

3 METHOD GUIDE FOR THE INCLUSION OF TRAVEL WRITING INTO COMMUNICATION SKILLS CURRICULA

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In the following chapter we outline the preparation of a method guide for the inclusion of travel writing into communication skills curricula. In the introduction we present an overview of travel writing where we also discuss the basic concepts of communication skills. Further, we expand the theory of readings and examples of good practice in relation to topics of travel writing and link it to the concept of green curricula for a sustainable future. The paper further presents an analysis of communication skills curricula in travel writing from several higher education institutions. The analysis functions as an example of good practice in the preparation of a common methodology for the inclusion of travel writing into communication skills curricula and the preparation of tasks for undergraduate and master level of education; these are also presented in the chapter.

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3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Introduction to travel writing

For centuries travel writing has been a popular genre (Thompson, 2011; Venkovits, 2010/2011) and has provided readers with a variety of stories from foreign lands, unknown traditions, and exotic places (Venkovits, 2010/2011). There have been numerous branches where travel writing has developed as a discipline, for example, anthropology, human geography and history. The academic study of travel writing as a practice is a more recent phenomenon. In the past decades, research has oriented towards the historic concept of travel writing (Phillips, 2016; Kilbride, 2011; Vanek, 2015) to country or religious related concepts (de Pont, 2012; Aziz, 2001) to gender oriented travel writing where we have a variety of works related to women (Kelly, 1993; Hall, 1993; Kelly, 1995; Klironomos, 2008). Travel writing is an escape from everyday reality and a way of becoming acquainted with foreign and faraway lands. For travellers, travel writing is an opportunity to share their own experience from a journey and compare it to the homeland (Venkovits, 2010/2011). As argued by Thomson (2011) every year new travelogues flow from printing presses and prominent travel writers, namely Michael Palin, Bill Bryson and Paul Theroux, regularly feature in the bestseller lists in Europe and America, we ask ourselves what do these texts tell us beside giving us more or less accurate and vivid descriptions, sometimes only raw data or excellent stories. As argued by Thomson (2011) publishers even reissue many old out-of-print travel books and as a result today's travelers can choose from a variety of exotic or adventure readings or simply opt for news related to the wider world or contemporary and historical books. Such readings recount journeys made for different purposes and the authors range from writers to pilgrims, conquistadors, explorers, and backpackers (Thomson, 2011). Venkovits (2010/2011) argues that travel texts provide new information on two levels, namely on one hand offering an insight into past walks of life not available elsewhere, or detailed descriptions of customs, traditions, historical and cultural events. On the other hand, such texts include not only what the traveller sees but also how the culture, the society, previous knowledge and preconception of the visited place shape the journey and the perceptions of the traveller.

3.1.2 Introduction to communication skills

After a simple search of the term ‘communication skills’ in Google scholar, we learn that the term appears in the first place among papers related to medicine, namely in relation to doctor-patient communication (Maguire & Pitceathly, 2002). A similar phenomenon is seen also when adding to the term ‘verbal’ or ‘effective’ ‘communication skills’ (Collins et al. 2011, Fallowfield & Jenkins, 1999). After adding to the term ‘students’ oral communication skills’ the results start to be oriented towards linguistics and improvement strategies (Grace & Gilsdorf, 2004). Raba (2017) argues that speaking represents an essential part of everyone’s life, and it is characterised as the second productive language skill and an essential means of communication. According to Raba (2017) we are talking of a channel where people interact, communicate, discuss and share their own thoughts. According to Chaney and Burk (1998) it is commonly known that students face problems in communications, here we mean speaking, in a foreign language, because a foreign language is often considered an obstacle that prevents them from expressing their thoughts properly. Dunbar, Brooks and Kubicka-Miller (2006) argue that for successful communication, students need more than just the formal ability of presenting well and a range of formulaic expressions that they use. Dunbar, Brooks and Kubicka-Miller (2006) argue that communication is a dynamic interactive process where effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values is involved. When we talk about communication we talk about an active and conscious involvement in order to develop required information and understanding to effectively function in a group. Oral communication reflects the role of language and communication in society (Dunbar, Brooks & Kubicka-Miller, 2006). According to Halliday (1978) communication does not consist of only an exchange of words, but it is a sociological encounter where through an exchange of meanings in the process of communication we create, maintain and modify social reality (Halliday, 1978). In addition, mastering appropriate communication skills, namely speaking, needs a great effort and requires also a skilful integration of language aspects, including vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure and pronunciation (Raba, 2017). As argued by Raba (2017) the appropriate teaching of oral communication has not yet been met and the field still needs to be explored. In view of the significant role of speaking Bailey (2005) and Goh (2007) propose methods for enhancing speaking skills that are related to the design of syllabus, tasks, speaking assessment, class materials and teaching principles. Speaking confidence is accomplished through the selection of

appropriate tasks, teaching pedagogies and methods for enhancing speaking skills as argued by Bailey (2005). The authors talk about enhancing speaking skills by syllabus design, teaching principles, types of tasks and materials, and speaking assessment.

3.2 Additional theory and good practice in travel writing

As discussed by numerous authors – travel writing – influences decision making. It is also known that good travel writing does not leave readers untouched, travel writing is defined also as tales of experience and as such tends to be trusted by readers (Woodside & Megehee, 2010; De Ascaniis & Grecco-Morasso, 2011; Séraphin, Gowreensunkar & Ambave, 2016). As argued by Séraphin, Gowreensunkar, Ambave (2016) several factors may explain why people decide to go to or avoid a destination. According to Williams and Zelinsky (1970) those factors are: distance, absence of international connectivity between the generating destination and the receiving destination, factors of attractiveness, cost of the destination, stability and image of the destination in generating areas, culture of the receiving destination, information fed back to people in the generating country from tourists who have made previous visits to the destination country. In line with the last point travel writing plays a crucial role in people's decisions to visit a destination. In this perspective the information provided as feed back determines if an individual will visit a destination. Consequently, we could argue that language and travel writing play an important role in tourism. In this perspective *Special Interest Tourism* (SIT) is the first step to assessing the effectiveness of travel writings as marketing tools (Handayani, Seraphin & Korstanje, 2019). Séraphin (2014) argues that travel writings can be considered as a valid marketing tool but only for a specific type of destination, namely those with a positive image. Travel writing is quite limited and even non-existent for destinations coming out of conflicts and destinations with a negative image (Séraphin, 2014). Séraphin (2014) prepared a content analysis that refers to a systematic attempt to identify the frequency with which certain words or concepts occur within a text and provide evidence for interpretation (Hammond and Wellington, 2020). Three types of existing social networks were analysed: a book review site, a travel site and a blog. Among the possible tools for text analysis is TextSTAT (<http://neon.niederlandistik.fu-berlin.de/en/textstat/>). This is a simple programme for the analysis of texts that reads plain text files (in different encodings) and HTML files (directly from the internet) and it produces word frequency lists and concordances from these files. In line with (Mansfield, 2020) examples of good

practice on how to produce travel texts can be followed by students to compose clear, accurate, artistically coherent and technically sophisticated written work, which articulates a combination of research and creative ideas. The texts should respond to the affective power of language, using appropriate approaches, terminology and creative strategies. Language should be used in a sophisticated and nuanced fashion, with a heightened awareness of concision, voice, idiom, idiolect, simile, metaphor, analogy, rhythm and media-specific restraints. Reflective strategies to help capture and synthesize personal experiences and other research in an imaginative form should be used.

A well-developed aesthetic sensibility and sense of intellectual inquiry should be applied. Individuals should reflect critically on their own creative writing practice and conduct independent research including that which is practice based.

3.2.1 Green curricula for a sustainable future

The presence of IT technologies and software in our everyday lives and its sustainability and environmental impact have to be considered in the future preparation and development of curricula, especially for the new generations of university students who are keen to learn about and contribute to a more sustainable and green society (Torre et al., 2017). Torre et al. (2017) argue that sustainability is under-represented in curricula and among the reasons for that they mention lack of awareness and teaching materials. Xiong et al. (2013) argue that the inclusion of environmental protection and sustainable development into academic curricula is of crucial importance. In their study Xiong et al. (2013) analyzed the curricula of 267 out of 810 public universities and colleges in China. According to the results 19.47% of the sampled institutions failed in establishing a comprehensive environmental education framework. Xiong et al. (2013) point out that education curricula is “greener” in institutions based on agriculture and forestry, while institutions focusing on sports, art and linguistics are considered less successful in addressing environmental problems. Being aware of the concept of green tourism (Furqan et al., 2010) and the lack of green curricula in linguistics, as stated by Xiong et al. (2013), in our project we designed curricula activities where language acquisition is surrounded by the concept of green and sustainable. Our curricula and all planned activities, namely those where the usage of software is included, as well as activities planned in an out-of-classroom environment, are prepared with the awareness of a

green and sustainable teaching in order to move towards the creation of green universities (Geng et al., 2013). European Union encouraged the development of a European sustainability competence framework (Green Comp) as one of the policy actions set out in the European Green Deal (Bianchi et al., 2022). GreenComp identifies a set of 12 connected sustainability competences to feed into education programmes to help learners develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote ways to think, plan and act with empathy, responsibility, and care for our planet and for public health (Bianchi et al., 2022).

3.3 Analysis of existing curricula in the inclusion of travel writing into communication skills curricula

Within the guidelines for the inclusion of travel writing into communication skills curricula we prepared an analysis of the existing curricula available at foreign universities. In order to present the existing curricula in a worldwide frame we exposed the curricula found in some English speaking countries, namely the US, the UK, and Australia. In the following paragraph we present 4 examples of existing curricula, we provide a short description, goals and content.

The Massachusetts Institute of technology (MIT, 2022) offers a course in travel writing. Within the course the focus is on reflecting the point of view, narrative choices, style of individuals and also responding to the pressures of real world by taking into observation narrative texts and also maps, objects, archives, and facts of various kinds. Within the course the materials are organized around three regions, namely North America, Africa and the Atlantic world, the Arctic and Antarctic. The course is oriented towards historic reading that allows the students to know something not only about the experiences and writing strategies of individual travelers, but about the progressive integration of the named regions into global economic, political, and knowledge systems. The course requirements include informal writing and consists of the preparation of a text of 500-700 words that identifies and discusses an object that 1/ relates to the events or places described in one of our texts; 2/ changes our understanding by telling us something the text does not. Within the course group work presentation is required. Within the requirement students are divided into groups, each group is in charge of leading 2 days of discussion, namely they prepare a presentation on the readings and design activities and discussion questions that they think are appropriate.

The University of Adelaide (2022) offers a course in travel writing that is focused on practical introduction to travel writing through history and practice. Within the course students work on ways to begin and develop a sustained and reflective travel writing practice, including revision and editing. Through a workshop students work in order to develop the capacity to revise and self-edit. The course consists of a series of exercises designed to develop aspects of the travel writer's craft and a selection of connected readings from classical and contemporary travel writing in a range of genres, styles and techniques. As course assignment students write a final travel piece.

At the **University of Maine** there is a course in travel writing that is designed for visiting Exchange Students for whom English is not a first language. The course provides an opportunity for students to visit various Maine locations over the semester while also learning the art of travel writing. The class meets once a week for fifty minutes and the trips to Maine locations are offered every other week. Participants do initial research before each trip, followed by note-taking, journaling, and picture taking, and ultimately the writing of an article based on the experience. Within the course participants learn how to write compelling and marketable articles including observation, description, and the development of voice. Participants also develop an awareness of audience and a knowledge of common submission requirements.

At the **University of Cambridge** there is a course in travel writing that explores the definition, history and development of travel writing and examines the differences between travel journalism, travel literature, guidebook writing, blogging, etc. The aim of the course is to introduce participants to the skills required to produce short travel features as published in many newspapers and magazines. The course fosters participants' confidence, and encourages them to start writing travel features based on their own experiences. This course starts by examining the definition of travel writing and also travel journalism, travel literature, guidebook writing and blogging. The course explores the history of the genre. Within the course the participant are encouraged to practice and develop their own travel writing, at the end of the course they are equipped with the skills needed to write a typical short-form travel feature.

3.4 Preparation of common methodology for the preparation of curricula

In line with the analysis of the existing curricula in travel writing, e.g. MIT, University of Adelaide, University of Maine, and University of Cambridge, we focus on the interdisciplinary level of combining all segments of our project. Within the methodology we join the above-mentioned concepts. Within the preparation of materials, we focus on travel writing through history and practice where we work on the historical scope of experiences and writing strategies of individual travellers. We also follow the concept of progressive integration of the regions into global economic, political, and knowledge systems. We apply common revision, editing and the ethics of travel focusing on classical and contemporary travel writing in a range of genres, styles and techniques. We explore the differences between travel journalism, travel literature, guidebook writing and blogging to develop the learner's own travel writing style. Within the methodology we decided to prepare activities in line with the level of proficiency of the language, namely the English language, starting with activities for students at undergraduate and followed by those for postgraduate level.

3.4.1 Example of master level activities

The following activities are examples of how travel writing is used to engage students into classroom activities and to communicate better.

3.4.1.1 Task 1: The compilation of the dictionary of English-Slovene-Croatian-German-Italian tourism collocations

Dictionary compilation has numerous functions from annotating and preserving a language to building new vocabulary and reporting on outdated usage of words and terms. The compilation of a dictionary is an important step in building and developing languages. The present method guide is oriented towards the presentation of the basic concepts of dictionary compilation, from micro and macrostructure of dictionaries and the overall process of compilation of dictionary entries. Within our Erasmus plus project we bring lexicography closer to the students and teachers by involving them in the process of dictionary compilation and editing. The **Dictionary of English-Slovene-Croatian-German-Italian tourism collocations** is a multilingual terminological dictionary for tourism, and it

is compiled by the users involved in the project workshops. In the guidelines specific characteristics of compiling general and terminological dictionaries (Atkins & Rundell, 2008, Fuertes-Olivera & Tarp, 2014) are presented, as well as the extraction of terms from scientific articles and filtration with the Sketch Engine (<https://www.sketchengine.eu/>) tool and compilation of dictionary articles with Termania (<https://www.termania.net/uporabnik/prijava>) dictionary mask. The working language of the dictionary compilation is English, and the dictionary entry is written in the English language and provides a definition, an example of usage from the text in English, and translations in four languages, the languages of the project partners. Within the project we are promoting multilingualism and language acquisition especially by including all project languages that are also the mother tongues of the participants.

3.4.1.1.1 Description of the used tools and their functions

Sketch Engine is a tool for managing, building and analysing text corpora. It is available online, upon registration the 30- day free trial is available to the users. The purpose of the tool is to enable users studying languages and language behaviour to search large corpora, currently it offers over 90 languages, search complex and linguistically motivated questions. An important feature of the tool is also the possibility to build our own corpus or upload a large text in order to start a lexical analysis. The tool will be used in our project for the filtration of the text and lexical analysis, namely the extraction of tourism collocations.

Termania is an online freely accessible portal for registered users, designed primarily for searching lexical databases, but offers to the users the possibility to compile their own dictionaries. In Termania a wide variety of freely available dictionaries that differ in type and structure, is concentrated. The platform is available for research and dictionary compilation. It offers basic and advanced research as well as data on each published dictionary, namely number of entries, languages included. Upon free registration several dictionary editing masks (e.g. bilingual, monolingual, multilingual dictionaries) for compiling dictionaries are available to the users. The mask could also be modified according to the needs of the users and the structure of the dictionary article.

3.4.1.1.2 Description of dictionary-making work

The participant will find a scientific article on the topic of tourism. They will upload the document in **Sketch Engine**, filter the text and prepare a lexical analysis. The lexical analysis will be oriented towards tourism collocations. A frequency list will be obtained from the **Sketch Engine** tool. The collocations will be included into **Termania** dictionary mask for dictionary compilation. A dictionary mask for multilingual dictionary article will be used in the compilation process. The users will compile the dictionary articles focusing on collocations. The dictionary article will be composed of headword, explanation, example of usage and translations into Slovene, Croatian, German and Italian.

Comment to the teacher: The compilation of the dictionary is a travel writing activity in which students are given instructions on how to compile dictionary articles. Within the activity the ICT skills are needed and further developer, as well as some pre-compilations work is needed and typically include an overview of the characteristics of terminological dictionaries. The inclusion of movement and nonverbal communication can be taken as pre-writing activities, namely movement – going to different libraries, finding sources; non-verbal communication – the usage of special symbols that replace words in dictionary compilation.

Duration: 90 minutes, INDIVIDUAL, PAIR WORK or GROUP WORK.

3.4.1.2 Task 2: Build a corpus of texts in travel writing

At present dictionaries are more often corpus based (Gizatova, 2016; Škrabal, 2016; De Schryver, Joffe, Joffe, & Hillewaert, 2006) as in such way they give an insight in the present position and characteristics of language, in certain cases the corpus is synchronic or, if taken from the past, diachronic. Corpus usage became an indispensable way of dictionary compilation and is a pre-compilation activity.

3.4.1.2.1 Description of the used tools and their functions

The participants collect different texts related to tourism and travel writing. The collected texts come from different subfields and those collected manually (in such cases also movement is included) are digitised. The corpus of texts is stored in a

word document and uploaded into Sketch Engine. Task 2 is related to task 1 as the corpus functions as source material for the preparation of glossaries, databases and dictionaries. The task could also go further to the inclusion of texts in the language of the project partners (here we think of translated texts) and in this way the preparation of aligned texts is possible.

Comment to the teacher: The compilation of the corpus (monolingual or multilingual) in travel writing texts is a travel writing activity that puts students in the position of preparing the source materials for further lexical analysis or dictionary compilation.

The inclusion of movement and nonverbal communication can be taken as pre-corpus preparation activity, namely movement – collecting real texts manually; non-verbal communication – the usage of special ICT that replace words in corpus compilation.

Duration: 90 minutes, INDIVIDUAL, PAIR WORK or GROUP WORK.

3.4.2 Example of undergraduate level activities

3.4.2.1 Task 1: Preparation of video resources

3.4.2.1.1 Description of work

Students prepare a travel itinerary outside, e.g. in the woods, a hike, a visit to the park, castle or similar. Students prepare video resources focused on movement for different focus groups, namely.

Comment to the teacher: The preparation of video resource is a travel writing activity that puts students in the position of preparing genuine materials that might be shown to their peers for further lexical and content analysis.

The inclusion of movement and nonverbal communication can be seen going to the location and preparing the activities as well as recording; non-verbal communication – the usage of ICT, symbols to explain certain movement exercises.

90 minutes, INDIVIDUAL, PAIR WORK or GROUP WORK.

3.4.2.2 Task 2: Travel writing and non-verbal communication to promote social inclusion of individuals with disabilities

3.4.2.2.1 Description of work

Students prepare a travel itinerary outside without using words, thinking of a castle, an important building etc. students learn how to prepare a non-verbal description of a castle using pictures (e.g., on the case of Pingu).



Figure 1: Pingu images

Source: Pingu, 2023

Students prepare short and concise texts and transfer the text into pictures.

Comment to the teacher: The activity is oriented to non-verbal communication and travel writing. The inclusion of movement is in the preparation of visual materials, e.g., taking photographs, going to the location.

90 minutes, INDIVIDUAL, PAIR WORK or GROUP WORK.

3.4.2.3 Task 2: Using gesture and preparing video

3.4.2.3.1 Description of work

Students do some pre-task work, namely prepare a dialogue, e.g., it could be the booking of a room or ordering food. Students write the text and with a classmate try to transfer the text into non-verbal communication, using only gesture to communicate. Students record the whole dialogue and in the second part of the video they provide subtitles of the used gestures.

Comment to the teacher: The activity is oriented to non-verbal communication and travel writing. The inclusion of movement is in the preparation of visual materials, e.g., video and the usage of gesture. Students could also go to a specific location.

90 minutes, INDIVIDUAL, PAIR WORK or GROUP WORK.

3.5 Conclusion

With the preparation of tasks developed thanks to the analysis of the curricula from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Adelaide, the University of Maine, and the University of Cambridge, and also the theoretical overview of the concepts of travel writing and communication skills, we developed the method guide for the inclusion of travel writing into communication skills curricula in an interdisciplinary frame. The analysis of the curricula from the above-mentioned institutions helped us in the preparation of tasks for undergraduate and master level students that are presented in the paper. Tasks are provided with a description of activities, a time frame and include specific fields in an interdisciplinary way. We believe that the development of such interdisciplinary tasks contributes to the preparation of green curricula for a sustainable future and pictures the topic of communication in a sustainable frame.

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