

JOSIP JURAJ STROSSMAYER UNIVERSITY OF OSIJEK

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Integrated undergraduate and graduate university Class teacher studies

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THE USE OF PRESENT PERFECT IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' JOURNALS

MASTER'S THESIS

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SVEUČILIŠTE JOSIPA JURJA STROSSMAYERA U OSIJEKU

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DIPLOMSKI RAD

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Predmet: Gramatika engleskog jezika I

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*To my family – the greatest gift a human being could receive,
and to the love of my life – thank you for having faith in me throughout it all.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	3
2.1. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	3
2.2. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS, ERROR ANALYSIS AND INTERLANGUAGE.....	4
2.3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRAMMAR TEACHING	6
3. NATIONAL STANDARDS OF ENGLISH	8
3.1. BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH	8
3.1.1. Grammar differences.....	8
3.2. PRESENT PERFECT IN AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH	10
4. PRESENT PERFECT.....	11
4.1. PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE	12
4.1.1. Adverbials with Present Perfect Simple.....	14
4.2. PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS	14
4.3. PRESENT PERFECT AND PAST SIMPLE.....	16
4.4. PRESENT PERFECT EQUIVALENTS IN THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE.....	17
5. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY.....	18
6. RESEARCH	19
6.1. YEAR 1	19
6.2. YEAR 2.....	20
6.3. YEAR 3.....	23
7. DISCUSSION	27
9. REFERENCES.....	30
9.1. INTERNET SOURCES	30

SUMMARY

This paper presents the analysis conducted at the Faculty of Education on the journals written by Module C (English language module) students of one generation (enrolled in 2015) years 1-3. The number of 230 journals that were analysed were written in the first, second and third year of study as part of English Language Practice courses. Journals are free written compositions, up to 500 words long, that students submit twice in a semester. The main aim of this analysis was to find out if the students use the Present Perfect tense, considering the fact that such a verb tense does not exist in the Croatian language, and if they do, whether they use it correctly or the Present Perfect tense is replaced by a different tense. For this purpose, it was necessary to find the instances of the Present Perfect tense, both simple and continuous, in students' journals, and to determine whether it was used accurately. Furthermore, it was necessary to find out whether Present Perfect should have been used instead of the tense originally used. Also, in line with the main aim, an emphasis was put on how frequently the students use the Present Perfect tense. The sentences containing the Present Perfect tense were extracted in a table along with the examples of sentences where Present Perfect should have been used. These sentences were later compared with their Croatian translations. The results showed that the majority of students avoid using the Present Perfect tense and use the Past Simple tense instead. The reason lies either in mother tongue interference or simply in not distinguishing when Present Perfect should be used instead of Past Simple. Since in Croatian there are no verb tenses equivalent to those in English, sentences from Croatian into English are frequently translated literally and, therefore, the use of the Present Perfect tense is avoided.

Key words: literal translation, mother tongue interference, Past Simple, Present Perfect, students' journals

SAŽETAK

Ovaj rad prikazuje analizu provedenu na pisanim radovima studenata jedne generacije (generacija 2015./16.) C modula (modul s pojačanim engleskim jezikom) Fakulteta za odgojne i obrazovne znanosti. Analizirani su radovi pisani na prvoj, drugoj i trećoj godini studija u sklopu kolegija Jezične vježbe engleskog jezika (230 radova). Radovi su imali do 500 riječi i bili su pisani dva puta u svakom semestru. Glavni je cilj ovog rada utvrditi koriste li se studenti glagolskim vremenom Present Perfect. Ukoliko se koriste, analizom se želi odgovoriti na pitanja je li navedeno glagolsko vrijeme upotrijebljeno pravilno ili je zamijenjeno drugim glagolskim vremenom. Za ovu svrhu bilo je potrebno pronaći glagolska vremena Present Perfect Continuous i Present Perfect Simple u rečenicama prikupljenih radova. Nadalje, bilo je potrebno utvrditi je li Present Perfect pravilno upotrijebljen ili ga je student zamijenio drugim glagolskim vremenom. U skladu s glavnim ciljem ove analize, naglasak je stavljen i na učestalost uporabe Present Perfecta. Rečenice u kojima je Present Perfect korišten pritom su zapisane u tablicu, kao i primjeri rečenica u kojima je Present Perfect trebao biti korišten, a nije. Te su rečenice kasnije uspoređene s njihovim prijevodima na hrvatskome jeziku. Rezultati pokazuju da većina studenata izbjegava korištenje glagolskog vremena Present Perfect te umjesto njega koriste Past Simple. Razlog tome je ili interferencija materinjeg jezika ili, jednostavno, neraspoznavanje kada bi se trebao koristiti Present Perfect umjesto Past Simple-a. U hrvatskom jeziku ne postoje glagolska vremena slična onima u engleskom, stoga težimo k tome da doslovno prevodimo rečenice s hrvatskog jezika na engleski jezik i, samim time, izbjegavamo koristiti Present Perfect jer u hrvatskom jeziku ne postoji glagolsko vrijeme slično tom.

Ključne riječi: doslovno prevođenje, interferencija materinskog jezika, Past Simple, Present Perfect, studentski pisani uratci

1. INTRODUCTION

The English language is a language that is spoken and used worldwide. It is used daily by either native speakers or those who learn it as a foreign language. In Croatia, the English language is omnipresent, on television, in songs, video games etc. English foreign language (EFL) learners incidentally pick up those words and phrases from the media and form their own “knowledge” of the English language. English is also taught on all educational levels, from pre-school institutions to higher education institutions.

English and Croatian languages are different on all linguistic levels (English is a Germanic language, and Croatian is a Slavic language), including grammar. Numerous grammar structures exist and are commonly used in English, and they do not exist in Croatian at all, and vice versa. These facts can lead to instances of incorrect use of many English structures by Croatian learners of English as a second language. The English Present Perfect tense certainly belongs to this category. We do not have this verb tense in Croatian, and it is highly common and widely used in English.

This phenomenon of grammar structures that exist in one and do not exist in the other language has been studied by, among others, by Dankić and Karadža (2011) who conducted a research amongst students to check how mother tongue influences the use of negatives in English sentences. Their conclusions will be presented later on in the thesis.

This thesis is based on the analysis of the Present Perfect use in university students’ journals. Apart from institutional learning of English, as mentioned earlier, there is incidental exposure to the English language whereby many speakers, including university students, pick up words and phrases unknowingly. Later on, they use those phrases in their essays and other written papers, such as journals. This thesis is meant to expand our understanding of why students replace Present Perfect with Past Simple and vice versa. In addition to that, it was examined if these errors happen due to mother tongue influence.

A theoretical overview of the research related to this topic is followed by the research analysis part, containing journals divided by year with extracted erroneous sentences, their corrections and translations. The results are provided in the Discussion section with possible explanations of error causes, followed by the conclusion regarding the research, along with some recommendations for grammar teaching courses.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a rather new discipline, and therefore interesting and challenging, permeating different fields of science – linguistics, pedagogy, psychology. Ellis defines it as “the systematic study of how people acquire a second language (often referred to as an L2)” (Ellis, 1997: 3). Second language acquisition theory appeared in the 2nd half of the 20th century. At the time, the world was becoming a “global village” and people wanted and needed to learn a second language in order to be able to communicate with the rest of the world. It is necessary to get a better insight in how the SLA works, so that we could get a better understanding of grammar errors happening in students’ journals.

There are various points of view regarding SLA. Behaviourists, with their best-known proponent B.F. Skinner, have greatly influenced the development of audio-linguistic teaching materials and teacher training. Furthermore, they emphasised the usage of mimicry and memorisation in classrooms, hence the students learned dialogues and sentences by heart. They believed that SLA can be viewed as the “formation of habits” and they assumed that those habits started with their first language acquisition which, later in their life, transferred to second language acquisition. The behaviourists assumed that those first language habits could interfere with the ones needed for the SLA. Hence, behaviourism has often been linked with the Contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH). The CAH claims that, where the first and the target language are similar, the learners should acquire the target language structures with ease. Where the first and the target language are different, the learners will struggle. Stephen Krashen (1977) has also been well-known for his *monitor model* which consists of five different hypotheses, where the most important one, known as *the natural order* hypothesis, claims that the acquisition of grammar structures follows the natural order which is predictable (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

A more modern approach to the SLA is the competition model. Bates and MacWhinney (1981) described the competition model as an explanation for language acquisition that takes into account not only language forms but also language meaning and language use. The competition model allows learners to lean on “cues” that indicate a certain language function. Such an example would be relationships among words in a sentence that are indicated by either word order or grammatical markers. The English language has a very strict and very specific word order in a sentence, where the subject comes first, followed by the verb and the object (SVO). It is so specific that even young children learn it by heart and produce sentences that do not make sense, but they contain the word order required by the English language. For example, *The car was driven by a man* may be interpreted (by children) as *A man*

was driven by a car. This, therefore, can cause problems to people whose L1 is English and they want to learn Italian as an L2. The Italian language is quite flexible when it comes to word order and they rely on the meaning of the sentence, not the word order. MacWhinney (1997) claims that English speakers will tend to rely on word order as the basis of interpretation. He provided an example of an Italian sentence 'Il giocattolo guarda il bambino' meaning '*the toy -is looking at-the boy*'. An Italian speaker, accustomed to a more flexible word order, reads the sentence and concludes that the acceptable meaning would be that the boy is looking at the toy (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). To conclude with, the competition model states that the SLA learners need to learn the relative importance of the different cues appropriate in the language they are learning (MacWhinney, 1997).

2.2. Contrastive analysis, error analysis and interlanguage

According to CAH, errors and mistakes are often assumed to happen as a result of transfer from learners' first language. In other words, learners tend to literally translate from their L1 to their L2 and thereby make errors. However, not all errors made by the L2 learners can be blamed on transfer from L1 to L2. Research has shown that many errors can be explained in terms of learners' development of L2 knowledge rather than making errors as a result of the transfer from L1 to L2. In addition to that, some errors are still similar to the ones that the young second language learners are still making, i.e. the use of a regular *-ed* past tense ending with an irregular verb (*bringed*, instead of *brought*). One version of the CAH was explained in a study by Dankić and Karadža (2011). According to the research, errors frequently happen when English negations are translated into Croatian and vice versa. English speakers use post-verbal negations, while Croatian speakers use pre-verbal negations. The Croatian language allows multiple negatives, while English syntax does not allow double or more negatives within a sentence. The research was conducted amongst 57 students, whose native language is Croatian, divided into three groups based on number of years of English language instruction they have had during their formal education. The test had three different assignments: an acceptability preference task, an acceptability judgment task and an elicited translation task. The first two tasks were similar, where students were given different sentences. In the first task, they were given 5 different sentences, all grammatically correct but one was more similar to its Croatian equivalent. The students had to choose the correct one. The second task consisted of three sentences written in four different ways. Two sentences were grammatically correct in the English language, the other two were grammatically incorrect, but similar to their Croatian equivalents, one sentence contained a pre-verbal negation normally used in Croatian and the last sentence contained a post-verbal negation normally used in English. The third task was different than the previous two. The students were asked to translate five Croatian sentences containing three or more negatives into English. For example, *Nitko nikada nigdje*

ništa ne pjeva (all negatives). They were also reminded that only one negative is used in English sentences. The results have shown that, in the first task, more advanced students (those who have been learning English for 4 or 6 years) chose sentences that were similar to their Croatian equivalent, while those who learned English for 2 years tended to choose other sentences as the correct ones. In the second task the vast majority of the students chose grammatically correct sentences as their answers. However, there were some who deemed the sentence *John does not love Mary* as incorrect, because the *does not* was not abbreviated. In the third task, where the students had to translate Croatian sentences consisting of three or more negatives into English, only a small number of students translated the sentences correctly. Furthermore, the results have shown that the students relied heavily on the Croatian rule of double or more negatives, which is the result of literal translation (Dankić & Karadža, 2011).

Selinker (1972) gave the Interlanguage its name. It is described as a separate linguistic system, independent of both first and second language. Interlanguage is a “language” of its own. It is a part of learning an L2. Various dialects, grammar errors and other grammar inaccuracies are constituents of one’s interlanguage, and that is a common pre-requisite for L2 comprehension.

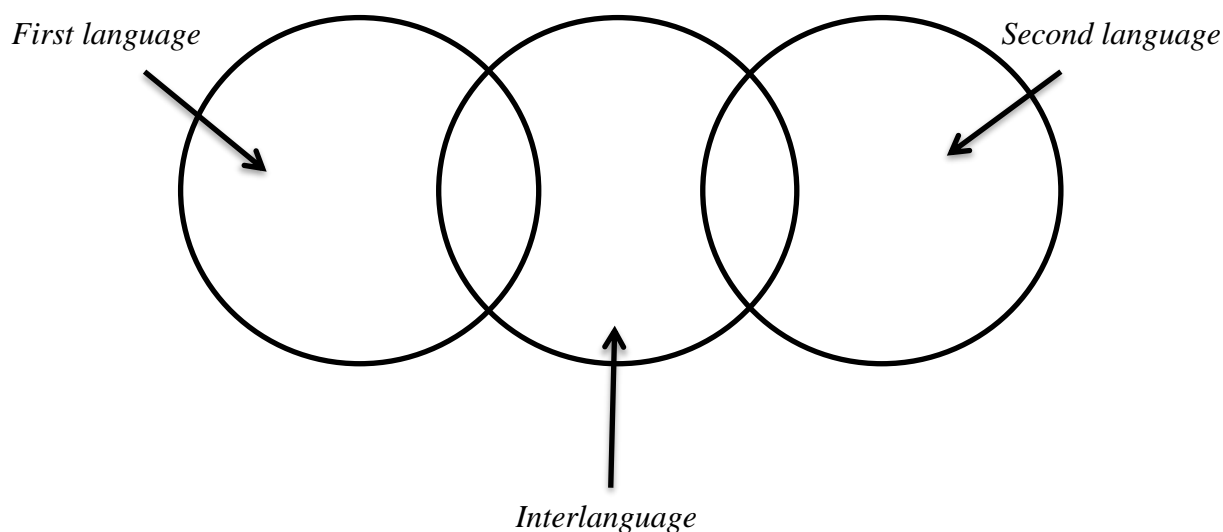


Diagram 1 – The concept of Interlanguage (Corder, 1981: 17)

Further analyses have shown that the SLA learners learn L2 by making assumptions in three different categories:

- a) “utterances in the learners’ native language (NL) produced by the learner”
- b) “interlanguage (IL) utterances produced by the learner”
- c) “target language (TL) utterances produced by native speakers of that TL” (Richards, 1973: 35).

This means that the L2 learners make grammar mistakes, which, firstly, they think are appropriate. Furthermore, L2 learners make their own rules and assumptions which lead them to the understanding of L2 functioning. Those rules, commonly, are neither from L1 nor L2 (target language). Therefore, the interlanguage can be considered a chain of events and strategies which help learners to produce structures of the target language that are not fully acquired through various processes, like simplification, formulaic language, overgeneralization and others (Selinker, 1974). Corder (1981) states that it is inappropriate to correct the errors a foreigner might make while speaking, unless they specifically asked you to do so. However, “it is one of the most important tasks of the teacher in the language classroom, and it is part of the skilled technique of the teacher to decide when correction is necessary and to do it in a way that helps the learner to acquire most expeditiously the correct forms of the target language” (Corder, 1981: 65).

In conclusion, the SLA can be affected by habit transfer from L1 to L2. In addition to that, students could form their own “interlanguage” – a language independent of both the target language and the first language where they are allowed to make errors in order to comprehend a target language. Finally, errors could appear when translating from mother tongue into the second language/target language, especially if the two have completely different grammar rules.

2.3.The significance of grammar teaching

Grammar is the basis of a language. Without grammar, other aspects of a language (speaking, writing and listening) would not have any value on the level of meaning and understanding. The grammar of a language provides us with the possibility to understand and comprehend the language. Fotos and Nassaji (2004: 91-92) claimed that grammar is essential for four different reasons:

1. “Learners should notice the target forms in input; otherwise input is processed for input only, not for specific forms, so they are not acquired by learners”.
2. “Some morpheme studies prove that learners pass through developmental stages”.
3. “Several studies show that teaching approaches that focus only on communication not on grammar are inadequate”.
4. “Positive effects of grammar instruction in the second language classroom are so clear”.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, grammar plays one of the biggest roles in learning a second language. It is a basis for learning how to speak with understanding, listen with understanding and write and read with understanding.

When language competence is tested, grammar is required. There are acknowledged levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) which test language competence.¹ Though not directly, grammar is tested. As mentioned before, grammar is a part of every aspect of a language, and without it the learners would have difficulties with completing the tasks that language competence tests require of them.

¹ <https://tracktest.eu/english-levels-cefr/> *English Language Levels* (CEFR)

3. NATIONAL STANDARDS OF ENGLISH

3.1. British and American English

When it comes to the national standards of English, it is important to differentiate between standard English and British and American English. While standard English embraces the “supranational”, meaning common to all, British and American English both have rules by which we can distinguish them (Quirk et al., 1985). Hereinafter, British English will be referred to as BrE and American English will be referred to as AmE.

3.1.1. Grammar differences

As Quirk et al. (1985) state, grammar differences between AmE and BrE are few. One of the everyday examples is that the AmE has two past participles of a verb *to get* (*got, gotten*), while BrE has only one. Another example is that in BrE both singular and plural can be used with a collective singular noun. For example:

[1] *Flock of seagulls is/are flying above the water.*

In the previous example we can see that both singular and plural function with BrE, whereas only singular is required in AmE. Some differences are less familiar, but are likely to put an obstacle in communication between an AmE speaker and a BrE speaker. Such an example would be that the AmE speakers use the Past Simple tense in the informal style of communication, while BrE speakers use Present Perfect. For example:

[2] *Joshua tried to convince her to come.* (AmE)

[3] *Joshua has tried to convince her to come.* (BrE)

BrE speakers, also, tend to use *should* in their sentences, while AmE speakers use the present subjunctive. For example:

[4] *My dad insisted that I should take my jacket.* (BrE)

[5] *My dad insisted that I take my jacket.* (AmE)

As for the lexical differences, they are numerous. See the table below.

BrE	AmE
<i>tin</i>	<i>can</i>
<i>petrol</i>	<i>gas</i>
<i>underground</i>	<i>subway</i>
<i>railroad</i>	<i>railway</i>
<i>post box</i>	<i>mailbox</i>
<i>lift</i>	<i>elevator</i>
<i>garden</i>	<i>yard</i>
<i>autumn</i>	<i>fall</i>
<i>caretaker</i>	<i>janitor</i>
<i>chips</i>	<i>French fries</i>
<i>cooker</i>	<i>stove</i>
<i>corn</i>	<i>wheat</i>
<i>engine</i>	<i>motor</i>
<i>film</i>	<i>movie</i>
<i>estate agent</i>	<i>realtor</i>
<i>ill</i>	<i>sick</i>
<i>lorry</i>	<i>truck</i>
<i>repair</i>	<i>fix</i>
<i>rubbish</i>	<i>garbage, trash</i>
<i>tap</i>	<i>faucet</i>
<i>vest</i>	<i>undershirt, T-shirt</i>

Table 1 – Some examples of lexical differences between American English and British English²

² <https://www.lexico.com/grammar/british-and-american-terms>,
<https://www.britishcouncilfoundation.id/en/english/articles/british-and-american-english>

Both BrE and AmE have been developing (modernizing) their vocabulary. More and more books are being written about the differences between two of the most popular English varieties. In the United States of America, experts say that standard English is just a myth and refer to it as an “Edited American English” (Quirk et al., 1985: 20). These changes can also be noticed in students’ journals, where students tend to use both AmE and BrE in the same written composition.

3.2. Present Perfect in American and British English

Both British and American English speakers use Present Perfect. British English speakers tend to use it more often than American English speakers. One of the examples of difference in use of Present Perfect is when using the adverbial *just*:

[6] *Your fiancée has just called.*

When giving news, BrE speakers tend to use Present Perfect tense, while AmE speakers use Past Simple.

[7] *Your fiancée just called.*

Sentences with *yet* and *already* indicate the time until now. Both are used in AmE and BrE, though AmE speakers tend to use them with Past Simple. See the following examples.

[8] *Did you do your homework yet?*

[9] *Have you done your homework yet?*

[10] *Did you meet her already?*

[11] *Have you met her already?*

In conclusion, American English speakers use Past Simple in informal spoken language. Present Perfect is used in formal language, as seen in the examples above. British English speakers rely on using Present Perfect rather than Past Simple.

4. PRESENT PERFECT

The English language recognizes two aspects of a tense – perfective and progressive aspect. Both can be seen as realizing a basic contrast of aspect between the action viewed as complete (perfective), and the action viewed as incomplete, i.e. in progress (progressive) (Quirk et al., 1985). In the following chapters, the perfective aspect of the Present Perfect tense will be referred to as Present Perfect Simple, while the progressive aspect will be referred to as Present Perfect Continuous.

Present Perfect has 4 different uses (Brdar et al., 2001: 153):

- a) continuative Present Perfect

*We **have been** here for a long time.*



Figure 1: Timeline for Present Perfect

Continuative Present Perfect refers to an event that extends during a period of time and it may also extend into the future. This use of Present Perfect is usually marked with adverbials of duration, such as *for a long time, since, so far* etc.

- b) iterative Present Perfect

*Joseph **has been coming** to Osijek for 20 years.*

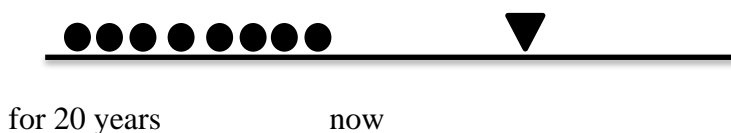


Figure 2: Timeline for Present Perfect

Iterative Present Perfect, referred to as habitual Present (Quirk et al., 1985) is used for an event that happens repeatedly during the past and until the present. It may also continue in the future. Iterative Present Perfect is signalled by an adverbial of frequency.

- c) resultative past

*My brother **has become** a father.*



Figure 3: Timeline for Present Perfect.

“The Present Perfect is also used in reference to a past event to imply that the result of that event is still operative at the present time” (Leech, 1971: 39). Regarding resultative past use of Present Perfect, it means that a “hidden” result is written next to a state we are referring to. In the example “*My brother has become a father*” the result would be “*My brother is overwhelmed with happiness.*”

d) indefinite past

*‘Wonder’ is one of the best movies I **have** ever **seen**.*

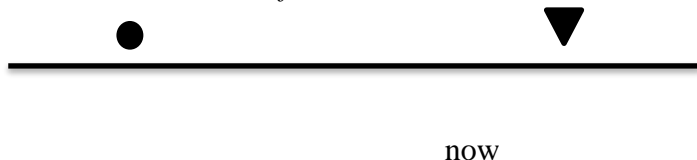


Figure 4: Timeline for Present Perfect

This use of Present Perfect refers to a moment that happened in the past, but it is not definite since we do not know when exactly in the past it occurred. It continues to the present moment and to the future, until the experience is changed. Since it refers to the experience of a speaker, it is also called “the perfect of experience.” Adverbials that signal the indefinite past are *ever, never, before* etc.

4.1. Present Perfect Simple

The difference between a tense and an aspect is the most problematic when it comes to deciding whether to use Past Simple or Present Perfect Simple.

Past simple: *Anthony **lived** in Australia for 20 years.*

Present perfective: *Anthony **has lived** in Australia for 20 years.*

Both sentences refer to an event that happened before the present moment, but when it comes to Simple Past, it means that Anthony lived in Australia and does not live there anymore, while in Present Perfective Anthony lived in Australia, still does and might live there in the future. According to Quirk et al. (1985) Present Perfect simple signifies past time with “current relevance”. The reason that Present Perfect signifies past time with current relevance is that the perfective aspect refers to the anterior time, “time preceding whatever time orientation is signalled by tense or by other elements of the sentence or its context“ (Quirk et al., 1985: 190).

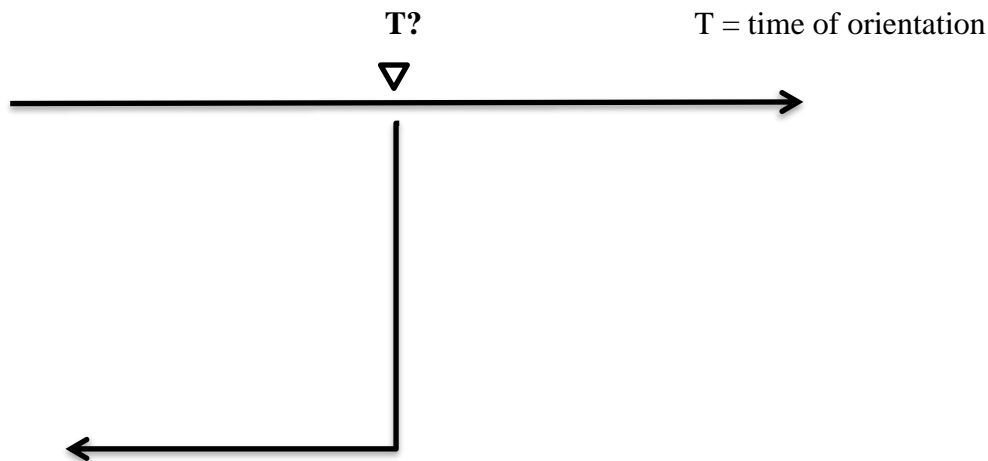


Figure 5 – Anterior time zone

In the figure above, the arrow points to the anterior time zone. Furthermore, when both Present Perfect Simple and Past Simple can be appropriately used, Quirk et al. (1985) say that the perfective aspect “relates the action more directly to the present time”, i.e.:

[12] *Where **did** you go?*

[13] *Where **have** you gone?*

In [12], the speaker asks a person to recall where he/she went, while in [13] the speaker concentrates on a person’s current whereabouts. Quirk et al. (1985) differ three meanings of Present Perfective:

- a) State leading up to the present

*That house **has been** empty for ages. (and it still is)*

- b) Indefinite event(s) in a period leading up to the present

*All our children **have had** measles.*

- c) Habit in a period leading up to the present

*Mr Terry **has sung** in a choir ever since he was a boy. (he still sings in a choir)*

Errors regarding Past Simple and Present Perfect most often occur in a) state leading up to the present. It corresponds to the “state past” use of Past Simple, but differentiates in meaning where state continues up to the present moment, while in Past Simple it remained in the past. The same goes for b) and c) where b) corresponds “event past” and c) corresponds “habitual past” and the only difference is that both lead up to the present moment. Quirk et al. (1985) show an example:

[14] *Journal **has been published** every month since 1980.*

[15] *Journal **was published** every month since 1980 to 1985.*

In [14] the journal is still being published, while in [15] the journal was published only during the specified period of time.

Another common use of Present Perfect Simple is while reporting news. i.e.:

[16] *There **has been** an earthquake in Zagreb.*

[17] *There **have been** protests in the United States of America.*

4.1.1. Adverbials with Present Perfect Simple

In line with the main aim of this thesis, it is necessary to differentiate Present Perfect from Past Simple, since both are commonly mistaken. One such example would be the use of adverbials, where similar (if not the same) adverbials are used with both tenses. Quirk et al. (1985) present such differences and similarities in the use of adverbials with these two verbs tenses:

Past Simple	Present Perfect Simple	Past Simple and Present Perfect Simple
<i>I drove a car</i>	<i>I haven't driven a car</i>	<i>I drove/have driven a car</i>
<i>yesterday.</i>	<i>up to now.</i>	<i>today.</i>
<i>a week ago.</i>	<i>since Tuesday.</i>	<i>this month.</i>
<i>earlier this week.</i>	<i>since I met you.</i>	<i>recently.</i>
<i>the other day.</i>	<i>so far.</i>	<i>before.</i>
<i>at 4 o'clock.</i>	<i>hitherto.</i>	<i>this June.</i>
<i>on Tuesday.</i>		<i>already.</i>

Table 2. Adverbials in Past Simple and Present Perfect Simple (Quirk et al 1985).

Adverbials used with Past Simple indicate a specific time in the past, while adverbials used with Present Perfect Simple indicate a period of time leading up to the present moment. Adverbials used with both Present Perfect Simple and Past Simple contain either an example where an adverbial is designated for Present Perfect Simple or Past Simple or dependent on the meaning of a sentence “whether a past or present time orientation is needed” (Quirk et al., 1985).

4.2. Present Perfect Continuous

Present Perfect Progressive, or Present Perfect Continuous, indicates an event that is in progress at a given time. The following examples are in the Present Simple tense and the Present Continuous tense, just to illustrate the difference between perfective and progressive aspect:

[18] *John dances well.*

[19] *John is dancing well.*

The sentence *John dances well* refers to John's dancing skills in general – he always dances well. On the other hand, in the sentence *John is dancing well* it is stated that John is dancing well during a certain event, at the time.

The meaning of the Present Perfect Continuous can be divided into three categories:

- a) “the happening has duration”
- b) “the happening has limited duration”
- c) “the happening is not necessarily complete” (Quirk et al., 1985:198)

In [19] the first two components take place, meaning that John's dancing skills are rather temporary than permanent. An example for the third component would be *I have been living in Croatia for 23 years*, meaning that it is not over; I am still living in Croatia. State, event and habit are differently used and interpreted with progressive aspect. State verbs are mainly not used with progressive aspect. See the example below.

[20] *I agree with your statement.*

[21] *I am agreeing with your statement.*

The second sentence simply does not make sense, because stative verb meanings do not go in line with the idea that something is “in progress.” Hence, when using progressive aspect, it is recommended to imply that something is temporary rather than permanent, as in examples below.

[22] *Ian plays in the backyard.*

[23] *Ian is playing in the backyard.*

[24] *Ian has been playing in the backyard.*

With event meanings, Present Perfect Continuous is used to stress out the duration of an event, meaning that the event has not yet come to an end (it is continuing to the present moment). For example:

[25] *Anthony was waiting for her for 2 hours.*

[26] *Anthony has been waiting for her since 3 o'clock.*

In [25] Anthony was waiting for her for only 2 hours and then she came, the event started and ended in the past, while in [26] Anthony has been waiting for her since 3 o'clock and she still has not arrived, meaning that Anthony is currently waiting for her.

When it comes to habitual progressive, it is used when an action is repeated over a period of time.

For example:

[27] John **writes** her letters daily.

[28] John **has been writing** her letters because his daughter couldn't do it for him.

In [27], the action is permanent; John was writing her letters, is doing so in the present and will continue in the future. In [28] that habit is temporary, it only happens when John's daughter cannot do it for him (Quirk et al., 1985).

4.3. Present Perfect and Past Simple

Both tenses refer to the past, but Present Perfect differs from Past Simple on three different accounts (Brdar et al., 2001: 49):

a) continuation up to the present time

Such contrast can be seen in the following sentences:

*She **has been** blind all her life. (She is still alive)*

*She **was** blind all her life. (She is dead now)*

Both speakers have the same person in mind, but refer to different periods of time in life.

b) present result

*Ian's car **has broken** down. (It still is broken and Ian cannot drive it.)*

*Ian's car **broke** down. (But he fixed it.)*

c) indefinite time

This specific difference between Present Perfect and Past Simple causes most difficulties. Present Perfect does not refer and does not require a specific point of time, while Past Simple does. Such reference point can be resolved by using adverbials required for either tense (see Table 2.) or by a preceding use of past or perfect tense (*I have examined the document you gave me and it requires some corrections*).

4.4. Present Perfect equivalents in the Croatian language

There are three central tenses in the Croatian language – past, present and future. Each of them has constituents in the form of sub-tenses. “Pluskvamperfekt”, “aorist” and “Imperfekt” belong to past tenses in Croatian. Present tense only has one form “present” while future tense has two forms – “Futur I.” and “Futur II.” As mentioned, present tense has only one form in Croatian, while in English it has two aspects – perfective and progressive. Past Perfect has two aspects as well (perfective and progressive), although in the Croatian language an equivalent to Past Perfect exists and it is “Pluskvamperfekt” (Hudeček & Mihaljević, 2019).

<i>I had been eating.</i> (Past Perfect)	<i>Bio sam jeo/la.</i> (Pluskvamperfekt)
<i>I have been eating.</i> (Present Perfect)	<i>Jeo/la sam.</i> (Prezent)
<i>I ate.</i> (Past Simple)	<i>Jeo/la sam.</i> (Perfekt)

Table 3. Difference in translation of English tenses into Croatian language.

We can see from the table that Present Perfect and Past Simple are translated in the same way into the Croatian language. The Croatian language does not have a present tense with reference to the past, or a tense that goes into past and has present results. Therefore, Present Perfect is translated in the same way as Past Simple into Croatian. The research conducted by Steiner (2016) supports this conclusion regarding the usage of Present Perfect in AmE and BrE. Steiner asked the participants to choose which type of English they prefer – BrE or AmE. Those participants who selected American English used Past Simple in sentences with *yet*, *already*, *recently*, *just* and *never*, while participants who selected British English used Present Perfect with the same adverbials.

5. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The corpus encompasses 230 journals written by students of the Faculty of Education in Osijek, generation 2015/2016. The journals were written during the first three years of study as part of the English Language Practice courses. The aim of the study was to detect how the students use the Present Perfect tense, both perfective and progressive aspect. The main idea was to see if the students use the Present Perfect tense and, if they do, whether they use it accurately. In line with the main aim, the sentences were translated to analyse the influence of the mother tongue, the Croatian language, and if that could be the reason for the inaccurate use of the Present Perfect tense. Journals vary from 300 up to 500 words each. The incorrect sentences are classified into three tables from year 1 to year 3.

6. RESEARCH

6.1. Year 1

In the first year of study, the students wrote 54 journals. This was also the first year of module C, the English language module. In the first year, the students had one semester of English courses. Each student wrote 2 journals in one semester. Out of the total of 54 journals, 7 of them contained inappropriate use of the Present Perfect tense. That comes up to 13% of journals containing Present Perfect errors in the first year. The overall number of journals containing Present Perfect errors in year 1, 2 and 3 is 34. That gives 21% errors in year 1 in the overall number of journals.

Original sentence	Corrected sentence	Translation of the original sentence	Translation of the corrected sentence
Before that, she haven't known she has been sick and never thought about angels.	Before that, she didn't know she was sick and never thought of angels.	Prije toga, ona nije znala da je bila bolesna i nikada nije pomislila na anđele.	Prije toga, ona nije znala da je bolesna i nikada nije pomislila na anđele.
Not so long time ago I read a book which made a great impact on me – on my personality, way of thinking, my reality.	Not so long time ago I read a book which has made a great impact on me – on my personality, way of thinking, my reality.	Ne tako davno pročitao/la sam knjigu koja je imala velik utjecaj na mene – na moju osobnost, način razmišljanja, moju stvarnost.	Ne tako davno pročitao/la sam knjigu koja je imala velik utjecaj na mene – na moju osobnost, način razmišljanja, moju stvarnost.
There were times when I haven't left my home for weeks because I had to study.	There were times when I didn't leave my home for weeks because I had to study.	Bilo je vremena kada nisam napuštao/la kuću tjednima jer sam morao/la učiti.	Bilo je vremena kada nisam napuštao/la kuću tjednima jer sam morao/la učiti.
That is probably because kids from Croatia have been coming here for years now and they had problems with them.	That is probably because kids from Croatia have been coming here for years and they have had problems with them.	To je vjerojatno zato što djeca iz Hrvatske dolaze tamo godinama i imali su problema s njima.	To je vjerojatno zato što djeca iz Hrvatske dolaze tamo godinama i imali su problema s njima.
This topic in particular was discussed quite a lot over	This topic in particular has been discussed quite a lot	Ova tema je posebno bila raspravljana u	Ova tema je posebno bila raspravljana u prethodnih 15

the past 15 years, primarily because the world of video games keeps expanding.	over the past 15 years, primarily because the world of video games has kept expanding.	prethodnih 15 godina, primarno zbog toga što se svijet video igara širi.	godina, primarno zbog toga što se svijet video igara širi.
Yes, we became selfish. Like never before.	Yes, we have become selfish. Like never before.	Da, postali smo sebični. Kao nikada prije.	Da, postali smo sebični. Kao nikada prije.
Secondly, animals were hunted for ages because people needed to feed their families.	Secondly, animals have been hunted for ages because people have needed to feed their families.	Drugo, životinje su lovljene godinama jer ljudi trebaju prehraniti svoje obitelji.	Drugo, životinje se love godinama jer ljudi trebaju prehraniti svoje obitelji.

Table 4. Errors in usage of Present Perfect, their corrections and translations in year 1.

6.2. Year 2

In the second year, the students wrote 98 journals. This was the second year of Module C. Each student wrote 2 journals per semester, which, in total, gives 4 journals by a student in the second year. Out of 98 journals, 13 contained errors related to the use of Present Perfect. That gives 13% of errors in this year and 38% in overall number of journals containing Present Perfect errors.

Original sentence	Corrected sentence	Translation of the original sentence	Translation of the corrected sentence
Whether it is something like an ice cream I had not eaten or the different school I had not attended.	Whether it is something like an ice cream I have not eaten or different school I have not attended.	Bilo da je to nešto poput sladoleda koji nisam bio/la pojeo/la ili druga škola koju nisam bio/la pohađao/la.	Bilo da je to nešto poput sladoleda koji nisam pojeo/la ili druga škola koju nisam pohađao/la.
And now, I wish I had stayed in touch with my old friends I did stupid things with.	And now, I wish I have stayed in touch with my old friends I did stupid things with.	I sada, želim da sam bio/la ostalo/la u kontaktu sa starim prijateljima s kojima sam radio/la gluposti.	I sada, želim da sam bio/la ostalo/la u kontaktu sa starim prijateljima s kojima sam radio/la gluposti.
It was my biggest wish and I've planned it since primary school.	It was my biggest wish and I had been planning it since primary school.	Bila mi je to najveća želja i planirao/la sam to od osnovne škole.	Bila mi je to najveća želja i bio/la sam planirao/la to od osnovne škole.
So I have been volunteering in Veterinary Station in my town for a year.	So I volunteered at the Veterinary Station in my town for a year.	Pa sam volontirao/la u veterinarskoj stanici u mom gradu godinu dana.	Pa sam volontirao/la u veterinarskoj stanici u mom gradu godinu dana.

Harvey has said: "The whole point of the painting is the photograph. That photograph. The iconic power that has come to it as a result of years of obsessive media reproduction.", since the iconic police photograph of Myra taken after arrest has been widely recognized in Britain, having been published in British newspapers in the decades after Hindley's conviction.	Harvey said: "The whole point of the painting is the photograph. That photograph. The iconic power that came to it as a result of years of obsessive media reproduction." Since the iconic police photograph of Myra taken after arrest has been widely recognized in Britain, having been published in British newspapers in the decades after Hindley's conviction.	Harvey je rekao: "Cijeli smisao slike je fotografija. Ta fotografija. Iskonska snaga koja je došla do toga kao rezultat godina opsesivne medijske reprodukcije." Ikonska policijska fotografija Myre je prepoznata nakon što je bila objavljena u britanskim novinama desetljećima nakon Hindleyjeve osude.	Harvey je rekao: "Cijeli smisao slike je fotografija. Ta fotografija. Iskonska snaga koja je došla do toga kao rezultat godina opsesivne medijske reprodukcije." Ikonska policijska fotografija Myre je prepoznata nakon što je bila objavljena u britanskim novinama desetljećima nakon Hindleyjeve osude.
So, Sebastian is shown as a jazz pianist who was struggling for years but still very passionate about it.	So, Sebastian is shown as a jazz pianist who has been struggling for years, but is still very passionate about it.	Sebastian je prikazan kao jazz pijanist koji se borio godinama ali je i dalje vrlo strastven.	Sebastian je prikazan kao jazz pijanist koji se bori godinama, ali je i dalje vrlo strastven.
After going through a lesson on this topic a few weeks back I started paying more attention to the surroundings of my 2 teenage sisters and I've noticed some quirky things.	After going through a lesson on this topic a few weeks back, I have started paying more attention to the surroundings of my 2 teenage sisters and I've noticed some quirky things.	Nakon što smo prošli lekciju na tu temu nekoliko tjedana prije počeo/la sam pridavati više pažnje okruženju mojih dviju tinejdžerskih sestara i primjetio/la sam neke čudne/zanimljive stvari.	Nakon što smo prošli lekciju na tu temu nekoliko tjedana prije, počeo/la sam obraćati više pažnje okruženju mojih dviju tinejdžerskih sestara i primjetio/la sam neke čudne/zanimljive stvari
We were so annoyed on our 1 st year when we waited for our turn to go to the oral exam; we waited for the entire day and it seemed like a year has passed.	We were so annoyed in our 1 st year when we waited for our turn to go to the oral exam; we waited for the entire day and it seemed like a year passed.	Bili smo jako živčani na našoj prvoj godini kada smo čekali svoj red na usmenom ispitu; čekali smo cijeli dan i činilo se kao da je prošla godina.	Bili smo jako živčani na našoj prvoj godini kada smo čekali svoj red na usmenom ispitu; čekali smo cijeli dan i činilo se kao da je prošla godina.

There was a revolution in the technological world and its goal was to connect people, but unfortunately it had the opposite effect.	There has been a revolution in the technological world and its goal has been to connect people, but, unfortunately, it has had the opposite effect.	Bila je revolucija u tehnološkom svijetu i njen cilj je bio povezati ljude, ali nažalost imala je suprotan efekt.	Bila je revolucija u tehnološkom svijetu i njen cilj je bio povezati ljude, ali, nažalost, imala je suprotan efekt.
People usually post things on those social networks to show other people how great their lives are, how happy they are, but it became a competition and anyone who can't follow the trends feels unhappy.	People usually post things on those social networks to show other people how great their lives are, how happy they are, but it has become a competition and anyone who can't follow trends feels unhappy.	Ljudi obično stavljaju stvari na društvene mreže kako bi drugim ljudima pokazali kako su njihovi životi sjajni, kako su sretni, ali to je postalo natjecanje i svi koji ne mogu pratiti trendove osjećaju se nesretnima.	Ljudi obično stavljaju stvari na društvene mreže kako bi drugim ljudima pokazali kako su njihovi životi sjajni, kako su sretni, ali to je postalo natjecanje i svi koji ne mogu pratiti trendove osjećaju se nesretnima.
It became a problem with no solution on sight.	It has become a problem with no solution in sight.	To je postao problem bez rješenja na vidiku.	To je postao problem bez rješenja na vidiku.
Studies has shown that a part of the brain responsible for processing communication is simply larger in women's brains.	Studies have shown that a part of the brain responsible for processing communication is simply larger in women's brains.	Istraživanja su pokazala da dio mozga odgovoran za procesuiranje komunikacija je veći u ženskom mozgu.	Istraživanja su pokazala da dio mozga odgovoran za procesuiranje komunikacije je veći u ženskom mozgu.
To describe it in a certain way, I had started to participate in many fields related to the faculty; I was in a play, I have met other people (from other faculty) and it is a good experience which can fulfil you as a person.	To describe it in a certain way, I have started to participate in many fields related to the faculty; I was in a play, I have met other people (from other faculties) and it is a good experience which can fulfill you as a person.	Da to opišem na određeni način, bio/la sam počeo/la sudjelovati u mnogim područjima vezanim uz naš fakultet; glumio/la sam u predstavi, upoznao/la sam druge ljude (s drugih fakulteta) i to je dobro iskustvo koje te može ispuniti kao osobu.	Da to opišem na određeni način, počeo/la sam sudjelovati u mnogim područjima vezanim uz naš fakultet; glumio/la sam u predstavi, upoznao/la sam druge ljude (s drugih fakulteta) i to je dobro iskustvo koje te može ispuniti kao osobu.
Sometimes they are very much aware of how hard they had worked for the things they have.	Sometimes they are very much aware of how hard they have worked for the things they have.	Ponekad su svijesni koliko su puno radili da bi bili imali stvari koje posjeduju.	Ponekad su svijesni koliko su puno radili da bi imali stvari koje posjeduju.

If I have done that, I wouldn't have had so many troubles now.	If I had done that, I wouldn't have so many troubles now.	Da sam to učinio/la, ne bih sada imao/la toliko problema.	Da sam to učinio/la, ne bih sada imao/la toliko problema.
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Table 5. Errors in usage of Present Perfect, their corrections and translations in year 2.

6.3. Year 3

In the third year, the students wrote 78 journals. This was the third year of module C. English Language Practice course was a two–semester course in which the students wrote two journals each semester. The difference between this year and the previous one is that in the fourth (final) journal there were no errors made in the usage of the Present Perfect tense. However, in this year other errors were noticed where the influence of mother tongue could be seen. Such errors will be mentioned later in the paper. Out of the total of 78 journals, 14 of them included errors regarding Present Perfect tense, making 19% of errors in this year and 41% in overall number of journals containing Present Perfect errors.

Original sentence	Corrected sentence	Translation of the original sentence	Translation of the corrected sentence
On the one hand, about 12 years ago, not every child had a mobile phone, and if they did, they've used it for emergency only.	On the one hand, about 12 years ago, not every child had a mobile phone, and if they did they used it for emergency only.	U jednu ruku, prije otprilike 12 godina, nije svako dijete imalo mobitel, a ako jesu, koristili su ga samo za hitne slučajeve.	U jednu ruku, prije otprilike 12 godina, nije svako dijete imalo mobitel, a ako jesu, koristili su ga samo za hitne slučajeve.
And that was about it – that was all the technology they've needed.	And that was about it – that was all the technology they needed.	I to je bilo otprilike to – to je bila sva tehnologija koju su trebali.	I to je bilo otprilike to – to je bila sva tehnologija koju su trebali.
I'm playing handball since I was 8 years old, which means that I play handball over 12 years now.	I have been playing handball since I was 8 years old, which means that I have played handball for over 12 years now.	Igram rukomet od kad sam imao/la 8 godina, što znači da igram rukomet više od 12 godina.	Igram rukomet od svoje osme godine, što znači da igram rukomet više od 12 godina.
I've read the introduction which was useful because it helped me to understand the whole story.	I read the introduction which was useful because it helped me to understand the whole	Pročitao/la sam uvod koji je bio koristan jer mi je pomogao shvatiti cijelu priču.	Pročitao/la sam uvod koji je bio koristan jer mi je pomogao shvatiti cijelu priču.

	story.		
For years people were speculating about Beyoncé and Jay Z's marriage not being as ideal as the image they've been representing.	For years people have been speculating about Beyoncé and Jay Z's marriage not being as ideal as the image they've been representing.	Godinama su ljudi nagađali da brak Beyoncé i Jay Z – a nije tako idealan kao što su ga oni prikazivali.	Godinama ljudi nagađaju da brak Beyoncé i Jay Z – a nije tako idealan kao što su ga oni prikazivali.
With growth of internet communities, the number of bullies online grew dramatically.	With the growth of the Internet communities, the number of bullies has grown immensely.	S rastom internetskih zajednica, broj internetskih nasilnika je dramatično porastao.	S rastom internetskih zajednica, broj internetskih nasilnika drastično je porastao.
To sum up, technology is actually a community that's growing all the time and will keep doing so.	To sum up, technology is actually a community that has been growing all the time and will keep doing so.	Da sažmem, tehnologija je ustvari zajednica koja raste cijelo vrijeme i nastavit će rasti i dalje.	Da sažmem, tehnologija je ustvari zajednica koja raste cijelo vrijeme i nastavit će rasti i dalje.
All of us have been teenagers and we all hated how everyone who is older than us looked down on us.	All of us were teenagers and we all hated how everyone who was older than us looked down on us.	Svi smo mi bili tinejdžeri i svi smo mrzili kako nas svi stariji gledaju snishodljivo.	Svi smo mi bili tinejdžeri i svi smo mrzili kako nas svi stariji gledaju snishodljivo.
From the beginning people were trying to find a way to prolong their lives.	From the beginning, people have been trying to find a way to prolong their lives.	Od početaka su ljudi pokušavali naći načina da produže svoj život.	Od početaka ljudi pokušavaju naći načina da produže svoj život.
Did you ever wonder how come some animals can live up to 200 years?	Have you ever wondered how come some animals can live up to 200 years?	Jeste li se pitali kako to da neke životinje mogu živjeti do 200 godina?	Jeste li se ikad zapitali kako to da neke životinje mogu živjeti do 200 godina?
But, are there only good things new technology brought us?	But, are there only good things new technology has brought us?	Ali, postoje li samo dobre stvari koje nam je moderna tehnologija donijela?	Ali, postoje li samo dobre stvari koje nam je moderna tehnologija donijela?
Another negative effect is that we forgot to	Another negative effect is that we have forgotten how to	Još jedna negativna posljedica je da smo zaboravili komunicirati u stvarnom	Još jedna negativna posljedica je da smo zaboravili kako

communicate in real life.	communicate in real life.	životu.	komunicirati u stvarnom životu.
In addition to that, more and more people are becoming experts and making technology their priority, often neglecting the old-fashioned, “primitive” technologies that has served the human kind for centuries.	In addition to that, more and more people are becoming experts and making technology their priority, often neglecting the old – fashioned “primitive” technologies that have served the human kind for centuries.	Dodatno, sve više i više ljudi postaju ekspertima i postavljaju tehnologiju svojim prioritetom, pritom često zanemaruju staromodne “primitivne” tehnologije koje su služile ljudsku vrstu stoljećima.	Dodatno, sve više i više ljudi postaju ekspertima i postavljaju tehnologiju svojim prioritetom, pritom često zanemaruju staromodne “primitivne” tehnologije koje su služile ljudsku vrstu stoljećima.
Looking back as far as 100 years people advanced in medicine as same as in last few millenniums.	Looking back as far as 100 years, people have advanced in medicine in the same proportion as in the last few millenniums.	Gledajući 100 godina unazad ljudi su se unaprijedili u medicini isto koliko i u posljednjih nekoliko milenija.	Gledajući 100 godina unazad, ljudi su se unaprijedili u medicini isto koliko i u posljednjih nekoliko milenija.
I didn’t have had any bad experience with the people yet.	I haven’t had any bad experience with the people yet.	Nisam imao/la loša iskustva s ljudima do sad.	Nisam imao/la loša iskustva s ljudima do sad.
We learned how to capture animals and every day there are more and more animals being caged in zoos.	We have learned how to capture animals and every day there are more and more animals being caged in zoos.	Naučili smo kako uloviti životinje i svaki dan ima sve više i više životinja zarobljenih u kavezima u zoološkim vrtovima.	Naučili smo kako uloviti životinje i svaki dan ima sve više i više životinja zarobljenih u kavezima u zoološkim vrtovima.
It was founded in 1506 and now, in this century, it became more modern and popular, especially with different sports program and Lipizzaner ball.	It was founded in 1506 and now, in this century, it has become more modern and popular, with different sports program and Lipizzaner ball.	Osnovan je 1506. godine i sada, u ovom stoljeću, postao je popularniji i moderniji, posebice s različitim sportskim programima i balom Lipicanaca.	Osnovan je 1506. godine i sada, u ovom stoljeću, postao je popularniji i moderniji, s različitim sportskim programima i balom Lipicanaca.

Table 6. Errors in usage of Present Perfect, their corrections and translations in year 3.

The third year was specific, in the first place because in the last journal there were no mistakes regarding Present Perfect tense, but there were plenty of errors in other aspects of a language. Such examples are provided in the table below, along with examples from year 1 and year 2.

Sentence	Error
<p>It actually fits <u>in</u> our reality and we need to understand that change won't come all at once by itself.</p> <p>I would say that this is a tense, unpredictable movie which drags you into a story without your permission. It's definitely worthy <u>of</u> watching.</p> <p>To move on, one of his students offered <u>to</u> David anything he wants in order to pass his course</p>	Unnecessary preposition
<p>They promote so much stuff for children, and of course that I wanted to have <u>everything</u> from that.</p> <p>He is this professor that cannot be bought and has a great family.</p>	Writing style
<p>On one hand, every young person enjoys living alone without supervision because they can go out more, stay longer without talking about it with their parents, bring their friends whenever they want and, basically, do whatever they want.</p> <p>La La Land is American romantic drama musical directed by Damien Chazelle and starring Ryan Gosling as a musician and Emma Stone as aspiring actress who meet and fall in love in Los Angeles.</p> <p>I think that this movie sends few messages.</p> <p>David Gale (Kevin Spacey) is popular university professor which actively fights against death penalties and bothers to live correctly per own principles.</p>	Lack of articles
<p><u>Nowdays</u>, people have access to almost everything they can imagine, technology is at the highest level and still rising. <u>Nowdays</u> teenagers are constantly online.</p> <p>It's a bit unrealistic and it always <u>leeds</u> to the same happy ending.</p> <p>This movie is really <u>had</u> to watch.</p>	Spelling
<p>We were taking pictures and getting <u>informations</u> from the guide, and after a while we went to the hotel in Hungary. We all know those “famous“ <u>advices</u> our parents gave us.</p>	Countable/uncountable nouns

Table 7. List of most common errors in students' journals.

7. DISCUSSION

The starting point of this analysis was to determine whether and in what the students of Module C of the Faculty of Education in Osijek use Present Perfect (both perfective and progressive aspect) in their journals. In line with the main aim, sentences containing errors regarding Present Perfect were put in a table, corrected and translated.

The results of the research show that the students had the least errors regarding the usage of Present Perfect in the first year of module C (21%). The most errors occurred in the third year. This was unexpected, it would be expected that students improve their knowledge more and more each year of study. In the first year, students wrote two journals while in the second and third year they wrote four journals a year. According to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957), errors occur depending on the difference between the L1 and the target language (L2). In this research, the use of Present Perfect was examined and, as mentioned before, the Croatian language has no equivalent to the Present Perfect tense, both progressive and perfective aspect. Therefore, the “gap” between the L1 and L2 was studied.

In the first year, the students mostly made errors by using Past Simple instead of Present Perfect. It was noticed that errors happened in sentences with Past Simple, where students should have used Present Perfect instead.

The second year was a year where more errors occurred than in the first year (38%). Errors appeared in sentences where students were writing about their past experiences and actions with present results and actions or events that are still in progress. Furthermore, three sentences contained Past Perfect instead of Present Perfect and vice versa. Also, one sentence contained the correct usage of the Present Perfect, but *have* instead of *has*. In the second year, the students’ knowledge of English grammar started expanding and they could have been overwhelmed with the amount of things they had not known up until then. Selinker (1972) wrote that interlanguage is a language independent of both L1 and L2; the learner of the target language makes errors and by making those errors the learner comprehends the target language. The same could be applied to the students of the second year – they made many errors regarding Present Perfect (again, replacing it with Past Simple) and then started to comprehend its usage. Such a result can be seen in the third year, where, even though there are many errors regarding Present Perfect tense, the final journal contained no Present Perfect errors.

The third year is a year where, even though the final journal contained no Present Perfect errors, students still made the most errors out of all three years in both number (14 journals) and percentage

(41%). Also, it was noticed that, occasionally, students do use Present Perfect accurately in the sense of tense usage, but use *have* instead of *has* + verb or vice versa. Such an example is a sentence: *In addition to that, more and more people are becoming experts and making technology their priority, often neglecting the old-fashioned, “primitive” technologies that has served the human kind for centuries.* In this particular case, the student should either have used *have served* or a singular noun. Furthermore, in the third year the students often replaced Past Simple with Present Perfect for actions that either have effect on the present or are still continuing in the present. The second year was the last year when the students had the English Grammar course and in the third, fourth and fifth years of study some grammar structures were taught and practiced as part of English Language Practice, but not as much as before.

Overall, in more than a half of the examples provided the students used Past Simple instead of Present Perfect in the instances of past experiences with present results or with actions and events that started in the past and are still continuing. As mentioned before, there is no equivalent to the Present Perfect tense in the Croatian language. In the Croatian language all of these sentences would be deemed correct, aside from other minor errors mentioned in Table 7. All the mentioned examples of Present Perfect usage or non-usage indicate the presence of mother tongue interference in all three years. In Croatian, there is either a present tense or past tense; there is no present tense with anterior time zone or “past time with current relevance” (Quirk et al., 1985). Naturally, when writing a journal, students think in their mother tongue and then translate the text into English. The translation from Croatian into English is already an automatized action for this particular level of English, therefore many students simply translated by “hearing”, without thinking that Present Perfect could have been used instead of Past Simple. The overall number of sentences containing such errors is 40 in 34 journals.

Error	Number/Percentage
Events or actions that started in the past and are still happening in the present time.	18 sentences out of 40/45%
Events or actions that happened in the past but have present results.	7 sentences out of 40/17%
Present Perfect used instead of Past Simple or Past Perfect.	13 sentences out of 40/33%
Other (correct sentences, but instead of have, has was used and vice versa).	2 sentences out of 40/5%
Total:	40 sentences/100%

Table 8. Errors in using Present Perfect in university students’ journal in percentages.

8. CONCLUSION

The results of this analysis show in what way mother tongue interference and other factors influence the usage of Present Perfect tense in university students' journals. As mentioned earlier, the Croatian language does not have an equivalent tense to Present Perfect, therefore the results have shown that students tend to use Present Simple instead. Furthermore, the research has shown that students' knowledge of English tenses does not always increase with the year of study – first year journals were by far the best when compared with second and third year.

Fotos and Nassaji (2004) wrote: “Several studies show that teaching approaches that focus only on communication not on grammar are inadequate.” As a student of Faculty of Education, I would suggest that the higher percentage of instruction should be given to grammar teaching, especially when it comes to these kinds of differences between mother tongue and target language. Moreover, when teaching Present Perfect to students, the differences between Past Simple and Present Perfect (both perfective and progressive) should be emphasised. As the results of the analysis have shown, students used Past Simple instead of Present Perfect in the majority of cases because Past Simple exists in the Croatian language, while Present Perfect does not. The results of this research could be used later on in error analysis, which would analyse errors made by learners while they learn a foreign language.

Errors could appear because students mostly prefer to use American English and tend to use it in spoken language. Throughout our education, we are taught British English (but allowed to speak and talk in any type of English we want to) and by that, Present Perfect is used with adverbials *yet*, *already*, *never* and *just*. In most media, American English is used and students in their free time watch movies in American English or read books and literature in American English. The problems appear when they are given tests and are expected to use Present Perfect and are overwhelmed with amount of American English that they simply decide to use Past Simple in sentences where Present Perfect should have been used. So, I would also suggest using some American literature and American examples of Present Perfect while teaching grammar to university students. As future teachers we are expected to accept both BrE and AmE as correct, therefore we must know how to use both accordingly.

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