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THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL AWARENESS AND HEMISPHERIC PREFERENCE ON SERBIAN EFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY PROFICIENCY

Given the scarcity of research in vocabulary acquisition in Serbian EFL scientific context, the present paper aims at examining the impact of two factors, cultural awareness and hemispheric preference, on Serbian secondary school EFL learners' vocabulary proficiency. In order to answer the proposed research questions and test the hypotheses, we conducted a questionnaire, and tested students' hemispheric preference and vocabulary proficiency by means of instruments employed in several previous studies. The employed linear regression analysis proved cultural awareness to be statistically significant predictor of students' performance on the implemented vocabulary test, hence proving the hypothesis that more positive attitude towards the target culture leads to more successful command of the target vocabulary. However, the hypothesis regarding the effect of hemispheric preference on vocabulary proficiency was rejected since the results proved to be not statistically significant, even though negative correlation was noted, i.e. left hemispheric dominance pointing to better performance of vocabulary tests, thus further research with a modified testing design may provide more valid conclusions. In the final section of the paper we underline the pedagogical implications of the present paper, as well as possible limitations to be improved in future studies.

Key words: L2 vocabulary, cultural awareness, hemispheric preference

1. Introduction

For years vocabulary was regarded as a neglected segment of SLA research (Meara, 1980), however, the situation has been changing in the recent years with an increasing number of relevant papers dealing with various aspects of L2 vocabulary teaching and learning (Fraser, 1999; Nation, 2009; Staehr, 2009 etc.). As soon as researchers recognized vocabulary as one of the most integral components of L2 learning, they started examining what factors influenced effective and long-term vocabulary acquisition. In Serbia, numerous studies have been conducted in an attempt to examine the influence of various social and psychological factors on language proficiency generally (Danilović-Jer-

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emić, 2015; Ćirković-Miladinović, 2010; Šikmanović, 2013). However, previous studies have provided limited insight into the relationship of these factors and the language components separately (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation). Thus, the present paper aimed at examining the impact of two factors, one social, that is, the attitudes towards target language culture, and one psychological, hemispheric preference, on Serbian secondary school EFL learners' vocabulary proficiency.

2. Students' Attitudes and L2 Culture

Since language and culture are inseparably connected to each other and language is not an autonomous construct but social practice, both creating and created by the structures of social and cultural institutions (Fairclough, 1989), most researchers studying the influence of language attitudes towards language learning, have emphasized the importance of attitudes towards target culture. Claiming that social factors have a considerable impact on L2 proficiency, Ellis (1994: 197) emphasizes that the effect is not direct, but mediated by various variables. One group of variables that have been regarded as significant factors that predispose learners to successfully learn an L2 is learner attitudes. The study of the attitudes in FL learning has a long history in applied linguistics. Following Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics' definition of language attitudes (2010), we dare say that second language learners' attitudes are believed to reflect their beliefs and feelings about the target language, community and culture, as well as their own culture. The study of language attitudes can explain various types of social events, but also predict learner behaviour. In the domain of FL learning, we find claims that learners' attitudes, besides their skills and strategies, dictate whether or not they will be able to master a foreign language (Oxford, 1990; Nunan, 2000). Hence, attitudes may play a crucial role in language learning since they influence students' success or failure. In the process of FL learning, learners may construct various attitudes towards the target language. Ellis (1994: 198) underlies six different attitudes towards: 1) the target language, 2) target language speakers, 3) the target-language culture, 4) the social value of learning the L2, 5) particular uses of the target language, and 6) themselves as members of their own culture.

The pioneering studies of attitudes towards target language community and culture were conducted by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1959) in bilingual Canada among Anglophone students of French. They examined the relation between their attitudes towards French Canadians and their culture, and their success in learning French. The results of the study indicated that attitudes towards target language and culture had strong influence on one's L2 proficiency, but also that the impact is indirect, while motivation appears as a mediator. They explained that positive attitudes towards target language community and culture would lead to high integrative motivation of students, which would in turn affect proficiency.

Inspired by Gardner's model, Wenden (1991) proposed a new concept of attitudes. He classified the term "attitude" into three components: cognitive, affective and behavioral. The cognitive aspect of attitudes refers to beliefs and thoughts about the object of the attitude. The affective aspect includes the learner's feelings and emotions towards the object. The behavioral component is related to the tendency to adopt particular learning behavior, which in turn affects L2 proficiency.

Some authors (Kramsch, 2000; Baker, 2003) focus on the comparison between the students' native culture and FL culture. Namely, Kramsch (2000) believes that students' attitudes towards their native culture are very significant for their understanding of FL culture. She claims that in the process of contrasting attitudes toward foreign culture, learners make contrast and analogy with the values of their own culture. Baker (2003) proposed the idea that attitude toward a target language and culture is related to students' home-language and cultural background, as well with other factors: age, gender, achievement and type of school.

3. Hemispheric Preference and L2 Learning

In the field of FL learning, hemispheric preference, among other learning styles, has attracted the attention of several researchers. Brown (2007) claims that the left hemisphere is associated with analytical and logical thinking, while the right hemisphere processes holistic and emotional information. Krashen (1988: 70) maintains that the left hemisphere is superior to the right in judging temporal order, deciding which of the two events was presented first. The study conducted by Morris (2005) revealed that left brain dominant language learners are more comfortable in the classroom since much emphasis is put on analyzing language elements, that is, the process that left brain dominant learners are good at. Examining the relationship between hemispheric preference and teaching styles, Krashen and his colleagues (1974) revealed that left brain dominant learners are interested in deductive teaching, while right brain dominant students prefer inductive techniques. Breien-Pierson (1988) examined the relationship between hemispheric preference and composition writing process, and concluded that left-brained learners better function in research paper and book reports, while right-brained learners preferred free writing.

Although various aspects of hemispheric preference were investigated in the context of language teaching and learning, they provided limited insight into the relationship between hemispheric preference and vocabulary learning.

4. Vocabulary Acquisition in EFL

Knowledge of a word is difficult to define since it refers to different levels of information about the word, for example, knowing its meaning, the context in which it is used, its relationship with other words, etc. Researchers have provided different definitions of the knowledge of a word. Thornbury (2002)

claims that at the most basic level, it includes knowing the form and meaning of the word. He maintains that in the process of learning the vocabulary of a foreign language, learners are faced with the following challenges: making the correct connections between the form and the meaning of words when understanding the target language, and using the correct form of a word when producing the language in question. Proposing a broader definition of the knowledge of a word, the same author claims that it includes knowing: the meaning (s) of the word, the spoken form, the written form, the word's frequency, the grammatical behavior, the word's derivation, its collocations, the register of the word, and its connotations.

Claiming that knowing a word involves much more than knowing merely its meaning, Folse (2004) emphasizes that it also includes the knowledge of polysemy, referring to additional meanings of a word, its denotation and connotation, spelling and pronunciation, part of speech, frequency, usage and collocations. In addition to the components, Moras (2001) includes six additional dimensions: boundaries between conceptual meaning, homonymy, homophony, synonymy, translation and, finally, style, register and dialect.

In an attempt to analyse our participants' vocabulary knowledge, we adopt Linda Taylor's perspective (Taylor 1990), and she maintains that knowledge of a word refers to seven aspects of word knowledge (word frequency, style, register and dialect, collocation, morphology, semantics, polysemy and translation), which we precisely define in the ensuing sections of the paper.

5. Methodology

5.1 Aim

The aim of the present paper is to investigate whether different attitudes to target culture and hemispheric dominance have significant effect on Serbian secondary EFL learners' vocabulary proficiency.

5.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Having the theoretical background and related research in mind, the present paper was guided by the following research questions:

Can cultural awareness be a significant predictor of Serbian EFL learners' score on vocabulary proficiency tests?

Does hemispheric preference affect Serbian EFL learners' achievement on vocabulary proficiency tests?

Hence we formulated the two main hypotheses:

- Serbian EFL learners' cultural awareness significantly affects the score on vocabulary proficiency tests.
- Serbian EFL learners' hemispheric preference significantly affects the score on vocabulary proficiency tests.

5.3 Participants

A total of 78 fourth-year students from a high school in Jagodina participated in the study. An in-depth account of the sample descriptives can be found in Table 1, obtained from the conducted questionnaire with the participants prior to the study. The initial number was 96, yet 18 participants were excluded from the final analysis due to eligibility and validity issues. The particular sample of students was chosen because of the versatility in views and attitudes regarding the target culture and the estimated proficiency level we deemed appropriate and sufficient for the vocabulary testing employed in the present investigations. The students were given course credits for the participation in the survey and testing procedures of the current paper.

Table 1: Description of the Chosen Sample of Participants

Age	Gender	Classes per Week	Proficiency Level (CEFR)	Onset of Learning English				
16	2 (2.6%) Male	37 (47.4%)	2	78 (100%)	A2	11 (14.1%)	7	8 (10.3%)
17	41 (52.6%) Female	41 (52.6%)			B1	42 (53.8)	8	11 (14.1%)
18	34 (43.6%)				B2	20 (25.6%)	9	25 (32.1%)
19	1 (1%)				C1	5 (6.4%)	10	16 (20.5%)
							11	18 (23.1%)

5.4 Instruments

In order to obtain data regarding students' cultural awareness we conducted a questionnaire combining and adapting five-point Likert scale statements from several different related studies (Karahan, 2007; Nasrabady et al., 2011; Navarro-Villarroel, 2011; Yi-Shin, 2009). Based on the frequency of answers, we divided the participants into three major groups according to their attitudes to target culture: positive, negative and neutral. Hemispheric preference was analyzed using a test suggested by Sousa (2006:191-193), and the final results were later coded as strong/moderate left, balanced and strong/moderate right.

The primary instrument for determining students' current vocabulary proficiency was a test containing seven segments according to the recommendations by Taylor (1990), with a total score of 100 points. The test contained exercises from various combined materials, including textbooks and practice books, and suitable internet resources. Table 2 provides a more exhaustive description of the seven parts of the vocabulary test. As can be seen in the very table, the test consisted of six segments related to different areas of vocabulary proficiency, including word frequency determination, the degree of formality of the chosen items in the test, word collocations, morphological and semantic aspect with lexical relations, polysemy and translation into the mother tongue.

Table 2: Vocabulary Test Summary

Test Segment Description	Question Type	Total Number of Examples
Word Frequency (determining the frequency of occurrence of a particular word or expression)	Multiple Choice	12
Style, Register, Dialect (determining the formality degree associated with a particular speech style; recognizing dialects)	Multiple Choice (register and style)	6
	Multiple Choice (dialects)	6
Collocation (determining the possible combinations of words)	Multiple Choice	6
	Fill-in-the-gap exercises	6
Morphology (recognizing word forms; word formation; recognizing affixes)	Word Formation	
	Exercises	5
	Isolated Examples Sentences and Text	10
Semantics (determining the denotation and connotation of words; synonyms and antonyms)	Connotation Multiple Choice	5
	Choice	5
	False Friends Multiple Choice	5
	Choice	9
	Word Definitions Synonyms and Antonyms	
Polysemy (determining different meanings associated with a word)	Multiple Choice	9
Translation (finding the suitable equivalents in the mother tongue)	Translation of words in a given context	20

5.5 Procedure

The corpus of the present study was collected during the 2012/2013 academic year in the course of four months during the winter term. The specific nature of the testing resulted in the data being collected on several different occasions, since it was relatively time-consuming and demanding in that it required students' preparation and full concentration.

5.6 Statistical Data Processing

Frequency counts, descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analyses were chosen as recommended statistical methods to analyze the obtained data from the questionnaires and vocabulary testing. All the analyses were performed by using SPSS version 20.0.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Cultural Awareness Questionnaire Results

Table 3 presents the results of the questionnaire, containing the statements and the Likert scale answers.

Table 3: Results of the Cultural Awareness Questionnaire (%)

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The spread of the use of English is one of the most crucial factors in Serbia's development today.	29.6	20.5	29.5	14.1	9
2.	Learning a foreign language, such as English, must include knowledge about the target culture.	19.2	21.8	35.9	17.9	5.1
3.	Learning about English (English speaking countries) culture helps me understand Serbian culture better.	30.8	17.9	28.2	11.5	11.5
4.	I feel eager to learn more about English (English speaking countries) culture.	25.6	17.9	33.3	7.7	15.4
5.	Learning a foreign language, such as English, is easier when you get to know its culture.	25.6	19.2	29.5	16.7	9
6.	Getting to know other cultures is necessary for a person to be considered educated.	25.6	17.9	33.3	7.7	15.4
7.	Getting to know other cultures is fun.	20.5	23.1	33.3	14.1	9
8.	Since English is a global language, lack of knowledge about its culture makes one inferior.	25.6	20.5	30.8	6.4	16.7
9.	The command of English is very helpful in understanding English based cultures.	24.4	19.2	33.3	15.4	7.7
10.	I believe I am familiar with English history and cultural heritage.	17.9	29.5	29.5	11.5	11.5
11.	I believe I am equally familiar with the culture of all English speaking countries.	17.9	24.4	32.1	12.8	12.8

12.	Pieces of information about British or American culture are more easily accessible than about other English speaking countries.	21.8	24.4	30.8	20.5	2.6
13.	I have the same attitude to English culture as I have to my native Serbian culture.	23.1	24.4	29.5	16.7	6.4
14.	I have positive attitude to English culture.	23.1	14.1	39.7	7.7	15.4
15.	I have positive attitude to all the cultures in the world.	29.5	14.1	33.3	14.1	9
16.	Serbian culture is incomparable to other cultures.	16.7	10.3	25.6	38.5	9
17.	The frequent use of English would detract from my own cultural identity.	7.7	15.4	30.8	35.9	10.3
18.	English classes should include lessons on English (English speaking countries) culture.	24.4	21.8	29.5	21.8	2.6
19.	If cultural materials are to be integrated in English classes they should focus on English countries' culture only.	17.9	5.1	37.2	17.9	21.8
20.	Learning about English (English speaking countries) culture makes me less patriotic.	20.5	2.6	34.6	33.3	9
21.	Learning about English (English speaking countries) culture may negatively affect my cultural heritage.	10.3	12.8	34.6	30.8	11.5
22.	I think English cultural heritage is superior to Serbian.	30.8	9	37.2	14.1	9
23.	I think Serbian culture is considerably different from English culture.	32.1	7.7	37.2	11.5	11.5
24.	Serbian cultural heritage is more historically significant than American.	19.2	3.8	21.8	33.3	21.8
25.	I learn about English (English speaking countries) culture through films, music and the media.	23.1	17.9	34.6	10.3	14.1

26.	I learn about English (English speaking countries) culture through books and school lessons.	26.9	14.1	34.6	12.8	11.5
27.	While getting to know English culture, I experienced an increase in pride in my own culture.	23.8	17.9	34.6	10.3	14.1
28.	Acting and living according to English or American lifestyle is a sign of prestige in the modern world and may bring one to a higher social status.	25.6	16.7	34.6	12.8	10.3
29.	I should disregard Serbian culture in order to absorb English and learn the language better.	3.8	14.1	32.1	20.5	29.5
30.	Learning about English culture will be useful to me in the future.	11.5	19.2	32.1	24.4	17.8

For the sake of clarity, we shall briefly comment on the questions and their grouping in the questionnaire. Namely, questions 1-12 were related to the importance of cultural awareness in the world of English as *lingua franca*, questions 13-16 were related to the attitudes to cultures, 17-19 to the interrelationship between English classes and culture, 25-26 questions on how students obtain information on different cultures, 20-29 were concerned about the relationship between target and home culture, and the purpose of being aware of cultural differences was the topic of question number 30.

6.1.1 *The importance of cultural awareness in the world of English as lingua franca*

Half of the students participating in the survey believe that using English may benefit the country's development, and around 30% do not know whether the two are interrelated. The majority (around 40%) agrees that learning a foreign language includes learning facts about its culture as well as that it might help them understand the native culture better and facilitate the learning process, while about a fifth of the students disagree.

6.1.2 *Attitudes to culture and foreign language learning*

Around 50% of the participants believe that familiarizing with foreign language culture is fun and necessary for a person to be regarded as educated, because, English being a global language, a lack of knowledge about its culture makes one inferior in the modern world. Understandably there are about 30% of students who are neutral, and about 20% who disagree. The majority of stu-

dents claims that they are well acquainted with English culture, furthermore, that they are familiar with all English speaking cultures equally, which may result from the lack of knowledge about the specific features of each of English based cultures, or it may be true. Further research is necessary to examine students' actual knowledge about the target culture in order to determine the actual state of affairs concerning these two statements in the questionnaire. Positive attitude towards English-based culture, as well as to all the cultures in the world is expressed by the majority of the students, yet slightly larger percentage than in the previous cases believes that Serbian culture is incomparable to others.

6.1.3 Getting information on English culture

It seems important, especially for EFL curriculum planning, that the majority of respondents learn about the English culture via films, music and the media, and a slightly larger percentage through books and school lessons, which may either point to the successful implementation of lesson plans, or to students' lack of interest for the target culture outside classroom activities.

6.1.4 Target and Home culture relationship

About a fifth of the participants believes that learning about the target culture would detract from their own cultural identity and would make them less patriotic and negatively affect their cultural heritage, which points to a considerable lack of cultural awareness and the need for expanding students' views by means of carefully planned and interest arousing curriculum and activities. About 40% of the participants find the English culture superior to Serbian and considerably different, as well, whereas about 20% of students think that Serbian culture is more historically significant from American. While getting to know English culture, the majority of the participants experienced an increase in pride in their own culture and found acting and living according to English or American lifestyle a sign of prestige in the modern world which might raise one to a higher social status. Of course, the majority disagrees with the suggestion to disregard Serbian culture in order to learn English better.

6.1.5 The purpose of knowing target culture

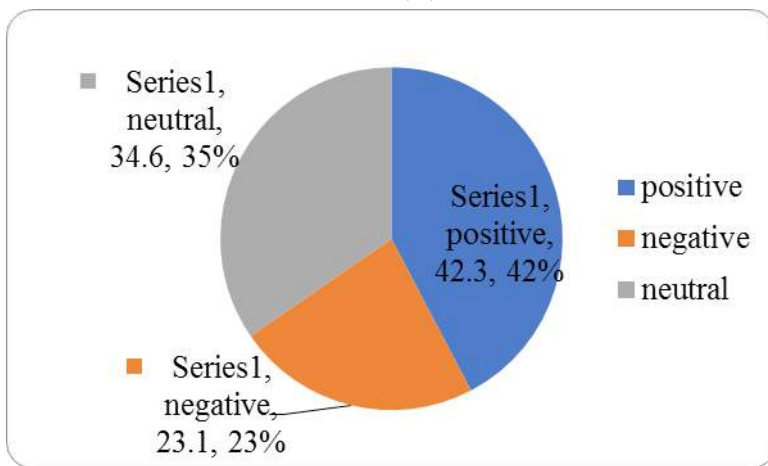
The majority believes that learning about English culture may not be useful for them in the future, which may serve as a significant indicator for EFL teachers when making future decisions about the material and approach in teaching target culture.

By looking at the results of the questionnaire we notice that 'Don't know' represents a rather high percentage of answers, which seems interesting to comment on. This may point to the students' unfamiliarity with the topics introduced due to the lack of attention paid to these issues during the classes

or outside school on one hand, or to students' disinterest related to this particular topic, on the other hand. Both of the interpretations yield important pedagogical implications for Serbian EFL teachers and the need for further enhancement of cultural awareness.

In Figure 1 we present the groups of students formed taking the results of the questionnaire into consideration.

Figure 1: Groups of Students based on the Results of the Cultural Awareness Questionnaire (%)

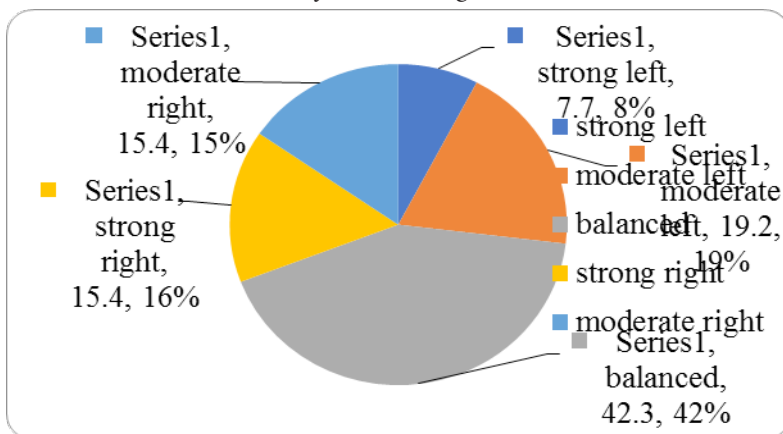


After the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire, we grouped the participants into three major groups according to their attitudes to the target culture (Figure 1), for the sake of clarity on one hand, and later easier estimation of the relationship between cultural awareness factor and vocabulary proficiency, on the other. The majority of students exhibited positive attitude towards English speaking cultures, or neutral at least, with about one fifth of participants expressing negative attitudes towards the target cultural background. The results agree with some previous findings on students in Taiwan (Yi-Shin, 2009) and in Turkey (Karahan, 2007), and although the number and age of participants differs, the overall percentage is similar. Nevertheless, our investigations slightly diverge from the conclusions in the study on Iranian learners (Nasrabad et al., 2011), in that the percentage of students with negative attitudes to the target culture is smaller for about 10%. This state of affairs may indicate Serbian teachers' effort and the tendency of the curriculum in general to raise cultural awareness through various in and out-of-class activities, but it may also point to the significance and attention paid to the native culture. It might be appropriate to note here that further research may focus on the socio-psychological factors as potential explanations for the negative feelings expressed towards English speaking countries and cultures.

6.2 Hemispheric Preference Testing Results

Figure 2 represents the groups of students formed based on the testing for obtaining information on hemispheric preference.

Figure 2: Groups of Students based on the Results of the Hemispheric Preference Testing (%)



The majority of students had balanced lateralization judging by the results of hemispheric preference testing, as expected at this point in education, and interestingly enough, there was an equal number of students with strong and moderate right hemispheric preference, with the lowest number having strong left hemispheric dominance (Figure 2).

6.3 Vocabulary Testing Results

In Table 4 we present the mean scores on vocabulary testing tasks, as well as the other relevant descriptive statistics data.

Table 4: Vocabulary Test Scores – Separate Tasks and Overall Achievement

Testing	Mean	Min.	Max.	St. Dev.
Word frequency	5.72	2	12	3.13
Style, Register, Dialect	3.24	0	9	2.83
Collocation	6.27	2	12	2.83
Morphology	6.56	2	15	3.21
Semantics	13.51	4	24	4.32
Polysemy	4.15	0	9	2.46
Translation	13.04	1	20	4.80
Total Score	57.00	24	99	16.85

As can be seen from Table 4 and the performed statistics for the comparison of means, there is a statistically significant difference among the scores in the segments of vocabulary test ($p=0.0$), which underlines the importance of task type in L2 vocabulary testing and the necessity of careful planning

of assessment techniques and instruments. The considerable difference in the results may be a reflection of students' divergent degrees of familiarity with certain aspects of vocabulary, as well as the result of a methodological issue. The best scores were noted in the *Semantics* and *Translation* tasks, where students had to define words, find synonyms or antonyms, and provide an equivalent in the mother tongue. The possible explanation for the situation may be the fact that these two types of exercises are the most frequently used in the classroom, so the participants are used to them, which may also point to the teaching approach most often employed by the teachers in Serbia. Furthermore, the types of activities are typical in various forms of EFL testing, which once again underscores the omnipresent focus of EFL teachers to prepare students for different kinds of formal assessment, rather than real-life communicative situations, confirming thus the observations in some of the previous studies (Yashima et al., 2004). The lowest scores were achieved in the *Style*, *Register*, *Dialect* and *Polysemy* sections, which points to the fact that these two segments remain disregarded in everyday EFL curriculum. The total average score of the vocabulary test was around 60%, with 25 being the lowest, and 99 the highest scores found, which provides safe ground for teachers to consider including this type of vocabulary knowledge evaluation as one of the options in their regular assessment.

6.4 Hypotheses Testing Results

Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 represent the output of the statistical testing including correlations, regression model summary, ANOVA and standardized coefficients for regression analysis.

Table 5: Results of the Correlations for the Tested Variables

Correlations		Total Vocabulary Score
Pearson Correlation	Cultural awareness	-.358
	Hemispheric preference	-.253
Sig. (1-tailed)	Cultural awareness	.001
	Hemispheric preference	.013

Table 6: Regression Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.431	.186	.164	15.40949

Table 7: ANOVA Results for the Tested Variables

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	4059.071	2	2029.535	8.547	.000
	Residual	17808.929	75	237.452		
	Total	21868.000	77			

Table 8: Standardized Coefficients of the Regression Model

Coefficients				
Model		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Beta		
1	(Constant)		12.808	.000
	Cultural awareness	-.349	-3.348	.001
	Hemispheric preference	-.240	-2.306	.024

To examine the potential statistical significance of the influence of cultural awareness and hemispheric preference on Serbian secondary school EFL learners' vocabulary proficiency, we performed linear regression analysis by means of SPSS 20.0. Preliminary findings demonstrated that the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homogeneity had not been violated. Thus the outputs of the analysis are shown in Tables 5-8. In Table 5 we notice the statistically significant negative correlation between cultural awareness and vocabulary scores, which implies that the more negative attitude students exhibit towards the target culture, the less points they earned on the vocabulary test (the coded values were 1-positive, 2-negative, 3 neutral). There is also a negative correlation between hemispheric preference and vocabulary scores, although the difference was not statistically significant. Judging by these results, we may conclude that the students with strong and moderate right hemispheric preference tended to score lower than the students with strong or moderate left hemispheric preference. Since the number of participants was 78, we would resort to the adjusted R square in estimating the probability of predicting vocabulary score based on cultural awareness and hemispheric preference as independent variables, which equals 0.164 (Table 6) and it is statistically significant following the results of ANOVA $p < 0.05$ (Table 7). Hence, the determination coefficient tells us that we could predict about 16.4% of vocabulary score based on the factors included in our study, predominantly cultural awareness, since it had statistically significant influence on the dependent variable. The latter opposes the hemispheric preference factor which proved to be not statistically significant. More precisely, standardized Beta coefficient is greater and statistically significant for cultural awareness variable, $p < 0.005$, unlike the hemispheric preference variable which proved to be not statistically significant, $p > 0.005$ (Table 8). Consequently, the first hypothesis of the present study is confirmed, i.e. positive cultural awareness may contribute to better vocabulary testing results, nevertheless, we must reject the second hypothesis due to the lack of statistical significance. The situation may be caused by the actual state of affairs in which hemispheric preference does not contribute to the achievement on vocabulary test designed for the purpose of our study, or the explanation may lie in the methodology implemented in this study, i.e. in the inconvenient design of the testing method.

The confirmation of the first hypothesis of the present paper has notable pedagogical implications. Having in mind that the knowledge of the target

culture may predict positive outcomes on vocabulary tests, EFL teachers may devote more time and provide additional material for students to learn about English-based cultures or incorporate extracurricular activities that would appropriately accompany students' interest.

7. Conclusion

Taking the previously presented results into consideration, we may conclude that cultural awareness, i.e. positive or negative attitude towards the target culture, proved to be a statistically significant predictor of students' performance on the vocabulary test implemented for the purpose of the present study. Our findings point to inferring that more positive attitudes to target culture lead to better performance on vocabulary tests. Regression analysis failed to prove hemispheric preference to be the statistically significant predictor of vocabulary proficiency, hence we rejected the second hypothesis. Considering the specific segments of vocabulary tests, students had the least success in deciding on the style, register or dialect of speakers, which underlines the need for devoting more attention to this particular segment of vocabulary acquisition. Word translation and definition tasks proved to be favoured by the participants of this study, judging by the performance on the test, which may signal the dominant teaching approach employed.

A possible limitation of the study might have been the number of participants, for a greater number of students tested might have led to the confirmation of both hypotheses. Further research should focus on the suggested improvements, as well as on other external or internal factors that may affect vocabulary proficiency.

Nevertheless, the obtained results once again underscore the importance of raising students' cultural awareness by frequenting topics regarding various world cultures in everyday curriculum through balanced incorporation of interesting activities and materials both in and out of the classroom.

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УТИЦАЈ ОДНОСА ПРЕМА КУЛТУРИ И ДОМИНАЦИЈЕ МОЖДАНИХ ХЕМИСФЕРА НА УСВАЈАЊЕ ЦИЉНОГ ВОКАБУЛАРА КОД СРПСКИХ УЧЕНИКА ЕНГЛЕСКОГ КАО СТРАНОГ ЈЕЗИКА

Резиме

Имајући у виду недостатак истраживања усвајања вокабулара страног језика у српском научном контексту, наш рад има за циљ да истражи утицај два фактора на познавање вокабулара код средњошколских српских ученика који енглески уче као страни језик: однос према циљној култури и доминацију једне од можданих хемисфера. Како бисмо одговорили на постављена истраживачка питања и тестирали хипотезе, спровели смо анкету са испитаницима и тестирали доминацију хемисфера, као и познавање вокабулара употребом адекватних тестова из претходних студија. Резултати линеарне регресије указали су на статистичку значајност односа према циљној култури као предиктора успеха на тесту вокабулара који смо употребили у истраживању, потврдивши тако хипотезу да позитивнији став према циљној култури може довести до бољег познавања вокабулара страног језика. Што се тиче хипотезе везане за доминацију можданих хемисфера, иако је примећена негативна корелација, односно да доминација леве хемисфере резултира бољим успехом на тесту, статистичка анализа није указала на статистичку значајност добијених резултата. Резултати рада указују на важне педагошке импликације које се односе на чешће увођење активности које би прошириле свест

ученика о културолошким аспектима учења циљног језика и њиховој повезаности са усвајањем вокабулара.

Кључне речи: вокабулар, ставови према култури, доминација мождане хемисфере, енглески као страни језик

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