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ARE POSITIVE STEREOTYPES ALSO NEGATIVE? EXPLORING THE (MIS)CONCEPTIONS AMONG FUTURE GFL TEACHERS SURROUNDING RACISM

This study examines the competence of prospective teachers of German as a foreign language (GFL) to reflect on racist topics. To assess the extent of racism among students, the IRDlabs' free test battery was translated into Serbian and adapted to the country's context. Initial assessments indicated that participants (n=67) were more aware of negative stereotypes than positive ones. In response, an intervention was designed to highlight the potential negative impacts of positive stereotypes. After a two-hour intervention session, the test battery was administered again to the students five months later. The before-and-after measurement results showed no statistically significant difference in the overall level of racism among participants. However, the results showed that the students' awareness of the importance of teaching about racism and its various manifestations increased significantly. The findings underline the role of universities in sensitising prospective GFL teachers to racism, enabling them to create a culturally sensitive learning environment after their studies and to enhance the intercultural competence of their learners.

Keywords: Teacher training. German as a foreign language. Racism. Antigypsyism. Stereotypes. Discrimination. Intercultural skills.

INTRODUCTION

One of the core competencies that language teachers should foster in their students is intercultural competence. According to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001: 104-105), the intercultural skills include:
- "the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other;
- cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures;

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- the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations;
- the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships."

This research paper critically examines the assumption that language teachers in Serbia can "overcome stereotyped relationships". According to the "European Map of Implicit Racial Bias"[2] from Harvard's Project Implicit, Serbia is depicted as having one of the lowest racist indices in Europe concerning negative associations with Blackness. However, it is crucial to note that this map reflects implicit racial attitudes towards black people, which doesn´t capture all dimensions of racism in Serbia. A study by the Custodian for the Protection of Equality in Serbia under the Horizontal Facility III program in 2014 revealed that the Roma community faces significant discrimination in Serbia (Poverenik za zaštitu ravnopravnosti, 2014). Direct and indirect discrimination is based on prejudices and stereotypes (Bašić & Stjelja, 2021; Hotchkiss et al., 2016; Zekavica, 2014; Janević et al., 2011). Antigypsyism is present among Serbian children and adolescents (Ljujic et al., 2012). The educational environment poses challenges for Roma students, leading to early school dropout rates due to discrimination, bullying, and inadequate teacher intervention (Trbojević et al., 2023; World Bank, 2019).

Three decades ago, King (1991) argued that teachers may unwittingly perpetuate racial biases and stereotypes due to their own internalized beliefs and social conditioning. Subsequent studies confirmed that teachers often feel unprepared to address issues of racism and diversity due to inadequate coverage of these topics in their training programs (Myers & Bhopal, 2015; Modica, 2012; Young, 2011). Furthermore, the research results of Priest et al. (2014) showed that the effectiveness of dealing with racism depends on awareness of racism as well as personal and professional skills. Each plays an important role in improving students' understanding of racism and preparing them for multicultural educational environments (Muniroh et al., 2023, Gazioglu & Tanyeri, 2021; Kohli et al., 2017). However, insufficient readiness to address racism and various forms of discrimination may lead to misinformation among students, perpetuating systemic racism within schools. Moreover, engaging in critical reflection is particularly challenging for white teachers, who are often not compelled to examine their own racial positioning and the ways in which racism affects them. Nonetheless, this reflection is an essential prerequisite for conducting educational work that is critically aware of racism (LEO, 2015). Jacobs, Dwyer, and Rivera (2023) emphasize the importance of critically considering "historical factors that have shaped racial power and marginalization where you now live (e.g., displacement, colonization, slavery, genocide, re-

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2   https://figshare.com/articles/figure/European_map_of_Implicit_Racial_
    Bias/4750588?file=7790077

ligious and cultural oppression, etc.)" in order to address racism and adopt an anti-racist practice effectively.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main aim of this work is to examine the extent to which future teachers of German as foreign language in Serbia are prepared to deal with racism in the classroom. The article focuses on positive stereotypes as a form of implicit racism. Positive stereotypes refer to beliefs about the qualities and characteristics of group members that are viewed as positive or desirable (Czopp, Kay, & Cheryan, 2015). For example, the belief that African Americans are naturally athletic or that Roma have musical talent is often perceived as harmless or even complimentary. However, these seemingly positive assumptions can have negative effects (Devine & Elliot, 1995). Such expectations of success can limit their (professional) decisions and cause individuals to blame themselves if they fail to meet these expectations. Positive stereotypes can also be harmful because they may reduce individuals to their group membership and deny their individuality (Siy & Cheryan, 2013).

METHODS

To gauge the students' awareness of both positive and negative stereotypes, the free test battery from IRDlabs was used. A condensed version of the IDRlabs Racism Test, created by Liang, Li, and Kim (2004), is available for free and it assesses racism by the white majority against non-white minorities. It contains 20 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Since the free test battery hasn't been validated and had to be adapted to the Serbian context, both factor and reliability analyses were conducted, to ensure the adequacy and consistency of the adapted instrument. To account for the negatively formulated items, the scores of 12 items were reversed before conducting the analyses. For the statistical analysis, SPPS and G*Power were used.

The KMO value of 0.628 suggests that the sample is mediocre but acceptable for proceeding with factor analysis. The significant result of Bartlett's test ($p < 0.001$) further supports the suitability of the data. The Varimax rotation was applied to the extracted factors to enhance the interpretability of the factor solution. During the analysis, item 14 was found to have an insufficient factor loading, which led to its exclusion from the test battery. The number of factors to be extracted was determined by examining the scree plot (see Figure 1). In total, two factors were removed (see Tables 1 and 2). The results of the reliability analysis showed that the scale of the remaining 19 items had acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's

alpha=.735). The factors were named "racial bias acceptance" (RBA) and "historical awareness of racism" (HAR). To detect the levels of the two factors and to compare the results of the first and second measurements, descriptive statistics were relied upon and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted, given that the Likert scale provides ordinal data.

The instrument was used twice: in October 2023, and again in March 2024 – 5 months after the anti-racism workshop. The test subjects were 67 white students from the BA and MA program, who study German language and literature at the University of Kragujevac (Faculty of Philology and Arts). Only one student declared themselves as a racist and claimed not to have a non-white friend. All students were tested the first time, but the second time only those students who participated in the anti-racism workshop (n=33) were tested. The workshop was based on:

- a didactic sequence of the Swiss integration program of the canton Basel-Stadt "Der Schwarzfahrer"[3];
- on the book of Alice Hasters, a famous author who's dealing with racism in Germany who wrote "Was weiße Menschen nicht über Rassismus hören wollen aber wissen sollten";[4]
- on the short documentary movie of Lanre Aranmolate and Andrea Lötscher "Schwarze Perspektiven"[5]
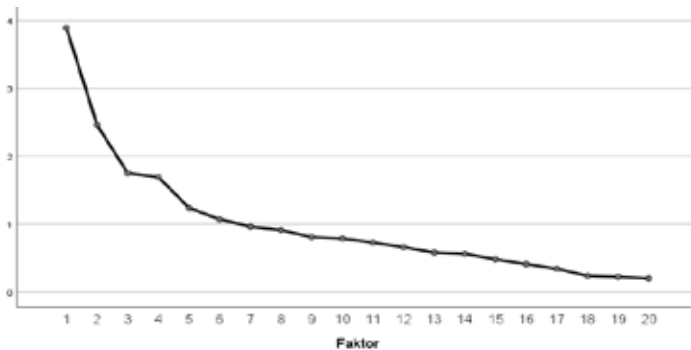

Figure 1 – screeplot

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3 The materials can be downloaded here:
   Movie: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90MC1btDyxs
   Lesson plan, part 1: https://www.zhaw.ch/storage/linguistik/institute-zentren/ilc/upload/gender-daz/diskriminierung-rassismus/sequenz-der-schwarzfahrer-teil-1.pdf
   Lesson plan, part 2: https://www.zhaw.ch/storage/linguistik/institute-zentren/ilc/upload/gender-daz/diskriminierung-rassismus/sequenz-der-schwarzfahrer-teil-2.pdf

4 The audio sample can be downloaded here: https://heimatkunde.boell.de/de/2020/04/17/leseprobe-alice-hasters

5 The movie can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRB4z8sr0ME&t=465s

Items	Factor loading
1. It is okay to ask non-Whites if they know a friend, co-worker, or classmate of yours who is of the same race as they are.	0.476
2. It is okay to portray non-Whites in Western movies in accordance with racial stereotypes (e.g., Arabs as prone to violence, Asians as reserved, etc.).	0.492
3. It is legitimate for European countries to impose stricter immigration restrictions on people from non-White countries than they do for immigrants from White countries (e.g., it is acceptable for refugees from Ukraine to receive preferential treatment compared to refugees from Syria).	0.402
4. It is offensive to ask non-Whites if they can teach you sports that people of their race have traditionally been good at (e.g., if Black people can teach you basketball, if Asian people can teach you martial arts, etc.).	0.479
8. It's okay to portray non-Whites in commercials as acting subserviently towards Whites.	0.419
9. It is offensive to suggest that all people of the same, non-White ethnicity look alike (e.g., that all Roma look alike, or that all Asians look alike).	0.561
11. It is offensive to ask non-Whites "where they are really from."	0.610
12. It is offensive to compliment non-white people on their proficiency in the official language of the country they reside in (e.g., praising Roma in Serbia for "speaking Serbian well").	0.626
15. It is offensive to suggest to non-Whites that they look like celebrities who share their ethnicity (e.g., that Roma look like Džej Ramadanovski, Black people look like Will Smith, etc.).	0.493
16. It's okay to portray minorities in commercials as being bad at the language of the country they live.	0.510
18. It is okay to make jokes about the food that is served in restaurants owned by non-Whites (e.g., lots of garlic in restaurants owned by Arabs, dog meat in Asian restaurants, etc.).	0.432
19. It is okay to portray non-White characters in TV shows as speaking poor and/or heavily accented Serbian (e.g., Roma speaking Serbian with an accent).	0.659
20. It is okay to assume non-Whites live up to their racial stereotypes (e.g., Roma are good singers, Black individuals are good at sports, Asians are good at math, etc.).	0.579

Table 1 - Factor Racial Bias Acceptance (RBA)

Item	Factor loading
5. Racism in European countries is mostly a thing of the past.	0.522
6. It may sometimes be necessary for the governments to detain or investigate non-Whites for actions that would not arouse suspicion if done by White people.	0.733
7. White people have a duty to educate themselves on the racist actions of their forebears.	-0.420
10. It is okay to assume that the kitchens in restaurants owned by non-Whites are generally dirtier than the kitchens in restaurants owned by Whites.	0.777
13. I don't really think minorities in Europe were historically the target of racist actions.	-0.355
17. European history books should take care to stress the contributions of non-Whites to Western civilization.	-0.492

Table 2- Factor Historical Awareness of Racism (HAR)

RESULTS

The findings of the first measurement are presented in Table 3. The scores are ordered from the highest mean to the lowest mean. Items 4, 6, 10/12, and 14 had values above 2 on a 0-to-4 scale, with 4 being the most common category, suggesting that there are students who may not recognize that the following actions are unacceptable:

– to assume that kitchens owned by non-white people are generally dirtier than those owned by white people,

– to believe that authorities sometimes need to detain non-white people for questioning for actions that would not arouse suspicion in white people,

– to think it is appropriate to ask non-white people about their origin,

– to assume it is appropriate to praise non-white people for their command of the official language of the country in which they live, and

– to think it is appropriate to ask non-white people to teach you sports that are traditionally associated with their ethnic group.

Item 15, also with a high mean and standard deviation, suggested that some students find it acceptable to compare non-white individuals to famous individuals from their ethnic group.

Item 1, which had the highest level of uncertainty, indicated that many students are unsure about asking non-white individuals whether they know someone of the same race.

Items 2, 3, 5, 7/9, 13, and 16/20 had low means and 0 as the most common category, suggesting students generally recognize these actions as inappropriate.

Item no.	N	M	SD	Mode	Median
Item 10	68	2.53	1.75	4	4
Item 4	68	2.44	1.62	4	3
Item 6	68	2.34	1.74	4	2.5
Item 11	68	2.28	1.43	4	2
Item 12	68	2.19	1.64	4	2.5
Item 15	66	1.76	1.54	0	1.5
Item 1	68	1.52	1.26	2	2
Item 5	68	1.37	1.44	0	1
Item 9	68	1.32	1.50	0	1
Item 20	64	1.28	1.30	0	1
Item 7	68	1.21	1.20	0	1
Item 19	66	1.00	1.22	0	0
Item 17	66	0.97	1.27	0	0
Item 18	66	0.83	1.21	0	0
Item 13	66	0.77	1.01	0	0
Item 2	68	0.72	1.14	0	0
Item 16	66	0.65	1.05	0	0
Item 3	68	0.42	0.97	0	0
Item 8	68	0.29	0.73	0	0

Table 3 – Descriptive statistics for all items (t1)

The scale for Factor RBA ranged from 0 to 52. Prior to the workshop, the mean RBA score was 16.50 (SD=9.09), which decreased to 9.06 (SD=4.00) after the second measurement. Notably, the data exhibited reduced dispersion, with no outliers detected. Both pre- and post-workshop levels were relatively low. The Wilcoxon test indicated that the differences between the two measurement were non-significant, suggesting that the

workshop did not significantly impact participants' racial-bias acceptance levels.

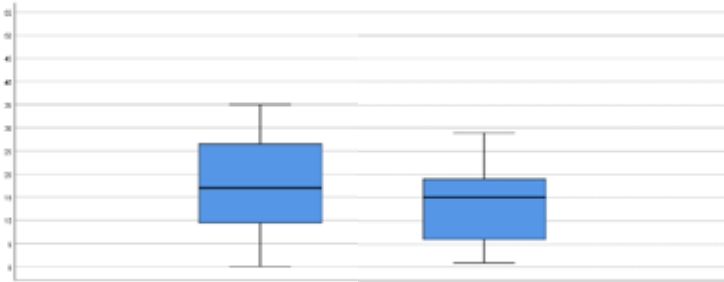| t	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
RBA (t_1)	21.00	16.50	17.00	7.00	9.09
RBA (t_2)	25.00	9.06	8.50	8.00	4.00

Table 4 - Descriptive statistics for Factor RBA

Figure 2 - Boxplots for Factor RBA (t1 on the left, t2 on the right side)

The HAR scale ranges from 0 to 24. At the initial measurement point, the mean HAR score was 12.93 (SD=7.73), indicating a mediocre level of historical awareness. However, after the second measurement, the mean HAR score decreased to 4.39 (SD=2.66), which is approximately three times lower than the initial score. Moreover, there are notable differences in the median and mode of HAR scores over time. The data reveal less dispersion during the second measurement, with no outliers detected. The latter HAR level can be considered low compared to the former mediocre level. The Wilcoxon test confirmed a highly significant difference (p=.000) between the pre- and post-intervention scores. The effect size, calculated using Cohen's d, is large (d=.850), indicating a substantial impact of the intervention on participants' historical awareness of racism. Moreover, the high test power of 97% suggested that the test result is reliable.

t	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
HAR (t_1)	18.00	12.93	15.00	19.00	7.73
HAR (t_2)	15.00	4.39	4.00	8.00	2.66

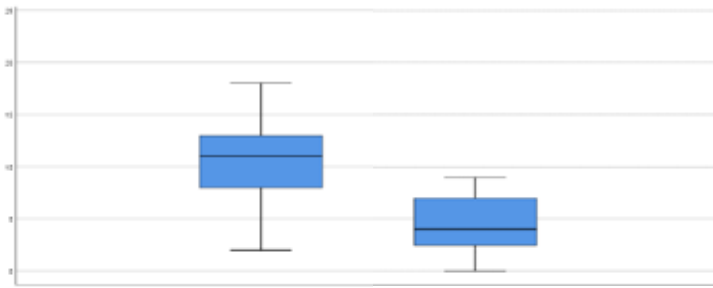Table 5 - Descriptive statistics for Factor HAR

Figure 3 - Boxplots for Factor HAR (t1 on the left, t2 on the right side)

DISCUSSION

The data analysis indicated that the participants of the study had a low RBA score, suggesting a high awareness of racial stereotypes. This might explain why the workshop did not have a significant overall impact on the students. However, examining individual items with high acceptance of racial bias revealed that some students still endorsed certain stereotypes. These include the belief that kitchens owned by people of colour are generally dirtier, the notion that authorities sometimes need to detain non-white individuals for actions that would not arouse suspicion if done by white individuals, and the perception that it is not offensive to ask non-white individuals about their "true" origin. Additionally, some students found it appropriate to compliment people of colour on their proficiency in the country's official language and to ask them to teach sports traditionally associated with their ethnic group. There was also noticeable insecurity about whether it was acceptable to suggest to non-white people that they resemble famous individuals from their ethnic group or to ask people of colour if they know a friend, colleague, or classmate of the same race. This pattern suggested that the students were more aware of negative stereotypes than positive ones. Additionally, these findings supported their reflections during the intervention. When we talked about the positive stereotypes, they asked questions like "How can it be racist if you're just being polite?", "How can it be insulting to pay a compliment?" or "Are positive stereotypes also negative?" While striving for minimal racial-bias acceptance is commendable, achieving this goal may necessitate exploring additional strategies or interventions to address racial bias more effectively. It is plausible that a longer intervention could yield more pronounced results.

Conversely, the brief intervention significantly enhanced participants' HAR scores. These findings aligned with the student feedback during the intervention, when many expressed surprise at the historical context and admitted to lacking prior knowledge. This underscores the importance of integrating discussions on racism and its historical context into

educational settings, emphasizing the significance of addressing these top-ics in schools. This might involve integrating more extensive training on recognizing and countering both explicit and implicit forms of racism into teacher education programs.

CONCLUSION

This paper's primary goal is to urge scientific communities to recognize the importance of incorporating lessons on racism and other forms of discrimination into teacher education. The theoretical foundation suggests a significant lack of awareness of racism among white teachers, implying that future German as a Foreign Language (GFL) teachers in Serbia might not be adequately prepared to address racism in the classroom.

Our findings revealed several critical insights. First, the majority of students scored low in both racial bias acceptance (RBA) and historical awareness of racism (HAR), which aligns with the "European Map of Implicit Racial Bias" showing that Serbians have one of the lowest racism indices in Europe. However, this study also identified persistent positive and negative stereotypes, indicating areas that require further development. This highlights the need to address positive stereotypes in the classroom, as they can be just as damaging as negative ones (Siy & Cheryan, 2013; Devine & Elliot, 1995). Furthermore, the results demonstrated the potential to increase historical awareness of racism through targeted workshops, supporting the arguments by King (1991) and Jacobs, Dwyer, and Rivera (2023) about the impact of education on racial awareness.

One limitation of this study is that the test battery measures overall racism, without focusing specifically on one particular group. Given the significant discrimination faced by the Roma community in Serbia (Trbojević et al., 2023; World Bank, 2019; Bašić & Stjelja, 2021; Zekavica, 2014; Poverenik za zaštitu ravnopravnosti, 2014; Ljujic et al., 2012; Janević et al., 2011), future research should specifically investigate attitudes towards Roma individuals. Addressing this limitation is essential for preparing teachers who are capable of fostering truly inclusive educational environments in Serbia. Furthermore, examining longer-term interventions and comprehensive training modules that address both historical and contemporary dimensions of racism should also be prioritized.

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Georgina V. Frei, Milena D. Matić / SIND POSITIVE STEREOTYPEN AUCH NEGATIV? UNTERSUCHUNG DER (IRRTÜMLICHEN) ÜBERZEUGUNGEN ANGEHENDER DAF-LEHRKRÄFTE IM UMGANG MIT RASSISMUS

Zusammenfassung / Diese Studie untersucht die Kompetenz angehender DaF-Lehrkräfte, sich mit rassistischen Themen im Unterricht auseinanderzusetzen. Um die Ausprägung von Rassismus unter den Studierenden zu erfassen, haben die Autorinnen die kostenlose Testbatterie von IRDlabs auf Serbisch übersetzt und an den Kontext angepasst. Die Auswertung der ersten Datenerhebung zeigt, dass sich die Teilnehmenden (n=67) negativer Stereotype stärker bewusst sind als positiver. Um das Bewusstsein für die potenziell negativen Auswirkungen positiver Stereotype zu erhöhen, entwickelten die Forscherinnen eine Intervention in Form eines zweistündigen Rassismus-Workshops. Fünf Monate nach der Intervention wurde die Testbatterie erneut eingesetzt. Die Prä-Post-Messung weist keinen statistisch signifikanten Unterschied in Bezug auf die Toleranz gegenüber rassistischen Vorurteilen auf, aber zeigt einen signifikanten Anstieg des Bewusstseins für die Bedeutung, das Thema Rassismus und seine Erscheinungsformen im Unterricht zu behandeln. Die Ergebnisse unterstreichen die Rolle der Universität, angehende DaF-Lehrkräfte für Rassismus zu sensibilisieren, damit sie nach ihrem Studium imstande sind, ein

kultursensibles Lernumfeld zu schaffen und die interkulturelle Kompetenz der eigenen Lernenden zu fördern.