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## **STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF ENGLISH IN BOSNIAN ADVERTISEMENTS**

One of the significant changes within Bosnian society and educational reality after the last war is the teaching and learning of English as a dominant foreign language at each level of the educational system, but also through the various forms of non-formal and informal education. This fact has a profound impact on the everyday communication of children and youth and their growing up in the post-war and globalized world. In this regard, this study investigated the attitudes of newer generations of Bosnians, who have learned English since kindergarten age and are highly proficient, towards the use of English in advertisements. Different advertisements were presented to respondents, i.e. the students of the University of Tuzla, and then they were given a questionnaire consisting of statements that measured their attitudes toward English in advertisements. A questionnaire was given in the form of a Likert's scale and the data received were analyzed using the SPSS software. As it was expected, respondents showed positive attitudes towards the use of English in Bosnian advertisements. They did not feel threatened and claimed that English did not jeopardize the position of their mother tongue. Additionally, they rated advertisements containing English elements with higher marks than advertisements containing Bosnian only. Finally, the respondents claimed that English enriched their culture in general.

**Keywords:** attitudes; advertisement; students; globalization; English for Specific Purposes

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has been widely used in advertisements to reach international target groups. However, very few studies have measured the attitudes towards the use of English in advertisements intended for the Bosnian market. Knowing that Bosnian society is monolingual, or more precise that there are no native speakers of English there, we rightfully claim that the use of English in Bosnian advertisements is to fulfill a symbolic function: it is a global language, the language of technology, and a sign of modernity and prestige.

This study investigated the attitudes of newer generations of Bosnians, who have learned English since kindergarten and are highly proficient, towards the use of English in advertisements. Ten different advertisements promoting beauty products (shower gels, perfumes, cremes, make-up, depilation cremes, toothpaste, sanitary pads), non-alcoholic beverages, cars, and clothes were presented to examinees and then they were given a questionnaire consisting of statements that measured their attitudes toward English in advertisements. The results received will be hybridized with the variable of gender and then presented and interpreted. A questionnaire was given in the form of a Likert's scale and analyzed using the standard SPSS software for the social sciences.

## 2. ON ADVERTISEMENTS

Definitions of advertisements are numerous. Some authors claim that advertisement is information. Others define it as a global phenomenon. All agree that advertisement is an extremely invasive text type. The English language is a *lingua franca* and is perceived as a language of cultural prestige that found its place in advertisements through the usage of Anglicisms, slogans, word puns, and other language devices. Stolac and Vlastelić (2014) suggest the localization of world corporations' advertisements into Croatian language and space. They convinced us that the economic side of advertisement would not be lost should we translate and adapt advertisements from English into Croatian.

Advertisers use the knowledge of all other professionals: linguists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and marketing experts to create a message that will touch upon, form, reform, and change readers/viewers/customers' attitudes, values, and wishes. Language is one segment of advertising discourse. Therefore, very skillful usage of language is necessary for successful and memorable advertisements. Very often advertisers use all resources of a language to create attractive and engaging ad-

vertisements: rhymes, catchphrases, jokes, myths, religious elements, sayings, literary phrases, and all to affect consumers' emotions.

Knežević (2019) in his research on the rise of Anglicisms in marketing concluded that people do not perceive Anglicisms in advertisements and that the presence of Anglicisms does not affect their consumers' needs. However, he urges Croatian linguists to insist on the usage of Croatian in the advertising industry to preserve their linguistic identity. (<https://zir.nsk.hr/islandora/object/acmt%3A74/datastream/PDF/view>) Furthermore, it is widely known how protective French are of their language and sensitive about the usage of English so much so that they proclaimed law on the preservation of the French language. However, it seems that there are some changes in this area as well. Riggio (2021) researched attitudes towards Anglicism and Americanization in France. The respondents were almost unanimous – they did not mind the usage of English words when there were no French equivalents but wanted to speak their mother tongue. They also expressed their appreciation for all the efforts that the Académie Française and related language legislation do for their French. (<https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1286&context=proceedings-of-great-day>)

Thus, it can be concluded that English usage in global advertising is a marker of modernity, progress, and sophistication.

### **3. ON ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGE**

In general, there are various definitions of attitudes. “Some psychologists view attitudes as having cognitive, behavioral, and affective components. Your attitude toward someone or something depends on what you think and feel about the person or thing, based on your thoughts and feelings” (Katz & Stotland 1959, according to Sternberg 1998: 472).

Bugarski (1986) claims that attitudes toward language present verbalized utterances of attitudes. They are divided into several categories according to different dimensions:

1. According to the object of research:
  - Attitudes towards language in general, towards languages, dialects, sociolects, idiolects;
2. According to the manner of manifestation:
  - conscious attitudes;
  - unconscious systems of values;

3. According to their type:

- aesthetic (pleasant, melodic);
- pragmatic (rich, valuable, functional);
- moral (good, bad);

4. According to their effects:

From completely harmless to extremely dangerous. Attitudes contain three components: cognitive, emotional, and active.

#### 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

A total of 111 first-year students attending the University of Tuzla participated in this research. Students were chosen from five different departments: Mathematics, Civil Engineering, Journalism, Linguistics, and English Language and Literature deliberately to compare and contrast the obtained results and conclude whether there are any significant differences between them. The sample included 14 or 12.6% Math students, 31 or 27.9% Civil Engineering students, 23 or 20.7% Journalism students, 16 or 14.4% Linguistics students and 27 or 24.3% English students. A total of 73 (65.8%) female and 38 (34.2%) male students filled in the questionnaire. Civil Engineering students took English as an elective course in the first semester. For Math students, English is an obligatory course in the first semester. However, for Journalism students, English is an obligatory subject in all eight semesters. For all three departments, the English course is organized and taught in the form of ESP. Students of the Linguistics department do not have English as a subject offered in their curricula.

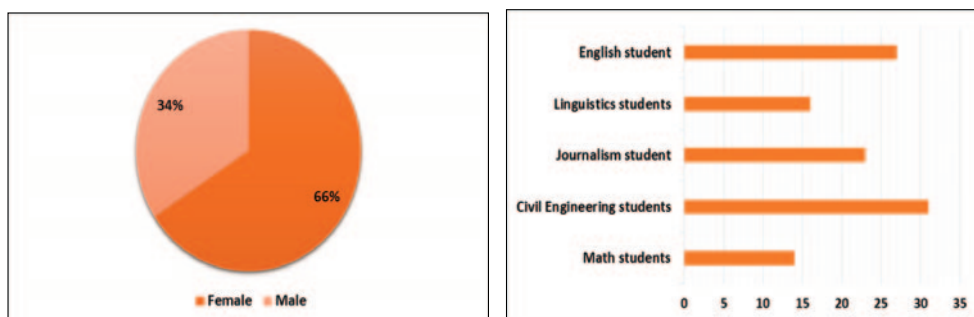


Figure 1. Sample Survey

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part referred to the respondents' gender, age, type of secondary school, length of studying English in primary and sec-

ondary school, and final grades at the end of secondary school and first semester. The second part of the questionnaire was given in the form of a Likert scale with 10 items that respondents expressed their (dis)agreement with. Their responses varied from 1 (absolutely disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (do not know), 4 (agree), and 5 (absolutely agree). These items were related to the respondents' attitudes toward the use of English in the media, attitudes toward English, and attitudes toward the use of English in Bosnian advertisements. The questionnaire was given in Bosnian. The researcher emphasized that the questionnaire was anonymous and explained the answer mode before the respondents responded.

The quantitative data analysis includes standard descriptive statistics (frequencies, central tendencies, variability), as well as the Chi-Square Test and Contingency Coefficient.

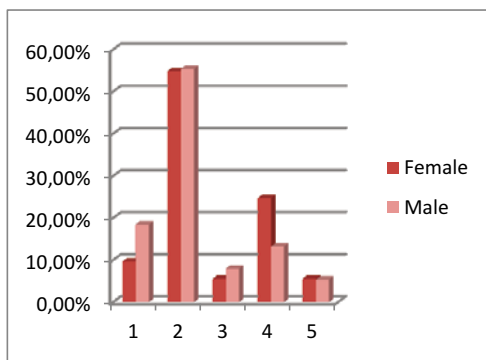
## **5. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND A COMPARISON OF DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES CONCERNING GENDER**

A total of 67 or 60.4% of examinees were 19-year-olds, with 15, or 13.5% 20-year-olds and 28, or 25.2% 18-year-olds. The third variable inquired about respondents' secondary school education and the following results were received: 63 or 56.8% graduated from grammar school while 48 or 43.2% graduated from technical high school. The fourth and fifth variables referred to the number of years that respondents spent learning English in their primary and secondary schools. Based on the responses obtained, it can be concluded that they learned English for nine years in total on average, five years in primary and four years in secondary school. The sixth variable referred to the respondents' final mark in English in their secondary school and the following results were received: 64.9% had a mark of excellent, 16.2% had a mark of very good, 13.5% good and 4.5% had a mark of sufficient. However, the situation changed after the first semester exams and according to the eighth variable the following marks were received: 16.2% had a mark of excellent, 15.3% had a mark of very good, 9.9% had a mark above average, 23.4% had a mark average and 12.6% had a mark sufficient.

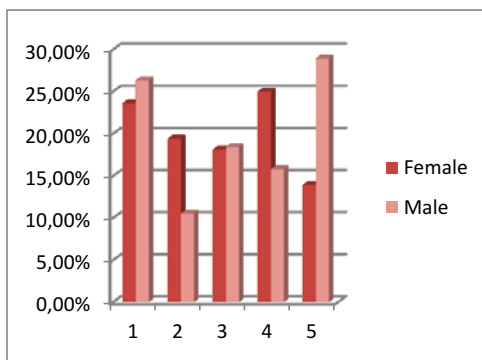
The second part of the questionnaire was given in the form of a Likert scale consisting of 10 items, which were analyzed individually as presented in Table 1. Due to restrictions imposed by the scope of this paper, attitudes in relation to respondents' gender will be presented here.

Both female and male students, a total of 54.8% agreed, 9.6% absolutely agreed, and 55.3% agreed and 18.4% absolutely agreed, respectively, showed positive attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in the media, both written and electronic (Figure 2).

The received value of the Chi-Square test was 3.375 and it proves that there was no statistically significant difference in responses between female and male respondents. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.172 which means that there is no association between the two groups.



**Figure 2.** (The usage of mother tongue in the media.)



**Figure 3.** (Foreign words degrading my understanding of the content in the media.)

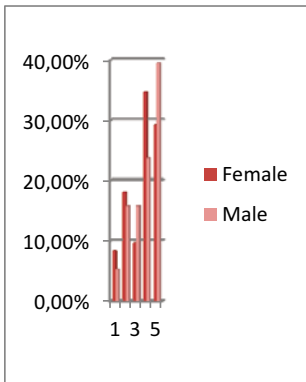
The second item on the Likert scale was used as a control item for the first one and the received results are in congruency. Both female and male respondents have disagreed that foreign words, i.e. English are the reason for the deterioration of their mother tongue. A total of 25% of female examinees disagreed, 13.9% absolutely disagreed with this claim, 15.8% of male examinees disagreed and 28.9% absolutely disagreed with it (Figure 3). The value of the Chi-Square test was 5.206, and it showed no statistically significant differences in responses between the two cohorts examined. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.213.

The third item examined the use of English in the media and the extent to which it affects understanding the news. Respondents of both genders disagreed with the claim that the presence of English lessens their understanding of the information displayed in the media. A total of 34.7% of female respondents disagreed and 39.5% of male respondents absolutely disagreed with the claim (Figure 4). The value of the Chi-Square test was 2.959, which means that there is no convincing evidence that the presence of English in the media affects respondents' understanding of their con-

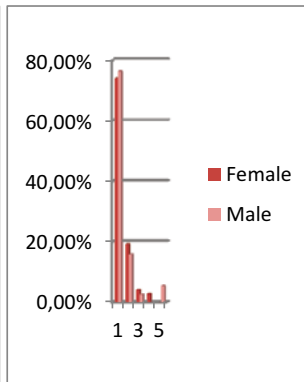
tent. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.162 and supports the previous Chi-Square test.

Female and male respondents unanimously agreed that English is the global language of today – the language of technology, science, and business, i.e. 74% of female respondents and 76.3% of male respondents absolutely agreed with the claim (Figure 5).

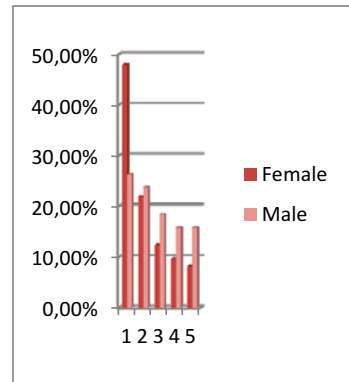
Furthermore, the fifth claim examined respondents' attitudes toward learning English, and no statistically significant difference in responses was observed. Both female (47.9% absolutely agreed and 21.9% agreed) and male (26.3% absolutely agreed and 23.7% agreed) respondents agreed that English must be learned regardless of their attitude toward it (Figure 6).



**Figure 4.** (Understanding the news)



**Figure 5.** (English is a global language)

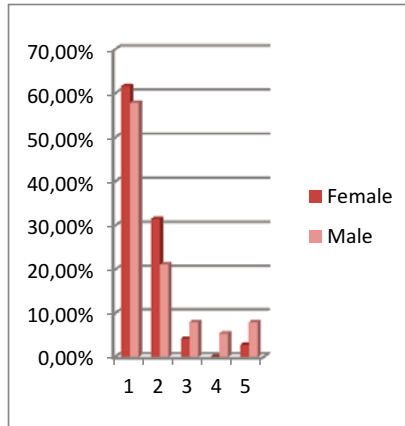
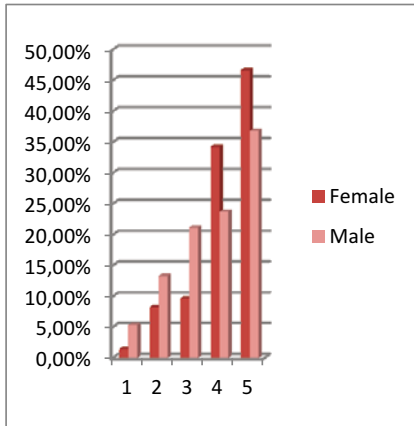


**Figure 6.** (One must learn English)

The following fifth statement examined the respondents' attitudes toward the use of English in advertisements for the Bosnian market. A total of 46.5% of female respondents and 36.8% of male respondents absolutely disagreed that the quality of a product would increase if its name was in English. Further, 34.2% of female respondents and 23.7% of male respondents disagreed with the claim, as given in Figure 7. The value of the Chi-Square test was 5.905. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.225. Both tests confirm that respondents agree that the name of the product would not affect its quality, whether in English or their mother tongue.

The seventh claim examined respondents' understanding of a product's characteristics when written in English. Here, also statistically congruent responses were received from both female and male examinees. A total of 61.6% of female respon-

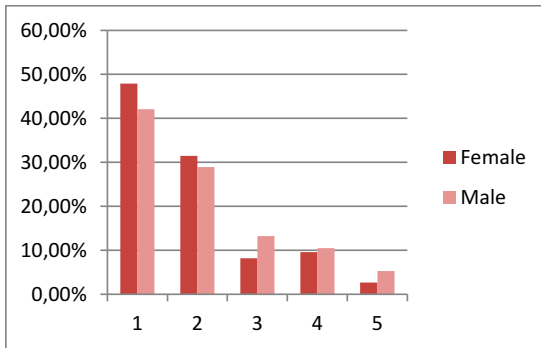
dents and 57.9% of male respondents absolutely agreed with the claim, plus, 31.5% of females and 21.1% of males agreed with it (Figure 8). The value of the Chi-Square test was 7.015. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.244. There is no statistically significant difference in the response of the two groups.



**Figure 7.** (English in the Bosnian market)      **Figure 8.** (Products in English)

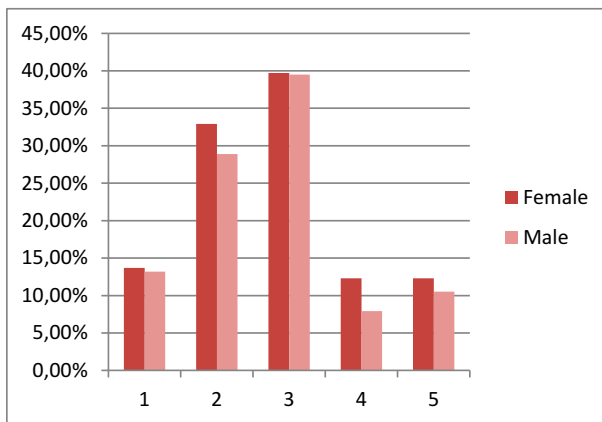
The following claim examined respondents' sensibility towards their seniors. Here, the results received were the results expected. A total of 47.9% of female examinees and 42.1% of male examinees absolutely agreed (1 in Figure 9.) that all parts of advertisements should be translated into their mother tongue so that all citizens could understand it regardless of their age, gender, and level of education. Plus, 31.5% of female and 28.9% of male respondents agreed (2 in Figure 9.) with the claim. The value of the Chi-Square test was 1.318. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.108. The results are illustrated in Figure 9.





**Figure 9.** (Translation of advertisements)

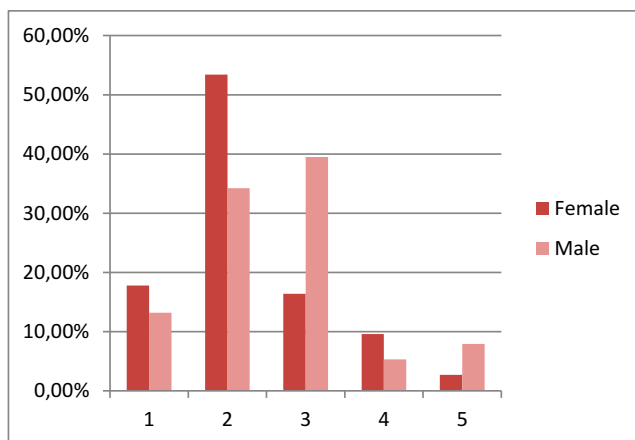
The ninth claim examined whether the respondents understood the role of global language in the market arena. Surprisingly, respondents remained rather reserved when showing their attitude toward the use of English in advertisements for the sake of an increase in sales. A total of 39.7% of females and 39.5% of males did not know the answer to the claim. The results are given in Figure 10. The value of the Chi-Square test was 5.234. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.212.



**Figure 10.** (Global language in the market)

The last claim *The use of English in advertisements influences our culture in general and the result is the adoption of elements of Western culture into our culture* showed statistically significant differences in responses between female and male examinees. The value of the Chi-Square test was 9.806. The limited value for 4 degrees

of freedom and a level of security of 0.05 was 9.488. Since the received value was greater than the limited value there was a statistically significant difference in attitude toward the claim concerning gender. The Contingency Coefficient was 0.285. A total of 53.4% of female examinees and 34.2% of male examinees agreed that Western culture influences our culture via advertisements. Further, 16.4% of females, as opposed to 39.5% of male respondents, did not know whether our culture was westernized. The results are given in Figure 11.



**Figure 11.** (Influence of English on our culture)

## 6. DISCUSSION

The respondents displayed positive attitudes towards the use of English in advertisements for the Bosnian market and were also satisfied with the use of their mother tongue in the media, both written and electronic. These results came as a surprise because they are not consistent with previous findings in similar studies, e.g. Kešetović (2007), when respondents claimed to be extremely unsatisfied with the use of language they found in the media. The reasons for such results are two-fold: either the situation with language in the media improved, which is probably not the case, or the newer generations became accustomed to the present-day usage of language in the media and consider it to be the standard one, which is more likely the case. However, they showed a rather purist attitude toward the introduction of new, foreign words into their mother tongue. The reasons lie in extra-linguistic factors: the respondents

equate language with the nation and thus, feel very protective toward their mother tongue.

Although they do not welcome English words into their vocabulary, their usage does not affect their understanding of news or information. This is expected and consistent since the majority of the respondents have learned English for nine years on average and claim to possess a good command of it. One of the most frequent and best ways to master a language is through exposure to its usage in the media. The newer generations recognize that English is a *lingua franca* essential for the existence in the modern world today.

The respondents recognize that the name of the product does not necessarily imply its quality. However, they also have shown that they do not understand the rules of business and did not want to take a stand on the claim that advertisers use English deliberately to increase the sale of products/services. Rather they remained reserved and unwilling to answer.

Further, the respondents were highly sensitive towards senior generations and understood the lack of their knowledge of English, thus, suggesting that advertisements be translated into the mother tongue to be informative for all the citizens.

Female examinees proved to be protective of their culture and displayed a rather negative attitude towards the influence of Western culture on their own culture. These results are consistent with the findings of other authors who conducted similar studies, e.g. Trudgill (2000), and Labov (1972). Due to their traditional role of child-rearing and transmitting the values to their offspring, women are more varied in protecting their culture.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Attitudes towards the language were relatively stable in all respondents. Although they showed almost identical attitudes towards their mother tongue, they were tolerant towards the usage of English in advertisements for the Bosnian market. The reason for this lies in the fact that their knowledge of English is quite good.

Attitudes depend on linguistic knowledge as well as on the history of the human mind, and on experience in evaluating and judging. Thus, it is to be assumed that the attitudes of the respondents will change according to the aforementioned factors in time.

As it was expected, respondents showed positive attitudes towards the use of English in Bosnian advertisements. They did not feel threatened and claimed that English

did not jeopardize the position of their mother tongue. Additionally, they rated advertisements containing English elements higher than advertisements containing Bosnian only. Finally, the respondents claimed that English enriched their culture in general.

The results of this study are relevant for teaching English for specific purposes but also for marketing specialists.

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## STAVOVI STUDENATA PREMA UPOTREBI ANGLICIZAMA U REKLAMNIM PORUKAMA NA BOSANSKOM JEZIKU

### Sažetak:

Engleski jezik je prvi strani jezik koji učenici osnovnih škola u Bosni i Hercegovini uče od prvog razreda. S rastućom upotrebom elektroničkih medija u školi i svakodnevnom životu raste i prisustvo anglicizama u jeziku. S tim u vezi sprovedeno je istraživanje kojim se ispituju stavovi novijih generacija prema upotrebi anglicizama u reklamnim porukama. Ispitanici su studenti prvih godina različitih studijskih profila na Univerzitetu u Tuzli. Najprije su pogledali različite reklamne poruke koje su sadržavale anglicizme u svom verbalnom dijelu, a potom im je dat upitnik koji se sastojao iz dva dijela. U prvom dijelu su bila pitanja općeg karaktera (starosna dob, spol, završena srednja škola, zaključna ocjena iz engleskog jezika), a drugi dio je sadržavao izjave u formi Likertove skale kojima su ispitanici izražavali svoje (ne)slaganje. Korišten je standardni SPSS softver za analizu podataka. Ispitanici su pokazali pozitivne stavove prema upotrebi anglicizama u reklamnim porukama na bosanskom jeziku. Smatraju da prisustvo anglicizama ne ugrožava njihov maternji jezik. Reklamne poruke koje sadržavaju anglicizme ocijenili su boljom ocjenom. Naposljetku, ispitanici su tvrdili da prisustvo anglicizama obogaćuje njihovu kulturu općenito.

**Cljučne riječi:** stavovi; reklamne poruke; sudenti; globalizacija; engleski jezik u struci

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