

Some Learning Gaps in the Suitcase of a Croatian Student of English as He Packs before Going of to College

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Key words: learning gap, secondary education, written work, error treatment, MTI

ABSTRACT

Upon closing the chapter of their secondary education and entering the academic world, a vast majority of Croatian students whether freshmen or senior need fresh challenges to help them to realise how much they know, and to make their passive knowledge active, together with a steady input of new language. In the established practice of using Google translation tools when asked to write an essay or a book report, it is not uncommon for a Croatian student of English to make it all the way to college without having his or her writing thoroughly scrutinized and used for successful error treatment. The research presented in this paper attempts to outline some of the most common learning gaps acquired through secondary school curricula that tend to accompany Croatian students in college English courses. Based on the analysis of guided written assignments done by a group of 25 students of the Music and Theatre Arts Department of the Arts Academy in Split, Croatia, the research identifies recurring patterns in the substitution of the Croatian present tense for the English Present Perfect structure, omission of articles in noun and adjective phrases, *mistakes* arising out of the contrastive analysis of the two languages having word-by-word translation and MTI as its immediate side effects, trouble forming irregular plural of nouns as well as the difficulty understanding the difference between countable and uncountable nouns. Although the development of such patterns might be explained by Dulay and Burt's claim that the majority of errors made by L2 learners are specific to that L2, the presented analysis sees them as being caused by ill-treatment of students' mother tongue interference during high school years.