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SLOŽENOPREDIKATSKE KONSTRUKCIJE U HRVATSKOM I
ENGLISKOM IZ KONTRASTIVNOLINGVISTIČKE PERSPEKTIVE

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COMPLEX PREDICATE CONSTRUCTIONS IN CROATIAN AND
ENGLISH FROM A CONTRASTIVE-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Diploma thesis

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Abstract

The present research is a translational and contrastive-linguistic study aimed at establishing correspondences between Croatian and English with regards to their use of simple predicates and *complex predicate constructions* (Goldberg [1995](#)). While simple predicates involve monolexemic verbs such as *walk*, *bite* or *look*, complex predicate constructions involve instances in which a so-called *light verb* (e.g. *have*, *take*, *give*) is usually used in conjunction with a countable noun derived from a formally identical verb to form a multi-word unit such as *have a walk*, *take a bite*, *give a look*. Following the assumption that the preference for simple predicates or complex predicate constructions is the product of language typology (see Gradečak-Erdeljić & Brdar [2012](#)), the current study investigates the extent to which so-called *unique items* (Tirkkonen-Condit [2004](#), Chesterman [2007](#)), i.e. items that are formally specific to the target language, are represented in Croatian-to-English translations produced by respondents in a translation task.

Key words: light verbs, complex predicate constructions, unique items, contrastive linguistics, contrastive construction grammar, applied construction grammar, translational, linguistic typology

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1. Introduction

Croatian and English are two languages which differ significantly in terms of their typological features – while Croatian is a highly synthetic language which favors affixation and morphological means of expressing conceptual contents, English is a highly analytic language which favors the use of syntactic structures. These opposing tendencies are particularly evident in cases where Croatian refers to an extra-linguistic event by using simple predicates such as *prošetati se*, whereas English resorts to so-called *complex predicate constructions* (see Goldberg [1995](#)) such as *take a walk*.

The stated cross-linguistic discrepancy can best be illustrated by offering up a morpheme-by-morpheme description of Croatian monolexemic verbs which can be said to be more or less identical to our selection of English complex predicate constructions (to gain insight into the procedure of morphemic analysis for Croatian, please refer to Šojat et al. [2013](#)):

<p>■ <i>have a chat</i></p>	<p><i>po-prič-a-ti</i> [fin. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>finish (= across)-tell-∅-∅</i></p> <p><i>pro-ćask-a-ti</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>start (= in front of)-chatter-∅-∅</i></p> <p><i>pro-čavrljati-a-ti</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>start (= in front of)-chatter-∅-∅</i></p> <p><i>pro-brblj-a-ti</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>start (= in front of)-bale-∅-∅</i></p>
<p>■ <i>have a lie-down</i></p>	<p><i>pri-leg-ti < prileći></i> [dim. pref.]-[stem]-[inf. suff.] <i>diminution (= at)-lie-down-∅</i></p>
<p>■ <i>take a nap</i></p>	<p><i>o(d)-drijem-a-ti</i> [fin. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>finish (=from)-doze-∅-∅</i></p> <p><i>pri-drijem-a-ti</i> [dim. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>diminution (=at)-doze-∅-∅</i></p> <p><i>dr(j)em-nu-ti</i> [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>doze-diminution-∅</i></p> <p><i>dr(j)em-uc-nu-ti</i> [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.]</p>

	<i>doze-diminution-diminution-∅</i>
■ <i>have/take a walk</i>	<i>pro-šet-a-ti se</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] [reflex. pron.] <i>start (= in front of)-walk-∅-∅ oneself</i>
■ <i>have/take a ride</i>	<i>pro-voz-a-ti se</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] [reflex. pron.] <i>start (= in front of)-∅-∅ oneself</i>
■ <i>have/take a swim (a dip)</i>	<i>za-pliv-a-ti</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>start-swim-∅-∅</i> conv. <i>buć-nu-ti se</i> [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>splash-diminution-∅ oneself</i>
■ <i>have/take a look</i>	<i>po-gled-a-ti</i> [fin. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>finish (= across)-look-∅-∅</i> <i>pri-po-gled-a-ti</i> [dim. pref.]-[pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>diminution (= at)-finish (= across)-look-∅-∅</i> <i>gled-nu-ti</i> [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>look-diminution-∅</i> <i>gled-uc-nu-ti</i> [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>look-diminution-diminution-∅</i>
■ <i>give a wriggle</i>	<i>pro-meškolj-i-ti se</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] [reflex. pron.] <i>start-squirm-∅-∅ oneself</i>
■ <i>give a sob</i>	<i>za-jec-a-ti</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>start (= for)-sob-∅-∅</i>
■ <i>give a cough</i>	<i>na-kašlj-a-ti se</i> [fin. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] [reflex. pron.] <i>finish (= on)-cough-∅-∅ oneself</i> <i>za-kašlj-a-ti</i> [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>start (= for)-cough-∅-∅</i> <i>kašlj-uc-nu-ti</i> [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>cough-diminution-diminution-∅</i>

■ <i>give a ring to sb</i>	zvrc-nu-ti [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>buzz-diminution-∅</i>
■ <i>give sth a trim</i>	pod-šiš-a-ti [dim. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>diminution (= under)-cut-∅-∅</i> šiš-nu-ti [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>cut-diminution-∅</i>
■ <i>give sth a wash</i>	pro-pr-a-ti [inch. pref.]-[stem]-[them. morph]-[inf. suff.] <i>start (= in front of)-wash-∅-∅</i> per-uc-nu-ti [stem]-[dim. suff.]-[dim. suff.]-[inf. suff.] <i>wash-diminution-diminution-∅</i>

Let us now get back to the already established and renowned theories on the functioning of complex predicate constructions. Seen as yielding a negligible contribution to the overall meaning of a complex predicate construction, as contrasted with the noun, the verbal component of such verb-noun combinations is frequently called a *light verb* (Jespersen 1942). This view is not shared by all theoreticians. Wierzbicka (1982) argues that light verbs do contribute to the overall meaning of *periphrastic verbal constructions*. Thus, the verb *have* (as in *have a walk, have a swim, have a run*), when combined with another verbal stem (formally identical to a noun), refers to an action that is limited in duration, repeatable and somehow beneficial to the agent. Dixon (2005) is another proponent of the idea that light verbs are not semantically impoverished. He contends, *inter alia*, that “the *have a construction* carries meaning elements: (i) something done voluntarily, by the subject; (ii) to indulge themselves in something they enjoy doing, or which provides relief; (iii) the activity being done ‘for a bit’, at the subject’s whim (rather than to achieve any transcendental goal)” (Dixon 2005: 470). Nearly all recent theoretical approaches which are concerned with the semantics of complex predicate constructions fall within the purview of *construction grammar* (Goldberg 1995). Construction grammar contends that the majority of linguistic phenomena can be seen as constructions with varying degrees of complexity and generality. Thus, the notion of the lexicon is extended to include even those items which would normally be seen as belonging to a grammatical category. This kind of a store of lexical, supralexical and grammatical units is often termed a *constructicon* (Goldberg 2006).

<i>gucnuti</i>	11	5	13	1		3	2	
<i>zagrliti</i>	32		3					
<i>bricnuti se</i>	28			1		2	2	2
<i>zalajati</i>	35							
<i>čitucnuti</i>	12	23						
<i>zahihotati se</i>	29	5	1					
<i>prileći</i>	30						5	
<i>pokucati</i>	36							
<i>žvaknuti</i>	19	5	3		6		1	1
<i>pijucnuti</i>	2		31				1	1
<i>pogledati</i>	17		17	1				
<i>odspavati</i>	2	8	25					
<i>gricnuti</i>	7		28					
<i>kašljucnuti</i>	34			1				
<i>prošetati</i>	22	2	11					
<i>zvrnuti</i>	10	16	7		2			
<i>porazmisliti</i>	22	1	9		1	2		
<i>poljubiti</i>	35							
<i>porazgovarati</i>			35					
<i>slušnuti</i>	13	12	10					
<i>popričati</i>	24	3	6		1	1		
TOTAL:	466	80	257	5	10	8	11	4

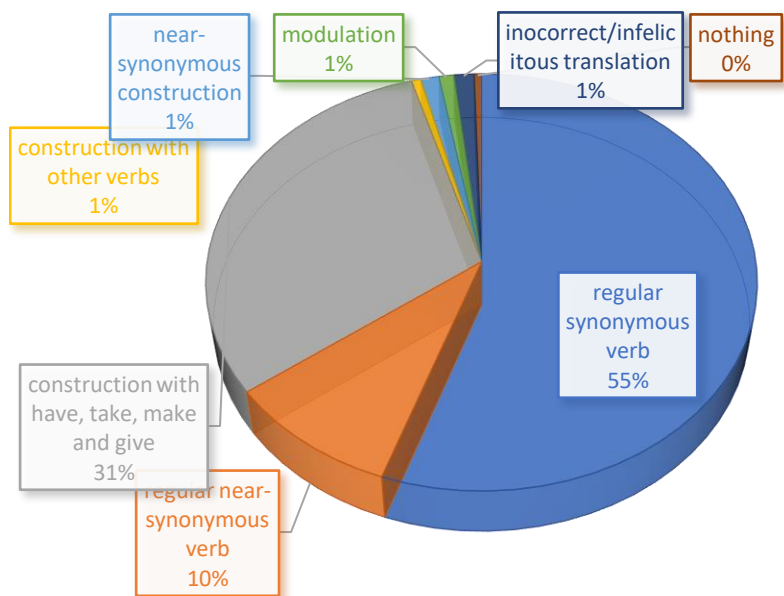


Figure 1. The percentage of each employed category

2.6.2. The number of units per classification category (ST constructions)

	Regular synonymous verb	Regular near-synonymous verb	Synonymous construction with <i>have, take, make and give</i>	Synonymous construction with other verbs	Near-synonymous construction	Modulation	Incorrect/infelicitous translation	Nothing
<i>baciti sluš</i>	13	8	12				2	
<i>dati dopuštenje</i>	9	2	20		1	3		
<i>dati pljusku</i>	35							
<i>dati poljubac</i>	18		17					
<i>baciti komentar</i>	26	2	2		3	1	1	
<i>dati preporuku</i>	16	2	6		3	6	2	
<i>baciti okladu</i>	13		20	2				
<i>uzeti griz</i>	4		31					
<i>baciti pogled</i>	26		6	3				
<i>uzeti gutljaj</i>	1		32	1		1		
<i>baciti vožnju</i>	12	1	12	7	1		1	1
<i>baciti spavanac</i>		2	31		2			
<i>uputiti pogled</i>	20		14	1				
<i>dati prijedlog</i>	22	4	4				5	
<i>zadati udarac</i>	32		3					
<i>ispustiti krik</i>	17	2		13		1	1	1
<i>baciti šalu</i>		1	5	27		1		1
<i>zadati šok</i>	21	4	6	2			1	1
<i>dati usporedbu</i>	9		26					
<i>baciti fotku</i>			17	11			7	
<i>baciti drijemku</i>	10		21		2	2		
<i>baciti tuš</i>	3		26	5				
<i>uzeti liz</i>	28		6				1	
<i>baciti šetnju</i>	10		18	6			1	
TOTAL:	345	28	335	78	12	15	22	4

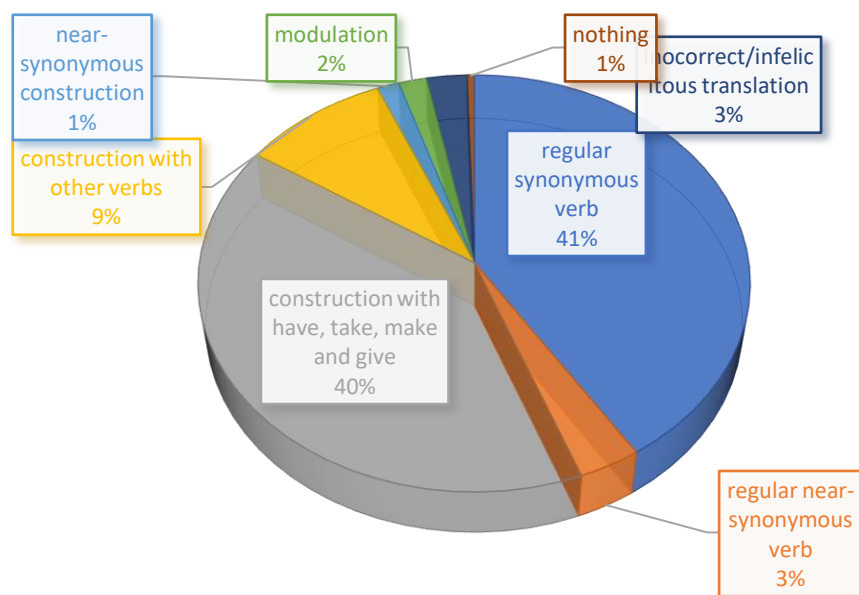


Figure 2. The percentage of each employed category

2.6.3. The simple predicate/complex predicate construction ratio (ST lexemes)

When presented with Croatian simple predicates in the translation task, students of English (35) produced a variety of monolexic traductemes. The lexeme *porazgovarati* ‘have a talk’ was the only lexeme that was not paralleled by a monolexic traducteme in English, while the lexemes *poljubiti* ‘give a kiss’, *pokucati* ‘give a knock’, *čitucnuti* ‘have a read’, *zalajati* ‘give a bark’ and *pasti* ‘take a fall’ were translated as monolexic units in all 35 instances:

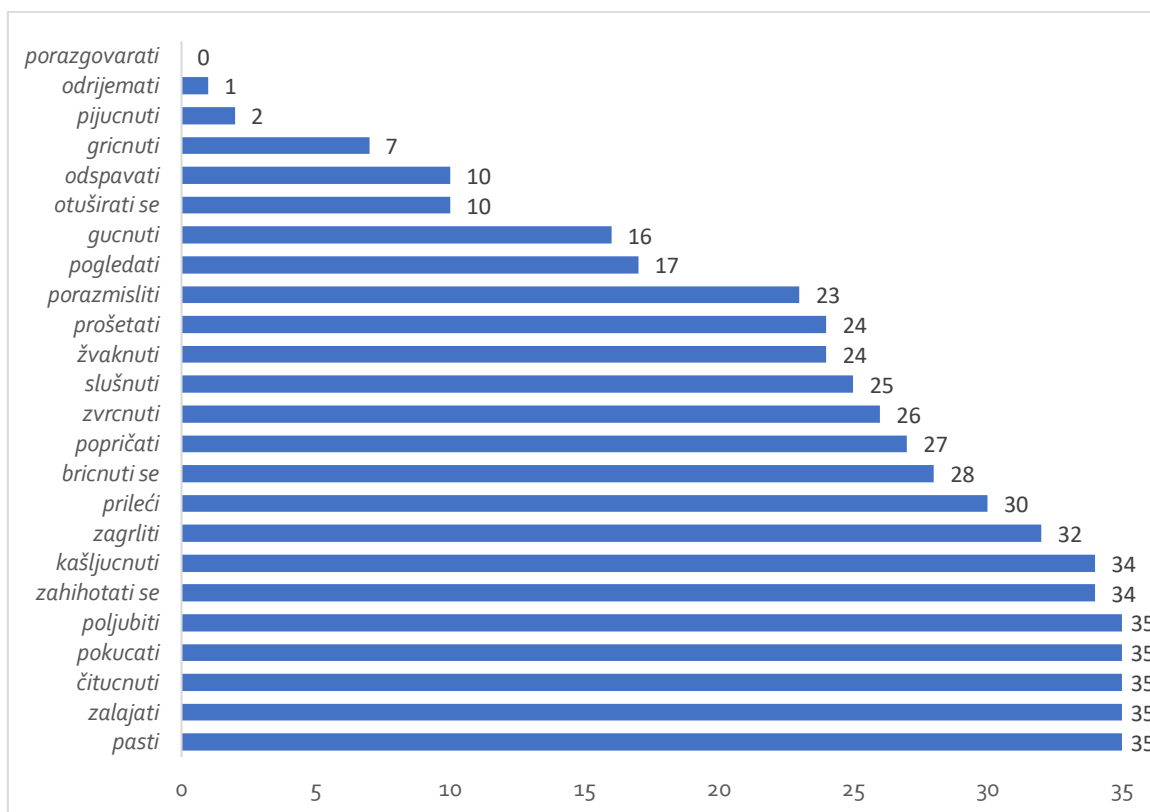


Figure 3. Number of monolexemic traductemes

The 35 respondents also yielded a significant number of polilexemic traductemes. While the lexemes *prileći* ‘have a lie-down’, *poljubiti* ‘give a kiss’, *pokucati* ‘give a knock’, *čitucnuti* ‘have a read’, *zalajati* ‘give a bark’ and *pasti* ‘take a fall’ were paired up with no polilexemic units, the lexeme *porazgovarati* ‘have a talk’ reached the maximum number of 35 polilexemic traductemes:

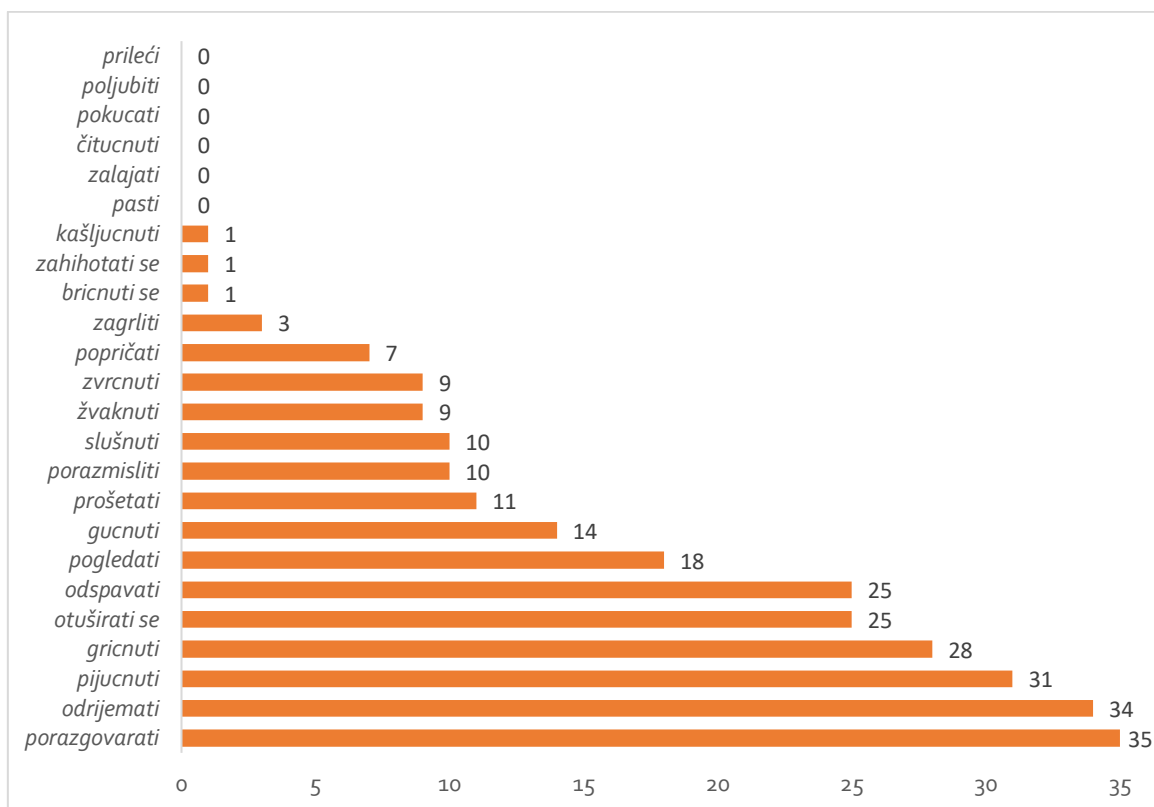


Figure 4. Number of polilexemic traductemes

2.6.4. The simple predicate/complex predicate construction ratio (ST constructions)

Students of English also generated a substantial number of monolexemic traductemes when confronted with a Croatian complex predicate construction. The construction *baciti fotku* ‘take a photo’ was the only construction not to receive a monolexemic equivalent, while the construction *dati pljusku* ‘give a slap’ was universally translated as a monolexemic unit in all 35 cases:

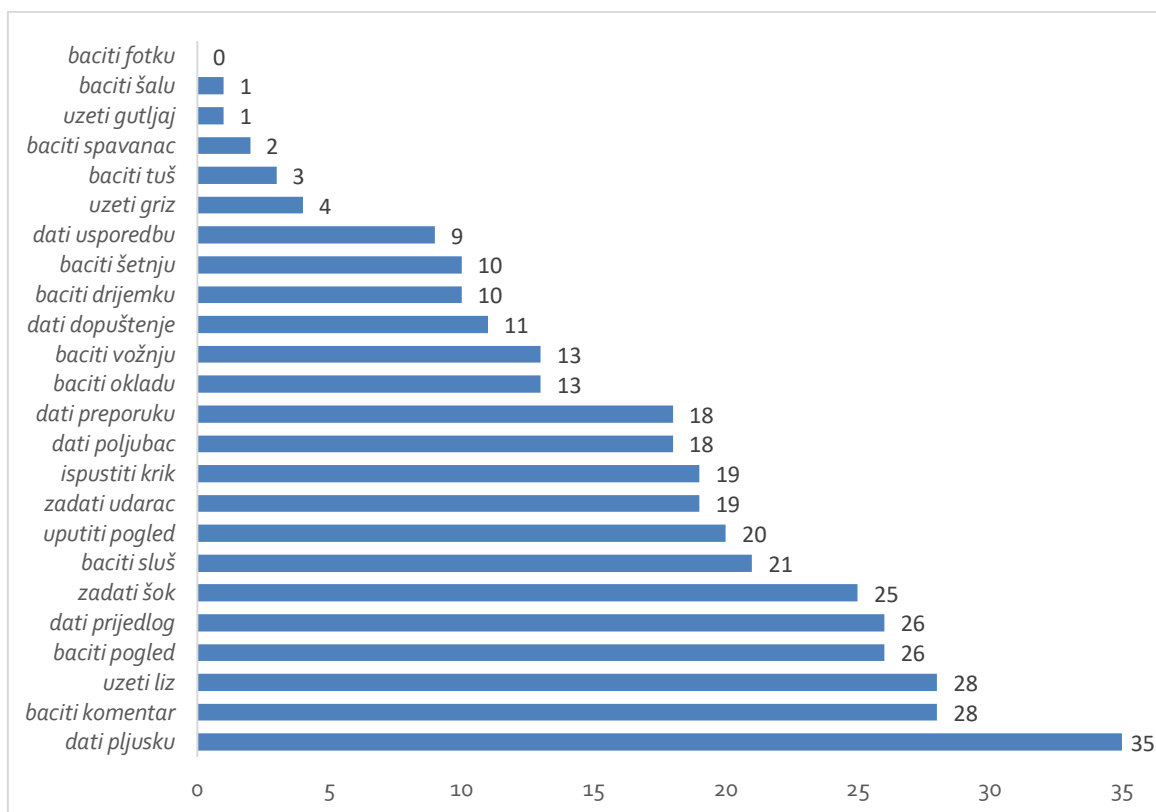


Figure 5. Number of monolexemic traductemes

Complex predicate constructions were also equated with polilexemic traductemes. An exception is afforded by the construction *dati pljusk* ‘give a slap’, which is without a polilexemic counterpart, while *uzeti gutljaj* ‘take a sip’ proved to be most polilexemic when translated in English:

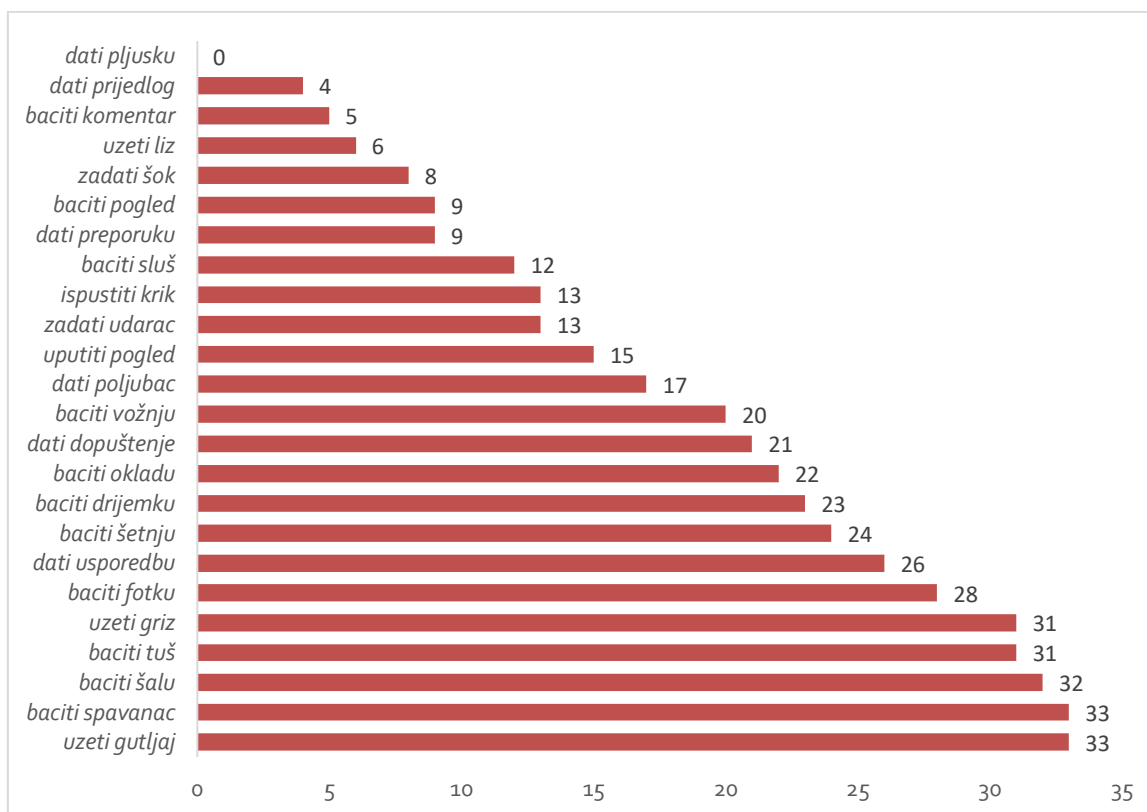


Figure 6. Number of polilexemic traductemes

2.6.5. The traducteme monolexemicity index (ST lexemes)

Seeing as the number of monolexemic traductemes can be seen as an inverse of the number of polilexemic traductemes, it is possible to look at them as being positioned on a scale of monolexemicity. Thus, if we were to combine these inverse values for each lexeme, we would come up with a *traducteme monolexemicity index*. Specifically speaking, we could create an index ranging from the value 0 (no monolexemicity) to the value 1 (absolute monolexemicity). Such an index, calculated using the data obtained from students of English, is provided below:

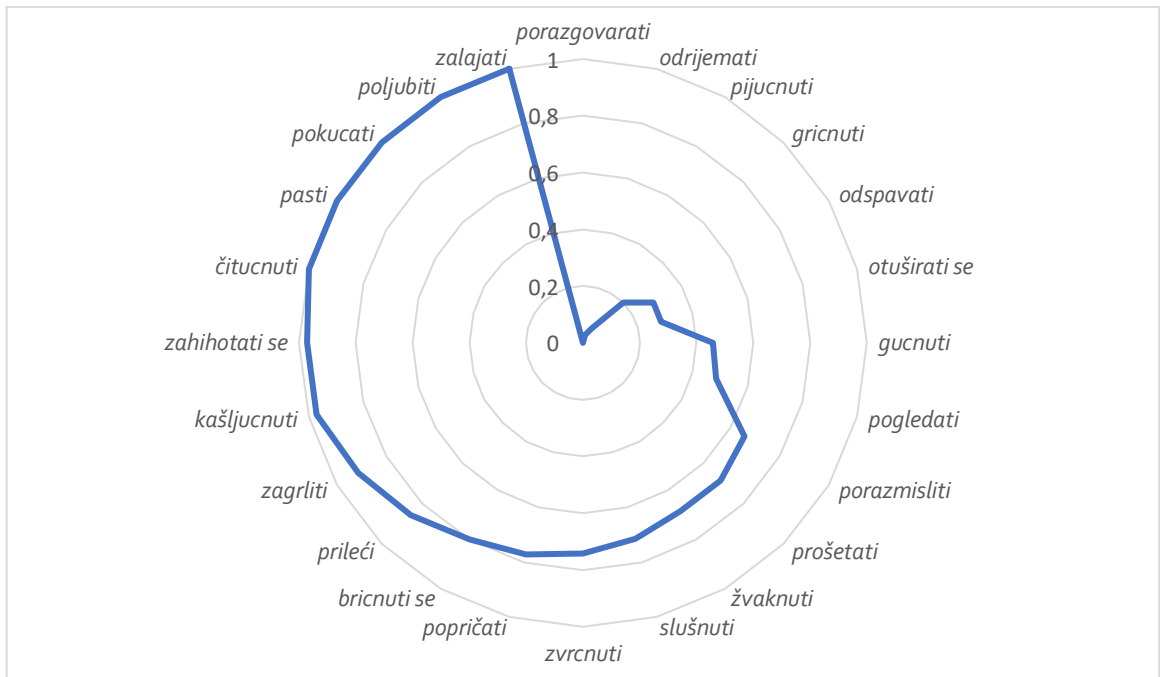


Figure 7. Traducteme monolexemicity index – ST lexemes

As is discernable from the newly forged index, the most monolexemic source traductemes (or *origotraductemes*) are *zalajati* ‘give bark’, *poljubiti* ‘give a kiss’, *pokucati* ‘give a knock’, *pasti* ‘take a fall’ and *čitucnuti* ‘have a read’, while the least monolexemic of them all proved to be the verb *porazgovarati* ‘have a talk’.

2.6.6. The traducteme monolexemicity index (ST constructions)

The same index can be created for Croatian complex predicate constructions:

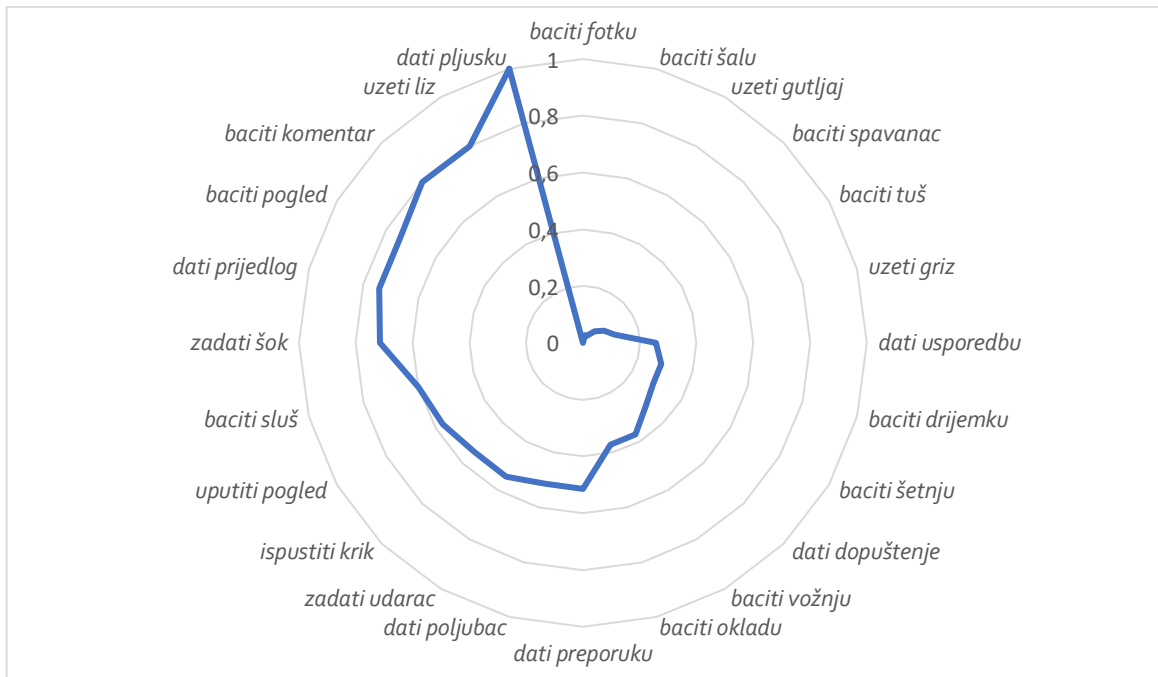


Figure 8. Traducteme monolexemicity index – ST constructions

In this case, the origotraducteme *baciti fotku* ‘take a photo’ seems to be the least monolexemic TT unit, while the origotraducteme *dati pljusku* ‘give a slap’ stands out as the most monolexemic TT unit.

2.6.7. The traducteme polilexemicity index (ST lexemes)

Building on the notion of the monolexemicity index, we now introduce the notion of *the polilexemicity index* and apply it to a range of ST lexemes:

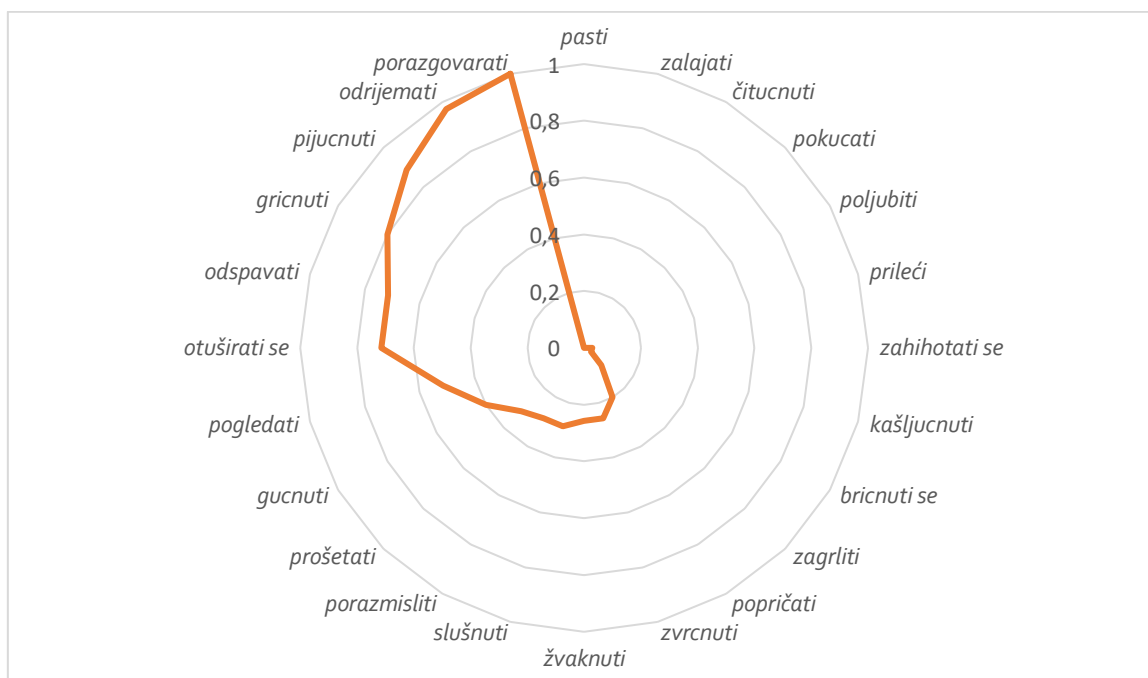


Figure 9. Traducteme polilexemicity index – ST lexemes

Here it transpires that the least polilexemic origotraductemes are *pasti* ‘take a fall’, *zalajati* ‘bark’, *čitucnuti* ‘have a read’, *pokucati* ‘give a knock’, *poljubiti* ‘give a kiss’ and *prileći* ‘have a lie-down’. On the other hand, *porazgovarati* ‘have a talk’ is arguably the most polilexemic origotraducteme.

2.6.8. The traducteme polilexemicity index (ST constructions)

In the continuation, the same indexing procedure is repeated for ST constructions:



Figure 10. Traducteme polilexemicity index – ST constructions

The above index tells us that the complex predicate construction *dati pljusku* ‘give a slap’ is the least polilexemic TT unit, whereas the construction *uzeti gutljaj* ‘take a sip’ exhibits a completely polar behavioral pattern, though not attaining the absolute polilexemicity grade of 1.

3. Discussion

While the above results indeed are very compelling, they are not in the least bit comprehensive. What remains to be heavily researched are the following questions:

- are some Croatian simple predicates (e.g. verbs with diminutive and delimitative prefixes as opposed to other verbs) more readily translated as complex predicate constructions
- does the corpus frequency of the targeted complex predicate constructions (e.g. *have a read < čitucnuti*) influence their frequency in the TT
- does language proficiency and language transfer influence the simple predicate/complex predicate construction ratio
- do the verbal components (e.g. *have, take, give, make*) form the most productive group in the TT

These questions often assert themselves guided by a researcher's intuition. Some of the possible hypotheses that tie in to the enumerated questions are:

- H1: Croatian simple predicates containing verbs with diminutive and delimitative prefixes are more readily translated as complex predicate constructions.
- H2: Those targeted complex predicate constructions that have a greater corpus frequency also have a greater TT frequency.
- H3: The level of proficiency in English affects the ratio between simple predicates and complex predicates in the TT. Students of English are likelier to produce a greater number of complex predicate constructions when compared to non-students of English.
- H4: Some verbal components of the targeted complex predicate constructions are more frequent than others.

4. Conclusion

Having been confronted with a Croatian-to-English translation task, the purpose of which was to translate Croatian sentences with simple predicates and complex predicate constructions into English, the 70 students of English who volunteered to take part in the research revealed an interesting (though already hypothesized) translational tendency. When given Croatian simple predicates (Translation Questionnaire A), they mostly translated them as simple predicates into English. Conversely, when faced with Croatian complex predicate constructions (Translation Questionnaire B), they largely turned to English complex predicate constructions. These results are in line with the previous findings by Gradečak-Erdeljić and Brdar (2012) and further corroborate the observation that English and Croatian inhabit opposite ends of the analyticity-syntheticity spectrum, at least with regards to their use of simple predicates and complex predicate constructions (for a new spoken register analytical tendency in Croatian linked to this phenomenon, consult Kežić 2018).

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Sažetak

Ovaj je rad traduktološka i kontrastivnolingvistička studija kojoj je cilj uspostaviti podudarnosti između hrvatskoga i engleskoga s obzirom na njihovu uporabu jednostavnih predikata i *složenopredikatskih konstrukcija* (Goldberg [1995](#)). Dok jednostavni predikati podrazumijevaju jednorječne glagole kao što su *prošetati*, *gricnuti* ili *pogledati*, složenopredikatske konstrukcije podrazumijevaju slučajeve u kojima se tzv. *lagani glagol* (npr. *baciti*, *uzeti*, *uputiti*) obično koristi u sprezi s brojevom imenicom izvedenom iz formalno istovjetnog glagola kako bi formirao višerječnu jedinicu kao što je *baciti šetnju*, *uzeti griz*, *uputiti pogled*. Slijedeći pretpostavku da je ustupanje prednosti jednostavnim predikatima ili složenopredikatskim konstrukcijama proizvod jezične tipologije (v. Gradečak-Erdeljić & Brdar [2012](#)), ova studija istražuje stupanj u kojem su tzv. *jedinstvene jedinice* (Tirkkonen-Condit [2004](#), Chesterman [2007](#)), tj. jedinice koje su formalno specifične za ciljni jezik, zastupljene u prijevodima s hrvatskog na engleski koje su proizveli ispitanici u prevoditeljskom zadatku.

Ključne riječi: lagani glagoli, složenopredikatske konstrukcije, jedinstvene jedinice, kontrastivna lingvistika, kontrastivna konstrukcijska gramatika, primijenjena konstrukcijska gramatika, traduktologija, jezična tipologija

APPENDIX

Translation Task A

In the following task you are asked to produce translations of the following textual snippets:

1. Ako ti se sviđa ova pjesma, baci sluš i na ostale s albuma.

2. Ako ti se sviđa ova pjesma, baci sluš i na ostale s albuma.

3. Odjednom je pao i ozlijedio ruku.

4. Fotograf mi nije dao dopuštenje za korištenje te fotografije.

5. Bila je toliko umorna da je odrijemala na dva sata.

6. Učitelj je dječaku dao pljusku po obrazu i rasplakao ga.

7. Skinuo se, otuširao i obukao strelovitom brzinom.

8. Zagrlila me i dala mi poljubac u obraz.

9. Sviđa mi se, ali moram baciti komentar na jednu sitnicu.

10. Francuzi više vole vino, a Amerikanci će radije „gucnuti“ pivo.

11. Našeg sina ne žele upisati u školu premda je vrtić za to dao preporuku.

12. Ja i prijatelj bacili smo okladu da će Hrvatska pobijediti.

13. Uzeo je griz hamburgera i zadovoljno se nasmiješio.

14. Zagrlio me kao da me vidio prvi put.

15. Posljednji put sam se bricnuo prije dva mjeseca.

16. Prije nego smo izašli iz kuće, bacila je pogled na moje uvenulo cvijeće.

17. Čim je zalajao, vlasnik se na njega naljutio.

18. Čitucnuo je sportske vijesti i odložio novine sa strane.

19. Taman je krenula da uzme gutljaj, kad ono beba počela plakati.

20. Čuvši moj vic, zahihotao se.

21. Prilegla je na kauč i nije se digla nekih pet sati.

22. Odlučili smo baciti vožnju do obale.

23. Pokucao sam teška antikna vrata i pričekao.

24. Žvaknuo je kost i ubrzo je ispljuvao.

25. Čekam goste, doći će oko podne pa ne smijem trenutno baciti spavanac.

Translation Task B

In the following task you are asked to produce translations of the following textual snippets:

1. Nakon što je shvatio što se događa, uputio mi je pogled.

2. Opet je pijucnuo od svog pića i pripalio cigaretu.

3. Nitko se nije usudio dati prijedlog za novog predsjednika.

4. Pogledao me zbunjeno i otišao.

5. Zavikao je i zadao mu udarac u trbuh, govoreći mu da će ga ubiti.

6. Pokrila se dekom i odspavala nekih 15 minuta.

7. Zastala je, a zatim ispustila krik kao da umire.

8. Za zagrijavanje bi netko mogao baciti neku dobru šalu da se svi nasmijemo.

9. Gricnuo je jabuku i zašutio.

10. Vidjela sam kako mu se tijelo grči kad mu je zadala šok.

11. Teško je dati usporedbu kad nemaš dovoljno podataka.

12. Mogla bi baciti koju fotku da vidimo kako ti stoji novi šal.

13. Kašljucnula je i pokrila usta desnom rukom.

14. Prošetao sam do trgovine i kupio sladoled.

15. Kako nismo bebe, ne trebamo baciti drijemku svaka dva-tri sata.

16. Zvrncula me nakon pet minuta i ispričala se zbog odgode.

17. Kad sam malo porazmislio, shvatio sam da sam pogriješio.

18. Mislim da ću prvo baciti tuš jer je još uvijek prevruće.

19. Nakon pomnog razmišljanja napokon ju je poljubio.

20. Vrijeme je da ozbiljno porazgovaramo.

21. Nasmiješila se i uzela liz sladoleda.

22. Slušnuo sam ih na Youtubeu i bio sam oduševljen.

23. O svemu smo otvoreno popričali.

24. Neki dan sam bacio šetnju sa psom i putem sreo prijateljicu.
