

**A Functional Approach to Teaching English Tenses to Speakers of Other
Languages**

The Case of Teaching English to Adults in Serbia

Dragana Stosic, MA
(Student ID: 45139989)

Supervised by: Marika Kalyuga, PhD

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Department of International Studies: Languages and Cultures
Macquarie University

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	4
Declaration.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	6
Glossary of Acronyms	7
List of Tables	8
List of Figures.....	9
1 Introduction.....	10
1.1 Overview, Objectives, and Purpose of the Research	10
1.2 Organisational Structure of the Thesis.....	13
2 Towards a Functional Approach to Describing English Tenses.....	15
2.1 The Systemic-Functional Theory of Language	15
2.1.1 Systems and metafunctions.....	16
2.2 Finite Verbal Groups and the Experiential Meaning: English Processes	18
2.3 Finite Verbal Groups and the Logical Meaning: Construing Time in English.....	19
2.3.1 Primary and secondary present in English.....	21
2.3.2 Implicit secondary tenses in English.	22
2.3.3 The English TENSE system and the logico-semantic relation of projection in clause complexes.	22
2.4 Concluding remarks	23
3 Towards a Functional Approach to Teaching English Tenses to L2 Learners.....	24
3.1 From Traditional to Functional Approaches to Grammar in SLA.....	24
3.2 A Functional Approach: Contextualised and Integrated Learning of Form and Function	25
3.3 Implementing a Functional Approach into Teaching English Tenses to L2 Learners ..	28
3.4 Potential Benefits and Challenges of Implementing a Functional Approach to Teaching Tenses	31
3.5 Concluding Remarks on the Reviewed Literature and Its Implications for This Research	33
4 Empirical Study: Research Methods.....	34
4.1 Research Design	34

	2
4.1.1 Reasons for choosing teachers as participants.....	34
4.1.2 Reasons for choosing questionnaires and interviews as data collection methods.....	35
4.2 Questionnaires	36
4.2.1 Designing the questionnaire.....	36
4.2.2 Administering the questionnaires.	37
4.2.3 Procedures for analysing the questionnaire data.....	38
4.3 Interviews.....	39
4.3.1 Designing the interview questions.	39
4.3.2 Administering the interviews.....	40
4.3.3 Procedures for analysing the interview data.	40
4.4 Validity and Reliability of the Study	41
5 Empirical Study: Results	42
5.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis	42
5.1.1 Teaching/learning context of the respondents and their learners.	42
5.1.2 Respondents' approaches to teaching grammar.....	44
5.1.3 Mastering the TENSE system: perceived difficulties.....	47
5.2 Interview Data Analysis.....	53
5.2.1 Interviewees' approaches to teaching tenses	53
5.2.2 Interviewees' attitudes towards the elements of the teaching/learning cycle.	56
5.2.3 Mastering the English TENSE system: perceived difficulties and possible solutions.	57
6 General Discussion	59
6.1 Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Implementing a Functional Approach to Teaching English Tenses to Adult L2 Learners in Serbia	59
6.2 Using the English TENSE System in Serbian EFL Classrooms for Adult Learners....	62
7 Conclusion	66
7.1 Answer to the Main Research Question	66
7.2 Implications of This Research	67
7.3 Limitations of This Research	68
7.4 Suggestions for Further Research	68

References.....	70
Appendix 1: English tenses included in the questionnaire: realisations in Serbian.....	76
Appendix 2: The participants recruitment advertisement.....	77
Appendix 3: Information sheet and the questionnaire	78
Appendix 4: Interview information and consent form.....	90
Appendix 5: Demographic information of the teachers participating in the empirical study...	92
Appendix 6: Questionnaire content data.....	93
Appendix 7: List of guiding questions for the follow-up interview	105
Appendix 8: Interview transcripts.....	107
Appendix 9: Ethics approval.....	118

Abstract

This thesis investigates how a pedagogy based on systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) can benefit teaching English tenses to adults in Serbia. Using a functional tense description within the SFL-based teaching/learning cycle should benefit language learners because it foregrounds the logical architecture of tense selection in English texts. There is a gap in research, however, exploring possible SFL applications in teaching tenses in English as a second/foreign language. Data for this study were collected through surveys with 24 English teachers of adult learners in Serbia, followed by semi-structured interviews with three survey respondents. The findings indicate that, despite the influence of a form-focused grammar pedagogy on their current practices, the participant-teachers believe in the benefits of a text-based approach to teaching grammar through scaffolding. The study also suggests that learners struggle when tense forms reflect more than one temporal relation, arguably due to the Serbian tense system. A functional pedagogy can provide English teachers with pedagogical tools for a text-based approach to teaching tenses, whereas the recursive SFL-based English tense system can enable learners to observe all time references influencing tense choice. One implication of this study is that a functional approach to teaching English tenses should be endorsed by English teachers in Serbia if provided with teacher training. Another implication is that such a pedagogy should assist in overcoming the difficulties arising from the learner's first language, which encourages the replication of this study involving different language groups.

Declaration

I certify that the research described in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree. To the best of my knowledge, all sources of information used and all assistance received while writing this thesis have been acknowledged.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee, reference number: 5201700156, on March 21, 2017 (see Appendix 9).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Hoslo', written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

Signature of Candidate

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Glossary of Acronyms

AMES	Adult Migrant English Service
BNC	British National Corpus
CEFR	Common European framework of reference for languages
CLIL	Content and language integrated learning
CLT	Communicative language teaching
COCA	Corpus of contemporary American English
CSWE	Certificate in Spoken and Written English
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a second language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First language
L2	Second language
SFL	Systemic-functional linguistics
SLA	Second language acquisition

List of Tables

Table 1: TRANSITIVITY types in English (COCA examples).....	18
Table 2: Tense selection and labelling (COCA examples).....	20
Table 3: COCA examples of implicit secondary tenses.	22
Table 4: General procedures for teaching grammar in the ESL classroom (Jones & Lock, 2011).	28
Table 5: English tenses included in the empirical study: SFL and traditional labels.	37
Table 6: Elements of a functional approach in the respondents' teaching philosophies.	46
Table 7: Perceived difficulties for L2 learners: individual tenses.	51
Table 8: Perceived difficulties for L2 learners: choosing the appropriate tense.....	52
Table 9: Perceived difficulties for L2 learners: tenses and the logico-semantic relation of projection in clause complexes.	53

List of Figures

Figure 1: Language content and context: strata and interrelations (adapted from Hasan, 2013, p. 275).	15
Figure 2: Logical TENSE potential and realisations in English (adapted from Matthiessen, 1996, p. 438).	19
Figure 3: The teaching/learning cycle (taken from Rothery & Stenglin, 1994, p. 8).	26
Figure 4: Visual representation of Text 19: a single timeline.....	29
Figure 5: Visual representation of Text 20: multiple timelines.	29
Figure 6: Visual representation of Texts 21-23: multiple timelines.	30
Figure 7: Summary of the survey respondents' demographic data.	38
Figure 8: The respondents' teaching/learning context.....	42
Figure 9: The learners' English social environment outside the classroom.	43
Figure 10: The learners' familiarity with grammatical structures.....	43
Figure 11: The respondents' use of authentic materials.	44
Figure 12: The respondents' use of context-driven activities.....	44
Figure 13: The respondents' support for an inductive approach to teaching grammar.	45
Figure 14: The respondents' support for a deductive approach to teaching grammar.....	45
Figure 15: Visual representation of English primary tenses.....	62
Figure 16: Visual representation of English secondary past.....	63
Figure 17: Visual representation of English secondary present (one previous time reference).	63
Figure 18: Visual representation of Text 27: a single timeline.....	63
Figure 19: Visual representation of Text 28: a single timeline.....	64
Figure 20: Multiple timelines and English secondary past.....	64

1 Introduction

Mastering English tenses poses a challenge for most speakers of other languages, which can be attributed mainly to the fact that languages encode time differently. As the tense system within a mother tongue (L1) realises time in a way natural to the speaker, the system found in a second language (L2) may be perceived as unnatural or even nonsensical (Hasan & Perrett, 2011). This thesis argues that an approach based on systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) can facilitate teaching/learning tenses in English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) by foregrounding the logical architecture of tense selection. It explores the case of teaching English tenses to adult L2 learners in Serbia to hypothesise the potential benefits of implementing an SFL-based pedagogy.

The following sections introduce the thesis by explaining the research undertaken (§1.1), and outlining its organisational structure (§1.2).

1.1 Overview, Objectives, and Purpose of the Research

English language teaching (ELT) methodologies provide guidelines for teaching tenses depending on their approach to teaching grammar. For instance, a traditional approach, which is still highly influential in ELT, focuses on language forms (Derewianka & Jones, 2010; McCabe, 2017), whereas communicative language teaching (CLT), a mainstream ELT pedagogy, focuses on language functions (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Current research in second language acquisition (SLA), however, indicates that purely form-focused teaching can lead to learners' failure to apply grammatical rules in communication, while excluding the form from ELT can cause learners to become trapped in their interlanguage (see, e.g., Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2009; Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Consequently, "approaches that integrate attention to form within communicative and content-based interaction receive the most support from classroom research" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 176). One such pedagogy is an SFL-based functional approach that observes forms in conjunction with the meaning they realise in social contexts.

Introduced by Michael Halliday in the 1960s, systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) argues that language is a network of systems representing a meaning potential from which speakers/writers choose to create a contextually appropriate spoken/written text, which in turn can be defined as language in social contexts (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1978, 2013; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014). Prior to the functional theory of language, Halliday's mentor, Firth (1964), differentiated between linguistic structures and systems – structures composed of elements, and systems consisting of a set of options from which to choose (Saussure's (1983) syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes,

respectively). As its name suggests, SFL is primarily concerned with systems, paying equal attention to used and unused options. This, however, does not mean that structure (i.e. form) is excluded from the functional analysis. Although SFL foregrounds functions as “the primary driving force in language use” (Fontaine, 2013, p. 5), it also describes structures used to express functions. In the case of realising time, the English TENSE¹ system described by Halliday and Matthiessen denotes simple and complex temporal relations between different time references (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2014, Matthiessen, 1983, 1984, 1996). The SFL analysis of English tenses delves into why a structure is selected from the TENSE system, how context and different intra-language systems influence the choice, and what implications this choice has on the overall meaning of the text regarding time.

The concept of interdependency between context and language use has made SFL an appealing theoretical framework for research on language acquisition, resulting in a functional approach to language teaching. In Australia, Jim Martin (1984) created a genre-based pedagogy, which was implemented and developed during the English literacy programs in Sydney schools for disadvantaged children (Martin, 2006; Rose, 2015; Rose & Martin, 2012; Rothery & Stenglin, 1994). Its teaching/learning cycle was defined as a text-based approach to teaching grammar using authentic texts² relevant to learners, scaffolding tasks, and SFL metalanguage (i.e. language about language). The application of the teaching/learning cycle extended to SLA through *The Certificates of Spoken and Written English* (CSWE) curriculum developed by Australian Adult Migration English Service (NSW AMES, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d; Feez, Hagan, & Joyce, 1993; Hagan et al., 1993), while the cycle itself has become the foundation of a functional approach in ELT (McCabe, 2017; McCabe, Gledhill, & Liu, 2015).

The research on a functional approach has been conducted with reference to teaching/learning English both as a first language (see, e.g., Butt et al., 2009; Halliday, McIntosh, & Stevens, 1964; Rose & Martin, 2012) and as a second/foreign language (see, e.g., Burns & De Silva Joyce, 1999; Halliday, 2007; Hasan, 2011a, 2011b; Hasan & Perrett, 2011; Hyon, 1996; Jones & Lock, 2011; Lock, 1996; Matthiessen, 2006; Perrett, 2000; Schleppegrell, 2013). In non-English speaking countries, genre pedagogy has expanded to some extent to the content-and-language-integrated-learning (CLIL) classrooms, yet these language programs tend to neglect teaching form, which is an inherent part of a functional approach (see McCabe, 2017; McCabe, Gledhill, & Liu, 2015).

Several systemic-functional linguists have used the English TENSE system to illustrate either specific SFL-based activities (see Jones & Lock, 2011) or cultural differences in expressing time (see Hasan, 2011a). Furthermore, Lock’s (1996) introduction to SFL for ESL

¹ BLOCK letters will be used to indicate a system name, which is common in SFL (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

² This thesis considers a text to be authentic if not created for language-teaching purposes (see, e.g., Jordan, 1997).

teachers includes a brief section on teaching and learning tenses stating that implementing a functional approach should benefit L2 learners. No research has been conducted, however, with a view to proposing teaching guidelines following an investigation of the benefits that an SFL-based approach can offer for teaching English tenses to L2 learners. According to Burns and Knox (2005), such research is necessary if teaching professionals are to implement it into their practice. Their findings indicate that more research ought to be done providing practical teaching guidelines because SFL-based researchers and teacher trainers “need to provide their students with explicit tools for pedagogy, in combination with the grammatical tools themselves” (p. 257). Although issued in 2005, Burns and Knox’s call for more pedagogical research is relevant today because a functional approach is still considered an alternative and it is relatively unknown outside Australia (see, e.g., Atkinson, 2011; McCabe, 2017). Therefore, it is important that further research be undertaken to explore and suggest how SFL-based grammatical tools can be applied in an ESL/EFL context.

This thesis aims to contribute to existing scholarship by investigating the following question:

How can an SFL-based functional approach benefit teaching/learning English tenses in the case of adult L2 learners in Serbia?

As the Serbian language is the mother tongue of 88% of the Serbian population (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2011), the vast majority of learners in Serbian ELT classrooms are Serbian native speakers. In Serbia, English is not an official language and has the status of a foreign language (EFL). It can be argued, however, that learning English is considered important and useful due to the learner’s “desire for commercial, cultural and technological contact” (Crystal, 2003, p. 5) with other nationalities. According to Ellis (2008) and Crystal (2003), the social value of learning English is more complex than the official status of English in the learner’s society as it has become a global language. Consequently, this thesis refers to learners of English as L2 learners if they are native speakers of other languages, while the terms ESL or EFL are used only to indicate whether English is learnt in a country where it is an official language.

I hypothesise that adult L2 learners in an EFL context, in this case Serbia, can benefit from a functional approach to teaching/learning English tenses. A functional approach should aid the learners in applying the knowledge of tenses in the English social environment, for it uses relevant authentic texts to contextualise learning. According to neurological and psychological research (see Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000), it should boost motivation and lead to transferrable knowledge because the logic behind tense selection is observed, analysed, and practised in the contexts of the learner’s interest. In EFL classrooms, increasing

the exposure to authentic texts and focusing on knowledge applicable in real-life situations should be of great value to L2 learners as SLA is likely to occur primarily in educational settings through instructed acquisition (Ellis, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

In answering the main research question, the research process has been divided into two stages. First, existing SFL literature is reviewed with reference to the English TENSE system and SLA research. The purpose of this stage is to define a functional approach to describing/teaching English tenses, and identify the potential benefits and challenges of its implementation in the ESL/EFL classroom for adult learners. Investigating how such a pedagogy can be beneficial in the context of Serbia also requires the understanding of current ELT approaches and challenges regarding teaching/learning tenses in Serbian EFL classrooms. Hence, the second stage of research involves an empirical study consisting of surveying and interviewing English teachers in order to explore these topics. The survey and interview questions do not relate explicitly to any SLA theory to avoid prejudiced answers and because it was deemed unlikely that the participants would be familiar with an SFL-based approach.

The objective of this thesis is to answer the main research question including the potential challenges that teaching professionals may face. In addition, I aim to propose teaching guidelines using the elements of a functional approach (i.e. SFL pedagogical tools) and the SFL descriptions of English tenses (i.e. SFL grammatical tools). Hence, this thesis will attempt to contribute to ELT in Serbia and the field of pedagogical SFL research in SLA. Apart from ELT in Serbia, the research results may also carry implications for teaching L2 learners coming from other Slavic linguistic backgrounds in the case of other EFL/ESL contexts. Ultimately, the findings should be of significance for future investigation of an SFL-based approach to teaching English tenses to speakers of any other language.

1.2 Organisational Structure of the Thesis

The organisation of the thesis reflects the research process described in §1.1. Chapters 2 and 3 review the literature relevant for the main research question and describe SFL-based grammatical and pedagogical tools. Chapter 2 explains the theoretical framework of SFL and provides the SFL description of the English TENSE system. Chapter 3 discusses the literature on a functional approach in conjunction with the SLA research pertinent to its possible implementation in ESL/EFL classrooms for adult learners. It focuses on defining the tools found within a functional pedagogy and explaining how they can be applied to teaching English tenses using the TENSE system described in chapter 2. Chapter 3 also identifies the potential benefits and challenges of implementing such a tense-teaching approach, ending with a summary of the literature review findings and their implications for the research question.

Chapter 4 deals with the research methods employed in the empirical study. It explains the research design and why such a design has been chosen. It also describes how the questionnaires and interviews were prepared, administered, and analysed. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the validity and reliability of the study.

Chapters 5 and 6 include the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in the empirical study. In chapter 5, charts, tables, and conceptual maps are used together with illustrative quotes to present the results. This is followed by a general discussion in chapter 6, which relates the findings of the study to the results of the research on the SFL-based English TENSE system, a functional language pedagogy, and relevant SLA studies. Chapter 6 discusses the potential benefits and challenges of implementing a functional approach to teaching English tenses in Serbian EFL classrooms for adult learners and proposes teaching guidelines using the SFL-based TENSE system.

Finally, chapter 7 answers the main research question and states the implications and limitations of the conducted research. It also provides directions for further research.

2 Towards a Functional Approach to Describing English Tenses

The discussion on a functional approach to describing and teaching tenses first requires a grounding in the underlying SFL theoretical framework. The scope of the SFL review in this chapter is prescribed by the main research question which explores how an SFL-based pedagogy can benefit teaching English tenses. While providing a comprehensive account of the theory would be desirable, it is unfortunately outside the scope of this thesis.³

In §2.1, the main SFL concepts will be explored with a view to explaining a systemic-functional description of the English language and locating the TENSE system within its system network. Then, the experiential and logical language meanings realised by English finite verbal groups will be reviewed in §2.2 and §2.3 before making concluding remarks in §2.4.

2.1 The Systemic-Functional Theory of Language

SFL considers language a *social semiotic*,⁴ defining it as a meaning potential realised in different social contexts as text. (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1978, 2013; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014). In Halliday's (2013) words, "semiotic activity involves semiotic choice: meaning this rather than meaning that" (p. 15). It is argued that speakers/writers construe *meanings* by choosing language structures (i.e. *wordings*) from different language systems. The choice of wordings depends on what meanings one wishes to convey in a *social context* that is determined by the topic of communication (*field*), the participants involved (*tenor*), and the medium of language used (*mode*).

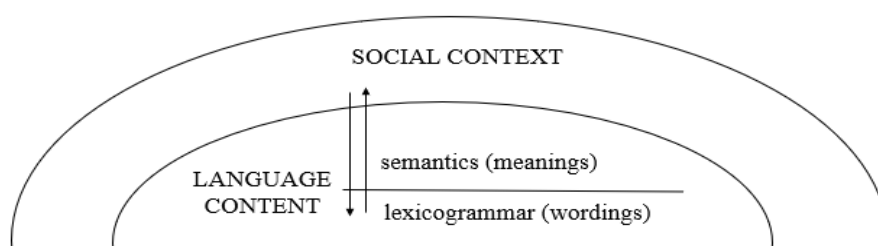


Figure 1: Language content and context: strata and interrelations (adapted from Hasan, 2013, p. 275).

In SFL, social context is the *language-external stratum*, while meanings and wordings represent the *intra-language content strata* of *semantics* and *lexicogrammar*, respectively (see Fig. 1).⁵ Figure 1 also illustrates that context, semantics, and lexicogrammar are interrelated "by a realisational dialectic whereby the higher stratum activates the lower and the lower construes the higher" (Hasan, 2013, p. 279). These three strata will be the focus of this thesis

³ For a comprehensive review of SFL, see Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

⁴ Terms commonly used in SFL and a functional approach will be *italicised* when introduced for the first time.

⁵ SFL positions grammar and lexis on the same continuum (see, e.g., Hasan, 1987).

in order to provide grammatical tools for explaining the logic behind the English way of expressing time realised by the TENSE system.

2.1.1 *Systems and metafunctions.*

The internal organisations of the intra-language strata consist of *units*, the basic semantic and lexicogrammatical units being *text* and *clause*, respectively (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). SFL argues that every text performs a set of language functions, i.e. *metafunctions*, which are realised by making choices from various language *system networks* originating from lexicogrammatical units.

On the semantic level, metafunctions within a text should be interpreted as semantic functional components, i.e. strands of meaning (see, e.g., Halliday, 1978). According to SFL, every time language is used, speakers/writers make choices to:

- represent their experience including the participants, processes, and circumstances (*ideational metafunction* comprising *the experiential and logical* subtypes);
- interact with others in accordance with the context (*interpersonal metafunction*); and
- organise the information in accordance with the context (*textual metafunction*) (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Metafunctions are central to the functional understanding of language because they are the conduit between a context and wordings (see, e.g., Eggins, 1994; Thompson, 2014). Each of the metafunctions is affected by different parts of the social context – ideational by the topic (e.g. future/present/past time); interpersonal by the participants (e.g. level of politeness); and textual by the language medium (e.g. written/spoken text). In turn, metafunctions are realised on the lexicogrammatical stratum by activating different language systems (e.g. the experience of time being realised by the TENSE system). There are several interpretations of the ideational metafunction found in SFL literature. It is variously interpreted as: (i) experiential, excluding the logical metafunction (see, e.g., Butt et al., 2009; Eggins, 1994); (ii) experiential as opposed to the logical defined as the fourth metafunction realised solely through the logico-semantic relations in clause complexes (see, e.g., Thompson, 2014); or (iii) ideational comprising the experiential and logical subtypes (see, e.g., Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This thesis uses the third classification, namely ideational, because of the metafunctional context of the English TENSE system (see §2.1.1.1).

On the lexicogrammatical level, there are four hierarchical *unit ranks* in English – clause (the highest), *group/phrase*, *word*, and *morpheme* – forming the relations of *constituency* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Constituency entails that (i) higher-rank units consist of one or more elements of the rank below it; (ii) units at each rank can form complexes; and (iii) higher-rank units can be downranked to become a constituent of another unit belonging to the same or lower rank. Each unit rank generates a number of interconnected system networks

construing language meanings, thus “systems at every rank are located in their metafunctional context” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 49).⁶ These networks can be measured with reference to how detailed they are – i.e. how long the systemic path is – which is known as *delicacy* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Hasan, 2013).

2.1.1.1 *The unit rank and metafunctional context of the English TENSE system.*

The English TENSE system belongs to the lexicogrammatical stratum originating at the verbal-group rank and is set in the logical subtype of the ideational metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2014, Matthiessen, 1983, 1984, 1996).

English verbal groups are headed by a *lexical verb*, carrying the experiential meaning of the process nature and holding the final structural position of *Event*⁷ (see, e.g., Bloor & Bloor, 2004). English finite verbal groups always include a verb functioning as *Finite* at the beginning of the phrase, while the positions of *Auxiliary(ies)* and *Polarity* are optional. Finites “locate the exchange within the semantic space that is opened up between speaker and listener” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 144), positioning processes with reference to the speaker’s certainty or speech time. While Finites expressing certainty are modal operators chosen from the MODALITY system, Finites expressing time are temporal operators selected from the TENSE system.⁸ English lexical verbs can occupy the positions of a temporal Finite and Event simultaneously (e.g. slept) if there are no other *auxiliary verbs* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

However, SFL argues that time realisation in English should be observed as a *univariate interdependency chain* rather than a *multivariate constituency structure* in which each element performs functions individually (see, e.g., Matthiessen, 1996). In Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) words:

(...) the structural labelling of the words that make up the verbal group is of limited value, (...) because it is the logical structure that embodies the single most important semantic feature of the English verb, its recursive tense system, and the elements of the logical structure are not the individual words but certain rather more complex elements (p. 398).

The English TENSE system is ideational because speakers use it to express their experience of time. It is, nevertheless, primarily logical because tense forms (i.e. structures) reflect the relations between two or more time references. The structures within the TENSE system differ in delicacy depending on the number of temporal relations they express (see §2.2).

The following sections in this chapter will focus on the English TENSE system in its ideational metafunctional context. Finite verbal groups will be analysed with reference to the

⁶ For a list of systems and their metafunctional contexts, see the function-rank matrix table (Table 2-9) in Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 87.

⁷ Capitalisation will be used to indicate a structural position, which is common in SFL (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

⁸ As the systems of FINITENESS, MODALITY, and POLARITY realise the interpersonal metafunction, they will not be discussed further. For discussions on verbal groups with reference to the textual and interpersonal metafunctions, see, e.g., Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

experiential and logical meanings to explore what systems can influence tense selection and how choices are made.

2.2 Finite Verbal Groups and the Experiential Meaning: English Processes

In the experiential structure of a clause, English finite verbal groups function as *Processes* (see Table 1). This position is pivotal as it determines the *process-participant configuration* from the system of TRANSITIVITY⁹ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Although a detailed classification of these configurations varies in SFL literature, Table 1 uses the examples from the corpus of contemporary American English (COCA) to outline the structures of four major TRANSITIVITY types (see, e.g., Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014).

Table 1: TRANSITIVITY types in English (COCA examples).

	Participant (name)	Process (nature)	Participant (name)	Participant (name)	Circumstances
Text 1:	Cortana (Actor)	is giving (Material)	you (Receiver)	the creeps. (Goal)	
Text 2:	He (Senser)	knows (Mental)	what he wants. (Phenomenon)		
Text 3:	She (Sayer)	told (Verbal)	me (Addressee)	they were at the movies. (Saying)	
Text 4:	I (Carrier)	will be (Relational)		stronger (Attribute)	soon.

As shown in Table 1, the number and nature of Participants depend on the Process, while Circumstances are optional elements. The nature of Process, however, is determined by the EVENT TYPE of a lexical verb. Lexical verbs can embody four main experiential domains – *doing* (including *happening*), *sensing*, *saying*, and *being* (including *having*). These options from the EVENT TYPE system activate the corresponding process-specific configurations from the TRANSITIVITY system:

- “Doing” (including “happening”) verbs → *Material processes* (see, e.g. Text 1);
- “Sensing” verbs → *Mental processes* (see, e.g. Text 2);
- “Saying” verbs → *Verbal processes* (see, e.g. Text 3); or
- “Being” (including “having”) verbs → *Relational processes* (see, e.g., Text 4) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999).

The nature of a Process can influence tense selection, which will be discussed in §2.3.

⁹ Contrary to the language interpretations which use transitivity to define if/how many complements a verb can have, SFL expands the concept of transitivity to the whole clause. It describes TRANSITIVITY as a system realising the experiential meaning by describing the process, participants, and circumstances of a text.

2.3 Finite Verbal Groups and the Logical Meaning: Construing Time in English

As stated in §2.1.1.1, English construes time through a logical ideational TENSE system at the rank of finite verbal groups. Figure 2 illustrates the logical potential of the English TENSE system. While a Hallidayan TENSE system network (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2014, Matthiessen, 1983, 1984, 1996) includes finite and non-finite/modalised systems, this thesis only addresses the finite temporal TENSE system (see the shaded area in Fig. 2).

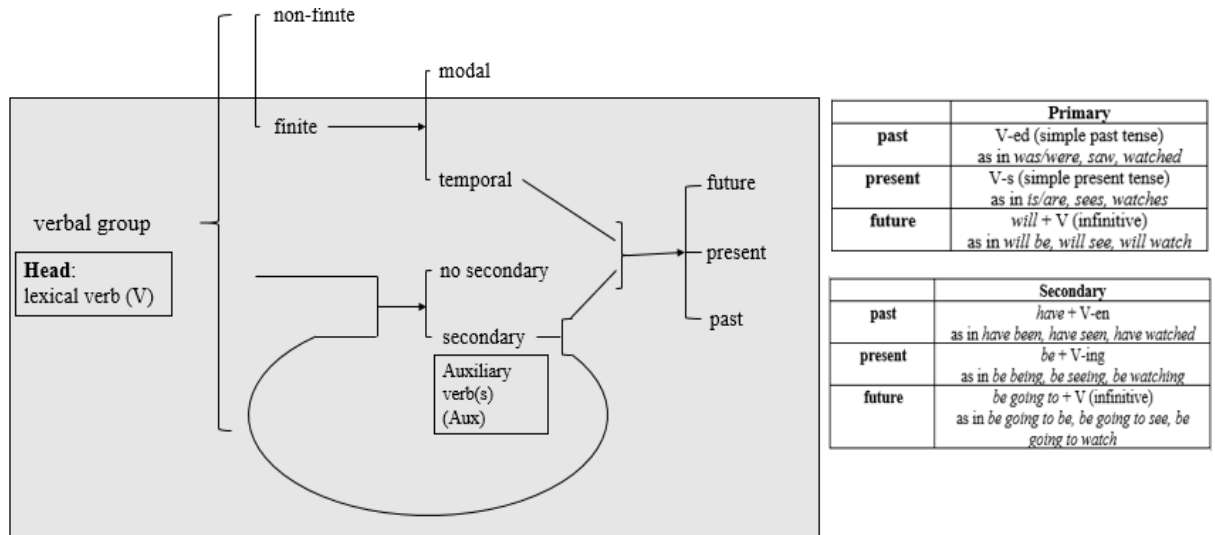


Figure 2: Logical TENSE potential and realisations in English (adapted from Matthiessen, 1996, p. 438).

There is criticism regarding the SFL description of English tenses as univariate interdependent verbal groups instead of multivariate constituent structures consisting of tense and aspect (see, e.g., Bache, 2008; Fawcett, 2000a, 2000b). The scope of this thesis, however, is limited to investigating how the use of the TENSE system of primary and secondary tenses, proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen, can benefit teaching/learning English tenses in the case of adult L2 learners in Serbia. Consequently, any discussion on why either description of tense structures – univariate or multivariate – may have more or less merit has been excluded from this thesis.

The main characteristics of the English TENSE system are *tripartition* and *recursiveness* (see Fig.2). Tripartition refers to the fact that a speaker can choose among past, present, and future. Recursiveness implies the possibility of making more than one choice using the same set of options to express complex temporal relations. Semantically, each choice from the system reflects a relation between two time references – T_x and T_y – in the following manner:

- T_y precedes T_x ($T_x > T_y$) → past
- T_y succeeds T_x ($T_x < T_y$) → future
- T_y neither precedes nor succeeds T_x ($T_x = T_y$) → present (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

English tenses encode time by relating *event time* (T_e) to *speech time* (T_s) through one or more temporal links (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2014; Matthiessen, 1983, 1984, 1996).¹⁰ Speech time should be understood as zero time in a framework of reference rather than the actual moment of speaking ($T_s=T_0$), while event time may refer to a single, repeated, or habitual instantiations.¹¹ Matthiessen (1983) also argues that, in English, it is not important whether time references (including event/speech time) are moments or intervals. The first choice made from the TENSE system, a *primary tense*, marks the time relative to speech time, becoming the first time reference. All subsequent choices, *secondary tenses*, are chosen relative to the previous time reference.¹² As shown in Figure 2, English primary and secondary tenses are realised differently.

Table 2 shows COCA examples of English tense forms consisting of a primary tense or a combination of a primary and one secondary tense. The analyses of these tense structures explain their logical architecture and names in SFL.

Table 2: Tense selection and labelling (COCA examples).

COCA example	What is the relation between T_1 and T_s ?	Does T_1 represent T_e ?	Tense name
Text 5: She <u>left</u> yesterday.	$T_s > T_1$ (past)	Yes;	Past ¹³
Text 6: He <u>leaves</u> every day.	$T_s = T_1$ (present)	Yes;	Present
Text 7: Billy <u>is</u> naive.	$T_s = T_1$ (present)	Yes;	Present
Text 8: A lot of them <u>will</u> leave.	$T_s < T_1$ (future)	Yes;	Future
Text 9: Robert <u>has left</u> them.	$T_s = T_1$ (present)	No; $T_1 > T_e$ (past)	Past-in-present
Text 10: She <u>is leaving</u> the house.	$T_s = T_1$ (present)	No; T_e includes T_1 (present) ¹⁴	Present-in-present
Text 11: Corker <u>is being</u> naive.	$T_s = T_1$ (present)	No; T_e includes T_1 (present)	Present-in-present
Text 12: She <u>is going to leave</u> next week.	$T_s = T_1$ (present)	No; $T_1 < T_e$ (future)	Future-in-present
Text 13: They <u>will have left</u> by Monday.	$T_s < T_1$ (future)	No; $T_1 > T_e$ (past)	Past-in-future

If the only time reference other than speech is event time ($T_1=T_e$), there is no need to choose again (see, e.g., Texts 5/6/7/8). If T_1 represents an additional time reference, however, one or

¹⁰ Tense selection in the case of expressing counterfactuality (e.g. conditionals) deviates from this logic because the choice is immediately pushed to secondary tense (Matthiessen, 1983, 1984). Also, tense selection in dependent temporal clauses does not allow for choosing the future option, which is an anomaly acknowledged by Matthiessen yet not explored any further. Due to the limited scope of this research, tense selection in conditionals and dependent temporal clauses will not be discussed.

¹¹ Matthiessen (1983) gives the example of travel itineraries in which every day of travel becomes a new zero time reference.

¹² In SFL, primary and secondary tenses can also be referred to as absolute and relative (see, e.g., Lock, 1996).

¹³ This thesis uses capitalisation to indicate tense names.

¹⁴ T_e includes rather than represents T_1 (see §2.3.1).

more secondary tenses need to be chosen relative to the previous choice until event time has been located (e.g., T_e precedes T_1 in Texts 9/13; T_e includes T_1 in Texts 10/11; and T_e succeeds T_1 in Text 12). In Texts 9/10/11/12/13, there is no third choice because the link between speech and event time has now been established. The last column in Table 2 shows that SFL-based tense names are formed starting from the last choice made from the TENSE system.

Introducing time references other than event or speech time indicates their importance for the topic (i.e. field) of a text. For instance, Matthiessen (1984) names two experiential distinctions – event v. result time and unplanned v. planned events – that can have influence on choosing an additional present time reference as the primary tense instead of a past or future event time. Depending on what feature a speaker wants to focus on, they will choose accordingly – for instance, selecting Past-in-present in Text 9 highlights the present result, while Future-in-present in Text 12 stresses the existence of the present plan.

Hypothetically, secondary tenses could be chosen an indefinite number of times, extending the systemic path indefinitely. SFL limits the delicacy of the TENSE system, however, by introducing the following stop rules allowing for 36 finite chain types (i.e. tense forms) in English:¹⁵

- secondary future can occur once in the chain;
- secondary present ends the chain; and
- the same tense cannot occur twice consecutively unless it is a combination of a primary and a secondary tense (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The TENSE system represents a meaning potential, hence not all tense forms are present equally in the English text. Halliday (2013) and Matthiessen (1983, 1984, 1996) acknowledge that more delicate instances are much rarer and more difficult to find in corpora. They state that the most frequent tense forms consist of a primary tense or a combination of a primary with one secondary tense. In other words, a form such as *will have been working* is far less likely to occur than *will work*.

2.3.1 Primary and secondary present in English.

Texts 6/7/10/11 show that primary and secondary present denote slightly different temporal concepts. Matthiessen (1984) posits that the meaning of simultaneity between T_s and T_1 expressed by English primary present can be threefold: they can coexist, overlap, or include one another. He states that English secondary present, though, realises only the *inclusion meaning* denoting that event time includes the previous time reference(s).

Primary and secondary present in English constitute unmarked choices for different experiential domains. As primary present can be perceived as unfocused in time (Hasan, 2011a),

¹⁵ For a list of English tenses in SFL, see Table 6-13 in Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 401-403.

the dynamic nature of Material processes requires secondary present to sharpen that focus, which makes the addition of secondary present an unmarked choice for these processes (e.g., Text 10). In the absence of secondary present, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe the meaning of primary present in Material processes as denoting repetitiveness or habituality (e.g., Text 6). They argue that primary present is an unmarked choice for Mental, Verbal, and Relational processes as they are compatible with its meaning (e.g., Text 7). Adding secondary present for these Processes is highly marked as it implies a strong temporal focus (i.e. temporariness) relative to another time reference (e.g., Text 11).

2.3.2 *Implicit secondary tenses in English.*

SFL refers to English *implicit secondary tenses* as exceptional cases in which the actual time of an event does not reflect the tense selection (see Table 3).¹⁶ Implicit secondary tenses represent *conditioned* rather than *default* tense meanings, which means they occur under limited and strictly defined contextual circumstances (Hasan, 2011a).

Table 3: COCA examples of implicit secondary tenses.

COCA examples	Tense	Implicit secondary tense	Circumstances
Text 14: He <u>left</u> before I could get in.	Past	Past-in-past	<i>before</i> [anteriority adverbial]
Text 15: The fleet <u>departs</u> tomorrow.	Present	Future-in-present	<i>tomorrow</i> ; [timetable]
Text 16: He patiently <u>passes</u> the ball.	Present	Present-in-present	[sports commentary]

Table 3 gives examples of English implicit tenses and describes the conditions under which they can occur:

- Past-in-past in the presence of a time adverbial expressing anteriority/posteriority (e.g. Text 14);
- Future-in-present in the presence of a time adverbial indicating future if the focus is on the present arrangement or schedule (e.g. Text 15); and
- Present-in-present in sports commentaries (e.g. Text 16) (see, e.g., Matthiessen, 1984).

2.3.3 *The English TENSE system and the logico-semantic relation of projection in clause complexes.*

As mentioned in §2.1.1, the language logical meaning is also realised through relations between clauses forming *clause complexes*. These relations can be defined as *paratactic* if independent

¹⁶ Matthiessen (1984) also mentions tense metaphors – historic present and past denoting politeness – as cases in which the actual event time does not reflect tense selection. However, they will not be discussed because they are used to construe meaning other than actual event time and they are usually not included as ESL/EFL tense-related grammar topics.

clauses are combined, or *hypotactic* if it is a combination of independent and dependent clauses (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This section discusses the *logico-semantic relation* of hypotactic *projection* (traditional indirect/reported speech) and its influence on tense selection through *tense sequencing*.

In clause complexes involving a hypotactic projection, the past event time of an independent (*projecting*) clause projects its “past” value to the zero time for tense choice in the dependent (*projected*) clause (see, e.g., Matthiessen, 1996).

Text 17: He thought that was the right move. (COCA)

Text 18: She said she knew. (COCA)

For instance, primary past has been chosen in the projected clauses of Texts 17/18 because they neither precede nor succeed the past event time of thinking/saying in the projecting clauses.

As only Mental and Verbal processes can project clauses (see, e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), the occurrence of these clause complexes is limited to the independent clauses containing verbal groups functioning as these Processes.

2.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter has reviewed the SFL theory of language to provide a foundation for a functional approach to describing grammar, namely tenses, as a meaning potential realised in social contexts. The English TENSE system at the verbal-group rank has been described as a logical ideational system for construing the experience of time based on recursiveness and tripartition. Therefore, the focus of this chapter has been on discussing the SFL-based grammatical tools, whereas the following chapter will address the SFL-based pedagogical tools.

3 Towards a Functional Approach to Teaching English Tenses to L2 Learners

To investigate the potential benefits of implementing an SFL-based functional approach to teaching English tenses in Serbian EFL classrooms, such an approach will first be reviewed and defined in the SLA context. In §3.1, a brief overview of major SLA theories with reference to teaching grammar will be provided.¹⁷ This will be followed by a detailed discussion on a functional approach (§3.2) and its applications to teaching the SFL-based TENSE system (§3.3). Next, the potential benefits and challenges surrounding the implementation of a functional approach in ESL/EFL classrooms will be hypothesised (§3.4).¹⁸ The chapter ends with the concluding remarks and implications for this research (§3.5).

3.1 From Traditional to Functional Approaches to Grammar in SLA

Influenced by different linguistic theories, the emergence of new SLA approaches has always been associated with how they compare to existing pedagogies with reference to teaching form and function. It has been accepted unanimously that mastering a language implies using language both accurately and effectively in communication. Nonetheless, there has been debate among teaching professionals concerning the role that grammar instruction should have in the second language curriculum. As Larsen-Freeman (2003) explains, “the debate has not been about the goal of instruction but rather about the means to the end” (p. 6). Broadly speaking, the distinction can be made between *traditional* (form-focused) and *notional-functional* (function-focused) approaches. This classification can be perceived as overly simplistic, however, as ELT approaches to teaching grammar are positioned along the cline between form and function (see, e.g., Burns, 2016; Burns & De Silva Joyce, 1999; Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Lock, 1996).

A traditional perspective is rooted in the descriptions of written Latin and Greek based on the constituency rules defining how language elements are combined (Derewianka, 2001). Such structure-centred pedagogies include grammar-translation and structural approaches, which maintain that syntactic accuracy is achieved by teaching rules in a pre-defined sequential order (Bloomfield, 1933; Fries, 1945). Under the influence of behaviourism (see Lado, 1964), American structuralists developed the contrastive analysis hypothesis, claiming that all L2 errors could be explained and predicted by the habits acquired in L1. This implied that SLA could be achieved through extensive practising of L2 patterns. It is important to mention that

¹⁷ Due to the word limit and scope of this thesis, the review of SLA literature regarding the influence of different theories and factors on L2 teaching/learning is limited to the theories/studies essential for discussing the possible implementation of a functional approach in Serbian ELT. For a comprehensive review of SLA research, see Ellis (2008) and Dörnyei (2005).

¹⁸ Ibid.

traditional pedagogy and terminology remain prevalent in today's ESL classrooms while teaching grammar (see, e.g., McCabe, 2017).

In the second half of the 20th century, SLA research started challenging the traditional perspective. Chomsky's (1965) universal grammar rejected the behaviourist theory of language acquisition as acquiring habits by introducing the concept of universal linguistic capacity that children possess to acquire language during the critical period of their development.¹⁹ Despite being a highly influential theory in linguistics, the applicability of universal grammar in the context of SLA is limited because of its focus on *linguistic competence* (i.e. a set of innate universal rules) rather than *performance* (i.e. language use) (Burns, 2016; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

On the other hand, Hymes (1971) pioneered the shift in SLA pedagogies towards exploring the language functions by stressing the importance of language use and *communicative competence*. Cognitive and systemic-functional linguistics have rejected the existence of innate universal rules and turned their focus to exploring language performance in SLA (see, e.g., Halliday, 1978, 2007). According to Halliday, both bodies of research claim meanings influence forms. A cognitive perspective foregrounds the mechanism of semantic conceptualisation, whereas a functional perspective highlights the influence of social environment. Cognitive linguistics has been applied in a cognitive approach to ELT, and "much current SLA research and theorizing shares a strongly cognitive orientation" (Doughty & Long, 2003, p. 4). On the other hand, SFL has inspired communicative language teaching (CLT) and a more alternative functional approach (see J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT should not be identified with a functional approach because it eventually abandoned the explicit teaching of form and accepted the comprehensive input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), which states that language can be acquired by sufficient exposure to L2 at the appropriate level.

3.2 A Functional Approach: Contextualised and Integrated Learning of Form and Function

From a functional point of view, learning a new language requires learning a new systemic path along which meanings are transferred from context to wording and vice versa. In Halliday's (2005) words, "To know a language is to have mastered the ability to mean" (p. 304). It is of great importance that L2 learners be exposed to authentic materials because "the relationship between a formal item and its meaning in one language is seldom if ever replicated in another one" (Hasan, 2011a, p. 339). Thus, teaching grammar should be contextualised and teachers should "think about grammar as a way of describing regular language patterns and the functions these patterns achieve" (Butt et al., 2009, p. 41).

¹⁹ According to the critical period hypothesis, the period during which people have a capacity to acquire a native-like proficiency in language ends around puberty or even earlier (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

An SFL-based pedagogy insists that English authentic materials be carefully chosen and adequately analysed to facilitate the learner's success in English social contexts (Halliday, 2007; Hasan & Perrett, 2011). A language educator should make use of SFL metalanguage and the concepts of genres (see, e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012), delicacy (see, e.g., Burns & De Silva Joyce, 1999), and metafunctions (see, e.g., Butt et al., 2009) to determine what content, in what order, and how to teach.

Martin (1984) defines *genre* as “a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our [their] culture” (p. 25). In designing the English literacy programs for Sydney schools, SFL researchers (see Rose & Martin, 2012; Rothery & Stenglin, 1994) identified different genres found in education such as recounts, reports, or explanations.²⁰ Nevertheless, this is not an exhaustive list of genres for there are as many genres as there are types of social activities in one's culture (Eggins, 1994). The intent of the “Sydney School” researchers was to analyse the texts found in different school subjects and group them according to their social purpose (i.e. genre) so that teachers and students could use them to analyse how language is used in a relevant context. In other words, the goal of this project was simultaneous learning through language and about language.

As stated in §1.1, the “Sydney School” program resulted in the creation of the SFL-based teaching/learning cycle (see Fig. 3), which represents the foundation of a functional approach to ELT. This pedagogical model is an inductive approach based on *scaffolding* and can be traced back to the work of Vygotsky, and later, Bruner. Vygotsky (1978) perceived learning as a collaboration between an expert and an apprentice, while Bruner's (1983) interactionist theory argued that children's language development is facilitated by parents' support in communication.

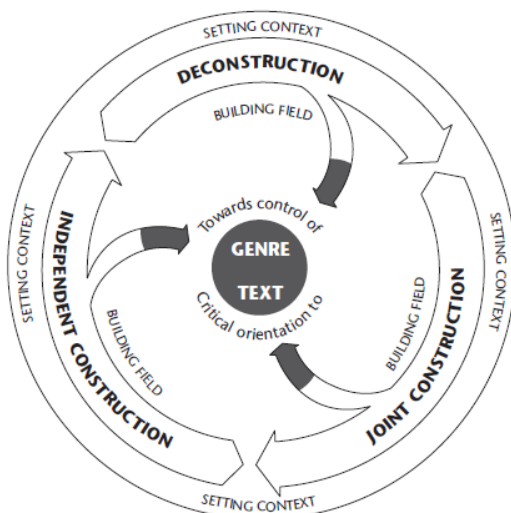


Figure 3: The teaching/learning cycle (taken from Rothery & Stenglin, 1994, p. 8).

²⁰ For a list of the genres defined during the “Sydney School” project, see Rose and Martin, 2012, p. 312.

Texts represent the basis for teaching since SFL defines texts as language in context (see §2.1). They are chosen based on the genre in which an L2 learner is likely to use the observed language (see, e.g., Byrnes, 2014; Hasan, 2011b; Hasan & Perrett, 2011). The teaching/learning cycle consists of three stages during which learners:

- deconstruct the text with the teacher's help while observing language meanings and analysing how language forms realise them using SFL metalanguage for explanations (*deconstruction stage*);
- construct a similar text in the same genre with the teacher's support and through group work (*joint-construction stage*); and
- construct independently a text in the same genre (*independent-construction stage*).

Being cyclic, the model can be used starting from a different stage depending on teaching/learning needs. For instance, Burns (2016) states that a teacher may choose to begin a lesson by asking learners to construct a genre-specific text (e.g. complaint letter) in order to identify the common problem areas to work on during the deconstruction stage. Thus, it is a learner-centred method building upon the learner's existing knowledge by promoting engagement and critical thinking through collaborative work in relevant authentic contexts.

SFL metalanguage used throughout the teaching/learning cycle is a meaning-oriented language, which enables a simultaneous learning of form and function (see, e.g. Schleppegrell, 2013). A functional approach to teaching grammar, however, does not reject traditional grammar or terminology. Instead, it aims to build upon it by introducing language descriptions and metalanguage relatable to L2 learners, which means that a functional approach can be applied even in traditional curricula (Butt et al., 2009; Derewianka & Jones, 2010). The previous chapter showed that SFL includes traditional unit-rank labels but enriches them with function labels such as Circumstances or Verbal processes, reflecting the learner's experiences outside the language classroom. Supplementing traditional terminology with a meaning-oriented metalanguage should benefit the learning process because it can help learners realise "that there is an underlying logic to the language they are learning – that grammar is rational" (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p. 15).

Current SFL pedagogical literature focuses on developing the cycle and providing teachers with ideas how to implement it in their classrooms through group/situation-based activities and using visual representations such as colouring or underlining (Burns & De Silva Joyce, 1999; Butt et al., 2009; Jones & Lock, 2011; Lock, 1996). In the SLA field, Jones and Lock (2011) proposed six general procedures to be used either separately or combined throughout the teaching/learning cycle for noticing, exploring, and practising grammar in a meaningful context (see Table 4).

Table 4: General procedures for teaching grammar in the ESL classroom (Jones & Lock, 2011).

Procedure	Description
<i>Comparing</i>	Learners are given two texts differing in one situational or systemic category (e.g. now v. then).
<i>Sequencing</i>	Learners are given a text in which the order of elements has been altered.
<i>Gap-filling</i>	Learners are given a text with gaps to fill. Their answers are then compared with the options from the original text. The activity is used as a basis for discussing the appropriateness of different options and not as a testing tool.
<i>Restructuring</i>	Learners remove parts of a text and then try to build it up with the focus on one grammatical feature (e.g. tenses).
<i>Elaborating</i>	Learners add more elements to the basic structure of the text to make communication more effective (e.g. adding more adjectives to observe/practise adjective order or adding more events to observe/practise narration)
<i>Transforming</i>	Learners transform one structure into another.

3.3 Implementing a Functional Approach into Teaching English Tenses to L2 Learners

Although Lock (1996) remarks that the SFL system of primary and secondary tenses should help learners realise that tense selection is not arbitrary, no study proposing SFL-based guidelines to teaching English tenses has been identified in the course of this research. This section therefore suggests new notions of how genre and delicacy can be used to choose texts for teaching tenses and how the English TENSE system can be used for analysis within the teaching/learning cycle.

If an ESL/EFL learner's goal is success in their English social environment outside the classroom, the more frequent a tense form appears in this environment, the more relevant it is for learners. In general, it could be argued that the level of delicacy of the tenses taught should increase with the proficiency level of learners as more delicate tenses are less common in communication (see §2.3). In addition, default meanings of tenses, which are more frequent, should be taught before the conditioned (Hasan, 2011a). Not all L2 learners are equally exposed to a certain tense form, however, because they need English for different social contexts. Thus, a needs analysis should also be conducted to investigate the *teaching/learning context* (e.g. learner's proficiency or learning goals) and reveal common genres found in the learner's English social environment in order to choose the appropriate texts for teaching. A more precise genre classification should be made for studying a specific tense or a group of tenses typically found in these texts. For example, business English courses can benefit from news articles on finance, while categorising the articles into recounts, explanations, and predictions can be useful for exploring past, present, and future tenses, respectively.

Teaching English tenses through the SFL-based teaching/learning cycle means noticing, exploring, and practising the English TENSE system in its metafunctional context. It can be argued that the semantic precedence between time references makes timelines the most suitable tool for illustrating simple and complex temporal relations. Timelines can be used as visual aids in all three stages of the teaching/learning cycle because students can:

- transfer tense forms from a text onto timeline(s), marking the relevant time references to discover logical patterns and explore the wording-meaning relations during the text-deconstruction stage; and
- use the illustrations from the text-deconstruction stage to help them practise the same logic for construing time by transferring the time references on the timelines into tense forms during the joint and independent text-construction stages.

Timelines in conjunction with SFL tense labels can provide language learners with the opportunity to observe all time references affecting tense selection. For instance, the illustration of Past-in-future realised in Text 19 (see Fig. 4) enables learners to explore how primary future (realised as *will*) marks the first time reference after speech time, whereas secondary past (realised as *have finished*) positions event time as preceding the first time reference.

Text 19: She will have finished the report by Monday.²¹

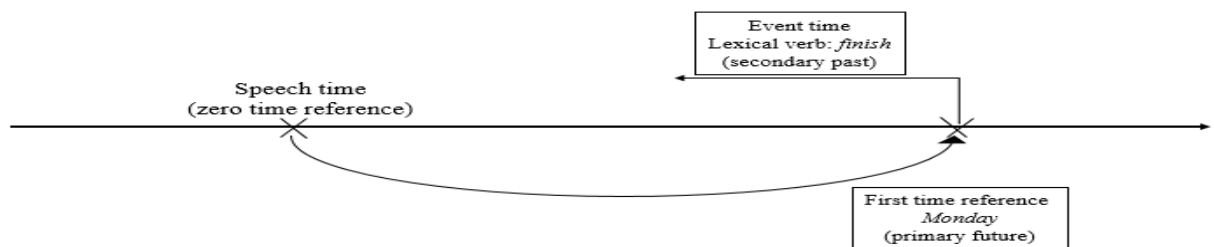


Figure 4: Visual representation of Text 19: a single timeline.

The logical architecture of tense selection can be presented either on a single timeline (see Fig. 4) or on multiple timelines by introducing a new timeline for each time reference (see Fig. 5/6). The possibility of including several timelines is raised by the recursiveness of the TENSE system. Using multiple timelines can be beneficial for teaching/learning indirect/reported speech (see, e.g., Fig. 5) or highlighting patterns that would be more difficult to notice on one timeline (see, e.g., Fig. 6).

Figure 5 can be used to help L2 learners rationalise the choice of Past-in-past in the projected clause of Text 20 (*had watched*) as a result of the event occurring before the past time reference set by the Verbal process (*said*) in the projecting clause.

Text 20: He said that he had watched that movie.

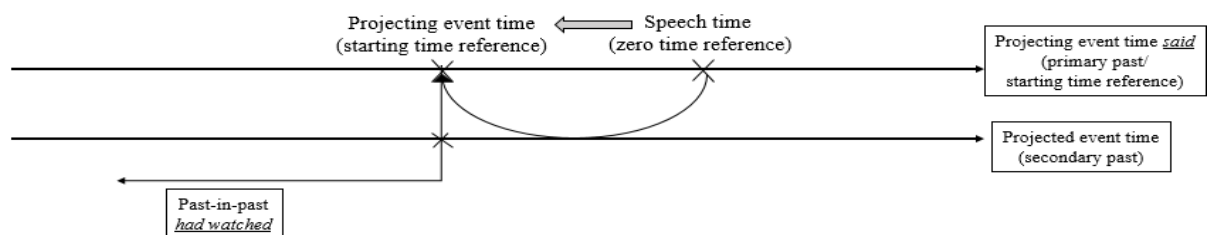


Figure 5: Visual representation of Text 20: multiple timelines.

²¹ Unless a source has been cited, the *texts* providing illustrations in this thesis have been invented.

Likewise, a comparison of tense forms sharing the same secondary tense can be facilitated by using multiple-timeline analysis. The first timeline can be used for all forms to indicate the differences in the first time reference, whereas separate timelines can be introduced below to highlight the similarities. Figure 6 shows a comparative multiple-timeline analysis of forms with secondary present in Texts 21/22/23. Shading the first time reference on the additional timelines pinpoints the inclusion meaning that is construed by secondary present (be + V-ing) regardless of the time set by the primary tense, which is realised through the temporal operator (was, am, will).²²

Text 21: I was watching TV at 7.

Text 22: I am watching TV now.

Text 23: I will be watching TV at 10.

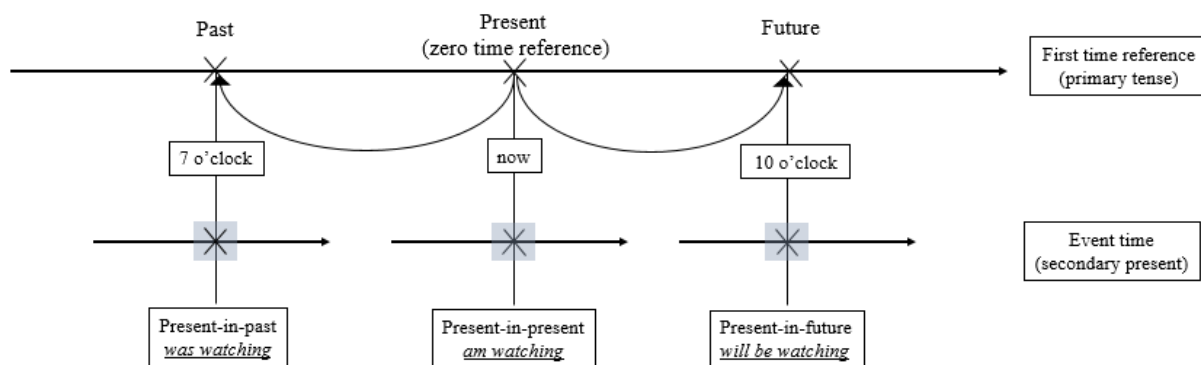


Figure 6: Visual representation of Texts 21-23: multiple timelines.

Despite its primarily logical nature, the English TENSE system should be taught in conjunction with the experiential metafunction because the Process type can influence tense selection. Butt et al. (2009) put forward the fact that the Process classification can have significant benefits for learning English tenses since a traditional approach tends to use Material processes as a rule while treating other Processes as exceptions. Using probing questions about the nature of Processes and activities such as colouring and underlining to raise the awareness of the experiential language meaning can help learners understand the markedness/unmarkedness of primary and secondary present (see §2.3.1). In addition, these activities can enable learners to observe how Mental and Verbal processes can project event time in another clause (see §2.3.3).

²² Shading the “X” on a timeline illustrates that event time includes the previous time reference, rather than the distinction between a moment and an interval.

3.4 Potential Benefits and Challenges of Implementing a Functional Approach to Teaching Tenses

Only a few empirical studies (see, e.g., Burns & Knox, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2013) have focused on class observations of the SFL-based activities involving teaching verbal groups to L2 learners. However, the potential benefits and challenges of implementing a functional approach to teaching English tenses can also be informed by a discussion of what such an approach involves.

Arguably, the main challenge of adopting an SFL-based functional approach to teaching grammar is the fact that most teachers outside Australia are unfamiliar with it. For a long time, traditional approaches have been “a shared point of reference in the [ELT] profession” (Derewianka & Jones, 2010, p. 10) and McCabe (2017) suggests that the complexity of SFL metalanguage might be initially off-putting. Burns and Knox’s study (2005) also indicates that a lot of support and teacher training is required. Therefore, the SFL-based pedagogy should be introduced gradually as an addition to current teaching practices to avoid overwhelming both teachers and learners. Derewianka and Jones (2010) argue that SFL metalanguage should eventually prove attractive as it reflects teachers and learners’ everyday experience.

The use of relevant authentic texts should benefit learning English in ESL/EFL contexts. As mentioned in §1.1, not only should it ensure greater exposure to English, but it should also increase the learner’s motivation because it leads to acquiring knowledge applicable in real-life situations. Lightbown and Spada (2006) note that learners’ motivation can be driven by learning goals and learning experiences. While observing SFL-based English lessons on verbal groups to Arabic L1 speakers, Schleppegrell (2013) reported that the learners found the activities motivating and engaging because the process had involved metalanguage and contexts to which they could relate. Similarly, Bransford et al. (2000) consider knowledge gained in a context resembling the language use outside the classroom to be motivating and transferable because the learners find it useful. Increasing the chances of learners’ appropriate use of language structures in communication would also mean addressing the *inert knowledge problem*, which refers to the learner’s difficulty in applying grammatical rules in communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

A functional approach also means opting for an inductive and content-based pedagogy instead of deductive and rule-based traditional approaches. An inductive approach is founded on the constructivist theory positing that a person constructs knowledge based on their experiences (see, e.g., Biggs, 1996; Bruner, 1961; Vygotsky, 1978). According to constructivists, successful learning occurs when content relevant to learners at a level within

the *zone of proximal development*²³ is provided so learners can integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge through cooperation with their educators and peers. In an EFL context, a study on the effectiveness of constructivism-based instructions was conducted during preparatory English courses at a university in Turkey (Altun & Büyükduman, 2007). The researchers concluded that, in general, the activities had been received positively and led to longer knowledge retention. Nevertheless, the same research revealed that the participants who faced the pressure of taking exams found an inductive approach to be time-consuming and of little use. This indicates the possibility of teachers and students' negative attitude towards a functional approach to teaching during exam preparation courses.

Apart from motivation, learners bring into the classroom their intelligence, aptitude, learning style, personality, feelings, age, and beliefs. All these factors may influence the success of language learning, which has been studied within the SLA research (see, e.g., Dörnyei, 2005). Lightbown and Spada (2006) state that all learners can achieve success "given the right opportunities" (p. 57), so a functional approach should be able to improve the chances of success in mixed-ability classes through collaboration.

A study involving adult L2 learners of French (see Wesche, 1981) reported that the learners with analytical skills benefited from focusing on form, while those with good memory benefited from a function-based teaching approach. This implies that grouping students of different aptitudes in the joint text-construction phase should yield positive results. Visual learners could gain the most out of the use of timelines, while the use of spoken text and situation-based activities should also cater for other learning styles. At the same time, it can be hypothesised that extrovert learners would enjoy the class interaction more than their introvert counterparts, which may be challenging for teachers of introvert learners.

Finally, the learner's age has been the focus of SLA research, mostly with reference to the critical period hypothesis (see §3.1). This is not particularly relevant to this thesis, however, as SFL is concerned with achieving success in communication rather than achieving perfection (Halliday, 2007). Instead, the adult age of learners is included as a factor in terms of their fully developed L1 linguistic system, their tendency to fear making mistakes, and previous exposure to traditional approaches to grammar in L2 learning (see, e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

²³ The term *zone of proximal development* was coined by Vygotsky (1978) and refers to the level higher than that of the learner yet attainable in a collaboration with the teacher and/or more proficient peers.

3.5 Concluding Remarks on the Reviewed Literature and Its Implications for This Research

It can be concluded that a functional approach to teaching English tenses entails using relevant authentic texts and the teaching/learning cycle to explore how time is realised by the English TENSE system. The SFL concepts of delicacy and genre should be employed to determine what teaching materials are suitable for a given teaching/learning context. Once selected, the texts should be deconstructed and then jointly/independently constructed with the focus on Processes realised by verbal groups. Questions probing the nature of Processes and underlining/colouring activities should be used to raise the learner's awareness of the relation between Processes and tense selection. Tense forms should be represented on single and multiple timelines to notice, analyse, and practise the English logic of expressing time through primary and secondary tenses. This approach can be viewed as an inductive and learner-centred teaching of tenses as a resource for construing time in relevant authentic contexts. Other teaching elements of a functional approach include promoting the learner's engagement and critical thinking as well as building upon the learner's existing knowledge through scaffolding and collaboration.

As stated in §1.1, this research investigates how an SFL-based functional approach can benefit teaching English tenses to adult L2 learners in Serbian EFL classrooms. The SFL and SLA literature presented in the second and third chapters imply that this pedagogy should increase exposure to relevant contexts and provide English teachers with the pedagogical and grammatical tools for simultaneous teaching of form and function. This should lead to longer information retention, increased learner motivation, and applicable knowledge outside the EFL classroom facilitating success in the English social environment. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the unfamiliarity with SFL and the influence of traditional approaches to grammar in terms of teacher training, metalanguage, assessment tools (i.e. exams), and learners' expectations may pose challenges in the implementation of a functional approach.

The empirical study presented in the following two chapters will further investigate the main research question by exploring current teaching practices, beliefs, and opinions of English teachers in Serbia. This thesis argues that a functional approach can benefit the EFL context of Serbia if the findings indicate that its teaching elements (i.e. pedagogical tools) would be compatible with existing approaches and perceived as beneficial. Moreover, the SFL-based tense explanations (i.e. grammatical tools) would need to be suitable for dealing with the perceived difficulties arising from mastering English tenses in the case of adult L2 learners in Serbia.

4 Empirical Study: Research Methods

The empirical study presented in this thesis is a predominantly qualitative mixed-method research in which data have been collected sequentially through surveys and semi-structured interviews with English teachers in Serbia. This chapter discusses the research methods applied in this study.

First, a description and justification of the research design will be provided (§4.1), followed by an explanation of data collection methods and analysis procedures (§4.2 and §4.3). Lastly, there will be a discussion of the validity and reliability of this study (§4.4).

4.1 Research Design

The empirical study enquires about current methodologies and issues concerning teaching English tenses to adult L2 learners in Serbia. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the objective is to understand this teaching/learning context in order to investigate how a functional approach can be of a benefit to it. A mixed-method study involving qualitative and quantitative analyses has been chosen as it enables more comprehensive and robust results (Creswell, 2003; Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). The method, however, is predominantly qualitative because it is suited for researchers whose ultimate goal is the exploration and description of phenomena as the basis for hypothesising the implementation of a new pedagogical model in SLA (Merriam, 1998). In other words, the decision to conduct qualitative inquiry has been reached due to the lack of research on SFL applications in teaching English tenses to L2 learners. Its findings are meant to provide the basis for discussing the potential implementation of a functional approach, rather than provide the specifics, or test the effectiveness, of current ELT approaches.

According to Ivankova and Creswell (2009), this study is of the QUAL-quan embedded design in which researchers “embed quantitative survey data within a traditionally qualitative case study to help describe the broader context in which a case is situated” (p. 144). The qualitative information relates to how/why a particular ELT approach is employed to teach tenses and why problems arise for L2 learners while mastering tenses. On the other hand, the quantitative data describe the study sample by reporting on the characteristics of the teaching/learning context, teaching practices, and the perceived difficulties of tense-related grammar topics.

4.1.1 Reasons for choosing teachers as participants.

The decision to focus on the sample of teachers instead of learners was influenced by the literature emphasising the importance of collaboration between SFL researchers and ELT professionals (see, e.g., Burns & Knox, 2005; Butt et al., 2009; Derewianka & Jones, 2010; Rose & Martin, 2012). Furthermore, it was assumed that teachers would be able to provide

more comprehensive data concerning the topics of investigation. This assumption was based on the facts that most teachers in Serbia:

- have been L2 learners themselves (i.e. non-native speakers);
- should be more capable of articulating language teaching/learning issues due to their training; and
- are likely to have experience teaching L2 learners in various teaching/learning contexts (e.g. teaching different courses).

Ideally, both English teachers and current L2 learners should be included as study participants to gain an insight into different perspectives. Involving both parties within the scope of this thesis, however, would result in collecting and analysing insufficient amount of qualitative data from either side, which is necessary for an in-depth study. I acknowledge the importance of the learner's perspective, which is why I believe their participation in a larger study would be of great value.

4.1.2 Reasons for choosing questionnaires and interviews as data collection methods.

This study has adopted a common design found in the mixed-method SLA research in which a researcher conducts “a survey (e.g., involving questionnaires) and (...) follow[s] up with a small number of respondents who indicate a willingness to take part in additional research and who represent important sectors or types of cases within the larger survey” (Duff, 2008, p. 111). Reasons for choosing these data collection methods can be found in the main research question, exploring how a functional approach can benefit teaching English tenses to adult L2 learners in Serbia, and the limitations of the thesis in terms of time.

Questionnaires were chosen as they are “versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. xiii). Questionnaires enabled data collection from a greater number of participants, and in a shorter period of time, than would have been possible with other methods. They also allowed collection of both quantitative and qualitative information on a variety of topics through closed-ended and open-ended items. There was a limit, however, to the amount and type of qualitative data that could be gleaned from questionnaires, especially in the case of ELT practices and beliefs, as open-ended questions needed to be concise and guided in order to avoid disinterest and exhaustion of the respondents (see Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

Therefore, another data collection method was needed to allow probing of participants' practices, attitudes, perceptions, and proposed solutions regarding teaching English tenses. Interviews were identified as appropriate because “they can provide insights into people's experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and motivations at a depth that is not possible with questionnaires” (Richards, 2009, p. 187). The conducted interviews were semi-structured as

pre-prepared guiding questions were used to cover the key topics, while additional questions were asked based on the interviewees' responses (see, e.g., K. Richards, 2009).

4.2 Questionnaires

The questionnaires have been used to collect information on the participant's demographics, teaching/learning context, ELT methodologies/preferences, and their opinions on the difficulties of tense-related grammar topics.

4.2.1 *Designing the questionnaire.*

The questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was designed to elicit data that could be analysed and then interpreted with reference to the challenges in teaching/learning English tenses and the potential implementation of a functional approach. It involved closed-ended and open-ended items which were factual, behavioural, and attitudinal in nature (see Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Demographic questions requested data on participants' gender, native language, ELT qualification, and ELT experience. No previous knowledge of any theoretical framework was assumed, so an explanation was provided whenever a theoretical term was used (e.g. inductive/deductive approach). Furthermore, traditional tense names (e.g. Past simple) and the corresponding tense structures (e.g. worked) were used throughout the study to avoid misunderstandings concerning terminology.

The items concerning the teaching/learning context aimed at discovering information on participants' courses and learners. The respondents were required to provide data on the duration/nature of the course(s) taught, the class size, and the learners' age group as well as English proficiency level.²⁴ In addition, data were collected on the learner's English social environment (i.e. exposure to/use of English) outside the classroom and their familiarity with grammatical structures.

The purpose of the items inquiring about the participants' ELT methodology was to gather information on their current practices and beliefs regarding teaching tenses, which could be later analysed/interpreted with reference to the teaching elements of the teaching/learning cycle (see §3.2). Frequency rating scales were used to measure how often the participants use different authentic materials as well as activities involving text analysis and collaborative situation-based tasks when teaching tenses. Additionally, two short-answer questions (2-3 sentences) were included asking the participants to summarise their teaching philosophy and explain their preference regarding a deductive or inductive approach to teaching grammar.

The remaining survey questions dealt with the perceived difficulty of tense-related grammar topics commonly found in current ESL/EFL grammar materials (see, e.g., Murphy,

²⁴ English proficiency levels are according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

2012). From an SFL-based point of view, they included the tense forms consisting of primary tenses, combinations of a primary and one secondary tense, and combinations of a primary and two secondary tenses (see Table 5).

Table 5: English tenses included in the empirical study: SFL and traditional labels.

English tense label in SFL	Traditional tense label	Example
Present	Present simple	<i>I work</i>
Past	Past simple	<i>I worked</i>
Future	Future simple	<i>I will work</i>
Present-in-present	Present continuous	<i>I am working</i>
Present-in-past	Past continuous	<i>I was working</i>
Present-in-future	Future continuous	<i>I will be working</i>
Past-in-present	Present perfect	<i>I have worked</i>
Past-in-future	Future perfect	<i>I will have worked</i>
Past-in-past	Past perfect	<i>I had worked</i>
Future-in-present	<i>Be going to + infinitive</i>	<i>I am going to work</i>
Present-in-past-in-present	Present perfect continuous	<i>I have been working</i>
Present-in-past-in-past	Past perfect continuous	<i>I had been working</i>
Present-in-past-in-future	Future perfect continuous	<i>I will have been working</i>

The questions enquired about the perceived difficulties arising for L2 learners from mastering individual tenses as well as from choosing between competing tense options (e.g. Present v. Present-in-present). Finally, the survey covered the topic of indirect/reported speech and its influence on tense selection through tense sequencing. Numerical rating scales ranging from one (extremely easy) to ten (extremely hard) were used to measure the perceived difficulty of a grammar topic for L2 learners based on respondents' teaching experience. Clarification questions inquiring about the possible reasons behind the difficulty were displayed in the case of rating the difficulty seven or higher. The responses regarding the reasons as to why a topic is considered rather hard to master are invaluable for this research because they can reveal the learner's perspective through the respondents' explanations.

4.2.2 Administering the questionnaires.

The *Participant recruitment advertisement* (see Appendix 2), which explained the nature of the study and participation requirements, was emailed to various language schools in Serbia and posted on online groups for English teachers in Serbia. The teachers who expressed interest via email were sent the *Information sheet* (see Appendix 3) and the link to the online survey on Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com). In total, 29 responses were submitted. Of these, 5 were excluded because they were incomplete. Therefore, the final sample comprised 24 surveys and Figure 7 summarises the demographic information of the survey respondents.

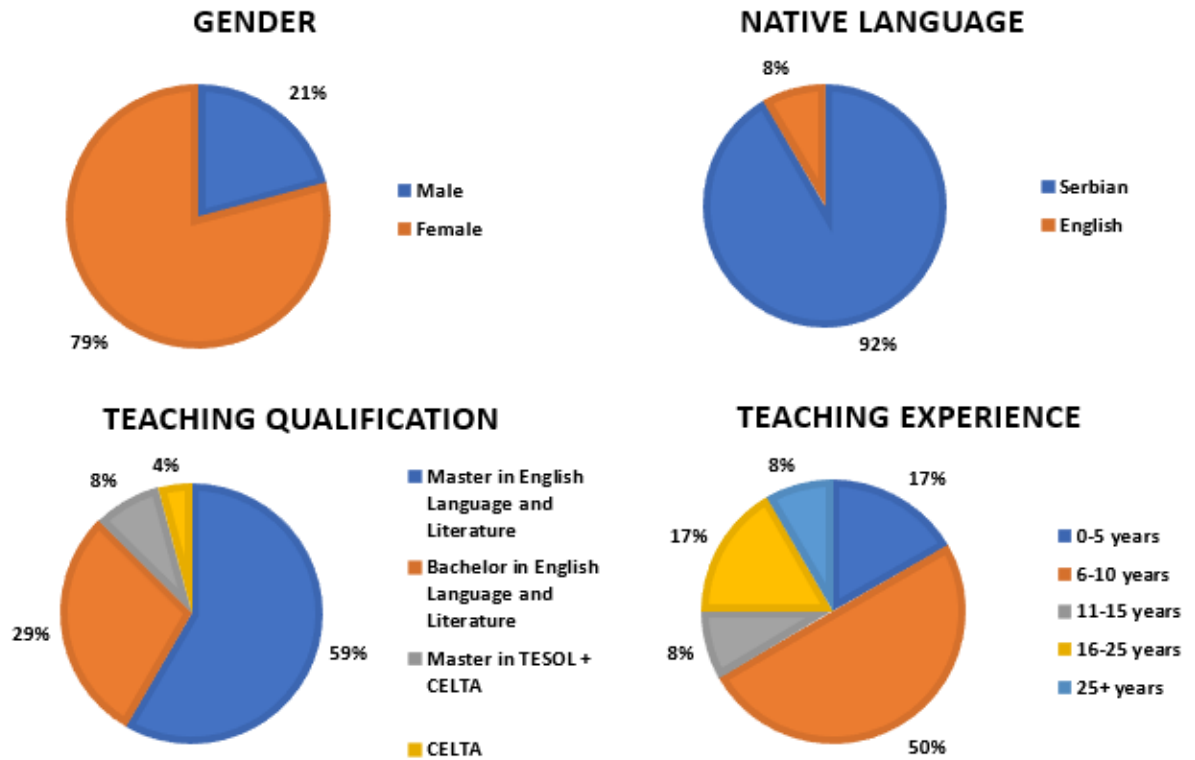


Figure 7: Summary of the survey respondents' demographic data.

The questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to complete. After answering the questions, respondents were asked to volunteer for a follow-up interview. The volunteers were displayed the information about the second phase of the study. They were also asked to provide their contact details, but this personal information was removed prior to analysing the data to ensure the respondent's anonymity.

4.2.3 Procedures for analysing the questionnaire data.

Quantitative and qualitative questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistical and interpretative content analysis, respectively. Qualtrics was used for storing and managing data, while its tools for statistics and filtering assisted the analysis process. All questionnaires were assigned identification codes and the 24 respondents were given pseudonyms (see Appendix 5). Due to the temporal constraints and a relatively small scale of the thesis, I alone conducted the analysis procedures while writing the research journal, memos, and notes throughout the empirical study to keep track of the ideas and overall progress.

The purpose of the quantitative findings was to describe the sample rather than generalise the results to population. The quantitative data were coded and charts were made for visual representation.

The coding of the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions was less straightforward as content analysis requires the researcher's interpretative and summary skills (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The responses on teaching philosophy and a deductive/inductive approach to teaching grammar were analysed and grouped using the a priori codes defined while

reviewing the literature, and codes reflecting themes identified while underlining and highlighting the data. Finally, conceptual maps were created to summarise the findings and facilitate their interpretation.

The nature of data regarding the perceived difficulties of mastering tense-related grammar topics required the use of both descriptive statistical and content analyses. The 24 numerical values (i.e. ratings) concerning the same topic were averaged so that the topics could be compared with reference to their average perceived difficulty rating. Additionally, standard deviation was calculated for each data set, measuring the dispersion of the responses from the average value to describe the variations of the perceptions within the sample. The responses on the possible reasons behind the perceived difficulty of a tense-related grammar topic were coded according to the emergent themes. Afterwards, the results of both analyses were merged in a unique table for representation and interpretation.

4.3 Interviews

The second stage of data collection involved follow-up interviews, which were used to explore the participant-teachers' experience, practices, and attitudes related to teaching grammar, namely tenses, to adult L2 learners in Serbia. The interviews also served to increase the robustness of the study, compensating for the amount of the qualitative data on ELT methodologies/beliefs collected from the survey and offering the possibility to triangulate the survey findings.

4.3.1 Designing the interview questions.

The interview questions were designed with reference to the main research question and the potential implementation of a functional approach. The guiding questions (see Appendix 7) can be divided into three categories centred around three main topics:

1. Teaching grammar/tenses to adult L2 learners in Serbian EFL classrooms (Q1 – Q7);
2. Attitudes towards different elements of teaching found in a functional approach (Q8 – Q15); and
3. The perceived difficulty of tense-related grammar topics and possible solutions (Q16 – Q17).

The first group of questions probed for the information on current ELT approaches to teaching grammar/tenses and the extent to which different characteristics of the teaching/learning context (e.g. class size, learners' age) influence the interviewees' choice of a pedagogy. The questions also investigated whether the interviewees have changed their approaches during the course of their careers. It was hoped these responses would provide an insight into how a methodology is chosen in Serbian EFL classrooms, revealing factors that could present challenges in implementing a functional approach.

The second group of questions captured attitudes towards teaching grammar as a meaning resource in social contexts. The interviewees were asked to explain their views regarding the advantages and disadvantages of a deductive/inductive approach to teaching grammar. In addition, they were expected to comment on whether they believe the use of authentic texts and situation-based activities is beneficial for teaching tenses. These responses were compared with the survey findings and the views held by the proponents of a functional approach.

The final group of questions required from the interviewees to propose an activity for teaching a tense-related topic with a high average perceived difficulty rating in the survey sample. The proposed activities would be evaluated to investigate how they compare to the functional framework. The participants were also asked to say which English tenses they believe are fairly easy for L2 learners in Serbia. These comments would be used to triangulate the survey findings on the perceived difficulties arising from learning tenses and the underlying reasons.

4.3.2 Administering the interviews.

Five potential interviewees were emailed the *Interview information and consent form* (see Appendix 4) to arrange the follow-up interview. Eventually, three participants agreed to be interviewed and their pseudonyms are *Jana*, *Mia* and *Filip* (see Appendix 5).²⁵

The semi-structured interviews were conducted via Skype and were approximately 15 minutes long. The audio recordings were also made for greater accuracy and later analysis. All interviews included questions from each of the three categories – practices, attitudes, and perceptions/proposed solutions – in order to cover all the topics under investigation. The number of questions varied based on the number of additional questions generated by their responses and the amount of data obtained from a single response. Throughout the interviews, the participants were encouraged to also comment on the learner's perspective as much as possible.

4.3.3 Procedures for analysing the interview data.

The interview data were analysed using interpretative content analysis. This analytic process was far more challenging than analysing the survey's qualitative items because the responses were longer, more discursive, and required transcription. The transcripts (see Appendix 8) were analysed using the emergent codes reflecting themes identified while rereading and labelling the responses. As was the case with the previous phase of the empirical study, I alone conducted all the analysis.

²⁵ It may be interesting to note that *Jana* holds a Master in TESOL degree from an Australian university whose program included an SFL-based course.

The interview results were first compared with the questionnaire results. Afterwards, the findings of the entire empirical study were related to the findings from researching relevant literature (see §2 and §3) in order to investigate the main research question. A detailed description of the study's results and their implications for the research question are the focus of the fifth and sixth chapters, respectively.

4.4 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity of quantitative research refers to the extent to which its findings can be generalised to population, while qualitative research is primarily concerned with the understanding of a particular phenomenon within a real-life context (see, e.g., Freeman, 2009; Maxwell, 2002). Due to the relatively small sample size of the study, some concerns may be raised by quantitative researchers regarding the generalisability of its findings. It must be highlighted, however, that this study is primarily qualitative, while its quantitative component is solely descriptive without the aim of generalising its findings. To reiterate, the study aims to understand current ELT approaches to teaching tenses and tense-related problem areas of adult L2 learners in the context of Serbian EFL classrooms. Its goal is to use the understanding gained through qualitative inquiry to explore and propose how an SFL-based approach can benefit this ELT context.

Reliability in research pertains to whether the results would be the same if the study were conducted by another researcher (see, e.g., Merriam, 1998). As I was the only investigator in this study, increasing reliability by involving more researchers in the analysis and interpretation procedures was not possible. Although data analysis was based on the interpretation of a single researcher, the study strived to improve its reliability by using a mixed-method approach and comparing its findings with relevant SLA research (see §3). High levels of consistency were found, which will be discussed in the following two chapters.

5 Empirical Study: Results

This chapter presents the results of the empirical study. The questionnaire data (§5.1) will be discussed prior to analysing the interview transcripts (§5.2) as these two data sets were collected sequentially.

5.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis

The information gathered through the questionnaire describes the EFL teaching/learning context of the respondents and their learners.²⁶ In addition, the data on grammar-teaching methodologies show the extent to which the elements and views of a functional ELT pedagogy are present in the respondents' teaching practices and beliefs. Lastly, the respondents' perceptions regarding the difficulty of tense-related grammar topics provide an insight into the challenges that L2 learners face in their efforts to master the English TENSE system.

5.1.1 Teaching/learning context of the respondents and their learners.

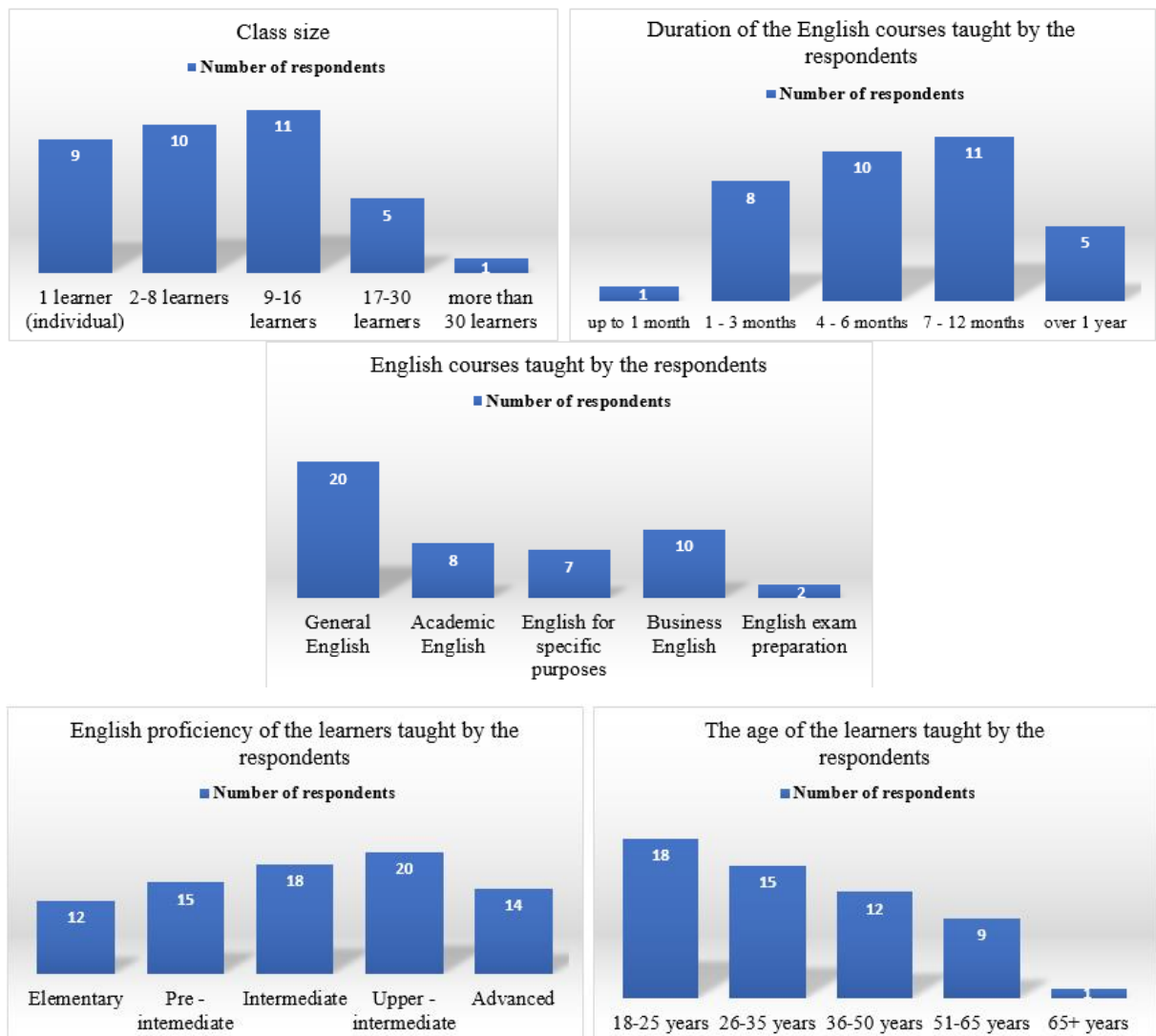


Figure 8: The respondents' teaching/learning context.

²⁶ In this chapter, "the learners" is used to refer to the respondents' learners.

Figure 8 describes the teaching/learning contexts within the survey sample with reference to the courses and learners taught. It is important to note that the respondents were prompted to select all the applicable options for each of the five categories. The results show that the respondents have a diverse ELT experience in teaching adult L2 learners. The category of the learners' English proficiency is arguably the most illustrative example as ten participant-teachers, which is nearly a half, teach learners at all levels. Such experience should increase the insightfulness and reliability of their responses.

Figure 9 shows the existence of the learners' English social environment outside the classroom, which is another important aspect of the teaching/learning context indicating the social value of acquiring English as L2. These data show that all the participant-teachers have learners who are exposed to English and/or use it in situations other than English lessons, the level of their exposure being higher than their level of use. Therefore, there appears to be a need for learning English as a medium of communication in the case of these L2 learners.

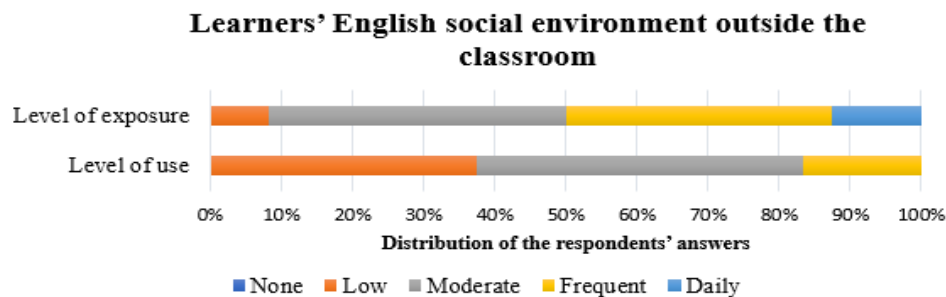


Figure 9: The learners' English social environment outside the classroom.

Despite the existence of the English social environment, there might be some concern whether L2 learners in an EFL context have sufficient exposure to a variety of language structures in order to conduct the text-deconstruction phase successfully. It may be argued that it is impossible for a learner to notice targeted language structures unless they have already encountered them in another context.

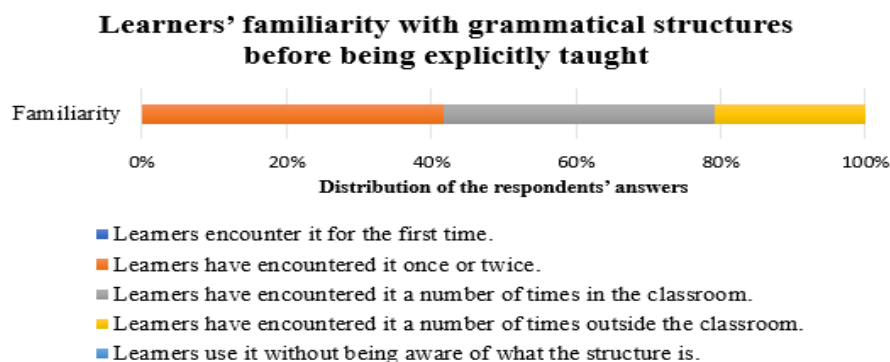


Figure 10: The learners' familiarity with grammatical structures.

Figure 10, however, indicates that the learners have been exposed to grammatical structures, either inside or outside the EFL classroom, before learning them as a part of their English

curriculum. This implies the possibility of performing the text-deconstruction phase, although there may be more challenges for learners who have encountered the grammatical structure only a few times.

5.1.2 Respondents' approaches to teaching grammar.

The survey results indicate that the respondents' practices while teaching English tenses to adult learners involve different elements of a functional approach. Figures 11/12 show that the use of authentic materials, text analysis, and collaborative situation-based tasks is widespread, which implies the respondents' positive attitude towards these pedagogical tools.

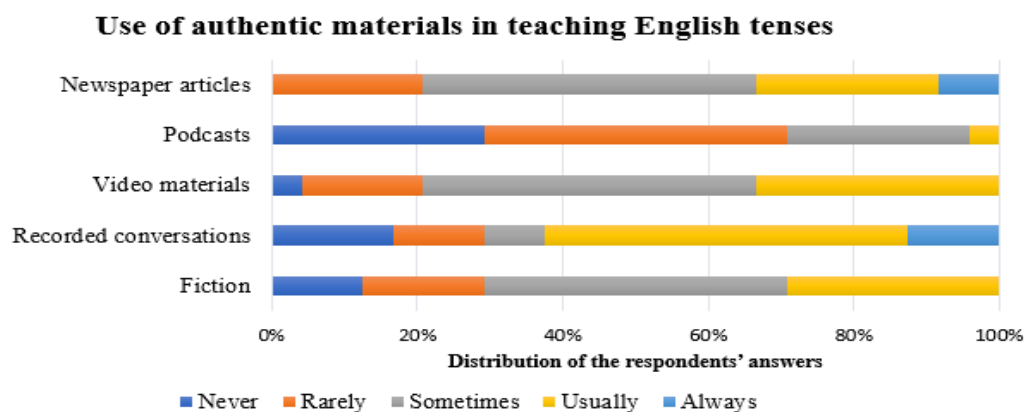


Figure 11: The respondents' use of authentic materials.

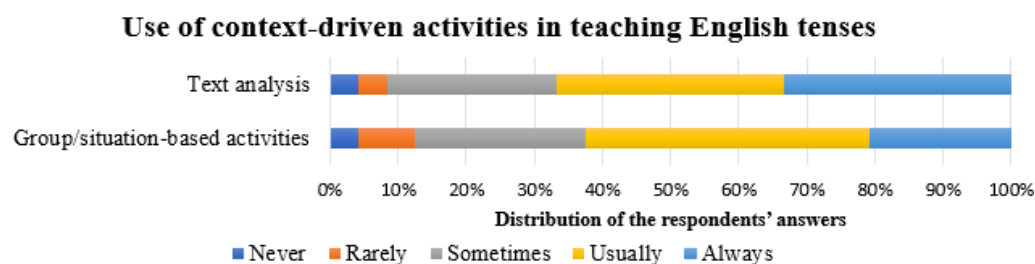


Figure 12: The respondents' use of context-driven activities.

Furthermore, 15 participant-teachers prefer an inductive approach to teaching grammar over the deductive for the reasons summarised in Figure 13. Their rationale behind implementing an inductive approach corresponds closely to the reasons put forward by the proponents of a functional approach. As a matter of fact, *John's* response reflects the stages of the teaching/learning cycle (in **bold**):

I prefer the inductive approach, not only for the teaching of grammatical features, but also pragmatic. I agree with the hypothesis that noticing is key to effective acquisition, so I try to **encourage my learners to notice features** for themselves. By raising awareness through noticing and then **consolidating knowledge through explicit discussion and practice opportunities**, my learners tend to retain the target language more efficiently.

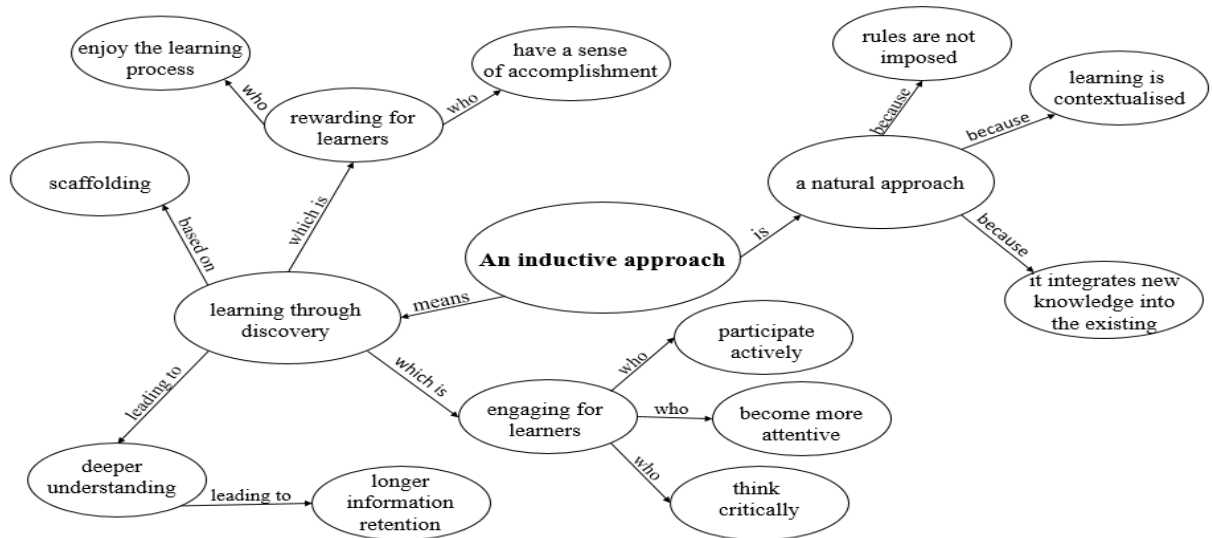


Figure 13: The respondents' support for an inductive approach to teaching grammar.

On the other hand, three respondents favour a deductive approach to teaching grammar for the reasons summarised in Figure 14.

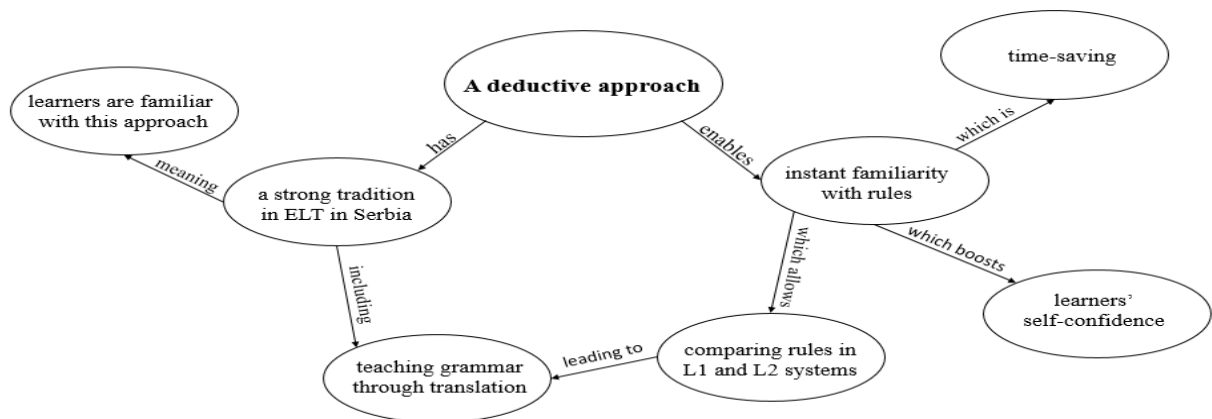


Figure 14: The respondents' support for a deductive approach to teaching grammar.

In this sample, it appears that the preference of a deductive over an inductive pedagogy is rooted in the influence of a traditional focus on form and accuracy. Furthermore, *Filip* explains his choice as a response to his students' preferences:

(...) adults like to be familiarised with the rules first before they can feel confident enough to start producing sentences using target language.

At the same time, there are six respondents that choose their approach to teaching grammar – inductive or deductive – according to the characteristics of the teaching/learning context. In addition to revealing the perceived benefits, their views are also significant for understanding the perceived challenges of implementing either of the approaches in Serbian EFL context. The contextual factors that influence their choice are:

- the learner's previous exposure to English (higher → inductive, lower → deductive);
- the learner's preference and expectations dependent on their age and previous English learning experience (younger → inductive, older → deductive);

- time allocated to learning (longer → inductive, shorter → deductive);
- class size (smaller → inductive, larger → deductive);
- type of a grammatical structure (no further explanations provided in the survey); and
- the learner's goals (real-life application → inductive, exam preparation → deductive).

For instance, *Danijela*'s response shows how time, class size, and learning goals influence her grammar teaching:

I believe that an inductive approach is better long-term, but the deductive one is more efficient for short term goals (e.g. Studying for a test) because it is not time-consuming. Also, I think that a deductive approach is easier in classes with a lot of students because it's quicker and it is impossible to check whether all students have understood the examples correctly.

Lastly, different elements of a functional approach have been identified in the respondents' summaries of their teaching philosophies, which should imply their positive attitude towards such a pedagogy (see Table 6).

Table 6: Elements of a functional approach in the respondents' teaching philosophies.

Identified teaching element	Number of respondents	Example quote
Promoting learner engagement and critical thinking	12	"I like to involve my students in the process of learning. I think active participation is very important." (<i>Sandra</i>)
Teaching grammar as a meaning resource in relevant authentic contexts	8	"I prefer to teach using conversation and real-life examples." (<i>Brian</i>)
Teaching for the learner's success in English social contexts	10	"Learners need English to do their jobs, so teaching English should include teaching them how to apply their knowledge in the real world." (<i>Goran</i>)
Learner-centred teaching	19	"I strive to create an atmosphere where they will be interested in learning, a respectful classroom environment conducive to student-centered [sic] learning." (<i>Mirjana</i>)
Teaching/learning through collaboration and scaffolding	7	"The teacher is there to facilitate understanding, help and challenge students, encourage creative experimentation, and respect and support a wide diversity of students and student needs" (<i>Ana</i>)

Building on existing knowledge	3	“Making use of resources already existing in students and connecting the new material to what they already know.” (<i>Vera</i>)
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5.1.3 Mastering the TENSE system: perceived difficulties.

5.1.3.1 A brief orientation on different time realisations in English and Serbian.

As mentioned in §1.1, L2 learners in Serbian EFL classrooms are most likely to be Serbian L1 speakers. Therefore, this section compares English and Serbian tenses from a systemic-functional perspective. This will enable an SFL-based analysis of the perceived difficulties for L2 learners which arise from the discrepancies between L1 and L2 time realisations. As this comparison is prescribed by the scope of this research, the description of the Serbian TENSE system is limited to the features essential for understanding and interpreting the results of this study.²⁷

Both English and Serbian TENSE systems exhibit tripartition: past, present, and future. The Serbian system in contemporary texts, however, does not appear to share the same recursive nature of tense selection with its English counterpart. From an SFL point of view, the default meanings of Serbian tense forms traditionally labelled as Prezent, Perfekat, and Futur I (see Stanojčić & Popović, 1992) realise primary tenses reflecting the relation between event time ($T_e=T_1$) and speech time as zero time reference ($T_s=T_0$):

- T_e neither precedes nor succeeds T_s ($T_s=T_e$) → present (traditional Prezent);
- T_e precedes T_s ($T_s>T_e$) → past (traditional Perfekat); and
- T_e succeeds T_s ($T_s<T_e$) → future (traditional Futur I).

In these instances, time references other than event and speech time can be realised by Serbian adverbials and textual meaning, but they cannot influence tense selection.

Text 24: I have moved to Sydney. → [Serbian] Преселила сам се у Сиднеј.

Text 25: I have lived in Sydney for 11 months. → [Serbian] Живим у Сиднеју 11 месеци.

For instance, Perfekat in Text 24 (*преселила сам се*) is chosen because T_e precedes T_s , while the present result (i.e. I live in Sydney.) should be derived from the whole text. Similarly, Prezent in Text 25 (*живим*) is selected because T_e neither precedes nor succeeds T_s (i.e. the event has started but not finished), whereas the event duration preceding the present time is realised only by the adverbial (*11 месеци*).

²⁷ For a comprehensive description of Serbian tenses, see, for example, Stanojčić and Popović (1992). To the best of my knowledge, there is no literature providing an SFL-based description of the Serbian TENSE system.

Serbian Present can also denote future when used in conjunction with an adverbial indicating future, which is equivalent to the case of the English implicit Future-in-present tense. As far as realising past is concerned, there are Serbian tense forms, traditionally labelled as Imperfekat and Pluskvamperfekat, which realise temporal relations found in the English combinations of primary past and secondary present or past, respectively. Nevertheless, the usage of these forms is extremely rare and mainly restricted to archaic texts, while contemporary speakers tend to replace them with Perfekat (Stanojčić & Popović, 1992). In addition, Stanojčić and Popović define the default meaning of another Serbian past tense, Aorist, as the event completion at speech time, which could be compared to some realisations of English Past-in-present. Save for literary texts, however, these authors note that its frequency in the Serbian text is also extremely low. Hence, it can be concluded that the usages of Serbian Present, Futur I, and Perfekat subsume the usages of English forms with secondary tenses (also, see Appendix 1).

Furthermore, projected event time in indirect/reported speech is realised differently in English and Serbian. In Serbian, although a past event time can replace speech as a framework of reference for another event, making the meaning of Serbian tenses relative (Stanojčić & Popović, 1992), it cannot project its “past” value to the new zero time. Relative instantiations of Serbian tenses do not reflect the recursiveness of tense selection because they only denote the temporal link between event time and its zero time. In other words, the form itself does not indicate whether its meaning is relative or – if it is – what the relation between speech time and its zero time reference is.

Text 26: He said he wanted more money. → [Serbian] Рекао је да жели још новца.

For instance, Serbian realises the projected time of Text 26 (wanted→*жели*) with Present because it neither precedes nor succeeds the projecting time (said→*рекао је*). It is the fact that the projecting time is realised by Perfekat that indicates the relative meaning of Present in the projected time.

Finally, Serbian and English differ in the type of the relation that exists between the experiential metafunction and their TENSE systems. Unlike English, the nature of the Process realised by the verbal group does not influence tense selection in Serbian. Yet, the experiential system of ASPECT is foregrounded in Serbian tense forms because Serbian verbs are marked as either *imperfective* or *perfective*. As such, they integrate the meaning of either ongoing or momentary event (i.e. an event denoting start, instant realisation, or completion) into the temporal meaning expressed by the tense they realise (Stanojčić & Popović, 1992). In English, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) claim that ASPECT is only foregrounded in infinitives and participles (e.g. to do v. doing). It is important that English secondary present not be identified with Serbian imperfective aspect. Choosing English secondary present implies that event time

includes the previous time reference(s), which means an event is ongoing at the time set up by the previous tense choice(s). Choosing a Serbian imperfective verb simply implies that event time is ongoing as opposed to momentary. In other words, all English tenses with secondary present are realised in Serbian by imperfective verbs, but not every use of Serbian imperfective verbs is realised in English as tenses with secondary present.

5.1.3.2 Respondents' perceptions of the difficulty of tense-related grammar topics for L2 learners.

Tables 7/8/9²⁸ summarise the responses on the perceived difficulties for L2 learners that arise while mastering the English TENSE system. The average ratings of the perceived difficulties increase with the delicacy of a tense form, which could be explained by the lack of Serbian tense forms reflecting recursive selection. In addition, Serbian and English include the same primary tenses, while more delicate forms are less frequent in the English corpora. For instance, the respondents have identified rare usage as one of the issues concerning Present-in-past-in-future, which is in line with the results of Bache's (2008) quantitative study on the frequency of tense forms in the British National Corpus (BNC).

In this sample, tense forms involving secondary past are considered more challenging for learners (see Table 7). The difficulty in understanding these forms could be traced back to the fact that, in these instances, English secondary past encodes event time, whereas the primary tense realises an additional time reference. The respondents believe that this can be confusing for L2 learners in Serbia and *Mia*'s response regarding Past-in-future is a case in point:

It confuses them that we talk about something that will be in the past from the future point of view, but they are in the present in their minds so it is all simply future for them.

Table 8 also indicates that learners struggle more when they need to choose between two forms where at least one involves secondary past. The Past-in-past v. Past distinction is an exception, possibly due to archaic Pluskvamperfekt in Serbian. According to the respondents, not only does the absence of these forms in the L1 system lead to confusion, it also makes it difficult for learners to justify the existence of such a form. This may result in the learners' reluctance to use that form in communication and their tendency to replace it with an option existent in the L1 system, which can be seen in *Ana*'s comment on Past-in-present:

It corresponds to two different tenses in my students' mother tongue. e.g. I've lived in Vranje for 10 years - Živim u Vranju 10 godina. (Present tense in Serbian) I haven't done my homework yet. - Nisam još uradila domaći (Past Tense in Serbian).

Similar results have been obtained regarding Future v. Future-in-present. For instance, *Jovana* claims:

²⁸ "X" in Tables 7/8/9 indicates that the relevant underlying reason has been identified in the respondents' answers.

Learners don't see the need for both forms and they think that they can use only one (e.g. Future Simple) [Future].

Ana and *Jovana*'s claims imply that the learners would rather choose a form which only realises a relation between event and speech time than a form whose tense selection denotes the existence of additional time references (e.g. present result or plan), even if they are important for the topic of a text.

The average perceived-difficulty ratings of individual tenses with secondary present as the only secondary tense might be considered surprising. Apart from *Nina*'s comment on Present-in-future (see Appendix 6), no responses refer to these forms as challenging or non-existent in L1 (see Table 7). As 92% of the respondents are Serbian L1 speakers, the perception of these forms as relatively easy may have been influenced by the fact that the meaning of Serbian imperfective aspect can coincide with the inclusion meaning of English secondary present. In this case, the choice whether to add a secondary tense should be perceived as more challenging because it does not reflect the ongoing/momentary dichotomy. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the responses summarised in Table 8, which indicate the learners struggle to comprehend the need for choosing secondary present to express a temporal focus relative to the previous time reference. This is reflected in *Tijana*'s responses below:

[on Present v. Present-in-present] They cannot understand the concept of two present tenses.
[on Future v. Present-in-future] In Serbian it makes no difference.

Similarly, the average ratings in Table 8 imply that the learners can experience great difficulties when making choices between more delicate forms involving the possibility of adding secondary present to define event time as including two previous time references. For instance, *Goran* and *Filip* make the following comments on the topic of Past-in-past v. Present-in-past-in-past:

Learners don't understand the need for the continuous form. (*Goran*)
Interchangeability in certain instances. (*Filip*)

Therefore, the possible reason why the learners have difficulties with the concept of the continuous form (i.e. an additional secondary present) may be that the ongoing meaning can be construed by simply using Past-in-past. Therefore, the challenge lies in comprehending the use of the inclusion meaning to put a stronger emphasis on duration.

As for the influence of the logico-semantic relation of projection on a choice from the English TENSE system, the average ratings in Table 9 show that mastering indirect/reported speech involving tense sequencing is relatively hard for the learners. *Nina*'s comment on the perceived difficulty of mastering tense sequencing aptly summarises the survey results:

They [learners] try to translate it and it doesn't make sense.

Therefore, it can be suggested that the root cause so to why learners face difficulties with this grammar topic is their Serbian L1 system, which does not involve the projection of the “past” value from the projecting event time to the zero time reference of the projected event.

The standard deviation values in Tables 7/8/9 indicate a slight variation among the respondents' perceptions of how difficult a tense-related grammar topic is for L2 learners in Serbian EFL classrooms. The identified degree of variation is similar for all the investigated topics. The respondents' perceptions might have differed because of the English proficiency level(s) of the learners they teach. The relation between the learner's L2 proficiency and the perceived difficulty of a grammar topic, however, will not be further explored in this thesis as it falls outside its scope.

Table 7: Perceived difficulties for L2 learners: individual tenses.

Tense form	Perceived difficulty		Identified reasons behind the perceived difficulty					
	Average rating	Standard deviation	Non-existent tense form in the L1 TENSE system		Low frequency in the English text	Tense form introduced at the later stages of learning	Misleading explanation by a teacher	Irregular verb forms
			Complex form and usage	Learners' inability to justify the existence of the form				
Present-in-past-in-present	7.25	1.42	X	X		X		
Present-in-past-in-future	6.91	1.59	X	X	X	X		
Past-in-present	6.71	1.43	X	X				
Past-in-future	6.46	1.56	X	X	X	X		
Present-in-past-in-past	5.75	1.98	X	X	X	X		
Past-in-past	5.13	1.85	X	X			X	
Present-in-future	4.41	1.61	X					
Present-in-past	4.00	1.02						
Future-in-present	3.74	1.32						
Present-in-present	3.54	1.28						
Present	3.46	1.64						
Past	3.00	1.47						X
Future	2.54	1.22						

Table 8: Perceived difficulties for L2 learners: choosing the appropriate tense.

Competing tense forms	Perceived difficulty		Identified reasons behind the perceived difficulty							
	Average rating	Standard deviation	Differences between L1 and L2 TENSE system			Low frequency of at least one L2 form in the English text	At least one L2 form used in a great variety of contexts	Tense forms introduced at the later stages of learning	Competing options in the L2 system	
			One L1 form covers two L2 forms	At least one L2 form non-existent in the L1 system	Learners can't justify the existence of both forms				Overlapping usage in the L2 system	Choice affected by the speaker's shift in focus
Past-in-future v. Present-in-past-in-future	6.88	1.92		X	X	X		X	X	X
Past-in-present v. Past	6.33	1.66	X	X	X					X
Past-in-present v. Present-in-past-in-present	6.17	1.76		X	X			X	X	X
Past-in-past v. Present-in-past-in-past	5.78	1.91		X	X			X	X	X
Present v. Past-in-present	5.65	1.87	X	X	X		X			
Future v. Past-in-future	5.50	1.79	X	X	X	X				
Future v. Future-in-present	5.17	1.53	X		X					X
Present v. Present-in-present	5.17	1.86	X	X	X					
Future v. Present-in-future	5.08	1.84	X				X			
Past v. Past-in-past	4.88	1.45		X						
Past v. Present-in-past	4.75	1.51	X							

Table 9: Perceived difficulties for L2 learners: tenses and the logico-semantic relation of projection in clause complexes.

Grammar topic	Perceived difficulty		Identified reasons behind the perceived difficulty			
	Average rating	Standard deviation	Different realisations in L1 and L2 systems	No past projection in L1	No change in word order in L1	Learners' inability to justify tense sequencing in L2
						Learners' insufficient knowledge of the English TENSE system
Sequence of tenses	7.17	1.55	X		X	X
Indirect/reported speech	6.63	1.76	X	X	X	X

In conclusion, the survey results on the perceived difficulties of tense-related grammar topics indicate that the use of the SFL-based English TENSE system in Serbian EFL classrooms should be beneficial due to its recursive nature. This will be discussed in more detail in §6.2.

5.2 Interview Data Analysis

The interview transcripts reveal the factors that have influenced, or still influence, the interviewees' approaches to teaching grammar/tenses in Serbian EFL classrooms for adult L2 learners. Furthermore, the interview data express the interviewees' attitudes towards the teaching practices and beliefs characteristic of a functional approach. At the same time, the interviewees' proposed teaching activities illustrate how similar the interviewees' teaching strategies are to those adopted within the teaching/learning cycle. Finally, the interviewees' perceived difficulties of tense-related grammar topics triangulate the survey findings.

5.2.1 Interviewees' approaches to teaching tenses

Filip's description of the approach usually adopted in Serbian EFL classrooms when teaching English tenses to adult L2 learners illustrates a strong influence of traditional approaches:

The teacher stands in front of the board and starts explaining the form and usage of the tense step by step. Then drill it for a few minutes using as many examples as it is necessary, and, at the end of the class, try to use it in real life situations. Sometimes this is left for next class.

Similar illustrations have been identified in the interviewees' remarks on their teacher training and personal experiences as EFL learners in Serbia. For instance, *Mia* notices:

So, in the past I primarily taught the way I was taught previously. And that was more like a teacher-centred classroom.

All three interviewees, however, claim their approaches have changed during their career due to their concerns about the effectiveness of a traditional approach in contemporary EFL classrooms. In *Jana's* words:

(...) some of the things I was taught at uni were not applicable later on.

The following quotes indicate that *Mia* and *Filip* started altering their practices because of the learners' reactions, while the change in *Jana's* practice was triggered by professional development courses:

Well, I realised the younger generations are bored with the rules, strict rules which are given to them and (...) they can simply switch off during a lesson. (*Mia*)

I probably started changing my approach when I realised that different people reacted differently to different ways of teaching and learning. I saw that some ways of teaching work only in theory and started deliberately avoiding them. Later, I realised that those ways do work but at specific levels and for specific people. (*Filip*)

When I did CELTA and I did my Master in TESOL, being exposed to discourse analysis and systemic-functional grammar, the things about understanding the whole meaning of the text and understanding that text influenced teaching of grammar has changed my approach to teaching tenses as well. (*Jana*)

Still, the abovementioned responses also indicate that the degree of change has not been the same for all three interviewees. While *Jana's* response implies that, in general, she opts for a function-focused approach, *Mia* and *Filip's* answers show that their use of a non-traditional approach is restricted to specific teaching/learning contexts.

Jana believes that a text-based approach should be used regardless of the teaching/learning context:

If it's general English or IELTS (...) it's usually the whole-text approach and using all four skills involved... so a text-based approach. But, with the academic text, it has to be also, besides the text-based approach, it has to be a genre approach.

She does mention, though, that the learners' cultural background and abilities can be factors influencing the choice between a deductive and inductive approach to teaching grammar:

(...) some students would be... their preference would be to be exposed first to the rules... whereas others who are more adventurous and more understand language at a different level and have a more lateral thinking towards language are better with the inductive one. So...it depends. If you have a mixed-ability class...and it depends on the culture background...you might have to combine.

Mia uses an inductive approach with younger adult learners and those more exposed to English:

[younger generations of adult learners] And they are more engaged if they have to work out the rules themselves, if they have something to work on – some material, video or... or a piece of text which they go through and if they are required to do something themselves.

[adult learners frequently exposed to English] You can easily use this material [familiar contexts] or their [learners'] previous knowledge to just start working from that point and then later on to work your way through (...) come to the rules eventually (...) they have this sense of achievement because they say like, "This is something I already know."

Filip limits the use of an inductive and text-based pedagogy to teaching small classes and courses involving university students:

With the group of a few students, I use a lot of input of the language, different texts, recordings and even short clips. (...) But when I have a huge class with mixed abilities, I can't really do the same thing efficiently, so I switch to explaining everything first and then do a few exercises to see if the majority understood the form and usage.

They [university students] actually enjoy change, and if you teach them some grammar the way they have never been taught before, they are excited and very motivated to try out that new approach.

He also stresses that a deductive traditional approach is still prevalent when he teaches English grammar to adults by saying:

(...) my experience tells me that adults like it when they are given rules which they just need to follow in order to solve a task at hand. They feel uncomfortable making mistakes, and inductive approach relies heavily on students doing exactly that – learning through mistakes.

However, the exception that *Filip* makes while teaching "Perfective tenses" (i.e. tenses with secondary past) is extremely significant for this research:

I teach Perfective tenses completely differently from the way I was taught. I teach students only one general rule of what Perfect aspect [secondary past] means by giving them different examples and comparing it with Simple tenses [tense forms consisting only of a primary tense]. Then, when I am sure that they understand the point of view of Perfect aspect, I add specific rules that deal with specific situations [contexts].

Irrespective of the teaching/learning context and despite the traditional influence, *Filip* teaches the forms with secondary past, which have been identified as more challenging in the survey, by first explaining the meaning (i.e. function) of secondary past. Therefore, his approach in this instance entails teaching grammar as a meaning resource, which is an essential element of a functional approach.

It can be concluded that the interviewees have abandoned a strictly traditional approach while teaching tenses as a response to the needs of a contemporary learner. Nevertheless, the traditional influence is still present and the factors influencing *Mia* and *Filip*'s choices between a deductive and inductive approach are in agreement with the survey findings (see §5.1.2).

5.2.2 Interviewees' attitudes towards the elements of the teaching/learning cycle.

All three interviewees agree on the necessity of a contextualised teaching of both function and form so as to ensure their learners' success in an English social environment. A good illustration of this is *Mia*'s comment on the idea of grammar as a meaning resource:

I think this is a more modern, if I can say more modern, approach. (...) if we only consider the exposure to the language and (...) the way they learn. It's so meaningful that they... they simply don't focus on the rules and they... it has a certain function that they want to (...) they want to communicate. That's what they want to achieve – it's not knowing the rules and it's quite... much beyond that.

Filip, however, also expresses his concerns about the possibility of teaching grammar as a meaning resource in the EFL classroom:

I agree that grammar is exactly that [a meaning resource]. Language is a fluid thing, and it changes depending on the situation and the type of message we want to convey. However, this property of language is very difficult to use in the classroom environment.

While *Filip*'s observation indicates his positive attitude towards this concept, it is implied that adequate pedagogical and grammatical tools need to be available to him in order to implement it into his ELT practice.

Despite the reservations that *Mia* and *Filip* have concerning the implementation of an inductive approach in certain teaching/learning contexts, all three interviewees believe that the advantages of a learner-centred teaching based on scaffolding outweigh its disadvantages. For instance, *Filip* states:

[on an inductive approach] I think that there are more advantages than disadvantages. Using your own intellect in order to solve a certain task guarantees you will retain that information much longer than if someone simply gave you the solution.

Apart from longer information retention, *Mia* also stresses learner engagement and transferable knowledge as the main benefits of an inductive approach:

They feel engaged during a lesson (...) if the approach is inductive, most of young people will find it easier to remember it and to use it later on when they need a certain structure in a situation.

Furthermore, they all underline the importance of accompanying textbooks with carefully chosen authentic texts in relevant contexts if the learners are to apply their knowledge in real life. In *Jana*'s words:

You need to be careful that the text is appropriate to your group and it's appropriate to your final aim of the lesson. (...) They [learners] will not always be exposed to textbooks. I mean, textbooks are useful, but (...) If they don't know how it looks and they don't understand the structure of it, the organisation, which element goes where, they will never be able to write something like that or will never be able to understand what is the culture context or meaning of it in English.

The interviewees also consider collaborative situation-based activities to be engaging methods boosting motivation and leading to the appropriate use of English outside the classroom. According to *Filip*:

Those activities are the closest to the real-life situations student can get into, so they can experience how the language works in certain situations. (...) So, I think that group and situation-based activities are useful and fun for students.

Therefore, the interview data suggest the interviewees' positive attitude towards the elements of the teaching/learning cycle, including the use of relevant authentic materials, scaffolding/collaboration, and an inductive approach to teaching both form and function. As such, these findings are in line with the survey findings on teaching methodologies (see §5.1.2).

5.2.3 *Mastering the English TENSE system: perceived difficulties and possible solutions.*

All three interviewees use timelines for teaching English tenses, which indicates that they perceive them as beneficial. The interviewees' proposed activities for teaching tense-related grammar topics with a high average perceived difficulty in the sample reveal that their strategies include several elements of a functional approach.

For instance, *Filip* and *Jana* propose the following ways of teaching Past-in-present:

First of all, students should be exposed to Present Perfect [Past-in-present] as soon as they start learning English because they need to get used to hearing it. I am insisting on this because there is no equivalent tense in the Serbian language and that is why it is the most difficult one to learn. (...) Another thing that helps is comparing it with the tense they already know, and it is usually Past Simple [Past]. This way they get to distinguish between the situations when each one is required. It also helps to continue using it every class naturally so that students are constantly aware of it and do not decide to forget it and use only Past Simple [Past]. (*Filip*)

As soon as you make it clear to a learner that Present Perfect [Past-in-present] is something that connects present and past and has a different variation... and they see that visually... I love using timelines (...) teaching Present Perfect [Past-in-present], umm, could be very amusing (...) if you relate their own experience (...) So, the idea that something shows the result or experience is clearer to them if you relate that not just to how it's structured but to the usage. (*Jana*)

These activities identify the exposure to, and the use of, Past-in-present in relevant authentic contexts as the key to mastering both form and function.

At the same time, *Mia*'s suggestion for teaching reported speech also contains elements of a functional approach:

It would be a good idea to give students certain tasks to, for example, look at certain videos in which some people might talk about their jobs or experiences (...) And then later on, to have these students report on what they have previously heard.

This activity involves the use of a video as a basis for text construction. It includes reporting as a method, which can be compared to the transformation procedure described by Jones and Lock (2011).

The presence of functional pedagogical elements in the interviewees' proposed activities appears to reaffirm the survey findings on the identified elements of a functional approach in the respondents' teaching philosophies (see §5.1.2).

As far as the interviewees' opinions on the difficulty of mastering individual English tenses are concerned, all three identified English primary tenses as fairly easy for Serbian L1 speakers because these tenses match the tense forms and functions in their native language. Such responses can be interpreted as a confirmation of the survey findings regarding why L2 learners face difficulties while learning the English TENSE system (see §5.1.3).

6 General Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the empirical study presented in the fifth chapter will be discussed in relation to the research examined in the second and third chapters. In §6.1, the perceived benefits and challenges of introducing a functional approach to teaching English tenses in Serbian EFL classrooms will be outlined. Based on the perceived difficulties for L2 learners arising from mastering English tenses, §6.2 will propose teaching guidelines on how the English TENSE system can be used to facilitate learning.

6.1 Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Implementing a Functional Approach to Teaching English Tenses to Adult L2 Learners in Serbia

The results of the empirical study show that, alongside textbooks, the participants use authentic texts and context-driven activities to teach English tenses regardless of the teaching/learning context. They believe that a pedagogy involving an integrated teaching of form and function should result in the learner's successful language use outside the classroom. This view is in agreement with the opinions of functional linguists (see, e.g., Halliday, 2007; Hasan, 2011; Hasan & Perrett, 2011). It also agrees with Larsen-Freeman's (2003) proposed solution to the inert knowledge problem and the psychological research on transferable knowledge (Bransford et al., 2000). Therefore, building on current practices by introducing the teaching/learning cycle and SFL-based tense descriptions is likely to be perceived as beneficial in Serbian EFL classrooms for adult learners.

The responses of the participant-teachers who favour an inductive approach to teaching grammar/tenses (see §5.1.2, §5.2.1 and §5.2.2) imply more perceived benefits of employing a functional approach. A scaffolded discovery-based learning is believed to lead to a deeper understanding and longer information retention, while being motivating and engaging for learners. These experiences support the constructivist theory (see, e.g., Biggs, 1996) and match the findings of Schleppegrell's (2013) and Altun and Büyükduman's (2007) studies (see §3.4). Accordingly, it can be assumed that, as an inductive pedagogy, a functional approach to teaching English tenses should offer the same benefits to adult learners in Serbia.

Nevertheless, the data analysed in §5.1.2, §5.2.1, and §5.2.2 also indicate the participant-teachers' concerns about using an inductive approach when teaching learners with little previous exposure to English, or when teaching older generations of adults. In addition, a larger class size, a shorter time allocated for teaching/learning, and exams as learning goals seem to cause the participant-teachers to resort to a traditional approach to teaching tenses. Proposing the implementation of a functional approach first requires that these teaching/learning contexts be discussed.

The social environment of the learners taught by the participants confirms Ellis (2008) and Crystal's (2003) statements that the presence and usefulness of English in a contemporary society transcend the official language status (see §5.1.1). This suggests that English teachers in Serbia should use their learners' English social environment to identify the relevant contexts and explain tenses as a meaning resource. Provided that appropriate texts have been chosen using the concepts of genre and delicacy (see §3.3), learners should be able to notice the forms under observation in the text-deconstruction phase. In the phases of joint and independent text construction, learners would gain more opportunities for practising tenses in contexts relevant to their needs. This should enable them to apply their knowledge in a similar situation outside the classroom. Not only should the teaching/learning cycle enable a meaningful learning of tenses, it should also provide more exposure to authentic text, which is what the participants deem necessary for a successful implementation of an inductive methodology (see §5.1.2 and §5.2.1). A similar strategy can be identified in *Filip*'s current teaching practice:

(...) when students are not that much exposed to English, I tend to use a lot of input and even use certain structures that are not the aim of that particular class, but I leave them there so that when the time comes to teach those things to them, they would find them familiar.

The participant-teachers claim that older adults normally favour a traditional approach to teaching grammar because knowing the rules provides them with confidence (see §5.1.2 and §5.2.1). Their observations are in line with other research (see, e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2003) noting the adults' reluctance to take risks in their fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, the study results and some existing research (see, e.g. Lightbown & Spada, 2006) show that adults tend to expect a form-focused pedagogy due to their previous exposure to traditional grammar and their tendency to compare L2 with their fully-developed L1 system. These facts do suggest that adult learners are likely to offer initial resistance if taught with a functional approach. Nonetheless, if their goal is success in a specific social context, they should eventually benefit from a language pedagogy teaching them the appropriateness of their tense choices in that particular context instead of drilling forms in isolated examples (see, e.g., Halliday, 2007). They should find the acquired knowledge applicable in their environment, which would create a new positive learning experience, thus boosting their motivation. This should result in the learners' eventual acceptance of the new teaching practice, followed by further learning.

The participant-teachers' perception of a traditional approach as time-efficient can also be attributed to the traditional focus on form. As English exams in traditional settings are mostly focused on assessing knowledge of form, the participant-teachers' reluctance to use an inductive approach for exam preparation, also implied by Altun and Büyükduman's (2007) empirical study, appears understandable and should not be surprising. However, international English exams taken for migration purposes (e.g., IELTS (www.ielts.org)) evaluate reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills, which reflect understanding and using English in social

contexts. This reaffirms the importance that the appropriate language use has in communication in order to achieve success in the English social environment. In this case, a traditional approach does not seem to be efficient. While stating rules may be faster than the process of discovering them, it only guarantees that the learners will be familiar with the form and rules of its use. Many learners can find it rather difficult to apply the acquired knowledge in communication because the context of learning has no resemblance to the context of use (Bransford et al., 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Without using the forms in communication, the learners may forget them together with the rules of their use, creating the need for relearning the same grammar topics.

The empirical study has also revealed that large class size and classes with learners of mixed abilities and personalities can be perceived as obstacles to using an inductive approach (see §5.1.2 and §5.2.1). Being based on scaffolding and collaboration, the teaching/learning cycle should be beneficial in these situations. The procedures proposed by Jones and Lock (2011) can be performed in groups during the text-deconstruction and joint text-construction stages before the groups present their findings in the class discussion. Not only would this reduce the number of responses to be managed by the teacher within a given time, it would also enable students of different skills to collaborate and use their aptitude or learning style to help one another during the discovery process. For instance, the learners with prominent analytical skills can contribute to the group when noticing forms, while those with good memory can be of great help when observing meanings that those forms realise (see Wesche, 1981). Moreover, joint text-construction in smaller groups should reduce the anxiety and the fear of making mistakes as it gradually prepares the learners for independent performance.

Despite the perceived benefits of using a functional approach based on the empirical study and other relevant research, the prevalence of ELT materials and curricula based on traditional grammar must be taken into account. *Jana*, the only participant that has undergone an SFL-based training, states:

(...) there is more preparation going into using authentic texts. That's...that's sometimes...it's easier to have something that is very nicely set, you know, it's well-tested, it's been used so many times.

This statement is in line with the results of Burns and Knox's (2005) class observations, indicating that more support from SFL research is needed in order to equip teachers with grammatical and pedagogical tools. This support should come in the form of SFL-based teaching guidelines for ESL/EFL teachers that can be incorporated into their current practices (see, e.g., Burns, 2016; Butt et al., 2009; Jones & Lock, 2011). Eventually, it should also lead to the creation of SFL-based materials/curricula such as the CSWE developed by AMES (NSW AMES, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d). According to the main research question and scope of this thesis, the following section focuses on how the English TENSE system and its

metafunctional context can be introduced into current teaching practice in Serbia to deal with the challenges that adult L2 learners may face while learning English tenses.

6.2 Using the English TENSE System in Serbian EFL Classrooms for Adult Learners

The results of the empirical study (see §5.1.3.2 and §5.2.3) indicate that adult L2 learners in Serbian EFL classrooms experience difficulties when mastering tense forms influenced by time references other than event and zero time. The tense forms with a low frequency in the English text also appear to pose challenges. Therefore, analysing each English tense as a part of a Hallidayan TENSE system based on tripartition and recursiveness (see §2.3) should be beneficial. This system describes all time references affecting tense selection, while the same semantic precedence criterion is used to determine the logical structure of tense forms regardless of their delicacy or frequency. The findings of the study also support Butt et al.'s (2009) statement concerning the benefits of exploring the experiential metafunction when teaching tenses to L2 learners.

During the text deconstruction phase, tense forms can be transferred from a text onto single and multiple timelines to observe and analyse the English logic of construing time. Speech/event time and all other time references should be marked/labelled on the timeline(s) depending on the text so that forms and functions can be set in a context. As far as forms involving secondary tenses are concerned, this should help learners notice additional time references that can be realised by the English TENSE system and understand their significance for the topic of a text. In the text-construction phases – joint and independent – learners can use the same timeline illustrations to help them create a new text using the same logic to express time.

The English realisations of primary tenses can be transferred from a text onto a single timeline by using a cross (X) to define a time reference relative to speech as zero time reference (see Fig. 15).²⁹ It should be brought to the learner's attention that a cross represents a time reference, rather than a momentary event. Furthermore, experiential Process types should be explored, accompanied by a discussion about the marked meaning of primary present as repetitiveness or habituality in the case of Material processes (see §2.3.1).

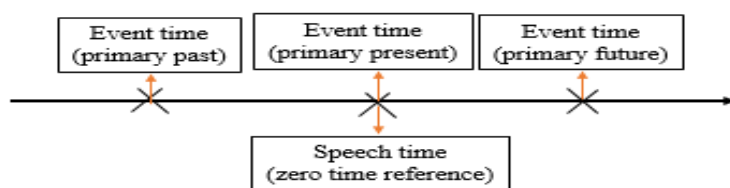


Figure 15: Visual representation of English primary tenses.

²⁹ If a tense form does not involve secondary tenses, the timeline in Fig.15 will describe a relation between event and speech time.

Transferring the realisations of English secondary past from a text onto timelines should enable L2 learners to observe past event time relative to the previous time reference (see Fig. 16). Additionally, text analyses should illustrate that the time reference up to which the occurrence or duration of an event is measured can be the time of the event's result or some other time important for the topic of a text. An example of a text analysis involving secondary past can be found in the visual representation of Text 19 in Figure 4 in §3.3.

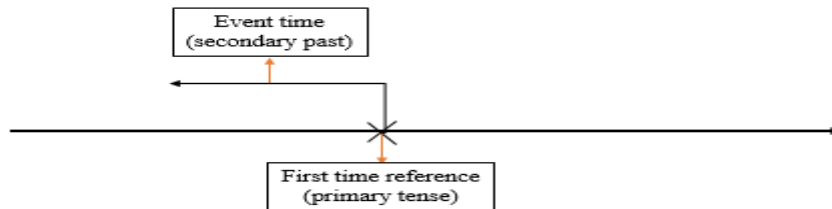


Figure 16: Visual representation of English secondary past.

Similarly, transferring the realisations of English secondary present from a text onto timelines should highlight the inclusion meaning. In the case of tense forms with one secondary tense, shading the first time reference on the timeline (X) should illustrate that event time includes the time set by the first tense choice (see Fig. 17). As a result, it should become clearer that the meaning of ongoingness realised by English secondary present is always relative to another time which is of importance for the topic of a text. Some examples of text analyses involving secondary present can be found in the visual representations of Texts 21-23 in Figure 6 in §3.3.

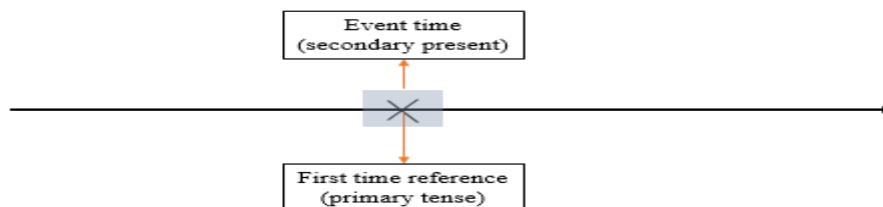


Figure 17: Visual representation of English secondary present (one previous time reference).

When it comes to the forms with two secondary tenses, representing event time on the timeline as focused on including both previous time references can illustrate the speaker's decision to put a stronger emphasis on the event's duration. For example, Figure 18 illustrates Present-in-past-in-future realised in Text 27.

Text 27: Next month, I will have been living in Sydney for a year.

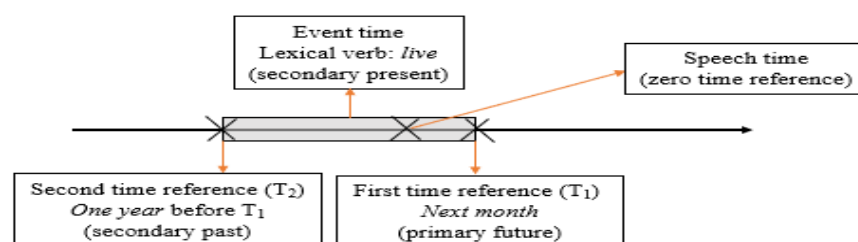


Figure 18: Visual representation of Text 27: a single timeline.

Regardless of a form's delicacy, teaching English secondary present should also include posing questions regarding the nature of Processes so that L2 learners can explore the markedness and unmarkedness of making this choice from the TENSE system (see §2.3.1).

While analysing the concept of English secondary future, the forms can be transferred from a text onto timelines to illustrate the meaning of event time succeeding the first time reference. This should be accompanied by a discussion on the experiential concept of planned and unplanned events to make L2 learners aware of the fact that the time of a plan can serve as a reference influencing tense selection in English (see §2.3). For instance, Figure 19 illustrates Future-in-present realised in Text 28.

Text 28: I am going to watch a movie tonight.

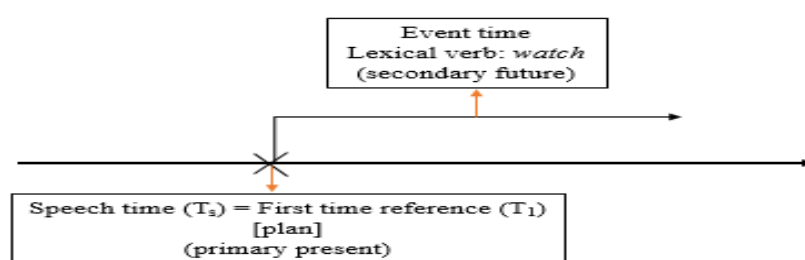


Figure 19: Visual representation of Text 28: a single timeline.

The recursive nature of the SFL-based TENSE system also assists the process of integrating new knowledge into existing knowledge. While traditional-based reference grammars mostly compare forms sharing the same primary tense (see, e.g., Murphy, 2012), SFL is suitable for comparing tense forms across the system. For instance, teaching/learning Past-in-future, which the participant-teachers perceive as a difficult topic introduced at the later stages of learning (see §5.1.3.2), can be facilitated by utilising the learners' knowledge of Past-in-past or Past-in-present. Figure 20 shows how the similarities and differences can be presented visually via multiple timelines. Furthermore, an example of a comparative text analysis of tenses forms with secondary present can be found in the visual representations of Texts 21-23 in Figure 6 in §3.3.

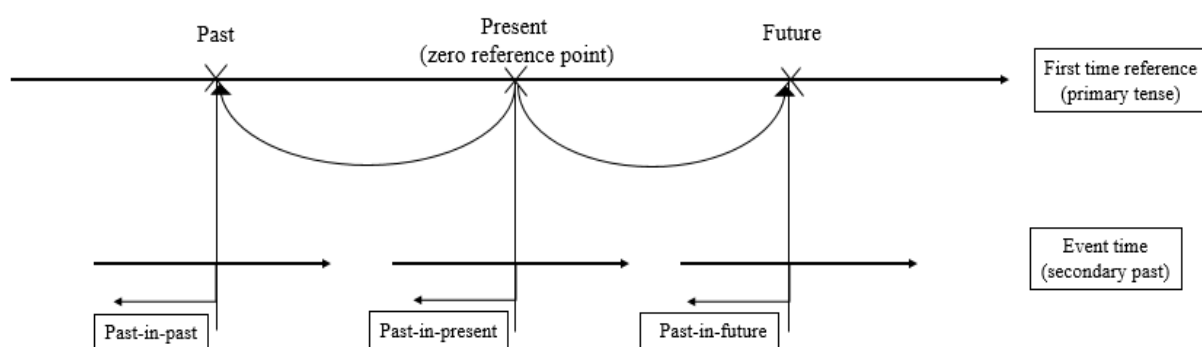


Figure 20: Multiple timelines and English secondary past.

Similarly, teaching/learning English tense forms with two secondary tenses can be supported by the learners' knowledge of primary and secondary tenses acquired while learning less delicate forms.

Finally, multiple timelines can be used for English indirect/reported speech to illustrate how the past event time in an independent (projecting) clause projects its "past" value to the zero time reference for tense selection in a dependent (projected) clause. Teachers can mark on a timeline the past event time of Verbal/Mental processes. On the timeline below, that time can be used as the starting point for locating time of the projected event (see Figure 5 in §3.3).

The descriptions of primary and secondary tenses should be possible to integrate into current EFL classrooms in Serbia by building on traditional grammar. Therefore, this research supports the following claim by Lock (1996):

The traditional names for the tenses which incorporate the tense-aspect perspective are so widely known and used that we are probably stuck with them for some time. However, (...) observing the use of tenses in context, the notion of a primary or absolute orientation to past, present, or future combined with secondary or relative orientations does make a lot of sense and may help learners see that the system of tenses and the ways they are used are not arbitrary (p. 163).

This does not mean that the entire system should be learnt at once, but that the use of SFL-based descriptions of English tenses can enrich the explanations given in current grammar-teaching materials by outlining the logic behind choosing a tense with reference to the whole language system. This should enable learners to realise that the usage rules described in traditional grammar can be traced to the meaning realised by combining primary and secondary tenses, the rules simply representing different contexts.

The use of traditional labels in textbooks and most reference grammars should not pose difficulties. Learners are not likely to associate these names with the traditional tense-aspect perspective as they are not likely to be aware of any linguistic theories. In *Filip*'s words:

You can call a tense Present Continuous or Present Progressive, the students don't really care. The only purpose it serves is that when we are explaining the differences between two tenses, we do not have to use example sentences all the time...I did vs. I have done.

As SFL tense labels reflect the temporal relations realised by a form, they should cause no confusion in the presence of traditional tense names. On the contrary, they should enable learners to observe the English tense logic illustrated on timelines, hence helping them explore how tense choices construe meanings in relevant contexts. This should also assist the learners in justifying the existence of the options non-existent in their L1 and encourage their use in communication.

7 Conclusion

Based on the research findings presented in this thesis, it can be argued that an SFL-based functional approach can benefit teaching/learning English tenses in the case of adult learners in Serbian EFL classrooms.

7.1 Answer to the Main Research Question

As stated in the introductory chapter, the main research question investigates how a functional approach as an SFL-based ELT methodology can benefit teaching tenses to adult L2 learners in Serbia. Since the investigation has not identified any SFL-based teaching materials available to English teachers in Serbia, this thesis argues that a functional approach can benefit the Serbian EFL context by being integrated into existing practices and curricula. Learners' English social environment outside the classroom and their proficiency can be analysed based on the SFL concepts of genre and delicacy to choose authentic texts to be used alongside textbooks. The texts can be taught through the teaching/learning cycle so as to facilitate the simultaneous learning of form and function in meaningful contexts. Building upon traditional grammar, SFL concepts and metalanguage can be introduced gradually whenever tenses are taught with a view to explaining the English logic behind construing the experience of time.

As discussed in §6.1, it is expected that the use of the teaching/learning cycle to teach/learn English tenses will lead to a deeper understanding and transferable knowledge. Given the opportunity to observe and practise how time is realised in contexts to which they can relate, L2 learners should be more likely to apply the acquired knowledge successfully in communication. Not only should the use of relevant authentic texts boost motivation and increase information retention, it should also result in the learner's early exposure to more complex tense forms in a meaningful context. This can be perceived as highly beneficial because learners can become more familiar with tense forms before being explicitly taught.

Furthermore, it is predicted that scaffolding and collaborative tasks within the teaching/learning cycle will promote active engagement and critical thinking, thus empowering the learner. As suggested in §6.1, the collaboration during the text deconstruction and joint construction ensures the teacher's support as a guide and allows L2 learners to complement one another by combining their learning styles, aptitude, and knowledge. Constructing a text in smaller groups before undertaking it independently may also decrease the level of anxiety arising from learners' fear of making mistakes.

Lastly, this research indicates that exploring English primary and secondary tenses together with the experiential metafunction and the logico-semantic relation of projection in clause complexes should help learners understand that neither tense forms nor their use are

arbitrary. The teaching guidelines proposed in §6.2 show how single and multiple timelines can be employed to observe, analyse, and practice the recursiveness of the English TENSE system. Timeline illustrations should show that time references influencing tense choice are not restricted to speech (i.e. zero) and event time. The empirical study indicates that this should be of great benefit for Serbian L1 speakers as they seem to have difficulties in justifying tense forms with English secondary tenses as well as tense sequencing (see §5.1.3.2). The use of the SFL-based TENSE system should also help L2 learners differentiate between the concepts of English secondary present and Serbian imperfective aspect. Using timelines to describe the logical architecture of tense forms including one or two secondary tenses should also enable learners to observe why the speaker has chosen to introduce a new time reference and what meaning this choice conveys in a given context. For instance, it may illustrate a speaker's decision to add secondary past to primary present to pinpoint the present result of a completed event. Finally, as the English TENSE system is based on making one or more choices from the same three options, learners can observe the functions and structures of newly-introduced tenses by relying on their existing knowledge of other tense forms.

7.2 Implications of This Research

In the context of teaching English to adults in Serbia, the key implication of this research is that a functional approach to teaching English tenses should be perceived as beneficial by teaching professionals, but only if provided with the appropriate support to integrate it into their practice. In the empirical study, the participants' current practices, beliefs, and opinions seem to be compatible with those found in a functional pedagogy. For instance, the practice of accompanying traditional textbooks with authentic materials to teach tenses through a text-based approach and collaborative situation-based tasks implies that they consider the use of authentic texts necessary and useful. The data on the participants' training and their learners' expectations, however, suggest that tense teaching in Serbian EFL classrooms is still influenced by traditional grammar as a form-focused approach, which may hinder the implementation of a functional approach.

From the participants' point of view, although contextualised learning provides the necessary exposure to the English text and helps learners observe language functions, it takes more time and effort to teach/learn grammar. This research has reviewed the SFL-based English TENSE system (see §2.3) and provided guidelines on using it to teach tense forms and functions simultaneously (see §3.3 and §6.2). Yet, there is still a possibility that EFL teachers in Serbia might be tempted to resort to a well-known traditional approach even if they endorse a functional approach due to a lack of SFL-based materials. Hence, teacher training programs

and further action research are likely to be needed to demonstrate, investigate, and develop SFL-based pedagogical and grammatical tools in practice.

Another implication of this research refers to the use of SFL-based language description to mitigate the L1 impact on learning English tenses in SLA. Apart from a form's low frequency in the English text, the empirical study has identified the recursiveness of the English TENSE system as the root cause as to why adult learners in Serbian EFL classrooms face challenges while learning English tenses (see §5.1.3.2). This can be attributed to the lack of recursiveness in the contemporary Serbian TENSE system and the foregrounded ASPECT in Serbian finite verb forms (see §5.1.3.1). The guidelines provided in §6.2, however, show how the use of the English TENSE system should help Serbian L1 speakers overcome difficulties arising from the L1 TENSE system. This implies the possibility that an SFL-based pedagogy to teaching English tenses may benefit L2 learners from another Slavic linguistic background or perhaps other language groups, which encourages replicating this research in other EFL/ESL contexts.

7.3 Limitations of This Research

One limitation of this research is the fact that only L2 teachers were included as participants of the empirical study due to its relatively small scope. As explained in §4.1.1, including learners would have caused the volume of the qualitative data to be insufficient for an in-depth study. However, the questionnaire and interview contained items asking the respondents to comment on their students' experiences. Although the value of these responses cannot be seen as equivalent to the participation of current L2 learners, it can be argued that they are insightful as 92% of the participant-teachers are non-native speakers of English and therefore former L2 learners (see Fig.7 in §4.2.2).

Another limitation refers to the fact that conducting a longitudinal study was not possible due to the time allocated for completing an MRes thesis, making this research mainly exploratory. This research did not involve implementing/observing the teaching guidelines proposed in §6.2 and then conducting surveys and interviews with teachers and/or learners.

Lastly, the research focused only on teaching English tenses to Serbian L1 speakers, who account for 88% of the Serbian population. Although the research findings are encouraging with reference to using an SFL-based approach to facilitate teaching tenses to EFL/ESL learners in general, more research is needed on teaching L2 learners from other linguistic backgrounds.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the outcome of this research, it is recommended that further research be conducted on implementing a functional approach to teaching English tenses to adult L2 learners with Serbian and, if possible, other languages as L1. This study could involve action research in which the

proposed teaching guidelines from this thesis would be implemented and observed in practice. In addition, it could include pre-/post-implementation surveys and interviews with both teachers and learners. This should be accompanied by progress tests on the appropriate use of tenses (either oral or written) given to both experimental and control groups. Such a study would provide a more comprehensive insight into the effectiveness of a functional approach to teaching English tenses and would allow for an investigation into the influence of different learner factors on its success.

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Appendix 1: English tenses included in the questionnaire: realisations in Serbian

English tense label in SFL	Serbian tense label (<i>example</i>)	Notes
Present	Prezent (<i>радим</i>)	Only imperfective verbs are used in default instantiations of Serbian Prezent.
Past	Perfekat (<i>радила сам / урадила сам</i>)	
Future	Futur I (<i>радићу / урадићу</i>)	Serbian Prezent can be used in conjunction with an adverbial indicating future.
Present-in-Present	Prezent (<i>радим</i>)	Only imperfective verbs are used in Serbian.
Present-in-Past	Perfekat (<i>радила сам</i>)	Only imperfective verbs are used in Serbian. Serbian Imperfekat can be used in archaic texts.
Present-in-Future	Futur I (<i>радићу</i>)	Only imperfective verbs are used in Serbian. Serbian Prezent can be used in conjunction with an adverbial indicating future.
Past-in-Present	Prezent / Perfekat (<i>радим / радила сам / урадила сам</i>)	Serbian Prezent is used if an event has not been completed (only imperfective verbs). Serbian Perfekat is used if an event has completed.
Past-in-Future	Futur I (<i>урадићу</i>) Structure: (<i>биће</i> + event duration + <i>како радим</i>)	If English secondary past denotes an event completed prior to the future time reference, only perfective verbs are used in Serbian. If English secondary past denotes the duration of an event prior to the future time reference, Past-in-future is realised in Serbian by the following structure: <i>биће</i> [Futur I of the Serbian verb “to be”] + event duration + <i>како</i> + Prezent of a lexical imperfective verb.
Past-in-Past	Perfekat (<i>радила сам / урадила сам</i>)	Serbian Pluskvamperfekat can be used in archaic texts.
Future-in-Present	Futur I (<i>радићу / урадићу</i>)	
Present-in-Past-in-Present	Prezent (<i>радим</i>)	Only imperfective verbs are used in Serbian.
Present-in-Past-in-Past	Perfekat (<i>радила сам</i>)	Only imperfective verbs are used in Serbian;
Present-in-Past-in-Future	Structure: (<i>биће</i> + event duration + <i>како радим</i>)	The following structure is used in Serbian: Futur I of the Serbian verb “to be” + event duration + <i>како</i> + Prezent of a lexical imperfective verb;

Appendix 2: The participants recruitment advertisement



Dear English teachers,

You are invited to participate in a study of **the methodologies and challenges of teaching tenses in English**. The purpose of the study is to better understand the challenges that teachers of English as a foreign language face when teaching tenses in English and gain a deeper insight into EFL teachers' methodologies as to explore how and to what extent the features of the functional approach can facilitate the teaching/learning process.

The study is being conducted by MA Dragana Stosic to meet the requirements of Master of Research Degree under the supervision of Dr. Marika Kalyuga of the Department of International Studies: Languages and Cultures (contact telephone number: + 61X XXXX XXXX, email: marika.kalyuga@mq.edu.au).

You are invited to participate if you teach English as a foreign language to students older than 18.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire which will take you approximately 30 minutes. The questions included in the survey refer only to teaching English and there are no sensitive or offensive questions. At the end of the questionnaire, you will be asked to volunteer for a 15-minute follow-up interview via Skype, which you are free to decline without giving any reason and without any consequences.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (reference number: 5201700156).

Please contact Dragana Stosic at dragana.stosic@hdr.mq.edu.au if you are interested.

Thank you.

Appendix 3: Information sheet and the questionnaire

Department of International Studies: Languages and Cultures
 Faculty of Arts
 MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
 NSW 2109
 Phone: +61X XXXX XXXX
 Email: dragana.stosic@hdr.mq.edu.au



Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name & Title:
 Dr. Marika Kalyuga

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Position:
 Senior Lecturer

Participant Information Sheet

Name of Project: The Functional Approach to Teaching Tenses in English

You are invited to participate in a study of the methodologies and challenges of teaching tenses in English. The purpose of the study is to better understand the challenges that teachers of English as a foreign language face when teaching tenses in English and gain a deeper insight into EFL teachers' methodologies as to explore how and to what extent the features of the functional approach can facilitate the teaching/learning process. Your contribution is vital in achieving the goal of this project and thus greatly appreciated.

The study is being conducted by MA Dragana Stosic to meet the requirements of Master of Research Degree under the supervision of Dr. Marika Kalyuga of the Department of International Studies: Languages and Cultures (contact telephone number: + 61X XXXX XXXX, email: marika.kalyuga@mq.edu.au).

You are invited to participate if you teach English as a foreign language to students older than 18.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire which will take you approximately 30 minutes. The questions included in the survey refer only to teaching English and there are no sensitive or offensive questions. At the end of the questionnaire, you will be asked to volunteer for a follow-up interview of approximately 15 minutes conducted via Skype, which you are free to decline without giving any reason and without any consequences. If you accept, you will be asked to leave you contact details so that we can obtain your consent and arrange the interview. The audio recording of the interview will be made for the purpose of maintaining the accuracy for the analysis.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. Quotes from your questionnaire or interview may be used in the dissertation or resulting publications but no individuals will be

identified. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request via email (please contact Dragana Stosic, email: dragana.stosic@students.mq.edu.au)

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (reference number: 5201700156) and participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

By proceeding to the survey questions, you acknowledge that you have understood the purpose and nature of the project and give your informed consent.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

General Instructions

We kindly ask you to complete this questionnaire concerning teaching methodologies and challenges with reference to teaching tenses in English. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give your answers sincerely, as this will guarantee the success of the research project.

SECTION A: Personal information

Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Ethnicity

Native language

English teaching degree/certificate

SECTION B: Teaching background

Instructions: Please mark the fields that are true for you.

How long have you been teaching English?

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-25 years
- ☐ more than 25 years

How many students are there in your class? (You may choose more than one answer)

- ☐ 1 (individual lessons)
- ☐ 2 - 8 students
- ☐ 9 - 16 students
- ☐ 17 - 30 students
- ☐ more than 30 students

What is the English language competence level of the students you teach? (You may choose more than one answer)

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ Pre-Intermediate
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Upper-Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced

What is the age of your students? (You may choose more than one answer)

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-50
- ☐ 51-65
- ☐ older than 65

What type of English courses do you teach? (You may choose more than one answer)

- ☐ General English
- ☐ Academic English
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ English for Specific Purposes
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

What is the length of the English courses you teach? (You may choose more than one answer if you teach different courses)

- ☐ up to a month
- ☐ 1 - 3 months
- ☐ 4 - 6 months
- ☐ 7 - 12 months
- ☐ more than a year

On average, how exposed are your students to English outside classroom?

- ☐ No exposure to English
- ☐ Very little exposure to English
- ☐ Moderate exposure to English
- ☐ Frequent exposure to English
- ☐ Exposure to English on a daily basis

On average, how often do your students speak/write English outside classroom?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

How familiar are your students with a language structure before you formally introduce that grammar topic?

- ☐ Students encounter it for the first time.
- ☐ Students have encountered it once or twice in previous materials/classroom activities.
- ☐ Students have encountered it a number of times in previous materials/classroom activities.
- ☐ Students have encountered it a number of times due to their exposure to English outside classroom.
- ☐ Students are fairly skillful at using the language structure in question without being aware of the relevant terminology in grammar.

SECTION C: Teaching philosophy and methodologies

Instructions: Please mark the fields that are true for you.

How often do you use the following resources when teaching tenses?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Newspaper articles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Podcasts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Video materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recorded conversations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fiction (e.g. children stories)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often do you use the following activities when teaching tenses?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Text analysis (e.g. colouring, underlining)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group/Situation-based activities (e.g. role-play)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In order to introduce a new grammar topic, do you prefer a deductive approach (i.e. introducing the rules first) or an inductive approach (i.e. introducing the examples for students to discover the general rules)? Why? (2-3 sentences)

How would you describe your teaching philosophy? (2-3 sentences)

SECTION D: Teaching tenses in English - problem areas

Instructions: According to your teaching experience, please rate (1 – extremely easy, 10 – extremely hard) how difficult you believe the following grammar topics are for your students. If your rating is 7 or higher, please explain shortly why you believe this topic may be challenging for learners.

Present Simple (He works)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer => 7

Possible reasons:

Present Continuous (He is working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Present Simple vs. Continuous (He works vs. He is working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Present Perfect Simple (He has worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Present Perfect Continuous (He has been working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Present Perfect Simple vs. Continuous (He has worked vs. He has been working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Present Simple vs. Present Perfect Simple (He works vs. He has worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Present Perfect Simple vs. Past Simple (He has worked vs. He worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Past Simple (He worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Past Continuous (He was working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Past Simple vs. Continuous (He worked vs. He was working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Past Perfect Simple (He had worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Past Perfect Continuous (He had been working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Past Perfect Simple vs. Past Perfect Continuous (He had worked vs. He had been working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Past Simple vs. Past Perfect Simple (He worked vs. He had worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Future Simple (He will work)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Future Continuous (He will be working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Future Simple vs. Continuous (He will work vs. He will be working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Future Perfect Simple (He will have worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Future Perfect Continuous (He will have been working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Future Perfect Simple vs. Continuous (He will have worked vs. He will have been working)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

Future Simple vs. Future Perfect Simple (He will work vs. He will have worked)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \neq > 7

Possible reasons:

BE GOING TO + infinitive (He is going to work)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \neq > 7

Possible reasons:

Future Simple vs. BE GOING TO + infinitive (He will work vs. He is going to work)

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \neq > 7

Possible reasons:

Reported/Indirect speech

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \neq > 7

Possible reasons:

Sequence of tenses

Level of difficulty for learners 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Display This Question:

If answer \geq 7

Possible reasons:

THIS IS THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Would you like to volunteer for a 15-minute follow-up interview via Skype?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Display This if answer = Yes

Please leave your contact details so that the interview can be arranged.

☐ Name: _____

☐ E-mail address: _____

The audio recording of the interview will be made for the purpose of maintaining the accuracy for the analysis. The questions included in the interview refer only to teaching English and there are no sensitive or offensive questions.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. Quotes from your questionnaire or interview may be used in the dissertation or resulting publications but no individual will be identified.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

Appendix 4: Interview information and consent form

Department of International Studies: Languages and Cultures
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
NSW 2109
Phone: +61X XXXX XXXX
Email: dragana.stosic@hdr.mq.edu.au



MACQUARIE
University
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name & Title:
Dr. Marika Kalyuga

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title:
Senior Lecturer

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: The Functional Approach to Teaching Tenses in English

You are invited to participate in a study of the methodologies and challenges of teaching tenses in English. The purpose of the study is to better understand the challenges that teachers of English as a foreign language face when teaching tenses in English and gain a deeper insight into EFL teachers' methodologies as to explore how and to what extent the features of the functional approach can facilitate the teaching/learning process. Your contribution is vital in achieving the goal of this project and thus greatly appreciated.

The study is being conducted by MA Dragana Stosic to meet the requirements of Master of Research Degree under the supervision of Dr. Marika Kalyuga of the Department of International Studies: Languages and Cultures (contact telephone number: + 61X XXXX XXXX, email: marika.kalyuga@mq.edu.au).

You are invited to participate if you teach English as a foreign language to students older than 18.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do a 15-minute follow-up interview which will be conducted via Skype and the audio recording of the interview will be made for the purpose of maintaining the accuracy for the analysis. The questions included in the interview refer only to teaching English and there are no sensitive or offensive questions.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. Quotes from your questionnaire or interview may be used in the dissertation or resulting publications but no individual will be identified. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request via email (please contact Dragana Stosic, email: dragana.stosic@hdr.mq.edu.au)

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, _____ have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix 5: Demographic information of the teachers participating in the empirical study

Pseudonym	Gender	Native language	ELT qualification	ELT experience
<i>Vera</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Sara</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Kristina</i>	F	Serbian	Bachelor in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Ema</i>	F	Serbian	Bachelor in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Ana</i>	F	Serbian	Bachelor in English language and literature	16-25 years
<i>Tijana</i>	F	Serbian	Bachelor in English language and literature	16-25 years
<i>Teodora</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	16-25 years
<i>John</i>	M	English	Master in TESOL+CELTA	6-10 years
<i>Mirjana</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	25+ years
<i>Jana*</i>	F	Serbian	Master in TESOL+CELTA	25+ years
<i>Marija</i>	F	Serbian	Bachelor in English language and literature	16-25 years
<i>Aleksandara</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Iva</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Mila</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	0-5 years
<i>Aleksandar</i>	M	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	0-5 years
<i>Filip*</i>	M	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Sandra</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	0-5 years
<i>Mia*</i>	F	Serbian	Bachelor in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Tanja</i>	F	Serbian	Bachelor in English language and literature	11-15 years
<i>Nina</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	6-10 years
<i>Brian</i>	M	English	CELTA	6-10 years
<i>Jovana</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	11-15 years
<i>Goran</i>	M	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	0-5 years
<i>Danijela</i>	F	Serbian	Master in English language and literature	6-10 years

*Interviewee

Appendix 6: Questionnaire content data

Responses on deductive v. inductive approach to teaching grammar:

Vera: Both. For some structures inductive makes more sense, while for some other deductive is a better way.

Sara: I prefer an inductive approach because I believe that discovering patterns gives students makes them really understand a structure and gives them a sense of accomplishment.

Kristina: I first introduce examples in a text so the students could detect the new tense themselves, I do these so they would identify the relations between the tenses they have already mastered and the new unfamiliar one

Ema: Inductive approach because I find that they understand better and learn more easily

Ana: I prefer an inductive approach because it makes students think and try to discover the rules. When they first try to discover the pattern, they remember the rules in a better way.

Tijana: Inductive approach. I find it more challenging and the knowledge gathered in that way is more natural

Teodora: Inductive approach, contextual grammar teaching, because I want them to come up with the solution on their own.

John: I prefer the inductive approach, not only for the teaching of grammatical features, but also pragmatic. I agree with the hypothesis that noticing is key to effective acquisition, so I try to encourage my learners to notice features for themselves. By raising awareness through noticing and then consolidating knowledge through explicit discussion and practice opportunities, my learners tend to retain the target language more efficiently.

Mirjana: Inductive because students are more active that way and they are more likely to remember things they had to discover by themselves.

Jana: Am inductive approach enables better understanding and critical thinking skills are employed in the process of identifying and constricting rules . Most importantly, students tend to remember the discovery process, which is scaffoldied, better than the rules 'imposed ' .

Marija: I prefer an inductive approach since I have noticed that students become more attentive when hearing examples first

Aleksandra: Inductive approach because that makes them think about the subject matter.

Iva: Depending on age and whether students had encountered English before, I do both approaches. Under 18 learners and those who had done English before as part of their mainstream education, prefer inductive approach since they remember a lot already. However, those who are over 18 encountering English for the first time, prefer deductive.

Mila: Inductive because learners remember the structures longer if they discover them themselves.

Aleksandar: I always start with explaining the rules first so that students can get an idea what to be on the lookout for. Having acquainted themselves with the basic rules students are better

equipped and more confident when asked to locate phrase/grammar structure we are covering. Moreover, once they've learnt the basics they can move on and observe the different ways of using a particular phrase/grammar structure.

Filip: Deductive, as adults like to be familiarised with the rules first before they can feel confident enough to start producing sentences using target language.

Sandra: I prefer inductive approach, since my students tend to remember more when they discover the rules by themselves.

Mia: I generally use a deductive approach because most of the students that I teach are over 30, 40 or even 50 and they are used to this approach. I have tried using an inductive approach, but many of the students were surprised or even reluctant to put some extra effort into drawing conclusions for themselves. In my opinion this is a result of a strong tradition of applying grammar-translation method in our country.

Tanja: Inductive approach-students can relate and memorise better once they discover the general rules by themselves. They are usually very good at writing the rules from the sample sentences.

Nina: Inductive...because when they focus too much on the rules they become paralyzed, and this approach feels more natural

Brian: Deductive. To analyse their understanding and to ensure that any existing errors are remedied before proceeding. I find that this also helps to identify useful similarities with their native language and to highlight any significant differences with their native language.

Jovana: I prefer an inductive approach because students have a sense of accomplishment after they have discovered a pattern. But, I sometimes don't have enough time for it because of a very intensive curriculum and then I use the deductive approach.

Goran: Inductive when there is time for it because students enjoy it more. Deductive when there are a lot of activities to do during the lesson.

Danijela: It depends on the learner's goals. I believe that an inductive approach is better long-term, but the deductive one is more efficient for short term goals (e.g. studying for a test) because it is not time-consuming. Also, I think that a deductive approach is easier in classes with a lot of students because it's quicker and it is impossible to check whether all students have understood the examples correctly.

Responses on teaching philosophy:

Vera: Making use of resources already existing in students and connecting the new material to what they already know.

Sara: Students should be involved and engaged as much as possible in the teaching and learning process. Only in this way will they be able to apply what they have learnt in the classroom.

Kristina: the students need to actively speak the language from the very beginning so they would not shy away from it later; they are also encouraged to so speak about their own lives so they would get to know each other and feel comfortable in a group

Ema: I want my students to really understand what they are learning because they will enjoy classes more.

Ana: The teacher is a guide in the teaching-learning process, which is a holistic process in which there is a co-creation of meaning between student and teacher. The teacher is there to facilitate understanding, help and challenge students, encourage creative experimentation, and respect and support a wide diversity of students and student needs while maintaining balance and fairness.

Tijana: I strongly believe that variety is the spice of life, so why not the spice of ELT?! In my opinion, learning in a classroom where a textbook is the only resource is like looking at a travel brochure and calling it a holiday! That's why I tend to give my students a variety of activities and always keep changing them. A little bit of this, and a little bit of that, makes my classes more interesting and my students more motivated. When I enjoy, my students enjoy. It's as simple as that.

Teodora: I want my students to learn about the culture and the people behind the language and to learn about life through language. I believe the curriculum should be adapted to students' needs and not vice versa. In addition, students should feel comfortable and be allowed to make mistakes and correct themselves.

John: My philosophy is that all target language should be meaningful and relate to real-world contexts (in consideration of both linguistic and pragmatic competences). I believe in the value of utilising naturally occurring discourse (elicited through meaningful exercises [e.g. discussions, role-plays]) in the teaching of relevant language.

Mirjana: For learning to take place, the students must feel comfortable and valued and and I strive to create an atmosphere where they will be interested in learning, a respectful classroom environment conducive to student-centered learning with the teacher as a collaborator. The teacher is neither omnipotent nor a magician and the classroom is not the only place where learning occurs.

Jana: If students are in the environment where social interaction and the negotiation of meaning are supported with communicative methodology, they are more likely to engage and learn.

Marija: I like my students to have fun in the classroom. To enjoy coming.

Aleksandra: Learners learn best when they are engaged in the activities.

Iva: The class is for the student and his or her means, I am a tool to achieve their goals. My ego and personality are left in front of the classroom door, I become what they need when I come in. Setting the goals before the classes begin is essential, as well as following through, encouraging and doing the most difficult tasks together.

Mila: Responding to students' needs is the key for successful teaching and learning.

Aleksandar: As I see it teaching should be all about bringing the language closer to students. My experience is that language tends to intimidate students and the key to avoiding that is in the use of materials and topics that students are familiar with and feel comfortable with. I rely more on conversation and less on long homeworks and exercises that take long and are often confusing for students

Filip: Provide students with the opportunity to get exposed to the natural language of tv shows and short films, and use the target language in an environment as natural as possible through role-plays.

Sandra: I like to involve my students in the process of learning. I think active participation is very important.

Mia: I use, combine and choose methods in accordance with the needs, abilities and preferences of my current students. My main task is to find the right path which will ultimately bring my students to the point when they are happy to be able to communicate their message effectively and they acquire a high level of motivation for further learning.

Tanja: Introduce, present and practice and practice. Ss are to be exposed to a language, to be involved, to make and correct the mistakes. A role of a teacher is one of a guidance, to give a structure to a lesson and to adapt to any unplanned situation.

Nina: make the students feel comfortable, find out their needs, adjust, offer support.

Brian: I prefer to teach using conversation and real life examples. My philosophy is based on giving students the confidence to try to speak even if the produced language is technically incorrect. I believe that communication is the key to language learning rather than too much focus on technical expertise.

Jovana: People will learn only if they are motivated and they enjoy the learning process.

Goran: Learners need English to do their jobs, so teaching English should include teaching them how to apply their knowledge in the real world.

Danijela: Use the learner's existing knowledge about language and the real world to teach new things.

Responses on the perceived difficulties of tense-related grammar topics (individual tenses):

Present Perfect

Vera: No equivalent structure in Serbian.

Sara: Their mother tongue (Serbian) interferes with learning this tense because Serbian uses either present or past tense to express different its usages.

Ema: Many different usages which coincide with different tenses in Serbian and mislead them to use other tenses in English

Ana: It corresponds to two different tenses in my students' mother tongue. e.g. I've lived in Vranje for 10 years - Živim u Vranju 10 godina. (Present tense in Serbian) I haven't done my homework yet. - Nisam još uradila domaći (Past Tense in Serbian)

Tijana: There is nothing similar to compare it with in Serbian.

Aleksandra: Differences between Serbian and English

Filip: No equivalent in Serbian.

Mia: Even when they do master a very complicated form, for them, there is an even bigger problem of use. For Serbian speakers this is considered as something 'extra and unnecessary', since we already have Past Simple, and its equivalent is sufficient in Serbian, so 'Do we really need to use this?' is a frequent question.

Tanja: Hard to grasp, not having the tense in the mother tongue. Difficult to connect past with present results.

Nina: it's different from their native language

Jovana: No equivalent in Serbian.

Goran: Learners find it difficult to understand that there are so many different usages.

Danijela: It doesn't exist in Serbian.

Present Perfect Continuous

Vera: No exact equivalent in Serbian.

Kristina: Serbian speakers spontaneously use present simple here because then it sounds more similar to Serbian since the language contains no matching tense to Present Perfect Continuous

Ema: Sometimes they find it difficult to understand the difference between present perfect simple and continuous

Ana: There is no corresponding tense in Serbian. The structure is encountered in later stages of learning.

Tijana: There is nothing similar to compare it in Serbian.

Teodora: There is no Present Perfect equivalent in Serbian language and it may be quite hard for them to distinguish between its various uses. In Serbian it is either the present or the past tense and the corresponding action. Present Perfect requires more inferential thinking, it is not a straightforward tense.

John: It may depend on learners' linguistic background, e.g. equivalent tenses may not exist (or may be used differently) in their L1.

Jana: The tense has no equivalent in their native language

Aleksandra: The tense does not exist in Serbian

Iva: Pres. Per. and Pres. Perf Cont. do not exist in Serbian, so translation as a technique cannot be used. It is up to the student to first grasp a time that those tenses refer to, since it would be Past Simple in Serbian.

Aleksandar: Students have difficulties grasping the notion of an action being in progress when something else interrupts it, or when an action lasts but we are not told exactly when it started

Filip: No equivalent in Serbian and similarity to Present Perfect Simple.

Sandra: There is no such tense in Serbian language and it is hard for the students to understand.

Mia: is a very problematic tense, but least of all because of the long form. The combination of progressive aspect and the already overwhelming Perfect Tense seems to be very puzzling and difficult to master.

Nina: they can't always grasp the need for it

Brian: Due to the similarity in meaning, many students seem to feel there must be more of a black and white difference between the tenses. Many are very focused on learning strict rules and struggle to accept that two tenses can mean the same thing.

Jovana: No equivalent in Serbian.

Danijela: It doesn't exist in Serbian.

Past Simple

Aleksandar: Irregular verbs are often an issue and are therefore an obstacle in properly mastering the tense.

Past Perfect

John: Because of L1, some learners don't see the need for the concept "past before past".

Iva: Past Perfect is often wrongly explained in primary schools as a past tense that took place a long time ago. So in a sentence "She left a few seconds after he had arrived", and especially if from the context we know this took place 2 hrs ago for example, students cannot use that idea that Past Perf had taken place a long time ago, so this confuses them/

Aleksandar: Students need to pay extra attention to which action took place first in order to get the tense right

Past Perfect Continuous

Ana: This tense is encountered in later stages of learning.

Teodora: Past Simple is difficult because of irregular verbs. Past Perfect is easy once they master all other past tenses but Past Perfect Continuous has been a challenge because they do not see the reason for using it and do not pay it too much attention.

John: It is especially difficult for learners of languages which do not use past perfect tenses. The concept of 'past before past' may be confusing.

Jana: Not often used.

Aleksandra: Ghe inability to differntiate between past cont and past perfect co t. Also the inability to understand the difference between past simple and past cont

Aleksandar: Same as with present perfect continuous. Once they have understood which action happened first they need to be sure that they understand which action lasted for a while before another action took placr

Filip: No equivalent in Serbian and rare usage.

Future Continuous

Tijana: There are no similar forms in Serbian to compare them.

Future Perfect

Ana: Students do not have a lot of opportunities to hear this tense in speaking. It is also introduced in later stages of learning.

Tijana: These forms are more difficult to understand as they are not so common in everyday English students are familiar with thanks to films and music.

John: Many languages do not use this form. It is therefore conceptually confusing.

Jana: The idea of something being finished in the future or no future aspect in their own language

Iva: The Future Perfect is resolved through other means in Serbian, so it does not exist. However, the notion of that time does exist, so students find the form of inf perfect difficult (because of many expressions with have, tenses with has etc.), but in my experience they understand the time it is referring to.

Aleksandar: It is difficult for students to understand the possibility of one future action being over by the time another future action takes place

Filip: No equivalent in Serbian, and difficulty understanding that an action can end in the future before a certain time, as future is believed to be uncertain.

Mia: In case the students haven't mastered Present Perfect well, this becomes almost impossible. It confuses them that we talk about something that will be in the past from the future point of view, but they are in the present in their minds so it is all simply future for them.

Jovana: Not frequently used and no equivalent in Serbian.

Goran: Not frequently used.

Future Perfect Continuous

Kristina: there are no matching tenses in Serbian so a great concentration is needed for a sentence to be formed

Ema: They can't compare it to anything in their own language and have difficulty visualising it

Ana: Students do not have a lot of opportunities to hear this tense in speaking. The structure is introduced in later stages of learning.

Tijana: Not very common, probably never used in the language students come across in music and films.

Teodora: When paired up, all these tenses are easier to understand and use. However, in many cases, learning them requires a very detailed knowledge of their mother tongue and honestly, that is not the kind of level many native speakers have when it comes to their own languages. They need to know their native languages extremely well in order to be able to draw parallels, make comparisons and find corresponding equivalents. Since that is not often the case, it is

better when target language (English in this case) grammar is taught within the context, through various social situations and then analyzed.

John: The added continuous feature makes the form even more confusing.

Jana: The same reason as for the future perfect tense

Aleksandar: Same as with any continuous action. Student struggle with what happens and what lasts

Filip: No equivalent in Serbian, and difficulties with the the notion of action in progress before a certain time in the future.

Jovana: The same as for Future Perfect Simple

Goran: Not frequently used and the form is complex.

Responses on the perceived difficulties of tense-related grammar topics (choosing the appropriate option):

Pres Simple v. Continuous

Vera: No similar contrast in present forms in their native language (Serbian).

Sara: There is no such difference in Serbian.

Ema: Native language interference mostly.

Tijana: Because of the negative transfer from Serbian. They cannot understand the concept of two present tenses.

Iva: Serbian in translation does not demonstrate differences between Pres S and Cont, students have to understand differences in meaning in real life situations.

Sandra: Non existant parallel example in the Serbian language.

Tanja: not having two present tenses in their mother tongue

Jovana: Because of Serbian, learners don't understand the need for both simple and continuous.

Goran: In Serbian, one tense covers both simple and continuous.

Present Perf. Simple v. Continuous

Ana: These structures are encountered in later stages of learning.

Tijana: There are many exceptions to the rule when it comes to using these two tenses.

John: Again, these tense differences may not exist in learners' L1; therefore it may be difficult to discern the difference.

Jana: It is difficult if the tenses do not exist in their mother tongue or the difference between a result and duration is not clear to those students.

Iva: If explained through the concept of duration, students ask how the sentences "He has lived there" and "He has been living there" differ, and in primary schools this is how the two tenses are explained. So, when we introduce the concept that Pres. Perf. could have finished at the moment of speech, but might happen again, this misconception is usually cleared.

Filip: Interchangeability in some instances.

Pres. Simple v. Pres. Perfect

Vera: The number of uses/meaning for each of these tenses.

Sara: Native speakers of Serbian use simple present tense to express an activity that started in the past and hasn't finished yet.

Ana: Present Perfect Tense is difficult to grasp for native speakers of Serbian.

Tijana: Nothing similar in their mother tongue.

John: Not only are discrepancies possible between the use of tense in L1/L2 (e.g. an equivalent 'he works/has worked' may serve the same function in learners' L1), it might be tricky for learners to acquire the range of application of the tenses in other contexts, e.g. when present simple functions to express habits, repeated actions, wishes, directions, fixed arrangements (timetables), etc.

Aleksandra: The inability to understand that present perfect can also be used for a finished activity

Goran: Serbian speakers use present tense for both.

Pres. Perfect v. Past Simple

Vera: Students often perceive Present Perfect as a past tense.

Sara: Native speakers of Serbian use simple past tense for any activity that's finished - regardless of whether the period/moment is mentioned or not.

Ema: Native language interference usually

John: It would depend on the culture. For example, for Chinese students, the concept of finished and unfinished actions is confusing.

Jana: The use of past tenses or aspects is not so distinctive in students' native languages.

Filip: No clear distinction in Serbian, and difficulties understanding the link with the present time related to consequences.

Tanja: having a difficulty in deciding whether the action is finished, or still has some connection with the present(when no adverb is given)

Jovana: Native Serbian speakers use past in both cases.

Goran: It's difficult when the activity is over because Serbian speakers use past tense.

Danijela: Students think they can use only past because it's enough in Serbian.

Past Simple v. Continuous

Aleksandar: As with any continuous tense, students might find it difficult to differentiate between what lasts and what is a given true fact, or between a background action and the main action

Past Perfect Simple v. Continuous

Ana: These structures are encountered at later stages of learning.

John: Not only does this contain the 'past before past' element, but also the difference between action and static. Such nuances do not exist in many languages, which is why it may be especially difficult for learners to discern the difference between simple and continuous in past perfect in English.

Jana: The same reason as with present perfect tense and present perfect progressive

Iva: Once Pres. Perf. and Pres. Perf. Cont. have been cleared up, the Past Perf. and Cont. differences are much easier to acquire.

Filip: Interchangeability in certain instances.

Goran: Learners don't understand the need for the continuous form

Past Simple v. Past Perfect

John: Again, it is a concept which may be alien, and therefore confusing.

Future Simple v. Continuous

Tijana: In Serbian it makes no difference.

John: Future continuous is more complex, not only to form, but also in meaning, since it serves several functions, e.g. to project ourselves into the future, predicting, guessing, requesting, to refer to continuous events in the future, etc.

Future Perf. Simple v. Continuous

Ana: Students do not have a lot of opportunities to hear these tenses in practice, and it is difficult for them to understand the differences between them.

Tijana: Rarely used and not very common

Teodora: There are no really adequate corresponding grammar structures in Serbian and they are not taught in primary and/or secondary. Those are the types of distinctions taught at universities (if even there). Therefore they do not understand why they should abandon "regular expressions of future actions" in favor of these structures. For example, if they can use Future Perfect to capture the meaning of their sentence (i.e. "You will have waited for more than two hours when her plane finally arrives" instead of "You will have been waiting for more than two hours when her plane finally arrives" - to emphasize their wait of over two hours will be over once her plane arrives), they don't see the need to use Future Perfect Continuous, although they understand that the latter emphasizes the duration in the future.

John: As with the past perfect simple/continuous tense, the ability to discern static and active events within the future perfect tense is especially tricky, particularly for learners of languages where this grammatical feature does not exist.

Aleksandra: Inability to understand which one focuses on duration and which on end of activity

Iva: It is difficult to clarify state verbs here since, because the students then mix these two tenses. "She will have been a teacher" vs. "She will have become a teacher"

Filip: Interchangeability in certain instances.

Mia: Actually, these two tenses are more difficult individually, so the students who already have good insight into the aspect, will manage to sort out the difference fairly well.

Goran: Learners can't see the difference.

Future Simple v. Future Perfect

Jana: Future intentions or plans are usually fine but that some action will be finished in the future can be a confusing concept for particular language learners

John: The concept of future simple should not be too hard. But the concept of something being completed before a future time may be challenging. Learners may opt for the simple form, owing to L1 influence.

Tijana: Not common and rarely used

Future Simple v. BE GOING TO

Tijana: In Serbian there is no difference

Brian: Students find it confusing to think about whether an activity is planned or not.

Jovana: Learners don't see the need for both forms and they think that they can use only one (e.g. Future Simple).

Goran: Learners are tempted to use only future simple because Serbian has only one future tense.

Responses on the perceived difficulties of tense-related grammar topics (logico-semantic relation of projection in clause complexes):

Reported/Indirect Speech

Vera: There is no sequence of tenses and there is a different word order in Serbian, so students tend to transfer in to English and they make a lot of errors.

Sara: In Serbian, the word order remains the same and there is no change of tenses.

Tijana: They don't understand the need to go once tense into the past

Iva: NO reported speech in Serbian, so students often translate from the mother tongue and wrongly so. Also, She is going to go out vs. She is going out, it takes them time to differ between

tense markings and main verbs if the form is the same, students just cut what they think they had mentioned already - She is going to in her bed (sleep)

Aleksandar: The problem here is that it requires a good knowledge of all tenses in order for students to be able to properly learn reported speech

Tanja: not having fully mastered the tenses, word order

Nina: concentration

Brian: Possibly native language interference.

Jovana: There is no tense sequencing in Serbian.

Goran: Differently done in Serbian and English.

Danijela: Sequence of tenses.

Sequence of tenses

Vera: Rarely used, they are not exposed to it very often and they learn it only in class.

Sara: In Serbian, there is no sequence of tenses.

Tijana: Seems illogical to them

Teodora: There is Reported Speech in Serbian, of course, but not the Sequence of Tenses. When I report my brother's words, I do not change the tense of the things he has said, I just preface it with "My brother said that.." and then just repeat what he has said without changing the tense. As for GOING TO+INFINITIVE, it is fairly easy, but they tend to confuse it with Present Continuous and in the early stages of learning they also tend to "forget" "be" ('I going to' instead of 'I'm going to').

Filip: No equivalent in Serbian.

Mia: Serbian language does not have the sequence of tenses so the speakers are used to using future forms within a sentence in the past without any changes. It takes time to learn differently and realize this is not an option in English.

Nina: they try to translate it and it doesn't make sense

Brian: Possibly native language interference.

Jovana: There is no tense sequencing in Serbian.

Goran: There is no sequence of tenses in Serbian.

Danijela: Sequence of tenses.

Appendix 7: List of guiding questions for the follow-up interview

<u>Question category</u>	<u>Guiding Questions</u>
Group 1	<p>Q1: Is your approach to teaching grammar in line with what you were taught during your teacher training (e.g. university, seminars, etc.)?</p> <p>Q2: Has your approach to teaching tenses in English changed in the course of your teaching career and why?</p> <p>Q3: (How) does your approach to teaching tenses in English change depending on your students' age and level?</p> <p>Q4: In your opinion, should the approach to teaching tenses in English be different for General and Business English courses? Why yes/no?</p> <p>Q5: (How) does the size of your class affect your grammar teaching methodology?</p> <p>Q6: (In what way) does your grammar teaching methodology change depending on your students' exposure to English outside classroom?</p> <p>Q7: When it comes to English teachers in Serbia, what are the most common approaches to teaching tenses in English? (as far as you know)?</p>
Group 2	<p>Q8: What do you think about the idea that teachers should see grammar as a socially and functionally motivated resource rather than a set of strict rules?</p> <p>Q9: In your opinion, what are the advantages and/or disadvantages of an inductive approach to teaching tenses in English?</p> <p>Q10: Some teachers find an inductive approach [theme identified in the survey results]. Do you agree/disagree and why?</p> <p>Q11: According to your experience, do students prefer a deductive (i.e. learning rules</p>

	<p>first) or an inductive approach (i.e. exploring examples first) to tenses in English?</p> <p>Q12: How effective do you think situation-based activities are for learning tenses in English?</p> <p>Q13: Do you think authentic spoken/written text should be given to learners to teach tenses even though they may contain structures unfamiliar to them? Why yes/no?</p> <p>Q14: (How often) do you use timelines for explaining tenses? Why yes/no?</p> <p>Q15: Do you believe that a greater use of magazines and online videos could make difficult grammar topics easier to comprehend?</p>
Group 3	<p>Q16: What kind of resources/activities do you propose for teaching [grammar point identified as challenging in the questionnaire]?</p> <p>Q17: Which tense in English do you believe is fairly easy for students to master?</p>

Appendix 8: Interview transcripts

Interview with Mia (R= Researcher, M= Mia):

R: OK. So, let me first ask you a couple of questions about your teaching background and methodologies. Alright? So, has your approach to teaching tenses changed in the course of your teaching career?

M: Well, it has changed to a certain amount. I think it's been influenced by my teachers. So, in the past I primarily taught the way I was taught previously. And that was more like a teacher centred classroom. In years, I realised that this is not an appropriate approach to use all the time, let's say most of the time. So, I tried changing it to a more inductive approach instead.

R: What made you change your approach? What was the turning point?

M: Well, I realised the younger generations are bored with the rules, strict rules which are given to them and they... they can simply switch off during a lesson. And they are more engaged if they have to work out the rules themselves, if they have something to work on – some material, video or... or a piece of text which they go through and if they are required to do something themselves. And it's much more intriguing for them as students. Well, but I did say the younger generations, not ...

R: OK, right. And in what way does your grammar teaching methodology change depending on your students' exposure to English outside the classroom? Or, does it change?

M: Well, it does change because these students who have previously been exposed to a lot of structures are... and a lot of materials they use the forms without knowing what that really is. And it's a good starting point when you really have to teach them this certain structure, you can easily use this material or their previous knowledge to just start working from that point and then later on to work your way through... well to a more... to come to the rules eventually, but then it's... it's... they have this sense of achievement because they say like, "This is something I already know."

R: Alright. And what do you think about the idea that teachers should see grammar a socially and functionally motivated resource rather than just a set of strict rules? What do you think about that idea? So, grammar as a meaning resource and not a set of strict rules.

M: Yeah, I agree with it totally. But... but it's not that all the teachers agree with it. I'm aware of it. And I think this is a more modern, if I can say more modern, approach. And this is something we will in the future have to consider even more because I think this... the kids today are different from us when we were younger. And, if we only consider the exposure to the language and lots of other factors – the way they learn. It's so meaningful that they... they simply don't focus on the rules and they... it has a certain function that they want to...they

want to say something, they want to communicate. That's what they want to achieve – it's not knowing the rules and it's quite... much beyond that. So, I agree with the claim.

R: Alright then. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of an inductive approach to teaching tenses in English?

M: Maybe I've already mentioned this, but I think the key is when they feel engaged during a lesson. The more effort they put into figuring out something, the more likely it is to stick with them in the end. So, if they are simply presented with all the rules, they might switch off and... Like, some of them might memorise it, others won't. But if the approach is inductive, most of young people will find it easier to remember it and to use it later on when they need a certain structure in a situation.

R: Many teachers find it very time-consuming, though. So, do you think it's worth it or do you think that it depends on a situation when to use this? Or, maybe a deductive approach, which might seem as much more effective and efficient when it comes to saving time?

M: Well, I am not really a teacher who supports these short courses and the theory that any language can be taught and learnt in a few months, actually. So, I don't think that's something that we shouldn't invest our time into. And, well...I...yes, I see it's time-consuming but I think it's really worth it, eventually will be worth it.

R: When we talk about an inductive approach we also talk about using a lot of different resources for teaching grammar points. So, do you think that authentic spoken or written texts should be given to learners to teach tenses even though they may contain structures unfamiliar to them?

M: Well, they should be given. These structures could become a sort of a... could be a certain distraction to them at that point, but not necessarily. And, if it is a distraction, a teacher can always say, "OK, this is not the thing we're focusing on now. That is something we will focus on later on." And then redirect their attention to the thing which is really important. But, even though these structures may be difficult at the time being, it's a good input for the future. And, it's exposure to this piece of language and that might become handy one day when we need it.

R: And, when we talk about authentic spoken or written text, which resources do you find most useful for teaching tenses, for example? Do you find some authentic sources more useful than others or no? For example, newspapers, fiction, maybe videos or something like that?

M: Well, maybe videos a bit more than other because... but it's merely because of the attention. I think the learners focus on videos more easily than on some sort of a written text. And it's fun for them. And the more fun they have, the better it is for learning. It's the only reason, maybe.

R: OK, so let us move on to some of the common problem areas for learners when it comes to teaching tenses. So, for instance, many learners find reported speech a bit challenging. So, what kind of resources or activities do you propose for teaching reported speech, for instance?

M: Well, I'd also use these videos if I could. Well, I'd use them whenever I can. Well, I think it would be a good idea to give students certain tasks to, for example, look at certain videos in which some people might talk about their jobs or experiences or something like that. And then later on, to have these students report on what they have previously heard or... And I think this would really be an interesting way to put them to use and work on reported speech.

R: OK, alright. And do you believe that this kind of an activity, the success of this kind of an activity, would be dependent on students' age or level? Or do you think it could be used with various levels and ages?

M: I think people like some tasks. I think generations would find this interesting. Maybe to a slight degree, the younger population would... But, it's fine for all the levels and ages.

R: And do you believe that a greater use of magazines and online videos could make difficult grammar topics easier to comprehend?

M: It's certainly helpful. The more we're exposed to something, the easier it is for us to master it. It can't be something that will make it harder for the students. It will just facilitate the acquisition of these structures.

R: If you were to use one of those, would you modify the text in any way before handing it out to your students?

M: Well, I'd certainly...well, only if there is something so... inappropriate for that level. If it's really, really...like a few levels away from them. So, inappropriate for the time being. But, anything that will in some near future be handy for them to know or expected to learn a certain structure in some recent future, that's, I think, OK.

R: OK. And one more question for the end. Which tense do you think is fairly easy for students to master?

M: Well. Let's say Past Tense, simple.

R: What would be the reason?

M: Well, it's the same ending for all. We have no change depending on the person and whether it's singular or plural. So, of course, we do have the problem of irregular verbs, but somehow it's mastered easily. But, they do not have to... the form is easy, and the usage is quite simple for them. And it's easy to explain the usage on a timeline because, in most usages, it's a clear-cut past. We know when that happens and there's no problems in usage such as we... or the type we have, for example, in... I'm talking about the Serbian speakers... compared to Present Perfect tense, when it's not really easy for our speakers to understand. So, compared to it, Past simple is fairly easy... to master.

Interview with Jana (R= Researcher, J= Jana):

R: So, let me ask you a couple of questions about teaching methodologies, OK? So, has your approach to teaching tenses in English changed in the course of your teaching career?

J: Yes, pretty much because some of the things I was taught at uni were not applicable later on. So, when I did my other training, like workshops and things, I noticed that teaching tenses had become more communicative than when we were taught. And later on, when I did CELTA and I did my Master in TESOL, being exposed to discourse analysis and systemic-functional grammar, the things about understanding the whole meaning of the text and understanding that text influenced teaching of grammar has changed my approach to teaching tenses as well.

R: OK. And how does your approach to teaching tenses in English change depending on your students' age or level? Does it change a lot?

J: So, I mostly teach adults and my students are usually the ones who would be going to university. So, whenever I teach academic program, it's completely different approach to teaching grammar. So, if it's general English or IELTS, it would be more communicative and more based on a particular situation. It could be a role-play or something that it's... it's usually the whole-text approach and using all four skills involved... so a text-based approach. But, with the academic text, it has to be also, besides the text-based approach, it has to be a genre approach. So, making a new text and understanding how the text is organised and then looking from top to down. It's usually a top-down approach. I mean when it comes to academic.

R: OK, alright.

J: Well, I mean, it's never top-down, but it usually starts with top-down.

R: OK. And...in your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of an inductive approach?

J: Umm... if you use inductive approach...if you think about test and teach...umm, there are advantages... some students would be... their preference would be to be exposed first to the rules... whereas others who are more adventurous and more understand language at a different level and have a more lateral thinking towards language are better with the inductive one. So...it depends. If you have a mixed-ability class...and it depends on the culture background...you might have to combine. Umm...some cultures prefer being exposed to.... umm... deductive thing, so they are being taught rules and then trying to apply them...whereas other cultures are happy to experiment with the rules.

R: OK. Umm, some teachers believe that it also depends on the size of a class. Do you think it's a factor? So, for example, the bigger the class, the smaller the opportunity for an inductive approach?

J: No, no. The...the size of the classroom should not influence the way you teach. So, for example, I had a class that I was teaching and there were 16 of them. So, that's... so I was

doing...I was teaching them how to write an argument essay, or cause-and-effect, I can't remember...no, cause-and-effect...and I was using inductive. So, we were looking at the text, analysing parts of the text. So, they were looking at the model and making...making their own rules and then we had the rules written on...we were going through the different stages.

R: OK, alright. Umm, do you think that authentic spoken or written text should be given to learners to teach tenses even though they may contain some structures unfamiliar to them?

J: Yes. Because...even when you...even if you have a text that is pretty difficult in the sense that there are collocations and there are culture...um, so they can still understand the meaning and get the general gist... and having the text that has... is being set in the context, which is the main purpose of systemic-functional grammar... context and meaning tell you a story. Um, I don't think it's... teaching them from the modified texts always helps. But (emphasised), having said that, you need to be careful that the text is appropriate to your group and it's appropriate to your final aim of the lesson. I think exposing them to the original text, umm, with no abbreviations, ah no... not being abridged or changed is really really important. Because that's what they will see. They will not always be exposed to textbooks. I mean, textbooks are useful, but...um, being able to understand everyday language or the language of... abstract language of the journal article or report or thesis. It's very important. If they don't know how it looks and they don't understand the structure of it, the organisation, which element goes where, they will never be able to write something like that or will never be able to understand what is the culture context or meaning of it in English.

R: Alright. Let me ask you a couple of questions related to common...most common problem areas when it comes to teaching tenses. Umm, so do you believe that the greater use of magazines and online videos, authentic texts in general, would make some difficult grammar points, with reference to teaching tenses, easier to master?

J: Umm, it depends. Umm, it depends on what kind of material we are looking at. So, um, I read a long time ago, something that Scott Thornbury wrote, that you can teach grammar using only one paragraph. And I greatly agree with that because any given text can give you a lot of sources of teaching and reusing it. So, I don't see the reason why not use authentic materials. I use a lot of TED talks, for example, for teaching public speaking and presentations... and starting with the topics. Umm, but you don't use the whole text, you may be using text to show them that this is...OK, this is the recorded thing, but then you pick up a certain point and you develop your teaching around that. So there is no reason why is that different from the textbook, there is no difference. The difference could be the collocations, but they are not always grammatical collocations...umm, difficulty could be the variation of language because with English of global Englishes and changes in the English structure because of non-native speakers who are speaking English...so you might be finding some unusual structures, which doesn't

mean that they...they shouldn't be exposed to it, so I have no problem with that. Umm, there is more preparation going into using authentic texts. That's...that's sometimes...it's easier to have something that is very nicely set, you know, it's well-tested, it's been used so many times. But, umm, if you want them to be... if you want your students to feel that they have achieved something, I think they should be exposed to the culturally...yes culturally-coloured text, not just something that is really...clinically... excellent or something like that.

R: Alright. Many teachers agree that Present Perfect can be rather challenging for English learners. So... what kind of resources or activities would you propose for teaching this grammar point?

J: Umm, Present Perfect is not difficult for every learner. Umm, certain language learners or nationalities have problem with Present Perfect provided that... I mean, the thing is that if they don't have a similar tense in their...in their own language, that is difficult.

R: For example, Serbian learners.

J: Serbian have a problem because we use present or...many times we use present when English would be using Present Perfect. Or we use past tense when English would be using Present Perfect. But as soon as you make it clear to a learner that Present Perfect is something that connects present and past and has a different variation... and they see that visually...I love using timelines, and using particular models of things, like...or total physical activity or timelines... they are usually better... Umm, the problem might be with things like...umm... if they are exposed to a variation of English where Americans would use past and, particularly for news and headlines, and British and Australians would be using Present Perfect. Then they get confused, and then there's like... (imitates a student) OK, he's using past and now you're using Present Perfect, so what's the difference...And the difference is in variation, but teaching Present Perfect, umm, could be very amusing, particularly if you...if you relate their own experience, so... you can't teach any tense... no tense can be taught in a way that you can do it immediately. So the gradual, that's where the communicative approach is really good, and that's where systemic-functional grammar needs to build up...umm...but if, I'm just thinking about the text that I read when I was doing my Master, which was when I was doing functional grammar, and the text was looking into use of Present Perfect and past tense and how, when you understand distance from the speaker's point of view and the participants, there is a clear difference between present perfect and past tense. But (emphasised), students might not be aware of that because their... assumption is that...umm...that student... that tenses are clear and that the aspects of past, future and present are clear. But not many languages...lots of Asian languages have different aspects than we do in Serbian or English. And I think for the Serbian, it's easier for us to understand because our grammar is pretty much patterned in a way like most of the Roman languages and Anglo-Saxon languages, or German languages...Germanic... so,

we have that. But...umm...I think the fine difference between present perfect and past tense and present tenses can be easily seen if you have a good text that shows the difference. And also if you use, umm... if you could use a text which is... which shows like, particularly when you talk about journal articles and when the authors talk in their conclusion discussion what they have achieved...and if you show them that the difference between abstract, which talks about future things and the implications that you may be having or what you want to achieve...then you're coming to the conclusion which says this is what we have done. So, the idea that something shows the result or experience is clearer to them if you relate that not just to how it's structured but to the usage.

R: OK, and one last question, umm... if we talk about Serbian language learners of English, which tense in English do you believe is fairly easy for students to master... and could you just briefly comment on the reason.

J: Umm, most of the tenses that are similar to ours... so, if we talk about present tenses, I think present simple is simple for us, but present continuous is not.

Interview with *Filip* (R= Researcher, F=*Filip*):

R: OK. Is your approach to teaching grammar in line with what you were taught during your teacher training? For example, at uni or seminars?

F: Yes, I believe it is. Most of the time I use almost exactly the same way of teaching grammar as I was taught during my schooling. I use timelines to show the differences between time and aspect. I teach the rules that are required for that specific level...A1, A2 and so on. However, there are some instances when I do something completely different. For example, I teach Perfective tenses completely differently from the way I was taught. I teach students only one general rule of what Perfect aspect means by giving them different examples and comparing it with Simple tenses. Then, when I am sure that they understand the point of view of Perfect aspect, I add specific rules that deal with specific situations.

R: And has your approach to teaching tenses in English changed in the course of your teaching career and why?

F: Generally speaking, yes, it has changed quite a bit. When I was starting to teach, I tried to do things by the book. I did exactly what I thought I was supposed to be doing, teaching the way I was taught to teach, and not think about how I actually learned the language. Teachers did help me, but only as guides, not as people who gave me their own knowledge. I probably started changing my approach when I realised that different people reacted differently to different ways of teaching and learning. I saw that some ways of teaching work only in theory and started deliberately avoiding them. Later, I realised that those ways do work but at specific levels and for specific people. Now, I tend to vary my approach to teaching tenses based on the

level and on the number of students. Basically, I leave it to my feeling of what is appropriate for a certain group.

R: Alright. When it comes to English teachers in Serbia, what are the most common approaches to teaching tenses in English? I mean, as far as you know.

F: I think that tenses are usually taught frontally and inductively. The teacher stands in front of the board and starts explaining the form and usage of the tense step by step. Then drill it for a few minutes using as many examples as it is necessary, and, at the end of the class, try to use it in real life situations. Sometimes this is left for next class. This is a more traditional way of teaching tenses and I think it has its benefits, especially in large classes where interaction between students and time are limited. The most obvious problem with this way of teaching tenses is that it is terribly boring and tiring.

R: Does the size of your class affect your grammar teaching methodology?

F: Oh, absolutely. The smaller the group of students is, the more interactive my teaching becomes. With the group of a few students, I use a lot of input of the language, different texts, recordings and even short clips. You can find a lot of those on the internet these days. Then, when I see that students are interested in the topic, I ask them to tell me what grammar they would use in these situations, and they start giving examples without the knowledge of what that is called in grammar. Then I tell them what it is called, and move on to further practice. But when I have a huge class with mixed abilities, I can't really do the same thing efficiently, so I switch to explaining everything first and then do a few exercises to see if the majority understood the form and usage. There are always some who can't follow either because it is too boring or because they simply don't like the way we are doing things.

R: OK, alright. Does your grammar teaching methodology change depending on your students' exposure to English outside classroom?

F: Quite a bit, actually. When students are exposed to a lot of English outside, in the real world, I don't really teach them grammar at all. I simply use what is called the communicative approach and make my students use specific grammar in specific situations. I do that mostly through roleplay, or by asking them to share their own experiences of the topic in question. On the other hand, when students are not that much exposed to English, I tend to use a lot of input and even use certain structures that are not the aim of that particular class, but I leave them there so that when the time comes to teach those things to them, they would find them familiar and wouldn't be stressed out with a lot of 'grammar stuff' as they usually say.

R: What do you think about the idea that teachers should see grammar as a socially and functionally motivated resource rather than a set of strict rules?

F: I agree that grammar is exactly that. Language is a fluid thing, and it changes depending on the situation and the type of message we want to convey. However, this property of language

is very difficult to use in the classroom environment. No matter how hard we teachers try to make the situation as real as possible, we fail. It is close enough to the real thing, but students get used to us teachers, and each other, and cannot imagine themselves being in a certain position, or relationship with a classmate and so cannot experience it fully and cannot use the socially conditioned language properly.

R: OK. And, in your opinion, what are the advantages and/or disadvantages of an inductive approach to teaching tenses in English?

F: I think that there are more advantages than disadvantages. Using your own intellect in order to solve a certain task guarantees you will retain that information much longer than if someone simply gave you the solution. This is especially the case with young students. However, my experience tells me that adults like it when they are given rules which they just need to follow in order to solve a task at hand. They feel uncomfortable making mistakes, and inductive approach relies heavily on students doing exactly that – learning through mistakes. It probably has to do with the way adults function at work. Every mistake is not seen as a step to improvement, but as the proof you are not good enough for the job. This is just my opinion.

R: According to your experience, do students prefer a deductive, that is learning rules first, or an inductive approach, that is, exploring examples first, to tenses in English?

F: I think I kind of answered that question with my last answer. It depends on the age of students. Of course, young adults do not fit in this category. What I am trying to say is that university students are the best students you can ask for. They actually enjoy change, and if you teach them some grammar the way they have never been taught before, they are excited and very motivated to try out that new approach. So, my conclusion is that inductive works well with young learners and young adults.

R: How effective do you think group and situation-based activities are for learning tenses in English?

F: I think they are very effective for learning any structure, not just tenses. Those activities are the closest to the real-life situations student can get into, so they can experience how the language works in certain situations. It has two main benefits that I can think of right now. Those who are participating in a roleplay, for example, are experiencing the situation on their own skin, so to say, and have to rely in everything that they know, not just the structure that they are learning at that moment. That is a wonderful thing, because, classrooms are not the places where such experiences happen often. On the other hand, the ones who aren't participating also get the chance to see the situation, witnessing it, like they are watching a film or a real-life conversation. They also get drawn in and start thinking how they would react in that particular situation. So, I think group and situation-based activities are useful and fun for students.

R: OK. Do you think authentic spoken/written text should be given to learners to teach tenses even though they may contain structures unfamiliar to them? Why yes or no?

F: Yes, absolutely. Especially to students at higher levels, or students who aren't exposed to English outside the classroom. We talked about that one a few minutes ago, so I will stick to higher levels. When students improve their language well enough, they start using it without thinking about the rules. The correct usage simply becomes a habit. They also stop using isolated structures and start combining them in different creative ways depending on what they want to express. So, inauthentic input is something they recognise immediately, and can feel that it is not really natural. I would say that all students, irrespective of their level, should be exposed to real life speech or texts, because it shows them that structures are not isolated, and that their usage can be combined with other structures in ways that are usually not covered in course books.

R: And do you think traditional labelling of English tenses, e.g. Present Continuous, Past Perfect, etc., is necessary or at least beneficial for learning them? Why yes or no?

F: I think that labelling is just that, labelling. You can call a tense Present Continuous or Present Progressive, the students don't really care. The only purpose it serves is that when we are explaining the differences between two tenses, we do not have to use example sentences all the time...I did vs. I have done...but can switch to labels...Past Simple vs. Present Perfect. I think that it really isn't important what we call them, because I don't call them anything when I teach children, and they seem to get it without any difficulties.

R: Do you use timelines for explaining tenses? Why yes or no?

F: All the time. Timelines are the most useful tools we teachers can use to visually represent time and aspect. Most student I have taught so far have been visual learners, and for them, drawing a graph of any kind is extremely exciting and useful. They wouldn't understand the differences otherwise.

R: Do you use texts or individual examples to illustrate the usages of tenses? Do you use both (if so, is your choice dependant on any factor)?

F: I use both. Generally, with lower levels, I would start with sentences, and then slowly move to longer texts. I find it better to use both, because texts are more challenging and provide the necessary context one sentence cannot offer. Student have complained so many times that in certain sentences more than one answer is possible, and they are right, but the teachers insist only on the target answer. Something like that is much rarer with longer texts as they provide specific context.

R: OK, alright. What kind of resources/activities do you propose for teaching Present Perfect?

F: First of all, students should be exposed to Present Perfect as soon as they start learning English because they need to get used to hearing it. I am insisting on this because there is no

equivalent tense in the Serbian language and that is why it is the most difficult one to learn. Later, when the time comes to teach it, it wouldn't sound too strange to students. Another thing that helps is comparing it with the tense they already know, and it is usually Past Simple. This way they get to distinguish between the situations when each one is required. It also helps to continue using it every class naturally so that students are constantly aware of it and do not decide to forget it and use only Past Simple.

R: OK. One final question. When it comes to Serbian speakers, which tense in English do you believe is fairly easy for students to master? Why?

F: That would definitely be Future Simple. It is quite easy to form and use in English and, on top of that, the Serbian equivalent is formed and used in almost exactly the same way. That is why many teachers don't really bother with it as students pick it up without any difficulty. Going to is more of a challenge and teachers spend more time on it, but students get that one fairly quickly as well.

Appendix 9: Ethics approval



Faculty of Arts Research Office <artsro@mq.edu.au>

Marika Kalyuga; Arts Research Office; + 1 ▾

21/03/2017

Final Approval - Issues Addressed_5201700156(R)

We removed extra line breaks from this message.



Ethics Application Ref: (5201700156) - Final Approval

Dear Dr Kalyuga,

Re: ('The Functional Approach to Teaching Tenses in English')

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee.

Approval of the above application has been granted, effective (21/03/2017).

This email constitutes ethical approval only.

If you intend to conduct research out of Australia you may require extra insurance and/or local ethics approval. Please contact Maggie Feng, Tax and Insurance Officer from OFS Business Services, on x1683 to advise further.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf>.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Marika Kalyuga

Mrs Dragana Stosic