

Slavic False Cognates: A Cross-linguistic Comparison

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ABSTRACT

In its first part, the present paper compares the structure of false cognates between two Slavic languages (called here internal Slavic false cognates, using the example of Serbo-Croatian¹ – Polish false cognates) with the structure of false cognates between a Slavic and non-Slavic language (termed external Slavic false cognates, using Serbo-Croatian – Polish examples). The analysis of the differences between these two types of false cognates is conducted with an eye toward proper treatment false cognates in second language acquisition. The ensuing second part of this paper outlines a possible agenda for the inclusion of these two types of false cognates into Slavic language teaching curricula. The majority of internal Slavic false cognates in this particular sample stems from different paths of the semantic development of common Slavic roots with some degree of different development of borrowed non-Slavic words. External Slavic false cognates mostly stem from the differences in the meanings of borrowed Latin words followed by a specific development of borrowed non-Slavic words. Both types of false cognates exhibit a clear albeit different pattern, with random identity or similarity being extremely rare. These patterns can be exploited in second language acquisition in developing global metacognitive strategies and concrete activities coupled with formative assessment objects.

Keywords: false cognates, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, English, second language acquisition.

1. Introduction

The topic of false cognates in Slavic languages has been commanding considerable interest in theoretical and practical research. Bunčić (2015b) offers an exhaustive bibliographical list devoted to the dictionaries about false cognates and the studies about them. To illustrate the directions of the research and exemplify the point, let us mention contributions that concentrate on the false cognates between Slavic languages (Čemerikić et al. 1988, Bunčić 2015a, Lewis 2002, Lotko 1992, Tokarz et al. 1994, Tokarz 1998, 1999, etc.) and those works that address Slavic – Non-Slavic false cognates (Готлиб 1972, Ivir 1968, Канонич 2001, Kovačević 2009, Краснов 2004, Šipka 1991, and others).

The two aforementioned directions in researching Slavic false cognates do not intersect, i.e., there exist a rich literature on internal Slavic false cognates and a separate, equally comprehensive, list of contributions to the study of external Slavic false cognates. What is missing in the scholarly assessment of Slavic false cognates is a comparison between internal and external false cognates in Slavic languages. Precisely this is the goal of this paper – it geared toward analyzing of the differences between the two types of false cognates.

The differences between the two types of false cognates are particularly pertinent to the pedagogical process. It is oftentimes so that one course (for example summer language

¹ The term Serbo-Croatian versus Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian is hotly debated just like the issue whether it is one polycentric standard language or do each of its varieties represent separate languages (for more about these debates, see Kordić, 2010). This politicized debate is not of interest to us here. Changing the name or the approach to the language(s) will not going to change the findings of this research, so the whole issue can simply be disregarded here using the traditional linguistic designation.

courses in Slavic countries) will include speakers of a non-Slavic language and those of another Slavic language. If substantial differences between the two types of false cognates exist, the language teacher would need to deploy different pedagogical strategies for the speakers of Slavic and non-Slavic languages.

The present analysis will take the following course. Conceptual tools will be defined and explained in the remainder of this section. The next section will use two concrete databases of false cognates, Serbo-Croatian – Polish (internal Slavic false cognates) and Serbo-Croatian – English (external Slavic false cognates) to distil and summarize the differences between the two types of false cognates. The third section of this paper will be devoted to the pedagogical implications of the aforementioned differences. General conclusions will be presented in the fourth section.

The concept of false cognates is far from being adequately addressed in linguistic literature. This concept comprises the cases such as the English *gift* vs. the German *Gift* ‘poison’, or the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS) *palac* ‘thumb’ vs. the Russian *палец* [pal’ec] ‘finger’, where words in two languages share form while exhibiting different meanings. Inasmuch as the problem of false cognates arises primarily in translation, most designations of the concept refer to “false translator’s friends” as in French *faux amis du traducteur*, German *falsche Freunde des Übersetzers*, Czech *falešní přátelé překladatele*, Polish *falszywi przyjaciele tłumacza*, Russian *ложные друзья переводчика* (found also in shorter forms: *faux amis*, *falsche Freunde*, *ложные друзья*). The fact that such terms can generate mistakes is underlined in many phrases including the German term *irrenführende Fremdwörter*, lit. ‘misleading foreign words’, the Czech *mezijazykové falsiekvivalenty*, lit. ‘interlingual false equivalents’, *zrádné slovo*, lit. ‘deceptive word’, and the Polish *złudny odpowiednik*, lit. ‘deceptive equivalent’, *odpowiednik pozorny*, lit. ‘misleading equivalent’. All aforementioned terms approach the concept from a psychological and applied linguistic perspective – they encompass all cross-linguistic pairs with a potential of generating false equivalence. A different perspective is observable in the Polish term *tautonym*, the Czech *mezijazyková homonymie*, lit. ‘interlingual homonymy’, and the BCS *međujezički paronim*, lit. ‘interlingual paronym’, *međujezički homonim*, lit. ‘interlingual homonym’. They refer to a contrastive linguistic category, regardless of their translatory and/or psychological functioning.

It may be useful to distinguish two overlapping phenomena.

1. False cognates – a relation between two words, each from its own language, which can cause cross-linguistic false equivalence – *psycholinguistic and applied linguistic category*.
2. Cross-linguistic homonyms (identical form) and paronyms (similar form) – a relation between two words, each from its own language, with identical or similar form and different meanings – *contrastive linguistic category*.

Given that the present paper has clear pedagogical implications, the first term is used here (i.e., false cognates) as we are interested in anything that can cause false equivalence in the process of second language learning.

2. Internal and External Slavic False Cognates

Two case studies of Slavic false cognates were used to explore the differences between internal and external false cognates: Šipka (2008), a dictionary of Serbo-Croatian – English false cognates (a case of the external type), and Šipka et al. (1999), a dictionary of Serbo-Croatian – Polish false cognates (internal type).

A preliminary cursory analysis of the dictionaries of external and internal Slavic false cognates mentioned in section one of this paper pointed to the fact that there are significant structural differences between the external and the internal type. Most notable differences were in the field of the part-of-speech distribution and in the origin of the two types of false cognates.

The idea was to use two concrete case studies to get a more detailed picture of these differences. Obviously, two case studies do not give the full picture, but they are at least the first step in building these differences. The fact that quantitative analysis is performed on two case studies certainly has its limitations and that should be taken into account when assessing the relevance of the conclusions.

The Serbo-Croatian – Polish database (Šipka et al. 1999) comprised 646 pairs of false cognates, while its Serbo-Croatian – English counterpart (Šipka 2008) included 929 pairs. The two dictionaries were compiled using the same methodology, so they were very similar in that regard, but, as can be seen, their size was different. It is for that reason that in the analysis that follows the differences in relative percentages will be addressed rather than plain numbers.

The differences in the part-of-speech distribution are presented in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2.

<i>Part of Speech</i>	#	%
Nouns	386	60%
Verbs	194	30%
Adjectives	57	9%
Other	9	1%
Total	646	

Table 2.1 Part-of-speech distribution in Serbo-Croatian – Polish database

<i>Part of Speech</i>	#	%
Nouns	755	81%
Adjectives	105	11%
Verbs	61	7%
Other	8	1%
Total	929	

Table 2.2. Part-of speech distribution in Serbo-Croatian – English database

One can see quite clearly that there exists a difference in the status of verbs. They are much more frequent in the internal type of false cognates than in the external one.

The mechanisms that cause false cognates are presented in tables 2.3 and 2.4.

<i>Origin</i>	#	%
Slavic root split	590	91%
Borrowed root split	44	7%
Coincidence	12	2%
Total	646	

Table 2.3. The origin of Serbo-Croatian – Polish false cognates

<i>Origin</i>	#	%
Latin borrowings in both languages	471	51%
English borrowings in Serbo-Croatian	206	22%
Borrowings from other languages	221	24% (French 15%, Greek 7%)
Coincidence	31	3%
Total	929	

Table 2.4. The origin of Serbo-Croatian – English false cognates

Here again, we can see significant differences. The internal type of false cognates is dominated by the semantic split of an inherited Slavic root in the two languages. The external type is much more diversified, with one half of the cases being the semantic split of a borrowed Latin word, nearly one fourth the split of a word borrowed from another language, most commonly French and Greek, and one fourth the development of idiosyncratic meanings of non-Slavic word in a Slavic language. In both cases coincidence comprises only a very small portion of all pairs.

The difference in the part-of-speech distribution is related to the difference in the origin. Verbs are much more common among inherited Slavic words than in the words borrowed from other languages (which are mostly nouns). We can actually say that the difference in the part-of-speech distribution is the consequence of different origin of the two sets of false cognates.

Another consequence of the difference in origin is that the internal type features mostly concrete and more common nouns, while the external type encompasses mostly abstract, less common vocabulary. It is namely so that words borrowed from Latin (the majority of the external-type cases) are less concrete and less common than inherited Slavic roots (the preponderant majority of the internal-type cases).

We will now exemplify the categories of origin in the two types of false cognates. Tables 2.5-2.7 present the internal type.

Serbo-Croatian		Polish	
<i>blud</i>	‘debauchery’	<i>bląd</i>	‘greška’
<i>doba</i>	‘age’	<i>doba</i>	‘24 hours’
<i>jutro</i>	‘morning’	<i>jutro</i>	‘tomorrow’
<i>maslo</i>	‘lard’	<i>masło</i>	‘butter’
<i>voleti</i>	‘to love’	<i>woleć</i>	to prefer’

Table 2.5. Internal false cognates: Slavic root split

Serbo-Croatian		Polish	
<i>akademik</i>	‘a member of an academy’	<i>akademik</i>	‘dorm’ (Greek)
<i>fleka</i>	‘stain’	<i>fleka</i>	‘birthmark’ (German)
<i>penzija</i>	‘pension money’	<i>pensja</i>	‘salary’ (Latin)

Table 2.6. Internal false cognates: Borrowed root split

Serbo-Croatian		Polish	
<i>halas</i>	‘fisherman’ (Hungarian)	<i>halas</i>	‘noise’ (Ukrainian)
<i>dah</i>	‘breath’ (Slavic)	<i>dach</i>	‘roof’ (German)

Table 2.7 Internal false cognates: Coincidence

As we can see, the pairs exemplified in tables 2.5-2.7 follow a straightforward semantic split of inherited Slavic roots (in most cases) or lexical borrowings. Coincidental similarity is just an exception which confirms the main trend of semantic splitting.

The external type of false cognates exemplified in tables 2.8-2.11 is somewhat more complicated.

Serbo-Croatian		English	
<i>abortus</i>	‘termination of pregnancy’	<i>abortion</i>	‘termination of pregnancy, fetus ejection, cessation of normal growth, a monstrosity’
<i>forum</i>	‘a public meeting, political body’	<i>forum</i>	‘a public meeting’
<i>honoraran</i>	‘part-time (e.g., employee)’	<i>honorary</i>	‘as mark of honor’

Table 2.8. External false cognates: Latin borrowing

Serbo-Croatian		English	
<i>akademija</i>	‘academy, college, commemoration’	<i>academia</i>	‘the academic community’ (Greek)

Table 2.9. External false cognates: Borrowing from other languages

Serbo-Croatian		English	
<i>fen</i>	‘blow-drier’	<i>fan</i>	‘devotee, wind-making device’

Table 2.10. External false cognates: Coincidence

Serbo-Croatian		English	
<i>skver</i>	‘city square’	<i>square</i>	‘city square, geometrical figure, etc.’
<i>desk</i>	‘newspaper section’	<i>square</i>	‘newspaper section, a piece of furniture, etc.’
<i>kidnapovati</i>	‘kidnap, highjack’	<i>to kidnap</i>	‘kidnap’
<i>spiker</i>	‘announcer’	<i>square</i>	‘speaker’

Table 2.11. External false cognates: English borrowings

As can be seen the examples presented in 2.8-2.10 parallel to some degree the internal type. Most cases are splits (most commonly of Latin borrowings) and pure coincidence is

extremely rare. In addition to the lack of inherited roots, and the fact that the borrowed Latin words constitute most common cases of splits, the external type of false cognates is additionally complicated by the English borrowings. As can be seen from Table 2.11, a borrowed English word in Serbo-Croatian can be considerably narrower in its meaning compared to the same word in English (the first two examples) but there are also cases of pseudoanglicisms, where a borrowed word develops additional meanings which are not present in English (the third and fourth example in Table 2.11).

Obviously, the category exemplified in Table 2.11 is characteristic only in the type of external false cognates between two languages with a clear borrowing imbalance (e.g. between English, German, French, Italian, etc., which are typically lenders and Slavic languages, which are borrowers, or between Russian, a lender language, and Kyrgyz, Evenki, Chukhchi, etc., which are borrowers).

Alongside with the aforementioned differences, the two types of false cognates have certain characteristics in common. Thus both kinds of false cognates can be mono- and bidirectional (i.e., there can be a difference if we go in just one direction, say from Serbo-Croatian to Polish but not vice versa, which is the monodirectional type, or in the difference can be present both directions), as can be seen from Table 2.12

Monodirectional:			
Pol. <i>lak</i>	= Ser. <i>vosak</i>	Ser. <i>lak</i>	= Pol. <i>lak</i>
Ser. <i>emitovati</i>	= Eng. <i>broadcast</i>	Eng. <i>emit</i>	= Ser. <i>emitovati</i>
Bidirectional:			
Ser. <i>pismo</i>	= Pol. <i>list</i>	Pol. <i>pismo</i>	= Ser. <i>časopis</i>
Ser. <i>autogen</i>	= Eng. <i>oxyacetylene</i>	Eng. <i>autogenous</i>	= Ser. <i>samonikli</i>

Table 2.12. Bidirectional and monodirectional false cognates

Obviously, each particular pair of false cognates can contain multiple meanings, some of which may be bidirectional and some monodirectional.

To sum up, although the two types of false cognates, internal and external Slavic, have some characteristics in common, there exist profound differences between them, most notably in the mechanisms that generate the emergence of false cognates. The internal type is predominantly caused by the split of common Slavic roots and the words affected by it are mostly concrete and common, while the external type displays a more complex set of generators coupled with more abstract and less common vocabulary. Additionally, the internal type contains a much higher proportion of verbs relative to the nouns. We will now turn to the pedagogical implications of these differences.

3. Pedagogical Implications

There are two major areas in which the differences between the two types of false cognates discussed in section two can be made relevant in Slavic language pedagogy. The first one is in formulating metacognitive strategies for the students and the second in developing in-class and individual activities for them. The need to distinguish between the two types false cognates arises in the so-called courses of Slavic languages for foreigners in

Slavic countries. Such courses, e.g., Russian (<http://www.pushkininstitute.ru/>), Polish (<http://www.plschool.uj.edu.pl>), Serbian (<http://www.azbukum.org.rs>), etc. Such language courses (in-class courses held throughout the academic year and especially in the summer and on-line courses) typically contain a mix of students from Slavic and non-Slavic countries. The students from non-Slavic countries typically include speakers of languages such as English, German, French, Italian, etc., which, albeit in a different measure, are traditional lenders of the vocabulary to Slavic languages. Obviously, in these courses, there are also speakers of a non-Slavic language, who have a background in another Slavic language prior to studying the one in question (e.g., an American with a prior knowledge of Russian studying Polish). Such learners will need to address both types of false cognates – internal and external. All this makes the case study discussed in section two relevant to most pedagogical environment of the courses for foreigners in Slavic countries. We will propose metacognitive strategies and activities within a post-methodological theoretical framework (see Brown, 2002), which adopts workable solutions from one or more relevant approaches. In other words, the functionality of the solutions is given priority over methodological consistency. We are also assuming that the ultimate goal of language instruction is the attainment of a certain target proficiency level (as a part of general literacy development) in interpretative reading and listening, communicative and presentational speaking and writing, cross-cultural sensitivity, as well as translation and interpretation. These segments of foreign language proficiency are described in the documentation of the three major global foreign-language proficiency scales: ILR (see ILR 2013 for more information), ACTFL (consult ACTFL 1996, 2012a, and 2012b for further details), and CEFR (see CEFR 2001 for further discussion).

What is common in the both types of metacognitive strategies (those for internal and those for external Slavic false cognates) is that the students should be aware that they should not take the word they think they know for granted. An effective tool of conveying this particular metacognitive strategy is its introduction via an anecdote, for example the situation where a speaker of Serbo-Croatian wanted to say to a speaker of Russian that she had beautiful cheekbones (in Serbo-Croatian that would be: *Imate krasne jagodice.*) and said in Russian *У вас красивые ягодицы.*, which meant ‘You have a beautiful buttocks’.

Aside from the aforementioned similarities, the two metacognitive strategies differ in the critical time of their introduction, their prominence in particular language proficiency skills and the vocabulary they focus on.

In the internal type, the student should be aware of false cognates at the very outset while in the external type the students are better off by turning their attention to false cognates later on, leaving more cognitive space for structural and general vocabulary issues. This stems from the differences outlined in section two, primarily the fact that external false cognates contain more abstract and less common vocabulary, which becomes more relevant with the progression of proficiency levels. Similarly, aside from cross-cultural sensitivity, in the internal type all proficiency skills are equally affected by false cognates while the external type features heavier emphasis on interpretative skills, translation and interpretation. This again has to do with the outlined differences in the commonness and abstractness of the vocabulary in the two types.

Finally, and most importantly, the students in the internal type should be told to be careful with inherited Slavic roots while those in the external type should be told to watch

for borrowed classical roots and the borrowings from “their own” language. Obviously, the introduction of these metacognitive strategies should be exemplified using pairs like the ones discussed in section two and with anecdotal evidence.

We will now turn to the activities. The design of the activities is based on two research projects: Franek (1998), a study of Serbo-Croatian false cognates performed during one academic year at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, for the internal type, and our own decade-long qualitative investigation of Serbo-Croatian – English false cognates with the students of Arizona State University.

The appropriate forms of the proposed activities are the same for internal and external, but their recommended progression and distribution are different.

The following in-class activities targeted at false cognates are proposed:

- 1a. Question-and-answer sessions about a segment of text containing false cognates,
- 1b. Pair and group work skimming for false cognates,
- 1c. Class discussion with false cognates as keywords,
- 1d. Pair and group work translation of sentences with false cognates,
- 1e. Filling in blanks in graphic and audio segments with false cognates.

We will now exemplify each proposed activity using Serbo-Croatian – English examples.

In activity 1a a text containing a text in Serbo-Croatian is presented to English learners, e.g., a text about *Direkcija za ekonomski razvoj Bosne i Hercegovine* ‘The Directorate of Economic Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina’ (*direkcija* is ‘directorate, management, etc.’ and its English false cognate is *direction*). With targeted questions from the instructor and contextual scaffolding, the students are made aware of this particular false cognate. In activity 1b students are first presented with metacognitive strategies to deal with false cognates, they are given some examples of such pairs and then they were played a series of clips or presented a series of graphic segments containing false cognates. They are divided into two teams and they compete who will notice a higher number of false cognates. They need to provide the correct equivalent and the English false cognate in each instance. Activity 1c relies on a general discussion on a subject which is labeled by a false cognate. For example, if the topic of discussion is *Gimnazija u Hrvatskoj i Americi* ‘General high schools in Croatia and America’, the students will be using *gimnazija* ‘general high school’ and they will have to realize that the word does not refer to a *gym(nasium)*, a training facility. In activity 1d students are divided into pairs or groups which translate sentences with false cognates and then switch their work trying to find erroneous translations in other group’s or pair’s work. Finally, in activity 1e, students are divided into two groups and given lists of words in pairs where one word is a false cognate and the other a genuine equivalent (some of them true cognates). Clips with muted words are played or texts with blanked words are presented and the two teams decide which member of the pair to enter. They compete who will achieve the highest score.

(e. they get the definitions of false cognates and real equivalents)

The following individual (on-line) activities are proposed:

- 2a. Matching collocations with false cognates,
- 2b. Selecting target-language definition for false cognates,
- 2c. Sentence completion with false cognates,
- 2d. Open-ended definitions of false cognates in their context,

- 2e. Forming questions about false cognates in their context,
- 2f. Eliminating intruders from a series of words containing false cognates,
- 2g. Selecting the word based on the definition which can erroneously be assigned to a false cognate,
- 2h. Selecting antonyms for false cognates,
- 2i. Selecting synonyms for false cognates,
- 2j. Translating sentences with false cognates.

In activity 2a the students would need to connect the word *spiker* (which means ‘announcer’) with *televizijski* ‘television’ rather than *engleski* ‘English’). Activity 2b relies on providing the students a source language word and then asked to choose between the definitions for the correct equivalent and the false cognate, e.g. *adaptirati*: to make over in structure or style (correct), to make suitable to or fit for a specific use or situation (false cognate, adapt). Activity 2c relies on completing sentences with several choices, e.g. completing the sentence *Kupio je jeftine cipele na ____*. ‘He bought an affordable pair of shoes at ____’ students are supposed to choose the word *akcija* from a group of words offered, as it means ‘discount sale’. In activity 2d the students are given a false cognate in a context, e.g. to define the word *aleja* in *Aleja je imala četiri trake u oba smera*. ‘The boulevard had four lanes in each direction’ as ‘boulevard’ and not as ‘alley’. Activity 2e asks the students to pose as many questions as possible about a false cognate in its context, e.g., for: *Kondukter je provjeravao karte u trećem vagonu*. ‘The conductor was checking tickets in the third train car’ they are expected to ask: Who checked the tickets? What did conductor do? Was the conductor in the third train car, etc., which will make them aware that the meaning of the word means ‘the person who collect fares’ rather than ‘the person who leads a musical group’. Activity 2f provides the students a list of connected words with a false cognate that needs to be eliminated, e.g.: in: *partitura, muzika, palica, note, kondukter* ‘partiture, music, baton, note, train conductor’ the last word is an intruder but the student may be tempted to eliminate less common partiture or baton, which is not a true cognate like partiture, music, and note. In activity 2g the students are given a definition, e.g. *osoba koja vodi muzičku grupu* ‘the person who leads a musical group’ and asked to provide the word defined – in this case the words should be *dirigent* ‘musical conductor’ rather than *kondukter* ‘train conductor’. Activities 2h and 2i are very similar: the students are provided a false cognate and a series of words from which they need to select the antonym or synonym, e.g., for *konkurentan* ‘competitive’ a correct synonym would be *kompetitivan* ‘competitive’ and a correct antonym *nekonkurentan* ‘non-competitive’ while the synonym *istoveremen* ‘concurrent’ and *raznovremen* ‘non-concurrent, at different points in time’ would be appealing given the English false cognate *concurrent*. Finally, activity is a self-evident translation of sentences containing a false cognate, e.g., *Jeo je ribu iz konzerve* a ‘He ate fish from a can’ as *konzerva* does not mean ‘conserve, jam’ but rather ‘can, tin’.

All the aforementioned activities, in-class and individual (on-line) alike, are used in addressing both internal and external Slavic false cognates. What differs in their deployment is their progression and relative distribution. Franek (1989) conducted tests with Polish students of the first, third, and fifth year of Serbo-Croatian philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, using the activities 2a-2j above and found a very strong correlation between the test score and the year of study ($R = .8144$, $p = 0.00$, $N = 61$). Although performed on a

limited number of subject, these findings are consistent with the general instructor observations about internal Slavic false cognates, namely that they present a serious problem in the early phases of instruction to become much less of a problem later on. In sharp contrast to this, our own decade-long qualitative analysis of student translations and compositions at Arizona State University shows that false cognates are equally present at all levels of instruction – their presence is even somewhat more pronounced at higher levels of instruction.

The aforementioned differences in the deployment of the activities in the two types of Slavic false cognates discussed in this paper. The activities should be introduced early on in the internal type, just like it was recommended for metacognitive strategies. All activities should receive equal emphasis, with more complex activities (most notably activity 1c, class discussion, and 2j, sentence translation) being gradually included as the process of instruction progresses. The number of the activities should be gradually decreasing along with the flow of the process of instruction. On the other hand, the deployment in addressing external Slavic false cognates should feature some limited degree of the activities early on with their number increasing later on. In addition, the distribution of the activities should be skewed toward more complex ones.

To make a long story short, the recommendations made here are based on the study of the differences between the two types of Slavic false cognates and the observation of their role and place in the process of instruction. What follows from this analysis is that the courses of Slavic languages that include both Slavic and non-Slavic learners, should develop and implement two distinct strategies of addressing false cognates in the process of instruction. The differentiation of the strategies between the external and the internal type is equally important in the metacognitive strategies presented to the students and the activities organized for them. False cognates may not have a large scope in the total body of cross-linguistic transfer, but the consequences of such transfer are ranging from comical to very serious. Developing the strategies tailored to the needs of these two distinct group of learners (Slavic and non-Slavic ones) is an absolute must if we want to address internal and external Slavic false cognates properly.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have used a case studies of Serbo-Croatian – Polish and Serbo-Croatian – English to demonstrate that there are two distinct types of Slavic false cognates: internal (that between two Slavic languages) and external (between a Slavic and non-Slavic language). Despite some similarities, they differ in their structure and most notably origin. These differences translate into two different sets of pedagogical challenges, which in turn call for varied metacognitive strategies, as well as in-class and individual student activities. The differences in metacognitive strategies comprise their inclusion at different points in the process of instruction, their relevance in particular segments of linguistic proficiency, and the focus on different segments of false cognates (most notably the segments marked by their origin, with clear consequences to their abstractness and commonness). The activities are different in their progression and distribution, most importantly in the fact that the external type calls for more complex activities are needed at higher levels of language acquisition. The present paper is meant to be just the first step in fine-tuning the treatment of false cognates to

the needs of two distinct group of learners – the speakers of Slavic languages learning another Slavic language, and the speakers of non-Slavic languages learning a Slavic language.

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