# The use of questions posed by professors in English and Montenegrin academic lectures

## A corpus-based study

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Although questions are considered as important linguistic devices employed by lecturers to communicate facts and ideas to students and facilitate the learning process, they have not been a topic of extensive research. With that in mind, this paper explores the types and functions of questions asked by British and Montenegrin lecturers. It examines similarities and differences between two corpora – standard British academic corpora and a specially created corpus of Montenegrin lectures. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to conduct a contrastive analysis of lecturers' questions. The results demonstrate that the differences in frequency, forms and functions of questions prevail over the similarities, which could be the impact of two different linguistic backgrounds and national academic cultures. The findings of this study could be useful in designing lecture-listening and note-taking courses for students in which they can get familiar with the forms and purpose of questions posed by professors. Research findings could be applied in training courses for novice lecturers and might also be useful to professors who give lectures to students with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

**Keywords:** English academic lectures, Montenegrin academic lectures, questions posed by professors, question forms, question functions

## 1. Introduction

The number of non-native students of English is on the rise in English-speaking countries, as well as in those where English is not a national language, such as Montenegro. These students have an opportunity to listen to the lectures of English native and non-native speakers who, via different exchange programmes,

come and teach up to one academic year at the English Language and Literature Department. Furthermore, due to available exchange schemes and scholarships, Montenegrin students can spend up to one year at international universities attending lectures from various courses in English. Bearing this in mind, it is important for both lecturers and students to be aware of certain linguistic features of the lecture genre so that the former can pay attention to significant aspects of lectures while lecturing, and the latter can follow and comprehend lecture content.

In higher education, a lecture is often regarded as the most important medium for students' learning within an academic discipline. "The lecture remains the primary instructional activity despite educational tools such as online learning, multimedia, seminars, tutorials, project work, which often serve only a supplementary role" (King, 2003, p. 2). This institutional genre enables the conveyance of lecturers' views, ideas and thoughts in a particular discipline. One strategy employed to facilitate the communication of facts and ideas through lectures is the use of questions.

Questions play a fundamental role in the learning process. "All learning begins with questions. Questions cause interactions: thought, activity, conversation or debate" (Chuska, 1995, p. 7). In tertiary education as well, questions are of considerable significance. Lecturers use them as an important interactional tool to activate and facilitate the learning process (Crawford Camiciotolli, 2008, p. 1216). Lecturers' question/answer sequences are also seen as one of the ways to enhance the interactive, conversational nature of lectures (Bamford, 2005, p. 126). Questions thus represent a very helpful means of conveying lecture content to students. Although the exploration of questions in academic lectures seems to be vital for understanding the learning process, it has not been a topic of extensive research unlike individual linguistic and lexical items, such as discourse markers (Levin & Gray, 1983; Chaudron & Richards, 1986; Flowerdew & Tauroza, 1995; Schleef, 2008, 2009; Othman, 2010), personal pronouns (Rounds, 1987a, 1987b; Crawford Camiciottoli, 2004; Fortanet, 2004; Dafouz, Núñez & Sancho, 2007) and lexical bundles (DeCarrico & Nattinger, 1988; Rilling, 1996; Biber, Conrad & Cortes, 2004; Nesi & Basturkmen, 2006; Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Csomay, 2013). Only a few studies have dealt with questions from different perspectives – Thompson (1998), Bamford (2000, 2005), Crawford Camiciotolli (2008); Schleef (2009), Suviniitty (2010, 2012) and Chang (2012).

Thompson (1998) analysed the use of *content-oriented* and *audience-oriented questions* in a mixed British corpus of scientific and linguistic academic lectures and presentations. Thompson studied how British lecturers and research presenters used questions to establish interaction, and was more focused on the examination of the relationship between the question types and interaction in academic talks in general. Bamford (2000, 2005) explored questions in a corpus of eleven

lectures delivered by English native speakers in the subfields of economics. Bamford specifically examined the functions of just one group of questions – *question/answer sequences* posed and answered by lecturers. Crawford Camiciotolli (2008) adapted Thompson's functional categorisation (1998) in her analysis of the use of questions in twelve English lectures and written instructional materials on business studies topics. Crawford Camiciotolli investigated how two different communicative modes influenced the use of questions. Her analysis focused on only three question forms – wh-questions, yes/no questions and alternative questions.

Schleef (2009) conducted a comparative study of German and American academic styles in general. Among other linguistic features reflecting the style of lectures, he investigated a connection between certain question types and style in two academic cultures – German and American. He explored the lectures taken from the MICASE and those in German. Chang (2012) examined the use of questions in fifteen lectures from the MICASE, in three academic divisions – social sciences, humanities and arts, and physical sciences. Although not contrastive, her valuable study is comparative in terms of disciplinary culture and very detailed in terms of functions. Suviniitty (2010, 2012) examined lectures held by Finnish nonnative speakers of English in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) situations. Suviniitty specifically investigated lecturers' questions in relation to students' perceptions of comprehension of lectures delivered at the Forest Product Department, Aalto University School of Science and Technology. She found that students viewed lectures with a greater number of questions as well-comprehended, while lectures with fewer questions were viewed as less-comprehended.

The aforementioned authors' research on questions is, for the most part, EAP oriented. The questions in lectures given in other languages still remain insufficiently investigated. Only Schleef (2009) conducted a contrastive analysis of certain question types in two academic cultures from the aspect of their role in interaction and influence on the academic style. In addition, there are few contrastive studies dealing with other linguistic features in lectures, including discourse markers (English–Spanish, Bellés-Fortuño, 2008) and evaluative resources (English–Spanish, Bellés-Fortuño, 2018). Unlike sparse literature on contrastive studies of lectures, a number of comparative analyses of academic written texts in English and other languages have been performed (English–Finnish, Mauranen, 1993; English–Bulgarian, Vassileva, 2001; English–Ukrainian, Yakhontova, 2002; English–Danish, Shaw, 2003; English–French–Norwegian, Dahl, 2004; English–Bulgarian–Danish–German, Shaw & Vassileva, 2009; among others) mainly due to easier accessibility of electronic written texts as a potential corpus for cross-cultural investigation. These studies attribute some of the variations detected between academic texts in different languages to "the resources made available

by the language system" (Shaw & Vassileva, 2009, p. 291) or to "national language and culture" (Dahl, 2004, p. 1822). As compiling academic spoken discourse corpora, including university lectures, is "an arduous and time-consuming activity" (Bellés-Fortuño, 2008, p. 57), it is not surprising that contrastive studies on lectures given in English and other languages are still clearly lacking, which merits further investigation.

It is also noteworthy that none of the aforementioned authors explored the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus, and only Thompson (1998) investigated linguistic lectures. Unlike previous studies, this paper uses linguistic lectures taken from the BASE corpus for a greater part of the British material. Lectures on linguistics were also chosen as it is the discipline with which the author is the most familiar and from which the author was in a position to collect the corpus for Montenegrin[1] lectures. In contrast to the researchers investigating only one group of questions (Bamford, 2000, 2005), or three groups (Crawford Camiciotolli, 2008), this study aims to provide a comprehensive categorisation of questions used by English and Montenegrin professors. It investigates the following research questions:

RQ 1.  What types of questions do Montenegrin and British lecturers in linguistics pose and what is their frequency?
RQ 2.  What role do such questions play?
RQ 3.  Are there differences and similarities regarding the forms, frequency and functions in the corpora explored?

This contrastive study is focused on detecting differences and similarities in the forms, frequency and use of lecturers' questions in two languages, and drawing conclusions that could contribute not only to a better understanding of British and Montenegrin lecturers' questioning practices in tertiary education settings, but to the understanding of this linguistic phenomenon in general. "Observations from small-scale studies of a limited set of languages (often only two) form the basis for hypotheses about universal linguistic principles, or they nuance such principles" (Nordrum, 2015, p. 328). This research suggests that lecturers' questioning practices is a phenomenon linked not only to one language, and, there-

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1.  The regional varieties of former Serbo-Croatian are also Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian, altogether with Montenegrin being a part of the dialect continuum of South Slavic languages. Although the four languages have become official languages of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, they are one language from the linguistic point of view (Bugarski, 2018, p. 101). They are spoken by "nearly 20 million people in four countries of the western Balkans – the Republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia" and a large number of speakers living in diaspora (taken from: https://slavic.ku.edu/why-study-bosniancroatianserbian-bcs-ku-slavic-department).

fore, calls for its additional exploration in other language pairs. It could also be a basis for further contrastive studies of lectures given in more than two languages, which "can potentially add explanatory power and theoretical value to contrastive linguistics as a field" (Nordrum, 2015, p. 328).

## 2.    Data and methodology

### 2.1   Corpus

The study is based on the analysis of 24 university lectures in the field of linguistics, i.e., a total of 181,008 words. These lectures are subdivided into two corpora: the British and the Montenegrin. The British corpus consists of 12 academic lectures (94,242 words) on a variety of linguistics discipline topics – seven linguistic lectures drawn from the BASE[2] corpus, one lecture from the British National Corpus (BNC)[3] and four lectures from the University of Reading and its SACLL (Self-Access Centre for Language Learning).

The analysed material of the British corpus includes 94,242 words, the total length of the recordings being 10 hours, 55 minutes and 24 seconds. In order to compare it to the Montenegrin corpus, the same number ($n=12$) of academic lectures from the field of linguistics was collected. Since an electronic corpus of the Montenegrin spoken and written language does not exist, a corpus of Montenegrin lectures was created. In the first stage of data collection, the lectures[4] in undergraduate and graduate level university courses were audio recorded. They were delivered by different lecturers who are Montenegrin native speakers and assistant, associate, and full professors of linguistics. In the second stage, the audio files were fully transcribed by means of the common transcription symbols used in discourse analysis (included in Appendix 2). The analysed Montenegrin data is comprised of 86,766 words with the duration of 12 hours, 43 minutes and 26 seconds. The details on the British and Montenegrin corpora are given in Appendix 1.

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**2.**  The recordings and transcriptions used in this study come from the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus, which was developed at the Universities of Warwick and Reading under the directorship of Hilary Nesi (Warwick) and Paul Thompson (Reading). Corpus development was assisted by the Universities of Warwick and Reading, BALEAP, EURALEX, the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Board.

**3.**  The written part of the BNC is 90%, whereas the spoken part constitutes 10% of the BNC.

**4.**  Formal permission to record lectures at the University of Montenegro, namely the Faculty of Philosophy and the Institute of Foreign Languages, was obtained.

In summary, the British and Montenegrin corpora share the following features (a) they are composed of the same number of university lectures, (b) the lectures belong to the particular subject field of linguistics, (c) they cover various topics within this discipline, d) they were given by university lecturers in the university context, (e) lecturers are native speakers of British English and Montenegrin.

## 2.2 Analytical procedure

After data collection, the author extracted all questions posed by lecturers from the transcripts of the two corpora on the basis of their forms, functions and with reference to appropriate literature. Regarding the identification of certain question forms (explained in this Section below), audio files and an additional researcher were also consulted.

The corpora were searched manually to identify all questions on the basis of the following criteria. The analysis relied on certain lexico-grammatical signals of questions, for example a question word/phrase at the beginning for *wh-questions* or at the end for *tag questions*. As for the British corpus, Biber et al. (1999) and Quirk et al. (1985) were followed in the identification of the following question forms:[5]

1. Wh-questions:

    (1)   [0.9] when we talk about new words **how do we form them** [0.7]      (EL$_3$)

2. Tag questions:

    (2)   You could all translate that **couldn't you?**                                           (EL$_{10}$)

3. Yes/no questions:

    (3)   If I want to analyse email, chat in chat rooms, virtual world's messages in games, logging instant messages, **are you going to let me have them?** (EL$_9$)

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**5.**  The most frequently used forms are described with the examples extracted from the corpus. These are analysed in more depth in Section 3. The same was done with the examples from the Montenegrin corpus.

The analysis also included:

4.   Statements+word tag, adapted from Thompson (1998) and Chang (2012):

   (4)   When somebody talks to you and you haven't quite heard what they said you are addicted to the internet if you say to them 'scroll up' rather than 'I beg your person', **right?** (EL$_{10}$)

5.   Directives:

   (5)   **remind me** what it is (EL$_8$)

Statements+word tag represent statements followed by *okay, right, yeah, all right*. In order to identify *statements+word tag*, the transcripts were manually searched with reference to their available[6] corresponding audio files. The files and an additional researcher[7] were consulted, as *okay*, *right*, *alright* can also have the function of structural markers (Schleef, 2009, p. 1110).

    Additionally, Tsui's work (1992) was particularly useful in categorising the questions which elicited students' responses, especially in situations when context played a significant role in determining which utterance was a question and which one a directive. A directive is seen as "an instruction to perform something" (Tsui, 1992, p. 100). In the lecture context, they are used to elicit students' verbal responses. Directives take the form of imperatives and *let's+main verb* construction (Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 827, 829) and, in that regard, they are different from questions. They are realised by certain verbs used in the mentioned forms, which are discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.1.4.

    As for the Montenegrin corpus, Piper et al. (2005) and Mrazović and Vukadinović (1990) were followed in the identification of:

1.   Wh-questions:

   (6)   *Dakle, pomenuli smo šta je leksema, znamo šta je leksema, **a šta je onda leksikologija?*** (ML$_2$)
       'So, we mentioned what a lexeme was, we know what the lexeme is, **but then what is lexicology?**'

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**6.**   The audio files of the lectures from the BASE corpus are "only available to students and academic staff in the Centre for Applied Linguistics for research and teaching purposes" (https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/base/). Therefore, the number of *statement+word tag* occurrences excluded the British lectures taken from the BASE corpus.

**7.**   An additional researcher coded this question form taking into account Schleef's view (2009, p. 1110). The results were compared with the author's. The cases with different codes were examined and the consensus was reached.

2.  Yes/no questions:

    (7)  ***Da li je to ista rečenica?***                              (ML$_{12}$)
          **'Is that the same sentence?'**

3.  Tag questions:

    (8)  *Dakle, <u>idealna</u> komunikacija je kada je <u>namjeravano</u> jednako protu-*
          *mačenom značenju, **jel' tako?***                           (ML$_{4}$)
          'So, <u>ideal</u> communication is when the <u>intended</u> is the same as the inter-
          preted meaning, **isn't it?'**

4.  Directives:

    (9)  ***Recite mi jednu promjenljivu verzalnu skraćenicu.***            (ML$_{9}$)
          **'Tell me one changeable versal abbreviation.'**

Montenegrin lecturers also posed some questions that Piper et al. (2005) and Mrazović and Vukadinović (1990) did not mention in their syntax and grammar books, such as *questions with a question word/phrase at the end* and *statement + a pause*:

(10)  *Objekat je u toj rečenici **šta?***                               (ML$_{1}$)
      'The object in that sentence is **what?'**

(11)  P[8]:  *Skraćenica za strana (.)*
      *S1*:  *Str.*
      P:  *Str.*                                     (ML$_{9}$)
      'L:  **The abbreviation for *page* is (.)**
      S1:  P.
      L:  P.'

The *statement+a pause* forms represent lecturers' utterances followed by short or long pauses (marked by (.) or (…)), initiating students' verbal contributions (Extract 11). Pauses act as signals to students to take their turn in an exchange. To identify them, transcripts were searched and audio files and an additional researcher were consulted. The same procedure was adopted as given in Footnote 7. *Questions with a question word/phrase at the end* are the utterances with a question word/phrase used at their end (Extract 10).

    Apart from the above-mentioned question forms, regarding both corpora, the analysis also included *multiple questions*, adapted from Bamford (2005):

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**8.**  P stands for *predavač* in Montenegrin or *lecturer* in English. The list of transcription symbols is given in Appendix 2.

(12)  **okay what are our sources [0.6] for [1.0] language change [2.4] where do we get the information from for language change**                    (EL$_5$)

(13)  *Kako ćemo ga naučiti da zaključuje, da analizira? Kako? (.) Kako ćete ih naučiti?*                    (ML$_8$)
      '**How shall we teach them to conclude, to analyse? How? (.) How will you teach them?**'

Bamford (2005, p. 136) used 'double questions' to indicate two questions in a row, whereby "the first question is reformulated and re-specified" (Extract 12). Considering the fact that in the corpora not only does a lecturer pose two questions in a row, but also three (Extract 13), the term multiple questions was introduced as more precise for this research.

In addition, there were questions referring to information about colloquia, exams, the absence of a professor on a certain day, or some other information. These were excluded from the analysis because they were not related to lecture content, as illustrated in the following items:

(14)  **What country are you from? Are you from Spain?**                    (EL$_{11}$)

(15)  *Vidite da je čitava Bolonja osmišljena da biste vi kontinuirano radili. Zato zato vi <u>pretjerujete</u> sa vašim zahtjevima da vam se ponavljaju kolokvijumi.* **Shvatate li da to gubi svrhu?** *To je smiješno.*                    (ML$_8$)
      'You see, the entire Bologna process was initiated so that you would continuously learn. For that reason, for that reason you <u>exaggerate</u> with your requirements concerning make-up colloquia. **Do you understand that it loses its purpose?** It's ridiculous.'

The next step in the analysis included examining questions' functions. The division of questions into *content-oriented* and *audience-oriented*, introduced by Thompson (1998) and later followed by Crawford Camiciotolli (2008) and Chang (2012), was considered for its possible application in this research. The content-oriented group of questions appears to be a broad category, since it can refer to all questions relating to content and posed in a lecture. For instance, it can include not only the questions asked by a lecturer, but also the questions posed by students. As the focus of this paper is on the questions asked by professors, this orientation seems to be broad. Thompson (1998) also introduced the *audience-oriented questions* category. She explored a mixed British corpus of academic lectures and presentations and analysed the questions used by lecturers and academic presenters at seminars and conferences. The audience included in her corpus was composed of students and academic community members who attended conferences and seminars. Therefore, her orientation also appears to be broad for the current research considering the fact that the audience in the lectures under study

includes only students. That is why in this research, two functional categories of questions were established as a consequence of the action a lecturer performs while posing a question – *questions posed and answered by lecturers* and *questions initiating a student response*. In the first functional category the lecturer poses a question and simultaneously provides an appropriate answer, whereas in the second the lecturer asks a question which elicits students' responses.

After the classification of question forms into two main functional groups, their contextual use was examined. Meticulous attention was paid to what preceded and what followed the identified question forms. It is necessary to mention that there were questions with more than one function and vice versa, a certain function was performed by more than one question form, as "the mapping of the questions' forms and functions did not have a straightforward, one-to-one relationship" (Chang, 2012, p.109).

In addition, the issue of multimodality was not addressed for a technical reason. Video recordings of the BASE corpus are held in the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, and are "only available to students and academic staff in the Centre for Applied Linguistics for research and teaching purposes".[9] Bearing this in mind, in order to perform a contrastive analysis, Montenegrin lectures were audio recorded. The need to be able to compare similar materials also prevented the author from integrating the author's own corpus with a study of perceptions as nothing similar exists for the BASE corpus. Therefore, the analysis did not include student and lecturer perceptions of questions posed by professors, but the types and functions of questions that lecturers asked.

The two functional categories of questions are thoroughly analysed in the Results section from a contrastive perspective, including a quantitative and qualitative comparison of the results obtained in the British and Montenegrin corpora.


## 3.    Results and discussion

This section presents the results with regard to the questions professors pose in the British and Montenegrin linguistic lectures. Table 1 shows that both British and Montenegrin professors use two functional question categories – *questions posed and answered by lecturers* and *questions initiating a student response*. However, the Montenegrin professors ask questions 2.34 times more frequently than their British colleagues.

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**9.**  Taken from: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/base/.

**Table 1.** Functional categories of questions in the British and Montenegrin corpora

| Functional category | N of occurrences | Questions per 1000 words | N of occurrences | Questions per 1000 words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | British corpus | | Montenegrin corpus | |
| Questions posed and answered by lecturers | 184 | 1.93 | 434 | 4.98 |
| Questions initiating a student response | 179 | 1.87 | 340 | 3.92 |
| **Total** | **363** | **3.8** | 774 | **8.9** |

Sections 3.1 and 3.2 outline the findings about formal realisations of *questions posed and answered by lecturers* and *questions initiating a student response* respectively. They are followed by Sections 3.1.1 and 3.2.1 describing the functions that the most frequently used formal realisations perform in both corpora.

## 3.1    Formal realisations of questions posed and answered by lecturers

The distribution of *questions posed and answered by lecturers* in the British and Montenegrin corpora according to forms is given in Table 2. The data include formal realisations, the number of their raw occurrences, a percentage frequency, as well as their normalised frequency per 1000 words. The percentage of one question form in a corpus was calculated in relation to the total occurrences of all the questions forms identified in a corpus, so as to show how frequent one question form is in comparison to the others in one corpus.

Table 2 shows obvious variations between the British and Montenegrin corpora in terms of the frequency of question occurrences in the field of linguistics. The Montenegrin lecturers use far more questions than their British counterparts (4.98/1.93).

In the British corpus, the most common questions forms found are *wh-*, *tag*, *yes/no*, *multiple questions* and *statement+word tag* (*okay, right, yeah, all right*). They account for 94.5% of the questions analysed. The most frequent questions in the Montenegrin corpus are *tag*, *wh-*, *questions with a question word/phrase at the end*, *yes/no* and *multiple questions*, constituting 96.7% of the questions examined. *Questions about questions*, *incomplete*, *embedded*, *alternative* and *indirect questions* will not be further discussed taking into account their low frequency in this functional category. The next section will present results regarding the functions of the most frequently used formal types in both corpora in the category *questions posed and answered by lecturers*.

**Table 2.**  Types and frequency of questions posed and answered by lecturers in the British and Montenegrin corpora

| Questions posed and answered by lecturers | Frequency | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | N of occurrences | | (%) | | Questions per 1000[*] words | |
| | British corpus | Montenegrin corpus | British corpus | Montenegrin corpus | British corpus | Montenegrin corpus |
| Tag questions | 47 | 240 | 25.5 | 55.3 | 0.49 | 2.76 |
| Wh-questions | 56 | 111 | 30.4 | 25.5 | 0.59 | 1.28 |
| Questions with a question word/phrase at the end | 2 | 28 | 1.08 | 6.5 | 0.02 | 0.32 |
| Statement+word tag (okay, right, yeah, all right) | 15 | – | 8.2 | – | 0.16 | – |
| Yes/no questions | 36 | 26 | 19.6 | 5.9 | 0.38 | 0.29 |
| Multiple questions | 20 | 15 | 10.8 | 3.5 | 0.21 | 0.17 |
| Questions about questions | – | 6 | – | 1.4 | – | 0.07 |
| Incomplete questions | 3 | 5 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 0.03 | 0.06 |
| Embedded questions | 3 | 2 | 1.6 | 0.5 | 0.03 | 0.02 |
| Alternative questions | – | 1 | – | 0.2 | – | 0.01 |
| Indirect questions | 2 | – | 1.08 | – | 0.02 | – |
| **Total** | **184** | **434** | **100** | **100** | **1.93** | **4.98** |

[*] The normalised frequency of questions is given per 1000 words of a corpus in order to be able to compare the frequency of the question forms in the two corpora.

**3.1.1**  Functions of formal realisations of the questions posed and answered by lecturers

**3.1.1.1**  *Wh-questions*
*Wh-questions* are most common in the British lectures, whereas in the Montenegrin they represent the second most frequent question form. Their normalised frequency shows that the Montenegrin lecturers use them twice more often than the British lecturers. These questions perform two functions. The first one refers to defining a new concept/term to be introduced to students, as is shown in the following examples:

(16)  **what do we mean by a learning syndicate** [0.7] it's a self- [0.2] chosen [0.2] self-help [0.2] group [0.5] you get together [0.3] with other students    (EL$_2$)

(17)  ***Šta je afiks?*** *To je znači dio koji se dodaje prije ili poslije, prefiks ili sufiks.* (ML$_6$)
'**What's an affix?** It is, in fact, the part added before or after, a prefix or suffix.'

In Example (16), a lecturer asks a *wh question* and s/he is the one who supplies an appropriate answer. The lecturer may presuppose that the students do not have the information on what *a learning sindicate* is, and therefore, gives them a definition in the following utterance. In Example (17), a Montenegrin lecturer also asks and answers a *wh question* to define the term *affix* introduced by a question. This function was not distinguished in the studies by Thompson (1998); Bamford (2000); Crawford Camiciotolli (2008); Schleef (2009) and Chang (2012).
     The second function *wh-questions* can fulfil refers to introducing new subtopics in lectures. This function, found in both corpora, corresponds with Thomspon's 'raise issue' function of content-oriented questions (1998, p.143). It seems to have a structural role, which can be seen in Extracts 18 and 19:

(18)  **so what is** [0.2] **education for** [0.6] at a very basic level [0.2] it can be [0.2] a commodity [1.3] a commodity is where the learner [1.4] is a client [0.5] a customer [1.0] who pays a lot of money very often or whose company [0.9] or sponsor pays a lot of money [0.3] to come and study with you    (EL$_1$)

(19)  ***U čemu je razlika, sada da vidimo, između rječnika, enciklopedije i lek-sikona?*** *Dosta su biski ovi pojmovi. Naravno, ipak se razlikuju. Rječnik je, kao što smo dosad već zaključiti, knjiga o riječima, najprostije rečeno. (zp) Enciklopedija je knjiga o stvarima.*    (ML$_2$)
'**What is the difference, now let's see, between a dictionary, encyclopedia and the lexicon?** These terms are very close. Of course, they differ though. The dictionary, as we have concluded so far, is the book on words, put in the simplest way. (zp) The encyclopaedia is the book about things.'

Example (18) is initiated by the boundary marker *so* which appears to signal a transition to a new lecture subtopic which is initiated by the *wh question* put. That way the lecturer introduces the subtopic relating to the purpose of education. Example (19) also shows the same function of *wh-questions* to initiate a new lecture subtopic – the difference between a dictionary, encyclopaedia and the lexicon, which is about to be announced by the use of the construction *now let's see* embedded in the *wh question* and indicating the beginning of a new subtopic.

Unlike the British corpus, in the Montenegrin lectures, *wh-questions* can carry out an explanatory function as well. Frequently, these questions are preceded by an exemplification act signalled by *recimo* 'let's say'. The lecturers then pose *wh-questions* to explain the content presented in examples as to enable students to better understand it (Extracts 20 and 21).

(20)  *Oblik riječi je, dakle, ta ista riječ učenik pa, recimo, vokativ učeniče, učeniče to bi bila jedna ista riječi, **a kako bi od učenik bila <u>nova</u> riječ?** Učionica, na primjer.*                                                                                    (ML[10])

'The form of a word is, therefore, that same word *učenik* '*a student*', so, let's say, the vocative *učeniče*,[10] *učeniče* would be the same word, but **how would a <u>new</u> word from *učenik* be?** *Učionica* '*a classroom*', for example.'

(21)  *Ili recimo, Upita druga podižući glas. Dakle, **kako ga je pitao?** Pitao ga je glasno.*                                                                                    (ML[1])

'Or, let's say, *He asked a friend raising his voice*. So, **how did he ask him?** He asked him loudly.'

**3.1.1.2**    *Tag questions and statement+word tag (okay, right, yeah, all right)*
Both Montenegrin and British lecturers employed *tag questions* in the category of questions posed and answered by lecturers. Table 2 shows that *tag questions* represent the most frequent group employed by the Montenegrin lecturers, whereas these questions rank second in the British corpus. *Tag questions* are over 5 times more frequently used in the Montenegrin lectures than in the British lectures (their normalised frequency being 2.76/0.49).

The contextual analysis of tag questions reveals that they do not initiate exchanges, instead, they serve other functions. More specifically, *tag questions* point to content that the lecturer believes students are familiar with, as illustrated in Extracts 22 and 23.

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**10.**  This term was not translated for the reason that the vocative case does not exist in English, whereas in Montenegrin it does.

(22)    It needs – speech is interactive – it needs that kind of dynamic and here's the difference with the internet, **isn't it**? Because you don't get simultaneous feedback on the internet, you can't, **can you**? With one or two technological modifications that might make it possible soon, but traditionally you don't get it.

(EL₉)

(23)    *Dakle, vi se sjećate (.) <kako je definisao standardizaciju> Milorad*
        *Radovanović, jel' tako? I sjećate se da je on (…) <napravio> taj takozvani*
        *<krug> od deset <faza> kako doći do standardnog jezika i to je upravo deset*
        *faza (.) <planiranja> jezičkog <korpusa>.*                                    (ML₅)
        'So, you remember (.) <how Milorad Radovanović defined standardisation>,
        **don't you**? And you remember that he (…) <made> that so called <circle> of
        ten <phases> exaplaining how to come to a standard language and these are
        exactly ten phases (.) of <planning> a language <corpus>.'

As Extract 22 is part of the subtopic on the difference between speech and computer mediated communication, the lecturer makes a comparison emphasising points that students already know. The same is true for Extract 23, where the lecturer reminds students of how Milorad Radovanović defined standardisation through the circle of ten phases before moving on to discuss them. Therefore, tag questions recontextualise already familiar content in order to help students better comprehend the topics to follow.

Tag questions are also used to intensify evaluation of the content expressed in the previous utterances. Let us consider Examples (24) and (25).

(24)    so [0.9] when we talk about new words how do we form them [0.7] we can
        [0.2] put [0.4] words like sad [0.4] to a new [0.3] to a new use so it used to
        mean [0.3] unhappy [0.3] now it means [0.3] not very socially [0.4] er [0.8]
        well integrated [0.8] **it's very difficult to measure this isn't it** because [0.2] how
        can you tell when a word is changing its meaning [0.4] they change perhaps
        their meanings just slightly is it a new word or is it just [0.2] a slightly different
        interpretation of an old word                                                  (EL₃)

(25)    *I mi smo odgovorni ne samo za ono što djeca znaju iz oblasti <jezika>, nego <u>vrlo</u>*
        *često to kako mi radimo s djecom i kako ih <u>mi</u> učimo, u stvari ih određuje i iz*
        *drugih predmeta. Da li oni čitaju kako treba, da li razumiju to što su pročitali,*
        *<u>da li</u> to znaju da izgovore i ispričaju. **To je <u>jako</u> važno, jel'**? I negdje je to takođe*
        *<u>dio</u> naše odgovornosti.*                                                 (ML₈)
        'We too are responsible not only for what children know from the field of
        <language>, but <u>very often</u> how we work with children and how <u>we</u> teach
        them, in fact, determines them from other subjects. Do they read properly, do
        they understand what they have read, <u>do they</u> know to utter and retell it? **That
        is very important, isn't it?** That is too <u>part</u> of our responsibility.'

The statements in bold express the evaluative content signalled by the amplifier *very* and evaluative adjectives *difficult* and *important*, and the final *isn't it* intensifies the significance of the propositional content given in previous statements.

In the British lectures, *statements+word tag* are used with a frequency of 8.2%, while in the Montenegrin they were not found. *Statements+word tag* are different from tag questions in that they represent utterances followed by a word tag such as *okay*, *right*, *yeah*, *all right*. They perform two functions in the analysed British lectures. First, lecturers employ *statements+word tag* to 're-specify information' (Schleef, 2009, p. 1111) and make it more precise, as illustrated in Extract 26.

(26)    it's a question of convergence or divergence, **ok**? Well in terms of convergence I've got this quotation from a man called Jack Payack who is from the University of Montreal 'English has triumphed because it is open to change unlike French which is watched over by the Academie Francaise'.                    (EL$_{10}$)

The statement with the word tag *okay/ok* at the end initiates the given extract which is then re-specified by another statement. The lecturer provides more specific information on the term convergence, whose meaning is made more precise with an example and a quotation.

Second, *statements+word tag* can indicate that one thematic cycle is about to end. Similar to the function of *okay* as a pre-closing device in everyday conversation (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973), word tags used at the end of statements pre-close thematic cycles in lectures. The most frequent word tag used as a pre-closing signal appeared to be *all right*, as shown in the following excerpt:

(27)    So there are some words remaining in the English language from the Celtic language but not many, **alright**? So those are the Celts.                    (EL$_{11}$)

In Example (27), the given statement followed by the word tag *alright* signals a pre-closure of thematic cycle about the Celts and their influence on the English language.

### 3.1.1.3    *Yes/no questions*

The following question form found within the category of *questions posed and answered by lecturers* includes *yes/no questions* as the third most frequent group in the British corpus, and the fourth in the Montenegrin (Table 2). These questions are known to be typical of everyday conversation, and they presuppose the condition that two or more interlocutors participate in the conversation (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). However, in university lectures, within both the British and Montenegrin corpora, it is possible to find *yes/no questions*, with the lecturer being the one who asks and answers a question. These questions have an explanatory function. Let us look at Examples (28) and (29).

(28) [0.8] and of course what's happened to the word disinterested is [0.6] itself of course very interesting [0.5] but [0.2] er that has come down to [0.4] roughly our generation [0.3] with a very important distinction between disinterested [0.2] and uninterested [0.4] disinterested as impartial [0.9] and [0.6] interested as you know [0.2] taking an interest or perhaps having [0.2] a certain [0.3] er [0.2] view on the outcome [0.7] er [0.4] we expect a judge [0.3] to be disinterested [0.6] we don't expect him to be uninterested reading his Beano or something you know while the er [0.4] while the the the talk is going on so there's a very important distinction there [0.4] but we notice that it's collapsed [0.9] that more people than not [0.2] will use the word disinterested to mean [0.4] uninterested [0.9] **does that tell us anything about the culture** [0.4] we're working in [0.7] that the very notion the ideal of being disinterested [0.2] of course in all kinds of ways is [0.5] i-, is worth looking at closely culturally (EL$_4$)

(29) *Dakle, svlačim sumrak. Sumrak je nije <u>nešto</u> što je konkretno (.) kao što svlačimo košulju, predmet koji se svlači. **Da li je sumrak to?** Nije.* (ML$_4$)
'So, I shed dimday. Dimday is not <u>something</u> that is concrete (.) like we take off a shirt, a subject that is taken off. **Is that dimday?** No.'

In Example (28), the given *yes/no question* refers to the content already presented in the previous statements, more precisely, to the difference between the meaning of words *disinterested* and *uninterested* and how it has changed over time. The *yes/no question* has an explanatory function. The same function is performed in Example (29), where the Montenegrin lecturer uses *yes/no question* to analyse the content given in the previous statement/s as to aid students' comprehension.

### 3.1.1.4 *Multiple questions*

Multiple questions record the fourth highest frequency in the British lectures, whereas they come fifth in the Montenegrin lectures (Table 2). They are slightly more common in the British corpus (0.21/0.17). Formally, multiple questions include two or more questions relating to the same topic. They also include the repetition of certain lexical units. The first question is repeated, serving as "reformulations of the first question" (Bamford, 2000, p. 167) and contributing to the clarity of lecture content. Examples (30) and (31) illustrate multiple questions.

(30) **how they learn best** [0.4] **how do I learn a foreign language best what's the best way for me to do it** [0.2] **as an individual** [1.5] very different attitudes to content (EL$_1$)

(31) *Kako ćemo ga naučiti da zaključuje, da analizira? Kako? (.) Kako ćete ih naučiti? Tako što ćete ih staviti u situaciju da analiziraju.* (ML$_8$)
'**How shall we teach them to conclude, to analyse? How? (.) How will you teach them?** By putting them in a situation to analyse.'

Extract 30 shows that the first question has been formulated again and, therefore, is specified. Not only are these three questions linked semantically, but also lexically (the adverb *best* used twice and the adjective *best* once, as well as the verb *learn* twice) and grammatically (parallel interrogative structures). Similarly, Extract 31 opens with a *multiple question*. The first question is repeated twice. The questions are linked on grammatical (parallel interrogative structures), lexical (the word *naučiti* 'teach' is repeated as well as the question word *kako* 'how') and semantic levels (*kako ćete naučiti studente da analiziraju i zaključuju* 'how will you teach students to analyse and conclude').

Apart from contributing to the clarity of lecture content, multiple questions play a structural role and mark a transition from one subtopic to another. In the present data it appears that they are used to introduce a new subtopic, which is not the function found in Bamford's study (2000). This function is similar to the one *wh-questions* perform. Let us consider Excerpts 32 and 33.

(32)   **well er [3.2] why do languages change at all why i mean why did this patalization occur when it did why didn't it occur before [1.3] why didn't it occur later** [0.9] well [0.4] these are [0.2] unanswerable questions they're not answerable [0.2] in relation to [0.7] linguistic structure [1.2] all right [1.0] because [1.0] of social factors                                                   (EL₅)

(33)   *(zp) E sad, šta sve posmatramo u jednom književnom djelu, a možemo da razgovaramo sa djecom o tome da vidimo kako oni to znaju? Kakvo pisac to djelo stvara?* Evo najprije su tu književna djela.                                (ML₈)
        '**(zp) Well now, what do we consider in a literary work we can talk to children about and see what they know? What type of work does a writer create?** First of all, these are literary works.'

Example (32) begins with the discourse marker *well* preceding multiple questions that are semantically, grammatically and lexically compatible. The lecturer poses the question about why languages change, and s/he continues to specify it by adding three more questions concerning the sound change *palatalization*. S/he uses the verb *occur* three times and follows the same structure of interrogatives. The answer is initiated again by the same discourse marker *well*, pointing to its complexity. The lecturer uses multiple questions to signal a transition to a new lecture subtopic, where the answers will be discussed in more detail. Example (33) from the Montenegrin corpus is initiated by the complex discourse marker *well now*, marking the transition to a new subtopic, where the lecturer is about to discuss the points regarding what should be considered in a literary work that students need to know.

**3.1.1.5**   *Questions with a question word/phrase at the end*

In contrast to the British lectures, where only two instances of *questions with a question word/phrase at the end* were found, in the Montenegrin lectures, 28 cases were recorded. The reason lies in the structural rules for forming questions. In English, interrogative forms require the initial positioning of a question word (Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 806–826). In the Montenegrin lectures, these questions are posed with the aim to draw students' attention to the specific information each question refers to. Let us look at Example (34).

(34)   *<u>Pravi</u> objekat je ime pojma u obliku <u>akuzativa bez</u> predloga uz <prave> prelazne glagole. Recimo, Marko zida kuću. **Objekat je u toj rečenici šta?** Kuću.*

$$(\text{ML}_1)$$

'<u>Direct</u> object is the name of an entity in the form of <u>accusative without</u> a preposition with <real> transitive verbs. Let's say, *Marko is building a house.* **The object in that sentence is what?** A house.'

What precedes this type of question in Example (34) is the *exemplification act*, signalled by *let's+say* construction introducing an example referring to the content discussed. The question word at the end requires a particular piece of information which is provided by the lecturer. Therefore, such questions have an explanatory function and play a significant role in making course content clearer and more understandable.

**3.2**   Formal realisations of questions initiating a student response

Table 3 shows the distribution of *questions initiating a student response* in the British and Montenegrin corpora according to forms. It presents formal realisations, the number of their raw occurrences, a percentage frequency and their normalised frequency per 1000 words.

The normalised frequency of questions initiating a student response in the Montenegrin lectures in this study shows that the Montenegrin lecturers use them twice more often than the British lecturers. This suggests that the Montenegrin lectures appear to be more interactive and points to students' greater involvement in the discussion on the lecture content.

In the British corpus, *wh-*, *yes/no*, *multiple*, *incomplete questions* and *directives* are the most common question forms, accounting for 87.1% of the questions analysed. The most frequent realisations in the Montenegrin lectures are *directives*, *statement+a pause*, *wh-*, *multiple* and yes/*no questions*, constituting 84.4% of the questions explored. *Questions about questions*, *echo*, *declarative*, *tag questions*, *questions with a question word/phrase at the end*, *incomplete*, *embedded* and *alternative questions* will not be further examined considering their low frequency in

**Table 3.** Types and frequency of questions initiating a student response in the British and Montenegrin corpora

| Questions initiating a student response | Frequency | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N of occurrences | | (%) | | Questions per 1000 words | |
| | British corpus | Montenegrin corpus | British corpus | Montenegrin corpus | British corpus | Montenegrin corpus |
| Wh-questions | 51 | 41 | 28.5 | 12.1 | 0.54 | 0.47 |
| Yes/no questions | 46 | 26 | 25.7 | 7.6 | 0.48 | 0.29 |
| Multiple questions | 25 | 37 | 13.9 | 10.8 | 0.26 | 0.43 |
| Incomplete questions | 20 | 10 | 11.2 | 2.9 | 0.21 | 0.12 |
| Directives | 14 | 127 | 7.8 | 37.4 | 0.15 | 1.46 |
| Statement+word tag (okay, right, yeah, all right) | 4 | – | 2.3 | – | 0.04 | – |
| Questions about questions | 7 | 3 | 3.9 | 0.8 | 0.07 | 0.04 |
| Echo questions | 5 | 7 | 2.8 | 2.1 | 0.05 | 0.08 |
| Declarative questions | 3 | – | 1.7 | – | 0.03 | – |
| Statement + a pause | 1 | 56 | 0.5 | 16.5 | 0.01 | 0.65 |
| Tag questions | 1 | 8 | 0.5 | 2.4 | 0.01 | 0.09 |
| Questions with a question word/phrase at the end | 1 | 13 | 0.5 | 3.8 | 0.01 | 0.15 |
| Embedded questions | 1 | – | 0.5 | – | 0.01 | – |
| Alternative questions | – | 12 | – | 3.5 | – | 0.14 |
| Total | 179 | 340 | 100 | 100 | 1.87 | 3.92 |

this functional category. The functions of the most frequently used formal realisations in both corpora will be discussed in the following section.

**3.2.1** Functions of formal realisations of the questions initiating a student response

**3.2.1.1** *Wh-questions*

*Wh-questions* are the most frequent question form initiating a student response employed in the British lectures, whereas they occupy the third position in the Montenegrin lectures (Table 3). Their normalised frequency is slightly greater in the British corpus (0.54/0.47). The present investigation confirms that *wh-questions* are "information-seeking" (Tsui, 1992, p. 94), meaning they "seek information on a specific point" (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 804). Therefore, their function is to elicit students' responses. However, unlike the use of these questions in everyday conversation, a lecturer already knows the answer to the question posed, which is obvious in Examples (35) and (36):

(35)   L:   Because phrasal verbs are used for spoken English. Words like 'put off ' –
             **what's the meaning of put-off?** Don't put-off your homework
       S:   don't leave it
       L:   Don't leave it, don't postpone. The phrasal verbs are most of Anglo Saxon
             origin.                                                                    (EL₁₁)

(36)   P:   *I na kom slogu je u pomoći akcenat?*
       S14:  *Na drugom.*
       P:   *Tačno.*                                                                    (ML₁₁)
       'L:   **On which syllable is the accent in *pomoći* 'to help'?**
       S14:  On the second.
       L:   Correct.'

**3.2.1.2** *Yes/no questions*

*Yes/no questions* are the second most common question form initiating students' responses in the British, while they come fifth in the Montenegrin lectures (Table 3). This question class is used to elicit a specific piece of information from students in both corpora:

(37)   nf1271:  **can you think of one area where there's been a huge growth in the
                 nineteen-nineties**
       sf1279:  Internet
       sm1280:
       nf1271:  absolutely [0.3] yes [0.3]                                              (EL₃)

(38)  P:  ***Znate li neku takvu skraćenicu (.) koja se piše bez tačke i koja pripada ovoj grupi sažetih skraćenica?***

    S4:  *Doktor.*

    P:  *Doktor, skraćenica dr bez tačke.*                                   (ML$_9$)

    'L:  **Do you know such an abbreviation (.) that is written without a full stop and that belongs to the group of contracted abbreviations?**

    S4:  Doctor.

    L:  Doctor, the abbreviation *dr* without a full stop.'

Lecturers employ *yes/no questions* to check if they have covered some aspects of the lectures (Extract 39) and whether students follow the current content or have understood the points already presented (Extracts 40 and 41).

(39)  P:  ***Jesam vam govorila o tome?*** *Testiranje.*

    S1:  *Da.*

    S2:  *Jeste.*                                                          (ML$_8$)

    'L:  Have I told you about this? Testing.

    S1:  Yes.

    S2:  Yes, you have.'

(40)  nf1292:  **does that make sense to everybody** [0.4] **yeah** [0.2]

    sf1325:  yes

    nf1292:  er [0.4] and you can see at the bottom [0.4] what her scores [0.2] came to [1.2]                                              (EL$_7$)

(41)  P:  *Druga je situacija sa sibilarizacijom u riječima stranog porijekla.* ***Razumijete?***

    Studenti:  *Razumijemo.*                                            (ML$_{10}$)

    'L:  Another situation is with sibilarization in the words of foreign origin. **Do you understand?**

    Students:  Yes, we do.'

In the literature, these questions are known as minimal choice questions (Piper et al., 2005, p. 673), offering the choice between two possibilities – confirming or not confirming the *yes/no question*. Furthermore, a filled pause[11] can also have the function of giving an affirmative answer to the *yes/no question* posed, as is the case with the following example:

---

**11.** In the literature, it is possible to find other terms, such as *minimal response token* (Farr, 2003) and *interjection* (Quirk et al., p. 1985). This group comprises the units that confirm or reject what a speaker has told, such as *hm, mm, yeah*.

(42)  nf1292:  **do you see what i mean** [0.2]
     sf1316:  **mm-hmm**
     nf1292:  it [0.3] er to go back to this idea of a frequency count          (EL$_7$)

According to Quirk et al. (1985, p. 853), the meaning of *mm* in everyday conversation is actually casual 'yes', which is the same meaning expressed in Example (42).

### 3.2.1.3  *Multiple questions*

Multiple questions were found and included in the category of questions initiating a student response in both corpora, with the normalised frequency being greater in the Montenegrin lectures (0.43 compared to 0.26 in the British). In contrast to the multiple questions classified in the group of questions posed and answered by lecturers, here they are used with the aim to motivate students to provide a certain piece of information and provoke their verbal reaction. Examples (43) and (44) illustrate multiple questions.

(43)  nf1292:  **why did she do that** [0.8] **why did she knock those out why did she remove**
     sf1309:  er was she doing a process of elimination [0.6]
     nf1292:  yeah          (EL$_7$)

(44)  P:  *A šta je sa fondom riječi kojima pojedinci barataju, šta mislite? Koliko vi znate riječi, na primjer, svog jezika?*
     S1:  *To je ono što sve koristimo.*
     P  *Tako je. Tu je razlika između aktivne i pasivne leksike, to ćemo pomenuti.*
     (ML$_2$)
     'L:  **And what about the number of words that individuals use, what do you think? How many words do you know, for example, of your language?**
     S1:  That includes all the words that we use.
     L:  That's right. There is a difference between active and passive vocabulary, we will mention that.'

The given extracts open with *wh-questions*, followed and specified by another two *wh-questions* so as to make students give an appropriate answer. Multiple questions are linked grammatically (parallel interrogative structures) and lexically (the use of the synonyms *knock out* and *remove* in Example (43), and the verbs *baratati* 'use' and *znati* 'know', which have similar meanings in Example (44)). They are also linked semantically referring to the matter discussed.

### 3.2.1.4  *Directives*

A considerable difference in the frequency of *directives* between the two corpora was recognised. Their normalised frequency shows that the Montenegrin lecturers use them 9 times more often than the British lecturers (Table 3). The illocu-

tionary force of *directives* in most cases depends on the situational context (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 831). They play an elicitation role in academic lectures (Excerpts 45, 46, and 47). Directives found in the British corpus are realised by imperatives and *let's* (*let us*) + *main verb* construction, the latter being more frequent, whilst in the Montenegrin the form of imperative prevails. The verbs used are those showing activity *give*, *go through*, *watch*, *take* and the verbs of thinking *think of/ about*, *remind* in the British, as well as communicative verbs, such as *odgovoriti* 'answer', *pitati* 'ask', *reći* 'tell', and those of the cognitive group – *misliti* 'think', *zamisliti* 'imagine' in the Montenegrin lectures. Imperative forms are 'hearer-oriented' (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 88) and hence are more direct, whereas *let's* (*let us*) + *main verb* constructions are "considerably more indirect" (Dalton-Puffer, 2005, p. 1290), as the use of the inclusive pronoun *we/us* subsumes lecturers and students under one perspective. Greater use of the imperative forms in the Montenegrin lectures appears to demonstrate that the Montenegrin lecturers put more emphasis on directness in communication. *Let's (let us) + main verb* constructions in the British lectures point to occupying a more indirect position, an "intermediary between speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented" (Dalton-Puffer, 2005, p. 1290).

(45)  nf0988:  you're a facilitator [0.2] you're a coordinator [2.7] **think of** the busi-
               ness world [1.3] you're a
      sf1028:  s-, [0.4] supervisor
      nf0988:  you're a supervisor [0.4] yes                              (EL$_8$)

(46)  nf0988:  okay **let's see** what we've got [1.0] anybody like to give me [0.3] some
               factors [1.4]
      sf1061:  age [0.7]
      nf0988:  age [0.6] yeah                                            (EL$_1$)

(47)  *P:*  **Recite mi neku slivenu skraćenicu, pominjali smo ih.**
      *S3:*  *JAT.*
      *P:*  *JAT, naravno. Skraćenica za Jugoslovenski aerotransport.*     (ML$_9$)
      'L:  **Tell me a fused abbreviation; we've mentioned them.**
      S3:  JAT.
      L:  JAT, of course. The abbreviation for the Yugoslav aero transport.'

### 3.2.1.5   *Statement + a pause*

*Statement + a pause* is the most frequent second form in the group of questions initiating a student response in the Montenegrin corpus, whereas it is atypical of the British lectures, with the only one instance found. Let us take a look at Examples (48) and (49).

(48)  P:   *A među pismima dalje pravi se razlika između poslovnih, društvenih (…)
           zatim pisama formularskog tipa. (…)* **Zatim tu su i magistarski radovi,
           diplomski radovi (.) razni zapisnici (…) pa i poruke pisane rukom (.) na
           zidovima, a to su (.)**

      S2:  *grafiti.*

      P:   *Grafiti, naravno.*                                                (ML₇)

      'L:   And among letters a difference between business, social (…) then the let-
           ters of formal type is still made. (…) **Then there are MA theses, diploma
           papers (.) various minutes (…) and even messages written by hand (.)
           on the walls, and they are (.)**

      S2:   graffiti.

      L:    Graffiti, of course.'

(49)  P:   **Primjeri *Razbila je vazu u bijesu, Zinuo je u čudu, U nedostatku dokaza
           oslobođen je optužbe* optužbe ilustruju (…) upotrebu lokativa sa predlo-
           gom u u funkciji priloške odredbe za (…)**

      S1:  *način. Uzrok.*

      P:   *Za <u>uzrok</u>.*                                                 (ML₃)

      'L:   **The examples *She broke a vase in anger*, *He yawned in wonder*, *In the
           absence of proofs, his accusation accusation was dismissed*, illustrate (…)
           the use of locative with the preposition *in* with the function of advebial
           modifier of (…)**

      S1:   manner. Cause.

      L:    <u>Cause</u>.'

The illustrated examples show another possible way in which the Montenegrin
lecturers elicit students' verbal reaction. They give a statement and then pause giv-
ing students a signal to take their turn in an exchange. The pause can be shorter,
indicated by (.), as is the case in Example (48), and longer, marked by (…) and
illustrated in Example (49).

## 4.    Conclusion

The aim of the paper has been to determine which question forms are used
in the British and Montenegrin linguistic lectures, how frequent they are, what
functions they serve, as well as whether there are certain similarities and dif-
ferences relating to question forms, frequency and functions performed in both
corpora respectively. Two main functional categories were identified in both cor-
pora – *questions posed and answered by lecturers* and *questions initiating a student
response*. This overall finding implies that the British and Montenegrin linguis-
tic lectures share a common feature in terms of the functional groups of ques-

tions that professors pose. As for the normalised frequency, *questions posed and answered by lecturers* were more frequently used than *questions initiating a student response*. This result could indicate that both the British and Montenegrin lecturers in linguistics are more focused on the content of their lectures than on interactivity expressed through questions as one of its linguistic features, which is not surprising considering the monologic nature of the lecture genre. This conclusion emphasises the prevailing information-presenting function of the *questions posed and answered by lecturers* and is in line with the primary aim of the lecture genre as "the most important learning medium at university level" (Flowerdew and Miller, 1996, p.121) – to convey information to students.

Some functions that *wh-*, *yes/no*, *tag* and *multiple questions* have in the category of *questions posed and answered by lecturers* are identical in both the British and Montenegrin corpora. Thus, *wh-questions* perform the function of defining new concepts to be presented and introducing a new lecture subtopic; *yes/no questions* have an explanatory function; *tag questions* are used to emphasise the points students are familiar with, as well as to intensify evaluation of the content already presented in previous utterances, and *multiple questions* contribute to enhancing the clarity of the lecture content and introduce a new lecture subtopic.

Furthermore, in the group of *questions initiating a student response*, functional similarities between the two corpora were also revealed. *Wh-questions* are employed so as to invite students to provide a specific piece of information, *yes/no questions* perform the same function, but also offer a means to check if students have understood the content already presented and to confirm that a lecturer has covered some points of the lecture. *Multiple questions* contribute to the clarity of the lecture content and simultaneously provoke students' verbal reactions.

The resemblance observed between the corpora in the use and functions of different formal realisations of two functional categories of questions suggests that certain genre-bound functions are present in the corpora of lectures delivered in two different languages. The presence of the identified functional similarities may be attributed to "the common generic norms or shared genre expectations of discourse members" (Lin, 2012, p.125) regardless of their linguistic background.

With regard to questions forms, their frequency and functions, the following major differences between the corpora were perceived: firstly, *questions posed and answered by lecturers* and *questions initiating a student response* are far more common in the Montenegrin corpus. Greater question frequency could be indicative of the Montenegrin lectures being more interactive. However, questions represent just one of the linguistic features of interaction present in lectures and further contrastive studies regarding other aspects of interaction are to be carried out to confirm this conclusion. Extralinguistic factors, such as smaller/larger classes, smaller/larger rooms, study level and native versus second language speakers may

also have an impact on lecture interactivity. Montenegrin lecturers and students included in the research are native speakers of Montenegrin, which may have influenced the lecture interactivity, assuming that the atmosphere in such conditions is more relaxing for lecturers to ask questions and students to provide a verbal response. British lecturers are native speakers of British English, but we lack information on students, as well as lecture rooms to suppose what could have had an impact on lecture interactivity.

Secondly, certain question forms are employed only in the British or only in the Montenegrin linguistic lectures. *Statements+word tag* were identified as a formal realisation of *questions posed and answered by lecturers* exclusively in the British corpus with two functions: re-specifying information and pre-closing thematic cycles. Mainly they have a structural role, regulating the structure of a lecture, which is not the function found in the studies of Chang (2012), Bamford (2000, 2005) and Thompson (1998). On the other hand, *questions with a question word/phrase at the end* and *statement+a pause* are the formal realisations frequently found in the Montenegrin lectures and atypical of the British ones. The presence/absence of the mentioned question forms in the examined corpora may be attributed to language-related reasons and "the resources made available by the language system" (Shaw & Vassileva, 2009, p. 291).

The last difference perceived refers to the use of *directives*. They were far more frequently used in the Montenegrin compared to the British corpus, with the function of eliciting students' responses. Their most common realisations included the imperative of the communicative and cognitive verbs rather than a form equivalent to *let's (let us) + main verb* construction, more commonly employed by the British lecturers. This result points to greater directness in communication with students in the Montenegrin lectures, which may result from a more straightforward and less formal national academic culture.

In addition, the results of the study lead to another conclusion. One formal realisation of two functional categories of questions can perform more than one function and vice versa, one function can be fulfilled by more than one question form, which is the result pointed out in Chang's paper (2012). Therefore, my study confirms that "straightforward, one-to-one relationship" (Chang, 2012, p. 113) is not the only relation recognised between question forms and their functions.

This research could make a contribution to the literature about questions in academic lectures regarding both languages, as only a few EAP scholars and none of the Montenegrin researchers examined the use of questions in academic lectures. More specifically, it could add to the field of contrastive linguistics and contrastive literature on questions in academic lectures. The comparison of languages "reveals what is general and what is language specific and is therefore important both for the understanding of language in general and for the study of the

individual languages compared" (Johansson & Hofland, 1994, p. 25). Not only can the findings of this study contribute towards a better understanding of British and Montenegrin lecturers' questioning practices in naturally occurring academic discourse, but to the understanding of this linguistic phenomenon in general. The findings imply that this phenomenon is not related to only one language, and point to the possibility of the employment of similar question categories and forms in lectures in other languages. Taking into account that "observations from small-scale studies are used to tentatively indicate universal linguistic principles, or nuance such principles" (Nordrum, 2015, p. 331), this research could be a basis for additional contrastive analyses of lectures delivered in other pairs of languages or even in more than two languages.

The findings of this contrastive study also seem significant for both British and Montenegrin tertiary education settings. They could be useful for British and Montenegrin lecturers who will give lectures to students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Research results could be applied in novice lecturer training courses in a way to make lecturers more aware of what types of questions they can pose and with which aim, as a number of lecturers' questions can enhance students' lecture comprehension (Suviniitty, 2010). Lecture-listening and note-taking courses for students may be based on these results, where students can be taught certain types and the use of questions posed by lecturers to improve their lecture comprehension process. This could be beneficial in the context of the internationalisation of university lecturing mainly through many mobility programmes.

Finally, it can be concluded that the analysis reveals more differences than similarities in terms of questions' forms, frequency and functions. Some of them appear to be the result of the impact of two different linguistic backgrounds, and some are possibly ascribable to different national academic cultures. At the same time, the similarities observed may reflect the influence of the lecture genre on the questions posed by lecturers. However, additional research with a larger corpus and other factors, such as a disciplinary culture, study level, non-verbal features of audio communication, should be conducted in order to provide further insight into this important linguistic device employed in academic lectures.

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## Appendix 1

**Table A1.1**  Montenegrin corpus details

| Lecture codes | Course/Subject | N of words | Lecture duration (h:min:s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| $ML_1$ | Contemporary Montenegrin (the syntax of simple and complex sentences) | 6,674 | 48:52 |
| $ML_2$ | Introduction to linguistics II | 9,757 | 56:43 |
| $ML_3$ | Contemporary Montenegrin (the syntax of cases) | 7,321 | 53:15 |
| $ML_4$ | Introduction to linguistics I | 7,946 | 1:05:32 |
| $ML_5$ | Sociolinguistics | 7,800 | 1:01:59 |
| $ML_6$ | Phonetics | 4,218 | 44 |
| $ML_7$ | Discourse analysis | 2,220 | 40:46 |
| $ML_8$ | Methodology of teaching language and literature | 16,204 | 1:46:20 |
| $ML_9$ | Contemporary Montenegrin (standardasation and orthography) | 3,553 | 45:36 |
| $ML_{10}$ | Contemporary Montenegrin (orthography with speech culture) | 3,535 | 46:03 |
| $ML_{11}$ | Contemporary Montenegrin (Accentology and introduction to dialectology) | 4,933 | 48:53 |
| $ML_{12}$ | Semantics | 12,605 | 2:16:27 |
| N of words and total duration | | 86,766 | 12:43:26 |

**Table A1.2**  British corpus details

| Lecture codes | Department/Institution | Lecture title | N of words | Lecture duration (h:min:s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $EL_1$ | Applied Linguistics | Applied linguistics and language teaching | 15,745 | 1:38:47 |
| $EL_2$ | CELTE (Centre for English Language Teacher Education) | Collaborative learning | 7,473 | 0:42:07 |
| $EL_3$ | CELTE (Centre for English Language Teacher Education) | Dictionaries | 8,965 | 0:55:34 |

| Lecture codes | Department/Institution | Lecture title | N of words | Lecture duration (h:min:s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $EL_4$ | English | Essay writing and scholarly practice | 9,129 | 0:46:07 |
| $EL_5$ | Linguistics | Historical linguistics | 8,256 | 0:47:58 |
| $EL_6$ | King's College London | Syntax | 6,982 | 1:02:32 |
| $EL_7$ | CELTE (Centre for English Language Teacher Education) | Research methodology: Vocabulary | 8,826 | 0:47:06 |
| $EL_8$ | CELTE (Centre for English Language Teacher Education) | Using video tapes in ELT | 5,097 | 1:04:41 |
| $EL_9$ | University of Reading (SACLL (Self-Access Center for Language Learning)) | Internet linguistics | 7,593 | 50:28 |
| $EL_{10}$ | University of Reading (SACLL (Self-Access Center for Language Learning)) | Global languages | 5,547 | 51:34 |
| $EL_{11}$ | University of Reading (SACLL (Self-Access Center for Language Learning)) | The history of English | 6,384 | 43:43 |
| $EL_{12}$ | University of Reading (SACLL (Self-Access Center for Language Learning)) | The history of writing | 4,245 | 44:47 |
| N of words and total duration | | | 92,242 | 10:55:24 |

## Appendix 2

Table A2.1  Transcription symbols used in the process of compiling the Montenegrin corpus[**]

| Symbol | Meaning |
|---|---|
| <> | slower relative to surrounding talk |
| >< | speeded up relative to surrounding talk |
| - | abrupt cut off of sound |

| Symbol | Meaning |
| --- | --- |
| = | overlapping talk |
| ? | rising intonation question |
| . | closing intonation |
| (.) | a short pause or gap |
| (…) | a longer pause or gap |
| (zp) | filled pause |
| 🙂 | Laugh |
| _____ _ | emphasised relative to surrounding talk |
| (nejasno) | transcriber unable to hear word |
| P | Professor |
| S | Student |

** The list was made and adjusted to the object of the research on the basis of accessible literature on transcription symbols in discourse analysis (Jefferson, 2004; Cameron, 2001; Savić, 1993; Du Bois, 1991).

## El uso de las cuestiones planteadas por profesores en las ponencias universitarias inglesas y montenegrinas: Un estudio basado en corpus

### Resumen

Aunque cuestiones se consideran importantes recursos lingüísticos empleados por profesores para comunicar hechos e ideas a los estudiantes y facilitar el proceso de aprendizaje, no han sido el tema de investigaciones exhaustivas. Teniendo esto en cuenta, este papel explora los tipos y las funciones de cuestiones planteadas por profesores británicos y montenegrinos. El papel examina las similitudes y diferencias entre dos corpus: el corpus académico británico estándar y un corpus de las ponencias universitarias montenegrinas, formado especialmente para esta investigación. Para el análisis contrastivo de las cuestiones de profesores se ha utilizado tanto la metodología cuantitativa, como la cualitativa. Los resultados demuestran que las diferencias en frecuencia, formas y funciones de las cuestiones prevalecen sobre las similitudes, lo que podría ser el impacto de dos orígenes lingüísticos diferentes y culturas académicas nacionales. Los resultados del estudio podrían ser útiles para diseñar cursos de escuchar ponencias y cursos de tomar notas para estudiantes en los que puedan familiarizarse con las formas y el propósito de las cuestiones planteadas por profesores. Los hallazgos de la investigación podrían aplicarse en cursos de formación para profesores principiantes y también podrían ser útiles para profesores que imparten ponencias a estudiantes con diversos orígenes lingüísticos.

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