

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER THESIS

**ARTIFICIAL AUXILIARY LANGUAGE AS AN INTERNATIONAL
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TOOL: THE CASE OF
INTERSLAVIC LANGUAGE**

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KAJA KURENT

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Kaja Kurent, a student at the University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, (hereafter: SEB LU), author of this written final work of studies with the title Artificial auxiliary language as an international business communication tool: The case of Interslavic language, prepared under supervision of Anastas Vangeli, PhD.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Interslavic's potential as an auxiliary language for Slavic business communication. Research shows 80-90% passive intelligibility among Slavic speakers without prior study, demonstrating effectiveness for tourism, marketing and corporate use. Through digital ethnography and interviews, the project confirms Interslavic's practicality for informal and B2C contexts. However, limited institutional support, learning resources and cultural resistance constrain its widespread adoption. Interslavic offers a culturally neutral alternative to English in Slavic markets, however, it requires strategic development to evolve from a niche project to a viable business tool.

KEY WORDS: international business communication, artificial auxiliary language, Interslavic, language barriers

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



POVZETEK

Magistrsko delo raziskuje potencial med slovanskega jezika (*Eng. Interslavic*) kot pomožnega jezika za poslovno komunikacijo med slovanskimi narodi. Raziskava kaže 80-90 % pasivne razumljivosti med slovanskimi govorci brez predhodnega učenja, kar dokazuje njegovo učinkovitost za turizem, trženje in poslovno uporabo. Z digitalno etnografijo in intervjuji študija potrjuje praktično uporabnost med slovanskega jezika za neformalne in B2C kontekste. Kljub temu pa pomanjkanje institucionalne podpore, učnih virov in kulturni odpor omejujejo njegovo širšo uporabo. Med slovanski jezik ponuja kulturno nevtralno alternativo angleščini na slovanskih trgih, vendar za prehod iz nišnega projekta v uporabno poslovno orodje potrebuje strateški razvoj.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: mednarodna poslovna komunikacija, umetni pomožni jezik, med slovansščina, jezikovne ovire

CILJI TRAJNOSTNEGA RAZVOJA



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Eng. – English

Int. – Interslavic

Sl. – Slovene

AI – (Sl. Umetna inteligenca); Artificial Intelligence

B2B – (Sl. Poslovanje podjetje-podjetje); Business-to-business

B2C – (Sl. Poslovanje podjetje-potrošnik); Business-to-consumer

CISLa – (Sl. Konferenca o medсловanskem jeziku); Conference on Interslavic language

EU – (Sl. Evropska unija); European Union

IAL – (Sl. Mednarodni pomožni jezik); International Auxiliary Language

ISO – (Sl. Mednarodna organizacija za standardizacijo); International Organization for Standardization

IB – (Sl. Mednarodno poslovanje); International Business

LD – (Sl. Jezikovna razdalja); Linguistic Distance

MNE – (Sl. Multinacionalno podjetje); Multinational Enterprise

1 INTRODUCTION

Our world today is often called a ‘global village,’ as a result of scientific advancements since the mid-19th century. Globalisation allowed countries and growth opportunities to connect across physical barriers, making borders less relevant - except for one: language.

Language has been fundamental in humanity's evolution and the spread of ideas and will continue to play an important role in future development. Therefore, the study of languages is essential to ensure humanity's smooth transition to a stage of global unity (Sarwal, 2019). According to Ethnologue (2022), an encyclopaedic reference work documenting the world’s living languages, there are currently over 7,100 distinct languages in the world. Recognising the importance of preserving and promoting national languages is based on the belief that they are key pillars of national identity and survival. On the other hand, in the context of globalisation, it is essential for companies and entrepreneurs to use a commonly understood language for trade, political and cultural relations. Therefore, English has taken over the role of *lingua franca* of international business (hereafter: IB), to an extent that, as some argue, has negatively affected linguistic and cultural diversity (Isheloke, 2019).

Language lies at the core of IB activities, by shaping interactions, strategies, and organisational outcomes. However, despite its significance, the role of language as a key construct in IB has been so far insufficiently theorised or articulated. Language takes on various forms, including national, corporate, technical, and electronic, and serves diverse functions, such as defining hierarchies, exercising power, and facilitating integration. Its features include elements like mixed syntax or gender marking, which add complexity to its usage. Understanding how these aspects interact and affect daily operations is becoming crucial for the success of global business practices (Brannen et al., 2014).

This tension is particularly visible in the Slavic-speaking world, where 20 related yet distinct languages span markets of 350 million people. Here, the Interslavic language offers a compelling alternative - this constructed auxiliary language builds on shared linguistic roots to achieve 80-90% immediate comprehension across native Slavic speakers without prior study (Merunka, 2018). Despite historical divisions, Slavic nations retain a strong shared identity and often prefer improvised Slavic-based communication over English in tourism, business, and other social contexts. Interslavic was specifically designed as an auxiliary language to formalise and strengthen these natural inter-Slavic communication practices (van Steenberg, 2019).

Existing research on the role of languages in IB primarily focuses on natural languages, overlooking the potential of artificial auxiliary languages in facilitating business communication. Therefore, this thesis paves a new path in IB research. The purpose of the thesis is to acquire a deeper understanding of the potential utility that artificial auxiliary languages could have in the context of IB communication. The focus is on the Interslavic

language; hence the thesis' purpose is also to discuss the potential application of an auxiliary artificial language among Slavic speaking countries, in particular in the context of IB communication within the zone of Slavic speaking countries.

Main goals of the thesis are to: (1) investigate Interslavic's feasibility and effectiveness for IB communication across Slavic countries, including real-world success cases; (2) explore its practical value for companies operating in multiple Slavic-language markets; and (3) analyse its comparative advantages and challenges against English and other languages in Slavic business interactions.

This thesis addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the benefits of learning an artificial language compared to natural languages?

- 1.1 What are the opportunities and obstacles encountered by Slavic speakers when learning an artificial language like Interslavic?
- 2.1 What is the added long-term value of knowing artificial languages like Interslavic, in particular in the IB context?
- 3.1 What are the financial and non-financial costs involved in learning Interslavic?
- 4.1 How do these benefits and costs compare to those of learning established or natural languages such as English or Russian?

RQ2: Under what circumstances does the use of Interslavic as an IB communication tool make sense, and when does it not?

- 2.1 In what contexts and industries is Interslavic most beneficial as a means of communication?
- 2.2 For what kind of companies does Interslavic bring the highest added value?
- 2.3 What are the limitations or disadvantages of using Interslavic? In what situations might it be less practical?

RQ3: What potential does the Interslavic project have to contribute to IB communications in Slavic speaking regions?

- 3.1 What specific advantages or disadvantages does Interslavic offer over established languages in the context of IB?
- 3.2 How can the potential of the Interslavic project in IB communications be increased or maximised?
- 3.3 What strategies can be implemented to promote the adoption and widespread use of Interslavic in IB environments?

This thesis is divided into two main parts, theoretical background and empirical research. By comprehensively examining both domestic and foreign scientific literature, the theoretical part presents four key elements: the role of language in IB, English's global dominance, artificial auxiliary languages, and the Interslavic project.

The first chapter begins with a presentation of early studies on the role of language, then it continues with explaining how language can be a barrier in IB and trade. It also covers the need for a common corporate language across multinational enterprises (hereafter: MNEs) and influence of language fluency on knowledge sharing, power dynamics, and decision-making, as well as its role in B2C transactions, tourism, and advertising. The first chapter concludes with a table that summarises all the key aspects of language in IB with relevant examples and references. The second chapter of the theoretical part articulates the dominance of the English language in global business. It also presents Europeans' and Slovenian business students' views on English and multilingualism as well as explains challenges faced by the English language. The third chapter explores artificial auxiliary languages in IB. It presents a perceived need for an artificial auxiliary language and the example of Esperanto.

The theory about the Interslavic language project is included in the fourth and fifth chapters. The fourth chapter presents diversity of Slavic languages and cultures, the idea for inter-Slavic communication, motivation, history and development of the Interslavic project, diffusion of Interslavic, and possible utility for the Interslavic language. The fifth and last chapter of the theoretical part presents linguistic features and variations of Interslavic, explains the logic behind constructing Interslavic and the use of “Voting Machine”, and concludes with Interslavic vocabulary, grammar, and alphabet.

The second part of the thesis is empirical research which aims to verify the theoretical aspects written in the previous part. To gather relevant primary data, two separate research methodologies are employed: digital ethnography and semi-structured interviews. The interviews are conducted with representatives of the following three groups: (1) a co-author of the Interslavic language, and/or a linguist who works on Interslavic; (2) a company executive or a manager, ideally from a company that operates in two or more Slavic speaking countries; (3) an individual who has learnt Interslavic, ideally working in IB. The goal of these interviews is to gain insight into the origins and backstory of the language, including its intended purpose and use, what had motivated certain individuals to learn it, is there an interest among companies to implement the language in their company operations, etc.

The goal of the digital ethnography is to observe and analyse the motivation for individuals to join the online groups and/or forums, their level of Interslavic language proficiency, when why and how individuals use the language in real life, and to observe the demographic (are they Slavic or non-Slavic). The main focus is on the official Reddit forum and Discord server of the Interslavic language project, since both platforms provide accessible and organic environments where natural interactions in Interslavic occur daily. Hence, allowing for authentic observation of the language's practical use and community dynamics.

Following the collection of primary data, this thesis conducts a comprehensive analysis of three key aspects: (1) documented cases of Interslavic's successful practical applications, (2)

an evaluation of the language's effectiveness and (3) feasibility in business contexts. The chapter ends with a SWOT analysis of the language project.

The thesis concludes with providing practical value by offering dual-focused recommendations for two stakeholder groups: Interslavic language developers seeking to enhance the project's long-term viability, and for business managers operating across Slavic-speaking markets who could benefit from its implementation in either business-to-business (hereafter: B2B) and business-to-consumer (hereafter: B2C) contexts.

2 LANGUAGE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

As organisations expand into international markets, whether as “born globals” or through more traditional pathways, they face a wide range of linguistic challenges, which include differing national languages. Operating internationally often requires communication with international intermediaries, various governmental agencies, and foreign institutions, all of which operate within distinct linguistic environments. The ability to overcome these challenges effectively is essential for organisations which are aiming to succeed globally (Brannen et al., 2014). Luo and Shenkar (2006) emphasise this point by describing MNEs as having diverse and geographically dispersed divisions that encounter language barriers when communicating with local business communities and within their broader global network.

2.1 Role of language in international business – early studies

Language plays a crucial role in IB, especially as globalisation expands into foreign markets, requiring multilingualism for effective communication. The significance of foreign language(s) has been widely acknowledged particularly in fields of international marketing, internationalisation, international management, and cross-cultural communication (Wiedersheim-Paul, 1972).

Since the 1970s, the field of IB has explored the importance of language in global operations. Numerous studies have demonstrated how language affects a company's ability to operate globally, emphasising its role in shaping international expansion patterns. Early research highlighted how cultural and linguistic barriers, of which language is a key element, influence the internationalisation of firms (Wiedersheim-Paul, 1972). In international marketing and exporting, language has been identified as a critical factor in selecting foreign markets and engaging with international customers. Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) considered language to be a key factor in psychic distance¹, obstructing the flow of

¹ Psychic distance reflects the uncertainty decision-makers face due to perceived differences between their home country and a foreign market, such as cultural, linguistic, economic, and political disparities. These differences are making market entry and operations more challenging (Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975).

information about the target market to organisational decision-makers. In this context, Mughan (1990) found that British exporters lost business opportunities because they could not effectively address customers in their local language. This shows the importance of understanding language differences when evaluating the accessibility and attractiveness of foreign markets. An article by Marschan et al. (1997) titled “Language: The forgotten factor in multinational management”, shifted the perspective on language from being seen just as an external challenge to being recognised as an internal issue embedded in the day-to-day management of large MNEs.

In industrial marketing and purchasing, suppliers’ language skills have been shown to significantly influence their ability to establish trustful relationships with foreign buyers (Martin, 2006). Furthermore, a study looking at Japanese manufacturers' choices of locations in Europe found that language played an important role. Specifically, the preference for working in English-speaking environments was seen as a key factor in the decision-making process (Hood & Truijens, 1993). Similarly, in service-oriented sectors such as healthcare and tourism, aligning services linguistically has been emphasised as a means of increasing foreign market share and achieving a competitive advantage. For example, in tourism, research has demonstrated that linguistic adaptation can help attract international travellers and create better customer experiences (Martin, 2006).

In IB research, cross-cultural complexity has often been analysed from a cultural perspective, where language has been closely tied to national culture (Hofstede, 1986). Similarly, scholars in other fields have emphasised how language is central to the governance and identity-building of nation-states (Eley & Gellner, 1984). However, as demonstrated by Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, and Jonsen (2009) in their meta-analysis of cultural diversity in teams, it is important to make a clear distinction between similarity based on language and that stemming from a shared national culture. While both factors can influence team dynamics, they are not necessarily the same. Language-related similarity refers to the common use of a particular language, while cultural similarity is rooted in shared values, traditions, and national identity. This differentiation is essential for understanding how team members interact and collaborate in multicultural environments. Moreover, recent studies on individuals with mixed cultural backgrounds demonstrate that being bicultural or multicultural does not necessarily mean being bilingual or multilingual. This suggests that while language and culture are closely connected, a critical step in advancing the study of language in IB has been to separate it as a distinct construct for focused examination (Klitmøller & Luring, 2013).

Despite early recognition of its importance, language has so far received limited attention in more recent studies of international operations. Early studies have shed light on the critical role of language as both external and internal factor that shapes the success of internationalising firms. They demonstrate that language considerations are not only crucial for accessing foreign markets but also for building trust, improving communication, and

gaining competitive advantages, making it a key element of global business strategy (Brannen et al., 2014).

2.2 Language as a barrier in international business and trade

Language barriers might not immediately appear to impact a company's financial performance, but their effects can be substantial. Miscommunication often results in costly issues such as project delays, misunderstood contracts, and failed negotiations. According to the Language Industry Market Report by Slator (2023), large global companies incur annual losses ranging from €7 to €10 million due to these challenges. The hidden costs of language barriers extend even further: nearly half of global executives report financial losses tied to language-related miscommunications, while 64% of companies have lost international deals due to a lack of multilingual staff (Slator, 2023).

Furthermore, Anderson and Van Wincoop (2004), in their analysis of trade costs, estimate that language barriers impose a tax-like effect equivalent to 7%. Hence, comparable in impact to tariff and non-tariff policy barriers, information costs, and security measures. Sauter (2010) found that countries sharing a common language trade approximately 1.5 times more than those without a shared language, and similarly, Egger and Lassman's (2015) meta-analysis shows that a common language boosts trade flows by 44%.

To measure the influence of language barriers on international trade, researchers frequently use the gravity model, which incorporates language as a variable. The model explains the size and direction of trade flows between political entities based on their economic size (e.g., GDP) and geographic distance. Since the early 2000s it has expanded to assess language factors such as language families, minority languages, and translation challenges (Ku & Zussman, 2010).

Research consistently shows that language barriers negatively affect trade. Therefore, this suggests that language not only affects communication but also other elements of IB, such as trade, negotiations and relationship-building (Ku & Zussman, 2010). This effect is seen even in domestic markets, as demonstrated by Sauter's (2010) findings on trade between French and English-speaking Canadian provinces, where linguistic differences limited economic exchange.

Harzing et al. (2010) also emphasise that language serves as a significant obstacle, often delaying processes and raising the costs associated with decision-making, while Simon and Grittner (1987) highlight how monolingualism, particularly in English, may have limited job opportunities for Americans. Additionally, language impacts entrepreneurship and trade dynamics differently for immigrant and transnational entrepreneurs compared to native, monolingual individuals. For instance, Light et al. (2002) found that immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States are more likely to establish export-focused businesses, and then over a decade later, similar patterns were observed in Canada, where French-

speaking and Allophone² immigrant entrepreneurs were significantly more likely to launch export-oriented ventures targeting global markets (Sui et al., 2015).

2.3 The meaning of common corporate language across MNEs

A common corporate language strengthens cohesion within MNEs and influences the management of international operations (Björkman & Piekkari, 2009). Corporate language evolves over time, incorporating industry-specific terminology and the national language of the home country. It serves as both a tool for organising thoughts and a way to communicate and share ideas (Brannen et al., 2014). In this context, Kuznetsov and Kuznetsova (2014) expand on this theme by investigating the connections between national languages, corporate languages, and English. Their extensive study, which spans over ten years, identifies a lack of specialised language as a “linguistic risk” for MNEs. Hence, the authors argue that this factor should be considered in the risk assessments of MNEs.

Ferner et al. (1995) question the effectiveness of a corporate language in transmitting company values beyond top management. Evidence from Kone, a Finnish MNE, shows that corporate language policies often benefit only upper management, while language barriers persist at lower levels. Middle managers and operative staff across international units revealed that language barriers are a significant challenge. For instance, a Spanish middle manager expressed frustration over the fact that all communication from headquarters was in English, a language he did not speak. He relied on his secretary, whose English was not perfect, to translate the information into Spanish, leaving him uncertain about the accuracy of the translations. As a result, Kone’s operating model was communicated in English through Spanish-speaking intermediaries, raising questions about how effectively and to what extent company values were passed down from top management to lower levels within the Spanish unit (Marschan et al., 1997).

Another example of difficulties that arose from language requirements is provided by Percy Barnevik, CEO of Asea-Brown Boveri (ABB). He noted that only 30% of ABB managers were native English speakers, which created risks of miscommunication and the false perception that language fluency equates to intelligence. This impacted how employees’ skills were perceived (Marschan et al., 1997). Similarly, language anxiety can also discourage participation, as employees fear making mistakes or being seen as less competent (Neeley, 2012). At ITT Motion Technologies in Italy the executive director of communications observed that Chinese employees often remain silent in meetings held in English (which was their second language) unless directly addressed. This hesitation stems

² An Allophone refers to a person whose first language is neither French nor English, particularly in the Canadian context. It is used to describe individuals who speak a minority language at home, distinct from the two official languages of Canada. The term comes from the Greek words *allo-* meaning “other” and *phone* meaning “sound” or “language” (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2022).

from a cultural concern about “losing face,” where individuals fear public embarrassment (Borzykowski, 2017).

Although there are challenges in implementing a common corporate language, the benefits are also substantial. Using the corporate language can reinforce employees’ sense of belonging to a global organisation. For instance, an Austrian middle manager at Kone mentioned that they only felt part of the larger Kone group when communicating in English with colleagues in Finland and Italy, as the use of English contributed to a sense of connection with the broader organisation. Otherwise, they did not experience that same level of unity (Marschan et al., 1997).

2.4 Influence of language fluency on knowledge sharing, information flow, power dynamics, and decision making in MNEs

Luo and Shenkar (2006) explain that the structure of a language used impacts corporate success through several key factors, including communication, coordination, knowledge exchange, and value creation. Language differences can disrupt the clear transfer of knowledge, leading to misunderstandings and inefficiencies in how information is shared. To address this, organisations develop language policies aimed at breaking down these barriers and improving information flow across diverse linguistic environments. Usually, this includes installing a common corporate language or *lingua franca* (Welch et al., 2005). However, as discussed in the previous chapter, this does not fully resolve communication challenges.

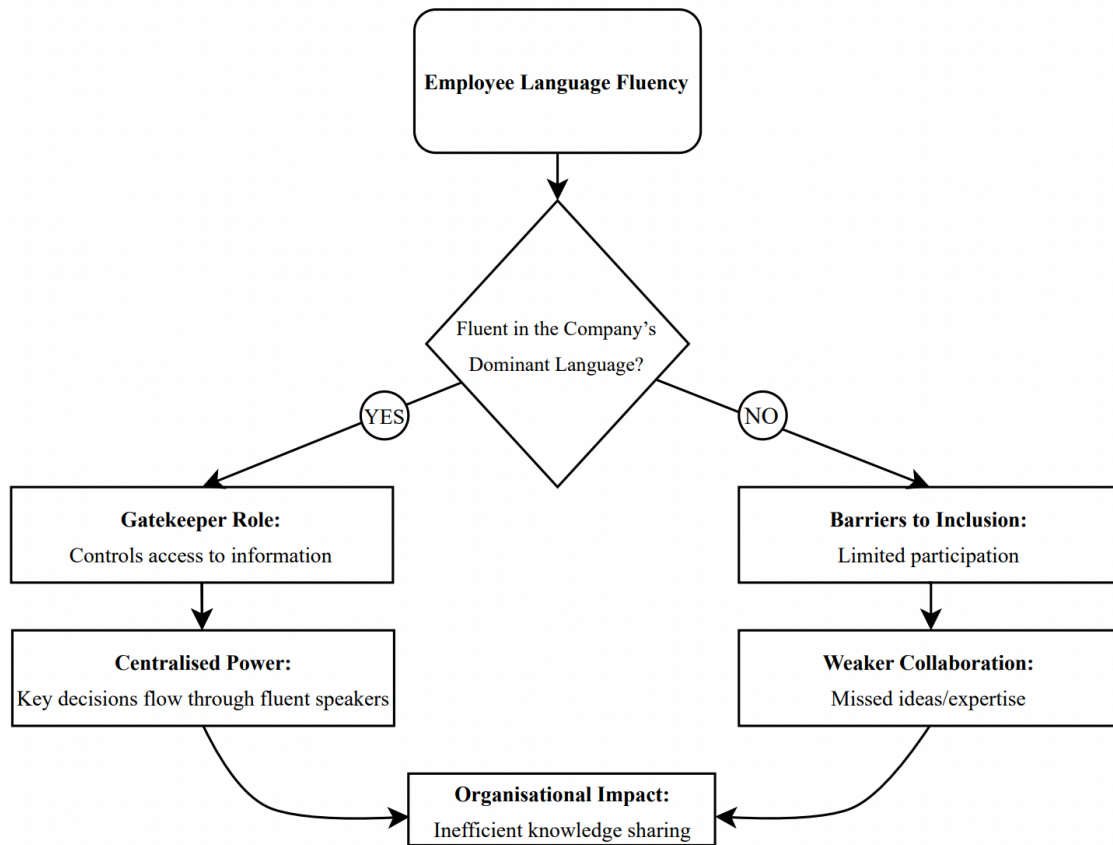
While a shared language improves internal communication, it can create issues for those unfamiliar with the organisational context. Additionally, when people communicate in English, they often rely on interpretations influenced by their native languages, which can create hidden meanings and cause misinterpretations. Simply translating words is insufficient for conveying intended meaning as well (Brannen et al., 2014).

Language fluency is a crucial yet underexplored factor in IB research, despite the recognised importance of information flows for effective interaction across MNEs. Fluency in the corporate language significantly impacts both formal and informal communication in MNEs. Employees who share a common language, whether the corporate or a local subsidiary language, collaborate more effectively. For example, Kone’s Spanish unit chose to collaborate with subsidiaries in France and Italy for training, as their shared Romance language roots made communication easier than with Finland (Marschan et al., 1997).

Language proficiency can also shape power dynamics within MNEs. Fluent employees may act as gatekeepers, controlling the flow of information, which can lead to filtering, distortion, or even blocking of knowledge. This can happen either intentionally or accidentally (Marschan et al., 1997). Figure 1 illustrates how fluency divides roles into gatekeepers

(fluent speakers) and excluded employees (non-fluent), which leads to centralised power and collaboration gaps.

Figure 1: Impact of language fluency on knowledge sharing and power dynamics



Source: Own work based on Marschan et al. (1997).

On the other hand, employees with limited fluency may disengage entirely. A middle manager in an Irish subsidiary of a French bank, for example, ignored corporate documents written in French due to language barriers (Marschan et al., 1997). Similarly, Monks (1996) found that in multiple MNE subsidiaries in Ireland, staff members tended to ignore important documents when they were not available in a language they could understand. In such instances, individuals not only fail to engage with the communication but also externalise the blame for the situation.

Furthermore, Yang et al. (2022) demonstrate that linguistic distance (LD)³ between home and subsidiary languages decreases the effectiveness of both in-person and virtual communication. An internal language hierarchy exists within MNEs, where corporate and home-country languages hold more power. Employees fluent in dominant languages gain greater access to information, better collaboration opportunities, and more influence in

³ Linguistic distance refers to the degree of difference between a native language and English. It is assessed on a normalised scale from 0 to 100, with higher values representing greater differences (or distance) from English (eLinguistics, 2020).

discussions. In contrast, those less proficient may feel excluded from decision-making processes or struggle to fully engage with their teams, potentially affecting their career progression and job satisfaction (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999). This hierarchy reinforces centralisation, as headquarters prioritise dominant languages, often overlooking local input. This tension reflects the broader challenge of balancing the tension between global standardisation and local responsiveness. While having a unified corporate language facilitates global operations and communication, it can marginalise local languages and cultural nuances, which potentially undermines the inclusivity and diversity of a MNE (Brannen et al., 2014).

In addition, studies in cross-cultural psychology show that cognitive functions such as judgment and decision-making are also affected by language fluency. When individuals operate in a non-native language, they may temporarily struggle to process information in a logical and sequential manner, as their cognitive load increases (Takano & Noda, 1993). On the other hand, the use of a foreign language also enables individuals to emotionally distance themselves from the issue at hand, which can reduce biases in decision-making (Keysar et al., 2012). A study of Dutch students found that making decisions in English influenced their identification with Anglophone cultural traits like assertiveness and performance orientation (Akkermans, Harzing, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2010).

Corporate boards often conduct meetings in a foreign language, but members may still “think” in their native tongue, which can influence how issues are outlined and, consequently, how decisions are made. For instance, many Scandinavian MNEs switched their boardroom language from national languages to English after hiring their first foreign board member. However, research by Piekkari et al. (2013) found that this shift often resulted in “silent boards,” where the introduction of a foreign language (in this case English) has been observed to diminish the quality of discussions in board meetings. This raises questions about how such a language shift could impact the effectiveness of decision-making and company performance.

Studies generally agree that the lack of a standardised professional vocabulary can significantly affect business communication. When terms are translated from one language to another, differences in the richness of vocabularies can create problems. This can lead to confusion and distortions in meaning, making language a source of misunderstanding instead of clarity. While English is widely used as a corporate *lingua franca*, it does not fully address these issues. Even as bilingualism increases among local professionals, the limitations of their native professional language can still affect communication. For MNEs, this can create linguistic hazards, complicating cross-cultural integration and potentially leading to financial losses. However, being aware of these challenges can help organisations better adapt to local business environments (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

2.5 The role of language in B2C transactions, tourism, and advertising

Language plays an important role in business transactions, as it affects both buyers and sellers. For consumers, language barriers can deter purchases, while for businesses, offering multilingual services can increase costs and reduce competitiveness. Successful cross-border transactions require balancing these factors. When language concerns are addressed, consumers are more likely to engage in international e-commerce. However, if selling across borders incurs significantly higher costs than domestic sales, businesses may avoid these markets. Standardised communication protocols help reduce misunderstandings, customer support costs, and inefficiencies, therefore making international sales more viable. Ultimately, mutual understanding builds trust between buyers and sellers (Filipowski, 2014).

In tourism, language serves as both a means of communication and a cultural symbol. As more people travel internationally, tourists, guides, and hosts frequently interact in multiple languages. The way destinations are promoted is shaped by language, as it helps express cultural identity and create a sense of authenticity. At the same time, it can turn local heritage into something that is packaged and sold to visitors. This phenomenon, known as linguistic commodification, refers to the use of language as a commercial resource and is becoming increasingly common in tourism. In Nepal, for example, English proficiency is considered essential for tourism workers, who undergo language training twice a year to improve their ability to connect with visitors. These programs help them share their culture in ways that attract tourists, making language a valuable skill. Many see English as an important asset, helping workers communicate effectively and improve the tourist experience (Sharma, 2018).

Advertising also uses language to shape consumer perception. Foreign languages in ads often evoke cultural stereotypes rather than serving a purely linguistic function. Research shows that English in non-English-speaking countries suggests modernity and openness, French conveys sophistication and elegance, and Spanish adds a sense of playfulness, though this depends on context. Consumers often associate products with the cultural traits of the language used in marketing, which strengthens social perceptions and ideologies. Language in advertising not only sells products but also reflects deeper social and cultural trends (Piller, 2017).

To summarise the aspects discussed so far, Table 1 provides an overview of key language-related factors in IB. The table presents three main areas: B2C, B2B, and internal corporate language dynamics. Each section describes relevant language aspects and provides examples identified during the literature review.

Table 1: Summary of key language aspects in IB

B2C Language Aspects		
ASPECTS & DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE FROM LITERATURE	REFERENCES
Competitive advantage in B2C: Language adaptation in customer interactions influences business success.	British exporters lost business due to their inability to communicate in local languages.	Mughan, 1990
Business transactions and consumer trust: Language barriers can deter purchases. Standardised communication can reduce misunderstandings and improve trust.	Consumers are more likely to engage in international e-commerce when language concerns are addressed. Companies avoiding multilingual adaptation may lose foreign market opportunities.	Filipowski, 2014
Language in advertising: Language in ads shapes consumer perceptions and creates cultural associations.	English in advertising signals modernity, while French conveys elegance.	Piller, 2017
Language in tourism: Language serves as both practical and symbolic function in tourism.	In Nepal, English skills are treated as human capital, helping tourism employees share information and aid cultural exchange.	Sharma, 2018; Martin, 2006
B2B Language Aspects		
ASPECT & DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE FROM LITERATURE	REFERENCES
Building connections and relationships: Language skills enhance trust and business relationships in international markets.	Japanese manufacturers preferred English-speaking locations in Europe.	Hood & Truijens, 1993; Martin 2006; Ku & Zussman, 2010
Language as a trade barrier: Language differences obstruct trade and increase transaction costs.	Countries sharing a language trade 1.5 times more than those without a common language.	Sauter, 2010; Egger & Lassman, 2015
Miscommunication risks: Language barriers result in financial losses and operational inefficiencies in B2B contexts.	Global firms lose up to €10 million annually due to miscommunication.	Slator, 2023
Supplier and partner communication: Language influences communication between suppliers, partners, and intermediaries.	Suppliers' language proficiency plays a role in international partnerships. Japanese manufacturers preferred working in English-speaking environments in Europe.	Hood & Truijens, 1993; Martin, 2006

(Table continues)

Table 1: Summary of key language aspects in IB (cont.)

Internal Corporate Language Dynamics		
ASPECT & DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE FROM LITERATURE	REFERENCES
Flow of information: Language facilitates or obstructs communication in MNEs.	A Spanish middle manager at Kone struggled with communication from headquarters in English language.	Marschan et al., 1997
Sense of belonging to a MNE: A common corporate language fosters unity in international firms.	An Austrian middle manager at Kone felt connected to the group when using English (the corporate language).	Marschan et al., 1997
Hierarchy and power: Corporate language policies create informal power structures.	Fluent employees act as “gatekeepers” of information.	Marschan et al., 1997
Linguistic anxiety and exclusion: Non-fluent employees may avoid participation in meetings.	Chinese employees at ITT Motion Technologies remained silent in English discussions.	Borzykowski, 2017
Disregarding corporate communication: Employees may ignore communication in an unfamiliar language.	An Irish subsidiary of a French bank ignored documents written in French.	Marschan et al., 1997; Monks, 1996
Limited career opportunities: Lack of language skills can reduce both employment and promotion prospects.	Monolingual Americans have fewer international job opportunities. Employees fluent in corporate languages are more likely to be promoted.	Simon & Grittner, 1987; Marschan et al., 1997

Source: Own work.

Language plays a crucial role in IB, affecting interactions with customers, business partners, and employees within MNEs. As shown in Table 1, language influences market success, trade relationships, and workplace dynamics. It is essential to address these challenges for companies that are seeking to operate effectively in global environments.

3 DOMINANCE OF ENGLISH IN GLOBAL BUSINESS

Originally, the term *lingua franca*, derived from the Arabic *lisan-al-farang*, referred to a language used as a bridge for communication between Arabic speakers and Western European travellers. Over time, its meaning grew to include a general language of trade, defined by consistency and little room for individual changes (House, 2003).

Currently, English is the global *lingua franca*. It is the universal language used worldwide, from businesses and schools to social media, healthcare to aviation, entertainment to technology. English is often also referred to as a “world language,” “global language,” or “link language.” However, to describe current and future roles of the English language, the term “auxiliary universal language” might be best, as it reflects its growing function in

facilitating global communication and connecting speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Ethnologue, 2024).

3.1 The widespread use of English across the world

Out of the world's 8.2 billion people, approximately 1.75 billion speak English at a useful level as of 2024, making it the most widely spoken language globally. Interestingly, only about 25% of these speakers are native English speakers, with around 385 million people speaking it as their first language (third most common first language). This makes English the only language in the world that has more non-native speakers than native speakers. The majority have therefore learned English as a second language, which contributed to its spread across 186 countries. While Chinese Mandarin remains the most common first language worldwide, followed distantly by Spanish, English takes the lead as the most studied foreign language, with French being a distant second (Ethnologue, 2024). English also dominates the digital world, with over half of all websites (52.1%) using it for content, which solidifies its status as a global communication tool (Statista, 2024).

English is expected to maintain its dominance as the most widely spoken language globally in the foreseeable future. Individuals are motivated to learn English because it opens doors to better career opportunities and economic stability. Its importance is further reinforced by its key role in technology, such as computer programming, and its central role in higher education and academic research, much of which is published exclusively in English (Copeland et al., 2023). The percentage of English-language publications has risen from 36% in 1880 to over 90% today. Many academic journals enforce English-only policies, creating disparities in research output due to uneven global proficiency (Di Bitetti & Ferreras, 2016). Studies show that regions where native languages are more similar to English tend to perform better in research, while LD negatively affects university research outcomes. Universities play a crucial role in national innovation, contributing to knowledge creation, regional economic growth, and international talent mobility. Their research supports corporate patenting, R&D projects, and start-ups, which often build on university findings to develop commercial innovations (Cao et al., 2024).

As English has evolved into a global language, it has developed characteristics essential for a world language. English was originally the language of the British, however, it now includes many varieties such as American, African, Indian, and Australian English. It serves as a utility language, meaning that it meets the needs of people worldwide. Its vocabulary has expanded significantly through the incorporation of words from other languages, and over time, it has transformed into a language that continues to change and adapt (Sarwal, 2019).

On the other hand, the widespread use of English as a common language in international organisations has made the language issue more complicated. It creates the false impression that by using one language, communication becomes simple and clear, regardless of different

national languages. A *lingua franca* was originally meant to be a neutral way to communicate without cultural or political bias. There have been other *lingua franca* languages in the past, like French in diplomacy, German in medicine, and Latin in scholarship, which helped connect different fields. However, English, as the official language of major global economies (including five members of the G-20) and key institutions, is far from neutral. Its widespread use adds complexity and requires careful attention to issues of power, ideology, and how meaning is shaped in multilingual contexts (Brannen et al., 2014).

3.2 English in global business

The adoption of English as a common corporate language in MNEs is often seen as a management tool to promote mutual understanding and improve the efficiency of global operations. However, English in MNEs serves more than just a communication function; it is also used strategically to create and enforce hegemonic language policies. The spread of English as a common language for business has helped MNEs manage their global operations more effectively. English, along with specific business and technical terms, serves as a shared language across different regions, making it easier for companies to handle the challenges of operating internationally (Piekkari et al., 2013).

An increasing number of global companies are adopting English as their primary language of communication, even when headquartered in non-English-speaking countries. For instance, firms like Japan's Nissan and Honda, as well as Germany's Siemens, have implemented English-first policies to enhance communication across their global operations (Borzykowski, 2017).

Furthermore, French multinational Sodexo has adopted English as the official language for its senior leadership in 2017, which marked a significant cultural shift. Despite being a French company with a 50-year history, the choice of English was driven by its global workforce composition. With only 35,000 of its employees based in France compared to 125,000 in the United States, selecting French as the global corporate language was considered impractical. The transition to English primarily affected the company's 200 executives and 1,600 senior leaders, who are now expected to be proficient in the language. Lower-level staff will still receive materials in various languages, though Sodexo plans to reduce the number of translations in the future and potentially extend English's influence throughout the organisation (Borzykowski, 2017).

This decision reflects broader trends among MNEs adopting English to improve efficiency and communication across geographically diverse teams. Sodexo's shift shows how English, as a global *lingua franca*, simplifies communication across the company's 80-country network and supports its strategy of building alignment and cooperation within senior leadership (Borzykowski, 2017).

English is often also the first choice when it comes to mergers and acquisitions between companies that are not based in the same language speaking countries, so where language differences can complicate communication and integration. For example, when Hoechst (Germany) and Rhône-Poulenc (France) merged in 1998 to form Aventis, the company selected English as its operating language to avoid favoring either French or German, thus simplifying cross-cultural integration (Neeley, 2012).

3.3 Europeans' and Slovenian business students' views on English and multilingualism

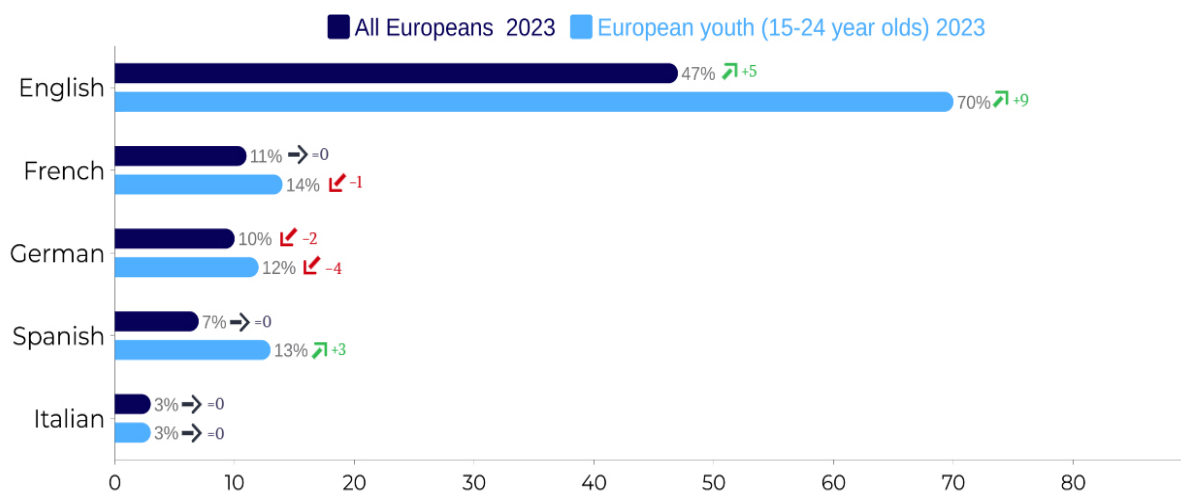
Already in 2004, the Eurobarometer survey showed the perceived importance of the English language by Europeans, as over 75% of Europeans stated that English is the most useful language to learn. Furthermore, 69% pointed out that every European Union (hereafter: EU) citizen must speak English (European Commission, 2004). Recently, a similar survey was conducted. The Eurobarometer survey on Europeans and their languages took place across the 27 EU Member States from September to October 2023. It provides valuable insights into language skills, language use, and attitudes towards language learning across the EU. Importantly, it also allows us to track changes over time by comparing the results with the previous language surveys conducted in 2012 and 2004 (European Commission, 2024).

Attitudes towards multilingualism in the EU are generally positive. A significant 86% of Europeans believe that everyone should speak at least one language in addition to their mother tongue, and 69% think people should speak more than one additional language. Furthermore, 76% of Europeans think that improving language skills should be a key policy priority. Language diversity is also highly valued, with 84% of Europeans agreeing that regional and minority languages should be protected (European Commission, 2024).

When it comes to Europeans' knowledge of languages other than their mother tongue, the survey shows modest but positive progress since 2012. Three out of five Europeans are able to have a conversation in at least one foreign language, which represents a 3 percentage point increase since the last survey. This figure rises to four out of five among young Europeans (79% of those aged 15 to 24), marking an improvement of 5 percentage points and bringing the EU closer to the target set in the 2019 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning. Additionally, 28% of Europeans (up 1 percentage point) and 39% of young Europeans (up 2 percentage points) can converse in more than one foreign language (European Commission, 2024).

English is the most commonly spoken foreign language in the EU, with 47% of Europeans being able to speak it as a second language, marking a 5 percentage point increase since 2012 (European Commission, 2024). Figure 2 shows the percentage of Europeans and European youth (aged 15-24) who are able to hold a conversation in the five most commonly learned foreign languages. It also includes changes in percentage points compared to 2012.

Figure 2: Comparison of foreign language proficiency among Europeans and European youth (aged 15–24) in the years 2012 and 2023



Source: Own work based on European Commission (2024).

Brexit appears to have had little to no negative impact on English language proficiency. In fact, the data shows an increase in the percentage of people able to speak English compared to 2012, while the knowledge of German and French has decreased over the same period. Among young Europeans, 7 out of 10 can hold a conversation in English, which is 9 percentage points higher than in the previous survey. This suggests that, rather than affecting English levels, Brexit may have even contributed to its continued prominence (European Commission, 2024).

The survey also reveals the main benefits of learning a new language. According to respondents, these include better job opportunities (51%), being able to understand people from other cultures (45%), securing a better job in their home country (42%), using it on holidays abroad (42%), and using it at work (40%) (European Commission, 2024).

Due to the small size of the Slovene-speaking population and proximity to various linguistic areas, learning languages is particularly important in Slovenia. Although English remains the *lingua franca*, learning other languages continues to hold significance as language needs evolve. Jarc and Zorko (2013) suggest learning at least two or three foreign languages, as this is an increasing necessity especially among students because of easier migration and employment opportunities abroad.

Ivašković's (2021) research, conducted on business students at the School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana, across all three stages of study (undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctorate), was one of the first comprehensive studies in the past decade to examine Slovenian business students' attitudes toward learning foreign languages. The study, based on a sample of 283 students and graduates, found that the population frequently encounters the need for foreign language skills, especially in jobs requiring higher education.

Moreover, the perception of the need for foreign language proficiency increases with the level of study. Students view foreign language knowledge as a vital part of education, yet they recognise that proficiency in English alone is insufficient to meet all demands.

3.4 Challenges faced by the English language

English, as a current world *lingua franca*, faces various challenges that complicate its adoption and integration in international contexts. A significant issue is the variability in spoken and written English, which differs based on cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For instance, English as used by an Indian speaker can differ immensely from the English spoken by an Australian. These differences reflect diverse vocabularies, structures, and conceptual frameworks shaped by different cultural backgrounds. The rise of electronic communication, particularly through messaging services and social media, has further influenced English spelling and grammar, adding another layer of complexity (Sarwal, 2019).

Another critical challenge lies in the sociopolitical tensions associated with adopting English as a *lingua franca*. For instance, linguistic communities like the French, Arabs, Germans, and Dutch often resist English due to concerns tied to nationalism, ethnicity, ideology, and culture (Hejazi & Ma, 2011). This resistance can lead to high-profile incidents, such as the walkout by then French President Jacques Chirac from an EU summit in 2005. Then President of France Chirac, along with his Foreign, Finance, and Europe ministers, walked out of an EU summit when the leader of a European business lobby, who was also French, insisted on speaking in English, claiming it was “the language of business.” The choice to use English was perceived as a dismissal against the national language and an example of cultural dominance. This incident illustrates a significant challenge presented by the dominance of English in global business, particularly when it diminishes the importance of national languages or creates political tension, as demonstrated by President Chirac’s protest. It shows how the widespread use of English in international settings can sometimes overshadow local languages and spark political and cultural disputes (Browne, 2006).

Additionally, the role of English as a global language is complicated by its historical association with colonialism and imperialism. As a legacy of colonial rule in many parts of the world, English is often perceived not as a neutral medium of communication but rather as a symbol of historical oppression and cultural marginalisation. In regions colonised by English-speaking powers, the language was frequently used as a tool to suppress indigenous languages, identities, and traditions, thereby reinforcing colonial hierarchy. This “historical baggage” contributes to ongoing discomfort and resistance toward the global dominance of English (Sarwal, 2019).

Ironically, the spread of English as a global language sometimes reinforces local linguistic identities. Minority language speakers often respond to the spread of English by asserting their cultural heritage more strongly. They may revive traditional practices and dialects as a way to resist its influence. Examples include the renewed interest in German folk music and

the use of local dialects, such as Bavarian, as a response to the dominance of English-only pop music. This situation reflects the complex role of English worldwide. While it facilitates communication across borders, it also triggers resistance as local cultures and identities fight to maintain their distinctiveness (House, 2003).

Also in corporate settings, employees might resist the mandatory use of English. Non-native speakers may revert to their native languages in meetings, particularly when it is faster or easier for communication. Some may even resort to strategies that disadvantage native English speakers, such as scheduling meetings at inconvenient times for English-speaking colleagues (Neeley, 2012).

The multilingual reality of MNEs adds further complexity. Efforts to standardise English use across global subsidiaries often conflict with the preservation of local linguistic diversity. Terms like “anglicisation” and “corporate Englishisation” describe the cultural and operational pressures that emerge when English becomes the default corporate language. While English can facilitate communication, it can also marginalise non-English speakers and exclude valuable local knowledge. Consequently, this tension points out the challenges MNEs face in balancing global integration with linguistic inclusivity (Brannen et al., 2014).

4 ARTIFICIAL AUXILIARY LANGUAGES IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS – POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES

A formalised language policy in MNEs can create communication barriers and power imbalances, as the adoption of English as the corporate language often disregards the cultural and linguistic diversity of employees. Studies on international mergers and acquisitions show how this decision raises concerns about national dominance and social exclusion. The lack of fluency in the *lingua franca* can isolate employees and increase power differences (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014).

The demand for a democratic choice in commonly used languages sparked the creation of constructed or artificial international auxiliary languages (hereafter: IAL). Jespersen (1928) defines artificial IAL as having the following features: (1) “artificial” refers to a language that is consciously created by individuals, as opposed to natural languages that evolve unconsciously over generations; (2) “international” implies that the language is intended for communication among individuals of different nationalities; (3) “auxiliary” specifies that the international language serves as an alternative for national languages when they are insufficient for communication. In essence, IAL is a language that is meant to facilitate communication between individuals with different nationalities, who do not share a common first language. It is important to note that it is not intended to be a first language nor to replace any individual’s first language.

4.1 Perceived need for an artificial auxiliary language

In 2019, Sarwal conducted a study which aimed at understanding the effects of widespread English usage in education. The study was conducted through a questionnaire distributed to undergraduate students and graduates from Punjab and Chandigarh (India). The respondents' answers demonstrated the perceived need for a universal auxiliary language, while also reflecting a global desire to overcome linguistic barriers in education and communication (Sarwal, 2019).

Of the 230 completed questionnaires, 96.5% of respondents agreed that a universal auxiliary language would facilitate cross-border communication, with 81.7% believing it could promote unity among nations. This demonstrates a growing sentiment that a global link language could bridge cultural divides and strengthen international relations. Furthermore, over 83% of respondents agreed that this global language should embrace diverse cultures, traditions, and ethics, while 67% supported a language that incorporates all major cultures (Sarwal, 2019).

The strong support for a universal language among respondents showcases the awareness of the importance of language in global communication and the need for an easy(-ier) way to connect with others. In this context, the idea of an artificial IAL - one that is neutral, simple, and inclusive becomes particularly relevant. The study also indicates that the majority of students would prefer this language to have no silent letters, hence being easier to learn (Sarwal, 2019).

The desire for a common auxiliary language links to the wider discussion about language's role in global society. Archibugi (2005) discusses how a universal language, like Esperanto, could break down barriers to mutual understanding and help create a more democratic global community. In his view, language is not just a tool for communication but a way to foster democracy and inclusive participation in global conversations.

Thus, the perceived need for an artificial IAL is not just about facilitating international communication, but it also reflects the larger socio-political and cultural aspirations of creating a more interconnected and inclusive world.

4.2 Example of Esperanto

Artificial or constructed languages are sometimes used as auxiliary languages for international communication. The most widespread and known example is Esperanto, created in 1887 by the Polish ophthalmologist L. L. Zamenhof. The author aimed for Esperanto to be adopted widely by educated individuals to facilitate global communication and promote cooperation worldwide (Zamenhof, 1889). Today, the Universal Esperanto Association has branches in 71 countries. Professional groups in fields like medicine, literature, science, and music publish journals, organise conferences, and support Esperanto's

professional development. The International Academy of Sciences of San Marino even uses Esperanto as the main teaching language and promotes publications in various fields including economics, computer science, and law (Gobbo & Foessmeier, 2011).

Most movements promoting a constructed language are built on the idea that learning a specific national language, like French (18th–19th century) or English (20th–21st century), is not a more just nor economical way to aid communication amongst people whose mother tongues differ (Maxwell, 1988). Advocates of artificial IALs, such as Esperanto, also argue that these languages are purposely designed to be less challenging and hence easier to learn than natural languages (Gobbo, 2017). The majority of artificial languages are as a result simple, logical, regular (have no irregular grammatical forms), and have single definitions (do not contain idioms and slang) (Sultan & Manaf, 2020).

Hence, Esperanto can be learnt in anywhere from 20% to 25% less time than other natural languages, according to various didacticists' estimates. A major study was done in 1933 at Columbia Teachers College about teaching Esperanto in American high schools and colleges. The results of this research showed that just one year of learning Esperanto equals four years of German or French in terms of proficiency level achievement (Research, 1933). Another study suggested that Esperanto required significantly less study time compared to the other languages, with up to 13 times less time needed for proficiency (Manea, 2016).

Artificial IALs have historically been considered as important tools facilitating IB. Already in the early 1920s, the French Chamber of Commerce suggested that Esperanto appears to be the optimal language for business and wanted to introduce Esperanto classes in their commercial schools for students to learn an IAL for commercial purposes (The New York Times, 1921).

Despite its promising beginnings, Esperanto never became the language of IB. It faced challenges from natural languages as well as lacked widespread adoption by global corporations and institutions. However, Esperanto remains a relevant and popular language, supported by a dedicated community of speakers worldwide, with notable concentrations in Northern Europe, Brazil, China, and Japan, who continue to promote its ideals of international communication and cooperation (Tonkin, 2019).

Moreover, Esperanto is just one of many existing constructed languages. The exact number of languages varies from how one defines an artificial language, however, there are estimations of there being around 1,000 of them. Some examples include Volapük, Ido, Novial, and Interlingua (Stria, 2013), as well as Interslavic, which is the focus of this thesis research.

5 INTERSLAVIC LANGUAGE PROJECT

Sometimes we come across texts in an unfamiliar language but related to our own. For example, consider Czech travellers in Croatia attempting to read a local newspaper at their hotel. While Croatian is not typically taught in Czech schools, some words may still be understandable, and the general meaning of the text could be identified because Czech and Croatian are both part of the same Slavic language family. Similar situations might occur among other language groups as well, for instance French visitors to Spain or Dutch travellers in Sweden. The extent to which one can understand an unknown language depends on various factors, such as the number of shared cognates, differences in orthography, syntax, and other linguistic features. Also, the smaller the language LD two languages, the greater their degree of mutual intelligibility (Golubović & Gooskens, 2015).

Based on the significant linguistic similarity within the Slavic language family, a language called Interslavic was developed to enable easier communication among Slavs of different nationalities. Slavic languages are closely related and form a coherent group where understanding one often provides a general comprehension of others. Throughout history, Slavs have created simple and improvised ways to communicate with neighbours, whereas linguists and scholars sought to formalise these efforts by designing a generic Slavic language that would be accessible to all Slavs. These endeavors most often drew inspiration from Old Church Slavonic, a liturgical language from the 9th century, and gave rise to numerous projects from the 16th century onward, such as “Pan-Slavic”, “New Slavic,” and “Common Slavic.” What ties all of them together is the assumption that the similarities of Slavic languages make the creation of a common language possible. By focusing on common language features and trying to minimise regional idiosyncrasies, Interslavic reflects centuries of efforts to bridge linguistic divides within the Slavic world (Merunka, 2018).

Interslavic is a zonal constructed language, meaning that it is made to facilitate communication between speakers of closely related languages within a given linguistic zone – in this case, the zone of Slavic languages. Zonal constructed languages still belong to the IALs; however, they are not intended to be used by the entire world like Esperanto. They are rather designed for specific linguistic or geographic regions, making use of the fact that the inhabitants of these areas can comprehend these languages without encountering significant difficulty when learning them. By far, the most numerous within this category are auxiliary inter-Slavic languages (Merunka, 2018).

5.1 Diversity of Slavic languages and cultures

Slavic nations (or Slavs) share centuries of geographical proximity, shared history and common cultural heritage. The Slavic nations, predominantly situated in Eastern and Central Europe, are characterised by a majority of their population identifying with Slavic culture and traditions and speaking Slavic languages. There are around 350 million Slavic people

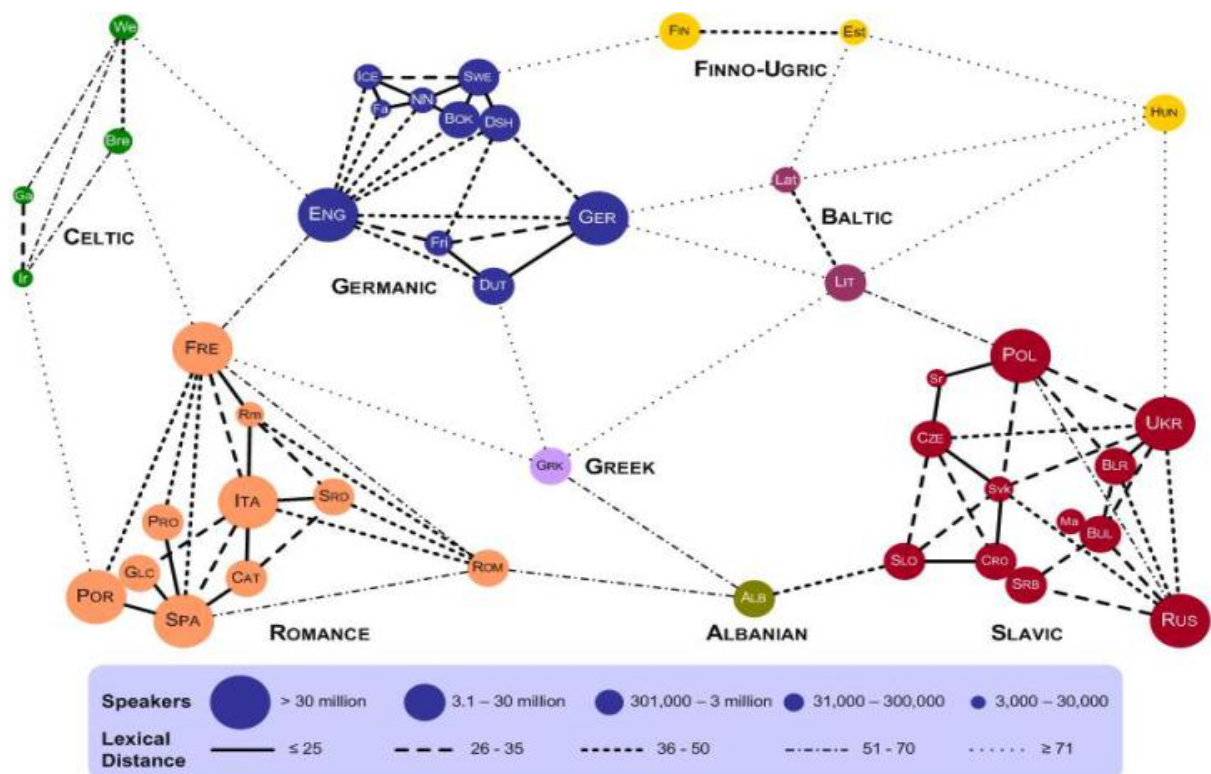
around the world. Furthermore, Slavs are the largest European ethnolinguistic group, which is a group that is unified by both a common ethnicity and language (Liu, 2021).

Slavic countries can be divided into three subgroups based on their geographical locations:

- (1) West Slavs (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia),
- (2) East Slavs (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine),
- (3) South Slavs (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia).

There is the same division when it comes to languages: West Slavic, East Slavic, and South Slavic, which together include over 20 different languages. These languages are believed to descend from a common language called Proto-Slavic, spoken during the Early Middle Ages, up until the year 1000 AD. That is why Slavic languages are a lot more similar to each other than the Germanic languages for example, which have already split into two branches (East and West) by the time the Roman Empire was formed (Liu, 2021). This can be demonstrated on Figure 3, which shows the lexical distance (measured from 0 to 100) between languages within the same language group in Europe. Smaller lexical distance means that the languages being compared are more similar to each other; sharing more common structure, vocabulary, and/or phonetic features (Spritzer et al., 2015).

Figure 3: Lexical distance (measured from 0 to 100) between languages within the same European language groups



Source: Elms (2008).

Despite the linguistic similarities of the Slavic languages, these countries and nations have followed different paths in culture, religion, history, and political tradition. However, these paths have frequently crossed in the creation and disintegration of empires in the constantly changing political landscape of Eastern and Central Europe. Between the 16th and 17th centuries, for example, the establishment of centralised Slavic states, together with the influence of the Enlightenment, moved the development of Slavic language, culture, and civilisation to new heights. This era saw an increased cultural consciousness among various Slavic nations, as reflected in many written works. Individuals like the Croatian writer Juraj Križanić, the Yugoslav historian Mavro Orbini, and the Polish historian Maciej Strykowski advocated for Slavic unity (Liu, 2021).

5.2 The idea for inter-Slavic communication

The Slavic languages are a relatively unified group, meaning that knowing one Slavic language often allows for a general understanding of texts written in any other Slavic language. Throughout history, this linguistic similarity has inspired efforts to create a universal Slavic language comprehensible to all Slavs. The first attempt is known to be the renowned Old Church Slavonic of the 9th century, followed by numerous projects developed from the 16th century onward (Merunka, 2018).

One of the earliest documented and known examples is *Ruski jezik*, developed by Croatian priest Juraj Križanić (1618–1683), who created it to foster Slavic unity but was later exiled to Siberia by the Russian authorities for his political and Pan-Slavic ideas. A particularly influential attempt was also *Uzajemni Pravopis Slavjanski* by Slovenian priest and political activist Matija Majar-Ziljski (1822–1887), which laid a foundation for modern inter-Slavic languages like Interslavic. Majar's approach involved comparing the full range of Slavic languages known in his time and creating a flexible system that allowed individuals to adapt their native languages as a starting point. His work included advanced grammar and orthography, but notably lacked a dictionary (Merunka, 2018).

Since the first attempts to create a common language, more than 50 auxiliary Slavic languages have been developed, with varying degrees of success. Historically, artificial auxiliary languages often disappeared or were forgotten along with the passing of their creators (Merunka, 2018).

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, the idea of a Pan-Slavic or multi-Slavic superstate lost much of its significance. Nonetheless, the rise of the Internet and its potential to facilitate international communication sparked renewed interest in creating a language that could be understood by all Slavs. Therefore, the creation of the Interslavic language revived a concept that was far from new (van Steenbergen & Merunka, 2018).

Among the early attempts to leverage the Internet for this purpose was Slovio, created by Croatian linguist Marko Toplak in the late 20th century to assist communication among Slavic nations and promote cultural exchange and cooperation. However, despite its innovative use of the Internet as a platform, Slovio failed to gain significant traction and is now largely inactive (Merunka, 2018).

5.3 Motivation, history and development of the Interslavic project

Sharing grammar and common vocabulary with contemporary spoken Slavic languages, Interslavic aims to create a universal linguistic tool that Slavic individuals can comprehend with minimal or no prior learning. Additionally, Interslavic provides non-Slavic speakers with an entrance to the expansive Slavic world of approximately 350 million Slavic speakers. Furthermore, Slavic-speaking nations are inhabiting more than half of Europe's territory. However, while Slavic languages share a lot of communalities, there are also significant differences between them, which often are interlinked with cultural and political divisions (Merunka, 2018).

Considering that the Russian Federation is by far the largest Slavic country that provides great contributions to science, technology, and business, Merunka (2018) explains that we cannot overlook Russian language as a possible auxiliary inter-Slavic language. However, he then argues that the issue of the Russocentric approach may undermine the distinct identities of other Slavic nations. Another argument is that, despite historical ties, the Russian language is difficult for non-Russian Slavic speakers to comprehend without prior study. That is why the authors of the Interslavic language project believed that the alternative to existing natural Slavic languages is needed for inter-Slavic communication; a language that is not associated with any religion, ideology or political movement (van Steenbergen, 2019).

The Interslavic language project is the result of years of collaborative effort. In 2011, three zonal auxiliary languages - Slovianski, Slovioski and Neoslavonic - merged into a common project named Interslavic or *Medžuslovjanski*, with a similar goal of promoting communication and better understanding between Slavic speakers (Merunka, 2018). The Slovianski project was initially launched by Ondrej Rečnik, Gabriel Svoboda, Jan van Steenbergen, and Igor Polyakov. The Slovioski project, which later merged into Slovianski in 2010, was created by Steeven Radzikowski, Andrej Moraczewski, and Michal Borovička, while Neoslavonic was developed by Vojtěch Merunka and Martin Molhanec. Hence, all of these individuals could be to some extent considered as the co-authors of the Interslavic language (van Steenbergen, 2019). However, today, the main authors of the language are considered to be a Czech mathematician and professor doc. Ing. Vojtěch Merunka, Ph.D. and a Dutch translator and interpreter Jan van Steenbergen (Merunka, 2018).

In June of the year 2017, a significant step toward unity and final form of the language was achieved with the first International Conference on Interslavic, known as CISLa 2017, held

in Staré Město, Czechia. The Conference brought together 64 active participants from 12 countries, including representatives from various organisations and institutions, as well as experts in interlinguistics, Slavistics, pedagogy, and history. Honourable guests of the Conference included Andreja Rihter, Director of the Forum of Slavic Cultures; Ines Troha, who was then the Ambassador of Croatia in Prague; Leon Marc, then Ambassador of Slovenia in Prague; and Grażyna Bernatowicz, then Ambassador of Poland in Prague (INTERSLAVIC Language Group, 2017).

The conference focused on topics such as the role of constructed languages in global communication, e-democracy, tourism, and digital economies, while also encouraging deeper cooperation among its participants. An important topic on the agenda was also the discussion about possible ways to promote the use of artificial auxiliary languages to encourage the development of the common European identity and solidarity (INTERSLAVIC Language Group, 2017).

Importantly, this conference marked the first official public use of Interslavic. Most of the presentations and discussions were either conducted in Interslavic or consecutively translated into it, allowing all Slavic participants to understand nearly everything. An unexpected and remarkable outcome was that some attendees, who had never previously studied Interslavic, began speaking it during the conference. This illustrates how easily passive multilingualism can be activated with the right tools. The success of CISLa 2017 demonstrated Interslavic's potential to facilitate multinational activities across the Slavic world, such as scientific conferences, cultural events, and more, using a single language for communication (INTERSLAVIC Language Group, 2017).

The CISLa 2017 led to a complete unification of the orthography and basic grammar of Interslavic, which resulted in a fully functional common language, with minor differences now reflecting personal preferences. A notable early example of this effort is the joint publication of Merunka and van Steenberg on SWOT analysis of Slavic cultural diplomacy (original title in *Int. Slovjanska kulturna diplomacija - SWOT analiza, strategija i taktika do budućnosti*), which was released to coincide with the conference. The current version of Interslavic was established in July of 2017 by a committee consisting of: Vojtěch Merunka, Jan van Steenberg, Roberto Lombino, Michał Swat and Pavel Skrylev (Merunka & van Steenberg, 2017).

The Interslavic language also has its own flag. It was designed already in 2006 by members of the Slovianski forum originally for the Slovianski project. It is likely the oldest flag created for the Interslavic language. As we see on the Figure 4 that shows the flag, the design features the Pan-Slavic colours (white, red, and blue), along with yellow to represent languages like Ukrainian, Kashubian, and Silesian. The flag aims to be simple, visually appealing, and distinct from any national or political flags. The four triangles symbolise arrows pointing towards the center, which represents Interslavic's position at the heart of the Slavic language family (van Steenberg, 2022).

Figure 4: Interslavic flag



Source: van Steenbergen (2022).

Recently, a significant milestone for the Interslavic was achieved – the certification of the ISO standard. Following two unsuccessful attempts to obtain an ISO 639-3 code for Interslavic in 2012 and 2014, a third application was submitted in September 2019, leading to the approval of the ISO 639-3 code 'isv' in April 2024. This recognition is crucial for the Interslavic language project as it formally recognises Interslavic as a distinct language, which further enhances its legitimacy and potential for wider adoption (SIL International, 2024).

5.4 Diffusion of Interslavic

Since its beginning, Interslavic has been widely discussed in the press and on the Internet, both among its community and interested observers. The Interslavic project is designed and promoted to integrate seamlessly into the family of spoken Slavic languages as an auxiliary tool. This enables international communication, knowledge exchange, and cultural interaction without the need for translating information into various national languages. Extensive use in various contexts, along with feedback from all Slavic countries, has demonstrated that its primary purpose, being understood by Slavs of any nationality without prior study, has been successfully achieved (INTERSLAVIC Language Group, 2017).

The co-authors of the Interslavic project have conducted an international survey from November 2015 to June 2018, on the passive intelligibility of Interslavic across all Slavic countries. The survey targeted individuals aged 16 to 80 with knowledge of any natural Slavic language, with the condition that they were not members of the Interslavic language groups. It aimed to test the hypothesis that the Slavic population could passively understand Interslavic at a level comparable to slightly advanced speakers. The cloze test⁴ assessed 1822 participants' ability to understand written text and recognise missing words. Results,

⁴ A cloze test was first introduced by Taylor (1953). It is a writing exercise where participants are given a passage of text with certain words removed and are tasked with filling in the missing words to complete the passage.

recalculated based on the size of Slavic populations, confirmed the hypothesis with a probability of 0.816. Participants achieved mean values between 79% and 93% in the cloze test, demonstrating that Slavic speaking individuals are able to understand the written Interslavic language well without ever learning it before (Merunka et al., 2019).

Despite its noble goals, Interslavic has not yet gained widespread recognition. It is currently spreading primarily within online communities and among language enthusiasts (Merunka, 2018). The exact number of Interslavic speakers is not known, however, the official Interslavic Facebook group has around 22,200 members (as of January 10, 2025). The number of group members grew by around 10% in the past year. We cannot say that every member speaks the language, but on the other hand, not every Interslavic speaker is a member of the Facebook group. Growing interest in the Interslavic project is shown on the social media platform Tiktok, where the project's profile has over 138.7K followers (as of January 10, 2025).

Some notable achievements of the Interslavic project include the development of the scientific journal written in Interslavic (Sloviani.info), which is an expert journal exploring Slavic peoples in a modern sociocultural context. It is included in the CEEOL database, a key resource for academic publications on Central and Eastern Europe, and its website is regularly archived by the Czech National Library.

Other achievements include the creation of online dictionaries (the Interslavic-English dictionary currently has more than 18,000 words), and other online resources, such as a podcast. An important step forward for the project is also a translation of "The Little Prince" into the Interslavic language by the co-author van Steenberg. The translation is available online as a pdf file and is free for everyone to read and download (van Steenberg, 2024).

One of the official websites of the project created by van Steenberg features a "flag counter" that tracks the number of visitors since 2008. As of January 11, 2025, it is remarkable that the website has attracted 2,114,222 unique visitors from 240 different countries. The majority come from the USA (20%), Poland (16.7%), and Russia (13.8%). Among the top 18 countries by total number of visitors, 8 are Slavic nations, including Slovenia (FlagCounter, n.a.).

5.5 Possible utility for the Interslavic language

Despite the historical separation of Slavic nations, there remains a strong sense of shared identity and closeness among them. This is especially noticeable in situations like tourism, business, and social gatherings, where Slavic speakers from different countries often communicate not in English, but rather in a spontaneously created common language,

typically a pidgin⁵ inter-Slavic form that is sufficient for many everyday interactions (van Steenbergen, 2019).

Interslavic was designed as an auxiliary language to serve as a bridge between Slavs. It resembles the structure and vocabulary of real spoken languages, therefore it is especially suited for the following purposes:

- To serve as a simple conversation tool for both Slavic and non-Slavic speakers, hence bypassing the need to learn a specific Slavic language. Research and experience show that speakers of Slavic languages often perceive Interslavic as an archaic form or as a distant dialect of their native language, or a closely related neighbouring language. Many are pleasantly surprised by how much they can intuitively understand (Merunka, 2018).
- To be an accessible language for active learners, and to provide non-Slavic individuals a gateway to the vast “Slavic world.” The authors believe that learning Interslavic enhances passive understanding (e.g., receptive skills) for both Slavic and non-Slavic speakers, while making it easier to learn modern Slavic languages. This process can therefore allow learners to smoothly transition from understanding Interslavic to mastering a specific Slavic language. This could be particularly useful for non-Slavic professionals who move to a Slavic-speaking country for work, as it allows them to establish basic communication skills essential for both workplace collaboration and daily life. At the same time, it provides a strong foundation for further language acquisition (Merunka, 2018). A real-life example of this comes from the co-author Jan van Steenbergen, who is Dutch and studied a Polish language. He said in an interview for the Serbian news portal Mondo that until he started working with the Interslavic language, he did not know a single Serbian word. Now, however, he can read a news article and immediately understand what it is about (Zurnal24, 2012).

Merunka (2018) proposes several other possible utilities of the auxiliary Interslavic language, some of them being in international transport (information texts and labels in transport vehicles), marketing (product descriptions and manuals), tourism (info leaflets, newsletters), and business in general. The language was also intended to be used as an auxiliary tool in scientific and research groups of individuals from Slavic countries.

6 LINGUISTIC FEATURES AND VARIATIONS OF INTERSLAVIC

The Memorandum of the Interslavic language states that the language project is based solely on elements found throughout the Slavic language spectrum, ensuring that the artificiality

⁵ A pidgin language is a simplified form of communication that arises when two or more groups without a common language need to interact. Since pidgins develop as a means of communication between people who do not share a common language, they often incorporate non-verbal elements like gestures, body language, and facial expressions to convey meaning (van Steenbergen, 2019).

seen in languages like Esperanto is avoided. Every word stem, grammatical ending, and morphological element is derived from multiple Slavic languages, ideally from all of them. This design approach places InterSlavic at the heart of living Slavic languages (Merunka, 2018).

6.1 Logic behind constructing InterSlavic and the use of “Voting Machine”

The authors stuck to the principle that a universal language should have a logical structure - clear, understandable, and with minimal exceptions and idioms. There is no room for unnatural structures formed from random combinations of consonants and vowels. Furthermore, a universal language should avoid overly abbreviated words and unnatural grammatical constructs. This means that InterSlavic favours complete and euphonic (the quality of being easy to pronounce) word forms for greater clarity (Merunka, 2018).

InterSlavic is intended to be inclusive: whenever two possibilities are equally understandable to Slavs, there is no point in enforcing one of them and forbidding the other. But on the other hand, because a certain level of standardisation is inevitable to prevent the language from becoming needlessly confusing for learners, the grammar always suggests one preferred option (van Steenbergen, 2019).

A key feature of InterSlavic is that its elements can be easily applied to any ethnic Slavic language. This makes the learning process for native Slavic speakers different from learning natural languages or constructed languages such as Esperanto. Instead of starting from scratch, learners gradually adapt their native language into InterSlavic.

The core principle is that every choice respects the equal treatment of all Slavic branches, to ensure that the language is understandable to all Slavic speakers (Herring, 2020). When creating a new word, the process begins by reviewing how the various Slavic languages express the concept (van Steenbergen, 2017). The approach is as follows:

1. If a word root exists in all Slavic languages with the same meaning, it is adopted.
2. If one or two languages differ, the common root is still used.
3. If multiple groups use different roots, the process involves:
 - Identifying cognates across languages and their meanings.
 - Grouping these into “semantic families.”
 - Selecting the word most common across languages with the most “average” meaning (van Steenbergen, 2017).

If no clear choice emerges, other options include selecting the most widespread word, choosing the most intuitive term, creating synonyms, or considering international equivalents. To ensure fairness among Slavic subfamilies (East, West, South), six subgroups are each given one vote: (1) Russian, (2) Ukrainian and Belarusian, (3) Polish, (4) Czech

and Slovak, (5) Slovene and Serbo-Croatian variants, (6) Bulgarian and Macedonian (van Steenbergen, 2017).

If two languages within a group differ on a word, each is assigned half a vote. If votes tie, population size decides, usually favouring Russian, as 70% of Slavs understand it. Languages with fewer than one million speakers (e.g., Sorbian, Kashubian, Rusyn) do not get a vote for practical reasons but are still considered (van Steenbergen, 2017).

The “Voting Machine” is a tool designed to apply these principles for word creation in Interslavic. It follows the voting system to calculate the number of votes and speakers associated with each option. However, it is important to clarify that the “Voting Machine” is not a word-generation tool. It does not create new words or make decisions; rather, it serves as a tool for evaluating potential options for creating new words in Interslavic. When a clearly better solution arises, regardless of the votes, common sense takes priority (van Steenbergen, 2017).

6.2 Interslavic vocabulary, grammar, and alphabet

While Slavic languages share enough similarities in grammar, vocabulary, and syntax to enable basic mutual understanding, each language also has unique features that can obstruct full comprehension. Interslavic addresses these challenges by eliminating these idiosyncrasies and emphasising the common words and structures shared by the Slavic languages, which are reflected in the use of international and pan-Slavic vocabulary:

- a) International Vocabulary: Similar to the Germanic and Romance languages, Slavic languages have adopted numerous international words, mostly derived from Latin and Greek, but also from French, German, and English. The benefit of these words is that they are nearly identical in appearance and pronunciation across languages, and their meanings are typically consistent (van Steenbergen & Merunka, 2018).
- b) Pan-Slavic Vocabulary: Slavic languages also share a significant number of words inherited from Proto-Slavic. These words are essential for mutual comprehension. Unlike international vocabulary, these words have undergone sound changes specific to each language, leading to different spellings. However, these words could be written using a unified orthography that accommodates various pronunciations, much like English spelling serves both British and American pronunciations. For example, the numeral “five” (Russian *pjat'*, Polish *pięć*, Czech *pět*, Slovak *päť*, Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian *pet*) could be written as *pet'*, which captures all five pronunciations and clearly shows that they are the same word (van Steenbergen & Merunka, 2018).

But of course, if Slavic languages were made up only of international and Pan-Slavic vocabulary, they would not be distinct languages at all. In reality, many Proto-Slavic words only survived in some Slavic languages, and in certain cases, their meanings have diverged to the point where a logical connection is no longer obvious. To address these issues,

Interslavic adheres to three design principles: (1) Interslavic follows the majority approach, but not by the number of speakers or languages. Instead, it ensures equal representation from all six major Slavic subgroups (as explained in the subchapter 6.1. above). If two options are supported by at least two subgroups, both are included. (2) To maintain etymological consistency, Interslavic avoids borrowing words directly from individual Slavic languages. Instead, it uses regular derivations from Old Church Slavonic or reconstructed Proto-Slavic forms. This ensures the language remains coherent and prevents it from becoming a patchwork of elements from various languages. As a result, Interslavic words are both recognisable and predictable for Slavic speakers. (3) Interslavic aims to be easily accessible to all Slavs, therefore it uses a user-friendly orthography. It supports both Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, with texts often presented in both scripts side by side (van Steenbergen & Merunka, 2018).

The question of how Interslavic should be written has always been a topic of debate, even in the previous projects. Ideally, every Slav should be able to write it using their own keyboard, but this would prevent the establishment of a single, unified orthography. The various national writing systems nowadays are too different to find a solution that suits everyone. Making any one system “official” or “standard” would be unfair, as it would automatically make all other systems “unofficial” or “incorrect.” On the other hand, having too many different writing standards can be confusing and discouraging for people wanting to learn Interslavic (van Steenbergen, 2017).

Given that the divide between the Latin and Cyrillic scripts cuts through the middle of Slavic territory, Interslavic uses standard alphabets for both. Neither is based on any specific national orthography but was designed as a compromise to be intuitive and facilitate easy transliteration between the two. While users are encouraged to follow these standard alphabets, alternatives are provided for those who have difficulty typing certain characters (van Steenbergen, 2017).

The Interslavic Latin alphabet uses 27 letters: 23 letters from the base Latin alphabet (all except q, w and x) plus four letters with diacritical marks (č, š, ž, ě), as well as three digraphs (dž, lj, nj) (van Steenbergen, 2017). Figure 5 showcases all 27 letters in the alphabetical order:

Figure 5: Interslavic Latin alphabet

A B C Č D DŽ E Ě F G H I J K L L J M N N J O P R S Š T U V Y Z Ž

Source: van Steenbergen (2017).

However, users unable to type ě can substitute it with e (similar to how the Russian ě is often written as e), Poles may use cz, sz, ź instead of č, š, ž, and those who cannot distinguish between y and i can write i in all instances. Similar flexibility applies to the Cyrillic script (van Steenbergen, 2017).

The Interslavic Cyrillic alphabet consists of 29 letters, including all the characters shared by the different Cyrillic orthographies, along with the additions of є, ы, ј, љ, њ, and the digraph (дж) (van Steenberg, 2017). Figure 6 showcases all 29 letters in the alphabetical order:

Figure 6: Interslavic Cyrillic alphabet

А Б В Г Д ДЖ Е Є Ж З И Ы Ј К Л Љ М Н Њ О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц Ч Ш

Source: van Steenberg (2017).

Both orthographies are equally valid. It is recommended to include both Latin and Cyrillic versions in published texts to ensure they are understood across different regions (van Steenberg, 2017).

As Interslavic draws on common elements from across the Slavic language family, while simplifying some of the complexities of individual languages, the grammar is very similar to natural Slavic languages (Merunka, 2018). A detailed Interslavic grammar is available in the Appendix 1, however, key aspects include:

1. Nouns: Interslavic has three grammatical genders (masculine, feminine, neuter) and uses six cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental, and locative). Nouns also distinguish between singular and plural forms.
2. Adjectives: These agree with the nouns they modify in gender, case, and number. The adjective system in Interslavic is relatively simple compared to other Slavic languages.
3. Verbs: Interslavic features two primary verb conjugations (for -a and -e stems) and uses both perfective and imperfective aspects to express different kinds of action. Verbs also inflect for tense (past, present, future) and person (first, second, third).
4. Word order: While the word order in Interslavic is flexible due to its inflectional system, the typical sentence structure tends to follow a Subject-Verb-Object order, similar to many Slavic languages (Merunka, 2018).

Unlike English, Interslavic words are pronounced exactly as they are written. Therefore, once the pronunciation of individual Interslavic characters is learned, any Interslavic text can be read correctly (Merunka, 2018).

7 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The empirical part of the thesis is based on qualitative research, which consists of two key components: digital ethnography and a series of semi-structured interviews. This approach provides a comprehensive and original look at the use of an artificial language in business contexts.

7.1 Purpose and objectives of the qualitative research

The aim of empirical research is to acquire a deeper understanding of the potential utility that the artificial auxiliary Interslavic language could have in the context of IB communication within the zone of Slavic-speaking countries. While the existing literature provides a valuable foundation, there remains significant room for further research. Additionally, this research aims to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of using Interslavic for businesses operating across multiple Slavic nations, evaluating its advantages and challenges compared to English or other languages in inter-Slavic communication. Another key objective is to analyse the demographic profile of those interested in the Interslavic language project (whether they are Slavic or non-Slavic speakers), their motivations for learning the language, and their intended applications.

7.2 Research method

The methodological framework of this thesis is based on qualitative research, which aims to explore how individuals perceive and use the Interslavic language in real-world business communication. Since the study focuses on experiences, opinions, and interactions rather than numerical data, qualitative methods are the most suitable approach. This type of research allows for in-depth exploration of a subject, providing insights that structured surveys or statistical analysis might overlook. The qualitative research consists of digital ethnography and a series of semi-structured interviews.

7.2.1 Digital ethnography

Digital ethnography is a method that systematically studies online communities, behaviours, and interactions using ethnographic methods adapted for digital environments. This method has recently expanded into a variety of sectors, including tourism, management, and marketing (Paoli & D'Auria, 2021). Using digital ethnography, various primary data was collected by exploring the official website of the Interslavic project. There are also several online Interslavic communities in the form of Facebook and Discord groups, YouTube channels, Reddit discussions, podcasts, etc. These online communities offer a unique opportunity to gain valuable insights into linguistic trends, cultural exchange, and Interslavic community dynamics. Given the growing role of social media in various research fields, researchers have utilised social media data for various purposes, such as predicting postpartum depression through Facebook posts (De Choudhury et al., 2014) and forecasting Bitcoin market movements based on X (formerly Twitter) sentiment analysis (Critien et al., 2022).

In the scope of my research, I mainly observed posts and members of the official Interslavic Reddit and Discord⁶ group. The goal was to observe and analyse the motivation for

⁶ Accessing most Discord content requires user registration, even on public servers.

individuals to join the online groups and/or forums, their level of Interslavic language proficiency, when, why and how individuals use the language in real life, and to observe the demographic (are they Slavic or non-Slavic). As part of the digital ethnographic research, I conducted digital observation, a method that involves systematically analysing online interactions and content without active participation (Alenezi, 2020). This approach allowed me to collect data on community dynamics while maintaining ethical neutrality. I observed these communities without participating, ensuring natural interactions remained unaffected.

7.2.1.1 Reddit and Discord

Research on Reddit in this chapter also extends to Discord. This comes organically, because many Reddit communities have their own Discord channels as well. Reddit has emerged as one of the most significant social platforms, with over 101 million daily active unique visitors and more than 100,000 active topical communities, known as subreddits (Reddit.com, 2025). Over the years, Reddit has been at the centre of major and often controversial events, such as the attempt to identify suspects in the Boston Marathon bombing, the widespread leak of hacked celebrity photos, and the coordinated effort to challenge short-sellers of GameStop stock. At the same time, it has been associated with problematic discourse, including racist, sexist, and heated political discussions. Given its prominence and influence, Reddit has increasingly become a valuable data source for researchers (Proferes et al., 2021).

Initially, X was hailed as a “model organism” for academic research due to its public nature, and real-time engagement with global events (Tufekci, 2014). Reddit, however, has started to fulfil similar research functions while offering distinct advantages. Its structured subreddit system allows for targeted data collection, and unlike X's character limits, Reddit provides more extensive qualitative and quantitative datasets. Despite these benefits, Reddit presents methodological challenges, as its diverse media formats often require mixed research approaches. Subreddits function as independent communities with distinct norms, moderation policies, and cultures, meaning insights gained from one may not be applicable elsewhere (Proferes et al., 2021).

Reddit is mostly public, hence anyone can view content, except in private subreddits. Posts and comments are ranked by user votes, shaping their visibility. While Reddit's terms state that users must be at least 13, real names are discouraged for privacy reasons. Participation history is also public, allowing anyone to see a user's past posts and comments. Because accounts are easy to create, it is common for people to have multiple, including “throwaway” accounts used for temporary or sensitive posts. Therefore, this anonymity makes it difficult to verify demographics, though Reddit administrators report that 58% of users are aged 18-34, and 57% are male (Reddit.com, 2021).

To understand how researchers are engaging with Reddit data, a systematic review of 727 research studies published between 2010 and May 2020 was conducted by Proferes et al.

(2021). This body of research includes 338 journal articles, accounting for 46.5% of the total, along with 382 conference proceedings, which make up 52.5%. Additionally, it includes six book chapters, representing 0.8%, and one white paper, making up 0.1%. Disciplinary representation in Reddit-based research is diverse; Computer Science, Engineering, and Mathematics contribute 33% of journal articles, followed by Medicine and Health with 23%, Social Science with 22%, Humanities with 17%, and Natural Sciences with 5%. Among the Social Science studies, six focus specifically on Business and Economics. The number of studies leveraging Reddit data has been increasing exponentially each year, which reflects its growing importance as a research tool.

Despite the general view that Reddit data is public and does not require user consent, ethical considerations remain a topic of debate. Of the studies analysed, only 44 studies, or 6.1%, mentioned obtaining consent. Furthermore, 68 studies, accounting for 9.4%, included identifiable Reddit usernames, while 207 studies, representing 28.5%, used direct quotes. Given the potential for sensitive content, particularly in subreddits focused on mental health, or substance use, researchers must consider privacy risks associated with direct quotations and identifiable data (Dym & Fiesler, 2020). As a result, researchers must navigate ethical considerations, particularly when studying sensitive discussions (Proferes et al., 2021).

7.2.2 Interviews

Interviews, as a key qualitative method, enable the researcher to collect rich and descriptive data, which helps form a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. The study follows a non-probability sampling approach to ensure that participants are selected based on their relevance to the research question rather than at random. The interview methodology combines expert interviews with professionals who have deep understanding of relevant fields, and key informant interviews with those who have direct involvement or insider perspectives on the Interslavic language project (Patton, 2014). Because qualitative research is interactive and interpretative, the data collected tends to be more varied and context-dependent than standardised quantitative datasets (Saunders et al., 2019).

To gather primary data, this study employs semi-structured interviews, which allow for both consistency and flexibility in questioning. While key themes and guiding questions are prepared in advance, the format enables the researcher to adapt the conversation based on the respondent's insights. Open-ended questions encourage detailed and meaningful responses, hence offering a deeper understanding of Interslavic's practical application. However, this approach also presents certain challenges, such as interviewer and response biases, as well as limited generalisability due to the small sample size (Saunders et al., 2019).

This research uses purposive and snowball sampling to select interviewees who have experience using Interslavic in professional or international communication. Purposive sampling ensures that participants are directly relevant to the study, including key informants with practical experience of the language and experts with specialised knowledge in relevant

fields (Patton, 2014), while snowball sampling helps expand the respondent pool through recommendations. These methods are particularly effective when studying niche topics, as they provide access to individuals actively engaged in the field (Saunders et al., 2019).

7.3 Sample description – key informant and expert interviews

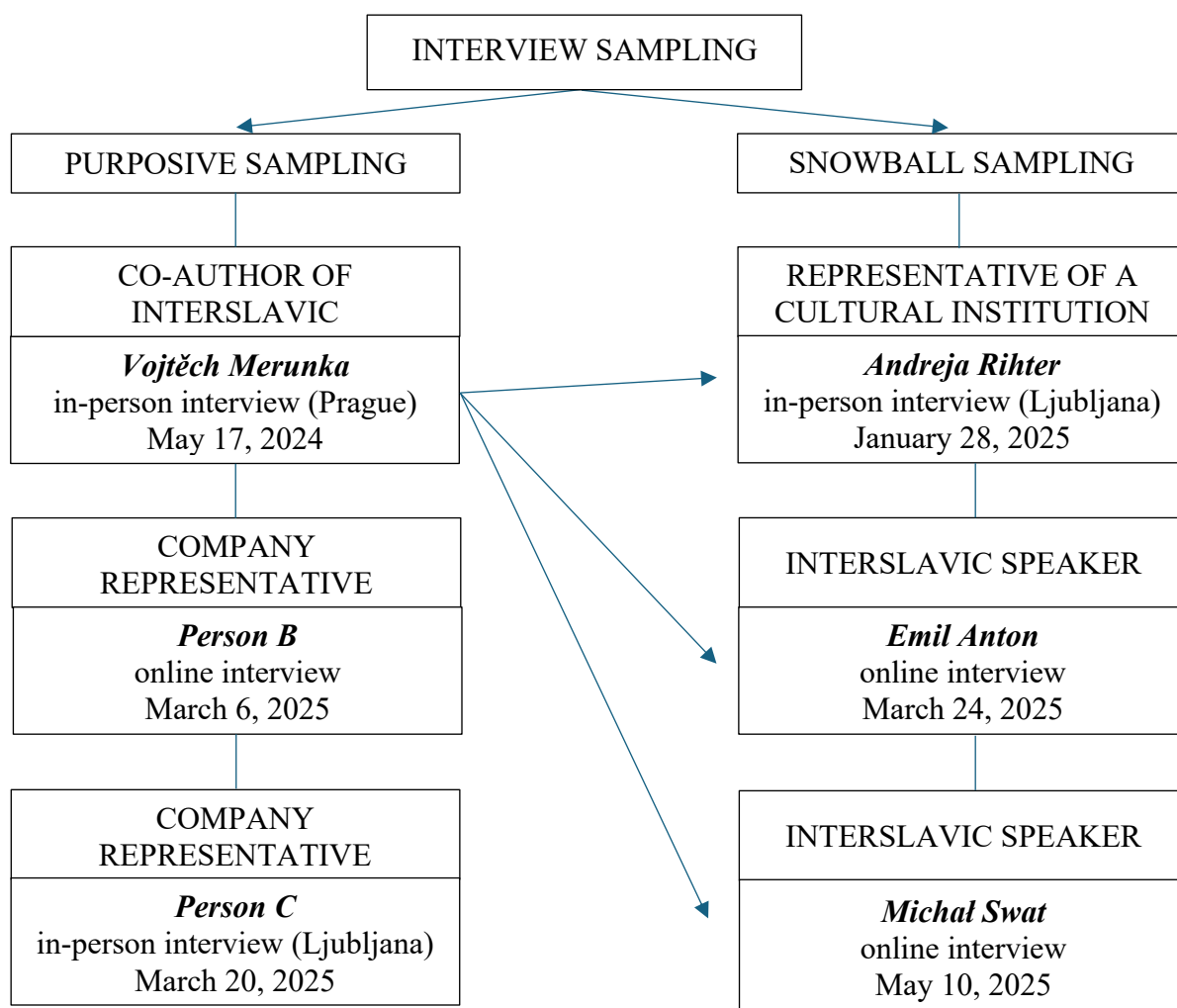
Interviewees were selected by using the combination of purposive and snowball sampling. This combination enabled me to find the most suitable respondents from the Interslavic language project, business world, and other individuals that had relevant experience. In total, I conducted six interviews: a co-author of the Interslavic language (Vojtěch Merunka), a president of the Forum of Slavic Cultures (Andreja Rihter), a head of employee education at a Slovenian company (wished to remain anonymous, will be referred to as Person B), an international educator for hairdressers and sales representatives at a Slovenian cosmetics company (wished to remain anonymous, will be referred to as Person C), a certified Helsinki tour guide and Interslavic speaker (Emil Anton), and a member of the Interslavic language Committee, Interslavic youtuber and translator (Michał Swat).

Interviewees Vojtěch Merunka and Michał Swat were identified as key informants because of their direct involvement in the Interslavic language project, providing unique insider perspectives on its development, community dynamics, and practical implementation challenges. Their deep engagement with the project offered invaluable insights that could not be obtained from external observers. The remaining interviewees were classified as expert interviews based on their professional expertise in relevant fields including Slavic cultural relations, corporate language education, tourism, and IB communication.

The first person to interview was Mr Vojtěch Merunka, who was selected using the purposive sampling, because I was interested in his motivation for creating the language and his vision for the project. The interview was held in person in Prague on May 17, 2024. Professor Merunka recommended me to interview the President of the Forum of Slavic Cultures, Ms Andreja Rihter, due to her extensive knowledge about the Slavic-speaking communities as well as her connections to the Interslavic project in the past. Merunka also recommended Mr Michał Swat, as he is one of the most active individuals working on the language project. Professor Merunka and I stayed in touch, and he later informed me about the Interslavic touristic tour of Helsinki. He forwarded me the tourist guides' contact information. Hence, snowball sampling was used for these three interviews.

The two company representatives were chosen based on online research about Slovenian companies that operate and/or do business with the majority of Slavic-speaking countries. Both individuals wanted to stay anonymous in this thesis. The sampling process of individuals for the interviews is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Sampling process of individuals for the interviews



Source: Own work.

Person B works as the Head of Education at a Slovenian company, classified as Company X, which operates in every Slavic-speaking country and invests heavily in language education of its employees. Person C works as the international educator for hairdressers and sales representatives at a Slovenian cosmetics company, classified as Company Y. Individuals that Person C educates come to Slovenia from all Slavic-speaking countries, hence she provided insights on how educators deal with language barriers, as few of participants speak English. Transcriptions of all the interviews are available in the Appendices 2 to 7.

7.4 Collecting data

This subchapter presents the data collection methods used in this research, which include digital ethnography of Interslavic online communities and semi-constructed interviews with six individuals.

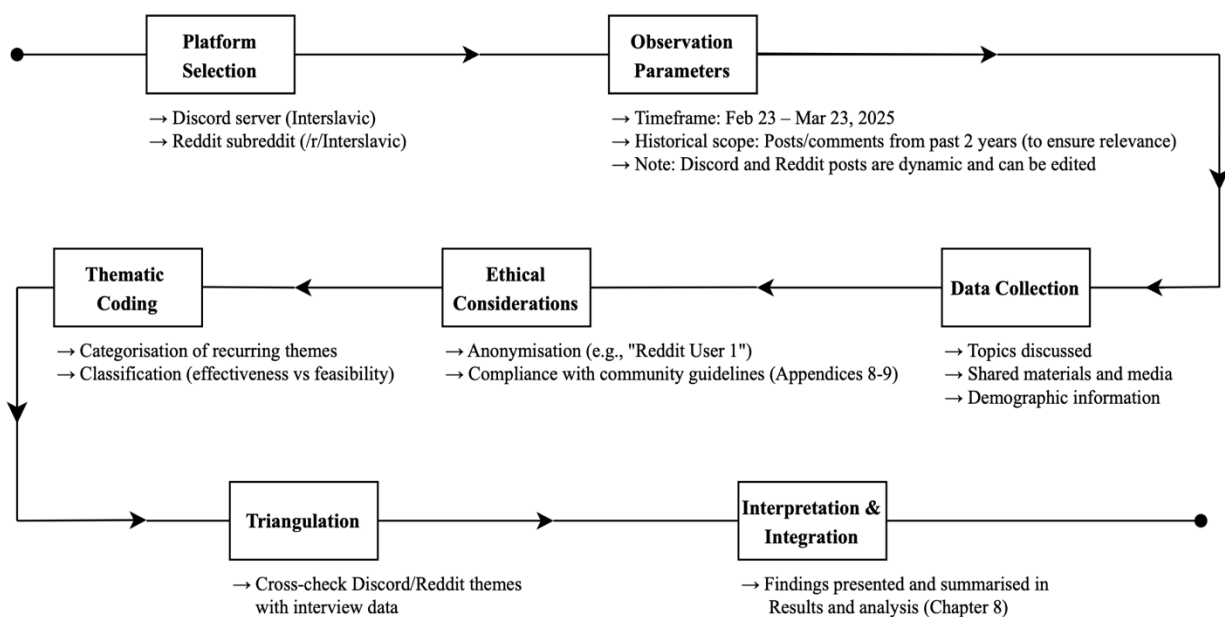
7.4.1 Digital ethnography

The Interslavic language project has its own Discord server which currently has 8976 members (as of March 23, 2025). Based on the 4-week observation period between February 23 and March 23, 2025, in the evening, the number of online users on Discord ranges between 800 and 1800. In this time period I observed the discussed topics, shared material, and collected demographic data. The user agreement of the Interslavic Discord server (original name *Medžuslovjansky • Меджусловјанскы • Interslavic*), which can be found in the Appendix 8, does not prohibit collecting data for any purposes, but rather warns against spamming and other inappropriate behaviours, such as insulting and sharing political agenda.

Similar user agreement holds for Reddit as well, which can be found in the Appendix 9. The Interslavic subreddit has over 2,400 followers (as of March 23, 2025). The subreddit was created already in 2016, however, I limited the collection of data on posts and comments that were generated in the past two years, to ensure relevancy of gathered data. Although the Interslavic subreddit is public, I anonymised users by labelling them as 'Reddit User 1,' 'Reddit User 2,' etc., to protect their privacy and adhere to ethical research guidelines. It is important to note that Reddit posts are dynamic content that can be edited. For this research, I accessed all Reddit posts between March 16 and March 23, 2025.

Figure 8 summarises the workflow of the digital ethnography analysis, from platform selection to data interpretation.

Figure 8: Workflow of the digital ethnography analysis



Source: Own work.

7.4.2 Interviews

For all the interviews, I have made a list of pre-prepared questions, which usually consisted of two main themes. The first part of questions focused on the interviewee's background and relevant experience, while the second one focused on the Interslavic language project and its effectiveness and feasibility.

Some questions repeated among the interviews, but not all. The questions were tailored to each individual based on their relevance to the project. Interviews ranged from 3 to 15 questions. I used open-ended questions, since the goal of the interviews was to gather as much meaningful information as possible.

Interviews were conducted from May 2024 to May 2025 at the agreed upon time and location. I was able to conduct interviews with Vojtěch Merunka, Andreja Rihter, and Person C in person, while all the others were conducted via online video communication platform Zoom as it was more convenient for both parties. Prior to each interview I presented myself and the research topic. Furthermore, I inquired if they wish to remain anonymous or not and inform them that the transcription of the interview will be available in the Appendix of this thesis. Upon request, I also sent the transcription of the interview for formal approval.

Interviews with Andreja Rihter, Person B, and Person C were conducted in Slovenian language, hence transcriptions of these interviews are in Slovenian language in the Appendix. All the other interviews were conducted with me speaking mainly Slovenian and occasionally English, while interviewees responded in Interslavic. I managed to understand practically 100% of their answers. The transcription of these interviews was translated from Interslavic to English language by me and are available in the Appendix as well.

After gathering data through digital ethnography and interviews, I proceeded with data analysis. For this, I applied thematic analysis, which is a method that is often used to analyse qualitative data.

8 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of the interviews and digital ethnography is divided into four parts: the first part presents examples of the Interslavic language used in the real world, the second part discusses the effectiveness of Interslavic, the third part analyses the feasibility of the language project, and the analysis concludes with the fourth part which evaluates these findings through a SWOT framework to provide strategic clarity.

8.1 Examples

Through primary data research, I identified six instances of Interslavic being used in different fields: three in tourism, one in film, another one in online gaming, and the most recent in social media advertising.

8.1.1 Three examples of Interslavic language used in tourism

Nowadays, people travel far more frequently than they did in the past, and this goes for Slavs as well. As there are over 20 distinct Slavic languages, tourist establishments have a hard time accommodating language requirements for each and every one of them. It is especially challenging if a Slavic tourist does not speak any other language besides their own. That is why the Interslavic language could be particularly useful in tourism, as the authors of the language already emphasised.

Based on this assumption, an experiment was done in 2012 (this was before the official merger of the two separate projects in 2017, so the Interslavic version here varied slightly); Hotel Oasis by Prima Group at the Dead Sea coast in Israel implemented the information leaflet for their Slavic guests. It featured details about check-in and check-out, restaurant opening times, and instructions about how to get to their private beach (see original in the Appendix 10). The experiment was proven to be a success as the Slavic guests understood the provided information.

There is also an example of Casa Santa Fe Cuba which is a specialised booking platform that facilitates stays in Cuban casas privately owned bed-and-breakfasts and apartments that offer travellers an authentic alternative to conventional hotels. Originally, many of these properties were listed on major global platforms like Booking.com and Expedia. However, due to U.S. sanctions restricting transactions with Cuba, these agencies no longer feature Cuban accommodations. Casa Santa Fe Cuba fills this gap by operating independently and ensuring that travellers can still book private stays while supporting Cuban hosts.

The platform is managed by a small team based in Czechia, which handles reservations and logistics on behalf of Cuban property owners. Their website is available in six different languages, including Interslavic. Based on the interview with the translator of the website, Michał Swat, the team wanted a cost-effective way to accommodate Slavic-speaking tourists. Since they had website visitors from various Slavic countries, they preferred a single translation instead of maintaining 10+ language versions of their website.

Another example of Interslavic being used in tourism is more recent. A first-ever Interslavic tour of Helsinki took place on August 15, 2024. The tour was led by Emil Anton, a Finnish Doctor of Theology and an authorised Helsinki guide with a strong connection to Poland through his studies and wife. It lasted for two hours, starting at 6 PM at the statue of Alexander II in Senate Square and ending at the statue of Mannerheim. Organised as part of

Helsinki's official cultural events and free of charge, it aimed to demonstrate the Slavic connections of the Finnish capital while testing how understandable Interslavic is to speakers of Slavic languages (INTERSLAVIC.news, 2024).

The tour was attended by around 50 individuals from at least seven different countries. The majority was from Russia and Ukraine, and other Slavic-speaking countries. Because of great interest and success of the event, Mr Anton plans to organise another tour in the Interslavic language on August 14, 2025, during Helsinki's Night of the Arts.

8.1.2 Example of Interslavic language used in film

Interslavic is not affiliated with any religion, ideology, or political movement. It is not meant to replace any living language or become a universal second language. Instead, it serves as a practical tool for communication among Slavs and for better understanding Slavic languages (Merunka, 2018). This neutrality inspired Václav Marhouľ to feature Interslavic in *The Painted Bird*, making it the first film to use the language. By doing so, the film avoids the political connotations tied to using specific Slavic languages like Russian, Ukrainian, or Czech (Herring, 2020).

Based on Jerzy Kosinski's 1965 novel, *The Painted Bird* depicts the harrowing experiences of a young Jewish boy in war-torn Eastern Europe. Its brutal realism led to walkouts during its debut at the 2019 Venice International Film Festival and sparked intense debate. Released in July 2020, the film gained recognition as an Oscar-nominated International Feature, earned a 91% Rotten Tomatoes rating, and showed the unique use of Interslavic (Herring, 2020).

Although Interslavic is spoken alongside Czech, Russian, and German in the film, the majority of the dialogue is in Interslavic. The language also appears in visual elements like posters advertising events and services as well as in songs, including "*Dušo moja*." These elements enhanced the realism of *The Painted Bird* while maintaining cultural neutrality (Herring, 2020).

8.1.3 Example of Interslavic language used in gaming

Minecraft is one of the most popular video games of all time. First released in 2009, it had sold over 300 million copies by 2023 (Baraniuk, 2025). The exact date when Minecraft first became playable in Interslavic is not documented. However, a Reddit post from around five years ago suggests that translation efforts were already in progress at that time. This indicates that an early version of the Interslavic translation may have been available as early as 2020. On June 24, 2023, the Interslavic language banner was officially introduced to Minecraft. Unfortunately, there is no available data on how many players use the Interslavic translation.

8.1.4 Example of Interslavic language used in advertising on social media

On January 20, 2025, a Germany-based supermarket Mix Markt published an ad on TikTok in the Interslavic language. As a leading retail chain specialising in food products from the former Soviet republics, the Baltic states, Poland, Romania, and the Balkans, Mix Markt aimed to reach a broad Slavic-speaking audience across Europe. With 417 stores across the continent, the company recognised Interslavic as a practical tool for engaging with customers from diverse Slavic backgrounds.

The ad was posted by a TikTok profile @mixmarktgermany (143.6K followers as of March 23, 2025) and features a song in Interslavic performed by Slavic influencer Tatyna Inyshina (2.5M followers as of March 23, 2025). Two months after posting, the ad generated 765.6K views, 47.4K likes, 1,332 comments, 4,571 saves, and was forwarded 7,679 times. In terms of audience engagement, this video performed the best on their TikTok profile in terms of audience engagement by far. For comparison, a video posted on February 16, 2025, gathered over 1.1M views, but only 848 likes, 10 comments, 116 saves, and was forwarded just 53 times. Despite the 250K more views, its engagement was significantly lower. Therefore, the Interslavic ad sparked significant interest, gained considerable traction, and proved to be an effective attention-grabber within the Slavic community.

8.2 Effectiveness

To analyse the effectiveness of the Interslavic language, I gathered opinions from users and participants on platforms such as Reddit and Discord and conducted interviews with key individuals involved in the language's development and use. By evaluating the language's sustainability in real-world applications, I was able to assess its perceived success and identify areas for improvement. Below are identified key points that prove the effectiveness of the language.

8.2.1 Native comprehension

Since Interslavic is based on common linguistic elements found across Slavic languages, many Slavic speakers can understand it with little to no formal learning. This was proven by an experiment (Merunka, 2018) as well as confirmed by Andreja Rihter during our interview, who never tried learning the language but still understood everything at the CISLa 2017. To the question if she agrees with the author's claims that Interslavic can be understood at least 80% without prior learning, she answered: *"Yes, absolutely!"* Person C, who was familiar with the language through social media stated: *"I understood practically everything; it was very interesting to me."* Furthermore, a tourist guide Emil Anton shared that out of 50 participants 40 or so said they understood between 90% and 100% of the tour of Helsinki that was held in Interslavic.

Several Reddit users agree as well, for example, a Reddit user 1 (2024) from Croatia agreed: *“Personally I understand about 90% or even slightly above 90% of it, which is way more than I do any other Slavic language, except for Slovenian or Serbian - if you consider Serbian a different language to Croatian, that is. It reminds me of Old Croatian - from the 11th and 12th century, a lot, except I understand it more than I do Old Croatian.”*⁷

8.2.2 Fast learning

Compared to learning an entirely foreign language like English or Chinese, Interslavic offers a significantly lower barrier to entry for native Slavic speakers. According to Vojtěch Merunka, a Slavic individual is able to learn Interslavic grammar in just two to three days. In response to this statement, Person B mentioned that, based on their experience, Slovenian employees need at least four years of learning to achieve active proficiency in a language like Russian. Thus, learning Interslavic could serve as a quick preparatory tool for understanding Slavic languages and could help individuals adapt to new environments more easily.

Even non-native Slavs who learnt one of the Slavic languages, can learn Interslavic fast. Emil Anton is Finnish-Iraqi who studied Polish and has a Polish wife. He first started watching Youtube videos in Interslavic, which sparked his interest and he decided to test his knowledge at the Polyglot Gathering in Teresin (Poland), where he participated in an Interslavic competition and won third place: *“I actually learnt about the competition when I was already traveling from Helsinki to Poland, so my practice lasted only for the 45 minute taxi drive.”*

Interslavic's learning efficiency aligns with shifting corporate priorities. As Person B noted, in 2024 the language courses comprise just 3% of total employee training hours at Company X (down from 10% in 2019). This is primarily because employees already possess language skills or use alternative approaches and therefore do not rely on formal language courses for learning.

Even though the language itself is easy to learn, several Reddit users noted frustrations with available learning resources. Reddit user 2 (2023) expressed: *“I find the lack of resources on Interslavic quite discouraging, as I am a person that needs some sort of guidance, even if it is thin, to learn through a topic. I've seen the official webpage, and the rules are very well put, but you're given the vocabulary all in raw, which I cannot digest.”* This lack of official textbooks and learning resources can be a deterrent for new learners, both Slavic and non-Slavic.

⁷ I too, can attest to this. Without ever learning Interslavic, I was able to fully understand podcasts in the language and even conduct interviews in it.

8.2.3 Variable mutual intelligibility

Mutual intelligibility among Slavic speakers is not always true. Person C stated: *“Now, that I interact with all Slavic countries so much as part of my job, I always understand the main thread of their conversation and can also distinguish between their languages. But before, for example, I would not have been able to tell Czech and Polish apart. Now I have no trouble with that, however, I still understood much more InterSlavic than Polish, even though I am significantly more exposed to Polish.”*

Reddit user 3, a Polish native, finds Western Slavic languages (Czech, Slovak) relatively easy to understand, while Eastern Slavic languages (Russian, Ukrainian) require prior exposure or study. Southern Slavic languages, however, are the hardest for them to grasp, even more so than Eastern Slavic ones, and only became somewhat comprehensible after learning Serbian. Their friend, who has not studied any other Slavic language, struggles even more, which shows that mutual intelligibility among Slavic languages is not always guaranteed (Reddit user 3, 2025). Hence, InterSlavic might be more effective for communication between different Slavic language groups.

8.2.4 Language bridge

InterSlavic acts as a bridge and makes all three Slavic language groups more comprehensible. While few people speak it, exposure to InterSlavic helps in understanding the Slavic language family. Reddit user 4 (2024) from Russia reported: *“My understanding of Slavic languages has significantly improved, however, not to the level of fluent understanding.”*

This is true even for non-Slavs. Reddit user 5 (2023) from the Netherlands shared his experience: *“InterSlavic was my first Slavic language and it still is the only one, funnily enough. I've tried to study other Slavic languages from time to time via Duolingo, just to see how easy it would be, and I went through most of the lessons as if it were nothing.”* Reddit user 6 (2024) also shared their experience: *“I don't speak any natural Slavic language(s) but as I've gotten better at InterSlavic I have also begun understanding the rest pretty well.”*

An interesting motivation for learning InterSlavic came from the non-Slavic Redditor, Reddit user 7 (2024): *“I'm less interested in learning it so I can speak to Slavs, and more interested in understanding political speeches, YouTube videos, etc.”* This suggests that some learners are driven by the desire to follow news and media directly, without relying too heavily on translations. Merunka has similarly emphasised the language's potential to combat misinformation, particularly during events like the Ukraine war where propaganda thrives on language barriers. He suggests that automatic translations of news into InterSlavic could provide equal access to information across Slavic nations by reducing opportunities for manipulation through linguistic divisions. This way individuals are able to grasp the original message without potential biases or inaccuracies in translations.

Furthermore, I conducted a demographic overview of Interslavic learners on the official Interslavic Discord server, tracking their age, gender, nationality, and the number of languages they speak. From the 300 respondents in the server's channel *prědstavi-sebe* (Eng. introduce-yourself) between September 2024 and March 2025, 29 respondents were non-Slavic and 27 were of half Slavic and half non-Slavic heritage. Hence, this suggests that nearly 19% of active learners do not have full Slavic linguistic roots yet still find value in Interslavic as a gateway to Slavic languages and cultures.

However, while Interslavic excels as a language bridge, its utility diminishes in fields that require absolute precision, such as law or technical industries. An illustrative case was provided by Merunka who shared information about Steeven Radzikowski, a lawyer from the United States who collaborates with Slavic-speaking clients. He uses Interslavic in his practice as a bridge for initial contact with clients to overcome language barriers, then switches to English or the client's native language for legal proceedings. This is because legal language demands to be 100% exact to prevent misunderstandings or claims of misrepresentation. Interslavic cannot guarantee this level of precision due to its constructed nature.

8.2.5 Limits of English

English is not a *lingua franca* everywhere. Interview with Person C provided valuable insight into business situations where English is not always the dominant language. Interestingly, despite globalisation, many hairdressers, particularly from Poland, Czechia, and Russia, have limited English proficiency. Person C noted that this is not necessarily tied to age but rather to the country of origin. She observes that in Slovenia, English proficiency is relatively strong, likely due to the country's small size, which makes foreign languages more necessary for communication. However, in larger countries like Poland, there is less of a need for English in daily life, which may explain why fewer professionals in the cosmetics industry speak it fluently.

Person C suggests that another key factor is education. Hairdressers typically complete vocational training rather than a university degree, which means that their studies focus heavily on practical skills rather than academic subjects such as foreign languages. In Slovenia, for example, English is part of the curriculum in hairdressing schools, but not at the same level as in academic high schools. Since the profession also does not usually involve international business travel, there is little emphasis on learning foreign languages. Instead, local training sessions and daily work occur in their native languages, which reduce the necessity for English. In this context, Interslavic shows potential as a useful tool for bridging communication gaps, especially in professional settings where English proficiency is limited. Here, Interslavic could improve collaboration and reduce reliance on translations.

Building on this, I conducted a demographic overview of Interslavic learners on the official Interslavic Discord server, tracking their age, gender, nationality, the number of languages they speak, and whether English is among them. From the 300 respondents in the server's

channel *prědstavi-sebe*, 51 of them did not list English as one of the languages they currently speak and only 16 of them stated that they are currently trying to learn it, meaning that 17% of examined Interslavic learners do not speak English and 11% do not intend to learn it in the near future. Ages of the non-English speaking respondents ranged between 14 and 55 (70.5% being under the age of 30), and they came from Russia (18), Poland (15), Ukraine (5), Czechia (3), Serbia (2), Slovakia (2), Belorussia (2), Armenia (1), Bulgaria (1), and Croatia (1).

8.2.6 Practical applications

Real-world applications of Interslavic further demonstrate its practical effectiveness. In the tourism and hospitality industry, there are documented cases of successful implementation. A previously discussed example of the hotel in Israel as well as the guided tour of Helsinki have successfully used Interslavic to engage visitors from multiple Slavic countries. Besides the Helsinki tour, Emil Anton said that he has used Interslavic in other instances as well: *“I’ve spoken Interslavic in a Gorani restaurant in Finland, with tourists from South Slavic countries in Helsinki, with a Bulgarian at a conference, and even during a magic trick at an international festival.”*

Andreja Rihter, the president of the Forum of Slavic Cultures shared her view on utilising Interslavic in tourism: *“For example, in Croatia during the summer, a large number of tourists are Slavs. Based on experience, many tourism workers do not speak other Slavic languages, except Russian. However, due to sanctions, Russian tourists are no longer present.”* Hence, Interslavic could serve as a practical solution for improving communication between tourism workers and Slavic-speaking tourists from different countries.

Even some of the Reddit users shared that their motivation for learning Interslavic is travelling across Europe and it would be good if they learned Interslavic as the base language. Reddit user 8 (2025) commented on this: *“If you learn Interslavic, you will have way less problems having yourself understood, but it doesn't guarantee you understanding every Slavic language.”* ... *“However, if people understand you, that's much better communication than complete non-understanding.”*

Businesses have also experimented with Interslavic, particularly in retail and marketing. Mix Markt, for example, has used Interslavic in social media advertisements (TikTok) to reach a wider Slavic audience. The potential of Interslavic for the retail industry was recognised even by Andreja Rihter during our interview that was held three weeks prior to the posting of the ad. She intuitively said that Western retailers with extensive networks could attract many customers using an Interslavic language. She continued that this is particularly relevant given that a large portion of Germany’s population has Slavic roots, and Slavs are widely spread across Europe. In her view, the potential of this language lies in retail marketing, including advertising products and promotions to attract a specific customer base.

Even though the comments under the Mix Markt ad were positive and full of people who were curious what this language is and why do they understand it, some are wondering about the true motivation behind posting the ad in Interslavic language. Reddit user 9 (2025) who posted the news about the ad on Reddit wrote: *“I think they're trying to move away from being known as a "Russian store", especially as a lot of their current customer base is Ukrainian refugees. I volunteer with the community and there's frequent discussions about whether it's ok to shop there, where are the goods from, am I funding a Russian business if I buy buckwheat there, etc. So it makes sense for the company to try to move away to be more multicultural. But I found it interesting that this is the direction they went with!”* Comments like this, as well as the film *The Painted Bird*, show that Interslavic is particularly useful for commercial purposes because of its cultural and political neutrality.

Furthermore, interest in the real-world commercial use of Interslavic does not end here. In October 2024, Denis Veps, a director and playwright from a Russian-Serbian theater in Belgrade, reached out on the Discord server for assistance with translating his scripts from Russian into Interslavic. His plays had already seen success in Belgrade and Montenegro, and he aimed to adapt them for performances in Interslavic. In addition to staging performances, he is also working on making the theater's official website available in Interslavic (Veps, 2024). The site already features an Interslavic flag as a language option, but clicking on it currently leads to a message in Interslavic stating that the page is still under construction.

8.3 Feasibility

The feasibility of Interslavic as a widely adopted language depends on various factors, including its cultural acceptance, practicality, and the resources required for its promotion and learning. Through my research, I assessed the potential challenges and opportunities for Interslavic by analysing feedback from users on platforms like Reddit and Discord, as well as conducting interviews with key stakeholders.

8.3.1 Lack of recognition

While Interslavic is an interesting concept, its potential as a widely used language faces several challenges, with lack of recognition being one of the biggest. When asked about its long-term impact on cooperation between Slavic-speaking countries, Andreja Rihter noted that the language is still too unknown among the general public to have any real influence. She emphasised that increasing its visibility would be essential for it to gain any significance. Without greater awareness and practical application, it is unlikely to play a meaningful role in strengthening connections among Slavic nations.

Furthermore, Person B mentioned that if she came across an information leaflet in Slovakia and understood it, she likely would not recognise the language. *“I would probably just think to myself, wow, I can understand Slovak, since I'm not familiar enough with either language.”* This lack of awareness about Interslavic likely shaped Casa Santa Fe Cuba's

decision regarding their Interslavic website version. Since most Slavic-language speakers would not recognise Interslavic's flag, the platform implemented an alternative solution: an icon combining flags from multiple Slavic nations. This design choice effectively ensured immediate identification among Slavic-speaking visitors. It therefore eliminated the requirement for prior familiarity with Interslavic.

Andreja Rihter suggested that translating the 100 Slavic Novels collection into Interslavic could be a valuable way to promote the language. With 108 authors and around 70 translators, the collection is currently available in nine Slavic languages. She proposed that for example Mr. Merunka could translate one of the novels as a concrete step toward increasing Interslavic's visibility. Once such a translation exists, it could be presented in libraries and companies, helping to introduce the language to a wider audience.

8.3.2 Limited institutional support

Unlike Esperanto, which has an established learning infrastructure and international organisations backing its use, Interslavic lacks government recognition and corporate sponsorship. No formal education system teaches the language, and no major companies have (yet) implemented it as an official communication tool.

Reddit user 10 (2024) commented on how to promote Interslavic more effectively to gain greater popularity and start playing a larger role in Europe: *“Getting government support would provide a huge boost to the recognition and visibility of the language. Offering free classrooms in universities and high schools would also yield great results. It is important to distance language from Pan-Slavism and politics in general.”* All in all, without institutional backing, large-scale adoption of Interslavic is unlikely.

Merunka did, however, mention that there was expressed interest in implementing Interslavic as an elective course at the Faculty of Tourism in Zagreb. At the time (before Covid-19), this was unfortunately not possible to carry out, as the language had not yet obtained ISO standard accreditation, and Covid-19 impacted the level of cooperation.

8.3.3 Resource gaps

For the language to gain traction, significant investment would be required in developing learning resources, training programs, and promotional efforts. Businesses would need to allocate funds for employee training, and educational institutions would need structured curricula. Currently, there are not enough comprehensive textbooks available nor any certified language teachers, which presents a huge scalability challenge.

Andreja Rihter said that she sees a possibility to do a pilot testing of learning the language as an extracurricular activity in primary schools. However, she points out an important obstacle: *“I see a problem here - where to find a qualified lecturer with a certificate, where*

to even obtain such a certificate, who can issue it, and so on. Mr. Merunka would probably need to test this in Czechia first.”

The author Vojtěch Merunka is aware of this challenge. He mentioned that in order for the Interslavic project to operate seamlessly even after the authors retire, a significant step toward institutionalisation and improving learning infrastructure is needed. They founded the *Medžuslovjanska Akademija* (Eng. Interslavic Academy), which would in the future, among other things, also be responsible for accrediting language certifications. A good step towards this goal is for now the *Fundacija MedžuSlovjansko Jezyčno Forum* (Eng. InterSlavic Linguistic Forum Foundation), which was founded by Michał Swat in 2024. It currently offers language courses, translation services, and material development in Interslavic, however, its initiatives currently operate at a small scale, due to the lack of resources and institutional partnerships that are needed to reach wider audiences.

Getting approved with ISO 639-3 code was a big step forward to increase its legitimacy and visibility. If properly promoted, the language could gain traction as a tool for cultural preservation. Additionally, EU funding opportunities could provide financial backing for the development of standardised educational materials, helping to address the current lack of resources.

8.3.4 Artificial intelligence potential

Artificial intelligence (hereafter: AI) generated translation and language-learning tools could accelerate the adoption of Interslavic by making learning more accessible. Some Reddit discussions suggest that AI models already demonstrate a degree of comprehension when processing Interslavic, even though they are not specifically trained for it. An occurrence that me and several other users found is that ChatGPT and other AI tools can translate text from Interslavic to English or any other natural language with almost no mistakes. However, it produces a lot of mistakes when trying to translate English to Interslavic.

Reddit user 11 (2025) pointed out the reason behind incorrect translations: *“I think the problem is because the Interslavic corpus is too small, and much of the training is based on places where enthusiasts, like me for example, speak imperfectly correct Interslavic. If there were a larger number of proofread and grammatically correct translations of books, then the focus could shift to additional training based on them.”* Future improvements in AI-based language models and training the models in Interslavic could lead to more accurate translations, automated grammar checks, and even interactive learning experiences.

8.3.5 Cultural and political barriers

As the president of the Forum of Slavic Cultures, Andreja Rihter’s perspective on the challenges of adopting Interslavic is particularly relevant. She pointed out that pride in one’s native language is a significant barrier to its acceptance. It is difficult to convince people from countries such as Serbia or Czechia for example to embrace a new, constructed

language. Ms Rihter believes that for Interslavic to gain broader support, national and cultural policies would need to engage with the idea and promote discussions at higher levels. She recalled that, in earlier attempts to promote the language, there was little enthusiasm, particularly in Russia, where the concept was met with resistance and a lack of interest.

The co-author of the language also expressed his disappointment regarding using the project as a political agenda. Everyone working on the project emphasises that it is a non-political linguistic project aimed solely at facilitating communication in tourism, culture, and business, without any connection to Pan-Slavism or other political ideologies. Despite this, Vojtěch Merunka shared that he had been accused by the Czech media that he is a “Russian spy”, while on the other hand, Russian media said that he spreads “anti-Russian propaganda”. However, this was in the early days of the project, current response from the media in Slavic countries is very positive.

Merunka shared another challenge he observed on the official Interslavic Discord server. Since the server has nearly 9,000 members from all Slavic countries or individuals interested in the Slavic world, some people join not to learn Interslavic but rather to promote their political agenda. Fortunately, he notes that the server admins monitor this behavior closely, and such individuals are permanently banned.

Despite political and cultural barriers, the continued growth of Interslavic demonstrates that mutual understanding can transcend national pride and ideological divisions. As awareness spreads and more individuals embrace the language, Interslavic has the potential to bridge communication gaps across Slavic nations while remaining a neutral and practical tool for cultural and professional exchange. However, businesses may prefer English or Russian or other national languages for broader international reach.

8.4 SWOT analysis

Interslavic offers an inclusive approach to inter-Slavic communication, however, its success depends on increasing awareness, building institutional support, and using modern technology to reach more individuals and companies that would find the language useful.

To systematically evaluate the potential of Interslavic as a business communication tool, a SWOT analysis was conducted, which can be observed in Table 2. This analysis provides a structured examination of the language's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats that could influence its adoption in IB contexts.

Table 2: SWOT analysis of the Interslavic language project

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Interslavic does not prioritise any single Slavic language, making it widely acceptable and fair to all Slavic speakers (see 8.1.2 and 8.2.6). (2) Achieves 80-90% intuitive comprehension by Slavic speakers without the need for prior study (see 8.2.1). (3) Slavic speakers can learn Interslavic's grammar in 2-3 days, far faster than other languages, which makes it practical for quick adoption (see 8.2.2). (4) Presents a cost-effective solution for multilingual Slavic markets (see 8.1.1 and 8.2.5) (5) Provides a culturally relevant option for inter-Slavic communication, countering the dominance of English in IB (see 8.2.5). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Many Slavic speakers are unaware of Interslavic or its potential benefits (see 8.3.1). (2) Without native speakers or regular use in daily life, it relies entirely on the interest of hobbyists and linguists (see 8.3.2 and 8.3.3). (3) Speakers of larger Slavic languages (Russian, Polish, Serbian) may feel they do not need it (see 8.3.5). (4) Currently, there are no systematic courses or classes available to learn the language (see 8.2.2). (5) The project lacks funding or a dedicated organisation. It is relying on volunteers to sustain its development and promotion (see 8.3.2 and 8.3.3).
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Inclusion in schools or as part of Slavic studies or linguistics courses (see 8.3.3). (2) Could be adopted in cultural and academic exchange programs, such as Erasmus+ (see Appendix 5). (3) Development of apps, translation tools, and media content could popularise the language (see 8.3.4 and Appendix 3). (4) There are communities of Slavic descendants outside of Europe who are looking for ways to reconnect with their culture (see 8.2.4). (5) Could facilitate Slavic cooperation in trade, research, and cultural diplomacy (see Appendix 3). (6) Companies in certain industries could recognise its benefits and adopt the language to gain first-mover advantage (see 8.2.6). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) English remains the primary language for IB communication, which limits the practical need for Interslavic (see 3.1, 3.2 and 8.2.4). (2) Without widespread adoption, Interslavic risks remaining a niche hobby rather than a practical tool (see 8.3.1) (3) Although neutral, the project could unintentionally be politicised in certain contexts or by specific groups (see 8.3.5). (4) Without dedicated resources, the creation of digital tools like learning apps may lag behind other auxiliary languages (see 8.3.3).

Source: Own work.

This analysis serves a purpose in this research as it identifies critical factors that businesses and language developers should consider when evaluating Interslavic's practical applications. Furthermore, it provides a foundation for the recommendations that follow, ensuring they address both the language's potential and its current limitations.

9 DISCUSSION

The main focus of this thesis research was to determine whether the Interslavic language could be effective as a business communication tool and if it is even feasible to gain widespread adoption of the language in the Slavic-speaking region. Within this chapter, the aim is to present the key findings of the empirical research, connect them with theoretical insights, and support the thesis with proposals that institutions and companies operating in multiple Slavic countries or seeking to reach consumers from various Slavic nations could implement for more effective business operations.

9.1 B2B applications: Discussion of results

Research (Hood & Truijens, 1993; Martin, 2006; Ku & Zussman, 2010) consistently shows that language not only affects communication but also other elements of IB, such as trade, negotiations and relationship-building. Both business professionals, Person B and Person C, confirmed that language is an important aspect for building connections and relationships with external business partners as well as subsidiary employees of a MNE. Person B, who works in human resources, emphasised that, in addition to being fluent in English, they have a basic understanding of several other foreign languages, which helps them build stronger connections with employees across different countries. Person C stressed the importance of speaking a common language during business dinners which is the time to establish a more meaningful and long-lasting relationship with business partners. Without translators present, individuals from Slavic-speaking countries who do not speak English, remain quiet. This is where Person C sees a great potential for the Interslavic language, to be able to converse with business partners in a non formal setting where a 100% mutual understanding is not a must.

On the other hand, both business professionals who were interviewed as well as Mr Merunka, stated that Interslavic is not a viable option when it comes to industry-specific terminology, particularly in sectors where precision in language is crucial. Person C pointed out that in theoretical education, where exact terminology plays a fundamental role, the use of Interslavic would not be appropriate. Similarly, Person B emphasised that in high-stakes business negotiations, limited language proficiency can be a disadvantage, hence training an employee in the local language is essential. This supports the research conducted by Slator in 2023 who found that language barriers and miscommunication in B2B contexts cause operational inefficiencies and financial losses. Table 3 provides an overview of key language-related factors in B2B operations, evaluates Interslavic's efficiency in each aspect, and presents examples identified during the expert interviews.

Table 3: Efficiency of Interslavic in key B2B language aspects

B2B Language Aspects			
ASPECT	RESEARCH	EXAMPLE FROM RESEARCH	REFERENCES
Building connections and relationships	Interslavic IS efficient.	Non-English Slavic speakers do not engage in informal conversation during business dinners with Slovenian partners.	Hood & Truijens, 1993; Martin 2006; Ku & Zussman, 2010; Person C
Language as a trade barrier	There was not enough evidence to draw conclusion on this.	/	Sauter, 2010; Egger & Lassman, 2015; Slator, 2023
Miscommunication risks	Interslavic is NOT efficient.	In manufacturing industry, exact terminology in local language or English is crucial.	Slator, 2023; Person B; Person C
Supplier and partner communication	Interslavic is PARTLY efficient.	In business negotiations, limited language proficiency in the local language can be a disadvantage. However, even 80% level of understanding is better than none.	Hood & Truijens, 1993; Martin, 2006; Slator, 2023; Person B; Person C

Note: References in bold are references from research.

Source: Own work.

9.2 B2C applications: Discussion of results

The analysis of interviews and digital ethnography data reveals that the Interslavic project holds particular promise in the B2C sector. With the Slavic community comprising 20 distinct national languages, ranging from Russian with 150 million speakers to smaller languages with just 600,000 speakers, businesses face significant challenges in addressing consumers in each individual language. Interslavic, in a way, acts as a shortcut, covering all language needs at once with at least 80% effectiveness.

The language has been proven remarkably effective in enabling comprehension among Slavic speakers without prior study, particularly in sectors like tourism, media, and retail advertisement. In tourism, for instance, the experiment at Israel's Hotel Oasis demonstrated that Slavic guests could effortlessly understand essential information presented in Interslavic, such as check-in procedures and dining hours. Similarly, the 2024 Interslavic-guided tour of Helsinki attracted around 50 participants from seven Slavic countries, with most reporting comprehension of over 90%. These outcomes align with linguistic research by Merunka (2018) and are supported by numerous testimonials by Reddit users. Moreover, even three interviewees who were not Interslavic speakers all independently identified tourism as the most promising application for the language.

The language's cultural neutrality has also made it attractive in media and advertising. Its use in *The Painted Bird* (2020) allowed the film to avoid political connotations tied to specific Slavic languages, while Mix Markt's Interslavic TikTok campaign in 2025 achieved unusually high engagement (765.6K views and 47.4K likes), which suggests strong resonance with a Slavic audience. This is backed up by theory, as Piller (2017) states that language in advertising not only sells products but also reflects deeper social and cultural trends. However, some skepticism emerged regarding the retailer's motives, with some Reddit users speculating that the ad aimed to distance the store chain from its perceived Russian associations.

Interslavic's digital presence continues to grow organically, as evidenced by its implementation in the online game *Minecraft*. Even though usage statistics are not available, the very inclusion of Interslavic in one of the world's most popular video games signals its expanding cultural relevance and potential for reaching younger audiences. Table 4 provides an overview of key language-related factors in B2C operations, evaluates Interslavic's efficiency in each aspect, while presenting examples drawn from expert interviews and digital ethnography.

Table 4: Efficiency of Interslavic in key B2C language aspects

B2C Language Aspects			
ASPECT	RESEARCH	EXAMPLE FROM RESEARCH	REFERENCES
Competitive advantage	Interslavic IS efficient.	Radzikowski's outreach to Slavic clients in Interslavic gives him competitive advantage in initial customer interactions where rapid understanding is important.	Mughan, 1990; @mixmarkt germany; Vojtěch Merunka
Business transactions and consumer trust	There was not enough evidence to draw conclusion on this.	/	Filipowski, 2014
Language in advertising	Interslavic IS efficient.	The <i>Painted Bird</i> 's use of Interslavic avoided political tensions while maintaining authenticity. Mix Markt ad avoided Russian-associated branding while reaching Slavic audience.	Piller, 2017; Herring, 2020; Reddit user 9
Language in tourism	Interslavic IS efficient.	Interslavic tourist tour of Helsinki (2024) was understood by the majority with 90-100%.	Sharma, 2018; Merunka, 2018; Emil Anton

Note: References in bold are references from research.

Source: Own work.

Additionally, I have identified two new aspects that emerged from my research and are not discussed in the literature. These aspects are digital engagement and cost-efficiency in multilingual markets and are presented in Table 5 with examples.

Table 5: Extended efficiency of Interslavic in key B2C language aspects

B2C Language Aspects			
ASPECT	RESEARCH	EXAMPLE FROM RESEARCH	REFERENCES
Digital engagement: Language in digital platforms affects user experience and market penetration.	Interslavic IS efficient.	Minecraft's Interslavic translation demonstrates organic cultural adoption. Mix Markt achieved 765K+ views/47K likes with Interslavic TikTok ad versus 1.1M views/848 likes for non-Interslavic content.	Reddit; @mixmarkt germany
Cost-efficiency in multilingual markets: Single-language solutions for linguistically related markets.	Interslavic IS efficient.	Interslavic covers 20 Slavic languages with 80%+ effectiveness, reducing translation costs versus individual language versions.	Vojtěch Merunka; Michal Swat

Note: References in bold are references from research.

Source: Own work.

Regarding internal corporate language dynamics, one of the key language-related factors in IB besides B2B and B2C language aspects, there are major research limitations, as at the moment of writing, no company has implemented Interslavic as a working language.

9.3 Overall assessment

The research demonstrates that Interslavic exhibits significant effectiveness in specialised applications where passive comprehension is sufficient, particularly within tourism, media, and Slavic-oriented marketing. Empirical evidence, including the successful Helsinki guided tour and Mix Markt's advertising initiative, confirms that the language achieves high comprehension rates among diverse Slavic speakers without requiring prior study.

The language proves particularly valuable for applications such as informational signage and basic advertising where complete fluency is not necessary. More complex professional applications would require addressing existing gaps in Interslavic language learning infrastructure and user proficiency.

However, the language currently faces substantial limitations regarding large-scale business implementation. The absence of formal institutional recognition and standardised support structures significantly restricts its potential for widespread commercial adoption. At present, Interslavic functions most effectively as a complementary communication tool rather than as a primary business language. Its potential for broader implementation depends on three critical factors:

1. increased institutional endorsement,
2. the development of structured educational programs,

3. the accumulation of documented success cases.

Strategic development of the project would enable Interslavic to transition from its current niche status to a more widely utilised solution for cross-Slavic communication, without displacing existing languages or cultural identities.

9.4 Recommendations for developers of the Interslavic project

With ISO 639-3 certification now secured (April 2024), Interslavic has achieved a crucial milestone for legitimacy. However, strategic development remains essential to transition from an initiative to a functional communication tool.

First recommendation for individuals working on the Interslavic project is to immediately focus on creating structured learning materials to replace the current fragmented resources. This includes developing tiered textbooks (A1-C2 levels) and workbooks with clear pedagogical progression, addressing the frustrations voiced by several learners. Parallel to this, establishing a formal teacher certification program through the *Medžuslovsjanska Akademija* would enable standardised instruction. These steps would directly support institutional adoption, allowing interested schools and universities, like Zagreb's Faculty of Tourism, to implement accredited courses.

To combat persistent recognition issues, exemplified by Person B's confusion between Interslavic and other Slavic languages, the project requires targeted promotion. High-value cultural projects such as translating the 100 Slavic Novels collection would serve multiple purposes: producing quality reference material, demonstrating literary application, and generating media attention through partnerships with organisations like the Forum of Slavic Cultures. Building on the success of the Helsinki tour, Interslavic should prioritise tourism-sector applications by developing practical, ready-to-use tools like standardised hospitality signage templates and professionally recorded audio guide scripts tailored for Slavic-speaking visitors.

The ISO certification now enables pursuit of EU educational and cultural funding, which should be pursued to secure sustainable financial support. This would reduce reliance on volunteer efforts while enabling professional development of learning materials and institutional partnerships. Corporate partnerships with Slavic businesses could sponsor specific applications, similar to Mix Markt's advertising success. Digital expansion is equally critical - developing a dedicated learning app and expanding the AI-training corpus would address accessibility for younger demographics while at the same time improving machine translation reliability.

Practical adoption requires addressing both perception and infrastructure challenges. Clear branding distinguishing Interslavic as a “bridge language” rather than a replacement would help overcome native language pride issues. Meanwhile, creating ready-to-use business

packages (e.g., retail labelling sets, hospitality phrasebooks) would lower entry barriers for commercial applications.

9.5 Recommendations for managers and entrepreneurs

Interslavic presents MNEs with a unique opportunity to bridge communication gaps across Slavic-speaking regions. For companies managing a mixed-Slavic workforce or customer base, the language offers key strategic advantages that are worth considering.

For workforce development, Interslavic serves as an ideal solution for short-term assignments. The language's simplified structure, which is free of the grammatical exceptions that make natural Slavic languages hard to learn, enables non-Slavic employees to achieve basic functionality within weeks rather than months. This rapid learning curve might be particularly valuable for staff on temporary deployment abroad, where even fundamental comprehension of local workplace norms, safety protocols, and daily interactions can significantly improve both productivity and cultural adaptation. Furthermore, the language offers unique value for Slavic professionals collaborating in multilingual teams. When for example Polish, Ukrainian, and Serbian colleagues lack a common working language, Interslavic can provide a neutral medium that is more accessible than English for many speakers. As demonstrated by Person C's expressed willingness to learn if her company offered training, employees do recognise its practical benefits for multinational cooperation. This reflects Interslavic's core strength: enabling meaningful communication without requiring full fluency in multiple Slavic languages.

In B2C operations, Interslavic's potential is most prominent in two domains: tourism and social media advertising. The language has proven particularly effective as an attention-grabber in social media campaigns, as evidenced by Mix Markt's viral TikTok content which outperformed their conventional posts by 350% in engagement. This “novelty factor” combined with broad comprehensibility makes Interslavic ideal for cross-Slavic brand awareness campaigns. As the language gains institutional support through its recent ISO certification, early adopting MNEs or startups targeting customers in Central and Eastern Europe may gain a first-mover advantage in Slavic market integration.

For physical locations in tourist hotspots, Interslavic proves to have the most potential, as it addresses tourism's unique language gap. As both Person C and Andreja Rihter identified, the challenge does not always lie in tourism and service workers lacking English skills, but in the mismatch between Slavic tourists' limited English proficiency and local staff's inability to speak other Slavic languages other than their native tongue, and occasionally Russian. Interslavic offers an elegant solution to this asymmetric language barrier. An example from the Helsinki guided tour demonstrated that 90–100% of Slavic participants could understand Interslavic without prior study, proving its immediate utility for communication in tourism.

For businesses in touristic areas, the implementation of Interslavic does not require training staff to fluency. Instead, simple standardised materials, such as signage, information leaflets, and audio guides in Interslavic, can dramatically improve the visitor experience. For example:

- Hotels could provide Interslavic room guides and check-in instructions to ensure guests from Ukraine, Poland, or Bulgaria all understand key information.
- Museums and cultural sites might offer Interslavic audio tours to eliminate the need for costly individual translations.
- Restaurants and resorts could use Interslavic for basic safety notices or FAQs to reduce confusion for Slavic-speaking tourists who struggle with English.

This approach is not only cost-effective but also scalable, as it relies on passive comprehension rather than requiring staff to learn another language. By adopting Interslavic in strategic customer touchpoints, tourism businesses can enhance accessibility for a key demographic.

On the other hand, someone must create these translations, which means paid work for linguists. Freelance translators, language schools, and startups can all benefit from Interslavic's growing use. For example, Michał Swat earned money by translating the Casa Santa Fe Cuba website into Interslavic. As more projects adopt the language, demand for such services could rise, which would create new income streams for Slavic language specialists.

The language's big competitive advantage also lies in its cultural neutrality. Unlike Russian or English which may carry political connotations in certain markets, Interslavic provides a linguistically neutral solution for internal communications. Teams containing Ukrainian, Polish and Serbian subsidiaries could use it for informal exchanges and basic documentation, ultimately reducing reliance on imperfect English translations. While not replacing local languages for technical matters, it creates an inclusive middle ground that acknowledges Slavic linguistic diversity while also solving practical communication needs.

9.6 Research limitations and further research

While this thesis provides valuable insights into Interslavic's potential in IB contexts, some limitations must be acknowledged. One of the limitations was the selection of business professionals for interviews. Since no company currently uses Interslavic in its operations, I interviewed professionals from Slovenian companies that operate across all Slavic countries. However, as both companies are based in Slovenia, it is hard to generalise the findings to businesses from other Slavic countries, particularly those with significantly larger populations of native speakers.

Furthermore, Reddit provided excellent insights. However, while it gave access to a diverse community of language enthusiasts, the platform's self-selecting user base may not accurately represent broader attitudes toward Interslavic. Discussions on Reddit can also be influenced by the informal nature of the platform and the varying levels of engagement among users, which may not reflect broader attitudes.

Looking ahead, several opportunities emerge for future research. The first one is to expand the geographic scope to include business professionals from other Slavic countries which would provide a more comprehensive understanding of Interslavic's regional viability. It could expand even to non-Slavic countries.

Then, future research should not use only Reddit and Discord, but also attend and observe conferences, meetings, and other events being held in Interslavic. Supplementing digital ethnography with in-person methods could gather more balanced data. Additionally, the successful case of Mix Markt's Interslavic TikTok ad suggests particular promise for future research of digital applications and the effect of Interslavic language on market penetration.

Future research should also include pilot testing within a relevant company or among business students. A valuable next step would be to build on Ivašković's 2021 study, which explored attitudes toward language learning among students at the School of Economics and Business in Ljubljana (hereafter: SEB LU). A similar study could be conducted to assess the comprehension of Interslavic among Slovenian and other Slavic-speaking students at SEB LU without prior learning. This would help determine whether they find the language useful for IB and provide deeper insights into its potential practical applications. Since my research found that Interslavic is most useful in tourism, a valuable comparative analysis would also be to compare business students to tourism students – if their perception of the usefulness of Interslavic differs.

10 CONCLUSION

The exploration of Interslavic as an artificial auxiliary language for IB communication within Slavic-speaking regions shows a fascinating intersection of linguistics, culture, and commerce. This research not only highlights the language's potential to bridge communication gaps but also demonstrates the broader challenges of linguistic diversity in today's globalised economy. The findings suggest that while Interslavic is not a solution for all language-related barriers in business, it does provide a practical and unique solution in certain situations in the zone of Slavic-speaking countries.

One of the most compelling aspects of Interslavic is its high level of passive intelligibility among Slavic speakers. The experiments conducted in real-world settings, such as the Hotel Oasis leaflet in Israel and the guided tour in Helsinki, demonstrate that individuals from diverse Slavic backgrounds are able to grasp the essence of Interslavic without prior formal study. This natural understanding comes from how the language was carefully designed to

focus on what Slavic languages have in common while minimising regional differences. For instance, participants in the Helsinki tour, coming from seven different Slavic countries, reported understanding between 90% and 100% of the content, proving the language's effectiveness. As noted by several Reddit users, even non-Slavic learners found they could recognise Slavic words more easily through Interslavic, though full fluency still requires study of specific languages.

In the world of business, Interslavic shows promise in sectors where direct communication with a broad Slavic audience is required. The success of Mix Markt's TikTok advertisement, which gained significantly higher engagement than their non-Interslavic content, illustrates the language's appeal as a marketing tool. By using Interslavic, the retailer connected with a sense of shared identity among Slavic consumers while avoiding the political sensitivities which are often tied to dominant languages like Russian. Similarly, in tourism, where language barriers can hurt customer experience, Interslavic offers a practical solution. Hotels, museums, and restaurants could use the language in informational materials, audio guides, or basic customer service interactions, therefore reducing the need for multiple translations and improving accessibility for Slavic-speaking visitors.

This practical effectiveness is further validated by its artistic adoption in the Oscar-nominated film *The Painted Bird*, which used Interslavic to avoid the political associations of individual Slavic languages. Together, these and other successfully implemented cases demonstrate how Interslavic addresses two critical gaps: (1) enabling functional communication across Slavic languages where English falls short, and (2) providing a culturally neutral medium that preserves linguistic diversity rather than eroding it. It also provides potential applications for other multilingual regions that are facing similar challenges.

However, the feasibility of Interslavic as a widespread business tool is tempered by several challenges. Unlike English, which benefits from institutional support and global acceptance, Interslavic lacks formal recognition in both educational and corporate settings. The absence of standardised learning resources, such as textbooks or certified language courses, limits its potential for widespread adoption and scalability. Moreover, cultural pride in native languages presents a psychological barrier; many Slavic speakers may resist adopting a constructed language, viewing it as unnecessary or even threatening to their linguistic heritage. This resistance is particularly pronounced in countries with a large number of inhabitants and strong national languages, such as Russia or Poland, where existing national languages already serve most communication needs.

Despite these hurdles, the digital age offers new opportunities for Interslavic's growth. Online communities on platforms like Reddit and Discord have become hubs for language enthusiasts, as well as professionals exploring its practical uses, such as a Serbian playwright who sought help adapting theater productions into Interslavic. This organic engagement promotes both interest and collaboration. The demographic data from these platforms reveal

a diverse and young user base, many of whom are motivated by a desire to reconnect with their Slavic roots or explore linguistic diversity. Additionally, advancements in AI could play an essential role in Interslavic's development. While current AI tools like ChatGPT can translate Interslavic to English with reasonable accuracy, their ability to generate the language on their own remains limited. Expanding Interslavic's digital corpus through translated literature, media, and educational content could enhance AI's proficiency and make the language more accessible to learners worldwide. Therefore, building this digital infrastructure should be among priorities for the Interslavic community moving forward.

This research has practical implications for IB beyond just Slavic languages. While English remains the *lingua franca* of global business, its widespread use comes with problems - it pushes local cultures aside and puts non-native speakers at a disadvantage. Interslavic proposes a middle path: a communication tool that bridges Slavic languages without replacing them. For MNEs operating in Slavic regions, the language could serve as a supplementary tool, by facilitating informal communication and creating a sense of unity among employees from different Slavic countries. In customer-facing industries, it could enhance engagement and brand loyalty among Slavic consumers, who may appreciate efforts to acknowledge their linguistic heritage.

Looking forward, the future of Interslavic depends on strategic collaboration between linguists, educators, businesses, and policymakers. Establishing formal institutions, such as the proposed *Medžuslovjanska Akademija*, would strengthen credibility to the language and provide a framework for standardised instruction. Partnerships with cultural organisations, like the Forum of Slavic Cultures, could expand Interslavic's visibility through projects such as translating literary works or hosting cross-border promotional events. For businesses, pilot programs testing Interslavic in specific contexts, for example in tourism or retail, could yield valuable data on its practical benefits and limitations.

This thesis confirms language's dual role in IB as both a barrier and a bridge. Interslavic demonstrates innovation in linguistics can address real-world challenges while respecting cultural differences. Importantly, replacing natural languages was never the project's goal; Interslavic was designed as a supplemental tool, not a substitute for English or native Slavic languages. Its value lies in enabling basic understanding between Slavic speakers while preserving their individual linguistic identities. As businesses operate in increasingly globalised yet culturally diverse environments, solutions like Interslavic offer a viable middle path - one that enables communication without demanding complete linguistic assimilation.

To conclude, the journey of Interslavic from a linguistic experiment to a viable business tool is still unfolding. Its success will depend on the collective efforts of those who see value in its mission: to make communication simpler without making cultures smaller. For now, it remains a promising testament to the idea that even in a world of borders, language can still build bridges.

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APPENDICES

abeceda i pravopisanje

a	b	c	č	d	dž	e	ě	f	g	h	i	j	k	l
ḷ	m	n	ṇ	o	p	r	s	š	t	u	v	y	z	ž
lb	M	Hb	O	P	C	š	T	U	V	B	Y	Z	Ž	JK

V latinici i cirilici jest možno vništo y pisati prosto i i vništo e pisati prosto e. Napr. *ryba*→*riBa* *rěka*→*reKa*
 Palatalizacija i eufonija: *k*→*č*, *h*→*š*, *g*→*ž*, *cj*→*č*, *sj*→*š*, *zj*→*ž*
 Napr.: *Grěk*→*grěksky* *prah*→*prahiny* *Bog*→*božsky* *prošitj*→*prošlj*

1. Staroslovjansko jatj=*e-ě* se može pisati bez diakritiky kako *ie* ili *prosto e*. Podobno *č, š, ž* se mogu pisati kako *ca, sz, zs*.
 2. Staroslovjansko *uj* jest na počatkah slova kako *šć*, ale potom kako *č*, (napr. *šćitj pomoč, občina, svěča*)
 3. V cirilici možno koristiti ligatury *шч* → *шч* *ыј* → *ыј* *ю* *ѡ* *ѣ* → *я*
- Medžuslovjansky język drži morfologično pravopisanje. Koren slova se piše rovno v svih padězah. Anglijske, latinske i grěske slova imajujt svoje orig pravopisanje ale bez ypislona i s fonetičnym s/z i s medžuslovjanskymi zakončenjama (*arhitektura, biologija, sistem, fizika, diskuzija, baza, vaza, ...*).

imeniky

BRAT (živ), GRAD (neživ)		mužsky tvrdy vzor	
N	brat	množina	brat-a
A	brat-a	grad-y	grad-a
G	brat-ov	grad-ov	grad-a
L	brat-u	brat-oh	grad-u
D	brat-u	brat-am	grad-ama
I	brat-om	brat-ami	grad-ama
V	brat-e	brat-i	grad-a

MUŽ (živ), NOŽ (neživ)		mužsky mekky vzor	
N	muž	množina	muž-a
A	muž-a	nož-e	nož-a
G	muž-ov	nož-ov	nož-a
L	muž-u	nož-oh	nož-u
D	muž-u	muž-am	nož-ama
I	muž-om	muž-ami	nož-ama
V	muž-u	muž-i	nož-a

mužske objekty, kore aktivno delajut nekaky proces, sut živoe (od pitanja KTO?) i po tutoj pričině imajujt akuzativ r ovny s genitivom. Ostanle objekty sut neživotne (od pitanja ČTO) i imajujt v jednině akuzativ rovny s nominativom.
 napr.: *gospod pečē hleb*. (*hleb* ne može pekti = jest neživotny)
gospod vidi človeka. (*človek* može viděti = jest životny)

Slova mužskogo roda zakončeni na *-a* imajujt v jednině klonjenje po tvrdom vzoru *žena* ili mekčkom vzoru *duša*, ale v množině dvojine imajujt normalny mužsky vzor.
 napr.: *vladyk-a, vladyk-y, vladyk-ě, vladyk-uh, vladyk-o, ...* (jednina)
vladyk-i, vladyk-ov, vladyk-am, vladyk-ami, ... (množina)

ŽENA		DUŠA		ženske tvrdy i mekky vzory	
N	žen-a	duš-a	žen-y	duš-e	žen-ě
A	žen-u	duš-u	žen-y	duš-e	žen-ě
G	žen-y	duš-e	žen	duš-ě	žen-u
L	žen-ě	duš-ah	žen-am	duš-ama	žen-ama
D	žen-ě	duš-om	žen-ama	duš-ama	žen-ama
I	žen-om	duš-omi	žen-ami	duš-ama	žen-ama
V	žen-o	duš-oi	žen-y	duš-ě	žen-ě

KOST' (MVS), RADOŠT', PEŠT', SEŠT', DEŠT', OČI, UŠI, ...)		ženske sōgl. vzor	
N	kost'	množina	ok-a
A	kost'	oč-i	ok-a
G	kost'-i	oč-ij	ok
L	kost'-ih	oč-ah	ok-ah
D	kost'-ih	ok-am	ok-ama
I	kost'-im	ok-ami	ok-ama
V	kost'-i	oč-i	ok-a

Vse čiselniky zakončene na soglasnyky (*PEŠT',SEŠT',SEDM ... DEŠT',TRINADSET, ... DVADEŠT', TYSEČ*) imajujt klonjenje kako *KOST'* v jednině: *šest', šest-i, šest-ju, ... Slova OKO, UHO* imajujt parovy plural rovny s množinōj vzora *KOST'* s palatalizovanym korenom: *oč-i, oč-ij, oč-am ... uš-i, uš-ij, uš-am ...* kade čijsjžj → č,š,ž.

SELO		POLJE		středne tvrdy i mekky vzory	
N	sel-o	pol-e	sel-a	pol-ě	sel-ě
A	sel-o	pol-e	sel-a	pol-ě	sel-ě
G	sel-ov	pol-ov	sel-oh	pol-uh	sel-uh
L	sel-u	pol-u	sel-ah	pol-uh	sel-uh
D	sel-u	pol-uh	sel-am	pol-ama	sel-ama
I	sel-om	pol-om	sel-ami	pol-ami	sel-ama
V	sel-o	pol-e	sel-a	pol-ě	sel-ě

-R- -R- -T-		speciale vzory	
N	děn	mat-i	dět-ě
A	děn	mat-i	dět-ě
G	dň-e	mat-er-e	dět-et-ě
L	dň-i	mat-er-i	dět-et-i
D	dň-i	mat-er-i	dět-et-i
I	dň-em	mat-er-ij	dět-et-om
V	dň-i	mat-i	dět-ě

Na rāžlišenje od staroslovjanskogo języka, speciale vzory imajujt svoje klonjenje toliko v jednině. Množina i dual jest v normalnyh mekkyh vzorah: *dň-i-kost', imgr-a-pol-ě, mater-e-duš-ě, dět-i-kost'-i, ...*
 Medžuslovjansky język koristi nestale (*ě/ij*) (*o/ij*):
otěč, otca *December, Decembra* *članok, članka* *pěs, psa ...*

naučno pravopisanje v slovníku i cirilica		iat. cirilica	
zapis	etimologija iz PSL	zapis	etimologija iz PSL
ě	nasal A	č	redukovany Ш
u	nasal Ж	ђ	ШЧ
ě	vokalizovany jor b	т	JA
ě	vokalizovany jor b	р	mekko sl. tvorno R
ă	O → A (napr. <i>kráva</i>)	ř	tvordo sl. tvorno R

zaimeniky

ja		ty		se		my		vy		na		va		kto		čto	
N	ja	az	ty	tebe	tebe	sebe	sebe	nas	nas	vas	na	na	va	va	kto	čto	
A	mene	mene	tebe	tebe	sebe	sebe	nas	nas	vas	naj	na	na	va	kogo	čto		
G	mně	mně	tobě	tobě	sobě	sobě	nam	nam	vam	naj	naj	vaj	vaj	kogo	čego		
L	mně	mně	tobě	tobě	sobě	sobě	nam	nam	vam	naj	naj	vaj	vaj	komu	čemu		
D	mně	mně	tobě	tobě	sobě	sobě	nam	nam	vam	naj	naj	vaj	vaj	komu	čemu		
I	mně	mně	tobě	tobě	sobě	sobě	nam	nam	vam	naj	naj	vaj	vaj	komu	čemu		
V	mně	mně	tobě	tobě	sobě	sobě	nam	nam	vam	naj	naj	vaj	vaj	komu	čemu		

TOJ TA TO		s. jedn.		m.ž.m.		m.n.m.		ž.m.s.m.		dvojnina	
N	toj	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to
A	to-vo	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju
G	to-vo	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju
L	to-om	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju
D	to-omu	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju
I	to-ym	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju
V	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju	to-ju

ON ONA ONO		s. jedn.		m.ž.m.		m.n.m.		ž.m.s.m.		dvojnina	
N	on	ona	ono	ona	ona	ona	ona	ona	ona	ona	ona
A	on-ego	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju
G	on-ego	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju
L	on-emu	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju
D	on-emu	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju
I	on-im	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju
V	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju	on-ju

mekky vzor klonjenja (*-ego, -emu, ...*) imajujt zaimeniky: *MOJ-MOJA-MOJE, TVOJ-TVOTOJA-TVOJE, NAS-NASA-NAŠE, VAŠ-VAŠA-VAŠE, VEŠI-VŠA-VŠE, KOJ, KOJA, KOJE, ČIJ, ČIJA, ČIJE ...*
 Tvar *n-* pišemo toliko v padězah s předlogom: *slušaj jęgo, rabotaj za njęgo, idj s njimj, pišuj jęmu, idj k njęmu*

DOBRY		s. jedn.		m.ž.m.		m.n.m.		ž.m.s.m.		dvojnina	
N	dobry	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě	dobr-ě
A	dobr-ogo	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju
G	dobr-ogo	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju
L	dobr-om	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju
D	dobr-omu	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju
I	dobr-ym	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju
V	dobr-y	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju	dobr-ju

SVĚŽI		s. jedn.		m.ž.m.		m.n.m.		ž.m.s.m.		dvojnina	
N	svěži	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě	svěž-ě
A	svěž-ogo	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju
G	svěž-ego	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju
L	svěž-emu	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju
D	svěž-emu	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju
I	svěž-im	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju
V	svěži	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju	svěž-ju

GRADACIA bez palatalizacije s palatalizacije do č,š,ž
 superlativ naj-bogat-ějš-i (iz...)
 komparativ bogat-ějš-i (od...)
 indikativ bogat-y
 augmentativ naj-bogat-y
 kraćenje: tvrd-ě-ši → tvrd-ši krat-ě-ši → krat-ši bogat-ě-ši → bogat-ši

glagoly

IMĚTÍ	tvrdý -eš vzor
Infinitiv	im-ě-ti
L-participij	im-ě-i
glagolno ime	im-ě-to
imperativ	im-ě-ťe
sučno vrěme (tvrdé glagoly možut imati sučny koren nerovny s korenom infinitiva)	imaj-! imaj-mo! imaj-te!
jednina	množina
1 imaj-u	imaj-emo
2 imaj-eš	imaj-ete
3 imaj-e	imaj-ete
aktivny sučny participij	imaj-učij
aktivny sučny participij	imaj-emy
sučno vrěme (infinitivny koren 1 samoglasnik iz infinitivnogo zakončěnija)	množina
1 im-ě-h	im-ě-ho
2 im-ě-še	im-ě-šte
3 im-ě-še	im-ě-šte
aktivny prošly participij	im-ě-ši
aktivny prošly participij	im-ě-ši

Pasivny prošly participij tvrdých glagolov -ti -eti -uti -yti jest -ty -ety -uy -ty: píti -pity, kletí -kety, obutí -obuty, krytí -kryty ... vse druge imajut -ny.

VARTI	měkky -iš vzor
Infinitiv	var-i-ti
L-participij	var-i-i
glagolno ime	var-i-to
imperativ	var-i-ťe
sučno vrěme (měkke glagoly imajut sučny koren rovny s korenom infinitiva)	var-i var-mo! var-te!
jednina	množina
1 var-i-ťu	var-i-mo
2 var-i-š	var-i-še
3 var-i	var-i-še
aktivny sučny participij	var-i-ši
aktivny sučny participij	var-i-ši
sučno vrěme (infinitivny koren 1 samoglasnik iz infinitivnogo zakončěnija)	množina
1 var-i-h	var-i-ho
2 var-i-še	var-i-šte
3 var-i-še	var-i-šte
aktivny prošly participij	var-i-ši
aktivny prošly participij	var-i-ši

Pasivny prošly participij měkých glagolov jest -jení -jena -jeno, ale dj -ož (viděť, viděť, viděť), ť -č (vratit, vratit, vratit), s -č (prositi, prositi, prositi), st -š (koristiť, koristiť, koristiť), korisčeny...
 Pasivny prošly participij vsch ostalých glagolov -eti -ěti -ti jest -eny -ěny -eny: dělati -dělany, pekti -pek-eny -pečeny ...

GLAGOLNE vrěmena	iz vrěne glagoly
buďučie vrěme	buďu pisati
predbuďučie vrěme	buďu pisal
sučno vrěme	pišu
predsučno vrěme	jesm pisal
prošlo vrěme	pisah
predprošlo vrěme	běh napisal

Aktivne glagolne participija možut tvoriti aktivny sučny i aktivny prošly prislovniky: dělati → dělať-uč-č, děla-v variti → var-ě-č, var-i-v

nerědny glagol BYTI

BYTI	b-y-ti
Infinitiv	b-y-ti
L-participij	b-y-i
glagolno ime	b-y-to
imperativ	b-y-ťe
buďučie vrěme	buď-! buď-imo! buď-ite!
jednina	množina
1 buď-u	buď-emo
2 buď-eš	buď-ete
3 buď-e	buď-ete
aktivny buďučij participij	buď-učij
aktivny buďučij participij	buď-emy
sučno vrěme	množina
1 jesm	jesmo
2 jest	jeste
3 jest-je	jeste
aktivny sučny participij	sučny = imaj-emy
aktivny sučny participij	sučny = imaj-uchij
prošlo vrěme	množina
1 b-ě-h	b-ě-ho
2 b-ě-še	b-ě-šte
3 b-ě-še = b-ě	b-ě-šte
aktivny prošly participij	b-y-ši = im-ě-ši
aktivny prošly participij	b-y-ši = im-ě-ši
kondicional	
jednina	množina
1 b-y-h	b-y-ho
2 b-y-s	b-y-še
3 b-y	b-y-še

nerědne glagoly VĚDĚTI, DATI, IDTI, JESTI

věděti, věděnje - věm, věš, vě, věmó, věte, vědět ... věděi, věděh ... věděi, věděte!
 dati, danje - dam, daš, da, damó, date, dadět ... dai, dah ... dajj dajje!
 idti, idenje - idu, ideš, ide, idemó, idete, idět ... išel, ideh ... idil, idite!
 jesti, jedenje - jedu, jedeš, jede, jedemó, jedete, jedět ... jedi, jedeh ... jedil, jedite!
 (kraziti, kradenje - kradu, krađeš, krađe, krađemó ... krađi, krađeh ... krađil, ...)

prislovniky

Posle tvrdých sóglasnikov jest zakončenje -o, posle měkých **č š ž j** jest -e.
 napr.: **dobro** - bystr-o už-e **dáž-e** menš-e
 Prislovniky iz pridavnikov zakončěnyh na -sky imajut zakončěnje -sky.
 napr.: pridavnik poljsky, a o → prislovnik poljsky

GRADACIJA	bez palitizacije	s palitizacijoj do č š ž
superlativ	naj-bogat-ěje (iz ...)	naj-draž-ěje (iz ...)
komparativ	bogat-ěje (od ...)	draž-ěje (od ...)
indikativ	bogat-o	drag-o
augmentativ	naj-bogat-o	naj-drag-o

prědlgy

s akuzativom: nad, pod, přéd, črěž, v, za, na, vně, među, mimo, ...
 s genitivom: bez, iz, do, od, u, kromě, posle, vně, radi, ...
 s lokativom: o, po, pri, v, na, ...
 s dativom: k, protiv, ...
 s instrumentalom: s, nad, pod, přéd, za, među, ...

číselniky

1	jedin, jedna, jedno	11	jedinnadset	21	dvadest, jedín
2	dva, dvě, dvě	12	dvannadset	22	dvadest, dva
3	tri	13	trinadset	23	dvadest, tri
4	čtyři	14	čtyrinnadset	24	dvadest, čtyři
5	peť	15	peťnadset	25	dvadest, peť
6	šeť	16	šeťnadset	26	dvadest, šeť
7	sedm	17	sedmnadset	27	dvadest, sedm
8	osm	18	osmnadset	28	dvadest, osm
9	devet	19	devětnadset	29	dvadest, devět
10	deset	110	sto deset	1100	tyšeč, sto
20	dvadset	200	dvěsto	2000	dva tyšeč
30	trideset	300	tristo	3000	tri tyšeč
40	čtyřideset	400	čtyristo	4000	čtyři tyšeč
50	peťdeset	500	peťsto	5000	peť tyšeč
60	šeťdeset	600	šeťsto	6000	šeť tyšeč
70	sedmdeset	700	sedmsto	7000	sedm tyšeč
80	osmdeset	800	osmsto	10 ⁶	milión
90	devětdeset	900	devěsto	10 ⁹	bilión
100	sto	1000	tyšeč	0	nuly

1	prvy	11	jedinnadset	21	dvadset prvý
2 <td>vtory</td> <td>12</td> <td>dvadset</td> <td>200</td> <td>dvěsoty</td>	vtory	12	dvadset	200	dvěsoty
3	treťj (měkky vzor)	13	trinadset	201	dvěsto prvý
4	čtyrvy	14	čtyřideset	210	dvěsto desěty
5	peťy	15	peťdeset	5000	peť tyšečny
6	šeťy	16	šeťdeset	6000	šeť tyšečny
7	sedmy	17	sedmdeset	7000	sedm tyšečny
8	osmy	18	osmdeset	10 ⁶	milióny
9	devety	19	devětdeset	10 ⁹	bilióny
10	desety	100	soty	0	nuly

25 746 = dvadset peť tyšeč sedmdset čtyřideset šest.

25 746 = dvadset peť tyšeč sedmdset čtyřideset šest.

dva, dvoch, dvom, dvoma tri, třech, třem, třemi četyři, četyřech, četyřem, četyřmi jedin, jednogo (TOJ) peť, peťmi... 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 (KOST) nula, nuly (ŽENA) sto, sta (SELO) tyšeč, tyšeči (KOST) milión, miliona (GRAD)

sójednjenja: i, ni ... ni rázlučěnija: ili, ili popisánija: že
 odpor: aťe, no přičiny: bo, zatože smysla: da

častice

sóglásěnija: da, ej odpor: ne, ni
 pyťanija: li náglašenija: ako ... potom ... inako

međzuslovniky

oh! ahl uval luťi
 eznačěnje međzuslovnika takože imajut vse izrěčěnija v navodnikah»
 ... kde ktoromu... tako ... kako ... toliko koliko že ...
 tvary že, jegože, jimže, ... sūt relativne zaimeniky od on, ona, ono

glagoljica

a	b	c	č	d	dž	e	ě	f	g	h	i	j	ju	k	l
+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
lj	m	n	nj	o	p	r	s	š	t	u	v	y	z	ž	
đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ	đđđđ

Appendix 2: Transcription of the interview with Vojtěch Merunka – May 17, 2024

Q: What exactly motivated you to create a common Slavic language? Were you inspired by other projects or was there a certain event that happened to you abroad?

A: I was interested in the history and evolution of humans on Earth, as well as the evolution of Slavic people, from a young age. I also had contact with other Slavic languages since I was little. Naturally, because I am Czech, I had contact with the Slovak language and other Slavic languages. Also, my great-grandmother was working for a while in Bosnia. Part of her family stayed there and wrote letters back home to her in Czechia in the Bosnian language. I read those letters out loud to her, because she was over 80 years old and had bad eyesight.

I became especially interested in the history of the Early Slavs, so I read a lot about Saint Cyril and Methodius, who created the first literary Slavic language, called Old Church Slavonic. Thus, I became drawn to the idea of how such a language would look like today and started experimenting.

Q: What specific goals did you envision for the use of Interslavic in real life? What about in the context of international business communication among Slavic-speaking countries?

A: We have written in the memorandum that not everyone should know how to speak Interslavic, but rather the ones who work in culture, business, and public sector offices. And all the other people would simply passively understand the language without ever learning it.

My wish is to see Interslavic being used for signage or safety leaflets on the airplanes or main train stations. This is because the Slavic language group does not have anything there right now. Sometimes there are signs or information in Russian or Polish language, but that is it. And this is terrible in my opinion, because how many people from Slovenia for example can read and understand Russian? My ultimate dream is that the base on the Moon would include Interslavic. This is the vision – the future.

Q: When did the creation process start? And then it was finalised in 2017 when you merged your project with Jan van Steenberg?

A: I started to work on this project in 2009, and Jan started to work on his own independent project around the same time as I did. My first publication about it was in 2010. Then, in 2011, there was a memorandum written about collaboration with Jan's project. After the memorandum, we collaborated on everything that we worked on – for example, I made an information leaflet, and then Jan and his community edited the text. And this went the other way around as well. However, at that time there were still some small differences between the projects (languages). The final unification of both projects then took place in 2017 at the Conference, so after six years of mutual work.

What is interesting is that when each of us started to work on our individual projects, we took two different approaches to constructing a language that would be as understandable as possible to all Slavs. I am a programmer and mathematician, so I used statistical models and coefficients to determine the vocabulary. But Jan, who is a linguist and studied humanities, took a completely different approach. However, the final result of both our approaches turned out to be very, very similar.

Q: Why would you say that the previous attempts for a common Slavic language were unsuccessful?

A: Because there was usually only one author that published a book or two about their new language project and expected others to adapt their language with any willingness to collaborate with other authors. Some also tried to invent unnatural substitutes for commonly known words, such as electricity, computer, robot, etc., and this doesn't make any sense in my opinion.

I believe that a big reason for not achieving success was also because of those authors' orientation to the past. What I mean here is, not many people are interested in reading the Old Bible in a new artificial language, when the content of the Bible is already very well known in the existing languages. So, why would someone learn a new language to access old information? That is why we are trying to provide new information and text that are original, something that is not accessible to every other language. This is essentially a marketing concept – if you want to succeed, you need to have an original product.

Q: How many words does the Interslavic language currently contain? If you realise that a certain word does not yet exist in the Interslavic language, how do you create it? Do you run it through the “Voting Machine”?

A: The dictionary currently contains over 20,000 words, but this grows practically every day, so it is hard to say for certain. The “Voting Machine” is not a generator of new words as some might think but a final check point or final test. We have a “dictionary committee”, that is in charge of the creation of new words based on several different principles.

Q: In your view, what are the key advantages of using Interslavic over established languages like English or Russian in inter-Slavic (business) interactions?

A: Behind every language is always a culture. The Russian language has three problems: linguistic, cultural, and the alphabet. The linguistic problem is because syntax and morphology are not in the centre of Slavic languages but rather at the very edge. That is why the Russian language cannot be a *lingua franca* for inter-Slavic communication. There are also historical and political reasons, of course. The same goes for English.

But other Slavic languages can also be a problem. For example, when Yugoslavia fell apart, six different countries emerged, and with those also political grudges. So, if a sign on a

certain product would be only in the Croatian language, which is well understood by practically all ex-Yugo countries, Serbians might not buy that product. That is why a small toothpaste has instructions for use and ingredients written in 6+ but very similar languages in small print that is barely visible. Here, I see Interslavic as being useful, as it is a culturally neutral language. Writing on this small toothpaste could be written in one language, Interslavic, in a much larger and easier-to-read font. I see great potential for Interslavic being used for different manuals, product descriptions, but also tourism.

I also think that this language is useful not just for tourism, product descriptions, and similar, but also for the prevention of the spread of misinformation and fake news. When the war in Ukraine started, naturally there was an increase in fake news and propaganda from all sides. I think that if there were some sort of financing available, because I am not willing to take this project on for free, that it would be beneficial if everything regarding the situation would be automatically translated also into Interslavic. The news and all information would be therefore automatically understood by all Slavic nations. Propagandists and politicians take great advantage of the language barriers between nations, and Interslavic could overcome these barriers. This is my “positive philosophy”, but still, I believe that this could work.

I remember one meeting that took place in Ljubljana. This was before Covid. Individuals from all Slavic countries were present there, and I was the representative for Czechia. Next to me was sitting the Minister of Culture at the time from Bosnia. The problem at the meeting was deciding on what language we would all speak. The Russian representative, from the Russian Ministry of Culture, pushed for the Russian language, however, South Slavs do not speak and understand Russian, and the others who did speak it, didn't want to. Hence, the decision ended up being that we used English. But the Bosnian Minister didn't understand English, so I translated for her, because I speak a bit of Bosnian. Then, when I wanted to say something, I used Interslavic and everyone understood, so it was better than English in this instance.

Q: You say that you don't see any sense in using artificial languages for writing novels, or to translate novels into artificial languages. But it is very sensible to use it for tourism, as people travel for touristic purposes more and more.

A: Yes, exactly! This is unnecessary. Why would we spend energy to make translations that are already available in your own natural language? At least for now, since we only rely on our own work and the work of volunteers. To make new, original works – that makes sense for our project at the moment. I am pleased to say that we have two composers in our community that produce original works in Interslavic. One of them is from Croatia, and he has a Youtube channel. The second one is from Poland, Melac, and he makes his own songs and music. I think this is great, because whoever wants to listen to them, can only do it in Interslavic.

Q: Please, explain more about the experiment at the Dead Sea in Israel. You said that the result was a success – a success in what way? From the hotel point of view or did all the Slavic tourists understand it?

A: The experiment was prepared as a semester-long project by a student who now works and lives in Poland. If I remember correctly, there was a sheet or a survey next to the leaflet, where Slavic guests could provide feedback on whether they understood the provided information or not, and the result was that over 90% of the guests understood everything. Now that we have the ISO standard, it would be great if we could do this kind of experiment again.

Q: Has any company so far expressed an interest in the Interslavic project?

A: Not yet.

Q: Could you discuss any challenges or limitations associated with the use of Interslavic in international business communication?

A: There are certain situations where it makes no sense to use Interslavic. To provide an example, there is a lawyer who works in the United States and sometimes uses Interslavic in his practice. His name is Steeven Radzikowski, and he worked with Jan on his previous project. So, Mr Radzikowski uses Interslavic for initiating contact with his clients who originate from Slavic-speaking countries and still struggle with English. However, once the initial contact is made, he switches from Interslavic, because the language of law needs to be exact, and all parties must understand 100%, so they cannot make excuses that they were deceived in any way.

Q: How did Covid impact the widespread adoption of the language?

A: The situation is now worse than it was before Covid-19. Our scientific journal practically stopped publishing during that time, all of the conferences were cancelled, and so on. It is hard to do everything online.

But an even bigger negative factor is the war in Ukraine, because now if I start talking about Interslavic, the reaction from some groups of people is “I am not interested in this, I do not support Russia”, however, this project has nothing to do with Russia... This saddens me, because what I am observing is that some people do not want to identify as Slavic anymore. So even though our project is not in any way political, it is harder now to secure collaborations and support from government institutions. On the other hand, I have been accused of being a Russophobe by Russian journalists because of my language project.

Q: What are some challenges that the Interslavic project is currently facing?

A: It is clear that we need marketing and promotion of our project. But there is also a lack of learning resources, because we don't offer any official language classes or have any workbooks.

There also has to be some sort of a jurisdictional authority, that could be held responsible for any kind of problem and that would grant certifications, and so on. We don't have that and we ourselves are not such an authority, we are simply volunteers. And this is a problem that at the moment prevents us from playing a big role in international business. There needs to be an Interslavic institution with international reputation – we are aware of that problem and have started to work on it. We established *Medžuslovjanska Akademija*, modelled on the Esperanto project. However, our *Akademija* is still new and there are only 5 of us. I believe that in a couple of years we will be able to create an institution with a reputation out of this and then we will be able to move forward faster. And what we want to achieve here is also that the Interslavic project will be able to prosper even after Jan and I are long gone.

Q: How do you perceive the potential impact of Interslavic on economic growth and cooperation among Slavic-speaking countries in the long term?

A: I see it as a huge factor for knowledge transfer between Slavic-speaking countries. Some years ago, I collaborated with the University of Trakia in Bulgaria, more specifically with experts in regional management. Bulgaria is in the EU, but it joined a couple of years later than Czechia. To join the EU, certain adjustments have to be made in a country, such as legislation, regional management, regulation in agriculture, etc. Here, countries who had joined before them, could help with the transfer of knowledge. So, we had a conference in Trakia and discussed how the countries could collaborate and exchange expertise. However, when it comes to Czech experts in agriculture, how could they transfer the knowledge and information to a farmer from a small Bulgarian village. You cannot do it in English – firstly, because our Czech expert most likely doesn't speak English well. This is because the best experts about managing farming in a small village are people coming from a small village as well. And secondly, because a Bulgarian farmer doesn't speak English either. From my knowledge, the level of English in the Czech and Bulgarian countryside is very low.

The solution here are one-on-one translation, however, when another farmer needs this knowledge, there has to be another translation. With Interslavic we need just one. This could truly promote collaboration between countries in our Slavic region, because knowledge from different countries would become more accessible to those who are not academics and don't speak English. Our Bulgarian farmer could now access information on how a Polish or Czech farmer does something, and he would understand the majority of it.

Q: How do you anticipate the role of Interslavic evolving as technology and communication methods continue to advance in the business world? Could AI benefit the project?

A: At the moment I am collaborating with a volunteer association where my students are working on virtual reality in the Interslavic language. In the scope of this project, we are also

trying to teach AI to speak Interslavic in the form of a chatbot. I think it would be interesting for young people to be able to play a game in VR in the Interslavic language. AI could probably also help with marketing of our project.

Appendix 3: Transcription of the interview with Andreja Rihter – January 28, 2025

Q: Bi lahko na kratko razložili zakaj so organizacije, kot je Forum slovanskih kultur, pomembne?

A: Midve bi se lahko samo o tej temi verjetno pogovarjali cel dan. Gre za mednarodno ustanovo, ki je nastala pred 20 leti. Situacija takrat in danes je popolnoma drugačna. Leta 2002, ko je bila pobuda za ustanovitev, in nato leta 2004, ko je bila organizacija uradno ustanovljena, so bila sodelovanja na področju kulture med državami, kjer govorimo slovanske jezike, še vedno zelo redka. Takrat se je začelo vzpostavljanje dobrega ponovnega sodelovanja v naši regiji, bivši Jugoslaviji, medtem ko so bili stiki s Poljsko, Češko in Slovaško redki.

Ravno zaradi tega je bil naš namen, da se bolje povežemo, da vemo, kaj delamo, da prepoznamo naše jezike, našo literaturo, saj je nismo dobro poznali. Tako se je rodil tudi prvi projekt – zbirka 100 slovanskih romanov, ki vključuje 108 različnih sodobnih avtorjev, ki so pisali v obdobju padca Berlinskega zidu. Skozi to zbirko se vidi tudi raznolikost situacij v naših državah ob koncu 20. stoletja.

Danes pa to sodelovanje potrebujemo še toliko bolj – v to sem prepričana. Mostovi med nami se iz dneva v dan rušijo, mi pa jih skušamo s kulturo ponovno oživiti.

Q: Ali obstajajo še kakšne sestrške organizacije, podobne vaši?

A: Ne, mi smo edini v vsej Evropi in tudi na svetu, ki povezujemo slovanske kulture. Zanimivo je, da do nas obstaja spoštovanje, vendar je to pogosto mešano z določenimi predsodki, saj je vedenje o slovanskih kulturah in narodih še vedno zelo pomanjkljivo, še posebej v Evropski uniji. V zahodnih državah pogosto ne prepoznajo naše raznolikosti, ne prepoznajo slovanskih jezikov, ne vedo, da v Sloveniji govorimo slovensko, da v Srbiji govorijo srbsko.

Da Poljaki govorijo poljsko, se sicer ve, saj gre za veliko državo z več kot 40 milijoni prebivalcev. Vsi poznajo ruščino, a v naših državah nikakor ne govorimo vsi rusko, daleč od tega. V Sloveniji je drugi tuji jezik angleščina ali pa jeziki naših manjšin, torej italijanščina, nemščina in madžarščina. Rusko se niti jaz pred 50 leti nisem učila v šoli – učila sem se nemško in angleško.

To je torej ogromno zgodb, ogromno nevednosti... In tistega, česar ne poznaš, se pogosto bojiš, se mu izogneš. Ravno zato je naša ustanova še vedno izjemno pomembna in vsak dan postaja še bolj. Sodelovanje v projektih je ključno, saj smo številčno majhni – dva milijona Slovencev, 600 tisoč Črnogorcev, nekaj več kot dva milijona Makedoncev in tako naprej. Če smo sami, smo premajhni, skupaj pa smo lahko močni – in tega se Zahod boji.

Če bi šteli še Rusijo, nas je kar 350 milijonov, vendar Rusije danes ne smemo šteti in tudi ne sodeluje v naših projektih od začetka agresije dalje. Odkar se je začela vojna, Rusija torej ni več vključena v naše projekte. Ko oziroma če se bo ta situacija spremenila, bomo lahko rusko kulturo ponovno vključili. Kar je malo čudno in nenavadno, ampak tako pač je.

Q: Kdaj ste se prvič srečali oziroma kdaj ste prvič slišali za projekt medсловanskega jezika? Kakšne so bile vaše prve misli o projektu?

A: Težko točno rečem, zagotovo pa je bilo to pred Covidom. Dvakrat sem bila na njihovem posvetu, s profesorjem Merunko sva se veliko pogovarjala o tem. Skoraj me je že prepričal, da je ta projekt strašno nujen in pomemben. Sama sicer nisem popolnoma prepričana, moram priznati. V projekt je že vloženega ogromno dela in truda. Žal pa v zadnjem času nimam nobenih informacij, kaj se z njim dogaja.

Profesor Merunka je bil tudi član našega programskega sveta iz Češke in med letoma 2017 in 2019 smo odlično sodelovali. Skupaj smo bili pobudniki za vzpostavitev Kulturne poti Svetega Cirila in Metoda, ki ima danes certifikat in je dala velik zagon gibanju tega projekta.

Q: Spletna stran vaše organizacije je na voljo v skoraj vseh slovanskih jezikih. Ste kdaj razmišljali, da bi jo prevedli še v medсловanski jezik?

A: Ne, nismo. To pa iz čisto tehničnih razlogov. Že zdaj se zelo trudimo – imamo 13 različnih jezikov, od tega pet v cirilici. Brez angleščine pa nismo vidni, saj je ta jezik nujen za širšo dostopnost.

Prevod spletne strani je zelo velik zalogaj. Kadrovsko smo precej okrnjeni in dodaten prevod bi bil preprosto prevelik tehnični napor. Gospod Merunka verjetno ne bi prostovoljno prevedel naše strani...

Je pa res – vidim, da zmigujete z glavo – da ga še nismo vprašali! Morda bi bila to dobra pobuda. Mi seveda proti prevodu nimamo nič, gre samo za tehnični in finančni vzrok, da naša spletna stran ni dostopna še v medсловanskem jeziku.

Q: Torej, če sem vas prav razumela, ste bili do Covida v stiku s tem projektom, potem pa ne več toliko?

A: Tako je, s Covidom se je vse malo “razblinilo”, online pa tudi ni šlo. Venndar imam profesorja Merunko namen ponovno kontaktirati.

Gospod Merunka je takrat začel razvijati idejo, da bi začel razstavljati po knjižnicah. Mi smo mu tu ponudili pomoč promocijsko in bi potem videli povratno informacijo o jeziku v posameznih državah. Ampak, kot sem že omenila, smo tu obstali zaradi Covida. Komunikacija se je prekinila, ker tega se ne da vsega urediti online.

Q: Leta 2017 ste bili častna gostja na konferenci CISLa, kjer je bil medсловanski jezik prvič uporabljen v uradnem javnem okolju. Tam ste torej slišali medсловnščino v živo, v pogovoru – se strinjate s trditvijo avtorjev, da je mogoče razumeti vsaj 80 % jezika brez predhodnega učenja?

A: Ja, absolutno! O tem smo se na konferenci tudi veliko pogovarjali in prišli do zaključka, da gre. Pri tem lahko rečem, da so v naši ustanovi vsi jeziki uradni jeziki. To se pravi, da lahko vsak govori svoj jezik. Na tebi pa potem je, koliko tudi razumeš oziroma koliko se potrudiš.

Na ta način se lahko učinkovito komunicira, saj se mi med seboj zelo dobro razumemo. Imamo namreč sodnike za najprestižnejšo nagrado Slovanskega muzeja Živa, in ti sodniki prihajajo iz različnih držav. Skratka, lahko rečem, da lahko poteka pogovor, tudi ko vsak govori svoj jezik. Poleg tega uporabljamo tudi angleščino, ker imamo sodnike iz Evropske muzejske akademije, med katerimi so tudi Nizozemci, Italijani in Grki.

Jaz bi skozi izkušnje lahko rekla, da so mi skoraj vsi jeziki že zelo blizu. Treba pa je biti previden pri besedah, ki so med jeziki iste, vendar imajo drugačen pomen (t.i. "lažni prijatelji").

Q: Leta 2017 ste na konferenci rekli, da (še) ne govorite medсловanskega jezika. Ste se ga do danes odločili naučiti?

A: Na žalost ne, mogoče kasneje, ko bom v pokoju. Slovanski jeziki so mi zelo pri srcu, še posebej češčina, poljščina in slovaščina. Vse tri se nameravam naučiti, morda pa še kakšnega zraven.

Q: V kakšnem kontekstu bi si lahko predstavljali uporabo medсловanskega jezika v vsakdanjem življenju?

A: Iskreno ne vem točno, kdo bi se za to odločal. V gospodarstvu bi lahko bil uporaben, v kulturnem življenju pa ne toliko, saj vsak narod stremi k ohranjanju svojega jezika.

Q: Tudi Merunka je večkrat poudaril, da ne vidi smisla v pisanju romanov v medсловanščini ampak bolj v sektorju turizma.

A: Ja, s tem se strinjam. To je tudi veliko bolj enostavno.

Q: Kakšne so po vašem mnenju ključne prednosti uporabe tega jezika v primerjavi z uveljavljenimi jeziki, kot sta na primer angleščina in ruščina v interakcijah med Slovani?

A: Sigurno gre malo hitreje oziroma lažje je s komunikacijo. Še posebej na primer z Rusijo, kjer vemo, da govorijo rusko in ostalih tujih jezikov praktično ne. Zdaj, možno je, da se situacija sicer spreminja, imajo verjetno tudi podjetja, kjer zaposleni govorijo angleško, ampak to ni stalna praksa, kot je recimo pri nas. Zaradi trenutne situacije se bodo verjetno vedno bolj uprli pri sebi in samo govorili svoj jezik. Tako da, če bi ta medсловanski jezik, ki je bližje vsem nam, bil na voljo, bi bila to takšna mehka varianta. Ampak potrebovali bi promocijo, promocijo, promocijo... Kako in na kakšen način pa ne vem. Ker nihče ne pozna tega jezika, je še precej nepoznana stvar med širšo javnostjo. Merunka je ob začetku mislil, da bomo lahko v naši organizaciji veliko naredili glede tega. Saj verjetno tudi bi, ker smo lepo začeli s sodelovanjem, ampak je Covid vse skupaj ustavil.

Q: Vidite rabo med slovanskega jezika mogočo v primeru kakšnih poslovnih interakcij? Menite, da je izvedljivo vpeljati ta jezik kot delovni jezik nekega podjetja oziroma organizacije?

A: Če bi se delala promocija in posebni tečajji ter bi potem naredili analizo pozitivnih in negativnih lastnosti, bi lahko katero podjetje prepoznalo potrebo za ta jezik. Sigurno bi bilo to primerno za podjetja, ki imajo zastopstva v vsaj treh, štirih slovanskih državah. Če delaš samo z eno ali dvema državama, se ti z med slovanskim jezikom ne izide. Treba je preračunati, kaj to pomeni v smislu usposabljanja svojih ljudi.

Drugače pa mislim, da so tukaj najbolj primerni trgovci, torej trgovske mreže. Pri tem ne mislim samo na naše, na primer Mercator, ampak tudi na zahodnjake, torej Lidl in Hofer. Zahodnjaki, ki imajo mreže vsepovsod, bi lahko z med slovanskim jezikom marsikoga privabili. Govorim iz tega vidika, da je Nemčija skoraj polovica slovanska država in na splošno, koliko Slovanov živi po celi Evropi. Pri trgovcih vidim potencial tega jezika v promociji, torej oglaševanju izdelkov in akcij, da bi privabili določeno klientelo.

Tudi, če gledamo turizem, na primer Hrvaško poleti, imajo ogromno turistov, med katerimi so večinoma Slovani. Vsaj po izkušnjah, turistični delavci ne govorijo ostalih slovanskih jezikov, razen ruščine, Rusov pa sedaj zaradi sankcij ni več. Z med slovansčino bi torej lahko zapolnili to vrzel.

Kar pa se tiče proizvodnih podjetij, je angleščina vendarle premočna. Ni računice, da bi uporabljali med slovanski jezik.

Q: Kakšne vidite izzive in omejitve v povezavi z uporabo med slovanskega jezika?

A: Največji izziv vidim v nacionalnem ponosu. Slovani smo ponosni na svoje jezike in misel, da bi jih "mešali", bi pri nekaterih lahko naletela na odpor. To je predvsem vprašanje kulturne in jezikovne politike, o kateri bi morale začeti razpravljati tudi državne institucije. Tukaj bi lahko sodelovala naša ustanova, mednarodni forum, ki bi to začel spravljati skupaj. Jaz sem takrat ob začetkih malo poizkušala, pa ni bilo rodni tal, da bi se to prijelo. Niti informacij niso želeli sprejemati, sploh na primer Rusija ne.

Q: Kaj pa z vidika šolstva – se vam zdi, da bi bilo možno imeti med slovanski jezik kot izbirni predmet ali pa nek krožek?

A: Ja, za probati bi bilo. Zakaj pa ne, to je jezik. Ravno to bi bilo dobro, da bi videli – pri otrocih. Ali je zanimanje ali ne. Pilotno bi se to lahko naredilo s prvošolčki. Treba bi bilo seveda slediti postopku, sestaviti ustrezen program po urah in imeti usposobljenega predavatelja. Tukaj vidim težavo, kje dobiti ustreznega predavatelja s certifikatom, kje sploh dobiti ta certifikat, kdo ga lahko izdaja in tako naprej. Verjetno bi to moral gospod Merunka najprej stestirati na Češkem.

Za začetek bi lahko sodelovala slavistična društva ali društva pisateljev, ki bi se osredotočila na to idejo. Društva prevajalcev pa bi bila verjetno še bolj primerna za to nalogo, saj v Sloveniji delujejo močna društva prevajalcev, ki bi lahko predstavila to pobudo določenim strokovnjakom in jo testirala.

Q: S katerimi izzivi se po vašem mnenju trenutno sooča projekt med slovanskega jezika?

A: Ne vem, s katerimi izzivi se projekt trenutno sooča, saj z Merunko nisva bila v stiku že vsaj tri leta. Dobro, da ste tukaj, da ste mi dali iniciativo, da ga zopet kontaktiram. Upam, da ni izgubil energije. Ampak glede na to, da ga obe pozna, lahko sklepava, da ni.

Q: Kako vidite potencialni vpliv projekta med slovanskega jezika na sodelovanje med slovansko govorečimi državami na dolgi rok?

A: Težko je natančno odgovoriti na to vprašanje, saj je med slovanski jezik trenutno še tako malo poznan, da ne more imeti pomembnejšega vpliva, dokler ga večina ljudi ne pozna. Potrebno bi bilo razmisliti o tem, kako bi se ta jezik lahko bolje promoviral. Verjetno bi bilo potrebno privabiti kakšno večje podjetje, ki bi se navdušilo nad tem projektom in bi izvedlo pilot. Kot sem že omenila, bi po mojem mnenju bili najboljši partnerji za to sodelovanje trgovci ali pa različna društva. Na primer, če bi uspeli vzpostaviti dialog s prevajalskimi društvi, bi se lahko začeli pogovarjati o projektu in pričeli z izdajo prevedenih del. Razmišljam, da bi v tem primeru lahko prav tako prevedli našo zbirko 100 slovanskih romanov v med slovanski jezik. Imamo namreč 108 avtorjev in približno 70 prevajalcev. Sedaj je zbirka na voljo v devetih slovanskih jezikih, in gospod Merunka bi lahko, na primer, izbral enega izmed romanov ter ga prevedel. To bi bila zelo lepa in konkretna priložnost za promocijo med slovanskega jezika. Ko enkrat tak prevod obstaja, lahko organiziramo predstavitve po knjižnicah, podjetjih in tako naprej. Dokler pa za jezik ve le malo ljudi, pa je težko govoriti o vplivu, ki bi ga imel.

Appendix 4: Transcription of the interview with Person B – March 6, 2025

Q: Prvih par vprašanj je namenjenih, da malo bolje spoznam vas in podjetje X. Bi se lahko najprej na kratko predstavili in povedali kakšna je vaša vloga v podjetju X?

A: Skrbim za področje izobraževanja in razvoja kadra, vključno z upravljanjem talentov v celotni skupini podjetja X. Močno smo prisotni v tujini, tudi v slovanskih državah.

Našim sodelavcem, ki odhajajo na delo v tujino, omogočamo usposabljanje, ki vključuje kulturno pripravo in učenje tujih jezikov, saj menimo, da se moramo približati tem trgov.

V okviru naše službe izvajamo tudi razvojne pogovore s sodelavci, tako v Sloveniji kot v tujini. Pogovore opravljamo večinoma v slovenskem, angleškem in ruskem jeziku, pri čemer sodelavci lahko, če imajo težave z izražanjem v teh jezikih, odgovarjajo v svojem maternem jeziku in jih večinoma razumemo. Z aktivnim znanjem vsaj enega od teh treh jezikov ne opažamo večjih ovir pri sporazumevanju.

Informacija o obstoju med slovanskega jezika je zame nova. Sprašujem se, ali bi takšen jezik v našem podjetju sploh potrebovali. V kolikor delujemo na določenem trgu, spodbujamo zaposlene, da se učijo jezika, ki ga govorijo v tisti državi. Če na primer naši sodelavci sodelujejo s Poljsko, jih spodbudimo in jim omogočimo učenje poljskega jezika.

Q: Kaj pa glede nabora izobraževanj tujih jezikov – imate na voljo prav vse slovanske jezike, tudi recimo češčino, slovaščino, itd.?

A: Vsako leto zaposlenim ponudimo katalog izobraževanj, ki zajema vsa področja, tudi jezikovna znanja. Najpogosteje se odločajo za jezike trgov, s katerim delajo, kot so angleščina, ruščina, nemščina, španščina, francoščina. Zanimanje za angleščino upada, saj zaposleni že imajo to predznanje, skrbimo torej bolj za nadgradnjo s krajšimi in specializiranimi tečaji. Ruščina pa je še vedno precej priljubljena med zaposlenimi. Čeprav nimamo stalne ponudbe skupinskih jezikovnih tečajev za vse slovanske jezike, omogočamo učenje posameznega jezika tistim, ki sodelujejo z določeno državo in zato potrebujejo znanje tega jezika.

Q: Kdo pa so učitelji jezikov? So to posamični zunanji izvajalci ali kakšne jezikovne šole ali ste mogoče kdaj celo redno zaposlili nekoga?

A: To so zunanji ponudniki. Že vrsto let sodelujemo z različnimi jezikovnimi šolami, s katerimi se dogovorimo o vsebinah oziroma programu za posamezni jezikovni tečaj.

Nekatere jezikovne šole sedaj ponujajo tudi “AI supported” jezikovne tečaje. Tudi zato in zaradi pomoči različnih spletnih prevajalnikov, se mi zdi, da se dejansko zmanjšuje potreba po takšnem umetnem jeziku. Seveda se lahko v tej oceni tudi motim.

Q: Glede predstavništev v tujini, bi lahko prosim delili na kakšen način izbirate zaposlene, ki bi delali tam – torej so to samo interni razpisi, so to predvsem Slovenci, so kakšni posebni kriteriji, kakšne so jezikovne zahteve in če so na voljo kakšna jezikovna in kulturna izobraževanja o državi kamor se kandidat relocira?

A: Imamo zelo raznoliko skupino zaposlenih. V enotah v tujini zaposlujemo pretežno lokalne sodelavce. V kolikor napotujemo Slovence, gre večinoma za vodstvena delovna mesta ali ključne strokovnjake, ki prenašajo naša znanja in tehnologije na posamezne trge.

Več kot 90% vodilnega kadra “vzgojimo” znotraj podjetja. Zelo redko za najvišje funkcije iščemo kandidate preko zunanjih razpisov.

Pred napotitvijo v tujino zaposlenim omogočimo jezikovno in kulturno izobraževanje. Omogočimo jih stik z zaposlenimi, ki že poznajo ta kulturna okolja in jim omogočimo prenos znanja ter izkušenj. Z učenjem jezika zaposleni nadaljuje tudi po odhodu v tujino, lokalno z lokalnimi učitelji.

Q: Je kdaj kateri kandidat zavrnil premestitev v tujinov prav zaradi jezikovnih ovir?

A: Ne, nikoli. Imamo posameznike, ki sodelujejo z več trgi in se naučijo aktivno uporabljati jezike prav vseh svojih držav. Za kvalitetno poslovno sodelovanje je pomembno res dobro znanje tujega jezika.

Q: Verjetno so potem odnosi tudi drugačni, bolj pristni, če znajo lokalni jezik?

A: Absolutno. Tudi jaz poleg aktivnega znanja angleškega jezika dobro razumem in poznam vsaj osnovno besedišče več tujih jezikov. To mi pomaga, da lahko vzpostavim pristnejše stike z zaposlenimi v različnih državah. Res verjamemo, da se je potrebno čim bolj približati in prilagoditi našim zaposlenim in poslovnim partnerjem na različnih trgih.

Q: Kako pa potem poteka komunikacija s predstavništvi v tujini? Če si vzameva Poljsko za primer, ste že rekli, da tam na lokaciji poteka vse v poljščini. Kako pa poteka komunikacija med poljsko podružnico in sedežem v Sloveniji?

A: Večinoma je to angleščina, včasih tudi poljščina in slovenščina. S centralo večinoma komunicirajo strokovnjaki in vodje, ki govorijo angleško, nekateri sogovorniki v centrali pa aktivno govorijo poljski jezik.

Q: Bi lahko predstavili vaš sistem in nabor jezikovnih izobraževanj oziroma tečajev – komu vse so namenjeni in katera skupina zaposlenih se za njih najpogosteje odloča, katere jezike se je mogoče učiti, kakšna je časovnica posameznega tečaja (na primer, so to intenzivni tečaji ali trajajo celo leto ali celo več let)?

A: Možnosti za učenje tujih jezikov so na voljo vsem zaposlenim. Spodbujamo učenje predvsem angleškega in ruskega jezika, ki sta najbolj pogosto uporabljana tuja jezika v skupini podjetja X. Celoletni tečaji tujih jezikov v trajanju od 40-80 ur potekajo popoldan, po dve uri tedensko. Krajši specializirani jezikovni seminarji pa potekajo v obliki celodnevnik delavnic v dopoldanskem času. Imamo tudi intenzivnejše oblike individualnih tečajev, ki se prilagodijo potrebam posameznega zaposlenega.

Za tečaje se odločajo predvsem tisti zaposleni, ki so tako ali drugače pri svojem delu v stiku s tujino. Prijavljajo pa se tudi posamezniki, ki se jezikov učijo iz drugačnih razlogov (širjenje obzorij, možganski trening, druženje s sodelavci). Učenje jezikov v podjetju X zelo podpiramo, saj je komunikacija osnova.

Q: Imate približen podatek kakšen delež vseh izobraževanj zaposlenih predstavljajo jezikovni tečaji? Lahko je približna številka.

A: Če gledamo po obsegu ur za leto 2024, gre za dobre 3%. V preteklosti je bil delež jezikovnih izobraževanj večji. Leta 2019 je bil recimo ta delež približno 10%, torej opažamo upad v učenju tujih jezikov. To pa predvsem zato, ker sodelavci že imajo jezikovna znanja ali pa uporabljajo druge pristope in se za učenje jezikov ne poslužujejo jezikovnih tečajev.

Q: Ali pri zaposlovanju novih kadrov gledate na to ali ima kandidat že obstoječe jezikovne kompetence?

A: Ne, to je bolj kandidatova prednost, ne pa glavni kriterij pri izboru. Bolj je pomembno, da ima oseba strokovna znanja, ki so povezana z delom, ki ga bo opravljala. Jezik se namreč da naučiti in pri tem tudi lahko pomagamo.

Q: Pri učenju jezikov seveda pride do finančnih stroškov, kakšne pa v podjetju X zaznavate nefinančne stroške učenja?

A: Seveda gre na prvem mestu za vložen čas. Potrebno je zagotoviti tudi primerne prostore, saj imajo zaposleni še vedno raje tečaje v živo kot online. Vse to se lahko izračuna kot strošek za podjetje, ampak mi ta strošek razumemo kot investicijo v zaposlenega, v boljše sodelovanje in lažjo komunikacijo.

Q: Hvala za vpogled v delovanje podjetja X, zdaj bi pa začeli še bolj konkretno s temo med slovanskega jezika. Prej ste že omenili, da preden sem vas jaz kontaktirala, še niste slišali za med slovanski jezik?

A: Tako je, nisem. Od umentih jezikov mi je poznan samo Esperanto, a še nisem srečala nikogar, ki bi ga dejansko uporabljal.

Q: Med slovanski jezik je umetno ustvarjen jezik in narejen na način, da ga vsak Slovan brez predhodnega učenja razume vsaj 80%. Značilnost tega jezika, in na splošno večini umetnih jezikov je ta, da nima slovničnih izjem in posebnosti, skratka, da je čim lažji za učenje. Slovnico se da na primer naučiti v 2-3 dneh samostojnega učenja. Glede na podane informacije o med slovanskem jeziku in vaše praktične izkušnje iz delovnega mesta v podjetju X, katere se vam zdijo ključne prednosti uporabe med slovansčine v primerjavi z uveljavljenimi jeziki, kot sta angleščina ali ruščina, v med slovanskih interakcijah? Katere pa so po vašem mnenju slabosti?

A: Če je res tako enostaven, potem je prednost zagotovo hitrost učenja. Po naših izkušnjah namreč zaposleni za aktivno znanje na primer ruščine potrebuje vsaj štiri leta učenja. Učenje med slovanskega jezika bi torej lahko služilo kot nekakšna hitra priprava za uporabo slovanskih jezikov in lahko pomaga pri prilagoditvi v novem okolju.

Vendar pa je za uspešno poslovanje in interakcijo s strankami ključna prilagoditev lokalnemu jeziku. Med slovanski jezik omogoča razumevanje približno 80%, kar ni dovolj za nobenega od slovanskih trgov, kjer smo prisotni.

Q: V kakšnih situacijah bi bila z vašega vidika uporaba tega jezika smiselna? Ni nujno, da je v poslovnem svetu.

A: Uporaba med slovanskega jezika bi bila smiselna za orientacijo v tuji slovanski državi, predvsem na področju turizma. Z napredkom tehnologije in umetne inteligence imamo sicer na voljo že tudi orodja (Google Lens, Chat GPT ipd.), ki močno olajšajo razumevanje besedil v tujih jezikih.

Q: Ali mislite, da je sploh izvedljivo oziroma možno, da podjetje uvede med slovansčino kot delovni jezik? Kateri viri bi bili potrebni?

A: Teoretično bi bilo možno. Pri nas konkretno ne vidim potrebe, saj komunikacija praviloma poteka med posamezno podružnico in centralo v Sloveniji in ne med posameznimi podružnicami. Učenje med slovanskega jezika bi bilo smiselno v primeru intenzivne neposredne komunikacije med enotami v različnih slovanskih državah.

Viri, ki bi bili za to potrebni, bi bili enaki, kot so za učenje ostalih tujih jezikov. Med slovanski jezik bi torej bil dodaten tuj jezik v naši ponudbi jezikovnih izobraževanj. Za izvedbo takšnega tečaja bi potrebovali gradivo oziroma program (katere tematike bi se obravnavale), ustreznega predavatelja in lokacijo za izvajanje tečaja.

Q: Znotraj skupine podjetja X deluje tudi enota z dejavnostjo turizma, soavtor jezika pa največji praktični potencial vidi ravno na področju turizma. V hotelu ob Mrtvem morju je bil približno 10 let nazaj izveden tudi eksperiment, in sicer so v hotelu Oasis, kjer so bili takrat pogosti gosti iz različnih slovansko-govorečih držav, informativno tablo prevedli v med slovanski jezik. Tam je pisalo kdaj so obroki, kako priti do plaže, kdaj je check out in podobno. To se je izkazalo za uspeh, saj so gosti razumeli podane informacije. Menite, da bi kaj podobnega v prihodnosti lahko poizkusili tudi v vaši enoti? Tako bi se recimo prilagodili tistim gostom iz Poljske, Češke in Slovaške, ki ne govorijo dobro angleško.

A: Zanimivo, da sem tudi jaz intuitivno takoj izpostavila področje turizma. Konkretno si za našo enoto tega ne upam trditi, ker slabo poznam strukturo gostov. Če predpostavimo strukturo gostov iz slovanskih držav, potem se mi zdi uporaba med slovanskega jezika uporabna.

Q: Kako bi se pa vam osebno zdelo, da bi recimo obiskali Bratislavo in bi bila v hotelu tabla v med slovanskem jeziku?

A: Ne vem, če bi jezik sploh prepoznala kot med slovanski, če ne bi bil posebej označen. Lahko bi menila, da gre za slovaščino in bila prijetno presenečena, da kar precej razumem.

Q: Sama sem bila ravno na Slovaškem v situaciji, ko me je domačin »okregal«, zakaj z njim govorim angleško, če sem iz Slovenije. Naj govorim slovensko in me bo več razumel. Ste se kdaj znašli v kakšni podobni situaciji oziroma zadregi?

A: Jaz imam včasih dilemo pri uporabi hrvaškega ali srbskega jezika. Sem namreč iz generacije, ki se je v šoli učila še srbohrvaško. V situacijah, ko ocenim, da je posameznik občutljiv na neustrezno rabo posameznih besed, potem raje uporabljam angleški jezik.

Q: Kako vidite potencialni vpliv med slovansčine na gospodarsko rast in sodelovanje med slovanskimi državami na dolgi rok?

A: Menim, da se regija že sedaj zelo povezuje. Dvomim, da bi se gospodarsko povezovanje v regiji bistveno povečalo prav zaradi uporabe med slovanščine. Bi pa znala uporaba tega jezika olajšati komunikacijo in preseči določene komunikacijske ovire.

Appendix 5: Transcription of the interview with Person C – March 24, 2025

Q: Bi se lahko najprej na kratko predstavili in povedali kakšna je vaša vloga v podjetju Y?

A: Sem mednarodni edukator za frizerje in prodajnike oziroma distributerje frizerskih izdelkov, ki jih proizvaja podjetje Y. Podjetje Y je slovensko podjetje, ki se ukvarja z razvojem, proizvodnjo in trženjem kozmetičnih izdelkov.

Q: Kje potekajo izobraževanja za frizerje in prodajnike? V katerem jeziku so?

A: Imamo dva sklopa izobraževanj, in sicer daljši 5-dnevni tečaj za tiste, ki pridejo prvič, in krajši 3-dnevni osvežitveni tečaj, ki poteka vsako leto. Ta izobraževanja so zelo intenzivna in trajajo po cel dan v našem salonu.

Glede jezika je malo zahtevna situacija. Udeleženci večinoma pridejo iz večjih evropskih držav naenkrat. V veliki večini so to iz slovansko govorečih držav, pa tudi iz Romunije, Gruzije, Baltika in podobno. Ko skupina pride prvič na izobraževanje, je treba udeležence pokombinirati po jezikovnih skupinah. Ponavadi razdelimo v tri skupine: angleško govoreči, adriatic skupina in mešana skupina. Pri adriatic skupini poteka komunikacija v srbohrvaščini, saj jo vsi razumejo. Najbolj zapletena situacija je seveda pri mešani skupini, saj to pomeni, da ne razumejo ne slovensko, ne srbohrvaško, niti angleško. V tej skupini so ponavadi frizerji iz Poljske, Češke, Slovaške, Ukrajine, Rusije, Belorusije, pa tudi iz Baltskih držav. Za mešano skupino zato najamemo dve prevajalki. Imamo eno prevajalko, ki prevaja kar jaz govorim v slovenščini v ruščino, za tiste iz Rusije, Belorusije, Ukrajine in Baltskih držav. Z drugo prevajalko pa imamo izredno srečo, da smo jo našli – ona živi v Sloveniji, po rodu je Poljakinja, tekoče pa govori še Slovaško. Tako lahko pokrije Poljake, Slovake in Čehe, če pa nje ne bi imeli, pa bi morali najeti več prevajalcev, za vsak jezik posebjaj. Vsak prevajalec pa seveda predstavlja dodaten strošek.

Jaz večinoma predavam v slovenščini, razen, če kateri od najetih prevajalcev na zna slovensko, potem govorim v angleščini. Za angleško in adriatic skupino pa prevajajo naši frizerji, ki so zaposleni v podjetju Y.

Q: Torej, če prav razumem, predavanje poteka za vse jezikovne skupine naenkrat?

A: Ja, tako je. Gre za ogromno nekega kombiniranja in usklajevanja, prav tako traja vse veliko dlje časa... Jaz najprej povem en stavek v slovenščini in potem prevajalci vsak svoji skupini prevedejo. In to gre stavek za stavek, vse torej traja še enkrat dlje, kot če bi recimo vsi razumeli angleško.

Q: Glede na to, da se gre za jezikovno zelo raznolike skupine, so to tudi številčno velike?

A: Ne, sploh ne. Ponavadi jih je približno 10, ampak je iz vsake države eden. Torej, če za primer vzamem naš 5-dnevni tečaj; ta je namenjen tistim, ki pridejo na novo v tistem letu in to je ponavadi en frizer na državo.

Za naše krajše osvežitvene tečaje pa je lažje, saj že vemo, kdo govori kateri jezik in damo na primer vse angleško govoreče na isti termin in takrat ne potrebujem prevajalcev.

Q: Me je malo presenetilo, da toliko veliko frizerjev ne razume angleško. O kakšni starostni skupini udeležencev govoriva?

A: Večinoma so stari med 30 in 50 let. Nekateri, sicer redki, so tudi še starejši, ampak pod 30 pa zadnjih par let ni bil noben. Za znanje angleščine opažam, da niti ni toliko odvisno od starosti, ampak bolj od države iz katere prihajajo. Frizerji iz Balkana, pa tudi, če so stari komaj 30, le redko znajo angleško. Na primer tudi moja sodelavka, ki je stara 36 in se je par let nazaj iz Srbije preselila v Slovenijo, se tam v šoli nikoli ni učila angleško ampak nemško. Angleško se je sama začela učiti zaradi boljših priložnosti za službo.

Tudi Poljaki redko govorijo angleško. V našem osvežitvenem tečaju je bilo nazadnje sedem Poljakov, od tega sta dva razumela angleško. Bili so tudi štirje Čehi, od njih je samo eden znal angleško. Iskreno, sem bila na začetku kar malo presenečena. V smislu, da sem pričakovala boljše znanje tujih jezikov, ker se mi zdi, da smo v Sloveniji kar močni z angleščino. Verjetno je to zato, ker smo tako majhni.

Sicer če pogledamo frizerje na splošno – mi opravimo srednjo šolo, kjer je poudarek na strokovnih predmetih in praksi. V Ljubljani smo imeli angleščino, vendar ni bila tako zahtevna kot recimo pri vrstnikih na gimnaziji. Skratka, nimamo neke visoke splošne izobrazbe, ker je velik poudarek na praksi, kar je logično pri našem poklicu.

Ne vem, kako je z angleščino recimo v osnovnih in srednjih šolah na Poljskem. Oziroma kako je bilo toliko let nazaj, saj so naši udeleženci že starejši. Ampak opažam, da so v nekem svojem “mehurčku”, ker ne čutijo nobene potrebe po učenju angleščine. Ko pridejo k nam enkrat na leto, tako ali tako dobijo prevajalca, preostanek leta pa normalno opravljajo svoje delo v salonu na Poljskem. Tudi ti Poljaki, ki jih mi naučimo tu v Sloveniji, potem prirejajo svoja izobraževanja na Poljskem za frizerje, ki uporabljajo naše produkte, in to seveda poteka v poljskem jeziku. Vsake toliko časa grem pa jaz tja in takrat oni zagotovijo tistega enega prevajalca. Skratka, v klasični obliki poklic frizerja nekega službenega potovanja v tuje države in srečevanja s tujimi jeziki po večini ne zajema. Zato na učenju jezikov tudi ni poudarka med našim šolanjem.

Q: Kje (če sploh) vidite priložnost za uporabo med slovanskega jezika pri vašem delu?

A: Čez dan še imamo prevajalce, zvečer, ko imamo skupno večerjo z vsemi, pa prevajalcev več ni. Tukaj pride do zoprne situacije, ker čeprav je večerja poslovna, je njen glavni namen, da se med državami podružimo in malo bolje spoznamo, saj je namen z večino frizerji neko dolgoročno sodelovanje, kjer so odnosi zelo pomembni. Vendar se s tistimi, ki ne razumejo angleško ali srbohrvaško, žal ne moreš pogovarjati, kar je res škoda. Ravno tukaj vidim

uporabno vrednost med slovanskega jezika. Da bi lahko tekom naših druženj komunicirala tudi z njimi in bi me oni večino razumeli.

Pa tudi med samim seminarjem, ko imamo praktični del in želim nekomu na hitro nekaj pokazati, da ne rabim vedno okoli iskat, kje je prevajalec. Vendar, če imamo teoretično izobraževanje, kjer je terminologija in točnost izrazov zelo pomembna, tam pa med slovanski jezik ne pride v poštev za nas.

Drugače pa priložnost vidim tudi za dijake in študente, ki grejo na razne Erasmus izmenjave v Slovanske države. Za tistih nekaj mesecev, ko se preseliš v tujino, verjetno ne boš prej posvetil celo leto učenju lokalnega jezika. Ker se med slovansko (po trditvah) lahko naučiš bistveno, hitreje, da te nato lokalci razumejo vsaj 80%, se mi zdi kar smiselno. Jaz sem šla tekom šolanja na enomesečno Erasmus prakso v Francijo in so jezikovne ovire predstavljale res veliko težavo. Vodje prakse niso znale besedice angleško, jaz nič francosko. Pred odhodom se nisem veliko posvečala učenju francoščine, ker se mi en mesec prakse ni zdelo dovolj dolgo, da bi prej vložila veliko ur v učenje. Če bi takrat recimo vedela za kakšno francosko različico med slovanskega jezika, bi se jo zagotovo šla učiti.

Q: Ste za med slovanski jezik oziroma *InterSlavic* slišali že preden sem vas povabila na intervju?

A: Ja, sem ga zasledila na TikToku, in sicer je bil posnetek od neke blond gospodične, ki je pela v tem med slovanskem jeziku.

Q: Pa ste jezik razumeli?

A: Sem razumela praktično vse, mi je bilo zelo zanimivo. Sicer sem v sklopu službe toliko v stiku z vsemi slovanskimi državami, da rdečo nit njihovega pogovora vedno razumem in jezike med sabo tudi ločim. Prej na primer ne bi znala razločiti češčine in poljščine, zdaj s tem nimam težav. Ampak vseeno sem med slovansko razumela veliko več kot poljsko, pa čeprav sem s poljščino občutno več v stiku.

Q: Če bi vam podjetje Y ponudilo možnost učenja med slovanskega jezika, bi se ga bili pripravljene naučiti?

A: Ja, absolutno. Se mi zdi, da bi mi zelo prav prišel. Tudi, ko imamo kakšne mednarodne dogodke v naši regiji, na primer modne revije, bi mi v *backstage-u* res pomagal. Na takih dogodkih je veliko delegiranja in če s tistimi, ki naj bi ti pomagali nimaš skupno razumljivega jezika, je sama zmeda.

Malo mimogrede, danes pred intervjujem sem se pogovarjala s sodelavko, o čem imam z vami intervju in še nikoli ni slišala za ta jezik. Potem sem ji na TikToku pokazala primer in je bila čisto navdušena, da tudi ona razume. Ona se je naši ekipi namreč pridružila lani in od tujih jezikov govori in razume izključno angleščino, tudi srbohrvaško ne. Je rekla, da če bi bila opcija, da bi se tudi ona želela tega naučiti. Sploh zato, ker se je hitreje za naučiti in ker bi lahko "pokrila" vse slovanske države, ne samo ene.

Appendix 6: Transcription of the interview with Emil Anton – March 24, 2025

Q: In August 2024, you organised a guided tour of Helsinki conducted in Interslavic. Could you describe the event in more detail? How many people attended, and what were their backgrounds? Did all participants have a Slavic linguistic background, and how well did they understand the language?

A: The tour took place in August 2024 and had around 50 participants. Among them, one Polish attendee estimated that he understood about 50% of the content, while six others reported comprehension levels of 80-90%. The remaining 40 or so participants said they understood between 90% and 100%.

Most participants were from Russia and Ukraine. There were also three people from Poland, one from Slovakia, possibly one from the Czech Republic (I don't remember exactly), a Finnish woman who knew Slovenian, one person who spoke both Croatian and Russian, and about five Russian-speaking attendees from Kazakhstan.

Q: Considering the success of the event, do you plan to organise similar Interslavic-language tours or other activities in the future?

A: Yes, I would definitely like to organise another public walking tour in Interslavic. In fact, I am planning one for August 14, 2025, during Helsinki's Night of the Arts. This would be another opportunity to test Interslavic in a real-world setting and introduce it to a broader audience. If you are in Helsinki at that time, you are welcome to join.

Q: I would like to ask about your personal experience with the language. How did you first learn about Interslavic, and what motivated you to study it?

A: I first encountered Interslavic through the Ecolinguist YouTube channel. Later, I discovered additional resources on the Interslavic and Melaca channels. My interest grew, and I decided to test my knowledge at the Polyglot Gathering in Teresin (Poland), where I participated in an Interslavic competition and won third place. I actually learnt about the competition when I was already traveling from Helsinki to Poland, so my practice lasted only for the 45 minute taxi drive.

Following that, I began reading materials by Jan van Steenbergen and Vojtěch Merunka online. Additionally, I listened to content created by Michal and Aleksey on YouTube, which helped me improve my understanding of the language.

Q: Have you had opportunities to use Interslavic outside of structured events, such as the Helsinki tour? If so, in what contexts?

A: Yes, several times! I've spoken Interslavic in a Gorani restaurant in Finland, with tourists from South Slavic countries in Helsinki, with a Bulgarian at a conference, and even during a magic trick at an international festival (I'm also a magician, by the way!).

Appendix 7: Transcription of the interview with Michal Swat – May 10, 2025

Q: Did any company/start up/entrepreneur ever expressed interest to implement Interslavic language in their operations?

A: Yes, there have been several inquiries regarding the implementation of Interslavic in company operations. I remember years ago, a Polish man approached me interested in learning Interslavic. He frequently traveled across Central Europe and the Balkans for work and believed learning Interslavic would be highly beneficial.

I also collaborated with app developers who wanted their app available in Interslavic. I don't recall the name, but it was designed for people to meet in a non-romantic, everyday context. My colleagues and I provided them with the full interface and code in Interslavic, though the app is no longer active.

Additionally, a cryptocurrency startup contacted us, and we similarly provided them with an Interslavic interface.

There's also a man in the United States who runs his own company and regularly uses Interslavic, primarily for initial client contact. However, I do not know him personally.

Another example that comes to mind is a tourist accommodation booking website from Cuba which is called Casa Santa Fe. The company contacted me as they wanted its entire website translated into Interslavic.

Q: Did the booking website from Cuba mention why they wanted their website to be translated into Interslavic? Why did they recognise the need for it?

A: Essentially, they wanted a cost-effective way to accommodate Slavic-speaking tourists. Since they had visitors from various Slavic countries, they preferred a single translation instead of maintaining multiple language versions of their website.

This happened years ago when I was unfamiliar with standard translation rates, so I quoted them at a ridiculously low price. It was around 100 Polish złoty, which is approximately 20 Euros, so of course they agreed.

Q: What are the challenges that Interslavic language project is currently facing?

A: I see the main challenge in the fact that we, the individuals working on the project, are volunteers who only collaborate online. Our group is decentralised and works together only on the internet. This is a problem because we do not know each other in real life. Some are even anonymous - we don't know what they look like or their real names. So, if they decide to stop collaborating and delete their accounts, we can't reach out to convince them to return. They're simply gone. They might also delete all the materials they've worked on, and none of us can recover them.

Another big problem is the lack of funding. Without money, it is hard to work on big projects, conduct extensive linguistic analyses, or promote the project effectively. For example, I have been working on this for 11 years without getting paid for practically anything, as I have done it all as a volunteer. Only recently have I started receiving some financial support, but it is far from enough to live on. What I mean is, not many people are willing to dedicate as many unpaid hours to this project as I have.

Furthermore, because of the lack of funding, we cannot afford to hire professionals. We have to rely on volunteers, and we cannot be selective about who helps. That is why some tasks take longer than they should. We are not experts in every field, so we are learning as we go.

This is why we are forming organisations like the InterSlavic Linguistic Forum Foundation (*Fundacija MedžuSlovjansko Jezyčno Forum*), which I initiated. It is the first InterSlavic foundation, created to address these problems and to open InterSlavic up to institutions - governmental, international, and especially educational. InterSlavic needs to be tested in these areas, and for that, we need resources and funding. Partnerships with institutions could also help us access grants. Right now, I am trying to secure some grants, but since I have never done this before, I am learning the application process as I go, which takes a lot of time. That is why this is challenging, and why we need funding to hire experts who could help the project move forward.

Another challenge that I am observing is that there are many incorrectly translated materials online. Some people translate texts or even online games by themselves without consulting those of us actively working on the project who are experts in InterSlavic translation and could check or improve their work. As a result, these incorrect translations end up online, and newcomers to our community cannot tell the difference between accurate and inaccurate versions. Even though these materials technically promote the language, it is still a “bad” promotion.

Appendix 8: Rules of the Interslavic Discord server

1. Write in Interslavic everywhere where it is needed. Use other languages in dedicated channels. If you don't know it yet – you can try, that's not a problem. But don't use other language in channels which are dedicated to Interslavic language.
2. Intensive spamming will be a reason for ban.
3. Server is totally apolitical. If you came here just to say your point of view for some political things, you have one dedicated channel for that. You can discuss about politics only in Interslavic language.
4. Every controversial discussion you will start will be a reason for ban.
5. If in your avatar or your Discord nickname you have some symbols which are related with racism, fascism, or other systems and people which are commonly considered as bad, you will be kicked out without warning. Change your avatar and nickname and then return back.
6. Insulting will be a reason for ban.
7. NSFW content is possible only in channel tagged as NSFW.

Appendix 9: Rules of the Interslavic subreddit

1. No off-topic posts

This community is focused on the topic of the Interslavic language; anything unrelated does not belong here.

2. No politicization

The language serves as a neutral platform for communication and not for advancing the power ambitions of various actors. The community is not a space for political conflict.

3. No hate speech

This forum is not intended for spreading hate speech, and such behavior will not be tolerated.

4. No disinformation

Do not spread disinformation.

Appendix 10: Information leaflet in the Interslavic language at the Hotel Oasis at the Dead Sea in Israel.

The following is part of an information leaflet in the Interslavic language that was available for Slavic guests at the Hotel Oasis at the Dead Sea in Israel:

“Dragi gosti!

Do hotela se možete prigrasiti od 15:00. Iz hotela trěba se odglasiti do 11:00.

Vrěme otvorjenja restavranta Marine (na 1. etaži): zajutrak 7:00 – 10:30, večerja 18:00 – 20:30.

Lobby-Bar jest otvorjeny vsaky den od 11:00 do 22:30. Lobby-Bar ves den přědlagaje Vam malejedenja. Večerom Vas v Lobby-Baru priglašajemo na veseljenje s živoju muzikoju.

Kompleks SPA jest otvorjeny od 8:00 do 18:00. Uslugy SPA sodrživajut basen s vodoju iz Mrtvogo Morja, jacuzzi, saunu, turečsko kupanje i fitness. Sovětujemo Vam, že byste uslugy sobě najskoro rezervovali v recepciji SPA ili po telefonu na čislu 8040.

Hotel takože imaje svoju privatnu plaž. Plaž jest na drugoj straně ulice desno (napravo) od Ambulancije. Vstup na plaž jest črěz velike zelene vrata. Hotelova plaž jest otvorjena od 7:30 do 18:00. Na plaž takože ide hotelovy transport vsakyh 15 minut od centralnogo vhoda.”