Preface

This publication is a result of a productive collaboration between research partners from institutions of higher education from Germany (Chemnitz), Macedonia (Skopje, Ohrid/Bitola), Albania (Vlora), Serbia (Niš, Vršac) and Croatia (Split). Most partners had first met in Albania in 2011, but the project was expanded systematically to Niš in 2017, to Split in 2018 and to Vršac in 2019. The collaboration, funded by the DAAD, was set up to establish a Dialogue with and between countries from South-Eastern Europe. The complex topic "Conflicting Truths in Academic and Journalistic Writing" provided a broad basis for a better understanding of reading and writing academic and media texts, for discussing openly controversial topics from the local-national level to the national-international level. Despite this diversity, the discussions were usually coloured by personal involvement and commitment, which made all parts of the project such a great experience for all participants that they were all very keen to continue. In 2019, the project included a workshop (in Vršac in May 2019), study visits to Chemnitz (in July 2019), a summer school (in Ohrid in August 2019), and this publication.

This volume opens with a general perspective on "conflicting truths" and how the concept is understood in the scope of the project. Schmied's first contribution centres around the concept of "truth" and the implications of its meanings. It provides a definition of "truth(s)" based on insights from philosophical and cognitive theories and traces the forms of "conflicting" truths as they are expressed in images, narratives, and figures of statistics. The related concepts of "untruth", "misinformation", "fake news" are discussed in light of intention and in their context of information dissemination.

The contribution by Đorđević turns to the media consumer discourse and analyses a corpus of comments on news articles on the Serbian President Vučić with regard to Priština's decision to transform Kosovo Security Forces into a regular army. After discussing the role of truth in the media in general and particularly with respect to the Serbian context, she argues for the role of news comments in the wider media discourse. The results of her corpus analysis systematise comment types together with their number of agreeing and disagreeing clicks. The number of clicks following a comment is shown to signify what truth readers and bots choose to support in the media.

Schmied's second contribution investigates the public debate in the German media on the Framing Manual for the German Public Broadcasting Services (ARD). The expert report is viewed as itself being framed in its presentation. The author addresses the framing advice through a critical discourse analysis, discusses the implications of recurring key terms such as "moral" and critically scrutinises the report as a whole. The media dispute is shown to present a case of conflicting objectivities.

The contribution by Dheskali explores the framing of the Israeli-Palestine conflict by American, Israeli and Palestinian journals, and Arab-speaking networks. The analysis of a corpus of reports reveals starkly contrasting

perspectives by the Israeli and Palestinian media evident from the lexical choices, hedging other's sources and boosting own sources. The use of nonlinguistic devices such as pictures is also shown to shape each side's view. While the American journals are found to predominantly share the Israeli perspective, the Palestinian perspective is shared by the Arab speaking networks.

Prtljaga's corpus analysis of speeches and interviews of the Serbian President looks at modality as a transmitter of conflicting truths. It accounts for the qualitative and quantitative differences in the use of modal verbs, modal adverbs and adjectives, and mental state predicates expressing epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality. The analysis of the presidential discourse shows that modal verbs are frequently used, yet extremely rarely in the epistemic sense, indicating a reluctance to hedge and tendency towards persuasiveness, firmness, and confidence.

The contribution by Mitić explores (non)lingual elements in media discourse such as numbers, hashtags, hyperlinks, videos, and pictures. It evaluates their impact through an analysis of pro- and antigovernmental media coverage of the "1 of 5 million" protest in Serbia. The study compares the number of articles published by the two sides as well as the number of visitors, pictures, videos, likes, dislikes, shares, posts and comments. It also juxtaposes the numbers of protest participants and supporters presented in the news. The comparison concludes that pro-governmental media uses more nonlingual elements than anti-governmental media, and that this can shape the perceived truth.

In the student section, the contribution by Dheskali, Zenelaj, and Pashaj looks at modal assessments in a corpus of articles on Brexit published on UK, EU and USA news websites. Addressing the articles from a systemic functional perspective, the authors identify low, medium, and high levels of probability, usuality, and degree. The predominance of uncertainty in the examined texts is related to the complexity of the topic of Brexit and its own indeterminateness. The study concludes that journalists use modal assessments to show distance from their statements, to argue the truthfulness of events, to increase the likelihood of situations or to emphasize their severity.

The contribution by Ivanova focuses on concession as a grammatical device to reconcile conflicting truths in reviews. It explores how different concessive constructions assert truths and how these truths are influenced by the underlying presuppositions of 'the norm'. The analysis of a corpus of single- and double-blind open peer reviews shows that reviewers combine positive and negative evaluation with different emphasis. Concession generally enables reviewers to assert conflicting truths on three overlapping levels – the individual, the field, and the venue.

Palinkašević investigates competing views on healthy diets both in the broader context of a popular Serbian women's magazine and in the specific context of Serbian preschool teaching. The study first reviews previous research on the role of healthy eating in preschools and society. It then conducts a discourse analysis of *Beauty and Health* newspaper articles and shows conflicting images of healthy eating in the same magazine. Finally, it presents the results of semi-structured

interviews with preschool teachers that again demonstrate conflicting truths in the perception of what a healthy diet is.

Shalevska approaches the distinctive framing in the media coverage of the flight of the North Macedonian former Prime Minister after being sentenced to two years in prison. She compares the contrasting representations of the event in the reports of pro-governmental and anti-governmental news portals. The analysis identifies lexical choices, few hedges, many boosters and attractive titles, which are viewed as a discourse strategy to shape and distort the truth about the event.

The discourse analysis by Milojković addresses the coverage of the "1 of 5 million" protest in Serbia in the news outlets *Politika* and *N1info*. It focuses on the quoting of credible sources and lexical choices and shows how these are used to a different extent in the two compared sources. The analysis finds that *N1info* has produced a more objective account of the events by including both pro- and anti-government sides. The study confirms that discourse can shape the perception of truth in the media and that news reporting should be approached critically.

Lokvenec turns to a literary case of conflicting truths in Nabokov's *Lolita*. The narrator Humbert is shown to manipulate the truth through alliterations, puns, allusions and repetition of word patterns, which eventually diminish the severity of his acts. She discusses the role of truth in fiction and the manipulative power of language. The analysis looks at the reliability of the narrator and explores the function of literary devices and dialogue structure for the representations of conflicting truths in *Lolita*.

In the teaching section, Dheskali examines the use of descriptive statistics to express alternative truths in academic writing. The author discusses core methods such as measures of central tendency, correlation and causation as well as research design components like dependent and independent variables, sample, balance and representativeness and explains from a teacher's perspective how statistics can be used in academic writing to mislead and lie. Statistics are shown to be a powerful means to shape the reader's interpretation.

The contribution by Albrecht concentrates on topic modeling as an explorative approach to unveil the true topics of a text objectively. It guides through the process of conducting automated text analysis with latent Dirichlet allocation and demonstrates it on a corpus of political speeches by the Chinese president Xi Jinping. The contribution draws attention to important considerations of the researcher when using topic modelling such as determining the number of topics and teaches how statistical measures of perplexity and coherence can be used to do this. The selected number of topics impacts the constitution of the modelled groups and accordingly shapes the generated truths about the text they summarise. Four- and five-topic models are found to be most useful for the analysis of the dataset in this case. The author works in line with open science by providing the data and the models under open access.

Goredema addresses the role of conflicting truths in the Advanced English curriculum for Saxony. The contribution investigates the attitude of preservice and in-service teachers in Saxony towards the discussion of sensitive topics (e.g., racism, medical ethics, and sexuality) in the English classroom. A survey reveals

which topics are deemed to be contentious, controversial, or objectionable. The main areas of discomfort for preservice teachers include black consciousness and affirmative action. In the case of in-service teachers, topics pertaining to capital punishment, abortion and transgenderism produced a wider range of responses.

Petrovska and Ivanova approach the teaching of lexical patterns from the English and Macedonian media discourse. They discuss how teaching English for specific (media) purposes confronts teachers with issues of conflicting truths in the stages of material development, teaching, and testing, as the translation and formulation of native-language sequences raises issues of discourse framing and translation equivalence. Teachers and students are confronted with different translation options even for relatively uniform lexical patterns and each of them could be used to convey a different truth about the reported event. After showing the problematics of teaching media English through concrete examples from the Macedonian context, the authors provide suggestions for the design of exam materials and conclude with thoughts on the connection between teaching a foreign language, lexical patterns, and media framing.

Finally, a few considerations on, mainly non-native, English academic style. This volume reflects the different research traditions and style conventions in European universities. This was clearly visible in the workshop, the study visits, the summer school, and the individual contributions here, as in the previous project volumes (Schmied Ed. 2015 and Schmied & van der Bom Eds. 2017 and Schmied & Dheskali Eds. 2018). We do not see this as unwanted heterogeneity, but rather as an interesting case of alternative discourses, where authors and editors have to find a compromise between disciplinary conventions and individual "heterogeneities". As usual, we tried to guide authors in essential academic issues like clear and explicit substantiation of their argumentation by direct reference to their sources and data or enough examples of a prototypical (but also non-prototypical and thus difficult) type. We saw this as a way towards achieving more professional credibility and professionalism, even allowing more conflicting truths, in the sense discussed in most contributions in this volume.

Despite this awareness of standard versus heterogeneity, we have expanded our section for novice writers' contributions and added a section on teaching. Here, we interpreted the "standard" more flexibly in a functional sense, especially from a readers' or processing perspective. Thus, we found clear reader guidance through metalanguage desirable as a courtesy to more or less professional readers. We appreciated when paragraphs had clear topic sentences (e.g. *conflicting truths can also be found in academic writing* followed by three elaboration paragraphs and a climax sentence), when main points of argumentation were clearly fore-grounded (e.g. by combining clauses with clear cohesive devices like *thus* or by focussing constructions like *What is particularly important …*) or when unnecessary complications were avoided (e.g. replacing *In this contribution, linguistic aspects are discussed …* by *This contribution discusses linguistic aspects …*). However, we did not insist on them, even if we pointed out possible "improvements" in many contributions, to make all contributors aware that re-editing and proofreading often take more time than developing an abstract or a first draft.

We also found it convenient when empirical qualitative and particularly quantitative analyses follow a conventional IMRaD structure of Introduction (better: Issue), Methodology, Research and Discussion. Yet, we allowed alternative, often more narrative, discourses, as long as they had their own clear structure without too much repetition. In such cases, as in previous publications, the editors found it difficult to interfere with the enthusiasm of young researchers. Author-specific idiomaticity was left untouched when the general understanding was not affected.

It has to be emphasized at the very beginning of this volume that this is not intended as a model to be followed by graduates in other parts of Europe; this is a documentation of the different conventions and practices of academic writing and thinking in different parts of Europe, which graduates in this field must be aware of, so that they can make their own decisions about which conventions to follow and which conventions to neglect in their own writings.

Thus, we can restate our previous experience. The combination of case studies, novice writers' and teaching perspectives allows us to include different writer and reader perspectives and also different theoretical backgrounds wherever needed. We hope that this can make this project and this volume accessible to all project participants and beyond. In fact, we are proud to be able to include so many alternative contributions that may not reflect always the "high standards" of international research journals yet, but that convey what we feel is the right spirit for international academic dialogue and learning. We are proud to see that despite the different national educational backgrounds, many young scholars can work together on a common topic like "conflicting truths". Since this is a challenging topic of our time, everyone should try to contribute from their own perspective to create a common understanding of such an important topic in a wider, European or even global, perspective.

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