



Complutense University of Madrid



Madrid, Spain, June 16-18, 2025

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Dear Darinka Marolova, Biljana Ivanova, Dragana Kuzmanovska and Aja Mitrova-Ringaceva,

Following the acceptance of your submission, we are pleased to confirm your invitation to deliver a presentation entitled “Cultural Influences on Macedonian Students’ Creative Writing in German: Challenges, Opportunities and Interventions” at the Fifth Cultural Linguistics International Conference (CLIC 2025), to be held at the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, from June 16 to 18, 2025.

We look forward to your participation in the conference.

Sincerely,

CLIC 2025 Organizing Committee

Department of Linguistics, Arabic, Hebrew, Basque, and East Asian Studies

Faculty of Philology

Complutense University of Madrid

Email: clic2025@ucm.es

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Certificate of Appreciation

This is to certify that

Darinka Marolova

presented

**Cultural influences on Macedonian students' creative writing in German:
Challenges, opportunities and interventions**

at the Fifth Cultural Linguistics International Conference,
held at the Complutense University of Madrid (Madrid, Spain) from 16 to 18 June 2025.



Raquel Hidalgo Downing
Conference Chair

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON MACEDONIAN STUDENTS' CREATIVE WRITING IN GERMAN: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND INTERVENTIONS

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Abstract:

This paper explores the cultural dimensions of creative writing faced by Macedonian students learning German, focusing on the challenges and opportunities that arise from the intersection of cultural expectations and the conventions of creative writing. The study examines how cultural influences—such as linguistic structures, communicational strategies, and creative norms—shape the writing practices of students as they navigate the German writing system. Specifically, it highlights the impact of students' home culture on their German creative writing, revealing a tendency to use phraseological expressions, follow the syntactic structures of their mother tongue, and incorporate informal elements such as interjections, onomatopoeia, wordplay, metaphors, and symbols. While these cultural writing habits are deeply rooted in Macedonian linguistic traditions, they often clash with the formal and precise nature of German creative discourse. The paper further identifies opportunities for enhancing students' creative writing skills through targeted cultural and linguistic interventions. It argues that increasing cultural awareness can help improve writing competence and creative expression. The study collects data from Macedonian students learning German at the University "Goce Delcev," specifically from the Department of German Studies and Literature. The core data consists of creative writing samples, such as short stories and essays, which provide insights into students' linguistic expression and cultural influences. The findings suggest that by addressing these cultural differences, educators can better support Macedonian students in mastering German creative writing, leading to enhanced performance and greater integration into the German-speaking academic community.

Key words: Culture, Creative Writing, Writing strategies, Interculturality

INTRODUCTION

Creative writing in a foreign language presents unique opportunities and challenges for language learners. Beyond mastering grammar and vocabulary, students must navigate cultural nuances, pragmatic conventions, and stylistic choices that shape authentic and meaningful text production. This is especially true for learners of German as a foreign language, where literary texts are not only linguistic artifacts but also complex cultural expressions embedded in specific social and historical contexts.

This paper investigates the interplay between cultural background and the creative writing process among Macedonian students learning German at the Goce Delčev University, Faculty of Philology. The study focuses on a diverse group of students, some of whom have chosen German creative writing as their main area of study, while others engage with it as an elective or supplementary class. This distinction allows for a broader understanding of how different levels of engagement with the language and creative writing shape students' textual production.

The primary objective of this research is to explore how Macedonian cultural experiences influence students' creative writing in German, particularly examining how traditional customs, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatic norms manifest in their texts. It also aims to identify the linguistic and cultural challenges students encounter when attempting to adapt these elements to fit the conventions of the German language and its communicative expectations.

The corpus of research consists of authentic student texts produced during creative writing exercises integrated into the German language curriculum. These exercises range from personal storytelling and poetry to collaborative storytelling and text reinterpretation. The texts were collected over a semester-long period, providing rich, varied data that reflects both individual creativity and collective cultural influence.

Methodologically, the study employs qualitative text analysis, combining insights from text linguistics, intercultural communication, and second language acquisition theories. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of textual cohesion, coherence, style, and intercultural pragmatics. Special attention is given to the transfer of cultural elements from Macedonian into German, including orthographic practices, metaphorical language, and politeness strategies.

Creative writing exercises serve as a key pedagogical tool in this research, fostering students' imaginative capacities while simultaneously encouraging intercultural awareness and linguistic competence. Through analysis of these authentic student texts, the study aims to shed light on the dynamic process of creative writing in a second language and to highlight the critical role of culture in shaping learners' written expression.

The research ultimately contributes to the field of foreign language didactics by emphasizing the need for integrated teaching approaches that combine language instruction with cultural education. By doing so, it supports learners in developing not only technical proficiency but also the confidence and sensitivity required to produce creative, culturally resonant texts in German. This holistic approach enriches students' academic growth and facilitates their broader intercultural competence and integration.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study integrates theoretical insights from text linguistics and intercultural communication with practical approaches to creative writing instruction, aiming to explore how Macedonian students' cultural backgrounds influence their creative writing in German as a foreign language.

Central to the study is the theoretical framework articulated by Snell-Hornby (1988), who emphasizes that texts are not merely linguistic constructs but primarily communicative acts embedded in specific situational and broader cultural contexts. Recognizing that texts operate within sociocultural frameworks—comprising traditions, values, norms, and behaviors—this research considers both the production and reception contexts of literary texts, acknowledging temporal and spatial distances that affect interpretation. This cultural embeddedness is crucial in understanding how students' native cultural perspectives shape their writing in German.

Complementing this perspective, Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) seven criteria of textuality—cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality—serve as analytical tools for examining student texts. These criteria provide a multi-dimensional lens to evaluate not only linguistic form but also communicative purpose, textual coherence, and reader expectations, enabling a comprehensive analysis of how Macedonian learners negotiate meaning in their German creative writing.

The study focuses on the creative writing process as a complex, dynamic interplay between linguistic competence, cultural identity, and individual expressivity. Snell-Hornby's concept of style as an author's system of linguistic choices highlights how students' lexical, grammatical, and stylistic decisions reflect their personal and cultural backgrounds. The creative writing exercises are designed to stimulate students' imagination and foster self-expression while encouraging awareness of cross-cultural communication challenges.

Data collection involved a series of creative writing tasks assigned to Macedonian students learning German. These tasks included writing about traditional customs, superstitions, dialogues, and metaphorical expressions—genres deliberately chosen to elicit culturally rich content and to prompt

reflection on linguistic and cultural transfer. The assignments were conducted in classroom settings and workshops, complemented by individual homework, thus capturing authentic student writing produced over a sustained period.

The qualitative analysis combined textual, cultural, pragmatic, and orthographic perspectives. Textual analysis assessed the cohesion and coherence of the students' German texts, while cultural analysis identified embedded Macedonian customs, idioms, and metaphorical language. Pragmatic analysis focused on politeness norms and social address patterns, exploring how Macedonian cultural conventions sometimes conflicted with German expectations. Orthographic analysis highlighted the influence of Macedonian writing habits, such as noun capitalization differences, on German text production.

Pedagogically, the methodology draws on contemporary writing didactics emphasizing cooperative writing and reflective practice (Baurmann, 2007; Becker-Mrotzek, 2006). The creative writing exercises are embedded within a learner-centered framework that balances language skill development with intercultural competence. This approach encourages students to experiment with language, adapt cultural content for target language readers, and revise their work iteratively, fostering both linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness.

In summary, this integrative methodology—grounded in text linguistics, intercultural theory, and practical didactics—allows for a nuanced exploration of how Macedonian students' cultural heritage shapes their creative writing in German. It highlights the importance of intercultural awareness and targeted pedagogical strategies in supporting learners to produce texts that are both culturally authentic and linguistically effective.

UNDERSTANDING TEXTS AND THE STUDENT WRITING PROCESS

Snell-Hornby (1988:69) argues that texts are not merely linguistic phenomena but must primarily be understood in terms of their communicative function. Every text is embedded in a specific situation, which itself is part of a broader cultural context. This cultural context includes sociocultural conditions such as traditions, values, norms, perspectives, and behaviors. When considering the two communication situations—the creation and the reading of a literary text—we observe that these can be temporally close or separated by centuries, and spatially near or thousands of kilometers apart. These factors result in differences in how texts are read and interpreted.

Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:3) define the concept of text through seven essential criteria of textuality:

- **Cohesion:** Surface-structural continuity and unity through graphic, phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and nonverbal means.
- **Coherence:** Semantic continuity and meaningful structure.
- **Intentionality:** The author's intention.
- **Acceptability:** The attitudes and expectations of the text recipient.
- **Informativity:** The delivery of new or relevant information.
- **Situationality:** The influence of the external context.
- **Intertextuality:** The relationship between the text's production, reception, and the knowledge shared between author and reader.

Literary texts, characterized by heightened expressivity, are shaped significantly by the author's individual style. Snell-Hornby (1988:124) defines style as "a system of choices in language use by an individual author," encompassing lexical choices (e.g., proper names, invented words, dialects), grammatical factors (sentence structure, word categories, connectors), modes of communication (direct/indirect speech, literal/figurative language), and textual organization (text division, chapters, visual elements like italics or illustrations).

The creation of literary texts is a deeply creative process in which the author often pushes the expressive potential of language by using wordplay, dialects, slang, neologisms, and sometimes deliberately

ambiguous statements. This expressivity can increase the risk of misunderstandings, especially when texts are mediated through translation.

Importantly, literary texts are also deeply shaped by culture. Like any text, they are produced within a specific cultural situation, which influences topic selection, motifs, character traits, structure, and readers' interpretations. This cultural context operates even at the micro-level of individual words and phrases, presenting significant challenges for translation where direct equivalents in the target language are lacking.

Writing didactics has increasingly recognized the importance of **cooperative writing** and its positive impact on developing individual writing competence (cf. Baurmann 2007; Becker-Mrotzek 2006).

FOSTERING CREATIVE WRITING IN GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The creative writing exercises presented here primarily aim to stimulate students' creative writing abilities, an area often neglected in traditional literature instruction. Beyond being integrated into the modern German language curriculum—often with a dedicated section on creative writing—these exercises are also conducted in workshops and assigned as homework for independent practice. Moreover, creativity is expected in seminar papers and theses.

Creative writing exercises help strengthen students' ability to express themselves and build confidence in writing, especially in essays and personal reflections on textbook texts. As one observer notes, "Through their own writing, students develop sensitivity to text construction and discover that poems, novels, or short stories are not spontaneous or random ideas, but carefully structured works."

Writing creates a space for students to confront their own thoughts, experiences, and ideas—essentially engaging deeply with themselves. Free writing, in particular, often leads to personally meaningful experiences, sometimes connected to feelings of satisfaction and happiness. In this sense, writing not only creates meaning but also contributes to identity formation.

The theoretical foundation for creative writing draws on multiple disciplines. Psychology—especially cognitive psychology—provides essential insights into writing processes, influencing research and practical applications. Linguistics also examines writing processes, often incorporating psychological findings.

To foster students' creative abilities, a wide variety of exercises are employed:

- **Storytelling from personal experience:** Students narrate real events, practicing emotional connection and narrative structure.
- **Poetry writing:** Encourages exploration of rhythm, metaphor, and style.
- **Writing fairy tales or stories with fantastic characters:** Stimulates imagination and symbolic thinking.
- **Finishing unfinished stories:** Enhances critical thinking and creativity.
- **Group story writing:** Collaborative narratives starting from a given sentence build teamwork and spontaneity.
- **Retelling the meaning of a text:** Develops comprehension and paraphrasing skills.
- **Describing pictures:** Sharpens descriptive language through visual stimuli.
- **Essay writing on assigned topics:** Cultivates formal organization and argumentation.
- **Writing inspired by sounds or music:** Uses auditory stimuli to inspire emotional and creative expression.

Together, these exercises create a comprehensive and balanced approach to nurturing creativity, linguistic competence, and cultural awareness in German language learners. They promote both personal expression and technical skills within an engaging, culturally rich learning environment.

MACEDONIAN CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' CREATIVE WRITING IN GERMAN: EXAMPLES AND INSIGHTS

In a creative writing class conducted in German, students were assigned to write about a traditional custom they knew, along with the superstitions connected to that ritual. One particularly interesting case arose when a student wrote about the Macedonian expression „**доаѓа на блага ракија**“. The student described a specific post-wedding tradition held the day after the wedding ceremony, usually on a Monday (since weddings are most often celebrated on Sundays). This gathering is a communal celebration involving close family and friends from both sides of the newlyweds. People bring homemade sweets, share **блага ракија**—a type of sweetened, often slightly warmed fruit brandy—and sing traditional, sometimes erotic, folk songs. The ritual serves not just as a continuation of the wedding celebration, but also as a symbolic gesture of unity, hospitality, and collective joy.

This example shows how cultural expressions deeply rooted in a student's home culture appear vividly in their German writing. However, without additional explanation or adaptation, some culturally specific details may be unclear or lose impact for readers unfamiliar with the tradition. Creative writing thus challenges students to find ways to convey cultural meaning across linguistic boundaries in a natural and accessible way.

Another example from the class highlights differences in orthographic conventions. One student wrote the phrase „**zum grau**“ with a lowercase „g“, reflecting the Macedonian norm where nouns are not capitalized. In German, however, all nouns are capitalized, including nominalized adjectives such as „**das Grau**“ (the noun form of *grau*). This small detail offers a teaching moment about how orthographic habits from the first language influence writing in the second language, sometimes requiring conscious adjustment to meet the conventions of German.

In a student-written dialogue set in a Macedonian context, a character addressed an unfamiliar man as „**Onkel**“ and used the informal pronoun „**du**“, saying: „**Hast du etwas gesagt, Onkel?**“

This reflects a cultural norm from Macedonian where addressing older men—even strangers—as “uncle” is common and respectful. However, in German, „**Onkel**“ is reserved for actual family members, and using „**du**“ with unfamiliar adults breaks important politeness norms. More appropriate German dialogue would be: „**Haben Sie etwas gesagt, Herr?**“ or more naturally: „**Entschuldigung, haben Sie etwas gesagt?**“

This illustrates how cultural norms about social distance and politeness shape language use and how creative writing must consider these pragmatic differences to produce authentic and culturally appropriate dialogue.

In another creative text, a student wanted to express the idea of making someone struggle or work hard to reach a solution or learn a lesson. The student used the German verb „**verschwitzen**“, influenced by the Macedonian metaphor „**сакаше малку да го испоти**“ (“wanted to make him sweat a little”). However, in German, „**verschwitzen**“ colloquially means to forget something, and does not carry the metaphorical meaning of challenging someone.

Instead, the student chose a more direct expression, such as „**Ich will ihn schon lehren**“ (“I want to teach him a lesson”). While this makes the meaning clear, it loses the metaphorical vividness of the original idea.

This case exemplifies how creative writers bring their cultural background into their language use, sometimes resulting in metaphors that do not translate well into the target language's cultural context. Recognizing this encourages students to reflect not only on vocabulary but also on how cultural and pragmatic aspects shape effective and natural creative writing.

Possible more idiomatic German expressions conveying the intended meaning might be: „**Er wollte ihn ein wenig fordern**“ (He wanted to challenge him a bit) or „**Er wollte, dass er es sich selbst erarbeitet**“ (He wanted him to work it out himself)

These examples from student writing highlight the importance of intercultural awareness in creative language use. They encourage learners to move beyond literal expressions and to engage with the cultural and social nuances that give language its full meaning.

RESULTS

In analyzing students' creative writing in German, it becomes clear that their Macedonian cultural background significantly shapes both the content and style of their texts. Students often include traditional customs, idioms, and rituals from Macedonian culture, which enrich their writing with authentic and vivid cultural elements. However, without adapting or explaining these expressions, the emotional and symbolic meanings may be lost or misunderstood by German-speaking readers.

Additionally, students' writing frequently reflects orthographic habits from their native language. For example, the tendency to write nouns with lowercase letters—as is standard in Macedonian—leads to errors in German capitalization rules. This transfer shows that language habits from the mother tongue influence their second-language writing, highlighting the importance of explicit instruction in German orthographic conventions.

Pragmatic and politeness norms also differ between the two cultures, as seen in students' dialogues. The use of familiar terms such as “Onkel” and informal pronouns with strangers reflects Macedonian social conventions but results in pragmatically inappropriate language in German. This underscores the need to teach cultural norms and social expectations alongside linguistic skills to help students communicate respectfully and naturally in German.

Furthermore, the use of metaphorical language illustrates how cultural differences affect meaning. Macedonian metaphors that are vivid and meaningful in the students' first language sometimes confuse German readers because the metaphors do not have the same cultural weight or connotations. Encouraging students to either adapt these metaphors or clarify their meaning helps maintain the expressiveness of their writing while ensuring clarity.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that creative writing in a foreign language involves more than mastering grammar and vocabulary. It requires intercultural awareness and sensitivity to the target culture's communicative styles and conventions. By developing these intercultural competencies, students can produce more authentic, meaningful, and culturally appropriate texts in German.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the intricate relationship between cultural background and creative writing among Macedonian students learning German. It reveals that students' native cultural and linguistic habits—ranging from idiomatic expressions and metaphors to orthographic and pragmatic norms—deeply influence their approach to writing in German. While these influences enrich their texts with authenticity and individuality, they can also create challenges in aligning with the formal, stylistic, and cultural conventions of German creative discourse.

The analysis shows that creative writing in a foreign language transcends mere linguistic competence; it involves navigating intercultural differences in communication styles, norms, and expectations. Students' tendency to transfer Macedonian phraseology, social politeness patterns, and metaphorical language into German highlights the essential role of cultural awareness in effective writing. This

awareness enables learners to adapt or clarify culturally specific elements, ensuring that their texts are both expressive and comprehensible to German-speaking audiences.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of targeted teaching strategies that integrate linguistic skills with cultural education. Through creative writing exercises that foster imagination, personal expression, and intercultural sensitivity, educators can support students in developing not only technical proficiency but also confidence and identity as writers in the German language.

Ultimately, fostering this cultural and linguistic competence enriches students' creative potential and facilitates their academic and social integration within German-speaking contexts. This comprehensive approach benefits learners by helping them craft texts that resonate authentically while respecting the communicative conventions of the target language and culture.

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