

PROSIFICATION – A DIDACTIC MEANS OF IMPROVING RECEPTION OF *KRST PRI SAVICI* (*THE BAPTISM AT THE SAVICA*)

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In the early 1930s, I. A. Richards was already working on the issue of reception of classical texts in verse and empirically confirmed students' problems with the interpretation of poetry. An empirical study of understanding *The Baptism at the Savica* showed that Slovenian high school students had notable difficulties in decoding the basic meanings of Prešeren's poem. In literature, didactics offer three methods of facilitating reception of complex classical poetry: linguistic modernization, annotation, and transmission into prose. Due to the cult status of Prešeren's poetry, modernization can only be limited, while annotation hinders a spontaneous reading experience; as a result, only prosification entirely solves the problems of pronounced archaization, inverted word order, and abundant metaphors in Prešeren's lines. This was confirmed by an empirical study in which secondary school students, who read a prose version of *The Baptism at the Savica* along side the original verses, attested a comprehension of the text twice as good as that of students who only read the poetry.

Key words: prosification, didactics, reception, *The Baptism at the Savica*, empirical research.

I. A. Richards and the perception of classical poetry

The English scholar I. A. Richards was one of the first to empirically research the reception of classical poetry. As co-author of the book *The Meaning of Meaning*, Richards¹ developed the idea that we should systematically distinguish between two completely different language uses—namely, between scholarly and emotional use: the former communicates thoughts about things, while the latter awakens emotions. The first use is subject to the question of reality, while the latter, particularly important for the poetry, is not related to this question. In his *Principles of Literary Criticism*, Richards defines the reader's experience—according to him the only possible starting point for evaluating a textual

¹ Richards (1893–1979), an English literary critic, theorist, and linguist, became lecturer at the Cambridge University in 1922. He participated in the basic semantic treatise *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) together with his colleague Charles K. Ogden, with whom he co-created the Basic English language project. In 1924 he presented a new view on literary communication in his book *Principles of Literary Criticism*, while fifteen years after his book *Practical Criticism* had been published, he became professor at Harvard University.

work of art—during the process of experiencing a poem as the visual sensing of words, images connected with the sensation, relatively free images, ideas on various subjects, emotions, and voluntary relations (Grosman 1974: 13–16).

Based on this theory, Richards conceived his most influential book, *Practical Criticism*,² which is memorable mainly due to its original empirical research rather than its theory. However, as one scholar observed,

in the end, Richard's final acceptance of completely subjective reader experience makes each attempt at criticism—and also his own extensive essays—utterly futile; therefore, many of Richard's critics point out that his work *Practical Criticism*, instead of practically demonstrating the functioning of his theory, only reveals its complete uselessness. (Grosman 1974: 18)

The novelty and value of *Practical Criticism* lies in the empirical research, which for the first time explained how complex the comprehension, experiencing, and evaluation of poetry are and how they oppose regular conceptions. In the introduction, Richards refers to three major objectives of his book: to present a new, documented approach to the research of modern culture, to introduce new criteria for studies of comprehending and experiencing poetry, and to prepare the grounds for more efficient teaching of literary reading (Richards 1929: 3).³

Further he describes the research he conducted over several years among his students⁴ at Cambridge University—i.e., among intelligent and relatively well-read students (roughly half male and female). Students were

² *Practical Criticism* is even nowadays a valid technique of close reading and interpretation of poetry. On the website of the Faculty of English Philology, Cambridge University (www.english.cam.ac.uk/vclass/pracrit.htm), the interpretation of the poems by Thomas Wyatt was presented in the following steps: The Poem, First Impressions, Developing Your Thoughts, Critical Discussion, The Answers?, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Conclusions. Unlike other methods, this begins with the students analysing poems on the basis of directional questions and later comparing their observations with the traditional interpretation, and finally familiarizing themselves with the poet's life and work.

³ Considering the entirety of his theoretical and practical approach towards literature, Richards's work is often compared with the contemporary research of Russian formalists who are, according to Hladnik, "pioneers of the new discipline of literary science" (1995: 325). In addition I would like to point out an interesting problem of cultural history: at the same time when literary science as a science of the fictive world, including Richards's writing, started to use verifiable scientific methods, the real world has begun, with the release of Edward Bernays's book *Propaganda*, its approach to the virtual world.

⁴ The vast majority of them were graduate students of the English language.

issued poems printed on sheets where the name of the author was omitted. They were asked to freely interpret and comment on these poems. Students had one week to deliver their comments,⁵ in which they had to mark the precise number of readings of each particular poem.⁶ Richards observed improper reception of poems at two levels—i.e., at the level of meaning (statements) and at the level of feelings (expressions)—so he primarily researched comprehension and experiencing. At the end of the introduction he gives a systematic description of ten problems in interpreting poems, ranging from failure to make out “the prose sense,” to difficulties with metaphorical expressions, stock responses, and sentimentality, as well as adherence to preconceptions connected with general evaluations found in literary criticism.

In the second, most extensive part of the book (documentation), Richards documents, by citing his students’ comments, improper receptions of thirteen poems, designated with abbreviations from I to P XIII.⁷ To illustrate I cite one of the student’s opinions of a sonnet written by John Donne (“Holy Sonnets VII”): “I confess immediately that I can’t make out what all the shouting is about. The poem is completely confusing. The numerous pronouns and adverbs mix up the thought, if indeed there is one definite thought throughout” (Richards 1929: 43–44). Thus Richards made his point when he stated that the reception of classical poetry is an extremely demanding task.

Problems with comprehending *The Baptism at the Savica*

To research problems of reception of *The Baptism at the Savica*, I used, as a theoretical basis of my empirical research, modern findings about reading processes or literary reading as they were presented at the turn of the millennium in studies by Sonja Pečjak (1999), Boža Krakar Vogel

⁵ Richards points out that in order to obtain valid results, he guaranteed full anonymity of participants, however slightly less than half of the students wrote and handed over their interpretations.

⁶ Since the number of readings was never less than four, and some of the students read a particular poem up to ten times, Richards establishes that they put a lot of effort and energy into analyzing the poems.

⁷ Richards reveals the identity of the authors only in Appendix C, at the very end of the book (Richards 1929: 367–68). In the book’s introduction and table of contents, he advises his readers, for sake of surprise, to find information on authorship only after they read the entire second part of the book.

(2004), and Meta Grosman (2004).⁸ Contemporary literary pedagogy foresees two ways of treating extended, non-extracted narratives:⁹

a) Home reading, which is usually followed by two hours of discussion at school, and

b) Long reading—i.e., reading that “takes place at school so that students, together with their teacher, read and interpret a particular literary work over a longer period” (Krakar Vogel 2004: 108–109). Due to the fact that the method of long reading requires more school time, students as a rule read *The Baptism* at home.

To the greatest possible degree, home reading should be a spontaneous and burden-free activity, since when we “give [students] explanations of the text and impose [on them] the task of finding answers to these questions, the possibility for them to achieve pleasurable and/or interesting literary experiences diminishes considerably” (Grosman 2004: 192).¹⁰ In the chapter entitled “Književne sposobnosti” (Literary abilities), Krakar gives a detailed analysis of literary reading ability, which consists of four cognitive-receptive phases: experiencing, comprehending, evaluating, and expressing to demonstrate reading ability (Krakar Vogel 2004: 40–45). Experiencing, which the author associates with the first reading of a text, is the phase where “the reader spontaneously perceives, feels, visualizes, and understands meaningful or obvious components of the text, and disregards those which do not match his/her scheme and often /.../ expresses his or her first opinion of approval or rejection.” Krakar is certainly aware that in actual reading, these cognitive-receptive phases are intertwined, that consequently experiencing a text depends on the reading comprehension¹¹—i.e. on word decoding, access to the words, and on analysis of the meaning and syntax (Pečjak 1999: 41–47).

The century-old findings of Karel Ozvald, professor at the state high school in Gorica, were identical and related particularly to Prešeren’s poetry. At the very beginning of the booklet *Naši kulturni delavci v zrcalu*

⁸ These authors are scientists and professors of psychology, Slovenian language and literature and German language and literature Departments at the Faculty of Arts, University in Ljubljana.

⁹ *Krst pri Savici* has been defined as compulsory home reading in accordance with the valid Curriculum for the Slovenian language as a subject in high schools (1998: 31).

¹⁰ In her dissertations, Grosman explicitly stresses the importance of a positive literary experience, which is in her opinion a key factor of discussing literature at school, as well as of the development of students reading competences.

¹¹ “As the reader was unable to understand the text well, he could respond only in a superficial and naive way, illustrating that the initial two phases of reading classical verses with demanding wording and composition are not automatically followed by comprehension” (Krakar Vogel 2000–2001: 131).

Prešernovih poezij (Our cultural workers in the mirror of Prešeren's poetry¹²) he writes:

A few years ago I read somewhere that Prešeren's poems do not need commenting at all¹³ and that everybody can understand them. That such a statement can be disputed, I was convinced by my own experience on the occasion of reading the immortal works of our poet—the champion at school. /.../ And there you often need to either untie thoroughly twisted material knots or at least visually illustrate the actual circumstances which comprise the background of a poem if you want to reach true artistic enjoyment when reading. Neither the first nor the second can be easily achieved at all times! (Ozvald 1905: 4)

Difficulties with the reception of Prešeren's poetry were presented by Boža Krakar Vogel in her 2001 article "Obravnavanje literarne klasike v sodobni šoli – na primeru Prešerna" (Dealing with literary classics in modern schools – the example of Prešeren). In her empirical research she tested comprehension of one stanza of Prešeren's "A Wreath of Sonnets," while I decided to empirically test the comprehension of Prešeren's romantic poem *The Baptism at the Savica*, since opinions on its difficult receptivity appeared while the poet was still alive (Prešeren 1964: 339).¹⁴

I therefore tested comprehension of three passages in the first six stanzas of *The Baptism* (from the stanza "The matching violence of man and cloud" to the stanza "When Črtomir was here, on this small isle"; Prešeren 1999: 119–21). Students in the first two grades of high school¹⁵ had to reiterate the contents or the message of the first half of the first, third and fourth stanza in their own words.¹⁶ This allowed me to verify the third,

¹² Ozvald writes *poezije* (poetries) with a small initial letter as he does not mean the book of poetry written by Prešeren, but he uses the word, under the influence of the Italian word *le poesie*, to denote his poems.

¹³ All underlines by Z. B.

¹⁴ In 1837, Prešeren wrote to Stanko Vraz: "As you wished, I am sending you twenty-four copies of my *Kerst*, which you found to be so difficult to understand."

¹⁵ I purposely chose the first grade of secondary school since *The Baptism* is compulsory home reading only in the second year and, as a rule, the elementary school curriculum includes only the Introduction to *The Baptism*. Thus I could expect only non-systemic or coincidental interfering factors.

¹⁶ The questionnaires were filled in by fifty students, most of them girls. In both classes I started with historical events to refresh students' memory (from the deaths of Avrelj and Droh to the siege of the Ajdovski gradec fortress and the death of all pagan soldiers except Črtomir), and after that I distributed the questionnaires. I read aloud all six introductory stanzas of *The Baptism* and then students were asked to read the first half of three chosen stanzas and write

highest level of comprehension, so-called applied comprehension, which is manifested through students' ability to transform the text they have read from one abstract form into another, to explain particular metaphors and symbols by rewording them and to analyze the components or events in a text and define their mutual relationships (Pečjak 1993: 59). This naturally implied primarily testing reference meanings of the text—i.e., facts which cannot depend on the reader's expectations or his cognitive scheme. To illustrate: in the first octave of *The Baptism*, the night fight and storm, the dawn shining on Triglav and the calm surface of the Bohinj lake are illustrated, while on the aesthetic or symbolic level the contrast "temna noč" – "svetla zarja zlati z rumen'mi žarki" (dark night – bright dawn gilds with yellow rays) presents a point of view that belongs to the area of co-referential meanings (Pečjak 1999: 48).¹⁷

The degree of comprehension in a particular task was graded with two points (complete answer), one point (partial answer) and zero points (wrong or no answer). In each fragment it was thus possible to achieve 100 points altogether or a maximum 300 point in all three. The results for each fragment and for the entire questionnaire are shown in figure 1.¹⁸

Figure 1. Comprehension test results on the reading of stanzas 1, 3, and 4 of *The Baptism at the Savica*

FRAGMENT	TOTAL POINTS	POINTS ACHIEVED	PERCENTAGE
Mož in oblakov vojsko je obojno ...	100	18	18
Na tleh leže slovenstva stebri stari ...	100	12	12
Prenesla pričujoče ure teže ...	100	22	22
TOTAL	300	52	17

down in one sentence, in the marked fields on the right, the content/meaning of the related text.

¹⁷ Without that, scientific examination of comprehension would be absolutely impossible. Thus Meta Grosman is wise to state that the author's "choice and arrangement in the artistic structure is obligatory for a reader" and that "most reading 'mistakes' and consequently limited or groundless actualizations of literary text arise from readers' inability to perceive or a wrong perception of the text constituents" (Grosman 2004: 156, 172).

¹⁸ For the first and third stanza there were only two complete answers, one in each, while there were six complete answers for the fourth stanza.

The final result (seventeen percent of available points) testifies that an overwhelming majority high school students experience insurmountable difficulties with their first, spontaneous reading of *The Baptism at the Savica*,¹⁹ since they do not understand the text and consequently are not able to experience it. Such students undoubtedly need help with their first reading.

As I selected fragments for testing without using a special key and primarily with the intention to create a meaningful unit, I was surprised by a great difference in understanding of the first and the fourth stanzas as opposed to the third. Detailed observation shows that all three stanzas are profusely inverted and noticeably metaphorical, yet there is a significant difference in the number of archaic words. While the first stanza contains three such terms and the fourth only one, there are nine in the third.²⁰ Obviously it is a question of a clear opposite correlation: the greater the number of archaisms, the more understanding deteriorates. This also confirms the view of Grosman, who noted that numerous unknown words make understanding a text impossible.

Concrete answers are even more explicit than sheer statistics. Since such research is rare and the results are exceptionally instructive, I relate examples of a complete answer, partial answer, and complete failure to

¹⁹ Almost forty percent of students did not achieve a single point (of six possible points), only twelve percent of students obtained more than one third of the possible points, two students obtained four points and no one at all achieved all available points. According to these results it could be said that no student reached the level of independent reading, two students reached the level of preliminary reading, four students reached the reading level necessary for participation in the lessons, while a high share of forty-four students (88%) typically show frustration level reading where it is “impossible to expect efficient understanding of texts and advanced reading proficiency” (Pečjak 1993: 63–64). Since such conclusions can of course not be true, the real problem lies not in the students but in Prešeren’s poetry, which is receptively too demanding.

²⁰ The archaic (difficult to understand or unknown) terms in the first half of stanza “Na tleh leže slovenstva stebri stari” (Old pillars of Slovenedom are cast down) are: *ležé, šegah, postave, parski, Tesel, ječé, jarmom, sini Slave*. These nine words (of twenty-two) represent forty percent of all text! As expected, students were not able to recognize the meaning of the word *parski*, which means *bavarski* (Bavarian), the word *jarem* ‘yoke’ is unknown to contemporary town children, and pretty much unknown to rural children as well, although it is still preserved in the idiomatic expression *zakonski jarem* ‘yoke of matrimony’. Young people are also not aware that the word *postava* ‘law’ may also mean *zakon* ‘marriage’.

understand each stanza,²¹ and I provide, for comparison, half of a particular octave, which served as the source text (figure 2).

Figure 2. Levels of comprehension of stanzas 1, 3, and 4 of *The Baptism at the Savica*

THE FIRST STANZA	THE THIRD STANZA	THE FOURTH STANZA
<i>Mož in oblakov vojsko je obojno / končala temna noč, kar svetla zarja / zlati z rumen'mi žarki glavo trojno / snežnikov kranjskih siv'ga poglavarja.*</i>	<i>Na tleh leže slovenstva stebri stari, / v domačih šegah utrjene postave; / v deželi parski Tesel gospodari, / ječe pod težkim jarmom sini Slave.**</i>	<i>Prenesla pričujoče ure teže / bi ne bila let poznih glava siva; / v mladosti vendar trdnejše so mreže, / ki v njih drži nas upa moč golj'fiva.***</i>
COMPREHENSION: The war and the storm finished when the dawn shone on the snow-covered mount Triglav.	COMPREHENSION: Carinthia is destroyed; foreigners are masters of Slovenes who suffer under the siege.	COMPREHENSION: In distress the young fare better than the old, because the young still hold some hope.
PARTIAL COMPREHENSION: The war is over and the sun shone over Triglav.	PARTIAL COMPREHENSION: Slovenes were destroyed, murdered ... victory of Tesel, the proud new master.	PARTIAL COMPREHENSION: The young have more power and courage, because they still have hope.
FAILURE TO COMPREHEND: In the dark night no trace of the army can be seen, while during daytime even one general can be seen.	FAILURE TO COMPREHEND: Although Slovenes were oppressed, they maintained their culture and traditions without submitting to rulers.	FAILURE TO COMPREHEND: When old your head becomes gray and the brain no longer works well, but when young, you think well and know how to cheat.

* Cf. Note 57

** Old pillars of Slovenedom are cast down, / And all our laws on ancient habit based; / All bow before Bavarian Tesel's crown, / The sons of Slavdom 'neath his yoke are placed,

*** A greying head, one of advancing years, / Could not endure the present hours of pain; / For youth the net much firmer yet adheres / Wherein false pow'r of hope can us enchain. (Prešeren 1999: 119)

²¹ The students' comments have not been edited.

As the examples of failed comprehension show, even though the majority of students decode many meanings of particular words or phrases, the real problem appears when these partial meanings have to be combined into a whole.²² We can conclude that out-of-school reading of *The Baptism at the Savica* will not be successful if nothing is done to facilitate comprehension. The first reading is simply too demanding for students, and consequently further discussion at school (unless the teacher uses the method of “long reading”) cannot surmount passive reception of the teacher’s explanation or a reproduction of “literature about literature.”²³

School possibilities to improve reception of *The Baptism at the Savica*

In the twentieth century, four options or possibilities to improve the reception of older or linguistically or stylistically more demanding verse texts gained ground: linguistic actualization (modernization), adding notes (annotation), transmission into prose (prosification),²⁴ and general simplification (simplification). Below I present the first three options in

²² To further illustrate some totally unexpected (but “possible”) readings, I quote a few more examples of miscomprehension. THE FIRST STANZA: The chief and his big army were defeated in one night. The darkness brought the fighting to a standstill and the dawn shone on the dead bodies. THE THIRD STANZA: Slovenian soldiers lie on the ground, wearing national clothing. Soldiers are lying dead on the ground and they look tired. Slovenians are lying on the ground, dead and in dungeon. These are difficult times for Slovenians as the yoke of glory is too heavy. The Brežinski spomeniki (misspelling of Brižinski spomeniki [Freising Monuments], the first written record in the Slovene language) lie on the ground. THE FOURTH STANZA: Even though the war was long, the soldiers still hope to win. In old age one remembers and awakens bad memories from the past.

As most of the examples show, students—through miscomprehension of the stanzas which describe the situation after the night battle—take meaningful components from the introductory story and use them to construct a complete meaning: for example in the metaphorical phrase “na tleh leže slovenstva stebri stari” (Old pillars of Slovenedom are cast down), which symbolically describes the loss of Slovenian independency and state, students saw something very material like the dead bodies of young soldiers lying on the ground.

²³ When Janko Bezjak, in his special didactics of the Slovene language, evaluates advantages of the text treated with “the developing illustrative method,” he draws our attention to the problems of reproductive teaching style and advantages of the discussion method of teaching: “When a teacher delivers his subject, students receive only passively, but when they think and answer the teacher’s questions, they participate actively. What they obtained by their own effort became permanent and their spiritual property” (Bezjak 1907: 209).

²⁴ According to Juvan (1990: 133–34), I chose the Slovene term *prozifikacija* ‘prosification’, which means a secondary form of a text, instead of the Slovene term *prozaizacija*, which means that something becomes prosaic (“ordinary,” “dull”) (*SSKJ IV* [Dictionary of the Slovene literary language]: 266).

more detail in relation to *The Baptism at the Savica*, since simplification²⁵ as a tool of didactic adjustment cannot be used in school.

Linguistic actualization (modernization)

In West European literary readers and also in independent publications we can find examples of linguistic actualizations (appearing side-by-side with the original, but also replacing the original) mostly from authors of the Middle Ages, who due to language development are either poorly comprehended or simply incomprehensible for today's readers who speak Italian, French, or English as their mother tongue. For illustration (figure 3), I quote the original and linguistically updated version of the beginning of "The Knight's Tale"²⁶ by the Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400). The author of the linguistic modernization strives to keep the verse and rhyme while substituting ten archaic words or phrases with modern counterparts and in thirteen cases substituting an archaic word with its modern form. This means that twenty-three out of sixty-seven words have been linguistically modernized, which is about thirty percent.

Figure 3. Examples of linguistic modernization of "The Knight's Tale"

ORIGINAL	MODERNIZATION
Whilom, as olde stories tellen us, there was a duke that highte Theseus: Of Athens, he was lord and governour, And in his time swich a conquerour, that greeter was there none under the sunne. Full many a riche contree had he wonne: What with his wisdom and his chivalrye, He conquered all the regne of Femenye, That whilom was y-cleped Scythia, And weddede the queen Ipolyta... (Chaucer 1996)	Once on a time as old tales tell to us, There was a duke whose name was Theseus; Of Athens he was lord and governor, And in his time was such a conqueror That greater was there not beneath the sun. Full many a rich country had he won; What with his wisdom and his chivalry He gained the realm of Feminity, That was of old time known as Scythia. There wedded he the queen, Hippolyta... (Chaucer 1988)

²⁵ It implies heavily abridged editions of different classical texts, written in prose. For example, in Great Britain, such texts are edited by Longman (Longman Simplified English Series) for readers learning English as their second or foreign language. Simplified editions of classics are immensely popular, and Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* were reprinted eighteen times, from the first Slovene edition of 1933 to 1971.

²⁶ These ten verses from the beginning of "The Knight's Story" in Longman's simplified version, which saw five editions during the period 1987–90, run as follows: "Duke Theseus once ruled over Athens. He was a great soldier. He conquered Scythia in a war, and married its Queen Hippolyta." (Chaucer 1990).

In Slovene pedagogical practice, the only known modernization is that of Brižinski spomeniki (The Freising Manuscripts).²⁷ In texts belonging to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods (for example: P. Trubar, "Proti zidavi cerkva" (Against the building of churches) and J. Svetokriški, "Na noviga lejta dan" (On the Day of New Year) the Bohoričica alphabet was transcribed, as a rule, in Gajica and less clear passages were explained in notes. In modern editions of Prešeren's poems (all notable school editions of poems except "Zdravljica" (The toast)²⁸ originate from *Poezije* (1847), which was printed in the Gajica alphabet) modernizations occur at the levels of orthography, sounds and forms, while the vocabulary remains unchanged due to the cult status of Prešeren's poetic word.²⁹ The possibilities for improved reception brought by linguistic modernization of Prešeren's poems are evident in the comparison between critical approach to the texts of *Poezije* in Prešeren's *Zbrano delo* (Collected works 1965) by Kos and the more popular version of Slodnjak

²⁷ The original transcription of the first two sentences from the Sermon on Sin and Penance is: "Et'e bi ded naš ne segrešil te v veki jemu be žiti, starosti ne prijeml'ot'i nikoliže pečali ne imy ni slzna telese imot'i, nu v veki jemu be žiti. Poneže zavistjo by neprijaznino vignan od slavi božje, potom na narod človečki strasti i pečali poido i nemot'i i po sem redu smrt" (Pirjevec 1961: 411).

Modernization: "Če bi ded naš ne grešil, bi mu na veke bilo živeti, starosti ne prejeti, nikoli skrbi imeti, ne solznega telesa, temveč ne veke bi mu bilo živeti. Ker je bil z zavistjo Neprijaznega izgnan od slave božje, po tem so na rod človeški bolečine in skrbi prišle, in bolezni, in po tem redu smrt" (Kos 2000: 121). (If our forefather had not sinned, then he would have lived forever, not growing old, nor ever having sorrow, nor having a tearful body, but forever he would have lived. As he was by the evil one's envy cast out from the glory of God, therefore upon the human race came pain and sorrow, sickness, and eventually death [<http://nl.ijs.si/e-zrc/bs/>])

As we can see, the language modernization does not include only the contemporary word forms such as *nikoli* 'never' instead of *nikoliže* etc., but it also replaces archaic, incomprehensible words, for example *skrbi* 'sorrow', 'worries', instead of *pečali*, *bolečine* 'pains' instead of *strasti*, *bolezni* 'sicknesses' instead of *nemoči*.

²⁸ The poem "Zdravljica" (The toast) was censored and first published only after the March revolution in 1848 in Bleiweis's newspaper *Novice* (News) and in the poetic almanac *Krajska čebelica V* (The Carniolan bee), set in the Gajica alphabet.

²⁹ The wording in Prešeren's poems used to be changed mainly for purist reasons, for example *žnablo žnabla* was changed into *ustno ustna* 'lip' in *The Baptism*, or *drekajo* 'they shit' was changed into *kramljajo* 'they chat' and *zasrane* 'shitty' was changed into *izdane* 'published' in the *Nova pisarija* (The new writing).

(1964), which was intended for a wider reading audience and of which an incredible 24,000 copies were printed in three reprints in a ten year period.³⁰

To compare both editions I chose the first six octaves of *The Baptism at the Savica* and used them to test high school students' comprehension of the poem. In Kos's edition of *The Baptism*, there are seventy-three difficult-to-understand words (they are no longer in use, or are archaic in form, accent or meaning), representing around twenty-five percent of all words, while Slodnjak's version still includes sixty-four archaic words, i.e. about twenty-two percent. Slodnjak's modernizations³¹ generally follow linguistic changes which are known as "new forms" in the history of Slovene literary language, which at about 1850 experienced a shift from a distinctive Carniolan literary language towards an all-Slovenian. Despite a clear intention to render Prešeren's language more familiar to a contemporary audience, Slodnjak's endeavours were very limited as he could not change abbreviated words or words with unusual accents on account of the metric scheme,³² and he could not modernize numerous words with archaic endings because of their rhymes.³³

Even after linguistic modernization, one fifth of the difficult-to-understand words remains. Modernization is thus ten times less extensive than in Chaucer above. Since the empirical test in the first year of high school, where I used Slodnjak's version of *The Baptism*, showed an extremely low degree of comprehension. I conclude that in Prešeren's case, this method of improving reception of a demanding classical text has a negligible positive impact.³⁴

³⁰ In the last four decades the following practice gained ground: secondary school readers include a more demanding version of Prešeren's poems edited by Kos, while elementary schools reprint a slightly updated version by Slodnjak.

³¹ *roparjov* – *roparjev* 'robber's', *nekdanji* – *nekdanji* 'former', *vtrjene* – *utrjene* 'strengthened', *tujcam* – *tujcem* 'to foreigners', *de* – *da* 'that', *vender* – *vendar* 'nevertheless', *Bleškega* – *Blejskega*, *Bleški* – *Blejski* 'of Bled', *gričam* – *gričem* 'to hills'.

³² The word *mladenčev* 'young men' could be updated as *mladenčev*; however, he could not write the proper form *mladeničev*.

³³ In any case, the inconsistent modernization is questionable. The Fourth Slovene reader for elementary school used in 1943 included the following text: "Dni mojih lepša polovica *kmalo*, / mladosti leta, *kmalu* ste minule ..."

³⁴ Chaucer wrote his texts more than four centuries before Prešeren; however, the share of archaic words showed that there is no significant difference between the difficulty of reception of both authors. In addition, Prešeren's poetical language is more inverted and above all much more metaphorical.

Annotation

Adding footnotes or endnotes³⁵ is common practice in difficult classical and modern texts regardless of literary form or type. Notes explain either less well-known data or receptively harder passages and undoubtedly facilitate comprehension of the text and thus also its experiencing. They may, however, be disturbing or even restraining as indirectly pointed out by Grosman (2006: 112), who notes—when explaining reception-related difficulties in reading more demanding texts—that various Slovenian textbooks “sometimes contain whole glossaries of new words with no respect of the fact that a text with so many new words becomes unintelligible to a student, de-motivates and diverts him/her from the subject.”³⁶

Since *The Baptism at the Savica* is, in terms of reception, one of the most demanding Slovene literary texts central to the Slovene literary canon, I first decided to research notes as they appear in similar (i.e., classical and in verse form) foreign literary texts. Thus *The Divine Comedy* in its 1971 edition and *The Tales from Canterbury* in its 1996 edition (in both cases these are one of numerous reprints, therefore these works are well-used) both include copious notes. On average there is one comment for each two lines in Dante, and exactly the same frequency appears in Chaucer’s general prologue, which is semantically very condensed. According to these criteria the entire *Baptism at the Savica*, consisting of 516 lines, would be expected to have approximately 250 notes. As in one of the recent editions of Prešeren’s poems for school use (Prešeren 2000), edited by Boris Paternu, there are only fifteen notes added to *The Baptism at the Savica* (two for the “Sonnet to Matija Čop,” five for the “Introduction,” and eight for *The Baptism*), so the following has to be stated: either the comparison to Dante and Chaucer is completely out of place or the editions of *The Baptism* for school use have essentially too few notes added.

Even though explanatory notes in school readers are an important yet completely uninvestigated indicator of the level of receptive difficulty in literary texts, I decided to research in more detail how many notes were added to *The Baptism at the Savica* by individual compilers of these

³⁵ Modern readers more and more often have notes placed on the outer edge of the page.

³⁶ The fact that a large number of notes essentially reduce or even make impossible for the reader to spontaneously get familiar with a text (so-called evasion reading or reading with absorption) was indicated by the two authors of the simplified version of Shakespeare’s dramas, who stated that “readers who read the book in its original form must look into the dictionary too often, and in doing they forfeit a good deal of reading pleasure offered by the book” (Lamb 1971: 3).

readers³⁷ and how many would really be necessary to ensure an appropriate reception of the poem. Only the number of notes referring to the last eighteen octaves of *The Baptism* can be compared. The number of notes in high school or secondary school readers from authors from Sket to Krakar, is shown in figure 4.³⁸ The comparison shows essential differences among textbook compilers regarding the number of notes. Although almost all compilers felt it necessary to explain the words “druid” and “Oglej/Aquileia,” there is otherwise no unanimity among them and there are as many as seventeen different notes. This proves that there is no generally valid consensus regarding what should be additionally clarified in the notes, nor is there a single notion as to the scope of the note, which ranges from one word or phrase to a whole line; for example “peza,” “izmed oblakov,” “dosegel oča zmage ni sloveče.” Statistics prove that the greatest value was attributed to notes as a didactic aid to improve reception by authors of *Slovensko berilo za višje razrede srednjih šol* (Slovene reader for higher grades of secondary schools 1948), which contains as many as fifty-eight notes for the whole epic.³⁹ We find, for example, that they explain names of places and persons (e.g., Bohinjsko jezero – The Bohinj Lake, Cato of Utica), modernize archaic expressions (*vunanji, z okol’š’no*), or explain difficult metaphors (*siv’ga poglavarja, vere ščiti*). Compilers of the reader were therefore aware how demanding *The Baptism* is due to its high degree of archaism and metaphorical elements.

Figure 4. Number of notes in school readers on the last eighteen octaves of *The Baptism at the Savica*

READER	NN	READER	NN	READER	NN
Sket V-VI 1886	2	Pirjevec I 1963	8	Kos I 1993	4
Grafenauer III 1925	8	Bohanec II 1972	4	Kos II 2001	2
Boršnik V 1948	8	Fatur I 1981	0	Krakar II 2001	8

NN = Number of Notes

³⁷ Jakob Sket was the first to equip the entire *Baptism* with some notes in his reader for higher grades of high school in 1886. The number of notes was constantly on the rise until 1948, when Marja Boršnik published her reader. Since 1972, readers have not had the entire text of *The Baptism* included, mostly they present only final events from the 35th to 53rd octaves.

³⁸ Pirjevec includes the same notes as Boršnik. Fatur only includes notes to the Introduction, and Kos only includes eight notes in his reader of 2001, although most of them refer to text that is not included into the published paragraph.

³⁹ This is almost four times more notes than in Paternu’s edition in 2000.

In this reader, the first six octaves of *The Baptism* contain nine notes, which is still not enough to give young readers a fair understanding. In defining the necessary number of notes we can look to Karel Ozvald, who used his experience of teaching Prešeren's *Nova pisarija* (The new writing) and published it with as many as sixty-nine exhaustive notes in *Naši kulturni delavci* (Our cultural workers). If this number is compared to the twenty-nine notes which were added to *Nova pisarija* in Boršnik's reader, we can conclude that Ozvald would add about twenty notes to the first six octaves of *The Baptism*. My actual analysis shows that in view of the fact that a young reader needs explanations of all demanding archaic and metaphorical passages (especially since today, students know less archaic words, and because *The Baptism* is discussed too early in the curriculum), reception of this part of *The Baptism* should be facilitated with more than twenty-five notes.⁴⁰

We can extrapolate that the whole *The Baptism at the Savica* would require 250 notes (verse ratio: 48 versus 516), which is, on average, one note for every two verses, thus presenting an equal density of clarifications as in the case of Dante or Chaucer. As such a number of notes actually disturbs the reading process and reduces the pleasure of reading and does not resolve the question of the ninety percent inversion rate in the lines of Prešeren's poem, we can reliably conclude that commentary cannot give a satisfactory solution to the problem of the first reading of *The Baptism at the Savica*.

Our thesis concerning the indispensable number of notes in the school version of *The Baptism at the Savica* would have remained an unconfirmed scientific hypothesis had I not discovered, during the finishing phase of the research when I scrutinized school readers, that by far the largest number of notes in Prešeren's poems can be traced to an ethnic Slovene reader, compiled in Italy by Robert Petaros and Maks Šah *Od prvih*

⁴⁰ As an illustration, I present all notes needed in the first six octaves of *The Baptism* (48 of 516 verses): *oblakov vojska* - *nevihta*, *snežnikov kranjskih siv'ga poglavarja* - *Triglava*, *pokojno* - *mirno*, *vunanjega* - *zunanjega*, *somov vojska* - *spopad med ribami roparicami*, *na pokrajni* - *na obali*, *v revah* - *v stiskah*, *harpije* - *grške boginje maščevanja*, *slovenstva stebri stari* - *slovenska državnost in samostojnost*, *v šegah* - *v običajih*, *postave* - *zakoni*, *parski Tesel* - *bavarski vojvoda Tassilo*, *pod jarmom* - *pod pripravo za vpreganje volov*, *sini Slave* - *slovanski narodi*, *svit* - *zarja*, *v Kranji* - *na Kranjskem*, *jenja* - *neha*, *Katona Utikana* - *znanega samomorilca iz rimske dobe*, *pričujoče ure teže* - *sedanjega težkega položaja*, *stara vera* - *poganska vera starih Slovencev*, *osredek* - *otok*, *božjo pot* - *romarski kraj*, *snežnikov velikani* - *visoke zasnežene gore*, *lepotije* - *lepote*, *z okolšč'no* - *z okolico*, *podoba* - *kip*, *zročeni* - *namenjeni*, *bog'nje vežo* - *pogansko svetišče*.

*zapiskov do romantike (From the First Records to Romanticism 1980).*⁴¹ Both authors added as many as 193 notes to the full *The Baptism at the Savica* (eleven to the sonnet “To Matija Čop,” fifty-one to the “Introduction,” 131 to “The Baptism”),⁴² which is an exceptional density of clarifications, amounting to one note each 2.7 verses. In the first six octaves of *The Baptism*, where I foresaw at least twenty-five notes, they found twenty-four difficult passages that needed to be explained to young readers.⁴³

Transmission into prose (prosification)

According to Gerard Genette, the author of the famous *Palimpsestes*, prosification is, together with translation, versification and trans-stylization, one of the cases of formal transposition (Genette 1982: 237–340), which “only likens the original to a new metasystem,” in our case to the requirements of the prose form of literary text (Juvan 1990: 133–34). Prosification as a reception aid is used in two ways: as a substitute for a receptively too demanding verse original or as didactic addition to improve comprehension of demanding classical poetry.

The first method emerges also within simplified versions of texts at some key passages. I relate an example of the prosification of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*:

ORIGINAL TEXT IN VERSE FORM	PROSIFICATION
Tarry a little: there is something else. This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood; The words expressly are a pound of flesh. (Shakespeare 1974)	“Wait a little, Jew,” said Portia; “there is something else. This bond here gives you no drop of blood; the words are, a pound of flesh.” (Lamb 1971)

As we can see, the adaptors of the text not only modernized the language, but also transformed verse to prose, and at the same time formally transposed the dramatic text to prose.

⁴¹ This could be expected, as the central Slovene readers succumb to the mythological image of Prešeren, who “does not need many notes”; however, our ethnic minorities obviously have a less burdened and more distant view on necessity of notes, based on their school practice. This may also be a continuance of the tradition, which was established by Ozvald through his detailed notes a hundred years ago.

⁴² This is thirteen times more than in Paternu’s edition of Prešeren in 2000.

⁴³ An interesting fact is that two-thirds of their notes are identical to those I specified as essential footnote explanations.

The second prosification method is intended for use at school and consists of displaying the same text in verse and prose, side-by-side. A typical example can be found in one of the recent editions of *The Divine Comedy*, which presents short prose summaries of most of the text, while some of the most beautiful fragments are in both verse and prose:

ORIGINAL TEXT IN VERSE	PROSIFICATION
“O frati”, dissi “che per cento milia perigli siete giunti a l’occidente, a questa tanto picciola vigilia, d’i nostri sensi ch’è del rimanente, non vogliate negar l’esperienza, di retro al sol, del mondo senza gente.” (Dante 1998)	Dissi: “O fratelli, che superando centomila pericoli siete giunti all’Occidente, a questo brevissimo tempo in cui disporremo ancora dei nostri sensi, non vogliate che ci priviamo dell’esperienza di vedere, seguendo il cammino del Sole, la parte del mondo dove non vive nessun essere umano ...

The prosification of this fragment of *The Divine Comedy* also shows formal transposition from verse to prose and is linked to linguistic modernization. A large number of added words can be noted because modern readers require more detailed explanations of Dante’s extremely sparing expression.

In Slovenia, prosification as a substitute for verse appeared in the translation of classical antique poetry at the end of the nineteenth century. It first appeared in 1894, when Andrej Kragelj⁴⁴ adapted Homer’s *Odyssey* for high school students, while the *Illiad* followed in 1900.⁴⁵ Influenced by German authorities and adaptors of Homer, Kragelj⁴⁶ opted for prosification, substantiating this with the need for a broader understanding,

⁴⁴ Kragelj (1853–1901) was a professor at the state German-language high school in Gorica and a translator. After his death, Simon Gregorčič dedicated a farewell elegy to him.

⁴⁵ When *The Illiad* was published, the epic poem *The Odyssey* had already been reprinted, which shows that young readers accepted it extremely well. After the Second World War, even the translator Anton Sovrè decided to prosify *The Odyssey*, although he tried, in his translations of Homer, to stay as close as possible to the original, also by using archaisms.

⁴⁶ In his Foreword he cites Schwab’s adaptation *Die schönsten Sagen des klassischen Alterthums*, which is still in print today, and two less well-known authors (Homerus 1894).

as he is aware that reception problems of Homer's works would likely arise if the translator followed the original.⁴⁷

Prosification for school use can be sensed as early as in Levstik's manuscript *Nekoliko težjih reči v Prešernu* (A few more difficult issues in Prešeren), which Levstik⁴⁸ prepared and published in Janežič's⁴⁹ *Slovenski glasnik* (Slovene Herald) ten years after Prešeren's death. In almost every poem, the author uses partial prosification to explain receptively demanding passages, primarily to solve the problem of frequent occurrences of inverted word order in Prešeren's lines. The sonnet, dedicated to the painter Matevž Langus, which he declares very difficult to understand (Levstik 1956: 233) due to its extremely complex metaphors (it includes a famous three-level metaphor, "sled sence zarje unstranske glorie" ("a trace of shadow of the dawn of glory from beyond")), is first partly prosified, then the most difficult second stanza is prosified:

PREŠEREN'S ORIGINAL	PROSIFICATION
V podobah gledat' hrepeni veselje Življenja rajskega. Sled sence zarje Unstranske glorie, vtisnjeni v oltarje, Ljubezni verne ohladi mu želje.	Romar hrepeni gledati v podobah veselje rajskega življenja. V podobah zasledi šele senco tiste zarje, ki jo ima onostranska, v oltarje vtisnjena glorijska, in že ta senca mu hladi želje verne ljubezni.*

* A pilgrim yearns to see the joy of heavenly life in pictures. In the pictures he traces but a shadow of the dawn, which is contained in otherworldly glory, imprinted in altars, yet even that shadow soothes his wishes of faithful love.

We can notice that Levstik modernized some archaic expressions (*gledat'*, *unstranske*, *glorie*) and primarily simplified the stylistic word order

⁴⁷ "This story is primarily intended for our studying youth. My goal was to write as simple as possible and allow less educated readers to also understand the text; to what degree this goal has been reached, I cannot say. If this simplified prose reflects at least a fragment of Homer's divine poetry, I have fulfilled my task" (Homerus 1900).

⁴⁸ Fran Levstik (1831–87), poet, author, critic, linguist and journalist. He was a private teacher, secretary of the "Slovenska matica" and clerk at Lyceum library in Ljubljana. Notable are his story *Martin Krpan* and his travelogue including a literary program, *Popotovanje iz Litije do Čateža*.

⁴⁹ Anton Janežič (1828–69), educator, linguist and editor. He taught at secondary schools in Celovec (Klagenfurt), and compiled several secondary school readers (for example, *Cvetnik slovenske slovesnosti*) together with a grammar textbook entitled *Slovenska slovnica*. He also published and edited several literary magazines (for example, *Slovenski glasnik*).

for the modern reader, while he did not give much attention to the problem of multilevel metaphors.

In Slovenia at the beginning of the twentieth century, prosification occurred both in scholastic theory and practice. When, in his special didactics, Janko Bezjak⁵⁰ speaks about school discussion of epic poems, he mentions that spoken prosification is an indispensable didactic means of improving reception of more complex poems: “After announcing this intent we present both versions and narrate the poem in neat, simple prose form, but only in the case where the contents assume a more difficult form, composition and poetic language than prose narrative, like for example in the poems “Mutec osojski” (The mute of Osoje), “Turki na Slevici” (Turks at Slevica), “Noč in dan” (Night and day), “Brodnik” (Ferryman), “Atila in slovenska kraljica” (Attila and the Slovenian queen), “Zvon na poti” (Bell on the way) (Bezjak 1907: 217). Bezjak’s didactic recommendation is significant for two reasons: he is clearly aware which elements hinder reception (complex form, composition, and language) and of the purpose of prosification, while his direct mentioning of more complex epic poems proves that prosification is even more needed in Prešeren’s poetry which is more problematic in terms of reception than some well known poems by Aškerc.

Ozvald’s⁵¹ booklet for school use *Naši kulturni delavci v zrcalu Prešernovih poezij* (Our cultural workers in the reflection of Prešeren’s poems) gives most attention to Prešeren’s *Nova pisarija*. In its already mentioned numerous notes, the author also explains reception-related difficulties through prosification:

PREŠEREN’S ORIGINAL	PROSIFICATION
Tam, kjer po stari šegi še drekaajo, kjer ne zmajêjo dost’ al nič jezika, besed nemšk’vavcev grdih ne poznajo.	Kjer se jezik tekom časa nič ni spremenil in govorijo “še po stari šegi”, tam vsaj ne rabijo germanizmov.*

* Where language has not changed through time and is still spoken “in the old ways,” there they at least do not use Germanisms.

Ozvald went a step further than Levstik as he dealt, in his own partial prosifications, with complex metaphors (“besed nemšk’vavcev grdih” –

⁵⁰ Janko Bezjak (1862–1935), educator and linguist. He was principal of the first state Slovene language high school in Gorica. After the beginning of the World War I he was for ten years an inspector of secondary schools in Ljubljana. He co-authored several readers for the last grades of secondary schools.

⁵¹ Karel Ozvald (1873–1946) was a high school professor in Kranj, Ptuj and Gorica; after World War I he regularly lectured on cultural pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. He was also one of the first deans there.

“Germanisms”). An even better example of prosification appears in *Četrto slovensko berilo* (The fourth Slovene reader), prepared in 1943 during German occupation by Kristina Hafner and Franc Ločniškar. In their note under the first stanza of the poem “Slovo od mladosti” (Farewell to youth), where the poetic language is modernized to the maximum still accepted by Slovenes, the stanza was explained through prosification:

PREŠEREN’S ORIGINAL	PROSIFICATION
Dni mojih lepša polovica kmalo, mladosti leta, kmalu ste minule; rodile ve ste meni cvetja malo, še tega rož’ce so se koj osule. Le redko upa sonce je sijalo, viharjev jeze so pogosto rjule. Mladost! Vendar po tvoji temni zarji srce bridko vzdihuje: Bog te obvarji!*	Pesnik se poslavlja od mladosti. Dala mu je malo veselja in sreče, pa še to, kar je užil, je trajalo le kratek čas. Mladost mu ni prinesla lepih upov za bodočnost, pač pa je doživel mnogo bridkosti in prebil veliko bojov. Kljub temu pa se pesnik težko loči od mladosti in ji kliče: Bog te obvarji!**

* Gone by the better half of all my days, / O years of youth, you have so quickly passed! / You bore for me so few of life’s bouquets, / Whose blossoms, never much, still faded fast. / And seldom did hope’s sun bestow its rays, / While all too oft erupted anger’s blast. / Yet, youth, for your dark dawn in bitter quell / My heart forever sighs, God keep you well! (Prešeren 1999: 41)

**The poet takes farewell from his youth. It gave him little joy and happiness, and even that he enjoyed but for a short time. His youth did not bring him bright hopes for future, on the contrary, he had to experience many sorrows and go through many battles. Yet still, the poet finds it hard to part from his youth and bids it: God keep you well!

This formal transposing is almost completely comparable to the above-mentioned prosification of *The Divine Comedy*. The poem “Farewell to Youth” is one of the receptively most difficult of Prešeren’s poems. A detailed analysis of the original stanza shows that it contains many less comprehensible words,⁵² and, above all, that almost all the lines contain inverted word order or metaphors. Prosification of the stanza, as opposed to modernization and commentary with their limited possibilities to improve reception, solves, in the first reading, the problems of archaisms, inversion

⁵² Examples of less comprehensible words are: *lepši, kmalo, kmalo, minule, rož’ce, viharjev, jeze, rjule, vendèr, zdihuje*, and *obvarji*.

and metaphorical language, which are the three factors inhibiting proper comprehension of the text. Since the prosification thoroughly performs the role of didactic modernization and simplification, the authors of the reader could, if they displayed both versions of the text side-by-side, leave the original in unaltered form on the left side, which would also allow more motivated students to obtain a realistic impression of Prešeren's poetic language.

Confirmed usefulness of prosification in improving reception of *The Baptism at the Savica*

In order to confirm my thesis that prosification is the most suitable didactic aid for improving students' reception of complex Slovene classical verse texts, I carried out an empirical study in three first year⁵³ classes at Tolmin high school in February 2006.⁵⁴ All three classes were taught by the same Slovene language teacher, who carried out the test according to my instructions. The classes were comparable as to the number of students, gender distribution, parents' education, and students' general achievement in the final year of elementary school.⁵⁵ I prepared three types of material: the first class received the first twelve octaves of *The Baptism* in poetic form, the second in prose form, while the third group received both versions side-by-side,⁵⁶ with poetry on the left and prosification on the right (figure 5). The teacher first distributed the material to the students who silently read all twelve stanzas, which were printed on both sides of one sheet of paper.⁵⁷ When all students had carefully read the material, the teacher took it away and then handed out the same questionnaires in all three classes, which included three tasks to verify student comprehension.

⁵³ As I wanted to avoid unwanted influences, I again chose the first year (in the second year *The Baptism* is compulsory home reading and is dealt with in class).

⁵⁴ I was assisted by Marta Rutar, professor of Slovene language.

⁵⁵ The number of students varied from twenty-two to twenty-four, and distribution between sexes was even: each group had ten boys and twelve to fourteen girls. The average education level of parents fluctuated from 5.2 to 6.2 (according to the national classification), while students' average final mark from elementary school ranged from 4.1 to 4.6 (out of 5).

⁵⁶ Fedor E. Korš wrote in *Prešeren's album*: "Such authors, especially those that are worthy of the name 'classics,' should be published side-by-side. This is because the majority of readers—with external changes, which should be made only to prevent, as much as possible, the form to disturb the joy of benefiting from the contents ..." (Korš 1900: 810).

⁵⁷ The students with both literary forms were instructed by the teacher to read zig-zag so that they first read each stanza in its original form and after that its prosification. If necessary, they may go back to the original form and then continue with the second stanza.

Figure 5. The first twelve octaves of *The Baptism at the Savica*

POETRY	PROSE
Mož in oblakov vojsko je obojno... končala temna noč, kar svetla zarja zlati z rumen'mi žarki glavo trojno snežnikov kranjskih siv'ga poglavarja. Bohinjsko jezero stoji pokojno, sledu ni več zunanega viharja; al somov vojska pod vodo ne mine, in drugih roparjev v dnu globočine.*	Z nočjo sta se končala tako nevihta kot vojaški spopad, zdaj pa jutranja zarja obseva vse tri vrhove Triglava. Bohinjsko jezero je mirno, saj ni več sledov viharnege vremena; vendar se pod vodno gladino somi in druge roparske ribe še vedno spopadajo.**

Due to the added prosification which already contained applied comprehension of the original, I chose, to test any potential differences between individual classes, only such tasks with which I identified the comprehension level for words and the comprehension level for interpretation,⁵⁸ while using the procedure of supplementing, summarizing and answering questions (statements), where I chose a closed-type task with several alternative answers (Pečjak 1993: 61–62).⁵⁹ The results of the empirical test were expressed as a percentage of correct solutions (figure 6). Otherwise the various numbers of possible points (first task - 4, second task - 2, third task - 7) would inhibit comparison. As expected, only a low percentage of students in all three classes successfully completed the first

⁵⁸ These two levels refer to familiarity with terminology and specific data (the lowest level) and understanding of relations between each part of the text or singling out some mutually independent events, points of view and their relevant details (the second level) (Pečjak 1993: 57–58).

⁵⁹ a) In the task of supplementing, students had to insert four missing words in a rewritten sixth stanza of the fragment; the missing words were *Črtomira*, *mladenčev*, *joki*, and *Staroslav*.

b) When summarizing, students were instructed to mark the order of events from four selected stanzas with the numbers 1 to 4; I took care not to include the first and the last octave of the fragment. The stanzas were quoted in the following order: 4. (Že, Črtomir! je treba se ločiti) - 3. (Dari opraviti bog'nji po navadi) - 1. (Al jezero, ki na njega pokrajni) - 2. (Tje na otok z valovami obdani).

c) Students received seven sets of closed-type statements and had to select the appropriate statement out of four possibilities, so random success was largely eliminated. I quote an example for the first and the last stanza:

“V jutru po spopadu med pogani in kristjani je bilo vreme A) deževno, B) oblačno, C) megleno, Č) sončno.” (The morning after the battle between the pagans and Christians the weather was A) Rainy, B) Cloudy, C) Misty, D) Sunny.)

“Ko se Črtomir poslavlja od Bogomila in njenega očeta, A) joče le Bogomila, B) joče le Črtomir, C) jočeta oba, Č) jočejo vsi trije.” (When Črtomir bids farewell to Bogomila and her father, A) only Bogomila cries, B) only Črtomir cries, C) they both cry, D) all three cry).

task, although the difference between the first and the third group is significant. The result of the second group is surprising since in the prosified version of the text, as many as three words out of four differ in form from the original. The second task has the highest average score of all, as discovering the plot is obviously less demanding than decoding textual details. The outstandingly high results of the third group can, in my opinion, be attributed to “zig-zag” reading that prolongs the perception of the text and allows increased memorization. The third task proves that *The Baptism at the Savica* in its first reading indeed provokes exceptional reception problems, as appropriate referential meanings of the text were identified by a mere third of high school students who only read the poetic form of the poem. As expected, comprehension improves two-fold among those who read *The Baptism* in prosified form as there was no reception interference from archaisms, inversion and metaphors. Such a high result was also noted in the third group, who read *The Baptism* in both forms.

Figure 6. Results of a closed-type, multiple-choice task to gauge comprehension

	Supplementing	Summarizing	Choosing	TOTAL
I. CLASS (poetry)	3	57	32	27
II. CLASS (prose)	10	63	66	48
III. CLASS (both)	13	90	68	54

As in the first empirical study, it would be pointless to contend that no high school student from the first group reached the level of independent reading, that only one reached the level, enabled through teaching, and that all others remained at the frustration level of reading (Pečjak 1993: 64).⁶⁰ Rather, the results consistently prove that also educated people have great problems understanding *The Baptism at the Savica* and most other Prešeren poems at the first reading.⁶¹ The results of the students from the third class show that additional prosification immensely improves reception; when their cognitive response was measured these students achieved up to a

⁶⁰ Only one student from the first class achieved more than forty percent of all possible points, two thirds of students achieved between twenty and forty percent, and almost one third less than twenty percent.

⁶¹ When summarizing events (second task), only one third of students from this group achieved all points, while when choosing the appropriate statement (third task), only two students achieved four points out of seven and all others achieved less than half of the available points.

hundred percent higher rate of positive answers compared to students from the first group.⁶²

An even clearer picture is obtained if we compare the results of only the last two tasks, since the first task mostly assesses memorization rather than comprehension. After this limitation, students of the first group obtained forty-five percent of available points and students of the third group seventy-nine percent. The percentage of the first group is almost identical to the result obtained by Krakar when assessing the cognitive response of primary and high school students (Krakar Vogel 2000–2001: 131), while the four fifths of points obtained by the third group confirm that prosification⁶³ proves to be an efficient didactic aid for the first reading of *The Baptism at the Savica*. My hypothesis is that added prosification benefits all three types of readers according to Schmidt⁶⁴—utilitarian readers (who, in my view, are the most frequent among high school students), emphatic-emotional readers, as well as intellectual readers.

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⁶² It is noteworthy that the prosification, added to the poem, was more helpful to the boys than to the girls. The boys in both second classes collected fewer points than girls. In the third class, boys were better than girls in both key tasks: in understanding the story and in the details. They obtained outstanding results of ninety-five percent and seventy-six percent, successively.

⁶³ The main reason being that it effectively removes reception noise caused by exceptional archaisms and the inverted and metaphoric style of Prešeren's poems.

⁶⁴ Dović (2004: 73) quotes Schmidt's conclusion, that in the late eighteenth century, the German reading public developed into utility type readers (reading for utilitarian reasons), empathetic-emotional readers (reading for enjoyment and in place of experiences) and intellectual readers (reading as self-actualization). This classification made by Schmidt is still useful.

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POVZETEK

PROZIFIKACIJA – DIDAKTIČNO SREDSTVO ZA IZBOLJŠANJE RECEPCIJE KRSTA PRI SAVICI

Ivor. A. Richards se je že v tridesetih letih 20. stoletja ukvarjal s problematiko recepcije klasičnih verzni besedil in tudi empirično potrdil težave študentov pri interpretaciji poezije. Empirična raziskava razumevanja Prešernovega Krsta pri Savici je pokazala, da imajo slovenski gimnazijci velike težave pri dekodiranju temeljnih pomenov Prešernove pesnitve. Ključni razlogi za visoko recepcijsko zahtevnost Prešernovih verzov so pogosti arhaični izrazi, praviloma invertiran besedni red in številne abstraktne metafore. V didaktiki književnosti so se uveljavili trije načini za olajšanje recepcije zahtevne klasične poezije: jezikovna posodobitev, dodajanje opomb in predstavitev v prozo. Modernizacija ima zaradi kultnega statusa Prešernovih pesmi omejen obseg, saj se lahko posodobi zgolj zastarela oblika pesmi, njihov besedni zaklad pa je nedotakljiv. Poopombljenje otežuje spontano bralno doživetje, saj Krst pri Savici podobno kot Dantejeva Božanska komedija ali Chaucerjeve Canterburyjske zgodbe zahteva v povprečju eno opombo na dva verza. Edino prozifikacija, ki jo kot priporočljivo didaktično sredstvo za izboljšanje recepcije zahtevne klasične poezije poznajo tudi druge zahodnoevropske književnosti (na Slovenskem je prvi prozificiral Prešerna že Fran Levstik), v celoti rešuje problematiko močne arhaiziranosti, invertiranosti in metaforičnosti Prešernovih verzov. To je potrdila tudi empirična raziskava, pri kateri so tisti dijaki gimnazije, ki so poleg verzov iz Krsta pri Savici brali tudi dodano prozifikacijo, izpričali dvakrat boljše razumevanje kot tisti dijaki, ki so brali samo poezijo.