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USE AND TEACHING OF SEO, VOICE AND TONE GUIEDLIENES: A WORKPLACE-ENGLISH CASE STUDY

This qualitative, case-study research analyses workplace English (WE) to determine how the interplay of voice and tone guidelines and search engine optimizations (SEO) guidelines shapes the use of English in marketing content of an IT company, as well as how much English teaching at the IT company caters to the needs of WE users in that respect. The research is based on two main resources: 1) a corpus of approximately 40 blogs and 100 website news articles which were compiled into a corpus in their draft, reviewed and post-SEO versions and 2) learning materials used in English classes for, allegedly, improving WE, including voice, style and SEO skills. The research was conducted in two phases. First, the revisions and edits in the corpus were identified and mapped to voice, tone, style and SEO guidelines, in order to see if edits do indeed target these aspects of WE use. Secondly, the teaching materials were analyzed to identify how they were crafted to address the main issues identified in the use of WE in respect of tone, voice and, in particular, SEO. This approach is based on the rules of qualitative research in public relations and marketing communication (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). The research shows that, in addition to struggling with voice and tone guidelines, employees also have trouble meeting the SEO guidelines, which may all be due to suboptimal WE teaching and learning materials which put too much emphasis on fine details of English usage, but not on the specialized requirements of IT companies in terms of voice, tone, style and SEO. The research also provides guidelines for improving WE teaching practice in terms of style, voice and, crucially, SEO requirements.

Key words: voice, tone, SEO, marketing communication, workplace English

1. INTRODUCTION

This study represents a follow-up and significant extension of the groundwork laid in two previous studies that were devised to identify and define linguistic constraints that are used to formulate tone and voice guidelines in workplace English (WE) and then to identify what language features and means are

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used to implement these guidelines into textual production. In that respect, this study represents a follow up as it includes search engine optimization (SEO) in the scope of research, which represents a common WE constraint that interplays with voice and tone optimizations. On the other hand, the research also represents a significant extension of the previous studies as it widens the scope of WE research by analyzing the in-house, customized teaching materials to assess to what extent they were crafted to address the main issues identified in the use of WE (tone, voice and SEO).

As a follow-up with expanded scope and nature, this study has two related goals. Firstly, to analyze a small corpus of WE to determine if SEO edits are made, and, if so, how often and if they are linguistically different from voice and tone edits. Secondly, to investigate the contents and focus areas of learning materials used to teach WE in the company whose WE production was used to compile the corpus, and to determine if SEO, voice and tone optimizations are sufficiently covered by teaching and learning activities. As such, the study represents a pilot, case study as the corpus compilation was made possible in a medium-sized IT company and the researcher would like to thank Typhoon HIL Inc. for providing WE text samples as well as WE learning materials from their subsidiaries in Brazil and Serbia.

2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE USE OF VOICE, TONE AND SEO GUIDELINES IN WORKPLACE ENGLISH

According to Bell (1984, 2001) and Kavgić (2021), corporate tone and voice guides can be understood as marketing-oriented use of audience design and referee design which have the purpose of adjusting language towards that of their audience, resulting in implied solidarity or greater "intimacy" with them, and consciously using style(s) of a social group or groups of the assumed target audience in hope the stylistic shift develop allegiances with them, respectively. In contrast, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is predominantly a marketing term (e.g. Ledford, 2015), but, in this paper, it is primarily analyzed from a linguistic perspective where it may be defined as a strategic process of tailoring and enhancing the textual and structural components of web content to improve its visibility and ranking on search engine result pages (SERPs) by means of the integration of relevant keywords, phrases, and latent semantic indexing (LSI) terms, as well as the optimization of syntactic structures, organization, and meta elements to align with search algorithms and user search patterns (a summary of Kian and Zahedi (2011) and Akay et al. (2018)).

In line with goals of the paper, this remainder of the chapter defines challenges in adhering to tone, voice and SEO guidelines for users of workplace English ((henceforward: UoWE) from the linguistic point of view, and establishes the theoretical framework for the research.

2.1. Challenges of following tone and voice guidelines from a linguistic point of view

The most significant challenge confronting UoWE in adhering to company tone and voice guides is the mastery of a unique, brand-specific linguistic identity (Cornelissen, 2017). The difficulty increases because each organization seems to develop its own distinct communication style, albeit on similar principles to other companies, which serves as an extension of its brand identity and corporate ethos (Kavgić, 2021). In other words, the UoWE must internalize this linguistic framework and consistently apply it across various content formats and channels, from website articles and blogs to social media posts and marketing collateral, as well as help and documentation. This necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the company's target audience, objectives, and values to ensure that the written content effectively communicates the desired brand message and resonates with the intended readership.

Another challenge is the navigation of diverse content requirements and the adaptation of writing styles to suit different contexts and purposes (Kavgić, 2021). UoWE must exhibit a high degree of versatility, seamlessly transitioning between formal, informal, persuasive, informative, or educational tones as necessitated by the content brief and/or goal/objective of content creation, all the while maintaining the same voice. Furthermore, maintaining stylistic consistency while addressing different topics or writing for various platforms can be a complex undertaking, because the UoWE must strike a delicate balance between incorporating the unique requirements of each project, including SEO considerations or audience preferences, and adhering to the overarching brand guidelines. Ultimately, the challenge lies in crafting content that is both contextually appropriate and reflective of the company's distinct style, tone, and voice, fostering a cohesive and engaging brand narrative across all communication touch points while appropriately using tone- and voice-compliant linguistic constructions such as active verbal voice, direct ("you") address, sentence length limits, approved terminology, etc. (Kavgić, 2021).

2.2. Purpose of SEO and challenges for UoWE

This section serves two purposes: firstly, to introduce the reader to SEO and, secondly, to highlight difficulties and challenges that UoWE face when dealing with it. After thorough investigation of various databases and scientific search engines, the author remained unsuccessful in efforts to find any significant number of earlier or recent studies that address SEO from the point of view of linguistics (outside natural language processing and computation) or WE. The only reference that directly addresses the linguistics of SEO is a single master thesis (Lushaku, 2022). This seems to indicate that WE and linguistic approaches to SEO present an under-researched topic, where this study may represent a modest contribution to fill the insight gap that seems to exist in this respect.

Non-linguistically, i.e. from the marketing perspective (e.g. Fishkin, 2018: 60-64), search engine optimization (SEO) is a multifaceted approach aimed at enhancing the visibility and ranking of web content in search engine result pages (SERPs). On the other hand, despite having non-linguistic motivation, SEO relies on linguistics to achieves its goals by means of strategic manipulation of textual components to align with search algorithms, thereby fostering a higher probability of content discovery and user engagement. In that respect, i.e. linguistically, lexical choices play a pivotal role in SEO as they determine the keywords and phrases employed in the content (Ledford, 2015: 19-31). These selections should reflect user search queries and trends, which can be identified through rigorous analysis of search data. Crafting semantically rich content, which encompasses synonyms and related terms, bolsters the topical relevance of the text and amplifies its resonance with search algorithms.

Another linguistic aspect of SEO, closely related to aforementioned lexical choices, is the use of latent semantic indexing (LSI) keywords (e.g. Blynova, 2019; Horasan, 2021). These are contextually related terms that search engines employ to discern thematic coherence and depth of content. According to these sources, incorporating LSI keywords can enhance the semantic network of the text, enabling search engines to ascertain its relevance to a broader array of user queries. Additionally, lexical choices and LSI are inextricably related to syntactic structures and the organization of textual elements, as the length of sentences and their syntactically encoded thematic structure impact the readability and navigability of web content. In other words, search-engine-optimized texts should exhibit a coherent, cohesive hierarchical structure of sentences further emphasized by means of formatting, such as clear headings, subheadings, and paragraph breaks. This fosters an intuitive user experience and facilitates search engines' ability to index the content accurately.

In sum, linguistic aspects of SEO entail the deliberate manipulation of lexical, semantic, and syntactic components of text to optimize its discoverability and relevance in search engine result pages. This process requires a comprehensive understanding of search algorithms, user behavior, and data-driven keyword selection. By harnessing these linguistic strategies, content creators who are UoWE can effectively enhance the visibility and impact of their web content in the digital landscape.

2.2.1. Challenges of optimizing WE output for SEO

One of the two primary challenges faced by UoWE in the realm of search engine optimization is the delicate balance between crafting content that appeals to both search algorithms and human readers. The dual objective of catering to search engine requirements while maintaining engaging and persuasive "prose" can prove to be a demanding task to achieve in the workplace. Striking this equilibrium necessitates a nuanced understanding of keyword usage and syntax, ensuring that content incorporates relevant search terms without succumbing to keyword stuffing or compromising the natural flow of language. Additionally, the dynamic nature of search engine algorithms requires UoWE, to stay abreast of the latest trends and best practices in SEO to maintain the efficacy of their textual strategies.

The second challenge for UoWE in the SEO landscape is the cultivation of high-quality, original content in an increasingly saturated digital market. Search engines prioritize unique, value-driven content that provides users with relevant, informative, and engaging material. UoWE in this domain must harness their creative prowess to produce fresh and captivating content, differentiating their work from the multitude of similar resources available online. This entails thorough research, the incorporation of diverse perspectives, and a commitment to innovation in both form and substance. Furthermore, UoWE must be adept at crafting compelling headlines, meta descriptions, and calls-to-action that entice users to click on their content amidst a sea of competing search results. Ultimately, the challenge lies in marrying SEO best practices with effective, persuasive copywriting to create content that captivates audiences and garners the favor of search engines.

In sum, SEO seems to represent an additional challenge for UoWE, especially when combined with corporate tone and voice guidelines.

2.3. Challenges of teaching WE skills for SEO

As it can be seen from previous sections, SEO, as well as tone and voice, are quite important language skills for UoWE and it would seem logical that there are some studies or research articles dealing with how to address them and teach them in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom. However, that is not the case. Despite thorough research of several scientific publication databases, it was not possible to find previous studies that directly tackle the topic of SEO, tone and voice in the EFL classroom. There are several studies that mention web content creation and, non-explicitly, SEO as aspects of digital literacy (Alakkrash & Abdul Razak, 2021; Alfia et al, 2020; Kurniawati et al., 2018; Pratolo & Solikhati, 2021; Tour, 2020), but the overall state of the art seems to be that, "digital literacy is overlooked in EFL classroom" (Iskandar et al., 2022: 86) – i.e. not only that are SEO skills and tone and voice skills are not addressed in scientific studies on EFL teaching, but digital literacy, as their overarching skill set, seems to be "missing in action", too. In other words, the search for other references on this topic seems to indicate that it is valid, new and relevant. On the other hand, this also means that there are no benchmarks or methodological guidelines from previous studies to build upon. Ultimately, this study seems to be the first in, hopefully, a series of studies that bridge this gap.

In the absence of previous studies, the researcher, on the basis of his part-time work in IT industry as both a content writer and an EFL teacher, can relay that integrating SEO skills into workplace English teaching classes presents a unique set of challenges for both educators and learners. One significant challenge is the rapidly evolving nature of SEO techniques and algorithms. Teachers must stay up-to-date with the latest trends and best practices to provide relevant and accurate information to students, especially in 2023 when, under the influence of ChatGPT and AI, search engine companies (read: Google and Bing) are starting to change how search results are displayed and ranked. Additionally, since SEO requires a combination of technical and linguistic skills, finding the right balance between these two aspects in a WE course can be difficult. It is essential to create a course curriculum that addresses the linguistic nuances of writing for SEO while also providing students with the technical knowledge necessary for optimizing content for search engines. In that respect, the best approach to integrating SEO into workplace English teaching classes will probably involve incorporating real-world case studies into the curriculum and having SEO experts or practitioners as guests in EFL classes or, at least, having them check EFL materials. This approach would

allow EFL students and UoWE to gain hands-on experience and develop a comprehensive understanding of SEO strategies in a practical context.

This finding, to a great extent, also leads to this study where one of the main research questions was to determine, despite no scientific studies on the topic, if language aspects of SEO were being taught in in-house EFL/WE classes, at least in a representative IT company of the case study.

3. INTERPLAY OF SEO, TONE AND VOICE GUIDELINES: A CASE STUDY IN WORKPLACE ENGLISH USE AND ITS TEACHING PRACTICE

The central part of this study is organized in two parts. First, the methodology and the corpus will be presented, which is followed by a presentation of the results of the corpus analysis.

3.1. The research methodology and the corpus

Similarly to some previous studies (e.g. Kavgić, 2021), the most challenging aspect of methodological work revolved around finding a representative corpus because suitable corpora are not publicly available and companies (e.g. Amazon, Hubspot, etc.) are unwilling to give access to relevant text samples. As mentioned earlier, it was the IT company Typhoon HIL Inc., with offices in Boston, Basel, Florianopolis and Novi Sad, that provided both in-house marketing materials and in-house WE learning materials for corpus compilation and the author would like to, once more, thank them for that. More specifically, the corpus comprised two "sub-corpora":

- "Web content corpus" (WCC) comprising blogs and web page text created by Tajfun HIL d.o.o. (Novi Sad, Serbia) and Typhoon HIL BR Ltda. (Florianopolis, Brazil), two subsidies of Typhoon HIL Inc: for this sub-corpus both raw and final versions were available (together with multiple reviews and tracked changes by native speakers of English)
- "Learning material corpus" (LMC) comprising learning materials for in-house, continuous education WE classes used in a total of 32 online, F2F and hybrid classes for both Typhoon HIL BR and Tajfun HIL doo,

The WCC was compiled from MS Word documents with tracked changes turned on and included up to five versions of a single document (draft, several revisions, and the final version), hence enabling the researcher to analyze various edits and annotate them according to their purpose. This type of corpus may be

called a "monolingual revision corpus" and has not been identified in major corpus textbooks or tangentially related studies (e.g., Aijmer, 2008; Beißwenger & Storrer, 2008; Bennett, 2010; McEnery & Hardie, 2012), except in an article by Kavgić (2021) where it is termed a "review monolingual corpus". The basic info on the corpus is presented in Table 1, while a text sample is shown in Figure 1.

Number of blogs:	37
Average number of words per blog:	1011
Average characters per blog:	6509
Total number of words in blogs:	37407
Number of web pages:	94
Average number of words per web page:	306
Average characters per web page:	1812
Total number of words in web pages:	28764
TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS IN THE WCC:	**66171**

Table 1: *Basic information on the web content corpus (WCC)*

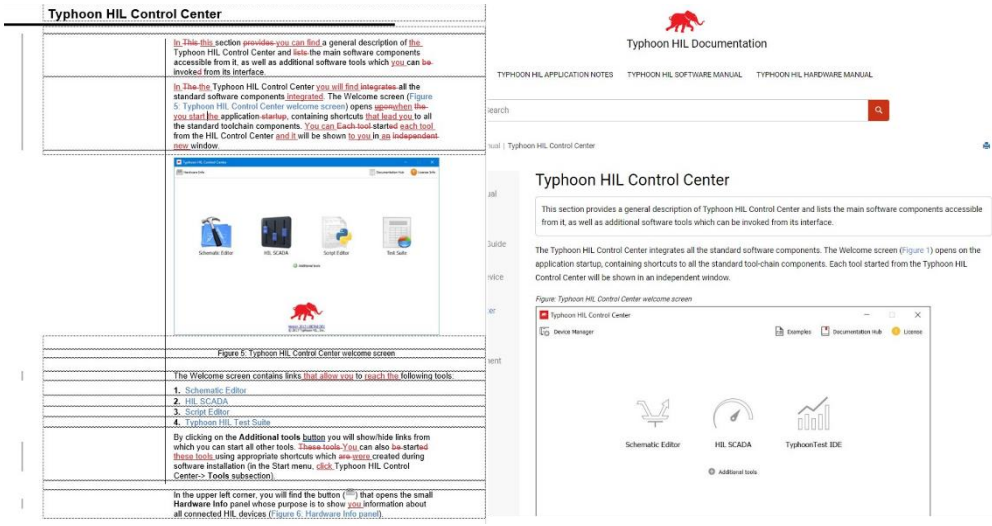

Figure 1: *Representative WCC corpus files (draft, left) and the final, published version (right).*

The WCC was analyzed in line with qualitative research framework in marketing communication (Daymon & Holloway, 2010): SEO edits in the WCC were identified and annotated for its type, as presented in the next section.

The LMC was compiled from a total of 36 PPTX slide decks and 19 MS Word files that have been used in a total of 32 in-house WE classes for employees

from 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. The LMC did not include course books, because they do not target voice, tone and SEO edits. It should be noted that in the company, the HR team communicates the employee language needs to the WE teachers and classes are assumed to be designed to fill in their skill gaps (personal communication), so these additional materials can be presumed to represent company-specific instructions. Sample materials from the LMC are shown in Figure 2. It is important to note that there is no word count/size of the LMC because many learning materials contained in it are scanned images/text from other sources.

The LMC was not annotated for SEO edits and their types. Instead, each exercise was annotated for the skill set that it targeted: general use of English, tone, voice and SEO.

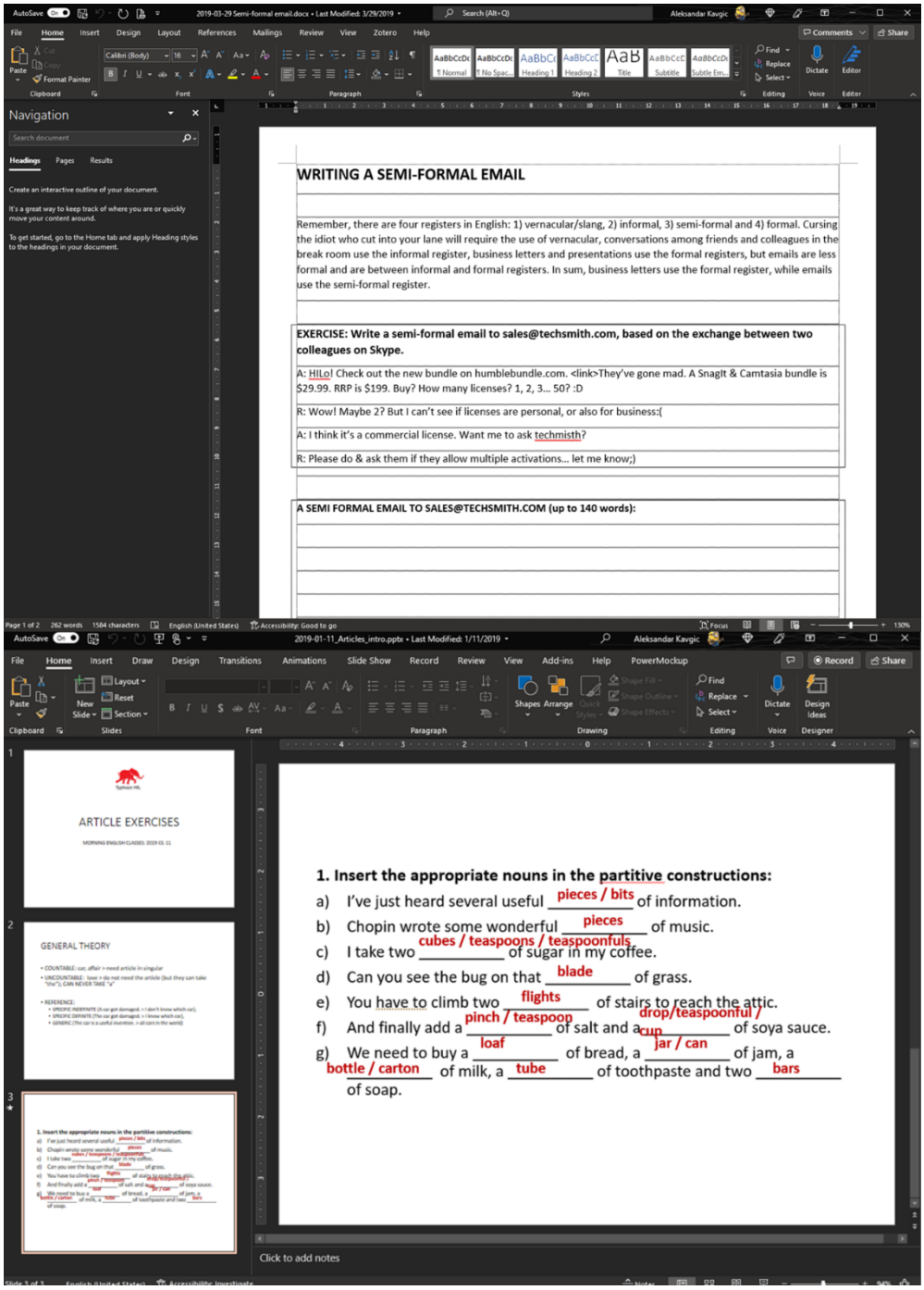

Figure 2: *Two screenshots of representative learning material corpus files: an email writing task (above) and the-use-of-article exercise (below).*

3.2. Corpus analysis: types of linguistic edits for SEO and relevant in-house WE classes

This section is divided into two sub-sections, one presenting the qualitative analysis results of the WCC, and the other of the LMC, respectively.

3.2.1. Types of WE edits for SEO

After qualitative analysis, the WCC analysis identified a non-negligible number of SEO WE interventions (i.e. 10.96% of sentences contained an SEO intervention, as shown in Table 2) across a total of five distinct linguistic means of SEO: splitting of sentences, deletion of keywords, change in information structure, terminology (keyword) change and grammar/lexicon simplification. It should be noted that a number of non-linguistic means of SEO optimization were identified, including changes to formatting (headings), metadata textual/keyword additions, ALT-text insertion for images and similar procedures which are not the scope of this research. In terms of the frequency of various types of linguistic SEO edits, four types were mostly equally distributed, except for "keyword/terminology change" which was more than two times more common than any other type of edit, as shown in Figure 3. Each type of edits is briefly represented in the following sub-sub-sections where the examples first present the original first draft and then the SEO edit(s) by the reviewers, where the relevant edits for the current section/type of edit are marked **with bold formatting**, while other identified edits are marked *with italicized formatting.*

Percent of segments containing an SEO edit:	**10.96%**
Number of SEO edits per segment:	1.43%

Table 2: *General frequency of SEO edits in the WCC*

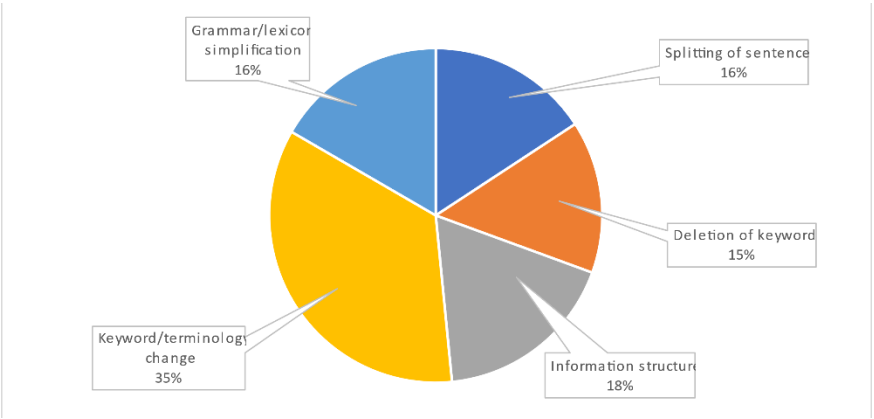

Figure 3: *Specific frequency (rounded) of different types of SEO edits in the WCC.*

3.2.1.1. SEO edit type #1: sentence splitting

Sentence splitting has been identified as one of the five types of SEO WE edits and is the one of the four similarly frequent edit types (see Figure 3) with a total of 91 occurrences in the corpus and a frequency of 15.79%. This type of edit most likely has the purpose of making the content clearer and easier to read both to the human, and, consequently, for the AI doing the search engine. Specifically, as explained by Schwartz (2022), Google uses RankBrain, neural matching, and bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) to "understand" what a piece of web content is fundamentally about, which means that search engine ranking (SER) of a web page is no longer dependent on the number of search keywords that it contains, but on the contents and meaning of the text: more often than not pages with a very high SER, even the top pages, do not contain a single occurrence of the search keyword – what matters is that they are most "relevant" for that keyword, as interpreted by the search engine AI. In that sense, sentence splitting is a strategy stemming from the basic principles of clear writing (e.g. European Commission, 2020: 12-13) that instruct the writers to think about what readers would try to learn from the text, to imagine questions the readers might ask, to "keep it short and simple" by aiming for "an average sentence length of 15-20 words" and having "just one idea per sentence". Sentence splitting, fundamentally, has the aim of making the text more "readable" and includes also grammatical changes necessary to transform compound or complex compound sentences into simple or short complex sentences, as shown in Example 1.

Example 1:

Comprehensive drag and drop library of OpenDSS components visually represented in the Typhoon HIL Control Center GUI allows you to build your own custom models and also import manufacturers' libraries.

↓ REVIEWED AND EDITED AS ↓

Comprehensive drag-and-drop library of OpenDSS components **is** visually **represented** in the Typhoon HIL Control Center (*THCC*).

<sentence split>

Build your own custom models and ~~**also**~~ import manufacturers' libraries.

3.2.1.2. SEO edit type #2: keyword deletion

The second type of SEO WE identified in the corpus was keyword deletion, which was identified on the basis of first drafts which contained initial keywords. With a total of 85 occurrences in the corpus (14.75% frequency), this is the least common SEO edit type. In the WCC, most instances of keyword deletion targeted acronyms, such as "HIL", and common collocations, such as "model-based". As explained in Schwartz (2022), but also in Ledford (2015), the shift of search engine provides, such as Google, to AI search processing means that the "brute force" SEO techniques, such as adding the target keyword in each paragraph and most headings, no longer work: on the contrary, search engines seem to penalize web pages oversaturated with keywords, and boost ranking of pages that explain keywords without necessarily explicitly mentioning them often in the text. Therefore, if the context allows it, it seems to be good, from the SEO perspective, to delete the relevant keyword, which is quite counterintuitive from the point of view of the WE user and content creator. This type of edit is shown in Example 2 where a very common phrase (and its acronym) was deleted.

Example 2:

Schematic Editor is designed to be a single-window environment for all your **hardware-in-the-loop (HIL)** modeling tasks.

↓ REVIEWED AND EDITED AS ↓

Schematic Editor is designed to be a single-window environment for all your **<keyword deleted>** modeling tasks.

3.2.1.3. SEO edit type #3: information structure change

The third type of SEO WE edit is focused on changing the original information structure of the sentence, which could, alternatively, be termed "refocusing". In simplest terms, this type of SEO edit ensures that the most important piece of information is focused, which, in case of simple and short complex sentences, typically implies putting the relevant phrase/clause in the sentence-final position. This SEO technique stems from the aforementioned shift of Google and other search engine providers (see 3.2.1.1.) to AI-driven content analysis which implies that web pages should be written so that humans can understand it, which, in all probability, will result in "the algorithms and AI search engines" also understanding it (Schwartz, 2022). This SEO technique is, again, closely related to general guidelines for writing clearly, which implies short sentences elaborating a single idea (see 3.2.1.1.). Thanks to 103 occurrences (a frequency of 17.88%), this is the second most common type of SEO WE edit in the WCC. The application of this SEO WE edits is shown in Example 3 where a typical swap of the subject and the subject complement was done in order, most probably, to focus on the benefit for the user (and not on the product itself).

Example 3:

[Simplified and streamlined testing]$_1$ is facilitated by **[an intuitive automated test IDE]$_2$**.

↓ REVIEWED AND EDITED AS ↓

[An intuitive automated test IDE]$_2$ facilitates **[simplified and streamlined testing]$_1$**.

3.2.1.4. SEO edit type #4: keyword/terminology change

The fourth type of WE SEO, a keyword/terminology change, is the most common in the WCC with a total of 201 occurrences (34.89% frequency): this SEO edit is up to two times more frequent than any other type observed in the WCC. The main purpose of this WE SEO edit is to avoid oversaturation by keywords, which can cause penalization while not resorting to deletion of the keyword (see 3.2.1.2.). In other words, this SEO technique is about "paraphrasing" the keyword in different ways, such as e.g., using synonyms or extending the keyword (creating a long-tail keyword). This is shown in Example 4 where a potentially oversaturating "model-based toolchain" is extended into "model-based system engineering" and has the

acronym ("MBSE") added: ultimately, this is the same keyword but more explicitly described together with a potentially relevant, but underutilized, acronym.

Example 4:

Model-based toolchain built from ground-up for high performance and long term numerical stability.

↓ REVIEWED AND EDITED AS ↓

Model-Based System Engineering (MBSE) toolchain built from ground-up for high performance and *long-term* numerical stability.

3.2.1.5. SEO edit type #5: grammar/lexicon simplification

The last general means of shaping the corporate voice is the simplification of grammar and lexicon, which, with 96 occurrences (16.66% frequency) in the WCC, represents the third most common WE SEO edit in the case study. It may be said that grammar/lexicon simplification represents just another means of achieving clarity and conciseness of the text so that it is easy to read by both humans and the AI operating behind the search engine user interface: sentence splitting (3.2.1.1.) and information structure changes (3.2.1.3.) are other means of achieving the same goal. This type of WE SEO edit is best illustrated by Example 5 where a highly complex sentence with focalization and three levels of recursive subordinate clause embedding is replaced with a less complex sentence with no fronting and only one subordinate clause: the main idea behind edits of this kind is to reduce text processing complexity and to improve readability (especially by the AI and algorithms).

Example 5:

What OpenDSS **is designed to do is to present an indefinitely expandable tool** which **empowers** the users with such capabilities that it can be easily modified to meet future needs.

↓ REVIEWED AND EDITED AS ↓

The OpenDSS **is designed to be indefinitely expandable** so that it can be easily modified to meet future needs.

3.2.2. SEO edits vs. tone and voice edits

The WCC contained a total of 8255 segments, which had been previously analyzed for tone and voice edits (see Kavgić (2021), presented in a summary form in

Table 3), so, once the annotation of SEO edits was conducted (see Table 4), it was possible to compare the frequency and types of edits in these two WE domains.

What the tables below are clearly showing is that SEO edits, despite being present in the corpus and, therefore, being relevant for WE written production, are 14 times less common that tone and voice edits that may, consequently, be said to be more important in the domain of WE and marketing content production. On the other hand, these results show that the research was properly oriented, and its primary goal has been achieved: the WCC shows that there are SEO edits, and their presence shows that SEO skills represent a relevant practical WE skill.

Finally, the tables show that there is a considerable overlap in kinds of edits that are used for achieving tone and voice compliance and SEO. More specifically, three techniques for achieving these two purposes are identical: sentence splitting, grammar/lexicon simplification and terminology change (i.e. keyword/terminology change). Of course, the ultimate goal of using these techniques in these two domains are completely different because complying with company tone and voice guidelines does not entail better SER or vice versa. These techniques are different sentences, clauses and phrases/words depending on the purpose and it would be wrong to assume that this is a kill-two-birds-with-the-same-stone situation.

Type of a tone/voice edit:	**Occurences:**
Splitting of sentences	301
Passive to active voice	2812
Impersonal to personal (including "you")	3692
Terminology change	674
Grammar/lexicon simplification	826
TOTAL EDITS FOR TONE AND VOICE:	**8305**

Table 3: Types and frequency of tone and voice edits in the WCC as reported in Kavgić (2021)

Type of SEO edit:	**Occurrences:**
Splitting of sentences	91
Deletion of keywords	85
Information structure	103
Keyword/terminology change	201
Grammar/lexicon simplification	96
TOTAL EDITS FOR SEO::	**576**

Table 4: Types and frequency of SEO edits in the WCC

3.2.3. Types of learning materials targeting WE SEO skills

The second goal of the research was focused on analyzing learning materials in the LMC to determine if SEO, voice and tone optimization skills are sufficiently covered by in-house teaching and learning activities, delivered by two different EFL teachers, of the company analyzed in the case study. In contrast to hundreds of annotated instances of SEO, tone and voice edits, the LMC analysis yielded no results. More explicitly, the LMC contains no exercises that target/develop skills necessary to make employees even aware of style and voice guidelines, let alone contextualized practice of relevant linguistics means to achieve them - and the same applies to SEO skills. Instead, the LMC practical tasks focus on:

- enriching vocabulary (mostly in the business and engineering domains),
- improving basic grammar skills (articles, subjunctive, conditionals, etc.),
- presentation skills,
- controversial topics for conversations, and
- email writing skills (especially formality and different registers).

The absence of results in the LMC represents a result in its own right: there is a complete disconnect between the teaching focus and the new WE skills that the employees (and, ultimately, the employer) need. Of course, one company case study does not provide ground for generalization, but this finding provides a tentative validation for more elaborate and broader studies in WE teaching practice, especially in the domain of in-house corporate teaching in the IT and where WE users need to adhere to multiple constraints and follow diverse guidelines on their textual production.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The case study presented here set out to achieve two goals. The first goal was to determine if the "Web content corpus" (WCC), previously used to analyze tone and voice edits (see Kavgić 2021), contains any edits made to achieve SEO, and, if yes, to identify the type and frequency of such edits. The second goal was to compile and analyze the "Learning material corpus" (LMC) to determine if custom-made in-house courses in the company analyzed in this case study contain exercises relevant for achieving better tone and voice compliance and ensuring SEO, and, if so, to what extent. Both goals were achieved, and the following conclusions can be made:

- the employees struggle to meet SEO guidelines, but to a lesser extent than voice and tone guidelines as there are 14 times fewer SEO edits in the WCC than tone/voice edits,

- five different types of SEO edits have been identified, three of which overlap with tone and voice edits,
- the LMC contains no exercises relevant for tone, voice, and SEO,
- the number of edits in the WCC and the absence of relevant exercises in the LMC jointly indicate suboptimal workplace English (WE) teaching and learning practice which puts too much emphasis on fine details of English usage, but not on the specialized requirements of IT companies in terms of voice, tone, style and SEO, and
- the disconnect between the WE needs of employees and the materials may indicate that universities and continuous education do not always target market-relevant language skills and types of language use.

On the basis of these findings, the following guidelines for improving WE teaching practice in terms of style, voice and SEO skills can be formulated:

- employees should learn how to achieve proper audience design: write for the reader (not present the contents from the writer's perspective),
- WE classes should contextualize grammatical and vocabulary skills for voice, tone and SEO optimizations,
- WE classes should tech employees to limit a single sentence to a single idea (which is contrary to the "unspoken" general notion that long sentences are a trademark of erudition and the goal of written production),
- companies should enforce the use of consistent company terminology,
- employees need to understand how SEO works (i.e. focus on good content, not on the exact keywords), and
- relevant stakeholders in education should find a way to update and modernize curricula, syllabi and lifelong learning courses with relevant new language skills, including digital literacy skills, such as complying with tone and voice guidelines and SEO, necessary to make students more (and faster) employable.

Finally, it should be, once more, emphasized that obtaining a larger representative corpus for these kinds of studies in the future may present a virtually insurmountable challenge because there are very few companies willing to share their in-house tone, voice and SEO guides, especially in pair with drafts and revisions of customer-facing content created in-house. For this reason, this research represents a case study and the researcher would, again, like to thank Typhoon HIL

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УПОТРЕБА И НАСТАВА *SEO* ОПТИМИЗАЦИЈЕ, КОРПОРАТИВНОГ ГЛАСА И ТОНА: СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА УПОТРЕБЕ И НАСТАВЕ ЕНГЛЕСКОГ НА РАДНОМ МЕСТУ

Сажетак

Ова квалитативна студија случаја анализира употребу енглеског на радном месту како би се утврдило колику улогу смернице за корпоративни глас и тон, и *SEO* (енг. Search Engine Optimization) утичу на употребу енглеског језика у стварању маркетиншких садржаја ИТ компанија, као и колико је настава енглеског језика у ИТ компанији прилагођена овим потребама запослених. Истраживање се заснива на два главна извора: 1) корпусу састављеном од 40 блогова и 100 чланака са веб страница који су убачени у корпус у више верзија (од иницијалне верзије, преко једне или више ревизија до завршне верзије која укључује *SEO* оптимизације), и 2) корпуса наставних материјала коришћених на часовима енглеског језика у компанији у којој су настали блогови и веб странице. Истраживање је спроведено у две фазе. Прво су у корпусу идентификоване преправке и измене повезане са смерницама за глас и тон, а посебно за *SEO*, како би се утврдило да ли су ово аспекти употребе језика релевантни за енглески на радном месту. У другој фази анализирани су наставни материјали како би се утврдило колико су они прилагођени употреби енглеског језика на радном месту из перспективе тона, гласа и, посебно, *SEO*. Овај приступ је заснован на правилима квалитативног истраживања у области односа са јавношћу и маркетиншке комуникације. Истраживање показује да, осим проблема са праћењем смерница за глас и тон, запослени такође имају проблема са праћењем *SEO* смерница, што може бити узроковано неадекватним наставним материјалима за енглески на радном месту који превише нагласка стављају на детаље употребе енглеског језика, али не и на специјализоване захтеве ИТ компанија у погледу гласа, тона, стила и *SEO*. Истраживање такође пружа смернице за побољшање праксе наставе енглеског на радном месту, посебно у погледу гласа, тона, и, примарно, SEO.

Кључне речи: глас, тон, *SEO*, маркетиншка комуникација, енглески на радном месту, настава енглеског на радном месту

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