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PRESCRIPTIVISM AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES: A COMPARISON
BETWEEN CROATIAN AND ENGLISH USAGE GUIDES

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis provides an overview and analysis of prescriptive language practices that can be seen in usage guides. The theoretical framework is based on the notion of ideology in language, particularly the concept of standard language ideology, along with its social and sociolinguistic implications. The theoretical part of the thesis is based on Critical Discourse Analysis and critical approaches to ideology in language planning and language policy (LPLP). The empirical part of the thesis comprises a study based on two usage guides, June Casagrande's English usage guide titled *Mortal Syntax* and Nives Opačić's *Reci mi to kratko i jasno: Hrvatski za normalne ljude*, a Croatian usage guide. By performing a qualitative comparative analysis of prescriptive practices and ideologies that occur in these usage guides, we have classified the ideological attitudes and positions taken by the two authors. We have analyzed one example of each of the predominant prescriptive ideologies present in the guides. The ideologies analyzed in this thesis are: etymological fallacy, ideology of dictionary attestation, ideology of fixed-code telementation, ideology of monosemy, ideology of symmetry and ideology of zero redundancy. We have defined and explained each of these ideological mechanisms and later on elaborated on the sociolinguistic implications of this type of language advice and the effect that this type of usage guides have on the speakers of a language. The focus of the critical discourse analysis was placed on the authors' assumptions about extralinguistic qualities of the users of non-standard linguistic constructions in the Croatian language and in the English language. This primarily encompassed assumptions about the social status of the speakers of non-standard varieties of a language, and the results of the study show that both authors use ideologically charged terminology in their discourse and exhibit bias against speakers of non-standard varieties of language. These findings demonstrate that prescriptive authors tend to use pseudoscientific argumentation based on personal preference to support their theories instead of relying on empirical evidence based on linguistic research. The findings and the conclusions of this thesis therefore emphasize the possible risks and repercussions of a nonscientific approach to the study of language.

Key words: critical discourse analysis, language ideology, prescriptivism, usage guides

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I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to investigate prescriptive language ideologies (particularly the ideology of the standard language) and their impact on the language planning promoted by prescriptive authors. We will analyze the attitudes that they have towards various linguistic issues and phenomena based on their advice about the use of language and the ideological notions that are present in usage guides.

In the theoretical framework of the thesis we will discuss language planning, prescriptivism, language ideology in general and the ideology of the standard language. We will also define and elaborate on the domain of critical discourse analysis, on which we will base our study.

In the practical part of the thesis we will look into the similarities and the differences in Croatian and English prescriptive ideologies by conducting a qualitative comparative analysis of usage guides for these two languages. We are going to analyze two usage guides that provide prescriptive guidelines and advice on language use: June Casagrande's *Mortal Syntax*, an English usage guide, and Nives Opačić's *Reci mi to kratko i jasno: Hrvatski za normalne ljude*, a Croatian usage guide. We will analyze the ideological positions and attitudes that can be found in these usage guides by using critical discourse analysis and we will highlight the ideologies that are represented as logical and commonsensical facts, while in reality they reflect the authors' personal preferences and value judgements.

The study will include one example for the Croatian language and one example for the English language for each of the ideological mechanisms that can be observed in the examples from the usage guides. These ideological mechanisms represent non-scientific and fallacious notions about the use of language which have no empirical support.

After conducting the study, we are going to discuss the findings of the study, i.e., the type of discourse that the authors of the usage guides use when giving language advice. We will elaborate on the ideological attitudes and the personal ideological preferences that the authors of those usage guides exhibit in their advice and we will analyze the value judgements that are present in their discourse, as well as their assumptions about the social status and similar extralinguistic qualities (such as the level of education) of speakers of non-standard language varieties.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

a. Prescriptivism

The Cambridge Dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org, 2017) defines prescriptivism as “the belief that there are correct and wrong ways to use language and that books about language should give rules to follow, rather than describing how language is really used.” Kapović (2003:392) sees prescriptivism in a similar manner, defining it as an approach to language devoid of scientific grounds which strives to prescribe language usage on a binary basis, arbitrarily labelling various elements as inherently “correct” or “incorrect”. *The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics* defines it as the “tendency to argue for desired patterns in language rather than describing linguistic phenomena“ (2007:227). The common denominator of these definitions is the notion that prescriptivism positions itself as the approach that strives to oversee and regulate the use of language (mostly the use of the standard language variety, which it often equates with the language as a whole) instead of analyzing linguistic phenomena from a more objective/neutral position, which is something that a scientifically-based approach to the study of language should be focused on.

This view of language is directly opposed to descriptivism, the predominant view endorsed by modern linguistics. It advocates research into actual field data received from speakers of the language in order to come to objective conclusions about language use. Very often, it opposes the notion that there should be a legislative language authority which would prescribe what kind of language use is wrong, and what kind is right. According to descriptivism, the principal arguments of prescriptivism are not objective as they rely heavily on sentiments and personal ideological preference, rather than hard data and actual information about what kind of language is used by its speakers.

The usage guides that we are going to analyze in our study represent collections of prescriptive rules and guidelines stating how language should be used and what kind of language is “correct” or “appropriate” instead of analyzing actual language use. At this point it is important to emphasize the fact that these kinds of prescriptive manuals are not scientifically valid materials that would empirically explain the actual use of language and linguistic phenomena, but rather a collection of suggestions based on personal preference and personal ideological notions and attitudes of their authors.

b. Ideology in Language

Language ideology encompasses a variety of “commonsense notions about the language”, as Tollefson (2000:43) sees them. According to Tollefson, these notions encompass “cultural assumptions about language, the nature and purpose of communication, and 'patterns of communicative behaviour as an enactment of a collective order' (Woolard, 1992)” (Tollefson 2000:43).

In many contemporary societies there is an official dialect, or the standard variety of a particular language. Some linguists, such as Milroy, consider that the existence of a standard variety of a certain language “affects the manner in which speakers think about their own language and about language in general” (Milroy 2007:133), concluding that speakers of languages which have an official standard variety live in “standard language cultures”. According to this view, the ideological positions that emerge in standard language cultures govern some of the attitudes towards language, thus creating the **ideology of the standard language** (or **standard language ideology**). (ibid.) The ideological aspect of the standard variety as opposed to other varieties of a language that has a standardized variety is often difficult for the average speaker to identify because of the commonsensical approach towards the standard variety as the “natural” one, as well as the “best” and “most logical” variety. The linguistic reality is that each standard variety of a language is just the dialect or a combination of dialects selected by a legislative authority to be the official variety due to geopolitical and sociopolitical reasons. Based on linguistic structure itself, its place could just as easily have been taken by another variety (dialect or sociolect) of the same language.

Speakers of a language with a standard variety seldom reflect upon the arbitrariness of their standard language variety, since they are “not usually conscious that they are conditioned by these ideological positions: they usually believe their attitudes to language to be common sense and assume that virtually everyone agrees with them” (Milroy 2007:133). Rosina Lippi-Green (1997, in Tollefson 1999:43) claims that the standard language ideology is “a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogenous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class”. Even though a standard language variety might seem organized and uniform as opposed to dialectal and sociolectal varieties, which might be reflected in (often stigmatizing) attitudes towards the speakers of non-standard varieties, Milroy argues that uniformity represents “a property of the language system, not of the speakers” (Milroy 2001:532).

The notion that a certain type of speech or style of discourse is *normal*, or better yet, *normative*, is derived from the fact that the sociolinguistic motivation behind the status of a standard language variety is often taken for granted. Milroy (2001, 2007), Tollefson (2000) and Verschueren (2012) observed this phenomenon in their works. Hidden in the frame of previously established (and rarely questioned or challenged) norms of standardization, ideological positions are more or less invisible to the average speaker of a language. This is mostly due to the fact that they appeal to the fallacious concept of *inherent commonsensicality* (as elaborated by Tollefson, 2000 and Milroy, 2007). Verschueren challenges this type of attitude towards aspects of meaning that are seemingly commonsensical, asking “how do we decide whether an aspect of meaning functions commonsensically? The meaning in question should clearly be taken for granted or, more negatively, should not be questioned” (Verschueren 2012:11). This notion of supposed commonsensicality is precisely what makes the covert ideological positions potentially dangerous because they can be (and are) used to perpetuate the established roles and positions within the social hierarchy.

c. Ideology in Language Planning and Language Policy (LPLP)

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:52) define language planning as “a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages or language variety within a speech community.” Spolsky (2004:218) states that “language policy exists within a complex set of social, political, economic, religious, demographic, educational and cultural factors that make up the full ecology of human life”.

Nahir (1984:294-327) differentiates between eleven language planning goals:

1. Language Purification – prescription of usage in order to preserve the “linguistic purity” of language, either to a) protect language from foreign influences, or b) guard against language deviation from within (in most cases it is both)
2. Language Revival – the attempt to restore to common use a language that has few or no surviving native speakers
3. Language Reform – deliberate change in specific aspects of language, such as orthography, spelling, or grammar, in order to facilitate use
4. Language Standardization – the attempt to garner prestige for a regional language or dialect, developing it as the chosen major language, or standard language, of a region
5. Language Spread – the attempt to increase the number of speakers of one language at the expense of another
6. Lexical Modernization – word creation or adaptation
7. Terminology Unification – development of unified terminologies, primarily in technical domains
8. Stylistic Simplification – simplification of language usage in lexicon, grammar, and style. That includes modifying the use of language in social and formal contexts.

9. Interlingual Communication – facilitation of linguistic communication between members of distinct speech communities
10. Language Maintenance – preservation of the use of a group’s native language as a first or second language where pressures threaten or cause a decline in the status of the language
11. Auxiliary-Code Standardization – standardization of marginal, auxiliary aspects of language, such as signs for the deaf, place names, or rules of transliteration and transcription

According to the established notions of language planning theory, language planning can be divided into three categories: *status planning*, *corpus planning* and *acquisition planning* (e.g. Cooper 1989:13, cited in Wright 2007:164). According to Spolsky (2004:11), the concept of status planning encompasses the appropriate uses for a named variety of language. Several subdivisions form part of this category, most of them regarding the language status itself: language origin, the degree of standardization, its juridical status and the level of vitality it exhibits (ibid.). Spolsky sees corpus planning as “the choices to be made of specific linguistic elements whenever the language is used” (2004:11), and he follows with the example of proactive differentiation between Serbian and Croatian official variants after the break-up of Yugoslavia and the disbanding of the Serbo-Croatian language, asserting that “it was corpus planning when the Serbians wanted the Croatian elements omitted”. The same can also be said vice versa, and the process of distancing the two languages could be easily explained as conscious and deliberate.

The use of the prestige variety of the language, which mostly refers to the standard variety, has a number of impacts on the perceived social status of the speaker. The most important consequence of the use of the standard variety is being recognized by the speech community as educated. On the other hand, the use of a less prestigious variety of language, for example a non-standard dialect or a jargon, can result in the perception of the speaker as uneducated or “illiterate”. The socially created status and prestige of a certain non-standard variety of speech can affect and perpetuate the perception that other speakers might have towards the user of the variety in question. For example, Milroy states that “[a]lthough it is now unacceptable to discriminate openly against someone for reasons of ethnic group, social class, religion or gender, it is still acceptable to discriminate openly on linguistic grounds” (Milroy 2007:135). This type of attitude towards speakers of non-standard varieties is prominent in Croatian prescriptivist circles. The common assumption is that the use of the standard variety of language is directly correlated with (a high level of) education and high cultural standards, and vice versa, i.e., that the use of a non-standard variety implies a lack of extralinguistic qualities such as the speaker’s education, cultural standards, or even manners. We will see examples of this kind of assumptions employed by both Casagrande and Opačić later on.

The reasoning that there is an inherent correlation between speech varieties and manners is in itself purely ideological and relies on fallacious arguments and *ad hominem* assumptions and stereotypes, but the actual motivation behind the stratification and discrimination of speakers of non-standard language varieties can actually be much deeper and less explicit. Milroy asserts that “people do not usually realize that language stands proxy for these other social categories [ethnic group, social class, religion or gender]“ (ibid.), which reinforces the notion that ideology is usually hidden and represented under the pretense of higher desirability of the standard variety, implying that it is “more correct” than dialectal or sociolectal varieties. Milroy’s position on this issue is that speakers of non-standard varieties often come from lower social classes or ethnic minorities, so the impact of linguistic discrimination is directed towards these social groups (ibid.). The effect might not be intentional, but the labelling of certain utterances or speech varieties as undesirable or incorrect suggests otherwise and implies a broader scope of meticulous language planning in prescriptive language guides and advice.

d. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a tool within the field of linguistics that facilitates interdisciplinary research regarding the relationship between language and the positions of power within a society. According to Teun A. van Dijk, it is a type of “discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context“ (Van Dijk 2015:466).

According to Blommaert, “a critical analysis of discourse necessarily needs to transcend the present and address history in and through language. (...) It may help us to avoid looking at symptoms and to expose causes” (Blommaert 2005:37). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) thus aims to directly address the correlation between societal power structures and linguistic patterns and practices.

Given that discourse represents “language-in-action”, William Hanks states that “investigating [discourse] requires attention both to language and to action” (Hanks 1996, in Blommaert 2005:2). The concept of discourse inevitably carries social implications, or in Blommaert's words, “[t]here is no such thing as a ‘non-social’ use of discourse, just as there is no such thing as a ‘non-cultural’ or ‘non-historical’ use of it“ (Blommaert 2005:4), “this kind of meaning-construction does not develop in vacuo, it does so under rather strict conditions (...), and this set of conditions cannot be exploited by everyone in the same way“ (ibid.). According to

Blommaert's point of view, the construction of meaning in discourse includes not only linguistic, but also sociocultural conditions.

“Undoubtedly, we shall find identical accounts of description in many accounts of ideology in which Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is being invoked as something which thoroughly saturates consciousness in such a way as to reduce ideology to the ‘normal state of affairs’” (ibid. 2005:127). This notion is important because the normalization of ideological patterns effectively makes them invisible. Blommaert also asserts that “Fairclough (1989) strongly emphasizes the ‘common-sense’ aspect of ideologies, and John B. Thompson (1990) would equally stress the ‘naturalising’ tactics involved in ideological circulation” (ibid.).

III. STUDY & RESULTS

In the study we are going to analyze two usage guides by two authors: Nives Horvat Opačić’s *Reci mi to kratko i jasno: Hrvatski za normalne ljude*, a Croatian prescriptive guide, and an English prescriptive guide, June Casagrande’s *Mortal Syntax*. We will analyze a number of language tips from these usage guides and demonstrate the presence of ideological notions, attitudes and value judgements regarding the standard variety of language, as well as language in general.

We will base the theoretical framework of our research on a number of ideological mechanisms present in the prescriptive linguistic discourse. We can distinguish several prescriptive mechanisms or guidelines upon which prescriptivists build the criteria for the “correctness” or “incorrectness” of certain linguistic elements in usage guides for the Croatian language and in usage guides for the English language. These mechanisms represent some of the elements of language ideology (primarily standard language ideology), and they contain ideological attitudes regarding linguistic questions and subjective opinions on what kind of language should or should not be used.

The prescriptive viewpoint on linguistics often imposes the constantly revised and artificially maintained standard language variety as the sole correct variety, thus disregarding the naturally changing and evolving dialectal and sociolectal varieties of language as lesser or incorrect (see Milroy 2001, 2007). Milroy recognizes the constant need of the standard variety to be continually updated, stating that “as language is much more complex than coinages, etc, standardization of language, at all levels and in both channels of transmission, is never fully

achieved, and the standard is in a process of being maintained” (Milroy 2001:542). The ideological mechanisms of prescriptivism which we are going to address in our research are: a) **etymological fallacy**, b) **ideology of dictionary attestation**, c) **ideology of fixed-code telementation**, d) **ideology of monosemy**, e) **ideology of symmetry**, and f) **ideology of zero redundancy**.

The ideological mechanisms that we are going to describe and present will form the basis of our research. We will carry out a qualitative comparative analysis of examples of these ideological mechanisms as seen in the two usage guides mentioned earlier. These usage guides are contemporary examples of their genre for their respective languages and we will provide one example of each of the ideological mechanisms mentioned above for both the Croatian language and the English language.

a) Etymological fallacy

Colman defines etymological fallacy as “[t]he belief that an earlier or the earliest meaning of a word is necessarily the right one” (2003:258). This ideological attitude toward language analysis often disregards the naturally occurring diachronic semantic change in words, but, according to descriptivism, “[t]he etymology of a word does not necessarily constitute any evidence about how the word is being used. A word is important, not for what it once meant, but what it means now” (Gula 2002:48). Therefore, this view represents only a personal ideological stance and not a valid scientific criterion.

b) Ideology of dictionary attestation

The ideology of dictionary attestation is a view that delegitimizes certain forms or meanings based on their absence from dictionaries (Starčević 2016:94). Prescriptive authors often claim that a word “does not exist” if it is not included in the dictionary, and vice versa, regard a certain word as the sole correct one based on its presence in a dictionary. Given that meanings of words change throughout the course of their existence, that language phenomena are too complex for dictionaries to register, as well as the fact that dictionaries (especially those in paper form) cannot keep up with language change and the new meanings that words can acquire, this ideological view cannot be defended as scholarly (ibid.).

c) Ideology of fixed-code telementation

According to Harris, even Saussure's theory regards communication as telementation, i.e. "communication as the transference of thoughts from one person's mind to another person's mind" (Harris 2003:25). Harris (2010, unnumbered) sees the idea of "telementation by a fixed code" (or fixed-code telementation) as a "Western language myth" with two constituent elements: "the fallacy of telementation and the fixed code fallacy", two aspects that perpetuate the myth of semantic invariance. Harris claims that "[t]elementation guarantees semantic invariance as between speaker and hearer. The fixed code guarantees semantic invariance as between all members of a linguistic community" (ibid.). This fallacious view usually advocates the use of one form over another based on no grounds or arguments other than the frequency of its use or the "commonsensicality" of one form over another.

d) Ideology of monosemy

The ideology of monosemy is a view which allows only one meaning to be attached to a single form (Starčević 2016:83). This view disregards the naturally occurring process of polysemy in language in order to "avoid confusion". However, one of the traits of every lexical system in spoken languages is undoubtedly the language economy principle, i.e. the maximization of language output utilizing the minimum amount of effort (see Martinet 1982:116), also known as the "principle of least effort" (Zipf 1949: 19). From a descriptive point of view, polysemy is a natural principle in language, considering that the "[c]reation of separate denotation for each individual object, phenomena or class of objects, facts and phenomena would result in excessive amplification of the lexical system, which would make it very difficult to use" (Pesina and Latushkina 2015: 488). The existence of polysemous words is simply a linguistic reality that cannot be erased, hidden or dubbed "unwanted" or "confusing".

e) Ideology of symmetry (Starčević 2016: 91)

The idea that lexical units should follow strict rules and that language systems should be symmetrical has long been debunked. Edward Sapir stated that "there is no inherent reason why the concepts expressed in our sentence should have been singled out, treated, and grouped as they have been and not otherwise" (Sapir 1921:112). He concludes that "[t]he sentence is the outgrowth of historical and of unreasoning psychological forces rather than of a logical synthesis of elements that have been clearly grasped in their individuality" (ibid). There is no natural language that is grammatically uniform when it comes to the formation of grammatical

elements such as derivational or inflectional affixes, perfective and imperfective aspects of the verb, etc.

f) Ideology of zero redundancy (Starčević *et al.* 2015)

This ideology promotes the abandoning of pleonastic constructions and elements of language that seem redundant. However, a large number of constructions that utilize seemingly redundant and often mutually synonymous or paronymous expressions do so in order to add a stylistic note to the utterance. Having no redundancy or reduplication of elements in linguistic constructions does not automatically equate to maximum efficiency and language economy, because “pure” transmission of information is not necessarily the main or primary purpose of language. Apart from ignoring the fact that linguistic constructions are naturally redundant or can be pleonastic on purpose for stylistic reasons, prescriptive authors tend to depict users of such constructions as “uneducated”.

RESULTS

a. Etymological fallacy

komunicirati s kim <- komunikirati koga, komunikirati komu (Opačić 2009:100)

Glagol *komunicirati* nije od jučer u hrvatskom standardnom jeziku. Značenja su mu proizašla iz lat. *communicare*, priopćiti, dijeliti što s kim, biti u vezi s kim, ophoditi se, uspostavljati i održavati komunikaciju, saobraćati, porazgovoriti se, savjetovati se. No kako onda u svjetlu ovih značenja razumjeti ovakve rečenice iz hrvatskoga tiska (nažalost, sve češće): Nije *komunicirao* svoje šefove o tome? Krajnje je vrijeme da im to (*is*)*komunicira*. Očito piscima ovakvih rečenica glagol *komunicirati* znači nešto drugo, na što je utjecalo sve češće zavirivanje u engleske izvore na kojekakvim portalima i puko prepisivanje. U engleskom jeziku *communicate*, uz *priopćiti*, *saobraćati*, *održavati vezu* znači i *obavijestiti*, *prenijeti/prenositi* (poruke, ali može i bolest), no u hrvatskom to (još) *ne znači*. Ipak, kako je počelo, ne bih se čudila da me i prije izlaska ove knjige iz tiska praksa u Hrvatskoj demantira, pa da ono čemu se ja čudim postane uobičajeno.

The woods were decimated by the fire. – *This usage is:* In flux. (Casagrande 2008:77-78)

There are two reasons to pitch a hissy fit over the evolving meaning of a word. Either you hate to see the word lose its original meaning because it’s a useful word with few substitutes, or you just pretend to be offended because that gives you an opportunity to show off you extraordinary genius.

“Literally” is a good example of the former. Slowly, it’s gaining credibility as meaning “almost literally” or even “figuratively.” And when “literally” means “figuratively,” what word do we have to mean “literally”?

“Decimate” is a good example of the latter. Luring everywhere are the people who are really proud that they know the word originates from an ancient practice of killing one in ten soldiers in order to punish the lot.

So whenever they see “decimate” used to mean “devastate,” “destroy,” “vanquish,” “nearly wipe out,” or even “wipe out completely,” they moan and they whine and they ham it up like a Southern belle having an attack of the vapors.

“The devastation of ‘decimate’ is my pet peeve,” writes a user at TechRepublic.com. “This is an old Latin term that means to kill every tenth person; you could extend it to also kill every tenth animal, but you can not kill a building or a town. . . . The bloody word is ‘devastate’ or its derivatives. This misuse is so devastating to me, and English teachers everywhere.”

Do these people really expect us to believe that we need a word for the deliberate annihilation of one in ten anything? Are they plotting something evil—for example, the systematic destruction of one in ten dictionaries? That’s the only thing that would justify their rabid insistence that “decimate” means to kill precisely one in ten and that the word cannot evolve.

But not all objections to “decimate” can be as easily laughed off. There exist two other camps, more reasonable ones, that disagree on how far “decimate” has truly evolved. Some say it can mean any form of destruction, wiping out, or even vanquishing, like “The Panthers decimated the Gazelles in last night’s game.” But others, and these are the people you should probably listen to, say the best use lies somewhere in between.

“Decimate,” they say, can mean “to destroy a large proportion of” but it shouldn’t mean “to destroy all of.” That’s the advice of *Chicago, Fowler’s, Garner’s, Partridge, Bernstein, Wallraff, Fiske, and Webster’s New World College Dictionary*. And you can’t decimate a consensus like that.

If we disregarded the change in meaning of certain lexical units throughout the course of their existence, words like *slut* or *retarded* would not be considered offensive, since the former would only possess implications of untidiness and not of promiscuity, and the latter would just mean *slow* instead of being a pejorative term for a mentally challenged person, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary (www.etymonline.com, 2001-2018). Had users of English kept using the word *starve* in its original meaning, the expression *starve to death* would be pleonastic due to the fact that it would mean *die to death* (ibid.). But meanings change and words naturally (and, for the most part, spontaneously) undergo various processes of semantic change (such as pejoration or amelioration), and some meanings shift so drastically that certain lexemes acquire a meaning diametrically opposed to their original meaning, such as *notorious*, originally meaning *famous* or *renowned* (ibid.).

The Croatian example clearly illustrates the existence of ideology reflected in the author’s argumentation, which relies on her insistence that the term should retain the exact meaning it had in the Latin original. However, the meaning of the verb *communicate* expanded and the term acquired new meanings through polysemy, and the proof of that is the fact that the meaning that Opačić finds disputable or problematic is used regularly in public discourse. It is irrelevant whether the expansion of its meaning occurred simultaneously in English and Croatian or the

meaning of the verb *komunicirati* expanded under the influence of the English language, the end result is that *communicate* is used as a transitive verb in both Croatian and English. This is not an anomaly that could be attributed to one's lack of understanding of the verb's meaning, but a fact that the author reluctantly acknowledges, stating that this practice might become common even before her book is published (which indeed it has). We can observe prescriptive attitudes in the author's claim that the term "does not (yet) mean *to inform* or *to transmit* (a message or a disease)", which would mean that Opačić assumes the position of a supposed linguistic authority that sanctions what meanings a word should have and what meanings it should not have.

A similar rationalization is used by Casagrande as she attempts to advise users of language not to use *decimate* as a synonym for *destroy* or *obliterate*. But unlike Opačić, Casagrande seems more lenient and not so much adamant and insistent about *decimate* being used to mean exclusively *to kill every tenth person* or *to destroy every one in ten of something*. Defending the exclusive use of the word in its original meaning would be pointless because the original meaning has become obsolete and the word had undergone a semantic shift. Despite Casagrande's milder stance regarding the subject, she still argues that the term should not be used as a synonym for *destroying* or *annihilating* (or at least agrees with the usage guides that claim so), thus revealing a prescriptive approach towards the matter.

b. Ideology of dictionary attestation

djelatnik, radnik, namještenik, službenik (Opačić 2009:49)

Sama sebi već izgledam kao papiga koliko sam puta u raznim prigodama (još od 1994. godine, dakle čim si je *djelatnik* počeo tražiti mjesto pod suncem) govorila i pisala o nepotrebnom uvođenju te riječi, koja je (sada to možemo tvrditi) istisnula nekoliko drugih riječi, prije svega *radnika*, *namještenika*, *službenika*, *činovnika* i dr. No nema pomoći kad što u svoje ruke zgrabi administracija, potpomognuta neznačajkim i prestrašenim narodom, koji bez pogovora prihvaća više-manje sve što mu koja vlast nametne. Tako se forsiralo i *djelatnika*, koji je trebao zadržati riječ *radnik*, premda ni jedan rječnik hrvatskoga jezika (stariji od 1990. godine) nema imenicu *djelatnik* u sinonimiji s imenicom *radnik*. Starija značenja imenice *djelatnik* jesu: *radni dan* i *aktivist* (prema *djelatan* = aktivan). No pojačanom (i nametnutom) upotrebom, *djelatnik* je danas (u administrativnom jeziku) potpuno istisnuo i *radnika*, i *službenika*, i *namještenika*, i *činovnika*, i koliko god su nekoć svi bili nekakvi *radnici* (prosvjetni radnici, zdravstveni radnici, politički radnici itd.), danas su istu funkciju preuzeli *djelatnici* (prosvjetni djelatnici, sportski ili športski djelatnici itd.). Na stranu što su *takvi* i radnici i djelatnici bili i ostali sasvim nejasni, svakako nejasniji nego kad se umjesto prosvjetni radnik ili djelatnik kaže *učitelj*, umjesto zdravstvenog radnika ili djelatnika *liječnik*, *laborant*, *medicinska sestra*, *bolničar* i sl. Što nam je činiti? Ništa. Kao i dosad, prepustiti se stihiji. *Radnika* su više-manje prognali, premda npr. nije nimalo sumnjiv u knjizi koja s komunističkim predznakom (to radniku najviše zamjeraju

upravo oni koji su nekoć i sami bili politički radnici) nema nikakve veze – a to je Biblija. Ondje, naravno, *djelatnika* nema ni jednoga, ali zato se *radnik* spominje 29 puta! Kad sam već spomenula Bibliju, onda i u ovom slučaju vrijedi ona česta Isusova rečenica: „Tko ima uši, neka čuje!“ (Mt 11, 15; 13, 9 i na više drugih mjesta).

Infighting among experts is a reoccurring phenomenon. – *This usage is:* Probably not wise. (Casagrande 2008:92)

Right about now, you're probably thinking: June, I know grammar is hilarious and all, a thrill ride of cosmic proportions that's like a bungee jump, a tequila shooter, and a Rita Rudner show all rolled up into one, but sometimes I'd rather watch mold grow or listen to my grandmother discuss the latest developments in her bursitis. What do you recommend?

My answer: How about reading a bit about the spine-tingling debate over “recur” and “reoccur”?

Start by seeking out the advice of those who would clobber you for using “reoccur,” like the guy named Henry who posted this on the Music Player Network Expert Forums: “Another [word I hate] is ‘reoccur.’ It’s ‘recur.’ Drives me batty.”

Then, for even more thrills, see what the experts have to say on the subject. Excitingly, the experts disagree on “reoccur.” Some say it’s a legitimate word subtly different from “recur.” Others say it’s just a poor substitute.

Bernstein and Garner are its two biggest defenders: “‘Reoccur’ suggests a one-time repetition. ‘Recur’ suggests a repetition more than once, usually according to some fixed schedule, as in ‘the recurring phases of the moon,’” Bernstein argues in *The Careful Writer*.

I would add that if prefixes allow you to make a new compound out of any word, there’s no reason you can’t slap a “re” onto “occur” in situations where the existing word “recur” doesn’t cut it.

Opponents of “reoccur” include *AP*, which says to use “recur” instead, and Fiske, who says, “Neither ‘reoccur’ nor ‘reoccurrence’ should exist in any reputable English-language lexicon.” But perhaps the most poignant commentary on “reoccur” isn’t what’s said about this word. It’s what is not said. *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* doesn’t mention “reoccur,” not even to dis it. Neither does *The American Heritage Dictionary*. And that’s about all the thrills I can handle on this one.

Opačić’s argumentation for *djelatnik* not being an adequate term to be used instead of *radnik* is based on the fact that no pre-1990 Croatian dictionary has the word *djelatnik* listed as a synonym for *radnik*. That is already a very selective approach to the investigation of a word’s meaning because it completely disregards the potential changes that might have happened on the lexicographical level in almost 30 years. The author uses a limited scope of meanings that the word encompasses according to said dictionaries in order to construct an argument supporting her claim that if *radnik* and *djelatnik* were not labelled as synonyms in dictionaries at a certain point in time, it should automatically imply that they cannot be used interchangeably. In reality, as it can be observed in actual language use, there is no obvious reason why *radnik* and *djelatnik* should not be used interchangeably given that their etymological bases, *rad* and *djelo* (the latter being the product of work), are almost synonymous. The author’s ideological stance presupposes dictionaries as absolute linguistic

authorities, ignoring the potential semantic shifts in words that can happen on a diachronic level and thus render dictionary entries obsolete or incomplete.

Casagrande's position regarding the dichotomy between *recur* and *reoccur* is once again more liberal, which is evident in her claim that there is no reason a new word could not be coined by adding a prefix to an existing word. Casagrande uses the "liberal advice strategy" (Starčević 2016:96), seemingly encouraging users to use either expression as they see fit. But we should not overlook the fact that she consults several dictionaries that do not contain the word *reoccur* in order to allude that it does not exist, thus revealing her ideologically weighted attitude. From the descriptivist point of view, the fluidity of language impedes us from using dictionaries as tools that would attest the existence or the full scope of meaning of a word.

c. Ideology of fixed-code telementation

zahvaliti, zahvaliti se (Opačić 2009:229)

U hrvatskom jeziku glagol *zahvaliti* znači reći komu hvala. *Zahvaljujemo* na pomoći, na gostoprimstvu itd. Kao povratni glagol, *zahvaliti se* ne izražava hvalu, nego znači ljubazno odbijanje; *zahvaliti se* na nekoj funkciji, časti. Loše je kad naši radijski i televizijski voditelji na kraju emisije kažu: *Zahvaljujemo se* svim gostima u studiju. Budući da im žele reći hvala, trebalo je upotrijebiti glagol *zahvaliti*, a ne *zahvaliti se*. Dakle, izražavam hvalu: *zahvaljujem*; uljudno odbijam: *zahvaljujem se*.

I wish I was taller. – *This usage is: A bad call.* (Casagrande 2008:26-27)

In a classic *Seinfeld* episode, Elaine publishes a cartoon in the *New Yorker*. Though we never see the cartoon, the characters divulge that in it, a pig standing in a complaints line says to a clerk, "I wish I was taller." Hilarity ensues as the rest of the gang wonders why that's supposed to be funny and as Kramer suggests a different complaint for the pig—one not very flattering to the pig's wife.

Not to diminish the sufferings of short swine with promiscuous spouses, I too have a wish I'd like to level at some divine complaint counter in the sky: I wish I could magically help everyone in the world to understand the subjunctive. But, as I've written before, the subjunctive mood is messy stuff. For one thing, though it's slowly fading from the language, parts of it are still hanging on.

The subjunctive is a "mood" most often used with "statements contrary to fact." And because the things we wish for are things that are not yet fact, "I wish" statements take the subjunctive.

Most of the time, using the subjunctive just means changing "was" to "were." That's because in the past tense, "to be" is the only verb that takes the subjunctive. And because the subjunctive past tense of "to be" is "were," it's as easy as changing "was" to "were": "I *was* taller than Mr. Curlytail," but, "I wish I *were* taller than his wife, as well."

Obviously, "you," "we," and "they" already take "were." So the subjunctive in these cases is identical to nonsubjunctive uses—mainly the "indicative," which is the mood we tend to think of

as standard for most speech and writing: “You were there” is indicative; “You wish you were there” is subjunctive.

Other situations also call for the subjunctive. They are: suppositions, especially ones beginning with “if”; demands and commands; suggestions and proposals; and “statements of necessity.”

This rule explains why you use the subjunctive in a supposition such as “If she *were* a better wife, her husband would feel taller.” It’s the reason that “were” isn’t “was.”

But as the other situations demonstrate, the subjunctive isn’t just about changing “was” to “were.” Take a demand such as “I insist that he consult a lawyer.” Normally, with “he” you’d use “consults.” But because this is a demand, it takes the subjunctive. And unlike the past-tense form of the subjunctive, which applies only to “to be” (i.e., “was” to “were”), the present tense of the subjunctive applies to all verbs—in this case, “consult.”

To make a subjunctive for a present-tense verb, just use the “base form” of the verb as the infinitive (naturally, without a “to”): “He consults” becomes “he consult.” “He wears” becomes “he wear” in a suggestion such as “I suggest that he wear platform shoes.” “She goes” becomes “she go” in a statement of necessity such as “It’s crucial that she go to counseling.”

Of course, not many people know all this and even those who do sometimes ignore it. So if you remember just one thing about the subjunctive, it should be that for statements contrary to fact, “was” becomes “were.” That’s why the pig would be better off wishing he *were* taller.

Numerous verbs in the Croatian language can be used as either reflexive or non-reflexive (e.g. *sjesti (se)*, *ustati (se)*), which is prominent in certain dialects and regional varieties, such as the Zagreb dialect. While it might be argued that this type of construction is pleonastic because the verbs themselves are intransitive and can refer only to the subject, the use of these verbs in their reflexive forms does not confuse the speakers of Croatian and it does not represent a problem in understanding the intended message. *Hrvatski jezični portal* (hjp.znanje.hr) includes the meaning of *reject* under the non-reflexive form of the verb *zahvaliti (se)*, which Opačić reserves only for the reflexive form of the verb. If we perform a Google search on both forms of the verb, it can be observed that the reflexive form of the verb is used in its primary meaning (to express gratitude) regularly in public discourse, and the only web-pages that observe and stress a supposed semantic distinction between the reflexive and non-reflexive form of the verb are usage guides or prescriptivist articles on language use. This is just one example which demonstrates that prescriptivists perpetuate the erroneous concept that communication is telementation using a fixed code and the idea that language use which is not in accordance with their personal preferences can somehow cause confusion, misinterpretation or misunderstanding, which is not true.

The use of subjunctive is also a matter that does not pose a problem understanding the utterance for speakers of English, mostly because the subjunctive mood is a relic in certain syntactic constructions. The use of the indicative mood instead of the subjunctive in the hypothetical construction *I wish I were/was* would not change the meaning of said utterance, so there is no

reason for them not to be used interchangeably according to personal preference and level of formality. Actual usage suggests this is the case, due to the fact that there are at least two songs named *I wish I was* (one by The Avett Brothers and the other by Maren Morris) and even more songs named *If I was* (by Midge Ure, Vök and Young Rebel Set). Similarly to the Croatian example, performing a Google search on *I wish I was* and *if I was* yields a much less musical result, only numerous prescriptive advice on the “correct” usage of the subjunctive in these constructions. Even though Casagrande’s advice seems descriptive at first glance, there is a sentence that carries a condescending overtone: “I wish I could magically help everyone in the world to understand the subjunctive”, implying that speakers of English who use the indicative mood instead of the subjunctive in the constructions mentioned earlier do so out of ignorance and lack of understanding of their own language.

d. Ideology of monosemy

iza (Opačić 2008:83)

Prijedlog *iza* ima mjesno značenje i ne valja ga upotrebljavati u vremenskom značenju. Kao prostorni prijedlog *iza* znači biti sa stražnje strane čega, na drugoj strani: *iza* kuće imamo vrt. To što se u razgovornom jeziku čuje i upotreba ovoga prijedloga u vremenskom značenju ne znači da bi takvu praksu trebalo u standardnom hrvatskom jeziku i ozakoniti. Čuje se: *iza* nastave, *iza* rata i sl.; no u takvim slučajevima valja reći: *poslije* nastave, *poslije/nakon* rata itd. U vremenskom značenju kad nešto slijedi za čim bolje je upotrijebiti *poslije/nakon*. Evo zgodna primjera iz Elektre (a mogla je biti i plinara, pošta, banka ili bilo koja ustanova): Budući da ste došli *poslije/nakon* mene, stanite u repinu *iza* mene.

I am continuously watching Simpson reruns. – *This usage is:* Incorrect unless you suffer from a medical condition known as Simpsonussansinterruptus. (Casagrande 2008:58-59)

Most people who watch lots of *Simpsons* reruns watch them *continually*. Only someone with a serious, serious problem watches them *continuously*. You're a continuous viewer if you have Homer and Marge blaring from your DVD player 24/7, if you have monitors throughout the house, including in front of the toilet, and if you watch the show even while you're writing a grammar book.

Normal people, however, watch their programs of choice continually. That's because “continuous” means, basically, “uninterrupted.” “Continual” means “frequently recurring.” The major style and usage guides all agree on this one: *Chicago*, *AP*, *Garner's*, and *Fowler's*.

Webster's New World College Dictionary emphasizes this distinction while permitting a little overlap. “Continual,” *Webster's* says, can be used in place of “continuous” to mean “uninterrupted.” But “continuous” can't take “continual's” job of meaning “intermittent.”

For my money, *Chicago* puts it best: “What is ‘continual’ is intermittent or frequently repeated. What is ‘continuous’ never stops – it remains constant or interrupted.”

And here's a little bonus you won't find in any of those authoritative books – a mnemonic device to help you remember the difference: “Continuous” has a second “u,” which can help you remember a word that also begins with “u”: uninterrupted. So, continue-“us” means uninterrupted.

“Continual” ends in “al.” So I like to think of an annoying uncle named Al who pops in continually – often showing up at mealtime but graciously leaving just before it's time to do the dishes. Contrast this with the “us” in “continuous” and you'll see that, while we can get away from Al on occasion, there's no getting away from “us.”

See? You can watch *The Simpsons* continuously and still retain enough brain function to come up with great stuff like that.

The ideology of monosemy is evident in Opačić's advice, best reflected in the attitude that a single expression should only have one meaning, disregarding the fact that the physical meaning of *iza* has expanded and that the word has become polysemous, acquiring a new, metaphorical meaning. The author insists that the preposition *iza* should have only a spatial connotation and meaning, and not a temporal one. However, the practice of using spatial prepositions to indicate temporal relations is ubiquitous and it is primarily related to the culturally ingrained concept of linear perception of time. Through metaphorical extension, we adopted the notion that *the future is in front/ahead* and *the past is behind*. The idiomatic expressions of *looking back* or *planning ahead* come to mind when talking about these kinds of relations, as well as concepts such as *naprednost/nazadnost* (whose etymologies are derived from adverbs of place *naprijed/nazad*).

A highly prescriptive attitude can be observed in certain elements of Opačić's advice, as seen in her statement that the preposition *iza* “should not be used” in the temporal meaning. Instead of describing trends in language or the actual contemporary use of said preposition, the author expresses personal value judgements regarding the use of language. The author's self-positioning as a supposed linguistic authority is reinforced in her use of legislative lexicon when talking about language practices: “ne znači da bi takvu praksu trebalo u standardnom hrvatskom jeziku i ozakoniti”.

Casagrande's advice on the usage of the terms *continuously* and *continually* is rife with ideological notions: she uses other usage guides as a proof for the argument that the former expression means exclusively *in an uninterrupted manner* and that the latter can only mean *intermittently*, inconsistently using the liberal advice strategy later on in order to conclude that certain dictionaries recognize the overlap in the meanings of the words. The two words share a common etymological background: they both stem from the Latin word *continuus*, but they appeared in the English language at different points in time, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary (www.etymonline.com, 2001-2018). The dictionary states that *continuous* was adopted in the English language in the 1640s from the Old French word *continueus*, while *continually*

appeared earlier in English, somewhere at the beginning of the 14th century, it also being borrowed from Old French (*continuel*). It can be argued that the contemporary use of the words has rendered them synonymous because both words have become polysemous and their meanings have extended to the point that they are now used interchangeably. Differentiating the slight nuances in the meanings and the uses of these expressions would then be a matter of style or register, and definitely not a linguistic problem that Casagrande presents it to be.

e. Ideology of symmetry

putovi <- putevi (Opačić 2009:178)

Imenica *put* ne završava na palatalni suglasnik, pa nema razloga da i u tzv. dugoj množini dobije palatalni nastavak *-evi*. Nepalatalne osnove u pravilu dobivaju nepalatalne nastavke, u ovom slučaju *-ovi*. Dakle, kad se misli na put, stazu (u pravom i u prenesenom značenju), nominativ množine u standardnom jeziku glasi *putovi*: Nedokučivi su *putovi* Gospodnji. Dragocjena monografija o hrvatskom jeziku u 19. stoljeću, što ju je napisao prof. Zlatko Vince, zove se *Putovima hrvatskoga književnog jezika*.

There's taxes to pay. – *This usage is: Icky.* (Casagrande 2008:89-91)

In the days leading to the American Revolution, a common cry of the colonists was “no taxation without representation.” Even a history-impaired person like me can understand this (although certain questions remain, such as why didn't they do something more effective than just throw a tea party or at least switch to a more American drink like lattes or Red Bull).

I bring this up now not to show off my vast knowledge of U.S. history but because the double standard of taxation without representation reminds me of my single biggest grammar beef: We're all expected to know stuff we were probably never taught. Then we're picked on for not knowing it. It's vexation without education.

For example, a lot of us cringe when we hear “there's” followed by a plural. “There's many things to drink besides tea.” “There's some people in red coats I want you to meet.” “There's eight of us who still haven't signed this document but John Hancock is hogging up half the page.”

All these “there's” should be “there are,” right?

Right?

There *are* many things. There *are* some people. There *are* eight of us.

Yeah, sure. But here's the rub: Why?

“There's,” as we all know, is a contraction of “there” and “is.” So anybody who cringes when he hears “There's men there,” no doubt also knows that verbs should agree with their subjects. But if you ask that same person why the verb is plural to agree with “men” instead of singular to agree with “there,” chances are he'll turn tail like a redcoat in the streets or wherever it was the redcoats were coming from.

Isn't "there" in the subject position in both "There *is* a man" and "There *are* some men"? Why does the verb seem to agree not with the subject of the sentence but with the complement of the verb?

Enter a term you English teacher probably never taught you (possibly because she'd never heard it herself): "notional subject."

A rather disturbing discussion of all this stuff can be found in *The Oxford English Grammar* under the heading of another term your English teacher probably never taught you: the "existential *there*."

That's the term *Oxford* uses to describe this "there." And though it may function grammatically as the subject of a sentence, it's really just booting the true subject – the notional subject – down to a lower status. "There are men here" is just a flip-flopped way of saying, "Men are here." So while "there" functions as the "grammatical subject," in *Oxford*-speak, "men" is the notional subject.

Putting this back in terms of our history lesson, "There are wine coolers in Jefferson's minifridge" is just a flip-flopped way of saying, "Wine coolers are in Jefferson's minifridge." In both cases, the "there" is just an extra word we throw in to help us control the emphasis.

In that last example, "wine coolers" is the true subject being discussed. It just happens to be relegated to a different grammatical position by the bullying existential "there."

So grammarians use the term "notional subject" to help us understand this situation. And from here we find the roots of our long-held but never explained instinct that the notional subject determines the verb conjugation.

There *are* many reasons for men to wear stockings. There *is* a good reason for men to wear stockings. There *is* nothing better than this silky feeling against a man's skin.

Using the term "inverted verb," *Garner's* backs up the logic we were unable to articulate all along: "*There is; there are. . .* The number of the verb is controlled by whether the subject that follows the inverted verb is singular or plural." *Fowler's* agrees. If it were up to me, the discussion would end here. Unfortunately, I found this nasty little twist in *Oxford*: "Like other grammatical subjects, [existential 'there'] often determines the number concord, taking a singular verb even though the notional subject is plural. This usage is common in informal speech."

Note that "informal."

Oxford gives examples: "There was elements of it that were fun." "There's no seats left on that day."

In writing this book, my policy is to never tell you that you can't do something that an established grammar authority tells you is okay. I'm just not qualified to contradict *Oxford*. So I'd be overstepping my bounds if I said you can't write "There's many people." But here's what I can, in good conscience, say about such constructions: Yuck.

Fowler's shares my disdain, saying that it is "uneducated speech."

So if you want to sound good to language book authors and history experts, avoid "there's" with a plural subject (that is, a plural notional subject). But if you like pushing the rules to their limits, if you're a rebel who questions everything up to and including whether we were wise to trade the king's rule for today's Congress, use "there's" whenever you like.

Opačić argues that non-palatal final sounds of nouns are usually paired with non-palatal suffixes, so her conclusion is that there is no reason why the noun *put* should not be declined in accordance with that pattern of symmetry. Following that train of thought, there is no reason

why the first person singular form of the present tense of the verb *moći* should not be **možem* instead of *mogu*. It would be logical because the suffix for the first person singular of the present tense in this conjugation is usually *-em*. But as we mentioned earlier, and as Edward Sapir pointed out almost a hundred years ago in his work *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*, no language is symmetrical (1921:VII:10-12). Consequently, linguistic forms that we might consider irregular sometimes become the preferred ones to the forms that we would think of as regular. *Putevi* is an excellent example of this phenomenon, due to the fact that a Google search for *putevi* yields around 3.530.000 results, while *putovi* amounts to only 279.000 results. *Hrvatski jezični portal* includes both variants of the long plural form for the declension of the word *put*, and there is no apparent reason why multiple declensional suffixes should not exist.

There is also no apparent reason why the concord of the “existential *there*” with the notional subject (or lack thereof, in this case) should represent a confusion or a problem for the users of the English language. Using the “strategy of apparent descriptiveness” (Starčević 2016:91), Casagrande masks her ideological position by explaining the concept of the “existential *there*” and the fact that the verb *to be* following it is usually in grammatical agreement with the notional subject. However, grammatical concord is not an absolute rule in language: the United Nations *is* an intergovernmental organization and Coldplay *are* a British rock band, but that does not stop either of them from being grammatically correct constructions in this sentence despite the terms not being in agreement with the verbs. Casagrande consciously disregards the fact that *The Oxford English Grammar* acknowledges the use of “existential *there*” without number concord, labelling it as a “nasty little twist”. The author’s ideological position is further established by her choice of words (“yuck”) regarding this linguistic construction, and even more by her “disdain” for the expression and by agreeing with *Fowler’s Dictionary of Modern English Usage* that it is “uneducated speech”.

f. Ideology of zero redundancy

dobar <- **jedan dobar** (Opačić 2009:51)

Ljudi često rabe *jedan* pod utjecajem nekih stranih jezika, na primjer njemačkoga, francuskoga ili talijanskoga umjesto neodređenoga člana. No u hrvatskom jeziku ta je riječ u tom kontekstu suvišna. Dakle, ne treba govoriti i pisati: on je *jedan dobar* učitelj, bit će dovoljno ako kažemo on je *dobar* učitelj. Znači li to da onda svaki *jedan* treba ispuštati iz rečenice? Ne znači. Kad *jedan* znači npr. *neki, nekakav*, onda ostaje. Došao je *jedan* čovjek i donio nam paket. (Došao je *neki* čovjek i donio nam paket.) Dakle, ondje gdje to znači samo gomilanje riječi, treba *jedan*

izostaviti. Postao je *jedan* pravi gnjavator. Dovoljno će biti: postao je *pravi* gnjavator. A možda je takav oduvijek i bio.

Where are you at? – *This usage is:* So hip it hurts (your chances of getting into a good college). (Casagrande 2008:166-167)

If I were auditioning to appear in a youth-oriented cell phone ad, I would ask the receptionist, “Yo, where’s the audition at?” I would ask the casting agent, “Where’s the script at?” I would ask the producer, “Homes, where’s my job at?”

No doubt these professionals would all respond, “Um, hello. This was a casting call for young hip people. Not for old nerdy people who think they can pass just by butchering the language. Where’s your brain at?” So that’s why, when it comes to “where are you at,” I’m not saying it’s bad. I’m not saying anything that could destroy my dream of one day becoming the world’s oldest MTV vee-jay. But I am saying that, if you want to be grammatical, don’t say, “Where are you at?” (And no matter what you do, don’t drop the “are”: “Where you at?”)

The “at” is just an extra word thrown in. It’s not part of the standard grammatical construction. As such, it’s redundant. “Where are you?” says it quite nicely without “at.” The “where” and the “are” contain built-in references to place or location that render the “at” unnecessary.

Some might argue that the version with the “at” has become an accepted idiom. Others might argue that it’s a good way to add emphasis – a little oomph to pound home the importance of the location. I, personally, would argue that it’s helpful in constructions such as “Where are we at on the Penske file?”

But, in most cases, unless you’re trying to impress people who wear their pants below their patooties, drop the “at.”

Opačić argues that constructions such as *jedan dobar učitelj* are redundant in the Croatian language under the erroneous assumption that they were introduced into Croatian under the influence of languages that possess the indefinite article. An example of such a pleonastic construction being used for stylistic purposes can be seen in *The Luck of the Fryish*, an episode of the animated sitcom *Futurama*:

[Fry falls headfirst into a garbage bin outside a kitchen]

Horse D'ourves Salesman: That is one unlucky guy.

[Tips a bucket of fish guts over him] (Season 3, Episode 10, transcript retrieved from the Internet Movie Database at www.imdb.com)

As we can observe in this *de facto* one line joke, the word *one* is present for a stylistic reason, in order to add emphasis and comicality to the situation. This example demonstrates that the practice of using *jedan* (*dobar učitelj* etc.) in Croatian is not an attempt at mimicking constructions of languages that possess the indefinite article and using *jedan* in place of *a/an*. Opačić attempts to prescribe the use of this construction, selectively allowing its use in certain situations. The “rules” for this usage are somewhat unclear and personally biased, considering that *neki* and *nekakav* used in this context could be considered the same kind of pleonastic construction that the author advises against. It is also not clear what constitutes as “sheer

amassing of words” and what would classify as adequate usage according to Opačić. Despite the apparent descriptiveness of the advice (“u hrvatskom jeziku ta je riječ u tom kontekstu suvišna”), the author’s ideological stance and the prescriptive nature of her advice are evident immediately in her next sentence: “ne treba govoriti i pisati (...)”.

Redundancy is a naturally occurring phenomenon in every language, and it exist on all levels of language, from the phonemic one all the way to the discursive level. Romanian neurolinguist Laura Carmen Cutitaru (2012:1057) notes the existence of two types of redundancy: grammatical redundancy and contextual redundancy. Grammatical redundancy encompasses concepts such as affixes: the *-re* in *reduplication* is redundant, but it is necessary for the meaning of the word. Contextual redundancy includes pleonasms, synonymy and word repetitions (ibid.). Constructions such as *aiding and abetting* or *one and the same* are certainly pleonastic and redundant, but at the same time they are used regularly in the English language without much thought about their inherent redundancy. *Where are you at* has become an accepted and widely used expression regardless of the fact that it is redundant. Casagrande’s prescriptive attitude is reflected in her value judgement that using this construction equates to “butchering the language”. Casagrande recognizes the fact that this construction stems from a specific sociolectal variety, derisively stating that it belongs to “people who wear their pants below their patooties”, thus alluding to members of the (originally African-American) hip-hop subculture.

IV. DISCUSSION

The language advice from the usage guides analyzed in the study demonstrates that both Casagrande and Opačić resort to their personal ideological views when contemplating and prescribing the adequacy or the correctness of a substantial number of expressions and lexical forms. This argument can be supported by the fact that the authors often opt for a judgmental choice of words that carry negative implications regarding the social status of the speakers who use constructions that the authors find objectionable. An empirical and scientific approach to the study of linguistic phenomena cannot contain value judgements, reflections of personal values and preferences or other non-scholarly extralinguistic implications when discussing strictly linguistic issues. Constructions such as “butchering the language”, “yuck”, “unnecessary introduction of the word [*djelatnik*]” or “uneducated speech” when talking about (apparently) recognized linguistic variations should not be considered acceptable on any level of well-argued discourse.

Based on Nahir's classification of language planning goals (1984), their advice would correspond with the category of "language purification" within language planning, since the aim of the advice is predominantly to "guard against language deviation from within". In other words, Opačić and Casagrande adhere to the fallacious notion that the use of language should constantly be governed, monitored and revised in order to "preserve" (but in reality: to construct) an idealized variety of language that corresponds with their personal views of what language should look like. Both usage guides contain advice that pertains to the standard language ideology, either implicitly or explicitly. The authors share the same attitude regarding the standard variety of language: they consider it the best or the most correct language variety, which would consequently imply that other varieties (dialects, sociolects, etc.) are just deviations or bastardizations of the standard variety.. However, we could argue that the standard variety is a deviation. As we mentioned earlier, dialects and similar non-standard varieties occur naturally for the most part and are regulated by the members of the speech community in an extrainstitutional environment, while the creation and maintenance of a standard language variety is a conscious process which involves a substantial degree of language planning.

Even though Casagrande employs a somewhat more liberal approach than Opačić and tends to argue that more than one option of linguistic constructions can be viable, her advice on language use nevertheless reveals her ideological positions and attitudes regarding the use of non-standard varieties and linguistic constructions which are not yet lexicographically recognized or completely sanctioned. Opačić explicitly positions herself as a linguistic authority and thus creates the image of scholarly validity of her ideologically charged advice about language. Given that linguistic issues are often a reflection of the relations of power within the social hierarchy, it would be naïve not to acknowledge the tremendous influence that language and linguistic variations have on social relations and structures (and vice versa). However, this is precisely the reason why linguistics as a science should be as objective and empirical as possible. Suggesting otherwise would mean that linguists should side with a particular group or school of thought, and that would inevitably result in linguistics being reduced to an agency or a tool that perpetuates and reinforces the established social relations and hierarchy.

V. CONCLUSION

By conducting a qualitative comparative analysis of usage guides using critical discourse analysis, we can conclude that the language advice found in prescriptive usage guides contains a plethora of ideological notions regarding the “correct” or “adequate” use of language. These ideological positions have no scholarly significance as they simply reflect the authors’ value judgements and personal preferences that they employ in an attempt to influence the use of language.

Making assumptions about the social status of speakers who use certain lexical forms or particular linguistic constructions is something that no reputable linguistic material should contain. Therefore, usage guides cannot be regarded as valid and constructive tools that provide objective information and useful suggestions about the use of language and linguistic elements. The guides should not be considered scientifically valid also because of the fact that they adhere to the standard language ideology, which positions the standard variety of a language above all other varieties (such as dialects or sociolects). Contemporary linguistic practices support a pluralist view of speech varieties which claims that non-standard language varieties are as valuable as the standard variety when taking language as a whole into account.

Due to the fact that the authors of the usage guides represent themselves as linguistic authorities, the guides might be even considered dangerous because they appear to establish and reinforce stereotypes about the speakers of language and the correlation between the language variety that they use and their position in the social hierarchy. The field of sociolinguistics recognizes and analyzes the dangers of correlating the position of an individual in the society with his speech variety. As we mentioned earlier, these kinds of assumptions often serve the purpose of preserving the positions of power in the social structure.

Even though modern linguistics has largely abandoned prescriptivism as a non-scholarly practice and it currently advocates the descriptive approach to the study of language, the very existence of the genre of usage guides proves that prescriptivism is still alive and present in linguistic discourse. Having that in mind, it is paramount to emphasize the importance of critical thinking as opposed to the automatic acceptance of pseudo-scientific notions that come from seemingly reputable sources.

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