

(Re)negotiation of national identity in the Croatian puristic discourse

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Linguistic purism has been integral to the Croatian literary language since its beginnings. Croatia's political history has been marked by changes in political ideologies, which have impacted the language situation and attitudes of Croatian speakers towards foreign influences and their national identity. This study aims to provide a systematic approach to linguistic purism as a prominent form of identity construction in the contemporary Croatian language. The premise is that metalinguistic comments on language usage reflect individual and collective ideologies and culture-specific behaviors. Therefore, the practice of linguistic purism can be seen as a manifestation of national attitudes and an ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of national identity. The research question can be formulated as follows: What are the collective attitudes and ideologies that underlie the concept of Croatian national identity, and how can they be identified in contemporary puristic discourse? To this end, the study employed a self-compiled corpus of language-reflective comment threads sourced from Forum.hr, Croatia's most widely used online forum platform. For this purpose, a mixed-method approach based on different qualitative strategies along with quantitative interpretation has been designed to interpret the data from several perspectives. Within the larger theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study employs 'textually oriented discourse analysis' proposed by Fairclough (Fairclough 1992, Fairclough 2003), focusing on the textual features of modality and evaluation. In addition, the representation of social actors and identity construction was examined through the lens of structuring pronouns and associated identifiers. The conceptualizations of language and identity in discourse were done by analyzing underlying conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The analysis revealed that in the Croatian context, the group polarization is directed chiefly inward rather than outward. Negative evaluation is generally associated with internal structures and subgroups, which form the dynamic of the "internal enemy" (Wodak 2009). Similarly, external cultural and linguistic influences are not overwhelmingly negatively evaluated and are often perceived as cultural and linguistic enrichment. Strong puristic and nationalistic attitudes are infrequent in the discourse, and the most prevalent language ideologies can be described as apuristic (Thomas 1991). The conceptual metaphor analysis similarly revealed that the two most salient metaphors for language development are LANGUAGE IS A CLOSED CONTAINER and LANGUAGE IS A PLANT, with the latter being more prevalent in the discourse.

References

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