

# On Linguistic Phenomena in Croatian Syntax at the beginning of 21st century

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**Anastazija Vlastelić and Borana Morić Mohorovičić:  
“On Linguistic Phenomena in Croatian Syntax at the  
beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century”**

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**Abstract**

In recent decades, Croatian syntax has been continuously recording more examples of ‘syntactic borrowing’ that have become a part of Croatian linguistic reality by means of electronic media. The English language is nowadays most commonly considered to be the main culprit of the disintegration of the Croatian linguistic, and therefore syntactic, norm. However, we are also witnessing the transfer of syntactic constructions from one functional style to another for no reason and, of course, completely incorrectly. This paper provides an overview of contemporary grammatical and advisory literature on the linguistic features of the Croatian syntax at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The examples given have been taken from the journalistic and conversational functional styles.

Key words: Croatian language, syntax, journalistic functional style, conversational style, linguistic influence, linguistic culture

*“... but also to witness that in the past 15 years changes in it have become more rapid, and overall knowledge – especially knowledge of the Croatian language and about the Croatian language – is continuously poorer and the irresponsibility towards the written and spoken word is getting higher. In fact, a certain indifference, negligence and indolence took over what we used to call culture (and language culture existed as well); whatever demands even the least effort to be learned is being circumvented, swept under the carpet. All of the above applies to the Croatian language as well.”<sup>1</sup>*

The 1990s were one of the turning periods in Croatian history.\* The establishment of independent state enabled the Croatian people to use their own Croatian language as the official language, which is the right that was denied to them over the course of several centuries. However, that was also the period of evident “*indifference, negligence and indolence*”<sup>2</sup> for linguistic culture. Linguists agree on the following - unfortunately, such an attitude towards the language is still present.

Undoubtedly, one of the most commonly mentioned processes of this period is globalization, which, in accordance with its definition, establishes *interdependence of nations in different fields*. Modern technological achievements have marginalized spatial and cultural differences between countries, while the linguistic barrier has been brought down in recent decades by the gradual establishment of the English language as the language of globalization processes.<sup>3</sup>

This paper tackles the topic of morphosyntactic features which have become common in both the Croatian written and spoken language of everyday communication, i.e. in the conversational and

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<sup>1</sup> Opačić (2006): 5.

\* The paper of a similar topic has been published in Croatian as: B. Morić Mohorovičić and A. Vlastelić, ‘O pojavama u hrvatskoj sintaksi na prijelomu tisućljeća’. In: *Zbornik radova Petoga hrvatskoga slavističkog kongresa*, eds. M. Turk & I. Srdoč-Konestra (Rijeka, 2012): 473-83.

<sup>2</sup> Opačić (2006): 5.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the topic see: Kryžan-Stanojević (2009).

journalistic style<sup>4</sup> during the past two decades. The first part of the research focuses on determining such features. The examples are the result of observing the conversational and journalistic style over the past five years. The observation of journalistic style is made in all four media: radio, television, press, and internet.<sup>5</sup> The second part analyses 26 advisory handbooks intended for a wider circle of readers and published between the early 1990s and today. The list does not include advisory books that do not include analysed syntactic features. We will try to determine whether these advisory books recorded any more recent syntactic feature which we labelled as common in the language of everyday communication, and what linguistic advice has been given regarding it. The corpus of analysed handbooks does not include orthography books, Croatian standard language grammar books and handbooks, and Croatian specialist linguistic journals. Those groups are considered as separate units: orthography books, grammar books and handbooks are used in Croatian language learning and teaching. Linguistic periodic editions, on the other hand are intended for specialists and do not have much impact on majority of speakers.

While changes happened on other linguistic levels and functional styles, in recent decades the syntax of the Croatian standard language of the above mentioned two styles records a growing number of constructions formed under the influence of foreign language, primarily English. Due to mass media, the boundary between the functional styles of standard Croatian has become porous. Such syntactical occurrences are contrary to the genius of the Croatian language. Their presence in the written and spoken language of everyday communication has already been noted as early as in the middle of the last century and some were noted even earlier. However, most of the occurrences tackled in the paper have occurred sporadically

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<sup>4</sup> This paper did not tackle more recent divisions of functional styles and their substyles.

<sup>5</sup> Regardless of its substyles, the journalistic style in public media is “*a central area of realization of contemporary public communication*” and “*recent state of contemporary language*” can be observed through it – Blagus Bartolec (2006): 8.

(e.g. in lower-quality translations of foreign works), while contemporary Croatian is abundant with such irregularities.

The paper will analyse the following features of Croatian:

- Linguistic category of definitiveness;
- Linguistic category of animacy on the example of the conjunctive use of the pronoun *koji/kojeg(a)*;
- Two consecutive prepositions;
- Superlativisation of expression;
- Expressing attributes / apposition;
- Unnecessarily long and complex expressions (nominalisation of expression).

### **Linguistic category of definitiveness**

*“One of the possible definitions of definitiveness would be: the category of definitiveness is a nominal category actualized by the choice of a noun in order to identify the noun and the content it marks.”<sup>6</sup>*

Definitiveness in Croatian is most often expressed by an adjective, i.e. the adjectival aspect,<sup>7</sup> so in Croatian grammar books it is often incorrectly described as an exclusively morphological category, i.e. the terms such as definite / indefinite adjective, definite / indefinite declension, etc.<sup>8</sup> are used. It should be noted that the category of definitiveness, when it comes to the content, belongs exclusively to (current) syntax, and that the expression of such content is realized morphologically using the adjectival aspect. Therefore, the difference between the above two aspects lies in the meaning, stress and endings.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Znika (2008): 125-26.

<sup>7</sup> Contemporary Croatian recognizes other manners of expressing definitiveness, e.g. Silić (2000), Pranjković (2000).

<sup>8</sup> Tafra (2004).

<sup>9</sup> “Although all adjectives have the category of definitiveness, it can be observed that it is not morphologically expressed in all adjectives”, Znika (2008): 130. The declension itself depends on the adjective type, i.e. on the possibility and the need of it expressing this category.

Although Croatian grammar books clearly stipulate restrictions in the declension of adjectives, with regard to their type,<sup>10</sup> the difference in the expression of the two aspects is continuously being eradicated, which can be best observed in the declension of possessive adjectives:<sup>11</sup>

*U Zmajevom gnijezdu.* (a movie title)

*Dio te priče prikazat ćemo na Markovom sajmu....* (*Koprivnica Tourist Board website*, September 2009)

*Sjajan pogodak novog Bilićevog dragulja.* (*Novi list*, daily newspaper, November 2010)

*Nakon diplome preuzimanje očevog posla.* (*Nacional*, weekly news magazine, August 2010)

Contemporary linguists agree that the reasons for unification are more recent and caused by:

- the influence of folk speeches;<sup>12</sup>
- the opinion that indefinite adjectives are more appropriate, which was widely accepted in the 1990s;<sup>13</sup>
- the influence of the administrative and business style;<sup>14</sup>
- the influence of the more numerous group of definite adjectival forms.<sup>15</sup>

Most advisory books tacitly permit such non-distinction between these two declensions of adjectives in the language of public

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<sup>10</sup> Contemporary Croatian grammar books provide different divisions of adjectives; e.g. Barić *et al.* (1995); Raguž (1997); Težak & Babić (2003); Silić & Pranjković (2005), but the restrictions in declension with regard to the type are the same for all adjectives.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the systematic restrictions for possessive adjectives see Barić *et al.* (1995); Silić & Pranjković (2005).

<sup>12</sup> Zoričić (1998).

<sup>13</sup> Matković (2005); (2006).

<sup>14</sup> Silić (2006).

<sup>15</sup> Opačić (2009).

communication.<sup>16</sup> It is only noted that the distinction between them should be observed in “*formal standard written language*”<sup>17</sup>, i.e. “*in functional styles that have a stricter stance on norm*”.<sup>18</sup> While the equalization of the declension of possessive adjectives with adjective-pronoun declension is not permitted only in ‘formal written language’, the definite aspect of adjectives used in the function of a predicate noun has not been verified in standard Croatian:<sup>19</sup>

*Dinamo je plavi!*

*Izađe kao nov, a jako je lijepi, svijetlih boja....*

*Svijet je veliki i spas vreba iza ugla* (a movie title)

Such examples occur sporadically in the analysed corpus and they are the feature of the spoken, primarily ‘spoken-conversational’,<sup>20</sup> style.

### **Linguistic category of animacy (on the example of the conjunctive use of the pronoun *koji/kojeg(a)*)**

The relative pronoun *koji* can take two forms in the accusative case: when it refers to something living (a person or an animal), the accusative is the same as the genitive case (*kojeg*), and when it refers to something non-living, but also plants and nouns with collective meaning, such as *narod* (people), the accusative is the same as the nominative case: *koji*. Therefore, the choice of the form depends on the noun the pronoun refers to.

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<sup>16</sup> Moreover, certain grammar books do not state the difference in declension: “*Adjectives that only have the indefinite form (with -ov- / -ev-, -ljev-, -ovljev- / -evljev- and -in- bases) change both according to the declension for indefinite adjectives and, in oblique cases, the declension for definite adjectives (Šegedinova teksta and Šegedinovoga (Šegedinovog) teksta)*”, Silić & Pranjaković (2005): 138.

<sup>17</sup> Opačić (2009).

<sup>18</sup> Frančić *et al.* (2005).

<sup>19</sup> “*In the Kajkavian (and even in Čakavian) dialect an adjective that is definite in form is commonly used even in a predicate noun, as opposed to the Štokavian dialect in which the definite adjectival form in a predicate noun has not been verified: Dedek/nono je stari. \*Djed je stari.*”, Znika (2008): 134.

<sup>20</sup> According to ‘written-spoken’ speech, the concept taken from Silić (2006).

Although the norm is rather straightforward and stated in almost each of the observed advisory books, the incorrect use is common:

*Koji je zadnji film kojeg ste gledali?*

*"Otkucaj kojeg je moje srce preskočilo"* (a movie title)

*Kredit – kraći put kojeg treba koristiti.* (*Pametna Kuna*, April, 2010)

*Aparat koji proizvodi radiofrekventu energiju i na kojeg je spojen slobodni kraj katetera.* (dalje.com, April, 2010)

If the use is incorrect, the singular accusative form *koji* is systematically being replaced with the form *kojeg*, while the opposite does not occur (e.g. *\*Prijatelj koji sam jučer čekao*).

This non-standard linguistic occurrence has been documented as early as in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century as a feature of the journalistic style.<sup>21</sup> So far the extent to which other dialects and speeches influenced its occurrence has not been researched, and neither has the fact: “*that in our old monuments up until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to the genitive-accusative form, an older form of nominative-accusative for nouns that signify something living can be observed*”.<sup>22</sup> The possible cause for the occurrence, as well as the lack of differences in the accusative case of the male pronoun *koji* for both categories of living and non-living, should be sought in the system itself.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Compare: Mulić (1953).

<sup>22</sup> Mulić (1953): 87.

<sup>23</sup> Malik Mulić (1953) interprets Antoine Meillet in his work *Le slave commun* (Paris, 1924) on the occurrence of the use of the genitive case instead of accusative for singular male nouns denoting something living. Namely, “*this accusative case (of the singular male nouns denoting something living, which has the same expression as the genitive case, noted by the author) has developed under the influence of personal pronouns. Once the difference between nominal categories that denote things or living beings started to disappear, the new accusative case started influencing its attribute – the relative pronoun, displacing the older accusative that was the same as the nominative case*”, Mulić (1953): 87. More recent conclusions about the genitive-accusative syncretism of singular male nouns interpret the need for its development through syntactic reasons, i.e. the possibility to differentiate a subject and a direct object - see Blagus Bartolec (2006).



The reasons why the pronoun form *koji* is used for something living can surely be found in the economy of language. The system of pronouns, especially personal pronouns, does not have a different paradigm for living and non-living forms of other pronouns, including the pronoun *koji*. For that reason, the pronouns are expectedly equalized in accordance with the form for living, because in this case the category of living ‘implicitly includes’ the category of non-living as well (more precisely, the living/non-living distinction is not observed), while the opposite does not apply.

### Two prepositions

A newer feature of the Croatian language is the prepositional phrase: *preposition* (most commonly *za*) + *preposition* + *noun phrase*:

*Laser Printer za po doma, biljka za po ogradi, sendvič za po putu, šešir za na more...*

*Sve kupljeno možete platiti na do 12 rata.* (Lesnina, furniture showroom, March 2010)

*Projekt je odgođen za do pred kraj godine.* (poslovni.hr, August 2010)

It seems that the problem of two consecutive prepositions is not clearly defined in standard Croatian. Among the examined handbooks, only *Hrvatski jezični savjetnik* states that such an order is possible with specific semantic restrictions.<sup>24</sup>

More recent Croatian grammar books state that the only prepositions in front of a prepositional phrase can be: *do*, *(u)mjesto*, *za*, “whose meaning is added to the meaning of the phrase ... (*Stigao je do navrh brda*)”.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, older handbooks state that prepositions *do*, *po*, *mjesto*, *osim* can be placed in front of prepositional phrases; however, “... good writers make an effort not to place two prepositions together”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Barić *et al.* (1999): 279-80.

<sup>25</sup> Barić *et al.* (1995): 280; Raguž (1997).

<sup>26</sup> Brabec *et al.* (1954): 145.

The use of prepositions that govern different cases is another common error in the analysed corpus, and linguistic handbooks and advisory books, even the older publications, warn about it:

*komode sa i bez kliznih vrata, motori sa i bez turbine, jogurti sa i bez voća, ljepota sa i bez skalpela...*

Language economy is a probable reason why such constructions are used even in complex sentences in which redundant parts of a sentence are omitted:

*Zanimljiva mjesta i aktivnosti za klince u i izvan Zagreba. Prosvjedi za i protiv gradnje džamije.* (*Glas Istre*, daily newspaper, August 2010)

Nevertheless, *Hrvatski jezični savjetnik* is less restrictive when it comes to their use: since this is a normative, and not a systemic restriction as the system allows omission of redundant elements:

*“... and considering the high incidence of specific constructions of this type (especially the ‘za i protiv’ construction) in certain functional styles, primarily journalistic and conversational, its acceptance in those styles should be considered. ... In the general linguistic neutral standard, such constructions are still unwelcome”.*<sup>27</sup>

### **Superlativisation of expression**

*“The element naj- does not occur independently in standard Croatian. However, nowadays it has started to increasingly act as an independent element.”*<sup>28</sup>

*Cvitešićka jedna od 10 naj mladih europskih glumica.* (webpage net.hr, February, 2010)

*Vrbovsko – naj goranski turistički grad.* (*Novi list*, daily newspaper,

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<sup>27</sup> Barić *et al.* (1999): 280.

<sup>28</sup> Opačić (2009): 126.

March, 2010)

***Naj – veliko finale!!!*** (*Novi list*, daily newspaper, May 2009)

The prefix *naj-* is used to form a superlative, which is a form only adjectives and adverbs formed from adjectives can have.<sup>29</sup> However, according to Stjepan Babić, *naj-* can also be used to form verbs and nouns.<sup>30</sup> In noun formation, the prefix *naj-* is used in journalistic language and it conveys the meaning of *the best, the largest* in what the base means (*najplaća, naj-dar, naj slika*). Although words formed in such a way are written separately, as both compounds and semi-compounds, the Croatian orthography book *Hrvatski pravopis*<sup>31</sup> prescribes that all of them should be written as compounds. Mile Mamić<sup>32</sup> states that such compounds sound like jargon and that in the first part, either the particle *vele-* should be used instead of *naj-* (for example: *najdar = veledar*) or the superlative *najbolji* (for example: *najdar = najbolji dar*). However, if we accept this replacement, does that mean that *velegrad* is *najbolji grad*, and *veletrgovina* *najbolja trgovina*? What about examples in which *naj-*, as the highest positive grade, means, for example, *najljepši/najljepša*? Is *najhaljina* *najbolja* or *najljepša haljina* (*is najhaljina the best or the prettiest dress*)?

Verbs cannot be compared, but verbs such as *voljeti* and *željeti* with their *positive* meaning also have the *comparative* meaning (the verb *voljeti* can mean *više voljeti* so the adverb *nego* is used with it, in the same way as with the comparative of adjectives). That opens a path for a *superlative* meaning. The question is whether we should express the meaning by using the superlative of an adverb and a verb (*najviše voljeti*) or by adding the superlative prefix to a verb (*najvoljeti*):

*Plavu boju volim više nego zelenu. ~ Najviše volim plavu boju = \*Najvolim plavu boju.*

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<sup>29</sup> Mamić (1996).

<sup>30</sup> Babić (2002).

<sup>31</sup> Babić *et al.* (1996).

<sup>32</sup> Mamić (1996).

The construction superlative prefix + verb is nowadays outdated and its function is stylistic. However, it can be justified by the fact that numerous words formed this way are considered as completely regular forms in some of our speeches and that they bear no stylistic marking.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the construction *naj+noun*, syntagms containing the English word *top* are becoming more frequent in the Croatian language:

***Top stipendija za Top studente.***

***Top model*** by Vanja Rupena. (TV show, RTL, 2010)

***Čilić bi morao biti u Top 5.*** (*Jutarnji list*, daily newspaper, August, 2010)

The use of such constructions pauperizes the Croatian language because one prefix (*naj*) or one foreign word (*top*) replace a dozen Croatian adjectives. It is therefore not surprising that the meaning of such constructions often remains ambiguous: is *top stipendija* the best scholarship or the financially highest one, is *najcura* the prettiest or the best girl?

### **Expressing attributes / apposition**

The English language has a growing influence on Croatian,<sup>34</sup> which can also be observed when expressing apposition and attributes.

***Jednostavno, to je bio Kanada dan!*** (net.hr, February, 2010)

***'Dukan dijeta' – revolucionarni režim prehrane koji je osvojio svijet.*** (*Nacional*, weekly news magazine, June 2010)

***Hrvatska vaterpolo reprezentacija imat će podršku domaćih navijača.*** (HTV, July 2010)

***Nema ljeta bez Gavrilović pašeta!*** (May, 2010)

In Croatian, the attribute can be expressed with adjectives, adjectival pronouns, noun cases, prepositional phrases, nouns in oblique cases, adverbs and numbers. However, today we are witnesses to an

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<sup>33</sup> Mamić (1996).

<sup>34</sup> See recent analysis of the influence of English on Croatian, as well as other European languages on all linguistic levels in Drljača Margić (2009).

increasing number of examples such as *Kanada dan* in which the main noun in the syntagm is complemented by a noun in the same case that serves as an attribute/apposition. In Croatian, it became possible to express the whole range of relations in a new way: possessiveness (*VIP partner, antilop koža*), typicalness (*Zvijezda kvaliteta*), location (*spa usluge, fitness centar*), means (*internet kupovina*), purpose (*shopping kartica*), content (*Crtani romani show*), composition (*mango osvježenje*).<sup>35</sup> In practice, such constructions are always written separately. However, Croatian normative literature recommends writing semi-compounds in attributive relations or swapping positions in appositional relations. When replacement with phrases comprised of adjective + noun, noun + noun in genitive case, noun + prepositional phrase is not possible. Such recommendation is in accordance with the Decision reached by the Council for Standard Croatian Language Norm.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to note that the above constructions have been present in the Croatian language for centuries. These expressions are characteristic for German (*krumpir-salata, tramvaj-karta, kokos-šnite, veš-mašina*) and Turkish (*biser-djevojka*),<sup>37</sup> both of which directly influenced Croatian over the course of several centuries.<sup>38</sup>

Apart from the influence of German and Turkish on Croatian, Anđel Starčević emphasizes the following reasons for accepting this new syntactical structure: extremely strong influence of English on the language of the media and (pop)-culture as part of the globalisation phenomenon, practicality and economy of structures with pre-attributive nouns<sup>39</sup> (*Gavrilović proizvodi – proizvodi tvrtke Gavrilović*), the desire to apply constructions that are more typical in

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<sup>35</sup> Starčević (2006).

<sup>36</sup> <http://pravopis.hr/uploads/vijece-za-normu.pdf>; last access 8/3/2017.

<sup>37</sup> Starčević (2006).

<sup>38</sup> Results of that influence should also be sought in Croatian toponymy (Sabljak Selo, Ivanić-Grad, Bokšić Lug, Cvetković Brdo).

<sup>39</sup> Pre-attribution is “*placing the attribute before the main noun in the noun phrase*”, Starčević (2006): 647.

English in order to achieve a greater marketing effect on readers/listeners that associate the English language with the prosperous West (*MasterCard kartica*). The last group comprises of examples such as *Pula film festival*, *Liburnija Jazz festival*. By using such constructions they favour world trends, offering an explanation that more people understand them in that form.<sup>40</sup> Due to the increasing practice of writing these types of compounds, Maja Matković<sup>41</sup> warns that we might soon start saying *škola praznici*, *televizija emisija* instead of *školski praznici* and *televizijska emisija*.

### **Unnecessarily long and complex expressions (nominalisation of expressions)**

Polyfunctionality is one of the features of standard language, so:

*“knowing the specific organisations of certain functional styles as well as distinguishing what is appropriate in certain communicative situations and in the use of certain registries is as important as acquiring language competency. At the same time, breaking the functional and stylistic communication norm is the same as breaking the grammatical or orthographic norm”.*<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, *“one occurrence in a particular functional style can be considered as a mistake, while it might not be a mistake in another”.*<sup>43</sup> The great (or even too great) influence of other styles (primarily administrative and business, and scientific) on the language of public communication can be best observed in the so-called ‘nominalisation of expressions’:<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> In addition to the syntactic level, the influence of English can be observed on the orthographic level; for example, when all the words in a title are written in capital letters (*Motovun Film Festival*).

<sup>41</sup> Matković (2005).

<sup>42</sup> Barić *et al.* (1999): 274.

<sup>43</sup> Silić (2006): 36.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Nominalisation of expressions’ is a collective name for nominalisation of expressions – use of verbal nouns in a noun case instead of verbal predicates, or

*Djelatnici policije uspješno su izvršili onesposobljavanje aviobombe iz II. sv. rata.* (net.hr, March 2010)

*Iako je tvrtka provela racionalizaciju poslovanja i planirane mjere štednje...* (Vjesnik, daily newspaper, April 2010)

*Vozač sa svojim vozilom nudi usluge prijevoza do osam osoba.* (Burza, Classified Advertisements, May 2010)

*S obzirom na upite građana vezano uz odvojeno skupljanje plastike u vrećama iz domaćinstava koje se promiče na televiziji, u svrhu informiranja javnosti ističemo sljedeće...* (Zagreb Holding, February 2010)

Although more systematic descriptions of certain styles are more recent,<sup>45</sup> this feature has been recorded in the journalistic style as early as the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>46</sup> and even then the users were rightfully warned that such a construction “*has a harmful effect on the style of a sentence, slowing down its thought rhythm, taking away its vigour and freshness.*”<sup>47</sup>

The reasons for the nominalisation of expressions in all styles of the Croatian language, especially in the written form, lie in a tendency for objectivity, impersonalness, and intellectualisation and abstraction of topics.<sup>48</sup> It is undisputed that the influence on its over-expansion should be sought in the so-called intellectual styles – administrative

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for decomposition (breaking down) of predicates – the use of a verbal periphrase, i.e. the construction of functional (semi-copulative) verbs + verbal noun.

<sup>45</sup> We primarily have in mind the following: the works by Josip Silić on the functional styles of the Croatian language published in the journal *Kolo* (1996-97) that have been extended and published in Silić (2006); Katnić-Bakaršić (2001) and the monograph on the journalistic style Hudeček & Mihaljević (2009). A somewhat different approach to the functional roles of Croatian has been given by Kovačević & Badurina (2001).

<sup>46</sup> “*Examples are given randomly because there are countless examples in newspapers. ... The journalist has to quickly report an event. The use of nominal constructions allows him to avoid assuming a completely precise attitude ... regarding the event*” Čale & Zorić (1955): 110.

<sup>47</sup> Vratović (1954): 26.

<sup>48</sup> Pranjković (2001), according to Radovanović (1990).

and scientific/scholarly.<sup>49</sup> However, due to the fact that nominalisation is a feature of numerous European languages, it is also justifiable to discuss the influence of extra-linguistic universalities, e.g. the common type of abstract thinking, cultural similarity, similarity in functional and situational contexts of linguistic use.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, even in this case it should be noted that “*each functional style is a role model for itself*”<sup>51</sup> so:

“... *the use of such constructions (nominal, noted by the author) outside their stem area (topic, situation in which it is discussed, intention, participants etc. should be taken into account in assessment) cannot always be considered as non-standard and inadmissible.*”<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, along with communicative and stylistic, there are intralinguistic reasons which prevent us from replacing such constructions with a verb with full meaning, e.g. *On mu je poklonio povjerenje. Bio je od velike važnosti.*

## Conclusion

Most of the features of Croatian syntax described above (and thus other linguistic levels as well) are only a continuation of changes in a language that normative handbooks have been recording from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reasons for their expansion should be seen in the great influence of media and globalisation, technological advancement, as well as obvious *indifference, negligence and indolence* in Croatian society.

All of the analysed language advisory books have noted the above occurrences, with superlativisation of expressions and two consecutive adjectives being the only two occurrences not mentioned in all of them. The reasons for that lie in the fact that those are more

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<sup>49</sup> Katnić-Bakaršić (2001).

<sup>50</sup> Pranjković (2001), according to Radovanović (1990).

<sup>51</sup> Silić (2006): 37.

<sup>52</sup> Barić *et al.* (1999): 275.



recent linguistic occurrences that are, according to the analysed corpus, primarily the feature of the conversational style, although their amount in the journalistic style should not be disregarded.

On the other hand, specific *linguistic anomalies*, due to the increasing number of their occurrences in Croatian, have been tacitly permitted in certain situations, such as for example more contemporary relations in attribution. Should such constructions be prohibited at least in the official titles of events, companies, magazines, organisations, etc., thus reducing their number, or should they be included in standard Croatian due to their numerosity? That is the question that should be tackled, but not only by the linguists.

The paper describes some of the syntactic features of contemporary Croatian language, but also notes some other non-standard language occurrences primarily related to verbal government. Do sentences such as: *Jonny mrzi njega natrag!* (HTV, March 2010), *Oni nas suportiraju u smislu odlaska na natjecanje.* (HTV, April 2010), *Nameće se pitanje kontrolinga.* (HTV, March 2011), although being a feature of spoken conversational style, primarily the speech of young people, present the future of the Croatian language standard? Or, to paraphrase Nives Opačić: Should we continue to fight or has the battle already been lost?

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### Sažetak

Stoljetna težnja za vlastitim jezikom hrvatsku je povijest ispisala brojnim 'malim' i 'velikim' djelima 'malih' i 'velikih' ljudi. Tijekom cijeloga razdoblja jezičnoga zatočeništva u izvornih je govornika postojala svijest o vlastitom materinskom jeziku. Danas je ta svijest u velikoj mjeri zamijenjena svojevrsnom rezignacijom. I dok se tek jezikoslovci više ili manje bučno bore protiv propadanja hrvatskoga jezičnog standarda u svakodnevnoj komunikaciji, prosječni govornici, i u ovom slučaju, pomalo stihijski ulaze u žrvanj globalizacijskih tekovina.

Utjecaj stranih jezičnih elemenata, ponajprije onih engleskoga jezika na hrvatski, činjenica je ne toliko nova koliko nam se ponekad čini. I dok je u početku taj priljev zahvaćao leksik, danas se njegov utjecaj proširio na sve razine hrvatskoga jezika, uključujući i pravogovor i pravopis. Dakako, i hrvatska sintaksa posljednjih desetljeća bilježi sve više primjera 'sintaktičkoga posuđivanja', koji posredstvom elektroničkih medija postaju dijelom hrvatske jezične stvarnosti. Najčešćim se krivcem urušavanja hrvatske jezične, pa i sintaktičke, norme danas drži engleski jezik, no svjedočimo i sintaktičkim konstrukcijama koje iz jednoga funkcionalnog stila prodiru u drugi, bez razloga i, naravno, potpuno pogrešno. U izlaganju se daje pregled suvremene jezikoslovne gramatičke i savjetničke literature o jezičnim značajkama hrvatske sintakse na prijelomu 20. u 21. stoljeće. Oprimjerenja su iz publicističkoga i razgovornoga stila.

