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Preskriptivizam naspram deskriptivizma u engleskom i bosanskom/hrvatskom/srpskom

Mentor: prof.dr. Merima Osmankadić

Student: Naida Ahmetović

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FINAL DEGREE THESIS

Prescriptivism vs. Descriptivism in English and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian

Mentor: prof.dr. Merima Osmankadić

Student: Naida Ahmetović

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Sažetak

Cilj ovog rada je da kroz teorijski okvir preskriptivizma i deskriptivizma istraži legitimnost preskriptivnih pravila u engleskom jeziku i u bosanskom, hrvatskom, i srpskom jeziku, te da uz pomoć COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) i WaC (Web Corpora of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian) korpusa istraži koliko se zaista govornici u realnoj upotrebi jezika pridržavaju tih pravila. Preskriptivizam i deskriptivizam stoje kao dva oprečna termina u sociolingvistici, pri čemu preskriptivizam označava praksu nametanja arbitrarnih normi u jezičnoj upotrebi, dok se deskriptivizam bavi opisivanjem stvarne jezične upotrebe. Praksa preskriptivizma u engleskom jeziku vuče korjene iz osamnaestog stoljeća, a mnoga pravila su se zadržala i u modernom dobu. Budući da je u posljednjih nekoliko godina ova tema postala aktuelna i na prostoru Zapadnog Balkana gdje je preskriptivizam duboko ukorjenjen (posebno u Hrvatskom jeziku gdje je prerastao u purizam), ovaj rad će se baviti i analizom nekoliko preskriptivnih pravila iz bosanskog, hrvatskog, i srpskog jezika. Analizi ove teme pristupit ćemo s pretpostavkom da se govornici bosanskog, hrvatskog, srpskog i engleskog govornog područja opiru preskriptivnim pravilima u jezičnoj upotrebi. Istraživački dio će koristiti kombinaciju kvantitativne i kvalitativne metode istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: preskriptivizam, deskriptivizam, bosanski jezik, hrvatski jezik, srpski jezik, engleski jezik, analiza korpusa

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the legitimacy of prescriptive rules in English and Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian through the theoretical framework of prescriptivism and descriptivism, and to investigate, with the help of COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and WaC (Web Corpora of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian) corpora, the extent to which speakers adhere to these rules in real language use. Prescriptivism and descriptivism stand as two opposing terms in sociolinguistics, where prescriptivism refers to the practice of imposing arbitrary norms in language use, while descriptivism deals with describing actual language use. The practice of prescriptivism in the English language dates back to the eighteenth century, with many rules still persisting in the modern era. Given that this topic has recently become relevant in the Western Balkans, where prescriptivism is deeply rooted (especially in the Croatian language, where it has evolved into purism), this thesis will also analyze several prescriptive rules from Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages. This analysis will be approached with the assumption that speakers of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian as well as the speakers of English, resist prescriptive rules in language use. The research part will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Keywords: prescriptivism, descriptivism, Bosnian language, Croatian language, Serbian language, English language, corpus analysis

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1. Introduction

The fundamental role of language is self-evident - it serves as a tool for communication, enabling an exchange of information among two or more people. One could say that there has always existed a need for change and improvement of speech, writing, and communication for the purpose of better understanding among individuals. While this change largely happened spontaneously through communication among interlocutors, it was sometimes influenced by various factors and, in certain cases, deliberately controlled by linguists or authority figures. Such interventions in language evolution paved the way for the systematic study and documentation of language changes. The need to study and record these changes in language gave rise to what we now call grammars. The early grammarians aimed to codify language principles in order to organize language into a coherent system, to settle usage disputes, and to enhance language by identifying and fixing some common mistakes.¹

This pursuit of linguistic clarity in writing, everyday conversation, or public speaking has led some linguists to single out a particular variety from a certain language, which would then serve as a common ground for effective communication. The variety that serves this purpose became known as the standard language (Haugen, 1966, p.925). While the primary reason for the establishment of a standard language is well-intentioned, some aspects of the standardization process are quite controversial. The process of language standardization often relies on prescriptivism, a non-scientific and elitist approach that enforces one language variety as the sole acceptable form, dismissing all the other non-standard varieties as incorrect or vulgar (Kapović, 2014, p.392). Once established, the standard language is often put on a pedestal and treated as the only valid option, eventually causing speakers of non-standard varieties to feel insecure about their language use. Certain speakers might even face discrimination if their language differs from the standard language. Descriptivism, in contrast to prescriptivism, is a scientific and democratic approach to language that seeks to describe language as it is used naturally, without assigning value judgments to any of the existing varieties of a particular language.

¹ For more details, refer to the University of Pennsylvania's resource https://www.ling.upenn.edu/courses/Fall_2018/ling001/prescription.html.

The standardization of English, as well as Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages are particularly interesting. In the English language, the practice of prescriptivism originated in the 18th century, during the early stages of English codification (Cole, 2003, p.133). Prescriptivism in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages began somewhat later, in the 19th century, when these three languages were still unified under the name Serbo-Croatian (Greenberg, 2004, p. 16). The practice of prescriptivism in the aforementioned languages continues to this day.

This thesis consists of two parts, the theoretical and the research part. In the first part of the thesis, the terms “prescriptivism” and “descriptivism” will be introduced, along with the concept of language standardization, as both prescriptivism and descriptivism are closely connected to it. This section will also discuss the negative impacts of prescriptive language norms on language and society.

The second part of the thesis will combine qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine the following research question: To what extent do speakers of English, and Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages follow prescriptive rules in their everyday language use? In this section, six prescriptive rules will be examined, three prescriptive rules present in English, and three rules present in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. Examples will be drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and the Web Corpora of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian (WaC).

2. Prescriptivism

Before discussing prescriptivism, it is important to introduce the concept of “prescription” first. The word “prescription” comes from the verb “to prescribe” which, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, means “to tell someone what they must have or do,” or “to make a rule of something” (“Prescribe,” n.d.). Kibbee & Craig (2019, p.68) define prescription in language more broadly as “any intervention in how another person speaks,” whether it is “an individual correction, as a mother to a child, or a societal one, as a religious taboo on uttering a specific word, or an official institutional one, as a government to its citizens.” In this thesis we will focus on prescription understood as a process of laying down of normative rules for a particular language. Prescription, in this sense, refers to the recommendation of rules for language use by a person or people in authority. Simply put, it means someone “important” telling people how to use their language properly. Prescription is necessary for the standardization of language, and for the imposition of a certain set of norms in grammars. Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.1) claim that “prescription depends on an ideology (or set of beliefs) concerning language which requires that in language use, as in other matters, things shall be done in the ‘right’ way.” This ideology is called prescriptivism.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, prescriptivism is “a 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” (“Prescriptivism,” n.d.). Mate Kapović (2014, p. 392) defines prescriptivism as “a non-scientific approach to language where it is randomly prescribed what is “correct” in language and what is not.”² Prescriptivism is not considered a scientific approach due to its reliance on arbitrarily prescribed rules of “correct” language usage. In fact, there is no scientific method by which one can determine what is correct and what is incorrect in a certain language. People who claim to know the “correct” way to write or speak, and often impose their opinions of language use on other people via grammars, books, media, or other means are called prescriptivists.

² All translations from Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian to English in this thesis are my own.

However, the tendency to correct others does not only come from the people in position of power and authority, such as linguists, professors, teachers or editors. Prescriptivism can actively engage other speakers in the process of language refinement, making them outraged by any kind of speech that deviates from the standard one, and making them correct the speech of their friends, parents, coworkers, and others. As John Edwards (2013, p.81) states,

In earlier times, scholars were the prescriptivists, but it is now the man or woman in the street (or in the newspaper) who is likely to rail against change, unwanted influence, and degeneration, to cry out for correctness, authority, and the maintenance of standards.

Prescriptivists are, therefore, not necessarily linguists. One might even argue that nowadays, the majority of individuals who are concerned with language correctness and adhere to prescriptive rules are, in fact, ordinary people we interact with every day, rather than authoritative figures.

Prescriptivist interventions, according to Edwards (2013, p.75), typically emerged due to factors such as “the need for language regularization created by technological advance,” “increasing literacy,” or “swelling conceptions of national solidarity.” In pursuit of these aims, a single variety of a particular language community is selected to serve as the standard language. Selecting a standard language to improve communication or for educational purposes is not problematic per se. However, prescriptivists go as far as to claim that the standard variety is inherently superior to others. This alleged superiority lacks scientific basis, and in reality, prescriptivists consider their preferred linguistic norms as correct, considering all other forms inferior and unacceptable.

Due to its insistence on maintaining the status quo in language, prescriptivism also includes “attempts to keep English at bay, worries about language “decline,” complaints about the rising tide of slang, and concerns for “correctness” (Edwards, 2013, p.74). Language norms are enforced on all aspects of language, with some focusing on vocabulary and spelling, while others extend their focus to include semantics and syntax. Prescription, as we have already mentioned, is necessary for the

process of standardization. However, prescriptivism is what creates the so-called standard ideology. Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.2) claim that we can relate prescriptive attitudes very largely to the standardization of language.

2.1. Language Standardization

Language standardization is a process of prescribing a set of rules and conventions for a particular language and recording them in grammars and dictionaries. Once created, these rules have to be accepted and maintained. Accordingly, Holmes (2001, as cited in Ramlan, 2018, p.28) defines the standard variety as “the one which is written, and which has undergone some degree of regularization or codification (for example, in grammars and dictionaries), and which is recognized as prestigious variety of code by a community.” Standardization aims to create consistency and uniformity in language, helping speakers of different dialects establish a smooth communication with minimal obstacles. It may develop naturally, or, more commonly, a single variety is chosen to become a standard. This process divides a single language into two parts, a standard variety and the non-standard varieties.

Holmes (2001, as cited in Ramlan, 201, p.31) elaborates on Einar Haugen’s four steps in the process of language standardization as follows:

1. Selection: choosing the variety or code to be developed,
2. codification: standardizing its structural or linguistic features,
3. elaboration: extending its functions for use in new domains,
4. securing its acceptance: enhancing its prestige and encouraging people to develop pride in the language or loyalty towards it.

The main factor in the process of selection of the standard variety is usually prestige. Holmes (2013, p.79) argues that grammar writers and lexicographers “generally take the usage of educated and socially prestigious members of the community as their criterion.” The standard variety is therefore frequently associated with a prestigious city, or with the prestigious social class, the educated and the wealthy

members of society. The next phase, codification, takes place when the established norms of grammar, spelling, and vocabulary are documented in grammars and dictionaries, which are subsequently published and distributed. Once established in grammars and dictionaries, the standard language is taught in schools, promoted through media, spread through cultural establishments, and enforced through various institutions and authorities. The standard language then serves as a model that all community members are expected to look up to when in doubt how to speak “correctly.” It also functions as a symbol of a unified identity for the members of a particular speech community. Ramlan (2018, p.29) summarised four main advantages of the standard language as follows:

- 1) language model,
- 2) unifier of people,
- 3) the identity,
- 4) practical in teaching.

Although the main idea behind the creation of the standard language is to unify people, language prescription and standardization have many drawbacks and can negatively impact speakers too.

2.2. Negative Impacts of Prescriptive Language Norms

The enforcement of language rules through prescriptivism, standardization, and the emphasis on correctness has been shown to have a negative impact on language and people. Despite the fact that, according to Ramlan (2018, p.30), “standardization is much more concerned with the written language (e.g. lexical, morphological, and syntactical) than the spoken language, (e.g. phonological language features),” and the fact that that the standard variety was mainly chosen for the purpose of formal communication, administration, education and media, prescriptive practices have extended these standards to everyday spoken language as well. Language standardization created new problems in language and among the language users: By imposing a standard variety over non-standard varieties, it divided speakers of a single

language into two groups, which often align with class divisions in society. It also fostered discrimination against speakers of the non-standard language, and made variation and language change unacceptable.

2.2.1. Superiority of the Standard Variety

The main issue arising from prescriptivism and standardization is the notion that the standard variety is somehow better than all the other varieties in a particular language. In his definition of standardization, Ferguson (as cited in Pillière & Lewis, 2018, p.2) claims that it is the process through which “one variety of a language becomes widely accepted throughout the speech community as a supradialect norm – the ‘best’ form of the language – rated above regional and social dialects.” Hence, the process of language standardization actively promotes the perception of the standard variety as superior to the non-standard varieties. Since the goal of the language standardization is to single out a particular variety and put it on a pedestal above the others, it has made the standard variety the only socially acceptable option, and created a widespread misconception that it is somehow better and the most logical form of language, while non-standard varieties are often unfairly seen as inferior, corrupted, or incorrect. Edwards (2013, p.59) also claims that “dictionary definitions of dialect and accent have often supported the popular view that nonstandard varieties are less correct than the “received” ones spoken by the socially dominant.”

In reality, non-standard varieties are just as grammatical and correct as the standard variety. They are equal in value. Starčević et al. (2019, p.23) state that non-standard forms are not inherently incorrect or wrong, and that their exclusion from the standard is solely due to extralinguistic factors. The process of choosing which dialect will be the standard one is purely arbitrary, and there is no good reason why one dialect should be picked over the other. The factors that affect their selection are external, most often elitist and political. According to Edwards (2013, p.82), prescriptivism and the process of language standardization rely on “narrow and often unfair conceptions of social inclusion and exclusion,” and there are no “intrinsic grounds that elevate one variety over another.... social convention is the driving force here” (p.62). It is not that the non-standard varieties are deficient, they are just different than the standard variety.

“Convention,” as Edwards (2013, p.62) states, “has always translated difference into deficit.”

Perhaps the main reason why the standard variety of a particular language is so well-respected, and its correctness is almost never questioned by other people, lies in the fact that the standard variety is associated with overt prestige.³ The users of the standard variety are often perceived as more educated or belonging to a higher social class, therefore it is commonly believed that speaking in a standard manner makes other people perceive us as intelligent, smart, highly educated, or even wealthy. However, this is because standard variety is associated with other, non-linguistic categories which are deemed valuable in today's society. As Edwards (2013, p.61) points out, “certain varieties are heard as pleasant and cultured because of the status of their speakers.”

The status that the standard variety holds in the society often makes people believe that ‘standard’ is synonymous with ‘correct’ and that ‘non-standard’ is synonymous with ‘incorrect’, but this is far from the truth. Contrary to popular belief, non-standard forms are not inferior, irregular, or incorrect – they were just not “lucky” enough to be chosen by a particular linguist or a group of linguists to serve a purpose of a standard variety. The term “non-standard” does not carry any negative connotations. Edwards (2013, p.60) explains that “no dialects are substandard, but some are nonstandard. If one variety is the standard in a particular context—spoken by educated people, used in writing—it logically follows that all other dialects must be nonstandard.” Edwards also explains that the term ‘non-standard’ “is not pejorative in any technical linguistic sense” and emphasizes that “the non-standard dialects are grammatically valid systems, and not deficient.” In his book *Čiji je jezik?* (“To whom does the language belong?”), Mate Kapović (2010, p.157) concludes that “everything that is used in language is correct.”

2.2.2. Language Change and Variation

The establishment of the standard language requires that it is continually maintained, uniform, and consistent. Typically, this maintenance is upheld by

³ Overt prestige is a term usually used to describe the recognition that a specific language variety receives in a certain society, often associated with individuals of power and status within that society.

prescriptivists, grammarians, lexicographers, and educational institutions. Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.14) point out that, in order to keep the language fixed, “prescriptivists are typically intolerant of innovations in language” and this applies to “new meanings, new synonyms and new syntactic constructions.” Jonathan Swift, for instance, complained of the change and variation in the English language, and insisted on “the need of a developing nation and colonial power to have a relatively fixed standard language for the practical purpose of clear communication over long distances and periods of time” (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p.28). Prescriptivists, for the most part, look to the past and admire older versions of a language, and usually despise new words or constructions, under the excuse that they are ruining the language. Stockwell (2007, p.58) points out how this complaint tradition in language is as old as time:

Even in ancient Athens, writers looked back to a previous age when their language was more ‘pure’ and ‘elegant’ than their own. This nostalgic delusion occurs throughout the ages: seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English writers compared their own ‘corrupt’ English with the language of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton; in the nineteenth century they looked back to the previous ‘Augustan’ age; and politicians in the twentieth century longed for Victorian values. In all of these, there is often a linkage made between linguistic ‘purity’ and national ‘purity, and it is then a short step from merely describing language to setting out prescriptive rules by which you would like it to change.

Standard language ideology suggests that language is a fixed, unchanging, finite, and static creation, and that any deviation and variation in speech is unacceptable. Prescriptivists regard language change and variability as detrimental processes that degrade and diminish every language, and therefore they offer their help in the form of grammars and dictionaries to save society from its imminent downfall. Pillière & Lewis (2018, p.3) claim that prescription is “an important addition to Haugen’s model,” as it “reflects the need for the standard to be continually maintained or monitored by norm authorities, norm enforcers, norm codifiers, and norm subjects.” There is yet another problem with standardization - it suppresses variation and natural language development and it demands that the language remains unchanged.

The idea that language is like an object which has to be preserved at all costs is fundamentally flawed. Language is dynamic, not static; it is in nature of every language to gradually change and evolve over time. “Variation is the only linguistic constant,” as Edwards (2013, p.39) claims. Similarly, Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.134) point out that “the ideal of absolute uniformity is never achieved in practice,” and “although language standardization discourages variability, no language is ever completely invariant.” While prescriptivists may have managed to slow down or prevent some changes in the written language, they have had little success in preventing change in spoken language. Despite their efforts, language continues to evolve.

2.2.3. Schizoglossia

A detrimental effect that prescriptivism can have on an average speaker is something called “schizoglossia,” a term coined by an American linguist Einar Haugen in 1962. Schizoglossia is a term used to describe a sense of linguistic insecurity or an inferiority complex that a speaker can experience in relation to using their native language. In this sense, Leeman-Bouix (1994, as cited in Kibbee & Craig, 2019, p.69) defines prescriptivism as “a kind of linguistic egotism in which the prescriptor destabilizes the targets of the prescription, robbing them of their linguistic security.” Leeman-Bouix also states that this linguistic insecurity caused by prescriptivists can be either individual or a product of the educational system, which “acts to denigrate the native speech patterns of the child in favour of a “more correct” version.” Haugen (1972, p.441) describes schizoglossia as “a linguistic malady which can arise in speakers and writers who are exposed to more than one variety of their own language,” but are expected to use only the high variety at all times. This malady flares up at times, “especially when new editions of standard dictionaries are published” (p.441). The victims of schizoglossia, as Haugen states, are often marked by “a disproportionate, even an unbalanced interest in the form rather than the substance of language” (p.441). The linguist Michael Halliday (as cited in Edwards, 2013, p.62) makes a similar observation as Haugen, and claims that “a speaker who is made ashamed of his own language habits suffers a basic injury as a human being.”

People are often taught, sometimes even from their early infancy, that their natural language production is incorrect, and every non-standard variety is seen as something undesirable, especially once the formal education begins. When a person's speech is constantly being corrected by various people of authority, one feels discouraged to speak and tends to think that he/she has a poor command of his/her language. The unattainable goal which the standard variety sets is often considered the only acceptable option, the only one deemed correct. As a consequence of the practice of language correctness, one becomes insecure in speaking his/her own mother language, especially if he/she grew up using one of the non-standard varieties. A person insecure in the correctness of his/her language may be hesitant to engage in any form of public discourse. In some people it can evoke self-hatred or hatred towards a particular group of people.

The standard language ideology has infiltrated the private domain where people, more often than not, correct other people any chance they get. As Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.60) point out, "one of the less fortunate consequences of standardisation is the application of the norms of writing to the grammar of speech." Due to a lack of understanding and knowledge of linguistics, many people blindly accept the teachings of prescriptivists. Consequently, they not only religiously adhere to these rules themselves but also impose them upon others. When speakers adopt a certain prescriptive rule, they often perpetuate it, doing it with their best intentions and believing they are helping other people speak better, unaware that their actions may actually make others insecure.

An expectation to always think about whether we are articulating ourselves accurately in any given situation is quite unrealistic. Some prescriptivists advocate rules that diverge significantly from real language usage, most likely with the aim of creating a sense of inadequacy in speakers about their language proficiency, and in hope that the speakers may consult language advisors and grammars written by these prescriptivists.

2.2.4. Discrimination

People who do not adhere to the rules established by prescriptivists in grammars and dictionaries in their everyday communication risk being discriminated against based solely on the way they speak. Discrimination is generally unacceptable in today's society, and denying employment to someone based on their race, religion, class, gender, or other characteristics is illegal in many places. However, linguistic discrimination is often very subtle and sometimes it is even widely accepted as quite reasonable under the pretext that the person or people who use a non-standard variety are careless or irresponsible, and thus not suitable for employment. Similarly, Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.2) point out that

a person who speaks English perfectly effectively, but who has occasional usages that are said to be 'substandard' (e.g. omitting initial [h] in words like happy, hair, or using double negatives) may well find that his or her social mobility is blocked and may, for example, be refused access to certain types of employment without any official admission that the refusals depend partly or wholly on his or her use of language.

Prescriptivism has the potential to foster intolerance towards those individuals whose language usage diverges from a rigid standard set by the people in the position of power, as well as the language of the higher classes. The grammar and pronunciation which is looked down upon almost always originates from the lower social classes. The dialect of the higher classes is favored not only in formal, but in many cases in informal circumstances. As Edwards (2013, p.58) states, "the speakers of standard dialects or of socially prestigious varieties are perceived in broadly favourable ways: they are seen as more competent and confident than others, and what they say is given greater weight." At the same time, many people are less tolerant towards grammatical variation in sentences such as "I done it yesterday," "I ain't never goin' there again," or "I ax Billy can he play tomorrow," while there is ample scholarly evidence that "all dialects are valid systems of communication, and that none is intrinsically better or worse than another" (Edwards, p.31). Those who deviate from the norms of "correct" speech and use non-standard dialects are frequently singled out when their speech is associated with

a certain region they come from. When prescriptivists correct others' speech, they may subtly discriminate against the entire group of people based on their unique dialect.

Robert A. Hall (1950, as cited in Haugen, 1972, p.442) states that “the merit of what a person says or does is not in any way affected by the way in which they say or do it, provided it is the most efficient way of saying or doing it” and “to accept or reject someone just because of 'correct' or 'incorrect' speech is to show oneself superficial, lazy, and snobbish.” Unfortunately, the standard language ideology legitimized all kinds of prejudices in language production. These prejudices are so powerful that even the speakers who are stigmatized often believe them to be true.

3. Descriptivism

As previously noted, prescriptivism and the standard ideology have changed the way people perceive language, linguistics, linguists, and grammars. Standardization and prescriptivism introduced a way of thinking that led people to equate the standard variety to language as a whole and view language in terms of a clear division between right and wrong. As a result, many people started to perceive linguists as individuals whose primary role is to dictate what is correct and what is incorrect in language and then write those rules in a dictionary or a grammar book. Some people even started demanding that linguists provide clear distinctions between right and wrong words or phrases in grammars, rejecting any vague answers that might suggest that all options are acceptable. However, this is not a scientific view of language.

From the preceding statements about prescriptivism and the process of standardization it is evident that they are not grounded in any scientific principles, but rather on arbitrary decisions made by prescriptivists. As Starčević et al. (2019, p.24) claim,

linguists, i.e. language experts, deal with language standardization. However, this does not mean that language standardization is scientific or grounded in science. Standardologists may always be linguists, but language standardization is a social and ideological/political engagement.

There is, however, an alternative perspective on language devoid of political or ideological influences, which regards all varieties of a particular language as equal, free from any bias or value judgments. This approach is called descriptivism.

Descriptivism, as the name implies, is a process which involves describing the natural usage of language, both in spoken and written form. It aims to objectively describe and document the process of language development within a particular speech community. Descriptivism focuses on the natural evolution of language and the way people actually communicate, so grammarians who adopt this approach tend to describe language use rather than dictate it. Milroy (2007, p.4) points out how “all standard introductory textbooks in linguistics affirm that linguistics is descriptive and not prescriptive.” As an example, he references Daniel Jones’ statement from the introduction to his *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (1955) in the following manner: “No attempt is made to decide how people ought to pronounce; all that the dictionary aims at doing is to give a faithful record of the manner in which certain people do pronounce.”

Similarly, Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.60) observe that “the grammar of a language or dialect is actually something much more wide-ranging than this (a set of prohibitions against particular expressions). It is a complex and abstract system inherent in the language and not imposed by overt prescription.” This is best explained with Noam Chomsky’s concept of Universal Grammar (UG), which states that “all native speakers have implicit knowledge of the grammar of English: it is this knowledge that enables speakers to use and understand their language. Amongst other things, this knowledge enables the speaker to judge what sentences are possible in the language” (Milroy & Milroy 2012, p.60). The rules of speech are acquired by the speakers in their infancy. When children actively listen to the people around them talk, they naturally pick up language patterns and word order without the aid of grammar or dictionaries. For instance, a child is never taught that sentences have an SVO construction, yet the child typically forms such sentences successfully before even knowing about the concept of grammar. Children are taught how to read and write in school, but speech is something they have usually mastered by the time they start their formal education.

Speakers are already capable of constructing coherent sentences before they are introduced to prescriptive grammars in schools.

The descriptive approach to language begins by observing and studying all the ways in which language is used by the native speakers of a particular community. It then involves a detailed analysis of the language, discovering the principles which are hidden in the structure of language, and finally concludes by describing the observed grammatical structures, without making any evaluative judgments throughout the process. As Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.7) claim,

if a linguistic scholar is to do his work adequately (to give a clear description of a language, to explain how children acquire language, to explain how languages change in the course of time), he would be extremely foolish to allow his own prejudices and notions of correctness to get between him and his data.

Einar Haugen (1972, p.443) makes the same point using an analogy from botanics, and claims that

a botanist may have private opinions about the plants he studies, such as that some taste better or are more sightly than others, but in expressing these he is not speaking as a scientist and his opinions have no more validity than anyone else's. The problem of linguistic correctness involves dimensions of human behavior that are not provided for in the models that linguists usually build.

Descriptivists do not judge vocabulary, grammatical structures, or varieties in terms of being good or bad, or right or wrong. Unlike prescriptivists, linguists concerned with descriptivism do not give orders or establish rules for people to follow in order to speak or write correctly. In the Cambridge Dictionary, descriptivism is defined as “the belief that books about language should describe how language is really used, rather than giving rules to follow saying what is correct and not correct” (“Descriptivism,” n.d.). Most linguists agree upon a fact that linguistics is descriptive, just like any science.

According to the Merriam-Webster definition, linguistics is “the study of human speech including the units, nature, structure, and modification of language” (“Linguistics,” n.d). Linguistics involves studying language and its changes, aiming to

describe them accurately. Hence, by definition, linguistics is descriptive. Linguistics is a science, just like mathematics or physics, and the aim of every science is to describe and analyse natural phenomena, as well as to draw conclusions and theories based on these descriptions, completely free from any aesthetic judgments or moral principles and opinions. Similarly, Starčević et al. (2019, p.19) point out that “the point of physics is not to prescribe how physical laws, such as gravity, should work, but how they actually work. Likewise, the meaning of linguistics is not to prescribe how language “should” look, but to describe and analyse language as it is.” As a prominent linguist William Labov (as cited in Edwards 2013, p.46) states, “either our theories are about the language that ordinary people use on the street, arguing with friends, or at home blaming their children, or they are about very little indeed.” Therefore, linguistics focuses on everyday speech of individuals in diverse contexts, capturing natural discourse where speakers are unaware of being observed.

Descriptivism encourages variation and change in language, and it is concerned with describing authentic and natural interaction. Descriptive grammarians recognize that it is in every language’s nature to change, therefore it is nothing that should be forcefully prevented from happening. They also recognize that all varieties are equally valuable in linguistics. In linguistics, there might be categories such as “formal” and “informal,” or “rural” and “urban,” but never “correct” and “incorrect.” In 1861, Max Müller (1861, p.23, as cited in Milroy & Milroy 2012, p.5) described linguistics in his Lectures on the Science of Language as follows:

In the science of languages... language itself becomes the sole object of scientific inquiry. Dialects which have never produced any literature at all...are as important, nay for the solution of some of our problems, more important, than the poetry of Homer, or the prose of Cicero.

Therefore, varieties in language cannot be classified or hierarchically ranked based on their superiority, as in linguistics, they are all considered equal and equally important for research purposes.

Prescriptive attitudes lack this scientific validity. They contradict all the scientific understanding of linguistic phenomena established over the last couple of

centuries in the field of linguistics. Regarding the job of a linguist, Kibbee & Craig (2019, p.68) state that “prescription is what linguists do not do, and what linguistics is not interested in. Linguists observe, they do not prescribe.” Contrary to the prescriptivist belief, all language forms are actually correct, and the job of a linguist is not to prescribe but to describe language. Guidance on proper language usage is often arbitrary, and there is an insufficient foundation for imposing any restrictions on language. Starčević et al. (2019, p.19) note that it’s important to insist on a descriptive study of language in linguistics: “Only when a study is based on an observation of facts, when it is objective rather than subjective, we can claim that it is scientific.” Robert A. Hall, Jr., an American linguist, called for abandonment of “the old dogmatic, normative, theological approach of traditional grammar and of social snobbery; and to substitute the relativistic, objective approach of scientific study and analysis” (As cited in Haugen 1972, p.442).

In the following pages, this thesis will provide an overview of the history of prescriptive practices in English, as well as in the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages. This historical examination serves to contextualize the evolution of linguistic norms and attitudes, offering valuable insights into the contrast between prescriptivist and the descriptivist approaches discussed earlier in the thesis.

4. Historical background of prescriptivism in the English Language

4.1. The Sociopolitical and Cultural Influences

Several important social, political, religious, and cultural factors have contributed to the development and the rise of prescriptivism in English. Cole (2003, p.119) states how we can trace their roots back to antiquity, but most of them arose in the years between 1650 and 1800, during the Late Modern English period, which coincides with England's transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy.

England underwent significant changes between the 16th and 19th century. The transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy was the most significant

change in the political landscape of England. This political transformation was also closely connected with religious changes. A religious Reformation prompted by Henry VIII largely contributed to an increased accessibility of education for the people who have never had an opportunity to learn how to read and write (Cole, 2003, p.120). This era also saw the invention of the printing press, which revolutionized the way in which knowledge was spread and made books available for everyone, leading to increased literacy. The Bible began to be translated into vernacular languages, and printing press made it accessible for every household (Cole, 2003, p.120).

The late 17th century saw the rise of the Enlightenment, also known as The Age of Reason, a movement that originated in Europe and continued throughout the 18th century. This period emphasized the importance of reason, individualism, freedom of thought, as well as the idea that humans had a potential for improvement and that they are capable of achieving great levels of excellence. Therefore, the Enlightenment brought a heightened emphasis on order and perfection, and correctness became an ideal in behavior as well as in language (Cole, 2003, p.121).

As more people gained access to education and had many opportunities for improvement, they naturally aimed to climb the social ladder. According to Cole (2003, p.122), “as the middle class increased in numbers and in wealth, they desired also to have the manners and education of those above them in social status, or at least the appearance of them.” However, the lack of proper guide became a major problem. Hence, “preying upon their social insecurity, printers were ever ready to supply this need in the form of grammar books, etiquette books, and other handbooks.” Consequently, there was a growing demand for such guidance to be available in the vernacular. Einar Haugen (1972, p.441), jokingly referring to people’s insecurity and the need for written guidance as “linguistic malady,” states that

A flourishing industry exists for the purpose of supplying the country with remedies, ranging from pocket handbooks to improve your English and evening courses in diction to huge and costly tomes of scholarship. Dr. Noah Webster⁴

⁴ Haugen jokingly refers to prescriptive grammarians as doctors, as he described language insecurity as a “sickness” they diagnose and attempt to treat.

diagnosed the malady to his own interest in the early years of the Republic and set himself to rescue the populace from its Babylonian babble.

The people of this era generally sought to establish a standard that could be consulted whenever there was doubt or dispute about the proper usage of English and also aimed for a high level of politeness in language, striving to make it more refined. Therefore, the variety chosen to become the standard was naturally the variety of the upper classes. This is the primary reason why most grammars were prescriptive and showed a strong bias against the language of the common people. On the one hand, grammars were of great use for people of lower socio-economic status, since refined speech not only opened the doors to better employment opportunities, but also improved one's social standing in society. On the other hand, various grammar writers emerged, motivated by the chance to gain profit.

4.2. The Influence of Latin

Until the 17th century, French and Latin held prestige in England. The privilege of learning Latin and French was reserved only for the educated elite, while English was considered inferior (Cole, 2003, p.125). However, political changes in Europe and England instilled a strong sense of patriotism among the English people, leading to English gaining prestige over time and finally becoming the dominant language. This shift created a growing need for English to be standardized and regulated, since English lacked the codified rules of grammar (Cole, 2003, p.123). As this was an age of Enlightenment, there was also a strong desire for order, therefore variation in language was deemed unacceptable. Language was expected to be “logical, permanent, and polished,” and “whenever possible reason was supported by appeal to classical authority, and Latin was looked on as a model” (Cole 2003, p.124). Consequently, prescriptive grammarians looked to Latin as a model and guide for establishing the rules of English grammar. As Cole (2003, p.122) writes:

The 18th century grammars were based on Latin and all the examples mentioned needed to be translated into Latin and compared to Latin structures. The structures that did not have the analogy in Latin were considered bad and incorrect. English

was strictly compared to Latin and where differences were found, English was judged faulty. The result was borrowing into the English language elements of style and rhetoric that were purely Latin.

Apart from the changes in the style and rhetoric, many Latin words were incorporated into the English vocabulary as well. Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.72) also claim that the prescriptive authorities were usually conservative in that they were inclined to prefer older usages:

In helping to preserve the irregular verbs of English, the eighteenth-century grammarians were also influenced by their admiration for Latin (which is highly inflected), and they were inclined to preserve tense, number and person distinctions as much as they could, on the model of Latin.

4.3. The 18th Century Prescriptivism

As previously mentioned, the Enlightenment brought about the belief that language could be purified and modified into perfection. Consequently, there was a general assumption that language of the time was corrupted, and that there had been a time in the past when language was pure, therefore various authority figures emerged to restore its 'former glory' and, once restored, to prevent any further changes. The language of the lower classes and the foreign borrowings were usually looked down upon by the English grammarians. However, as Cole (2003, p.133) points out, "most of these authors had no particular training or qualification for the task other than a belief that they had a right to declare what was right and wrong about the English language," and so they often based grammatical rules on their personal preferences.

Many attempts were made to establish a strict set of rules and apply logical principles to an ever-changing language. These efforts resulted in various prescriptive grammars and dictionaries, some of the most famous being Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), and Robert Lowth's "A Short Introduction to English Grammar" (1762). Beal (2018, p.3) points out that the first definition of grammar in Johnson's Dictionary is "the science of speaking correctly," while Lowth states that "grammar is the Art of rightly expressing our thoughts by Words."

Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* was the first monolingual dictionary to address common English words (Cole, 2003, p.135). Johnson was determined to fix English. He presented an authority figure which people needed and asked for. In his *Dictionary* he determined which words are correct and acceptable, how to correctly pronounce each word, and intended to make a clear distinction between the words he deemed refined and correct, and the words he often labeled as “proper”, “improper”, “corrupt”, “cant”, “barbarous”, and “vulgar” (Cole, 2003, p.130). However, as (Cole 2003, p.130) states, these are all “clearly judgmental descriptions,” and Johnson obviously failed to recognize that all forms are actually correct. Haugen (1972, p.441) claims that “the malady which Dr. Johnson wished to cure was not precisely schizoglossia, but linguistic change in general.” Lowth believed that English could be “systematized in a grammar of rules,” and he was quite concerned about the usage and the pronunciation (Cole, 2003, p.134). Like many grammarians of the time, Lowth also deemed his own usage correct and based the rules of his grammar accordingly.

The 18th century was a significant period in the history of English prescriptivism as it marked the period of the codification of grammars. Besides England, the influence of the grammatical norms has significantly reached America, to the point where Einar Haugen (1972, p.444) argues that “there is no nation in the world where the dictionary has entered daily life to the extent of ours, or where the teaching of 'correct' grammar has touched as many lives.” The long history of prescriptivism in English has shaped contemporary attitudes and approaches to language. Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.72) claim that we can attribute the relative conservatism of Standard English in this respect to the standard ideology in the shape of eighteenth-century prescriptivism. The opinions of 18th century prescriptivists thus greatly shaped and affected the Standard English we know today.

5. Historical background of prescriptivism in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Languages

5.1. Beginnings of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages

The history of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian is quite complex and intricate. Their written tradition dates back to the 9th century AD, coinciding with the adoption and expansion of Christianity in the regions that are now Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Montenegro (Kamusella, 2009, p.217). In terms of religion, Croatia fell under Rome's influence and embraced Catholicism, while Serbia, influenced by the Byzantine Greek sphere, adopted Eastern Orthodoxy. Besides Greek and Latin, the early language of this region was Old Church Slavonic, developed between 863 and 885 for administrative and liturgical purposes. By the 12th century, the Cyrillic script had replaced Glagolitic in Old Church Slavonic, and mainly spread to areas now within present-day Serbia due to Bulgarian influence, where Old Church Slavonic was most prevalent, while Croatia adopted the Latin script (Kamusella, 2009, p.218).

According to Tomasz Kamusella (2009, p.219), Bosnia became “a buffer zone between the Catholic and Orthodox churches” and established its own religious institution known as the Bosnian Church, which was influenced by the heretical teachings of the Bogomils. In Bosnia, the Cyrillic script developed into Bosančica. Kamusella also notes that “independent Bosnia had existed long enough to spawn the ethnonym “Bosnian” and the glottonym “Bosnian language,” and that “these terms have been frequently used in Ottoman documents done in (Ottoman) Old Turkish and Arabic since the 15th century” (p. 220).

The Ottoman conquest of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia in the 15th and 16th centuries impeded the development of their vernacular languages. However, from the 16th century onward, both religious and secular Croatian literature thus began to be written in one of three dialects, Štokavian, Čakavian, and Kajkavian (štokavski, čakavski, i kajkavski).⁵ The idea that Orthodox Christians can also write in their own vernaculars emerged in the mid 18th century with the arrival of “the Ruthenized tradition

⁵ The names “Štokavian,” “Čakavian,” and “Kajkavian” were developed after three versions of the interrogative pronoun “what?” (što, ča, kaj) used in Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia.

of Church Slavonic, known as the Russian recension (version) from Russia,” which “superseded the Serbian one in the written language” (Kamusella, 2009, p.222). However, the real transition to the vernacular and the beginning of its codification only began with Dositej Obradović and Vuk Karadžić in the 19th century.

5.2. Standardisation of Serbo-Croatian Language

1830s and 1840s saw the development of the Illyrian Movement in Croatia, which “advocated cultural and political unity for all South Slavs and adoption of a standard for the Croatian language based on Štokavian, spoken by Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins, and Muslim Bosnians” (Kamusella, 2009, p.222). In 1850, influenced by the Illyrian Movement, a group of Croatian and Serbian intellectuals,⁶ including one Slovenian linguist, signed the Literary Agreement in Vienna, laying the foundation for the Serbo-Croatian language. The Literary Agreement originated from a desire to create a unified literary language, which was based on the Štokavian dialect, and it was decided that both Cyrillic and Latin scripts would be used (Greenberg, 2004, p.26). Vuk Karadžić, one of the linguists who signed the Literary Agreement, played a pivotal role in the 19th-century language reform. Following his well-known principle “write as you speak,” Karadžić based his dictionary on the everyday speech of common people.

The practice of compiling dictionaries started much earlier, in the 16th century Croatia, but the first grammars began to be published only in the 19th century. According to Kamusella (2009, p.226) “the Yugoslav Academy published the first authoritative grammar of the “Croatian or Serbian language” in 1899, authored by Tomislav Maretić” and it was this grammar which “assured the supremacy of the (I)jekavian (southern) dialect.” Đura Daničić, one of Vuk Karadžić’s pupils, was the first to translate the Bible to Serbo-Croatian and to “inspire the compilation of the authoritative 23-volume dictionary of the Croatian or Serbian Language (1880–1976, Zagreb), printed in the Latin alphabet” (Kamusella, 2009, p.227).

⁶ The intellectuals who signed the Literary Agreement include Vuk Karadžić, Đuro Daničić, Franc Miklošić, Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, Dimitrije Demeter, Ivan Mažuranić, Vinko Pacel, and Stjepan Pejaković.

Twentieth century saw a turbulent turn of events for the Serbo-Croatian language. During World War Two, there were already attempts to separate Croatian from Serbian and to “cleanse Croatian of Serbianisms and other linguistic loans perceived as “foreign,” or “un-Croatian” (Kamusella, 2009, p.229). Despite the 1954 Novi Sad Agreement, which aimed to reconfirm the Literary Agreement from 1850, attempts to separate Croatian from Serbian persisted. In 1959, another authoritative Serbian Cyrillic-based dictionary was published in Belgrade. After the 1967 “Declaration on the Name and Position of the Croatian Literary Language,” which insisted on the separation of Croatian and Serbian, and the 1974 Federal Constitution, Serbo-Croatian began to deteriorate rapidly. Finally, as Kamusella (2009, p.228) states, “the 1990s breakup of Yugoslavia probably sealed the fate of this political-cum-lexicographic effort.”

5.3. The Breakup of the Serbo-Croatian Language

With the breakup of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and the ensuing armed conflicts, nationalism increased and began to impact various aspects of life, including language. The name “Serbo-Croatian” ceased to exist, and the language was officially divided into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and (much later) Montenegrin. Since then, great efforts have been made to make Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and Montenegrin as different as possible. Serbian linguist Ranko Bugarski (2005, p.165) depicted the overall situation in the following manner:

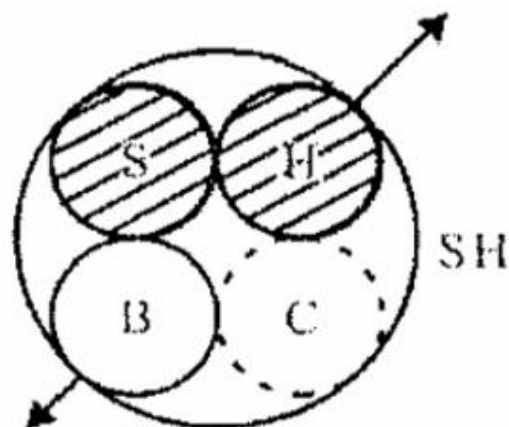


Figure 1. The Breakup of the Serbo-Croatian Language

The biggest circle marked SH (srpskohrvatski) represents Serbo-Croatian, containing four other circles, where S stands for Serbian, H for Croatian (hrvatski), B for Bosnian, and C for Montenegrin (crnogorski). The first three are encircled by a solid line to signify their “autonomous existence in a political sense,” the first two are drawn the same because of the long tradition of Serbian and Croatian, Bosnian differs from Serbian and Croatian to indicate “its recent and still somewhat contested existence as a distinct idiom of Serbo-Croatian” and the fact that it has been “politically recognized in Bosnia and Herzegovina and internationally since the Dayton Agreement.” A short arrow is attached to Bosnian, symbolizing its gradual distancing from the Serbo-Croatian circle, while a longer arrow is attached to Croatian, indicating a much faster separation from the Serbo-Croatian circle.

Since language plays a very important role in the construction of national identity, language planners in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia felt that it would be necessary to make clear distinctions between their languages. This resulted in strong movements emphasizing the unique identities of each language. John Edwards (2013, p.81) observes that in the case of Serbo-Croatian, “the demands of identity” were “allowed to trump communicative practicality.” Hence, the emphasis on distinct linguistic identities overshadowed the practical aspects of effective communication, and the desire to assert and preserve distinct national or ethnic identities was much stronger than the consideration of how these decisions might impact practical communication between speakers of these languages.

Serbian remained largely unchanged, as Serbo-Croatian essentially became Serbian by default. Consequently, other languages felt the need to distinguish themselves from it, whereas Serbian did not have to separate from any other language. In Bosnia, there were certain “moves to emphasize Arabic-Turkish features,” while “grammar and lexicon have been little affected” (Edwards, 2013, p.33). Croatian is, as previously mentioned, one step ahead of Bosnian and Serbian in that matter. In Croatia, scholars have been employed “to set up barriers to communication in the cause of an exclusionary group solidarity” (Edwards, 2013, p.33). They have even gone to the extent of inventing new words to replace borrowings from other languages. This practice, known as linguistic purism, is believed to have originated as an attempt to

make Croatian differ from Serbian, but it continued to be applied to any other language, especially English. Bugarski (2005, p.163) explained this occurrence in the following manner:

In a semi-official wave of purification and Croatization, the public language was cleansed of anything that smelled of Serbian or Yugoslav, and replacements were found by reviving Croatian archaisms, institutionalizing regionalisms, and creating neologisms.

Purism in the Croatian language has a long history, but the “puristic hysteria” started rapidly evolving in the early 1990s. Many linguists have spoken against the practice of purism in language and described it as a purely non-scientific occurrence which should be abandoned, not only because it completely goes against the nature of language and because it is not scientific, but because it could be potentially dangerous.

Mate Kapović notes that purism and prescriptivism are quite similar in nature. He uses a political analogy to differentiate the two, comparing prescriptivism to right-wing politics and purism to fascism. Kapović (2010, p.12) also makes an observation that the practice of purism and prescriptivism in the 90s “had very little to do with science and linguistics” and that “it was actually a matter of projecting certain phenomena from society and politics onto language.” “The fact that some actions were attempted to be “scientifically” justified,” as Kapović claims, “does not necessarily mean that they have anything to do with science.” What actually happened is something Bugarski (2005, p.144) claims to be a “a clear example of a phenomenon in sociolinguistic theory called a gradual change from above, where elites impose new language habits on the general public.” The arguments they use in their authoritative grammars are claimed to be linguistic, however, upon closer inspection, one can see that the motives behind the formation of particular grammatical rules are extralinguistic and political.

Kapović (2010, p.106) further states that “events from society and politics, as well as major ideological changes, are reflected in the language.” In that sense, Thomas Kamusella (2009, p.29) explains the fate of Serbo-Croatian by claiming that national movements and nation-states in Central Europe adopted “the ethnolinguistic kind of

nationalism” which legitimizes “statehood with the notoriously difficult to achieve tight overlapping of language, nation, and state,” and also “assumes that all the members of a nation ought to speak the standardized version of their national language.” In such states, dialects are “ridiculed and banned from public life as the sign of backwardness and local particularisms,” which further “hinder the spread of the homogenous national consciousness in the population” (Kamusella, 2009, p.29). Former Yugoslavia was located in the part of Europe where “statehood legitimacy is derived exclusively from the normative isomorphism of language, nation, and state” (Kamusella, 2009, p.53), and for this reason the idea of a unified language for Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro did not work. With its idea of a single language which would unite four or more countries, it simply “went against the logic of the normative isomorphism of language, nation, and state” (Kamusella, 2009, p.53). Today, this kind of nationalism persisted first in Croatia (Kapović (2010, p.78) stated how the connection between the standard language and the nation is quite obvious in Croatia), and in lesser degrees in Bosnia, and Serbia.

These new language habits which elites and other authorities imposed on the general public affected all aspects of language, including phonology, morphology, and syntax. The dissolution of Serbo-Croatian consequently enforced the abandonment of the unitarist policies that had led to its creation. Since these unitarist ideas were originally associated with Vuk Karadžić, who, as previously mentioned, participated in the signing of the Literary Agreement and who based his dictionary on the language of the common people, the breakup of Serbo-Croatian also meant a departure from the principle of looking up to common people when forming language norms. Consequently, many authorities emerged, writing new authoritative grammars and increasingly separating the standard language from the language of the common people. This shift also fostered aversion towards dialects and non-standard varieties while simultaneously elevating the standard variety on a pedestal, “as if how the people actually speak doesn't matter,” and “as if the standard is somehow independent of the people who speak the language on which that standard is based” (Kapović, 2010, p.59).

Despite the efforts of prescriptivists to create artificial distinctions between Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, Bugarski (2005, p.173) claims how the unitarian spirit is still present in the speech of ordinary people:

Thus, Serbo-Croatian remains a living language that can be spoken and written. Despite the most unfavorable external conditions, it has proven to be an extremely resilient material, resisting the concerted efforts of the engineers of linguistic fragmentation.

Overall, prescriptivism in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian emerged from a complex interaction of various historical, political, social, and cultural factors, with the goal of establishing distinct identities for the newly formed and standardized languages that arose as a result of the breakup of Serbo-Croatian. Former Serbo-Croatian, now divided into four distinct languages, remains a unique phenomenon where “language, ethnicity, and nationality intertwine in a complex way that eludes administrative divisions” (Bugarski, 2005, p.144).

6. COCA AND WaC Corpus Research

As previously noted, prescriptivists advocate for the elimination of any words, phrases, and constructions that they, for various reasons, consider unacceptable. Typically, this campaign occurs through formal education, authoritative guidance, or written works. The second part of the thesis will aim to present examples of several prescriptive rules in English as well as in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages and address the following research question: To what extent do speakers of English, and Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages adhere to prescriptive rules in real language use? We will begin with the hypothesis that the speakers of English and Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages predominantly use non-standard forms in their everyday communication, and generally resist conforming to arbitrary prescriptive rules in language. The research methodology will combine qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The following research was conducted using the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) corpus for English, and the WaC (Web corpora of

Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian) for Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. Both corpora consist of texts taken from a variety of sources, including websites, blogs, social media, forums, as well as transcriptions of TV shows, news reports, interviews, and movies. For the most part, these corpora contain examples of the informal language usage, offering an accurate depiction of how language is employed in real-life contexts.

The upcoming section of the thesis will examine three prescriptive rules present in English, and three rules in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. In the part that deals with the English language, the analysis will cover prescriptive rules that discourage the use of multiple negation, splitting infinitives, and ending sentences with prepositions. Examples used for the English language include “ain’t got no” vs. “ain’t got any” (multiple negation), “to fully understand” vs. “to understand fully” (split infinitive), and “what are you talking about?” vs. “about what are you talking?” (dangling preposition). For Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, the analysis will cover prescriptive rules that condemn redundancy and illogical expressions in language. Examples used for Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages include “više od sat vremena” vs. “više od sat” (anti-redundancy), “na telefonu” vs. “pri telefonu” (logic), and “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” vs. “sve vrijeme/vreme” (logic).

7. Prescriptive Rules in English

7.1. Multiple negation

Multiple negation refers to the presence of more than one negative element in a single sentence. There are several types of multiple negation, such as double negation or negative concord. Double negation is a form of a negative statement where two negative words are used within a single sentence in such a form that they cancel each other out, leading to a positive interpretation (e.g. *she is not unattractive*), while negative concord occurs when multiple negative elements are used to express a single negative meaning, thus emphasizing the negation (e.g. *I ain’t got no money*).

According to Cole (2003, p.138), the use of multiple negation was quite common in Early English:

Chaucer said of the Knight,

“He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde / In al his lyf unto no maner wight.”

Which in modern English is roughly equivalent to saying, “He didn't never say nothing bad to nobody nohow.”

Its usage declined in the sixteenth century and almost entirely disappeared from the standard language by the eighteenth century. The use of multiple negation was still prevalent in spoken language, but it was less common among the educated speakers.

The condemnation of the use of the use of multiple negation in English originated in the 18th century as English was being standardized and codified. The use of multiple negation in speech has historically been associated with lower socioeconomic groups. This association persists into the 21st century. According to Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.1), “particular English usages, such as double negatives, as in *He never said nothing*, are viewed as unacceptable although they are very widely used.”

John Edwards (2013, p.66) states that the reasoning behind the condemnation of the use of multiple negation “has as its first authority the eighteenth-century linguists Robert Lowth and Lindley Murray” who argued that “two negatives in English destroy one another or are equivalent to an affirmative.” Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.13) also state how prescriptivists still maintain the belief that “language should obey certain principles of mathematics, notably the rule that two negatives make a positive.” However, mathematical rules cannot be applied to language. Creating language rules is a complex process that does not rely on basic principles of mathematics. Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.16) argue that if they did, “then presumably using three negatives together would be unproblematic to the prescriptivist, since three negatives make a negative in mathematics.” However, even three negatives are seen as wrong, and this is precisely where prescriptivist’s logic fails.

Consider, for example, the sentence *she doesn't want nobody to know about her secret*; If we were to follow the logic where two negatives make a positive, the negatives in this sentence would apparently cancel each other and end up meaning *she*

wants somebody to know about her secret, which is not what this sentence means. In reality, people fully understand the use of multiple negation and the vast majority of speakers would understand the sentence *She doesn't want nobody to know about her secret* as an affirmative rather than a negative statement. Furthermore, certain forms of multiple negation, such as negative concord, are part of the standard language in many languages, such as French, Russian, and even Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. This demonstrates that the logic prescriptivists use to argue against multiple negation is not universally applicable.

Multiple negation is still widespread in English and is common in various English dialects, mostly among African-American speakers in the United States. Unfortunately, this linguistic feature is often used as a basis for a subtle form of discrimination, as members of a particular group are recognizable through their excessive use of multiple negation in speech.

7.1.1. “Ain’t got any” vs. “ain’t got no”

We will compare the frequency of usage between “ain’t got no,” which prescriptivists consider unacceptable, and “ain’t got any,” which is considered acceptable in language. There were total of 1505 entries in the COCA corpus for both alternatives. Upon entering “ain’t got any” in the corpus, the result showed 64 entries from 61 texts, while, upon entering “ain’t got no” in the corpus, the result showed 1441 entries from 992 texts. “Ain't got any” accounts for 4.25% of the total frequency, while “ain't got no” accounts for 95.75% of the total frequency. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that, in this case, the frequency of multiple negation is significantly higher than that of a single negation.

The first two excerpts from the corpus containing “ain’t got any” are transcribed from spoken language, while the last excerpt is taken from a blog:

Examples	Source
Why did you stop me? He reportedly said while the officer performs a routine Pat down. I ain't got any firing weapons. What is this about? After his arrest he allegedly had a lot	Anderson Cooper 360°, 2014

more to say to police.	
Shoemaker: There are countries sitting out there waiting for us to get so low that they could come in here. And you think they ain't got any bombs sitting over there in the other countries?	NPR – ATC, 1992
I don't blog nearly as frequently as I ought, going on the principle that the best thing you can do to promote your books is to 'write' books -- you can't sell any if you ain't got any .	http://www.rachellegardner.com/2012/10/should-all-authors-blog/ , 2012

Table 1. Examples from the COCA corpus for “Ain’t got any”

The following three excerpts from the corpus containing “ain’t got no” are transcribed from spoken language:

Examples	Source
Yes. Drew, affluenza, I looked it up. It is Latin for, “You ain't got no other defense.” That is really what that is. (LAUGHING)	Dr. Drew, 2015
Mr-SAYAS: And I ain't got no time for taking him to school, coming back to pick up him. And I got no person for doing so.	CBS Street, 1992
We would just laugh because, you know, it was like, she ain't no dancer. She can't dance. She can't dance. She ain't got no rhythm.	ABC, 20/20, 2012

Table 2. Examples from the COCA corpus for “Ain’t got no”

What all of the aforementioned examples have in common is that they are grammatical, and that there are no obstacles to understanding any of these sentences within a given context. However, it is particularly interesting that the last two examples seem to show an excessive use of negation in their speech, which indicates that both speakers might share a single variety. The use of multiple negation in these cases also serves as an intensifier.

It is precisely through these features found in the last two examples that, as we have already mentioned, certain individuals are recognized as belonging to the “less favorable community.” As Edwards (2013, p.62) points out, “the variety itself is a trigger or stimulus that evokes attitudes (or prejudices or stereotypes) about the

community to which the speaker is thought to belong,” and this can potentially lead to discrimination against them.

7.2. Split Infinitive

Split infinitives occur when a certain word, usually an adverb, is inserted between the particle ‘to’ and the verb in an infinitive phrase, for instance, *I asked him to quietly leave*. To + verb constructions where they do not have any other words standing between them are also common in today English, such as *I asked him to leave quietly*. However, prescriptivists typically accept only the latter construction while condemning the former. As discussed earlier in the section on the influence of Latin on English, Latin held significant prestige in England for a long time, and, therefore, many writers and grammarians who sought to standardize English in the 18th century have based many of their grammatical rules on Latin grammar. Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.13) state that,

although it had long declined as a spoken language and as a language of European diplomacy and education, Latin continued to be part of educational curricula in Europe and elsewhere and influenced many grammarians of the eighteenth century as to what should count as good English usage.

The rule of not splitting the infinitive also originates from the Latin language where infinitives are not split.

Regarding the appeal to classical languages, Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.16) argue that “anti-prescriptivists point out that there is no strong reason to expect one language to match the mould of another, older (dead or, at best, embalmed) one.” Similarly, American linguist Steven Pinker (1994, p.374) asserts that “forcing modern speakers of English to not...whoops, not to...split an infinitive because it isn’t done in Latin makes about as much sense as forcing modern residents of England to wear togas and laurels.” Hence, the rules which are applicable in Latin do not necessarily have to be applicable in English.

Unfortunately, the belief in the supremacy of classical languages persists even today, with many contemporary prescriptivists still appealing to the authority of classical languages when formulating their grammatical rules.

7.2.1. “To fully understand” vs. “to understand fully”

We will now compare the frequency of usage between “to fully understand,” which prescriptivists consider unacceptable, and “to understand fully,” which prescriptivists find acceptable. There were total of 591 entries in the COCA corpus for both alternatives. Upon entering “to fully understand” in the corpus, the result showed 520 entries from 491 texts, while, upon entering “to understand fully” in the corpus, the result showed 71 entries from 70 texts. “To fully understand” accounts for 87.97% of the total frequency, while “to understand fully” accounts for 12.03% of the total frequency. We can draw a conclusion that, in this case, the frequency of the split infinitive construction is significantly higher than the infinitive construction.

The following three excerpts from the corpus containing “to understand fully” are transcribed from spoken language:

Examples	Source
Why? Why would that be troubling? Because what we do know -- let me just -- I want to understand fully here your argument because we do know that there was a confidential source working with the FBI who spoke to George Papadopoulos who spoke to Carter Page because, they were concerned about Russia's nefarious actions and intent here, and reported that back to the FBI.	CNN Newsroom, 2018
And it's also something that we don't understand in all the detail yet, so we need more research in this area to understand fully the devices which are working quite nicely, but maybe hopefully also improving them further by understanding the physics behind.	NPR Science, 2001
How about- Senator, just how about giving them enough time to see what President Assad told President Bush in his letter. What- You know, two more days - a little bit of time to understand fully what all this is about. I	CNN Novak, 1991

want this process to go ahead and I think it should. I am not for using technical issues to avoid peace negotiations.	
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Table 3. Examples from the COCA corpus for “To understand fully”

The following three excerpts from the corpus containing “to fully understand” are transcribed from spoken language:

Examples	Source
And in my reading of it, the owners sounded like they were living in a different country. They didn't seem to fully understand the forces at work here. Is that a fair take, do you think?	Fox News Channel, 2018
And I think that people understand that it is that way. And it is important for America to fully understand the ramifications, and time has helped people understand the complexities of the issue. And when I get back, I will continue my deliberations.	CNN, 2001
And one of the lessons, by the way, about when you read history is that, after your presidency, you know, it's going to take a while for the historians to fully understand the decisions you made, if you're making big decisions, and so therefore you don't worry about history.	Fox HC, 2006

Table 4. Examples from the COCA corpus for “To fully understand”

In the first set of examples containing “to understand fully,” the emphasis is on the ongoing process of understanding. The speaker seems to use this phrase in the meaning of “to stop and take some time to think.” This construction places emphasis on the act of understanding itself. In the second set of examples containing “to fully understand,” the suggestion is that achieving a comprehensive understanding is the objective or desired outcome, and the emphasis is on the importance and necessity of understanding a particular issue. Both phrases are equally useful for highlighting different aspects. Hence, there is no good reason to eliminate either of them.

7.3. Dangling Preposition

Dangling preposition, also referred to as hanging or stranded preposition, occurs when a preposition is placed at the end of a sentence without a following object or a noun it could modify, hence, it is “dangling.” It is believed that the discouragement of the use of prepositions at the end of a sentence originated in the 17th century with a poet and a dramatist John Dryden. According to Cole (2003, p.121), John Dryden was “one of the early proponents of the call for an authoritarian regularization of English that would eventually lead to the common acceptance of a prescriptivist outlook on language and the formation of explicit rules of “correctness.”

Similar to the prescriptive rule against the use of the split infinitive, the rule made against the use of dangling preposition is an attempt to align English with Latin; since in Latin language a preposition comes before, not after the word it governs or is linked with, the same was thought to be applicable in English. Although it is, in many cases, applicable in English, there are numerous instances in which applying this rule from Latin language results in unnatural-sounding sentences in English, e.g. *At what are you looking?* instead of commonly used *What are you looking at?*

Bumbas (1980, cited in Cole 2003, p.136) states how Dryden is also guilty of this fault because he carefully edited out the sentences with dangling preposition from his own writing. “The fact that if he (...) used this construction it must be natural, good English, did not occur to Dryden or to anyone else either for a long, long time,” claims Bumbas. Dangling prepositions may be even more prevalent in usage than multiple negation or split infinitives. Surprisingly, they are frequently used even in formal writing. Due to their widespread occurrence, they are often disregarded and typically not corrected by prescriptivists.

7.3.1. “What are you talking about” vs. “About what are you talking”

We will compare the frequency of usage between “what are you talking about” which prescriptivists consider unacceptable, and “about what are you talking” which is considered acceptable in language. There were total of 11564 entries in the COCA corpus for both alternatives. Interestingly, upon entering “what are you talking about” in

the corpus, the result showed 11563 entries from 8382 texts, while, upon entering “about what are you talking” in the corpus, the result showed 1 entry from 1 text. Therefore, “what are you talking about” accounts for 99.9% of the total frequency, while “about what are you talking” accounts for 0.1% of the total frequency. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that, in this case, the frequency of dangling preposition usage is significantly higher than that of non-stranded prepositions.

The following three excerpts from the corpus containing “what are you talking about” are transcribed from spoken language:

Examples	Source
How could I decide to stop feeling sad? What are you talking about? And listen, I was there. So just about four months ago I was diagnosed with postpartum anxiety and depression and insomnia, and I was in the deep darkest moment of my life.	ABC News: Good morning America, 2019
And I looked at another maid, and I said to her, I don't want to do this anymore. I think I quit. And she said, what are you talking about? You're going to have to go tell Marlon. And it was Marlon Brando.	NPR: Fresh Air, 2019
(CROSSTALK WATTERS): No one said a lot of disgusting things about anybody for endorsing anybody. WILLIAMS): What are you talking about? WATTERS): Kanye West suffered some of the most horrible rhetoric I've ever seen about anyone on television.	Fox News: The Five, 2018

Table 5. Examples from the COCA corpus for “What are you talking about?”

The following excerpt from the corpus containing “about what are you talking” is taken from a movie:

Example	Source
See? She has spirit. Yes! Yes, just... not the kind I like. Pineapple juice. Trust me. About what are you talking about? Was to see if she could get the Gun come to church with me this weekend. Good luck with that.	“Make the Yuletide Gay,” 2009

Table 6. Example from the COCA corpus for “About what are you talking?”

It seems that sentences with dangling prepositions are indeed much more common than those with non-stranded prepositions. Interestingly, even the sole example

of a non-stranded sentence, “about what are you talking,” found in the COCA corpus still contains a dangling preposition (“About what are you talking about?”).

8. Prescriptive Rules in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian

8.1. Anti-redundancy

Redundancy in language refers to the unnecessary repetition or addition of words or phrases with the same meaning next to each other. In Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, this is known as “pleonazam” or “jezična suvišnost.” An example of redundancy is “free gift,” where the word “free” is redundant because a gift is inherently free. Prescriptivists typically regard this as a linguistic error, yet redundancy remains prevalent in everyday speech.

Milroy & Milroy (2012, p.65) argue that arguments based on redundancy are inconclusive, and that all language grammars contain redundancy. Starčević et al. (2019, p.68) note that redundancy follows the principle of economy, which “requires that written language should avoid undue syntactic redundancy,” while speech “may actually require some redundancy so that there will be less danger of a spoken message being misheard.” Thus, redundancy is not inherently negative, as it mostly makes the communication easier. Starčević et al. (2019, p.313) also claim that there is no scientific reason which would insist on elimination of redundant words or phrases, just like two kidneys or two eyes are not surplus just because we can do without one of them.

8.1.1. “Više od sat vremena” vs. “Više od sat”

It is difficult to find an equivalent for “više od sat vremena” and “više od sat” in English. It could be translated as “more than one hour” and “more than an hour,” where the first option would be unacceptable by prescriptivists due to redundancy of the word “one,” since “hour” already implies “one.” In “više od sat vremena,” the word “vremena” (meaning “time”) is redundant because the word “sat” (meaning “an hour”) already implies “time.”

We will compare the frequency of usage between “više od sat vremena,” which prescriptivists consider unacceptable, and “više od sat,” which is considered acceptable in language. There were total of 6471 entries in the WaC corpus for both alternatives. Upon entering “više od sat vremena” in the corpus, the result showed 264 entries in the bsWaC (Bosnian Web), 2507 entries in the CLASSLA-web.hr (Croatian Web), and 2103 entries in the CLASSLA-web.rs (Serbian Web). Upon entering “više od sat” in the corpus, the result showed 92 entries in the bsWaC (Bosnian Web), 785 entries in the CLASSLA-web.hr (Croatian Web), and 720 entries in the CLASSLA-web.rs (Serbian Web).

The frequency percentages are as follows:

	Više od sat vremena	Više od sat
Bosnian (bsWaC)	74.16%	25.84%
Croatian (CLASSLA-web.hr)	76.17%	23.83%
Serbian (CLASSLA-web.rs)	74.49%	25.51%

Table 7. Frequency percentages in the WaC corpus for “Više od sat vremena” and “Više od sat”

“Više od sat vremena” accounts for 75.34% of the total frequency, while “više od sat” accounts for 24.66% of the total frequency. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that the frequency of the redundant expression is significantly higher than that of the “economic” expressions.

The following excerpts are taken from the corpus for Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian respectively:

	Više od sat vremena	Source	Više od sat	Source
Bosnian (bsWaC)	Čitam već nešto više od sat vremena postove na ovoj temi, i svega sam se načitao.	Klix.ba	Kiša je padala više od sat i sasvim sigurno je nanijela velike štete.	Otvoreno.ba

Croatian (CLASSLA- web.hr)	Na drugim blogovima sam čitala da se miris nažalost ne osjeti na kosi više od sat vremena , ali ja ga osjetim do kraja dana kada sam oprala kosu.	Suradan cer.com	U Frankfurtu su poljetanja kasnila pa smo za Oslo krenuli sa više od sat zakašnjenja tako da nas je u Oslu morao čekati avion za Trondheim.	Streljastvo. net
Serbian (CLASSLA- web.rs)	Jednom, tokom teške životne situacije dali su mi broj mobilnog telefona oca Pavla Gumerova. U očaju sam pozvala i... razgovarala sa ocem Pavlom više od sat vremena , ako ne i dva.	Centarz azivot.rs	Tito i Če na sastanku, koji nije bio medijski praćen i podugo je bio obavijen velom tajne, pričali su više od sat o revoluciji, agrarnoj reformi, ulozi Ujedinjenih nacija, moći Amerike.	Admin.nov osti.rs

Table 8. Examples from the WaC corpus for “Više od sat vremena” and “Više od sat”

Although some prescriptivists argue that using longer phrases instead of being economical in speech is illogical, it does not mean that speakers will adhere to that rule. This corpus research shows that speakers use both forms interchangeably. All the mentioned sentences use the phrase “more than an hour” to describe the duration of an activity, and there is no fundamental difference in the meaning and use of both forms. Language is dynamic and adaptive, shaped by the practical needs of its users. Redundancy can serve important communicative functions, such as providing clarity and reducing the risk of misunderstandings in spoken language. Furthermore, the persistence of redundancy in everyday language points to the fact that prescriptive rules often do not align with actual language use. Speakers naturally gravitate towards forms of expression that enhance comprehension and ease of communication, demonstrating that efficiency is not the sole criterion for effective communication.

8.2. Logic

Some linguists claim that language has to be logical, and that expressions that contradict logical reasoning or common sense should be avoided. Kapović (2010, p.41) claims that “those same linguists forget that language is language, not logic, and that language doesn't necessarily have to be logical.” Many phrases are actually metaphorical and average speaker does not get confused when they are used in everyday conversation. As we have already mentioned in the section about the multiple negation, language does not obey the principles of logic. Just because two negatives make a positive in mathematics, the same is not necessarily applicable to language. Kapović (2010, p.41) also asserts that language is the product of the human mind, and therefore we might often come across illogical phrases or repetition, but this is exactly what makes it a human language, not a machine language.

8.2.1. “Na telefonu” vs. “Pri telefonu”

In English, “na telefonu” can be translated as “on the phone,” while “pri telefonu” could be translated as “by the phone.” In Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian it is illogical and unacceptable to say “on the phone” because, as Kapović (2010, p.42) states, “we are not standing on the telephone device.” However, Kapović asserts that the preposition “on” has both a concrete meaning (on the roof, on the table, on the floor) and an abstract meaning (on a diet, on medication).

We will compare the frequency of usage between “na telefonu,” which prescriptivists consider unacceptable, and “pri telefonu,” which is considered acceptable in language. There were total of 17,930 entries in the WaC corpus for both alternatives. Upon entering “na telefonu” in the corpus, the result showed 386 entries in the bsWaC (Bosnian Web), 4770 entries in the CLASSLA-web.hr (Croatian Web), and 12,609 entries in the CLASSLA-web.rs (Serbian Web). Upon entering “pri telefonu” in the corpus, the result showed 7 entries in the bsWaC (Bosnian Web), 115 entries in the CLASSLA-web.hr (Croatian Web), and 43 entries in the CLASSLA-web.rs (Serbian Web).

The frequency percentages are as follows:

	Na telefonu	Pri telefonu
Bosnian (bsWaC)	98.22%	1.78%
Croatian (CLASSLA-web.hr)	97.64%	2.36%
Serbian (CLASSLA-web.rs)	99.66%	0.34%

Table 9. Frequency percentages in the WaC corpus for “Na telefonu” and “Pri telefonu”

“Na telefonu” accounts for 99.08% of the total frequency, while “pri telefonu” accounts for 0.92% of the total frequency. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that, in this case, the frequency of the “illogical” expression is significantly higher than that of the logical expression.

The following excerpts are taken from the corpus for Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian respectively:

	Na telefonu	Source	Pri telefonu	Source
Bosnian (bsWaC)	I još je gore.... kad želim pitati neku informaciju djelatnicu za odvojenim stolom desno, a ona na telefonu priča o privatnim stvarima i gleda mene kako stojim.	Reklamacija.ba	Firme ne moraju zapošljavati mnoge ljude koji bi neprestano bili pri telefonu pokušavajući pomoći korisnicima, jer bi oni jednostavnim upitom odmah dobijali odgovor.	Promotor.ba
Croatian (CLASSLA-web.hr)	Opet je 'odmjeravala' Expedita, dok je on pričao na telefonu . Nisu ništa spominjali, ali izgleda da svi žive u istoj zgradi.	Forum.hr	Primijetila sam na svom redakcijskom telefonu zabilješku da imam jedan propušten poziv. Nisam se, dakle, stigla nekom javiti ili trenutno nisam bila pri telefonu .	Blog.vecernji.hr
Serbian	Ja mnogo volim svoje	Redport	Ako bolujete od	Svetsatov

(CLASSLA- web.rs)	ime – Tiago. To je jako neobično. Ponekad ljudi čudno gledaju, pogotovu kada pričam na telefonu i zakazujem lekarSKI pregled ili bilo šta.	al.rs	paranoje, mi dobro znamo tko ste i što želite od nas. Samo ostanite pri telefonu dok ne lociramo otkuda tačno zovete.	a.com
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Table 10. Examples from the WaC corpus for “Na telefonu” and “Pri telefonu”

All the sentences involve the action of talking on the phone or being available by the phone. Both “na telefonu” and “pri telefonu” refer to someone being engaged with the phone. While “na telefonu” and “pri telefonu” can be used interchangeably, “na telefonu” typically refers to the action of speaking on the phone, while “pri telefonu” implies being near or available by the phone but not necessarily talking. Either way, both alternatives are equally necessary, and there is no reason to eliminate any of them. As already mentioned, language prioritizes the principle of expression over the principle of logic.

8.2.2. “Cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme vs. “sve vrijeme/vreme”

Another phrase that prescriptivists consider illogical is “cijelo vrijeme” (or “celo vreme” in Serbian due to the Ekavian dialect), which translates to “the whole/entire time.” They argue that since time is not a tangible entity, it cannot be described as “whole.” Instead, prescriptivists suggest using “sve vrijeme/vreme,” which translates to “all the time.”

We will compare the frequency of usage between “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme,” which prescriptivists consider unacceptable, and “sve vrijeme/vreme,” which is considered acceptable in language. There were total of 155,312 entries in the WaC corpus for both alternatives. Upon entering “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” in the corpus, the result showed 3687 entries in the bsWaC (Bosnian Web), 53,938 entries in the CLASSLA-web.hr (Croatian Web), and 5687 entries in the CLASSLA-web.rs (Serbian

Web). Upon entering “sve vrijeme/vreme” in the corpus, the result showed 3157 entries in the bsWaC (Bosnian Web), 7331 entries in the CLASSLA-web.hr (Croatian Web), and 81,512 entries in the CLASSLA-web.rs (Serbian Web).

The frequency percentages are as follows:

	Cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme	Sve vrijeme/vreme
Bosnian (bsWaC)	53,87%	46,13%
Croatian (CLASSLA-web.hr)	88,03%	11,97%
Serbian (CLASSLA-web.rs)	6,52%	93,48%

Table 11. Frequency percentages in the WaC corpus for “Cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” and “Sve vrijeme/vreme”

“Cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” accounts for 40,76% of the total frequency, while “sve vrijeme/vreme” accounts for 59,24% of the total frequency. Therefore, we can draw a conclusion that the frequency of “sve vrijeme/vreme” is slightly higher than that of “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme.”

The following excerpts are taken from the corpus for Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian respectively:

	Cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme	Source	Sve vrijeme/vreme	Source
Bosnian (bsWaC)	Neko prvo poluvrijeme, neko samo 10 minuta. Neko sjedi na klupi cijelo vrijeme . A uvijek je samo jedan najbolji, najuporniji.	Cin.ba	Ljudi generalno gube puno vremena na nevažne stvari, čak sati, dani i godine odlaze u vjetar i ako ih neko upita šta ste radili to sve vrijeme uglavnom odgovaraju sa ne znam ili se dobro zamisle da odgovore.	Spu.ba
Croatian	Naslov je obećao više no	Mdf-	Moja kočnica je sve	Tripolog

(CLASSLA -web.hr)	što nam je predstava ponudila. Živciralo me to što se cijelo vrijeme palili i gasila svijetla. Predstava je bila jako kratka.	bilten.co m	vrijeme neugodno škripala no nisam primijetio da ne lovi dobro, zaustavljanje je bilo sigurno.	ia.com
Serbian (CLASSLA -web.rs)	Atinjani su razvili svoju falangu i krenuli prema Spartancima, a spartanski hopliti su pobjegli u čamce. Celo vreme ganjali su ih atinski peltasti.	Srpskae nciklope dija.org	Čitalac, dok čita roman, sve vreme oseća složenost semantičke perspektive koju ne može da oblikuje sam Ljuba Sretenović.	Ljudigo vore.co m

Table 12. Examples from the WaC corpus for “Cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” and “Sve vrijeme/vreme”

All the sentences describe actions or states occurring over a continuous period. They indicate that something was happening continuously during a specific timeframe, and imply this action had its starting point and an end. Both phrases emphasize the continuity and completeness of the time period and convey the idea of continuous duration. However, “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” places slightly more emphasis on the entirety of the period compared to “sve vrijeme/vreme.” The context of each sentence influences the nuance of the duration being described.

9. Results and Discussion

The research in this thesis was focused on how people use specific phrases in informal contexts, and aimed to show to which extent the speakers adhere to prescriptive rules. Data from the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and WaC (Web Corpora of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian) corpora provide a comprehensive overview of language use patterns and the prevalence of certain expressions. The results indicate a strong preference of the speakers for non-standard

and colloquial expressions in everyday communication, suggesting resistance to prescriptive rules and thus proving the hypothesis stated earlier in the thesis.

Analysis of linguistic patterns from the COCA corpus focused on three specific grammatical constructions respectively: multiple negation, split infinitives, and dangling prepositions. Each category was examined to understand the prevalence of certain forms and their acceptability in contemporary usage:

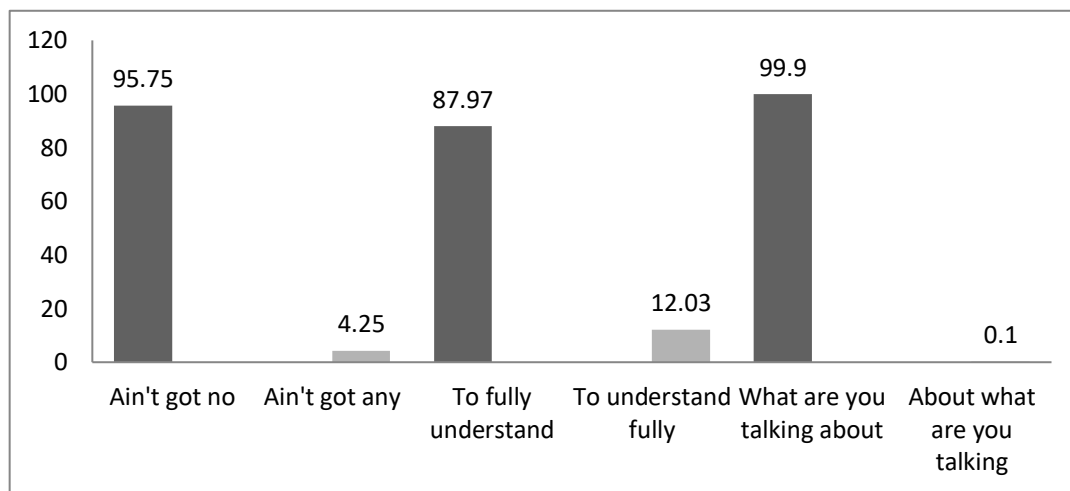


Figure 2. Frequency of the standard and the non-standard expressions in the COCA corpus

Based on the analysis of the COCA corpus, several interesting patterns emerge regarding the usage of certain expressions in English. The phrase “ain't got no” is more common than “ain't got any,” with a frequency of 95.75% compared to 4.25%. This suggests a strong preference among speakers for the former expression, possibly due to its colloquial and informal nature.

Similarly, the expression “to fully understand” is much more prevalent than “to understand fully,” with frequencies of 87.97% and 12.03% respectively. This difference could be attributed to the natural flow and rhythm of the English language, as well as common usage patterns.

The phrase “what are you talking about” is almost exclusively used in comparison to “about what are you talking,” with frequencies of 99.9% and 0.1%

respectively. This suggests that the standard word order in English for this expression is highly fixed and rarely deviated from.

The study of linguistic patterns in the WaC corpus focused on three prescriptive grammatical structures, one that prioritizes reducing redundancy, and two that apply logic in language. Analysis of the WaC corpus reveals interesting differences in the usage of the following expressions in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian:

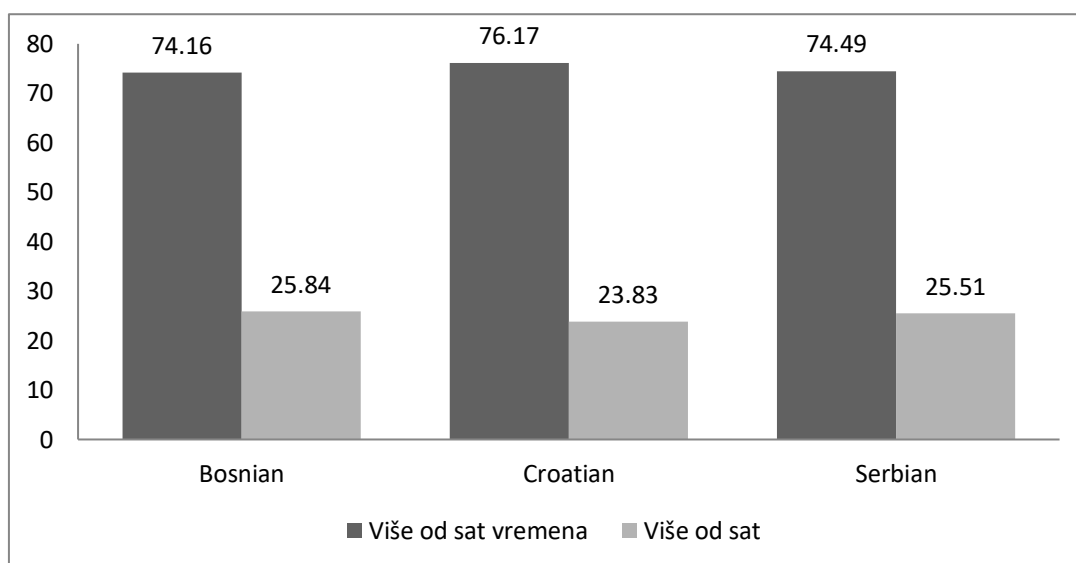


Figure 3. Frequency of “više od sat vremena” and “više od sat” in WaC corpus

There is an insignificant difference in the use of the phrase “više od sat vremena” in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, and also an insignificant difference in use of the phrase “više od sat.” Evidently, the speakers of these languages tend to favor redundant phrases in their everyday communication, often without much consideration for linguistic economy in their speech or writing.

When it comes to logic in language, two examples have been used: “Na telefonu” vs. “pri telefonu,” and “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” vs. “sve vrijeme/vreme.”

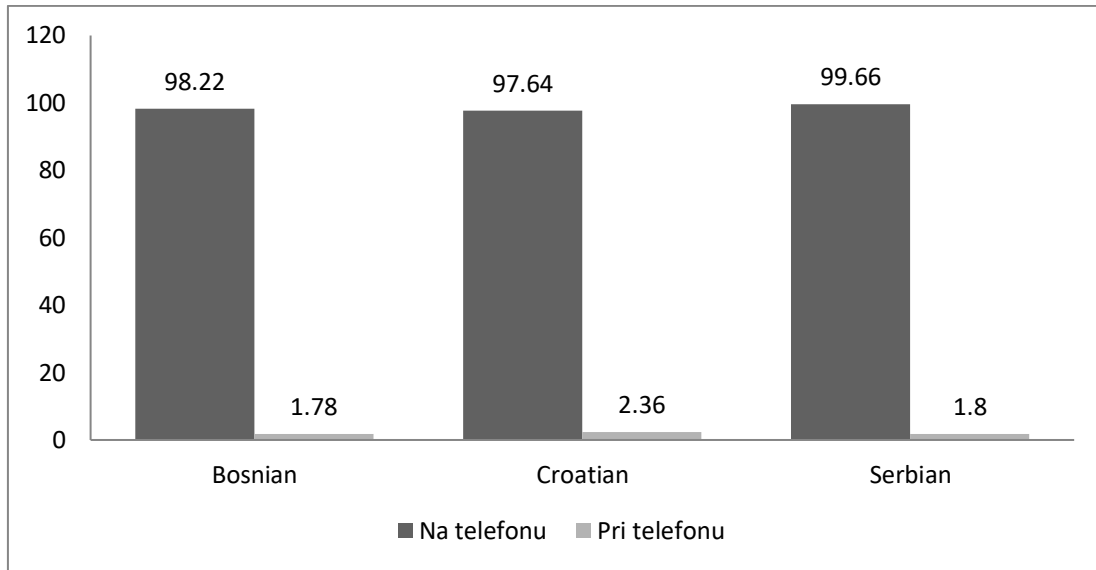


Figure 4. Frequency of “na telefonu” and “pri telefonu” in WaC corpus

In all three languages, the phrase “na telefonu” is significantly more common than the phrase “pri telefonu,” with frequencies of 98.22% in Bosnian, 97.64% in Croatian, and 99.66% in Serbian. This suggests a strong preference for this expression when referring to being on the phone, and also suggests that the speakers of these languages tend to favor the forms regarded as incorrect, despite efforts by prescriptivists to eliminate illogical phrases from the language.

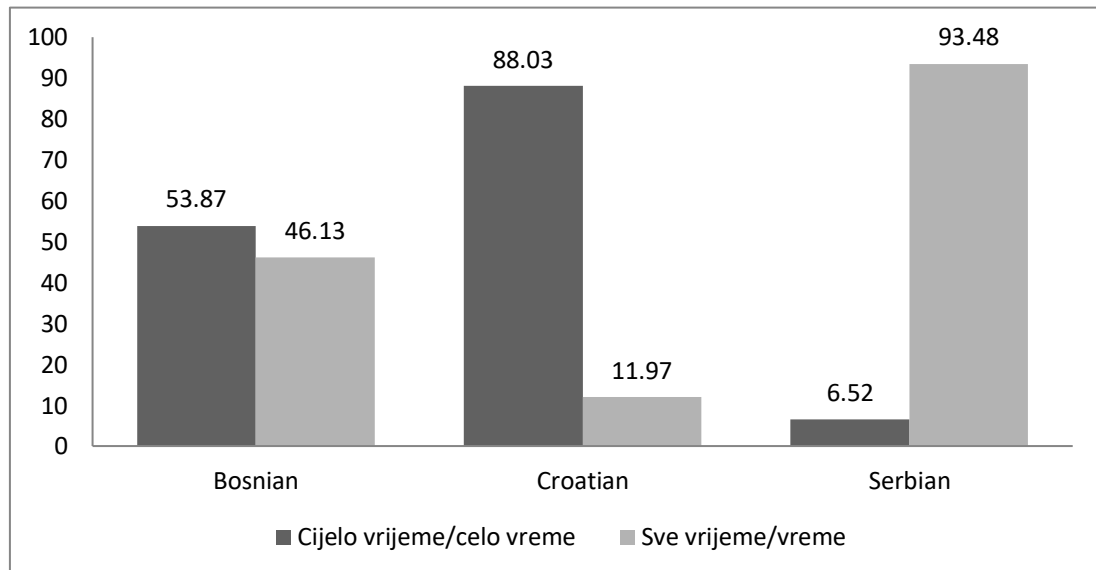


Figure 5. Frequency of “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” and “sve vrijeme/vreme” in WaC corpus

The last example is particularly interesting because the results differ from all the previous results found in both COCA and WaC corpus. In all the previous examples, there was a notable difference between the use of correct and incorrect forms, with the forms considered incorrect generally being more prevalent. However, the situation with “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” and “sve vrijeme/vreme” is different. In Bosnian, the use of the incorrect form slightly surpasses the correct form. In Croatian, the incorrect form is used much more frequently than the correct form, whereas in Serbian, the correct form is significantly more common than the incorrect form.

In *Pravopis bosanskoga jezika* (Halilović, 2017), it is clearly indicated that the form “sve vrijeme” is correct:

sve, *gen.* sveg(a), *dat./lok.* svemu, *instr.* svim; sve četiri, **sve vrijeme**.

Despite this, Bosnian speakers still prefer to use “cijelo vrijeme.”

In Croatian, “sav,” “sva,” and “sve” are synonymous with “cijelo,” therefore, both alternatives are acceptable, and there is much more dispute about the usage of “svo vrijeme” rather than the usage of “cijelo vrijeme.”⁷ *Jezični savjetnik* of the Institute for the Croatian Language and Linguistics offers “cijelo vrijeme” in an example of a correct sentence:

Lagati koga > lagati komu

Glagol *lagati* znači ‘govoriti komu neistinu’ i u standardnome hrvatskom jeziku zahtijeva dopunu u dativu, a ne u akuzativu. Umjesto *lagati koga*, primjerice *Lagala ih je cijelo vrijeme*, u hrvatskome standardnom jeziku pravilno je *lagati komu*, dakle *Lagala im je cijelo vrijeme*.⁸

In *Pravopis srpskoga jezika* (Pešikan et al., 2010) it is stated that “sve vreme” is preferable to “celo vreme”:

⁷ An editor Maja Matijević has spoken about it for Jutarnji.hr: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/lektorica-objasnjava-je-li-ispravno-govoriti-svo-vrijeme-u-hrvatskom-standardnom-jeziku-to-nije-pravilno-15294052>.

⁸ Taken from website jezicni-savjetnik.hr.

цело време, боље **све време** (p.495)

све (нпр. све село, **све време**, у шоку свег шога времена), а не сво (p.445)

Evidently, Serbian speakers greatly follow this rule even in informal contexts and everyday communication.

The significant difference in the use of both phrases in Croatian and Serbian suggest that the Croatian linguists are more flexible when it comes to this specific rule in their grammars, while Serbian linguists are much more rigid in their insistence that the “correct” form is used at all times. Another implication might be that the political efforts to distinguish Croatian from Serbian, and vice versa, are present to this day (Greenberg, 2004, p.19).

The chart below provides a summary of the results from the examples mentioned earlier, extracted from the WaC corpus:

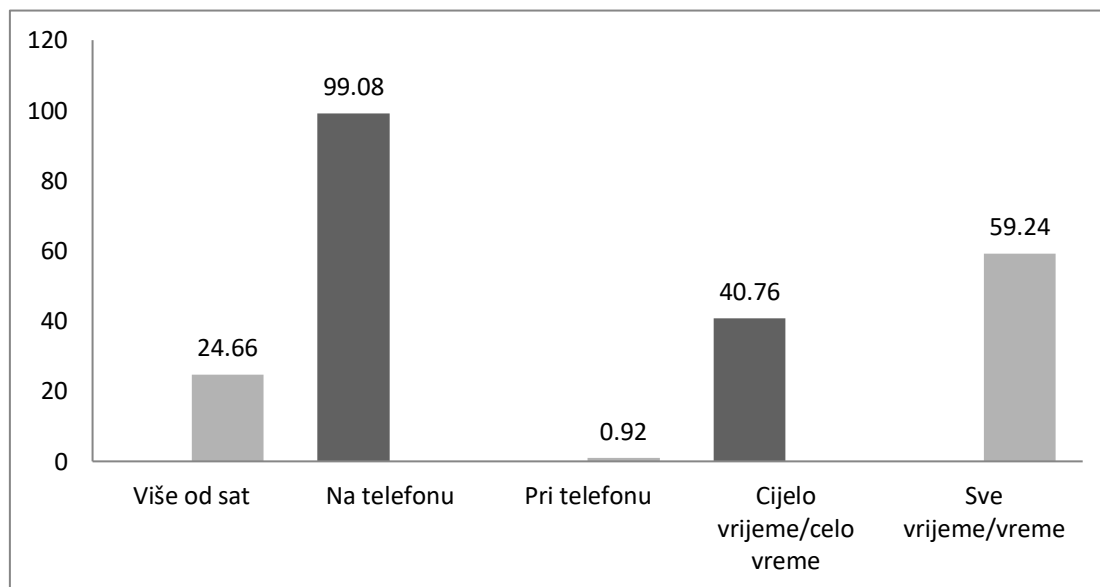


Figure 6. Frequency of the standard and the non-standard expressions in the WaC corpus

10. Conclusion

The theoretical framework of this thesis examined the prescriptive and descriptive approaches to language and revealed a stark contrast between the two. Descriptivism is a scientific and democratic approach that aims to document and describe language as it is naturally used, without assigning value judgments to different varieties, while prescriptivism selects a single variety for the standard language and promotes an unscientific notion that this arbitrarily chosen standard variety is inherently superior to other, non-standard varieties.

We have mentioned that the process of language standardization is closely connected to prescriptive practices, as it aims to create uniformity and maintain the status quo. However, we have also observed that language change is natural and inevitable, and the efforts to keep the status quo by insisting on the usage of the standard language at all times cannot prevent the natural evolution of language. Prescriptivism can negatively impact the way people think about language, and as a consequence, make them insecure in their natural language production. We have asserted that the insistence on the use of the standard language often results in societal divisions, and the speakers who deviate from the norms of the standard language risk being discriminated against.

The theoretical part of the thesis also discussed the origins of standardization and prescriptivism in English, as well as in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. It highlighted how the social, political, religious, and cultural factors influenced the language change and standardization in the aforementioned languages. Although the development of authoritative grammars, standard languages, and prescriptive linguistic norms occurred differently in England compared to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia, they ultimately had a similar impact on the general population. The key difference is that language discrimination in English is usually based on social class, while in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian it is mostly based on nationality and characteristics of ethnic dialects.

While the theoretical part of this thesis explored the legitimacy of prescriptive rules in the English language and in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages, the second part of the thesis focused on the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and WaC (Web corpora of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian) research, aiming to answer the following research question: To what extent do speakers of English, and Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages adhere to prescriptive rules in real language use? By employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, we have managed to come to the conclusion that the speakers of English, as well as the speakers of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages, tend to resist adhering strictly to prescriptive rules in their everyday language use, and with this we proved the stated hypothesis. In practice, speakers often prioritize natural and effective communication over the rigid application of grammatical norms. This resistance is evident in both informal spoken interactions (transcribed in the corpora) and casual written communication, where non-standard forms and colloquialisms are frequently employed. The fact that many speakers don't always follow strict grammar rules shows that speakers favor linguistic flexibility and expressiveness.

We have observed that there is a tendency among the speakers to use redundant expressions, indicating a preference for clarity and emphasis over linguistic economy. They often use metaphor in language without much concern for the principles of logic. The speakers, more often than not, use split infinitives, multiple negation, and dangling prepositions. An exception was noted in the analysis of the phrases “cijelo vrijeme/celo vreme” versus “sve vrijeme/vreme” in the WaC corpus. In Croatian, the former, though considered incorrect, is used more frequently than in Bosnian and Serbian, while the latter, considered correct and acceptable, is used more often in Serbian than in Bosnian and Croatian. This suggests that Croatian grammar is more flexible regarding this rule compared to Serbian grammar, and it may also reflect the political efforts to distinguish Croatian from Serbian and vice versa.

In conclusion, this analysis highlights that while prescriptivism and standardization strive for uniformity and helping the speakers establish a smooth communication with minimal obstacles, they also contribute to societal divisions and discrimination, and focus on the form rather than on the content. Descriptivism, on the

other hand, embraces the natural diversity and evolution of language, promoting an inclusive and objective understanding of language and linguistics. This approach aligns more closely with the dynamic and ever-changing nature of language, emphasizing the importance of describing rather than dictating language use. Evidently, dissemination of prescriptive rules does not guarantee their adoption and acceptance by the speakers. Prescriptive rules and the maintenance of a standardized language can slow, but not prevent the natural evolution of language. Despite prescriptivists' efforts to control and regulate language use and maintain the status quo, people generally prefer natural language expression without much concern for correctness, and language thus continues to evolve.

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