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ON THE NORMATIVE FEATURES OF
CROATIAN ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

Introduction

Advertising, mass media, and consumer society are among the typical concepts that impose themselves in discussions of contemporary society. Consumption has long since become a necessity of everyday social life, and living outside a consumer society has, over time, become almost impossible. Industrialisation and the onset of mass commodity production required more effective ways of placing products on the market, which in turn created a need for higher-quality advertising. This is how advertising emerged. It has since undergone a long development, from text through visual motifs to the multimedia message, shaped by developments in industry and technology.

Over the past three decades, we have witnessed a new, contemporary revolution – the digital one. In such a highly technologically developed era, A. Gjuran-Coha and Lj. Pavlović note that advertising has become “part of one of the most widespread discourses of our civilisation”.¹ The present-day omnipresence of advertising discourse around us draws attention to the fact that we are exposed to the written word more than ever before. On the other hand, it has for years been argued that reading is “no longer in fashion”. Teaching methodologists, as well as classroom practice itself, have long emphasised that only reading good writers genuinely enriches and cultivates a young person’s spoken and written expression. There are growing voices of concern that, due to the excessive use of digital media and a reduced number of books read per year, the culture of spoken and written expression is being neglected.

Advertising discourse has been extensively studied to date, and much has been written about its features and messages. Advertising discourse encompasses advertisements and advertising notices. Among these (and other) near-synonymous terms used in Croatian, philological scholars have opted for the term *reklama*. In this context, D. Stolac and A. Vlastelić also adopt the term *reklama*, which they describe as “the result of the advertising process”.² The same term is accepted by L. Hudeček and M. Mihaljević, who state that “*reklama* may be defined as the creation or communication of ideas about products with the aim of encouraging consumers to purchase them”.³ K. Bagić rightly concludes: “Advertising is such a dynamic phenomenon that any claim about it becomes outdated

¹ URL 2: GJURAN-COHA, Anamarij–PAVLOVIĆ, Ljiljana: *Elementi reklamne retorike u hrvatskim reklamnim porukama*. Fluminensia, 2009. /1. 41–54. <http://hrcak.srce.hr/43474> 19.09.2025.] (Hereafter: GJURAN-COHA–PAVLOVIĆ, 2009.)

² STOLAC, Dijana–VLASTELIĆ, Anastazija: *Jezik reklama*. Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada d.o.o., Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, Rijeka, 2014. (Hereafter: STOLAC–VLASTELIĆ, 2014.) HUDEČEK, Lana–MIHALJEVIĆ, Milica: *Jezik medija*. Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada d. o. o., Zagreb, 2009. 179. (Hereafter: HUDEČEK–MIHALJEVIĆ, 2009.)

as soon as it is uttered”.⁴ Regarding the global omnipresence of advertising discourse, the same author notes: “According to some assumptions, the contemporary individual – at home, at work, and in public space – is confronted with around ten thousand advertisements in the course of a day (...)”.⁵ Consequently, advertising texts gradually enter the reader’s field of attention and, by virtue of their sheer number, influence the mother tongue. While printed literary texts undergo proofreading, this is not always the case with advertising texts (or at least it appears not to be), which prompted the research described in this paper. Bagić highlights a thought expressed by McLuhan as early as 1951: “Today, the treasures of eloquence are no longer classrooms, nor the classics, but advertising agencies”.⁶

Widespread advertisements, seeking to encourage consumers to make a purchase, address targeted groups: adults, children, older people, animal lovers, vegetarians, and others. The decoding of an advertising message also depends on geographical context (a vivid example is the glass Coca-Cola bottle in the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*) and on the time when an advertisement was created (younger audiences are certainly unfamiliar with the advertisement *Nemoj misliti na torticu*, even though *tortica* is still produced, and the older generation might likewise not know what *Milica pomada* is or what *Darmol* refers to in the advertisement *Dok ti spavaš, Darmol radi*). Contemporary advertisements avoid earlier advertising stereotypes that, for example, addressed women as housewives: *Nema čišće bjeline od Radion bjeline, Radion – pere sam, Svaka žena voli Elida Favorit*. All examples are provided in the original language. The textual component of advertisements for, for instance, cleaning agents, washing, or cooking was accompanied by the image of a female figure. Advertisements reflect not only the products being offered and the manner in which they are presented, but also the worldview of a particular period: *Zrcalo vam kaže: “Poljepšati će vas Elida!”* Advertisements did not merely instruct women on how to be diligent, or even professional, housewives, but also contributed to the creation of different female identities that supported different social statuses.⁷

Advertising notices can be found on billboards, advertising panels, advertising columns, on advertising vehicles, on the exterior parts of public transport vehicles as well as inside them, on façades or side walls of buildings; advertisements sometimes cover dilapidated buildings or those undergoing renovation, and they also appear in shop windows or at shop entrances. Advertisements for particular products are on occasion carried by so-called “sandwich board people” or by groups wearing T-shirts or caps bearing the name of the advertised company or product. At times, a small aircraft can also be seen towing a long banner displaying an advertisement. Certainly, not all possible locations in which advertising may appear have been exhausted, especially in today’s digital world, as we are inundated with advertising messages the moment we access the internet—advertisements are present on social media, mobile applications, and in email.

⁴ BAGIĆ, Krešimir: *Stilistika reklame*. Ljevak, Zagreb, 2025. 18. (Hereafter: BAGIĆ, 2025.)

⁵ BAGIĆ, 2025. 24.

⁶ Ibid. 41.

⁷ MIKLOŠEVIĆ, Željka: *Ideološka konstrukcija žene u međuratnom razdoblju: reklamni oglasi tvornice Georg Schicht*. Osječki zbornik, 30, Muzej Slavonije, Osijek, 2011. 227–238.

Advertisements have a long history and are present throughout the world; consequently, interest in their study has also emerged. The power of advertising is examined by experts from various fields, and the authors Stolac and Vlastelić, who have studied the language of advertising in greater depth, emphasise that “the linguistic component of advertising should be examined from multiple perspectives: sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, pragmalinguistic, and cognitive-linguistic” perspectives.⁸

“The language of advertising cannot be unequivocally and fully subsumed under any single functional style (...) and freedom is greatest in the language of advertising”.⁹ It is therefore necessary to distinguish between authorial creative freedom, which represents a deliberate deviation from the norm, and unintentional linguistic errors in the advertising corpus that result from insufficient knowledge of the standard language.

That advertising is powerful is also evidenced by the fact that certain words, expressions, exclamations, or phrases from colloquial style (*svašta nešto*), anglicisms (*wow*), and even nonsense such as *six seven* (6, 7) have found their way into Croatian advertising texts and then spread at lightning speed, entering everyday speech. This raises the question of whether the recipient will accept a fashionable expression, a piece of nonsense, an anglicism, or even a linguistic inaccuracy without checking whether the word is used correctly, since today almost no one does. The analogy may not be entirely appropriate, but the saying about a repeatedly told lie that eventually becomes the truth leads to the conclusion that a repeated linguistic error gradually comes to be perceived as something correct and proper (e.g. *losion kojega koristimo* instead of *losion kojim se koristimo*, *sljedeći proizvodi* instead of *sljedeći proizvodi*, etc.). Advertising is a powerful tool that could help raise linguistic awareness.

In the retail chain catalogues analysed in this paper, there is no scope for free authorial creativity in advertising, as the advertisements are reduced to product features and basic product information and are intended to inform a broad range of consumers. Consequently, this is not the type of advertising discourse in which creativity is desirable, nor one in which deviations from the language norm are permitted for such purposes; rather, these are catalogues in which adherence to the standard language norm is assumed and expected.

Advertising has taken over the world, and already a hundred years ago, André Breton, in his *Manifesto of Surrealism*, perceptively anticipated their permanence: “... I claimed that the world would not end with a good book but with a beautiful advertisement for hell or heaven”.¹⁰

⁸ STOLAC–VLASTELIĆ, 2014.

⁹ HUDEČEK–MIHALJEVIĆ, 2009. 186.

¹⁰ BAGIĆ, 2025. 87.

Language Norm, Public Language, and Linguistic Errors

The norm determines the acceptability of linguistic units in the standard language, as well as the acceptability of linguistic units within the functional styles of the standard language. It encompasses language at all its levels; therefore, we distinguish between phonological, morphological, word-formation, syntactic, lexical, orthographic, and accentual norms.¹¹ Kryzan-Stanojević¹² points out that the norm can be defined in two ways. One definition reveals traces of prescriptivism and regulation, according to which the norm is understood as what is accepted by educated speakers of a given language. The other definition understands the norm as an established principle accepted by the majority, i.e., a set of rules that are accepted and subsequently codified to enable the functioning of the language.

According to Težak and Babić,¹³ a normed language is the literary language, i.e., a language defined in written form and found in books. Such a language serves to facilitate communication and to overcome difficulties among speakers with different speech habits. Every nation develops such a language to serve as a reliable means of communication among all its members. Since the spoken form of the literary language is equally important, attempts have been made to replace the term literary language with the broader term standard language. Nevertheless, the retention of the term literary language is generally accepted, and both terms—literary language and standard language—often coexist in use to denote the normed language.

In everyday, ordinary, informal communication, we do not use a strictly normed language but rather a much more relaxed, conversational variety.¹⁴ In contrast to the private sphere, where conversational language is used, Dubravko Škiljan¹⁵ discusses communicative acts realised in the public sphere and thus constituting the context of public communication. For such communication in the public domain, specific appropriate codes, forms, and message contents are selected, as well as specific communication channels. This is the so-called public language, as it is realised in public spaces, which, as Škiljan notes, comprise four discourses: the discourse of informational media, that is, public media, the discourse of science, the discourse of education, and religious discourse. Škiljan thus places first the linguistic discourse realised through the journalistic functional style, to which, according to some authors, advertising discourse also belongs, as has already been emphasised several times in this paper. It can therefore be concluded that advertising discourse, as part of public language, necessarily needs to be realised in a normed language. All the above also explains why this paper does not address the problematisation of the status of the norm in

¹¹ FRANČIĆ, Anđela–HUDEČEK, Lana–MIHALJEVIĆ, Milica: *Normativnost i višefunkcionalnost u hrvatskome standardnom jeziku*. Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, Zagreb, 2006, 37.

¹² KRYZAN-STANOJEVIĆ, Barbara (ed.): *Jezična politika: Između norme i jezičnog liberalizma*. Srednja Europa, Zagreb, 2016.

¹³ TEŽAK, Stjepko–BABIĆ, Stjepan: *Gramatika hrvatskoga jezika: Priručnik za osnovno jezično obrazovanje*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2005. (Hereafter: TEŽAK–BABIĆ, 2005.)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ ŠKILJAN, Dubravko: *Javni jezik. Antibarbarus*, Zagreb, 2000.

the Croatian language, as some linguists today engage in questioning the norm¹⁶ in their work, which could otherwise potentially be used to explain the numerous normative deviations found in the language of advertising.

The Croatian Language Act, in Article 11, paragraph 3, also formally confirms that the language of advertising should be a normed language: “The Croatian standard language is the means of informing the public and consumers about products and services on the market in Croatia.”¹⁷ It should further be added that the Consumer Protection Act (Articles 13 and 18) stipulates that product information must be truthful and written clearly, visibly, and legibly “in the Croatian language and the Latin script”, while not excluding the use of other languages.¹⁸

In describing textual errors in pupils’ written assignments, Dragutin Rosandić states that a textual error is considered to be any violation of the norm of the literary language and any deviation from it in stylistically unmarked, that is, non-artistic expression.¹⁹ A violation of the norm refers to any departure from linguistic rules and norms that are customary or accepted within a given linguistic community. Deviations may occur in various linguistic domains, such as orthography, grammar, syntax, lexis, style, and punctuation, and may also be the result of unconscious errors, creative choices, or deliberate deviations. Violations of the norm may lead to misunderstanding and a lack of textual clarity. Such errors can be divided into two general groups: linguistic errors and non-linguistic errors.

Linguistic errors are deviations from linguistic rules and norms that occur in speech or writing. They arise when the author of a text does not adhere to the use of the normed language. According to Rosandić,²⁰ linguistic errors are divided into grammatical, orthographic, lexical, and stylistic errors.

Grammatical errors arise as a result of violations of the grammatical norm of the standard language. They may be morphological, word-formation-related, or syntactic. Morphological errors concern word forms and word classes, word-formation errors relate to the principles of word formation, while syntactic errors concern the principles governing the linking of linguistic units into phrases, sentences, and coherent texts.²¹ Word-formation errors are most often associated with the use of loanwords. Syntactic errors most commonly concern the position of enclitics in a sentence, word order (sentence constituents), non-

¹⁶ For example, Mate Kapović in *Jezični savjetnik za 21. stoljeće* (2024), Mate Kapović, Anđel Starčević, and Daliborka Sarić in *Jezik je svejedno* (2019), or Branimir Belaj in *Kognitivna lingvistika i hrvatski jezik* (2023).

¹⁷ GJURAN-COHA-PAVLOVIĆ, 2009.

¹⁸ HUDEČEK, Lana-MATKOVIĆ, Maja-ĆUTUK, Igor: *Jezični priručnik Coca-Cole HBC Hrvatska*. Coca-Cola HBC Hrvatska, Zagreb, 2011. <http://www.gfos.unios.hr/images/jezicni-prirucnik-coca-cole-hbc-hrvatska-02-2012-1.pdf> [26.07.2024.] (Hereafter: HUDEČEK-MATKOVIĆ-ĆUTUK, 2011.)

¹⁹ ROSANDIĆ, Dragutin: *Od slova do teksta i metateksta*. Profil, Zagreb, 2002, 97. (Hereafter: ROSANDIĆ, 2002.)

²⁰ Ibid. 98.

²¹ Ibid.

normative use of tense relations, pleonastic word groups, the use of synonymous expressions and constructions, and illogical sentence linkage.²²

Grammatical errors are the result of insufficient knowledge of the grammatical structure of the contemporary standard language.²³ Knowledge of the language norm, however, is more important than is usually assumed.

Orthographic errors arise as a result of violations of the orthographic norm. According to Rosandić, a distinction is made between so-called pure orthographic errors and errors that are phonetically and grammatically conditioned. These are combined errors. Pure orthographic errors are associated with orthographic rules, for example, those governing the use of upper- and lower-case letters, the adaptation of foreign words, compound and separate spelling, syllabification, the writing of abbreviations, punctuation, and so forth.²⁴ This is also confirmed by Rišner and Glušac,²⁵ who, by comparing Croatian advertising notices from the earliest examples to those of the 21st century, identified deviations from the orthographic norm in the use of upper- and lower-case letters as well as in compound and separate spelling. The authors conclude that proper names are often written with a lower-case initial letter, but also conversely with an upper-case initial letter.

Phonetically and grammatically conditioned orthographic errors are most closely associated with rules governing phonological changes. In this paper, they are referred to as phonological errors.

Lexical errors arise from violations of the lexical norm of the contemporary standard language. The lexical norm is particularly evident within each functional style; thus, violations of the lexical norm occur when lexis from different functional styles is mixed. Rosandić²⁶ points out that the most frequent lexical errors result from the non-functional use of words and terms, the mixing of lexis from different functional styles, and the unmotivated use of phraseological units. Rišner and Glušac²⁷ further note that compounds which do not conform to established patterns of the Croatian language are appearing with increasing frequency in advertising.

Stylistic errors arise from violations of the stylistic norm, which requires adherence to the “unity of style”. This means that a text is shaped by the norms of each individual functional style.²⁸ According to Rosandić, stylistic errors may be classified into two groups: lexico-stylistic errors, which relate to lexis, and grammatical-stylistic errors, which relate to grammar.

For the purposes of this paper, stylistic errors were not examined, as they occurred in an almost negligible number and therefore remained entirely marginal.

²² Ibid. 98–99.

²³ Ibid. 99.

²⁴ ROSANDIĆ, 2002.

²⁵ RIŠNER, Vlasta–GLUŠAC, Maja: *Kroz mijene i dodire publicističkoga stila*. Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku, Osijek, 2011. (Hereafter: RIŠNER–GLUŠAC, 2011.)

²⁶ ROSANDIĆ, 2002.

²⁷ RIŠNER–GLUŠAC, 2011.

²⁸ ROSANDIĆ, 2002. 101.

Functional-Style Affiliation of Advertising Catalogues

A dictionary defines a catalogue in the advertising sense as “a printed, illustrated promotional medium for offering goods and services”.²⁹ In addition to its printed form, an advertising catalogue usually also has a digital form, that is, an online version. It presents products, discounts, and promotional sales. Advertising catalogues include photographs of products, their prices and descriptions, information on discounts, the duration of promotional offers, as well as contact details and addresses of retail outlets.

Although advertising cannot be said to belong fully to any single functional style, among all of them, advertising messages are closest to the journalistic style. This is reflected in some of the basic features of that style, such as the use of language aligned with the language norm, which also applies to the language of the advertising catalogues examined for this paper. Other shared characteristics include clarity and simplicity, while the language of certain advertisements is also marked by literary elements characteristic of the journalistic style—vividness, metaphorical expression, rhythmicity, and musicality of expression. Thus, for example, advertising leaflets contain messages such as *Always with you!*, *What makes you happy...*, *Smart shopping!*, *Always on offer!* (or *Always in action!*). The connection between the language of advertising messages and the journalistic style also lies in their shared aim—to influence the reader, either by promoting products or services (advertising messages) or by informing or shaping opinions (journalistic style).

From all of the above, it can be concluded that advertising discourse largely belongs to the journalistic style, but not entirely, as it does not contain journalese, which is otherwise a defining feature of the journalistic style.

The language of advertising messages may also exhibit features of other functional styles. This is evident, for example, in some of the main characteristics of the administrative functional style, such as objectivity, simplicity, conciseness, clarity, and alignment with the norms of the Croatian standard language.³⁰ It is these features that characterise the language of advertising catalogues, where they serve to inform consumers and persuade them to take a particular action, most often the purchase of a specific product. Among the authors who classify advertising messages within the administrative-business style is Josip Silić,³¹ who, in his overview of this style, includes advertising.³² Furthermore, Silić and Pranjković state that the administrative-business style “encompasses the language of administration, industry, trade, politics, the military, and advertising (emphasis added by D. S. and I. V.).”³³ S. Težak and S. Babić note that the administrative-business style is used for expression “in official correspondence, administrative acts, regulations, decisions, laws, rulebooks, provisions, certificates,

²⁹ JOJIĆ, Ljiljana (ed.): *Veliki rječnik hrvatskoga standardnog jezika*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2015.

³⁰ HUDEČEK–MATKOVIĆ–ČUTUK, 2011. 11.

³¹ SILIĆ, Josip: *Funkcionalni stilovi hrvatskoga jezika*. Disput, Zagreb, 2006.

³² Silić speaks of hyperbolised words “with which commerce and its advocate, advertising, inundate us” (2006. 72).

³³ SILIĆ, Josip–PRANJKOVIĆ, Ivo: *Gramatika hrvatskoga jezika za gimnazije i visoka učilišta*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2007. 379.

invoices, orders, requests, appeals, advertisements (emphasis added by D. S. and I. V.), official curricula vitae, reports, and the like”.³⁴

However, some authors do not agree with the unambiguous classification of advertising within the administrative-business style. Thus, M. Mihaljević³⁵ lists the characteristics of the administrative-business functional style as follows: strictly defined norms, simplicity, clarity, clichéd expression, unambiguity, impoverished lexis, and lexical unification, and concludes that advertising unquestionably does not possess all of these features and therefore cannot belong to this style. The inclusion of advertising within the administrative-business style is also problematised by Bjelobrk, who states: “Since the advertising message, conditionally speaking, developed from notices that correspond to the administrative-business style, it is possible to indicate the closeness of the advertising message to this style, while its affiliation with it remains questionable”.³⁶ Bjelobrk further concludes that the advertising message also corresponds to the literary-artistic style due to the use of various stylistic figures; however, it is still not possible to establish the complete affiliation of advertising with that style.

The scientific functional style is characterised by rationality, clarity, a striving for accuracy, and rigour. These features can also be applied in advertising in order to enhance credibility and persuasiveness and to gain consumers’ trust, particularly when promoting products based on technology, medicine, scientific research, or innovation. In advertising, the scientific style is realised using scientific data and statistics, references to research, specialised and technical terminology, internationalisms, and visual representations and graphs. The use of scientific data and a clear organisation of information help create the impression that a product or service is reliable, effective, and based on verified evidence, which can significantly influence consumers’ decisions. The fundamental difference between the scientific style and advertising lies in objectivity.

The most widespread functional style in everyday life is the conversational style. It is realised not only in spoken communication but also in written form: in letters, notes, as well as in communication in contemporary media. Elements of the conversational style can also be found in most advertising messages, such as slang expressions and dialectal forms, and, in more recent times in particular, loanwords or foreign words, for example: *Happy vikend*, *Tips & tricks*, *donut*, *to go*, etc. Advertising frequently employs loanwords to achieve a particular effect; for instance, English words such as luxury, exclusive, premium, or trend may have an appealing sound effect, but at the same time, they displace Croatian words that are suitable equivalents of foreign words and should take precedence. Ham et al. (2014) note that the present era is marked by computers and computer

³⁴ TEŽAK–BABIĆ, 2005. 34.

³⁵ MIHALJEVIĆ, Milica: *Funkcionalni stilovi hrvatskoga (standardnog) jezika (s posebnim obzirom na znanstveno-popularni i personalni podstil)*. Rasprave Instituta za hrvatski jezik i jezikoslovlje, 2002/1. 325–343. http://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=102727. [19. 09. 2025.]

³⁶ BJELOBRK, Vladimir: *Kojemu funkcionalnom stilu pripadaju reklame?*. Hrvatistika, 2009/3. 69. http://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=104398. [19. 09. 2025.] (Hereafter: BJELOBRK, 2009.)

technology, which primarily come from the English-speaking world, and therefore technological innovations often bear English names. This gives rise to a dilemma—whether to adopt the innovation as such or to opt for an already established or a newly created Croatian word. The dilemma is easily resolved if an appropriate Croatian equivalent exists for the English word. If no such equivalent exists, a new one should be created. However, advertising cannot be attributed to the conversational style either, due to its frequent occurrence in written language and, even more so, because of other features that do not belong to the conversational style. For example, one of the basic characteristics of the conversational style is spontaneity, a feature that cannot in any way be associated with advertising, as it is completely contrary to its nature. Bjelobrč therefore concludes that “advertising messages partially adopt certain features of all functional styles and have thus acquired characteristics of multimedia discourse”.³⁷ M. Mihaljević and L. Hudeček³⁸ unequivocally conclude that the language of advertising cannot, in fact, be unambiguously and fully classified within any single functional style.

Speaking of contemporary didactics, Lazzarich³⁹ notes that it is better suited to the information-based knowledge society. Educational didactics and approaches to learning in an information society are increasingly oriented towards active interaction with information, the application of technology, and the development of critical thinking, which can also be applied to the ways in which advertising communicates with contemporary consumers. With the help of digital media and technologies, advertising can today reach its target audience rapidly, as with online advertisements, video advertisements on YouTube and TikTok, or targeted advertisements on social media. Consumers today receive personalised messages based on their online interests.

The language advice manual *Govorimo hrvatski*⁴⁰ (Dulčić, ed. 1997) encourages reflection on and care for the Croatian language, which, like any other language, is subject to constant change; however, such change needs to be guided in order to preserve its authenticity and diversity. S. Težak⁴¹ (1999) shares this view, emphasising that attention should be paid to the vulnerability of valid Croatian words in their collision with aggressive loanwords, which push not just one but an entire range of Croatian words into oblivion or at least to the very margins of use. Editor M. Dulčić and linguist S. Težak warn of the danger posed by the excessive importation of foreign words into all functional styles, particularly the journalistic and conversational styles, as this ultimately threatens the linguistic richness and diversity of contemporary Croatian—a concern that is especially relevant in the context of advertising leaflets. Although loanwords may be useful in creating a modern and global impression, their use needs to be balanced with the preservation and promotion of the Croatian language and its richness.

³⁷ Ibid. 73.

³⁸ HUDEČEK–MIHALJEVIĆ, 2009.

³⁹ LAZZARICH, Marinko: *Metodika Hrvatskoga jezika u razrednoj nastavi: Knjiga prva*. Učiteljski fakultet u Rijeci, Rijeka, 2017.

⁴⁰ DULČIĆ, Mihovil (ed.): *Govorimo hrvatski: Jezični savjeti*. Hrvatski radio, Naklada Naprijed, Zagreb, 1997.

⁴¹ TEŽAK, Stjepko: *Hrvatski naš (ne)zaboravljeni*. Tipex, Zagreb, 1999.

Advertising and Media

V. Majdenić⁴² defines media as carriers of messages, that is, as means by which messages are communicated orally or in writing in an indirect manner. Media are thus various channels that enable the transmission of information to a wider public. When it comes to advertising, media play a key role in the dissemination and transmission of promotional messages. Defining advertising, D. Stolac and A. Vlastelić⁴³ state that an advertising message is a text that, either independently or in conjunction with images and/or sound, conveys information about a product or service. The aim of advertising is to inform potential consumers about products or services. As has already been pointed out earlier in this paper, we are today surrounded by advertising in both traditional and digital media. Exposure to advertising is particularly strong on social media.

To fulfil its specific purposes, advertising makes use of a specialised language. A. Peti-Stanić and M.-M. Stanojević⁴⁴ explore more deeply the relationship between language and the fundamental role of advertising: „Since advertisements are intended for the public and are disseminated through the media, they belong to media language. Advertising content in the media does not serve only to persuade and to short-term induce consumers to purchase individual products. In the case of advertising leaflets, one can most clearly observe the characteristics of contemporary marketing strategies aimed at building a positive image of a company in the public sphere, establishing intensive contact, and fostering a lasting, positive relationship between the company and the consumer. Through such strategies, consumers are encouraged to become permanent and long-term clients. Advertising sentences are usually short, striking, and characterised by a distinctive rhythm. The aim of every advertisement is to associate a product with the positive values of a given society and culture, that is, with everything considered good and desirable in a particular society. While it is important to encourage consumers to purchase the advertised product or service, in recent times, an even greater goal has been to establish a long-term and high-quality relationship of trust with the customer.“⁴⁵ The purpose of every advertisement is to be noticed; the message must immediately catch the eye or ear. It is therefore understandable that the fundamental tendency of advertising messages is textual condensation. This means striving to convey the maximum amount of content through the shortest and most concise possible expression—or, more briefly, to prompt the recipient to wish to become a consumer using as few words as possible. This requires an exceptionally high level of creativity and linguistic competence, as well as effort and competence in other

⁴² MAJDENIĆ, Valentina: *Mediji, tekst, kultura*. Ljevak, Zagreb, 2019. 20.

⁴³ STOLAC, Dijana–VLASTELIĆ, Anastazija: *Jezik reklama*. Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada d.o.o., Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, Rijeka, 2014. Much has been written on advertising and its language in the Croatian context; however, for reasons of brevity, this paper focuses on the book *Jezik reklame* by the said authors, as it provides a comprehensive overview of contemporary scholarly insights into the topic. (Hereafter: STOLAC–VLASTELIĆ, 2014.)

⁴⁴ PETI-STANTIĆ, Anita–STANOJEVIĆ, Mateusz–Milan: *Jezik kao informacija*. Srednja Europa, Hrvatsko društvo za primijenjenu lingvistiku, Zagreb, 2013.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

non-linguistic stimuli. It is precisely the fusion of linguistic, visual, and auditory elements that shapes the architecture of advertising texts and enables such effects.⁴⁶

The language of domestic advertising belongs to the language of advertising across all cultures and nations of the world; it is short, concise, comprehensible, modern, and often shocking and aggressive, all with the aim of achieving successful communication with the consumer. Advertising writers reduce advertising to the use of minimal expression for maximum content; that is, with as few linguistic and other means as possible, they attempt to convey as much as they can, or to communicate the most appealing possible message about a product. In the creation of advertisements, everything is permitted, and the most prominent characteristic is freedom. This is reflected in linguistic creativity (the creation of new words and product names), syntax (the omission of verbs, articles, and prepositions), and style (word choice and the use of stylistic figures).⁴⁷ The authors also emphasise the power of advertising language to impose fashion trends, to become an image of the consumer's desires and needs, while at the same time reflecting the individual, the group, and the society to which the product is offered.⁴⁸

However, the language of advertising can also be poor, for example, *A s kim vi bankarite?* (*And who do you bank with?*), where the verb *bankariti*, due to its suffix, acquires a pejorative meaning, which was certainly not the intention of the author of that advertisement. Such poor language is attributed to the authors of advertising texts, who are not sufficiently linguistically educated for the work they perform and often resort to "instant solutions", established expressions, and literal translations from English. In the creation of advertising, "how something is said" is just as important as "what is said".⁴⁹

It is important to mention a significant feature of contemporary language that also permeates the language of today's advertising. This feature is the strong presence of adapted or unadapted English words, or even entire sentences in English, in Croatian today. This phenomenon is usually justified by the difficulty of finding appropriate Croatian equivalents. However, its cause is in fact a consequence of our complacency and intellectual laziness, frequent ignorance, and even fear. The use of a foreign language reveals most about the speakers themselves, about their perception of the value of their own language in relation to other languages, and above all in relation to English. The Croatian standard language is increasingly losing ground in the struggle for prestige in our public communication, while, on the other hand, English is gaining strength in this respect. It can therefore be concluded that, for some speakers, the use of a foreign language in advertising reflects a higher status and value of the product, that is, it signals prestige in relation to the national language.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ STOLAC, Dijana–VLASTELIĆ, Anastazija (ed.): *Jezik i njegovi učinci: Zbornik radova s međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa Hrvatskoga društva za primijenjenu lingvistiku održanoga od 4. do 6. svibnja 2017. godine u Rijeci*. Biblioteka Srednja Europa, Zagreb, 2018. 304.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ STOLAC–VLASTELIĆ, 2014.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Advertising seeks to reach every potential consumer, regardless of gender, age, education, or social status. It may be said that advertising “attacks” us at every step, in both private and professional life, but not always in the same way; therefore, those who create advertisements must choose the approach that is most appropriate to a particular situation, moment, or target group. It is a fact that advertisers, thanks to the involvement of psychologists in marketing, are very well acquainted with the needs of children and young people at all stages of their development and strive to meet them successfully.

Advertising clients who wish to reach recipients differing in age, gender, interests, level of education, purchasing power, and many other factors will engage experts from various fields. When it comes to promotional catalogues and leaflets that provide only basic information about a product, the textual component of the advertising message requires compliance with the standard language norm and, accordingly, advisory support. In discussing the language of advertising, the legally prescribed and clearly binding obligation to use the Croatian language, that is, its standard form, has been repeatedly emphasised; however, everyday language practice in this area of public discourse frequently shows a certain disregard for this obligation, which prompted this research.

Research Methodology

The objectives of the study were to identify deviations from the Croatian standard language norm in printed advertising catalogues of retail chains in Croatia; to determine the linguistic levels at which such deviations from the language standard most frequently occur (orthographic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, word-formation, or lexical); and to compare these deviations in the language of advertising catalogues across the advertising publications of selected retail chains.

The research sample consisted of a linguistic corpus of advertising advertisements drawn from printed advertising catalogues of ten food and non-food retail chains. The advertising catalogues were collected between 11 January and 24 April 2024 from the following retail chains: Bipa, Boso, Eurospin, Interspar, Jysk, Kaufland, Konzum, Lidl, Plodine, and Slavonija Bošković. The collected data were analysed using descriptive and comparative methods, as well as quantitative and normative analysis.

Results and Discussion

The study analysed a linguistic corpus of advertising catalogues from ten retail chains to identify various language errors and classify them according to linguistic levels.⁵¹ This yielded an affirmative answer to the research question of whether

⁵¹ The promotional catalogues of retail chains were collected by Marija Hes, a third-year undergraduate student of Early and Preschool Education at the Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, who also participated in recording deviations from the standard language norm.

deviations from the language standard are present in printed advertising texts of retail chains. In total, 164 errors were recorded and distributed across the following linguistic levels: orthographic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, word-formation, and lexical.

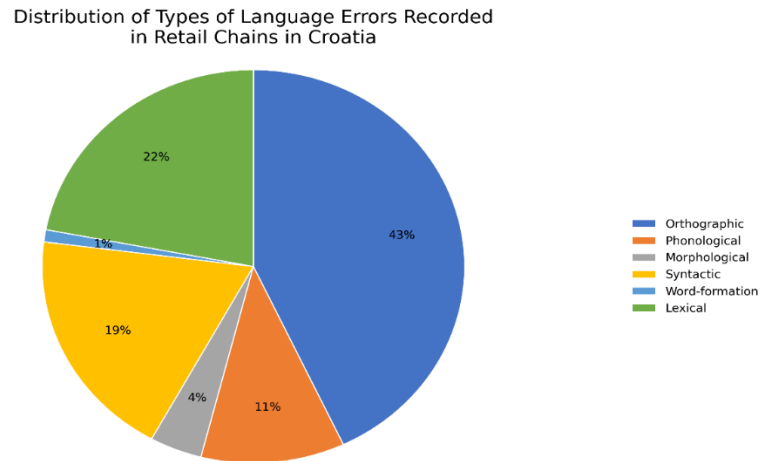


Figure 1. Distribution of Types of Language Errors in Advertising Materials across All Analysed Retail Chains. Note. Adapted and translated into English using AI-assisted tools; data unchanged.

As shown in Figure 1, and in view of the defined research objectives, the following was established: The largest share of the total number of language errors identified in the analysed catalogues consists of orthographic errors (70, or 43%), which is expected given that even basic orthographic rules relating to sentence and other punctuation marks, the correct use of upper- and lower-case letters, and the correct joined and separated spelling of words are often neglected in advertising materials. In terms of overall share, lexical errors follow (37, or 23%); these relate to the inappropriate use of foreign words and expressions, most often phonologically unadapted to the Croatian language, as well as to semantic imprecision. They are followed by syntactic errors (32, or 20%), which most frequently reveal irregularities in sentence grammatical structure and word order. Phonological errors (18) account for 10% of all errors, while various morphological errors were recorded in only 4% of cases (6). The smallest number of errors was identified at the word-formation level – only one, or 1% – which indicates that word-formation errors are rare but nonetheless important because of the effect they may have on the semantic clarity of the advertising message.

The overall distribution of errors shown in Figure 1 provides a clear overview of the dominance of orthographic and lexical deviations in advertising catalogues, while at the same time indicating the presence of various types of language errors that point to insufficient standardisation of the language used in advertising texts.

Total Number of Recorded Errors by Retail Chain

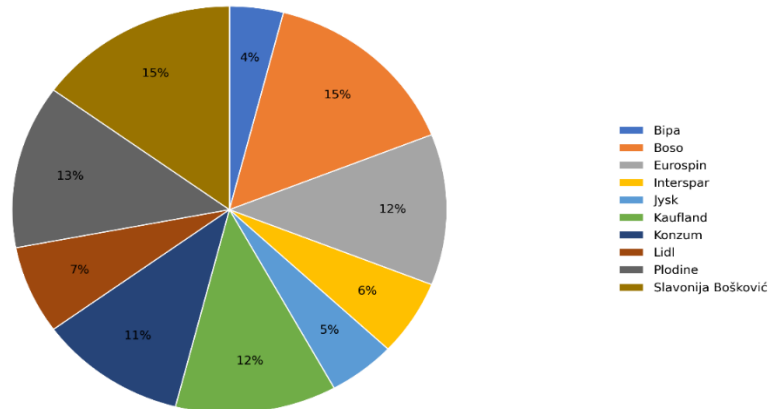


Figure 2. Total Number of Recorded Errors by Retail Chain. Note. Adapted and translated into English using AI-assisted tools; data unchanged.

When the results for individual retail chains are compared (Figure 2), it is evident that the highest total number of errors was recorded in the advertising catalogues of the Boso retail chain (25 errors, or 15% of the total), while a similar number was recorded for the Slavonija Bošković retail chain (24 errors, or 15%), which places these two chains at the bottom of the ranking. More than 10% of the recorded deviations from the norm were also identified in the catalogues of Plodine, Eurospin, Kaufland, and the Konzum retail chain, which is positioned approximately in the middle of the ranking with a total of 18 errors (11%); this somewhat indicates a slightly higher level of language correctness compared to the other chains listed alongside it. In four retail chains, fewer than 10% of the total deviations from the language standard were recorded, namely Lidl, Jysk, Interspar, and Bipa. Among these, the best result in terms of language accuracy was achieved by the Bipa retail chain, as the smallest number of language errors was recorded in Bipa's advertising materials (6 errors, or 4%). It should be noted that Bipa publishes catalogues biweekly; therefore, a smaller number of catalogues was analysed compared to the corpus of weekly catalogues issued by some other chains. However, this is not the reason for the lower overall number of language errors in Bipa's catalogues, since, for example, the Slavonija Bošković chain also publishes catalogues biweekly; consequently, the number of analysed catalogues for both Bipa and Slavonija Bošković is the same, although the number of language errors recorded in them differs considerably. Therefore, the number of errors cannot be causally linked to the number of catalogues published during the observed period.

Orthographic Errors

Regarding the specific observed deviations from the language norm, orthographic errors include a wide range of irregularities, the most frequent of which are the following:

1. omitted or superfluous commas: (a) omitted in the listing of words and word groups (*Domaće slavonsko suježe*, BO6;⁵² *Kikiriki slani pečeni oljušteni*, PL 4/2024; *Frondi 250 g nougat, kakao mlijeko*, SB9. 2. – 18. 2. 2024.; *Debljina zaštitne pjene cca 5 mm jednostavna montaža otvori koji sprječavaju kondenzaciju dimenzije L ili XXL*, KA10. 4. – 16. 4.); b) omitted with subsequently added notices (*Od petka 05. 04. 2024.*, PL14/2024); c) superfluous before disjunctive conjunctions (*Gold 95 g classic, ili cream*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.; *Limunada, Naranča-Jabuka, Naranča-nektarina, ili Multivitamin*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.); superfluous before a verbal adverb (*Stimulira područje usana i usta, potičući zdrav oralni razvoj*, LI4/2024).
2. omitted full stop after an abbreviation (*Sir topljeni trokutići 16 kom*, EU26. 1. – 30. 1. 2024.; *Limun 10 kom*, EU26. 1. – 30. 1. 2024.).
3. errors in the use of upper- and lower-case initial letters: a) incorrect use of an initial capital letter (*Hrvatski Proizvod*, EU22. – 28. 2. 2024.; *0,5 Litara Limenka*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.; *Sirup Bakino Blago*, IS2); b) incorrect use of an initial lower-case letter (*Jysk ima bogat asortiman dodataka za zavjese posjetite jysk.hr ili najbližu jysk trgovinu*, JY7. 2. – 9. 3. 2024.; *Monte desert s lješnjakom zott*, KO4).
4. pisanje spojnice namjesto crtice (*Limunada, Naranča-Jabuka, Naranča-nektarina, ili Multivitamin*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.) i ispuštena crtica (*Pionir bomboni 100 grama Karamela Lješnjak*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.).
5. inaccuracies in the notation of numbers: a) cardinal Arabic numerals (03, 04, 05,⁵³ BO); b) numerals in dates (26. 02. do 03. 03., LI9/2024; *Posebna ponuda od 07. 03. do 30. 04. 2024.* KO14; 04. – 06. ožujka 2024. EU29. 2. – 6. 3. 2024.); c) numerals in compounds (3 slojni, 3-sloja, 3-slojni, BO6); d) omission of spacing between a numeral and a mathematical symbol, between a numeral and a unit symbol, between a numeral and a percentage sign, and between an abbreviation and a numeral (*dimenzija jedne krpe: 30x40cm*, IS6; *Tuna salata 185g*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.; *Jogurt 2,8%*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.; *BB krema SPF30*, BI29.2. – 13.3.).
6. use of non-Croatian symbols instead of conjunctions – the logogram &, i.e. a substitute symbol from English for the conjunction i (and), recorded in English syntagms (*Pringles 185g original, paprika, sour cream & onion*, SB9. 2. – 18. 2. 2024.).
7. incorrect joined spelling of two words (*Hladnoljevana spužva*, KA13. 3. – 19. 3.).
8. incorrect spelling of a foreign semi-compound without a hyphen (*Flips pombar*, KO2).

The highest number of orthographic errors was recorded in the catalogues of the Slavonija Bošković retail chain, with 19.

⁵² The abbreviated letter codes in parentheses denote the retail chain (BI – Bipa, BO – Boso, EU – Eurospin, KA – Kaufland, KO – Konzum, PL – Plodine, LI – Lidl, SB – Slavonija Bošković, IS – Interspar, JY – Jysk), while their catalogues are identified by dates or other numerical markers.

⁵³ These refer to the issue number of the advertising catalogue.

Phonological Errors

Within the category of phonological errors, uncertainty in the addition of an epenthetic vowel to the preposition *s* predominates, most often occurring in the form with a superfluous addition, *sa* (*Sa mlijekom*, BO9; *Donut sa čokoladnom glazurom ili s okusom jagode*, PL14/2024). A frequent irregularity involves the alternation of the diphthong (*ije*) and the sound sequence *je* (*Mješano povrće*, BO5; *Hladnoljevana spužva*, KA13. 3. – 19. 3.). Deviations were also observed in the application of certain phonological changes, such as vocalisation (*Slatko-kisel* KA28. 2. – 5. 3.) and voicing assimilation of stops (*Kruh slani bezkvasni*, KO11) as well as the omission or insertion of individual phonemes in words, particularly „j“ and „i“: *Neprianjajući premaz*, KA13. 3. – 19. 3.; *Bombonjera Milka*, BO9; *Ukras perije*, BO10; *Vražije kandže*, BO10). The highest number of phonological errors was recorded in the catalogues of the Boso and Kaufland retail chains (6).

Grammatical Errors

Among grammatical errors, morphological errors were the most frequent and were mainly related to incorrect declension of nouns (*Želim super proizvode po niskim cijenama! S BUDGET za super šparanje!*, IS8) and numerals (*Set od 3 škare*, EU11. – 17. 1. 2024.; *Precizan čisti rez sa jednom ili dvije oštrice*, LI9/2024) as well as to the substitution of definite and indefinite adjectives (*Antialergijski luksuzan jastuk*, JY7. 2. – 9. 3. 2024.).

Such types of errors occur in the promotional materials of several retail chains – Eurospin, Interspar, Jysk, Kaufland, Konzum, and Lidl – with one error recorded in each case.

In a large number of cases, syntactic errors relate to the accumulation of nominative noun phrases without adjectival or pronominal modification and determination, which hinders comprehension and considerably undermines the normativity of expression (*Kolač malina kokos*, EU4. – 10. 4. 2024.; *U cink posudi*, KA31. 1. – 6. 2.; *Sa čičak trakom*, JY3. 4. – 8. 4. 2024.). Irregularities in agreement are also observed (*0,5 Litara Limenka*, SB15. 3. – 31. 3. 2024.). In addition, frequent errors occur in the application of the unmarked, so-called grammatical word order, resulting in a disruption of the natural sequencing of words within the syntactic structure of the Croatian language (*Krumpir mladi*, BO3; *Carsko meso marinirano*, EU28. 3. – 3. 4. 2024.). The highest number of syntactic errors was recorded in the promotional materials of the Eurospin retail chain (7).

Word-formation deviations were extremely rare: only a single instance was recorded, in the corpus of the Lidl retail chain, and it concerned the unnecessary formation of a new compound (*Veliki cjenopad*, LI10/2024). Given that advertising discourse forms part of public language use, this study assumes the consistent application of the standard idiom within that discourse and therefore focuses on it accordingly. In this sense, no attention was paid to additional, marginal components of the journalistic style, such as stylistically motivated interventions in word formation, for example, in the above-mentioned expressive newly formed compound *cjenopad*. Thus, the compound *cjenopad* may be

regarded as an unnecessary new formation in a narrow standard-language sense; however, in advertising, as a mixture and “a confluence/intersection of different styles”,⁵⁴ such formations also find their justification, as they serve to attract consumers.

Lexical Errors

The analysis of lexical errors shows that they account for almost a quarter of all identified errors and are predominantly related to the uncritical and overly frequent use of Anglicisms, as well as other loanwords (*Avokado ready to eat*, KA24. 1. – 30. 1.; *Happy vikend*, BI11.4. – 24.4.; *Tips & tricks*, BI11.4. – 24.4.; *Non-stick premaz*, PL4/2024; *Body cream*, BI29.2. – 13.3.; *S timerom*, JY28. 2. – 9. 3. 2024.; *To go brzo i ukusno*, KO2; *Špatula set ALPINA*, BO10; *Gross*, BO5 etc.), which are very often incorporated into Croatian expressions in their original form, that is, completely unadapted to the Croatian language (*Svježi juneći mix za juhu*, LI7/2024).

Semantically imprecise uses of certain words were also identified (*Jako upijajući*, JY26. 1. – 30. 1. 2024., instead of „snažno upijajući“). Although lexical errors may not appear grammatically incorrect, they significantly affect the quality of advertising language, its clarity, stylistic consistency, and compliance with the language standard. The highest number of such errors was observed in the Plodine retail chain corpus (8).

For the purposes of the study, tabular overviews of all language errors identified in the analysed catalogues were prepared and described and classified by type and by retail chain; however, for reasons of conciseness, only selected characteristic examples from these tables are presented in this paper.

Conclusion

Advertising catalogues and leaflets belong to traditional media, but increasingly they are also taking on digital forms. Their purpose is to reach as wide an audience as possible, which is largely achieved by delivering promotional catalogues to many households and individual consumers. Linguistic analysis of advertising catalogues and leaflets of retail chains in Croatia has confirmed that, at almost all linguistic levels, contemporary promotional language, in many instances, deviates from the standard.

The collected and analysed advertising corpus enabled a detailed classification and insight into the types, frequency, and distribution of language errors, with orthographic errors being the most numerous, followed by lexical, syntactic, morphological, phonological, and finally word-formation errors. Such a distribution points to specific features of advertising discourse which, in its primary effort to attract the consumer's attention, often neglects linguistic norms.

⁵⁴ RIŠNER, Vlasta: *Jezik medija kao s(t)jecište različitih stilova*. In: Vlasta RIŠNER (ed.): *Jezik medija nekada i sada: Zbornik radova sa znanstvenoga skupa održanoga 6. i 7. lipnja 2014. godine na Filozofskom fakultetu u Osijeku*. Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku, Zagreb, Osijek, 2016. 236.

Deviations from the language standard may be intentional, when the aim is to attract the attention of a particular target consumer group, for example, young people, or unintentional, in which case they largely reflect insufficient linguistic competence on the part of the authors of advertising texts. A comparative analysis of language errors across different retail chains has highlighted that insufficiently professional and inattentive language use is not an isolated occurrence but a widespread phenomenon in domestic advertising. Language errors are not merely a matter of linguistic correctness, as they also affect the comprehensibility and effectiveness of the message. Moreover, recipients of advertising messages may unintentionally acquire the content of advertising texts along with the language in which they are formulated, which underscores the need for systematic editorial and linguistic supervision. Widespread advertising in traditional and digital media forms part of everyday life. In addition to promoting products, it also reflects the overall state of our language culture.

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Note

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Abstract

**ON THE NORMATIVE FEATURES OF
CROATIAN ADVERTISING DISCOURSE**

Over the past three decades, we have witnessed a digital revolution. In such a highly technologically advanced environment, advertising has become one of the most widespread forms of discourse in contemporary society. The omnipresence of advertising discourse has left a clear mark on the shaping of both spoken and written culture. Since this discourse is realised within the public sphere and thus belongs to public language, advertising, as part of public language, necessarily needs to be produced in a normed language. Although advertising is a powerful tool that could help raise the linguistic awareness of contemporary speakers, an analysis of a linguistic corpus comprising advertising catalogues issued by retail chains in Croatia reveals deviations from the standard language norm at all linguistic levels. In addition to the inconsistent application of the Croatian language norm, the study has shown that the shaping of advertising discourse in Croatia is marked by a strong influence of foreign languages, primarily English. Although the use of the Croatian language, that is, its standard form, is clearly prescribed and even legally binding, everyday linguistic practice in this domain of public discourse frequently reveals a certain degree of non-compliance with this obligation, which prompted the research presented in this paper.

Absztrakt

A HORVÁT REKLÁMNYELV NORMATÍV JELLEMZŐIRŐL

Az elmúlt három évtizedben digitális forradalomnak lehettünk tanúi. Egy ilyen, technológiailag rendkívül fejlett környezetben a reklám a kortárs társadalom egyik legelterjedtebb diskurzusformájává vált. A reklámdiskurzus mindennapi jelenléte egyértelmű nyomot hagyott mind a beszélt, mind az írott kultúra alakulásában. Mivel ez a diskurzus a nyilvános szférában valósul meg, és így a köznyelv részét képezi, a reklámnak szükségszerűen a standard (normatív) nyelvváltozatban kell megvalósulnia.

Bár a reklám hatékony eszköz lehetne a kortárs beszélők nyelvi tudatosságának növelésében, a horvátországi kiskereskedelmi láncok reklámkatalógusaiból álló korpusz elemzése azt mutatja, hogy minden nyelvi szinten eltérések tapasztalhatók a standard nyelvi normától. A horvát nyelvi norma következtelen alkalmazása mellett a tanulmány arra is rámutat, hogy a horvát reklámdiskurzust erőteljes idegen nyelvi hatás jellemzi, elsősorban az angol nyelv részéről.

Habár a horvát nyelv, illetve annak standard változatának használata egyértelműen előírt, sőt jogilag is kötelező, a nyilvános diskurzus ezen területén a mindennapi nyelvhasználat gyakran eltérést mutat ettől az elvárástól. Ez a jelenség ösztönözte a jelen tanulmányban bemutatott kutatást.