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## **SMS Communication – Croatian SMS Language Features as Compared with those in German and English Speaking Countries**

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### **ABSTRACT**

SMS is a relatively new asynchronous communication form, generally accepted in Croatia, where the number of mobile phones surpasses the number of the inhabitants. A language analysis of the corpus of SMS messages has been done for the purpose of this investigation, with the aim to examine the type of communication involved, and to establish whether the language in the Croatian SMS messages differs from those in German and English. It has been found that the limit of 160 characters in a single message presents a basic determining factor of the SMS discourse, as it requires utmost economy of the language used, i.e. briefness (saving the effort, space, time and money). The language analysis performed has also shown that SMS messages are used to communicate almost any topic of everyday life, as well as that, apart from numerous elements of deviation from the accepted language standards, they exhibit a lot of abbreviations, together with graphostylistic signs (emoticons) and Anglicisms. The language used in Croatian SMS messages does not differ significantly from that used in English or German messages of the same type.

**Key words:** SMS discourse, deviation from the standard, conceptually oral expression, abbreviating, graphostylistic signs (emoticons), Anglicisms

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# SMS-sporočila: primerjava jezikovnih značilnosti hrvaških, nemških in angleških sporočil

## POVZETEK

SMS je razmeroma nova asinhrona komunikacijska oblika, splošno sprejeta na Hrvaškem, kjer število mobilnih telefonov presega število prebivalcev. Jezikovna analiza korpusa SMS-sporočil je bila narejena z namenom preučiti vrste komunikacije ter ugotoviti razlike in podobnosti SMS-sporočil v hrvaščini, nemščini in angleščini. Ugotovljeno je bilo, da omejitev na 160 znakov v enem sporočilu predstavlja osnovno določilo SMS-sporočil, saj zahteva izredno ekonomično uporabo jezika (prihranek truda, prostora, časa in denarja). Opravljena jezikovna analiza je pokazala, da SMS-sporočila, ki se uporabljajo za komunikacijo, vsebujejo skoraj vse teme iz vsakdanjega življenja in da poleg številnih elementov odstopanja od sprejetih standardov jezika vsebujejo veliko krajšav, grafičnih znakov (emotikonov) in anglicizmov. Jezik v hrvaških SMS-sporočilih se bistveno ne razlikuje od angleških in nemških sporočil.

**Ključne besede:** SMS-diskurz, odstopanje od standarda, ustno izražanje, skrajšave, grafofostilistični znaki (ikone za čustva), angleški izrazi

## Introduction

Mobile phone communication has become a *conditio sine qua non* of contemporary living. It is almost impossible to find a person who has not been involved in this type of communication or tried its potentials. SMS (Short Message Service) application is the most widespread data application globally, with more than 2.4 billion users. Short messages have become a part of our everyday routine. On the one hand, they replace conventional phone calls, and on the other, SMS messages are used to send greetings or invitations, to close simple deals, to send presents, and to distribute information. This makes it clear that mobile phone communication covers at the same time both written and spoken media. The messages sent by mobile phone can be private, but official ones are sent as well.

According to the information offered by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, the number of mobile phones in Croatia exceeds that of the country's population, with 4.5 million mobile phones registered in Croatia in 2006. Some 3.8 million messages were sent in Croatia in 2008. According to GfK (*Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung/Consumption Research Association*), 79 per cent of the citizens of Croatia were mobile phone users in 2008, which puts Croatia in 17th place in Europe. Almost 12

per cent of the entire population in Croatia possesses more than one mobile phone. There were more than six million mobile phones in Croatia in 2010, while the population estimate was around 4.3 million. In the course of the second year of the current recession (first half of 2010), the Croatians sent, according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 1.5 billion SMS messages.

As much as 80 per cent of the population of Germany use mobile phones, whereby more than 90 per cent of the users are between 21 and 34 years of age. With 80 million users, Germany occupies the fourth place globally, following China, USA, and Japan. The users sent 29.1 billion messages in 2008, which is the highest result Europe-wide (Blogspan magazin, 2009).

The first SMS message in its contemporary commercial form was sent on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1992 in Great Britain, containing *MERRY CHRISTMAS* greetings. The development of the service was rather slow at the beginning. In 2000, the British sent on average 35 messages per month. However, Christmas 2006 registered as much as 205 million messages (strategicist.com), while 96.8 billion messages were sent in Great Britain in 2009.

The above data prove that SMS has long since ceased to be exclusively a part of the discourse of the youth, and that a considerable part of the general population sends and receives these messages as well. At the very beginning, the messages were an auxiliary service of mobile phone networks, invented accidentally by Finnish youngsters Matti Makkonen, Seppo Tiainen, and Juha Tapiola towards the end of the second millennium, with the objective to send information on network failures to mobile phone users. Quite soon this type of communicating has become an unavoidable part of contemporary civilisation. The service was initially free, the fee being introduced somewhat later. Today, it is a globally widespread phenomenon, so much that it can be said without restraint that we have been witnessing the development of a new language variety.

## **The aim, hypotheses and methodology of the investigation**

### *The aim*

As already mentioned, SMS messaging is used in business communication (from a formal entity to private users and vice versa) and for private communication (from the private user to another private user). This paper focuses on the analysis of private short messages, as SMS messages used in business communication mostly use a

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standardized form of a language. In general, such messages are sent by banks, phone companies, tourist agencies, and various other advertisers to private users.

Since mobile phone communication differs from the conventional one, that is, such that we have been used to through the conventional telephony, the aim of this investigation was to study the characteristics of this particular communication form, so as to be able to explain its impact on the language. However, the primary objective of the investigation was to study the language in Croatian SMS messages from the orthographic, graphostylistic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical point of view. No investigation of the Croatian SMS messages of such extent has been done until now, as opposed to the English and the German language, where numerous similar investigations have been organized and performed. The general idea behind our survey was to compare the results obtained with those of the German and the English language areas, with the purpose of establishing possible similarities and differences in various SMS discourses. This is why the results of the language analysis are herein presented prior to those on the communication form, which are included in the closing part of the paper.

### *Hypotheses*

1. It is essential to distinguish two types of short messages (personal and business). The language characteristics of individual short messages are determined by the type of the message (it can be conceptually oral or conceptually written).
2. Similar language properties pertaining to various linguistic levels can be found in the Croatian, as well as in the German and the English short messages.
3. SMS discourse differs from the conventional short texts primarily due to the new medium (mobile phone) and its limitations (language economy, errors caused by the medium, etc.).
4. The language (particularly in personal messages) exhibits numerous changes. By no means could this be interpreted as the deterioration of language.

### *Methodology*

Around 1,000 SMS messages covering various topics (e.g. love, family, school, friendship, free time, holidays, birthdays, pets, sports, politics, society, etc.) were collected in 2009 and 2010 for the purpose of this investigation. The sample included SMS messages composed by the students at the Čakovec Branch of the Faculty of Teacher Education, their friends, parents, brothers, sisters, and relatives. The senders were between 11 and 56 years of age. The following elements of different languages levels were investigated: upper-case and lower-case letters, punctuation

marks, grapheme repetition, individual words written separately or together, errors caused by the medium, graphostylistic features (emoticons or smileys), abbreviations, ellipses, use of the imperfect, telegraphic style of writing, contents, Anglicisms, dialecticisms, and vulgarisms.

What followed was a language analysis of the SMS messages collected, dealing with orthographic, graphostylistic, morphological, syntactic, semantic and lexical aspects, as a prerequisite for a comparison between the characteristics of the Croatian SMS messages, and that of the SMS messages in German and English.

## **Current investigations of SMS discourse**

SMS discourse has been studied intensively in recent years. The topic has been given more attention in bigger languages. However, Croatian philology also has been increasingly involved in investigating SMS discourse. In her paper *Communication Technologies and Their Influence on Language: An Example from Croatian* (2003), Žic-Fuchs shows that the imperfect, long-forgotten in spoken communication yet alive in the language of literature, was revived in Croatian SMS messages. Moreover, Žic-Fuchs and Babiċ (2007) included Internet and SMS abbreviations, as well as emoticons from the Internet and SMS communication in their *Dodatak Rjeĉnika kratica* (Abbreviations Dictionary Supplement). Žic-Fuchs and Tudman-Vukoviċ (2008) discussed “reshuffling” (distribution) of past tenses in the Croatian language, as well as the causes behind such changes, and their impact on the system of tenses as a whole. Filipan-Žigniċ (2007) compared the language of the Internet and SMS messages with regard to the use of punctuation marks, Anglicisms, and abbreviations. Furthermore, Pavliĉeviċ-Franiċ (2009) suggests SMS messages are a new linguistics of communication.

SMS messages in English were investigated by Aitchison and Lewis (2003) in their book which studied SMS communication within the framework of the language of new media. Social and cultural perspectives of SMS messages were discussed by Harper et al. (2005), while Humphrys (2007) published a paper with an interesting title *I h8 txt msgs*. Some witty and interesting papers were published by Crystal, with the titles *2b or not 2b* (2008a), and *Gr8 Db8* (2008b), and by Bieswanger: *2 abbrevi8 or not 2 abbrevi8: A Contrastive Analysis of Different Space- and Time-Saving Strategies in English and German Text Messages* (2007). Finally, Tagg defended his doctoral thesis titled *A Corpus Linguistics Study of SMS Text Messaging* in 2009, discussing the language of SMS messages, dealing in particular with numerous deviations from the standard, abbreviations, and the elements of spoken language. All these papers point to creativity and numerous possibilities for abbreviating SMS messages already in their titles. Moreover, Crystal clarified some misunderstandings

associated with SMS messages, such as the idea that abbreviations were a contemporary phenomenon, or that sending messages destroyed the language, or that the ability to write and read was impaired with children, concluding that one of the key roles of researchers dealing with language was to destroy such myths.

There are numerous papers on the respective topic in German linguistics as well. Androutsopoulos and Schmidt wrote about SMS language (2002, 2006) and pointed out some elements of play in SMS discourse. Dürscheid (2002) discussed the elements of oral and written communication comparing SMS communication with electronic mail. Döring (2002) focused on acronyms and abbreviations, Schwittala (2002) studied short messages in telegrams and SMS texts, Dittmann (2002) observed conceptually oral features of SMS messages, Schlobinski (2001) discussed language and communication aspects of SMS messages, while Watanabe (2003) offered a contrastive analysis of German and Japanese messages. Schlobinski edited papers dealing with new media in his book titled *Von \*hdl\* bis \*cul8r\** (2006) and in 2009 published a SMS dictionary *Von HDL bis DUBIDODO* ;-). Most of these texts were quite creative and tried to imitate the linguistic style used in SMS messages in their titles already.

## Analysis of the results

After having collected SMS messages in Croatian, a language analysis was performed on the orthographic, graphostylistic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical levels. Following are the results of the analysis by levels.

### a) Orthography

On the orthographic level we examined the use of punctuation marks, upper-case and lower-case letters, grapheme repetition, writing words together or separately, as well as errors attributed to the medium.

The analysis of punctuation marks showed that they were appropriate in 60.4 per cent of the messages, mixed (meaning that both adequate and inadequate punctuation marks appeared in a message) in 25.1 per cent, and improper in 14.7 per cent of cases.

As for upper- and lower-case letters, their use was correct in 33.8 per cent of the messages. Only lower-case letters were used in 17 per cent of the messages, while in 49.2 per cent of cases mixed writing was present.

Quite often graphemes were repeated, such as *daaaaaa*, *ma neeeeeeeee*, *juhu-uuuuu* or *hmmmmm*. Furthermore, words were not separated in some messages

(*doslabumktebi*). Errors attributed to the medium also occurred quite often, which made some messages hardly understandable and rather problematic (*ročkas joj je 2l*). Since the digit 5 shares the same button which, when pressed three times, gives the letter *l*, the speed of writing resulted in the error of having written *l* instead of 5.

#### b) Graphostylistics

The following graphostylistic marks or emoticons (smileys) were recorded in the SMS messages collected (their meanings are also given):

- :-) = *smiling* - "smiley"
- :-( = *frowning* - "frowny"
- ;-) = *winking*
- :-> = *impish comment*
- >:-> = *impish comment*
- :-P = *sticking tongue out*
- :-D = *bursting with laughter*
- :-| :-/ = *indifference*
- :-9 = *delighted by the news*
- :-( :-, = *crying*
- :-< = *disappointment*
- >-( = *resentment*
- }-@ = *anger*
- :-\* :-x = *kiss*

Smileys as a "typographic representation of facial expressions" (Beißwenger, 2000) represent abbreviations for smiling, crying or some other descriptions of state or action. Smileys in SMS discourse express that which is in oral communication denoted by particles, interjections, prosody, mime, and gestures. Smileys can be regarded as creative impulses expressed by limited abilities of a mobile phone. The investigation showed that younger users of SMS messages were more inclined to using smileys, while only two smileys appeared in messages by users over 40 (:-), :-( ).

### c) Morphology

SMS language analysis suggests that there are no significant deviations on the morphological level, the only exception being abbreviations. A great number of abbreviations were invariably used in SMS discourse. Numerous grammar books offer various classifications of abbreviations (for example; Fleischer and Barz, 1992; Babić, 2002; Barić et al., 2003; Kobler Trill, 1994). However, we have taken and adapted a comprehensive classification as presented in the doctoral thesis by Kobler Trill, and the abbreviations encountered in the messages analysed were classified as follows:

- **acronyms** (*TV, CD, PC, btw, VW, LP*),
- **syllable** type abbreviations (*meba, zaba, min, tnx, dns, ugl, plz*), and
- **complex** abbreviations (*e-mail, e-tvrtka, info, B4, W8*).

Acronyms were most frequently used, followed by syllable abbreviations, while complex abbreviations were rather uncommon.

As regards the origin of the abbreviations, foreign (mostly English) abbreviations were frequently used, though Croatian ones were not uncommon either. The abbreviations were mostly used by younger SMS senders. The users over 40 seldom use abbreviations (except for *LP, meba, e-mail, e-tvrtka*). The acronyms used in the SMS discourse were as follows:

#### English:

- **AFAIK** – *as far as I know*
  - **ASAP** – *as soon as possible*
  - **BTW** – *by the way*
  - **CID** – *consider it done*
  - **CU** – *see you*
  - **EOD** – *end of discussion*
  - **FU** – *f\*\*\* you*
  - **FYI** – *for your information*
  - **ILU** – *I love you*
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- **JK** – *just kidding*
- **NS** – *no shit*
- **UOK** – *are you ok?*

#### Croatian:

- **AMR** – *ako me razumiješ* (Cro. for IYKWIM - if you know what I mean)
- **BMK** – *boli me k\*\*\*\** (I do not care)
- **PDF** – *Pijemo Do Fajronta* (We drink until dawn)
- **SAJB** – *sorry ako je bilo* (Sorry if it was ...)
- **LP** – *lijep pozdrav* (Kind regards)

High frequency of the usage of abbreviations points to the conclusion that the shortened forms result from the nature of the medium used, or language economising, since the messages are limited to 160 characters and have to be as short as possible. The trend of abbreviating was observed also in orthography and punctuation marks, and could be attributed to the same reasons, as could be the usage of graphostylistic elements (emoticons) for the purpose of denoting emotions. All these abbreviations were used to gain extra space, but also to save time spent in writing the messages and, finally, to save money.

#### d) Syntax

The syntactic level was characterised by medium-dictated syntax, or the usage of ellipses in the SMS messages collected. The main characteristics of this type of syntax were:

- omitting the subject (*jucer videl novi VW*),
- omitting the preposition (*sastanak 7*),
- omitting auxiliary verbs (*bio u Hemingwayu*)
- the usage of the aorist and the imperfect (*Stigoh, gdje si*)
- telegraphic style (*uzmem novac, kupim pljugu, cekam korzo*).

#### e) Semantics

Almost all the topics from everyday life such as love, family, school, friendship, going out, free time, holidays, birthdays, pets, sports, politics, and society in general,

etc. were present in the messages collected. However, some of the messages concerned other interesting topics, such as breaking a love relationship, announcing a divorce, advertising through SMS messages, firing or dismissal from work, and denials or confrontation of local politicians. This clearly shows that almost any topic can be covered by sending a SMS message.

love	family	friendship	going out/dating
free time	celebrations and holidays	birthday	pets
sports	politics	society	cooking

#### f) Lexis

Numerous Anglicisms were recorded in the messages collected; primarily those used frequently as stylistic variants in the message texts (for example *cool*, *sorry*, *ok*, *happy*, etc.). The most frequently encountered examples were in greetings, such as *hi*, *hello*, *hey*, *haj*, etc.). Young people between 12 and 30 years of age were the most frequent users of Anglicisms, while persons above 32 used these expressions less frequently. It was also recorded that almost 90 per cent of the abbreviations used in the messages were of English origin.

Dialecticisms were also frequently encountered. Dialecticisms in Croatian messages are often used as a sign of intimacy, but also of speed and the imitation of the spoken language. Here are some of the examples encountered in the messages collected: *ve spi*, *denes*, *včera*, *ve mam*, *cukor*, *Do Fajronta* etc. (these obviously originated in the Kajkavian dialect).

Vulgarisms were also recorded in the corpus of the messages and were sometimes Croatian (*ma u pm*), but much more often English in origin (*f\*\*\* you*, *shit*).

## Characteristics of SMS discourse in German and English

Since the SMS discourse in German and English languages has been studied intensively for some time, we shall present some of the results of these investigations, so as to be able to compare the results of language analysis obtained. Following are some of German SMS discourse characteristics:

- Schlobinski and Watanabe (2003) generally confirmed deviations from the standard language norm in German SMS texts.
- Dürscheid (2002) claimed that insufficient attention was paid to orthography, which resulted in a high level of tolerance to orthographic errors (the so-called superficial errors).

- Quasthoff (1997) pointed out frequent writing of nouns with lower-case letters only (though in German standard all nouns are capitalised), as well as the omission of punctuation marks in general.
- Dittmann (2006) wrote about high frequency of spoken communication elements, which he called conceptually oral, and of the language of intimacy (substituting *ne* for *eine*, *hab* for *habe*).
- Schlobinski and Watanabe (2003) confirmed frequent usage of spoken language particles (*hm*, *boa*), as well as repeating some graphemes and punctuation marks (*aaaaaah*, *yes!!!!!!!*), while in syntax, they recorded numerous ellipses (*fands auch schön*), and a number of Anglicisms in the lexis. Dialecticisms were not so frequent according to their report.
- Androutsopoulos (2002) and Schmidt (2006) noticed the usage of creative elements (*Tu grad mit Sunny phonieren:ganz viele \*knubus\*.Tschüssilein!*).
- Schlobinski et al. (2001) concluded that the messages analysed abounded in abbreviations (mostly English by origin, but also some newly created German ones, such as *HDL – hab' dich lieb*), as well as in emoticons.
- Schlobinski (2009) described SMS messages as 'typed spoken conversation'.

Following are some of English SMS discourse characteristics:

- Crystal (2008b) noted that texting raised awareness on the relationship between non-standard and Standard English.
- Humprys (2007) and Sutherland (2002) wrote about SMS messages being the ruin of language, since linguistically, they were a mess and they masked problems like dyslexia, poor spelling, and mental laziness.
- Crystal (2008a, b) also mentioned deviations from Standard English such as a lack of punctuation and using lower-case letters throughout an SMS. He also claimed that there were no changes in grammar, and that written forms were becoming more similar to spoken forms, which was not necessarily something negative, as an SMS had a more individual style which would be impossible if Standard English was used.
- Crystal (2008b) pointed out that less than 10 per cent of the words were abbreviated in a text message and word abbreviation had been present for many decades. He also noticed the new way of combining complex puzzles, logograms, sequencing of shortened and full words (2bctnd – to be continued), non-standard spelling (cu2nite – see you tonight), combinations of shortening (iowan2bwu – I only want to be with you).

- Crystal (2006) suggested there were many similarities between the language of the Internet and texting.
- Tagg (2009) analysed 11,607 SMS messages and summarised all previous investigations on the topic in her Thesis and found, among other things, the following features of the English SMS discourse:
  - deviation from the language standard – omitting graphemes (*wat - what*) and punctuation marks, the use of ellipses (*wine good idea*), shortening words (*pls - please, gd - good*), as well the usage of acronyms (*btw*) and emoticons,
    - the presence of spoken language and grammar rules belonging to the spoken language,
    - the usage of colloquialisms (*goin, allo, yep, yeah*) and *vague language* (*this, that*),
    - high incidence of playing with language and creativity,
    - SMS discourse was described as *language variation*.

A comparative analysis of the SMS discourse in Croatian, German and English languages suggests that the language present in the SMS messages exhibited no significant differences. On the contrary, noticeable similarities were recorded. Deviations from the standard were present in all three languages (e.g. reduction on the phonological-orthographic, morphological and syntactic levels), errors caused by the medium, frequent usage of dialecticisms, vulgarisms and Anglicisms (except in English, of course), similar topics etc. All the investigations presented point to the fact that SMS discourse represents a separate language variety, which is summarised in the quotation "...SMS messages have become a separate language 'variety', with specific rules in various aspects of language use" (Žic-Fuchs and Tuđman-Vuković, 2008: 122). Further investigations of SMS discourse should be aimed at specific groups, for example young people, to establish whether the characteristics mentioned herein relate to their discourse only, or whether they have become part of general SMS discourse.

## Conclusion

Although SMS (*Short Message Service*) was initially launched in 1992 as a free-of-charge information for the users, concerning network failures only, today it has become a widespread unavoidable service and, due to a number of structural and semiotic characteristics of the language variety, a separate type of communication. SMS messages are defined by the technical limitation of comprising 160 characters,

which to a great extent defines the language to be used in the medium. Together with the language of the Internet, the SMS language started a new media revolution. Two previous revolutions were obviously the invention of writing and printing. The SMS language has clearly become a technically and culturally established communication form, adding to the speed of the communication processes in the globalised world.

SMS discourse accepts the elements of spoken language and starts the era of oral conceptuality, introduced in 1995 by Koch and Österreicher. It includes pictorial and graphostylistic elements, often from cartoons as well, establishes new abbreviations, exhibits a dialogue character, while the foundations of the discourse include asynchronous communication and visual realisation (graphic instead of phonic).

A comparison of the written and oral communication elements indicates they are well intertwined within SMS discourse. From the written communication, SMS discourse retains the following elements: it is written in form, there is a spatial distance, it is visual, and it can be reviewed as text. The elements of oral communication incorporated into SMS discourse are as follows: dialogue, separating the situation, spontaneity, confidentiality, superficiality, and temporary character. Obviously, differentiated shades could be found in the discourse, provided the age of the users is taken as a parameter. The messages analysed included short messages sent by persons from 11 to 56 years of age, and an age-based analysis will be the topic of some future investigations.

Investigations of the SMS messages in Croatian, German and English indicate that the language used does not differ significantly, and that similarities are numerous. All three languages point to a deviation from the standard (reduction on the phonological-orthographic, morphological, and syntactic levels); numerous errors occur that are caused by the medium itself; Anglicisms are often used (in Croatian and German SMS messages), together with dialecticisms, vulgarisms, and vague language; similar topics occur in all three languages, etc. All of this suggests that SMS discourse has become a specific, separate language variety, the conclusion reached by Žic-Fuchs and Tuđman-Vuković (2008:122): "SMS text messages have become a language variety in their own right, exhibiting specific regularities in different aspects of language use".

This new language variety is an attractive communication form by itself and despite the necessary economy of language, it does not limit communication. On the contrary, it provokes language creativity and play. By no means could this be interpreted as the deterioration of language. As a matter of curiosity, let us say that the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) was sent in two messages in 2001 and the limitation of 160 digits represented no obstacle to write a novel using SMS messages (Schlobinski, 2008). President Barack Obama realised the importance of SMS messages as well,

using them to advertise himself as the candidate for the elections. This message is considered to be one of the most successful SMS messages ever (Schlobinski, 2008).

SMS discourse differs from the conventional short texts primarily due to the new medium (mobile phone) and its limitations (language economy, errors caused by the peculiarities of the medium, etc.).

Those who are afraid that SMS message will “murder” standard language, can find the best answer in Tagg’s Thesis.

“It is not reasonable to expect everybody to write by grammar rules, precisely and with an acceptable style. Illiteracy and half-literacy has always existed and is by no means associated with SMS messages. On the contrary; SMS message motivate us to play with words and to invent them” (Jutarnji list, April 7th 2010).

Let us, then, play by sending messages.

## **DALJŠI POVZETEK**

SMS predstavlja razmeroma novo asinhronično obliko komunikacije, ki je v sodobnosti zelo priljubljena po vsem svetu, saj je z več kot 2,4 milijarde aktivnih uporabnikov najbolj razširjena aplikacija podatkov. V mnogih državah, tudi na Hrvaškem, je število mobilnih telefonov višje kot število prebivalcev. Po podatkih državnega zavoda za statistiko je bilo leta 2006 na Hrvaškem registriranih okoli 4,5 milijona mobilnih telefonov. Po podatkih GfK (Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung – Društvo za raziskovanje konzumov) iz leta 2008 je bilo 79 % Hrvatov uporabnikov mobilnih telefonov, kar predstavlja 17. mesto v Evropi. Leta 2010 je bilo na Hrvaškem več kot 6 milijonov mobitelov, prebivalcev pa približno 4,3 milijona. Nemčija je z 80 milijoni uporabnikov na četrtem mestu v svetu, z 29,1 milijarde odposlanih sporočil v letu 2008 pa je bila na prvem mestu v Evropi. Prvo SMS-sporočilo je bilo napisano v angleščini, in to v Veliki Britaniji leta 1992, z vsebino MARRY CHRISTMAS. Britanci so v letu 2000 poslali povprečno 35 sporočil na mesec; leta 2009 so samo na božič odposlali osupljivih 441 milijonov sporočil, v istem letu pa kar 96,8 milijard sporočil. V sodobnosti je uporaba SMS-sporočil tako razširjena po vsem svetu, da lahko postavimo trditev, da smo priče razvoju povsem nove jezikovne različice. SMS-sporočila so postala tehnično in kulturno sprejemljiva komunikacijska oblika, ki prinaša pospeševanje komunikacijskih procesov v globalnem svetu.

Komunikacija s pomočjo mobilne tehnologije se razlikuje od tiste, ki smo je bili doslej vajeni v klasični telefoniji, zato smo v tem članku želeli predstaviti nove komunikacijske oblike, posledično pa tudi spreminjanje jezika ob uporabi SMS-sporočil. Izvedena je bila analiza jezika na 1000 SMS-sporočilih; posebej smo bili

pozorni na pravopisno, grafostilistično, morfološko, sintaktično, semantično in leksično podobo hrvaščine v SMS-sporočilih, ki smo jih pozneje primerjali s tistimi, ki so bili napisani v nemščini in angleščini. Analizo smo opravili na kratkih sporočilih uporabnikov, starih od 11 do 56 let. Rezultat preučevanja je pokazal, da se v SMS-sporočilih pojavljajo elementi pogovornega jezika in se tako začenja obdobje konceptualnega zapisanega govornega jezika. Značilno je vključevanje slikovnih in grafostilističnih elementov, pogosto tudi s področja risane filma, utrjuje nove krajšave, ima dialoški značaj, bistvo te komunikacije je asinhronija, ki je pogosto vizualna (uporablja grafične znake in ne morfemov). Primerjanje elementov pisne in govorne komunikacije nam pokaže, da v SMS-sporočilih prihaja do mešanja teh elementov. SMS-sporočila od pisne komunikacije vsebujejo naslednje elemente diskurza: je pisan, obstaja krajevna distanca, je vizualen in je pregleden kot besedilo. V to besedilo so vneseni naslednji elementi govorne komunikacije: dialoški značaj, delitev situacije, spontanost, zaupnost, površnost in minljivost. Na podlagi preučevanja SMS-sporočil v hrvaškem, nemškem in angleškem jeziku lahko ugotovimo, da se SMS-sporočila bistveno ne razlikujejo, ne glede na to, v katerem jeziku so napisana, prav nasprotno, imajo namreč zelo veliko podobnosti: v vseh jezikih v SMS-sporočilih prihaja do odstopanja od jezikovne norme (na fonološki, pravopisni, morfološki in sintaktični ravni); uporaba telefona kot sredstva za pisno sporočanje, ki pogojuje napake; pogosta uporaba angleških izrazov (v nemških in hrvaških SMS-sporočilih), dialektizmov in vulgarizmov; pogosta uporaba krajšav in grafostilističnih znakov (emotikonov).

Tehnična omejitev na 160 znakov za posamezno SMS-sporočilo močno vpliva na izbiro diskurza in hkrati pogojuje ekonomičnost jezika oziroma kratkost (varčevanje s trudom, prostorom, časom in denarjem). Jezikovna analiza je pokazala, da SMS-sporočila vsebujejo vse življenjske teme, zato je postalo SMS-komuniciranje specifična različica jezika. SMS-sporočila so privlačna sporazumevalna oblika in ne glede na ekonomičnost jezika ne omejujejo komunikacije, pravzaprav nasprotno: spodbujajo jezikovno ustvarjalnost in igro. Leta 2001 je bila, kot zanimivost, z dvema sporočiloma poslana tudi molitev OČE NAŠ. Omejitev na 160 znakov pa ne omejuje niti pisanja romana preko SMS-sporočil.

V članku predstavljamo najpogostejše kritike SMS-sporočil, strah pred osiromašenjem jezika, odstopanje od jezikovnega standarda, neupoštevanje slovnice ipd., hkrati pa predstavljamo tudi pozitivne strani SMS-sporočil kot nosilcev ustvarjalnega načina izražanja. Pisanje SMS-sporočil je mogoče razumeti tudi kot pozitivni doprinos k razvoju pismenosti in ne zgolj za ogrožanje le-te; otroci se, kadar pišejo sporočila, igrajo z besedami in tako hkrati razvijajo tudi jezik. Za pisanje kratkih sporočil je potrebno dobro poznavanje jezika, to pa lahko izkoristimo za to, da mladi razvijajo jezikovne zmožnosti in da ob tem ne ogrožajo standardnega jezika.

SMS-sporočila uporabljajo zasebni jezikovni kod, ki vsebuje specifična pravila.

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