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Multilingualism in Academic Publishing and Higher Education in Croatia

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Abstract: ***The paper deals with the dominant language practices among university teachers and researchers in Croatia with special emphasis on the two dominant languages taught, English and German. The discussed problem relates to the role of English as the lingua franca and the role of German as the second dominant foreign language in the country, as well as the potential presentation of the concept of European multilingualism in the Republic of Croatia. After reflecting on the debate on the role of language choice in academic publishing, i.e., whether the choice of one dominant foreign language is adequate in the search of research insights and truths or whether a richer choice of languages also offers a wider pallette of possible insights, the possibility of 'linguistic imperialism' through the dominance of English is explored. Phillipson's tripartite division of linguicist pro-English arguments is used as the background for the analysis of linguistic practices of Croatian researchers/university teachers. Upon examining the possible linguistic development of different academic disciplines, a dual communicative approach is suggested according to the needs and functions of specific academic domains.***
Keywords: academic publishing, English as a lingua franca, multilingualism, foreign language use, higher education, linguistic imperialism, linguicism

I. INTRODUCTION

Most researchers agree that today's academic communication is predominantly anglophone, meaning that in the wider academic arena research findings are communicated through the medium of English. Some reasons for these developments can be found in an increased political, technological, economic and research power of the Anglo-American world as well as in the changes of educational paradigms on all education levels in the countries of the European Union. The ever stronger impetus of the spread of English from the 1970's onward has effectuated wide acceptance of this language in academic circles and a global linguistic shift in research communication. Still, while a predominant number of academics is rowing the English-speaking boat, voices of concern over this situation and opinions opposing ‘linguistic imperialism’ [Phillipson 19] of the Anglo-Saxon world are receiving increased attention in the debate on the languages of academic research ([21]; [5] - [6]). However, a unified solution for academic publishing does not seem to be at hand, because due to a plurality of research disciplines and their objects of study, - hence also their different levels of immersion in the national cultures and societies, - it demands a differentiated linguistic approach (c.f.[11]). As a result, the debate on the languages of academic research is not only linguistic in nature, but also concerns the question of the function of specific research fields and of the definition of the role of languages in them. On another level, language choice in prestigious social domains symbolises the struggle for political power by the nations whose languages are in question. Of primary concern in this paper are the arguments regarding the communicative needs of research disciplines, for which purpose the dominant views in the debate on the languages of research are presented. In addition, the question of political implications in the framework of Phillipson's theory of ‘linguistic imperialism’ [19] is discussed, serving as the background for the observation of linguistic practices in Croatian research arena. The concluding part of the paper consists of some remarks on the possible twofold linguistic development of research communication.

II. MULTILINGUALISM IN RESEARCH PUBLISHING

A predominant view in the humanities and most social sciences is that the use of one national language as a lingua franca presents an intellectual constraint by imposing a one-sided, currently an Anglo-American, worldview (c.f. [5], [9], [11], [21]). Given the fact that their disciplines are inextricably bound to culture and society, as well as the understanding that languages are expressions of different worldviews, value norms and mentality (c.f. [10] (p.57)), the use of one national language as a lingua franca presents a problem in this field of research.

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While de Swaan [4] (p.78) states that English 'certainly is not a neutral medium – on the contrary, it favors American ideas, American authors', Thielmann [21](p.1) goes even further to speak of Anglo-Saxon academic and cultural hegemony, stating that linguistic diversity is jeopardised by a 'monoculture' and that by ignoring linguistic diversity researchers are also neglecting a wide variety of perspectives in research insights. In his opinion, linguistic pluralism and the plurality of insights are currently being abandoned in favour of gaining wider readership (ibid: 8). While universally used English in its reduced variety is deemed insufficient for the needs of academic research communication, European research cultures open various ways for the society's coping with reality through science, the ways that are grounded in their different linguistic procedures [21](p.8). Another argument against monolingual communication is that it might lead to exclusion of non-native speakers of English from the fully-fledged participation in research (ibid.), as well as to a disconnection in the communication between the scientists and their local (research) communities. Thus, in contrast to Anglocentrism, academic research is said to necessitate a multilingual approach including the preservation of national languages (c.f. e.g. [5], [21]).

From a different point of departure, English as an exclusive language of academic communication is perceived to be of great advantage for researchers in the natural sciences, medicine and economics (c.f. [20], [1]) because it enables a quicker exchange of ideas through the possibility of almost instant mutual communication and recognition by a wider international audience. A large number of academics advocate it as the lingua franca of academia and as a practical means of international communication, even as a culturally neutral medium (c.f. [15]-[17], [2]-[3]). Because of its use by a multitude of non-native speakers, global English is not perceived as an ideology tool or the carrier of certain values, but as a culturally neutral and denationalised language [17] In contrast to seeing it as the symbol of Anglo-American hegemonial force, Brutt-Griffler [2] recognises in it a chance for universal mutual understanding. Furthermore, with its dominance in the publishing domain, this language is of central importance for academic professional advancement. The predominant view is that only in English it is currently possible to participate in the relevant research in a transparent way and as an equal member of the academic research community at international level.

While the arguments for a multilingual approach emphasise the diversity of insights and the role of culture in language, pro-English arguments are predominantly functional. One possible point of view arising from this is that languages have mutually complementary roles, e.g. English is understood as a culturally neutral communicative medium while other languages are seen as identity symbols. However, this issue is disputed (c.f. [10]), because promoting the dominance of English as a neutral communicative medium effectuates the already present diglossic scenario of English plus national language, as identified by Lüdi (2007:133). This kind of development potentially eliminates the use of national languages from the socially important and prestigious domains (e.g. academic research) and leads to a split between English as the only language of literacy on the one hand, and all the other languages as the languages of spoken communication, or non-literacy, on the other.

According to Phillipson [19], most arguments in the promotion of the dominance of English are part of a particular kind of imperial discourse pertaining to unequal division of power between the community of its native speakers as the 'Center' and the communities of non-native speakers of English as the 'Periphery' (c.f. ibid.). He labels it the discourse of linguicism.

In his tripartite categorisation of linguicist discourse, Phillipson's [19](pp. 272) pro-English arguments are ascribed to three types of power as previously identified by Galtung ([8] (p.62); see also [19](pp. 272)).Accordingly, there are intrinsic, extrinsic and functional arguments for English representing respectively innate, resource and structural power. Intrinsic arguments incorporate an innate power in attributing certain characteristics to English, e.g. by describing it as a culturally neutral language rich with expressions, well adapted for discourse in research and science. English-extrinsic arguments are based on the amount of resources provided through this language, e.g. the number of speakers, academic journals and textbooks, teachers, experts etc. English-functional arguments represent structural power, meaning that the language facilitates academic progress, enables access to relevant research, provides cooperation and transparency, effectuates modernisation (c.f. Haarmann 2001:153; also ibid. 1989) etc. As a consequence of linguicism, these three sets of arguments produce an 'imperialist world order' promoted and perpetuated by an imagined community of English speakers, in which this language is equated 'with bounty and other languages with the opposite' [19](pp. 272-3). In addition, linguicist arguments do not seem to be imposed, but are understood as 'common sense', which is characteristical of 'hegemonic beliefs and practices' [19](p. 271). Furthermore, by accepting and approving of a wider use of English, its users are said to legitimate 'linguistic imperialism' not only in their field of work, but also in 'the wider political arena': it means 'the legitimation of English linguistic imperialism in the wider context of a hierarchy of languages and the crystallization of official language policy' [19](p. 271).

In the following section it will be analysed whether the communicative practices of Croatian researchers reflect the promotion and perpetuation of linguicism in academic publishing.

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III. LINGUISTIC PRACTICES IN THE CROATIAN ACADEMIC SPHERE

A. Methodology

Linguistic practices of Croatian researchers-teachers analysed here were ascertained on the basis of a questionnaire disseminated online among university teachers and researchers in Croatia. Quantitative analysis was carried out in SPSS Statistics 17.0. Respondents represented in the questionnaire are university teachers holding doctoral degrees in one of the following academic fields: medicine, biology, chemistry, legal sciences, economics, psychology, pedagogy, philosophy and history. Of the overall 232 returned questionnaires, the below stated questions were answered respectively by a minimum of 171 and a maximum of 183 respondents. The following questions were asked:

1) Should in your opinion Croatian universities offer international study programmes in foreign languages and, if yes, in which foreign language?
2) Should in your opinion Croatian universities offer national study programmes in foreign languages and, if yes, in which foreign language?
3) Most research journals today are published in English. According to you, is it necessary in your field of research to also publish work in Croatian?
4) Which foreign language(s) do you choose when publishing your work? What are the main reasons why you choose to use some foreign language in your work?

B. Results

In view of the questions pertaining to the languages of teaching in international study programmes in Croatia, most respondents (96%) consider English to be the necessary language, while 6,4% would also add another language according to the needs of a given programme (e.g. German, French or Italian). While this result was expected, it was not foreseen that the favoured language choice for the national study programmes would also point to a high preference of English. A large number of respondents (70%) would introduce that language in the national study programmes, while a smaller number of them (11%) would add German, French or Italian with respect to the specific needs of a given programme. These results point to the possibility of future development toward a diglossic situation in the national university programmes, with the combination of English as an international and Croatian as the national language.

Most scientists included in this study consider their national language – Croatian – to be important (75%) in publishing their work, but 14% of them do not share this opinion. The choice of foreign languages in publishing is quite uniform, as 77% of respondents prefer exclusively English as the language of published research. Similar to the tendencies in the choice of the languages of teaching, the answers regarding the languages of publishing point to diglossic preferences which include English and Croatian. Moreover, with some researchers there are tendencies toward a complete language shift to English research publishing.

Further insight into the issue of foreign language use of Croatian university teachers was gained through a qualitative analysis of the reasons for or against the usage of one or another foreign language.

The responses to the open question on the reasons for the researchers' language choices in their work were analysed against the background of Phillipson's framework of 'linguistic imperialism'. As the most frequently chosen foreign language was English, the explanations for the choices were categorized into the following groups of answers: 'English as a choice', 'English as an imposed language' and 'Not only English'.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings point to a tripartite division between choices as 1) English as a Choice, 2) Imposed English, and 3) Multilingual options. English by choice is dominantly represented by the field of medicine and economy, and is characterised by the arguments for an exclusive use of English as the lingua franca of academic communication, which enables open communication with the international community. Approximately 17% of the overall number of responses (100% = 179) account for this group, in which all the three sets of linguicist arguments can be identified. Some intrinsic arguments are the statements like the following: 'English is the Esperanto in today's world' (resp.0-22), 'I use English because it is universal'(resp. 0-43), 'because it is the official language in research'(resp. 1-89) and because 'formulations [in it] are clearer and easier to understand' (resp. 1-44). Extrinsic arguments are related to the question of resource provision, meaning that a great amount of resources in a given language assures its importance among the resource users. These arguments are exemplified by the statements like the following one:

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'The main reason I choose English in my research and teaching is the fact that an increasing number of research (…) publications is published in that language' (resp. 1-46). In this way, English becomes a necessary choice if one wants to reach new insights and make progress in their field of work. According to the functional line of arguments, English enables openness and transparency in international research. In this respect, respondents argue that communication in it is 'a common current practice [which] enables the widest recognition and accessibility' (resp. 0-11), 'wide readership and better recognition' (resp. 1-91) and 'acces to the international community' (resp. 5-08). 'A paper published in English is accessible in the shortest time frame and made understandable to the greatest number of peer scientists' (resp. 1-26).

In addition to offering transparency and peer criticism, English is viewed as a democratic medium, because 'research results [are made] understandable and comparable to everyone, as this language is used by virtually everyone in the circles of peer researchers' (resp. 3-10). This view, of course, would only be realistic if all scientists were equally proficient in English or if good quality translation services were available and affordable to everyone. In their Anglocentric approach some academics even go so far as to state that their national language is imposed on them as the language of teaching. For example, respondent 1-17 sees herself as 'forced' to teach in Croatian, because she believes that it would be more advisable for students to be taught in English. An interesting and important research question in this respect would concern the linguistic proficiency of those academics that actually teach or plan on teaching their courses in English as a foreign language.

English as an imposed language is the second observed category. The largest number of responses (68% of 179) is found in this group, which is very heterogenous in view of the academic disciplines it encompasses: it is represented by all the research fields included in the questionnaire except medicine and economic science. In contrast to seeing English as the best suited language for academic discourse, these respondents critically reflect on the dominant position of that language in academia. However, the awareness of linguistic injustice is not an incentive to act differently than the majority. On the contrary, most researchers try to adapt to the given situation and satisfy the criteria dictated by the major academic journals and organisations in their field. In this sense, this group does not represent overt, bur covert linguicism, because the researchers see themselves as the linguistically dominated group that is forced to adapt to the dominant groups' rules. In view of the explanations given for the language choices, this group is characterised by the presence of English-extrinsic and English-functional arguments, and the absence of English-intrinsic arguments. An interesting reflection of researchers' communicative practices is given by the following respondent, who observes the dominance of English as linguistic and academic injustice: "I am forced to use that language (it implies an absolute absence of freedom and protectionism and an easier access and [the fact that] research papers [are written by] the researchers from the speaking area of the British Empire) 3. when I think about it, I do not choose the language, it is (...) IMPOSED [respondent's emphasis] on me (resp. 0-76)."

Although English as lingua franca is seen as an obstacle to linguistic equality (not only) in research, 'Anglophonisation' is accepted by most respondents for the purpose of international recognition of their research results.

The third option observed is the choice of multilingualism. The least represented group (15% of 179) predominantly consists of the responses given by the researchers from the fields of legal sciences, philosophy and history. These respondents emphasise the need for other foreign languages in research, on the one hand because of the geographical and historical contexts of their research areas, and on the other due to their recognition of the cultural value of linguistic pluralism. An example of functional arguments is seen in the importance of German for Croatian legal sciences: 'Croatian legal system is shaped on the basis of German and Austrian [legal systems], [therefore, German] is extremely important for legal scientists' (resp. 0-33). For historians in the geographical area of Central and Eastern Europe not only the classical languages and some more widely known European languages are important, but also the lesser known languages like Hungarian or Turkish (resp.1-32). While the arguments in favour of multilingual practices are related to the functional (resources) and intrinsic aspects (culture), they seize to be linguicist when the communicative space is not (intended to be) monopolized by only one language. Thus, the arguments in this group can be labeled as non-linguicist.

After examining the current situation in academic research fields and looking into the linguistic practices of Croatian researchers, it is instructive to think about the potential consequences of anglicisation and the linguistic options that would better reflect the reality of linguistically plural backgrounds of the members of the international academic community. It is obvious that linguistic diversity is often neglected when the aspects of functionality and economic demands come to the fore. Due to this, two basic approaches in academic communication can be identified: one is the pragmatical, economic-functional approach symbolised by the use of only one language (English), the other is an identity-oriented cultural approach resting on the principle of multilingualism [Žanić 22]. In terms of this sharp distinction, natural sciences might remain anglophone while humanities are expected to maintain their multilingual profiles (c.f. e.g. [7]).

These two approaches potentially offer *modi vivendi* (but not *a modus vivendi*) for different academic disciplines according to their function and purpose. The linguistic choices in the theoretical natural sciences and economics exemplify the preference of the functional approach, with an emphasis on the number of possible readers and the quickest possible dissemination of one's research results. On the other hand, for those disciplines whose objects of study are rooted in a specific culture and society, a multilingual approach is much more appropriate. However, as tendencies toward a reduced number of languages for communication even in the humanities are observed, it remains to be seen whether linguistic pluralism will survive in the international academic communication. In this respect it should be kept in mind that even if researchers-teachers are pushed into the anglophone boat by the national policies' criteria of academic advancement at university, the function of academic research is not exhausted in its economic productivity and immediate availability on the international market. If languages are symptoms of the principles on which a given discipline rests, and of the purpose to be served by a given discipline, then balance should be kept between the pragmatic and the cultural, i.e. between the anglophone and the multilingual approach.

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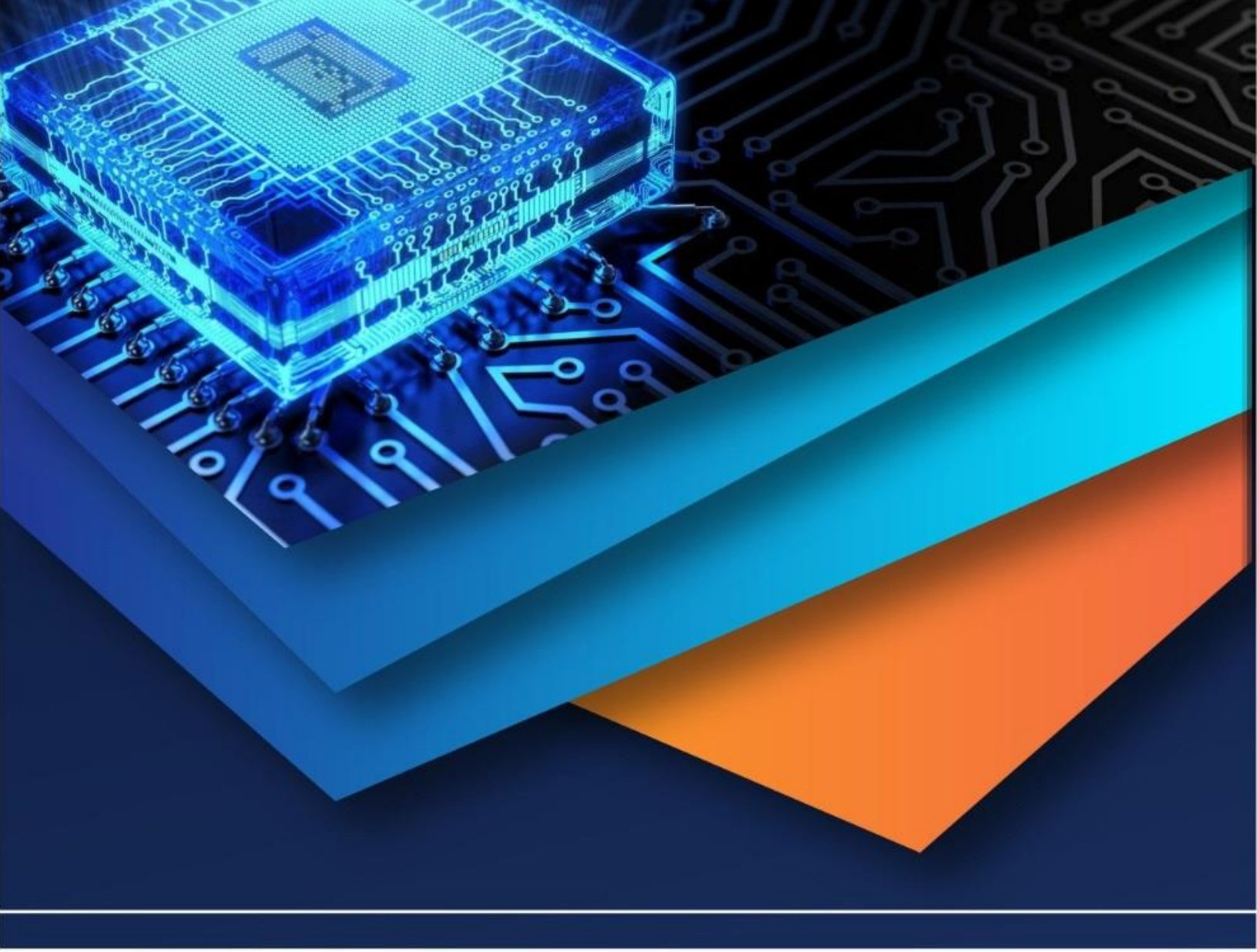

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