

# Professional Language - a Tool against Eurocepticism!?! An example from dental medicine

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# The Western Balkans: Lessons from the Past and Future Prospects – A View from the Danube Region

István Tarrósy – Susan Milford (eds.)



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# PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE – A TOOL AGAINST EUROSCEPTICISM!?! AN EXAMPLE FROM DENTAL MEDICINE

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MARIN VODANOVIĆ

*The aim of this paper is to show how a multidisciplinary and multi-institutional project focused on the development of Croatian professional language can have positive side effects on overcoming the fear of losing Croatian language identity and its possible influence on a reduction in euroscepticism.*

## EUROPEAN UNION – A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENLARGEMENT

Enlargement of the European Union is the process of expanding the European Union (EU) through the accession of new member states. This process began with Belgium, France, (then-West) Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, who founded the European Coal and Steel Community (the EU's ancestor) in 1952. Since then, EU membership has grown to twenty-seven member states (1973 – Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom; 1981 – Greece; 1986 – Spain and Portugal; 1995 – Austria, Sweden and Finland; 2004 – Malta, Cyprus, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Hungary; 2007 – Romania and Bulgaria as EU's newest members). Although Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Greece, Spain and Portugal joined the European Economic Community between 1957 to 1986, the EU was formally established in 1993 when the Maastricht Treaty came into force. Today EU presents an economic and political union of 27 member states. Currently, accession negotiations are under way with the following candidate countries: Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Iceland. Potential candidate countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244, Montenegro and Serbia.

## EUROSCEPTICISM

Euroscepticism is a general term used to describe criticism of the European Union, and opposition to the process of European integration. "A Eurobarometer survey of EU citizens in 2009 showed that support for membership of the EU was lowest

in Latvia, the United Kingdom and Hungary “(Standard Eurobarometer 71, 2009). Traditionally, the main source of euroscepticism has been the notion that integration weakens the nation state. Other views occasionally seen as eurosceptic include perceptions of the EU being undemocratic or too bureaucratic. Hard euroscepticism is opposition to membership of, or the existence of, the European Union in its current form as a matter of principle. “Soft euroscepticism is support for the existence of, and membership of, a form of European Union, but opposition to particular EU policies, and opposition to a federal Europe” (Euroscepticism, 2010).

Although public opinion about joining the EU varies and is influenced by actual political events, in the last few years there has been a decline in the desirability of joining the EU in Croatian public opinion. “There is also a gap between the political elite and the citizens of Croatia with regard to the popularity of the European integration process” (Štulhofer, 2006). People are afraid of losing their national identity, language, culture, history or religion as a result of becoming a member of the European Union. Wrong interpretations and a lack of understanding the differences between the Croatian and Serbian languages shown by some EU opinion makers have increased these fears.

#### **EU POLICY OF OFFICIAL MULTILINGUALISM**

The EU has 27 member states and 23 official languages. Each member state, when it joins the Union, stipulates which language or languages it wants to have declared official languages of the EU. The EU policy of official multilingualism as a deliberate tool of government is unique in the world. The EU actively promotes the freedom of its peoples to speak and write their own language (Europa languages portal, 2010; European Commission – Europeans and languages, 2005; European Commission – Many tongues, one family, 2004; Languages of the European Union, 2010).

In 2001 and 2005 two Eurobarometer surveys were conducted, which showed interesting results. “Between 5 November and 7 December 2005, 28 694 citizens in the 25 EU countries as well as in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey were asked about their experiences and perceptions of multilingualism as part of the wave 64.3 of the Eurobarometer” (European Commission, 2005). In each country, the survey covered the population with a minimum age of 15 and having citizenship in one of the Member States. In the acceding and candidate countries, the survey covers nationals of those countries as well as citizens of the EU Member States resident in those countries who

have a sufficient command of one of the respective national language(s) to answer the questionnaire.

In 2001, 53% of respondents said that they could speak a language in addition to their mother tongue. By 2006, this had risen to 56%. The most multilingual EU citizens are the Luxemburgers, where 99% of people know at least one other foreign language, followed by Slovaks (97%) and Latvians (95%). In 2006, 28% of respondents spoke two foreign languages, compared to 26% in 2001. The most popular second languages are English, French and German, followed by Spanish and Russian. Smaller Member States with several state languages exhibited greater levels of multilingualism. Only six Member States had a majority of mono-linguists in 2006: Ireland (66% of people not knowing any other language than their mother tongue), the United Kingdom (62%), Italy (59%), Hungary (58%), Portugal (58%) and Spain (56%). In the acceding and candidate countries the use of languages other than the mother tongue in the situations mentioned here appears to be modest. Among the group with the highest use, 37% of Croatians, 33% of Bulgarians and 30% of Romanians indicate that they use foreign languages while watching television or films or listening to the radio, whereas 29% of Turkish have conversations with friends in a language other than their mother tongue. Strong agreement on the benefits of multilingualism is also perceived in the candidate and acceding countries. 95% of Turks and Bulgarians consider that knowing foreign languages is useful, and 88% of Croatians and 87% Romanians are of this view. A reasonable share of EU citizens (67%) agrees with the statement that language teaching should be a political priority, 29% being entirely in agreement with this view. Citizens in Croatia (55%), Finland (53%) and in Slovenia (49%) are most likely to stand against this view (Special Eurobarometer, 2006). The Special Eurobarometer report 237-Wave 63.4. published in 2005 showed that in the acceding and candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia), the proportion of respondents being able to have a conversation in another language than their mother tongue is below the EU average, except in Croatia (European Commission, 2005).

**PROGRAM: DEVELOPMENT OF CROATIAN PROFESSIONAL TERMINOLOGY  
(2007-2010)**

In 2007, the National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia started a "Development of Croatian Professional Terminology" program in order to foster the development, systematization

and unification of Croatian professional terminology, the organization of terminological workshops and education of experts who will continuously oversee Croatian terminology. This program is intended for experts employed at universities, faculties, polytechnics, public institutes, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and state agencies or experts on any other legal basis involved in the work of state institutions, independently or in cooperation with other institutions and/or experts from within the country and from abroad (The National Foundation for Science, 2010).

#### **“CROATIAN DENTAL TERMINOLOGY PROJECT”**

The “Croatian Dental Terminology Project” started in 2009 and receives a grant from by The National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia. Its lead institution is the University of Zagreb School of Dental Medicine and the main cooperating institution is the Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics.

The project fits into two basic areas of National Strategy for Science Development: development of information technology and sociocultural transition from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society. The project has a two-pronged aim: the building up of a Croatian dental terminology and Croatian dental terminology usage popularization among students of dentistry, dentists, scientists and all other interested parties. The project is open to all interested parties (Vodanović, 2009).

The project has received good press: more than 50 doctors of dental medicine (about 2% of all active dentists in Croatia) from three Croatian universities—the School of Dental Medicine of the University of Zagreb and the schools of medicine of the universities of, Rijeka and Split—with a few dental clinics and private dental practices joining the project and actively participating (pro bono) in the development of the Croatian dental terminology. In cooperation with the Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics, more than 3,000 dental terms coming from foreign languages (mostly English and German) were analyzed, edited and adopted according to Croatian grammar. In order to realize the aims, a project website with an online database of dental terms was established, dental terminology manuals were prepared and terminology workshops were organized.



**PROFESSIONAL TERMINOLOGY AND EUROSCEPTICISM**

Although this project was not focused on any investigation of euroscepticism, the high response of the dentists and their active participation in the project, including an online survey performed for the purpose of project quality assessment, showed very interesting results regarding the desirability of the EU. Although work on the online project database and the editing of dental terms is time-consuming, project team members found enough free time to give their own contributions. They did so for free without any financial compensation. Some of the participants said that they were honored to be a member of a team working on the development of the language of their profession (dentistry), and that this was a chance to become “a part of history”.

Because it is well known that many people are afraid of losing their national identity, language, culture, history or religion when becoming members of the European Union, during the project quality assessment an online questionnaire was prepared in order to determine the participants’ opinion about the project and its influence on the preservation of the national language. The results of the online survey showed that 90.9% participants of the project considered it very important for the development and preservation of Croatian language and national identity. The remaining survey participants (9.1%) considered it important.

**CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE**

Although the primary idea of the CDT project was not an investigation of such social phenomena during the EU accession process as euroscepticism, it was very interesting to analyze the side effects of the project. The unexpected high response of the dentists and their active participation in the project showed that they were ready to protect their language identity in a specific but very effective and productive way. This can be an excellent indicator showing that social initiatives based on the principle of “many mickle makes a muckle” could be very effective if they are well prepared and precisely targeted.

As a permanent achievement of this project, and in cooperation with the Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics and foreign language experts, an online multilanguage dental dictionary (probably: Croatian, English, German, Italian and Latin) with advice on Croatian grammar will be developed and available for free. A Beta version is already available at: [www.dictionaryofdentistry.com](http://www.dictionaryofdentistry.com).

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