

# National ambiguity: a historical perspective



## REPRESENTATION OF CROATIAN-ITALIAN NATIONAL AMBIGUITY AND MULTILINGUALISM IN PRO-CROATIAN NEWSPAPERS IN AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN PULA

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# Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867 - 1918)



# Istria



# Austro-Hungarian Pula

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- 1850's: main naval port of the Empire
- growth and modernisation
- immigration, cultural and linguistic diversity
- partial overlapping of ethnic groups and social classes
- Italianisation of Croatian population, national ambiguity
- Italian and Slavic national movements, growing political conflicts
- development of Croatian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, construction and consolidation of Croatian national identity

# Pro-Croatian newspapers in Pula



- *Naša sloga* (1870-1915)
  - biweekly/3x weekly, 4 pages, 500/1000+ copies, Croatian
- *Omnibus* (1904-1912)
  - daily/weekly, 2-4 pages, 2000 copies, Italian/Croatian/German
- *Diritto Croato* (1888-1894)
  - weekly, 4 pages, max. 770 copies, Italian

# Representation of national ambiguity



- how are Croatian-Italian national ambiguity and multilingual practices represented?
  - not mentioned (“Croats” and “Italians” as given, unproblematic categories; identification with “Croats”)
  - represented very negatively (lack of national awareness, lack of consistency, conformism, opportunism, disloyalty, being “lost”)
  - aggressive discursive strategies – construction of a collectivity through public shaming
  - politicisation of language practices in public space

## Naša sloga, November 29<sup>th</sup> 1894

Žalimo k tomu, da ženski sviet i u samoj „Čitaonici“ neće, da se odreče nesretnog talijančarenja i švabčarenja, dočim je istina da sve gospodje i gospodjice, što u nju dolaze znadu ili hrvatski ili slovenski.

Mnogokrat se nesmje niti kuditih lahkoumnih ženskinja; ali zato su ukora vriedni i, stiditi se mogu, oni mužkarci, koji ne paze na to, da jim žene, kćeri, sestre i drage goje uz ljubav prama njima, takodjer ljubav prama narodnomu jeziku.

Za sada dosta, a ako uztreba bič će biti oštiji, te će „Jurina i Franina“ i sa imeni na polje.

*“That will do for now, but, if necessary, the whip will be harsher and we will reveal actual names.”*

## Omnibus, January 9<sup>th</sup> 1906

*“There are several sons and daughters in the family, who, of course, all learned their mother’s language and we hope that they won’t discard it in the future either.”*

† Ana udova Re rodjena Jurlina.  
Nedjelju po podne pokopana je na gradskom groblju u Puli, gdje obitelj imaše odprije grobnicu. Pokojni njezin muž Re bio je rodom iz Romanje, nastanjen u Medulinu, gdje se bavio kamenarstvom. Od te porodice ostalo je više sinova i kćeri, koji dakako naučiše svi majčin jezik, te se nadamo da ga i od sada neće baciti pod noge. Pokojnica, slabotna od zdravlja bila je marljiva gospodarica.  
Pokoj njezinoj duši !



## Omnibus, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1906

**Barba Mijo neće „per zakaj“.**

U petak poslje podne došao je barba Mijo iz Vinkurana u trafikku Marchesan na Foru, te je kupio par novčanih naputnica. Uzev iste u ruku zapita prodavača: »že quešto per talian o per zakaj? perchè mi novojo per »zakaj.« Prodavač ostade malko začudjen, videć seljaka u hrvatskim tiesnim hlačama, a pod malom čepicom i u suroj domaćoj kabanici takva šta izreći. Odgovori mu: kome che la vol, ghe že anke per tedesko.

A znate zašto barba Mijo tako govori? Jer je bio blizu jasala (manjadore); a kad je malo dalje od nje n. pr. u krčmi Sma-reglia, kaže da će svakomu zube razbit, koji mu reče da je »šćavo«, jer on da je »slavo«. Ali, barba Mijo ako i jeste »delikato komunale« vi ste takodjer — po Vašu i »slavo«, pak je više nego i smješno ako nećete naputnice koja je pisana i u Vašem jeziku. Oli su Vas obladala lita?

# Public shaming



- singling out individuals and exposing their language practices to public critique and ridicule
- feeling of being in the public eye/ear, gossip
- awareness and self-control of one's language practice
- feeling of duty and shame/guilt
- indirectly scolding all readers who do not use Croatian as often as they could

# Construction of the collectivity



- authors/editors as a moral authority over readers
- control over language practice of *all* readers
- public as means of control over individuals
- isolating individuals – collectivity subjectified, individual objectified
- *any* individual can be in this position!
- mutual control and self-control - collectivity constructed as already objectified

# Dual positions



- the individual as part of the collectivity *and* objectified at the same time
- newspapers *depend* on the readership and position themselves as moral authority *over* them
- heterogeneity in the readership, dual role of the newspaper – “convinced” and “undecided” readers, consolidating and asserting authority

# Conclusion



- use of “national” languages in public space as expression of national loyalties
- newspapers – important contributor to politicisation of language use
- clear, unambiguous, consistent and openly expressed Croatian/Slavic identification and use of Croatian language encouraged/enforced
- ambiguous identification not mentioned or discouraged/ridiculed
- indirect threat to all readers – authoritarian collectivism

# Questions



- how strong can this collectivity be?
- effect on the actual use of Croatian?
- less pressure on people of Croatian origin who don't speak any Croatian?

Thank you!

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