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Contests and nominations for new words – why are they interesting and what do they show¹

During the last 15 years the Croatian linguistic journal *Jezik* has been organizing contests for the best words which had appeared in the previous year or has encouraged the readers to find replacements for unnecessary loan words or those native words which – because of some features – did not meet the requirements of the Croatian language system. Such contests or nominations very often bring about numerous comments and are frequently perceived from a rather negative position. Many people find them inappropriate because they link them exclusively with purist language attitudes and have the impression that such type of contest is specific just of this journal. Examples from a number of other languages, however, show that contests and nominations for the best, the most prominent, the most imaginative, the most (un)necessary or even the worst words is something that is quite common regardless of whether a language has a strong purist tradition or is, on the contrary, open to all possible foreign influences. The article brings an overview of various types of contests and similar activities in several countries, deals with criteria that are being set in these contests, and gives examples of words that were chosen as the best ones within certain categories. The aim of the contribution is to show to what extent the so called average speakers of a language can be perceived as active participants in the evaluation of the newly coined words, what their opinion about certain proposals is and can one expect that the reactions of the wider public will influence the use of new words. The article is primarily focused on the Croatian situation and the reaction of the media to the final results of the contest for new words published in *Jezik* in June 2007.

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1. Introduction

It is a well known fact that the vocabulary of language is not a closed system but is constantly being enriched by new words both those which are borrowed from other languages and those which are coined from native material. Thus all languages are subject to the acceptance or creation of neologisms because of the social and technological development which brings along new phenomena to which new words are necessarily linked. The triggers to create new words are present above all in communication: at a certain moment the speaker finds out that the words he has at the disposal in his mother tongue cannot express a new concept, at least not precisely enough, because a word for it is missing. One can proceed in two ways: one will either take a foreign word which, within the course of time, might become a loan word or one can create a new word with elements of one's mother tongue (it happens more seldom because it asks for more time and inspiration). Both ways are common in all languages regardless of their being open to foreign influences and ready to integrate foreign words or more purist in the sense that they try to coin new words out of their own linguistic resources.

It is clear that such neologic procedures are linked solely to denominative neology because they answer the need to communicate a new experience and are not inspired by aesthetic considerations but by the necessity to be efficient in communication.²

2. Interest in new words

Neologisms are language segments that raise much more comments and opinions of the media and the so called general public than any other segment. It is usually manifested in frequent articles in newspapers where new words are being listed, criticized or praised, in publishing *ad hoc* glossaries in which new words from a certain – at a given moment – accented field of interest are brought, in letters to the editor in which “average” readers write on their views about a certain neologism, in discussions on Internet forums etc. This is certainly an aspect which should not be neglected by those who create the environment for the entrance of new words into the vocabulary of a language.

Due to the fact that neologisms are a category that is much more ephemeral than the rest of the lexis this quality of being popular for a short time is both an advantage and a disadvantage: the characteristic of novelty is always attractive so every new word appearing in a neutral text imposes itself to the reader and calls for his attention. The ephemeral popularity of some new words on the other hand is mostly due to the decline of interest for the concrete object or notion that a particular neologism denotes.

It is mostly linguists or persons who have at least some interest in terminological issues who decide which word is acceptable, which of the proposed ne-

² C. f. Guilbert, 1975: 40.

ologisms should be given a “green light” and which one should not. Tafra (1999: 279) says that “lately the mass media almost daily bring advices about language issues and that very often laymen participate in the discussions; there have also been quite a number of reference books with an advisory purpose. All these make the average user of the language rather confused.” Special columns about language matters where journalists comment about certain trends in language and judge what is good and what is bad are quite common in many newspapers.³ Of course, such judgements are mostly subjective and it is a question whether their views about certain usage are in agreement with those of other speakers of the language. The wider public, on the other hand, has never been asked to give their opinion about language issues – including new words – but, as much as linguists would think they do not have an opinion, they do and they are willing to share it with others.

It seems that people in general feel it as an imposed rule when new words are proposed to them, especially if these words are meant to replace some existing ones. Such recommendations are mostly perceived as a consequence of linguistic purism which is rather seldom seen as a means of enriching the vocabulary of a language but much more frequently from its negative side. It must be said, however, that there is always a certain number of people who like the idea of inventing new words. The motives are different: while some support purist ideas and feel that their mother tongue has been threatened by the influx of foreign (during the last few decades mostly English) words, others, it seems, just like to play with words, to be more precise, like to create neologisms using various potentials a language can offer. Such activities are often supported – or even initiated – by linguistic institutions or journals in many countries. However, we must say that this kind of contests and nominations of best words differ in certain aspects. Basically there are two types: 1. the ones which focus on new words in general, regardless of their origin and, 2. those which start from more purist premises and ask for new words that would replace (unnecessary) loan words. In some cases it is the general public who is encouraged to create new words, in others it is the linguistic experts who are in search for new words which had recently entered the language. There are also contests which award prizes to outstanding actors, TV-presenters or politicians who are perceived as the ones who care for their mother tongue and its cultivated use. Although activities related to the nominations and contests for new words depart from different attitudes to neologic procedures they all have similar goals: to increase the interest of the speech community for new vocabulary items and to encourage an active participation in their evaluation.

3 E. g. William Safire who has a column about language in the *New York Times* and who calls himself a ‘linguistic activist’ (J. Aitchison, 2004: 258–259); in Croatia e. g. the journalists Josip Pavičić who in the daily *Vjesnik* had the columns *Words, words, words* and *Newspeak* for nearly twenty years commenting on the usages and abusages of language and Inoslav Bešker who in several newspapers and magazines from time to time wrote about linguistic problems.

According to Thomas (1991: 96–97) public campaigns in which purists try to promote their ideas are dating back to the 19th century already. Thus e. g. the Hungarian Academy offered prizes for essays on measures to be taken for the correction of Hungarian, in the 1930s newspapers (e. g. *Nemzeti sport*) organised competitions to create native sporting terminology which – because of a great interest – have shown that the readers are not indifferent to these problems. Competitions of this kind were popular in Poland as well so e. g. before the Second World War a prize was awarded for the neologism *drapacz szmur* as a replacement for *skyscraper*.

The aim of this article is to try and find answers to several questions related to the mentioned contests and nominations:

1. Who does such a contest or nomination address?
2. What can be expected as an outcome of such a contest?
3. To what extent do such contests influence the average speaker of a language?
4. How many words of those chosen or coined by the readership are really necessary?
5. Are there criteria which should be obeyed if one would like a new word to be widely accepted?

3. Contests, nominations and similar activities

As it was already said contests and nominations for the most prominent or the best words of a year are relatively frequent. It is obvious that in different countries they are organized on different premises depending on the aims and on the linguistic situation and language planning attitudes in the respective country. There is no doubt that in communities where a higher degree of purism is present the organisers of the contest will expect the potential participant to *create* neologisms which might replace unnecessary loan words. In those which are more open to foreign influences the contest or nomination will mostly be directed to *reporting* on new words found or heard in the media or elsewhere. We shall give a short overview of some contests and similar activities to demonstrate how they function and what is their purpose; the focus, however, will be on contests in Croatia and the reactions to them.

3.1. Germany

The German language society (*Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache – GfdS*) has various activities and discussions concerning the German language: already in 1978 its journal *Der Sprachdienst* launched a section devoted to new words of a given year. Thus “Wörter des Jahres” has been a place where one can find the most prominent words or expressions which characterized a certain year, regardless of their origin: thus both new-coined German words as well as loans appear side by side. They are chosen by a jury consisting of language experts from the *GfdS*. It is interesting to note that the words that have been chosen are not evaluated so the choice does not imply any suggestions or

recommendations regarding their usage. In 2006, e. g. one of the neologisms was *Rechtschreibefrieden* (alluding to discussions about new German orthography), in 2005 *Tsunami*, in 2003 *SARS/Sars* and *googeln*, in 2001 *der 11. September*, *Anti-Terror-Krieg*, *Homo-Ehe*, in 1996 *Sparpaket*, *Globalisierung*, *Homepage*, in 1995 *anklicken*, in 1994 *Jackpot*⁴ etc. What one can see is quite a number of words related to concepts, events, natural catastrophes etc. that have been globally known so many of these neologisms appear in almost all languages – either as loans or as loan translations. The words of the year in German, unlike in some other languages, are not being ranked according to their acceptability or attractiveness but are just listed as the ones that marked a certain period of time. On the other hand the *GfdS* gives book prizes to readers who send in their nominations for the word of the year – the word they nominate has to be among the top ten on the list. There are also other prizes awarded: thus, every two years the s. c. *Medienpreis für Sprachkultur* is awarded to a journalist or publicist who in his work has been promoting a cultivated, correct and creative use of the German language. In 2006 e. g. it was Günther Jauch, the moderator of the TV production *Who wants to be a millionaire*. In 2007 issues of *Der Sprachdienst*⁵ several contests have been organized: one which calls the readers to find out the origin of the idiom “Hier irrt Goethe”, another which asks them to find as many words for *Geld* ‘money’ (either in standard German, dialect, colloquial speech or slang), a third one that encourages the readers to find the best imported word (‘Wörter mit Migrationshintergrund’, or, ‘das beste eingewanderte Wort’). The latter – unlike the others where the prizes are books – will award a one-week stay in the country of origin of the chosen loan word!

Having in mind the fact “that *Der Sprachdienst* has always endeavoured to be a connection between research and society and has presented its scientific themes in a generally understandable and appealing way”⁶, it is clear that many of the 3.200 copies of the journal appearing every two months, are being read by different profiles of readers and certainly can be regarded as a source of information on various language issues, including new words.

It is also important to note that under the section *Kritisches und Normatives* within a number of entries included in the dictionary *Neuer Wortschatz*⁷ the reader can find the information that a certain neologism has been chosen among the words of the year in *Der Sprachdienst*. (e. g. *Outing* in 1992, *Ostalgie* in 1993, *Datenautobahn* in 1995, *Doppelpass* in 1999, *simsen* in 2001, etc.).

3.2. The USA

The *American Dialect Society* started nominations for the New Word of the Year in 1990 at its annual meeting⁸. Various categories were suggested: Most

4 For more see <http://www.gfds.de>.

5 *Der Sprachdienst*, Hefte 3, 5, 7/2007.

6 See under Publikationen in <http://www.gfds.de>.

7 *Neuer Wortschatz. Neologismen der 90er Jahre im Deutschland* (2004)

8 A. Metcalf, 2002: vi.

Original, Most Outrageous, Most Useful, Most Amazing, Most Unnecessary and Most Likely to Succeed. After a lively discussion the members of the society voted the New Word of the Year 1990: *bushlips*. The word meant 'insincere political rhetoric', referring to president George H. Bush's declaration "Read my lips: no new taxes". Although the word itself seemed interesting to linguists, it was not used very often and it never reached the status of a dictionary entry. As Metcalf says, everybody is aware of the fact that a great number of words enter the vocabulary every year but the question is which ones will succeed and, above all, why. Several aspects have proven to be important in this respect, and Metcalf poses four questions the answers to which should enable one to define the criteria for coining (successful) new words:

Why are prominent new words often just a flash in the pan?

Why are not-so-prominent new words often the most successful?

Why do successful new words often turn out to be older than we thought?

And above all: How can one pick the winner? What are the qualities that make for success?⁹

The voting for new words of the year has also shown that the restriction to new words that had not yet been included in dictionaries was not acceptable as it became obvious that many words which were nominated were not quite new but for some reason prominent in a certain year.

It is interesting to see which words were chosen in some of the years following the 1990 first call for nominations. They fall into several categories, thus, apart from *bushlips* which was chosen as Word of the Year, in 1990 the Most Likely to Succeed was *notebook PC* and *right-sizing*. Most Amazing in the same year was *bungee jumping*. In 1991, Word of the Year was *mother of all*, Most Likely to Succeed *rollerblade*; in 1992, Most Original was *Franken-*, Most Useful *grunge*; in 1993 Word of the Year was *information superhighway*, Most Imaginative *McJob*; in 1994 Word of the Year was *cyber*, Most Trendy *dress down day* or *causal day*; in 1995 Word of the Year as well as the Most Likely to Succeed was *World Wide Web* and its variants *the Web*, *WWW*, *W3*.

The American Dialect Society's quarterly journal *American Speech* has a column entitled "Among the new words" which used to be edited by J. Algeo, lately by W. Glowka. The journal – as it is said on its web-site¹⁰, "is not committed to any particular theoretical framework, and issues often contain contributions that appeal to a readership wider than the linguistic studies community." This is important to know because the new words appearing in the column most likely reach quite a big number of readers of different profiles and thus possibly spread their use to a greater extent.

3.3. Poland

Although Polish has been known for its traditionally purist attitudes and in spite of the fact that there is a law which regulates the use of foreign words

9 A. Metcalf, 2002: xi.

10 <http://www.dukeupress.edu/americanspeech/>

and loans in Polish, in everyday speech there are still many of them, especially those of English origin. This is why the weekly *Politika*¹¹ decided to open a contest under the title *Polonize it yourself!* in which the readers were asked to propose new words – Polish equivalents – for a hundred foreign words. The reaction was amazing: 2000 coupons were sent to the editorial board, each having from 3 to 300 new words so altogether 21000 proposals arrived. The jury – consisting of linguists – had a difficult job to choose the best ones, especially having in mind the fact that many readers just wanted to have fun and proposed neologisms regardless of their chances to enter the language. Others who acted more seriously managed to create a number of quite successful new words out of which 25 were chosen as the best ones: *hasłonosz* instead of *banner*, *mamitto* for *blue box*, *gorsik* for *body*, *chłopela* for *boys band*, *drzymatka* for *caravanning*, *licobór* for *casting*, *paraderki* for *cheerleaders*, *hasłarz* instead of *copywriter*, *budotwórca* for *developer*, *maszynista* for *didżej* (Engl. DJ), *listel* instead of *e-mail*, *orzeźwiacz* instead of *energy drink*, *gratik* for *gadżet* (Engl. gadget), *idolatki* for *groupies*, *kompirat* for *haker* (Engl. hacker), *butlet* for *hamburger*, *noginsy* for *leggings* (Engl. leggings), *farbitwa* for *paintball*, *dziennikap* instead of *researcher*, *półserial* for *sitcom*, *powstaniec* for *stand up*, *podnietki* instead of *stringi* (Engl. thongs), *toktok* for *talk-show*, *skapik* for *top* and finally *twarzysta* for *wizażysta* (Fr. visagiste)¹². Most of these substitutes – according to the opinion of the jury – sound much better than the original (almost all English) models and this is why they have a chance to become part of spontaneous Polish discourse.

3.4. Sweden

Caring about the Swedish language and its usage has always been a firm tradition in Sweden. For many years the *Språkrådet* (a council of the *Institutet för språk och folkminnen*) has been engaged in promoting different activities related to Swedish, one of them being the registering of new words appearing in the language. Until 2007 new words were published in *Språkvård*, a journal issued by the *Språkrådet*, since August 2007 a new paper, the *Språktidningen*, is being published (in 15.000 copies) and from the first appearance has already gained about 6.000 subscribers. The *Språkrådet* publishes lists of various kinds of new words: those which are completely new and those which have existed in Swedish but have appeared lately with a new meaning. Also, both words created in Swedish as well as those imported from other languages are welcome. The corpus of new words is being filled with examples from newspapers and magazines, TV- and radio programmes. Several persons have been engaged in collecting neologisms on a regular basis but the readership is also encouraged to send in their tips concerning new appearances in the language.

11 M. Wolny, »Mrlje na jeziku«, *Kolo*, br. 4, 2001.

12 We want to thank Barbara Kryżan-Stanojević for providing us with the 25 Polish neologisms which – by mistake – were not published in her translation of the quoted article.

Thus a form can be filled in and sent to the editorial board. The form requires several elements to be given: the new word itself, an explanation and comment on it, the data about where the word was found or heard, who saw it or came across it, the name and e-mail address of the person who is sending the neologism. It is possible to send in new words that were found somewhere but also those that are personal creations which might be taken as suggestions and need not be accepted widely.

Thus e. g. on the list of the so called *egna ord* 'personal words' (or *egen-påhittade ord* 'personally invented words') in 2007 one can find the verb *albumera* meaning 'to put photos into an album' or *arkitektera* 'to draw a house', *försviken* < *förbannad* 'cursed' + *besviken* 'disappointed', *messianska* – sms-skriftspråket 'SMS-written language', *mäla*, *e-mäla*, *e-mäle* – mejla, mejl 'to mail, e-mail' etc.¹³ Among the *Nyord* 'new words' category in 2007 there were: *fejkkött* 'fake meat' (meat substitute for vegetarians), *sittdansa* 'to dance sitting in a bar stool', *livshack* < Engl. lifehack, *kaffe knatte* 'milk with a little coffee that can be drunk by children' etc.

Although the mentioned activities of the *Språkrådet* cannot be qualified as contests they more or less have the same purpose: to encourage the readers to either send in new words which they had noticed or heard in the media or invent their own new words which they think should replace some existing ones or fill in possible gaps in the vocabulary.

3.5. France

France has been well known for its purist attitudes to linguistic issues and the endeavour of its government and various institutions to maintain a high level of care for the French language and its usage. Although one cannot speak about contests or nominations of the kind mentioned before it is possible to trace certain activities which prove that the general public has actively been engaged in accepting but also proposing new words which should replace a number of loan words, mostly of English origin. *Franceterm*¹⁴ is an Internet site that brings all the terms published in *Journal officiel* issued by the *Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie* which are obligatory in administration and institutions but are also recommended for general use. The site has several sections: one titled *Vous pouvez le dire en français*, another *Vous dites déjà* and a third *Vous pouvez dire aussi*. Their purpose is to make people aware of certain language problems and various solutions they have at their disposal when searching for the right word in a given context. It also encourages them to use French replacements for previously foreign terms. Thus the section *Vous dites déjà* brings the following, already well established, French new words: *baggage à main* instead of *hand baggage/luggage*, *chèque de voyage* for *traveller's cheque*, *équipage* instead of *crew*, *navette* for *shuttle*, *sale d'ém-*

13 Some examples are from *Språktidningen*, some from *Språkrådet's* web site (<http://www.sprakradet.se>).

14 <http://www.franceterm.culture.fr>

barquement for *boarding lounge*, *sans reservation* instead of *go show* and *vol sans escale* for *non-stop flight* (issues of J.o. from 2002 and 2004). The comment is that these terms which might have surprised the audience at the moment of their publication are today part of the general vocabulary. The section *Vous pouvez dire aussi* brings a number of words that are suggested as replacements: *billet ouvert* instead of *open ticket*, *bon d'échange* or *coupon* for *voucher*, *boutique hors taxes* for *duty-free shop*, *compagnie à bas prix* or *compagnie à bas coût* instead of *low cost/fare airline/company*, *complexe touristique* or *station* for *resort*, *organisateur de voyage* or *voyagiste* for *tour operator* etc. (various issues of J.o. from 2000, 2006 and 2007).

In the context of the problems we have been discussing in this article it is significant that the readers of the web site are invited to participate in enriching the French lexis by sending in the propositions for new words. They should give the term they propose, the area to which it belongs, its definition, possible comments on it and their e-mail address. This proves that a wider circle of people is regarded as the potential group for both the spreading the newly coined words in everyday usage but also the creation of potential neologisms.

3.6. Adding new words to a dictionary

The possibility of adding new words to a dictionary is another option of including the speech community into active participation. Thus the *Australian Macquarie Dictionary* – appearing both in print¹⁵ and online¹⁶ – calls the users to send new words or phrases that they came across and think should be registered in the dictionary. The *Add-a-Word* section thus collects the proposed new words which are then considered as potential entries. The online version of the dictionary also has the sections *Word of the year* and *Word of the week* in which the most prominent words are chosen by a committee and through online voting. Thus the committee's choice for 2007 was *pod slurping* 'downloading of large quantities of data to an MP3 player or memory stick from a computer' while the people's choice was *password fatigue* 'a level of frustration reached by having too many different passwords to remember'.

The *Oxford English dictionary* also encourages its users to send in new words: they are asked to email the word they have spotted along with a brief explanation of its meaning and the information on where they came across it. Newly invented words, however, are in most cases not included in the dictionary. In the section *Ask the expert*¹⁷ there is a rather extensive answer to the question "Will you put the word I have invented into one of your dictionaries?"

First of all it is said that "the use of a newly invented word by a single person is not sufficient to merit a dictionary entry (unless the person happens

15 The last printed edition was published in 2005.

16 <http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au>

17 <http://www.askoxford.com>

to be, for example, William Shakespeare or Jane Austin). On the other hand “there is nothing to stop you using an invented word – so long as you don’t mind the fact that it will not be understood and will have to be explained every time. If it genuinely fills a gap in the language, then it may well catch on among a significant section of the population. It will then become part of the language, and if it is used in print (or can be traced, for example, in scripts or transcripts of broadcasts), it will fall within the sphere of the OED’s Reading Programme.”¹⁸

3.7. Croatia

3.7.1. The contest in *Jezik*

The Croatian journal *Jezik* (‘Language’) – published in 3.000 copies – engages in maintaining and improving the Croatian literary language and has sporadically been organizing contests for the best new Croatian words since 1993¹⁹. One of the aims of these contests was to encourage the readers to look for new words and in this way “develop their creativity.” Other aims of the contests were: 1. to popularize new words, 2. to replace unnecessary and unacceptable loan words, 3. to develop a feeling for the Croatian language, 4. to direct the Croatian language in the best direction, 5. to increase the interest for literary language and, 6. to develop the language cultivation.²⁰ The issue of October 1993²¹ published an article about new words²² which were sent to the editorial board upon a call for the best and the worst word that appeared in Croatian during 1992. Many words were sent but most of them were not really new being just part of the former passive layer of the language: *djelatnik* ‘worker’, *vojarna* ‘barracks’, *ravnatelj* ‘director’, *prisega* ‘oath’ etc. On the other hand, M. B. proposed *dopusnica* < dopustiti ‘allow’ instead of *dozvola* < dozvoliti ‘allow’. The comment of the editor in chief was that in spite of it being a very nice word (and also a rather old one because it was already recorded in Parčić’s dictionary of 1901) it had not been able to push aside *dozvola*. It is interesting to note that *dopusnica* has nowadays – after some 15 years – become much more frequent and has been used in many official documents and in various contexts.

For the year 1993²³ the word *suosnik*²⁴ for *koaksijalni kabel* ‘coaxial cable’ was chosen to be the best one, two other computer terms were at the second

18 <http://www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/>

19 Articles related to the replacement of several loan words or inadequate loan translations have been published in the journal much earlier, already at the end of the 1960s, most frequently by S. Babić.

20 Babić, 1993.

21 *Jezik*, 1, Zagreb, October 1993, 29–31.

22 As a matter of fact, it was supposed to be the best and the worst word of the year but also a new word, not yet recorded in dictionaries.

23 *Jezik*, 4, Zagreb, April 1994, 127–128.

24 Invented by Bulcsú László, professor of linguistics.

position (*strojevina* < stroj 'machine' and *očvrsje* < čvrst 'strong' for the Anglicism *hardware*) and *udomitelj* < dom 'home', meaning 'a person or family who takes a parentless child into his/her home and cares for it'²⁵ as the third best. According to the editor in chief "these words were chosen to be the best ones because they show invention in creation, they replace unnecessary Anglicisms and they are in accordance with Croatian word formation".²⁶

Apart from the two mentioned computer terms, several others were among the best ones: *blizinomjer* < blizina 'proximity' + mjeriti 'measure' instead of *proximity detector*, *predočnik* < predočiti 'to show, demonstrate' for *monitor*, *obradnik* < obraditi 'to process' for *data processor* etc.²⁷ The worst words of the same year were *HRD* (pronounced /hrd/) for hrvatski dinar 'Croatian dinar' (a monetary unit of Croatia at that time), and a number of Anglicisms like *AIDS*, *šoping centar*, *hardware*, *software*, *pacemaker*, *joystick/džojstik*²⁸.

The best word of the year 1994²⁹ was *velezgoditnjak* – a substitute for the Anglicism *džekpot* or *jackpot* (by M. J.), the second best ones were *osobnica* for the already existing longer word *osobna iskaznica* 'identity card' (by B. Š.) and *ocjeđivač* < *ocijediti* 'to drain' (a rack for washed plates, glasses and cutlery) (by unknown author). The best word *velezgoditnjak* was chosen among 239 different proposals for the replacement of *jackpot* that were sent in by 56 readers.

Although such contests were not regular so sometimes a year or more passed before the next one was opened it does not mean that there were no propositions for new words and discussions about some of them going on. Thus, possible replacements for the Anglicism *bookmark* were asked for and quite a number of suggestions arrived, the best three chosen being: *dočitnica* < dočitati 'read until a certain page', *straničnik* < stranica 'page' and *štionik* < štilac obs. for čitatelj 'reader'.³⁰

We have to say that the calls for proposals were not always of the same kind. In some cases the best new word of a given year was expected, sometimes the editorial board wanted the readers to find replacements for an already existing word – both a loan word, mostly of English origin, or a native, Croatian one, which did not quite meet the requirements of word formation standards. Thus e. g. in 2003³¹ the readers were asked to send their proposals to substitute the Anglicism *bobi* (E. bobby) and the Croatian term that was coined as *kontakt-policajac* 'contact-policeman' (because these policemen were meant as contact persons for a certain town area). There were also two other proposals, *redarko* or *retko* < red 'order' but as Babić said, "they had little

25 Today it also refers to those who take an abandoned dog or cat.

26 Babić, 1993.

27 László created more than 400 computer terms out of which 12 were chosen by *Jezik* to be the best ones. For *suosnik*, László got a book as a present.

28 Appearing either in original orthography or adapted to the Croatian system.

29 *Jezik*, 2, Zagreb, Dec. 1995, 79–80 and *Jezik*, 5, June 1995, 138–146.

30 *Jezik*, 2, Zagreb, Dec. 1998, 76–79.

31 *Jezik*, 4, Zagreb, Oct. 2003, 150–152.

chances to survive because they did not come spontaneously”³². The readers were encouraged to send new suggestions because *kontakt-policajac* was evaluated as a bad replacement. However, it is still in use, sometimes in parallel to the term *kvartovski policajac* < kvart ‘town area’ + policajac ‘policeman’.

Some of the words that were chosen to be the best ones in the contests have been in use since their appearance while some of them have not been accepted by the speech community. The following ones were attested in various written media and on some Internet sites: *suosnik* ‘coaxial cable’, *strojevina* ‘hardware’, *udomitelj* ‘a person who provides a home for a parentless child’, *velezgoditnjak* ‘jack-pot’, *ocjeđivač* ‘rack for washed plates, glasses and cutlery’, *dočitnica*, *straničnik*, *štionik* ‘bookmark’, *kontakt-policajac*, *kvartovski policajac* ‘bobby’. In the *Croatian National Corpus* (www.hnk.ffzg.hr) only *udomitelj* and *kontakt-policajac* have been registered so far. The word *udomitelj* has also been registered in *Riznica*, another Croatian corpus (www.ihjj.hr). On several sites providing information on various products the word *ocjeđivač* was found in the meaning given above but also in the meaning of ‘lemon squeezer’ (!). *Dočitnik* and *straničnik* were found on the homepages of some libraries. Both *kontakt-policajac* and *kvartovski policajac* were found on the official sites of the Ministry of the Interior and in newspapers.

3.7.2. Reactions to the contest in *Jezik* of 2007

The last contest that was organized in October 2006 and the results of which were published in April and June 2007 seems to have triggered much more interest than the previous ones both from the point of view of the number of participants but also in terms of numerous articles in newspapers, on various Internet sites and even TV-forums.

Prizes will be awarded to authors who propose the first three words from the list of the best ones that will be chosen by a jury, the journal said. The words the contestants propose could either be newly invented or heard or read somewhere. It was important that they had not been listed in any dictionary so far. According to the editor in chief, the principal aim of the contest was not so much to choose the three best new words but more to create an atmosphere that would set free our word formation abilities.

More than 500 propositions arrived to the editorial board of *Jezik* and the six member jury (consisting of three members from the editorial board and three external ones – a writer, a physicist and a medical doctor) chose 47 new words to be candidates for the best three ones. Among them were the following: *istinomjer* for *poligraf* ‘lie detector’³³, *zakulisje* < kulisa ‘stage scenery’ for the Anglicism *backstage*, *dojmovnik* < dojam ‘impression’ for *knjiga dojmova* ‘guest book’, *sučelište* < sučeliti se ‘to confront (each other)’ for the Anglicism *talk show*, *mimoučinak* < mimo ‘past, by’ + učinak ‘effect’ for *nuspojava* ‘side

³² Ibid, p. 151.

³³ Although in Croatian there exists quite an old and well established translation loan: *detektor laži*.

effect', *brzogriz* < brzo 'fast' and griz 'bite' for the Anglicism *fast food*³⁴, *tiskalo* < tiskati 'to print' for *printer*³⁵, *svemrežje* < sve 'all' and mreža 'net', *rukal* < ruka 'hand' for the Anglicism *tenis*, *dvokriška* < dva 'two' and kriška 'slice' or *dvokrušac* < dva 'two' and krušac 'small bread' for the Anglicism *sendvič*, *crtaljka* < crtati 'to draw' for *rebus* 'rebus', *hrvatistika* < hrvatski 'Croatian' for *kroatistika* 'Croatian studies', *šiljevina* < šiljiti 'to sharpen (a pencil)' – this word should stand for 'what is left from sharpening a pencil' (it is an analogy to *piljevina* < piliti 'to saw' meaning 'sawdust'), *izoblika* < izobličiti se 'to lose one's shape' instead of *karikatura* 'caricature', *maložice* < malen 'small' + žice *arh.* življenje 'living' or *sitnobiće* < sitan 'tiny' + biće 'living being' for *mikroorganizam* 'microorganism', *skutnik* < skut 'lap' instead of *prijenosno računalo* (as a matter of fact *laptop* which is a rather frequent Anglicism in Croatian), *krompulja* < unknown origin (!) for *glasna, gruba žena* 'loud, uncouth woman'. Several proposals came for the Anglicism *bajler*: *vodogrijalica* < voda 'water' and grijalica 'heater' or *grijovod* < grijati 'to warm up' and vod 'tube', *mlačnik* and *mlačnjak* < mlačan 'lukewarm' and *prokuhaval* < prokuhavati 'to boil up'.

In the end the choice fell on the following three words and their authors got money prizes:

1. *uspornik* < usporiti 'slow down' instead of *ležeći policajac* 'lying down policeman' (Engl. coll. sleeping policeman, or speed bump, speed hump, speed cushion).
2. *smećnjak* < smeće 'garbage' instead of *kontejner za smeće* (Anglicism kontejner + smeće 'garbage')
3. *raskružje* < raskrižje 'crossroads' + krug 'circle' instead of *kružni tok* or *rotor* (Engl. circular crossroads)

When the June issue of *Jezik* published the final results there was almost no daily paper which did not register the event, many local papers, and radio stations commented on it as well. The majority of the reports in papers and magazines were neutral, just bringing the news without any personal evaluation or criticism on the part of the journalists. Few articles brought critical views on the event as e. g. the one in the weekly *Globus*³⁶ where the author quoted some of the newly coined words and evaluated them. According to his opinion it is unnecessary to replace words and expressions which have been in use for some time already especially if they are "amusing and understandable to everybody" as e. g. *ležeći policajac*. He thinks the new word *uspornik* is a dull word. A very critical article appeared also on an Internet forum³⁷ in which the author expressed her outrage at the fact that among the best 47

34 *Hrana s nogu* (a loan creation) has already been in use for quite a long time in Croatian.

35 Again, another Croatian equivalent has been in use and well established: *писаћ* < pisati 'to write'.

36 Kuljiš, D. »Bacimo uspornik, svemrežje i velezgoditnjak ravno u smećnjak«, *Globus*, July 2007.

37 <http://www.cointerview.net>

words that were chosen by the jury the coinage *krompulja* for 'a loud, uncouth woman' was included. She sees it as a rather sexist attitude on the part of the jury because such a proposal could initiate a wave of what she calls 'verbal terrorism'.

Various portals brought the news about the contest and the biggest Croatian portal³⁸ also had a poll about the results of the contest in which the question was: "What is your opinion about the words which gained the contest?" One could choose between two answers: 1. "Excellent solutions, I shall use them!" or 2. "No chance that I would ever speak like this!"

Out of 608 persons 20% voted for the first option and 80% for the second.

A number of forums on the Internet both in Croatia but surprisingly also in Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁹ and one in Serbia brought discussions concerning the contest that revealed a very lively interest in the issue. Among several forums that had discussions about the contest we did not include one which was obviously visited by people who had some knowledge of linguistic issues. It was evident throughout the comments by the participants that they were well acquainted with both the literature as well as linguistic situations in different countries. Also, the discussion going on was of a rather general nature focusing on the question of being for or against purist trends, the contest in *Jezik* being just a trigger to write about it.

It is our opinion that forums are a rather rich source of data for at least two reasons: 1. the participants feel free to express their ideas and views about all kinds of topics because of being anonymous; 2. their standpoints are not influenced by linguistic experts or institutions.

It is impossible to quote all the comments the participants in the various forums wrote about the appearance of new words so we shall bring only some of them; we think, however, that even a restricted number of these comments can provide us with an idea about how people feel about the discussed problem and what their perception of the newly coined lexical items is.

The research on attitudes of the speakers to lexical innovations has so far been a rather neglected part in studies on neology in general. The majority of studies on attitudes has been aimed at attitudes in relation to the norm, to standard *versus* non-standard varieties, to majority *versus* minority languages, to the status a language has in a community etc.⁴⁰ On the other hand the majority of reports on reactions of the speakers to neologisms has been focused primarily – if not solely – on Anglicisms as one of the most prominent sections within the wide scope of new words in a language. Even these studies do not discuss reactions of the general public but those of linguists, especially the ones concerned about normative problems. When describing the situation in

38 T-portal.

39 Due to the fact that in Bosnia and Herzegovina Croats are one of the three nationalities.

40 A small-scale analysis of the attitudes of the speakers of the Croatian standard to revived words which were meant to replace a number of internationalisms was presented in an article by M. Gnjidić (2000) but the word pairs that were chosen belong to different categories which cannot be compared so the results are only partially acceptable.

Russia, Pfandl (2002: 136–138) explicitly says that he will not deal with letters to the editor and journalists' comments concerning a high impact of foreign influences and a decadency of the Russian language cultivation but with the opinions of linguists who are involved in discussions about the status of Russian and about possible substitutes to a number of Anglicisms. Rathmayr (2002: 169) also focuses on the endeavours of some linguists to suggest native Russian equivalents for certain loans. Although the *Rapport au parlement* from 1999 mentions an increasing interest of French citizens for linguistic issues which is manifested in their letters of protest and questions about language regulations, Kubarth (2002: 191) says that there have been no reports on the attitudes of the public to the state policy regarding Anglicisms. When discussing normativity in French, Picone (1996: 30) says that “while neology is often portrayed as the battlefield between French and English, it may, in reality be more accurate to view it as a linguistic space for negotiating power among different segments of French society, all the more so given that the state has officially laid its claim to the lexicon through the creation of academies and commissions.” He suggests that there should be more interest in extra-linguistic factors which, we suppose, might also include the reactions of the French to both Anglicisms and the newly coined native words which are recommended as substitutes by the government commissions.

We have come across a study on neologisms in interpreting⁴¹ that, among other problems encountered by Swedish interpreters and translators, devotes a section to strategies related to the creation of new words (mostly terms) and the use of those recommended by language planning authorities. Although parallels to the attitudes of an average speaker can be noticed it is obvious that the interpreters' attitudes are founded on completely different views and above all needs in their daily work.

An article by Koharović (1996) partly deals with attitudes of a group of students to forty neologisms chosen from two dictionaries based on differences between Croatian and Serbian. The focus, however, is primarily on the comprehensiveness of these new words and the students' ability to find synonyms for them. In her article on the defensive mechanisms of the Croatian language toward foreign influences B. Kryžan–Stanojević (2001) to some extent also covers the problem of the attitudes to newly coined words discussing the strategies that have to be used if we want the speech community to accept the proposed neologisms.

As we did not come across an already established approach or methodology which would be appropriate to our investigation we had to rely on the interpretation of empirical data elicited from our material.

3.7.2.1. Forum discussions

Within a discussion going on at a Croatian forum⁴² one could find thoughts about new words proposed in the contest, a kind of their evaluation but also general remarks on coining neologisms and their usage in Croatian.

41 Niska, 1998 (<http://lisa.tolk.su.se>)

42 <http://www.forum.hr>

Thus, participant (C)⁴³ was of the opinion that if we have *protutijelo* (*pro-tu = anti*) instead of *antitijelo* in Croatian then we should also have *protugen* instead of *antigen*. It certainly shows that there should be consistency in the vocabulary items, especially if they belong to terminology.

(Sch) answered: “it is most important that the linguists understand that it is not their business to create language – they are just notaries – they are here to note changes a language goes through, the ones they can notice in newspapers or in new literary works.

(G) Seeing the newly coined words from the contest I would suggest that we – who are participating in this forum – also suggest new Croatian words.”

(Sh) “Fine, *uspornik* is OK, I read all about the contest, but sometimes there are such stupid words, anyway, people chose...”

(E) “I read about the contest, there were so many nebulous ideas, some were a catastrophe...”

(Ch) “I am very much in favour for a cultivated use of the Croatian language but I do not see why we should insist on having a single word for a concept or thing when we could easily have an expression with two words: we could, e. g. say *kraj tjedna* ‘end (of) week’ for *weekend* because this is what it really means. Why panically search for a single word?”

(M) “It is true, why should we be slaves of the idea that each notion should be defined by one single word; on the other hand it is always good to hear new ideas. Nobody says that *uspornik* will live as a word, but many similar words which looked strange at the beginning in the end became part of everyday speech.”

(Ch) “You are totally right, especially related to *uspornik* because that stupid expression *ležéći policajac* I usually call *mrtvi policajac* – after so many vehicles have passed over him, he can’t possibly be alive any longer! The fact is, though, that many words have become part of everyday usage because I think that quite a big number of people have a feeling for the Croatian language and for words which have a sense and those which are senseless.”

(E) “Personally, I think that *uspornik* is a very adequate substitute for *ležéći policajac*, I like it, it is easy to pronounce, it looks very literary.”

(SM) “It is my opinion – and it is shared by many people I know – that it is stupid to speak about the creation of new words as an act of serious brain work. We know our language and we are able to express in words whatever comes to our mind. I do not say that it is bad to expel expressions that are not adequate or that are foreign but giving prizes for it is really stupid and a sign that our linguists do not have any work to do in this world.”

(M) “The Croatian language is still alive – yes, we are only 4 million, it is not a large number, but the language is alive. It is not created in a

43 The comments have been translated from Croatian by the authors.

“laboratory” as Esperanto, definitely not, but it does not mean that people should not be encouraged to create new words. I am especially glad that amateurs are given a chance because language is being created and changed among people and not through an agreement of academicians. I do not have anything against English but if something can easily be said in Croatian, why not! What really gets on my nerves are those empty phrases which appear so frequently in everyday speech.”

(SM) “That our language is alive, is just a statement. However, I doubt it that amateurs with their new words or linguists with their orthography variants will help it. The only sensible solution is a better culture in written and oral expression.”

At another forum participants expressed their doubts about the possibility of most of the proposed neologisms to have the power to replace the words they should stand for in the future. Thus (R) wrote about the words which were chosen to be the best nine ones and said:

“I think that it is very unlikely that *rotor* and *hupser*⁴⁴ (uspornik) will come out of use, I am not quite sure about *pojavnica* (token). Maybe *istinomjer* and *pržilo*... well, it is kind of OK. But *nizanka*? Or *smećnjak*, it could mean other things as well: dustpan, dustbin, even a garbage collector.”

(P) “I am sure that in the past even the word *pravopis* ‘orthography’ (you see, it is an abbreviation of *pravilno pisati* ‘write correctly’) was hilarious! As long as our people bring order into Croatian it means that they do the job they are paid for... and it is always good news even if sometimes these words won’t live!!

But you can’t explain anything to those who are ignorant and to whom the interest for the purity of cultural heritage is funny.”

(D) “I have a fantastic proposal for *fast food*: *hitrokruh*! (hitro ‘fast’ + kruh ‘bread’).

(L) “*Žurnožvak* (žurno ‘fast’ + žvakati ‘chew’) is not bad either!”

(A) “Where do we have a congress in Croatia so that we need a replacement for congressman (Anglicism *kongresmen*) in the form of *kongresnik*? We only have the members of Sabor (Croatian parliament) and quite a big number of them. They are sufficient! And this word *pojavnica* (token), what does it mean?”

(D) “I like *raskružje*, I sent it in a report today – I am very curious to hear the comments – will they send it back or not.”

(L) “I think that *raskružje* is a more precise term than *kružni tok* because it also includes the junctions to the circular crossroads.”

(R) “My favourite is *nizanka*. It’s an absolute success [the word *uspješnica* is used by the participant which is an older, relatively well accepted replacement for the Anglicism *hit*].”

44 A colloquial term that has its origin in skiing terminology where it means ‘a bump on the skiing slope’.

(K) “Well, any word you use for a hundred times will start sounding normal.”

(A) “How is it possible that *detektor laži* has become *istinomjer* – a lie (Cr. laž) is not a truth (Cr. istina).”

(L) “I once spoke to an expert for lie detectors to whom I suggested several replacements like *lažopis* ‘lie + write’, *lažokaz* ‘lie + speak’, *mjerolaž* ‘measure + lie’ etc.”

(H) “*Kongresnik* is not a new coinage, it has been used for some time already. *Pržilo* sounds so stupid, *nizanka* even more. It’s not really in accordance with the Croatian language spirit.”

(L) “*Groznokaz* is an excellent coinage for *film strave i užasa* ‘horror film’. It is said that if an imported word after 30 years does not get a Croatian substitute it becomes part of the Croatian language⁴⁵, e. g. *mikrofon*. But word formation as part of the language spirit is a very important task. The word *resume* has for a long time prevailed until the word *sažetak* ‘summary’ appeared which was coined by a Croatian linguist (I can’t remember his name but his last name begins with Š).”

(R) “Šulek? I think it is ridiculous when it is a priori thought that it is absolutely necessary to invent a Croatian word for every [foreign] word.”

(W) “The absolute champion is *suosnik* (*koaksijalni kabel*) from some years ago. I really like this term and use it because it precisely describes the concept. Anyway, why do people find all this so amusing and strange? When the French invent words to replace the English technical terms then nobody thinks it is strange. The language is alive and the need for new words is an everyday phenomenon, the easiest thing would be to use foreign expressions but why? We still use *brzjav* ‘telegraph’. *Brzglas* and *dalekovidnica*⁴⁶ have disappeared which means that they were not good enough. The Poles still use *samolet* and *samohod* for airplane and automobile which clearly shows that new words can very well stay alive and that one should not always take loan words although at first sight it seems easier.”

(P) “I don’t understand how *kongresnik* could enter the contest, it has been used for quite a long time already. I think that *sučelište* is a word which could describe any place where it comes to being face to face with someone so it could be a boxing ring as well.”

(R) “All the English words that come through the informatization of our everyday lives should not be completely substituted by Croatian words, it is, as a matter of fact, an unfruitful try because it goes for a completely new pattern in communication (both through SMS and the internet) and it cannot be stopped and it is absolutely global. Besides, it does not threaten the autonomy and authenticity of a language.”

45 There is no information as to where this statement comes from.

46 These were proposals for *telephone* and *television* which failed.

On a Bosnian forum⁴⁷ we could read a number of totally opposite opinions – positive and negative – about the contest in *Jezik* and the new words which were chosen as the best three ones.

Thus one participant (I) in the discussion said:

“Well, OK, I can accept *raskružje*, but the other two... are they joking or are these words really entering the Croatian vocabulary? Just like that, inventing words? Interesting.”

(K) replied:

“It is not so bad, I would only like to know whether you have to be a Croat to be allowed to participate?”

(J) “They are trying to make their language totally different from Serbian and Bosnian, but they cannot change the verbs so I don’t know why they need it all!”

(W) “They are making their language better and richer. And it is OK:”

(Iv) “... but if there already exist words [for something], why change them? It is clear to me that there is no word for *kontejner*, OK, let’s invent one, but why change [existing words]?”

(M) “I think that it is positive that Croatian has been trying to defend itself from Anglicisms which are omnipresent (not only in Croatia but in the whole world) and has been enriching the language with words that describe a notion with two or more words. I hope they will go on learning from the Germans. It is good that they have renounced from the practice of returning to obsolete expressions with the sole aim to make Croatian different from Serbian at all costs.”

(PDD) “Of course it is OK. There are so many objects and concepts that we describe with two or more words, so I like this contest.”

(Iv) “I think it is useless if words are expelled or changed, e. g. if they are of foreign origin or for other reasons, but if beside a foreign word a new one is coined (a synonym clad in “domestic garments”) then it is welcome. There is nothing wrong in expelling a very long and complex word and substitute it with a new, well sounding and simpler one. The vocabulary of a language is being enriched by keeping the ones that have already been in use and creating new ones.”

(H) “Well, now a journal decides about the creation of new words. How many ‘language coiners’ do we have? In France, it is the Academy of Sciences that decides about every change. For some things it takes 10 years of research and discussions!”

(S) “Here is my contribution: ‘zračnjački otvorik’ (air opening) – meaning ‘an opening for air’, or, as we say ‘prozor’ (window).

(Im) “They tend to create a situation where their neighbours won’t be able to understand them... but, never mind the neighbours... they won’t be able to understand themselves any more. And that’s not OK.”

47 <http://www.sarajevo-x.com/forum>

(Ć) “We have a word for ‘prozor’ (window) – *pendžer*⁴⁸, but the neighbours pretend not to understand it.”

(W) “Even our neighbours will often laugh about some new coined words, their comic appearance will cause laughter with Croatians as well which is quite understandable in these times of “linguistic turning points”. But with time passing all will be quite normal, not funny or weird, our neighbours will understand even those words which today they do not, perhaps they will start using some of them.”

(P) “In Croatia they have recently decided to substitute ‘hardware’ with ‘očvrsje’, I don’t know what they coined for ‘software’⁴⁹”

(S) “Perhaps they will translate it as *mekinje*⁵⁰.”

Another Bosnian forum⁵¹ asked the readers: “Are you going to the Croatian coast??? If your answer is yes, then you should by all means print out the following concepts to make it easier getting through at the beautiful blue Adriatic!” Eighteen words from the contest have been listed, among them *dojmounik*, *zakulisje*, *uspornik*, *raskružje* etc.

3.7.2.2. The analysis of the comments

The majority of the participants of the forums felt that the contest in *Jezik* was based on purist attitudes. A very general division of their comments would therefore primarily be between *positive* and *negative* reactions to such attitudes, but also to the contest itself and the new words proposed. As Thomas (1991: 95) says “the replacements proposed by individual purists may elicit praise, acceptance, ridicule or outright condemnation. Indeed, to a great extent the reception by the speech community determines the impact of the active modes of purism.” The fact that Croatian standardisation processes have mostly followed a relatively moderate course which takes into account the functional layers of usage⁵² has been reflected in comments about possible co-existence of loan words and their substitutes. Such an attitude was supported by most of the participants.

What one can extract from the discussions is a great deal of rather clever and rational comments concerning the idea of organizing a contest for new words but also concerning the new words themselves. It is also surprising how the proposed neologisms are analysed both from the point of view of their comprehensibility and word formation features but also semantic logic. Obviously the speakers of a language intuitively know what is acceptable and what

48 A Turkish loanword for window.

49 *Hardware* and *software* are English loans, *očvrsje* is a new coined substitute for the first loan, derived from *čvrst* ‘hard’.

50 *Mekinje* ‘oatmeal’ has here been related to *mekan* ‘soft’, obviously to make it look funny.

51 <http://kahvaugrandu.blogger.ba>

52 Turk, 1996: 76

is not. There is also a certain humorous – sometimes quite ironic – attitude toward the whole project which can be felt in many comments. Of course, there are always those who condemn the idea of coining new words as a manifestation of rigid purist interests and it is an attitude which could be traced both in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Quite a number of the participants felt that many clumsy and rather long words and expressions could and should be replaced by new coinages which would be better adapted to the word formation rules. Out of the comments one can also see that most of the participants know very well that new words cannot be accepted rather quickly and that it takes time for the speech community to adopt some of the good proposals – they even quoted examples of cases they knew from experience.

As one could expect some remarks on the Bosnian forum addressed the relations between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian and while a few participants felt that contests of this type were organised basically to make Croatian different from Serbian and Bosnian, others found it interesting and quite acceptable and even thought of the possibility to participate.

As we have already mentioned there were several ironic comments about the contest and the idea of inventing new words and some words were proposed, that could be interpreted as *playful purism*, which “is almost invariably the result of individual activity, more likely to irritate, shock or amuse the reader than to convince him of the need to use such idiosyncratic creations.”⁵³ A few individual coinages of this type can be quoted: *hitrokruh*, *žurnožvak*, *groznokaz*, *zračnjački otvornik*.

4. Conclusion

The lively interest in the Croatian contest has shown several aspects which are partly typical for the Croatian situation but can to a great extent be applied to other language situations as well. If we have in mind the questions we had put in section 2 of this article the answers to them would be along the following lines:

- Depending on the readership of the mentioned journals it is obvious that in many cases one can expect that a rather wide range of potential readers would be interested in this kind of language matters. Both the number of issues being published as well as the general policy of the editorial boards are important in this respect.

One of the proofs is a relatively big number of those who expressed their wish to actively participate in inventing and proposing new words. The fact that this task has gathered people of different professions (university professors, school teachers, medical doctors, technicians etc.) and almost all age

53 Thomas, 1991: 80.

groups (from retired persons to primary school pupils) shows that certain language phenomena are attractive not only to linguistic experts but also to many laymen.

On the other hand, almost the same amount of interest was shown by those who wanted to express their opinions about the contest and the new coinages; this was clearly manifested in many comments within various Internet forums. Such an interest was partly the result of an active engagement of the media⁵⁴ that widely reported about the contest but also the wish of many people to express their positive or negative opinions about the event itself. If articles about neologisms and on the results of the mentioned contests were restricted exclusively to linguistic journals they would certainly not raise so many comments on the part of those who otherwise do not have much opportunities to speak about language problems.

This brings us to the answer to the third question, and that is to what extent do contests and nominations influence the average speaker of a language.

- The media have another significant role: because of the fact that nowadays most dictionaries are based on large language corpora and there is no corpus which would not include as many newspaper sources as possible, it is obvious that the only way for new words to reach the stage where they might be seen as potential entries in a dictionary is that they are being used in (mostly) written media. The frequency of this usage will then be decisive in the choice of candidates for both the dictionaries of neologisms as well as other dictionary types.⁵⁵

- The answer to the fourth question would be that several of the new words which were coined are in fact unnecessary in language. Two types can be distinguished: the first one are words which stand for concepts and phenomena that simply do not need a specific name, which have not appeared in dictionaries because they are just *ad hoc* created syntagmatic expressions, they just describe a concept, an object or a person. A word like *krompulja* for *glasna, gruba žena* 'loud, uncouth woman' – regardless of the possible negative evaluation it may have – is something that a language does not need. The second type are words which are meant to replace well-established, old loan words, very often internationalisms, like *tenis*, *sendvič*, *bojler*, *mikroorganizam* etc. This is why proposals like *rukāl*, *dvokrušac*, *vodogrijalica*, *sitnobiće* and the like have little or no chance at all to become substitutes for the mentioned loans. Another problem is the fact that some of the proposed new words do not provide enough precision: *prokuhavalō*, for instance, could mean any water heater as e. g. an electric kettle; *mlačnik* on the other hand might suggest that the boiler could just provide us with lukewarm water etc. Such lack of preci-

54 All daily newspapers and numerous local papers registered the results of the contest and published articles commenting it.

55 C. f. Quasthoff, 2007: 6.

sion is probably due to the perception of certain meanings which might be different for different persons.

- On the other hand, quite a number of words that are coined by individuals can be labelled as nonce words because of the extremely restricted scope of usage (sometimes only by the person who invented the word, maybe some of the members of his family or a few friends) and the chances of their being widely accepted are very often rather small. We agree with Hohenhaus (2007: 17–18) who says that he distinguishes “between neologisms and nonce formations. The former [are used] as the notational term for words that are ‘young’, diachronically speaking, but which nevertheless have already entered the language as more or less institutionalised vocabulary items. As such they are no longer the output of productive or creative processes but are already given, i. e. listed in the lexicon. ‘Nonce formation’ on the other hand is the notational term [used] to refer to words that are in fact new – in the sense of newly, actively formed in performance, as opposed to being retrieved from the lexicon.” We agree with Veisbergs (2007: 240) that “it is necessary to distinguish between individual nonce use, sometimes called speech transformations, and those changes that become adopted by the language community and enter the general lexicon.”

Some of the nonce words (and in the initial stage of their creation they cannot be labelled differently) may – under certain circumstances – become neologisms and as such candidates for dictionary entries but, as we mentioned before, it depends on several crucial factors whether a new coinage has a chance for survival or not. Therefore it is impossible to predict how many of the best ranked words of a contest will gain the status of a fully accepted neologism. Various examples from the past have shown that it usually takes many years for some words to gain at least the status of a variant that stands side by side with the model which it should have replaced: thus e. g. *završnica* has been used more and more frequently in Croatian in parallel to *finale*, *doigravanje* beside *play-off*, *uspješnica* in parallel to *hit*, *dopusnica* beside *dozvola* ‘permit’, etc. There is no doubt that the time factor but also the acceptance of newly coined words are relevant for their being fully established in a speech community. As R. Fischer (2007: 264) says, “the individual creative act has to be acknowledged by others and institutionalised in a certain environment, otherwise it will not be available to a wider range of users.”

- The quality of new words which were sent to the editorial board of *Jezik* differs very much. Some are quite acceptable both from the point of view of Croatian word formation rules as well as semantic criteria. If they are at the same time appealing to people, they certainly have a chance to become part of the Croatian lexis. Although many proposed new words met the necessary criteria they still did not succeed in being at the same time attractive and will probably never be used as items of the general vocabulary. Why this is so is difficult to answer. Identical phenomena have been noticed in other languages as well and one simply cannot give a definite answer as to why a word that at

first sight has all the elements of an acceptable new creation simply does not make a breakthrough to become part of the lexicon. Metcalf (2002: 152) suggests that the success of new words could be predicted by applying the so called FUDGE scale that includes five significant factors: Frequency of use, Unobtrusiveness, Diversity of users and situations, Generation of other forms and meanings and Endurance of the concept. It has been proven by many examples in different languages that these factors can be taken as the ones that to a great extent determine the fate of newly coined words. It is our opinion that the frequency of use is definitely the most important factor; we all know by experience that even words that do not meet other criteria very often become part of the lexis simply because they have been appearing in the media very often.

The aim of this article was to demonstrate how both genuine contests and nominations for new words or just regular activities of an institution can basically focus on the same goal: the inclusion of the average speakers of a language to participate in the creation of neologisms or evaluate those already suggested for use. It is our opinion that such an active role on the part of a wider public can – at least to some extent – help in shaping a mainstream course between a rigid purism as one extreme and a too liberal attitude to foreign influences as the other.

Note

When the present article was already in press, the April 2008 issue of *Jezik* announced the results of the Contest for the best new Croatian word in 2007 in which, according to the editorial board, 134 participants took part who sent a total of 603 new words.

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Natječaji i nominacije za najbolje riječi – zašto su zanimljivi i što nam pokazuju

Posljednjih se godina u časopisu *Jezik* objavljuje natječaj za najbolje riječi u protekloj godini, odnosno traže se zamjene za nepotrebne tudice ili za one domaće riječi koje se po nekim svojim obilježjima ne uklapaju dobro u hrvatski jezični sustav. Ti natječaji često izazivaju brojne komentare i često se na njih gleda s vrlo negativnih pozicija. Mnogi ih smatraju neprimjerenima, jer ih povezuju isključivo s purističkim jezičnim stavovima i misle kako je takva vrst natječaja specifična za isključivo navedeni časopis. Primjeri iz brojnih drugih jezika, međutim, pokazuju nam kako su natječaji ili nominacije za najbolje, najistaknutije, najmaštovitije, naj(ne)potrebnije ili čak i najgore riječi nešto što se javlja bez obzira na to jesu li ti jezici skloni purizmu ili, naprotiv, otvoreni prema svim mogućim stranim utjecajima. U članku se navode razni tipovi natječaja i sličnih aktivnosti u pojedinim zemljama, kriteriji koji su u njima postavljeni te stanovit broj riječi koje su na tim natječajima izabrane kao najbolje u okviru zadanih kategorija. Namjera je ovoga priloga da pokaže do koje se mjere tzv. prosječni govornici nekoga jezika mogu promatrati kao aktivni sudionici u ocjeni novostvorenih riječi, kakvo je njihovo mišljenje o pojedinim prijedlozima i može li se očekivati da će reakcije šire publike utjecati na uporabu. Težište rada usmjereno je ponajprije na hrvatsku situaciju i na odjek što su ga rezultati natječaja za nove riječi koje je *Jezik* objavio u lipnju 2007. godine imali u medijima i na internetskim forumima.

Key words: Jezik (journal), contest for new words, linguistic purism, neologisms, Croatian

Ključne riječi: Jezik (časopis), natječaji za nove riječi, jezični purizam, neologizmi, uporaba neologizama, hrvatski jezik