

*Metalinguistic discourse of legal professionals:
What does it reveal about the history of the Croatian language of the law?*

The modern Croatian legal language was created around the middle of the 19th century after Croatia was given autonomous status within the Habsburg Monarchy, and Croatian was declared the official language. In order to prepare Croatian for entering the public sphere the first German-Croatian dictionary of legal and political terms was compiled, and the main Austrian laws were translated into Croatian. In the 1850s a great number of newly created legal terms started the process of implementation. The new terminology, however, had yet to be socially accepted and approved by professionals in everyday use.

The present study, which is a part of a more extensive research, examines metalinguistic discourse of legal professionals on the Croatian legal terminology and language in order to reconstruct the process of their development and standardization in the complex socio-political and linguistic situation of the 2nd half of the 19th and early 20th century. The research aims to discover if they accepted the new terminology, which was introduced to replace the familiar German terms; how they reflected on its appropriateness and the intensity of the German influence on the legal language; what their main concerns were; which changes they proposed. In order to answer these questions metalinguistic comments of some of the most distinguished Croatian jurists and law professors of the time published in the journal of the Croatian Law Society in the period between 1875 and 1938 were analysed. The content of 26 articles were searched for evaluative metalinguistic comments as well as proposed improvements and initiatives for further development of legal Croatian. The analysis confirmed the initial hypotheses: several decades after entering the public sphere modern Croatian legal terminology was only limitedly accepted by the profession and partially inadequate; the Croatian legal language was still under the influence of German.

References

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