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“Serbian Purism: Myths and Reality”

The present paper argues that facts do not support a commonly held belief that purism was not present in the history of the Serbian standard language variety. This belief is not only popularly held, but it can also be found in linguistic publications, such as Herity (1978). Espousing the definition of purism from Thomas (1991), this paper analyses Serbian purist endeavors and their outcomes at two junctures. First, two 19th-century Serbian lexical engineering proposals are analyzed (one anonymous, the other penned by the Society of Serbian Literacy). The results show that the impact of those endeavors is comparable to the impact of similar efforts by the Illyrian movement in Croatia, as reported by Thomas (1988). Second, purism in the emergence of Serbian computing terminology in the late 20th century is analyzed. Here again, various replacements for English borrowing have been attested. Statistical data at these two junctures are analyzed using the measure of acceptance for purist maneuvers proposed in Šipka (2019). The results clearly show that in the history of the Serbian standard language variety, purism has been a constant component and that it had a significant impact in shaping its lexicon, which remains so to this day. Similarly, linguistic and popular attitudes, also analyzed in this paper, have had a strong purist component throughout the history of the Serbian standard language variety in the last two hundred years.

References:

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