LANGUAGE COUNSELLING: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CODIFICATION AND LANGUAGE USE

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Abstract. In Slovenia, language counselling activities, especially the online Language Counselling Service, help linguists fill in the gaps in codification caused by the inadequacy of current language manuals for the Slovenian standard language. In this sense, the Language Counselling Service acts as an interpreter of the linguistic information available in the language manuals and as a bridge over the codification gaps. The Service is further one of the main tools used to identify language users' dilemmas; it automatically creates a provisional online language compendium. The knowledge gained in this way is then used by linguists to create the new normative guide for the Slovenian language.

1. Introduction

In wider terms, this paper's topic concerns Slovenian language counselling activities. The online Language Counselling Service (*Jezikovna svetovalnica*[1]) is an important building block in the codification of the contemporary Slovenian standard language.[2] The use of the standard language (the agreed-upon, supra-regional idiom used in

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1 Available at: https://svetovalnica.zrc-sazu.si/.

2 In this paper, the term *codification (of language)* is used as it has traditionally been used in structural linguistics, which developed under the influence of the Prague linguistic circle, namely as the third component in describing relations in standard language, alongside *language use* and *language norm* (Mžourková 2022a). Codification enables linguists to capture linguistic elements that are perceived as set, binding, and nationally representative throughout the speech community (Pravdová & Svobodová 2019).

written language since the middle of the 19th century) is regulated by normative manuals, i.e. grammars, unabridged monolingual descriptive dictionaries,[3] and normative guides.[4] The Slovenian language has two million speakers, who speak either one of the eight existing macro-dialects or one of the regionally spoken language varieties.

This paper focuses on the problem-oriented methodology adopted by the linguists involved in drafting the new normative guide for the Slovenian standard language. At the very centre of this methodology is the Language Counselling Service. Normative guides (orthographic manuals called *pravopis* in Slovenian) traditionally consist of two parts: (1) The **normative rules** provide a general, theoretically oriented, fundamental information on the acceptability of linguistic elements for standard language use. This includes the basic writing rules at the phoneme-grapheme level as well as other consensual norms such as capitalisation, orthography of borrowings, punctuation, etc. (2) The **orthographic dictionary** illustrates how the normative rules should be applied in language use (Dobrovoljc 2016).

The reason for choosing a problem-oriented approach is that in most cases the main causes of negative feedback on the last normative guide were not the specific normative rules, but rather the inadequacy of the phrasing and the illustrative examples included, or the lack thereof. In addition, the previous normative guide did not include guidance on how to treat some of the more recent language phenomena, such as graphically uncommon proper nouns (see below). In preparing a new normative guide, special attention had to be paid to two areas: (1) the specifics of the Slovenian standard language (details and illustrative

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3   Cf. Černivec (2023) for more information on why and how a descriptive dictionary transforms into a normative manual. This is the case with the descriptive dictionary for the Slovenian standard language (SSKJ): the linguistic environment and the language users expect such a dictionary to represent standard language use, especially since it was heavily based on orthographic tradition. The dictionary itself professes to have an informative-normative role, meaning that the standard language is broadly described, while the organisation of the linguistic material and the accompanying qualifiers and normative markers also provide some evaluation of the language elements in terms of their suitability for formal standard language use. (Bajec et al. 2014, § 8)

4   The standard Slovenian language (i.e. its formal variant; this does not apply to other social varieties of the Slovenian language, such as slang or dialects) is entirely standardised. Its phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and, in certain aspects, pragmatic features are codified in the normative manuals mentioned above.

examples), and (2) the modernisation of the normative rules. Gorjanc, Krek & Popič (2018: 47–48) claim that the source of normative agreement must be sought "in monitoring language use by making consensual decisions based on maxims about adjusting the standard in the parts that cause speakers the most problems". The problem-oriented approach of observing language use and language difficulties in the Language Counselling Service allows linguists to do just that: find the parts and particulars of the valid codification that cause language problems and adjust the codification and it's phrasing accordingly. Even though the changes in the standard language itself are secondary and slower to implement, they are both a cause and a consequence of changes in the codification.

Language counselling is one of the activities of language management. According to the definition of Neustupný & Nekvapil (2003: 185), language management has a wide range of actions that deal with "language problems" that try to include various other (sociolinguistic) points of view, such as "discourse, politeness, communication in intercultural contact situations, matters arising in proof reading, speech therapy or literary criticism." While language counselling mainly deals with language problems in the narrow sense (mostly related to orthography and grammar), the questions and answers in the Language Counselling Service also show the interest of language users in linguistic matters of a more practical nature, e.g. in rules of politeness in various situations, political correctness, and the authority of linguists and proofreaders.

1.1. Normative manuals for the Slovenian standard language: a historic overview

The first normative manuals for the Slovenian language were normative guides (published in 1899, 1920, 1935, 1937, 1950, and 1962). The first unabridged, monolingual, descriptive dictionary for the Slovenian standard language, entitled *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* (hereafter SSKJ), was published in five volumes between 1970 and 1991.[5] Normative guides normally focus on the acceptability of linguistic

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5   For a detailed description of orthographic dictionaries for the Slovenian language, see: https://www.fran.si/slovnice-in-pravopisi/ (*Slovenske slovnice in pravopisi*).

elements[6] for the standard language and contain limited semantic information.[7] However, in the absence of an unabridged, monolingual, descriptive dictionary before 1970, orthographic dictionaries had to undertake the task of compiling concise semantic and stylistic information, and this did not change with the next normative guide, entitled *Slovenski pravopis* (hereafter SP 2001; the normative rules were published in 1990 and the orthographic dictionary followed in 2001) (cf. Dobrovoljc 2021).

After the publication of the SSKJ dictionary and the SP 2001 normative guide, feedback[8] from language users and linguists showed that two partially overlapping Slovenian language dictionaries were not necessary. Since the codification of the Slovenian language was now based on two manuals fairly far apart in time, discrepancies arose, not only between the normative manual as a whole and the descriptive dictionary but also between the normative rules and the orthographic dictionary. (Dobrovoljc & Vranjek Ošlak 2021)

The orthographic dictionary, therefore, needed a different approach and a new concept to effectively accompany the normative rules by offering (additional) examples, a typical function of orthographic dictionaries. (Verovnik 2004) The orthographic dictionary should include (1) a material expansion of the normative rules, and (2) linguistic elements that exhibit a certain level of difficulty for the users of the language. It was important that the new orthographic dictionary be developed simultaneously with the normative rules to avoid so-called asynchronous codification (Dobrovoljc 2016).

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6   The acceptability of linguistic elements in Slovenia is traditionally decided by the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language (the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) in cooperation with the Commission on Orthography of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

7   Descriptive dictionaries focus on what is regular and common in the language; orthographic dictionaries, in addition to presenting regularities, focus on what is irregular and could potentially cause difficulties. (cf. Dobrovoljc & Jakop 2012: 146–165) In the evaluation of irregularities, Slovenian orthography has transitioned in the last decade from the traditionally established role of the linguist as a language authority (who uses their linguistic intuition to determine what is "correct or incorrect") to an approach that is based on corpus data and other resources, and centred around language users' feedback.

8   Cf. Dobrovoljc 2016.

1.2. The new normative guide and its corresponding dictionary

The new Slovenian normative guide is currently (since 2013 until about 2025) in preparation.[9] The normative rules are being written by the Commission on Orthography at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The orthographic dictionary and accompanying publications are the domain of the Orthographic Section at Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.[10]

The new normative guide for the Slovenian language will consist of: (1) normative rules entitled *Pravopis 8.0* (the eighth normative manual in line), (2) an orthographic dictionary entitled *ePravopis* (an online orthographic dictionary), and (3) a publication entitled *Pravopisne kategorije* (*Orthographic Categories*), a collection of comments on changes in codification whose main purpose is to ensure a transparent codification process. (Dobrovoljc & Vranjek Ošlak 2021) All three resources are available on the *Fran*[11] online portal.[12]

The linguistic information contained in these three resources is interconnected. Illustrative examples in the normative rules are linked to the corresponding dictionary entries in the orthographic dictionary. The dictionary entries contain applicable normative information and form problem-based groups. Each dictionary entry is linked to the corresponding category in *Orthographic Categories*, which contains a description of the linguistic problem and a list of the entries included (Dobrovoljc & Vranjek Ošlak 2021).

The new approach to the development of the new normative rules for the Slovenian language is problem-oriented (see above). One of the

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9   Cf. Lengar Verovnik & Dobrovoljc 2022.

10 For a more detailed description of normative procedures cf. Dobrovoljc 2022. The workflow has six work phases: I. Acquisition of specific problem-oriented corpus material. II. Detailed research of the identified irregularities/innovations and their placement in the language system. III. Formation of appropriate wording in the normative rules. IV. Incorporation of illustrative examples included in the normative rules into the orthographic dictionary. V. Public discussion. VI. Final lexicographic procedures.

11 Available at: https://fran.si/.

12 There is also a fourth publication entitled *Utemeljitve pravopisnih pravil* (*Normative Argumentations*); it is a collection of comments on changes in codification as presented in the new normative rules. Available on the *Fran* online portal.

most important resources used for identifying linguistic dilemmas and codification gaps is the Language Counselling Service platform.

2. Language counselling

Language counselling falls within the broader spectrum of language management activities, which can be broadly defined as processes that include the following steps: (1) comparing the language used with the norm/codification to identify deviations; (2) evaluating the deviations; (3) identifying necessary corrections or adjustments of the norm/codification; (4) the process is complete when the correction or adjustment of the norm/codification is implemented in language use.[13] Language counselling sees the first, second, and third steps implemented (Jernudd & Neustupný 1987; Lengar Verovnik & Kalin Golob 2019). Elements of language counselling activities or their results also appear in the first, second, and fourth stages of cyclical standardisation as defined by Dobrovoljc & Jakop (2012: 15): (1) determination of language use, (2) evaluation of use in relation to the described norm, (3) standardisation, and (4) verification of the implemented standard in use. As this process is cyclical, it not only ensures that the language norm and the corresponding codification are in accordance with the natural language, but also that the standard language is more user-friendly, which means that the codification is changed if language use shows persistent deviations from the standard.

2.1. Language counselling activities in Slovenia

In Slovenia, language counselling in various forms has a noteworthy linguistic tradition (cf. Kalin Golob 1996). At the end of the 19th century, Father Stanislav Škrabec was one of the first linguists to help the public with language difficulties, as were Josip Tominšek, Rudolf Kolarič, Ivan Koštial, and others. Originally, the most widespread form

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13 Czech linguists (Smejkalová 2017) invented the notion of *a priori codification*. This describes situations where codification cannot be derived from the norm because the norm does not yet exist. In a priori codification, it can be difficult to predict how a particular linguistic element will integrate into the language system (if at all).

of language counselling was the so-called language corner (*jezikovni kotiček*), i.e. a short, language-oriented newspaper column containing linguists' observations on "incorrect" (i.e., less formal or inferior) language use. At the beginning of the 20th century, language guides (*jezikovni brus*), i.e. handbooks listing difficult language areas in one place, became popular. With the development of the media, language counselling has also expanded to include radio, television, and the internet.

In the past, language advice in one form or another served, in a sense, as a substitute for language manuals that did not yet exist. It was based on the linguist's intuition and their authority to determine the proper use of language. Today, language counselling activities supplement the information contained in standard language dictionaries, grammars, and other linguistic resources. Nowadays, language corners, popular science language handbooks, various online counselling forums, etc. mainly play the role of filling in the information gaps that occur in providing information about the use of language in modern language manuals (Lengar Verovnik 2016).

2.1. The Language Counselling Service

The Language Counselling Service is the central language counselling platform for the Slovenian language. It has been in operation since 2012. It is administered by the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language at Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. It is used by various language-related professions as well as lay language users. It is free of charge and openly accessible. The Service is accessed up to 1,000 times per day and publishes about 30 answers per month. It is widely used to address ambiguities in standard language and seek advice on linguistic choices; researchers use it to identify gaps in language description (Dobrovoljc et al. 2020; Vranjek Ošlak & Dobrovoljc 2021).

The Language Counselling Service is a citizen science service; language counselling cannot be conducted without the input of the public. The language counsellors involved are linguists employed by the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language. Language counsellors answer questions from their field of expertise. In writing an answer, language counsellors draw on their own research, linguistic research in

general, and corpus data.[14] The reasons for and context of the enquirers uncertainty are often stated in the question; additional questions are directed to the enquirer as appropriate.[15] After careful consideration by the Editorial Board (at least three members must agree with the proposed answer), the final answer is published on the platform.

The Service is used by Slovenian language users all over the world. Most are from Slovenia, followed by users from neighbouring countries. Most language difficulties concern the use of standard language, e.g. punctuation (especially the use of commas), orthography of borrowings and neologisms, morphological and word formation difficulties, etc. Mastering the standard language, which is based on but not limited to the central Slovenian dialect, is a challenge, especially for speakers from peripheral regions (Vranjek Ošlak & Dobrovoljc 2021).

Surveys (Dobrovoljc et al. 2020; Lengar Verovnik 2016) have shown that most questions are asked by users aged 30 to 49. The majority of users have a higher education degree,[16] and the predominant motivation for using the Language Counselling Service is either professional need or the inability to find the answer in available language manuals. Most users indicated that they recognise the Language Counselling Service as a valid reference source in their professional environment (cf. Dobrovoljc 2018a).

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14 In general, language counsellors are expected to answer the enquirers' questions in a democratic manner, and to seek a balance between the regularities of the standard and the variations of language use. (Cf. Vranjek Ošlak & Dobrovoljc 2021) Although the authoritative linguistic approach is undoubtedly outdated, stability (or even a certain rigidity) in terms of the norm is to be expected. However, this should not prevent the linguist from seeing, acknowledging and describing the language change evident from the corpus data.

15 The online platform includes a chat-like function for this purpose. The enquirer is notified of new messages by e-mail.

16 The main reason for why highly educated people need language counselling is that in most cases they are language professionals, such as proofreaders and translators, who often deal with advanced language problems. For others, the reason for requiring language advice could also be linguistic insecurity, defined as the speaker's belief that their language is unsatisfactory or unskilled. (cf. Baron 1976; Preston 2013) This could be the result of social pressures from above as exerted by the 20th century linguists; the linguist was seen as an authority who told other users of language (whose language was 'mediocre') how to speak correctly. For more information on social pressures from above, cf. Labov 1966.

The Service relies on language-related questions and dilemmas posted by language users; the questions vary in nature. Most often, they relate to (1) areas of the language that have already been explained in detail; language users simply require guidance in understanding the codification. Some questions relate to (2) language features that are already covered in existing codification manuals, but whose explanation is inadequate, e.g. punctuation use in uncommon syntactical structures. Least common are questions that address (3) features of language that are not addressed in existing codification manuals, e.g. neologisms. In all these cases, users generally consult the existing manuals but are unable to solve the problem, and therefore turn to the Language Counselling Service.[17]

In this sense, the Language Counselling Service is an important link between language codification and language users; it acts as an interpreter of existing linguistic information or a bridge over the codification gaps. The Service automatically creates a provisional online language manual,[18] and, like similar platforms,[19] reflects current social realities, providing linguists with a real-time overview of the difficult aspects of language use. Although the main purpose of the Language Counselling Service is to assist Slovenian language users with their language-related problems, the database of questions and answers has considerable potential for other linguistic research. An evaluation of the questions reveals certain weaknesses of language manuals, current semantic and grammatical changes in the Slovenian language, etc., but

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17 Because questions often cover more than one topic and present different challenges within a question, quantitative information about the number of specific question types and topics is not readily available; the database has not yet been thoroughly evaluated and analysed. For some useful conclusions about a similar language counselling service, cf. Dufek et al. 2022.

18 'Provisional' because it is not a formal manual, but a forum-based website that can serve as a language manual when other, formal manuals do not provide the user with the necessary information.

19 E.g. the *Grammis* portal of the Leibniz Institute for the German Language in Mannheim; *Internetová jazyková příručka* by the Czech Language Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Informatics of the Masaryk University; *Jezični savjetnik* for Croatian by the Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics; the Estonian *Keelenõuanded* of the Institute of Estonian Language; language advisory service of the Institute for the Languages of Finland; *Jazyková poradňa* of the Sme.sk portal and the Ľudovít Štúr Institute of Linguistics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences; etc.

could also bring to light other linguistically and socially relevant data, e.g. the level of standard language proficiency, language users' attitudes towards the language, etc.

3. Codification gaps as language dilemmas in the Language Counselling Service

The term *language dilemma* (more narrowly, *normative dilemma*) is interpreted as a point or element of the (usually standard) language system where language users are uncertain about how to properly use specific linguistic elements. The feeling of uncertainty and shortage in language competence is often mistakenly attributed to a lack of linguistic knowledge or linguistic insecurity (see above); however, it can also be the result of deficiencies and discrepancies in linguistic information, as frequently identified by linguists in the process of language description, standardisation, and codification (Dobrovoljc & Krek 2011).

Several studies (Dobrovoljc & Krek 2011; Dobrovoljc & Lengar Verovnik 2020; Dufek et al. 2022; Mžourková 2022b) have shown that language dilemmas form themed (sub)types. In this contribution, a typology developed by Dobrovoljc (unpublished internal resource) is adopted and adapted to represent the types of dilemmas prevalent in the Language Counselling Service. The typology is as follows:

1) The linguistic dilemma is addressed or explained in the language manuals, but the presentation may be inadequate or inappropriate.
   1a) The user does not understand the normative rule.
   1b) The user does not understand the (descriptive or orthographic) dictionary entry.
   1c) There is a discrepancy between the normative rule and the dictionary entry.
   1d) There is a discrepancy between the descriptive dictionary and the normative guide.
   1e) The user does not agree with claims on language as presented in language manuals.

2) The language manuals do not address or explain the linguistic dilemma.

The following subsections detail how the Service acts as an interpreter of the provided linguistic information, as a tool to bridge codification gaps, and as an intermediary between the language users and linguists. The path taken by the linguists in preparing a response to a language question received in the Language Counselling Service is described. Each subsection includes an excerpt from the language question posted on the Language Counselling Service platform.[20]

3.1. The explanation of the linguistic dilemma is inadequate or inappropriate

A significant proportion of user questions posted on the Language Counselling Service platform relate to difficult linguistic elements that are addressed or explained in existing language manuals, but this may be done inadequately or inappropriately. Language users try to find the answer but are unsuccessful.

3.1.1. A language user does not understand the normative rule

This subtype includes dilemmas that involve a particular normative rule. The language user can often find the normative rule that corresponds to their language dilemma but has difficulty understanding its meaning and practically applying the rule in language use. This subtype usually relates to more complex normative rules, e.g. on the use of punctuation, especially comma.

(1) *Zanima me, kaj je med Hribom in Loškim Potokom – nestični vezaj ali nestični pomišljaj? Veliko zapisov na spletu vsebuje celo stični vezaj, vendar si takšne rabe nikakor ne znam pojasniti. Gre morda za dvojno ime (kot je* Šmarje *– Sap)?*

'I would like to know what to put between *Hrib* and *Loški Potok* [geographical name compound of two equal elements; similar to names such as *Rheinland-Pfalz*] – a hyphen with spaces or a dash with spaces?

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20 The online forum used by the Language Counselling Service complies with the requirements of the GDPR. No personal information is collected and the data of the enquirers is fully anonymised.

On the internet, I found many examples with hyphen without spaces, but I don't understand this usage. Could this be considered a double name (like Šmarje – *Sap*)?'[21]

Example (1) shows that the language user knows the normative rule about the use of hyphens and dashes in double proper names, but does not understand it sufficiently to apply it to another similar proper name. In some cases, the user even specifies the exact location (paragraph or article) where this is discussed in the normative rules. The language counsellor investigates where in the normative rules the language dilemma occurs and produces an applicative explanation for more difficult cases.

The answer in the Language Counselling Service acts as a supplement to the explanation of a linguistic phenomenon. The answer states that the name in question "is in fact one of the so-called double names that combine two otherwise independent geographical units." It agrees with the enquirer that such use of hyphens is unusual, and states that the Commission on Orthography will propose some changes to the normative rules where this applies.

For questions of this subtype, the language counsellor usually (1) guides the user through the existing codification, (2) clarifies the linguistic background of the normative rule, and (3) explains how it apply to the examples in question. Language users can apply the answer when making decisions in similar cases (language counsellors sometimes include detailed instructions on how to do this).

The ambiguities in the normative rules identified by the Language Counselling Service are used in drafting the new *Pravopis 8.0* normative rules. The Commission on Orthography studies the questions and decides where and how the normative rules can be improved to make them easier to understand. Also, some of the more difficult examples from the questions are then used as illustrative examples in the new normative rules.

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21 Cf. Lengar Verovnik 2017.

3.1.2. A language user does not understand
the (descriptive or orthographic) dictionary entry

This subtype includes language dilemmas that involve difficulties in understanding dictionary entries,[22] mostly the specific metalanguage, i.e. qualifiers and other markers (e.g. the implicit normativity of superordinate synonyms in italics in SP 2001), and illustrative examples.

(2)   *Zanima me, kako je z glagolom privzeti/privzemati. V SP 2001 je imel kvalifikator 'neobčevalno', v najnovejšem SSKJ pa kvečjemu 'knjižno'. Kaj kvalifikator 'knjižno' sploh hoče povedati? Ali takšno besedo, če nam je všeč, lahko uporabljamo brez slabe vesti?*

'I would like to know what to do with the verb *privzeti/privzemati* [to adopt]. In the Slovenian normative guide (SP 2001), it was marked with the qualifier 'non-conversational'; in the latest dictionary for the Slovenian standard language (SSKJ), only the qualifier 'literary' was used. What does the qualifier 'literary' mean anyway? Is it okay to use a word with this qualifier if we like it?'[23]

In example (2), the language user struggles to understand the dictionary qualifier *neobčevalno*, which is used to define a particular type of discourse when a given word is likely to be used in written texts (namely, literature and scientific texts) but not in spoken communication. The language counsellor (1) examines the entry in question and finds the definition of the metalinguistic element that the user does not understand. They then (2) compose an explanation of the dictionary entry with general directions for the user on how to interpret dictionary entries with similar metalanguage. In cases where the enquirer does not provide a context such as the register, etc., the counsellor contacts them with additional questions. If the enquirer does not answer, the counsellor usually gives more general advice and tries to predict the various possible contexts.

The answer in the Language Counselling Service serves as a supplement to the explanation of the metalanguage in the introduction to each dictionary. Language users can employ it to make decisions in similar

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22 The questions on the Language Counselling Service website frequently highlight these difficulties, as do some user experience surveys. Cf. Arhar Holdt 2018.

23 Cf. Dobrovoljc 2015.

cases. The answer to the above question in example (2) directs the enquirer to read the introduction to the dictionary in question, which explains the qualifier's meaning and use. The answer cites said explanation and then answers the second part of the question by explaining that the use of headwords marked with this qualifier is acceptable, but the enquirer should be mindful of the fact that such words may have an artificial or inauthentic effect.

The ambiguities in the dictionary metalanguage identified by the Language Counselling Service are used in developing the new *ePravopis* orthographic dictionary. The Commisson on Orthography examines the questions and decides where and how the metalanguage can be improved to make it easier to understand. For example, one of the recent improvements was the discarding of some traditional qualifiers and their replacement with new, more expressive and transparent ones, e.g. the qualifiers *manj formalno* (in less formal use) and *redko* (infrequent).

3.1.3. There is a discrepancy between the normative rule and the orthographic dictionary entry

This subtype includes language dilemmas involving discrepancies between normative rules and the orthographic dictionary, in definitions of certain linguistic phenomena, i.e. the correct declension of multi-word geographical names such as *Sierra Leone* and *Palma de Mallorca*.

(3)   *Kakšna je orodniška oblika lastnih imen Ontario in Ohio? V pravopisnem slovarju sta imeni rešeni različno, torej Ontario s preglasom ali ne, Ohio pa vedno s preglasom. Pravopisna pravila dajejo za zgled samostalnik radio, kjer je preglašena možnost prednostna, nepreglašena pa vseeno tudi dovoljena.*

'What is the instrumental case of the proper names *Ontario* and *Ohio*? The normative guide offers different solutions, i.e. *Ontario* with or without vowel alternation, and *Ohio* with vowel alternation only. As an example, the normative rules show the noun radio, where the variant with vowel alternation is preferred, although the variant without vowel alternation is also allowed.'[24]

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24 Cf. Dobrovoljc 2013.

In example (3), the language user is puzzled by the differences in the declension of seemingly similar words in the normative rules and in the orthographic dictionary. The language counsellor examines the entry and the normative rule in question. They then produce a commentary on the discrepancy, along with general directions that can be used in similarly difficult cases.

The answer in the Language Counselling Service serves as a bridge between the normative rules and the orthographic dictionary. The answer refers the enquirer to the relevant paragraph of the normative rules. It points out that such deviations are problematic for language users when they want to apply the rule to a new example, such as one that has not yet been included in the normative guide. The answer also provides the enquirer with a concise summary of how similar examples are treated in the guide and the reasoning behind it.

Due to the non-simultaneity of developing the SP 2001 normative rules and the orthographic dictionary, asynchronous codification occurred. In writing the new normative guide, such cases should be avoided, and the basis for this is the Language Counselling Service. Ideally, the description of the standard language in both parts of the normative manual should be consistent.

3.1.4. There is a discrepancy between the descriptive dictionary and the normative guide

This subtype includes language dilemmas involving discrepancies between the descriptive dictionary and the normative guide (the normative rules and/or the orthographic dictionary). Language users are unsure which manual to abide by, as many do not understand the difference between the descriptive or prescriptive nature of Slovenian language dictionaries.

(4)   *S kolegicami prevajalkami smo se danes znašle v dilemi glede pomanjševalnice za besedo slika. Prepričana sem bila, da se zaradi palatalizacije k spremeni v č in da je pravilna pomanjševalnica sličica, a smo kasneje v SSKJ našle obe možnosti, slikica in sličica. Zanima nas, če sta enakovredni, ali je mogoče katera le bolj pravilna od druge.*

‘My fellow translators and I found ourselves in a dilemma today regarding the diminutive form for the word *slika* [a picture]. I was

convinced that, due to palatalisation, k changes into č and that the correct diminutive is *sličica*, but later in SSKJ we found both options, *slikica* and *sličica*. We want to know whether they are equivalent, or perhaps one is more correct than the other.'[25]

In example (4), the language user is puzzled by the differences in the word-formation of diminutive forms in the normative rules and in the descriptive dictionary. The language counsellor examines the dictionary entry and the normative rule in question. They then compose a commentary on the discrepancy, as well as general directions that can be used in similarly difficult cases.

The answer in the Language Counselling Service serves as a bridge between the normative guide and the descriptive dictionary. It says, "Palatalisation in Slovenian is not always an obligatory change of sounds; it is common, but not without exception. You can read more about it in the "Slovenian Grammar"". The answer continues by listing cases where palatalisation is not obligatory and cases where it is. The answer offers the enquirer a strategy to use in similar cases: "Semantic equivalence can be discerned by comparing the dictionary entries for the corresponding forms. In cases where neither form evaluated as superior to the other, some semantic differences can still be found."

The answers to questions of this subtype cover discrepancies that occur due to concept and approach differences. In the preparation of the new normative guide, such cases are addressed in the *Orthographic Categories*.

3.1.5. The user does not agree with claims on language in language manuals

This subtype includes instances where language users do not agree with language manuals on various topics, e.g. capitalisation, use of qualifiers, etc.

(5)   *Mislim, da slovenski pravopis napačno piše 'Hrvaško Zagorje'. Razlaga v pravopisu je, da je Zagorje lastno ime, kar ne drži. Citiram hrvaški pravopis: [--]. Hrvaško zagorje bi se moralo pisati kot Bela krajina – zagorje z malo začetnico.*

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25   Cf. Vranjek Ošlak, Dobrovoljc & Jelovšek 2020.

'I think that the capitalisation of the name *Hrvaško Zagorje* in the ortho-graphic dictionary is wrong. The explanation in the rules is that *Zagorje* is a proper name, which is not true. I am quoting the Croatian normative guide: [--]. *Hrvaško zagorje* should be written as *Bela krajina – zagorje* [sic] with a lowercase initial.'[26]

In example (5), the language user claims that there is a mistake in the orthographic dictionary, namely that the Croatian geographical name *Hrvaško Zagorje* does not have the correct notation in the dictionary. The language counsellor examines the dictionary entry and the norma-tive rule that determines the use of capitalisation in such cases. They provide argumentation as to why the dictionary entry is correct or in-correct, and general directions that can be used in similarly difficult cases.

First, the answer to the question in Example (5) cites the correct paragraph of the valid normative guide (paragraph 73): "In non-common geographical names [names for geographical units other than place names of cities, towns and villages], the first constituent is always capitalised, while the non-first constituents are capitalised only if they are proper names themselves." The answer then describes how the lan-guage counsellor investigated whether language users perceive certain non-first constituents of such names as common words or as proper names. The answer concludes that the non-first constituent in question (*Zagorje* or *zagorje*) is rarely perceived as a common word and there-fore should be capitalised.

As can be seen from the questions asked in the Language Coun-selling Service (and also in other media, e.g. language-oriented tele-vision and radio programme), language users are generally willing to share their views on language codification and use. Their feedback is valuable as it allows linguists to double-check grey areas where discord among language users and language manuals is likely to occur. In such cases, the Language Counselling Service is the only language resource that provides language users with argumentation regarding similarly difficult linguistic phenomena. The findings are included in the annual update of the *ePravopis* orthographic dictionary and in other online language manuals.

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26 Cf. Dobrovoljc 2018b.

3.1.6. Language manuals do not explain
the linguistic dilemma

This subtype includes language dilemmas where the user cannot find a normative rule or dictionary entry for their language dilemma. The most common dilemmas of this subtype are neologisms (their notation and usage) and borrowings from other languages. Language manuals are updated too infrequently to capture everything that emerges in the language in a timely manner. Language users often encounter new words with unusual notation.

(6)   *Zanima me kateri zapis je pravilen: Ebay ali eBay in zakaj prihaja do razlik v zapisu?*

'Is it correct to write *Ebay* or *eBay*? Why are there these differences in spelling?'[27]

In example (6), the language user is unsure about how to correctly write the proper name of the American company. The name is relatively new and has a distinct orthographic notation.[28] The language counsellor examines the available language manuals to determine if the language dilemma has not already been resolved. Then they investigate the usage and characteristics of the proper name and write up a description. The language counsellor attempts to fit the innovation into the existing language system or suggests a treatment method if this proves impossible.

The answer to the question in example (6) states that "although company names are written with a capital letter, there are also exceptions that have not yet been included in the valid normative guide." The letter *e* before the name is the abbreviation of the adjective "electronic" or "online" (or more recently and in other examples also "electric" or "ecological"), which is often used to indicate the names of companies and services related to online media or electronic communications. The answer concludes that the written form of such proper names must be retained even if it is rather uncommon.

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27 Cf. Dobrovoljc & Lengar Verovnik 2019.

28 This name and other similar graphically uncommon names (most of which are chrematonyms, i.e. product names) were not included in the previous normative manual (published in 2001). The discussion about how to write such names has arisen only in the last 10–20 years. The reason for this discussion was trademark policy. Cf. Dobrovoljc 2009.

In such cases, the Language Counselling Service is the only language resource that provides explanations of similar linguistic phenomena.[29] The novelties identified by the Language Counselling Service are included in the annual update of the *ePravopis* orthographic dictionary and in other online language manuals.

Figure 1 shows a similar graphically uncommon proper name, namely the name of the entertainment application *iTunes*, as it is presented in the *ePravopis* orthographic dictionary, namely in the Fran portal search results. The figure shows that this proper name has two homographs, the first of which is a masculine noun in the singular and the other a masculine noun in the plural. The headword is followed by the genitive form of the word; the first homograph has two declension options, with the second in bold print. The pronunciation of the proper name is given in square brackets. The fourth line of each search result contains the word formation options of that proper name, namely the formation of possessive adjectives.
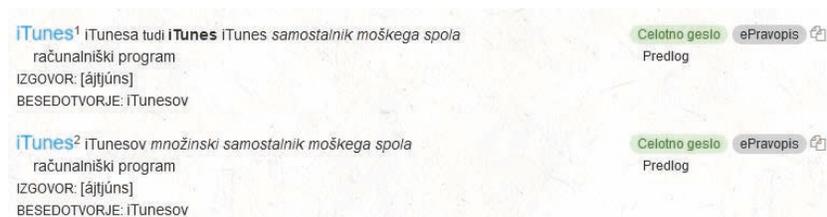
Figure 1. An example of a dictionary entry (from the Fran portal search results) for a graphically uncommon chrematonym *iTunes*.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Language counselling is a language management activity. It corresponds to the accepted definition of Neustupný & Nekvapil 2003: the questions of language users represent a wide range of language-related

29 Of course, there are internet forums in Slovenia where people give each other language tips, but this advice is from a layman's point of view. The Service is the only resource of its kind that is created by scientists and professionals who use scientific methods in cases where additional research is needed. Therefore, the advice that is given is properly justified and the enquirer can be sure that it is in accordance with the valid codification.

problems in the narrow sense, intertwined with other sociolinguistic or social aspects, such as discourse, politeness, language contact, etc.

This paper focuses on the problem-oriented methodology used by the linguists involved in the preparation of the new normative guide for the Slovenian standard language, at the centre of which is the Language Counselling Service. Research on the role of language counselling in the tension between the Slovenian language users and the codification of the standard Slovenian language is presented. As shown above, language counselling has several roles. (1) Language counselling helps linguists to fill the gaps in the codification caused by the inadequacy of the current language manuals for the Slovenian standard language. In this sense, language counselling acts as a bridge over the codification gaps. (2) Language counselling helps language users to better understand the codification of the standard language. The description of the standard language and the instructions for its use can sometimes be too complicated and not easy to understand. In this sense, the language counsellor acts as an interpreter of the language information available in the language manuals. (3) Language counselling activities ensure valuable feedback regarding both the phrasing of the codification and the actual suitability of the standard language. In this sense, language counselling is an intermediary between language users and linguists. It enables linguists to make necessary changes to both the codification and the standard language norm, since language users' questions inevitably reflect current linguistic and social realities. (4) The Language Counselling Service creates a provisional online language manual that is considerably more responsive to current linguistic and social realities than its more formal and static counterparts. It provides both linguists and language users with a real-time overview of the difficult aspects of language use. Language users are sometimes unsure which manual to follow (as many do not understand the differences in their nature and purpose), and language counselling activities can be helpful in this matter by providing a sort of guidepost for language users to navigate the language accordingly.

Because of the traditional importance of the standard language, changes to the wording of the codification and the use of illustrative examples are more common than actual changes to the norm. The standard language is in itself an artificial language; it is a consensual middle ground between all dialects and other regional varieties (although,

admittedly, based on the central dialect). There are no first-language speakers of the standard Slovenian language; it must be learned in school and communicated through the media. Since the standard language is also the most regulated variety, difficulties are to be expected. The observed language dilemmas show that in most cases the formulations in the language manuals are inadequate and need to be adjusted.

The knowledge gained through language counselling is used by linguists to create the new normative guide for the Slovenian language. The problem-oriented and timely manner in which all parts of the normative guide are developed will ensure that this publication will be a more user-friendly language manual that is more coherent than the previous normative guides.

Acknowledgements

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Kokkuvõte. Urška Vranjek Ošlak: Keelenõuanne kui sild normingute ja keelekasutuse vahel. Sloveenias aitavad keelenõuande teenused, eriti veebipõhine keelenõuandla, keeleteadlastel täita lünki normingutes, mille on põhjustanud praeguste keelekäsiraamatute puudused sloveeni standardkeele kirjeldamisel. Keelenõuandla on mõnes mõttes nagu keelekäsiraamatutes oleva keelelise teabe tõlgendaja ja sild normingulünkade ületamisel. Nõuandla on ka üks peamisi viise, kuidas keelekasutajate dilemmasid tuvastada; see loob veebis automaatselt esialgse kokkuvõtte keelemuredest. Niiviisi saadud teadmisi kasutavad keeleteadlased seejärel uue normatiivse sloveeni keele käsiraamatu loomiseks.

Märksõnad: sloveeni standardkeel, sloveeni ortograafia, keelenõuanne, keelekorraldus, kodifitseerimine, normatiivne käsiraamat