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Anatomy of a Wooden Language

Abstract

The most important aim of the undertaken analysis is the search for corpus evidences of a wooden language. The analysis concentrates on such occurrences of wooden language that reveal its main characteristics: lies, concealment of information, creation of surreality. Political movements in Yugoslavia in the autumn of 2000 inspired the creation of 1.5 million word corpus based on one very influential and pro-governmental daily newspaper. Due to the chronology of events the corpus was naturally divided in three subcorpora that correspond to the last days of electoral campaign, post-electoral crisis, and constitution of the newly elected government respectively. With the use of text processing tools integrated in INTEX system and by iteratively constructing various finite state graphs it was possible to identify the occurrences of wooden language and to survey its relative frequency over the period under consideration.

Keywords: wooden language, corpus analysis, finite state automata, finite graphs

Political movements in Yugoslavia during the electoral crisis in September and October 2000 have attracted the attention of world media. The regime that in the 1990s has been generating - with some help, of course - Balkan wars and crises was overturned on October 5th, after a short post-electoral turmoil. The president of Yugoslavia became Vojislav Koštunica.

1. The short chronology

At the end of July 2000, after the set of electoral laws was passed by Federal Parliament, the premature elections for the president of Yugoslavia (two rounds system) as well as elections for Federal Parliament and local authorities (one round system) were scheduled for September 24th. During the electoral campaign two main political blocks were formed: the first, using the acronym SPS-JUL, assembled the political parties supporting Milošević, while the second, known under the acronym DOS, was represented by a

heterogeneous coalition of parties opposing the actual regime. The other parties involved in electoral process, particularly the right-wing parties discredited by their close cooperation with the SPS-JUL coalition at one time or another, did not play a significant role in these events.

At the elections on September 24th, due to the specific role of Montenegro in electoral system, distribution of votes was such that both blocks could have formed the federal government by entering into coalition with Montenegrin parties, at that moment primarily oriented towards Milošević. However, Koštunica won the presidential elections with more than fifty- percent votes of the electoral body and DOS declared its victory as soon as the results were announced. In the period between September 24th and October 5th Milošević has tried in various ways to alter the results of first round and to procure the second. Those manipulations provoked a series of severe and massive protests all over Serbia that were ended by the takeover of presidential function by Koštunica on October 5th. Immediately after the overthrow of Milošević a radical change in the attitude of international community towards Yugoslavia has occurred - for instance, already on October 9th the European Union lifted the embargo on oil and international air traffic. On the internal plan, the swift marginalization of Milošević's role and role of his party took place. The changes have been instantaneously reflected in the reporting style of the media that had until October 5th performed intensive propaganda in favour of Milošević's regime.

The newspapers formerly praising Milošević started praising the winner and introducing a new rhetoric. In this paper we will try to elucidate the nature of the language discontinuity that happened on October 5th basing our analysis on evidences found in a corpus of texts of influential, traditionally pro-governmental daily newspaper *Politika*. This newspaper has, besides many political columns, large number of other contributions as well as important advertising section, which has made it important source of information even among Milošević's opponents. Moreover, the *Politika*'s web site is regularly updated with many texts from its paper edition.

2. The Wooden Language

The term *wooden language* is not quite precise, but basically it expresses "a specific relation between language and power in the Soviet-type political systems" ("*un rapport d'un type particulier entre le langage et le pouvoir dans un régime politique de type soviétique*" (Seriot 1985)). Its structure reflects the "defeat of the normal language in contact with ideology" (Tadić 1994). The analyses of such language usage, as given in (Seriot 1985), (Thom, 1987) show that stereotyped language, due to its ideological function, develops particular lexical and syntactical features, as well as a specific relation to the Other. The Other is understood as a rival, enemy, the incomprehensible who appears to threaten "our" system of values. S/He is described as a member of a hostile tribe, and the criteria of belonging to "our" or "their" tribe - criteria based on irrational generalization and prejudice, irrespective of the individual - have been defined by the wooden language itself.

Milošević's regime has been usually described as nationalistic, as a poisonous fruit of Serbian nationalism. However, our corpus shows that it was rather based on a tribal

attitude - in the non-tribal world - which dissolves individual existence in the tribe's history and tradition (in the sense developed in (Konstantinović 1991)). Paradoxically, in this case as in many others, the *wooden language* did not promote the interests of "our" tribe, but made them serve the interests of power as such which is as "unselective" as money.

Thus the wooden language creates a deceptive picture of reality using the means comprehensively illustrated in (Seriot 1985): lies, concealment of information, creation of surreality, etc.

The ideological language of the early phase of Milošević's regime was directly inherited from the period of domination of KPJ (Communist Party of Yugoslavia) which had adopted the Soviet language Seriot is talking about. With the development of crisis in former Yugoslavia, it was "enriched" by a rhetoric of war, national hatred (Bugarski 1994), (Jaksić 1996) and political disqualification of "internal enemies". This evolution of wooden language results from the necessity to constantly redefine the Other, the one who is the real opponent of the common interests proclaimed by those in power. Its last stage took place in the electoral campaign in 2000.

3. The corpus

The wooden language that covered the electoral campaign was analyzed on the basis of the web edition of daily newspaper *Politika* (<http://www.poliika.co.yu/>). The system *web-corpus* (Fairon 1999) was used to assemble the issues from September 10th to October 20th. The complete web editions were recorded as textual files, from which the HTML tags were stripped. The URLs of individual texts were, however, retained which enabled the chronological ordering of texts, as well as the original ordering of texts in each issue. The issues were separated in three groups that corresponded to the tree main periods of this crisis: the first period encompassed the issues from September 10th to 24th and it corresponded to electoral campaign (the electoral silence began on September 22nd). The second period assembled the issues from September 25th to October 5th and it corresponded to the post-electoral crisis while the third period, issues dated from October 6th to October 20th covered the initial period of the constitution of the new government. The following table gives the main quantitative data about the size of subcorpora:

Period	No. days	Size in Mb	The longest text in a period	Date of its release	Tokens	Diff. tokens	Simple forms
10.09-24.09.	15	4.64MB	427KB	15.09.	741572	68994	582071
25.09-05.10.	10	2.51MB	311KB	05.10.	497003	54018	386797
06.10.-20.10.	15	3.01MB	270 KB	14.10.	497463	47954	386935
	40	10.16MB			1736038	107878	1355803

The subcorpora and the corpus as a whole were processed by the system INTEX (Silberztein 1993), using primarily the incorporated tools for finite automata processing, and partly the available lexical resources.

The processing was based on the construction of local grammars as finite automata. The initial step of this construction was the analysis of occurrences in text of individual words on the basis of produced concordances.

4. One example of the analysis procedure

The main participants of electoral crisis were, as mentioned, Vojislav Koštunica and Slobodan Milošević. Using these names as search keywords, concordances did not yield good approximation: three political leaders have the same name, Vojislav, and the surname Milošević is one of the most frequent in Serbia. The following examples from the 1st and 3rd period show with keywords in bold and in small capitals that from the first seven occurrences of the entry <Milošević> only one of them in the 1st period and three in 3rd actually referred to Slobodan Milošević.

Savezne Republike Jugoslavije Borislav **Milosxevicx**. Ciljevi ovih bombardovanja, a bi im u tom slucyaju i sam predsednik **MILOSXEVICX** cyestitao i glasao za mladi sportisti Marina Muncxan i Bojan **Milosxevicx**, cylanovi Olimpijskog kampa prihvatila jasno i na dugu stazu da je **Milosxevicx** deo problema. A ne deo dstave po romanu Dragoslave Pandurovicx-**Milosxevicx**, direktnog potomka Lazara e patrijarh Aleksije bio gost porodice **Milosxevicx**. Dok patrijarh Aleksije liteta iz doba neolita, stvaracxe Arsa **Milosxevicx** i Mirjana Popovicx iz

Example 1 Excerpt from the concordances of the keyword <Milošević> in 1st period

doskorasxnji predsednik Slobodan **MILOSXEVICX**, a tome su prisustvovali i Dusxan objasxnjava ambasador **Milosxevicx**. "Ambasada radi redovnim tempom. ambasadi. Borislav **Milosxevicx**, ambasador, rodxeni brat Slobodana Milosxevicxa jednoglasno je izabran Radmilo **Milosxevicx** Baja, a za potpredsednika izabran bez balkanskih ratova **MILOSXEVICX** bi bio pocyisxcxen mozxda vecx 1990. ili donesenim u vreme dok je josx **MILOSXEVICX** bio na vlasti, sve uradxeno tako da stvar jednog mladog cyoveka". Marko **Milosxevicx** boravio je u Moskvi od subote,

Example 2 Excerpt from the concordances of the keyword <Milošević> in 3rd period

The better approximation was obtained when finite automaton graph was constructed that included, on the basis of concordances, the description of the indirect references to the position of the president of the Republic: president, president of the republic, president of SRJ, Commander-in chief, etc. The graph **vodxa.grf** (*leader*) that is included as a subgraph in the graph **predsednik.grf** (*president*) represented in Figure 1 recognizes the various designations of the president, independently of the person that occupies the position. This graph was constructed iteratively using the concordances from the example 1 and analyzing the context of keywords <Slobodan> and <Milošević>.

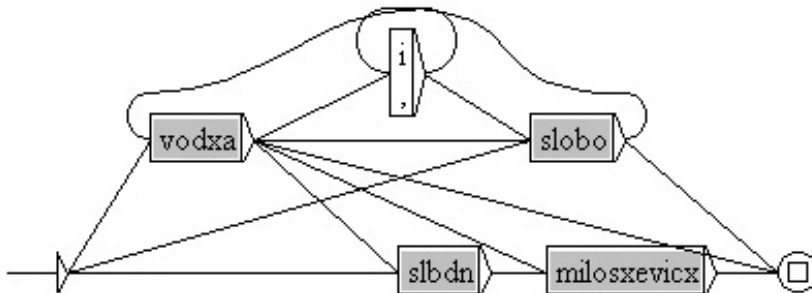


Figure 1 The graph **predsednik.grf** (*president*) recognizes various designations of Slobodan Milošević, by name, by title, by hypocoristic names etc.

Some strings that correspond to this graph in the 1st period are shown in the following example:

da je na cyelu drzxave i vojske bio [genijalni vodxa Slobodan Milosxevicx](#)", odlucynosxcxu i mudrosxcxu [nasxeg predsednika i vrhovnog komandanta Slobodana odlicyna saradnja](#) - to je poruka [nasxeg predsednika](#)", istakao je Kocyovicx u Banja je rekao da "samo pobeda [nasxeg predsednika Milosxevicxa](#) donosi SR e dileme - izabracxemo takvog vodxu za [nasxeg predsednika](#), naglasio je Tomicx. a "imamo samo jednog predsednika, [nasxeg predsednika Slobodana Milosxevicxa](#), dok koliko narod Krajine veruje politici [nasxeg predsednika Slobodana Milosxevicxa](#) na izborima "pobeda [nasxeg predsednika Slobodana Milosxevicxa](#) jeste garant je neodvojivo vezano za [nasxeg predsednika Slobodana Milosxevicxa](#) jeste obnova pod mudrim rukovodstvom [nasxeg predsednika Slobodana Milosxevicxa](#), Socijalisti

Example 3 The excerpt from the concordances obtained by the graph **predsednik.grf** in the 1st period; the president is marked as "ours" and is confronted to "their" candidate.

ime (iz sportske hale zaorilo se "[Slobo, Slobo, Slobo](#)"), a zatim je Gorica velicyanstveni skup da daju podrskxu nasxem [Slobi](#)", rekao je Vojislav Nosecxi visoko uzdignut transparent "[Slobo](#), Kraljevo je uz tebe", Milutin lokalne vlasti aplauzom i ovacijama - "[Slobo, Slobo](#)", ispratili ga iz svog prekidan aplauzima i poklicima "[Slobo, Slobo](#)", "Jugoslavija, Jugoslavija", burnim ovacijama, pozdravima "[Slobo, Slobo](#)", "Jugoslavija, Jugoslavija". Na aplauzima i odusxevljenim povicama "[Slobo, Slobo](#)", "Pobeda, pobeda",

Example 4 Hypocoristic references to the president from the concordances obtained by **predsednik.grf** in the 1st period

Applying the graph **predsednik.grf** to the 3rd subcorpus identified the occurrences of the former and the newly elected president, referred by the title, which has proved its adequacy:

pokazatelj priznavanja drzxave [Jugoslavije i njenog predsednika](#). On je naglasio 1244 je bila cyinjenica da je [predsednik Jugoslavije](#) bio Slobodan Milosxevicx. Vojislav Kosxtunica izabrani [predsednik Jugoslavije](#). "Danas, posle deset godina prisustvovati i novoizabrani [predsednik Jugoslavije](#) dr Vojislav Kosxtunica. maja- juna 1997. godine, aktuelni [predsednik Jugoslavije](#) i tada bio u stanju da u RS i predstojećim izborima. [Predsednik Jugoslavije](#) je sa zadovoljstvom prihvatio Kao prvi neposredno izabrani [predsednik Jugoslavije](#) on je sada prvi put u tom Kosxtunica i zvanično [predsednik Jugoslavije](#) Pobednik na izborima polozxio dan kada je bivsxii [predsednik Jugoslavije Slobodan Milosxevicx](#) krocyio u centar oko 18 cyasova stigli su novi [predsednik Jugoslavije](#), srpski patrijarh

Example 5 The excerpt from the concordances **predsednik.grf** in the 3rd period; references

are made both to the former and to the new president.

The relation between the occurrences of Milošević retrieved by the keyword <Milošević> and Milošević defined by the graph **predsednik.grf** is illustrated in the following table:

		1 st period	2 nd period	3 rd period
predsednik.fst	occurrences:	669	395	236
	tokens:	101	73	25
	hapaxes:	50	40	16
<Milošević>		690:6:0	338:6:0	619:6:0

The occurrences of Koštunica, first in the role of the presidential candidate, and then as the president were identified in the similar way using the graph **kandidat.grf** (*candidate*) in the 1st and 2nd period and the graph **novi-predsednik.grf** (*new-president*) in the 3rd period. The Figures 2 and 3 represent the density of the occurrences of these two names in the 1st and 3rd subcorpora that illustrates their relative frequency. The same procedure was applied to the creation of other graphs that were used for the corpus analysis.

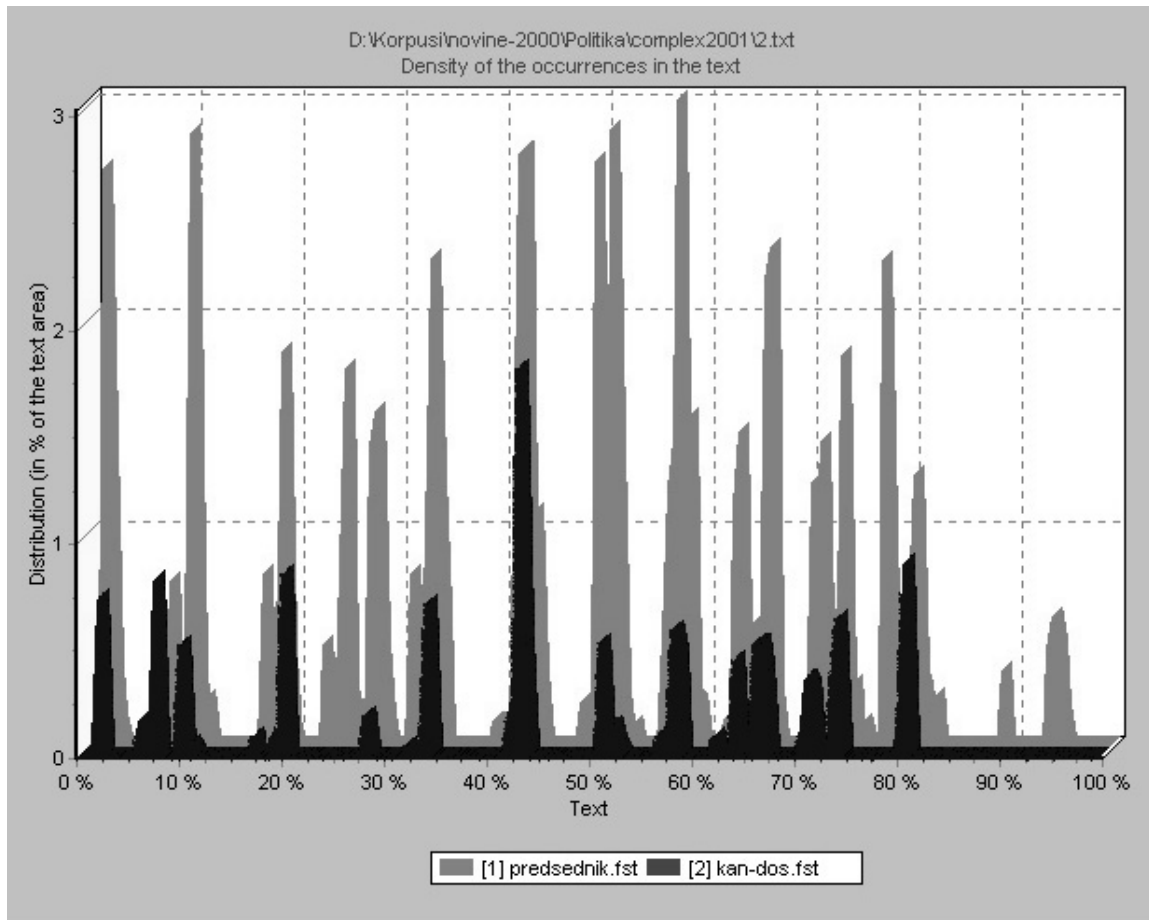


Figure 2 Relation between Milošević and Koštunica in the 1st period: picks correspond to the individual issues during the electoral campaign. The low density at the end of the chart corresponds to the electoral silence.

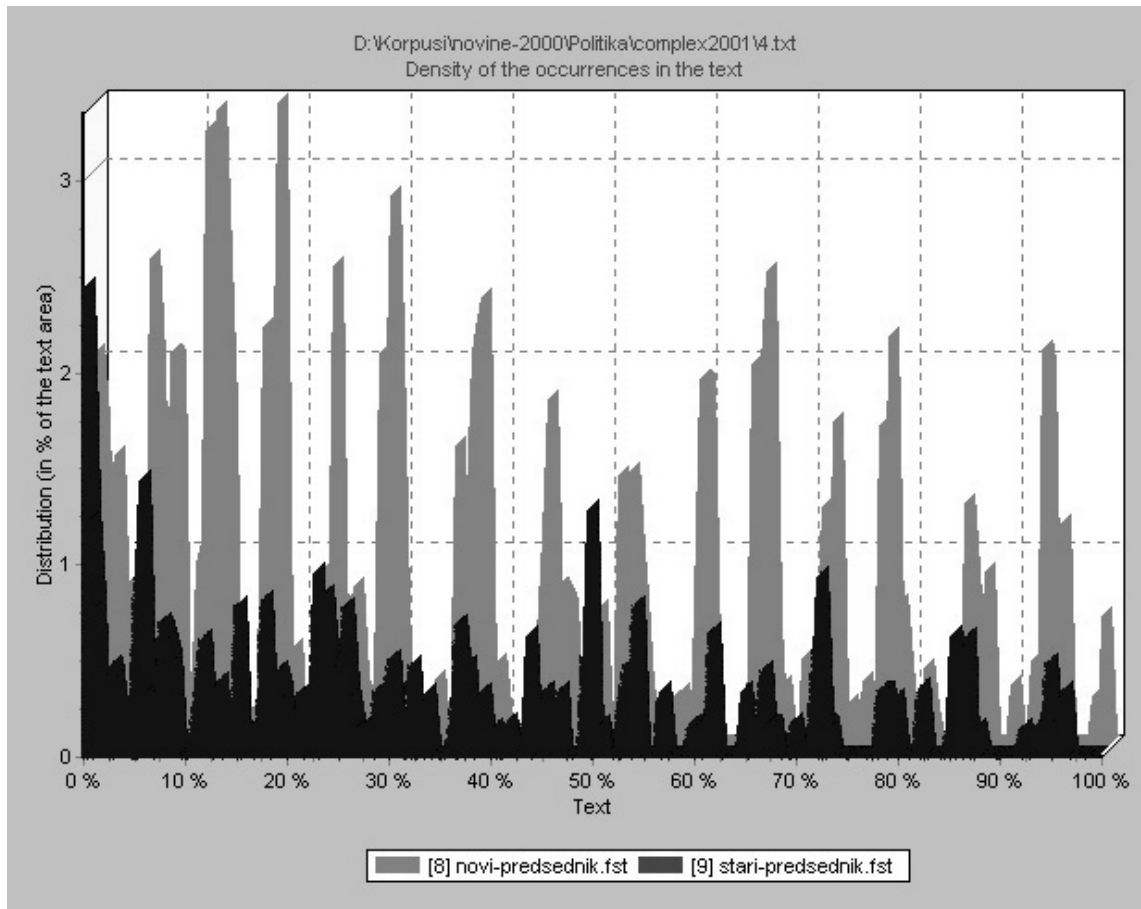


Figure 3 Relation between Milošević and Koštunica in 3rd period: picks correspond to the individual issues from the period after October 5th.

5. Evidences of the tribal attitude

The applied procedure enabled us to search for the corpus evidences of the wooden language. In its relation to the Other, the wooden language assigns the meaning to Us and to the Other through the system of definitions.

The excerpted examples illustrate this view. In the period before 5th October the president was “ours” (see example 3), not “theirs”, and even the hypocoristics were used to name him (see example 4). After the 5th October these qualifications were not used any more to refer to the new president (example 5). The similar evidence was obtained from the sequences of the form **oni koji nisu** (*those that are not*), that is the pronoun in 3rd person of plural and relative sentence with negation (see example 6). These sequences are in the function of defining the Other: the Other is **not** a friend, **not our** citizen, etc.

medxutim, ne mogu da sude [oni koji je ne](#) poseduju i koji, svojim stavovima kao a imali od toga koristi [oni koji nam nikada nisu](#) bili prijatelji". Za dobro Nigde ne kazxu kako nam [oni koji nam nisu](#) oprostili jasnu nevinost mogu nesxto

se svet pita, i prijateljske zemlje i oni koji nam nisu prijatelji, hocxe li zxivlja na Kosovo useljavaju i oni koji nikada nisu bili gradxani Jugoslavije. pojedinih novina, da oni koji nikako tako nesxto ne mogu javno da saopsxte oni koji se nisu slagali i voleli, oni koji nisu govorili, oni koji misle da

Example 6 Concordances of the graph **oni-koji.grf** (*those-that*) used on the 1st period subcorpus.

Use of the word "democracy" is another example of tribal attitude. It had two meanings: *our* democracy and *their* democracy, while *their* democracy was often emphasized by quotation marks because it was not the real democracy as *ours* (see example 7).

zavaraju lepim recyima kao sxto su "demokratija" i "moderna ekonomska misao" odlucyno odbacuje da "liberalna demokratija i trzxisxna privreda" predstavljaju strategija. Prava demokratija, koja podrazumeva suverenitet i samoopredeljenje na to da je "prava demokratija", koja podrazumeva suverenitet i samoopredeljenje svoj mazut. To se zove demokratija kojom cxe nas usrecxiti takozvana srpska i pojmovi kao sxto su mir, stabilnost, demokratija, multilateralnost, ljudska pravna drzxava, ne postoji demokratija, niti, pak, najosnovnija bezbednost et da nama ne trebaju sloboda i demokratija onih koji su nas bombardovali. od najvećih zxivih istoricyara. "Demokratija pocyiva na pojmu gradxanina,

Example 7 Occurrences of the keyword <demokratija> in the 1st subcorpus

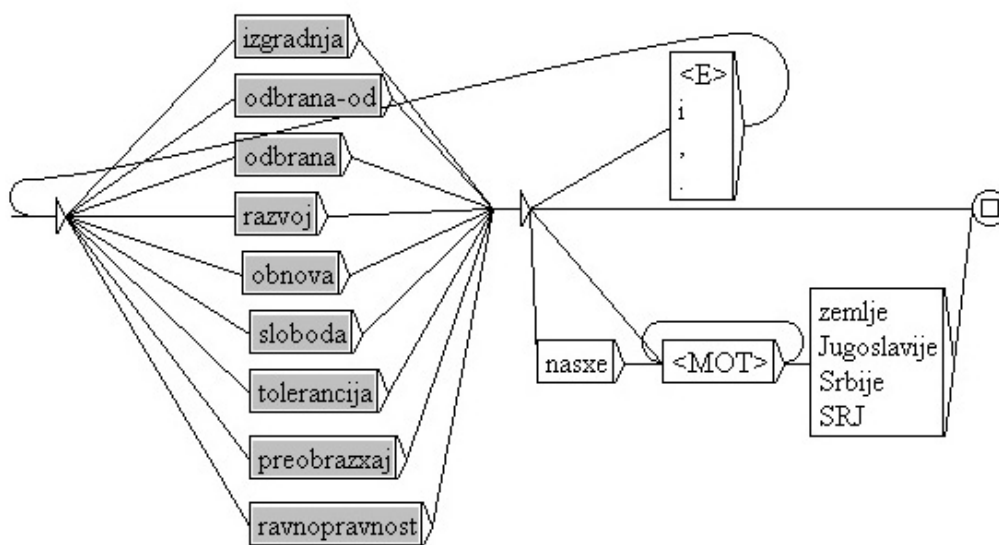


Figure 4 The graph **sps.grf** recognizes the phrases of the form “development and the reconstruction of our country”

Language used in the electoral program of Milošević’s parties concentrated on few central subjects.

- (a) Development of the country which includes the reconstruction and reparation of the country;
- (b) Defense of the country whose independence and territory are imperiled.
- (c) General civil rights (liberty, tolerance, equal rights, etc.)

The occurrences of such language were singled out by the graph **sps.grf**, represented on Figure 4. This graph has identified 2480 syntagmas in whole corpus whose occurrences were connected primarily to the period before October 5th. Components corresponding to the individual paths in the graph have the frequency that is decreasing after October 5th, as can be seen from the Figure 5.

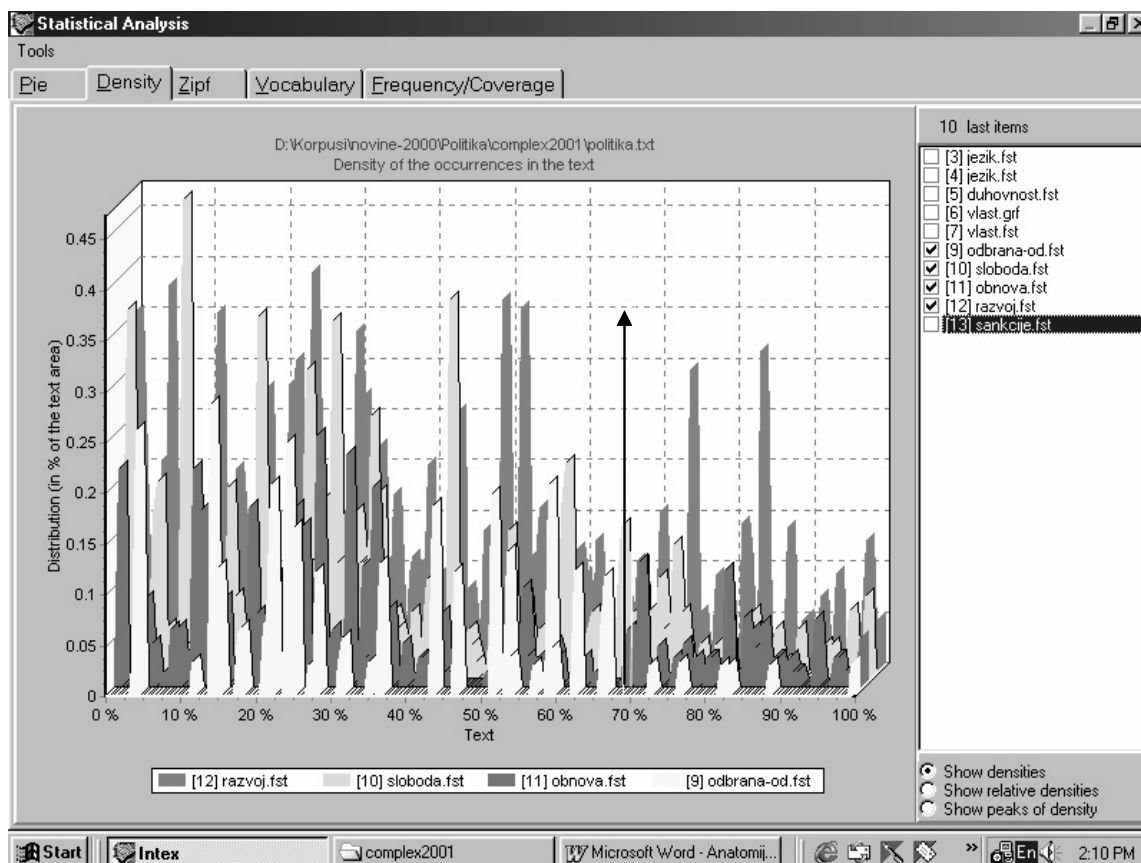


Figure 5 The chart shows a substantial decrease of certain phrases included in set of promises of Milošević supporters, such as defense, liberty, and development. The arrow corresponds to 5th October.

The analysis of these proclaimed aims illustrates the means of wooden language as Seriot described them. The general civil rights speak, actually, about their absence: for instance, the aims of political opponents, the coalition DOS, have never been quoted literally during the electoral campaign. Only after October 5th the text under the title “What is the political group DOS?” has been published. Until then, the reader of Politika could not get a neutral report on the opposition activities. Talk about the development of the country was hiding the effect of international sanctions, while the defense was actually the “last battle for the defense of the liberty and independence of our country” (see example 8).

garantuje građanima nezavisnost, slobodu, mir i sigurnost. Narodu Jugoslavije SPS i JUL zalaznu za slobodu, mir i ekonomski prosperitet, porucio građanima nasvih građana da ocyuvaju slobodu, mir i nezavisnost, istakao je sekretar jer druge otadybine nemaju. Sloboda, mir i nezavisnost nemaju cenu, naglasavaju patriotska i koja se zalazne za slobodu, mir i patriotizam. Krsmanovicx smatra Slobodana Miloshevicxa i parolama za slobodu, mir i razvoj, docyekale su u centru poverenje dati onima koji cyuvaju slobodu, mir i toleranciju i koji imaju i umeju 24. septembra branimo nasxu slobodu, mir, integritet i dodao da nama ne trebaju da je glas za Miloshevicxa, glas za slobodu, mir, nezavisnost SRJ, nasuprot Miloshevicxa garantuje slobodu, mir, ocyuvanje integriteta i teritorijalne ce ocyekujem da pobeđe sloboda, mir, red i rad, izjavio je potpredsednik pokra ne prodaju Srbije. - Kad kaznem obnova - mislim na nacionalni preporod. Obnova

Example 8 Phrases identifying the proclaimed aims of the SPS group retrieved by the graph **sps.grf**.

6. Conclusion

The presented results give the methodological frame in which it would be possible to undertake a more comprehensive study of the phenomenon of wooden language. The corpus evidences of means that are used by this kind of language are important not only as linguistic phenomenon—they also lead to the idea that it is possible to replace the language of the ideological manipulation with the dialog with the Other. It seems that it is appropriate here to paraphrase Jean Baudrillard's (*Le crime parfait*, ch. *La pensée radicale*, Galilée, Paris, 1995) idea that transformation of the world requires the transformation of language.

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