

## Critical metaprescriptivism: An exploratory analysis of attitudes towards grassroots prescriptivism in a pertinent Facebook group

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One focus of digital prescriptivism research has been corrections, especially in the context of what could be labelled *orthographic shaming*. This term denotes the practice(s) of people publicly correcting other people's linguistic mistakes (both concerning spelling and grammar). Crucially, the term is based on the fact that correctors – sometimes called 'grammar nazis' – are often ascribed the intent of discrediting or denigrating the corrected person and/or positioning themselves as superior while distracting from the actual argument at hand and thus disrupting the discourse. Both the practice itself and the question of how users perceive it – observable in (implicit and explicit) attitudes towards it, which are often negative (see Meletis 2022) – reveal how normativity and grassroots prescriptivism are negotiated by lay members of the general public. This talk focuses on the aspect of perception by adopting a metaperspective and exploring how users react – explicitly – to a specific type of correction: incorrect corrections. Specifically, in social media such as Facebook, incorrect corrections – which by no means target only linguistic 'mistakes' but also other domains of knowledge – are often corrected themselves in what here are called *re-corrections*. An intuitive observation that is supported by preliminary evidence (see Frick/Meletis submitted) is that correctors of incorrect corrections take pleasure in uncovering the hypocrisy of both incorrect correcting as a practice and often also incorrect correctors as stereotyped agents. Interestingly, this creates a situation in which a prescriptive practice is criticized – and possibly subverted – by another prescriptive practice. The intricacies of such instances of metaprescriptivism are at the core of this talk.

In a qualitative exploratory approach, select linguistically-themed posts and comments from the public Facebook group *People Incorrectly Correcting Other People* are analyzed. This group itself operates at a metalevel as it is dedicated to collecting and discussing anonymized and decontextualized screenshots of (often re-corrected) incorrect corrections to entertain the group's members. The questions addressed in the analysis are: Which attitudes can be deduced towards corrections in general, and what does the (often) gleeful reaction to incorrect corrections reveal about attitudes towards 'unsuccessful' attempts at prescriptivism? How can metaprescriptivism be critical of prescriptivism or even anti-prescriptivist while being a prescriptive practice itself? How do re-correctors position themselves as well as the incorrect correctors they correct? What are the different levels of awareness of prescriptivism among users and (how) do they distinguish between language and language use? At a macro-level, what do the architecture of this Facebook group and the activities of its members reveal about attitudes towards grassroots (meta)prescriptivism? What role does humor play? By critically examining these questions on the basis of specific examples, the talk aims to contribute to research on the public's attitudes towards prescriptivism.

Frick, Karina, and Dimitrios Meletis (submitted): People incorrectly correcting other people: The pragmatics of (re-)corrections and their negotiation in a Facebook group. Submitted to *Discourse, Context & Media*.

Meletis, Dimitrios (2022): Grammatiknazi. In Forschungsgruppe Diskursmonitor und Diskursintervention (ed.), *Diskursmonitor. Glossar zur strategischen Kommunikation in öffentlichen Diskursen*. <https://diskursmonitor.de/glossar/grammatiknazi-grammar-nazi/>