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M a r i a C i c h o ń s k a

**The uniqueness
of southern Slavonic languages:
one dialect as the base
for four standard languages**

1. Standard languages of Slavonic south developed in different historical periods and in different political and cultural conditions. In the early years the most common and natural situation was when a standard language was being created on the basis of a dialect surrounding the capital town – a political and cultural centre, the example of which is the Czech language, which developed on the basis of the dialect of the area surrounding Prague. The situation of the emergence of a standard Polish language is a little more complex with the transfer of the rights of a capital town from Gniezno to Cracow and finally to Warsaw. This created a situation in which three dialects, albeit in different proportions, had the influence on standard Polish. The three dialects are the following: the Great-Polish dialect, the Little-Polish dialect, and the Mazovian dialect. Still another situation applies to the Macedonian language, whose dialect base was not the language of the area surrounding the capital town.

Due to geographic and political location and the lack of state independence for several hundred years, the small southern Slavonic nations did not create their own standard languages (apart from Slovenia), when West European languages were formed in the 15th and 16th centuries. The southern Slavonic dialect languages were under considerable influence

of other languages, more prestigious ones or the languages of invaders. The fate of standard Croatian language is worth mentioning here. Before standardization two dialects played the role of standard languages namely, the Chakavian dialect (16th century and the first half of the 17th century) and later the Kaykavian dialect (the second half of the 17th century and 18th century). The period of the standard language development of Serbs, Macedonians, and Bulgarians was connected with the fight against the Turkish oppression and the national revival which led to the development of standard Bulgarian and Macedonian languages as late as the 19th century. The Macedonian language with its late appearance of its standard form in 1945 and the Bulgarian language create a language area with standard languages in the south western area of Slavonic languages. In the north there exists a standard Slovene language.

2. The area covered, in recent past, by the so-called Serbo-Croatian language had the Neo-Shtokavian dialect at its base. For almost 150 years it was a common language of Serbs, Croats, the multicultural Bosnia and Hercegovina, as well as Montenegro inhabited by Montenegrins and Serbs. The process of creating a standard language in the rest of the area, in Bosnia and Hercegovina as well as Montenegro, was a more complex one and has not been completed yet. The difficulties have been caused by complex nationalistic (ethnic) issues in the new countries of former Yugoslavia. Bosnia and Hercegovina gained the status of an independent country thanks to The Dayton Agreement of 1995. Montenegro voted for independence in a referendum in 2004. The ethnic diversity of Bosnia and Hercegovina has its serious consequences on the development of a standard language. The language in this country is connected with the religion of the speakers, namely Muslims use Bosnian, East-orthodox Serbs – Serbian (in the so-called Serb Republic, an autonomous republic being a part of Bosnia and Hercegovina) and Roman-Catholics use a language labeled as the Croatian language in Bosnia. To present a full picture of the language situation the presence of the Serbian language should be noted. The language is used by the few Serbs who inhabit Kosovo and who communicate in a standard language which is based on the Serbian standard language used in Serbia.

3. The Serbo-Croatian language, based on the Neo-Shtokavian dialect, has been a diversified language since its codification. This situation has been caused not only by the vast area it covers but also by the cultural di-

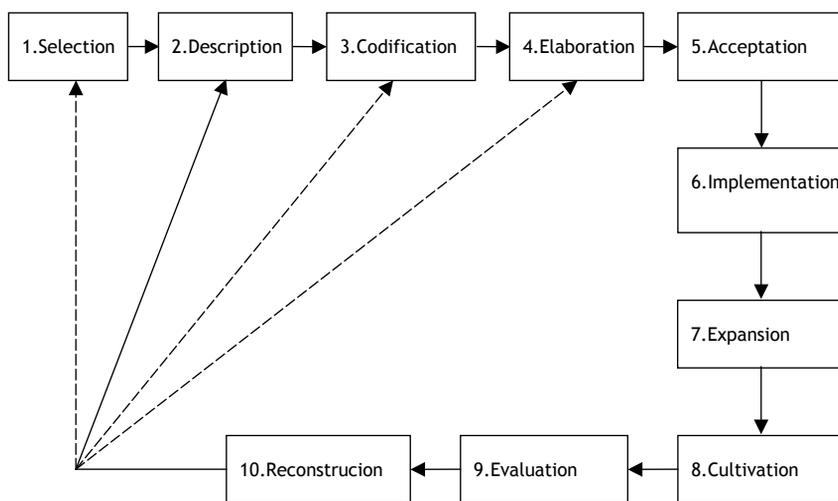
iversity due to the presence of the great religions: Christian (East-orthodox and Catholicism), Islam and also, Judaism (till the Second World War).

In each of the former Yugoslav Republics, the language was based on a liberal norm and was used as a basic tool for 'yugounification', whose aim was to eradicate the national identity of each of the nationalities. The Serbo-Croatian language presented a very specific language phenomenon as it did not have one source as its base. The Neo-Shtokavian dialect spread over a vast area and developed in different cultural areas under the influence of various other languages (more than a dozen). At the early stage the grammar was not homogenous, which brought about the diversification of the standard language, too. The Chakavian dialect and the Kaykavian dialect had influenced the diversification of the Croatian standard. In the past they played the roles of standard languages. In the 16th and 17th centuries it was Chakavian and later the uncodified Kaykavian. Although it enjoyed a privileged status, it did not become a standard. Even in modern times the dialect expresses the 'Croatian' character and its elements make their way into the standard language which is common in Zagreb, the capital city. In former Yugoslavia a view was put forward that it was one language in the form of the so called 'variants.' According to Brozović (1970) language variants did not block communication and the users of Serbo-Croatian were bilingual speakers during the Republic and after its disintegration. The status of 'variants' guaranteed political correctness, though it was not broadly accepted, especially by Croats inhabiting both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Babić (2004) discussed the inadequacy of the terms Serbo-Croatian and Croat-Serbian, which might imply that they did not apply to the language used in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

4. Only a few years before the break-up of former Yugoslavia articles devoted to language differentiation of Serbo-Croatian started to present facts about language differences. The use of a liberal language norm which allowed the mixing of elements of variants of Serbo-Croatian was meant to obliterate the differences within Yugo-unification. Such a language norm was not fully accepted by everybody. The speakers of the so-called western variant of the language, Croats living in Croatia, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina were reluctant to use language elements not existing in their language tradition, thus, consciously or unconsciously following the purist tradition.

5. The complicated language situation, which can be found not only in the Slavonic world, led to permanent, political treatment of the language. The vast number of papers on this subject written in Tito's Yugoslavia, gagged by censorship, show that the problem of the Serbo-Croatian language was not dealt with freely especially in its sociolinguistic aspect.

In the early 1970s a sociological concept of the development of literary/standard languages was put forward. This theory was of a very general nature and did not take into consideration the numerous and concrete political, economic and social conditions which influence such a complex process. This concept was created by American linguistics (Fishman, 1974). Soon it was used to interpret the development of Serbo-Croatian. This interpretation made the impression of being objective and not entering the delicate questions of language functioning in a reality outside the language itself which was differently interpreted by intellectuals (especially linguists), many of whom were politically engaged. (Radovanović 1978, 1979) The model which will be presented below assumes stages/phases of language development since its adoption (depending on a concrete situation) of a dialect or socio-dialect, or possibly the language of an invader up to the phase of reconstruction, or language standardization. The model used for the interpretation of the shaping of the Serbo-Croatian language follows acceptance and implementation stages.



6. The model was interpreted in former Yugoslavia by Radovanović (1979) and presented as an infinite process due to the character of the mod-

el itself as well as the status of the Serbo-Croatian language in former Yugoslavia. The first four stages of the model namely selection, description, codification and elaboration present a preliminary state in which the sequence and number are of obligatory character. The 5th stage is the acceptance stage of the language that is its standardization. If a language does not undergo the process of acceptance the language is not standardized. Further stages, 6–10, are of non-obligatory character and in each of them the ongoing process can stop.

7. The criticism of this model, thirty years after its conception and twenty years after the breaking up of former Yugoslavia and the disintegration of Serbo-Croatian language on the level of standard language specify what the model takes into account or how it should be modified. The model is idealistic and assumes a total fulfillment of the standardization process. However, after a detailed analysis, it should be stressed that the model was not appropriate for the interpretation of the Shtokavian dialect area and the process of the creation of the Serbo-Croatian language. Radovanović (1979), who used the model for the interpretation and evaluation of the language situation in this area, was aware that the process had not been fully completed. Neither did he mention the fact that the Shtokavian dialect was not accepted by Croats. What is more, he was aware that between phase 5 and phase 6 there is a difference, which he defined as a difference between the official and factual language practices. He was cautiously trying to explain the situation by cultural differences and the need for longer time to eradicate the difference. Trying to be faithful and defend the language *status quo* he introduced the concept of *language planning* into his model, which means authoritative control, and in practice, making the language a political issue in the former Yugoslav federation. To make his stand credible he referred to similar situations existing in other areas in Europe where one language (having variants) is used by speakers living in different (non-native) countries. This applies not only to English but also to German, Spanish or Portuguese outside their mother countries. This sociolinguistic model of Serbo-Croatian in the final years of Yugoslavia coincided with a new outlook on the questions of language variants. Certain publications that appeared then, i.e. a grammar of Croatian published in 1986 and the work of Janković (1990) pointed out the disregard for the vast language differences that were treated artificially only as variants within one common standard language.

8. The disintegration of Yugoslavia had a considerable impact on the Serbo-Croatian language and very quickly changed the status of variants. The new and independent countries promoted them to the roles of standard languages. The disintegration of the Serbo-Croatian standard followed, which, in turn, led to considerable changes in the Shtokavian dialect areas. Coming back to the above presented model, it should be stressed that both in Croatia and Serbia the first two stages of standardization were maintained namely: stage 1 – selection and stage 2 – description, whereas in stage 3 – codification and various other phenomena take place. The codification changes had little effect on the Serbian language area whose standard language was changed very little. In common parlance, it was said that Serbian had returned to its roots in Serbia as it was rejected in the other newly created countries in the spheres of the army and police forces. The Serbian language has maintained its standard form from the times of the Federation with very little change. It must be stressed that contemporary Serbian must face the present opposing tendencies of ‘balkanization’ and ‘Europeanization’ which affect not only the standard language but also the language system itself (Radovanović 2001).

The other countries of former Yugoslavia were forced either to reintroduce the old national terminology in the armed forces (Croatia) or to create its new terminology (Slovenia, Macedonia). Croatia as well as Bosnia and Hercegovina had to introduce certain changes in the standard language which even before the split from Serbian did not overlap with the Serbo-Croatian standard. In Croatia the de-Serbization of the language has had long tradition. During the time of the Independent Croatian State in the Second World War similar steps were undertaken. Despite the prestige which the Kaykavian Dialect enjoys in Croatia, there are (very few) voices suggesting the need to depart from the Shtokavian language base and replace it by the Kaykavian Dialect. However, such a revolutionary step, which might have unforeseen cultural consequences, has not been undertaken. The changes in the Croatian language included the process of getting rid of Serbian elements and the increase of language purism.

9. After the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia the language situation in the multinational Bosnia and Hercegovina was as complicated as its political situation. The existing Bosnian variant of Serbo-Croatian had to meet the requirements of the three nations: Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Even before the outbreak of the war, in the national census of 1991 Bos-

nian Muslims declared that 90 per cent of them were using Bosnian as their national language. The language is based on the Shtokavian dialect and takes into account the grammatical features and vocabulary of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Since 1991 Bosnian has been treated as an official language in the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina. It is a language of a long lasting written and literary tradition and the present period is treated as the language's fifth phase of development (Jahić, Halilović, Pašić 2000). The language is based on the Neo-shtokavian dialect with two variants: East Bosnian and East Hercegovian (with the production of the old Slavonic phoneme /e/ in the form of double phoneme /(i)je/. On its phonological level it includes the old tradition i.e. the presence of the phoneme /h/ thanks to which its frequency of occurrence in the Shtokavian Bosnian is higher than anywhere else. It is also increased by the presence of Oriental words, especially Turkish, which also manifests itself in word formation. This situation is connected with the presence of the culture of Bosnian Muslims developing in that area since 16th century. The latest phase of the development of the Bosnian language consists in the changes in phase 10 of Fishman's model, that is the reconstruction of the norm which exceeds the frames of the dialect and the Shtokavian tradition and adduces to the old Bosnian tradition. It should be stressed that there is no influence of Modern Turkish.

The Croats in Bosnia and Hercegovina, on the other hand, have a language norm which is closer to the Croatian language norm in Croatia. Also in this case the changes occurred in the 10th and the last reconstruction phase within the Shtokavian dialect only.

The Serbs living in the Serb Republic, which is a part of the Bosnia and Hercegovina Federation, base their Serbian language on the same base – the Shtokavian dialect. They, however, do not follow the Muslim tradition but rely on the Serbian tradition and culture. It seems that the language differences in Bosnia and Hercegovina result from phase 9 and 10, i.e. evaluation and reconstruction stages of Fishman's model, which develop in a slightly different way in each of the nationalities because they result from the current needs of each of the nationalities, their tradition, culture and national aspirations.

10. The situation of a standard language in Montenegro is a reflection of the complex ethnic situation of this country. The society of Montenegro is divided into two groups. One group which regards itself as a sep-

arate nation, whose origin was presented by Nikčević (1977). This group approves of the separate character of the language in relation to Serbian declaring a certain number of anachronisms and dialectic expressions from the area of Montenegro features as elements of the standard language. The other part of the society denies the Montenegrin national identity, regarding themselves as Serbs from Montenegro and thus rejecting the separate status of the language. Each of the groups has a different outlook on the beginnings of Montenegro, its history and cultural development.

The language in Montenegro should not be treated in a dual way if we want to place the state of the language in the Fishman's model. Both the advocates and opponents of a separate Montenegrin language see the source of further differences in phase 1 (selection) unlike in the former language processes much later. Language features, strongly present in language use, yet absent in the language norm were promoted to the norm as a result of a new codification of the Montenegrin language. This applies to phonological features i.e. palatal /š/ and /ž/, prosodic features which are characteristic of the central and north-western parts of Montenegro which are outside the norm as well as morphological features such as the archaic forms of deictic pronouns and personal pronouns, and numerous lexical features of regional character.

11. The factors which led to the rise of the presented language situation as far as standardization in the area of the Shtokavian dialect is concerned did not take place anywhere else in the Slavonic world. As can be seen from the presented problem, no nation which is changing the status of its language from a variant did not get rid of its old dialectic base. The Serbian language covers the area of Neo-Shtokavian and a small area of a very old Torlacian dialect. This dialect never aspired to the role of a superior dialect. The languages in Bosnia and Hercegovina as well as in Montenegro are also based on one dialect of the territory. A different situation exists in Croatia where the dialect which is the base for the standard language covers only a part of the territory: Eastern Croatia (Slavonija and Dalmatia from Split to the South). The rest of territory is covered by the Chakavian dialect (part of Dalmatia, Istria, the Adriatic islands) and the Kaykavian dialect on the territory of inland Croatia including Zagreb, the capital city. The Kaykavian dialect enjoys high prestige and its grammatical and lexical elements are present in common parlance of the inhabitants of the capital (the so called Purgerian language).

Conclusions

The phenomenon in which one dialect can be the base for even four literary languages is caused by several factors. Past attempts to create one standard language on the basis of the same dialect, common to several Slavonic nations, while trying to maintain some differences in phonological, grammatical and lexical systems turned out to be impermanent in spite of the existence of the community for almost 150 years. The main reason for such a situation was the lack of a full and real acceptance of the 1st 'selection' phase of the standardization process. With the passing of time the next phases of Fishman's model were not being fulfilled. As a result the politically required unification of the language did not take place. On the contrary its differentiation was taking place and the uniform Serbo-Croatian language turned out to be one more utopia of contemporary times.

The Shtokavian dialect, covering a vast area, created in the 12th century in Southern Slavonic territory could give rise to more than one standard language due to the rich internal diversity of the grammatical and lexical systems which allowed the possibility of choice and language differentiation. The choice of Shtokavian dialect was the only possibility for Serbs and the inhabitants of Bosnia and Hercegovina as well as Montenegro while Croats did not make use of Chakavian and Kaykavian dialects, existing in their territory, for such purposes.

Potential possibility of norm/language modification, that is the reconstruction phase can be achieved by incorporating dialect features into the standard language. This was utilized for the codification of the Montenegrin language. Another possible step in this phase is to enliven the old words and to introduce regionalisms which was done in the Croatian language in Croatia and in Bosnia and Hercegovina as well as in the Bosnian language in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Fishman's Model (1974) is accepted as an idealized model for the presentation of the general phases of the creation of a standard language. It is, however, too abstract for the description of each language without modification. The inventory of sociolinguistic factors is not sufficient as it does not take the strictly political factor strongly enough into consideration. However this political factor may have a decisive influence on the process of standardization. Therefore all the factors in Fishman's model should be discussed in each language separately.

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