

THE DYNAMICS AND FACTORS OF ETHNO-LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE POLICY OF WESTERN BALKAN

Etno- Linguistiğin Batı Balkanlar Dil Politikasındaki Dinamikleri ve Etkileri

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Abstract: *Main purpose of this paper will focus on the language development in the Balkans region; specifically language known as Serbo-Croatian that was primarily used as official language of the former SFRJ (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) while using descriptive method. While exploring history of the languages spoken in the Balkan region, research itself will primarily focus on the Bosnia and Herzegovina and its official language known as Bosnian being which is direct decent of the Serbo-Croatian language. Serbo-Croatian language, not long ago was commonly used throughout the SFRJ has been divided in to three different languages known as Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian language, even though they all share majority of common spelling, syntax and pronunciation. The paper itself can be used as a useful resource for the future researches done on the language subject in the Balkan region.*

Key words: *the Balkan, language, nation, identity*

Özet: *Bu çalışmanın ana amacı Balkan coğrafyasındaki dil gelişimine, özellikle de eski SFYC (Sosyalist Federal Yugoslavya Cumhuriyeti)'nin resmi dili olarak öncelikli kullanıma sahip olan Sırpça-Hırvatça olarak da bilinen dilin gelişimine betimsel yöntem kullanarak odaklanmaktadır. Balkanlarda konuşulan dillerin tarihini incelerken araştırmannın kendisi öncelikle Bosna Hersek ve onun doğrudan Sırp-Hırvatçası kökenli bir dil olan resmi dili olarak tanınan Boşnakçaya odaklanacaktır. Kısa süre öncesine kadar SFYC'de yaygın bir şekilde kullanılmakta olan Sırp-Hırvatça, çok sayıda ortak yazım, sözdizimi ve telaffuz kurallarına sahip olmasına rağmen Boşnakça, Sırpça ve Hırvatça olarak bilinen üç farklı dile ayrılmıştır. Balkan coğrafyasında dil ile ilgili yapılacak olan araştırmalarda bu çalışma yararlı bir kaynak olarak kullanılabileceği kanaatindeyiz.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Balkanlar, dil, ulus, kimlik*

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Introduction

Balkan and people living in this region have always been in the center of interest and the subject of many research studies done on the issues such as; identity, nation, culture, tradition, language, religion, history and so on. The issue of the languages thorough the Balkans, particularly the former Yugoslavia, has great importance as a field of the study for all, especially people living in this region and deal with linguistics. According to the former researches conducted, by the late 20th century approximately 27 million people in the former SFRJ were known to communicate in the Slavic language. Following group of 12 languages share common roots and belong to Slavic linguistic family: Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian, Check, Slovakian, Lustian, Serbian, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarussian, and Russian. All of these languages have developed in different ways. Surprisingly, neither great emigration during Austro-Hungarian outbursts in the Yugoslav Kingdom, nor all the wars and different military confects that followed in later years failed to put in the issue of the language into the background. There were four different Yugoslav people who used Serbo/Croatian language within the area ranging from the Slovenian/ Croatian border in the west to the Serbian/Macedonian and Serbian/Bulgarian border in the south and the east. Serbo/Croatian language belongs to the southwest Slavic group of languages. Group itself is one out of four groups a Slavic language family is divided into. The other three groups are: The Southeast Slavic which consists of Macedonian and Bulgarian language, The Northwest Slavic consists of Czech, Slovakian, Lusatian, Serbian and Polish and the Northeast Slavic group which combines of Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Russian.

Historical Perspectives of Serbo-Croatian Language

Now we will shift our focus on Serbo/Croatian language. Prof. Senahid Halilovic (1991) said that the main common language in Yugoslavia was Serbo-Croatian language. It was primarily spoken by the Serbs, Croats, Muslims and Montenegrins in four central republics of former SFRJ which was consisted of six republics: Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as two autonomous provinces Kosovo and Metohija. The term Serbo-Croatian has been used since the beginning of the tribes of the Serbs and Croats. It was regarded and appreciated as well as Slovenian, Bulgarian and Macedonian. This language included literary and standard language, the speech and idioms of people living in this area. It was the language that itself did not require the linguistic need to be a separated language. It included all the elements of

modern languages. The differences among the languages throughout the Balkan region are very close. It is common for the people from this area that every nation has a separate name for their language although there are no linguistic reasons a language can be divided and named as the two different languages. Yet people from these areas understand and communicate with one another very well, while speaking and the use of the same language. This situation cannot be changed by the targeted interventions in the language by the Croatian and nor Serbian national philology (Pohl, 1996). Many other authors claim the same thing: Leto (2001) argues that "linguistic intelligibility between Serbs and Croats is complete, while Trudgill (2003) also notes that Croatian and Serbian variations are completely mutually intelligible. Therefore, the Serbs and Croats named their language as Serbo-Croatian, whereas other nations were forced to opt for the only possible option. Many authors think that the name of the Serbo-Croatian language was imposed to the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. S. Woodward disagrees and claims that language is the basis of "ethnic identity" and surely claims that "Serbo-Croatian" was not imposed to its speakers. The Serbo-Croatian language was semantically complete in its core, without any ideological political connotations. It was a contentious fact that the language was called Serbo-Croatian if we note that the characteristic of the region was that each nation has its own name for a language. Here a new question arises - whether the Balkan-Slavic peoples are separate and whether there are truly different languages according to the linguistic. It is for sure that peoples and languages are not different from any linguistic point of view. The only differences between people are those religious, ethnic and dialectal ones. Religious, cultural and ethnic factors play an important role in the determination of the name of the language.

Earlier Stage of Bosnian Language and Afterwards

It is true that, the Catholic and Orthodox churches, as well as the arrival of the Turks Ottoman Empire, and thus the arrival of Islam with it in to this region, had a major influence on the development of the language. The presence of the Turks in the Balkans caused the present of Turkish words in Serbo-Croatian language and the use of voices 'h' and 'f'. The Bosniaks have argued for the present of the letter 'h', while members of the Serbian and Croatian people tented not to pronounce these voices considering it as an innovation in language. Therefore, it is obvious that the language has suffered from both violent and nonviolent change throughout the centuries. However, communication among ordinary people is still alive and active taking into the consideration that the concept of mutual

intelligibility is part of the definition of language: the language is defined as a mean of mutual understanding (Abraham, 1974; Lewandowski, 1990).

However, in early 90s of the 20th century, the Serbo-Croatian language was replaced by other names and used in different national and religious institutions, educational institutions, press and in academic circles. Since it was not the subject to of legislation, different names for the Serbo-Croatian were widely spread. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, members of the Serbian people called it Serbian, Croats called it Croatian, whereas Bosniaks and others called it Bosnian language. There is written evidence that the name of the Bosnian language was used in Bogomil ethnos in the 12th century. It was one more reasons Bosniaks found as a relevant data and enough to start clarifying that they speak Bosnian.

Most of linguists would find logical that the language was named after the state in which it is spoken. There are three levels of language: the language of the people, the standard language and the language in general. While the language on the basis of similarity is treated as a "three degrees of linguistic distance: little distance (typical for polycentric standard varieties of the same language, such as differences between Austrian standard German and its German counterpart), medium distance (the minimum linguistic distance between the standard variations of different languages (Ausbau-language), such as the difference between Luxembourgish and Germany's Standard German) and great differences (Abstand; any two variations representing different languages, Abstand-languages) "(Ammon, 2005).

When it is applied to the language of the Serbs, Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins, a high level of mutual intelligibility is present. Once in The International Criminal court prosecuting violations of humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia, ICTY, the translation of witness testimony who was coming from the different ethnic group and belonging to different confession was requested because the defendants complained he did not understand the language of witnesses, regardless the fact that Serbo-Croatian language was used to be their and only common language. American linguist who deals with Slavic field said that "the differences between the standard forms of Serbo-Croatian are little enough that a person in front of the court can not reasonably refuse an interpreter because s/he uses a standard form of the language (Drazenovic and Carrier, 2002). Morton Benson on this issue claims that the variation of Serbo-Croatian, used by educated speakers is mutually intelligible variations of those in English.

Linguistic Variation and Grammatical Properties

The differences between these variations can be briefly summarized as follows: there are phonetic /orthographic differences such as mleko / mlijeko. They are understood and well known by everyone. Practically, there are no grammatical differences. There are differences in the lexicon or dictionary such as veljača - februar. It must be stressed that a competent, any experienced Bosnian translator knows the meaning of the Croatian version. The need to ask for an explanation appeared to be very rare. In rare occasions, an American translator might need an explanation of the speakers who speaks British English. A competent translator can translate all three variants of Serbo-Croatian. It is clear that some linguists compare the languages of the former Yugoslavia, with British and American English. Prof. Dr. Ridanović (2012) as well, says that it is safe to say that British and American English are more distant from each other than any of the four variants of Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian from any other. Prof. Dr. Dzevad Jahic (1991) claims that Croatian, Serbian, and Bosnian language in terms of speech have no linguistic condition to be separate languages. Differences in spelling, syntax and pronunciation are not significant enough to be treated as separate languages such as Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian. Linguists agree that idioms are not decisive criteria for language separation. According to Slavic as the linguistic discipline, there is no a single reason that the Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian might be considered as separate languages but as variations of one language (Gröschel, 2001). Prof. Jahic (1991) agrees that these languages are neither ethnically nor linguistically separate languages. Gröschel (2003) also notes that idioms of the Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs as well as Montenegrins, are mutually intelligible as they used to be before. They are even more statistically intelligible than it is the case among other closely related languages). The present mutual intelligibility is a sociolinguistic correlation for a structural similarity established in the linguistics.

As previously stated, the difference between languages has only a political connotation. Today within the region of Southeast Europe, the question of language is one of the most sensitive ones because it implies other issues, the issue of national identity. After stating the language s/he uses a person's national and religious commitment is evident. The language is the mean of communication as well as national identity. Language is conceived by the people. Wiesinger (2000) argues that the relationship between the nation and language is given by the nature, as well as the understanding of a large group of people that they make one nation. The issue of language and identity concerned Robert D. Greenberg. In his book entitled *Language and Identity in the Balkans*, which deals with the modern interpretation of linguistic reality within the territory of 'common Serbo-Croatian'

clearly shows that this is not about linguistics and science, but the arranging of other people's backyards. Although Josip Silic argued that R. Greenberg (1996) does not understand many things and misunderstands a lot of things for he claims there is no descriptive spelling; equates national with nationalist, does not differentiate a vernacular from a dialect, nor dialects from a speech, even different language as a system from a language as a standard, or entity from identity, etc.

Many agreed that Greenberg paid attention to the political conception of the Balkans. Prof. Jahić explicitly says that it is absurd claim that Bosnian language has a connotation of a political name for the language. Since 1991, Croatian linguists are too concerned about the history of the Croatian language, which angers linguists who argue that the interest for the history of the Croatian people has started a long time ago.

This leads to interesting data which was analyzed by Greenberg. Among all countries of the former republic of Yugoslavia, the most stable is Croatia, where 96 percent of residents in the survey correspond to speak Croatian. Hence, it is in this country where there is the largest homogenization of people when it comes to the language they speak. Meanwhile, Woodward believes that the name of the Croatian language seemed to unite all the Croats. For Greenberg, language policy in Serbia was used as a means to satisfy the Serbs as people and held academic status quo.

Conclusion

It is clear that the language has been called differently. However, it was always one language. While some people tried to unite all nations in the region one of the Balkans, others have done their best to have their language named after the nation they belong to. Society of Bosnia-Herzegovina is a multiethnic and multicultural with three common spoken languages. Despite attempt, officially the people as the languages of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been separated although it was simply impossible due to dialectic base, linguistic reasons, as well as the ethnic and cultural integrity of these languages which are still so close.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a population of approximately four million people who speak Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian. The development of languages in the Balkans is the interest of all peoples. This is a new process that goes beyond national and takes the shape of the larger culture. After all the events in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia all nations had a great understanding and communication in different languages. Bosnia and Herzegovina is interested in connecting culture and languages, meanwhile people must not lose

their national identity. When we all tend to be the part of only community, union like the European Union and NATO forces, the peoples of the Balkan make every effort to dissociate. We heartily hope there will be no tendency to harm other peoples in order to achieve national and cultural goals. The tendency to be a different requires a respect for others.

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