

Tokyo 2014

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SERBIAN LANGUAGE TODAY: THE MAIN ISSUES

The goal of this presentation is to examine the **situation in the Serbian language and around it** – having in mind “the questionnaire” for the study of sociolinguistically relevant topics in the Slavic languages in related countries.

The **inventory/questionnaire** which here serves as a starting point represents mostly the externally, extralinguistically, sociolinguistically oriented list of phenomena and relations for which it was estimated that they could be significant for the general picture of the circumstances and changes in the **Slavic languages**, around them and among them, in the past half-century (as “a picture-frame” of the circumstances and changes).

Primarily “the inventory/questionnaire” was the basis for the text published internally in Poland, **University of Opole**, during the work on the international project about the **changes in the Slavic languages in the second half of the 20th century** (as a reminder for the sociolinguistic part of the theme):

As a series of publications of The Opole University in Poland, the following official monographs from the project have been published: *Najnowsze dzieje języków słowiańskich*, 1-14, Opole: Uniwersytet Opolski – Instytut Filologii Polskiej, 1996-2004 (general editor Stanisław Gajda):

Serbian (ed. M. Radovanović, 1996),

Bulgarian (ed. S. Dimitrova, 1997),

Russian (ed. E. Širjajev, 1997),

Sorbian (ed. H. Faska, 1998),

Czech (ed. J. Kořenský, 1998),

Slovenian (ed. A. Vidovič-Muha, 1998),

Slovak (ed. J. Bosák, 1998),

Croatian (ed. M. Lončarić, 1998),

Byelorussian (ed. A. Lukašanec, M. Prigodzič, L. Sjameška, 1998),

Macedonian (ed. L. Minova-G'urkova, 1998),
Ukrainian (ed. S. Ermolenko, 1999),
Polish (ed. S. Gajda, 2001),
Cassubian (ed. E. Breza, 2001),
Ruthenian (ed. P.R. Magocsi, 2004).

- (1) **The Language Situation:** (a) genetically proximate/distant languages; (b) typologically similar/distinct languages; (c) intelligibility between languages; (d) alphabets, orthography, the level of literacy; (e) ethnic (and confessional) proportions and processes; (f) autochthonous position and position of the diaspora type; (g) compact/non-compact linguistic (speech) communities; (h) bilingualism and multilingualism; (i) migrations of the population; (j) minority vs. majority languages.
 - (2) **Language Policy (“status planning”):** (a) language/languages in public use (mass media, education, publishing etc); (b) language/languages in the official use; (c) constitutional/legal/judicial solutions and language practice; (d) *lingua communis* and similar phenomena; (e) diglossia; (f) conflict (crisis) regions and situations.
 - (3) **Language Planning (“corpus planning”)** – normative (prescriptive) instruments for the planning of standard languages (which implies): (a) orthographic norm; (b) orthoepic norm; (c) grammatical (phonological, morphological, syntactic-semantic) norm; (d) word-formation norm; (e) lexical norm; (f) textual norm (organization of text, discourse, speech event); (g) stylistic (genre) norm; (h) pragmatic (interaction) norm. In the case of Serbian – *without “language engineering”*.
- (2-3) Is language planning being carried out as a continuous process, or only as a gradual one, with interruptions, changes in succession and so on? Have any of the planning phases been omitted, and some of them done simultaneously?
[Inventory of Phases:] (a) *selection*; (b) *description*; (c) *prescription* (codification); (d) *elaboration*; (e) *acceptance* ([“official”] recognition); (f) *implementation* ([“real”, “practical”] acceptance, that is application); (g)

expansion ([“horizontal” and “vertical”] extension); (h) *cultivation*; (i) *evaluation*; (j) *reconstruction*.

FIGURE 1

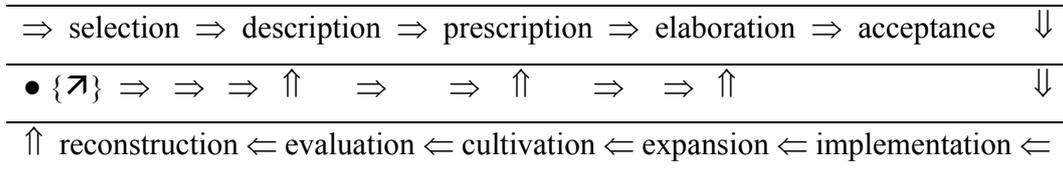


FIGURE 2

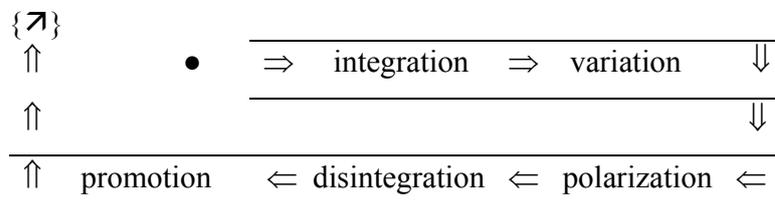
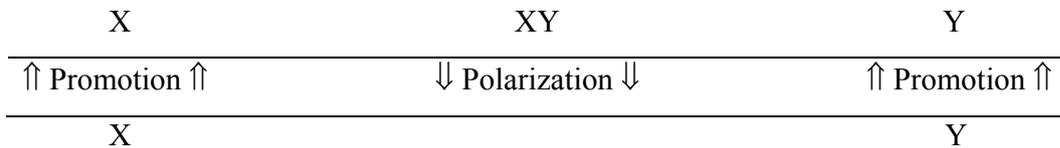


FIGURE 3

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- Integration** = Inauguration of the Neoštokavian standard (first half of the nineteenth century)
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- Variation** = Inauguration of urban-regional usage to the rank of the prestigious standards (second half of the nineteenth century)
-
- Polarization** = Inauguration of territorial / national variants of the standard (the twentieth century to the end of the 1960s)
-
- Disintegration** = Inauguration of the variants to the rank of the prestigious standards (1970s and 1980s)
-
- Promotion** = Inauguration of the separate standard languages (1990s)
-

FIGURE 4

The level of
Standard language



The level of
Variants
(of the Standard language)

[X = “Serbian”; Y = “Croatian”; XY = “Serbo-Croatian”]

- (4) **Language Stratification:** (a) in a functional perspective (written and spoken language, functional styles/registers: thematic, situational, professional etc); (b) in a social (“vertical”) perspective (sociolect, jargon, slang, vernacular etc); (c) in the territorial (“horizontal”) perspective (rural/urban dialects, variants of the standard language, their urban-regional realizations and versions, and their inter-relations).
- (5) **Languages in Contact:** (a) contacts with the so-called “major world” languages; (b) contacts with the languages in the surroundings (“neighbouring languages”); (c) contacts with the language of the *lingua communis* type; (d) contacts in the situations of diglossia, diaspora etc; (e) specific contact topics: lexical borrowings loanwords, syntactic calques from current international culture and language corpus, from current European (“Western”) culture and language corpus, from Balkan, Carpathian, Middle-European, Oriental and Mediterranean culture and language corpus, from Church-Slavonic, from modern *English*, French, German, Russian, Turkish (Arabic, Persian), from old Greek and Latin, (and others); (f) attitude to “purism” (versus “internationalism”).

(6) Speech (Language) Interaction: (a) the choice of language and (or) variety; (b) attitudes to languages and their varieties; (c) language prestige; (d) prestige of standard language; (e) principles of code-switching and speech strategies; (f) types of interaction choices and patterns.

To conclude: the conclusion is that in the (standard) Serbian language and around it (within the selected parameters), the situation characteristic for its (socio)linguistic picture before the political, cultural, ethnic and linguistic disintegration of (SFR)Yugoslavia has been preserved in a **relatively stable manner**.

On the *external level* (the level of status planning) the most distinctive (and relatively turbulent!) has been the **glottopolitical promotion** of already existing variants of standard Serbo-Croatian into separate standard language entities.

On the *internal level* (the level of corpus planning) the most distinctive (but not turbulent; without so-called “language engineering”) have been changes resulting from the fact that standard Serbian is simultaneously exposed to the influence of cultural and language **Balkanisation** and **Europeanisation** (especially to the influence of English language and American culture).

Both in the field of **grammar** and **lexicon**, these processes at times coincide and at others diverge, as they do in the corpus of culture in general.

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