

SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF THE SLOVENE SPOKEN IN AMERICA*

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Any comprehensive description of language would involve a description of not only its code, but also the use of that code. In other words, a full understanding of language involves both its form (code) as well as its function (use), because language is an aspect of human social behavior and not merely an isolated system and structure. Therefore such fields as sociolinguistics (the approach being perhaps fundamentally linguistic) or sociology of language (seeking a broader, interdisciplinary goal),¹ as well as psycholinguistics,² are essential for a greater understanding of language.

An interesting contribution to knowledge of the processes

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This paper is a section of a longer monograph by Professor Paternost on the opportunities for linguistic research in the problems of the Slovene spoken today in the United States. In this publication we omitted the paragraph subtitles of the original outline of the monograph, and changed its documentation system to the system used in Slovene Studies. Note that the author's use of terms Slovene, Slovenian ("I tend to use the term Slovene as a noun and Slovenian as an adjective," page 10 of the original manuscript), has been modified to conform to our editorial policy on the subject (see SSS Letter, 1, p. 34). Note also that the abbreviations of the original have been kept: thus, AE stands for "American English," AS for "American Slovene," ES for "European Slovene," and FL for "foreign language."

by which a language changes through contact with another language is the study by J. Rayfield.³ Speech habits and attitudes of a mostly bilingual Jewish community in California (in 1959) are discussed in detail. Useful recent works in South Slavic are, for example, those of D. Jutronic⁴ and A. Albin and R. Alexander,⁵ as well as the articles in General Linguistics,⁶ especially two short papers by R. Austerlitz and R. Lencek. Austerlitz says that "values govern human societal life and it is a concentration on these values and how they affect language that is required of the student of bilingualism."⁷ Lencek presents useful theses on defining the parameter of language interference problems in the speech communities in the U.S., and in his bibliographical survey he gives a representative cross section of the linguistic studies which treat AE-Slavic interference problems.⁸

There are, of course, different designations for different linguistic specialists; for example, there is an 'orthodox linguist' and a 'sociolinguist.' R. Bell characterizes the former as having "as his primary goal the discovery of descriptive rules which govern the structure of the code" while the sociolinguist "is essentially concerned to specify the descriptive rules by means of which social interaction through language is made possible."⁹

The question of norm is discussed by American Slovenes from time to time (German loanwords in Slovene are very often used to initiate such a discussion) and the problem arises within the individual (bilingual) speaker, because of his uncertainty as to what he ought to say (or even write), since very often the same linguistic item may be presented to him in more than one way. This becomes especially troublesome if the speaker is not aware of or if he does not accept the different varieties of Slovene. The result may be an excessive or unbalanced interest in the form rather than the substance of language. E. Haugen calls this 'linguistic malady' a 'schizoglossia' and persons indulging in it as 'victims of schizoglossia.'¹⁰ It might be interesting to see to what extent this phenomenon is found also among American Slovenes.

1. American Slovene (AS) may be viewed as one of many varieties of Slovene and as such it has its own peculiarities in phonology and grammar, lexicon and semantic structure. One could, of course, describe it as an independent entity, but it would be much more meaningful (in terms of a more

complete description of particular human social behavior) to view it both in terms of its contact with American English (AE) and its relationship to European Slovene (ES) as well as to other varieties of Slovene outside of Slovenia, e.g., Carinthian Slovene and Argentine Slovene influenced, to whatever extent, by German and Spanish, respectively.

AS is, of course, under the influence of AE (and, theoretically, at least, vice versa, see below) and it could be described in terms of interference or transference. (The latter term is preferred by some scholars, because it merely describes the phenomenon while the term 'interference' may carry pejorative or even 'disruptive' connotations.) By studying such transference one could see, for example, some essential tendencies and changes in the Standard Slovene and/or its major dialects by contact with AE (the result being AS) through two, perhaps three, generations of Slovene-speaking Americans. The few examples in the two subsections below are taken from my brief language sketch of AS elsewhere.¹¹

Most examples of phonological transference (interference) would obviously occur in numerous loanwords which undergo different degrees and types of phonological adaptation. It would be interesting to learn, for example, in what way AE vowels are taken over in AS (in such loanwords), e.g., kids (a short vowel) becomes /kici/ (long vowel), bill → /bíl/, trim → /trím/. Long vowels (in AS) in nonfinal syllables are expected, because Slovene can have, as a rule, short stressed vowels only in final syllables. However, even though both long or short vowels can occur on the final (or only) syllable, practically all loanwords with short vowels (in AE) become lengthened in AS. Such is the case especially with those speakers whose primary language is AS. Not only the quantity (long/short), but the accent also could be investigated. For a brief discussion of the analysis of the standard Slovene vowel system with reference to accent, see R. Golush, 1977.¹²

One might also look at some seemingly unpredictable choices of linguistic form in AS made by the same informant in the same situation, e.g. /ingléšku/ or /angléšku/ '(in) English,' or /kúala/ or /kúhala/ '(she) cooked' (/h/ may be either the AE /h/ or the Slovene velar fricative /h/, voiced or voiceless). Are they 'variants' or 'variables'? A variable, according to W. Labov¹³ is an "inconsistency or disagreement that a particular form of language may exhibit from an abstract standard" while a variant is a "specific value of a variable."

On the levels of morphology and syntax, there is a great difference between those speakers whose primary language is AS and those whose primary language is AE. The latter have, to a great extent, modified and even eliminated the declensional and, to some extent, even the conjugational patterns of Slovene. For example, /z moj stric/ (Standard Slovene: z mojim stricem) 'with my uncle,' /mój māt je pústla stárši tām/ (moja mati je pustila starejšega sina tam) 'my mother left her older son (over) there.' There is frequent confusion or, perhaps, rearrangement or redistribution of prepositions, e.g., iz 'out of, from' is used instead of s or z 'with, by, from' or od 'from, of': /iz mam pa zmérəm slovensko/ (z mamó pa zmerom slovensko) 'with Mom (we) always /speak/ Slovene,' Na swedenje in iz Bogem (Na svidenje in z Bogem /or, z bogom/) 'So long and God be with you /or, with God, good-bye/' (from a letter of a second generation respondent), /on je bíw od Kleveland/ (on je bil iz Clevelanda) 'he was from Cleveland.'

The phenomenon of code-switching involving not only individual words or phrases, but whole sentences or even paragraphs introduced into a speech event may often be observed in AS/AE contacts.

Listing and classifying lexical items (most common loans) in terms of loanblends and loanshifts would certainly be useful. A loanshift may be either a loan translation (/zádno imé/ (priimek) 'last name') or a loan extension (/papír/ 'paper' vs. časopis 'newspaper'), a loanblend is a combination of both AE and Slovene morphemes or words (/trévl ček/ (turistični ček) 'traveler's check' (ček, although originally a borrowing from English, is a normal Slovene word; trevl does not occur in ES).

Loan extensions are an especially important category because they often give a false sense of linguistic 'security' among speakers of AS variety when they are confronted with speakers of ES. For example, in AS the term garaža may mean either a place where you park your car, or a service station. In ES, on the other hand, garaža is a 'garage' only in its first meaning (a place to park) and other terms are used for other meanings, e.g., bencinska črpalka 'filling station.' Or, praktična katoličana would mean to a European Slovene 'practical Catholics' rather than 'practicing Catholics.' The latter meaning was intended, I think, in the particular context in which it was recorded. And the expression, 'for all

practical purposes' is sometimes translated as iz praktičnih razlogov 'for practical reasons.'

One phenomenon that might also be investigated is a rather frequent rearrangement of forms in (mostly) two-word fixed constructions like French fries → fry French, ice milk → milk ice, pressure cooker → cooker pressure, tree branch → branch tree, vinegar and oil → oil and vinegar. The last is especially interesting, because while both possibilities may exist in AE (I do hear oil and vinegar more often, however) in Slovene kis in olje 'vinegar and oil' is normal. There may be perhaps also three-word constructions. A first-generation speaker, a recent arrival, visiting the World Trade Center in New York referred to it later as Trade World (Center). This mainly occurs among the first-generation speakers and perhaps now and then even among the second generation. The following story is told in a small Pennsylvania community. A person is asking a second-generation Slovene woman as to the whereabouts of her son. The son was studying at Penn State (the Pennsylvania State University) at the time. The lady answered: 'Oh, he's down at State Pen' (i.e., the State Penitentiary).

Now, what is the reason or 'motivation' for such a shift? Is it the semantic structure of such a construction that motivates the change? Perhaps the head words (nouns: fries, milk, cooker, State) are perceived as key words and must therefore be uttered first. This change or shift in word order occurs also in some adverb constructions, e.g., around here becomes here around which is tukaj nekje in Slovene.

2. Both ES and AS or for that matter any variety of Slovene are comprised of subvarieties which have traditionally been called dialects (narečja). T. Logar outlines some twenty major dialectal areas in Slovenia and its adjacent areas in Austria and Italy.¹⁴ In addition, he presents subdialects (govori) in a number of these major dialects. It would be interesting to examine the state of those Slovene dialects and subdialects in the U.S. While they have been influenced by AE, they nevertheless may have preserved certain features which may no longer be found among the present speakers of those dialects in Slovenia.

A second-generation female Slovene visiting in Slovenia was recently described as one who "speaks Slovene well and with that distinctive accent which is characteristic of all American Slovenes, namely, the Lower Carniolan and Inner

Carniolan accent."¹⁵ While it is true that perhaps a large majority of Slovenes have come from those areas, still there are other areas which are also well represented, e.g., Prekmurje, Bela krajina (White Carniola), Gorenjska (Upper Carniola), Štajerska (Styria). Therefore, the word "all" in the above quote is not accurate.

There is also a different story by another second-generation Slovene who visited Slovenia for the first time in 1953, and who spoke only the 'old St. Clair /Cleveland/ dialect' of Slovene. When speaking that dialect, "full of everyday Slovenian Germanicisms," in Ljubljana, he thought of himself as being "a museum piece."¹⁶ The author (Nielsen) also gives a list of over 70 of those old Germanicisms from that 'old St. Clair dialect'. In fact, he may have generated enough interest so that other persons may follow his lead and also collect these Slovene Germanicisms which, as children, many "have picked up as authentic Slovenian." It would be interesting to examine this growing list of Germanicisms and look at their (popular) phonetic spellings and perhaps learn more as to how these forms were perceived phonetically and also which grammatical forms were generalized, e.g., pashe (=paše) 3rd singular is generalized as an infinitive, 'to fit well.'

3. Slovenes have been in contact with other Slavs, especially in the steel mills, coal and iron ore mines, and must have participated in what N. Francis termed 'Slahvish',¹⁷ a kind of 'transitory' Slavic koine found in the heavy industry towns of Pennsylvania and the Middle West. (Actually, as far as the term itself is concerned, my impression from Pennsylvania is that the term 'Slahvish' or Slavish there refers or used to refer more often to Slovak than to such a general Slavic vernacular.) I have heard of several first-generation Slovenes as presumably having the knowledge of several Slavic languages or, rather, speaking a kind of general Slavic. However, such persons are hard to find and, very often, because of their advanced age and infirmities, not always available for an interview. Perhaps some informants might be found in various rest homes around the country.

Such a phenomenon as Pan-Slavic koine would certainly be a very interesting topic for research, because it is (or, perhaps, it was) a vehicle of communication and a result of the interaction of different linguistic systems. McDavid suggests several useful topics which might be investigated.

As of now, Slahvish is still 'The Elusive Slahvish' as McDavid entitled his article in 1967.¹⁸

4. It might be interesting also to note the number of surnames used in Slovenia today. According to F. Jakopin, there are today about 50,000 different surnames (based on the census of 1971) in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia.¹⁹ But he also says the following: "from these /50,000/ we could subtract some 10,000 surnames of temporary /guest/ workers from other Yugoslav republics." Perhaps it should be pointed out here that many of these 'guest' or 'seasonal' workers plan to stay in Slovenia. One Yugoslav magazine put it this way: "Polls show that half of the workers who come /to Slovenia/ from other republics intend to remain in Slovenia" and "In one out of every two marriages /the figure is actually 46%/ in the SR Slovenia, one of the marriage partners is not from Slovenia."²⁰

J. B. Rudnyckyj suggests the following three major categories reflecting the anthroponymic changes in Canada and the U.S.: full assimilation, partial assimilation, and hybridization.²¹ The same could be applied, to some extent, also to the study of Slovene name changes. Very interesting source material in the matter of people's (not necessarily Slovene) surnames is L. Adamic's book, What's Your Name?²² I have been unable to see as yet the publication "Change and Assimilation in North American Slovene Names" by J. Kess.²³ The following is a tentative general classification of name changes.

Full assimilation. A translation (literal or approximate) of the original name, or of one of its component parts would be the most obvious way of changing a name from one language to another. For example, Černe (čern or, normally, črn 'black') → Black, Erjavec (rjav 'brown') → Brown, Kaplja (kaplja 'drop') → Drop, Podlesnik (pod 'under' and les 'wood') → Underwood, Sever (sever 'north') → North, Valjavec (valjati 'to roll') → Rollington, Zidar (zidar 'mason') → Mason, Žagar (žaga 'saw' -- žagar 'sawyer') → Sawyer. Perhaps also the following (from California): Zima (zima 'winter') → Winters. Sometimes such 'translations' were used only informally, that is, in spoken language only, and according to one informant, either 'joshingly' or 'acrimoniously', e.g., Zajc (zajec 'rabbit', usually pronounced /zájč/) became Rabbit, or even, Roberts.

Partial assimilation. This is probably the largest category and it involves truncations and partial phonetic

modifications of various types. It would be interesting to learn, for example, which component parts are truncated, or abbreviated, or modified more frequently (consonants, vowels, syllables) and in which positions (initially, medially, finally). First some examples of truncation: Dobravec → Dobroutz (this might also resemble one possible pronunciation of the original, namely, /dobrávc/), Grablovec → Grablutz, Hribar → Rebar, Simončič → Simms and Simon, Zupančič → (only in advertising inscriptions) Zup (e.g., Zup's Inc., Zup's Fish Camp).

Examples of other partial (phonetic) modifications: Aleš → Elish, Ambrož → Ambrose, Bajt → Baits, Cerovšek → Sheroshek or Sherosick, Finc → Finch, Klemen → Klemens, Stritar → Streeter, Princ → Prince, Šic → Shitz, Škulj → School, Zupan → Supon, Zupančič → Suponsic. A vowel is often inserted between a consonant and "r", e.g., Grm → Germ or Garm. One must not assume, however, that such names as Germ, or Gorup, or Sterle, or Terchek, or Terpin are automatically modifications of Grm, or Gorjup, or Strle, or Trček, or Trpin respectively, because such names also exist in Slovene (Germ, Gorup, Sterle, Terček, Terpin).

Some examples of expansion might be: Svet → Swetter, Svete → Swetter. Perhaps the forms marked with an apostrophe might also be listed in this partial assimilation category, e.g., Oblak → O'Black or O'Block.

Hybridization. This category comprises the elements from both languages (AS and AE). These elements may be integrated to form a neologism in both languages. For example, Bradač → Braddock, Dečman → Dutchman, Cerovšek → Sherosick, Podržaj → Poterjoy or Potterjoy. Perhaps also Debeljak → Doublelock which one respondent described as a "phonetic transliteration."

5. The study of transference or interference has very often been directed either to the influence of AE on the foreign language (FL) -- the result being, for example, AS -- or to the influence of a FL on AE, but that latter influence only with respect to the first generation speakers, that is, the non-native speakers of AE. For example, in grammar, the omission of the "dummy" word "it" on the part of non-native speakers of AE can often be observed, e.g., an elderly first-generation speaker would say What is? (←Kaj je?), rather than What is it?

It would be quite useful, then, and perhaps even more challenging, to investigate a possible influence of a FL on AE among the second or even third-generation speakers, that is, the native-born Americans. I am not sure whether any research has ever been done on the possible influence of AS on AE in any Slovene community.

It has been mentioned already that a number of American-born Slovenes spoke only Slovene in their pre-school years (a few of them even spending some of their younger years in Slovenia) and perhaps some of them may have retained a trace of AS influence in their AE speech. Such was the case, for example, with some Norwegian descendants in the Upper Midwest. E. Sevareid's father, for example, who was born in America "carried a faint Norwegian accent in his speech throughout his life, which came from his early boyhood when few around the farms spoke English."²⁴

6. Language use in the total communication system consists not only of grammatically correct but also socially acceptable utterances (and writing). These utterances are backed up by a wide range of other communications skills including non-verbal communication skills involving gestures, proximity, dress, posture and so on. The study of body motion communication is especially interesting.²⁵ It is, just like language, a learned form of communication and is patterned within each culture.

There is one aspect of body language which perhaps has not been sufficiently investigated, namely, the counting on one's fingers. My brief note on that²⁶ tends to show that this type of nonverbal communication differentiates the first two generations. Most first-generation informants (whose primary language is AS) started to count with their thumb, then proceeded to the index finger, etc. (that is, the way most Europeans would probably count). On the other hand, most second-generation informants (whose primary language is AE, of course) started to count beginning with their index finger, then proceeded to the middle finger and the thumb being last or number five. This observation is based on a very small sample in Minnesota. I am sure that with larger samples somewhat different results would be obtained. Still, there seems to be a pattern even in this type of body motion communication and it is, or it can be, complementary to language performance.

Footnotes

¹Cf., Roger T. Bell, Sociolinguistics. Goals, Approaches and Problems (New York, 1976), 28; Joshua A. Fishman, "The Uses of Sociolinguistics," Language in Sociocultural Change (Stanford, 1972), 305-330.

²Joseph F. Kess, Psycholinguistics: Introductory Perspectives (New York, 1976).

³J. R. Rayfield, The Languages of a Bilingual Community (The Hague and Paris, 1970).

⁴Dunja Jutronic, "The Serbo-Croatian Language in Steelton, Pa.," General Linguistics, 14 (1974), 15-34.

⁵Alexander Albin and Ronelle Alexander, The Speech of Yugoslav Immigrants in San Pedro, California (The Hague, 1972).

⁶Rado L. Lencek and Thomas F. Magner (eds.), The Dilemma of the Melting Pot: The Case of the South Slavic Languages = General Linguistics, 16 (1976), 51-186.

⁷Robert Austerlitz, "Bilingualism: The Context Beyond Linguistics," General Linguistics, 16 (1976), 68-71.

⁸Rado L. Lencek, "Linguistic Research on Language Interference Problems in the Speech of Slavic Communities in the United States," General Linguistics, 16 (1976), 72-77.

⁹Cf., Bell, Sociolinguistics, op. cit., 90.

¹⁰Einar Haugen, "Schizoglossia and the Linguistic Norm," The Ecology of Language (Stanford, 1962), 148-158.

¹¹Joseph Paternost, "Slovenian Language on Minnesota's Iron Range: Some Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language Maintenance and Language Shift," General Linguistics, 16 (1976), 95-150.

¹²Ruth A. Golush, "The Origin of Vowel Reduction in Slovene," Papers in Slovene Studies: 1976 (New York, 1977), 107-119.

¹³Quoted after Bell, Sociolinguistics, op. cit., 32.

- ¹⁴ Tine Logar (ed.), Slovenska narečja. Besedila (Ljubljana, 1975).
- ¹⁵ Juš Turk, "Pogovor s predsednico zbora Jadran," Prosveta, August 1977 (reprinted from Nedeljski Dnevnik, July 31, 1977, Ljubljana), 3.
- ¹⁶ John O. Nielsen, "Old St. Clair Dialect," Ameriška Domo-vina, October 1, 1976, 5-6. See also his: "More Germanicisms," ibid., September 9, 1977, 4.
- ¹⁷ W. Nelson Francis, The Structure of American English (New York, 1958), 533. See also: G. L. Trager, "The Slavic-Speaking Groups of the United States and Canada," American Council of Learned Societies Bulletin, 34 (March 1942), 59-63.
- ¹⁸ Raven I. McDavid, "The Elusive Slahvish." Languages and Areas. Studies Presented to George V. Bobrinsky (Chicago, 1967), 86-89.
- ¹⁹ Franc Jakopin, "Nekaj značilnosti najfrekventnejših slovenskih priimkov," Wiener slavistisches Jahrbuch, 21 (1975), 94.
- ²⁰ "They Come to Work, and Stay to Get Married," Yugoslav Life, 3 (Belgrade, 1977), 6.
- ²¹ J. B. Rudnycky, "Anthroponymic Changes in Canada and the USA," Studia Onomastica Monacensia, 4 (Munich, 1958), 663-671.
- ²² Louis Adamic, What's Your Name? (New York and London, 1942).
- ²³ Joseph F. Kess, "Change and Assimilation in North American Slovene Names," Proceedings of the Annual Name Society Meetings (San Francisco, December 1975).
- ²⁴ Eric Sevareid, Not So Wild A Dream (New York, 1946), 11.
- ²⁵ Ray L. Birdwhistell, "Kinetics and Context," Essays on Body Motion Communication (New York, 1970).
- ²⁶ Paternost, op. cit., 131.