

A NOTE ON THE NATURE AND THE STATUS OF THE STANDARD SERBO-CROATIAN IN BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

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In the standard language controversy which has been going on in Yugoslavia for over two decades there remain two questions on which serious and reasonable specialists still disagree. One is the question whether the Croats have the right to call their variant of the standard language by the single name Croatian rather than by the joint name Croato-Serbian or Serbo-Croatian (or Croatian and Serbian/Serbian and Croatian). The 1974 constitution gave them the legal right to use the single name. Dunatov (1978) and Brozović (1984) give several sociolinguistic arguments for the correctness of this position.

The other question concerns the number of standard language variants on the territories of the republics of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

Everyone now agrees that there are at least two variants: the Western or Croatian or Zagreb variant, and the Eastern or Serbian or Belgrade variant. The last linguist to deny the existence of even these two variants was Stevanović (1965) in a work that actually gives one of the most complete inventories of the features that differentiate the two variants.

The different names, Western vs. Eastern, Croatian vs. Serbian, Zagreb vs. Belgrade, each emphasize the different components which have contributed to the development and the preservation of the differences, namely the areal, the ethnic, and the principal cultural center components. Of the three components, the areal is the most non-controversial and will be used here.

The problem with the "one standard with two-variants" solution is that it leaves out large areas of the Serbo-Croatian-speaking territory, namely Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the forms of the standard Serbo-Croatian do not correspond completely to either the Western or the Eastern variant. What then is the status of these forms of standard Serbo-Croatian?

This paper is concerned with only one of these forms of standard Serbo-Croatian, that in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It has been described over the years in various ways: as the coexistence of the Western and Eastern variants, as a hybrid of the two variants, as the interpenetration of the two variants, or as the neutralization of the oppositions that define the two variants. That latter view is convincingly argued by Janković in a series of perceptive articles (1967, 1978, 1982).

The answer to the question whether the form of the Serbo-Croatian standard in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a variant depends on how one defines the term variant. Brozović defined standard language variants as follows: "Variants are adaptations of a single standard language to tradition and to contemporary needs of a nation as a specific ethno-social formation," (1970:35).

Janković, while praising this definition as the first serious attempt at a formal definition, nevertheless finds it wanting. In his opinion, it overemphasizes the ethnic component and makes no provision for the areal one. He proposes the following modification: "Variants are adaptations of a single multi-territorial standard language to the conditions, needs and traditions of a given uniquely structured socio-cultural milieu," (1984: 58).

Both of these definitions, however, are too general to provide a clear answer to the question whether a given set of linguistic and sociolinguistic differences (i.e., adaptations) constitute a standard language variant. Is there, for example, a minimum of differences or adaptations? The existence of such a minimum is implied by those who argue that the

Montenegro form of standard Serbo-Croatian is not a variant, because it differs from the Eastern variant by only one feature, namely the *jekavian* vs. *ekavian* pronunciation.

What gives the Western and Eastern forms of standard Serbo-Croatian the rank of variants is the existence in each of a set of phonetic, morphological, syntactic, orthographic, and above all lexical features in opposition, the so-called variant doublets. Even though these variant doublets comprise a relatively small percentage of features (e.g., only approximately 5% of the lexicon), they are sufficient for the speakers to be aware of them; i.e., to be aware of a different norm in their speech compared to the speech of someone from the other area. Janković (1978, 1982) maintains that the presence of these oppositions is essential for the existence of variants. Since in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian form of standard Serbo-Croatian these oppositions are neutralized, it does not, according to Janković, meet the minimum requirement for a variant.

What is meant by "neutralization of variant opposition" is this: the word for 'soccer', for example, in the Western variant is *nogomet* and in the Eastern *fudbal*. Most speakers of the Western variant know the word *fudbal* and know that it means 'soccer' in the Eastern variant: i.e., that it is the Eastern counterpart of their word *nogomet*. In Bosnia-Herzegovina both words, *nogomet* and *fudbal*, are used in the meaning 'soccer.' Some speakers use only *nogomet*, some only *fudbal*, some use both forms interchangeably, as synonyms, without the added notion that *nogomet* is Western and *fudbal* is Eastern.

Not every pair of doublets is used this way, however. Many Western forms and some Eastern forms do not occur at all (see, e.g. Diklić, 1970; Janković, 1967; Marković, 1971), and some doublets are becoming semantically differentiated (e.g., *čas* 'lesson', *sat* 'hour'). Ridjanović (1984) explains this as the tendency of languages not to tolerate absolute synonymy, because it is contrary to the principles of linguistic economy. Janković (1967) and Diklić (1970) have demonstrated that the choice between Western and Eastern forms of doublets does not correspond to the ethnic identity of speakers, and that the speakers are poorly aware of whether a given form belongs to the Eastern or the Western variant. Similar results were obtained by me in an English to Serbo-Croatian translation exercise of a set of sentences containing one or more lexical doublets given to students in advanced-level English language classes in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo. While students in Zagreb and Belgrade did in fact use consistently only the Western or the Eastern forms, students in Sarajevo used both forms, but with different degrees of preference. Thus, the Eastern word *stanica* is used to the complete exclusion of the Western *kolodvor*, and the Western forms *papir*, *analizirati* to the complete exclusion of the Eastern forms *hartija*, *analizovati*; the Eastern words *sprat*, *pozorište*, *voz*, *supa*, *utisak*, *hirurg*, *hemija*, *avgust*, *ostrvo*, *opština*, *sto*, *šta*, *neko*, *pisaću* are greatly preferred to the Western *kat*, *kazalište*, *vlak*, *juha*, *dojam*, *kirurg*, *kemija*, *avgust*, *otok*, *općina*, *stol*, *što*, *netko*, *pisat ću*; the Western *prvenstveno*, *kuhar*, *uho*, *kasniti*, are greatly preferred to the Eastern *prevažno*, *kuvar*, *uvo*, *docniti*; while the forms *grah-pasulj*, *kolegica-koleginica*, *dječji-dječiji*, *tinta-mastilo*, *zrak-vazduh*, *plin-glas*, *nogomet-fudbal*, *kisik-kisionik* show almost equal distribution.

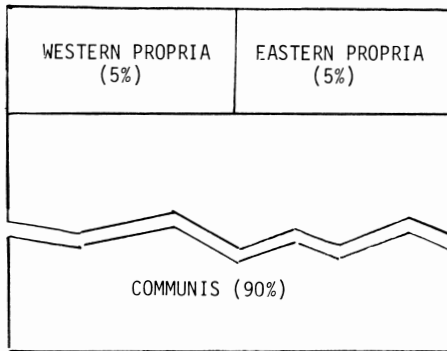
Counting the total number of doublets used in the sentences by the Sarajevo students, the ratio of Western to Eastern forms was 30%-70%. However, if we count the instances where the Eastern form was greatly preferred, the figure was only 53%, compared to 20% for the Western form, and 27% for instances where both forms were more or less equally preferred.

While these figures show that in Bosnia-Herzegovina the Eastern variant members of lexical doublets are found more frequently than the Western ones, the substantial number

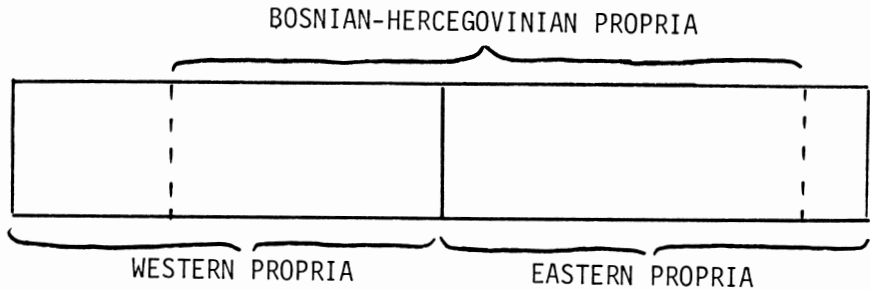
of the latter, used either as synonyms with the Eastern forms or as the only forms, make the Bosnia-Herzegovina situation radically different from that of Montenegro, where only the Eastern variant forms occur. But is this enough to justify giving the Bosnia-Herzegovina form the rank of variant?

It would be a mistake to equate the term variant with the differences or adaptations. If we consider the differences or adaptations of each variant as its *propria*, while those features shared by the variants as the *communis*, then a variant can be defined as the sum of the *communis* and the *propria*.

We can represent the Western and Eastern variants of standard Serbo-Croatian graphically as follows:



If we include the Bosnian-Herzegovinian *propria* in the above scheme, the picture looks like this:



The Bosnian-Herzegovinian *propria* is larger than each of the other two, since it incorporates more than it excludes from each of them.

Returning to Brozović's and Janković's definitions, it seems to me that the Bosnian-Herzegovinian form of standard Serbo-Croatian does represent an adaptation of a single language to tradition and to contemporary needs of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian republic. It represents a separate norm of usage (although the norm is not completely established), and the speakers are aware of this norm. For speakers in Bosnia-Herzegovina it performs the same functions as the Western and the Eastern variants for speakers in their areas. Sociolinguistically speaking, it is therefore a variant.

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POVZETEK

O NARAVI IN STANJU ZBORNE SRBOHRVAŠČINE V BOSNI IN HERCEGOVINI

Mnogi strokovnjaki govorijo o 'srbohrvaščini' kot o enem samem zbornem jeziku z dvema različicama (zahodna/vzhodna, hrvaška/srbska, ipd.). Takšna obravnava zanemarljivo problemska področja, v katerih oblike zbornega jezika ne ustrezajo ne eni ne drugi različici. Članek obravnava eno tako področje, in sicer Bosno in Hercegovino. Avtor na podlagi objavljenega gradiva in še zlasti svojih lastnih poizkusov pride do zaključka, da je bosansko-hercegovaška oblika zborne srbohrvaščine zares posebna različica.