

ATTITUDES IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

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Introduction

Linguistically, the past two decades in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been characterised by the implementation of three official languages which have replaced the formerly used "Serbo-Croatian": "Bosnian", "Croatian", and "Serbian".

What initially looked like a merely terminological change for ideological reasons has developed into a gradually growing language change along ethnic lines¹, which was also largely influenced by the neighbouring countries of Croatia and Serbia, thus turning language planning in Bosnia and Herzegovina into a transnational issue.

We focus on student attitudes in the Republika Srpska, one of the two constituencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina with an almost 'mono-ethnic' Serb composition, the other being a combination of predominantly Bosniacs and Croats. This division seems to stimulate further divergence, rendering the peace process difficult. The study aims at revealing language attitudes by using the verbal guise technique and follow-up interviews.



Methods

We selected 20 comparable (fairly similar in tone, temperament) speaker samples of different 'ethnic' and regional origin, male and female (see Fig.1) by asking them to perform two tasks:

A) to tell us something about Michael Jackson and;

B) to retell the fairy tale of little red riding hood

We chose these particular topics since usual speech eliciting events such as holidays, places, regions etc. would have contained information on the subjects' respective ethnic backgrounds.

Town/City	Speaker's ethnic background		
Banja Luka	Serb	Croat	Bosniac
Belgrade (Serbia)	Serb		
Zagreb (Croatia)	Croat		
Mostar	Croat	Bosniac	
Sarajevo	Serb	Croat	Bosniac

Fig 1: Distribution/ Origin of speech samples

We cut and digitally edited the samples. These were then played to 102 students at the University of Banja Luka in Republika Srpska, who were then asked to complete four questionnaires on these samples.

- 1) Attitudinal, linguistic, subconscious, 5-scaled, semantic differential, bi-polar;
- 2) Ascribing, part one: guess ethnic background/ language on grounds of samples A;
- 3) Ascribing, part two: identical task as in part one, only on grounds of samples B (answers arbitrary or actual competence?);
- 4) General (non-linguistic) attitudes to ethnic groups and regions within Bosnia and Herzegovina, conscious, 5-scaled, semantic differential, bi-polar

Aims/ preliminary results

- 1) Ranking of means and individual traits/variables (so far, since full data not yet accessible). There is a significant difference between the Belgrade sample (highest ranking) and the Sarajevo and Mostar ones (lowest);
- 2) Testing of ascribing competences (primarily: to prove notions of being able to tell a person's ethnic background by their speech wrong);
- 3) Analyse link between perceived and self-given speaker's identities and impact/ consequences on attitudes;
- 4) Comparison of subconscious attitudes revealed via linguistic attitudes versus conscious as questioned in part 4 of test.

References:

- Garret, P. (2005): "Attitude measurements". In: Sociolinguistics (U. Ammon et al. eds). Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, p. 1251-1260.
- Greenberg, R.: Language and identity in the Balkans. Serbo-Croatian and its disintegration. Oxford 2004.

¹ It has to be stressed though that these differences are minute and can be observed mostly at the lexical level. They are comparable to differences as those found in British and American English or other polycentric languages.