

Standing of the Croatian Language at the European Universities – Web Content Analysis

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Summary

In the socialist Yugoslavia the official language policy insisted on one language with two standard varieties. The unity of the language was emphasized, interpreting differences among each nation's language as factors enriching the „common language” diversity. Collapse of the Federation signified the breakdown of the „common language”. As a result today we talk about standard Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian.

The aim of this paper is to examine to what extent are these languages acknowledged and studied as separate and different languages at the European universities. Paper presents the results of an analysis conducted at websites of eighty-six universities in twenty seven European countries.

Key words: Bosnian/Bosniak, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbo-Croatian, Serbian, BCS, BCMS

Introduction

There has been much talk on the position and recognition of the Croatian language. It is and has remained a delicate subject to this day. Some linguists as Mate Kapović (2009: 1) argue that the main reason for the preservation of the name Serbo-Croatian lies in four simple reasons: inertness, scientificness, convenience, and partly viciousness of foreign linguists. The fact is that the knowledge once learned is difficult to change. Also, some scientists to this day regard Croatian and Serbian as one language, ignoring the „local conflicts”. Others find easier to treat Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian as one language, particularly from a methodological point of view. In addition, when quoting older sources, which go by the name Serbo-Croatian, the easiest way is to simply leave it so, both by Serbo-Croatian, Croatian and Serbian sources. Lastly, Kapović states that some may insist on that name for purely political or personal reasons.

According to McGuigan (2011: 1) Serbo-Croatian is more accurately an *umbrella* term for three distinct languages (Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian) tied

together by similarities. Serbo-Croatian contains loan words from many different languages, as a result of the history rich with various allegiances.

From the Serbian side the language contains many words from both Turkish and Greek. From the Croatian side the language contains many words from German and Latin. The language is written in both Latin and Cyrillic alphabet. For the Bosnian language sometimes it is also used the Arabic alphabet.

Serbo-Croatian was standardized as a single language during the era of Yugoslavia, from 1918 to the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. During this period Serbo-Croatian was one of the three official languages, alongside Macedonian and Slovenian. Following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Serbo-Croatian language broke into its constituent parts, with Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian becoming distinctly recognized languages. Currently in Montenegro there is a push to have Montenegrin recognized as its own language, as well.

The issue of Serbo-Croatian has become highly politicized, and is in many ways a political issue, rather than a linguistic one. As McGuigan (2011: 1) remarks language is viewed by many people as a sign of cultural and political independence. As a result there has been a push since the breakup of Yugoslavia for each distinct social group to have their own dialect recognized as a distinct language.

The arising problem and the main issue which this paper explores is the result it had and has on the study of the languages in question (formerly one) at European universities. It tries to give an objective analysis of the reach and recognition of the Croatian language and its neighbouring languages as sovereign South Slavic languages. Research itself mainly relies on the information and data collected at the university pages of top five or top three¹ national universities in twenty seven European countries.

Hypothesis

Croatian language in Europe, as well as in the world, its prevalence and significance mainly depends on Croatian Diaspora, its exuberance and engagement. The count is only approximate because of incomplete statistical records and naturalization, but (highest) estimates suggest that the Croatian Diaspora numbers between a third and a half of the total number of Croats. Accordingly, Croatian instructorship will be represented in the regions where there is a greater and more influential number of the Diaspora. The largest emigrant groups are in Western Europe, mainly in Germany, where it is estimated that there are around 450,000 people with direct Croatian ancestry. Consequently Serbian or Bosnian

¹ Depending on the total number of universities it is taken a sample of top three or top five universities. In the countries with less than twenty universities we have considered only top three. The author has tried to compare only universities with similar academic interests and a considerable number of students.

will be more represented in those countries where there is a greater number of Serbian, and/or Bosnian Diaspora.

As a result of work emigration in the ex-Yugoslavia the greatest number of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian Diaspora we find in Germany².

Method

This paper researches the reach and significance of both Croatian/Bosnian/Montenegrin/Serbian language(s) and Croatian language within the European cultural club.

The research is focused on 27 European countries and 86 universities and their faculties with a cathedra or an instructorship of Croatian, Croatian- Serbian, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian³ or Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian⁴.

To gain impact results and a detailed region-by region review the countries have been divided into five geographical regions.

All the information used in this research has been obtained from the web pages of the universities and their faculties. The content has been analysed according to the type of instructorship described in the syllabus of the course and defined by its name (Croatian, Croatian-Serbian, BCS or BCMS). The academic background of the foreign-language instructor has also been taken into account as it also influences on the type of speech exercise they will have. And the type of spoken language they will learn. If the instructors are from a Croatian academic background it is natural that the students will hear and talk more Croatian than Serbian, even if the courses are called Croatian-Serbian, BCS, or BCMS. The same goes in the cases when there is a Bosnian or Serbian instructor.

The percentage of all the Croatian sponsored instructorship from the total number of instructorship in Europe where Croatian, Croatian-Serbian, BCS or BCMS is studied has been calculated with the help of a report from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport written by Staša Skenžić⁵.

Analysis

The syllabuses of the Slavonic studies per each university have been analysed with an emphasis on the study of the language. The paper has tried to answer two main questions:

- In which percentage is one or are all languages in question taught at the European universities

² 158 158 Bosnian, 225 309 Croats and 330 608 Serbs and Montenegrins.

³ Abb. BCS

⁴ Abb. BCMS

⁵ Hrvatski jezik u okruženju drugosti; Pregled poučavanja hrvatskoga jezika na stranim visokoškolskim ustanovama

- From all the languages in question what is the percentage of study of the Croatian language as a sovereign and unique language

The countries have been divided into five geographical regions according to authors preference in order to provide more systemized data:

- South-eastern Europe
 - Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria
- Central Europe
 - Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria
- Eastern Europe
 - Ukraine, Russian Federation
- Western Europe
 - United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Portugal, France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy
- Northern Europe
 - Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Due to lack of information on their web sites of the universities in Eastern Europe data has been collected from the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

Results

Table 1 enumerates instructorships per each language found among top 3 (in South-eastern Europe) or top 5 state universities in each country:

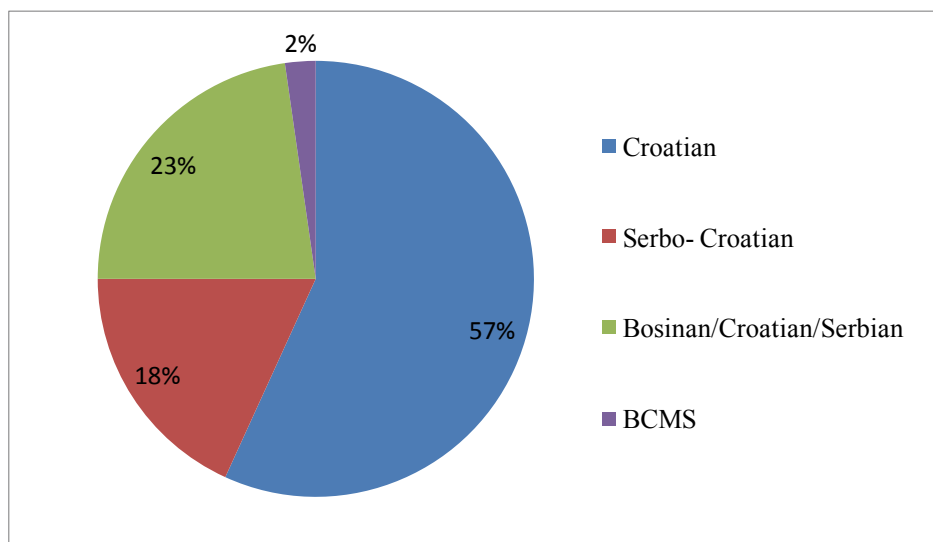
Table 1.

Country	Croatian	Serbo-Croatian	BCS	BCMS
BIH	1	-	1	-
Slovenia	-	1	-	-
Macedonia	1	-	-	-
Bulgaria	-	2	-	-
Czech Republic	3	-	-	-
Slovakia	1	-	-	-
Poland	3	-	-	-
Hungary	2	1	-	-
Austria	1	-	2	-
Russian Federation	1	-	-	-
Ukraine	1	-	-	-
Germany	-	-	5	-
Italy	4	1	-	-
Switzerland	-	1	2	-
Holland	-	-	-	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-
Ireland	-	-	-	-
Portugal	-	-	-	-
France	4	1	-	-
United Kingdom	1	1	-	-
Norway	1	-	-	-

Country	Croatian	Serbo-Croatian	BCS	BCMS
Finland	-	-	-	1
Sweden	-	-	-	-
Denmark	-	-	-	-
Estonia	-	-	-	-
Latvia	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	1	-	-	-

Chart 1 describes the percentage of instructorship per language in relation to the total number of Croatian, Serbo-Croatian, BCS and BCMS instructorships at the European universities:

Chart 1.



The statistical data obtained with the web content analysis of totally 206 web pages shows that Croatian language is by far the most frequent language used at the foreign instructorship, of all the languages in question.

If we compare these statistics with the report of the Croatian Ministry on foreign instructorship of Croatian language we gain equal results:

Table 2: Croatian instructorship in the World

<p>ARGENTINA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires• Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Rosario <p>AUSTRIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Karl-Franzens University, Graz <p>BELGIUM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ISTI - Institute of Translation and translators, Brussels <p>BULGARIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• University „Sv. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia <p>CZECH REPUBLIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Univerzity Karlovy, Prague <p>FRANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universite de Paris - Sorbonne, Paris• Universite Jean Moulin, Lyon• Universite Stendhal, Grenoble• INALCO Institute, Paris• Universite Le Miral, Toulouse <p>INDIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• University of Delhi, New Delhi <p>ITALY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universita degli Studi di Padova, Padova• Universita degli Studi di Firenze, Florence• Universita „La Sapienza”, Rome <p>CHINA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing <p>LITHUANIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vilniaus universitetas, Vilnius <p>HUNGARY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tudományegyetem Eotvos Lorand, Budapest• Bersenyi Daniel, Szombathely• University „Janus Panonius”Pecs• Eotvos Jozsef Foiskola, Baja <p>MACEDONIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sveučilište „Sv. Kiril and Methodius”, Skopje <p>POLAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uniwersytet Slaski, Sosnowiec• Uniwersytet Warszawa, Warsaw• Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza, Poznan• Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Krakow <p>ROMANIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• cathedra de Limbi Slave, Bucharest
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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- Faculty of Moscow State University VM Lomonosov, Moscow

U.S.

- Indiana University, Bloomington,
- Indiana University of Iowa, Iowa City

SLOVAKIA

- Comenius University, Bratislava

SLOVENIA

- Faculty of Arts, Ljubljana

SPAIN

- Alcalá de Henares, Madrid

UKRAINE

- Universytet „Taras Shevchenko”, Kiev
- Universytet „I. Franko ”, Lviv

UNITED KINGDOM

- University of London, London

Conclusion

As Bugarski (2004: 13) concludes we might put forward the view that the linguistic grounds for the disintegration of former Yugoslavia are not to be sought in the mere existence of numerous languages at that territory, but rather in the conflicting cultural traditions, national aspirations and political programmes embedded in, and symbolised by, the major languages and their varieties.

Consequently, for the peaceful and stable region, as well as Europe it is of the crucial importance that all the languages be accepted and acknowledged as sovereign, as it is languages the ones used to mark identity boundaries as well as to express the make-up identity (Byram 2007: 328).

Twenty years from the independence of ex-Yugoslav states it seems we may talk about separate Croatian, Bosnian/Bosniak, Montenegrin and Serbian language on an European level without being laughed at by foreign linguists. As much as it seems unquestionable in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, it is of the substantial importance to have objective statistical data confirming that these languages, as well as these nations will be acknowledged as sovereign and unique in its identity, language and culture upon entering the European Union. The statistics shown in this paper may assure us in that trend. Represented with 57% we can see that the Croatian language together with the Croatian language policy has successfully struggled to achieve international acceptance. For the Bosnian/Bosniaks and Montenegrins the situation is quite different. Reasons of such vague and versatile acceptance lie in their national language policies which are as versatile, as the statistic of BCS and BCMS language(s) shown in this paper.

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