

## **LINGUISTIC, SOCIOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF SERBO-CROATIAN IN WEST-EUROPEAN DIASPORA**

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Labour migration of the sixties and seventies was effected by a controlled opening of boundaries of the West-European nation states for workers from the Mediterranean area. In the mid-seventies, the boundaries were closed again (except for family reunion), and the several millions of migrants are the remnants of this historical influx.

A structural consequence for the receiving societies was the emergence of new 'minorities', quite different from traditional ethnic minorities and even from immigrant groups. Culturalistic explanations of majority-minority-tensions neglect this specific character. After all, problems of acculturation are only to be expected in migration processes, but what is decisive are the social possibilities to cope with these crises. The (political, legal, social, cultural) marginalization of the migrant groups led to social formations for which the concept of 'caste' has been proposed, combining problems of other structural minorities (e.g. women) with the status of an 'under-class' and the situation of numerically lesser ethnic groups. Continuing ties with the countries of origin (which cannot afford, politically and economically, to lose this portion of their citizens) and national affiliation of the migrants themselves (whose decision to migrate was not coupled with the intention to renounce their citizenship) foster the predominance of the national/ethnic aspects of the new minorities in public conscience. For the indigenous population, the foregrounding of ethnic and cultural strangeness serves to strengthen cohesion via national autonomy in a society that was cleaved, politically and socially, even prior to migration. (Sweden, with her liberal immigration and multicultural policies, is an exception among the receiving countries).

In this context, national language and what is perceived of as national culture acquire an emblematic significance. It prevents common sense solutions for practical problems of intercommunication which arise from the fact that the national language of the receiving country has to function as the lingua franca (e.g. the question of languages in school education). It even influences scientific concept-building: the concept of 'diaspora (dispersion) languages' presupposes the habitual congruence of language community and territory, which may hold for periods of sedentariness, not for migration. It thus reinforces the national language position. We would probably not talk of diaspora languages with regard to highly multilingual settings in developing countries. Finally, emblematic and communicative significance of a language combine, in our information societies, with standardized language in education, administration and in the mass media; standardization enhances the value of a given language. Thus, we may expect that the varieties of the migrants' home language, gradually estranged from the language of origin as a result of the contact situation, of limited exposure and of subculture! communication, come under the threefold pressure of association with a stigmatized social group, of the communicative predominance of the receiving country's language and of the standardized form of the language of origin. The migrant child, 'actively and creatively\* developing its language, is quite soon confronted with this external pressure. On the level of scientific description, we are faced with a similar dilemma: we start from established languages (e.g. languages of origin - Serbo-Croatian as it is used in Yugoslavia), but the closer we look at the developing migrant child the more we deal with a label of fluctuating reference. What looks like a gradual removal of the child's language variety from the language of origin, is possibly a mirror effect of our descriptive approach, insinuating a Moss' where something, the language of origin in its traditional shape, was never held by the child. The same may be true for 'acquisition', where the language produced by the child differs from all the models to which it is exposed. The teleological perspective on child language development would seem to be especially inappropriate when we deal with migrant children.

An estimate of Yugoslav children in West-European countries yields a total of 250.000 including adolescents, among them some 90.000 of pre-school age (Anić, Pavlinic-Wolf 1986, 49). They

live (in the following order) in West Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, Sweden and others (Haberl 1978, 296). The language of origin for about 85% of them is Serbo-Croatian resp. Croato-Serbian.

Yugoslavs in the receiving societies have the image, for others and for themselves, of adapting easily to their new surroundings; it is borne out by statistics on employment, intermarriage, command of the dominant language, success in schools. A representative West German study shows 52% of Yugoslav school-children to have good results in German and less good results in Serbo-Croatian, while the corresponding figure for Turks is 2%. (Landesinstitut für Schule und Weiterbildung 1985, 79). Regional differences of civilization, of great importance in Yugoslavia and productive of a predominant regionalism in the 1st migrant generation, are hidden behind these statistics as are the psychic costs of adaptation (Fulgosi et al. 1986). Adaptation may lead to one of the first places in the hierarchy of migrant nations, but not even the normal command of the dominant language places a Yugoslav child on equal footing with an indigenous one. More than other migrant children, Yugoslavs are made to feel this contradiction in the predominant model of submersive schooling (cf. Anić, Pavlinic-Wolf 1986, 53) to which mother-tongue instruction has been added on a voluntary basis. This *Dopunska nastava* is deficient in several respects: it occupies a marginal position in the mainstream educational system, a minimal number of lessons prevents the realization of the programme, heterogeneity with regard to age and type of regular school make pedagogical work difficult, instruction is reduced to a language learning programme (Mrazovic 1986, 135).

The ensuing kind of subtractive bilingualism, with the reduction of Serbo-Croatian to a 'co-language' (Rostohar 1986), has been diagnosed by several studies from different countries (Friberg 1983, Stojanovic 1982, Stötting et al. 1980, Vasić 1986). It is a topic of public concern in the Yugoslav mass media and even among the parents. This does not prevent the spread of the dominant language among parents and children and especially among siblings of school-age. Thus, a case of predominantly proficiency-oriented, unstable intragroup bilingualism presents itself.

While the earlier studies had children of the 2nd migrant generation, Yugoslavia-born, for objects, the more recent ones deal

with the 3rd generation. Not surprisingly, in the 2nd generation the best Serbo-Croatian was found in children with a long school-career in Yugoslavia. Surprising enough, on the other hand, is the finding that the 3rd generation has retained enough of the language of origin to develop a near-standard competence once *Dopunska nastava* is being offered (with a retardation of 2-3 years in comparison with monolingual children, cf. Landesinstitut für Schule und Weiterbildung 1985). It is difficult to account for this retention without microsociolinguistic research (as in the Universität Konstanz project with Italian children) which would yield the more subtle functions of the home language.

More research has been done on the 'deficit areas' of migrant children's Serbo-Croatian, viewed against the speech of monolinguals. The central deficit to come up is the monolingual vocabulary, followed by deficits in literacy skills (from spelling to stylistics). A specific preoccupation of linguists, school authorities and parents alike, has been with the fate of Serbo-Croatian variants in the process of migration. The belated and complicated national language development in South-East Europe has left the Croates, Serbs, Muslims and Montenegrinians with more than one literary standard (cf. Babic 1980, Kalogjera 1985), quite close to one another but emblematic for national and cultural affiliation. Yugoslav children in diaspora, as a rule, show a mixture of variants plus dialectal features. Mixture and variants are derived, among other sources, from *Dopunska nastava* and the parents, respectively. Puristic insistence on a correct variant may result in a child's disgust for the home language as a whole. The frequent use of the label 'Yugoslavian' on the part of migrants indicates a capitulation in the face of variants, - A specific feature of Yugoslav migrants in German-speaking countries is that synchronic contact of Serbo-Croatian and German has a diachronic perspective in the historical influence of German upon the literary language and upon dialects in Yugoslavia. Integrated transfers and actual transference form a continuum which opens up Serbo-Croatian, psychologically and as a language system, for the impact of Germanisms. Similar historical mixings exist with Polish and Czech, and the similarity does not stop here but includes broader manifestations of social behaviour, for which there exist intercultural models from traditional Slavic-German culture contact, facilitating interadaptability.

This sketchy survey was based upon findings from sociologists of language and educationalists whose main interest is to relate different levels of L<sub>1</sub> maintenance to social factors and educational models. Another discipline active in this field is language-contact research, where migrant varieties of Serbo-Croatian are explained as interference between language structures. Studies for different contact languages are available. Serbo-Croatian - Norwegian contact results are described and analysed by Mönnesland (1987), Swedish by Pavlinic-Wolf, Anić, Ivezić (1987), French by Vasić (1986), German by Matešić (1987), Mrazović (1986), Rostohar (1986), Stojanović (1982) Stolting et al. (1980). While they yield a rich material, these studies are somewhat unsatisfactory in theoretical respect. They concentrate upon instances of deviation from the language of origin that can be explained by the model of the contact language. Other characteristics of interim languages remain out of view. As the studies, more or less explicitly, follow the Weinreichian paradigm, their concept of interference and its behaviouristic basis are open to criticism. A strategic perspective on language transfer with reference to Serbo-Croatian is still a desideratum, and texts and conversations produced by Yugoslav migrant children are used as quarries and are not studied for their internal structure, with the exception of S. Savić (Novi Sad) who is preparing an analysis of a bilingual (Serbo-Croatian - German) retelling of the Pear Story.

A new beginning in the study of diaspora Serbo-Croatian has been made by the JUBA project in Lund which I will discuss here for its theoretical aspects. To begin with, Stankovski as early as 1979 formulated a set of theoretical models of diaspora bilingual development. They make the necessary elementary distinction between the 2nd generation for which L<sub>1</sub> is still available enough to make interference studies a sensible undertaking, and the 3rd generation where L<sub>1</sub> development is characterized by processes of retarded acquisition and processes of forgetting while L<sub>2</sub> develops continuously (cf. Stankovski et al. 1983). Retarded acquisition is assumed to follow the developmental stages of normal acquisition, until it reaches a breaking point (dependent on conditions of the social situation and of the individual) when forgetting sets in. Retarded acquisition of the unsuccessful type and forgetting manifest themselves in a reduction or in a restructuring of the language system. Reduction means a loss of distinctions of the language of origin under the influence of L<sub>2</sub>, demonstrated for the

consonant system by Stankovski 1986, 1987. Restructuring involves innovations in the language of origin which rest on the working of analogy, as demonstrated for the case system and the number system by Đurovič 1983, 1984, 1987, Tomašević 1986. The home language of the individual child then oscillates between preserving and destroying the self-regulating capacity of the language system, its authenticity. The factor which starts off the whole process is the lack of unifying pressure of a homogeneous language community upon the child, giving it ample margins to develop its own idiolect.

The JUBA programme, in its theory and its collection of individuum-bound, diachronically ordered cross-sectional data, takes us in important step closer to the study of concrete individuals and their idiolects which are subjected to a systemic analysis. It redefines acquisition and loss of language according to the requirements of diaspora and makes us aware of the fact that contrastive studies are necessary not on the basis of two abstract language systems but much more between the idiolects/interlanguages of given children. If idiolectal changes follow general trends, the typological changes of diaspora Serbo-Croatian in contact with different European languages need to be studied. - Of course, the systematic approach and the stress placed upon the 'self-regulating capacity of the language system' are in accordance with the linguistic levels which JUBA has been analyzing - the relatively closed systems of phonology and morphology. It remains to be seen how the postulate of 'Systemzwang' does on less tightly knit linguistic levels, in pragmatics and in vocabulary. One would also wish for a psycholinguistic and interactional substantiation of the system-linguistic postulate, because it is people that act, compel and regulate. Lexical competence is in the centre of the research project 'Bilingualism of Yugoslav school-children in Lower Saxony', in which the Philosophic Faculty in Novi Sad and my university cooperate (first communication in Mrazovic 1986). The 50 informants, between 10 - 15 years of age and born in West Germany, attend *Dopunska nastava* in the city of Hannover. Lexical competence was chosen for several reasons: earlier studies show it as the main deficit in Yugoslav migrant children; research results are expected to directly benefit instruction of Serbo-Croatian (e.g. specialized dictionaries); lexical development can best document the comparing and equivalence-building activity of the bilingual child. The use

of the better proficiency in German for developing Serbo-Croatian is, in fact, the pedagogical idea behind this research.

The development of lexical equivalents in bilingual children is considered as a strategy to be able to speak both languages and to denote the same number of new objects and events as the monolingual child (cf. Taeschner 1983, Chapter 2). This is why speaking language A and B is not twice as difficult as speaking either A or B.

Vocabulary in both languages was gained from a composition, the retelling of the Pear Story, a cloze test, a test of phraseology, word-naming, a rhyming test and an anagramm test. The final project report is not yet available, but some global results should be mentioned:

- In all measures, there is a high correlation between the quantity of lexemes in Serbo-Croatian and in German; at least under conditions of *Dopunska nastava*, the process of equivalent formation is a very active one; individual cases of divergence in both languages are few in the lower age-group and quite rare in the upper one.
- Serbo-Croatian equivalents follow a similar curve to that of new acquisitions which are generally in German. From a quantitative point of view, the value of the Serbo-Croatian equivalent curve is always lower than the German curve.
- There is a constant increase of (active) vocabulary in both languages from younger to older children, with some interference from a learning-group factor. Diaspora monitoring in II can be compensated by equivalent formation.
- After 4 years in the German school (and peer-group), the children show no domain-related differences between their both vocabularies.
- The phraseology test showed where the strategy of equivalent formation will be unsuccessful - in different idiomatic traditions. Similarly, the ability to find rhyme words to a given stimulus is unconnected with equivalence; here familiarity with oral and literary poetry is the decisive factor and in this respect both languages may be unconnected for the child.

Further evaluation is directed towards strategies to fill lexical gaps in one of the languages (usually in L<sub>1</sub>) and towards establishing profiles of lexical proficiency for each informant which then are correlated with background data from bilingual development case histories. A serious fault which I find in this research is the omission of data from the bilingual mode spoken outside school and of video-taping word-finding processes in group interaction. In consequence, we find it difficult to distinguish between creative strategies of filling lexical gaps and established forms from fused family speech.

In my country, there is an unholy tradition of educationally assimilating (= germanizing) children of Slavonic-speaking ethnic or national groups. I am referring to the educational practices with the Polabian population (in the 18th century), the Polish population in Prussia and the Sorbian population. While the settings change, the traditions are restive as on the level of school administration as in the single school. The predominant model of submersive schooling plus facultative Mother Tongue instruction is not even in accordance with state policies which keeps migrants in the status of secondary class citizens. Even if the public stress upon cultural/ethnic differences has a certain compensatory aspect to it, the wishes of migrants for the offer of bilingual education must be respected. This would certainly go beyond *Dopunska na-stava* as a language subject and aim at home-language classes or combined classes which exist in Sweden.

Regrettably, we are still ill equipped for Serbo-Croatian language instruction in *Dopunska nastava*, let alone for bilingual schooling. The Methodical Handbook, prepared in Yugoslavia, is a first tentative step in the right direction (Diklić et al. 1986). Serbo-Croatian as a Second Language is an underdeveloped area in the universities of Yugoslavia. Materials produced in the receiving countries, some very good like e.g. the *Svensk-serbokroatiskt/kroatiskt lexikon*, are not known in other countries.

Finally, there is the problem of variants and the danger that the standardized language of origin in migrant education grows too distant from the home language in order to encourage acquisition. When the restricted use of the standard variety is seen as more valuable than the unrestricted use of diaspora varieties, then assimilation (to L<sub>g</sub>) through maintenance programmes is a rea-



listic possibility (cf. Kjolseth 1971). Great efforts are necessary (including efforts of self-denial on the part of mother-tongue teachers) in order to develop a methodology that meets the migrant child where it stands, offering the experience of literary language without devaluating the home language or pushing up the shibboleths of correct variants.

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