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DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURES IN THE FAMILY LANGUAGE OF YUGOSLAV  
IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN A SWEDISH LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

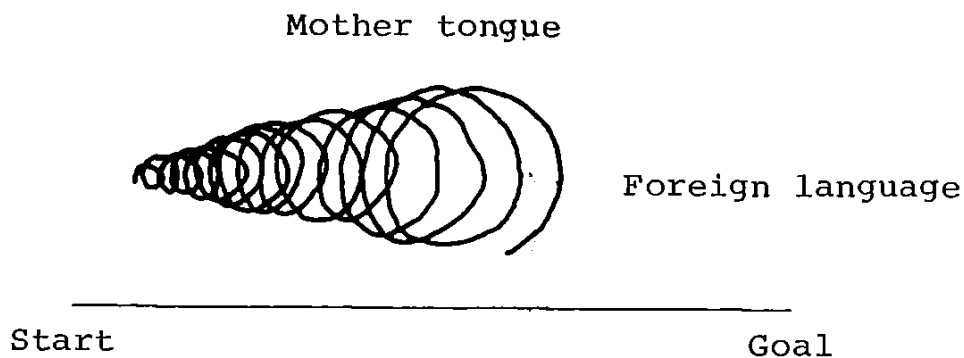
We would like to sketch some problems arising in the S/C language of Yugoslav children living in Sweden.

It is reasonable to suppose that after a few decades there will be considerably fewer S/C-speaking children in Sweden than there are today. In other words, among the S/C-speaking children from Yugoslavia there are two kinds of processes in action: namely, language-preserving processes and processes which will lead to the break-down of the native language structure. These processes are of the same type as those which, in the case of the Swedish-speaking Americans, meant that so few retained and inherited the language up to the present day.

Up till now the aim of contrastive linguistics as a rule, has been to determine the best way to acquire a foreign language.

The following model has been arrived at:

Fig 1:



Model for acquisition of a foreign language

The shape of the model shows quite clearly that according to the initial hypotheses, the native language has a constant value and is only of interest as an interference factor, which in some way is involved in the acquisition of the second language. It is also symptomatic that, in the investigations carried out, the informants have always been adult immigrants whose mother tongue, it is reasonable to assume, had greater stability than that of a child.

Yugoslav children in Sweden can roughly be divided into two main groups:

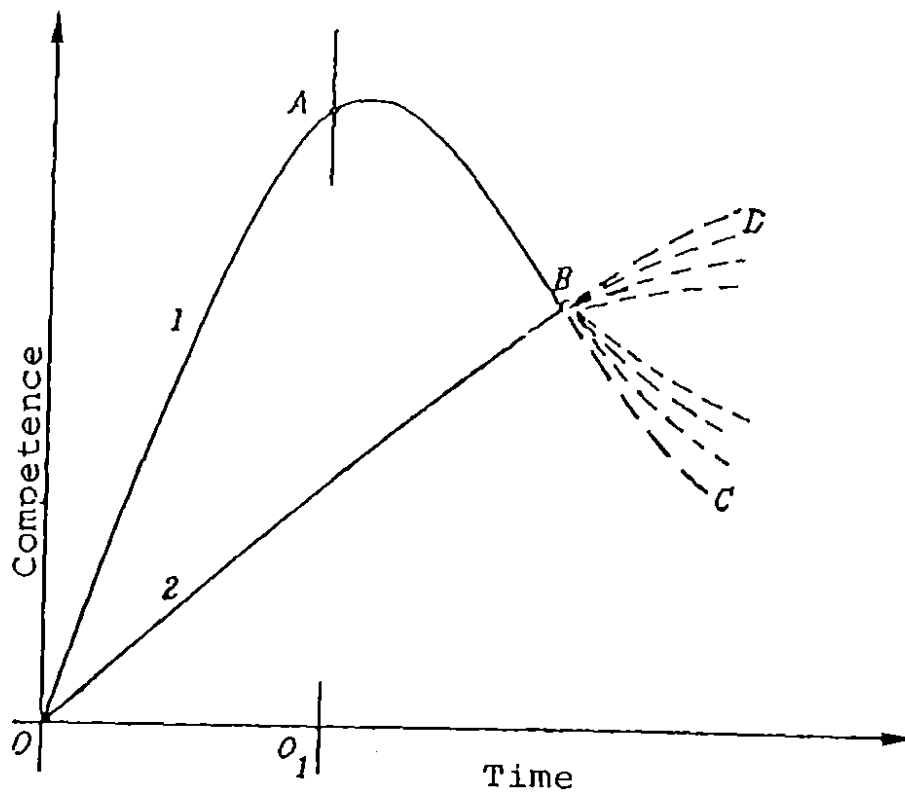
- 1) Yugoslav children born abroad (in Yugoslavia) and
- 2) Yugoslav children born in Sweden

Only those born abroad, who have come to Sweden with a fully acquired mother tongue, can be subject to loss or forgetfulness of their mother tongue. They have acquired the language in an environment where it was the means of communication and an accepted institution in the whole of the community. Therefore there is something (that is the language) which can be forgotten. Here the native language can also influence the acquisition of the foreign language, in our case Swedish. Native language instruction ("family language" tuition) in Swedish schools has the task of expanding the children's knowledge of their mother tongue, to develop it and stop the process of "forgetting".

All this becomes quite different when applied to Yugoslav children born in Sweden. They acquire their native language, probably at a retarded rate, in a foreign linguistic environment. In this case there is a completely different basic knowledge to build on. The task of the family language tuition is more one of teaching the mother tongue. The aim of the teaching then is the further development of a more or less rudimentary system.

Two completely different types of processes are involved in the whole population of the Yugoslav children in Sweden: the process of forgetting and the retarded learning process.

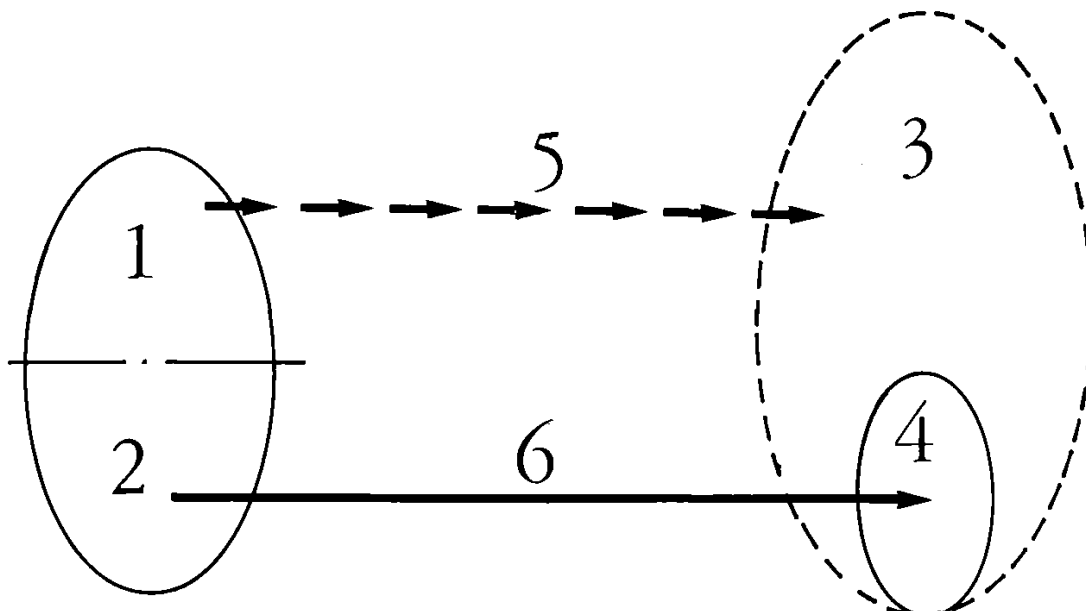
The situation can be explained in a hypothetical schematic representation:



Schematic representation of the possible language development in immigrant "Yugoslav children" and "Yugoslav children" born in Sweden (from Stankovski, *Procesi redukcije ... Slavica Lundensia* 6, 1978).

1. Hypothetical development curve for the children born in the natural mother-tongue environment (O - A) and their development in the foreign linguistic environment (A-B-C/D).
  2. Hypothetical development curve for retarded development in children born in a foreign linguistic environment (O-B-D/C).
- O<sub>1</sub> Start of the processes of oblivion for group 1 (e.g. arrival in Sweden).
- B Hypothetical point of intersection of the development curves despite the different paths of earlier development.

With all this in mind we can make a schematic representation of the supposed linguistic development in the groups:



1. "Those born in Sweden and those who have immigrated to Sweden" with unfavorable conditions.
2. "Those born in Sweden and those who have immigrated to Sweden" with favorable conditions.
3. The present potential group of Serbocroatian speakers which will not exist in the future.
4. The group which will be bilingual in the future, i.e. speak more or less Swedish-coloured Serbocroatian, so that their Serbocroatian at that point will vary in certain ways from the Serbocroatian being spoken in Yugoslavia (as for example American-Swedish diverges from the language in use in Sweden).
5. "Structure disintegrating processes": processes of forgetting and retarded learning processes which are not completed.
6. "Structure preserving processes".

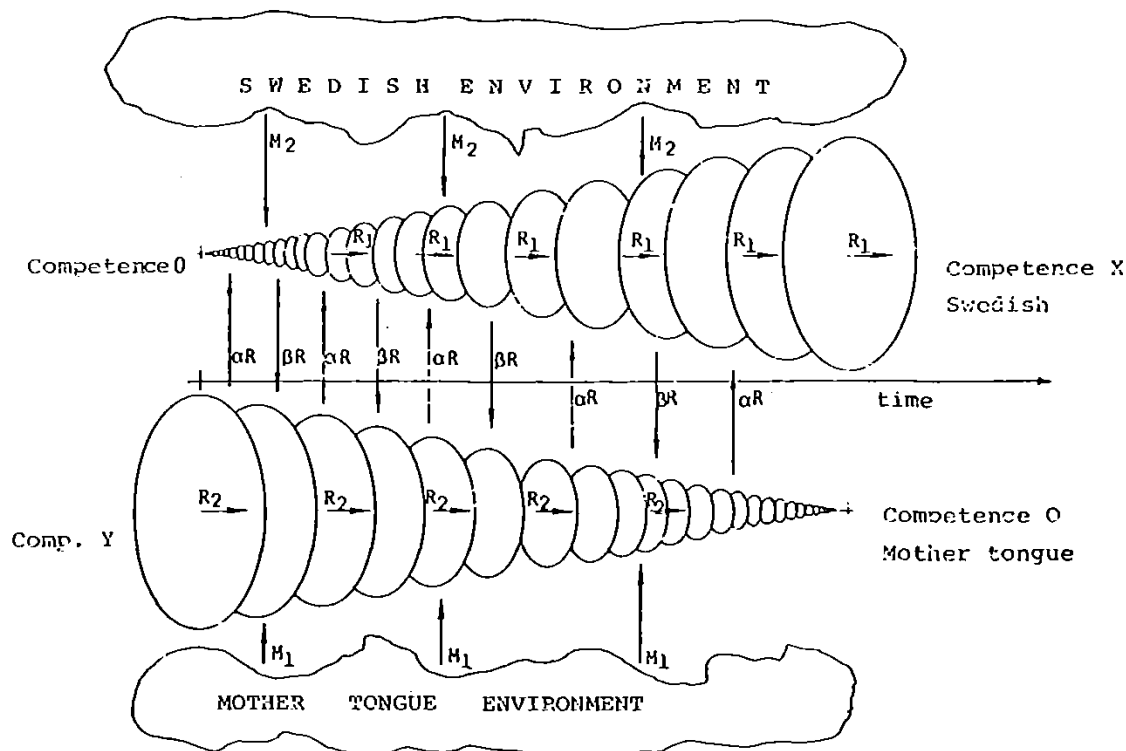
Thus, the diachrony of the structure is governed by those two different goal models. There exists a general a priori assumption that every individual, including children, belongs to group 2 (language preserving group). The startingpoint therefore is one of the following assumptions:

- a) that the mother tongue is a constant factor, or
- b) that the mother tongue is a constantly increasing progression.

Since the development of the mother tongue in the group with "unfavorable conditions" leads to zero-competence, the self-regulation capacity of the mother tongue structure must at some point in their language development cease to function. We cannot, at the present time, determine whether this starts with the beginning of the process of forgetting or if it occurs at some definite stage in the actual retarded learning.

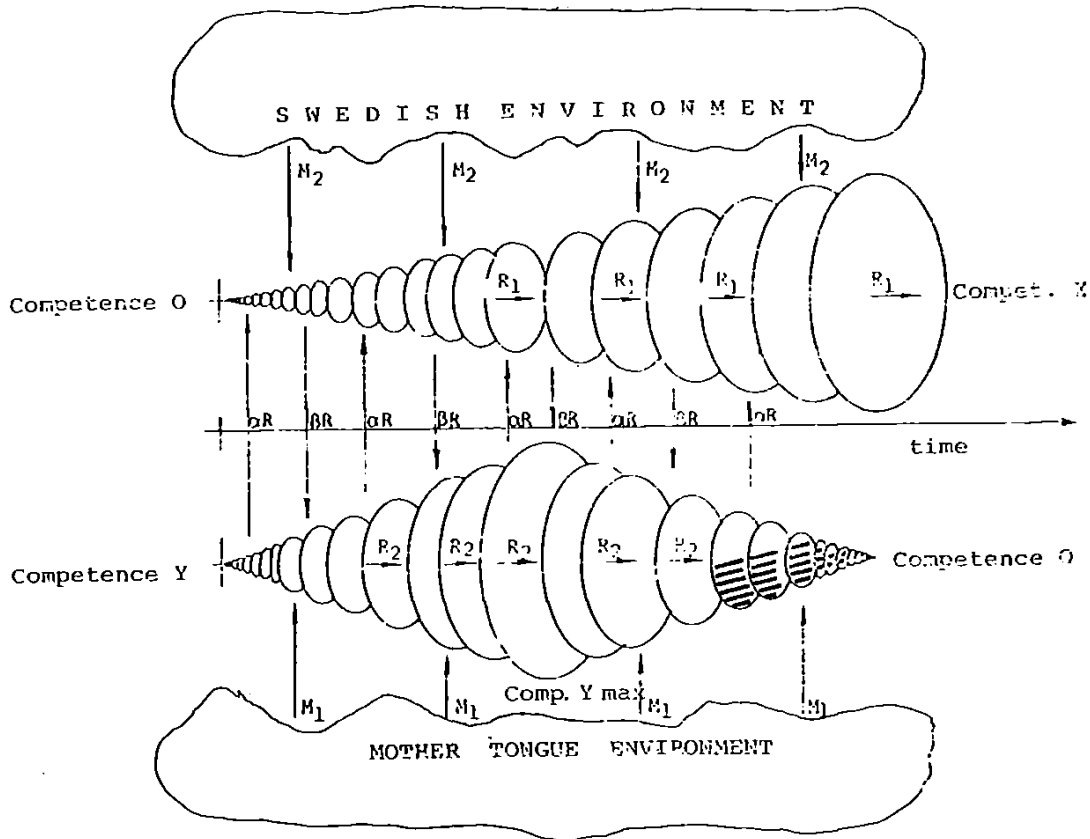
Our research program is based on two hypothetical models for a more objective picture of the linguistic development of Serbocroatian-speaking children in Sweden:

**Case A. Swedish increases from zero-competence to competence X and the mother tongue decreases from Y-competence to zero-competence.**



- $R_1$  - Rules governing the learning processes.
- $\alpha R$  - Rules of the type " $\alpha$ -ference" depending on the mother-tongue structure.
- $R_2$  - Rules governing the process of oblivion
- $\beta R$  - Rules of the type " $\beta$ -ference" depending on the structure of the Swedish language.
- $M_1, M_2$  - "Monitoring" (Saltarelli, 1977) = regulating pressure from the environment upon the individual maintaining the language within an accepted norm, codified or non-codified.

**Case B.** Swedish increases from zero-competence to X-competence and the mother tongue grows to Y-maximum and then potentially again to zero-competence.



- R1 - Rules governing learning (acquisition).
- $\alpha R$  - Rules of type "alpha-ference" depending on the mother tongue structure.
- R2 - Rules governing the processes of (retarded) learning and oblivion.
- $\beta R$  - Rules of type "beta-ference" depending on the structure of the Swedish language.
- M1, M2 - "Monitoring".

The line marked area of the figure indicates that the structure can be petrified at any stage because of on different social and individual factors. This is also true for the previous figure.

Concerning the monitoring we would like to add the following:

In the new European migration context, there is quite a considerable difference from earlier migrations. What is going on is not a preserving of the language as a part of the "ethnic heritage". The actual European labour-migration (not political emigration!) allows persons during long periods of time to live with the implicit possibility either to return back home or to continue living on in the country of immigration.

The Yugoslavs live here in a society with clear Swedish economic and social supremacy, but this supremacy is nearly always transformed to their own benefit when coming back temporarily or definitely. Another factor in the recent history of migration is the ease in maintaining physical contact with the home country. All this can give a special motivation for preserving the first language.

By monitoring we understand not only the social pressure which results in an optimally built-up language system but also reduction of the pressure or lack of it.

For the monitoring in our conditions it is typical that the environment of the child is linguistically non-homogeneous: in the same Swedish community people from different Serbocroatian dialect areas can live alongside for instance Macedonians. In other words nobody in the child's environment has to speak the same language or dialect as the parents.

In that way the subconscious ideal language of every individual does not grow up to a uniform language in the classic sense. In this case the norm appears to be quite tolerant to group or individual variations in the native code.

The effects of this kind of monitoring upon the individual language structure is an oscillation between diachronic processes which are preserving the language structure and diachronic processes which are destroying it, or rather, processes which destroy the self-regulating ability of the structure.

This situation opens up a possibility for two different processes which we name reductions and restructurings.

By reduction we mean a loss of distinctive grammatical categories or other distinctive units in the mother tongue, which is ultimately directed towards a replica of the Swedish language system. It is important to bear in mind that such reductions may result from both processes: forgetting and learning at a retarded rate.



Reduction processes take place at all linguistic levels. For example on the phonological level: loss of affricates, loss of palatals, loss of /z/ and /ž/. All this increases the homonymy and leads to a breakdown of the system. Another example: On the morphological level in the conjugation the personal pronouns which are optional in Serbocroatian become compulsory in the speech of the children. At the same time we have noted a possibility to abolish the opposition between singular and plural forms. In this way children's Serbocroatian present tense has features of a replica of the Swedish present tense.

By restructuring, we mean the use, by one or more speakers, of structural innovations not used in the mother tongue, either in the standard language or in dialects. Subject to restructuring, as far as we could notice, are above all those parts of the Serbocroatian system which are irregular or manifest some other kind of instability. So far restructuring has been noted only in the language of the children born in Sweden.

As an example of restructuring we can cite replacing of different Serbocroatian equivalents of the numeral two, in Serbocroatian dva, dve, dvoje, dvojica by a unique form dvi, formed one parallel with tri, četiri - which combines with all kinds of substantives.

Fig 6:

STANDARD	RESTRUCTURING
dva dečka (two boys) Q (=G) sg	dečke
dve klupe (two benches) G sg, N/A pl	klupe
dvoje dece (two children) G sg	dvi dece
dvoja kola (two cars) N pl	dvi aute

The general use of the form with the ending "-e" in combination with numerals, originally accusative plural in the major masculine and feminine declensions, can thus be considered as a restructuring - instead of very complicated combination rules both in the standard language and in the dialects.

Those features do not exist in the Serbocroatian norm, they do not exist, as far as we could register, in the language of the parents. They were found consistently used in the recordings of three children in the same family and not fully consistently in the recordings of some other children from the same school.

Thus, we have reason to see here a result of the self-regulating ability of their language system, when monitoring fails to generate the dialectal or literary norm.

For restructurings, as subject to diachronic processes, the following example can be illustrative: In the record of a child with a two-case system (only nominative versus accusative) we found one locative singular form - "na stolu" (on the table). The question arises: Is it an extant form of a destroyed complete seven case system, or is it a symptom of developing the Serbocroatian seven case system, or, finally, is it a loan (a rigid idiom) from the language environment?

Such questions are specific for investigating idiolects with non-compact monitoring.

Answers can be obtained by a combination of directed tests in the synchrony and repeated recording after certain time periods.

We hope to be able to present more detailed and sufficiently documented results of our research in the years to come.

(A paper presented at the 6th International Congress of Applied Linguistics, Lund, August 9th-15th, 1981.)

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