

Ethno-Linguistical and Dynamic Transformation Process of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

Language and identity are two items impossible to ignore in a 'nation' defined by following different elements within it and with language indicating feelings of group belonging. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a very distinguished place in the world with its history and mosaic-like unity, and has included three ethnicities over recent centuries. From time to time, similarities have bounded in contrast to the differences separating and deepening the 'otherness feeling'. Governing rules in the Bosnia and Herzegovina territories have had the leading effect of shaping the characteristics of those areas.

The most distinct turning points writing the fate of those territories were the Ottoman Empire and the former Yugoslavia. In our study, we aim to study that process in terms of ethnical and linguistic perspectives.

Key Words: *Ethnicity, Language, Boshnjak, Serbian, Croatian, Transformation*

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina is often called the Jerusalem of Europe as well as being subjected to a continuous transformation process over centuries. This process is still being sustained under external and internal factors. In this study, that multicultural society will be examined linguistically and ethnically.

The term *ethnic* is derived from 'ethnos' and 'ethnikos' in ancient Greek. Both of those terms can be used interchangeably to refer to "a number of people living together, a company, a body of man or a band of comrades." It invokes notions of *nationalism, ethnic identity, ethnic culture* etc. (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences 2008).

Ethnicity has been defined by many scholars from different aspects. In Isajiw's definition, it is an involuntary group of people who share the same culture and who see themselves or are seen by others as belonging to the same group (1980, quoted in Matin et al., 2001).

Edwards (1985) explained it in terms of its subjective and objective features. In his critical approach, while some sense of group boundaries must have a persistence, continuation of the same socialization or cultural accumulation over generations is not a must. According to him, subjective components can be seen as the reflection of faith harmony that people share. Objective components are language, race, geography, religion etc.

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In this study of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the above-mentioned definition doesn't fulfil the requirements of the term ethnicity. In the light of Edwards' definition with subjectivity and objectivity, we question whether "origin" or "race" and "religion" are among the objective components that can catch the description of the three societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, how should "language" which both separates and unites those three societies be evaluated in Bosnia in terms of that ethnicity definition. What here is the answer fulfilling the question of language? Namely, is it something non-exchangeable in the construction of an ethnicity? If so, why do the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina who share the same historical background, are descended from the same race or origin, and speak almost the same languages say different things in answer to the questions "who am I?" and "who are you?".

The Process of Seeking Identity through a Language War

In present day Bosnia and Herzegovina, people from three different religions have lived together for centuries. Core differences started mainly via the Turkish conquests in 1463, as some claim that the origins of the Moslem Bosnian people derive from Turks who conquered these lands. Three of them are the descendants of the Slavic nations, not only the Croats and Serbs, but also those who converted to Islam with the conquests of the Turks. After the conquests, with the contribution of the Ottoman Empire to these territories through Islamization, a transformation process was begun which greatly affected balances from many aspects, and in addition through a well-nourished support of the faith of the people who had converted beforehand. Through this process the perception of people was changed through the tolerance principle. The rights of non-Muslims, the relatively lower taxes paid by them, and support for liberty of religion, played a crucial role both in the religious conversion of those people, or if not then in the positive perception of Ottoman culture and civilization.

Historians see here a mosaic-like pattern comprised of people from three religions, but from the same race in a shared territory. It seems that the most distinct is the condition of Boshnjak, Moslems from 1463. From time to time they have been seen as "real Croats" or "real Serbs" resulting from the separation of religion factor. However, Islamic identity became like a nationality for them over time. Ancic (2004) stated that Moslem identity, dependence on the Ottoman Empire and Islamic principles are the cornerstones of Boshnjak society.

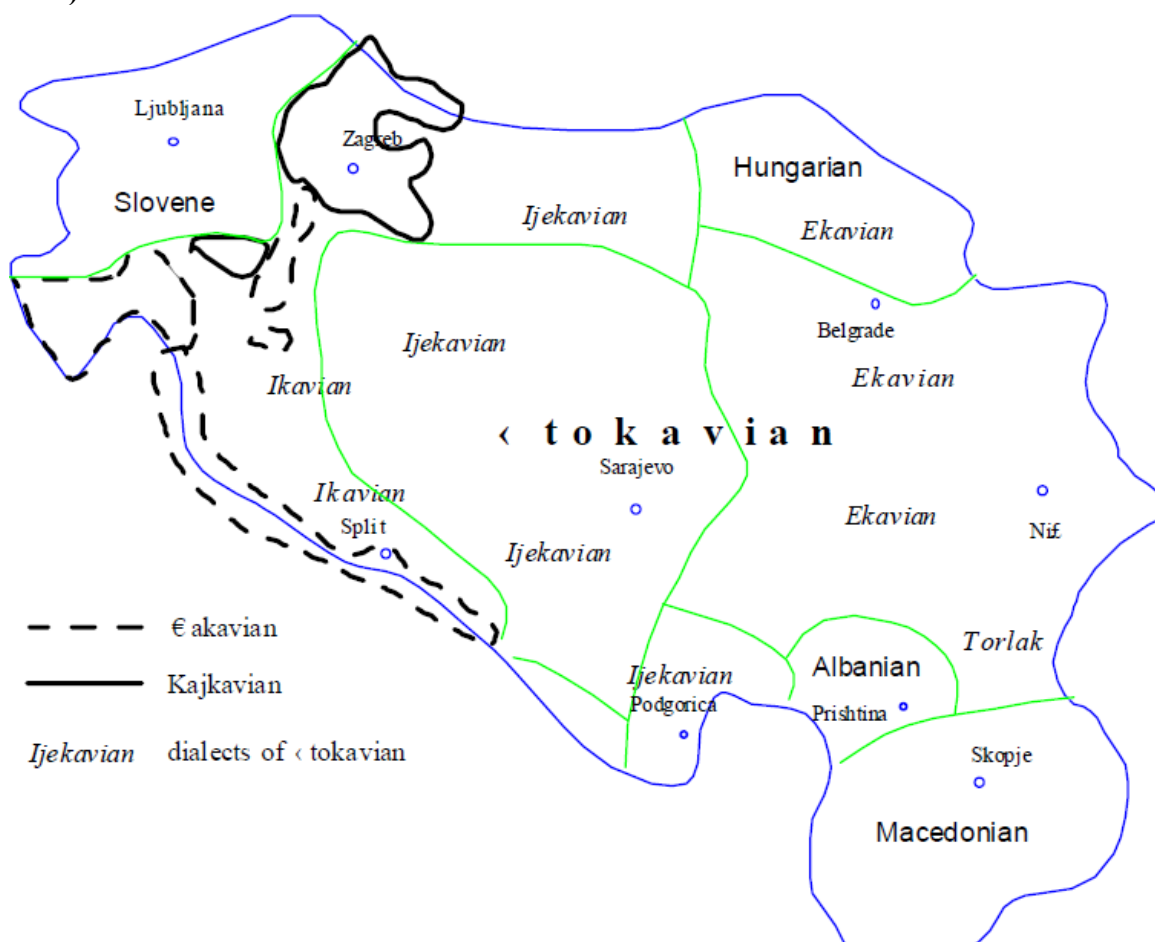
Bosnian / Serbian and Croatian are accents of the same Slavic language. Culture which has been changing for centuries with various invasions or other political cases was given two different colors by language and religion. In the center of Europe, with three different ethnicities, emerged a country which is unique in the world.

According to Sotirovic, ethnically there is no intention for separation in the "Slav" expression. However, in "Serbian" and "Croatian" expressions, difference has been accepted mostly even though it is not in terms of race but their being two different parts of the same tribe. Up to the 19th century, they could not gain importance because of ethnic or political reasons. In those years, Serbs gained independence while Croats remained under the rule of Austria-Hungary. This was the turning point towards a new period in terms of ethnicity (1993). The languages spoken are Montenegrin, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian and Slovenian which all have differences and similarities (Ling & Katseff 2005). Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian became the second most important language after Turkish and was accepted as the diplomatic and second formal language in the Ottoman Empire. There were both senior governing staff descended from those origins and soldiers called Janissaries in the Empire. In those times, the Boshnjak language was seen as most diplomatic and significant language of the Balkans and Europe (Sotirovic 1993).

The French Revolution awakened nationalist movements, and the following political reconstruction - the independence of the Serbian and Croatian under the rule of Austria-Hungarian Empire - became the turning point of the changing linguistic policies in those territories. In 1850, Serbian and Croatian

linguists signed the Vienna Literary Agreement. This was very important for long-lasting language politics with a nationalist tendency. According to that agreement, the dialects of Serbo-Croatian, Ijekavian and Štokavian, were accepted as the standard language of Serbian and Croatian with a consensus (1993).

Table 1. Languages of the Former Yugoslavia (with dialects of Serbo-Croatian) (Greenberg M.L. 1996)



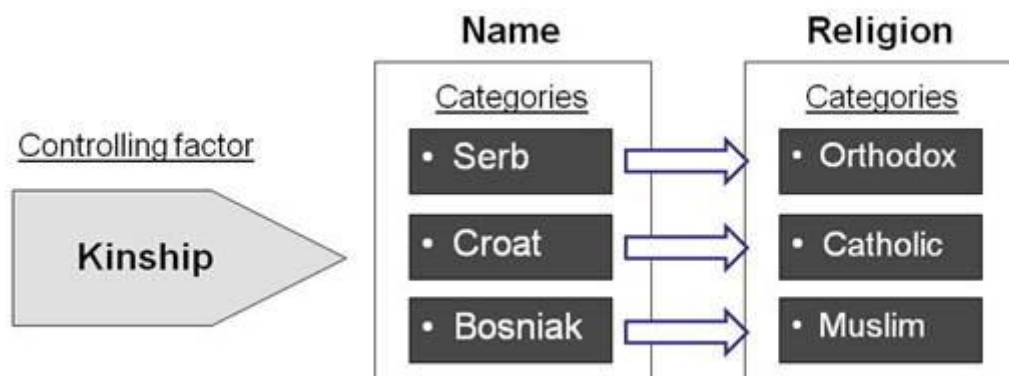
These efforts continued with dictionary studies being cleansed of the original Turkish words by nationalist linguists. Here, it seems that "language" had a clarified status in terms of culture and politics and became a signal of nationalism contrary to the uniting and comprising politics of the former Yugoslavia and the Ottoman Empire (Husic 2000).

It can be said that efforts to clarify the ethnicity became more neutralized in the period of Yugoslavia. The three societies united with the *"hillet"* concept under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and *"Brotherhood"* in the former Yugoslavia by decreasing the effect of religion, and even though not isolated as a whole, relationships between each other were vivid through cultural and economical incorporations. Children grew up unaware of ethnicities and national identity in the Yugoslavian period. Their names were given without the effect of nationalist sensitivity and they were united under the identity being a Yugoslavian. Thus, the ethnic and national identity were isolated and various groups of Yugoslavia were governed easily as a multinational and Tito-ist public (Vanderwerf 2009).

The new Yugoslav identity was defined by Fran Markowitz as *"a citizenship-based category"*. He states that *"It is neither an autochthonous category of belonging nor an ethnic group but flexible hybrid identity that indexed identification with the socialist state's ideological goals and/or provided an alternative to forcing a single choice among individuals with mixed backgrounds"* (2007).

Table 2.

Kinship, National Identity and Religious Identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Vanderwerf, M. 2009)



In the former Yugoslavian period, those nations were prevented from remembering their national identity under strict rules. The flag, songs and other socialist symbols reinforced those politics. Serbo-Croatian was the common standard language for everybody at schools and in the media. Latin and Cyrillic alphabets were used. Even though these implementations tried to resist nationalist movements, it did not last long. Boshnjak. Serbian and Croatian politicians emphasized their languages in order to separate themselves from other ethnicities. The tendency towards separation in terms of the language factor was because of their understanding of themselves as totally different from each other. This phase for the groups, sharing many common aspects with each other, turned into a competition of three languages and resulted in a war which lasted three and a half years. (Vanderwurf 2009).

The names given to children, especially after the war, became an element emphasizing national identity. If someone had a name that was derived from Arabic it indicated that he or she was a Boshnjak, otherwise they were Serbian or Croatian. Thus, it was the first impression and information given when people met for the first time. If the name was neutral, the information was attained through the name of the father or the area in which that person lived (Bringa 1995) (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. A selection of Women and Men`s Names

Some women's names

Aida [B,C]
 Āmila [B]
 Ana [C,S]
 Ānka [C]
 Ānkica [C,S]
 Azra [B,C]
 Biljana [S]
 Bojana [C,S]
 Branka [C,S]
 Dijana [B,C,S]
 Drāgana [S,C]
 Dūbravka [C,S]
 Dušanka [S]
 Dželila [B]
 Edita [B,C,S]
 Emīna [B]
 Gōrdana [C,S]
 Grozdana [S]
 Hana [B]
 Ines [C,S]
 Īva [C,S]
 Īvana [C,S]
 Jadranka [C,S]
 Jasna [B,C,S]
 Jovana [S]
 Ljiljana [C,S]
 Ljubica [C,S]
 Māra [C,S]
 Mārija [C, S]
 Marta [C,S]
 Merima [B]
 Mērsiha [B]
 Mīra [B,C,S]

Mirjana [B,C,S]
 Nāda [B,C,S]
 Rāda [S]
 Rādmila [S]
 Rajka [S]
 Redžija [B]
 Sanja [B,C]
 Saša [B,C,S]
 Selma [B]
 Sněžana [S]
 Snježana [B,C,S]
 Stāka [S]
 Svētlana [B,S]
 Svjetlana [B,C,S]
 Tijana [C,S]
 Zehra [B]
 Zlata [B,C,S]
 Zōra [C,S]
 Zvezdana [C]
 Željka [C]

Some men's names

Aleksandar [C,S]
 Ālija [B]
 Ānte [C]
 Āntun [C]
 Branimir [C]
 Brānislav [S]
 Branko [S,C]
 Dāmir [B,C]
 Dānjan [C,S]
 Dānijel [C]
 Dānilo [S]
 Dārko [C]
 Dobrilo [S]
 Dušan [S]
 Đorđe [S]
 Elvis [B]
 Ēmir [B]
 Gōran [B,C,S]
 Grgur [C]
 Hajrudin [B]
 Hāmdija [B]
 Hāris [B]
 Hāsan [B]
 Hrvoje [C]
 Īnoslav [C]
 Īvan [C,S]
 Īvica [C]
 Īvo [C]
 Īzet [B]
 Jāsmīn [B]
 Jōvan [S]
 Jovica [S]
 Juraj [C]
 Lūka [S,C]
 Ljudēvit [C]
 Mārko [C,S]
 Mēhmed [B]
 Milorad [S]
 Mīrko [S]
 Miroslav [C,S]
 Mirza [B]
 Nenad [C,S]
 Nermin [B]
 Nīkola [C,S]
 Pētar [C,S]
 Predrag [S]
 Rājko [S]
 Saša [B,C,S]
 Senad [B]
 Siniša [C,S]
 Slobōdan [C,S]
 Srđan [S]
 Tōmislav [C,S]
 Vlāda [S]
 Vlādimir [C,S]
 Vlādo [B,C]
 Zlātan [B,C,S]
 Zōran [C,S]
 Žārko [C,S]
 Željko [C,S]
 Živorad [S]

Source: Alexander & Bursac 2006

Vanderwurf (2009) evaluates Boshnjak's situation from a different perspective and sees it as a different process from the Croat and Serbian groups, since Moslem Boshnjaks have been exposed to the most amount of indefiniteness. To the question "who am I?", for centuries they could not reply in a certain way contrary to Serbian and Croatian. Sometimes, they identified themselves as "Moslem descended of Croats" or "Moslem descended of Serbs", and sometimes just as "Moslem". They started to use the term Boshnjak before and after the war years of 1992-1995. It was not so easy for the Boshnjak to have the others accept it as an identity to themselves. Under the effect of the population factor for the first time, they were given a right to identify themselves as "Moslems from an unknown origin" in 1948. In 1953, for the uniting politics of the former Yugoslavia, "Yugoslavians of an unknown nation" was formally presented as an alternative. The next development was in 1961 when the Bosnian Moslem identity *harodnost* was acknowledged formally by the former Yugoslavian government ethnically, and finally in 1971, despite oppositions, the "Moslem" identity was formally agreed. However, it was not acknowledged by Serbs and Croats, who still define Boshnjaks as "Serb or Croat in Islamic faith" (2009).

In the war years, the language struggle of Boshnjaks was accelerated in Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croatian orthography was used (Bringa, T. 2010) The deepening competition tended to prove differences by applying religious expressions. Eker states that the claim of Boshnjaks that their language is more similar to Turkish than Serbian and includes many Turkish words shows a feeling of belonging to the Ottoman via its "language" (2006). He thinks that linguistic reality and the perception of the identity a society is not the main definitive factor. This expression is a critical approach and poses a question to Edwards' definition of ethnicity and language as a component of ethnicity in it. Eker claims that because of the social and humanistic reality of societies, faith is more dominant to the existing reality.

It is important to cite that greetings, such as the names of people, are important clues indicating their identity. In everyday language, the attitudes towards greetings gives a direct impression of who that person is. For example, if a person greets someone using the Islamic way, they are a Boshnjak. If the other person does not answer, this indicates that they are a Serb or Croat. Frequently used Islamic greeting phrases are: Selam Alejkum-Alejkum Selam, Allaha Emanet, Aksham Hayrola, Sabah Hayrola etc.

In addition to linguistic patterns showing identity, the way of life, food and clothes may be also be different in daily life. The reason for those differences is mostly the result of religious understanding. For example, while in Ramadan fasting culture is common among Boshnjaks, for Serbs and Croats fasting is practiced on certain holy days. Boshnjaks prefer green symbols and do not eat pork meat, while Croats and Serbs prefer red and blue mostly in clothes or in different contexts and eat pork meat (Vanderwurf 2009).

The dilemma between the Serbian and Croatian thesis claiming that Boshnjaks are the descendants of Serbian ethnicities, thus the Bosnian language is only a variant of Serbian-Croatian, and the thesis of Boshnjaks who see their language as totally different between ancient times and the present day is acknowledged by Eker's thoughts.

It is possible to group the differences of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages under three chapters.

1. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Latin is used, while in the Republika Srpska the Cyrillic Alphabet is used. In Table 4 below, the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets are provided with English equivalents.

Table 4. Latin and Cyrillic Alphabets (From Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian: A textbook with exercises and a basic grammar)

The Latin alphabet

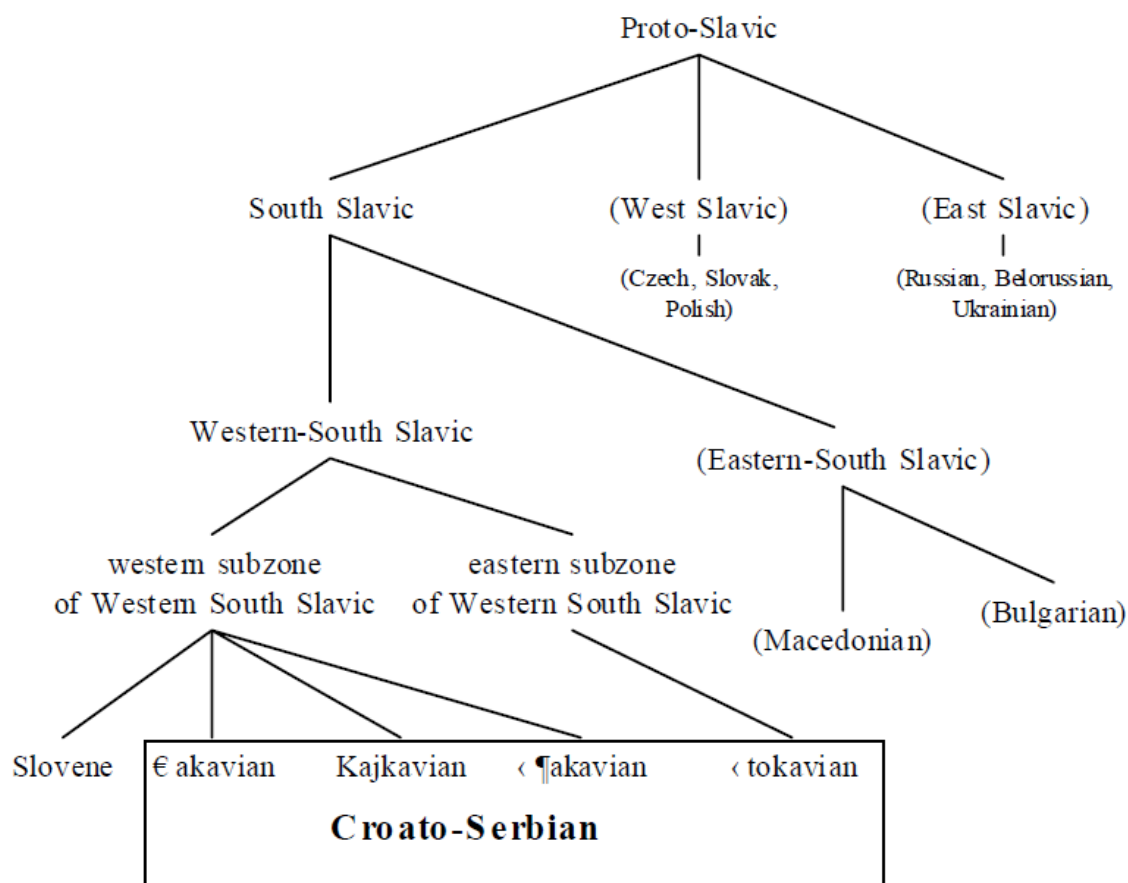
Latin	Cyrillic	English equivalent	Latin	Cyrillic	English equivalent
A	a	A a father	L	л	L l left
B	б	B b bet	Lj	љ	Lj lj million
C	ц	C c its	M	м	M m met
Č	ч	Č č church	N	н	N n net
Ć	ћ	Ć ć chick [gotcha!]	Nj	њ	Nj nj canyon
D	д	D d dent	O	о	O o or
Dž	џ	Dž dž junk	P	п	P p speck
Đ	ђ	Đ đ ginger [didja see it?]	R	р	R r [trilled r]
E	е	E e met	S	с	S s sent, center
F	ф	F f fed	Š	ш	Š š sugar
G	г	G g get	T	т	T t step
H	х	H h Bach	U	у	U u flute
I	и	I i machine	V	в	V v vet
J	ј	J j yes, boy	Z	з	Z z zen
K	к	K k sketch	Ž	ж	Ž ž treasure

The Cyrillic alphabet

Cyrillic	Latin	English equivalent	Cyrillic	Latin	English equivalent
А	a	A a father	Н	н	N n net
Б	б	B b bet	Њ	њ	Nj nj canyon
В	в	V v vet	О	о	O o or
Г	г	G g get	П	п	P p speck
Д	д	D d dent	Р	р	R r [trilled r]
Ђ	ђ	Đ đ ginger [didja see it?]	С	с	S s spent, center
Е	е	E e met	Т	т	T t step
Ж	ж	Ž ž treasure	Ћ	ћ	Ć ć chick [gotcha!]
З	з	Z z zen	У	у	U u flute
И	и	I i machine	Ф	ф	F f fed
Ј	ј	J j yes, boy	Х	х	H h Bach
К	к	K k sketch	Ц	ц	C c its
Л	л	L l left	Ч	ч	Č č church
Љ	љ	Lj lj million	џ	џ	Dž dž junk
М	м	M m met	Ш	ш	Š š sugar

2. Each of the languages belong to the same language family. However, they are different dialects of a Slavic-rooted language. The relationship can be seen in Table 5 very clearly below.

Table 5. Development of W-South Slavic in Lončarić 1988, 94-95 (Greenberg 1996)



3. It contains so many Turkish words even though they belong to different family group of languages. Husic (2000) groups those words into three categories: Older borrowings, specific theological terminology and everyday Turkish words.

Older borrowings are those that have long been in everyday speech, not only in the Bosnian variant, but also in the other two dialects. They have existed in the language for such a long time that they are not perceived as the words borrowed under the impact of Turkism by the people. For example: *'sât'* - 'hour' from Turkish *'saat'*, or the word *'jastuk'* - 'pillow' from Turkish *'yastik'*.

The second group is comprised of the religious terminology connected with Islam, Moslem holidays, prayers and rituals. For example, the effect of Turkism is minimal in the discussion. This is a common phenomenon in any religious context.

The final group refers to the words which are mostly preferred by Moslems with substantial Moslem populations. Now, they are accepted as the elements of standard language. These vocabularies take place in everyday life so often that it is impossible to exclude them. However, especially after the French Revolution until the present day, their exclusion was attempted intensively by replacing them with newly formed words.

Husic categorized those new words by analyzing Morton Benson's Serbo-Croatian English Dictionary. The writer of the dictionary is very conservative and it is clear that the dictionary is designed from a Serbian oriented perspective. He assumes that if a word is not included in the dictionary, then that word belongs to this new vocabulary group. But if the word appears, it means that it belongs to the first two categories: older borrowings or theological in nature.

The discrepancies between each other are numerous. For example, one of the leading phonological

differences is the `h` sound. While in Bosnian, `h` is emphasized with a special intonation within words, in Serbian or Croatian there is no such intonation. This sound comes from the Turkish who were under the influence of Arabic culture (see Table 6 below).

Table 6.

English	Bosnian	Croatian	Serbian
Easy	Lahko	Lako	Lako
Soft	Mehko	Meko	Meko
Coffee	Kahva	Kava	Kafa

Another distinct feature is the transformation of the `h` sound in Bosnian and Croatian into `v` in Serbian (see Table 7 below).

Table 7.

English	Bosnian & Croatian	Serbian
Tobacco	Duvan	Duhan
To cook	Kuvati	Kuhati
Dry	Suvo	Suho
Deaf	Gluvo	Gluho

There are many morphological sound changes. For instance, the changes in `irati` or `isati` suffixes especially in international translations (see Tables 8 and 9 below).

Table 8. Internationalism in B/C/S

English	Bosnian	Croatian	Serbian
To organize	Organizirati/organizovati	organizirati	organizovati
To construct	Konstruisati/konstruirati	Konstruirati	Konstruisati
To analyze	Analizirati	Analizirati	Analizirati

Table 9. From Wikipedia

English	Bosnian	Serbian	Croatian
male student	student	student	student
female student	studentkinja	studentica	studentkinja
male professor	profesor	profesor	professor
female professor	profesorica	profesorica	profesorka
scientist	naučnik	znanstvenik	naučnik

translator	prevodilac	prevoditelj	prevodilac
reader	čitalac	čitatelj	čitalac
point	tačka	točka	tačka
correct	tačno	točno	tačno
municipality	općina	općina	opština
priest	svećenik	svećenik	sveštenik

However, in official language there are not such definite morphological shifts (see Table 10).

Table 10. Some official terms in Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian

English	Bosnian	Serbian	Croatian
male president	predsjednik	predsjednik	predsjednik
female president	predsjednica	predsjednica	predsjednica
male black	crnac	crnac	crnac
female black	crnkinja	crnkinja	crnkinja
thinker	mislilac	mislilac	mislilac
teacher	učitelj	učitelj	Učitelj

In the syntactic shift in those three languages, the most definite distinction is between Serbian and Croatian. In Croatian, there is a similar logic structure for the future tense like in English. In order to refer to a question meaning, they use 'li' soon after the verb. However, Serbians prefer the 'da li' form. Furthermore, in modal verbs, Croatian applies to a sentence including a 'request' meaning for 'can' and 'want' the Serbian 'da' (that/to) + the present tense. However, Bosnian is open to both of those uses. They are commonly used interchangeably, and there are numerous examples. However, it is clear

that the most definite distinction is in lexicon (Husic 2000).

With the war, the break up period created a sharp bend. The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina comprised of three federations - the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and district Bričko. There has been an effort as an independent country to include again people from three different ethnicities. UNESCO searched for the analysis of course books and their content in terms of national concepts under linguistic and related language policies in August 1999 (Low-Beer 2001).

The report reaches those consequences:

1. There is first of all an issue of language. Before the war and the disintegration of Yugoslavia the language of the area was Serbo-Croatian, and in Bosnia pupils learnt both Latin and Cyrillic scripts, and textbooks were printed in both although the Latin was gaining popularity.
2. Since the war there is a tendency to establish three different versions of the language, and the forms of the language are diverging. The Bosniak and Croat forms of the language use the Latin script, and emphasize the non-Serb elements of the language. In Republika Srpska the Serbian forms of the language are used and the Cyrillic script. In fact, knowledge of both scripts is useful to everyone in the Balkans.
3. In the Bosniak curriculum language and literature includes the study of authors from the whole area. But in the history curriculum there is considerable reference to aggression and attempts at genocide against Muslims.
4. In the Croat curriculum the study of language and literature means only Croatian; there are no references to any other languages of the area, or authors and literature which come from the area but are written in other versions of the language.
5. One unit contains literature on the theme of 'the homeland war' – the Croat name for the war.
6. In secondary school only Croat and world authors are studied, and almost no Croat authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina or other parts of the Balkans. In history 'the curriculum can be called a Croatian history curriculum. It neglects the history of Bosnia and Hercegovina and its non-Croatian population'. In one unit Bosnia-Hercegovina is treated as a 'foreign' country like Serbia or Macedonia. This is intelligible since the books are published from Zagreb. In music and the arts the non-Croat productions from the area are ignored. Indeed the whole curriculum is constructed from a Croatian perspective with a far-reaching tendency to ignore the other nationalities of the Balkan area.
7. The Serbian curriculum similarly has a Serbian and a world perspective. Pupils learn of the symbols, fights and sacrifices of the Serbian people with a parallel neglect of the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
8. The Serbian curricula and books do present a considerable world context, but not the local region. Republika Srpska is inserted into topics linked with Yugoslavia and Montenegro, not into the context of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and 'the Bosnian and Bosnian-Croat population of the country are practically ignored'.
9. In music Serbian patriotic songs are learnt, in religion only Orthodox Christianity, with much on Saint Sava – the Serbian national saint. In various subjects, including Nature and History it simply is not clear what region exactly is meant by the words 'our country' but implicitly it does not mean Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conclusion

The attempts to make people 'other' and giving them an 'otherness' identity have deepened separations and the boundaries of different nations affecting intersociety relationships all over the world. However, those attempts feed and nourish the feelings of belonging and comprise them in a stronger way within the group. In our study, a kind of seeking and struggle for identity through language and linguistic items were analyzed. Here, Croats, Serbs and Bosnians have been in a transformation for the sake of such a struggle. The religious factor in that war is the crucial one while language is the weapon.

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