

PREFACE

What this book is about

This book is about the language that used to be called Serbo-Croatian. When Yugoslavia split up into separate component states, this one language was replaced by the three languages now known as Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian.¹ The background of this situation is complex. Some claim that Serbo-Croatian still exists as a unified language and that to call the successor systems separate languages is a political fiction required by the existence of separate states, while others claim that there never was a unified language and that the naming of one was likewise a political fiction required by the existence of a single state. Most thinking falls somewhere between these two poles. What is clear to everyone, however, is that all these languages share a common core, a fact which enables all their speakers to communicate freely with one another. Although all speakers of the languages themselves admit the existence of this common core, they fail to agree on a name for it. In the English-speaking world, the most frequently used name is the abbreviation BCS, whose letters refer to the complex of Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian. Listing them in alphabetical order allows one to refrain from ranking of any sort, and using the letter B allows one to refrain from taking a position on the Bosnian / Bosniak dispute.

The aim of this book is to describe both the common core and the individual languages. The term BCS is used throughout to refer to the common core, and the terms Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian refer to the three separate languages which function as official within the successor states: Croatian in Croatia, Serbian in Serbia-Montenegro, and these two plus Bosnian in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The book consists of two parts. The first part, the *Grammar*, contains a full and systematic description of the grammar of BCS (the common core); embedded within this description are statements identifying the specific points on which Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian differ (index entries allow one to locate all these statements). The second part, the *Sociolinguistic Commentary*, provides the social, political and historical background to this complex situation, and discusses in some detail the question of “one” vs. “more than one” as it pertains to language in the former Yugoslavia. The book’s underlying goal is to show that all of these languages – the common code here called BCS and the three separate codes bearing national-ethnic names – are real and existing systems, and that to admit the existence of any one of them does not deny the existence of any of the others.

... and how it deals with diversity on the practical level

The breakup of Yugoslavia into separate countries was accompanied by (indeed, initiated by) drastic political changes. But the corresponding breakup of Serbo-Croatian into component languages did not initiate drastic linguistic changes, for the simple reason that most of the elements which differentiate the three were in place well before the breakup. Serbo-Croatian had

¹ Two additional points are necessary: 1) Bosnian is also called Bosniak in some circles; 2) some have proposed adding a fourth language, Montenegrin, a move which depends upon the proclamation of Montenegro as an independent state. As of this writing Serbia-Montenegro is still a single state, one whose official language is Serbian.

always been a pluricentric language – a single basic system with several different local implementations, each of which was accepted as the norm in the relevant part of the country. Indeed, this state of affairs had already been elevated to law in 1974. In that year, a newly promulgated Yugoslav constitution had allowed each of the component republics of that country to define its own internal medium of communication for administrative purposes. The separate standard idioms recognized at that point in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina embody much of what is now Croatian and Bosnian. Serbia, by contrast, did not recognize any standard idiom other than Serbo-Croatian, and today's Serbian does not differ markedly from the variety of Serbo-Croatian that was used in Serbia in those days. This is not to say there has been no change, but rather that the change has been not so much in linguistic elements themselves as in the type of focus and emphasis placed on these elements. Namely, those features which marked each of the three as separate from one another have taken on much greater significance: most differences that were once possible variants have become the prescribed norm, and many features that once were perceived as local color are now strongly imbued with national significance.

There were (and are) three basic types of differences. One of these is alphabet. Serbo-Croatian was written in two different alphabets, one of which (Cyrillic) was more frequently used in the eastern regions while the other (Latin) was more frequently used in the western regions. Both, however, were standard and both were taught in schools. Now, Croatian and Bosnian use the Latin alphabet exclusively, while Serbian uses both freely. A second major difference is that of pronunciation. Although there are a number of regional “accents”, the most notable pronunciation difference is also reproduced in the spelling. This difference concerns a frequently occurring sound which in the “ekavian” pronunciation is spoken (and written) as **e**, but which in the “ijekavian” pronunciation is spoken (and written) either as **je** or **ije**. Standard Bosnian and Croatian use only ijekavian pronunciation, while Serbian uses ekavian predominantly but not exclusively: Montenegrins and Bosnian Serbs all use ijekavian, as do some speakers in the southern and western parts of Serbia proper.

Both these differences are of the “either – or” sort. On any one occasion, a person writes in either one alphabet or the other; and any one speaker uses either ekavian or ijekavian pronunciation consistently. But the third difference – that of vocabulary – is more fluid. Some vocabulary items are clearly marked as belonging to either Croatian or Serbian, but others carry mixed markings. Sometimes the affiliation of a word is a matter of personal preference. Other times, a word can be clearly identified as “preferred” by one side, but as it is also used by the other, there is no exclusive marking. Bosnian is a case in point: there are a few vocabulary items which are specifically Bosnian, but in the majority of cases Bosnian uses both the Serbian and the Croatian words interchangeably. Finally, there are a few differences sometimes called “grammatical” (different ways to express the idea “infinitive”, variant spellings of the future tense, etc.).

Because this book describes the grammar of BCS in detail, it of necessity contains a great many examples. The citation of these examples addresses the paradox of one language (BCS) vs. more than one (Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian) in the following manner:

- *Alphabet.* All items in paradigms and word lists are given in the Latin alphabet. Of the remaining examples, which comprise full sentences, 20% are given in Cyrillic and 80% in Latin.

- *Pronunciation.* Some examples are given in ekavian and others in ijekavian; the choice is more or less random. Whenever this is done, a paired set containing the form in question and the “other” form is given immediately below the particular group of examples. The abbreviation **E** refers to the ekavian partner of any one pair and the abbreviation **J** refers to the ijekavian partner.

- *Vocabulary.* Whenever an example contains a word or phrase that is marked as belonging to (or preferred by) one of the three, a paired (or three-way) set is given below the particular group of examples. Here, the abbreviations **B**, **C**, and **S** refer to the languages in question.

How this book is organized

Each of this book's two components, the *Grammar* (chapters 1-20) and the *Sociolinguistic Commentary* (chapters 21-26), has its own index, and the entire book is amply cross-referenced, enabling the reader to move among the different sections at will. There is also a detailed word index, which includes every instance of a BCS word mentioned in the text, in vocabulary or grammar listings, or as an alternate vocabulary item in example set footnotes; a supplementary index lists English words mentioned in the text. Although there is a logical progression to the 26 chapters, readers can approach them in various orders. For instance, one need not have internalized all the grammar in order to profit from the sociolinguistic commentary, and one may pick and choose the areas of grammar one wishes to consult.

The grammar is intended to serve several functions. For those beginning to learn one or more of the languages, it is best used in conjunction with the book it has been designed specifically to accompany, *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: a Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar*. That book, intended for classroom use, contains interactive dialogues, extensive exercises, vocabulary lists keyed to dialogues and exercises, brief grammar explanations, reading selections, and full glossaries. For those who need only the rudiments of grammar, that book is a self-contained textbook. This book is for those who wish more detailed grammar explanations, and to better understand the social, cultural, and political context of the languages. The order of presentation in the first 16 chapters of this book (*Grammar*) corresponds directly to the order of material in the corresponding lessons of that book (*Textbook*). Bold-faced numbers in the brief grammar sections of that book refer one directly to the relevant section in this book.

For those who wish to review grammar once learned or to have a reference aid at hand, this book can stand alone. The organization is that of a review grammar, in that cases and tenses are presented gradually throughout the first ten chapters; in later chapters, the presentation takes on the form of a reference grammar, one which gives full details about aspect (chapter 15), case usage (chapter 17), word formation (chapter 18), accent (chapter 19), and phonological structure (chapter 20). Full paradigms of nouns, pronouns and adjectives are found in chapter 8, and full paradigms of verbs in chapter 16. The presence of numerous cross-references in grammar discussions, together with the several detailed indexes, should make the book fully accessible to those accustomed to the ordering of topics within traditional reference grammars.

The sociolinguistic commentary which concludes the book can be read alone or as a supplement to the grammar presentation. The first two sections (chapters 21-22) review the history of standardization and discuss the question of linguistic differentiation. Each of the subsequent three chapters is devoted to the relationship between language and identity – in the case of Bosnian (chapter 23), Croatian (chapter 24), and Serbian (chapter 25, also discussing Montenegrin). The book concludes (chapter 26) with a statement of the status quo as of the end of 2005.

...and what is new in this book

It is nothing new to state that a language is simultaneously one and more than one, but it is another thing to give a full description of such a state. This is the first book to have done so for BCS. It is also the most thorough description of BCS grammar in English, and the only grammar to contain extensive sociolinguistic analysis as well. Additionally, it is the first grammar to deal squarely with the issue of accents in a manner that is both true to the facts and accessible to a learner. This is accomplished by separating out the components conveyed by the traditional marks, and then marking these components in a more transparent manner. Although the concept underlying these marks is well known to linguists, it has not been used consistently before now, either in pedagogy or in descriptive grammars. The accentuation described is that which is actually used in Bosnian, and which is traditionally prescribed for use in Serbian and Croatian, with the following reference manuals used as sources: Vladimir Anić, *Veliki rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*

(Zagreb, 2003); L. Hudeček et al., eds., *Hrvatski jezički savjetnik* (Zagreb, 1999); Morton Benson (with the collaboration of Biljana Šljivić-Šimšić), *Serbocroatian-English Dictionary* (Belgrade and Philadelphia, 1971), and the six-volume *Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog jezika* (Matica srpska, 1967-1976). The marks used in this book present the full detail of this accentual system, in a manner which allows the acquisition either of this fuller system, or of the more simplified system actually in use by most Serbs and Croats. The marks are defined briefly in chapter 1 and explicated fully in chapter 19, where the issue of the difference between prescribed and actual usage is also discussed.

Other analytic innovations which are useful both to the learner and the scholar include a clear system of verb types (presented in chapter 10 and elaborated on in chapter 16) and new treatments of what traditional grammars call “reflexive verbs” and “impersonal sentences”. In the first instance, true reflexive verbs are distinguished from the larger category called “**se**-verbs”: this allows a more precise and workable analysis of the different functions fulfilled by the particle **se**. In the second instance, impersonal sentences are viewed as a sub-category of what are here called “subjectless sentences”, which in turn are defined in a manner that allows students to grasp a basic grammatical structure more easily and to see the ways in which it embraces a much larger category of sentence types.

Perhaps the most valuable innovative contribution of this book concerns clitic ordering. On the pedagogical side, this consists of a new framework bearing the deceptively simple title “XYZ model”: in this system, any one group of clitics is referred to as “Y” (a rubric with specific subdivisions), and the particular portion of the sentence preceding them in any one instance is referred to as “X”. The use of these simple labels helps clarify this troublesome part of BCS grammar for both students and teachers. On the analytic side, this book provides a new definition of the “first position in the sentence” (the unit referred to as “X” in the pedagogical model). This definition, presented in chapter 19, introduces the term “rhythmic constituent”, which in turn is based on an interpretation of clitic ordering as determined not only by syntax but also by speech rhythm.

How this book came into being

This book originated as a combination of grammar handouts to supplement existing language textbooks, and lectures in a course on the cultural history of Yugoslavia. Earlier manuscript versions of this book have been used by teachers in various universities; the one dated 2003 was conceived of as a fully completed textbook. The present book supersedes that one: both the grammar explanations and the sociolinguistic commentary have been completely rewritten and significantly expanded. In addition, this book now functions explicitly as a reference tool, intended either to stand on its own or to supplement the classroom text *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: a Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar*, co-authored by myself and Ellen Elias-Bursać.

... with thanks to all who helped along the way

I am indebted to a great many people for help on this project. First of all are the students in my Fall 1999 language class at UC Berkeley, whose gentle but obstinate insistence that I turn grammar handouts into a full-fledged book made me commit to a project of this long-term nature; I am also grateful to several classes of students for pointing out to me which explanations worked for them and which didn't. I acknowledge with gratitude my colleague and friend of many years, Wayles Browne, who read the entire manuscript more than once and caused me to rethink and clarify a great many points of grammar. Teachers and scholars who commented on earlier versions include Henry Cooper, Gordana Crnković, Ellen Elias-Bursać, Radmila Gorup, Vladimir Ivir, Anto Knežević, Snežana Landau, Viktorija Lejko-Laćan, Nada Petković, Prvoslav and Jovanka Radić, Midhat Ridanović, Lada Šestić, Danko Šipka, Catherine Taylor-Škarica, Snježana Veljačić-Akpınar, Aida Vidan and Charles Ward: I am grateful for their input. I also acknowledge the spadework done by authors of textbooks for foreigners who went before: Celia Hawkesworth,

Thomas Magner, Vasa Mihailovich, and Biljana Šljivić-Šimsić. For input on sociolinguistic issues I am grateful to Midhat Ridanović and Damir Kalogjera, and especially to Ranko Bugarski, who read the entire sociolinguistic commentary several times and gave numerous helpful suggestions.

Another essential part of the process is work with native language consultants. Although I referred frequently to published language manuals, it was not possible to produce an adequate description of the current differences between Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian without the help of educated native speakers of the three current standards. I am deeply grateful to Mirza Fehimović, Miralem Jakirlić, Anto Knežević, Natalie Novta, Darko Poslek, Milorad Radovanović, Jasmina Ridanović and Jelena Simjanović for their insightful comments and their patience with endless questions about usage. I have not incorporated every one of their suggestions, due to the simple fact that they did not always agree among themselves as to which element was more characteristic of their own Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian speech. In each such instance, I have tried to make the best judgment, and I thank them all for their input. At the more impersonal level, I and co-workers also consulted the following electronic corpora:

<http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/Bosnian/Corpus.html>

<http://www.hnk.ffzg.hr/korpus.html>

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I dedicate this book to the memory of the country I loved, to the future of the new countries which carry on its several heritages, and to the living nature of language. This living nature embraces also the lack of perfection and completeness, and it is here that I take responsibility for any and all mistakes in the pages to come: despite the immense amount of work that has gone into this project, it is too much to hope that a book of this complexity can be completely error-free. Some of these errors will be oversights, which can be corrected given subsequent editions. In other instances, that which may seem erroneous to some simply represents my own best judgment in an ambiguous situation. I remind those who may not agree with all these judgments that language is fluid, and allows for the rich variation that is part and parcel of the human condition.