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The sociolinguistic interview

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THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC INTERVIEW

- Qualitative Approach
- Eliciting respondents' attitudes, beliefs and experiences

- Preparing the interview
 - Thinking of a research topic and research questions
 - Drafting the interview questions

- Conducting the interview
 - Approaching respondents
 - Informed consent
 - Recording the interview

- Post-interview
 - Transcribing the data
 - Analysing the data



PROJECT 1



Topic:

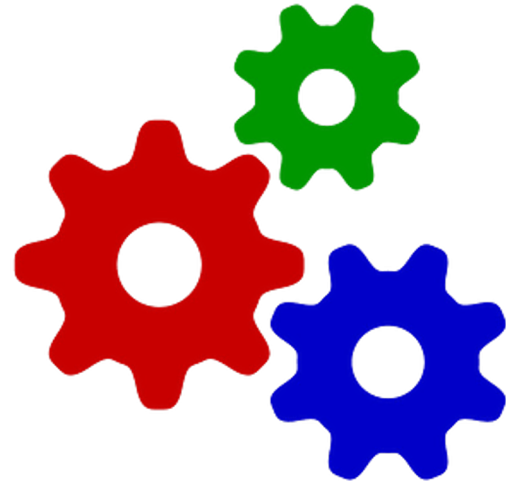
Attitudes of students who speak Serbian as their L1, towards speaking English

Research Questions:

- What motivates Serbian L1 students to learn and speak English?
- How do respondents perceive the prestige associated with speaking fluent English?
- How do respondents relate speaking fluent English to social status?
- In which communication contexts do respondents feel English holds higher prestige than Serbian?

POST-INTERVIEW

- A total of 5 interviews were conducted
- Organisation of data
- Transcription
- General Analysis



TRANSCRIPTION EXTRACT

01 there is an opinion (0.1) around speaking fluent English

02 being associated with prestige. do you agree with this? or not?

03 (0.1)

04 and why?

05 I mea:n, sure;

06 it's the language of the people who **colonised** half the world

07 but I think erm:

08 it's better as like a universal language of the world because it's easy to learn

09 mhm

10 erm: easy to learn language and already a lot of people speak it

Transcription conventions ([Podboj & Lujčić 2020](#))

underlined	interviewer
bold	loud speech
(1.2)	pause in seconds
-	self-interruption
[overlaps between
utterances	
> word <	fast speech
word-	self-interruptions; abrupt cut-off
@	laughter
?	rising intonation (as in
interrogative sentences)	
,	continuing intonation
wo:rd	extension of the sound or syllable
((comment))	researchers' comments

TRANSCRIPTION EXTRACT

11 so: (0.2)

12 I find it okay that it's the international language

13 there might also be an association with English fluency and a high status in society

14 do you agree with this? or not?

15 erm: I mean, umm, I umm (0.1) find that there is a correlation

16 because people who speak English have higher education;

17 you **need** it for higher education

18 and also umm; people who are very low social status like in poverty ((people))
don't have a lot of time on their hands

19 to learn another language

20 so: (0.1) people who are better off in society; sure can learn it

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GENERAL ANALYSIS



- Learning English in Serbia
- Prestige associated with speaking English
- High societal status associated with speaking English
- The need for English in today's world

Overview

Judgement task nonce words - Wobbly /a/ in BCMS



Self-paced reading experiment on topicalization



Second language acquisition



Phasal verb complex predicate



Attitudes towards English as a global language



Attitudes towards the label "Serbo-Croatian"

Experiences of interaction between Serbians & Croatsians

PROJECT 2



Topic: attitude of young Serbian people towards the label Serbo-Croatian.

Research question: What do young people from Serbia think of the label “Serbo-Croatian” in relation to the language they speak?

- Do they perceive Serbian, Croatian etc. as different languages?
- What influences their perception?
- Does education address the issue of the unity/division of the language?

RESPONDENTS



	Gender	Age	Education	Length of interview	Date	File name
Speaker 1	M	18	BA in Medicine	4.31	17/07/2023	int1
Speaker 2	M	24	MA in Medicine	16.05	17/07/2023	int2
Speaker 3	F	17	High school student	5.55	17/07/2023	int3
Speaker 4	F	17	High school student	7.47	17/07/2023	int4
Speaker 5	M	23	BA in Engineering	10.23	17/07/2023	int5

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Brief personal introduction
- Questions on the topic, e.g.
 - How do you refer to the language you speak?
 - What do you think of the umbrella term “Serbo-Croatian”?
 - Did you have interactions with speakers from other countries and what did you make of these experiences?



TRANSCRIPT

- 19 like ə other Croatian people that I met, I think they had to put a bit of effort into speaking a little bit more Serbian
- 20 ə me personally I've not been in Croatia so I don't have that experience
- 21 but they aren't that similar, they're not like (1.6) ə Montenegrin [if you call that
- 22 yeah I was just about to ask you, what about like, Bosnian and Montenegrin?
- 23 it's, it's really much more similar than Croatian and Serbian
- 24 ə because I think ə especially during the war and the splitting up ə there was a ə not much love, [not at all
- 25 yeah
- 26 and I think that a lot of Croatian words were invented in that period so that ə the Croatian language could be more legitimate
- 27 I don't think that's- a bit more ə I don't ə that's a bit (6.3)
- 28 alright
- 29 I don't think if that's nationalist

Transcription conventions

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ANALYSIS



- Respondents agree that from a linguistic point of view Serbo-Croatian is a single language but they never use this term
- Main differences: vocabulary, grammar, orthography. Croatian is perceived as more distant from Serbian than Bosnian and Montenegrin
- The topic is not addressed much in education, it was more prominent in the 90s
- Mixed opinions on the umbrella term “Serbo-Croatian”: can be tricky because it ignores political/historical factors

Overview

- ❑ Judgement task nonce words - Wobbly /a/ in BCMS
- ❑ Self-paced reading experiment on topicalization
- ❑ Second language acquisition
- ❑ Phasal verb complex predicate
- ❑ Attitudes towards English as a global language
- ❑ Attitudes towards the label "Serbo-Croatian"
- ❑ Experiences of interaction between Serbians & Croatsians



PROJECT 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS



What kind of experiences did the respondents have when speaking Serbian in Croatia or when interacting with Croatian speakers?

Sub-questions:

What are language-related barriers and negative attitudes or forms of discrimination that speakers of Serbian experienced because of the variety they spoke when interacting with Croatian speakers (particularly in tourism on the Croatian coast and similar migration contexts)? If any.

Are there any positive attitudes or experiences that the respondents encountered because of the variety they spoke when getting in contact with Croatian speakers?

INTERVIEWS

	Date	Length	Gender	Age	Education	Background	File name	Been in Croatia	Negat. ex.	Posit. ex.
Respondent 1	17/07/23	6:18	M	18	First year BA in medicine	Serbian origins	Resp1_17.0 7.23	Yes, but small	No, just one media ex.	Yes
Respondent 2	17/07/23	6:14	F	17	Highschool student, researcher biomedicine	Dad from Serbia, mum from Montenegro	Resp2_17.0 7.23	No	Yes, but not personal, media influenced	Yes, more than one
Respondent 3	17/07/23	7:13	F	17	Highschool student, researcher in biochemistry	Mum from Serbia, dad from Bosnia	Resp3_17.0 7.23	No	Yes, reported by others/parents influencing by media	Yes, more than one
Respondent 4	17/07/23	12:18	M	25	MA student in linguistics	Serbian	Resp4_17.0 7.23	No	No	Yes, many
Respondent 5	17/07/23	31:14	M	25	Tutor for students, MA student of medicine	Serbian	Resp5_17.0 7.23	No	Yes, 2 personal ex, 2 media ex.	No

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS AND POSITIONING

The aim is to investigate linguistic devices and strategies that narrators use to position themselves and other social actors in:

Positioning 1: The story world

Positioning 2: The storytelling world

Positioning 3: The wider social context



How does the narrator position a sense of self/identity with regard to dominant discourses or master narratives?

(Bamberg 1997, via Davies and Harré 1990: 48)



EXAMPLE OF POSITIONING 3

(...)

10 but my friend that was there said “I’m sorry” in a café

11 and they said that you don’t really, you don’t really say that that way,
you say something else,

12 and **they didn’t tolerate**

13 I **guess they are ok with you if you are Serbian if you absolutely
accept their culture (0.5)**

14 and if you **behave like you are a Cro-, a Croatian**

(...)

30 Yeah, when **you** say “izvinjavam se”, and **that is the normal thing to
say** when you call somebody, **they say it different**, “ispričavam se”,

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NEGATIVE VS POSITIVE EXPERIENCES



1. Positive experiences are predominant.
 2. Positive experiences especially when meeting outside of the ex-Yugoslavia space, abroad their identity is shared.
-
1. Few bad experiences or just reported from other people's experience. Linked mainly to nationalism, not to most of the people.
 2. Negative experiences are mainly influenced by media or by what "people say", not really experienced in first person when interacting with Croatians.
 3. Politicians and media keep a contrast/hate narrative.

GENERAL PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Common patterns

1. In terms of language: the varieties of BCMS are pretty distinct, clearly recognizable, but there are no real language barriers, they are inter-comprehensible.
2. Adaptation to the variety spoken, so not clearly recognizable.
3. Generational divide: young generations care much less about the differences and have less prejudices. The situation with prejudices and contrasts is getting better with comparison to the past.
4. However, older people and the media spread a lot of stories about Serbians being discriminated in Croatia, and younger people still get influenced by it. Discrimination still exists, but is getting less and less.

GENERAL PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Different opinions

1. Negative experiences are prevalent for one participant, both in terms of prejudice towards Serbians from Croats that for language-barriers (ex. book in Croatian for the preparation of one exam)
2. Discrimination is getting more and more because of nationalism and it is very often reciprocal between Croats and Serbians.
3. The youngsters are still very influenced by older generations and apart from the bubble of highly educated people here, prejudice and discrimination are the norm.

QUESTIONS?
SUGGESTIONS?
COMMENTS?

