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The Making of "Montenegrin Language"

Nationalism, Language Planning, and Language Ideology after the Collapse of Yugoslavia (1992-2011)

Abstract

The paper discusses the political process of standardization of the Montenegrin language and its effect on the ethnic differentiation in post-Yugoslav Montenegro. The standardization of the Montenegrin language, which was started by a handful of linguists, eventually became a national project after the independence of Montenegro. This process did not lead to a drastic change of the language; however, it formed and expanded ethnic cleavages in Montenegro.

What is Montenegrin language (*crnogorski jezik*)? This is an important question for understanding contemporary Montenegro. Montenegrin language, which was established as the official language of Montenegro in 2007, is one of the newest languages in Europe and one of the successor languages of former "Serbo-Croatian language (*srpskohrvatski jezik*)."¹ The existence of Montenegrin language is a political issue in contemporary Montenegro (and also in Serbia), which is related to the problem of the existence of Montenegrin nation and the relationship with Serbia. In this article, I analyze the standardization process, language ideology and situation of Montenegrin language. There are many arguments that "'Montenegrin nation/language' is false/fictional/quasi nation/language" in Montenegro, Serbia, and other countries. At the same time, there are many claims that "Montenegrin nation/language has a history of over a thousand years." However, academically speaking, these arguments are all nonsense; hence "there is no procedure that prescribes how a group should be elevated to the status of a nation or a segment of dialect/creole continuum to the level of a language. These are arbitrary decisions."¹ Therefore, there are no positive or negative assessments about "Montenegrin language" in this article.

Language policies in Yugoslavia and BCMS

Serbo-Croatian, belonging to South Slavic Languages within the Slavic language group of the Indo-European language family, was standardized in mid-19th century by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić and other linguists. In 1850, he and other linguists declared that the language of Serbs and Croats was one language. Almost a century later, the Novi Sad Agreement in 1954 decided that Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins (after a while, the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina as well) use one language, Serbo-Croatian. The agreement also underlined the equality between Cyrillic and Latin, between Ekavian and Ijekavian dialects.² Serbo-Croatian was the official language of the Yugoslav People's Army, and *de facto lingua franca* of the Yu-

¹ Kamusella, Tomasz. (2008): The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 26.

² Greenberg, Robert. (2011): Language and Identity in the Balkans: Serbo-Croatian and Its Disintegration, updated edition. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 187-189.

goslav federation.³ In 1963, the constitution of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro defined Serbo-Croatian as the official language of all organizations of the republic. In 1974 Serbo-Croatian in its Ijekavian dialect, written both in Cyrillic and Latin script, was established as the official language of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro.⁴ In 1980, the Institute for Literature and Language of the CANU (*Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti*; Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts) was founded and prominent nationalist scholars became its members.⁵ The disintegration of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s at the same time led to the disintegration of “Serbo-Croatian.” For example, in Croatia, a policy which aimed to “purify” the Croatian language was adopted, and “Serbian elements” in the Croatian language were excluded.⁶ In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the official name of the “Muslim nation” was changed to “Bosniak,” and “the Bosnian language” was created by introducing more and more Arabic elements.⁷ In this article, I call these languages generically “BCMS” (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian)⁸ hereafter.

BCMS is classified into three main dialects – Ekavian, Ijekavian and Ikavian, based on differences of pronunciation of “*ě” in what may be regarded and was partially (re-) constructed as the common Slavic “language.” Ekavian is used in Serbia, Ijekavian in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, and Ikavian is used in Dalmatia and by parts of the population of Vojvodina.⁹ During the socialist period the differences between Ekavian and Ijekavian were taught as “dialects” in school. Therefore textbooks claimed that the difference never hurt the unity of the literary language.¹⁰ The area of contemporary Montenegro is divided into two dialect areas – the Zeta-Sandžak dialect area in southeastern Montenegro (including Cetinje and Podgorica) and the eastern Herzegovina dialect area in the northwest.¹¹ It is worth noticing that “Montenegrin language” wasn’t established in modern Montenegro.¹²

³ Naylor, Kenneth E. (1992): The Sociolinguistic Situation in Yugoslavia, with Special Emphasis on Serbo-Croatian. In: Ranko Bugarski and Celia Hawkesworth (eds.): *Language Planning in Yugoslavia*. Columbus: Slavica, pp. 81-83.

⁴ Službeni list Socijalističke Republike Crne Gore 14/1963, p. 95; Glušica, Rajka (2009a): Jezička politika u Crnoj Gori. In: *Riječ* 1, p. 26.

⁵ Dulović, Vladimir (2009): Montenegrin Historiography and Nation-Building 1948-1989. In: Saša Nedeljković (ed.): *The Challenges of Contemporary Montenegrin Identity: Anthropological Research of the Transformation of Montenegrin Identity Formula since World War Two*. Kruševac: Baštinik, pp. 130-131.

⁶ Greenberg, pp. 109-134.

⁷ Saitou, Atsushi (2001): Bosnia-go no keisei. In: *Suravu kenkyuu* 48, p. 113-137. However, in Montenegro, Muslims are divided into two nationalities: Bosniak and Muslim, who insists that they are not Bosniak. On this Muslim-Bosniak division, see: Dimitrovová, Bohdana (2001): Bosniak or Muslim? Dilemma of One Nation with Two Names. In: *Southeast European Politics* 2 (2), pp. 94-108.

⁸ On the English name of this language, see: Pupavac, Vanessa (2006): Discriminating Language Rights and Politics in the Post-Yugoslav States. In: *Patterns of Prejudice* 40 (2), p. 121.

⁹ Ivić, Pavle (2001): *Dijalektologija srpskohrvatskog jezika: Uvod i štokavsko narečje*. Sremski Karlovci: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, pp. 81-85.

¹⁰ See for example: Stevanović, M. (1968): *Gramatika srpskohrvatskog jezika za gimnazije*, 6th edition. Cetinje: Obod, pp. 5, 13; Medojević, Miroš; Peco, Asim; Nikolić, Milija (1977): *Gramatika srpskohrvatskog jezika za VIII razred osnovne škole*. Titograd: Republički zavod za unapređivanje školstva, p. 5; Stefanović, Ljubo; Nikolić, Milija (1988): *Pouke o jeziku: Udžbenik za IV razred osnovne škole*. Titograd: Republički zavod za unapređivanje školstva, p. 6.

¹¹ Ivić, p. 175; Lisac, Josip (2003): *Hrvatska dijalektologija 1: Hrvatski dijalekti i govori štokavskog narečja i hrvatski govori torlačkog narečja*. Zagreb: Golden marketing; Tehnička knjiga, pp. 98, 121.

¹² This is due to the fact that, historically, many of Montenegro’s residents identified themselves as Serbs; in fact, “Montenegrins” were seen as “the best of Serbs” in Montenegrin awareness. Cf. Pavlović, Srđa. (2003): *Who Are Montenegrins? Statehood, Identity, and Civic Society*. In Florian Bieber (ed.), *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 93-97. On the national thought in interwar

During socialism the “Montenegrin people (*narod*)” was recognized, a university was founded, and intellectuals started discussing the uniqueness of Montenegrin nation.¹³ However, “Montenegrin language” had never been an official language.

Politics of language during the 1990s

Socialist Yugoslavia had finally collapsed and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was founded by Serbia and Montenegro in 1992. In 1993, the Montenegrin P.E.N. Centre¹⁴ issued the “Declaration of the Montenegrin P.E.N. Centre on Constitutional Position of the Montenegrin language (*Deklaracija crnogorskog P.E.N. centra o ustavnom položaju crnogorskog jezika*).” In this document, the Montenegrin language was defined as the national language of Montenegrins and it was demanded that it should become the constitutional and official language. In this period, a great number of cultural organizations were formed and claimed the independence of Montenegro.¹⁵ However, Montenegrin separatist factions were not politically strong. The pro-independency party could hold only 15 percent of all seats in the parliament, as many as the party supporting the union with Serbia.¹⁶ In this period, “Montenegrin language” was planned by intellectuals without actual political power.

Vojislav P. Nikčević (1935-2007) was a linguist born in Montenegro, educated in Zagreb, and later worked at the Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić.¹⁷ In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, he promoted the uniqueness of Montenegrin language as a Montenegrin nationalist,¹⁸ and in course of the polemics on the origin of Montenegrins in the 1980s he stood by the anthropologist Špiro Kulišić, who argued that Montenegrin has no common features with Serbian.¹⁹ In course of the political transformation period he wrote many books on “Montenegrin language.” In 1993 he wrote *Montenegrin language (Crnogorski jezik)* and *Write like*

period, see: Troch, Pieter. (2008): The Divergence of Elite National Thought in Montenegro during the Interwar Period. In: Tokovi istorije 1-2, pp. 21–37. During the Italian occupation a constitution draft of the Montenegrin puppet-state was made, which declared “Montenegrin” and Italian languages as official languages of Montenegro. However, the constitution was not enforced. Cf. Burzanović, Slavko; Piletić, Deja (2010): Crnogorski ustav iz 1941. godine. In: Matica 44, p. 270.

¹³ Cvetković-Sander, Ksenija. (2011): Sprachpolitik und nationale Identität im sozialistischen Jugoslawien (1945-1991): Serbokroatisch, Albanisch, Makedonisch und Slowenisch. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, p. 268; Dulović, Vladimir. (2013): Socialist Intercessions: The Earliest Demands for a Separate Montenegrin Language (1967-1972). In: History and Anthropology 24(1), pp. 172–176; Malešević, Siniša, Uzelac, Gordana (2007): A Nation-State without a Nation? The Trajectories of Nation-Formation in Montenegro. In: Nations and Nationalism 13 (4), pp. 701–703.

¹⁴ Montenegrin P. E. N. Centre was established in 1990. Cf. Trovesi, Andrea (2009): La codificazione della lingua montenegrina: Storia di un’idea. In: Studi Slavistici 6, p. 201.

¹⁵ For example, the Montenegrin Orthodox Church was (re-) founded by nationalist clergies. The Doclea Academy of Arts and Sciences (*Dukljanska akademija nauka i umjetnosti*, DANU) was established by Jevrem Brković in spite of already established CANU in 1976. Brković and his colleagues claimed that CANU was pro-Serbian. Cf. Morrison, Kenneth (2009): Montenegro: A Modern History. London: I. B. Tauris, pp. 138–151, 226; Wachtel, Andrew Baruch (2004): How to Use a Classic: Petar Petrović Njegoš in the Twentieth Century. In: John Lampe and Mark Mazower (eds.): Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe. Budapest: Central European University Press, p. 147.

¹⁶ Bieber, Florian (2003): Montenegrin Politics since the Disintegration of Yugoslavia. In: Florian Bieber (ed.): Montenegro in Transition. Problems of Identity and Statehood. Baden-Baden: Nomos, p. 20; Cattaruzza, Amaël. (2004): Identités en mouvement: La redéfinition du nationalisme monténégrin dans les crises yougoslaves. In: Revue d’études comparatives Est-Ouest 35 (1-2), pp. 362–363.

¹⁷ Vojinović, Vladimir (2009): Vojislav Nikčević (1935-2007). Riječ 1, p. 255.

¹⁸ Cvetković-Sander, p. 271; Dulović (2013), p. 176.

¹⁹ Dulović (2009), p. 129.

You Speak (Piši kao što zboriš), in 1997, *Montenegrin Orthography (Crnogorski pravopis)*, the first orthography of “Montenegrin language,” in 2001, *The Grammar of the Montenegrin language (Gramatika crnogorskog jezika)* etc.²⁰ In his works, he criticized and demonized Serbia by using words such as “cultural domination,” “ethnocide,” “Serbian occupation” etc.²¹ The features of his orthography include the use of new characters like *ś*, *ź*, *z*,²² which, especially *ś* and *ź*, reflect *jotovanje*²³ in the Zeta-Sandžak dialect. However, Nikčević’s orthography received no major support by mainstream philologists and linguists.²⁴

At the same time, one should point out the existence of a parallel dispute over “Serbian language” in Serbia. After 1993, in Serbia, linguists discussed the tolerance over the Ijekavian pronunciation in Serbian orthography. Some of the linguists claimed that only the Ekavian pronunciation was to be permitted in Serbian orthography, while other linguists supported the claim that all pronunciations used by Serbs had to be permitted. In this dispute, some Montenegrin linguists supported the latter because of their Ijekavian pronunciation.²⁵ And in Montenegro, the latter insistence was opposed by the Montenegrin nationalist insistence. That is to say, there had actually been one discussion – “Serbian language which contained different pronunciations” vs. “pure Serbian/Montenegrin language.” A part of the former fraction was composed of sociolinguists. They claimed that the disintegration of “Serbo-Croatian” was political pseudoscience.²⁶ In Montenegro, latter purists regarded the former faction as the repulsion of the pro-Serbian intelligentsia.²⁷

Independence and the new language policy

Since the presidential elections of 1997, Montenegrin secessionism has been growing stronger, mostly for economic reasons. In that process, the meaning of “Montenegrin” was changed and “the right to national self-determination” was emphasized by pro-independence politicians.²⁸ In 2003, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was “renamed” into the confederate state of Serbia and Montenegro, and in May 2006, a referendum in Montenegro was carried out, at which the independence faction won. On the June 3rd 2006, Montenegro declared independence, and in 2007, a new constitution was enforced; the name of the state was chan-

²⁰ Trovesi, p. 201.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 212–213.

²² “ś” and “ź” are used in Polish and Lower Sorbian, and “z” is “s” in Cyrillic, used in Macedonian.

²³ On *jotovanje* in the Zeta-Sandžak dialect, see: Ivić, p. 212.

²⁴ Gröschel, Bernhard (2009): *Das Serbokroatische zwischen Linguistik und Politik: Mit einer Bibliographie zum postjugoslavischen Sprachenstreit*. München: LINCOM, p. 301.

²⁵ Greenberg, pp. 77–83; Gustavsson, Sven (2009): *Standard Language Differentiation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Grammars, Language Textbooks, Readers*. Uppsala: Centre for Multiethnic Research, p. 227; Saitou, Atsushi (2003): *Shin-yūgo niokeru 1990-nendai no serubia-go ronsou: Kyuu-yūgo kaitai-go no serubia-jin no gengo ishiki*. In: Obiya, Chika; Hayashi, Tadayuki (eds.): *Surabu-Yūrashia sekai niokeru kokka to esunishiti II*. Suita: National Museum of Ethnology, pp. 23–24.

²⁶ For example, the Croatian linguist Snježana Kordić criticized the Croatian language politics comparing it with Nazi politics. Her thoughts were collected in the following book: Kordić, Snježana. (2010): *Jezik i nacionalizam*. Zagreb: Durieux, pp. 16–18.

²⁷ Vasyľ’jeva, Ljudmyla. (2010): Čornohors’kamovas’ohodni (sociolinhval’nyjaspekt). In: *Movaisuspil’sstvo* 1, pp. 125–126.

²⁸ Caspersen, Nina (2003): *Elite Interests and the Serbian-Montenegrin Conflict*. In: *Southeast European Politics* 4 (2-3), pp. 116–117.

ged to “The Republic of Montenegro” instead of Montenegro.²⁹ Moreover, the 2007 Constitution declared that:

“(Article 13)

Official language in Montenegro is Montenegrin language.

Cyrillic and Latin scripts are equal.

Officially, Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, and Croatian languages are used.”³⁰

This constitution led to a dispute over the status of “Serbian language.” The draft of constitution did not have any concrete reference to the languages of the ethnic minorities. Pro-Serbian parties claimed that Serbian in Ijekavian dialect had to be the official language. In the context of this dispute, a draft was submitted, which defined the official language as “one language, which was called Serbian or Montenegrin by the citizens”. But even such ideas as a “Serbo-Montenegrin language” were proposed. Finally, Serbian wasn’t to be the official language, but it was instead referred to as a language in official use.³¹

On January 24th 2008, the Montenegrin government established the Committee for the standardization of the Montenegrin language (*Savjet za standardizaciju crnogorskog jezika*). This committee aimed to edit the orthography and the grammar and publish a dictionary of Montenegrin language. Its chairman was Branko Banjević,³² and many scholars and critics joined him.³³ The government spent some 350 000 euro per year for the committee.³⁴ The committee is divided into two factions: literary critics and linguists. The critics supported the new characters, while linguists claimed the equality between new characters and old styles.³⁵ Rajka Glušica, a member of committee wrote that members of the former fraction strongly insisted on Montenegrin nationalism and anti-elitism.³⁶

Finally, a new orthography was published by the Ministry of Education and Science in the *Službeni list (Official Gazette)* on July 19th, 2009.³⁷ This orthography introduced the new characters, *š* and *ž*, but their binding force is weak until the present day. Thus, *both* “predsjednik” and “predsjednik” (“president”) are valid in the Montenegrin language.³⁸ The latter form has

²⁹ On Montenegrin independence process, see: Shiba, Nobuhiro (2006): Rengou kokka serubia-monteneguro no kaitai: Monteneguro no dokuritsu to EU. In: Kaigai jijou 54 (6), pp. 88–101.

³⁰ Službeni list Crne Gore 1/2007, p. 3.

³¹ “Ustavne odredbe i alternative”. In: Pobjeda, 26.03.2007. URL: <http://www.pobjeda.me/arhiva/?datum=2007-03-26&id=114969>, last access: 23.10.2012; Greenberg, p. 178.

³² Banjević belonged to the nationalistic “intelligentsia” during the socialist period. He argued that Njegoš is a Montenegrin poet, and not Serb. Cf. Cvetković-Sander, pp. 268–269; Dulović (2013), pp. 175–176.

³³ Službeni list Crne Gore 10/2008, p. 1. Other members are: Dr. Rajka Glušica (professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Montenegro); Milorad Stojović (literature critic), Mirko Kovač (academician); Mladen Lompar (president of Montenegrin P.E.N. Centre); Rajko Cerović (literature critic); Čedo Vuković (academician); Zuvdija Hodžić (academician); Dr. Milenko Perović (professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Novi Sad, Serbia); Dr. Zorica Radulović (professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Montenegro); Dr. Tatjana Bečanović; Dr. Igor Lakić; Dr. Adnan Čirgić.

³⁴ Milović, M. (2008): Crnogorski pravopis, gramatika i rječnik u septembru. In: Pobjeda, 25.01.2008. URL: <http://www.pobjeda.me/arhiva/?datum=2008-01-25&id=134431>, last access: 23.10.2012.

³⁵ Lakić, Igor. (2013): Jezička slika Crne Gore. In: Vesna Požgaj Hadži (ed.): Jezik između lingvistike i politike. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, pp. 144–147.

³⁶ Glušica, Rajka (2009b): O radu na pravopisu crnogorskoga jezika. In: Njegoševi dani 1, p. 293.

³⁷ Službeni list Crne Gore 49/2009, p. 1; Perović, Milenko A.; Silić, Josip; Vasiljeva, Ljudmila (2009): Pravopis crnogorskoga jezika i rječnik crnogorskoga jezika. Podgorica: Ministarstvo prosvjete i nauke.

³⁸ Perović et al., p. 225.

been used in Montenegro for many years. Therefore we can conclude that this orthography eventually preserved the old form. The same is true not only for the Montenegrin “president,” but also for “tomorrow (*šutra* and *sjutra*)”, “north (*šever* and *sjever*)”,³⁹ “pupil (eye) (*ženica* and *zjenica*)”,⁴⁰ and many other examples. The Montenegrin vocabulary is traditionally close to Serbian, which is the reason why this orthography adopted most of the identical forms of Serbian (Table 1).

English	Serbian	Croatian	Montenegrin
coffee	kafa	kava	kafa (kava)
history	istorija	povijest	istorija
soccer	fudbal	nogomet	fudbal
bread	hleb	kruh	hljeb
democracy	demokratija	demokracija	demokratija
socialist	socijalista	socijalist	socijalist(a)
female student	studentkinja	studentica	studentkinja
her	njen	njezin	njen (njezin)

Table 1: Differences of three languages

Source: Brodnjak, Vladimir (ed.) (1992): Rječnik razlika između hrvatskoga i srpskoga jezika. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada; Perović, Milenko A. et al. (ed.) (2009): Pravopis crnogorskoga jezika i rječnik crnogorskoga jezika. Podgorica: Ministarstvo prosvjete i nauke.

These conciliatory features of new orthography signify that only a symbolic role is attributed to them. Of course, there are some further technical reasons – there are no Cyrillic scripts of *š* and *ž* in Unicode (therefore the printing of orthography is warped⁴¹), and new characters are troublesome to type on BCMS keyboards.⁴²

At the same time, two cultural institutions were recognized as official language planning institutions. The one is *Matica crnogorska* (Montenegrin *matica*⁴³), which was established in 1993 in Cetinje as a private institution.⁴⁴ It is a nationalistic institution and it publishes the journal *Matica*. In 2008, the Law on *Matica crnogorska* (*Zakon o Matici crnogorskoj*) was enforced. The law gave *Matica crnogorska* the status of an official organization and enabled it to receive funding from the government and promote a democratic and multi-ethnic Montenegrin culture.⁴⁵ The other one is the Institute for Montenegrin language and Literature

³⁹ Ibid., p. 249.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 296.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴² Because of that problem, the character “*ć*” in Latin script was used in Cyrillic documents instead of “*с*” in Cyrillic. See for example: Službeni list Crne Gore 80/2010, p. 1. In this issue, “*седница* (*sednica*)” and “*председник* (*predsednik*)” were used. Both old and new styles are used in *Službeni list*.

⁴³ The word *matica* originates from Serbian (literally it means “queen bee,” or “source, home”). In the nineteenth century, especially in the Habsburg Empire, many *maticas* were established by nationalist intellectuals. For example, *Matica srpska* by Serbians and *Matice česká* by Czechs. Recently, a few Slavic minority nations declare own *matica* for insistence of their uniqueness (for example, *Bunjevačka matica* for Bunjevac people in Vojvodina and *Matica muslimanska* for Muslims in Montenegro). *Matica crnogorska* is one of them.

⁴⁴ Morrison, p. 112.

⁴⁵ Službeni list Crne Gore 21/2008, pp. 11–12.

(*Institut za crnogorski jezik i književnost*). It was established by the Montenegrin government in 2010⁴⁶ with Adnan Čirgić as its director. Somewhat a forerunner of the institution was the former Institute for Montenegrin language “Vojislav P. Nikčević” (renamed after his death). Its bulletin *Lingua montenegrina* is continuously being published since 2008 (the first volume was a special in memoriam issue dedicated to the late Nikčević). Members of these two institutions were partly duplicated, as Adnan Čirgić for example. In the future it may be expected that these institutions will probably coexist and shoulder a role in language planning, quite similar like it was the case in Croatia.⁴⁷

Montenegrin language ideology

How Montenegrin language was formed ideologically? Contemporary semi-official Montenegrin language ideology has two sides – nationalism and internationalism. For example, the authors of new orthography are not only Montenegrins, but also foreigners (Croatian and Ukrainian⁴⁸ – Judova called it a paradox⁴⁹), which was a reason for some media to doubt the legitimacy of the orthography.⁵⁰ However, the nationalistic view of language too may be observed in the orthography. Those are two sides of a coin.

The introduction of orthography basically declared that Montenegro represents a linguistic unity. For the authors of the orthography, Montenegrin spoken languages include enough common features in order to distinguish themselves from other BCMS languages.⁵¹ One of the authors, Milenko Perović, accepts that all BCMS languages possess many common features, “[h]owever,” he wrote, “differences exist!”⁵² For him and other like him, even little differences are important enough to distinguish the language. Nikčević justified the existence of Montenegrin language by exemplifying the difference between Italian and Castilian.⁵³ Adnan Čirgić, one of the authors of the grammar and a prominent ideologue of Montenegrin language, criticized linguists (including Vuk Karadžić) who insisted on the fact that Montenegro is divided into two dialect areas. According to him, there are no linguistic divisions in Montenegro.⁵⁴ In Perović’s opinion, already the Novi Sad Agreement denied the existence of Montenegrin language.⁵⁵ For these linguists, the “denial of existence” of Montenegrin language is part of the assimilation policy of Serbia. According to Čirgić, even King Nikola I was not able to create “a national program” and respectively develop a unique Montenegrin

⁴⁶ Službeni list Crne Gore 56/2010, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁷ On the Croatian case, see: Langston, Keith; Peti-Stantić, Anita (2011): A Language Academy by Any Other Name(s): The Case of Croatia. In: *Language Policy* 10 (4), pp. 357–358.

⁴⁸ The Ukrainian linguist Ljudmyla Vasyl’jeva is a professor of the Faculty of Philology, L’viv University, and author of a Croatian-Ukrainian Lexicon. Josip Silić is professor emeritus of the Faculty of Philology, University of Zagreb, and one of the most famous linguists in Croatia. Adnan Čirgić received his PhD from the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek (Croatia). This might at least illustrate the influence of Croatian studies for the process of standardization process of the Montenegrin language.

⁴⁹ Judova, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Radanović Felberg, Tatjana; Šarić, Ljiljana (2013): Discursive Construction of Language Identity through Disputes in Croatian and Montenegrin Media. In: *Scando-Slavica* 59 (1), pp. 25–27.

⁵¹ Perović et al., p. 5.

⁵² Perović (2011): *Riječ urednika*. In: Čirgić, p. 9.

⁵³ Trovesi, p. 207, fn.32.

⁵⁴ Čirgić, pp. 53–54, 62–63, 143–144.

⁵⁵ Perović (2011), pp. 10–12, 15.

nation, because of his Serbian nationalism.⁵⁶ Features of the “Montenegrin language” were treated as a dialect, localisms or archaisms of Serbian.⁵⁷ Čirgić also declared that language policy in the socialist era was “anti-Montenegrin.”⁵⁸ For him too, former language policy in Montenegro was a part of Serbian “expansionistic” language policy.⁵⁹

At the same time, in contemporary Montenegro, although the constitution recognizes equal rights of Cyrillic and Latin scripts, Latinization is rapidly progressing.⁶⁰ During socialism, *Službeni list* and *Pobjeda* (organ of People’s Front) were published in Cyrillic, but today, *Službeni list* is published partly in Latin and partly in Cyrillic, while *Pobjeda* (today privatized) is published only in Latin. In 2010, a publishing company published the “Montenegrin language version” of Njegoš’s *The Mountain Wreath*,⁶¹ written in Latin script.⁶² During my field research in September 2011 in Cetinje and Podgorica, there were no Cyrillic scripts except of the official documents and pro-Serbian publications. Bernhard Gröschel pointed out that the people of Montenegro think that Latin script is a “global script (*svjetsko pismo*)” and that the script will easily connect Montenegro with the international society.⁶³ This however, may perhaps point to the fact that there is a need to differentiate Montenegrin from Serbian language.⁶⁴

Before addressing the question of the language awareness in Montenegro, let us briefly sketch out some major features of the Montenegrin language ideology. Firstly, Montenegro is defined as a linguistic unity. Division of dialects is treated as a non-essential division, and “common Montenegrin spoken language” was created. This notion of unity is based on an ideological combination of nation and language. Secondly, Serbia is defined as *other* in contrast to Montenegrin *us*. Serbia became the “true enemy of the Montenegrin nation”⁶⁵ in the Montenegrin nationalists’ language ideology. They represent themselves as a small nation, suppressed (by Serbia) on the one hand and on the other hand, somewhat in reaction to this, a Westernized nation.

Language awareness in Montenegro

In socialist Montenegro, the number of people which declared themselves as “Montenegrin” in census was always over 60 percent, and the number of “Serbs” was always under 10 percent. In this period, the largest national minority was “Muslim.” In fact, a large amount of

⁵⁶ Čirgić, pp. 172–174.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 183–184.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁶⁰ Judova, pp. 7–8; Gröschel, pp. 309–310.

⁶¹ Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813–1851) was prince-bishop (*vladika*) of Montenegro and a poet. His works were often used to cultivate national identities by nationalists – Serb identity, Yugoslav identity, and finally, the Montenegrin identity as well. *The Mountain Wreath* (*Gorski vijenac*) is his most famous work written in 1847. For further reading, see: Wachtel, Andrew Baruch (2004): How to Use a Classic: Petar Petrović Njegoš in the Twentieth Century. In: Lampe, John; Mazower, Mark (eds.): *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press, pp. 131–153.

⁶² Petrović Njegoš, Petar II (2010): *Gorski vijenac*. Podgorica: Grafo-Bale.

⁶³ Gröschel, p. 309.

⁶⁴ For other cases of new-born Slavic languages which use Latin to differentiate from other Cyrillic use languages, see: Gustavsson, Sven (1998): *Sociolinguistic Typology of Slavic Minority Languages*. In: *Slovo* 46, p. 80.

⁶⁵ Trovesi, p. 212.

the Christian Orthodox population *and* speakers of Serbo-Croatian declared themselves as “Montenegrin.” However, the 2003 census demonstrated that the answers have changed in the course of the 1990s. This was the case especially in northern Montenegro.⁶⁶ BCMS speaking Orthodox people were divided into “Montenegrin” and “Serb.”

Nationality	Ratio (%)	Population	Mother tongue	Ratio (%)	Population
Montenegrin	43.16	267.669	Montenegrin	21.96	136.208
Serb	31.99	198.414	Serbian	63.49	393.740
Bosniak	7.76	48.184	Albanian	5.25	32.603
Albanian	5.02	31.164	Bosniak	3.2	19.906
Muslim	3.97	24.625	Bosnian	2.28	14.172
Others	8.1	50.089	Others	3.82	23.516
Total	100	620.145	Total	100	620.145

Table 2: Nationality and mother tongue in the 2003 census

Source: [Zavod za statistiku Republike Crne Gore] (2004): Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova u 2003. Stanovništvo: Vjeroispovjest, maternji jezik i nacionalna ili etnička pripadnost prema starosti i polu. Podaci po opštinama. Podgorica: Zavod za statistiku Republike Crne Gore, pp. 8-13.

This division is valid until the present day. According to the 2011 census, the ratio of “Montenegrin” and “Serb” is practically fixed. “Montenegrin” occupies a little more than 40 percent of population while “Serb” occupies a little fewer than 30 percent.

Nationality	Ratio (%)	Population	Mother Language	Ratio (%)	Population
Montenegrin	44,98	278.865	Montenegrin	36,97	229.251
Serb	28,73	178.810	Serbian	42,88	265.895
Bosniak	8,65	53.605	Bosnian	5,33	33.077
Albanian	4,91	30.439	Albanian	5,27	32.671
Muslim	3,31	20.537	Serbo-Croatian	2,03	12.559
Others	9,42	57.773	Others	7,52	46.576
Total	100	620.029	Total	100	620.029

Table 3: Nationality and Mother Language in 2011 Census

Source: [Zavod za statistiku Republike Crne Gore] (2011): Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova u Crnoj Gori 2011. godine: Stanovništvo Crne Gore prema polu, tipu naselja, nacionalnoj, odnosno etničkoj pripadnosti, vjeroispovijesti i maternjem jeziku po opštinama u Crnoj Gori. Podgorica: Zavod za statistiku Crne Gore, pp. 6-15.

However, the ratio of the “mother language” has changed between two censuses. In the 2003 census, the people who claimed that their mother tongue was Montenegrin represented

⁶⁶ Kubo, Keiichi (2006): Pitanje nezavisnosti i etničkog identiteta u Crnoj Gori. In: Referendum u Crnoj Gori 2006. godine. Podgorica: CEMI, pp. 33-47.

only 22 percent of the total population.⁶⁷ According to Nikola Komatina, only 53.62 percent of Montenegrins answered that their mother tongue was Montenegrin while 44.93 percent answered it was Serbian.⁶⁸ At that point, the “Montenegrin language” ideology was not popular among Montenegrins. The whole matter then was not a problem of real language use, but an issue of politics over the name of the language. Many people answered with regard to the ethnic categories as Montenegrins, Muslims etc. while at the same time declaring Serbian as their mother tongue. In fact, this was the usual answer in all censuses carried out in socialist Yugoslavia. However, in the 2011 census, 37 percent of population answered that their native language is Montenegrin. On the other hand, the ratio of the people which declared “Serbian” as their mother tongue decreased. This fact means that the ideology on existence of “Montenegrin language” is slowly being received by Montenegrins. Perhaps this ratio will not decrease as long as Montenegro continues to form a separate state from Serbia. Whether recognized by international society or not, for better or for worse, the basis of “Montenegrin language” is under preparation domestically.

Conclusion

In this article, I shortly described the standardization process of Montenegrin language and its effects. Montenegro’s language policy as a consequence or a result of Montenegrin ethnic nationalism is slowly establishing the basis for the “Montenegrin language,” though it is not strong. Many people in Montenegro claim that Montenegrin is actually Serbian and their mother tongue is Serbian.

The Linguist Ranko Bugarski called the dissolution of Serbo-Croatian an “administrative dissolution.”⁶⁹ Actually, there are no extreme changes in the practical language use – people speak as they have been speaking in the past. However, the administrative dissolution creates a symbolical difference, and plays a role at the deepening and stabilizing the ethnic cleavages. In fact, the Montenegrin case is a typical one. “Montenegrin language” is becoming more and more centralized, while the “Serbian language” is being marginalized. In August 2011, the former President of Montenegro Milo Đukanović said that “Montenegrin [language] is not the language of ethnic Montenegrins, but the language of Montenegrin state.”⁷⁰ This language policy gave rise to the protest of “Serbs” and their claims for the protection of their language rights. Moreover, Serbs increasingly organize in form of political parties promoting equality of nations in Montenegro.⁷¹ What has been concluded for other parts

⁶⁷ At that time, “Montenegrin language” was not recognized as a language officially; in fact, it was the census that legitimized it. Language statistics in census often legitimize the existence of a language. Cf. Arel, Dominique (2002): *Language Categories in Censuses: Backward- or Forward-Looking?* In: Kertzer, David; Arel, Dominique (eds.): *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 115.

⁶⁸ His thesis was not (yet) published. This data is cited in Lakić, p. 153.

⁶⁹ Bugarski, Ranko (2012): *Language, Identity and Borders in the Former Serbo-Croatian Area*. In: *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 33 (3), p. 231.

⁷⁰ [Portal analitika] (2011): *Đukanović: Crnogorski nije jezik etničkih Crnogoraca, već države CG*. In: *Analitika*, 25.08.2011. URL: <http://www.portalanalitika.me/politika/vijesti/35468-ukanovi-crnogorski-nije-jezik-etnikih-crnogoraca-ve-drave-crne-gore.html>, last access 28.01.2012.

⁷¹ Kubo, Keiichi (2011): *Kyuu-yūgosurabia shokoku no seitou shisutemu: Senmonka sābei no kekka ni motodzuku seitou no “seisaku-ichi” no sokutei*. In: Sengoku, Manabu; Hayashi, Tadayuki (eds.): *Posuto-shakaishugi-ki no seiji to keizai: Kyuu-soren – chuu-touou no hikaku*. Sapporo: Hokkaido University Press, p.

of former Yugoslavia is true for the Montenegrin case as well: When exploring and analyzing the processes of ethnic differentiation process in this region we cannot ignore the role of the respective language policy.

172. On the contrary, the Montenegrin government insists that Montenegro is a “civic state,” which means that ethnic particularism should be denied. Cf. Džankić, Jelena (2012): Understanding Montenegrin Citizenship. In: *Citizenship Studies* 16 (3-4), pp. 339-341.

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