Anita Peti-Stantić / Mateusz-Milan Stanojević / Goranka Antunović (eds.)

Language Varieties Between Norms and Attitudes

South Slavic Perspectives

Proceedings from the 2013 CALS Conference
Language Varieties Between Norms and Attitudes

Sandra Slusvíc
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Preface

This book of proceedings brings together thirteen articles presented at the international conference entitled *Standard Languages and Sociolects*, organized by the Croatian Applied Linguistics Society (CALS) and held at the Center for Advanced Academic Studies (CAAS), University of Zagreb and the University of Dubrovnik from 18 to 20 April 2013. The conference was envisaged as a forum for discussion about the status and corpus of contemporary standard languages and sociolects, focusing specifically on their relationship with urban and traditional dialects.

This volume (one of two volumes from the conference) contains articles that deal with standards, norms and varieties in the light of overt and covert attitudes, policy, teaching, and translation practice. Specifically, four groups of issues are explored: stability and change at the intersection of the standard and other varieties; language policy and attitudes toward languages in relation to the status of L1 and L2; bilingualism and multilingualism and its verbal component; translation solutions reaffirming and/or establishing the norm. These research questions are examined from the point of view of the contemporary Croatian and Slovenian sociolinguistic situations, relating them to the current situation in Europe. All of the papers, as we argue below, illustrate tensions between attitudes, policy and practice, including issues such as official and personal views of the standard, dialect leveling, policies towards the standard as a teaching norm, multilingualism as a policy vs. actual foreign language learning and norms in translation. In the following paragraphs we give a short overview of the contributions, based on which we argue that the difference between ascribing values, policy and actual practice is analogous to the diversity-relativity conflict evident in the field of cultural policy.

The first strand, stability and change at the intersection of the standard and other varieties from a sociolinguistic and dialectological point of view, brings together three articles. In his paper *Dialect electrified or horse-drawn: Popular music as a form of (un)conscious language policy* Ivo Žanić discusses the role of local dialects and the standard in popular music lyrics in Croatia. Based on an analysis of media interviews with two prominent Croatian front men whose bands play songs with lyrics largely written in their local dialect, Žanić presents
their self-reflexive view of their own discourse practices. In this way, he strongly argues for a socially situated linguistics, where the etic dichotomies (standard – dialect; native – foreign; stylistically marked – unmarked) are reevaluated from an emic perspective.

Monika Kalin Golob’s article *Sociolects and media Language: Modernity, attractiveness, democratisation and marketisation* focuses on the way in which varieties have been treated in Slovenia in light entertainment shows, informative programs and advertisements. Her analysis shows that, despite the influence of external and internal standardizing pressures, different varieties are increasingly present in the media, as a result of democratisation and marketization. Therefore, Kalin Golob calls for a reevaluation of the traditional model of language variation, whereby the language variety used changes only with regard to the more or less public circumstances of the speaking situation.

In their article entitled *Dialects in and around small urban centres in the northern Čakavian area: The current situation* Silvana Vranić and Sanja Zubčić present a longitudinal analysis of dialect change in small urban centers in the northern Croatian Adriatic area. Their analysis of the varieties spoken in Mošćenice, Cres, Veli Lošinj, Mali Lošinj and Osor shows that even these small urban centres exhibit the common characteristics of urban varieties, including dialect leveling. This calls for a reexamination of the traditional dialectal treatment of these varieties, which does not recognize their variability or hybrid structure.

The second strand deals with language policy (with regard to standards and multilingualism) and its relation to foreign language teaching. Nataša Pirih Svetina’s article entitled *Teaching one or more standards? Teaching Slovene—what, where, and for whom?* focuses on teaching Slovene as part of bilingual education in Slovene communities in Italy and Austria. Based on a lexical and grammatical analysis of Slovene teaching materials used in these communities, Pirih Svetina shows that the Slovene language taught there differs from the Central Slovene standard. However, the high value ascribed to Central Slovene and the negative attitudes ascribed to the regional standards raise a host of social, sociolinguistic and policy-related issues, and the author suggests that only a multilingualism and diversity-focused public campaign could be a way of resolving them.

In her paper *Positioning the Croatian language by regulating Croatian as L2* Sanda Lucija Udier takes a look at the language policy in Croatia as evident from Croatian legislation. Udier finds that almost all legislation deals with Croatian as the first language, and finds no evidence of a coherent strategy for the regulation of Croatian as L2. Therefore, she argues for a systematic purpose-oriented
strategy, and finds it is necessary not only from the internal point of view, but also as a way of positioning of Croatian among other European languages.

Milica Gačić and Kristina Cergol Kovačević deal with multilingualism as policy and actual (teaching, speaking) practice in Europe. In their paper, Multilingualism – English as a lingua franca and other second and foreign languages in Europe, they compare the current situation in Croatia and the rest of Europe with regard to foreign language learning. Analyzing a variety of European documents and using Eurobarometer studies, Gačić and Cergol Kovačević show that multilingualism has been embraced as a policy on the level of attitudes across Europe, that there is a rise of English as a Lingua Franca and that Croatia is “living up to the ideal of multilingualism” in this respect.

A closer view into multilingualism in Croatia is offered by the following two papers dealing with foreign language teaching. In their paper entitled Attitudes of Croatian learners towards learning English, German and Spanish in a formal environment Nives Vidak, Sandra Didović Baranac and Daniela Falkoni-Mjahović look into the attitudes and beliefs of secondary school students in Croatia towards learning English, German and Spanish. Overall, the results on this level confirm that Croatian students are indeed ready for multilingualism, as evident from their wish to learn foreign languages in general. However, the preponderance of English is evident too, as the students find English more enjoyable, easier to learn, speak and understand than the other two languages.

Renata Šamo, Ida Ćurić and Alenka Mikulec’s paper A contribution to reconsidering the role of slang and colloquialism in contemporary foreign language teaching deals with the issue of colloquial language and its relation to teaching English in Croatia. In particular, their study looks into Croatian students’ familiarity with British and American English slang and colloquial expressions. Their results show that, generally speaking, Croatian university students were not very familiar with these expressions, and that they were more familiar with American English than British English expressions. Based on this, the authors call for a reconsideration of the role of slang and colloquialisms in teaching English as a Foreign Language in Croatia.

The final paper in this strand, “Half Thrust to Port”: The potential of using the Mighty Ships series as a tool for the teaching of Maritime English vocabulary by Violeta Jurković deals with the importance of using authentic materials in teaching Maritime English, a division of English for Specific Purposes. Focusing on this particular variety, Jurković analyzes a number of documentary videos with regard to the vocabulary used in them, finds them suitable for teaching, and proposes several ways in which they can be used.
Our multilingual competence, both with regard to speaking ourselves or hearing others has a clear verbal component. This is precisely what the next strand deals with. In her paper entitled *Verbal fluency in late Croatian-English bilingual* Ivana Petrović presents a case study of two Croatian-English late bilingual speakers. Using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, Petrović looked into their verbal fluency, showing that their semantic verbal fluency performance was significantly better than their phonemic verbal fluency, and that they were more productive in the dominant language.

Nada Županović Filipin looks into the ways in which Zagreb secondary school students rate speakers who use the standard variety and the Zagreb Kajkavian vernacular. In her paper *Matched guise technique revisited: The Zagreb case study*, Županović Filipin shows that among her participants in Zagreb it is the standard, rather than the local variety, that is connected with both prestige and social solidarity. This result is in opposition to the de-standardization tendencies in some other regions of Croatia, and is explained by invoking the sociolinguistic situation in Zagreb, particularly the influx of non-Kajkavian population.

The final strand in the book deals with norms in translation. The paper *From foot to meter: Rendering of culture-specific items in popular fiction translations from English to Croatian* by Snježana Veselica Majhut and Ivana Bašić searches for trends in the way that culture-specific items (including units of measurement, forms of address and urban toponyms) were translated from English to Croatian in two periods (the 1960s-1970s and the 2000s). The results show that there are differences between the norms established for the two periods, and that the establishment of the new norm was preceded by a period of instability. Such a conclusion is clearly analogous to the leveling tendencies observed in standardization.

In her paper *Identifying translation-relevant information in legal texts* Alenka Kocbek seeks to answer the question of what norms and conventions to use when drafting legal texts in a lingua franca, nowadays mostly English. Kocbek argues for a critical application of the principle of cultural embeddedness, because the use of English as a Lingua Franca does not mean that the text should be automatically anchored in the Anglo-American legal system. For this purpose, the author suggests comparing the established cultural patterns (referred to as “culturemes”) of both the source and the target culture, and using the *skopos* theory approach.

Overall, the common theme of the volume are the more or less overt attitudes towards the construction of the relationship between norms, standards and varieties as evident from the Croatian and Slovenian daily life. All of the papers point
to the hybrid and stratified nature of language in its various guises, and the fact that our attitudes, practices and policies need to come to terms with this hybridity. A variety of discussions are offered, but they all seem to point to a somewhat inconsistent attitude towards language stratification. On the one hand, as language users, we are aware of the variety of languages and language varieties that we use and need, and on the other, coming to terms with this variety presents a problem. The problem is a result of our presumed (inner) need for a non-hybrid, rule-governed and (at least ostensibly) coherent system (cf. e.g. Kalogjera 2014 for a review of such attitudes towards the standard) as well as a result of a practical need for a common system (a lingua franca in the broadest of terms, a teaching standard, or a translation standard). This is further complicated by the policy of multilingualism, which is based on celebrating diversity.

It seems that the inconsistencies evident in linguistic policy, attitudes and practices are analogous to the cultural vs. human rights conflict referred to by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006) in relation to cultural policy. Whereas the multilingualism policy is based on diversity (affirming the value of difference), we perceive the actual variety of practices and the hybridity within a single imagined community (Anderson 1991) as relativity (i.e. “a defensive response ... to a hierarchical ordering of terms based on an absolute or universal standard”; Kirshenblatt Gimblett 2006: 22). However, as shown by a variety of papers in the volume based on sociolinguistic factors, ascribing values and a hierarchical ordering of varieties is what speakers do; at the same time leveling them. Hence the clear tensions in the attitude-policy-practice triad. We hope that the readers will find the discussions of these tensions stimulating and enlightening.

Finally, we would like to thank all the reviewers and contributors to this volume for all their work, as well as the staff at Peter Lang for their help in preparing the volume. Without all their help and support this volume would not have been possible.

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1 Note that this shows an essentializing view of imagined communities, whereby the aspects that connect them into a “single” imagined community also require the leveling of all other aspects, depriving the communities of their (potential) hybridity.