

**Language Names and Norms in Bosnia and Herzegovina  
by**

**Kirstin J. Swagman**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Anthropology)  
in the University of Michigan  
2011**

**Doctoral Committee**

**Associate Professor Alaina M. Lemon, Chair  
Professor Judith T. Irvine  
Professor Sarah G. Thomason  
Associate Professor Barbra A. Meek**

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation owes its existence to countless people who provided intellectual, emotional, and financial support to me during the years I spent preparing for, researching, and writing it. To my dear friends and colleagues at the University of Michigan, I owe a debt that can hardly be put into words. To the ladies at Ashley Mews, who were constant interlocutors in my early engagements with anthropology and remained steady sources of encouragement, inspiration, and friendship throughout my fieldwork and writing, this dissertation grew out of conversations we had in living rooms, coffee shops, and classrooms.

I owe the greatest thanks to my Bosnian interlocutors, who graciously took me into their homes and lives and tolerated my clumsy questions. Without them, this dissertation would not exist. I want to thank the many teachers and students who shared the details of their professional and personal lives with me, and often went above and beyond by befriending me and making time in their busy schedules to explain the seemingly obvious to a curious anthropologist. I owe the greatest debt to Luljeta, Alexandra, Sanjin, and Mirzana, who all offered support, encouragement, and insight in countless ways large and small.

Daniel, Peter, Tony, Marina, and Emira were also great sources of support during my fieldwork. From Thanksgiving dinners to road trips to Montenegro, they

were a welcome taste of home in a far away place and a valuable collegial network during a challenging professional time.

I had the pleasure of getting my graduate training in a supportive and nurturing environment at the University of Michigan. My professors encouraged my ideas and gave me the freedom to explore them. The staff, led by Laurie Marx, smoothed countless administrative and financial hurdles, making possible the years of study necessary to produce this dissertation.

The coursework and research for this dissertation was funded by the generous support of the University of Michigan Department of Anthropology, the US/ED Language and Area Studies Fellowship, The American Council for Teaching and Research Title VIII Southeast European Language Program, the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant, and the National Science Foundation Dissertaion Improvement grant.

My parents, Ann and Bill, have always been supportive of my academic pursuits, even when they seemed intangible or unrealistic. This dissertation is a result of them constantly pushing me to pursue excellence and telling me that I can do whatever I want to do.

Finally, Tayt and Taylor lived with me during the writing of this dissertation and graciously put up with my turning chairs into bookshelves and floor space into library stacks. Their patience, love, and support have meant more to me than anything in the past five years. I love you both.

## Preface: A Note on Usage

A number of terms in this dissertation have varied usages or spellings. I have tried to be consistent with usages common among Anglophone scholars. In some cases, I have deferred to American English spellings such as Herzegovina, although I use Hercegovina when citing passages in one of the local languages.

In keeping with the way most of my interlocutors referred to ethnic groups within Bosnia, I use Bosnian (*bosanski* adj. or *bosanac* n.) for Bosnian Muslims. When I wish to be clear that I am referring to Bosnian Muslims as an ethnoreligious group or when mirroring language used by my informants, I occasionally also use Bosniak (*bošnjački* adj. or *bošnjak* n.).

Likewise, I refer to the Bosnian language exclusively as Bosnian (*bosanski*) rather than Bosniak (*bošnjački*) unless quoting someone else's usage. In general, I refer to the South Slavic standard languages as my interlocutors referred to them—as Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, or Montenegrin. I also refer to these languages as B/C/S (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) when referring to the language system rather than the separate official standards. Again, I have tried to mirror the usage of my interlocutors here as much as possible. When writing about language use or policy during the Yugoslav era, I use the terms Serbo-Croatian or Bosnian-Herzegovinian standard-

language idiom (*bosansko-hercegovački standardno-jezikčki izraz*)—a term developed by linguists in the Socialist Federal Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this work are my own.

With the exception of some accent patterns that do not really enter into my analysis in this work, words in Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian are all pronounced the same. Following is a brief guide to pronunciation in B/C/S:

č	ch (hard) as in church
ć	tch (soft) as in catch
c	ts as in cats
š	sh as in wish
ž	zh as in leisure
dj	similar to j as in jet (soft)
dž	similar to dg as in judge (hard)
nj	as in canyon
lj	as in million
j	y as in yes

See Appendix A for more details on the phonology of B/C/S.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

ARBiH	Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina
B/C/S	Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Federation	The Croat-Muslim Federation (One of two entities comprising the Bosnian state created by the Dayton Accords)
KPJ	<i>Komunistička partija Jugoslavije</i> (Communist Party of Yugoslavia)
RS	<i>Republika Srpska</i> or Serb Republic (The second of the two entities created by Dayton)
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SRBiH	Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina
SFRJ	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

## Chapter One: Introduction

In February of 2007, I was having a late evening language class with my friend and tutor Mirsad at his office at the University of Sarajevo. He was telling me how he thought language use had changed in Bosnia since the war in 1992-1995 in which the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBiH) declared its independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ). While Mirsad often focused on the textual aspects of standardization in our conversations — the codification of forms in orthographies and dictionaries, the differences between one standard or another in literary texts— that night he shifted his discussion to language use.

“The situation is chaos,” he told me, citing TV as an example. “BH1 [a state-level public broadcaster] uses Croatian. There’s no coordination between alphabets and standards. They use Cyrillic with *ijekavski*,” he said, explaining to me that BH1 alternates every day between use of the Latin script and the Cyrillic script for show titles or announcements on the bottom of the screen. For example, the night before, Mirsad had seen the *ijekavski* variant *srijeda* (Wednesday) graphically represented as *сриједа*<sup>1</sup> during the evening news.

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<sup>1</sup> In *ekavski*—the dialect Mirsad ideologically associated with Cyrillic--this word would be *sreda* or *среда*.

A major dialectal difference among the standard languages that emerged out of Serbo-Croatian is that between *ijekavski* (spoken primarily in Bosnia, Croatia, and Montenegro) and *ekavski* (spoken primarily in Serbia). (See Appendix A for a more detailed discussion of differences between these dialects.) While both the Latin script and Cyrillic are official scripts in Bosnia, Cyrillic is associated with Serbian while the Latin script is predominantly associated with Bosnian and Croatian.

This juxtaposition of a dialect ideologically mapped onto Bosnia and Croatia with a script mapped onto Serbia appeared chaotic to Mirsad. Language policy in the Socialist Federal Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBiH) during the Yugoslav era emphasized free choice among existing language variants—at the time codified as Eastern and Western variants that were mapped onto Serbia and Croatia respectively. While many Bosnians that I talked to during my fieldwork in 2005-2007 still said they supported the idea of free choice in language, the ideology that every nation should have its own language had become a predominant prism through which many of my interlocutors viewed the newly standardized Bosnian language. This dissertation explores tensions between ideologies of free choice in language and what Alexandra Jaffe terms the “monolingual norm”—the idea that one nation should have one language.

Mirsad was not alone among my interlocutors in pointing out how signs—linguistic and other—were being used in new and sometimes unexpected ways in post-war Bosnia. Examples of surprising or humorous language were often pointed out to me by my interlocutors. Such examples are also regularly traded on the Internet. For example, one thread on a forum devoted to language and cultural issues

challenged users to submit their own examples of Croatian neologisms—widely criticized for being unnatural and motivated by a political desire to make Croatian distinct from its linguistic neighbors—and resulted in pages and pages of submissions poking fun at the Croatian tendency to coin clumsy new terms to replace foreign borrowings that had been in the language for centuries.

Other semiotic signs such as dress or behavior were also characterized as unstable by some of my acquaintances. For example, as veiling became more popular in Sarajevo in post-war years, some of my interlocutors felt it had become detached from certain moral codes they believed it had—and still should—index.

When such things were described as chaotic to me, however, it was not their general unintelligibility that was at issue,<sup>2</sup> but rather their appearance in new combinations or contexts—Cyrillic and *ijekavski*, a woman with a covered head but tight skirt. Such combinations and contexts were often pointed out to me as examples of how values in post-war Bosnia were shifting and as examples of new practices that required a new metapragmatic matrix—a new set of social understandings and pragmatic cues for how to decode the social meaning of signs. The daily negotiation of how to decode these signs is one object of study in this dissertation, a major focus of which is how teachers and students in the classroom engaged in collaborative—and sometimes conflictual—efforts to understand how linguistic forms map onto ethno-national communities.

I began my fieldwork in Bosnia hoping to study how linguistic regimentation in middle schools classrooms was contributing to various standardization campaigns.

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<sup>2</sup> As I discuss later in my dissertation, intelligibility was rarely invoked as a linguistic problem. I only heard my interlocutors complain about intelligibility with respect to three types of language: Croatian neologisms, archaic Turkish words, and Cyrillic texts.

When the Yugoslav state collapsed in 1991-1992, its official language Serbo-Croatian<sup>3</sup> also ceased to exist. Four separate standard languages—Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and Montenegrin<sup>4</sup>—have since been codified out of the Serbo-Croatian standard norm.

Under the influence of a dominant monolingual ideology, these standards have become key symbols of the distinctiveness of the national communities that are claimed to speak them. While Croatian and Serbian had some institutional history as separate standards before their fusion into Serbo-Croatian at the 1954 Novi Sad Agreement, Bosnian had a far more ambiguous history of standardization, much of which was erased by outside observers and local participants during the Yugoslav era.

National differences in the Yugoslav region developed gradually over the centuries leading up to the first serious efforts to develop a multinational Yugoslav state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Religious differences were key in the development of distinct national identities in the Yugoslav region. During the 1800s, primarily, Orthodox Slavs came to identify as Serbs and Catholic Slavs as Croats. For reasons I discuss in chapter two, Bosnia was the site of the greatest number of conversions to Islam during the Ottoman era, and thus many Muslim Slavs came to identify as Bosnian or Bosniak.<sup>5</sup> While Bosnian has both a national and territorial referent, and thus can refer to Croats and Serbs from Bosnia, Bosniak refers exclusively to Bosnian

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<sup>3</sup> Serbo-Croatian, far from a primordial language standard, was itself the object of much linguistic intervention, which will be discussed in chapter two.

<sup>4</sup> Because Montenegrin is not one of the three official languages in Bosnia, it is not a major focus of my dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> Bosniak as an ethnic term (*bošnjački*) is used to refer to Bosnian Muslims exclusively rather than all inhabitants of the Bosnian state—an ambiguity present in the adjective Bosnian (*bosanski*—the noun *bosanac* carries the same ambiguity). This term was accepted by many of my interlocutors and used in official titles of some Bosniak organizations and publications. I use it in this dissertation when I want to make a clear distinction between Bosnian Muslims and other citizens in the Bosnian state.

Muslims. During both the late Yugoslav era and in the post-war state, Bosnia has been constitutionally defined as home to three constituent nations: Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. Although a census hasn't been conducted in the country since before the war, the state is estimated to currently be just under 50 percent Bosniak, just under 40 percent Serb, and about 15 percent Croatian, and about 1 percent minority nationalities, primarily Jews and Roma.

Serbo-Croatian was depicted by many Yugoslav linguists and citizens as a language with two main variants—two alphabets, two dialects, and two institutional centers. The idea that a third, Bosnian variant might exist or have contributed something unique to the development of the common language was one that was discounted by many Serb and Croat linguists during the Yugoslav era. Instead, Bosnia was presented as a blank linguistic space where Serb and Croat (or Eastern and Western as they were sometimes called to avoid national labels) variants mixed and were neutralized. While Serbian and Croatian have become widely recognized standard languages, even today some people deny that Bosnian is a language at all, while others suggest its history as a language dates back only to 1992. Perhaps one reason for this disparity is that while Serbia and Croatia became relatively centralized and stable states following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the state of Bosnia remains weak and fragmented nearly 18 years after its inception. Thus the Bosnian language is an embattled marker of the legitimacy of the Bosnian state and the distinctiveness of its nation.

Bosnian Muslims generally embrace the *idea* of the Bosnian language. However, the specific forms it has taken have been heavily criticized for being

artificial, political creations. Many of my interlocutors insisted to me that “we speak as we always did,” denying that highly visible standardization campaigns had impacted their linguistic practices. Instead, many of them took pains to emphasize to me what they considered to be the underlying unity of the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian standard languages and described their linguistic practices as generally consistent with pre-war norms.

Thus my dissertation is something of a study in the failure of Bosnian standardization campaigns to successfully promote either an ideology of standard among Bosnian citizens or the use of certain linguistic forms associated with that standard. By focusing on schools as a primary site of language socialization, my dissertation explores the role of institutions in standardization projects and suggests that ambiguity can be far more central to the role of institutions than many theories have suggested (see, for example, Philips 1998). Rather than focus on institutions as sites of boundary construction, I argue that in Bosnia, institutions are also prime sites of boundary erasure.

In this way, my dissertation addresses questions—and questions presuppositions—that have long been central to the field of linguistic anthropology about the relationship of standard language and its attendant ideologies to nation-building and state-building projects. In particular, I seek to contribute to literature about the interrelationship of schools, states, and standard languages, asking how (or why) success or failure in one of these areas is often believed to lead to or result from success or failure in another.



## **Language Ideologies and Boundaries: Construction, Maintenance, and Erasure**

My research is firmly located in the growing body of work within linguistic anthropology that considers the study of language ideologies or language ideological processes. Judith Irvine has defined language ideologies as “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (Irvine 1989: 255. See also Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, Silverstein 1979, Kroskrity 2000, Scheffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998).

The concept of language ideologies has been fruitful for scholars studying language standardization as well as investigating how language is involved in imagining the nation (see Anderson 1991)—both key concerns in my work. The theoretical concept of language ideology has been useful because it provides ways to understand how complex and diverse social categories like language and nation come to appear bounded, internally homogenous, and natural. By extension, once internally homogenous categories have been constructed, linguistic forms or social types that are labeled as different can be placed outside the national body (or whatever relevant social category is at stake). In this way, language ideologies shed light on how processes of boundary construction are part of everyday linguistic practice.

Because language is such a powerful tool for categorizing and making sense of the social world, language ideologies are deeply involved in the organization of social difference. For example, if language ideologies strongly link language and identity, linguistic difference will be perceived where ethnic difference is presupposed and vice versa. A key concern for students of ideology then is not just to point out that ideologies construct difference, but to investigate *how* they do so (see

Lemon 2002: 29, Hill 1985, 2001, Meek 2006, Harvey 1991, Irvine 1979, Mendoza-Denton 1995).

Irvine and Gal have identified three ways through which ideologies construct difference: reumatization (or iconization), fractal recursivity, and erasure (2005: 37). These processes work to naturalize links between linguistic form and social groups (iconization), to project those links onto various levels of social difference (fractal recursivity), and to render invisible evidence that might contradict such links (erasure). In this way, they are crucially implicated in language standardization projects that seek to map a bounded, homogenous linguistic code onto a bounded and homogenous national body.

Within the literature investigating how ideologies work to construct linguistic boundaries, I take up the call of scholars like Woolard and Genovese (2007) and Irvine and Gal (2000) who argue that more analytic attention should be paid to how linguistic boundaries are erased.<sup>6</sup> While attention to the construction and maintenance of boundaries between standard languages may be a natural outgrowth of the tendency to take national units and nationalist projects as objects of study (Woolard and Genovese 2007), it has had the effect in the literature of making homogenization efforts seem to be institutional linguistic processes while erasure of the boundaries between standard languages has typically been written about as

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<sup>6</sup> Any process of boundary construction may itself involve boundary erasure as internal differences must be erased so that external borders can be erected. Thus boundary construction and boundary erasure are in some ways part of the same process but operating on different scales. When I talk about boundary construction and erasure here I am generally talking about boundaries between standard languages, although things are not always so neat in practice. I return to this issue in chapter six when I discuss unstandardization. Thanks to Jessica Smith for helping me clarify this.

something that happens on the margins of institutions (Rampton 1995, 1998, Jaffe 2003, Stocker 2003).

Though the blurring of linguistic boundaries has often been approached as a creative response to institutional or hegemonic processes that seek to solidify borders between linguistic varieties, my research aims to study boundary erasure as itself an institutional process. To do so, my research follows scholars who have argued that what we think of as institutions are actually diverse structures, actors, and processes (Blommaert 2001, Philips 1998, Mitchell 2002). This dissertation analyzes the interactions among institutional structures (school organization and curricula) that *appear* to be oriented toward creating and reinforcing distinct ethnolinguistic boundaries; institutional actors (teachers and students) who bring diverse perspectives and orientations into the allegedly monolithic institution; and institutional processes (such as pedagogy and correction) through which institutional structures are transformed.

### **Ideologies of Standardization and State-Building**

The idea of a standard language in Bosnia dates back to the Austro-Hungarian era—a period in which work on an orthography and grammar of the Bosnian language first began. The project, which was sponsored by the Austro-Hungarian government and led by a Slovenian, had as its aim to resolve certain questions of dialect and orthography so that Bosnia could produce its own school books rather than import them from neighboring Croatia.

Tony Crowley (1989) has identified two distinct meanings of the term “standard” in English—standard as what is common and standard as what is excellent or ideal. Similar to the English case Crowley discusses, the idea of standard in Bosnia was originally an attempt to define what was common to Bosnian speech—and by extension how it differed from neighboring Serb and Croat speech—in order to help build a Bosnian identity that was less susceptible to the neighboring nationalisms of Serbia and Croatia.

Yet by the time I was conducting my fieldwork in 2005-2007, standard in Bosnia was far from referring to a common language, and my interlocutors acknowledged this in their conversations with me. Instead, for most of my interlocutors, standard Bosnian referred to a conscious political project—a set of forms that existed in texts but whose transference to the realm of everyday speech was uncertain at best. Instead of referring to a set of common linguistic forms, as I will argue throughout this dissertation, in post-Yugoslav Bosnia, standard has for some Bosnians become negatively identified with a project of national separatism.

Similar to the Swiss case discussed by Richard Watts in which standard German was rejected because it symbolized identification with a centralized, expanding German state (and, during the turbulent World War I and World War II periods, identification with a fascist, Nazi state), standard Bosnian was rejected by some of my interlocutors because it was associated with the nationalism some blamed for the wars in Bosnia (see Watts 1999).

“It’s linguistic fascism,” one woman told me, a British employee at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, during a conversation about the

Bosnian standard language. She had lived in Bosnia for close to 10 years and married a Bosnian man, but they had decided to send their children to the local French school so they wouldn't learn Bosnian in the classroom. "I feel sorry for the children now," she said. "School is more about learning what not to say."

But as Crowley noted, there is a second sense of standard—that in which standard comes to symbolize a superior way of writing or speaking and by extension a superior moral standing (1989: 147-148). This meaning of standard has not suffered the negative associations that the first has in Bosnia, I argue. In particular, this meaning of standard—one that I argue is largely empty of the idea of ethnic particularity associated with the first sense of standard—is enforced in classroom across Bosnia.

In the sense that a literary standard is believed to be more correct than any of the so-called dialects, standard does exist as a prestige form of speech in Bosnia. Because early standards in the region were based on the East Hercegovinian *ijekavski* dialect native to most of Bosnia, many of my interlocutors reported to me that they had been born speaking standard and, in response to questions about difficulties following standard norms, reported to me that they had none. In this second sense, standard referred to a set of linguistic practices that were very much consistent with Serbo-Croatian norms. This meaning of standard is in sharp contrast to the more politicized standard that developed during and after the wars in the 1990s and that was designed to mark a sharp break with Serbo-Croatian norms and attitudes toward language. In a telling indication of the co-existence of these two meanings of

standard, many of my interlocutors who labeled their own speech as standard in one breath, in the next told me they didn't follow *pravopis* norms.<sup>7</sup>

These meanings of standard in Bosnia coexist, complicating attempts to develop a consistent policy for language education throughout the country. This tension between the two sense of standard will be explored in detail in coming chapters—its presence can be found by tracing the use of linguistic labels (*bosanski* vs. *bošnjački*), deictic markers (*naš jezik*, a potentially ambiguous term meaning “our language”), and highly marked linguistic forms such as *kahva* (Bosnian for “coffee”).

The coexistence of these meanings of standard also points to another key theme in this study—that of unstandardization, or the unmaking of linguistic norms and ideologies from the Yugoslav era. Because standardization is so often associated with hegemonic institutions such as schools or media and powerful actors like the state or a national elite, the pushback to standardization projects is not often theorized within notions of standardization. Yet my research suggests that these processes of standardization and unstandardization are two sides of the same coin.

Unstandardization—which I suggest is one way to understand the pushback standardization projects in Bosnia are encountering—suggests that multiple sets of language ideologies are at play in Bosnia, following the observation that language ideologies are “partial, contestable and contested, and interest laden” (Hill and Mannheim 1992: 382). On the one hand, certain ideologies value pluralism as a distinctive marker of “being Bosnian” and work against the imposition of standard

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<sup>7</sup> The *pravopis* (lit: correct writing) or orthography is considered in the region to be a defining text for standard norms. In addition to containing guidelines for punctuation, capitalization, and writing foreign words, among other orthographic conventions, the *pravopis* generally includes a list of commonly mispronounced/ misspelled forms as well as their standard forms. In this way, it serves as an arbiter of standard for much of the lexicon as well.

language forms strictly defined as belonging to one nation. On the other hand, ideologies that consider a well-defined and commonly accepted standard language to be a marker of modern, European states work toward the acceptance of a standard language believed to belong exclusively to one national community.

On the surface, the conditions in Bosnia seem ideal for differentiation along national lines potentially leading to language divergence—a small set of highly marked linguistic differences exist which are reinforced through separate educational structures, separate administrative organs, and separate media. Instead, my research found that linguistic norms strongly associated with standardization projects were among the *least* likely to be identified by my interlocutors as authentically Bosnian.

There is a great deal of literature that discusses this gap in standardization between forms considered correct and forms considered authentic (Jaffe 1999a, 1999b, Hill and Hill 1986, Hill 1985). My research is somewhat different in that this dichotomy was most often applied by my Bosnian interlocutors *among* standards, not *within* standards. That is, many of my interlocutors expressed a commitment to speaking standard and a belief that they did so. When they judged a linguistic form labeled standard—such as *kahva*<sup>8</sup>—to be inauthentic, it was not because they preferred a local (non-standard) form, but because they believed a different form—*kafa*—was standard. Thus many of my interlocutors embraced an ideology of standard in Silverstein’s sense (Silverstein 1996) while rejecting standard forms. These standard forms were not rejected because they were standard but because they perceived as nationalist. What is at stake is not so much the linguistic forms

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<sup>8</sup> *Kahva* was a major symbol for the excesses of standardization that many of my interlocutors believed characterized the Bosnian standard. Included in the standard because the *h* was believed to be a marker of Bosnian speech, this form was rarely used in speech or writing in Sarajevo.

themselves, but whether a form is believed to index an inclusive (multi-national) linguistic community or an exclusive (homogenous) linguistic community.

Linguistic anthropologists have long noted that language variation is not in and of itself a problem. Instead, it becomes a problem for political or social reasons. The alleged need for the modern-nation state to constitute itself as a homogenous body with representative leadership has been cited as one key reason that the existence of linguistic variation has become such a problem for so many nationalist projects. Modernizing states *appear* to require a homogeneous, linguistically defined nation at the same time as they play a key role in constructing that nation (see Hobsbawn 1990, Scott 1999).

However, while the ethnographic research in much of the literature has taken place in contexts in which the nation may have been imagined in homogenous terms, my research explores language ideologies and language policy in a place where the nation is often imagined as a heterogenous polity. In a 2002 article on how language ideologies impose a functional division of labor on linguistic codes, Lemon describes how ideologies of referential transparency map well onto pan-European ideologies aligning bounded linguistic codes with bounded nation-states. Lemon wonders if state formations that don't rely on a one-to-one correspondence between national group and state structure might more easily embrace ideologies of variation or pluralism (2002: 31).

Bosnia is one such case. While today's Bosnia—an international creation—was designed in accordance with European ideologies of the state,<sup>9</sup> many citizens of

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<sup>9</sup> See Radan 1999. Radan argues that the insistence of the European Community on maintaining internal borders between Yugoslav republics—applying European principles of the sanctity of external



Bosnia imagine their state—and its language—as epitomized by mixedness.<sup>10</sup> As one young linguist told me: “Bosnian is either/or. That is Bosnia in essence.”

As a result, many of the ways linguistic anthropologists have often thought about the role of the state and its institutions in standardization do not explain why standardization has been such an embattled project in Bosnia. Michael Silverstein defines standardization as follows:

Standardization, then, is a phenomenon in a linguistic community in which institutional maintenance of certain valued linguistic practices—in theory fixed—acquires an explicitly recognized hegemony of the definition of the community’s norm (1996: 285).

For Silverstein, hegemonic institutions are a key condition for the existence of standard languages. Likewise, James Milroy (2001) argues that a standard language culture can be recognized by the development of a commonsensical notion of correctness which is located external to speakers in places like normative books and linguistic authorities (Milroy 2001: 539).

My research challenges the idea that institutions must be engaged in drawing rigid us/them boundaries to be thought of as representative or legitimate, instead pointing to the possibility that ambiguity can be a marker of legitimacy rather than a threat to it. However, my research also points to the influence of pan-European ideologies—what Jaffe calls the monolingual norm (Jaffe 1999)—that threaten

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borders to what had been internal borders—when those republics seceded resulted in intensifying and prolonging the wars. Radan writes: “The development of Yugoslavia’s internal borders after 1918 was part of the search for a viable political system for that multinational state. It was never envisaged that these borders could ever become future international borders for states that seceded from Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia’s secessionist wars were fundamentally about the states that were to emerge out of the Yugoslav debris. The insistence on the application of the Badinter Principle only served to prolong and intensify the agony that was the break-up of Yugoslavia” (1999: NP).

<sup>10</sup> This is not to suggest that perceived ethnic divisions do not exist in Bosnia nor that they are not important. As many anthropologists in Yugoslavia have shown, ethnic identities in the region are fluid and shifting. However, I suggest that many Bosnians—of all ethnicities—value their state as one with a history of multicultural coexistence and syncretism.

nationalist projects or state structures not based on the existence of an allegedly homogenous nation.<sup>11</sup>

As Jaffe points out, the existence of ideologies that link bounded standard languages with homogenous nation states are so ingrained in hegemonic views of language that it can be difficult to reconcile these pressures toward homogeneity with a pluralist model of language and culture. Mirsad's comments on chaos are one example of this—despite his professed commitment to a multi-cultural Bosnian state, Mirsad (and many of my other interlocutors) labeled examples of language that strayed from monolingual norms and referential transparency as chaotic.

Examples of this tension abound in Bosnia. Despite the presence of what I argue is an ideology of linguistic pluralism held by many of my interlocutors, efforts to structurally integrate linguistic varieties in practice are met with fierce opposition. Perhaps nowhere is this dilemma better encapsulated than in the education sector, in which theoretical linguistic boundaries are enforced by outside observers, local political parties, and normative linguistic projects.

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<sup>11</sup> Ethnographers in Bosnia have argued that Bosnian Muslims based their ethnic identity primarily on practice, not on blood. Ethnographers of village life in Bosnian over the past century have noted that while Serbs and Croats are able to recount long genealogies and have developed systems of fictive kin such as godparenthood, Muslims do not have developed networks of ritual kin nor do they remember their ancestors past their grandparents' generation (Lockwood 1975, Filipović 1960, Hammel 1968). This became particularly problematic for Bosnian Muslims during the wars of the 1990s, which stressed an allegedly natural theory of ethnicity as constituted through blood ties and descent, and made Muslims vulnerable to nationalist discourses in the region arguing that they are really converted Serbs or Croats and thus lack their own authentic identity. Tone Bringa, citing Bosnian sociologist Fuad Saltaga describes the dilemma: "Since Bosnian Muslim national identity does not rest predominantly on a theory of ethnicity, [Saltaga] warns that it would be risky for Muslims to enter into any society which insists on 'natural identification.' For the Muslim population, he argued, this would imply assimilation, or should they refuse this, genocide" (1995: 31).

## **Linguistic Anthropology of Education and Institutions**

Schools in Bosnia face a catch-22 in their educational missions. While Bosnia has signed international treaties pledging to provide what the state terms culturally relevant education to each child, the state also agreed upon acceding to the Council of Europe in 2002 to continue education reforms in order to “eliminate all aspects of segregation and discrimination based upon ethnic origins” (OSCE Report 2005). Thus while the rights of children and their parents to receive ethnically-specific instruction in subjects like language and literature are guaranteed by Bosnian laws, schools are also charged with integrating curricula and classrooms in the name of inculcating a vision of Bosnia as a unified state.

There is currently a great deal of pessimism—expressed by academics, journalists, parents, and teachers—about whether the current governing structures created by the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 can continue to function. Intended as a cease-fire and not a foundation for a new state, Dayton created a complex structure of two semi-autonomous entities in Bosnia, the Croat-Muslim Federation and the Serb Republic (*Republika Srpska*) that have separate ministries of education.<sup>12</sup> While the Republic Srpska is administered as one unified educational space, within the Federation, education is the portfolio of the ten cantons, five of which are Bosniak majority, three of which are Croat majority, and two of which are termed ethnically mixed, meaning certain administrative and legislative measures are in place to protect

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<sup>12</sup> In dividing up Bosnia, Dayton also created a third territory, the Brčko District, that belongs to neither the Federation nor the Republika Srpska but is administered by the International Community. Because Brčko is administered in such a different way than the rest of the Bosnian state, much of what I say in this dissertation is not meant to apply to Brčko.

ethnic equality. Thus there are 11 ministries of education within the Federation—10 cantonal ministries and a Federation-level ministry.

Aside from the parallel structures for education, Dayton created parallel police forces, court systems, and internal ministries of education, culture, and the like. Efforts led by the international community—which have included sanctions and delayed progress towards European integration—to merge and coordinate various political and institutional structures have been largely exercises in futility. For all practical purposes, the Bosnian state is a weak and fractured state with little real power.

While all post-socialist states have, to various degrees, dealt with the transformation and (re)creation of political, social, and moral communities, this process in Bosnia has been subjected to a remarkable amount of international oversight and legislation. From international agreements that determine institutional structures to war crimes tribunals that attempt to write official versions of history to international funding structures that influence local actors and organizations, Bosnian citizens must negotiate a wealth of outside influences about how their daily lives should look. My research attempts to track how Bosnians engage with these influences by focusing on how everyday practices articulate in complex ways with official policies in the domain of language education.

To do so, I focus on the role of teachers as a crucial point of intersection between an official realm of top-down policies and curricula standards and the realm of the everyday, in which state oversight is subverted, critiqued, and eluded. Many studies of classroom interactions and schooling more generally have depicted teachers

as almost monolithically aligned with institutional authority (Heath 1983, Willis 1977, Wortham 2003, McDermott and Tylbor 1995, Stocker 2003, Jackson 2008). For Willis (1977) teachers personified the authority structures and social inequalities that the lads rebelled against. For others (Eckert 1989, 2000, Rampton 1995, 2001 Bucholtz 2000), teachers are almost absent as they blend into the institutional background against which youth play with language or try on different identities and social positionings. For these scholars, language play is positioned outside of institutional structures that regiment language.

Others have paid more attention to the agency of teachers or other school authorities to reframe classroom interactions (Jackson 1968 is an early treatment, see also Jaffe 2003, Roberts and Sarangi 2001) or to defuse dilemmas resulting from linguistic inequality (Chick 1996, Hornberger and Chick 2001). My research attempts to understand in more detail the linguistic resources teachers draw upon to position themselves in the classroom and to track how they shift among various positionings depending on how personal and professional ideologies overlap or contradict each other in any given classroom moment.

As I hope to show through more detailed attention to how teachers frame pedagogical content, the classroom is a leaky social space in which activity is not always in service of some dominant political order or ideology (see Hill 2001). The ways in which classroom language is evaluated may work to reproduce hegemonic social distinctions, but that reproduction is interactionally achieved and therefore not mechanically predetermined (see Heller and Martin-Jones 2001, Yon 2003). Likewise, while classroom interactions may work in service of Herderian ideologies

of the nation in which the dominance of one code over another is reinforced or the heterogeneity within a code is erased, they do not always do so.

Bosnian classrooms are nominally multilingual, in that Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian are all official languages in use in classrooms in the Federation. In practice, however, the three standards overlap a great deal in lexical stock, grammatical patterning, and phonological features. Thus picking out any bit of talk and labeling it as belonging to one standard or another is a metalinguistic act that relies on certain highly salient linguistic forms as contextualization cues (Gumperz 1992) and a variety of indexical orders (Silverstein 1995). Thus while linguistic difference *can* be made to matter in the classroom, it is often glossed over or reincorporated into what are in *practice* flexible boundaries of standard norms. My dissertation points to the crucial role teachers play in this metalinguistic process.

### **Experts and Intellectuals: Defining the Nation**

A focus on teachers points to another key theme in my study: the role of experts in defining, maintaining, and erasing linguistic boundaries. While this boundary work takes place in everyday social interaction, it is also more visibly the work of intellectuals and language professionals. Such expert work takes place in institutional contexts in which the power to define either linguistic boundaries or the legitimacy of particular forms is unevenly distributed. My study examines the role of linguists who serve as experts at the level of the state in defining language boundaries as well as teachers who, as language professionals, also serve as experts.

There was a broad consensus among my interlocutors in Bosnia in 2007 that language was a problem that experts needed to solve. Despite widespread criticism of the ways in which experts engaged in linguistic debates, their right to do so on privileged terms was rarely questioned.

Katherine Verdery has suggested that a key element in the definition of an intellectual is recognition not only by the nation but also by those with the power to promote experts to positions of influence. For Verdery, this process of achieving recognition (what she calls the formation of “cognizant publics” (1991: 18)) is a site of struggle and competition among elites for their expert status. It is certainly the case, as I discuss in chapter three, that language professionals in Bosnia are in constant struggle for public recognition of their credentials to suggest solutions to linguistic problems. Such struggles go beyond academic qualifications and include efforts to define oneself as more patriotic, more authentic, or more Bosnian than one’s interlocutor.

As Verdery suggests, struggles such as these are key ways in which ideological processes and legitimating moments occur (1991: 11). As others have pointed out, disagreements about form can mask agreement about who has the right to define forms or what those forms should index (Bourdieu 1999, Bilaniuk 2005). In light of this, one key effect of the heated debates about linguistic forms in Bosnia may be a shift of attention away from the underlying ideologies of language that support those forms.

That is, while the specific forms of the Bosnian<sup>13</sup> (or Croatian or Serbian) standard languages and their indexical or referential meanings are hotly contested, such debates take for granted that there is (or should be) a Bosnian language and that it belongs to the Bosnian nation, whoever that may include (see Verdery 1991: 11, 34, 70). This process has the effect of obscuring more marginal expert perspectives that seek to challenge this underlying assumption. In this way, the monolingual norm becomes even more entrenched.<sup>14</sup> While not all language experts in Bosnia support the idea of the monolingual norm, those who do have been most successful in accumulating positions of influence in the post-war Bosnian state, as I discuss in more detail in chapter three.

As Verdery point out, in post-socialist societies—but also elsewhere—the struggle for intellectual recognition takes place not only among present elites but also against past social formations:

Forming a cognizant public includes not only “civilizing” the public into one’s preferred values and sustaining its attachment to them but also, sometimes, *recivilizing* it: forming new cognizances for a public already cognizant within a given distribution of values (1991: 198, emphasis in original).

As I discuss in chapter six, this *recivilizing* is perhaps the most controversial part of language standardization in Bosnia. In that chapter, I explore how previous ideologies of standard must be unmade in order for new linguistic regimes to be seen

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<sup>13</sup> While my study aims to situate Bosnian language politics within the trilingual context of the Bosnian state, my focus is on the Bosnian language in particular. Its lack of institutional support during the Yugoslav era and its more pluralistic tendencies make it a more interesting case for me as it relates to the attempt to forge a unified standard language than do debates surrounding the other two standards. I do my best to be explicit throughout this work about when I am referring to processes specific to Bosnian and when I am referring to processes that apply to all three standard languages.

<sup>14</sup> As I discuss in chapter three, one of the few linguists who publicly argued Bosnia didn’t need a standard at all was completely marginalized by the academic community. I was repeatedly told he was crazy and that visiting him would be a complete waste of my time. This, of course, turned out to be untrue.



as legitimate by using the concept of unstandardization. Unstandardization reminds us that standardization processes do not happen in a vacuum but must deal with previous state structures, language norms, and supporting ideologies. Language experts who emphasized continuity with Yugoslav-era norms and policies were often—but not always—more successful in gaining popular support for their research, showing the continued presence of Yugoslav-era ideologies.

Verdery's emphasis on recognition in the definition of an intellectual is echoed by Boyer and Lomnitz, who suggest that an intellectual should be defined not by her functions or credentials but “as a social actor who has, by local, historical standards, a differentially specialized engagement with forms of knowledge and their social extensions” (2005: 107). By employing a broader definition of intellectuals, Boyer and Lomnitz open up this terrain to include members of the media, bureaucrats, and most importantly for my purposes, teachers.

A key motive shaping Boyer and Lomnitz's review of intellectual engagement in nationalism is to bring an analytic focus to questions of agency in the production and circulation of national culture (*ibid.*) This question of agency is central to my study, as I hope to show how individual actors within the classroom are critical in impacting the transmission and reception of instructional materials. The tension between this agency and the limits imposed by institutional structures will be a focus of chapter six, which explores the concept of free choice in language—a cornerstone of language policy in Bosnia during the Yugoslav era.

A great number of studies about education in Bosnia have focused on textbook and curricula content as diagnostic of not only what kind of learning is or

was taking place, but of the sociopolitical climate in general (Wachtel 1998, PROmente 2007, Jelavich 1989, 1983, Pašalić-Krešo 2008). Such studies neglect the role of human agency and face-to-face interaction in animating instructional materials. My dissertation shows that it is not the case, as so many analysts of textbooks have presumed, that ideologies inscribed in official educational materials are mechanically transmitted in classroom encounters.

In this respect, my research draws on another key theme in the study of institutional discourse by linguistic anthropologists—the intertextuality of such discourses. While the physical boundedness of many institutions might obscure the ways in which language in institutions has both histories and trajectories outside of the physical space in which it is produced, studies by scholars like Jan Blommaert and Gregory Mateosian have revealed ways in which other contexts of discourse are regularly invoked and made relevant in evaluating institutional discourse. Both of these authors also point out that the power to invoke certain contexts is not evenly distributed across actors within an institution (see also Goffman 1974, 1981, Blommaert 2001, Mateosian 2001).

Language in classrooms is no different from language in courtrooms or asylum requests in this respect—both students and teachers are aware (although in different ways) of the shades of meaning a particular form labeled as standard or non-standard may have in the street (Bakhtin 1981), and teachers in particular have their own interpretations of how a framing of a particular historical event or literary text matches their lived experiences or the nation’s collective narratives.

Teachers in the classroom, however, maintain the authority to impose a privileged frame for interpretation. While students can and do contest how teachers frame a bit of talk, they are not equally empowered to impose their own frames. Yet this does not mean that so-called official frames always or even regularly predominate in the classroom. Teachers occupy an ambiguous institutional position, on the one hand as representatives of the state and on the other as subjects to it. My research suggests that many teachers in Bosnia rejected what they saw as nationalist and artificial curricula content, including linguistic forms, literature selections, or framings of language and its uses. Teachers employed a variety of strategies to reduce discrepancies between their personal viewpoints and their professional duties (see chapters five and six), and I argue that careful attention to classroom interactions reveals how education policy and curricula content are transformed as they are taught.

### **Evolution of Research Questions: Language Variation in the Classroom**

I conducted my dissertation research over a period of 14 months between 2005 and 2007, with the bulk occurring from November 2006 to November 2007. My research project was initially designed to explore children's linguistic practices to determine if curricula differences were resulting in differences in linguistic practice.

Early on in my research, however, I encountered practical difficulties with my research plan. While I had hoped to follow one or two groups of children from class to class throughout their day, my stated interest in language instruction resulted in my being assigned to follow two different teachers throughout their day. When I approached one of these teachers in December about getting permissions to survey

her students, she suggested this would not be possible until after the New Year and then politely ended our working relationship over the holiday break. While I had hoped to set up a space to interview students in an empty classroom, the crowded nature of every school I worked in made such a plan impossible. The urban nature of Sarajevo, where I spent my first eight months, made it difficult to forge bonds with children outside of school.

By contrast, a number of teachers at different schools took me under their wing, inviting me to spend breaks and lunches with them in the teachers' lounge or at a nearby café. Several expressed interest in my research and took time out of their breaks to explain to me their motivations behind a particular lesson, their frustrations with structures of education, or their experiences in the Yugoslav system. While not all teachers were excited to have me in the classroom—as my example above indicates<sup>15</sup>—many were. I owe a great deal of gratitude and the very existence of this work to those teachers.

I spent the bulk of my time in schools with teachers. Students generally viewed me as something like a student-teacher—I had told them I was there to learn about their language, and I occasionally assisted teachers with small classroom tasks. Because I was so often with teachers, students generally referred to me as a teacher (*nastavnica*) as well. My research naturally shifted to a focus on teachers, then, for this practical reason as well as others motivated more by my own curiosity. I had

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<sup>15</sup> My interactions with this teacher were strained from the beginning. Other teachers and the principal at this school were extremely gracious. I can only guess as to the reasons we didn't click, but I presume that a certain amount of it had to do with a climate in which many education reforms were targeting pedagogy and teachers' practices. This was significantly different from my preliminary research in the summer of 2005, in which most educational reforms were still focused on curricula content. After this experience, I took pains to emphasize to teachers that I was not there to evaluate pedagogy in any way. I suspect I was not entirely convincing to everyone, but I tried to only visit classrooms in which I knew I was welcome.

many questions about education that teachers could answer, so I found myself talking with them often and at length throughout the school days.

I was also struck by the expectations for teachers that the complex education structure in Bosnia had created. Because of various treaties that were signed to ensure minority and cultural rights in Bosnia, children throughout the state who might attend a school in which their language is not officially being taught can ask for instruction in their language. While in places with a sizeable minority population, separate classes might be organized, in other schools, like the schools I visited in Sarajevo, the student would attend the same class and use the same books, but the teacher was expected to apply the different standard norms to that student's written and oral work. While I was told that this almost never occurred in practice—likely because parents who felt strongly about the issue enrolled their children in different schools to begin with—the expectation alone was an almost impossible request of teachers.

Finally, teachers had some of the most critical opinions about language norms of anyone I met. They often found themselves in the position of enforcing linguistic norms they did not agree with, and the creative ways they dealt with this potential conflict—on the one hand, representatives of legitimate language, on the other hand, Bosnian citizens highly critical of how standardization had preceded—proved rich for analysis.

This initial interest in how teachers balanced language standards with personal opinions and political meaning led to a more focused study on practices of correction. I found a great deal of variation among teachers in how they approached correcting students' written and oral performance, as well as several significant threads of

commonality. I suggest that for teachers, the act of correction is a political act in which they position themselves with respect to a complex and contested discursive field about linguistic correctness and language norms. Practices of correction will be discussed in great details in chapters five and six.

By focusing on what teachers chose to correct and what they chose to ignore, one can trace the ways in which boundaries between closely related linguistic varieties are constructed and erased in everyday practice. The shifting of these boundaries—as well as moments when shifting is contested—reflects attitudes about what it means to be Bosnian in today's Bosnia.

### **Research Design: A Comparison of Four Schools in Three Cities**

Because my initial research question (Is the use of different language curricula in Bosnian schools resulting in diverging linguistic practice among Bosnian children?) was comparative in nature, I designed my research project to give me exposure to multiple schools, sacrificing a certain amount of depth at each school.

While living in Sarajevo, I visited three schools—two Bosnian schools and one Croatian school (referred to in my dissertation as Catholic School because it was also religious in nature). Due to a shortened school year and some difficulty gaining the necessary permissions to observe classes at the Croatian school, my classroom observation time there was limited. I was able to make a few extra visits to talk with teachers, but my understanding of Croatian language education is based as much on stories from friends and neighbors as it is on first-hand observation.

The other two schools I visited in Bosnia allowed me extensive observation. At the first—Sarajevo 1—I developed a good working relationship with one teacher who invited me into the teachers’ lounge between classes, allowing me to talk to a wide range of teachers at the school and gain insight into the “off-stage” aspects of that school. At Sarajevo 2, I had a very formal relationship with the three teachers I worked with. Although I was able to regularly observe classes for nearly three months, I was never invited into the teacher’s lounge or given an opportunity to talk with teachers about much beyond their daily lesson plans.

My understanding of schooling in Sarajevo was further informed by my circle of friends, many of whom taught in Sarajevo primary or secondary schools or universities. In addition to being able to tell me about their memories of being a student, I gained a great deal of insight into schooling by asking my friends about their experiences as teachers.

After spending seven months of the 2006-2007 school year in Sarajevo, I moved to a small town in Zenica-Doboj canton (hereafter ZD town) in the fall of 2007. This town was located near the border with the Republika Srpska and I spent three months there observing classes at the Bosnian school in ZD town (which I refer to as *Osnovna Škola Mak Dizdar*) and traveling 20 minutes by bus to the Republika Srpska to observe classes at a Serbian school there (*Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović*). At both of these schools I was welcomed warmly—teachers invited me to share in their daily routines, help them correct homework, and get to know their schools in a more intimate manner than in Sarajevo. I ran into students from *Osnovna*

*Škola Mak Dizdar* on the streets around ZD town and also got to know some of my neighbors well.

In contrast to Sarajevo where my social network consisted almost entirely of friends of around my own age scattered around the city, in ZD town I socialized with my neighbors—older women—and teachers.

I also had the opportunity to teach informal English classes at two *medresas* in towns outside of Sarajevo during 2006-2007. I was able to get to know a group of about 30 high school students as well as a small group of teachers and administrators from one school very well during this period. My students took a great interest in my research and often reported to me on happenings in their classes or linguistic forms they saw they thought might be of interest to me. These students were also the only group of students for whom I was able to get permission to do a survey.

Additionally, I left a survey for teachers in the lounge of all the schools I visited in Sarajevo, inviting them to fill it out and leave it in an envelope. This survey got good response at all three Sarajevo schools and expanded my research sample, albeit superficially, to a wide range of teachers outside of mother tongue language classes. In ZD town and at *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović*, I had more opportunities to chat with teachers and opted not to leave the survey.

In each school, I observed mother tongue language classes taught to 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students.<sup>16</sup> At Sarajevo 2, *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović*, and *Osnovna Škola Mak Dizdar* I recorded classes as well. At Sarajevo 1 and the Catholic School,

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<sup>16</sup> At *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović*, I observed 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes. The Republika Srpska had implemented one tenet of a package of proposed education reforms to make primary school nine years instead of eight. Because this extra year was added as the first year of school, the 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades in the RS corresponded to the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades in the Federation.



I was not given permission to record classes and have only detailed notes from each session I observed. As a general rule, I recorded very few of my conversations with teachers—my best conversations with teachers happened in group settings in teachers lounges where my recorder was not welcome.

In addition to my work in schools, in Sarajevo I arranged interviews with a number of linguists representing different camps in the debates over standard. I interviewed professors from the University of Sarajevo who were generally quite active in normative efforts, scholars from the *Institut za Jezik* who often were more critical of normative campaigns, and independent linguists. I also interviewed two former ministers of education, a number of municipal education workers both in and outside of Sarajevo, and representatives of one of the major publishing houses for textbooks.

I supplemented these interviews with archival research, digging into 20 years of past magazines and newsweeklies to track media coverage of recent events as well as going back to the first Yugoslavia to find examples of curricula, textbooks, primers, and articles published in pedagogical journals. I gathered a sample of more recent curricula and textbooks as well.

My attempts at archival research were somewhat haphazard. I was told by archival staff that many records had been destroyed during the war or lost in various moves, thus my initial plan to gather curricula in five-year increments met with frustration when, more often than not, the particular years I wanted were missing. Instead, my sampling of old curricula and textbooks is a somewhat random assortment of whatever was available to me.

I also spent time in libraries gathering texts by local authors that are largely unavailable in the U.S. about language development and standardization efforts in Bosnia. I attended two conferences—one on language and one on education—and, thanks to a connection forged during a 2005 visit for language training, was able to spend a great deal of time with teachers and students in the Department of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Language and Literature at the University of Sarajevo.

### **Methodologies: Challenges and New Opportunities**

Though articles on language politics and standardization efforts in Bosnia abound—particularly in the local language—there is little research that tracks language use. Mirsad, the young literary scholar I mentioned in this chapter’s opening anecdote, once lamented to me the region’s lack of a tradition in sociolinguistics.<sup>17</sup> Thus despite numerous articles detailing the difference among the standards (or among regional dialects), there is little research on whether people actually use standard forms and to what ends. My research began as an attempt to answer those questions for young children, but when it became clear early on I would have difficulty gathering samples of students’ speech outside of formal classroom settings, I shifted my emphasis.

This focus on teachers has been productive because, contrary to the way they are often represented in the academic literature (as discussed above) I found teachers played an extensive role in the framing and re-interpretation of classroom materials.

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<sup>17</sup> Bougarel, Duijzings, and Helms (2007) suggest the relatively more repressive political culture in Bosnia during the socialist era prevented the development of research agendas emphasizing issues of ethnicity or interethnic relations, which could be one reason why sociolinguistic research is rarely undertaken by local scholars.

This emphasis on classroom practice sets my study apart from many non-anthropological studies of education in Bosnia and post-conflict states in general. The literature surrounding education in Bosnia often draws theoretically from studies grounded in conflict resolution and takes ethnic categories and ethnic conflict as a starting point. It has a tendency to focus on structures and top-down analyses.<sup>18</sup> Thus much of what has been written to date about education in Bosnia focuses on structural segregation and curricular differences to conclude that the education system is a key contributor to continued ethnic tensions in Bosnia, which in turn foster the ongoing existence of the still-divided political and state structures.

While I agree with these authors that the tendency toward mono-ethnic classrooms is disturbing and that textbooks—despite massive efforts over the past 15 years on the part of the international community—still contain dramatically different (and sometimes distorted) interpretations of Bosnian history, society, and culture, I disagree that from these facts we can conclude that education in Bosnia works in favor of continued separatism. While I suggest in chapter four that a generational gap maybe emerging in which teachers embrace a more pluralistic model of language than their students, I am hesitant to say this is a result of separatism in education. Instead, I suggest that schooling is unable to counteract these ideologies which students form outside of the education system.

Ultimately, neither my research nor any other study can definitively predict how today's middle school students will view their state or their place in it, nor whether they will use *kahva* or *kafa* with greater frequency. My research, in focusing

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<sup>18</sup> See Hromadžić 2008 for an important exception.

on teachers, attempts to better understand the ambiguous and myriad ways in which schools in Bosnia challenge or support various ideologies of language.

### **Paradigms for Bosnia: Post-Conflict or Post-Socialist?**

Yugoslavia was well studied by foreign scholars. Its position in the Cold War between East and West, its novel approach to socialism in the form of workers' self management,<sup>19</sup> and its relatively open borders meant a generation of foreign political scientists, historians, anthropologists, and others came to know Yugoslavia well. Anthropological studies in the region during the 1960s and 1970s focused on traditional anthropological topics like kinship, village organization, and religious practices and contributed to understandings of interethnic relationships and the construction of ethnic identities.

Much of the pre-war anthropology in Bosnia focused on the intersection of religious and ethnic identities, emphasizing the fluid boundaries of ethnic relationships at the same time as they pointed to the ways in which local practices—such as how many spoons were served with coffee or which saints days were celebrated—continually re-indexed ethnoreligious differences (Bringa 1995, Lockwood 1975, Sorabji 1994, Bax 1995).

This nuanced scholarship of ethnic identities in Bosnia was lost during the war, as Western scholars seemed to fall into two camps. The two major lenses

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<sup>19</sup> Workers self-management was a distinctive feature of Yugoslav socialism in which workers in factories formed committees and took ownership of their own workplaces. Although the central government retained veto power, these workers councils were able to set production targets and control factory budgets. In practice, workers often chose to spend the profits on luxury items rather than invest back in the factories as had been envisioned. For more on workers self-management, see Lampe 1996, Rusinow 1977.

through which foreign commentators viewed the war—Serbian aggression or civil war—were reflected in the scholarship produced during and immediately after the wars of Yugoslav secession in the 1990s (see Bougarel, Duijzings, and Helms 2007). The war divided a generation of scholars at times sharply over issues such as the cause of the war, the culpability of various parties, and whether Yugoslavia’s collapse was inevitable.

Much of what was published during the war and immediately after—often responding to disturbing “clash of civilizations” and “ancient ethnic hatred” theses advanced by the popular media or scholars with little knowledge of the region (Huntington 1998, Kaplan 1994)—focused heavily on the multicultural tradition of Bosnia, sometimes oversimplifying ethnic relations in the region (see Donia and Fine 1994, Sells 1996, Friedman 1996). For many authors in this camp, Serbian political nationalism was the only culprit for the war—the naked aggression by Serbian President Slobodan Milošević destroying an otherwise workable Yugoslavia.

Scholars who have advanced different or more nuanced theses for understanding the underlying causes of the war—for example, Susan Woodward who suggested the causes lay in economic disparities between the regions or Robert Hayden who pointed to constitutional structures and Slovene secession—have been sharply criticized for their allegedly pro-Serb viewpoints (Halpern and Kideckel 2000, Cushman 2004, Hayden 2005, Cushman 2005, Kideckel 2005, Denich 2005).

In turn, these differences of opinion are reflected in post-war evaluations of the Bosnian state, which are divided between those who support the international

efforts to reintegrate the national communities of Bosnia and those who argue that such a state is by definition unworkable (see Hayden 2000, Chandler 2000).

The anthropologist Robert Hayden has been one of the most vocal critics of international politics in Bosnia and has argued that repeated elections by Bosnians returning nationalist parties to power demonstrate that a multicultural Bosnian state can only exist under the protection of international coercion. Hayden writes:

It is hard, however, to argue that what Bosnians need is help to “learn to live together” since they already had learned to live together over the forty-five years of “communist dictatorship” informed by the ideology of “brotherhood and unity.” That ideology worked only as long as it was not necessary for the people(s) of Bosnia to constitute themselves as a nation, which they have not done and show few signs of doing (2002; 173).

In this way, debates about today’s Bosnian state reflect yet another cleavage that characterized scholarship about wartime Yugoslavia: the question of whether a supranational South Slavic identity ever really took hold in the region despite multiple political and ideological incarnations of the idea. I explore this question in greater depth in some of the chapters that follow.

While research into ethnic identities and identity formation in Yugoslavia has produced some fascinating research, a recent anthology of anthropology in Bosnia argues that anthropology in the region must move beyond the conceptual straightjacket that frameworks like nationalism and ethnic identity have imposed on Bosnia toward more productive and nuanced frameworks for understanding individual and communal identities in the region (Bougarel, Duijzings, and Helms 2007).

Much current research in Bosnia continues to be motivated by post-war concerns such as research on NGO programs or international efforts to foster democratization and state-building.<sup>20</sup> The challenge for scholars of Bosnia today lies in moving beyond traditional ways of understanding identity formation and ethnic conflict in the region—returning, in a sense, to the nuanced studies of the 1970s and 1980s.

My own research, which is very much grounded in the post-Dayton structures of Bosnia in 2007, attempts to move beyond the framework of nationalism or post-conflict studies to understand education in Bosnia through an attention to classroom practice rather than educational structures. While it would be easy to understand school segregation as yet another manifestation of the nationalism many believe characterizes so much of daily life in Bosnia, I suggest that an attention to linguistic practice as an arena of social life that is fraught with indeterminacy allows one to see the contradictory and unpredictable ways social difference is mobilized, interpreted, and erased in Bosnian classrooms.

One approach advocated by some scholars has been to re-integrate Bosnia into a post-socialist framework. While Bosnia has been treated as a “post-conflict” state by many researchers in the first decade of 2000, more recently, anthropologists have called for new research in the region to consider ways in which social processes and formations may be as much post-socialist as they are post-conflict.

Yugoslavia has always occupied a somewhat peripheral place within post-socialist studies. The state’s leading role in the non-aligned movement and different

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<sup>20</sup> “You foreigners are funny,” a good Bosnian friend of mine once remarked. “First you send in all the NGOs, then you send in all the people to study the NGOs.”

road to socialism following Tito's break with Stalin in 1948 made classic analysis of socialism ill-fitting to explain Yugoslav economic development (see Verdery 1996). Some Yugoslavs also liked to represent their country as occupying a privileged position between East and West, represented in the value of Yugoslav currency and passports on the black market and in the presence of goods like pineapples and Chanel perfume in Sarajevan markets .

Yet while Yugoslavia may have been the most "Western" of the socialist countries, the violent end to socialism in the state quickly made it one of the most "Eastern" of the transition countries. Michael Kennedy writes:

Yugoslavia's nonalignment with the major power blocs of the world system, its integration into both world economies, and its "self-managing socialism" had been presented as clear alternatives as well as important comparisons to what Eastern or Western Europe had. And they were meaningful comparisons. In the 1960s and 1970s, and even through 1989, Yugoslavia was as "European" as any communist-led society, and in many ways, it arguably was better developed for "transition" than those now more frequently identified as East Central Europe. But with those wars, most of the lands of the former Yugoslavia became profoundly "othered" (Kennedy 2002: 231).

I seek to address these concerns in chapter five, in which I look at the intersection of ideologies of pedagogy—which I argue are similar to those seen in other post-socialist countries—with practices of language correction. I suggest this is a good place to look for overlap with concerns that have been of interest to scholars of post-socialism more broadly because, as Laada Bilaniuk points out in her study of Ukrainian language practices that blurred boundaries between so-called standard languages, concerns about language correctness may be heightened in times of rapid



social change when the legitimacy of political regimes or the “taken-for-grantedness” of moral systems is exposed.

Bilaniuk writes: “I argue that the current preoccupation with linguistic correction evident in Ukraine is similar to the situation at the inception of the USSR: in both cases, abrupt social change led to heightened anxiety about the symbolic markers of authenticity, culturedness, and social legitimacy” (2005: 11). While Bilaniuk acknowledges that language is always a site of struggle, she argues that perceived social instability makes those struggles more vivid and openly contested. Bilaniuk draws on Voloshinov to explain how social instability heightens awareness of differing ideologies and stances, preventing the imposition of a monolingual norm or uniaccental sign.

While there are clear parallels between the situation Bilaniuk analyzes and my research, one difference is key. For Bilaniuk’s interlocutors, hybridity in language was a problem that threatened ideas about culturedness, nationhood, and purity. But for many of my interlocutors, it was purity that was a problem, as hyperstandardized forms were perceived as threatening the nation.

By incorporating concepts such as legitimacy that have been of great interest to post-socialist scholars (Hann 2002, Humphrey 2002, Verdery and Burawoy 1999, Yurchak 2005), my research seeks to move beyond some of the narrower frames post-conflict studies have imposed on education in Bosnia. However, I aim to contribute to this literature by analyzing a case in which ideas of what makes a linguistic form legitimate may differ significantly from those in areas where the nation is imagined in more homogenous terms.

## **Summary of Following Chapters: Roadmap for Readers**

In what follows, I seek to provide a snapshot of what schooling was like in Bosnia in 2006-2007. I suggest that language in classrooms in Bosnia was significantly different than language outside of classrooms.<sup>21</sup> However, unlike traditional depictions in which schools are sites of homogenization, standardization, and strict regulation of language, I argue instead that teachers in Bosnia were engaged in efforts to make fuzzy the sociolinguistic borders that politicians and media were erecting outside the classroom.

In my second chapter, I aim to provide necessary historical and social contextualization. I discuss the history of language standardization efforts in South East Europe with an emphasis on the distinctive development of language standards in Bosnia as well as pan-Slavic Serbian and Croatian standardization efforts. I will detail how language became increasingly politicized in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s and how Serbo-Croatian came under attack from Croatian, Serbian, and eventually Bosnian linguists, resulting in the establishment of separate standards in the early 1990s. In this chapter I also discuss various historical influences that shaped discourses about Bosnia being a crossroads—a place between East and West, Communism and Capitalism, Islam and Christianity—and led to one imagining of what it means to be Bosnian as a syncretic and pluralistic sort of identity.

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<sup>21</sup> This research did not systematically address the large question of what “language outside classrooms” looked like. I do not mean to imply that language outside classrooms was somehow homogenous or unified. However, in making the claim that language in classrooms differed significantly from language outside classrooms, I draw on my daily experiences and conversations with friends, neighbors, shopkeepers, and scholars to suggest that in classrooms, different language forms and attitudes were highlighted.

My third chapter explores the role of experts in the standardization of Bosnian and discusses several visible debates among experts in the popular media as well as ways in which these debates were interpreted by my interlocutors or refracted on Internet forums. I argue that while language is constructed as a domain in need of expert intervention, experts are popularly perceived as having failed to manage language appropriately. Jokes and satirical sketches circulate that poke fun at the idea that linguistic difference as codified in standard norms is significant. Yet at the same time, discourses about linguistic chaos are common. This chapter is intended to describe the more general linguistic landscape in which debates and discussions about language in classrooms occur.

Chapter four lays out the history of schooling in Bosnia with an emphasis on how debates over the proper or desired relationship between school and state have recurred in the region since the Austro-Hungarian era. I will trace how the relationship between school and state has been constructed by policy makers in the moment and dissected by scholars, often years later. Though this story is often told as one in which schools failed to provide the ideological underpinnings for the state to succeed, I argue that such a view relies on normative notions of what a state (or nation-state) should look like. That is, scholars who have argued that schools in Yugoslavia failed to provide an ideological basis for citizens to imagine themselves as Yugoslav had narrowly defined ideas of what a Yugoslav state should look like.

In chapter five, I focus on ways in which language in the classroom differs significantly from language outside of it. I have identified four such ways: which linguistic features are emphasized, which linguistic functions are emphasized, where

authority is placed, and what linguistic difference is presumed to mean. This chapter focuses on how linguistic difference indexes a wide variety of social differences, not merely the ethnic ones that have become so prominent in outside discussions of language and education. I focus on practices of correction to show how teachers construct a particular regime of language in the classroom.

While my fifth chapter focuses on how linguistic order is constructed in classroom, in chapter six, I turn to a discussion of how boundaries between standard language varieties are blurred by teachers in classroom practice. I focus on how teachers shift sites of significant difference, redefine the meaning of lexical or phonological features, and employ deictic shifters to de-emphasize controversial linguistic difference and create a “shareable” linguistic community in the classroom.

My conclusion suggests some ethnographic cases that might provide useful comparisons to the Bosnian case and also suggests how some of the conclusions of this dissertation may be useful to policymakers in the region.

## **Chapter Two: State Structures and Language Policy: Persistent Questions and Diverse Solutions**

Many of the debates that structure Bosnian language politics today are not new but instead echo debates in previous generation or have their roots in policies of previous state formations. Ongoing questions about the nature of the Bosnian nation, the distinctiveness of its language, and the meaning of language variation in a multiethnic state were major policy issues for the Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav states and continue to dominate public debate in the post-war Bosnian state.

In effect, the questions that hampered Austro-Hungarian administrators are the same ones that continue to structure linguistic debates today: Are the dialects spoken in Bosnia one language or many? Is there a Bosnian nation with its own language? Is Bosnian linguistic practice better characterized by tropes of free choice or national specificity? What, in essence, is the meaning of variation?

Despite support from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian authorities, Bosnia lacked the institutional scaffolding for its mother tongue in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that developed in independent Serbia and more highly westernized Croatia. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both Yugoslav states viewed the official language Serbo-Croatian through a binary lens that considered it to be made up of two main dialects—a Serbian variant and a Croatian variant. During both Yugoslav states, Bosnian did not exist as a

recognized linguistic variety or even as a distinct region contributing to Serbo-Croatian. Many Yugoslav formulations in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, represented Bosnian as a blank linguistic space in which Serbian and Croatian linguistic patterns mixed and neutralized.<sup>22</sup>

Thus when Bosnian was declared to be an official language of Bosnia in 1992, many Serb and Croat linguists, including some living and working Bosnian, labeled Bosnian (referred to as *Bosniak*<sup>23</sup> by many Serbs and Croats) as a “new” language, an “invented” language, and one that lacked a distinctive historical tradition.

Such discussions were not new in the 1990s. As language and culture became objects of political debate in the late 1960s in Yugoslavia, similar disputes arose, to which Bosnian linguists responded in calculated ways. While advancing the idea of a distinct Bosnian idiom with historical roots was ideologically appealing to some *Bosniak* nationalists, language policy at the time was driven by pragmatic concerns, namely the fact that the potential for linguistic separatism posed greater practical problems in Bosnia than in either Croatia or Serbia (Baotić 2005). Bosnia’s demographic mixing made it a sort of Yugoslavia writ-small in which no one group could claim their language was the majority. For this reason, many Bosnian linguists supported the unity of Serbo-Croatian until its dissolution was all but inevitable.

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<sup>22</sup> When I began studying Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian at the University of Michigan in 2005, my instructor who was from Serbia and had grown up during the Yugoslav era told the class she would point out differences between Serbian and Croatian to us. When I mentioned I was interested in learning Bosnian phrases and characteristics, she told me Bosnian didn’t have any specific linguistic markers but was a mix of Serbian and Croatian.

<sup>23</sup> While *Bosniak* as an ethnic term was accepted by some of my interlocutors, nearly all Bosnian Muslims I spoke to firmly rejected the term *Bosniak* for their language, arguing that it denied them equal linguistic rights. By contrast, some Bosnian Serbs and Croats argued that Bosnian was not appropriate for the language because it implied a territorial referent that suggested it was the language of all inhabitants of Bosnia, not just Muslims. Because the term was offensive to many of my interlocutors, I avoid the use of the term *Bosniak* to refer to the Bosnian standard language.

In response to claims that Bosnia lacked a distinct linguistic identity—that it had no autochthonous linguistic characteristics or was a space where East and West met and were neutralized—Bosnian linguists, especially in later years, fell into two different camps. Official language policy in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBiH) during late socialism emphasized free choice among Serbian and Croatian variants in Bosnia as well as the use of lexical doublets (or synonyms that were strongly marked as belonging to one variant or another),<sup>24</sup> and a group of linguists in Bosnia today argues that this tradition of choice and pluralism continues to characterize Bosnian linguistic practice. While this was the dominant school of thought during late socialism, as the political climate tended toward separatism and nationally based politics in the 1990s, a second group of scholars came to prominence. These scholars, who have been at the forefront of standardization efforts since the 1990s, argue that the distinctiveness of the Bosnian language comes from the influence of Turkish and Arabic on both the lexical and phonological planes of language.

Those who advocate for a Bosnian language standard defined primarily by lexical items and linguistic features that index Bosnia's Eastern or Islamic heritage are, by extension, believed by many South Slavs to be advocating a Bosnian state by and for Bosniaks. By contrast, those who advocate a Bosnian standard showing more continuity with Serbo-Croatian norms are often aligned with a perception of the Bosnian state that seeks to continue the multicultural tradition cemented,

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<sup>24</sup> Yugoslav language policy with respect to lexical doublets is discussed in more detail in chapter six. In general, in cases in which there exists both a Serbian and Croatian variant for a lexical item, language policy in the Socialist Federal Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina allowed both forms in official use.

ideologically at least, during the Yugoslav era. Based as they are on Herderian notions as well as pan-European linkages between nations and states, arguments about the linguistic boundaries of the Bosnian language are also arguments about the nature of the Bosnian nation and state.

This chapter explores how historical debates about language in Bosnia intersect with and influence both past and present debates about the Bosnian nation and the Bosnian state. I trace the evolution of some of the most persistent questions about language in Bosnia, paying particular attention to how the different state structures have attempted to solve those questions. I begin with a brief summary of the major issues in Bosnia today before turning to a discussion of their historical evolution.

### **What Is Bosnian? Two Dominant Perspectives**

There are two main groups of linguists involved in standardization debates in Bosnia today: those who argue Bosnian is defined by its Eastern influences and those who support a standard that shows more continuity with the Yugoslav-era tradition of allowing lexical doublets and free choice among them. The first group is arguably the more influential group both in terms of public visibility and publication of normative manuals. This group is best represented by Senahid Halilović and Dževad Jahić, both professors at the University of Sarajevo, whose work will be discussed in more detail in chapter three. These linguists, who are more prescriptive in their orientation, have emphasized the distinctiveness of Bosnian from Serbian and Croatian as well as the



influence of Islam and the Ottoman occupation on the Bosnian phonology and lexicon.

Halilović is the author of the Bosnian *pravopis* (or orthography) currently in use in many schools across the Federation, and he and Jahić co-authored the *Grammar of the Bosnian Language* with a third colleague, Ismail Palić. Halilović was also one of several authors involved in the 2007 publication of a Bosnian dictionary, the first such general purpose<sup>25</sup> dictionary published for the Bosnian language.

Jahić has published a trilogy of books on the Bosnian language, including a dictionary of orientalisms<sup>26</sup> and a book of 100 questions and 100 answers narrating the history of the Bosnian language dating back to the early middle ages. In addition to a number of scholarly publications, Jahić has also published a series of books called *Moj bosanski* (My Bosnian) for elementary school children, again focusing on Islamic and Turkish influences in Bosnian. Because of their active efforts to publish normative manuals and their involvement in producing textbooks and handbooks for schools,<sup>27</sup> these linguists have become associated with standardization as both a political and linguistic project.

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<sup>25</sup> As mentioned below, a handful of authors, including Jahić and Alija Isaković had published dictionaries focusing on literary language and words of foreign origin used in Bosnian.

<sup>26</sup> Orientalisms, or *orijentalizmi*, is a wide-spread term used by both Bosnian language scholars and laypersons to describe words borrowed from Turkish, Arabic, or Persian, generally. *Turcizmi* or Turkisms is also used for Turkish borrowings—the most common category. These words vary in degree of markedness—while some are part of everyday speech in all three standard varieties, others are highly marked as archaic or regional and reportedly not widely understood.

<sup>27</sup> The Federal Ministry of Education has never approved one *pravopis* or another for use in schools across the Federation. This power belongs to the 10 cantons. For this reason, Halilović's *pravopis* is the official *pravopis* for schools in some Bosnian municipalities and not in others. It is widely used even where not officially recognized across the Bosnian schools in the federation. I saw one other *pravopis* in use in classrooms, *Bosanski jezik: jezičko-pravopisni priručnik za učenike osnovnih i srednjih skola* (Bosnian Language: Linguistic-Orthographic Handbook for Students of Elementary and Secondary Schools) by Refik Bulić. In his introduction, Bulić states that he follows Halilović's *pravopis* and grammar.

The second group is less interventionist in its approach to Bosnian and advocates greater continuity with Yugoslav-era language policies and linguistic norms. These authors are arguably less unified than the previous group, and they present diverse critiques of the Bosnian standard as it has evolved from a variety of perspectives and institutional positions. While these linguists generally support the recognition of Bosnian as a language, they emphasize a descriptive approach to linguistic norms, criticizing the linguists above primarily in cases where standard norms do not match accepted usage.

More specifically, many, including well-known linguists like Josip Baotić and Ibrahim Ćedić, emphasize continuity with the Yugoslav-era norms of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian standard language expression, as it came to be known in the 1970s (*bosankso-hercegovački standardni jezički izraz*), including the norming of lexical doublets and respecting the principals of tolerance and free choice. Regional rather than national criteria are emphasized, as during the Yugoslav era, and, in conjunction with this orientation, Islamic influences are downplayed.

Emphasizing different linguistic forms implies different social boundaries for the Bosnian speech community, and issue that is also at stake in debates about the language's name. Because Bosnian (*bosanski*) could refer to either the ethnic group Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) or to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and its citizens, some critics of the term argue *bosanski* implies that all residents of BiH speak this language—something disputed by some Serbs and Croats living within as well as outside of Bosnia, who claim they speak Serbian or Croatian. Instead, they argue the correct name for the language is *bošnjački*—a word that refers only to

Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia.<sup>28</sup> Opponents of this view argue that the historical evidence supports the use of the name Bosnian language. They also argue that on the grounds of parity with Serbian and Croatian that the language of Bosnians should be labeled Bosnian. All the authors mentioned above support the recognition of the name *bosanski jezik* (Bosnian language) as opposed to *bošnjački jezik* (Bosniak language) as being both historically more correct and politically more desirable.

While Serbian and Croatian are uncritically accepted to be the state languages of Serbia and Croatia, respectively, as well as of the Serb and Croat peoples, Bosnian has failed to achieve this status. The multiethnic nature of Bosnia—both as a socialist republic and as an independent state—is one reason for this. Another is the contested national status of the Bosnian Muslims themselves. While Serbs and Croats were recognized as distinct nations by the Austro-Hungarians and Yugoslav authorities, it wasn't until 1969 that Yugoslav leaders recognized Bosnian Muslims as a nation rather than as a religious or ethnic community (Friedman 1996: 159).<sup>29</sup>

### **Who Are the Bosnian Muslims?**

The disputed nature of the Bosnian nation turns on various interpretations of just who the Bosnian Muslims are and how there came to be a Muslim population

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<sup>28</sup> The choice of Bosniak or Bosnian to refer to the language can make quite a political statement. Once, when visiting a school in the Serb Republic with a Bosniak friend of mine, she introduced herself to a group of Bosnian Serb teachers as “*profesorica bosanskog jezika*” (professor of the Bosnian language). One of the teachers interrupted her to say “You don't teach Bosnian, you teach Bos-ni-AK. AK.” A brief argument ensued and both women were clearly upset.

<sup>29</sup> In Yugoslavia, a distinction was made between *narod* and *narodnost*, similar to Russian. *Narod* means nation and *narodnost* means nationality. While *narod* in Yugoslavia was reserved for nations with their own republics, *narodnost* was used for national groups like Hungarians who lived in large numbers in certain areas of Yugoslavia. A final category, *etnički manjine* or ethnic minorities, was used for groups of smaller numbers such as Jews or Roma. Until 1969, Bosnian Muslims were not officially included in any of these categories.

living in Europe. These debates sometimes question the authenticity of Bosnian conversions to Islam to argue that Bosnians are “really just” converted Serbs or Croats. In response, Bosniak nationalists often draw on the medieval Bosnian Church to trace their roots back to pre-Islamic times and provide a sense of national continuity for Bosnian Muslims.

Scholars generally agree that Slavs began to arrive in the Balkan peninsula in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century. These Slavic tribes were ethnically undifferentiated but shortly after their arrival, tribes known as the Croats and Serbs (believed to be Iranian) arrived and, though thoroughly assimilated by the Slavs, gave their names to the tribes living in what is roughly present day Croatia and Serbia (Donia and Fine 1994: 14).

The Croatian tribes lived along the Adriatic and were subject to Venetian colonial projects and Catholicizing missions from Rome, while the Serb tribes settled to the East in the area known today as the Sandžak, and encountered Orthodox missionaries from Constantinople (Judah 1997: 8). Bosnia was situated between the two, and due to its relatively greater distance from these religious centers and mountainous topography that made travel difficult, had less frequent and sustained interactions with Christian missionaries (see figure 2-1).



Figure 2-1 Bosnia and Surrounding States, reprinted from Tom Gjelten (1995) *Sarajevo Daily: A City and Its Newspaper Under Siege*. New York: Harper Collins.

The historian Ivo Banac suggests that early on, a distinct Bosnian identity was present:

There is no question that the original Bosnia was on the periphery of Serbia and Croatia and yet withstood any efforts those states may have made to impose their state traditions. Indeed, although the Serbs and Croats participated in Bosnia's earliest national integrations and continued to do so in the modern period, the growth of Bosnia's pronounced regional character may derive from the strong presence of the undifferentiated Slavs from the first migration (Banac 1984: 39).

Some believe that this distinct Bosnian identity was encapsulated in the Bosnian Church, a short-lived medieval institution whose legacy has been the subject of much debate.

In one view, the Bosnian Church was a heretical, Bogomil<sup>30</sup> sect that had broken from the Catholic Church hierarchy to form its own church. This view is attractive to Bosnian nationalists (and was embraced by Austro-Hungarian administrators for similar reasons) who want to view today's Bosnian Muslims as the direct descendents of dualist Bogomils who later converted to Islam, thus completely separating Bosnian religious practices from Serb and Croat church hierarchies and providing a longer heritage for today's Bosnian Muslims.<sup>31</sup>

The historian John Fine, in his book *The Bosnian Church: Towards a New Interpretation* (1975) advances a different view of the Bosnian Church. Fine argues that due to Bosnia's mountainous geography and isolated villages, peasants lacked a cohesive theological worldview and instead saw religion as a syncretic set of world-oriented practices. Because the terrain made travel difficult, church hierarchy was loose, and many villages lacked properly trained priests to instruct the villagers in correct religious rites.

Instead of arguing that the Bosnian Church possessed its own theology, Fine posits a gradual drifting of religious practice in Bosnia that may have been labeled as heretical or schismatic by Catholic church authorities but was instead only local variation on practice due to lack of religious instruction. According to Fine, Bosnia's mountains and geographic location further from religious centers (as opposed to

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<sup>30</sup> Bogomils were argued to be heretical because they rejected Catholic and Orthodox church teachings and instead embraced a dualist view of the world as locked in a battle between good and evil. Bogomilism in Bosnia is believed to have spread there from Bulgaria.

<sup>31</sup> The distinctive *stećci* or tombstones from this era are believed by many present-day Bosnians and some scholars to be a relic of the Bosnian Church, although the medieval scholar John Fine argues the evidence shows medieval Bosnians of all faiths built them, and they are a regional, not national, relic.

Zagreb, Dubrovnik, or Belgrade, for example) amplified this process of theoretical drift, presumably present in all peasant societies, in Bosnia.

Thus when the Ottoman invasion occurred, Bosnian peasants lacked a strongly institutionalized religion—a fact Fine suggests was equally true of Bosnian Church members and Orthodox and Catholic Bosnians—and were susceptible both to the highly organized religion of a conquering empire and to the pragmatic benefits that came with conversion. In fact, Fine argues that conversion is a misnomer for what actually occurred when Bosnian peasants accepted the Islamic faith:

Thus we cannot really say that the peasants were converted to Christianity at a given time and that later some of them were converted to Islam. For *conversion requires a significant change both in ideas held and in ways of thinking*. And what is impressive about the Bosnian peasants is that, in accepting a new faith, they accepted a few obvious and formal new practices, but basically continued to live and believe as they always had (1975: 22, emphasis mine).

Fine claims there is nothing special about the ancestry of today's Bosnian Muslims—just as adherents of the Bosnian Church converted to Islam, so did Catholic and Orthodox Bosnians:

Throughout this study we have stressed that the Bosnian Church exerted relatively little influence on political developments or upon society. And as an inefficient religious organization existing in the middle of a peasant society quite indifferent to religious matters, its religious and moral influence was also small. Thus the legacy of the Bosnian Church is nil. And though frequently historians have used the Bosnian Church to explain the Islamization of Bosnia, it is more accurate to explain that phenomenon by the absence of strong Catholic, Orthodox or even Bosnian Church organizations (1975: 387).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Fine's argument that the legacy of the Bosnian Church is nil is surely too strong. The Bosnian poet Mak Dizdar is one example of a Bosnian who wrote to legitimate Bosnian identity as grounded in a medieval state and religious tradition in which the Bosnian dualist Bogomils were a symbol of resistance and purity to warring forces of Catholicism and Orthodoxy and ultimately good and evil. Dizdar's view minimizes the role of religious difference in national identity and instead focuses on land and mythology. As one author comments on the themes: "The imagining of Bosnian identity is incomplete without a fusion of language, history and mythology. All three are intricately woven into

Fine suggests that the Bosnian Church died out quickly when the Ottoman Empire conquered Bosnia. Though Fine rejects the traditional notion that conversion to Islam under the Ottomans was a large-scale phenomenon confined to Bosnian Church members, there is no doubt that the social and religious changes brought by the Ottomans were significant. Among other things, these changes are credited with creating the multi-ethnic demographic patchwork that since then has been considered a defining of the Bosnian state.

### **Migrations, States, and Demographic Changes**

The multi-ethnic nature of Bosnia is often blamed for the wars that occurred there in the 1990s as well as the difficult political problems in the post-war state. A complex series of political changes and migrations during the Ottoman era are one of the primary reasons Bosnia today is so much more ethnically mixed than its neighbors, and here I will briefly outline those key population movements.

While each of the present-day states of Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoyed a sort-of golden era in the middle ages, epitomized for each by a powerful kingdom,<sup>33</sup> various waves of migrations and battles created a series of kingdoms and state structures that overlapped in territory and sometimes in time. These early kingdoms would live on in historical consciousness, and, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and

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the construction of Bosnian national culture, thereby rendering confessional differences as entrenched in official national ideologies insubstantial” (Buturović in Shatzmiller 2002: 42). In this way, even if the legacy of the Bosnian Church exists only in national mythology, its presence is still felt.

<sup>33</sup> Croatian nationalist mythologies recall the reign of King Tomislav (910-928), Serbs remember King Stefan Nemanja (in the 1160s. The 200 year dynasty he founded ended with death of Dušan in 1355), and Bosnians speak of Ban Tvrtko I (1353-1391).



20<sup>th</sup> century, their memories were vulnerable to exploitation by nationalist ideologues as representing the allegedly natural borders of the modern-day states.

Such memories had to suffice for inhabitants of the Balkans for centuries, as the Venetian, Ottoman, and Habsburg empires fought for control of Southeast Europe. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire advanced first into Serbia and then Bosnia with significant consequences for the region.

Many Serbs fled ahead of the advancing Ottoman army, and these population movements had significant demographic consequences. Besides coming to hold a powerful place in Serb collective memories signifying the oppression and destruction that much of Serb historiography associates with the Ottoman era, the movements created a number of border zones and religiously mixed areas.

Westward migrations following the Ottoman conquest of 1463 resulted in a significant Orthodox population in Herzegovina. Migrations north led to the establishment of the *krajina*, or military frontier between Croatia and Bosnia, in which Habsburg authorities allowed Orthodox refugees who settled on the border between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires religious freedom and certain other privileges in exchange for serving as a military buffer zone against advancing Turkish armies.



Source: Based on information from United Kingdom, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Yugoslavia, 2: History, Peoples, and Administration*, London, 1944, 20.

Figure 2-2: The Bosnian *Krajina* or Frontier

Within the Ottoman territories, the administrative system known as the millet system had significant impacts on demographics, social mobility, and the development of national consciousness. The millet system, in which local religious authorities maintained rights of taxation and other governmental privileges, permitted Orthodox communities to maintain a certain degree of autonomy. According to the journalist Tim Judah, it was the millet system that allowed the Serbian Orthodox Church, the backbone of the Serbian nation, to continue to function and keep Serb national identity alive during the nearly 500-year Ottoman occupation of Serbia. (Judah 1997, Lampe 1996).

While scholars stress the generally tolerant nature of Ottoman administration, there is no doubt that Muslims enjoyed advantages during this era such as lighter tax burdens, opportunities for political advancement, and greater property rights. A significant number of Bosnians converted to Islam over the course of the 500-year Ottoman era. Converting to Islam under the Ottoman Empire had both financial and practical benefits for Bosnians, who maintained their rights to own land and avoided having to pay church taxes among other benefits.<sup>34</sup>

Scholarly accounts stress that these conversions were gradual and voluntary—not en masse or forced as some depictions would have it. Fine also argues that conversion occurred in all directions:

The most noticeable religious change in Bosnia was from Christianity to Islam. But on closer examination we find that Bosnian was marked by religious change in general. If we look at Bosnian and Herzegovina in about 1550, we see not only many Muslim but also many Orthodox, and the Orthodox as found all across Bosnia and in many places where they were not found earlier ... The spread of the Orthodox was partly from the migrations noted, but the Orthodox also gained from large numbers of conversions of Bosnian Church members and Catholics to Orthodoxy, for Orthodoxy was the Christian group favored by the Ottomans (Donia and Fine 1994: 38).

However, the question of why conversions to Islam occurred en masse in Bosnia and not in other areas under the Ottoman Empire such as Serbia has been a source of controversy in the region, particularly for those who wish to question the authenticity of the Bosnian Muslim nation or their claim to the Bosnian land. While Fine argues the higher conversion rate in Bosnia was due primarily to Bosnia's relative isolation from Christian church hierarchies, some Serb and Croat nationalist

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<sup>34</sup> Fine argues that the theory that Bosnians converted to *maintain* their land is misguided because records show no continuity between pre-Ottoman elites and the Ottoman aristocracy. Yet Muslims convents in Ottoman Bosnian undeniably had greater opportunities for wealth and privilege.

discourses claim Bosnian Muslims were converted Serbs or Croats who had forsaken their true identity out of opportunistic motives or Ottoman pressure, thereby denying any distinct cultural or historical traditions to Bosnia—including literary and linguistic—and simultaneously staking claims to large portions of Bosnia’s territory.

Although the Ottoman era was one of large-scale social and religious change, it was not an era of national conflict. A series of peasant rebellions—growing more frequent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—can be attributed to class differences, as the increasingly discontented peasants rebelled against a small group of privileged landowners (Donia and Fine 1994: 70).

Thus on the eve of the Austro-Hungarian era, Bosnia was characterized by growing social inequality, looming disputes about land ownership, and an ethnically mixed population. Western European ideologies of nations were also starting to influence young people in the South Slavic states, and Serbian nationalism in particular was perceived by European diplomats and local administrators as a growing threat to the stability of the region.

### **Questions of Hybridity and Purism**

The former Yugoslavia, like many other post-Socialist states, has long been viewed as both a cultural and geographic crossroads. Strategically located at the intersection of various empires at various points in history, Yugoslavia, and Bosnian Muslims in particular, have often been discursively located at the intersections of various binary sets such as: East/West, Communist/Capitalist, Orthodox/Catholic and Christian/Muslim, to name a few.

While some observers have taken this purported hybridity to be an indication of deep cultural cleavages or civilizational fault lines (e.g. Kaplan 1993, Huntington 1998), others have considered it to be a source of a distinctive culture of tolerance and coexistence (see Donia and Fine 1994, Sells 1996).

In a similar way, some pundits viewed the failure of Yugoslavia as the inevitable collapse of an artificial and unstable state, but for others it was a tragic cooptation by nationalists of a state with a multiethnic composition:

It is only the fanaticism of nationalists that insists that states must be based on ethnicity and be nation-states and that pluralism is artificial and unworkable ... But Bosnia—for centuries a pluralistic society—has shown over these centuries that pluralism can successfully exist even in a Balkan context (Donia and Fine 1994: 8-9).

However, as a practical matter, on-the-ground demographic mixing—mostly religious difference that grew into national differences over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Donia and Fine 1994)—has perplexed various governing states in Bosnia. The Austro-Hungarian administration, the socialist Yugoslav state, and the post-war Bosnian state all tried to develop supranational or civic loyalties that would bring together members of different religious communities. All three of these efforts are typically considered failures by either the historical record or modern-day observers.

While the failure of Austro-Hungarian *bošnjastvo* is generally accepted to be absolute, there is much debate among scholars and local alike as to the extent to which a Yugoslav identity took hold among citizens of the socialist state. Debate about statistics such as self-identification on censuses, rising numbers of mixed marriages in urban areas in the 1960s and 1970s (Halpern and Kideckel 2000, Botev

2000), or the meaning of various literary works (Wachtel 1997, Wachtel 1998) reveals the extent to which not only the number of people who may have identified with a Yugoslav identity but even the meaning of that identity itself is contested today.

Today, while some observers suggest electoral results and public opinion surveys indicate Bosnia is an artificial political creation held together only by the will of the international community (Hayden 2000, Bose 2002, Chandler 2000), others point to examples of coexistence and rebuilding to suggest that a Bosnian identity still exists (Donia 2006, Donia and Fine 1994).

However, as Ballinger points out, this tendency to read Bosnian or Yugoslav identity as all or nothing elides the complexities of identities in the region:

Rather than read political ideologies such as those promoting an autonomous Julian March [ethnically-mixed region in Istria] or Yugoslavism as the unrealized or failed *alternatives* to exclusive ethno-nationalist identifications, it proves more productive to consider how ideologies of intermixture nevertheless left in place narrower understandings of identity (2004: 48, emphasis in original).

More specifically, as Ballinger points out, discourses in Yugoslavia about hybridity and mixing often presumed the existence of pure ethnic groups:

Examining the dialogic relationship between purity and hybridity historically in the Julian March helps explain the seeming “Balkan Paradox”—the competition over the past two centuries between exclusive notions of *narod* (ethnic groups as equal to nation) and expansive, multinational structures and ideologies. Those who look at only one term in the purity-hybridity dialectic thus fail to understand, for example, why Istria (or Bosnia) has been home to both interethnic tolerance *and* ethnic unmixing (2004: 48).

The question of hybridity and purity in Bosnia revolves to a great extent around the Bosnian Muslims. While Serbs and Croats in the 1990s could both lay

claim to a purported motherland that—while not demographically unmixed—was ideologically pure, the greater demographic mixing in Bosnia as well as the contested national status and ethnic origins of the Bosnian Muslims made such claims more complicated for Bosnian nationalists.

In what follows, I explore the efforts of the Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav states to build a common Bosnian identity, paying special attention to how each state approached language policy.

### **The Austro-Hungarian Era and Kallay's *Bošnjastvo***

After a series of rebellions and uprisings that threatened to draw into question balances of power on the European continent, major changes occurred following the 1878 Congress of Berlin: the Ottoman Empire was defeated; Serbia was granted independence; and Bosnia became a territory under the administration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

When the Austro-Hungarian Empire took over administrative control of Bosnia in 1878, language was an immediate concern. The Austro-Hungarian approach to language politics can roughly be divided into two phases<sup>35</sup>—the era of Benjamin Kallay and the period after Kallay's death.

Kallay is a somewhat controversial figure in Bosnia. The Austrian bureaucrat became the prime administrator of Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1878 and is most well known for his policy of *bošnjastvo*—an attempt to create a secular, multi-confessional identity among Bosnians.

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<sup>35</sup> Šipka (2001) divides the era into four more nuanced phases. For my purposes here, the two longest phases—corresponding to Šipka's second and third—are important.

From the start, the Austro-Hungarian Empire feared that the spread of South Slav nationalism could threaten the stability of the empire. Although Croatian nationalists in the empire advanced various plans for a Greater Croatia or unified South Slav state—either within the auspices of the empire or as an independent state—it was the influence of neighboring Serbia, which had been a sovereign and modernizing state for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that was most threatening to Austria-Hungary.

Kallay's attempt to create a civic Bosnian identity should be understood in this light—although Bosnian nationalists today often point to his support for a distinct Bosnian language as evidence of the historical continuity of their idiom, Kallay's *bošnjastvo* was more of a project than a realized identity.

The 21 years of Kallay's regime (1882-1903) were marked by efforts to stabilize the Bosnian language—under that name—and form a unified Bosnian nation. Starting with the occupation of Bosnia by Austria-Hungary in 1878, language became an object of political intervention, as opposed to the Ottoman era in which language was rarely the subject of direct state policy.

In 1883, a Commission for Language was established by the government to resolve questions surrounding the *pravopis*. The impetus for founding the commission was the desire to produce school texts in Bosnia after texts imported from Croatia were judged to be offensive to the Jewish and Muslim populations in Bosnia (Šator 2004). The major issue facing the commission initially was whether to adopt a phonological orthography like the one proposed by the Serbian linguistic



reformer Vuk Karadžić or an etymological one like that proposed by the Croatian proponent of Illyrianism Ljudevit Gaj.

The commission, under the leadership of a Slovenian named Ljuboje Dlustuš, adopted a phonological orthography to be written in both Cyrillic and the Latin script, which were declared equal scripts in the region, and a series of texts were published according to the conclusions of that commission, including the 1890 *Gramatika bosanskoga jezika*, which was published as a reference book for secondary school students (but in post-Yugoslav Bosnia has also become an important symbol for the continuous existence of Bosnian outside of a Serbo-Croatian framework).

In his book detailing language policy during that era, the Bosnian linguist Muhamed Šator emphasizes the relative ease with which a reformed script and orthography were accepted in Bosnia compared to both Serbia and Croatia, where church-based Slaveno-Serbian and the strong presence of *kajkavski* and *čakavski* respectively, created pockets of resistance to adopting Karadžić's neo-štokavian<sup>36</sup> as the dialect base for a common standard. Thus, for Šator, Bosnia played a leading role in the development of a common standard idiom—a fact he argues was later erased from the historical record when Croatia and Serbia came to be seen as the centers of standardization.

While some authors have judged Kallay's contributions to be primarily politically motivated—and his contributions to language to be tainted because his goals were in service of the Austro-Hungarian empire (Jahić 2000)—for Šator, increased attention toward language norms during the Austro-Hungarian era was a natural outgrowth of that state's civilizing and modernizing tendencies and the pan-

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix A for a discussion of the linguistic differences among these various dialects.

European obsession at the time with language norms, linguistic science, and language-nation relationships.

Šator insists the increasing involvement of Kallay's regime in language politics was not about differentiation but about urbanization:

The *Grammar* shows that Kallay didn't want to create a distinct Bosnian language that would be different from Serbian and Croatian. In that chaotic linguistic space in which divergent norms and distinct linguistic conceptions had always ruled, the *Grammar of the Bosnian Language* gave an undisputed huge contribution to the stabilization and unification in the South Slavic space of Vuk's principles. It's undoubted that that was the goal of Kallay and the Austro-Hungarian language policy which united the South Slavic space while distancing it from Russia in the wider political conceptions of the time's most powerful European empire (2004: 328).

When Kallay died in 1903, his *bošnjastvo* died with him. His successor, Istrian von Burian, presided over a general liberalization of cultural policy—largely a result of shifting Austro-Hungarian policies in the region in response to the failure of Kallay's repressive regime to stem nationalist sentiments or foster a secular Bosnian identity. Even Muslims in the later years of Kallay's regime joined Serb protests for greater cultural autonomy (Okey 1986). Robert Donia writes:

By 1901 Kallay had lost his sustained struggle to repress the autonomy movements and the province-wide political organizations they spawned. Along with the failure of his Bosnian nationality project in prior decades, the durability of the autonomy movements exposed the futility of Kallay's archaic neo-absolutism. His blend of limited democracy, elite cultivation, strict controls, and close surveillance proved insufficiently flexible to accommodate the dynamic changes that he himself had promoted in Sarajevo and Bosnia-Herzegovina (101).

In 1907, under pressure from Serb and Croat nationalists, the policy of referring to the local language as *bosanski jezik* was reversed in favor of *srpsko-*

*hrvatski*. In 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, resulting in a short-lived political crisis but paving the way for greater liberalization in the region as Austro-Hungarian leadership—at long last convinced of its sovereignty in the region—granted local demands for greater autonomy and a short period of constitutional rule even existed between 1910 and 1914.

While nationalist sentiments and dissatisfaction with Austro-Hungarian rule grew among youth movements and Bosnian Serb nationalists—eventually culminating in the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the outbreak of World War I—language standards stabilized in Bosnia during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Šator’s study indicates that language politics in Bosnia up until 1914 were not nationally polarized, but instead focused on stabilizing emerging language norms. However, the Yugoslav era would usher in substantial shifts in language policy.

### **Toward a United Yugoslavia: Tito’s Brotherhood and Unity**

Austro-Hungarian efforts to create a supranational Bosnian identity were abandoned after Kallay’s death and were not revived in the first Yugoslav state. Following World War I, The Tripartite Kingdom, or Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was proclaimed on December 1, 1918 in Belgrade and was an outgrowth of the Yugoslav Committee and Corfu Declaration—an ambiguous partnership between the Serbian government that had gone into exile at the outbreak of World War I and pro-Yugoslav Croat and Slovene representatives. The tensions inherent in this state between Serb goals to create a greater Serbia and Croatian

desires for a less centralized confederation haunted it from its inception until it was dissolved by the Croat Ustaša state at the outbreak of World War II. Bosnian concerns were largely eclipsed in the first Yugoslav state by tensions between Serbs and Croats. Not politically powerful enough by themselves, the Muslim political parties were involved in various coalitions but in many ways played a minor role in policy and politics during the first Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav kingdom did not develop an explicit language policy. The only formal act the state made with respect to language was a 1918 law declaring the name of the language to be Serbian or Croatian and the Latin and Cyrillic scripts to be equal (Šipka 2001: 30).

If the first Yugoslav state did not devote much effort to developing a supranational Yugoslav identity, the second Yugoslav state focused on that from the beginning. Following the brutal ethnic cleansings of WWII and conflicts between Partisan, Četnik, and Ustaša soldiers, Tito's slogan "brotherhood and unity" reflected an attempt to erase (rather than confront) brutal memories of ethnic violence. As described by ethnographer Lynn Maners, "It was during the Tito period that a conscious program of socialist Yugoslavism was initiated with the intent of creating a new Yugoslav man and woman" (1995: 76).

Wachtel (1998) argues that it was the cultural dismantling of the Yugoslav state in the 1960s and 1970s that led to the eventual political collapse, rather than the other way around. Yet he argues that this cultural collapse was not inevitable, but a result of contradictory national policies:

Examined closely, however, “brotherhood and unity” was no less problematic a formula than the Trinitarian one it superseded.<sup>37</sup> After all, unless brotherhood and unity are understood to refer to separate things, the slogan is an oxymoron. Unity, if it could be achieved, would result in full synthesis, whereas brotherhood, although it certainly emphasizes closeness, implies difference and potential disagreements of all kinds (1998: 132).

While Tito’s early visions of Yugoslavism sought to downplay national differences in favor a supranational Yugoslav identity, this policy weakened over the years as decentralization increased and more power was transferred to the six republics. During this era, Yugoslav was listed as an ethnic category on censuses and it attracted people who chose not to identify with other ethnic categories. Such identification was reportedly higher in Bosnia than in other republics, and peaked in cities such as Sarajevo with mixed demographics and higher rates of inter-ethnic marriage (Botev 2000, Friedman 1996). Yet structural tensions between richer and poorer republics and the overall shallowness of Yugoslav identity across the state prevented the sort of synthesis of identity Tito initially envisioned.

The status of the Bosnian Muslims in the first and second Yugoslavia came to be perceived as subordinate in later years by some Bosnian nationalists and sympathetic outside observers, citing as evidence the fact that they were not considered to be a distinct national group until 1969. They were not mentioned as one of the constituent peoples of the first Yugoslav kingdom and it was not until late socialism that the second Yugoslavia recognized Bosnian Muslims as a national group.

This lack of recognition on the national level was paralleled by a lack of recognition on the linguistic level. While some of my interlocutors felt this lack of

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<sup>37</sup> This refers to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

recognition was due to the passivity of Bosnian intellectuals during this period, others blamed more deliberate schemes by Serb and Croat intellectuals to deny Bosnian distinctiveness. It is certainly the case that post-World War II Bosnia lacked the developed academic and intellectual institutions that might have fostered an active language policy in the 1940s and 1950s. Whatever the reason for the late entry of Bosnian linguists into Yugoslav language policy, many of my interlocutors in Bosnia in 2007 felt Bosnian was still struggling to play catch-up with respect to Serbian and Croatian.

### **Language During the Two Yugoslav States**

Despite the failure of a supranational Yugoslav identity to take hold throughout the multinational state, language policy in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBiH) in the 1960s and 1970s reflected many of the goals of the Yugoslav idea.

The Bosnian linguist Milan Šipka suggests that while many studies of 20<sup>th</sup> century language politics in Yugoslavia have used periodizations anchored in the rise and fall of new states, a more apt periodization might be to compare language politics between 1918-1970 with those from 1970 onward. Šipka argues that between 1918 and 1970, language politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina were passive, allowing policy to be dictated by an external government, while starting in 1970 with the Symposium on Linguistic Tolerance, Bosnian linguists again took a more active role in establishing language norms and policies.

Both Yugoslav states issued various declarations about language dealing with the repeatedly thorny issues of the language's name, script, and dialect. Šipka argues that such debates did not even take place in Bosnia during the first Yugoslav state:

No one from that region even participated in the work of the *Pravopis Commission* (1928-1929) ... because there were simply no linguists or linguistic centers in which they would work. ... In Bosnia and Herzegovina not only were there no universities, there weren't any higher education institutions at all (other than confessional schools), and the only scientific institution was the National Museum, established during the time of the Austro-Hungarian occupation (2005: 413).

Šipka refers to this era as the deaf era or *gluvo doba* (2005: 413), and the historian Robert Donia also depicts interwar Sarajevo as a "forgotten city" (2006: 130), demoted from its role as regional center in the Ottoman era to a city that clearly had second-class status in royal Yugoslavia and suffered from lack of economic investment on the part of the central government.

Following World War II, the first significant linguistic decision in the framework of the socialist Yugoslav state was the Novi Sad Agreement in December of 1954. Following a public poll and three days of discussion by linguists, cultural workers, and writers, a series of principles were agreed to, including:

1. The national language of the Serbs, Croats, and Montenegrins is one language that developed in two main centers, Belgrade and Zagreb, with two pronunciations, *ijekavski* and *ekavski*.
2. In official use, both constituent parts [Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian] must always be mentioned in the language's name.
3. Latin and Cyrillic are equal and it is the responsibility of schools to ensure students learn both equally.
4. Both *ijekavski* and *ekavski* are equal (Šipka 2001: 149-150)

The need for a common *pravopis*, dictionary, and set of terminology were also agreed to. The Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBiH) was

represented by only three participants at the conference (out of about 40 signatories) and all three were Bosnian Serbs (Šipka 2005: 423). Participation in the development of the common Yugoslav *pravopis* and dictionary in 1960 was similarly scarce. Despite limited participation by Bosnians in the drafting of these documents, Šipka reports that they were easily accepted in SRBiH because they were agreeable in a multi-national republic.

When debates about language politics did break into the open in the 1960s, they first did so outside of Bosnia. In 1967, a group of Croatian linguists published *Declaration of the Name and Position of the Croatian Language* by Matica *Hrvatska*—the most important cultural and scientific institution in Zagreb—calling for cultural and linguistic autonomy in Croatia, including the right of Croats to be educated in their mother tongue. In response, a group of members of the Society of Serbian Writers published a piece called *Suggestions to Think About*, which demanded that the Croatian republic include in its constitution a provision guaranteeing all Serbs (and Croats) would have access to education, government, news, and cultural organizations supporting their mother tongue—in essence countering the Croatian demand for linguistic autonomy with a demand for recognition of Serbian within Croatian borders.

Šipka writes:

This approach to national rights meant a change in national relations: instead of living one with another, as they had lived until then, sharing everything including a common language or linguistic expression, Serbians and Croats would live one next to the other, each with its own educational, cultural, and other institutions (426).



Bosnian linguists engaged in these debates on somewhat different terms. In contrast to Serb and Croat linguists, they denied the linkage of linguistic form with national identity, insisting there were no linguistic markers that could be attached to Bosnian Muslims. While they did argue for the recognition of a Bosnian idiom (*bosanskohercegovački standardnojezički izraz* or Bosnian-Herzegovinian standard language idiom), this linguistic variety was demarcated territorially, not nationally. Bosnian linguists made explicit note of the multiethnic character of SRBiH and the difficulty of suggesting or promulgating any nationally defined standard in that space.

While Tito's mandate of Brotherhood and Unity suggested that there was unity in difference across all of Yugoslavia, and therefore that linguistic variation should not imply the necessity for dissolution of Serbo-Croatian, the potential for polarization was felt on a much more practical level in Bosnia. Although the Croatian Declaration and Serbian response suggested that each national group should have the right to use its own language in school, administration, and public life, within Bosnia the heterogeneous and mixed nature of the cities and regions made such proposals difficult. How, for example, would the education system function if two (or three or four) distinct languages or varieties were declared to exist? In what language should news broadcasts be given? According to the linguist Josip Baotić, the SRBiH government and state institutions had neither the material nor the intellectual resources in place to deal with such a situation (Baotić 2005: 441).

Linguistic unity, as well as brotherhood and unity, were consciously recognized as necessary principals to Bosnia's existence and this at times seemingly pragmatic recognition was folded into ideologies that went beyond necessity to define

the core of Bosnia's identity as a blending of different linguistic and cultural influences.

Despite a reluctance on the part of many Bosnian linguists to promote polarization in language policy, the unmistakable variation present within Serbo-Croatian was hard to ignore. In a context of increasing Serbian and Croatian polarization, this variation raised urgent social and linguistic questions: Would linguistic choice necessarily lead to polarization and if so, must that polarization be along national lines? (Baotić 2005: 440). Further, in the current binary framework of Serbo-Croatian which recognized an Eastern and Western variant only, what linguistic forms characterized linguistic practice in Bosnia, what social identities did those forms correspond to, and were they equal in status to Serbian and Croatian variants?

A first attempt to answer these questions in Bosnia was developed in the 1970 Symposium on Linguistic Tolerance, whose participants—both linguists and education officials—published their conclusions in a 1970 document.

This document, dealing mostly with education issues, was concerned more with laying out a set of practical solutions to the increasing threat of linguistic polarization occurring in Croatia and Serbia than with an elaboration of linguistic theory. Participants in the Symposium published the following five conclusions:

1. The official name of the language of SRBiH has two parts: SerboCroatian-CroatoSerbian. Citizens may freely choose to use one of them.
2. The Cyrillic and Latin scripts were declared to be completely equal.
3. Schools will use the *ijekavski* pronunciation.
4. Schools will instruct students in all variants of technical or scientific terminology.

5. Teachers and students have free choice among lexical variants and orthographic or grammatical norms. The only restriction is that they may not be mixed in a single text. (Šipka 2001: 170-173).

Additionally, in their introduction to these conclusions, participants wrote the following:

The people of BiH and their culture do not agree with the direction of the literary language towards two-variant (or two-language) polarization nor with the forming of a third, Bosnian-Herzegovinian variant, because that would be against our linguistic reality and would prohibit the free and independent development of the literary language and limit the possibility of enriching our literary expression (in Šipka 2001: 171).

Because of the still strong political and social obstacles to linguistic dissolution, this document didn't seek recognition of a Bosnian variety, instead arguing that what made Bosnian linguistic practice unique was the influence of both Serbian and Croatian variants. According to the conclusions of the Symposium, suggesting that the Serbo-Croatian linguistic community was not unified went against reality of linguistic practice, in which Bosnians enjoyed the full richness of free choice among all existing variants.

The principal of linguistic tolerance and its corollary of free choice were thus established as the cornerstone of a nascent linguistic policy in SRBiH.<sup>38</sup> The following year, this policy was elaborated in a document titled "Literary Language and Literary-Linguistic Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina," a collaboration between party officials and linguists. This document—which was careful to state it applied only to SRBiH—again insisted on the linguistic unity of Serbo-Croatian, as well as principals of tolerance, free choice, and openness. However, unlike the Symposium,

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<sup>38</sup> See chapter six for a more detailed discussion of how SRBiH language policy played out in classrooms, including its impact on present-day linguistic practice in schools.

which categorically denied the possibility of a Bosnian variant, this document left the door open to a third when it stated that: “The nations of Bosnia and Herzegovina can in no case agree to two-variant or even two-language polarization on the territory of this Republic” (Šipka 2001:176, Baotić 2005: 448).

By not explicitly declaring themselves to be against a third variety, and because the reality of polarization between two varieties was appearing increasingly inevitable, this document implied that a third, Bosnian variety would have to be recognized to counter the recognition of Serbian and Croatian varieties. This third variety would be a territorially marked, not a nationally marked one.

Indeed, this document explicitly denied that there were any lexical, morphological or phonetic features that marked Muslim speech, and it linked variant polarization to national polarization, suggesting that if variant polarization were allowed in Bosnia, Muslims would find themselves forced to choose between speaking like their Croatian neighbors or their Serbian neighbors—in essence, it is implied, they would have to declare themselves either Serb or Croat. “And that is, again, one view of national assimilation (on a linguistic and cultural plane). Accepting the thesis that every nation MUST have its own special literary language directly negates the Muslim national specificity” (Šipka 2001:177).

However, these authors argue against understanding Bosnian linguistic practice as simply a mixing of Serbian and Croatian.

Literary expression in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be divided by variants because, and without specific examination, it is evident that it is specific, because it was developed in specific social and cultural conditions. ... The variant influence that is felt in linguistic reality in BiH in no way can be enough to claim that our literary language is “a mixed variant.” Some elements of literary language, marked as

variants in other places, are not variants for us (either emotionally or nationally marked). They are, again, communal expressions (which our citizens and culture workers, regardless of national belonging, use) expressions that only by their prevailing use in other places compare with Eastern and Western variants of our literary language (Šipka 176).

In essence, these authors are arguing that Bosnian linguistic practice is characterized by a different indexical system, that similarity of form does not imply similarity of content. Instead of adopting Serbian and Croatian forms as mere variants, these authors argue, they have taken on a new range of semantic and indexical meanings in Bosnian linguistic practice. This argument is at the heart of the syncretic view of Bosnian culture that believes a supranational or civic Bosnian identity was formed during the Yugoslav era.

As Baotić points out in his detailed history of the period between 1970-1990 (in Monnesland 2005), arguments at the time about linguistic unity or difference were based more on social facts than linguistic evidence:

Bosnian and Herzegovinian linguists were asked to provide scientific elaboration of all active questions and provide linguistic arguments for the positions given in the principals of the language policy. Up until that point, other approaches to standard language problems were not disqualified because they were linguistically unfounded, but rather because they were unacceptable for the social reality of Bosnia and Herzegovina” (455)

In the unavoidable face of linguistic variation across Yugoslavia, the major question remained whether Serbo-Croatian was one unified language or whether this unity was abstract and the language functioned as two or three or four languages with two or three or four sets of norms. While Bosnian language policy was officially in favor of the former view, insisting on the specificity of the Bosnian standard language expression made it difficult to avoid the question of particularity.

Baotić describes the dilemma facing BiH linguists at the time: “Those that were responsible for the theoretical elaboration [of the language policy] were faced with a complicated and difficult task—to affirm the equal and alike (*podjednako*) character of the standard language community *and* the specificities in them” (456 emphasis added). Calls for more research on characteristics of the Bosnian idiom resounded constantly in works from this era continuing through present day scholarly papers and media publications.

It is possible to characterize Bosnian language policy during socialism as in many ways reactive—reactive to the overt agitation on the Croatian side and the Serbian response, reactive to how linguistic movements outside SRBiH might impact linguistic practice and language attitudes in the republic, and reactive to attitudes by non-Bosnian linguists that characterized Bosnia as a blank linguistic space, as unfinished or inadequate when it came to literary expression (see Šipka 2001, Baotić 2005). According to Baotić, it is only when the inevitability of language dissolution became an unavoidable reality that Bosnian linguists began to explore the official promotion of a third variety as a sort of “necessary evil” (Baotić 2005: 457) designed above all to maintain a unified communicative space in the republic and across Yugoslavia.<sup>39</sup>

One of the early calls for recognition of a Bosnian variety was by the prominent writer Alija Isaković. Isaković, was a professor of literature at the University of Sarajevo and is best known for his *Dictionary of the Characteristic*

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<sup>39</sup> Throughout these debates communicative concerns are regularly mentioned as obstacles to language polarization. These communicative concerns appear to be more about pragmatic administrative issues such as schooling, government administration, or media rather than intelligibility. These pragmatic issues have indeed proven to be thorny in the independent state of Bosnia with its three official languages.

*Lexicon in the Bosnian Language* (1992),<sup>40</sup> a textual survey of Bosnian writers, poets, and national poems that focuses on Turkish and Arabic influences in Bosnian lexicon and phonology.

In a well-known article titled “Variants on the Make-Up Exam” (*Varijante na popravnom ispitu*)<sup>41</sup> (1970), Isaković argues that Bosnian should be recognized as a third variety. Writing shortly after the publication of the Conclusions of the Symposium on Language Tolerance, but before the publication of the SRBiH document in which the possibility for recognition of a third variety was implied, Isaković takes issue with the assumption at the Symposium that linguistic polarization is something that can be reversed or even avoided:

So Bosnian linguists recognize the *two-language* polarization in our Serbo-Croatian language but—because the people of BiH and their culture “don’t agree with it,” according to the conclusions of the Symposium—they will sit with clenched fists, indignant at the development of our linguistics since 1965 up till now and allow individuals to waste their language with public declarations and public means, and remove all responsibility from themselves ... If Bosnian linguists are against a Bosnian-Herzegovinian variant, then they really don’t have anything to do: we will get all recipes, all instructions, all guidelines from linguistic centers of which we are a region (not to mention a colony), of which we are an under, beneath, between, sub and inter-variant! (243, emphasis in original).

Isaković takes issue with the common refrain that Bosnian linguistic practice can be characterized by free and equal use of both variants, pointing out that while Bosnian linguistic practice draws on both so-called Serbian and Croatian variants, one

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<sup>40</sup> Published as it was in 1992 during the war, paper was hard to come by and distribution nearly impossible. In the introduction to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition (1993), Isaković tells how he struggled to write and publish his work during the war. The edition I purchased in Sarajevo in 2007 (published 1995) was simply titled *Dictionary of the Bosnian Language* and the subheading (*Characteristic Words*) appeared on the title page, but not front cover. Isaković refers to his work by the longer title but many published references to it do not, obscuring the fact that this work is not intended to be a general purpose dictionary.

<sup>41</sup> The *popravni ispit* is a make-up exam given to students who have failed a final exam for a class. In this context, Isaković’s title refers to a sort of last chance to get it right.

variant is preferred in all situations. People, he argues, do not switch back and forth between them but simply use the word that has been incorporated into Bosnian. He writes: “Our variants have characteristics like painting, for example: yellow and blue when mixed don’t give yellowblue but green!” (257).

Instead, what makes Bosnian unique, according to Isaković is not its *mixing* of Serbian and Croatian elements but its *combining* of them: “In this way, Bosnian is complementary (and in no way sub!): even if it doesn’t have anything special that the other two don’t, and this isn’t completely correct, the Bosnian variety is lacking nothing” (251).

While Isaković was marginalized as a separatist at the time of his writing, (Baotić 2005: 450) he advocated a view which is more commonly accepted in Bosnia today—that Bosnian language practice, like other aspects of Bosnian culture, was unique because it fused the various cultural and linguistic influences running through the region to form something new and unique. While this thesis would remain attractive to those committed to a multiethnic Bosnia, increasing nationalist tensions during the 1970s and 1980s drove the development of republics that modeled the mono-ethnic nation-state, creating pressure for Bosnia to define itself as a republic—or state—for Bosniaks.

### **The Dissolution of Yugoslavia**

Tensions between the republics grew during the 1970s, exacerbated by economic inequalities, rising nationalist tensions, and growing unemployment. When



Tito died in 1980s, a power vacuum was created that was never effectively resolved. Many felt that it was the charismatic Yugoslav leader who had held the sometimes unwieldy socialist federation together. As Tito's death approached, a clear successor failed to emerge, meaning post-Tito Yugoslavia in the 1980s, facing economic stagnation, inflation, and growing national sentiment, inherited an eight-person rotating federal presidency and complex federal bureaucracy. Nationalist parties quickly came to power across the various Yugoslav republics when multiparty elections were held in the liberalizing climate of the 1980s.

While some observers have suggested Yugoslavia's dissolution was the result of long-standing ethnic tensions that re-appeared absent the strong hand of Tito to keep them repressed, in actuality the federal structures of Yugoslavia came under attack from a variety of sources, including the rise to power of Slobodan Milošević.

Milošević, a former party bureaucrat, came to power by stoking nationalist sentiment first among Serbs in Kosovo<sup>42</sup> and later throughout Serbia. Milošević managed to manipulate popular sentiment (see Silber and Little 1997) and force more moderate leaders<sup>43</sup> from power in 1987 and 1988. Milošević forced out representatives on the federal presidency from Kosovo and Vojvodina<sup>44</sup> and replaced

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<sup>42</sup> Many Serbs regard Kosovo as the heart of the historic homeland, which they were forced to abandon after a crushing defeat by the invading Ottoman army in 1389. The historically important Patriarchate of Peć, which established the Serbian Orthodox Church, is located in Kosovo, and medieval Serbian kings ruled from Kosovo. The place of Kosovo in Serb nationalist mythology has been solidified over the years by many poets, writers, and politicians. See Judah 1997, Silber and Little 1997 for more.

<sup>43</sup> Many journalists, scholars, and politicians who worked in Yugoslavia during the wars in the 1990s are convinced that Milošević himself was not a hard-line nationalist but rather an opportunist who used nationalism as a tool to propel himself to power.

<sup>44</sup> The eight-person federal presidency in Yugoslavia was composed of representatives from each of the six republics as well as the two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, which had a status almost equal to that of republics but were considered to fall within Serbia's borders. The one major distinction between republics and autonomous provinces was that republics—in theory—could secede from Yugoslavia while provinces could not.

them with men loyal to him, giving him control over four of the eight votes, when Montenegro (who nearly always voted with Serbia) was counted.

In response to Milošević's consolidation of power and proposed reforms to federal laws and structures, the western provinces of Slovenia and Croatia sought safeguards that Yugoslavia was not turning into a greater Serbia. Slovenia in particular moved quickly to adopt a series of constitutional reforms that weakened federal Yugoslavia in favor of republican sovereignty and confederalization. In the face of significant Serbian opposition to Slovenian reforms, a referendum for independence was held in 1990, and in June of 1991 Slovenia formally seceded.

While private talks and back door politics characterized negotiations among republics in those tumultuous years, Slovenia's secession removed any potential to balance Milošević's nationalism or steady cooptation of federal structures like the JNA (Yugoslav National Army) which was quickly becoming a pro-Serb army. Following Slovenia's secession, Croatia quickly followed suit, and Bosnia declared independence a year later in 1992.

However, unlike Slovenia, which was relatively homogenous ethnically and well-prepared for independence, allowing them to secede with little opposition from Serbia,<sup>45</sup> declarations of independence in Croatia and Bosnia led to prolonged and devastating war as Serbian and Croatian paramilitaries attempted to carve out ethnically-homogenous territories to incorporate into their states while the Bosnian army fought to defend the borders of the republic as they had been drawn in 1945.

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<sup>45</sup> The ten day skirmish that followed Slovenia's secession was termed Slovenia's phony war by Silber and Little, who claim Milošević had already decided to let Slovenia secede but used negotiations over the war as a way to appear conciliatory in front of European representatives.

War in Bosnia lasted from 1992 until the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in November of 1995. Dayton carved Bosnia up into two semi-autonomous entities, the Serb Republic (*Republika Srpska* or RS) and the Croat-Muslim Federation (commonly referred to as the *Federacija*) with a loose federal government with a three-person presidency responsible for foreign policy, monetary policy, and defense, but with little power to impose law. Within the Federation, 10 cantons were created, each of which also had a great deal of autonomy in critical matters such as education.

Of these 10 cantons, five were predominantly Muslim, three were predominantly Croat, and two are labeled mixed (see map 2-3). Dayton was a clunky way to start a new state, with ethnic quotas for political office, parallel administrative and bureaucratic structures throughout the state, and few mechanisms to resolve inevitable political stalemates. Though Dayton was envisaged to structure a transitory period in which state institutions and bureaucratic administration merged, 15 years after Dayton, there has been little real progress toward unifying Bosnia's administrative apparatus.

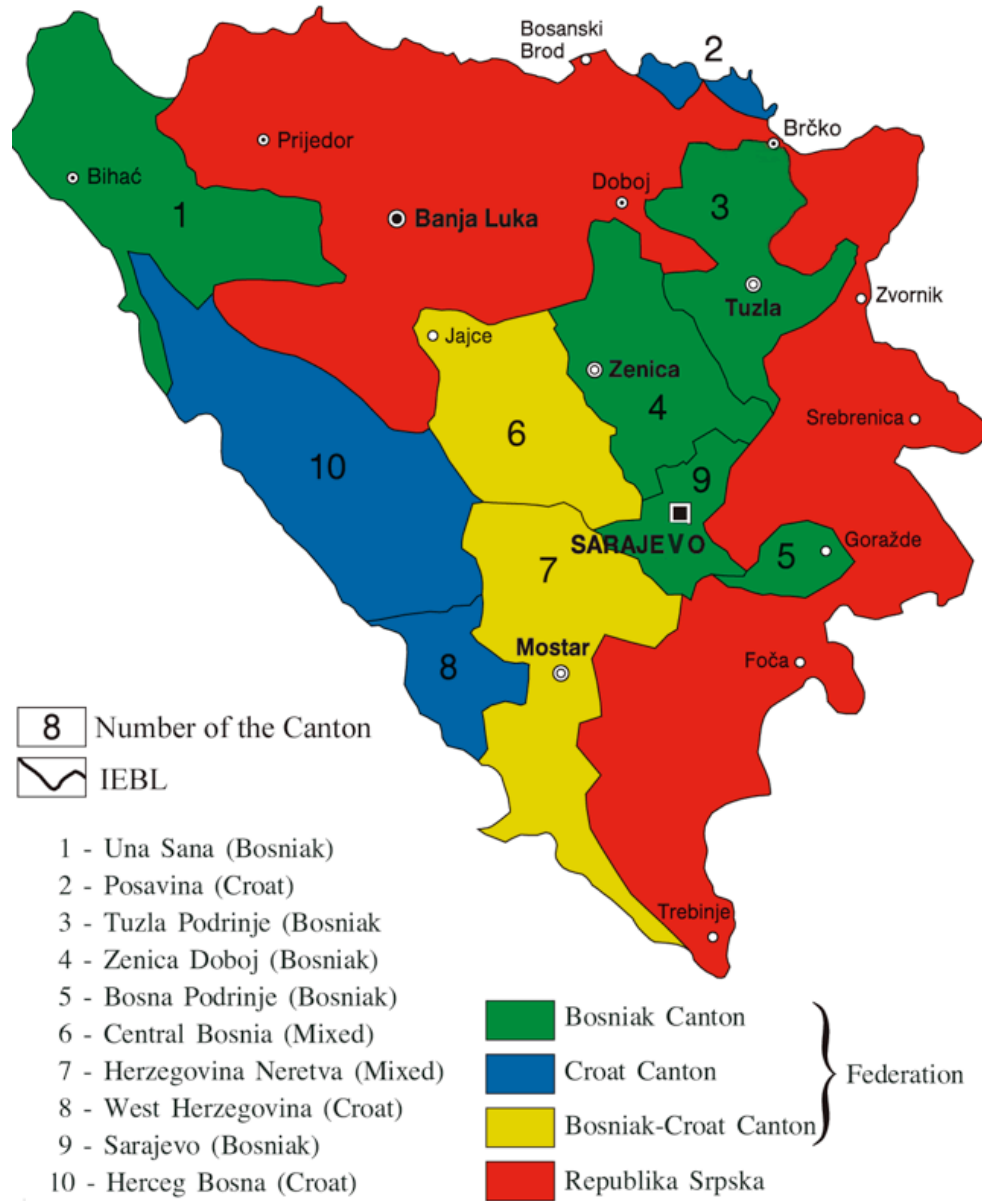
While the international community has declared itself committed to Bosnia's territorial integrity, critics such as the anthropologist Robert Hayden argue that Bosnia is an unworkable state. Opinion polls and election results in post-war Bosnia indicate that nationalist parties control much of the vote and raise the possibility that many Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats do not wish to be part of a Bosnian state. The question of whether post-war Bosnia can remain unified is one that raises political tensions and scholarly hackles alike, with some insisting Bosnia's multiethnic tradition remains alive and well, obstructed only by petty nationalist

politicians eager to remain in power, while others claim it is only international strong-arm tactics that have kept the post-war state together.

International involvement in Bosnia has been gradually decreasing since the end of the war as international funding priorities shift and NGOs and peacekeepers find their mandates ending. Bosnia remains under the administration of the international community in the form of the High Representative, who has the power to impose law, remove elected officials, and impose sanctions on political actors. The High Representative's mandate was set to end in 2007 but has been extended because of continued political instability in the region.

International organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are still heavily involved in areas like education, democratization, and minority rights, and some observers feel the international community lacks an exit strategy in Bosnia. Questions about the state's viability absent international stick-and-carrot tactics loom large as Bosnia seeks to re-establish its economy and integrate its institutions. The fate of post-war Bosnia remains uncertain—state building has proceeded slowly and has seen as many failures as it has successes in the 15 years since Dayton.

Federation of BiH



Map 2-3 Post-Dayton Bosnia, map taken from the Office of the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, <http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/maps/images/federation-of-bih.gif>

## **Conclusion: Linguistic Boundaries and State Borders**

Both the Austro-Hungarian administration and Tito's Yugoslav state sought to counterbalance the perceived danger of South Slav nationalism with the creation of a multinational identity. From a pragmatic perspective, both of these projects failed. Today's Bosnian state finds itself facing much the same dilemma. While some linguists in Bosnia today advocate an inclusive language policy, most inhabitants of the multiethnic state view language as the property of a nation, not as a symbol of the civic state the international community seeks to create.

Despite this, the legacy of language policy in Yugoslavia continues to structure both popular and intellectual debates as well as perceptions of authentic linguistic practice. In the rest of this dissertation, I explore this tension between a standardization framework that recognizes the Bosnian language as belonging to the Bosnian people and a legacy of language policy that emphasizes a pluralistic approach to practice and norms. In chapter three, I turn to a discussion of how so-called language experts negotiate this tension in their representations of Bosnian language norms and practice, focusing on the contested status of experts in the new Bosnian state and the ways in which debates about language in public forums become debates about the Bosnian state as well.

### Chapter Three: Representational Conflicts: Experts and the Creation of Linguistic Borders

A late-1980s TV sketch by the popular Sarajevo comedy troupe *Top Lista Nadrealista* (Toplist Surrealists) opens with a bored-looking TV anchor surrounded by books slumped over his desk. As he introduces that evening's guest for the segment on language – Dr. Nermin Padež (*padež* is Serbo-Croatian for morphological “case”)— he is interrupted by Padež himself, a pompous looking fellow, who corrects the host “*Professor* Dr. Nermin Padež.” Padež has come on the show to present the findings of himself and two colleagues (whose last names are “pronoun” and “comma”) that Serbo-Croatian is not one language but in fact six—*srpski*, *hrvatski*, *bosanski*, *hercegovački*, *crnski*, and *gorski*.<sup>46</sup> He has to shake the host, who has fallen into a stupor slumped over his books to get a reaction to this shocking announcement. The host feigns interest, and returns to his prone position. Padež continues: “To clarify this for the viewers it will be best to take an example, because that is how linguistics works best, with examples. Here is a simple sentence, just a subject and predicate, ‘I read’ (*Ja čitam*), that’s in Serbian, right. In Croatian that sentence sounds completely different, it is said ‘I read’ (*Ja čitam*), while in Bosnian that sentence is completely different than the first two variants, in Bosnian that is ‘I read’ (*Ja čitam*).”

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<sup>46</sup> The first four are Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Herzegovinian. *Crnski* and *gorski* are plays on the name of the republic of Montenegro (*Crnagora* in the local languages), Monte + Negro, or *Crna* + *gora*, which translates literally as Black Mountain.

At this point, the head of the bored host is completely buried in his books on the desk and he appears to be sleeping. Padež continues, while thumbing through a couple of the books on the table in front of him, “Hercegovinian is interesting because it is very similar to Bosnian, there are many similar, almost identical semantic connotations, such that this sentence in Herzegovinian is ‘I read’ (*Ja čitam*). However, *Crnski* is perhaps the most interesting of all these languages. In *Crnski* this sentence is—I think you have no chance to guess what this sentence is in *Crnski*,” Padež breaks off to say to the still comatose host. “How do you think this sentence is said in *Crnski*?” Padež asks the host, who is staring off screen blankly. He doesn’t respond until Padež hits him, and then needs the question repeated.

“What sentence?” the host asks. He looks helplessly at Padež as he repeats the question to himself, “How do you say ‘I read’ (*Ja čitam*), in *Crnski*?” he mumbles, and then answers, “I read (*Ja čitam*).”

“Aaah, completely wrong,” Padež laughs. “In *Crnski* that is ‘I read’ (*Ja čitam*), While in *Gorski* it is different from all the other variants. In *Gorski* this sentence is ... is... is...” Padež hesitates while he thumbs through his book looking for the *Gorski* translation until he finds it, “In *Gorski* that sentence is ‘I read’ (*Ja čitam*).” The host, meanwhile, has fallen back asleep.

Completely ignoring him at this point, Padež goes on to introduce a film designed by his linguistic institute to demonstrate to viewers the important role of a translator in all those situations in daily life where one might meet a speaker of a different linguistic variety. He again has to slap the host awake to cue the film, which the host does sleepily before settling back down. The film shows two different



scenarios, one in which a woman who speaks Bosnian is attempting to buy tea. She communicates with the hand gestures and simple sentences of a person facing a language barrier who cannot make her request “one tea” (*jedan čaj*) understood until the store clerk, who speaks *Gorski*, calls his boss, who “understands” enough Bosnian to translate *jedan* and look up *čaj* in a dictionary.

In the next scenario, a Hercegovinian-speaking man attempts to ask a Serbian-speaking woman out for coffee, but she doesn’t understand a word. The couple struggles until a translator shows up carrying a thick dictionary and offering his services. With the help of the translator and his dictionary, a date is successfully arranged. The translator charges 18 dinars (the Yugoslav currency) for “two subjects, three predicates and one adverb specifying time.” The clip ends by flashing a phone number where one can arrange for translation services or purchase the dictionary—“ideal for mixed marriages,” the announcer intones, a joke referencing the relatively high number of interethnic marriages in late socialist Sarajevo.

The hilarious clip circulates today via Internet sites like youtube and is successful for a number of reasons.<sup>47</sup> It plays on a variety of themes that cut to the heart of language issues in the country both in the late 1980s and in the present. The *Top Lista* sketch is humorous because it pokes fun at the intellectuals. The expert on the show, Nermin Padež, from an “official” institute of language on an “official” public TV station cannot even command the interest or the respect of the host of the segment. The subtext is clear: linguistics is boring and its experts are pompous and

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<sup>47</sup> The video clip can be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DztrX5dXmxU>

self-involved. The clip, in a sense, takes language back from the experts and reminds viewers that their linguistic intuitions should be trusted.

But the clip also demonstrates in a humorous way what was perceived at the time, I believe, and still is perceived by many Bosnians as a very real problem—the ways in which separatism, linguistic or otherwise, justified or not, could fracture the Bosnian social space. By taking this to the extreme in introducing the varieties of *hercegovački*,<sup>48</sup> *crnski*, and *gorski*, the sketch implies that existing (or at the time proposed) linguistic separatism between *bosanski*, *hrvatski*, and *srpski* is equally silly.

What I find most striking about this clip, however, is not just the depiction of a situation characterized by fractured social and economic ties and communicative breakdown, but the depiction of language experts as being responsible for this situation. Everyone watching the clip is presumed to understand that there is no difference between any of the words that are allegedly translated from one variety to another, but somehow linguists with their research, their institutes, their meetings, and their dictionaries have created differences. And crucially, these differences have not remained in dictionaries, institutes, and meetings but have crossed out into the communicative and social space of Bosnia. The so-called experts, while they might be ridiculed for lacking common sense and not being able to see past their mounds of books to the plain linguistic facts, are presented as having the power to change those facts.

Some friends of mine during my fieldwork in 2006-2007 took an even more critical view, suggesting that the linguists were deliberately mismanaging the

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<sup>48</sup> While many linguists do describe Herzegovina as having distinct dialect features within Bosnian, it has never, to the best of my knowledge been proposed as a distinct variety and I never witnessed the label *hercegovački* used in any serious context.

situation. “It’s all one language,” a friend complained to me, “But they’re trying to make it so we don’t understand each other.” Despite such criticisms, many of my interlocutors perceived the need for expert intervention in language, expressing a desire for clearer norms or more orderly guidelines in language and suggesting this was the work of certain language professionals.

While in the previous chapter I detailed the development of official language policy in Yugoslavia and BiH, in this chapter, I turn to a discussion of how expert representations and regimes of language interact with so-called popular or amateur ones. Throughout linguistic debates in Bosnia, both popular and academic, a tension runs between expert representations of language and those defined as amateur.<sup>49</sup>

While academics claim the ability to define legitimate language for themselves through emphasis on credentials, methodology, and what they define as scientific arguments, many of my interlocutors suggested that the experts had failed in some way or another to manage language properly and challenged expert representations by drawing on alternative criteria for legitimacy. At their core, such debates pit expertise against intuition,<sup>50</sup> with both sides claiming to represent the “authentic” Bosnian.

This chapter aims to show how current debates about language in Bosnia slip back and forth between the language of expertise with its attendant claims about logical, scientific evidence and the language of authenticity with its moral arguments

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<sup>49</sup> Similar tensions can be found throughout the anthropological literature. Studies of language revitalization point to conflicts that can arise between authoritative representations of language and those spoken by native speakers (Jaffe 1999, McDonald 1989, Hill and Hill 1980, Frekko 2006). Similarly, standardization projects may bring to light competing ideas about what standard should be (see Bilaniuk 2005, Errington 2000, Schieffelin and Charlier Doucet 1998).

<sup>50</sup> My interlocutors often used the phrase *jezički osjećaj* or linguistic feeling, which I have translated as intuition, to describe both how they made linguistic choices and sometimes how they felt they should make linguistic choices. Teachers used this phrase in classrooms as well to explain to children how they could sense if a phrase or stylistic choice was appropriate.

and appeals to more widely circulating discourses of nostalgia and normalcy. I draw on prominent debates among experts and about expert representations of language as well as focus on one controversial linguistic feature—the voiceless velar fricative—that encapsulates many of these debates. Finally, I will examine how discourses about linguistic chaos and confusion are related to claims about expertise as well as perceptions about what normal, European languages should look like.

### **“As Is Our Country, So Is Our Language:” The Experts Have Failed**

As the linguistic situation became increasingly politicized during the 1970s and 1980s, the academic and popular literature in Bosnia resounded with calls for the scientific elaboration and description of linguistic practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such publications often simultaneously lamented the low level of linguistic education of the public.

A 1987 report on the progress made implementing the language policy by the Central Committee of the Socialist Republic of BiH cited the failure of any of the daily newspapers to maintain a column on language issues (as the other republics had done) and noted a possible trend towards increased “illiteracy” (*nepismenost*, literally; however, the term is commonly used to describe a failure or inability to follow standard orthographic conventions rather than a complete inability to read or write). Such trends are cause for concern, the report suggests, stating:

Without a constant and well-organized effort to increase the level of linguistic education within the school system and outside of it, we won't have any real results in actualizing the principals of the linguistic and literary policy (in Šipka 2001: 230).

The authors of the report conclude:

At the base of all this lies our biggest problem: our unsatisfactorily established consciousness about linguistic culture as an element of human culture more generally. And to build this consciousness it is necessary to work more consistently and in a more organized way, and much more responsibly, than we have until now” (231-232).

According to published documents at the time, an increased level of linguistic education would lead more or less naturally to more “cultured” linguistic behavior—openness towards positive influences in language and respect for the linguistic rights of others.

While language professionals both then and now—including linguists, teachers, and journalists—complain about the lack of public knowledge about language norms, many of my interlocutors perceived the so-called confusion over both linguistic norms and socio-political meanings of language to be a failure on the part of the experts to do their job. Indeed, the experts were often viewed as the ones who had created the problem in the first place. Several of my interlocutors blamed state institutions like schools, universities, and the Institute for Language (*Institut za Jezik*) for a failure to organize, to develop a literary canon, and to create institutions equal in strength and function to those in Serbia or Croatia.

While Serbo-Croatian was often discursively constructed as a stable standard language with clear norms, several of my informants characterized the Bosnian language as not fully standardized, suggesting that the “normal” state of affairs in language is to have a clearly defined standard with competent experts to regulate it and generally accepted dictionaries and orthographies to define it. As one contributor to an online discussion forum put it:

It's completely natural that language changes through time, but above all we need to form some sort of linguistic organization that would officially lead a language reform and verify rules on the level of the state (of course, it's a shame we don't have a normal state). All that has happened up until now is unstandardized bullshit. As is our country, so is our language (Forum Sarajevo-x.com, *Jezički Standardi u BiH* (Language Standards in BiH), posted 2/24/07).

As discussed in chapter two, some Bosnians attribute the perceived subordinate status of Bosnian to deliberate discrimination on the part of the Yugoslav state, while other blamed Bosnian linguists and intellectuals for a lack of participation. According to one man I spoke with, the codification of Serbo-Croatian into only two variants (Croatian and Serbian, which were officially labeled the Western and Eastern variants) was the fault of Bosnian linguists who failed to assert the specificity of Bosnian in the 1950s, creating the situation today in which Bosnian was perceived as still somehow substandard.

Some, however, suggested the linguists themselves were confused, just like everybody else, and therefore unable to lead the people towards clearer language standards:

Everyone in our country is somehow confused—the politicians and the linguists and the ordinary citizens as users of language. Ten years of confusion!?! The average speaker, from any nation, who has no direct influence on events, can't find answers to numerous questions and has no idea how, in the new environment, to behave linguistically (Vajzović 2001: 81).

Picking up on this theme of linguistic confusion, the Bosnian Croat intellectual Ivan Lovrenović suggests that this confusion can have serious psychological consequences:

In everyday life this phenomenon manifests itself in a terrifying way. At every step and in every moment you will encounter a situation in which the speaker bites his tongue when, completely naturally in

Croatian, he starts to say *hiljadu, kafa, izvjestaj, obaveza, naročito, prisutan*, then, with a visible internal panic corrects himself: ‘*hilj...tisuća*’, ‘*kaf...kava*’, ‘*izvjes ... izvijesće*’, ‘*obav ... obveza*’, *nar ... osobito*’, ‘*pris ... nazočan*’, ‘*činit ... čimbenik*’, etc. and on and on. In this completely unnecessary, compromising situation intellectuals, politicians, journalists, TV editors and students find themselves everyday—all in great fear of using nationally “guilty words” (Lovrenović 2007: 36).

Here Lovrenović draws on the most common criticism leveled against linguists and others who present themselves as linguistic experts (such as TV pronunciation coaches or newspaper editors)—that their norms fail to correspond with people’s linguistic intuitions and are thus motivated by some more suspect criteria, such as politics or nationalist sentiment. In the face of such charges, so-called experts must marshal other kinds of support for their proposed norms—historical data, linguistic arguments, or claims to personal credibility.

### **Politicization vs. Authenticity: The Case of *H***

If one sound could be said to represent all of the controversies embodied by the Bosnian standard, it would be the voiceless velar fricative, graphically represented as *h* in the Latin alphabet. While some linguists advocate for its inclusion in various lexical items in the Bosnian standard on the basis of historical linguistics and its alleged continuity in linguistic practice, others argue against it, suggesting its inclusion is politically motivated and not reflective of current usage patterns. Both sides claim to be presenting a more authentic Bosnian, one based on usage and the other based on historical continuity.

*H* is the subject of much metadiscourse in Bosnia, as its use or avoidance in everyday situations is highly noticeable and sometimes draws commentary. Even my own speech, which because I was a foreigner was rarely corrected for phonological issues or for perceived crossing of standard boundaries, was sometimes censured for failure to use the fricative and, occasionally, for including it.

The voiceless velar fricative was present in all early varieties of the dialects that became Serbo-Croatian. However, over time it was lost or replaced by other sounds in many contexts in these languages. There are two different explanations for this loss in the writings of Bosnian linguists. The first, by Senahid Halilović, is that *h* lacks a voiced counterpart, which makes it unstable given language's tendency to strive for coherency and symmetry (1998 [1992]: 52). The second explanation is given by Dzevad Jahić. Jahić suggests that because the *h* is difficult to pronounce—he calls it a “soft, fragile” sound (2001: 220)—it had a tendency to be lost for purely articulatory reasons. Both of these authors argue that while the *h* was lost in many places in the speech of Catholic and Orthodox South Slavs, it was maintained among Muslims.

There are again two main arguments for why *h* was maintained among Muslims. Both suggest that Islamic influence, primarily via the Ottomans, was responsible for this. The first view is more agnostic about the role of religion however, simply suggesting that *h* became an important dialect feature of cities in Bosnia, such as Travnik and Sarajevo, where the Ottoman presence was concentrated and that the use of *h* remains more noticeable in urban areas in Bosnia (Sanjin Kodrić, personal communication 2007). The second suggests that it was the influence of



Arabic words via Islam and Islamic culture, such as burial terms, that solidified the place of this *h* among Bosnian Muslims:

The loss of the *h* sound represents an Eastern Herzegovinian innovation that was taking place exactly at the time of the Turkish invasion and massive conversions to Islam on the part of the Slavic inhabitants. For this reason, this process was interrupted in the greatest measure in those who accepted Islam. This state was maintained under the influence of Arabic (prayers, for example, in which *h* often appears in *bismilli* [a blessing], which begins every prayer in the Kur'an—except one—and also every activity for Muslims) the phoneme *h* solidified its place in our consonant system” (Halilović 1998 [1992]: 53).

For Halilović, and others who share his views, those who did not convert to Islam continued the process of losing the *h*, making it a marker of Bosniak speech only, while in the first view, the influence was regional, not religious. Today the *h* is strongly associated with the speech of Bosnian Muslims, although many Muslims report they do not use the sound and consider its emphasis to be the result of a politicized move by the government of Alija Izetbegović (the wartime president of Bosnia) and nationalist linguists.

According to Halilović, a morphologist by training, *h* is well maintained in initial and medial positions in Bosniak speech, while it is more vulnerable to being lost in word-final positions such as in the genitive plural or the first person aorist. This word-final loss is also common in Serbian and Croatian, but all three standards have maintained *h* in this position in their orthographies. Teachers in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian schools all reported to me that their students regularly dropped *h* in these contexts—contexts in which *h* marked a grammatical distinction—and that teachers considered this to be a significant marker of non-standard speech that they

needed to correct.<sup>51</sup> These are the only contexts in which *h* appears to be a significant issue in Croatian<sup>52</sup> and Serbian varieties.

In most other contexts in Serbian and Croatian linguistic practice, *h* has been either lost completely (most often word initially) or replaced by another sound (most often intervocalically). In most cases, replacing *h* with another sound has been codified in the standard orthography or orthographies, while its word-initial loss is often considered a non-standard innovation. For example, in Serbian, *h* is required by standard orthographic rules in *hleb* (bread) although in speech and written representations of characteristic Serbian this is often reduced to *'leb*. Similarly, *hvala* (thank you) is often pronounced *fala* (this is common in Bosnian linguistic practice as well), but this is considered non-standard. In other cases in Serbian or Croatian, what was originally *h* has undergone a sound change to, most commonly, *k*, *g*, *v*, or *j*, as in *duhan/duvan* (CR), *hemija/kemija* (CR), *uho/uvo* (SR), or *snaha/snaja* (SR).

In his influential 1836 orthography, the Serbian linguistic reformer Vuk Karadžić included the *h* for the first time (it had been absent in his earlier 1818 norm), giving the rule that it should be used wherever it was etymologically present, and this rule is still used by Serbian and Croatian orthographies to determine when *h* should appear in the standard language, although it is often dropped in everyday speech.

The Bosnian standard, however, has also introduced *h* in places where it wasn't etymologically present, such as *hudovac/udovac* or *hrdjav/rdjav*. This addition of *h*, often called “secondary *h*,” is also common in medial positions, such as

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<sup>51</sup> I will discuss how *h* is handled in classroom contexts in more detail in chapters five and six.

<sup>52</sup> According to the Bosnian literature, *h* at one time was a significant marker of the Dubrovnik dialect. I have not looked into the literature on this topic further.

*sahat/sat* or *lahko/lako*. The secondary *hs* are by far the most controversial inclusions of *h* in the Bosnian standard. While Halilović includes them in his orthography for what he suggests are descriptive reasons (1998 [1992]: 55), many of my interlocutors implied that their inclusion was actually normative in nature.

While dominant metadiscourse about *h* links it to Bosniak speech via its perceived connection with Islam, a counterdiscourse maintains that *h* is an essential feature of Bosniak speech but suggests that this use of *h* is an essentially Slavic characteristic, not a foreign one. For example, Alija Isaković,<sup>53</sup> in the afterword to his 1992 *Dictionary of the Characteristic Lexicon in the Bosnian Language*, offers a different explanation for the use of *h* in Bosnian, suggesting that it couldn't have been Turkish influence that was responsible for the maintenance of *h* among Bosnian Muslims because Slavic Muslims in other nations (Bulgarians, Albanians, Macedonians) didn't preserve the *h* and neither did Christians who fought in the Turkish army. Additionally, Isaković points out that the voiceless velar fricative does not exist in Turkish, but in the speech of Bosnian Muslims it has been secondarily added to words borrowed from Turkish, such as *sahat* (Bosnian standard) from the Turkish *saat* (Arabic *sa'hat*) or the Bosnian form *havaz* from the Turkish *avaz*.<sup>54</sup>

Instead, Isaković insists on a sort of indigeneity that explains the presence of *h*, citing authors who argue that *h* is somehow integral to the linguistic and cultural system of the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian dialects. For example, he cites the Croatian

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<sup>53</sup> See chapter two for a more detailed discussion of Isaković's writings.

<sup>54</sup> In both these cases the borrowed form without *h* exists as well: *sat* (hour, time) and *avaz* (voice). Both *sat* (SR, B) and *čas* (CR) are stylistically unmarked but nationally marked variants. *Avaz* is part of the name of a major Bosnian daily *Dnevni Avaz* (Daily Voice) that is considered to be pro-Bosniak and more nationalist than the other daily *Oslobodenje* (see Ćedić 2001 for a summary of how linguistic forms differ in these two dailies). *Avaz* is stylistically marked in contrast to *glas*, which is the stylistically and nationally unmarked term for *voice*. Isaković's other examples of adding *h* to Turkish words are controversial and unevenly spread in Bosnian linguistic practice (see Isaković 1993: 383).

linguist Tomislav Maretić (a devoted follower of Vuk Karadžić’s principles) as writing in 1899 that without *h* “our language would be disconnected and sloppy” (in Isaković: 385). He also cites the celebrated Bosniak poet Mak Dizdar who wrote: “Dropping the letter *h* from its syllable would be like a composer throwing away a note from the musical scale, or a chemist any element of Mendel’s system, or a builder a step in the staircase of a building” (in Isaković: 386).

That Isaković considers *h* to be more than just a characteristic linguistic feature but to be somehow connected to the Bosnian spirit is evidenced by his assertion that words containing *h* “have a soul” (382) and his statement that:

Bosnian Muslim writers pronounce and write *h*, whether it was there or not or was developed from another letter .... challenging (*othrvavajuci se*) imposed orthographic norms. We don’t have to justify it. Multi-century linguistic reality is above all theorizing about reasons (382).

Isaković’s objection to identifying the essence of Bosnian linguistic practice with an exclusive emphasis on Islamic influence as well as his insistence on the specificity of Bosnian linguistic practice and language identity is consistent with his approach throughout his writings, as well as with the views of many linguists in his generation who favor a focus on linguistic practice and oppose norms they view as politically or ideologically motivated. Isaković bases his defense of *h* on its alleged prominence in literary sources and linguistic practice, rather than on a connection to Islamic practices like Jahić and Halilović. All three authors share a rhetorical style that emphasizes the integral nature of *h* to Bosnian linguistic practice, but they differ in meaning they attribute to the sound. While Isaković seeks to integrate *h* into a pan-religious Bosnian standard, Jahić and Halilović link the preservation of *h*—and

Bosnian's linguistic distinctiveness—to a religious tradition embraced only by Bosniaks.

By contrast, some linguists have, in rather muted rhetoric, suggested that this emphasis on *h* is not reflected by general linguistic practice in Bosnian (e.g. Ćedić 2001). More explicitly, Internet forums, café conversations, and articles in the popular media often ridicule the inclusion of *h* as the most visible example of the kind of linguistic tampering and nationalism that exemplifies all the problems with the current standard. When I told a friend—a young woman about my age in Sarajevo—that I was concerned that I wasn't pronouncing the *h* properly in intervocalic situations, she told me to forget about it—it wasn't worth trying to pronounce it; she never did and she thought it sounded ridiculous. She went on to cite examples of secondary *h* such as *hudovica* and *hlopta* as among the most ridiculous forms in the new standard, saying she said she had never heard them used in ordinary speech and couldn't imagine anyone she knew saying them.

One visible situation in which *h* serves as a noticeable index of linguistic affiliation is the triad *kahva* (*B*)/*kava* (*CR*)/*kafa* (*SR*) (coffee). While *kahva* is, according to Halilović's orthography, the only correct option in Bosnian, *kafa* was commonly used before the war and remains the most common term for coffee. While friends of mine in Sarajevo—college educated, self-identified religious Muslims in their 20s—reported that use of *kahva* was noticeably higher immediately following the war, they said that it has decreased dramatically in the last 10 years.

It appears that a semantic distinction has begun to develop in which *kafa* is used to refer to espresso and *kahva* to Bosnian or Turkish coffee. While menus

throughout downtown Sarajevo, for example, offer *kafa* (meaning espresso), it is more common to see *kahva* (and receive Bosnian coffee) in the old part of Sarajevo (Bašaršija). This distinction is far from absolute, as I have many times ordered or been offered *kafa* when Bosnian coffee was being referred to, although I was told *kahva* can never be used to refer to espresso.

I was also told that *kahva* could imply a more elaborate social ritual of coffee drinking rather than the hurried gulp of a shot of espresso that *kafa* might refer to.<sup>55</sup> One joke that I was told captures the relationship between being Bosnian and drinking coffee by drawing on the idea of *ćeif*, a Turkish word that is used commonly in Bosnian to express the idea of doing something with pleasure: A woman from Sarajevo and a woman from Zagreb are sitting together drinking *kahva*. The woman from Zagreb drinks her coffee quickly while the woman from Sarajevo sips hers slowly. “Why are you drinking your coffee so slowly?” the woman from Zagreb asks. “I drink my coffee with *ćeif* (*s ćeifom*),” the woman from Sarajevo replies. “Ah, well, I drink my coffee with sugar,” says the woman from Zagreb.

This joke is notable because it links a linguistic form (the Turkish borrowing *ćeif*) with a social practice (enjoying a cup of coffee) in such a way that both the linguistic form *and* the social practice are unintelligible to outsiders. Foreigners are also among the social groups that are thought to not understand this concept of *ćeif*, as one friend related a story to me of trying to get the foreigners in her office to take

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<sup>55</sup> This explanation was given in fifth grade classroom in Sarajevo. I will go into detail about this, as well as discussing how usage of *h* is handled in schools, in chapter six. I will also discuss how textbooks and other manuals designed for school use (from 1946 to the present) treat the letter in chapter four.

mid-morning coffee breaks, away from their desks, using the concept of *ćeif* to explain what she was trying to teach them.

Moments of unintelligibility or perceived unintelligibility are relatively rare in metalinguistic discourse in Bosnia, at least in conversations where I was involved, as many of my interlocutors felt the need to emphasize to me the underlying structural and communicative unity of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian standard varieties. However, in this case I suggest that by linking the form *kahva* to a way of drinking coffee that is considered to be somehow more Bosnian, an inauthentic sound is grounded in an authentic social practice.

The fricative *h* has become emblematic of many of the debates about Bosnian today—is it primarily Islamic or not? Do language norms match linguistic practice? How much variation is tolerable? In short, is standardization succeeding? Although forms containing *h* are often normed exclusively in Bosnian, making them potentially excellent markers of Bosnian's distinctiveness from Serbian and Croatian, many of my interlocutors suggested that linguistic practice has not changed to include these and indeed that they are actively avoided. The voiceless velar fricative thus also comes to represent the biggest problem for the Bosnian standard—the perceived gap between language norms and linguistic practice and the inability of experts to close that gap.

### ***Ljiljan* Debates: Patriotism, Authenticity, and Representativeness**

One example of this perceived failure on the part of experts can be seen in a series of high-profile public exchanges about language that took place during the

summer of 2003. Over about eight weeks, a heated debate took place between two linguists—Midhat Ridjanović and Dževad Jahić—in the newsweekly magazine *Ljiljan*. The exchange centered on Ridjanović’s outspoken criticisms to the *Gramatika bosanskog jezika* (Grammar of the Bosnian Language, hereafter GBJ), published in 2000 by Jahić and two of his colleagues at the University of Sarajevo, Senahid Halilović and Ismail Palić. In the summer of 2003, Ridjanović was publicizing the launch of his book, *Total Failure (Totalni promašaj)*, which heavily criticized the GBJ and its authors. Excerpts of *Total Failure* were being published around that time in the weekly news magazine *Slobodna Bosna*, prompting Jahić to respond publicly in *Ljiljan*.

The publication of the GBJ was an event that had been hailed as a key step in the recognition of Bosnian as a distinct language. One popular formulation in Bosnia—I saw it repeated in classrooms, printed in textbooks, and cited by friends of mine—was that every language must have a grammar, an orthography, and a dictionary. The orthography—*Pravopis bosanskog jezika (Orthography of the Bosnian Language)*—had been published in 1999. The grammar followed in 2000. While the question of a dictionary remained a source of some debates, many claimed the *Dictionary of Characteristic Words in Bosnian* (1993) by Alija Isaković.<sup>56</sup> Thus, to some at least, when the grammar was published in 2000, it was the third and final authoritative text needed to defend Bosnian’s position as a standard language.

Additionally, the GBJ was published by well-respected professors at the University of Sarajevo. Both Halilović and Jahić are public figures prominently

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<sup>56</sup> Others suggested this dictionary, which focused on Turkish phrases in Bosnian, was not a general-purpose dictionary and didn’t fulfill this criterion. In the fall of 2007, a massive general-use dictionary was published ending this debate.



linked with standardization efforts. They have each published numerous works dealing with linguistic and sociopolitical aspects of the Bosnian language; Ismail Palić is a young professor whose relatively short list of publications, aside from the GBJ, consists of articles about syntactic issues published in scholarly journals. It is fair to say that Palić is less of a public intellectual than Halilović and Jahić. Palić is also one of three authors (along with Halilović and Amela Šehović) of the *Dictionary of the Bosnian Language (Rječnik bosanskoga jezika)* published in the fall of 2007. However, he has not published anything, to the best of my knowledge, about his political or ideological views on language (unlike many of his colleagues) and is not a name immediately associated with standardization projects, unlike Jahić and Halilović who are two of the most prominent.

Following the publication of the GBJ—a significant event that received press coverage and was noted as an important landmark in the standardization of Bosnian, a number of reviews appeared. The most controversial was Ridjanović’s *Total Failure*, published in 2003.

While Ridjanović’s critique—popular in part due to his over-the-top rhetoric and liberal mixing of personal insults with scientific critique—resonated with some Bosnians in criticizing a standard norm they found unnatural or overly politicized, there is no doubt that Ridjanović was writing from a position outside intellectual circles of power. While the GBJ had been favorably reviewed (and peer-reviewed prior to publication<sup>57</sup>) by a number of prominent linguists, Ridjanović’s book was

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<sup>57</sup> Bosnian publishers typically require all educational and scientific books to have three *recenzenti* who approve the book before it can be published. The GBJ was peer-reviewed (*recenzija*) by four linguists—three high-ranking professors at the University of Sarajevo and a high-school teacher from Tuzla.

unusual in that it was published without any peer review—according to the publisher, because no reviewers could be found (btcsahinpasic.com, accessed January 26, 2009).

Ridjanović, who completed a Ph.D. in general linguistics at the University of Michigan in 1969, has been a vocal figure in the polemic over the Bosnian standard, publishing a number of articles in Sarajevo dailies and newsweeklies as well as academic books and articles. *Total Failure* maintains the outrageous tone of many of his popular pieces and is also aimed at a general audience. While Ridjanović attacks specific details of the GBJ, picking apart the linguistic science behind the book, at the core his argument is with the standardization project itself and particularly what he sees as unnatural and politically motivated linguistic forms that have been included in the new norm. In this way, Ridjanović echoes a critique of standardization projects that is common among Bosnians and that circulates in coffee shops, kitchens, and Internet forums.

However, while Ridjanović is in some ways siding with the people against the expert's view of language, he does so primarily by attacking the scientific foundations of the GBJ. In doing so, Ridjanović insists that linguistic problems are the domain of experts, even while he attacks the experts who have institutional backing and support.<sup>58</sup>

The most popular Sarajevo newsweekly, *Dani*, covered the release of Ridjanović's book in the summer of 2003 at a public event that was billed as the

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<sup>58</sup> Ridjanović was definitely an outsider in Bosnian intellectual circles. He had retired from teaching at the University of Sarajevo prior to my field research and thus lacked the institutional positioning of the linguists he debated. Several of my interlocutors at various academic institutions tried to dissuade me from meeting him, suggesting he was crazy or senile. Finally, as a general linguist who had taught in the English department, his specific expertise in Slavic languages was often called into question by those he challenged.

“Introduction to Dialogue about Language.” However, *Dani* titled its coverage of the event “Monologue about Language” and noted that Ridjanović appeared before a nearly empty room. Despite having invited the authors of the GBJ, as well as other public figures, almost no one showed up, and, according to *Dani*, the audience consisted entirely of Ridjanović’s supporters.

The tongue-in-cheek article suggests that the Bosnian public simply doesn’t care about grammatical issues—that polemics like the definition of Bosnian or the perceived Croatization of the language are linguistic issues the public cares about but the definition of grammatical categories or the physiology of vowel production (issues discussed at length in both books) are not.

However, Ridjanović showed his polemical side over the course of the eight week exchange in *Ljiljan*, a debate that began as being about linguistic principles quickly became about who could represent a more authentic Bosnian.

Jahić fires the first shot in the 23-30 May 2003 issue of *Ljiljan*, his first public response to Ridjanović’s criticism, by suggesting that efforts to undermine the GBJ are politically motivated. In response to growing controversy surrounding the GBJ, Jahić writes, people with fewer and fewer academic credentials to enter into the debate have been criticizing the GBJ on ideological and political grounds. Jahić criticizes Sarajevo’s scientific institutes—the Institute for Language and the faculty at the University of Sarajevo—for failing to do as they should and defend the grammar. However, Jahić writes, it was when Ridjanović—not some unqualified layperson, but a university professor—entered the fray, that Jahić couldn’t restrain himself from

responding, although, Jahić can't resist adding, Ridjanović really is a layperson when it comes to Slavistics since his training is in English and general linguistics.

In the 6-13 June issue, Ridjanović launches his own attack on Jahić's right to authentically represent Bosnian, accusing him of fleeing Bosnia during the war (a relatively common way to question someone's patriotism or ability to know what is authentically Bosnian) and betraying his nation by noting that he spent the war teaching Serbian in Moscow. He adds:

That is why I wrote this article the Serbian language, so that he could understand it better. . . . However, if it would have helped his career, Jahić would have taught “*četnik*”<sup>59</sup> or “*ustaša*,” if those languages existed, because he belongs to the type of person who has neither homeland nor religion nor language nor ideology—who has only himself! (57). [The article is written in *ekavski*, the dialect used in the Serbian standard instead of the *ijekavski* used in Bosnian, drawing on one visible difference between Serbian and Bosnian standard to stand in for a host of differences.]

The following week Jahić responds first to the charge that he fled during the war, emphasizing he had been in Moscow since 1989, and second to the charge of teaching Serbian, noting that the language in Moscow at the time was called Serbo-Croatian and he taught his native dialect, *ijekavski*. Indeed, he continues, it was during that time in Moscow that he was writing his Trilogija on the Bosnian language.<sup>60</sup> Ridjanović's charges against Jahić, while factually incorrect, are bolstered

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<sup>59</sup> Četnik and Ustaša are labels that date back to WWII and referred respectively to the nationalist Serb army loyal to the monarchy and to the army of the Croatian fascist puppet state. When used today they evoke extreme nationalism and xenophobia and are insulting terms to say the least.

<sup>60</sup> Jahić is well known for a trio of books: *The Bosniak Nation and Its Language* (*Bosjančki narod i njegov jezik*), *Bosnian Language in 100 Questions and Answers* (*Bosanski jezik u 100 pitanja i 100 odgovara*), and *School Dictionary of the Bosnian Language* (*Školski rječnik bosanskog jezika*, hereafter SRBJ) published in the late 1990s. These books were written for a general audience and lay out a basic charter for Jahić's understanding of Bosnian—its roots in the Bogomils, its historical continuity through the Bosnian nation, its characteristic features, many of which are a direct result of Islamic influence, and its rightful place as the official language of the Bosniak nation today.

by symbolic geographies of Europe in which Moscow and Belgrade are seen as tight allies.

In response to Ridjanović's attack, Jahić attempts to change the terms of the debate, suggesting academic knowledge—territory Ridjanović has claimed via his repeated allusions to his knowledge of English and so-called modern linguistic theory—is not enough to be a serious critic of a work like the GBJ:

In order to know this work and really understand and interpret it, as well as criticize it, one must, of course, have a deep feeling/intuition for the linguistic area. One must carry that area in oneself as a deeply respected cultural historical being ... The theoretical readiness of a linguist is an important factor in understanding any kind of linguistic data from any language. But, when we approach linguistic data from our typical Bosnian or Bosniak scheme, which persistently attempts to integrate, in essence to gather, theoretical knowledge from world literature and apply it to our own territory and its language, almost immediately we become witnesses to a tragic misunderstanding, or more precisely, inability of these theoretical minds to settle down on the territory of their own culture, in this case data from their maternal language (13-20 June: 59).

Here Jahić evokes the robust trope of Balkan impenetrability. Opaque even to the world's best theoretical minds, Balkan linguistic phenomena defies explanation. (This trope is deployed by Ridjanović as well in some of his writings, which I will discuss later.) If Ridjanović has attempted to establish himself as the more credentialed of the two authors, at least according to international standards (the only ones Ridjanović thinks should count), Jahić—without conceding that ground—has argued that it doesn't matter anyway; such general theoretical knowledge reveals nothing about specific Bosnian phenomena.

The final substantive change in the tone of the debate appears in the later issues in which Ridjanović and Jahić spar over whose linguistic examples are more

authentically Bosnian. Jahić accuses Ridjanović of citing Serbian examples because Ridjanović states that they come from television in the RS (*Republika Srpska*). Ridjanović argues that the language spoken in the RS is more Bosnian than that in the Federation because the Federation has been thoroughly Croatianized, suggesting that cultural inferiority motivates lexical borrowings from Zagreb, which are perceived by many Bosnians to be on the rise. Jahić writes that Ridjanović must have been born with an impoverished set of linguistic intuitions and Ridjanović calls Jahić illiterate, claiming he doesn't know the meaning of certain Bosnian words. The exchange continues along these lines for eight weeks, with both authors slinging insults such as “poser,” “snob,” “know-nothing,” “primitive,” and “lacking in urban culture.”

An editor's note appears in the 4-11 July issue, Jahić's eighth week of correspondence and Ridjanović's seventh:

Ljiljan dedicated its pages to a polemic that was supposed to have the point of discovering scientific facts and debating the confrontation of language experts, between the authors of the GBJ (Palić, Jahić, Halilović) and one opponent, the critic prof. dr. M. Ridjanović. However, as for a meaningful, constructive and healthy polemic, there was none; instead everything unfolded on a personal level. Because of this, we will end this polemic in the next issue in which we will give one more chance to our scientists to speak about linguistic style, not to insult each other (57).

In the next issue, only Jahić published a column, and it would be difficult to say he refrained from insults. Following this exchange, Ridjanović has remained a prolific contributor to Sarajevo media, always maintaining his controversial tone, always critical of current standardization efforts, sometimes engaging in exchanges with other public figures and always falling back on his English knowledge and general linguistic training as final proof of his authority.

While *Ljiljan* judged the exchange between the two linguists to be a failure, it seems to have captured public attention. When I began my field research 3 ½ years after this exchange, Ridjanović still enjoyed quite a reputation as a controversial linguist (due also in part, of course, to his continued publications) and the feud between him and the so-called mainstream linguists was well known. Friends of mine always made it a point to bring me copies of magazines that contained any new articles by him.

Interestingly, both *Ljiljan* and *Dani* in its coverage of the Dialogue about Language judged these public exchanges to be failures for the same reason—they didn't resolve anything. They did not settle either particular questions surrounding linguistic forms nor did they definitively establish linguistic experts whose solutions to these questions could be trusted:

But neither he [Ridjanović] nor anyone else can explain who it is that approves and who abolishes grammars in this country. As if there is no one competent to confirm that Ridjanović is correct and the trio of Palić, Jahić and Halilović are wrong or vice versa, neither is there, and *this is the gist of it*, anyone to tell or show who it is that knows how to write a real grammar and if he will ever do it (*Dani* 2003: 41, emphasis added).

The lack of not only settled linguistic norms but settled linguistic authorities contributed to a perception among some of my interlocutors that language was chaotic or not normal in Bosnia.

### **Linguistic Chaos: Discourses of Nostalgia and Normalcy**

Near the beginning of my field research in Bosnia in the fall of 2006, I met for coffee with a friend, an assistant professor of literature at the University of Sarajevo.

We were discussing my research plans to explore how linguistic variation was managed in elementary school classrooms, and he was speculating as to what I might find. “One thing is for sure,” he said. “No matter what else you find, I am sure that one of your conclusions will be that the linguistic situation right now is chaos.”

Almost a year later, in a small, primarily Muslim town in north central Bosnia, I was having coffee with my next door neighbor, Zlata, one chilly October evening. The conversation turned to the topic of language. “Bosnian is an imaginary language,” said Zlata, a Bosnian Croat who has lived her whole life in or near this town. I asked her what language she speaks. She paused and pursed her lips, “Serbo-Croatian,” she finally responds. “That’s what I learned in school.” She then went on to say, “This must be a hard time for you to be here to learn our language. People themselves don’t know how to speak. Everyone is so insecure.”

My interlocutors often compared the linguistic situation in Bosnia today unfavorably to the past, drawing on images of chaos and insecurity to characterize their current linguistic landscape. Such assessments draw on idealized images of Serbo-Croatian as an authentic and uncontroversial linguistic standard and by contrast construct today’s Bosnian as somehow lacking.

While chaos was a common trope people drew on when describing language, everyday interactions were not often characterized by a sense of instability. Friends of mine often confessed—sometimes sheepishly, sometimes proudly—to not knowing whether a particular lexical item was Bosnian or Serbian or being unsure about certain case endings. Yet in interaction, this uncertainty rarely mattered. In fact, it rarely even appeared as uncertainty. Only when language norms were somehow made



to matter—either through an anthropologist’s pointed questions or some interactional trigger that brought them to the forefront—did variety appear chaotic. In this way, I suggest so-called linguistic chaos in Bosnia might best be approached the way Brubaker approaches ethnicity, as an “intermittent happening, a latent possibility that is actualized” (Brubaker 2006). Searching for moments when chaos becomes experientially relevant can shed light on when ideologies of language are brought into conflict with people’s linguistic practices. In Bosnia, this conflict often arises when ideologies about so-called normal languages fail to match language in use.

Such moments are sometimes found in classrooms when official texts and practices of correction are juxtaposed with people’s linguistic practices. For example, one friend of mine told me about a test she had taken in high school in the mid 1990s that asked students to choose between the form *četverica* (standard under Halilović’s pravopis) and *čtvorica* (considered correct under Serbo-Croatian norms). She reported that everyone in her class chose *čtvorica* and had all gotten the answer wrong. Despite learning that *četverica* was the correct form, she reported she continued to use *čtvorica* in her speech.

The same friend, who often worked translating English into the local languages, reported one job where she was translating a document for the mayor of Sarajevo in which she felt she needed to use specifically-Bosnian terms. While much of her translation work took place in international contexts where she judged differences between local languages to be irrelevant, this job for a prominent Sarajevan Bosniak caused her much consternation over whether certain forms were correct or not in Bosnian.

When standard norms were in conflict with ways of speaking, it was often the norms that my interlocutors judged to be lacking rather than their own linguistic skills (see, by contrast, Jaffe 1999, Bilaniuk 2005, Frekko 2006). This mismatch between authoritative texts authored by experts and people's own linguistic intuition only mattered in some moments, but it could be an uncomfortable reminder that the Bosnian language had not yet achieved the legitimacy that many of my interlocutors imagined characterized "normal" languages or that was remembered as characterizing Serbo-Croatian during the Yugoslav era.

Language is not the only domain of social life in Bosnia today that is sometimes cast as inferior to its socialist-era counterpart. Café culture is deemed to be less vibrant, less politically meaningful, less conducive to social networking than it used to be. Schools are criticized for providing an inferior education and offering fewer material benefits to students. The family is considered to be in decline, as even relatively young adults speak scornfully of the way kids roam the streets or of how little authority teachers have in schools these days. Politicians are constantly described as corrupt and ineffectual. Such discourses are not uncommon in post-Socialist states (Humphrey 1999, Haney 1999, Pesman 2000, Maček 2007), as new governments and social organizations attempt to establish themselves as politically and morally legitimate leaders while citizens, in some cases, continue to make claims and draw categories based on socialist-era identifications and entitlements. In this light, discourses about linguistic chaos are one way in which Bosnians can criticize the changes that the end of socialism has brought to their country.

Many people I spoke with were critical of certain aspects of socialism, such as a perceived marginalization of the Bosnian nation or a system that some claimed rewarded conformity rather than innovation. However, the violent end to socialism in Yugoslavia resulted in a new state that sometimes seemed inferior because of the many disruptions to social patterns, new forms of material and social inequality, devastated infrastructure, and limited state ability to provide basic services. It also brought a new place in the symbolic geography of Europe for Bosnia. Before, as part of Yugoslavia, many Bosnians told me they enjoyed relative prestige across Europe. Now, after the war, many pundits and commentators have placed Bosnia firmly in the “Balkan Zone” (for academic discussions of this othering, see Todorova 1997, Hayden and Bakić-Hayden 1992, Sells 1996), and one commentator suggested Bosnia was really best classified as Middle Eastern (in Sells 1996).

Nostalgia for socialism, among certain people or in certain moments, is widespread across much of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In Bosnia, I suggest, that nostalgia is less about the material comforts and the predictability of life under socialism—although it is certainly sometimes about that—and more about perceptions that the predominant international image of Bosnia has changed from cosmopolitan to backwards. During my fieldwork, people often told me of the days in which a Yugoslav passport had more value on the black market than a US one, or of eating pineapples and having Chanel perfume when other socialist countries struggled with shortages for basic necessities. These were the days when a Yugoslav passport allowed one to go anywhere, while today a Bosnian passport allows one to go

virtually nowhere. In those days, Westerners vacationed in Sarajevo, while today Westerners quite literally run Sarajevo.

If Bosnian nostalgia for socialism is at least partly about a perceived loss of international status, a loss of order and clarity in language comes to stand in for a loss of order and clarity in other areas of social practice. As Bosnians struggle to restore the image of their country in the eyes of the rest of the world—as they seek to reassert that they are indeed European—they struggle to remake their language, or their image of their language, in a way that is believed to be European. I was told often that English was the simplest language, that I couldn't understand the problems in Bosnia because language was so straightforward in America. After all, my interlocutors suggested, we Americans never entered into silly debates about whether we spoke one language or many. Language in the U.S., it was implied, lacked the political divisiveness, the social explosivity that it had in Bosnia.

While some discourses discussed above present Bosnian as a confusing language and suggest that such confusion fractures internal social and communicative spaces, other discourses present this confusion as some sort of opacity to outsiders, as something uniquely—and often typically—Bosnian that non-Bosnians cannot understand (see Shryock 2004 on cultural intimacy).

In a popular article, Ridjanović writes the following:

When we insist that we speak three different languages, we won't be able to respond to the many questions foreigners (and other reasonable people) will eventually ask us. Imagine that a foreigner learns our language at Sarajevo Interlingua, where it is called Bosnian... He goes to Neum where he is told that there they speak Croatian. "Aaaa," he wonders, "but here I'm using my Bosnian from Sarajevo perfectly well, are you sure that your language isn't Bosnian?" he asks. "No, no," says the man from Neum, "Our language is Croatian and only

Croatian and only Croatian and only Croatian.” . . . The poor foreigner is totally confused. He searches out a linguist from Neum to explain the confusing situation to him. “No problem,” [says the linguist,] . . . You see, there exists an enormous difference between Bosnian and Croatian. . . . In Croatian . . . . we have at least 37 words that they don’t in Bosnia, and researchers are hot on the trail of 4 ½ more.” . . . “Well wait a minute,” the foreigner says, “In New Orleans English we have at least 337 words that are different from the English in New York.” “Aaaaa,” says the linguist, “But words don’t have the same value for you as for us. It’s been scientifically shown that one word in a Balkan language is worth 1000 English words” . . . The poor foreigner is now totally confused and he has a headache from this Balkan Babylon. He takes an aspirin, which doesn’t help him, and totally aware now of the danger that threatens him—years of confusion leading to madness—he leaves this damned place forever (Ridjanović 2007).

In this example, it is the foreigner who represents common sense—he is the one who can see the plain linguistic facts through the mass of impenetrable “Balkan Babel.” Against a backdrop of presumed Western normalcy, it takes a foreigner (or a Bosnian’s voicing of a foreigner<sup>61</sup>) to see the Bosnian situation clearly.

While such discourses about chaos and impenetrability provide a means of social critique for Bosnians, they can also be discourses of pride or modes of defense vis à vis a Western world that defines Bosnia as backwards, tangled, and confused.<sup>62</sup> Thus, for example, while Ridjanović’s excerpt presents the foreigner as the voice of reason par excellence, an academic article by Hanka Vajzović suggests something of the opposite. Vajzović presents foreigners—who wield a significant amount of power in political and cultural forums in BiH—as bumbling fools who, unaware of the nuance of language politics in Bosnia, comically mistranslate words in their fervent attempt to enforce linguistic equality or formulate clumsy policies that the locals must then overcome:

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<sup>61</sup> I’d like to thank Andrew Gilbert for pointing out this layering of voices to me.

<sup>62</sup> I’d like to thank Elissa Helms for this insight.

As for linguistic policy and equality of languages for “our foreigners,” two variants are enough: one— “mediocre” Croatian (approximately, Bosnian in the Croatian way) using the Latin script, and the other— Serbian, more or less “*ekavian*,” using Cyrillic. As soon as that appears unacceptable or biased to someone, then the problem is left to a translator. So, in the majority of cases, the important symbolic function of language ceases to exist. In contrast, merely decoding the message is considered a success (2001: 83).

Vajzović presents the foreigners—those who are supposed to preserve peace, implement reconciliation measures and guide Bosnia back towards Europe—as unequipped for the task.

While many of my interlocutors bristled at a perceived paternalism towards them on the part of Western governments and NGOs and earnestly urged me to correct though my dissertation what they saw as essential misunderstandings about Bosnia and its history, many of them also drew on tropes of a Balkan mentality to explain certain things about social practice. In particular, although the multiethnic composition of Bosnia is at the heart of what both Westerners and Bosnians see as Bosnia’s most complicating factor, there is often a sort of tragic pride in this multi-multiness—to borrow a phrase from Robert Hayden (Hayden 2000). Bosnia, and its perceived microcosm in Sarajevo, is presented as the ultimate melting pot, a crossroads of history where parallel cultural streams came together to form a syncretic Bosnian culture.

While representatives of the European community in Bosnia present themselves as leaders, as teachers, and as experts in the fields of multi-cultural education and tolerance for diversity, one Sarajevo professor I spoke with suggested that Europe is still not ready to accept the peculiar polymorphic culture of Bosnia: “Bosnia is a very specific case in European culture,” he told me. “It was supposed to

be to our advantage; unfortunately it became, in the end, tragic at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Europe is still not able to recognize the very simple fact that Europe wants to be tomorrow that what Bosnia was for centuries—a polymorphic culture based on respect of others and self-respect for individual particularity. Europe is still not ready.”

### **Conclusion**

Bosnian standard language forms have not achieved legitimacy. Alternate imaginings of standard are also contested, both because they are not normed in the expected places or in the expected ways. Yet acceptance of the label “Bosnian” for the language has achieved political and social acceptance among most Bosnians—the belief that since Bosnia exists as a state, Bosnian should exist as a language is rarely questioned (for which inhabitants of Bosnia this language should be considered native is still debated). This gap between the perception that nations have languages and the view that Bosnia, currently, does not (in the official, codified, uncontested sense) creates room for slippage. Urban writes: “If there is bound to be a slippage between metadiscourse and discourse—between the ideology of language use and its empirical characteristics—there is also bound to be a pressure on the two to align” (Urban 1991).

Closing this gap becomes the work of experts (cf. Mitchell 2002). While the descriptivist trend prominent among some linguists would counsel speakers to trust their linguistic intuitions, the social, political and moral loading of language choices in Bosnia today can make trusting such intuitions difficult.

As historical evidence gets marshaled in various ways, as it gets aligned and linked with arguments about linguistic structure, people's linguistic practice, as well as their linguistic intuitions, become vulnerable to charges of inauthenticity by a wide range of criteria. The discourses about linguistic chaos that circulate throughout Bosnia are a manifestation of this. As the politicization of language grows and the debates get more heated, so does the perception of language as inaccessible to the layperson. Language becomes increasingly formatted as a scientific object, inaccessible to the layperson, such that journalists can lament the failure of a qualified expert to show up to a linguistic forum and resolve the debate once and for all, while a neighbor of mine questioned whether I could really learn Bosnian at this time, since no one knew how they should speak.

While many of my interlocutors took pains to point out to me that they considered this to be something of an academic problem, that daily communication was not hindered, perceptions of linguistic chaos are problematic for certain language professionals, like teachers, whose jobs deal with policing language norms. I turn to this issue in more detail in the following chapters. In the following chapter, I first provide a framework for understanding the relationship between the Bosnian state, language, and schools.



## **Chapter Four: Segregated Education and Curricula Reforms: Learning to Live Together?**

The story of education in Bosnia is often told as a story of the state. Drawing on the commonplace narrative that the codification and spread of a national standard language through schools was essential to the rise of the modern nation-state and remains a key way in which national communities imagine and legitimate themselves (Hobsbawm 1992, Anderson 1991, Weber 1976, Haugen 1966), scholars studying education in Bosnia have often focused on the ways in which education in general and language education in particular have been tied to state-building efforts (see Okey 1986, Jelavich 1983, 1989, 1990, 1994, Wachtel 1998, McCreight 2002, Lampe 1996, Torsti 2007).

A dominant theme in these studies has often been the perceived failure of education to foster a unified national (or supra-national Yugoslav) consciousness. The perceived failures of the first and second Yugoslav states are sometimes traced to the decentralized and separate education systems in place before and during the Yugoslav era. The historian Charles Jelavich, for example, conducted studies of textbooks in use in the South Slavic region both prior to 1914 and during the interwar period and concluded that material in these textbooks did not support a unified Yugoslav national consciousness, despite political attempts to build a Yugoslav state. Jelavich

concludes: “These prewar textbooks also help to explain the unfortunate course which South Slavic affairs took in the interwar years and even the tragic events of World War II” (1983: 619).

Similarly, the literary scholar Andrew Wachtel’s study of education during the socialist era points to significant differences across republic curricula in the area of literature, blaming the cultural sphere for the failure of the Yugoslav state. Writing about the failure of a proposal for a federal core curriculum in the 1980s, Wachtel writes: “Given these attitudes toward the central government and the idea of a shared culture, it is hard to see how Yugoslavia could have survived, even had the most able and compromising political leaders emerged after the death of Tito” (1998: 189).

Such narratives are echoed today by scholars and international observers who express concern about the fractured nature of education in present-day Bosnia. The following statement from a 2007 report by the OSCE captures the dominant discourse among international policy makers:

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, each of the country’s three “constituent peoples” has their own curricula. In many cases, students attend schools only with those of their own ethnicity; in certain cases they attend classes separated by ethnicity within the same school building. This solidifies ethnic divisions within communities. It also leaves little room for national minorities or those of mixed ethnicity. These divisions in education impede reconciliation and state building (OSCE 2007: 6).

Such perspectives draw on two circulating discourses: the first suggests that the Balkan region—epitomized in Bosnia—is a fractured place of deep divisions and cultural narcissism. The second is a more academic discourse that tightly groups education, standard language, and the modern nation state in a co-dependent triad.

Linguistic anthropologists since Boas (as well as scholars in other disciplines) have argued against pre-conceptions that monolingual nations are a natural or primordial social grouping (Boas 1911, Silverstein 1996, Milroy 2001), painstakingly documenting ways in which standard language comes to be naturalized and politically necessary on the national and international stage (Lemon 2000, Jaffe 1999, Irvine and Gal 2000, Silverstein 1996, Spitulnik 1996, Errington 2000). However, much of the literature today takes for granted that in such state-infused contexts as the school, linguistic variation is problematic for state- or nation-building movements.

A number of insightful studies have focused on how national movements and the politics of recognition are played out in classrooms where pressures toward standard language usage have erased various social groups, marginalized certain linguistic phenomena, or created long-lasting social inequalities (Heller and Martin-Jones 2001, Wortham and Rymes 2003, Heath 1983). While such studies may be valid in their context, they reinforce preconceptions that schools work in favor of state-sponsored linguistic ideologies, at least in official ways.

In my fieldwork, however, I found something of the opposite situation. As described in the previous chapter, differences among standard languages in Bosnia had the potential to be quite controversial in settings outside the classroom ranging from media debates to Internet forums to discussions among friends. However, in the classroom, such differences were rarely the subject of explicit metalinguistic commentary, and when they were remarked upon, such commentary was generally uncontroversial. The next three chapters are devoted to exploring this seeming paradox.

In this chapter, I first review several of the major studies on education in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1878. While I am sympathetic to the arguments many of these authors make with respect to the biased and partial representation of ethnic difference they find in textbooks, I will argue that their narratives serve to reproduce an ideologically shaped image of how languages, states, and schools co-construct each other.

In the second part, I aim to position my own work with respect to what I see as the major question previous studies of education in Bosnia have addressed—is it really all just about (failed) state-building? While this question will run through the remaining chapters of this dissertation, in this chapter, I present an analysis of textbooks and a small survey I conducted. I will suggest that a gap may be emerging with respect to linguistic ideologies although perhaps not with respect to linguistic practice.

## **History of Schooling in Bosnia: A History of Stalemates?**

### ***Pre-Yugoslav Schooling***

The first public schools in Bosnia date back to the Austro-Hungarian era. When the Austro-Hungarian Empire took over administrative control of Bosnia in 1878, they encountered a population with illiteracy rates estimated to be as high as 97 percent (Dizdar 1996, Russo 2000). Up until that point, education had been carried out almost entirely through the religious communities. The Austro-Hungarians entered a country with 720 *mektebs* (traditional Islamic schools), 56 Orthodox schools, and 54 Catholic schools serving a total population of over one million

(Magaš 1998: 2). Education during this time was largely reserved for the elite and urban segments of the population.

While education during the Ottoman era had been largely decentralized and left to the various religious communities, the Austro-Hungarian administration attempted to create a streamlined public education system, both to demonstrate the allegedly modern way they were administering their new province and to diminish the influence of the religious communities in the civil arena (Russo 2000, Magaš 1998). In general, the lasting impact of this period is often considered to be the first steps towards universalizing education.<sup>63</sup>

However, according to the historian Robin Okey, the still relatively low levels of education at the time reflected the fact that while the Austro-Hungarian regime used the rhetoric of a civilizing mission to justify its work in cultural and educational spheres in Bosnia, its concerns were more about consolidating power and stifling expressions of South Slav nationalism deemed threatening to the empire, particularly Serbian nationalism, which was considered especially dangerous due to the neighboring presence of an independent Serbia.

Thus, according to Okey, the Austro-Hungarians concentrated their school-building efforts in areas where Orthodox schools already existed, while other communities without schools might wait several years before a request for a school

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<sup>63</sup> While only 32 public primary schools were opened between 1878-1881, by 1912—the year the first legislation on mandatory schooling (The Compulsory Education Act) was passed—there were 331 public schools in the country, in addition to a growing number of private schools—either religious or vocational in nature. By 1910, the number of *mektebs* had increased to 1,970, while by the 1913-14 school year there were 123 Orthodox schools. The number of Catholic schools had dropped to 28, due primarily to the decreasing influence of the Franciscans and the gradual closings of their schools, after the Austro-Hungarians negotiated with the Vatican to introduce a secular Catholic hierarchy in Bosnia (Dizdar 1996: 2, McCreight 2002). However, Dizdar estimates that in 1912, only about 25 percent of school-age children attended primary school.

would be realized (Okey 1986: 326). In addition, Okey reports that the government imposed a series of restrictions on confessional schools, including an 1892 law requiring Serb teachers to have government certificates of reliability (330).

The first Austro-Hungarian administrator in Bosnia, Benjamin Kallay, wanted to use public schools in the region to develop an inter-confessional Bosnian identity free from Serbian or Croatian influence. His initiatives towards this end included teaching a mother tongue labeled Bosnian.<sup>64</sup> Yet this first state-sponsored effort toward creating a Bosnian identity that spanned religious communities was short-lived, as Kallay's perceived repression of Serb cultural and religious expression was met with significant resistance by Serbian leaders. By 1905 Kallay's successor Istrian von Burian adopted a policy that abandoned many of Kallay's Bosnianising initiatives in favor of greater cultural autonomy for different groups in Bosnia (Okey 1986: 331, see also chapter three). At the outbreak of WWI, education in Bosnia was still reaching a fairly small proportion of the population. Okey describes the era as a period of flux between Herderian, modernizing pressures toward Yugoslavism and struggles over confessionally based conceptions of ethnicity (337).

Writing about the same era, Charles Jelavich claims that the success of the Yugoslav state depended on the creation of a united Yugoslav identity. However, in a study of pre-war textbooks in Serbia, Jelavich argues that pre-war education systems throughout Croatia and Serbia did not foster any pan-Slavic, Yugoslav, or Illyrian<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The existence of Bosnian as a school subject during this period is often cited by scholars and laypersons defending the name of the Bosnian language and its place in today's curriculum. See chapter two for a more detailed discussion of Kallay's regime in Bosnia.

<sup>65</sup> The Illyrian movement was a 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophy popular primarily in Croatia that promoted a pan-Slavic identity. The Croatian linguistic reformer Ljudevit Gaj is one well-known advocate of the Illyrian idea, but Gaj's linguistic reforms eventually lost out to Vuk Karadžić's. For more on the Illyrian movement, see Despalatović 1975.

identity but instead taught students almost exclusively about their national history, geography, and literature and promoted certain nationalist myths with respect to land claims or historical events (Jelavich 1990, 1983).<sup>66</sup> Thus, for Jelavich, one reason for the failure of the interwar Yugoslav state was the lack of an educated, administrative class who embraced the idea of Yugoslavism (1994: 127, 134).

Jelavich presumes that Yugoslavia's success as a political unit was dependent upon the state's ability to create a single national consciousness—a point Wachtel challenges, as I'll discuss below (1983: 601). Jelavich presents examples from Serbian geography texts, which presented linguistic similarity across the South Slavic region as support for a Greater Serbia, as evidence that schools promoted distinct national identities (613) and points to the introduction of the term Serbo-Croatian in 1914 as evidence of small movements towards Yugoslavism (617).<sup>67</sup>

Thus two important studies of pre-Yugoslav education focus primarily on the challenges school reformers faced in unifying and de-politicizing education as well as the failure of education to foster a unified civic identity across the region.

### ***Yugoslav Era***

Following World War I, the system of public education in Bosnia remained largely unchanged in the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, although its growth slowed considerably, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The new kingdom attempted to unify the seven disparate education systems inherited from

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<sup>66</sup> Jelavich based his conclusions on analysis of a large number of textbooks. He seems to focus almost entirely on Serbian and Croatian texts, with Slovenian texts discussed to a lesser degree.

<sup>67</sup> Jelavich doesn't give any basis to evaluate the uptake of texts. He mentions the esteem Serbs held at the time for both books and school teachers (603) and from there seems to presume that textbook content can provide insight into the attitudes of students.

the various sociopolitical structures that were united in the first Yugoslav state, but faced both practical obstacles and political resistance to doing so and eventually hesitantly allowed each region to maintain its pre-war system (Jelavich 1994: 129).

Jelavich's survey of textbooks and education policy in use during the interwar period suggests that although Yugoslav leaders attempted to impose federal educational structures and bring various curricula closer together, the state lacked the power, the funds, and the political mandate to do so (130). Even under the dictatorship of King Alexander proclaimed in 1929, mandates to unify the education system did not result in significant differences in curricula content or the worldviews they were presumed to foster:

Thus the bitter divisive debates over the constitution merely confirmed the fact that they were three separate nations, which were not ready to sacrifice a millennium of history and tradition for the Yugoslav concept ... The situation and the differences between the component nationalities was expressed in the textbooks and by the fact that no acceptable education laws were implemented. Furthermore, when King Alexander sought, through his dictatorship, to impose the unitarist concept in order to create a new Yugoslav person and identity out of the multi-national, multi-religious, multi-cultural and polyglot peoples it was almost a foregone conclusion that the Yugoslav idea would fail as a unifying principle (Jelavich 1994: 139).

Evaluations of the success of schooling during the first Yugoslav era rely heavily on one's definition of what it meant to be Yugoslav. Jelavich views Yugoslavism as a homogeneous concept meant to replace individual national identities:

Yet the ultimate success of Yugoslavism was dependent on the acceptance by Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes of the basic premise that they were in essence one people, and that eventually they would no longer give primacy to their Serbianism, Croatianism, and



Slovenianism, but would offer their undivided loyalty to the larger Yugoslav concept (1983: 601).<sup>68</sup>

Thus for Jelavich the side-by-side inclusion of three national anthems (for three separate nations) in a 1920 Serbian 4<sup>th</sup> grade reader is an example of the failure of pre-war education to promote a sense of belonging to a common nation.

By contrast, Wachtel, in his study of Yugoslav cultural politics between 1918 and 1991, defines the Yugoslav concept as complementary to, not in competition with, existing national identities. While Wachtel concurs with Jelavich that pre-WWI readers worked to promote separate national consciousnesses, he differs in suggesting that the organization of interwar readers<sup>69</sup> gave a “strong impression of the unity of Yugoslav literature” (98), noting that literary selections were grouped thematically rather than by nationality of the author and that biographies identified individuals by region, not by ethnicity. Wachtel responds to Jelavich’s claims about the inclusion of three national anthems side-by-side by writing: “But, as we have seen, most versions of a synthetic Yugoslav culture included a recognition of its diversity, so there is nothing subversive about this [the inclusion of three national anthems]” (1998: 262).

While Jelavich finds the lack of one common identity to be fatal to the Yugoslav idea, Wachtel views the concept as more flexible—as more of a precursor to the supranational brotherhood and unity formulation of the Tito era. Jelavich focuses on the failure of the state to impose a unitarist Yugoslav notion while

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<sup>68</sup> What the concept of Yugoslavia meant to various of its proponents and opponents has been analyzed by a number of scholars (see Banac 1984, Lampe 1996, Donia and Fine 1994, Todorova 1997, Halpern and Kideckel 2000). My point here is not to argue in favor of one view or another but to point out how they are linked to evaluations of schooling.

<sup>69</sup> The specific examples Wachtel gives in this section are based largely on a middle school reader from 1928 published in Belgrade.

Wachtel traces the evolution of this notion into a synthetic idea of Yugoslav identity and is thus more optimistic about the extent to which the model took hold:

Thus, despite the political instability and nationalist posturing that marked the first Yugoslav state, cultural critics, artists, and writers worked hard to devise and implement a culture that could serve the country's nation-building needs. The strength of belief in some form of a Yugoslav nation among South Slavic elites in this period can perhaps best be measured by the fact that despite all the political problems of the interwar period and despite the horrific nationalist excesses that characterized the war years, there was great support for the reconstitution of Yugoslavia after the war (1998: 126).

It is striking how neatly such analyses—as well as points of contention among scholars—mirror questions that would arise 50 years later—Had Yugoslavia (later, Bosnia) been successful in creating a Yugoslav (Bosnian) identity? Did being Yugoslav preclude also being Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian? Were national divisions too strong for a Yugoslav (Bosnian) state to work? What was the role of education, both before and after the war, in fostering divisiveness or unity?

The more tightly models of a successful Yugoslavia adhere to traditional definitions of the nation-state, the more likely education is found to be lacking. The dominance of this traditional model can be seen in both historical studies and in current evaluations of schooling, as I discuss below.

Following the end of World War II and the consolidation of power by Tito's communist party, another attempt was made to unify the educational systems. Private and religious schools were officially closed, and Tito sought to use the education system to instill socialist principles, to develop brotherhood and unity, and to achieve universal education.

While education was officially decentralized following World War II, there remained an element of surveillance from Belgrade, particularly in the early years of socialism. However, each republic wrote its own curricula and the Federal Ministry of Education was abolished in 1948 in favor of the republic ministries and a group of federal committees (Soljan 1991, Wachtel 1998). The historian John Lampe writes:

The decision marked the end of a debate within the KPJ [Communist Party of Yugoslavia] about the centralized preparation of uniform school texts. Representatives from Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had argued that uniform texts were good Soviet practice and that their republican resources were too limited to publish their own texts anyway. Croatian, Slovenian and some Serbian representatives wanted to publish their own texts. They prevailed in the crucial cultural disciplines of history and literature on what was supposed to be a temporary basis. A variety of federal councils were created over the years, beginning in 1948, in order to reverse this decision but none succeeded (Lampe 1996: 233).

While post-war difficulties delayed the writing of new curricula until 1947, already by 1948 a conference was convened in Belgrade due to official concerns over differences in the history curricula. Revised curricula in 1949 were much more uniform. History, as well as language and literature, remained the most difficult subject material for officials concerned with brotherhood and unity. According to Lampe, while curricula were fairly uniform in the early years of Tito's Yugoslavia, as central control loosened, curricula became very different (see also Wachtel 1998 for a detailed study of shifting presentations in textbooks of literature and literary figures throughout this era).

According to the historian Wolfgang Hopken, this decentralization was one reason for what he views as the ultimate failure of Yugoslav education—the varied curricula content and failure to teach a common historical narrative resulted in a

generation of Yugoslavs who developed only a superficial understanding of either Yugoslav socialism or brotherhood and unity. Hopken writes:

The problem with textbooks in Titoist Yugoslavia, therefore, was not that they promoted nationalism (they did not), but that they did so little to contribute to a political culture prepared for the dangers of ethnocentrism. Their weaknesses in terms of concepts and content paved the way for alternative historical memories that apparently did offer a more convincing historical identity once the system came under nationalist pressure (1997: 93-94).

The problem of decentralization and a common curriculum was one that would return as a major issue in post-war Bosnia, although, in keeping with the general trend toward greater autonomy for the republics in the 1970s and 1980s, it does not appear to have been particularly controversial at the time.

By the 1980s, a basic structure of schooling was in place that would remain after the Bosnian war in the 1990s with minor changes. Primary school was mandatory for eight years, from the age of 6 to 15. Secondary school was divided into multiple types of institutions, lasting either three or four years. Completion of a four-year secondary school program paved the way for admission to higher education, provided a student passed the entrance exams given by the university. Secondary schools included the four-year *gimnazija*, following a college preparatory curriculum, and three- or four-year professional schools (*stručne i tehničke škole*) with vocational orientations such as medical, electrical, or pedagogical. Following the end of primary school, students would apply for admission to the secondary school they wished to attend. Admission, particularly to *gimnazija* could be competitive and not all students were accepted. Although there have been some changes, such as the introduction of

nine-year mandatory primary education (still not fully implemented), this system remains more or less in place today.<sup>70</sup>

By the early 1980s, education was said to be reaching 100 percent of primary school age children, with 70 percent continuing on to secondary schools. However, the rapid expansion of the educational system was expensive and constituted a significant drain on the republic budget. The pace of school construction did not meet official goals, resulting in a period of stagnation compared to the marked growth of previous decades. Additionally, the declining state of the Yugoslav economy led to decreasing job prospects for an increasingly university-educated population, a fact that led to rising urbanization and exacerbated certain demographic imbalances which were particularly notable between certain regions such as Serbia and Kosovo (Lampe 1996: 334).

After Tito's death, education in the 1980s was facing other problems as well, as inter-republic tensions grew and the political situation became increasingly unstable. Lack of funding, political insecurity, and changes across other socialist countries in the early 1990s were prompting some education officials in Bosnia to begin considering reforms to the basic philosophies of education. The outbreak of war in 1992 interrupted these debates about reform.

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<sup>70</sup> Friends of mine in ZD town reported that admission to *gimnazija* now was not nearly as competitive as it used to be. They claimed that the reason for this was that as school enrollments shifted after the war, *gimnazije* had a harder time filling their slots and had to accept less qualified students. In Sarajevo, by contrast, I was often told how difficult it was to get into *gimnazija*.

### ***War Schooling In Bosnia***

The story of the continuation of schooling in Bosnia during the war is often told as a story of resilience. While some parts of the country were further removed from the front lines than others, allowing for more continuity in the physical structures of schooling and mobility to and from, schooling in places like Sarajevo had to be almost totally re-created in wartime conditions. Aside from concerns about basic issues like classroom safety and procurement of instructional materials, the war created massive internal population movements that impacted children's access to education as well as the population teachers needed to serve. Additionally, the new social and political structures required rewritten textbooks and curricula. While the Serbian and Croatian areas of Bosnia during the war generally took their materials from Serbia and Croatia respectively, the area under the control of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) had to produce their own materials in wartime conditions. Bosniak education officials undertook the production of a new curriculum in 1993 and a limited production of some textbooks in 1994.

Despite the enormous challenges, the work of schooling—of attending classes, giving grades, passing classes, and producing education materials—did not cease during the war. This is perhaps most well documented in the city of Sarajevo, which, despite 44 months of siege, continued to operate schools. Schooling in Sarajevo, like other seemingly incongruous siege activities such as applying makeup or holding a Miss Beseiged Sarajevo beauty pageant, is often depicted as a stubborn refusal by Sarajevans to allow the war to invade every corner of their lives.

The imagery of the military battle for the country is employed by student and teacher alike to describe the psychological battle to

preserve the illusion of normality and the logistical battle to reconstruct an educational system under siege. This imagery suggests that “the battle of the mind” became a form of patriotic resistance against the enemy expressed in the very terminology of the “war schools” of Sarajevo. In my view, the educators of Sarajevo took it upon themselves, with virtually no outside assistance, to reconstruct an educational system “on that most intangible yet fundamental battleground” in order to create what they perceived as their own frontline in the defense of the besieged city (Berman 2001: 7).

David Berman, a professor of education at the University of Pittsburgh, is the author of two books about war schools in Sarajevo, one about a school in the isolated suburb of Dobrinja (often described as a siege within a siege) and the other, from which the above excerpt is taken, about Treća Gimnazija in Novo Sarajevo, a large and prestigious public high school that achieved local prominence after the war when Bill Clinton visited it in 1998 following a U.S. donation of 2 million KM (*konvertibilni maraka*, the local currency) towards reconstruction.

Berman, in his study of Treća Gimnazija, attempts to provide a detailed look at one *ratna škola* or war school, an institution he defines as a school that continued to operate during the war despite lacking a single, permanent physical location. While media reports often emphasized the ad hoc, improvised nature of wartime education in Bosnia, Berman attempts to track how education was organized and systematized even during the war. He does this through a focus on the local, community school, which, in effect, became the center of the education system during the war.

War broke out in the spring of 1992 in Bosnia, effectively ending that school year in April. While the 1992/1993 school year would not start until March of 1993 and would last for only 16 weeks, by 1993/1994, the school year began on time in September and lasted for 30 weeks out of an envisioned 36 (Berman 2001: 13).

According to Berman, this delay in beginning the 1992/1993 school year was not so much a failure to get schools organized in time for a September start as a necessary period of coordination for schools to be functional in the long term once they did start.

During the spring and summer of 1992, teachers, professors, and education officials met to develop a framework for education during the war, including assigning schools districts that were responsible for registering children, finding safe locations for classes to be held, and developing curricula and procuring instructional materials.

Education officials presented the decision to continue with schools primarily as an effort to “normalize the lives of children living in totally impossible circumstances” (Jahić 1996: 11, quoted in Berman 2001: 50). Teachers were obligated to maintain school records and record grades as well as to facilitate the process of entrance exams for secondary school and higher education. The continuation of a long-term educational system—one that continued the processes of ranking, sorting and tracking students—was an important aspect of the efforts to keep education operating during the war. That is, while the war disrupted the *physical stability* of the school, Berman’s concept of *ratna škola* is designed to emphasize the *administrative* and *functional* continuity of local schools.<sup>71</sup>

Teachers and administrators went to great lengths to preserve this continuity in the form of records, sometimes recruiting soldiers to help them retrieve record

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<sup>71</sup> The system as a whole could not be said to be characterized by continuity because of the tripartite division that arose in Bosnia following the front lines of the war and institutionalized via Dayton. However in Sarajevo and other areas under the control of the ARBiH, the notion of continuity is applicable.



books from schools or individuals in dangerous locations. Of particular importance is the *odjeljenska knjiga*, or homeroom book, in which all grades and attendance for a particular homeroom were recorded. As Berman points out, the maintenance of such documents is essential to the purpose of schools, and college preparatory schools in particular:

In other words, the documents of school attendance and academic progress were considered of such importance that school administrators would request the services of the Bosnian Army forces defending Dobrinja to secure the grade book for a single class. These records remained critical documents for students at schools such as Treća Gimnazija, an academic preparatory school designed to prepare students for a university education. Without the opportunity for students to enroll in one of the Faculties (or Colleges) of the University of Sarajevo, a school such as Treća Gimnazija simply had no purpose, even during wartime (70).

Thus the continuation of schooling during the war was not only about normalization during the war but also was an essential act of looking forward to life after the war. It was also a way in which the fledgling Bosnian state looked forward and legitimated itself. Just as the existence of a mother tongue language class labeled Bosnian during the Austro-Hungarian era became a key way in which that linguistic label was legitimated nearly 100 years later, the establishment of an education system that could be said to provide continuity would become an important part of how today's Bosnian state established itself as state-like.<sup>72</sup>

Crucial to such wartime state-making efforts was curricula content. While curricula in the Serb and Croat controlled areas was more or less adopted wholesale

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<sup>72</sup> The literature on politics in Bosnia and state-building in general uses a number of different terms such as “failed state” or “quasi state” to talk about political entities like Bosnia that function as states in name only. Currently, many analysts are quite pessimistic about the future of the Bosnian state (Hayden 2000, Chandler 2000, see also various articles in the popular media on Bosnia). It is only with significant effort on the part of certain international actors that Bosnia functions as a state on the international stage.

from Serbia and Croatia, Bosnian officials worked to produce, during war conditions, new curricula that reflected the relatively new and still embattled existence of the Bosnian state. It was not until 1996 that the new government actually was able to pass new laws with respect to education, but efforts to write a new curriculum were underway by 1993 via the Federal Ministry of Education. By 1994, the books were ready for publication, which occurred in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The authors of the textbooks were primarily Bosniak, although Enes Karić, the minister of education at the time, reported collaboration with authors of other nationalities as well. Practical considerations like travel and communication made collaboration with authors outside of Sarajevo more difficult. As for payment, Karić notes: “Usually it was 5 candles, 10 kilograms of flour, 5 or 6 sets of batteries for transistor radios, and so on” (in Magaš 1998: 6). International governments as well as George Soros’s Open Society Fund provided funding to print the 1.6 million textbooks, estimated to cost 7 million deutschemarks. The textbooks were ready for distribution in the fall of 1994; however, the logistics were somewhat complicated:

With the closing of the “Blue Route,” the makeshift road that ran over Mount Igman, and then around the eastern end of the airport runway, the textbooks could not be brought into the city by vehicle. Instead, they had to be unloaded from trucks near the tunnel entrance in Butmir on the southwest side of the airport. They were then carried through the tunnel that ran some eight hundred meters in length under the airport runway to Dobrinja on the city side of the airport to the northeast. . . . As the *School Annual* indicates, the distribution of these textbooks to the schools of Sarajevo occurred during the latter months of 1994 “with the help of the Army” (Berman 141).

The same *School Annual* indicates that this process itself was delayed as UNHCR and UNPROFOR negotiated with Serb forces about allowing passage of the

trucks. Berman notes that *Treća Gimnazija*'s records indicate they had received the textbooks by November 9 (ibid.).

According to Karić, distribution outside of Sarajevo was accomplished by bribing UNPROFOR soldiers to distribute the texts even in enclaves like Srebrenica and Goražde in Serb-controlled eastern Bosnia.<sup>73</sup> However, areas controlled by the Croatian army (HDZ) would not allow the distribution of the textbooks, even after Karić expressed willingness to change content if necessary.

The first set of published textbooks included Bosnian language books for the second, third, and fourth years of primary school; Bosnian grammar books for all four years of high school; a primer for the first year of primary school; readers of literary selections (*čitanka*) for the other seven years of primary school; a fine arts textbook and a computer science textbook for secondary school; and five textbooks each of geography and science for primary and secondary schools; as well as a text titled "Nature and Society" (Magaš 1998: 6).

While the Bosnian government achieved its goal of producing textbooks and curricula for the new state by 1994, the end of the war, officially marked by the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995, would provide a new set of structures impacting education.

Immediately following the Dayton cease-fire, Bosnia and Herzegovina had a tripartite education system characterized by three different curricula and a division that followed the frontlines of the war. Schools were highly segregated, and instructional materials were heavily ideological, particularly in the subject areas of

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<sup>73</sup> See Andreas 2008 for a more general account of ways in which international forces were involved in the distribution and flow of commercial and humanitarian goods in war-time Bosnia.

history, geography, and literature. For example, students in schools using textbooks from Croatia sometimes saw maps in which parts of Bosnia were included within Croatian borders. Students in schools using textbooks from Serbia more often saw maps in which Bosnia didn't exist—the area west of the *Republika Srpska* was presented as blank. Bosnian religious textbooks sometimes used the ethnic slur *četnik* to refer to Serbs.

Dayton has drawn a lot of criticism for institutionalizing the divisions established by the war and creating an unwieldy bureaucracy that is difficult to operate and, 15 years after Dayton was signed, seemingly impossible to integrate (Bose 2002, Chandler 2000, Andreas 2008). This is true for education as for other domains of political infrastructure despite the fact that Dayton never mentions education specifically, creating some legal confusion over the rights and responsibilities of different government actors with respect to education.

The confusion results from differences in interpretation attributed to misunderstandings between the American framework under which Dayton was drafted and the European one in which it has been primarily interpreted (Torsti 2003: 154, Magaš 1998:14-15). In particular, in accordance with the European tradition, all rights and responsibilities not specifically allocated to the state have been devolved to the two entities—the Federation and the Republika Srpska. Thus attempts to centralize and streamline education at the state level have met with significant amounts of resistance and as of 2007, a proposed state-level educational body would only have the power to “coordinate” among lower-level educational bodies and would have no ability to enforce standards if the lower authorities resisted. Additionally, a

yearly conference of the 13 ministers of education (10 representing each of the cantons in the Federation, one representing the Federation itself, one from the Republika Srpska, and one from the Brčko District) had, as of 2007, not met in several years, according to the head of the education division of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Claude Kieffer (fieldnotes September 4, 2007).

Following an immediate post-war period in which education was relegated to the back burner as the cease-fire was solidified and more pressing reconstruction took priority, education regained international attention at the December 1997 Bonn conference, in which the role of education in promoting peace and reconciliation, as well as the failure of the existing education systems to do that, was underscored. For example, earlier that year the Federal Minister of Education had issued a statement supporting the practice of segregating children for instruction in the so-called national group of subjects (language and literature, history, geography, nature and society, religious instruction). It was withdrawn after criticism by the Office of the High Representative, but the incident served to attract more attention on the part of international administrators to the problems surrounding education (Low-Beer 2001).

Much of the focus on education reform in the immediate post-war years occurred in the context of facilitating the process of return refugees. In line with this objective, in early 1998 a working group on textbook reform was established. However, the recommendations of this committee that potentially offensive material be removed were harshly criticized by media for attempting to whitewash history, and no changes were made to textbooks in the 1998/1999 school year.

In 1999, Bosnia applied for membership to the Council of Europe and as a condition of accession agreed to remove objectionable material from all textbooks. However, as this agreement was signed in July, there was no time to produce new books before the fall. Thus, a second agreement was reached about how to handle potentially offensive material in existing texts. The agreement stated that international experts would identify material that would be either removed, by blackening the portions of text deemed problematic, or marked with a stamp that would read: “The following passage contains material of which the truth has not been established, or that may be offensive or misleading. The material is currently under review” (Low-Beer 2001).

Teachers were to receive a list of material to be marked and it was reported that many teachers carried out this activity in class with their students (fieldnotes September 6, 2007). Additionally, many texts that had been blackened remained readable when held up to the light (Torsti 2003:158, see Figure 4-1). Thus the end result was not so much eliminating objectionable material in the classroom but rather highlighting it. Additionally, it was reported that many schools simply did not follow the instructions they received regarding annotating textbooks, forcing education officials to take punitive actions.

In February 2000, a curricula symposium was held at which officials agreed that both alphabets would be taught across the country and that “pupils should be aware of the linguistic variants in the country and the full range of the literary heritage” (Low-Beer 2001).



Perhaps most significantly, an agreement was reached that by June 2002, no textbooks published outside of Bosnia would be used for the national group of subjects. While many Serb and Croat schools had been using textbooks published in Belgrade and Zagreb, respectively, the major result of this agreement was for identical or nearly identical versions of those texts to be published in either Banja Luka or Mostar. Thus the agreement was fulfilled in letter, but hardly in spirit.<sup>74</sup>

A new agreement on textbook review was reached in December of 2001 after field investigation revealed the uneven implementation of the 1999 recommendations. In March of 2002, the Inter-Entity Textbook Review Commission, a group of 24 local experts, was re-established. With respect to language and literature, this group made the following report:

Generally speaking, the literature and language group encountered difficulty in reaching agreements on certain issues. Although the group agreed to remove certain items that were deemed to be inappropriate, much of the discussion time was devoted to a one-sided interpretation of certain linguistical [sic] phenomena. The group agreed and even drafted the biographical data that could be used to describe the life of the authors that was also subject to biased presentation in all textbooks. One of the general remarks was that all textbooks had an unbalanced representation of authors of all three constituent peoples, in which the prominent position was given to authors belonging to only one ethnic group. Unharmonized issues in the mother tongue and literature group:

- The character of the folk literature originating from the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past periods. The folk literature was perceived as either strictly Serb, Croat or Bosniak in character.
- Interpretation and the role of the “*bosančica*” script, medieval tomb stones known as “*stećci*,” the poem of “*Hasanaginica*”
- Interpretation of Bosnian language in general
- General interpretation regarding the history of language; medieval literature, origins of literacy (medieval monuments,

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<sup>74</sup> As late as 2005, I witnessed language textbooks published in Belgrade in the Republika Srpska. By 2007, I was assured by a member of the Pedagogški Zavod (pedagogical council) near *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović* town that all books in use across the RS were published in Banja Luka.



Chart of Ban Kulin), Vienna agreement on language, medieval literature in Dubrovnik, and Berlin Congress

- Interpretation of the term “*bosanski*”

OSCE Report July 2003

As this report shows, and as I will discuss further later, the most contentious issues with regards to language were not particular linguistic forms and their regimentation but instead ideological aspects of language. As I will argue, such discrepancies among the language curricula reveal themselves primarily through different language ideologies rather than diverging linguistic practices.

In this way, language might be said to be the opposite of history. In a 2003 study about history education in Bosnia, Pilvi Torsti found evidence of what she labels “divergent stories, convergent attitudes.” That is, while the content of what students learned in history classes was significantly different, large-scale survey results led Torsti to conclude that Bosnian students of all ethnicities “clustered” together as one national group when their attitudes about a number of topics like nation or war were compared to other countries.<sup>75</sup> Borrowing her turn of phrase, then, I will suggest that language classes might be characterized as “convergent practices, divergent attitudes.”

The year of 2002 saw a flurry of activity in the area of education reform, as the OSCE officially took over the education portfolio from the Office of the High Representative and efforts to harmonize curricula content began in earnest, again with an eye towards facilitating the mobility of return refugees. In particular, aside from concerns about nationalist ideologies in education, the drastically different curricula

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<sup>75</sup> Torsti’s research was based on large-scale survey data and minimal classroom observation. While she analyzed textbooks and other elements of memorial culture to contextualize her research on history and memory, her conclusions are based primarily on survey data.

in use across BiH created practical problems for students who had been refugees in one entity and attended school there and then returned home to a new school system. For example, some material was taught in one grade in the Republika Srpska and another in the Federation. A student who had studied French in the Republika Srpska was likely to return to a school in the Federation where German was offered instead.

A noteworthy decision was made in March 2002, when, as part of the Interim Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children, the various ministers of education signed an agreement that instruction in the so-called national group of subjects could be segregated. That is, they gave students (or more practically, their parents) the right to insist that their children be taught the national group of subjects in the curriculum of their ethnic group. Thus, where students were part of a minority, they were entitled to separate education for these subjects in their chosen curriculum. If there were more than 20 children in a school, the school was obligated to provide a teacher and classroom for these classes. Otherwise, education officials were supposed to facilitate the teaching of these subjects in other, unspecified, ways.<sup>76</sup>

Additionally, at least in the Federation, parents have the right to ask that the name of the language class recorded in the *odjeljenska knjiga* reflect the language the child speaks at home. Theoretically, these schools offer instruction in all three

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<sup>76</sup> While this right remains in place in Bosnia today, when I visited schools in 2007, I was told by various principals that it was rarely invoked. At least one reason for this could be the continued practice of bussing or other practices that avoid the “catchment area” principle in which children are supposed to attend primary school by residence not by nationality. This would create ethnically mixed schools in many places in which the right to separate education might be invoked. In practice, however, the OSCE reports that there is a great deal of evidence that parents instead find ways to send their children to schools in other areas, making for more homogenous classrooms.

standard languages and teachers are supposed to be able to apply the different standard orthographies in their corrections if requested. Thus, one principal in Sarajevo told me that while all children attended the same class with the same teacher and same textbooks (in this case, Bosnian language textbooks), official records could reflect that their child has taken Croatian or Serbian language. She reported that this had never been requested.

The final major initiative of the OSCE was the development and implementation of a Common Core Curricula (CCC), which was designed to develop a common set of curricula standards across the country. The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education (FLPSE), which entered into force in July 2003, required the CCC to be implemented by the 2003/2004 year. The CCC, another measure designed to increase student mobility, was not one curriculum, but rather a certain percentage of material from 18 subjects that would be the same across the country, allowing for local determination of the remaining percentage. However, this percentage varied from subject to subject, allowing for relatively uniform curricula in subjects like math and science and drastic differences in more sensitive subjects like language, history, and geography. Of course, these subjects were the areas in which difference was deemed problematic in the first place.

Although the various ministers of education agreed to the CCC before the 2003 school year, its implementation was spotty at best, and, lacking an educational body with the power to impose the curriculum, the undertaking was more or less abandoned. According to Claude Kieffer: “The CCC turned out to be an exercise in stocktaking of what was common and what was not in the existing curricula. It was

supposed to be an exercise in expanding what was common, but it failed” (fieldnotes, September 4, 2007).

### **The State in Schools, Schools and the State**

The picture of education in Bosnia today painted by prominent international reformers, then, is one of a failing system that promotes national difference rather than civic unity, much like Jelavich’s evaluation of education over a century ago.

While from this perspective—one in which education can either support the national communities or the civic state but not both—the presence of language variation in multiethnic Bosnian classroom would seem to be a problem, my research revealed language ideologies counter to what Alexandra Jaffe terms the “monolingual norm” (Jaffe 1999) that de-emphasized variation among standard norms. However, my research also revealed potential evidence of an emerging generational gap in language ideologies. My evidence for this is anecdotal at best, and further research is needed to determine how children are mapping linguistic variation onto social difference.

I do not mean to imply that language classrooms did not rank linguistic forms—as I will demonstrate in chapter five, a distinct of hierarchy of language was created and reinforced in Bosnian classrooms. However, this hierarchy did not problematize variation among standards but rather variation along a standard/non-standard axis that was often similar across standards. That is, while lexical difference, which often marked differences among standards, was rarely problematized in the

classroom—and when it was, as I discuss in chapter six, teachers and students often collaborated to reconfigure linguistic boundaries—grammatical and orthographic variation was regularly remarked upon, linked to social distinctions, and problematized. Importantly, the same types of grammatical and orthographic variation were at stake in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian classrooms.

My research suggests that although most teachers viewed the B/C/S standards as one language and considered grammatical unity to be more important than lexical variation, not all students shared this view, pointing to an emerging generation gap. Thus while I argue that contrary to fears among some international observers, classrooms are not primarily nor particularly salient sites of linguistic differentiation, they likely cannot be said to be effectively instilling a message of pluralism that overrides normative monolingual messages students receive elsewhere (see chapter three for a discussion of the linguistic landscape in Bosnia more generally).

### **Diverging Ideologies: Emerging Generational Gap?**

Nearly all the teachers I interviewed took pains to emphasize to me that they viewed the languages in Bosnia as having more similarities than differences and as being separated by only minor linguistic features. Teachers regularly made a distinction between linguistic criteria—by which they considered the languages to be unified—and political criteria, which they cited as a source of linguistic difference.

But teachers also reported to me incidents and suspicions that their students did not necessarily share this view. Some were concerned that students had accepted stereotypes about language, such as one Sarajevo 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, who reported her

disappointment that her students had negative attitudes about Cyrillic because they identified it with Serbian and not with their own language. On another occasion, I saw a student pretend to spit on a picture of Josip Broz Tito<sup>77</sup> on the front cover of a book containing the title Serbo-Croatian, while laughing with a friend about the title. Another Sarajevo teacher complained that some parents weren't allowing his students to complete reading assignments because they disapproved of the ethnic affiliation of the author—an author this teacher considered an essential part of Yugoslav literature (Branko Ćopić).

Two informal, anonymous surveys I conducted,<sup>78</sup> one among teachers and one among students, also point to some of these differences. In a survey I conducted among Sarajevo teachers at three schools—two public largely Bosniak schools and one Croatian school—teachers responded in ways that primarily de-emphasized linguistic difference. For example, one teacher I surveyed from a Sarajevo public school responded to a question about whether or not student knew the differences among the standards with the following: “They are not aware of the differences, which is good. They should be aware that it is one language that has different names.” Several other teachers responded to this question by agreeing that students mixed standard forms, but they didn't consider this to be a problem: “The most important thing is that we understand each other in these three languages. That is the most crucial thing.”

Another teacher gave the following response: “The language spoken by Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and Montenegrins is one language and is mutually intelligible

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<sup>77</sup> This incident was exceptional because for the most part, Tito was still very popular among my interlocutors, almost all of whom were my age or older.

<sup>78</sup> See Appendix B for copies of the survey and further details.

without translation, but they have the right to name this language with their national name. The linguistic differences between these variants are frequently fewer than the differences in normal speech and in dialects within each of these languages.”

By contrast, in a survey I conducted with two groups of Bosniak high schools students, 23 out of 26 students responded that they considered Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian to be three different languages, indicating a generational shift compared to the majority of my adult interlocutors who told me they considered the languages to be one.<sup>79</sup> Of the 23 students surveyed, 12 cited differences in linguistic form (primarily lexical but also accent and differences between *ijekavski/ekavski*) as the reason they considered the languages to be distinct, while 6 gave social reasons for the differences:<sup>80</sup> “They’re three different languages because its three different religions, three different nations, and three different lands” or “Those are three languages because in Bosnia we speak Bosnian, in Serbia Serbian, in Croatia Croatian. And those are three different countries.”

As I will argue in the following chapters, teachers play an important role in the framing of classroom material in ways that de-emphasize controversial linguistic differences. My survey suggests that students may not share the ideology of pluralism—which I argue in chapter six has roots in Yugoslav language policy before these students were born—that supports this.

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<sup>79</sup> The survey for teachers did not explicitly ask if teachers considered the languages to be one or three, however, the above responses are generally representative of my conversations with teachers.

<sup>80</sup> The other five students didn’t answer this part of the question.

Despite embracing a language ideology that tightly linked language to national identity, when surveyed about their linguistic usage,<sup>81</sup> my students reported uneven use of Bosnian standard forms. All 26 students who responded to my survey reported using *polahko* instead of *polako*. 24 reported they used *kahva* instead of *kafa*—and indeed, this school was one of the few places I observed *kahva* being spoken, in this case by a teacher. However, only 12 out of the 26 reported using *hudovica* instead of *udovica* (the first form, Bosnian standard, contains a secondary *h* and was not normed in Serbo-Croatian). Ten reported that they used the form *četverica* (Bosnian standard, newly normed) instead of *četvorica*. Although *četverica* does not contain any of the features indexically or iconically linked to different national standards, it provoked a lot of criticism for being unnatural and against linguistic practice by other of my interlocutors (see chapter six for further discussion of *četverica*).

Variant pair (Bosnian norm first, Serbo-Croatian second)	Number of students using Bosnian variant	Number of students using Serbo-Croatian variant	Degree of markedness	Strength of indexical link to Bosnian norm
<i>polahko/polako</i>	26	0	Medium	High
<i>kahva/kafa</i>	24	2	Medium	High
<i>hudovica/udovica</i>	12	14	High	Medium
<i>četverica/četvorica</i>	10	16	High	Low

Figure 4-2: Responses to Student Survey

In this way, reported adherence to standard norms varies with the markedness of the forms. The more linked a form is to ideas about Bosnian standard, the more likely my students were to report using it. Whether their self-reporting matched their

<sup>81</sup> As many scholars have noted, self-reporting is a notoriously problematic way to evaluate language use. I take the reported use of these forms more as evidence that students accepted these forms as standard Bosnian than as evidence that they used these forms.



usage is a question I cannot answer. However, contrary to many of my peers in their 20s who were openly critical of many standard language forms, students in these classes at least reported adherence to these norms.<sup>82</sup>

In general, I rarely observed students in Bosnian classrooms using forms like *polahko* or *kahva*, and they were rarely corrected for failing to do so. It is important to note that the high school students I surveyed were both older than the middle school students I observed and that the schools they attended were religious in nature, potentially resulting in a greater emphasis on symbols of Bosniak identity than in classrooms that were at least nominally multiethnic. Because these students were older than the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders I observed in mother tongue language classes and because we interacted in a very informal context without a Bosnian teacher present, I'm hesitant to draw any further parallels.

As I will argue in chapter five and six, differences in linguistic form are downplayed or reinterpreted in the classroom. Thus, the primary site of difference among classrooms is in the ideological interpretation of language, not in everyday practice. I have suggested that there is anecdotal evidence that these ideological differences are present among students to a greater extent than their teachers.

Evidence of an ideological shift can be found by examining textbooks as well. While Bosnian textbooks from the Yugoslav era mirror language policy at the time in rejecting the idea of nationally marked variants and focusing on regional variation

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<sup>82</sup> One obvious explanation for this—and a potential flaw in my survey—was how it mimicked a test of correct forms. I tried to avoid this interpretation in my oral and written framing of the survey and in the context I delivered it—an English class—yet it remained. In informal conversations with these students in cafes, at least some volunteered without any prompting or framing on my part that they considered secondary *hs* to sound unnatural, but because the survey is anonymous, I cannot gauge how those students answered my survey questions.

(see chapter two, Friedman 1999, Šipka 2001), textbooks produced following the fall of Yugoslavia focus primarily on national difference when defining linguistic variants.

### **Mapping the Linguistic onto the Social: From Regional to National Variation**

The most interesting treatment of linguistic form in these texts has to do with the letter *h*, which, as I discussed in chapter three, is one of the most emblematic as well as most controversial aspects of the Bosnian standard.

A 1969 text titled *Pravilno-Nepravilno* (Correct-Incorrect) published in Sarajevo by the authors Jovan Vuković and Savo Pujić gives the following explanation under the title “Letter H”:

In our eastern regions, especially in villages, the letter *h* is almost never pronounced. Instead of *hrana*, they say *rana*, instead of *hum-um*, and instead of *hrt-rt*.<sup>83</sup> In this way, the words get new meanings ... The letter *h* should be pronounced and written where it exists [*gdje mu je mjesto*]. For example: *hlad, hljeb, grah, kruh, skočih, novih, naših, mahnuti*, and so on. This is how typically and correctly it is pronounced in our western regions and in cities (Vuković and Pujić 1969:12).

Vuković and Pujić thus associate the loss of *h* with eastern and rural speech—in essence, with uneducated speech. The eastern urban centers, such as Belgrade, are implicitly rescued in the next sentence, which states that in some words, *h* has been replaced by *v*, giving the examples *suh-suv, kuhar-kuvar, duhan-duvan*, in which the second element in each pair is associated with the Eastern variant of Serbo-Croatian. The authors state that each of these variants is correct, although it is better to write with *h*.

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<sup>83</sup> These examples are all minimal pairs: food-wound, hill-mind, and cape (the geographical meaning)-greyhound

Thus, the authors primarily follow Vuk Karadžić's principle of maintaining *h* where it is etymologically justified. Indeed, they explicitly state that using *h* where it is not etymologically justified is incorrect, giving the following examples where the first term is disallowed in the *pravopis*: *kahva* instead of *kava*, *lahko* instead of *lako*, *hrdja* instead of *rdja*. In all of these cases, the first element in these pairs was later, under the Bosnian *pravopis*, normed as the only correct variant.

Vuković and Pujić, however, do not associate *h* with any social groups other than to align its correct usage with Western, urban speech (read: educated) and its incorrect, non-standard usage with Eastern, rural areas. Any association at the time between *h* and Islam is not mentioned and neither is Vuk Karadžić, although the lesson follows the rules he used when he introduced *h* in his 1836 grammar.

Linguistic variation in these texts, as well as the division of Serbo-Croatian into dialects or variants, is discussed primarily as resulting from types of social differences other than ethnic. This reflects a more general orientation in the language policy of the SRBiH in that Bosnian linguists argued for a territorially based definition of the Bosnian idiom, explicitly denying national difference in linguistic practice (Šipka 2001, see Friedman 1999 on variation by region). The texts I reviewed from the Yugoslav era make no links between language and nationality or religion. Turkish words are not framed in any sort of special way, although they are sometimes defined, as are other archaic or stylistic words that appear in literature excerpts.

By contrast, today's texts link linguistic difference primarily with national difference. Although linguistic difference continues to be linked to education and geography, it is also now discussed as a distinctive marker of national identity:

The national speech of Bosniaks differs from the national speech of Croats and Serbs by the consistent use of the sound *h*. In this speech, the sound *h* regularly appears in words of Slavic and non-Slavic origin, while in the speech of Croats and Serbs *h* is lost or replaced with other sounds: *snaha-snaja*, *uho-uvo*, *suh-suv*, *lahko-lako*, *mahrama-marama* (Sarajevo Publishing 2004: 74).

In terms of linguistic forms, the major difference between *h* in SRBiH textbooks and texts from BiH, has to do with whether secondary *hs* are permitted. Vuk Karadžić's principle of enforcing *h* where it is etymologically justified is widespread in textbooks spanning both the decades and the entities in Bosnia today. However, while secondary *hs* were almost universally considered non-standard by SRBiH textbooks, Bosniak textbooks today promote those forms, for example, employing forms like *kahva* and *lahko*.

The changing course of ideas about how labels for linguistic codes indexed particular groups of speakers can also be seen by looking at the title of the mother tongue language class over the years. For example, the 1969 curricula for the SRBiH labels the language and literature class as "*srpskohrvatski*" (Serbo-Croatian) while by 1975 this has changed to "*sprskohrvatski- hrvatskosrpski*" (Serbo-Croatian—Croatian-Serbian) and in 1980 the dash between the two names has been changed to the preposition *ili* (or). In 1994, the first curricula published by the new state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, still during the war and before the Dayton Peace Accords were signed establishing two entities in the state, the class is labeled "*bosanski jezik*" (Bosnian language) and no mention of any other nation or of any particular stance

towards any other nation is given. After a significant curricula reform was carried out in 1999 aimed at restructuring required courses and opening up elective options, the language class in the Sarajevo curriculum<sup>84</sup> was labeled “*bosanski jezik*” or “*hrvatski jezik*” and the goals of the class focus on fostering openness, equality and tolerance. By 2007 all three language names are used in the Sarajevo curriculum for the class—“*bosanski*”, “*hrvatski*” or “*srpski*”. In the Republika Srpska, the 2007 curriculum only lists “*srpski*” as a possible name for the language.

### **Language History and Development in the Curricula**

When comparing curricula from the Yugoslav era with those in use in Bosnia today, the most obvious difference is the increased amount of class time devoted to language history and the development of standard languages in the post-war Bosnian curriculum. For example, the 1975 curricula for the SRBiH devotes two classes in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to all of the following material:

Serbo-Croatian language. The mother tongue that four of our nations use; literary pronunciation of *ijekavski* and *ekavski*. Differences in the use of certain words and their equivalence (for example: *hleb-kruh*, *uopće-uopšte*, *ko-tko*, *suh-suv*, *duvati-duhati*, *nogomet-futbal*, etc.). Respect for the differences in the standard speech of every individual. Slovenian and Macedonian language; *kajkavski* and *čakavski* dialects, the most basic attention to this by way of work on appropriate literary texts (SRBiH 1975: 73).

By 1980, the number of classes devoted to language standards has increased significantly (to 12), but it is still taught only in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition to the

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<sup>84</sup> By 1999 education in Bosnia was structured more or less along its current lines with the 10 cantons in the Federation producing their own curricula and the RS producing its own. Thus there were a minimum of 11 curricula in use, and within the Federation significant variation could also occur at the level of the municipality. The 1994 curriculum was produced by the Federal Ministry of Education, although its reach is questionable given the war-time circumstances. Prior to the war, all curricula were produced at the Republic level.

curriculum content from 1975, the 1980 curriculum also includes “basic principles of literary-linguistic policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (SRBiH 1980: 58) as well as an introduction to linguistic nationalities in SFRJ. Half of the 12 classes were scheduled to be spent on the introduction to Slovenian and Macedonian, leaving six for Serbo-Croatian.

However, by 1999 the Bosniak middle school language curriculum includes a section on the development of the Bosnian-Croatian language in all four years of middle school (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade). In contrast to the Yugoslav curricula, under the Bosniak curriculum students learn about the development of Bosnian and Croatian in parallel—that is, as separate standards with separate socio-historical conditions of development. Also, students go back much further in time than the SRBiH curricula did, back to the first traces of written language in the early middle ages.

Although this 1999 curriculum devotes equal time and parallel content to both Bosnian and Croatian, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook I observed in use in 2007 (published in 2004) focused only on the history of the Bosnian language.<sup>85</sup>

The Bosniak curriculum divides the development of Bosnian into five phases, which reveal the nearly exclusive focus of the content on Bosnian. The five phases are the Middle-Bosnian Era, the Turkish Era, the Austro-Hungarian Era, the Yugoslav Era, and the Bosnian Era. The focus of the curriculum is on the development of Bosnian during the first two eras, its decline as a result of shifting policies during the Austro-Hungarian era,<sup>86</sup> its total marginalization during Yugoslavia, and finally its

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<sup>85</sup> I was unable to attain a copy of any of the 2007 curricula in use in the Federation. 1999 is the most recent one I have for the Federation, although I have a 2007 curriculum for the *Republika Srpska*.

<sup>86</sup> Note this evaluation of the Austro-Hungarian era differs from that of Muhamed Šator discussed in chapter two.

continued standardization (which is not yet complete, one book says) during the Bosnian era. The oriental roots and influences on Bosnian are emphasized as well as the distinct literary tradition of Bosnian throughout these five periods.

In contrast, the 2007 Serbian curriculum has much more in common with the SRBiH curricula. The curriculum only devotes time to language history and development in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>87</sup> Students are supposed to learn about: “Language as a means of understanding, Serbian language, the *Štokavian* dialect, Serbian literary language and the relationship of Serbian to the languages of other nations that lived in ex-SFRJ” (*Nastavni Plan i Program Republike Srpske* 2007). In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook in use in 2007 (published in 2003), the material presented focused on Serbian (listing Croatian and Bosniak as alternate names for Serbian). The history of Serbian is framed in the context of the Slavic language family, discussing how Serbian developed out of Old Slavonic. Interestingly, the book notes that the oldest written text is the *Povelja Kulina Bana* in 1189. All Bosnian sources claim this text is the oldest example of Bosnian because it is written in *bosančica*, a specifically Bosnian version of Cyrillic. The Serbian text makes no mention of the alphabet, leaving one to assume it was written in Cyrillic. *Bosančica* is never mentioned anywhere in the text.

The Ottoman era is all but erased from Serbian language history, as the focus of that period of time is primarily on the relationship between language and literacy development and the church as well as influence from Russian. By the time the Austro-Hungarian era began in Serbia in 1770 (nearly 100 years before it began in

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<sup>87</sup> The RS has adopted nine-year primary education while the Federation still has not done so in many places. The goal of nine-year education is for students to start school a year earlier. Thus the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades in the Federation are roughly equivalent to 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades in the RS.

Bosnia), the text says three languages were in use: *rusoslovenski* (Russo-Slavonic), the Russian redaction of Old Slavonic, used primarily by priests; *slavenosrpski* (Slaveno-Serbian), a mix of Russo-Slavonic with Serbian national speech; and *narodni jezik*. According to the text, it wasn't until after Vuk Karadžić began his work in the early 1800s that Serbian in its present day form became standardized.

The book devotes the rest of the pages on language history to Vuk, ending with a just couple sentences devoted to the creation of Serbo-Croatian as well as its dissolution (Kovačević and Savić 2003: 32-41). One paragraph suffices to cover the period between 1954 and 1991. Slovenian and Macedonian are discussed in some detail, while Croatian and Bosnian (Bosniak) are only mentioned twice—once at the beginning when listing members of the South Slavic language family, although they are listed as alternate labels for Serbian, and once at the end when the dissolution of Serbo-Croatian is discussed. Throughout the Bosnian variant is referred to as Bosniak—a potentially offensive term, as Bosnian Muslims insist on their right to name their language Bosnian.

Thus, there are significant differences in the amount of curricula space devoted to language history and standardization as well as in the time periods emphasized and the way in which those time periods are interpreted.

While teachers generally avoided emphasizing differences in linguistic practice when discussing language with me, I found them much more open to talking about differences in language history. These conversations mirrored the material in textbooks much more than conversations about linguistic form. For example, teachers



in the RS occasionally told me that Bosnian was a “new language,” while Bosniak teachers emphasized the historical roots of their language.

This potential mismatch between particularistic ideologies in textbooks and those that stressed similarity in linguistic practice was sometimes recognized and resolved in speech by drawing on different scales in different moments. Thus, when one teacher of Serbian in a small town in the Serb Republic in Bosnia translated words from her class reader that were written in the Serbian dialect (*ekavski*) into the Bosnian dialect (*ijekavski*), she was acknowledging her students’ lack of familiarity with the literary tradition they are taught is their cultural heritage. When she later gave a spelling test focusing on these differences—a test in which *ijekavski* answers were considered to be correct—she was acknowledging the Bosnian state in which her students live. Finally, when she told the class that their town is known for its mixing of these two dialects, she was acknowledging a linguistic identity that is neither primarily Serbian nor Bosnian, but regionally-based. I suggest that one way to understand the monolingual ideologies that co-existed alongside pluralistic linguistic practices may be to focus on the relevant scale in each moment to understand what set of identifications and ideologies individuals may be drawing on.

In the first section of this chapter, I argued that evaluations of education may differ based on the model of the state they are believed to be in service of. Many of the visions of today’s Bosnian state suggest it is failing because it has not developed a common civic identity—it has not fostered a Bosnian identity that supercedes Serbian, Croatian, or Bosniak identities. By contrast, my research suggests that the state is not always the relevant scale in the classroom and that students and teachers

may alternately embrace different identities, some of which may be relevant on the level of the state and some of which may not. The next two chapters will be devoted to exploring this idea through examples that are ethnographic rather than textual.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that linguistic variation in Bosnian classrooms is not the problem many observers or theoreticians suggest it may be. In the next two chapters, I will delve more deeply into the ideological frameworks and discursive practices that I believe make linguistic variation so remarkably unremarkable in the classroom in Bosnia. In chapter five, I will focus on how ideologies of language that emphasize grammar as the essence of language are deployed to focus on sites of linguistic unity. I suggest that an emphasis on grammar leads to highlighting social distinctions other than the national in the classroom. For example, ideas of region and class will be discussed in this chapter.

In chapter six, I look at teachers' linguistic practices to develop the idea of unstandardization, suggesting that Yugoslav language policy still shapes the way many teachers approach language. I will argue that this Yugoslav language policy draws on an idea of what it means to be Bosnian that is still embraced by many in today's state.

## Chapter Five: Creating Linguistic Order: Ideologies of Pedagogy, Language, and Correction

In a small town in north central Bosnia, Ivan is a 5<sup>th</sup> grade Bosnian language teacher in a school that is almost entirely Muslim. When I met him in the fall of 2007 he was two years away from retiring. Having moved to this town from Zagreb with his wife in 1969, he had been teaching at his school, *Osnovna Škola Mak Dizdar*<sup>88</sup> for 38 years. He told me that when he started working there, the teacher he was replacing, who was retiring, told him, “I hope that by the time you retire, you don’t still have to move (*krenuti*) [from class to class] all day.” Ivan pointed at his black leather briefcase, which I knew from hours of watching him take things in and out of contained a few pieces of chalk, an eraser, several pens, and copies of the class reader, grammar text, and workbook. “I’m retiring in two years and I’m still moving, still carrying all this stuff. It would be nice to have a classroom for Bosnian language,” he said, gesturing around him to the room with bare walls except for a Fleur-de-lis above the chalkboard and containing only his desk and rows of tables and chairs. “We need more materials for the media section, we need the ability to show films. I know the kids are bored sometimes, but I can’t do anything about it.”

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<sup>88</sup> School names are, as discussed in chapter one, pseudonyms. Mak Dizdar was a prominent Bosniak poet who died in 1971.

In recent years, teachers in Bosnia have found their personal and professional lives implicated in a domain that has been deemed a relative failure by many international observers. Teachers' practices are labeled by some observers as authoritarian and out-dated and for these reasons have been the target of the most recent wave of education reforms in BiH. As the demands on teachers have shifted, so have their perceptions of their workplaces. Schools during socialism were different types of places, and some teachers remembered them fondly, telling me they missed the order and authority of socialist schools or the greater predictability of policy and funding under the socialist government.

This chapter explores the intersection of two different sets of ideologies in the Bosnian classroom: ideologies of pedagogy and ideologies of language. Contrary to what I had expected to find before I began my fieldwork, my research revealed the relative **lack** of contestation over standard norms in classrooms in Bosnian, especially when compared to the much greater amount of controversy such norms generate outside the classroom. While language outside the classroom may be perceived as chaotic (see chapter three) and a key marker of ethnic difference, inside the classroom, teachers work to make language stable and orderly. They also link linguistic difference to a wide range of social differences that go beyond ethnic identities.

In particular, I argue that a focus by international policy makers on differences *among* standards flattens out differences *within* standards—differences that remain socially salient in Bosnia and are central to how many teachers I spoke with defined correct or standard language use. While difference *among* standards is linked to

ethnic difference, difference *within* standards indexes social differences like class, education level, or urbanity.

This chapter will focus on the metalinguistic act of correction as a key way in which teachers create linguistic order and link linguistic forms to social qualities. It is in the act of correction that ideas about the teaching and learning of language intersect with ideas about the value and meaning of language. It is also how abstract values about correctness get instantiated in interaction. Thus correction is not a mechanical process but a creative one that relies on particular ideologies and produces particular views of language.

In this chapter, I will first describe current pedagogical reforms in Bosnia, as well as some of the assumptions about the nature of the system socialism left behind that motivate those reforms. Because these reforms often turn on the perceived (im)balance between theory and practice, pedagogical debates with respect to language crystallize in discussions over the purpose and practice of teaching grammar. I will briefly outline these debates before turning to a discussion of how teachers make use of correction to transmit both social and linguistic values. I will focus on how ideologies about linguistic features determine both *what* features are regimented in classroom practice as well as *how* those features are regimented. I will argue that a focus on the word as the site of significant difference (Silverstein 1981, Woolard 2008, Hill 1985) enables lexical variation among the three standards in classrooms, while simultaneously reinterpreting grammatical variation not as

variation among standards but variation along a scale of education, urbanity and culturedness.<sup>89</sup>

### **Ideologies of Pedagogy**

In the interior of the school, the observer is convinced almost at once that strict discipline is maintained. The class rises as the teacher, or any adult, enters or leaves the room. When called upon, the student stands up to recite. Work proceeds in silence. Boys and girls do not sit on the same benches. . . . The teachers are treated with marked respect and the general behavior of the students is characterized by a subdued, self-disciplined deportment (Parker 1957: 216 on Moscow schools).

As in other social or political arenas, the war in Bosnia is seen as having disrupted the potential for a smooth transition<sup>90</sup> in education from socialism to capitalism. As discussed in the previous chapter, the physical and material limitations during war years disrupted—although did not halt—regular patterns of schooling, testing, or textbook production. Additionally, the major changes to sociopolitical alignments and political borders meant that new curricula, textbooks, and laws on education had to be produced that reflected the envisioned multicultural nature of the new Bosnian state. It wasn't until some of this seemingly more urgent work concerning segregation and cultural rights was completed that the work of “transition” in the schools could begin.

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<sup>89</sup> There is a large literature on socialist ideas of “culturedness” (see Grant 1995, Martin 2001, Živković 2001a, 2001b) In Bosnia, the adjective *kulturni* and its opposite *nekulturni* were regularly used to describe people and their behavior. One friend of mine suggested the meanings of these two terms were closer to the English “civilized” and “uncivilized.” Again, ideas about who is civilized and who is not have been explored in detail by some authors (see Lemon 2000, van de Port 1998).

<sup>90</sup> Anthropologists have critiqued the normative and teleological assumptions behind the use of the word “transition” to describe the social and political changes occurring in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the 1990s (Buroway and Verdery 1999, Verdery 1996, Berdahl, Bunzl, and Lampland 2000. See also Kennedy 2002). I use the word here purposely to invoke those assumptions, which I suggest animate the logic behind many of the pedagogical ideologies I describe here.

Transition-oriented projects are often animated by stereotypical assumptions about the passive nature of socialist *citizens* (Kennedy 2002, Dunn 2004), which are in turn reflected in assumptions about the passive nature of socialist *students* (Larson 2007). Outside observers have labeled the Bosnian education system—presumed to be a socialist relic—as “teacher-centered, bureaucratic, and authoritarian” (McCright 2002: 37), and as focused on fostering ideological conformity rather than developing the vocational or problem-solving skills necessary to a modernizing economy (McCright 2002: 50). For these reasons, some suggest that after the fall of socialism Bosnia was burdened with an education system with low standards, poorly trained teachers, and inefficient structures.

A report produced by one of the country’s most prominent pedagogical experts, Adila Pašalić-Kreso, describes pedagogy in the country as follows:

[Teachers] acquire knowledge in narrowly specialized subjects ... without trying to master knowledge and skills on how to transfer their specialized education to pupils in a way that would meet the needs of young people and society as a whole. ... The curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina are characterized by a large number of lectures and exercises—mainly in classrooms that cannot maintain the active attention and interest of students with difficulties. Students in the last couple years increasingly feedback to their teachers the message that the teaching is far removed from real life, far behind the latest achievements in specific areas, and overloaded with unnecessary facts, definitions, and phrases (Pašalić-Kreso et al. 2006: 177).

Such assessments have led to an increasing focus on teacher’s practices as a target of reforms. For example, some UNICEF programs have focused on re-training teachers to nurture what educators and pedagogues refer to as “child-centered classrooms,” an idea that stands in alleged opposition to their previous training, which was believed to be centered on the needs of teachers and the demands of the curricula.

While socialist curricula are derided as knowledge-based, adherents of reform argue that the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands an education from children that is skill-based, an education in which they are taught to be life-long learners and decision makers—skills, one UNICEF employee told me, students were not taught under the socialist system, and that many are still not being taught in post-war Bosnia (fieldnotes January 24, 2007). Such a caricature of socialist education is epitomized in the work of a military scholar who conducted research in Bosnia on general and military education:

Preparation for useful employment was supposed to be one of the central goals of the Yugoslavian education system, but the system itself failed to respond to the dynamics of need of an economy moving from an agrarian base to an industrial one. What was required was obvious—skilled workers able to apply problem-solving techniques and innovative solutions to the particular demands of the economy. ... But there was no motive for anyone to act in such a manner. ... This clinging to a lecture/regurgitation pedagogical system, afraid (almost paranoid) of imagination, investigation and innovation by the student produced systemic blockages to progress (McCreight 2002: 50).

In such a view, teachers are an integral part of the problem—it is their teaching methods that are believed to both *mimic* as well as *create* the stagnancy attributed not only to socialist economies in this excerpt, but also to socialist **modes of thought**. While socialist education is presumed to be authoritarian, didactic, and unresponsive to the changing demands of the economy or world climate, the foil of capitalist education is presumed to be nurturing of individual talents and perspectives, critical of received knowledge or traditional approaches, and flexible in supplying the job market or society with workers ready to meet current needs and adapt as those needs change (Dunn 2004, Kennedy 2002).



Underlying this ideology of education in capitalist systems is a belief in individuality that socialist education is presumed to stifle. Advocates of transition-oriented reforms often suggest that this individuality is promoted through **modes of interaction**. In particular, it is not only teacher's pedagogical practices that reflect outdated socialist ideas but also their classroom personas. See, for example, the following statements, taken from student's evaluations of "American-style" teaching in a program sponsored by the U.S. State Department:<sup>91</sup>

"We aren't punished for being wrong... we can joke and teach our teacher  
Bosnian."

"We work like a team. It's more interesting."

"We can say whatever we want. We can say our opinion about anything."

"We learn and have fun at the same time."

"In normal class, we just take book and read. Here, we work together and  
play together- the teacher too. We treat the teacher as our friend."

"Our teacher is not like a teacher in our school. She is like a friend to us. She  
talks to us just as we are friends and we play together also."

Thus transition-oriented pedagogical reforms (often explicitly, but sometimes implicitly) prescribe changes in **modes of interaction**, which will presumably lead to changes in **modes of thought**. The onus for these changes is placed on teacher's personal and professional personas in the classroom.

Criticisms that Bosnia's education system was failing to prepare its students for meaningful employment were echoed by some of my friends and acquaintances in

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<sup>91</sup> The statements were elicited from students during an end-of-the year evaluation process and selected by U.S. Embassy staff for inclusion in a report on the program, which operated in several countries and had as an overarching goal to create a more positive image of the U.S. abroad. These statements neatly mirror the way the Embassy staff described the program in conversations with me, suggesting that perhaps students were repeating Embassy-endorsed views of pedagogy.

Bosnia. One man in his late 20s who had finished a degree in history from the university in Tuzla as well as some study abroad in Italy, complained: “It’s all just theory, just memorization sitting on a bench. Engineers finish school, they go to work, how can they do their job? They have no practical experience, only theoretical knowledge. It’s like a doctor—it’s one thing to know where the heart and kidneys are, but its another to cut someone open.”

A near universal complaint among my informants—teachers, parents, and students alike—was that curricula in schools today were overly full and that students were overburdened (*preopterećen*) with material to learn. In the subject of language classes, this overburdening took the form of what was characterized by some as excessive grammatical theory and categorization that, many suggested, was irrelevant to daily life.

Teachers regularly told me they felt the curriculum was too intense and they didn’t have time to adequately teach the material they were supposed to cover. Parents also echoed these concerns, and at a meeting held at Sarajevo 2 in May of 2007, parents from 35 different schools met to express their complaints about the difficulty and amount of homework their middle-school aged children were given, citing rising rates of gastritis in school-age children as evidence that the curriculum was too demanding (*Dnevni Avaz*, May 18, 2007: 32).

Yet not all of my informants believed that pedagogical reforms were positive for education. One teacher, Jagoda, told me the first day she met me—and repeated it to me many times thereafter—that she was not in favor of what she called the Western system.

“Our students are very educated,” she told me the day we met. “The Western system is being introduced here, but it is too narrow. It’s like blinders—each only knows his own field. Here our students learn everything.”

Jagoda and her husband Ivan taught at *Osnovna Škola Mak Dizdar* located in a small, almost entirely Muslim town in the Zenica-Doboj Canton in north central Bosnian (hereafter ZD town). Ivan and Jagoda were particularly welcoming to me and talked with me at length about their experiences and opinions regarding education in general and at Mak Dizdar in particular, where both had taught for nearly 40 years. Both often used the concept of *aktivni časovi* (active classes) in conversations with me to explain why they structured their lessons the way they did. However for both Ivan and Jagoda, *aktivni časovi* were generally something that happened elsewhere—they would, for example, often ask me about classes I had observed at other schools I visited, asking me if they were *aktivni* and what I had thought of them.

While Jagoda regularly expressed a philosophical opposition to both new methodologies and the curricula changes they implied, Ivan often cited practical considerations, such as class size or lack of infrastructure, as the major obstacles to using “more active” methods. While such methods supposedly emphasize the most contemporary thinking in pedagogy, Ivan criticizes them on the grounds that he lacks resources to implement them. “Child-centered education doesn’t always work,” he said. “You need a drill system to repeat the material so a higher percentage of kids get it. If I just allow them to come to the answers themselves, if I don’t explain it, they go home, they say they don’t know how to do it [their homework], their parents don’t know how to do it, so they don’t do it. Dictation isn’t ideal, but I can’t avoid it. I can’t

just leave kids to find answers in the book because not all of them have it and some of them wouldn't do it."

Ivan, who taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade, often complained to me about what he viewed as an overly heavy and outdated curriculum. He told me about out-of-date textbooks still in use that contained countries that no longer existed and about the absence of computers in the computer science classroom. "They're not learning practical skills," he complained. "They're learning how many acres of forest there are in X country. Other students don't know where Tanzania is and our students not only know where it is but how many kilometers of forest it has." On another day, he told me: "Kids are overburdened with grammar. Teachers talk about it, say it's too much, but it's in the curricula so we must teach it."

While Ivan struggles to make sure that his students—some of whom share books or use old editions to save money—keep up with their lessons, he draws on techniques that he believes will help his students master the material they need to. Ivan is sometimes stern in class, rebuking students when they fail to stand to deliver an answer or don't speak in full sentences. Yet he is also funny and smiles often, and the students seem relaxed as they go about their work. "I'm kind of old fashioned," he told me one day. "Maybe kids should be able to be louder in class but it bothers me if its not contributing to a working atmosphere."

Jagoda, in contrast, made no apologies for her quiet classroom and use of repetition and memorization. She told me she didn't like group work—something she considered a defining feature of *aktivni časovi*—because it was impossible for her to tell which students had learned what and she couldn't evaluate them individually.

Jagoda was quite proud of the Bosnian education system she had spent her life in, and told me often that Bosnian students were among the best in the world, citing examples of former students who had gone on to university in countries all over the world.<sup>92</sup>

In her classroom, Jagoda maintained a quiet, disciplined atmosphere, dividing classroom time fairly equally between activities she led and quiet individual work. Occasionally, Jagoda also had students drill verb conjugations or recite classifications and definitions. In one 6<sup>th</sup> grade class I observed, Jagoda was teaching a lesson on past tense verb conjugations. After the students copied a definition she had written on the chalkboard and repeated it together, Jagoda had the students repeat the conjugation of the helping verb *biti* (to be) together: “*sam, si, je, smo, ste, su. Sam, si, je, smo, ste, su,*” they chanted over and over. On another day, when learning the aorist tense, student recited the conjugation of *čitati* (to read) for nearly the whole 45-minute class period: “*čitah, čita, čita, čitasmō, čitaste, čitase.*”

After class, when I asked her why she had devoted so much time to these seemingly simple conjugations, Jagoda told me kids make many mistakes with common tenses—leaving the *h* off the end of the first person aorist or dropping *a* out of the past participle (*iš’o* instead of *išao*) . “Kids hear them [those mistakes] from half-literate, uneducated people, like their relatives. That’s why they must learn everything in school—they must come to school to learn literary language and learn even basic things like the present tense.”

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<sup>92</sup> I heard this regularly from teachers and neighbors in ZD town. Interestingly, going on to university in a foreign country was the most common piece of evidence given to me for the strength of the Bosnian education system.

For Jagoda, the spatial distinction between rural and urban speech far outweighed the temporal one between socialist and post-socialist pedagogy or the national one between Bosnian, Croatian, or Serbian standards. While Jagoda rarely even referenced distinctions between standards in her classes—in contrast to most other teachers I observed who mentioned them relatively often in the course of grammar lessons or when reading texts from authors of different nationalities—she frequently emphasized other lexical distinctions grounded in social categories such as urban vs. rural or literary vs. jargon. Such distinctions indexed both ideas about cultured speech and education as well as local stereotypes about the differences between living in town and living in a village outside of town.

It is not surprising that evaluations of schooling in different political systems assign shifting values to pedagogical practices. These values reflect the broader currency of the political culture in which they occur as well as trends in educational theory. For example, during the Cold War, some American scholars worried that the demanding nature of education in socialist countries was giving their students an educational advantage over American students—an advantage that some feared could result in tipping the balance of power between communism and capitalism (see Trace 1961). Such analyses—which resonate with stories about the intensity of Japanese curricula or their lengthier school year at the same time fears of an Asian-dominated world economy were growing in the 1990s, for example—speak admiringly of the depth, intensity, and sophistication of socialist curricula.

In rather stark contrast to the transition lens which views students—and their teachers—in formerly socialist countries as deprived of critical reading, writing, and

thinking skills, Trace, in his 1961 book *What Ivan Knows that Johnny Doesn't*, suggests that Soviet curricula in the 1950s and 1960s fostered the sort of knowledge and appreciation of literature, languages, and the humanities that American curricula at the time were failing to do. He derides American readers as “immature” and suggests that the abundance of drawings and photographs surrounding the text are “shenanigans” that detract from teaching students to appreciate and focus on the written word (1961: 66).<sup>93</sup>

However, evaluations of schooling, as Shirley Brice Heath and others have shown (Heath 1983), can conflate culturally specific ways of interacting with texts or responding to questions with knowledge itself, confusing the issue of what children in a post-socialist system might be said to *know* based on how they have learned to *display* that knowledge (see also Chomsky 1987).

Thus, for example, while a group of children reciting verb conjugations may look to some like an example of conformity and passivity in the classroom, such pedagogical techniques do not preclude either the acquiring or the valuing of other linguistic functions in the classroom as well. My research suggests that teachers in Bosnian classrooms across the country privilege the metalinguistic function in their teaching—students are taught certain ways to talk about language as much as they are taught how to use language for, say, persuasive purposes or how to evaluate its aesthetic qualities. Yet this privileging of language structure and metalinguistic knowledge derives from language ideologies that suggest understanding the structure

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<sup>93</sup> In contrast, current analyses of textbooks in Bosnia, of which there are many, sometimes focus on the number and characteristics (color vs. black and white, for example) of illustrations and other breaks in text as indicators of the quality and pedagogical appropriateness of textbooks. Very often these texts are found lacking because they don't contain enough, or high-enough quality, illustrations.

of language is a prerequisite to understanding the meaning of language rather than any inherent devaluing of other linguistic functions.

Concerns about the amount of grammar in the curriculum as well as the technical way in which it was presented in the classroom are present in scholarly literature and journals for teachers in Bosnia already in the 1960s and 70s. Additionally, concerns that the curriculum in general was too intense and students were overburdened (*preopterećen*) were expressed as early as the 1950s, and several curriculum revisions and conferences were dedicated to attempting to relieve this problem (McCreight 2002). In the subject of language and literature, such debates often revolved around the question of what the purpose of teaching language structure was. Contrary to the stereotype of unthinking repetition of theory and fact, Yugoslav and Bosnian educators thought carefully about why (although less commonly if) language structure was important in the classroom and how to present it to best achieve their goals.

These educators often stressed that teaching grammar was not an end in itself, but rather a means to other goals. For example, a 1968 article by the author Juraj Marek<sup>94</sup> published in a scholarly journal for teachers and pedagogues, proposes that grammar be emphasized in language classes but as a means to a more important end—the fostering of an appreciation of and connection with literature. Starting from the premise that students today lack an emotional connection with much of Yugoslavia’s great literature, Marek argued that grammatical knowledge should be

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<sup>94</sup> I have been unable to find any biographical information on Marek, and his name was unfamiliar to friends of mine. His work was published in a series titled *Savremena Nastava Maternjeg Jezika* (Contemporary Teaching of the Mother Tongue) published by the *Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika* (Institute for Textbook Publishing) in Sarajevo.



linked to wider linguistic knowledge and that grammar should have as its first and foremost goal the cultivation of “cultured written and spoken words” among students (112). If grammar is given its rightful place as a tool in the “battle for literacy among students” (139), students will not only develop a feel for language that allows them to understand great literature, they will learn to express themselves artfully, logically, and correctly.

For Marek, understanding the *structure* of language is a prerequisite for understanding the *meaning* of language. This meaning is both a means to better understanding and presentation of self and also to a greater connection with literature, which was an essential tool in Yugoslav curricula for the fostering of ideological aims considered important in education (see Wachtel 1998 for a detailed discussion of the role literature in schools played in Yugoslav state building).

While the importance of literature in Yugoslav language policy has continued on in Bosnia today, this emphasis on literature and language structure is one that emphasizes metalinguistic functions of language and structural forms of language in ways that are, some critics suggest, divorced from everyday language use and what some term more practical linguistic knowledge.

### **Evaluating Language in the Classroom**

In this section, I argue that teachers use correction to impart to their students a view of language that differs greatly from the way language was often talked about or described outside the classroom. In particular, in the classroom, teachers emphasize

different *functions* of language than those that are emphasized outside the classroom and privilege different linguistic *forms*.

Many of my interlocutors drew a distinction between the communicative and symbolic function of language. While the terminology of communicative vs. symbolic is well-represented in the local literature<sup>95</sup> (see Baotić 2005, Vajzović 2001, Vrljić 2001), my interlocutors often phrased this same insight to me along the following lines: “It’s all one language,” my neighbor Zlata told me one day. “Maybe some say *kaput* and some say *sako* [variants for “coat”] but we all understand each other.”

While outside the classroom, the symbolic function of language—or the ways in which language indexed particular identities—was emphasized (see chapter three), inside the classroom, teachers generally downplayed ways in which language indexed a social identity (an important exception is discussed below) and instead focused on how students used language to communicate—to express themselves artistically, to answer questions in a manner deemed appropriate, or to write clearly. While the former function often relied on the use of different lexical items, in the classroom, the latter was based on a mastery of orthographic and grammatical conventions that were not linked to ethnic identity.

Most linguists I spoke with, as well as my peers and friends in Bosnia, generally believed that language structure—phonology, syntax, and morphology—

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<sup>95</sup> Hanka Vajzović defines those terms as follows: “The communicative function of language subsumes referential and metalinguistic, which is equal to the desire of the speaker to code a message as precisely as possible and avoid the possibility of ambiguity, and at the same time the desire of the listener to precisely decode the message, making an effort to eliminate any misunderstandings. By contrast to the communicative, we understand the symbolic function of language as the relation between the emotive and connative, that is, we understand the effort of the sender of the message to pragmatically color his expression, relying on the receiver to positively and correctly react (2001: 89).”

was a source of underlying unity and order in the B/C/S languages. I argue that the reason these levels of language were emphasized in classrooms is at least partly because they were not believed to be salient markers of national distinctiveness nor subject to the politicization in the same way lexical items were.

If teachers face a dilemma when dealing with language standards that fail to match up with their personal intuitions or usage, this can be partially managed by de-emphasizing those features of language—primarily lexical—that are most controversial, most subject to metalinguistic commentary, and most tightly linked to ethnic difference. By teaching language through methodologies that are themselves highly ordered and emphasize those aspects of language that are believed to be the most structural and rule-governed, teachers create a sense of language as orderly, predictable, and rational.

While teachers rarely corrected speech for deviations from new standard norms,<sup>96</sup> correcting written work posed a greater problem in that teachers typically applied stricter standards to this work. Many teachers reported to me that when they grade papers they don't correct differences among the standards but focus on literacy, as one teacher called it, or correct use of grammatical and orthographic conventions—differentiation of commonly confused affricates (*č* and *ć* or *dž* and *dj*) capital and small letters, proper case endings, or ways of punctuating direct speech. These are things that, by and large, are the same in all three standards.

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<sup>96</sup> Students *speech* was often corrected for deviations from standard that are uncontroversial, such as grammatical mistakes or use of terms deemed *narodni govor*, but rarely for use of terms belonging to one of the three standards, even if it wasn't the standard in use in the classroom. Writing, as I discuss, was subject to stricter standards.

In addition to being similar across standard varieties, and thus less controversial in multiethnic classrooms, grammatical norms have generally remained relatively consistent with Serbo-Croatian norms. Even in cases where there have been changes—for example the Bosnian orthography changed some rules for the capitalization of street names—such rules are less subject to metalinguistic commentary than lexical and phonological norms and so don't elicit the sort of challenges from either students or their parents that the enforcement of lexical standard norms does.

Some of my informants suggested that the emphasis on grammar and orthography in the classroom may be a way for teachers to avoid controversial aspects of language and instead focus on what is similar and well-defined. As one teacher put it: “No one has thrown out even one case. Nouns are still nouns, pronouns are still pronouns, adjectives are still adjectives,” (fieldnotes September 2007). When teachers focus on grammatical categories and definitions in classroom lessons they are, of course, following a curricula that places a heavy emphasis on those forms of linguistic knowledge. They are also creating an environment in which language can be seen as systematic, rule-governed and predictable. “Grammar is like mathematics,” one teacher told her 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. “Logical in the first place.” (“*Gramatika je kao matematika. Logična na prvom mjestu.*”) Or another teacher who told his class: “Rules exist in language as in life. If rules exist, we have to follow them.”

When I surveyed teachers<sup>97</sup> regarding their opinions on changing curricula content and language norms, as well as any difficulties they felt they had in keeping

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<sup>97</sup> Following my observation at three different schools in Sarajevo I left a short survey in the teachers' lounge for interested teachers or staff to fill out. The goal of this was to expand my data base beyond

up with current standards, none of the teachers who responded reported having any difficulties in following current standards or conventions in their classroom practice, although in their comments on the survey some said they were frustrated with fluctuating norms, which one teacher called “complicated and unnecessary.”

Another teacher explained the dilemma this way: “*Pravopis* changes are unfinished. They happen continuously, which is understandable since linguistic norms are revealed through language practice as well, and not only according to those who are language experts. That’s the major difficulty for teaching. In teaching classes and generally in homeroom<sup>98</sup> I am obligated to accept the language standards defined for mother tongue in the curriculum.”

“Yes, of course!” one teacher at a school using a Croatian curriculum responded to a question as to whether changing curricula and language standards had made her work harder. “It’s harder as far as even teachers are ‘lost’ for language and they don’t know anymore what is correct and what isn’t.”

In the remainder of this chapter, I review how teachers make use of correction to construct a distinct image of language in the classroom. I argue that teachers use correction to place an emphasis on structural and orthographic language conventions—conventions that are largely ignored in debates outside the classroom about significant linguistic difference. Instead, these structural and orthographic corrections are used to: 1) Promote an image of language as structural and rule

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language teachers, who were my main contacts at schools, but who are far from the only, or even the privileged, way in which linguistic norms and attitudes are transmitted in schools. I received about 40 surveys back.

<sup>98</sup> *Razredna nastavna*, usually a weekly class to discuss problems, school events or milestones, etc.

governed in contrast to chaotic; and 2) Forge links between language use and education rather than language use and ethnic identity.

### **Mistakes that Matter: Linguistic Forms**

In this section, I argue that ideologies about linguistic form constrain how language is presented in the classroom as well as which linguistic forms are regimented in classroom interactions. I suggest that classroom language regimentation in Bosnia is tightly linked to ideas about which linguistic features are socially sensitive and which somehow stand outside of history and national identity. Among other things, such ideologies work to support the minimization of difference among national standards in classroom interaction at the same time as they increase difference along other social lines, such as urban/rural divisions.

Many discourses, both popular and academic, about linguistic difference in Bosnia focus on the lexical as the level of significant variation. While differences exist orthographically, phonologically, syntactically, and morphologically, such variation is often dismissed as minor, as merely a tendency as opposed to a rule, and is subject to less metalinguistic commentary—at least outside the classroom—than word choice. Instead, according to this ideology, it is vocabulary through which a language marks, stores, and expresses the spirit of a nation. Many of my interlocutors expressed this idea through the following kinds of assertions: Vocabulary tracks a nation's history, through the incorporation of foreign borrowings based on political influence or via transmitted material culture—or through the purging of such borrowings as during former Croatian president Franjo Tudjman's nationalist regime;

Vocabulary stores a nation's literary and cultural treasures in the form of both high art as in literary language and common tradition like folk epics; Vocabulary expresses a nation's spirit, as in the example of *ćeif*—a unique word to express a unique social attitude (see chapter three for a more detailed discussion of *ćeif*).

For example, one linguist, in an otherwise critical review of Dževad Jahić's *Scholastic Dictionary of the Bosnian Language* wrote: "For every language every word enriches it, and from that aspect Jahić's Dictionary is a full covering (*mahrma*) of beautiful pearl-words. An important part of the Dictionary's selected words—jewels—we have almost forgotten" (Durić 2003: 67).

Jahić, together with another author, has also published a series of books for elementary school titled *My Bosnian* in which he begins with a letter to the students:

Learn the words of the Bosnian language and think. If you want others to respect you, third graders, you must respect yourself, your language, your history and your tradition. You belong to the proud nation that kept in its houses for centuries Bosnian *ćilime* (carpets), Bosnian *serdžade* (prayer rugs), precious *djindjuhe* (knick-knacks) and in the soul our precious Bosnian language. Every word in this book is like a pearl bead in the Bosnian *djerdan* (necklace)... In each of these words is woven the history of your country, in them is hiding, third graders, the soul of Bosnia, her history and her poetry (Jahić and Ništović 2001: 3)

Such a view is widespread among authors who write in defense of Bosnian—authors who view the language as previously marginalized and still attacked today (cf. Halilović 1998, fieldnotes, Dizdar 1970, Isaković 1991).

Some Croatian linguists express a similar focus on lexical items—particularly those that tend towards purism. Specifically, such authors are concerned about

doublets and borrowings—influence from Serbian and English are the most prominent in current writings. One author writes:

Our language is constantly under attack from behind, once from Serbiansims, and today from Anglicisms. I have the feeling like we can't be ourselves in our own language, like we're always seeking refuge in someone else's garden. It's as if what others have is always prettier and better to us, and we forget that we have to nurture our own so that others can wonder at what we raised (Matković 2006: 13).

Here language appears as in need of cultivation. Yet, for Matković, this cultivation is a layer on top of an underlying essence—an essential Croatianness that needs nurturing to become properly cultured, properly expressive. Absent this care, the nation must use other words, words that are and will remain essentially foreign.

Another Croatian writer puts this more succinctly: “For [some] borrowings, we don't currently have an acceptable replacement, but when we create good Croatian words for them, then we must give them back because we borrowed them (for what you borrow, you must return)” (Protudjer 2004: 179).

According to this view, then, language is the property of the nation. A nation's “own” words are uniquely suited for the expression of its people, and this is a link forged through historical development and social conditions. However, while lexical items mark the essential differences between language standards, other kinds of variation are not believed to be sensitive to history and social conditions in the same way.

Not only are statements about the “jewel-like” quality of grammar absent from the written materials I examined, many people emphasized the unity of the grammatical and morphological systems of the B/C/S languages. During an interview with me, the pro-standard linguist Senahid Halilović also emphasized this unity,



suggesting that aside from certain features, the differences among the standards could be—if linguists were willing to work together—limited and well defined: “Aside from forms that have emblematic value, we don’t consider the structure of language very important, for example, when deciding if we want to write adverbs together or separately. No one is going to lose their linguistic identity and this and that if we all agree to say that we will write [adverbs] together or separately, and we have reasons for one and the other, scientific reasons” (Halilović, interview, April 18 2007).<sup>99</sup>

So while lexical variation is presented both as the key source of linguistic specificity as well as a source of richness and beauty in language use, variation in syntactical patterns, use of morphological cases, or writing conventions is often de-emphasized or erased.<sup>100</sup> Instead, structure is deemed to be the source of the underlying unity of the B/C/S language varieties.

Another linguist—one who advocated significant curricula reforms because she felt language instruction in the classroom was divorced from real-life usage—also expressed the view that the essence of language resided in its lexicon during a conversation with me. Aida Kršo, a young linguist and teacher at the college of political science within the University of Sarajevo, suggested that language classes

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<sup>99</sup> The rules for writing adverbial phrases vary a great deal within each standard as well as among standards. A great many adverbial phrases in the B/C/S standards are formed by combining a preposition with an adjective as in: *dosad* (so far, up till now) which is formed from *do* + *sad* (to, until + now). Another example is *nazdravlje*, which means “to your health” or “cheers.” In Bosnian, this is written as one word while in Serbian and Croatian it is written *na zdravlje*. It is not always the case that Bosnian prefers combining these phrases as one word while Serbian and Croatian write them separately. See Muratagić-Tuna 2005: 176-182 for detailed comparison of how various orthographies treat this question.

<sup>100</sup> When linguists in Bosnia say there are no grammatical differences between the languages, they are most often referring to the fact that none of the grammars of the three standard languages have codified any differences by requiring one pattern and disallowing another. They will often say that differences in such domains are a result of choice. They do not deny the fact that in people’s usage different patterns and forms appear, whether or not these divisions line up with ethnicity or standard allegiances. Lexical and orthographic differences, on the other hand, are very often codified in the various standard orthographies.

are overly formal and lacking in practical instruction, calling for what she terms “*jezik u upotrebi*” (language in use) in the curricula.<sup>101</sup> One of the reasons for this lack, Kršo said, is the lack of clear standards for teachers. “Language is not a solved question. Even teachers in schools are not sure whether something is Croatian, Bosnian or Serbian. So they speak the way they used to speak” (fieldnotes June 2007). Thus, she suggested, teachers avoid this critical area in language instruction.

Kršo objected to the traditional approach to language in the classroom that emphasizes grammatical and orthographic rules, arguing that the essence of Bosnian is not grammar. During our interview, Kršo described a typical approach to language instruction in which students are asked to identify subjects and predicates in sample sentences and asked me, “Where is the Bosnian in that? That isn’t Bosnian.” Instead, Kršo defined Bosnian primarily lexically as choice among variants: “... and/or one and the other. That is Bosnian in essence.” It is this type of lexical knowledge—knowledge Kršo terms practical or the most concrete level of language—that would form the basis of *jezik u upotrebi* in the classroom. The result, Kršo argues, would be language classes that were more engaging and practical for students. In an article on the same topic, Kršo writes:

With that [*jezik u upotrebi*] we would eliminate linguistic doubts and interest students. Students would themselves seek explanations for some of their dilemmas, they would use that knowledge everyday and classes would pass quickly. ... After these classes, they will stop you in the hallway and ask if something is said like this or like that. You know that they have bitten, that after these classes they will begin to talk about language. That is success! In class they will give you

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<sup>101</sup> Language classes are typically composed of four or five subsections: literature, language (which consists of grammar and orthography), *lektira* or outside reading, which is discussed in class once or twice a month, *kultura izražavanja* (cultured expression—a part of the class that focuses on different styles of writing such as letters, narratives, descriptions), and sometimes film, which is more common in more recent years.

examples that they read somewhere, heard on television, from someone in conversation, desiring to check if it was correct” (1998: 240).

For Kršo, a language class is not only about learning the rules of a language, but also about learning what gives that language its identity. While Kršo echoes views common in media and held by many of my interlocutors that lexical difference is the major source of differentiation among the standards and that schools should teach about these differences, many teachers I spoke with rejected the idea that acquainting students with the lexical difference among standards mattered to them, from either a pedagogical or a linguistic viewpoint.

While adherents of the former view focus on language as a cultural symbol or as national property students must be taught to nurture, teachers I observed far more commonly focus on language as a symbolic and economic resource, something students must be taught to respect so that they can use it to their advantage. I discuss this perspective further below.

While the importance of respecting personal choice in lexical variation was emphasized by many of my interlocutors, there is no such dictate that syntactical or morphological variation be respected. Instead, structural variation was often picked out and corrected. My fieldwork also suggests that “permissible” lexical variation is limited to nouns and adjectives – lexical categories that might be believed to be more expressive and therefore allowed to vary more freely—and does not extend to purportedly more functional categories of words like pronouns. This erasure of grammatical variation from popular discourses of language is often combined with a

suppression of linguistic variation in the classroom that can be considered structural rather than expressive, or grammatical rather than lexical.

For example, one concern among many Bosnian teachers I spoke to was the perceived Croatization of Bosnian. Citing the influence of media—Croatian language shows that are popular with children, foreign movies subtitled by speakers of Croatian, and the perceived increase of Croatian terms by Bosnian television personalities—some teachers reported to me that children were using many more Croatian forms and were often not aware of whether a form was Croatian or Bosnian.

For example, in Bosnian and Serbian the pronoun “who” is *ko*, while in Croatian is *tko*. Similarly, “someone” is *neko* in Bosnian and Serbian and *netko* in Croatian. One teacher of Bosnian reported that many of her students regularly used *tko* and *netko* and that she considered this to be an error in need of correction. And indeed, in classroom interactions and review of written assignments, when I heard students in Bosnian class use *tko*, they were corrected. In contrast, the word for pen in Bosnian is *hemijska olovka* or just *hemijska* while in Croatian it is *kemijska*. Both teachers and students who used *kemijska* in Bosnian classrooms did so without censure.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> One one occasion, I heard Ivan use *tko* in the classroom. Ivan regularly sprinkled his speech with Croatian lexical items, and indeed, he was originally from Croatia although he referred to his language as Bosnian. Because Ivan was the teacher, I argue that he was able to get away with this variant that I regularly saw corrected in students. Azra Hromadžić, who conducted fieldwork at the largest high school in Mostar, told me that she observed students correcting teachers for using lexical variants not considered correct. The Mostar *gimnazija* was a visible symbol of divided schooling in Bosnia in the years preceding my fieldwork, and my interlocutors reported different language ideologies and patterns of usage in Mostar than I observed in either Sarajevo or ZD town. In particular, while I conducted fieldwork in places in which the Bosniak/Serb divide was most salient, Mostar was a town divided between Bosniaks and Croats. Reportedly, Croatian lexical items were more controversial there than they were in Sarajevo and ZD town.

Likewise, students in Bosnian classes who dropped *h* in contexts in which it carried grammatical meaning (for example, in the first person aorist or in the genitive plural) in speech or written work were censured, but students and teachers regularly said *polako* instead of *polahko* or *meko* instead of *mehko* without correction, although absence of *h* in these contexts was sometimes pointed out in written work.

Finally, mistakes having to do with contemporary reflexes of the Old Slavic vowel *jat* were regularly corrected in both written and spoken language, but on one occasion a Bosnian teacher used *pre* (*ekavski*, commonly associated with Serbian, meaning before) instead of the *ijekavski* version *prije*, and another teacher told me that he considered mixing the two dialects characteristic of his region and didn't correct it in spoken language, although pointed it out in written work.

On the one hand many of these mistakes that drew commentary could be considered more egregious and therefore subject to correction because they are mistakes in all three standards—that is, if a student says or writes *ljepo* instead of *lijepo*, she is not choosing *ekavski* instead of *ijekavski*, she is producing a form that is not correct in either dialect standard. Likewise, if a student produces *lijepi* instead of *lijepih* for the genitive plural he is not merely failing to produce a preferred sound in the Bosnian standard, but has produced a form that is incorrect (in this context<sup>103</sup>) in any of the three standards. On the other hand, all of these mistakes violate a structural—orthographic, phonological or grammatical—convention in the language,

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<sup>103</sup> In its written form *lijepi* would be a correct rendering of the plural form of the adjective *lijep* or the definite singular—*lijepi grad* (the nice city) *lijepi gradovi* (nice cities). In the written form the addition of *h* to form *lijepih* marks it as the genitive plural. When *h* is omitted in writing these two forms would be indistinguishable. However, in speech the *e* in the genitive plural form would be longer than in the base form and the two forms would be distinguishable. Context would also serve to indicate which form was intended, and meaning would rarely be confused due to this similarity of form.

such as the historical rule for reflexes of the old Slavic vowel jat or morphological rules for adjective declensions.

As one teacher, a Croatian language teacher, put it when I asked her about lexical variation in her students' work: "As a language teacher, I am obligated to correct children, but these corrections don't enter into grades, they are only warnings that there are words that are more in the spirit of the language which they are learning."

Teachers often downplayed their role in regimenting controversial linguistic forms and instead focused on what they labeled literacy (*pismenost*<sup>104</sup>) skills such as reading comprehension and written expression, relying on a linguistic division of labor when more explicit corrections were necessary.<sup>105</sup>

### **Social Differences that Matter: What Language Indexes**

Instead of being concerned in the classroom about policing ethnic boundaries through language, teachers focused on improving students' command of language as a resource—one that, like money, they acknowledge is unevenly distributed throughout the state.<sup>106</sup> Many teachers I spoke with suggested to me that their primary

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<sup>104</sup> *Pismenost* is translated as literacy, but is often used in a broad sense to mean one's command of the orthographic and morphological conventions of the language, rather than an ability to decipher and produce a written code. Thus students who can clearly read and write but flout many conventions of the *pravopis* are sometimes referred to as *polupismen* or half-literate.

<sup>105</sup> As I discuss further in chapter six, one way in which teachers distanced themselves from controversial language standards was a reliance on authoritative manuals and a de-emphasis of their own linguistic expertise.

<sup>106</sup> For example, although curricula vary from canton to canton and municipality to municipality, only relatively wealthier cantons like Sarajevo Canton can afford to produce textbooks. Thus for Mak Dizdar, located in the less wealthy Zenica-Doboj Canton, textbooks from Sarajevo must be used, ensuring a certain amount of conformity with Sarajevo curricula. The conformity extends to *lektira* or outside reading assignments, which are prescribed by the curricula and designed to coordinate with textbooks. Teachers may choose books off a list on the curricula, however, Ivan told me, in his town many families can't afford to buy the books and the school library doesn't own them. "[The students]

goals in teaching were related to *pismenost*. *Pismenost* was a sign of education and culturedness and highly valued by teachers. In attempting to pass this skill on to their students, teachers often focused on language as form of social capital. In doing so, they emphasized how certain kinds of expression—speaking well, writing fluidly, reading critically—indexed positive social qualities like education, urbanity, or culturedness.

I suggest that this focus on language function rather than form was a way for teachers to emphasize not only what they believed was most important but also what was common across standard languages. When teachers do focus explicitly on form, they tend to focus not on forms that contrast across the three national standards, but rather on forms that are considered to be *narodni govor* or non-standard speech. This is one way in which teachers shift sites of significant difference to construct a linguistic community in the classroom (see chapter six for a more detailed discussion of this shifting.)

One teacher I became friends with, Jelena, taught both at *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović* in RS town—a relatively large city drawing students from the surrounding rural area—as well as a branch school located about 30 minutes away in village. Jelena, regularly linked the importance of learning *pravopis* conventions to students' projects outside the classroom. One October afternoon in 2007, Jelena and her students were reviewing writing assignments by reading students' work aloud and discussing strong and weak points of each assignment.

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have the same requirements but they don't have the same possibilities," Ivan told me. "It's unfair to the kids."

Ivana, known to her classmates to be an excellent student, had just read her passage aloud and reported her grade to be a 4 out of 5.<sup>107</sup> Jelena then asked another student, Petar, to read his passage, but Petar avoided putting his own work in the spotlight and instead responded by saying that he thought Ivana should have received a 5. Jelena responded that stylistically perhaps Ivana should have, but Ivana hadn't indented the first line of her essay, an automatic deduction, going on to elaborate her expectations for written work:

J: You know, when your mother makes a cake, how is that cake if you only mix eggs, sugar, and flour? That isn't a cake you know, there are other ingredients missing. It's missing cream and butter and who knows what else. But when you add everything that is necessary then you have a cake. Ivana will in the future respect the elements [Ivana: I will] because this time she got a four. If we had given her a five, like Petar suggested, if every time we say to Ivana: "Good, Ivana, next time pay attention, this shouldn't be a five." Ivana would just leave this school and she wouldn't pay attention. But now every time this four will remind her, "aha, I didn't [indent] the first sentence."

*J: Znae, kad mama pravi kolae, kakav vam je kolae ako samo zamuti jaja, eeer i doda brašno i to vam nije kolae imaš još tu sastojaka koji fali. Fali šlaga i margarina i nema eeega ne fali. Znači, i vi k'o kad dodate sve te koje su mu potrebne onda se stavlja. Ivana ee nama ubuduće poštovati elemente [Ivana: Hoću] jer je sad dobila eeetiri. Ako joj budemo dali pet, Petarova primjedba je na mjestu. Ali ako mi Ivani svaki put kaemo: „Dobro Ivana, drugi put vodi računa, ovo nije trebalo biti pet.“, Ivana ee jednostavno otići iz ove škole i neee voditi računa. A svaki put ee je ova eeetvorka opominjati: „Aha, nisam prvu reeenicu.“*

Jelena was like many teachers I spoke with who told me she cared far more about students' literacy skills than their ability to consistently follow the conventions of any one of the three standard languages. Indeed, while teachers generally agreed that students mixed standards in their usage, few suggested that they considered this to be any sort of problem. As Ivan explained to me, he doesn't care if his students follow exactly all the conventions of the Bosnian standard but instead his goals are that they: "write correctly, read nicely, and express themselves in a cultured manner" (*pravilno pisati, lijepo eeitati, i kulturno izražavati*).

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<sup>107</sup> Grades in Bosnian schools ran the scale from 1 to 5, with a 5 being highest and a 1 being lowest.



Writing correctly involves following the conventions contained in the *pravopis* and summarized in a number of books published for school age children. These books often focus on rules of the *pravopis* that are difficult for children because they contradict much naturally occurring speech, for example a natural tendency to drop *h* in word final positions, a tendency to pronounce *h* as *f* in words like *zafalio* (standard: *zahvalio*). While the *pravopis* does dictate which lexical variant is preferred in a particular standard, it deals mostly with variation among the standards that is not particularly salient, even though rules for capitalization of proper nouns or whether negative verbs are written as one word or two, for example, do vary from standard to standard. Variation in this domain is not mapped onto ethnic difference but is read as an indicator of social difference in that many violations of orthographic conventions—rules contained in the *pravopis*—are considered to be *narodni govor*—folk speech associated with rural, uneducated, non-standard speakers.

As Jelena told her students: “You can’t just write any way. To be educated, to be sure in language use one must know the *pravopis*. How do we tell if someone is literate, what tells us most? Written expression” (fieldnotes September 27 2007).

Teachers—especially in ZD town and the RS, but in Sarajevo also—labeled incorrect or non-standard speech and writing as *narodni govor* and *polupismen*, linking unacceptable forms of language to a purportedly uneducated and rural social class.

Like other spatial divisions (see Gal and Kligman 2000, Gal and Woolard 2001, Irvine and Gal 2000) attributions of rurality have a nesting nature to them in

Bosnia. Thus, while ZD town was on some occasions designated as an example of rural speech while I was in Sarajevo (see chapter six for an example), teachers in ZD town<sup>108</sup> often located *narodni govor* in the surrounding villages. While certain characteristics of speech in ZD town—like mixing *ekavski* and *ijekavski* variants or using Turkish words frequently—were mentioned to me proudly as sources of local distinctiveness, *narodni govor* was almost universally derided as uneducated and archaic.

For example, I observed the following exchange in Ruža's 7<sup>th</sup> grade classroom in *Osnovna Škola Mak Dizdar* in September of 2007. Ruža had just finished explaining the difference to her students between a *dogadjaj* and a *doživljaj*, or between a “happening” not experienced by the narrator and an “experience.” Students work on the ability to distinguish between these two types of narrations and produce their own throughout middle school and are tested on it on both school and standardized exams. After explaining the structure of these narrations, Ruža solicited oral *doživljaji* from her students. A girl (Student 1) seated near the front volunteered and recounted a story about cutting her finger while doing some yard work one day. The following exchange occurred immediately after she finished:

R: You constantly said “*kidsala, kidsala, kidsala*” [past tense form]. What does that mean? ... *Kidisati* [infinitive form], that is an archaic word. It means to gather courage. Who says it?

Ss: Old people, uneducated folk (shouting in unison)

R: Can you use it in Bosnian language class?

Ss: You can! You can't! (shouting in unison)

R: When can you use it?

S2: In poems

R to S1: **Here** you have to use correct, literary language. Where do you live?

S1: (responds with name of village near town where school is located.)

R: Do people **there** talk like **that**?

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<sup>108</sup> ZD town was a small town center with a population of about 5,000 serving a larger rural area of about 50,000. Children who lived in the surrounding villages came to ZD town for school. The town also hosted a weekly market, a library, post office and several banks, in addition to other services.

S1: Yes

R: *Stalno si rekla 'kidisala, kidisala, kidisala'. Šta to znači? ... Kidisati, to je arhaism. To znači skupiti hrabrost. Ko govori?*

Ss: *Stari ljudi! Neobrazovanje narod!* (Shouting in unison)

R: *Možeš koristiti u čas bosanskog jezika?*

Ss: *Može! Ne može!* (Shouting in unison)

R: *Kad možeš koristiti?*

S2: *U poeziji.*

R to S1: ***Ovdje** moraš pravilno, književno govoriš. Gdje živiš?*

S1: *(responds with name of village)*

R: *Da li ljudi **tamo tako** govore?*

S1: *Da.*

In this exchange, Ruža deviates dramatically from the stated purpose of the lesson—to learn about narrative structure for different types of narrated events. Ruža doesn't comment at all on the structure of the narrative Student 1 has just related. Instead, she immediately focuses on one word Student 1 had employed repeatedly. Ruža focuses on *when* and *where* this word is appropriate, in conjunction with her students determining that this word is one used by old, uneducated people. When she asks if it can be used in Bosnian language classes, the students give different answers, evidencing differences of opinions about its appropriateness, but Ruža goes on to clarify by asking *when* it could be used, and agreeing with the student who volunteers one limited context: in poems.

Poetic license is often invoked in classes to explain why sounds or syllables are eliminated, why a poem in *ekavski* might include a word in *ijekavski* (to lengthen the line and maintain poetic rhythm), or why punctuation might be differently used. Teachers often clarified to students that while poets could do this, they, the students, could not. Thus in invoking poetry, I argue, the student invoked a context familiar to his classmates as one that was “off-limits” to them or sufficiently set off from more ordinary language use.

After establishing the limited contexts in which *kidisati* is appropriate in the classroom, Ruža then directs here attention back to Student 1 specifically, again locating her correction spatially. *Here* in the class you must speak correctly, and, after confirming that Student 1 lives in a rural area, clarifies that *people there talk like that*, having already, in conjunction with the students determined that those people are both old and uneducated, two things that by virtue of being middle school students, her interlocutors certainly are not.

Concerns about what is perceived as a massive influx of rural Bosnians into the urban areas began during the rapid urbanization and industrialization of the early Yugoslav era and were revived by some of the population movements caused by the war. During my first visit to Sarajevo in 2005 as I was walking around my neighborhood with a friend, she pointed to some graffiti on a building and commented with disgust that *seljaci* (villagers) were destroying her city—implying that not only the linguistic forms used by rural Bosnians but also the ways in which they displayed those forms were at odds with urban practices. Thus when teachers corrected ways of speaking in the classroom—such as shouting an answer or addressing a teacher while remaining seated—they did so with an eye to ideologies that linked both linguistic forms and ways of displaying those forms with social judgments about urbanity and culturedness.

Such ways of speaking included not only standing while answering questions or using complete sentences, but also a particular work ethic that teachers suggested was necessary for children to succeed in school. When teachers faced noisy

classrooms or inattentive students, they often rebuked them harshly, suggesting that students would be sorry later that they had not worked hard in language class.

For example, one 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović* told her students the following after she perceived them to be inattentive while she was reviewing mistakes in their essays: “This isn’t easy, but if you listen, if you learn your mistakes, you can get good grades, get 4s and 5s in *gimnazija*, go on the college. What do I care how you do in school? I have two degrees in my pocket, my salary is paid, I have hot meals. I can’t force you to learn. But it’s not hard to be attentive. When I was young, I listened to my teachers. No one fell from the sky.”<sup>109</sup>

On another occasion, Jelena compared the noisy behavior of her students to that of a group of villagers in a story they had discussed that day—a group the class had characterized as provincial, narrow-minded, and judgmental. After class, she complained to me that students today are unwilling to “sweat” for the answers, citing as examples a student who had rested his book on the piano at the front of the class while reading aloud and another student who had remained seated while giving his answer to her question.

Thus both linguistic forms and classroom behaviors deemed to be inappropriate were spatially located as rural. The role of school—as Jagoda explained in the example above—was to teach students ways of speaking and ways of acting deemed to be more educated or urban.

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<sup>109</sup> Lit: “*Nije niko palo s neba*,” a common Bosnian phrase.

## **“A Man Is Worth as Many Language as He Speaks:” Language as Resource**

In addition to censoring certain linguistic forms as “uneducated” or “*polupismen*,” teachers also attributed positive, cosmopolitan characteristics to linguistic forms that in other contexts could invoke divisiveness. For example, I observed the following exchange with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade group of students in October 2007. Jelena had just handed back graded written assignments designed to evaluate student’s descriptive skills.

J: On the bigger side that you have, make two lists. This work you will write in Latin, written correction.

S1: Latin?

J: Yes. You know, every correction during the year you write in Latin, because we need to begin both with the Latin alphabet and use it from time to time.

S2: Exactly.

J: You know that a man is worth as many languages as he speaks and alphabets as he knows. And I don’t know how you forget the Latin alphabet. You need it in English, for computer class, for German.

*J: Na većoj strani, koju imate, navedite dva lista. Ovaj rad pišete latinicom, ispravak pismene.*

*S1: Latinicom?*

*J: Jeste. Znači, svaki ispravak u toku godine pišete latinicom, zato što treba da počnemo i latinično pismo i povremeno ga koristimo.*

*S2: Tačno.*

*J: Znaš ti da čovjek vrijedi onoliko koliko jezika govori i pisama zna. I ne znam što zaboravljate, latinica ti treba engleski, za informatiku, za njemački.*

Students across Bosnia were required by various curricula to learn both alphabets. While teachers in the Federation told me that students were required to do one-third of their assignments in Cyrillic, I rarely saw it used in class.<sup>110</sup> Students in the Federation often groaned when told they had to use Cyrillic and appeared to work more slowly in that script. Adults reported to me that they feared children were not learning Cyrillic and that this would cause them problems later on, since a significant

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<sup>110</sup> This is possibly a result of my presence. One teacher told his students one day that they were supposed to be using Cyrillic that day, but wouldn’t because he didn’t want to make it hard for me to follow along. Despite my assurances that I could read Cyrillic, teachers in the RS also sometimes tried to find Latin versions of class texts for me to follow along or used Latin on the chalkboard.

number of texts printed in the Yugoslav era were printed in Cyrillic. This rising literacy gap is one of the few places where my informants pointed to problems with intelligibility that were linked to differences among the standards. For example, one Bosnian teacher told me she had a hard time getting her students to read Cyrillic because they associated it negatively with the Serbian language.

In contrast, I didn't observe any reluctance to use Latin in the RS—although S1 above expresses surprise—but when looking over students' work in Latin noticed that they would sometimes make mistakes—using *g* for *d*, for example, likely since the *d* sound in Cyrillic resembles the *g* in the Latin script.

In this example, however, Jelena explicitly stresses the value of knowing more than one language as well as more than one script. Instead of viewing linguistic forms as potential symbols of an exclusive identity, Jelena positively emphasized being bi-scriptal as another way in which students could present themselves as educated individuals.

Other teachers also pointed out the positive value of being multilingual, tying it to performance in language class. Another teacher at *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović*, Marija, told her students: “The fundamental thing is that you know your own language. You can't learn English or German if you don't know your own grammar. How can you learn the past tense [*perfekat*] in Macedonian or German if you don't know the past tense in your own language?”

When I observed Marija going over student essays, she had developed an extensive list of mistakes. None of these mistakes were specific to the Serbian standard. In fact, in a couple cases, to highlight the incorrectness of a word, Marija

emphasized to her students that it wasn't correct in any of the standard variants. For example, in response to the word *ljek* which students had used in a written essay, Marija said: "That is not correct—not in Croatian, not in Bosnian. The correct form is *lijek* [medicine]. In Croatian you can hear *lijekarna* instead of *apoteka* [Serbian variant for pharmacy] but they also say *lijek*." Thus Croatian was drawn on as a source of authority for correct usage. Marija further went on to speculate that *ljek* may be correct in Slovenian, implicitly drawing a distinction between Slovenian on the one hand and Croatian, Serbian, and Bosnian/Bosniak on the other. With another class, she emphasized the equality of *dvijehiljada* and *dvijetisuća* (Serbian/Bosnian and Croatian variants respectively for two thousand) and *oktobar* and *listopad* (Serbian/Bosnian and Croatian variants respectively for October).

Other teachers reported that students weren't exposed to the richness of language that they had been during socialist education. One teacher at *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović* explained to me that when she had been a student in the 1970s, they had learned all the Turkish phrases, but today students were not exposed to those words. While she placed Turkish borrowings squarely within the Bosnian (not Serbian) standard, she noted that many older Serbian writers used them regularly and that to be able to read and understand literature, students needed to know these phrases.

Thus, my research shows that teachers de-emphasize linguistic differences that are mapped onto ethnic differences in the classroom and instead highlight ways in which language indexes other qualities such as education level or urbanity. In contrast to the perception of language standards as fluctuating or chaotic, teachers



emphasize the rule-governed, orderly nature of language and the importance for their students of learning and following these conventions. In this light, even linguistic forms that may be interpreted as indexing ethnic difference can be positively redefined as indexing cosmopolitan values.

## **Conclusion**

As I have suggested above, language inside the classroom is quite different from language outside the classroom. While in the classroom, students and teachers focus on grammar and orthography, outside the classroom lexical choices are highlighted. Inside the classroom, structure and logic are emphasized while on the street chaos and insecurity are perceived to be the norm. Language in the classroom is anchored in a linguistic division of labor that promotes authoritative books while outside the classroom, linguistic intuition and authenticity are held up as models for appropriate speech and normative manuals are mocked. Inside the classroom, language is presented as unrelated to ethnic difference while outside the classroom, language constantly indexes and creates ethnic difference.

Such a view, however, assumes the classroom space to be monolithic—always official in its conduct and aims and somehow isolated from the social meanings of language that are ever-present just meters away in hallways and teachers lounges. Yet the classroom is a space with leaky boundaries and social difference and linguistic chaos sometimes creep in—indeed, they are sometimes invited in. While teachers often emphasize language’s structural aspects and logical qualities, they also collaborate with their students in a blurring of qualities through highlighting certain

kinds of “mistakes” while de-emphasizing others, framing lessons with asides about language or language change and anchoring language in different kinds of authority.

It is to this blurring of boundaries that I now turn.

## **Chapter Six: Blurring Linguistic Boundaries: Ideologies of Pluralism and the Monolingual Norm**

This chapter will explore how tensions between two competing ideologies shape linguistic choices as well as interpretations of those choices in Bosnia today. Those ideologies are: a deeply rooted ideology of pluralism and dominant pan-European ideologies linking nations, states and speakers in tightly bounded exclusive communities. In particular, I will look at how institutional and social pressures towards a one-to-one correspondence between a language and a nation intersect with competing discourses that value linguistic variation and diversity. I will argue that the ways linguistic forms are actually deployed in classroom practice reveal that both the use of standard norms as well as their indexical valences are shifting and multiple.

While many scholars (Anderson 1991) have taken use of or allegiance to standard languages to be a relatively unproblematic indicator of national identity, this line of scholarship fails to take into account ways in which standard languages are never completely unified but are contested resources and fragile constructs. While Anderson's communities are imagined on the basis of a naturalized linguistic community, this chapter will explore the indexical processes by which linguistic community is achieved in the moment (and perhaps only for a moment) in classroom interactions.

This chapter builds on critiques of Anderson's work that have argued Anderson erases internal language variation to project the existence of a homogenous national community (e.g. Silverstein 2000). While Anderson's views have been influential in explaining how deep emotional ties such as nationhood can be held in common by groups of strangers, by erasing internal variation—as well as internal debates about indexical meaning—Anderson assumes the existence of the very community he is purporting to explain.

In the Bosnian case, some observers take the existence of three officially distinct codes to align neatly with three national groups, à la Anderson. However, in this dissertation I have argued that despite sharing overlapping linguistic forms, at least two distinctly different Bosnian communities are imaginable through the medium of standard language. As I discussed earlier, the major point of contention surrounding the Bosnian standard language is whether it is the language of a primarily Muslim national community or whether its speakers are Bosnian citizens of all nationalities and religions.

That is, although one idea of what it means to speak Bosnian is firmly grounded in an ideology of pluralism, this ideology is constantly in tension with an arguably more dominant pan-European model of monolingual nation-states. While many definitions of Standard in Bosnia point to the elimination of lexical doublets as a sign of complete or good standardization (Halilović 1992, see also various Sarajevo-X.com forum discussions), it is precisely the elevation of one lexical variant over another—or, on the level of the state, one linguistic code over another—that many claim makes the Bosnian standard “un-Bosnian.” Such evaluations juxtapose

received ideas about what makes a standard with a history valued for its pluralistic tradition of syncretism and tolerance.

Tensions between authoritative institutional languages and marginalized or subordinate languages are well known in the anthropological literature (Jaffe 1999, Meek 2001, Heller and Martin-Jones 2001, Woolard 1998, 1999, Lemon 2000).

These tensions often manifest themselves in a double bind over competing values of legitimacy and representativeness (Jaffe 1999: 246). That is, while dominant ideologies often define the value of a language by its institutional recognition, its instantiation in authoritative manuals, and its regulation by state-sanctioned experts (Silverstein 1996, 2000, Milroy 2001), such normativity and regimentation can sometimes alienate the language from the people presumed to be its rightful speakers.

What is interesting about the Bosnian case is that what is at stake is not the differences among codes, but those among the communities that a code is believed to index. Because the three standards considered official languages in Bosnia overlap to a great degree in lexical stock, grammatical patterns and orthographic conventions, the process of labeling some bit of language as belonging to one standard or another is a complex process that, in any given context, draws on a variety of indexical orders, assumptions about what it means to be Bosnian, and ideologies about which linguistic features are believed to be significant in any given moment. Thus in this chapter I will argue that in classroom practice, teachers play on the ambiguity of linguistic forms and labels to blur the boundaries not only among linguistic varieties but also among the social groups believed those forms are believed to “belong to.”

The forms at stake are often bivalent in Kathryn Woolard's sense, although with an important difference. While Woolard discusses how bivalency can be used to voice a dual identity (Woolard 1989), my research in Bosnia suggests that bivalent forms are often used to *avoid* an overt identification with an ethnolinguistic identity. The situation in Bosnia is more similar to the strategic bivalency discussed by Woolard and Genovese (2007) in which they discuss how a strategic minimization of differences between Spanish and Latin was employed for nationalist purposes in early modern Spain. In this way, read as a manifestation of allegiance to Yugoslav era linguistic policy, this avoidance of ethnolinguistic identification in Bosnia is itself a form of political identification.

The imposition of unity—as James Milroy (2001: 531) defines standardization—has been considered central to analyses of nationalist projects or state-making enterprises. Along with such unity comes intolerance for variety, both formal and functional (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 22). While the constructed nature of such categories as nation or language is well established in the literature, scholars have focused a great deal of attention on how social actors, state institutions and cultural projects try to tidy up the inherent messiness in creating such categories (Heller 2008, Jaffe 1999, Spitulnik 1998). The ambiguity surrounding such messiness, then, becomes a site for creative responses to dominant ideologies—a source of play at the margins of hegemonic nationalist ideologies. In this chapter, I aim to show how ambiguity itself can be a nationalist project, not simply a response to it.

I follow Woolard and Genovese (2007) who suggest that the dominant analytic focus on how language boundaries are constructed and maintained stems from the important role of allegedly discrete standard languages in the nationalist and national projects of the last few centuries that have fundamentally reshaped much of the modern world. Yet Woolard and Genovese also suggest that boundary erasure can be productive of certain national identities (see Irvine and Gal 2000 for another call for a focus on cross-boundary linguistic practices). Importantly, this process of erasure is never total. That is, while transgressing boundaries allows for alternate social positionings and rich ambiguity, the existence of these boundaries must be presupposed before social actors can transgress them in creative, meaning-making ways (Woolard and Genovese 2007: 499, 505).

That the boundaries between linguistic codes are messy and incomplete is not unique to Bosnia nor is it surprising. Instead, what I am arguing is that it is precisely this messiness of language boundaries in Bosnia is central to defining Bosnian. As I discussed in chapter two, one perception of what it means to “be Bosnian” focuses on blurring boundaries and straddling ideological divides. Narratives of Bosnia as a place of bridges, as a crossroads of history and a fault line where empires, religions and civilizations met, clashed and co-existed are commonplace, among both Bosnians and outside observers, both recently and centuries ago (see Bakić-Hayden 1991, Cvijić 1909, 1918, Andrić 1990 [1924]).<sup>111</sup> While some of these discourses focus on the so-called schizophrenic or paradoxical results of such sociohistorical mixing (Andrić 1990 [1924], Cvijić 1909, 1918) others emphasize the syncretism and melding over

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<sup>111</sup> On similar narratives elsewhere in Eastern Europe see Wolff 1994, Todorova 1997. On the fractal and nesting nature of such narratives see Gal 1995, Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1995

time that resulted in a distinct, indigenous Bosnian-ness that was not merely intermingling but fusion and creation (Mahmutćehajić 2000 [1997], Isaković 1970).

While such ideas have historical roots that were strengthened by Yugoslav nationality policy, I argue that they gained a great deal of *moral* currency during the war in Bosnia between 1992-1995. During the war—a war which included not only ethnic cleansing of minority populations, but also the targeted destruction of cultural monuments—many Bosniaks felt it was their distinct, syncretic tradition that was under attack.

My research suggests that despite overwhelming support for the *name* of the Bosnian language, the *norm* does not enjoy such support. As I discussed in the last chapter, ethnically marked linguistic forms are rarely objects of debate or controversy in the classroom but are mixed, used, and avoided on a daily basis. In this chapter I aim to show first how it is that the boundaries between Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian standard norms are shifted and blurred in classroom interaction. Tending to the semiotic ways in which language boundaries are indexed and shifted reveals how significant linguistic difference is constructed in the classroom and how those linguistic forms and their use are linked to particular imaginings of the Bosnian national community. I will then argue that this shifting is based on an ideology of linguistic pluralism that is tightly linked to the way in which many Bosnians imagine their community. I will end by suggesting that it might be more productive to view the politics and discourses surrounding language standards in Bosnia today as primarily about the *unstandardization* of Serbo-Croatian norms and attitudes rather than the *standardization* of Bosnian.



While Silverstein argues that from within the culture of standard languages, linguistic variation is experienced vertically or pyramidically (2000: 122) as failure to attain standard norms at the apex of the pyramid, I argue that in Bosnia some speakers experience some types of variation horizontally—as choice among equals rather than ranked alternatives. However, despite discourses which emphasize the importance of *choice* among variants in Bosnian linguistic practice, on the ground such choices are constrained not only by official standard norms—which are indexed as much by their avoidance as by their use—but by various institutional contexts, concerns about uptake, and memories of past violence, among other factors.

### **Whose Linguistic Community?**

Many Bosnian teachers I spoke with were very critical of recent changes in both language standards and teaching materials. However, in the classroom they are in a space in which language is defined as legitimate primarily through its inclusion in authoritative texts. Thus for many teachers their personal linguistic ideologies were at odds with their views of their pedagogical responsibilities, creating a situation in which teachers were expected to endorse linguistic forms or interpretations they may not personally agree with.

As my research shows, through their classroom practice teachers find ways to balance these tensions by playing with language boundaries, redefining sites of significant difference, and inserting moments of critique into their lessons. In this way, teachers uphold their professional obligations while simultaneously shifting the boundaries of the community indexed by their language use. While many teachers

told me they thought standard forms indexed an exclusive religious community, they redefined these forms in the classroom to point to values or practices believed to be common to all Bosnians.

### ***Redefinition***

One of the ways teachers blurred boundaries between rigid ideas of standard varieties was to redefine the indexical or semantic meaning of certain linguistic forms. This redefinition often served to shift the boundaries of the implied speech community, allowing linguistic forms to cross standard boundaries in ways not permitted by normative manuals. For example, I observed the following in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom in Sarajevo in November of 2006. Rušid, a Bosnian language teacher of about 35 or 40 years old who had been teaching for 10 years, handed back students' written assignments. The following table was on the chalkboard:

<i>Ne</i>	<i>Da</i>
<i>razbolela</i>	<i>razboljela</i>
<i>polako</i>	<i>polahko</i>
<i>pričanje</i>	<i>pričanje</i>
<i>drugačije</i>	<i>drugačije</i>
<i>čarape</i>	<i>čarape</i>
<i>dole</i>	<i>dolje</i>
<i>kafa</i>	<i>kahva</i>

In the first column were words Rušid had marked as incorrect in his students' essays and in the second were the correct versions of those words. When Rušid reached the example of *dole/dolje* he told the students that before the war, under the 1960 Novi Sad *pravopis*, both forms were considered correct but *dole* was used more in Bosnia

because of a general lexical orientation towards Eastern or Serbian forms. After the war, that orientation shifted and Rušid explained that *dolje*, which had always been correct, began to be used more. In 1996, Halilović's *pravopis* declared that *dolje* was the only correct form in standard Bosnian.

One boy in the second row raised his hand and challenged Rušid, invoking the speech of his parents and peers, and claiming he would be embarrassed to use the forms Rušid was presenting as correct—in this case *dolje* while the student had used the form *dole* (which was now considered correct only in Serbian). Rušid first responded by telling the students that he was presenting the correct forms in Bosnian and that the students would learn them.

However, he then backtracked a bit. Rušid pointed on the chalkboard to the word “*kahva*,” Bosnian standard for coffee. Students had used the word “*kafa*,” technically only normed in the Serbian standard but still seen and heard in cafes all over Sarajevo.<sup>112</sup> Rušid introduced a semantic difference between the two words. *Kahva*, he told them, implied a ritual—sitting and drinking coffee slowly, enjoying it, maybe chatting with a friend. *Kafa* was for drinking coffee quickly, most likely espresso, not Bosnian coffee, and maybe drinking it in a café, while reading a paper.

By introducing a semantic distinction, Rušid shifted the boundaries of the Bosnian standard to include both *kafa* and *kahva*, allowing the presence of *kafa* in daily life in Sarajevo without undermining the standard form of *kahva*. In doing so, he performatively made *kafa* a bivalent form, one that can now be *both* Bosnian and

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<sup>112</sup> Rušid also used *kafa* in the classroom. In lesson about two weeks later a sentence he wrote to illustrate the accusative case read: *Svako jutro bi sjeo, popio kafu i pročitao novine*. (Every morning I would sit, drink coffee and read the newspaper).

Serbian. By grounding a sound considered by many to be inauthentic in a social practice defined as authentically Bosnian, I suggest that Rušid also challenged assumptions that forms containing *h*—and by extension the Bosnian standard itself—are both somehow artificial as well as primarily Muslim. In invoking the *ritual* of coffee drinking as the primary referent of *kahva*, Rušid also invoked a number of other discourses in which coffee drinking in Bosnia is favorably compared to coffee drinking in neighboring countries for maintaining an air of pleasure and sociality that had been lost in the Westernizing frenzy of Croatia, for example.

The student, however, in invoking embarrassment in his refusal to use the new standard forms was drawing on ideas that associated the standards with artificial and unnatural forms of language that are politically motivated and ideologically influenced. The student located authenticity in his linguistic intuitions—intuitions that drew on the speech he heard around him. The appeal to linguistic intuition (*jezički osjećaj*) is often presented in popular discourses as a necessary remedy to incompetent experts and linguistic separatism run amuck.

However, in his correction Rušid not only made reference to expert authority by invoking the *pravopis*, he also drew on a general trend in Sarajevo speech since the war to shift away from certain lexical forms which, while commonly used before the war, have since become negatively identified with Serbia and the perceived dominance of Serbian standard norms during Yugoslavia (see chapter two). This perceived linguistic aggression is sometimes mapped onto the physical aggression of Serbia during the war and the relationship among the standards is sometimes described using imagery drawn from the war. Thus while using certain Bosnian

standard forms can open one up to charges of linguistic nationalism, using certain Serbian forms can open one up to charges of being unpatriotic or pro-Serb (remember the *Ljiljan* debates discussed in chapter three).

I suggest that the idea of bivalency is useful here not only because speakers in Bosnia sometimes chose bivalent forms to avoid having to use highly marked forms but also because it highlights how multiple and sometimes contradictory language ideologies can be deployed at the same time in the same bit of talk. In the exchange above, Rušid drew on the multiple indexical meanings of *kahva* to shift the ideological implications of using the new standard forms from a more restricted, exclusionary idea about how to be Bosnian to one that, while purportedly more inclusive in recognizing coexistence of lexical items, marked a salient break with both pre-war usage patterns and social alignments<sup>113</sup> as well as created a hierarchy of coffee drinking practices linked to different social groups.

One reason *kahva* is controversial is because it contains the voiceless velar fricative, graphically represented in the Latin alphabet as the letter *h*. As I discussed in chapter three, the Bosnian standard is characterized by the use of this letter in places where Serbian and Croatian norms do not include it. However, the reasons given by linguists for the *h* in Bosnian linguistic practice are directly tied to Islamic practices like praying and reading the Ku'ran in Arabic. Thus *h* has become linked both indexically and iconically<sup>114</sup> not just to Bosnian speech but to Islam and Islamic

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<sup>113</sup> I knew from private conversations with him that Rušid was highly critical of certain aspects of the standard. He also during one particular lesson involving a short story with war imagery made a point of emphasizing multiculturalism and pacifism to his students. It was implied to me, although I never asked Rušid, that he had been a soldier during the war.

<sup>114</sup> As discussed in chapter three, some depictions of the *h* present it as a fragile, vulnerable sound that was only preserved in Bosniak speech due to the influence of Islam and Arabic. Such depictions

practices. In this way, that one letter symbolizes the major debate around the Bosnian standard—namely, whether the specificity of Bosnian is marked by the influence of the Ottomans and Islam or whether what makes Bosnian unique is its distinct multiethnic, multireligious tradition that emphasizes lexical doublets and free choice among them.

However, *h* remains an important phoneme in some grammatical contexts in both Serbian and Croatian standards—in particular, it marks the genitive plural of adjectives and the first person aorist. This *h* is often dropped in everyday speech by Bosnians of all ethnic groups, expressing allegiance to all standards. Teachers of all three standards consider dropping *h* in contexts in which it marks a grammatical form a mistake they need to correct. Thus even though *h* is ideologically constructed as being an Islamic sound, teachers of Serbian and Croatian also emphasize the importance of using *h*, albeit primarily in these grammatical contexts and not as widely as Bosnian teachers might.

However, the significance of the phoneme was redefined in one Serbian class I observed at *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović*. During this class, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were giving presentations about Vuk Karadžić, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Serbian linguistic reformer and literary figure. Vuk, as he is known, is an important figure in Serbian linguistics, credited with modernizing the alphabet and implementing the phonetic principle of “Write as you speak and read as it is written.” Vuk created a standard based on linguistic practice and his legacy across the neo-štokavian languages is important. In this context, a student presenter noted that in 1836 Vuk took the step of

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parallel those that present the Bosniak nation as vulnerable to outside forces with its distinctiveness coming primarily from its associations with Islam.

introducing the letter *h* into his *pravopis*. “Why is this important?” the teacher asked. “Well, he heard it among the Muslims,” the student responded. “Yes, but what is important is that now all sounds have a sign,” the teacher replied. “There are 30 sounds and there are 30 letters.” She went on to elaborate that this perfect correspondence is part of what makes Serbian so easy to pronounce in contrast to languages like English. In this way, a letter that is primarily indexically linked to Muslims is re-incorporated into a Serbian linguistic standard that draws both on a Serbian folk hero and on Serbian linguistic principle.

Thus in the examples above, teachers redefined the meaning of potentially controversial linguistic forms—in the first case the semantic meaning of a word and in the second case the indexical referent of a sound. In both cases, the teachers did so in response to challenges or inferences from students that a certain standard form “belonged” to someone else’s linguistic community. In both cases, the teachers offered alternate interpretations of those forms that attempted—successfully or not—to redraw the boundaries of the language community by making certain linguistic choices less marked. In Rušid’s case, he did this by associating *kahva* not with an exclusively Islamic referent but with a shared, authentically Bosnian one. In the *Osnovna Škola Dositej Obradović* example, a form is redefined so as not to be primarily Muslim but in this case to index a Serbian folk hero and an allegedly disinterested linguistic principle.

### ***Indexical Indeterminacy***

Another way in which the boundaries between linguistic communities are blurred in classroom practice plays on the fundamental ambiguity inherent in the labels used for the standard languages. That is, while nearly all of my interlocutors had shifted to saying Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian (instead of Serbo-Croatian) depending on where they were spatially located or which language they personally identified as speaking, sometimes the label Bosnian meant something equivalent to “the language we used to call Serbo-Croatian” and other times it meant “Bosnian and not Serbian or Croatian.” Such ambiguity could sometimes be avoided, as for example, when people chose to use the label *B/H/S* for *bosanski/hrvatski/srpski*, which would refer to all the languages formerly codified as Serbo-Croatian, or when they used the label *bošnjački*<sup>115</sup> (Bosniak) which would refer exclusively to a code used by Bosnian Muslims and different from both Serbian and Croatian.

However, given the political ramifications of selecting one label over another and the uncertainty of how one’s interlocutors might interpret that selection, the label *naš jezik* (our language) is frequently used.<sup>116</sup> This label carries the very same ambiguity, and this uncertainty is at least in some cases probably why it was used. Who is the “*naš*” referred to in this phrase—all Bosnians, regardless of national

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<sup>115</sup> As discussed in chapter two, this label is rejected by most Bosnian Muslims as the appropriate name for their language based primarily on two criteria: 1) The historical evidence that *bosanski* (Bosnian) had always been the name for the language of Bosnian Muslims from the time of the medieval Bosnian state up into the Austro-Hungarian era and 2) The principle that every state should have a language and thus Bosnian was the language of Bosnia. Many Bosnian Serbs (as well as textbooks used in the RS) use the label *bošnjački* for the language of Bosnian Muslims, rejecting the idea that as inhabitants of Bosnia a language called Bosnian might include them.

<sup>116</sup> Many foreigners in Bosnia use the phrases local language(s) (*zajedni jezik/zajedni jezici*). The use of *naš jezik* was common during the Yugoslav era as well. For example, several of the textbooks from the 1960s onward used this term as a title.



identity or a more exclusive view of “us?” I witnessed this phrase used in a variety of contexts, both in situations when all parties involved (except myself) were members of the same national community as well as in situations when they were not, as when a Muslim friend of mine asked a Serbian shopkeeper for the location of a grammar book for me, who she described as learning “our language” (*Ona uči naš jezik*).

The ambiguity of the phrase was nicely illustrated at a conference I attended in Croatia during which one of the keynote speakers, a French academic who taught B/C/S at the Sorbonne and had learned what was then Serbo-Croatian in Belgrade in the 1970s, noted that he was going to mention some “things about ‘our’ language” (*stvari o “našem” jeziku*) using air quotes for the “*našem*” (locative case) and drawing a few chuckles. He went on to explain that as a non-native speaker he didn’t really speak Serbian, but felt even less that he spoke Croatian.<sup>117</sup> In this way, he, like others, exploited the ambiguity of the deictic “*naš*” to avoid the awkwardness of selecting a label when none seemed quite right.

This was exploited in the classroom as well. For example, on the same day discussed above, Rušid, was explaining the rule for determining reflexes of the Old Slavic vowel *jat* (*zamjena jata*). *Jat* underwent a sound change sometime around the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Jahić 2000: 16) that became the major basis for the difference between the *ekavski* (primarily Serbian) and *ijekavski* (primarily Bosnian and Croatian)

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<sup>117</sup> This hesitancy on the part the speaker, as a non-native, to label his linguistic practice as conforming to one of three standard varieties is echoed in my fieldnotes from September of 2007, the night before I was to visit a school in the RS for the first time: “Should I switch and say I speak Serbian simply because I have crossed a border? Is it silly to switch what I call the language if I don’t switch my speech patterns? I don’t think I would be feeling this way if I were a native speaker of Bosnian—I would say I spoke Bosnian wherever I was. Is it having learned it as a foreign language—perhaps feeling like I don’t have the intimacy or the emotional ties or something to this language, whatever it is, makes me think I should switch names when I switch borders?” Competency also comes into play, as not all non-native speakers (myself included) are fluent enough to switch among standard varieties with ease.

dialects.<sup>118</sup> In *ekavski*, *jat* became either a long or short *e*. However in *ijekavski*, *jat* had two reflexes, *je* and *ije*. Children often make spelling mistakes with these two reflexes and Rušid was teaching them the rule: if they are unsure if a word is spelled with *ije* or *je*, they are to think of that same word in *ekavski*. A long *e* in *ekavski* means *ije* in *ijekavski*, while a short *e* in *ekavski* means *je* in *ijekavski*.<sup>119</sup> Rušid had listed *ekavski/ijekavski* pairs on the blackboard under the headings *ekavski* and *naš jezik*, thereby opposing the *ekavski*, Serbian dialect to “our language.” *Ekavski* was labeled *nepravilno* (incorrect) while *naš jezik* was labeled *pravilno* (correct).

Shortly thereafter, Rušid was discussing mistakes in which students had confused *č* and *ć* and he told them: “*U našem jeziku postoji pravilni afrikat—i mi ćemo to naučiti!*” (In our language there is a correct affricate—and we will learn it!) Here, the deictic *naš* is left unspecified but could theoretically include all B/C/S varieties, given that the rules for affricates are the same in all of them. However, the tendency to confuse the two affricates is considered to be a marker of urban speech generally and Sarajevan speech in particular (Jahić 2000: 227-229).

In explaining this to his students, Rušid drew on a widespread social hierarchy in which villagers, and their language, are unfavorably compared to urbanites, urban culture, and urban speech. He also shifted the significant difference at play from the

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<sup>118</sup> The distribution of these two dialects as well as the third *ikavski* (considered to be non-standard) does not correspond exactly to state boundaries, although the fuzzy dialect boundaries are often erased in ideological mappings.

<sup>119</sup> Evoking *ekavski* is the standard way to teach this rule. When I questioned teachers as to whether children’s knowledge of *ekavski*, presumably their non-native dialect, was reliable enough to help them with spelling in their native dialect, almost all assured me that it was. Friends of mine (in their late 20s) told me *ekavski* words with improper accents sounded foreign to them. One said the words sounded Russian. Mirsad was the only teacher who suggested this rule only worked due the high amount of dialect mixing (via media and migration) during Yugoslavia that helped children develop an ear for *ekavski*. He suggested my peers who were children in the 80s had still been exposed to a significant amount of *ekavski*. Mirsad predicted that within the next generation this rule would no longer help children with spelling in *ijekavski*. While there is a great deal of TV from Croatia in the Federation, there is significantly less Serbian TV.

one previously discussed between *ekavski* and *ijekavski*—a difference that, ideologically at least, corresponds primarily to national differences between Serbian on the one hand and Bosnian and Croatian on the other—to a difference within Bosnia between urban and rural speech.

Thus Rušid drew on something all three standards share in common to invoke a social difference based on education rather than ethnicity. Rušid invoked a social hierarchy as he discussed this tendency with the students, calling the problem “*specifično Sarajevo, specifično urbani*” (specifically Sarajevan, specifically urban), going on to say: “*Seljaci rijetko imaju problemi. Ne kaže seljaci ne znaju ništa. U Tešnju nemaju problemi. U Zenici imaju problemi, iako je blizu Tešnja.*” (Villagers rarely have problems. Don’t say villagers don’t know anything. In Tešanj they don’t have problems. In Zenica they have problems, even though it is close to Tešanj.<sup>120</sup>) Interestingly, here, Rušid reversed the dominant valences of these terms, in this case, valorizing rural speech as more correct than urban speech.<sup>121</sup> (See chapter five for a more detailed discussion of urban/rural distinctions).

Rušid often employed *naš jezik* in such shifting ways in his classroom, sometimes using it in an obviously restricted sense and sometimes in a (possibly) inclusive sense. A few weeks later, when introducing the vocative case, Rušid told the

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<sup>120</sup> Tešanj is a small town in north-central Bosnia once described to me as a “*pravi bosanski gradić*” (proper Bosnian small town). The population of Tešanj was estimated to me to be about 5,000 although including the surrounding villages, the town center serves closer to 50,000 people. Zenica is an industrial city with a population of nearly 130,000 located between Sarajevo and Tešanj. Rušid chose Tešanj in this case because my research assistant was from Tešanj. This came up on this day, our first day visiting Rušid’s class because after pointing out their mistakes to his students, Rušid asked my research assistant and I to pronounce certain words containing the affricates. We both did this successfully, prompting Rušid to ask my research assistant where she was from and then to tell the students that I likely pronounced the affricates correctly because I had learned them from a *Tešanjka* (woman from Tešanj). In fact I learned Bosnian primarily from Sarajevans.

<sup>121</sup> While rural speech is sometimes valorized as being more authentic or picturesque, it is, at least in Bosnia, very rarely considered more *correct* than urban speech (see Bilaniuk 2005 on a similar tension in the Ukraine between rural and urban speech. See also Jaffe 1999.)

students about a palatalization rule in “our language.” (This rule applies in all three standards, though Rušid didn’t state this explicitly.) However, he then went on to elaborate a contrast for the students between a relatively new extension of the rule in Croatian in which it is applied to names of foreign origin, unlike in Bosnian. Rušid contrasted the rule in “*hrvatski*” (Croatian) to the rule in “*naš jezik*,” giving as an example the name *Tariče* and going on to say, “*Sve više u našem jeziku čuje Tariče.*”<sup>122</sup> (“More and more in our language you hear *Tariče*”). In this case the palatalization rule has been applied to the name Tarik, although it should not be under Bosnian norms.

It is unclear what Rušid meant by his shifting use of *naš jezik*. While Rušid often used this phrase in ways that could be inclusive, he also used it to explicitly contrast Bosnian to other standard norms. I suggest that the meaning of the unspecified uses does not have to be deliberately or explicitly exclusive, but only that it can be. That is, while Bosnian is in some moments sharply distinct from Croatian or Serbian, in other moments it is not. Tracking when uses of *naš jezik* (could) refer(s) to all three standard languages in Bosnia and when it can only refer to Bosnian tracks when the perceived boundaries of the Bosnian standard overlap with other standards and when they do not.

Significantly, Rušid’s use of *naš* with his students created a (momentary) linguistic community in the classroom. Regardless of their own linguistic practice or ethnic affiliation, Rušid worked to construct the classroom community as one that shared linguistic codes, albeit codes that he played a disproportionate role in

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<sup>122</sup> Tarik is the name of a Bosnian man who hosts the popular Croatian version of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, which is also broadcast in Bosnia, thus explaining why he is often called *Tariče*.

dictating.<sup>123</sup> Such strategies rely heavily on deictic markers because such linguistic forms are creatively presupposing—that is, the work of constructing the “we” to whom those forms refer is accomplished in their use (Silverstein 1976).

By contrast, the choice of specific lexical items runs the risk of upsetting the achievement of linguistic community. They are thus particularly problematic for some teachers. While many teachers downplayed the significance of lexical difference in the classroom, several teachers I spoke with described in detail to me particular strategies they used when making lexical choices in the classroom. It is to a more detailed discussion of teachers’ linguistic practices that I now turn.

### **Teachers’ Linguistic Practices**

In conjunction with the other significant shifts in education policy and curricula content, the introduction of separate national standards in Bosnia in the 1990s was accompanied by a major shift in how teachers were *supposed to* speak in the classroom. While language and education policy in the 1970s emphasized *sloboda izbora* (free choice) among standard linguistic variants for SRBiH citizens, this free choice did not extend to teachers in the classroom. As Milan Šipka notes in his 1975 *Jezički savjetnik* (Linguistic Advisor), in the classroom teachers are obligated both to speak the *ijekavski* variant of Serbo-Croatian as well as to “familiarize students with terms that are in use in the whole Serbo-Croatian linguistic territory so [teachers] must themselves use double terminology” (46). Further, teachers must make equal

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<sup>123</sup> As discussed in chapter four, it is difficult for me to speculate to what extent students bought into the classroom community of language teachers worked to construct. Overt challenges to teachers’ presentations of linguistic forms, such as the one discussed above, were relatively rare, but this may just as plausibly be a function of power differences in the classroom as a sign that students acquiesced to the linguistic values their teachers presented.

use of both the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. Thus teachers are constrained in their choice of dialect, lexical variants, and alphabets.<sup>124</sup>

As a corollary to this principle, the idea of *jezička tolerancija* or linguistic tolerance formed the other pillar of language policy in the 1970s. In classrooms, teachers were supposed to select their speech and use of examples to demonstrate this principal. Thus while teachers were instructed to *model* linguistic tolerance in the classroom—and because of this mandate did not have complete freedom in their own linguistic practice—they were also supposed to tolerate any standard language variants their students chose to use.<sup>125</sup>

Importantly for my purposes here, the twin principles of free choice and linguistic tolerance combined to, at least in theory, effectively suppress the policing of variant boundaries in linguistic practice, since, as Šipka makes clear, students had the right to chose not only any dialect or linguistic variant they wanted (as long as it was considered to be a permissible variant within the Serbo-Croatian standard umbrella) but also to combine these elements in any way they wished:<sup>126</sup> “Free choice includes the right to chose from any of the possibilities which our standard Croato-

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<sup>124</sup> Šipka, however, also notes a distinction between so-called public speech by teachers and what might be considered private speech: “In Bosnia and Herzegovina there really has been proclaimed and really exists full free choice [*puna sloboda izbora*] of linguistic, expressive means, not in general but only in *individual use*. According to this, we can say that free choice of linguistic expressive means is *full* if it is *individual*, that is, if someone speaks in their name, or if they write their own text—outside so-called ‘official uses’” (1975: 47).

<sup>125</sup> While students in class presumably had the right to free choice of dialect and lexical variant, this choice did not extend to alphabets, it appears, as part of the teachers’ responsibility in teaching the different alphabets involved requiring students to practice in them and demonstrate competency in both and thus at least sometimes enforcing the use of one over the other (Šipka 1975: 54-55).

<sup>126</sup> The question of mixing alphabets seems less permissible, as Šipka addresses it specifically. He concludes it is permissible to have multiple alphabets used in one book—say a grade book filled out by multiple teachers or a form printed in Latin but filled out in Cyrillic. The special attention given to this question implies that switching alphabets midway by one user would not be possible (or conceivable). However in speech Šipka makes it clear that strict adherence to one variant is not required by the spirit of linguistic tolerance and openness.

Serbian/Serbo-Croatian offers, as well as the right to chose one of the existing literary norms of the Western or Eastern variant in its pure form” (48).<sup>127</sup> Thus free choice was not just among variants but included the possible of combining them.

However, in post-Dayton Bosnia, expectations for teachers’ linguistic practices have shifted from the assumption that teachers should model choice and tolerance across standard variants to the expectation that teachers will model the norms of only one standard—the standard officially being taught in the school they worked in,<sup>128</sup> regardless of how they may feel about those norms or whether that standard was their chosen standard.

“The *pravopis* is like a bible to me. I may not agree with everything in it, but it is my job to follow it and teach it,” one middle school teacher in Sarajevo told me. She compared her situation to lawyers who, while they might disagree with a particular law, are not allowed to pick and choose which laws to follow but instead are professionally obligated to respect the whole law.

In contrast to a language policy during socialism that specifically outlined guidelines for teachers’ speech that not only differed from other individuals but constructed both classrooms and teachers as official and public, some teachers in Bosnia in 2007 rejected the idea that classroom speech should differ from other kinds of speech in any way except for formality—an idea that my interlocutors defined in

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<sup>127</sup> Of course, I don’t have data on how such policies played out in the classroom. Textbooks (discussed in chapter four) give some hints as to which linguistic forms were regimented. The policy as Šipka presents it is of course an idealized version that may or may not have been adhered to in practice. For example, friends of mine who were in elementary school in Bosnia in the late 1980s recalled use of *ekavski* variants being corrected by teachers.

<sup>128</sup> Teachers in public schools are theoretically supposed to be able to teach all three standard norms since, as discussed in chapter four, students have the right to request they be taught whichever standard they chose, regardless of the majority language in the school. In practice, not all teachers received training in all three standards norms and the task of keeping up with changes to all three norms would be demanding to say the least.

practice as avoidance of *narodni govor* or folk speech, meaning slang or non-standard colloquialisms as well as common but non-standard morphology or grammatical constructions.

When I surveyed teachers about their language usage, they nearly unanimously reported that they followed standard norms in the class—yet in personal conversations with many teachers and, as discussed in chapter five, in my survey, many teachers did express a sense that language norms were fluid and difficult to follow. In practice, teachers displayed a number of different discursive strategies for dealing with lexical variation, in particular in schools in Sarajevo.<sup>129</sup>

During one conversation including myself and two young university professors, Mirsad and Ahmad, Mirsad explained to me that in the classroom—where he teaches both Bosnian and Croatian literature—he avoids forms that are ethnically marked whenever possible. For example, instead of saying *kahva* (B), *kava* (CR) or *kafa* (SR), he chooses *espresso* (unmarked).<sup>130</sup> Instead of *lako* (CR, SR) or *lahko* (B) he says *jednostavno* (unmarked). When an unmarked alternative does not exist, he reported that he alternates, saying, for example, *mehko* (a highly marked form in standard Bosnian) once and then the next time he uses the word says *meko* (standard in both Serbian and Croatian, unmarked). Mirsad explained this by saying that as a teacher and an authority figure, he does not wish to make any of his students

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<sup>129</sup> It is my impression that teachers in Sarajevo paid more attention to their own lexical choices than the teachers I worked with in Zenica-Doboj Canton or in the RS. This impression is based on teachers' more frequent reflexive metalinguistic commentary to me in Sarajevo. I suggest this is for at least two reasons. One is the more politicized linguistic landscape in Sarajevo. The second is the relatively more mixed ethnic composition of classrooms in the capital.

<sup>130</sup> *Espresso* is a common term used by Sarajevans of all ages to refer to European-style espresso. It does not appear to be marked in any particular way in Sarajevo, although both the term and the drink were less common in ZD town, suggesting that *espresso* might index an urban identity.



uncomfortable because of his usage and how it may or may not be similar to their own.

To explain his usage, Mirsad drew on a view of public spaces that he traced back to Tito's approach to nationality. Under Tito, Mirsad said, national identity was a private matter, something that was okay to discuss at home and in private settings, but was not appropriate in public spaces and, in particular, multiethnic spaces. "I have always identified as Bosniak," he said, "But even when I was a kid I understood that that identity wasn't discussed outside the home. Now I imagine many teachers feel as I do. Nationality is baggage that should be left at the door when a teacher enters the classroom."

Although Mirsad was describing a usage pattern that was both prescribed and positively valued by the language policy of the 1970s, both Mirsad and Ahmad were critical of this aspect of Bosnian life that Mirsad called a mark of a society in transition. Ahmad referred to Bosnia as a "schizophrenic society"—a society in which one has one identity at home, one at work and yet another in the café with friends. As an example of this sort of schizophrenia, Mirsad gave the example of another professor in their department who is a Bosnian Croat but typically uses the form *tačno*—the Bosnian variant for "correct." However, Mirsad reported that a few days previously while chairing a faculty meeting this professor used the Croatian variant *točno*. Mirsad explained this by saying that in a public context this professor—who is a member of some government board for the Croatian language—didn't want his other Croatian colleagues to accuse/be able to accuse him of not speaking proper Croatian.

The idea that variation in one's own linguistic usage is a mark of uncertainty or inability to speak freely appears regularly in popular and academic literature in Bosnia (see chapter three for more examples). Such variation is often linked to psychological maladies or "typical Bosnian" mentalities (remember, for example, the intellectual Ivan Lovrenović's discussion of the paralyzing fear of using "nationally guilty words"). In strikingly similar terms, the Croatian linguist Radovan Lučić employs the idea of schizoglossia<sup>131</sup> to explain why he signed a funding request addressed to the Croatian Minister of Culture with the highly marked Croatian standard form *sa štovanjem* yet when he sent the same request to the Open Society NGO he wrote *s poštovanjem*. "The example is a bit old," he writes, "But schizoglossia has left its mark" (Lučić 2007: 341).

In contrast to the SRBiH policy of the 1970s that deliberately promoted linguistic variation in public speech and extolled the virtues of such openness and tolerance, linguistic variation in Bosnia today is often pathologized—taken as an indication of insufficient standardization or a sign of insecurity or suppression of one's true self. The underlying problem, in this view, turns out not to be the social conditions that lead to variation, but variation itself. Even teachers like Mirsad who consciously strive for variation in their linguistic practice<sup>132</sup> attach different meanings

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<sup>131</sup> The concept of schizoglossia was introduced by the linguist Einar Haugen in a 1962 paper as follows: "Schizoglossia may be defined as a linguistic malady which may arise in speakers and writers who are exposed to more than one variety of their own language. ... If the patient refuses to 'leave his language alone' ... he may also be afflicted by general insecurity, which expresses itself as 'false humility' and 'needless self-depreciation.' The damage to his character, we are told, may be 'incalculable.' ..." (Haugen 1962: 148).

<sup>132</sup> Another teacher, an elementary school music teacher in Sarajevo, employed a related but slightly different strategy in her speech. She told me she named her class *Muzika i Glazba* (the Croatian variant) and makes a point, when in front of the class to always say *i muzika i glazba*.

to this variation in classroom practice than policy makers did 40 years ago.<sup>133</sup> While it was constructed as a marker of freedom and diversity in language during the 1970s, contemporary discourses construct this variation as a failure to attain an ideal, unified image of linguistic usage.

How teachers imagine the classroom space shapes the linguistic choices they make. As I will argue, such choices are not merely a performance of personal ideologies. That is, choosing to use or to avoid a highly marked form in standard Bosnian, or to juxtapose such a form with a bivalent term, is not necessarily about demonstrating one's allegiance to a particular social identity or ideological position. Instead, such choices are shaped by the institutional contexts in which they occur (see Goffman 1974, 1981).

However, the institutional context—and by extension the state to which it is tied—carries a very different meaning now than it did during the late Yugoslav era. While teachers in Bosnia today employ a variety of linguistic strategies in their classroom practice, such strategies are built around essentialist assumptions that take national identity to be the key determinant of language choice. That is, while Yugoslav era policies defined linguistic plurality in Bosnia as iconic of Bosnianness, the Bosnian state—and its educational policies—promote an essentialist mapping between ethnic identity and linguistic form. Thus when Bosnian education policy purports to support “multilingualism” in the classroom for example, this multilingualism is about tolerating individuals choosing the code that

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<sup>133</sup> As mentioned earlier, my discussion of the linguistic policy of the 1970s is relatively limited by my reliance on materials published by linguists and policy makers. I cannot say what meanings were attached to linguistic variation at the time, although most of my interlocutors remembered (likely somewhat nostalgically) the linguistic landscape of the 1970s (and of the Yugoslav era in general) as uncontroversial, at least compared to their current one.

straightforwardly indexes their identity rather than policies that require individuals to blur or cross boundaries to index a different sort of identity all together—a supranational one. Although teachers may indeed blur boundaries in their classrooms, this blurring takes place contrary to official language policy, not in accordance with it.

For example, a Sarajevan teacher named Amela told me she often relied on a student's name when correcting written assignments to determine which of the three standard orthographies she would apply in her corrections. She told me about one student whose work she had regularly corrected using the Croatian orthography because, based on his name, she assumed he was Croatian. When a colleague told her that this student was in fact Muslim, Amela immediately switched to the Bosnian orthography for the remainder of this student's work. Mirsad also recalled taking a test in high school right after Halilović's orthography was published. The test, he told me, was only given to Muslims students presumably, he said, because it was believed that only Muslims students should follow that orthography.

When teachers in Bosnian today cross linguistic boundaries, they do so deliberately and self-consciously. They do so in an institutional space that gives meaning to those crossings because that space has become saturated with essentialist notions of how language and identity relate. Leaving aside the question of how linguistic choices were interpreted and made meaningful during, say, the 1970s, teachers in that era interacted within an official framework that differently defined the relationship between public space and linguistic variation. Public speech by teachers in Yugoslavia required using and mixing forms from different linguistic varieties to

downplay their significance while public speech by teachers in Bosnia requires emphasizing those boundaries.

Traces of that earlier policy linger, I suggest, in teachers' personal approaches to language. As has been noted by other scholars (Goffman 1974, 1981; Blommaert and Slembrouck 2004, Gal and Kligman 2000) social spaces are leaky and dynamic concepts that are both shifting and nested. Classroom spaces are no different. Jane Hill has noted that classrooms in the United States have characteristics of both public and private spaces—they are spaces where official aims and policies are carried out and where activity is often assumed to be sanctioned by the state or other authoritative bodies. However, classrooms also allow for and often encourage the expression of individual voices, opinions and interests—a feature Hill characterizes as excluding something from a presumably objective and disinterested public sphere in mainstream American discourses (Hill 2001, see also Habermas 1991[1962]).

Šipka's discussion of Bosnian language policy in the 1970s illustrates this, as Šipka takes care to distinguish how different contexts existing within the same institutional space carry different requirements for linguistic practice, suggesting that at least some characteristics of the public sphere described by Hill hold true in Bosnian imaginings of public space and appropriate discourse as well. For example, while teachers must model linguistic tolerance and variation when they are acting as teachers, Šipka notes that when they are "individuals acting in their own name" the principles of free choice extend fully to them as well (Šipka 1975: 47).

In addition to the shifting nature of spaces within schools, I suggest the classroom is doubly ambiguous because of how teachers position themselves within

it. While many studies of classrooms have focused on interactions between students and teachers as sites of conflict, miscommunication, or pressure towards assimilation (Willis 1977, Heller and Martin-Jones 2001, Wortham and Rymes 2003), my research suggests that teachers are far more ambiguously positioned within educational structures than such studies might suggest. While within the classroom in spaces or moments framed as official, teachers do represent educational policies and their ideological aims, teachers are also citizens and subjects who interact in a realm in which state oversight can be eluded, subverted, or critiqued. Thus the classroom space is not always an official space, and teachers are not always representatives of the official.

In one striking example of this, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade language teacher at Mak Dizdar was teaching a lesson about the history and development of the Bosnian language. After reviewing with students the first three phases in the development of Bosnian language (Turkish Period, Austro-Hungarian Period, Yugoslav Period) the teacher, Ruža, moved on to the so-called Bosnian Period. After a discussion of the status of internationalisms and the changing names for the language, Ruža made the following comments about changing norms in the Bosnian standard: “There are experts who have the right to do that work [define norms]. I am not competent to do that. I am a teacher. I have to follow the curricula (*nastavni plan i program*).”

Ruža then introduced the idea of three books that every language must have: a dictionary— “We still don’t have one,” she told the students<sup>134</sup>—a *pravopis*, which she said there was much debate about; and a grammar. She ended by telling students

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<sup>134</sup> In the fall of 2007, about a month after this class, *Rjecnik Bosanskog Jezika*, a massive tome representing years of work by numerous linguists, was published.

about the *pravopis*: “We don’t have another one, we don’t have a better one. This is the law for us.”

Ruža drew on a linguistic division of labor in which her role was not to create, or even endorse potentially awkward norms but simply to transmit them. In invoking experts—aligning herself with her students as in this case receivers of knowledge instead of separating herself off as authoritative—Ruža was able to create a distinct space (or shift the frame for interpretation) in the classroom in which this criticism could be heard without undermining her enforcement of such norms in more official classroom moments. Indeed, Ruža was extremely aware of the importance of enforcing these norms, as during our first meeting she had related a story to me about how one year she had not kept up with all the revisions to the *pravopis* and as a result when her students took a standardized test<sup>135</sup> that year they all lost points—an event she obviously still felt badly about. Ruža’s linguistic division of labor allowed her to maintain her teaching standards and fulfill her duty to follow the standards laid out in the curricula without having to personally endorse forms she finds controversial. And, like so many other teachers, in conversations with me in teachers’ lounges or cafes, Ruža was critical of both the forms contained in the *pravopis* as well as the qualifications—and sometimes the motivations—of its authors.

I suggest that the reluctance of some teachers to fully embrace the standard forms prescribed in the textbooks and curricula derives from an ideological rejection of what they believe that standard represents. Because use of new standard norms can

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<sup>135</sup> I received conflicting answers as to how standardized tests were carried out. While some of my interlocutors told me there were no standardized tests in the country, and others told me there were only future plans to have state-wide tests at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, others told me students took standardized tests to determine their placement in secondary school. In all likelihood, the system varies from canton to canton.

sometimes be read as indexing a nationalist, normative, and exclusively Islamic Bosnia, teachers who wish to view Bosnia as a tolerant multiethnic community may avoid those forms.

In her study of Corsican language politics, Alexandra Jaffe points out the “difficulty of reconciling a pluralistic model of language and identity with a powerful social and linguistic ideology in which diversity is conceived of as a threat to unity, authority and authenticity” (1999: 32), suggesting that the monolingual norm works against the co-existence of Corsican and French in Corsica.

In contrast, I suggest that the opposite process is at work in Bosnia: a powerful pluralistic ideology with historical roots in the Yugoslav era and moral influence after the war (Živković 2000) works against the imposition of a standard norm. While Corsican language professionals face dilemmas resulting from attempts to standardize Corsican, Bosnian language professionals face dilemmas primarily relating to the *unstandardization* of what came before Bosnian.<sup>136</sup> That is, before new standard ideologies and practices can be successfully implemented, the ideologies that supported the linguistic practices associated with the previous norm must be unmade.

### **Unstandardization**

The idea of language *unstandardization* can most simply be thought of as the *unmaking* of linguistic norms and attitudes. When my interlocutors criticized new

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<sup>136</sup> I hesitate to label this as the unstandardization of Serbo-Croatian because, as I have shown in chapter two, Serbo-Croatian was a label that was often felt to be ill-fitting across Yugoslavia. When my interlocutors expressed nostalgia for previous ways of speaking or of understanding linguistic difference they did not express this in the idiom of a wish for a return of Serbo-Croatian per se but rather fond recollections of what was remembered as a stable, orderly linguistic regime.



standard forms, they generally did so when those forms differed significantly from Serbo-Croatian norms, thus demonstrating an orientation towards previous norms and an allegiance towards the institutions that created and enforced those norms. While standardization is a conscious political project, I suggest that unstandardization is a way to comprehend the pushback such projects encounter on the ground. While I use the term unstandardization to imply a process that is in many ways the opposite of standardization, the two processes are tightly linked. Unstandardization, I suggest, cannot take place without standardization. Conversely, I imagine very few standardization projects altogether avoid the resistance of unstandardization.

What I wish to emphasize here by using the term *unstandardization* is that language-making or state-making do not happen in a vacuum. There is always a previous socio-political formation that must be reckoned with. In particular in Bosnia, the previous socio-political formation is one that is often remembered as somehow better than the current Bosnian state. Thus the making and legitimation of the Bosnian language (and therefore the Bosnian state) is as much about the unmaking of Serbo-Croatian (and Yugoslavia) as it is the codification of a new linguistic or sociopolitical framework. The morally and politically charged context of post-war post-socialist Bosnia has made Yugoslavia a powerful symbol of normalcy and nostalgia even as aspirations for Europeanization and material improvements, as well as international pressure, push Bosnia towards embracing the framework of the liberal nation-state (for debates on such issues see: Chandler 2000, Hayden 2000, Donia 2006).

As scholars of standardization have noted, standardization is not just a linguistic project, but is also a social one. It involves not just the imposition of

linguistic unity (Milroy 2001) but also the development of allegiance to the institutions and structures of power that endorse that standard. As Silverstein has noted, standard language ideologies, where successful, have become powerful mechanisms for shaping not only how language is used, but also how it is experienced:

For such subjectivities from within cultures of standard, the very concept of “language” rests upon finding the various institutional paraphernalia of standardization, for example, literacy in relation to standard register, grammars and dictionaries and thesauruses, authoritative judgments of “correctness” enforceable in certain institutional sites of power over discourse, and so forth (Silverstein 2000: 123).

By contrast, the utility of an idea like *unstandardization* become clear in the following domains: an orientation towards Serbo-Croatian norms, the location of authenticity in linguistic practice rather than normative manuals, and a focus on variety rather than unity in classroom practice. While I have given evidence for the last two criteria throughout this dissertation, here I will focus on the first.

As I have shown in chapter two, the idea that a Bosnian linguistic variety could or should be mapped onto a Muslim national body was one that was vigorously rejected by linguistic activists in Bosnia during the politicized debates of the 1970s. The language policy developed at the time instead focused on tolerance and diversity. It wasn't until the war broke out that calls for a Bosnian language for a Bosniak population began to gain ground in public opinion. Efforts to promote the Bosnian language have been highly successful in achieving acceptance among Bosniaks of the need for the Bosnian language, of the right of Bosnians to call their language Bosnian and, to a lesser degree, of the Turkish and Arabic influences on this language.

However, the specific forms that the Bosnian standard has taken have been highly criticized. The criticism has taken a number of forms, but I suggest two themes are instructive: these criticisms involve complaints about intelligibility and exclusivity.

The first is the relatively common complaint among critics of the new standard was that it required people to *relearn* their language. The new standard, for these critics, was not then a necessary remedy to imposed norms or marginalizations of Bosnian language practice under Yugoslav domination, but an unfamiliar set of rules, unintelligible even to native speakers. Such criticisms sometimes took the form of complaints about neologisms—most often in Croatian—or revived Turkish borrowings in Bosnian. “We already have a word for that,” my interlocutors would say to me when explaining why they felt a certain form was artificial or politicized.

By contrast, the linguists who have been at the forefront of developing new standards, while careful to acknowledge that standard norms develop in conjunction with practice and are still evolving, defend most of their choices on the grounds that they are, for the most part, descriptive. Critics suggest that the standards are primarily normative.

The second form of criticism is that the new norms are exclusive when Bosnian is, by nature, inclusive. This perceived exclusivity is often presumed to have nationalist motives. That is, proposed standard forms that are seen as going against linguistic practice are sometimes assumed to be primarily about creating differences were none existed before. As one friend of mine put it, complaining about new standard norms: “They’re trying to make it so we don’t understand each other.”

In his 1999 paper on an ideology of dialect in Switzerland, Richard Watts develops the argument that speakers of Swiss German distance themselves from standard German to both reject the political centralization symbolized by standard languages in general and German in particular as well as to demonstrate their non-Germanness, which became increasingly important following the Nazi era and World War II. I suggest we might be able to see similar elements of this rejection of what standard typically means in Bosnia in that linguistic nationalism, hyperstandardization (in the form of excessive purism in Croatian), and exclusion (in the form of Turkish borrowings in Bosnian that are unintelligible not only to many Serbs and Croats but to many Bosnians as well) are rejected by many speakers who seek to imagine their national community as based on synthesis and co-existence rather than the homogeneous national body implied by “Standard with a capital S.”

The most prominent sources of contention in the new standards are the use of neologisms (*novohrvatski* or new Croatian) in Croatian and the (re)introduction of *h* and Turkish borrowings in Bosnian.<sup>137</sup> While these linguistic forms do not represent the only changes to the new standards, I suggest they have become prominent for three reasons: First and most importantly, they involve linguistic forms considered to be incorrect by Serbo-Croatian standard norms. Second, they are semiotically linked to attributes of the ethnic groups expected—or asserted—to use them. Finally, they have become prominent in their role as lexical items—that is, segmentable, denotational forms that are accessible to native speaker awareness.

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<sup>137</sup> Serbian has followed the most conservative route with respect to standardization, maintaining many of the norms for the Eastern variant of Serbo-Croatian. Critics might suggest this shows the extent of Serbian linguistic domination during the Yugoslav era. For a discussion of Serbian and Croatian linguistic politics respectively see Greenberg 1998, Katčić 2001, and Bugarski 2001. The focus of my discussion here will be the Bosnian standard language.

These linguistic forms that are most emblematic of the new standards are also most contested in practice, and many of my interlocutors rejected the idea that standardization had impacted their linguistic practices. In contrast, there have been some general shifts in linguistic practice in Sarajevo since the war.<sup>138</sup> Such shifts are metalinguistically constructed not as responses to standardization but as responses to social tensions. For example, the linguistic practices that were described to me as different after the war consist primarily of patterned shifts from so-called Serbian variants to those more commonly considered Croatian before the war. In the cases described, I was told that while Serbian variants had been more commonly used before the war, Croatian variants had become much more common since the war. For example, my interlocutors reported shifts from *prevoz* to *prijevoz* or other words with the *pre/prije* prefix—a distinction between *ijekavski* and *ekavski*. Here I was told that the use of the *ekavski* form in the prefix had been common in Sarajevo and elsewhere in many otherwise *ijekavski* regions in Bosnia. Another patterned shift was from *št* to *ć* as in *opština/općina* and other variants like this (see also the discussion of *dole/dolje* above).

In addition to being linguistic forms that are less likely to be subject to speaker awareness because they are changes in phonological patterns rather than lexical items (see Silverstein 1981), I suggest that these changes are less controversial because while the usage is different the forms themselves are not new—they were included in the Serbo-Croatian standard and thus have a certain amount of legitimacy by association with a standard that is remembered as being commonly accepted. Such

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<sup>138</sup> My informants initially reported these shifts to me, and my observations suggest that usage in Sarajevo generally although by no means exclusively follows the patterns described here.

shifts in usage are also localized, I was told. That is, one of my informants who told me he had shifted from using *opština* to *općina* and from *prevoz* to *prijevoz*, reported that a relative who lived in Mostar had not. My friend's explanation for this was that while linguistic forms identifiable as Serbian could be negatively identified with the Serb aggression during the war and increased Muslim-Serb tensions since, in Mostar Muslim-Croat relations were and still are the most strained from the war. Thus avoiding a so-called Serbian form in favor of a more Croatian one might be an appealing choice to some Bosniaks in Sarajevo, it would likely not be in Mostar.

Thus while many of my informants rejected the idea that the new standards had changed linguistic practice, my fieldwork suggests that there have been some shifts in Sarajevo speech patterns. However the practices that were reported to have changed are not only anchored in linguistic forms that are less subject to metalinguistic commentary because of the ideological focus on the word as the source of difference (see chapter five), they are also anchored in social divisions that are more contentious in post-war Sarajevo. That is, they are less likely to be seen as indexing ethnic exclusivity like other standard norms precisely because they avoid linguistic forms that index Serbian, which in turn can be associated with aggression or hegemony by some Bosnians. As I have argued, while an ideology of pluralism is dominant in many social arenas or moments in social life, references to or memories of the war invoke both the historical moment of ethnic violence as well as the moral justification for an exclusively Bosniak nation-state.

For example, one friend of mine who was a staunch supporter of a pluralistic Bosnian state and the Bosnian language as an important symbol of that state lived in

the part of Sarajevo that officially fell in the Republika Srpska. Upon meeting this friend on night near her home in Serb Sarajevo (*Srpsko Sarajevo*), I handed her a distinctive green book titled *Grammatica Bosanskog Jezika* (Grammar of the Bosnian Language). She quickly slipped it into her purse, commenting with some embarrassment that she didn't feel safe carrying such a book in Serbian neighborhoods. "There was war here," she would sometimes remind me to explain actions or events that ran counter to the image of a harmonious, multiethnic Bosnia she so believed in.

Despite an emphasis on Bosnian as the official language in Bosniak classrooms, teachers and textbooks still implicitly employ Serbo-Croatian as a frame of reference. Teachers would phrase corrections to their classes or asides to me in the format "*Prije mi smo...*" (Before we used to...), as when Ivan told me: "*Prije mi smo tolerarali oblici bez 'h', a sad ne.*" (Before we tolerated forms without *h* and now we don't).

Likewise, in his book "*Bosnanski jezik u praksi i normi*" (Bosnian Language in Practice and Norm, 1999)—a sort of dos and don't of Bosnian standard norms—the author Refik Bulić includes a number of more controversial forms from Halilović's *pravopis*. Often Bulić traces the status of these forms through previous orthographies, acknowledging when current standards go against previous norms or practices. For example, in the section *Petero ili Petoro, Peterica ili Petorica*, Bulić writes:

Forms with *-ero* and *-erica* are more widespread in Bosnian folk speech, but the previous norm allowed forms with *-ero* and *-oro*. ... It appears that forms with *-oro* and *-orica* were more common in written practice. First Alija Isaković in the *Dictionary of Characteristic Words*

*in Bosnian* gave priority to forms with *-ero* and *-erica*, and then the *Pravopis of the Bosnian Language* made a turnaround and completely left out forms with *-oro* and *-orica*. We believe that is correct and we recommend to you forms with endings of *-ero* and *-erica* (1999: 57).

A friend of mine related a story to me about this word: a test she had taken in high school in the late 1990s shortly after the publication of Halilović's *pravopis* in which students had been asked to choose between the forms *čtvorica* and *četverica*. She reported that all every student in her class had, incorrectly, chosen *čtvorica* because they had, under the old orthography, learned that that was correct. She told me that while she now knew *četverica* was correct according to the orthography, she continued to use *čtvorica* in her speech—again, showing allegiance to previous norms, even when directly contradicted by standard language guides.

The major challenge for Bosnian linguists is about presenting Bosnian as a legitimate language with all the expected expertise and institutional trappings *as well as* popular acceptance, and indeed, it is often on the grounds that Bosnian lacks the former that people justify withholding the latter. While Silverstein defines the acceptance of and orientation towards authoritative institutions as a key element of standard language culture, as I discussed in chapter three, in Bosnia there is a widespread perception that the experts have mismanaged language. Particularly when the new norms appear to violate linguistic practice (as many of them do) or contradict folk etymologies or histories, speakers of Bosnian question their legitimacy. For example: “Introducing new rules that have no relationship to logic, [sic] and what



bothers me the most is the new accent that the media is forcing”<sup>139</sup> (Sarajevo-X forum posted February 25, 2007).

The legitimacy of a language is often tightly linked to the legitimacy of the social order that code is seen as representing (see Bilaniuk 2005) and in Bosnia, the post-war state is one that has largely failed to convince its citizens that it is a legitimate and authoritative governing body. Garbage that went uncollected in the streets, pensioners protesting in the street because their pension payments were late, or schools that no longer had funding for libraries or lunches were just a few symbols of the state’s failure to provide. The gap between the expectations people had of the old state and the reality of the new one was illustrated on a bus I took one day from my home in ZD town to my school in the *Republika Srpska*. An elderly gentleman boarded the bus and took his seat, but when the ticket agent came around to collect his payment he refused to pay, explaining that during socialism tickets had been free for pensioners. The ticket agent explained that tickets were no longer free, but the elderly man still refused to pay. Both men became angry, with the ticket agent shouting that he was already charging the old man less than he should and the old man yelling that he refused to pay at all. This continued until the next stop when the old man got off.

In this context, the Yugoslav state—despite how it may have been experienced at the time—is often remembered as more orderly and more capable of

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<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, the media is often perceived as following (and sometimes leading) the controversial changes in standard norms. Many people point to the speech of television personalities and news programs as well as newspapers like *Dnevni Avaz* that are identified with the Bosniak political program to identify standardized, politicized language use. While the media and education are often considered to be two key arenas in standardization programs, they appear to be operating very differently in Bosnia. This is an appealing avenue to pursue for future research.

orchestrating basic life experiences. Thus *unstandardization* points to not only the need to unmake certain linguistic practices but also the need to unmake loyalty to the state structure that those forms have become associated with.

### **Conclusion: Free Linguistic Choice?**

This chapter had danced around the following paradox: despite the popular (although not exclusive) perception of the Bosnian language as a language defined by its acceptance of lexical doublets and tolerance of linguistic diversity, many of my interlocutors complained about fluctuating norms and “schizoglossic” linguistic practice. That is, how do discourses about linguistic tolerance and choice co-exist with discourses about linguistic chaos?

I suggest that this paradox itself is an example of the kind of double bind discussed in my introduction—despite deeply rooted ideologies of pluralism, it is difficult to escape the dominant influence of pan-European ideologies linking nations, states and speakers in tightly bounded exclusive communities. Tensions between these conceptual schema, the values they ascribe to different linguistic practices and the contexts in which those forms are deployed in everyday interactions limits the spaces in which “free linguistic choice” can be exercised. While the teachers I described above displayed a variety of orientations towards the linguistic practices of themselves and their students, such orientations are less the expression of unconstrained linguistic choice than they are interactional strategies deployed by teachers to negotiate complex and contradictory expectations in highly charged institutional contexts.

The potential of linguistic choices to be highly charged is something many of my interlocutors pointed out to me, some more viscerally than others. Towards the end of my time in Sarajevo, I interviewed a man who worked in education who had been held in a concentration camp during the war. Food had been scarce in the camp, and one summer day, when bread was being handed out, he had asked for some using the Croatian word “*kruh*.” The guard heard him and got angry at his use of *kruh* instead of the Serbian variant *hleb*. As punishment, he told me, he was made to lie flat on his back in the hot Hercegovinian summer and stare up at the sun. The guard stood over him with a rifle, threatening to smash his face with it if he closed his eyes.

When I asked him about how different language standards could best be incorporated into more unified education system, he said: “Students should have the right to chose which language, expression or terms they want to use. I think this is the best solution and we had it 30 years ago.” He went on to describe Bosnia as being like a large house occupied by a large family. Members of the family used different entrances to get into the house, but once inside, every room opened up into a common garden where the family gathered. “The Bosnian language is one and the other. That is Bosnia for you.”

## **Chapter Seven: Effects of Segregated Education on Language Practice and Ideology**

Throughout my fieldwork, teachers often told me about the ways in which schools in post-war Bosnia seemed inferior to those in the socialist state: the relationship between education and employment is unclear. Curricula revision and education reforms result in a shifting pedagogical landscape. Changing ideas about authority in the classroom leave student-teacher interactions fraught for some. Money for basic necessities like books or relatively more luxurious items like physical education equipment can be hard to come by and unpredictable in its availability. As Ivan told me: “Contemporary is losing its meaning. We are left here. We still use chalk and a blackboard, just like when I started 40 years ago.”

For Ivan, education in Bosnia is static. It is no longer moving forward through time—he uses the same pedagogical methods his predecessor did 40 years ago, following the same physical paths through the school. By contrast, there is a tendency on the part of influential international organizations, many of which play a large role in shaping education policy in the country, to see education as characterized by chaotic forms of movement. From education materials that are published outside the country and smuggled in to students who cross school district boundaries to attend schools where they are part of the ethnic majority, controlling unregulated mobility

across perceived political boundaries is a major focus of internationally led education reforms. Such movement is perceived as threatening to the international community's goal of creating a centralized and unified state populated by Bosnian citizens rather than members of distinct ethnic nations.

Thus while for Ivan—and other teachers—the state is failing to produce functioning schools, for certain members of the international community, the schools are failing to produce a functioning state. While my interlocutors in Bosnia in 2006-2007 were relatively united in considering education to be failing in some way or another to provide the opportunities for social, economic, or physical mobility it was generally believed to be accountable for, they differed as to the source of this failure. Such differences inevitably led to different assessments as to how to repair education or what the potential consequences of the flawed education system may be.

In this dissertation, I have argued that nationalist language policies and segregated classrooms for language instruction are not creating differences in linguistic practice such as those feared by casual observers or certain more careful scholars such as the linguist Robert Greenberg (Greenberg 2004), who predicts the three standard languages in Bosnia are on their way to diverging to the point where they are no longer mutually intelligible. While I cannot predict what language practice in Bosnia will look like in a generation, during my fieldwork I found evidence of language practices that undermined strict boundaries between language varieties and pluralistic ideas of language that blurred conceptual boundaries between ideological concepts like standard language or Bosnian nation.

I also suggested in chapter four that an emerging generational gap may exist in which teachers have more pluralistic ideologies of language than their students. While I have argued that schools—at least in the classrooms I visited—are not promoting nationalist ideologies likely to lead to further divisions among Bosnian citizens, I also suggested that they are likely not overriding messages of division or national distinctiveness that students may be exposed to elsewhere.

While I found little evidence to suggest that linguistic practice is diverging along ethnic lines, I did find numerous examples that language ideologies differ among Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs, suggesting that segregated education may be resulting in diverging attitudes about language and interpretations of language history.

Such diverging ideologies may or may not pose a problem for the emerging Bosnian state. As I argued in chapter four, whether a pluralistic conception of language and nation undermines the existence of a centralized state depends on how that state and its constituents are defined. Robert Hayden has shown how the emergence of “constitutional nationalism” (Hayden 2000) in the 1980s and early 1990s in the Yugoslav republics led to a definition of various republics as homelands for distinct national groups and marginalized minorities within those groups. Yet some scholars have argued that in Yugoslavia, a state policy of brotherhood and unity supported a pluralistic citizenry. The tension between these two legacies is one that has not yet been fully worked out within the Bosnian state.

Education is a prime example of how international direction in Bosnia walks a fine—and sometimes paradoxical—line between these two conceptions of the state.

On the one hand, Bosnia is conceived of as a multi-ethnic state. In education, efforts to harmonize curricula, integrate classrooms, and promote tolerance are examples of how international and local policy makers attempt to instill this vision.

On the other hand, the inherited structures of the Dayton Peace Accords with their tripartite divisions of government and bureaucracy reflect the view that each national group should have a certain amount of sovereignty over its own cultural, religious, and civic affairs. Despite efforts to integrate these bureaucratic structures, an ideology that supports their separation remains. In education this can be seen in the legal provisions—enshrined in European treaties—that each child has the right to education in his or her own language.

These same tensions can be seen in language policy and language practice. As discussed in chapters three and six, an ideology of pluralism in language—one that supports polysemy and the use of lexical doublets—exists alongside a view that Bosnian falls short of so-called normal, standard languages because it lacks a clearly defined norm.

The pluralistic ideology of language in Bosnia—one that I argue was inherited from the Yugoslav state and strengthened during a war that many experienced as an attack on Bosnia's multiethnic nature—poses challenges for scholars seeking to apply traditional ideas about language standardization, language in institutions, and language education to Bosnia. In particular, I have argued that unlike many cases in the anthropological literature, Bosnian schools are not primarily engaged in cleaning up messy borders between standard languages. Instead, I have argued that ambiguity

and heterogeneity are central to the kind of language many teachers promote in their classrooms.

The role of institutions in erasing language borders has not been as well studied by anthropologists as the way institutions are often involved in constructing such boundaries. Yet, as some Bosnian conceptions of nationhood show, boundary erasure is a critical process in the defining of any group—at the same time as institutions and ideological constructs like standard languages construct differences between an “us” and a “them,” they also must erase important internal differences that could threaten that perceived homogeneity (Irvine and Gal 2000).

I argued in chapter five that while dominant representations of linguistic difference in Bosnia as being primarily ethnic erase important internal language variation, teachers focus on this grammatical and orthographic variation in the classroom and, in doing so, change the boundaries of the language community they are simultaneously working to construct with their students.

The different perspectives of local and international actors on the question of community is clear. As I argued in chapter five, teachers in the classroom placed a great deal of emphasis on linguistic features that indexed differences of class and region—differences that came to stand in for education level and created complex social hierarchies within so-called ethnic groups. By contrast, an international focus on differences among ethnic groups result in a top-down education policy that focuses on perceived points of difference among ethnic groups such as the ethnic affiliation of literary figures or the lexical items found in various texts.



In seeking to foster mobility across the state, international reforms attempt to erase social difference in the classroom by eliminating material deemed potentially offensive to one group or another, specifying quotas for authors of different ethnic backgrounds in the curricula, or mandating a certain number of pages be printed in the Cyrillic or Latin alphabet. Such policies aimed to create a standard of nominal equality across the state, seeking to create in textbooks a state that many felt did not yet exist in reality.

Thus many international reforms viewed the goal of education as primarily about state-building and so focused on forms of mobility that ended at state borders. Such mobility was primarily physical, and took place across a landscape differentiated only by ethnic identity. In attempting to create a homogenous state space, international actors designed policies for empty, abstract classrooms. By contrast, as discussed in chapters five and six, teachers in actual classrooms people by students collaborated with those students to construct complex linguistic hierarchies in the classroom that created differentiated paths for social mobility.

While internal mobility has been the primary goal of the international community in education reforms, in my experience, my interlocutors in 2007 were more concerned about ways in which they found shrinking opportunities to move outside of Bosnian borders. As more and more states in formerly socialist Eastern Europe join the European Union and agree to enforce visa restrictions for the EU, Bosnians have found the number of countries to which they can travel without visas to be steadily declining.<sup>140</sup> Getting a visa to travel to another country is a tedious

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<sup>140</sup> Bosnia signed a visa agreement with the EU in 2011 that made travel to EU countries possible without a visa for many Bosnian citizens.

affair that can involve camping out overnight in front of embassies, gathering mounds of paperwork, and paying significant application fees. Still many applicants do not get the visas they desire.

Thus while various members of the international community work actively to promote physical mobility within Bosnian state borders, such mobility is sharply circumscribed outside of those borders by the same state actors. Many of my interlocutors related stories to me about their difficulties with international travel. Such difficulties often stood in for ways in which life in the Bosnian state was more difficult than in the Yugoslav one. “Our passport [the Yugoslav passport] was special. We could cross borders and others had to wait. Now it is the opposite,” a man told me one night over coffee in an Internet café in the town where I did fieldwork. A report from Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty in February of 2007 noted the following:

Up until the end of the Communist era, Yugoslavs had what was arguably the most enviable passport in Europe because they could travel to both the East and the West without visas. The visa regulations currently in force for [travel to] almost all European countries constitute possibly the most painful proof of what many Yugoslavs regard as their second-class status in today’s Europe and have become an important political issue in the successor states (RFERL: February 2007)

Here I have suggested that while international education reformers view mobility as primarily internal to the Bosnian state, local actors envision trajectories that move outside what is viewed as a restricted economic/state space. Such different imagined trajectories reveal themselves in differing conceptions of the goal of education, as well as different reasons why education is failing. While international

reforms seek to enhance mobility within the Bosnian state by focusing on nationalist content within education, they ignore what many Bosnians consider to be more pressing concerns educational and economic concerns, thereby creating a space for mobility that no one wants to move in.

### **Ethnographic Comparisons**

Bosnian is a multiethnic state with three official languages and the constitutional model on which linguistic rights were built invites comparisons to places like Switzerland. However, because of the embattled status of the Bosnian language, I suggest that comparisons to places like Corsica and Catalonia are more instructive. Defining Bosnian and creating allegiance to standard language norms is, as I have argued, a contested project and one that I believe bears more similarity to minority language revitalization projects than projects to establish equality among relatively uncontested standard languages.<sup>141</sup>

Because projects to define and delineate Bosnian often involve reaching back into some allegedly authentic Ottoman past—inviting questions about the continuity of the Bosnian nation as well as criteria for membership in that nation—Bosnian language standardization is a project to redefine and revitalize a nation that was, in this view, denied its rightful place during the Yugoslav era. As I have shown, these questions raise concerns about authenticity and linguistic competence that parallel those in places like Corsica and Catalonia.

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<sup>141</sup> It is worth noting that debates about Bosnian bear more similarity to Romansch in Switzerland than to the other three national languages, both because of the relatively recent standardization of Romansch and questions about the legitimacy of that standard as well as the valorization of local dialects of Romansch.

Like Corsican and Catalan, Bosnian is often labeled to be inauthentic in practice despite deeply held ideologies that connect the language with the identity of the speakers. Corsican and Catalan are often learned as second languages by Corsicans and Catalans, who sometimes face problems because they may lack the ability to produce varieties of the language deemed authentic. Bosnians don't learn Bosnian as a second language; however, they must also manage the gap between allegedly authentic varieties of the language and textual versions of it.

Investigating ways this gap is managed in other settings reveals that much work goes into constructing and maintaining language boundaries. For example, in her work on children's linguistic competence in Corsican-language schools, Alexandra Jaffe shows how teachers play a key role in reframing—or “revoicing”—some Corsican-language statements by children to help construct them as competent speakers of Corsican even as they make mistakes in pronunciation, grammar, or idiomatic constructions. Jaffe writes, “The accomplishment of the bilingual classroom requires that the children have, and have attributed to them, linguistic competence in Corsican (2003: 180).

As Jaffe points out, this kind of classroom work helps keep intact ideologies that Corsican is the authentic language of Corsicans that might otherwise be challenged by some people's obvious inability to speak Corsican correctly. Such “revoicing” challenges the monolingual norm in allowing for alternate relationships between a language and its speakers. In Corsica, Jaffe writes, language competency becomes a socially-situated practice, not simply an innate ability.

Ethnographic studies like Jaffe's and those done by Kathryn Woolard and Susan Frekko in Catalonia reveal ideologies similar to those in Bosnia about nations, languages, and speakers. Comparing language ideologies and practices in Bosnia to those in language revitalization or minority language settings outside of the European framework may thus provide instructive comparisons about how European ideologies influence constructions of standard languages or textual norms and thus work to make certain kinds of language knowledge seem more authentic while other types seem more correct.

Another set of comparisons that I believe are instructive are to other post-socialist states that have also redefined language boundaries or practices as they have redefined state boundaries. Regional comparisons to linguistic practices in places like the Ukraine or the Czech Republic and Slovakia provide insight into how linguistic borders that were differently defined under previous state formations have shifted—and how speakers have dealt with those shifts.

Again, questions of authenticity and legitimacy loom large. Laada Bilaniuk shows how the perceived social instability in Ukraine after the fall of socialism led to a heightened concern with linguistic norms and language boundaries. I have argued that the same concern was present in Bosnia but manifested itself in a different way. While concerns about hybridity and language mixing in Ukraine were seen by some as threatening to an independent Ukrainian nation, concerns about excessive purity were voiced by many of my Bosnian interlocutors.

As this contrast suggests, the way the nation is defined impacts what kind of language standard is considered appropriate for that nation. Thus a second set of

instructive comparisons for this research involves looking at how language-nation ideologies vary in places that employ different ideologies of the nation.

Finally, some of the most high-profile debates in Bosnia are about the representation of language, including debates about *h* and those about differentiating affricates. I have argued that written language in classrooms is subject to stricter standards than speech when it comes to following new standard norms and this invites comparisons to other language standardization projects such as Haitian Creole in which orthographic issues have loomed large.

### **Unstandardization**

Battles over standard language forms—including battles of which forms will be included in the standard and how those forms will be taught in schools—are also battles over the boundaries of the Bosnian nation. In this dissertation, I have shown debates about orthographic and phonological issues such as the writing and pronunciation of *h* draw on various historical and sociological arguments about the influence of Islam in the development of the Bosnian nation and state. I have also shown how teachers play upon the various indexical associations of this sound to redefine the meaning of both *h* itself and words containing *h*. Such redefinitions shift the boundaries of the implied language community and thus become key sites in the struggle to define the Bosnian nation.

As I suggested in chapter six, such struggles are as much about the unmaking of Yugoslav-era allegiances and identifications as they are about the building of a new Bosnian state. Language is only one social domain in which today's Bosnia is

often compared unfavorably to the Yugoslav state, and the norms of today's standard languages are criticized primarily when they go against standard language norms or usage patterns dating back to the Yugoslav state.

The language policy of the Yugoslav state also leaves lasting traces on language practice in Bosnia although, as I suggested in chapter six, today's Bosnian state has adopted a dramatically different approach to linguistic pluralism. While both states value linguistic pluralism—at least nominally—in the Yugoslav state, use of lexical doublets and polysemous language forms was valued in individuals while in Bosnia today language variation is often pathologized, taken as a sign of insecurity or incomplete standardization rather than an homage to the syncretic nature of the Bosnia nation.

I have argued that language standardization in Bosnia today has been a relative failure. Although most Bosniaks support the theoretical existence of a Bosnian standard, the specific forms that standard has taken remain highly contested and the standard has yet to achieve popular acceptance, with its most emblematic forms also being among the most highly marked in every day speech. I have argued that we can understand the relative failure of language standardization in Bosnia today—despite the seemingly ideal institutional conditions for language divergence—as an example not so much of failed standardization but of unstandardization. This paradigm is meant to shift our focus to the ideologies and language practices previously in place that standardization seeks to undo in instituting a new set of policies and practices.

Some of the language ideologies that supported Yugoslav-era language practices are arguably still in place in Bosnia today and these ideologies define the perceived purified and artificial forms of today's Bosnian and Croatian standards as illegitimate and unrepresentative of the Bosnian or Croatian nation.<sup>142</sup>

This battle for linguistic legitimacy, as Laada Bilaniuk has pointed out, is heightened in a state that has yet to establish itself as legitimate in the eyes of many of its citizens. The interlinking of the legitimacy of the state and its language are revealed in comments like that posted online by one commentator (mentioned in chapter three):

It's completely natural that language changes through time, but above all we need to form some sort of linguistic organization that would officially lead a language reform and verify rules on the level of the state (of course, it's a shame we don't have a normal state). All that has happened up until now is unstandardized bullshit. As is our country, so is our language (Forum Sarajevo-x.com, *Jezički Standardi u BiH* (Language Standards in BiH), posted 2/24/07).

Influential international observers have judged Bosnia to be failing in key areas: the state is failing to function as an independent, sovereign state; the schools are failing to produce a unified citizenry with a civic attachment to their state; the language is failing to assume the commonplace status so-called normal standard languages achieve.

I have argued in this dissertation that these so-called failures are a result of dominant pan-European frames which define nations as homogenous communities—or at least as communities which aspire to homogeneity—and define standard

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<sup>142</sup> As discussed previously, today's Serbian standard arguably shows the most continuity with previous forms under Serbo-Croatian norms and has escaped much of the controversy surrounding visible forms like *novohrvatski* or Bosnian orientalism that has surrounded the Bosnian and Croatian standards.



languages in terms similar to those outlined by Silverstein (1996) as emanating from authoritative institutions and enshrined in authoritative manuals and as coming to naturally represent the social world they refer to in a seemingly transparent manner.

While tropes of free choices have been used to characterize Bosnian linguistic practice in both the former Yugoslavia and present-day Bosnia, I suggested in chapter six that the ideology of choice masks the institutional and socio-political constraints on language use that Bosnians encounter in everyday practice. I suggested that rather than understand Bosnian linguistic practice as free choice between equal variants, as so many of my interlocutors presented it to me, the use of various standard forms in Bosnian is one way Bosnians negotiate different ways of defining their nation and language community as well as a way to respond to imposed definitions such as those promoted by prominent international actors or scholars.

Bosnia is caught in a tension between normative models of nation-states and their languages and more pluralistic models, which the state has flirted with throughout its history. As Ballinger points out in her article on Balkan hybridity (Ballinger 2004), such a tension has coexisted in the region for centuries. It is unlikely that either view will prevail. Instead, the interplay between models of purity and those of hybridity continues to define both the state and the nation as well as contour the linguistic landscape Bosnians interact upon every day.

## Appendix A: Differences Between Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Standard Languages

This appendix outlines some of the salient differences among the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian standard languages. This appendix is not exhaustive and the reader is referred to my bibliography for additional resources on these standard languages.

The Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian standard languages are part of the South Slavic language family. Among languages spoken in the former Yugoslavia, there are three main dialects: *štokavski*, *kajkavski*, *čakavski*. Each dialect is named for the word for “what” in that dialect. The most widespread of the three is *štokavski*, which is spoken throughout Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. *Kajkavski* and *čakavski* are spoken primarily in certain regions of Croatia. The variety of *štokavski* spoken in Eastern Herzegovina—*neo-štokavski*—became the dialect base for the literary standard codified by Vuk Karadžić and accepted by Croatian and Bosnian language activists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Neo-štokavski* differs from earlier forms of *štokavski* primarily in its accentual system—while *neo-štokavski* uses a two-accent system, earlier forms of *štokavski* (some of which are still spoken in various parts of the former Yugoslavia) use a four-accent system.

Within *štokavski*, there are three main dialects—*ijekavski*, *ekavski*, and *ikavski*. These dialects take their name from the reflex of the old Slavic vowel *jat*, which underwent a sound change during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A word like *mľbko* in which *ľ* represents the vowel *jat* today is *mlijeko* (*ijekavski*), *mleko* (*ekavski*), and (*mliko*) *ikavski*. While *ľ* always has the reflex *i* in *ikavski* and *e* in *ekavski*, in *ijekavski* it may be *ije* or *je* depending on whether the syllable is long (*ije*) or short (*je*).

*Ikavski* is spoken primarily in certain regions of Croatia, but is not considered to be a standard form of *štokavski*. Both *ijekavski* and *ekavski* were considered to be standard language variants of Serbo-Croatian. Today, only *ekavski* is standard in Serbian while only *ijekavski* is standard in Bosnian and Croatian. While the map below shows the distribution of *ijekavski* and *ekavski*, ideologically, *ekavski* is considered to be the Serbian dialect while *ijekavski* is associated with Bosnia and Croatia.



Adapted from: Brabec, I; Kraste, M; & Zhivkovic, S: *Gramatika Hrvatskoga ili Srpskoga Jezika*, Zagreb, 1954: the original map can be seen on the webpage <http://lrc3.sas.upenn.edu/popcult/MAPS/srbcroat/crotsrb2.JPG>






<b>KEY:</b>		Štokavian dialect ( <i>ekavian</i> variant)
		Štokavian dialect ( <i>ijekavian</i> variant) <sup>21</sup>
		Štokavian dialect ( <i>ikavian</i> variant)
		Kajkavian dialect
		Čakavian dialect

Figure A-1: South Slavic Dialect Distribution, reprinted from The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names report titled “Language Evolution in Bosnia,” 2006.

Aside from the dialect difference, the standard languages differ primarily in the following ways:

**Syntax:** Syntactical differences between the three standard languages are found primarily in the realm of word order preferences—these differences are not codified in standard grammars. For example, Croatian (and to a lesser extent Bosnian) exhibits a greater preference for the use of the infinitive in future constructions. In Serbian, the phrase “I want to do that” would likely be: *Hoću to da uradim* while in Bosnian and Croatian it would more likely be expressed as: *Hoću to uraditi*.

Likewise, the interrogative construction in Bosnian and Croatian is often expressed with the particle *li* after the verb, while Serbian tends to use *da li* before the verb:

*Hoćete li?* (Do you want to?) in Bosnian and Croatian; *Da li hoćete?* in Serbian

**Phonology:** A major difference between between Bosnian and Croatian and Serbian is the presence of “secondary *h*,” or *h* in Bosnian words where it was not etymologically present.

In many Serbian words, *h* has been replaced with *v*, resulting in Serbian variants such as *duvan* where Bosnian and Croatian have *duhan*.

Another major difference between Croatian and Serbian is the Croatian tendency to use the fricative *ć* where Serbian uses the cluster *št*, resulting in oppositions like *općina/opština*. As discussed in chapter six, a Bosnian tendency to use *opština* before the war was shifting in some areas to a tendency to use *općina*, which was the standard form in the Bosnian standard orthography.

**Morphology:** Other differences include Croatian infinitive stem *–irati* where Serbian uses *–ovati* and the suffix *–telj* in Croatian (where Serbian uses *–lac*) to turn verbs into nouns (i.e. translator as *prevoditelj* or *prevodilac* from the infinitive *prevoditi*.) The Bosnian standard generally prefers *–lac* to *–telj* but allows both *–irati* and *–ovati*.

**Orthography:** The major orthographic difference among the standards is the script used in each standard. Standard Croatian allows only the Latin script and standard Serbian only the Cyrillic while standard Bosnian permits use of both scripts. Another key orthographic difference has to do with the transliteration of foreign words—

Croatian standard orthography requires foreign words to be transliterated using the Croatian phonology, while Serbian prefers to retain as much of the original spelling as possible.

A particularly salient orthographic difference in recent years has been a Croatian movement to write negative future tense verbs as two words rather than one (*ne ću* vs. *neću*). This proposal, which is controversial even within Croatia, contradicts a long-standing rule in Serbo-Croatian of writing these forms as one word.

A number of minor orthographic differences exist such as: how proper nouns are capitalized or whether adverbial phrases are written as one word or two. These differences are often relatively uncontroversial, although the perception among many of my interlocutors was that these rules changed frequently and were hard to follow.

## Appendix B: Survey Instruments

Dear teachers,

My name is Kirstin Swagman and I am a student at the University of Michigan, where I am working on a Ph.D. in linguistic anthropology. Currently, I am living in Bosnia where I am conducting research for my dissertation on mother tongue language education in Bosnia.

My research is composed of two parts: I am interested in how children use grammatical structures and how they learn about their own language. For this purpose, I am observing and recording language classes to see how children use language interactionally in the classroom setting. The second part of my research focuses on how children learn about the differences between the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian standard languages. I'm interested not only in what linguistic forms they themselves use, but also how they view these differences and, in general, what is their attitude towards their mother tongue.

School is only one of a variety of important places where children develop this attitude—others include at home, on the street and from television. However, school is an important part of how children learn about their language and how to use it. Included in this is the type of language children hear from their teachers, and not only mother tongue language teachers, but all teachers who, in some way, set examples for children about how to speak and what kind of language is appropriate in different settings. The goal of this research is not to say what is correct or incorrect or what is “good” or “bad” with respect to Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language. I am simply interested in how, in everyday life, people—especially children—speak in Bosnia.

I would like to ask you, if you are interested and willing, to fill out the attached survey. The identity of participants in this research will be completely confidential—neither individuals nor particular schools will be identifiable in any publications or presentations resulting from this research.

Thank you very much for your participation. If you wish to contact me for any reason, my email is [kirstisw@umich.edu](mailto:kirstisw@umich.edu).

Thanks in advance!

Grade(s) you teach:

Subject(s) you teach:

How long have you worked as a teacher?

1. Do you, as a teacher, speak differently in the classroom than at home? Do you think you should use a different type of language in the classroom? If yes, can you describe it?

2. Orthographies and curricula, especially for language, have changed a lot in the past 10 or 15 years. Does this make your work harder? How?

3. If you are not a mother tongue language teacher, how much do you succeed in following the rules of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian standard language during your teaching?

4. In your opinion, do children know well the differences between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian standard language? Do they consistently use one of these three standards or do they mix them?



5. In your classroom and in written work, do you correct children when they don't use correct forms or when they mix standard variants? Why or why not? What are the most common mistakes that children make?

6. Do you use both the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabet in your classroom? In what ratio?

If you would like to add anything else, please feel free to do so below.

Postovane kolege i kolegice,

Zovem se Kirstin Swagman i studiram na Universtitetu u Micigenu, gdje radim doktorat iz lingvisticke antropologije. Trenutno zivim u Bosni i radim istrazivacki rad za moju doktorsku tezu o nastavi maternjeg jezik u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Moje istrazivanje se sastoji is dva dijela: mene zanima kako djeca usvajaju gramaticke strukture i znanja o svom maternjem jeziku. Zbog toga, posmatram i snimam casove jezika da vidim kako djeca koriste jezik (u smislu medjusobne interakcije ili interakcije sa nastavnicima) i sta oni znaju o svom jeziku. Drugi dio mog istazivanja je fokusiran na to kako djeca uce o razlikama izmedju bosnanskog, hrvatskog i srpskog standardnog jezika. Mene zanima ne samo koje lingvisticke forme oni koriste, nego takodjer sta oni misle o tim razlikama, i, uglavnom, kakav je njihov stav prema svom jeziku.

Skola je samo jedan od mnogih, vaznih mjesta gdje djeca razvijaju taj stav—drugi su kuca, ulica, televizija itd. Medutim, skola je vazan dio gdje djeca uce o svom jeziku i kako da ga koriste. U tome je ukljucen jezik koji djeca cuju od nastavnika u skoli, i ne samo nastavnika maternjeg jezika nego svih nastavnika koji na neki nacin predstavljaju primjer djeci kako da govore i koja vrsta jezika je prikladna. Cilj ovog istrazivanja nije da kaze sta je pravilno i sta je nepravilno; sta je dobro i sta je lose u pogledu b/h/s jezika. Mene samo zanima kako, u svakodnevnom zivotu, ljudi—i posebno djeca—u Bosni govore.

S obzirom na to da su svi nastavnici vazan dio te socializacije, zeljela bih da vas zamolim da, ako ste zainteresovani i voljni, da potpunate prilozenu anketu. Identiteti ucesnika u ovom istrazivanju ce biti potpuno povjerljivi i tajni, sto znaci da niti ce osobe niti odredjene skole moci biti identifikovani na bilo kakav nacin u mojim buducim publikacijama ili predavanjima.

Hvala vama mnogo na vasoj participaciji. Ako me zelite kontaktirati zbog bilo kojeg razloga, moj email je [kirstisw@umich.edu](mailto:kirstisw@umich.edu).

Hvala unaprijed!

Kirstin Swagman  
Universtet u Micigenu  
Odsjek za antropologiju

Sarajevo

15.08.2007

Razredi u kojima predajete:  
Predmet(i) koji predajete:  
Koliko dugo radite kao nastavnik/ nastavnica?

1. Da li vi, kao nastavnik/nastavnica, govorite drugacije u skoli nego kod kuce? Da li biste trebali koristiti posebnu vrstu jezika u ucionici? Ako mislite da biste trebali, mozeti li ga opisati?

2. Pravopisi i nastavni planovi i programi (posebno za jezik) su se mnogo promijenili tokom proteklih 10/15 godina. Da li to otezava vas rad? Kako?

3. Ako niste nastavnik maternjeg jezika, koliko se uspjete pridrzavati pravila b/h/s standarnog jezika tokom vasih predavanja?

4. Po vasem misljenju, da li djeca dobro znaju koje su razlike izmedju bosanskog, hrvatskog i srpskog jezika? Da li oni dosljedno koriste jednu od te tri standardne varijante ili ih mijesaju?

5. U vasoj ucionici i u pismenim radovima, da li ispravljate djecu kada ne koriste pravilne oblike ili kada mijesaju standardne varijante? Zasto ili zasto ne? Koje su najcesce greske koje djeca prave?

6. Da li se u vasoj ucionici koriste oba pisma latinica i cirilica? Ako da, u kojem omjeru?

Ako ima bilo sta sto biste zeljeli dodati, molim vas, napisite ispod. Hvala

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