**Serbo-Croatian and the ideology of separateness**

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In the case of the Serbo-Croatian language(s), the importance of ideology is especially obvious, since it pervades even the ‘scientiﬁc’ description by linguists: On the one hand, there is a wide-spread notion that the former Serbo-Croatian language has ‘dis­inte­grated’ into up to four diﬀerent languages (e.g. Katičić 1997, Rehder ³1998). A variant of this point of view is that Serbo-Croatian as such never existed (e.g. Auburger 1999). On the other hand, a few linguists maintain that Serbo-Croatian as a ‘linguistic’ language is still the same today as it was a century ago (e.g. Kordić 2004, Gröschel 2009) and that Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian are mere “political” (i.e. non-linguistic – and hence non-existant) languages (Thomas 1994).

In my talk it will become clear that none of these concepts is quite correct. What hap­pened a quarter of a century ago is a good example of the inﬂuence ideologies can have on language as a medium of communication itself. In the Serbo-Croatian case, ideology aﬀects all levels of linguistic expression (the writing system, phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon). Apart from that, ideol­o­gies also determine such socio­linguistic parameters as the status and area of application of standard varieties. Conse­quent­ly, ideologies changing over time bring about language change.

Most of the phenomena observed are caused by political ideas and language policies which I summarize under the cover term of ‘the ideology of separateness’. However, this ideology is opposed both by an ideology of togeth­er­ness and by a general inclination to maximize the potential audience of communication in a language. A question to be addressed in this context is whether such ideologies are really something external to lan­guage or in how far they coincide with such ‘natural’ sociolinguistic requirements of a standard language as the “separatist function” and the “unifying function” proposed by Garvin & Mathiot (1960).

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