Language in Croatia:
Influenced by Nationalism

Senior Essay
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Abstract

Language and nationalism are closely linked, and this paper examines the relationship between the two. Nationalism is seen to be a powerful force which is capable of using language for political purposes, and the field of linguistics has developed terminology with which the interface of language and nationalism may be studied. Using this background, the language situation in Croatia may be examined and seen to be complex. Even after thorough evaluation it is difficult to determine how languages and dialects should be delineated in Croatia, but it is certain that nationalism and politics play key roles in promoting the nation's linguistic ideals.

Acknowledgements

I suppose I could say that this essay was birthed almost two years ago, when I spent the summer traveling with a group of students throughout Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia in order to study issues of justice and reconciliation. Had I never traveled in the region I may have never gained an interest in the people, their history and, yes, their language(s). Even after conducting a rigorous academic study of the issues plaguing former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, I carry with me the impression that this topic can never be taken entirely into the intellectual realm; I am reminded by my memories that the Balkan conflicts involve people just as real as myself. For this, I thank all those who shared those six weeks of traveling. That summer gave me new perspectives on many areas of life.

I would also like to thank Professor Greenberg for advising me as I wrote this essay. The expertise which he offered has proved invaluable. Professor Jonas, too, has been of great help in directing me within the bounds of the linguistics department. You will be missed.

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1.0 Introduction

The primary goal of this paper is to investigate the linguistic situation in Croatia and to propose that it is influenced principally by political concerns within the country. Nationalism is therefore seen as a driving force behind not only the political history of the nation, but also the linguistic history. Section 2 will begin with general background on the study of nationalism, followed by Section 3 which will discuss relevant linguistic theory. Croatia and its political and linguistic histories will be introduced in Section 4, and Section 5 will analyze these histories in light of Sections 2 and 3. Section 6 concludes with a summation of Sections 2-5.

2.0   Nationalism

Even in a world that is becoming increasingly globalized and international, nation states continue to play a key role in the organization and function of everyday life. However, while the links between nationality and identity are strong and powerful they are somewhat hard to define. First, a basic understanding of nationalism and ideology is needed, and once this is established a discussion may be opened about their links to language.

2.1   *Nation-States and Identity*

In his book <u>Banal Nationalism</u>, Billig proposes that nationalism is "the ideological means by which nation-states are reproduced" (Billig, 1995: 6). Indeed, the very name suggests that nationalism cannot occur without the existence of nation-states, and, as Billig (1995) proposes, nationalism can be observed in mundane settings, not solely during times of crisis.

If nationalism is built upon nation-states, then it is important to have an understanding of what exactly comprises a nation. Smith (quoted in Barbour, 2000: 4) defines a nation as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths, and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members." Birnbaum (quoted in Fishman, 1987: 148) similarly states that "the mind and soul which characterize a people can, in fact, only be explained in terms of natural history." According to these two scholars, a nation is a group with a common historical and social identity.

Billig (1995) would likely agree that a nation is founded on a common identity, but he finds this concept of identity difficult to define. He observes that nation-states "are not founded upon 'objective' criteria, such as the possession of a discrete language" (1995: 10) and that there is no underlying principle of language, religion, or geography (1995: 23-24) upon which they are

consistently built. Rather, he argues similarly to Smith that identity can be found "in the embodied habits of social life" (1995: 8).

Benedict Anderson (quoted in Billig, 1995: 24) takes this argument even further, suggesting that nations are merely "imagined communities." If "the need to belong to a community of some kind is a fundamental human characteristic," as suggested by Barbour (2000: 3), then nations can be seen to "have arisen to fulfill this need, as earlier and more primary communities – local, 'tribal', and religious – have lost their significant through economic and social change" (Barbour, 2000: 3). Basically, nations are the modern way of creating a needed community.

A discussion of nation-states would be missing an essential element, though, if it excluded the mention of politics and government. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) makes this clear through its definition of 'nation-state:' "an independent political state formed from a people who share a common national identity (historically, culturally, or ethnically); (more generally) any independent political state" (OED: "nation-state"). Similar to the discussion above, the OED finds it necessary to include "national identity" in its definition, but there is also a key element of political statehood. A governing body and all that goes with it is required.

It is useful, too, to draw a distinction between nationalism and patriotism. According to the OED, nationalism is "advocacy of or support for the interests of one's own nation, especially to the exclusion of detriment of the interests of other nations…advocacy of or support for national independence or self-determination" (OED: "nationalism"). This seems fairly straightforward as a concept, and the general sentiment that agrees with these ideas is usually referred to as "patriotism," while "nationalism" is reserved as a refernce to a specific ideology, especially when accompanied by political activism (OED: "nationalism").

Thus, as a working definition, a nation-state is an independent political state comprised of people who share a perceived common identity that is broadly based on shared history and social habits.

2.2   Ideologies and Power

By way of definition, an ideology is "a systematic scheme of ideas, usually relating to politics or society, or to the conduct of a class or group, and regarded as justifying actions, especially one that is held implicitly or adopted as a whole and maintained regardless of the course of events" (OED: "ideology"). Another way to consider ideologies is as "patterns of belief and practice, which make existing social arrangements appear 'natural' or inevitable" (Eagleton, quoted in Billig, 1995: 15). The key notions in these definitions are that ideologies involve a systematic method of thinking and that they are used to justify actions.

Throughout recent history it is evident that nation-states function as communities for which people are willing to fight, and this does not make sense without the presence of shared ideologies. If, as observed above, there is not necessarily a connection between national boundaries, religion and language (Billig, 1995: 23-24), what causes the strong bond between the citizens of a country? A nation is not "generally essential to survival" (Barbour, 2000: 2) in the same way that these immediate communities are, and yet it has an equally strong influence on its citizens. It must be, as stated above, that a nation is built upon a common history and social way of life, and that this ideology has a strong claim of loyalty on its citizens. It is logical that what is perceived as familiar and as community is worth fighting for in the same way as a biological relation. As Barbour observes, the significance of nationalism "lies in its power to arouse passionate loyalties and hatreds that motivate acts of extreme violence and courage," (2000: 2).

Ideologies are powerful tools, and are frequently used to mobilize large groups of people. By definition as systems of ideas, no person is immune to ideologies, so it is not their presence but rather how they are used that makes them dangerous. Ideology and nationalism are a dangerous combination; "people kill and die for their nations" (Barbour, 2000: 2).

2.3   Language and Nationalism

Nation-states are a relatively new innovation in the history of mankind and so are the notions of language and dialect. From a contemporary viewpoint they are both necessary for a functional world, but history proves that this view is inaccurate; these ideas have not always been assumed and would indeed have been strange to former societies. Language, dialect, territory and sovereignty are in fact "invented permanencies." (Billig, 1995: 36)

Having appeared at roughly the same time, the idea of a language is frequently linked to a national identity and ideal. Many countries have a language academy whose job is to regulate the national language; language is acknowledged to be a national symbol. There is a general association that French speakers traditionally live in France, German speakers in Germany and Russian speakers in Russia. While it is obvious that there are speakers of these languages residing elsewhere in the world – and indeed that these languages are the national languages of other countries as well – these are mostly in areas that have experienced colonization or dictatorial rule by the "home" country of that language. Many former British colonies still maintain English as their national language, just as former French colonies often maintain the French language. In all cases, though, language is associated with national identity.

2.4   Nationalism: Creating Language

Although it is theoretically possible that the introduction of the concept of languages has

given rise to nationalism, it is far more likely that, as Billig proposes, "language does not create

nationalism, so much as nationalism creates language" (1995: 30). In support of this view, Billig

cites the difficulties pertaining to the differentiation between languages and dialects. Because

there are mutually intelligible "languages" for multiple countries as well as mutually

incomprehensible dialects of a single "language" within a single country, it is obvious that the

languages are named along political boundaries and not the political boundaries created by

language names. (Billig, 1995: 32)

It should be noted, though, that people gravitate toward others who speak the same

language and that this is partially responsible for the patterning of linguistic groups within

political borders. As Snyder (quoted in Billig, 1995: 14) astutely observes, "in the search for

security, people who speak the same language are irresistibly drawn together." However, this

statement should not be taken to mean that nations are formed merely on the basis of linguistic

similarity but more that linguistic similarity eventually results after the nations are formed.

It has been seen earlier that the essence of a nation lies in a common history and shared

social habits. Billig includes "thinking and using language" (1995: 8) among these habits, and

perhaps rightly so. Some people, though, take this a step further and hypothesize that a manner

of thinking is inextricably linked to the language through which it is spoken. Birnbaum (quoted

in Fishman, 1987: 148) expresses this idea that "language is…the product of the character and

spirit of the people. The individual character of the race determines the individual character of

the mode of thinking and feeling of a people and thus in turn creates the individual character of

the language." He even goes so far as to state that "it is not because of their language that the

German people is German. It is rather because it is German that it had to create the German language" (quoted in Fishman, 1987: 148). Yet Birnbaum's argument is not entirely consistent, which becomes evident when he argues that Jewish residents of Germany cannot be expected to adopt German viewpoints simply because they have learned the German language (quoted in Fishman, 1987: 148). If this point is true – as it indeed seems to be – then it logically follows that identity cannot be the basis of language creation.

Decisions about the usage of language usually entail more than just linguistic issues; they "are not just struggles about language, but importantly they are conducted through language (as well as through violence)" (Billig, 1995: 35).

2.5   Nationalism: Using Language

As has been observed, language and nationality are "inextricably and naturally linked" (Fishman, 1972: 48), with nationalism having a creational role in the contemporary concept of language. There are a few key ways which nationalism chooses to use this creation, and these are discussed here.

First, language is used as a link to a "Glorious Past" that is perceived to lie somewhere in the history of a people group or nation. This referenced period is associated with greatness, and it is believed that "the ethnic past must not be lost for within it could be found both the link to greatness as well as the substance of greatness itself" (Fishman, 1972: 44). Language is often seen as a key link to this period and thus the language connotes greatness.

A "broader unity" is also argued for within the bounds of linguistic nationalism, whereby speakers of language are linked to other speakers everywhere, and beliefs are projected on the speakers in affiliation with the language. This concept couples with a "stressed authenticity"

wherein language can be used as a measure of legitimacy by which a person may be included or excluded from a group. (Fishman, 1972: 6-8)

Thus, the "mother tongue" becomes glorified when language is used for national endeavors. Oral and written imagery and folklore are emphasized in an attempt to link the mother tongue with beauty and success. (Fishman, 1972: 45) Even though it seems that nationalism originally gives rise to the need to define linguistic identity, language and nationalism play off of each other in a complex and circular cycle.

3.0 Linguistic Theory and Nationalism

Within the field of linguistic study there are many phenomena which can be observed within Croatia. The exact definitions of many of the concepts involved are frequently disputed, but in order to avoid confusion definitions will be offered for the terminology used in this paper. Each concept will be described generally, and other places in the world where these issues have arisen will be referenced when relevant.

3.1 Sprachbund

The term "Sprachbund" (German for "language union/bond") is used to denote a "linguistic area." According to Thomason (2000: 1), this can be defined as "a geographical region containing a group of three or more languages that share some structural features as a result of contact rather than as a result of accident or inheritance from a common ancestor." It is necessary that more than two languages are involved so that the effects are more than unidirectional. Structural features are used to assess language change in order to exclude features such as vocabulary which might include too many languages (e.g. words such as *email, hamburger,* and *computer* are introduced in a more universal manner). Finally, Thomason emphasizes that the very nature of a Sprachbund centers on the fact that the languages involved change as a result of contact; there is no "accidental similarity." (Thomason, 2000)

The language spoken in Croatia is a member of a Balkan Sprachbund, but as the political boundaries in the region have shifted so have the definitions of language. If, indeed, there are as many languages as former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, then questions about the existence of a former-Yugoslavian Sprachbund are raised. This will be discussed further in Section 5.2.

3.2   *Language and Dialect*

An oft-quoted statement goes something like, "a language is a dialect with an army and a navy" (origin unknown, but often attributed to Max Weinreich), and its irony effectively communicates the difficulties in defining exactly where the line between "language" and "dialect" lies.

Mutual intelligibility is often offered as an indication that a single language is being spoken, but there are examples in the world to disprove this idea. Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish are considered to be three distinct languages, but all three are mutually comprehensible to their speakers. In contrast, speakers of Mandarin and Cantonese cannot understand each other at all, yet both groups are considered to speak dialects of Chinese. These cases demonstrate that there is indeed something political about the declaration of what is considered a language or a dialect. In addition, it is necessary to consider what constitutes mutual intelligibility; at exactly what point does one person become incomprehensible to another? (Billig, 1995: 32)

It is obvious that there are political motivations in defining languages and dialects, and this seems to be linked to the naming of nation-states. Swedish, Norwegian and Danish may be mutually comprehensible, but they each represent a distinct political entity. Similarly, Mandarin and Cantonese may be vastly different in linguistic terms, but their speakers belong to a single nation. The case of British and American English may seem to refute this correlation between political boundaries and language naming, but this is not necessarily so. The name of the primary language of both England and the United States of America is English, but few people in America are upset because their language is not referred to as "American." One way to explain this is that Americans feel no need to define themselves as different from their British counterparts; there is a clear international understanding that the two nations are distinct. In

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contrast, a few centuries ago – when this distinction was not as clear – there was indeed a movement promoting an "American" language, largely characterized by Noah Webster's attempts to differentiate the "American" language from British English and standardize the language through the production of an "American" textbook and dictionary (Greenberg, SLAV 205 lecture, 1/19/05). Perhaps, then, the conclusion is painfully obvious: political definitions are not linguistic definitions.

This question of how to delineate between language and dialect is a key issue in the language debates surrounding Croatia. The administration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia argued that the varieties of language spoken in the region were all dialects of the same Serbo-Croatian language, but since its breakup each former republic has declared its own language and worked hard to perpetuate its status as a language and not merely a dialect. This issue will be seen in greater detail in Section 5.2.

3.3   *Language Death and Language Shift*

Language death – wherein a language ceases to have any native speaker – may be classified into three categories, according to Kloss (1984, cited in Edwards, 1985). The first category cites language shift as the primary cause of death. Language shift refers to the way in which a language changes as it is gradually overwhelmed by a neighboring language; whereas only a few speakers may initially be familiar with the foreign language, eventually the second language will gain greater usage than the first. Language death also can happen when a speech community simply shrinks until the last living speaker dies, and this is the second type of death that Kloss cites. A third type of language death occurs by "metamorphosis" when a language splits along dialectal lines into two languages.

3.4   *Abstand and Asbau*

In 1978, Kloss (cited in Greenberg, 2004:13) proposed two different manners in which languages grow apart: Abstand and Ausbau. The former (German for 'distance') refers to languages that have drifted apart naturally whereas the latter (German for 'disassemble') denotes those languages that have separated due to active intervention by governing bodies. English and German are examples of Abstand languages, while Hindi and Urdu exemplify the process of Ausbau. (Greenberg, 2004: 13)

3.5   *Language Policy and Language Planning*

As defined by Bugarski (1992: 19), language policy is "the policy of a society in the area of linguistic communication" whereas language planning refers to the "concrete measures taken within language policy to act on linguistic communication in a community, typically by directing the development of its languages." Basically, the policy is the more abstract position that motivates the action-oriented planning.

3.6   *Linguistic Iconization*

Iconization refers to the process by which features or characteristics become associated with a certain social group or image. Thus, the linguistic attributes that indicate a specific group or context become representational icons, "as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence" (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 37).

3.7 Fractal Recursivity

When an opposition at one level of society is projected onto either a smaller or larger level, fractal recursivity is at play. The effect of this is that a relationship between communities is shifted somewhat to align with the pattern set by an opposition at another level; one level is affected by its perceived association with another level. This may occur at many different levels. (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 38).

3.8 Erasure

Not all facts or phenomena are consistent with an ideology, and erasure occurs to remove these obstacles to the promoted philosophy. The term may suggest that the phenomenon in question is entirely obliterated as it is quietly removed from the scene, but this is not usually the case. Rather, the bothersome element is either explained away or simply ignored. (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 38)

4.0   Introduction to Croatia and the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The nationalistic and linguistic phenomena discussed in Sections 2 and 3 can all be seen in the nation-state of Croatia, a former constituent republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). This section attempts an objective historical overview of the region, focusing on both the political and linguistic histories.

The area in which the SFRY existed has been wrought with conflict and violence as far back as the history books reach. Indeed, it is occasionally difficult to peruse the books because so many variations of state have occurred there in rapid succession; the borders seldom remain stable and the terminology describing the region is even more transitory. Should the area be referred to as former Yugoslavia, as "the Balkans," or as the individual countries of which it now consists?

For the sake of clarity, a few definitions will be offered here. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (EB), the term "Balkan" refers to the "easternmost of Europe's three great southern peninsulas" (EB: "Balkans"), which includes the countries that are known today as Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia & Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Greece and European Turkey. (EB: "Balkans"; Greenberg, SLAV 205 lecture, 1/12/05). Sometimes, though, the term "Balkan" is used in reference more specifically to mean the former SFRY, which constituted a large portion of the region at one point. In this paper, though, "Balkan" will be used in the traditional, more general sense to refer to the larger region.

A "Yugoslav" is simply a person who is a "southern Slav," and thus the term "Yugoslavia" technically refers to the land in which such people live. However, in recent history the word has been incorporated into the names of various national entities, and thus the title has come to have much more polarizing associations. In this paper, "Yugoslavia" will be used only

in reference to the former communist SFRY unless otherwise specified (see Figures 1 and 2 below).

Figure 1: Map of Europe, circle indicating the location of the SFRY.
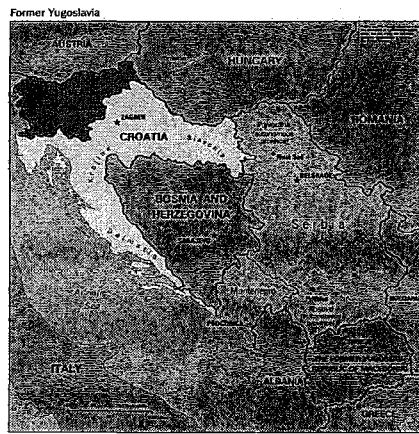(Map of Europe)

Figure 2: Map of the SFRY –
Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia &
Herzegovina, Serbia,
Montenegro and Macedonia
(Map of SFRY)

4.1   General History

The first people to inhabit the Balkan region were the Illyrians, followed by the Celts in the fourth century and the Romans a century after that (EB: "Balkans"). The Yugoslav ("southern Slav") people moved into the area sometime around the sixth century although no one knows exactly from where they came. The influx of these peoples brought about great language and cultural shifts, resulting in a "slavicised" people. (Greenberg, SLAV 205 lecture, 2/28/05)

After an initial thriving existence the Croat tribe fell under Hungarian rule in 1102, while the Serbs began to develop an independent medieval dynasty that continued to expand and flourish for a few hundred years. Eventually, though, the Ottoman Empire took over much of the region except for Croatia, which remained under Hungarian rule. A particularly poignant defeat was issued to the Serbs by the Ottoman Turks on June 28, 1389, during the Battle of Kosovo Polye (known as "The Field of Blackbirds"). The Serbs finally gained independence in 1878, but

by then the region of Bosnia-Herzegovina had joined Croatia under Austro-Hungarian rule. Just prior to the outbreak of World War I there were two Balkan Wars fought in 1912 and 1913 over the liberation and ownership of territory, but they only resolved the issue temporarily. Then, in 1914, World War I broke out after Arch-Duke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. He had arrived for a visit on June 28, the same day as the epic Serb battle had been fought centuries before. (Greenberg, SLAV 205 lectures, 2/28/05, 3/2/05, 3/28/05; Rozen)

The first Yugoslav State, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was created at the conclusion of World War I and ruled over by King Alexander. Then, during World War II, a series of retributive conflicts broke out between the communist Partisans, the Croat fascists known as the Ustasha and the Serb royalists known as the Chetniks. Muslim people, too, were involved. The Croats had the upper hand at this time as part of an Austro-Hungarian puppet state. (Greenberg, SLAV 205 lecture, 3/28/05, 3/30/05; Rozen)

A second Yugoslav state, often referred to as "Tito's Yugoslavia," arose when the communist Partisans defeated both the Ustasha and the Chetniks. This state was first known as the People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and then in 1963 gained the title of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), consisting of the republics of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro. It existed under the communist mantel of "brotherhood and unity" from 1945 until 1991, but the compromises aimed at maintaining these ideals arguably had the reverse effect and dissent was only suppressed. (Greenberg, SLAV 205 lecture, 3/30/05) When Tito died in 1980, an eight-person rotating presidency took over his reign, but although power was technically decentralized as Tito had stipulated it be, Belgrade, Serbia held a prominent position due to its economic power. For the next decade, Yugoslavia was

plagued with conflicts that foreshadowed the wars of the 1990s, and as Slobodan Milosevic gained power by rallying nationalistic Serbs, the other Yugoslav republics responded by breaking away from the Yugoslav infrastructure. In June of 1991, Croatia and Slovenia both seceded, shattering any remaining hope that Yugoslavia would hold itself together. (Greenberg, SLAV 205 lecture, 4/4/05, 4/11/05)

What followed in the 1990s was a series of bloody wars, drawing on a complex mix of national, ethnic and religious ideologies that pitted neighbors against each other throughout the region. No part of former Yugoslavia was unaffected by the conflict, but the front lines of the war between Serbia and Croatia as well as a large portion of Bosnia-Herzegovina were hardest hit. The extreme violence that occurred brought the attention and intervention of the international community, and although outside forces ultimately were able to halt outright war it is a widespread opinion that the international community did too little too late.

In short, the tangled history of former Yugoslavia displays a pattern of violence and retribution. All of the peoples there have experienced oppression in their distant and recent histories, changing hands more times than are easily counted. Dynasties have played violent games with the region, pitting one people against another, and those who have experienced the resulting horrors have memories that are long.

4.2   Linguistic History

Like the historical narrative of the region, the linguistic situation of Yugoslavia is long, complex and full of dissent. The languages spoken in the area are quite similar, but there has been much dispute about how to classify "languages" versus "dialects," and as the borders within

the region have shifted so too have the definitions of the languages undergone subtle – and not so subtle – changes.

The languages of Yugoslavia belong to the Slavic (or Slavonic) branch of Indo-European languages. This group also includes languages from central Europe (Czech, Polish and Slovak), Eastern Europe (Belarusian, Ukrainian and Russian) and parts of northern Asia (Russian). The Baltic group of Indo-European languages is the language group most closely related to that of Slavic, and some people believe that there was a Proto-Baltic-Slavic language in which these two groups were once unified. Yugoslav languages belong to the South Slavic branch of Slavic languages and to the Western subgroup of South Slavic (the Eastern subgroup being comprised Bulgarian and Macedonian). (EB: "Slavic Languages")

Around the sixth century the Slavic people spread southward across central Europe and the unified Slavic language began to fracture as the people became divided into several distinct embryonic linguistic groups. A rift between the eastern Orthodox and western Roman Catholic churches helped to foster the split between Eastern and Western South Slavic groups. In an effort to react against the Western Christian church and its association with the German empire, "Church Slavonic" was introduced as part of Orthodox liturgy. The Cyrillic script – invented in Bulgaria and later used in Orthodox lands by disciples of St. Cyril and his brother Methodius – became the script of choice, and it is still in use today in the eastern parts of the region. Soon, the church schism between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western (Roman) Catholicism began to form a larger rift among southern Slavic people. In the mid-seventeenth century, Croatian Roman Catholic priest and scholar Juraj Krizanic set out to reunite the Christian church and convert Orthodox Slavs to Roman Catholicism, but he was not at all successful in his venture. (EB: "South Slavic Languages")

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there were developments on both

sides of the east-west division as dialects began to be standardized. In the East, Serbian Vuk

Stefanovic Karadzic (1787-1864) helped to create a tradition of Serbian folklore as well as

adapting and establishing the Cyrillic alphabet for common use. His counterpart in the West was

Ljudevit Gaj (1809-72), a Croatian who led the Illyrian movement in the 1830-40s seeking to

unify the South Slavic languages as a reaction against oppression from the Austro-Hungarian

empire (EB: "Croatia"). 1850 saw the signing of a "Literary Agreement" in Vienna, advocating a

single unified literary language among Serbs and Croats. Karadzic and Gaj were both key

proponents of the Agreement, although Gaj did not actually sign the document.

A century later – after World War I, the rise and fall of the first Kingdom of Yugoslavia

and World War II – Marshal Tito's SFRY controlled the region. In the interest of preserving the

communist mantra of "brotherhood and unity," a second Agreement was signed, this time in

1954 in Novi Sad, Serbia. This Agreement reiterated that "the popular language of Serbs, Croats,

and Montenegrins is one language...therefore, the literary language, which has developed on its

basis around two main centers, Belgrade and Zagreb, is also a single language, with two

pronunciations" (Greenberg, 2004: 172). Both the Cyrillic and Latin scripts as well as both the

Western and Eastern pronunciations were declared to be "equally legitimate" (Greenberg, 2004:

172), and a common orthographic manual was deemed necessary.

From 1969-1971 there was a movement known as the "Croatian Spring" during which

there was a great cultural and national awakening within Croatia. Tito interceded when the

movement began to call for greater Croatian autonomy, but he could not entirely suppress the

growing dissent. The 1974 Constitution of the SFRY did grant increased autonomy to its

constituent republics, but the communist control of the political parties in power prevented this

from having much actual effect. The net result was that Croatia and Slovenia pushed for increased independence from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, eventually seceding in 1991. (EB: "Croatia")

The language spoken in Yugoslavia during Tito's reign was referred to as Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian, depending on whether the speaker in question lived in the East or the West. This name was officially declared as part of the 1954 Novi Sad Agreement, but as soon as the SFRY dissolved each former republic began to claim its own language. Today, Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian and are all accepted languages, and there are disputes as to whether a unified language ever actually existed or whether this was merely a political invention.

5.0   Analysis of Language and Nationalism in Croatia

Here it will be demonstrated that the linguistic situation in Croatia is both an outgrowth of and a proponent for its political situation. After outlining the "historical language narrative" that is present in the country, the success of the political and linguistic aims of its narrative will be examined.

5.1   An Historical Language Narrative

Within a nation, nationalistic ideologies combine to form what is sometimes referred to by historians and social scientists as a historical nation-state narrative. Basically, this narrative is the history of a nation told in such a way so as to support the political aims of its current leaders. In some ways this is just an extension of the idea that it is the winners who write history; details that do not support the rhetoric in question are often either twisted or excluded altogether. Bellamy (2003) examines the presence of such a narrative in Croatia, where the idea that "Croatia has enjoyed continuous statehood since the time of the medieval kingdom" (Bellamy 2003: 57) is promoted. By emphasizing certain occurrences in history and exercising erasure (see Section 3.8) on others, the narrative is carefully crafted to support Croatia's political ideals. (Bellamy, 2003)

An outgrowth of this nation-state narrative is what will be referred to as a "historical language narrative." This refers to the promoted view of language within a nation as it corresponds to the national ideals, and can be seen clearly in Croatia: during the SFRY the narrative supported a single unified language, whereas now Croatia's narrative proclaims the existence of a distinct Croatian language even before the advent of the SFRY. Obviously, this

narrative is not an objective concept, but rather is linked to the nation's political state and changes along with it.

In parallel with the history outlined in Section 4.1, Croatia's nation-state narrative reaches back over a millennium to the era of its "Glorious Past" in order to validate its current situation. The existence of a unified Croat people before its subjection to the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1102 seems to show that the nation of Croatia has a strong historical claim to autonomy, linking a successful era of the past to the present. The origins of the Croat people farther back seems to be unimportant, and the thousand years that intervene between the independent Croat tribes and the newly recognized nation-state of Croatia are seen to be merely a long hiatus from the truly original state of affairs.

The language narrative was created when the rise of nation-states brought the need to define national boundaries and name languages accordingly. Yet by drawing upon the nation-state narrative the language narrative is able to reach back into history beyond the creation of nation-states to give the Croatian language a greater depth of authenticity. Croatian is now accepted as a language separate from Serbian or Bosnian, this distinction has not always been acknowledged. During the SFRY all three of these languages were considered to be three dialects of a single language. A further investigation into the distinction between language and dialect in the SFRY helps to give insight into a more objective viewpoint, although no answers become immediately evident.

5.2   The Problem of Language and Dialect

Remembering the proposal cited in Section 3.2 that a language is merely as a dialect with an army and navy, it is not surprising that the "Serbo-Croatian" language was declared as

unified under the jurisdiction of the SFRY and then fractured into "new" languages as the SFRY broke into six new nations. Today, each of these nations still feels its identity to be in danger, and thus the existence of a unique language is held to fiercely. It is important to note, though, that only four new countries needed to declare new languages; Slovenian and Macedonian were acknowledged as independent languages even when Slovenia and Macedonia were member states of the SFRY. Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are widely acknowledged as distinct languages, while the status of Montenegrin is still debated (Greenberg, 2004).

Within former Yugoslavia, there are three primary variations of the same language(s) that are spoken. Each "dialect" is named after the word that it uses to mean what. In the shtokavian dialect shto means 'what,' in the chakavian dialect it is cha, and in the kajkavian, kaj. The shtokavian dialect also has three subgroups. These subgroups are named after their three different realizations of a vowel ("jat'") which is presumed to have developed in three divergent paths from the same low front vowel in an ancestor language; the dialects are known as ekavian, ikavian, and ijekavian. The ijekavian dialect is characteristic of eastern, central and southern Yugoslavia, while kajkavian, chakavian and shtokavian ikavian are characteristic of the west, and shtokavian ekavian is spoken in eastern Yugoslavia. Chakavian is only spoken in a small region in the northwest and on the islands of the Adriatic Sea. The shtokavian ijekavian dialect was selected by the signers of the 1850 Literary Agreement as the standard dialect of the entire region, but the ekavian dialect (typical of Belgrade) was later imposed by King Alexander and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. (Greenberg, 2004: 32-33; Carmichael, 2000: 236)

Although a better understanding of the dialects in the former SFRY does help to explain the complexity of the language situation there, it also raises many questions about how to classify these dialects, as well as how to utilize linguistic terminology in application to the area.

For example, it has been widely accepted that there is a Balkan Sprachbund. Thomason (2000: 7) states that its linguistic area includes Rumanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, "southern dialects of Serbian," Albania, Greek and dialects of Turkish, and that – as is typical of Sprachbunds – it has emerged as a result of "diverse social processes and institutions (e.g. trade, war)" (Thomason, 2000: 5). Among the linguistic features shared in this region are the presence of a high or mid central vowel, vowel harmony, postposed articles, a merger of dative and genitive cases, partial or total loss of the infinitive, a future construction formed with the verb *want* and a perfect construction formed with the verb *have*. There are more specifically borrowed features, too, including a plural suffix that appears in Arumanian from Greek and a vocative case that appears in Rumanian as evidence of Slavic influence. (Thomason, 2000) The breakup of the SFRY raises interesting questions about the concept of Sprachbund as it is applied to the Balkans. The term was coined for formal linguistic theory in an era when the primary language of Yugoslavia was considered to be a single language, Serbo-Croatian. Now, though, as each former republic declares its own language, should a Yugoslav Sprachbund be declared? There are certainly linguistic features that each of these individual "languages" share, but there is dispute over whether each of these are indeed languages or rather merely dialects of a single language.

Even an assumption that the current Croatian government is correct in declaring a Croatian language creates problems with linguistic terminology. If Serbo-Croatian existed at some point, there is a peculiar form of language death taking place. The language is dying (or perhaps is already dead), not because its speakers are being obliterated or because another language is taking its place, but rather because it is fragmenting into several new languages. It is not the speakers which are dying or forgetting the language, but rather the language which is dying due to shifting political borders. Although this is an instance of Asbau (see Section 3.4),

this process does not fit within any of the possible forms of language death proposed by Kloss (see Section 3.3). Such an analysis, though, is quite controversial since many people would argue that a unified Serbo-Croatian language never existed; therefore, it cannot die. (Greenberg, 2004:13)

In an attempt to sum up an issue which has no clear answers, let it suffice to state that the goals of a nation affect its language policy. In turn, the language policy affects the concrete language planning measures, including what is classified as a language and what is considered to be a dialect. Neither the 1850 Literary Agreement nor the 1954 Novi Sad Agreement – both being instantiations of language planning – managed to reach a long-lasting conclusion on the matter of language and dialect in the region, and the policy of unification which was at their roots has since passed away. A new nation-oriented policy is now driving Croatian language planning.

5.3   *Polarizing Linguistic Ideologies*

The language policy in Croatia is making good use of language as a divisive icon (see Section 3.6 for a discussion of linguistic iconization). By playing up the associations that various dialects evoke, the natural language ties are appropriated for non-linguistic purposes. The kajkavian dialect is typically spoken in the greater Zagreb area in Croatia and thus this dialect has become associated with Croats and their capitol city. The shtokavian ekavian dialect is associated with a more standardized language, but even this has its regional associations. The Cyrillic alphabet, too, is iconic of the East; the entity within Bosnia-Herzegovina that is under the jurisdiction of Serbs (the Republika Srpska) uses Cyrillic while the other district – comprised primarily of Croats and Bosniacs and known as the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina – uses

Latin. Here orthography is seen to be a powerful visual representation of the linguistic separateness that is currently being declared between the eastern and western portions of the former SFRY. As Billig (1995: 34) observes, "the power of writing down a way of speaking should not be underestimated: it provides material evidence for the claim that a separate language exists."

Outside the realm of language there is no shortage of iconic associations within the region, and these non-linguistic symbols and groups are tied ideologically to the respective languages that their members speak. Perhaps the most prominent of these is religion, with most Croats self-identifying as Catholic, most Serbs as Orthodox and most Bosniacs as Muslim. There are historical symbols, too, which have become linked to various ethnic groups. Two extremist groups that were operative mainly during the Second World War – the Ustasha and the Chetniks – have become associated with general violence committed by Croats and Serbs, respectively, against the opposing ethnic group; the names and symbols of the extremist groups have come to represent a much more general idea.

Icons of a linguistic nature and of non-linguistic nature alike play into ideologies that are part of a greater dichotomy between East and West. Within Europe as a whole, there is a sense of division between the East and West in terms of culture, custom, history and so forth, and this idea is projected on a smaller scale within former Yugoslavia. Croatia aligns itself with the ideals of Western society while Serbia leans toward the East. (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 64-65) This pattern is even seen on the level of language, as certain dialects have come to symbolize eastern Yugoslavia and others the western part of the region. These are all instantiations of fractal recursivity at work within the former SFRY (see Section 3.7 for a discussion of fractal recursivity).

5.4   Deconstructing the Serbo-Croatian Language Narrative

As has been noted in Section 5.1, the language narrative during the SFRY proclaimed a unified Serbo-Croatian language whereas the language narrative of Croatia now decrees a Croatian language that is separate from both Serbian and Bosnian. One key part of the current Croatian narrative is an attempt to deconstruct the Serbo-Croatian story and prove that such a language never existed. In doing so one of the key pieces of evidence against the existence of Croatian – the Serbo-Croatian language – will be obliterated; there is no other convincing alternative for the language of the Croat people.

Excluding access to primary language sources, it is still possible to examine the success of this attempt at deconstruction. Three major arguments that can be used to refute the existence of Serbo-Croatian will be examined in the following three sections: a communist motivation for declaring the unified language; distinct Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian literary traditions; and linguistic elements seen in everyday speech that clearly delineate between constituent languages.

5.6   Political Motivations

It is certainly true that the language narrative in the SFRY was politically motivated; as has been demonstrated above, there are myriad opportunities for ties between language and nationalism. Thus, it is possible to argue that the Serbo-Croatian language is merely an invention of a communist regime which imposed its mantra of "brotherhood and unity" onto even the linguistic realm. However, to make such a claim would require a similar evaluation of the current situation in Croatia, with the aim of proving that the Croatian language narrative either has fewer political motivations or that its political stance is somehow more legitimate than that of Serbo-Croatian.

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According to statistics posted on the European Union's website, Croatia's population is 89.6% ethnically Croat, 4.5% Serb and less than half a percent each of Bosniac, Italian, Hungarian, Albanian, Slovene and Roma. Correspondingly, 87.8% of the population is identified as Roman Catholic, 4.4% as Orthodox and 1.3% as Muslim. Croatian is cited as the official language, with "Serbian and other minority languages" also being spoken. (http://europa.eu.int) The alignment of the ethnic and religious boundaries is clear in these statistics, and the ethnic and religious majorities can be seen to correspond, too, with the name of the official language; most people in Croatia are ethnically Croat, most identify themselves as Roman Catholic and they are speakers of the Croatian language.

One way to investigate the political motivations of Croatian policy is to assess the opinion of the international community as to the acceptability of the nation's behavior. To do this, Croatia's relationship with the European Union (EU) will be considered. After declaring independence from the SFRY, Croatia was first recognized by member states of the European community in 1992. At this point diplomatic relations were established with Zagreb, and then in 1997 the EU Council enumerated conditions – both political and economical – that would be required if bilateral relations with Croatia were to be advanced. Then, two years later, a new Stabilization and Association Process was proposed for five South-East European countries, including Croatia, and after another two years the European Commission adopted a country strategy for Croatia. The nation officially submitted its application for EU membership on February 21, 2003, and on June 18, 2004 the Brussels Council allowed Croatia to begin membership negotiations. By the end of 2004 it appeared that accession talks could be opened in the spring of 2005, with the stipulation that Croatia fully cooperate with the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. However, in March of 2005 the accession talks were postponed due to

noncompliance on Croatia's part. Later the same year, on October 3, the EU agreed to formally open membership talks with Croatia, and the screening process began on October 20. Full EU membership is currently projected for 2009. (http://www.euractiv.com)

It is interesting to note what specific factors caused the postponement of Croatia's accession to candidate status within the EU. According to the EU's website (http://europa.eu.int), the "main issues" that currently plague the country include "reform of the judiciary and the fight against organized crime and corruption, minority rights, refugee return, [and] the conduct of war crimes trials." In addition, the two issues concerning the international community that are cited as "main issues" within Croatia are "sustaining full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague and continued engagement in regional cooperation including the need to solve outstanding bilateral issues with its neighbors." These issues are clearly caused at least partially by nationalistic sentiment within Croatia. Without such a strong sense of national identity there would be much less obstruction to the issues mentioned above. Minorities would not feel as marginalized, war crime trials would be conducted fairly and relations with neighboring countries would be less strained. There is certainly a history which has caused Croatia to adopt such a nationalistic sentiment, but this does not negate the fact that such a sentiment exists and affects the country's actions.

The issues with which Croatia needed to contend in order to become a candidate country have nationalistic undercurrents, and it is possible that a nationalistic sentiment among the Croatian people has affected the popularity of the prospect of EU membership. According to an article discussing relations between the EU and Croatia (http://www.euractiv.com), 70% of the public supported entry to the EU in January of 2004 but only 50% did by the first half of 2005. This drop of 20% in popularity is noticeable, and it is curious to note the time span during which

this decline took place. In 2004 Croatia was looking to accede into the EU, and a large portion of the country was in support of this move. In 2005, though, as the EU became dubious of Croatia's full cooperation with the UN Tribunal in The Hague and therefore postponed Croatia's candidacy, Croatians became less supportive of EU membership. It was as though the need to take stronger action on issues that would require subduing nationalistic sentiment was too great of a sacrifice for the Croatian people to pay. The EU simply was not worth it.

It is logical, then, to conclude that Croatia's language policy has nationalistic political foundations as well. The EU exemplifies the opinion of the international community that, at least until mid-2005, Croatia displayed actions born out of a political mindset that was in need of improvement. If nationalistically motivated actions were a problem in much of the political realm, why should political motivations be discounted for language? Rather, just like for Serbo-Croatian, the case for a distinct Croatian language is built upon political ideals.

5.7   Literary Traditions

Another argument used to deconstruct the Serbo-Croatian language narrative is that each of the languages that were clumped together under the title of Serbo-Croatian has its own literary tradition. It could even be argued that these cultural traditions do not correspond to national borders and therefore discount any proposed political motivations of a language narrative. Supporters of such a viewpoint point to a distinct Croatian literary tradition, but there are authors claimed by Croatia who defy classification within strictly Croatian linguistic borders. Ivo Andric will be considered here.

The Encyclopedia Britannica (EB) identifies Ivo Andric as a writer of "Croatian- (Serbo-Croatian-) language novels and short stories" (EB: "Ivo Andric"), but this classification is far

from certain. Andric, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1961, was born on October 9, 1892, to Roman Catholic Croat parents. Born in the Bosnian village Dolac, Andric moved into the household of his aunt and uncle when his father died. He was raised there in the eastern Bosnian town of Visegrad. Andric studied in multiple cities including Sarajevo and Zagreb, and in addition to becoming a famous author he had a successful career as a civil servant. He died in Belgrade on March 13, 1975. (EB: "Ivo Andric;" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivo_Andric)

Andric began his writing career using the "Croatian" dialect/language, but with the establishment of the first Kingdom of Yugoslavia he switched to the ekavian dialect that had been selected to represent the Serbo-Croatian language. The ekavian variety carried regional associations, and while he considered himself to be switching to the eastern variety of the same language, today this would be understood as switching from Croatian to Serbian. In order to demonstrate that he was a proponent of the unified Serbo-Croatian language, Andric began to eradicate from his writing any orthographic, syntactic, morphological and lexical traits that were associated with any non-standard dialect. It has been observed that had the Serbo-Croatian language really been about accepting all varieties of a single language that Andric would not have felt such a need to make a radical switch in his writing because neither variety would have been considered superior. Regardless, Andric – born in Bosnia – wrote both in the presently declared Croatian and Serbian languages. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivo_Andric)

Since Andric was an author with a mobile history, which language should have claim to him? Perhaps Serbia has the strongest argument since the greatest portion of his work was written in what is today considered to be the Serbian language. Yet his earliest works – nearly 30% of the total – were penned in Croatian (or a dialect of Bosnian), and Andric did not alter these in later editions. Should, then, the Serbian language own the latter two-thirds of his works

and Croatian have the first third? What about Bosnia? Croatian high schools and universities include Andric in their Croatian literature departments, but Andric's work is also cited in Serbian and Bosnian literature programs. Interestingly, the majority of Andric's writings pertain to the land of his youth, Bosnia. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivo_Andric)

No matter how the questions surrounding the classification of Andric's works are resolved, the confusion itself suggests that a clear Croatian literary tradition may not be as easy to define as Croatians would like. Similar to the distinction between language and dialect, the boundaries between Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian literary traditions are blurred.

5.8   *Common Usage*

If two varieties of speech are to be identified as distinct languages, it would be desirable to have evidence that speakers who identify as speaking one "language" do not in fact utilize the other while under the pretense of speaking the first. An experiment conducted by Langston and Peti-Stantic addresses this issue in Croatia.

Langston and Peti-Stantic, in an attempt to "investigate the reactions of individual speakers towards changes in the standard [Croatian] language" (Langston and Peti-Stantic, 2003: 260), conducted a survey in Croatia in 1998. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, both utilizing pairs of words that appear to have experienced a change in the frequency of their usage as a result of the growing rift between Serbian and Croatian. One of the words in each pair was either of foreign origin or considered to be Serbian. The other was the "recommended Croatian equivalent" (Langston and Peti-Stantic, 2003: 261). In the first part of the survey the words were given in context – sentences were taken from actual usage in newspaper articles where one of the words appeared – and the participants were asked to select which word was "better" or "more

correct." In a second section, the pairs of words were simply listed and participants were asked to identify which word they normally used. The results of the survey were useful for Langston and Peti-Stantic, but they are also pertinent to the question here of whether "correct" standardized Croatian is considered to be correct and/or actually spoken by Croatians. (Langston and Peti-Stantic, 2003)

In the first part of the survey, 37.3% of the 208 respondents chose the Serbian/foreign terms as being "more correct" while 52.5% chose the Croatian words. Only 8.7% answered that both words were equally acceptable. In contrast, when asked which form was used more often, 54.1% chose the Serbian/foreign words while only 40.7% chose the Croatian terms and 4.4% answered that they used both with equal frequency. This is striking because it seems to suggest that while a larger number of Croatians acknowledge the "correct" way of speaking Croatian, more of them are actually speaking what is considered to be the Serbian norm. This becomes even clearer when the statistics for the "Serbian/foreign" words are broken down between what are foreign loan words and what are words of Slavic origin. For pairs involving one Croatian word and one foreign loan word, 29.1% cited the foreign term as "more correct" while 58.8% chose the Croatian word. This is in contrast to the pairs involving one Croatian word and a Serbian word that was also of Slavic origin; 44.8% chose the Serbian word as "more correct" while only a slightly higher 46.6% chose the Croatian equivalent. Perhaps this merely suggests that the foreign loan words are more easily recognizable as foreign and therefore not as "correct," but the usage statistics make an interesting point. 46.3% of respondents reported using a foreign term more often than that of Croatian, with 46.9% using the Croatian word. When considering Serbian words of Slavic origin, though, 61.4% said they used the Serbian term while only 34.9% used Croatian. A mere 2.9% answered that they both the Serbian and Croatian term

with equal frequency. These statistics seem to indicate even more that Croatians are aware of what is promoted as "correct" Croatian, but the majority still utilizes the Serbian term with greater frequency. Factors such as the gender, education and media-exposure of the respondents were considered, but these did not seem to bear a great effect on the results. It is important to note, too, that no more than two-thirds of respondents ever constituted the majority. Even though the majority appeared to answer in a certain way, this majority was never overwhelming. (Langston and Peti-Stantic, 2003)

From this data it could be concluded that what is acknowledged as "correct" Croatian is not necessarily spoken by Croatians. This suggests a couple of different options. It is possible that although the speakers that were surveyed lived in Croatia they were actually speakers of Serbian; linguistic borders need not match up perfectly with national lines. This would explain why the speakers were able to identify Croatian terms as "correct" while still demonstrating a higher usage of words associated with Serbian. Another option would be to propose that the distinction between Serbian and Croatian is not as great as the proponents of the Croatian language imply. It may be that erasure has taken place (see Section 3.8 for a discussion of erasure) in order to downplay the similarities between these two languages, just as Tito downplayed the differences between dialects and orthography in order to unite the former SFRY. Although the Langston and Peti-Stantic data is by no means conclusive, it does provide evidence that what is considered to be "correct" Croatian language is different than what is spoken by Croatians.

5.9   *Serbo-Croatian or Croatian?*

It is clear that language narratives are constructed as part of a nation-state narrative in order to further justify the existence of a nation-state, and that they are therefore politically motivated. A narrative for a Serbo-Croatian language was propagated during the existence of the SFRY, and this narrative is now being deconstructed – or perhaps already has been – in an attempt to justify the current Croatian language narrative. Yet, as has been seen from Sections 5.6 – 5.8, the arguments to refute the Serbo-Croatian narrative and support that of Croatian are not unbiased. If the Serbo-Croatian narrative may be discounted as a result of the political motivations of the SFRY, so may the Croatian narrative be dismissed due to the nationalistic motivations of the Croatian government. A distinct literary tradition may indeed be evidence of a unique language, but – as seen in the case of Ivo Andric – it is difficult to parse Croatia's literary tradition apart from that of Serbia and Bosnia. Finally, Langston and Peti-Stantic's data provide evidence that there is not a clear correlation between what Croatians understand to be "correct" Croatian and what they actually speak.

In light of all this, how should language be classified in Croatia? Should it be called Serbo-Croatian because of the striking linguistic similarities between these two "languages," or should it be considered a distinct Croatian language on account of the political and nationalistic implications that language has? Based upon the evaluation set out in this section it would perhaps seem logical to call the language Serbo-Croatian, but placing the history of Croatia in the context of linguistic histories across the world it seems quite natural to allow Croatia to declare its own language. Perhaps some dialects of Croatian are closer to Serbian and Bosnian that to other Croatian dialects, but the same could be said of Swedish, Danish and Norwegian. If

each nation is allowed to determine the name of its language(s), then Croatia certainly has a

claim to its own.

6.0   Conclusions: Nationalism Affects Language in Croatia

After considering nationalism and language both in a general context and specifically in the case of Croatia, the complexity of the relationship between the two forces is clear. Nationalism is birthed out of the ideologies of nation-states and is significant because of its ability to mobilize people; it can be yielded as a powerful tool. In the former SFRY, nationalism has been used to pit different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups against one another and has left a legacy of violence and conflict in its wake. The forces that caused the Balkan Wars of the 1990's are still present, and polarizing ideologies remain in the former republics of the SFRY, including Croatia. One of these ideologies is language.

Language is, in many ways, born out of nationalism and the organization of the world into nation-states, and it is used in nationalistic rhetoric to strengthen the identity of a people. Thus, debates surrounding language "are not just struggles about language, but importantly they are conducted through language (as well as through violence)" (Billig, 1995: 35). The language situation is by no means the only evidence of Croatia's conflict with other former SFRY republics but it is certainly a poignant representation of the many ideologies present there.

While language does create boundaries between people when they cannot communicate, it is indeed true that – as stated by Anderson (quoted in Billig, 1995: 24) – language creates imagined communities whose margins often coincide with national borders. The "broader unity" that is initiated by the nationalistic ideologies of a nation state can be supported by the existence of a unified and unique national language, regardless of whether the delineation of the independent language is linguistically justifiable. A subset of the field of linguistics has become devoted to the study of language as it coincides with identity and nationalism, and this has resulted in the development of a good deal of useful terminology. Using this theoretical

knowledge to view the linguistic history of Croatia through the lens of its political history can be used to assess the current linguistic state within the nation.

In Croatia, the historical language narrative – as a subsection of the historical nation-state narrative – is attempting to refute the existence of a unified Serbo-Croatian language and instead promote a Croatian language that is argued to exist independent from Serbian and Bosnian. There is quite a bit of difficulty in objectively identifying whether the languages in the region are dialects or actually distinct languages, largely because of the competing ideals within the region. Political, ethnic and religious differences are projected onto language debates until language boundaries recursively mimic non-linguistic groups; language has been iconized into a symbol of identity and for this reason language policy makers in the former SFRY have declared independent languages. However, the evidence in support of an independent Croatian language utilizes erasure to overlook key facts: both the Serbo-Croatian and the Croatian language narratives are politically motivated, the distinction between Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian literary traditions is not always clear, and responses to surveys suggest that what is understood as "correct" Croatian language is not actually what is used by speakers of Croatian. These facts demonstrate that the changing of national borders does not change the variety of language that inhabitants of a region speak; policy makers may adjust the name of their language to coincide with shifting political boundaries, but the linguistic reality remains much the same. This suggests that Serbo-Croatian had a legitimate claim to existence during the existence of the SFRY but that the new nations of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia can now justifiably separate the former single language into three parts. In this, a peculiar form of language death is shown that allows for the renaming of language in order to give each sovereign nation-state the right to proclaim the name of its own language.

In the end, it is difficult to say whether Croatian has a legitimate claim to existence but it is certain that the debate surrounding its appearance is intrinsically linked to the political situation in the country.

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