ETNOLOGIE ȘI CULTUROLOGIE

Antony HOYTE-WEST

EXPLORING THE CHANGING STATUS OF SIX SLAVIC LANGUAGES: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW

https://doi.org/10.52603/rec.2022.32.01

Rezumat

Explorarea statutului în schimbare a șase limbi slave: o privire de ansamblu istorică și contemporană

Studiul actual oferă o privire de ansamblu de explorare istorică și contemporană a statutului și dezvoltării a șase limbi slave: bulgară, croată, cehă, poloneză, slovacă și slovenă. În ceea ce privește domeniul de aplicare, este de remarcat faptul că, toate aceste șase limbi sunt acum limbi oficiale ale Uniunii Europene, precum și ale statelor lor naționale specifice. Cu toate acestea, statutul acestor limbi nu a fost constant de-a lungul timpului și, uneori, aceste limbi au fost reprimate și împinse în subteran. În consecință, prezentând studiile de caz lingvistice individuale relevante, această contribuție bazată pe literatură, conturează traiectoria istorică și socio-politică a fiecăreia dintre aceste șase limbi, cu un accent deosebit pe evenimentele ce s-au produs începând cu secolul al XIX-lea. În consecință, analiza preliminară întreprinsă în acest studiu indică o serie de trăsături comune între cele șase studii de caz. În plus, acest lucru este evident chiar și în ceea ce privește acele limbi, care au fost vorbite în zone care făceau parte din diferite regate, imperii și republici și în care s-au urmat politici lingvistice drastic diferite. Prin urmare, sunt propuse puncte pentru extinderea ulterioară a acestui studiu de cercetare, inclusiv încorporarea unei game mai largi de studii de caz, care să includă acele limbi slave vorbite ca limbi naționale în afara contextului UE, precum și posibile lucrări comparative cu acele limbi slave care sunt limbi minoritare sau au devenit minoritare în prezent.

Cuvinte-cheie: politică lingvistică, Europa Centrală și de Est, limbi slave, Imperiul Habsburgic, Uniunea Europeană.

Резюме

Изучение меняющегося статуса шести славянских языков: исторический и современный обзор

Настоящее исследование представляет собой предварительный исторический и современный обзор состояния и развития шести славянских языков: болгарского, хорватского, чешского, польского, словацкого и словенского. С точки зрения охвата следует отметить, что все они в настоящее время являются официальными языками Европейского Союза, а также конкретных национальных государств. Однако статус этих языков менялся с течением времени, и иногда они подавлялись и уходили в подполье. В результате анализа соответствующих отдельных лингвистических тематических исследований автор данной статьи, основанной на литературе, представляет историческую и социально-политическую траекторию каждого из этих шести языков, уделяя особое внимание событиям начиная с XIX в. Как следствие, предварительный анализ, проведенный в этом исследовании, указывает на ряд общих черт между шестью примерами. Кроме того, это проявляется даже в отношении тех языков, использовавшихся на территориях, входивших в состав разных королевств, империй и республик, в которых проводилась совершенно иная языковая политика. Следовательно, выдвигаются аспекты для дальнейшего расширения этого исследования, включая вовлечение более широкого круга тематических изысканий, в том числе касающихся тех славянских языков, которые используются в качестве национальных языков вне контекста ЕС, а также возможную сравнительную работу с теми славянскими языками, которые являются языками меньшинств или стали таковыми в настоящее время.

Ключевые слова: языковая политика, Центральная и Восточная Европа, славянские языки, империя Габсбургов, Европейский Союз.

Summary

Exploring the changing status of six Slavic languages: a historical and contemporary overview

The current study provides an exploratory historical and contemporary overview of the status and development of six major Slavic languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Polish, Slovak, and Slovenian. In terms of scope, it is noteworthy that all six of these languages are now official languages of the European Union, as well as of their specific nation-states. However, the status of these languages has not been constant over time, and on occasion these languages have been repressed and pushed underground. Accordingly, by presenting the relevant individual linguistic case studies, this literature-based contribution outlines the historical and socio-political trajectory of each of these six languages, with a particular focus on events from the nineteenth century onwards. As a consequence, the preliminary analysis undertaken in this study indicates a number of common features between the six case studies. In addition, this is apparent even regarding those languages which were spoken in areas that were part of different kingdoms, empires, and republics and where drastically different language policies were pursued. Hence, points for further expansion of this research study are posited, including the incorporation of a wider range of case studies to include those Slavic languages spoken as national languages outside of the EU context, as well as possible comparative work with those Slavic languages which are minority languages or are minoritized at present.

Key words: language policy, Central and Eastern Europe, Slavic languages, Habsburg Empire, European Union.

1. Introduction and rationale

Spoken as native languages primarily across

Central & Eastern Europe as well as in northern Asia, the Slavic (also known as Slavonic) languages comprise one of the main branches of the Indo-European language family. The precise origins of the Slavs and their proto-Slavic language remain somewhat shrouded in mystery, though various homelands have been proposed (for example, see Gołąb 1992; Birnbaum 1993; Rębała et al. 2007); however, as noted elsewhere, the evolution of the modern Slavic languages have been strongly influenced by the later liturgical language of Old Church Slavic (Grenoble 2010: 581) and its various recensions.

The Slavic languages are divided into three main groups, sharing common linguistic features between the sub-families of Eastern Slavic, Western Slavic, and Southern Slavic (Comrie 2009: 269). There is some uncertainty about the number of Slavic languages, given traditional academic, linguistic, and socio-political discussions about the recognition and differentiation of languages and dialects. In the Slavic setting, this context is further developed by issues relating to aspects such as alphabetisation, codification, and standardisation for certain members of the language family, a discussion which continues to this day (Kamusella 2021: 173-175). Alongside the now obsolete Glagolitic alphabet, the Slavic languages were scripted by St Cyril and St Methodius, who developed the ancestor of the modern Cyrillic alphabet used by major members of the family such as Bulgarian, Ukrainian, and Russian. Other Slavic languages – such as Polish, Croatian, Czech, Slovenian, and Slovak – use modified versions of the Roman alphabet, with this decision typically influenced by historical and contemporary factors relating to politics, language contact, education, and religious aspects (Comrie 2009: 269).

Over the course of history, struggles of power and dominance – together with the fact that until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Slavic languages were not the national languages of independent nation states – meant that ethnolinguistic concepts of nation, national identity, and language assumed important differentiating factors between peoples and subjects of the Central European multi-ethnic empires. As Kamusella notes in his recent study of political aspects relating to the Slavic languages (Kamusella 2021: 9), in the nineteenth century some felt there was just a single Slavic language with various literary dialects, with just Bulgarian, Russian, and Serbian existing as official languages prior to the beginning of World War One. Over time, this view has changed of course, with a range of Slavic languages now recognised. As Kamusella observes, "counting languages is like counting water" (Kamusella 2021: 173), and is thus dependent on the means – linguistic, political, or other – used to quantify it.

Many Slavic languages and dialects have been pushed underground at various times throughout history, and echoing Ferguson's (1959) concept of diglossia, as vernaculars they have been subject to lower status. Politics, society, and culture – as well as issues of linguistic purism, power, and identity – have all played an important role in the enacting and enforcing of various linguistic restrictions and ideologies. Though many of these underlying factors started in the medieval era, the present work aims to provide an exploratory overview of the situation in more modern times, centring on the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. The focus of this article, therefore, is the six main languages which are spoken as national languages of the relevant European Union (EU) member states and are thereby official languages of the EU since the three most recent enlargements of that organisation: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Polish, Slovak, and Slovene. Though these languages are also spoken as minority languages – both recognised and unrecognised – in several other neighbouring countries outside of the relevant kin-states – as well as by diaspora communities worldwide – this contribution aims to highlight their existence as national languages within the contiguous territory of the relevant states. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach informed by recent English-language scholarship, it aims to identify, in broad terms, how the status of these major Slavic languages has changed in recent times through the lens of relevant historical, cultural, socio-political, and linguistic aspects.

In terms of limitations to the current research study, the breadth of the topic combined with the restrictions of space and length mean that this study can necessarily only be superficial and somewhat broad-brush in its approach. However, noting the existence of similar such surveys and overviews within the field (for example, see Grenoble (2010) on language contact and its implications for the development of the Slavic languages), it was still believed that a basis for further research on the topic could be provided. In addition, although the focus of this study is on those Slavic languages which are the six of the EU's official languages, nonetheless

it was intended to furnish a foundation for further exploration of the topic, including with regard to those Slavic languages which are currently of uncertain status, are subject to restrictions, or lack wider recognition at present.

2. Polish

The Polish language (*język polski*) is a member of the western Slavic branch of the family, closely related to Czech, Slovak, and the smaller Slavic languages such as Upper and Lower Sorbian. It is the national language of Poland and a recognised minority language for historical and cultural reasons in Ukraine (Pelekhata 2020: 3), with Polish-speaking communities also residing in other neighbouring and nearby countries such as Lithuania and Romania. In terms of native/L1 speakers, it is the largest Slavic language spoken in the EU and boasts a rich literature including Nobel laureates such as Henryk Sienkiewicz, Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska, and most recently, Olga Tokarczuk (Zechenter 2021).

In medieval times, Polish was one of the major languages, alongside Latin and Ruthenian, of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*), a significant regional power across central Europe. As such, until early modern times, the language was endowed with status and prestige across a territory larger than the extent of modern Poland (Koyama 2007: 139-140). However, as the commonwealth's luck changed, so did those of the Polish language. The culmination of these reversals of fortune was the disappearance of Poland from the map following the Third Partition in 1795, which carved up its territory between the three major imperial powers – the Prussian Empire (later the German Empire), the Habsburg Empire (later Austria-Hungary); and the Russian Empire (for more information, see Kattan 2015). With Poland split into three parts, these geopolitical changes heralded severe impact for the Polish language, with each imperial entity pursuing different linguistic policies and approaches.

In Prussian/German-ruled territory, which comprised the western part of modern Poland, the German language became dominant as the language of prestige and status in schooling, administrative and public life, with Polish relegated from widespread usage in attempt to encourage Germanisation (Labbé 2007: 291-292). In Russian-ruled Poland, centred around eastern Poland and including the city of Warsaw, strict Russification policies were enacted (Krouglov 2021: 4). Accordingly, the Polish language suffered a loss of status, yet remained, as Davies highlights, a vigorous unifying concept during these times (Davies 2005: 16-17)

Habsburg-ruled Poland comprised the crownland of Galicia, which included the cities of Krakow and Lviv. Here, and also in the neighbouring crownland of Bukovina (now in modern Romania and Ukraine, and where Polish was one of the four official languages), different language policies were enacted after the mid-nineteenth century. Changes to the administrative structure of the Habsburg empire following the 1848 revolution and the Compromise (*Ausgleich*) of 1867 led to the so-called Dual Monarchy, a division of Austria and Hungary into separate entities under one monarch. This also led to greater linguistic freedoms in certain regards. With Galicia falling into the Austrian section of the empire, Polish was given significant status alongside German. This incorporated corresponding legal rights (for more information, see Fischel 1910), for Polish – alongside the other co-official languages at crownland level in Habsburg Austria – which included bilingual education and usage in public life.

After World War One, Polish became the language of the reconstituted Poland, which was independent during the interwar years (Stone 2009: 292). World War Two, however, brought with it Nazi occupation, and once again Polish was forced underground. After the war and during communist times, Polish was the language of the Polish People's Republic, which was part of the Warsaw Pact grouping. Following the end of Communism after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Polish language has gone from strength to strength. It is taught widely at universities across the world and, in 2004, was recognised at the supranational level, becoming an official and working language of the EU and its institutions.

3. Czech

The Czech language (*čeština*) is, like Polish and Slovak, part of the western Slavic branch of the linguistic family. It is the official language of Czech Republic, known informally as Czechia, and is a recognised minority language in Slovakia. In linguistic terms, Czech and Slovak are closely related to each other and a high degree of intercomprehension is present; though there are notable differences and the two languages are considered as separate tongues (Short 2009: 306).

Starting in medieval times, Czech was the main language of the Bohemian lands, where over time it competed with German (Thomas 1998: 4). The

Reformation brought with it a strengthening of Czech language and culture; however, demands for greater status and recognition for Czech in the 17th century around the time of the Thirty Years War came to nothing, and German became ever more dominant. With the Czech lands forming part of the Habsburg Empire, German became increasingly more important (Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003: 195-196). After the 1867 Compromise, the crownlands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia were formed, and, as with recognition of German-Polish bilingualism in Austrian Galicia, the Czech language was recognised after the Habsburg reforms and provision was made for German-Czech bilingual schooling (van der Plank 2012: 376), as well as usage of the language in public life.

In 1918, the Czech and Slovak lands of the Habsburg Empire united to become independent as Czechoslovakia, a republic under the leadership of Tomas Masaryk. As Kamusella (2007) observes, a unified "Czechoslovak" language was mooted. A subsidiary German minority still resided there. Indeed, these German-speakers in the Sudeten were used as the justification of the annexation of Czech territory by Hitler in 1938, one of the precipitating events of the Second World War. As with other Slavic languages, Czech was banned during Nazi occupation in World War Two (for more information, including on the Polish context, see Steinweis 1991). Following the end of the war, a federal Czechoslovakia was constituted and became part of the Warsaw Pact group of countries within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. During these times, both Czech and Slovak had official status in Czechoslovakia and were ostensibly of equal status, but in practice Czech was the dominant language at the upper echelons of politics and diplomacy (Djovčoš et al. 2020: 53).

After the fall of communism in 1990, Czechoslovakia remained as a single country structure; however, a 1993 referendum voted in favour of separation. This led to the so-called Velvet Divorce, as Czechia and Slovakia decided to split amicably and become two independent nations. As noted in the opening paragraph of this section, the similarities between the two languages and the widespread knowledge of Czech owing to sociohistorical reasons in Slovakia has meant that the Czech language has a special status there. In common with the other five languages illustrated in this overview, Czech is also an official language of the EU, and has been since the enlargement of 2004.

4. Slovak

Slovak (*slovenčina*) is a western Slavic language closely related to the two preceding case studies, Czech and Polish. It is the official language of the Slovak Republic, also known as Slovakia. However, the country's position at the centre of Europe, together with its complex history, has meant that in historical terms the area has always been one where many languages have been spoken. As cited by Matlovič, Matlovičová and Vlčková (2019: 1156), the 2011 census revealed that 78.6% of the population reported that Slovak was their native language, with the largest minorities by mother tongue consisting of Hungarians (9.4%), with smaller numbers of Roma, Rusyn, Czech, Ukrainian, and German speakers.

As noted above in the previous entry, the Slovak language is similar to Czech, and shares several common features. However, it was codified differently, principally by the famed linguist Ľudovít Štúr in the 19th century (Short 2009: 307). In addition, Slovak is also notable for being the so-called Slavic "Esperanto" – that is, the Slavic language which offers the highest degree of mutual intelligibility with others from the family (Rehm and Uszkoreit 2012: 46-47). Turning to historical aspects, for many centuries the territory of modern Slovakia was under the rule of the Habsburgs, and from the 1860s until the First World War it was under Hungarian control within imperial Austria-Hungary. Although the aforementioned 1867 Compromise resulted in a form of greater linguistic equality across the Austrian part of the empire (see for example, the previously mentioned examples of German-language bilingual education for Czech and Polish speakers in the relevant crownlands), a different policy was pursued in those lands in the Kingdom of Hungary, where Slovak speakers were largely located. Here, a policy of increased magyarisation was adopted. As such, this meant that knowledge of the Hungarian language became ever more important in the education sector and wider public life (van der Plank 2012: 378). Accordingly, the Slovak language (among others spoken within the territory of the then Habsburg Kingdom of Hungary) thus suffered from a distinct denigration and though not outlawed, was marginalised in favour of the dominant Hungarian language, which gained status and prestige through its usage as the language of education and power.

As was also observed in the entry on Czech, after 1918 Slovakia spent much of the twentieth

century as part of Czechoslovakia, which became one of the Warsaw Pact countries in the years immediately after the Second World War. Following the end of the Communist regime and the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia became an independent republic in 1993. This, of course, had implications for the usage and spread of the Slovak language. Indeed, when Slovakia joined the EU in 2004, Slovak therefore became an official language of the organisation, thereby gaining recognition at the supranational level.

5. Croatian

The Croatian language (*hrvatski*) is a member of the South Slavic branch of the linguistic family. As the sole official language of the Republic of Croatia, Croatian is part of the unique sociolinguistic and socio-political situation present in the countries comprising former Yugoslavia. As with Slovakia, the territory of modern Croatia was part of Habsburg-ruled Hungary for many centuries, and thus was under similar restrictions as Slovak vis a vis the institutionalised primacy of Hungarian during the latter half of the nineteenth century and first years of the twentieth century. After the fall of Austria-Hungary in 1918, Croatia became part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which brought together several South Slavic peoples into a single country, and was later renamed as Yugoslavia (Corbett and Browne 2009: 331). Following the Second World War, Yugoslavia became a Communist republic, although, unlike the Warsaw Pact nations, it did not align itself politically and militarily with the Soviet Union. Under the rule of Josip Broz Tito, Croatia formed part of a federation comprising six different Yugoslav republics, each with different languages and ethnicities: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. In the early 1990s, the disintegration of federal Yugoslavia began, and Croatia declared its independence in 1991. Unlike the Velvet Divorce in the Czechoslovak context, which was peaceful in character, the death throes of the Yugoslav federation led to protracted military conflicts and a large death toll (Bracewell et al. 2022).

In terms of the relevant linguistic aspects of Croatian, the mutual intelligibility and interlinkage between several South Slavic tongues has been known for centuries. As Corbett and Browne (2009: 331) note, Croatian was standardised by the linguist Ljudevit Gaj, among others, in the nineteenth century. However, following the establishment of Yugoslavia, Croatian fell under the common umbrella of Serbo-Croatian. This was a multipolar composite South Slavic language based primarily on features of Serbian and Croatian, and which served as a common lingua franca for the entire Yugoslav nation. Thus, although the Croatian language was not banned during this time, nonetheless its identity formed part of the single Serbo-Croatian language, although the Croatian alphabet (Latin) and various dialectal and grammatical features were retained within this multipolar lingua franca. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbo-Croatian disappeared, and was replaced by four individual national linguistic standards: Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, and later Montenegrin. As such, these languages are based on the historical and contemporary dialects of the Slavic-speaking successor states, and generally have a high degree of mutual intelligibility, despite some relevant lexical and grammatical differences (Corbett and Browne 2009: 333; Bracewell et al. 2022). Indeed, recent moves – for example, as highlighted by the 2017 Declaration on the Common Language – affirm the similarity of these successor languages, aiming to ensure that a common yet distinctive trajectory is pursued (for more information, see Krejčí et al. 2021). As observed by the author elsewhere (see Hoyte-West 2021a: 54), in certain supranational situations – for example, in The Hague at the International Criminal Court – conference interpreting services are provided by a single Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian booth. With Croatian becoming an official language in 2013, the EU, however, has opted to recognise each language as separate for interpretation purposes.

6. Slovene

The Slovenian language (*slovenščina*), which is also known as Slovene, is a member of the South Slavic family of languages (Comrie 2009: 269). Like Czechia, Slovakia, and Polish Galicia, the territory of modern Slovenia spent many centuries as part of the Habsburg Empire. Unlike Hungarian-ruled Slovakia and Croatia, however, the lands which comprise present-day Slovenia formed part of the Austrian section of the empire in the guise of the imperial crownland of Carniola. Thus, after the 1867 Compromise, broader linguistic freedoms regarding the use of Slovene alongside German were in place, including the wider use of the language in bilingual education (see Almasy 2019). After the fall of the Habsburg Empire, Slovenia – like Croatia – spent the majority of the twentieth century as an integral part of Yugoslavia. Although, as noted

above, Serbo-Croatian was the official language of the entire federation, Slovenian held official status within the borders of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, one of the constituent states that formed Yugoslavia. On declaring independence in 1991, Slovenia was largely spared the prolonged terrors of the conflicts that consumed some of the other republics of the former Yugoslavia (Novak-Lukanovič and Limon 2012; Allcock et al. 2022).

Like Czech, Polish, and Slovak, Slovenian became an official EU language when Slovenia joined EU as part of the 2004 enlargement. According to the country's constitution, Slovenian is the Slovenia's sole official language, although Italian and Hungarian also enjoy special status in municipalities in the border regions of Istria and Prekmurje. In addition, Slovenia has also recognised the Roma language as one of the country's minority languages; this status, however, has not been accorded to former Yugoslav languages such as Croatian and Serbian (Novak-Lukanovič and Limon 2012). Slovenian has also been relatively widely spoken outside the territory of modern Slovenia, including around the cities of Trieste and Graz. Both urban centres were formerly in the Habsburg Empire, but now are in Italy and Austria respectively, and minorities of Slovenian speakers still reside there. During the fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini in Italy in the early twentieth century (1923–1945), the Slovenian language was banned from public usage; however, in the intervening eight decades the Slovenian minority in Italy has been given several language rights (for more information, see van der Jeught 2016: 73-75).

7. Bulgarian

Unlike the other five languages highlighted in this overview, Bulgarian (*български*) was not spoken within the limits of the former Habsburg Empire. Located in the Balkans, the territory of modern Bulgaria fell under Ottoman rule for many centuries. As highlighted in the introduction to this contribution, the earliest recorded forms of Slavic by St. Cyril and St. Methodius were in fact originally located in this geographical area. Indeed, Old Church Slavic – as also mentioned previously, the earliest version of Slavic – is also known as Old Bulgarian. Notably, and unlike the previous five case studies, Bulgarian is written in the Cyrillic script. The Ottoman Balkans were a complex composite of religions, languages, cultures, and ethnicities, with the Ottoman Turkish language occupying a prestigious position for administrative purposes (Lindstedt 2016: 53). This history of language contact has led to the so-called *Sprachbund* of Balkan languages, where despite coming from different language families, certain grammatical, lexical, and other linguistic communalities can be observed (for more information, see Joseph 2020). In this regard, Bulgarian adheres to this concept.

As noted by Alexandrova, during the centuries of Ottoman rule, the Bulgarian language was not subject to any state recognition or development, and there were no institutions to further the language (Alexandrova 2020: 165-166). It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, in common with cultural and nationalist awakenings across Europe, that the language enjoyed a resurgence. After the Russo-Turkish war, Bulgaria subsequently became an independent nation in its own right, with Bulgarian adopted as the language of the new country. After World War Two, Bulgaria also became part of the Warsaw Pact until the end of communism in the early 1990s (Dimitrov et al. 2022). On 1 January 2007, Bulgaria acceded to the EU, and Bulgarian became one of the organisation's official languages – the first and – currently only – one written in the Cyrillic alphabet.

The contemporary sociolinguistic context regarding the Bulgarian language remains interesting; in common with many other languages spoken in the Balkan and Central European context, there are communities of speakers outside the national borders of Bulgaria, including in the Serbian and Romanian Banat (Nomachi 2016). As a member of the South Slavic branch of the linguistic family, the Bulgarian language is closely related to Macedonian, the national language of North Macedonia and which was formerly one of the languages of communist Yugoslavia. In addition, related South Slavic dialects are also spoken in northern Greece. In this instance, their usage was outlawed during certain periods in the twentieth-century Greek history, including during the Metaxas dictatorship in the interwar years (Alvanos 2019). Turning to the present day, these Slavic dialects still do not have wider status or recognition, within the wider Greek context (BBC News 2019).

8. Discussion and some preliminary conclusions

In brief terms, the present contribution has shown that there are some similarities in the status of the six languages examined here. However, significant in-depth further research is needed. As such, it has been demonstrated that for those lan-

guages that were under Habsburg rule in the Austrian section of the empire (Czech, Slovak, Slovenian, and the partial case of Polish in Habsburg Galicia), despite earlier situations of diglossia, linguistic freedoms for the relevant Slavic languages were granted in later Habsburg times – i. e., from the 1867 Compromise onwards. Owing to their position in the Hungarian part of the realm, for Croatian and Slovak these freedoms were not as available owing to the dominance of the Hungarian language. In the context of Bulgarian, situated in the Ottoman Empire, the lack of development of the language until independence in the late nineteenth century appears to be attributed to a lack of relevant institutional approaches from the Ottoman authorities. Regarding the case of Polish in the partitioned territories annexed by the German and Russian empires, the use of the language was denigrated in those areas. After World War One, and during the majority of the tumultuous twentieth century, all of the languages examined appeared to be re-emergent, although in the cases of Slovenian and Slovak, in practice these tongues occupied, a lower position than the principal national languages of the federations of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Czech and Serbo-Croatian respectively). The fall of the Communist regimes in 1990s meant that linguistic freedoms among these Slavic languages became more widespread, with all the languages becoming the national languages of independent states and subsequently – in the early years of the current century – official languages of the EU.

As noted at the outset, this study can only provide an overview given the breadth and depth of the topic. As has been touched upon, several, if not all of these languages are also spoken as minority languages outside of the national borders of the relevant countries – for example, the cases of Polish in Lithuania or of Slovenian in Italy. Accordingly, further research could additionally explore the status, attitudes, and historical and contemporary development of each of these languages in those specific minority contexts outside of the relevant kin-states.

This preliminary study was also further limited by the number of languages selected. Constraints regarding time and space meant that explorations of relevant Slavic national languages such as Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian will need to be addressed in future studies, especially in the context of imperial, Soviet, and contemporary language policies as well as evolving geopolitical considerations, including the recent decision to award EU candidate country status to Moldova and Ukraine. Greater focus also remains necessary on those Slavic languages spoken as official languages in the western Balkans, including Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, and Macedonian, particularly given that those languages are spoken in future or current EU candidate countries and thus could potentially become official languages of that organisation at a later time (see Hoyte-West 2021a; 2021b). In addition to exploring the current issues regarding these three languages, future attention could also highlight aspects pertaining to those Slavic minority and minoritized languages spoken in Central and Eastern Europe. In brief terms, this means not solely delving into further detail regarding the context of those Slavic dialects spoken in northern Greece which have been alluded to in this study, but also through additional explorations of languages such as Kashubian, Silesian, and Rusyn (Ruthenian), as well as smaller Slavic (micro)languages such as Upper and Lower Sorbian, Molise Croatian, and others. As such, it is evident that this topic contains a panoply of avenues for further research on this wide-ranging and important issue.

References

Alexandrova N. 2020. Bulgarian language in the 18th century represented in Sofroniy Vrachanski's idiolect. In: Haarmann D. and Petrovszky K. (eds.). Yearbook of the Society for 18th Century Studies on South Eastern Europe, no. 3, p. 164-177.

Allcock J. B., Lavrencic K., Gosar A. and Barker T. M. 2022. Slovenia. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/place/Slovenia (visited 26.06.2022).

Almasy K., 2019. Setting the canon, translating the canon: Translations in Slovene school readers and translation policy within the school system of the Habsburg monarchy (1848–1918). In: Chronotopos – A Journal of Translation History, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 43-62.

Alvanos R. 2019. Parliamentary politics as an integration mechanism: The Slavic-speaking inhabitants of interwar (1922–1940) Western Greek Macedonia. In: History and Anthropology, vol. 30, no. 5, p. 600-621.

BBC News. 2019. Greece's invisible minority – the Macedonian Slavs. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-47258809 (visited 26.06.2022).

Birnbaum H. 1993. On the ethnogenesis and protohome of the Slavs: The linguistic evidence.

In: Journal of Slavic Linguistics, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 352-374.

Bracewell C. W., Pleština D., David-Barrett L. and Lampe J. R. 2022. Croatia. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/place/Croatia (visited 26.06.2022).

Comrie B. 2009. The Slavonic languages. In: Comrie B. (ed.). The World's Major Languages. London & New York: Routledge, p. 269-273.

Corbett G. G. and Browne W. 2009. Serbo-Croat: Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian. In: Comrie B. (ed.). The World's Major Languages. London & New York: Routledge, p. 330-346.

Davies N. 2005. God's Playground: A History of Poland, vol. 2: 1795 to the Present. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Djovčoš M., Hostová I., Perez E. and Šveda P. 2020. The economies of interlingual intercultural transfer: Towards a complex picture of translators and interpreters in Slovakia. In: World Literature Studies, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 45-66.

Dimitrov P., Danforth L., Bell J. D. and Carter F. W. 2022. Bulgaria. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/place/Bulgaria (visited 26.06.2022).

Ferguson C. A. 1959. Diglossia. In: Word, vol. 15, no. 2, p. 325-340.

Fischel A. 1910. Das Österreichische Sprachenrecht: Eine Quellensammlung. Brünn: F. Irrgang.

Gołąb Z. 1992. The origins of the Slavs: A linguist's view. Columbus: Slavica Publishers.

Grenoble L. A. 2010. Contact and the development of the Slavic languages. In: Hickey R. (ed.). The Handbook of Language Contact. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 581-597.

Hoyte-West A. 2021a. The western Balkans and EU multilingualism: A focus on translation and interpreting. In: Thesis, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 43-65.

Hoyte-West A. 2021b. EU multilingualism and the languages of the Eastern Partnership countries: An exploratory overview. In: Palimpsest / Палимпсест, vol. 6, no. 12, p. 61-71.

Van der Jeught S. 2016. The protection of linguistic minorities in Italy: A clean break with the past. In: Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe, vol. 15, no. 3, p. 57-82.

Joseph B. D. 2020. Language contact in the Balkans. In: Hickey R. (ed.). The Handbook of Language Contact (2nd ed.). Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 537-550.

Kamusella T. 2007. The political expediency of language-making in Central Europe: the case of Czechoslovak. In: Studia Slavica / Slovanské Studie, vol. 11, p. 217-222.

Kamusella T. 2021. The Politics of the Slavic Languages. London: Routledge.

Kattan V. 2015. To consent or revolt? European public law, the three Partitions of Poland (1772, 1793 and 1795) and the birth of national self-determination. In: Journal of the History of International Law / Revue d'histoire du droit international, vol. 17, no. 2, p. 247-281.

Koyama S. 2007. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a political space: Its unity and complexity. In: Tadayuki H. & Hiroshi F. (eds.). Regions in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present. Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, p. 137-153.

Krejčí P., Krejčová E. and Stalyanova N. 2021. A (non) existing language – Serbo-Croatian after WWII. In: Balkanistic Forum, vol. 30, no. 1, p. 233-243.

Krouglov A. 2021. Language planning and policies in Russia through a historical perspective. In: Current Issues in Language Planning [Online First], p. 1-23.

Labbé M. 2007. Institutionalizing the statistics of nationality in Prussia in the 19th century (from local bureaucracy to state-level census of population). In: Centaurus, vol. 49, no. 4, p. 289-306.

Lindstedt J. 2016. Multilingualism in the Central Balkans in late Ottoman times. In: Makartsev M. and Wahlström M. (eds.). In search of the center and periphery: Linguistic attitudes, minorities, and landscapes in the Central Balkans. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, p. 51-67.

Matlovič R., Matlovičová K. and Vlčková V. 2019. Language of Rusyns in Slovakia: Controversies, vagaries, and rivalry of codification discourses. In: Brunn S. D. and Kehrein R. (eds.). Handbook of the Changing World Language Map. Cham: Springer, p. 1156-1170.

Neustupný J. V. and Nekvapil J. 2003. Language management in the Czech Republic. In: Current Issues in Language Planning, vol. 4, no. 3–4, p. 181-366.

Nomachi M. 2016. The rise, fall, and revival of the Banat Bulgarian literary language: Sociolinguistic history from the perspective of trans-border interactions. In: Kamusella T., Nomachi M. and Gibson C. (eds.). The Palgrave Handbook of Slavic Languages, Identities and Borders. London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 394-428.

Novak-Lukanovič S. and Limon D. 2012. Language policy in Slovenia. In: Language, Culture

and Curriculum, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 27-39.

Pelekhata O. 2020. The current status of the Polish language in Ivano-Frankivsk (formerly Stanislaviv). In: Cognitive Studies – Études cognitives, vol. 20, p. 2272.

Rębała K., Mikulich A. I., Tsybovsky I. S. et al. 2007. Y-STR variation among Slavs: Evidence for the Slavic homeland in the middle Dnieper basin. In: Journal of Human Genetics, vol. 52, no. 5, p. 406-414.

Rexm G. and Uszkoreit H. 2012. Slovak in the European information society. In: Rehm G. and Uszkoreit H. (eds.). The Slovak Language in the Digital Age Berlin: Springer, p. 46-54.

Short D. 2009. Czech and Slovak. In: Comrie B. (ed.). The World's Major Languages. London & New York: Routledge, p. 305-329.

Steinweis A. E. 1991. German cultural imperialism in Czechoslovakia and Poland, 1938–1945. In: The International History Review, vol. 13, no. 3, p. 466-480.

Stone G. 2009. Polish. In: Comrie B. (ed.). The World's Major Languages London & New York: Routledge, p. 289-304.

Thomas A. 1998. Anne's Bohemia: Czech Literature and Society, 1310–1420. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Zechenter K. 2021. From "Poland's genius" to the world as "a living, single entity": World, literature, and writer's duty in lectures of Polish laureates of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1905–2019). In: The Polish Review, vol. 66, no. 2, p. 128-145.

Antony Hoyte-West (Poznan, Polonia). Doctor în lingvistică, Universitatea „Adam Mickiewicz" din Poznan.

Антони Хойт-Уэст (Познань, Польша). Доктор лингвистики, Университет им. Адама Мицкевича в Познани.

Antony Hoyte-West (Poznan, Poland). PhD in Linguistics, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan.

E-mail: antony.hoyte-west@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-4410-6520