



Collective narrative: the narrative on Croatian language from academic to far-right discourses in Serbia

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Abstract

The paper presents a case of under-represented narrative data which I call “collective narratives”. Drawing upon the concept of group-defining stories, it is argued that these narratives embody an antidote to the ‘canonical’ Labovian paradigm as they construct collective subjectivity and causality. The paper explores how “collective narrative” is utilized in the discursive production of national identity by using a case study on Croatian language narrative which is perpetuated in some academic and far-right discourses in Serbia².

Keywords

Collective narrative, national identity, Serbian and Croatian language, academic discourse, far-right discourse, hate speech

“Collective narrative”: another name for group-defining story or something else?

The paper focuses upon under-represented narrative data which I call “collective narratives” by means of which collective subjectivity and causality is constructed. They are used for the re-enactment and negotiation of collective identity – especially ethnic, national, religious ones – through interaction between social actors. In this paper, I analyze this concept through a case study on Croatian language narrative which is perpetuated in some academic as well as in far-right discourses in Serbia, whereby certain academic and far-right discourses overlap; its plot is not, thus far, dispersed on the vernacular level. The paper aims to shed light on the ideological background, selection of collective memory, types of social actions and positioning of social actors

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which are accomplished through this particular storytelling. First, narrative concepts closely related to group identity are analyzed. Following this, ideological, historical and linguistic background of the narrative is outlined. Finally, narrative accounts on Croatian language are analyzed.

Numerous studies have discussed narratives and forms of story-telling which do not fit into Labov's personal experience narrative (abb. PEN): autobiographies, reports and chronicles, habitual narratives, small stories, etc. (de Fina 2003, Johnstone 2001, Bamberg, Andrews (eds.) 2004, Georgakopoulou 2006, 2007, Bamberg, Georgakopoulou 2008). Likewise, I argue that "collective narratives" represent another case of under-represented narrative data which departs from this 'canonical' paradigm. The concept of "collective narrative" draws upon theories about major and group-defining stories. Michel Foucault draws attention to the decisive role certain narratives play in constituting societies. Foucault thus distinguishes between major and casual narratives:

I suppose, though I am not altogether sure, there is barely a society without its major narratives, told, retold and varied; formulae, texts, ritualized texts to be spoken in well-defined circumstances; things said once, and conserved because people suspect some hidden secret or wealth lies buried within. In short, I suspect one could find a gradation between different types of discourse within most societies: discourse 'uttered' in the course of the day and in casual meetings, and which disappears with the very act which gave rise to it; and those forms of discourse that lie at the origins of a certain number of new verbal acts, which are reiterated, transformed or discussed. (Foucault 1972: 220)

In more recent times, scholarly attention has been given to the narratives linked to the group identities. Jerome Bruner (1990: 77–80) argues that narratives are not only inherent in the praxis of social interaction and basically concerned with sense-making, that they even determine "the order of priority in which grammatical forms are mastered by young child" (op. cit., 77). Bruner (1991: 11) develops the concept of the canonical script – which he sees as the unmarked script of everyday life, the way we expect things to be. Building on this, Frosh et al. (2002: 10) write about "canonical narratives" which they define as "general stories about how lives may be lived in the culture, serving to justify certain behaviours". Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2004: 224) analyzes the interactive structure of "shared narratives", also named as "familiar" or "known stories". These narratives are re-told among a narrator's close circle of acquaintances (relatives, friends or colleagues); also, they have either already been told in the past or they refer to events which are more or less well known to all interlocutors.

Van Dijk (1987, 1993) identifies a specific narrative type which is closely related to the group identity which he names "argumentative narratives", within which evidence is amassed in order to support generalizations about one's own or other community. Carol Feldman introduces the concept of the "group defining story" which is conditioned essentially by the group identity:

Group-defining stories can be highly patterned, having a distinctive genre and plot structure, with all group members able to tell their group's story in much the same way. (Feldman 2001: 143)

According to Feldman, these narratives are adopted in the earliest socialization and, as such, become part of the cognitive apparatus of group members and the interpretive frames through which their categorization and evaluation of the words around them is made:

The way they function in cognition is as interpretive frameworks that tell what meaning can be attached to events. In general, group-defining narratives facilitate interpretation, or allow particular events to be given a meaning, by supplying a particular shared context within and with which they take on a determinate meaning. (Feldman 2001: 143)

Feldman, however, does not enter into structural analysis rather she sticks to a thematic-content level, i.e. the listing of topics, motifs and characteristic plots of North American group-defining narratives.

In this paper I argue that “collective narrative” may serve as an “umbrella term” for a specific narrative type which is highly patterned, culturally significant and deployed in the acquisition, enactment and negotiation of collective identity. The concept has been already deployed in cultural psychology, conflict studies, nationality studies, and linguistics, as scholars have been trying to come to terms with the power of storytelling in comprehending the social world, as well as positioning and motivating of social actors (Bamberg 1997 (ed.) 1997, Bamberg 2004, Bamberg, Andrews (eds.) 2004, Rotberg (ed.) 2006, Korostelina 2014, Cobb 2013, Hammack 2010, Hammack (to appear)). However, “collective narrative” is either defined in an ambiguous way or used interchangeably with other more or less corresponding concepts and terms such as “dominant”, “master” “conflict”, “national” narratives, “narratives of collective memory”. The definition closest to what I consider to be “collective narrative” is provided by Bar-Tal, Salomon (2006: 20):

Following Bruner, we conceive of collective narratives as social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community's collective experiences embodied in its belief system and represent the collective's symbolically constructed shared identity.

All of these forms of storytelling, nevertheless, are conceived as an antidote to the Labovian personal experience narrative. Korostelina is thus interested in the multifaceted and dynamic relationship between national and personal narratives which she sees as “comparable to the relation between an individual and society”: personal narratives “mirror national narratives of history and identity, including key components about social categories, collective memory, and social representations of history and collective identity” (2014: 21). In line with Korostelina, I argue that the relationship between personal and “collective” narratives is a dialectical one; in conversational

discourse particularly, they mirror and intertwine with each other whereby the levels of agreement and engagement with particular collective narratives vary among individuals.

To summarize, I argue that major story, group-defining story, narrative of collective memory, and collective narrative are more or less different ways of naming the same concept, while the other proposed terms and concepts – such as national, argumentative, conflict narratives³ – I regard as subtypes of “collective narrative”.

“Collective narrative”: towards an elaboration of the concept

The “collective narrative” employs collective agency while its basic structure corresponds to some temporal, chronological sequence. The notions of collective consciousness and collective memory lie at the heart of “collective narrative”;⁴ namely, it refers to a collective experience which is evaluated, implicitly or explicitly, as being principally important for the community. As Rotberg (2006: 4) reminds, “such memory need not reflect truth, instead it portrays a truth that is functional for a group’s ongoing existence”. Besides, beliefs and affects make also fundamental properties of the “collective narrative” and, as Hammack puts it, they “intend to motivate individuals to either maintain or challenge the status quo” (to appear, 13-14). Each ethnic and national community, in my view, has at its disposal a repertoire of “collective narratives” which varies in accordance with its different social sub-groups based on properties such as ethnicity, generation, education, status, socialization, power, etc.

The “collective narratives” were in particular investigated and documented in an anthropological case study of a small rural Serbian community in Hungary which lives for centuries in the Diaspora (Ilić 2014). Namely, during the repeated short-termed field research in 2001 and 2008 I identified a certain salient, highly patterned type of narratives. In view of this evidence I put forward a hypothesis that analogous to other linguistic clichés, e.g. phrases and stereotypes, there are also more complex discursive means like “collective narratives” which perform an important ideological function for the community (ibid.). Regarding the repertoire of this particular Serbian community, I distinguished between argumentative, narratives of a common past, narratives of a common culture and “perspectivation” narratives “then/now” (ibid.) It was, thus, argued that “collective narratives” serve as building blocks for the ethnic identity construction and, at the same time, as very important discursive means for positioning of social actors in the process of dramatic social change the community has been undergoing.

As regards the discursive production of national identity, one has to take into consideration its hybrid nature and incoherence, social stratification and ethnic diversity

³ Following Lyotard (1984), I consider master-narrative (i.e. grand narrative, meta-narrative) a form which operates at a superordinate level by linking different collective constructions (social systems and conditions, collective narratives, beliefs, symbols, etc.)

⁴ By collective conscience, Durkheim means the “totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society [which] forms a determinate system with a life of its own” (1984 [1893]: 38-39). Maurice Halbwachs, a student of Durkheim, enriched and elaborated the concept of collective memory; according to him every group develops a memory which is socially framed since the social groups select and structure the particular memory and determine how it will be remembered (1950 [1925]).

of the community members, and, above all, the power relations within the national community which generate hegemonic, marginalized, competing and counter-discourses. Moreover, different social contexts and genres generate diverse types of storytelling. In official and written genres “collective narratives” are rendered as more coherent forms which perform more or less strategic communication functions. In oral and informal genres, nevertheless, they mostly emerge as fragments and intertextual references, and play more ambiguous communication functions; there are also genres in-between, like internet chats, forums, etc. The positioning likewise differs to a great extent across discourse genres: in official and written genres the “collective narratives” are mostly used for establishing a particular political position, while in conversational and semi-institutionalized discourses speakers may use them to hold all different sorts of positions from negotiating meaning in interaction and individual identity, to expressing their views on collective identity or political order (cf. Davies, Harré 1990, Bamberg 2004, Korostelina 2014). The case study to follow attempts to illustrate some of the above mentioned discursive mechanisms, forms of storytelling, and positions which speakers hold.

The case study: Serbian vs. Croatian language

The case study focuses on the narrative about Croatian language which is perpetuated in some academic and far-right discourses in Serbia; nevertheless, this collective narrative is not widespread on a vernacular level, as this paper will show. The narrative to be analyzed is based upon collective memory and is mainly reproduced by right-wing oriented scholars and laics alike. In the national(ist) master narrative it constructs a symbolic ethnic boundary towards the Other. I consider it to be an argumentative collective narrative (van Dijk 1993). As a linguistic means of argumentation strategy it is employed in the process of justification and questioning of potentially problematic actions or events which seem to jeopardize an identity (cf. Wodak and Reisigl 2009: 94).

The narrative plotline can be outlined as follows:

The Croats spoke Kajkavian and Čakavian. / The Serbs spoke Štokavian. / In the 19th century the Croats abandoned Croatian Kajkavian and Čakavian / and adopted Serbian Štokavian as their standard. / They named it Croatian language.

In order to understand the meaning, implications, and positioning which is established through this narrative, one needs to understand first its ideological, linguistic and historical background which I briefly outline in the following section.

Whose language is it?: An ideological, historical and linguistic background

The collective narrative on Croatian language is based upon primordialist and essentialist theories which often use ethnic group and nation synonymously. These views are typical of European, and especially German, national romanticism and its organic model of national culture which developed at the turn of the 19th century (cf. Herder 1820 [1793], Fichte 1807/1808, Loudon 2007: 73-82). The primordial concept takes biological attributes as the most salient factors in determining one’s ethnicity and nationality, and views

collective symbols, cultural and social features as being derived from a common origin (Poutignat, Streiff-Fenart 1995). The essentialist vision of national identity assumes an organic unity of race/ethnicity, language, culture and mentality. The essentialists argue that ethnic groups and nation are natural, ancient and more or less static phenomena. In this worldview, changes are usually seen as deviations and corruptions of an 'authentic' national (or ethnic) essence (ibid.). The national romanticism afforded a privileged place to language which, according to it, constitutes the essence of a nation; this ideology is also known as linguistic nationalism (cf. Herder op. cit., Fichte op. cit.). It propagates that a 'nation' – a distinct people – should possess its own distinct 'language'. A more careful examination of ethnicity and nationality began only in the early 1960s, when the traditional, static concepts which presupposed the series of equivalences between (one/particular) 'community = culture = language = mentality' were problematized (Poutignat/Streiff-Fenart 1995).

The Central South Slavonic dialect continuum stretches from Slovenia via Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia to Bulgaria. In this area, dialects are regionally differentiated, but they do not follow ethnic or standard languages' borders. It is claimed, therefore, that South Slavonic linguistic situation resembles the Scandinavian language area (cf. Mønnesland 1997, Alexander 2006). Nonetheless, in the former Serbo-Croatian standard language zone – i.e. in present-day Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro – three basic dialect types are spoken Štokavian, Kajkavian and Čakavian, whose names originate in different forms of the interrogative pronoun 'what', i.e. *što*, *kaj* or *ča* (cf. Ivić 1985, Greenberg 2004). Croatian nowadays is spoken in all three dialect types, whereas Serbian is spoken in Štokavian.⁵

According to the 19th century national romanticism, the most prominent Slavonic philologist, the majority of whom lived in Habsburg Monarchy, endeavored to assign each dialect type to a distinct South Slavonic nation. They, therefore, maintained that Čakavian was native to ethnic Croats; Kajkavian was considered a dialect of Slovenian, while Štokavian was natively spoken by ethnic Serbs (cf. Dobrovský 1792/1818, Kopitar 1810, Miklošič 1852/1879, Šafařík 1826, 1833). These views were adopted and elaborated by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, a Serbian philologist who was the major reformer of the Serbian language in the 19th century (cf. Karadžić 1849).

The development of modern standard varieties also raised controversies over the languages' identity and belonging. Decades before a Yugoslav state was established, the most prominent Serbian and Croatian scholars of the 19th century declared the language

⁵ The geographic distribution shows that dialectal picture of Croatia is composed of all three dialectal types: Čakavian in the north-eastern Adriatic, Kajkavian in north-western part of Croatia, and Štokavian in the rest (major part) of Croatia. Yet, the dialectal picture of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro is far simpler: the dialect natively spoken in these states is only Štokavian. Considering Serbia, some linguists argue that beside Štokavian there is also Torlakian dialect type, which is spoken in the border zone between southeastern Serbia, northeastern Macedonia and western Bulgaria. However, the opinions are divided on this subject: some linguists consider Torlakian as an Oldštokavian dialect, some categorise it as a fourth dialect of Serbo-Croatian along with Štokavian, Čakavian, and Kajkavian, whereas some classify it as a western Bulgarian dialect (cf. Friedman 2008).

unity of three dialect types Kajkavian, Čakavian and Štokavian in order use language as a unifying force as well as to create a modern-day literary language. The Croatian intellectuals particularly promoted language unity at that time. They initially tried to establish standard on the basis of Kajkavian, but gave it up since it was spoken in a limited part of the territory (Friedman 1999: 12, Greenberg 2004: 23). Finally, as a result of mutual endeavors of Croatian and Serbian intellectuals the literary language was standardized on the basis of Štokavian. No consensus, however, was reached over the language name: it was called “Serbian” (Vuk Karadžić), “Croatian or Serbian” (19th century Croatian followers of Vuk Karadžić), “Serbo-Croatian” or “Croatian-Serbian” (in socialist Yugoslavia).⁶

The common literary language was initially bi-centric with two variants; Croatian and Serbian, to be later developed as a polycentric language with four standard variants spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia (cf. Kordić 2010, Greenberg 2004). The Štokavian based standard language and its variants having been propagated through the state institutions have strongly influenced and altered the dialectal situation of the 18th and 19th centuries. The nominal demise of the Serbo-Croatian language after the breakup of Yugoslavia resulted in the equally nominal birth of – in alphabetical order – the Bosnian language in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croatian language in Croatia, the Montenegrin language in Montenegro, and the Serbian language in Serbia.⁷ Since these standard varieties are all based on the same dialect type – Štokavian – speakers communicate fluently with each other (cf. Bugarski 2002, 2004, Požgaj Hadži (ed.) 2013). Thus, what is arguably one language linguistically, as Bugarski (2004: 6) puts, it takes the form of four languages politically.

The inter-ethnic controversy and national belonging of South Slavonic varieties, in particular Štokavian dialect, has been a matter of dispute since the 19th century. However, many South-Slavonic speech communities during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries had an ambiguous national affiliation or identification identifying themselves by endonyms and exonyms. The unfinished process of nation and state building in this part of Europe and the ethnic conflicts fuelled aspirations for the clear national demarcation and separate ethno-national identities.

Collective narrative on Croatian language in the Serbian academic discourse

In most of the studies which use the concept of “collective narrative” or a concept comparable to it, scholars do not employ structuralist approach, but instead concentrate on topics, motifs, types of plot, binary semiotics, construction of meaning in the identity formation or in the maintenance and reproduction of conflict, etc. Although I consider that “collective” and personal narratives are antidotes to each other in many respects,

⁶ Scholars and officials were from the onset at great pains with regard to the unified language name: the Croatian intellectuals used in the 19th century “Illyrian”; in 1861 the Croatian Sabor voted for the names “Yugoslav” and “South Slav” language, but the proposal was overturned by the authorities in Vienna, which promulgated the terms “Serbian-Illyrian (Cyrillic)” and “Serbian-Illyrian (Latin)” (cf. Greenberg 2004: 27)

⁷ Besides, the Bunjev minority intellectuals in Serbia struggle to have their native variety – which is based on Ikavian Štokavian – standardized and recognized alongside Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin and Serbian (cf. Belić/Ilić 2014).

the “collective narrative” which is reproduced in written genres is characterized by many conventional narrative features. I will use to some extent thus the classic Labovian structuralist approach in the analysis to follow. In order to overcome limitations of this approach, I include also the model of positioning (cf. Davies, Harré 1990, Bamberg, 2004) and social functions which the narratives perform. The analysis brings evidence not only about the narrative structure, but also about the presence of the counter-narratives, the absence of this particular collective narrative at some discourse levels, such as vernacular in this case, and the trajectory of the narrative across different discourse genres.

The collective narrative on Croatian language has been (re)produced in the Serbian academic, popular and right-wing discourses since the 19th century. During the time of the language and state union within the frame of Serbo-Croatian standard and Yugoslavia, this polemical debate has been largely pushed down and tabooized. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia and its official standard, the debate “Whose language is it?” has started to gain more and more proponents in Serbia and Croatia. One of the basic linguistic means used in this debate in contemporary Serbia is the collective narrative on Croatian language. It is important to mention, however, that this is not a dominant narrative about the origin of Croatian language in the Serbian public and academic discourse (cf. Okuka 1998, Radovanović 2000, Bugarski 2004, 2004a). It is still a rather marginal narrative generated among small group of Serbian intellectuals, although some of them are well established scholars. However, this narrative is not at all, or not yet, spread on the vernacular level, which will be discussed later in this paper. The narrative thus is coming into the public sphere from nationalistic intelligentsia. In Croatian right-wing oriented discourses, nevertheless, there is the counter narrative which claims that Serbs took over Croatian language, which is beyond the scope of this paper.⁸

Lazo Kostić (1897-1979), a Serbian law professor who after the Second World War and the establishment of the communist regime in Yugoslavia, emigrated to Switzerland, publishing many books and papers on the Serbian language, cultural identity and nationality during his life in exile. The political orientation which these books establish is a nationalist right-wing one. In 1964 he published the book *Krađa srpskog jezika* (Eng. *Theft of Serbian Language*) in Baden, in a limited, private edition; it was reprinted in 1999 and 2011, in Novi Sad (Serbia). The main topic of this book was to explain the events and circumstances under which the ‘theft’ of the Serbian language occurred. The whole book thus is conceptualized as an academic elaboration of the collective argumentative narrative. The author’s political position and evaluation are emphasized already in the title: Štokavian is equated with Serbian and the act of adopting Štokavian dialect for the Croatian standard was designated as ‘theft’.

In the following excerpt from the book, the narrative is reproduced in a short form (1). The narrative nucleus may be paraphrased as follows: “The Croats had no functional tradition / Then they came to idea to take over Serbian language”. The

⁸ Cf. Portal “Language advisor”: <http://blog.dnevnik.hr/stitch/2005/05/269722/tko-je-kome-ukrao-jezik.html>; Portal “Croatian Portal”: <http://www.forum.hr/showthread.php?t=561165>; last accessed 17.07.2014.

narrative orientation clauses provide information about the speakers “language was then spoken by Štokavian Catholics, but not by self-declared Croats”. The narrative is entirely colored by an extremely negatively charged evaluation: the Croatian dialects are depreciated as varieties “with no tradition, no international reputation, and underdeveloped”. The narrator positions the collective protagonists – the Croatian intellectuals – as actors with “diabolic” idea to take the Štokavian (Serbian) language, who are planning to deceive the Serbs: it is implied that the act of language appropriation led also to the appropriation of nationally ambivalent Štokavian Catholics. The whole narrative performs clearly two social functions: (1) it establishes boundary to the Other and (2) it defines the Other as a rival and hostile political collective actor.

(1) Kostić 2011 [1964]: 295; cit. in Tošović. 2011: 719

As not a single Croatian dialect had a tradition nor was developed, not to mention the fact that their dialects had no international reputation, the Croatian intellectuals at that time had a diabolic idea: to take Serbian language as if it was theirs. The language was spoken then by many Catholics, but no self-declared Croat. It was spoken by Catholics from Slavonia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, and small part of Dalmatia.

Pošto nijedan od njihovih hrvatskih dijalekata nije imao ni tradiciju niti je bio izgrađen, a još manje čuven po svetu, to su tadašnji aktivni hrvatski nacionalisti došli na dijaboličnu ideju: da srpski jezik uzmu kao svoj. Njime su tada govorili mnogi katolici, ali nijedan svestan Hrvat. Govorili su katolici Slavonije, Bosne, Hercegovine i malog dela Dalamcije.

The recent editions of this book (2009, 2011) were very much welcomed in Serbian nationalist circles. The book was many times reviewed, extensively paraphrased and its basic theses perpetuated. The various ideological arguments, collective stories and beliefs are chained in these reviews:

“theft of language” – “theft of national heritage” – “appropriation of Štokavian speaking Catholics”, who are described either as ethnic Serbs or people without clear national affiliation in the 19th century – “genocide against Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia, a Nazi puppet state in World War II” – “weakening political power of the Serbs in Balkans by Vatican, Habsburg Monarchy” – “using the ideas of the Illyrian movement and Yugoslav state in order to decrease the Serbs and annihilate their political power” – “Croats are an artificial nation” – “Croatian version of Serbian is a corrupted language”.⁹

In recent decades, the narrative on language appropriation started to gain more and more proponents among academics in Serbia. Petar Milosavljević, a Serbian linguist and professor of University of Novi Sad, published the book *Srbi i njihov jezik* (Eng. *The Serbs and their Language*) (1997) in which he develops a similar argumentation line as

⁹ Reviews of the book can be found on the following links: Cf. Portal “Serbian Treasury” <http://www.riznicasrpska.net/vukijezik/index.php?topic=42.0>; Portal “The Serbian Nationalists” <http://forum.srpskinacionalisti.com/viewtopic.php?f=6&t=24857>; Portal “Serbian Journal. Bulletin of the Serbian Club” <http://www.srpskilst.net/istorijski-osvrt/hrvatska-kradja-srpskog-kulturnog-blaga>; Portal “News” (the article was taken from the Portal “Vaseljenska” – Portal of the Orthodox Religious Broadcasting) <http://www.vesti.rs/Vesti/Kradja-srpskog-jezika.html>; Portal “The Arc” http://kovceg.tripod.com/sunjka_kradja.htm; last accessed 17.07.2014.

Kostić (2011 [1964]). Likewise, Branislav Brborić, a Serbian linguist and professor at Belgrade University, in one of his papers also perpetuates this collective narrative. The plot can be outlined as “Croats adopted Serbian language / then they called it Croatian”. The position of the collective protagonist Croats is established in the evaluative clauses which serve to portray them as an actor who regretted what had happened as they were *post-festum* faced with the identity crisis. The social function of this narrative excerpt is to belittle the whole collective “it was difficult for them to bear the uncomfortable consequences this action had for their own national identity”.

(2) Brborić 1996: 18; translation in Greenberg 2004: 37

Is not only about the adoption of Vuk's ijekavian pronunciation, but also about the acceptance of his orthography, orthoepic practices, lexicon, morphology, word formation, phraseology, syntax, and style. Hence, it is not at all strange (...) that we are known to speak about how Croats in fact adopted the Serbian language, accepted the Serbian standard, called it Croatian, although it was difficult for them to bear the uncomfortable consequences this action had for their own national identity.

I nije tu reč samo o preuzimanju karadžićevskog ijekavskog izgovora nego i o prihvatanju karadžićevske ortografije, ortoepije, lekiske, morfologije, tvorbe reči, frazeologije, sintakse i stila. Stoga nije nikakvo čudo što se (...) znalo govoriti o tome da su Hrvati zapravo preuzeli srpski jezik, prihvatili srpski jezički standard, nazvali ga hrvatskim jezikom, ali su teško podneli neugodne posledice tog preuzimanja po svoj nacionalni identitet.

The similar argument is developed in the paper by two very prominent Serbian linguists, Sofija Miloradović and Jovanka Radić (Radić, Miloradović 2009). The authors employ intertextual references, implications, and impersonal constructions. Thus, the actors and the plot are implied “The Croats appropriated language and the archaic Serbian folklore / later no one would admit it”. The negative evaluation is indisputable: “renaming”, calling “shared” what is “ours” implies that this political act was ill-planned from then onset. This paper aims at redefining what the authors perceive as endangered Serbian identity.

(3) Radić, Miloradović (2009: 163-64)

Later appropriation of the cultural heritage, and, in particular, renaming of the Serbian oral literature into „Serbo-Croatian“, turned the most archaic layers which were preserved in the Serbian tradition into „shared“ (...) Later, when, the „division“ of the mixed had already gone far, there were less and less of those who would like N. Nodilo (a Croatian historian – M.I.) admit at least that the origin of Štokavian and Epic poetry is – Serbian.

Potonje svojatanje kulturne baštine, posebno preimenovanje srpske narodne književnosti u „srpskohrvatsku“, učinilo je da se „zajedničkim“ proglašene i najstariji slojevi nacionalnog pamćenja sačuvani u srpskoj tradiciji (...) U kasnijim periodima, kada je „deoba“ pomešanog već uveliko bilo poodmaklo, sve su ređi bivali oni koji su poput N. Nodila, priznavali da su štokavski govori i epska pesma, makar i po poreklu – srpski.

The fourth excerpt which I discuss is taken from an interview conducted with a prominent Serbian linguist and university professor Miloš Kovačević, which is published in 2012 in *Politika*, the Serbian most renowned daily. The collective narrative is initially formulated as a tag-question by the journalist; then, it is reiterated and elaborated in the answer by Kovačević. The narrative nucleus is thus already provided in the question (“The Croats gave up their language / and adopted Serbian”). The rhetorical question conveys the negative evaluation by implying that the case of Serbian and Croatian is unprecedented: “Did anything similar to this happen anywhere in the world?”

The answer of Kovačević yields a more extended narrative adhering to the question; it is referred to the contemporary Croatian language policy (linguistic purism and strategic erasure of elements considered as typically Serbian); it is also referred to the recent creation of the new standard varieties which are based on Štokavian: “Other ‘languages’ (...) came out as a result of renaming Serbian, as it was for instance the yesterday’s ‘Serbo-Croatian’, and today’s so-called Bosnian/Bosniak and Montenegrin”.

The embedded and explicit evaluation serves to legitimize the narrative by calling upon authorities, such as:

- common sense or well-known fact (“It has not been a matter of dispute”, “Nobody considers these – which are languages only by their names – to be ‘languages in linguistic sense’”);
- Ljudevit Gaj, a Croatian linguist and language reformer of the 19th century (“as Ljudevit Gaj himself emphasized”);
- scientific criteria (“Any basically competent linguist and philologist knows that such a language (...) [is] not grounded on any scientific criteria for measuring a language identity”);
- Rajko Petrov Nogo, a Serbian popular writer (“as R. P. Nogo would say”)
- rationalizing the act of “language takeover” in terms of modern linguistic terminology (“they stand for ‘language policy’”).

The positioning of narrative actors, who are distinguished intellectuals, serves to provide the legitimacy to the narrative (“Ljudevit Gaj himself emphasized”, “as R. P. Nogo would say”); the opponents to this view are delegitimized as “some Serbian philologists who are loyal to the Croatian language policy”. The rhetorical claim about this event as an unparalleled incidence underlines the negative evaluation: “An example like this one, that any language, like Serbian, multiplies itself to such an extent by dividing itself (as R. P. Nogo would say), the world has not witnessed yet. Serbian is in that a unique case in the whole world”. Nevertheless, the chauvinistic implications are mitigated by euphemism “embrace” or term “language policy” which designate the act of “language adoption”. In this interview, Kovačević takes the position of an expert who strives to give the scientific legitimacy to the collective narrative by calling on authorities and providing facts which support his claims.

(4) Zoran Radisavljević (ZV), a journalist in *Politika* daily, in an interview with Prof. Dr. Miloš Kovačević (MK), a prominent Serbian linguist and university professor; January 9, 2012.¹⁰

1 ZR: The heated debate about the language and script has again emerged these days. The Croats gave up their language and adopted Serbian, they called it for a while Croatian-Serbian, and now Croatian. Did anything similar to this happen anywhere else in the world?

2 MK: It has not been a matter of dispute for a long time that the Croats, as Ljudevit Gaj himself emphasized, have “embraced the Serbian language”. And that they detached it by their “newspeak” from Serbian language, thus, making it a distinct variety. Today, any basically competent linguist and philologist knows that such a language (as well as the other “languages” which came out as a result of renaming Serbian, as it was for instance the yesterday’s “Serbo-Croatian”, and today’s so-called Bosnian/Bosniak and Montenegrin) they are not grounded on any scientific criteria for measuring a language identity, but they stand for “language policy”. And nobody considers these – which are languages only by their names – to be “languages in linguistic sense”, let alone some Serbian philologists who are loyal to the Croatian language policy. An example like this one, that any language, like Serbian, “multiplies itself to such an extent by dividing itself” (as R. P. Nogo would say), the world has not witnessed yet. Serbian is in that sense a unique case in the whole world.

1 ZR: Ovih dana se ponovo rasplamsava polemika oko jezika i pisma. Hrvati su se odrekli svog jezika, prihvatili srpski, zvali ga jedno vreme hrvatsko-srpski, a sada hrvatski. Da li se nešto slično dogodilo negde u svetu?

2 MK: Odavno nije sporno da su Hrvati, kako je sam Ljudevit Gaj naglašavao, „prigrlili srpski jezik”. I da su ga svojim „novogovorom” odvojili od srpskoga jezika, stvarajući posebnu varijantu. Danas svaki iole upućeniji lingvista i filolog zna da takav jezik (kao ni drugi „jezici” nastali preimenovanjem srpskog, kakav je na primer juče bio „srpskohrvatski”, a danas takozvani bosanski/bošnjački i crnogorski jezik) nemaju uporišta u naučnim kriterijumima jezičkog identiteta, nego predstavljaju „političke jezike”. I niko više te – samo imenom jezike – ne smatra „lingvističkim jezicima”, sem možda pokojni srpski filolog lojalan hrvatskoj jezičkoj politici. Primera da se bilo koji jezik, kao srpski, toliko „množi deljenjem” (kako bi rekao R. P. Nogo) svet nije zapamtio. Srpski je po tome unikatan na kugli zemaljskoj.

Collective narrative on Croatian language in Serbian far-right discourses

The narrative is often reproduced in far-right discourses and hate-speech. Hate speech is a linguistic and legal term which describes speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which attack, belittle and insult a person or group on the basis of race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and which, therefore, may intimidate and provoke violence or prejudicial action against or by an individual or group (cf. Whillock, Slayden (eds.) 1995, Waltman, Haas 2011). Accordingly, it is sanctioned as an act of violence. The rise of hate speech on the Internet in particular has become a worldwide phenomenon. Though some countries have developed legislation under which hate speech on the Internet is a criminal offence, others have opted for

¹⁰ Cf. <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Kultura/Hrvati-prigrlili-srpski-jezik.lt.html>; last accessed 11.03.2014.

unrestrained free speech rights on the Internet. In Serbia, hate speech is not a criminal act unless it is considered an act of “Instigating National, Racial and Religious Hatred and Intolerance” which is punishable according to the Serbian Criminal Code and forbidden according to the Serbian Constitution (Article 317, Criminal Code of Republic of Serbia).¹¹ The peculiarity of hate speech in Serbia and in the other Balkan countries is that it is often tendentiously reproduced by media and public figures, regularly going by unnoticed and uncensored, with no critical label attached to it (cf. Lenkova (ed.) 1998). Since there is a lack of awareness within the public sphere of what the hate speech is and how it should be dealt with it, it became almost a mode of communication (ibid.).

The collective narrative on Croatian language comprises clauses which make fruitful ground for hate speech, like “they adopted our language”, “they call it by their name although it is ours”. In hate speech code, the verbs are added components of extremely negative evaluation: “they stole our language”, “they lie about it now”. This causes further generalizations about the entire national community: “Croats are thieves”, “Croats are liars”. The further implications introduce a discourse of racism “they are inferior to us as they even do not use their own language, but use ours”. The fifth passage can serve as a good example of how easily the narratives on Croatian language can pass from a nationalist academic argument to hate speech code.

The passage is transcribed from a TV-show “In medias res” on the Croatian Radio-Television (abb. HRT).¹² Namely, Jovan Pejin, a Serbian historian and former director of the Archive of Serbia, had a guest appearance as he was invited to join a studio debate on the ongoing rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement in Serbia.¹³ The studio debate also included Croatian politicians, historians and journalists. However, it resonated more or less in an intolerant and hate speech code: the quest from Belgrade produced many ethnic slurs and insulting statements regarding Croats in general, and the Croatian guests likewise made many insulting statements regarding the Serbs in general. At the very end of his TV-appearance, Jovan Pejin made a statement on Croatian language which is a fragment implying the whole narrative. It is formulated so as to address the guests in the studio and a broader Croatian TV-audience, the response was laughter for other guests in the studio, cf. (5):

(5) TV-show “In medias res” HRT2, Dr. Jovan Pejin (JP), Serbian historian, Petar Vlahov (PV), a journalist and TV presenter; 19.03.2012.

- 1 JP: You have to know which language you speak today. You speak today Serbian language.
- 2 (Laughter in the studio)

¹¹ For Serbian text of the Act see: <http://www.cbs-css.org/ostale-publikacije/105-cbs-css/132-krivini-zakon-republike-srbije>; for English translation see: <http://www.osce.org/serbia/18244>; last accessed 11.03.2014.

¹² Cf. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yd48Q_4sQI0; last accessed 11.03.2014.

¹³ The Chetnik movement is a Serbian nationalist and royalist guerilla force that formed during World War II to resist the Axis invaders and Croatian collaborators; eventually they fought a civil war against the Yugoslav communist guerrillas, the Partisans (cf. Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/109820/Chetnik>; last accessed 11.03.2014). The rehabilitation, however, raised controversies as many members of this guerrilla force committed serious crimes against humanity.

- 3 JP: What are we to speak more now.
4 PV: Mister Pejin now I have to admit I didn't expect that you're gonna=
5 JP:=Croatian language is Čakavian, and from the 18th century Kajkavian. Right?
6 PV: (Ironically) We have learnt so much from you this evening from Vukovar to which language we speak today. Well, Mr. Pejin thank you on this live report from Belgrade. I am convinced we will speak more in the future.
7 JP: You are welcome.
- 1 JP: Morate da znate koji jezik govorite. Govorite danas srpskim jezikom.
2 JP: Pa šta tu sad da pričamo.
3 (SMEH U STUDIJU)
4 PV: Gospodine Pejin evo ja sad moram reći da se nisam se nadao da ćete=
5 JP: =Hrvatski jezik je čakavski, od 18. veka je kajkavski. Tako?
6 PV: (ironično) Mi smo od vas večeras dosta saznali o tome od Vukovara do toga kakvim jezikom govorimo. Evo gospodine Pejin hvala vam na ovom izravnom uključenju iz Beograda. Vjerujem da ćemo se još vidjeti.
7 JP: Nema na čemu.

The guest appearance of Mr. Pejin attracted a considerable media attention both in Croatia and Serbia. Titles of the articles in the Serbian newspapers varied from critical references – e.g. “Serbian historian ‘acted foolishly’ on HRT: the Croats should quit the primitive behavior”, “Serbian historian insulted Croats in the live TV show”, “Scandal on HTV: Vukovar is Serbian”¹⁴ – to those which positively evaluated his statements, mainly boulevard press and extreme right portals but also some respectable dailies – e.g. “Historian Jovan Pejin questioned Croats on HRT” , “Croatia: The truth about Draža annoyed them”, “Jovan Pejić gave a lesson to Croats”¹⁵. This TV appearance motivated journalist from the Serbian boulevard daily *Telegraf* to make an interview with Jovan Pejin in which he reiterated his statements. The article title underlined, with no critical distance to it, exactly Pejin’s hate speech: “Croats are a genocidal nation, the most primitive in Europe!”¹⁶

Part of the interview is dedicated to the language subject. The discourse on Croatian language takes the form of narrative: “The Croats speak ‘rotten Serbian language’. Language is a measure for a nation, and Croats, in order to become a nation, stole Serbian language / and deformed it.” The orientation refers to the 19th century and to the Croatian and Serbian language reformers. The position which the narrator assigns

¹⁴ Vukovar – a city on the Danube river in eastern Croatia and the biggest river port in the country – is imbued with political and national symbolism in Serbian-Croatian modern relations. Namely, one of the main battlefields in the armed conflicts between Croats and Serbs in the 1990s was located in the city of Vukovar. In post-war Croatia, Vukovar has been designated the symbol of Croatian defense and declared a ‘Martyred City’ and ‘Hero City’. However, it is often described as a city of ‘divided memory’ (cf. Baillie 2013).

¹⁵ Cf. <http://www.24sata.rs/vesti/aktuelno/vest/srpski-istoricar-ludovao-na-htv-u-hrvati-da-rasciste-sa-primitivizmom/33468.phtml>; <http://www.glas-javnosti.rs/clanak/politika/glas-javnosti-22-03-2012/srpski-istoricar-izvre-djao-hrvate-uzivo-na-hrt>; http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2012&mm=03&dd=20&nav_category=12&nav_id=592646; http://www.pressonline.rs/sr/vesti/vesti_dana/story/210055/Istori%C4%8Ddar+Jovan+Pejin+na+HTV+prozvao+Hrvate.html; <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/reportaze/aktuelno.293;html:371793-Hrvatska-lznervirala-ih-istina-o-Drazi>; <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t873913/>; last accessed 11.03.2014.

¹⁶ Cf. <http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/politika/130279-intervju-istoricar-jovan-pejin-hrvati-su-genocidan-narod-najprimitivniji-u-evropi>; last accessed 11.03.2014.

to Ljudevit Gaj portrays him as an actor who deliberately carries out the fraud and tricks Vuk Karadžić: “The fraud was carried out when Ljudevit Gaj tricked Vuk Karadžić / and placed the Kajkavian dialect type under the umbrella of our language.” The Croatian 19th century language policy is described by extremely negatively charged terms: they “stole” Serbian, they “tricked” Serbs, the whole action was “fraud”; verbs and adjectives “rotten”, “deformed”, “corrupt” belittle Croatian and refer to the contemporary Croatian language policy which is characterized by linguistic purism and strategic differentiation of Croatian from Serbian. The passage is based upon the ideological beliefs of the 19th century language nationalism, i.e. if there is no nation without its own distinct language, then the Croats are fake nation. The social function is clearly a political one: Croats – perceived as a hostile, political Other – are degraded by the act which aims to deconstruct their identity.

(6) Jovan Pejin, a Serbian historian, the former director of the Archive of Serbia; 21.03.2012.

The Croats speak “rotten Serbian language”. Language is a measure for a nation, and the Croats, in order to become a nation, stole the Serbian language and deformed it. The fraud was carried out when Ljudevit Gaj tricked Vuk Karadžić and placed the Kajkavian dialect type under the umbrella of our language. Since then the Croats speak Serbian, although they only corrupt it and make it rotten, so out of this one can draw a conclusion that they speak rotten Serbian.

Hrvati govore “nakaradnim srpskim jezikom”. Jezik je merilo jednog naroda, a Hrvati su, da bi bili narod, ukrali srpski jezik i unakazili ga. Prevara je odigrana kada je Ljudevit Gaj nasankao Vuka Karadžića i pod okrilje našeg jezika ubacio kajkavski izgovor. Od tada Hrvati govore srpskim jezikom, iako ga samo kvare i prave ga nakaradnim, pa se iz toga može slobodno zaključiti da pričaju nakaradnim srpskim jezikom.¹⁷

The variants of this narrative can be found on many Serbian right-wing Internet portals, especially when the troubled Serbian-Croatian history and relations are addressed. The example [7] is an extract from the article which is entirely formulated as hate speech about Croats almost completely repeating Pejin’s words. The evaluation aims to prove the narrative legitimacy by calling upon the authority of the Croatian linguist Ljudevit Gaj. Gaj is positioned as an actor who admits what is at stake, i.e. he allegedly said “openly that the Croats adopted Serbian for their own language”:

(7) Internet portal Inter magazine.rs; anonymous author; published on 10.01.2014
Croatia is an artificial creation in everything; they even falsified themselves as nation. They speak rotten Serbian. Language is a measure for a nation, and the Croats, in order to become a nation, stole Serbian language and deformed it. Ljudevit Gaj, who is a German of origin, says openly that the Croats adopted Serbian for their own language, but contemporary Croatian historians want this to push it down by making deafening noise.

Hrvatska je veštačka tvorevina u svemu, falsifikovali su čak i sebe kao narod. Oni govore nakaradnim srpskim jezikom. Jezik je merilo jednog naroda, a Hrvati su, da bi bili narod,

¹⁷ Cf. <http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/politika/130279-intervju-istoricar-jovan-pejin-hrvati-su-genocidan-narod-najprimitivniji-u-evropi>; last accessed 11.03.2014.

ukrali srpski jezik i unakazili ga. Ljudevit Gaj, Namac poreklom, otvoreno kaže da su Hrvati prisvojili srpski jezik za svoj, ali to današnji hrvatski istoričari zaglušujućom galamom žele potisnuti.¹⁸

In the following example [8], it can be seen how the basic structure of the collective narrative, the line of argumentation and the evaluation are reiterated. It is an anonymous comment on the article about the forthcoming trial in front of the International Court of Justice in the Hague between Croatia and Serbia: “Budimir: Croatia committed genocide”. In the comment, the basic structure of the collective narrative unfolds; one can see almost whole phrases and words being repeated, like in the previous examples (“IN ORDER TO BECOME A NATION THE CROATS STOLE SERBIAN LANGUAGE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (...) Violence has been committed against Serbian language and it was named Serbo-Croatian”). The narrative is imbued with strongly negative affects which are as, as already stressed in conflict studies, a fundamental property of the collective narratives. These affects as well as the form which the narrator uses (anonymous internet comment) bring the shift in the narrative perspective from the third person plural (“Croats stole...”) to the second person plural (“You Croats...”). Thus, the positioning takes the form of a direct verbal fight, although a fictive one, between the narrator and the protagonists and addressees – Croats.

The social function of such a comment positioning is manifold: negating Croatia as a legitimate state, calling upon authorities, such as European standards, English language, which provide a different example of the relation between a national language (English) and different nationalities which use it under the same name. The end of comment resonates entirely in hate speech and racist discourse which attributes to the Croats a genetic tendency to genocide and theft:

(8) Portal „Vijesti online“; anonymous commentator; published on 13.01.2014 (punctuation is preserved as in original)

Croatia was founded on GENOCIDE of the Serbs!!! Croatia was founded on forgeries of its own history. IN ORDER TO BECOME A NATION THE CROATS STOLE SERBIAN LANGUAGE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! According to the European standards the national language of a nation can be used also by other nations, but they are not allowed to change the name and identity of the language. The big part of the world today speaks English language, but no one has adopted it and changed its name. Violence has been committed against Serbian language and it was named Serbo-Croatian. NO LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD IS CALLED BY TWO NATIONAL NAMES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Two different nations CANNOT CREATE ONE LANGUAGE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! YOU CROATS, YOU'RE NOT JUST GENOCIDAL, YOU'RE ALSO THIEVES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Hrvatska je nastala na GENOCIDU nad Srbima!!! Hrvatska je nastala na falsifikatima svoje istorije, HRVATI SU DA BI POSTALI NAROD UKRALI SRPSKI JEZIK!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Po evropskim standardima nacionalnim jezikom jednog naroda mogu da se služe i drugi narodi, ali ne smeju da menjaju ime i indentitet jezika. Veliki deo sveta danas govori

¹⁸ Cf. <http://www.intermagazin.rs/istina-koju-skrivaju-hrvatska-je-vestacka-tvorevina-hrvati-su-falsifikovali-sebe-kao-narod-i-govore-nakaradnim-srpskim-jezikom>; ; last accessed 11.03.2014.

engleskim jezikom, ali ga niko nije prisvojio i promenio mu ime. Nad srpskim jezikom je izvršeno nasilje i nazvan je srpskohrvatski. NIJEDAN JEZIK U SVETU SE NE NAZIVA DVONACIONALNO!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Dva različita naroda NE MOGU DA STVORE JEDAN JEZIK!!!!!!!!!! HRVATI, EM STE GENOCIDNI, EM STE LOPOVI!!!!!!!!!!!!¹⁹

Collective narrative on Croatian language at the vernacular level

Having identified this narrative in some nationalistic academic and far-right discourses, I wanted to examine if it is known among non-academics and non-linguists, and whether it is reproduced at the vernacular level too. Thus, I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with people mainly with secondary education, of various generations, and professions, like drivers, bakers, salespeople, housewives, retirees; this small sample was also gender balanced (7 women and 8 men); some of interviewees are Belgrade based, whereas others are from central Serbia. I hypothesized that this narrative will be at least known to everybody, and that those interviewees who are right-wing oriented will reproduce it. However, this proved to be wrong: the interviewees were not familiar with this narrative. Only one woman (age 40) claimed to know it. Although during these short interviews some of my interlocutors made statements in which they outwardly demonstrated nationalism, it seems – as many scholars already claimed with regard to linguistic situation and attitudes in Serbia (Bugarski 2002, 2004, 2004a, Greenberg 2004) – that they did not embrace linguistic nationalism. I will hereby briefly analyze two excerpts from the interviews.

The analysis of the vernacular discourse should be a subject of separate study. In this paper, I will just use two examples in order to illustrate the “absence” of the discussed collective narrative at the vernacular level. Furthermore, one can argue that a sort of counter-narrative is produced in these semi-institutionalized discourses. My research strategy was to ask initially about language attitudes regarding the creation of separate standard varieties with different national names in order to trigger a spontaneous response about the appropriation of Serbian language. However, I was surprised to see that none of my interlocutors knew the narrative nor displayed linguistic nationalism. It was even more unexpected for me since I led previously conversations with some of the interviewees who were right-wing or conservatively oriented with regard to other social matters, e.g. showing sympathies for the right wing parties in Serbia, etc. As these two examples (9) and (10) show, my interlocutors articulated rather a non-nationalistic linguistic ideology even when I openly posted questions which were aimed to provoke a kind of nationalistic response: “MI: So, you are all right with it that Bosnian say we speak Bosnian language, Montenegrins say we speak Montenegrin language. It is not bothering you? SB: I am not bothered by that now. I think it’s the same language, some variants“ (9.13–14); “Originally they are all the same, everybody knows that. And now, if it is easier for people and if they prefer that they call by their own name,

¹⁹ Cf. <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Ex-YU/374248/Budimir-Genocid-je-pocinila-Hrvatska>; last accessed 11.03.2014.

conditionally speaking, their pronunciation, I don't have anything (laughter) against it" (10.4). Moreover, to my explicit question about the narrative of language appropriation the answer was either negative (9.9–12) or the interlocutor produced the counter-narrative („Well, I heard that, but I think that Croats also heard that Croatian is an authentic language, well that, that Serbian is derived from Croatian“ 10.6). The last excerpt (10) is also interesting as it illustrates the direction of the circulation of this narrative – from written nationalist and right wing discourses to the vernacular discourse.

(9) SB, male, 50 years old, secondary school, taxi driver; MI: researcher

MI: I am doing research about language attitudes, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and so on. I would like to hear what people who are not linguist experts think about that. How do you see that all these languages exist, Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin? Do you think that they are same or different languages?

2 SB: Well, I think they are the same.

3 MI: And how do you consider these languages being called differently?

4 SB: Well I think these were different Slavic tribes from which these nations originate.

5 MI: And they speak the same language?

6 SB: The same language. These were Slavic tribes which inhabited this region and later they were divided, you see, and different nations were formed. Serbs, Bosnians, Croats.

7 MI: And when you listen, for example, Bosnian, Croatian, do you notice any difference?

8 SB: No, just in the way they pronounce.

9 MI: But I am really interested in this; some of our linguists claim that Croats stole the language from Serbs. Have you heard that story?

10 SB: I haven't. But if we start with what I said that they are all the same people, that roots are Slavic, that they probably spoke some similar language.

11 MI: And you haven't heard this story?

12 SB: No, I haven't.

13 MI: So, you are all right with it that Bosnian say we speak Bosnian language, Montenegrins say we speak Montenegrin language. It does not bother you?

14 SB: I am not bothered by that now. I think it's the same language, some variants.

(Original transcript in Serbian)

MI: Radim istraživanje o stavovima o jeziku, bosanski, hrvatski, srpski, i tako dalje. Hoću da čujem šta misle ljudi koji nisu jezički stručnjaci. Kakto ti vidiš da postoje svi ti jezici, bosanski, srpski, hrvatski, crnogorski? Da li su to za tebe isti ili različiti jezici?

2 SB: Pa ja mislim isti.

3 MI: A kako tumačiš to da se različito zovu?

4 SB: Pa tumačim to tako što su to slovenska različita plemena od kojih su nastale te nacije.

5 MI: I govore isti jezik?

6 SB: Isti jezik. To su sve slovenska plemena koja su naselila ove prostore i kasnije se izdelila, razumeš, i nastale su različite nacije. Srbi, Bosanci, Hrvati.

7 MI: A kada slušate na primer bosanski, hrvatski je I primećujete neke razlike?

8 SB: Ne, samo u narečju.

- 9 MI: Ono što me baš zanima je što neki lingvisti kod nas kažu da su Hrvati ukrali od Srba jezik. Jeste čuli tu priču?
- 10 SB: Nisam čuo. Ako pođemo od toga što sam rekao da je sve to isti narod, da su koreni slovenski, da su verovatno pričali nekim sličnim jezikom.
- 11 MI: A nisi čuo za ovu priču?
- 12 SB: Ne nisam.
- 13 MI: Znači, nemaš ništa protiv toga da Bosanci kažu govorimo bosanskim jezikom, Crnogorci kažu govorimo crnogorskim jezikom. To vam ne smeta?
- 14 SB: Sad mi ne smeta. Mislim da je to sve isti jezik, neke varijante.

The passage (10) is also interesting because it illustrates the possible ways in which this collective narrative circulates through the Serbian public sphere, and that is from the representatives of the nationalist intelligentsia towards the vernacular level. The internet, however, proves to be a very powerful media for dissemination of all sorts of information, including the collective narratives (10.7-10).

- (10) GM, female, 40 years old, secondary school, beautician; MI: researcher
- 1 MI: I am doing research of speakers' language attitudes. I am interested to hear what is your opinion that there are today Serbian, Montenegrin, Bosnian languages.
- 2 GM: I haven't thought about it (laughter)
- 3 MI: Are they in your opinion separate languages?
- 4 GM: Well, they are not separated, but obviously they are not the same. They are simply derived, there are small differences. We who are not concerned with language, we cannot recognize them in sufficiently high degree. The grammar, I think, is the same; we learnt about those Ekavian and Ijekavian pronunciations. That means, originally there are some differences among these languages. Well, all of them were called Serbo-Croatian once, and now Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin are separated all right, I do not know what to think about it, but they are trying. I think, I am not bothered by that. Originally they are all the same, everybody knows that. And now, if it is easier for people and if they prefer that they call by their own name, conditionally speaking, their pronunciation, I don't have anything (laughter) against it.
- 5 MI: And have you heard stories that actually they are all Serbian language and that the other peoples simply took over the language from the Serbs?
- 6 GM: Well, I heard that, but I think that Croats also heard that Croatian is authentic language; well that, that Serbian is derived from Croatian. Since I am not concerned with language as linguists, I simply don't know, and I can't claim one thing or another.
- 7 MI: And where did you hear that? On TV?
- 8 GM: On the Internet.
- 9 MI: You were not told that story by some people in your circles or?
- 10 GM: No, nobody told me that. I think I read about it in some book. Probably, it was a part of a book, but it was on the Internet.
- 11 MI: Thank you

(Original transcript in Serbian)

- MI: Radim istraživanje, stavovi govornika prema jezicima. I zanima me koje je tvoje mišljenje o tome što sad postoje srpski crnogorski, bosanski jezik.
- GM: Nisam razmišljala o tome (smeh)
- MI: Jesu li to za tebe odvojeni jezici?
- GM: Pa nisu odvojeni, al nisu očigledno ni isti. Prosto su izvedeni, male su to razlike. Mi koji se ne bavimo jezikom i ne prepoznajemo u nekoj ozbiljnoj meri. Gramatika mislim

da je ista, ali mi jesmo učili te neke ekavice i ijekavice. Znači postoje izvorno neke razlike u tim jezicima. E sad što su se svi zvali sprskohrvatski, pa se sad srpski, hrvatski crnogorski odvojilo dobro, ne znam šta da mislim, ali oni pokušavaju. Mislim, ne smeta mi. Izvorno su oni svi isti, to je svima jasno. E sad, ako je prosto narodu lakše i više voli da taj neki, uslovno rečeno, svoj naglasak više imenuje nekim drugim imenom, ja nemam ništa (smeh) protiv toga.

MI: A da li si čula za priče da je, su u stvari, da je to sve srpski jezik i da su ostali narodi prosto preuzeli od Srba taj jezik?

GM: Pa to jesam čula, ali isto tako mislim da i Hrvati su čuli da je hrvatski izvorni jezik, pa da to, da je srpski izveden od hrvatskog. Tako da ne bavim se tim naučno, ne znam prosto, i ne mogu da tvrdim ni jedno ni drugo.

MI: A gde si čula to? Na TV?

GM: Na internetu.

MI: Nije ti neko pričao u nekom krugu ljudi ili?

GM: Nije mi niko pričao. Mislim da sam čitala da i u nekoj knjizi. Uglavnom možda neki deo knjige, ali mislim na internetu.

MI: Hvala

Concluding remarks

This paper addresses the question of how stories are used for social organization and identity making. The hypothesis has been put forward to explain the emergence of what I call collective narratives as an exceptionally important means used in ethnic and national identifications. The collective narrative builds upon concepts which are related to group identity, such as Foucault's major story and Feldman's group-defining story.

The collective narrative on Croatian language used for the case study shows that this narrative is generated among the Serbian nationalist intelligentsia. The narrative plot can be outlined as "Croats abandoned their original language. / They adopted Serbian language, / and named it Croatian language". This orientation designates the narrative to the 19th century and relates it to two most prominent Serbian and Croatian language reformers of that time – Vuk Karadžić and Ljudevit Gaj. The goal of this paper has not been, however, to discuss the narrative veracity from a sociolinguistic or historiographical standpoint, rather it attempts to illustrate the narrative pattern, ideological background, uses of collective memory, and how it is deployed in national identity negotiations.

In academic discourse which employ this narrative, its function varies from attempts to collect evidence in order to remedy what is perceived as historical injustice and a hostile political act against the Serbian collective, via attempts to redefine what is perceived as endangered Serbian identity to the openly exhibited hostility and degradation of the Croatian nation in general. Thus, one can say that sometimes nationalistic academic discourses intertwine with hate speech.

As this is collective narrative on the rivalry over the national language possession, it creates a fruitful ground for hate speech. It is not surprising therefore that it is often deployed as a kind of 'verbal weapon' against the 'rival' Croatian nation in general on right-wing internet portals and in books alike. In hate speech, the act of 'standard

language adoption' is termed 'theft', while the language naming is labeled as 'lying'. Moreover, this narrative in hate speech reproduces a whole range of negative generalizations and makes intertextual links to the other stories which create a nationalistic trajectory of negative generalizations about the Croatian nation as traditionally hostile to the Serbian political and national collective.

Since this narrative was identified in nationalistic academic and far-right discourses, I wanted to examine whether it is dispersed at the vernacular level too. A pilot research which comprised of 15 semi-structuralized interviews indicates that this narrative is not dispersed among non-academics and non-linguists in Belgrade and central Serbia. The interviewees did not demonstrate linguistic nationalism, although many of them hold nationalist attitudes with regard to other social matters. Moreover, when explicitly asked about this narrative almost all of them claimed not to have heard about it. Only one of the interviewees claimed to know the story (example No 10), but as a response she rendered the counter-narrative. The vernacular discourses may show different picture in other regions inhabited by the Serbs, especially in multiethnic contact-zones, like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, or Vojvodina (northern Serbia), where (re)defining of the in-group and out-group boundaries interferes with everyday life, and where competing national narratives intensively circulate. The detailed analysis of the vernacular discourse, however, is beyond the scope of this paper. The "absence" of the collective narrative at the vernacular level indicates its trajectory – from nationalist intelligentsia via right-wing discourses towards vernacular level.

Nevertheless, one should not unequivocally relate the concept of collective narrative to the nationalist discourse, hate speech and discriminatory talk in general. The collective narratives are often used as means in construction of a common past or a common culture in order to transmit shared historical or cultural knowledge, or as directional models. Besides, they may be used to support construct and maintain generational or local identity. The preliminary analysis of collective narratives shows that there is a great difference between those used within small ethnic communities from those used in the public sphere for the purpose of national and nationalistic identification. The latter are much more inclined towards hate speech. Since this is a rather new concept, it still remains to be explored.

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