## The Croatian Language Today

From a lecture given by Dr Branko Franoli] in Trinity College, Cambridge in May 2001.

Croatian is a South Slavonic language spoken in the Republic of Croatia, parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and by the Croats living abroad.

Croats migrated in the 6<sup>th</sup> century from White Croatia, a geographic area north of the Carpathians, to the former Roman Illyria and Dalmatia. At that time they spoke a palaeo-Croatian language, a branch of palaeo-Slavonic. This language was divided in to a number of dialects, among which the *kaj* predominated in the North, the ^a dialect in the South (Dalmatia) and part of Bosnia and the *[to* dialect in Slavonia (eastern Croatia) and in the South East. These dialects are named after the different forms of the interrogative pronoun "what?", which is "kaj?" in the kaj dialect, "^a?" in the ^a dialect, and "*[to?*" in the *[to* dialect.

It is worthy of note that at that time there was little linguistic differentiation in the Slavic world. The differences between the Croatian and the Macedonian dialects, for instance, were no greater than those that exist between British and American English. Consequently, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Croats adopted as their liturgical language Old Church Slavonic, based on the Macedonian vernacular of Salonica, which they modified and adapted to their own use for secular purposes and which is today known as Croatian Slavonic or the Croatian recension or version of Old Church Slavonic, written in *Glagolitic script*.

The first major text written in Croatian Slavonic and in Glagolitic script is the *Ba[ka Tablet* of 1100, recording the donation of a site by King Zvonimir to the Benedictine convent of the Island of Krk. It stands as a cornerstone of Croatian literary development. The first Croatian printed book is the *Glagolitic Missal* of 1483, possibly printed in Venice.

As in the 9<sup>th</sup> century the Croatians aligned themselves to Rome and as the official language of the medieval Croatian State was Latin, the Church Slavonic tradition gradually wane and the Roman (Latin) script replaced Glagolitic from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The rich Renaissance ^a(kavian)-based literature which in the 16<sup>th</sup> century flourished in Dalmatia (Split, Dubrovnik, Hvar, Zadar) was exclusively written in Roman script. The prestige of the ^a dialect of Dalmatia was so widespread that *Faust Vran* ^i], from [ibenik, in his *Dictionarium quinque nobilissimarum Europae Linguarum* (Venice, 1595) ranks Croatian alongside Latin, Italian, German and Hungarian as the five noblest languages in Europe. The ^a dialect fell into disuse after the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 16th century the kaj dialect also appeared on the Croatian literary scene. It was used by the writers of north Croatia

whose capital was the city of Zagreb. The *kaj* dialect also showed some degree of [to(kavian) influence and in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had developed into a relatively normalized form, as in the plays of *Titu* [ *Brezova^ki* (1757 - 1805).

The differences between the literary dialects were never, however, clear cut. Writers were reasonably aware of the kind of language used in the other areas and the language of some writers was a hybrid of more than one dialect. Such has been the case, for example, with the 17<sup>th</sup> century writers in northern Croatia. Thus, *Pavao Ritter Vitezovi*] (1652 - 1713) consciously aimed at blending three dialects for the purpose of creating a common Croatian literary language. Vitezovi] 's efforts anticipated by more than a century the *"Illyrian Awakening"* from which would finally emerge a unified Croatian literary language.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century convergent tendencies toward unity and normalization clearly existed. It was already accepted that the *[to* dialect should form the basis of standard literary language and this idea stimulated many Croats in their literary creation. Although in 1604 *Bartol Ka[i]* (1575 - 1650), of the Island of Pag, wrote in Latin a grammar of the ^a and *[to* dialects (*Institutiones linguae illyricae libri duo*), he nevertheless chose the *[to* dialect for his translation of the Bible in 1622. In his grammar Ka[i] aimed at the creation of a unified Croatian language, but in effect he codified ^akavian with an admixture of [tokavian elements.

The liturgical works, for rituals and sacraments, used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Catholic churches from Istria to Eastern Bosnia were written extensively in the [to-dialect. Ka[i] called it *op]eni jezik*, "lingua communis". Thus, Pi[tole i evangelija (Epistles and Gospels) by Ivan Bandulavi], published in 1613, had been re-edited at least twenty times up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nauk krstjanski (1611) (Christian Doctrine) by Matija Divkovi] went through more than thirty editions in two centuries; Rimski ritual (1640) (Roman Ritual) by B. Ka[i] had six editions. At the same time, Besjede (1616) (Sermons) by M. Divkovi] served as a model guide to many preachers. In the first part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuit Jacobo Micaglia compiled his Croatian-Italian-Latin dictionary, Blago jezika Slovinskoga, published in Loretto-Ancona (1649). It contains words from the [to and ^a dialects.

This predilection for the *[to* dialect is explained by the influence, which may have been exercised over the Croatians by *Ragusan* (Dubrovnik) literature, written in the *[to* dialect from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, under the influence of Ragusan literature, 17<sup>th</sup> century writers in Dalmatia turned increasingly toward the *[to* dialect. The *[to* dialect used by the 17<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan writers also became the literary language in Bosnia.

The [tokavian literature of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, written by Franciscans and Jesuits of Bosnia and Dalmatia, was at the origin of the 18<sup>th</sup> century rebirth of Croatian literature and language which reached its zenith in the works of two Dalmatian Franciscans, *Filip Grabovac* (1697-1749) and *Andrija Ka^i*] *Mio[i]* (1704-1760), the forerunners of modern Croatian nationalism.

The [to dialect also spread as a literary language in Slavonia (north-eastern Croatia) and was used by the writers **Antun Kani**[li] (1699-1777), **Matija Antun Reljkovi**] (1732-1798), one of the proponents of the Enlightenment in Croatia, and the learned Franciscan **Petar Katan** ^i] (1750-1825), the author of the Croatian etymological dictionary **Etymologican** Illyricum (800 sheets manuscript). Katan ^i]'s incomplete work (ending with the word **svemogu** ]) is the first attempt at an etymological dictionary among the South Slavs.

By about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the great majority of Croatian writers were using the *[to-]* language. The *kaj* tradition continued only in and around Zagreb, while everywhere else the writers used the *[to-]* language. This mideighteenth century neo-[tokavian language marks the real beginning of contemporary standard Croatian.

pravopisanja... (A Brief Outline of Croatian-Slavic Orthography ..). It contained Gaj's important orthographic reform based on Czech orthography, with a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. This work heralded the beginning of the Illyrian Movement, a Croatian national and political movement.

At the time of the Illyrian Movement (1830s) inspired by Ljudevit Gaj and his associates, which was under the influence of Romanticism that introduced the cult of nationalism as well as a cultural and political revival, the leaders of the movement proclaimed that the literary language of the Ragusan (Dubrovnik) and the other [to writers was the literary koiné which would lead the Croat people to linguistic and national unity. The term "Illyrian" is reminiscent of the Napoleonic Illyria, and during the national awakening, which occurred in post-Napoleonic Central Europe, political emancipation was accompanied by language revivals, with emphasis laid on folk traditions.

Under this momentum the old literary language of Dubrovnik was an influence of primary importance in the creation of the new Croatian literary language. This literary *koiné* or national language played a part in unification and became the symbol of supralocal, ethnic and cultural identification. It was used from the outset in 1836 in scholarship and journalism as well as in poetry and literary prose. The language reform of 1836 gave complete sovereignty to the [tokavian dialect. Apart from stimulating intense creativity in literature, the new literary language became the vehicle and symbol of the Croatian national movement. In 1847, Croatian became the official language of Croatian Parliament (*Sabor* ) instead of Latin.

Modern literary Croatian is a final conquest over dialect, since the influence of the substratum (*kaj* or ^a) on the [to language is very considerable in variations of accent and of vocabulary. Among the Croats, their literary tradition exercised a great influence on the formation of the standard language in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its evolution in the twentieth. The feeling of historical continuity and of the links with the writers of the sixteenth century is obvious among contemporary writers and there is a clear affiliation among them. Whatever changes have taken place in vocabulary or in the elements of grammar with the lapse of time, the fact nevertheless remains that both the literary languages of the sixteenth and twentieth centuries are Croatian by virtue of the principle of linguistic continuity, since linguistic features are fundamentally traditional in character.

The [to] -dialect has three main sub-dialects, according to a typical vowel  $(\overline{ei})$  or diphthong (-ije) developing from Old Slavonic phoneme  $\check{e}(jat)$ . These sub-dialects are ekavian, sometimes called [to-e], ikavian or [to-i] and ijekavian or [to-ije]. Thus "a beautiful flower" is "lep cvet" in [to-e], "lip cvit" in [to-i] and "lipe cvijet" in [to-ije]. The Croatian standard literary language uses the ijekavian form of the [tokavian] dialect ([to-ije]) while the Serbian standard literary language uses the ekavian form ([to-e]).

The diverse historical, religious and cultural backgrounds of the Croats and the Serbs had important ramifications in the formation of the modern Croatian and Serbian standards.

A language can be studied in two different ways:

1. From the viewpoint of its development through time, as in historical comparative linguistics and dialectology, used in genetic (genealogical) classification of different languages believed to have a common historical origin. Dialects are usually considered to be subdivisions of languages. It is generally said that the people speak different languages when they do not understand each other. But many of the so-called dialects of Italian are mutually unintelligible. For instance, the Sicilian dialect is incomprehensible to a Piedmontese, and vice-versa. On the other hand, a Czech and a Slovak (or a Swede and a Norwegian) are generally able to understand each other although their speeches are considered to be two languages. Consequently, mutual understanding amongst speakers is not a sufficient criterion for the fixing of language boundaries. Besides, mutual comprehension is impossible to measure; it is relative and can vary according to the mental ability and cultural background of individuals.

2. The second way to study a language is through sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics covers all aspects of the relationship between language and society and also investigates a prestigious variety of a language used within a particular speech community that is conscious of a certain unity. This prestigious language, containing elaborate oral and written expression, which is prescribed by a norm, and is considered within the community to be the socially approved standard of correctness, is called the "standard language". In Central and Eastern Europe it is referred to as a "literary language", in German it is "Schriftsprache", in Russian "Literaturnyj jazyk", and in Croatian "Knji`evni jezik".

To avoid an inherent ambiguity in the complexity of the relationship between dialect and language many linguists use the term *diasystem* (short for system of dialects) for the language study in dialectology and *standard* for the language study in socio-linguistics.

If Serbian and Croatian can be studied as a diasystem of *[to]* dialects, their separate histories, cultures, literatures and political structures warrant their being referred to as different standard languages.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the spadework had been done and the foundations laid for serious philological South Slav studies, in spite of the ethnocentric approach and folkloristic misconceptions. (*Dobrovskýi, Kopitar, Karad`i ], [afarík*]. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the great Slovenian Slavicist *Fran Miklo [i]* systematically mentioned Serbian and Croatian as two distinct entities when he enumerated the forms of different Slav languages [Cf. Miklosich, F. (1868-1874) *Vergleichende Grammatik der slawischen Sprachen*, IV Syntax, passim, Wien, Braumüller].

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the South Slav languages were studied in comparative philology from the point of view of their historical development in order to establish how their historical relationship connected them. The stress was laid on similarity, not on nuances and differences. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the influence of the teaching of Neogrammarians, South Slav philologists stressed the importance of the [tokavian vernacular, medium of oral folk poetry, tales and proverbs and completely ignored the study of literary languages. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century most Slavic linguistic investigations were synchronic descriptions of contemporary language states and of standard literary languages [Cf. Prague Grammar School].

The differences between Croatian and Serbian literary standard languages described as follows:

may be conveniently

(a)	Croatian literary tradition with Zagreb as its centre	Serbian literary tradition with Belgrade as its centre
(b)	Roman script	Cyrillic script
(c)	[to-ije dialect (e.g. nijekati prisjesti presjesti , bijel )	[to- ēdialect (e.g. presesti beo )
(d)	Croatian orthography (e.g. <i>past ] u</i> "I shall fall")	Serbian orthography (e.g. <i>pa [] u</i> "I shall fall")
(e)	Croatian grammatical distinctive features: phonology, morphology, word formation	Serbian grammatical distinctive features: phonology, morphology, word formation

(f)	Words which constitute Croatian basic vocabulary	Words which constitute Serbian basic vocabulary
	otok island zrak air va cesta roa `lica spoon mrkva carrot [	azduh nd drum n ka [ika
(g)	Czech, kaj and ^a influences	Church Slavonic, Russian and Greek influences
(h)	German loan translations (calques) (e.g. [tednjak "stove")	German loan words (e.g. [poret "Sparherd")
(i)	Grammatical gender differences	Grammatical gender differences
	<i>gripa</i> f. flu	er glad m. et front m. grip m. ene sveska f.
(j)	Croatian technical and scientific terminology	Serbian technical and scientific terminology
(k)	Croatian abstract vocabulary for religious and philosophical concepts	Serbian abstract vocabulary for religious and philosophical concepts
(l)	Prosodic features, stress-pattern	Prosodic features, stress-pattern
	^ <i>ìtamo</i> we rea <i>ràdovi</i> works	
The	following sentences may help to show the differences be Croatic	

Eng: After he fell ill. he did not wish to go either to theatre or to cinema or

Eng: After he fell ill, he did not wish to go either to theatre or to cinema or dancing.

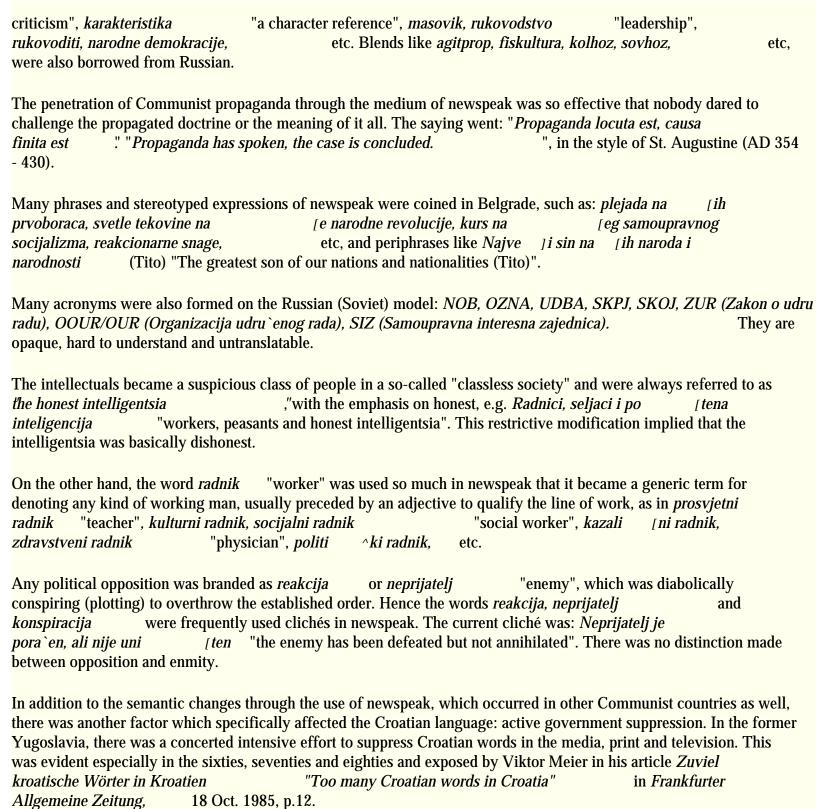
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Cro: Otkako je <u>obolio</u>, nije <u>htio</u> vi [e <u>i ] i</u> ni u <u>kazali [te</u>, ni u<u>kino</u>, ni na <u>ples</u>.

Sb: Otkako je <u>oboleo</u>, nije <u>hteo</u> vi [e <u>da ide</u> ni u <u>pozori [te</u>, ni u<u>bioskop</u>, ni na <u>igranku</u>.
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 's / I am going to see the doctor.

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Cro: <u>Kamoide</u> [?ĐIdem<u>lije _^niku</u> (Destination)
Sb: Kuda (gde)ide [?ĐIdemkod lekara
Eng: Which way are you taking, path or road?
Cro: Kuda ] e [, stazom ili cestom?
                                       (Direction)
Sb: The interrogative adverb kamo is not used in Serbian.
Eng: Had I not been delayed by a car accident on the road, I would not have been
late for lunch.
Cro: Da me nije <u>sprije _^ila prometna nesre ___la</u> (nezgoda) na <u>cesti __</u>, ne bih bio <u>uop le</u>
zakasnio na objed
                         (ru^ak).
Sb: Da me nije <u>spre ^io saobra lajni udes spre ^ila saobra lajna</u> nezgoda) na
drumu, ne bih bio uop [te zadocnio (zakasnio) na ru
Eng: Cooking salt is a compound of sodium chloride.
Cro: <u>Kuhinjska sol</u> je <u>spoj natrija</u> i<u>klora</u>.
Sb: So za kuvanje jeste jedinjenje
                                                natrijuma ihlora .
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In the post World War II period, Central and East European languages were affected by the phenomenon that George Orwell called *newspeak* (in: ")1984/ogovor ), peculiar to the totalitarian regimes established in "people's democracies". It was characterized by verbal inflation and devaluation of the semantic content of the lexical meaning of words used in political discourse and journalistic jargon. This balderdash, teeming with political clichés, affected the terseness of the standard literary language. The trend did not completely stop after political and social changes, which occurred in the early 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe.



Further, Serbian linguistic imperialism was encouraged by the (Communist) Party-State (according to the excellent terminology of Alain Besançon), which had replaced the western concept of Nation-State in the Communist countries or the eastern Byzantine concept of the Church-State with its Messianic politico-religious Orthodoxy. From the declaration of intent of AVNOJ (The Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) in 1944, which proclaimed the equality of all languages of Yugoslavia, everything had been geared towards the supremacy of the Serbian language. This was done under the cover of reciprocity (*uzajamnost* ), mutual enrichment (*uzajamno boga* ] enje ) and togetherness (*zajedni* [tvo ), hoping that the transient phase of closeness (zbli`enje ) and "growing together" among nations in Yugoslavia would eventually give way to one of fusion and provide a firmer basis for Serbianisation to

be stepped up. The Party-State was simply subrogating itself to the rights of its victims.

A collective Croatian reaction against such *de facto* Serbian imposition came on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1967. On that day, nineteen Croatian scholarly institutions and cultural organisations dealing with language and literature, including foremost Croatian writers and linguists, issued the "Declaration Concerning the Name and the Status of the Croatian Literary Language". In the Declaration, they asked for amendment to the Constitution expressing two claims: (1) the equality not of three but of four literary languages, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and Macedonian, and consequently, the publication of all federal laws and other federal acts in four instead of three languages; (2) the use of the Croatian standard language in schools and all mass communication media pertaining to the Republic of Croatia. The Declaration accused the federal authorities in Belgrade of imposing Serbian as the official state language and downgrading Croatian to the level of a local dialect.

Strictly speaking, both dialect and language are relative terms and it is difficult to use purely linguistic criteria to divide up varieties of language into distinct languages or dialects. It is because certain linguistic varieties were spoken by a politically dominant ethnic group, that this variety has become the standard language. The administrative, economic and political centralisation of great European states has considerably modified the process of linguistic evolution of these countries. In the majority of European countries, there has emerged a state language, which all the citizens were supposed to know. The French philosopher Roger Garaudy once said that: "A language is a dialect which possesses an army and a navy 

". When political power is lacking, the national culture is reduced to folklore, the subordinate language withers away, crushed by a centralizing bureaucracy, which administratively tends only to level down.

In September 1971, a manual of *Croatian Orthography* , designed for primary and secondary schools, was published in Zagreb. Compiled by three eminent linguists (S. Babi] - B. Finka - M. Mogu[), it codified the current norm of Croatian spelling and orthography: "In all ways, from a purely language point of view, The Croatian Orthography is probably the most authoritative guide to enlightened language practice in Croatia today". Forty thousand copies of this handbook awaiting distribution were seized and destroyed on the orders of the political authorities. This auto-da-fé threw a particular light on the "cultural" policy of the Belgrade government. But one copy of the Croatian Orthography survived, was smuggled abroad and reprinted in London in 1972.

This manual of Croatian Orthography, entitled "Hrvatski pravopis" , has been used in schools and on mass media since 1990, after being examined and approved by all scholarly and professional Croatian institutions (HAZU, Matica hrvatska, the University Chairs for Croatian language, Croatian Writers' Association, etc.). However, in November 2000 the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the previous manual of Orthography, entitled "Pravopisni priru ^nik hrvatskoga jezika " (1986, 1987, 1990), which was used in Croatia before independence, was published in Zagreb. In the 4<sup>th</sup> edition the title was changed to "Pravopisni priru ^nik hrvatskoga jezika ", but the content remained the same. The publisher of the book has been trying to obtain approval from the Ministry of Education for this manual to be used as a textbook in schools, although no scholarly and professional institution has recommended it.

In the late 1980s, before the collapse of former Yugoslavia, many Croat words, which were previously ostracized, were reinstated in the Croatian media and in public use, e.g. novinstvo, priop]enje, redarstvo, vrhovni[tvo, etc. This provoked a general outcry in the Belgrade press, accusing Croats of "digging up from the grave obsolete Croat words" (Ivan Klajn) instead of using [tampa, policija, saop]enje and a newspeak word rukovodstvo [Cf. Slavko Mihali], Unitaristi^ke smicalice, in Vjesnik, Sunday 9 Dec. 1990, p.13].

Since 1990 hundreds of Croatian words formerly banned from the media, press and television, have been reinstated and recorded in language reference books and dictionaries. One should particularly stress the importance of two of such books: "*Hrvatski jezi ^ni savjetnik*" - "*Croatian Language Counsellor*", published by the Institute for Croatian language

and philology (Zagreb, 1999, 1660 p., 24 cm), and "*Rje^nik hrvatskog jezika*" - "*Croatian dictionary*", compiled by Jure [onje & others, published by Leksikografski Zavod "Miroslav Krle`a" and [kolska knjiga (Zagreb, 2001, 1450 p., 25 cm).

Croatian language studies and linguistic investigations are much in evidence today. A considerable number of language reference books, school grammars and bilingual dictionaries have been published since 1990. Two new language journals were started: "Fluminensia" (1989, in Rijeka) and "Jezikoslovlje" (1998, in Osijek), bringing the total number of journals to 10, with the present 7 in Zagreb and 1 in Split, all of which are published at regular intervals. In spite of the terrible destruction and suffering inflicted upon the country by 1990's war, cultural activities did not stop.

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