

# “Their language sounds aggressive”: a matched guise study with Serbian and Croatian

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## Abstract

The disintegration of Yugoslavia also brought about the disintegration of what used to be its principal standard language, Serbo-Croatian. The present study looks at the attitudes of the speakers of Croatian to the speakers of Serbian and vice versa, using the matched guise technique. The participants listened to the Serbian and Croatian recordings of the fable *The North Wind and the Sun* spoken by a Serbian-Croatian bilingual, as well as the recordings of the same text in seven other languages used as fillers. The participants were divided into several age groups: some of them remember the war years quite vividly, others only have vague recollections, while the youngest groups were born after it ended.

The results show that the speakers of Serbian have slightly more negative attitudes to Croatian than vice versa. Surprisingly, adult groups on both sides exhibited neutral attitudes to the neighbouring language while the most negative attitudes were found in the group of 13-year-old native speakers of Serbian. The amount of contact with the neighbouring language was shown to correlate positively with the attitudes to it. In addition, some speakers of Serbian perceive Croatian as the same variety as Serbian, but one that was deliberately changed and raised to the status of a separate language.

## 1. Historical background

The story of Croatian and Serbian is a truly complex one: it begins with two different literary traditions, which later merged into a common standard language and continues in bloodshed and largely mutually intelligible, but separate languages<sup>1</sup>. Croatian and Serbian belong to the same language family (Slavic) and the same sub-branch (south Slavic). They had been developing more or less independently for centuries, with western influences from Austro-Hungary and Italy on the varieties spoken in today's Croatia and eastern, predominantly Turkish influence on the varieties spoken in today's Serbia. This also resulted in two different scripts: Latin for Croatian and both Cyrillic and Latin for Serbian. However, the standard

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<sup>1</sup> Even though structurally Croatian and Serbian may well be considered to be the national variants of the same polycentric standard language (Kordić 2010, Gröschel 2003), they are now fully standardized and internationally recognized as separate languages. Therefore, in this text, we shall refer to Croatian and Serbian as languages, keeping in mind that the situation with these two standard varieties is much more comparable to standard Dutch and Flemish, than to, for instance, French and Spanish.

varieties spoken in today's Croatia and Serbia have always been mutually intelligible.

With the rise of romantic nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Pan-Slavic movement emerged in the Balkans with the purpose of uniting all Southern Slavs except the Bulgarians in one country with a common language. With the joint effort of intellectuals on both sides: Ljudevit Gaj from Croatia and Vuk Karadžić from Serbia, Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian was born in 1850, when the Vienna Literary agreement took place. This unofficial meeting of Croatian and Serbian intellectuals helped set the basic guidelines for the development of the common standard, which later became the official language of Yugoslavia. The Eastern Herzegovina-type dialect was taken as the basis of the standard (Greenberg 2008) and both Cyrillic and Latin alphabets were in official use.

However, all this changed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century with the horrors of the Yugoslav wars (1991-1995). Croatia emerged as an independent country and Serbia stayed in a loose union with Montenegro, which ended in 2006. Consequently, the linguistic landscape of the region, at least officially, underwent a dramatic change. The language that used to be called Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian turned into four separate, but almost completely mutually intelligible languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and Montenegrin. The main reason for this is political, since a separate language in the Balkans appears to confirm the existence of a nation. Thus each nation that was in the process of re-creating its separate identity after the war felt the need to make its own language official. Therefore, Serbian and Croatian started developing independently and the initial differences between them became more prominent. Linguistic nationalism caused both sides to make emotional decisions, which led to Croatian language planners creating a separate Croatian standard by insisting on prescriptivism and the purification from foreign as well as Serbian-sounding words (Greenberg 2008). On the other hand, these actions created a backlash in Serbia, culminating in 1998, when about a dozen members of Serbian extreme-nationalist intellectual group led by Radmilo Marojević signed a "Declaration on the Serbian language", insisting that there was only one real language in former Yugoslavia, namely Serbian (Greenberg, 2008). Granted, their views were heavily criticized in the media by many prominent Serbian linguists as well as the Board for Standardisation of the Serbian language.

In some linguistic circles, a heated debate on whether Croatian and Serbian are one language or two is still on (Kapović 2011, Kordić 2009, Kovačić 2005, Bugarski 2004, Grubišić 2000, Škiljan 2000, Kordić 1997),

whereby generally linguists from Serbia are more in favour of the idea that Croatian and Serbian are one language and linguists from Croatia tend to argue the opposite. Sometimes the question of whether Croatian and Serbian are the same language is (intentionally or not) even equated to the question of whether both are in fact Serbian, which is not only a wrong question to ask, but also extremely offensive to the native speakers of Croatian. These two languages used to form a common standard together, so one cannot simply be reduced to a dialect of the other. However, in the Balkans, the question of language still cannot be separated from the question of ethnicity and identity and with the recent turbulent past of the region, strong attitudes between the speakers of Serbian and Croatian towards each other are to be expected.

## **2. The bigger picture: language attitudes and conflict**

Negative language attitudes can stem from a variety of causes, the most salient one being an armed conflict between the speakers of different languages. This problem was well studied in the context of Hebrew and Arabic in Israel, where the history of hostility combined with negative stereotyping aggravated language attitudes of both sides. Israeli Arab students, dismayed at the cultural disempowerment, turned to their native language and culture thus demonstrating an utter lack of motivation to learn Hebrew (Abu-Rabia 1998, 1996). On the other hand, speakers of Hebrew stereotypically viewed Arabic language and culture as valueless and the speakers of Arabic as aggressive and violent (Shoshamy & Donitsa-Schmidt 1998, Bar-Tal 1996). These stereotypes appear to have been acquired from the early childhood and further enforced by the mass-media (Bar-Tal & Teichman 2005) resulting in negative language attitudes and a lack of interest in learning Arabic by Hebrew speakers.

However, even without an armed conflict, political issues still play a vital role in forming language attitudes. The USSR enforced a strong nativization and russification policy in the 1930s and onwards, imposing Russian as a lingua franca and the Cyrillic alphabet on all its constituent states. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many newly formed states felt the need to resist and to re-establish the position of their national languages. This national revival combined with negative attitudes to Russian as the symbol of the former totalitarian regime was by far the strongest in the three Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where Russian was completely replaced with the titular language and numerous members of the Russian diaspora were either left without their

citizenship or forced to pass a language exam (Pavlenko 2006). On the opposite side of this language attitude spectrum lies Belarus, which is still under a heavy Russian influence and where the attitudes to Russian are extremely positive. Therefore, even though both Belarusian and Russian are the official languages in Belarus, Russian is the preferred and the more prestigious language (Pavlenko 2006). By contrast, in Ukraine, there are still distinct Russian and Ukrainian language identities, which has led to a polarization of language attitudes (Ciscel, Hallett & Green 2000).

From the aforementioned examples it can be concluded that the conflicts between nations often create a tension in terms of language attitudes and the insistence on “the national language”. The national language is an imaginary construct, in much the same way as different nations are in fact imagined communities (Anderson 1991) despite being a clear geographical reality. National languages are thus created to bind together the members of the same nation state and help them to create a common cultural and social identity on one hand, but also to differentiate them from the members of other communities on the other. This is exceptionally clear in the case of Croatian and Serbian, whose mutual intelligibility and similarity in structure can easily be compared with different standards of some languages (German or English for instance) that do share a common identity. Tang & Van Heuven (2009) demonstrated that many varieties considered to be dialects of Chinese are not entirely mutually intelligible, therefore the feeling of a common identity can persist even despite the mutual (un)intelligibility. Therefore, is it possible that the speakers of such similar varieties as Serbian and Croatian hold negative attitudes to each other on the basis of stereotypes and the war aftermath? This paper will attempt to provide an answer to that question.

### **3. Zooming in: Serbian-Croatian attitudes and stereotypes**

When it comes to Serbian and Croatian, language attitudes were at least partly formed both by the disintegration of a common country resulting in divergent language policies and an actual armed conflict (1991-1995). Several studies demonstrated that Croatian-Serbian stereotypes are still quite strong even two decades after the war. Šimičić & Sujoldžić (2004) looked into the attitudes of Zagreb high school students towards different dialects of Croatian (Štokavian standard, Zagreb Štokavian, Zagreb Kajkavian, rural Kajkavian, urban Čakavian and rural Čakavian) and three non-Croatian varieties (Serbian, Bosnian and Janjevo dialect). They employed verbal guise technique, where one female and two male speakers read out a text

in all the varieties and used a questionnaire consisting of 13 qualities which were grouped into three dimensions (social attractiveness, competence and status) by means of a subsequent factor analysis. When it comes to social attractiveness, Zagreb-born students gave the lowest ratings to the three non-Croatian varieties, whereas first generation immigrant students, mostly from Bosnia, demonstrated exactly the opposite trend. For them, the variety with the highest degree of social attractiveness was Bosnian, closely followed by Serbian. However, both groups of students rated the speakers of the standard as the most competent ones. With the status dimension, the speaker of Serbian is once again rated below average by Zagreb-born students and above average by non-Zagreb students. In short, the most striking differences in attitudes have been found in the evaluation of Bosnian and to a somewhat lesser extent Serbian, whose speakers seem to be regarded as much more pleasant and likeable by the immigrants than by the host adolescent population.

Šakaja (2001) studied the stereotypes about the Balkans among Zagreb high school students and found that the stereotypes about Serbs and the Serbian language were incredibly strong. The students were asked to rate all the European countries with regard to how much they would like to live in each of them and indicate why. Out of the 10 least attractive countries, 7 were in the Balkans and when asked about the reason why they would not like to live in Yugoslavia<sup>2</sup>, some respondents simply responded: “Serbs”. In this study, young Croatians viewed Serbs as “aggressors and destructors, delusional megalomaniacs, a nation that is poor, uncivilized and oriented towards oriental instead of the Western, European values”. Some of the adjectives and phrases the participants used when talking about Serbs were: *rude, arrogant, stupid, they demonstrate a constant desire for enlarging their territory, they are always at war and they always lose, their politics and life are based on illusions* etc. Not surprisingly, Serbian is viewed as an ugly language, since out of all the languages by far the greatest degree of animosity was expressed towards Serbian.

Petrović (2003) gave 80 adjectives to university students from various cities in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and instructed them to choose five that best describe average Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Both Serbian and Croatian participants shared generally negative stereotypes. However, it

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2 After the breakup of the so-called “Second Yugoslavia” in 1992 Serbia and Montenegro remained in the union and kept the old country name. In 2003, it was changed into Serbia and Montenegro, until 2006, when Montenegro seceded. Therefore, at the time of this study, the name Yugoslavia referred to the union of Serbia and Montenegro only.

appears that Serbian participants displayed a somewhat greater degree of animosity. Serbs perceived Croats as *nationalistic* (28.74% chose this adjective out of the 80 offered options), *sly* (20.87% of participants chose it), *arrogant* (19.69%), *two-faced* (16.93%), but also *well-mannered* (15.75%). It is interesting to note that virtually none of the Serbian participants chose *peaceful* or *tolerant* as one of the five adjectives when describing Croats. Some of the other frequently chosen adjectives were *cold* (12.20% participants marked it as their description of Croats), *cruel* (7.48%), *boastful* (6.69%), but also *patriotic* (6.30%). On the other hand, Croatian participants most often described Serbs as: *warmongers* (29.14% of participants chose this word among 79 others), *nationalistic* (21.14%), *aggressive* (20.00%) and *patriotic* (16.00%). Some of the adjectives that they never chose were: *respectful*, *mild*, *peace-loving*, *neat*, *hard-working*, *modest*, *emotional* but also *dirty*.

#### 4. Aims and hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes of speakers of Serbian towards Croatian and vice versa with a particular regard to the age factor and the amount of contact with the neighbouring language. To elicit language attitudes, we use the matched-guise technique (Lambert et al. 1960) where the participants rate speech recordings unaware that the same bilingual speaker produced two or more speech samples. To our knowledge, this is the first matched-guise study with Serbian and Croatian and it will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- What are the attitudes of the speakers of Serbian and Croatian to the “other” language compared to their attitudes to their native language?
- Are the attitudes towards the neighbouring language symmetrical or asymmetrical?
- How do the attitudes to the native and the neighbouring language vary across different age groups and is there any difference in attitudes between those who experienced the war and those who did not?
- What is the relationship between the amount of contact and attitudes to the neighbouring language?

Based on the literature cited above, what is expected is a degree of linguistic nationalism i.e. a consistently lower rating when the bilingual

speaker is speaking the “other” language. Also, due to the fact that it was Croatia that decided to leave both the common country and the common language standard, many speakers of Serbian perceive Croatian as a “made up” language which leads to a hypothesis that their attitudes towards Croatian will be more negative than vice versa.

As for the age factor, it seems reasonable to suggest that older participants, who actually have quite vivid memories of war, might have more negative attitudes towards the other language, whereas the younger participants will probably not share that animosity. However, some anecdotal evidence and public opinion polls suggest that nationalism is on the rise in teenagers and young adults. Therefore it is likely that their attitudes will be just as negative as or more negative than the attitudes of the participants who actually remember the war years.

The amount of exposure to the other variety is not as large as it was while Croatia and Serbia were a part of the same country and Croatian and Serbian constituted the same standard language. In Yugoslavia, travelling from one republic to the other was quite common, books and magazines were published in the one of the two standard varieties and both varieties could be heard in the media as well as in the street. Nowadays it is fairly uncommon e.g. for a speaker of Croatian to read a book in Serbian if the Croatian edition is available; Croatian is generally not heard on Serbian television and vice versa and many young speakers of both languages are not aware of the most basic differences in lexicon between the two languages (common knowledge for their parents’ generation) simply because they have hardly ever been exposed to the other variety. Therefore, we hypothesize that the people with more contact with Croatian/Serbian are probably actively seeking it and therefore are expected to have a more positive attitude to the other language compared to the people who are less exposed to it.

## 5. Method

In order to make different speech samples as comparable as possible in terms of voice quality and speech characteristics, the matched-guise technique, where the same speaker produces two or more speech samples, was employed. This technique was first used by Lambert et al. (1960) in order to test the attitudes between the English- and French-speaking populations of Quebec. In general, the participants are instructed to listen to several recordings and rate the speakers regarding various personal traits. What they do not know is that in at least one pair of languages, they listen

to the same bilingual person speaking different languages and by having the participants judge the speaker and not the variety, the researcher gets an insight into attitudes that may not have been expressed overtly. In the pioneer study by Lambert and colleagues it was discovered that the participants' judgments of the speaker differ significantly depending on the language spoken: the English-speaking participants rated the speakers more positively when they spoke English than when they spoke French, but also, quite surprisingly, the French-speaking participants showed exactly the same pattern of responses – they rated the same speakers more positively when they spoke English than when they spoke their own native language. The fact that voice quality and speech characteristics are kept constant across the involved languages makes it possible to directly compare attitudes towards these languages.

## 5.1 Stimulus material

### 5.1.1 The recordings

The stimulus material for this experiment was the text *The North Wind and the Sun*, consisting of five sentences and comprising about a minute-long recording. The texts in English, Croatian and Serbian are found in the appendix. The differences between Croatian and Serbian can be classified into several categories:

- the distinction between ekavian Serbian and ijekavian Croatian<sup>3</sup> (*vetar* vs. *vjetar* for 'wind');
- lexical differences e.g. *duvao* (Serbian) vs. *puhao* (Croatian) for 'blew';
- syntactic differences e.g. the preference for the infinitive in Croatian vs. the conjunction *da* + the present tense in Serbian: *počelo sjati* vs. *počelo da sija* (for this example there is also a rough English equivalent: 'start to shine' vs. 'start shining').

Native speakers of Croatian and Serbian are quite used to the ekavian-ijekavian distinction, both in perception and in production, and this

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3 The differences between ekavian and ijekavian varieties stem from different reflexes of the Proto-Slavonic vowel *jat* (ǫ). In ekavian accents, *jat* became E, in ijekavian it became JE or IJE. Example: Proto-Slavonic *mlěko* ("milk") became *mleko* in Ekavian and *mlijeko* in Ijekavian. Nowadays, neo-Shtokavian Ekavian is the basis of standard Serbian and neo-Shtokavian Ijekavian is the basis of standard Croatian.

difference could be compared to, for instance, to rhotic and non-rhotic accents of English. Syntactic differences denote an extreme difference in frequency of use rather than a grammatical distinction, as both constructions are in most cases grammatical in both languages. In addition, there are a few differences in lexicon.

*Table 1: The order of the stimuli*

L1	Training session		Experimental session						
Cro	Finnish	Chinese	Cro/Ser	Czech	Portuguese	Russian	Slovene	Arabic	Ser/Cro
Ser	Finnish	Chinese	Cro/Ser	Czech	Portuguese	Russian	Slovene	Arabic	Ser/Cro

Apart from the Croatian and Serbian recordings, there were also seven distracter stimuli in Finnish, Mandarin Chinese, Czech, Slovene, Russian, Arabic and Portuguese. Therefore, the stimulus material consisted of a total of nine recordings. Recordings of Finnish and Mandarin Chinese were used during a training session so they were always played in the beginning. The first experimental recording was in the native language of the participants (Serbian or Croatian) for half of them and in the other language for the other half. The remaining recordings were always played in the following order: Czech, Portuguese, Russian, Slovene, Arabic and finally, either Serbian or Croatian depending on the language that was played first. The order of the recordings is presented in Table 1.

### *5.1.2 The questionnaire*

The main part of the questionnaire consisted of six semantic differential scales. Semantic differential scales were used for measuring connotative meanings of concepts for the first time in Osgood et al. (1957). Zahn & Hopper (1985) conducted a factor analysis on 56 semantic differential items and came up with three main factors/dimensions: superiority, attractiveness and dynamism. The superiority factor combines status and education elements, attractiveness refers to social and aesthetic quality but also solidarity and dynamism encompasses social power, activity level and self-presentation in speech. This factor structure proved to be stable and replicable and was used in numerous subsequent studies (Schüppert, Hilton & Gooskens (accepted), Dailey, Giles & Jansma 2005, Rodriguez, Cargile & Rich 2004).

Two adjectives were chosen from each of the three dimensions: stupid/smart and rich/poor for superiority, warm/cold and good-natured/hostile for attractiveness and aggressive/unaggressive and strong/weak for dynamism. The adjectives have been selected on the basis of the previous research into language attitude measurements as well as sociological and psychological research in Serbian-Croatian ethnic stereotypes, cited above. The participants were instructed to judge the speakers using a 7-point scale with the negative adjectives consistently on the left and the positive adjectives on the right. The Semantic Differential Scales employed in our experiment are given in Figure 1.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
stupid	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	smart
weak	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	strong
hostile	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	friendly
poor	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	rich
aggressive	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	peaceful
cold	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	warm

Figure 1: The Semantic Differential Scales provided for each speech fragment

In addition, the participants were asked to rate the beauty of the language in an additional scale from 'ugly' to 'beautiful' and name the language in case they could recognize it.

After the experiment, the participants filled out a background questionnaire where they were asked to provide some information about themselves: their sex, age, level of education and the country where they spent most of their lives. The participants were also asked if they had previously spent any time in Serbia/Croatia, how often they visited the other country and how much time they spent there when they did, how often they spoke with people from Serbia or Croatia in person/over the phone/on Skype, how often they wrote to people from Serbia/Croatia on news portals, forums or blogs, how often they watched TV and films as well as how often they listened to radio programs, podcasts or music in Serbian/Croatian etc. These data were later used to investigate the correlations between the amount of exposure to the other language with attitudes. There were also two open-ended questions about the biggest differences between Croatian and Serbian in writing and in speech, in order to get an impression about which differences are considered to be

the most prominent ones. These most salient differences are probably used to identify the language and thus activate the (negative) attitudes.

### 5.1.3 Bilingual speaker/voice parade

One of the common criticisms directed at the matched-guise technique concerns the authenticity of the speech samples produced by the same speaker in different varieties (Garrett 2010). In order to control for that, it was necessary to make sure that the speaker was indeed a balanced bilingual in Serbian and Croatian. Following Schüppert, Hilton & Gooskens (accepted), this was done through a voice parade, a procedure adapted from forensic linguistics (Broeders, Cambier-Langeveld & Vermeulen 2002) where monolingual speakers of a language listen to a series of recordings by different speakers and judge how native-like they sound.

For our purposes, two separate voice parades were organised, one in Serbian and one in Croatian. We obtained the recordings of two male and three female bilinguals who spent significant parts of their lives both in Serbia and Croatia. All five of them recorded a Serbian and a Croatian version of the text *The North Wind and the Sun*. Each voice parade consisted of five recordings (one from every bilingual speaker) and the recordings of two monolingual fillers. That means that a total of seven randomly played recordings were presented to the participants per parade. The raters listened to all the recordings and answered the question *How native-like does this speaker sound?*, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not native at all, 5 = completely native) for every speech sample. Based on the judgements of 48 Croatian monolinguals and 45 Serbian monolinguals who participated via the Internet, the most balanced and native-like bilingual turned out to be a Serbian male who had lived in Croatia for a while and at the moment works in Germany as a news presenter.

## 5.2 Participants

The matched guise study included a wide age range of participants: elementary school students (4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade), high school students (3<sup>rd</sup> grade), university students and adults. The participants were tested in Belgrade and Zagreb areas using a pen and paper method. A total of 417 participants, 195 native speakers of Serbian and 222 native speakers of Croatian took part in the study.

Table 2: Number of participants, mean age and age range divided per group and native language

	Croatian			Serbian		
	N	mean age	age range	N	mean age	age range
4 <sup>th</sup> grade el.	38	10.3	10-11	37	10.5	10-11
7 <sup>th</sup> grade el.	38	13.3	13-14	37	13.7	13-14
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade h.s.	49	17.2	17-18	44	17.3	17-18
BA students	61	21.6	21-24	39	21.1	19-24
Adults	36	41.7	25-81	38	49.4	25-88
Total	222	20.6	10-81	195	22.3	10-88

The Croatian participants ( $N = 222$ ) had a mean age of 20.6, whereas the Serbian participants ( $N = 195$ ) were on average 22.3 years old. Mean age and the number of participants per testing group and per language are indicated in Table 2. The category of “adults” is restricted to all the participants older than 25. Elementary school, high school and bachelor students were tested during their classes, while adult participants were tested in smaller groups at their homes.

### 5.3 Procedures

The participants were told that they would listen to several different speakers reading the same text and that their task would be to indicate their impressions of each speaker and the languages by filling out a questionnaire with Semantic Differential Scales. Each recording was played once and after that, they had a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire. Having completed the task, the participants were asked to fill out a background questionnaire.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Data coding

For each of the nine recordings, the participants were to indicate on a 7-point Semantic Differential Scale how smart, strong, friendly, rich, peaceful and warm they thought the speaker was, as well as how beautiful they thought the language he spoke was. The data was coded by assigning the value of one for the negative extreme (stupid, weak, unfriendly, poor, aggressive and cold), the value of seven for the positive extreme (smart,

strong, friendly, rich, peaceful and warm) and the numbers in between for the values between these two extremes.

### 6.2 What are the attitudes of the speakers of Serbian and Croatian to the “other” language compared to their attitudes to their native language?

As shown by paired-samples *t*-tests Serbian listeners rated the bilingual speaker more positively when he was speaking Serbian compared to when he was speaking Croatian. This difference is significant across all six traits (all  $p < .0001$ ). However, with Croatian participants, the same paired-samples *t*-tests revealed significant differences only in the case of intelligence ( $t = 2.9, p = .006$ ), wealth ( $t = 3.14, p = .003$ ) and peacefulness ( $t = 3.67, p = .001$ ).

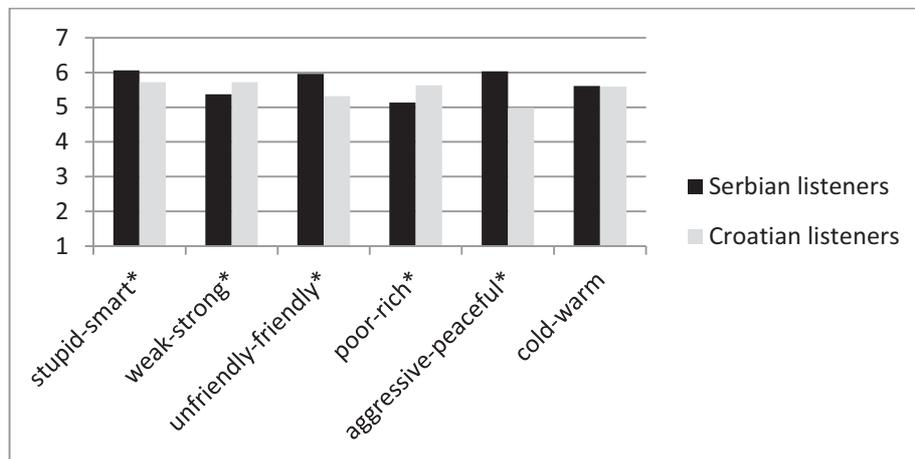


Figure 2: Serbian and Croatian participants' ratings of the same bilingual when he spoke their native language. Significant differences are marked with an asterisk.

However, if we compare the Serbian and the Croatian groups' rating when the bilingual spoke the listeners' native language by means of an independent *t*-test, there is a significant difference between the ratings across five traits: intelligence ( $t = 2.86, p < .004$ ), strength ( $t = -2.48, p = .014$ ) friendliness ( $t = 5.05, p < .0001$ ), wealth ( $t = -3.35, p < .001$ ) and peacefulness ( $t = 8.67, p < .0001$ ). Serbian speakers thought that the matched guise speaker was more intelligent, friendly and peaceful when he spoke Serbian, whereas Croatian speakers rated him as richer and stronger when he spoke Croatian. The results of this analysis are shown in Figure 2.

When the two groups judged the neighbouring language, their ratings differed significantly in two traits: intelligence ( $t = -2.701, p < .007$ ) and

strength ( $t = -5,549, p < .0001$ ). In both cases it was Serbian participants who rated the speaker significantly lower when he spoke Croatian compared to the Croatian participants' rating of the same bilingual speaking Serbian as can be seen from Figure 3.

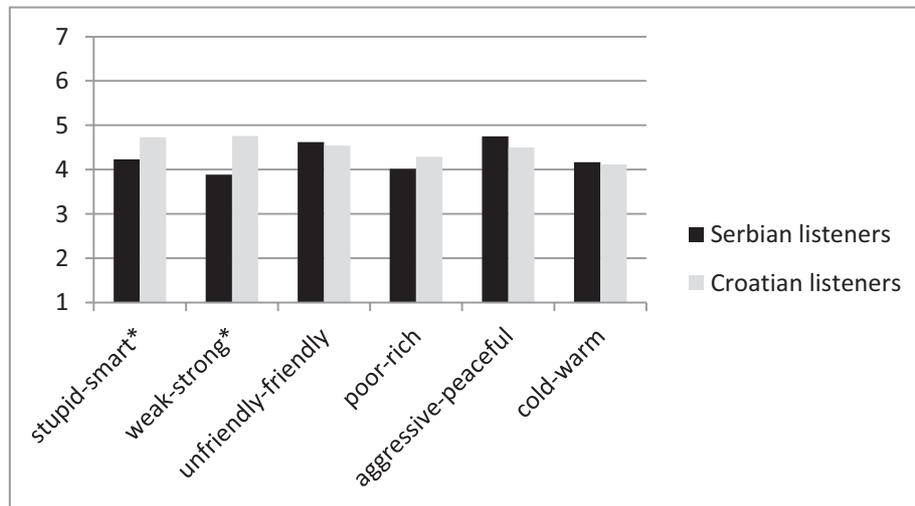


Figure 3: Serbian and Croatian participants' ratings of the same bilingual when he spoke the neighbouring language. Significant differences are marked with an asterisk.

### 6.3 Are the attitudes towards the neighbouring language symmetric or asymmetric?

According to the results of the pairwise t-tests, both groups rated the bilingual speaker significantly more positively when he spoke their native language, compared to when he spoke the neighbouring language. This finding is not surprising, since it was found in numerous other studies, for instance in the case of Catalan and Spanish (Huguet and Llorca, 2001) or Ukrainian and Russian (Bilaniuk, 2003). Nevertheless, if we compare the two groups' ratings when the matched guise speaker spoke their native language, Serbian participants rated him significantly more positively than Croatian participants across five traits. When the two groups rated the matched guise speaker speaking the neighbouring language, once again, it was the Serbian participants who rated him significantly more negatively across two traits. These findings seem to indicate that the attitudes of the two groups might be slightly asymmetric: it is the Serbian participants who tend to rate the same speaker higher if he speaks their native language and the other way around. In addition, the participants were explicitly asked to

rate the beauty of the language. Independent-samples *t*-tests showed a significant difference both when the bilingual spoke the listeners' native language ( $t = 4.34, p < .0001$ ) and when he spoke the listeners' neighbouring language ( $t = -3.65, p < .0001$ ). As can be seen from Figure 4, Serbian participants rated their native language as significantly more beautiful compared to the Croatian participants' ratings of Croatian and they rated Croatian as uglier compared to the Croatian participants' ratings of Serbian.

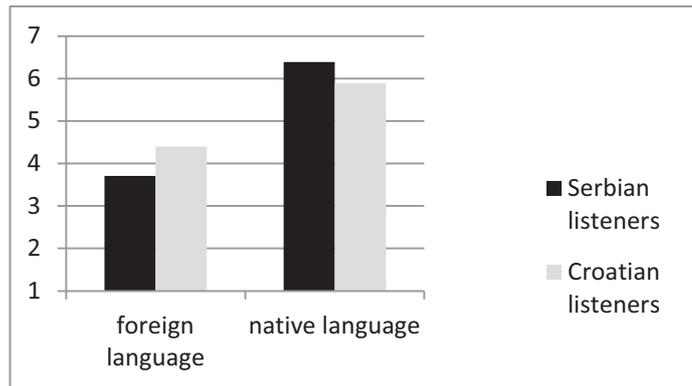


Figure 4: The ratings of language beauty by Serbian and Croatian participants

#### 6.4 How do the attitudes to the native and the neighbouring language vary across different age groups?

In order to find out whether there are any differences in attitudes among different generations, we compared the ratings of Serbian and Croatian participants across different age groups. What is particularly striking is that the adult participants from the two countries judge the speaker in a very similar way with regard to all six traits. The attitudes of the youngest group to the neighbouring language were either very similar or Serbian participants had more positive ratings of the bilingual than their Croatian peers (friendliness:  $t = 3.417, p = .001$ ; peacefulness:  $t = 2.738, p = .008$ ; warmth:  $t = 3.063, p = .003$ ). High school students rated the matched guise speaker lower across three traits: intelligence ( $t = -2.353, p < .005$ ), strength ( $t = -4.167, p < .000$ ) and wealth ( $t = -2.055, p < 0.05$ ) and bachelor students did the same when it comes to strength ( $t = -3.514, p = .001$ ), but they thought the matched guise speaker was more peaceful when he spoke Croatian ( $t = 2.115, p < .005$ ). However, by far the most puzzling age group is the one with the mean age between 13 and 14 from Serbia. Their attitudes are consistently the most negative across all traits and compared to

all the other age groups, both from Serbia and Croatia. Figure 5 illustrates the attitudes of different age groups to the neighbouring language.

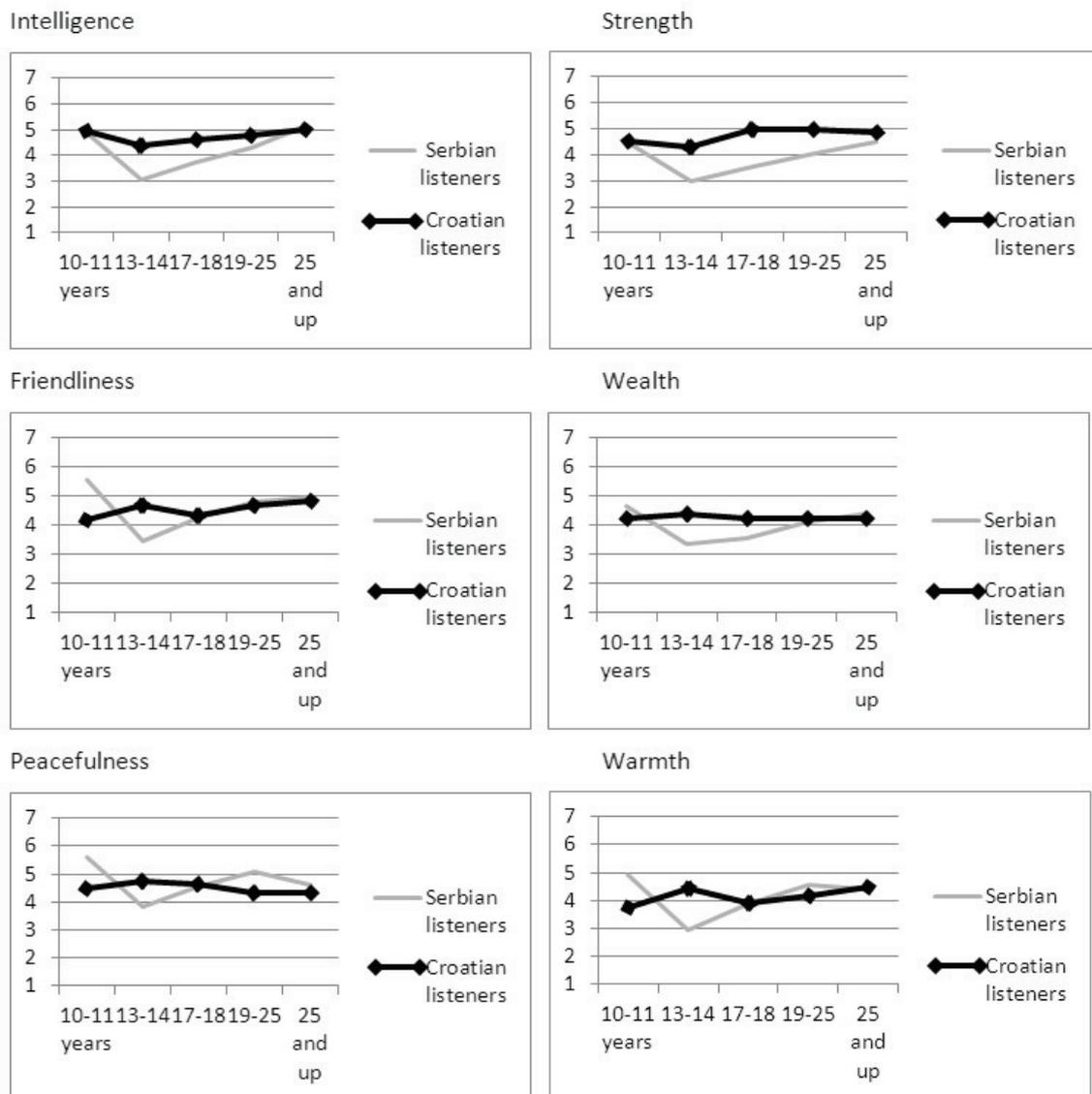


Figure 5: Attitudes of Serbian and Croatian participants to the neighbouring language across different age groups

In order to check whether the effect found in 13-14 year old participants from Serbia was generalisable, we conducted a follow-up study in a different school. The school was in exactly the same neighbourhood as the first one, which should rule out potential differences in social structure. What we found was that there was no statistically significant difference between the ratings, which confirms that this age group of Serbian speakers indeed holds more negative attitudes to Croatian compared to all the others. A brief interview conducted in the second school revealed that for

most participants, the main reasons behind their negative attitudes to Croatian and the speakers of Croatian are related to the negative stereotypes they hold. However, at this point it is impossible to say more about the exact causes, even more so since their Croatian-speaking peers do not exhibit similar behaviour.

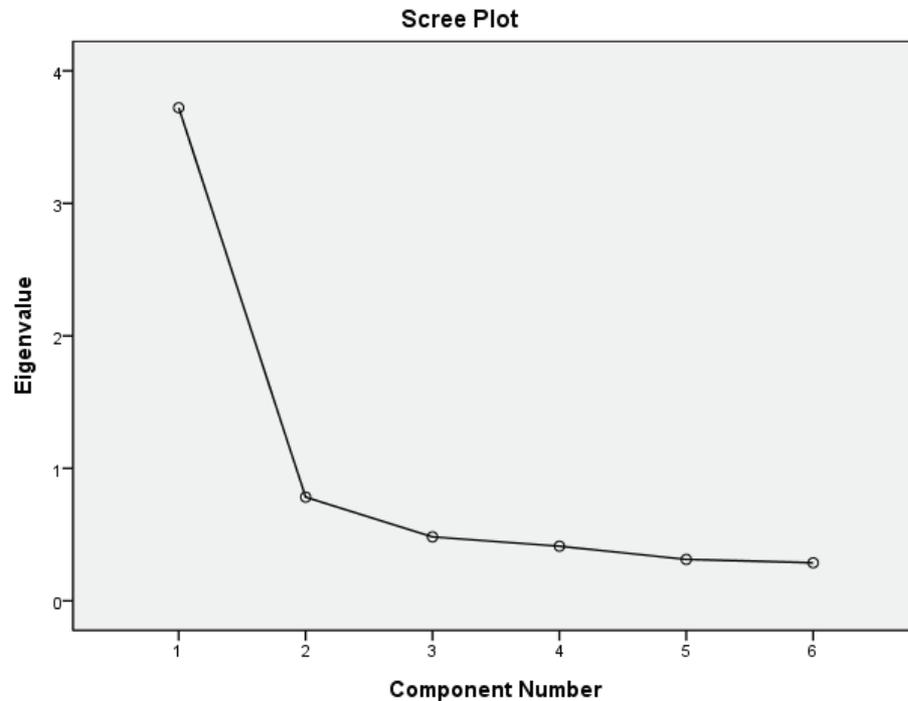


Figure 6: Scree plot showing eigenvalues per component

### 6.5 What is the relationship between the amount of contact and attitudes to the neighbouring language?

In order to evaluate our hypothesis that the amount of contact correlates positively with attitude to the neighbouring language, we reduced the six personality traits to one by conducting a principal component analysis. The overall ratings of the neighbouring language on the six personality traits: intelligence, strength, friendliness, wealth, peacefulness and warmth served as the input variables. The analysis revealed that all six variables were significantly interrelated (all  $r < .70$ ), but not to an extent that would mean that they were basically measuring the same thing, which would require excluding some of them from the principal component analysis. The extracted principal component had an eigenvalue of 3.72 and this factor alone accounted for 62% of the variance. According to Kaiser's criterion (1960) all factors with an eigenvalue greater than one

should be retained, and since our next component had an eigenvalue of 0.78, we decided to reduce the six variables to a single component. In addition, the extracted component correlated quite highly with all six variables, as all correlation coefficients were higher than 0.70.

Having obtained one general attitude variable, we correlated it with the amount of contact to the neighbouring language. The correlation proved to be positive and fairly low but significant ( $r = .26, p < .001$ ), which confirms our hypothesis.

*Table 3: Component matrix with correlation coefficients between the extracted principal components and the ratings of the bilingual speaker when he spoke the neighbouring language*

	Principal component
stupid-smart	0.84
weak-strong	0.76
unfriendly-friendly	0.86
poor-rich	0.79
aggressive-peaceful	0.70
cold-warm	0.75

## 7. Discussion and conclusion

Based on the results presented above, it can be concluded that overall, both Serbian and Croatian participants have more positive attitudes to their native language than to the neighbouring language, which is in line with the previous research. However, Serbian participants appeared to have more negative attitudes to Croatian than the other way around and they hold more positive attitude to their native language compared to Croatian participants. This is confirmed both by their ratings of the bilingual speaker and by their ratings of the beauty of Serbian and Croatian. On the other hand, Croatian rated the bilingual as stronger and richer when he spoke Croatian (which is even objectively true, if we compare the

gross domestic product or the average salary in the two countries). If we look at the language attitudes across different generations, it seems that Serbian 10-11 year olds are more positive to the “other” language compared to their Croatian peers. On the other hand, teenagers and university students from Serbia have rated the matched guise speaker speaking the neighbouring variety more negatively than the participants of the matching age from Croatia.

The asymmetry in attitudes can partly be explained by a general tendency to rate one’s own language more positively which is simply more emphasized in the case of Serbian speakers. However, another reason might be the lost war, the continuation of the nationalist politics as well as the general feeling of animosity to the “new language” that Croatian appears to represent, which is particularly visible in the participants’ comments on the differences between the two languages. These are some of the answers by Croatian native speakers:

- *Serbs sound like peasants.*
- *Serbian sounds colder and more aggressive because of its pronunciation.*
- *It sounds less educated, more aggressive and more primitive.*

The prevailing opinion among the speakers of Croatian is that Serbian has a “hard” pronunciation and thus sounds aggressive, and sometimes even uneducated or peasant-like. However, the speakers of Serbian had a very different kind of a problem with Croatian:

- *There is no difference, they just stole our language, changed it a little and named it Croatian!*
- *People in Croatia are deliberately inserting foreign words and trying hard to make the language as different from Serbian as possible, even if it sounds stupid.*
- *Croatian is just crooked Serbian.*
- *They are very similar but it is important to know that the Croatian government gives money to people that come up with a new Croatian (actually a twisted Serbian) word.*

The qualitative analysis of the answers indicated that the speakers of Serbian still have not accepted the disintegration of what used to be a common language. Note the prevailing notion that Croatian is actually (a version of) Serbian, and not that both are varieties of a common language. Based on these responses, certain speakers of Serbian seem to view

Croatian as nothing more than a runaway dialect of Serbian and the more one group of speakers insist that another group actually speaks their language, the more this other group will insist that they do have a language of their own.

One of the most striking findings regarding the relationship between the age and attitudes of the participants is that there is no difference in attitudes towards the neighbouring language held by the Serbian and Croatian participants who do remember the war years – they are equally neutral. This may be due to their upbringing in the spirit of “brotherhood and unity”, typical of the communist Yugoslavia, but also because of the years of exposure to Serbo-Croatian. For the middle-aged participants, the variety that is at the basis of today’s modern Croatian was a part of their everyday life, thus they do not perceive it as alien, unlike the younger participants. The younger participants, on the other hand, grew up with Serbian as their native language and had very little contact with Croatian, unless they actively sought it or had family relations in Croatia. Therefore, younger participants tend to view Croatian as just another variety of Serbian that claimed the status of a separate language. The only exception here is the group of 10-year olds, whose attitudes to Croatian are either equal or more positive than the attitudes of their Croatian peers to Serbian, which may suggest that such young participants have not yet been exposed to the negative stereotypes typical of both nations. However, it is difficult to explain why the 13-year olds in Serbia hold such negative attitudes to Croatian, especially because their Croatian peers appear to be generally positive about Serbian. Teenagers are prone to having more extreme attitudes, but since this was found only in Serbian participants, in order to solve the mystery, further research is needed.

The relationship between attitudes to the neighbouring language and the amount of contact with it is rather straightforward: the speakers who have more contact with the other language through personal interaction, the media, or the Internet are more likely to have positive attitudes to that language. In addition, the group with the most negative attitudes to the neighbouring language, i.e. the group of 13-14 year old native speakers of Serbian, reported the least amount of contact with Croatian. It appears that these two variables are positively correlated; however, it is not possible to comment on the causation of this relationship.

It is difficult to generalize on the basis of these findings, thus more thorough investigations of the factors influencing these attitudes as well as a closer look on the 13-14 year olds are particularly desirable. However, the general conclusion of the study is that there is a strong indication that

linguistic nationalism is more present in the speakers of Serbian than in the speakers of Croatian. Considering the history of the two languages and their turbulent breakup, it appears that hell hath no fury like a language scorned.

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## Appendix: Testing material (all the differences between the two languages are marked in bold)

### *Croatian*

Sjeverni vjetar i sunce su raspravljali o tome tko je od njih **dvoje** jači, kad je naišao putnik umotan u topli **kaput**. Dogovorili su se da **će** onaj koji prvi putnika natjera da skine kaput **biti** proglašen **jačim**. U tom trenutku, sjeverni vjetar je **zapuhao** što je jače mogao, ali što je više **puhao**, putnik se sve više umotavao u svoj kaput<sup>4</sup>. **Stoga** je na kraju sjeverni vjetar odustao! Tada je sunce počelo **sjati** i putnik je odmah skinuo svoj **kaput**. Sjeverni vjetar je tada bio **primoran priznati**, da je Sunce jače od njega.

### *Serbian*

Severni vetar i sunce su raspravljali o tome ko je od njih jači, kad je naišao putnik umotan u topli **ogrtač**. Dogovorili su se da onaj koji prvi natera putnika da skine ogrtač **bude** proglašen **za jačeg**. U tom trenutku, severni vetar je **zaduvao** što je jače mogao, ali što je više **duvao**, putnik se sve više umotavao u svoj ogrtač **tako da** je na kraju severni vetar odustao. Tada je sunce počelo **da sija** i putnik je odmah skinuo svoj **ogrtač**. Severni vetar je bio **dužan da prizna** da je Sunce jače od njega.

### *English*

The North Wind and the Sun were arguing about which one of them was stronger, when a traveler came by wearing a heavy coat. They agreed that whoever got the traveler to take off his coat first would be considered stronger. The North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the harder he blew, the tighter the traveler wrapped his coat around him, and finally the North Wind had to give up. Then the sun began to shine, and the traveler immediately took off his coat. And so the North Wind had to admit that the Sun was stronger.

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4 *Kaput* and *ogrtač* ('coat' and 'cloak') are the examples of semantic distinction stemming from the different choices made by the translators, rather than a true lexical difference.