The Discursive Creation of the 'Montenegrin Language' and Montenegrin Linguistic Nationalism in the 21st Century

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Abstract. The Serbo-Croatian language was but one of the casualties of the wars of the Yugoslav secession, as it was discursively forcefully split into first two, then three, and recently four allegedly separate languages. The first line of division was promoted by Serbian and Croatian nationalist linguists during the early nineties, soon to be followed by the invention of a standalone Bosnian language, even though contemporary linguistics agrees that Serbo-Croatian, with its regional varieties (as a standardized polycentric language), is a single language. Coming late into the fray, nationally-minded linguists from Montenegro achieved the state-driven proclamation of Montenegrin as a separate language to be in official use within the state only in 2007. Backed by the state, a coterie of nationalist literary theorists and linguists started discursively promoting Montenegrin in academic and public spaces, mostly via the dubious quasi-academic journal titled *Lingua Montenegrina.* This article explores the manners in which Montenegrin nationalist linguists discursively created what they dub to be a language entirely separate from all variants of Serbo-Croatian, which are mostly contained in encomiastic texts about key nationalists, attempts to classify several allophones and phonemes as well as to assert the purported primordial character of the language.

Keywords: Serbo-Croatian, Montenegrin, Montenegro, discursive construction, linguistic nationalism

With the breakup of Yugoslavia and the wars of the Yugoslav secession, the sociolinguistic situation within the new-founded states in which Serbo-Croatian was and is used as the native tongue of the majority of the population (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro) has changed profoundly. All four states – all four national groups – led by nationally-minded linguists sought to establish the base of the new national identity despite alleged ethnic or cultural differences in *language*, which has been tackled in scholarship (Kordić 2010, Jovanović 2012, Greenberg 2004). The first 'split' – on entirely political, national

grounds – was between 'Serbian' and 'Croatian', where forced codification of new standards was introduced from the nineties onwards; 'the instruments of codification include the many dictionaries, orthographic manuals, grammars, and handbooks of the new successor languages published since 1991. Each publication of an instrument of codification has political, rather than linguistic, significance' (Greenberg 2004: 5). Giving an overview of the regional nationalist codifications of local languages, this article delves into the contemporary development of the Montenegrin national linguist corps, analysing their discourse beyond what was so far described in scholarship, as most works have concentrated on the works before 2008 (Kordić 2008, Greenberg 2004), with the exception of a short piece by Nakazawa (2015) and Glušica (2011). The corpus used for analysis is the work produced by the nationalist linguist corps of Montenegro; it concentrates on the most important publications that promulgate a separate, specific Montenegrin language, such as the work of Vojislav Nikčević (1993, 2008b) primarily and especially its reception and proliferation by Adnan Čirgić (2011, 2010) as well as Žarko Đurović (2008a,b), mostly within the textual production of questionable scientific credentials put forth in the *Lingua Montenegrina* journal (2008–present), the analysis of which has not yet seen its day in scholarship.

The Context: The Serbo-Croatian 'Split' within the Region

With the breakup of Yugoslavia, each 'side' developed their own way of forcing the idea of their own, separate, and unique language. In Croatia, this was done mostly by a reintroduction of purism that was already present during the era of the Croat Nazi puppet state, the Independent State of Croatia (Busch 2004: 205, Kordić 2010). A mass of newly coined words were invented with the sole purpose of being different from what was considered to be 'Serbian'. As Thomas has noted, nationalist governments tend to either support or insist on changing 'foreign words' as a part of their nationalist programme (Thomas 1989: 7). In the purists' own words, it was 'necessary to create Croat words and expressions' (Frančić 2005: 191).

The Serbian nationalist linguist corps adopted a somewhat different approach. The majority of linguists subscribed to the idea that Serbo-Croatian was still one language, yet that it was 'Serbian', which was, in a bizarre choice of wording, 'eaten' by other nations (Piper 2003). Those who do not resist such an occurrence are 'unwilling collaborators in glotophagia, the hidden linguocide and the silent murdering of the language' (Piper 2003: 19). The other key instance was the insistence on the Cyrillic script being something intrinsically Serbian (Greenberg 2004: 60), 'the spirit and soul of the Serbian people' (Matović 2006), whilst the Latin script started being considered as 'Croatian', even though it dates millennia into the past and the Roman Empire.

Next in line was the discursive development of a new Bosnian language, which was seen as especially daunting as Serbo-Croatian was already 'separated' into two camps, leaving the Bosniak national linguist corps to 'scrape the barrel' for potential morphological, lexical, or phonological instances that could serve as 'intrinsically Bosnian'. In Greenberg's words, and for those reasons, 'the task of establishing a new Bosnian language has been particularly arduous' (Greenberg 2004: 136) as a 'heavy stretch needed to take place in order to create a Bosnian language out of nothing' (Jovanović 2017: 81). The 'solution' was found in a massive forcing of words of Turkish etymology (in lexicology) as well as the velar fricative /x/ (in phonology) during the nineties when 'the Bosnian language erupted suddenly and unexpectedly in the context of the 1992–5 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The birth of a new Bosniac identity coincided with the proclamation of the language in 1992' (Greenberg 2004: 136).

If Bosnian was left to 'scrape the barrel', Montenegrin nationalist linguists were left with little to nothing when it comes to the 'building blocks' of the forced creation of yet another (fourth) language as a political/administrative successor of what was once known as Serbo-Croatian. This was done resorting to an introduction of what Jacobsen called 'alleged phonemes' (Jacobsen 2008), Greenberg 'some bizarre claims about authenticity' (Greenberg 2004), ending up in what Greenberg described as 'a mountain out of a mole hill' (Greenberg 2004: 88), including a strong agenda pushing from the side of the academic and political elite (including the state), which will be analysed in this work.

From the point of view of linguistics, however, Serbo-Croatian is still one language. What is more, the whole South-Slavic region is 'one dialectal continuum' (Friedman 1999, Alexander, Joseph, and Naylor 2000). The differences between alleged Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin – nowadays 'national varieties' – are fewer than between the variants of French in France, Canada, Belgium, and Africa (Thomas 2003: 314), fewer than among the speakers of German in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Pohl 1996: 219) as well as between English in the United Kingdom, Canada, USA, and Australia (McLennan 1996: 107). It is one linguistic system, 'unquestionably' (Hinrichs 1997: 14). The administrative, political languages that have officially, yet not linguistically, been created from the wars of the Yugoslav secession onwards, though nowadays differing in names, have not changed; a name cannot create a separate language (Blum 2002: 153), and even though laymen can name their languages as they see fit, this cannot stand in the way of scientific rigour (Gröschel 2001: 175). According to Gröschel, there is no bilingualism (or multilingualism) between the groups of speakers of the newly formed idioms (Gröschel 2003). In the words of Kordić, 'Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks, and Montenegrins have a common standard language' (Kordić 2010: 76). As Chilton wrote, 'the varieties differ in relatively minor ways, and are certainly mutually intelligible' (Chilton

2004: 10). Having in mind principles of geographic layering of language, some differences do exist:

> … on the level of phonology, morphology and syntax, and to some extent the vocabulary itself differs slightly. These differences are in themselves minor, but all differences are capable of being politically indexed. The differences in the Serbo-Croat dialect continuum were seized upon and politicised by nationalist movements during the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia that began in 1991. (Chilton 2004: 10)

The abovementioned differences, however, do not amount to the proclamation of different languages from a linguistic perspective. Language planning as well as the 'whole process of language standardization is permeated by politics' (Del Valle 2011: 389), often highly connected with nationalism (Dil & Haugen 1972, Haugen 1966, Blommaert & Verschueren 1998, Judt & Lacorne 2004).

'The Merit of Politics and Politicians'

Not unlike their nationalist counterparts in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia, '"nationalizing" the language … became one of the policies of the government of Montenegro' (Džankić 2014: 367). The process was led from a 'top-down' approach (van Dijk 1993: 250) by the new linguistic elite and politicians, which is why it is important to 'focus on the elites and their discursive strategies' (van Dijk 1993: 250) as 'the ruling elites adopted several symbolic policies in an attempt to consolidate their vision of independent statehood with that of a separate Montenegrin identity. The most significant among these policies were those related to religion, state symbols, and language' (Džankić 2014: 362). In order to force a dominant discourse about language, nationally-minded linguists have numerous times stressed the officialdom of the endeavour. In essence, we are talking about language planning, in Fishman's words, about the 'organized pursuit of solutions to language problems, typically at the national level' (Fishman 1974: 79), which tends to have a 'symbolic status' as it is 'not just a matter of policy and planning' (Del Valle 2011: 389).

In Čirgić's words: 'for the first time in Montenegrin history, the Montenegrin language became a constitutional category as the official language in Montenegro … this is by all means the merit of politics and politicians' (Čirgić 2010: 8). We see that the locus of the utterance is held in the official nature of the proclamation, where Čirgić openly admits that the introduction of an official Montenegrin language was political. At one point, members of the Montenegrin nationalist linguistic project spoke how Montenegrin should be 'imposed by politics, school,

voluntarism, the media' (Nikčević 2009:116), even though, at a different point, they claim that their opponents 'deal with politics rather than science' (Đurović 2008b: 42) in the same journal, *Lingua Montenegrina*. However, proclaiming a language constitutional is not necessary in order to 'protect' the language (Gonzalez 2001), as constitutional proclamation is not even a criterion for the existence of a standardized language (Mattusch 1999: 79–80). This is why van Dijk emphasizes that in such discourses we often see 'incomplete or lack of relevant knowledge – so that no counter-arguments can be formulated against false, incomplete or biased assertions' (van Dijk 2006: 375). Furthermore, Hungary, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the USA do not have a language defined in their constitution (Kordić 2008, 35), keeping in mind that:

> There is also another reason against Constitutional proclamation: the euphoria that is being artificially created around it can lead people to see the language or a specific language name as a totem, as a quasi-sacral, emotionally charged group symbol to identify with, something like a national hymn, flag or coat of arms. (Kordić 2008: 36: Tabouret-Keller 1997)

As Gröschel wrote, from the constitutional declaration of newly standardized languages such as Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, or Montenegrin, arguments against the existence of the Serbo-Croatian language cannot be made (Gröschel 2009: 349). That is why the state is called upon heavily since governments tend to play the key role in language standardization (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997).

In addition, Čirgić claimed that 'with state independence and the Constitution of the independent state of Montenegro, the Montenegrin language became the official language of Montenegro, and it was thus known that negating it was in vain' (Čirgić 2010: 12), stressing the 'vainness' of 'negation attempts', indicating that the declarative power of the states is essentially a 'trump card'. This was necessary due to the fact that a number of linguists (both within Montenegro and from other countries) who have worked in the initial Council for the Standardization of the Montenegrin language failed to reach a consensus among themselves. Čirgić wrote:

> When it became clear that the problem of the standardization of the Montenegrin language got carried over from professional debates into the daily press and lost any scientific character … the Government of Montenegro abolished the Council for the Standardization of the Montenegrin Language and formed a working group, later entitled the Expert Commission for the Standardization of the Montenegrin language. (Čirgić 2010: 33)

The same point is repeated above as well: linguists were prohibited to deal with the issue, with the state stepping in to force its agenda. 'The Commission

gave itself ... a fundamental task ... to prove the existence of the Montenegrin language' (Perović in: Čirgić 2011: 15), which was seen as a question of *identity*, as 'one of the key questions of Montenegrin state identity has the chance of being solved – the question of the Montenegrin language' (Čirgić 2010: 7). In language planning, there is often a 'political nature of these choices' as language planning and policy practices are 'deeply rooted in the interests and ideologies of its practitioners' (Del Valle 2011: 389). However, 'the linguistic aspect of the Montenegrin identity schema's reconstruction was less than successful because a significant percentage of those who identified themselves as Montenegrin did not support all the government's nation-building policies' (Džankić 2014: 369). In other words, the response by the population of Montenegro expected by the nationalist corps was not nearly as enthusiastic. The question remains as to *how* Montenegrin was discursively created, i.e. what are the main discursive instances that have been put forth by Montenegrin nationalist linguists, which is where we turn to in the following paragraphs.

Whence 'Montenegrin'?

The Symbol of a Nation

In Fishman's formulation, when language planners discuss the establishment of new standard languages, their task is both to define the characteristics of the new language and to establish the differentiating features of the new language as opposed to other closely related or competing languages (Fishman 1993). This is why for the main codifier of the new language, Vojsilav Nikčević, 'the focus has been less on how Montenegrin is neither Croatian nor Bosnian, but rather on what has differentiated Montenegrin from Serbian' (Greenberg 2004: 90). In other words:

> Serbia is defined as *other* in contrast to Montenegrin *us*. Serbia became the 'true enemy of the Montenegrin nation' in the Montenegrin nationalists' language ideology. They represent themselves as a small nation, suppressed (by Serbia) on the one hand and on the other hand, somewhat in reaction to this, a Westernized nation. (Nakazawa 2015: 134)

In accordance with such a pathos of differentiation, the discourse stresses the alleged difference from 'Serbian':

> Even a superficial glance into the opus of the greatest Montenegrin writers will show that they have indeed been writing in folk language but significantly different from Serbian. It is so different that Serbs (even

though they appropriate them as their own writers) cannot understand them without a dictionary! (Đurović 2008b: 10)

A common instance that will be seen is strong counterfactuality, having in mind that even the dialects spoken in Montenegro are also spoken in parts of Serbia as 'one of the two dialect types in Montenegro—the Neo-Stokavian/ijekavian dialect—is nearly identical to that spoken by the Serbs residing west of the Drina River' (Greenberg 2004: 91). On a broader level, 'Montenegro's current political boundaries do not correspond to either the dialectal or the ethnic ones' (Greenberg 2004: 92).

It has been established in the study of nationalism and national identity that 'the opposition to the other is taken as an intrinsic feature of nationalism' (Triandafyllidou 1998: 596), and in the case of Montenegrin linguistic nationalism the 'Other' are Serbs, where 'the significant other in these cases serves in overcoming the crisis because it unites the people in front of a common enemy, it reminds them "who we are" and emphasizes that "we are different and unique"' (Triandafyllidou 1998: 603): 'the idea of the political, military, spiritual, linguistic, ethnic and state equality of the Serbs and the Montenegrins was a fatal delusion for the naive Montenegrin people, who have ... been tricked and dragged over to the Serbian national and state corpus' (Đurović 2008b: 6). Đurović offers a revealing paragraph, in which he stresses the 'Montenegrin people (not Serbian)':

> In any case, everybody is well acquainted with the fact that the name of the Montenegrin language springs from the being of the Montenegrin people (not Serbian), as their creators, and has to be identified with it. Those peoples who accept a foreign language as their own are doomed to disappearance. One's own literature and culture cannot be developed in a foreign language. That is why the question of language is much more than a formal acknowledgment and realization of a universal human right. Language is a crucial existential question for a nation. There are numerous proofs that the Montenegrin language has been developing in continuity ever since the proto-Slavic period. Rare are the peoples who have such rich oral and written literature as the Montenegrins do. The confirmation of the existence of the Montenegrin language is found in the literary works of Petar I, Petar II, Stefan Mitrov Ljubiša, Marko Miljanov Popović and other writers who have written works of unsurpassable values in the original Montenegrin language. (Đurović 2008b: 9)

The 'Other' is discursively presented as the enemy, as 'the Serbian political and spiritual elite, with much zeal and will, embarked upon a hasty deconstruction of the Montenegrin national consciousness, establishing a Serbian value system in all spheres of life along the way' (Đurović 2008b: 6). As explained by Glušica, 'the

most important task of the Montenegrin linguistic restandardization is the radical separation of the Montenegrin language first of all from Serbian … which is the foundational approach of nationalism' (Glušica 2011: 274). The oppositional Other exhibits 'crude negational attacks on the foundations of Montenegrin culture, statehood and spirituality', which 'were significantly helped by local scientists of a Great Serbia orientation … they have all been given the same task: fulfill the expansion of Serbian national consciousness and eradicate any trace of the existence of Montenegrins as a self-important people and nation' (Đurović 2008b: 7). As Džankić noted, 'the policies on language and state symbols have been adopted predominantly as markers of differentiation between the Montenegrin and Serb identity schemas' (Džankić 2014: 362). Furthermore, there is a strong insistence on the *language* that should separate the nation from the Other, as 'language has been an additional ethnocultural symbol in the reconstruction of the Montenegrin identity schema' (Džankić 2014: 366).

In a Herderian fashion, it is often emphasized in *Lingua Montenegrina* that 'One of the most important elements of cultural and national identity is language' (Brom 2008: 62). Or, in Đurović's words, 'a name, language and spirituality are the founding blocks of every national being and statehood' (Đurović 2008b: 6). Language is thus positioned as the prime defining element that constitutes a nation:

> Against this background, calling the language used in Montenegro – Montenegrin is an indicator of high cultural awareness of the Montenegrin society, achieved despite unfavorable political conditions. The language is in this case the implementation of a state of mind and the manifestation of the spiritual unity of the nation. (Brom 2008: 64)

The Other, being as such superimposed as the Enemy, thus negates these basics of national identity in a 'strategy' of assimilation:

> The creation of such false notions about the Montenegrin language, which has received the status of locus communis in Serbian linguistics, was a part of a larger political strategy to impose Serbian linguistic identity onto Montenegrins, and then, based on these identifications, carry the political doctrine of annexation of Montenegro into Serbia into effect. (Perović in: Čirgić 2011: 7)

This *Weltanschauung*, even though presented as 'natural' and 'self-understandable' in nationalist discourse, does not correspond with reality as 'many people take it for granted that the political entities we call states have their own language. This is not a state of affairs that comes about naturally, so to speak; it is deeply political' (Chilton 2004: 8, see also: Haugen 1966).

Allophones as Phonemes: Ś and Ź

Besides the insistence on language as the foundational core of national identity, Montenegrin national linguists have developed some implausible notions of the purported phonological structure of the fledgling language, mostly by presenting allophones ś and ź as intrinsically Montenegrin, with a new orthography to present them. However, 'the occurrences of the new jotations **sj* and **zj*, which produced the new phonemes and their corresponding graphemes in the proposed new Montenegrin alphabets, are relatively infrequent. Nikčević provided no proof that these sounds qualify as distinctive phonemes' (Greenberg 2004: 103). The emphases on the two newly added phonemes, by means of reiteration, are ubiquitous within the discourse, and it can be said that they represent the main 'linguistic argument' to the uniqueness of Montenegrin, based on the sheer iterative frequency. In the words of Đurović, 'without the graphemes/phonemes ś, ź, and з, the vocal system of the Montenegrin language is incomplete, unreal, and non-existent' (Đurović 2008b: 10). There was a need for 'the expansion of the Montenegrin consonant system with the sounds *ś* and *ź*' (Čirgić 2011: 56), indicating a stress on phonology at one time, while the same discourse, in other instances, emphasizes the orthographical moment as 'the orthographies that have been official in Montenegro did not take into consideration general Montenegrin language specificities since they have not been taken into consideration by the former Serbo-Croatian standardized language norm' (Perović, Silić, and Vasilijeva 2009). Whether only ś and ź are used or the insistence is expanded to other phonemes is entirely haphazard in the discourse. At one point, Nikčević, combating Serbian linguists who are opposed to the discourse, magnifies the array entirely, saying that 'in this work, the author impugns the opinions of Drago Ćupić about the non-phonemic character of the sounds *ś, ź, з, ć i đ* in an analytical and critical manner' (Nikčević 2008a: 25). Čirgić, in another, offers his own random collection, even adding an ellipsis, so that the reader might read in their own vision, claiming that 'the sounds *ś, ź, ć, đ...* are omnipresent in all Montenegrin speeches, without exception' (Čirgić 2011: 144), indicating poor systematic linguistic work.

Contrary to the Montenegrin national linguist corps' repetitive claims, 'Nikčević's orthography received no major support by mainstream philologists and linguists' (Nakazawa 2015: 130) – as 'these new jotations are found in the territory of Montenegro, they are neither pan-Montenegrin nor uniquely Montenegrin, since East Herzegovinian Serbs also admit such a feature' (Greenberg 2004: 103). In more detail:

> If we take a closer look at the situation presented in the *Grammar of the Montenegrin Language* (by Nikčević), we shall see that when it comes to the first two alleged phonemes what is surprising is the claim of the author

that ś and ź are specifically Montenegrin phonemes, when it is known that they are present in a large area of South Herzegovinian speeches ... besides that, it is clear that ś and ź are not functional units but the combinatory versions of the phonemes s and z as they come up only in connection with the phonemes /j/, /lj/ and /nj/. (Jacobsen 2008: 30)

Occasionally, /đ/ and /ć/ get mentioned as well; however, 'when it comes to the other two allegedly typical Montenegrin phonemes, đ and ć, it is not possible to see any structural difference between Serbo-Croatian and Montenegrin' (Jacobsen 2008: 31), given that they are part of the phonemic repertoire of Serbo-Croatian in all its dialectal forms, from Istria to the Torlak region. According to Greenberg:

The two palatal sounds, s and z, arose primarily in the Northwestern Montenegrin and East Herzegovinian Neo-Stokavian/ijekavian dialects. These dialects obtain such forms through a process referred to as 'new jotations,' which occurs when the dental consonants *s, z, d, t* were followed by *j* resulting from the ijekavian renditions of the short *jat'*. In the ijekavian dialects spoken by Bosniacs and Croats, such jotations are completely absent; they may only be found among Serbs of East Herzegovina and Montenegrins. (Greenberg 2004: 103)

A further moment of relevance is the recognition of the Montenegrin linguistic corps that 'the presence of the voices *ś* and *ź* is confirmed also in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian' (Čirgić 2011: 161), yet this never functioned as a deterrent in the creation of a new standard:

The fact that linguistic properties in Montenegro are 'not only Montenegrin but they envelop significant zones beyond Montenegro' cannot be in collision with the standpoint of the existence of Montenegrin speeches as a whole, that is, it cannot serve as a confirmation of the non-existence of typical Montenegrin properties. (Čirgić 2011: 58)

Due to a running *non sequitur*, the lines above were needed to be given in a declarative discursive fashion the topos which permeates the discourse. That is why it is probably true that 'the orthography of the Montenegrin language with two new sounds ś and ź will not be long-lived ... that is because these "expert" experiments are more than of ephemeral character' (Kadić 2009). Furthermore, claims have been made that there is a 'magisterial Montenegrin orthographic and orthoepic principle *Write as you speak, read is it has been written* – for each sound (phoneme), an appropriate letter (grapheme) has to be found' (Đurović 2008b: 10), an error made by the lack of understanding that even languages in

which one grapheme does not correspond to one phoneme (languages with phonemic orthography such as Serbo-Croatian or Arabic) 'write as it is spoken' and 'speak as it is written'.

In order to convince their audience of the 'importance' of the new phonemes, the authors tended to use them wherever possible or impossible, so that words like 'śedoči' (Đurović 2008b: 6) were coined even though the original word, 'svjedoči' (Ser-Cro: 'testify'), does not have the jotation itself, having in mind the consonant cluster 'svj', and not 'sj'. In other moments, some words, such as 'uslјed' (due to, since), becomes forcefully jotized to 'uślјed' (Nikčević 2008b: 60, 62). Đurović uses 'uślјed' several times as well (Đurović 2008a: 329), yet inconsistently, as then he reverts to the standard form 'uslјed' (Đurović 2008a: 323) within the same text, showing that not even he himself has managed to congruously force it into his discourse. In short, Nikčević, with his new phonemes and orthography, 'created an artificial and idealized language for the Montenegrins, which is not native to any of its citizens' (Greenberg 2004: 105).

Other Separating Instances: Ijekavian as a Separator and the 'Ancient' Character of Montenegrin

Yet another instance that was put forth as 'intrinsically Montenegrin' is the ijekavian pronunciation. In Nikčević's own words, 'the very fact that the ijekavian pronunciation is standardized in Montenegro, while being dialectal in Serbia, speaks that it is originally Montenegrin, and in Serbia ... secondary and dying out' (Nikčević 2008a: 36). This serves to prove that the Otherization takes exclusively Serbia as its opposition, as the ijekavian pronunciation covers the whole of the territories of Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia as well as southwestern Serbia, yet only in Serbia it does not function as part of the standardized language (even though Bosnian Serbs use the ijekavian pronunciation). In Greenberg's explanation, 'for him (Nikčević), the Montenegrins are the sole authentic ijekavian speakers in the Balkans, and other peoples in the area (Serbs, Croats, Bosniacs) had acquired ijekavian speech "secondarily". There is no credible evidence to justify any of these claims' (Greenberg 2004: 100). According to Čirgić, 'contrary to the territory covered by Bosnian, Croatian, and especially Serbian, the territory of Montenegro is predominantly and recognizably ijekavian' (Čirgić 2011: 93), yet this is an entirely counterfactual statement as both 'Bosnian' and 'Croatian' are ijekavian in their entirety.

In addition to the insistence on ijekavian, Montenegrin linguist nationalists have also tried to present Montenegrin as a language with diverging historical development, which has led to Nikčević's incredulous categorization of the language through history, in which the first stage of the development of Montenegrin is 'from the articulation of speech to 1360' (Nikčević 1993). As the

alleged differences were contrary to modern linguistics, the discourse needed to continue in a declarative fashion; according to Čirgić, 'even though they have a štokavian base, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Croatian, and Serbian had different developmental flows, so their development did not have many contact points in particular stages' (Čirgić 2011: 23). According to Greenberg:

> Like other nationalists, members of the pro-Montenegrin faction support their claims for a sovereign Montenegrin nation-state, by emphasizing its specific cultural heritage, history, literature, ethnic origins, and language. In their search for authenticity, they have made some outlandish claims on the special origin of the Montenegrin people. In an interview posted on the Montenet website entitled 'Does a Montenegrin Language Exist?' ('Da li postoji crnogorski jezik'), Nikčević made the highly dubious claim that 'the prototype for the Montenegrin language is the Polabian language,' having based these unfounded assertions on 'hundreds' of Montenegrin place names. (Greenberg 2004: 100)

'With Full Respect to Scientific Argumentation': The Discursive Strategies of Repetition, Praise and Faux *Ad Verecundiam*

Another instance which is heavily exploited is a staunch encomiastic discourse, with the main proponent of the Montenegrin language, the late Vojislav Nikčević, being the most common object of praise. Đurović wrote, drawing upon Čirgić, that 'for Čirgić, there is no doubt that the academic Vojislav P. Nikčević, with his work and linguistic conception, acquired great international acclaim in the world of linguistics' (Đurović 2008b: 16). He also called Nikčević 'the bard of the Montenegrin language, who now already enjoys high respect in philological and linguistic circles throughout Europe. There is an imposing number of writers, prominent cultural workmen, philologists and linguists that hold true that Vojislav P. Nikčević is, as a scientist and tireless workman, unrivalled in Montenegrin linguistics' (Đurović 2008b: 8).

Statements are given in a straightforward, declarative manner, without corroboration, expecting from the reader to take the information given for granted. The praise continues, uninterrupted:

> It is doubtless that Čirgić's scientific attitudes about the whole of the work and importance of Vojislav P. Nikčević fit into the criteria of numerous contemporary linguists, academics, and university professors throughout

Europe. All of them are unified in the judging that Nikčević's work has played the key role for their own introduction to the Montenegrin language as well as that because of him this language is being studied at departments of Slavistics outside of Montenegro. Without any exaggeration, one could say that there is no linguist in the world who is aware of the Montenegrin language without being aware of the academic Nikčević. (Đurović 2008b: 16)

Besides the ubiquitous declarative nature of the statements, the main identifiable instance in the above-presented encomiastic discourse is *repetition*. For some linguists, repetition is a 'central linguistic meaning-making strategy' (Tannen 2007: 97) as it has a strong 'reinforcing function' (Lausberg, Orton, and Anderson 1998). Similar discursive instances are presented time and again by the use of slightly different wording and synonymy, which in linguistics is known as 'semantic repetition' (Persson 1974). This praise is repeated in constant new iterations, all of which promote the idea that Nikčević is a rigorous scientist: he is a 'lucid scientific researcher' (Đurović 2008b: 5) 'adhering to rigorous scientific norms' (Đurović 2008b: 8), 'with full respect to scientific argumentation' (Đurović 2008b: 12), including the following:

As an important property of Nikčević's work, the academic Rotković states the principle of acknowledgment of linguistic facts … the academic Nikčević does not belong to that circle of linguists who invent solutions only to make Montenegrin different from Serbian, Bosnian, or Croatian. (Đurović 2008b: 9)

– even though the statement above is entirely counter-factual. Repetition is an important element in encomiastic text as it stands among the most important of instances in the creation of discourse (Tannen 2007). Plato was probably the first to stress the negative aspects of praise (Nightingale 1993), and the examples given here speak to that particular point. Besides Đurović, Perović went in a similar manner, claiming that:

[Nikčević] persuasively and with scientific validity … proved the historical foundation of the Montenegrin language, its independence and authenticity, its specific differences towards Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, the justification of a complete linguistic rehabilitation of ijekavian iotation as well as a total linguistic, cultural, and political meaningfulness and validity of the act of the first standardization of the Montenegrin language. (Perović in: Čirgić 2011: 19)

Praise continues, claiming that 'even with the most superficial of glances into the overflowingly rich creation corpus of the academic Vojsilav P. Nikčević, one comes to the conclusion about his immensurable contribution to the guarding of the spirit of the Montenegrin language' (Đurović 2008b: 7). The all-permeating pathos of *ad verecundiam*, in which Nikčević is the only reference, serves to stress the alleged scientific background of his work. Occasionally, *ad verecundiam* will spread to:

> [I]mportant names of contemporary philology and linguistics (who) have unreservedly supported the gifted and tireless scientist, Nikčević, as the linguistic leader of Montenegro, who has, by use of his fundamental books, created the strongest of foundations for the Montenegrin language. (Đurović 2008b: 7)

These 'important names of contemporary philology' are most commonly left unnamed, having in mind that the number of linguists who support Nikčević's idea of a 'standalone' Montenegrin is small to non-existent, as Serbo-Croatian, at least in linguistics, if not local politics, still figures as a single language (Kordić 2010, Greenberg 2004, Mørk 2008, Jacobsen 2008, Thomas 2003). Only occasionally, nonetheless, is it elucidated who these linguists are, such as in Čirgić's elaboration as follows:

> There is a not too small number of philologists in the world to whom the Montenegrin language is an undeniable reality (next to the mentioned Croatian linguists, these are: Emil Tokarz, Przemysław Brom, Robert Bońkowski, Agnieszka Spaginska Pruszak, Lyudmila Vasilyeva, Daniel Grabić, Krzysztof Zalewski, and others). (Čirgić 2011: 191)

However, inquiry into these 'important names' reveals less than exonerating instances. Przemysław Brom is listed as a fifth-year student of Croat studies at the Silesian University in Katowice (Katowice 2017). Robert Bońkowski is officially a linguist from the same university, who supports the idea of Montenegrin as a separate language in a single, nine-page article, quoting Brom at the beginning of his work (Bońkovski 2008: 191); the English version of the summary speaks about the 'wrighting of Montenegrins' (Bońkovski 2008: 201) instead of 'writing'. Emil Tokarz is yet another Silesian linguist who has produced a single work about the linguistic situation in Montenegro, published in the first issue of *Lingua Montenegrina*, in which he mentions only that 'the Montenegrin language is the youngest of the normatized standards that have been introduced in the past few years' (Tokarz 2008), never in actual fact supporting the idea that Montenegrin is a separate language, indicating perhaps that the editorial of the *Lingua Montenegrina* has dubious publishing practices, as there is no way in which it can be proven that

anybody from the editorial board speaks Polish. Agnieszka Spaginska Pruszak is another Polish linguist who deals with Serbo-Croatian and has published a couple of works on the topic of the linguistic situation in former Yugoslavia (Spagińska-Pruszak 2003, 2005a,b,c), yet without mentioning Montenegrin. Krzysztof Zalewski has not published anything on the Montenegrin language. The case of Daniel Grabić's work is somewhat more interesting as he actually wrote about Montenegrin linguistic nationalism and the 'exclusive Montenegrin nationalist project' and that there is 'skepsis in connection with the meaning and legitimacy of the demand for a further segmentation of the former Serbo-Croatian language area' (Grabić 2010: 22), indicating yet again that Čirgić had never checked what Grabić wrote, given that he wrote in German. When it comes to Lyudmila Vasilyeva, she is a Ukraine-based scholar who has written several times about Montenegrin, mostly by propounding a Herderian view of language, claiming that 'the language of any people, as well as state language, is the instrument of communication within society and the basis of national culture' (Vasiliyeva 2009: 48) as well as that 'language is an important sign of the cultural specificity of a people and state' (Vasiliyeva 2009: 51). In summa, only a few of the authors enumerated by Čirgić *do* claim that Montenegrin is a separate language, while most of them do not. Those who do not have mentioned the phrase 'Montenegrin language' in the work (as does this article), published in foreign languages. A conjecture can be made that the creators of the Montenegrin language searched for the phrase and then took every work that mentions it, without reading it first, as they are in Polish, German, and Ukrainian.

Conclusions

The process of Montenegrin language planning and the creation of the fourth language offspring of Serbo-Croatian was led by a relatively small number of the elite, with ample help from the state itself, via a process of the discursive construction of national identity by attempts of simulating linguistics. This process was initially 'led by Vojislav Nikčević—a professor of Slovene literature from Nikšić's Philosophy Faculty—the Montenegrins advocating a separate Montenegrin language became louder and politically more palatable after 1997, when Milo Đukanović was elected president of Montenegro, and the republic began moving towards secession from the FRY' (Greenberg 2004: 89).

Within Nikčević's discourse, it could be seen that he was not a linguist but a literary scholar as most ideas put forth by him tended not to correspond with linguistics or linguistic reality. As Nakazawa wrote:

> Vojislav P. Nikčević (1935–2007) was a linguist born in Montenegro, educated in Zagreb, and later worked at the Faculty of Philosophy in

Nikšić. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, he promoted the uniqueness of Montenegrin language as a Montenegrin nationalist and in course of the polemics on the origin of Montenegrins in the 1980s he stood by the anthropologist Špiro Kulišić, who argued that Montenegrin has no common features with Serbian. In course of the political transformation period he wrote many books on 'Montenegrin language'. (Nakazawa 2015: 129)

Nakazawa, however, erred when he dubbed Nikčević a linguist, as he was a literary scholar. After his passing, the discourse was taken over primarily by one Adnan Čirgić, who is often dubbed 'the first doctor of the Montenegrin language' (Đurović 2008b: 15), who has 'at the University of J. J. Strossmayer, on 26 October 2007, defended his doctoral thesis' (Đurović 2008b: 15), yet Strossmayer University in Osijek does not boast a study programme for Montenegrin language (Osijek 2017). Žarko Đurović, who was heavily cited in this work as an important creator of the nationalist discourse, is not credited with a Ph.D., but with a B.A. in literature studies.

We have approached the Montenegrin national linguistic agenda from a discourse analytical perspective, taking special consideration of the notion of *manipulation*, promulgated by van Dijk as 'one of the crucial notions of Critical Discourse Analysis' (van Dijk 2006: 359). 'Discursively, manipulation generally involves the usual forms and formats of ideological discourse, such as emphasizing Our good things, and emphasizing Their bad things' (van Dijk 2006: 359) – in this case, 'Montenegrin good things' versus 'Serbian bad things'. 'Manipulation not only involves power, but specifically *abuse* of power, that is, *domination*' (van Dijk 2006: 360), when one discursive format, put forth by the elites and the state, tried to establish itself above all others. As van Dijk noticed, '"modern" and often more effective power is mostly cognitive, and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation and manipulation, among other strategic ways to *change the mind of others in one's own interests*' (van Dijk 1993: 254).

Due to its being based on severe lack of linguistic expertise, as well as having in mind that it has commonly been put forth in an entirely declarative discursive manner, Montenegrin as a 'standalone' language has not been accepted in linguistics worldwide and stands as a testament of the unending streams of nationalism from the fledgling states that used to be part of former Yugoslavia in their own ways of discursively constructing national identities. As Mørk wrote, as just one example, 'when it comes to the Montenegrin language, as a topic of study, it will not be used outside of Montenegro' (Mørk 2008: 296). We shall end by quoting Jelušić, who put the situation in a brusque and straightforward manner: 'After everything that has happened in these areas, Montenegro needs knowledge and education, not linguistic nationalism, especially one tolerated and supported by the state' (Jelušić 2008).

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