
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 DIALECT AND STANDARD

The interaction among the varieties of the Slovene language might be described as a kind of diglossia. Although, the traditional definition of diglossia does not perfectly fit the Slovene situation, the term does capture an important reality (Greenberg 2006: 14). The Slovene standard language did not arise organically from one dominant dialect but is a construct based on features from various dialects and historical periods. As a result there is significant distance, structurally, lexically and phonetically, between the standard language and the dialects. Almost no one in Slovenia grows up with the standard language as his or her mother tongue.

There are various proposals for the categorization of the varieties of Slovene speech. The best known model, put forward by Toporišič, divides Slovene into literary and non-literary types, the literary standard and the spoken standard language being in the literary group and local and regional dialects being part of the non-literary group (13). In many ways this is not a very helpful categorization because it does not tell us much about the varieties. All varieties are defined based on the standard language. Never the less, it will serve as a beginning point for our discussion.

The standard literary language is the language of educated Slovenes, at least to the level of a secondary education (15). It is generally not a spoken language unless it is read from a prepared text. It is used for official purposes and to reach a national audience. Standard Slovene is most often and correctly used by teachers, professors, writers, journalists and actors (15).

The colloquial standard is a less formal and less strict variant of the written standard. It is spoken and rarely written (16). It is used when the audience is not strictly local or when speaking with an unfamiliar person.

Because of its connection to the literary standard, it can be understood by all Slovenes, although, it does adopt some local features. For example, the colloquial standard is different in Ljubljana than in Maribor (Herrity 1). In general the colloquial standard differs from the literary standard in that it is characterized by phonetic reductions and vowel loss, ‘delati’ > *delat*, ‘je bila’ > *je bla*, ‘rekel’ > *reku*, ‘ključ’ > *kluč*. There is also some simplified morphology and colloquial word choice, ‘jedo’ > *jejo*, reduction of the dual and ‘da’ > *ja* (Toporišič 18).

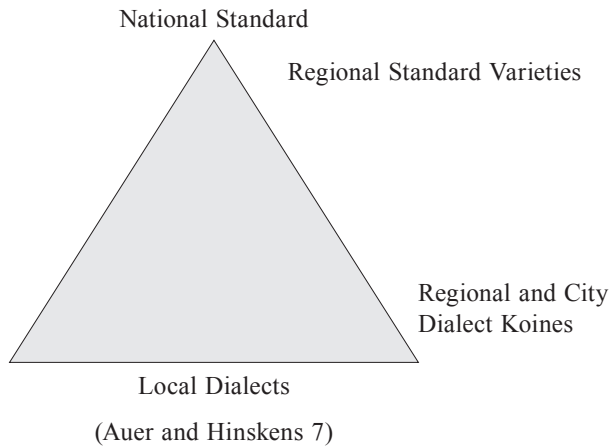
Regional and city dialects are regional koines based on local dialect features. They are used by less educated people or when the audience is local, family and friends. The regional dialects permit, in addition to local dialect features, multiple foreign borrowings, the origin of which mainly depends on the region of the country (21). Finally, local dialects are geographically quite restricted, used almost exclusively in the local village among family and friends and mostly by farmers and agricultural workers (23).

This traditional view is a good place to start a discussion of the interaction between varieties of the Slovene language because it allows us to define distinct categories. Its weakness is that language use does not always fit into these distinct categories. While this model is regularly used in basic descriptions of the Slovene speech territory, researchers often reject or modify it in more detailed discussions because of its distance from actual usage. For example, Smole rejects Toporišič’s division between literary and nonliterary as not very accurate and too focused on the literary standard rather than the language with all its varieties (2004: 322). Smole has recently proposed a division for the varieties of Slovene based on systematic versus non-systematic varieties. She describes Slovene speech varieties between two systematic poles. The natural local dialect, a self-contained linguistic system, being one pole, and the standardized literary language, systematized in the national grammar and authoritative dictionaries, being the other pole. According to Smole, non-systematic variants such as regional or city dialects and the colloquial standard are, to a greater or lesser degree, departures from the systematic varieties (323).

Smole’s model has much to recommend it. Systematic poles and variation from those poles by degrees much more accurately represents language

use. Speakers do not generally switch from one distinct variety to another. They usually alter some aspects of language by degrees based on the social context (Lundberg 2010: 58). One problem with Smole's systematic/non-systematic approach is that the local dialect may not be as systematic as she claims. The modern local dialect may also not be easily understood as a single system. Unless we take a historical perspective or choose the dialect spoken only by the oldest speakers, modern dialects in Slovenia, and probably in most of Europe, are often quite fluid and variegated with clear age and social differentiation. This is complicated by the fact that in some areas of Slovenia the local dialect has been or is being replaced by the regional koine of the area, the colloquial standard or some combination of both (Lundberg 2005b). Auer and Hinskens propose a continuum model, inspired by Chambers and Trudgill, for variation between a standard language and local dialects that is similar to Smole's approach but better represents the variety in local dialects.

Figure 1: *Dialect-Standard Continuum*



In figure 1 the standard language and local dialects form the poles of a continuum. The horizontal line represents the relative geographical diversity of local dialects. Intermediate forms arise, which may be more or less demarcated, because of convergence toward the standard language and because of koineization due to the mobility of the population (6). In Slovenia some intermediate varieties, regional dialects, have arisen around major

cities through the process of koineization.¹ In general large cities play an important role in the development of regional dialects (Auer and Hinskens 10). For the Slovene speech territory Toporišič claims at least four regional dialects: Central Slovene, centered around Ljubljana and Kranj; South Styrian, around Celje; North Styrian, around Maribor and Ptuj; Littoral, around Nova Gorica and Koper (21).

Intermediate varieties as well as local dialects are also influenced by dialect leveling. For the local dialects some of this leveling is toward the colloquial standard, but most of it is toward the regional dialects. Dialect leveling toward a regional koine is a common process in contemporary Europe.² Smole claims that in Slovenia the range of usage for both the literary standard and the local dialect is diminishing and that the gap is being filled by nonsystematic regional dialects (2009: 558). This claim is supported by my own research on dialect leveling in Haloze, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

Almost all Slovenes have some competence in a local dialect, and, depending on their education level and other societal factors, they command a greater or lesser degree of the continuum toward the standard language. If a speaker is well educated and fully controls the entire continuum, then the speaker can switch between codes, local dialect, regional dialect and standard language, when the social context demands. If a speaker has less command of the standard language, making him or her unable to fully shift to the standard, or if the speaker is only accommodating his speech in a minor way from a local dialect to a regional koine, then it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify clear distinctions between codes. This is where the notion of a continuum is especially useful. It is also the place where the opinion of an outside observer may differ from that of an informant as to which code is really being used (Werlen 96). What an informant considers to be the colloquial standard may have a variety of regional or dialect features in it. The same can be said of the variety of speech that an informant

¹ For a discussion of koineization see Kerswill 671 and Auer and di Luzio 5.

² For a discussion of dialect leveling see Auer and Hinskens 14, Kerswill 671 and Trudgill 107.

claims to be local dialect. It may have many features of the regional koine in it. This will also be discussed further in chapter 4.

1.2 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In what follows, I will discuss developments in and around the dialect area of Haloze, Slovenia. We will begin the analysis from a descriptive and historical perspective. The phonological description of the dialect and the discussion of the linguistic history of Haloze will be based on the author's dialect recordings and fieldwork. This initial description will be done in order to document the most archaic forms of the dialect and to better understand where Haloze fits among the surrounding dialects and language groups. After this we will analyze Haloze from a contemporary perspective. The discussion of the modern sociolinguistic state of the dialect will be based on extensive interviews as well as several questionnaires conducted in the region within the last two years. This discussion will make use of the continuum model for the interaction between different varieties of the Slovene language described above. It will also be done with the intent of documenting the early stages of dialect leveling in Haloze. This leveling is not primarily toward the colloquial standard. It is largely toward the regional dialect around the city of Ptuj.

In chapter 2, I will give a brief overview of the most archaic form of the dialect still in use, the dialect spoken primarily by the oldest living generation of the Haloze region. I will not give a detailed description of each of the micro dialects. That has been done elsewhere and is not the primary purpose of this book. I will give a basic description of the vocalic systems of the main regions of Haloze and include a more detailed description of two regions as examples. The phonological description included in chapter 2 is of the village dialects of Meje and Belavšek. This micro dialect of Meje is similar to other eastern Haloze village dialects, but this description with examples has not been published in any other venue.

In chapter 3, I will give a brief summary of the phonological history of the region. I will use dialect data from fieldwork to discuss the provenience

of the Haloze dialect systems and to describe the relationship between the Slovene Pannonian and Styrian dialect bases and the Croatian Kajkavian region. Haloze plays an important part in that discussion because of its location at the convergence of these dialect areas and because of the national border on which it sits.

In chapter 4, I will turn to the contemporary situation in Haloze. I will discuss interviews and recent fieldwork as well as present the findings from several questionnaires conducted in Haloze, all of which indicate that, contrary to popular belief, the local dialect is not dying. Large percentages of people of all age groups claim to be proficient speakers of the dialect. It is also undeniable that, when the modern dialect of almost all local speakers is compared to the most archaic forms of the dialect, the dialect is changing. My contention, backed up by the results of surveys, interviews and observations, is that the local village dialect is being leveled toward the dialect of the regional koine.

The regional koine, spoken in and around the city of Ptuj, is based on local dialects and is perceived by speakers as dialect. As the local village dialects are leveled toward the regional koine, speakers continue to think of themselves as local dialect users even though they are speaking a variety of the language closer to the regional dialect than to the micro dialect of their parents and grandparents.