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## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Very few Slovenes grow up with the literary language as their mother tongue. Some form of dialect or the colloquial standard is spoken at home. Still, all but the oldest and most isolated Slovenes, including the middle and younger generations in Haloze, have at least a basic competence in the standard language. Depending on their education level and other societal factors, they command a greater or lesser degree of the continuum from dialect 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. Although this is theoretically true, many well educated speakers, especially those who no longer live in the dialect area, have lost much of their active proficiency in the local dialect. These speakers may only be able to partially shift back to the local dialect, using local expressions and some local pronunciation. If a speaker has less command of the standard language, making him or her unable to fully shift to the standard, then it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify clear distinctions between codes. The speaker may claim to be speaking the standard language while using a mix of dialect, colloquial and standard forms.

The linguistic situation in Slovenia generally and in Haloze specifically fits well with a model for the varieties of Slovene in which the standard language and local dialects form the poles of a continuum. Intermediate forms arise because of convergence toward the standard language and because of koineization based on dialect contact. 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. This appears to be the case in the village dialects of Haloze.

A comparison between the most archaic forms of the Haloze dialect and the modern situation strengthens the case for leveling in the region. From a historical perspective, we have seen that the dialect spoken primarily by the oldest residents is different from that of other generations. The main difference is one of quantity rather than quality. Individual speakers at varying rates have abandoned some of the most salient Haloze dialect features while maintaining others, especially basic pronunciation. There is a lack of uniformity in usage in the modern dialect.

Even though there is variation in usage in the modern Haloze dialect, residents claim high levels of proficiency in the local dialect. 87% of respondents to the survey discussed in chapter 4 claimed to both speak and understand the dialect. The number goes up to 98% if we include those who claimed adequate command of the dialect. Locals also have a relatively positive aesthetic judgment of their dialect. When asked to indicate if the dialect were ugly or beautiful on a scale from 1 to 7, respondents averaged 5.69. It is also striking that 63% of respondents claimed that the youth from Haloze speak primarily in the local dialect. The dialect of Haloze is spoken regularly and valued highly. It is not on the verge of dying off, but it is changing. The variation in usage among all generations is an indication of this.

One of the main ways that the Haloze dialect is changing is that it is being leveled toward the regional Styrian dialect, generally, and the dialect of Ptuj, specifically. When asked what variety of Slovene is the most beautiful (Ptuj 33%), with what variety of Slovene do you have the most contact (Ptuj 71%) and what variety of Slovene is replacing the local dialect (Ptuj 62%), the regional dialect used in and around Ptuj was the top choice for Haloze dialect speakers. These survey findings along with the observations on language use and dialect contact reported on in chapter 4 are strong evidence for the claim that the local Haloze dialect is being leveled toward the regional speech of Ptuj. This new leveled Haloze dialect is not identical to that spoken by someone from a village in other dialect areas near Ptuj. It still has some distinct features and can be identified as haloško, but it is less differentiated than the speech of previous generations.