

The Language of the Media (on Some Aspects of the Standard and Substandard From the Point of Accentuation)¹

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Abstract

The relationship between the standard as a special idiom, a subsystem of a language, and its additional idioms (dialects, jargon, colloquial language) is most often observed in the context of dynamic and innovative processes in the domain of language use. One of the most suitable and reliable language corpora for studying the stability of the language system and the changes that occur in it is media discourse. It represents reliable material for assessing the character of those changes, for monitoring not only development tendencies but also possible consequences. In the sphere of language use in the social context, the orthoepic norm itself plays an important role, i.e., accentuation, which represents a group of acoustic, the so-called prosodic or suprasegmental properties of the human voice such as length, pitch and loudness. In this paper, we deal with the issues of the use of standards, i.e., substandards in electronic media from the point of accent, because it is a fact that the way in which speakers in electronic media - presenters, journalists, announcers - shape certain contents could, without a doubt, strongly shape public opinion and also significantly influence the speech and language culture of a wide audience.

Keywords: media language, standard, substandard, accentuation

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Media discourse – Linguistically the most influential discourse of public communication

Many studies have shown that out of all forms of public communication journalistic discourse is the most influential factor in the development of language

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awareness and culture of members of a particular language community. In the context of standardization and consolidation of the standard language idiom as a common code of dialectically separated speakers of the Serbian language, in the past it was one of the basic factors for promoting the standard language as a supralinguistic category. If we agree that the language of the media, considering the immediate linguistic and educational role, should be linguistically exemplary, which means shaped in accordance with the standard language norm, it is necessary that the creators of the linguistic discourse - journalists, presenters and announcers - possess at least a satisfactory level of linguistic competence. However, the linguistic analysis of contemporary journalistic discourse shows an increasing tendency to move away from the standard linguistic norm and the frequent use of various substandard idioms - dialects (Lončar Raičević, 2021; Miloradović, 2014). The analysis of speech on radio and television at the beginning of the 21st century showed that both in our region, and in the surrounding area, there is a significant decline in language culture (Jokanović Mihajlov, 2006), and reasons should be sought in the globalization and democratization of public space, which leads to “the lowering of style “ (Škarić, 1998), but also to the abolition of relevant language criteria when selecting people to perform announcer jobs. Let us refer to Ivo Škarić’s statement on this occasion - wherever one speaks in public, one “speaks rhetorically”, which means obeying certain rules, because the speaker in the public space often does not only speak on his/her own behalf, but also represents someone or speaks as a member of a group, so he/she is also responsible to the collective he/she represents (Škarić, 1988). Not only because of the collective that h/she represents, but also because of the audience that he/she addresses, every speaker, according to Škarić, should master the basic rules of good speech, namely: *eloquence* (moving away from the mere reproduction of a written text), *personality/character* (identifying oneself with the content message that is manifested in a recognizable, individual interpretation), *logicality* (properly and logically structured speech, argumentation of statements), *poetics* (stylistic refinement of speech) and *regularity* (obeying the orthoepic norm of the standard language)” (Škarić, 1988), which is very often a reflection of the speaker’s social status and his/her position on the social ladder.

Being aware of the need for the necessary mastery of standard idioms in media discourse, but also of the fact that in the written and spoken use of language, standard and substandard intertwine (dialect, colloquial language, etc.), we want to draw attention to this interactive relationship between standard and substandard idioms, above all dialects, on the corpus from the electronic media.

Standard – Substandard form the point of accentuation

Depending on social conditions, a language can be spoken in different ways, and in this sense, we can talk about language as a set of varieties. According to Milorad Radovanović, language is divided into four types: territorial, social, individual and functional. Territorial stratification implies two types of phenomena: territorial stratification in the form of dialects and territorial stratification in the form

of a standard language (Radovanović, 1979: 77). Territorial stratification of non-standard languages implies spatial differentiation into different dialects that branch all the way to local languages, and they are the subject of dialectology, while on the other hand, there are also urban (city) languages that are characteristic of “urbanized societies”. When it comes to standard language variants, they can be reflected on different levels, even on the level of accentuation. The problem of pronunciation in public communication is a direct result of problems in Serbian prosody in general.

It is known that the Serbian language, as an organic idiom, has several dialects that differ to a greater or lesser extent and are more or less distant from the standard. Standard languages can be created on different bases, and the basis of the Serbian literary language consists of two Neo-Shtokavian dialects: Eastern Herzegovinian and Šumadija-Vojvodina. The standard, or standard idiom, represents an explicit social convention and has the status of supra-regional and general social communication, it has gained cultural and political supremacy over all other idioms - dialects, sociolects, jargons. One of its goals is the unification and stabilization of diverse language practice (Bugarski, 1995: 162). The standard itself is a consequence of language planning, which is nothing more than enabling an idiom for public communication (Granić, 1996: 84). The standard language norm covers all levels of language structure in the entire range of language functions, so we are talking about orthoepic, orthographic, morphological, syntactic, lexical and stylistic norms, which are determined by grammars, dictionaries, stylistic, spelling and other manuals (Bugarski, 1995: 234). It is important to point out that the speech community that shares a language is never homogeneous, and it has a repertoire of language varieties that the speakers use according to their personal discretion, depending on the communicative situation.³

In relation to the standard language, substandard idioms are locally limited and represent non-standard language varieties that were created by the territorial stratification of the language (Bugarski, 1995: 156). They have their own implicit norm that their speakers intuitively feel and that derives from the manner of its adoption, i.e., transmission from generation to generation. So, non-standard language

³ In sociolinguistics, there is a typology of the repertoire of speech communities, the most famous of which is the one that distinguishes the standard language and dialects, which Charles Ferguson defines as diglossia (the phenomenon refers to the point when two varieties are found in the same genetic language that are used for different functions, and both of them can be standardized). This model has been, for instance, applied in the Croatian language by Damir Kalogjera (he points out that the high variety is adopted only through education; in formal speech only the high variety is used; the high variety is not used in everyday speech). He defines the low variety as the standard layer of the language in which many structures belonging to the high variety are bypassed and solved in a different way (Kalogjera, 2009: 556), stating that the low variety is the highest level that an average educated Croatian citizen can achieve in terms of knowledge of the structural norms of the standard Croatian language, after finishing high school and obtaining a higher education degree, with the exception of diligent students who graduated from Croatian studies. The high level of the Croatian variety, for example, implies the realization of the Neo-Shtokavian accentuation norms and the application of rules concerning accents (falling accents can only be placed on the first syllable; realization of unaccented lengths; transfer of accents to the proclitic).

varieties, i.e., dialects are not explicitly normed and their development cannot be controlled, which is a key difference from the standard idiom.

Contacts of a standard language and a dialect of a language represent a completely natural and common type of contact because each speaker of a standard language is also the bearer of his/her natural dialect idiom. On the other hand, the standard language as a part of general communication, which is in a way also the language of prestige in society, significantly affects the speech of each individual. Since most speakers never master the standard, one can speak of “incomplete standardization, because even though it is officially accepted, the implementation and expansion of the standard are at a very low level” (Granić, 1996: 3). Precisely for this reason, the largest number of speakers of the Serbian language in their speech base have two varieties of their mother tongue, firstly their dialectal base, and then their own realization of the standard language.⁴ It is natural that every speaker loves his/her mother tongue most, which is the local speech of his/her birthplace. On the other hand, the rules of social stratification and obligations impose norms of speech behavior depending on the sphere of language use.

When it comes to the changes that are taking place in the traditional standard Serbian language that yield a parallel norm, we can also talk about the term neostandard, in the creation of which the dominant influence is the media (Nikolić, 2020: 5). Neostandard represents a new form of a standard idiom, created in the process of restandardization, mainly under the influence of the media and new ways and needs of communication (Tavoni, 2002, quoted according to Nikolić, 2020). Reasons for the creation of neostandards are common in all European languages. Neostandard is characterized by an informal style, it is modern, creative, subjective, personal, expressive, close to a spoken expression, etc. which brings it closer to the substandard, i.e., variants, in contrast to the traditional, canonical standard, which has features of traditionality, formality and closeness to the written language. Therefore, neostandard is located between the traditional standard language, on the one hand, and regional and substandard varieties, on the other hand, to which it is opposed not only structurally, but also in terms of status and prestige. Among the most important tendencies of the neo-standard in terms of accent, the following features could be singled out: reduction of post-accent quantity, use of falling accents on the inner syllables of polysyllabic words, use of accents on the final syllable, double-stressed pronunciation within a word.

If we are dealing with the issue of observing the relationship between the standard language - dialect - substandard in the media, it is important to keep in mind the fact that we are dealing with dialects that are or are not in the base of the standard

⁴ For example, the vernacular of Niš in the linguistic-geographical sense belongs to the Prizren-Timok dialect, and even more narrowly to the Prizren-South Moravian dialect. However, given that it is an urban environment, the vernacular of Niš is characterized by many linguistic features that are close to the standard Serbian language, and thus differs from the language of the surrounding rural areas. What is related to the vernacular of Niš is that the dialectal elements that made Niš part of the South Moravian region were lost over time, so today it is rare to hear them in everyday communication (Trajković, 2018).

Serbian language. It is the media that are most responsible for promoting different forms of organic pronunciation idioms, characteristics of certain urban environments and containing regional prosodic features, especially in dialectal environments with Old Shtokavian accentuations. Since there are significant differences between the accentuation systems of the Prizren-Timok and Kosovo-Resava speech zones, on the one hand, and standard accentuation, on the other hand, it is clear that speakers face serious difficulties when trying to get closer to the standard Serbian language. The standard Serbian language is characterized by Neo-Shtokavian accentuation, which is one of the most complicated in Europe (Ivić & Lehiste, 2002: 628) with six prosodic units consisting of: short rising, long rising, short falling and long falling accents, as well as unaccented length and unaccented shortness. In the Serbian language, the accent can be placed on any syllable of the word, except for the last one. Moreover, there are certain limitations in the distribution of accents, e.g., falling accents can only be placed on the first syllable in a word, and even monosyllabic words can only have falling accents, then, no accent can be placed on the last syllable in the Serbian language, and unaccented length in the standard language can only be found in the post-accented syllable.

The urban language varieties in the Kosovo-Resava region (which has a three-accent system) and the Prizren-Timok area (one-accent speech zone), which are also a feature of the media discourse in the above-mentioned region, are primarily their dialectal background, and only then a certain reorganization within all linguistic levels, i.e., innovation, or approaching in certain linguistic segments of the spoken norm of the standard Serbian language (Miloradović, 2014).

The greatest obstacles in mastering standard accentuation of the Serbian language appear precisely when two completely typologically different idioms come into contact. On the basis of typological affiliation, the standard Serbian language is classified into limited-tonal languages whose characteristic features are pitch and impact, while the basic feature of accentuation of the Prizren-Timok dialect is its dynamic component (Clark & Yallop, 1995).

The fact that this is a broader linguistic problem that does not have only a local character is also evidenced by numerous studies in other languages that deal with the possibilities of mastering a second non-native language or a variety in adulthood and the difficulty of the struggle to suppress the originally acquired accent and replace it in a consistent and permanent way (Lippi Green, 1997). The following four parameters are most often singled out as important factors influencing the acquisition of a second language accent: mother tongue, ability for oral mimicry, the length of stay in L2 environment, and the degree of accent perception. Many of these factors are crucial for the adoption of the accent system of the other, in the prosodic sense, typologically different idiom.

It is a common opinion that the system of automated articulation habits in the mother tongue is established by the age of seven, to be more precise, the automated pronunciation of all sounds in the system, all types of syllables, as well as the use of intonation patterns and other elements of the suprasegmental structure is established by the age of seven (Kašić, 2009). An automated system of articulation

habits enables native speakers to speak fluently within the native language or native dialect. Conversely, it can also represent a limiting factor - when learning foreign languages and in accepting standard orthoepy. This is evidenced daily by the fact that in the public speech of a large number of intellectuals, people who pursued standard orthoepy through education, it is possible to determine with certainty which dialect type they belong to.

The question that arises is to what extent speakers who have automated the system of dynamic accentuation can adopt tonal components that are features of limited tonal accentuation, typical of the standard Serbian language. Experimental research carried out in the Prizren-Timok area showed that highly educated speakers from the Prizren-Timok area, in order to speak the standard language, retain their regional prosodic base, which is based on the expiratory dynamic unit. As an opposition to the short expiratory accent, which is the basic unit of the dynamic system, in educated speakers in the normatively expected categories with long accents, a specific long prosody that does not correspond to the descriptions of long accents from the tonal system appears, and in all the normatively expected categories there is only temporal and intensity difference, and not the tonal difference between accents (Lončar Raičević, 2020: 265). Regardless of the above-mentioned limitations in the realization of the accent unit itself, in the media discourse of the Prizren-Timok area, there is a distinct tendency of the speakers to come as close as possible to the standard accentuation with the place of the accent - correction of pronunciation is carried out, primarily in those examples that stigmatize the speaker the most. Thus, for instance, the remnants of the old accentuation to which the Prizren-Timok speeches belong are reflected in a limited number of examples.

Speakers' attitudes towards the standard idiom and other varieties

Attitudes towards language have drawn the attention of numerous authors in the field of social sciences, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics since the middle of the last century (Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 1983; Coupland, 2003). They actually represent a complex set of opinions, emotions and reactions of all those elements that influence the formation of the identity of individuals or groups, and greatly influence social behavior and social interaction. The largest number of papers in the field of language attitudes deals with the examination of attitudes towards different varieties, with the aim of looking at speakers' attitudes towards standard and non-standard varieties (Milroy, 20021; Coupland, 1991). The way of pronunciation actually represents a means of identification of the speaker and it can indicate his/her regional origin or it can be a mark on the basis of which an individual is placed at a certain level of the social ladder.

Attitudes towards language belong to the important factors that shape an individual's identity and behavior, and they are shaped through social interaction, which is of particular importance in today's complex social environment (Paunović, 2006). What speakers think about language illustrates how important attitudes are for fitting into a certain social environment, and it offers explanations for differences in the way an individual speaks.

When it comes to the Serbian language, there is a certain number of papers in which empirical research data are very systematically given in connection with the examination of attitudes towards a certain phenomenon. One group of authors studied the attitudes of Serbian speakers towards other varieties (Knjižar, 2011; Kovačević, 2004, 2005; Paunović, 2009; Lazić Konjik, 2011; Sredojević, 2011; Miketić, 2016; Sudimac, 2018; Lončar Raičević & Sudimac, 2021).

With regard to attitudes towards varieties in the Serbian language, the most complete research is Sanja Miketić's dissertation *Attitudes towards language among the student population in the Republic of Serbia* (Miketić, 2016). On this occasion, we draw attention to two studies whose respondents were originally from the Prizren-Timok speaking area. It refers to the paper of M. Mihajlović, who conducted research on the value attitudes of the speakers of the Prizren-Timok dialect towards the standard language, in which the author reached the conclusions that the participants showed love for their dialect, but regarding the claim that they learnt the standardized language willingly, they unanimously expressed the view that they wanted to adopt the standard language (Mihajlović, 2018: 69). A similar tendency was observed in the research that was conducted on the corpus of media discourse data from Niš during the speech realization of announcers and journalists of electronic media, who tried to a great extent to adapt their urban variety and bring it closer to the standard (Lončar Raičević & Sudimac, 2021). When it comes to the value attitudes of speakers (language experts) towards accent realizations, we single out the paper of D. Sredojević (Sredojević, 2020).

We are witnessing the fact that speakers of certain regionally marked pronunciations (especially speakers from the south of Serbia) are often attributed *stereotypical attributes with negative connotations*, which can be reflected in social relations in general⁵. The negative role of the media in presenting the so-called "southern speech" also played a role in the creation of stereotypes and prejudices about the south of Serbia, whose speakers are often exposed to linguistic discrimination. The speaker of the dialects of the south and southeast of Serbia is portrayed positively only if he/she is connected to certain past, idealized time or distant from modernization processes. As soon as the speaker goes out of the scope of the so-called folk wisdom and describes everyday things and the hybrid reality in which he/she lives (which happens in films, television series and other products of popular culture), the speaker becomes ridiculous, unsophisticated and grotesque (Petrović, 2015). However, when it comes to dialects with an older accent from the area of Montenegro, this is not the case because the speakers do not feel inferior in relation to other speakers and do not need to assimilate linguistically after changing their place of residence and moving to the territory where the newer Shtokavian accentuation is used. All of this is connected with the idea that is ingrained in Serbian society - that the south cannot belong to the modern world, which on the linguistic level manifests itself in the conviction that speakers from this area can never master the standard.

⁵ In Montenegro, from the beginning of the 1990s to the present day, the linguistic confidence of the representatives of the urban varieties of the Old Shtokavian accentuation is growing, and at the same time the tolerance towards those varieties is growing, while the language standard is slowly losing its normative prestige.

However, one of the important characteristics of attitudes towards language is the fact that they are often based on stereotypes and prejudices, as evidenced by the results of numerous researches on attitudes towards regional and social varieties of English, as the most widely studied language (Paunović, 2006).

Otherwise, there is no scientific argument that can confirm the statement that the Prizren-Timok dialect is inferior to the Eastern Herzegovinian dialect, or that it is corrupted, just as it is pointless to prove that Jekavian pronunciation is better or worse than Ekavian pronunciation. The same applies to non-standard forms. But that does not mean we do not need a language standard. It is the product of a politically motivated decision by the community about which particular variety will be used as the one common to all of us and for the sake of increased order and ease of communication.

Concluding remarks

The way in which speakers in the electronic media - presenters, journalists, announcers - shape certain contents can, without a doubt, strongly shape the public opinion and significantly influence the speech and language culture of a wide audience. We believe that at the accentual level, insufficient compliance of prosodic characteristics in speech on radio and television with the standard language norm is observed, especially in dialect areas that are far from the standard. Judging by the results of research dealing with these issues (Miloradović, 2014, Lončar Raičević & Sudimac, 2021), the tendency of speakers to come as close as possible to the standard accentuation with the place of the accent has been observed, the pronunciation is corrected in those examples that stigmatize the speaker the most (so, for instance, the remains of the older accentuation to which the Prizren-Timok speeches belong are reflected in a limited number of examples). Since the regular education system often does not provide enough language education, it would be important to establish a network of additional language education for creators of the journalistic discourse, as well as mandatory proofreading of all journalistic genres, especially of an informative nature. The level of language culture largely depends on the individual's personal readiness to choose an adequate communication strategy, which is reflected in the numerous individual variations that are present in speakers, both at the accentual level and at other linguistic levels.

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Jezik medija (o nekim aspektima standarda i supstandarda iz ugla akcentuacije)

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Sažetak

Odnos standarda kao posebnog idioma, podsistema jednog jezika, i njegovih drugih idimoma (dijalekata, žargona, razgovornog jezika) najčešće se posmatra u kontekstu dinamičkih i inovacionih procesa u domenu jezičke upotrebe. Jedan od najpogodnijih i najpouzdanijih jezičkih korpusa za proučavanja stabilnosti jezičkog sistema i promena do kojih u njemu dolazi jeste govor medija. On predstavlja pouzdan materijal za procenu karaktera tih promena, za praćenje razvojnih tendencija, ali i mogućih posledica. U sferi društvene upotrebe jezika važnu ulogu igra upravo ortoepska norma tj. akcentuacija koja predstavlja skupinu akustičkih, tzv. prozodijskih ili suprasegmentalnih svojstava ljudskog glasa kao što su trajanje, visina i jačina. U radu se bavimo pitanjima upotrebe standarda, odnosno supstandarda u elektronskim medijima iz ugla akcentuacije, jer je činjenica da načinom na koji oblikuju određene sadržaje govornici u elektronskim medijima – voditelji, novinari, spikeri – bez sumnje, snažno mogu oblikovati javno mnjenje i isto tako značajno uticati na govoru i jezičku kulturu širokog auditorijuma.

Ključne reči: jezik medija, standard, supstandard, akcentuacija.

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