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## **BOSNIAN, CROATIAN AND SERBIAN OR NONETHELESS SERBO-CROATIAN? AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE AUSTRIAN DIASPORA**

The split-up of Serbo-Croatian into the three official languages Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian has led to an ongoing status debate. However, there is little empirical research about speakers' perception. In this regard, ethnically mixed diaspora communities are especially interesting. This paper will give some insight into the perspective of speakers from Austria using data of an online survey with 258 participants from the first and the second generation. This research project aims to investigate various issues related to the language controversy; the system linguistic part examines which linguistic features are perceived as language specific while the sociolinguistic part raises the questions how the language(s) are commonly called and whether Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian constitute three languages.

The recognition of language-specific features is investigated in relation to the respondents' own language usage. To test the perception of discriminative features, participants were asked to associate test items with one of the three languages. For capturing the participants' own language usage, they were presented two test items featuring two different instantiations of a discriminative feature each and asked to indicate the item preferred in their usage. The test items covered phonological (ijekavian vs. ekavian), lexical (two different lexemes of Slavic origin, internationalism with a Slavic synonym, names of the months) and grammatical (grammatical morphemes -telj vs. -lac and -irati vs. -ovati, infinitive vs. da + finite form, word order in sentences with clitics) differences between the three languages.

Whereas the distinction Ijekavian versus Ekavian is well known, data show that fewer participants assign doublets of lexemes to the language they are typical of. Interestingly, although the discussion about internationalisms is prevalent in the linguistic research about the differences between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, Croatian participants show a relatively high acceptance of internationalisms belonging to their own language and report to use them themselves. Grammatical morphemes and syntactic structures are perceived as distinctive characteristics by a small number of participants. Test-items containing Turcisms, typically interpreted as a Bosnian characteristic, have a similarly high acceptance and language use by Bosnian and Serbian participants and a lower one by Croatian participants. Generally, a low recognition of distinctive features is observed, which can result from the reported good personal relations between people from different ethnic groups, making speakers familiar with words and structures of other varieties.

The sociolinguistic data show, that in addition to ethnic glottonyms, the evasive term 'naš jezik' ('our language') is very popular in the diaspora and even the controversial glottonym Serbo-Croatian is still used or considered appropriate by more than one third of respondents, while the newly introduced denomination 'BKS' ('BCS' - Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) is appreciated by comparatively few speakers. The data show a rather small agreement with the statement that Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian constitute three languages, but a higher agreement that speakers should be aware of the differences.

Overall, the data indicate that for the diaspora Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian constitute rather variants of one common language than three different languages.