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Ethnographic accounts of linguistic issues in the Yugoslav successor states



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*Ethnographic accounts of linguistic issues
in the Yugoslav successor states*

Guest editor
Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić

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EDITORIAL

Language issues in former Yugoslav space: Current perspectives

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Embarking on a special issue on former Yugoslavia is no mean task for any journal, as it involves taking into consideration the many, significant contributions of scholars over the last three-odd decades. From grammarians to sociolinguists, historians, geographers, and anthropologists, scholars have succeeded in offering a kaleidoscopic account spanning over periods of peace and warfare, which, combined with official policy-making texts (and, no less, the virulent propaganda in public discourse just about everywhere) give a much more comprehensive picture of the linguistic state of affairs in the former Yugoslav lands today than are available for most other polities. And this is a legacy rarely afforded to scholarship as well as a burden to be borne with the respect it deserves.

Although there is little doubt that former Yugoslavia and the successor states have often attracted the “pornographic gaze” of international journalism and scholarship, it is nonetheless certain that, in the long run, this has had some serious consequences: today it takes serious professional engagement to talk about either Yugoslavia or the successor states –it is not exactly a topic allowing for dabbling, either locally or, what is worse, internationally. And all contributors to this issue –some of them locals, some of them foreigners– are manifestly aware of this.

The merits of this special issue, as I see them, have to do both with the diverse themes tackled and theoretical approaches assumed by contributors as well as the areas they focus on: although none of the contributions focuses exclusively on Croatia, I am especially pleased to have contributions problematizing language issues in Macedonia both because of its close ties with BCMS and because it is less frequently discussed in relation to it. The downside is the absence of a contribution on Croatia and Slovenia, (which, despite its separate history, can hardly be convincingly considered outside the context of the breakup of former Yugoslavia). It must be stressed that this does in no way reflect editorial choices (or predilections). I believe that the absence of a contribution on Croatia is partly remedied by Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić’s insightful introductory chapter, which reflects her long-standing interest and

specialization in this area of the South-Slavic continuum, and the references to Croatia in other contributions. Ideally, however, we would have wished for individual contributions focusing on each and every constituent part of former Yugoslavia.

On a different note, I would like to express my gratitude to the guest editor of this special issue, Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić, for persistently and unfailingly doing her best to secure high quality papers which will foster continuing dialogue in a field to which, all of us involved, share a long-standing commitment.

Last, I would like to introduce and extend a warm welcome to my doctoral student, Daphne-Nicoletta Christoulaki, our new copy editor, to the editorial team of **AWPEL**.

Daphne Nicoletta Christoulaki received her BA in sociology from Panteion University and her MA in gender & sexuality studies from the University of the Aegean. In her MA thesis she focused on the linguistic landscape of Mytilene, Lesvos vis-à-vis gendered and sexed signs. Her current research interests focus on ethnographic linguistics and linguistic landscape studies. She has recently started working towards her doctoral dissertation provisionally entitled “Contested linguistic landscapes: Mytilene”.