

Title: "Language Affirmation as a Concept in Linguistically Contested Spaces: The Case of the Macedonian Literary Language"

SinFonija 18 Conference

Motoki Nomachi, Hokkaido University

Robert Greenberg, University of Newcastle

In this contribution, we draw on theories of identity affirmation to introduce the notion of language affirmation, which we define as a two-way process whereby language codifiers seek to gain international acceptance of the language they are promoting, and international experts or linguists reciprocate by affirming the existence of the language in their writings. This kind of language affirmation serves as a basis for other external validation processes, such as the establishment of an ISO code for the language, acknowledgement by diplomatic missions and governments of the languages, and the growth of language programs to facilitate the spread of these languages to speakers of other languages. Our research has shown that identity affirmation processes, like language affirmation, can include an emotional dynamic whereby the codifiers of a language seek to inspire a strong emotional response from stakeholders on the existence of a new language. Often, the early adopters, or "believers" in the new language play a key role in promoting acceptance alongside the local actors. To this end, we examine the processes of language affirmation for the Macedonian literary language, especially beginning in the 1940s. We consider in depth the role of the Soviet linguist Samuil Borisović Bernštejn and in the early international acceptance of the Macedonian language as seen in the work of Horace Lunt and others. The processes of language affirmation for Macedonian have been ongoing in recent years given discourse emanating from neighboring countries that have questioned aspects of Macedonian language and identity. However, as we demonstrate, the language affirmation process in Macedonia is contrasted to that in the former Serbo-Croatian speech territory, where the newest standard languages, Bosnian and Montenegrin, have not received the same level of international acceptance and where language affirmation efforts have encountered greater resistance with future developments in these language standardization processes uncertain.