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"Serbian Language in Emigration" – Serbian Language Idiom in Ljubljana*

This paper analyses an application of Serbian language idiom within communication in private and public spheres, among members of the Serbian ethnic community in Ljubljana. Based on the idiom's dissemination and the intensity of its usage, the paper draws conclusions about communicational function of language as well as about perseverance of native tongue as a segment of ethnic identity. Research results imply that the immigrants in question are asymmetrically bilingual, meaning that Serbian idiom is used in all spheres of communication. On the other hand, Slovenian language represents a language used in public communication while Serbian idiom is used within private spheres of communication. Therefore, a conclusion could be drawn that the level of perseverance of native tongue depends of dissemination and intensity of its usage within private sphere of communication. However, usage of Serbian idiom is not in direct correlation with a need to preserve one's mother tongue and ethnic identity, but it is correlated with its communicative function.

Key words:

mother tongue,
Serbian idiom,
Slovenian language,
ethnic identity, private
and public spheres of
communication

This paper analyses usage of Serbian idiom within private and public communicational spheres among individuals of Serbian origin, currently residing in Ljubljana. The research includes individuals who moved to Ljubljana in 2000-2007, as an emigration wave originated within state borders made on the territory of the former Yugoslavia after 1991. This emigration wave turned out to be very important for a number of reasons, foremost since it allows tracking down all development phases of emigration. The choice of research site was determined by the fact

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that people tended to immigrate to Ljubljana and much less so to other cities in Slovenia (Komac, Medvešek, Roter 2007). If we take into an account that Ljubljana is the administrative, economic and university center of Slovenia, it is easy to understand why people have settled mainly in that city.

My curiosity to understand the links between language and ethnic identity was prompted primarily by the knowledge that language in the humanities and some social science disciplines was treated as a separate feature, that is, as the "ultimate and final expression" (Bugarski 2005, 77) of an ethnic identity. At the same time, I also considered the practice I have faced during the research of ethnic identity among members of the emigration wave, which leads to the assumption that language is "one of many elements, which in conjunction with others, forms ethnic identity" (Smith 1986, 27). All these prompted me to investigate a link between Serbian language idiom and ethnic identity at the level of individual wherein language is discussed as identity issue, being an aspect of ethnic problem.

Given that the impact of language on the preservation of ethnic identity is judged on the basis of the use of Serbian idioms among immigrant who have learned it in the native country but now live in Ljubljana for a relatively short period, I assumed they are well familiar with it, if not in literary sense, but certainly in a dialect form. Therefore, the research does not question the extent of knowledge of Serbian language, which is normally assumed in studies of immigrants' ethnic identity (Јукић Крстановић 2007, Прелић 2008, Павловић 2009, Petrović 2009). Instead, I discuss its usage solely in everyday communication. I also reflect the fact that the scope of the usage of mother tongue in "small non-institutionally supported linguistic and ethnic groups" (Petrović 2003) such as the Serbian community in Slovenia, depends on several factors. Therefore, the paper discusses the impact of: the length of stay of immigrants in Slovenia, one's profession and employment, ethnic endogamy / exogamy, and the ethnic composition of the individual's friendship network of relationships. During the analysis, it turned out that the impact of these factors is of particular importance for understanding the relationship between language and ethnic identity.¹ The above mentioned factors, according to the division provided by T. Petrović belong to the group of objective factors (Petrović 2009, 43–44). Moreover, I assumed that we are all different as individuals and that the impact of these factors depends on the individual as such. So I furthermore assumed that the influence of these objective factors will not be the same among the researched individuals, that is, it should depend more on "subjective factors" (ibid., 44). In this paper, the above mentioned assume the impact of "values that speakers attach to their idiom or idiom of the majority" (ibid., 44), then the impact of the attitudes about membership in a particular ethnic community, and the relationship of individuals to their own ethnic identity. I do not exclude the possibility that these

¹ That does not mean that other factors, such as physical proximity / distance from the native country, minority institutional networks, and religious affiliation of individuals, were left out of the fieldwork, but due to limitations in paper writings it was necessary to consider the impact of only those factors that are proved to be more primary in understanding the problems addressed here.

subjective factors arise from the impact of certain objective givens. Therefore, I have tried to take into account the mentioned possibility.

The paper is based on the empirical material I have collected through directed interviews with respondents in June 2007.² Regarding this matter, the place and period of immigration were the only criteria in determining the sample. It turned out, however, that the majority of respondents were males. All respondents have at least finished college and are employed within their respective profession (all except for one female respondent, who, in 2007, was enrolled in MA studies).³ All respondents but one female declared as members of the Serbian ethnic community.⁴ At the same time, they noted Serbian as their mother tongue (except for the female respondent who declared as a Croatian). It is important to emphasize that all respondents are multi-lingual- Serbian language is the first language in communication (the same goes for the female respondent who declared as not being a member of the Serbian community)⁵, while Slovenian language often represents a third language used in communication (the second language is most frequently English). Regarding marital status of the respondents, four out of twenty were not married or in a relationship at the time of the research; three were in exogamous relationship/unregistered unions: a male Serb and a Slovenian girl (two couples), and a female Serb and male Slovenian (a couple)⁶. In the research period, none of the respondents were engaged in exogamous marriage. Therefore, the majority follows ethnic endogamy. The majority came to Ljubljana in 2000-2005, meaning that at the time of research, they have lived in Ljubljana between 3 and 5 years, except for the two respondents, who have lived in Ljubljana for only six months (one came at the end of 2006 and the other in the beginning of 2007).

² This is a sample of 20 subjects (15 men, 5 women) aged between 28 and 40. All were born in Serbia, and come from urban areas (Zrenjanin, Belgrade, S. Palanka, Niš, Šabac). I conducted interviews using a questionnaire-reminder. I tried to ask every individual the same questions, but their order depended on the flow of the conversation. Sometimes the subjects offered answers to specific questions without me having to ask them directly. Some information I acquired informally, by participating in the gatherings of a few respondents in the private sphere. With most subjects, the conversation took place in a public place (coffee shop). So I was able to hear their communication in Slovenian (with employees in the bar, but also with a partner). I also stress that my knowledge of Slovenian language is just as well as Serbian.

³ These are mostly graduate electrical engineer, but there are individuals who are engaged in design, management, stage direction and dramaturgy, as well as pharmacy.

⁴ It is important to emphasize that within this sample, ethnicity is not primary in determining personal identity. In other words, for example, the subject attach greater importance to his/hers professional affiliations.

⁵ The term first language of communication refers to the language they have learned first in childhood, not the language that is now used as the first language of communication. Although it turned out that all subjects learned Serbian as their first language and as such is used today.

⁶ This does not mean that there aren't ethnically exogamous marriages or relationships of Serbs with members of other ethnic communities (Komac, Medvešek, Roter 2007; Petrovic 2009). However, during the research I've only recorded examples of the above exogamous out-of-wedlock unions.

Context within which I investigated communicational function of Serbian idiom as a mother tongue poses several questions regarding a definition of terminology used throughout the paper. First, the question was whether it was reasonable to use the term Serbian language because the subjects, in everyday communication, use vernacular. So I thought that the more appropriate term, instead of the term Serbian language, would be Serbian idiom. The term idiom in this paper is understood as "a neutral term superior to all units in a set of linguistic diversity, hence both the language and dialect and local dialect system, as well as any sociolect, including specific language of an individual (i.e. idiolect) will represent the idioms" (Škiljan 2002, 12, according to Petrović 2009, 29). It follows that an idiom may comprise "all language codes which members of a given community...use" (Petrović 2009, 29). By using the term Serbian idiom, I try to reflect on Serbian language as a descriptive category which "comprises a totality of discursive practices..." (ibid.,29). In this way, I have tried to avoid usage of Serbian language also as a means of "national identification" (ibid.,29). At the same time, as we shall see later on, I do not question a determination of Serbian as a mother tongue. Even though I have questioned, in the beginning of my research, whether is justifiable to assume that a mother tongue of respondents is Serbian language, that is, I assume that language and ethnic identity are not always in correlation (Bugarski 2005, 106–107). For instance, even though I may be Serbian, it doesn't follow that my native language must be Serbian, or first language in communication. Furthermore, the term mother's tongue should not be used as a synonym for one's first language, since Serbian could be the first language in communication even for those individuals whose native language is not Serbian. This caution was justified by the account of a Croatian female, who stated Croatian language as her native while Serbian as the first language in communication (she is an ethnic Croat).⁷

In an attempt to solve these dilemmas, I've asked each respondent to define his/hers ethnicity and native language. That is, I assume that ethnic identity should be "understood in the same way the respective subjects represent it, with an emphasis on many meanings" (Лукић-Крстановић 1997, 93). This of course doesn't not imply that I have omitted a dimension regarding assigned or added identity, that is, the one identity "given to someone by others" (Bugarski 2005, 16-17). Instead, the focus of the inquiry is on one's subjective experience and individual perception of one's own ethnic identity. A justification of this kind of approach is found within the practice itself- and this which points out, in this as well as in many other studies (Лукић-Крстановић 1997, 94; Жикић 1998, 133–144; Razpotnik 2004), to the differences between objective and subjective dimensions. These arise within ways others see and experience us, who we are and whom we belong to. Thus, the objective

⁷ According to her own words - her father is a Croat, while her mother is Serbian. She determines her ethnic identity by the father, and that's why she declared as a Croatian. Regarding this matter, it would be interesting to consider the question of the impact of political developments of the 20th century in the region, to individuals' ethnic identity ascription, in this as well as in the succeeding period (see: Krel 2010). In fact, judging by the words of this female - it was the Croatian passport that allowed her to travel and cross borders in the region without any difficulty, while individuals holding Serbian passport at that same time needed Slovenian visa to enter Slovenia.

dimension appears as a constant in an individual's ethnic identity, determined on the basis of some common symbols / markers, such as origin, language, name and so on, and wherein some of these symbols are variable in character, a feature not so frequently taken into account. And even if these are not variable - it still does not mean that an individual ascription would be equal to description of his/hers ethnic identity. Based on the encountered practice, I conclude that ethnic identity is assigned to us by others, using the previously mentioned symbols / markers, who at the same time do not care for our personal experience and perception of ethnic identity, which can but does not have to match the description. That is why I have taken, as the primary criterion for determining an individual's ethnic identity, just the individual's perception of his/hers own ethnic identity.

If we review the sample we can conclude the following: the respondents were originally from Serbia, Serbian is their first language of communication, and they have surname ending on -ić.⁸ Based on these symbols, we can conclude they are members of the ethnically Serbian community. However, it turned out that there are individuals within the sample who do not declare as such (the already mentioned female). Even though there was only one individual to declare so, I do not believe that such data can be ignored despite the fact her ethnic orientation can be linked to the general political situation in the region, wherein individuals who have emigrated from Serbia to Slovenia resorted to ethnic mimicry (Đorđević Crnobrnja 2010, 83-98). Exactly because these situations may arise, it is important to take the primary personal definition of ethnicity, regardless whether it is caused by external or internal factors, and whether for us, researchers, such orientation is justified or not. In any case, this indicates that ethnic identity is a variable category and thus indicates the necessity to accept and study it as such.

Judging from the responses of the informants, their native language is Serbian (except for the mentioned respondent, whose testimony on this occasion, I did not use in data analysis and presentation of findings).⁹ The explanation given was that Serbian is the language of their parents and therefore they considered it as their native. It follows that individuals do not determine Serbian language as a mother tongue because it is their first language of communication, but because it is the language of their parents.¹⁰ In this respect, we could argue about the definition of

⁸ On the role of these symbols / markers in determining the ethnic identity of immigrants who immigrated to Slovenia from the former Yugoslavia, see: Komac, Medvešek, Roter 2007; Razpotnik 2004.

⁹ In this and similar examples, the issue of links between ethnic identity and first language of communication could be considered, which in fact, was one of the aims of the research. However, simply because it was shown that the vast majority of respondents consider themselves Serbs and cite Serbian as a first language, I thought it was more appropriate to analyze the communicational function of Serbian as mother tongue. Still, I think the primary intent is a very inspiring research.

¹⁰ In this respect, I consider the situation I found in the fieldwork completely random (among almost all respondents, native and first language of communication match). In other words, I recorded an example that points to the possibility that results of another sample could differ from this

mother tongue and the feasibility of its use in the aforementioned manner ((Nedeljković 2007, 249). At the same time, a possibility that "one's first language may, under certain life circumstances, change over time, giving way to another language." (Bugarski 2010, 22) is not excluded. However, if we start from the fact that individuals' first language is defined as such because it is the language of their parents, it can be assumed that they will always cite it as their mother tongue, regardless to whether it remains their first language of communication or not.¹¹ This does not call into question the role of mother tongue as a symbol of ethnic identity. But furthermore, it is possible that it will change its importance as a symbol, that is, it does not always have to have the same significance for individuals. I fully accept the premise: "Language is an important feature of identity – unquestionably so - but not necessarily always and everywhere the most important, because, among other things, it is subject to the copying and changing." (Bugarski 2010, 21). In other words, I treat language as one of the symbols of ethnic identity which represents a "dynamic phenomenon (...)" ((Bugarski 2010, 22). In this respect I find it important to consider the communicational function of mother tongue, and the impact of its use in the preservation of ethnic identity of individuals, to whom it also represents the first language of communication, and who belong to the first generation of immigrants. I already pointed to the role of Serbian idiom, based on the scope and intensity of its daily use in the private and public spheres of communication. It follows that the paper will discuss the link between dissemination and intensity of the mother tongue and its preservation, as well as the impact of its usage on individual ethnic identity.

My analysis indicates that the use of Serbian idiom is most comprehensive and most intense in the private sphere, that is, in daily communication among the respondents and their spouses, their children and friends. The use of idiom within a family to a large extent depends on whether one is in ethnically endogamous or exogamous marriage. Those who are in unregistered unions with Slovenians use Serbian idiom within their homes to a lesser extent compared to individuals who are in ethnically endogamous marriage (both partners Serbs). In other words, they communicate with a partner mostly in Slovenian. During my research, there were only two married couples (ethnically endogamous) with children.

In this sample, parents communicated in Serbian with children (pre-school age) at home and in a public places (coffee shop, backyard, etc.). Therefore, for these children, Serbian is a first language of communication, while Slovenian is their second language. The respondents stated that with the children, they tend to speak Serbian and not Slovenian, because children learn and speak Slovenian in a kindergarten, while Serbian they could learn and speak only through communica-

presented in the paper. Therefore, the presented conclusions should not be justified or generalized.

¹¹ This assumption is discussed also in other ethno-linguistic and ethnological research about links between native language and ethnic identity (Прелић 2008; Павловић 2004, 117–127; Иста 2009; Крел 2010; Petrović 2009).

tion with parents and relatives, or friends, who also use Serbian language as the first in communication. Still, regarding friends, it turned out Serbian is not native to all of them, but nevertheless, they tend to use it in communication because it is the most appropriate (this is especially the case in communication with friends who are originally from Bosnia and Macedonia). At the same time, the respondents also claimed they themselves do not know Slovenian enough to be able to speak fluently and use it in communicating with children. It is questionable how many children learned Slovenian language well enough to be able to communicate with parents fluently as in Serbian.

Also, individuals who are in ethnically endogamous marriages, tend to have friends who are mostly from Serbia, mainly those individuals or couples who immigrated to Slovenia in the same period as the respondents themselves. Individuals say that with friends who are Slovenes, they speak Slovenian, and with friends who are from Serbia or from some other country in the region (the former Yugoslavia) they speak Serbian. They also stated that communication within a group where friends from Slovenia are a minority, is in Serbian, or a variant of the Serbo-Croatian. The explanation given is that Slovenians relatively well understood and speaks Serbo-Croatian; in the beginning, when the respondents were newly arrived in Slovenia, it was easier to communicate in a variant of Serbo-Croatian than in Slovenian, since the newcomers were not so fluent in Slovenian. Regarding this, I want to point out that individuals tend to speak Slovenian with Slovenians only in formal situations (home, bank, shops and the like) and only when they are confident they have mastered Slovenian language to such an extent that communication can take place flowingly.

The ethnic composition of friendship networks may be affected by ethnicity and occupation of an individual's partner. This especially applies to situations in which an individual befriends co-workers, who are also immigrants from Serbia. Namely, there are cases when a company employs a number of individuals who are of Serbian descent. So it may happen that the same office is shared by three or five immigrants from Serbia. In such case, use of Serbian idiom is possible even at work. Nevertheless, Serbian language is used only cases of informal communication between employees who immigrated to Slovenia from Serbia or from neighboring countries in the region (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina). Otherwise, when at work, individuals try not to speak Serbian, unless it is inevitable – they are in Slovenia for only a short time period and have failed to learn Slovenian in so far as is necessary to make the communication effortless. In any case, it appears that the respective occupation of respondents affect significantly the intensity of substituting Serbian for Slovenian idiom. Thus, individuals who work in an environment in which Slovenian is first language of communication for most employees, have little choice if they want to successfully perform in the job. The respondents also emphasized that Slovenia in general more readily accepts into its (business) environment those immigrants who are eager to learn and speak Slovenian.

In this sample, individuals who date Slovenians or engage in unregistered unions with Slovenians, have more friends of Slovenian ethnicity than those individuals who are in ethnically endogamous marriages. This is a consequence of the

fact that their respective partners have friends who are mostly Slovenes. Therefore, ethnicity of one's partner affects also ethnic composition of one's friends. This also means that these individuals tend to use Slovenian idiom when communicating with Slovenian friends.

Regarding the previous conclusions, it should be noted that the scope and intensity of using Serbian idiom to a large extent depends on an individual length of stay in Slovenia. This factor influences Serbian idiom usage within public but not within private sphere. Specifically, the longer an individual lives in Slovenia, the better his/hers knowledge of Slovenian becomes, and thus allows its use in public places, or in formal situations (post office, bank, court, work, shop and so on). At the same time, increased frequency of using Slovenian idiom does not affect the extent of usage of Serbian or native idiom, as Serbian language is mainly used in private sphere, wherein the presence of Serbian idiom, as shown in in this as well as in other studies, is- a key for usage and preservation of native idioms (Komac, Medvešek, Roter 2007, 224, 230; Petrović 2009). Apropos, it remains an open question of how will this issue resolve in the future due to the fact that ethnicity of one's spouse appears as a significant factor in influencing the extent of usage of native idiom at home and in communication with friends. It is therefore not unreasonable to ask to what extent the immigrants, who are in ethnically exogamous marriages, will be able to preserve Serbian idiom.

Among all respondents, there is an increased awareness of the necessity to learn Slovenian language, because the language proficiency so increases the possibility for an effortless communication in this language, and thus allows the acquisition of "equal status in communication with individuals whose native or first language of communication is Slovenian", as the respondents cited . That does not mean that all immigrants are trying to learn Slovenian language in equal measure. It is therefore not surprising that respondents who reside in Slovenia for the same amount of time differ in their language proficiency. In other words, there are some who have mastered the language after five or more years of living in Ljubljana, but there are some whose language proficiency have remained at the same level as when they first moved to Slovenia. Judging by the responses - this is not only the consequence of the above (objective) factors or political determinations, or individual attitudes towards Slovenians and Slovenian language, that is, towards Serbian language and Serbs (subjective factors) (Petrović 2009, 43–44) but stems from the fact that we are all different as individuals. If we accept that the impact of these factors depends on the individual - we'll understand why we have differences among individuals in terms of mastering Slovenian and Serbian languages.¹²

Therefore it was justified to assume that in the studies of ethnic identity and language, as one of its segments, the level of individual is very important, i.e., "linguistic behavior per se of a particular ethno linguistic community member"(Petrović 2009, 44). In any case, all respondents agree with one – it is quite difficult to learn

¹² Practice shows that even within a family, in private sphere, there are differences in Serbian language use.

Slovenian and in addition, they have not mastered the language to the point that their communication does not reveal they are not Slovenians. In other words, respondents emphasize that it is unlikely they will ever speak Slovenian as the Slovenians and other individuals who have learned the language from childhood (in the words of the respondents – accents are the main issue). The above implies a number of other issues, including the question of whether fluency in Slovenian language by immigrants alone contribute to the acquisition of equal status, and their rapid integration into the majority community (Petrović 2009; Bugarski 2005; *ibid* 2010). Analysis of the foregoing, as well as other issues concerning the role of language in maintaining ethnic identity of migrants will be discussed in some future reports.

Based on the discussed evidence, it can be concluded that in the researched period asymmetrical bilingualism was present, favoring Serbian idiom used in almost all areas of communication. At the same time, in public communication, Serbian idiom is gradually being substituted within some communicational functions in favor of the more dominant idiom. Petrović, influenced by Batobo, proposed expected phases appearing in this process of exchange and lose of native tongue (Petrović 2009, 25–26). Based on the fieldwork, the respondents belong to the first and the second phase. "The first is characterized unilingual in native language, followed by a period of increased level of bilingualism in which native language is still dominant" (*ibid*). If we take into account that each of these phases has a certain pace and length, we will see that the length of their duration depends on the external socio-cultural and socio-political developments within the studied site as well as globally (Petrović 2009, 26). Furthermore, intensity and phases of the replacement of Serbian idiom with the majority idiom depend on the sphere of communication. In other words, they depend on whether it comes to public or private domain. And judging by the results presented here, I can conclude that phases of exchange go faster in the public sphere of communication. Specifically, the majority of respondents expressed the desire to learn Slovenian so to be able to speak fluently in the public domain. This is associated with the fact that Slovenian is a language of public communication, while the use of Serbian idiom is reserved primarily for the private sphere. Subsequently, the extent to which Serbian idiom will be preserved depends precisely on its use within the home and family, that is, it depends on the desire and ability of individuals that through communication with the spouse, children, and friends contribute to its further use and preservation. In this respect, ethnic endogamy and exogamy proved to be of special interest in the use and preservation of Serbian idiom.¹³ At the time of my fieldwork, one could draw a clear boundary between private and public spheres of communication, provided that it is the variable category. Examples show that its displacement and loss of influence is primarily due to ethnically exogamous marriages.

Based on the above mentioned, it follows that we follow certain changes in the use of Serbian idiom, i.e., within its communicational function. I believe that such a function and its role are significantly influenced by the present sample. In

¹³ Similar conclusions were reached and T. Petrović studying the language ideology of the Serbs in Bela Krajina (Petrović 2009).

other words, these are the immigrants who have lived Slovenia for only a relatively short period. I stress this because some other studies on the relationship between language and ethnic identity of immigrants of the first and second generations suggested that the length of stay in a foreign country, or outside of the native land, has a significant effect on the intensity and scope of knowledge and use of native idioms in both private and in public sphere (Прелић 2008, 256–270; Павловић 2004, 117–127; *ibid* 2009; Petrović 2009). So I can conclude that the degree of preservation of Serbian as native idiom depends on the extent and intensity of its use within the private sphere of communication. In addition, the extent and intensity of use of Serbian idiom is not in direct connection with the need to preserve an individual's native language and ethnic identity, as can be the case for individuals who belong to the second or third generation of immigrants (Комас, Medvešek, Roter 2007; Прелић 2008, 256–270), but with communicational and pragmatic function of language. This does not imply that the use of native idiom does not contribute to its preservation, but this is not an end in itself when it comes to individuals represented in this a sample (first generation immigrants with a relatively short length of stay). Based on the scope and intensity of use of Serbian idioms in everyday communication, I can also conclude that it plays an important role as a carrier of individual's identity, and that its role as a marker of ethnic identity is manifested primarily at the collective level. Therefore, some further research will investigate the relationship between language and other segments of ethnic identity, and thus complete the picture of communicational and symbolic functions of language and its impact on the preservation of ethnic identity of individuals.

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Јадранка Ђорђевић Црнобрња

Српски у емиграцији – о употреби српског идиома у Љубљани

Језик посматрам као идентитетско питање које представља само аспект етничког проблема. У раду анализирам употребу српског идиома у оквиру приватне и јавне сфере комуникације код припадника српске етничке заједнице у Љубљани. У фокусу посматрања је емиграцијски талас који се формирао у периоду од 2000. до 2007. године, односно – у оквиру државних граница које настају на простору бивше СФРЈ након 1991. године.

Кључне речи:

матерњи језик,
српски идиом,
словеначки језик,
етнички идентитет,
приватна и јавна
сфера комуникације

У раду полазим од претпоставке да је језик подложен мењању, а да обим и интензитет његове употребе могу да зависе од више фактора. Тако разматрам утицај следећих фактора: дужина боравка у Словенији, етничка едногамија / егзогамија, запослење, и етнички састав пријатељске мреже односа.

Анализа грађе показује да је код свих испитаника присутна вишејезичност – српски им представља први језик комуникације, а словеначки им неретко представља трећи језик комуникације. Притом, испитаници сматрају српски језик својим матерњим језиком.

Резултати истраживања уједно показују да је код досељеника присутан асиметрични билингвизам, и то у корист српског идиома, који се користи у готово свим областима комуникације. Уједно констатујем да је процес замене српског идиома започет, и то у оквиру јавне сфере комуникације, где он неке своје комуникацијске функције уступа доминантнијем идиому. Наведено доводим у везу са тим што словеначки представља језик јавне комуникације, при чему је употреба српског идиома резервисана првенствено за приватну сферу. Из овога произлази да мера у којој ће се српски идиом очувати зависи управо од његове употребе у оквиру куће и породице, тј. од жеље и могућности појединаца да кроз комуникацију са брачним партнером, децом, као и са пријатељима, допринесу његовој

даљој употреби и очувању. У том погледу је од посебног значаја утицај етничке ендогамије и егзогамије на употребу и очување српског идиома. Појединци који су у невенчаној заједници са Словенком или Словенцем користе српски идиом у кући и у комуникацији са партнерима у мањој мери него појединци који су у етнички ендогамном браку (тј. ако су обоје Срби). Показало се, такође, да појединци који су у етнички ендогамном браку имају већином пријатеље који су пореклом из Србије, и то углавном оне појединце или брачне парове који су досељени у Словенију у истом периоду када и сами испитаници.

Из претходно наведеног следи да овде пратимо извесне промене у употреби српског идиома, односно – у оквиру његове комуникацијске функције. Сматрамо да таквој улози и функцији овога идиома у знатној мери доприноси чињеница да је у питању узорак на којем је истраживање обављано. Другим речима, у питању су досељеници који су у емиграцији провели релативно кратак период. Наведено истичем због тога што се и из неких других истраживања односа језика и етничког идентитета досељеника прве и друге генерације може извести закључак да дужина боравка у емиграцији, односно, изван матице, има значајан утицај на интензитет и обим познавања и употребе матерњег идиома, како у приватној тако и у јавној сфери (Прелић 2008, 256–270; Павловић 2009; Petrović 2009). Стога могу закључити да степен очуваности српског као матерњег идиома зависи од обима и интензитета његове употребе у оквиру приватне сфере комуникације. При овоме, обим и интензитет употребе српског идиома не доводим у директну везу са потребом појединца за очувањем матерњег језика и етничког идентитета, као што то може бити случај код појединаца који припадају другој или трећој генерацији досељеника (Komac, Medvešek, Roter 2007; Прелић 2008, 256–270), већ са комуникацијском, тј. прагматичном функцијом језика. То не значи да употреба матерњег идиома не доприноси његовом очувању, већ да то није само по себи циљ када су у питању појединци који представљају узорак на којем је истраживање обављано (прва генерација досељеника, који су релативно кратко у емиграцији). На основу обима и интензитета употребе српског идиома у свакодневной комуникацији испитаника, такође могу закључити да он има значајну улогу и као носилац појединчевог идентитета, а да се његова улога као маркера етничког идентитета испољава пре свега на колективном нивоу. Самим тим остаје да се у наставку истраживања проблематизује веза између језика и осталих сегмената етничког идентитета, те да се на тај начин употпуни слика како о комуникацијској тако и о симболичкој функцији језика, као и о његовом утицају на очување етничког идентитета појединца.