

**TO STANDARDIZE, OR NOT TO STANDARDIZE  
 —  
 THAT IS THE QUESTION**

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*How that might change his nature, there's the question.*  
 William Shakespeare -*THE TRAGEDY OF JULIUS CAESAR, ACT II, SCENE I-*

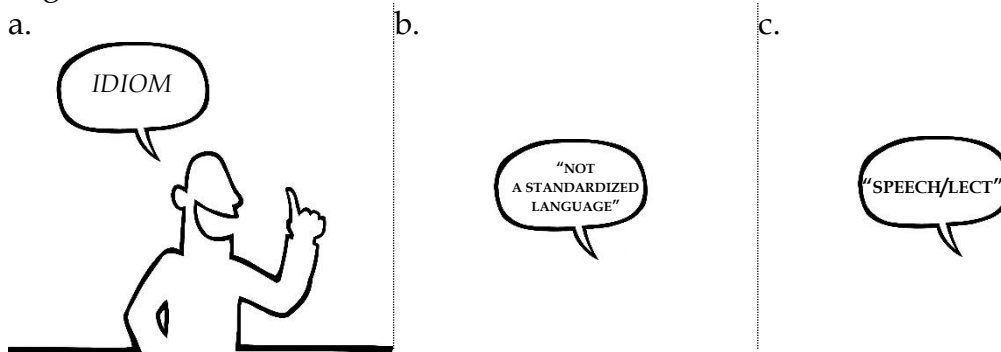
**I. IMPETUS**

(1) Žarko Bošnjaković's Claim (in Bošnjaković and Sikimić 2013:190)

[B]udući da bački Bunjevci nemaju standardizovan jezik, idiom kojim se oni služe možemo nazvati samo *govorom*.

*'[C]onsidering the fact that the Bačka Bunyevs do not have a standardized language, the idiom that they use can only be called speech/lect.'*

(2) Illustrating the Claim



**II. BACKGROUND**

(3) Bunjevcs in the 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia

Табела А1: Становништво према националној припадности, по пописима 1948–2011.

Table A1: Population by ethnicity, as per the 1948–2011 censuses

	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991 <sup>2)</sup>	2002	2011
РЕПУБЛИКА СРБИЈА / REPUBLIC OF SERBIA	6527966	6979154	7642227	8446591	9313676	7822795	7498001	7186862
Буњевци <sup>3)</sup> / Bunjevci <sup>4)</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	21434	20012	16706

(4) 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia

territory	number
Serbia	16,706 (100%)
Vojvodina*	16,469 (98.58%)

\*Vojvodina: Autonomous Province in Serbia; Territorially Organized into 7 counties and 45 municipalities (most relevant two: Subotica, Sombor)

(5) Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

Равноправност грађана и национална равноправност

Члан 6.

АП Војводина у оквиру својих права и дужности доприноси остваривању Уставом зајамчене потпуне равноправности Мађара, Словака, Хрвата, Црногораца, Румуна, Рома, Буњеваца, Русина, Македонаца.

*'Equality of Citizens and National Equality*

*Article 6 (excerpt)*

*Within the scope of its jurisdictions and responsibilities, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina provides the fulfillment of the constitutionally guaranteed comprehensive equality of Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, Montenegrins, Romanians, Roma, Bunyevs, Ruthenians, and Macedonians.'*

(6) Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

Службени језици и писма

Члан 24.

Поред српског језика и ћириличног писма, у органима АП Војводине у равноправној службеној употреби су и мађарски, словачки, хрватски, румунски и русински језик и њихова писма, у складу са законом.

*'Official Languages and Alphabets*

*Article 24 (excerpt)*

*In addition to the Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet, in the bodies of AP Vojvodina, Hungarian, Slovak, Croatian, Romanian, and Ruthenian language (sic) and their alphabets are equally in the official use, in accordance with the law.'*

(7) Constitution of the Republic of Serbia

Језик и писмо

Члан 10.

У Републици Србији у службеној употреби су српски језик и ћирилично писмо.

*'Language and Alphabet*

*Article 10 (excerpt)*

*In the Republic of Serbia, the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet are in the official use.'*

(8) Politika 1

Поводом 8. јануара, Светског дана писмености, Удружење војвођанских учитеља поднело је захтев Министарству просвете и Матици српској за коначну стандардизацију букварског писма српског језика.

Недопустиво је и крајње неодговорно да још немамо званично стандардизовано букварско писмо.

*'On January 8, International Literacy Day (sic), the Association of Teachers of Vojvodina submitted to the Ministry of Education and to Matica Srpska a request for the final standardization of the Serbian language alphabet in school primers.*

*It is both inexcusable and irresponsible that we still do not have an officially standardized school-primer alphabet.'*

(9) Politika 2

Министарство просвете, науке и технолошког развоја упутило је јуче иницијативу Српској академији наука и уметности и Одбору за стандардизацију српског језика да у оквиру својих надлежности покрену питање стандардизације ћириличног писма.

*'Yesterday (January 12, 2015, B. B.) the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development forwarded an initiative to the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Committee for Standardization of the Serbian Language in which it asked them to raise the question of standardization of the Cyrillic alphabet.'*

### III. EXAMINATION

#### III.1. INITIAL OBSERVATION

(10) Milroy 2001:539

[T]he idea of what *is believed to* constitute a 'language' can hardly escape the influence of the standard ideology.

#### III.2. STANDARD LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

(11) Milroy 2001:530

Certain languages ... are believed by their speakers to exist in standardized forms, and this kind of belief affects the way in which speakers think about their own language and about 'language' in general.

(12) Gal 2006:163

It is a common sense view widely held by European elites that languages are organized systems with centrally defined norms, each language ideally expressing the spirit of a nation and the territory it occupies.

(13) Gal 2006:174

It is only the dominance of standard language ideology – especially the idea that standards are anonymous and neutral – that leads to the widespread yet mistaken assumption that standard language is the overriding factor in the circulation of a message.

#### III.3. STANDARD LANGUAGE

(14) Auer 2011:486

(a) a standard variety is a common language, i.e. one which (ideally) shows no geographical variation in the territory in which it is used; (b) a standard variety is an H variety, i.e. it has overt prestige and is used in situations which require a formal way of speaking (if a spoken standard exists at all), as well as in writing; and (c) a standard variety is codified, i.e. 'right' or 'wrong' plays an important role in the way in which speakers orient towards it

(15) Coupland and Kristiansen 2011:11

Standard language is itself a slippery concept, and it is in need of further critical consideration.

(16) Smakman 2012:26

The standard language ... is subject to a wide array of descriptions, making this language more elusive.

(17) Browne 2002:5

To put together a standard ... someone has to invest some work into processing and tampering with existing language forms. ... [S]tandard English largely took shape without identifiable people making explicit decisions.

#### III.4. STANDARDIZATION

(18) Milroy 2001:531

[U]niformity has to be *imposed* on ... classes of objects, and uniformity, or invariance, then becomes in itself important defining characteristic of a standardized form of language. **[S]tandardization consists of the imposition of uniformity upon a class of objects.**

(19) Milroy 2001:534

[S]tandardization [is] a process that is continuously in progress in those languages that undergo the process.

(20) Milroy 2001:535

The immediate goals of the process are not literary, but economic, commercial and political.

(21) Gal 2006:164

[T]he European linguistic mosaic [is] the product of language standardisation, a sociocultural process that accompanied and often legitimated the making of European nation states.

(22) Milroy 2001:539

Standardization of language is not a universal.

#### **IV. ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES**

##### **IV.1. COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS VS. SERBIAN AUTHORITIES**

(23) European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – Application of the Charter in Serbia. 2nd Monitoring Cycle (excerpts)

25. Part II of the Charter applies to all regional or minority languages used in Serbia, i.e. Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Bunjevac, Croatian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Macedonian, Romani, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Vlach. In the first evaluation report, the Committee of Experts did not deal with Bunjevac under Part II as its status under the Charter was not yet clear.

10. A particular problem exists regarding Bunjevac. However, the Serbian authorities have informed the Committee of Experts that Bunjevac [is] not officially used in any unit of local self-government because [it has] not yet been standardised. The Committee of Experts notes that the concept of “official use” in Serbia covers not just written, but also oral communication with citizens for which a standardisation is not necessary.

15. In the first monitoring cycle, the Serbian authorities declared that they would not yet apply the Charter to Bunjevac because it had not yet been standardised. However, they were willing to apply Part II to Bunjevac in the future. The Committee of Experts underlined that the lack of standardisation was not in itself an obstacle to the application of Part II to a regional or minority language. The Committee of Ministers recommended Serbia to “clarify the status of Bunjevac ... in consultation with representatives of all speakers”. Furthermore, the Committee of Experts “encourage[d] the Serbian authorities to clarify the status of Bunjevac under the Charter in cooperation with the speakers.”

(24) Serbian Authorities (excerpts)

The Republic of Serbia’s authorities deem the non-existence of standardised Bunjevac [language] a realistic obstacle to [its] introduction into official use in the local self-government units where national minority members reach the legally stipulated limits.

It is therefore incontestable that the existence of standardised language is a prerequisite for implementation of this provision, in order to have written communication in a minority language, and the Republic of Serbia’s authorities share the Committee’s opinion that for spoken communication with the citizens language standardisation is not necessary.

Still, minority languages are in practice used in spoken communication with local authorities, which is confirmed by data obtained from certain local self-government units.

##### **IV.2. NORWAY; KVEN**

(25) Kven

a. Lane 2011:57-58

The Kven language of northern Norway has up to the early years of the 21st century been subject to prejudicial language and cultural policies due to its close ethnolinguistic relationship with Finnish. [It] has recently acquired recognition by the Norwegian state through its inclusion under Norway’s ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

b. Lewis et al. 2014

Finnish, Kven < Uralic, Finnic (number of speakers of the Kven language is 5,000; Lane 2011 provides various figures, all between 2,000 and 10,000 speakers)

(26) Lane 2015:10

In 2005, Kven was recognised as a language in its own right and not just a dialect of Finnish, and the official process of the standardisation of Kven started in 2007.

(27) Sandøy 2011:119,122

The term 'standard language' is not widely known in Norwegian. ... Norway is by far the most liberal society with respect to attitudes to the use of non-standard varieties in spoken media.

#### IV.3. LINGUISTS AND STANDARD LANGUAGE

(28) Kristiansen and Coupland 2011

a.	b.
Austrian German	there is much insecurity about whether a standard Austrian German could really be on a par with standard German as associated with Germany
Danish	the Danish society will move in a direction different from the one it has followed to date: Towards more tolerance not less, more variation not less, and more lects not less
English	standard English is best seen as an ideological ascription rather than as a bounded variety
Finnish	we seem to be heading towards de-standardisation
Finland Swedish	the term 'standard Finland Swedish' has a somewhat unclear referent; a teacher should use a good standard
German	Even though Germany has a uniform written and spoken standard language there are large differences in the usage of a spoken standard in different types of communication as well as in the relationship between local dialects, regiolects, and the standard language.
Icelandic	the enthusiasm for insisting on the ideology of linguistic purism appears to have begun to wane over the last 20 years
Irish	the attribution of prestige to non-traditional speech varieties and their identification with a perceived national standard is highly salient
Lithuanian	More than a hundred years have passed since Lithuanian was shaped into a standard language. ... It has become obvious that, for more than a hundred years, no ideal usage has actually evolved.
Dutch	there is some controversy as to how standard Standard Dutch (still) is ... the downward norm relaxation ... is ... a form of standard enrichment: while it becomes less general, the standard also becomes less sterile by acquiring social meanings and adapting to more diverse contexts of use
Norwegian	The term 'standard language' is not widely known in Norwegian. ... The Norwegian language community has experienced an obvious destandardisation since 1970 and a demotisation since 2000.
Swedish	interest in Standard Swedish is fairly lukewarm in Sweden today
Welsh	it is unclear whether there is a consensus around how to define standard Welsh, or if a clear standard exists at all

(29) Destandardization and Demotization (Kristiansen and Coupland 2011:28)

- Destandardization refers "to a possible development whereby the established standard language loses its position as the one and only 'best language'"
- Demotization signals "the possibility that the 'standard ideology' as such stays intact while the valorisation of ways of speaking changes"

#### IV.4. NON-LINGUISTS AND STANDARD LANGUAGE

(30) Smakman 2012:31,54

- An international survey was held involving speakers divided across seven speech communities: England, Flanders, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland and the United States.

- b. [T]he definition of the standard language could be that this language is the neutral communication tool within a country or speech community. So, the standard language is the language that connects people within a country, amongst others linguistically. It is liked although it may suffer from a degree of unnaturalness and colorlessness. Generally, other characteristics can be explained by local conditions and local history. Television presenters, and newsreaders in particular, are associated with the standard language. However, alternative role models may present themselves and might come from unexpected places.
- c. It is not unlikely that a detailed description of any standard language yields a system that no individual speaker actually applies.

## V. DELIBERATION

### V.1. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION

#### (31) Standard

A standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose.

#### (32) Benefits of Standards

International Standards bring technological, economic and societal benefits. They help to harmonize technical specifications of products and services making industry more efficient and breaking down barriers to international trade. Conformity to International Standards helps reassure consumers that products are safe, efficient and good for the environment.

#### (33) Standards in Action

ISO International Standards provide practical tools for tackling many of today's global challenges, from managing global water resources to improving the safety of the food we eat: Sustainable Development; Food; Water; Cars; Climate Change; Energy and Renewables; Services; Health; Accessibility.

#### (34) Developers of Standards

ISO standards are developed by groups of experts, within technical committees (TCs). ... Each TC deals with a different subject. ... ISO has over 250 technical committees:

ISO/TC 37 Terminology and other language and content resources

Scope:

Standardization of principles, methods and applications relating to terminology and other language and content resources in the contexts of multilingual communication and cultural diversity.

### V.2. JAMES MILROY 2001:532

#### (35) Prestige

- a. One social category that is often used to characterize a standard variety is ... the category of **prestige**. Commonly 'standard variety' has been equated with 'the highest prestige variety', rather than with the variety that is characterized by the highest degree of uniformity.
- b. [I]f it does happen to be true in a given case that the standard variety is identical with the highest prestige variety, it does not follow that high prestige is definitive of what constitutes a 'standard'.
- c. In fact, it is not difficult to argue that varieties of language do not actually have prestige in themselves: these varieties acquire prestige when their *speakers* have high prestige, because prestige is attributed by human beings to particular social groups and to inanimate and abstract objects, such as Ming vases and language varieties, and it depends on the *values* attributed to such objects. The prestige attributed to the language varieties (by metonymy) is **indexical** and involved in the social life of speakers.

### V.3. LINGUISTIFICATION

(36) Bach 2013:87-88

- a. Think of linguistification by analogy with personification: attributing linguistic properties to nonlinguistic phenomena. For my purposes, it also includes attributing nonlinguistic properties to linguistic items, treating these properties as if they were linguistic. Linguistification is widespread. It has reached epidemic proportions and needs to be eradicated.
- b. [A]ttributing properties to linguistic expressions they don't have needlessly increases the explanatory burden on linguistics. The task of linguistics is demanding enough.
- c. [L]inguistification gives rise to a fundamental misconception of the process of ordinary communication.

### VI. RESOLUTION

(37) Standard? (Garrett et al. 2011:58)

[There are] inconsistencies in how the term 'standard' is intended and interpreted, partly because many aspects of linguistic communication are not standardisable, and partly because pressures on what might be judged to be 'good spoken usage' come from different normative centres and impact on different domains or genres.

(38) Issue of Best Language (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011:29)

In its ultimate consequence (even though we consider this to be just as unlikely and idealised as a fully standardised, invariant standard language), value levelling implies a situation with no valorisation of differential language use, a situation where the idea of 'best language' no longer is an issue in the community.

(39) Lexical Fallacy (Bach 2013:94)

If to be F is to be F relative to something (of a certain type), then the lexical entry for 'F' must associate a variable (or slot) with 'F'.

Consider adjectives like 'relevant', 'qualified', and 'legal'. A topic can't be just plain relevant, a person can't be just plain qualified, and an action can't be just plain legal.

### VII. TENTATIVE PROPOSAL

(40) Need for Standard?

- a. Denmark (Kristiansen and Coupland 2011)

Denmark arguably comes closest to realizing Ernest Renan's wet dream of 'one nation, one language'.  
Vs.

I would like to persuade the reader that the variationist research programme has ideological implications, and that it should be supported and developed as a contribution to changing the linguistic climate

- b. Iceland (Kristiansen and Coupland 2011)

[T]he standard modern Icelandic language is more or less the same idiom as the language of classical Old Icelandic literature.

Vs.

The linguistic ideology in Iceland remains one of 'holding the thread' and caring for the well-being of the standard, but it is arguably less actively enforced than it was previously.

- c. Committee for the Standardization of the Serbian Language (Decision #1; February 16, 1998; excerpt)

[С]тандардизацијом се ништа не забрањује нити укида, а још се мање “спаљује” оно што постоји у људским главама и њиховим језичким творевинама, запамћеним у књигама, часописима и новинама, на целулоидним тракама, дискетама и компактним дисковима. Њоме се само утврђује одговарајући распоред језичких јединица у јавној употреби, особито оној којој се придружују придеви званична, службена (употреба језика). ... [О]собе које се одликују познавањем и поштовањем језичких норми могле би, у бољим друштвеним приликама, стицати више јавног угледа и других погодности, као, уосталом, и другде, нарочито у развијенијем свету.

*'Standardization prohibits and annuls nothing, let alone 'burns' that what exists in human brains and their linguistic creations, immortalized in books, journals and newspapers, on celluloid, diskettes, and compact discs. Standardization simply establishes a certain order of linguistic units in the public use, particularly the one described as official (language use). ... In better social circumstances, those who know and respect linguistic norms could gain a higher social reputation, as well as other conveniences, as the case indeed is elsewhere, particularly in the more developed world.'*

- d. Committee for the Standardization of the Serbian Language (Program; excerpt)

Одбор ће пратити и подстицати рад на већ прихваћеним капиталним пројектима (две синтаксе, творба речи, фонологија, једнотомни речник, обратни речник, двојезични речници, заокруживање правописног комплекса). Одбор ће настојати да се нађе радно језгро и за непокривене капиталне пројекте (морфологија, акценатски речник и др.).

*'The Committee will follow and support the work on the already accepted major projects (two syntaxes, word formation, phonology, one-volume dictionary, reverse dictionary, bilingual dictionaries, completion of the orthographic complex). The Committee will also strive to find work groups for the currently not considered major projects (morphology, accentual dictionary, etc).'*

- e. European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – Application of the Charter in Serbia.  
2nd Monitoring Cycle

According to the information obtained from the National Council of the Bunjevac Minority, the process to standardise Bunjevac has begun and a grammar is being prepared. The national council expects that standardisation will be achieved by 2013 and that it will facilitate the use of Bunjevac in public life.

## VIII. SOLUTION?

THERE IS NO REAL-LIFE/NATURAL/LINGUISTIC ENTITY SUCH THAT COULD BE REFERRED TO AS standard language, SO DO AWAY WITH THE PHRASE standard language FOR IT IS LOADED WITH SEVERAL CENTURIES OF LAYERS OF MEANINGS.



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CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES – APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER IN SERBIA.

2<sup>ND</sup> MONITORING CYCLE

STATUTE OF THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA