The World's Major Languages

Second Edition

Edited by
Bernard Comrie

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Serbo-Croat

Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian

Greville Corbett and Wayles Browne

1 Historical Background

The Serbo-Croat (or Serbo-Croatian) area is a striking example of mismatching between dialect differentiation and the rise of standard languages.

The line which divided Europe into east and west, Orthodox and Catholic, runs right through this part of South-east Europe. Various states have prospered at different times in this region, such as the Serbian medieval kingdom under rulers like Stefan Nemanja and Stefan Dušan and the unique city-state of Dubrovnik (Ragusa). Parts of the territory have been under Venice, Austro-Hungary and the Turks. We can only hope to hint at the complex and turbulent history of the area.

The ancestors of the South Slavs arrived in the Balkans during the sixth and seventh centuries and within the next two centuries the first Slav states of the area sprang up. By this time too the main linguistic divisions were evident. There were two main sets of dialects: East South Slavonic would later develop into Bulgarian and the closely related Macedonian, while West South Slavonic was the basis for Slovene and Serbo-Croat. From the ninth century the Slovenes in the north-west were ruled by Bavarian and Austrian princes and so were separated from their Slavonic neighbours. In the remaining area, roughly equivalent to modern Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia (or former Yugoslavia excepting Slovenia and Macedonia), a range of dialects developed.

Christianity was accepted in the ninth century, with certain political repercussions. The tenth-century Croatian kingdom looked to Rome in matters of religion. Serbia's adoption of Orthodoxy meant that it looked first to Constantinople and later, after the fall of Constantinople, to Moscow for support. Montenegro was also Orthodox. The picture was complicated by the invasion of the Turks, who defeated the Serbs at Kosovo in 1389, and by the resulting migrations of population. In the next century the Turks occupied Bosnia and Hercegovina, where a large proportion of the population adopted Islam, and parts of Montenegro. By the time the Turks were finally removed (1878), Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which took over Bosnia-Hercegovina. It was not until 1918 that the different groups were united into one state –

the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, soon officially renamed Yugoslavia (from *jug* 'south' and *Slav*).

Three main dialect groups had emerged, which take their names from the interrogative pronoun 'what?': Čakavian (*ča?* 'what?'), Kajkavian (*kaj?*) and Štokavian (*što?*). Kajkavian was spoken in the north, Čakavian in the west and Štokavian in the east, centre and south-west. However, the dialectal, political and religious boundaries did not match in a straightforward way, particularly after Štokavian speakers, escaping the Turks, moved north and west, confining Čakavian to the Croatian coastal area and Kajkavian to north-west inland Croatia. Despite this troubled history there have been some remarkable flowerings of literature. When the Serbian Kingdom was at its height during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, literature flourished, written not in the vernacular but in the Serbian version of Church Slavonic. In the west too, Croatian Church Slavonic was used at first, but by the sixteenth century major writers like Marulić, Hektorović, Zoranić and Lucić were using Čakavian. The rise of Dubrovnik brought Štokavian to the fore also in the sixteenth century. And in the eighteenth century, Kajkavian was widely written in Croatia around Zagreb.

This diversity of literary tradition, mirroring the tri-dialectal fragmentation of the area, naturally impeded the development of a common literary language for Croatians. In the east, Turkish domination had severely hampered the development of the Serbian Church Slavonic tradition. Russian Church Slavonic was adopted in the eighteenth century and a hybrid language (Slavenoserbian) evolved, with elements of Russian Church Slavonic and vernacular Serbian. Its artificiality, contrary both to the aspirations of intellectuals influenced by the Enlightenment and to the needs of modern society, led to a movement towards a more popular language, which was brought to fruition by Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864). Karadžić rejected Slavenoserbian, insisting that the new literary language must be based on the vernacular and on a single dialect, the Štokavian dialect of East Hercegovina. He made his revolutionary proposals in his dictionary (1818), which also contained a grammar of the language. There had already been some movement in the west towards basing the literary language on Štokavian – spoken by the majority of Croats, though not native to the cultural centres of Zagreb and the coast. The Zagreb editor Ljudevit Gaj (1809–72) and other intellectuals helped accelerate this trend. In 1850 the Literary Accord between Croats and Serbs was signed in Vienna. It justified the use of Štokavian (Hercegovinian dialect) as the literary language and gave rules for writing it. Reactions to the Accord varied; not surprisingly it aroused a great deal of hostility, but gradually it gained support. Yet the centuries of division between different dialects, religions, cultures and political groups could not be removed by such an agreement. In any case, the major task of adapting the chosen variant to all the functions of a modern literary language had still to be faced. Nevertheless the Accord crystallised a unifying trend. A major success associated with this trend was the reform of the writing system.

2 Writing Systems

The original alphabet for South Slavonic was Glagolitic. In the eastern, Serbian Orthodox area this was replaced from the twelfth century on by Cyrillic. In the west, the Latin alphabet was introduced in the fourteenth century, under Catholic influence. However, Glagolitic remained in use in the west, particularly among priests of the Dalmatian

coast and islands, even into the twentieth century. From the sixteenth century until the Second World War, some Moslem writers in Bosnia used the Arabic script.

Neither in the east nor in the west was the writing system satisfactory. The version of the Cyrillic alphabet employed was appropriate for Church Slavonic but not for the contemporary language, while the use of the Latin alphabet in the west was influenced by Italian or Hungarian practice (depending on the area), neither of which was a suitable model for a Slavonic language. In his dictionary of 1818, Vuk Karadžić justified and used a new version of Cyrillic. This was a major reform involving simplifying the alphabet, using a single letter per sound and adopting a phonemically based orthography. He eliminated several unnecessary letters and introduced six new ones. Despite initial angry opposition, his alphabet was adopted and, with one minor modification, is in use today.

The equivalent reform for the Latin alphabet was carried out a little later by Ljudevit Gaj, using diacritic symbols on the Czech model. With minor modifications, Gaj's alphabet is the present one. Unlike the Cyrillic alphabet it includes digraphs: *lj*, *nj* and *dž* (also *dj* though this latter is usually written *đ*). Single symbols exist for these but their use is restricted to certain academic publications. The digraphs cause little problem; the combination *l*+*j* does not occur, while *n*+*j* and *d*+*ž* are rare; an example is *nadživjeti/nadživeti* (Cyrillic надживјети/надживети) 'to outlive', where *d*+*ž* represent separate sounds. The two modern alphabets are given in Table 18.1.

Table 18.1 The Alphabets of Serbo-Croat

Latin		*Cyrillic*		*Latin*		*Cyrillic*	
A	a	А	а	L	l	Л	л
B	b	Б	б	Lj	lj	Љ	љ
C	c	Ц	ц	M	m	М	м
Č	č	Ч	ч	N	n	Н	н
Ć	ć	Ћ	ћ	Nj	nj	Њ	њ
D	d	Д	д	O	o	О	о
Dž	dž	Џ	џ	P	p	П	п
Đ	đ	Ђ	ђ	R	r	Р	р
E	e	Е	е	S	s	С	с
F	f	Ф	ф	Š	š	Ш	ш
G	g	Г	г	T	t	Т	т
H	h	Х	х	U	u	У	у
I	i	И	и	V	v	В	в
J	j	Ј	ј	Z	z	З	з
K	k	К	к	Ž	ž	Ж	ж

The characters are arranged in the Latin order; the Cyrillic order is: А, Б, В, Г, Д, Ђ, Е, Ж, З, И, Ј, К, Л, Љ, М, Н, Њ, О, П, Р, С, Т, Ћ, У, Ф, Х, Ц, Ч, Џ, Ш. This Cyrillic list includes six characters not found in Russian Cyrillic; conversely, Russian has nine characters not used in Serbo-Croat. Note from the table that there is an exact correspondence, letter for letter, between the two alphabets of Serbo-Croat. The digraphs in the Latin version function as autonomous letters. This means that in a dictionary, all words beginning with *lj* are grouped together after all those with initial *l* (unlike English, where *thin* comes before *tin*); in a crossword, *lj* occupies a single square. The

exact correspondence between the two alphabets means that transliteration is automatic; a typescript may be submitted in the Latin alphabet though it is to be printed in Cyrillic. This parallel use of the alphabets is found in Serbia and Montenegro, while elsewhere the Latin alphabet is found almost exclusively. In the twentieth century there was a trend in the east towards greater use of the Latin alphabet. In present-day Belgrade the two coexist with no apparent confusion: one sees shop windows with notices in both alphabets side by side, or a lecturer may begin labelling a diagram in one alphabet and then continue in the other.

The orthography of Serbo-Croat is based on the phonemic principle. Assimilations are indicated in spelling, for example, *gladak/*гладак (masculine singular) 'smooth' but *glatka/*глатка (feminine singular); *top/*топ 'gun' but *tobdžija/*тобџија 'gunner'. If a consonant is dropped it is omitted in spelling, for example, *radostan/*радостан (masculine singular) 'joyful' but *radosna/*радосна (feminine singular). Though there are rare exceptions, this phonemic principle is applied (at the expense of the morphological principle) with unusual consistency.

3 The Contemporary Situation: Dialects and Standard Languages

While Yugoslavia existed, Serbo-Croat was its major language, being spoken in the Yugoslav republics of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, by a total of over 17 million according to the 1981 census. Slovenia and Macedonia have their own languages but many Slovenes and Macedonians knew Serbo-Croat (as did large numbers of the sizable populations of Albanians and Hungarians living in Yugoslavia and of the smaller groups of Bulgarians and Rumanians). Many hundreds of thousands of Serbo-Croat speakers lived abroad, notably in the United States and Australasia, and in West Germany and Sweden.

When Yugoslavia broke up (1991–5), four countries were formed, each with its own standard, as we shall see below. The number of speakers living abroad increased greatly as people fled the destructive wars and ruinous economic conditions.

As stated earlier, there are three dialect groups: Čakavian, Kajkavian and Štokavian. Each of these is in fact a set of related dialects. In contrast to their earlier importance, Čakavian and Kajkavian are spoken in relatively small areas, so we shall discuss them briefly. Čakavian survives along the Dalmatian coastal fringe, on the Adriatic islands, in Istria and in a small part of northern Croatia. As we shall see in the next section, it preserves an interesting accentual system; in morphology too it is more conservative than Štokavian. Kajkavian is spoken around Zagreb in the north-west of Croatia, bordering on Slovenia. It shares several features with Slovene. Like Čakavian, in the plural it retains distinct dative, instrumental and locative endings, which are merged in Štokavian; another interesting archaic feature is the preservation of the supine to express purpose.

The main dialect, Štokavian, is spoken over the remainder of the Serbo-Croat area. It is divided first into New Štokavian (the innovating dialects, typically those which underwent the stress shift described in the next section) and Old Štokavian (those which did not). The most important of the Old Štokavian dialects are the Prizren–Timok dialects, which are spoken in the south-east of Serbia, bordering on Bulgaria and Macedonia. They have lost the infinitive and reduced the case system to three cases only and are therefore clearly transitional to Bulgarian and Macedonian. The Kosovo–

Resava dialects run in a band from south-west to north-east, between the Prizren–Timok dialects and the rest of the Štokavian dialects, and share features with both.

Within New Štokavian, the traditional feature for distinguishing between dialects is the reflex of the Common Slavonic vowel *ě* (named *jat'*), which may be *i*, *e* or *ije/je*. This gives three dialect groups: Ikavian, Ekavian and Ijekavian, in which the word, say, for 'child' is *dite*, *dete* and *dijete* respectively. The Ikavian dialect is found in Dalmatia, the west of Bosnia-Hercegovina and parts of Lika and Slavonia. It is no longer used as a literary standard language (though certain Ikavian features are established in the standard languages). This leaves the two major dialects of New Štokavian: Ekavian is spoken in most of Serbia; Ijekavian is found in the western part of Serbia, Montenegro, the east of Bosnia-Hercegovina and in those parts of Croatia not previously mentioned. Ekavian is the basis of the standard Serbian of Serbia, which has Belgrade and Novi Sad as its centres; Ijekavian is the foundation of standard Croatian, whose focal point is Zagreb, even though Zagreb is in a traditionally Kajkavian area. The Ijekavian of Bosnia-Hercegovina can be seen as transitional between the two, but has some characteristics of its own. Montenegro is particularly interesting in that it is Ijekavian, but in terms of lexis goes together with Serbian.

It is worth looking in a little more detail at the differences between the two most highly standardised languages – Croatian and the Serbian of Serbia. As previously mentioned, Croatian uses Ijekavian pronunciation. This means that Common Slavonic *ě* is represented as *ije*, in long syllables, e.g. *snijeg* 'snow', and as *je* in short syllables: *snjegovit* 'snowy'. In Serbian (Ekavian), *e* is found in both cases: *sneg*/снег, *snegovit*/снеговит. Croatian is written in the Latin alphabet, Serbian traditionally in Cyrillic, but now also in the Latin alphabet. The other most obvious area of difference is in lexis. Several very common objects are referred to by different words in the two standards: 'bread' is *kruh* in Croatia, but *hleb*/хлеб in Serbia; a 'train' is *vlak* in the west, but *voz*/воз in the east. Technical terminology also differs, having been formed separately: Croatian *dušik* but Serbian *azot*/азот 'nitrogen'. There are fewer borrowings in Croatian and correspondingly more calques and neologisms; we find, for example, *sveučilište* 'university' (based on *sve* 'all' and the root *uč-* 'teach, learn') whereas Serbia has *univerzitet*/универзитет. Those words which have been borrowed into Croatian come predominantly from German, Latin and also Czech, while borrowings from Turkish, Greek and Russian are more common in Serbian. Words borrowed into both standards may show differences in derivational morphology. Thus *student*/студент 'male student' is found in both; 'female student' is *studentica* in Croatian, *studentkinja*/студенткиња in Serbian. Salient differences in inflectional morphology and in syntax will be pointed out in the appropriate sections.

We specified 'Serbian of Serbia' above, because many Serbs living outside Serbia use Ijekavian pronunciation, though otherwise following the Serbian standard as described. So they may say and write *snijeg*/снијег, *snjegovit*/сњеговит, *hljeb*/хљеб and the like.

While noticeable differences exist between Croatian and Serbian standards, some of them are not absolute but are a matter of frequency of usage. Many features often quoted as characteristic of one actually occur in the other, though they are less common there. The whole question of the status of the two standard forms is very sensitive, because of the cultural and political implications. To the outside linguist, the numerous shared features, added to the ease of mutual comprehension, suggest one language with multiple varieties. This was official policy during the Yugoslav period, and many Yugoslavs

concurred. But at present neither independent Croatia nor independent Serbia wants input from the other country in questions of standardisation. The official language of Croatia, with its ca. 4.5 million inhabitants, is officially termed Croatian, and is regulated by spelling dictionaries (*pravopis*) and grammars published in Zagreb. The language of Serbia, with more than 6.6 million speakers (plus ca. 200,000 in Kosovo) and many second-language speakers, is referred to as Serbian.

Matters are more complicated in the other two new countries. In Bosnia-Hercegovina, with ca. 4.25 million inhabitants, the largest single group is Bosniaks (*Bošnjak*, meaning Bosnian of Muslim heritage), and these mostly call their language Bosnian. A Bosnian *pravopis* and grammars exist but usage does not always follow them strictly. Croatians living in Bosnia-Hercegovina claim the right to follow the Croatian standard, and the Serbs of the Republika Srpska subpart prefer the Serbian standard, although mainly keeping the local Ijekavian pronunciation.

The standard of Montenegro (population ca. 600,000) is Serbian with Ijekavian pronunciation. As in Serbia, the Cyrillic alphabet is felt to be a national symbol but Latin is used side by side with it.

In each country language questions kindle heated polemics in the press. In Croatia these concern the desirability of replacing foreign words – including those thought to be Serbian – with new coinages; the merits of competing *pravopisi*; and the custom of having a *lektor* 'language corrector' read any text that is to be published. Serbia debates the need to favour Cyrillic over Latin, and also has competing *pravopisi.* In Bosnia, ethnic Croats and Serbs defend their 'own' standards, and some claim that standard Bosnian should be renamed *Bošnjak* because only Bošnjaks adhere to it. In Montenegro the name of the language is debated (Montenegrin or Serbian?), a point connected with the wider issue of whether Montenegrins are a subpart of the Serbian nation or a group unto itself. Some adherents of separate Montenegrin identity have published a *pravopis* adding three extra letters for local sounds (palatals *ś* and *ź* as in Polish, and *3* for the affricate *dz*), but this has not been officially adopted.

Few people in the countries involved identify their own language as 'Serbo-Croat' nowadays, though many scholars outside the region still find it useful. As used in the present chapter, 'Serbo-Croat' does not deny the differences between the standard languages, but is a cover term referring to the many features they have in common. In what follows, we will cite Ijekavian and Ekavian pronunciations side by side, but in the Latin alphabet.

4 Phonology

Serbo-Croat's inventory of segmental phonemes is one of the smallest in the Slavonic family, since it does not have the range of palatalised consonants found, say, in Russian. Generally 25 consonants are recognised. Of these *r*, which is trilled, can be syllabic (= a vowel), as in *trg* 'square'. In addition there is a straightforward five-vowel system. The phonemes are presented in Table 18.2, using the normal orthography, which does not distinguish syllabic *r* and which includes digraphs for single sounds.

The vowel system provides the most interesting feature of Serbo-Croat phonology, namely accentuation. The classical account goes back to Karadžić and his follower Daničić and is that found still in most modern descriptions. In this analysis, vowels (including syllabic *r*) vary according to length and pitch. Vowels may be long or short, both in

stressed position and in positions after the stress. Pitch is differentiated only in initial stressed position, where there is an opposition between rising and falling tone. These possibilities are indicated using the symbols given in Table 18.3. The top four symbols indicate the position of the stress, tone and length. Thus *govòriti* 'to talk' is stressed on the second syllable, where there is a short vowel with rising tone. On unstressed syllables length is indicated; the absence of a marker, as on the other three vowels of this example, indicates an unstressed short vowel. Thus in *glèdalācā* (genitive plural) 'of the spectators' the first vowel is stressed and has falling tone and is short; the second is unstressed and short; the other two are unstressed and long.

These symbols are used in dictionaries and grammars but are not printed in ordinary texts. We shall include them when discussing phonology and morphology but not in the syntax section. An indication is given in texts to avoid confusion, notably for the genitive plural, which in many nouns is identical to the singular, apart from vowel length. For example, *rȉbāra* (genitive singular) 'fisherman', *rȉbārā* (genitive plural). The first would be printed without accent, the second as *ribarâ*, using the circumflex. (This actually retains Karadžić's usage; the macron ¯, given in our table, is a twentieth-century innovation in linguistic usage.) While the opposition of genitive singular to genitive plural is the most crucial distinction which depends on the accentual system, other morphological distinctions rest on it in some words. Furthermore, there is a small number of frequently quoted minimal pairs: *grâd* 'city', *gràd* 'hail'; *pâs* 'belt', *pàs* 'dog'; *kúpiti* 'to buy', *kȕpiti* 'to collect'; *pàra* 'para' (unit of currency), *pȁra* 'steam'.

Table 18.2 Segmental Phonemes of Serbo-Croat

Vowels										
		i	r	u						
		e		o						
			a							
Consonants										
	Plain stop		*Affricate*		*Fricative*		*Nasal*	*Lateral*	*Trill*	*Semi-vowel*
Bilabial	p	b					m			
Labio-dental					f	v				
Dental	t	d	c				n	l		
Alveolar					s	z			r	
Palato-alveolar			č	dž	š	ž				
Palatal			ć	đ			nj	lj		j
Velar	k	g			h					

Table 18.3 Serbo-Croat Accentuation

		long	*short*
stressed syllables	falling tone	∩	\\
	rising tone	/	\
unstressed syllables		–	

There are severe restrictions on the distribution of tone and length, which are best understood in terms of historical development. Falling tone is found only on initial syllables and monosyllables always have falling tone. Apart from monosyllables, and a few recent borrowings, stress is never on the final syllable of a word. Long vowels occur in stressed position or after the stress. When we compare the position of the stress in Serbo-Croat with that of the other Slavonic languages which have free stress and which, in the main, preserve the Common Slavonic stress position (the East Slavonic languages and Bulgarian), we find that normally the Serbo-Croat stress is one syllable nearer the beginning of the word, for example *sèstra* 'sister', as compared to the Russian *sestrá*.

Serbo-Croat had inherited a long–short opposition in vowels; of the other Slavonic languages only Slovene, Czech and Slovak preserve this opposition. There was also an opposition, for long vowels, between acute (/) and circumflex (∩) intonations; the origin of this opposition is open to debate, many claiming it is of Indo-European origin, others believing it dates only from Common Slavonic times. In very broad outline the development was as follows. The acute was replaced by a short vowel with falling pitch. A special rising tone, however, had arisen when the ultra-short vowels (jers) could no longer carry stress: *krāljь́* > *krãljь* 'king'. This long rising accent, denoted ˜ and called the 'neo-acute', is preserved in Čakavian and Kajkavian dialects. In Štokavian, with the exception of some dialects in Slavonia, the neo-acute became identical with the long falling accent. At this stage, then, vowels were opposed in length (long or short only, after the loss of the jers). As a result of various changes, this opposition occurred in stressed position, immediately before the stress and in all post-tonic positions.

The crucial development took place around the fourteenth century in the central Štokavian dialects. The stress moved one syllable towards the beginning of the word, creating new rising tones. If the stress moved on to a long vowel, long rising tone resulted (/), and short rising (\) if the vowel was short. The modern restrictions on tone and length are explicable in terms of this change. Falling tone is found only on initial syllables since stress moved from all other syllables to produce rising tone. Monosyllables have falling tone because they were not involved in stress shifts. Stress is not found on final syllables because, of course, it has moved leftward. Finally, length is found in stressed and post-tonic positions only, because the earlier additional position (immediate pre-tonic) was covered by the accentual shift.

This, then, is the classical account of Serbo-Croat accentuation and its development. However, an extensive survey by Magner and Matejka revealed that the Karadžić–Daničić system is not so well preserved in towns as in rural areas. The influx of population to urban centres with the resultant mixing of dialects has led to a less clear situation. In particular, many speakers in Serbia and Croatia do not distinguish length on unstressed (post-tonic) vowels.

5 Morphology

Serbo-Croat has been generally conservative, maintaining most of the categories of Common Slavonic and changing some of the actual forms remarkably little. However, there have also been some surprising innovations. Seven cases have been preserved, together with three genders, which are distinguished in the plural as well as the singular (unlike Russian). The dual number has been lost, but it has left its mark on the plural oblique case forms (a Serbo-Croat innovation). The chart given here shows the main types of noun declension, corresponding to those given for Russian.

Serbo-Croat Nominal Declension

	a-*stem*	*Masculine* o-*stem*	*Neuter* o-*stem*	i-*stem*
Singular:				
Nom.	žèna ‘woman’	zákon ‘law’	sèlo ‘village’	stvâr ‘thing’
Voc.	žȅno	zákone	sèlo	stvâri
Acc.	žènu	zákon	sèlo	stvâr
Gen.	žènē	zákona	sèla	stvâri
Dat.	žèni	zákonu	sèlu	stvâri
Inst.	žènōm	zákonom	sèlom	stvârju/stvâri
Loc.	žèni	zákonu	sèlu	stvári
Plural:				
Nom.	žène	zákoni	sȅla	stvâri
Voc.	žȅne	zákoni	sȅla	stvâri
Acc.	žène	zákone	sȅla	stvâri
Gen.	žénā	zákōnā	sêlā	stvárī
Dat.	žènama	zákonima	sȅlima	stvárima
Inst.	žènama	zákonima	sȅlima	stvárima
Loc.	žènama	zákonima	sȅlima	stvárima

In broad typological terms, the picture is similar to that of Russian: the morphology is fusional, and there is a high, but not absolute, correlation of gender with declensional class. When we look in more detail, however, we find interesting differences as compared to Russian. The vocative case is preserved, requiring a mutation of consonants for many masculine nouns. Thus *Bôg* ‘God’, vocative singular *Bȍže*, *prèdsjednīk/prèdsednīk* ‘chairman’, vocative singular *prèdsjednīče/prèdsednīče.* These mutations go back to the first palatalisation (see page 310). The second palatalisation is well preserved too. It is found in the singular of feminine *a*-stems: *knjȉga* ‘book’, dative and locative singular *knjȉzi*; *rijéka/réka* ‘river’, dative and locative singular *rijéci/réci*. In addition, it occurs in the plural of masculine nouns: *ìzlog* ‘shop window’, nominative plural *ìzlozi*, dative, instrumental and locative plural *ìzlozima*; *tèpih* ‘carpet’, nominative plural *tèpisi*, dative, instrumental and locative plural *tèpisima.* The innovatory mutation *l/o* also affects nominal paradigms: *pȅpeo* ‘ash’, genitive singular *pèpela.* When combined with a fleeting *a*, the reflex of both jers in ‘strong’ position, it can make forms from a single paradigm sound very different: *čìtalac* ‘reader’, vocative singular *čìtaoče*, accusative singular *čìtaoca*, genitive singular *čìtaoca*. These last examples illustrate the genitive–accusative syncretism found with animate nouns. In Serbo-Croat this is much more restricted than in Russian, being limited to masculine singular nouns. Note, however, that masculine plurals have an accusative form distinct from both nominative and genitive. While Serbo-Croat preserves the vocative, it has all but lost the distinction between dative and locative. Probably the major innovation in the nominal paradigms is the genitive plural *-ā*, for most nouns except *i*-stems. The origin of this form is still subject to debate. An *ā* may also be inserted to avoid consonant clusters before this ending, for example, *stùdent* ‘student’, genitive plural *stùdenātā*.

There are various smaller declensional classes which complicate the picture: some consonant stems are preserved, though with regularised endings, and certain suffixes may be added or lost in the declension of masculine nouns. And as the first noun in our chart shows, the length and tone of the stressed syllable may change within a paradigm; furthermore, as in Russian, the position of the stress may move as well. Before leaving the declension of nouns, it is interesting to note that, with a very few exceptions, all Serbo-Croat nouns are declinable. Even borrowings ending in a vowel decline: *bìrō* ‘office’, genitive singular *biròa*, unless they are feminine. This contrasts with Russian, where nouns whose

stem ends in a vowel (a considerable number) are normally indeclinable. On the other hand, most of the numerals in Serbo-Croat no longer decline, while in Russian they decline fully.

Many of the adjectival endings (as shown in the chart of adjectival declension) are similar to those of Russian, though contraction has applied to a greater extent. The accusative singular masculine form depends on the animacy of the noun. The forms given in brackets are optional additions; thus the genitive singular masculine and neuter is *mlâdōg* or, less usually, *mlâdōga*. Note that the three genders are distinguished in the direct cases of the plural. The forms given in the chart are the definite (pronominal, long) forms. Serbo-Croat retains indefinite forms, though these are distinguished by inflection in the masculine singular only; elsewhere the difference is normally one of length, the definite endings including a long vowel and the indefinite endings typically a short one. The distinction is best preserved in the nominative singular masculine: *dȍbrī čòvjek/čòvek* 'the good man' contrasts with *dȍbar čòvjek/čòvek* 'a good man'. Thus noun phrases are clearly marked for definiteness providing they include an attributive adjective and a masculine singular noun in the nominative case (or accusative–nominative). As in other Slavonic languages, though later than in most, the indefinite forms are being lost. The main reason they are best preserved in the nominative is that when the adjective is used predicatively it stands in the nominative and the indefinite form is used. Definite forms are therefore attributive; indefinites could be attributive or predicative and are increasingly a sign of predicative usage. A secondary reason for the retention of the opposition in the masculine concerns case-marking. Subjects and direct objects are clearly distinguished for animate nouns since, as mentioned earlier, animates have accusative forms identical to the genitive. For inanimates, however, nominative and accusative are identical. In actual text, a high proportion of subjects is definite, while most direct objects are indefinite. Therefore, for inanimate masculine nouns, the opposition of definite and indefinite forms helps to mark case.

Serbo-Croat Adjectival Declension (Definite)

	Masculine	*Neuter*	*Feminine*
Singular:			
Nom.-Voc.	mlâdī 'young'	mlâdō	mlâdā
Acc.	as nom. or gen.	mlâdō	mlâdū
Gen.	mlâdōg(a)		mlâdē
Dat.	mlâdōm(e)		mlâdōj
Inst.	mlâdīm		mlâdōm
Loc.	mlâdōm(e)		mlâdōj
Plural:			
Nom.-Voc.	mlâdī	mlâdā	mlâdē
Acc.	mlâdē	mlâdā	mlâdē
Gen.		mlâdīh	
Dat.		mlâdīm(a)	
Inst.		mlâdīm(a)	
Loc.		mlâdīm(a)	

When we move to verbal morphology, we find a plethora of forms. Serbo-Croat is moving from a system based on tense to one in which aspect has a central role, but it has not lost the redundant tense forms as most other Slavonic languages have. A concomitant change involves greater use of compound tenses. We start, however, with simple forms. The main conjugations are given in the chart of conjugation types (there are several variations on these forms which will be omitted).

Serbo-Croat Conjugation Types

		I Conjugation	*II Conjugation*	*III Conjugation*
Infinitive		čìtati 'to read'	nòsiti 'to carry'	trésti 'to shake'
Present:				
Singular	1	čìtām	nȍsīm	trésēm
	2	čìtāš	nȍsīš	trésēš
	3	čìtā	nȍsī	trésē
Plural	1	čìtāmo	nȍsīmo	trésēmo
	2	čìtāte	nȍsīte	trésēte
	3	čìtajū	nȍsē	trésū
Imperative:				
Singular	2	čìtāj	nòsi	trési
Plural	1	čìtājmo	nòsimo	trésimo
Plural	2	čìtājte	nòsite	trésite

Similarities with the present tense forms in the other Slavonic languages already given are evident. The main innovation is in the first person singular. The *-m* has spread from the very small group of athematic verbs to all the verbs in the language (with two exceptions: *mòći* 'to be able', first person singular *mògu*, and *htjȅti/htȅti* 'to want', first person singular *hòću* or *ću*). As stated earlier, long vowels after the stress, which occur in all persons in the present tense, are shortened by many speakers. Serbo-Croat preserves two more simple tenses, the imperfect and the aorist, illustrated in the charts displaying these forms. Note that in the imperfect the stem may show a consonant mutation, as in the case *nȍšāh* from *nòsiti*; several verbs have two possible forms, while *ìmati* 'to have' has three: *ìmāh*, *imàdijāh* and *ìmađāh.* The imperfect indicates action in process in the past. It contrasts with the aorist, which is normally used for a completed single action in the past. Both tenses are particularly used for events witnessed by the speaker.

The Imperfect Tense in Serbo-Croat

		I Conjugation	*II Conjugation*	*III Conjugation*
Infinitive		čìtati 'to read'	nòsiti 'to carry'	trésti 'to shake'
Imperfect				
Singular	1	čìtāh	nȍšāh	trésijāh/trésāh
	2	čìtāše	nȍšāše	trésijāše/trésāše
	3	čìtāše	nȍšāše	trésijāše/trésāše
Plural	1	čìtāsmo	nȍšāsmo	trésijāsmo/trésāsmo
	2	čìtāste	nȍšāste	trésijāste/trésāste
	3	čìtāhu	nȍšāhu	trésijāhu/trésāhu

The Aorist Tense in Serbo-Croat

		I Conjugation	*II Conjugation*	*III Conjugation*
Infinitive		sàznati 'to find out'	kúpiti 'to buy'	istrésti 'to shake out'
Aorist				
Singular	1	sàznah	kúpih	istrésoh
	2	sàzna	kûpī	ȉstrēse
	3	sàzna	kûpī	ȉstrēse
Plural	1	sàznasmo	kúpismo	istrésosmo
	2	sàznaste	kúpiste	istrésoste
	3	sàznaše	kúpiše	istrésoše

In the aorist of third conjugation verbs, a mutation of velar consonants may occur in the second and third persons singular (first palatalisation), for example, *rèći* 'to say',

first singular aorist *rèkoh*, second and third singular aorist *rèče.* In the first conjugation, some forms coincide with the imperfect – apart from post-accentual length. There is, however, little possibility of confusion, since the imperfect is formed only from imperfective verbs and the aorist usually, but not exclusively, from perfectives (hence the different illustrative verbs given in the chart of aorist tense forms). The notion of aspect is discussed in the chapter on Russian (pages 283–284). In broad outline, the aspectual system is similar in Serbo-Croat in both morphology (perfectives are typically derived from imperfectives by prefixation, and imperfectives from perfectives by suffixation) and semantics (the perfective views a situation as a single whole, the imperfective views a situation as having internal subdivisions). Given the basic aspectual meanings, it is not surprising that the imperfect is found with imperfective verbs and the aorist typically with perfectives. However, the increasing importance of the aspectual opposition imperfective–perfective, which duplicates the imperfect–aorist opposition, is leading to the supplanting of both tenses by a compound past tense, which can be formed from verbs of either aspect. We shall refer to it simply as the 'past tense'; it is sometimes referred to as the 'perfect'. For many speakers, particularly outside Bosnia-Hercegovina, the past tense is replacing both the imperfect and aorist, the aorist being the better preserved.

Before going on to the past and other compound tenses, we should return for a moment to the present tense. Whereas in Russian only imperfectives have a present tense (forms with the morphological appearance of the present formed from perfective verbs are future perfective), in Serbo-Croat there is a present perfective, distinct from the future. It is formed identically to the examples given in the chart of conjugation types, but from perfective verbs. Thus *istrésti* 'to shake out', first person singular present *istrésēm.* The perfective present has a range of uses, but is not used for events occurring at the moment of speech. In the example: *štȍ nè sjednēš/nè sednēš* (perfective present) 'why don't you sit down?', the addressee is evidently not actually doing so. This tense is frequently used in subordinate clauses; examples will be given in the syntax section.

Of the compound tenses, the past is easily the most important. It is formed using the past participle of the verb. This participle agrees in gender and number, as is illustrated using the verb *znȁ̀ti* 'to know'.

Forms of the Past Participle

	Masculine	*Feminine*	*Neuter*
Singular	znȁo < znȁl	znȁla	znȁlo
Plural	znȁli	znȁle	znȁla

The other component of the past tense consists of the present tense forms of the auxiliary verb *bȉ̀ti* 'to be'. These agree in person and number, and they are enclitic (see Section 6), though there are also long forms used for emphasis and in questions. Subject personal pronouns are normally omitted in Serbo-Croat unless they are under contrastive or emphatic stress. If there is no nominal subject or other preceding word in the sentence, the participle precedes the enclitic, which, as we shall see in Section 6, cannot stand in first position. The past tense paradigm is therefore as that given for *znȁ̀ti* 'to know'. The past tense can be formed from imperfective verbs, like *znȁ̀ti*, and such forms have largely supplanted the imperfect tense. The past tense can also be formed from perfectives in just the same way: *sàznati* 'to find out', *sàznao sam* 'I found

out' (such forms replace the aorist). Compare *písala je písmo* (imperfective) 'she was writing a letter', *napísala je písmo* 'she wrote a letter'.

The Past Tense in Serbo-Croat

Infinitive		znȁti 'to know'
Past Tense		
Singular	1	znȁo/znȁla sam
	2	znȁo/znȁla si
	3	znȁo/znȁla/znȁlo je
Plural	1	znȁli/znȁle smo
	2	znȁli/znȁle ste
	3	znȁli/znȁle/znȁla su

While the past is easily the most common tense for reference to past events, there is in addition a pluperfect tense. This can be formed from the imperfect of *bȉti* plus the past participle, for example Ijek. *bȉjāh* / Ek. *bȅjāh čȉtao* 'I had been reading'. As elsewhere, the past can replace the imperfect, so a more frequent alternative formation with the past tense of *bȉti* is *bȉo sam čȉtao.* The pluperfect occurs infrequently. If the aorist of *bȉti* is combined with the past participle, then the conditional results: *čȉtao bih* 'I would read'. These auxiliary forms are again enclitics. The inflections of the aorist are being lost in this usage and the uninflected form *bi* is taking over (as has happened in Russian, see page 284). There is also a past conditional: *bȉo bi rȅkao* 'he would have said'. This tense is found in the western varieties but has practically died out in the east.

All the compound tenses discussed so far use the auxiliary *bȉti.* In contrast, the future tense is formed with the verb *htjȅti/htȅti* 'to want' together with the infinitive. Normally the short forms of *htjȅti/htȅti* are used (singular *ću*, *ćeš*, *će*, plural *ćemo*, *ćete*, *ćē*), for example, *žèna će znȁti* 'the woman will know'. These short forms are enclitic, so that if no subject is expressed the infinitive is likely to precede: *dóći ću* 'I will come'. If an infinitive in *-ti* precedes the auxiliary, the *-ti* is not pronounced. This is reflected in the spelling in Serbia and Montenegro: *znȁću* 'I will know'; the pronunciation is the same in Croatia, but only the *i* is dropped in the spelling: *znȁt ću.* (Bosnian uses both spellings.) The long forms of *htjȅti/htȅti* can be used for emphasis: *hòću dóći* 'I **will** come', and in questions: *hòću li dóći?* 'shall I come?' As our examples show, the future is formed with verbs of both aspects: *znȁti* is imperfective and *dóći* is perfective. Particularly in the east, the infinitive is frequently replaced by *da* plus verb in the present tense; we return to this topic in the next section.

A further tense, sometimes called the 'future exact', is formed from a second set of present tense forms of *bȉti* 'to be' (singular: *bȕdēm*, *bȕdēš*, *bȕdē*; plural: *bȕdēmo*, *bȕdēte*, *bȕdū*) plus the past participle. It is used only in subordinate clauses, especially those introduced by *ȁko* 'if' and temporal conjunctions such as *kȁd* 'when': *ȁko bȕdēš dòšao* 'if you (in the future) come'. It can be used with verbs of either aspect. In the case of perfective verbs, the present perfective can be used instead: *ȁko dôđēš*, and this is regarded as more proper in Croatian.

Of all the tenses described, the ones which form the backbone of the system in the modern language are the present, the past (*znȁo sam/znȁla sam* 'I knew') and the future (*znȁt ću/znȁću* 'I will know'). Each of these can be formed from perfective and imperfective verbs, giving six possibilities, which cover most situations. As aspect has gained in significance, tenses other than the main ones have been reduced to marginal status. It will be interesting to observe how many of them survive and for how long.

In contrast to the wealth of tense forms, the inventory of non-finite verbal forms is limited. There are two indeclinable adverbs, termed 'gerunds'. The present gerund is formed from imperfective verbs (*čìtati* 'to read' gives *čìtajūći* 'reading') and denotes action contemporaneous with that of the main verb. The past gerund, normally formed from perfective verbs (*sàznati* 'to find out': *sàznāvši* 'having found out'), is for an action prior to that of the main verb. There is also the passive participle in *-n/-en/-t*, formed more frequently from perfective verbs than imperfectives, for example, *kúpiti* 'to buy' *kûpljen* 'bought'. The passive participle takes adjectival endings and, with *bì̀ti* 'to be' as auxiliary, forms the passive voice.

6 Syntax

Two particularly interesting aspects of Serbo-Croat syntax (enclitics and the replacement of the infinitive by a subordinate clause) have already been mentioned and will be described in more detail. In addition, we shall give brief consideration to questions and to agreement.

Serbo-Croat enclitics are already familiar to many non-Slavists through the work of W. Browne, who showed the problems they posed for transformational theory. Enclitics must come in second position in a clause. There are six 'slots', each of which may be filled by one enclitic, in the strict order given in Table 18.4. As examples, consider the following: *gdje/gde ste me našli?* (enclitics II, V) 'where did you find me?'; *želim mu ih dati* (III, V) 'I wish to give them to him'; *našao ga je* (V, VI) 'he found it'; *sjećate/sećate li me se?* (I, IV, V) (*sjećati se/sećati se* is a reflexive verb which governs the genitive) 'do you remember me?'

Table 18.4 Serbo-Croat Enclitics

I	Interrogative particle: li
II	Verbal auxiliaries: sam, si, smo, ste, su (but not 3.sg. *je*) ću, ćeš, cé, ćemo, ćete, će bih, bi, bi, bismo, biste, bi
III	Dative pronouns: singular: mi, ti, m. nt. mu, fem. joj (reflexive *si* in west only) plural: nam, vam, im
IV	Genitive pronouns: singular: me, te, m. nt. ga, fem. je plural: nas, vas, ih
V	Accusative pronouns: identical to the genitive pronouns; also the reflexive *se*
VI	Third singular form of *biti*: je

There are two special rules concerning *je*, the third person singular of *biti*. If the combination *se je* is expected, then *je* is dropped. *Vratiti se* 'to return' is a reflexive verb; the expected third singular masculine of the past tense would be *vratio se je*, but we find *vratio se* 'he returned'. This is now an absolute rule in the east but occasional forms with *se je* occur in the west. The other special rule prohibits the combination **je je*, where the first is the accusative case of the personal pronoun (third singular feminine) and the second is the third singular of *biti*. Instead, the first is replaced by the form *ju*, for example, *našao ju je* 'he found her'.

Earlier it was stated that enclitics stand in 'second' position. The expected interpretation of this statement might be after the first accented constituent. This interpretation

would fit the examples given so far, as well as sentences like: *taj student mi je napisao pismo* 'that student wrote me a letter'. If an initial constituent is separated by a pause, enclitics will then occur in second position counting from the pause: *početkom ove godine*, *taj student mi je napisao pismo* 'at the beginning of this year, that student wrote me a letter'. In some cases an initial long constituent is disregarded though there is no pause. More surprisingly, the enclitics may stand after the first accented word, even though by doing so they split a constituent: *taj mi je student napisao pismo* (lit. 'that to me is student written letter') 'that student wrote me a letter'.

Enclitics are found in the other Slavonic languages, though Serbo-Croat has preserved them particularly well and has created new ones, such as the clitic forms of *htjeti/hteti*. Our next point of interest, however, is unusual in Slavonic (being found only in Bulgarian and Macedonian in addition to Serbo-Croat) but shared with other languages of the Balkans (e.g. Rumanian and Greek – see pages 264–265 and 366–367). Mainly in the eastern varieties, Serbo-Croat tends to replace the infinitive by a construction consisting of the conjunction *da* plus a verb in the present tense. The infinitive with purposive meaning is most likely to be replaced, so that examples like: *Marija je došla da kupi knjigu* (lit. 'Mary came that she buys a book') 'Mary came to buy a book', occur freely in the west as well as in the east. With verbs like *željeti/želeti* 'to wish', both constructions occur: *Marija želi da kupi knjigu/Marija želi kupiti knjigu* 'Mary wishes to buy a book', but the first is more likely in the east and the second in the west. The construction with *da* has spread into the ordinary future: *Marija će da kupi knjigu* 'Mary will buy a book'. This is common in the east, much less so in the west, where one would expect the infinitive: *Marija će kupiti knjigu*. Broadly speaking, as one moves eastwards, so the infinitive becomes rarer, though there is considerable variation even among individuals. In eastern dialects transitional to Bulgarian and Macedonian the infinitive is effectively excluded.

Questions often contain multiple interrogative words, and all are moved towards the beginning of their clause: *Koga ste gdje/gde našli?* Or *Gdje/gde ste koga našli?* 'Whom did you find where? Where did you find whom?' As we see, one or another of the interrogatives is moved 'more' to the left, so that the enclitic *ste* follows it. A classic article by C. Rudin (1988) contrasts Serbo-Croat with Bulgarian, in which the mutual ordering among interrogative words is fixed. Recent work (Ž. Bošković, S. Stjepanović) has however shown that interrogatives in subordinate clauses require a more fixed order even in Serbo-Croat.

The last area to consider is agreement. Like the other Slavonic languages described, Serbo-Croat shows agreement of attributive modifiers with their head nouns in gender, number, case and, to a limited extent, in animacy. Main verbs agree in person and number with their subjects, participles in gender and number. There are various complications. For example, a few nouns are of different gender in the singular and the plural: *to* (nt. sg.) *oko* 'that eye'; *te* (f. pl.) *oči* 'those eyes'. Then there is a class of nouns ending in *-a*, which have the appearance of feminines but refer to males. In the singular, these are masculine: *naš gazda* 'our master'. In the plural, both masculine and feminine agreements are found: *naši/naše gazde* 'our masters'. Furthermore, a small group of nouns, instead of having a normal plural paradigm, takes another singular. Thus *dijete/dete* (nt. sg.) 'child' has the form *djeca/deca* 'children', which declines like the feminine singular noun *žena* in the chart of nominal declension. Agreement with *djeca/deca* is singular or plural, depending on the construction: *majka ove* (gen. sg. f.) *djece/dece* 'the mother of these children'; *djeca/deca spavaju* (pl.) 'the children are sleeping'.

Since Serbo-Croat retains the original gender distinctions in the plural, there are rules for agreement with conjoined noun phrases, which may be of different genders. If all conjuncts are feminine, then feminine agreements are found (all these examples are from works by the Nobel prize-winning novelist, Ivo Andrić): *nad njim su stajale* (f. pl.) *Jelenka* (f.) *i Saveta* (f) 'over him were standing Jelenka and Saveta'. In all other cases, the masculine plural is used even though no masculine is present: *znanje* (nt. sg.) *i intuicija* (f. sg.) *su kod njega sarađivali* (m. pl.) … 'knowledge and intuition worked together in him …' Conjoined neuter singulars similarly require a masculine plural predicate. Comparable rules are found in Slovene. However, Serbo-Croat has made an interesting innovation. If the conjuncts are all of feminine gender, but they refer to inanimates, then masculine agreements may be found: *službena revnost* (f. sg., *-i* declension) *i lična sujeta* (f. sg.) *zanosili* (m. pl.) *su ih* … 'professional zeal and personal vanity carried them away …' It appears, therefore, that Serbo-Croat is moving towards a position in which the feminine plural will be required for agreement with conjoined nouns referring to females, the feminine will be optional for other feminine nouns and the masculine will be used under all other circumstances.

This last construction typifies the particular interest of Serbo-Croat for the linguist. The preservation of the original gender distinctions in the plural is an example of its conservatism; there are, as we have seen, various forms still found in Serbo-Croat which have been lost in most of the other Slavonic languages. On the other hand, the innovation permitting masculine agreement with feminine nouns (depending on their type) is, like other innovations we have noted, a surprise and a challenge for the linguist.

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Alexander and Elias-Bursać (2006) is a solid grammar in textbook form, covering Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, with an accompanying reference grammar Alexander (2006). Descriptive grammars include Meillet and Vaillant (1969), with thorough coverage of morphology but somewhat dated, and Leskien (1914), a landmark in its time. Browne (1993) and Kordić (1997) may be consulted with profit for the present-day situation. The following deal with accent: Lehiste and Ivić (1963 and 1986), extensive acoustical studies; Magner and Matejka (1971), a challenge to traditional accounts, perhaps overstated, though a good entry point to the extensive literature on the subject; Gvozdanović (1980), an acoustical study, with a useful introduction to the phonology of Serbo-Croat. The *Publications of the Yugoslav Serbo-Croatian–English Contrastive Project* (1968–) contain papers covering a range of topics, especially in syntax and lexicon; for instance, *Contrastive Analysis of English and Serbo-Croatian*, vol. 1 (1975) includes a paper by W. Browne giving a detailed account of clitics. Progovac (2005) treats syntax extensively. Greenberg (2004) interprets the sociolinguistic situation before and after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Benson (1990 and later reprints) remains the most informative dictionary for the English-speaking reader.

For the history of the language, Naylor (1980) provides a clear account of the external history of Serbo-Croat; Popović (1960) lays particular emphasis on the early period and on contacts with other

languages; while Vaillant (1928–79) is a historical grammar of wider scope than its title suggests. Ivić (1958) provides a survey of Serbo-Croatian dialects by one of Yugoslavia's foremost linguists.

Nearly every annual issue of *Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics* includes recent research on Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian.

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