

# Characteristics of language of the novel in Serbia in the period from 1990 to 1995

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The topic of this presentation is an analysis of the New Testament translated into Serbian by Vuk Karadžić, especially an analysis of the model of linguistic structure as the germ of the novel in Serbian prose.

This psycholinguistic structure was taken as the reference point for determination of the nature of the language of the modern novel published in the period between 1990 and 1995, in the period of rapid flourishing of this form of literary creation, when on the average a hundred new novels were published annually, marking, not only by quantity but also by quality, topics, problems and linguistic expression, a special phenomenon of creative zeal at the time of the greatest economic and political pressure and war environment, frustration and struggle for preservation of the ethnic being, but struggle for bare survival, too. For comparison with the linguistic model taken as the reference point, a modern novel by Milorad Pavić (*Hazarski rečnik*) was taken as thematically related, but linguistically quite loose, incoherent and difficult.

From the so far processed language material based on a sample of the Serbian novel of the last decade of the twentieth century it is impossible to draw definite conclusions. It is, however, possible to point out to some general trends also observed in earlier processing of language material by the method of frequency vocabularies, and to some new observations which are enabled by the until now completed ten frequency vocabularies – five which belong to vocabularies of the four Apostles – St. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and their collective vocabulary, and the other five which belong to the novel «*Hazarski rečnik*» (Vocabulary of the Khazards) by Milorad Pavić, Serbian writer translated into majority of world languages, which by the number of publications is the most popular modern prose writer in Serbian in the past several years. The language of the four Apostles was taken as the reference point in measurements of the lexical structure of linguistic analysis, sufficiently general to be taken as the starting characteristic of linguistic origins of the Serbian novel in respect to the nature of the lexicon, categories of words and form structures. From these origins of the novel in the language of the people we are separated by 150 years, because this translation of the Bible was published in 1847 which is a significant year for our literature not only for the first translation of the New Testament and the Gospels according to St. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, translated by Vuk Karadžić, but also for marking his big language reform consisting of introduction of the language of the people into literature and the phonetic alphabet based on the famous rule «write as you speak, and read as it is written».

All the ten frequency vocabularies have a common topic – religious one, since the Vocabulary of the Khazards is a theoretical discussion about disappearance of this Asian nation presented in different parts of the novel from the aspect of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish religion. In all the ten frequency vocabularies it is possible to distinguish the general, the separate and the individual vocabulary.

The general vocabulary is the universal common vocabulary which is the foundation and enables communication and understanding. For example: this foundation is formed of the first

ten most frequent function words or relative words. Their characteristics are briefness (monosyllabic words, or even consisting of a single speech sound, like for example the conjunction «i» /and/, auxiliary verb «je» as a form of the verb to be, preposition «u» /in/ and «na» /on/) and that they are essentially words which show relations.

It is necessary to note that in this type of prose, among the pronouns represented in the high ranking words is the pronoun of the third person singular, probably conditioned by the religious foundation of the omni-present or non-present godly creature, or perhaps by the characteristics of the novel as the literary form which will be revealed by further creation of frequency vocabularies of our modern novel. In other frequency vocabularies made in our country, the advantage is given, in children's frequency vocabularies for example, to the reflective pronoun «se» (sebe) which ranks the third and pronoun «ja» (I), which ranks seventh, or in the frequency vocabulary of future teachers, also to the reflective pronoun «se (sebe)» which ranks four and pronoun «ja» (I) which ranks seven. A separate vocabulary refers to a certain topic and it is evident from the first ten most frequent words in the vocabulary. For instance, in the collective vocabulary of the four Apostles and the collective vocabulary of Milorad Pavić, these first nouns are the following:

The Gospels	Vocabulary of the Khazards
1. Jesus	1. dream
2. son	2. year
3. father	3. Khazards
4. disciple	4. book
5. God	5. time
6. people	6. Khagan (ruler of the Khazards)
7. man	7. vocabulary
8. day	8. name
9. Lord	9. word
10. word	10. man

In the Vocabulary of the Khazards, the word God ranks 83.

Individual-idiosyncratic vocabulary, the one in which the author expresses his verbal personality, is reflected in the words and forms the writer uses. For example, for Ivo Andrić the most characteristic is the aorist tense and the favourite case the dative, while for the four Apostles, they are the first three most frequent nouns. Nouns which appear only in Matthew's vocabulary are: talent (type of money), cockle, gold, debt, river, migration; in Mark's: creature, worm, spike, treachery, error; in Luke's: loan, company, barren (woman); and in John's: Judean, dispute, rib. It should be noted that the idiosyncratic use of words is also evident in other categories of words and forms: for example among verbs, Matthew often uses «to dress», Mark «to spit», Luke «to slaughter», «to herald», John «to acquire fame», etc. Statistical measures, such as the diversity or creativity index, and the repetition index or the mean value, the ratio between lexical determinants and current words, are useful in comparisons of the nature of the authors' language in a text, under the condition that the samples of language material are approximately of the same length and about a similar subject matter.

This analysis revealed that in individual vocabularies of the four Apostles, although they refer to the same topic: description of Christ's life, and although it is the canonized text of the Bible, these four evangelists differ by the volume of vocabulary – number of lexical determinants and current words, number of repeated words and diversity index, the mean value or the repetition index, and they express their verbal personality through these parameters.

As concerning three Pavić's books which form his novel *Vocabulary of the Khazards*, the Christian, the Muslim and the Judean version of the polemic on the Khazards (the Red, the Green and the Yellow book), diversity indexes and the repetition indexes coincide in full, in the first two even to the third decimal place:

Diversity coefficient	Mean frequency	Repetition index
Red Book	0.172	5.809
Green Book	0.172	5.809
Yellow Book	0.165	6.058

This proves that, although these are three different religious approaches, the verbal personality of the author is the same in all three cases, and therefrom the diversity coefficient and the repetition index are the same. The main and, according to our opinion, one of the most significant conclusions is the fact that 75 per cent of the text which describes Christ's life and Christ's philosophy by all the four Apostles, is covered by only 200 words which are closely connected with the very existence of Man. These 200 words are also found in the modern general vocabulary of frequency vocabularies made on the basis of literature. This datum can explain the fact that the Bible is understandable to nations of quite different cultural level of development, who live in completely different and separated parts of the world. These are words which are connected to the very survival of man, but especially to actual situations of that survival. As concerning the first ten most frequent words, they slightly differ from the customary distribution of function words (adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs and pronouns). The main difference consists in the use of the most frequent pronoun. In the so far made and analyzed frequency vocabularies in our country (we have no data for other languages concerning the language of the Bible), these ten words are the same according to their conceptual contents. But, instead of the personal pronoun I which is common in all frequency vocabularies of to us known world languages, the personal pronoun HE is the one which appears most frequently in the language of the Bible. In all secular vocabularies, the first ten words point out to Man's self-centred nature, his own personality and some kind of egocentrism. In the religious vocabulary, that is, in the language of the Bible there is no egocentrism, because it is not present in the personality of Christ. Even when speaking of himself, Jesus Christ spoke indirectly. And when the Apostles spoke about God and Jesus they also used the pronoun HE. That is how the first ten most frequent words clearly show what the subject of the Bible is – the absent or rather omnipresent being, the invisible and although unknown and intangible to men – omnipotent being.

The collective vocabulary of the four Apostles revealed, as mentioned, that only 200 lexical determinants, or 6.55 per cent of the total number of words cover precisely 76.52 per cent of the text, while in the *Vocabulary of the Khazards*, 200 words, or 2.32 per cent of determinants cover 59.228 per cent of the total text. With 500 words or 16.372 per cent, as much as 88.123 per cent of the total text is covered in the vocabulary of the four Apostles, and in the frequency vocabulary of Pavić's novel, 500 lexical determinants or 5.8 per cent cover 70.93 per cent of the entire text. In the vocabulary of the four Apostles, 700 determinants or 22.921 per cent cover 91.412 per cent of the text, and in the *Vocabulary of the Khazards*, 700 lexical determinants cover 75.234 per cent of the text. This indicates clearly that the book *Vocabulary of the Khazards* for an average man is considerably more difficult to read, demanding knowledge of a much larger number of words in order to be understood. At the same time, it becomes obvious that in order to describe and understand Christ's life it is necessary to know only fundamental existential lexical determinants. This implies that understanding of Christian philosophy is more

accessible to the average and even uneducated people. This also explains enormous popularity of the most widely read book in the Christian world.

As concerning words with frequency one, or the so-called idiosyncratic words, their number in the collective vocabulary of the four Apostles is below 50 per cent. In the Vocabulary of the Khazards, their number exceeds 50 per cent, and also indicates difficult reading of the text of Milorad Pavić's book.

The mentioned results of the initial investigation of vocabulary of modern prose lead to the conclusion that we are on the right track and that the language material which we will get will offer numerous possibilities for various interpretations. That we will, based on it, get a confirmation of certain fundamental objectives and tasks of the investigation: a) that we will establish the nature and structure of modern language of Serbian prose, and especially that of the novel; b) that we will make the fundamental frequency vocabulary which, like all frequency vocabularies, includes three vocabularies: the general, the separate and the individual, which will be representative of language of selected writers of the novel of the last decade of the twentieth century; c) that we will establish possibilities of creation of objective literary criticism based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of frequency vocabularies obtained from a sample of selected novels according to certain criteria; d) that we will enable objective comparison of characteristics of written language of certain authors. In the final phase, we expect to reach pragmatic and psychological and educational conclusions which will be useful for the population of pupils and students. Especially if the ultimate goal of creation of a frequency vocabulary of modern prose will make it easily accessible to young people.

<b>GOSPELS</b>					
	<b>MATTHEW</b>	<b>MARK</b>	<b>LUKE</b>	<b>JOHN</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
V	1 860	1 470	2052	1 204	3 054
N	19 863	12 378	21 557	16 501	70 119
C	0.094	0.119	0.095	0.073	0.044
Fsr	10.58	8.42	10.51	13.71	22.96
N	200	200	200	200	200
%	75.48	77.09	76.70	82.74	76.52
N	500	500	500	500	500
%	87.84	89.59	88.13	93.90	88.129
N	700	700	700	700	700
%	91.66	93.15	91.49	96.69	91.41
<b>DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS MILORAD PAVIĆ</b>					
	<b>RED BOOK</b>	<b>GREEN BOOK</b>	<b>YELLOW BOOK</b>	<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
v	4 693	3 660	4 297	2 722	8 621
N	27 260	21 261	26 030	12 512	87 063
C	0.172	0.172	0.165	0.218	0.099
Fsr	5.81	5.81	6.06	4.597	10.099
N	200	200	200	200	200
%	59.40	62.28	60.23	61.389	59.228
N	500	500	500	500	500
%	71.54	74.55	72.82	74.98	70.94
N	700	700	700	700	700
%	76.03	79.10	77.46	80.04	75.234