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Features of Serbo-Croatian for language teachers

Eric G. Vaszolyi

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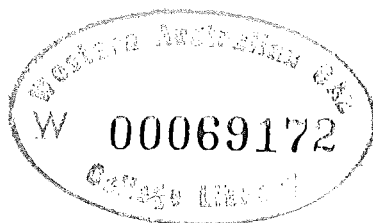
MOUNT LAWLEY COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

**Features of
SERBO-CROATIAN**
For language teachers
Eric G Vaszolyi



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Features of SERBO-CROATIAN For language teachers Eric G Vaszolyi ✓



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TO BEGIN WITH

Teachers of migrant children experience a great many difficulties in trying to understand and resolve their pupils' language problems. One basic problem is all too familiar: the teacher speaks English and the migrant child does not understand it or only understands it to some, rather limited, extent. Another problem area: the pupil picks up some English in the classroom, on the playground and out in the street but speaks it with a peculiar accent and peppers it with phonemic, grammatical and semantic errors. The child's deviations from the generally accepted patterns of English (i.e. the prevalent variety of English spoken in this country) originate in the language of the home, that is the child's vernacular. The English-speaking teacher is normally unfamiliar with the latter. Ideally, he or she would like to learn a foreign language spoken in the class but more often than not this is easier said than done. Very often there is not just one foreign language spoken in the class. Quite commonly there is a bunch of, say, Italian children mixed with Portuguese, Macedonians, Maltese, Greeks, Serbs, Croats, Turks, Burmese, Bengali, Lebanese and others. Such a Babel will of course discourage the most zealous teacher from learning one or another foreign language.

Our teachers need some assistance in diagnosing and remedying their migrant students' language problems. Mount Lawley College of Advanced Education being strongly involved in various aspects of migrant education, we not only recognized this need but also tried to do something about it in our linguistics courses by highlighting some salient features of the main migrant languages in contrast to English. The present Serbo-Croatian sketch is a makeshift summary of some of the problems arising from Yugoslav speakers' hardships in learning or speaking English. Before completion, it was discussed with practising teachers who had had some experience with children from Yugoslav families. Considered useful, the booklet has now been made available to all interested. Like sketches of other migrant languages will hopefully follow.

With kind regards and best wishes to my fellow teachers,

Eric Vaszolyi

1. PREAMBLE

Serbo-Croatian or, alternatively, Croato-Serbian is a Slavonic language spoken in Yugoslavia by nearly ten million Serbs and Croats as their mother tongue. It is also widely used by most other ethnic groups in that country (Slovenians, Macedonians, Germans, Hungarians, Gipsies, Albanians, Rumanians etc.). Dialectal developments occur in various parts of the Croatian and Serbian language area but they do not obstruct mutual intelligibility and do not amount to more than variations within the integral whole of a language, which is markedly distinguishable from other Slavonic languages both in Yugoslavia (Slovenian in the north-west and Macedonian in the south-east) and in other Slav countries (Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Russia with the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia). The language is thus a strong unifying factor shared by Croats and Serbs who, however, may well be regarded as two distinct nations: they represent two different cultures, developed two different alphabets, adhered to two different religions, exhibited different political and social aspirations and their past history, too, developed along different lines through the ages.

2. SERBO-CROATIAN ALPHABETS

Serbo-Croatian is one language with two different alphabets. The Croats use a Latin-based writing system while the Serbs have adopted the Cyrillic alphabet (like the Russians, Ukrainians and Bulgarians). However, either is highly phonetic: in other words, there is hardly any discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation which is quite a bliss particularly for those acquainted with the nightmare of English spelling.

Letters of the Croatian and Serbian alphabets (in this order) are listed hereunder with Serbo-Croatian examples and English equivalents or the nearest English approximation, if any, of the Serbo-Croatian phoneme symbolized by the given letter.

No.	Croatian and Serbian characters	Serbo-Croatian examples	English equivalents
1	A a Ā ā	hvala 'thanks' Hrvatska 'Croatia'	None. The vowel in lard , palm is much longer. Nearest approximation: the a element of the diphthong in out , cow , light , died .
2	B b Б б	baba 'grandmother' bomba 'bomb'	bib , bulb
3	C c Ц ц	carica 'empress' crkvice 'chapel'	None. The /t+s/ combination lots , tsetse is somewhat similar.
4	Č č Ч ч	čaj 'tea' kučka 'bitch'	Much 'harder', than the initial consonant in chuck , chop .
5	Ć ć Ћ ћ	ćaća 'daddy' ćućenje 'feeling'	The initial consonant in chip , chin is near enough.
6	D d Д д	dodati 'to add' dažd 'rain'	dad , added
7	Dž dž Џ џ	džak 'sack' džep 'pocket'	Much 'harder' than the initial consonant in jolly , ginger .
8	Đ đ Ђ ђ	davo 'devil' đurđica 'lily'	None. The /d+ʒ/ combination in jam , jelly is similar.
9	E e Е е	mene 'me' negdje 'somewhere'	Similar to the vowel in pet , set .
10	F f Ф ф	fanfara 'fanfare' fazan 'pheasant'	fit , roof , photo , rough
11	G g Г г	glagol 'verb' gologlav 'bareheaded'	gag , giggle
12	H h Х х	(i) hvala 'thanks'	Before consonants: like the

		hrvat 'Croat'	final consonant in Scotch loch, Glenfiddich.
		(ii) hoditi 'to go' kuhar 'cook'	Other positions: like the first consonant in hot, heel.
13	I i И и	iskititi 'to decorate' ini 'other'	hit, image
14	J j Ј ј	jaje 'egg' janjac 'lamb'	yes, yeast
15	K k К к	kakav 'what kind' kapak 'lid'	sky, skulk, act
16	L l Л л	lokalo 'drunkard' lala 'tulip'	lit, slide
17	Lj lj Љ љ	ljubav 'love' ljuljajka 'see-saw'	None. The /l+j/ combination in colliery, pillion is some- what similar.
18	M m М м	mimo 'beside' imam 'I have'	mummy, mimicri
19	N n Н н	nanovo 'again' naklon 'bow'	nun, nylon
20	Nj nj Њ њ	nježan 'tender' njuh 'smell'	None. The /n+j/ combination in new, canyon is somewhat similar.
21	O o О о	okolo 'around' korov 'weed'	None but the vowel in hot, pot is near enough.
22	P p П п	pop 'priest' propis 'ordinance'	spy, apply, lisp
23	R r Р р	rastresti 'to scatter' srce 'heart'	None but the Scotch rolled /r/ is very similar.
24	S s С с	sasma 'entirely' visost 'highness'	sauce, seats
25	Š š Ш ш	šešir 'hat' šušav 'hornless'	shy, sugar, machine
26	T t Т т	teta 'auntie' tkati 'to weave'	sty, actor, lot
27	U u У у	unuk 'grandson' čutura 'flagon'	The vowel in put, look is rather similar.
28	V v В в	vjeverica 'squirrel' ovčevina 'mutton'	vine, live
29	Z z З з	zakazati 'to say' oznaka 'mark'	zoo, roses
30	Ž ž Ж ж	žežen 'scorched' ožica 'spoon'	pleasure, rouge

3. SERBO-CROATIAN PHONEMES

3.1 Consonant Chart

	Labial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
STOPS	p b		t d			k g	
NASALS	m		n		ɲj		
AFFRICATES			c dʒ	č dʒ̣	ć đ		
FRICATIVES		f v	s z	š ž			h
LATERALS			l		lj		
VIBRANTS			r				
SEMIVOWELS					j		

3.2 Vowel Chart

	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
HIGH	i		u
MID	e		o
LOW		a	

4. ENGLISH/SERBO-CROATIAN PHONETIC CONTRASTS

A comparison of the Serbo-Croatian (henceforth abbreviated as SC) phonemic system with the English consonant and vowel stock displays considerable differences: the latter has a number of speech sounds which the former does not and vice versa. As a result, substitution and interference will inevitably occur when a Serb or Croat speaks English (or when an English speaks SC but we are not now concerned with the second problem area). The specific features and discernible patterns of the SC 'accent' are, of course, conditioned by the speaker's native SC sound system and make it quite distinguishable from, say, Greek or Italian or Russian or any other 'accent'. The following display is not an exhaustive analysis but an attempt at pinpointing the most salient deviations a SC speaker is likely to make in speaking one or another variety of English.

4.1 Dental Fricatives

In English there are two, very frequent and significant, dental fricatives: a voiceless (as in *thin, thought, both, frothy*) and a voiced one (as in *there, this, then, they, father, clothes*). Neither is found in SC and, as a consequence, the first would normally be substituted by a SC /t/ while the second by a /d/. Thus

- | | | | |
|------|----------------|---------|------------------|
| (i) | thick | becomes | tik |
| | thought | " | tot |
| | thin | " | tin |
| | fourth | " | fort |
| | three | " | tri etc. |
| (ii) | then | becomes | den |
| | they | " | dei |
| | though | " | do |
| | there | " | der |
| | other | " | oder/ader |
| | seethe | " | sid etc. |

The trouble is, of course, that in English the contrast between the above dental fricatives and dental stops (used by Serbs and Croats as substitutes) is phonemic and therefore crucially significant. It is not a matter of 'good' English or 'not-so-good' English: it is of profound importance, for the neutralization of the dental fricative vis-a-vis dental stop contrast in English may, and does, interrupt or even disrupt intelligibility and may well result in a communication halt or communication breakdown. (Cf. *thin/tin, thick/tick, thought/taught, three/tree, heath/heat, both/boat, fourth/fort; then/den, though/dough, there/dare, other/udder, seethe/seed*).

4.2 Labial Semivowel

English has a labial semivowel /w/ and SC speakers tend to substitute it almost invariably by a /v/. As a result:

which/witch	becomes	vich
wet	"	vet
wine	"	vine etc.

The trouble is, of course, that in English there is a /w/ versus /v/ contrast which cannot be neutralized without risking misunderstandings, cf. wine/vine, worse/verse, west/vest, wet/vet etc.

4.3 Trill

The SC /r/, too, differs markedly from most varieties of its English opposite number, except perhaps the Scotch /r/. It is a distinctly trilled or rolled vibrant occurring in word-initial, word-medial and word-final positions alike and is distinctly pronounced in any position. Thus, for instance, word-final SC /r/ is never slurred or dropped like an English one. In other positions, too, the English post-alveolar frictionless continuant would normally be substituted by strongly rolled SC /r/ phoneme and this substitution seems to be one of the most salient features of the SC 'accent'. Serbs and Croats often yield to the temptation of English spelling and incline to pronounce the letter /r/ in post-vocalic position whereas in most varieties of (British and Australian) English it would only indicate the length of the preceding vowel but would not be pronounced (star, harm, nurse, court, core) or it may indicate a diphthong (as in poor, pour, sure, here, hear, rare) but no consonant whatsoever. Thus

here /hiə*/	becomes	hir or hier
hear /hiə*/	"	hir or hier
sure /ʃuə*/	"	šur
nurse /nə:s/	"	ners
start /sta:t/	"	start
worse /wə:s/	"	vers or vors
hurt /hə:t/	"	hert or hort
girl /gə:l/	"	gel or gerl etc.

4.4 Voiceless Stops

English voiceless stops /p, t, k/ are, as a rule, aspirated in word-initial and unaspirated in other positions. SC voiceless stops are never aspirated. As a result, Serbs and Croats incline to pronounce the voiceless stops in pike, tie, curt just like in spike, sty, skirt, without aspiration.

4.5 Palatal Nasal

SC has a palatal nasal symbolized by the digraph /nj/. It is, however, a single indivisible phoneme, unparalleled in English for English has an /n+j/ consonant cluster (as in *new*, *nuisance*, *avenue*) but it is, firstly, a combination of two distinct phonemes and, secondly, quite distinguishable acoustically from the SC phoneme under review. The latter may often occur as a substitute for the English /n+j/ because SC, in turn, has no such cluster.

4.6 Dental Affricate

Likewise, SC has a dental affricate /c/, another single indivisible phoneme without an English counterpart. The English /t+s/ cluster (as in *lots*, *fits*, *lightsome*) is a combination of two distinct phonemes which, however, may well be substituted by the above SC dental affricate, although it sounds acoustically rather different from the English cluster.

4.7 Affricates

English vis-a-vis SC affricates represent a particular problem area, anyway. The score is 2-1 to the Yugoslavs. English has a palato-alveolar voiced affricate (as in *judge*) and a voiceless one (as in *church*). In contrast, SC has two alveolar affricates, a voiced /dž/ and a voiceless /č/ plus a pair of palatal affricates, voiced /ǰ/ and voiceless /č̣/. As a result, English palato-alveolar affricates in SC pronunciation are likely to become either palatal or alveolar but not alveo-palatal — a slight or not so slight difference constituting part of the SC accent (native English speakers learning SC are likely to have even more trouble in an attempt at realizing the significant phonemic distinction between the two pairs of SC affricates). Thus

church	becomes	čerč, ćerc, ćerč or čerc
judge	"	džadž, džadž, đadž or đadž
much	"	mač or mać
midget	"	midžit or midit or midđet etc.

4.8 Velar Fricative

Serbs and Croats are unlikely to have much trouble with the English /h/ in prevocalic or intervocalic position (as in *heart* or *mohair*): their vernacular has the same consonant in the same position. In other positions, however, notably before consonants, the glottal fricative does not occur in SC. Instead, it has an allophone: a velar fricative, very much like the one heard in Scotch *loch*. This may occur, as a SC substitute for English /h/ in items like *huge*, *hue*, *humid*, *human*, *humour*.

4.9 Laterals

In English there is a non-phonemic contrast between 'clear' and 'dark' /l/, in SC no such variation occurs. Therefore Serbs and Croats will not have any difficulty in pronouncing **like, lit, lake, laundry, slide, slip, plea** etc. but they will incline to utter exactly the same lateral sound in **roll, ball, rolled, bolt, fold, mild, child** etc.

4.10 Consonant Clusters

SC abounds in consonant clusters: it has 138 of them while the English total is a modest 42 (Gleason: *An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics*, p.337–338). Most English clusters represent no problem for SC speakers (except of course when one or another constituent of the cluster is a problem-sound anyway). Some difficulty may be found in mastering some of the English consonant+/j/ cluster (e.g. **pure, tube, cue, beauty, dew, gewgaw, mute, neutral, lure, feud, view, thews, huge**).

4.11 Vowels

A great many pitfalls can be found in the realm of English versus SC vowel contrasts and correspondences. The fairly simple Slav system consists of five principal vowels with no diphthongs, no triphthongs and no phonemic length, so important in English, which, in turn, displays at least twenty-two vowels: more than four times more than SC. As a result of this discrepancy, most Serbs and Croats are likely to find difficulties in mastering most English vowels and frequent substitution of the latter by SC vowels is one of the basic symptoms of SC accent.

4.12 Vowel Contrasts

Some SC vowels have no English equivalents and are indeed markedly different from the nearest English approximation.

Firstly, SC /a/ is quite distinct from the English vowel in **but, cut, shut**. It may sound somewhat closer to the vowel in **calm, cart, palm, part** but the Slav phoneme is short whereas the English one is long. Perhaps the most reminiscent sound would be the "a" constituent of the English diphthong in **hi, high, light, rite, sky** without the glide. Likewise, SC /o/ appears to be closer to the "o" part of the diphthong in **hoist, moist** than to the short vowel in **hot, pot, lot**, let alone the long one in **court, cord, horde, poured**. SC /u/ is not the same as the English vowel in **put, cook, bull, wood** and even less reminiscent of the long vowel in **fool, pool too, two**. The two front vowels, /e/ and /i/ would perhaps correspond most to their English opposite numbers as in **bet, pet, let** and **bit, pit, lit**, respectively.

4.13 Short, Open Vowel

The short open English vowel in **cat**, **rat**, **sat** has no equivalent in the Slav language and will, therefore, be identified with, and substituted by, either a SC /a/ or /e/. Thus

/bæt/	becomes	/bat/ or bet/
/ræt/	"	/rat/ or /ret/
/kæt/	"	/kat/ or /ket/

As a result, the highly important contrast of **bat**, **bet** and **but** or **gnat**, **net** and **nut** or **cattle**, **kettle** and **cuttle** is neutralized to the detriment of intelligibility.

Less crucial is perhaps the substitution of the English vowels in **but**, **cut** and **hot**, **pot** by SC /a/ and /o/, respectively: phonetically they are different but no phonemic contrast is jeopardized.

4.14 Schwa

The English schwa represents another problem sound, normally substituted by a SC /e/ or /o/ or /a/ whereby

tremendous	becomes	tremendoz or trimendez
observant	"	obzervant or obzervent
fashionable	"	feshenabl or feshenebl
her purse	"	her pers or her pors
curly girl	"	kerli gerl
early bird	"	erli berd or bord

4.15 Diphthongs

English diphthongs seem to be another problem area for Serbs and Croats whose language has no diphthongal phonemes. Thus the diphthongs in **late**, **right**, **hoist** would normally be substituted by SC /e+j/, /a+j/ and /o+j/, respectively; the one in **how**, **loud** is normally replaced by /a+u/, that is two principal vowels instead of a diphthong. However, these four sounds appear to be the least troublesome. Much more problem is caused by the mispronunciation of the English /ou/ whereby

road	becomes	rod
goat	"	got
coat	"	cot
cone	"	con
note	"	not

To make things worse, the very significant phonemic contrast of /ou/ and other vowels/diphthongs becomes neutralized, too, resulting in confusion of minimal pairs like **phone/faun**, **load/lord**, **stoker/stalker**, **Joan/John**, **boat/bought**, **joke/jerk**, **float/flirt**, **foal/fowl**, **crone/crown** etc.

The diphthongs in **here**, **chair** and **lure** would normally be substituted by the respective short vowels, often followed by a final /r/, too. Thus

beer	becomes	bir
fair	"	fer
poor	"	pur

4.16 Vowel Length

SC has no long vowels. Two adjacent short vowels may sometimes occur (e.g. **poodrasti** 'to increase') but they represent two different syllables and two distinct morphemes (cf. English **co-operate**, **co-ordinate**). SC speakers often tend to substitute long English vowels by short ones, thereby neutralizing the highly important short-long contrast and confusing minimal pairs like **live/leave**, **ship/sheep**, **bucking/barking**, **cock/cork**, **pull/pool**, **muster/master** etc.

All these phonetic/phonemic problems are of course further increased by considerable differences in English and SC stress, rhythm and intonation patterns and syllable structure, even though this can but be mentioned here and now.

5. GRAMMATICAL AND SEMANTIC INTERFERENCE

Marked differences between English and SC on the phonetic-phonemic level have been indicated above. Quite predictably, further differences will be found in the realm of grammar and vocabulary. In other words, English and SC have a number of different categories and devices, follow different rules, display diverse patterns and all these are structured in two rather different ways. The same holds good for their vocabularies, too: English has words with no SC equivalent or vice versa and often an English 'word' and its SC 'equivalent' mean different things, have different connotations, are used in different ways and contexts and so on and so forth.

Without a thorough examination of SC grammar and lexicon it is of course impracticable to go into much detail. All that can be attempted here is to present a few examples, selected in an inevitably superficial fashion.

5.1 Articles

One of the most salient features in Yugoslav students' English usage is perhaps the strong tendency to omit definite and indefinite articles (*the, a, an*). They would not use it when required or would use it when not required. The reason is interference: the category of definiteness and indefiniteness does not exist in SC, therefore the language, unlike English, does not have articles, whether definite or indefinite.

5.2 Verbs

The highly complex realm of English verb is usually a particular problem area for SC students. Just a few major discrepancies to mention.

a. Perfect-Imperfect

The English perfect-imperfect distinction may cause difficulties. There is perfect versus imperfect contrast in SC but its correlation to tenses and voices is quite different from English. Thus a SC speaker may not easily perceive the boundaries between *see* and *have seen* or *saw* and *had seen*, let alone further complications arising from the continuous versus non-continuous distinction interwoven with perfect-imperfect differentiation.

b. Continuous – Non-Continuous

Continuous as against non-continuous forms are not distinguished in SC and it may, therefore, be found difficult by Yugoslavs learning English. The fine and significant distinction of forms like *he eats, he is eating, he has been eating, he ate, he was eating, he had been eating* etc. needs to be amply clarified and reinforced.

c. Negative — Affirmative

Negative-affirmative and interrogative-affirmative constructions in SC differ greatly from English. For one thing, neither auxiliaries nor word order are used in SC to distinguish negation from affirmation or question from statement. Instead, negative and interrogative particles used with affirmative verbs turn them into negative or interrogative. See the following examples:

Govorimo. 'We speak/are speaking.'

Ne govorimo. 'We do not speak/are not speaking.'

Govorimo li? 'Do we speak/are we speaking?'

d. Double Negative

Besides, in SC double negation is the rule: **Ne govorimo ništa** 'We don't say anything' should literally be translated 'Not say-we nothing'. Therefore English double negatives (like **I don't say nothing**), normally discouraged in our schools, can be heard from Yugoslav students as a result of interference.

e. Conjugation

In present-day English there is precious little conjugation, if any; in SC there is a lot. Compare the following verbs:

Sing1	govorim	I speak	idem	I go
Sing2	govoriš	you speak	ideš	you go
Sing3	govori	he/she speaks	ide	he/she goes
Plur1	govorimo	we speak	idemo	we go
Plur2	govorite	you speak	idete	you go
Plur3	govore	they speak	idu	they go

In English, there are only two contrasting forms, **speak/speaks** and **go/goes**; put differently, the third person singular is marked by a suffix while all other persons are unmarked; instead, the respective personal pronouns have to be used with the verb to indicate the subject, the acting person (and its number). But for the personal pronoun (or, in the third person only, a corresponding noun etc.) nothing would indicate the subject's person.

Quite the contrary, in SC the subject is clearly identified by a set of specific suffixes attached to the verb stem, whereby the use of personal pronouns with the present tense becomes redundant or at least optional (it may be used in case of heavy emphasis). As a result, the noun phrase versus verb phrase (or subject/predicate) dichotomy, so very common in English, may look quite different in SC where the subject, marked only by a suffix, may simply be incorporated in the verb. Compare the following:

Sedim ovde.	'I sit here.'
Sediš ovde.	'You sit here.'
Sedi ovde.	'He/she sits here.'
Sedimo ovde.	'We sit here.' etc.
Radim brzo.	'I work fast.'
Radiš brzo.	'You work fast.'
Radi brzo.	'He/she works fast.'
Radimo brzo.	'We work fast.' etc.

As a result of interference, a Yugoslav student may incline to omit the personal pronouns in an English phrase or sentence, forgetting that in English it is not optional.

5.3 Prepositions

Both English and SC use prepositions with nouns but the usage may sometimes differ in the two languages. As a result, a SC speaker may select the wrong preposition in English. For instance, SC **do** means 'to, so far as, so long as, till, until, by, beside'. Now, in English the time/space reference is clearly distinguished whereas the SC preposition refers to either. This is why a Yugoslav student may confuse 'as far as' with 'as long as'. Sometimes the converse holds good: SC **pre** means 'before' but only with reference to time, not to space. Further, SC **od** means 'from, since, of, off'; the preposition **s** or **sa** is 'from, off, with, by'; as a consequence, Yugoslav learners may confuse English **from** and **since**, on the one hand, and **with** and **by**, on the other. Some other correspondences: SC **na** 'at, on, on to, upon, in, to, into, by'; **za** 'for, during, in, within, behind, after, instead'; **u** 'in, into, to, at, on, in case of'.

5.4 Lexicon

Just like in phonemics and grammar, considerable differences occur in English and SC lexicon, too, and the resultant interference may, and does, cause problems to Yugoslav learners and English/Australian listeners alike. A few random examples are thought to be illuminative.

To wait and **to expect**, distinguished in English, by and large coincide in SC: the same SC verbs can be interpreted in either way. As a result, a Yugoslav learner might say that he/she is **waiting** for someone or something when indeed he is not waiting but **expecting** somebody or something (or vice versa). SC **probat** has the following English equivalents: to experience, to try, to attempt, to assay, to test, to rehearse, to try on (e.g. clothes), to taste, to sample (e.g. food). An SC learner may find it hard to realise that not all these English verbs are freely interchangeable.

When you want something in English, a Yugoslav student may hesitate whether in his vernacular it would be *željeti* or *htjeti* (= to wish, to demand) or rather *prositi* or perhaps *moliti* (= to ask for, to request, to pray, to beg). The latter two verbs in SC are considered polite forms, the previous ones sound rather categorical or even harsh or curt; anyhow, this significant distinction is neutralized in the English verb *want* (it is another story that, if necessary, such a distinction can of course be made in English by different means).

Much and **many** (and a lot or lots) are used in different ways in English whereas they coincide in SC *mnogo* which means either 'much' or 'many' or 'a lot'. Likewise, **how much** and **how many** have the same SC equivalent: *koliko*.

Hot and **warm** do not necessarily refer to the same temperature in English and SC. Out of context, **hot** would be *vruć*, *vruća*, *vruće* (masculine, feminine and neuter genders distinguished) with reference to temperature or *papren*, *paprena*, *papreno* with reference to spiciness and **warm** can be rendered as *topao*, *topla*, *toplo*. However, talking about **hot water** or **hot air** or **hot meal**, the SC equivalent would normally be *topla voda* 'hot water' or *topla hrana* 'hot meal'; i.e. literally speaking 'warm water' and 'warm meal'. One can of course talk about *vruća voda* 'hot water' or *vruća hrana* 'hot meal' but in this case some burning/boiling hot liquid or a sizzling hot dish is meant. Then again, if you talk about **hot food** meaning a spicy curry or a chilli dish, that should be *paprena hrana*, i.e. 'peppery/spicy meal'.

Then there are lots of English words with hardly any or no SC equivalent. The famous English **understatement**, for one, can only be explained or circumscribed in SC for no single vocabulary item would correspond to it. Similarly, a **prerogative** can only be translated in SC as, say, *isključivo pravo* 'exclusive right'; **predicament** would be *težan položaj*, i.e. literally 'difficult situation/position'. **House-warming** is interpreted as either *svečanost* 'celebration, feast' or *gozba kod useljenja u novu kuću* 'party at settling in "a new home"' (English-Croato-Serbian Dictionary. Školska Knjiga, Zagreb 1962). Now, the first item is a noun synonymous to **house-warming** but certainly not identical with it whereas the second is clearly a circumlocution or explanation, not an equivalent. In the same dictionary, **supermarket** is rendered thus: 'veliki self-service store' (sic). Well, *veliki* means 'big'.

Some forms of greeting are perhaps worth mentioning. In SC one can say *dobro jutro* 'good morning', *dobar dan* 'good day', *dobra večer* 'good evening' and *laku noć* 'good night'. Firstly, there is no

such form as **good afternoon**. Secondly, **dobar dan** 'good day' has quite a different connotation than in Australian English. It does not imply the same degree of intimacy or affability; indeed it is a rather formal or neutral form. Besides, **dobro jutro** would only be used early in the morning, **dobar dan** from, say, mid-morning right until evening when **dobra večer** is appropriate. In other words, **dobar dan** would cover part of the range of **good morning** and also the whole of **good afternoon**. English greetings like **How do you do?** or **How are you?** have no SC equivalent and are rather hard to translate.

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