

Marc L. Greenberg (University of Kansas)

Antemurale innovationis: the Mura river area as both a center and a periphery

The Prekmurje (Mura River) region of NW Slovenia represents an oddity of sorts in the Slavic linguistic landscape. It lies at the periphery of Slovenia and, while it carried through many of the early innovations of Slovene, it was separated from the majority of the Slovene speech territory until 1918 by the political border between the Austrian German and the Hungarian territories. Prekmurje Slovene consequently displays a number of features that are not shared with other Slovene dialects, some of which were fostered by contact with Hungarian. Perhaps just as strangely, Prekmurje Slovene was not separated by a political border from the Kajkavian Croatian dialects, but, nevertheless, there are clear contrasts in the features that make up these neighboring dialect complexes. For example, Prekmurje Slovene uniquely in Western South Slavic displays the parallel formal-semantic development of PS1. **gъlčěti* ‘speak’ : **mъlčěti* ‘be silent’, which is found only in a subset of Central Bulgarian dialects and Central Russian dialects (Schallert and Greenberg 2007), and is absent in both the rest of Slovene as well as the BCS dialect complex. Another curious feature that at first blush unites Prekmurje Slovene and Bulgarian (as well as the much of the rest of the Balkans), and excluding both Slovene and BCS, is a bifurcation in complementizers for realis (*ka*) and irrealis (*da*) subordinate clauses (Greenberg 2011).

Do these correspondences signal a special, distal relationship between Prekmurje Slovene and Balkan Slavic, perhaps originating in a common founder dialect of Proto-Slavic? Or are these parallels the result of separate and coincidental innovations? Answering these questions can help us better understand the formation of the South Slavic area, the migration patterns of Proto-Slavic dialect speakers, and contribute to a deeper understanding of how to interpret diatopic patterns in general.

References

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- Schallert, Joseph and Marc L. Greenberg (2007). “[The Prehistory and Areal Distribution of Slavic *gъlčěti ‘Speak’.](#)” *Slovenski jezik / Slovene Linguistic Studies* 6: 9-76.