

NIŠ SPEECH IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEWEST SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH^a

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Abstract

The new approach to the research of the speech of Niš is explained in this paper, in light of the newest sociolinguistic research. Since the research of the speech of Niš so far were determined by the approaches chosen by the authors and having in mind the newly made conditions in which the city of Niš changed in the demographic sense, the possibility of a newer, more modern and more encompassing exploration of the Niš vernacular has arisen. The goal of the research, the choice of the informers, the manner in which the material was gathered, the methodology of the treatment of the gathered material and the presentation of the results is presented. Following the suggested steps in the sociolinguistic approach to the speech of Niš, a new and more reliable representation of the speech of Niš today would be arrived at.

Key words: Niš speech, city speech, sociolinguistics, Serbian language, Prizren-Timok dialect area.

ГОВОР НИША У СВЕТЛУ НАЈНОВИЈИХ СОЦИОЛИНГВИСТИЧКИХ ИСТРАЖИВАЊА

Апстракт

У раду је представљен нови приступ истраживању говора града у светлу најновијих социолингвистичких истраживања. С обзиром на то да су досадашња истраживања говора града Ниша имала ограничења одређена приступима аутора, а имајући у виду новонастале друштвене околности под којима се град Ниш у демографском смислу изменио, јавила се могућност новог, савременијег и свеобухватнијег испитивања нишког вернакулара. Представљен је циљ истраживања, одабир информатора, начин прикупљања грађе, методологија обраде прикупљеног материјала и представљања резултата. Праћењем предложене поступности у

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социолингвистичком приступу говору Ниша била би створена нова и веродостојнија слика данашњег говора Нишлија.

Кључне речи: говор Ниша, говор града, социолингвистика, српски језик, призренско-тимочка дијалекатска област.

INTRODUCTION

Urban or socio dialectology is a linguistic area which our science did not pay enough attention to. The initial signal came from Miloš Moskovljević, who, in his paper “A Few Words on Belgrade Speech” from 1921, pointed out the language currents in city speech. Unfortunately, decades passed and not one of the linguists from the territory of ex-Yugoslavian republics focused their work on the speech of cities. Even though foreign linguistics paid full attention to the sociolinguistic research of city speech, during the 60s and 70s of the previous century, that trend arrived to our region much later.

American linguist William Labov started the sociolinguistic research of the speech of the island Martha’s Vineyards, near Massachusetts in the 60s of the previous century. Through a combination of linguistic and social variables he reached the conclusions which pointed to the fact that different extralinguistic factors affect the state of language. One of such factors is that the inhabitants of this island, with the aim of preserving their own identity (in relation to the newcomers and occasional inhabitants of the island), started pointing out the specificities of their speech, noticeable especially among the younger generations, precisely those which returned to the island and continued their life on it. Apart from that, Labov actually simulated the process of language development by simultaneously observing several different age groups, which came into the place of the research done on the development of a speech or languages, over several years. This allows for observation of the tendencies in the language evolutions (see Majerhof, 2006, 16–25). The term *apparent time* was introduced, translated in Serbian as *privedno vreme*, which allowed the compression of time in language research (Labov, 1978).

Later on, Labov concentrated on the speech of New York, which was marked by the interpretation in the framework of social stratification. Labov was not satisfied with the explanation that some phonetic variants, such as the letter *r*, appear completely by accident. Enriching his research methods of obtaining materials through fieldwork, which had to be anonymous, set the relation among and predictability of the variations. Namely, the choice of prestige markings in a speech was in question, that is, a specific variation marked a certain social niche and, based on that, the speakers were choosing the variant and used it in a specific situation. He chose three department stores on Manhattan rated according to the type and price of the products they were selling, since the presupposition

is that the buyers are socially stratified as well. His anonymous informants were the shop assistants in those department stores, of different gender, age and backgrounds. The analysis of the gathered data confirmed Labov's presuppositions of variations in the speech of an individual conditioned by social layering (see Labov, 1966, 1978; Majerhof, 2006, 25–30).

Lesley Milroy, a British linguist, focused on the social variable that could be universally applied, unlike the social classes. Namely, Milroy based her research on social networks, that is, the connection between an individual and various social networks that surround him or her. It related to the social, as well as linguistic relation of the individual within his or her family, stores, neighborhood, church, work etc. L. Milroy and J. Milroy (Milroy, 1978) examined three areas of Belfast equal in economic sense and followed certain phonetic variations in their inhabitants. It was shown that the pronunciation can be adapted according to whether it is an informal conversation or the conversation within the framework of looser contacts on one of the networks. The authors did not manage to come to a concrete conclusion since the principle of the examination of social networks is very demanding, but it is evident that language changes occur and that they are conditioned by non-linguistic factors such as age and environment.

The name Dunja Jutrović stands out in the process of application of the modern sociolinguistic methodology in the dialectic work in the region of ex Yugoslavian republics. She applied the contemporary approach in the description of the city speech in her book *Splitski govor* (Jutrović, 2010).

The differences between the speech of cities and villages in Serbia were pointed out by Milka Ivić in 1965; however, she also presented the fact that every urban center has its language individuality, depending on the dialectic environment (Ivić, 1965).

The same occurrence was the interest of Dušan Jović, who examined the relation of the standardized and regional speech (Jović, 1979) and analyzed the types of city speeches according to the structure of the population, emphasizing that the differences between the rural environments and smaller administrative centers are lessened (Jović, 1983).

Interlingual stratifications in an urban environment were the topic of the research done by Stanislav Stanković, who analyzed dialectic types in the speech of Vlasotince and their realizations in different groups of speakers (Stanković, 1997).

The linguists from Novi Sad took the examination of the city speech seriously, as a type of work which demands team organization, and they approached the subject accordingly. The project *Govor Novog Sada* was realized through onsite research and application of sociolinguistic methods in the analysis of the gathered material. As a result of this work two volumes were published named *Govor Novog Sada 1: Fonetske osobine* and *Govor Novog Sada 2: Morfosintaksičke, leksičke i pragmatičke osobine*.

RESEARCH DONE SO FAR ON THE SPEECH OF NIŠ

One of the most valuable dialectologists for the research of the speech of Niš is the French Slavist Paul-Louis Thomas. He based his doctoral dissertation on the research of the city speech of Niš and the near-by villages. His approach to this topic at that moment was unique. He did not disregard the city surroundings, as was usually done (with good reason, too) in dialectological publications.¹ Thomas followed simultaneously on all language levels (prosody, phonetics, morphology, syntax) all occurrences in village and city speech, with the confirmations from the works of Sremac (*Ivkova slava* and *Zona Zamfirova*). A parallel overview and analysis of dialectic characters led to the conclusion that the speech of Niš is different from the near-by villages and that it has more elements of the standardized Serbian language.

After a detailed research of the rural speeches of the Prizren-Timok area, the need for a turn in the dialectological approach to this area arose. So far, the dialectologists focused on the unchangeability within a dialect, that is that which was not subject to the factors which would affect their original state. The choice of informers was conditioned by it, those who preserved the antiquity of speech and who were not exposed to the external influences of other dialects and standardized language. Everyone understood that the changes occur outside that closed circle as waves of something unknown to the native dialect speaker roll in. Due to the traditional dialectological principles, that antiquity has been preserved in written word and in numerous publications and textbooks. The new age of folk speeches is riddled with the changes. In bigger neighborhoods, especially those with high level of migration, primarily in the last several decades of last century and the first ones of this century, the changes occurred in the idiomatic expression of those speakers, within the domain of their speeches. The more intensive connections with the standardized language affected that occurrence.

The city of Niš represents the seat of the Niš administrative region. Having in mind that it is the biggest city in the southeast Serbia, Niš acts

¹ The following publications are not included - Slobodan Remetić (1996, *Srpski prizrenski govor*), Mihailo Stevanović (1950, *Đakovački govor*) and Jovan Mihajlović (1977, *Govor Leskovca*), since they differ from other Serbian dialectological writings since they are concerned with the linguistic material from a city environment. For the majority of the dialectological analyses the materials was gathered from villages, from the oldest autochthonous speakers, while the administrative and cultural centers of the given areas were not of interest (since they were not the goal of the research), in the previously mentioned works, the authors examined the speech of Prizren, Đakovica and Leskovac. The applied methods of analyses followed completely the traditional dialectological practice. In every case, all the material was gathered at the last minute, both from the biological and historical point of view.

as the center of this part of Serbia. As such, it has a specific position not only in the administrative and cultural sense, but also regarding the status of its speech. Its status of “the capital of the southeast Serbia”² singles it out from the smaller areas which have representatives in the field of languages.

The picture of Niš vernacular was created by the publication of Paul-Lui Thomas, who gathered the material during the summer of 1987. Thomas started from the intention to compare three systems: the speech of the villages surrounding Niš which belong to the Southmoravian speech group (Lalinac, Medoševac, Donje Međurovo, Mramor, Novo Selo, Pasi Poljana, Popovac, Trupale and Čokot), the speech of the city of NIŠ and the standard Serbian language. In his research, Thomas followed parallel currents: determining the common characteristics between the first two types of a speech and the hypothesis that the city idiom suffered stronger influence of the standard language, so he observed the city speech as “unstable system between the rural speeches and standard language, which affect it” (Thomas, 1998, 25). He did not choose his informers primarily through the traditional dialectological process since he believed that “every informer is interesting because he or she reflects the state of a language and is an indicator of changea” (Thomas 1998: 26). The total number of speakers involved in the research was fifty. For the city speec, Thomas had ten “main” speakers, which is an insufficient number to paint the full picture of a city speech with over 180.000 citizens.³ The expression “speech of Niš” was used in a very narrow sense for the speech of the informers chosen according to the specific criteria and cathegories. Namely, the lowest age limit of those speakers was 60, and as far as the education is concerned, the persons with no education, those with four grades of primary school or craftsmen participated in the research. Such a choice was explained as limiting the variations on a linguistic level (Thomas, 1998, 28).

As he was gathering the material from the city, Thomas emphasised that the recordings done with the city population “last longer than the recordings from the villages, with the aim of noticing the variations of urban speech in relation to the village speech and standard language” (Thomas 1998: 32). City speech demands a more sofisticated approach of the researcher and great caution in the analysis and conclusion making, since the line between the idioms and the version that has been adapted according to the standard is very thin.

When explaining the methodology of his work, Thomas makes a parallel between the communities where standardized as well as Creole languages exist and the relation of Serbian regional speeches and the

² This expression could be heard in Niš media.

³ According to the Inventory list from 2011, 183.164 citizens lived in Niš (<https://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/5.11.2015>).

standardized language. Of all the possible social variables, Thomas decided to use the place of living (city or village) and based his work on the speeches of NIŠ and ner by villages on that variable (Thomas 1994/5, 1998).

American Slavist, Thomas Magner dealt with the speech of NIŠ in several instances. He examined the state of accents in the speech of Niš, that is, in the grammar school “Stevan Sremac”, where he noticed great deviations from the standard prosody (Magner 1984). The following research was done on the group of students whose assignment was to translate a text in English into Serbian, but the one they are using in everyday speech. The results showed that the Niš speech is still very much alive, and the survey showed that the speakers believe that the dialect would survive under the influence of the standard (Magner, 1984). During the 80s of the previous century, he observed the city vernaculars parallelly in Zagreb, Split and NIŠ, which represented centers of regional dialects which greatly differ from the normative language, at the time of SFRY. He determined that these speeches had different status regarding prestigiousness. Split speech was found at the top as the model for the newcomers, while it was not as pronounced in Zagreb because Kajkavian speech is mostly avoided in professional communication, while the speech of Niš has no prestige since all speakers, regardless of their origin, strive to come as close as possible to the standard (Magner, 1983).

NIŠ SPEECH FROM A NEW ANGLE

Since the speech of Niš belongs to the Prizren-Southmoravian dialect according to its characteristics and the city represents the center of the speech zone which is the furthest, in comparison to other Serbian dialects, from the standardized language, it is evident that Niš, with its vernacular, is in a constant need to be closer to its higher level – the standard variety of the Serbian language. Paul-Lui Thomas pointed out the differences between the Niš speech and the speech of the nearby villages. The following question arises – to which extent is the Niš speech removed from its original dialect and in which segments can that be perceived. To give answers to these and similar questions, it is firstly needed to examine the demographic picture of Niš in greater detail, since it shows the existence of different Serbian speeches in the Niš region.⁴ The make of the population of Niš has changed lately and the layout of the inhabited neighborhoods across the territory of the city and has not stopped shaping this space in the economic, cultural and language sense.

⁴ Regarding the demographic structure of the area the research should be familiar with, the Bulgarian linguist Videnov says: „По време на събирането на материала социолингвистът е длъжен да се съобразява с демографската характеристика на града за последните 50–60 години.” (Videnov, 2010, 69).

It is highly important for directing the examination of Niš speech, since the distribution of population, usually done according to the pre-set rules, indicates the dialect basis of the population and thus determines the direction of language examination.

The geographic position of Niš shows its additional dialectic background. Apart from its Southmoravian dialectic characteristics, the immediate surroundings of the city there are the Svrlijig-Zaplanje and Timok-Lužnica dialects. The unavoidable mixing of the population from the villages with the city one affected the changes in the speech of the city. The mixing does not include only the move from the villages into the cities but also the daily migrations of the population from the surrounding places which occur due to the market days, education or work in the city. The city population has started increasing from economic reasons during the 50s and beginning of 60s of the 20th century, and the dynamics of the rise was especially pronounced in the period from 1961 to 1971. Therefore, in 1953 Niš had over 58.000 citizens, in 1961 more than 81.250, in 1971 over 127.600, in 1981 the number was higher than 161.000, in 1991 Niš had more than 175.000, and in 2002 the inventory list had more than 180.000 citizens.⁵

After the wars in the 90s the territory of the former SFRY an avalanche of Serbian people from Croatia and Bosna and Herzegovina started, and they inhabited different regions in Serbia. During that period, the people that arrived to Niš brought with them characteristics of a completely different Serbian dialect with new-Stokavian accentuation and declination. Whether it provoked changes in the Niš speech and to which extent is a question to be examined.

After the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and sudden emigration of Serbian people from Kosovo and Metohija, Niš and the surrounding are were very acceptable for the Serbs coming from the South themselves. Whole neighborhoods were inhabited precisely by the Serbs who emigrated from Kosovo and Metohija. The level of the influence their dialectic characteristics, which are specific in comparison to the speech of Niš primarily due to the elements from the non-Slavic languages (Turkish and Albanian), should also be questioned. It is necessary to determine to which extent did their language basis changed under the influence of Niš city life and all it includes.

Therefore, the initial research of the Niš speech should start from four target presuppositions:

1. To which level have the Southmoravian characteristics of the Niš speech been preserved as well as changed;

⁵ For the more precise data on the number of citizens in some of the neighborhoods in Niš today refer to Stanovništvo(prim. prev. Population) 2007: 162.

2. To which level have the Svrlijig-Zaplanje characteristics of the Niš speech, which stem from the area of the Svrlijig-Zaplanje dialect area, been preserved as well as changed;
3. To which level have the Timok-Lužnica characteristics of the Niš speech, which stem from the area of the Timok-Lužnica dialect area, been preserved as well as changed;
4. To which level have the language characteristics of the Serbs who emigrated from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, been preserved as well as changed;
5. To which level have the language characteristics of the Serbs who emigrated from Kosovo and Metohija, been preserved as well as changed;

The examination would include certain stages, primarily the choice of the region of the city which would be researched. Even though Niš has five administrative municipalities (Medijana, Crveni krst, Palilula, Pantelej, Niška Banja), there are city neighborhoods with their own names and the Niš citizens recognize each other as well as differentiate according to them: Bubanj, Palilula, Durlan, Duvanište, Čalije, Donja Vrežina, Gornja Vrežina, Ledena stena, Trošarina, Brzi brod, Marger etc. Such territorial division could work as an asset in the language research. For some of these Niš neighborhoods it is evident which parts were inhabited by people from a specific part of Serbia. That would be significant for the differentiation of the gathered material, because it would be compared to one's own basis.

Eventual difficulties when gathering and systematizing the material would probably occur because of the diglossia in the speech of Niš population. The position of Serbian dialects in relation to the standard is such that the carriers of a part of the dialect in certain speech situations adapt to the standard. The bigger deviation from the norm, the bigger the need to come closer to it and the speeches of the Prizren-Timok area are exposed to that precisely. They are always put aside and usually exposed to criticism or mocking due to the language gap (see Petrović, 2015). With the tendency to avoid the feeling of discomfort and standing out, the carrier of the Prizren-Timok speech is prone to, in certain situations, changing the code in communication, which would bring him or her closer to the standard, that is the prestigious language variety. However, that need to be accepted and the sense of community is precisely what makes the same speaker hold on to his way of speaking in his/her own social frameworks. Therefore, a Niš citizen would say to his/her mother: "Nesam gu videja", but in court, that utterance would be: "Nisam je video". Such situations cause the speech of the Prizren-Timok area to be marked by diglossia. That moment becomes a problem for the researcher. How to differentiate the diglossia forms from the basic ones? So as to avoid such confusion, it is necessary to clarify at the very beginning of

material gathering whether diglossia is present in speakers or not. Paul-Lui Thomas was aware of the “danger” of the diglossia in the speakers, so he evaded this issue by choosing the lesser educated informers or those without any level of education, believing that they are not as exposed to diglossia. However, such a choice leads to the creation of a not so realistic picture of Niš speech. Every Niš citizen, regardless of age, background, education or economy status is a representative of the speech of his or her city. Therefore, it is necessary to find an approach where the language analysis would incorporate more various groups of speakers. On the other hand, Thomas is in “insecure” speakers found wider possibilities of sociolinguistic conclusions. Namely, it is precisely the speaker who oscillates between the dialect and standard can point to the “breaking points” in the language systems, the units susceptible to variations. Therefore, diglossia could, as double edged sword, lead to wrong conclusions as well as point out the obvious tendencies in the development of a speech. It is clear in any case that diglossia is an important occurrence, even necessary, in the final examination of the research of a city vernacular. The confusion created by diglossia could be solved in two different ways: by using a survey and anonymous recordings of the informers. One of the possible manners of gathering the material from the city speech, which could lead to the most authentic data, is found in Videnov: „Социолингвистът доста често има възможност да записва жива реч на улицата, в магазина, във фойетата на кинотеатрите, в превозните средства и т. н. Натрупаният опит показва, че такива материали имат висока стойност със своята непосредственост и спонтанност. Да се осъществи запис в такива условия, е трудно, но всички теренни изследвания, поставили си за цел да проучат градска езикова ситуация, не пропускат възможността да направят такива записи. Използването им става след определена лабораторна социолингвистическа обработка” (Videnov, 2010, 67).

Bulgarian linguists have already observed the occurrence of diglossia in their language (see Videnov 2005, 91–203). The author who regarded this issue on the example of Bulgarian city speech is E. Dimitrova (2004), who examined this phenomenon on the speech of a small Bulgarian city in the northwest of Bulgaria – Krivodol, in the framework of three social groups: intelligence, agricultural workers and students, taking into account whether the inhabitants are natives or newcomers. Dimitrov applied the methods of social stratification which were set in the 70s through the works of Labov, Trudgill and other sociolinguists. The analysis led to the conclusion, among other things, that the third, youngest group has the highest level of diglossia, since both codes are dominant in this generation: both the standard and dialect one.

In our linguistics, Ljubiša Rajić examined the position of the users of a dialect in the process of standardization and he did his research on the students coming from the dialect areas (Rajić, 1980).

GOALS, WAYS AND METHODS OF WORK

After taking into account the interest given to the speech of Niš so far and the sociolinguistic approaches that have been applied in the world as well as in the region, the need for the Niš vernacular to be reexamined arose, but in a fresher and more complete way. That new approach to the Nis vernacular would be comprised of the following steps:

1. Detailed introduction with the demographic structure of the city of Niš and the placement of inhabitants across its neighborhoods;
2. Choice of city neighborhoods in which the material would be gathered;
3. Choice of the informer who would fit the following categories: background, age, education, sex;
4. Gathering the material through spontaneous conversation;
5. Gathering the material through surveys;
6. Contemplation of the possibility of separating the materials pertaining to spontaneous speech from those with diglossia;
7. Processing the material according to the language variables (phonetic, morphological, syntactic and lexical); adapting of the variables to the dialectic basis of the informer;
8. Analysis of the material through sociolinguistic methods which include calculation of the frequency index;
9. Presentation of the results of the analysis through tavles, diagrams etc.
10. Interpretation of the research results;
11. Hypotheses on the tendency of the development of Niš city speech.

Such a research must be, without a doubt, complex and it calls for team work, which is supposed to be professionally skilled for dialectic research, since it would ensure precision, security and quality during the processing of the data. If that aspect is missing the complete processing and analysis of a city speech would need more time.

The first step implies examination of the layout of the citizens throughout Niš neighborhoods. If possible, it should be determined in which neighborhoods the natives of Niš live as well as the origin of Niš citizens living in different parts of Niš. The dialectic basis for the formation of language variables, which should be analysed, would be determined on the basis of the origin of the newcomer citizens.⁶ The

⁶ Videnov and Bajčev, when researching the speech of Veliko Trnovo, chose people who lived there for more than 15–20 years, though attention should be paid to the age of the individual when he or she started living in that city: „В нашето проучване на великотърновската градска говорна ситуация бе възприето лицето да е пребивало в

following step, stemming from this, would be to focus the research territorially, with an adjusted language approach regarding the origin of the speaker. The chosen are would include the informers who qualify according to the followin pre-conditions:

- youngest, middle aged, older speakers;
- with no education or with several grades of primary school, with finished high school, with higher education;
- the equal number of male and female informers.

The question of the number of informers which would satisfy the needs of the research could be solved through the advice of the sociolinguists: “Sociolinguistic research showed that an optimal sample is between 25 and 90 stratified examinees, and that around 150 examinees is the upper limit, since further increasing of the number does not lead to significantly better results” (Rajić, 2009, 94), though Chambers examines the issue to a greater detail (1995).

The choice of the informers is followed by the gathering of the material, which should be done in two ways: recording spontaneous conversations with the informers and anonymous filling out of the designed questionnaires, with the aim of solving the dilemma on diglossia. Anonymous recordings of everyday conversations in different surroundings in the city would also be beneficial.

The gathered material should be divided according to the chosen variables, after which quantitative methods should be applied. Determining the index of frequency has the role of determining the level of presence of certain, primarily marked, dialect characteristics, which would be clearly shown on the diagrams or graphic representations. The analysis of the achieved results would lead to conclusions on the state and development of the speech of Niš and the visible tendencies in its evolution.

CONCLUSION

Serbian dialectology has slowly been turning towards new goals in its research. Certain changes occurred in the folk speeches, which led to the realization that the dialectological focus needs to be moved.

града повече от 15–20 г. Напълно логично е следното разсъждение: не е възможно едно лице да живее в даден град 15–20 г. и да не усвои речевата му норма, т. е. речевата норма на съсловието, към което принадлежи. Наистина 15–20 г. са внушителен срок, но от първостепенна важност е кой период от живота на индивида съставят тези години. Една от нашите информаторки например е живяла до 50-годишната си възраст в с. Хвойна, Смолянско, а след това се премества във Великотърновската си възраст (70 г.) тя е усвоила доста елементи от великотърновската норма, но в същото време в речта ѝ се проявяват и множество елементи, характерни за нормата в бившето ѝ село. Съвсем други са резултатите при лицата, които стават градски жители на по-млада възраст.” (Videnov, 2010, 62).

Theoretical views of the need to research the changeability in the Serbian speeches have been merely an invite but without the answer. Bravery and determination of the participants of the project *Govor Novog Sada* showed that sociolinguistic methods can be applied to the domain of the Serbian language and, which is even more interesting, to the area of the dialect which comprises the base of the standardized language. Such results of our dialectologists are primarily what created the security and need for exploration of the speech of Niš, which represents a capital city of the Prizren-Timok dialectic zone. The need for answers to the questions whether Niš has a language prestige, what type of a vernacular it is, how it is different than its dialect base and in what way it is similar to the standardized language and if it is possible that it will disappear from the map of dialects of the area leads to contemplation on the manners in which such an example of Serbian can be explored. Combining the qualitative and quantitative sociolinguistic methods could lead to certain results which would point to the current speech of Niš as well as its future. The newest demographic data on Niš paint the picture on the layout of the dialect basis of the inhabitants on which the new language variant would be developed further, under the influence of the normative language and an already formed city speech. Determining the relation in the level of presence of dialect and standard elements would point to what the Niš speech actually looks like, or even maybe the mosaic of the Niš city vernacular.

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ГОВОР НИША У СВЕТЛУ НАЈНОВИЈИХ СОЦИОЛИНГВИСТИЧКИХ ИСТРАЖИВАЊА

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Резиме

У раду је објашњена могућност новог приступа говору града Ниша. Након прегледа уже литературе која се бави социолингвистичким истраживањима градског вернакулара (М. Московљевић, В. Лабов, Ј. Милрој, Ц. Милрој, Ц. Чејмберс, М. Ивић, Д. Јовић, Љ. Рајић, Д. Јутронић, С. Станковић, М. Виденов, Б. Бајчев, Е. Димитрова) и досадашњих истраживања нишког идиома (П. Ј. Тома, Т. Магнер), указано је на потребу заокрета у домаћој дијалектологији. Српска дијалектологија се досад усредсређивала на руралне говоре, а стање у градским говорима створило је потребу да се дијалектолог окрене новој материји. Овим путем је најпре кренуо тим лингвиста окупљених око пројекта „Говор Новог Сада” и реализовао две свеске описа објављене 2009. и 2011. године.

Идеја која је представљена у овом раду оправдана је из неколико углова. Досадашња истраживања нишког говора била су ограничена одабиром приступа аутора и нису могла представити реално стање у нишком идиому. Демографска слика Ниша изменила се у последњих неколико деценија, а то је условило промене у говору града. Ниш има незванични статус представника југоисточне Србије, а самим тим и представника призренско-тимочке дијалекатске области, која је према својим одликама најудаљенија од стандардног српског језика. Када се све ово узме у обзир, ствара се потреба за испитивањем говора једног таквог града.

Представљени су циљеви, начини и методе рада, који се заснивају на досадашњим социолингвистичким истраживањима. Ниш би се из језичког угла испитивао према територијалним областима на које је издељен. Узела би се у обзир дијалекатска база испитаника (призренско-јужноморавски, сврљишко-заплањски, тимочко-лужнички дијалекат и дијалекти са подручја бивших југословенских република). Прикупљена грађа би подразумевала и материјал настао у условима диглосивног понашања информатора. Анализа би текла применом метода: израчунавање индекса фреквенције, представљање резултата табелама и дијаграмима, интерпретација закључака. Закључци би подразумевали и препознавање извесних тенденција у даљем развоју нишког вернакулара.

Говор града Ниша је неопходно испитати на нов, савременији начин како би се створила реална слика о његовом стању. На тај начин могло би се доћи до одговора на бројна питања као што су: да ли Ниш има језички престиж, по чему је он другачији од своје дијалекатске базе, у чему се он приближава стандардном језику и да ли је могуће да ће једном нестати са дијалекатске карте своје области.