

Variation of Spoken Slovene in the Case of Geographically Mobile Speakers

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Based on the pioneering variationist research on Slovene language material, the article explores the authentic language use of speakers of the Cerčno dialect who commute daily or weekly to work or school in Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana. The research corpus comprises excerpts from informants' full-day audio self-recordings, selected to represent variation of location, interlocutors, and conversation topic. Through a quantitative analysis of five phonological variables, the study reveals distinct language strategies with speakers of other varieties, resulting in a classification of one code-switcher, three code-mixers, and one dialect speaker language strategies employed by the informants when communicating with speakers of other varieties, resulting in a classification of code-switchers, code-mixers and dialect speakers. Furthermore, the qualitative data derived from interviews shed light on various sociopsychological aspects of the focal topic, such as the informants' perception of their own speech behaviour, their experiences with language use, and their language attitudes, providing deeper insights into their language variability and highlighting the intricacies of language choice and interpersonal communication.

Keywords: variation of spoken Slovene, Cerčno dialect, speakers' profiles, self-recording, sociolinguistic interviews, language attitudes

Bitenc, M.: Variation of Spoken Slovene in the Case of Geographically Mobile Speakers. Slovenščina 2.0, 11(2): 29–58.

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original Scientific Article

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4312/slo2.0.2023.2.29-58>

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1 Introduction

The aim of the research presented in this paper is to investigate of the diverse language practice and intralanguage variation of five mobile Slovene speakers of the Cerčno local dialect who commute daily or weekly to work or school in Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana, as well as to examine some the relevant sociopsychological topics.

The study aims to adapt and test the methodological approaches of variationist sociolinguistics (cf. the works of Labov (1972, 2004) and Tagliamonte (2006, 2012) and comparable research in other language communities, as mentioned in section 3) on Slovene language material for the first time, and to define the typology of speech strategies in dialect contacts in the Slovene capital. It seeks to supersede the division and dichotomy of this research area in Slovene linguistics, where the idealized poles of standard language and dialect have been the main focus to date, and to establish a new foundation for researching the field, the need and incentive for which has been expressed previously in the expert literature (e.g., Kenda-Jež, 2004; Stabej, 2010). The topics raised in this context seem to be very relevant to Slovene due to its high level of geographical language diversity, especially in an age of increasingly pronounced geographical mobility.

Studying language variation, particularly in mobile speakers who move between regions and bring different speech varieties and dialectal features into contact, offers valuable insights into the actual language use and the sociolinguistic factors that influence individuals' language behaviour, such as age, gender, education, social networks, personal history, characteristics, and linguistic experiences. Besides, examining how varieties interact and evolve contributes to a better understanding of the processes of language change. Mobility and exposure to different speech varieties also influence individuals' language attitudes and self-perception. By exploring how mobile speakers adapt to different interlocutors and negotiate their linguistic identities in diverse contexts, we gain insights into the complex relationship between language and identity. This understanding can help speakers navigate linguistic landscapes, connect effectively with others, and achieve success in personal and professional domains.

Additionally, such research advances various fields related to language and society, sheds light on issues of social integration and inclusion, power relations between the centre and periphery, and the dynamics between standard and non-standard varieties. Understanding the linguistic experiences and challenges faced by mobile individuals promotes inclusive language policies, educational programmes, and social support systems that foster linguistic diversity, diminish linguistic stereotypes and prejudices, and ensure equal opportunities for all (Labov, 1972; Edwards, 2009; Auer and Schmidt, 2010; Tagliamonte, 2012; Milroy, 2002).

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the sociolinguistic situation regarding the Slovene language and the Idrija region. Section 3 offers a brief review of relevant previous work, with a particular focus on the European and Slovene contexts. The research presentation focuses on two younger informants, both high school students.¹ The methodological framework is presented in Section 4, while Section 5 presents the results and discussion. Subsections 4.1 and 5.1 deal with the quantitative variationist study data, while subsections 4.2 and 5.2 explore the qualitative sociolinguistic interviews. Section 6 concludes the paper with a discussion of the findings and an assessment of their potential implications for future research directions.

2 The sociolinguistic situation in Slovenia and the Idrija region

The sociolinguistic situation regarding Slovene, a South Slavic language now spoken by approximately 2.4 million speakers,² is characterized by several distinctive features. Firstly, there is a significant geographical diversity of the language, encompassing seven dialect groups and over 40 local dialects and subdialects (cf. Škofic et al., 2011, p. 11). Additionally, Slovene has a long history of serving as an L-language in diglossic relations with German, Italian, Hungarian and Serbo-Croatian. Furthermore, the standardization of the written and

1 Two adult female informants are presented in detail in Bitenc and Kenda-Jež (2015).

2 For a general overview of the Slovene sociolinguistic situation, see Greenberg (1997) and Bitenc (2013).

spoken language exhibits an asymmetric nature. While the unification of the written language and the abandonment of regional literary traditions originated from the second half of the 19th century, the development of a unified spoken standard was not as well-established and regional varieties continue to be observed (cf. Pogorelec, 1984; Toporišič, 2000; Stabej, 2010). The Slovene language territory exhibits complex patterns of social and regional stratification of language varieties, with various dialects featuring different levels of prestige and distance from the standard Slovene, as well variations in mutual intelligibility (cf. Bitenc, 2013, pp. 58–61; Bitenc and Kenda-Jež, 2015, pp. 31–32). The classic Slovene theory of language varieties (Toporišič, 2000, pp. 13–27) presents dialect variability in terms of the division between standard (“literary”) and non-standard (“non-literary”) varieties.³ According to critical reflections on the theory, this schematic and rigid interpretation of different language forms and communicative situations can neither explain nor take into account the real sociolinguistic situation in the language community (Stabej, 2010, p. 198). Slovene linguistics, with its prevailing structuralist orientation until the end of the 20th century, has predominantly focused on traditional dialects as well as standard (“literary”) language, since these were supposed to be the only varieties with a systemic character (Smole, 2004, pp. 321–324). The majority of language observation and description has been based on introspection, and in the theory of standard language, the Czech model of Common Czech has been adapted to the Slovene situation (Pogorelec, 1998).

Slovene sociolinguistics has been characterized by special historical circumstances in the Slovene language territory and has gone chiefly in the direction of (standard) language policy and planning, dealing with bi- or multilingualism, language as an indicator of interethnic relations, language ideologies, and so on (Nećak Lük, 1998; Stabej, 2010). The need and incentive for a systematic empirical investigation of spoken Slovene and its variability have been expressed

3 Standard (literary) varieties include formal language and “common” or standard colloquial language; non-standard (non-literary) varieties include rural dialects, regional interdialects, slang, jargon and cant (Toporišič, 2000, pp. 13–27). In the theory, the Czech model of the Prague School with “spisovný jazyk” and “obecná čeština” has been adapted to the Slovene situation (cf. Pogorelec, 1998, p. 59; Wilson, 2010, pp. 34–39).

previously in the expert literature (Pogorelec, 1998; Kenda-Jež, 2004; Stabej, 2010), but it is only recently that concrete suggestions and relevant research have appeared to address this gap.

The Cerkno dialect, spoken in the Idrija region, which is about 60 kilometres to the west of Ljubljana, belongs to the Rovte dialect group, whose structural development differs from the general Slovene tendencies. The dialect is noticeably different from varieties selected as the basis for standard Slovene, and in comparison with the urban dialect of Ljubljana there are noticeable differences in phonological system, morphology and lexicon, the most salient of which is the retention of vocalic quantitative oppositions (cf. Bitenc and Kenda-Jež, 2015, pp. 32–33). The dialect has high status and prestige in the Idrija region and is generally also used in semiformal contexts. This can be attributed to long communication isolation and the period of Slovene-Italian diglossia during the Italian occupation of the region in the interwar period (Kenda-Jež, 2002, p. 67), when the dialect was the only variety of Slovene that was used in the region and therefore developed greater functional flexibility. The city of Idrija is known for having the second largest mercury mine in the world, whose beginnings date back to the late 15th century, and has a remarkable history not only in the economic-technical field, but also in the areas of culture and education⁴ (Kleindienst, 1995, pp. 9–12). It has an important role as a regional centre, and lies at the intersection of the influential regions of two urban centres, Ljubljana and Nova Gorica (Fridl et al., 2001, p. 97), the latter on the border with Italy, which also testifies to its specific sociolinguistic situation. According to demographic data from censuses from the second half of the 20th century, the level of education and the proportion of the population in employment has increased significantly. The size of the working population with a residence in Idrija and a workplace in Ljubljana doubled from 2000 to 2011 (from 237 to 492 inhabitants). In 2002, some 1,114 of 2,682 school and university students residing in Idrija attended educational institutions in municipalities located in other statistical regions. Among the daily

4 The first Slovene theatre was founded in Idrija in 1780 and the first Slovene high school with Slovene as the prevailing language of instruction in 1901.

commuters, the majority commuted to the municipality of Ljubljana⁵ (cf. also Bitenc, 2016b, pp. 164–169).

Recent surveys of the Cerčno dialect for the Slovene and Slavic atlases have enabled a detailed phonological description of the Cerčno dialect (e. g. Rigler, 1981 and Kenda-Jež, 2002). Also relevant for the present research is a discussion of the potential classification of the local dialect of Idrija as a subdialect of the Cerčno dialect (Skalin, 2002).

3 Relevant studies in the Slovene and European context

In Slovene linguistics, there has been a strong focus on the study of traditional dialects, reflecting a dichotomous view on language variability (cf. section 2). Extensive efforts at documenting traditional dialects have resulted in a substantial corpus of dialectal material, compiled through highly structured interviews conducted with non-mobile, older rural informants, and partly presented in dialectological atlases (Škofic, 2011; Škofic, Gostenčnik, Kumin Horvat, Jakop, Kenda-Jež et al., 2016). Dialectological studies of city dialects are rare, however, which can be attributed to the strict theoretical division between rural and city dialects (literally “city speech”) in Slovene linguistics (Kenda-Jež, 2004, p. 270).

The central variant of the capital Ljubljana and its surroundings has been the object of phonological studies conducted on unrepresentative samples of speakers and connected with standardization and spoken standard planning since the second half of the 20th century (cf. Rigler, 1970–1978; Srebot Rejec, 1988; Jurgec, 2011). A million-word corpus of spoken Slovene known as GOS⁶ (Verdonik and Zwitter Vitez, 2011) has been compiled, but in order for its material to be used as a basis for variationist investigation, more data about speakers’ base dialects and more detailed transcription, especially for potential phonological studies, would be necessary.

In two relevant studies on the variation of spoken Slovene, Guzej (1989) investigated the regional variation of migrants, a couple

5 <http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/>

6 www.korpus-gos.net

migrating from Slovenske gorice and Kozjansko to Gorenjska, while Škofic-Guzej (1994) analysed the speech of high school students from Mengeš and Beltinci in Ljubljana. Other studies of the spoken language have focused on different specific research questions, such as discourse markers and self-corrections (Verdonik, 2007), and text types in spontaneous speech (Smolej, 2012).

There have been a number of questionnaire studies on different samples about the use of dialects and attitudes to them on the basis of informants' self-assessment, e.g., Smole (2004), Lundberg (2014) (partly with the methodological approaches of perceptual dialectology), and Zemljak Jontes and Pulko (2019). In a questionnaire survey, attitudes towards different sociolects were investigated (Skubic, 2005) and two experiments with the socio-psychological methodology of the matched-guise technique focused on language attitudes regarding spoken standard Slovene and a distinctive Cerklje local dialect (Bitenc, 2014a and 2014b).

In the European context, linguists from different language communities have explored different aspects of dialect change, in particular dialect convergence or divergence (Auer, Hinskens and Kerswill, 2005). The studies demonstrate the important structural impact of the addition of a standard variety to the language repertoire of large parts of the population as a consequence of modernization and mobility in European societies, the centralization of the state, the spread of mass media, and changes in the education system. However, the outcomes of dialect change in various sociolinguistic situations show significant diversity. They range from situations where traditional dialects are nearly extinct, to those where the influence of the standard variety on the dialect is strong but still permits vital regiolects and base dialects, and to situations where the standard variety plays a relatively minor role in the ongoing dialectal changes (Auer, 1998). European sociolinguists have also dealt with the various social reasons for variety shifts and changes in the course of social and communicative modernization, with a special emphasis on migration (Mattheier, 2000). Within a project that transcends European frames, researchers have focused on the connection between language and space in the investigation of linguistic variation (Auer and Schmidt, 2010).

Especially relevant are sociolinguistic studies in environments that are close to the Slovene sociolinguistic situation in terms of dialect diversity or the structure of language varieties (Germany, the Czech Republic, Norway, Denmark). Notable among these are the investigation of the linguistic behaviour of inhabitants of Erftstadt-Erp, a small town near Cologne (Besch, 1981 and 1983), the analysis of changes in German regiolects and (regional) dialects (Schmidt and Herrgen, 2011), the examination of linguistic accommodation among Moravian university students in Prague (Wilson, 2010), the qualitative exploration of linguistic variation among Norwegians who have migrated to Oslo from rural areas (Mæhlum, 1986), and an investigation of language change in real time among mobile and non-mobile informants from three Danish towns (Monka, 2013).⁷ The insights of these studies have significantly influenced the conceptualization of the research in different ways. They employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse and explain the informants' linguistic behaviour, using variationist analysis and a range of various phonological and morphological variables. Most of them focused on mobile informants, where the potential to observe intermediate linguistic phenomena is bigger, and used an interview-based research design, involving different interlocutors with different language varieties. Schmidt and Herrgen (2011) paid special attention to the dialect-standard continuum and potentially more stable intermediate varieties, while Besch (1981 and 1983) characterized different types of speakers' profiles and speech strategies in interactions with various interlocutors.

4 Methodology

The research is a pilot investigation, focusing on in-depth case studies of five informants: three females (Ula, Ita, and Eva) and two males (Jan and Tim).⁸ Among the participants, three were adults (Ita, Eva,

7 A detailed description and critical evaluation of the methodological approaches for these and other studies can be found in Bitenc (2016b, pp. 123–155 for the Slovene language community and pp. 83–96 for other language communities).

8 To maintain the informants' anonymity, their names are changed in the context of the research and the article.

and Tim), while two were high school students (Ula and Jan). This article specifically focuses on two younger informants to provide a comprehensive illustration of the research process and to highlight the intricate relationship between their life stories and speech profiles.

4.1 Variationist study

4.1.1 *Speech recordings and domains*

With the aim of observing authentic language use and diminishing observer's paradox, the technique of informants' full-day audio self-recording was used in the present study to provide the material for the variationist analysis. For the duration of one entire day, the informants wore a voice recorder (Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-210S) in a small bag on their chest. The research corpus is based on a text selection from all of the collected material according to different criteria: especially the interlocutors and the topic of the conversation, but also the time, place and formality of the situation. The individual informants' particularities, as well as the potential for comparing functionally similar speech situations, were taken into account when defining the domains.

The life circumstances and everyday dynamics of the two high school students included in the study were so different that it was impossible to define the same domains for both of them. Ula and Jan both have the domains of local friends and teachers (in public). In addition, Ula has the domains of a roommate and other peers from elsewhere, whereas for Jan, on the other hand, there are the domains of peers at both regular school and at music school. Jan also had some conversations with two teachers during breaks (the teachers' parts of these were kept private) and there was a recording of communal prayer (*Our Father* and *Glory be to the Father*) at church.⁹

9 For the adults, the majority of the speech recordings belong to four main domains: local friends, children, and work colleagues, the latter being divided into the domains of casual topics (holidays, children, housing issues, etc.) and expert topics (professional work).

4.1.2 *Transcriptions and phonological variables*

The recordings were transcribed orthographically, using the 25 letters of the Slovene alphabet and phonetic symbols for specific dialect features (variables).¹⁰

The central part of the investigation is an analysis of five phonological variables (three vowel variables and two consonant variables), chosen on the basis of previous observation (the author is a dialect speaker and used to be a commuter herself) and dialect research in the area (Kenda-Jež, 1999, 2002):

- (1) Variable (ɔ): unstressed central /ɔ/ ↔ local dialect /a/ (the result of “akanje”)¹¹

s[a] sɛ u 'bistu 'ti: [a]tp[ɔ]'wi:dal 'di:lɛzu dɛ jɛ kmɛ'tija [a]s'ta:la ɛ'nɔtna
 ‘in fact they gave up their share so that the farm remained unified’

- (2) Variable (o): central /o:/ ↔ local dialect /u:/, /uo/

a j 't[o:] zɛ prɛ'wɛf? : 't[u:] 'zɛj dɛ'lujɛ
 ‘is this too much already?’ : ‘this is now working’

- (3) Variable (e:): central /e:/ ↔ local dialect /i:/, /ie/

u'r[i:]dnu ɔ'ylɛda : 'ɥr[e:]dnɔ ɔ'glɛda
 ‘worth seeing’ : ‘worth seeing’

- (4) Variable (g): central /g/, [k] ↔ local dialect /ɣ/, [x]

'lɔpɔɔɔ pa na 'muorf 'jet pa'[ɣ]liɛdat : 'ti si 'rɛ:ku dɛ bi 'fɔɔ pɔ'[g]le:dat 'lɔpɔwe
 ‘you can’t go and see villains’ : ‘you said you would go and see villains’

- (5) Variable (v): central /v/ (before vocals) ↔ local dialect /w/

'tɛ zu'nanjɛ s[w]ɛtɔ'[v]a:ɥtse sɔ 'rɛkɫ dɛ nɛ 'bɔjɛ 'li:tas 'nɛf upɔ'ra:blɛl
 ‘they said they wouldn’t use these outside advisers at all this year’

In addition, attention is paid to certain morphological variables and lexicon. Due to the limited material (the relatively small number of tokens), the results are not subject to statistical analysis. Testing

10 A narrow phonetic transcription was used for the first two, adult female informants. The simplification of transcription conventions enabled a larger database while still preserving an adequate level of transcription detail (cf. Tagliamonte, 2006, p. 54).

11 The development of Protoslovene unstressed and short stressed *o > a.

the reliability of the obtained results with additional data analysis did not reveal any significant changes in distribution patterns.¹²

4.2 Sociolinguistic interviews

Qualitative data were gathered in sociolinguistic interviews (approximately three hours of recordings for Ula and Jan), conducted by the researcher, a dialect speaker herself, with the individual informants. The interviews took place soon after the self-recording. The main topics and open-ended questions were prepared in advance, but the interviewer conducted the interview relatively freely, allowing the interviewees to elaborate and reflect upon issues especially relevant to them, and to influence the course of the conversation. The atmosphere during the interviews was generally relaxed and pleasant, although it did vary to some extent depending on the location (a café with Ula and a school hall with Jan), the timing, and the relationship between the informant and the researcher as an ex-member of the local community (Ula is an acquaintance of the interviewer, whereas she met Jan due to the research). The rich discourse with many personal stories both from the interviewees and the interviewer allowed for in-depth analyses of conversational contributions with reflections and emotions that could have remained unnoticed in a more constrained context.

All of the relevant parts of the interviews were transcribed. In relation to the transcriptions for the variationist study, conventions were further simplified, but the transcriptions still enable observation of variables in the interviews. The selections were sorted according to different topics, and thematic conversational analysis was carried out.¹³

After collecting basic data (informant's family background, personal history, education, social network, personal interests and characteristics), special attention was paid to the informants' perception of their own speech behaviour, their language attitudes, their experience with language use and the connection between language and identity.

12 It is planned to use the results as a basis for a more extensive research project investigating spoken language in a larger geographical area, with adequate exploration techniques (distributional analysis and cross-tabulation).

13 All of the transcriptions as well as the excerpts according to different topics are available on the CD that forms a supplement to Bitenc (2016a).

5 Results and discussion

5.1 Speech patterns

A comparison of informants shows that they differ even in the varieties they use in the local environment, which can be explained by the fact that their parents originate from – and they themselves have resided in – different towns in the Idrija region. Jan grew up in Idrija, acquired the local Idrija dialect in his childhood and retained it after moving to another town in the vicinity (Godovič), which can be attributed to the special status of the Idrija local dialect as a variety of the regional educational, cultural and administrative centre. Ula grew up in Kanomlja with the Kanomlja local dialect. Probably due to her father's Idrija origins and contacts with other people from the area, Ula soon acquired the characteristics of the Idrija local dialect, which were also prevalent in her speech at the time of the recording. For the variationist study, the total length of Ula's recordings is 17 hr 59 min 42 sec, while the total length of Jan's recordings is 11 hr 56 min 22 sec. For Ula, 16 excerpts were selected for analysis with a length of 30 min 33 sec (individual excerpts last from 6 sec to 4 min 36 sec, whereas for Jan, 13 excerpts with a total length of 48 min 52 sec were selected (individual excerpts last from 13 sec to 12 min 48 sec). Ula mostly discussed school issues and plans for seaside holidays with her peers. She also answered her teacher's questions in an oral examination at a history lesson. As a promising musician, Jan mostly conversed about music and concerts with his peers as well as his teachers. At an English lesson he took an active part in a discussion about current issues regarding this school subject.

The proportions of dialect variants for different domains (Table 1) show that Ula uses two distinctively separate codes that she mostly refers to as *idrijščina*¹⁴ (Idrija local dialect) and *ljubljanščina* (Ljubljana urban dialect); her graph (Figure 1, top left) is also distinctively divided in two. Although she claims that she speaks the Idrija local dialect with her roommates, the proportion of dialect variants is lower in this variety than in the variety she uses with local friends

14 The expressions taken and translated from informants' narratives are written in italics.

(87% in comparison with 96%). In her *ljubljanščina* (colloquial speech of Ljubljana) or *pravilna slovenščina* (correct Slovene), a certain share of dialect variants remains (17% with peers from elsewhere, including her boyfriend, and 9% with teachers).

Table 1: Different domains and the distribution of variables for Ula and Jan

Variable	Local friends		Roommate (Ula) / Peers at school (Jan)		Peers from elsewhere (Ula) / Peers at music school (Jan)		Teachers private		Teachers public		Prayer	
	Ula	Jan	Ula	Jan	Ula	Jan	/	Jan	Ula	Jan	/	Jan
(o)	89/15	82/8	23/8	19/9	3/65	14/9	/	5/12	0/16	7/27	/	0/6
	86	91	74	68	4	61	/	29	0	21	/	0
(e:)	119/1	129/5	23/1	43/11	21/56	20/12	/	7/9	1/6	15/13	/	0/5
	99	96	86	80	27	63	/	44	14	54	/	0
(o:)	61/2	81/1	15/0	29/2	14/35	17/0	/	11/2	0/3	11/9	/	0/2
	97	99	100	94	29	100	/	85	0	55	/	0
(g)	77/1	63/2	9/1	28/1	3/70	13/4	/	9/9	0/7	13/9	/	2/1
	99	97	90	97	4	76	/	50	0	59	/	67
(v)	123/0	124/0	26/1	47/0	15/74	37/3	/	12/1	4/10	16/5	/	1/10
	100	100	96	100	17	93	/	92	29	76	/	9
Average	96	96	87	88	17	79	/	60	9	52	/	15

Note. The first row for each variable: number of dialect/standard variants, the second row: percentages of dialect variants.

Examining the number and average value of dialect variants in different domains for Jan (Table 1), a gradual decrease can be observed from 96% with local friends, through 88% and 79% with peers at school and music school, to 60% and 52% with teachers private and public, and finally 15% in the case of prayer. Jan has a diverse language repertoire with more intermediate speech varieties with different proportions of dialect variants for individual variables, but his speech remains substantially dialectally coloured even in the most formal conversations with his teachers. He is aware of the variability of his speech and accurately states that he is *sometimes really half way* between the dialect and the standard, but would *hardly ever totally switch*. In the comparative graph (Figure 1, bottom left),

Jan's domains of teachers public and private are combined, whereas the domain of prayer is omitted.

Even a cursory glance at the shares of dialect variants reveals a surprisingly accurate match in Ula's and Jan's conversations with local friends (96% for both) and in the column with those peers from elsewhere to whom the informants feel closest (Ula's roommate 87% and Jan's school friends 88%). However, in the others columns – with the share for Ula's peers from elsewhere and Jan's peers at music school, as well as for teachers – the differences between Ula and Jan are considerable and clearly reveal the fact that they use very different language strategies with the majority of speakers of other varieties. Jan's speech remains rather dialectally coloured and his local origin and identity are recognizable in all domains. Even in his communication with peers at music school and with teachers, the proportion of dialect variants is 79% and 60% or 52 %, respectively. Ula, on the other hand, changes her speech to such an extent that only rare dialect traces remain and her speech is, as she herself reports, distinguished as dialect only by the most linguistically sensitive listeners. In her communication with peers from elsewhere and with teachers the share of dialect variants is 17% and 9%, respectively.

In Ljubljana, both Ula and Jan use two different varieties with peers from elsewhere, but the criteria according to which they categorize them are different. For Ula, the criterion is the time when she met certain people: with a roommate from the Gorenjska region, she uses markedly dialectally coloured speech, which she attributes to the fact that they became acquainted just after she came to Ljubljana, when she was not yet used to code-switching.¹⁵ Other peers

15 The concepts of code-switching and code-mixing (and borrowing) are dealt with from different points of view and defined in different ways by different authors; there is no commonality of practice and it seems difficult to distinguish clearly between the terms. They mostly refer to language choice between two or more languages, but also embrace variation within the same language (different language varieties, dialects, styles or registers). Some scholars have reserved code-switching for cases where the two codes maintain their monolingual characteristics and code-mixing for those with some convergence between the two (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, pp. 10–13; Fasold, 1987, pp. 180–183). In the context of this research, we use the terms in congruence with the German sociolinguistic project Erfstadt/Erp (e.g., Besch, 1983; Niebaum and Macha, 2014, p. 198). Code-switching refers to the linguistic and communicative behaviour where varieties (dialect and standard) maintain their relative coherence, whereas in the case of code-mixing, different shares of dialect and standard variants of investigated variables are combined.

from elsewhere include all of the peers not from Idrija whom Ula got to know later on during her school years in Ljubljana, when her speech profile was already different and her *ljubljanščina* was already the natural choice for communication with people from other regions. For Jan, the criterion is the closeness and time spent with his colleagues: his speech is more dialectally coloured with peers at regular school, with whom he spends more time and has a closer relationship, than with peers from music school, whom he knows less personally.

The results of the variationist part of the study show that different types of speakers exist and that we can often speak about continuum-like transitions between the dialect and the standard. The informants use different linguistic strategies: the distribution of dialect variants in different domains shows that Ula uses two distinctive codes with local friends and speakers in Ljubljana, whereas Jan retains a relatively high percentage of dialect variants in most domains and approaches the standard more significantly only when talking to teachers. Using terminology from German sociolinguistics (Erfstadt/Erp Projekt; e.g., Besch, 1983; Niebaum and Macha, 2014, p. 198), we can label the informants as a code-switcher (Ula) and a code-mixer (Jan), although Jan approaches the profile of a dialect speaker with a high percentage of dialect variants in their communication with different collocutors in Ljubljana (Figure 1).¹⁶

16 The adult male informant, Tim, stands as a clear example of a dialect speaker, as evidenced by the high percentage of dialect variants observed in all domains. On the other hand, the two adult female informants, Ita and Eva, can be classified as code mixers. Eva employs the dialect when interacting with local friends, while displaying a gradual yet significant shift towards the standard in the remaining three domains: conversing with children and engaging with work colleagues on both casual and expert topics. Ita's profile aligns more closely with Jan's, with a more pronounced shift towards the standard observed primarily in Ljubljana during interactions with work colleagues on expert subjects.

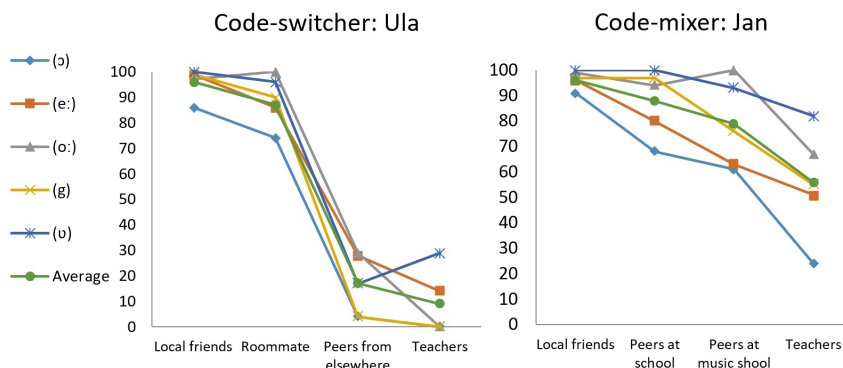


Figure 1: Speakers' profiles and distribution of variables according to different domains for the younger informants.

Code-mixers' intermediate forms, in particular, enable the informants to express a kind of double or ambivalent geographical, social and linguistic identity, i.e., social identification with more codes and social groups simultaneously, which can be paralleled with the consideration of all language activity as expressions of “acts of identity” (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Code-mixers' hybrid repertoire with gradual transitions or relative accommodation can also be interpreted in terms of “strategies of neutrality”. In uncertain situations, speakers tend to use a linguistic variety that is neutral to attributes that they perceive as salient in the situation, attempting to use favourable aspects of potentially salient attributes of each variety to their advantage (Scotton, 1976, p. 940; cf. Mæhlum, 2000, pp. 104–105). The informants' language situation can be described as uncertain to some extent, and their preferred strategies can be interpreted as neutral.

Due to the small number of informants, it is not possible to determine the relationship between social factors and variability. However, it can be observed that the greater proportion of dialect variants with the male informants is in line with the so-called “sociolinguistic gender pattern” (cf. Fasold, 1996, p. 92), which refers to males speakers' tendency to use forms that are considered wrong or stigmatized more frequently than female speakers (cf. also Tagliamonte, 2012, pp. 32–33). The difference between younger informants, Ula and Jan, is considerable in Ljubljana – with Ula's peers from elsewhere and Jan's

peers at music school, as well as for teachers – Jan’s speech remains rather dialectally coloured, whereas Ula keeps only rare dialect traces in her speech (see Section 6.1 for detailed proportion of dialect variants in different domains).

In addition, there is an obvious use of slang in the speech of both high school students, which is typical for the period of adolescence and serves young people as a marker of ingroup membership and a deviation from the norms of their elders (Chambers, 2003, pp. 186–189). Both Ula and Jan use common slang expressions, some of which derive from English. Examples include *'ful* (slang for totally) and *'tip* (a guy). In addition, Ula very often says *'sori* (sorry), *də 'best* (the best) and *'fɔ:ra* (a joke), as well as using jargon from the school environment, such as *k'la:s* (slang for ‘class’), *pr'foksa* (teacher), *za'liwat* (cut classes), *'mata* (maths), *z'yodla* (history) and *'bajla* (biology). Jan uses *'kul* (cool), *'zakon* (great) and *'badžet* (budget), as well as using expert and jargon expressions in conversations about music, such as *'ja:ki ko'ma:t* (nice song) and *šp'rudlat* (play badly).

Considering the concept of the linguistic market and the connection between language use and education or profession (Sankoff and Laberge, 1978; cf. Ash, 2008, pp. 413–414), the relevance of Ula’s role of “technician of language” in their professional engagement can be pointed out. Her assistant work at expert meetings presented a stimulus for the use of the standard variety. She claims that *at her expert work or at conferences with that high society the dialect wouldn't be acceptable, they would look at you strangely – it's not appropriate, it doesn't fit*, which demonstrates that competence in the standard is associated with social success (cf. Mæhlum, 2010).

5.1.1 *The envelope of variation*

Different variables show different tendencies and the analysis demonstrates that vowel variables change to a greater extent than consonant variables. (ɔ) is changed first and has the lowest percentage of dialect variants for all informants and in most domains,¹⁷ so it may be

17 A common share of dialect variants for all informants was 47% for the variable (ɔ), 68% for (e), 73% for (g), 77% for (o:) and 80% for (v).

possible to speak about a dialect change in progress for this variable. However, it seems to be below the informants' level of consciousness, as it is never mentioned in the interviews. A voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ of variable (g), on the other hand, proves to be a salient feature, a stereotype (cf. Labov, 1972, pp. 314–317). It was most difficult to distinguish between the standard and the dialect variant for the variable (v), especially with noise on the recordings and a fast speech tempo. For the variable (ɔ), there were also cases with intermediate sounds that were difficult to define as either /a/, /o/ or perhaps /ə/. Intermediate or interdialectal phenomena that are part of neither the dialect nor the standard can be interpreted as a result of numerous strategies of code-mixing and code-switching.¹⁸ It seems important to point out that, according to Auer and Hinskens (2005, p. 356):

the driving force behind change in the individual, and also in the community, is not imitation of the language of one's interlocutor but, rather, an attempt to assimilate one's language to the possibly stereotyped characteristics of a group one wants to be part of, or resemble.

In order to properly define the envelope of variation, certain items that behave differently from other members of their class and show no variation were excluded from the analysis (cf. Labov, 2004, p. 7; Tagliamonte, 2012, p. 13), which holds true mostly for vowel variables. An additional questionnaire was completed by the informants and two language experts and dialect speakers in order to define these items.¹⁹ The informants agreed that certain loanwords that pertain to

18 Ula and Jan (also Tim) use a few typical reflexes of the Idrija local dialect, among them the diphthong *uo* as the reflex of *o*, which acquired stress following the regressive accent shift from word-final short syllables onto pretonic short vowels, and short acute *o* in word-final syllables. This sound is, however, interchanged with long and narrow *o*-s and interdialectal short *o*-s, most often in frequently used lexemes, such as *'puo(l)'*/*'po:(l)'*/*'po(l)* (then, later) or *'duol'*/*'dɔ:l'*/*'dol* (down). Participant observation and some experts' comments show that the decrease in the use of the diphthongs in Idrija local speech occurs not only in the speech of geographically mobile speakers, but also with non-mobile inhabitants, especially among the younger generations, so we might speak of dialect change in progress.

19 For each lexeme, where there was a dilemma as to whether to regard an individual case as a variant of a variable, the two experts as well as the informant whose utterance was in question stated whether or not they would use the word with the dialect variant, as well. For 40 of the 112 questionable examples, all three agreed that they would not, whereas for the other 72 words their opinions differed. In the latter cases, the answer that occurred twice was taken into account.

expert language do not have dialect variants (e.g., *patɔlɔ'gija* 'pathology' and *ɔd'vɛtniske stɔ'ritvɛ* 'lawyer services') as well as certain proper names (e.g., *'se:ʃa*, the name of the coastal town Seča, or *po'lo:na*, the female personal name Polona). Interesting examples also include lexical items that can be used with the dialect variant when used as common nouns (e.g., *'di:lu* (dialect) vs. *'de:lo* (standard) for 'work'), but would only be used with the standard variant when used as proper nouns (*'de:lo* as the name of the Slovene newspaper *Delo*). Similarly, words such as *'ne:ɣa* 'care' or *'do:m* 'home' have common dialect variants *'ni:ɣa* and *'du:m*, whereas they are never used with the dialect variant when used in a set phrase or in an idiom: *'ne:ɣa o'trɔ:ka* 'child care' as a school subject or *di'ja:ʃki 'do:m* 'boarding school'.

5.2 Participant reflection

5.2.1 *Language attitudes and experiences with language use*

All of the informants assign great significance to the Cerčno dialect for their personal and local identity, but demonstrate different language attitudes towards their own dialects. The two younger informants express mainly positive feelings about it (Jan says it is *great* and *something special*, Ula finds it *really interesting* and *nice*, as it is *so unusual*). In contrast, the adult females, in particular, comment relatively negatively about it (they describe it as *hilly* and *clumsy, not beautiful, hard* and *coarse*). This may be interpreted as an indication of a generational shift towards greater acceptance of and increasing tolerance towards nonstandard regional varieties, as well as the growing orientation towards local and regional identity, also referred to as the "dialect renaissance" (Auer et al., 2005, p. 36).

When people from elsewhere comment on the informants' dialect or dialectally coloured speech, they typically say it is *interesting* (Ula) and *beautiful* (Ula); it *varies the atmosphere* (Jan). They often *smile* (Ula) or *make fun of it in a nice way*; Jan points out that he has *never found out whether they like it or whether it bothers them*. Jan says that he *somehow feels if the dialect doesn't suit somebody* and thinks it *might be intrusive for some people if...[he] spoke entirely in the dialect all*

the time. Ula and Eva have experienced that people in Ljubljana urged dialect speakers from Idrija region *to learn how to speak.*

The informants report a prevailingly negative attitude towards the inhabitants of Ljubljana and their speech, which is connected with non-linguistic characteristics in the sense of commodity and superiority. Ula says that the inhabitants of Ljubljana *treat their dialect as holy*, whereas Jan claims that some *simper* and *madly like to use English expressions*, whereas others *speak very beautifully* and their speech *isn't disturbing.*

The informants report that collocutors often do not understand what they say, and that their reaction depends on the individual. For Ula, this was a reason for accommodation: *It really got on my nerves when I was explaining something and then somebody asked: "What did you actually say?"* Jan sometimes asks his interlocutors: *Do you understand? Is it ok?*

Members of the local community often perceive an individual's language accommodation towards a standard variety as a withdrawal from the local community. Ula comments: *I hear it all the time: that I have totally abandoned my dialect and how could I; it is more as a joke, that I have betrayed my homeland!* Jan, who accommodates less, is critical of speakers who accommodate more when talking to speakers of other varieties. As he explains: *I find it a bit stupid that some people want to hide it when they come to Ljubljana. It's really harmful to some people that they start to converse here a bit and then start speaking that way at home, too.* It seems the problem is that in the view of their compatriots speakers with greater accommodation show *some non-affiliation* (Jan), that they deny their origin and local identity and accept another identity instead. The data show that the understanding of the complexity of the linguistic choices depends on personal experience. Jan's family happens *to grimace* when he speaks to his teacher from Ljubljana on the phone; moreover, his father sometimes says: *Don't you just start talking like this sometime!* Jan then defends himself: *Look, don't worry, I've never started speaking like this at home.* In the interview, he comments that *they aren't in this kind of situation every day and it is difficult for them to imagine it.*

5.2.2 Language awareness and metalanguage

The informants mainly claim that their accommodation is automatic. Ula says that she has *never questioned her speech*, and that it is her *automatic reflex* to use *correct Slovene* with people she does not know. Jan claims that in his opinion accommodation works *plainly spontaneously*. He accurately explains these processes: *It is a question of every person making out some kind of system according to which she/he then acts; it is not self-conscious. Then a person sees, now I am in this situation, I will speak like this. It comes with experience. I've been doing this for four years now and a system evolves, a mould according to which a person acts.*

The informants show different levels of language awareness and differ significantly in the accuracy of the description of their own speech behaviour. The terms they use for different language varieties speak for themselves. Jan, for example, uses the term 'literary (colloquial) speech' to refer to one of his varieties, whereas Ula speaks about 'correct Slovene' or *ljubljanščina* (Ljubljana urban dialect) or about speaking *ljubljangsko* 'in the Ljubljana way'. Other informants use this expression rarely and only when referring to other people's speech or when expressing attitudes towards this variety. Ula demonstrates some uncertainty regarding these labels: *Also at the faculty I mainly use the correct language or maybe some Ljubljana slang, or I don't know what to call it.* When the adult informants refer to the standard, Ita only uses the expression 'colloquial Slovene', Eva the terms 'beautiful/correct/colloquial Slovene', whereas Tim speaks about 'Slovene' (as opposed to the dialect). The terms show that the informants perceive and evaluate the varieties differently, and highlight that the concepts of a 'beautiful' and 'correct' language still persist within the language community. This reflects the influence of the prescriptive tradition and the standard language ideology in Slovene linguistics, and calls for a better understanding of language variation, appreciating linguistic diversity instead of imposing rigid norms and recognizing the inherent beauty in all forms of language expression.

6 Conclusion

The article presents interlanguage variability in a case study of five commuters from the Idrija region with a distinctive Cerčno dialect to the capital, Ljubljana. The technique of full-day self-recording provided a great deal of authentic material and enabled the selection of various authentic speech situations with the informants' actual acquaintances. Although it is still necessary to identify and account for contextual effects, the observer's paradox is diminished to a minimum: according to the informants, they quickly forgot about the recorder and paid minimal attention to it. However, there are often a lot of useless segments on the recordings, and recording conversations more selectively may therefore be more convenient in future studies.

The variationist analysis of five phonological variables demonstrates that vowel variables change to a greater extent, and that among the variables (ɔ) has the lowest percentage of dialect variants, whereas a voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ of variable (g) proves to be a salient feature, a stereotype. According to different language strategies in contacts with speakers of other varieties, the five subjects represent different speakers' profiles: a code-switcher with two rather distinctive varieties in communication with local friends in Idrija versus speakers in Ljubljana, three code-mixers with different intermediate varieties in different domains, and a dialect speaker with a high percentage of dialect variants in all domains. Intermediate or interdialectal sounds and varieties can be interpreted as a result of numerous strategies of code-mixing and code-switching. They enable the informants to express a kind of double or ambivalent geographical, social and linguistic identity, i.e., social identification with more codes and social groups simultaneously.

The sociopsychological topics dealt with in the in-depth sociolinguistic interviews – such as language attitudes, informants' perception of their own speech behaviour, their experience with language use and the connection between language and identity – additionally illuminate the informants' language variability and the reasons for their different linguistic strategies, as well as testifying to the complexity of language choice and interpersonal communication.

The cases of two high school students, examined in more detail in the central part of the article, show that individual life experiences and everyday dynamics influence language use to a significant extent. With her two distinctly different codes, Ula was defined as a code-switcher, whereas Jan, with his diverse language repertoire with more intermediate varieties, was labelled a code-mixer. Both use common slang expressions and, in contrast to the female adult speakers, express positive attitudes towards their own dialect, which might be interpreted as an indication of a generational shift towards increasing tolerance of nonstandard regional varieties and a growing orientation towards local identity, also referred to as the 'dialect renaissance'. In the future a longitudinal study will be possible, which could reveal potential changes in Ula and Jan's language strategies on their path to adulthood. As for the next research step within the framework of a postdoctoral project, I have decided to focus on adults, since language behaviour and language attitudes (at least in the form of informants' self-evaluation and self-reflection as reported in the interviews) can vary quite significantly through different stages up to adulthood, when language choices are mostly stabilized. I will investigate the language repertoire of speakers from two other dialect regions, Lower Carniola (Dolenjska) and Styria (Štajerska) – specifically, from the town of Ribnica and the city of Maribor – who commute to work in Ljubljana on a daily basis. The findings will enable a comparison of language variation of speakers whose dialects have been involved in the standardization of Slovene in different ways and to a different extent, and of related sociolinguistic issues. Furthermore, they will illuminate the different prestige and status dialects, as well as related stereotypes and prejudices, which can be important for understanding complex interdialect relationships in the Slovene language territory, with its high level of geographical language diversity. The longitudinal plan is to exploit language use and relevant sociolinguistic questions on larger samples, on different dialect areas, and in both urban and rural speech settings, in order to gather relevant data about language variation and potentially more stable interv varieties or regional standards, as well as regional variants of the spoken standard.

The integration of the different research traditions as well as linguistic and sociopsychological methodological approaches that we have pursued seems to provide a solid basis for further investigations, especially in the Slovene context, where there are few comparable studies to refer to, particularly in the present time of new and very complex technological and social issues. The results can contribute to a more objective description of the sociolinguistic picture of the Slovene language community, and to understanding the nature of the language variability of Slovene and its social significance. A more open view of language variability in linguistics, and consequently in the education system, can help to diminish the influence of the reigning standard language ideology and aid speakers of Slovene to achieve more relaxed and efficient communication in different life situations. Since sociolinguistic conditions differ hugely between and within European countries, and since variationist studies in Slavic environments are scarce, the research can help to transcend the prevailing Anglo-American bias in sociolinguistics (Wodak idr. 2011: 1), which is of major importance to sociolinguistic theory itself.

Acknowledgments

The author's postdoctoral research project, titled *Sociolinguistic Variation of Spoken Slovene in the Case of Mobile Speakers: Resources, Methods and Analysis* (project number Z6-9371), is funded by the Slovenian Research Agency, and the author would like to express gratitude for their support. The author is also thankful to her PhD mentors, Dr. Marko Stabej and Dr. Karmen Kenda-Jež, for their valuable assistance in designing the research and providing helpful comments throughout its process. Additionally, the author extends appreciation to Dr. Albina Nečak-Lük and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback on the text. The author would like to acknowledge Dr. Brit Maehlum, Dr. Sali A. Tagliamonte, Dr. Johanna Vaattovaara, and Dr. Peter Trudgill for their valuable advice on methodological issues. Lastly, heartfelt thanks are extended to the informants, without whom the research would not have been possible.

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VARIANTNOST GOVORJENE SLOVENŠČINE PRI GEOGRAFSKO MOBILNIH OSEBAH

Članek predstavlja prvo variantnostno študijo na slovenskem gradivu in se osredotoča na avtentično jezikovno rabo govorcev z Idrijskega, ki se šolajo oz. delajo v Ljubljani. Gre za dnevno ali tedensko geografsko mobilne govorce, ki v prvotnem okolju vsaj v neformalnih govornih položajih pretežno govorijo lastno narečje, v osrednjeslovenskem prostoru pa v komunikaciji z govorniki drugih varietet uporabljajo različne strategije govornega obnašanja. V ospredju je predstavitev mlajših informantov, dijakinje in dijaka.

Metodološko se kvantitativna analiza petih fonoloških variabel povezuje s kvalitativnimi podatki iz sociolingvističnih intervjujev. Raziskovalni korpus za variantnostno študijo sestavlja izbor izsekov iz celotnega nabora posnetkov glede na kraj, sogovorce in temo pogovora, analiza se osredotoča na tri samoglasniške in dve soglasniški variabli. Kvalitativni podatki iz sociolingvističnih intervjujev vključujejo osebno zgodovino posameznikov, njihovo samooceno govornega obnašanja, izkušnje z jezikovno rabo, ozaveščenost jezikovnega (ne)prilagajanja, jezikovna stališča ter razumevanje povezave med jezikom in identiteto.

Informanti uporabljajo različne strategije govornega obnašanja, tako da lahko opredelimo različne tipe oz. profile govorcev: kodne preklopljevalce, narečne govorce in kodne mešalce. Na kontinuumu med narečjem in standardnim jezikom se kaže več vmesnih jezikovnih varietet, ki se ne ujemajo z v slovenskem jezikoslovju pogosto pretirano shematizirano dihotomijo med

knjižnim jezikom in tradicionalnimi narečji. Pri posameznih analiziranih variablah je mogoče opaziti različne tendence. Potrjuje se relevantnost različnih družbenih in socialnopsiholoških dejavnikov pri pojasnjevanju posameznikovega govornega obnašanja, kompleksnosti jezikovnih izbir in medosebne komunikacije.

Ključne besede: variantnost govorjene slovenščine, cerkljansko narečje, profili govorcev, samosnemanje, sociolingvistični intervjuji, jezikovna stališča