

The Kinship Terminology in Ruthenian, Slovak, and Serbian*

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present the kinship terminology in the Ruthenian language and compare it with the kinship terminology in Slovak and Serbian. Some 270 years ago, groups of Ruthenians began migrating south from their homeland in the Carpathian mountains mostly from Zemplén and Šaroš counties (in present-day Slovakia) to the Bačka region (in present-day Serbia). Since the Ruthenian language has been in contact both with the Slovak and Serbian languages for a long time, we expect to find certain influence of these languages on the Ruthenian kinship terminology.

Keywords: kinship terminology, Ruthenian, Slovak, Serbian, languages in contact

1. Introduction

Before the ancestors of the Vojvodina Ruthenians (or Rusyns), in total number of around 2.000, were allowed to settle under the contract with the state authorities to Kerestur (1751) and Kucura (1763), villages in the central Bačka region, in the middle of the 18th century, they had lived within the borders of the Hungarian Kingdom (ХОРЬАК 2006: 25). As the Ruthenian population increased in time, from the end of the 19th century, many of them started to migrate from Ruski Krstur and Kucura to Kula, Vrbas, Novi Sad, and Đurđevo in Bačka as well as Šid and Sremska Mitrovica in Srem in pursuit of jobs and better life. The contacts of the Ruthenians and the Serbs increased in time as well (ФЕЈСА 2010: 7).

The research of kinship relations in the Ruthenian language is almost unique since the terminology of kinship relations was dealt with only in the *Serbian–Ruthenian Dictionary* (РАМАЧ 1995–1997) and the *Ruthenian–Serbian Dictionary* (РАМАЧ 2010). The terms of Ruthenian kinship relations from these two major lexicographical works were included in the questionnaire and offered to schoolchildren of the 8th grade in Ruski Krstur and Kucura in 2014. The schoolchildren were asked if they heard certain terms and if they used them. They were also asked to define the meanings of the terms (ФЕЈСА 2014: 95). The research showed that the Serbian system of kinship relations is more complex and that it exerts great influence on the Ruthenian system of kinship relations.

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The aim of this paper is to compare the Ruthenian, Slovak, and Serbian terminology of kinship relations since the Ruthenians have lived with the Slovaks and the Serbs for a long time (cf. the terms for the Slovak language in LALIČOVÁ 1989, МАКИШОВА 2004, МАКИШОВА–ТЯРОВА 2015, and the terms for the Serbian language in VUKOVIĆ 1980, MARJANOVIĆ–SAVIĆ 1982, БЈЕЛЕТИЋ 1994). The list of terms for the Serbian language includes 65 items (SAVIĆ–RADOVIĆ 2014).

2. The terms for family members older than parents

Ruthenian terms	Slovak terms	Serbian terms
	prastarí rodičia	
pradido	prastarý otec	praded, pradedá
prababa	prastará matka, prastará mať	prababa
	starí rodičia, <i>fam.</i> starkí	
ďido, <i>fam.</i> stari ocec	starý otec, <i>fam.</i> starý oco, starý ocko, <i>hovor.</i> starký	ded
baba, <i>fam.</i> stara mac	stará mať, stará matka, <i>hovor.</i> stará mama, starká	baba

As this table shows, the terms for the father's / mother's father and the father's / mother's mother are similar in Ruthenian and Serbian (Ruth. *ďido* and *baba*, Serb. *deda* and *baba*). In Slovak, the terms are formed by adding the adjectives *starý* and *stara* 'old' before *otec* and *mať*. Parallel constructions were used in Ruthenian in the past (*stari ocec* and *stara mac*). These constructions originate from the time when the Ruthenians and Slovaks lived together in the Carpathian area before the settlement in Bačka in the middle of the 18th century.

As it can be seen in the table above, the Slovak language has several other terms for a grandfather and a grandmother but they are familiar (*starý oco*, *starý ocko*; *stará mama*) and spoken (*starký*, *starká*) ones. In the Ruthenian language, the diminutives *ďidko* and *ďidočok*, or *babka* and *babočka* are frequently used, although their use is primarily related to children's speech. Their equivalents in the Serbian language are *deka*, *dedica*, and sometimes *čiča*, or *baka* and *bakica*.

In the Ruthenian, Slovak, and Serbian languages, the names for the grandparents' parents are formed by adding the prefix *pra-*. Hence, the persons more remote than a grandparent are *pradido* and *prababa* in Ruthenian, *pradedá* and *prababa* in Serbian, and *prastarí otec* and *prastara matka*, together with *pradedo* and *prababka* (MAKIŠOVA–TYROVA 2015: 36), in Slovak. The terms for a great-grandfather and a great-grandmother are formed by adding another prefix *pra-* (for example, *prapradido* and *praprababa* in Ruthenian). It is interesting that the Serbian speakers, mainly through oral tradition, have kept for centuries the archaic names for the ancestors from the 4th to the 16th degree of kinship: (4) *čukundeda* and *čukunbaba*; (5) *navrdeda* and *navrbaba*; (6) *kurđel* and *kurđela*; (7) *askurđel* and *askur-*

đela; (8) *kurđun* and *kurđuna*; (9) *kurlebal* and *kurlebala*; (10) *sukurdol* and *sukurdola*; (11) *sudepač* and *sudepača*; (12) *parđupan* and *parđupana*; (13) *ožmíkura* and *ožmíkurka*; (14) *kurajber* and *kurajbera*; (15) *sajkatava* and *sajkatavka*; (16) *beli orao* and *bela orlica*. This is not the case in Ruthenian and Slovak. The Ruthenians rarely use the terms *čukundido* and *čukunbaba*, whereas *askurđel* is used only in a couple of swearing expressions by older generations (for example, *askurđela/bogara ci išče*; see ПАМАЧ 1995: 17) without a clear idea which degree of kinship the speakers refer to.

3. The terms for family relations in the narrow sense

Ruthenian terms	Slovak terms	Serbian terms
rodiči, roditelje	rodičia	roditelji
otec, <i>beš.</i> tato, apo, <i>dem.</i> tatko	otec, <i>fam.</i> otecko, oco, ocko, ocino, ocinko, ocík	otac
mac, <i>beš.</i> mama, <i>dem.</i> mamka, <i>zast.</i> matka	matka, mať, mater, <i>hovor.</i> mama, <i>fam.</i> mamka, mamička, mamulienka	majka, mati, mater
dzeci	deti	deca
sin, <i>dem.</i> sinočok	syn, <i>fam.</i> synček, synáček	sin
dzivka, <i>fam.</i> dzivče, <i>zast.</i> cera	dcéra, <i>fam.</i> dcérka, dcéruška, dcérenka	kći
braca i šestri	súrodenci	braća i sestre
brat, <i>fam.</i> bracik	brat, <i>fam.</i> braček, bratko	brat
šestra, <i>fam.</i> šestrička	sestra, <i>fam.</i> sestrička	sestra
unučata unuče	vnúčatá vnúčence	unučad unuče
unuk	vnuk, <i>fam.</i> vnúček	unuk
unuka	vnučka	unuka
njevlasni otec	nevlastný otec, otčím	očuh
njevlastna mac, mačoha	nevlastná mať, nevlastná matka, macocha	mačeha
njevlasni sin	nevlastný syn	posinak, pastorak
njevlasna dzivka	nevlastná dcéra	počerka, pastorka

As this table shows, the term for a male child to parents, i.e. a son (Ruth. *sin*, Slov. *syn*, Serb. *sin*) and the term for a male child born by the same parents, i.e. a brother (Ruth. *brat*, Slov. *brat*, Serb. *brat*) are the same in the three investigated languages. The terms for the son's/daughter's son, i.e. a grandson (Ruth. *unuk*, Slov. *vnuk*, Serb. *unuk*) and the terms for a female child born by the same parents, i.e. a sister (Ruth. *šestra*, Slov. *sestra*, Serb. *sestra*) are very similar.

In addition to the dominant term for a male child to parents, there are many familiar and diminutive forms such as *sinočok* and *sinok*, and the archaism *fijam*,

which is of Hungarian origin (ANDRIĆ 2014: 13, ПАМАЧ 2010: 797). The noun *hlapec* ‘boy’ and its diminutive *hlapčik* can also be used for this purpose (Ruth. *Voni maju dvoh hlapcoh* ‘They have two sons’). A diminutive form takes over the function of the term *sin* in the Serbian language as well. Hence, in addition to the noun *sin* in this function, we can find the term *dečak* (Serb. *Oni imaju dva dečaka* ‘They have two sons’) and the nouns *sinak*, *mališan*, and *klinac*.

There are a number of variants for a female child to parents as well. A female descendant in Serbian is called *kći*, *kćer*, *kćerka* or *ćerka* but in the same function we can find the noun *devojčica* (Serb. *Ima jednu devojčicu* ‘He has a daughter’). In Ruthenian, the situation is more complicated for several reasons. Firstly, because the term *cera* from Ruthenian folk songs, which corresponds to Serbian term *ćerka* and Slovakian term *dcera* (МАКИШОВА 2004: 159), joined the lexicon of archaisms. The term *cera* is probably shortened from Slovak *dcera*. It was recorded in the late 19th century in Volodimir Hnačuk’s ethnographic collections (ПАМАЧ 1983: 191). Secondly, the most frequent term *dzivka* alternates with the term *dzivče* (Ruth. *Ma jedno dzivče* ‘She has a daughter’). Thirdly, in the Ruthenian language, the lexeme *dzivka* means not only a daughter (Serb. *ćerka*) but also a girl (Serb. *cura*, *devojka*) and a loved person, i.e. a girlfriend (Serb. *dragana*, *voljena osoba*). Thus, in Ruthenian, three correspondent relationships can be established: 1. *dzivka* : daughter; 2. *dzivka* : girl; 3. *dzivka* : girlfriend. There are several terms for parents used instead of the common ones in all three languages. For example, most members of the Ruthenian national community, in addition to the term *ocec*, use the alternative, familiar term *tato*, and the diminutives *tatko* and *tatočko*. As far as the mother is concerned, the term *mac* is often replaced by the familiar term *mama*, and the diminutives *mamka* and *mamočka*. Young people use the terms *čale* and *keva* (ФЕЈСА 2012: 180–181), which represents direct Serbian influence. There also exist two old terms for parents: *apo* and *matka* (ПАМАЧ 2010: 38, 379). The first term is borrowed from Hungarian (ANDRIĆ 2014: 11) and the second one is shared with Slovak. The Slovak language has more familiar terms for parents than the other two languages: *otecko*, *oco*, *ocko*, *ocino*, *ocinko*, *ocík*; *mamka*, *mamička*, *mamulienka*. Hypocoristics for a male parent in Serbian are mostly *tatica*, *taja*, *tajo*, and *tale*, and for a female parent – *mamica*, *majčica*, and *nana*.

The same happens with the terms for children, that is for a brother and a sister. The terms *brat* and *sestra* are used by each member of the Ruthenian national community. Young people, however, use a number of other lexemes. For example, instead of the term *brat*, they mainly use the diminutive *bracik*, and also *bratija*, *brašo*, *burazer*, or *tebra*, the shortened forms of *bracik* and *burazer*, i.e. *braco* and *buraz*, as well as innovative terms such as *brader*, *bro*, and *bruda* (the first two are Anglicisms, and the third is probably a Germanism). Instead of the term *sestra*, young people use the diminutives *šestrička*, *seka*, *seja*, and the Anglicism *sister* (ФЕЈСА 2012: 183). The Serbian influence is evident.

It has already been mentioned that the terms for naming the children of our children in Ruthenian, Slovak, and Serbian are similar, and there is also a term in these three languages which does not include gender determination and may be

used for a grandson and a granddaughter at the same time: Ruth. *unuče*, *unučatko*; Serb. *unuče*; Slov. *vnučence*.

In the investigated languages, the next, third degree of kinship is formed by adding the prefix *pra-*. In Ruthenian and Serbian, the term for a boy is *praunuk* and it is *praunuka* for a girl. In Slovak, it is *pravnuke* for a boy and *pravnuka* for a girl (MAKIŠOVA–TYROVA 2015: 35). For marking the fourth degree of kinship, the prefix *pra-* is doubled (for example, *prapraunuk*); in Ruthenian and Serbian, the prefix *čukun-* is used as well (for example, *čukununuk*).

Generally speaking, the greatest similarity is observed in the terms referring to the family in the narrow sense. A previous study on the terms that mark family relations showed that the most frequent lexemes in the Ruthenian language are *ocec*, *mac*, *ďido*, *sin*, *dzivka*, *brother*, and *sister* (ФЕЙСА 2014: 96). This can be stated for Serbian and Slovak as well.

4. The terms for family relations in a broader sense

Ruthenian terms	Slovak terms	Serbian terms
bači, <i>fam.</i> striko	strýk, strýc, strýko, <i>fam.</i> strýčko	stric
andja	stryná, <i>fam.</i> strynka	strina
bači, <i>fam.</i> ujko	ujec, ujček, <i>fam.</i> ujo, ujko	ujak
andja, <i>fam.</i> teta	ujčiná, <i>fam.</i> ujčinka, teta, <i>fam.</i> tetka, tetuška	ujna
švekor	svokor	svekar
švekra	svokra	svekrva
ženov ocec	test'	tast, punac
ženova mac	testiná	tašta, punica
mužov brat	<i>zast.</i> dever, švagor	dever
mužova šestra	<i>zast.</i> zolvica, švagríná	zaova
šovgor	švagor	šurak, šogor
nina	švagríná	svastika
muž ocovej/macerovej šestri	svák, sváko	tetak
bratnjak	synovec, <i>fam.</i> synovček	bratanac, bratić, sinovac, nećak
šestrinjica	neter	bratanica, sinovica, nećaka
bratnjak	synovec	sestrić, nećak
šestrinjica	neter	sestričina, nećaka
bratnjak	bratanec, bratranec	ujaković, ujčević
bratnjak	bratanec, bratranec	bratanac, stričević
bratnjak	bratanec, bratranec	tetić, tetkić
šestrinjica	sesternica	sestra od ujaka

šestrinjica	sesternica	bratučeda, stričična
šestrinjica	sesternica	tetična, tetična
žec	zať, <i>fam.</i> zaťko	zet
njevesta	nevesta	snaha
svat	svat	prijatelj
svaha	svatka	prija
[kresni] kum	krstný otec, <i>hovor.</i> krstný	krsni kum
[kresna] kuma	krstná matka, krstná mať, <i>hovor.</i> krstná mama, krstná	kuma
kumče	krstný syn	kumče
kumče	krstná dcéra	kumče

As far as the terms for family relations in a broader sense are concerned, the Serbian terminology is the most complex one and the Ruthenian terminology is the simplest one. For example, the Ruthenian term *bači* covers the terms *stric*, *ujak*, and *tečo* in Serbian, and *stryk* and *ujec* in Slovak. In the Serbian language, we must take into account whether the family relationship is established through the female or the male line, not only in relations that occurred by blood but also in relations that occurred by matrimonial bond. Therefore, when we use the terminology of kinship relations, we must have in mind if a person is the father's or the mother's brother, respectively, *stric* or *ujak*. The term for the wife of his father's brother is *strina*, and the term for the wife of his mother's brother is *ujna*. *Strina* and *ujna* in Serbian, and *stryná* and *ujčiná* in Slovak are covered by the same term *andá* in Ruthenian. In the *Ruthenian–Serbian dictionary*, there are eight meanings in the entry *andá*: 1. the brother's wife (Serb. *snaha*, *snaja*, *deverka*); 2. the wife's brother's wife (Serb. *šurakinja*, *šogorica*); 3. the father's brother's wife (*strina*); 4. the mother's brother's wife (*ujna*); 5. the husband's brother's wife (*jetrva*); 6. the husband's married sister (*zaova*); 7. the wife's married sister (*svastika*); 8. an older woman (*tetka*, *majka*) (РАМАЧ 2010: 36). This example clearly illustrates how simplified the terminology for family relations in Ruthenian is.

The simplification of the Ruthenian kinship relations system in comparison to the Serbian one is particularly noticeable at the level at which the sister's and brother's children are named; the brother's son is *bratanac*, *bratić*, *sinovac*, *nećak*, the brother's daughter is *bratanica*, *sinovica*, *nećaka*, the sister's son is *sestrić*, *nećak* and the sister's daughter is *sestričina*, *nećaka*. The sister's and brother's male children in the Ruthenian language are called *bratnjaci*, and the sister's and brother's female children are called *šestrinjici* / *šestranjici*. The Slovak terminology for these relations is somewhere in the middle between Serbian and Ruthenian but closer to Serbian since there exist *sinovec*, *neter*, *bratanec*, and *sesternica*. The terms *bratnjak* and *šestrinjica* / *šestranjica* take a stable place in the kinship terminology system of the Ruthenian language, a study of the language of the youth, however, pointed to the use of the lexemes *brat* and *šestra* in the same meaning which is influenced by Serbian (ФЕЙСА 2014: 104).

The case of the term *teta* is interesting because we cannot talk only about the immediate impact of Serbian but also about an indirect, stimulative impact due to the fact that the lexeme *teta*, meaning the mother's brother's wife, also exists in the Carpathian area. It exists in the Slovak language too (МАКИШОВА 2004: 158). The terms *bači* and *teta* appear in the language of the youth as synonyms for the traditional Ruthenian terms *šovgor* (the wife's brother) and *nina* (the wife's sister). The term *šovgor* has its equivalents in Slovak (*švagor*) and Serbian (*šogor*) but the term *nina* exists only in Ruthenian.

The terms *dever*, *šure*, *zaova*, and *šurnjaja* are not a part of the Ruthenian traditional terminology system for labelling kinship relations but they may be heard by the Ruthenian language speakers, especially by those from the mixed, Serbian–Ruthenian marriages (ФЕЙСА 2014: 105). Considering that all Ruthenians are bilingual, Serbian influence will increase and we can assume that the use of these terms will increase in time as well.

Generally speaking, as far as the Ruthenian system of kinship terminology is concerned, at the beginning of the 21st century, the speakers of the Ruthenian language are faced with a choice between two sets of terms: on the one hand, the traditional set, in which the lexemes *bači* and *anđa* are the result of coexistence with the Hungarians in the Hungarian Kingdom or in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and, on the other hand, a set of recent origin, whose gradual entry started with the immigration of Ruthenians to Bačka in the middle of the 18th century, after living with the Serbian population. Some elements of the Serbian system of kinship terminology, especially among young people, began to modify the traditional set. This especially applies to terms *stric*, *strina*, *ujak*, *ujna*, and *teta*.

Whereas the term *bači* is very frequent in Ruthenian, covering several kinship terms in Serbian and Slovak, it is important to add that the term exists in Slovak but it is used to address only the unknown or less known people who are not in any family relationship.

Among the terms for family relations in a broader sense which are created through marital connections, the greatest correspondence is observed in the terms for a son-in-law: Ruth. *žec*, Slov. *zat'*, Serb. *zet*; for the husband's / wife's father: Ruth. *švekor*, Slov. *svokor*, Serb. *svekar*; for the husband's / wife's mother: Ruth. *švekra*, Slov. *svokra*, Serb. *svekrva*; for a brother-in-law (the wife's brother): Ruth. *šovgor*, Slov. *švagor*, Serb. *šogor* (besides *šurak*). Slovak and Ruthenian share the terms *svat* and *njevesta*, while Ruthenian and Serbian share the terms *kum* and *kumče*.

5. Conclusion

In the paper, the terms of Ruthenian kinship relations have been compared with the Serbian and the Slovak ones. The Serbian kinship relations system is the most complex one. For instance, the Ruthenian term *bači* covers the meanings of Serbian *ujak*, *stric*, and *tečo*, and the Ruthenian term *anđa* covers the meanings of *ujna*, *strina*, and *tetka*. The situation is similar in Slovak since the term *bači* covers

the meanings of *stry'k* and *ujec*. The simplification of the Ruthenian kinship relations system in relation to the Serbian kinship relations system is particularly evident at the level at which relations for the sister's and brother's children are expressed; Ruthenian *bratnjak*, respectively, *šestrinjica*/*šestranjica*, occur as equivalent terms to Serbian *bratanac*, *bratić*, *sinovac*, *nećak*, and *sestrić*, respectively, *bratanica*, *sinovica*, *nećaka*, and *sestričina*.

The Ruthenian lexeme *dzivka* stands out because it covers three meanings, i.e. three lexemes of the Serbian and Slovak languages: a daughter, a girl and a girlfriend (for example, Serb. 1. *ćerka*/*kći*; 2. *devojčica*/*cura*; 3. *devojka*/*dragana*).

The highest degree of similarity between the kinship terms in Ruthenian, Slovak, and Serbian is noticed in the terms conveying names of male and female persons of family relations in the narrow sense. For example, Ruth. *ocec* : Serb. *otac* : Slov. *otec*; Ruth. *mac* : Serb. *majka* : Slov. *matka*; Ruth. *brat* : Serb. *brat* : Slov. *brat*; Ruth. *šestra* : Serb. *sestra* : Slov. *sestra*; Ruth. *sin* : Serb. *sin* : Slov. *syn*; Ruth. *unuk* : Serb. *unuk* : Slov. *vnuč*; Ruth. *unuka* : Serb. *unuka* : Slov. *vnučka*.

Most of the terms of Ruthenian kinship relations are of Slavic origin but there are several Hungarisms (*bači*, *anđa*, *apo*, *fijam*) and a Germanism (*šovgor*). The obsolete lexeme *cera* is etymologically connected to the Slovak lexeme *dcera*. Since Ruthenian and Serbian coexist in Serbia/Vojvodina, and Serbian presents the majority language, it is most likely that in the future the influence of the Serbian language concerning the terminology of kinship relations in the Ruthenian language will increase. In the language of young Ruthenians, *ujo*, *teta*, *dever*, *šure*, and other words can already be heard.

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