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Linguistic analysis of YU-Rock: Riblja Čorba

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Questions and goals

1. Why Riblja čorba?

- Band info, album issues, greatest hits, Bora Đorđević as a poet

2. Which linguostylistic features make Riblja čorba so popular yet unique?

- phonetics and phonology
- morphology
- lexicology and semantics

3. Application potential of those features in learning serbian as a foreign language

- frequent usage of certain grammar and lexical structures
- intentional language errors
- rich functional framework

4. Which language type(s) are we dealing with? (quantitative approach)

- substandard (slang, jargon, dialect)
- oral colloquial language
- standard language
- poetry language

Sergej Esenin of YU-Rock ?

- One of the most popular Serbian rock bands in EX-Yu, based on „strong“ texts of lead member Borisav Đorđević a.k.a. Bora Čorba
- Life confession of a poet, soldier, deceived lover, rebel, misanthrope, patriot, cynic, social and politics critic, religious skeptic
- strong, creative and deep connection between attitudes, ideas and topics on one side, and language means used to express them, on the other
- 30 years publishing continuum-texts of Riblja čorba reflect not only authors personal issues (loneliness, depression, irony, bitterness, despise, exile, rage...) but also turbulences in EX-Yu, Serbia, Balkan (war, poverty, gastarbeiter profile, crime, music and culture breakdown, false politics, alcohol...) and therefore the development and usage of language means (terminology, slang, semantic fields, appropriate grammar structures...) that follow such topics

1979	Kost u grlu
1981	Pokvarena mašta i prljave strasti
1981	Mrtva priroda
1982	Buvlja pijaca
1984	Večeras vas zabavljaju muzičari koji piju
1985	Istina
1986	Osmi nervni slom
1987	Ujed za dušu
1988	Priča o ljubavi obično ugnjavi
1990	Koza nostra
1992	Labudova pesma
1993	Zbogom, Srbijo
1996	Ostalo je ćutanje
1999	Nojeva arka
2001	Pišanje uz vetar(Hi-Fi Centar)
2003	Ovde (Hi-Fi Centar)
2005/2006	Trilogija(M-Factory)
2009	Minut sa njom

BORISAV "BORA ČORBA" ĐORĐEVIĆ



Published poetry:

Đorđević, Bora (1986): *Ravnodušan prema plaču*. Beograd: Književne Novine.

Đorđević, Bora (1987): *Hej Sloveni. Pesme*. Beograd: Glas.

and other.



“... da je Bora Đorđević **prvi srpski ulični pesnik** novije generacije ...

Prema svemu izloženom, mišljenja sam da ovu zbirku pesama svakako treba štampati, uz napomenu **da takav izdavački poduhvat neće ostati nezabeležen u istoriji naše književnosti.**”

(Aleksandar Popović in: Foreword to *Ravnodušan prema ...*)

Phonetics and phonology

1. standard 4 accent dialect with ekavian pronunciation

2. strongest substandard dialect features

- vocal reduction in perfect participle
(išao = iš'o, rekao = rek'o, imao = im'o, čitao = čit'o, uzeo = uz'o)
- reduction of unstable voice /h/
(odmah = odma', hleb = 'leb, hoće = 'oće, hladovina = 'ladovina, halo = 'alo)

3. attitude and style markers, **expressive usage of phonetics-phonostyleme**

- author assigns to voices and words of serbian language phonetic values of american pronunciation, especially voice /r/

“Moj rodni grad je tamo dole
a tamo dole svi me vole

a ispred **vrata čekaju mama i tata**

ispred kuće ruke širi **Meri**

ja joj kažem 'ajd ne **seri**

ja idem da vidim zelenu travu doma mog...” (Zelena trava doma mog),



- **imitating jekavian pronunciation**

„... noge su mi smrdjele kano da sam tvor,
u nesvjest je pala pa je onda ležala,
a ja sam je zaskočio da ne bi bježala...” (Crna Gora, Bar)

- **false morphophonological alternations**

vojski → vojsci (Kaži, ko te ljubi)

knjigi → knjizi (Džigi Bau story)

Kazablanci → Kazablanki (Kazablanka)

Morphology

1. frequent usage of **vocative case/imperative forms** (vivid and direct communication)

“...Hej, **ćale**, **ugasi** televizor

hej, **ćale**, **zakasni** na rad

hej, **ćale**, **idi** negde s društvom

budi bar malo opet, opet **budi** mlad...”

(Hej, ćale)

“Hej, **živote skote**

hej, **živote idiote**...”

“**Prošlosti**, molim te, **oprosti**...”

“Zbogom, **Srbijo**, zbogom...”

“Ako te ima, **pomozi** mi, **Bože**...”

“**Pogledaj** dom svoj, **anđele**”

“... **gutaj** šta ti se servira

ne bavi se politikom

spavaj, radi, ćuti, jedi

i **ne veruj** više nikom

lezi, diži se, ustaj, sedi...”

(Kako je lepo biti glup)

“...**nemoj** da psuješ

nemoj da pljuješ po podu

obavezno **povuci** vodu

ne govori u stroju

popuni formulare, ako hoćeš pare...”

(Pravila)

2. attitude and style markers, **expressive usage of morphology-morphostyleme**

• substandard noun forms

*biciklo = bicikl, *ljudovi = ljudi, *lancom = lancem, *u izlozi = u izlozima (*Amsterdam*)

*dimovi = dim, *očeta = oči, *pićevi = piće (*Tezga*)

*u srcetu = u srcu, *čvrgove = čvrge (*Deca*)

• substandard present tense 3. pl.

*grizaju = grizu, *pušu = puše, *sedu = sede, *gledu = gledaju, *ćutu = ćute (*Amsterdam*)

*trunaju = trunu, *opijadu = opiju, *liču = liče (*Tezga*)

3. using **expressive tenses aorist and imperfect** (recent past) author evokes unfulfilled love, shattered dreams and memories

“Dečurliji našoj **smišljasmu** imena
voleh je sve više svaki Božji dan
ubedih se najzad, to je prava žena...”

(Dva dinara, družę)

“**Voleh** te suviše
takve ko ti me **ubiše...**”

(Noćas gubim meč)

- intertextuality

“...kažu da bilo je dobro u državi Danskoj
al' tikva **puče**, koliko juče
dođe do tuče, **propade** država Danska...”

(Nešto je trulo u državi Danskoj)

4. **diminutive noun forms with ironic value**

“Vi ste izašli na večeru
vaš **sinčić**, tek **detence**
novu kućnu pomoćnicu
štipka za **dupence**
a vaša **ćerkica** draga

naravno, konzumira mladiće...” *(Mangupi vam kvare decu)*

5. **usage of one derivation pattern in rhyme** (critique of politics)

“Snage **opozicije** jačaju svoje **pozicije**
pevaju **kompozicije** i krše **propozicije**.

Pa pišu **rezolucije** hteli bi **revolucije**

čuvajmo **institucije** vršimo **egzekucije...**” *(Snage opozicije)*

Lexicology and semantics

1. expressions and phrases

lije kao iz kabla	it rains heavily
mrzeti nekoga/nešto iz dna duše	hate someone very much
fali mu koja daska u glavi nisu mu sve ovce na broju	he is crazy
slomila se kola na meni	all responsibility and burden falls on my back
nisam ja od juče	I am not naive, stupid
popiti nešto s nogu	drink something fast
terati mak na konac tražiti dlaku u jajetu	to be petty and demanding
bežati glavom bez obzira	escape in panic without thinking
biti nekome trn u oku	to bother someone who is often envious of you
mrtvo slovo na papiru	Something unfulfilled, only a word, formality
kadija te tuži, kadija ti sudi	injustice when someone is judge and jury
doći bogu na istinu	to die
držati se nečega kao pijan plota	to be very attached to someone/something, to rely on
pas koji laje, ne ujeda	the one who talks to much isn't dangerous
prosto ko pasulj	very easy, peace of cake

sastavljati kraj sa krajem	to live in poverty, on the edge of existence
prodati rog za sveću	to cheat, deceive someone
prodavati maglu	to deceive, give false promises and hopes
biti manji od makovog zrna	to be humble and unnoticeable
teče med i mleko	well being and wealth
tapkati u mestu	no development and progress
ispravljati krive Drine	fight against injustice and other wrong things
hteti hleba preko pogače	always want more than you need
zabiti glavu u pesak	to deny, refuse to see what's happening around
daleko od očiju, daleko od srca	out of sight, out of mind

2. idiolect - expressions and phrases

imati manire lava i mozak vola	behave like a king on the outside and be arrogant and stupid on the inside
biti izlizan ko vojnički kazan	to be empty on the inside like soldiers pot
o nečemu lepom pričati slepom a istine pevati gluvom	all efforts were in vain
znam te, puško, dok si pištolj bila	i know you since you were little
pasti u sevdah ko šljiva u govno	to fall in love like plum in a pile of shit
bol podmukao kao kvarni zubi	painful memory reminding us constantly of its presence

3. street slang vocabulary

probisvet	hobo
skitnica	bum
šljam	scum
đankoza	junkie
mamlaz	jerk
baraba	punk
lupež	crook
ološ	lowlife
secikesa	cutpurse
bagra	mob
varalica	fraud
pijavica	leech
klinac	kid
riba cava	attractive girl

murija panduri	police
ćorka aps	prison
lova	money
brlja	bad rakia
krdža	bad cigarettes
splačina	swill
zabušant	slug
utoka	gun
šljemati ljuštiti cirkati	to drink
lemati mlatiti	to beat
šljakati	to work

A pilot study: Riblja Čorba: which diastratic variant of Serbian?

Is it a specific form of

Serbian “substandard” (slang, jargon, dialect)?
(oral) colloquial language?
some kind of “Standard-Sprache”?
“poetic” language?

Redundancy of different registers of language

1. unnecessary/unessential information in a message: in undisturbed communication some signs/lexemes etc. can be omitted
2. information theory: **probability/frequency of particular elements** (phonemes, morphemes, lexemes etc.) „The more likley a language sign, the less information it contains.

Hypothesis:

Oral colloquial language has a higher degree of redundancy than for instance fictional texts, poetry or nonfictional texts (scientific and technical texts).

Linguistic motivation:

- high frequency of discourse markers, like interjections, conjunctions, particles, modal particles, pronouns ... in other words synsemantic/function words
- high frequency of collocations
- high frequency of flowery phrases and clichés (greetings, manner of addresses, congratulation etc.)
- general back channel behaviour, with many repetitions
- ...

→ Riblja Čorba is a representative example of Serbian colloquial language !

Empirical analysis: Measurement of redundancy: “Repeat Rate” (RR)

starting point is:

frequency of word forms (Types, Tokens)
 compilation of a frequency dictionary, based on non-lemmatized word forms.

N	Word	Freq.	%
1	I	520	3,0166
2	DA	507	2,9412
3	JE	449	2,6047
4	SE	352	2,042
5	U	298	1,7287
6	SAM	261	1,5141
7	NE	214	1,2414
8	JA	194	1,1254
9	NA	186	1,079
10	TI	166	0,963
11	ME	141	0,818
12	MI	139	0,8064
13	O	129	0,7483
14	TE	128	0,7425
15	SU	126	0,7309
16	A	115	0,6671
17	ZA	107	0,6207
18	SI	99	0,5743
19	SVE	97	0,5627
20	OD	90	0,5221
21	SA	78	0,4525
22	KO	76	0,4409
23	KAD	73	0,4235
24	SAMO	70	0,4061
25	TO	69	0,4003
26	BIO	57	0,3307
27	JER	56	0,3249
28	NEMA	56	0,3249
29	MENE	53	0,3075
30	PA	52	0,3017

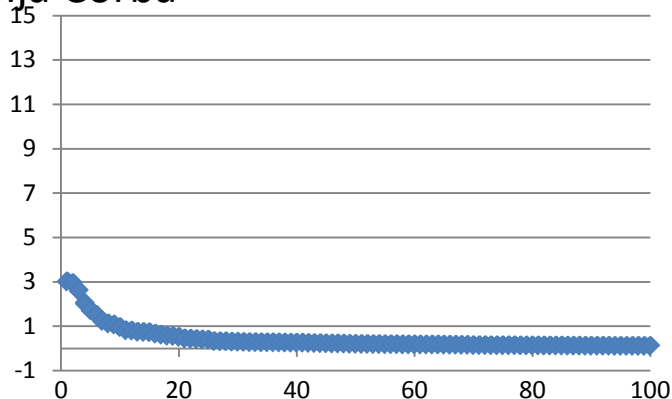
$$RR_{rel} = \frac{1}{N^2} \sum_{i=1}^V f_i^2$$

N = number of tokens

V = number of types

f_i = rel. frequency of tokens

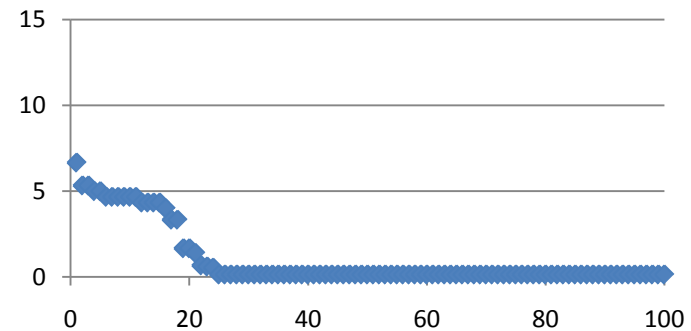
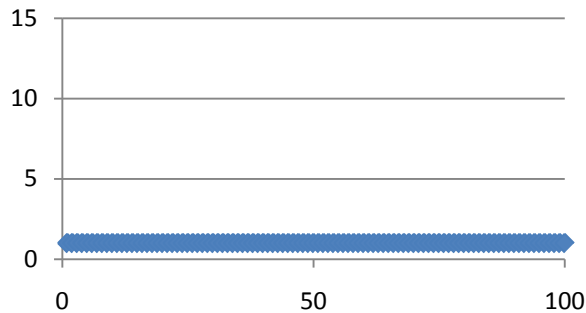
Riblja Čorba



$$RR_{rel} = 0,995098036$$

Linguistic interpretation of the Repeat-Rate (RR) ?

1. $RR_{rel} = 1$: all word forms occur with the same probability/frequency
2. $RR_{rel} = 0,96$: concentration of frequencies in the front area of the rank-frequency distribution
high frequency of f1 (most frequent word form)
high frequency of function words = high degree of “grammaticalization”

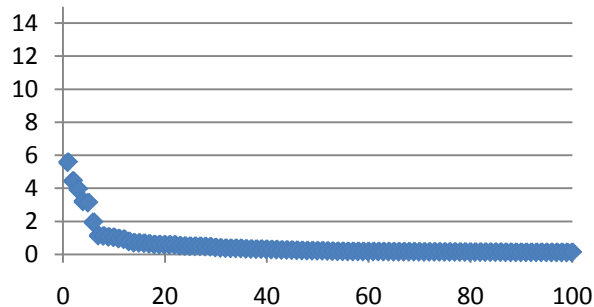


- Repeat Rate gives information about the symmetrical/asymmetrical exploitation/frequency of words forms
- the higher the RR, the higher the lexical richness of the text
- the lower the repeat rate, the higher the repetition of some very frequent word forms

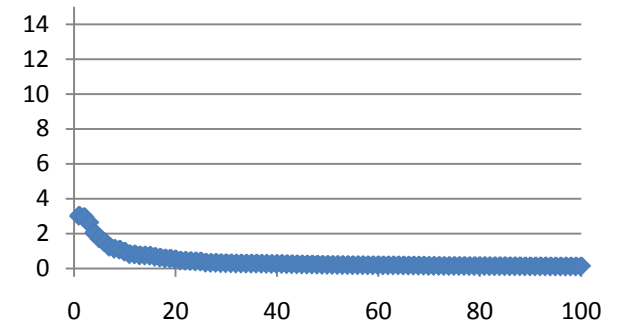
Repeat Rate in different registers of Serbian

text type	author	N	V	RRrel	f1
songs	Riblja Čorba	17238	5293	0,995	3
poems I	Bora	3842	1969	0,996	2,9
poems II	Bora	3428	1768	0,996	2,9
colloquial	Savić-Corpus	31575	6052	0,994	3,9
prose I	Boba Blagojević	24152	4835	0,99	5,6
prose II	Miloš Crnjanski	18821	5218	0,992	5,5
div. poems	Crnjanski, Dedinac, Maksimović	8429	3276	0,994	5,1
dialogue patient - doctor		3999	1034	0,991	6,3
science		16123	4950	0,993	5,4
journalism		16286	5437	0,994	3,9

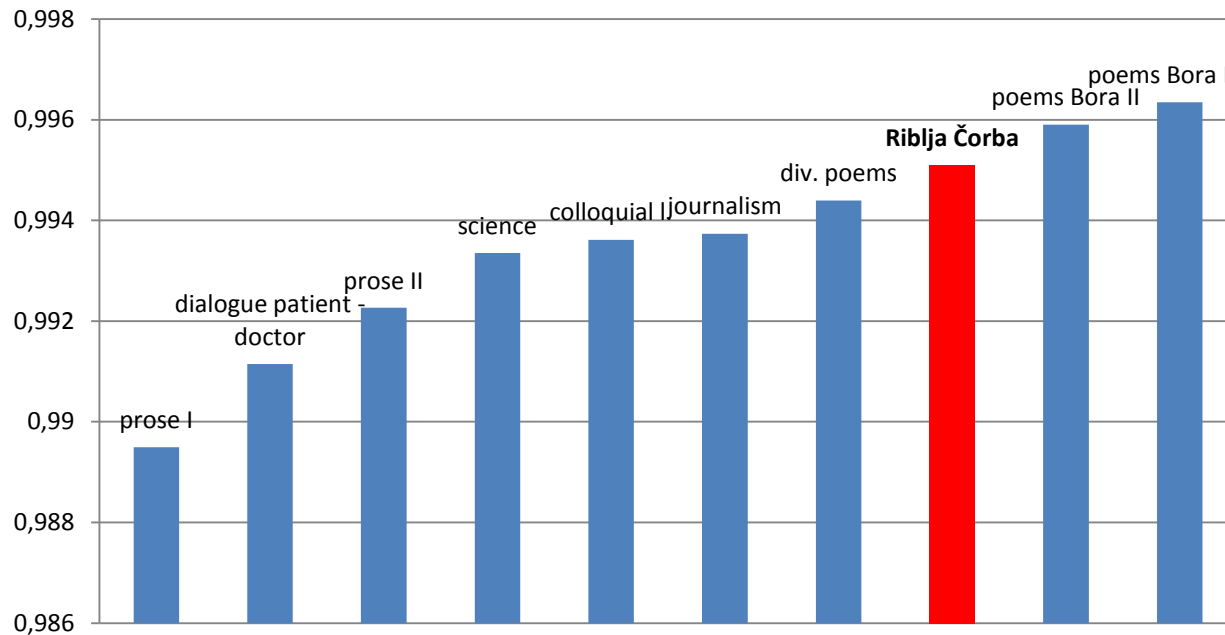
prose I



poems Bora I



Results: Repeat-Rate in Serbian corpora



Riblja Čorba songs

1. are near to „poems“ generally
2. differ significantly from poems and all other registers
3. higher distance to oral/colloquial language than to poetry
4. de-facto “poetic” language with features of colloquial language

Conclusion

- **amalgam** of different registers of Serbian (colloquial, slang, dialect, standard and poetical language)
- many intentional errors with high linguistic competence and creativity
- only for upper-intermediate and advanced students with appropriate knowledge, under the supervision of a lector and proper dictionary literature

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