WORD BORROWING IN SLOVENE DIALECTS IN THE
SEMANTIC FIELDS ‘HUMAN BODY’, ‘RELATIVES’ AND
‘FRIENDS’

Abstract: This paper examines the proportion between borrowed and non-borrowed
words in Slovene dialects. The vocabulary is presented through linguistic geography,
while lexical maps of Slovene dialect vocabulary from the semantic fields of 1) ‘human
body’, 2) ‘family’ and 3) ‘friends’ show the spatial distribution of lexemes in Slovene
dialects.

Keywords: Slovene language, Slovene dialects, lexis, loanwords, semantic field,
human body, relatives, friends.

1. Slovene language

Slovene (also known as Slovenian)2 is a South Slavic language spoken by
approximately 2 million people. The Slovene language (and its dialects) has been
developing for more than 1000 years at the crossroads of three language areas: Slavic,
Germanic and Romance. Today it is surrounded by five neighbouring languages:
Italian, Friulian, German, Hungarian and Croatian. Slovene is also spoken in some
border areas within its neighbouring countries (northern Italy, southern Austria
and south-western Hungary).

In terms of language variation, a great deal of interest has traditionally been
focused on the study of dialects (Ramovš 1924, 1935, Logar 1966, Rigler 1986,
etc.). The idea for what has become the main work of Slovene dialectology – the 
Slovene Linguistic Atlas [Slovenski lingvistični atlas – SLA] – was put forward by 
the Slovene linguist Fran Ramovš in 1934, but work on the Atlas only began in 
earnest after the Second World War at the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian 
Language in Ljubljana. Fran Ramovš was the first to classify Slovene dialects in 
modern terms. In 1931 he published the first scientific classification of Slovene 
dialects (Dialectological Map of the Slovene Language), followed, in 1935, by a 
diachronic description of Slovene dialects (Dialects).

Dialect differentiation in Slovenia is, for geographical and historical reasons, 
among the highest in the Indo-European world. Slovene dialects are divided into 
seven dialect groups, following the Karta slovenskih narečij or ‘Linguistic Map of 
Slovene Dialects’: 1. Carinthia (Koroška), 2. Littoral (Primorska), 3. Rovte, 4. Upper 
Carniola (Gorenjska), 5. Lower Carniola (Dolenjska), 6. Styria (Štajerska) and 7. 
Pannonian (Panonska). These dialect groups are further divided into 36 dialects and 
12 sub-dialects. The dialects and subdialects, and their respective dialect groups, 
are given below (Jakop 2008: 24):

| 1. Carinthia | 1a Zilja (Gailtal), 1b Rož (Rosental), 1c Obir (Hochobir), 1d Podjuna (Jauntal), 1e Mežica and 1f Northern Pohorje dialects |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. Littoral   | 2a Rezija (Resia), 2b Ter (Torre), 2c Soča, 2d Nadiža (Natisone), 2e Brda, 2f Karst (with Banjšice subdialect), 2g Istra (consisting of Rižana and Šavrini subdialects), 2h Notranjska and 2i Čičarija dialects |
| 3. Rovte      | 3a Tolmin (with Bača subdialect), 3b Cerkno, 3c Črni Vrh, 3d Horjul, 3e Poljanska Sora and 3f Škofja Loka dialects |

Fig. 1: Fran Ramovš (1890–1952)
Word Borrowing in Slovene Dialects in the Semantic Fields ‘Human Body’, ‘Relatives’ and ‘Friends’

| Region          | Dialects                                                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. Upper Carniola | 4a Gorenjska dialect, 4b Eastern Gorenjska subdialect and 4c Selška Sora dialect |
| 5. Lower Carniola | 5a Dolenjska dialect and 5b Eastern Dolenjska subdialect, 5c Kostel dialect (with Babno Polje subdialect), 5d Southern Bela Krajina and 5e Northern Bela Krajina dialects |
| 6. Styria        | 6a Posavje dialect (consisting of Zagorje-Trbovlje, Laško and Sevnica-Krško subdialects), 6b Upper Savinja dialect (with Solčava subdialect), 6c Central Savinja, 6d Central Štajerska, 6e Kozjansko-Bizeljsko and 6f Southern Pohorje dialects (with Kozjak subdialect) |
| 7. Pannonian     | 7a Slovenske Gorice, 7b Prlekija, 7c Haloze and 7d Prekmurje dialects |

NB The brackets contain the German names of those dialect areas located in Austria or Italian names of those dialect areas located in Italy. Although the English name has been adopted for the Dolenjska and Gorenjska dialect groups (Lower and Upper Carniola respectively) there are single dialects within these groups that bear these names. Therefore, where Dolenjska and Gorenjska appear, the reference is to the dialects and not the dialect groups.

Fig. 2 Map of Slovene dialects (Adapted by T. Jakop, 2008; © Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language, ZRC SAZU; Anton Melik Geographical Institute, ZRC SAZU, Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies, ZRC SAZU; sources of topographic data; © Survey and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia)
2. Methodology of linguistic interpretation

The vocabulary will be presented using linguistic geography methods, with lexical maps showing the spatial distribution of lexemes in Slovene dialects (see Figs. 3–4 and 6–8). The methodological principles of mapping and data commentary, as well as the types of language map used, follow the Slovene linguistic tradition. The methodology for the mapping of dialect data is rooted in the tradition formed while the Slavic Linguistic Atlas (OLA) was being compiled, applied to Slovene dialectology at the end of the 20th century and further developed for the Slovene Linguistic Atlas (SLA).

Interpretation of the material (as well as phonetic transcription) in the SLA is also based on the interpretation contained in the OLA, which examines the distinction between non-borrowed and borrowed lexemes. While the SLA material is written in phonetic transcription, highlighting the lexical characteristics requires a certain level of abstraction. For that reason, morphological analysis has been conducted to show lexical and word-formative features without overburdening them with all the different ways in which they are realised phonetically across the dialects. By simplifying in this way, one avoids having too many phonetic variants of a single lexeme. Inherited (Slovene) lexemes are phonetically abstracted (following the phonetic rules of each dialect, subdialect or even micro-dialect) and are followed by their proto-Slavic transposition and their word-formational predecessors. Borrowed lexemes are followed by their sources from foreign languages (e.g. Italian, Friulian, German, etc.), marked by a sign indicating the direction of borrowing (←).

Different cartographic methods have been developed in parallel with the SLA project – from the first drafts for label maps and hand-drawn linguistic-symbol maps made in the 1950s, to modern spatial visualisations of dialectal phenomena based on the use of computer cartography tools, automated map-making and the interactive presentation of linguistic material. The modern electronic blank map for the SLA is the map of the Slovene linguistic territory (including the Slovene language in neighbouring countries), with relief, rivers and national borders.

3. Slovene Linguistic Atlas (SLA)

This paper is based on the most extensive dialect material from the whole of the Slovene linguistic territory gathered for the Slovenski lingviščni atlas, collected across the entire Slovene-speaking territory by a large number of people (from

The author of this paper was involved in compiling the SLA.
linguists and schoolteachers to students of Slavic and Slovene studies) over a long time period (from the end of the Second World War to the present) and supplemented with data from the author’s own fieldwork (2010–2016). The SLA was established by Fran Ramovš in 1934. Ramovš also produced an outline of an atlas, a special questionnaire and a network of data-points (DPs) for the SLA in 1934–1945; since then, this has been used in field research (still ongoing). Proper preparation for the SLA started after the Second World War at the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language; in the second half of the 20th century, many papers, studies and books were written based on an analysis of the SLA dialect material.

The first two volumes of SLA were finally published in the 21st century,: SLA 1 (2011) with dialectal lexemes from the semantic field ‘man’ (questions denoting ‘human body, illness and family/relatives’) and SLA 2 (2016) with dialectal lexemes from the semantic field ‘farm’ (questions from rural material and cultural heritage, i.e. nouns and verbs that designate places and items in Slovene farmhouses and its parts, outbuildings and farm work). The current SLA network has been expanded to include 417 micro-dialects (‘research points’ or ‘data-points’ within the borders of Slovenia and as well as some within Slovene linguistic territory in Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia). The SLA questionnaire contains 870 numbered questions (lexical and grammatical – phonological and morphological questions). The first volumes of the SLA present lexica only.

4. Borrowed vs. non-borrowed words in the Slovene dialectal lexicon

The existence of borrowed words in Slovene dialects and colloquial Slovene varieties can typically been described as a result of 1) language contact with German, Italian and/or Friulian (and Hungarian in the north-eastern part of Slovene linguistic territory) and 2) administrative-political reasons (Slovene-speakers in this territory have lived in different countries and under different governments that have used different official languages, i.e. Latin, German, Italian, Hungarian, Serbian, etc.) – not only affecting dialects but also written Slovene. Most lexemes are of Slavic origin, while others have been borrowed from neighbouring languages at various

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4 See lexemes in chapter 5.2.
5 The letters ‘DP’ in front of the three-digit number indicate the data-point number in the SLA network, i.e. numbers from DP 001 to DP 417 (usually villages and smaller towns in rural areas).
6 Slovene linguistic territory is the territory in which Slovene is spoken. It therefore encompasses Slovenia as well as those areas in neighbouring countries in which Slovene-speaking minorities reside.
periods, mostly Germanic; and there are a fair number of Romance loanwords, in the west in particular, i.e. in contact with the Italian and Friulian languages. The lexemes of Hungarian origin are rarest, appearing in the extreme north-east of the country, in contact with the Hungarian language (Jakop 2017: 196).

4.1. German loan words

The German influence on the Slovene language started in the second half of the 8th century – after the political-administrative connection of Carantania and Carniola to the Northern Frankish or Bavarian State, and later, in the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century – also from the Standard German to Standard Slovene language, e.g. žlahta ‘family’ ← OHG slahta, MHG slabte ‘tribe, family, origin’ or šaci ‘one’s boyfriend (← Germ. Schatz, Schatzi ‘sweetheart’).

4.2. Romance loan words

Romanisms came into our western dialects from Friulian, colonial Venetian Italian, Standard Italian and the Istriot language. Loanwords from Standard Italian can be distinguished from loanwords from Venetian Italian and Friulian on the basis of Romance reflexes of the non-voiced voiceless consonants in the voiced environment: i.e. dial. Sln. amiko : amig ‘friend’: amiko ← Standard Italian amico : amig ← Friu.*ie (> ami), Ven. It. amigo ‘friend’. Some more examples of Romance borrowing: nono ‘grandad’ ← It. nonno ‘grandad’; nona ‘grandmother’ ← It. nonna ‘grandmother’; novic ‘boyfriend, the groom’ ← Friu. nuviz ‘the groom’; novica ‘girlfriend, the bride’ ← Friu. nuvice ‘the bride’.

4.3 Hungarian and Croatian loan words

Hungarian loanwords entered only a small (extreme north-eastern) part of Slovene linguistic territory; however, the Hungarian influence goes nearly as far as the German, beginning with the immigration of Hungarians into the Pannonian Basin at the end of the 9th century. Along the border with Croatia, one also finds Croatian loanwords; however, due to the close relatedness between the two South Slavic languages, these are more difficult to distinguish. Examples: conta ← Hung. csont ‘bone’ (in Pannonian dialect group); krov < *krova ‘roof’.

Tjaša Jakop
5. Lexemes from selected semantic fields

5.1. Lexemes from the semantic field ‘human body’

The material collected for the first volume of the SLA contains lexemes from the semantic field ‘human body’. The vocabulary for human body parts is usually quite uniform and contains mainly non-borrowed words of Slavic origin, but there are some more interesting examples. For ‘lip’, Standard Slovene *ustnica*, we find different dialect expressions, most of which are of Slavic origin, along with some Germanic loanwords (over 50%) and some Romance loanwords (only 2%): žnablj/žnablje and žnabljica (← MHG *snabel* ‘beak’), trobec (← OHG *trumba* ‘horn’), mulica (← Carinthian Germ. *mule* ‘pouty lips’ < MHG *mūle* ‘mouth, muzzle’); mužon (← Venetian *muṣon* ‘nozzle’); labra (← It. *labbra* ‘lips’), labrin/lavrin (← Friu. *lavri* ‘lip’, ‘cleft lip’ and/or It. *labbro* ‘lip’).

![Map for *ustnica* 'lip’ – (non)-borrowed expressions (Jakop 2015)](image)

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7 This section is using data from etymological dictionaries (Bezlaj 1976–2007, Skok 1971–1974, Snoj 2003) and some other language or dialect dictionaries (for example Boerio 1867, Pirona 2001, SSKJ 2001; Striedter-Temps 1963).
5.2. Lexemes from the semantic fields ‘relatives’ and ‘friends’

The material collected for the first volume of the SLA also contains lexemes from the semantic field ‘relatives’. One notices that the vocabulary for close relatives (such as starši ‘parents’, mati ‘mother’, brat ‘brother’ and sestra ‘sister’) is more uniform in comparison with lexemes denoting more distant relatives (e.g. bratranec or sestrična ‘male or female cousin’):

![Fig. 4 Map for bratranec ‘male cousin’](Jakop 2007)

An analysis of names denoting the children of uncles or aunts shows considerable dialect diversity, which is also the result of various word-formative development processes in Slovene dialects. The forms bratranec ‘male cousin’ and sestrična ‘female cousin’ are found throughout most of Slovene territory; the second most frequent terms are strnič and strnična/strnička, and the third is the borrowed lexeme kužin ‘male cousin’ ← Friu. cusin ‘male cousin’, Ven. It. Cusin (see Fig. 5 for frequency). The majority of other dialect lexemes for ‘male cousin’ and ‘female cousin’ are also of Slovene origin; they only differ in the word-formative suffixes used with the bases brat(r)- or sestr- (i.e., bratr-an, brat-ič, sestr-ič, sestr-ič-en; bratr-an-ka, bratr-an-čka, bratr-an-činja, sestr-ana, sestr-ič-ka). In terms of loanwords, the lexemes kužin, kužina or kusen, kusena and zurman, zurmana appear in the west (Littoral dialect group), borrowed from Italian or Friulian (the word-formative morphemes of these loan words are, however, Slovene).
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Fig. 5 Diagram for bratranec ‘male cousin’ showing the frequency of the most widespread lexemes (Jakop 2011: 234)

Fig. 6 Map for bratranec ‘male cousin’ – (non)-borrowed expressions (Jakop 2015)

From the author’s more detailed work (2007: 192): The distinction between bratran(ec) meaning ‘uncle’s son’ and sestrič(en) – meaning ‘aunt’s son’, that is, according to a blood relation after someone’s sister or brother (of one’s father or mother) – is recorded in the Zagorje-Trbovlje subdialect, Central Savinja, the
dialects of Central Štajerska and the Southern Pohorje dialects (Styrian dialect group). This differentiation began mixing with the differentiation between bratran(co) ‘paternal male cousin’ and sestrič(en) ‘maternal male cousin’ – that is, after one’s mother or father and not after a parent’s sister or brother. Thus, on the father’s side, cousins are called bratranci and bratranke while on the mother’s side they are called sestriči and sestrične (author’s data: in Velenje in the Savinja Valley and its surroundings). The distinction between sestrična and bratran(č)ka (female cousins) is typical of the Styrian dialect group (Upper Savinja, Central Savinja and Central Štajerska dialects).

Vocabulary for fant ‘boy’ shows a predominance of German and Romance loan words (approx. 95%). We find 42 different expressions for ‘boy’. The most frequent expression is the Romanism fant (← Friu. fant, Ven. It. fante ‘servant, messenger’), which appears at 202 data-points in the SLA. The second most frequent is the Germanism pob (← Bav. MHG puobe, MHG buobe ‘boy’) at 140 data-points; the variation peb (← Bav. Germ. Püeb ‘boy’) only appears at 22 data-points in the Styrian dialect group. The inherited expression dečko ‘boy’ is typical of the Pannonian dialect group (16 data-points), as is čeh ‘boy’ (probably from the ethnonym Czech) in the Prlekija dialect (12 data-points). The Romanism mulo (← It. mulo ‘(illegitimate) child’) only appears at 4 data-points in the Istria dialect.

Supplemented with data from the author’s own fieldwork (2010–2016).
Vocabulary for *dekle* ‘girl’ shows a predominance of Slavic words (approx. 60%). We find 45 different expressions for ‘girl’. The most frequent expression is the Germanism *punca* (← Germ. Punze ‘girl’), which appears at 140 data-points in the SLA. The second most frequent is the Slavic *dekle* (124 data-points). The other inherited expressions are *deklina* (36 data-points, Prlekija dialect), *dečla* (27 data-points, Carinthia dialect group) and *deklja* (16 data-points, Prekmurje dialect). Here we also find diminutives derived from that lexeme: *deklica*, *deklč*, *deklinče*, etc. In the Littoral dialect group, the Romanism *pupa* (← It. *pupa* ‘girl’) appears at 36 data-points (sometimes also in the diminutive forms *pupica* or *pupika*), as does the Germanism *čeča* (← Carinthian Germ. Tschätsche, also Zatsche, Zätsche ‘toy; small thing’) at 33 data-points (or the diminutive *čečica*).

The author’s own fieldwork (2010 onwards) contributed more lexemes for ‘boy’, e.g. *fantina*, *fantin*, *fante*, *deček*, *pobec*, *pamž*, *mojster* and *tipo* (← It. *tipo* ‘guy’) or for ‘girl’ (e.g. *debiče* < *děvica*, diminutive from *děva* ‘young woman’). This shows the remarkable diversity in Slovene dialects, as well as the need for further dialect material to be collected. The expressions *mulo* and *muła* (← It. *mulo* and *mula* ‘bastard child: boy/girl’) have the neutral meaning of ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ in the Littoral dialects, but a pejorative one in the central dialects. The diminutive *punčka* (for the Standard Slovene *deklja* ‘girl’) is used in central dialects for a small, younger...
girl and also for a toy doll (in dialects and in Standard Slovene), while in Styrian dialects one finds the lexeme puža (Lat. pusa ‘girl’), which denotes both: a little girl and a toy doll.  

In the Styrian Central Savinja dialect, the word pozre is also used for ’a girl between the ages of 13 and 14’. In the western part of this dialect, the author found the lexeme debiče meaning ‘young girl’ (derived from the word devica ‘virgin’). In contemporary Ljubljana slang, new lexemes are also borrowed from English (bejbi or bejba ← Eng. baby or babe) or Italian (e.g. pupa, which used to be used only in the Littoral dialect group in contact with Italian language). On the other (eastern) side, in contemporary Maribor slang, lexemes are borrowed from German, e.g. šaci for one’s boyfriend (← Germ. Schatz, Schatzi ‘sweetheart’).

6. Conclusion

This paper gives an overview of selected dialect words from the semantic fields ‘human body’, ‘family’ (blood relations) and ‘friends’, systematically collected over the last 70 years from the whole of Slovene linguistic territory for the Slovene Linguistic Atlas. The vocabulary for basic body parts is quite uniform and contains mainly non-borrowed words of Slavic origin, while some other lexemes show a greater degree of borrowing (predominantly Germanic loan words).

The richness and variety of the lexemes are the result of the extreme diversity of Slovene dialects, which has arisen for historical and geographical reasons as well as from the influence of neighbouring languages, both related (Croatian: Slovene and Croatian both belong to the South Slavic group of languages) and unrelated (Italian, Friulian, German and Hungarian). Most lexemes are of Slavic origin, while others were borrowed from neighbouring languages at various periods. These others are mostly of Germanic origin (historical, administrative-political and geographical factors – as a result of language contact in the north), some are of Romance origin (especially in the west, as a result of Italian and Friulian language contact), and fewer than 1% of lexemes are of Hungarian origin (only in the extreme north-east).

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List of symbols and abbreviations:

* Proto-Slavic reconstruction
/ or
< developed from
> developed in
← borrowed from
‘xxx’ meaning
Bav. – Bavarian
dial. – dialectal
Friu. – Friulian
Germ. – German
Hung. – Hungarian
Eng. – English
It. – Italian
Lat. – Latin
MHG – Middle High German
OHG – Old High German
Sln. – Slovene
Ven. – Venetian
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POZAJMLJENICE U SLOVENAČKIM DIJALEKTIMA U SEMANTIČKIM POLJIMA ‘LJUDSKO TIJELO’, ‘RODBINSKI ODNOSI’ I ‘PRIJATELJI’

Rezime

Ovaj rad ispituje odnos između pozajmljenih i nepozajmljenih riječi u dijalektima slovenačkog jezika. Vokabular je predstavljen kroz lingvi-stičku geografiju a leksičke mape slovenačkih dijalekata iz semantičkih polja 1) ‘ljudsko tijelo’, 2) ‘porodica’ i 3) ‘prijatelji’ prikazuju prostornu distribuciju ovih riječi u slovenačkim dijalektima.

Ključne riječi: slovenački jezik, slovenački dijalekti, lekseme, dijalekti, pozajmljenice, semantičko polje, ljudsko tijelo, rodbinski odnosi, prijatelji.

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