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Expressive Particles in Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek and Kurdish

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Abstract

A common feature in Balkan *Sprachbund* is the use of expressive particles, such as *bre*, *be*, *vre*, *re*, *more*, *mori* and *ma* in colloquial speech. In some sources the origin of the particles has been claimed to be the Greek *moros*, 'moron'. The aim of this study was to map and investigate the use of the particles in Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek, and on the other hand to make a grammatical and semantic comparison with the word *bre/bra*, 'brother', in Kurdish, which has an almost identical phonetic appearance as one of the particles on Balkans. Qualitative methods in form of elicitation were applied. The results indicated signs of semantic bleaching and obtaining characteristics of a particle in the use of the Kurdish word and gave justification for a future research regarding the etymology of the particles on Balkans.

The sociolinguistic use of the two most common particles in Serbian and Bulgarian was investigated, too. Quantitative methods were utilized for which a questionnaire was created. The predictions concerning the sociolinguistic aspects were confirmed, and the expressive particles were found to be indicators of power and solidarity in social relations. Differences in attitudes towards *bre* in Serbian and *be* in Bulgarian were discovered, which could possibly be due to the further semantic bleaching of *be*.

(Keywords: *be*, *bre*, Bulgarian, expressive particles, grammaticalization, Greek, Kurdish, semantic bleaching, Serbian, *vre*)

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1. Introduction

One of the many features that the languages spoken in the Balkans have in common is the use of *expressive particles* such as *bre*, *be*, *vre* and *more*. Their exact meaning is hard to define. They can be described as interjections for calling attention or for either sharpening or softening a request, a question or a statement. Their translation in English can, depending on the context, appear as ‘hey’, ‘oh’, ‘but’, ‘you’, ‘friend’, ‘mate’, ‘man’, ‘dude’, ‘bro’, ‘dear’, ‘folks’, ‘guys’, etc. In all Balkan languages, i.e. Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek, Romanian, Albanian, Macedonian, (Balkan) Turkish, and Balkan Romany, one or more variants of the particles are in use, often different ones in different dialects.

Kurdish on the other hand is an Indo-European language, belonging to the branch of Indo-Iranian languages and is spoken outside of the Balkans in the territory of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Armenia. It is naturally not included in the Balkan *Sprachbund*¹ but shares the characteristic of using the word *bre* in a similar way as speakers of the languages of the Balkans. Apart from Kurdish, *bre*² is used outside of the Balkans at least in the Assyrian and Ukrainian languages. The following examples show the parallel use of *bre*, *be*, *vre* and *re* in Serbian³, Bulgarian, Greek and Kurdish,⁴ respectively in calls (1), orders (2), questions (3), and statements (4). The particles are positioned in what appears to be their most common position, utterance finally.

(1)	<i>Ajde</i> C'mon.INDECL	<i>bre!</i> PRT	(Serbian)
	<i>Haide</i> C'mon.INDECL	<i>be!</i> PRT	(Bulgarian)
	<i>Ela</i> Come. IMP.2SG	<i>vre!</i> PRT	(Greek)
	<i>Dei</i> C'mon.INDECL 'Come on, man!'	<i>bre!</i> PRT/brother NOM	(Kurdish)

¹ A *Sprachbund* is a linguistic area of distantly or not at all genealogically related languages that due to language contact share common features. The Balkan Sprachbund is usually considered to involve Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, Greek, Albanian and Romanian (Heine & Kuteva 2005).

² I refer here to the Kurdish particle as *bre*, although the official transcription is *bra*, as the pronunciation of the last vowel is not clearly [a] or [ɛ], but something between, approximately an [ɐ] (Shakely 2010).

³ What I refer to as “Serbian” is the southern dialect of Serbo-Croatian that is spoken by majority in the Republic of Serbia. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Serbian and Croatian have assumed the status of separate “national languages”, and even though the matter is controversial, I opt for considering Serbian a dialect.

⁴ By “Kurdish” I refer to the central and southern dialects spoken in Iraq and Iran even called Sorani.

- (2) *Idi spavaj bre!* (Serb.)
 go.IMP.2SG sleep.IMP.2SG PRT
- Idi da spiš be!* (Bulg.)
 go IMP.2SG CONJ sleep.PRS.2SG PRT
- Pigaíne na koimithís vre!* (Gr.)
 go. IMP.2SG CONJ sleep.SBJV.2SG PRT
- Bcho bnú bre!* (Kurd.)
 go.IMP.2SG sleep.IMP.2SG PRT/brother.NOM
 ‘Go to sleep, man!’
- (3) *Kako si bre?* (Serb.)
 how be.PRS.2SG PRT
- Kak si be?* (Bulg.)
 how be.PRS.2SG PRT
- Ti káneis vre?* (Gr.)
 what do.PRS.2SG PRT
- Chooniit bre?* (Kurd.)
 how.clit.PRS 2.SG PRT/brother NOM
 ‘How are you, man?’
- (4) *Mnogo je kasno bre* (Serb.)
 Very be.PRES.3SG late.NOM.N PRT
- Mnogo e kasno be* (Bulg.)
 Very be.PRES.3SG late.N PRT
- Eínai polí argá vre* (Gr.)
 be.PRES.3SG very late.NOM.N PRT
- Esta zor drenga bre* (Kurd.)
 Be.PRES.3SG very late.NOM PRT/brother NOM
 ‘It’s very late!’

Both the traditional and modern folk-music provides miscellaneous examples of recorded use of the particles, and they are even found in literature, for instance in epic poetry and descriptions of dialogues in fiction. Today, they are broadly used in informal speech in all the languages mentioned, as well as internet chat sites with language resembling oral informal communication. The contemporary use of the particles is charged both with positive and negative connotations among the speakers. It is not unusual to get an answer to a question about *bre* among Serbs, that it is “an impolite expression” or “bad language”, and in general something to be avoided. However, among the youth of Belgrade, despite of

the official negative stance spread by pedagogues and parents, *bre* is according to the observations of the author a constantly repeated accessory in speech. The same can be said about *be* in Bulgarian. The use of *more*, on the other hand, seems to be considerably more restricted, in both Serbian and Bulgarian, as it seems to be most commonly found in utterance initial position, as shown in (5). In Kurdish, it does not appear at all.

- (5) *More* *šta* *kazeš?* (Serb)
PRT what say.PRS.2SG
- More* *kakvo* *govoriš?* (Bulg)
PRT what say.PRS.IMP.2ndSG
- Moré* *ti* *les?* (Greek)
PRT./moronMASC.VOC.2SG what say.PRES.2SG
‘Lad, what are you saying?’

There are conflicting ideas about the origin of the particles. The most common theory found in dictionaries of the Balkan languages is that *bre*, *be*, *vre* and *more* all derive from the Greek word *μόρος* [moros] ‘moron’, ‘idiot’. However, in some lexicons *bre* is defined as a loan-word from Turkish without any reference to its original meaning (See the quotes from dictionaries in Section 2). In the case of Kurdish, however, the etymology of *bre* is quite clear, since its lexical meaning is still in use: ‘brother’. Hence, in (1-4), this was used as a parallel gloss for the translation of the Kurdish examples.

The goal of this thesis is to provide a pilot study of the use of *bre*, *be*, and *more* in Serbian, *be*, *bre*, *more* and *ma* in Bulgarian, *vre*, *re*, *more* and *mori* Greek and *bre* in Kurdish, from the perspectives of (a) grammatical and lexical analysis and (b) sociolinguistics. Apart from the general comparative interest, this study is aimed to serve as a background for future research on the etymology of the various particles.

When referring to *bre*, *be*, *vre* or *re* jointly, I will use the term B-particles, and for *more*, *mori* and *ma* the term M-particles. For addressing (a), I utilized qualitative methods in form of an interview and elicitation with two or three informants for each language. Twenty-five sentences that represented seven different speech acts were elicited with the particles placed either in an initial, final or a medial position. I also elicited general intuitions on the meaning and appropriate use of the particles. For the sake of (b), I examined the use of the two most common B-particles in Serbian and Bulgarian – *bre* in Serbian and *be* in Bulgarian - by creating a questionnaire and asking as both male and female native speakers in the two languages to fill it in. The questionnaire consisted of a

list of social roles in which the informants were asked to mark whether they could use *bre* or *be* in conversation with a person representing the role, and whether they could expect the persons to use it vice versa.

The methods are explained in more detail in Section 3. Prior to that I'll provide some background on the phenomenon in Section 2, leading to the motivation of specific research questions in Section 3. Sections 4 and 5, respectively, present the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies. Section 6 consists of a discussion, and in Section 7 I present the conclusions and outline paths for future research.

2. Background and previous research

Despite of their extensive usage, the expressive particles have not been thoroughly explored previously, especially not in context of other languages than Greek, possibly because of their colloquial nature and the somewhat conservative attitude in choosing the linguistic topics of research in the countries where the particles are traditionally used. An extensive search in various databases gave only a few relevant articles⁵, summarized in the following section. Considering the prevalence, variant meaning, and unclear origin of the particles, a deeper analysis of the phenomenon is certainly called for.

2.1 Geographical distribution

The use of the expressive particles is widely distributed on the Balkan Peninsula. Only in Greek up to 56 different forms are used, if both the standard language and different dialects are taken in consideration (Joseph 1997). The distribution of B-particles goes beyond the Balkan languages to Ukrainian, Assyrian and Kurdish (in both southern and northern dialects). *Bre* is even widely used among immigrant youth in Sweden, where it has probably been adopted either from Serbian, Albanian, Turkish or Kurdish, which are the largest immigrant groups among the speakers of the “bre-languages” in Sweden (www.migrationsverket.se/info). Table 1 shows attested forms of B/M-particles, according to Joseph (1997) and dictionaries of the respective languages.

⁵ This may be due to the fact that in the countries where the phenomenon exists, the use of internet is not as widespread in academic circles as in for instance, in Sweden, and not all research papers are published on internet. Quite recently, the following monograph, devoted entirely to the expressive particles in Bulgarian was brought to my attention: Vrina, Mari. *Ekspresivnite chastitsi v bălgarskiya ezik*, (1999), Sofia, Abagar. Unfortunately, I have not been able to study it yet.

Appendix A shows maps of these distributions. As can be seen from Table 1 and the maps, the distribution of B-particles is much wider than of M-particles, which (if Venetian is discounted) are limited to the languages of the *Balkan Sprachbund*.

Table 1. Attested forms of B/M-particles, based on a survey of dictionaries and Joseph (1997). * = forms only given by Joseph (1997)

Language	B-particles	M-particles
Albanian (Tosq, Geg)	Bre, be	More, mre, moj, mori, ore, vore
Bulgarian	Be, bre	More, mori, ma
Greek	Vre, re, bre etc.	Moré, morí
Kurdish (Kurmanci, Sorani)	Bra, bre, bira[bəre], abre	-
Macedonian	Bre	More, mori
Polish	Bre*?	-
Romanian, Aromanian	Bre, bă	Mare, mărí, măi, mă
Romany (Balkan)	Bre, be, abe, abre	More, mori, ore, moro
Serbian	Bre, be	More, mori
Assyrian	Abri	-
Turkish	Bre, bire, be	-
Ukranian	Bre	-
Venetian⁶	Bre*	More*
Multiethnic slang in Sweden	Bre, abri	-

2.2 Sociolinguistic aspects

According to Tannen and Kakava (1992) the use of the expressive particles in Greek is based on the dimensions of power and solidarity. In Modern Greek the particles are said to constitute two types of linguistic markers of solidarity which often accompany expressions of disagreement:

- adversative imperatives such as *ακού* [akú] (‘listen’) and *κοιτάξε* [kitákse] (‘look’)
- expression of affection, especially with the particle *re* as in *όχι ρε παιδί μου* (‘No, re my child’). These are said to be often “uttered in high pitch” when used by women and that the high pitch is a paralinguistic marker of affection, typically used in speech with children and intimates.

⁶ A Romance language spoken in The Venice region and in surroundings areas, also in Croatia and Slovenia (Ethnologue, 2009).

Tannen and Kakava (1992) make use of the framework of “power and solidarity” introduced by Brown and Gilman (1960). This framework refers to the choices that must be made in languages that have both familiar and polite forms of address. According to the theory, the choice is based on the *power dynamic* when a person addresses another with the familiar form, but is being addressed by the polite one. The *solidarity dynamic* reigns if speakers address each other in the same way. Whether power or solidarity dynamic reigns is determined by reciprocity rather than whether the forms of address are familiar or formal. The same linguistic means are used to express both. The markers of power and solidarity are polysemous, i.e. they can simultaneously signify both. A sign of affection is inherently condescending because it precludes the unequal footing of differential status. Similarly, any sign of respect is naturally distancing because it places the speakers on relative footings that reflect different level of status (cf. Tannen and Kakava 1992: 14).

2.3 Grammatical and semantic aspects

As mentioned in Section 1, in most Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek dictionaries *more* and *mori* are described as derivations of the vocative form of the Greek word μῶρος [moros] (‘moron’, ‘idiot’). The vocative declensions of the word are μωρέ [more] MASC.VOC and μωρή [mori] FEM.VOC. In some other Balkan languages both forms *more* and *mori* are in use, but are apparently not distinguished by ending for addressing male or female as it is the case in Greek. By the process of *semantic bleaching*,⁷ it can be assumed that the M-particles, in both Greek and the other Balkan languages have lost the meaning of the original lexical item. This is one of the common features in the process of grammaticalisation (cf. Heine and Kuteva 2007: 32-46) whereby a full lexical word such as a noun turns into a more abstract word, in this case, a vocative particle.

In comparison, the origin of B-particles is considerably more obscure. The most common theory about their etymology found in most Balkan language dictionaries, is that *bre*, *vre* and *be* originate from *more* and due to phonetic changes and semantic bleaching have lost the negative meaning of the original lexical item. However, since phonetic change [m] > [v]/[b] is almost unattested (cf. Joseph 1997) and because of the questionability of similarities in grammatical, sociolinguistic and areal distribution between M-particles, on the other hand, and B-particles on the other, this theory may be questioned.

⁷ Loss or generalization of meaning content (Heine and Kuteva 2007).

The particle *vre* in Modern Greek has been described as “a marker of friendly disagreement” (Tannen and Kakava 1992: 29), “unceremonious mode of address or cry of surprise, impatience etc.” (Pring 1975), or as “exclamation ‘hey you!; you there!; well!; just!’” (Stavropoulos 1988). In Modern Greek *vre* and *re* appear mostly together with a person name or a diminutive form of it, as in: *Pe Xριστινάκι* ‘Re Christinaki (diminutive of Christina)’, where the particle immediately precedes the name (Tannen and Kakava 1992: 29).

In “The dictionary of Croatian or Serbian language” from 1880-82 *bre* is defined as follows (s.v. *bre*, *Rječnik Hrvatskoga ili Srpskoga Jezika*):

Interj.turski bre, uzvik kojim se jače utvrđuje što se kaže kao napominjući da se zbiljski misli, a tijekom govora biva i oštar, kao kad se tko osiječa, a kad kad kao da se tko reče: Čuješ? Ču li? Ili a! da! ta!

‘Interjection, in Turkish *bre*, exclamation with which it is stronger confirmed, like to remark, that the person means seriously, and with it even speech is sharpened, like when someone feels or says: Do you hear(listen to) me? Or: Did you hear? or: Oh! Yes! That!’ (author’s translation)

The particle *more* is described in the same dictionary in the following way (s.v. *more*, *Rječnik Hrvatskoga ili Srpskoga Jezika*):

Interj.koja se obično govori oštrijim tonom i znači da je onaj, koji govori, jači ili stariji ili mogućniji od onoga, kome govori; katkad se bez oštine u tonu *more* govori od mila, gotovo kao da se reče: brate. Iz grč.*more*, koja je riječ upravo vok.sing. I znači: budalo! Ali današnji Grci upotrebljavaju tu riječ u smislu posve blagome, gotovo kao: moj dragi!

‘Interjection which is usually uttered with a sharper tone and means that the one who says (it), is stronger, older or more powerful than the one he/she talks to. Sometimes, without sharpness in the tone it is said with tenderness, just like is said: Brother! From Greek *more* which is a singular vocative [form] and means: Idiot!, But nowadays Greeks use the word in a mild way, like: My dear!’ (author’s translation)

In “The Etymologic dictionary of Croatian or Serbian language” from 1971, *bre* is referred as follows (s.v. *bre*, *Etimologiškij rječnik Hrvatskoga ili Srpskoga jezika*):

Uzvik iz istočnih krajeva, nepoznat čakavskom i kajkavskom, javlja se u narodnim pesmama i pripovijetkama, u bugarštici kao *bri* (upor.*mori*), *bro* u narodnoj pesmi 18.v. I kod jednog pisca 17.v. U Kosmetu se veže s ličnim imenom *bre Radenko* ili *bre bale* (v.*brat*); također s vokativom *more* na drugom mjestu: *more bre*. Oboje je balkanizam grčkog podrijetla(vokativ *more* od *moros* ‘luda’, skraćeno u *bre*<*mre*) Nalazi se u bug.,rum.,arb. *bre* i ngr.*bre*; *vre more te* u turskom u rumeljskim narječima.

‘Exclamation from the eastern parts [of Yugoslavia], not known in čakavski or kajkavski [dialects of Serbo-Croatian], appears in folksongs and tales, in epic poems as *bri* (orig. *mori*), *bro* in a folksong from the 18th century, and in texts of a writer from the 17th century. In Kosmet [Kosovo and Metohija] it is connected with personal names, *bre Radenko* or *bre bale* (vocative of brother [brat]), also with the vocative *more* in the second place: *more bre*. Both are balkanisms of Greek origin (vocative *more* of *morós*, ‘crazy’, shortened to *bre<mre*). It is found in Bulgarian, Romanian, Arb.[Albanian?] *bre*, and *bre* in Greek; *vre more* in Turkish in Rumelian⁸ words.’ (author’s translation)

The verb *nabrekivati se* is mentioned in some Serbo-Croatian dictionaries as a verb for using *bre*, meaning “exclaiming to someone *bre*”, and *morekivati se*, meaning “uttering the exclamation *more*” (s.v. *bre, more, Etimologiškij rječnik Hrvatskoga ili Srpskoga jezika*).

Dictionaries of other Balkan languages explain the meaning of the particles as follows: **Albanian:** “Hey fellow” (s.v. *bre, An Historical Albanian-English dictionary*); ”a vocative particle used in a call to a man” and “In feminine forms *moj* and *mori* are used.” (s.v. *more, Albanian Etymological dictionary*); **Turkish:** “Hi! Heh you! I say!” (s.v. *be, The Oxford Turkish-English Dictionary*); **Balkan Romani** “an appellative addressed to a male or female” (s.v. *bre, Wörterbuch Romani-Deutsch-Englisch für den südosteuropäischen Raum : mit einer Grammatik der Dialektvarianten*); **Ukrainian:** “exclamation for request, often used for increasing intimacy in the language” (s.v. *bre, Etimologični Slovník Ukrainskoj Movi*); **Bulgarian:** “appellative particle, usually addressed to a male” (s.v. *be, Bâlgarski Etimologičen Rečnik*). (examples that are not in English translated by author)

Search gave no results in dictionaries of the languages surrounding the Balkan Sprachbund area⁹, except for Ukrainian, or contact languages with Kurdish.¹⁰ In a Southern Kurdish dictionary *bra* [brə] has been translated as ‘brother’ or ‘bro’, with no reference to the use as a particle. (s.v. *bra, Lexin online dictionary, Southern Kurdish-Swedish*).

As seen in the examples, B-particles are defined in a similar way in languages in which they appear. The only exception is Kurdish, which apart from having a similar expressive meaning also has the lexical meaning ‘brother’. In references to the etymology of the particles, in dictionaries of Serbo-Croatian, depending on the dictionary,

⁸ The Byzance Empire, “land of the Romans”.

⁹ Hungarian, Slovenian, Italian, Russian (contact with Ukrainian), Church Slavonic.

¹⁰ Persian, Arabic, Armenian, Azeri, Turkmen.

both Greek and Turkish has been given as the origin of the B-particles. For the etymology of the M-particles, however, only Greek *morós* has been exposed.

2.4 Appearance in music and literature

In Serbian epic songs from the 14th century on, which were collected in the 19th century by the Serbian writer and linguist *Vuk Karadžić*, *bre* appears frequently. The epic songs describe battles of Serbs against the invasion of Ottomans in Kosovo in 1389.(translations by author).

- | | | | |
|-----|---|--|--------------|
| (6) | <i>Planu Bane prepade se ljuto,
te dervišu turski odgovara:
"Bre, dervišu, nesretna ti majka!"</i> | Bane gets stunned and furious
and answers the dervish in Turkish
Oh dervish, your mother should be
mourning!´ | (Vuk 2,0349) |
| (7) | <i>Al' joj veli Sekul momče mlado:
"Bre, nevjero, gizdava djevojko,
Pruži meni svoju desnu ruku
Da poznajem obiljestvo moje!"</i> | But the young man Sekul tells her:
"Oh you, unfaithful, flashy girl,
Give me your right hand
So that I recognize my sign! | (Vuk 2,091) |
| (8) | <i>"More, Marko! Ne ori drumova!
More, Turci! Ne gaz´te oranja!"</i> | Hey Marko! Don´t plough roads!
Hey you Turks! Don´t tread ploughed
land! | (Vuk 2,439) |

It should be noted that in older sources both *bre* and *more* appear almost always initially, and with a negative connotation, as in (6)-(8). One can also note that in (6) the protagonist is apparently addressing a Turk "in Turkish", and uses *bre*. This could imply that *bre* was used in the same way in Serbian and Turkish already in 14th century.

Jumping 600 years, and to the other end of Europe, we find the use of the particles attested in the slang of Swedish immigrant youth, in the book *Shoo bre* (Foley 2003). The author, who has lived the last three decades in a Stockholm suburb, has had close contacts with the youths living there. The dialogues are rich in slang-expressions, and *bre* and *abri* are frequently used as in examples (9) and (10).

- | | |
|-----|---|
| (9) | <i>"Så vad gör du ensam i centrum bre?"
So what doPRS you alone in centre PRT
´So what are you doing alone in the city, bro?´</i> |
|-----|---|

- (10) “*Abri vad gäller det?*”
 PRT what concern.PRS it
 ‘Hey, what is it about?’

These examples are taken from conversations between a Syrian teenage boy and his Arabic-speaking acquaintance. In the multi-ethnic slang of Sweden¹¹ languages are mixed and words are being loaned from each other’s mother tongues. Some expressions, such as *bre* are inserted in sentences where the major elements are from the common language, Swedish, as shown in the examples. Some of the characters are from countries where *bre* is unknown, but they all use *bre* or *abri*, which demonstrates that the particles have taken root in the immigrant slang in Sweden, and that they are in frequent use regardless of the home language of the youth. The source of *bre* and *abri* is most probably some of the Balkan languages, Turkish, Kurdish or Syrian, or they all together, as it could be assumed that finding the same particle used in the same way in each other’s mother tongues would enact the use of it in general in the slang. In conversations displayed in the book *bre* appears almost always finally or medially in an utterance, and *abri* in the beginning¹².

A generous source for finding recorded evidence in the usage of B-particles in the Balkans is contemporary music. In the past decennia *bre* has appeared frequently in popular music, especially in *narodnjaci* (Serb.) or *chalga* (Bulg.), the mixture of traditional and modern music listened widely, especially in rural areas. A brief look at titles and refrains of this genre reveals the following examples:

- (11) “*A gde žuriš, a gde žuriš bato bre.*” (Serbian)
 ‘And where do you hurry boy, dear.’ (Indy)
- (12) “*A bre momche makedonche.*” (Macedonian)
 ‘Oh you Macedonian boy.’ (Emanuela Mitić)
- (13) “*Ah bre djal, ah bre dreq.*” (Albanian)
 ‘Oh you devil, oh you satan’ (Nexhat & Remzije Osmani)

¹¹ Even referred to as Rinkebysvenska or Förortssvenka.

¹² It is probable that the use of the particles in the slang in exile corresponds the use in former homelands, and based on this a brief look in the subject should be justified. *Bre* as a slang expression has appeared in wider use only since 1990’s according to Foley.

- (14) “*Aman bre deryalar, Kanlica deryalar.*” (Turkish)
 ‘Oh, the waves, Kanlica¹³ waves!’ (Arif Şenturk)
- (15) “*Akoú vre fíle*” (Greek)
 ‘Listen you friend.’ (Sfakianákis)
- (16) “*Abre kako so pijeja.*” (Balkan Romany)
 ‘Oh uncle, why are you drinking?’ (Esmá Redzepova)
- (17) “*Shto taka be Mime.*” (Bulgarian)
 ‘Why like that, hey Mime?’ (Ruslan Mainov)

In all the examples initial *bre* is avoided and a vowel or another interjection, such as ‘a’ is added.¹⁴ M-particles were considerably rarer, and could only be found in old folk-songs:

- (18) “*Mori puče puška* Folks, a gun was fired
U dolini Drima” In the Drim valley (Serbian)
- (19) “*Zbog tebe mori Leno* Because of you girl, Lena
Ilija sreće nema” Ilija has no luck/happiness
 (Trad./Usnija Redzepova) (Serbian/Macedonian)

In Kurdish, both in Sorani and Kurmanji¹⁵, *bre/bra/bira* [bərə] is usual in contemporary music, and its use closely reminds on the use of B-particles on Balkans, as shown in (20).

- (20) “*Rasha, bre, rasha,* Black, oh, black
chaw yarakam rasha my darling’s eyes are black,
Her chand bea meila, Even when she’s icy,
Mn dalam pei xosha” I’m keen on her
- (21) “*Xoshai bre det, xoshai det* Oh, it jingles, it jingles
Dengi pauanakei det” The sound of her anklet
 (Azis Waisi, 2010)

¹³ A district of Istanbul.

¹⁴ This feature will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁵ Northern dialect of Kurdish, spoken in Turkey, Northern Iraq and Syria.

As can be seen in the examples, the B-particles are actively in use in the languages mentioned, according to the internet search, but M-particles are far more rarely found. B-particles can as well be found in initial, medial and final positions in the examples.

3. Research questions and methods

The goals of this thesis were: (1) to map the use of the expressive particles in general in Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek and Kurdish; (2) to make a comparison between the use of the B-particles in the three Balkan languages and the word *bre* in Sorani Kurdish; and (3) given the differences between B- and M-particles, described in the previous section, to map their respective usage in the three languages where both types are present: Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian. The predictions I expected to be confirmed were: (A) that B-particles are commonly in use in all four languages, (B) that B-particles are used in the similar way in Kurdish as in the three Balkan languages, and (C) that the use of the B-particles differs from the use of the M-particles. If it can be shown that there are systematic differences between the two types, it would be even more motivated to search for alternative explanations of the respective origin. One such explanation could be that the B-particles have been borrowed from Turkish, which on its part has adopted them from Kurdish. Hence a comparison between the B-particles in the three Balkan languages and Kurdish is also to be made.

The method I used for this research was qualitative i.e. elicitation with two to three informants in each language. The method was chosen in order to get as comprehensive answers as possible, which I judged to be troublesome with quantitative methods, as the example sentences were numerous, and filling in a form by one's own would have demanded a great attention and patience from informants in order to be accurate. The elicitation was performed in the following manner: between twenty-nine and forty-four sentences, expressing the speech acts of (a) requests, (b) assertions, (c) greetings, (d) calls, (e) questions (f) yes/no-answers, were composed for each of the four languages, and two or three native speakers were asked to evaluate the placement of B/M-particles in either (1) initial, (2) final or (3) medial position. The number of examples varied due to different structures of sentences required in different languages¹⁶. Furthermore, the investigations focused on whether the particles could be used with the second person plural polite form of the verb. Appendix A shows the example sentences

¹⁶ In many cases Kurdish, as being a highly agglutinative language, didn't allow the particle to be inserted in a medial position.

used in the elicitation.

The fourth goal of the thesis was to compare in more detail the sociolinguistic use of the two most common B-particles in Serbian and Bulgarian, *bre* respectively *be*, from the aspect of power and solidarity dynamics by studying the attitudes towards usage in relation with persons representing social roles with both lower and higher social status, and in familiar and formal relations. For this purpose, quantitative methods were used. I composed a questionnaire in which informants were asked to mark whether they would expect the use of the respective particle with respect to a number of different social roles, such as parent, doctor, taxi-driver etc. to be either (A) *symmetric* i.e. both speaker and hearer would use it, or neither of them, or (B) *asymmetric* i.e. that they would expect it to be used unilaterally in any of the two possible directions. A few additional questions were included as well, targeting opinions on the particles and their frequency of use.

The questionnaires were completed by 69 Serbian and 37 Bulgarian informants. The aim was to search for confirmation of the predictions that (1) the particles are frequent in speech in both languages, (2) that the particles are indicators of power and solidarity in social relations, and (3) that the use of *bre* in Serbian differs from that of *be* in Bulgarian, since the use of *be* in Bulgarian is more restricted, and more negatively evaluated than *bre* in Serbian (based on observations by the author). The questionnaires are shown in Appendix B.

4. Comparing the use of B/M-particles within and across languages

4.1. Serbian

The Serbian informants were: A, female, 20 yrs, place of origin Belgrade, Serbia, monolingual in Serbian, fluent in English, secondary education; B, female, 20 yrs, place of origin Belgrade, Serbia, monolingual in Serbian, fluent in English, secondary education; C, male, 33 yrs, place of origin Belgrade, Serbia, monolingual in Serbian, fluent in English, higher education.

According to all three informants *bre* (and possibly *be*, see below) can be used in an initial, medial and final position as shown in (22):

- (22) a. *Bre* *idi* *spavaj!*
 PRT go.IMP.2SG sleep.IMP.2SG
 ‘Go to sleep, now!’

- b. *Nemojte bre/be da vičete!*
 NEG.IMP.2PL PRT to scream.PRES.2PL
 ‘Don’t scream, guys!’
- c. *(G)de si bre?*
 where be.PRES.2SG PRT
 ‘What’s up, man?’ (lit. Where are you?)

Bre was accepted equally in all positions in all speech acts except if preceding a single yes/no. In summary, the use of it is very flexible in Serbian, all positions were accepted by the informants in all kinds of speech acts. The informants categorically rejected the use of any of the particles in conversation where the polite 2p.SG form was used for addressing. There were no differences in sex: addressing to a male or a female was equally accepted in case of all the particles.

According to the informants, the use of the particle *be* corresponds to that of *bre* and the main difference is dialectal: *be* is believed to be used in Southern Serbia while *bre* is the most common particle in other parts of Serbia (and especially Belgrade, where the informants came from). *More* was by considered by the informants as “old-fashioned and primitive”, and seems not to be used by the young and middle-aged in Belgrade. Because of that the informants were unable to give exact answers to the questions concerning *be* and *more*: they were not really part of their dialects. The intuitions about *more* were predominantly linked with archaic use, and the informants cited epic songs in order to find patterns in its positions in sentences.

In Bosnian, none of these particles is used, but a similar particle *bolan*, *bona* or *ba* is in use. In Croatian *bre* and *be* are very negatively viewed (presumably due being associated with “Serbian”), and one informant brought up she had been strongly advised not to use them on a trip to Croatia.

4.2 Bulgarian

The Bulgarian informants were D, male, 45 years, higher education, monolingual in Bulgarian, fluent in English and Swedish, place of origin Sofia, and E, female, 77 years, monolingual in Bulgarian, place of origin Velingrad (Rodophi region, Southern Bulgaria).

As in Serbian, the informants were asked to evaluate the use of three particles: *be*, *bre* and *more*. According to them, *be* is the most common of the particles and

the two others were considered not to be a part of contemporary Bulgarian. Because of not using *bre* or *more*, both the informants found it hard to determine their intuitions concerning the two particles. The only references of use were in folk songs and epos, very much like the Serbian examples with *more* and *be*, or in humoristic speech. However, in all these only initial use of the particles seemed natural.

The particle *be* was accepted without hesitation only in final position, as shown in (23). Initial *be*, is deemed “very rude”, but this becomes toned down if preceded by [a] as in (24). In medial position *be* was accepted only in exclamations, if preceded by another expressive particle, *ey*, as shown in (25).

(23) *Dajte mi тази книга be!*
 give.IMP.2PL I.DAT this book PRT
 ‘Give me that book guys!’

(24) *A be mnogo e kâsno!*
 PRT PRT very be.PRS.3SG lateNOM
 ‘Hey, it’s getting very late!’

(25) *Ey be Ivane!*
 Hey PRT Ivan.VOC
 ‘Hey, Ivan!’

The informants agreed that the only thinkable placement for *bre* and *more* would be in the beginning of an exclamation, like in (26), or in a call preceding a name (27).

(26) *Bre/More mnogo e kasno!*
 PRT very be.3SG late.NOM
 ‘Hey, it’s very late!’

(27) *Bre/More Ivane/Maria!*
 PRT Ivan.VOC/Maria
 ‘Hey Ivan/Maria!’

Among the examples used, a language specific expression *ma*, which is a particle used in a similar manner but exclusively addressed to a female, was added. The informants found it

to be very dialectal, “low-status” language and maybe even discriminative due to its restricted use with females.

The other three particles were accepted to be used for targeting a female as well as a male. They could be addressed to a group as well as to a single person. The example sentences in polite second person singular were refused categorically, as was the case in Serbian.

4.3 Greek

The informants in Greek were F, male, over 40 years, with higher education, monolingual in Greek, fluent in Swedish and English, place of origin Athens and G, female, over 40 years, place of origin Crete, Greece, monolingual in Greek, fluent in German and English, higher education.

The Greek *vre* and *re* were accepted by the informants in most cases both initially and finally, as displayed in (28-29). The only exception was after a name, see (34). In medial position *vre* and *re* were in most cases rejected, as in the negative requests (30), and the question/greeting (31).

- (28) a. *Ti óra éinai vre/re?*
 what time be.PRS.3SG PRT
 ‘What time is it, friend?’
 b. *Vre/re ti óra éinai?*

- (29) a. *Ti gínetai vre/re?*
 what happen.PRS.3SG PRT
 ‘What’s up, bro?’
 b. *Vre/re ti gínetai?*

- (30) a. *Mi *vre/*re fonázete!*
 NEG PRT scream.IMP.2PL
 ‘Don’t, guys, scream!’
 b. *Mi *vre/*re thimósete!*
 NEG PRT get.angry.IMP.2PL
 ‘Don’t, guys, get angry!’

- (31) a. *Ti *vre/*re káneis?*
 what PRT do.PRS.2SG
 ‘How are you, man?’
- b. *Ti óra *vre/*re eínai?*
 what time PRT be.PRS.3SG
 ‘What time, mate, is it?’

In two positive requests in form of a longer sentence medial position however was accepted, as shown in (32). The explanation doesn’t necessarily have to be in the kind of speech act they represent, but can as well be interpreted as that the utterances in (32) are more clearly divided into two parts, which allows the particle to be inserted (32a) between the two verbs and (32b) between the verb and the object.

- (32) a. *Pigáine vre/re na koimithís!*
 go. IMP.2SG PRT CONJ sleep.PRS.SBJV.2SG
 ‘Go dear to sleep!’
- b. *Mou dínete vre/re to vivlío!*
 I.DTA give.IMP.2PL PRT ART.DEF.N.ACC book.ACC
 ‘Give me guys the book!’

As pointed earlier in Section 2.2 the natural position for *vre/re* in Greek is the one preceding a personal name, as “*Re Christinaki*”, and as expected both the utterances with the particles before the names were approved. No difference was made between a male and a female name, as shown in (33). However, in the case of placing the particle after the names, both examples were rejected by the informants as displayed in (34).

- (33) a. *Vre/re María!*
 PRT Maria.FEM.NAME.NOM/VOC
 ‘You/Hey Maria!’
- b. *Vre/re Giánni!*
 PRT Giannis.MASK.NAME.VOC.

‘You/Hey Giannis!’

- (34) a. *María *vre/*re!*
b. *Giánni *vre/*re!*

The utterances addressed to one person in a plural form, as displayed in (35) were all refused by one informant but restrictively accepted by the other. As in many other languages, in Greek the second person plural form of a verb and personal pronoun is used for expressing respect or distance. Since, *vre*, and particularly *re* are not commonly used in formal speech, they cannot (normally) be used together with the polite 2PL.

- (35) *Mou dínete to vivlío *?vre/*?re!*
I.DAT giveIMP.2PL ART. DEF.N.ACC book.ACC PRT
‘Give me the book, folks!’

However, when addressed to more than one person, the same example was approved.

According to the informants, *more* and especially *morí* are used only restrictively, and are considered, as in other Balkan languages, more out-of-date than the two others. In a shorter interrogative phrase both the masculine form *moré* and the feminine *morí* were approved initially and finally, but refused in a medial position, as shown in (36).

- (36) a. *Moré/morí ti les?*
PRT what sayPRS.2SG
‘Lad, what are you saying?’
b. *Ti les moré/morí?*
c. *Ti *moré/*morí les?*

However, in another example (37) given by informant G, both *moré* and *morí* could be accepted in the middle, which depends on the construction of the sentence. The particles *more/morí* could be placed between the verb phrase and its spatial complement(s) allowing the verb phrase to stay connected.

- (37) *Ti théleis moré edó péra?*
 what want.PRS.2SG PRT here over
 ‘What do you want here now?’

The masculine form *moré* has partially undergone a process of semantic bleaching, and therefore it can be addressed even to a female. It has at least in part lost its pejorative connotations as a vocative of *μωρός*, [morós] ‘idiot’. The feminine *morí* has however preserved its negative tone and is considered ruder. Like *vre* and *re*, *moré* was not considered suitable for using in formal speech or for addressing a person with higher social status than speaker.

The informants considered *re* as an expression more associated with youth, and declared it to be more slang than its equivalent *vre*. With the informal and modern greeting ‘*Ti ginetai?*’, *re* was considered to be the most suitable option among the particles.

All the particles could be used equally in all sorts of speech acts, except that they didn’t appear in medial position in negative requests in the example sentences, which was due to the construction of the actual sentences. Informant G gave an example of using the particles in such a speech act in a medial position, which is displayed in (38). Again the particle could be placed between two phrases.

- (38) *Ela moré, min stenohoriásai tóra!*
 C’mon.INDECL PRT NEG worry.IMP.2SG now
 ‘C’mon dear, don’t worry now.’

Placed after a person name in a call, as shown in (39), *moré/morí* was rejected.

- (39) *Giánni *more!*
*María *morí!*

4.4 Kurdish

I interviewed three native speakers of Sorani dialect: J, male, 39 yrs, place of origin Kirkuk, Iraq, monolingual in Kurdish, fluent in Swedish, secondary education; Y, male, 35 yrs, place of origin Suleymania, Iraq, monolingual in Kurdish, some knowledge in

Swedish, secondary education. , K, male, 27 yrs, place of origin Kirkuk, Iraq, bilingual in Kurdish and Arabic, fluent in Swedish.

It was found that in Kurdish the word *bre* can be used in initial and final position as shown in (39) and (40).

(39) *Bcho* *bnu* *bre!*
 go.IMP.2SG sleep. IMP.2SG PRT/brother.NOM
 ‘Go to sleep, bro/brother!’

(40) *Bre* *sa àt* *chand-e?*
 PRT/brother clock.NOM how.much-COP.PRS.3SG
 ‘Bro/Brother, what time is it?’

In a medial position the particle only appears restrictively. The medial position was accepted by all the informants only in the positions as shown in (41), in which *bre* had been placed between a) agglutination of the subject + verb, and its complement, or between b) imperative with a personal ending and its direct and indirect object.

(41) a. *Esta* *bre* *zor* *drenga!*
 be.PRES.3SG PRT/brother.NOM very late
 ‘It’s very late, man/brother!’
 b. *Aw* *ktab-m* *bre* *bda-ne!*
 that book.NOM- I.DAT PRT/brother.NOM give-IMP.2PL
 ‘Give me that book, guys/brothers!’

Other examples with *bre* in a medial position, while placed between the two imperatives (42) a) or between the subject and the agglutination of the question word and the verb (42) b), were rejected by two informants, but accepted by one. A possible explanation for it could be that the informants experienced in the two utterances the phrases separated by the particle to be more bound to each other than in (41).

(42) a. *Bcho ?bre bnu!*
 b. *Sa’at ?bre chande?*

In (43) due to agglutinations in a), c) and d), inserting another word in a medial position was impossible. In b) the word ‘news’ is used as an informal greeting, and placing a word inside it was impossible.

- (43)
- a. *Chon-it?*
how-COP.PRS.2SG
‘How are you?’
 - b. *Dengubas?*
news.NOM
‘What’s up?’
 - c. *Ma-qizen-m!*
NEG-shout-2PL
‘Don’t shout!’
 - d. *Tuurra-ma-ba!*
angry- NEG- become2SG
‘Don’t get angry!’

There was no evidence on the variation in using the particle in a medial position on basis of categories of speech acts. The appearance of the particle in a medial position was accepted by informants in a declaration (41) a), and a request (41) b), and rejected in a request(42)a) and a question(42)b) by the informants J and Y, but accepted by K.

Using the particle in an initial and a final position was accepted in utterances expressing all types of speech acts, which suggests that the category of a speech act is not a distinctive factor in the use of the word *bre* in Kurdish, as shown in (44).

- (44)
- a. Declaration:
Esta zor drenga bre!
 - b. Question:
Bre sa’at chande?
 - c. Request:
Bcho bnu bre!
 - d. Exclamation:

In sum, *bre* is used in all types of speech acts, finally or initially, but restrictedly in a medial position. It is directed only to males but sometimes used in a conversation with a female although not addressed to her directly. The particle is omitted in formal speech. *Bre* is addressed in its singular form to more than one person, which can be interpreted as that it has been partially bleached of its actual meaning as the nominative singular of 'brother', and that it has acquired traits of a particle, such as loss of inflection.

4.5 Summary of the qualitative results

As predicted, the use of the B-particles was detected similar in all four languages. The word *bre*, 'brother' in Kurdish, was found to have undergone a grammaticalization process, and to have acquired characteristics of an expressive particle, as (1) it could be addressed to more than one person without declining it to plural; (2) it could be used for expressing an emotion without being addressed to a person; (3) it could be addressed to a person who was not a biological brother of the speaker; and (4) despite of the masculine connotation it could be uttered in company of a female without another male being present, although not addressed directly to her.

The prediction about B-particles being commonly in use in all four languages was confirmed: all informants stated they use it at least sometimes, and all of them accepted the use in several example sentences. The speech act was found not to be the distinctive factor in accepting or rejecting a placement in any of the languages and the placement inside an utterance was not as relevant as position in relation to a phrase. However a slight tendency to place B-particles utterance finally and M-particles utterance initially was discovered, although in Serbian the placement of *bre* was found to be very flexible. The grammatical and lexical aspect of the use of M-particles turned out to be difficult to research, because of the fact mentioned above: they could only rarely be found in modern speech. The prediction about M-particles differing from B-particles was therefore hard to confirm.

In all the languages examined the use of the particles in polite utterances were predominantly rejected, and the colloquial nature of the particles was affirmed. Unlike in Kurdish, in Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek the particles could be addressed to a female as well as to a male.

5. Sociolinguistic patterns in the use of Serbian *bre* and Bulgarian *be*

As shown in the previous chapter, clearly the most commonly used expressive particles in Serbian and Bulgarian are *bre*, respectively *be*. In order to better understand the contexts of use, and the attitudes towards these particles in the two languages communities, a questionnaire shown in Appendix B was administered to students and faculty at Belgrade University in April 2011, and in New Bulgarian University, Sofia in May 2011, with the active help of my two supervisors. The aim was to confirm the two predictions brought out earlier: (1) that the expressive particles are markers of power and solidarity, and (2) that the use of *be* in Bulgarian is more restricted, and more negatively evaluated than *bre* in Serbian.

Replies were obtained by 69 speakers of Serbian and 37 of Bulgarian. Five of the Serbian and two of the Bulgarian replies were rejected, due to severe defects¹⁷. The replies of the remaining were coded and analysed. Average “scores” were computed for each of the 25 social roles of imagined addressees, with respect to the five choices given in the questionnaire:

- I=You=YES: both the speaker and the addressee would be expected to use the particle.
- I<You: the speaker would not use the particle to the addressee, but would not be surprised if it was used in return.
- I >You: the speaker could use the particle, but would not expect it to be used in return.
- I=You=NO: the speaker would not use the particle to the addressee, and would not expect for it to be used to him/her either.
- ?: Situation unknown or difficult to imagine.

The results are shown in Figure 1.

¹⁷ Some questionnaires were incomplete or provided with conflicting information.

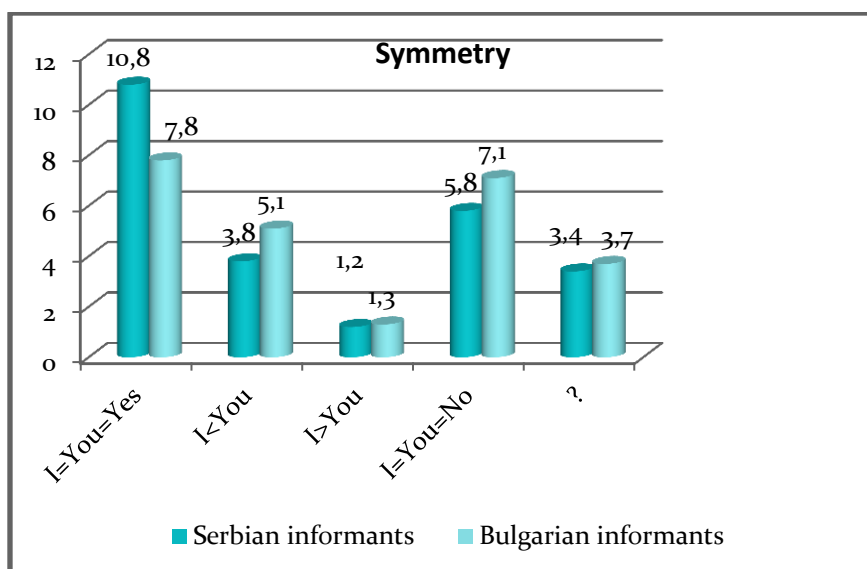


Figure 1. Answers of the Bulgarian and Serbian informants on the questions of symmetry of the usage of the particles in conversation with persons with different social roles

As can be seen from Figure 1, for both groups the two symmetrical categories (I=You) were highest. However, there was a marked difference: while for the Serbian speakers, the yes-category (symmetrical usage) was more widely spread than for the Bulgarian group, the situation was reversed for the no- category (symmetrical non-usage). Another notable difference was that the Bulgarian informants chose the asymmetrical option (I<YOU) more often than Serbian speakers, i.e. not saying it to a person, but expecting to hear it from him/her. The remaining two classes are nearly identical.

Most informants in both languages chose not to use the particles in conversation with persons enjoying high respect, such as a priest, a professor, a doctor, a mother- and father –in- law, or a parent of a friend. Inside the nuclear family the usage was most common, which affirms the prediction of an expressive particle being a solidarity marker. Both younger and older siblings, mother, father and a child were the ones that the particles were most often addressed to, and so was the case with both male and female friends, a boyfriend/girlfriend and husband/wife. From grandfather and grandmother most informants would expect to hear the particle, but would not say it themselves. Colleague, salesperson, taxi-driver and a waiter or waitress were the options that were answered most diversely.

In the Serbian survey 34% of the informants replied that they like the usage of *bre*, 34% that they don't, and 32% didn't have an opinion. The same percentage for the Bulgarian informants were considerably different, 14%, 50% and 34%, which confirms the

prediction of *be* being more negatively evaluated in Bulgarian than *bre* in Serbian. The percentages are displayed in figures 2 and 3.

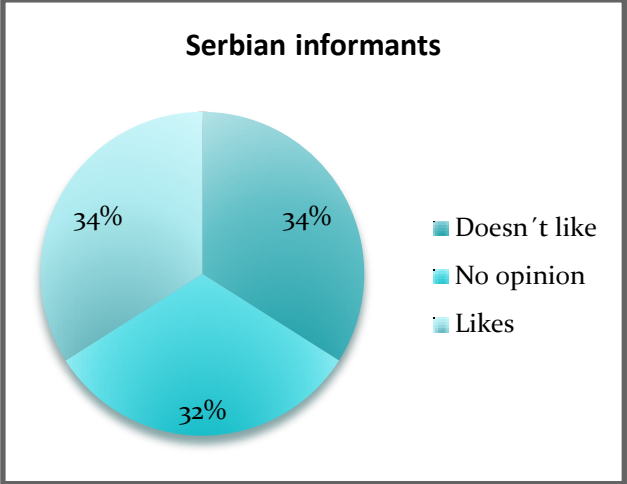


Figure 2. Approval among Serbian informants

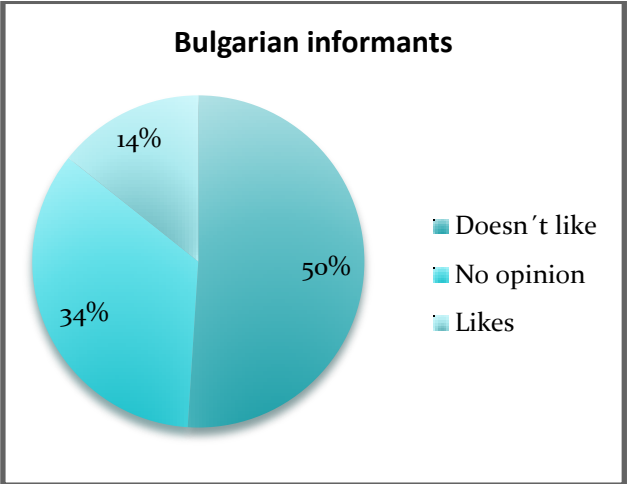


Figure 3. Approval among Bulgarian informants

In both languages together, 99% of all of the informants admitted they at least occasionally use the particle. 33% of Serbs replied that they use it “often” or “all the time”, and 26 % of the Bulgarians gave the same answer, as shown in figure 4. 56% of Bulgarians and 53% of Serbs admitted that they had been advised by a parent or a teacher not to use it.

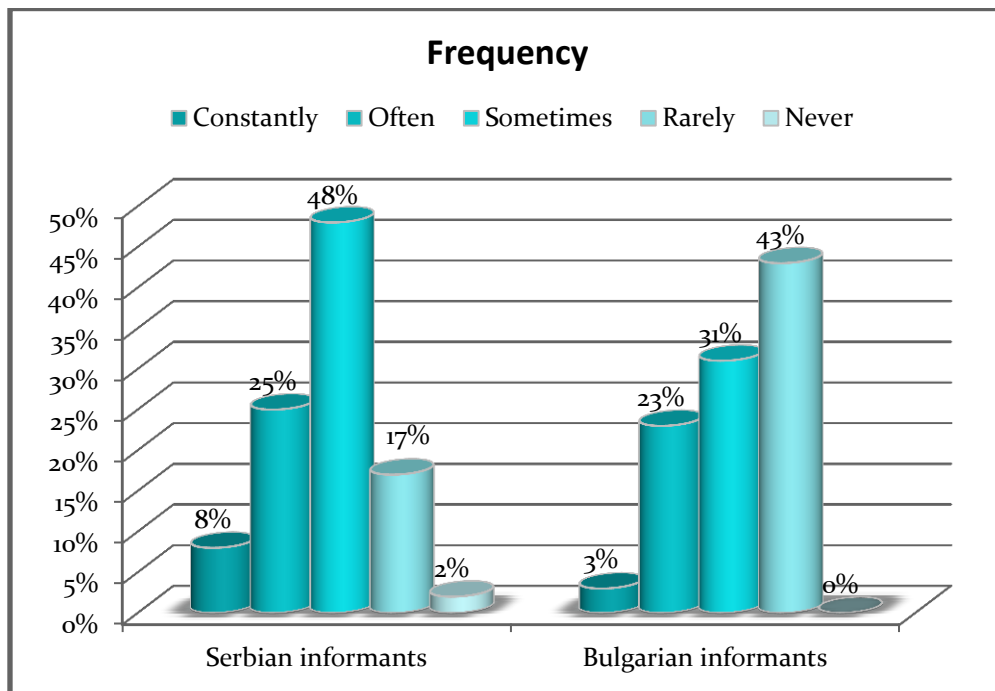


Figure 4. Frequency in using *bre* respectively *be* among Serbian and Bulgarian informants

The prediction of the use of *bre* in Serbian deviating from that of *be* in Bulgarian was confirmed. In Serbian the use was more approved in general, while in Bulgarian the use was found to be more limited, and the particle apparently had less positive connotations than in Serbian.

6. Discussion

As shown in the previous two chapters, the most commonly used expressive particles in the three Balkan languages were B-particles: *bre* in Serbian, *be* in Bulgarian and (*v*)*re* in Greek. The informants in the quantitative survey among Serbs and Bulgarians affirmed that they use *bre*, respectively *be*, at least occasionally, and many of them often. In Serbian the use is more approved than in Bulgarian, shown by the fact that most Serbian informants admitted they use the particle ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’, but most Bulgarians chose the options ‘rarely’ or ‘sometimes’. Besides, more Serbs accepted the positive symmetric use than Bulgarians, and more Bulgarian informants chose the option for negative symmetry. Among the Serbian informants a larger number gave the answer they like the use of the particle. Assuming that Bulgarian *be* and Serbian *bre* have a common origin, it is apparent that Bulgarian *be* has been bleached further phonetically from the preceding *bre*, and therefore possibly undergone a further semantic bleaching as well, and this way lost some of its positive connotation, that is still preserved in Serbian.

In all the target languages the particles were defined as interjections in dictionaries, but even though exclamations are a natural context for using them, they were shown to be used in other speech acts as well. Type of speech act, did not show to be a distinguishing factor in accepting or rejecting the particles. On the other hand, position of the particles in relation to the construction of a phrase was the most important factor when approving or denying a placement of a particle.

The placing of the B-particles was found to be flexible in Serbian, as they could be placed in utterance initial, medial and final positions. In the other languages, there were more restrictions on the placement of the particles. The most accepted placement was in the beginning and in the end of utterances. Bulgarian *be* seemed to be most restricted with respect to medial and initial positions, and allowed the initial position only when preceded by another particle, or followed by a term of address.

M-particles, as far as information could be obtained concerning them, were used much more restrictively, if at all. Their placement was not as flexible, especially when it comes to placing them medially. This feature might be attributed to the fact that *more* or *mori* are disyllabic, while *bre* and *be* are monosyllabic, and due to it easier to insert in an utterance. M-particles were dominantly found to precede a name or a title in literature and music texts in Serbian and Bulgarian, and final position was accepted with hesitation in Serbian, but not in Bulgarian. As a Bulgarian informant pointed out, *be* or *bre*

in the beginning of an utterance can be considered rude, but by adding another particle, most often an interjection such as ‘*a*’, the tone can be “softened”. Possibly due to this, in some languages (Assyrian, Balkan Romani) some of the forms *abe*, *abre* or *abri* have developed to be standard variants.

In each language there was a “favourite” particle, i.e. one that was more usual and accepted than the others; In Bulgarian (Sofia-dialect) *be*, in Greek *vre/re*, and in Serbian (Belgrade-dialect) *bre*, all belonging to the B-particles. M-particles, as mentioned, were far more unusual and considered not to be part of contemporary urban speech in any of the three Balkan languages. Acquiring information on grammatical patterns in context of M-particles appeared to be troublesome, as none of the informants declared to use the M-particles except informant G in Greek, rarely, with very intimate friends. In Kurdish there was only one variant found, *bre*.

The attitude on the particles varies, and seems to be partly a question of generation. Although known to have been in use already in the 14th century at least in Serbian and Turkish, the particles are often, at least in public, condemned by the older generations. Many Bulgarian and Serbian informants implied that they had been advised by parents or teachers not to use *bre* or *be*, apparently because of considering them impolite or “primitive” expressions. However, all the informants in the group of over 30 years as well declared that they use the particles sometimes, although the ideal of a polite language seems to become actual when obtaining the role of a parent or a pedagogue.

In all the target languages the particles were considered more or less colloquial, and not accepted in formal speech. Some variation between the languages was detected in which social role was considered to be higher or lower in social hierarchy, but the common ones in all the languages examined not to address the particles to were a priest or a mullah, a professor and a doctor. As expected, friends, siblings, intimate partners (excl.in Kurdish, see chapter 4.) and children were the ones who were apparently experienced to be equal or in the lower level in social hierarchy, and using the particles with them was approved by most of the informants. In many cases parents, and especially grandparents, despite of obvious intimacy, were targets of respect, and were chosen not to be addressed with the particles.

In sum, all the predictions were at least partly confirmed. B-particles were found to be commonly used in all target languages. 100 % of the Bulgarian informants and 98 % of the Serbian admitted they use the most usual B-particles at least occasionally. The B-particles were found to be used in a similar way in Kurdish as in the Balkan languages,

except that in Kurdish the masculine connotation of the word “brother” was still present, and as a result of it the particle could not be addressed to a female. The form *bra/bre*, with lexical meaning ‘brother’ in Kurdish, had clearly been grammaticalized as an expressive particle. The prediction of the use of Bulgarian *be* being distinct of that of Serbian *bre* was confirmed. In Serbian the particle was accepted more often than in Bulgarian and more informants reported that they like it. Inside the sociolinguistic framework of “power and solidarity”, the presumption of the particles being indicators of intimacy and solidarity vs. distance and power in social relations was confirmed. Social hierarchy and traditions evidently dictate with whom the particles are used and from whom they can be expected to be heard.

7. Conclusions and future research

Given these findings, what can be said concerning the origin of the particles? The origin is most obviously seen in Kurdish, where the lexical meaning ‘brother’ is still in use. We may conclude that the lexical origin of the Greek *more* and *mori* is still reflected in its negative connotations, especially when addressing a female. The origin of the B-particles in Serbian and Bulgarian remains mysterious. Considering the more positive connotations in Serbian, and less so for Bulgarian, as well as the unattested sound change $m > b$, it is not clear that they have the same origin as the M-particles. In fact, taking in account all forms of the particles displayed in Table 1, it can be established that there isn’t any single formal element that all the particles have in common: no certain phoneme, not the same placement of an accent nor the same number of syllables (Joseph, 1997).

As stated in the Introduction, in most dictionaries of Balkan languages, *bre*, *vre/re* and *be* are given the etymon *moros*, ‘moron’ in Greek, but considering the findings of this thesis, a more plausible theory would be that B-particles have their origin rather in the east than in the south, i.e. rather in Turkey than in Greece. In Turkish both *bre* and *be* are commonly used, and the pronunciation is identical as in several Balkan languages, except Greek. Taking a look in Turkish etymological dictionary, no explanation for the origin or for the literal meaning can be found. However, a language with a near contact

with Turkish has the particle: Kurdish, where as shown it can be explained as deriving from grammaticalization. Under centuries Turkish and Indo-Iranian people have inhabited same areas in near-east, and loaned words from each other. Transmitting the particle to the Balkans by Turks during the Ottoman occupation seems like a realistic possibility, with *bre* and *be* as regional variants.

As a reply to the question “where do you think *bre* originates from”, 36% of Serbs gave Turkey as the most plausible origin. This might be due to false information or a legend, but it could as well be part of the common consciousness of the Serbian people that has been preserved through centuries, and based on it shouldn't be ignored as a plausible theory of the origin of *bre*. As displayed in the maps in Appendix C, the area where B-particles are in use corresponds approximately the map of The Ottoman Empire, if the regions with Arabic speaking majority are left out. The map of the area where M-particles are found, is considerably narrower, and concentrated around the Greek-speaking regions.

Considering the distinction in approval of the particles in Serbian and Bulgarian, what could be a reason to it? Is the language use in Bulgarian more normative than in Serbian? It is impossible to give an answer in frame of this study. Does the particle *be* in Bulgarian have worse connotations than *bre* in Serbian? Providing that both *bre* and *be* share a common etymon, as presumed here, Bulgarian *be* obviously has phonetically been bleached further from the original *bre*. Therefore a possible theory for explaining the lower approval among the Bulgarian informants could be that the semantic meaning has undergone an additional bleaching as well, and the positive connotation of the original word ‘brother’ has decreased, and the prior solidarity values in *be* have faded.

This, however, is only a hypothesis consistent with the findings of this thesis, and not something that could be derived from it. To explore it further, additional research in historic linguistics and etymology, combined with a closer look at Ancient and Medieval Greek, and Turkish language and history would be motivated.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The example sentences used for the qualitative analysis

A.1 Serbian

	Primer:	Bre	Be	More
1a	Ajde bre!			
1b	Bre ajde!			
2a	Kaži bre!			
2b	Bre kazi!			
3a	Idi spavaj bre!			
3b	Idi bre spavaj!			
3c	Bre idi spavaj!			
4a	Mnogo je kasno bre!			
4b	Mnogo je bre kasno!			
4c	Bre mnogo je kasno!			
5a	Koliko je sati bre?			
5b	Koliko je bre sati?			
5c	Bre koliko je sati?			
6a	Kako si bre?			
6b	Bre kako si?			
7a	(G)de si bre?			
7b	Bre (g)de si?			
7c	Gde si bre Ivane?			
8a	Marija bre!			
8b	Bre Marija!			
8c	Ivane bre!			
8d	Bre Ivane!			
8e	Ej bre Ivane!			
9a	Nemojte da vičete bre! (vi, množina)			
9b	Nemojte bre da vicete! (vi, množina)			
9c	Bre nemojte da vičete! (vi, množina)			
10a	Dajte mi onu knjigu bre! (vi, množina)			
10b	Dajte mi bre onu knjigu! (vi, množina)			
10c	Bre dajte mi onu knjigu! (vi, množina)			
11a	Nemojte da se ljutite bre! (Vi, jednina, u persiranju)			
11b	Nemojte bre da se ljutite! (Vi, jednina, u persiranju)			
11c	Bre nemojte da se ljutite! (Vi, jednina, u persiranju)			
12a	Dajte mi tu knjigu bre! (Vi, jednina, u persiranju)			

12b	Dajte mi bre tu knjigu! (Vi, jednina, u persiranju)			
12c	Bre dajte mi onu knjigu! (Vi, jednina, u persiranju)			
13a	Je si li spreman? Da / Ne bre.			
13b	Jesi li spreman? Bre da/ ne.			
13c	Jesi li spreman?			
14a	More beži odavde!			
14b	Beži more odavde!			
14c	Beži odavde more!			
15a	More šta kažeš? Ne razumem te.			
15b	Šta kažeš more? Ne razumem te.			
15c	Šta more kažeš? Ne razumem te.			

A.2 Bulgarian

Може ли да се каже на български “бе”(“бре” или “море”) в следните изречения?

	Пример:	Be	Bre	More
1a	Хайде бе!			
1b	Бе хайде			
2a	Кажи бе!			
2b	Бе кажи!			
3a	Иди да спиш бе!			
3b	Иди бе да спиш!			
3c	Бе иди да спиш!			
4a	Много е късно бе!			
4b	Много е бе късно!			
4c	Бе много е късно!			
5a	Колко е часа бе?			
5b	Колко е бе часа?			
5c	Бе колко е часа			
6a	Как си бе?			
6b	Бе как си?			
6c	Как си бе Иване?			
7a	Мария / Мариьо ма!			
7b	Ма Мария / Мариьо!			
8a	Иване бе!			
8b	Бе Иване!			
8c	Еи бе Иване!			
9a	Мария / Мариьо бе!			
9b	Бе Мария / Мариьо!			
10a	Недейте да се ядоствате бе! (на няколко човека)			
10b	Недейте бе да се ядоствате! (на няколко човека)			
10c	Бе недейте да се ядоствате! (на няколко човека)			
11a	Дайте ми тази книга бе! (на няколко човека)			
11b	Дайте ми бе тази книга! (на няколко човека)			
11c	Бе дайте ми тази книга! (на няколко човека)			
12a	Недейте да се ядоствате бе! (На един човек)			
12b	Недейте бе да се ядоствате! (На един човек)			

12c	Бе недейте да се ядоствате! (На един човек)			
13a	Дайте ми тази книга бе! (на един човек)			
13b	Дайте ми бе тази книга! (на един човек)			
13c	Бе дайте ми тази книга! (на един човек)			
14a	(Готов ли си?) Да бе.			
14b	(Готов ли си?) бе Да.			
15a	(Готов ли си?) Не бе.			
15b	(Готов ли си?) бе Не.			

A.3 Greek

Can you use βρε, ρε, μωρέ/ μωρή in Greek as displayed in the following sentences?

		Βρε		Ρε		μωρέ/ή	
		yes	no	yes	No	yes	No
1	Έλα,βρε!						
2	Πες μου,βρε!						
3a	Πήγαινε να κοιμηθείς,βρε!						
3b	Πήγαινε βρε να κοιμηθείς!						
3c	Βρε πήγαινε να κοιμηθείς!						
4a	Είναι πολύ αργά, βρε!						
4b	Είναι βρε πολύ αργά!						
4c	Βρε είναι πολύ αργά!						
5a	Τι ώρα είναι βρε;						
5b	Τι ώρα βρε είναι ;						
5c	Βρε τι ώρα είναι ;						
6a	Τι κάνεις βρε;						
6b	Τι βρε κάνεις ;						
6c	Βρε τι κάνεις ;						
7a	Τι γίνεται ρε;						
7b	Ρε τι γίνεται ;						
8a	Μαρία βρε!						
8b	Γιάννη βρε!						
8c	Έι βρε Γιάννη!						
9a	Μη φωνάζετε βρε! (to more than one person)						
9b	Μη βρε φωνάζετε!(to more than one person)						
9c	Βρε μη φωνάζετε! (to more than one person)						
10a	Μου δίνετε το βιβλίο βρε! (to more than one person)						
10b	Μου δίνετε βρε το βιβλίο! (to more than one person)						
10c	Βρε μου δίνετε το βιβλίο! (to more than one person)						
11a	Μην θυμώσετε βρε! (polite, to one person)						
11b	Μη βρε θυμώσετε ! (polite, to one person)						
11c	Βρε μην θυμώσετε ! (polite, to one person)						
12a	Μου δίνετε το βιβλίο βρε! (polite, to one person)						
12b	Μου δίνετε βρε το βιβλίο! ! (polite, to one person)						

12c	Βρε μου δίνετε το βιβλίο! ! (polite, to one person)						
13	Είσαι έτοιμος ; Ναι βρε.						
14	Είσαι έτοιμος ; Οχι βρε.						
15a	Άσε μας βρε						
15b	Άσε βρε μας						
15c	Βρε άσε μας						
16a	Τι λες βρε ; Δεν καταλαβαίνω.						
16b	Τι βρε λες; Δεν καταλαβαίνω.						
16c	Βρε τι λες ; Δεν καταλαβαίνω.						

A.4 Kurdish

Could you use **برا** in some situation as displayed in the following examples?

		بهێنی	نا
	Example	Yes	No
1.	دهی برا		
2.	بێه برا		
3.a	بچۆ بنو برا		
3.b	بچۆ برا بنو		
3.c	برا بچۆ بنو		
4.a	نیستا زۆر درهنگا برا		
4.b	نیستا برا زۆر درهنگا		
4.c	برا نیستا زۆر درهنگا		
5.a	سهعات چهنده برا؟		
5.b	سهعات برا چهنده؟		
5.c	برا سهعات چهنده؟		
6.a	چۆنیت برا؟		
6.b	برا چۆنیت؟		
7.a	دهنگوباس برا؟		
7.b	برا دهنگوباس؟		
8.a	برا مهرنیام گۆی بگره لهم		
8.b	برا کارزان گۆی بگره لهم		
9.a	مهقیژنن برا		
9.b	برا مهقیژنن		
10.a	نهو کتیبم بدهنه برا		
10.b	نهو کتیبم برا بدهنه		
10.c	برا نهو کتیبم بدهنه		
11.a	برا تووره مهبه		
11.b	تووره مهبه برا		
12.a	نهو کتیبم بدهره برا		
12.b	نهو کتیبم برا بدهره		
12.c	برا نهو کتیبم بدهره		
13.a	تۆتهوا بوییت؟ بهێنی برا		
13.b	تۆته نا نا وا بوییت؟ نا برا		

A.5 English (sentences used in Kurdish elicitation, translated from Kurdish)

Could you say like this in Kurdish?

	Examples:	Yes	No
1	C'mon <u>bre</u> !		
2	Tell me _!		
3a	Go to sleep _!		
3b	Go _ to sleep!		
3c	_ go to sleep!		
4a	It's very late _!		
4b	It's _ very late!		
4c	_ it's very late!		
5a	What time is it _?		
5b	What time _ is it?		
5c	_ what time is it?		
6a	How are you _?		
6b	_ how are you?		
7a	What's up _?		
7b	_ what's up?		
8a	_ Maryam, listen to me!		
8b	_ Karzan listen to me!		
9a	Don't shout _! (to more than one person)		
9b	_ don't shout!(to more than one person)		
10a	Give me that book _! (to more than one person)		
10b	Give me _ that book! (to more than one person)		
10c	_give me that book! (to more than one person)		
11a	_don't get angry! (to 2nd sing., polite))		
11b	Don't get angry _! (to 2nd sing., polite)		

12a	Give me that book _! (to 2 nd sing., polite)		
12b	Give me _ that book! (to 2 nd sing. -polite)		
12c	_ give me that book! (to 2 nd sing., polite)		
13a	Are you ready? Yes _.		
13b	Are you ready? No _.		

Appendix B: The questionnaires used in the quantitative survey

B.1 Serbian

FORMULAR ZA ISTRAŽIVANJE UPOTREBE REČI "BRE"

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Ovo je formular za izraživanje upotrebe reci "bre" u raznim kontekstima i sa raznim ljudima. Rezultati izraživanja će da budu korišćeni za studentski rad u okviru lingvistike na Univerzitetu Lunda. Ako imate pitanja vezana za formular ili za izraživanje, možete da me kontaktirate telefonom ili putem e-mejla.

Molim vas odgovorite na sledeća pitanja (označite X-om) :

- (a) Uzrast: Ispod 30 god. [] Preko 30 god. []
 (b) Pol: M [] Ž []
 (c) Obrazovanje: Osnovno [] Srednje [] Visoko []
 (d) Poreklo (mesto gde ste odrasli) : _____
 (e) Živim u inostranstvu [] Koliko dugo? _____ Ne živim u inostranstvu []

1. Da li biste mogli da koristite "bre" u razgovoru sa sledećim osobama? (označite X-om):

	Osoba, razgovarate:	skim	Mogao bih da mu/joj tako kažem, i ne bih se iznenadio da mi on/ona to kaže.	Ne bih mu/joj tako rekao, ali ne bih se iznenadio da mi on/ona to kaže.	Mogao bih da mu/joj tako kažem, ali bih se iznenadio da mi on/ona to kaže.	Ne bih sam rekao , a iznenadio bih se da mi on/ona tako kaze.	Situacija nepoznata, ne znam i ne mogu da zamislim kako bih pristupio.
1	Otac						
2	Majka						
3	Stariji brat						
4	Mlađi brat						
5	Starija sestra						
6	Mlađa sestra						
7	Dete, 0-12 god.						
8	Dete, 12-18 god						
9	Dete, 18-(vaše)						
10	Deda						
11	Baba						
12	Kolega na poslu						
13	Svekar						
14	Svekrva						
15	Drug						
16	Drugarica						
17	Roditelj druga/drugarice	od					

18	Suprug/Supruga					
19	Dečko/Devojka					
20	Nastavnik/Profesor					
21	Prodavač/Prodavačica					
22	Lekar					
23	Sveštenik					
24	Taksista					
25	Konobar/Konobarica					

2. Kakvo mišljenje imate o korišćenju reči "bre"?

Sviđa mi se []

Ne sviđa mi se []

Nemam mišljenje []

3. Koliko često koristite "bre" u svakodnevnom govoru?

Stalno []

Često []

Ponekad []

Retko []

Nikad []

4. Da li vam je neko nekad savetovao da ne koristite reč "bre"? Ko?

5. Kako biste objasnili šta znači "bre"?

6. Šta mislite, odakle je potekla reč "bre"?

7. Ima li nešto što želite da dodate?

HVALA!

B.2 Bulgarian

ФОРМУЛАР ЗА УПОТРЕБАТА НА ДУМАТА "БЕ"

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Моля попълнете следния формуляр за употребата на думата "бе" в българския език. Резултатите ще бъдат използвани за дипломна работа по лингвистика в Lund University. Ако имате въпроси, може да ги зададете чрез e-mail/електронна поща.

Моля отговорете на следните въпроси, като поставите кръст (x) в подходящото място.

1. Бихте ли могли да употребите "бе" в разговор със следните личности, и очаквате ли те да употребят? (означете с X)

	При разговор с:	Сам бих употребил и не бих се учудил ако той/тя би употребил /а в разговор с мен	Сам не бих употребил, но не бих се учудил ако той/тя би употребил/а в разговор с мен	Сам бих употребил, но бих се учудил ако той/тя би употребил /а в разговор с мен	Сам не бих употребил и бих се учудил ако той/тя би употребил /а в разговор с мен	Непозната ситуация / не знам и не мога да си представя
1	Баща					
2	Майка					
3	По-голям брат					
4	По-малък брат					
5	По-голяма сестра					
6	По-малка сестра					
7	Дете, 0-12 год.					
8	Дете, 12-18 год					
9	Дете, 18-(ваше)					
10	Дядо					
11	Баба					
12	Колега					
13	Свекър					
14	Свекърва					
15	Приятел (не интимен)					
16	Приятелка (не интимна)					
17	Родители на Приятел/ка					
18	Съпруг/Съпруга					

19	Приятел/Приятелка (интимен/интимна)					
20	Учител/Професор					
21	Продавач/Продавачка					
22	Лекар					
23	Свещеник					
24	Шофьор на такси					
25	Сервитьор					

2.Какво е вашето мнение за думата “бе”?
Харесва ни [] Не ми харесва [] Нямам особено мнение []

3.Колко често употребявате “бе” във всекидневната реч?
Постоянно []
Често []
Понякога []
Рядко []
Никога []

4. Съветвали ли са ви да не употребявате думата “бе”? Кой?

5.Как бихте обяснили значението на “бе” със свои думи?

6. От къде мислите произлиза думата “бе”?

7.Има ли нещо което желаете да добавите?

МНОГО ВИ БЛАГОДАРЯ ЗА ВРЕМЕТО И УСИЛИЯТА!

14	Mother-in-law					
15	Friend(male)					
16	Friend (female)					
17	A parent of a friend					
18	Husband/Wife					
19	Boyfriend/Girlfriend					
20	Teacher/Professor					
21	Shop- assistant(male/female)					
22	Doctor					
23	Preast(mullah in Kurdish)					
24	Taxidriver					
25	Waiter/Waitress					

2. What is your opinion on using *bre*?

I like it [] I don't like it [] I don't have an opinion on the subject []

3. How often do you use *bre* in everyday speech?

All the time []

Often []

Sometimes []

Rarely []

Never []

4. Has anybody advised you not to use *bre*? Who?

5. What does *bre* mean?

6. What do you think, where does *bre* come from originally?

7. Do you wish to add something?

THANK YOU!

Appendix C

Maps

C.1 The approximate map of the areas where BRE-particles are used (marked with light green)



Geology.com (marking by the author)

C.2 The approximate maps of the areas where MORE-particles are used (marked with bright red)



Geology.com (marking by the author)

