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The Balkan Sprachbund in the Republic of Macedonia Today: “Eurology” as Discontinuity and Dialectology as Continuity

Although almost a century has passed since the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and despite the relatively recent penetration of West European languages to all levels of social life, the conditions that produced the Balkan linguistic league continue to exist on the level of regions and communities. Of particular note is the complexity of multilingualism in the Republic of Macedonia, where patterns of Balkan innovation continue to operate even today. This in turn gives evidence of enduring mechanisms of language contact. Moreover, for various historical reasons, Macedonia continues to function at the heart of Balkan innovation.¹ Thus, for example, the modern spread of double prepositions from southwest to northeast in Macedonian is following the path of the spread of the ‘have’ perfect in previous centuries and is doing so for similar reasons related to Aromanian; the Albanian and Macedonian languages continue to influence one another despite the divisiveness of national politics; Romani continues to respond to its multilingual environment while at the same time engaging in new forms of conservatism. From these and other examples we can conclude that not only does the history of the Balkan linguistic league merit continued investigation, but so does its present. In this contribution I shall argue the case for a continuation of Balkan linguistics through the study of sites of living language contact, i.e. urban neighborhoods and multilingual villages. This approach differs significantly from that of traditional dialectology, deeply implicated in the formation of modern national ideologies. While monolingual villages provide important evidence for the reconstruction of

¹ See Hamp 1977, Friedman 1999.



many areas of linguistic history, including the ultimate effects of language contact, nonetheless, we now know enough about language change to engage its sources, some of which are to be found in multilingual rather than monolingual environments.

Let us first examine Macedonian and Aromanian substrate effect. Gołąb (1984) makes clear that practices of mutual multilingualism among Slavic- and Romance-speaking populations in southwestern Macedonia led to a congruence of grammatical forms (e.g., perfects formed using the auxiliary verbs, 'have' and 'be', in both languages) that reflected those multilingual practices and spread via speaker interaction beyond the original confines of those practices. It is this last process that creates the effect of a sprachbund² when language-contact is involved as the source of change. Thus, for example, the complete replacement of the original Slavic perfect using the auxiliary verb 'be' plus the resultative participle in -l by the new perfect using the auxiliary 'have' with a neuter verbal adjective, took place to the south and west of what can be assumed to have been the core zone around Ohrid and Struga, i.e. in the region with the most intensive contact with Albanian and Greek as well as Aromanian, each of which forms a perfect with the auxiliary 'have.' As one moves further to the north and east, the number of types of perfects formed with the auxiliary 'have' decreases as distance from the core increases, so that in northeastern Macedonia perfects using 'have' do not occur (see Koneski, Vidoeski, and Jašar-Nasteva 1968 and Friedman 1988 for details).

It is important to distinguish this phenomenon from the possessive resultative construction involving a transitive verb with the main verb agreeing with the direct object. Such constructions are found throughout Balkan Slavic and are especially frequent in Aegean Macedonia owing to contact with Greek. They have also been found in the Parakalamos dialect of Romani spoken in Epirus, e.g. *ama therelas arakhlo o kher*, 'if he had found the house' although here intransitive main verbs agreeing with the subject also occur, e.g. *ov therel našto* 'he has left' (Matras 2004:88). What is crucial about the Macedonian 'have' perfect, aside from the invariant neuter main verb form (and absence of limitations on voice, animacy, etc.—see Friedman 1977) is that the directionality of its spread is indicative of classic core-periphery relations in grammatical relations.

Turning now to present day Macedonia, we see a different effect, namely parachuting, i.e. the influence is taking place between two centers that are in close communication without necessarily affecting the intervening countryside. Such phenomena are well attested elsewhere in Europe, but

² Following the practice of younger scholars in the United States, a practice of which I approve, I treat the word sprachbund as an integrated loanword into English, like pretzel.

the current situation in the Republic of Macedonia is of particular interest because it partially replicates relations that have existed in the past without literally reproducing patterns of linguistic presetige. At the time when the 'have' perfect was spreading from the Ohrid region north and east toward Skopje, Ohrid had enjoyed a centuries-long reputation of literary production and ecclesiastical significance, which, however, precisely during the early modern period fell into decline. The spread of the 'have' perfect from this center thus proceeded gradually from the center to peripheries and other centers in a geographically regular fashion. During Macedonia's Yugoslav period, Ohrid was a center of tourism, but was not nearly as important as, for example, the Dalmatian coast or the Aegean coast of Greece. With the break-up of Yugoslavia (1991), the subsequent wars, difficulty of travel, Greek embargos, etc., Ohrid assumed increasing importance as a tourist destination for people from the metropole, i.e. Skopje, which precisely at this time and for these reasons became a metropole on an international rather than local and provincial level. As a result, Ohrid became the primary destination for tourists from Skopje but also the host of many international conferences in the context of which Macedonia was now an independent country. On the Republic level, this has resulted in an increasing awareness of certain indexical specificities of the Ohrid dialect, such as the preservation of the 3rd sg present marker *-t*. This feature, however, is not spreading at the expense of the formerly innovative zero-marker. Rather, it has become an index of Ohrid dialect and as such figures, for example, in jokes the punchlines of which depend on misunderstandings that can arise from the Ohrid form.

Another Ohrid dialect feature, however, namely doubled prepositions, appears to be spreading directly from Ohrid to Skopje Macedonian. While the feature itself is not lacking in either dialect, its relatively greater frequency in Ohrid Macedonian and its current rise in usage in Skopje Macedonian can be attributed first to an Aromanian substratum in Ohrid Macedonian and then to a spread to Skopje Macedonian. The spread can be attributed, in part, to the covert prestige of the Ohrid dialect: e.g. *Ohrid za na doktor* (cf. Aromanian *ti a jatur* lit. 'for at doctor') 'for the doctor' is still strictly Ohrid local, whereas *od na rabota* (cf. Aromanian *di a lukur* lit. 'from at work') 'from work' is now also Skopje colloquial.³ Such doubled prepositional constructions either became obsolete or were more or less pushed out of formal usage. In the 1980s M. Solecka did not find a single example in the Macedonian press. This does not mean that the construction did not occur at all, but that it was also probably being suppressed by proofreaders. Be

³ Cf., e.g., *Овие риби ми требаат за на доктор (Aist peshch një lăps eshti ti a jatur), I need these fish for [to take to] the doctor[s]'* *Ми го дадоја од на работа (N'u dedără di a lukur) 'They gave it to me [from] at work.'* See Марковиќ 2006 for details on Macedonian-Aromanian contact in Ohrid.

that as it may, the current situation in Ohrid is that speakers who are no longer fluent in Aromanian or no longer speak the language nonetheless use constructions in their Macedonian calqued by previous generations of Aromanian-Macedonian bi- (and multi-) linguists (cf. Mithun 1992 on the effect of Native American pragmatics on the English of monoglot speakers descended from polyglots, cf. also Friedman 1999). Given the temporal and spatial distribution of these constructions, we can say that we have here a classic example of contact-influenced feature selection. Doubled prepositions are found in Slavic, they retreated in Macedonian, and have gained new impetus recently as the result of a combination of substrate influence and covert prestige.⁴

In the case of Macedonian and Albanian, each language is currently influencing the other depending on various sociolinguistic circumstances. Thus, for example, in the Čair neighborhood of Skopje, which in the course of the last forty years has gone from a very linguistically mixed neighborhood to one that is predominantly Albanian, young native speakers of Macedonian tend to stress words on the last syllable of the stem rather than on the antepenultimate, e.g. *чове'к-ом* 'the person,' which is the primary stress rule of Albanian.⁵ Another context where Albanian influence shows up in the Macedonian of Albanians and others (and then has the potential to spread) is the use of imperfective presents in Macedonian *да* and future clauses where a perfective present would be expected in Macedonian. The occurrence of such usage is due to the fact that Albanian—which makes a subordinate aspectual distinction in the aorist/imperfect of 'have' that is completely lacking in Macedonian—does not distinguish superordinate aspect in the present but rather indicative/subjunctive, which is lacking in Macedonian. While this is currently perceived as a "mistake" by speakers with Macedonian as a first language, it has the potential to become the site of grammatical change. These same types of phonological and category mapping account for, e.g., the absence of nasal vowels and the merger of the subjunctive and indicative in Debar Albanian, where the historical Macedonian-Albanian bilingualism of Debar townspeople has been a mark of urban identity for centuries.

Another interesting area of influence is the formation of vocatives. Macedonian has a synthetic vocative in *-o*, *-e*, or *-u* (rarely also *-i*) inherited from Common Slavic whereas Albanian has an analytic vocative using the particle *O* with stress and rising intonation before the item in question. The

⁴ Evidence in popular media supports this analysis, e.g. the use or mention of emblematic Ohrid dialect forms in advertising and political reporting

⁵ While it is true that Skopje dialect is less consistent in antepenultimate stress placement than dialects to the west and south, nonetheless the Čair phenomenon is much more widespread and points to Albanian rather than north Macedonian stress patterns

synthetic vocative, especially that in *-o*, has become increasingly restricted, and is often considered rude. Moreover, many modern names or nicknames in *-i* have no morphological vocative. And so, one hears Albanian *O* with the stress and rising intonational contour typical of Albanian being used by Macedonians in, for example, Skopje, e.g. *O Тону!*

On the other hand, Macedonian has influenced Albanian, especially in usages that are more characteristic of formal expression. Thus, for example, as Тоска (2008) has shown, Albanian usage in Macedonia has a tendency to employ adjectival constructions in contexts where Macedonian has an adjective and Albanian normally uses a genitive, e.g. Macedonian *филолошки факултет* would be Albanian *fakultet i filologjisë* but in the Albanian of Macedonia becomes *fakultet filologjik*. In the Albanian of Macedonia, such constructions are recognized as based on Macedonian and criticized as such. Interestingly enough, however, when they spread to the Albanian of Albania they are regarded as being of West European origin and therefore exotic or even prestigious rather than polluting or corrupting.

In Romani-Macedonian contact, a striking feature taking place in the current generation of Romani-speakers is the replacement of the ablative case in *-tar* with a prepositional construction that is etymologically related but syntactically based on the Macedonian type of prepositional ablative, e.g. *Skopjatar vs taro Skopja*, from Skopje = Macedonian *од Скопје*. This change has progressed to the point that the youngest generation of speakers recognize the ablative but do not use it. At the same time that the ablative is receding, however, Romani language education is progressing. Thus, children who might otherwise not use the ablative are being taught to do so at school, and moreover – as opposed to, e.g. the nominative/objective distinction of *who/whom* in English, which is perceived as excessively bookish – the Romani ablative is valorized not as a marker of correctness but rather as a marker of *Romanipe* (the quality of being a Rom). Whether this will translate into a change in general practice remains to be seen.

These types of examples could be multiplied, but the current set will suffice for our purposes here. A final point worth noting is the problematizing of the entry of English lexicon in all the Balkan (as well as many other) languages. One can say in this regard that for the Balkans, English is the Turkish of the twenty-first century: it arouses the same discourses of puristic anxiety that focused on Turkisms in the twentieth century, and at the same time English is the source not only of lexicon but of calques, e.g. Macedonian *Имајте добра вечер* ‘Have a nice evening.’ It is too early to tell, however, whether such calquing will affect grammatical structure or simply become—like many Turkish calques—simply peculiar expressions reflecting a particular historical moment.

In addition to providing evidence for the value of a new, multilingual dialectology, all of the material in this contribution relates to an attempt to subordinate Balkan linguistics to Eurolinguistics or, as I have called it (Friedman 2008), Eurology. The arguments themselves are not new, but they have received an increased impetus from the political rise of the European Union and its ability to invest in broadly European projects such as EURO TYP, where areal processes and typological features are sometimes deliberately conflated, e.g. as Siewierska (1998: v-vi) writes: “Language typology is the study of regularities, patterns and limits in cross-linguistic variation. The major goal of Eurotyp was to study the patterns and limits of variation in [...] the languages of Europe [...] by characterizing the specific features of European languages against the background of non-European languages and by identifying areal phenomena (*Sprachbünde*) within Europe [...] and thus contribute to the characterization of Europe as a linguistic area (*Sprachbund*).” The problem with such connotations, as Hamp (1977) pointed out more than three decades ago, is that similarities arising from language contact are areal and require a history of multilingualism, whereas those that arise from the nature of human language are typological and require neither contact nor historical context. An areal phenomenon can be framed as belonging to a “type” e.g. the so-called analytic vs. synthetic distinction, but such framing – aside from the fact that it tends to oversimplify – runs the risk of obscuring the factors actually involved in the change in question. In a multilingual context, appeals to (typological) universals should be treated like appeals to analogy in genealogical linguistics: they are not without explanatory power, but they must be carefully monitored and each case independently justified.

In the context of Eurology, it is, I would argue, no coincidence that, e.g., Haspelmath (1998) identifies the “nucleus” of a putative European sprachbund at the Romance-Germanic border from the BENELUX nations through France, Germany, and Switzerland, to northern Italy, i.e. the former EEC and also the Holy Roman Empire. Nonetheless it is precisely the Ottoman period that is the crucial one for the formation of the Balkan sprachbund as it came to be recognized, from Kopitar’s early suggestions through Trubetzkoy’s, Seliščev’s, and Sandfeld’s more precise theoretical formulations. More recently, however, and pace these authors, the place of the Balkan dialects of Judezmo, Romani, and Turkish are increasingly recognized. The importance of the Ottoman period can be seen from the textual evidence of such innovations as future formation and infinitive replacement (as well as other features such as the Macedonian ‘have’ perfect). As Olivera Jašar-Nasteva said, during the Ottoman period, with one teskere you could travel the whole peninsula. Moreover, we can add, during this same formative period, what became the core of the EU was

divided into dozens of mini-states that only began to consolidate as the Ottoman Empire broke up.

What we have in the Balkans today in general, and in Macedonia in particular, is continued contact and mutual influence among local languages at local levels.⁶ The fact that more people in the Balkans now know English rather than a neighboring language certainly adds a new dimension to the investigation of the Balkan Sprachbund, but it remains to be seen whether the ultimate effects of English will be comparable to those of Turkish or more fleeting, like those of Venetian. In any case, despite the fact that the homogenizing power of the nation-state has eliminated Balkan multilingualism in large swaths of territory where local language contact was the norm in the past, enough such locales of contact continue to function that the primary focus of our discipline remains a relevant one.

In this connection, it can be argued that what is most urgently needed is a new kind of dialectology that looks at multilingual sites. In general, dialectology has served the interests of nationalism, and in fact was one of the fundamental underpinnings in the nineteenth-century rise of national ideologies in both Western and Eastern Europe. International and regional language atlas projects such as the European Linguistic Atlas, the Slavic Linguistic Atlas, and the Carpathian Language Atlas generally focus on one language per nation-state, or, in the case of non-territorial languages such as Romani, on only one dialect. Even the Romani dialect atlas (Boretzky and Iglá 2004) is monolingual. The *Малый диалектологический атлас балканских языков* project provides a wealth of comparative Balkan data using the traditional dialectological focus on monoglot villages (except for Aromanian). Nonetheless, the development of urban sociolinguistics provides a valuable addition to traditional rural dialectology in studying language contact processes. The time has come to pay more attention to multilingual practices in both urban and rural settings in the modern conditions of an increasingly integrated world.

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⁶ Although this article focuses on Macedonia, such multilingual environments survive in every Balkan nation state. Macedonia, however, is unique in the extent to which multilingualism survives as a valorized phenomenon, albeit both traditional and more modern forms of valorization are suffering erosion from the successes of intolerance displayed by neighboring nation states. For the example of Greece, see Friedman 2010.

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Балкански јазичен сојуз во Република Македонија денес: „еурологија” како неконтинуитет и дијалектологија како континуитет

Со примери од современите македонски, албански, влашки, и ромски градски говори во Република Македонија, во оваа статија се докажува дека процесите што го создадоа балканскиот јазичен сојуз во минатото се уште функционираат во Република Македонија, како и во другите балкански земји. Сепак, додека класичната балканска многујазичност се уште се наоѓа во секоја балканска земја, таа постои повеќе на локалното ниво во другите земји додека во Македонија таа се уште е доста распространета, особено во градовите. Во врска со тоа, во статијата се насочува кон фактот дека заедно со класична дијалектологија со нејзината национална и еднојазично-историска ориентација, има потреба и за дијалектологија на градовите и многујазични села, затоа што точно во тие контексти ги забележуваме изворните резултатите на јазичен контакт. Најпосле, исто така се насочува кон фактот дека балканскиот јазичен сојуз го добиваше неговиот современ образ точно во времето кога во западна Европа, особено во териториите кои после стануваат јадрото на Европската Унија, постојуваше огромна политичка фрагментација додека во Османската Империја, како што велеше Оливера Јашар-Настева, се патуваше низ целиот полуостров со едно тескере. Значи идеата на еден европски јазичен сојуз со центар во јадрото на сегашната Европска Унија и со Балканот на периферијата е повеќе создадена од современата политичка ситуација, а не одговара на истроиските околности на балканскиот јазичен сојуз.

Bałkańska liga językowa w Republice Macedonii dziś: „eurologia” jako nieciągłość i dialektologia jako ciągłość

W niniejszym artykule staram się podtrzymać tezę o ciągłości funkcjonowania procesów, które wykreowały fenomen bałkańskiej ligi językowej i ich żywotności na terytorium dzisiejszej Republiki Macedonii, a także na obszarze pozostałych bałkańskich państw. Tezę tę dokumentuję poprzez przykłady zaczerpnięte ze współczesnych języków, macedońskiego, albańskiego, arumuńskiego i romskiego w miejskim wariacie na terytorium dzisiejszej Republiki Macedonii.

O ile jednak klasyczna bałkańska wielojęzyczność jest obecna jako cecha dystynktywna we wszystkich państwach bałkańskich na poziomie lokalnym, to w Macedonii jest to cecha występująca zarówno na poziomie lokalności, jak i w miastach.

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W związku z tym, w artykule wskazuję na potrzebę badań dialektologicznych w miastach i wielojęzycznych wsiach, a nie tylko na poziomie klasycznej dialektologii z jej narodowo-historycznym i jednojęzycznym ukierunkowaniem, jako że tylko w tych pierwszych można zbadać źródłowe rezultaty kontaktu językowego.

Wreszcie podkreślam fakt, że bałkańska liga językowa swój dzisiejszy obraz osiągnęła w czasie, kiedy Zachód, zwłaszcza zaś obszar jądra dzisiejszej Unii Europejskiej, był podzielony na osobne jednostki polityczne, tymczasem po terytorium Imperium Osmanów podróżowało się, jak podkreśla Oliviera Jašar-Nasteva, z jednym dokumentem podróży (teskere).

Oznacza to, że idea stworzenia jednego europejskiego językowego sojuszu z centrum w obrębie „starych” państw-członków Unii Europejskiej i Bałkanami jako jego peryferiami jest płodem współczesnej sytuacji politycznej, nie zaś historycznego kontekstu, który umożliwił powstanie bałkańskiej ligi językowej.

*Przekład z języka macedońskiego
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