

BALKANISTICA

Volume 25:2
2012

Macedonian Matters:
**Proceedings from the Seventh
Macedonian-North American Conference
on Macedonian Studies**

Edited by
Victor A. Friedman and Donald L. Dyer

Published for
The South East European Studies Association

The Balkan Linguistic League in Macedonia Today¹

Victor A. Friedman
University of Chicago

Although almost a century has passed since the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and despite the influx of West European languages and their speakers, 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 some patterns of Balkan innovation continue to operate even today. This in turn gives testimony to enduring mechanisms of language contact. 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 for similar reasons; the Albanian vocative is spreading into some Macedonian dialects while the Macedonian morphosyntax is spreading into both Albanian and Romani. 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.

Let us first examine Macedonian and the 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 both 'have' and 'be' in both languages) that both 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 *Sprachbund* when language contact is involved as the source of change. Thus, for example, the complete replacement of the original Slavic perfect using 'be' plus the resultative participle in *-l* by the new perfect in '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, all of which have 'have' perfects. As one moves further to the north and east, the number of types of 'have' perfects decreases as distance from the core increases, so that in northeastern Macedonia 'have' perfects are lacking altogether (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. Such constructions 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 nashto* '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 that called *parachuting*, where 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 the current situation in the Republic of Macedonia is of particular interest because it partially replicates without literally reproducing patterns of linguistic prestige relations that have existed in the past. 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 in 1991, the subsequent wars, difficulty of travel and Greek embargos, etc., Ohrid assumed increasing importance as a tourist spot 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 in, for example, jokes whose punchline depends 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, and while the feature itself is not lacking in either language, its relative 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 owing, in part, to the covert prestige of the Ohrid dialect: e.g., Ohrid *za na doktor* (Aromanian *ti a jatur* lit. 'for at doctor') 'for the doctor' is still strictly Ohrid local, whereas *od na rabota* (Aromanian *di la lukur* lit. 'from at work') 'from work' is now Skopje colloquial. Such doubled prepositional constructions were not common in Macedonian in earlier decades and either became obsolete or were more or less pushed out of formal usage. Solecka (1979) did not find a single example in the Macedonian press of the 1970s. This does not mean that the construction did not occur at all, but it was also, at the least suppressed, by proofreaders. Be 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-) linguals (cf. Mithun 1992 on the effect of Native American pragmatics on the English of monoglot speakers descended from polyglots). 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 they have gained new impetus recently as the result of a combination of substrate influence combined with covert prestige.

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., *čovék-ot* 'the person,' which is the primary stress rule of Albanian.² 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 *da* and future clauses where a perfective present would be expected in

Macedonian owing 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. This is currently perceived as a “mistake” by speakers with Macedonian as a first language.

Another interesting area of influence is in 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* before the item in question. The 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 stress and a rising intonational contour typical of Albanian) being used by Macedonians in, for example, Skopje, e.g., *O Toni!*

On the other hand, Macedonian has influenced Albanian, especially in usages that are more characteristic of formal expression. Thus, for example, as Toska (2008) has shown, Albanian usage in Macedonia has a tendency to use adjectival constructions in contexts where Macedonian has an adjective and Albanian normally uses a genitive, e.g., Macedonian *filološki fakultet* 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 *od Skopje*. This change has progressed to the point that the youngest generation of speakers recognizes the ablative but does not use it.

All of the foregoing examples demonstrate the on-going nature of local language contact in the Balkans and thus stand as counterexamples to attempts to subordinate Balkan linguistics to Euro linguistics or, as I have called it “Eurology” (Friedman 2008). The arguments for Eurology are not new, but they have received an increased impetus from the political rise of the EU and its ability to invest in broadly European projects such as EURO TYP, wherein 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 EURO TYP 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 confluations, as Hamp (1977) pointed out more than three decades ago, is that similarities that arise 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 generalized as belonging to a “type,” e.g., the shift from synthetic to analytic declension, but the phenomenon itself is part of a historical process. To conflate the genealogical or areal with the typological, e.g., in collocations such as “Slavic type” or “European type” is to imply some sort of immutable genealogical or areal linguistic essence. Essentialism, in its turn, is a crucial part of ideologies that serve political rather than linguistic purposes.

It is, I would argue, no coincidence that Haspelmath (1998) identifies the “nucleus” of the 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 Holy Roman Empire. Nonetheless, as can be seen from the textual evidence of such innovations as future formation and infinitive replacement, the crucial formative period of the Balkan *Sprachbund* as it became identified from Kopitar (1829) though Trubetzkoy (1923, 1928), Seliščev (1925) and Sandfeld (1930) is precisely the Ottoman one, when, as Olivera Jašar-Nasteva said, with one *teskere* (Ottoman travel document) you could travel the whole peninsula and, we can add, what is now the EU was divided into hundreds of mini-states that only consolidated as the Ottoman Empire broke up.³

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. This is especially true in the Republic of Macedonia, which is both smaller and characterized by more multilingualism than its neighbors. 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*, and we can even say that English is the Turkish of the 21st century, supplying a variety

of lexical items and even calques, such as Macedonian *imajte dobra večer* 'have a good evening.' Nonetheless, 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 and also despite the rise of West European linguistic hegemony, enough local Balkan linguistic contact continues to function that the primary focus of Balkan linguistics remains a relevant one, and this is especially so for Macedonia. To this I would only add that the development of urban sociolinguistics provides a valuable addition to traditional rural dialectology in studying language contact processes.

Notes

1. Some of the research for this article was conducted with support from Fulbright-Hays (2008-09) and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (2009), which I hereby gratefully acknowledge. None of the opinions expressed herein is the responsibility of these organizations.
2. While it is true that the 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 or east Macedonian stress patterns.
3. More recently, and *pace* these authors, the place of the Balkan dialects of Judezmo, Romani and Turkish is increasingly recognized (Friedman 2000).

References

- Friedman, V.A. 1977. *The Grammatical Categories of the Macedonian Indicative*. Columbus: Slavica.
- _____. 1988. "Za složenite minati vremenja vo dihovskiot govor vo sporedba so makedonskiot literaturni jazik," *Jazičnite pojavi vo Bitola i bitolsko deneska i vo minatoto*. Skopje: Makedonska Akademija na Naukite i Umetnostite, pp. 193-200.
- _____. 2000. "After 170 Years of Balkan Linguistics: Whither the Millennium?" *Mediterranean Language Review* 12, pp. 1-15.
- _____. 2008. "Macedonian Dialectology and Eurology: Areal and Typological Perspectives," *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* 61(2), pp. 139-46.
- Gołąb, Z. 1984. *The Arumanian Dialect of Kruševo, SRM*. Skopje: MANU.

- Hamp, E.P. 1977. "On Some Questions of Areal Linguistics," *Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, Whistlers, K., et al. (eds). Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistic Society, pp. 279-82.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 1998. "How Young Is Standard Average European?" *Language Sciences* 20, pp. 271-87.
- Koneski, Blaže, Božo Vidoeski and Olivera Jašar-Nasteva. 1968. "Distibution des balkanismes en macédonien," *Actes du premier congrès international des études balkaniques et sud-est européennes*, vol. 6, Gălăbov, I., V. Georgiev and J. Zaimov (eds). Sofia: Bălgarska Akademija na Naukite.
- Kopitar, J. 1829. "Albanische, walachische und bulgarische Sprache," *Jahrbücher der Literatur* 46, pp. 59-106.
- Matras, Y. 2004. "Romacilikanes – The Romani dialect of Parakalamanos," *Romani Studies*, Series 5 (14:1), pp. 59-109.
- Mithun, Marianne. 1992. "The Substratum in Grammar and Discourse," *Language Contact: Theoretical and Empirical Studies*, Jahr, Ernst Håkon (ed.). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 103-15.
- Sandfeld, K. 1930. *Linguistique balkanique*. Paris: Klincksieck (first published in 1926 in *Balkanfilologien*. Copenhagen: Luno).
- Seliščev, A. 1925. "Des traits linguistiques communs aux langues balkaniques: Un balkanisme ancien en bulgare," *Révue des études slaves* 5, pp. 38-57.
- Siewierska, Anna (ed.). 1998. *Constituent Order in the Languages of Europe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Solecka, Kazimiera M. 1979. "Upotrebuvanje na predlozite vo makedonskiot jazik od gledna točka na normata na literaturni jazik (vo sporedba so drugite balkanski jazici)," *V Naučna diskusija 1978*, pp. 53-58.
- Toska, Valbona. 2008. "Načini na izrazuvanje na semantičkata kategorija posesivnost vo imenskata sintagma vo albanskiot i vo makedonskiot jazik," Ph.D. dissertation, Sts. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje.
- Trubetskoj, N.S. 1923. "Vavilonskaja bašnija i smešenje jazykov," *Evrasijskij vremennik* 3, pp. 107-24.
- Trubetzkoy, N.S. 1928. "Proposition 16," *Actes du premier congrès international de linguistes*, p. 18.

Macedonian owing 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. This is currently perceived as a “mistake” by speakers with Macedonian as a first language.

Another interesting area of influence is in 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* before the item in question. The 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 stress and a rising intonational contour typical of Albanian) being used by Macedonians in, for example, Skopje, e.g., *O Toni!*

On the other hand, Macedonian has influenced Albanian, especially in usages that are more characteristic of formal expression. Thus, for example, as Toska (2008) has shown, Albanian usage in Macedonia has a tendency to use adjectival constructions in contexts where Macedonian has an adjective and Albanian normally uses a genitive, e.g., Macedonian *filološki fakultet* 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 *od Skopje*. This change has progressed to the point that the youngest generation of speakers recognizes the ablative but does not use it.

All of the foregoing examples demonstrate the on-going nature of local language contact in the Balkans and thus stand as counterexamples to attempts to subordinate Balkan linguistics to Euro linguistics or, as I have called it “Eurology” (Friedman 2008). The arguments for Eurology are not new, but they have received an increased impetus from the political rise of the EU and its ability to invest in broadly European projects such as EURO TYP, wherein areal perocesses 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 EURO TYP 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 that arise 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 generalized as belonging to a “type,” e.g., the shift from synthetic to analytic declension, but the phenomenon itself is part of a historical process. To conflate the genealogical or areal with the typological, e.g., in collocations such as “Slavic type” or “European type” is to imply some sort of immutable genealogical or areal linguistic essence. Essentialism, in its turn, is a crucial part of ideologies that serve political rather than linguistic purposes.

It is, I would argue, no coincidence that Haspelmath (1998) identifies the “nucleus” of the 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 Holy Roman Empire. Nonetheless, as can be seen from the textual evidence of such innovations as future formation and infinitive replacement, the crucial formative period of the Balkan *Sprachbund* as it became identified from Kopitar (1829) though Trubetzkoy (1923, 1928), Seliščev (1925) and Sandfeld (1930) is precisely the Ottoman one, when, as Olivera Jašar-Nasteva said, with one *teskere* (Ottoman travel document) you could travel the whole peninsula and, we can add, what is now the EU was divided into hundreds of mini-states that only consolidated as the Ottoman Empire broke up.³

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. This is especially true in the Republic of Macedonia, which is both smaller and characterized by more multilingualism than its neighbors. 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*, and we can even say that English is the Turkish of the 21st century, supplying a variety