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Conjunction Calquing – A Heartland Balkanism

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It has been well established that conjunctions, like discourse particles, with which they overlap, are subject to borrowing among languages, and, moreover, there is a hierarchy in the likelihood of borrowing according to which disjunctives such as ‘but’ are more likely candidates than alternative conjunctions such as ‘or’ which are in turn more likely to be borrowed than combinatory conjunctions such as ‘and’. Matras (1998) explains this hierarchy in functional-pragmatic terms, the basic idea being that the more of a cognitive break or disconnect in the discourse, the more likely the intrusion of a form from another language that is in some way dominant. Disjunctive alternative conjunctions like either/or, neither/nor, etc. have not been examined in this light but seem to follow the same patterns as simple conjunctions. The borrowing of conjunctions among the Balkan languages has received only limited attention, but the calquing of conjunctions has received none at all. In this paper, I shall demonstrate not only that conjunction calquing is possible and occurs, but that it does so under current conditions that continue the Balkan linguistic league despite a century or more of nation-state boundaries. This in turn helps us to nuance concepts such as dominance and prestige.

Weigand (1923/24, 1925) was the first to notice certain similarities between the Albanian admixture (nëshpra) and what he called Bulgarian (in modern terms, Balkan Slavic) admixture usage and suggested that the Balkan Slavic usage was the result of Albanian influence. He described the Albanian admixture as an inverted perfect and cited example (1), transcribed here as in the original, in both articles:

(1) 'To bilo xtabo v grad! (Bulgarian)
   Kjen-ka bukër ndë kasaba! (Albanian)
   'How fine town life is!'

The 1925 article generated denials of Albanian influence on Bulgarian by Roman斯基 (1926) and Behislev (1928), but it was cited approvingly by Sandfeld (1938: 119–120). Earlier assertions that the Albanian admixture derived from an unattested inverted future have been definitively rejected by Demiraj (1971), who

1 Dominant in this sense is broadly conceived as situational, social, or cognitive. Matras (1998) gives a variety of excellent examples illustrating the various ways in which the term dominant can be understood, a point to which we shall return.
also demonstrates the fact that the admlicative is attested in its current form (albeit with variable semantics) in the earliest Albanian writers (see also FRIEDMAN 2010). FRIEDMAN (1980, 1981, 2005) gives an exhaustive summary of previous discussions for Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Turkish and also demonstrates the fundamental differences between the Balkan Slavic and Turkish phenomenon, on the one hand, and the Albanian, on the other. The Albanian admlicative is marked for non-confirmativity, i.e. surprise (which requires a contrary expectation, i.e. a previous state of nonbelief), doubt or disbelief, or implication that the information is inferred, reported, etc. It constitutes a distinct set of paradigms in which the present, although derived historically from an inverted perfect, is now a true present. The past nature of the Balkan Slavic phenomenon can be seen in the fact that any of the Albanian past admitrivates (imperfect, perfect, and pluperfect) can substitute for the present admlicative precisely in contexts where Balkan Slavic has an admlicative use of the perfect.2 This can be seen from (2a–e), where (2a) is the original Bulgarian, (2b) is the Macedonian translation — both with admitrivative usage of the past bil — while (2c–d) are Albanian translations of the same Bulgarian sentence using a perfect and pluperfect admlicative, respectively, and (2e) is a translation of a similarly admitrivative usage of the plural bilo with an imperfect admlicative:

   c. Bre! gomor to mëdh pusku qëntë ky njeri! [KONSTANTINOV 1975: 96]
   d. Ore, fure gomor pusku qëntë ky njeri! [KONSTANTINOV 1975: 98]
   ‘What an ass that guy is!’
   e. Ama njerëz, fure pa mend qënqërsnin këtu ... [KONSTANTINOV 1975: 24]
   ‘What fools are these … ’

By contrast, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (e.g., FRIEDMAN 1981, 1986, 2005) the Balkan Slavic admitrivatives are actually non-confirmitative uses of the unmarked past or perfect whose non-confirmativity is derived from the contrast with a marked confirmative past. In the Albanian of Macedonia, however, we find a new development of the admlicative, viz. the replacement of the 3 sg. present optative of ‘be’ qofte X, qofte Y with the 3 sg. pres. admitrivative of ‘be’ genka X, genka Y in the meaning ‘be it X or be it Y’ or ‘whether X or Y’. I will argue here that this is a Balkanism connected with Macedonian influence that derives from an Albanian reinterpretation of a Macedonian optative usage of the Macedonian verbal l-form.

2 Another argument for the unmarkedness of the Balkan Slavic usage is the fact that a question with no past reference can use the present admlicative in Albanian but not the Balkan Slavic admlicative usage of the unmarked past, e.g. Albanian Ku genka mjetër! but not Macedonian *Kade bil majozeror for ‘Where is the boss?’

3 CAMAI (1984: 163) makes the important point that in both older and modern Albanian writers, the subjunctive present admlicative can be used in the protasis of irreal conditionals, as in his example ‘te fryke era, s’kishte m neqet kajet’ ‘If the wind were blowing, we would not sit outside’. NEWMARK, HUBBARD and PRIFTI (1982: 86) also cite the irreal conditional usage of the imperfect and pluperfect subjunctive admitrivative, e.g. ‘... fluturqitë e sillen ca ne te vogla, te sez pi, sikur te qenqeshin tim prej dannimit ... ’ there fly around and roam about a few small clouds, pitch black, as if they actually were dynamite smoke’ and Sikur e gjuhja te mas puskeqe te njerëz është kuch neq vetura kushtë do te kishte mjetër ashtu ... ’ ‘If his grandmother had not actually stuck her head out of the cart ... , who knows how long he would have remained like that ... ’. These modal uses are connected with usages in some of the earliest attested admitrivatives (see DEMIRAJ 1971) and are, I would argue, a development that is entirely distinct from the non-confirmitative meaning (see also LLOISI 2010 on the modal fate of the admlicative in Arvanitika). As CAMAI (1984: 187) points out, the Albanian optative itself is an internal Albanian development with close morphological ties to the aorist (which, we can add, is the one paradigm absent from the admlicative). It would appear that expressions of desire and irrealis were in a state of relative flux in Albanian for some time before the attestation of our earliest documents. Nonetheless, the phenomenon we are examining in this article is based on a later Albanian system, where both optative and admlicative have achieved their current states, but at the same time a new development is possible.
(3) bylo nie bylo, zrobني to (Polish)
    ‘kako da da e, kje go napravime to’ (Macedonian gloss)
    ‘No matter what, we will do it.’ (lit. let it be or not be/
    how it is, we will do it.)
She compares this to usages of bilo in Ukrainian and bio, etc. in the former Serbo-
Croatian, such as (4):

(4) Bilo doc! = ‘ko ti je krv sto nisi došao’ (BCS)
    ‘You should have come’ = whose fault is it you didn’t come
VAILANT (1966: 97) attributes such uses of the l-participle to an elliptical optative
composed of da plus the conditional (3 sg. bi plus l-participle), e.g., Macedonian
Daj l Bog dobrot! literally ‘May God grant you [that which is] good!’ He also no-
tes that Russian uses of the type polet ‘Let’s go!’ have nothing to do with the South
and West Slavic phenomenon under consideration here but are rather expressive
uses of the past (cf. colloquial English We’re outa here’). It thus seems to be the
case that we are dealing with an old in力を that spread from South to North to in-
clude West Slavic and even Ukrainian, but not Russian.
In Macedonian, the l-form was reinterpreted as a perfect rather than an elliptical
conditional and can thus occur in other persons with the auxiliary of the old perfect
rather than the conditional marker, e.g. Da ne sum te videl! literally ‘May I not
have seen you’, i.e. I’d better not see you [around here]. In the course of subse-
quent centuries, the perfect meaning of the old present resultative perfect using the
l-form in Macedonian came into competition with that paradigm’s non-confirma-
tive meaning, which arose as a result of the development of marked confrimativity
in the synthetic pasts (see FRIEDMAN 1986 for detailed discussion). In southwestern
Macedonian, with the rise of a new resultative perfect using the auxiliary ima
‘have’ and the neuter verbal adjective, the old perfect using the present of ‘be’ plus
the verbal l-form became restricted to non-confirmative usage and, in the extreme
southwest, disappeared almost entirely. To the north and east of the Ohrid-Struga
region up to the river Vardar (and beyond, since World War Two), the old and new
perfects are in competition, and the old perfect using the verbal l-form is an un-
marked past, but with a chief contextual variant meaning of non-confirmativity (see
FRIEDMAN 1977 for detailed explanation).
At the same time, with all these developments, a remnant of the old Late Com-
mon Slavic use of the l-participle as an optative (without, n.b., an auxiliary in all
the languages where it occurs) developed in Macedonian and Bulgarian into a
disjunctive alternative conjunction using the third person singular neuter of ‘be’
bilo ..., bilo ... in the meaning ‘whether ..., or ...’4 In its meaning, this construction

corresponds to the Albanian use of the 3 sg. present optative qëfet ... qëfet ... In
modern Albanian, the optative is more or less limited to expressions such as rëfufal!
‘thank you’ (literally, ‘may you live’), me nder qëfet ‘you’re welcome’ (literally
‘may you be with honor’) and a variety of other formulae, blessings, and curses
that can use any verb in any person, such that the paradigm is very much alive al-
bite quite restricted in function. These functions, however, are very tightly con-
tected to the desiderative function of the optative. As such, it rarely occurs outside
this function, and when it does, e.g., in the expression në qëfet se ‘if it’, it can always
be replaced by some other locution (ne, po, po t’i, etc.).
In the Albanian of Macedonia (but not that of Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania, or
Greece), it appears that the combination of restriction of the Albanian optative to
wishes combined with the surface similarity of the Macedonian optative use of the
l-form to its non-confirmative use, especially with the verb ‘be’ as in the example
from Weigand cited for Bulgarian above (the Macedonian would be the same,
mutatis mutandis, see FRIEDMAN 1981, 1986 for further discussion), has resulted in
a calqued replacement of qëfet by qenka in the meaning of ‘whether ..., or ...’.
Thus, for example, an Albanian politician from Tetovo talking with a colleague in
Skopje about the importance of investment made the point that nationality was
irrelevant: qenka shqiptar, qenka amerikan, qenka macedonas ... ‘[it doesn’t mat-
ter] whether it’s (= let be) an Albanian, an American, or a Macedonian ...’. The
Macedonian for qenka here would be bilo, while standard Albanian would use
qëfet in this position.
As indicated above, based on evidence from a variety of languages (MATRAS 1998),
we have here an interesting and relatively rare example of calquing as op-
posed to ordinary borrowing in a conjunction. Thus, for example, in the hierarchy
of borrowed conjunctions in Romanian (and elsewhere), ‘but’ is most likely to come
from the most recent contact language, ‘or’ from an older contact language, and
‘and’ is least likely to be borrowed (ELIŠK and MATRAS 2006: 185). Consistent
with this hierarchy, colloquial Macedonian and Albanian share Turkish ama for
‘but’ (literary Albanian por and literary Macedonian no), but have native expres-
sions for ‘or’ and ‘and’. Moreover, in the context of nineteenth and twentieth cen-
tury nation-state politics, neither Macedonian and Albanian in what is today the
Republic of Macedonia occupied positions of prestige prior to World War Two. In
terms of the concept of dominance, therefore, this calque argues for a source in
situations where Macedonian had some sort of contextual dominance not associ-
ated with prestige or politics. As MATRAS (1998: 322) makes clear, dominance can
be pragmatically conditioned by a variety of factors such as topic, addressee, and
conversational expectations that do not necessarily involve prestige. If the first

4 Some speakers of BCS accept the bilo ... bilo ... construction, and it is attested in
literature, but other modern speakers today reject such usage.

5 I wish to thank Rexep Ismaili of the Academy of Arts and Sciences of Kosovo and
the University of Pristina for confirming that this usage is limited to Macedonia.
occurrence of the calque was the result of the cognitive dominance of Macedonian in a bilingual speaker, the subsequent spread of the construction to the Albanian dialects of Macedonia in general could have been promoted by other factors. Given that that Albanian optative is used most often for expression of the speaker’s desire, its use in a conjunction that expresses indifference or alternatives rather than actual wish may have been contributed to its vulnerability to the calqued alternative. The fact that this Albanian usage is a calque and not a borrowing – and at the middle level in the hierarchy of likelihood – points to a long-standing local bilingualism between the Albanian and Macedonian language communities of the type that give rise to the Balkan sprachbund. Such a calque also demonstrates both the accessibility and the vulnerability of verbal forms when used in the function of other parts of speech. Finally, it is the Albanian calque that illuminates the grammatical complexity of the Macedonian structure.

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