

Abstract: The paper deals with the mechanisms and outcomes of the language contacts between the local dialects of Albanian and Slavic in the framework of some major theoretical issues of the Balkan contact linguistics. The zones of ongoing contact in East Albania (Gollobordë area) and South Montenegro (Mrkovići area) uncover special mutual contact-induced changes in all structural levels of Albanian and South Slavic dialects. Contact induced change variation through time and space reveals the general paths of language convergence in the Balkans and the restrictions that apply to that convergence.

Keywords: Albanian dialects, Montenegrin dialects, Albanian-Slavic Symbiosis, Albanian-Slavic language contact, Balkan Sprachbund.

This conference paper addresses a previously understudied type of language contact setting in the Western Balkans, which presents symbiosis among Albanians and Slavs, linguistic convergence in a balanced bilingual sociolinguistic situation and balkanization processes (linguistic change in the Balkans) *in statu nascendi*. The new field data on the idioms of multiethnic, multilingual groups of people contribute to the general theory of language contact and special Balkan Sprachbund theory. We try to overcome new theoretical ambivalence in contact linguistics and thus a deconstruction of the ideal of knowledge. To the research aspects belong linguistic competence of bilingual informants in L1 and L2; dialectal attribution of bilingual speech; phonetics, grammar and lexicology of L1 and L2; authentic transcribed dialectal texts showing code switching and mixing.

The Balkan communities provide an exceptionally valuable special case of linguistic convergence (i.e. matter and pattern borrowing, mutual reinforcement, code-switching, code-mixing, etc.) which preserves the linguistic identity of groups of people. A question is important, what kinds of strategies, scenarios, agents, mechanisms worked through the history of the peninsula to achieve this outcome of linguistic convergence and can we convincingly reconstruct them in cases where the historical evidence is almost absent? Are there limits of grammatical and lexical assimilation of

contact languages to each other special to the Balkans? Is there any causal relationship between the observable contact settings and the outcomes of the demonstrated contact induced language change? Are there contact situations that are more responsible for Balkan linguistic convergence than others? And what can be gained in the observation of Balkan symbiotic societies with balanced, or nondominant bilingualism?

Linguistic reconstruction of ethnic symbioses among Balkan peoples, as well as criticism of the idea from the standpoint of ethnically centered philology, have received coverage in both early and more recent literature. Important studies have considered interactions between Albanians and Slavs (Šufflay 1925; Desnitskaia 1976; Curtis 2012; Dombrowski 2013; Gashi 2015). It is important to mention, that anthropologists consider for symbiotic only those communities where groups of people enter into linguistic, cultural and anthropological relations of complementary distribution (Barth 1969); against that background the usage of the term in linguistics seems rather inconsistent. That groups in the Balkans are now rare and reliable information about them is almost absent. Was their role in Balkan mixoglossia and emergence of the Balkan convergent language group, i.e. Sprachbund, in the past important?

One of the rare symbiotic societies in the Balkans still persists in the area of Mrkovići in Southern Montenegro, to the south of Bar (Antivari), where the community in the village of Velja Gorana is characterized by a rare case of Albanian-Slavic linguistic exogamy (Jovićević 1922: 113; Vujović 1969). Balkan linguistics has turned toward the material from the group recently (Sobolev 2015; Morozova 2016; Morozova & Rusakov 2018; Morozova 2019; 2020; Morozova & Dugušina 2020). The group, situated exactly on the linguistic and ethnic border between Slavs and Albanians, is characterized by balanced bilingualism in a symmetrical situation without the dominance of one language over another (Muysken 2000: 726). The long-term bilingual condition of this group is reproduced for more than a century and does not result in a consequential shift from one language to another. The direct observation of the current situation of “contact at work” and mutual linguistic accommodation with barriers to this process shows, in which cases were Albanian and Slavic donors to each other, in which cases were they recipients, and in which cases were they neither. The current research fixed all idioms used in the Mrkovići (Velja Gorana) symbiotic community; revealed the degree of mutual isophoneticism, isogrammatism and isosemantism in these idioms; determined the inherited and acquired elements in the speech of bilingual speakers; described the sociolinguistic parameters of the linguistic situation. The people interact here with partial symmetry in power, prestige and linguistic competence of L1 and L2:

men use standard Serbo-Croatian (“Montenegrin”) and local Serbo-

Croatian (“Mrkovići”) dialect as L1 = local Albanian dialect(s) as L2; women use local Albanian dialects as L1 and standard Serbo-Croatian (“Montenegrin”) and local Serbo-Croatian (“Mrkovići”) dialect as L2.

There is no Standard Albanian in active usage.

As for power relationships, the powerful group in the country are the orthodox Montenegrins. The dwellers of the Mrkovići area (predominantly Moslem Slavs and some Albanians) belong to the less powerful groups. The modern state language, prestigious language of religion and emblematic language is standard Serbo-Croatian (“Montenegrin”). There are two languages of the wider communication in the region, standard Serbo-Croatian and Albanian. The local Serbo-Croatian (“Mrkovići”) dialect and local Albanian dialects play the role of the indigenous minor language, everyday language within the family and neighbourhood, local language on the regional level.

The linguistic competence and speech production of our *bilingual* informants from Velja Gorana is perfect in both languages, Serbo-Croat and Albanian (Vujović 1969; Sobolev 2015; Morozova 2020).

Typical Serbo-Croat phonological and morphophonological features occur regularly in their Slavic speech, like /r/ [kr̩sti] ‘back’; /ε/ [ʃupɛk] ‘arse’; kuk SG ~ kukovi PL ‘hip’. Their Albanian speech production shows inherent local phonology and morphonology as well: the opposition of long and short vowels [plak] ‘old man’ ~ [pla:k] ‘old woman’; /y/ [kryti] ‘head’; /ø/ [bøθa] ‘arse’; /uⁿ/ truⁿ ‘brains’; /ə/ [vetəʃ] ‘eyebrow’; the contrast between the retroflex /ɽ/ and trill /r/: [ru:j] ‘I guard’ – [ru:ɽ] ‘I shave’; interdental consonants /θ/ and /ð/, ex. [θoni] ‘nail’; free variation of [ð] and [tʃ], ex. [ð’ija] or [tʃ’ija] ‘goat’; /ɹ:/ [i ɹat] ‘long’; devoicing of final obstruents [i maθ] ‘big’, [zok] ‘bird’, [i verθ] ‘yellow’, [lu:k] ‘spoon’; krah INDEF ~ krahi DEF ‘arm’. Some of the phonological oppositions disappear in the L2 Albanian speech as a result of imperfect learning.

The Velja Gorana Slavic phonetics reveals traces of Albanian influence in borrowings like [boʃa] ‘kind of snake’, [ðokun] ‘small puddle’ and in genetically slavic lexical items, ex.: [v] [zl’vto] ‘gold’; [sv’ɔdba] ‘wedding’; [tʃ] [kʃɔs] ‘spike’; [mɔʃi] ‘small’; [tʃʌm] ‘to rub’; regular devoicing of final obstruents [grat] ~ [grada] ‘city’. In Slavic word formation one finds the Albanian diminutive suffix -za in personal names and patronyms Alb. Dabza ~ Slav. Dabezić; Alb. Nikëza ~ Slav. Nikezić, and in toponyms. In Slavic grammar structural calques from Albanian can be observed, like the preposition ge ‘at; to’ which takes the object in nominative ge d̑zmija ‘at/to the mosque’; the merger of sociative (comitative) and instrumental grede kozama ‘(S)he goes with goats’; the prepositional constructions mleko o krave ‘cow’s milk’; potok o ʃkurte ‘river Shkurta’. Reciprocally, in Albanian speech structural borrowings from Slavic can occur, like the accusative

complement of the verbs of pain: Asanin e ðemp kryti 'Asan's head hurts'.

Examples of lexical calquing from Albanian appear in Slavic, like the names of the autumn months *prvi jeseni* 'September', *drugi jeseni* 'October', *treći jeseni* 'November' (*vjeshtë e parë*, *vjeshtë e dytë*, and *vjeshtë e tretë*) or *babovejli* 'paternal grandfather' in the kinship terminology (in great detail in Morozova 2019; 2020). Loanwords from Albanian are present as well, many of them coexisting as full synonyms to native words which are also in use. On the other side, moderate quantity of borrowings from Slavic occur in Albanian speech as well (ex. *pipata* 'pot'), discourse markers like *ali* 'but', *isto* 'too', *stvarno* 'really' being more often.

In spontaneous speech unmotivated code switchings can take place, cf. the transcript by Maria Morozova (2020):

e, da ti k'azem za to. i dandan'as se kəzuj'e ta z'ima. sm'rgł̩a je 'ona u płan'inu, u ʃarpłan'inu u ałb'aniju. sm'rgł̩a je p'ołsto 'ona se fəl'iłta kə j'eno prol'eł̩e. iz łivd'u prānv'erəs. bok je p'ołtao... ja ka łf'u ft'ofin e u ŋri d'elet e t'əna, aj'ł me d̩ziθ d'elen, me d̩ziθ m'ad̩zen n mał. i dandan'as su t'ije k'ameje ʃto su s'łuzeli ju. i d'andan'as. i 'ot toga d'ana se z'ove... kəd z'ima na izł'as m'ərta k'əze b'abe su. tr'ułskaju se b'abi. ʃk'unen pł'akat. t̩etiri d'ana.

Hey, let me tell you about this. Even nowadays that (kind of) winter can happen. She iced up in the mountains, in the Shar mountains in Albania. She iced up because she boasted in the spring. She boasted in the spring. The God sent... He sent coldness and her sheep iced up, she iced up with all the sheep, with a kneading trough in the mountains. Even nowadays there are the stones that she used. Even nowadays. And from that day it is called... when winter ends in march they say, there are 'old ladies'. 'Old ladies shake'. 'Old ladies shake'. Four days (long).

Although the conditions of language contact, intralinguistic processes and patterns of code-switching, as well as general results of contact-induced linguistic change in Mrković area have affected all levels of language structure: phonetics/phonology, grammar and vocabulary, it is important to summarize that we don't observe any deeper change in phonological, grammatical and lexical systems of the both languages in contact. Interference affects mainly the allophonic level in phonology and periphery of morphosyntax and vocabulary. Two clearly opposed phonologies and two grammars coexist in the same bilingual individual.

In order to determine the role of social circumstances in the outcomes of linguistic contact we need more data on the qualities of bilingualism, code switching strategies, bilateral linguistic accommodation, past language change situation and social practices. At present we can sum up, that no creolization, language mixing, no hybridization, no emergence of new types, no language death can be observed: the bilinguals in Velja Gorana

seem to master perfectly the cognitive load of the two different linguistic systems they use.

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