

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TURKISH LANGUAGE ON ALBANIAN DIALECTS IN MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Borrowing new words from other languages has been and continues to be an ongoing linguistic process. The influence of languages is mutual, but for various reasons such as cultural, economic, commercial, religious, political, etc., one language may exert a stronger influence on another. The Balkan Turkish varieties are essentially a collection of dialects related to Turkish, representing variants of Turkish. Turkic loanwords in Albanian have long attracted the attention of local and foreign linguists. Various studies have been conducted regarding the general situation and classification of Turkish varieties in Macedonia. The sources regarding the past of Turkish speakers in Macedonia are very limited.

Keywords: Turkish language, language influence, Albanian dialect, Macedonia

Introduction

The study of linguistic interference is a highly complex issue. On the one hand, linguistic interaction in territories where several languages have coexisted for centuries is particularly extensive. Language evolution does not immediately reflect historical events; rather, it tends to preserve, over long periods of time, the influences of earlier historical stages. The complex ethnolinguistic situation and the language contacts it has conditioned remain present in the Balkan states, especially in Macedonia. Within this context, Turkish has exerted a considerable influence on the phonetics, morphology, syntax, and semantics of the Albanian language. The dialectal varieties of Albanian, in addition to lexical borrowings, also contain calques derived from Turkish. Such calques are most frequently produced in communities where individuals speak two or more languages, as well as in sociolinguistic environments in which bilingualism has affected broad segments of the population.

Borrowing new words from other languages has been and continues to be an ongoing linguistic process. One of the most significant linguistic issues has been the relatively late interest of linguists and scholars in studying the influence of one language on another. Since the famous German linguist Schuhart's assertion that no language is pure, the issue of the mutual influence of languages has become an important subject of research²².

Among Albanian linguists who have addressed the relationship between Albanian and other languages, such as Çabej, I. Ajeti, Sh. Demiraj, R. Ismajli, M. Blaku it is emphasized that the study of linguistic borrowings holds particular importance both for Albanian and for the languages with which it has been in contact and communication. The influence of languages is mutual, but for various reasons such as cultural, economic, commercial, religious, political, etc., one language may exert a stronger influence on another. For example, the Turkish language has had a considerable impact on the lexicon of Albanian, while it has also adopted certain elements from Albanian.²³

²²Mehdi Polisi, *Turqizmat në të folmet shqipe të Republikës së Maqedonisë, tezë doktorature* (doctoral thesis), p. 2-7; Srdan Musić, *Romantizmi u Severo-zapadnoj Boki Kotorskoj*, Beograd, 1972, p. 13.

²³Eqrem Çabej, *Elementet e shqipes në gjuhët e tjera të Ballkanit*, in: Studime gjuhësore III, Prishtinë, 1987, p. 71.

Turkic loanwords in Albanian have long attracted the attention of local and foreign linguists. It has been repeatedly stated that some elements of Turkic in Albanian, Turkish in Albanian, as well as in other languages of Southeastern and Eastern Europe, were first identified by Miklosich²⁴ in the first half of the last century. The German Albanologist Meyer, who had an excellent knowledge of Turkish, included 1,180 Turkish words in his well-known dictionary containing 5,140 fundamental lexical items²⁵.

Regarding the use of Turkisms in the Albanian language, two contrasting perspectives may be illustrated. According to Eqrem Çabej: *“In the last century, especially during the period of the National Renaissance, the attitude toward Turkish borrowings took the form of a systematic struggle. Although this struggle was understandable in that historical context, under present conditions it may be regarded as excessive. It should not be forgotten that many Turkish borrowings have entered the language of the people and for this reason cannot be removed from use. The worst thing is that, those who oppose (fight) these words, believing that avoiding Turkisms contributes to the purification of the language, often replace them with other words of foreign origin. Such a qualitative change, for example the further reduction of the values of the Turkisms, is from an objective scientific point of view completely incompatible with the Greekisms and Italianisms...”*²⁶.

According to Professor M. Polisi, the use of words borrowed from languages oriental languages should be approached with caution, that is, we should avoid two extremes: on the one hand, their general elimination and on the other hand, their excessive use, and whenever the Albanian language (literary and spoken) has all the possibilities of substitution, they should be replaced with Albanian words. Since, as Sami Frashëri uses a Persian expression *“Better the devil you know than the devil you don't”*²⁷.

The general situation of Turkish varieties in Macedonia

The Balkan Turkish varieties are essentially a collection of dialects related to Turkish, representing variants of Turkish. Despite this situation, the term *“Anatolian varieties”* is often considered sufficient for the Anatolian Turkish dialects, as in many studies titled *“The varieties of Anatolia and Rumelia”* do not mention the Turkish dialects of the Balkans.

In the classification made in 1896 by Ignác Kúnos, the Ottoman-Turkish dialects are divided into seven regions, while in the classification made in 1946 by A. Caferoğlu, the Turkish dialects of Turkey are divided into nine regions, but neither mentions the Turkish dialects of the Balkans²⁸.

Various studies have been conducted regarding the general situation and classification of Turkish varieties in Macedonia. Among the researchers who have contributed to such studies we can mention Gyula Németh, Emil Boyev, N.K. Dimitriev, Mefküre Mollova, E.A. Grunina, Iryna Dryga, Ahmet Günşen. The study by Gyula Németh has largely solved the issue *“temporarily”*. The characteristics of the Western Rumelia branch are presented in eight points in the article titled *“On the Classification of the Turkic Dialects in Bulgaria”*. The explanation at these points was accepted and subsequently applied in many subsequent studies²⁹.

Languages that come from the same family or languages that are in contact with each other are not different in black and white form. These are like shades of gray passing from one color to another. If we were to give an example from the Balkans, it is impossible to say that the

²⁴F. Miklosich, *Die turkischen Elemente in den sudost und osteuropaischen Sprachen*, v. I, 1884; II, 1890

²⁵ G. Meyer, *Etymological Worterbush door Albanian Language*, Strasbourg, 1891.

²⁶ Eqrem Çabej, *Huazimet turke*, in: Studime gjuhësore III, Pristina, 1987, p. 67.

²⁷ M. Polisi, *Turqizmat në të folmet shqipe të Republikës së Maqedonisë, tezë doktorature*, p. 7.

²⁸ Ahmet Günşen, *“Balkan Türk Ağızlarının Tasnifleri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme”*, in: Turkish Studies, v. 7, Ankara, 2012, pp.114-115.

²⁹ Gyula Németh, *“Bulgaristan Türk Ağızlarının Sınıflandırılması Üzerine”*, in: Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı, Ankara, 1983, p. 119.

Albanian spoken in Albania is different from the Albanian spoken in the Kumanovo region of Macedonia. The transitions have always been, for example, from Macedonian to Bulgarian or Serbian, from Serbian to Bosnian or Croatian. Natural (varieties) languages know no borders. Standard languages do. Borders are political³⁰.

The sources regarding the past of Turkish speakers in Macedonia are very limited. The use of the Arabic alphabet during the Ottoman period also poses an important problem in identifying the characteristics of the varieties. Regarding the dialects of Turkish in Macedonia in the 19th century, we can obtain information from Gjorgji Pulevski's two dictionaries, *the Quadrilingual Dictionary* (1873) and the *Trilingual Dictionary* (1875). His first work is a Serbian-Macedonian-Turkish-Greek dictionary, while the second work is a dictionary in three parallel columns in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish, written in the Cyrillic alphabet³¹.

The first study on these dictionaries was presented for the first time in the world of Turkology in 1964 by György Hazai with his work entitled "*Rumeli Ağızları Tarihinin İki Kaynağı Üzerine*" (On Two Sources of the History of the Rumelian Dialects) (1964).

In the dictionaries we can see the influence of the Southwestern and Western Macedonian Turkish dialects. It is likely that these parts were translated into Turkish, not only by Pulevski, but also by others. These two dictionaries are very important sources for identifying ancient characteristics of the Turkish dialects in Macedonia. Although written in Cyrillic script, the characteristics of Macedonian Turkish can be distinguished through comparative methods and careful examination of consonant shapes³².

At first, the studies of foreign Turkologists were generally important, but with the establishment of the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philology of the University of "Saints Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje (1976-1977), the interest in these studies grew considerably. In the period 1990-2000, many studies were conducted on Turkish dialects in Macedonia. Researchers who have studied Turkish dialects in Macedonia are:

Arif Ago, Hamdi Hasan, Oktay Ahmed, Nazım İbrahim, Aktan Ago, etc. Researchers who have studied these dialects outside Macedonia are: Victor Friedman, Erdoğan Boz, Recep Yusuf, Şirin Tufan, Gürer Gülsevin, Ahmet Günşen, Alpay İğci, etc.³³

If we were to classify the Turkish dialects in Macedonia taking into account the changes brought by the old (Ottoman) centers and by the Turkish tribes that settled here from Anatolia in the past, a classification could be made as follows: Northern dialects (Kumanovo, Tetovo, Skopje), Western dialects (Gostivar, Vrapcishte, Kicevo, Debar), Southwestern dialects (Struga, Ohrid, Resen, Bitola), Eastern dialects (Valandovo, Dojran, Radovis, Stip)³⁴.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although Turkish and Albanian belong to different linguistic families, their long-standing coexistence and continuous contact over centuries have resulted in substantial mutual influence. One of the clearest manifestations of this interaction is the impact of Turkish on the Albanian speech varieties spoken in Macedonia. Research on Turkish borrowings and linguistic influence in the Balkan languages, particularly in Albanian, was initially undertaken by foreign scholars, while after the Second World War these issues also received increasing attention from Albanian researchers and Turkish scholars in Macedonia. Furthermore, the influence of Turkish extends beyond Albanian and is also clearly reflected in the Macedonian

³⁰ A. Günşen, "*Balkan Türk Ağızlarının Tasnifleri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme*", pp.119-129.

³¹ Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 1468.

³² Oktay Ahmed, "*Makedonya Türk Ağızları: Geçmiş ve Bugünkü Durumu*", in: Ulakbilge Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, v. 6, Ankara, 2018. p. 1470.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 1471.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 1472.

language, as evidenced by sources such as the two dictionaries of Gjorgjia Pulevski.

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