ГЛАГОЛНАТА СИСТЕМА НА БАЛКАНСКИТЕ ЕЗИЦИ – НАСЛЕДСТВО И НЕОЛОГИЯ

THE VERBAL SYSTEM OF THE BALKAN LANGUAGES – HERITAGE AND NEOLOGY

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LABILITY AS A SCALAR BALKANISM

ЛАБИАЛИНОСТТА КАТО СКАЛАРЕН БАЛКАНИЗЪМ

Лабиалността може да се определи като употреба на една и съща форма за интрангитивен и транснгитивен глагол, напр. бъл. Девятата година и Девятата го го
рък. В македонския лабиалните глаголи са по-чисти, споредхов в българския, напр. ще умра и ще го умра човеком. Когато разреждаме балкано-романските езици, видим, че арменският е сходен с македонския, а румънският – с българския. Уверено е, че градове някои прилича на македонската и арменската по отноше-ние на лабиалността. В българския и румънския лабиални глаголи съвпадат много по-ред
ки, тъй като в арабския има медийно-таксимно маркиране, а в ромски – каузативно маркиране. Въпреки това понякога има лабиални глаголи и в тези езици, особено в ромски диалекти, които са в контакт с македонския. В турския език, където има много синето развитие каузативна морфология, лабиални глаголи не се срещат. Спе-
dоведни, лабиалността, която съществува в много езици по света, може да се сим-
та все пак за балканизация и като някои други балканизми има различни степени на реа-
лизацията.

Verbal lability, i.e. the use of a form unmarked for voice as both tran-
sitive and intransitive is a characteristic that is typologically distinct;
ive among the languages of the world. Thus, for example, it is characteristic of
d of neighboring Kartvelian and Turkic, while Indo-European languages are
divided between those that are more open to lability and those that eschew it. In the case of the Balkan languages, lability is a feature that Balkan Romance shares to some extent with non-Balkan
Romance, but also with Greek, Albanian, and Balkan Slavic, all of which also
have other fairly well developed voice-marking (intransitivizing) strategies.
In the case of Balkan Slavic—especially Macedonian—lability is clearly con-
tected to contact induced changes and is a feature distinguishing it historically from the rest of Slavic (although see below on current
govements). On the other hand, Balkan dialects of those lan-
guages with well developed causative strategies (Romani, Turkish) seem
to avoid lability even in heavy contact situations. It is thus the case that
lability seems to be both contact-induced and contact-resistant in the Bal-
kans. As a Balkan feature, lability has received very little attention. As in
the realization of other verbal categories, Macedonian and Aromanian are
distinguished as more similar to one another than to their Balkan genea-
logical relatives Bulgarian and Romanian, respectively (Golab 1970).

Let us begin with a few general observations on lability. Kulikov and
Lavidas (2009) provide a convenient brief summary of current approach-
es. Using Modern Greek (and English) they illustrate the difference be-
tween what they call Patient-preserving lability (P-lability) in (1a&b) and
Agent-preserving lability (A-lability) in (2a&b):

(1a) O Janis espase to vazo.
   ‘John broke the vase.’
(1b) To vazo espase.
   ‘The vase broke.’
(2a) O Janis efage mesimeriano
   John ate lunch.
   O Janis efage.
   ‘John ate.’

It is interesting to note that while P-lability of the type illustrated in
(1) does not occur in Balkan Slavic, Balkan Romance, or Albanian with
the verb ‘break’, which would have to have mediopassive morphology
or a mediopassive marker in a translation of sentence (1b), such usage
occurs in Balkan Slavic and Balkan Romance with ‘burn’, as in example
(3a&b) from Bulgarian and example (4a&b) from Aromanian:

(3a) Dărâta gorjat (Asenova 2002:109)
   ‘The trees burn’
(3b) Dărâta gi gorjat. (Asenova 2002:109)
   ‘They burn the trees.’
(4a) Hoara ardi baba s-cheaptină. (Cuvata 2009:65)
   The village burns, grandma combs her hair’ [cf. Nero fiddles while
   Rome burns.]  
(4b) Andartsilji arsiră Avdhela tu 1905. (Papahagi 1974:194)
   ‘The Greek bandits burned Avdhela in 1905.’

Macedonian and Romanian would also use the same verb in each of
the two sentence, e.g. Macedonian gorat in (3a&b), Romanian ardė and arsiră
in (4a&b), respectively; however, Albanian would require mediopassive
morphology for the intransitive in both examples, e.g., in (3a&b): dërë
dijen vs transitive dërë dijen in. Both Romani and Turkish would use
eymatologically related but synchronically different verbs for the intransi-
tive and transitive ‘burn’ (yan- and phabol for the intransitive, yak-
and phabarel for the transitive, respectively). Thus, the other Slavic
languages would not permit such P-lability with their equivalent (i.e.,
derived imperfective) forms of ‘burn’. In the case of the A-lability of
‘eat’, however, all the Balkan languages have the same types of usage as
that illustrated in (2a&b), with the caveat that if the verb is perfectivized in
Balkan Slavic, it may require either a direct object or an intransitive
marker.1

As a general linguistic phenomenon, lability has a long history in Ind-
o-European and a complex distribution in the modern languages. Thus,
for example, despite their morphological complexities and distinct voice
systems, Vedic Sanskrit and Homeric Greek had considerable lability as
seen in (5a&b) from Sanskrit cited in Kulikov (2009:24):

(5a) rudā rādyā sākamesaḥ sūrvīlaḥ
    ‘Rudras have grown in the residences of the truth’
(5b) jacket ṣukhiṇā sūrvīlaḥ
    ‘The hymns have increased Indra’

Modern English is said to have about 800 labile verbs (McMillon
2009), although in colloquial usage, especially expressive colloquial us-
age, almost any word can be a verb if the context is suitable, and almost
any verb can be treated as labile.2 Russian, on the other hand, has no
P-labile verbs, although the number of A-labile verbs appears to have
been growing since the nineteenth century (Letuchy 2009). The lack of
P-lability in Russian is characteristic of Slavic in general and of the an-
cestral language, and it is this type of lability that is of greatest interest

1 We can note here that non-mediopassive ‘burn’ is ‘active’ or ‘agentive’, e.g. Alba-
nian Dëldë dijëg Turkish guneq yakas ‘the sun burns’ but Romani o ḫem phabol.
2 The problem of expressive and contextual usage need not concern us here.
to us here. We should note that in the case of P-lability, if the patient is animate then the transitive is causative, e.g., English *The dog walks/*I walk the dog.

While both Bulgarian and Macedonian share the kind of P-lability that does not occur in the rest of Slavic, Macedonian permits the kind of causative P-lability that does not occur in Bulgarian. Examples (6a&b), (7a&b) and (8a&b) are illustrative:

(6a) *Umram.*
    'I die.'

(6b) Go *umram* čovekot.
    'I kill the person'

(7a) *Zaspivam.*
    I fall asleep.

(7b) Go *zaspivam* deteto.
    I put the child to sleep.

(8a) *Šetam.*
    I walk.

(8b) Go *šetam* kučeto.
    I walk the dog.

In the case of (6), both Macedonian and Bulgarian have the option of using *uhi* 'kill', but only Macedonian also has the option of using 'die' transitively to mean 'cause to die'. Similarly, in (7), the meaning of *zaspiva* in both languages is 'fall asleep', but only Macedonian can use the verb to mean 'lull to sleep' (i.e., cause to sleep); in Bulgarian, the verb *prispiva* 'lull to sleep', which occurs in both languages, is the only possible causative. Finally, in (8), Bulgarian and Macedonian have both lexical and valency differences. In Bulgarian, *seta* means 'to do housework' or 'roam'. The Bulgarian equivalent of Macedonian *seta* is intransitive *razožda* se and transitive *razožda*, for which the Macedonian equivalent, *se razožda* means 'begin to walk' and, like the Bulgarian, is not labile. Macedonian also has transitive *razeto* in the meaning of Bulgarian *razožda*, but our point here is that Macedonian has the option of using *seta* as a labile verb.

Turning now to Romanian and Aromanian, we see that Aromanian follows the same patterns as Macedonian, while Romanian patterns with Bulgarian. Thus *mor(i)*, *doiarme*, and *prinâmâ* have the same lability as *umre*, *zapiva*, and *seta*, respectively in Macedonian, whereas Romanian *muri*, *dormi*, and *plimba* do not (the first two are intransitive, the last is transitive and must be marked with se in order to be intransitive, as in Bulgarian). In the case of Greek, *pe'gaim* 'go' is labile as in (9a&b):

(9a) *Pége sto* sxoleio (Asenova 2002:109)
    *He goes to school.*

(9b) *Ton pége sto* sxol'io (Asenova 2002:109)
    *He takes him to school.*

However, the equivalent of Macedonian *seta*, which is *perpatáo*;

is only weakly labile. Speaker's found it unacceptable with *skyll* 'dog', although it was marginally acceptable in a sentence like (10) for some speakers:

(10) *Na se* perpatáso: *te: stásse:*
    Let me walk you to the bus stop.

On the other hand, *péo*: 'go' is also labile in Greek. On the other hand, 'sleep' and 'die' are not labile in Greek, the intransitive and transitive being *koimóntai* vs *koimízo* and *apothei* *skos* vs *skoi:ó* *skos*, respectively.

Turkish has a well established causative system, and no such lability occurs even in the west Rumelian dialects. Romani, however, is in a different position. Historically, Romani has a robust system of causative formation, although it has been transformed to varying degrees in varying dialects. One of the inherited causative forms is *-e*, although in some dialects, such as Skopje Arli, the root *ker-* 'do' can also be morphologized to indicate causation, and in examples (11a&b&b'):

(11a) *Me phirava.*
    I walk.

(11b) *Me phiravava e děučke.*
(11b') *Me phírovkerđnjava e đukułe*

'walk the dog.'

On the other hand some recent loanwords into Skopje Romani such as *plivinel* 'swim' show the lability of Macedonian (*plivo*), lacking in Bulgarian (*plivam*), as in (12a&B):

(12a) *Plivam* (Macedonian) = *Plivinava* (Romani)

' *I swim.*'

(12b) *Go plivam kućevo.* (Macedonian) = *Plivinava e đukułe* (Romani)

'I give the dog a swim.'

There is considerably more to be said about Balkan lability, particularly its relationship to tense, aspect, telicity, and inherent versus prepositional objects. These topics, however, must remain for the future. For the moment it suffice to observe that, as with the Balkan infinitive (Joseph 1983) or the Denatal Modal Subordinator (*da, ti, saši*, *na, te*; Friedman 1985), lability is a scalar Balkanism. Here Turkish is at the extreme end of non-lability, with Romani and Albanian both being far less labile than Greek, Baskan Slavic, or Balkan Romance, albeit in different ways. Albanian has a strong mediopassive system, whereas Romani maintain causativity and even renews it morphologically, as seen in example (12). On the other hand, contact induced change in Romani is also seen in (12). Within Balkan Slavic and Balkan Romance, Macedonian and Aromanian pattern together as the most innovative, whereas Bulgarian and Romanian pattern together as more conservative. Interestingly, it appears that Greek is also at the more labile end of the scale. The topic is clearly worth further investigation, but I hope to have indicated the basic outlines and most fruitful directions here.

REFERENCES

