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## THE SPIRAL OF EVOLUTION

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### Abstract

The author discusses semantic impulses responsible for the striking grammatical parallels between the different linguistic codes evolving in a multilingual environment: a) English and West European Romance languages, on the one hand, and b) members of the so called Balkan Linguistic League, on the other hand.

In my last booklet of the series: *“Polish ~ Macedonian. Grammatical confrontation”*, under the title identical with the title of this paper, I argued that there are three main factors/mechanisms responsible for the evolution of a language. These are: grammaticalisation, condensation and borrowing, i.e. contact changes. I have looked for and found results of the activity of those three types of processes both in Polish and in Macedonian regardless the huge differences between the grammatical structures of the two languages. The differences are due to social, political, administrative factors controlling the speed of the evolution, but the causes, the direction and the results are parallel, if not the same. I have also emphasised the influence of the Romance factor, precisely of the so-called Vulgar Latin, on the processes observed in the history of Macedonian and of other members of the Balkan Sprachbund.

In this paper, I would like to present some striking parallels between the path and the results of evolution of Balkan languages on the one hand and the “great” Central European languages, such as English, French, German..., on the other. I am not an Indo-Europeist, I have no knowledge of the details of the geography, chronology and pace of the processes forming the “grammatical history” of those languages. However, I would like to defend the thesis that the responsible factors are the same as in the case of Balkan languages.

I am working in the frame of one of the numerous theories of the type: content > form, starting with the semantic analysis of the message and then looking for the grammatical means conveying that message. The author of the theory is St. Karolak, who has presented it in details in his contribution to the syntactic volume of the Polish descriptive grammar (Karolak 1984). Here is the proposed formula of the semantic structure of a sentence:

$$M \{ T \& L [ p ( a_1, a_2, a_3 \dots ) ] \}$$

where M stands for modal information, T for temporal information, L for spatial information, p for the constitutive predicate, and  $a_1, a_2, a_3 \dots$  for the implied arguments of that predicate, which means: arguments coded in the semantic structure of the predicate. The sequence  $[ p ( a_1, a_2, a_3 \dots ) ]$  is a formulaic notation for the PROPOSITION (= predicate-argument structure), which is understood as basic linguistic structure referring to an event. EVENT in its turn is a general term for a situation, a state, a process, an action, an operation... that is spoken about in the text. While the proposition refers to an event as a whole, arguments of the constitutive predicate refer to the protagonists of that event.

Karolak distinguishes two types of predicates functioning as constitutive members of sentences:

- those of the first rank which accept only arguments whose referents are material parts of the world, including live organisms, among others people as primary candidates for the leading/controlling participants of the events. Thus, sentences constituted by the predicates of the first rank reflect relations between parts of our, natural and social, environment. Let us call them material object arguments; on the surface of the text they take the form of NPs; cf. *John sleeps., Ann eats an apple., The mother gives the child a book., The house is ruined.,* etc. – Predicates of the first rank are formalised as finite verbal forms and/or as *copula*-constructions;
- those of the second rank which reflect human mental: intellectual, emotional, volitional attitudes and as such accept humans as referents of their leading material-object-arguments and propositions as referents of propositional arguments reflecting attitudes of these leading human participants; cf. *Ann thinks that this is a good idea., John would like to come tomorrow., Those people want all and give nothing.,* etc. – Predicates of the second rank are formalised as finite verbs.

I have extended the inventory of the predicate-types with predicates of the third rank, which reflect patterns/ways of our reasoning, concluding about the spoken-of- events. They are formalised sometimes as finite verb forms, but most often as conjunctions (a typical Romance and/or Slavic solution), particles, prepositions... and inform about three basic types of relations that the speaker perceives between the spoken- of-events; going from most simple to more complex and sophisticated relations, these can be:

- associative, e.g. conjunction, alternative, disjunction...
- temporal, e.g. following, preceding, overlapping in time...
- causal, e.g. cause, consequence, condition, goal, permission...

These predicates accept propositional arguments; secondarily, as a result of condensation, associative predicates can also appear with material-object-arguments, cf. *John came after the first lecture and Ann was also late. // John and Ann were late., I didn't come because I had another important conference.*

If we accept the presented outline of the semantic text structure, we are faced with the fact that the main process leading to the correct perception of the message is the adequate identification of the spoken-of-events and of the protagonists of these events, first of all human protagonists controlling the events. The process is especially complicated in the multiethnic, multilingual environments where the interlocutors do not have sufficient mastery of their mutual languages. It is still more difficult after phonetic earth-quakes, which destroy relevant grammatical markers enabling successful communication, as was the case in both territories under discussion. Consequently, the evolutionary changes focus on introducing new, maximally clear and predictable markers enabling correct identification of the mentioned key items: events and their participants. And those are exactly the processes that we observe in the history of the Balkan Sprachbund on the one side and of the medieval Central Europe, on the other. There is usually one prestigious language, that of the state administration and/or of the church, which influences the direction of the evolutionary process and accelerates it.

Let us see which are the linguistic/grammatical processes that we are talking about. We shall divide them into (a) those which help to identify the event itself, and (b) those leading to easier identification of the protagonists, especially human protagonists, of the events.

**Ad a.** An event can be primarily identified with the aid of the criterion of its truth value, i.e. in the frame of the semantic category /± factive /, and, secondarily, through its temporal and spatial parameters; it can be /+ factive /, i.e. confirmed as real, or /- factive/, i.e. /+ modal/, and characterised in the frame of the category of modality as /± factive/, i.e. non-confirmed (Friedman's term, cf. Friedman 1977) or virtual, i.e. /- factive/. To make all these distinctions clear for our addressee we need a rich apparatus of grammaticalised (i.e. predictable) markers.<sup>1</sup> Such an apparatus was developed in the two territories under discussion: Balkan and Central European. Let us see some of these new developments:

- **FUTURE/CONDITIONAL** – Both territories have developed this new mood with two temporal paradigms; the first one (usually labelled as “future”) refers to future expected events, the second labelled as “future in the past” or conditional refers to events that (could have but) did not occur in the past. It seems to me that all future event is conditioned, so I would label them respectively as *conditionalis praesentis* and *conditionalis praeteriti*. In the languages under discussion they took form of periphrastic constructions with the auxiliary ‘habere’ and/or ‘velle’.

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<sup>1</sup> I understand grammaticalisation as regularization of formal markers for the respective (= grammaticalised) information.

- SUBJUNCTIVE/CONJUNCTIVE – it appears primarily in the propositional arguments of the predicates of the second or of the third rank and signals that the truth value of the spoken-of-event is suspended and depends on the predicate of the main proposition. Usually the /– factive/ interpretation prevails, but it varies from language to language. The languages under discussion have restructured the old conjunctive/subjunctive system or developed a new construction in its place – it is always a periphrastic construction with a preposed formant in the form of the *relativum generale* or (as in Balkan languages) of some particle specialised in this function.
- Here we should mention the process labelled as “the loss of the INFINITIVE”, since the infinitive is one of the typical substitutes for the subjunctive; we shall discuss this problem in the following text, in connection with the loss of the substantive declension.
- The RELATIVUM GENERALE and the subjunctive formants were used also as a “building material” for predicates of the third rank, the predicate of ‘goal’ among others, accommodating arguments referring to /– factive/ events; cf. e.g. French *pour que...*, Macedonian *za da...*
- On the /+ factive/ side: new periphrastic RESULTATIVE PERFECT with the auxiliaries ‘habere’ and ‘esse’ emerged, with secondary differences from language to language in the number of temporal paradigms and their functional zones.<sup>2</sup>

Ad **b**. The participant of an event can be identified as /± definite / with the aid of semantic distinctions grammaticalised in the frame of the so-called category of definiteness (which, on the formal plane, is a category of the NP as a whole, and not only of its constitutive noun). He/she/it can be presented to the addressee of the message directly, with deictic means, or indirectly, with anaphorical/contextual reference. Best defined protagonists are the participants of the speech-event referred to with the aid of personal pronouns. Second best way of identification is the presence of the article, definite or indefinite (i.e. characterising the entity in question as an element of the set named in the corresponding NP).

- All the discussed languages underwent the LOSS OF SUBSTANTIVAL AND ADJECTIVAL DECLENSION – instead postposed inflectional endings the case relations<sup>3</sup> are signalled with preposed (*nomen omen*) prepositions and/or with the linear position of the corresponding argumental NP in relation to the constitutive predicate.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In Balkan languages there is also an interesting innovation developed under the Turkish influence: the NON-CONFIRMATIVE (known also as dubitative, mediative, inferential...); it is a periphrastic paradigm characterising the spoken-of-event as /± factive /, or – in its ADMIRATIVE variant (best established in Albanian, where it developed several paradigms) /+ factive /, while emphatically marked as unbelievable.

<sup>3</sup> I understand CASE not as a morphological form, but as a semantically motivated syntactic relation between the argumental NP and its controlling predicate.

<sup>4</sup> The loss of the infinitive can be seen as a consequence of this process, as it was historically a dative form of a deverbative substantive; most interesting is in this connection the present-day English «infinitive» with its dative marker *to*, especially observed in the construction ... *have to...*

- In contrast with the elimination of the substantival and adjectival declension, the PRONOMINAL DECLENSION (i.e. morphological forms marking cases) is preserved, albeit reduced, and its functional zone is extended; also the functional contrast between the stressed pronominal case forms, on the one hand, and the clitical forms, on the other, is emphasised.
- In the languages of the two territories under discussion the category of the definite article emerged as the central marker of what is known to the speaker and should be known to the addressee. Macedonian has even developed three variants of the article: besides the basic, neutral form there is also a form marking what is near (spatially and/or emotionally) to the speaker and a form marking what is far from him.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the article forms coalesce with the prepositional “case markers” creating new markers for definiteness, cf. French *du* < *de le*, *au* < *à le*...
- In all the languages under discussion we have examples of the emphatic PRONOUN REPLICAS (PRONOUN DOUBLING) in NPs referring to persons/objects qualified by the speaker as /+ definite/, cf. French constructions as *Il M'a donné ça A MOI, TOI TU dis ..., LUI, notre président, dit ..., etc.*, cf. also a title from “Le Monde”: *LES soucoupes, on LES a vu ...*, Macedonian *Toj MI go dade MENE, TOJ, tatko mi, vika ...*, etc. In Western Macedonian dialects (which are the dialectal base of the standard language) the “doubling” of the /+ definite/ NPs in the dative and/or accusative case relation became a regular phenomenon and so in standard Macedonian we have today two “declensional” paradigms: one /- definite/ and without doubling and the other /+ definite/, with pronominal replicas.
- Another process motivated by the same semantic impulses as the “pronoun doubling” is the total and/or partial LOSS OF PERSONAL ENDINGS IN VERBAL PARADIGMS (in the written or in the spoken language only) in several great Central European languages. Personal endings were substituted by personal pronouns in subject position. In the linguistic literature it is sometimes called “pronominalising of the subject”. Here we also find a sort of emphatic doubling, cf. constructions like French *Moi, je pense...*, etc.

Once more I would like to emphasise that my goal in quoting all the above processes is to demonstrate their parallel motivation and parallel direction, and not their full formal identity. We are faced, in my opinion, with parallel grammatical effects of parallel semantic impulses. To my knowledge, up to now the genesis of the so called Balkanisms (= typical Balkan morpho-syntactic pattern) has not been discussed seriously from the semantic/cognitive point of view. It seems to me that this is the correct way to approach the problem. Balkan linguistics was born following the euphoria after the discovery of striking formal parallelisms. Nobody asked why just such parallelisms were created. The sufficient answer for all those questions was the linguistic contact, interference, eventually social conditions...

<sup>5</sup> As first forerunner of the article in the Slavic linguistic world could be seen the anaphorical \*jb postposed to the adjectival form built into a NP referring to a known object.

In my opinion four factors were of decisive importance in stimulating the processes of introducing new, clearer, more often preposed than postposed grammatical markers for some important types of information in the two territories we are concerned with:

1. the presence of multiple linguistic codes at the same large territory without natural and/or administrative borders between particular ethnic communities,
2. the dominant position of Latin, as the language of the Roman Empire and of the Christian Church, and partially, in the Balkans, also of Greek,
3. phonetic and/or prosodic changes destroying phonological and inflectional systems; in consequence grammatical markers for some relevant information types had to be reconstructed,
4. last but not least, the objective semantic hierarchy of the different information types that the language transmits.

Only in the first half of the second millennium strong and stable state frontiers appear in the Western and Central Europe and the processes of language standardisation begin. It puts an end to the building of the Central European Sprachbund.

In the Balkans, new state frontiers emerged only at the period from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. So it is no wonder that many linguistic processes we are speaking about were and are more advanced there.

I hear that today even in German, the bastion of the old IDE inflectional language type, the genitive ending retreats before the preposed *von*, which is presumably the result of the linguistic adaptation of Turkish and other immigrants. It seems that in our global world processes of that type will multiply and their universal direction, if not the pace, is predictable.

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