

Introduction Fundamentals and Advances in Balkan Linguistics

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The present issue of *Balcania et Slavia* consists of a selection of papers based on the presentations given at the first international meeting of *Fundamentals and Advances in Balkan Linguistics* (FABL), held at the University of Belgrade on November 16–18, 2023.

By organising FABL, we wanted to create a forum for the current high-quality work in Balkan linguistics, especially the one that deals with less widely researched varieties, topics or innovative methodologies, as well as to foster networking between researchers from various academic centres around the world where this work is currently being done. To the best of our knowledge, there was no other similar international event, devoted specifically to Balkan linguistics, and we felt the need for such venue. The turnout of the conference proved that our intuitions were sound.

A total of 44 papers were presented at FABL, including six plenaries. Out of the latter, three invited talks, presenting some of the cutting-edge research on language contacts with an interdisciplinary or otherwise methodologically innovative dimension, were delivered by Ana Stulic (Bordeaux-Montaigne) on the sociolinguistics of Judeo-Spanish in the Balkans, Lumnije Jusufi (HU Berlin) on Albanian-Slavic dialect contacts in western Macedonian border zones, and Adina Dragomirescu (Bucharest) on how a formal approach to diachronic



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(micro)variation can shed novel light on the effects of language contact in syntax, focusing on Romanian-Slavic contacts in the syntax of Old Romanian and Istro-Romanian.

In addition, three remaining plenary talks were delivered by distinguished scholars in the field, who also served as members of the FABL Scientific Advisory Board. Professor Irena Sawicka (Warsaw) opened the conference with a talk on multiple sources of selected phonetic and morphosyntactic balkanisms. On the second day, academician Marjan Markovikj (Skopje) delivered a talk on Macedonian-Aromanian interferences in the prepositional system, focusing particularly on instances of double prepositions. The conference concluded with a joint plenary talk by Evangelia Adamou (Paris) and Andrey N. Sobolev (St. Petersburg), who presented the multinational collaborative project on creating a new up-to-date *Atlas of the Balkan Linguistic Area*, produced by a team of 24 co-authors from 13 institutions across nine European countries.

In addition to lectures, as a special plenary event FABL has also hosted the promotion of the most recent publications on Balkan Romance and Romani anthropological and contact linguistics, (co-)edited and (co-)authored by researchers from the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, viz. Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, Svetlana Ćirković, and Mirjana Mirić.

The remaining talks, in total 38 of them, were presented in eleven parallel sessions on various aspects of Balkan linguistics, bringing together 55 authors and co-authors, affiliated with 32 different institutions in 18 countries, from USA to Japan. Five of those, included in this volume of *Balcania et Slavia*, truly showcase the span and the main topics of the conference. Some of them take a wider contrastive or comparative approach, while others focus on very specific local contact situations. All levels of linguistic structure and analysis are represented—phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse, and the lexicon. The languages analysed include all major members of the Balkan sprachbund and beyond, viz. South Slavic varieties – both Balkan Slavic and the non-balkanised western South Slavic dialects – Albanian, Modern Greek, and Balkan Romance.

In their collaborative paper, entitled *The Discursive Functions of zar-Questions in Macedonian and Serbian*, Eleni Bužarovska from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University and Liljana Mitkovska, both from Skopje, present the results of their research on questions marked by particles *zar* or *zare* in Macedonian and *zar* in Serbian. The authors argue that the element *zar* functions as a modal operator, serving to amplify the assertiveness of a presuppositional question it introduces, simultaneously altering the polarity of the encoded proposition. Consequently, *zar*-questions convey a negative bias, rendering them most suitable for contexts involving contradiction. In order to determine the functional distribution of *zar*-questions in Macedonian and

Serbian and to assess the extent of their convergent development, the analysis was based on over 400 examples extracted from literary prose in both languages. It has revealed notable similarities between the two languages, whereby *zar*-questions appear to serve three primary functions: that of rhetorical, assertive, and biased questions. Rhetorical questions, which are prevalent in both language samples, generate a strong epistemic conflict, resulting in emphatic effects. Assertive questions emphasise specific aspects of the epistemic conflict, heightening their assertiveness, while in biased *zar*-questions, assertiveness turns out to be lowest. A specific value of this paper lies in the fact that it is one of the rare analytical contributions to Balkan pragmatics.

In the paper on *Agreement, Case and Definiteness in Balkan Existential Constructions*, Alberto Frasson from the University of Wrocław presents a minimalist syntactic account of the so-called definiteness effects in existential constructions, focusing on the Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Modern Greek, and Serbian counterparts of English *there*-constructions. Despite the superficial differences, the paper argues for a unified syntactic analysis for the constructions in question, i.e. for a single Balkan existential construction. It focuses on structures with a 3sg neuter *have*-copula and a post-copular NP (the pivot), which show some degree of variation among the Balkan languages in case marking on the pivot. Thus, while Albanian and Greek use indefinite accusative pivots in this construction, Bulgarian and Macedonian have indefinite pivots, and Serbian uses genitive-marked pivots. All three strategies, however, follow from the presentative nature of such existential constructions, which generally disallow definite post-copular pivots (with genitive objects in Serbian encoding indefiniteness), and the paper further argues that the non-nominative pivots cannot be the grammatical subject of the construction. Rather, a 3sg null expletive with valued ϕ -features and an unvalued case feature, functioning like *pro*, is a target for agreement operations, thus blocking agreement with the pivot. The *have*-copula, encoding specific interpretative features associated with presentativity, allows for non-nominative case assignment in Albanian, Greek, and Serbian in view of its argument structure, so that the pivot is actually the object, which explains accusative case assignment in Albanian and Greek. In addition to providing a unified approach to definiteness effects in these Balkan existentials, this paper demonstrates the methodological and explanatory potential of a formal approach to traditional balkanisms, such as *have*-existentials, and to (micro)variation in Balkan linguistics.

Niyaz Kireyev from the École normale supérieure of the Université Paris Sciences et Lettres, in the paper entitled *Балканские проклитики и история славянского союза или [Balkan Proclitics and the History of the Slavic Conjunction ili 'or']*, deals with the

accentual history of the Slavic conjunction *ili* 'or', in particular in the light of its South Slavic reflexes, where this conjunction is best attested. The paper argues that, contrary to earlier claims, the word originally had final accent, at least in South Slavic, as evidenced by the exclusively attested Middle Bulgarian form *ilí*, but later it became proclitic, whence the initially stressed forms such as Modern Bulgarian *ili* and BCMS *ìli*. This reanalysis allows the author to propose an alternative etymology for the conjunction *ili*, whereby it represents a compound made of *i* 'and' and the historical conjunction *li* 'or' (rather than *i* + question particle *li*, which is standardly assumed). As a compound of a proclitic and an enclitic, *ili* is regularly oxitonic, but due to its further grammaticalisation and procliticisation, it surfaces with an initial falling tone in BCMS, as do some other disyllabic proclitics, like the prepositions *među* and *protiv*. While tackling the issues of Slavic historical accentology, especially those transcending the traditional eastern vs. western South Slavic and balkanised vs. non-balkanised divide, this paper also stresses out the importance of integrating the data from the South Slavic continuum as a whole.

Kenta Sugai from the Hokkaido University in Sapporo, in the paper entitled *The Integration of Romanian Loan Verbs in the Bulgarian Dialect of Brănești in Romania*, explores the borrowing of verbs in the Bulgarian dialect of Brănești in Romania, while aiming to investigate how bilingual speakers integrate Romanian loan verbs in their Bulgarian vernacular. The research is based on the data collected during the author's own fieldwork in the village. It is argued that the bilingual speakers of Brănești Bulgarian may choose either a direct or indirect loan verb insertion strategy, and in the latter case, they utilise the suffix *-askă*, borrowed from Romanian, which was extended and generalised as a loan verb integration marker. This process is motivated by formal similarities between the Romanian inflectional suffix *-ă* and the thematic vowel of Bulgarian verbs, as well as between *-askă* and the Bulgarian suffix *-ka*. An additional factor allowing for this generalisation may be the high productivity of both the verbal suffix *-esc* in Romanian and the suffix *-ka* in Bulgarian. These are ultimately the reasons why the bilingual speakers choose to extend and generalise *-askă* as a morphological integration marker of Romanian loan verbs with suffixes in general. A particular contribution of this paper to the existing body of research on Romanian loan verb integration in the Bulgarian dialect of Romania lies in combining the original fieldwork data with both quantitative and contrastive analysis, which has not been undertaken before.

Aleksandar Trifunović from the University of Ljubljana, in the paper entitled *The Role of the Particle po- in the Comparison of Adjectives in Shtokavian Dialects*, tracks the areal distribution of this particle across Shtokavian dialects, trying to establish a border between the dialects that have the particle *po* and those in which this particle

is not present. The particle *po* is characteristic of almost all Slavic languages, including the evidence that it used to exist in Slovene in the earlier stages of its development, as well, although the modern standard language lacks it. That leads to the conclusion that Proto-Slavic had it, too. However, while in most other Slavic languages, the particle *po* has a uniform meaning within the given language, Shtokavian dialects display a whole spectrum of its meanings and usage. In some dialects, it is used only with the positive degree, in others with both positive and comparative degrees, while in some, it can be used with adjectives in all three degrees of comparison, bearing the meanings from “less than” to “pretty much” in some dialects, to “more than” or “quite” in others, while in some dialects, the particle *po* is grammaticalised as the only way of forming the comparative degree of adjectives, a trait traditionally described as a balkanism. The paper also briefly touches on the chronology of the switch from synthetic to analytic type of comparison in the Torlak dialects, associating it with the same shift that Macedonian and Bulgarian underwent.

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