

THE SLOVENE LANGUAGE AND ITS IMPORTANCE FROM THE
POINT OF VIEW OF COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS:
SLOVENE AND SOUTH SLAVONIC BALKAN LANGUAGES

Slovenščina kot južnoslovanski jezik je za primerjalnozgodovinsko jezikoslovje osrednjega pomena, saj se po eni strani v njem prepoznavajo analitične tendence kot sicer tudi v drugih slovanskih jezikih, po drugi strani pa v njem še živijo arhaizmi, kot sta slovnični kategoriji namenilnik in dvojina. V slovenskih dialektih je najti tudi vzporednice z južnoslovanskimi balkanskimi jeziki, ne da bi slovenščina spadala v balkansko jezikovno skupino.

As a member of the South Slavonic group, the Slovene language is of utmost importance to comparative linguistics, for it shows analytic tendencies common to other Slavonic languages while preserving archaisms, such as the grammatical categories of the dual and supine. Furthermore, Slovene dialects reveal parallels with South Slavonic Balkan languages although Slovene does not belong to the Balkan language group.

»Centuries of contact between Slovene and the neighbouring languages influenced all layers of the Slovene language structure. As the language of a relatively small, non-dominant group, Slovene usually did not really penetrate the other languages. Situated at the crossroads of the Slavic, Germanic, Romance and Hungarian worlds, Slovene abundantly adapted foreign language elements. At the same time strong purist tendencies, especially as regards the South Slavic languages but also as regards other languages, characterize the Slovene language cultivation process«, as we find in 1997 in *Contact Linguistics* (two volumes). There was a noticeable increase of interest in the Slovene language only after the independence of Slovenia in 1991, because in former Yugoslavia the language had no public function. But the development of modern linguistics is largely a history of oscillation between two complementary approaches to the comparison of languages, and Slovene is studied by using both the *genetic/reconstructive* and the *typological/general linguistic* approaches. Both were based on the assumption that Slavic languages like Slovene are not unique and closed configurations and that the variety of Slavic languages can be reduced to common features and comprehended by general principles like other languages. By the end of the 19th century,

comparative grammar for Slavic languages, represented by the Slovene scholar Fran Miklošič, became identified with the genetic approach, which gained an almost exclusive position among linguists, including Slavicists.

In comparative linguistics – the study of the similarities and differences between two or more languages at one point in time, which can be conducted either on the synchronic or diachronic plane – the purpose of comparing different languages is often to determine or reconstruct their common ancestry. For Slovene this is Proto-Slavic – next represented by Old Church Slavonic or Old Bulgarian, for Baltic languages Proto-Baltic – next represented by Old Prussian.

It is generally acknowledged, although difficult to demonstrate, that Slovene is unique among the Slavic languages in the heterogeneity of its dialects, especially in relation to the small size of the Slovene-speaking area. This diversity, which exerted some influence on the evolution of the standard language, is reflected in some lack of mutual comprehension. Another question is how far the Slovene language has developed as an analytical language, a language in which auxiliary words are the chief means of indicating grammatical relationships to the total or partial exclusion of inflection, and where separate meanings are expressed by words that can be used in isolation. But Slovene seems to be more a synthetic language, a language in which the grammatical relationships of words are expressed chiefly through inflections and where several concepts are put together within one word. The rich nominal morphology of Common Slavic is remarkably stable over most of the Slavonic territory, except that of the Balkan Slavic languages. Only Bulgarian and Macedonian have almost completely lost morphological case and have developed analytical means of declension, especially with prepositions like *na* and *s*. The dual has been lost in the Slavic languages except Slovene and Sorbian. Most Slavic languages have undergone some simplifications of the remaining distinctions, the main line of innovation being the loss of minor declension types like *u*- or *r*-stems, e.g. *synŭ* and *dŭšti*; in favour of the three main declension classes, especially *o*-, *a*- and *i*-stems. In some instances the actual surviving inflection is taken from the minor classes, especially the *u*-stem. The oldest Slavic languages are conservative Indo-European languages, which means that three numbers are distinguished, i.e. singular, dual and plural, three genders, and seven cases are used, namely nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental and locative, with the vocative not being used in Slovene.

The morphology of the Slovene verb has undergone more radical shifts. Here, Bulgarian and Macedonian prove to be the most conservative languages in retaining the rich common Slavic verbal system, although both have also made innovations during their development. The aorist and imperfect have been ousted by the originally compound perfect in Slavic languages, including Slovene, e.g. *delal sem*, *delal si* ..., another compound tense in Slovene is the »Plusquamperfekt«, e.g. *delal sem bil*, *delal si bil* As in other Slavic languages, the future tense is also compound, e.g. *bom delal*, *boš delal* ...

In the field of phonetics, consonants and vowels in Slovene occur in the proportion 50 : 50, as also in Croatian and Sorbian. But the consonant percentage is higher in Slovak, Czech, Ukrainian and Bulgarian, namely about 82.5 %, the same percentage is found in Russian, but the highest percentage is found in Polish with 87.5 % consonants. In the field of morphology, the highest number of verbal tenses is found in Bulgarian (9) and Macedonian (8), followed by Serbian and Croatian (7), Sorabian (6), Old Church Slavonic, Ukrainian and Polish (5), but only four verbal tenses are found in Slovak and Slovene while only three verbal tenses are used in Russian and Belo-Russian. The present and future tenses, of course, are used in all the Slavic languages, but the auxiliary verbs which are used for the future tense are different in the South Slavic languages, depending on whether they are Balkan-Slavic languages or only South Slavic languages like Slovene. Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian and Croatian use future tenses with the auxiliary verb *to will* whereas Slovene, like the Western and Eastern Slavic languages, uses the auxiliary verb *to be*. Past time is expressed with four verbal tenses in Old Church Slavonic, but only two verbal tenses for past time occur in Ukrainian, Polish and Czech, as well as in Slovak and Slovene. Only one verbal tense for past time is used in Russian and Belo-Russian. The »Plusquamperfekt« is used only in Slovak and Slovene, while the aorist and imperfect are employed in Croatian and Serbian, but not in Slovene.

Concerning grammatical number, there exist three in Old Church Slavonic, also in Sorabian and Slovene, although these are the only languages to retain three at present, while the other Slavic languages have only two categories of number, but remnants of the dual exist in some forms of substantives. A special feature of Slovene within the South Slavic languages is the use of the auxiliary verb *biti* while other South Slavic languages use the auxiliary verb *chotěti*. From a historical point of view it must be mentioned that Old Church Slavonic had both possibilities of forming the future tense, but it depends on the »Balkan character« of the South Slavic languages as to whether a future tense is used by means of *to be* or *to will*. Today the old form of the supine is used only in Slovene and lower Sorabian, e.g. *grem spat*. The supine is a verbal category used in connection with verbs of motion. It is found as a verbal category in Old Church Slavonic beside the infinitive.

Are there any »Balkan features« in Slovene as in Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbian as in Croatian and Sorabian, we find in Slovene clitics of personal pronouns, which are used in the genitive, dative and accusative beside the full forms of pronouns. A special use of clitics is found in Macedonian and Bulgarian in the function of possessive pronouns, reduplicated objects and in connexion with demonstrative adverbs like *eto* or *evo*, clitics are also used in the West Slavic languages, but not in Russian. So the use of clitics in Slovene cannot be assumed as a »Balkan feature«. In Slovene we find special forms of the comparative and superlative for adjectives – sometimes synthetic, sometimes analytic forms, e.g. *slab*, *slabši*, *najslabši*, but also *zelen*, *bolj zelen*, *najbolj zelen*. In Slovene some case

forms occur which are homonyms, e.g. *lipo* as one form for singular accusative and instrumental – the result of denasalization of *o* or *ojo*. Special forms of pronouns for two genders are used in the plural, e.g. *mi//me*, *vi//ve* for 1st and 2nd person singular and plural, but the forms for the dual are analytic ones, e.g. *mi-dve*, *me-dve*, *vi-dva*, *ve-dve*.

So we can see that between Bulgarian and Macedonian on the one hand and Slovene on the other, a number of typological similarities exist, as well as common tendencies which are involved in the tendency towards analyticism (characteristic not only of the Balkan languages), like the dying out of the infinitive, the role of which was assumed by dependent clauses with the conjunction *da* in Macedonian, Bulgarian and Sorbian, whereas in Slovene this happened only in dialects. But Slovene also shows a simplification of nominal and adjectival declensions, accompanied by an increasing use of prepositions, the analytic comparison of adjectives, etc.

Thus Slovene is not to be regarded only as a South Slavic language – in some respects it is linked with Slavic languages like Czech and Slovak, but it also shows some similarities with the Balkan Slavic languages. Slovene as a South Slavic language is quite close to some West Slavic languages, but it is not a Balkan language like Macedonian and Bulgarian, there are only some typological tendencies comparable with Balkan Slavic languages. If we look around in Europe, a postpositive article is observable not only in Bulgarian and Macedonian, Albanian and Romanian, but also in the Scandinavian languages. All these facts gave rise to the idea of a European unit of languages, discovered by a new branch of linguistics – Euro-linguistics.

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SLOVENSKI JEZIK IN NJEGOV TRENUTNI POMEN Z VIDIKA
PRIMERJALNEGA JEZIKOSLOVJA:
SLOVENŠČINA IN JUŽNOSLOVANSKI BALKANSKI JEZIKI

POVZETEK

Zanimanje za slovenski jezik je močno naraslo šele po osamosvojitvi Slovenije leta 1991, saj v času nekdanje Jugoslavije slovenščina ni imela javne funkcije. Pa vendar se slavistične primerjalne študije že dolgo časa ukvarjajo s posebnostmi slovenščine, kot sta morfosintaktični kategoriji dvojine in rabe namenilnika za glagoli premikanja.

V razvoju sodobnega jezikoslovja v glavnem zaznamo zgodovinsko nihanje med dvema dopolnjujočima se pristopoma k primerjavi med jeziki, zato tudi slovenski jezik preučujejo glede na »genetski« oziroma »rekonstrucijski« pristop ali »tipološki« oziroma »splošnojezikoslovni« pristop. Oba pristopa temeljita na podmeni, da slovanski jeziki, skupaj s slovenščino, niso edinstvena in zaprta tvorba in da lahko raznolikost slovanskih jezikov omejimo na skupne značilnosti, ki jih zaobjemajo splošna načela, kot velja tudi za druge jezike. »Primerjalno slovnico« so do konca 19. stoletja začeli istovetiti z genetičnim pristopom, ki je pridobil skorajda ekskluziven položaj med vsemi jezikoslovci in slavisti.

Če primerjamo bolgarščino in makedonščino s slovenščino, lahko torej opazimo, da obstajajo številne tipološke podobnosti in skupne razvojne težnje, še posebej težnja k analitičnim oblikam. Gre za težnjo, ki je skupna vsem balkanskim jezikom in ki vključuje lastnosti, kot so izginevanje nedoločnika, katerega vlogo so nadomestili podredni stavki z uvajalnim veznikom *da*, poenostavitev samostalniških in pridevniških sklanjatev z vzporedno rabo predlogov in analitično primerjanje pridevnikov.

Zato slovenskega jezika ne bi smeli obravnavati zgolj kot južnoslovanski jezik in ga kot takšnega povezovati s češčino in slovaščino, saj kaže podobnosti z balkanskimi slovanskimi jeziki. Slovenščina je potemtakem južnoslovanski jezik s številnimi podobnostmi z balkanskimi slovanskimi jeziki in z nekaterimi podobnostmi z zahodnoslovanskimi jeziki.