

## Towards evidentiality markers in Albanian and Macedonian bilingual political discourse

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The article concerns the two main problems connected to evidentiality in bilingual Macedonian and Albanian political discourse:

Firstly, there is a problem of matching the form in the original to its equivalent in translation, which is not trivial in case of perfect in Macedonian-Albanian and Albanian-Macedonian translation. Macedonian perfect is homonymous to some evidential forms, whereas in Albanian there is an expansion of perfect at the expense of aorist. So perfect in both languages under consideration can be better described as a frame, inside which different phenomena take place, using the suitable definition by F. Fici. The translation between the languages provides some algorithms for defining the intent of the form's original meaning.

Secondly, the problem of interaction between a grammatical and a lexical marker when used together is described. The bilingual discourse gives some insights as to how the common meaning of the phrase can be drawn from the lexical and grammatical components and then recoded in the target language.

**Keywords:** evidentiality, political discourse, bilingual discourse, perfect, translation

According to A. Aikhenvald, evidentiality is “a linguistic category whose primary meaning is [the] source of information” (Aikhenvald 2004: 3). Evidentiality takes a different place in different language systems. In this article I will focus on two languages: Macedonian, where expressing evidentiality (witnessed or unwitnessed) is compulsory in the past tense, and Albanian, where expressing evidentiality is optional and this grammatical meaning is usually entangled with the admirative.

In Macedonian, grammatical markers of unwitnessed evidentiality (‘I didn’t witness it, so I don’t vouch for it, but they say...’) are the so-called ‘perfect-like’ *l*-forms, dating back to the Common Slavic ‘be’-perfect. Grammatical markers of witnessed evidentiality (‘I witnessed it, therefore I vouch for it’) are forms in *-v/-š-/j-*, dating back to the aorist and imperfect. When speaking about a series of events in the past on the text level, there is no way to avoid indication of whether the speaker has been a witness or not; hence, Macedonian is a language with grammaticalised evidentiality.<sup>1</sup>

In Albanian, grammatical markers of unwitnessed evidentiality are the so-called admirative forms, based on the model ‘participle of the main verb without ending + conjugated forms of the verb *kam* ‘to have’ (practically, it is inverted apocopated perfect: cf. perfect *kam shkruar* ‘lit. have written’ and admirative *shkrua-kam* ‘lit. writ-have’ with the meaning ‘(it turned out that.../they say that...) I write!’ There are no grammatical markers of witnessed evidentiality and

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<sup>1</sup> Some interpret Balkan Slavic evidentials sub specie epistemic overtones they can gain in certain contexts, cf. Friedman 1986, who treats the opposition they express as not witnessed/unwitnessed, but confirmative/non-confirmative. I follow G. Lazard (Lazard 2001) and Z. Guentchéva (e.g. Guentchéva 1996), who include evidentiality together with epistemic modality and mirativity into the umbrella term of mediativity, or the category which indicates a certain distance between the narrated event and the speaker.

marking unwitnessed evidentiality is not compulsory, so we can say that Albanian is a language with grammaticalised evidential strategy.<sup>2</sup>

The system becomes even more difficult if we consider that apart from the grammatical markers in Albanian and Macedonian, there are lexical evidential markers, as in the majority of other European languages, even those which do not have a grammatical category of evidentiality: compare English *apparently*, *supposedly*, Russian *jakoby*, *mol*, *vrode kak*, Polish *ponoć*, *jakoby*, Chekh *prý/prej*, Slovene *bajè*, Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian *navodno*, etc. This topic has received much attention recently, yet its bibliography is still not as extensive as that of grammatical(ised) evidentiality.<sup>3</sup> The following works are dedicated especially to Macedonian markers: Bužarovska 2006, Gajdova & Labroska 2008, Gajdova & Labroska 2010, Tofoska 2008, Petroska & Тоџоска 2011, Kasapovska (foregoing). The bibliography on Albanian lexical evidential markers is the smallest one; to the best of my knowledge, there is only one article partly dedicated to them (Makartsev 2012).

Here I would like to show the use of evidentiality in Albanian and Macedonian bilingual political discourse, and especially to dwell upon interactions between lexical and grammatical markers. The data for the first part of my article is taken from a bilingual Albanian-Macedonian political talk-show “Eurofokus,” which is broadcast on ALSAT-M from Skopje. The guests in the studio are Macedonian and Albanian politicians and political experts from Macedonia. Each of them chooses the language s/he wishes to speak: Macedonian or Albanian. In the studio, simultaneous translation is provided for those who need it; when the program is broadcast, subtitles are provided. That is why, in practise, we deal with one text in two linguistic dimensions. This practice is not unique to ALSAT-M and is used as well by other media in Macedonia that target minority integration.

I shall focus on the full excerpt of past forms from a “Eurofokus” programme.<sup>4</sup> The main story is about citizens of two Macedonian communities, Kumanovo and Lipkovo, mainly ethnic Albanians, who started to leave Macedonia en masse for Belgium, where they demanded economic asylum. In the studio there are two journalists and four invited speakers. The majority of people in the studio speak Albanian; one of the speakers and one of the journalists speak Macedonian. In the course of the heated argument an Albanian speaker switches to Macedonian but later he turns back to Albanian. Everything said is subtitled; the speeches in Macedonian are provided with Albanian subtitles and vice versa. There is also simultaneous translation, but the Macedonian speaker is the only one who uses it, because all the others are bilingual. The majority of the discussion is in Albanian (if we count verbal forms in the programme, the proportion of Albanian to Macedonian is 5 to 1).

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<sup>2</sup> The Macedonian and Albanian grammatical evidential systems are described meticulously in academic grammars and other works on different aspects of the phenomenon, so I will refer readers to the following works: Lunt 1952, Koneski 1967, Foulon-Hristova 1995, Fici 2001, Mushin 2001 and Usikova 2003 for Macedonian; Lafe 1975, Sytov 1979, Buchholz & Fiedler 1987, Duchet & Pěrnaska 1996 and Domi 2002 for Albanian. V. Friedman in various works takes into consideration both Macedonian and Albanian evidentiality, comparing it to the situation in other Balkan (Balkan Romance and Bulgarian) and non-Balkan languages (Turkish, Georgian and Lak) (see, among other, his works Friedman 1986, 1988, 1998, 2000, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> The literature on grammatical evidentiality in Balkan languages is so vast that it both impossible and unnecessary to provide references to it in an article dealing with lexical evidentiality in bilingual discourse, which is a relatively new topic. The most important bibliography on the issue can be found in Victor Friedman’s articles, in particular in Friedman 2003. A long overview of existing literature on Balkan evidentiality with the analysis of the respecting Bulgarian, Macedonian and Albanian forms and their interpretation in the context is provided in my book (Makartsev, foregoing).

<sup>4</sup> Broadcast on 08.03.2010, total length 57’58”.

I chose this programme because the topic mainly focuses on some events in the past (as opposed to other productions of the channel, which focus on the present and the future of Macedonia), and in Macedonian evidentiality is compulsorily marked only in the past. The disproportion of the language data can be easily reduced by introducing a coefficient ( $k = 5$ ) to Macedonian data.

If we consider the parallel text of the emission, 205 slots with aorist, imperfect or perfect in at least one of the languages are to be found. The statistics are introduced in the Table 1:

Tenses in original → Tenses in translation <sup>5</sup>	From Albanian original to Macedonian subtitles	From Macedonian original to Albanian subtitles
Aor/Impf → Aor/Impf	72	29
Aor/Impf → Perf	—	—
Perf → Perf	63	4
Perf → Aor/Impf	20	4
Aor/Impf → Other	1	—
Perf → Other	3	—
Other → Aor/Impf	4	—
Other → Perf	1	—
Unclear	4	—

Table 1: Tenses in the original and their counterparts in the translation

Since only Macedonian unwitnessed forms homonymous to perfect were used, they are described in the same field of the Table under the title ‘Perfect’. ‘Other’ stands for present, future, pluperfect, participles and gaps in the translation. They are not taken into consideration, as they do not outnumber statistical observational error. ‘Unclear’ stands for the forms which cannot be heard well enough. The only Albanian admirative form is in the Present “No one took us (*s’na merrke*.<sub>Adm</sub>/*ne në zede*.<sub>Aor</sub>)” (“Eurofokus”, 08.03.2010, 34’20”), so it is put into the ‘Other’ line. It is not linked to evidentiality, because its primary meaning in this case is unpleasant surprise and embarrassment.

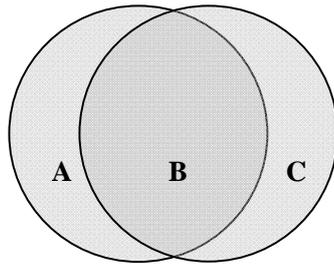
One possible criticism for this model is that the translators are under the influence of the language they are translating from, so the result of the translation can bear certain features of the original. In this case, we would expect that the verbal forms would be translated with their structural equivalents in the second language: aorist/imperfect would be translated only by aorist/imperfect, perfect by perfect. But there is a large group of examples where an Albanian perfect is translated by Macedonian aorist/imperfect. Here we need to consider the ambivalence of perfect in Albanian and Macedonian. As has already been said, in Macedonian perfect is homonymous to some unwitnessed evidentials (to be more precise, to evidential imperfect and evidential aorist; moreover, that perfect can also be used as evidential perfect, which makes us suspect evidentiality almost in every usage of Macedonian perfect).<sup>6</sup> So in every perfect form one could suspect an unwitnessed evidential. In Albanian there is no such homonymy, but another process is currently taking place—an expansion of perfect into aorist area, which happens both in

<sup>5</sup> Alb – Albanian; Mk – Macedonian; Aor – aorist; Impf – imperfect; Perf – perfect.

<sup>6</sup> There are other unwitnessed evidentials not homonymous to the perfect, e.g. unwitnessed future (compare Perf./Ev.Perf./Ev.Aor. *došol* and Ev.Fut. *ke došol* from the verb *dojde* ‘to come’), but they are used much less often and were not found in my data.

oral and in written discourse and is not reserved to a specific dialect area. Buchholz & Fiedler (1986: 130) consider this process to be a north-eastern Gheg feature, but the academic grammar of Albanian states that it happens both in spoken and in written speech with no reference to the dialects (compare also Përnaska 1982: 141, 143, 148; Asenova 2002: 252-253).

So, between the areas of meanings represented by perfect in Albanian and Macedonian there is a zone of intersection, but there are nonintersecting zones as well. The left circle stands for Albanian, the right one is for Macedonian (the size of the respective zones is irrelevant):



A — Perfect substitutes aorist;

B — Perfect for events that happened in the past and still valid at the moment of speech;

C — Unwitnessed evidentials, homonymous to perfect.

Scheme: Semantics of perfect tense in Albanian and Macedonian

If the translation is from Albanian and the meaning is from area A, the Albanian perfect corresponds to aorist in Macedonian:<sup>7</sup>

1. a. [Original] Azilkërkuesit nga Maqedonia, Serbia apo Mali i Zi, që *kanë mbetur*.<sub>Perf</sub> rrugëve, jo vetëm që *nuk kanë parë*.<sub>Perf</sub> këto shuma, por ata me më shumë fat, që mund të kenë qjetur vende në një kamp refugjatësh, në pritje të përgjigjës, që thuan se do t'jetë negative, marrin vetëm 7 euro në javë (“Eurofokus”, 08.03.2010, 18’20”).
- b. The refugees from Macedonia, Serbia or Montenegro, which *remained* in the streets, not just that they *didn't see* those money, but even those, who were more lucky and managed to find places in the refugee camps, as they are waiting for the answer (which is said to be negative), get only 7 euros per week.
- c. [Subtitles] No azilantite od Makedonija i od Srbija koi *ostanaa*.<sub>Aor</sub> na ulica, ne samo što *ne gi vidoa*.<sub>Aor</sub> ovie pari, tuku tie so poveke sreka što moze da najdat nekoje mesto vo nekoj od kampovite za begalci i se vo isčekuvanje na odgovor – za koj se veli deka ke bide negativen – dobivaat po sedum evra nedelno.

If a perfect form from B area is translated (no matter from Macedonian into Albanian or vice versa), there is perfect in the translation as well (compare the use of perfect in English as well):

<sup>7</sup> In all the examples first the original is given, then translation into English, then the subtitles. In all cases, the English translation is made from the original, so some differences between the English translation and the subtitles are inevitable, but they are not relevant for the grammatical forms I will be concentrating on.

2. a. [Original] Për shkak se gjitha punë kjo Qeveri bân nga zyrtja, asnjëherë komuna e Likovës *nuk ka përjetu*.<sub>Perf</sub> që një kryeministër i Maqedonisë të pretë ndonjë lentë në komunën e Likovës (“Eurofokus”, 08.03.2010, 29’48”).
- b. As far as all the businesses this government does through offices, never *has* the municipality of Lipkovo *seen* that a Prime Minister of Macedonia would cut a band in the municipality.
- c. [Subtitles] Bidejki ovaâ Vlada svoite raboti gi pravi od kancelarija, nigogaš opština ne *doživeala*.<sub>Perf</sub> eden minister na Makedonija da preseče nekoja lenta vo opština Lipkovo.

If a form from area C (unwitnessed evidentials, homonymous to perfect) is translated from Macedonian to Albanian, in Albanian both perfect and aorist can be used, because in Albanian it is not compulsory to express the opposition between witnessed and unwitnessed evidentiality; compare the example with Aorist:

3. a. [Original] Mene mi e nesfatlivo deka Vladata *ne mozhelo*.<sub>Perf</sub> da go predvidi, pošto godina dena zboruvavme (“Eurofokus”, 08.03.2010, 40’00”).
- b. It is incomprehensible to me that the Government *couldn’t have foreseen* it, because we have been saying this for a year.
- c. [Subtitles] Për mua është e pakuptueshme, që Qeveria këtë *nuk arriti*.<sub>Aor</sub> ta parashikojë, ngase ne ka një vit, që po flasim.

Of course the original influences the translator, so there are cases when in the translation there are structural calques, contradicting the speaker’s intentions. For example, in a story about some events which the speaker has witnessed and thus it is expected that s/he would believe in them, suddenly in the Macedonian translation a perfect, homonymous to unwitnessed evidentials is used:

4. a. [Original] Ismeti, i cili nuk pranonte të identifikohe para kamera, është një tjetër banor që *ka kërkuar*.<sub>Perf</sub> azil në Belgjikë (“Eurofokus”, 08.03.2010, 18’40”).
- b. Ismet, who didn’t want to speak for the camera, is a citizen of Kumanovo, who *asked* for asylum in Belgium.
- c. [Subtitles] Ismet, koj ne saka da zboruva pred kamera, e žitel na Kumanovo koj *pobara*.<sub>Perf</sub> azil vo Belgjia.

The reporter met Ismet in a queue before the Belgian Bureau for Foreigners, among other refugees from former Yugoslavia who had migrated *en masse* several weeks before that. The reporter does not have any reason not to believe Ismet; moreover, he gives his story as one more example of the refugees. So it is not in his best interest to depict the story as untrustworthy. But the translation does him a bad turn: in this context both aorist (*pobara*) and present (*bara*) could be used in Macedonian, so use of the perfect as opposed to those unrealised opportunities is understood as doubtful reportive. In other words, an additional meaning of unbelief emerges in the translation. But examples like this are very rare, and do not change the general picture very much.

What makes it difficult to describe grammatical markers in Macedonian and Albanian is that in their semantics the “clear” evidential meaning is often accompanied by an epistemic one. That is why throughout the article I have been underlining that it is essential not only whether the speaker has witnessed the events, but also whether s/he believes in the information s/he conveys. That is why in many cases (apart from the transparent: “the speaker has seen, so s/he vouches for what s/he says” and “the speaker didn’t see, so s/he doesn’t vouch for what s/he says”) one

should always ask oneself the question: is it just evidentiality, is it both evidentiality and epistemic modality, or is it just epistemic modality? At the same time, lexical markers can also have several meanings. That is why on the first account we deal with very loose rules: lexical markers with multiple meanings are used together with ambivalent grammatical markers. So can we speak about rules at all?

Here we can apply Peter Kehayov's division between "analytic" and "holistic" readings of the construction consisting of a lexical and a grammatical marker (Kehayov 2008). Within the semantics of the markers, evidential (Ev) and epistemic (Ep) semantic components are highlighted and the common meaning of the construction is driven from the sum of the components. As an example I would like to present a part of an interview in Albanian with Macedonian subtitles.<sup>8</sup>

5. a. [Original] Ajo që **thuhet** (i) se... **gjoja** (ii) se simpatizantë apo anëtarë i Bashkimit Demokratik për Integrim *kanë qenë*.<sub>Perf</sub> të paisur apo *kanë ardhë*.<sub>Perf</sub> (iii) armatosur fare nuk qendron.
- b. The thing **being said** (i), that... **apparently** (ii) sympathizers or members of the democratic Integration Union *were armed* or *came armed* (iii), that is not right at all.
- c. [Subtitles] Onie što **velat** (i) deka **navodno** (ii) simpatizeri ili členovi na DUI *bile dojdene*.<sub>Perf.II.Evid</sub> (iii), toa voopšto ne drži.

Let me show in the Table 2 the semantic components in the Albanian original and Macedonian translation:

(i) <i>being said, that &lt;...&gt;</i>		(ii) <i>apparently &lt;...&gt;</i>		(iii) <i>were &lt;...&gt; or came &lt;...&gt;</i>	
ALBANIAN	MACEDONIAN	ALBANIAN	MACEDONIAN	ALBANIAN	MACEDONIAN
<i>thuhet se &lt;...&gt;</i>	<i>velat deka</i>	<i>gjoja se &lt;...&gt;</i>	<i>navodno</i>	<i>kanë qenë ... apo kanë ardhë &lt;...&gt;</i>	<i>bile dojdene &lt;...&gt;</i>
evidential	evidential	evidential & epistemic	evidential	∅	evidential & epistemic

Table 2: Lexical and grammatical markers and their semantic components in Albanian and Macedonian

So both evidential and epistemic components of the message are translated, but by different components: in Albanian, evidential and epistemic meanings are combined in one lexical marker (i), and in Macedonian – in one grammatical marker (iii).

Bilingual Macedonian media, besides their important role of a source of information, are a place for communication in recent years—for communication between members of different societies who speak different languages. As far as modern technologies enable the discourse to continue in two linguistic dimensions at once, it provides us with a new type of data for comparative study of grammar categories. In our case, these data help differentiate between homonymous forms (evidentials vs. perfect) in Macedonian, show the process of the expansion of perfect into the area of aorist/imperfect in Albanian and show the place of evidential and epistemic semantic components in shaping the sense of the whole utterance.

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<sup>8</sup> Published by the "Free Europe" channel on YouTube on 06.10.2007.

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## Резюме

Две основных проблемы, которые рассматриваются в статье, связаны с эвиденциальностью в македонском и албанском политическом дискурсе.

Прежде всего, речь идет о соответствии формы в оригинале и в языке перевода. В том, что касается перфекта в македонско-албанском и албанско-македонском переводе, это вовсе не тривиальный вопрос. Македонский перфект омонимичен некоторым эвиденциальным формам, а в албанском происходит экспансия перфекта за счет аориста. Таким образом, и в том, и в другом языке перфект можно описать как рамочное явление, внутри которого имеют место разные явления, если использовать удачное определение Ф. Фичи. Перевод подсказывает некоторые алгоритмы для определения исходного значения формы.

Кроме этого, описывается проблема совместного употребления грамматического и лексического маркера. Двуязычный дискурс позволяет показать, как общее значение конструкции выводится из суммы значений лексического и грамматического компонентов и затем перекодифицируется в языке перевода.

## Résumé

La présente communication est consacrée à deux problèmes principaux liés aux manifestations de la catégorie du médiatif (évidentialité) dans le discours politique bilingue en macédonien et en albanais. Tout d'abord, il y a un problème qui concerne l'équivalence entre les formes dans le texte original et dans la traduction. Ce problème n'est pas trivial dans le cas du parfait dans la traduction de macédonien vers albanais et vice versa. Le parfait macédonien et certaines formes médiatives (évidentielles) sont homonymiques; en albanais, il y a une expansion du parfait aux dépens de l'aoriste. En utilisant la définition du F. Fici, on peut conclure que le parfait dans les deux langues examinées peut être mieux décrit comme un cadre, à l'intérieur duquel apparaissent les différents phénomènes. La traduction entre les langues fournit des algorithmes qui permettent de désigner la signification originale de la forme.

D'autre part, dans cette communication, on traite également de l'interaction entre une forme grammaticale et un marqueur lexical lorsqu'ils sont utilisés ensemble dans le texte. Le discours bilingue donne quelques idées sur les mécanismes qui font que le sens de toute la phrase composé d'éléments lexicaux et grammaticaux se recode dans la langue cible.