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Language Contact and Language Interference: The Case of Greek and Old Church Slavonic

Considering Academician R. Filipović's major contributions to contrastive and contact linguistics, the author first ponders the possibility of writing an essay to his honor dealing with Balkan *Sprachbund* phenomena or with the linguistic contacts of Croatian and German (as well as Hungarian), or Italian. However, given the present writer's own earlier research in the area of Greek–Old Church Slavonic language contacts and interference, some hitherto less explored facts of this subject are briefly discussed. Notably, rather than once again considering the already much studied syntactic and lexical Hellenisms (Grecisms) of Old Church Slavonic, attention is focused on the semitisms (which entered via Greek, hence also referred to as "pseudo–Hellenisms") and the vernacular (non–literary) Byzantinisms of the earliest liturgical and written language of the Slavs. Yet, the latter do at most qualify as nascent (incipient) Balkanisms only.

Academician Rudolf Filipović, former incumbent of the Chair of English at Zagreb University and, above all, a good friend, has made an international name for himself by his contributions to contrastive and contact linguistics, focusing on Croatian and English — notably the English elements in Croatian (Filipović 1990) and the impact of (American) English on the (second– and third–generation) Croatian speaking communities in the United States — and by his many organizational and editorial efforts in his capacity as long–time secretary of the philological section of the Yugoslav, later Croatian, Academy of Sciences and Arts and, after his official retirement, as director of the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy in Zagreb. Prior to that, Filipović became widely known as the first editor and one of the founders of the journal *Suvremena lingvistika* (Contemporary Linguistics). He is, moreover, editor–in–chief of the multi–volume series *The English Element in European Languages*, and a decade ago he summed up his theoretical insights of contact linguistics in his study *Teorija jezika u kontaktu: Uvod u lingvistiku jezičnih dodira*, Zagreb, 1986. For a brief assessment, see Birnbaum 1987. A second, revised and much

expanded edition is currently in preparation and due to appear within a year or two.

It could have seemed natural, therefore, to write for the volume honoring Rudolf Filipović an essay on some aspect of Balkan linguistics, i. e., the areal-typological grouping of languages characterized by what has commonly become known as Balkanisms (primarily, though not exclusively, in the morphosyntactic component of linguistic structure) — a field of *Sprachbund* research to which I myself have previously contributed on several occasions (cf. Birnbaum 1965, 1966, 1968a, 1983, 1985). Yet it must be realized that Croatian, especially as it is by now evolving as a genuinely independent language (closely related to, but no longer merely one of the variants of "Serbo-Croatian" or "Croato-Serbian"), can only be considered marginally a Balkan language in the formal sense, Serbian, and especially its southeastern Torlak dialect, being much closer to the core of the Balkan convergence area. Alternatively, I could perhaps have ventured into some facet of Croatian-Italian or Croatian-German contacts and their linguistic fallout. Though it cannot be said, to be sure, that Croatian forms part of a *Sprachbund* with either Italian or German, there are a number of lexical, phraseological, and even syntactic agreements between Italian (or some of its dialects) and the language of the Croats residing on the Adriatic coast (in Dubrovnik and its environs, Dalmatia, the Croatian Littoral, and Istria); similarly, many conformities can be ascertained between Croatian, German (especially its Austrian variety), and Hungarian. Naturally, these convergent features have their historical (and geographic) explanation.

In this short essay, however, I have instead chosen another, equally intriguing topic, that of the Greek impact on Old Church Slavonic, since here, too, there are as yet insufficiently explored aspects and levels of language contact and interference worthy of being considered and at least briefly touched upon, much previous work in the field notwithstanding.

There are two areas of linguistic structure where the impact of the Greek koinē of the New Testament, the Psalter (in the Greek rendition of the Septuagint), and the Byzantine Greek of the Church Fathers on the earliest translations into Slavic was massive and therefore immediately felt. These areas are, on the one hand, syntax and, on the other, the lexicon, including word formation and lexical semantics. To be sure, traces of the Greek originals can also be found in the components of phonology (and graphics) and inflectional morphology, but in comparison to the effect the Greek models had on sentence (and phrase) structure and on the vocabulary, these traces are relatively insignificant. By the same token, syntactic phenomena of Old Church Slavonic can indeed not be treated appropriately without constantly considering the underlying Greek patterns and paradigms; yet it would lead us too far afield here to attempt to illustrate this with any specific concrete examples, say, the use of participial constructions. Let me therefore merely refer the reader to the best available, most authoritative, and very detailed reference work on Old Church Slavonic syntax — the monumental, multi-volume set by R. Večerka (1989, 1993, 1996, and forthcoming) — to illustrate the necessity of always fully accounting for the Greek equivalent constructions as well as clause and sentence types. For a very general, yet incomplete survey of Old Church Slavonic syntax, without, however, adducing the Greek counterparts of various Slavic con-

structions, see now also Huntley 1993: 164–184. Issues of methodology pertaining to the identification of syntactic Hellenisms in Old Church Slavonic, and thus also to the separation of foreign elements from those of the inherited Common Slavic sentence structure have long intrigued scholars, among them myself; cf. Birnbaum 1958a, 1968b, 1968c. Likewise, the model role played in the coining of new lexical items of Old Church Slavonic and the effect on semantic shifts in the new vocabulary created by Sts. Constantine–Cyril and Methodius and their associates for the purpose of rendering the large body of Christian writings into Slavic has duly been recognized. Thus, special studies have been devoted to the lexical calques of the earliest Slavic literary language (as well as post–canonical Church Slavonic); cf., e. g., Schumann 1958 and Molnár 1985.

However, as I have noted earlier, not all Hellenisms of Old Church Slavonic qualify, on closer scrutiny, as precisely that, namely, as Hellenisms proper. Some foreign elements of the earliest liturgical and literary language of the Slavs entered it from — or rather via — Greek, to be sure, but the ultimate source was not the Greek *koinē* of the Gospels or the Byzantine language of the Eastern Church Fathers. I am referring here to those pseudo–Hellenisms which can be traced back to Semitic — Hebrew or Aramaic (Syriac) — origins; cf. Birnbaum 1958a: 246–248. Among the syntactic Hellenisms of Old Church Slavonic which possibly ultimately go back to Semitic origins, we can mention the construction *črmq* plus infinitive, corresponding to the Greek phrase ἄρχομαι plus infinitive (believed to echo a construction of the Septuagint), to express the ingressive future. More assuredly this applies to the “progressive” paraphrase — not entirely unlike that of English — made up of the copula verb and a present participle (type Greek ὄν διδάσκων, OCS *bě/běaše učę* ‘he was teaching’). Of these, particularly the latter was earlier thought to have its roots in Greek, but subsequent scholarship (notably D. Tabachovitz 1956) has demonstrated the direct impact of the language of the Septuagint, with its **S**emite**S** Semitisms, on that of the synoptic Gospels. Here belongs also the use of the perfective present in Old Church Slavonic to render future tense forms of the Greek New Testament in commands and prohibitions borrowed — or echoed in the pronouncements of Jesus — from the language of the law in the Old Testament. The Greek future here corresponds to a Hebrew imperfect of the indicative which, like the so-called jussive mood, could have future as well as imperative connotations. Cf. Mt 5:27 *ne přeljubý svtvořiši* — οὐ μοιχεύσεις ‘you shall not commit adultery’; 5:43 *vřzljubiši* — ἀγαπήσεις ‘you shall love’; 19:18 *ne lřzesvřdětělŷ bŷdeši* — οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις ‘you shall not bear false witness’; Lk 4: 12 *ne iskusiši* — οὐ κῆκεράσεις ‘you shall not tempt.’ Clearly, had the Slavic author here not been influenced by the language of the Septuagint (and ultimately by that of the Hebrew Old Testament), he would have used the imperative.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that, although Old Church Slavonic was of course a strictly literary — and initially even more restrictedly, a predominantly liturgical — language, it nonetheless also reflected to some extent the Slavic dialect spoken in the environs of Salonica, Constantine–Cyril’s and Methodius’s hometown, and later, in the “third homeland” of Old Church Sla-

vonian, i. e., on the essentially Bulgarian linguistic base of that language. (To posit a separate "Old Macedonian" base of Old Church Slavonic I consider, as pointed out elsewhere, anachronistic, fully recognizing of course the separate and autonomous status of present-day Macedonian; cf. Birnbaum 1993: 245–246 and 250.) The question whether Old Church Slavonic shows some first Balkanisms has therefore long intrigued scholars in the field. And it is primarily at this level of the spoken language and its neighboring tongues, foremost among them, again, the spoken Middle Greek of nearby Byzantium (which was also the *lingua franca* of the Southern Balkans, namely, south of the so-called Jireček line, subsequently slightly adjusted by P. Skok) that the notion of — living — languages in contact, as conceived of by R. Filipović and, before him, by U. Weinreich, comes into play. If therefore, in addition to the numerous purely literary genuine Hellenisms, not enumerated and examined here, we can distinguish a much smaller group of pseudo-Hellenisms (alias Semitisms) in Old Church Slavonic, this additional — third — class of foreign elements could be labeled popular Hellenisms, or Byzantinisms proper. Frequently, though, it may be difficult to decide whether a particular phenomenon can be considered merely a popular Hellenism (Byzantinism) or rather perhaps as owing to a combination of the bilingual milieu of its origin and the literary norm of an Old Church Slavonic text. Thus, the use of the more common periphrastic future (with one of the auxiliary verbs *iměti*, always in the present tense, or, in particular, *xotěti*, in the present, the present participle, as well as, less frequently, past tense forms) has by some scholars been explained as due to the influence of the Byzantine spoken language (as well as perhaps also vernacular Balkan Romance) or as owing its use to a combination of vernacular Greek (Balkan) influence and the model effect of the Greek literary originals, where the use of periphrases with μέλλω / θέλω plus infinitive was fairly widespread; the construction with ἵχω, while common in Byzantine Greek, was not yet known in the New Testament Greek koinē. For details, see Birnbaum 1958b: 253–260.

In a similar vein, the phrase (Mk 6: 39–40) *i povelě imъ posaditi ję vse na spody. na spody. na trěvě zeleně. i vřzlegošę na lěxy. na lěxy...*, attested in the Codex Zographensis, appears at first glance as a mechanical rendition of the equivalent Greek original: κατέἰπέταξεν αὐ τοῦς ἀνακλιθῆναι πάντας συμπόσια συμπόσια ἵπτάτῳ χλωρῳ χόρτῳ. κατέἰπεσαν πρασιαάπρασιαά... "And he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass. So they sat down in groups..." Yet, as A. M. Seliščev (1951: 19–20) has pointed out, the use of double forms of the same word to indicate distribution has also entered Middle and Modern Bulgarian; thus, examples of this can be found in the works of a modern writer like Elin-Pelin. The construction can therefore be considered fairly common in the Southeast Balkan area and thus a native, or at least semi-native, means of expression also in Old Church Slavonic; cf. further Birnbaum 1958a: 248–250. The exact number of only just evolving Balkanisms in Old Church Slavonic is, as indicated, as yet to be determined (cf. Hinrichs 1984). Among features which have been potentially identified as Balkanisms in Old Church Slavonic are: (1) the presence of a mid-tongue vowel in the phonological system; (2) the morphological marking of the vocative case;

(3) the use of the postpositive article; (4) case syncretism (genitive/dative and accusative, respectively); (5) the replacement of infinitive constructions by a subordinate clause (introduced by the conjunction *da* and with a finite verb form); (6) the use of an adnominal dative to express possessivity; (7) the omission of the pronoun 'it'; (8) the duplication of the syntactic object; (9) the duplication of conjunctions; (10) the duplication of words to mark distribution (cf. above); (11) the differentiation of past tense forms depending on pragmatic relations; (12) the formation of the conditional by means of the auxiliary *xotěti*; (13) the formation of a periphrastic future by means of the auxiliary *xotěti*; (14) the non-distinction of expressions for position (place) and direction; (15) the use of *iměti* plus past active participle to form the perfect; (16) the use of the word for 'smaller' in the meaning of 'younger'; (17) the use of the verb meaning 'to catch, to grasp' for 'to begin'; (18) the use of the combination 'one-on-ten' etc. to form the numerals from 11 through 19; and (19) a general preference for paratactic sentence structure. Yet Old Church Slavonic cannot, it would seem, be considered a full-fledged Balkan language in the areal-typological sense since, being a purely literary language, it — contrary to the spoken Slavic of the area — lacked the live contact with other vernacular languages of the region and therefore, despite several rudimentary or incipient Balkanisms, did not partake in the typically Balkan multilingual symbiosis. The users of Old Church Slavonic would as a rule prefer a non-Balkan to a genuinely Balkan solution in their choice of phrase and sentence structure (cf. Birnbaum 1990: 126–127).

With these few remarks I hope to have been able to show that the earliest literary language of the Slavs and its relationship to Greek, both written and spoken, can and ought to be viewed from several angles, all falling under the rubric of "languages in contact" — an area of research so close to the heart of our honoree.

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Jezični dodir i jezična interferencija: slučaj grčkoga i starocrkvenoslavenskoga

Uvažavajući glavne prinose akademika R. Filipovića kontrastivnoj lingvistici i lingvistici jezičnih dodira autor najprije propitkuje mogućnost pisanja eseja u njegovu čast, a u kojem bi se obradile pojave balkanskog *Sprachbunda* ili pak jezični dodiri hrvatskoga i njemačkoga (kao i madarskoga) ili talijanskoga. Međutim, uzevši u obzir piščeva ranija istraživanja u području grčko-crkvenostaroslavenskih jezičnih dodira i interferencija, u kratkim crtama raspravlja se o dosada manje istraženim činjenicama u tom području. Naime, umjesto da se još jednom razmatra o već proučenim sintaktičkim i leksičkim helenizmima (grecizmima), pozornost se posvećuje semitizmima (koji su posudeni posredovanjem grčkoga, te se nazivaju pseudohelenizmima) te vernakularnim (neknjiževnim) bizantinizmima najstarijeg crkvenog i pisanog jezika Slavena. Potonji se, međutim, mogu označiti jedino kao balkanizami u nastajanju.