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The impact of the totalitarian ideology in Albanian grammatology

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Abstract

Ideology plays an important role in society and language. The purpose of this study is to examine whether there was an impact of the totalitarian ideology in Albanian grammatology, and if so, to what extent. Albania was under the totalitarian regime from 1945 to 1991. The communist regime of Albania has been considered the most rigid and isolated one in all Eastern Europe. This regime had some specific features that distinguished it from other communist regimes in Eastern Europe. For this reason it is known in literature as “Enverist communism”, “Enverist regime”, or “Enverism”. The dictatorship ideology of Enverist communism pursued a strong propaganda, which was built by Institute of the Marxism Leninism Studies based on the socialism that Stalin established in Russia. The Enverist regime constructed tools that controlled every aspect of life in Albania. Linguistic research could not escape the Enverist ideology, especially as language served as a major tool of indoctrination. Interestingly enough, Albanian linguists claim that that there was no major impact of political ideology of Enverism in the grammatical studies of Albanian language. This study will investigate this claim.

Keywords: Impact, Totalitarianism, Enverism, Ideology, Grammatology, Albanian

1. Introduction

Many linguists, philosophers, psychologists and sociologists have tried to define the content of the term *ideology*, thus I will not attempt to approach this problem here. (Silverstein, 1979; Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Eagleton, 1991; Simpson, 1994; Woolard, 1998; Irvine & Gal, 2000, Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Pullum, 2004; Saussure & Schulz, 2005 etc.). In general, a certain ideology consists of a system of ideas, facts and values for social and linguistic relations. According to philosopher Robert Higgs, ideology has four distinct aspects: (a) cognitive aspect (it structures the perception of the individual and predetermines the understanding of the social world); (b) affective aspect (it shows to the individual that what he “sees” is good, bad or morally neutral); (c) programmatic aspect (it pushes the individual to act in accordance with his cognition and assessments; (d) solidarity aspect (the individual pursues certain social objectives as a dedicated member of a political group) (Higgs, 1987: 37). This demonstrates that ideology is a form of dictate not only in society, but in language as well. Politicians, linguists, ethnographers, journalists, etc. are groups that the ruling class invites to hegemony in order to serve the hegemony (Register, 2001). Ideologies are supported by its direct participants and by linguists as well. Linguists set linguistic boundaries and support ideologies descriptively (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 36). Ideology, stated Joseph & Taylor (1990: 5), is a powerful force, the most powerful in all human culture. The impact of ideology is so strong, that it touches every aspect and every of human life and research.

2. General characteristics of the Enverist totalitarian regime and its ideology

It is a known fact that political and economical theories of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels processed by their followers became the basis of the communist system. The so-called Marxism – Leninism ideology that the communist system implemented during 1945 to 1991 in Albania differs greatly from the original ideas of Marx and Engels. This regime had certain specific features that distinguished it from other communist regimes in Eastern Europe and made it the most rigid and isolated totalitarian regime in all Eastern Europe. I will use the term *Enverism* to precisely refer to this political, philosophical and social ideology implemented in Albania from 1945 to 1991. Enverism used two pivotal tools to impose its dictate in language and society: a) propaganda, and b) specialised controlling instruments.

The dictatorship ideology of Enverist communism pursued a strong propaganda, which was built by Institute of the Marxism Leninism Studies in Albania. Its propaganda was based on the socialism that Stalin established in Russia. In linguistic research the totalitarian propaganda

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carried out its task through a number of Albanian linguists who studied in Russia, as well as through regular translations of linguistic, philosophical and ideological materials published in Russia. Marxism-Leninism was the only foundation of scientific methodology. Any other linguistic school was considered unscientific, reactionary and illegal (Memushaj, 2005: 283). Western modern linguists and linguistics were not even allowed to be cited. Furthermore, linguistic theories and treatises were to be illustrated with sentences that supported the communist propaganda of Enverism.

The Enverist regime constructed instruments that controlled every aspect of human life in Albania. They built a climate of fear and terror even among researchers and linguists. An official or even unofficial charge for foreign approaches to linguistics, or an accusation for being against the Marxist philosophy in language, had serious consequences for the life of the linguist and his family. For illustration, I will recall the fate of the prominent Albanian linguist Selman Riza, who was officially excluded from the Institute of Linguistics in Tirana and all linguistic research activity in the 60's because of these charges. He was transferred to another city and was appointed to work as a museum guide.

However, here is no denying to the fact that a lot of linguists, just like the majority of the Albanian people were indoctrinated by the political ideology of the communist-Enverist regime. Rami Memushaj testifies that prominent linguists of the world like Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield, Louis Hjelmslev, etc. were anathematized (Memushaj, 2005: 284).

3. The impact of the Enverist totalitarian regime in Albanian grammarology

Generally, Albanian linguists claim that there was no major impact of political ideology of communism-Enverism dictatorship in Albanian grammatical studies apart from politicized illustrations of linguistic material and some dogmatized lines in articles and books, which did not touch the core substance of Albanian grammatical studies. Memushaj (2005) agrees that ideological restriction of the time under investigation have left their traces in Albanian linguistics. However, he denies the impact of Russian ideology, language and linguistics in Albanian linguistics. This raises the question whether there was any impact of the Enverist totalitarian regime in Albanian grammarology. If there was an impact, to what extent was it?

To create a clearer idea on this matter, I will quote from "Marxism and Problems of Linguistics", published firstly in *Pravda* newspaper, Moscow, in 1950: "Grammar (morphology, syntax) is the collection of rules governing the modification of words and their combination into sentences. It is therefore thanks to grammar that it becomes possible for language to invest man's thoughts in a material linguistic integument." (Stalin, 1972: 22). Stalin defines the field of grammar and how should we think about it. Stalin was at the same time the most influential communist leader in Albania. This is not the only elaboration about language made by Stalin. When asked what formalism in linguistics consists in and how to overcome it (1972: 39), Stalin's answer was: "...'formalism' was invented by the authors of the 'new doctrine' to facilitate their struggle against their opponents in linguistics. ...The removal of these plague spots will put Soviet linguistics on a sound basis..." (1972: 40). The opposition of formalism in language is stated openly and clearly by the communist leader. Formalism is a plague spot

that needs to be removed. Instead, Marxist linguistics is considered the right way.

The grammatical principles that Stalin explained and elaborated in his article in *Pravda* are all found present in Albanian grammarology of 1945 to 1991. How is this possible? Many well-known and influential Albanian grammarians studied in Russia. Their work testifies that it Albanian grammar was by Russian linguistics. Let's consider an excerpt taken from a grammatical work by Spiro Floqi. This author was selected randomly; it is not my intention to focus on him. The opening line of his article "*Rreth modeleve të fjalisë në shqipen e sotme letrare*" (*Sentence Patterns of Modern Literary Albanian*) is: "Marxist Linguistics demand the researchers to investigate linguistic data not in isolation, but in their dialectical connections, in their systemic relations" (1978: 1). It might firstly seem like a common slogan, mandatory for the publication of scientific works at that time. However, the author concludes: "Certain schools of nowadays linguistics are not able to adequately describe the semantic value of the sentences of a particular model, especially because *their theoretical and methodological foundations have flaws that rise from the ideological and idealistic conceptions*. Without a preliminary investigation to determine the basic notions and terminology of semantics from the dialectical materialism viewpoint, it will not be possible to give an accurate detailed description of sentence patterns. ...It is the duty of Marxist linguistics in general, and of the *Albanian Marxist linguistics* in particular, to clarify various points of this problem...." (1978: 50) (the emphasis is mine). This citation makes it clear that the cited opening line is not just a mandatory sentence required for the publication of the article. The quoted sentences express the author's conviction. Floqi raises some fundamental problems in linguistics, which necessarily involve the discipline of grammar. Firstly, he emphasizes the need for research from the approach of Marxist linguistics generally and specifically, Albanian Marxist linguistics. Furthermore, the author discusses the issue of theoretical approach in linguistics, which, in accordance with the instructions of Stalin, should be Marxist and not idealistic. Necessarily, grammatical categories are to be conceived in line with the dialectal materialism criterion, according to which categories exist solely in opposition with each other. Furthermore, the presence of one category implies the presence of the opposite category, and vice versa, the absence of one category implies the absence of the opposite category, namely, a sentence has both a subject and a predicate or neither of them. This criterion not only has had a significant impact in the conception of syntactic categories, but it constitutes the essence of the syntactic theory on categories in Albanian grammarology (Çeliku *et al*, 1996).

In Albanian Marxist linguistics, language works similarly to the social organization of society. The laws of language generation processes are considered to be merely sociological laws. More specifically, grammar is seen only as a social product. The concept of universal grammar, which started with Leibnitz and was taken over by Saussurean school, and later on by generative grammar, is not accepted because it is a feature of idealism and formalism in language. According to dialectal materialism, ideology, sign and communication cannot be separated from the material reality; physical (signifier) and semantic (signified) aspect of the sign are indivisible, they cannot be studied separately from each other as they form a single unit. This unity forms a binary opposition. In a similar way, language and thought are seen in

dialectal unity, just like form and content. They are not to be separated from each other. The same approach is found in Volosinov, 1929.

The principle of the unity of the binary opposition is applied with precision in the interpretation of the grammatical function of the subject and predicate of the sentence. In accordance with the principles of dialectical materialism, the categories of subject and predicate in Albanian syntax are seen in binary opposition, namely, the sentence has a subject if it has a predicate and the other way around. Outside this opposition the sentence has no subject or predicate (Totoni, 1981: 109). For example:

Lexoj librin.

Read-1st singular book-the
“I read the book.”

In this sentence the subject is implied, it is not expressed phonetically, which is a common feature of Albanian language. According to Marxist linguistics, the grammatical interpretation for this sentence is that since there is no subject, there is no predicate as well (Çeliku *et al.*, 1996: 110,114). The syntactic theory about sentence structure is based on this core principle and continues to be the same even nowadays.

Core grammatical concepts, such as Pānini's Kāraka roles which are known in Western linguistics as thematic roles (Gruber, 1965; Fillmore, 1968; Sharma, 2002 etc.), occupy a prominent place in modern linguistic theory, but they are still unknown in Albanian grammarology. Empty grammatical categories (ellipsis, traces, *pro* etc.) were criticized and rejected as idealist and formalist approaches to language.

The whole Marxist approach to language has left many holes in Albanian syntax. There are a lot of difficulties in defining and distinguishing the categories of subordinate constituents from each other. Many adverbials overlap with prepositional objects and modifiers. Object and subject complements are quite problematic too (Kananaj, 2008, 2009, 2012a, 2012b).

4. The impact of European structuralism or the impact of Marxism?

For the sake of the truth, one must mention the worldly impact of the most influential linguistic movement on the period under investigation, namely the structural linguistics. Some elements of structuralism are seen in Albanian grammarology, although we cannot talk about genuine structuralist studies. For example, grammatical phenomena are studied in system. The demand to study the linguistic data as a system is a known feature Saussurean linguistics. The rejection of empty categories in grammar could as well be related to the development of structural linguistics in Europe. Does this mean that Albanian grammarology was influenced directly by Western linguistics? Cours de linguistique générale (Course in General Linguistics) of Ferdinand de Saussure not only was very well known, but had a great influence on young Russian linguists. Some of the Saussurean ideas were rejected by European structuralism and by Marxist linguistics as well. This led Russian linguists into a combination of Saussurean concepts with Marxist ideology. The same kind of combination is found in Albanian grammarology. This means that structural linguistics did not come in the original version in Albanian linguistics, but through the interpretations and translations of Russian linguistics. Only those elements of structuralism accepted by Russian Marxism linguistics have penetrated Albanian grammarology.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the totalitarian ideology of Enverism had a great impact in Albanian grammarology. The Enverist regime had built instruments that controlled every aspect of human life in Albania, which built a climate of fear and terror among researchers and linguists. The Enverist propaganda was spread through political slogans and political illustrations in Albanian grammarology. Contemporary literature was not cited and there was explicit reference to dialectical materialism and Marxist linguistics. Marxism-Leninism was the only foundation of scientific methodology. However, it is also true that many linguists were indoctrinated by the political ideology of the communist-Enverist regime and truly believed in Marxist linguistics.

These ideological restrictions have left their traces in Albanian linguistics, where grammatical categories are conceived in line with the dialectal materialism criterion. Core grammatical concepts of modern linguistic theory are still unknown in Albanian grammarology. A few structuralist elements that are seen in grammatical studies have penetrated into Albanian linguistics through the interpretation and translation of Russian linguistics. The impact of the Enverist ideology is still felt nowadays and has not been overcome completely. Albanian grammarology needs yet to be relieved of this past ideology.

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