Language as a Tool for Identifying Social Dissimilarity of Speakers

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Abstract: "The language is the only real means which serves to study the man and his behavior" [Rorty,1992]. It shows the most positive and the most wholesome element in which man's behavior finds its traces. "There are no frontiers in manners among which people get connected with each-other for motifs of auto-identification, security, profit, religious belief. As a result, there are no frontiers in the amount and the varieties of linguistic communities that can be individualized in the society". [Bolinger,1975, p.15] Within the social community of a nation we distinguish even smaller groups of individual-speakers that have different linguistic features depending on various characteristics. The religious belief is one of the factors that influence on the identification of the linguistic differences. Such a fact becomes evident when there are speakers who belong to a nation, a state, a language, a dialect, even dwellers of the same city who are linguistically distinguished simply from the fact who belong to different religious beliefs. According to Hudson" the language performs a social function, either as a means of communication, or as a way of the social groups' identification and their study, without referring to the society that uses it, which means excluding the possibility of finding social explanations about the used structures". [Hudson, 2002, p.15] Considering closely the impact that the religious differences have on language we have dwelled in Shkoder , a city in the north of Albania, where inhabitants of catholic and Muslim beliefs have lived for centuries. We have seen from close the linguistic situation in this city of about 120 thousand inhabitants. An inhabitant manages to identify an interlocutor whether this one belongs to his or her religious belief or not, since it carries with itself even linguistic differences depending on the religion to which he or she belongs. The institutional aspect of the religion deals with the conservatism in language. These religious-based linguistic differences are embedded in Albania although for 50 years, the communist dictatorship had legally banned the religious belief and had even killed a great number of clerics, even though for more than 70 years there have been marriages among youngsters of different religious beliefs, even though the subject –speakers belong to close social groups. Considering closely this linguistic reality in relation with the religious differences we have done a lot of interviews and observations.

Keywords: language, social dissimilarity, religion, behavior

1. Why have we chosen the region of Shkoder?

Albania is situated in the peninsula of Balkans, in Europe. There are approximately 3 million inhabitants and it is a country where three religious beliefs live together; Muslim, catholic and orthodox. Shkoder is one of the oldest cities in Albania, founded at the end of the 4th century and at the beginning of the 3d century before Christ. It lies in the north-west of Albania; it has been a big economic-administrative center and one of the few Albanian areas that managed to maintain the catholic belief despite of the Ottoman Empire for about 500 years. In 1479 Shkoder fell under the rule of Turkey and at that time the majority of the population turned from the catholic belief into the muslim belief. Although the inhabitants were under the occupant's pressure, they fanatically preserved their religion. This bigotry occurred even in the language. Just as they preserved their religion unchanged, they also preserved their language and brought phonetic characteristics of the old Albanian nowadays. It is certain that a major positive role played the fact that the representatives of the catholic belief were at the same time the first authors of the written Albanian and those who created the written Albanian tradition. While the rest of the population, turned into muslims and having changed the belief, acquired the respective linguistic changes. " The birth and the disappearance of beliefs constitutes for each race culminant points of its history and form the real skeleton of each civilization." [Le Bon, 2008, p.235] By the passing of centuries the religious separation led to the physical separation of the city. "The eastern part was catholic, whereas the western part was muslim. These two parts composed of the inhabitants of the same city, but of different religions, were separated from "The road of Gjan (rruga e gjan) " or "Piaca", which follows the line coming from the bazaar, passes through the center and then turns left towards the north of Shkoder to Koplik." [Ziu, 2002, p.46] In his study "Oborret e Shkodrës (Shkoder's courts)", Trifon Ziu affirms that:" Long life under the Turkish rule left a deep trace in the social life of the city." [Ziu, 2002, p.46] As all the cities of European Turkey, Shkoder got in terms of an urban look of an oriental city. Town houses in the neighborhood divided by

religious affiliation were surrounded by high walls. According to the researchers this division was more a quiet natural phenomenon led by the respective religious mentality. Between the two parts of the city there were differences in various aspects related to cultural influences. Turkish-oriental habits gradually penetrated the Muslim quarters. The division in different religions led to differentiations in social and cultural relations, as well. The cultural life developed in a considerable extent under the influence of the respective religious beliefs. In the catholic areas despite the no little influence of the oriental customs, there was more affinity to the social life conception and organization under the European and western tendency. However, among Shkoder communities of different religions there have traditionally been tolerance and harmony (understanding). Never have there been any fights or violence among these communities. The communities themselves, the clerics of the different religious communities, the various state institutions or associations and social organizations have reacted just at the right time, avoiding the development or installation of the evil in the people's minds and the undermining of the age-long equilibrium.

2. Linguistic differences among various religious communities.

We noted above the link between religion and language, we stopped at the fact that religious differences lead to linguistic differences. Let us stop at these differences in the Shkoder city. Between the speakers of Muslim and catholic belief there are differences in both lexical and phonetic level. [Shkurtaj,2004, p.232]

2.1. Differences in the lexical level

The lexicon is one of the fields where linguistic differences between religious beliefs are evident. The religious influences can be clearly seen in the countries names (topomyms). In cases when in the same area live inhabitants of the two beliefs there are specific denominations, for example Zagora has two denominations : Zagore- Isufaj for the muslim community and Zagore- Ndreaj for the catholic community.

The people's names , the antroponyms are another distinctive part. The inhabitants of catholic belief have saints' names of the catholic belief. These names have been albanianised , for example: *Shtjefën, Tefë from Stefano, Gjin from Giovani, Kolë, Nikolë from Nikola, Tom from Tomaso.* Whereas the inhabitants of muslim belief have names related to their belief, mainly of Turkish origin: *Ahmet, Sulltane, Hamdi, Mehmet, Bajram, Ajet, Habibe etc.*

The most distinctive part consists in religious words and services. They are the property of the respective community speakers. Speakers of catholic belief use these phrases: *Go to the church, Mass, minister, saint, hallowed (shkoj në kishë, meshë, meshtar, shejt, shejtnua).* In their speaking we can frequently find used catholic saints 'names *Krisht ose Jezu Krisht (Christ or Jesus Christ), Maria ose Maria e Bekueme (Mary or Blessed Mary), Shnazefi (Saint Joseph), Shnanou (Saint Anthony), Shnarroku, Shënkolli(Saint- Nicola, Shnjergji(Saint-Georges.* There are nouns of some of the periods related closely to specific religious practices such as : *Fast, Shrove Tuesday; swears* and other formulas which contain God and saints' names , such as : *Pasha Zotën , për Zotin or për të lumin Zot (for God's sake), për të lumen Zoj, pasha Zojn e Diell(for God's sake and Sun), pasha Zojen e Bekueme, bej kryq, rrefehem, (confess at the priest) , kungohem or marr kungimin.* In their every day speaking, speakers of catholic belief use a lot of borrowed words from Italian, whereas speakers of muslim belief use them less.

Speakers of Muslim belief use other phrases that distinguish them from the former group. Thus, we can mention names of *xhami, tyrbe (mosques and mausoleums), hoxhë, imam (preacher);* names of different festivals of Muslim belief, such as: *Bajrami i madh (big bajram) ,bajram i vogël (little bajram), kurban- bajrami, natë e madhe ose natë e mirë (big night or good night), natë teravie (night teravie), pejgameri, xhehnet,(paradise) xhehnem (hell), allahu (god), pasha allahun(for god's sake),;* as well as greetings and swears containing the *allah* words, perëndi (goodness). The first phenomenon of the difference of these two lexemes groups is that in the case of the muslim belief there is an abundance of words and terms of Turkish – Arabic origin, which appears even in some of the following greetings, such as: *selam, "të fala", alekum selamn, selamalekum,, ramazan, yftar, ninoj (to fast), me ra shehadet, shkoft n'ahiret , bismilah.* Interjections ala turka are used: *allah-i (allah-u), din-i, iman, pejgamer-i, such as . pasha allahun, pasha din e imân, etc.* Very distinguishing has been in the muslim environment the use of Friday in Turkish, which everywhere was called e *xhuma.*

The religious differences have made that linguistic differences be in greetings and consolations phrases. For example, in the case of a death consolation The Catholics say: *"Pastë dritë", or " Dritë pastë", "Krishti e pastë ne parriz", "Dritë i baftë shpirti",* whereas Muslims say: " *Pastë rahmet" or " Rahmet pastë, " Allahu e pastë në xhehnet";*

Catholic belief	Muslim belief	English
Zot	Allah	God
ferr-skëterrë	Xhehnem	hell
parriz (parajsë)	xhehnet (parajsë)	paradise
e prêne (e premte)	xhuma	Friday
ruaje zot	Marshall	God blesses him or her
kufomë	Xhenaze	dead
Nadja e mirë	Si keni nje?	Good morning
kotël	haver	dress

In the lexical background are noticeable the use of foreign words borrowed from Italian for catholic believers and for Muslim believers the use of words of Turkish origin.

2.2. Differences in the phonetic level

A Muslim believer can easily be distinguished from a catholic one by the amount of phonemes he or she uses. In the Shkoder speaking the religious differences affect some phenomena of the phonetic system which are not essential anyway**.** These phonetic differences are also a reflection of sociolinguistic situations: relations that inhabitants of catholic belief have had with the mountainous and Zadrime areas , while muslims with Ulqin, Krajë, Tuz etc.
1. The catholic part pronounces the ancient groups **kl, gl** like **kj, g-j**; *kjaj, i g-jat, skjep, skjetull*. The Muslim part pronounces these groups respectively **q** and **gj**; *i gjat, sqep, sqetell*.

Word in standard Albanian	Catholic belief	Muslim belief	English
qaj	kjaj	qaj	cry
sqep	skjep	sqep	beak
gjuni	g-juni	gjuni	knee
sqetull	Skjetull	sqetell	armpit
gjuha	g-juha	gjuha	tongue, language

 The catholic part does not clearly distinguish the phonemes **q, gj**, from **ç, xh**. The Catholics pronounce with **ç** (not with **q**) words, such as. *fuçi "fuqi" (barrel), i fuçishëm " i fuqishëm"(powerful), çeni"qeni"(dog), çafa"qafa"(neck).*
On the other hand, they can pronounce with /q / words where there is /ç/ : *qelsi "çelësi"(key), me qil derën" me çil derën",* *(to open the door), qaj "çaj"(chop) etc.*
    In the muslim area of Shkoder the pronunciation of palatals: **q, gj** is everywhere identical to that of standard Albanian.

Word in standard Albanian	Catholic belief	Muslim belief	English
fuqi	Fuçi	fuqi	barrel
Çaj	Qaj	çaj	tea
çelësi	Qelësi	çelësi	key
Hap , çil (deren)	qil (derën	çil (derën)	open

In a considerable number of Catholics there is a tendency to exchange the lateral phoneme /**ll**/ with the interdental /**dh/;** *dhampa "llampa" (lamp), madhi "malli" (nostalgia).* However, this is not a general phenomenon.

Word in standard Albanian	Catholic belief	Muslim belief	English
llampë	Dhampë	llampë	light bulb
mall	Madh	mall	nostalgia
llokum	Dhokum	llokum	sweet
dhuratë	Lluratë	dhuratë	present

In the muslims'speaking the short phoneme /o/ which misses passes to /a/ : *kas "kos"(yougourt), mas"mos",(don't), sat"sot"(today), santé"sonte"(tonight),*
or it passes to /e/: thet "thotë"(says);
sometimes it passes to /u/ : sunde "sonte" (tonight)

Word in standard Albanian	Catholic belief	Muslim belief	English
sonte	Sonte	santé	tonight
kos	Kos	kas	jogurt
kot	Kot	kat	useless
zot	Zot	zat	god

These are some of the main linguistic differences among subject speakers of various beliefs in the Shkoder city.

3. Today's reality in Shkoder

With the society evolution, the creation of new socio-political circumstances the linguistic situations change, since language is their reflection. This is why linguistic differences do not show all speakers the same use density. Their age, their education and social circle affects the intensity of their use.

   To see specifically this reality we have made a survey. We have investigated subject-speakers of two beliefs in Shkoder (catholic and muslim) that belong to three age groups: the first group consisted of 70-75 year-old subject speakers, the second group included those of 40-45 years old and the third group were children of 10-15 years old. The linguistic differences in spoken language have been a part of our study. The material recorded during their free conversations has served as a comparative part, too.

   It is easily noticeable that in the first group (70-75) the linguistic differences, consequence of religious beliefs are more visible. There are numerous differences in both phonetic and lexical level, because:

They belong to the generation having acquired a complete religious education. At the time of communist dictatorship this generation had already obtained the religious information.
They have carried with them a strong religious heritage from their parents.

In the second group the religious differences related to the respective belief can be identified in a lower degree, although they are visible. The reasons are the following:

This group has grown up under the communist rule when the religious belief was banned and was considered as a crime.
The religious heritage in families has secretly been transmitted because of the dictatorship.
The generation's education and the coexistence between religious beliefs have influenced the softening of these differences

In the third group we have included 10-15 year-old children. Despite their young age the differences in their spoken language are present, because:

Children carry features of their close social circle they belong to.
The revival of religious belief has made children get direct information.

We have made a survey with teachers of first grade in the Shkoder city. About 80% of these teachers have claimed that they are able to identify their pupils 'religious beliefs from the phonetic differences in their speaking.

The existence of these linguistic differences as a consequence of various religious beliefs can be explained from both aspects: psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic, as the impact the social community has is great. Children receive cash linguistic differences from their social circle; learn languages together with these differences by making them their part at a time when they are not aware of the existence of religious differences. On the other hand, the linguistic structures are crystallized in the children's brain by embedding the linguistic differences, differences that become part of language unconsciousness and the speaker always carries them with him.

4. Conclusions

Along with the language is born and developed what we directly feel as personal. This inner feeling does not really find expression in the social world, but it occurs through language. "The language establishes unconsciousness in human beings. The language includes in its theme even the unconsciousness in its psychoanalytic conception" [Rrokaj, 2010, p. 188] According to Saussure the language is a social phenomenon, but on the other hand there is a discourse which is an individual act of the language implementation and while we communicate we show our individualism. Mankind is inclined to represent himself through language and this the key which explains the existence of linguistic differences in individuals belonging to different religious beliefs, although these people belong to the same nation, state, language, dialect, city or social group." … the world starts from the immaterial radiation of meditation to God". [Rrokaj, 2010, p. 188] The language is an energy that the speaker owns and through which he creates realities to infinity. According to Gustav le Bon "little change in the state of beliefs of any nation leads to a series of changes in its existence" and the language is one of the most existential elements of a nation. Within the linguistic community every repartition is noted, above all through the particular linguistic use and the community itself is able to know to notice the presence of such repartitions. The selection of a linguistic form is the most direct means of speakers to individualize the speaker's position in the society in an automatic way.

Man has the tendency of keeping up to the group which he belongs to. Religion affects directly in the creation of identity and language is part of it.

The feeling of religious belonging is deep, it is deeply rooted in ethnic psyche. The protective role of religion is the continuity of the protective function that the family offers in certain phases of man's development, especially in the most important phase in that of childhood.

According to the psychoanalysts parental principle of religion and nation remains present as religion is identified with the family, the mother. The religious belief as an important part of the individual becomes a direct cause of linguistic differences.

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