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Writing Standard: Process of Macedonian Language Standardization

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on questions of Macedonian standardization at the most micro-level, i.e., within the individual. Through examination of archival materials of Macedonian writers of the early twentieth century, questions of language shift and standardization are addressed. While much research has been conducted on the state processes of language standardizing, on access to the media in newly standardized linguistic codes, and on access to education, this work refocuses discussion of language standards on individual speakers and writers: how and why they shift their language to the emerging norm. Two writers from this period, Anton Kavacev and Radoslav Petkovski, serve as models and provide the first step in a larger study of processes of standardization in the early decades of the twentieth century leading to codification in mid-century. The written works of the authors under study demonstrate that language codification is not an act, nor a series of acts, but a process, a process that takes place within individual speakers who are committed to the project of language standardization while subject to external political and linguistic pressures.

1. INTRODUCTION
How do writers adapt to changing linguistic circumstances? How did Macedonian writers of the first half of the twentieth century move from writing in the languages of their schooling (Serbian or Bulgarian) or their Macedonian home dialect to become writers of the emerging standard Macedonian?1 Much research has been conducted that focuses on the state processes of language standardizing, e.g., commissions to codify grammars, publication of new dictionaries and handbooks, access to the media in newly standardized linguistic codes, and access to education. Such works leave unanswered questions: such as why a speaker chooses to write in an emergent language or dialect, particularly if they have been schooled in a dominant language. Dorian writes: “the social standing of a group of people carries over to the language they speak. Social and economic opportunities go mainly to speakers of the state-sponsored language” (26). Yet in the Balkans some writers switched to a lower status variety because of group cohesion and ethno-linguistic identity. Although the lower status language is a reflection of power relations in contexts of developing ethnic and political awareness and newly standardizing languages,2 some people will opt to

1 I am grateful for the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences for access to their archives, which helped in locating documents.
2 See Krejci and Velimsky 1981 for a typology of European languages based on ethnic and political consciousness and other parameters.

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shift to this emergent language since, as Dorian states: “If conditions are reasonably favorable, people identify with their own language and do not seek a preferable substitute. In cases in which people have changed to another language and given up their own entirely, it has nearly always been due to a local history of political suppression, social discrimination, or economic deprivation. More often than not, all three have been present” (39). Indeed, in Macedonia all three were present, but in the early twentieth century new circumstances arose that allowed Macedonians to choose Macedonian. How and why individuals make this choice, and how they express themselves in a language they often do not fully control—given that they are usually schooled in the higher status state language and often have few tools such as grammars and dictionaries to aid them—are key underlying questions of processes of standardization.

Much of the scholarship on language standardization is concerned with institutions of social implementation of language shift, language planning, formal declarations of language reform and the legal apparatus that implement language planning.¹ In this paper, however, I focus a discussion of language standards on individual speakers and writers. Scholars such as Danforth who privilege the experience of individuals inform my work:

Most scholarly work on ethnic nationalism has focused on the construction of national identity as a large-scale collective phenomenon and as a long-term historical process. It has not paid sufficient attention to the construction of national identity as a short-term biographical process that takes place over the course of the lifetime of specific individuals... Many important questions are raised by focusing attention on the construction of national identity at the individual level. (85)

In this study I examine individual speakers: how and why they shift their language to the emerging norm—and, by so doing, help to create it. This change in focus is also informed by Kalogjera (212) who notes that more attention has been given to the selection stages of language standardization (cf. Radovanović 1992), but relatively little attention to the acceptance stages. I will focus on the linguistic and meta-linguistic factors in language shift and the concomitant identity shift in the generation of writers who, though schooled in Serbian or Bulgarian, chose to write in the nascent Macedonian standard language, even when this led to an inability to publish, social ostracism, personal injury and prison.

This paper is the first step in a broader study of writers in the period 1935–1955. These are writers from the interwar period and writers who published in the first decade after standardization. Particular emphasis is placed on writers who published in the first issues of the literary journal Nov den, i.e., authors such as Aco Šopov and Ivan Točko. As a preliminary step toward this broader study, I discuss here two writers from this period: Anton Kavaev and Radoslav Petkovski. Both writers experienced the transition from dialect to standard in different ways, and their experiences and linguistic autobiographies shed light on the ways in which standardization and identity shift are experienced at this micro-level. While claims have been made that Macedonian was a language constructed by Tito and imposed on the population,³ archival data show that there were writers committed to Macedonian in the early decades of the twentieth century, developing a meta-dialect that would become the basis of the Macedonian standard.⁴ Through the study of their writings, I will explore the responses of these educated individuals to processes of language standardization within changing political boundaries. In this way I will be able to highlight questions of language codification and standardization at the most micro-level, i.e., within the individual.

Language codification and re-codification in the Balkans from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twenty-first centuries provides a laboratory for examining issues of language, statehood, belonging, and status shifts across national boundaries. Yet, despite the importance language plays in identity, recent studies devoted to Macedonia have either ignored the linguistic dimension of Macedonians (e.g., Pettifer 2001, and, in some respects, Brown 2003) or accept essentialist identities such as Serbian and Bulgarian, yet treat Macedonian as not imagined but imaginary.⁵ Bucholtz’s “strategic essentialism”—describing contexts in which “... the group under study is seen by the dominant group as illegitimate or trivial, or when a stigmatized group forms an oppositional identity to counter such negative ideologies” (401)—may be relevant, since for many in the Balkans, and, indeed, for many scholars, Macedonian is an oppositional identity. By examining the speakers themselves who chose Macedonian, I re-center discussion of Macedonians and Macedonian identity on critical linguistic components.

Other scholars have focused on language policy and language codification, yet language standardization in many of these works is expressed as an event or series of events, e.g., a codification congress, followed by attempts to implement its decisions. Greenberg (2004), for example, provides tables of events leading to the demise of Serbo-Croatian and the re-standardization of separate Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages. He notes: “The successor languages are still shaping their identities” (162). However, it is, of course, not the languages that


⁵ See Kofos 1993 as well as discussion in Friedman 2000.

shape identities but the people who use them. The written works of the authors under study demonstrate that language codification is not an act, nor a series of acts, but a process, a process that takes place within individual speakers who are committed to the project of language standardization while subject to external political and linguistic pressures.

Koneski was well aware of the difficulties inherent in developing a new standard, particularly since (in the south Balkan context) Macedonian was a late-codifying language. He wrote in his first published piece, *Macedonian Literature and the Macedonian Literary Language*: “Of course, a language does not form a literary language in a day. Time will have to pass before all the forms of the literary language would be strictly applied” (34). The high school textbook *Odhram četiva za makedonski jazik vo I, II, i III klas* published in 1946 contains a note on the language used: “In the language of this book there are notable inconsistencies. There are doublets, even triplet forms... These differences are unavoidable, but are even necessary in the phase of the formation, in which our language finds itself” (390). Yet, Lunt notes: “Since the normalizers were starting anew, experiments and controversies were to be expected. What is surprising is the speed with which consensus was achieved” (Lunt 1999: 10). The question then is how writers attained this standard, if at all.

As stated above, writers schooled in Bulgarian or Serbian sought a literary voice in Macedonian, a language that remained uncodified. In comparison to neighbouring languages, Macedonian writers had no institutional support or resources, and were prone to change their stylistic orientation. Only careful study of their writing, untouched by editors, can help us to understand the motivation, the process, and the personal risk they took to write in the Macedonian language.

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7 Blaž Koneski was not only a member of the commission which codified the language, but also one of Macedonia’s leading poets, linguists, and academicians who was aware of the process of codification in his own writings.

8 For more details on Koneski see Kramer 2002 as well as references cited there.

9 Here I would like to draw attention to two additional facts: first, when we talk about writers from Macedonia during the early decades of the twentieth century, we usually do not mention their material circumstances. Looking through the archives, one is struck by the poverty in which these authors lived. Much of their writing is on found paper and written in pencil. These works need to be recorded and saved because they will be completely useless in another decade and this record of the process of pre-codification writing will be lost. Much of the writing is already too faded to read. The famous inter-war playwright Risto Krle, for example, wrote plays on the back of playbills from a Croatian traveling theatre troupe. Other poems are written in school notebooks, on scraps of loose paper, and in pocket notebooks—i.e., paper of poor quality. On the other hand, it is incredible that so much did get published and preserved during periods of war, poverty, imprisonment, earthquakes and continued political upheaval in Macedonia.

10 Information on Kavaev is taken from his autobiographical statement and official personal documents; Kavaev archive, Box 1, folder 1

11 He was also sent official thanks from the Macedonian government in 1949 for his work building Skopje.
**Process of Macedonian Language Standardization**

I am a Macedonian and I live with my family in Skopje as a Bulgarian citizen. In Bulgaria we lived in the village of Târgoviste. There we lived as Macedonians and considered ourselves among the ranks of the Macedonian émigré community.

Because we wanted to return to Macedonia, we submitted a request to the Yugoslav embassy during 1936 but before the question could be settled definitively, the events of 1941 took place.

In his 1948 request for a review of his citizenship application, he included not only the fact that he had already been working as a lawyer in Skopje since 1947, but also a list of his writings, writings which, he pointed out, were all on Macedonian themes. These included, among other works, a long poem entitled *Biljana*, a play devoted to national liberation, a one-act play entitled *Maroova*, a three-act play *Pesnata na Vardarot* [Song of the Vardar], a poem entitled "Longing for Struga" written in honour of Konstantin Mihidjanov. He cites these writings as foundational to his claims of Macedonian and Yugoslav loyalty and citizenship because, as he writes:

- Od ova petiteva moja tvorba, Vje isto taka mozete da znamu čine da se, iako magisam i sakam da bitam eden od najdobra i lujniji građanin na Macedoniji i Nugošavijari.

- Od ova očetena moja tvorba, Vie isto taka možete da zaklužite, deka jaz možam i sakam da bitam eden od naj dobro i lojalni građanin na Macedoniji i Jugoslaviji.

From this published work of mine, you can also conclude that I can and wish to be one of the best and most loyal citizens of Macedonia and Yugoslavia.

Kavayev felt he had long been a foreigner, i.e., a Macedonian in Bulgaria. He now wished to be a Macedonian at home in Macedonia. At the close of his request he writes:

...I am Iščam da ne živjemo vecce kako "tugnici." Sakam da živjemo kako odvječci. Vrćejte svoj život sva sum go proved u Bugarijsi, kako makedonci, namnke za ovde. Tama beemo zgrundici, koja rastva, čekajki eden den da se vrati ovde. I sota koga se vrati, sakam da bitam izrnien kako oni na zemlji, koji laži i koji saka da i bide polzn.

...Iščam da ne živjemo veće kako "tugnici." Sakam da živjemo, kako odvječan. Celjot svoj život sum go proved vo bugarija, kako makedonci, težnje za ovde. Tam bevme tuginci, koi rasti, čekajki eden dan da se vrati ovde. I sota, koga se vrati, sakam da bitam izrnien kako oni na zemljata, koji laži i koji saka da i bide polzn.

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12 The orthography is typical of many writers during this time because they did not have typewriters with Macedonian characters, including the letter j. Archival materials show they used a broad range of typewriters; people made do with what they had. Some variation, for example, with the doro-poiljata k' g was due to the fact that the fonts were long unavailable. Early publications, such as the journal *Nov Den* and the newspaper *Nova Makedonija* contained special editorial notes concerning typefaces. See also Friedman 1998: 39.

13 Kavayev’s request sent to Skopje Regional Council, MANU archive, Kavayev fund, box 1, folder 1.

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14 Kavayev produced two versions of this poem. A comparison of their linguistic features will be the subject of future research.

15 Kavayev’s request sent to Skopje Regional Council, MANU archive, Kavayev fund, box 1, folder 1.

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I do not wish to live any longer as a 'foreigner'. I want to live as one who belongs here. I have lived my whole life in Bulgaria—as a Macedonian—longing for home. There we were foreigners, who grew up waiting for the day to return here. And now, when I have returned, I want to be accepted as a son of the country, one who loves her and who wishes to be useful for her.

Kavaev provides an interesting example of the difficulties encountered by writers of this period. He wrote on Macedonian matters, though not in standard Macedonian. For a long time he was claimed neither by Bulgaria nor Macedonia. His personal writings from his twenty years in Macedonia are not written in Bulgarian, but he also never fully acquired standard Macedonian, a fact he highlights in his autobiographical sketch, written in 1961. Here he makes his most explicit remarks on his linguistic code:

Oд тога да сега писам непрекинато, иако не познавам добро македонскиот јазик. На македонскиот јазик не можам да напишам нито едно стихотворение во сум написал и публикувал многу разкази во в. Нова македонија, во Разгледи, во Бирилк...

Oд тога да сега пишува речено, иако не познавам добро македонскиот јазик. На македонскиот јазик не можам да напишам нито едно стихотворение, но сум написал и публикувал многу разкази во в. Нова македонија, во Разгледи, во Бирилк...

From that time to the present I have been writing without break, although I do not know the Macedonian language well. In Macedonian I cannot write a single poem, but I have written and published many stories in the newspaper Nova Makedonija, in Razgledi, in Birlik...

Perhaps it is not surprising that Kavaev's last years were spent in Paris, where he died far from the Balkans in August 1967.

3. Radoslav Petkovski

Let us now look at one other writer from this period, Radoslav Petkovski. Petkovski is one of the most significant literary figures in inter-war Macedonia. He has a much less complex history than Kavaev, yet he too experienced difficulties in developing a Macedonian literary style and in getting his works published in Macedonian. He was born on August 13, 1916 in Resen, though, he notes, lie is an Ohrid resident by background. He completed some of his schooling in Ohrid, then continued studies for four years in Bitola. He took up law in Belgrade, but, due to financial difficulties, returned to Ohrid where he became active in the cultural life of that city. According to his autobiographical notes, he began writing poetry as a young student and published his first work while in a gymnasium in Bitola. His poem Ribarce [The Young Fisherman] was his first published work in Macedonian.

Petkovski comments that he was unable to publish much of his work from the thirties due to censorship, adding that some of his work was even banned by the office of the public prosecutor. Smiljevska (2000) comments that since it was not legally possible for a Macedonian paper to appear, Macedonians employed various strategies to publish newspapers and journals in other languages, i.e., Serbian or Bulgarian, and then inserted some Macedonian works in the hopes of getting them past the censors.

The materials in the Petkovski archive allow us to see the processes of standardization in detail. It is important to recall that writers were developing both language and new genres. Other writers experienced difficulties as well due to the lack of resources and an inability to get their Macedonian works published. Such a situation is described by the inter-war playwright Anton Panov in his autobiographical notes, when he remarked on the difficulties of writing in any type of standard when there were no grammars, no dictionaries, and the threat of prison for writing in Macedonian. Petkovski also writes of his personal difficulties caused by virtue of his Macedonian writings, as seen, for example, in his autobiographical notes of 1946.

Larochy leško mi beše koga završiv matura. Nemam vozmoštvo da se izdržjam na studiji i stipendija ne mi se daje meka da be odišen učenik i završiv matura odišen. Stipendija ne mi se daje bežedi učenik kog učenik se zapiša po poznatim i uže vo gimnazija i kako student piševo makedonski jazik.

It was especially difficult for me when I finished high school. I didn't have the opportunity to remain at my studies and I didn't receive a scholarship even though I was an excellent student and I completed high school with excellent marks.

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19 Biographical notes, written by Petkovski; MANU, Petkovski fond, folder 1, doc. 16.
21 MANU archive, Panov fond, box 1, folder 1.
22 MANU archive, Petkovski fond, box 1, doc. 16.
23 In fact his high school records for the years 1931–1934 do show that he received excellent marks (5s) in all courses ranging from languages (Serbo-Croatian, Latin, German, and French), science (Natural sciences, chemistry, physics), Religion, and Philosophy. The only exceptions: in 1931 he received a very good (4) in nature study, and drawing, and a good (3) in physical education, and in 1932 very good (4s) in...
not given a stipend because I had already as a schoolboy begun to write poems and as a high school student I wrote in the Macedonian language.

In the Petkovski archives are multiple versions of several poems: the original versions from the 1930s written in school notebooks, the self-published edition of 1941, as well as this latter version with the author’s hand-written editorial changes. Here we see an individual who was born and educated in Macedonia, who self-identified as Macedonian, who published in Macedonia, and who was committed to moving his language to the emerging standard. In the introduction to the 1941 edition, he wrote:

Овие песни се написани во времето од 1936/1938 год. Требаше да бидет штампани тога во една збирка со други песни написани на српски јазик, ама поради политички причини не беше штампани.

Сметам оти денеска тие све некоје имат ако некоја народна книжевна предност, ова историско политичка—да видет оти тога преди војната се пишео во македонски на народниот македонски јазик.

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The poems were written in the period between 1936 and 1938. They should have been published then in a collection of other poems written in Serbian, but due to political reasons they were not published.

All the same, I consider that today they will have some sort of literary value, an historical political one—to demonstrate that the Macedonian folk language was written in Macedonia before the war.

In addition to the importance of this statement for historical, political reasons, it is also interesting to note how close it conforms to the standards of the codified Macedonian language. That is not to say that there are not obvious dialectisms, even here (in a ‘public’ genre). Most notably we see the presence of the Ohrid dialect form -t in the third singular of the verb脑海 ‘be’.

When we take a closer look at one poem, we can follow the transition from dialect to standard more clearly. In the following table Column One represents the poem in its handwritten version of 1938. The second column presents the self-published text of 1941. The third has been modified to include the changes
Here we see changes in orthography, phonology, morphology, and lexicon. Again, we note that some problems in orthography are mechanical in nature. Petkovski consistently writes the letter -j- but in the later versions we see ñ, an artifact of the Cyrillic machine he was using. We will disregard this fact here. We will also need to disregard the spelling of ñ. We see two different solutions to this font problem represented here: куките, кукитите,30 i.e., either ignore the diacritic or insert -j-. In the later versions we see also the same digraph solution to solve for the lack of f: rii.

Changes between 1938 and 1945 include:

- Loss of intervocalic [j] in the first person pronoun: nije → nie.31
- In the first version Petkovski spells miki ‘torments’ with a zero vowel, representing phonemic schwa. Later versions modify to the standard reflex of a-: miki → maki.
- We should also note here the spelling of noun plus possessive pronoun as an accentual unit in the first version, but separated as two separate lexical items in the second one: taksojn na taksojn vs taksojn na taksojn.
- We note the lexical changes, as well: e.g., sted to meju ‘among, between’.

30 The first version differs from the later two. The variation in translation here and in the line below is separated by a slash (/).
31 In fact, in the southwest dialects k’ occurs less frequently (see Vidoeski 2000:27), but we cannot determine the cause of its absence because of the font issues mentioned above.
32 Note this was a standard orthographic issue. Cf. the rules in the Pravopis
33 At the University of Toronto many heritage speakers from southeast dialect areas, where accentual units are particularly strong, consistently write the possessive pronoun and noun as a single unit, even when other areas of their spelling conform to norms. For information on accentual units in these dialects see Vidoeski 2000:25.

Later changes include:
- In the final column we see orthographically correct -v- in the first-person plural past tense ending, earlier written phonetically as -f, e.g., bine → bivme.
- The cluster m ya, typical of Ohrid reflex of *tv (see Vidoeski 2000:27) becomes standard m ya: немашки → немашки.
- The metathesis and diphthongization typical of Ohrid dialect seen in the noun каракника → каракници (karakinci = karanci, cf. Vidoeski 2000:25) is absent in the final version: каракници.
- In the neuter plural, the -n- is softened: пекерчина → пекерчина.
- The third-plural verb ending, which earlier appeared in the southeast dialect form imai (cf. Vidoeski 2000:27) regularizes for the -a class to -at: imat.
- Several lexical changes including sted ve to ce ce se ‘everything’, and optivaem ‘we asked’ becomes imanahme prašavme.

Despite these changes, other examples of Ohrid dialect remain. Of course, some of these may have been preserved for artistic reasons, e.g., zovko and lopki, to keep a dialect flavour in the poem. Other non-standard features present in the poem are due, in part, to the fact that the standard was not yet fully codified in the early 1940s, e.g., -aj remained an acceptable variant for -ovi until 1950.

4. CONCLUSION

The work of the two writers discussed above, Kavaev and Petkovski, serve as example of the difficulties faced by many writers in Macedonia in the first decades of the twentieth century. As the language was codified, these writers were ready to contribute works to the emerging literary journals. There are archives filled with documents, personal writings, poems, plays, official letters, all written before 1945, which give evidence of this literary activity and the desire of individuals to contribute to a Macedonian linguistic and literary identity. This current paper is a first examination of these processes of standardization within individual writers based on archival documents. In contrast to other works that focus on stages of development and an examination of features present at one moment, I propose a diachronic analysis of the linguistic changes within individuals. In future work I will develop a data base in which specific linguistic features will be tagged as dialect, meta-dialect, or standard. These features will then be examined along several parameters: (1) a temporal parameter: how does writing evolve as individual writers develop from pre-standardization in the 1920s and 1930s to post-1945 standardization, (2) a genre parameter: can we detect differences in dialect vs. standard, depending on type of writing, e.g., personal diaries and private letters, poetry, prose, official
documents. Finally, (3) a content parameter: documents will be weighted for Macedonian content, i.e., is the writer claiming Macedonian identity explicitly. This latter parameter will be an important feature of this research because, for example, there are writers, such as Kavaev, who sought recognition as Macedonians, whose work is on Macedonian subjects, yet who wrote in dialect or meta-dialect but not in standard Macedonian.

It is both well known, and well studied, that national identity in the Balkans is closely tied to national language. Because emerging statehood has been tied to a program of language standardization, Friedman (1999), echoing Naylor, writes of "language as flag." Yet surprisingly little research has focused explicitly on the impact of these changing standards on individual speakers, how standardization processes are lived. While many studies privilege the spoken language, standardization happens in written code perhaps more obviously than in spoken and, in the case of Macedonian, we have access to this written record.

REFERENCES


53 Here Gal’s (2005) “public/private” distinction will be valuable.


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