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**TURKISH INFINITIVES IN BALKAN ROMANI: FROM
CODESWITCHING TO PARADIGM SHIFT**

The replacement of infinitives by subjunctive clauses – which latter are analytic in all cases except West Rumelian Balkan Turkish, where the optative is used – is one of the hallmarks of the Balkan linguistic league, and among the first phenomena to be observed as such (K o p i t a r: 1829). To be sure, as seen clearly in J o s e p h (1983), there is a continuum of infinitive replacement such that various Balkan languages or dialects have varying manifestations of older or newer infinitival or infinitive-like constructions. We can note here in passing that even the Balkan dialects of Judezmo and Armenian are characterized by a higher degree of infinitive replacement vis-à-vis the non-Balkan dialects of these languages (F r i e d m a n: 2006, A d a m o u: 2008). In the case of Romani, which, like Judezmo, S a n d f e l d (1930) excluded from Balkan linguistic study – although in recent decades their place in Balkan linguistics, especially that of Romani, has been firmly established (F r i e d m a n: 2006) – the use of finite subjunctive clauses (and related constructions) with the subordinating particle *te* corresponds to Balkan Slavic *da*, Greek *na*, Albanian *të*, and Balkan Romance *s-*.¹ Unlike the Romani future marker *ka[m]*, which particle corresponds exactly to the *volo*-derived future marking particles of the other Balkan languages, and which is limited to the Romani dialects of the Balkans (B o r e t z k y, I g l a: 2004), Romani *te*-constructions are characteristic of almost all Romani dialects wherever they are spoken. It can thus be argued that while the dialectal distribution of the Balkan future in Romani is a defining characteristic of the linguistic Balkans, the *te*-subjunctive is a defining Balkan characteristic in Romani. It is thus significant that, as B o r e t z k y (1996), M a t r a s (2002), and E l š í k (2007) document, new infinitival constructions have developed in some (mostly Central) Romani dialects outside the Balkans in contact with Hungarian, German, or Slavic. Of particular significance here is that such constructions either involve the generalization of a third person form to all persons (in subordination to *te*), or, in the case of the wholesale borrowing of a Hungarian infinitive into the Rumungro dialect, the elimination of *te*. In this contribution I shall

document another instance of a “new” infinitive in Romani, but one that occurs in the Balkans, in contact with Turkish. The most important feature of the Turkish infinitive in Romani is that in at least some instances it is more closely integrated into the relevant dialect than the Hungarian infinitive in Rumungro. As such, the Turkish infinitive represents a more highly integrated categorial borrowing.

Among the dialects of Romani spoken in the Balkans, there are groups that conjugate Turkish verbs using Turkish inflections. The practice itself is consistent with what I have called code compartmentalization in Romani, a phenomenon by means of which native – or perceived native – elements are segregated from foreign ones by means of separate grammatical treatment (Friedman 2009). In the case of some Romani dialects, Turkish conjugations are limited to the two basic tenses that characterize the Romani system: present and preterite, e.g. *jazarum* ‘I write’, *jazdum* ‘I wrote’ cf. native *kerav* ‘I do’, *kerdem* ‘I did’ in the dialect of Agia Varvara (Iglia 1996).² In other dialects, however, Turkish optatives (as well as other forms that need not concern us here) are also employed. In the case of Turkish optatives, most dialects employ them in subordination to *te* as in example (1). It is worth noting that such patterns occur in representatives of all three Romani dialect groups of the Balkans (North Balkan, South Balkan, and South Vlach), although the phenomenon is attested mainly in eastern Bulgaria and in Greece (but also in Crimea and, marginally, in Kosovo and Turkey).³

- (1) Ov avijas me khereste te **konušsun** mansa. (Sliven Nange 440)
‘He came to my house to **speak** with me.’

In the Kaspichan Xoraxane, Shumen Xoraxane, and Varna Gadžikano Romani dialects, however, (all of them North Balkan dialects of northeastern Bulgaria) the optative occurs without *te*, in the first two facultatively and in the last regularly, as in examples (2)-(6):

- (2) Mi phen **bašladə** te **baarsən** kana tharde amare kera. (Kaspichan Xoraxane 759)
‘My sister **began to scream** when they burned down our house.’
(3) Arachi ljom me grastes i gijom **ajdajəm** les. (Kaspichan Xoraxane 1000)
‘Yesterday I took my house and went to **ride it**.’
(4) Oj **ittirijeri** o manušen te **pinsin** an *rejsate*. (Shumen Xoraxane (878)
‘She **pushes** people [out of the way] to **get on** the bus.’
(5) O mangela **tanəšsən** o ekesa kaaka. (Shumen Xoraxane 749)
‘He wants to **meet** someone’
(6) O dad vakerla **čevirsin** o grastes. (Varna Gadžikano 799)
‘His father told him to **return** the horse.’

In all of these examples, the word order is Romani and the Turkish optative is neither preceded nor followed by a Turkish word. This is thus the same sort of code

compartmentalization as in the more limited system of Agia Varvara noted above, albeit with more complex morphology. (All Romani dialects with Turkish optatives also have Turkish presents and pasts.)

Examples (7)-(9) from the three abovementioned dialects all contain actual Turkish infinitives, a feature which is correlated with the omissibility of *te* when optatives are used. When infinitives occur in these dialects, however, they are usually preceded by another Turkish verb form (and, in the case of (9), using Turkish-influenced word order), which raises the question of whether or not these occurrences of Turkish infinitives are merely codeswitches, since speakers of these dialects also know Turkish (which is not, however, the case for all Romani dialects with Turkish conjugations):

- (7) O phure manusha **seviiler annattərma** sar siaste terne.
‘The old folks **like to talk about** their youth.’ (Varna Gadžikano 564)
(8a) Me pheja **bašladi baarinmaa** kana tharde amare kera. (Shumen Xoraxani 759)
(8b) Mi phen **bašladə baarmaa** kana tharde amaro kher (Varna Gadžikano 759)
‘My sister **began to scream** when they burned down our house.’
(9) Odva džanna trin **dildže konušmaa**. (Kaspichan Xoraxane 863)
‘He **knows [how] to speak** three languages.’

Example (10), however, is crucial in arguing that, at least in the Shumen Xoraxane dialect, at issue is integration of the infinitive into the Turkish compartment of the Romani conjugational system rather than an actual codeswitch *per se*.

- (10) Rači lijom o grastis gijom te **ajdamaa** (Shumen Xoraxane 1000)
‘Yesterday I took my horse [and] went to **ride**’

Here, the infinitive is – unlike the borrowed Hungarian infinitives of Rumungro – subordinated to *te* and is, moreover, the only Turkish word in the sentence. Furthermore, the word order is Romani, not Turkish, which would normally have the finite verb at the end. It can thus be argued that in at least some cases, Turkish infinitives can occur in Romani as part of the Turkish conjugation of verbs borrowed into Romani rather than being switches from Romani into Turkish (keeping in mind that the phenomenon of Turkish conjugation in Romani as a whole is not dependent on current knowledge of Turkish).

We thus have, at least in the Shumen Xoraxane Romani dialect, an example that indicates the entry of contact-induced infinitives outside the central European area where they are usually found and, moreover, in the Balkans where infinitives historically tended to be replaced by finite constructions. The fact that the dialect or dialects in question are in contact with East Rumelian Turkish, which, like standard Turkish, has a robust infinitive, is clearly a factor. Nonetheless, given the fact that

these Romani dialects are also in intense contact with Bulgarian, it is possible to speculate that the entry of the Turkish infinitive is part of an emblematic identity process, not unlike the significance assigned to the infinitive in recent processes of the differentiation of Croatian from Serbian. The question of infinitivophilia in the case of recent Croatian versus infinitivectomy in recent Serbian, however, takes us beyond the modest scope of the present article and will form part of a larger study.

NOTES

¹ I use *s-* for Balkan Romance since the vowel varies among Romanian, Aromanian, and Megleno-Romanian. Although Matras (2002) argues that the process could have begun during the period of proto-Romani contact with Iranian.

² In dialects with only present and preterite Turkish conjugations, the other two basic Romani tenses – imperfect and pluperfect – are formed by suffixing the native marker *-as* to the conjugated present or preterite, respectively.

³ All Romani sentences are from Matras, Elšík (2001-2005), although I have adapted the orthography. The names of the dialects are those used there (see Friedman: 2009 for discussion), and the numbers refer to the identifying numbers in the database. Turkish words are given in boldface, recent loans from other languages are in italics.

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