THE TERRITORY OF THE PHRASEOLOGY AND THE INNER FORM OF THE LANGUAGE

Dr. Suela MANGELLI
Dr. Daniela STOICA
Dr. Lindita KAÇANI
"Fan S. Noli" University of Korce, Albania
suelamangelli@hotmail.com
danielastoica@unkorce.edu.al
lkacano@yahoo.com

Rezumat:

După un scurt istoric al teoriilor legate de exitenţa formei interne a cuvintelor, dar şi a expresiilor frazeologice, articolul porneşte de la teoriile lui Wilhelm von Humboldt şi Jacob Grimm, potrivit cărora structura interna a limbii există, într-adevar, şi ea reflectă specificul unei comunităţi lingvistice, precum şi istoria, tradiţiile şi mentalităţile ei. Pentru a demonstra veridicitatea şi actualitatea acestor teorii, articolul analizează structurile interne ale unor expresii frazeologice în limbile albaneză, română, franceză, italiană şi engleză, scoţând în evidenţă în primul rând deosebirile, dar şi asemănările dintre ele. Deosebirile sunt puse pe seama diferenţelor de care dau dovadă vorbitorii acestor limbi în modul de a vedea anumite lucruri, situaţii sau în a da sau nu importanţă anumitor detalii. Asemănările sunt explicate mai ales prin împrumuturile lingvistice realizate de-a lungul timpului, dar şi prin contactele lingvistice şi culturale strânse dintre vorbitorii acestor limbi.

Cuvinte cheie :

Expresie frazeologică, forma internă, diversitate, cultură, mentalitate.

Abstract :

After briefly reviewing the theories related to the internal form of the words, but of phraseological expressions as well, the article starts from Wilhelm von Humboldt's and Jacob Grimm's theories, according to which the internal structure of the language really exists and it reflects both the specificity of a linguistic community, and its history, traditions and mentalities. In order to prove the credibility and the actuality of these theories, the article analyses the internal structures of some phraseological expressions in Albanian, Romanian, French, Italian and English, by emphasizing mainly the contrasts but also the resemblances between them. The contrasts are attributed to the differences that the speakers of these languages show in the way of looking at certain things, at certain situations, or by paying attention or not to certain details. The resemblances are accounted

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for especially through the linguistic borrowings resulted over time, but also through the linguistic and cultural contacts accumulated by the speakers of these languages.
Key-words:
Phraseological expression, internal form, diversity, culture, mentality.

"*Language is the nation's spirit and the nation's spirit is the language. It's hard to think of something more specific*"[1] (Humboldt).

"*A language without a nation is just like a tree standing without its roots. But now this is not a tree anymore, but only a deceased body, sign of an ex-flourishing plant*"[2] (Humboldt).

The language has the same importance as the history of a nation, because it is the product of its historical development as well as of the nation's spirit. "Our language is our history"[3] states Jacob Grim. So, how can a language possibly have any arbitrary relations, which means that it must be a mere codified verbal symbol, provided that it embarks a whole history of a nation?

Plato had his own hypothesis on the nature of the language. He thought that there was a natural resemblance between an object and its phonetic representation. Modern thinking retains this thesis to be true only for onomatopoeic words. But, if Plato's thesis were true, then there would not be such idiosyncrasies among languages. The best example in support of our statement would be provided by the comparison between two very closely related languages, taking into account their origin. The English are the descendents of a Northern Germanic tribe. Naturally, English is part of the Germanic group of the Indo-European family of languages. For example, the English perception of "window" seems to be related to the wind, while the German "fenester", to its visual function. In a larger context, all the languages are supposed to have the same source. Why then should there be such diversity?

The inner form of a language is a thesis that was put through for the first time/ advanced by the German linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt. In his

[1] Humboldt, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ''Some essentials of Humboldt's understanding of language'', Citations
[2] Humboldt, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ''Some essentials of Humboldt's understanding of language'', Citations.
[3] *Encyclopedia Britannica* (11 edition), 1911.

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opinion, language is ''the mirror of a nation's spirit.''[4]**.** He thinks that language is an involuntary outflow of a nation's spirit. He himself approves that the notion of 'form' has never been complete and clear. So, since the language is the expression of the nation's spirit, the variety of the world's languages can be explained/ accounted for. Moreover, Ferdinand de Saussure, despite his theory of the arbitrariness of the linguistic signs, when referring to the inner and outer elements of a language, states that "The customs of a nation are traced in the language and on the other side, the language itself constitutes the nation".[5]

Following Humboldt's line of thinking, we believe that language is a "sponge" which has inhaled all the peculiarities of the culture of a nation. It also shows how people of the same group perceive the world, the objects, the reality, religion and also how they imagine unreal things. Our aim is to squeeze these "sponges", which seem to be similar in form (at the surface), but different inside. In this article, the *phraseological phenomenon* is clearly emphasized in order to defend the thesis that the inner form of the language does really exist. The following examples from five European languages show the idiosyncrasies between the nations' perception of the world.

In this long list of examples, we also see that phraseologies are another way of seeing the same things. It is the way of expressing the same idea that makes the difference. Phrases are not just a group of words with an isolated meaning but expressions of a nation's mentality. They may be even considered part of the nation's history itself.

The aim of this article is to analyze the inner form of some categories of phraseologies in English, French, Italian, Albanian and Romanian. Considering the inner form as a logical structure, it is possible to stabilize/to conceive it as something higher and fundamental in language, which can be accessed not only by research but also by intuition. Thus, the internal forms are in essence objective focus and algorithms of the realization of the meaning. These forms are immersed in the cultural being of the speakers and organize it from the inside. So, the language does not reflect objects, but their notion (???)/ mental perception, thus appropriating things and bringing them to us. As Jacob Grim states "Language has the same importance as the history of a nation, because language is a product of

[4]Wilhelm von Humboldt, "On language" (Cambridge text on the history of philosophy), edited by Michael Lolonsky,1999.
[5] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*, 1916.

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the historical development of the nation, as well as the strength of this development and the utterance of a nation's spirit, because our language is our history"[6]. In this article, we will have the chance to verify Grim's hypothesis by analyzing the inner form of several phraseologies in context.

Phrases referring to rituals, customs and mentalities

In the first part of this article, we will deal with the fact that phraseologies are a mirror of a nation's rituals, customs and mentalities. They are perfect instruments to express each nation's specificity concerning their culture.

Gur, gur bëhet kalaja – This is an expression rendering the idea that where there is a will there is a way. The construction of this phrase introduces us to the Albanian relation with castles and war as well. The origin of the phrase is found in the roots of Shkodra's castle, in the North of Albania, the way it was built, day after day, with many sacrifices and loss of human lives.

Roma wasn't built in a day – The English seem to have been more interested in the Italian history rather than in their own. The conflicts they had in ancient times with big empires (such as the Roman Empire) are still reflected in their language.

de fil en aiguille – In their turn, the French have expressed the idea of doing something slowly by comparing it with the act of knitting. Though it is only "une fil" it can make a whole big blouse.

Piatră cu piatră se înalţă zidul/cetatea – the Romanian inner structure of this phrase is similar to that in Albanian. This can be explained by the fact that Albanian and Romanian, despite their different origins, have been in contact for a very long time.

S'njihet burri nga mustaqet –In Albania there was a time when the mustache was a sign of maturity/wisdom/courage of a man. In other words it was a sign of manliness.

Clothes do not make the man – The same idea is rendered in English. But, the inner form is the one which makes the difference. To the English, a man's character or qualities (including wisdom or courage) are not shown by the clothes he puts on.

[6] Jacob Grim, in *Encyclopedia Britannica* , s.v.

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L'abito non fa il monaco – The Italians say that the purity and the faithfulness of a person is not shown by the characteristic mantle a priest wears.
Haina nu-l face pe om – With this phrase, the Romanians seem to be closer to the English. Nevertheless, by using the word ''om'' (human being) instead of ''man'', the idea of manliness is no longer stressed.
Me të katra – The Albanians' main means of transport has always been the horse or other similar domestic animals. They compare one's fast run with a horse's run.
To gallop away – The English compare the leap of a person with the gallop of a horse.
Â tout jambs – The French seem to have conveyed the same idea by reference to one's using all its capacity. People are supposed to use all legs to run. The French may have based their idea on a mythological creature with more than two legs.
cât l-au ţinut picioarele – the Romanian way of assessing somebody's run is connected to his/her resistance and strength.
Çoj ujë në mullirin tim – This phrase shows the selfishness of a person who does everything for his/her own benefit. One of the most profitable businesses in the past was the mill, which was put down to work only by the fall of the water from a certain height.
All the world and his wife – Jealousy seems to have been a serious issue with the English. But, since England is also an island, the influence of the sea and fishing can't be ignored either, as in a similar phrase: *all is fish that comes to his net.*
Tirare l'aqua a proprio mulino – The Italians do have a complete similarity with the Albanian phrase. *A-şi trage spuza pe turta lui*- this phrase must have its origins in the traditional custom of baking bread inside the oven, using wood. In order for the bread to get baked well, it is necessary to cover it with 'spuza' (hot ashes).

Phrases which contain or imply a figurative comparison

In our attempt to find the inner form of the phraseological structure, it is worth mentioning that some of the phraseologies are based on a figurative comparison (present in the structure or implied) as follows:
Si pulë e lagur – The Albanians compare a wet person with a wet hen.
Like a drowned rat – The English compare a wet person to a drowned rat.

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Ud ciuciulete – In Romanian, the second term of the implied comparison is ‘’ciuciulete’’, which is a kind of a ball.
Si kokrra e mollës – It is a phrase used to express the idea that a person is fit/ in shape and healthy. This proves that the Albanians’ comparison to an apple hints at the red cheeks, which usually identify a healthy person.
As fit as a fiddle – For the English, a healthy person is said to be just like a violin.
sănătos tun –In Romanian the implied comparison consists in equating a healthy person with a cannon.
Si kazan pa fund – This phrase is used to describe a person who reveals secret information especially without intending to do so. Such a person is compared to a boiler that can’t contain water.
To spill the beans – The English have rendered the same idea by making visible what one has just “eaten”. In this case, ‘’the beans’’ stand for the information unveiled to the others.
A bate toba – this Romanian phrase seems to take us back to the times when public announcements were made by special drummers who used to beat their drums in order to draw people’s attention, make them gather and tell them the news (usually, they were sent for by the rulers). Today, a person who ‘’beats the drum’’ is considered to reveal some information other people are not supposed to get to know.
Sa hap e mbyll sytë – This phrase is used when something happens so quickly that one can hardly say what happened. In Albanian it is compared with the instinct of closing the eyes or with the short act of blinking.
Before you can say Jack Robinson – In England it is supposed that ‘’Jack Robinson’’ is a group of words that can be pronounced more quickly than others. The action which escaped our senses/ passed unnoticed can happen before pronouncing Jack Robinson.
In un battere d’ali – The Italians say that something has happened just in a wing’s move.
cât ai clipi din ochi/cât ai bate din palme - the first phrase is completely similar to the Albanian one, whereas the second one introduces the idea that something can be as short as the clap of one’s hands.
Bëhem erë /i shpejt si era – The Albanians compare themselves with the wind when they are quick.

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Avere ali ai piedi – The Italians have always connected the notion of quickness to the presence of the wings. They suppose that a very fast run is made possible only by having wings attached to one's legs.
Brûle le pavė – The French consider that a quick run burns the pavement.
Iute ca vântul – this phrase too has a similar internal structure with the Albanian one.

3. Phrases that contain reference to the parts of the body

There are certain cases where the inner form of the phrases is directly related with the names of the parts of the body. There are lots of cases where people, trying to express something, have used words as *head*, *leg, hand, ear, eye,* etc in building phrases and expressing meaning.
I vuri kokës rreth – This phrase expresses the idea that when people get married, they take a great responsibility on their shoulders. Albanians express the idea of taking responsibility by putting a crown on one's head which will always disturb one (???).
A-şi pune pirostriile în cap- the internal structure of this phrase is almost similar to the Albanian one. The only difference between the two phrases lies in the word ''pirostrii'', which is a metaphor for the bride's and bridegroom's crowns, introducing an ironical connotation. Nevertheless, the phrase does not imply the idea of responsibility.
To tie a knot with one's tongue – the English phrase introduces us to the custom according to which a piece of string, ribbon, or a narrow cloth is laid across the wrists of the couple who is getting married and tied in a simple knot when they are made one. This is the tying knot of a marriage which can be tracked back almost as far as the first written records.
Të jesh mish e thua – This phrase means to get on very well with somebody you can never live without. It is just like the flesh with the nail, which causes a lot of pain if they are being divided/ separated. This is the Albanian mentality about true love.
A fi trup şi suflet – Through this phrase the Romanians render their belief in the unity of body and soul, which only death can set apart.
Për një fije floku – It is a phrase used to express something that was so close to happen. In Albanian, this idea is rendered by a word corresponding to the English "hair", considered the tiniest object which represents the shortest distance.
By the skin of one's teeth – For the English the shortest distance is represented by the skin between the teeth. They use this as an element worth

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of being used in a phrase to represent the English mentality. This seems to be an element which has been considered appropriate to represent the English mentality.
Ci corre un capello – The Italians' idea is identical with the Albanian mentality.
Ca prin urechile acului – As far as the Romanians are concerned, their idea of the shortest distance is not rendered by reference to the hair, but by reference to the needle's holes.
S'i trembet syri – This phrase is used to express the braveness/courage of a person. Albanians assess the braveness/courage of a person by referring to how s/he controls the instinct of blinking.
Not to turn a hair – The English have based their idiom on the reference to one's hair, in order to describe a brave person. The idea is conveyed figuratively by wriggling one's hair.
A nu clipi din ochi/a nu-i tresări un muşchi pe faţă – If the first phrase has the same internal structure as the Albanian one, the second one shows that a person's courage or power to control his/her feelings is proved by his/her capacity to control the movement of his/her face muscles.
Larg syrit, larg zemrës – It is an Albanian phrase which states that if you don't see the person you love for a long period/ if the loved one is absent for a long period, the attraction becomes weaker and weaker. The eye is used as a symbol to represent seeing and meeting somebody, while love is always represented by the heart (*zemra*).
Out of sight, out of mind – For the English love is connected to reasoning or keeping always in mind what one is mostly interested in.
Ochii care nu se văd se uită- in literal translation ''The eyes that are not seen are forgotten''. As we can see, in the Romanian phrase there is no reference to the heart.
Të jesh i mprehtë nga goja – Always when speaking is talked about. Whenever one refers to the act of speaking, s/he evokes the instruments used in order to speak. In this case, the inner form of the phrase is represented by the mouth.
Avoir la langue bien affilée – For the French, to be a very good speaker is to have "la *Langue bien affilée"*/being a very good speaker means having …(sharp tongue). According to their mentality, the representative word for speaking is the tongue.

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To have a sharp tongue – the same inner structure as in the French phrase is present in the English and Romanian ones (*a avea limba ascuţită).*
Më ngriu gjaku – Darkness, coldness, freezing, are all words that convey a kind of an uncertain feeling. In the Albanian expression "the frozen blood" expresses a state of being astonished and afraid at the same time because of an unexpected situation, which has threatened your life or your interest.
To freeze the blood – the same structure is to be found in the English phrase.
A-i îngheţa sângele în vine – The Romanians render the same idea of the ''frozen blood'' but they try to be more specific by adding the reference to the veins. This way they imply that if the blood in somebody's veins freezes, then the whole body becomes frozen.
Të bëhesh kockë e lëkurë (i numërohen brinjët) – The Albanian idea is that somebody has become so thin that s/he has remained fatless. S/he has become only bones and skin.
To become skinny - For the English to lose weight dramatically is equated with being reduced to one's skin. The inner form of their phrase is based on the reference to the skin.
Au rămas numai pielea şi oasele de el (îi poţi număra oasele)- The first and the second phrases are similar to the Albanian ones.

Phrases containing names of animals to reflect a nation's mentality

Until now we have seen people using every means to express themselves. Now, it is time to say that even animals have had a great influence on different national languages. Being characteristic of a certain country, animals are used to symbolize an action, a concrete person or an object by referring to their peculiarities. For example, we will see that a dog will be the symbol of courage/braveness in one nation but also a symbol of a faint / weak-hearted person in another.
Si macja pas cironkave - It is a phrase used mostly in South-Eastern Albania. It is used in a funny way to express that a person is very strongly attracted to somebody or something. The actions are mostly understood by reading between the lines because there is a second meaning in every phrase we mention.
To take to something like a dog to water – The English typical example for being attracted to something is considered to be the attraction a dog has towards water.

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Fare l'asino a una dona – The Italians hint at love stories/ affairs. To become a woman's donkey means that love makes one lose its self-control and become irresponsible for its actions.
Më mirë një vezë sot se sa një pulë mot – It is better to be satisfied with what one has rather than to risk loosing everything by trying to get much more. The inner form of this phrase in Albanian is based on "pulë" (the hen) and "vezë" (the egg).
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush/a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush – The English have almost the same idea as the Albanians but put in different words. This is also a proverb saying that it is better to stick with something you already have, rather than pursue something you may never get. This proverb is a very popular warning, largely used in many English-speaking countries. The English phrase also contains the idea of not longing for/ asking for too much.
Meglio un uovo oggi che una gallina domani – The Italian phrase is identical to the Albanian one. But their most representative idea for this case has to do with the other Italian phrase: *Meglio un asino vivo che un dottore morto*. The inner form relies on the comparisons "un asino" (the donkey) and 'un dottore morto" (a dead doctor).
Nu da vrabia din mână pe cioara de pe gard- In Romanian, the inner form of the phrases evokes two different birds (the sparrow and the crow) found in two different places (one in the hand and the other on the fence) between which one is supposed to choose: in the same line with the English way of thinking, it is better to choose the one in your hand.
S'nxirret dhjamë nga pleshti – It is used in different situations for something (money, sympathy, understanding, etc) almost impossible to obtain from somebody. The Albanian inner form of the phrase is related with an abstraction. It is useless to try to get fat from a flea.
Volere drizzare le gambe ai cani – The Italian idea of an impossible action is related with trying to knit the legs of the dog. This is a perfect example of the diversity that exists in the mentality of various nations.
Kalit të falur mos i shiko dhëmbët – It is usually used with a negative meaning to express that you can't refuse or criticize something that is given to you for free or as a gift.
never look a gifted (Gifted = talented) horse in the mouth – In English it is exactly the same phrase as the one used by the Albanians.

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a cavalo donato non si guarda in boca – The Italians join to/ follow the previous nation's mentality. But in *l'occhio del padrone, ingrossa il cavallo* is clearly rendered the special idea Italian people have in expressing that a gift can't be judged.
Calul de dar nu se caută la dinţi - in Romanian, the phrase is exactly the same as in the above mentioned languages.
Te jesh kokëmushkë – To be proud and stubborn. The idea is that a mule in Albanian is considered not to be very obedient. The Albanian inner form for this phrase is related with a kind of comparison Albanians make between some people's behavior and the behavior of this animal.
To be as stubborn as a mule - the English also use the mule as a term of comparison for someone who will not listen to other people's advice and will not change their way of doing things.
Essere testardo come un assino – While the Albanians relate stubbornness and disobedience with the mule, the Italians expect it to be a characteristic of a donkey.
Încăpăţânat ca un catâr – The Romanians also connect stubbornness to the behavior of a mule.
These last two examples appear to contradict our thesis. Nevertheless, their similarity can be accounted for through borrowings and linguistic contacts.

Phraseologies and anecdotes

Despite their function of entertaining people, the anecdotes accomplish their critical aim in a polite and indirect way. They are used as a good source for the inner source of the culture of a country. These are mostly phrases which have a more emotional impact and transmit their message in a more funny and practical way.
Të jesh si veshka në mes të dhjamit – It is used to express the idea that somebody is really having a good time, and that others are taking care of him. The people who take care of this person are considered to fulfil the same function the fatness does to the kidney. As we have already seen in the Albanian culture the fatness always inherits the meaning of healthiness, thing that by sure does not happen in other cultures.
To live like fighting cocks – This is supposed to happen with the English cocks which do not have anything else to think about but fighting. This is because they are supplied with food and other goods.
Être comme un coq en pâte – The French "coq" (rooster) is considered to be very good/ tasty when cooked in pastry. They think this is their best meal.

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A trăi ca un paşă – in literal translation ‘’to live like a pasha’’. The Romanians use the Turkish word ’’paşă’’, a military commander or a governor of a province in the Ottoman Empire, to render the idea of well being and being taken care of.
T’a zësh me presh në dorë – to catch somebody in flagrant, especially while stealing or preparing a trap. The “leek” is a word that in Albanian sounds rude and harsh. They have used this word to emphasize the rudeness of this action.
To catch somebody red-handed – The English perception of red is used to refer to something forbidden. Consequently, “red-handed” is used to mean that (some)one has done something forbidden.
A mani nel saccho – The Italians have related their phrase to represent a stealing action../ The Italians have connected their phrase to the representation of a theft. The sack has always been the main instrument of a thief.
A prinde pe cineva cu mâţa in sac – in Romanian, the inner structure of this phrase focuses on the words ‘’cat’’(the stolen thing) and ‘’sack’’ (the thief’s instrument). In literal translation, *to be caugh twith the cat in your sack.*
Del bishti para sqeparit – This means to put things in a wrong order, or to consider things in a wrong way. But more specifically, in Albania, it is used when a dependent (???)/ an employee feels superior to his/her boss.
To put the cart before the horse – The English idea is related only to the act of putting things in a wrong order just as the cart is being put ─ wrongly ─ before the horse.
Mettre la charrue devant les boeufs – The French say to put the wooden plow before the oxen. The construction of the phrase expresses clearly the relation of the French with the agriculture.
A pune carul înaintea boilor – Just like in the English phrase, the Romanians express the idea of a wrong order by comparing it to a cart put before the oxen.

To conclude, throughout centuries people have been rambling in the closed ways of the linguistic labyrinth to find the only way out. We hope this article is just a small contribution to the endless search of the truth about the inner form of the language. But one thing is sure; all of us are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their background is similar or at least in some way calibrated.

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In many cases from the examples given we have noticed similarities in the inner form of the phrases. These can be accounted for through borrowings or close linguistic and cultural contacts, like in the case of Romanian and Albanian, which, despite having different origins, belong to the group of the Balkan languages. Along with Greek, Bulgarian and Macedonian, these languages are mainly spoken in the same geographical area, that of the Balkans, and they have been in contact since the beginning of their history.

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