

**THE PHRASEOLOGY OF “HEAD” IN RELATION
WITH BALKAN MENTALITY
(CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
PHRASEOLOGY OF ALBANIAN, BULGARIAN
AND GREEK LANGUAGES)**

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Abstract:

The common points in the phraseology of Balkan languages are often attributed to some “Balkan cultural heritage”, a term which is usually not defined any further. So, this term can allow us to see how this heritage is represented in phraseology. First of all, the use of a systematic empirical research to describe these phraseological units serves to determine which idioms actually share a relatively identical lexical and semantic structure across the three languages and could therefore be called “widespread”. This article presents a contrastive study of the structures and semantics of phraseology units containing the word “head” in Albanian, Bulgarian and Greek languages. This approach can describe similarities and differences of mentality as reflected in phraseology.

Key words:

Head, phraseology, contrastive insight, Balkan languages, semantics.

Introduction

Glaser (1996) defines PhUs as “Glaser nominations” because they designate a phenomenon, an object, a process or a state, a property or a relationship outside the world. Every language forms them according to its particular nature, often according to existing patterns. As a result, they are widespread not only in the written language but also in the spoken language. (Thomaj, Lloshi II, 1972: 231).

The common points in the phraseology of European languages are often attributed to some “European cultural heritage”. Menac (1987) presented an inventory of several dozens of (supposedly) common European idioms, drawn from six languages of diverse genetic relationships, namely two Slavonic (Croatian, Russian), two Germanic (German, English) and two Romance (French and Italian) languages. Her analysis reveals quite a large number of near-equivalent idioms in these languages (Pirreñei, 2005:49). From this point of view, by analogy, in what is described as Balkan Sprachbund, many scholars have found concordances between languages in folkloric forms, proverbs etc. Meanwhile, based on the concept of Glaser, phraseology is described not only as a nomenclature of designations, but as a linguistic angle of a common mentality, that in this case is the Balkan mentality. Balkan cultures are so similar: the long coexistence close to each other, the movement of the population, the common historical, economic and social circumstances, all these have determined common linguistics realities.

Language itself is an implicit “thought scheme”, so through comparative and contrastive cross-linguistic description it becomes possible to find out the inner linguistic connections underlying a common Balkan mentality. One of the main reasons for the similarities in folklore is bound up with the common elements in the spiritual realm of Balkan nations, seen as the “Balkan cultural heritage”, a term which requires defining further. These similarities are seen by Sanfeld as one of the factors defining the Balkan community (Thomaj; Lloshi, II 1972:225). Based on this common Balkan element, the lexical concordances between Balkan languages are present and more distinctive because “...it is the nature of linguistic cognation that the analogies are created from the first contacts mainly in the field of lexis” (Thomaj; Lloshi, II 1972:223).

Several other “cross-cultural” studies start from the traditional grouping of idioms into “thematic groups” (e.g. idioms with body parts, animal or garment constituents), mistakenly referred to as the “onomasiological” approach as well. They come to the conclusion that there are “similar idioms” in some languages (Piiirainen 2005: 47).

Methods

One type of cultural fundament is represented by idioms whose underlying cultural knowledge chiefly goes back to knowledge folk social mentality. This type can be divided into smaller subgroups and the phraseology containing parts of the body is one of them. The analysis features 108 phraseological units that contain the word *head*, taken from the “Balkan phraseological dictionary”. These phrase units are examined in parallel in three Balkanic languages: Albanian, Greek and Bulgarian, starting from the Albanian language. Such parallels include items with slight lexical differences, which means when the words in *both* languages belong to the same semantic field and it is difficult to find any other extra-linguistic explanation for the usage of one word or another in the noun phrases (Hristova Bejleri, 1996).

Results and discussion

According to the meanings given in the “Dictionary of the Albanian language” (2002: 587-588), the phraseological units containing the word *head* have four main meanings: 1) *upper part of the body which is the location of the brain, the eyes, the ears, the nose etc.*; 2) *part of the human body as the unit of thinking, the human being as holder of ideas and of certain mental capacities*; 3) *part of the human body as representative of human life, ego*; 4) *the beginning of some beings or objects, top*.

Christians have usually understood the word “head” to mean “authority over.” Thus, Christ is the authority over the church and a husband is the authority over his wife (1985: 38). In a contrastive analysis of the phraseological units containing “head” in Albanian and Bulgarian, we shall identify will three groups:

The first group includes the phraseological units evincing the same lexical structure. This means that, in both languages, the phraseological units contain the same verbs or synonymous verbs followed by the word *head* (in Albanian *kokë-a*, in Bulgarian *глава-та*, in Greek *το κεφάλι*). These examples of structural correspondences containing the same verb or synonymous verbs show lexical-semantic phraseological parallels. The phraseological units show parallelisms not only in their lexemes but even in their meanings. There are many instances of phraseological units where both the form and the structure are the same in both languages, for example such expressions as: *më ra rrara kokës – удря ме в главата- Με χτύπησε πίσω από το κεφάλι; i bie kokës me grushte – бия си главата (с два камъка)- Χτυπό (βαρώ) το κεφάλι μου με γροθιές, m’u ça koka – цени ме главата- Μου σκίστηκε (έσπασε)το κεφάλι., më dhemb koka - боли ме главата- Με πονά το κεφάλι, heq(fshij) nga koka – махам (изтривам) от главата си (от акъла си, от ума си)- Βγάζω (σβήνω) από το κεφάλι μου(κάτι); s’më hiqet nga koka – не ми излиза от главата-, kokë e këmbë – от главата до петите- Δεν μου βγαίνει(φεύγει) από το κεφάλι(από την γνώμη,το μυαλό); nga koka në këmbët - от главата до петите- Από το κεφάλι μέχρι τα πόδια; kokë më kokë – глава до глава- Κεφάλι με κεφάλι., me kokë poshtë – с наведена глава- Με το κεφάλι κάτω, kokë qerë – лукова глава - Креμμυδοκέφαλος; me kokë ulur – с наведена глава- Με το κεφάλι креμασμένο; kriaq kokëp – почесвам се по главата- Ξύνει το κεφάλι, e kthej me kokë poshtë – обръщам надолу с главата - Το γυρίζω με το κεφάλι κάτω; kthej kokëp rrara - обръщам назад- Γυρίζω το κεφάλι πίσω;*

ia lau kokĕn – насапунисвам главата - Του το 'πλυνε το κεφάλι;, s'e ngre kokĕn – глава не повдигам- Δε σηκώνω κεφάλι (από κάτι), e pres kokĕn – главата си режа- Κόβω το κεφάλι μου (για κάτι).

As already mentioned, in the three languages, these phraseological units contain verbs with a wide semantic structure. These verbs have more than one meaning, but in the most cases the verb is used in its literal meaning. Generally, these units are a result of a transformation of free noun-phrases to phraseological noun-phrases.

The second group includes phraseological units with a different structure, having in common the noun “head”. In these cases, the word *head* occurs in its usage as “part of the body where the brain is located” or as “mind, the process of thinking itself”, as in the following groups of examples: *Ia bëri koka – от главата си патя - Του το 'κανε το κεφάλι;* *s'di ku kat kokĕn – пламнала ми е в главата - Δεν ξέρει που να χώσει (βάλει) το κεφάλι του;* *s'i dhem b koka (për asgjë) – ништо не ми тежи на главата - Δεν το πονάει το κεφάλι;* *i hipi (i kërcen) në kokë – наумявам си нещо; влиза ми някаква муха в главата - Του ανέβηκε (ήρθε) στο κεφάλι κάτι;* *e ka mendjen prapa kokës – нямам ум, имам бърмбари в главата - Έχει τη γνώμη (το μυαλό) πίσω από το κεφάλι.(δεν έχει λογική);* *lë kokĕn (për dikë a dikja) – главата си залагам (за нещо,за някого) - Αφήνω το κεφάλι μου (για κάτι), e lodh kokĕn kot – бърхтя си главата - Κουράζω το κεφάλι (μάτια);* *më zien (mizëron) koka – пламва ми главата - Μου βράζει (βουίζει) το κεφάλι.*

This group is semantically based on the figurative meaning of the components in the phraseological unit. The verbs occurring in these phraseological units have different meanings but the meaning of the whole phraseological unit is the same in all three languages. These phraseological units demonstrate the process of constructing the “we” in opposition to “the others”. This requires archaic operations which utilize rudimentary

generalizations, functioning as crude means of detachment which will later provide the basis for opposition (Frangoudaki & Thalia, 1997:14-16)

The third group includes phraseological expressions containing the word *head* in Albanian but not in Bulgarian. In Bulgarian these examples are linked to lexemes that in most cases express meanings similar to the meaning of “*head*” as brain, mind or connected to the meaning “*head*” as representative of life. Therefore, in Albanian and Greek phraseological units the word *head* is present, whereas in Bulgarian phraseological units other lexemes are used. From a detailed analysis it results that, in the case of phraseological units containing the word *head* as the upper part of the human body, in Bulgarian the word *head* is replaced with other parts of the body linked to the head, such as: *e nxori kokën - Το 'βγαλε το κεφάλι του - показвам си рогата* (head-horns).

In Albanian and Greek phraseological units, the word *head* is used in its meaning as life, while in Bulgarian phraseological units another word is used with the same meaning: *i ka bërë kokën – Του έχει κάνει το κεφάλι - давам живот - (head-life); përpjek kokën (pas murit) - Χτυπό το κεφάλι μου στο τοίχο - сам се боря с живота, изнемогавам (head-life); ku më ka rënë koka - Пου μου έχει πέσει το κεφάλι - където ми е вързан пъпа (head-navel); s'ka kokë dimri – Δεν έχει κεφάλι (γνώμη, μυαλό) - няма сила (зимната) (head-force); ia hëngri kokën me të mirë – Του το 'φαγε το κεφάλι με το καλό - вадя душата с памук (head-spirit).*

There are some phraseological units in which the word *head* is used as “process of thinking” in Albanian and in Greek, while in Bulgarian “*head*” is replaced with the words “*mind, brain*”, in such cases as: *s'ia pret koka – Δεν του κόβει το κεφάλι - не ми стига акъла; ia shpëlau kokën- Του το ξεκαθάρισε το κεφάλι - избистрям мозъка, s'ka kokë – Δεν έχει κεφάλι (γνώμη, μυαλό) - не ми работи акъла; ум море глава кофа.*

In this group, even national features of both nations are referred to, because the phraseological units carry not only the original structure but even the meaning of the phraseological unit.

Based on the analysis of these phraseological units, it can be noticed that most of them are linked to the meaning “unit of thinking” and “representative of life, ego”. In the first case, some phraseological units are introduced as synonymous versions, where the word “*head*” is replaced with the synonyms “*mind, brain*”.

According to J. Thomaj and Xh. Lloshi “...the common origin of Indo-European languages explains even the analogies in the process of formation of the phraseological noun-phrases of this type. Therefore their origin cannot be explained with any certainty and it is also difficult to separate the Balkan stock of phraseological units, except in the cases documented from written monuments” (Thomaj; Lloshi, II 1972:227).

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we should point out that these phraseological parallels cannot be called exhaustive. The contrastive semantic-structural analysis of phraseological units will complete the linguistic coincidences between Balkan languages. The study of phraseological units makes it possible to assume that Balkan languages have to be studied in connection with each other. At the same time, they preserve the features of the Indo-European family, but without affinity or connection to each other.

Even so, these coincidences in phraseology present in the general system of the Balkan community are linked to the features of every language in the complexity of its national features, of the history of every nation in all its aspects (Thomaj; Lloshi, II 1972:234).

Quite probably, a systematic multilingual investigation of idioms, along lines similar to those outlined above for proverbs, would produce promising results.

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