

An approach to the infinitive in Albanian and German Languages

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Abstract

In this article, the author clearly approaches the problem of the infinitive in Albanian and German languages. The argument that will be presented in this paper is concerned with the most frequently discussed issue among the dialects of the Albanian language, the infinitive. It should be pointed out from the beginning that this phenomenon is not only an albanism, but also a pan-Balkan problem. According to diachronic Balkan language scholars, one of the common characteristics of the Balkan languages is the slow separation of the infinitive and its substitution mainly with the subjunctive. Nowadays, the comparative studies are very interesting, as learning a foreign language in the global world in which we live has become indispensable for the teaching process of a foreign language in order to explain how these languages are structured and used. In this paper, the author is concerned with the historical aspect of the infinitive use and its structure in the Geg and Toske dialects illustrated by examples. Later, the focus is on the German language, respectively pointing out the main structure and functions of the infinitive in this language through examples. The last part of this paper is concerned with the attention that the use of the infinitive receives nowadays. In order not to impinge on the standard language the linguists are particularly of the opinion that the implicit forms in the Geg dialect, in our case the infinitive, enrich our Albanian standard language not only with a variety of forms but also with a special way of expressing.

Keywords: infinitive, Albanian language, German language, dialects, teaching process

1. The historical aspect of the issue

The argument treated in this paper deals with one of the most controversial issues of Albanian dialects compared to the present standard language. It should be pointed out that this phenomenon is not only an albanism, but a pan-Balkan issue that belongs not just to the Slavic languages but also to the Latin and Hellenic languages existing in the peninsula. According to the diachronic Balkanologists, one of the main features of the Slavic languages is the slow detachment of the infinitive form, and its replacement with the subjunctive mood.¹

The verbal category of the infinitive is not just an attribute of the Indo-European family languages, but also one of the Semitic languages acquired through some non-inflective forms, representing in this way a grammatical separation in the verbal system of a language. This form, along with the nominative principle, represents an active process and holds many language's functions such as: subjective, predicative, and objective forms in periodical structures and simple clauses (extended or not) such as the nominative for the non-inflective forms:

E mos t'i çpifena popullit tonë (Fishta); Të rrojmë shoqnisht e vllaznisht (Harapi); Le të më thërrasin tutës, le të më quejnë djalë të lig (Koliqi); Mbasi deri këtu paraqitëm një pjesë të sistemit parlamentar..., të shohim tash e të vemë ore deputetin e ri n'atë valën e veprimt të vet n'ushtrim të misionit që ka (Fishta); Mos të mendohet se e ndihmoi vetëm fati (Koliqi), etc².

Indicators of the infinitive form are the usages of one or more prepositions as an integral part of the infinitive in order, to achieve a far more accurate and perfect phrase than any other functional fusion.

The deviation of the infinitive usage from its main use is initially found in Greek language and it is replaced by the impersonal form of the subjective mood, in the southern Serbian language, removing the period of Cyril and Method which belonged to Salonika,³ in the Latin language, since the first literary period. The same occurred with the Bulgarian language.

In terms of Albanian language, Demiraj treats the problem in this way; the form of the infinitive being treated should be determined from the beginning- if it is a shortened synthetic form as in Indo-European family languages, or if it is a non-inflective analytical type *me ba*, which is mainly found on the northern dialect and it is inherited from his *mother*.⁴

Over the centuries of the Albanian written language, groups *për+ të bërë* in Tosk dialect and *me ba*, in Geg dialect have taken a grammatical form.

¹ Shaban Demiraj, *Gjuhësi ballkanike*, Tiranë 2004, pg.149.

² Examples are taken from the article *Një dukuri gjuhësore në poezinë e Fishtës dhe të shkrimtarëve të tjerë veriorë* of M.Geros, published in *Studime shqiptare*-6,1997,pg. 95.

³ Shaban Demiraj, *Gjuhësi ballkanike*, Tiranë 2004, pg.153.

⁴ Shaban Demiraj, *Gjuhësi Ballkanike*, Tiranë 2004, pg.154.

On the other hand, according to the author if the thesis that Albanian language had a synthetic infinitive is accepted, it must be described the period of its separation before and after the infinitive form *me ba*; this phenomenon must be found within the familiar phenomenon that an archaic form is slow replaced by a newer and a more expressive form. On the contrary, the issue of the separation should be analyzed only in the southern speech forms, if they have been developed as previously. Language scholars of Balkan such as Sandfield, Rohlfsi, and Gabinsky think that this Albanian phenomenon came as the result of the Greek language influence, as the language of the civilization, mostly found in the southern speech. Whereas Marko de Piana thinks that the disappearance of the infinitive in Tosk dialect has occurred regardless the Greek influence⁵. So, the infinitive issue remains unclear, and opposes the raising hypothesis, as the issue of the initial separation of this verbal category from the common Balkan languages.⁶

With regard to the deepening of the predicative of the non- inflective form we are focused on two textbooks written by Aleksander Xhuvani “*Njohunit e para të Syndaksës shqipe* /The first knowledge of Albanian syntax”, published in Vlora in 1922, and the other book „*Sintaksin e Shqipes*” is written by father Justin Rrota in 1942- a textbook for secondary schools. Xhuvani, who established the Albanian syntax in Geg dialect 90 years ago, states that during that period the infinitive form type *me ba*, the subjunctive with the component *të* were still in usage, as well, time structures that followed predicative attributes such as in the following examples:

Nji djalë kishte dalë me shetitë. Atëherë ishte koha, kur kishin zanë fill me u pjekun rrusht. Nuk ka gjë të fshehtë që të mos dalë në faqe të dheut Kam me të shkruemun ase kam me ardhur vetë për të të pamun. Lufta nisi me u zgja, gjaku me u derdhë. Le t'i reshtemi shoqënis së ligë e le t'i afrohem i së mirës. Foshnja do me pimun, prandaj po qan. I thanë të vijë bashkë me ne, nuk deshi. Vetëm njerëzit mund të flasin, bagëtit jo.

As a result, the author highlights the fact that through the predicative functions with the infinitive, sentences might be the subject or the object of the main clause⁷ as in:

Dishroj me të pamun. Nuk due me shetitun sot. Jini punëtorë të mirë, po deshët të merrni pagë të mirë. U ul në tryezë, që të shkruajë detyrën. Do të bije me fjetun pse jam lodhë shumë. Vemi në shkollë që të nxâmë gjâna të dobishme.

Another famous linguist of the time the Franciscan priest Justin Rrota, a grammar scholar, has written in 1942 the most complete book of his time about the structure of the Albanian language by bringing new elements of the contemporary linguistics such as German ones. Rrota constructs the predicative sentence from the infinitive and literary examples (Koliqi) which are equal with the fact that the non-inflected forms are absolute predicative sentences used to complement the sentence unit, such as:

Zana zbriti tu krojet e kullueta me pi ujën, që sa herë kishte pasqyruem fëtyrën e saj, dikur të gëzueshme...Por bylbyli, që çërcërronte pa pushue, e shtyni dhe atë me këndue, ma parë lehtas, pastaj me za ma të çelun...Bylbyli preu vargun në gjymë, dhe fluturoi në një gem më

⁵ Marco la Piana, *Studio linguistici albanesi I*, Palermo 1939, pg.144.

⁶ Shaban Demiraj, *Gjuhësi Ballkanike*, Tiranë 2004, pg.164.

⁷ Aleksander Xhuvani, *Njohunit e para të Syndaksës Shqipe*, Vlora, 1922, pg.45.

t'afërm e t'ulët, për mos me humbë asnjë notë të melodis së përmallshme. Ai e ndjeu për së largut kangën e thekshme, dhe u avit për m'e shijue mâ mirë. (pg. 81).

It is interesting to point out that the syntactic category of the compound predicate in the Geg dialect (J. Rrota, Syntax), is often expressed by the interference of a clause through modal verbs and the infinitive form. For example:

Në mbrame, para se t'erret, na duhet doemos me u gjetun në shpi (constructing the non-inflective form of a single sentence). Or, the other example: *Porsa fillon drita me dalë, edhe zogjët ia nisin kangës.*

The author explains the infinitive and its predicative functions as significant features, stating that the verb in the infinitive form, predominately in the Geg dialect often replacing the components of a simple sentence, can stand as a proper sentence. *Subject clause: S'asht njerzi me i a pre kuj fjalën në gojë ; Object clause: Mendoj me shkue përjashta; Attributive: Dishiri me u mbajtun dishka mbi tjerë, të vërbon ; Manner clauses: Në vend qi me punue, kërkon pijetoret; Derivational clauses: S'jam aq i trashë, sa mos me të marrë vesht; Purpose clause: Kam ardhë me të ndihmuem⁸.*

In the grammar book designed by Justin Rrota almost fifty years ago, we also notice that instead of the analytical infinitive type *me ba* there are also other usages substituted by the subjective mood *të baj*.

Scholars think that Fishta's literary writings and other northern author's writings, as well, emphasis that the differences between dialects regarding the infinitive form of the Geg dialect and subjunctive form of the Tosk dialect are not so vast after all.

2. A comparative plan with the German language

Following the comparative plan of German linguistics, it is important to provide with examples from various grammars of the German language focusing on chapters of language's structure, to see the way our problem is treated by the traditional plan of German language. According to the generativist linguist Graffi, the syntactical feature formed by the combination of some words defined in the sentence is a predicate structure, which can be formed by a verb in the past tense. However, this is not indispensable, because what matters is that all languages possess a way to show a predicative combination that differs from other types of combinations.⁹ In German language, the use of the infinitive with participle *-zu* (= *për të/* in order to) is related to verb valency. As a beginning, some words about the genesis of the German's infinitive. According to the Duden dictionary¹⁰, the infinitive derives from Latin which in the old Latin is a verbal form that had the meaning *not closely defined*, and expresses the main form of the verb which is not closely determined by the person, number, mood and manner. The infinitive doesn't have its own meaning, but the verb in the infinitive possesses its own inherent meaning as in:

⁸ At Justin Rrota, *Sintaksi i shqipes*, Shkodër 1942, pg.99.

⁹ Giorgio Graffi, *Sintassi*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1994, pg. 96-97.

¹⁰ In|fi|ni|tiv [auch: der; -s, -e [spätlat. (modus) infinitivus= nicht näher bestimmt (e Zeitwortform)] (Sprachw.): *Grundform des Verbs, die nicht durch Person, Numerus, Zeit u. Modus näher bestimmt ist; Nennform: erweiterter I. (Infinitiv, zu dem noch weitere Satzteile hinzutreten).* Duden - Deutsches Universalwörterbuch 2001

- gehen¹¹ (eci, shkoj - walk, go);
- sich zu Fuß bewegen (eci në këmbë- I walk)

In any dictionary or text book we encounter the verb of this language in the infinitive form. Verbs in the infinitive are distinguished by the specific ending -e(n). In German language, the infinitive is widely used. In some cases it replaces past participle of the verb, mainly that of modal verbs as in the following example:¹²

- Er hat nicht *arbeiten* können.¹³

(Ai nuk ka mundur të punojë/ He couldn't work)

As it can be seen in the example above – të punojë / to work in Albanian corresponds to the subjunctive mood of the verb. The infinitive takes verbal features when used for the construction of the chosen forms as in the example:

- Wir werden warten.¹⁴

(Ne do të presim - We are going to wait)¹⁵

Regarding its predicative, in the German language the infinitive can take various roles, or in the so called constructions with the infinitive¹⁶: As part of the compound verb, as complement, as an adjunct for the verb, as an attribute for a noun or an adjective. In all these usages, the infinitive keeps its verbal feature. As a part of the compound verb, the infinitive remains mainly unchanged. Sometimes, it is used without the participle –zu (për të- in order to), and in this form it is often called the pure infinitive of the German language and other times it is called the infinitive with – zu. For example:

- Hans kann schwimmen; Ihr schien es *zu gefallen*.¹⁷

Hansi mund të notojë: Duket se asaj i pëlqeu. Hans can swim. It seems she liked it.

When used with –zu, the infinitive can replace the subject, the direct object, prepositional object, but it doesn't appear as indirect object. For example:¹⁸

1. Öffentlich zu sprechen liegt ihr.
(Të flasë hapur, i përshtatet asaj – To speak openly, it fits her properly)
2. Paula glaubt, pünktlich zu kommen
(Paula beson, të vijë ne orar - Paula believes to come in time)
3. Karl wartet darauf, befördert zu werden.
(Karli pret, që të ndihmohet - Charles expects to be helped)

¹¹ Ulrich Engel, Deutsche Grammatik, Heidelberg:Gross, 1996. Pg. 437

¹² Ulrich Engel, Deutsche Grammatik, Heidelberg:Gross, 1996. Pg. 435

¹³ Authors note: in German language both verbs: main verb and modal verb are in infinitive

¹⁴ Authors note: In German language future tense is built with the verb werden + infinitive

¹⁵ See Walter Fläming: Grammatik des Deutschen: Einführung in Struktur- und Wirkungszusammenhänge. Berlin, 1991, pg. 431.

¹⁶ Compare: Ulrich Engel, Deutsche Grammatik, Heidelberg: Gross, 1996. Pg. 435.

¹⁷ Ibid, pg. 436.

¹⁸ Peter Eisenberg: Grundriss der deutschen Grammatik, 3.überarb.Aufl. Stuttgart, Metzler, 1994. pg.373.

The infinitive can be an attribute in those nouns that derive from verbs and full adjectives in the infinitive, as in the examples below:¹⁹

1. Paulas Hoffnung, pünktlich zu sein.
(Shpresa e Paulës të jetë në orar- Paula's hope to be in time)
2. Karls Erwartung, befördert zu werden
(Shpresa e Karlit të ndihmohet- Charles' hope to be helped)

In the function of the noun's attribute or in the function of the adjective, the infinitive appears only with – zu (për të). For example:

1. Die Lust zu leben.
(Dëshira për të jetuar- the desire to live)
2. Entsetzt, dies mitansehen zu müssen.
(I tmerruar për të dëshmuar këtë - terrified to testify this.)

In the adverbial constructions, as a rule, the infinitive appears with the conjunctions: anstatt zu, ohne zu, um zu, as in examples:²⁰

1. Sie arbeiteten, anstatt nachzudenken.
(Ata punonin në vend që të mendonin- they worked instead of thinking)
2. Wir arbeiteten, ohne nachzudenken.
(Ne punonin pa u menduar- we worked without thinking)
3. Wir legten eine Pause ein, um nachzudenken.
(Ne vendosëm një pushim, për të menduar- we decided a break in order to think about)

According to Eisenberg, (see page 395) in the sentences with adjunct infinitive, facts that takes place belong to the same person. In accordance with the speaker the first fact is completed in order that the second fact can be completed (um). He adds that, the first act is completed, although the second should still be completed (anstatt) and according to this, the first fact is completed but the second one no, though this should be expected (ohne).

3. The scientific approach in the present days

In the plan of Albanian syntactic studies, the problem treated for over ten years is established in accordance with the theory of constituents (elements) related to the sentence's formula:²¹ subject + verb S+V. sometimes even as a constituent (the object) or sub constituent (the subject). These parts of the sentence are related in a solidarity way to be distinguished from other grammatical relations. In this way, in the Albanian Normative Grammar published by the Academy of Science is defined that when the non-inflective forms are related with a noun or pronoun in the nominative form and predicative relations, it can be stated that they possess predicative functions of non-inflective forms.²² In superlative syntactic category of the compound clauses, the predicative's issue of the non-inflective forms is treated as a controversial issue, showing that the construction of the infinitive, the participle or the gerund, in the grammar of some languages are treated the same as in Albanian language, and

¹⁹ Peter Eisenberg: Grundriss der deutschen Grammatik, 3.überarb.Aufl. Stuttgart, Metzler, 1994. pg.374.

²⁰ Ulrich Engel, Deutsche Grammatik, Heidelberg:Gross, 1996. Pg. 437

²¹ Remzi Parnaska, *Kundranori me parafjalë*, Pejë, 1996, pg.15.

²² Akademia e Shkencave e R Sh, *Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe*, II, Tiranë, 1997, pg. 180.

are called subordinate, non-inflective clauses. For this reason, when the non-inflective structures forms have a referent subject, they are called subordinate clauses.²³ For example: *Dy burrat e tjerë kishin shkuar njëri për t'u dhënë ujë kuajve , tjetri për të mbledhur një dorë bar. Duke vepruar ju kështu, rezultatet do të jenë të qëndrueshme etc.*

Recently, the linguist Mehmet Çeliku²⁴ has studied the Geg form of type *me punue* considering the predicate of the non-inflective forms in this dialect, not just as sentences with no subject but also (in Albanian language mono-primary sentences) in the structure of the compound clause as in the following examples:

Pse me i grisë kot? Shka me ba? Me më diftue! Me luftue, o burra! Duhet me pvetë. Duhet me prashitë. S' duhet me vajtue kaq shumë.

In order not to damage the standardized norms and cause discontent, Çeliku states that whenever the issue of the non- inflective form of the standard Albanian language will be discussed, it should be stressed that the infinitive must be separated, focusing mainly on the gerund form and the participle.²⁵

We come to the conclusion, that the non-inflective forms of the Geg dialect, in our case the infinitive, is an asset that enriches the standard Albanian language, not only with a diversity of forms but also with a particular expressiveness.

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²³ Akademia e Shkencave e R Sh, *Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe*, II, Tiranë, 1997, pg. 489 – 490.

²⁴ Mehmet Çeliku, *Format e pashtjelluara të foljes në gjuhën shqipe*, Tiranë 2006.

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