Linguistic Planning and the Status of Official Languages in Kosova During the Years 1999-2009

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The issue of linguistic planning, choice of variant for increasing in standard norm, the determination of official status of appropriate language in certain countries, has been a concern, as it was also the orientation of different linguistic studies. In this work, we will try to treat the process of linguistic planning and of the official status of languages in Kosova during 1999-2009. In this context we do not intend to exhaust of handling with this problem, but we will try to present some issues and problems in which languages in Kosova have passed through. This issue is interesting for studies in sociolinguistic field in general and particularly in Albanian language.

Keywords: language planning, official language status in Kosovo, The Constitution of Kosovo, Commissioner for languages, Yugoslavia, denial rights of language in Kosovo

Introduction

The object of treatment in this paper is the phenomenon of linguistic planning and the status of official languages in Kosovo during the years 1999-2009. These linguistic processes were analyzed and studied by Albanian and foreign scholars, like Rexhep Ismajli, Victor A. Friedman, Shkumbin Munishi, Bahri Beci, Gjovalin Shkurtaj, Joshua A. Fishman, Tomor Osmani, Majlinda Bregasi and other researchers, who in their views and evaluations have been very successful and have created opportunities, especially to young researchers, to advance even more these studies.

Language as a characteristic of the human being is a very important factor of individual and collective identity for each speaker, especially to those members of national minorities where language is one of the main elements of determining and saving their identity.

Like the identity, language is not a static process, but it is developed continuously throughout the life of individual speakers. Effective and full ensuring of speakers of a language to use their language implies that the authorities allow free identification of persons through language and they do not limit the national identities to be isolated only within linguistic categories.

In history are marked the practices when for many years, speakers of a particular language were denied the right to use their mother tongue, particularly in those countries where political systems have been totalitarian. Within a certain period of time, an atmosphere more or less similar was in Kosova, because "relations between Albanian and Serbo-Croat in former Yugoslavia are clearly described through classifications within the official regulation plurilingualism" (Rexhep, 2003, pp. 135-136), because Serbo-Croatia as the first official language, had a privilege and was pronounced "Lingua Franca" for the whole Yugoslavia. Based on this, it can be said

that Albanian as one of the languages of the former Yugoslavia had a non affirmative status, maybe from the fact that “the flow of creation of political and cultural identities of peoples of the Balkans was considering mutual conflicts in their project to patch up countries, whose boundaries will coincide with people who would have a homogenous national identity” (Muhamedin, 2007).

Since the policy of that time does not create necessary condition, for an equal Albanian with other languages for an official communication in federal authorities of former Yugoslavia, considerably has been affected by the so-called “Macedonian syndrome”, cultivated and affirmed from government people, particularly from those Serbian nationality “to make the differentiation of language (sh) qipe-shiptarsi¹ for Kosovars and other Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, the Albanian language (Albanski) for the Albanians of Albania” (Rexhep, 2003, pp. 135-136).

Linguistic Situation in 1990s

Nevertheless, the beginning of the 1990s brought about the end of the Cold War, many political systems in Europe changed, the totalitarian one started to dissolve, particularly in East and Southeast Europe, after these developments, conditions were created to redo new orders of political and social. “These totalitarian political systems that were built on communist ideology were replaced with those of democratic pluralistic, according to Western models”.²

Through the same process of transformation, changing of concepts and ideas has passed the society of Kosovo too. The beginning of 1990s marked worsening of the political situation in Kosovo as a result of suppression of Kosovo’s autonomy by federal authorities of the former Yugoslavia (initiated by Serbian), and of the harsh policy followed by these authorities denying even the most basic human rights. In the other side, the Albanians of Kosovo in response to these segregationist actions, formed parallel institutions with them of Yugoslav Federation, including here all the segments of society. Until 1999, as it is known, Kosovo was in circumstances that were not normal for society, there was not a clear political status because the campaign of violence that was attended by Slobodan Milosevic in Kosovo, and the regime of that time of Yugoslavia state, questioned many things, including the language. But after the entrance of NATO in Kosova (June 1999), the security situation began to improve, in the same way began to return to normal many social processes. After this period, linguistic policies, linguistic planning, and the status of languages started to change, taking new form of scope, so looking through today’s prism, this developments were a great achievement, and in full compliance with the principles on which was raised European Card for regional and minorities language.

The International Mission in Kosovo and the Status of Languages

By placing Kosovo under international administration (UNMIK), under Resolution 1244 of the UN, were decided rules with power of laws. One of them was (UNMIK Regulation³ No. 2001/9 of 15th May 2001) according to which, in Kosovo, the official language or in official use was decided Albanian language, Serbian and, English, whereas in municipalities where communities had populations of other (non-Albanian and non-Serb) to the mass over 3% of the population, in official communications, guaranteed the usage of their native languages.

¹ This term was not exempt from using pejorative because it has a social history, who attributed this term.

² See from <http://linguasocio.blogspot.com/2010/02/planifikimi-i-statusit-te-gjuheve-ne.html>.

³ See from <http://www.unmikonline.org/regulations/2001/reg09-01.htm>.

Five years later, on 20th October 2006, Parliament of Kosova approved the law for the usage of languages and in this institutional manner decided that Institutions of Kosova will ensure equal usage of Albanian and Serbian language as official one in Kosova, creating favorable conditions for other communities languages in Kosova. This law was in accordance with international standards and instruments for the protection of national minorities and regional or minority languages that are directly applicable in Kosovo, including the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities.⁴

So we can say that here has been the foundation upon which has built a clear policy regarding to the term of linguistic planning in Kosovo.

Linguistic Flows in Kosovo After Its Declaration of Independence

In September 2008, within the Office of the Prime Minister, was established Office of Community Affairs⁵ (OCA), which specifically and harmoniously deals with community issues within the work of Kosova's Government, and the Office of the commissioner⁶ for languages. Announcement of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state on 17 February 2008, according to linguist Shkumbin Munishi made that Albanian (the language of the majority population in Kosova-s.g.), build new relations not just with a common language of southern Slavic peoples, but with specific language. The scholar Munishi further emphasized that:

After these developments, the status of Albanian were advanced again and at the same time were disappeared the danger of glotofagic phenomena that could occur under Serbian occupation putting Albanian in front of a confrontation and coexistence not only with regional languages, such as Serbian, but with a language that today leads the world globalization processes, like English language.⁷

Conclusion

From all we said above, we can conclude that Kosovo for years has not normal condition in political and economic fields, in fact Kosovo was actually in the situation of the curfew. The official status of Albanian language was ignored because most of the time in writing and reading of formal official communication was in Serbian language, particularly before 1966 and 1974, then in 1981, 1989, 1999. The years 1989-1999 marked the time when the Albanian language in Kosovo, in fact was without a defined status, but much more served as a language for non formal communication (in family, or in oral communications), although in 1990s years were established Albanian institutions in Kosovo, parallel with Serbians, those institutions that as first official language had Albanian.

After the Kosovo war ended in 1999, the intervention of the international factor, situation changed, thereby changed the official status and linguistic planning in Kosovo too. Based on what we said above, it can be estimated that the Republic of Kosovo has established specific mechanisms regarding to the proper development of linguistic as well as promotion of the rights of minority communities to communicate in their native language, as required by the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the Law on the Use of Languages in Kosovo. Kosovar society, is multi-ethnic, and multi-religious, with freedom and full rights to freely use the native language, even though in some municipalities, in the local level (municipalities: Zveçan, Zupin Potok, Mitrovicë e Veriut, Graçanica, Partesh, and Ranilluk) should be more careful towards respecting

⁴ See *The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo* (2008, June 15), article 22.

⁵ See from <http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/?page=1,134>.

⁶ See from <http://www.komisioneri-ks.org>.

⁷ See from <http://linguasocio.blogspot.com/2010/02/planifikimi-i-statusit-te-gjuheve-ne.html>.

the law on languages in Kosova.

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