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*Ethnographic accounts of linguistic issues  
in the Yugoslav successor states*

Guest editor  
Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić

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## Rediscovering the border region in linguistics: Cases from Southeastern Europe

*Lumnije Jussufi*

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## Rediscovering the border region in linguistics: Cases from Southeastern Europe

*Lumnije Jusufi*

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
jusufi2001@yahoo.de

### Abstract

*Border region research has recently made its way into various different disciplines and is becoming increasingly useful for sociolinguistics. Nevertheless, in the context of the languages represented in Southeastern European Studies, it is still rather rare today and heretofore non-existent in the Albanian context. This can be explained by the fact that the pivotal research object –state borders– as well as the languages discussed are often used as political and ideological tools. Often, the language situation of a given border region is not taken into account at all, for the sake of preserving the image of linguistic –and thereby national– unity. This paper will show the results of a study in the Albanian-Macedonian border region of Dibra/Debar, which has been divided for roughly 100 years into two parts, situated East and West of the geopolitical border. The central question is to what extent the state border has exerted influence on local dialects, local standard languages, language behavior, and perception of language among the local population.*

### 1. Introduction

Linguistic border region research is a relatively young field, overlapping with linguistic disciplines of rich traditions, in particular with pluricentrism. The methodology of the younger discipline is, therefore, still in an early phase of its infancy and, at the moment, still touches upon various and diverse linguistic methods and disciplines.

Border regions are considered a classic research subject in linguistics. One could even say that they provide the groundwork for linguistics and facilitate the formation of different philologies and linguistic subfields. Furthermore, border regions are often closely related to the concept of language in the field of dialectology. In the classical sense, we therefore encounter border regions in the form of language borders, which do not constitute definite boundary lines, but take the shape of transition zones.

The political context of languages embeds language concepts within linguistic disciplines –i.e., it provides an answer to what a language is. But because of the way borders are politically drawn, they initially create further unnatural boundaries for a language that may in fact be linear. Are these linear language borders an invention of present-day linguistics? By no means. They have long been attested in dialectology, which takes territorial and tribal realms as a basis for mapping out dialect areas, as well as in the development of larger spheres of influence of administrative languages

that are today regarded as cultural spheres –for instance, what is known as the *Jireček line* (Jireček 1911) that also represents a type of linear language border.

Border regions have become increasingly significant since the foundation of modern nation states, not only regarding the creation of national languages, but also with regard to their overall prevalence. In comparison to the expansive empires of the past, nation states have proven to be small political entities –especially in the Southeast of Europe.

Nevertheless, nation states also give significance to border regions in terms of language policy. What we are dealing with here is pluricentrism –a linguistic concept that brings border regions into the spotlight. Language borders that originally were very comprehensive are now becoming quite linear, albeit with some initial limitations. The fact that theories of pluricentrism suggest that language borders cannot be linear may be arguably seen as a form of potential self-abandonment of the discipline. This contradiction is based on the traditional view of language borders as zones, but never as lines.

This is exactly where a more recent linguistic discipline intervenes by investigating border regions with regard to sociolinguistics as well as systematic linguistics. This new type of research on border areas now affects the established theories of pluricentrism, obviously providing both parallels and counter claims, which will be the focus of this paper.

## **2. Pluricentrism**

Pluricentrism has its origins in the study of major European languages –such as German, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. Initially this was a result of colonialism and its aftermath, leading to language sharing beyond separate states/nations. Pluricentric research on these languages is well-established (Clyne 1992; Ammon 1995; Muhr 2012; Kellermeier-Rehbein 2014; Voß & Jusufi 2013; Ammon, Bickel & Lenz 2016).

### **2.1. Political pluricentrism**

Pluricentrism is primarily an aspect of language and therefore also an object of linguistic research. Regarding its factual outcomes and its potential for instrumentalization, however, it is extremely political. In domestic as well as foreign contexts, it represents the most important instrument in the politics of language and education. Considering the internal dimension, national policies for schools, education, and language are based on it, whereas externally it assists foreign countries in forming special coalitions with other states. Besides, states also share representative institutions. Not only the public purse, but also the languages themselves benefit from this type of language policy, because their foreign representation increases and they remain larger language formations. Therefore, it is no coincidence that pluricentric theories are based on highly politically determined concepts such as *state* and *nation*.

Pluricentrism does not automatically imply language heterogeneity, but rather a political order for standard languages that have the status of an official language in several countries and allow for attempts at uniting these countries based on pluricentrism. This unification of the countries involved is a voluntary process, neither self-evident nor natural, otherwise pluricentrism would disintegrate and the

formation of new standard languages would emerge, as in the case of Serbo-Croatian. Pluricentrism can therefore be regarded as the first step toward language sharing, but also making a last attempt at safeguarding language unity. With the following two examples, I would like to illustrate two well-known types of pluricentric languages.

German pluricentrism is a result of separate states and the voluntary affiliation of the countries involved. This pluricentrism, the linguistic aspect of which we will consider later, is seen as stable, although until 1989 the internal division of Germany was seen as dynamic and could be compared to the language situation in Southeastern Europe (Ammon 1995).

An example of a second type of pluricentrism is the former Serbo-Croatian language. It used to be the pluricentric language par excellence, in which pluricentrism served as the concept of codification from its onset. The aim behind this concept was to join two rather independent languages into a new one. However, together with the dissolution of Yugoslavia we also saw the disintegration of this pluricentric language. In this case pluricentrism was not a result of separate statehood, but essentially the unification of two languages into one extremely pluricentric language, attempting to even incorporate two different alphabets: Cyrillic script was used in Serbia or rather in the one capital city –Belgrade– and Latin script was used in Croatia or in the other capital city –Zagreb (Cvetković-Sander 2011).

But what happens to languages, like Albanian, that find themselves in the middle of pluricentric developments? To apply existing pluricentric theories to young or still-developing pluricentric languages is very difficult due to the basic terminology in pluricentrism such as *state*, *nation*, *national diversity* and even *nation state* (e.g. Clyne 1992) –which are extremely sensitive concepts, especially for Southeastern Europe. Albanian pluricentrism, for example, cannot be explained with or be based on existing theories. Arguing for Albanian as a pluricentric language is almost impossible, because of the political constellation of the Albanian speaking groups (Voß & Jusufi 2013).

## 2.2. Linguistic pluricentrism

When it comes to the form of a pluricentric order, pluricentric states can be described as states whose cultural and educational centers or institutions have made decisions –or have the political power and wish to make decisions– on their language politics. This can be achieved through publishing linguistic codices, for example. In the case of German, there are three main centers –Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Codices have been created for the relevant varieties, i.e. the standard varieties, of each of these three countries. Here, the variety that is spoken in one country functions as the national language and is associated with a full center. In the case of the German language, there are German, Austrian, and Swiss-German as varieties –with full language standardization– of the umbrella language “German” (Ammon 1995: 73-94). The differences in these varieties are called *Teutonisms* for Germany, *Austriacisms* for Austria and *Helvetisms* for Switzerland (Ammon 1996: 158). States that do not have their own codices nor intend creating them, are classified as half-centers. In this case they typically have links to one of these full-centers. Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, South Tyrol, and East Belgium are such German half-centers, while the German language areas in Romania, Namibia, and the Mennonite settlements in Mexico are quarter-centers (Ammon et al 2016). The German examples show that a language acquires

pluricentric status based on its national sovereignty and the standardization of its varieties (Ammon 2011: 38-40).

At the other end of the pluricentric continuum we have the various state-dependent developments of a language. Depending on the longevity of separate statehoods, as well as on the geographic distance between the states, differences could be present in all linguistic areas. Initially the differences were only on the level of phonemes, codified into orthoepic dictionaries and known in German as *Hochlautung*. This codified spoken language plays an important role in television –for instance, for newsreaders and for verbal communication on political and judicial as well as other higher levels of language use. Other differences, as in grammar and lexis, also affect the written language.

The codification of language varieties is of vital importance as states may give an official character to seemingly regional colorings, but also in order to foster the improvement of language skills for language-cultivation and for testing language skills. Besides that, it is important on the political level, as it determines language use in influential areas of public life such as administration, legislation or education, (including school examinations and school grades) but also in the media. Through these instruments, it becomes possible to measure and control the standard language.

According to pluricentric theory, the evaluation of a linguistic element as part of a language variety has to be very stringent and clear. Pluricentrism is fundamentally concerned with recording and categorizing particular variations that result in a variety. Distinctions are classified according to fixed criteria such as area-specific characteristics, situational dependency and interchangeability (Ammon 1996: 161-172). Non-specific variants are those that are used in two full-centers. For example, an apricot is *Aprikose* in Germany as well as in Switzerland as opposed to *Marille* in Austria (Ammon, Bickel & Lenz 2016: 462), while a potato is *Erdapfel* in Austria as opposed to *Kartoffel* in Germany (Ammon, Bickel & Lenz 2016: 372). Elements that occur in one variety but also in the border region of another variety –even if not throughout a whole area– are considered even less specific. For example, we find the word *Kren* ‘horseradish’ in Austria as well as in Bavaria (Ammon 1996: 162-164). In addition, this is exactly where pluricentric theories reach their limits, because regarding language borders or dialect borders as zones does not correspond to state borders that appear as linear. This makes it difficult to define distinctions as part of a variety in pluricentrism, especially in regions that run along state borders, as can be seen with the example of *Kren*.

### 3. Border region research

Border region research, or *Border studies*, can be used in order to get a better understanding of these issues in the assessment of pluricentric languages, as it moves the focus from the state center to the periphery. In other words, it changes the scientific view from *top-down* to *bottom-up*. Border region research has recently made its way into various different disciplines and is becoming increasingly useful for sociolinguistics, too. Nevertheless, in the context of the languages represented in Southeastern European Studies, it is still rather rare today. In the Albanian context, it is non-existent up to now. This phenomenon can be explained in terms of the central research object, state borders, as well as the accompanying languages that are often used as political and ideological tools. The language situation of the border regions is

not taken into account at all, for the sake of preserving the image of linguistic –and thereby national– unity.

International research on border regions had its beginnings and its focus in Western Europe with its Germanic and Romance languages (Cajot 1990; Kremer & Niebaum 1990; Taeldeman 1990; Gerritsen 1999; Kallen, Hinskens & Taeldeman 2000; Klausmann 2000). The Slavic languages have been part of this research stream, as represented by Woolhiser (2005, 2011), Voß (2005, 2006) and Steinke & Voß (2007). The formation of a working group in 1995-1998, *The Convergence and Divergence of Dialects in a Changing Europe*, represented an important step in this research (Auer, Finskens & Kerswill 2005). The central theme this group worked on were the dialects on state borders in different parts of Europe, but also outside Europe.

In public debates in the West, state borders in Southeastern Europe are often perceived as a by-product of the Yugoslav dissolution. This political development has indeed caused ongoing changes for the language situation in the Balkans, with new standard languages and language identities being created. It has also affected the Albanian language, despite it being a non-Slavic language and even though the pluricentric development of Albanian is still at its first stage.

In the new Balkan states, linguistic topics such as the distinctiveness of a language are covered only in South-Slavic studies, but even here, such research, more often than not, serves the aim of national self-legitimization. The Greco-Macedonian and Greco-Bulgarian border regions have been examined in studies by Voß (2005, 2006) and Steinke & Voß (2007) on the example of slavophones. The papers by Kahl (2007) and Atanasov (1990, 2002) on the minorities in the border regions of Southeastern Europe provide valuable insight to this topic. It is also useful to consider sociolinguistic studies on Moldavia, especially by Bochmann (2004, 2005; Bochmann et al. 2012). In this regard, Albanian studies are still at an early stage and encompass only few studies (Pani 2006; Jusufi & Pani 2016).

Border region research, as opposed to pluricentrism, which concentrates on standard languages, is all encompassing. It looks at standard- and non-standard language varieties, as well as at their speakers. It does so by analyzing language behavior, prestige languages, language contact and conflict, multilingualism, state languages, and many other aspects. Thus, it is a micro-study involving all areas of structural linguistics and sociolinguistics in search of language convergence or divergence –as well as its causes– in a state border region.

Languages spoken in the provinces can be defined as standard languages with limited scope, for instance in the local media, in schools, and in local politics. Or they can be non-standard varieties, in other words, the local dialect and sub-standard forms. The relevant research focuses mainly on spoken languages (Jusufi & Pani 2016) and partly on written languages (for example in the print media) as well as on differences, specifically on the reasons for the development of such differences.

The sociolinguistic spectrum aims to answer who speaks how, where, when, with whom, and why (Voß 2006: 89). This means that issues such as where the standard language is spoken and what type of standard language is in fact present are of central interest in that perspective. Other research questions would be: Where is the dialect spoken and what kind of dialect is it actually? Does a complementary diglossia exist, i.e. is standard language used in written communication, whereas dialect dominates in spoken communication? By posing these questions, we can



evaluate the level of dialect preservation or loss according to Sasse's (1992) model. Another topic of border area research is the question of the prestige of regional languages (Jusufi & Pani 2016). Of equal importance is the question: Which other factors –e.g. age, gender, education, conversational situations, conversation partners, and topics of conversation– influence these developments?

When researching structure, we find that border studies clash with pluricentric research, but only in relation to standard languages, because both approaches make standard languages their object of investigation. So how does linguistic border region research work? As a first step, it investigates the classic areas of linguistics, namely phonetics-phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis (Kremer 1990). As in dialectology, most distinctions are expected to appear on the phonetic and lexical levels. The changes in lexis occur especially in the areas of life where fundamental changes have occurred since the demarcation of new borders. These changes include: personal hygiene, household objects (especially electrical appliances), needlework, sports, clothing, education, as well as folk- and high culture. Besides, technical language represents a unique and very interesting language-level (Jusufi 2017).

### 3.1. State mechanisms

It is central for the analysis of the language situation in border regions and their relevance for pluricentrism to understand the importance of states and their influence on local languages and language perception. In other words, how can a state change languages, especially non-standard varieties, and the language perceptions of its citizens?

In the first place, states can operate through *umbrella languages* or *state languages*. This includes issues of language contact and language conflict and may entail various linguistic influences to a greater or lesser degree. Then we also have to evaluate the degree of relationship of the umbrella language with the local language or dialect. In other words, the closer the relationship between dialect and umbrella language, the larger the influence of the umbrella language on the dialect. The reverse case leads to the preservation of dialects.

The demographic composition that can vary greatly depending on the territory of the state plays an additional role in the convergence or divergence attested in a border region. Different ethnic groups are politically instrumentalised simply through their status as being members of either a majority or a minority –whereby they may strengthen or weaken the language contact or language conflict and the preservation of the dialect. However, language politics is the main mechanism through which a state influences the development of languages. Command of the standard language and the dialect depends on this contingent on age and formal education.

The presence of urban centers is an important factor in border regions, because they are normally situated on one side of the border only. Such towns reinforce the state mechanisms to an even greater degree. They play an important role in the development and modernization of dialects and in the dissemination of standard languages through education. In general, urbanization leads to the blending of rural vernaculars and the dissemination of urban vernacular. This confines developments to the side of the border with the urban center, while the rural side is neglected.

#### 4. Particular case study: Dibra

The region of (alb.) Dibra or (mac.) Debar is located in the central frontier between Albania and Macedonia. This formerly unified geographical and cultural region is divided into two parts by the border since the independence declaration of Albania (1912).

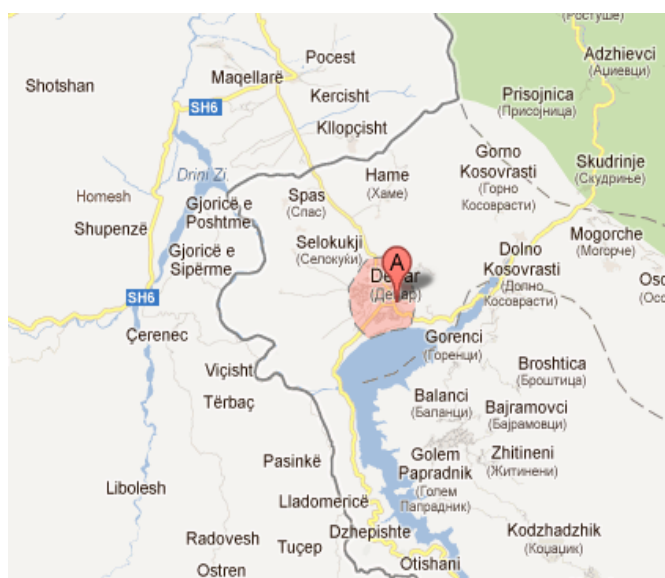


Fig. 1: The region of Dibra/ Debar (from: <http://maps.google.com/maps>)

The example of the state border in the region of Dibra is useful for analyzing very neatly the linguistic impact of the Albanian-Yugoslav/Macedonian state border.

This region has been divided for roughly 100 years into two parts, situated East and West of the border. The central question for our present purposes is to what extent the state border exerted influence on the local dialects, the local standard languages, language behavior, and perception of language among the local population. In other words: did the state border in Dibra also turn into a language boundary? The first results of this research are presented in the following section of this paper.

The first concrete example of the language situation in this border region is the language spoken by masons in Debar, analyzed as part of the project with the same name by the author at Humboldt University in Berlin. Technical innovation within the last 30-40 years, marking the most pronounced differences between the two parts of Dibra, clearly demonstrates the impact of the border on language development (Jusufi 2017).

The second example of the influence of the state border on the linguistic situation rests on the analysis of the difference in the perception of and the preference for languages and varieties, as shown in the following charts.<sup>1</sup> The empirical data is gathered throughout 2015 in Debar, on both sides of the border. The charts are based on the issue of which language the informants believe to be the more prestigious one. The survey was divided into three age groups: 10-20 years, 30-40 years, and 50 and older. The large gap between the age groups has been deliberately built in to make

<sup>1</sup> This example is in a somewhat different form found in Jusufi & Pani 2016.



the differences between them clearer. The material analyzed is based on written surveys using a broader questionnaire, which includes three questions, of which one is closed and two open. The questions refer to the prestige of many languages spoken in the region, including Turkish, and the attitude towards Turkish words in Albanian (Jusufi & Pani 2016).

Languages	10-20 years, 25 respondents	30-40 years, 25 respondents	from 50 years, 25 respondents
Macedonian	3%	0%	0%
Turkish	18,5%	5%	4,2%
Italian	18,5%	20%	4,2%
English	29,6%	35%	8,3%
Standard Albanian	22,2%	35%	83,4%
own dialect <sup>2</sup>	7,4%	5%	0%

Table 1: Prestige languages in Albania (Jusufi & Pani 2016)

Languages	10-20 years, 22 respondents	30-40 years, 20 respondents	from 50 years, 24 respondents
Macedonian	3,7%	0%	9%
Turkish	37%	0%	0%
Italian	29,6%	3,7%	0%
English	29,6%	40,7%	0%
Standard Albanian	18,8%	44,4%	91%
own dialect	18,5%	11%	0%

Table 2: Prestige languages in Macedonia (Jusufi & Pani 2016)

These results show some very telling aspects of the language situation in the region. The differences attested in the first age group are first of all due to the discrepancy between standard Albanian and the interlocutors' own dialect, which is more pronounced in Albania than in Macedonia –due to the effects of language purism in Albania. There are also differences in the perception of Turkish, which could either be ascribed also to language purism in Albania or might be a result of Turkish-Macedonian economic relationships, as well as the great number of Turkish TV series on Macedonian television at the time of the survey. We can see some parallels in the answers about Macedonian, which is not often preferred, as well as the global language, English, by observing the peak values on both sides of the border. The results concerning Italian were somewhat surprising. However, the youth on both sides of the border seems to somewhat prefer the less known languages: Turkish in Albania and Italian in Macedonia.

In the two probes of the middle-aged group, it appears that people have more in common with one another than in the first age group. People of that age on both sides of the border share the experience of the consequences of Albanian language politics 20-30 years ago (Hetzer 2001-2002). Some common results here are that the dialect counts as non-prestigious, whereas standard Albanian, hand-in-hand with English as a global language, are evaluated most positively. An additional interesting

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<sup>2</sup> Dialects spoken at home often need to be differentiated as either the mother's or the father's dialect: Within the existing patriarchal framework of this study, "own dialect" refers to the father's dialect.

point here is that Turkish and Macedonian are barely ever mentioned in relation to prestige –this may be a result of these languages being categorized as the languages of the previous, or, in the latter case, still ongoing, “occupiers”, at least according to people’s perceptions.

The oldest group’s evaluation reflects the school education of their time. But what is even more striking in this case is the influence of foreign language education on both states concerned. The commonalities are based on similar schooling concepts and are therefore not an indication of convergence. Foreign languages are only sporadically evaluated positively, in accordance with the school programs when the members of this group were at school age. While standard Albanian holds the top position, the dialect has the lowest position with zero-values, which reflects Albanian language purism.

The third example of the language situation in this specific border region is a survey on the perception of and preference for the Turkish language.<sup>3</sup> When asked what kind of language Turkish is, the first age group between 10 and 20 years of age answered as follows:

Albania, 25 respondents		
Negative	neutral	Positive
less beautiful	don’t know	interesting
unpleasant		beautiful
less interesting		popular
Macedonia, 22 respondents		
Negative	neutral	Positive
foreign	easy	precious
imposed	like the others	worth learning
worthless	rare here	interesting
melancholic	difficult	beautiful
boring	don’t know	
unimportant		

Table 3: Perception of the Turkish language in the youngest group (10-20 years)

The group of adolescents generally regards the Turkish language in Albania neutrally. Both positively and negatively implicated descriptions are a minority and balanced by six answers on each side. In Macedonia on the other hand, the perception of Turkish within this age group often holds a considerably negative meaning, by 52% of the respondents, or a neutral meaning, by 28%. Half of the positively implicated answers could also be evaluated as neutral. Only 8% show a positive assessment. On the whole, one can assert that the adolescents in Macedonia gave more accurate answers than their peers in Albania. It appears that the overall preoccupation with the Turkish language is more perceptible here, most likely because of the existence of numerous TV series (as traceable also in the answers above: *melancholic, interesting, heavy*). This fact is also reflected within the next age group.

<sup>3</sup> This example is in a somewhat different form also found in Jusufi & Pani 2016.

Albania, 25 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
foreign	don't know	good
		positive
		very warm
		beautiful
Macedonia, 20 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
foreign	easy	beautiful
of the TV soaps	Balkan	pleasurable
worthless	here rare	interesting
heiress of the Ottomans	difficult	I like them
of the Turks	don't know	with special elements
does not sound well		

Table 4: Perception of the Turkish language in the middle age group (30-40 years)

The next age group, respondents between 30 and 40 years, regards the Turkish language neutrally or positively by 50%. In this case, the modifier “foreign” (20%) can be interpreted as neutral, when simply stated in comparison with Albanian as the mother tongue. In Macedonia, this age group evaluated the Turkish language rather negatively (48%) than neutrally (16%), a result which is, in line with linguistic purism. However, the answers themselves were striking: *heiress of the Ottomans*, *language of the Turks* (read: “occupying force”), but also the attribute *Balkan*, which is not always positively perceived (could be read as “antiquated/backward”). In view of the historical circumstances, these results are no surprise, as this age group took part in the nationalization process and the distribution of standard Albanian in Yugoslavia. The answers of the respective age group in Albania are similar. Nevertheless, it is clear that no distinction is made between Ottoman-Turkish and contemporary Turkish. The aforementioned TV series apparently exercise an influence on this age group, too.

Albania, 25 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
outdated	don't know	pleasant
don't like them	existing	interesting
Macedonia, 24 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
foreign	old	beautiful
don't like them	easy	Interesting
of the Turks	common in Europe	Good
of the TV-soaps	don't know	Sweet
gypsy language		
alaturca, unintelligible		
not nice sounding		

Table 5: Perception of the Turkish language in the older age group (from 50 years)

The older age group regards the Turkish language neutrally to negatively. It is evident that the Turkish language is strongly identified with the Ottoman Empire (around 21%: *archaic*) and is therefore rejected (8.3%). The above-average answer *don't know* can

be interpreted in two ways, firstly as “neutral”, as already discussed, or, secondly, as “unknown”. In the worst case, this answer could stand for ignorance or even rejection. Compared to the Western part of Dibra in Macedonia, where this answer was given only twice in 75 respondents, the whole perception shifts to a negative direction in the Eastern part of Albania, although not to the outmost edge. The issue of regarding Turkish as responsible for unwanted language developments in Albanian is evident in the answer of a teacher of Albanian (54), who stated that Turkish had left deep traces in the Albanian language and that Turkisms would be harmful for Albanian. In Macedonia, on the other hand, respondents of this group were far more positive in their evaluation of the Turkish language (40%). The negative answers (32%) and the considerably less neutral answers (20%) come as a surprise. Therefore, sentiments are quite different, particularly regarding the intensity of the negatively connotated answers. Terms like *alaturca*, *gypsy language*, and *language of the Turks* are connotated highly negatively, and are considered almost insulting. The reason for this perception, in contrast to the far more positive and neutral attitudes towards Turkisms attested in other cases, might be due to the abundance of Turkish TV series, which really fill up the whole daily program and which are mostly consumed by middle-aged people.

The last example is about the perception of and preference for Turkish words (Turkisms) in the Albanian language:<sup>4</sup>

Albania, 25 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
old words	don't know	positive
don't like them	existing	beautiful
		interesting
Macedonia, 22 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
remains of the Turkish occupation	examples	---
too much, too active	foreign, from the Turks	---
words of the old people		---
away with it		---
harmful		---
worthless		---

Table 6: Perception of Turkisms in the youngest age group (10-20 years)

The majority of adolescents (77%) in Albania clearly regard Turkisms as neutral or rather descriptive (*existing*, *old words*). This comes as a surprise at first, but one needs to keep in mind that this is an age group born and socialized long after the socialist period. Although purism is still propagated by an older generation of leading linguists, it seems that they do not have any influence anymore, at least not on this age group. In Macedonia, the answers of this group are the most significant. Turkisms bear clearly negative connotations for 60% of the adolescents. Yet, the answer *foreign, from the Turks* (20%) is not completely neutral, either. Here, the negative perception of the

<sup>4</sup> This example can be found in a somewhat different form also in Jusufi & Pani 2016.

Ottoman Empire as a result of the anti-Ottoman attitude of Albanian historiography clearly comes to the surface. For peers in Albania, the differentiation between Ottoman-Turkish and contemporary Turkish seems to have a positive effect towards the perception of Turkisms.

Albania, 25 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
old words	don't know	interesting
tough / assertive	existing	positive
outdated		
Macedonia, 20 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
barbarisms	borrowed	of a humane, peaceful folk
outdated	Turkism	cultural property
remains	still in use	language proficiency
imposed	adapted in Albanian	
	part of Albanian, as other foreign words	

Table 7: Perception of Turkisms in the age group (30-40 years)

The middle-aged group in Albania regards Turkisms within the Albanian language equally neutrally and negatively (45% each). The attributes *existing* and *old words* are here evaluated in another context, possibly as “backward/antiquated” and with the co-text of “purism was not successful”, which would make them shift to the left (negative) area in the above chart. Only 10% of the answers involve clearly positive attributes. In Macedonia, this age group clearly regards Turkisms more neutrally than the younger group. But the negative perception is nonetheless four times higher than the positive one (48% compared to 12%). The neutral attitude with 36% modifies this to some extent. However, puristic attributes are remarkable (*barbarisms*, *remains*, *imposed* and *outdated*). Most notably, the expression *barbarisms* is a current term used within normative Albanology.

Albania, 25 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
old words	don't know	---
outdated	existing	---
Macedonia, 24 respondents		
Negative	neutral	positive
barbarisms from the Turks	Turkish words, in use	---
Imposed	high use	---
remains of the Ottoman Empire, which we consider to be Albanian	borrowed from the Turks	---
foreign	a few words	---
	don't know	---
	very present	---

Table 8: Perception of Turkisms in the older age group (from 50 years)

The old-aged group clearly regards Turkisms with a neutral to negative look. Not one of the respondents gave an answer with positive connotations. Here again, the attribute *existing* stands in a negative context. The answer “don’t know” was often accompanied by a gesture of disinterest or ignorance. This too, can be interpreted negatively. In Macedonia within this age group, one finds a neutral attitude (80%) towards Turkisms that is above average. Even far more neutral than their peer age group in Albania and more neutral than the general attitude towards Turkish, which deteriorated in value due to the opulence of TV series. The interrelation to the Ottoman past is on the fringes (16%).

These examples show that the state border running across Debar strongly influences the technical language of the masons, the perception of and preference for certain foreign languages in that region, as well as the relationship between standard language and dialect and the attitudes towards the shared Ottoman past. A purely pluricentric study of Albanian would hardly be able to achieve such clear results. An interdisciplinary perspective based on empirical findings and an awareness of the ideologization of normative approaches (Milroy 2001) is much more suitable for such research questions.

## 5. Conclusion

Border region research has appropriated methods from established fields of linguistics, for instance language borders, dialect borders, multilingualism, language contact, and language conflict as well as linguistic research on the language system and social factors (sociolinguistics). Only through combining all these different linguistic sub-disciplines and research fields does this approach acquire its all-encompassing character.

The research object of both pluricentrism and border region research –i.e., the state border– causes rivalry between these two disciplines. Border region research has revolutionized our understanding of language borders by conceptualizing them in a more narrow way, from an unclear zone, which is difficult to survey, to a clear line, which is almost uncrossable. It invalidates transition-zone theory (Auer 2004: 160-166) by changing the observation method from the pluricentric *top-down* to *bottom-up*, but it also expands to encompass many other aspects.

	Pluricentrism	Border region research
Political context	Yes	yes
Standard language	Yes	Yes
Differences in the language system	Yes	Yes
Written language	Yes	yes (little)
Spoken language	yes (little)	Yes
Nonstandard variety	yes (little)	Yes
Historical development	No	Yes
Context of the differences	No	Yes
Speaker (Sociolinguistics)	No	Yes

Table 9: Pluricentrism vs. border region research



Pluricentrism and border region research can therefore be seen as complementary disciplines with different goals and different observation methods. As can be seen in Table 9, the two approaches have parallels in the areas of standard language, language-system linguistics and its typical levels –sound levels and lexis (cf. this appears in white on the table). They also have parallels in most cases as regards the grey shaded areas (in the middle of the table). Pluricentrism concentrates mostly on written language and only in some individual cases on spoken language (e.g. on television discourse). Besides, it is based less on theoretical grounds but rather on research difficulties, because standard texts of spoken language are much harder to collect and analyze than written language ones, especially with regard to the criteria of pluricentricity. However, spoken language should definitely be researched and much further investigated in future research (Ammon et al. 2016). In contrast, border region research concentrates on spoken language and only touches on written language (e.g. in local print media). The aspects of linguistic research listed in the dark grey areas of the table (Historical development, Context of the differences, Speaker) are very new and characteristic of border region research.

The sociolinguistic approach –in which speakers are centrestage– is an innovation in border region research. Pluricentrism is not concerned with developing processes like border studies but with language differences as outcomes. Pluricentrism considers dialects as a source of enrichment for their own variety, i.e. dialects become instruments for the purposes of language policies. They are, however, the main research object in border region research, being influenced by several umbrella languages. The focus therefore shifts from *top-down* to *bottom-up* factors, which have increased considerably.

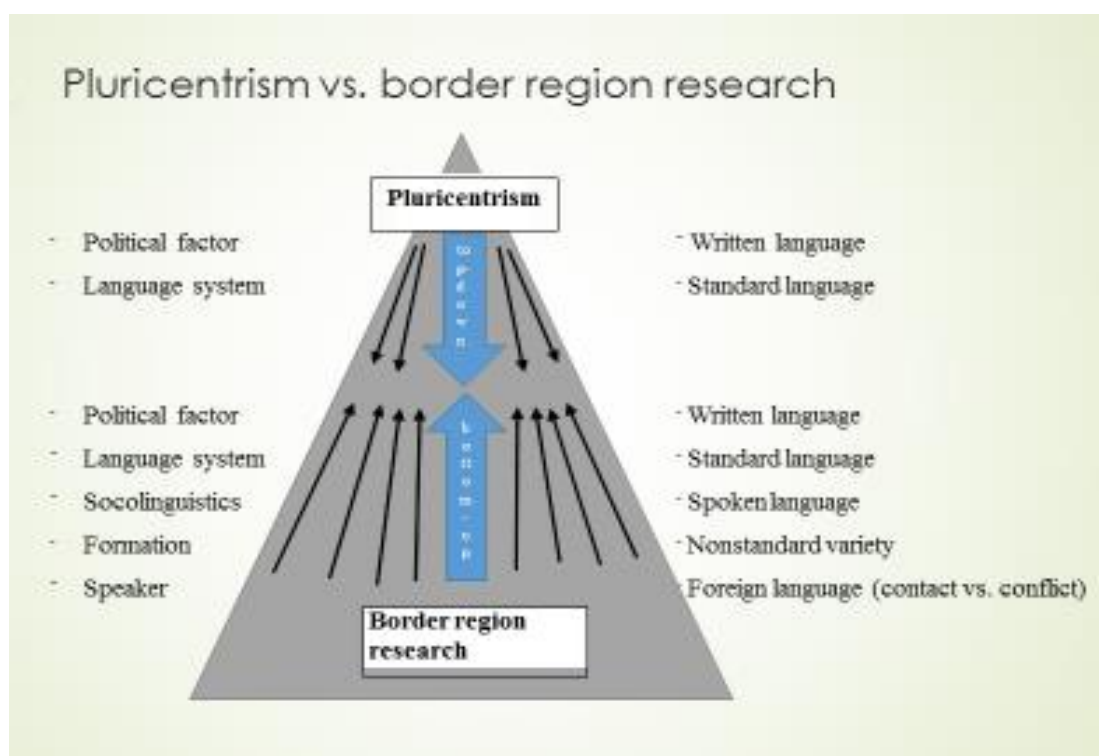


Fig. 2: Top-down and bottom-up factors

In conclusion, it can be said that pluricentric studies address other –and, indeed, fewer– questions than border region research does. In pluricentrism the questions to ask would be: What are the differences and how can we explain them against the background of existing language politics? In contrast, border region research asks more and wider questions: What are the differences? How did they originate?

Border region research provides a stronger and more linguistic argument than pluricentrism. It is linguistically based and uses empirically collected data. It is statistically verifiable and focuses on linguistic varieties in the narrow space of a state border. This purely linguistic approach is far removed from both language politics and the politicization of languages.

Returning to the title of this paper: border areas are a rediscovered classic in linguistics. Therefore, a classic can only become an innovation in science when we expand its research object, supplement and adjust it to new scholarly standards by opening up previously narrow themes. This is all true of current border region research, even though we are now merely at the first stages.

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