

# Introduction

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## 1 Fundamentals and Advances in Balkan Linguistics (II)

This issue of *Balcania et Slavia*, intended as a continuation of Volume 4, Issue 1 (2024), brings four additional papers based on the presentations given at the first international meeting in the *Fundamentals and Advances in Balkan Linguistics* (FABL) series, held at the University of Belgrade on November 16-18, 2023.

As was the case with the previous selection, this time, too, all major branches of Balkan languages, as well as some peripheral members of this linguistic area, are included: viz. Balkan Slavic, Albanian, and Balkan Romance (namely, Judeo-Spanish), as well as Turkish. The four papers collected in this volume tackle the Balkan linguistic data in its wider context of language use and function, illuminating it from different methodological perspectives. Thematically, all four papers deal with semantics, or its interfaces with grammar or discourse and society, in four language- or dialect-specific situations and in four particular domains. Methodologically, they apply different frameworks and tools to analyse meaning construction and representation in the domains of evidentiality, spatial relations, language naming, and tense: i.e. genre and narrative analysis, contrastive and cognitive linguistics approach, sociolinguistics, and formal methods.



Merima Krijezi and Predrag Mutavdžić (University of Belgrade) co-author a paper on the semantics of the Albanian accusative preposition *në*, mostly based on Krijezi (2023). As the authors point out, *në* is one of the most frequent prepositions in Modern Albanian, primarily expressing spatial relations, as well as having a number of secondary non-spatial meanings. In order to disentangle the primary and secondary meanings of *në*, its semantic scope, as well as its combinatory potential, the authors put forward an analysis rooted in the morpho-syntax, semiology, and cognitive linguistics. As such, the paper is indicative of the kind of linguistic research conducted currently under the auspices of the Belgrade cognitive linguistics school, deriving ultimately from late professor Ranko Bugarski's (1933–2024) oeuvre and his lasting influence (cf. Bugarski 1969).

Vesela Simeonova (University of Graz) and Seçkin Arslan (University of Côte d'Azur and CNRS) present an analysis of Turkish and Bulgarian evidentiality across seven written genres: news, history, police reports, fiction, fables, religious texts, and dreams. This interesting and acerbic study, based on a substantial corpus of empirical data, shows that evidentials are restricted to different narrative modes. In four of the seven environments examined, evidentials are used identically in both languages. Their use in news and general knowledge and the report category differs, however, in Bulgarian and Turkish. The paper continues and complements the line of research on evidentiality and areal contact between Turkish and languages of the Balkan area, initiated and championed by Victor A. Friedman (e.g. Friedman 1999; 2008; cf. now also Friedman & Joseph 2025).

Ana Stulic's (University Bordeaux-Montaigne) paper on Judeo-Spanish language and its linguistic culture, based on an invited talk she delivered at the 2023 FABL meeting, is a rare contribution focusing on this minority Balkan language and the culture of its speakers. While discussing the three linguistic ideologies that historically have shaped the language use and multilingual practices among the Sephardim in the Balkans, this paper provides a framework for understanding the range of terms employed by both present-day speakers and scholars to designate the language of Sephardic Jews: viz. *Ladino*, *Judeo-Spanish*, and *Judezmo*. As argued by the author, these ideas are crucial for understanding both the external and internal histories of Judeo-Spanish, as well as its role in language contact settings in the Balkans. While looking at the intriguing case of Judeo-Spanish, one cannot but think of the nonminority, albeit not less intriguing case of Serbo-Croatian, and other languages of the Balkans, where various linguistic ideologies, national and religious identifications, and overall linguistic cultures of their speakers are intertwined with language naming issues. Although deeply rooted in

the Judeo-Spanish case study, Ana Stulic's paper, therefore, has the potential for outlining a wider Balkan research paradigm.

Last but not least, Jelena Živojinović (University of Graz) and Natalia Jardón Pérez (Central European University) co-author a paper on the expression of past events in western South Slavic. Investigating how past events are expressed in the balkanised Torlak, as opposed to the standard variety, this paper identifies semantic and morpho-syntactic differences between the aorist, the imperfect, and the perfect in these closely related varieties. Analysing their distribution and usage patterns, with a focus on the aorist/perfect divide, the paper shows how the expression of past tense in Torlak is related to the broader framework of Balkan-type evidentiality. Thus, in addition to the broad literature on the topic, the present study contributes both empirically and theoretically informed formal account for the already observed fact in traditional dialectology, that the aorist and the imperfect are better preserved and more frequently used in the South-East than in the North-West (e.g. Ivić 1956; 1957).

We extend our gratitude to the editorial team of *Balcania et Slavia* and Edizioni Ca' Foscari for hosting this special issue. As it comes out of press, the second FABL event will have taken place at the University of Belgrade, organized by the Institute for the Study of Antiquity and Classical Heritage on October 31, 2025 (cf. Božović & Ligorio 2025). We are looking forward to another Balkan linguistics meeting in the series and, hopefully, future events.

The year 2025 has been one of the hardest in the history of higher education in Serbia. Amidst unprecedented oppression by the authorities, many of us have been deprived of our institutional affiliations, employment, and salaries. In the streets, if not at our workplaces, we remain in full solidarity with the Serbian university students, who struggle for a fairer and better society.

## 2 Independent paper

In addition to the four contributions presented in the section prepared by Gjorgje Božović and Aleksandar Trifunović, which derive from the second edition of the international conference *Formal Approaches to Balkan Linguistics (FABL II)* held in Venice in November 2023, the present issue also includes an independent paper by Maksym O. Vakulenko (Lviv).

Vakulenko's study, *Linguistic and Didactic Aspects of Overcoming the Ukrainian Phonetic Crisis*, addresses the current state and challenges of Ukrainian phonetic research, proposing a modernized transcription system based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). By combining linguistic and didactic perspectives, the author underscores the need to align Ukrainian phonetic scholarship

with contemporary international standards. The paper addresses the decline of experimental phonetic research in Ukraine and the persistence of outdated Soviet-era transcription systems. Vakulenko proposes a modernized conversion of the Cyrillic-based phonetic symbols into the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and provides updated experimental data on Ukrainian vowels, affricates, and the voiced/voiceless consonants [ɣ], [ʃ], and [h]. The study includes detailed tables for transliteration and recommends adopting IPA-based transcription in teaching and research. It also argues that English and German [h] should be represented in Ukrainian loanwords with the letter *x* rather than *z*. The author concludes that revitalizing Ukrainian phonetics requires the systematic integration of contemporary international standards into linguistic education and codification practice.

Together, the papers included in the present volume illustrate the thematic diversity and vitality of the current issue, which bridges Balkan and neighbouring linguistic traditions while continuing the comparative and interdisciplinary spirit of the journal *Balcania et Slavia*.

We take this opportunity to draw our readers' attention to a particularly valuable recent contribution to the field — the comprehensive handbook by Victor A. Friedman and Brian D. Joseph, *The Balkan Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 2025). This volume represents a milestone in Balkan linguistics, offering the first systematic and accessible synthesis of the Balkan linguistic area written in English. Bringing together decades of scholarship by two of the most authoritative voices in the field, the book combines descriptive depth with theoretical insight and provides a comparative overview of the main structural features shared by the Balkan languages. Its open-access format makes it an indispensable reference for specialists and students alike, ensuring that the study of Balkan linguistics continues to evolve within an inclusive and internationally accessible framework.

The editorial team of *Balcania et Slavia* would like to thank all contributing authors and reviewers for their collaboration and support. This issue continues to affirm the mission of our journal as a space for dialogue among scholars, theoretical frameworks, and linguistic and cultural traditions of the Slavic, Balkans and neighboring regions.

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