

Macedonian as L2 of Albanians in Struga (North Macedonia): A source of acquisition

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Key words: second language acquisition, bilingualism, source of acquisition, Macedonian

This paper aims to explore what is the source of the acquisition of the Macedonian as L2 by Albanians in Struga (Republic of North Macedonia, near border with Albania). Although Albanians are a minority in North Macedonia, they constituted 50,58% of the total population in the Struga municipality according to 2021 census (Census 2022, 46–47). Children attend schools with Albanian as the language of instruction and have compulsory Macedonian classes starting from the fourth grade. During Macedonian classes the Standard Macedonian is presented. In non-formal communication Macedonians in Struga use the local dialects. The research questions are as follows: (1) when do Albanians in Struga start speaking Macedonian; (2) what kind of Macedonian (Standard or local dialects) do they speak at different age.

For the purposes of the research the following types of data were collected among Albanian speaking informants (aged 10 to 18) in 2020–2022.: (1) 13 narratives elicited by means of the picture tasks using *Frog where are you* (Mayer 2003) and *Pucio mówi pierwsze słowa* (M. Galewska-Kustra 2017) as well as interviews about the local community and linguistic biographies of the informants; (2) 45 questionnaires about the acquisition and use of Macedonian and other languages. At the end of the questionnaire, a task was proposed to translate a small simple text from Albanian into Macedonian. Data from adults (over 18 years old) were also collected for comparison (34 interviews without translation task and 9 audio records with interviews and narratives).

According to collected data, Albanian children in Struga on average acquire Macedonian at six to nine years of age. It means that, as a rule, Albanians in Struga start to speak Macedonian before the grade IV when they commence the study of the Macedonian language (as 10 years old students). The analysis of the informants' speech also shows that the real source of acquisition of the Macedonian language is the local Macedonian dialect/s rather than Standard Macedonian taught at school (1, 2, 3).

(1) Segá tija čé si jadat
now they CL.FUT CL.REFL.D eat-PRES.3.PL
'Now they will eat.'

(2) Z's trebit
Because need-PRES.3SG
'Because it is necessary.'

(3) Majkata go drži na deteto
mother-F.DEF it-CL.MASC/NEUT.ACC hold-PRES.3.SG on child-NEUT.DEF
'The mother is holding the child (in her arms).'

The first example (1) shows regular use of the affricate č [tč] instead of the standard k [k']. In (2) the vernacular form z's is used instead of the standard zašto 'because' and the verb in 3 Sg Pres has -t ending, which is characteristic of the west Macedonian dialects. Examples like (3) with differential object marking were collected only from young Albanians from Struga (and not from the older generations in Struga and all the informants from the villages). Vidoeški writes that DOM is characteristic of the Struga urban dialect and not of the rural ones (Vidoeški 1998, 260). The research shows that young Albanians' use of dialectal features decreases between the ages of 16 and 20.

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