

Combining a linguistic, philological and narratological perspective, this project aims at a functional description of specific Balkan Slavic morpho-syntactic features – the definite article, auxiliary-variation and clitic doubling – from a diachronic point of view. While these phenomena have already been investigated quite extensively as regards their structural properties, their functional and pragmatic dimension still lacks a thorough description. The present project aims at closing this research gap, focusing on the correlation between the occurrence of these structures in text documents and the emergence of narrativity in Early Neo-Balkan Slavic.

The language of Early Neo-Balkan Slavic texts, i.e. manuscripts dating to the 17th-19th centuries, is characterized by a shift from Church Slavonic towards the vernacular, which is indicated by the increasingly regular and systematic usage of the above mentioned features. The vernacularization goes hand in hand with the emergence of new genres allowing for the introduction of author, narrator and characters as potential anchors of viewpoints. The introduction of viewpoints constitutes one of the main functional aspects of the newly emerging morpho-syntactic features. They thereby serve the construction of narrativity, which is understood here as the explicit linguistic reflection on the relation between narrator and narration.

The main question to be investigated pertains to the mechanisms basic to the functional exploitation and pragmatic interpretation of the respective structures in specific contexts. This is possible not on the basis of isolated occurrences of the phenomena in question, but only based on regular patterns of usage. Therefore, one of the central aims consists in getting an overview over possible usage patterns and their dependence on syntactic and thematic contexts. This is achieved by means of a corpus-based analysis, the results of which are compiled and systematized in a data basis.

Another essential question pertains to the role of Turkish in the functional exploitation of these structures. Turkish has been recognized as a 'catalyst' for the development and systematic usage of the Balkan linguistic features, as well as for the development of common epic topics. What remains to be analyzed is its role in the discourse-pragmatic functionalization of the structures in question on the text level. This is also relevant in order to investigate whether there can be assumed also a common 'Balkan narrativity'.

In addition to these predominantly linguistic issues, this project contributes to the discussion of 'historical narrativity', which is currently getting into the focus of attention in literary studies. Trying to shape the notion of 'narrativity' from a linguistic point of view, it shares research interests with literary studies also on a more general level and provides the basis for interdisciplinary collaboration.