

Helmut Schaller

Vocatives in Slavic, Baltic, Balkan and other European languages

Vocative cases with the function of exclaiming or addressing are not used in representative sentences, but in indexical, expressive or appellative sentences, revealing various aspects of the speaker to the listener, e.g. impressions or feelings or imperatives. In Eastern and Southeastern European languages we find a widespread use of synthetic vocative forms in addresses. They are used not only in the majority of Slavic languages, except Russian with some remnants of Church Slavonic vocatives, but also in Lithuanian, in most of the Balkan languages, outside East- and South East Europe also in the western part of Ireland. Masculine and feminine substantives may appear in a special vocative case form within the singular, whereas in the dual and plural forms the vocative form is identical with the nominative. One has to comment the disuse of vocative forms in the history of Russian, beginning with texts in the 11th century. The Old Russian alternations of the consonants k, g and ch with č, ž and š lapsed with the disuse of the vocative case, which began to be gradually replaced by the nominative form. But the real reason for the disappearance of vocative forms in the history of Russian has not been discovered so far. In Bulgarian the majority of human and many non human animate nouns have vocative case forms, which are morphologically marked, e.g. *юнак//юначе, старец//старче*. In Rumanian the vocative case is specifically marked by the suffix –o with the feminine singular nouns, while masculine singular nouns show the alternation –e//–o. The Rumanian vocative marker –o seems to be a case form taken over from South Slavic languages. The suffixes –le for singulars and –lor for plurals can also be used as a vocative marker in Rumanian. In Albanian we don't find a special vocative form, when addressed directly, nouns carry the definite article. In Modern Greek we find distinct markers for four cases, nominative, genitive, accusative and vocative, though they do not occur in every noun.

The use of vocative forms is not only a question of descriptive, but also of historical linguistics, perhaps a consequence of mutual influence within neighboring languages, but possibly also a consequence of a new synthetism which developed in concurrence with analytism. Vocative as marker of addressing persons, sometimes also things, is an Indo-European phenomenon, highly developed in Balkan and Slavic languages. We find vocatives in Lithuanian, in rare cases also in Latvian: *výras//výre*, Old Russian: *вълкъ//вълче, богъ//боже*, Latin: *lupus//lupe, dominus//domine*, Old Greek: *λύκος//λύκε*.

The use of the vocative in today European languages seems to be a question not only for Slavic and Baltic languages, but also for non-Slavic Balkan languages and Irish dialects, the use of vocative case forms seems to be not only a Balkanism but also a Europeism. The actual use in all the languages, mentioned above, will be treated separately.

Literature:

- Bühler, Karl* 1936: Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache. Stuttgart. Translation: *D.F. Goodwin* 1990: The representational function of language. Amsterdam-Philadelphia. The Routledge Linguistics Encyclopedia. 2010 Third edition. Edited by Kirsten Malinckjær. London-New York.
- Hill, Virginia* 2014: Vocatives: How syntax meets with pragmatics. Leiden u.a.
- Quonje, Jan Ivar* 1986: Über den Vokativ und die Vokativformen in den Balkansprachen und im europäischen Sprachareal. Copenhagen.
- Reiter, Norbert* 1999: Eurolinguistik. Ein Schritt in die Zukunft. Wiesbaden.
- Vocative! 2013: Addressing between system and performance. Berlin.