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## Some ethnolinguistic features in Ndre Mjeda's works

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### Abstract

This research aims at describing and analyzing on some of the ethnolinguistic features in Mjeda's works. In the poems of this collection we find the use of euphemisms, the use of greetings, curses, praises and petting words. As well, we find the use of some mythological figures of beliefs, customs, clothing, Albanian folk traditions. Based on the collected material and the analysis that we will do, we will be able to answer which of these features are used, then they will be studied from the linguistic aspect. And, according to this analysis, we will see which ethnolinguistic phenomena are included in the creativity of Mjeda, in order to discover at least some of their richness in the field of ethnolinguistics. Therefore, the examination of these ethnographic features will reflect the early documentation of Albanian, as well as will show how strongly our poet has been dedicated to this ethnolinguistic aspect.

**Keywords:** ethnolinguistic features, greetings, praises and flattering words, folk clothing, Mjeda.

### 1. Introduction

The study and linguistic analysis of Mjeda's work sheds light not only on the early reflection and documentation of Albanian, but also on issues related to the fields of onomastics, folklore, dialectology, etc. This work is a spiritual inspiration for the Albanian language and people Albanian in general, because it reflects history, popular mentality, customs, rites, beliefs, etc. We examine and display Mjeda's motivation, his inspiration by the Albanian reality, particularly by the reality of Shkodra, which has to do with a number of issues related to rites, beliefs and mores of the Albanian mentality in those regions of Albania where Mjeda would attend religious and intellectual services. We can say that ethno-linguistic examinations in Mjeda's works not only shed light on the reflection and early documentation of Albanian Language, but they also show our poet's strong commitment to this linguistic segment, which are products of the Albanian people mentality, where we tried to distinguish some that seemed more special, like: greetings and wishes, compliments, praise and flattering words, curses, folk clothing, trade, etc.

In this paper we have examined ethnographic viewpoints in Ndre Mjeda's works. Since his works are motivated by the concrete Albanian reality, particularly that of Shkodra, treating a range of issues related to rituals and beliefs, by which he shows best different sides of the people mentality, discovers the past, the roads where the Albanian people, language and

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tradition had gone through. Seeing that *“ethnography as a science generally deals with the scientific description of the customs of individual peoples, their material, social and artistic cultures (ASHSH, 2006: 252).*

Ndre Mjeda is distinctive for another aspect also, he joins with the biggest part of the Albanian researchers in the north of Albania, who spent their lives collecting and registering ethnographic elements of inhabitants there. Registering provincial mores of northern Albania, staying for a long time from one province to another, guides, priests, political and spiritual missionaries, all of them, being local or foreign, have gained enough knowledge about the psychology, clothing, lifestyle and the dialect of the region. This knowledge was inherited by Ndre Mjeda too, the missionary who on the mass table, along with the bible in Latin, he kept the book *“Çeta e profetëve”* by Pjetër Bogdani and *“Pasqyra e t’rrëfimit”* by Pjetër Budi, in Arbërore Language.

### ***1.1.Literature review***

According Bali (2008: 67) Ndre Mjeda has explained his knowledge about the spoken language of the North in some cases and in some of his historical texts, ethnologic and especially in linguistic texts. Knowing that languages and societies are closely interrelated with each other, thus, since the language acquisition cannot happen out of a certain social context, whereas social interaction cannot happen without the spoken language.

So, one of the important factors on determining the national identity is the use of the language. This is not only a conductor of the values and traditions of the people, which has gained a new dimension in the ethno-linguistic and sociolinguistic plan today, but authors of a nation also bring inexhaustible resources of the properties and features of that country, *“that are connected to the construction of a building...to the clothing and bedding, agriculture and farming, crafts and different masteries, annual celebrations, rituals and beliefs marking the most special moments of a human’s life”* (Tirta, 2004: 14). Language development is closely linked to a range of external social factors that make it change or adjust according to different contexts. This way, Mjeda’s language is studied in *“the light of his relation to the ethnos, particularly to the material and spiritual culture, mentality and creativity of that ethnos, which can also be under the competences of anthropologic linguistics, cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, culturology or other interdisciplinary fields”* (Ibrahimi, 2016: 109).

It is not that the former generation of writers, or his contemporary writers and linguists lacked love for the homeland, its language and ethnographic borders, but there are only a few writers who attempted to protect their patriotism with the scientific dimension of the linguistic knowledge that reigned at those times. Ndre Mjeda is one of those few creators who, besides the artistic words and the scientific concepts on the origin of the Albanian nation and the Albanian Language in his problematizing and polemical linguistic texts, has also brought some facts of historical, ethnographic, and linguistic character, even facts with political character of the historical circumstances that put pressure on the ethnic and linguistic element in the Albanian area (Baliu, 2008).

### ***1.2.Research question***

- a) In what forms do ethno-linguistic features emerge?
- b) What is the main use of greetings?
- c) What are the most common uses of praise and flattery?

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- d) What are the uses of folk costumes
- e) Albanian mythologies and belief in fairies?

## 2. Method

This paper was realized using the method of analysis, the qualitative method of interpretation of relevant data, and the method of comparison in some cases. Ethnolinguistic linguistic features will be based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected on Mjeda's works.

### 2.1 Data collection and analysis

In this paper we have data extracted regarding the ethnolinguistic features in the works of Mjeda. The distinctive ethnolinguistic characteristics that emerge in Mjeda's works will be compared with the standard of the Albanian language.

The analysis of the data together with the findings and results of this research are based on our corpus taken directly from the Mjeda's works.

## 3. Results and discussions

### 3.1. The use of euphemisms

According to Ibrahim (2016: 110), euphemisms are important ethno-linguistic strategies, since language without euphemisms presents nothing but a weak communication means. Euphemism is a very powerful tool in any work. So, Mjeda in his works has used euphemism, such as: *pagojë (djall)* (*mouthless (devil)*); *i shuar (vdes)* (*wiped out (die)*).

### 3.2. The use of greetings and wishes

The function of greetings should be sought from an early age, when in the meeting of persons it was customary to greet each other with the good intention to show each other the pure spirit, to live in complete harmony without various barriers and to avoid potential conflicts.

According to Shkurtaj (2009: 122) “*greetings are as ancient as humanity itself, when a thousand, two thousand years ago, there were people who loved, hated, were jealous, wished, congratulated, cursed with most of the words that we use today...but these live and circulate and always serve to express love, grudge, to make wishes and to curse. Words are neither seen nor touched, but in them there is an unlimited light of the eyes that smile while saying them, the shivering of young and wrinkled lips that uttered them, the tears and the laughter of hundreds of generations that are gone.*” Expressions that through greetings and wishes address the process of civilization are also of interest: *Me i falë i madhi Zot* (*Forgive them Great God*); *Qofsh ti shëndosh e mirë* (*May you be safe and sound*); *Zoti është i madh* (*God is great*); *Qe dishmuesin, o Zot, këndoshin*. (*Here is the witness, O God, may they sing*)/ “*Mirë se vjen! Vetë Perendija*

*T'paska prumun nder kto vende /Se me ty gjith Shqyptaria/ Fluturim mue m'erdh, e n'mende/ T'tanë me'j herë njaj dhe m'përtrihet/ O lejek, ku shqypja ndihet. (Welcome! God itself has brought you among these places/ that with you the whole Albania/ flew to me, and in my mind/all at once that soil gets renewed/ O stork, where Albanian is heard.” (Mjedja, 1990: 31).*

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According to the dictionary of the Albanian language (2006), the word hello has a greeting meaning, I give hand with someone, I do a sign with head.

### 3.3. Praises and flattering words

Praises are present in the poet's works, as Shkurtaj (2012) points out "as we, north-westerns, have had (and we have) the welcoming tradition toward well-wishers, he bestows a glorifying periphrasis, one of the most beautiful and with all deserved solemnity to the well-known Albanologist" with the words: "Kur një burrë u çu në Austri/ E me sy gjithkund t'kërkoj/ Gustav Meyer-i asht emni i tij/ Emni i burrit që t'madhnoj". (When a man got up in Austria/ And everywhere he looked for thee / Gustav Meyer his name is/ The name of the man that magnified thee"). According to Shkurtaj (2012) "we have a very high appreciation for Meyer's scientific assistance, using the best words that highly praise his scientific values". So, Mjeda in these verses highly values the founder of Albanologic studies, Gustav Meyer, like: "Porsi dielli tui flakue/ Shpërndan terrin që na mbëlon/ Njashtu Meyer-i tue kërkue/ Kah ke dalë po ta difton". (Just like the sun flaming/ scatters the dark covering us/So does Meyer searching/ where you come from pointing out).

### 3.4. Flattering words

Frequent use of flattering words. as: vllaçko (for brother), djaloç (for boy), djelmoça, like: (Ndiqte rrugen një djaloç); Djelmoça "the plural of the noun boy" (Shtyi djelmoçat, stuhin e permnershme) (Mjeda, 1990: 83).

### 3.5. The use of curses

According to Ibrahim (2006: 109). folk curses as anger outbursts and soul reliefs through words-like magic power. In Mjeda's poems, particularly in the poem "Malli për Atdhe" ("Missing my Homeland"), (Mjeda curses those who leave their homeland and go abroad to get rich: Njaj zemrë nierit nuk ka që udhtimin/ Per mirakande m'err me u begatue;/ Lerg teje, o Shqype, kush lyp gjallimin/ Po do mallkue. (No man's heart that takes the road/ out of greed to grow rich/ Away from thou, O Shqype, who thriving wants/ yes to be cursed they merit").

### 3.6. Beliefs in Fairies

As a figure of folk beliefs, the Fairy is present in Mjeda's works, a figure that was envisioned as a very beautiful girl that was also a fighter, who lived in forests and mountains, helped the brave and had the power to punish by casting a spell. "(Maje bjeshkve fillon Zâna/ On top of the mountains the fairy starts) (Ndre Mjeda, 1990: 43). This has to do with the beliefs of highlanders, who believed in fairies. However, fairies are also encountered with other names, like: Orët e Malit, Shtojzovallet (Sylph). So, in northern Albania fairy tales, they are envisioned as beautiful women that are usually seen singing and dancing". According Tirta (2004: 15) to superstitions, in mountains, springs and streams, there are dense woods that Albanian highlanders call them difficult and dangerous, so people are afraid to pass by because they get petrified by fairies.

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#### 4. Other ethnographic examinations

According to Tirta (2004: 14), ethnographic examinations bring an inexhaustible flow of the main features of a country, which are linked to clothing, agriculture and farming, different crafts, rites and beliefs in sacred moments. Mjeda, like other authors from the area, through his writings manages to bring in front of us the tradition and the culture of his city of birth, Shkodra.

##### 4.1. The use of words of Folk clothing

According to Shkurtaj (2004: 85) provincial groups and subgroups have also had external differences, especially in characteristic clothing, and they, in their entirety, in addition to what they had in common as Albanians, had also other elements that were distinctive depending on the province they belonged to. However, in Mjeda's works we have seen the clothing called *xhubleta*, like: *E tirtë prapë te votra/ Pej tirtë për xhubleta* (She spun again to the fireplace/ spun yarn for *xhubleta*) (Mjeda, 1990:41). This clothing is known as the most distinctive element of women in the north of Albania. A range of archaic features make this clothing different from many other folk clothing, becoming so a research object of interest for many researchers. *Xhubleta* was daily worn by highland women. They used to wear it from their youth to the end of their life. But, this cloth changed its appearance depending on the age of the user; each period of life had its own *xhubleta*, fulfilling so the functional, social and symbolic mission. After the age of ten, the girls would wear the *xhubleta* of girlhood, and after the marriage, the *xhubleta* of the womanhood. Referring to researcher Andromaqi Gjergji (2005: 135) “*xhubleta* is a clothing of thousand years of tradition. It represents a very ancient type of clothing in Mediterranean shores and it managed to survive in a limited area in Northern Albania”

Further, in his poem “*Lisus*”, Mjeda has used some other clothing terms, such as: “*Veshun me gunza e krah' t' e bardh' t' shpervjelun/ Vashat e Ilirve me koshere n' krye.*” (Mjeda, 1990: 133) (*Wearing gunza and white sleeveless arms/ Illyrian young ladies with koshere (hive) on their heads*).

##### 4.2. The use of words from the field of trade and agriculture

According to Shkurtaj (2012), Mjeda, coming from a province well-known for its rich spoken language, for its agriculture and devoted pastoralists, was well rounded, he had deep knowledge of the spoken word, who had also enriched himself with lots of readings in foreign languages, readings of old authors as well as his contemporary colleagues. While agriculture and farming were the main activities in the Highland (Malësi), trade was the main activity in the city of Shkodra. So, because of the different relations between Shkodra and Malësi, common ethnographic features and different language features have been formed, like: (*Për tregtarë do bashka lesh*) f. 25/ *U ndie një za të shtegu/ Cice! del se erdh murgjina/ E mbrapa po vjen Trina / Me 'j gjingj të sykes ngryk; Blegtori ” (Si dhënt blegtori kúr, avit' të trina)* f.152; *Blegtoresha “fem.” (Ili fatbardh, Ili qi blegtoresha)* (Mjeda, 1990:152).

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## 5. Conclusions

To conclude, the language of Ndre Mjeda, just like that of other well-known writers, plays a significant influential role in the language of the society. Through the written literature, readers are introduced to the treasure of folk Albanian lexicon, to new words and expressions created by writers, and they can make them their own in their language use. A special impact on people comes from the works of the most favorite writers however, whose words' weight is powerfully felt in the written and spoken culture. As to the ethnographic examinations, we see that euphemisms are present, since they are a powerful tool in literature and are of a high importance in language. Further, Mjeda paid a special attention to wishes, greetings, praises and flattering words. In addition, we see that the poet has also used terms of folk clothing, which are among the oldest in the northern part of Albania. We also see other important ethnographic data related to beliefs, customs, rites, etc. So, we can see that his works are inspired by the concrete Albanian reality, particularly the reality of Shkodra, addressing a range of issues linked to the beliefs, rites, clothing, by which he uncovers and shows to us the language features of the northwestern Gega (Gheg) dialect.

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