

MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE AND ITS AUSBAU AND ABSTAND DIMENSION APPLIED TO CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

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The article discusses the concepts of Ausbau and Abstand languages and their application to the Macedonian language. It outlines the instances when Macedonian can be seen as Ausbau or Abstand language. At the same time, it also deals with the level of law, specifically with the branch of constitutional law, and shows that the five main reasons for enshrining the language in the Constitution of North Macedonia (national identity, dominance of language, protection of language, consolidation of sovereignty and consolidation of the language in international relations, and foreign policy) correlate precisely with these sociolinguistic concepts. It therefore concludes that it is possible to link certain reasons for enshrining a language as a norm of constitutional law to whether Macedonian is viewed as an Ausbau or Abstand language. The paper contains a classification of these reasons for constitutional regulation based on these two concepts.

Keywords: Macedonian language, Ausbau/Abstand languages, applied sociolinguistics, law, constitution

МАКЕДОНСКИОТ ЈАЗИК И ДИМЕНЗИИТЕ *АУСБАУ* И *АБСТАНД*, ПРИМЕНЕТИ НА УСТАВНОТО ПРАВО

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Во статијата се анализираат концептите за јазиците *аусбау* и *абстџанд*, како и нивната примена во македонскиот јазик. Аргументите посочуваат дека македонскиот јазик може да биде третиран и како јазик *аусбау* и како јазик *абстџанд*. Истовремено, статијата го разгледува правниот контекст, поконкретно уставното право и ги посочува петте причини за вметнување на јазикот во Уставот на Република Северна Македонија (национален идентитет, доминација на јазикот, заштита на јазикот, консолидирање на сувереноста на јазикот во меѓународната сфера и во надворешната политика), коишто се во корелација токму со овие социолингвистички концепти. Во статијата се заклучува дека е можно да се откријат одредени причини за вметнување на македонскиот јазик како нормиран стандарден јазик во уставното право, според тоа дали македонскиот јазик се толкува како јазик *аусбау* или како јазик *абстџанд*. Во статијата е направена класификација на овие пет причини за уставна регулација, согласно со овие два концепта.

Клучни зборови: македонски јазик, јазиците *аусбау/абстџанд*, применета социолингвистика, закон, устав

1 Introduction

The issue of language perception and law, not only at the theoretical level but also at the practical level, has recently come to the forefront. Because of various concepts such as national identity, constitutional identity or sovereignty, interdisciplinary research into language and law is possible thus giving valuable insights into this underexplored field.

This article, which tries to connect sociolinguistic categories and constitutional law, considers this context, more specifically, the Ausbau and Abstand language concepts and their application to the Macedonian language on constitutional level. During my studies, I have noticed that the reasons for enshrining language in constitution, rooted in historical, social, and political contexts, often correlate with the relationship or the position of the enshrined language to others. In the case of Macedonian language, it is a position primarily vis-à-vis Bulgarian, but also other languages. Since Macedonian is still perceived as the subject of conflicting debates, I therefore assume that the given positions will be more visible here than in the case of other languages.

The aim of the article is to apply the concept of languages such as Ausbau and Abstand onto Macedonian and then to classify the reasons for enshrining the Macedonian language in the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter referred to as the “Macedonian Constitution”), more specifically, whether they are more related to the view of Macedonian as an Ausbau or Abstand language.

The methods used in the article are primarily theoretical, connected with the analysis of selected concepts from the field of sociolinguistics and law and their application to the Macedonian language. The article attempts to answer the following research question: Can Macedonian be classified as a language of the Ausbau- or Abstand-type and then, based on this classification, could this be used for sorting out the reasons for its enshrining in the Macedonian Constitution?

The structure of the work is sequential. After a brief presentation of the concepts of Ausbau and Abstand languages, they are applied to the Macedonian language in order to conclude whether it is possible to interpret the language in this way. Subsequently, in the second part of the article, which view the topic from the legal perspective, present the reasons for enshrining the Macedonian language in the Macedonian Constitution are presented. Finally, those reasons are classified according to whether they are related to the position of Macedonian as an Ausbau or Abstand language.

2 Basic Introduction of Ausbau and Abstand Languages

The terms Ausbau and Abstand languages are closely related to the process of language planning by which language idioms can be classified in sociolinguistics. Both of these concepts, which can also be referred to as Ausbausprache and Abstandsprache, were introduced in sociolinguistics by Kloss (1967: 29) – the basis of these concepts stems from the problem of the distinction between language and dialect, understood as relational concepts.

According to Tosco (2008: 1), the first concept, Ausbausprache or Ausbau-type languages, can be understood as a human product. Kloss (1967: 29) explains that this term is based on the reshaping of language. At the same time, he argues that the transformation of language must be deliberately distinguished from the term development, as this could lead to misunderstanding. In his view, reshaping is aimed at deliberate language planning, and such reshaping cannot be regarded as naturally occurring. Hence, the Ausbau language can be considered a language variety that is a separate language for political, cultural, social or historical reasons (Trudgill 2014: 37). Tripathi (2016) also rightly states that differentiation of languages that are mutually

intelligible serves as a tool for building national identity and can be encountered when different nationalities or ethnicities attempt to differentiate. Straightforward examples of Ausbau-type languages are Czech and Slovak. According to Fasold (2005: 698), Ausban-type languages are also Norwegian, Swedish (and perhaps) Danish since these languages are so close that, if they were not transformed, they would be in a standard-dialect relationship.

The second concept is *Abstandsprache*. The defining feature of the term *Abstandsprache* or *Abstand-type languages* as languages is the criterion of distance. This distance is furthermore understood as an internal distance not a geographical distance (Kloss 1967: 29). Dovalil (2007) calls this distance the mutual structural distance. A good example of a language characterised by this linguistic distance is Basque. According to Trudgill (2014: 37), Basque can be considered an isolated language that is extremely distant from all other languages and the languages of its geographical neighbours – as a result, Basque's status can be said to be based solely on linguistic grounds. Kloss (1967: 29) states that linguists must resolve the dilemma of which dialects are to be seen as separate and which appear as a cluster of dialects forming a kind of indivisible linguistic unit. Therefore, as a linguistic concept, it includes criteria for measuring the distance between the languages.

The relationships between these concepts are explained by Dovalil (2007), who affirms that 1/5 of languages can be classified according to both criteria at the same time, for example, the Slovene language can be understood as an Ausbau language in relation to Czech, but as an *Abstand* language in relation to Finnish. In addition, he maintains that it should be remembered that languages that cannot be classified as *Abstand* do not immediately imply an exclusive classification as Ausbau, an example of this being the polycentric languages.

3 Applying the Concepts to Macedonian

Dovalil (2007) argues that one of the fundamental criteria for determining language distance –but never the only one – is elaboration. To classify languages only according to this point of view, especially Macedonian in relation to Bulgarian, is both politically and socially sensitive. He states that the decision on the status of Macedonian as an idiom, which should also be an independent language, is based on political views, which have a basis in power-political processes with linguistic arguments being left aside. Through such processes, the elaboration is then purposefully and systematically increased even for political purposes. This is typical for the question of national identity, which is based on differences in languages, which is precisely the case with Macedonian (Dovalil 2007).

It is therefore important not only to look only at elaboration, but to assess it in the context of other influences. Thus the elaboration, the linguistic arguments, and historical development form a sufficient basis for Macedonian to be understood as a separate language. Based on such argumentation and perspective, Macedonian a language of the Ausbau-type language, as illustrated in Figure 1.

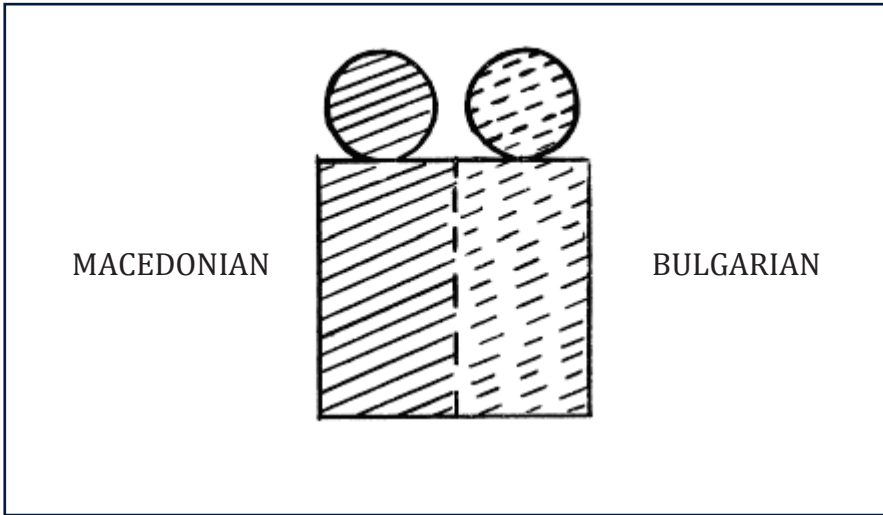


Figure 1. Macedonian language in relation to Bulgarian language (Ausbau)
(Based on Kloss 1967:32, modified)

Dovalil (2007) also thinks of Czech and Slovak as Abstand languages. Similarly, it would be possible to think of Macedonian in this way as well. The examples he gives show that Slovak can be considered an Abstand language in relation to Finnish. In this way, the relationship between Macedonian and Finnish can also be classified as Abstand-type languages.

If we would like to stay in the same language group, we can also find such a relationship between Macedonian and Serbian, for example, from a micro perspective. Although some similarities can be found between the two languages, there was no need to distinguish the two languages from each other culturally or politically, as is the case with Macedonian and Bulgarian. Kloss (1967: 32), for instance, works with a similar scenario when he explains the relationship between German and Dutch as languages of the same group. Based on his scheme, the relationship of these languages as languages of Abstand-type is presented in Figure 2.

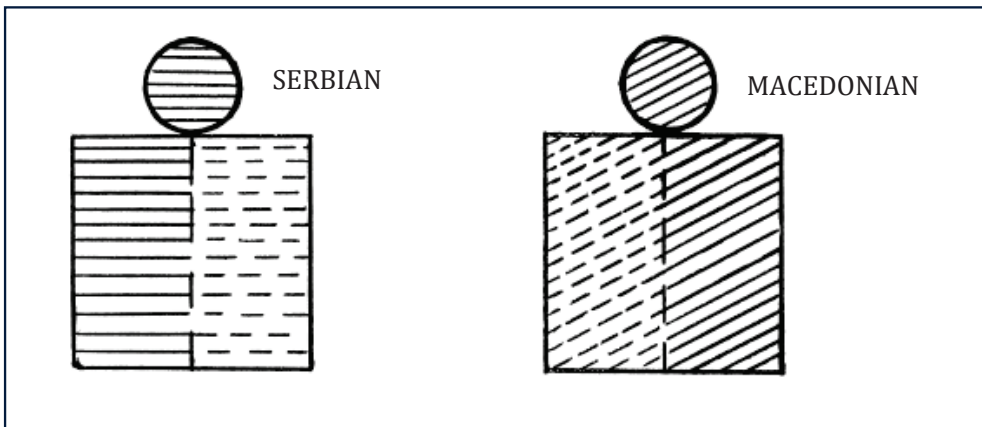


Figure 2. Macedonian language in relation to Serbian language (Abstand)
(Based on Kloss 1967:32, modified)

We might conclude from the above that the Macedonian language can be perceived as an *Ausbau*-type language (for example, in relation to Bulgarian), but also as an *Abstand*-type language (in relation to Serbian, as a language of the same language group, but also in relation to Finnish, as a language of a different language group).

4 Constitutional Law and Reasons for Enshrining in the Macedonian Constitution

Within the context of the constitutional law, it is necessary to list the reasons that lead to enshrining a language in the constitution and to be able to classify them according to sociolinguistic concepts.

The listed reasons to enshrining a language at a constitutional level are connected with Article 7 of the Macedonian Constitution and its amending Amendment V. According to the currently effective version of the Macedonian Constitution, the Article establishes the status of the Macedonian language as an official language and proclaims its use in international relations. Determining the general reasons that led to the adoption of the provision in the Constitution, Tomečková (2022: 38–41) concludes that the most important reasons why states resort to enshrining language in the constitution are based on the aspects of the relationship between the constitutional law and the state's adopted model of language policy.

The author of these models is Schmidt (1998: 38–39), who concluded that the models adopted would always be the result of a conflict between national or ethnic groups in a state. These conflicts are thus conditioned by the equality of nations (or ethnicities) and nationalism in the state. These two phenomena are then manifested (not only, but mainly) in relation to law as: (a) a national identity, or (b) the equality of nations and their languages in the state or the dominance of one nation and its language over others.

Therefore, in the case of the Republic of North Macedonia, the national identity and the dominance are two of the five main reasons for enshrining the Macedonian language in the Macedonian Constitution. The two reasons can also be connected with the historical, social, and political context. When it comes to the national identity of the Macedonians, this key reason for enshrining a language is to strengthen the national identity which was (and still is, although less intensively) denied by Bulgaria or Greece. Regardless of the dominance of Macedonian, it is consolidated to have a dominant position on the territory of the country (Tomečková 2022: 76). For the other three reasons we have to look at the historical, social, and political context and their connection to controversies associated with Macedonian. The fourth reason includes the protection of the language. This is derived from the issue of enshrining national identity and in an effort to maintain the place of Macedonian in the linguistic world. The fifth reason is the consolidation of sovereignty, which is the result of efforts to avoid various claims by Bulgaria and/or Greece. The last reason is the consolidation of the language in international relations and foreign policy, which is explicitly stated in the Macedonian Constitution.

4.1 Combining the Concepts of *Ausbau* and *Abstand* with the Constitution regulation of the Macedonian Language

From a sociolinguistic point of view, these five main reasons for enshrining the Macedonian language in the Macedonian Constitution can be further divided according to whether we view the Macedonian language as *Ausbau* or *Abstand* (see Table 1).

If we look at the Macedonian language as an *Ausbau* language, we look at the reasons that

are based on the elaboration of the Macedonian language in relation to another related language. Thus, national identity, language protection, and sovereignty can be included in the Ausbau concept. All these reasons, in fact, from a linguistic point of view (but in fact also from a social, historical or political scientific point of view), stem from the controversies that are mainly associated with Bulgaria and Greece. The premise of these reasons is that although linguistically Macedonian and Bulgarian are very close, they are two separate languages.

In the case of viewing the Macedonian language as an Abstand language, the reasons for this phenomenon can be attributed to dominance and consolidation of its place in the international and foreign policy. The reason for dominance stems from the enshrining of the dominant position of the language within the state. Considering the second official language of the Republic of North Macedonia, i.e. Albanian, the reason cannot be found to stem from the necessity to distinguish one language from another on the basis of elaboration. The same is the case with the North Macedonia's **own** foreign and international policy.

A partly different point is the view of Macedonian in the framework of the **common** foreign and international policy (i.e., for example, in the case of the accession of North Macedonia to the European Union), when Macedonian should be seen as an Ausbau language. Indeed, the political context of the emergence of this language, already mentioned several times, would influence its use in other policies.

Table 1. Classification of reasons based on the Ausbau and Abstand concepts

Ausbau	Abstand
national identity	dominance of language
protection of language	international relation and foreign policy
consolidation of sovereignty	

5 Conclusion

The article focuses on the connection of the sociolinguistic concepts of Ausbau and Abstand languages in relation to Macedonian and the reason for its enshrining in the Macedonian Constitution.

First, the concepts of Ausbau and Abstand of languages are briefly introduced; these were then applied to the Macedonian language. I came to the partial conclusion that Macedonian can be considered a language of both Ausbau and Abstand, and the reasons for enshrining it in the Constitution could accordingly be classified. The analysis of the five main reasons behind the enshrining of the Macedonian language in the Macedonian Constitution from a historical, social and political point of view was discussed in detail. These five main reasons include national identity, dominance of language, protection of language, consolidation of sovereignty, and consolidation of the language in international relations and foreign policy. They can be classified according to whether they result from viewing Macedonian as an Ausbau or Abstand language. It was concluded that we can connect three reasons (national identity, protection of language

and consolidation of sovereignty) with the Ausbau concept, and two reasons (dominance of language and consolidation of the language in international relations and foreign policy) with the Abstand concept. However, it is necessary to remember that a distinction must be made between one's own and common foreign policy, as the position of Macedonian between the concepts of Ausbau and Abstand can change.

As a final point, it should be noted that similar reasons in other states would not always be classified in the same way. Such sorting always needs to be approached individually according to the context behind the reasons for enshrining, which opens up a possibility for other languages to be further classified in a similar manner.

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