

Short Description of Albanian Lexicography**Linguistics**

Keywords: monolingual dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, headword, lexicography, development.

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Abstract

This paper aims at providing a short description on the historical development of the Albanian lexicography. At the very beginning there were some very simple bilingual dictionaries which mainly served to the day to day communication of Albanian citizens in the USA. At a later stage were published some more professional monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. The development of lexicography as a separate branch helped these compilers in increasing the quality and the expectations of their works.

The first very important dictionary of the Albanian lexicography is the monolingual “Albanian Dictionary” compiled by Kostandin Kristoforidhi. This dictionary was followed by some other publications, which with the passing of time, were improved from the lexicological point of view. The bank of headwords was carefully chosen by the respective authors, by reflecting the continuous development of the Albanian language during the years.

For the learners of foreign languages bilingual dictionaries are more useful than the monolingual ones. The work of Stuart Mann “A Historical Albanian-English Dictionary” is of a later date, when the Albanian language had many bilingual dictionaries. This paper analyses it into a more detailed approach.

Headings

Taking into consideration that the lexicology, as a branch, was properly developed only during the last decades of the XX century. Bearing in mind that the majority of bilingual dictionaries, in all Indo-European languages, were English-Latin, French-Latin, German-Latin, Albanian could not have been an exception. The first Albanian bilingual dictionary was ‘*Dictionarum Latin-epiroticum*’ by Frang Bardhi. It was published in 1635 with about 2.500 words in Albanian and 5.000 words in Latin. However the first scientific attempt for compiling a monolingual dictionary was *The Albanian Dictionary*, undertaken by Kostandin Kristoforidhi in 1905. Kristoforidhi started to gather phraseological units since the '50-es of the XIX century. This dictionary was made possible through the support of Albanian Association of Bucharest where many Albanians were members at that time. Kristoforidhi worked very hard in trying to make a proper division of the dialects from the general lexicon.¹⁷ This dictionary was very useful to the simple communities who wanted, and needed, to interact with each other. It is very important to mention that Kristoforidhi designed the dictionary in such a way that the headwords are not only translated from Albanian into Greek, but an Albanian explanation is provided for them as well. He was of the opinion that the “explanations” would be more accurately explained because a less elaborated language would be explained by a better elaborated one.

We might encounter different styles during the design of this dictionary. In many cases Kristoforidhi has provided, apart from the Greek explanation, many Albanian synonyms next to the headwords. And there are some other cases as well where we do not find a proper translation of the headword, but only a simple explanation in Albanian. From the lexicographic point of view

17 Thomai, J.; Leksikologjia e Gjuhës Shqipe; 2006; fq. 320

many researches are of the opinion that this dictionary can not be properly classified as a bilingual dictionary taking into consideration that it was mostly designed to help the Albanians to better understand the day to day communication in Greece.¹⁸

This positive experience was later followed even by some other Albanian lexicographers who were part of the working team for the design of the “Dictionary of the Albanian Language” in 1954. The aim of that dictionary was to become an explanatory dictionary of the Albanian language. It explains the standards of the vocabulary and probes its situation at that time. That particular dictionary was compiled by some well-known personalities of that field such as Kostaq Cipo, Eqrem Çabej, Mahir Domi, Anton Krajni and Osman Myderrizi. It was published in Tirana, by the Albanian Institute of Sciences. The lexicographers used some previous publications that the Institution had published earlier.¹⁹ The aim of that dictionary was to become a normative descriptive dictionary which would reflect the actual vocabulary and provide the right orientations on the usage of the words and their forms. There were some specifications on the selection of the headwords that had to be included in the dictionary. One of them was their frequency of use in day to day activities. Another important criterion was that the words were gathered from all the parts of Albania. The lexicographers were very careful not to introduce many headwords in dialect. There were many international words as well, especially those originating from Turkish. The phraseological units were carefully selected and explained. They included many synonyms and they aimed at better understanding the Albanian language. That publication was the best one designed by the Albanian lexicographers and it represented the active vocabulary of that time without forgetting the passive vocabulary, of course.²⁰

After this publication, the vocabulary of the Albanian language had a great development. Many new words were created and the stylistic value of many lexical and phraseological units was increased. Different words and explanations, which were not being used, were not included. A very important element was the development of the theory of lexicography. For many years the lexicographers wanted to have another publication of that dictionary. This became a reality in 1980, with the publication of the “Dictionary of Present Day Albanian Language”. This dictionary was compiled by a group of lexicographers of the Institute of Linguistics and Literature. The selection of these experienced lexicographers is an indicator that shows the seriousness of their work. In the Introduction of this Dictionary, there is a detailed explanation on the approaches used to update the previous dictionary. Some of the headwords are explained by giving more than 30 examples to illustrate them; there are some other ones that have 40 examples. The lexicographers wanted to compile a dictionary that would last for a long time. The rest of the headwords, about 80 percent are presented with more than one definition. The novelties are very important and they are not encountered in the previous similar works. If we analyze the sources used for the collection of the headwords, the contemporary theories that were used at that time, the type of the dictionary itself etc., we can jump to the conclusion that it was a great turning point in the development of the Albanian lexicography.

18 Xhuvani, A; Kursi i Gjuhësisë së Përgjithshme; Tiranë; 2002; fq. 48.

19 Lloshi, Xh.; Leksikografia Shqipe, Trashëgimi dhe Perspektivë - Konferencë Shkencore; Tiranë 3 dhjetor, 2004; fq. 108.

20 Thomai, J.; Leksikologjia e Gjuhës Shqipe; 2006; fq. 330

The Albanian Academy of Sciences made a great use of this dictionary. After its publication many other dictionaries followed. Most of them were bilingual, synonymic, and phraseological dictionaries etc. The authors wanted to expand the studies on the lexicographic field of that time. And this is why they worked so much for the publication of this masterpiece. They identified the need not only to reflect in the dictionary new added values but they wanted also to express more emotional and paradigmatic values. The compilers of the dictionary felt the need not only to explain what the word is but also how it functions in the everyday usage, in a written and oral form.²¹ They took into consideration the linguistic philosophy of Oxford "Meaning is Use"²² which is widely used in the design of dictionaries.

In 1982 the "New Explanatory Dictionary of the Albanian Language" was published, which was based on the previous Albanian Dictionary, but in a shorter form. Even though it was shorter, it did not lose the linguistic richness of the previous dictionary. They both were considered as complementary to each-other. The working group prepared a detailed plan of macrostructure and microstructure. In it the headwords, the explanations of the phraseologies, grammatical elements etc. were properly selected. During all this time they took into consideration the main purpose of it, which was the explanatory and informative character. Borrowings were properly studied and the compilers were very careful in their selection.

According to the documentations kept for its design, the compilers had a clear plan, based on a concrete timeline and a defined number of headwords that were to be mainly taken from the edition of previous dictionary. The total number of headwords was 30.000 and they had planned to include 600 new words. They included those words which were mainly used by the population in general, bearing in mind the fact that they would become part and parcel of the everyday usage of a wider population. One of the issues that they took into consideration dealt with the words that were not used previously in the everyday situations. There was a proper selection of them because some, even though old ones, still continued to be used widely.

Later on many other dictionaries were published. They were mainly focused on the fields of culture, literature, medicine, economy etc. Many technical terms had to be substituted with pure Albanian words. At the same time there were some words which were included in this dictionary but which were not used in Albania (archaic words). They derived from the Albanian speaking regions, of the Diaspora.

In 2002 and 2006 two other editions of the Albanian Language Dictionary were made. They were welcomed by the regular users and by the population in general. Of course, with the passing of time new editions are needed for this kind of dictionary. Languages change all the time and especially during the last two decades since there has been a widespread migration and emigration from and to Albania. The lexicographers need to work hard in order to represent the actual situation of the Albanian language, the phraseological units, idioms etc.

Turning back to the bilingual dictionaries, we have to admit that with the passing of time we notice the compilation of bilingual dictionaries of different kinds and with different scientific values. At the early stages most of them were compiled by foreign authors. But in most of the

21 Dyrko, O & Teodorov, C.; Fjalor enciklopedik i shkencave të ligjerimit, Prishtinë, 1984, f. 139
22 Erkenntnis 53; 2000; 405-420

cases they had the support of different Albanian researchers. Chronologically we might mention the dictionaries of: Hahn, Ros, Jung, Bufol, Aldeger, Buzet, Godin, Cordignano, Leot etc. These bilingual dictionaries have helped also the lexicographers to better study the vocabulary of the Albanian phraseology. In cases when the compilers have been Albanians, their main aim has been to support the Albanians to learn foreign languages, in cases when the compilers were foreign lexicographers, their aim was focused on the correct scientific terminology.

In 1635, Frank Bardhi compiled the first Latin – Albanian dictionary “*Dictionarum Latino-epiroticum*”. Apart from the practical values that it reflects, it also reflects an important evidence of that time. The purpose of Bardhi was to explain the vocabulary of the religious works in Latin so that the catholic clergyman would preach in Albanian as well. His dictionary has served as the basis for many other dictionaries that were compiled later on. It is calculated that up to the present, there are about 500 bilingual dictionaries in total. It is understandable that apart from the quantity of the headwords, the quality has improved as well. Especially the second half of the XX century and the first decade of this century have introduced great improvements in this field. The scientific level has also greatly improved.

When it comes to the foreign researchers we might notice that some of the first ones, who dealt with the Albanian language were J.C. Hobhause and Martin-Leak etc. In the Appendix, Hobhause has included some words, numbers and some Albanian verses translated into English.²³ Both of them were involved in the researches related to the origins of the Albanian language.

Among the Albanian researches we might mention D.J. Kamburi who worked hard for the compilation of an English-Albanian dictionary²⁴ at the beginning of the last century. During the compilation of this dictionary he used the dialect of Korça (Southeast Albania). This was because he was originally from this region and because the main purpose of this dictionary was to help the Albanians, leaving in America, to better integrate them into the American society. He himself had encountered many difficulties when he first moved to live in America.

Another compiler, who shared his contribution with the Albanian community in America, was K. Çekrezi. In 1923 he compiled another English-Albanian dictionary.²⁵ He clearly states that this dictionary would respond to the needs of the simple working class. It was not to be used for scientific purposes. At that time it was the largest dictionary because it included about 15.000 headwords. A novelty introduced by him was the coining of some new words which did not respond to the real Albanian structure of the language.

N. Dizdari compiled another dictionary English-Albanian and Albanian-English dictionary with a smaller number of words. His work was also focused on a specific target group, which were the Albanian immigrants in America. If we look at it very carefully, we notice a great influence from the English language related to word formation since he tried to include those elements into the Albanian language structures.

During the middle of the last century, we notice a relatively great step forwards in the development of Albanian lexicography. Stuart Mann’s “A Historical Albanian-English-

23 Hobhause, J.C.: A journey through Albania and other provinces of turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, during the years 1809 and 1810.

24 Dennis J. Kambury, English-Albanian Dictionary (Fjalëtar anglisht – shqip), Jamestown, N.Y., 1915

25 C.A.Çekrezi, Fjalor anglisht-shqip, Boston 1923

Dictionary” was realized by the British Council in 1948. There were many headwords included there and they were chosen very carefully by him. In his work he had included many illustrations and phraseological units which made this work become one of the milestones of the Albanian lexicography. After about ten years, he published a second dictionary. This time it was “An English-Albanian Dictionary” with about 28.000 words which was bigger than the first one. He has chosen the headwords based on the criteria of frequency of usage. The reader might find there about 10.000 idioms and their Albanian equivalents. This element illustrates the seriousness of this publication since its aim was the proper illustration of the Albanian vocabulary.²⁶

S. Mann has started his studies on the Albanian language with a very simple, short book on grammar.²⁷ At the end of this grammar book there is a long list of English words accompanied by the Albanian equivalents. Taking into consideration all these features of his dictionary, it might be considered as a *thesaurus* of the Albanian language.

The *English-Albanian Dictionary* has a great number of illustrations for different lexical units. The quality of the translation helps a lot in properly understanding the meanings of the headwords. His desire to be very careful in properly illustrating a definition has been sometime not the proper solution because instead of using the borrowed form of a word, he has used an archaic/old version of the Albanian language. We have to be aware that Albanian language evolves just like the other languages and there is no possibility that it stays out of the influence of the other languages.

In order to better transmit the equivalent of an English word into Albanian. Mann has used synonyms. This is a great help for the users of this dictionary because it creates the possibility to choose the right word for the respective context. It might have been advisable to have used a better organization of this approach. The words might have been grouped according to different ways for example: general words, dialects, borrowings, individual creations etc. In cases where he could not identify a proper equivalent for a word, he has tried to create new words or to provide the explanation through multiword expressions. But sometimes they sound as artificial, since they do not respect the proper linguistic rules of the Albanian language. But on the other hand we have to bear in mind that Albanian was not his mother tongue.

The spoken Albanian has greatly been used in this dictionary. This is a good approach because it adds values to this work but on the other hand we have to be very careful in using it. In order to properly use it you have to be a native speaker. There are many examples in the dictionary where the translation makes sense, but it has not been chosen the right way in expressing them.

Even though there might have been identified some elements which could have been organized better, it can be said that this work is a very important step forward compared to the other bilingual dictionaries of the Albanian language compiled by foreign lexicographers. This conclusion is supported by the style used by Mann, on the wider vocabulary of the Albanian language and on the tendency to use as much as possible the Albanian sources. All the foreign lexicographers who would aim at compiling similar works should always keep in mind that they

26 Germizaj, Sh; *Leksikologjia Shqipe. Trashëgimi dhe Perspektive*; Tiranë; fq. 274

27 Stuart E. Mann, *A short Albanian grammar. With vocabularies and selected passages for reading*, London 1932.

should have a very deep knowledge of the Albanian language. They should also have a good knowledge on the results of the Albanian lexicography and on the conceptual theories designed during the last years.

After Mann there are some other very important bilingual dictionaries that were compiled with the passing of time. “English-Albanian Dictionary” of 1976 was compiled by Gasper Kici and Hysen Aliko and it is followed by the one compiled by Prof. Ilo Stefanllari that incorporates about 30.000 words, published for the first time in 1988. This work was really appreciated by the whole international community and it is published in Prishtina and London as well.

While mentioning all these works, it is of great importance to even mention another work of Prof. Stefanllari which is the publication in 1998 of the “English - Albanian Dictionary” of Phraseology. The phraseological units and the idioms that are included there are the ones which are thought to have the largest usage in the everyday communication.

Albanian lexicography has gone a long way if we take into consideration that the first publications of this field were compiled some hundreds years ago. It is true that they do not count as proper lexicographic works but they have paved the way for the future developments in this field. The first monolingual dictionaries were drafted during the period when Albanian language had begun to take its formal shape. The lexicographers of a later stage worked hard in compiling normative descriptive dictionaries for providing the proper vocabulary and the right usage of the headwords which were gathered from all over Albania. The new theories of lexicography offered a great support for the inclusion of the phraseological units as well.

One of the most important monolingual dictionaries is that of K. Kristoforidhi. He had worked very hard for compiling this dictionary. Even though his main goal was to help the orthodox clergy to teach in Albanian, his work was so rich that he also provided a great help to the future similar works. As for the bilingual dictionaries the one that really paved the way toward the design of some other ones was the work of S. Mann who even though did not have Albanian language as his mother tongue has worked with a high professionalism on that field.

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