Research Article

Press as an Actor and Factor of Albanian Language Planning and Albanian Linguistic Identity Construction

Linguistics

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Abstract

How much does language affect our way of thinking, in our identity and culture expression? This symbiosis of influences between language and identity has drawn the attention of researchers, who have come to the conclusion that among our language, culture and identity there is a close relationship. All changes, developments and historical events are reflected in the way we use language and the speaking community is undoubtedly one of the purest examples of social identity reflection on individuals' linguistic consciousness. From their origin as a nation, Albanian people have always seen language in an organic relation with ethnic consciousness. During the first stage of the Albanian language planning, which begins from 1908 and continues up to 1944, an important role was played by the press. We think that Albanian press functions in support of a common literary language can be divided into several aspects: Firstly, to reflect discussions, enterprises and institutional decisions about language. Secondly, to treat problems and discussions about specific and concrete language aspects. Thirdly, through selected publications, submitted documents and analyzing of historical and scientific facts, to create a certain opinion.
To closely monitor these attitudes and functions fulfilled by interim magazines that were published during the first stage of the Albanian language planning we choose as the object of our observation the respective magazines "Albania" and "Hylli i Dritës", as two of the most enduring magazines, which had a clearly defined goal and were appreciated in Albania and abroad for the high level of their articles.

How much does language affect our way of thinking, in our identity and culture expression? This symbiosis of influences between language and identity has drawn the attention of researchers, who have come to the conclusion that among our language, culture and identity there is a close relationship. The way we talk, defines us as individuals, as part of social groups and communities. Social factors which affect the construction of speakers'social identity, decisively affect the speech acquisition. This insoluble symbiosis is naturally reflected in social interactions within the communities they belong to.

Such definition connects us with the type of linguistic variation we choose to communicate in different situations, as each specific act of language usage from us, constitutes an "act of identity". It affects our social identity, which varies according to ethnic origin, gender, social class, educational and cultural level as well.

However, a question naturally arises: How to define the concept" identity"? From the semantic point of view, the meaning of the word "identity", as we use it nowadays, is not clearly given among dictionaries. The idea that we have of "identity", looks like a complex social construction, which is contextualized in some levels. Briefly, in this concept, "the social" and the "personal" parts are closely linked. Without wishing to look at the countless definitions for this term found in various books, we are limited to the definition of this term in *Fjalori i Gjuhës Shqipe* (*Dictionary of Albanian language*), 2006. Here is the definition based on this dictionary for the word identity: identitét,-i *m. sh.* -e(t) *libr.* 1. njëjtësi: (Identity, the identity, male, plural (ies). 1. sameness*: identity of phenomena*). 2. të qenët i veçantë nga të tjerët dhe i njëjtë me veten, të

qenët po ai, vetëvetësi: *identiteti i njeriut; dokument (kartë) identiteti.* (2. being different from the others and the same with oneself, being the same, autobeing: *human identity*; *identity document (card).* 3. *mat., logj.* përputhje e plotë e dy anëve të një barazimi, pavarësisht nga vlerat e elementeve të tyre: *identitet trigonometrik.*(3. *Logical Maths.* Total correspondence of both sides of an equation, regardless of their elements values: *trigonometric identity*) identitét,-i *m. sh.* -e(t) *libr.* 1. njëjtësi: *identitet dukurish.*

We are certainly aware that our concept of the identity as an approach to social-cultural awareness, is much broader. This type of "identity" has a semantic dual character: on the one hand it refers to identity as a social category, to the designation of the individual's status within a social group and on the other hand, the concept of identity is connected with special discoursive performances, as the most tangible cultural form of defining the individual's mental and social status. The way of realizing the collective identity through language selection, occurs not only in the close relationship between identity and culture, but also in the so-called construction of social prejudices. As for the personal identity, it is rather a series of attributes, beliefs, desires, norms and conceptual principles on which the existence of each individual is organized. In a more general definition, identity is seen as a conscious process of social differentiation among languages (Crawshaw, Callen, & Tusting, 2001). In this context, language can be seen as a fundamental link in the formation the speaker's social and linguistic identity.

All changes, developments and historical events are reflected in the way we use language and the speaking community is undoubtedly one of the purest examples of social identity reflection on individuals' linguistic consciousness. From their origin as a nation, Albanian people have always seen language in an organic relation with ethnic consciousness.

The existence of language variations, undoubtedly influences social identity that appears in its variables, such as ethnicity, gender, education and cultural background, variables which affect the individual's social status. In this way, linguistic heritage "is used" through social and individual identity acts, which are contextualized during linguistic and cultural contacts among individuals, by building different ways of perception. Since people realize their identity through language selection and construction of social prejudices, the language they speak also creates a reality that offers them semantic and pragmatic elements for their own speech. Every individual, since he was born, finds himself a member of a particular social community, therefore he uncounsciously (chooses to be a user of selects a particular variety or a particular language) or even instinctively (he is the native speaker of a language or a variety) undergoes all socio-cultural sanctions offered by this community. If we accept the fact that language is an existential necessity and a direct reflection of social life, then we will notice even the differentiations several individuals make through various situations of language usage. Precisely at that moment, we accept the concept of linguistic variability, which constitutes one of the essential occurrences and functions of language in a community. Within this entire identity context, the question: How do we speak, how and why do we use words, occupies a particular place. The answer comes from the

status definition of the linguistic variety we choose during our communication. It depends on three basic criteria: - *the linguistic environment of sociolinguistic variables;- social characteristics of speakers; - the situation of usage.*

In this way through language, the social identity of speakers is more clearly outlined. This happens because of the linguistic individualism and conformity, which passes from the speaker, who represents a special cell, to the community that is a whole organism. As a result, these identity approaches stem from the use of linguistic inventory. The way we use language, conditions us within socio-cultural framework offered by the community. This type of conditioning depends on the above-mentioned factors and occurs as a confrontation among the linguistic varieties. The community language never appears as a monolithic whole, it precisely exists in the form of linguistic varieties, which represent its most specific stratifications. These differenciations made to the language, not only during special speakers' identification, but also during the identification of various social groups within the community, are related to the concept of *linguistic variety*. Within the multiplicity of definitions related to linguistic variables, we will submit the question of code-mixing and code-switching. These two sociolinguistic features deal with sociolinguistic conversations modeling, by taking into account the mixing of the varieties within a given usage of language. These phenomena will not be seen from the point of view of their classical conception, as consequences of linguistic contacts between or among ethnicities (ie bi- and plurilingualism situations), but within the Albanian speaking community.

The identity of the speakers' linguistic heritage is related to the cultural positioning in a diglotic community and undoubtfully this positioning leads to sociolinguistic approaches among users of different linguistic varieties. It is usually noticed in bilingual speakers whose language usage is related to linguistic and ethnic heritage they inherit. However, a pure form of linguistic identity emerges even through the so-called dialectical bilingualism. In certain situations, language users are in contact with both language varieties at the same time. Spoken language varieties face each other at that point, where we can distinguish a particular type of diglossy. In this confrontation, the relationship between language, dialects and registers, represents an almost ideological subalternation within linguistic reality and often it often occurs alieanated in different communicative situations. Code-mixing during dialectal bilingualism is related to identity factors, such as: age of the speakers, social group they belong to, the dominant linguistic variety, contexts of use. Consequently, the constant linguistic contact, related to the simultaneous usage of different linguistic varieties within a given geographical area, makes the juxtaposed dialects find contextual use, subjecting to a conscious process of selection of linguistic instruments set in use. Users, who may belong to different geographical realms, of all ages fully understand the standard language and by being partially under its influence or completely use it in different communicative situations. The standard-dialect or dialect-dialect confrontation, determines our way of communication and the selection of lexical material we dispose of, as well. The differences between varieties that affect all levels of language are related to the degree of native linguistic variety usage, compared to the dominant variety used in the group of individual speakers. Such

dialectological constellations are often found in the majority of big cities in Albania, where cases of code-mixing and code-switching / respectively varieties. It happens that the choice of a linguistic variety be a conscious sign of identity, through which the individual-speaker will be differentiated from the group he belongs to. In this case, code-mixing is paler. Identitary linguistic acts can be conscious or natural, always referring to the communication situation. Thus, the use of typical elements that characterize the Albanian dialects can be seen by the speakers as "conscious" identitary acts. By generalizing the research we have carried out for this paper, concerning the forms of language usage within this interdialectical approach, we can affirm that among various social groups, the status of varieties is a very controversial point. From surveys we have conducted, it results that the three classical stages of linguistic evolution facing the normative language form with dialects, are not fully realized, especially the third phase which implies the hierarchical differentiation in the use of the standard language. More than hierarchically distinct codes, they result today as interchangeable codes, although the space of standard language usage is wider (in terms of alignment, functional and structural aspects). Nevertheless, even during this interchange, we can observe forms of code- mixing and code-switching, or more precisely the creation of some unusual hybrid forms, which are not included in any of the above mentionned varieties: *me bërë, me shkuar* (*to make, to go* etc.). The evolution of a diglottic identity is undoubtfully based on the cultural heritage that speakers inherit. At the moment of their communication, individuals consciously "choose" which varieties to use, in accordance with the situation of communication.

As a conclusion, we can affirm that the situation of dialectical bilingualism is a complex and ubiquitous situation in every individual speaker of a community, because the subjects are under a constant pressure between these two forces, on the one hand, the geographical origin along with all linguistic impressions it carries and on the other hand, the continuous contact with a wider variety, the standard, which is increasingly being imposed, linguistically and culturally to the entire speaking community. We should emphasize that these codes are not opposed, by contrast, they are juxtaposed, qualitatively being differenciated from the situation and geography of their usage.

During the first stage of the Albanian language planning, which begins from 1908 and continues up to 1944, an important role was played by the media, which was at that time the only tribune to unfold not only the opinions of scholars, specialists but those of language lovers who could not have a proper linguistic education, by contrast, had the desire and the will to give a contribution to the Albanian language outline.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century the Albanian press underwent a quantitative and qualitative burst. The need for Albanian writing and language had already been shaped in the national consciousness and concrete initiatives had been taken by Albanian patriots living in different countries of the world. Tens of Albanian periodicals were founded and began to be published in various countries, such as Egypt, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Belgium, America, etc.

In their numerous pages, these periodics mostly dealt with the Albanian language issue. Starting from the presentation of the need for the unification of the Albanian alphabet to the shaping of the idea of a common language. The number of linguistic magazines and newspapers published at this period of time in Albania was relatively high, even though many of them were of a short longevity. However, some of them managed to survive the rapid developments that Albanian society underwent and were able to create their own tradition, by maintaining a clear physiognomy equipped with well- defined goals and fanatically followed despite many difficulties. We think that Albanian press functions in support of a common literary language can be divided into several aspects: *Firstly*, in most cases, by means of the media, it was managed to reflect discussions, enterprises and institutional decisions about language. *Secondly*, the press managed to treat problems and discussions about specific and concrete language aspects, which require some more scientific work. These discussions were often made by specialists without an official status, but who took a great interest in Albanian literary language. *Thirdly*, through selected publications, submitted documents and analyzing of historical and scientific facts, the press had the ability to create a certain opinion, depending on the interests of publishers or of a defined group of people.

The issue of the Albanian language unification was treated in the media pages during this period of time, but especially in the magazines of the time, on several levels:

From the social viewpoint common language was seen as a means of national union. It was serving its representation in a single unit and identification with a common means of communication.

From the practical viewpoint common language was an opportunity to facilitate communication between Albanians in Albania and abroad. By that time the Albanians wrote in different variants depending on the country where the magazine was published, or depending on the publisher's origin. Now in a new situation of Albania's independence and establishment of an Albanian state, it was required that these media organs be more comprehensive so that they could be read and distributed nationwide.

From the historical perspective this common language was an important and necessary moment for the Albania situation. After a long period of sacrifices for its protection and revitalization, language was passing to another stage, that of the required standardization to be an official state language.

From the political viewpoint at the level of internal contradictions between the parties and at the external level as well, language is seen as an opposition to attitudes of neighboring countries. Albanians had not only their own state but also a common means of communication and which was clearly distinguishable from oher people.

From the genuine scientific viewpoint Albanian and foreign researchers published scientific works. Researchers took also a great interest in analyzing the old book texts of Albanian writing and in the comparative study of Albanian language with other languages of Indo-European family.

To closely monitor these attitudes and functions fulfilled by interim magazines that were published during the first stage of the Albanian language planning, we thought to have a closer look at both of them. We chose as the object of our observation the respective magazines *"Albania"* and *"Hylli i Dritës"*, as two of the most enduring magazines, which had a clearly defined goal and were appreciated in Albania and abroad for the high level of their articles.

"Albania" Magazine (1897-1909)

The idea on the need of the literary language creation appears since the first numbers of "Albania" magazine. The director of this magazine, Konica, a multidimensional visionary, judged as necessary the unification of Albanian language because such a unification would also lead to a spiritual and cultural unification of Albanians, who until then had perceived language changes as barriers that hinder communication between them. He was a *tosk dialect* speaker that knew and appreciated phonetic features as well the lexical richness of his dialect, but in terms of the base of common literary language establishing he was impartial. Since the very beginning Konica used the term *"letrarishte language"* instead of common language, in the sense of a language to be used in the Albanian writings. Alongside this *letrarishte language* he considered as powerful other Albanian speaking and other dialects, which would certainly continue to be used in spoken language and in everyday communication. According to Konica, *letrarishte language* was seen as the intersection and selection between dialects or, as he stated, "nëngjuhë" ("sublanguages"). It was Konica's patriotic philosophy that urged and inspired his efforts to create a common Albanian language, because he obviously knew that a single national language was the foundation of a united nation. He professionally insisted on the the issue of creating a common language. We can also affirm that he was the first of Albanian literary language theoritists. For the director of "Albania" magazine, the difficulty of creating this *letrarishte language* consisted in the selection process of one of the "sublanguages", " subdialects") to make a common language. Because, as he says, it was likely that there would be resentment from others and then"... *May God protect us from Albanians' head!"* Therefore, as an opportunity of pacification between parties, he presented the option of selection from all subdialects. Konica thought that this selection dah to be made basing on some clearly defined basic rules since the beginning. Furthermore, he supposed that it was not easy work, but little by little it would be accomplished. According to him, the best solution would be perhaps the Albanian Tosk dialect for writing prose and the Albanian Gegh dialect for poetry. A well-known connoisseur of Albanian reality and mentality, Konica was aware that it would be impossible and even utopian to realize that. So, as more feasible, he proposed that the two dialects get gradually closer to each other until they "mix". Hereinafter, he would claim that to achieve this goal, it would be very difficult. That is why, according to him, it was necessary that all those who read Albanian published books, should try to speak as they were written. In his

opinion, if a *Gegh* person saw or heard a word in *Tosk* dialect, he would use it when he found necessary to use. Also *Tosk* people should not be lazy to use *Gegh* dialect. In that way, he was optimistic that one day there would not be *Gegh* and *Tosk* dialects, but Albanian. In case it was impossible to reach an agreement, he proposed the best form to be used would be Elbasan (a city in the centre of Albania) speaking. The same procedure had to be followed for other issues related to syntax, phonetics or to any other modification. If it was impossible to give a special value to each form, it would be preferable to use Elbasan speaking. In his journal, several times, Konica had given the idea of establishing the *common letrërare* (literary) Albanian language on the basis of the two dominant dialects mixing. However, concerning the submission of principles on which he decided to support the agreement, he also considered the presented Elbasan speaking *as a leader or pacifier* in case they could not reach an agreement between the main Albanian dialects. Konica's idea of mixing the two main Albanian dialects to acquire a common literary language had encountered the objection in Albanian literary and cultural circles of the time. For Xhuvani, the solution of this not little easier issue, would pave the way for later Albanian writings, serving as a guide and not as a must. But first os all, he thought that they had to know the history of foreign literary languages so that the common goal could be successfully achieved. He recalled that in the history of linguistics most common literary languages were not created by the union of dialects. The general way of forming a literary language had been the predominance of the dialects. This process was supported by historical factors the country had experienced. To materialize these statements the author gave the example of common literary Italian, French and German languages. Xhuvani explained that, when he said that *"a written literary language"* was formed by a particular dialect, meant that the foundation, the majority of Albanian lexicon was based on a particular dialect and other dialects could serve as auxiliaries of the basic dialect. And based on the path and the methodology followed for the foundation, the author suggested that the Southern dialect (Tosk) shoud be the basis for the establishment of a common literary Albanian language. This assumption was made because *Tosk* had the same features of the other peoples'dominant dialects. For Xhuvani, the main reason why *Tosk* should be the basis for the establishment of a common language because the majority of Albanian books were published in *Tosk* until then. Nevertheless, it was not the only reason why we should choose the *Tosk*-added. According to him, *Tosk* had some qualities that were not found in the *Northern* dialect and which made easier *Tosk* acquisition. He also explained that *Tosk* had clearer syntax, a more harmonious sounding and words were not shortened, but more complete. All these features would facilitate Albanian learning by compatriots and foreigners. He stated that: *"... this dialect has been promised to be a natural and a common one*."[15]. In this vivid discussion about the formation of literary Albanian language was also involved Luigj Gurakuqi[16], who unfolded some general principles on language development and progress. He claimed that "spoken languages" followed and reflected the life of the nation that spoke them and therefore, they constantly developed and changed. We clarify that, when using the term "spoken language" the author refers to dialects. And as for "written languages", which had an established literature for ages, he declared that they

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[15] Dok Sula, "Per thémélim te gne ghuhé létretaré", *Albania*, 1905, nr.11, p.220.
[16] Lék Gruda, "Per thémélim te gne ghuhé létretaré", *Albania*, 1905, nr.12, p.230-235.

underwent fewer modifications. When speaking about written language he meant languages such as: Italian, French and German, which were not languages of Italian, French or German people, but were languages of Italian, French or German schools. He thought that these "written languages" were not spoken in any country, since peoples' dialects, always in change and evolution, were widely spoken. These language changes and developments were made in accordance with laws and rules, but they could be affected by external social, political and historical factors. For the author, these laws and rules were well based and the harmony of their authenticity could be noticed not only in dialectal differences, but also in languages with a common root. Gurakuqi was aware that modern linguistics had made great progress in the comparative analysis among languages to discover the roots and branches of their linguistic family. According to him, the application of these principles in the comparative analysis between the dialects of a language could provide linguistics with full and detailed information. For this author, os for the case of the Albanian language, comparative analysis between dialects would aimed at the establishment of a common language, which should be an approximation and fusion of two major Albanian dialects.

"Hylli i Dritës" magazine (1913-1914, 1921-1924, 1930-1944)

The idea and the need for a common literary Albanian language are sometimes directly posed, by joining the national question, since the first numbers of "Hylli i Dritës" magazine and they continue to be a constant motif throughout its publishing light. Initially, it is worth mentioning the fact that for the authors the issue of language unification came as a natural consequence of nation unification. Therefore for Justin Rrota, literary language was a problem which should be resolved, as one of the fundamental problems of the Albanian state and culture, which required an urgent solution and which could not endlessly last According to him, Albanians, compelled by circumstances, had led an individual and rather selfish life and they had no idea of what common work was. For him, as the main factor of nationality was language, it was essential to create a common literary Albanian language, because *"The language union is the opinions, sensations and national character union"*[17]. As for Zef Pali, he shared Justin Rrota's opinion. He declared that language was of a great value in a nation's life. It was the most distinctive mark which linked the inhabitants of a country. For Pali this essential feature of language had been overlooked indeed, by highlighting mostly linguistic differences between Albanians. Therefore, a unified language would also be a powerful instrument not only for a national union, but also for a political and economic and a cultural and spiritual one as well. Attitudes to the principles on which they should base the realization of this major project for Albanians, were different. A group of authors expressed the view that the common literary language would be gradually and naturally realized by the fusion of both Albanian dialects. So, for Justin Rrota, the Albanian people had assumed their mission since they had saved their language. However, each province had its own flaws and obviously there was not a part of Albania where typical written language could be found. Therefore, each province had to admit which was good in

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[17] "Hylli i dritës", vjeta VII, nr. 3, 1931,p.9-10

another province so that, by means of tolerance, it could be reached to an agreement for a written language. Dema Benedict also expressed his idea that despite their great differences, dialects of a language, on the whole, were a common legacy of the entire nation, which benefited from them. That is why a common language of a civilized nation, colud not be born and could not be last-longing if it was created on the basis of a single dialect. Whereaeas Sali Nivica, in regards with the issue of common literary language and for the common decision making proposed the foundation of a Literary Academy, in which they could prompote support all dialects, by studying each of them carefully and profoundly, by selecting what was good and worth and then by their mixture we could obtain that "would be the language we are lokking for"[18] and as for the technical terminology, it could be borrowed from other languages or could be a new one. Fishta mendon se vetëm atëherë koha, dija dhe estetika do të gjykojnë si cili dialekt duhet zgjedhë si gjuhë letrare në Shqipëri. According to another group of authors, who had a completely opposite opinion, the idea of dialects fusion or mixture was considered as totally unacceptable and inefficient. As the first among them, we can mention Gjergj Fishta who ironized some Albanians, who when writing Albanian mixed the *Gheg* and *Tosk* in such a rude way that it could not be read. As for this mixture, he stated that *"It is not a language: it is like the mule, which is neither a horse nor a donkey"* [19], because to establish the literary language it was not necessary to create *"a new language"*, but language should be well known. In Fishta's opinion, it would be only time, knowledge and aesthetics which could choose which dialect to use in Albania. The third group of authors had clear ideas and proposed that the dialectical basis for the common literary language would be the *Gegh dialect*. We can mention here a short work of Lambertz, who proposed that the official language would be borrowed from a vivid dialect which had been used even in literary writings. He advised that if it was to choose a vivid literary dialect, the dialect of Shkodra, in Northern Albania had to be taken into consideration. Whereas, Gjon Shllaku submitted that a big controversy existed on the issue of the literary language and he had different opinions about its dialectical basis. He concluded: "The Albanian literary language must be only the Gegh. The fact that on the pages of "Hylli i Dritës" magazine we find different attitudes and sometimes even contradictory ones on the principles and tracks of establishing an Albanian common literary language, obviously adds values to this magazine which even nowadays, after more than 100 years ago, makes us take great interest and curiosity in reading its yellowed pages, but immortalized in our national memory.

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[18] "Hylli i dritës", vjeta II, nr. 5, 1921, p..39
[19] "Hylli i dritës", vjeta I, nr. 8, maaj 1914, p.32

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