

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE INFLUENCE IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY ALBANIA AND ENGLISH LOANS IN THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

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## **Abstract**

*The intake of English lexis in the Eastern Europe countries has been increasing considerably since the end of their political, social and cultural isolation. Having one of the most severe and violent political systems Albania was probably more eager to accelerate the exchanges with the 'outer world' and its integration in Europe. Thus adapting to the international context English language was, and still is, one of the mediators to achieve this integration. From the linguistic perspective what results from this languages contact are the loans, neologisms, and even 'pseudo – loans' (Albanian words with the form or the pronunciation of the donor language - English in this case, but that do not exist in the donor language). In this context this paper states some of the extra-linguistic factors (historical, social, political and other factors) which conditioned and determined the language contact between English and Albanian and that would further lead to a considerable number of borrowings from English. Pseudo loans and other new Albanian words created under the influence of English language are briefly discussed under the title of 'Language shifting'. The study also describes Albanians' attitude toward English language, which is found to be definitely a positive attitude. Based on the above overview of English-Albanian contact and on some of the linguistic outcomes deriving from it, is concluded that the impact of English language and culture in the Albanian context is of a considerable degree, and that the outcomes of this impact are only at the primary stages of identification and examination.*

**Key words:** Albanians' attitude to English, English-Albanian contact, language shifting.

## **Introduction**

It is a widely accepted fact that in the last fifty years English has become a global language. English is used all around the world by professionals and academics in international encounters; it is often the official language of international and multinational companies and industries; and it is the language of the internet. As such, its powerful impact is felt also on Albanian language.

Yet this impact and the high number of English loans in Albanian is not derived neither from any past invasion of any English speaking country nor from the "long history" of trade and commerce with Great Britain, USA or other countries whose first language is English. The opening of the country after the end of the communist regime in 1990 brought about many changes. What was 'foreign' was considered the best, regardless its origin, due to the chaotic political and economical situation. Many Albanians emigrated and with time, they became more selective. Therefore, politicians, journalists, actors, singers, students, professors and many other representatives of the Albanian society, having recognized that English was the language of the modern technology and overall development, started to promote it, overusing English words and phrases, leading to the increase of the number of English loans in Albanian.

Another important aspect is the process of anglicisms' adaptation. Some of them are

used as they come from English language, e.g. *remitanca* (eng. *remittance*), *maus* (eng. *mouse*), *miss* (eng. *Miss*), *first leidi* (eng. *first lady*), *kompjuter* (eng. *computer*), *big* (eng. *big*), *best-sellër* (eng. *best seller*), *kopirait* (eng. *copyright*), *dans* (eng. *dance*), and many others; many acronyms like: CD, GDP, OK, HIV; some others have been fully adapted, taking Albanian inflections: *klikoj* (eng. *to click*), *implementoj* (eng. *to implement*) and other words have “enriched” the Albanian vocabulary, being like English in their form or pronunciation but not existing in the source language. Consequently providing a sense of irregularity and confusion between the foreign and the native words in use.

Several academics and linguists are becoming more and more aware of the ‘omnipresence’ of English, of the tendency of people and especially journalists, TV and radio speakers and analysts to use and overuse English words and expressions in their speech and press articles, sometimes giving the impression as they want to make Albanian a peripheral language. Many other European countries have concretized this high impact of English language in the compilation of their national dictionaries of anglicisms.

Furthermore there is ‘A Dictionary of European Anglicisms’ (Görlach, 2001), encompassing 16 European languages, Albanian language included. Considering the only-two-decades process during which this languages’ contact has been at its peak, the absence of such national dictionaries of anglicisms or of any other thorough studies in the field can be justified, therefore it is thought as worthy to undertake some research work in this respect in the attempt to give a contribution in the identification and further examination of anglicisms in the Albanian language.

## General Background

The number of the English speakers has risen dramatically. There exist plenty of reasons for such a spread. The development can be divided into four (partially overlapping) phases:

- (1) In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English spread as a result of British colonialism.
- (2) In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, English spread as the language of British leadership in the Industrial Revolution.
- (3) In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, English spread as the language of American economic superiority and political leadership.
- (4) In the second half of the twentieth century, English spread as a consequence of American technological domination (Fennell, 2008)

Considering the historical and political circumstances in Albania, the last two phases seem to have influenced the relationship among English and Albanian language.

English language position and role in different countries is various. In some of them English is a native language, in some others a second language, and in many others is a foreign language. Kachru (1983) has divided the English-speaking countries of the world into three broad types, which he symbolizes by placing them in their three concentric rings:

- (1) The **inner circle**: these countries are the traditional bases of English, where it is the primary language, that is Great Britain and Ireland, the Unites States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- (2) The **outer or extended** circle: these countries represent the earlier spread of English in non-native contexts, where the language is part of the country’s leading institutions, where it plays a second-language role in a multilingual society, e.g. Singapore, India, Malawi, and 50 other territories.
- (3) The **expanding** circle: this includes countries that recognize the importance of English as an international language though they have no history of colonization and English has no special administrative status in these countries, e.g. China, Japan,

Poland and a growing number of other states. This is English as a *foreign language* (Fennell, 2008).

It is clear that the expanding circle is the one that is most sensitive to the global status of English. It is here that English is used primarily as an international language, especially in the business, scientific, legal, political and academic communities.

For sure Albania belongs to the expanding circle since Albania has no history of colonization and English has no special administrative status.

Many social factors can come into play in controlling which verbal repertoires of the Albanian society and context shall be mostly affected by the English language and culture. Considering that *registers* are linguistic varieties that are linked to particular occupations or topics, it can be assumed that only some of these *registers* in the Albanian context were more 'privileged' compared to others, in terms of borrowings and influence by the English world.

Among the areas mostly affected by English culture and language are diplomacy, law, economy, politics, culture and especially computer science, due to the most frequent contacts and agreements in that respect.

## Historical Factors

### *Early Contacts of English World and the Albanian One*

A - The London Conference in 17 December 1912 where it was decided the political status of Albania and where its borders were defined and its independence declared (Korkuti, Hengjilli, 2006).

B – Secrete London Treaty of 26 April 1915, according to which Albania was to be divided among Serbia, Montenegro, Italy and Greece (Korkuti et al, 2006).

C – The supporting position England held when the Albanian Government on 2 October 1920 required membership in the League of Nations and when on 17 December 1920 it was accepted as a full member. This decision was achieved after they were convinced of the political sustainability of the Albanian government and the promise given by the Albanian government to permit the Anglo-Persian Petroleum Company to search and use the petroleum sources in Albania (Korkuti et al, 2006).

D – After the Second World War the Albanian 1944 Government required to be acknowledged officially by the three major war allies USA, Soviet Union and England. Their sympathy for Albania is reflected in scores of books of memories, which were never published in the period of totalitarianism. In 1945 the civil mission of USA and the military mission of England and Soviet Union arrived in Albania. Great Britain asked the Albanian Government to hold free and democratic elections and to allow the presence of the foreign correspondents in those elections. But the pro-soviet orientation of Albania worsened the relations between Albania and UK and as a result the English mission left Albania in the spring of 1945 (Korkuti et al, 2006, p.181)

After 1945, and for other 45 years afterwards Albanians were no more in contact with the English world, due to the isolation of the totalitarian regime, except the widespread English language teaching in all school levels and the few movies in the English language that were broadcasted repeatedly by the only public TV station (TVSH).

## Political Factors

In 11 December 1990 it was decided to decree the political pluralism which was then followed the next day with the founding of many democratic parties in Albania, widening in this sense the political spectrum of the Albanian politics. This act marked the end of the last communist regime in Europe (Korkuti et al, 2006, p.196)

But only after the elections of March 1992 did the Parliament of Albania adopt a series of laws that would pave the way to the Euro Atlantic integration of Albania.

In fact the frequent national and local elections of this period, those of 1991, 1992, 1996, 1997 and on, were closely observed by international organizations, which on their side, gave their valuable contribution to the progress of the Albanian politics in all its aspects.

Since the beginning of 1990 the European Union Countries and the United States of America offered Albania a series of urgent assistance in food, technical and juridical assistance. Later, many political, economical, military, scientific and cultural agreements were signed with other countries and among these also with the English speaking ones. In 1991 Albania became a member of OSCE, it signed agreements with the European Development Bank, World Bank and International Monetary Fond.

In 1992 it became a member of the North Atlantic Union Council and in 1994 the Peace Partnership was signed.

In June 1995 Albania became a member of the Council of Europe.

An important political development has also been the establishment of the Stability Pact in 10 June 1999, through which the European Union Countries and the USA aimed at promoting and supporting the European integration of the Southeastern Europe Countries. Albania has been introduced to the Pact with several projects that are in harmony with those of the region. These projects include the reconstruction of infrastructure, the well-being, the development of the civil society and a free media, the disarming of the population, strengthening of the internal security, etc. A primary project has been and continues to be, the construction of the 8 Corridor.

Several agreements and projects have been established among Albania and many other developed countries among which USA and UK, not to mention the neighboring countries, as well as many others that have contributed to the development and democratization of the Albanian society.

In 2001, the Ambassador of the Republic of Albania in the USA, Petrit Bushati, made a review of the history of the alliance of our country with USA by initially stating that ‘in April 1990, in a routine meeting with a limited number of Ambassadors, who had been called for consultations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we were casually instructed – in the absence of any special decision or propaganda or clamor – “to be more flexible with the US diplomats and not to avoid their greetings (handshaking) or even conversations with them” (Negotium, 2001, p.14). He continued by qualifying this technical instruction as “the most daring political step for that time ever been taken since the country closed up hermetically and shunned every contact not only with the US diplomats but with every US official of any level.

Following the democratic movements and the radical changes of 1991 and 1992, the Albanian politicians were forced to ‘take the first timid, albeit belated, steps. In this whirl of subsequent events, it is not a coincidence that the first visit of a high US personality, State Secretary James Baker in early 1991, only a few days after Albania’s access to CSCE (today OSCE), would raise an unprecedented spontaneous enthusiasm by thousands of enthusiastic people in the central square and the main streets of Tirana. The people cherished great hopes from the most powerful democratic country of the world, the United States.

This is how New York Times would describe the euphoria, the hope and the admiration Albanians had for the American people at that time: “*A sea of Albanians greeted Mr. Baker as he drove into town for his one-day visit. Hands reached out from every direction to touch the Secretary of State or to pound on the windows of his car. Albanians kissed the hood and windows and showered the car with flower petals, and one man threw himself in front of the limousine and kissed the road – anything to make a link with the representative of America.*” (23 June 1991, New York Times, p.1).

In February 2001, Tirana welcomed US Department of State Secretary Albright, who

conveyed the message that the US support and assistance would continue also in the future.

Assistance was given to Albania through the USAID, Department of States Program. Some other factors and events that indicate the continuous support and the sustainable loyalty of the United States towards our country are: the visits of US high-rank officials in Albania and their counterparts in America, the US support after the 1997 crisis, the cooperation and understanding that existed between Albania and US during the Kosovo war, etc. and finally USA support for the Albania's NATO membership which was realized after many efforts in 2009.

### **Economic Factors**

A lot of difficulties and obstacles were faced when the Albanian Economy was transformed from a centralized economy into a decentralized one, or a market economy. The Law on the Sanctioning and the Defense of the Private Property and the Law on Land, were adopted at the first stages of this transformation. As a consequence, along the time, the private sector, in the internal and the external sectors were strengthened. The Albanian Lek became convertible and the inflation rates were stabilized. After the 1997 crisis, time when the Albanian economy suffered considerably, it recognized distinguishable growth especially in the construction and transport sectors. A valuable and irreplaceable contribution in this growth have had also the remittances of the emigrants.

During all these years the assistance provided to Albania by many countries but especially the assistance and contribution of USA has been indispensable, valuable and very generously provided.

### **Language and Culture**

Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways.

It can be confirmed that language expresses, embodies and symbolizes the cultural reality.

Cultures resonate with the voices of the powerful and are filled with the silences of the powerless (Kramsch, 2009). Both words and their silences contribute to shaping one's own and other's culture. Scholars in Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies, etc., have shown the hegemonic *effects of dominant cultures* and the authority they have in representing and in speaking for the Other. Taking culture seriously means questioning the very base of one's own intellectual inquiry, and accepting the fact that knowledge itself is colored by the social and historical context in which it is acquired and disseminated.

As the considerations above suggest, on one hand the study of language has always had to deal with the difficult issue of representation and representativity when talking about another culture. Who is entitled to speak for whom, to represent who through spoken and written language? Who has the authority to select what a representative of a given culture: the outsider who observes and studies that culture, or the insider who lives and experiences it? According to what and whose criteria can a cultural feature be called representative of that culture? The different ways of looking at culture and its relationship to language raise a fundamental question: to what extent are the world views and mental activities of members of a social group shaped by, or depend on, the language they use?

Similarly, before the 1990s and for some years after that, the English culture was represented (from Albania's perspective) by its famous writers like Shakespeare and especially Byron who has also traveled and spoken of Albania and Albanians in his works.

On the other hand it is the obligation of the culture authorities to select the representatives

of the Albanian culture who then establish its course, whether it is going to be developed in isolation or with few contacts with other cultures or in continuous contacts with other specific ones.

Not only after the 1990s but also before this period, Albanians' contacts with the world music and cinema, especially the American and the English ones, were inseparable, despite the continuous isolating efforts of the regime. The best part of the famous American movies came in Albania dubbed in Italian language, whereas many popular songs like 'Let it be' or singers and groups like Joe Cocker, Michael Jackson, Tina Turner, Pet shop Boys, ACDC, and many others were since a long time part of the 'menu' in the parties and celebrations organized at that time.

In the Albanian National Theater House, a few plays and dramas of the British and American world, have been translated and staged, since 1990: Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, Tennessee Williams, and recently the well-known American playwright Edward Albee with "Who fears Virginia Wolf?"

### **Albanian's Attitude towards English Language**

Not much has been said and written on this subject in Albania. It seems like people admire and do not fear this English language "invasion", yet giving the current economical, political and social circumstances of our country, named as "an emerging democracy", little attention is paid to the native language and to how correctly people use it.

It is a fact that English as a language has a high status and prestige. It is valued and spoken by many people and certain economic, social and political benefits tend to accrue to those who speak and write it. This held true in the past, when those few foreigners who came to Albania were looked up and admired by the Albanian people as they were unusual but certainly better 'creatures' than us. This held true after the opening of Albania in the 1990s, where the people who spoke English were the most privileged emigrants, employees, translators, economists and in fact the most well-paid people in all the areas of the society. This holds true even today, when the numerous foreign language centers that have been opened in the last 20 years, whose primary language is English, still continue to function at their full capacity. Thus there is a boom in English Language Teaching.

Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language has become a huge industry all over the world in the last thirty years. There are whole networks of standardized language-testing centers, often administered through universities such as the University of Cambridge (present and very active in Albania as well) or the University of Michigan, and there are commercial language-training companies in most countries.

Starting from the second half of 21<sup>st</sup> century Albanians have set English language as a priority and especially students, who have always been instructed (and it is a trend that still continues nowadays) to study and learn English language prior to their graduation.

English language is still the first criterion to be met when entering a job interview, and English is still the first and sometimes the only language of communication in all the international activities held by different Albanian institutions and organizations.

Most of the Albanian children grow up with the idea that foreign languages and English language in particular, are a prerequisite to be successful in their future.

The pressure of group identification and peer-group solidarity are very strong. Linguistic research has shown that the adolescent peer-group is in many cases the most important linguistic influence. Children do not grow up speaking like their parents, and they certainly do not grow up speaking like their teachers – their speech patterns are those of their friends (Trudgill, 2000). Similarly, in Albania, teenagers speak with the language of the computers and that of the Internet. The way they communicate verbally and in a written form is very much

influenced by the English of computers, and especially the one used in Emails; you find them using English language a lot, and whenever Albanian is used, it has a considerable amount of English words in it. Facebook, the latest development in the internet and computer area, has enabled the broadest communication among many people around the world, who know or who do not know each other, where the primary means of communication is English. Thus not only in schools do the teenagers have the possibility to stay in contact with the English language, but Internet and Facebook have also transformed the way they communicate and speak their own native language, which is full of English borrowings randomly used, and with some 'fake' English words too.

Being neighbor countries with the USA and UK, but still being in continuous contact with them, and feeling always urged and privileged to learn and to speak their language, it can be confirmed that Albanians have a positive attitude toward English language, which has enabled and encouraged the existence of many English borrowings in Albanian language.

### Language Shifting

In a process of social interaction a speaker can switch completely from one language to another. This switching, in social contexts where English is dominant, is presumably subconscious, and has the effect of making the conversation, amongst other things, more intimate and confidential (Trudgill, 2000). This rapid form of language-switching can be also called *code-switching* and overcoming speaker's problems, difficulties or even complexes, it has become a very widespread phenomenon.

Due to the fact that English language has become the language of almost all the institutions: economic, financial, tourism, environment, culture, etc., national and international ones, in many organizations even though the Albanian employees far outnumber the foreigners the internal communication is preserved in English, even among Albanians; the main language, and most of the time the only language of all the conferences and activities is English; almost all the movies broadcasted are in English; the language of nearly all the press conferences is English; thus it seems more natural to find this code-switching even among student communities, and why not even amongst us, professors of University, for whom English is the language of mainly all the literature we work on.

One thing which almost always happens, when words are borrowed from one language to another, is that the borrowing language uses the word with a narrower range of meanings than the donor language. *Home* in French means specifically a home for elderly people, for instance; and *look* in a number of European languages, including Albanian, is a noun which refers specifically to 'trendy image' or 'fashionable style'. On the other hand *vis-à-vis* in English can refer only to abstract relationships, as in *What is your attitude vis-à-vis this issue?* whereas in Albanian it can have the very down-to-earth meaning of 'on the opposite side of the street'.

Sometimes languages even 'borrow' words which do not exist. In Albanian it is the example of the so-called 'English word' *narkoman* meaning *drug man* but that in fact it is not an English word. Or the adaptation of *businessman* to be used also for women in the Albanian business world: *biznesmene*, when in fact *businesswoman* exists in English as its counterpart.

### Discussion

In this language change process, considering the country's population and the political, economic and cultural situation, Albania and Albanian language seem to be at the 'welcoming' stage. We are making considerable attempts for Albania's integration to the European family and what language better than English can facilitate this process?

Many articles have been written and published in this regard by Albanian linguists and

academics like Xhevat Lloshi, Hajri Shehu, Jani Thomai, Raimonda Këçira et al. *A Dictionary of Foreign Words in Albanian* was published by Mikel Ndreca in 2007, where there is no clear identification of English loans. Yet all the publications, observations and critical reviews to the way Albanians speak but especially write their own language, have not been finalized in a genuine lexicographical work as it would be a Dictionary of Anglicisms in the Albanian Language.

*The Dictionary of European Anglicisms* of Manfred Görlach is intended as a documentation of the lexical input of English into European languages up to the early 1990s, concentrated mostly on the modern lexis imported after World War II (Görlach, 2001). As it is stated in the above paragraphs, regarding the historical, political and cultural contacts with the English speaking world, this period of time was not so *fruitful* for Albania, in terms of English borrowings in Albanian language, because, as it was stated in the above historical, social and cultural overview of English-Albanian contact, it was exactly in the early 1990s that the English loans started to be noticed.

It is a fact that we are becoming more and more aware of the existence of many anglicisms in Albanian language but, yet, it is not very easy to verify this statement. Although the existence of the anglicisms is not yet 'legalized' or 'institutionalised', their number is continuously growing and it would require several decades to collect and examine them properly.

## Conclusions

The increasing international influence of English has been welcomed by many, but criticized by many others. While some appreciate its political, economic and cultural advantages, others are sensitive to a possible threat to other languages and cultures. France is an example to be taken when discussing about the complaints about a take-over while trying to ban the English element in French.

Another psychological aspect may be the degree of self-esteem. As long as English language and English loans are used to give some 'spice' to our communication, and do not transform our native language into a peripheral language, we still can value and appreciate our language and the *guest* ones.

Once in a while we encounter this 'peripheral risk' in the Albanian language: when we professors and teachers see our students, who for the sake of time or simply for showing-off, not translate things in Albanian but using in their tasks or speech many English words; or when the translators or interpreters have to interpret politicians or high members of government who do not prefer to speak in Albanian, as the protocol rules state, but publicize their knowledge in English and try, through this, to show closeness to the foreign guests and other/native English speakers; or when we see many names of shops in English for names whose Albanian equivalent already exists, names of different TV or radio programs.

But still a lot remains to be done in respect to our beloved language and country. Because in the long process of anglicisms' assimilation or adaptation come out the values of a language and its ability to resist change, regardless its nature and direction.

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