

## Issues of Gradability in Albanian Language Traditional Studies

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### Abstract

This paper is about some structures of the comparative degrees unspecified in the book of Grammar I of the Albanian Academy of Sciences. A considerable number of grammar books deal mostly with formal examples referring particularly to some elements of a synthetic or analytic character, which are the classical cases of these categories. However, we think that this process has not been studied from the semantic approach, at least in our theoretical studies. The cases, where we may not find the classical structure, for instance of a comparative degree, are numerous, nevertheless semantically it is obvious the fact that there is a comparison process in a particular structure, such as the example taken from Albanian, "Kjo ndërtesë është e madhe, por kjo tjetra është gjigande" (This is a tall building but the other is huge). While studying the classification treated in our grammar, we think that there are some particular groups of the comparative degree, which are not described sufficiently, such as "shkalla krahasore e ultësisë" (the comparative degree of descending) where there is not any difference between the relative and superlative degree of descending progression. For example *Ai është më pak i lodhur se unë; Ai është më pak i lodhur nga të gjithë.* (He is less tired than me. He is less tired than all persons). The majority of examples to be found in the grammar books are affirmative statements. Whenever there are negative statements, the structure of the comparative degree of ascending semantically imply the comparative degree of descending, as it is the case in this particular example, *Ai nuk është aq i lumtur sa unë* (He is not as happy as I am). As a result this paper aims to characterize gradability as the main characteristics of adjectives based on the semantic level. A similar methodology includes other cases which have not been mentioned before by the previous traditions. In this way the number of adjectives having the ability to be gradable is increased and secondly, it clarifies the semantic aspect and the structure of its realization along its scale.

**Keywords:** gradability, absolute, relative, comparative degree, adjective, adverbs, presupposition, pragmatic context, semantic level

### 1. Insights on the Category of Degree from Various Sources

The traditional category of degree in Albanian language is considered as a process which is a characteristic of word classes such as adjectives and adverbs.

If we refer to the main university text, mainly the publication of the Academy of Sciences of Albania, Grammar I (2002:172), we notice that the degree is considered as a morphological grammatical category which expresses "... *the degree to which a certain feature of a given object is displayed...*".

The scholar Ali Dhrimo (1972:148), who is also the main contributor of this chapter in the book Grammar I, in one of his articles concerning the definition of the category of degree, refers to German and Russian literature when mentioning the definition given by Ahmanova, mainly: "The degree is the notion of scale when defining the semantic content of one or the other category of words" (We can see that the concept is quite wide in this definition and more restricted than the first.)

On the other hand, Dhrimo (1972:148) refers to the German scholar Jung who considers the category of degree as "a specific change that the adjective undergoes and which allows for the distinction between the adjective and the noun". (Nevertheless, this definition is secondary as compared to the first two, since it considers this category as a formal phenomenon).

One of the well known French grammar "Le bon usage" (Maurice Grevisse, DUCULO, 1980) gives the following definition with regard to the category of degree, "a quality which is displayed as the most dominant one in a higher or

lower degree. On the other hand, the existence of the quality can be seen (considered) even without a comparison to itself or to others." (Chapter III, Degrees of Signification (*Degrés de Signification dans les Adjectifs Qualitatifs*).

On the basis of this definition the same book firstly, makes a division between the *absolute degree* (where the positive and superlative degree are included, where they do not account for a genuine comparison) and the *relative degree*, where the comparative degree with its respective divisions are included.

On the other hand, both consulted English grammar respectively the Contemporary Grammar of English Language (Quirk, Randolf, Greenbaun, Leech, Svartnik) and Huddleston & Pollum (Cambridge Grammar of English Language, Cambridge University Press, 2002) provide for a semantic explanation regarding the gradability of adjectives. The Contemporary English Grammar (1985) treats the units used to express the category of degree, as modifiers of the adjectival heads, which can have the category of degree. (It should be mentioned that this Grammar considers the degree in the context of the semantic criterion of gradable and non-gradable adjectives, along with two other criteria: Static/dynamic and inherent/non-inherent, as mentioned above).

Mainly, the Contemporary Grammar of English Language (Quirk, Randolf, Greenbaun, Leech, Svartnik, 1985:265) states that the existence (or absence) of the degree is one of the criteria to be taken into consideration for the classification of adjectives at the semantic level. Regardless of this statement, this grammar describes the above mentioned cases, however, without dealing with them from a more profound semantic analysis.

With regard to the category of degree David Crystal, the author of the Linguistics and Phonetics Dictionary (2008) defines, "degree (n) – a grammar category that is used to specify the level (the extent) of comparison between adjectives and adverbs (Crystal 2008:159). Further, when clarifying the meaning of comparison (Crystal 2008:117), he immediately deals with the formal aspect without dealing in details with the semantic component.

According to Grammar I, the category of degree is a characteristic of qualitative adjectives whose meaning allows that the feature denoted by these adjectives may be expressed at various degrees or of relational adjectives used with a "figurative" meaning. (With regard to the term "figurative" there has not been given any explanation of a semantic, stylistic or pragmatic nature).

From the start we encounter some difficulties regarding an inherent classification of the main division of adjectives based on the semantic criterion, which defines two groups, qualitative and relational adjectives, since there are not any clear criteria at least to identify the cases when we go from relational to qualitative adjectives. The distinction between the qualitative and relational adjectives is made on the existence of the degree, antonymic pairs and type of nominalization, i.e. on the basis of morphological features, at least as the book refers to them, while other studies argue that these features are of a semantic domain.

A specific characteristic of Albanian language, according to the same reference (Grammar I) it is the fact that the degree category does not consist of synthetic elements, "but it is formed with analytical means constructed, as a rule, with lexical elements". This definition is not also clear, not only with regard to the terminology that is used but also substantially, since we think that *this process consists of particular semantic components which are realized within typical syntactical structures, whose components cannot be considered as merely analytical means* (according to the same book, these components have semantically faded, still we cannot say this for at least some of them, respectively *shumë*, *mjaft*, *pak*, *jashtëzakonisht*, *tepër* (very/many, few) modifying the superlative degree.

Dhrimo (1972:173) highlights that "... the form of each degree is directly related to morphology (to the relevant morphological indicators). According to him, the analytical means are expressed with lexical means which gradually do not stand alone and are turned into particles. As mentioned above, in addition to the particle "më" (*more*) which is not an element of the sentence and comparative conjunctions, the other elements are considered as adverbs (*aq*, *kaq*, *shumë pak*, *tepër*) (so, as, very few etc), which are considered by the traditional grammar as sentence elements.

Certainly there is no doubt that these "lexical units" have a close dependency relation with the Adjectival heads (adverbial). Nevertheless, the recent terminology codified by Grammar I regarding the notion of analytical means, leaves these elements out which are defined as above in the relevant literature. These elements are treated there as adverbs or as particles (particle "më" (*more*)) with an adverbial function.

Further, Grammar I makes the division in three groups, which are already known as the positive, comparative (equative comparative, relative and absolute ascending comparative and comparative of descending degree)<sup>1</sup> and the superlative degree.

<sup>1</sup> *Equative comparative: Ai është aq i mirë sa edhe e motra. (He is as good as his sister)*

*Relative ascending comparative: Ai është më i dashur se i vëllai (He is more loving than his brother)*

*Absolute ascending comparative: Ai është më i zgjuar se të gjithë moshatarët e tij. (He is clever than his peers)*

*Comparative of descending degree: Ai është më pak i shkathët se kusheriri i tij. (He is less agile than his cousin)*

E. Hysa (1972:133) states that “the terminology used for the degrees of adjectives and adverbs is not uniform both in the Albanian and foreign literature. Thus, in Albanian the term “degree of comparison” is used in a broad sense, where along with the comparative degree, we have the positive and the absolute superlative degree, which at a linguistic level do not express any type of comparison. The French grammar “Le Bon Usage” also states that the positive and superlative do not involve any comparison, therefore, they should be classified under the same group that was named the absolute degree and the comparative was named as the relative degree.

*In relation to the degrees there have been debates, where the positive degree has been considered by different scholars as the unmarked “standard conventional degree” in contrast to the other marked degrees (Hysa 1972:133).*

*In this context he takes as an example: “Ai është më i ri se ti” (He is younger than you) and adds that “if the sentence did not have any comparison, both persons would be able to be compared not only to the quality young but also to the quality old”. (Hysa 1972:135)*

In our opinion this is not a solid argument to neglect the positive degree as the standard, particularly in the comparison processes. It is true that the comparison could be made not only with the adjective *young* but also with the adjective *old*, or with other adjectives (such as *big*, *small* etc). This is a normal thing, since these types of adjective are part of the valence patterns of the heads in the relevant noun phrases (they are bounded complements) or as Bochnak and Bogal-Allbrighten state, they are part of their potential semantic property for these structures (Bochnak- Bogal-Allbrighten 2013: 5). Since the majority semantic properties are capable of being compared (we are going to specify the term below) they all account for these structures, which are quite normal for the Albanian language. If we were to shift into a pragmatic reasoning, these structures would represent one of the speech acts group, mainly the representative one (May 1977:34).

According to Leech (1983:128) “these speech acts (the representatives) are statements for the state of affairs in the world and as such they bear the truth or false value. This is their purpose; they should certainly try to match the world so that it is true”.

Thus, we are talking about an act which is designed on the basis of the truth condition (in the best case). The above mentioned sentence, under the context of this projection includes not only a quality but several ones which are comparable and are part of the human cognition. On the other hand, again in the light of pragmatics, this fact is highlighted even more if we refer to another pragmatic element, i.e. presupposition.

When Levinson (1992:167) describes the presupposition, he refers to the modern logic philosophy of Frege (1892), Russell (1905) and Strawson. Further, he states that “presupposition aims to seize at least a part of our pre-theoretical intuition about what has been said or presupposed (in the linguistic sense of the word) when we speak” (Levinson 1992: 181)

Among the initial elements that distinguish an inherent presupposition is to use the method of negation. (A well known example from Russell: “The King of France is clever/is not clever”. The negation in this case allows us the basic presupposition that firstly there should be a monarchy regime and there should be a king).

Lakoff (1972) viewed presupposition in the comparative structures. In this way, the presupposition, which is the basis of these acts (i.e. the sentences where there is a comparison), should consist of the substance of the positive sentence. Thus, the sentence that was mentioned above “*He is (/is not) younger than me*” has as its basic presupposition the fact that we are both within the human cognitive domain which is about our life timeline (the youth and the others following this age, since for childhood we use other adjectives).

On the other hand, as we will observe in the following section, the antonyms that Hysa mentions, *young/old* are implicitly part of the two end-point concepts of gradable adjectives. (In the following section we shall mention some views on antonymy as part of a gradable process).

Similarly, Dhrimo accepts the existence of a positive degree by mentioning that “we should understand the positive degree as the statement of the quality of an object, as such, we mention this degree as a characteristic of the object but without mentioning the extent to which it is displayed at that particular object (the scale)” (Dhrimo 1972:150)

On the basis of this explanation the negation does not negate the quality as an entity but its presence at the relevant object. Still, his concept about the traditional positive degree is too far from the present concept related to the unmarked forms of gradable adjectives, which could express the senses of the degree.

## 2. Remarks on the Albanian Traditional Studies in the Category of the Degree of Adjectives

Traditional studies in Albania have provided a significant place for the comparative degree as formed with analytical means, describing some of its structures. However, if we study more profoundly the methodology that it is used, we could observe that the formal aspect of the analysis prevails, as compared to the semantic analysis in different cases. There are also some structures that are not included or pose problems regarding the formal and semantic classification. (We already mentioned some examples above).

According to Grammar I, the basis of the comparative degree is the comparison between one or two units in two or more elements; or the comparison with the same quality in the same element but at different times and conditions; with the same quality compared to the whole class; one or more qualities of the same object compared to one another (Grammar I:173).

The means used to realize this degree usually include the adverbs such as, *aq, kaq, pak* (so, as, few), the particle with an adverbial function *më* (more) and the comparative conjunctions *se, sa, si* (than) etc.

The relevant means and structures are explained for each group focusing more on the analytical elements and on the presence or absence of the other part of the comparative structure. Even within the same classification, which is in line with the classical traditional approach (without referring to the recent studies), we have observed that there are often debatable cases and it is almost impossible to interpret the structures that we come across in speech.

There is a traditional distinction between the relative ascending comparative degree and absolute ascending comparative degree but we do not find a similar distinction in the comparative degree of descending, regardless of the available examples (*më pak i ëmbël se ai/më pak i ëmbël se të gjithë të tjerët*, (less sweet than him/less sweet than the rest).

The examples provided in Grammar I are only statements and the negative and interrogative sentences are not mentioned (*He is not as smart as he seems to be*. This sentence would entail the fact that he is smart but less than he is thought to be).

Further, although the context has been mentioned in some cases, it has not been analyzed deeply and the standard conditions of comparison are not described. For instance the following structures: *Kjo ndërtesë është e madhe, po kjo tjetra është gjigante* (This building is tall but the other is huge); *Kanë gjatësi të njejtë*. (They are of an equal length); *Kishte renë borë e madhe* (It had snowed a lot); *la dha të qarit me sa fuqi kishte*. (He burst into tears) are not discussed at all.

In order to identify the above-mentioned remarks, we were based on the recent studies in other languages, where there have been numerous studies on the meaning of gradable predicates, comparison structures and other similar structures related to them.

In the realm of theoretical studies, these issues are a characteristic of the semantic and pragmatic level, yet, closely related to the concrete realization at the morphological-syntactical level in different languages.

As Bolinger (1971) states, "gradability is a significant semantic property, whose influence extends beyond adjectives to other lexical categories. It is a property not only of adjectives but of nouns, verbs, adverbs and even prepositions. The same fact has also been stated by Sapir 1944.

Perhaps the greatest challenge when dealing with the comparison structures and the notion of gradability is related to the fact that the meaning of gradable predicates is highly dependent on the context (Bochnak & Bogal-Allbrighten, 2013:2). When dealing with gradability, as it was also observed at Kennedy&McNally (2005), Paradis (2012), Toledo & Sassoon (2011), the main goal is to define the contextual standards closely related to the truth conditions but not separated from the specific contexts (Kennedy & Mc Nally 2005:9).

This line of the argument leads us towards an important term for this type of analysis, mainly the standard of comparison closely related to the context. The classical example to illustrate the notion of this standard of comparison is the sentence *Michael Jordan is tall*. Still, we should bear in mind that the comparison in this case is also relative to a comparison class of objects which are similar in some way or another. That is to say, we are comparing the height of Michael Jordan to the normal parameters of other basketball players, which are not relevant for the other people. (We are discussing gradable adjectives, which also have their traditional comparative degree)

In this context, gradability can also be observed at the predicates (gradable adjectives) which are often found without their classical degree modifiers (the traditional analytical means of Albanian language, which were mentioned above, such as the adverbs, or a particle etc.). This process has not been treated so far in the Albanian studies. On the contrary, the superficial absence of modifiers and the presence of the meaning of the category of degree in these predicates have been discussed extensively by different researchers in other languages.

As von Stechow (1984) states, an unmodified AdjP (adjectival phrase), currently has a degree morpheme null pos, (for the positive form) whose function is to relate the degree argument of the adjective to an appropriate comparison standard.

This statement certainly refers to gradable adjectives and it confirms the cases that we brought up for discussion, in particular related to adjectives such as: *gjigand*, *i mrekullueshëm*, *i fundit* (huge, wonderful, recent) or antonymic sentences of the kind *this is small but this is big*, which have not been studied by Albanian scholars.

According to Kennedy (1999), *the category null pos codifies the standard relation, which holds of a d category for the cases when it meets a comparison standard for a G adjective, in relation to a comparable class defined by C, a variable of individual properties whose value is determined by the context.*

Kennedy & McNally (2005) also state that the codifying value of this morpheme is context bound and there are the semantic properties of the adjectives which determine the value of the modifiers. Toledo & Sassoon (2011:145) also agree and they further explain that the value of this unit should be determined by means of quantification within their counterparts. It is further mentioned that *completely different*, should be interpreted "different in every respect" rather than different in degrees

The above studies illustrate the detailed analysis from a semantic perspective not only to identify the semantic properties of adjectival heads, but these properties are considered in the context of semantic valence as selective in terms of their modifiers, which should be determined by the semantic variable of the adjectival head part of the specific comparison standard. (This type of study is useful for a better acquisition of the structures in question, since they define a clear regularity. Certainly, in our studies we do not find any trace of similar analysis but rather a description without any sufficient explanations of the structures. Their existence has not been justified as well as their position along the range of the scale.

### 3. Some Proposed Approaches for the Study of the Degree of Adjectives

Another essential distinction which has not been treated in the Albanian studies is related to the semantic research of the internal semantic properties of scalar adjectives and determining the minimal and maximal limits within these properties.

The degrees of adjectives have been distinguished on the basis of three elements: a set of degrees consisting of the measurement values; a dimension measurement indicating the type of measurement (value, temperature, speed, volume, length etc.); and an ordering relation. (Kennedy & McMally, 2005; 13)

The ordering relation has been considered as one of the criterion when distinguishing antonymic pairs such as: *i gjatë/i shkurtër*; *i zbrazët/i mbushur*; *i shtrenjtë/i lire*; *i pastër/i pisët*; *i bukur/i shëmtuar*; *i gjerë/i ngushtë* (long/short; empty/full; expensive/cheap; clean/dirty; pretty/ugly; wide/narrow etc.), which are part of the same specific context (tall/short are part of the length but characterise opposite directions of this measurement).

Based on the dimensional criterion we could distinguish those adjectives which are part of the same direction (negative or positive) but belonging to different dimensional groups. Thus, we could make the distinction between *tall* and *agile* since the adjective *tall* is part of the length dimension and the adjective *agile* is part of the mobility dimension, as a result these adjectives cannot be compared in the same comparative structure.

*\*Ai është më i gjatë se i lëvizshëm. (He is taller than agile)*

*† është po aq i gjatë sa dhe i lëvizshëm. (He is as tall as agile)*

Another important distinction would be the identification of scales on the basis of the semantic extremes that they represent. Therefore, we would have open scales, which need their minimal and maximal elements and closed scales which have their minimal and maximal elements (Kennedy & McMally, 2005:15). Thus, we make the distinction between these adjectives: *i mbushur*, *i mbyllur*, *i padukshëm* (full, closed, invisible) and *i gjatë*, *i shtrenjtë*, *i vjetër* (tall, expensive, old). (The first group comprises adjectives that characterize the open scale where the second group includes the closed scale one).

This type of distinction is based not only on their meaning but also on the modifiers to be used with them. The open scale group can be used with modifiers such as: *gjysëm*, *përgjithësisht*, *komplet*, *plotësisht* (half, generally, completely, and wholly) etc., and the closed scale one cannot be used with these modifiers, especially when talking about something huge, somebody dead or alive. (When talking about modifiers, particularly the last two make the feature move towards the maximum end. In particular structures, in Albanian, they should be analysed on the basis of the specific comparison standard, for example the notion of *full* can have a different interpretation by a physician or by ordinary people. On the basis of these comparison standards we could distinguish totally/nearly closed adjectives. The

second group of adjectives is not usually modified by the above modifiers since their meaning places them in the extreme ends.

Depending on this restriction, adjectives may be grouped into totally open scale adjectives (which do not have a maximum/minimum level, but tend to go towards these levels) and closed scale adjectives. The latter depending on the minimum or maximum could be grouped into lower closed and upper closed scale adjectives. (Kennedy & McNally (2005:17).

At first sight it may seem that the same division identified by Kennedy and McNally coincides with the Albanian classification of the degrees into ascending and descending comparative degree, found in Grammar I. In fact, the classification made by Albanian scholar does not entirely coincide with the above classification, since the Albanian examples refer to comparative structures of qualitative adjectives where modifiers such as *more tired/less tired* are present. The classification of Kennedy and McNally refers to gradable adjectives with or without modifiers and to their semantic properties.

Still the above classification had its own problems since it did not reflect accurately the minimum and maximum (positive and negative). As a result, closed scale adjectives referring to the minimum were called adjectives of totally open scale; those adjectives that were at a midpoint and never reached the minimum or maximum but came close depending on the direction of the scale were termed lower closed scale adjectives; and the adjectives moving towards the positive were termed as upper closed scale adjectives; and the last group which met the maximum were totally closed scale adjectives.

Thus, on the basis of this reasoning we could say that the adjectives standing on a positive direction would select the above mentioned modifiers whereas the opposite could not be possible. The following structure would not be accepted:

- \**Ai është komplet i shkathët. (He is entirely agile)*
- \**Qumështi është gjysëm e derdhur. (The milk is half poured)*
- \**Ai duket pjesërisht i gjatë. (He seems partially tall)*
- \**Ai u bë plotësisht i famshëm. (He became totally famous)*
- \**Shtëpia ishte 100% e zhurmshme. (The house was 100% noisy)*

Kennedy & McNally (2005) also identified some modifiers whose presence or absence would support the fact that some adjectives belonged to the above mentioned groups. These were the modifiers *slightly* and *perfectly*.

In this sense the adjective *tall* which belongs to the totally open scale cannot accept these modifiers:

\*slightly tall/perfectly tall ○————○

The group of lower closed scale accepts only the modifier *slightly dirty* ●————○

The upper closed scale accepts the modifier *perfectly clean* ○————●

The group of totally closed scale accepts both modifiers *slightly* and *perfectly closed* ●————●

(Assaf Toledo & Galit W.Sassoon, 2011:135). However, in Albanian the way modifiers are selected from the adjectival phrase is not as restricted as in English because we find even these structures in Albanian: *pak i pisët/shumë i pisët; pak i pastër/shumë i pastër/jashtëzakonisht i pastër* etc.

Based on this classification the relative and absolute adjectives are determined. (This is too far from the classification that "Le Bon Usage" grammar makes)

An adjective A is interpreted as relative according to a standard contextually bound only if the degree A is linguistically open. If A is associated with a closed scale, the restrictive standard (endpoint, non-contextual) would be at function to interpret A. Whereas the absolute adjectives would refer to the closed scale group.

However, the classification of Kennedy & McNally (2005) has its own problems as identified by Assaf Toledo & Galit W.Sassoon, (2011:137), since the relative adjectives are dependent on the context and extend along the open scale, while the absolute ones are often restricted in their endpoints (minimum/maximum) without taking into consideration the context. Still, both groups are contextually bound depending on their specific standards.

Toledo and Sassoon (2011:137) argue that this fact is supported by the presence of the *for-phrase* establishing the reference with the contextual standard. Its presence is merely grammatical, only in the case of the relative adjective *tall* (He is tall for a child at his age). Thus, we notice that when it restricts the contextual standard of absolute adjectives, it is not part of the construction. We cannot say:

- \**Ai është i mbushur për një bidon. (It is full for a bottle)*
- \**Ajo është e pastër për një pjatë kuzhine. (It is clean for a kitchen plate)*

\*Ai është i pistë për një fëmijë. (He is dirty for a child)

According to Toledo & Sassoon (2011:140) absolute adjectives are contextually influenced. As it will be shown in the following sentences which have the absolute adjectives clean (the maximum standard) and dirty (the minimum standard) in different contexts (as we observed above with the adjective *tall*) acquire a different degree.

*My house is clean.*

*The operation theatre is clean.*

*The floor of the house is clean.*

*The floor of the operation theatre is clean.*

The standard of cleanliness and dirtiness do not have the same comparison standard in their respective sentences. We know that in the context of a hospital, *clean* should be at the maximum points, whereas in the context of the house the adjective could be potentially at any point of the scale. This supports the fact that in Albanian, the classic structures of comparative are to be found only within the context of the house (*më i pastër se, më shumë i pastër se, shumë i pastër*) and we can even find the negative direction along the range *më pak i pastër*.

Toledo & Sassoon stress that gradable adjectives, relative/absolute, function within comparison standards, thus, they are influenced by the context. The semantic distinction between the Albanian ascending (sometimes descending) relative comparative degree and the descending absolute comparative is based on the two types specified by Lewis (1986). The first one is a set comprised of counterparts of the same individual and the second type comprised of an extensional category of that individual.

Thus, in this context we could say that the main distinction if we were to refer to relative and absolute adjectives, this is related to the fact that absolute adjective are usually part of the counterparts of the same individual, where the comparison is made within the other variants of the adjective; whereas relative adjectives are part of the extensional category of the individual, where there are different members of the same class.

Toledo & Saassoon (2011:146) provide the following examples:

X është plot. (x is full) means that -x- as full as it can be (x- cannot be fuller).

X është i gjatë. (X is tall) it does not mean as tall as it can be, in comparison to the other variants of the same adjectives)

As above, the semantic features of the adjective provide for regularity, restriction when selecting specific modifiers, which has led to their grammaticalization where *më* is not considered as an adverb but as a particle.

In this framework, Paradis (2001:2) uses different terms to describe the process where the content domain (semantic properties) restricts the schematic domain (the formal realization). The concept of boundedness/unboundedness, previously seen at verbs and nouns (aspective verbs and countable/uncountable nouns) is suggested to be related to the schematic domain, where the semantic property of the adjectival head restrict the modifiers.

Based on this distinction, we could talk about scalar modifiers (*very, fairly* in English, *shumë, pak, më aq, kaq* in Albanian), which are unbounded and totality modifiers (*perfectly, absolutely* in English and *plotësisht, komplet* in Albanian) which are bounded. The modifiers of the first group (unbounded) determine a particular position but not the endpoint on the range of the scale. The modifiers of the second group (bounded) determine a value exactly specified at endpoints.

Paradis (2001:7) proposes two criteria to classify adjectives; firstly, depending on the type of degree modifiers adjectives may combine with; secondly, depending on the type of oppositeness involved in the conceptualization of the adjectives.

The second criterion is quite interesting, since the antonymic relations are reflected on the schematic domain.

On the basis of this distinction we have scalar adjectives, such as *i bukur, i mirë, i njohur* (pretty, good, known). These adjectives move along the scale and they never reach the endpoints of the scale. In Albanian this group falls under the ascending/descending relative/absolute comparative degree and the superlative one. They refer to the semantic properties of length, speed, weight etc). The Albanian sentences which may seem as paradoxical: *As e madhe as e vogël* (neither big nor small), *as i gjatë as i shkurtër* (neither tall nor short), *as i ri as i vjetër* (neither young nor old) fall within this continuum of scale, which are described by the scalar adjectives. (In some cases scalar adjectives are referred to as implicit comparative degree) (Paradis 2001:7) Moreover, this group of adjectives is combined with unbounded modifiers.

The second group includes extreme adjectives, as *i mrekullueshëm, i tmerrshëm, i magjishëm* (wonderful, terrible,

magical). This group is modified by bounded modifiers such as, *totally, completely, absolutely*. They often represent the endpoint of opposition, thus they are not part of the movement from the minimum to the maximum.

The third group refers to limit adjectives such as: *i vdekur, i gjallë, i vërtetë, i fundit* (dead, alive, true, last). This group of adjectives are unmarked and not modified due to their semantic restrictions. They stand at both endpoints of the scale. The antonymy plays here the main role for their identification.

Albanian structures such as: *I gjallë a i vdekur të shkosh atje* (dead or alive you should go there) are paradoxical from the semantic aspect but they are acceptable from the stylistic aspect. In this context, they are idioms used in the meaning of the adverb *patjetër* (by all means). Normally these adjectives are characterized by relations such as: either ...or.

#### 4. Conclusions

As above, gradability is an inherent feature of the adjective and it is part of its semantic level. The detailed analysis of the semantic properties of adjectives, on the basis of the above-mentioned concepts, would change the current classification of adjectives (qualitative and relational) and on the other hand, it would specify the exact position of each degree (at their endpoints or midpoints). In this way we could talk about gradable/ungradable adjectives.

Further, the analysis of semantic properties of adjectives determines the type of modifiers to be used with them. In our opinion, the concept of boundness/unboundness may be successfully applied to adjectives since it influences the classification of adjectives and their type of modifiers.

With regard to the concept of antonymy, it extends the traditional classification by increasing the number of adjectives which could be viewed as gradable. On the other hand, this supports the implicit superlative degree (unmarked).

The limit group of adjectives (mentioned above) clarifies better the meaning of the traditional positive and superlative degrees.

The current notion of comparative degree is based generally on the schematic domain without taking into consideration the content domain. This has caused problems in the correct classification of gradable/non-gradable adjectives, traditional positive, comparative and superlative degree in Albanian.

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