

Some Aspects of Linguistic Education in Albania

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Abstract

This paper attempts to develop within the applied sociolinguistics which includes in itself a lot of issues related to language pedagogy. We will specifically deal with the relationship of dependency that exists between the most important components of teaching and learning the Albanian language, such as: text, teacher, student, with the outside linguistic and mainly the social context, under the influence of which these ingredients are unquestionably found. According Bernstein language and linguistic behavior of an individual speaker depends on social structure in which the speaker is involved and in particular the social connections and interference that intersect inside the social group to which he belongs. Language and linguistic behavior react in the social behavior... Bernstein dealt closely with the reflex of economic class in linguistic behavior of the individual (Berruto1994: 103). In this paper we will see how language deficits are also created thanks to some socio-cultural problems of the country's and how the aspects of linguistic pedagogy practically not fulfill their function, as lacking consideration of any possible relationship that is created between them and the social context . It is precisely the lack of such a relationship (which remains purely theoretical) that has led to the current state of today's use of the Albanian language. Albanian possession means having the capacity of linguistic competence, communicative competence as the capacity to possess and its developed standard. Only in this way language gets social value. The individual speaker in Albanian society today is obviously deficient in Albanian language dominance even though he has been subjected to an Albanian language learning according defined cycles of the study. This happens due to the fact that the Albanian education has been paid more attention to the recognition of linguistic units than their tenure, while success in language obviously requires recognition of all social interference under the pressure of which this process is done. Language is part of the individual, the community where we live, and the entire society. Consequently, linguistic norms should also mean social norm. Only in this way can be achieved in a successful communication process. In this context, we believe that education constitutes not merely a starting point, but also destinations. With a good language education within a sociolinguistic implement, problems of today's standard rate, may find solutions.

Keywords: Text-teacher-student, social context; communicative competence; policy language; standard language.

1. Introduction

What are some of the objectives of teaching and learning the Albanian language?

Gjokutaj marks as first objective the learning of the Albanian language as a *service subject in school for all school subjects* (Gjokutaj: 2012: 16). Although this is a "toned" goal, we would not call it as intended, as far as we would call **language value**, value that arises not just from the need to communicate, but also by the need to learn, for enriching our world, to expand knowledge about all kinds of science.

Regarding the goals of this field, primarily, would cite that *the object study of didactics is the study of the entire components of teaching and learning of the subject (...)*, then we would like to summarize and recall some of them that related to the importance are mainly dedicated to the principles, criteria, laws, curricular structure, methods, ways, strategies, self-evaluation forms, etc. (Gjokutaj 2012:16).

If all these components will be properly designed and moreover will be realized, then we will really have a modern teaching and learning of Albanian language teaching. While, in connection with *the knowledge, skills and practical skills*, all of which are in themselves the object of forming the so-called *linguistic competence*, or rather, as sociolinguists call, criticizing the notion of psycholinguistic competence of Chomsky, *communicative competency*.

This kind of competence takes into account linguistic context (to possess some language varieties, to identify them, and to know to pass from one to another, etc.) And the outside linguistic context of the speech (which may be social, semiotic etc.) (Berruto1994: 22)

Linguistic and outside linguistic factors are significantly related and are even more intertwined than anywhere precisely in what is called the competence of speech, or more precisely: communicative competence (Shkurtaj 2004: 273)

The question arises, what do we understand with communicative competence in the Albanian context?

Albanian community today is a heterogeneous community. The ideal of the members of such a community is the first to be knower, but also possessor of the **language of origin** (Albanian dialect or language of origin, but also knower of its current standard). In the second place connoisseur and holder **of the language of the host community** (Cognitive of their current standard, or cognitive of the receiving dialect). Finally, connoisseur and good holder **of a foreign language** (considered among the Albanian as bread language), as is today English or any other language as needed.

Education is a very important sociolinguistic variable thanks to which the individual manages to improve his linguistic behavior to the point, as it becomes distinct from the rest that is not educated. Consequently, the language policy and planning must be done in accordance with the educational development of each country, in order that knowledge is properly forwarded achieving a successful teaching and learning. This achievement means the conversion of linguistic knowledge in language skills and for more capacity and competence in communication.

On the other hand think that competence alone is not enough to be just communication, but communication in a wider spectrum (Berruto 1994: 23). Shkurtaj labels it a *broader global competence*,

Linguistic competence is part of a broader and global competence of communication (Shkurtaj 2004: 272),

while we would call a *comprehensive competence*. *Comprehensive competence* in our view, starts with a successful teaching and learning (strongly supported in three important and interactive components as: text (curriculum), teacher, student and ends with **the consciousness of civilized individual** (part of a heterogeneous society) who consciously fights every day for a successful communication and above all more developed. This obviously does not mean to follow foreign models, does not mean to follow the wrong models, but consciously searching accurate models, clean models, models that advise a civilized norm.

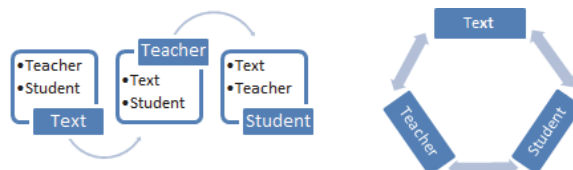
This kind of competence encompasses in itself, base linguistic knowledge, extensive theoretical knowledge, scientific knowledge, knowledge of terminology by different fields and disciplinary dispensations; text knowledge, discourse knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, philosophical knowledge of speaking, knowledge of communication strategies etc. And, if we have achieved so, think that not only have taken the proper formation of the language, but have already shaped the so-called "competence" which means complete mastery of our language.

On the other hand, university strategy and Albanian language didactics should consider four important elements of sociolinguistics that are directly related to the Albanian context such as: time, space, social strata, social situation. Our linguistic competence should be developed alongside these elements.

Language is diverse and varies: in time, space, in classes or different social strata and under specific situations (Shkurtaj 2009: 21)

Despite this very important issue, which treatments remain only theoretical and will once again retaken, the three most important components of the didactic activity of the Albanian language, which have always been in the spotlight are: **text, teacher and student**.

The relationship between these components is a **chain report**. And not only the link that exists between them **revolves around a closed circuit**, and precisely in the Albanian situation is very difficult to decide at what point in this circuit should initially interfered.



Let us now briefly describe the three components in question in order to better understand what we admitted above.

2. The Text

A very good text helps a teacher with a not very good background, helps students of different levels. It plays an important role in conveying accurate knowledge even when one of the components has not forming properly. Becoming one with one of them, the text somehow manages to cover the gap of the weaker component.

On the other hand, not a good text, becomes an obstacle for the pupil, the student and for the teacher. Teacher facing the mandatory text has a great responsibility, as hour after hour, step by step should modify, compile and correct this text that is not legally permitted to avoid. Until now assume that we are dealing with well-qualified teachers.

The question arises, what if it comes to teachers with not a good background that undoubtedly are not able to perceive these errors (we are still talking about logical errors)? Of course this is a rhetorical question, which will be argued by some examples.

So for example, during a class period, the second grade children (in primary cycle of studies), should take prior knowledge about **the adjective as part of the lecture that denominate a feature (qualities, attributes, relationships) of the item and fits on gender, number and case with the noun of this item**. In the first place, what draws our attention are grammatical rules or definitions that are placed at the top of every page of the book, written with red ink and placed inside a frame. Immediately following definitions, start practical exercises.

Thus, after the definition of the adjective, follow the exercises, while we completely consider wrong such a thing, because the definition **must be produced by the students**. Such a thing he must do after the exercise through different practical methods found in the text.

Regarding knowledge about the adjective, the first exercise, immediately after the simplified definition about the adjective (*Adjective is a word that shows quality*), makes available some figures as: a bicycle with the label BIÇIKLETA-THE BICYCLE, a snail with the label KËRMILLI-THE SNAIL, a semi moon with the label HËNA-THE MOON, and a guy with the label DJALI-THE BOY. Each of the labels is related to relevant community of words which in its composition has some adjectives. The student must mainly identify the adjective that is not logically connected with the label (name).

Fallacy lies in the fact that the name is placed in definite form, while in the Albanian is always taken as a model the indefinite nominative. Placing the names in label in definite form, in conjunction with the adjectives within communities, requires difficult contexts for children of this age. A prepared teacher of the Albanian language grammar, immediately corrects these errors. So he corrects labels: THE BICYCLE, THE SNAIL, THE MOON, and THE BOY, placing words in indefinite nominative. In this way the student makes proper logical connection: *new bike, slow snail, bright moon, cheerful boy and no: biçikleta e re- the new bicycle, kërmilli i ngadaltë-the slow snail, hëna e ndritshme-the bright moon, djali i gëzuar- the cheerful boy*. And if the child would be required to create sentences with these constructions, then what percentage of the class would be able to form sentences with the words *kërmilli i ngadaltë-the slow snail* or *hëna e ndritshme-the bright moon* etj.?

Errors to the text are noticed even in the first lesson, in the first sentence of the served text, with a *order of words* that leaves much to be desired, or for example the not so appropriate use of the pronouns where is often noted the use of the interrogative pronoun *cili-who* or *cilët-whom*, in whose places would be more appropriate to use the interrogative pronoun *kush-who* etc.

Following these examples, we think the answer is obvious; errors in the text remain inexcusable, especially if it's such an early age.

Certainly issues related text are diverse. I think the first step is the curriculum. So, it must be determine the appropriate text for a relevant study cycle and a more appropriate text for the relevant branch. The importance of text in this regard is illustrated with another example which deals with the case where the relevant lecturer uses a relatively good text, but that is not suitable for a given cycle of studies, or rather the text is more than needed for the cycle in question, however, the not harmonious design of a curriculum, has made this valuable text not properly be absorbed by students.

So for example, in the program of Albanian language grammar (morphology, branch - Low Cycle, Bachelor level of studies, is defined the obligatory text of the Albanian language Grammar written by the Albanian Academy of Sciences, compiled by a group of grammarians. This is a very good text among others suitable for the branch Language and Literature. After its use in both branches simultaneously (Low Cycle and Language and Literature), was noted that the results of the students in Low Cycle were very low in comparison with students of the Language and Literature. During the teaching process was also noticed that the text was perceived with great difficulty by the students of the branch of elementary education (Low Cycle). Referring to such a problem, the question arises, will be these teachers able to perceive logical errors (which we talked a little higher) of a primary text? As we shall address to the description of the teachers, the deficit of "students that become teachers" will no doubt reflect the gap or the wrong transmission of knowledge to younger children.

So not a good text leads unquestionably to the failure of not only a lesson, but the failure of all the planned curriculum for a certain course (subject), not only, but with serious consequences for the future. These examples suffice to show how delicate and important are the issues of curriculum in general and the Albanian language curriculum in particular. A good text on the other hand minimizes the consequences.

3. The Teacher

Let us now turn to the second component, teachers. And start with a subset of teachers in two important groups:

1. - Teachers who resolutely try to close any knowledge deficit that may have not only in the field of linguistics, but also in teaching the Albanian language.
2. - Teachers with a disadvantage that does not tend to increase professionally.

In the higher cycle of studies (University), the lecturer of Albanian language is able to assess the language level and language skills of students. Priori it is able to segregate the student who is the holder of a linguistic deficit of the 9-year system of education (Albanian language is not studied in high school), of the student who has basic necessary knowledges of the language. And thanks to this observation, the lecturer is able to understand then, the relationship that exists between the two aforementioned groups to their former teachers.

Of course, students who have basic knowledges of the Albanian language come from the first group of teachers and students with language deficits are students coming from the second group. Mathematically it appears that the first group of teachers prevails. However, this type of conclusion is filtered thanks to intuition. To justify it, some questionnaires were distributed to students, with the aim to collect the appropriate information regarding the preparation of teachers, preference for the subject, the results of the subject - all these for 9 year old system etc. Their answers were consistent with our intuition filtered thanks to measuring students' language skills. 80% of students expressed positively to their teacher of Albanian language, mainly: for his dedication to the subject, for his rigorous preparation, its ability in the perception of any textual errors (logical or technical), for his work independently, top complaint of account etc.

All these have subsequently led to an increased desire and love for the subject of the Albanian language, as well as satisfactory academic results (final grade of the Albanian language in the so-called state exam to all these devoted students was grade 9 (nine) or ten (10)).

Certainly from the received responses from the questionnaires there were some cases of knowledge gaps by smallholder often due to such a deficit was the teacher. Mostly, it was a unqualified teacher, a teacher without proper experience etc. In such cases is always talked for teachers in the second group that, among other things, are unavoidable in the situation of countries like Albania.

Although is not such a kind thing, we are illustrating this opinion with an example from the elementary cycle studies. In this cycle mainly occurs that young children are penalized, because they don't properly know linguistic unit. This often happens when the word changes its function and passes from one part to another part of lecture. Teachers of the second group (in primary school) in all cases of the names derivated by verbs, by adjectives, by adverbs, or adjectives that come by nouns etc., wrong in their determination. They are defined by them as verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns etc. So for example if in a particular context we have the adjective *brave* (*brave* boy), the teacher in probation the word *brave* will call a name (trim-trimi/brave), and even more so if it comes to such cases when the adjective is used separated by noun or pronoun accompanying ex: *ai ishte trim-he was brave*. Examples like these are numerous. They are collected through direct observations. The child in this case is not merely a carrier of the deficit, but much worse, he is carrier of wrong knowledge. Although rare, these kind of teachers have always existed.

The second group encompasses in itself other types of teachers as: irresponsible teacher that although are qualified teachers who graduated, don't speak well the language standard etc. Let us rejoice in the fact that dominates the first group of dedicated teachers, but without forgetting the years that will pass in employment the second group of teachers, who are the inheritors of a kind of "illness" that lasts for years (until teacher in question retired) whose victims will be entire generations.

4. The Student

All education policies are student-centered. The consequences fall on it. Teachers of the second group are a major disaster for them. It also constitutes a disaster for them a not well designed curriculum, a non professional text; and we proceed: student's intellect, parents, family environment where it grows, social environment, its economic strata, the institution in which he is educated... etc. In all this filing is not only the student the most important component, but also the weakest component, after two others are served to him compulsorily and regardless. But for the moment we should not forget that it is the teacher who through appropriate methods and his knowledge should know (for many reasons) its nature, temperament, and other factors mentioned above and above all to establish it, to measure and evaluate the student.

The measurement and the evaluation should be done with real professionalism. It often happens that in the case of the Albanian language, the teacher praises for eloquence in speech, for writing skills, for the standard that the student

uses etc., while he must assess the student's intellect, skills and its linguistic capacity, etc. Of course even eloquence, the way he writes or the correct use of standard are part of his capacity and his linguistic skills, but not as much as the student be penalized in the evaluation process etc. Teachers can also sometimes have difficulties in teaching and cultivating the element (the student), but this does not dismiss them from **liability** that they have opposed such a commitment.

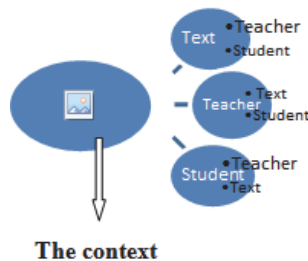
After all, it is clear that the basis of the formation of communicative competence in education are mainly taken by a good linguistic education, which primarily relates to a good text, with qualified teachers or ambitious versus their professional growth and educated students with a strong consciousness for education in general and linguistic culture in particular.

So far we talked about the dominant accountable group of teachers, for students who have completed the basis of language studies with high scores (all verified by the survey method), then the question arises: why Albanian is not well spoken in Albanian society?

Firstly the object of learning Albanian is holding its best, the ability to use the language units, thus shaping a good communicative competence. All these certainly cannot be seen, as out of standard literary uses, but as a properly standard use, where appropriate, in the proper form. Let's see now how much and how Albanian language is used in our society.

First we must answer several questions: How are related the aforementioned components (teacher, student, text) with time, space, social class and social situation? Are taken into consideration other linguistic and outside linguistic factors in their development? How is their relationship with the Albanian context?

The relationship between language and society is a circular report (Berruto 1994: 96) and not only, I believe that, as in the case of the education components, as well as in case of connecting with each of their respective context, we have a process that goes not merely in the same direction, but in the expansion process, always in the form of interaction of *communicating vessels*.



As I mentioned a little earlier, the connection of these components with Albanian reality and Albanian context in general has remained a theoretical treatment, subject of projects, but results are not practically in sight yet. To prove such a thing, we quote below one of the intentions of didactics by Gjokutaj, which in our view constitutes the entire scope of what we submitted so far, the object of a good linguistic planning.

"The didactics of learning the Albanian language with its object that serves all other school subjects, studies: (...)

Defining the ways to more sustainable and systematic acquisition of linguistic knowledge, for possession of Albanian from the pupils and its fair and accurate use in accordance with the discursive situations and communication needs "
(Gjokutaj 2012. 17)

In our view this point, although among many other issues, constitutes the subject of language policy today. We arrive at this conclusion while taking into account the opinion of Giglioli regarding language policy under which the latter must necessarily be adapted to the country's policies in which seeks to find the application (Giglioli 2000).

The question is: is this goal achieved, if it is the aim of the Albanian language didactics, either as the subject of a good language policy?

As stated above, through education of the Albanian language in educational institutions I think that has been achieved a consistent and systematic acquisition of language skills. From a direct observation of the three study cycles (9-year-old cycle, high school and university) have reached conclusions that standard best meets its function and the Albanian language is a worth unifying standard. This is not an instant process, this is a process with deep roots, to the design of the Albanian Spelling Rules in 1972. After 1972 (the year in which was held the spelling Congress of Albanian

language) the initiative to speak Albanian standards was undertaken not just by the governmental institutions, but by all Albanian society. Isolation of the country under dictatorship with all its negative sides, contributed positively to the protection of the Albanian language.

After 90s with the change of systems (dictatorship state-democratic state) the situation and the whole social context strongly influenced in language. Albanian as any other language nowadays is frantically running in the course of globalization. Yet our standard continues to meet (although with difficulty now) its unifying function in our educational institutions, **but it operates with difficulties in other state institutions and moreover in whole Albanian society today.**

From direct observations of Durres schools, I see that children, pupils or students considerably speak the standard language. What is more important is the fact that it appears fairly stable in the 9-year school, in young children. During the class we noticed that it is quite difficult to identify where come from these pupils (remember after 90s the mechanical movements of populations were mainly from rural to urban areas and mostly from northern and southern areas towards the center). What we see is only a shift in timbre *that remains in the mind and heart.*

If you wish to find the factors of this goodness, the most important one is the requirement of teachers to respect their standards and their commitment to a better education language. Even sometimes, as mentioned above, they exceed the proper limits of bringing students up to account for the use of dialect of origin and often not showing professionalism. This requirement of account has injected in itself a kind of discipline to the students to speak in standard that is noted to be inherited until the early years of the Gymnasium. Throughout this period are clearly seen from one side a stable standard and on the other side the dialect speech: The standard that is spoken only in school and the dialect spoken in the rest of the day in the family.

After the 9-year of compulsive education, with teens begin to interfere external factors in the dialect of students. In this age there is a mixture, a substitution or alternation of language "codes" in many ways. This comes as a result of the freedom that they already have acquired in speaking. Along with the increase in age also starts breaking the rules more so when rules don't exist, because the Albanian language subject is removed from the curricula of high school.

In this period rebels the host dialect which is very palatable for the younger generation. It is a prestigious dialect (dialect of center). It is the dialect of the social group and, as we know *language is a strong factor of identity and cohesion of a social group* and definitely through language must become part of this group. Sometimes at this age are created brand new models that have no connection either with the host dialect, the dialect of origin, nor with the standard language. These models even though are outside the norm, become fashionable models by the majority of the same age throughout society. At this age they become very familiar to a foreign language L2. All these make tight circle inherited from the 9-year-old school up to now well preserved, to expand and disintegrate.

Then there remains nothing but us to once again regain the above definition: "The didactics of learning the Albanian language with its object that serves all other school subjects, studies: (...)

Defining the ways to more sustainable and systematic acquisition of linguistic knowledge, for possession of Albanian from the pupils (...) and,

Regarding the second half of the definition *for the proper and correct use of Albanian according the discourse situations and communication needs*, as we presented above, the realization of these goals remains pending.

Albanian context that all Albanians obviously know and experience, highlights the need for effective communication. In Albanian society, this problem has been recently the subject of heated discussions. Albanian feels today more than ever the need of a developed standard. Our standard should best fulfill its function in the Albanian community today. Language is an important value for society and meeting the standard function only in educational institutions, do not solve this kind of situation. Therein lies the problem. Communication needs are much greater and it deliberately leads to deformation rate. In these circumstances, more than ever there is a need for a developed standard and primarily such a thing can be accomplished through precise language policy of a good linguistic planning. In these circumstances, all we see the carelessness in writing to all other state institutions, to say nothing then to free communication between young people that has to do with lack of awareness about the importance of writing and speaking clearly and exactly the language of the nation. This is also the reason why Albanian linguists in general believe, whether they are for a good standard of cure, nor the rest that are for a very carefully touched standard, are all of one mind regarding the whole language education which is needed especially in high school where the lack of a subject as the Albanian language has consequences at the expense of accurate communication.

On the other hand with all the desire and goals of linguists to preserve the literary standard after 90s, the standard was shaken. In terms of today's Albanian contacts with other foreign languages, together with its development in the

course of globalization, this language were attributed many words and foreign models that began to undermine the system of language. An open and post-dictatorship society along with template forms of other well-structured and well maintained languages, also began to create their own models out of any rate, considering them as successful teaching models. These models change, evolve and innovate often in our society.

In this context, although is often aimed at a standard rate which should be able to contain the whole society, sometimes it is the society which decides on the rules. The linguist must decide which of these fractures are fair and which are not. So we are all aware that the terminal *ë* is not used correctly in the primary cycle, nor in the 9-year cycle, even in high school or in the cycle of high level studies (university) and so on. So, it is not used right to even by the learned nor the unlearned, neither of Chiefs, nor of ministers. This rule has long made its choice in our society. Terminal *ë* is correctly used only by linguists. The same situation is repeated for several other spelling rules such as the writing with small letters some religious words like: God, Allah, Christ, etc., or writing the word Europe-Europë for Evropë etc.

In conclusion, we can say that the spelling rules of this nature are best to improve as soon as possible in order to properly maintain and develop the standards in accordance with the requirements of a particular society.

Then, didactic activity itself may not suffice simply to the recognition of linguistic units, but these units should be used, as appropriate, where appropriate, when appropriate and to whom is appropriate to be used and if it is necessary. On the other hand, the didactic activity of the Albanian language, especially its three basic components must always see associated with the social context in which we live.

Language is not the property of the individual but the community, and as such it is not only a communication tool, but is also an important institution in the life of society (Shkurtaj 2009)

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