

# Language and Identity: Opportunities and Challenges of the Albanian-English Bilingualism

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**Abstract:** The relation between language and the form of the national identity can be assessed according to the historical perspective of the cultural factors that determined the emergence of Albanian-speaking or, vice versa, according to the same historical perspective which focuses on the characterizing role of the state and national unity. The present work outlines some dynamic aspects of the interaction between language and identity, with a focus on Albanian and English semantic and symbolic analysis. It will also explore the social and anthropological metamorphosis of the Albanian language either as being influenced by the English rules or how these interactions have framed the common speaking. As changes in the linguistic dictionary have preceded and still influence the formation of both the nation and the state in Albania, the goal of equality and substantial claims to regulate society, in harmony with fundamental social values, is certainly one of the major elements that empower the status of language as a marker for cultural diplomacy and national identity.

**Keywords:** language, Albanian, English, national identity, dynamic interaction, multilingualism

## 1. Introduction

The big sources of identity vary in degrees of significance: the most tangible resources appear in the individual's behaviours and affiliations, while the least tangible resources build our personality traits and features. As social beings, humans need to be able to survive and fulfill their various needs. Relations among individuals within society depend on the mutual position of those who interact and reproduce norms, rules, and values relating to different aspects of communal living, customs, customs, and beliefs (Bouchard, 2018; Baldi & Savoia, 2016). Narratives linked to the people's nation create representations about them and others, about what they do and what they mean about themselves and others, and the meaning of their actions. Language is an important attribute of national identity, as an idiosyncratic expression of the national spirit (Bills & Fishman, 1990), as a tool for disseminating national ideas, and as an organizer of the state's system (Eminov, 2013; Kamusella, 2001). Language is a privileged referent of national identity because, in addition to its communicative function, it fulfills a demarcation function (Wodak & Boukala, 2015; Potowski & Matts, 2015; Gibson, 2005;

Zimmermann, 1991; Bills et al.1990) as an external marker and an internal cohesive element of a group (ibidem). This is why the national language has been interpreted as the only *legitimate language* (Zimmermann, 1991). The national norms transferred by language are

internalized by group members and contribute to forming what we call their identity and at least some aspects of personality (Jenks et al., 2013). The mediating function of language connects the Ego to the world, or human beings within the material and immaterial world. Representing an object to become a concept must be objective, but the process of objectification is realized only through the mediation of the language and the latter is formed only within the word. The ego is not the abstract and transcendent individual, but a concrete member of a collective that is defined by the other (Tanzilli et al., 2021; Gazillo et al., 2012).

Therefore, objectification becomes linguistic in intersubjectivity, reciprocity, and dialogue. The function of the language is expressed in the object-to-object relationship, as a mediating example between the Ego and the world, and mostly in the subject-subject relationship, according to a dialogical model of knowledge. Language cannot be understood only as a *poiesis* (theoretical) process, but mainly as a *praxis* (practical) one (Mullamaa, 2010). We tend to live in communities to meet our needs. Human beings need a variety of knowledge to gain an identity and become an individual by being equipped with talents, a process that takes place within the communities in which one is involved throughout one's life, starting from the family, and ending in socialization throughout the individual's life. This process of socialization takes place through various agents where the individual while at the same time equipping himself with knowledge and experience specific to the community is also included in the collective memory of the same community. Thus, the individual becomes part of the community's past, present, and future (Mullamaa, 2010; Epps & Ladley, 2009). Like the community at large an individual who begins to perceive, think, and behave identifies with the community. In the same way, the identities that the individual has are in line with the number of communities of which he/she is a member. *Socio-linguistic representations* (Boyer 2003) are social representations that involve socially shared ideas about a language. By linking the linguistic order with the social order, and showing how they articulate, they allow us to understand other aspects of social reality. In this sense, sociolinguistic representations contribute to the formation of an *imaginary community* (Gafitescu, 2006; Boyer & Lomnitz, 2005). Sociolinguistic research argued that the creation of imagined communities called nations implied the development of a national consciousness where there had been the development of a national consciousness where before there was another kind of consciousness, linked to the religious community and dynastic consciousness (Boyer & Lomnitz, 2005).

The present work is the result of a longitudinal socio-linguistic investigation that was carried out in Albania, between March 2012 and December 2022. Although the local language repertoire is very colorful in different parts of the country, this, of course, does not mean that residents know all these language codes. Individual linguistic repertoires vary from one person to another. Domestic migration and foreign cultural diplomacy have influenced the Albanian Language and the second most-known language in Albania, English (Tusini, 2020; Kapo, 2022; Shehu, 2002). The citizens of the city of Tirana, the biggest for its space and population in the country, "experience" a sort of multilingualism. Some linguistic codes are shared by (almost) everyone, while others belong to only a few. From this point of view, then, the Albanian micro-society could be defined as a set of linguistic micro-communities,

of which the Albanian-speaking community is one of the paper aims of the paper to give a (socio) linguistic pictures of the community by dwelling on socio-any graphical aspects, word formation, linguistic uses and attitudes, and traits of linguistic competence in Albanian and English. Since most of the Albanian speakers who participated in the survey are of Albanian origin, it is decided to focus the content of the work on this ethnic group. This does not detract from the fact that two people of Kosovo origin and 50 Albanian emigrants, residents in a foreign country participated in the survey for which we generally use the designation that refers to linguistic rather than ethnic affiliation.

## 2. Language and national identity

Man is a being that stands out with his social aspect. Aristotle also emphasizes this aspect of human beings. Throughout history, mankind has been working to meet their common needs and to tend to live in a community for many different reasons, such as safety. This need for people to live in a community has led to different human groups have emerged. The largest of these people groups society is made up of people who share a common culture and heritage (Lou & Noels, 2018; Mullamaa, 2010). Bauman defines society as a system of "*affirmation and power that sublimates what is shared*" (Bauman, 2011). What makes societies come into being together is the desire to meet their social needs. Every society then has patterns of thinking and behaviour that distinguish it from other societies. The way of thinking and individuals who have adopted behavioural patterns distinguish themselves from members of other societies and differentiate themselves from others. As Berger and Luckmann note (1991) "*the reality that surrounds each of us, including the ways of life and the social order, represents a product of the human activity, which every human being must internalize in the process of socialization*" (cited in Parton,2008). Through socialization, the individual internalizes the social order in its micro- and macro-sociological cosmos and makes it a participant in the symbolic universe associated with the society in which it lives. More generally, in the processes of identity formation and the introjected symbolic order, language is the true "repository of collective feelings, beliefs, and thoughts"(idem). Identity is thus a construct of social processes that fix the symbolic universe of the individual. The identity of individuals is thus constructed by a set of features that establish their membership in the social group. This set of characteristics is subject to change in the material conditions of life or the psychology and experience of the individual. It ultimately represents a process of construction that researchers characterize as marked by the dialectic of identity (Oonk, 2002; Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Kruks, 1995; Economic development and globalization have directed people toward rethinking their identities in communitarian terms. So, societies in general which contain many basic characteristics such as emotions, thoughts, lives, customs, and traditions to maintain their culture, to preserve their existence, or more precisely, to preserve the existing will be vital for the maintenance of order. Modern nation-states are superior to all the identities of the individual in a more dominant collective identity, a "national" identity that encompasses all citizens. They aim to construct a "National identity". The ideology governs the state, through direct or indirect interventions in the agents of socialization to construct the national identity. These interventions are collective targets that aim to reconstruct the future through interventions in the past and to create a future. Because

how the past is remembered determines how a future is created and this will provide both the present and the future of the national identity. National identity gives way to a more reassuring regional perspective within which people seem to share a common tradition and common perspectives. At the same time, the same people locked into an increasingly local identity are open, thanks in part to new technologies supporting information and communication, to inhabitants of remote places with whom they feel they share language, culture, and religion. The process of globalization by homogenizing ways of living, thinking, and producing makes it increasingly complex to identify the other from us and identify, among our many affiliations, the prevailing identity that distinguishes us from the other.

If identity is what makes everyone to be unique, however, the elements that define it, such as language, religion, social status, ethnicity, and nationality, can correspond to multiple affiliations, giving rise to the complex socio-cultural and language that characterizes each community. The many memberships do not hold the same importance in people and any case, not at the same time; moreover, language, nationality, religion, social status, and ethnic characteristics are experienced by people as a single and prototypical identity (Gazillo et al., 2012). In a time marked by the rapid evolution of communication and the expansion of information, changes in consumption patterns and the increasing mobility of people and by the weakening of relationships in social relations, the fading of boundary lines, and the decline of references of value and institutional structures, the citizen finds himself coexisting with and facing-face a cognitive and emotional dimension of insecurity (Bauman, 2011) and, in any case, of change. Therefore, in today's societies, the question of identity is

an issue both at the multicultural level and by cultural processes (e.g., means of communication, socio-economic deterritorialization, and use of symbolic languages) that tend to overpower and equalize people's original/native diversity.

The multicultural character of our societies has contributed decisively to questioning the very perception of belonging to the same social group, which in traditional societies is based precisely on the sharing of values and knowledge. The effect of tradition in organizing, stabilizing and controlling behaviour in the different areas of our lives has been replaced by other social mechanisms, often not explicit, but influential. The disappearance of social rule-setting mechanisms, cultural norms, and values proper to traditional societies, and thus integration (Beck 2016), would make members of modern societies free from the rules imposed by the social system, and more dependent on the need to make individual decisions (Giddens, 1999). This analysis does not exhaust the issue. Indeed, it remains true that the basis of identity is still represented by a process of adherence to social groups and value systems, in terms therefore of the usual mechanism of identification on a national or ethnic basis. A crucial point concerning multicultural situations of the past is the space and time distancing of social relations and the construction of events (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Rasmussen, 2017; Liddicoat, 2016; Giddens, 1999). This entails a more complex construction or preservation of one's identity, including the linguistic component. The structuring of time and space by the media makes it possible to inhabit differently, temporally deferred, and spatially distant, with the result that different cultures and languages are subject to systematic

adaptation to global phenomena. In a context in which even the presence of different languages cannot stop the spread of ideas and cultures to all parts of the world, new understandings can frame and impact identities (Chen et al.,2008; Held & McGrew, 2002). More specifically, the possibility that the cultural production and the sense of belonging, to it, are manifested in distinct places. In this sense, identity as cultural identification determines a kind of further indeterminacy to the already complex system of reference determined by the globalization of cultural meanings (Held & McGrew, 2002).

The relationship between identity and socio-cultural and linguistic factors is now inscribed within the framework of globalization processes that have affected economic policy choices and communication mechanisms in contemporary society. The differentiation of information sources, sectorial languages, socio-economic conditions, cultures, and languages gives rise to a kind of deregulation of behaviour and expectations, causing variations and uncertainties in people's identities. People's rootedness in a cultural and linguistic tradition cannot be cut off, as certain approaches to the globalization process tend to argue (Giddens, 1999). Language is like religion, and in general moral beliefs and customs are among the most significant and determining of "belonging." Moreover, religion tends to be exclusive, language not; language is a factor of identity and a tool of communication. The common identity connotation between language and moral beliefs is expressed in the moralistic characterization of the use of a given language, in anthropological studies. The name of the language is in the symbolic universe of many communities associated with attributes such as 'sacred' and notions such as 'soul' and 'spirit.' Another aspect implied by the sacredness of one's language is morality, that is, language recalls the morals, traditions, and customs adopted by the community (ibidem, pp. 332). The link between language and morality thus represents a psychological mechanism that emerges in the most diverse cultural traditions by implying cognitive properties in general (Everaert et al., 2017; Evans & Levinson,2009; Chen et al.,2008).

Language in fixing the identity of individuals "expresses" and at the same time "provides the means" to create the link between the individual and social identities (Boutet,2021; Coulmas,2017; Joseph,2004). Language, in addition to being itself, as used, a sign of identity concerning the social group, provides the differences (lexical, morphosyntactic, and phonological) that are shown in the different identifications, of the development of new states for which the recognition of an autonomous language has been a source of legitimacy. A mechanism of identity is the identification of a language using a name. Naming has the effect of creating the preconditions for the conceptualization of often uncertain and changing entities such as the set of linguistic competence of the speakers of a group and the definition of space in a semantic space, evocative in turn of symbols, beliefs, interests, and identities. From an ethnological perspective, the naming process of a language is addressed as a social construction that arises from the 'will of homogenization' directed by institutions and linguists, as in the case of the identity of the Albanian language and the national identity that it represents (Müller et al.,2016; Madueke,2017; Jiang,2013; Thomaj,2006; Sag,2005 ). Trudgill (2004) takes the definition of *Ausbau language* (language by extension) to characterize varieties constructed as distinct languages for political, cultural, social, and historical reasons (cited in Duszak & Okulska, 2011). The attribution of names

identifying languages and cultures is thus an instrument of power politics, which through the equivalence between a language, a nation, and ethnicity is functional for the legitimization of national identity (Müller et al., 2016; Thomaj, 2006; Tsitsipis, 1998).

### 3. Albanian and English multiculturalism: challenges and opportunities

When speaking of multiculturalism, reference to the very concept of culture defined by Parekh as a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understands regulates, and structures their individual and collective lives is inevitable (2000). Further research argues that culture and multiculturalism as a way of understanding and organizing human life (Goh,2016; van de Vijver,2008; Sogunro,2001). As Parekh notes: *"sharing a culture makes it possible to identify a group*

*and distinguish it from others. Cultures and likewise cultural groups are not incorruptible, but always changing in response to circumstances."*(2011) Cultural diversity characterizes contemporary liberal-democratic societies, as it is a type of society that guarantees the freedoms of thought, expression, and association. As Priku (2013)states:” *Language in general and Albanian language in this case, over the centuries, has created and reserved some elements that prove a strong connection between language and identity, starting from anonymous creations, proverbs, etc.*” (pp.1) Further, international research has confirmed the dominance of English as a contact language and its impact on various cultures (Liu & Wei,2021; Pietikäinen,2021; Yamada,2021; MacKenzie,2020; Leitner et al.,2018; Prčić,2014; Schreier & Hundt,2013; Amouzadeh & House,2010; Csizer & Kormos,2009). Little research was done in the past years of communism to examine the inter-change of Albanian and English at the micro and macro-cultural levels. Only in the last decade have scholars been focused on the dynamic relations between the English-Albanian language, identity, and culture. It might have come because, studies as well as society, were unprepared to the impact of globalization in their culture and of course because Albanians were “eager” to be “as all Europe”. Historical and geopolitical changes and the influence that English-speaking nations had on domestic policies made it quite necessary to” speak Albish”. Business, tourism, medicine, education, entertainment, research, and social-media interactions, all speak “English”; activities that of course impact Albanian everyday life. Investments and politics speak English! And speaking is ultimately a consequence of thinking. Albanians acquired English as a second “own” language because they changed and opened their thinking toward new opportunities. Even though, there is a universal challenge of whether learning English might impact a society’s identity and self-preservation, the benefits of globalization surpass the costs (Pietikäinen ,2021; Sung,2014; Prčić ,2014; Horst,2013; van de Vijver,2008; Burns,2003).

As Pendavinji argues in his work (2018): *“Albanians, monolingual in their majority, were faced not only with different ethnic populations, but also with a new mentality and new culture, regarding the national, economic, or social organization of host countries and societies. The most sensitive and foreign feature to immigrants was the language of the host country, which immigrants – in this case, Albanians – should assimilate, to obtain a kind of economic and social prestige”*. (p.372).

In their research on the impact of English in the Albanian dialectic context, Çeliku & Veseli (2021) address the question of Albanian and English as an interacting system between the common speaking and psycholinguistic incorporation. Authors argue that “*English has already been confirmed as the global lingua franca. It is spoken and heard in almost every home, especially by the younger generations, who speak it in parallel with their mother tongue. We are also exposed to this language through technological means which include the names of those means too. The Albanian language must accept and use words and objects as they come after penetrating through different ways*” (pp. 2). Here the authors view the “contamination” of the Albanian language by the English terms in technology, informatics, and the symbolic terms of emojis, especially in the youth and students such as Hardware, Software, Hard Disc, Monitor (monitor), Laptop, USB, PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, Windows, Inbox, Link, File, Account, Password, Printer, Virus, Desktop, Chat, Draft, Search GPS, etc.

As other research revealed, one of the major issues of the English and Albanian corporation is the inter-translation of Albanian pronouns, names, or adverbs in their equivalent. For example the Albanian equipollent of the name “George” is “Gjergj”, but, it is relatively difficult to find a British to call someone “Gjergj”, so, Albanians have “replaced” their authentic word- names with their like in English (Draçini & Murati, 2018; Kapaj, 2011; Shkurtaj, 2004). Further research revealed that the influence of English on Albanian developed a new form of the Albanian language, the “Alblish” (Kapo, 2022; Kapo, 2016). According to the author’s research, 70% of the pseudo-Anglicisms in the Albanian corpus and media should be categorized as belonging to the categories of “morphological change” or clipping. In terms of word formation and the productivity of the English loans in Albanian, this longitudinal research found a total of 253-word families or 16.6% of the corpus, from two to five constituents, coined with English constituents and Albanian suffixes: e.g., “*lob–look–lobim–lobues*” for the English “*lobby (n.)–lobby (v.)–lobbyist*”: the English stem lob plus the Albanian verb formation suffix -oj, the Albanian noun formation suffix -im, and the Albanian adjective formation suffix -ues, etc. (idem, pp.5). Most of the nominal and adjectival English loans take inflectional and derivational endings of their respective gender, number, and case, according to the Albanian language rules.

#### 4. Conclusion

Language is an objective instrument in the construction of identities. Social representations involved in this process, are constituted, reproduced, and legitimized through public and institutional discourses, including research. In the case of national identities, public and institutional discourses transmit nationalistic and institutional discourses transmit nationalist and purist representations within which representations of language occupy a prominent place as a fundamental role of nationality. The present work outlined different aspects of the relationship between language and a community of people and the dynamics a language can reveal while being continuously in progress. Culture and identity indeed understood as the symbolic universe that society shapes in each of us, are in the language, as the linguistic system, the grammar follows the life of the speakers. Each language expresses the psychological mechanisms and the historical-social, and cultural

factors that determine the way of communicating through it. Language is also the best transmitter of an inter-generational cultural ADN. Linguistic choices in this sense assume the role of indicators of phenomena and social differences. So even if the deep properties of our linguistic map are universal, the processes that bring languages into contact with people's attitudes and community rules influence the way. We have investigated this link in the linguistic history of Albanian, and the impact that English had on the way Albanians think, feel, and communicate. Through a longitudinal review, we explored the way English semantics and word formation were acquired in Albanian day-to-day interactions. Based on the literature examined, among the variables that could determine the “today” Albanian word-formation and production towards social and non-social stimuli, is English as the second-most-known language in the country. A very interesting finding in the present work is related to the impact of English-ism in the Albanian anthropological and psychological being as a post-communist country (Kapo, 2022). As further highlighted in the studies examined in the present work, the results of the research in a variety of national and international studies, confirmed how language colours the subject and national identity and how it transforms people's thoughts, beliefs, and actions universally (Kapo, 2011-2022; Lou et al., 2018; Bouchard, 2018; Müller et al., 2016; Jenks et al., 2013; Brisset, 2013; Thomaj, 2006; Shehu, 2002; White & Dunn, 2001). Future research should be oriented toward the deepeners in psycho-social and economic impact and rising incentives of learning and certifying the Albanian language internationally a significant tool for promoting National Identity.

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