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Review Article

The Linguistic Dependence of an Independent Country

State of the native Albanian, the impact of English and the multilingual perspective of Kosovo Albanians

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Abstract

This paper presents an outline of the current state of Albanian language in Kosovo in view of the impact of other languages, English in particular. It attempts to understand the underlying causes for the intrusion of English from a diachronic socio-linguistic viewpoint, by looking at similar phenomena across the world and relevant research by linguistic scholars. The paper seeks answers to the following questions: What are the causes of English expansion in Kosovo, and how is it affecting the Albanian language? What determines the choice of language and the level of tolerance for borrowings? Furthermore, are there suggested approaches on how to treat this type of modern-day bilingualism? The scope of this paper is in keeping with current efforts to see language changes from a constructive angle, that of bilingualism and multilingualism as global phenomena. In so doing, it aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the need to view language as organic and inextricably connected to the evolving social and cognitive fabric of its users.

Keywords: *language, bilingualism, Albanian, Kosovo, English*

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Language: Definitions and Background

Communication is the means that enables mutual relationships among human beings and the validation of their existence. It materializes primarily in the form of language, as ours is the only species able to verbalize our thoughts by uttering combined sounds. A purely human method of communicating ideas (Sapir, 1921), language as we know it has been around for at least 50,000 years (Harari, 2015), although there is no scientific consensus on the matter. Some form of communication, presumably through language, is thought to have appeared with the emergence of *Homo sapiens* between 200,000 and 300,000 years ago. Precisely this skill set *Homo sapiens* apart from other human species enabling them to survive and thrive (Harari, 2015). With as many as 7000 languages in existence today (Simons, 2019), countless definitions have been formulated about language, yet it remains one of the most complex processes attributed to human beings which is hard to be confined to one definition alone.

Noam Chomsky (1957) relied on his universal grammar to define language as 'a set of [finite or infinite] sentences made of a finite set of elements', Ferdinand de Saussure generally argued that language is a structured system of arbitrary signs, Sir Richard Paget (1930) had a physical-onomatopoeic theory about the origin of language, and Charles Darwin (1871) famously speculated that spoken language may have arisen from our ability to imitate sounds from the natural world. Definitions of language encapsulate a wide range, due to the large number of biological, psychological, social and other human processes related to and/or set in motion by it. Furthermore, advancements in scientific research and technology have carved new paths towards understanding language, unearthing new connections with other processes in humans as well as the world around them. Just a few decades

ago Gauker (1990) affirmed that language is a tool for affecting changes in the subject's environment, while Jackendoff (1996) specified that it is linguistic formulation that allows us a 'handle' for attention to events. Finally, Clark (1998), and Clark and Chalmers (1998) argued for the causal potencies of language and suggested that language complements our thoughts (see also Rumelhart et al, 1986).

The multifaceted nature of language is made more complex by the two forms of expression: spoken and written language. The latter clearly evolved from the need to express spoken language in a variety of agreed-upon symbols (Saussure, 1916). It is spoken language whose origins are still subject to scientific debate by linguists, anthropologists and psychologists. Despite the fact that it comes naturally to human beings, spoken language is a highly sophisticated and intricate process whose manner of birth lacks definitive physical evidence; this has led some to suggest that this question should be dealt with by philosophers (Hawhee, 2006). While written language obeys well-constructed systems and rules of grammar, spoken language is more flexible, it obeys individuals and is subject to social context. Written language is considered the standard which spoken language ought to adhere to in formal communications, although these roles have undergone significant conversion over the past decade.

Although native language provides the foundations of individual knowledge of the world, the need to speak other languages is now an undisputed practical reality. With the advent of modern technology and the overall dynamics of the 21st century, language has also become a matter of personal preference, adding the complexity of human relationships to the challenge of understanding language (J. K. Buda, 2006). In that vein, preference for languages other than one's native tongue is a phenomenon mostly observed in countries where

smaller languages are spoken. The use of English language in Kosovo is one such instant of the informal adoption of a geographically distant language into one of the oldest languages in the world, Albanian (Matasović, 2018). It is the official language in the Republic of Albania, and the main official language in the Republic of Kosovo, where 93% of the population is Albanian; it is also an official language in Montenegro and North Macedonia. This paper will focus on Albanian language in Kosovo, including aspects of linguistic processes in Albania for comparative purposes.

At language's core lays the innate human inclination to belong and be identified with a certain group or community - although identity has constantly been a puzzling phenomenon for scholars of various disciplines due to its abstract nature (Reka, 2016). The language one speaks and the identity of the speaker are inseparable, which shows that every act of language is an act of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Identity as a concept is deeply intertwined with the language spoken by a given community, to the point of being a determinant factor in the distinctiveness of national groups in particular (Reka, 2017). Invariably, it is constantly influenced by social context, and it cannot be viewed as an empty entity without looking at the ever-changing settings in which it operates. In the 21st century identities are mixing as people migrate and resettle. Intense Albanian migrations have been known to occur periodically, most notably Albanians in the 1970-es migrating from Kosovo to Germany and Switzerland, as well as the mass exodus from Albania to Italy and Greece after the fall of communism in the early 1990s. Entire generations of bilingual Albanians are now becoming the new norm of a mixed linguistic identity, often viewed with concern and interpreted with some confusion by native Albanians back home. This process of partial assimilation as a result of

integration is known to occur naturally, and such adaptability in a bilingual or multilingual environment shapes a 'unique identity of the child' (Balák, 2005), a phenomenon which has systematically gained traction among scholars in a wide array of interdisciplinary studies over the past decades.

All languages are equipped with suitable systems to fit the needs of their speakers, and when the needs change the language adapts (Edwards, 2009). The social network theory elaborated by Milroy (1980) pioneered research into the fact that language belongs to the people and it is shaped by the needs of a given community. However, a tunnel view on the matter no longer suffices in today's societies where increased mobility, smaller families, and living in bilingual or multilingual environments is affecting languages in multiple ways, most of them unprecedented.

The opportunity to use one's native language is the essence of freedom, as, unlike animals whose actions are dictated by nature alone, humans contribute to their operations by being free agents who are vocal about their thoughts and intentions (Chomsky, 1973). Like countries and people, languages too have been affected by periods of oppression with lasting impact. In mid-20th century Spain the Catalan language was suppressed under Franco's rule, alongside other regional and minority languages like Basque and Galician (Woolf, 2017). Earlier in the 20th century during the Japanese occupation of Korea, Korean language was outright banned in schools and in the workplace. In the 19th century Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Belarusian languages suffered under the measures of 'russification', despite several uprisings. In the United States linguistic discrimination included forbidding the public speaking of German during World War II and executing Russian speakers after the Alaskan purchase (Kinzler *et al*, 2007). In Turkey linguicide was part of the genocide on Kurds,

and in South Africa imposed language policies were what initiated anti-Apartheid riots (Kinzler *et al*, 2007).

Similarly in Kosovo, part of Serbia under the former Yugoslavia, the Albanian language faced severe restrictions during the 20th century (Vickers, 1998). An intensification of the assimilation policies by the Serbian government in 1990 banned the Albanian as language of instruction at all levels of education. Thousands of Albanian teachers lost their jobs due to their ethnicity, and throughout the following decade about 355.000 Albanian students attended schools in private homes and basements sustaining a parallel system of education. Only between 1991 and 1992 many public libraries closed down and over 100.000 books in Albanian were destroyed, along with 8000 magazines, newspapers and other publications in Albanian.

As of 2008, Kosovo is an independent country recognized by the majority of UN member states (Rohan, 2018). Ever since Kosovo's *de facto* liberation in 1999, Kosovo Albanians are free to use their native language everywhere and be educated in Albanian, which has coincided with the global expansion of the English language. As a result, the linguistic liberties fought for have been diluted by the growing need to learn and use English, mostly for practical purposes, but also due to the absence of adequate promotion and linguistic advancement of the Albanian.

Choice and Circumstance

According to a UNDP report half of Kosovo's near 2 million population is under the age of 25, making the median country age 29.5 years old and making Kosovo the youngest country in Europe. A branding campaign to attract foreign investment in 2010 featured 'Kosovo - The Young Europeans' as the country's

most distinct feature and a coveted asset in an otherwise aging continent. Being so young, Kosovo Albanians are prone to modern trends, they identify with western values and English language is the epitome of everything they aspire to. Many prefer English to Albanian in social interactions, displaying code-switching skills and language mixing with natural ease. Freedom of thought, lifestyle and the impact of multimedia play a major role, and English is the main tool enabling young people to adopt models from the English-speaking world in their quest to be productive members of the global community. Social media occupy the pole position, as one of the key platforms enabling flagrant displays of language mixing like the example below (Fig. 1):

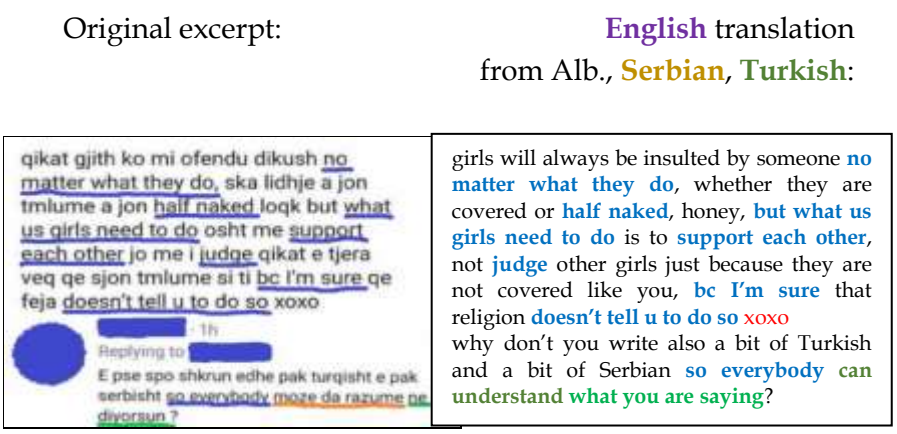

Figure 1 (Source: Instagram).

The 'young Europeans' in Kosovo are not the only ones resorting to English, as Kosovo Albanian journalists and politicians also make extensive use of 'anglicisms' in their attempts to sound more profound and appeal to readers and voters in higher measure (Sejdiu & Alla, 2015). The same authors refer to criticism by scholar Rami Memushaj about the

poor quality of trend-setting individuals in public discourse, and the fact that general audiences are prone to follow their example, thus allowing for degeneration of the language (Memushaj, 2011). Language advancement may not be a top priority in times of major transitions but language cannot be left to its own devices, and these matters must be dealt with promptly and strictly by linguistic experts (Nuhiu, 2008).

Albanian is not among the high-impact languages in the world today. Its relevance is equated to the number of speakers worldwide, estimated at roughly 7.5 million in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Croatia, Turkey, Ukraine, US, Canada, Argentina, Chile. The Albanian language in Kosovo has its own brand of issues that are multifaceted. Decades of disrupted reading culture in Kosovo, due to various socio-political factors, have produced a dubious relationship between written language and readers. This phenomenon persists, despite a recently increased interest in reading where literature translated into Albanian from other languages, mainly English, is widely preferred. The grammatical complexity of Albanian still taught through bookish methodologies versus the practicality of English grammar does the former no favors, as English constantly comes in attractive ways through modern technology. Furthermore, between the Tosk-based language standard and the prevalent colloquial Gheg dialect, English may be a potentially convenient fix as well as a shorter path towards joining the billion-strong global community of physical and virtual non-native English speakers.

The role of education in formal instruction is another factor that deeply impacts attitudes towards the Albanian language in Kosovo. Poorly written textbooks in schools have resulted in meagre learning outcomes and mass aversion towards education by young and adult students in Kosovo

public schools. A 2013 report by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN Kosovo) revealed severe shortcomings in the compilation of textbooks. The report identified highly abstract and contradictory language and texts overloaded with terminology unsuitable for the children's ages, besides scientific inaccuracies and illogical facts.

The most important scientific event of Albanology in the world, the International Seminar on Albanian Language, Literature and Culture, now in its 38th edition, is the main pillar around which most research evolves concerning the state of Albanian language today. It seeks to promote and advance language research by hosting a wide array of Albanian and international scholars sharing their research and thoughts on Albanian language, culture and literature. This event is held entirely in Albanian and has a high impact on scientific developments in language studies. Especially in recent years the Seminar has gained major prominence as one of the most substantial events of the kind, having consistently kept up its publication tradition. The other event of academic and cultural significance in Kosovo, now in its 18th edition, Prishtina International Summer University, is held entirely in English. It brings together international academics and foreign students, and it appears to serve a diplomatic purpose rather than a domestic one (Saliu, 2013).

English versus Albanian

The reasons for the expansion of English among Kosovo Albanians are manifold and complex. Besides the consideration of English as the *lingua franca* of the Enlightenment era and the underlying notion of freedom and progress it has propagated since, now there is also a distinct cultural dimension attached to the English language facilitating its expansion, bearing in mind

that an entire industry that includes art, education, social values and lifestyle comes in English. The words used and the accompanying narratives influence people's perceptions (Edwards, 2009) and the desire to embrace and identify with progressive global trends follows naturally. From a cognitive standpoint, language helps organize one's knowledge and reflects the needs, interests and experiences of individuals and cultures (Geeraerts and Cuyckens, 2010). As these needs and interests change, so does language.

With over 1.5 billion speakers worldwide, of whom 427 million native speakers (Raine, 2012), the global dominance of the English language extends to every corner of the planet through technology, media, literature, art and culture, as well as in daily conversations of both native and non-native speakers. It is commonly argued that the massive expansion of the English language dates back to the colonial past of the British Empire. By the year 1922 it was the biggest empire in history, holding under its crown one fourth of the Earth's land territories (Fig. 2) inhabited by 450.000 million people (Raine, 2012). The official language of the colonized lands was English, and it continued to be an official or national language even after many colonies gained independence, thanks to leaders who were themselves products of colonial education (Phillipson, 1992).

Figure 2. The British Empire, circa 1922. Image courtesy of WikiMedia.

Another reason for this expansion was the emergence and progress in the 18th century of the United States of America. By pooling together the world's brightest minds to create opportunities for economic and social development, as well as unprecedented scientific and cultural advancement, the U.S.A. provided an extraordinary environment ripe for prosperity to which the English language was perfectly suited. The expression 'linguistic imperialism' is an equally suitable way of describing the events that followed up until today, defined as 'the dominance asserted and retained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (Phillipson, 2004). While observing that the use of English was rapidly increasing across Europe, Phillipson (2004) referred to the apparent superiority of English towards other languages, as it continues to evolve at a pace other languages cannot keep up with.

"Imposer sa langue, c'est imposer sa pensée" said the French linguist Claude Hagège, meaning "to impose one's language is to impose one's thinking". A connoisseur of as many as fifty languages and propagator of the idea that the expansion of English poses a threat to the preservation of other

languages, he pointed at the volatility and lack of precision of the English language. This may serve as some explanation of English flexibility in word-formation and the limitless space it provides for free and rich expression. Under these circumstances, when confronted with an English word that best describes something, as opposed to a rare native word, provided such word exists, the Albanian speaker opts for the former as the easier choice (Wheinreich 1953 at Nuhiu 2008).

Since 1999 the Albanian language in Kosovo is freely used in all public and official settings, and education is no longer tarnished by any linguistic or political ideology. Between 1999 and 2008 Kosovo was run by an interim United Nations administration and secured by NATO-led forces, whereby English skills were in high demand. The United States of America and the United Kingdom played a crucial role in Kosovo's liberation, and the culture brought on predominantly by the English language was associated with the values of freedom and democracy. Consequently English established itself as the *de facto* language of business and life. In 1999 English was indeed formalized, besides Albanian and Serbian, as an official language with extraterritorial status (Rugova, 2015). The new criminal and civil codes of Kosovo drafted in Albanian, Serbian, and English by the UN-led administration in Kosovo stipulated that the English version would prevail in cases of conflict between either of these languages.

Following liberation, Kosovo Albanians were introduced to new ideas about democracy, technology and education, and new ideas need new words. When a new term is needed, the initial tendency is to adopt an existing term before inventing a new one (Finch, 2005). It is argued that the temporary use of foreign words is acceptable until suitable counterparts are formed; it takes time for new notions or objects to be assigned a word in any language and even longer for them to settle and

establish themselves in popular parlance. Although one of the ways to avoid foreign words is to create new ones by local linguists, no such initiative has been undertaken in Kosovo yet (Sejdiu & Alla, 2015). Furthermore, existing Albanian words are being sidelined by English words like *obligim* (Alb. Detyrim), *atak* (sulm), *kompetencë* (aftësi), *implementim* (zbatim/jetësim), *resurs* (burim), *event* (ngjarje), *departament* (sektor), *staf* (personel) etc. (Sejdiu & Alla, 2015). The fact that some of the Albanian counterparts of these words are old Latin borrowings is beyond the scope of this paper, since their presence in the standard dictionaries of Albanian language has long been solidified, and they are not targeted by the presently cited authors.

Similar challenges are also observed in Albania, where foreign words are increasingly endangering existing words to the point of rendering them obsolete. Albanian professor of linguistics and renowned translator Edmond Tupja recently brought up the acute example of the widely used adjective *fleksibël* (Eng. flexible) which has replaced five Albanian adjectives with the same meaning, namely: *i përkulshëm* (bendable), *i epshëm* (something that gives/bends/stretches), *i fushkët* (relatively rare: supple enough to be bent into different shapes), *i lakueshëm* (pliable), *i butë* (soft). All these words can mean *flexible* both physically and metaphorically. The phenomenon has further repercussions, as it is followed by the use in Albanian of the noun *fleksibilitet* (Eng. flexibility) instead of the corresponding original Albanian nouns *përkulshmëri, epshmëri, lakueshmëri* and *butësi*. Furthermore, Prof. Tupja, a vocal proponent of language preservation, refers to the use of the word *indicie* in court rooms and journalism to express any indication or indices pointing to a piece of evidence or a news story, replacing the Albanian words *tregues* (Eng.

indicator/indication), *e dhënë* (data), *e thënë* (utterance, uttered), and *shenjë* (sign).

Against this backdrop, the latest dictionary of contemporary Albanian vocabulary (Elezi, 2006) contains 41.000 words with 54.000 meanings not found in earlier dictionaries. Compared to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (12th edition, Oxford University Press, 2011) with 240.000 entries, the task of linguistic equivalence between these two languages appears impossible.

State of the Language

English is the only language in the world whose non-native speakers outnumber native speakers by three to one. Just over a decade ago one of the world's leading experts on language, David Crystal, estimated that 1.5 billion people, or around one quarter of the world's population, could communicate reasonably well in English. Having infiltrated even countries traditionally conservative in matters of native tongue, such as France and Italy, it is no surprise to see its dominant place in Kosovo, where English frequently replaces Albanian from university lectures and journalistic jargon to political parlance (Sejdiu & Alla, 2015). The expected linguistic progress in Kosovars' native Albanian has been thwarted by the rapid pace of social, political and economic developments, as well as by the fact that education quality in Kosovo remains low, scientific research is minimal, while relevant institutional efforts are virtually inexistent. In great measure due to ethnic and linguistic repression, the pursuit of education in general was a less attractive option in Kosovo during the second half of the past century, especially for 16-25 year olds who had family members in the diaspora able to secure them employment. Likewise, higher education was unnecessary for the children of

many families that received remittances on a regular basis. Considering that education has long been identified as a key aspect of human capital formation and human development, the repercussions are likely to be catastrophic.

Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 prompted changes which were both systemic and status-related. The shift from a communist to a democratic system happened simultaneously with the change of status from a province of the former Yugoslavia into an independent state, and the ongoing transition affected all walks of life, including language. The language spoken in Kosovo is a variation of Gheg, the northern Albanian dialect spoken in the northern half of Albania and in Kosovo. Standard Albanian is based entirely on the Tosk dialect spoken in the southern part of Albania, which makes the linguistic situation in Kosovo more complex. While the two dialects are mutually intelligible, in Kosovo a mix of Albanian Gheg dialect and standard Albanian is used in formal settings, while the typical Gheg dialect is used in all social interactions. The local population takes pride in dialect diversity, as the alternative art scene in particular has capitalized immensely on the rich Gheg dialect which enables concise statements with powerful social messaging. Given such state of the language, the growing presence of English words in the Albanian vocabulary is an unforeseen challenge, albeit reasonably predictable.

Many languages, particularly small ones, have been affected by English, and Albanian is not an exception. Kosovo is the newest country in the world with a population of just under 2 million, of whom 93% are ethnic Albanian. Albanian is an unaffiliated branch of Indo-European languages (Bopp, 1854), presumed to be the sole survivor of ancient Illyrian since much of present-day Albanian lands and neighboring territories where Albanians live were inhabited by Illyrians during the

Antiquity (Matasović, 2018). Given its geographic position and history of constant foreign invasions, substantial borrowing from other languages is observed across all Albanian regions, as the influence of another language and culture, regardless of its temporary or decisive nature, is unavoidable (Friedmann, 2011). A survey conducted in the 1960-es on the etymology of 1424 most commonly used Albanian words revealed that 667 words were of Proto-Albanian origin, while 757 came from other languages (Çabej at Vehbiu, 2012). The century-long encounters with other peoples have left an imprint and are still reflected in the Albanian lexicon (Çabej, 1977); examples include influences from Slavic languages, as well as countless loanwords from Latin and Modern Greek, some of which very old (Matasović, 2018). As a general principle, each language has two main reasons for borrowing from another language: need and prestige (Kulla, 2010). For centuries the Albanian language was passed on by oral tradition, being initially documented in writing only in the 15th century, so need may be the most reasonable motivation for its adoption of words from other richer languages. Furthermore, there are well-documented linguistic remnants of Ottoman invasion, often referred to as 'orientalisms' (Harri, 2015), which are also observed across the Balkan linguistic and dialectical spectrum.

Bloomfield has elaborated on the notions of 'cultural borrowing' from a neighboring language and 'intimate borrowing' from a language spoken around the same area as the borrower (Dillon, 1945), predominantly observed to happen from a more sophisticated language into a less sophisticated one. Dillon (1945) references borrowings from English, or Brittonic, incorporated into the Irish and Celtic languages, that is among people living in lands adjacent to one another. Linguistic influences among neighboring countries are known to occur naturally, and yet the intrusion of a language such as

English, which is geographically, historically and linguistically very distant from Albanian, is unusual and requires special attention (Vehbiu, 2012). While it is common for members of Kosovo diaspora in the US and UK to speak English in everyday life, it is uncommon for those living in an Albanian-speaking country to do so.

The natural progression of Albanian language was historically affected by political factors and their social and cultural side effects. Over the 20th century, the language used in Albania and Kosovo went through different kinds of pressure on both sides of the Albanian border with different kinds of impact. In Kosovo, a country with stronger non-standard varieties, Albanian was affected by Serbo-Croatian as the official language of the former Yugoslavia, and German as the language of a large diaspora (Jusufi, 2018). In communist Albania language purism was embraced (Jusufi, 2018), particularly targeting turkisms and dialects at the offset of a systematic process of disseminating the new language standard. The Albanian standard literary language was established in 1972 at the Congress of Albanian Orthography held in Tirana (Elsie, 2010). The Congress united Albanian linguists and intelligentsia from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia and was an important unification event in the history of Albanian language identity, as shown by its motto 'one nation, one language'. However, of the two main Albanian dialects, northern Gheg and southern Tosk, the latter was favored due to the political agenda in Albania at the time. A map of dialects (Fig. 3 & 4) shows that the Gheg variation is spoken in the northern half of Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia, while the Tosk variation is spoken in the southern part of Albania. The issue of Gheg exclusion from Albanian standard language has resurfaced after the 1990-es, with some scholars requesting that the standard be revised and others

defending it (Mantho, 2009), though this is a topic for another paper.

Fig. 3 Map of Albanian dialects, by Robert Elsie (retrieved from: http://dialects.albanianlanguage.net).

Fig. 4 Legend of map of Albanian dialects, by Robert Elsie (retrieved from: http://dialects.albanianlanguage.net).

Albanian Bilingualism (Multilingualism)

Speaking more than one language is not new to Albanians, nor is it difficult for them to learn foreign languages, being equipped with a complex phonological structure in their native tongue (Struga, 2016). Throughout history the Albanian people have been occupied and under foreign administration, having to use additional languages from Turkish and Slavic to Italian and German. During the brief decades following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian Revival movement sought to establish the foundations for a new national identity based primarily on the Albanian language as a core unifying element. The architects of the movement were distinguished Albanian intellectuals, illuminists who tried to usher in progress by encouraging education in the native language. However their efforts were thwarted by two world wars and the rise of communism, resulting in new kinds of oppression. Over the second half of the 20th century language progress in Albania was limited and carefully scrutinized by the communist regime, whereas in Kosovo the Albanian was suppressed as Serbo-Croatian was the official language of the former Yugoslavia (Rugova, 2015). This likely shaped a general perception of and adaptation to bilingualism as a tool for survival, whereby foreign language was not only a means of communication but also a means of self-preservation. Teaching in Albanian was banned until the turn of the 20th century, publications were scarce and most of them occurred outside the country, and illiteracy was rampant. Such constraints no longer exist, yet this language remains largely unexplored and under-documented, while the benevolent intrusion of English is challenging the domain of linguistic research and development on the Albanian language.

As a new phenomenon among Kosovo Albanians, English expansion must be treated in new ways and in a manner

appropriate to the place and time of its occurrence. Sporadic attempts to deal with the state of Albanian have been ineffective and rather divisive, between the rigid views of neo-purists and those of language liberals. On the one hand, it is not right to force back words that have fallen out of use naturally over time, or insinuate that existing words can be burdened with additional meanings (Vehbiu, 2011). On the other hand, one may question the suitability and value of allowing the infiltration in Albanian syntax of randomly used affirmative structures like *çfarë ai bën* following an English structure (literally *what he does*), instead of the typical Albanian construction *çfarë bën ai*, where the switching of places between the subject *ai* and the predicate *bën* is entirely unnecessary and to no semantic benefit[1].

Similarly to Latin, which is still prevalent centuries on as a lingua franca *sui generis*, the supremacy of the English language appears unlikely to be challenged in our lifetime. However, a number of scientists who are native speakers of English believe that the English language merely facilitates people coming together due to the ease of acquisition of its basics, but it will not be so forever. The British linguist David Graddol takes a liberating view on this state of languages in his book *The Future of English?* (2000). Although English may become *the* global language, the world will simultaneously be filled with new generations of bilingual and multilingual speakers and, compared to the latter, 'English native speakers will find themselves to be a minority' (Graddol, 2000).

[1] The full affirmative sentence *I don't know what he does* in Albanian is *nuk e di çfarë bën ai* (author's note)

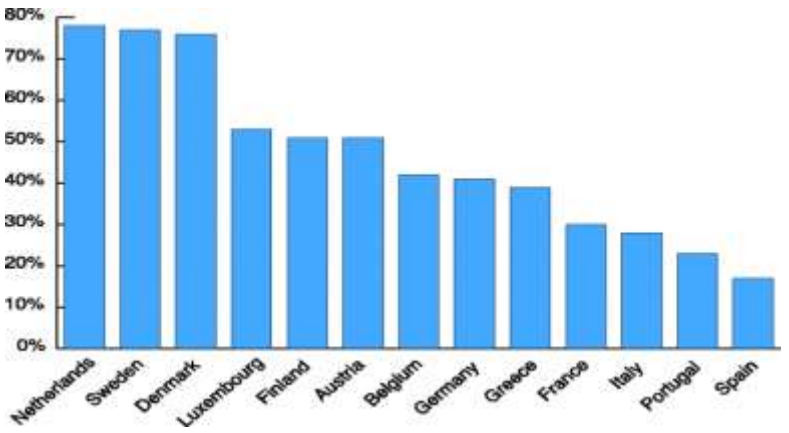

Figure 4. Percentage of EU populations claiming they speak English. Courtesy of Scimago.

In the new world order, according to Graddol, multilingualism will be the norm and linguistic switching will be common among most people in the world. This paper moves for a similar pragmatic take on these processes, bearing in mind the evolving dynamics of today's world, the growing global community and linguistic mixtures in the making over the past decade. It is becoming increasingly difficult to identify monolingual adults in most countries of the world, among other things due to wide access to technology and higher mobility. Attitudes towards bilingualism and multilingualism have begun to shift towards acceptance, albeit with questions attached, but this new unprecedented reality cannot be ignored, refuted, or simply labelled 'semilingualism' (Hinnenkamp, 2005). In *The Future of English?* (2000), Graddol recalls a comment by language expert David Crystal in which the latter posited that 'there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. There are … no precedents to help us see what happens to a language when it achieves genuine world status' (Crystal, 1997 at Graddol, 2000).

As a result of these processes, entire generations are being raised with more than one language, which is why studies on linguistics and multilingualism have multiplied enormously in recent years. In particular bilingualism has been scientifically proven to be highly beneficial in terms of cognitive development, in stark opposition to earlier views which considered bilingualism an obstacle in psycholinguistic development. An increasing number of studies point to the benefits of bilingualism, in particular augmented neuroplasticity in bilingual/multilingual individuals as well as preventative and minimizing effects on age-related conditions such as dementia (Wang *et al*, 2004). In the case of Albanians, their easy mastery of other languages and the flexibility of acquisition appear to be negatively correlated to skills in the native tongue, as the better they become at foreign languages the less effective they appear to be in their native language; although such hypothesis warrants genuine field research.

Conclusions

The overuse of English by Kosovo Albanians is due to a combination of factors and circumstances including but not limited to history, geopolitics, demographics and the nature of the language itself. It is also a result of the heavy international presence established in Kosovo after the war in 1999, the influence of globalism, technological advances and social media, as well as being an expression of lifestyle reflecting the aspirations of a new country and its young citizens. Indeed, English is a highly effective platform providing massive opportunities for global distribution of ideas and expressions of creativity. At the same time, bilingualism and multilingualism are becoming norm on a global basis, with freedom of movement, increased mobility, and technology enabling faster

acquisition of foreign languages, among other factors. In light of this new reality, new ways should be identified for treating the state of Albanian language in the 21st century.

As far as the institutionalization of language development and research goes, the existing debate on many fronts has assumed a rather rhetorical and journalistic character instead of scientific. Views range from Topalli (2014) insisting that the Albanian language needs to be enriched rather than changed, to Memushaj (2015) complaining that Albanian orthography is being disrupted by allowing solid rules to be put under the lens for no apparent reason. In good part, the lack of coordination is due to challenging and lengthy transitions across Albanian borders. In order to treat bilingualism properly it must be understood correctly, and social context is one of the main factors to be considered (Romaine, 1995). The social fabric of Albanian society in Kosovo is morphing and transitioning on many levels, which makes the task of analyzing linguistic trends complex and multidimensional.

From general observation, bilingualism and multilingualism seem to have become the norm rather than the exception worldwide, despite the lack of formal statistical data (Hammarström, 2016). At the same time, the discourse on multilingualism has become a centerpiece of 21st century scientific research, which is increasingly interdisciplinary in nature drawing from the domains of psychology, cognition and neuroscience, among others.

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