

---

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE PRESS IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

**Rezearta Murati**

University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Albania, [rezearta.murati@unishk.edu.al](mailto:rezearta.murati@unishk.edu.al)

**Merita Hysa**

University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Albania, [merita.hysa@unishk.edu.al](mailto:merita.hysa@unishk.edu.al)

**Abstract:** In this paper, we observe aspects of the language and language planning in the pages of the Albanian periodicals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the first stage of the Albanian language planning the press played a major role as the only forum for the dissemination of the opinions of the scholars, specialists, and language admirers, as well, who may not have had a proper language preparation, but they had the will and desire to make a contribution to the Albanian language. The number of magazines and newspapers published at that time in Albania was relatively high although many did not have great longevity. However, some of them managed to survive the rapid development of the Albanian society and managed to create their own tradition, maintaining a clear physiognomy with well-defined and pursued fanaticism and sometimes with great difficulty.

We think that the functions the Albanian press has done to help a common literary language can be divided into several aspects: it mainly managed to reflect discussions, enterprises, and institutional decisions about the language; the press came to present problems and discussions about specific aspects of the language which required a closer scientific examination; the press had the ability that through selected publications, presented documents, and historical and scientific fact analyzing to create a certain opinion depending on the interests of publishers or a certain group of people.

In order to observe these attitudes and functions that fulfilled the published temporal issues during the first stage of the Albanian language planning, we thought to look closely at two of them in our paper.

We have chosen, as the subject of our survey, the magazines "Albania" and "Hylli i Dritës", as the most long-lived magazines, with a clearly defined and evaluated purpose in and out of the Albanian borders, for the high level of articles published in them.

The criteria for our observation methodology is to focus on the articles that directly or indirectly deal with matters that have a logical and factual connection to the language planning of the Albanian or other languages. Our observation would have a descriptive character of the authors' views and, in some cases, we would make analyzes, approaches, and comparisons among them.

**Keywords:** language planning, language policy, Albanian press, language standardization.

Language planning is a new field of academic study dating back to about the 1960s. The majority of the first literature in this field of language studies focuses on issues related to the linguistic processes of developing countries, which are subject to social, economic, and political change. In this perspective, language planning and policies should take into account the social, economic, political, and educational context in which unequal power and resources compete with one another.

The language creates a cultural system that has incredible complexity and is miraculously flexible. Changes in language are related to changes in non-linguistic aspects. These changes can be: drafting a national constitution, drafting a law that defines which language or variant should be official, etc.

From the time when the term "language planning" was first used by Haugen, numerous studies that have been the subject of various language planning courses in the world were conducted by researchers such as Fishman, Ferguson, Rubin, Das Gupta, Nahir, Kloss, Neustupny, Ruiz, etc. These scholars and others presented their theoretical formulas on language planning.

Haugen, with *language planning*, implies the design of a spelling, grammar, and normative dictionary as a guide for the speakers and writers of a non-homogeneous language community.

The goals for which linguistic planning is undertaken can be very different such as language purification, language revival, language reform, language standardization, language proliferation, lexicon modernization, unification of terminology, stylistic simplification, interpersonal communication, language maintenance, standardization of auxiliary codes, etc.

Regarding the structure of language planning, the terms "*status planning*" and "*corpus planning*" were presented for the first time by Haugen in 1968. However, in 1989, Cooper introduced the third term "*acquisition planning*" referring to the third aspect of language planning.

*Status planning* refers to the attribution of functions to one or several varieties. In this way, status planning is a language planning strategy, in which the primary level (the government) and the secondary level (the institutions and organizations) define the functions that one or several varieties must fulfill in a country or province. The first step in status planning is to select the code that will be raised to the norm/standard. So, making a decision on which of the varieties normally present in the territory will become prevalent or official. This decision can be imposed for historical, political, social or economic reasons, as it has happened in most European countries despite the different modalities.

*Corpus planning* is precisely the study of work that is carried out over a particular code to put it in the situation of taking on the functions of the language of administration, school or culture. The basic aspect of corpus planning and language planning itself is the standardization of the language which can be understood as the establishment of the uniform language norm/standard. The codification of a language or a variety includes its graphisation, grammatication and lexication

*Graphisation* is the first step in standardizing a language. It is a process of returning a language spoken in written language and its development. Graphisation begins with a phonetic description of the language. It refers to the development, selection, and modification of language writing principles.

The choice and formulation of rules, which describe the way how the language is structured, is called *grammatication*. Morphological and syntactic levels, compared to other levels of language, are undoubtedly among the most distinctive ones of the linguistic varieties.

This fact hampers the definition of standardization indicators for interference in corpus implementation at these levels.

*Lexication* deals with the development and selection of appropriate words for one language. In principle, it also includes determining the styles and spheres of use of language words. The way words are used in specific fields is justified and specified in the Lexication. Studies in this area address issues that are not only related to lexical development, but also to their use.

*Acquisition planning* includes the entirety of public interventions aimed at increasing the potential users of a language. Certainly, the increasing number of users of a given language has its implications on the range of sociolinguistic relationships between existing varieties in a territory, thus, on their reciprocal power and their ability to be an identifiable link to the population. The embodiment planning actions are very delicate because the speaker often has an accurate perception of the relationships between the codes he/she uses, or among those in contact. These aspects can be: political, economic, aesthetic, identifying.

In our paper, we have found it reasonable to observe all these aspects and purposes of the language and language planning in the pages of the Albanian periodicals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the first stage of the Albanian language planning, which runs through 1944, the press of the time played a major role as the only forum for the dissemination of the opinions of the scholars, specialists, and language admirers, as well, who may not have had a proper language preparation, but they had the will and desire to make a contribution to the Albanian language. The number of magazines and newspapers published at that time in Albania was relatively high although many did not have great longevity. However, some of them managed to survive the rapid development of the Albanian society and managed to create their own tradition, maintaining a clear physiognomy with well-defined and pursued fanaticism and sometimes with great difficulty.

We think that the functions the Albanian press has done to help a common literary language can be divided into several aspects:

First, it mainly managed to reflect discussions, enterprises and institutional decisions about the language. We think that this function of massive information, at that time, on each field (in this case, we examine what information is directly or indirectly related to the common language) could not accomplish another mass communication tool.

Secondly, the press came to present problems and discussions about specific aspects of the language which required a closer scientific examination. These discussions were often made by specialists without an official status but they had a great interest in the common Albanian literary language. We cannot deny the fact that in some cases these reviews were made by authors who did not have the proper philological preparation and were prompted only by the goodwill to highlight and generalize the concrete features of a dialect to which they belonged.

Thirdly, the press had the ability that through selected publications, presented documents, and historical and scientific fact analyzing to create a certain opinion depending on the interests of publishers or a certain group of people.

The issue of unification of the Albanian language was dealt with on the press pages, but especially in the periodicals of the time, in several plans:

-From the social point of view, the common language was seen as a national unification tool. It was already serving the representation, in a single ethnic unit, as well as the identification with a common communication tool.

- From a practical point of view, the common language was an opportunity to facilitate communication among the Albanians in Albania and abroad. Until then, the Albanians wrote in different variants depending on where the magazine was published, or depending on the origin of the publishers. Yet, in a new situation of Albania's independence and the creation of an Albanian government, it was required that these bodies be more inclusive, having the opportunity to be distributed and read throughout the country.

-From a historical viewpoint, this common language was an important and necessary moment for the situation in which Albania was. After a long period of sacrifice for its protection and revival, the language was passing to another stage, to the much needed standardization, to be an official and state language

-From a political point of view, both in the internal plan of the contradictions between/among the parties, as well as in the external plan, as opposed to the positions of the neighboring countries. Here, the Albanians did not have only their own state, but also a common and distinct communication tool, clearly distinguished from other peoples.

- From a genuine scientific point of view, as a means of publishing scientific materials from Albanian or foreign scholars. The interest of the scholars was to analyze the old texts of the written Albanian and the comparative analysis of the Albanian language with the languages of the Indo-European family.

To closely observe these attitudes and functions that fulfilled the published temporal issues during the first stage of the Albanian language planning, we thought to look closely at two of them.

We have chosen, as the subject of our survey, the magazines "Albania" and "Hylli i Dritës", as the most long-lived magazines, with a clearly defined and evaluated purpose in and out of the Albanian borders, for the high level of articles published in them.

We set some criteria for our observation methodology:

-Focus on the articles that directly or indirectly deal with matters that have a logical and factual connection to the language planning of the Albanian or other languages;

-Our observation would have a descriptive character of the authors' views and, in some cases, we would make analyzes, approaches, and comparisons among them.

-The object of the observation would be the magazine only, not referring to the antecedents or general attitudes of other bodies.

The magazine "Albania", which was founded by Faik Konica in Brussels and which was a political-cultural and literary magazine, became the most important and most authoritative organ of our Renaissance in 1897. For thirteen years of its publication, it became a tribute to the most advanced Albanian thought of the time. Konica, as its creator, founder, and director, was undoubtedly the basic pillar on which this magazine relied. The authors, who wrote over years in "Albania", gave her a nationwide and inclusive character. After a careful reading of all the articles published in the thirteen years of the publication of the magazine "Albania", we have tried to make a selection of the articles dealing with issues about the Albanian Language and its planning.

In this magazine, we find, occasionally, expressed the need for delivery and processing of the Albanian language because there is a gap that needs to be fulfilled in order to revive the language.

The "Albania" started publishing at a time when the Albanian language was in danger. In this situation, schools in the Albanian language were throwing the first difficult footsteps through persecutions and, thus, the publications in Albanian had just started to flourish. From the very beginning of its foundation, it had vigorously raised the voice of the need and the right of the Albanians to be educated in their own language. It made a brief analysis of regression that Albania had done over a hundred years. One hundred years ago, Albanian was spoken everywhere in Albania, not only in the family but also in the society and in the public sphere. If the Albanians, at that time, had the attention and willingness to advance and prosper the Albanian language, they would have had the opportunity to open hundreds of schools where their native language would have been taught.

The necessity to unite the efforts and to revive the Albanian language comes from magazine pages as a continuous call. The issue of the Albanian language was being coordinated with the national issue. The nation could not have revived, united and flourished if the Albanian language had not been a means of national unity. It was time to think that if they had not all worked with all their heart and goodwill to purify, refine, and flourish the language, they would never have had the right to be called a civilized nation.

The magazine "Albania" from the first issue of its publication showed openly and firmly the need for the unification of the Albanian alphabet. The abundance of alphabets that were used in Albanian editions of the time, significantly, inhibited the development, dissemination and recognition of the Albanian culture. Creating an alphabet was not just a philological work, but a "literary and national issue". The political, provincial, and religious beliefs should be set aside in order to achieve a common high goal.

There was emphasized the principle that the basic and primary feature of an alphabet should be the ability to be printed and even easily typed. Konica, himself, used the type of alphabet that was a mix of the Istanbul alphabet

(1897) with the old North alphabet in the 1900's edition of the "Albania" magazine. After 1900, he abandoned this type of alphabet and used the alphabet of the "Bashkimi" society with little change.

Concerning the Istanbul alphabet, in the magazine, Konica maintains a categorical contradictory attitude, going so far as to say that these letters should not be used, but they should have been forgotten altogether because they banned the progress of the Albanian nation. The opposition to the Istanbul alphabet was related to the origin of the graphs and, consequently, to the practical difficulties of printing. Although this alphabet was adhered to the principle "every single sound, a letter" and was easy to learn, it represented typographical difficulties so it was costly and impractical.

There were also voices against this attitude arguing that the letters chosen by the Istanbul Society had no defect, but were light, beautiful, simple, and "finished". He recalled that the separation had so far left them in the dark, so it was necessary to have a union and brotherhood.

The magazine was laying the foundations of a unified alphabet of the Albanian language, but support from other publishers was required to make the temporaries and their books written in its alphabet. The initiative undertaken was an important project that required broad support and which was not yet received.

It is of great interest to note that in the very first announcement for the founding of the "Bashkimi" Society we see fondness of the editor-in-chief of the "Albania". Konica, who never spared the remarks, did not show a contradictory attitude to the "Bashkimi" alphabet although there were some changes in his alphabet. The editorial staff of "Albania" also stated that there would soon be some other modifications, which, according to them, would be the last to completely adapt to this already approved alphabet. From this announcement, we can understand that an agreement has been reached between the "Bashkimi" Society and Konica for the use of a common alphabet without any difference between them. The "Albania" will in fact delay the realization of this promise to readers, this will happen for various factors that sometimes appear and sometimes not on the magazine pages.

As you might imagine, the alphabet of the "Bashkimi" Society did not get immediate support from all Albanians. Certainly, there were Albanians and in this case readers of "Albania" who disagreed with the solutions that this alphabet had given to the issue of the writing in the Albanian language.

Konica has also expressed the need to hold a general meeting to establish a common attitude to the Albanian alphabet, but he thinks that in the situation of that time it was impossible to hold a congress on the Albanian language alphabet.

Initially, he held a disapproving attitude to the decisions of the "Monastery Congress" (1908), not only that he was invited to delay, but above all, because Congress decided to use two alphabets, that of Istanbul and Latin; the first for use within the country, and the second for use out of it.

He was a clear-sighted polyhedral, and he felt the unification of the Albanian language was indispensable. According to him, such unification would also affect a spiritual and cultural union of the Albanians, who until then perceived linguistic changes as barriers that hampered communication between them.

From the very beginning, for the common language, the term "literary language" was used with the meaning of a language to be used in Albanian writings. Along with this language, the Albanian dialects and its spoken language were considered powerful as well, which would of course continue to be used in the spoken language and in daily communication.

Konica saw the foundation of literary language formation in the combination and the selection of dialects or, as he often called them "sub-languages". So from what we read, we can understand that Konica believed that full knowledge of the Albanian dialects and their use by all Albanians would naturally lead to a gradual mix of them

To help realize this idea, Konica called on Albanians to learn one another's dialects and use them in their writings.

In 1905, he also introduced the idea of obtaining the Elbasan's folk, as a leader or patron, for concrete cases when no agreement could be reached between the main dialects of the Albanian language.

The idea of mixing the two Albanian leading dialects to provide a common literary language had also encountered controversy in the Albanian cultural and literary regions of the time. With such a controversial spirit Aleksander Xhuvani came to the pages of the magazine. He recalled that the most general way of forming a literary language had been the rise of a certain dialect. This process was backed by historical factors in the country.

Luigj Gurakuqi was aware that modern linguistics had made huge progress in comparative analysis among languages to reveal the roots and branches of linguistic families. According to him, the same principles applied even to comparative analysis between dialects of one language could give us complete and in-depth information about it. According to the author, in the case of the Albanian language, the comparative analysis between the dialects would be aimed at the realization of the common language, which should be the approximation and the blending of two large Albanian dialects.

The discussions on the aspects of grammatication of the language, that is, of shaping a norm/ standard that defines the most appropriate and acceptable forms of words often took place in the pages of the "Albania". Even in its

second year of publication, the magazine begins a permanent column titled "*Notes Linguistiques*" (Language Notes). In this rubric, it was noted that the use, books, and school traditions would fix little by little the permanent language norms.

But these language norms and spelling rules would be based on pronunciation as well as some grammatical and phonetic combinations. Such rules, which had a well-founded and well-grounded basis in origin, deserve to be taken into account and be implemented.

The enrichment of the Albanian lexicon with new words, which increase the expressive power and meet the needs of Albanian authors of various fields of knowledge and science, were one of the most permanent issues of the articles published in the "Albania" magazine. The issue of creating new words or the borrowing and adapting from other languages is encountered in the first issue of the magazine.

The "Albania" magazine is intended to return to an Albanian writing school, as such, a special and constant attention was paid to the language used in the articles. The writers were advised to use as many words and phrases from the folk.

New words, which the Albanian language lacks, were occasionally brought to readers around the world or were reminded of old words which were covered by dust of time but were worth regaining their status. The purpose of introducing these words in the form of short words was to encourage their use to meet the expressive needs of the Albanian language and to replace foreign words commonly used in both written and spoken language.

The "Hylli i Dritës" magazine had the support and appreciation of most of the Albanian intellectuals of the time, who often became its collaborators. It was praised for the seriousness it had shown and the quality of its articles published by foreign scholars.

This magazine started its publication several years after the Congress of Monastery, so the issue of a common Albanian alphabet did not take a significant place on its pages. This was because the case was already considered solved and the Albanian language faced other problems at that time. However, the issue of the alphabet was seen as an important historical stage not only for the Albanian language but also for the Albanian nation as a whole.

The idea of national unification took an important part in the pages of the magazine "Hylli i Dritës". There was pointed out that one of the most important points of national unification was undoubtedly the language. The issue of the common language was not addressed solely in the general plan, and as a need for a literary language, but occasionally the authors also presented their thoughts on the manner this language was formed.

Attitudes are different. In some cases, the decisions of the Shkodra Literature Commission are upheld, but it is suggested that improvements should be made. Some claimed categorically against this decision giving their reasons for this objection. Others argued the idea of merging two dialects by taking the best elements of each one.

Gjergj Fishta ironized some Albanians when they wrote in Albanian. They mixed gheg and tosk dialects in such a rough manner that it could not be read. While building a literary language there was no need to create a "new language", but the language should be known well, its rules had to be adopted and then the words had to be masterfully arranged.

Maximilian Lambertz did not advocate a gheg-tosk mixed language proposing that the only way was to use a living dialect as the official language, which should also be used literally. He advised that if a living literary dialect was chosen, the Shkodra dialect of northern Albania should be considered.

For Justin Rrota the language issues had to be systematically and slowly dealt with, so in his opinion, it would not be reasonable to set up a literary commission or academy, at that time, to determine issues and order law enforcement.

The Monastery Congress established a foundation not only for the Albanian letters but also for its spelling. But this foundation was pending, so it was necessary to work "to build this building". The Commission had not resolved the spelling issue in order to respond to the needs of the language, and it was called upon by the legitimate authorities to give due consideration to these shortcomings with the aim of achieving a reasonable and sufficient spelling. It was emphasized that the writing language should take the form that approaches more phonetics, even if it cannot rely on a hundred percent phonetic writing, at least it should approach as much as possible to this criterion. Etymology was of particular importance to the historical study of language, but it had a second-hand role in determining the correct way of writing words which could not be denied.

The issue of establishing a common grammar for the Albanian language is one of the topics dealt with in several plans: First, in the theoretical plan of the study and the definition of the best representative forms of the Albanian language and secondly, in the practical plan of their use by the writers and authors of the time and especially in the teaching of the language in the school.

It was suggested that language scholars gather from every corner the living language of each province, study it carefully, and combine the tales and then the forms that are closer to the general rule, evaluate, and include them in the treasures of linguistics.



Some discussions have to do with the establishment and shaping of state institutions that would enable an Albanian language planning. The official institutions, which would feature personalities of the Albanian linguistics and culture and that would have the ability to make important decisions regarding the common Albanian language, have been a persistent and well-made requirement on the pages of the magazine.

The time of publication of the magazines "Albania" and "Hylli i Dritës" coincides with the first period of language planning of the Albanian language. Important steps were taken during this period to codify the language. These magazines certainly did not have a decision-making status in this area, but became actors and factors in this process. The issue of the establishment and formation of a common language was raised with conviction and strength, as an urgent need of the historical and political situation that the country was going through.

The common goal was to raise national awareness of the common language. Provincial and religious divisions had to be avoided, which obscured the objective judgment of the issues.

They created a writing tradition, which they followed, with minor changes, for years. Thus they managed to shape models for other authors and publications.

They addressed general principles and concrete issues related to the grammatication of the language.

Gave new functions to the language in line with the topics covered in the articles. Albanian was now slowly becoming able to meet the needs of a society that was changing.

They paid attention to the Albanian lexicon, bringing back to use lost words or tracing in the dialectal lexical richness of Albanian. Enriched the vocabulary with new words by giving examples and appropriate word-formation patterns and maintained a critical attitude towards the use of foreign words and set the conditions when they are necessary and acceptable.

#### LITERATURE

"Albania", Bruksel, 1897- 1909.

"Hylli i Dritës", Shkodër, 1913-1914; 1021- 1924; 1930-1944.

Beci, B. (2010). *Historia e standartizimit të shqipes: politika dhe planifikimi gjuhësor në Shqipëri*. Tiranë.

Blaku, M. (2007). *Roli e revistës "Albania" në zhvillimin e gjuhës letrare shqipe*.

Byron, J. (2012). *Përzgjedhje midis alternativash në standardizimin e gjuhës: rasti i shqipes dhe shkrime të tjera*, Tiranë.

Çeliku, M. (2013). Shqipja standarde, kur ka filluar dhe evoluimi. *Gjuha shqipe*. - No. 2.

Cooper, R. (1989). *Language Planning and Social Change*. Cambridge.

Haugen E. (1966). *Language Planning and language Conflict, the Case of Modern Norwegian*. Harvard.

Holmes, J. (2015). *Hyrje në sociolinguistikë*. Tiranë.

Ismajli, R. (2005). *Gjuhë standarde dhe histori identitetesh*. Tiranë.

Kamsi, W. (2008). *Albania 1897- 1909, Bibliografi kronologjike*. Shkodër.

Kamsi, W. (2013). *Shtegtimi i "Hyllit të Dritës"*. Hylli i Dritës, nr 3-4.

Konica, F. (2006). *Mendime gjuhësie*. Tiranë.

Rubin, J., Jernudd, B. H., Das Gupta, J., Fishman, J. A., & Ferguson, C. A., (eds.). (1977). *Language planning processes*. The Hague/Paris/New York. Mouton.