

THE INFLUENCE OF FRENCH WORDS ON THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: All languages “borrow” words from other languages - be they from neighboring countries or far away lands - as well as “lend words”. Just like other languages, Albanian has also borrowed words from the languages of the peoples it has encountered throughout its history. As a result of the continued contact with varied populations, the Albanian language has encountered foreign words from varied sources such as: Greek, Slavic, Turkic, Latin and Romance (Italian, French), as well as English. The objective of this work is French loanwords in the Albanian language. The earliest loanwords from the French language date back to the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and can be traced until today showing that French influence in the Albanian language is very real. There are many cultural and intellectual connections between France and Albania for a long time making the linguistic impact more than obvious. There are words that are used in administration, justice, in the academic setting, in the social and political settings, the technical setting, in medicine, in the arts, in fashion, in sports etc. Some examples of French loanwords in the Albanian lexicon are: *adresë, dosje, kod, ambasadë, seancë, debat, kurs, stazh, kamion, garazh, trotuar, veturë, omletë, bluzë, triko, dantelë, pardesy, artist, reklamë, gravitet, fasadë, eveniment, elozhe, ekzemplar, ekzigjencë, ekzistencë, ekzekutoj, ekzagjeroj, ekzakt, eksplodon, ekspozitë, ekspresion, ekstrem, efektiv, deziluzion, prononcoj, refuzoj, survejoj* etc. After an exhaustive selection of the French loanwords from the academician Kolec Topalli's, *Fjalor etimologjik i gjuhës shqipe* (Tiranë, 2017), the main purpose of this work is the classification of these words according to various criteria: - According to the way of borrowing (direct / interwoven); - According to the contents of the loanwords (whole and structural); - According to their general value (foreign / international); - According to the way they are structured (with prefix / with composition). Lastly, we will try to achieve a conclusion on what the importance French loanwords in the Albanian language is.

Keywords: loanwords, influence, language, dictionary

All languages borrow words from other languages, be they neighboring or distant languages. The traces of these relationships can be seen in the lexicon of each language. One can say that words, just as objects and people, “travel” from one place to another, from one culture to another thus ensuring that no language is “pure”. The history of languages clearly indicates this universal phenomenon, loanwords, which visibly impacts the expansion and enrichment of each language's vocabulary.

Throughout the long path of Albanian history, the Albanian language has also exchanged (given and taken) words with the languages of the peoples it's encountered throughout history thereby enriching itself with suitable words and expressions. As a result of the continued linguistic contact with other peoples throughout the centuries, the Albanian language has come face to face with foreign words from varied sources such as: Latin, Greek, Slavic, Turkish, romance (Italian, French) and English. These have come from: contact with languages of the peoples that came to Albania as conquerors, - contact with geographic neighbors, - contact with languages of the peoples with which Albanians have had economic, political, social and cultural relationships. The linguistic impacts, particularly lexical ones, have certainly not had the same weight - in a specific period, one language was in a dominant position and from that, a large number of words were borrowed, later the influence of that language weakened leaving the dominating position to another language.

This work will focus on French loanwords, this stratum which has had no small impact on the Albanian language.

Cultural and intellectual relationships between France and Albania have existed for a long time making the French linguistic impact an evident one in the Albanian language. But where does this relationship begin? How did it progress and what kind of impact did it have on the Albanian language?

According to scholar J. Thomaj, “the earliest loanwords from French to Albanian date primarily to the end of the 19th century, and early 20th Century”⁵⁴. In this period, particularly after the Declaration of Independence (in 1912), in accordance with the new social, economic, political and cultural conditions, the Albanian language was

⁵⁴ Jani Thomaj, “Leksikologjia e gjuhës shqipe”, Tiranë, 2006, f. 258.

subjected to many developments & shifts, particularly in its lexicon. In varied linguistic fields, as well as from varied social ranks, a multitude of new denominations were introduced, many of which used loanwords. Lexicologist Thomaj points out “in the 1920s, words from Neo-Latin languages - from Italian and French - made their way into the Albanian language primarily in terminology.”⁵⁵ Administrative law is a notable field which has a very strong French character because “the creation of the Albanian State in the 1920s was based mainly on the French judicature.”⁵⁶ “There are two important phases in the constitution of Albanian judicial terminology”, points out scholar B. Bajrami in one of her research projects: “an old time period which stretches all up until to the beginning of the 20th century, and a modern phase from that period until today. What characterizes the second phase is the Latin and Romance origin, particularly French, of the majority of the terminology used in administrative law.” Throughout this second phase, most Turkish, Greek and Slavic loanwords borrowed previously are eliminated and replaced with primarily French neologisms. Data regarding Albanian legal terminology provides an image of the extent of French contribution to the modernization of Albanian administrative law language as well as in the creation of an international legal language⁵⁷ - states scholar Bajrami. Below are some Albanian terms in administrative law stemming from Latin and romance languages: *testament* (it.), *dekret* (it., fr., from lat.), *incident* (it., fr., from lat.), *mandat* (lat., it.), *replikë* (fr., it., from lat.), *akuzë* (it., from lat.), *apel* (fr., it., from lat.) etc., or some others which demonstrate that this type of terminology has spread in particular because of French such as: *anketë* (fr.), *krim* (fr.), *kriminal* (fr.), *shantazh* (fr.) etc.

At this time (the first half of the 20th century), we see impactful influences from French in the field of education as well. The existence of the French High School in Korça, which was considered to be one of the most important institutions in the country at the time is noteworthy. Korça National Institute, or the French School was a high school in the city of Korça financed by the Albanian government in order to spread French culture and Western European values. The school was fully functional in the years 1917-1939.

Within this same time, in the year 1926, marks the opening of a nursing school from the French Red Cross.

Years later, during the isolation of Albania - during the communist regime, France was the only western country with which Albania maintained a diplomatic and cultural relationship. As a result, this relationship certainly left its marks in the Albanian language: firstly, because French became part of the educational curriculum in secondary school, as well as at university, and secondly due to the fact that a scholarship program was offered to a (very limited) number of people to specialize in France. This arrangement continued until 1990 at which time, a new era begins, the time of democracy where the Albanian borders open to allow for free movement of people.

After the '90s, as a result of the big sociopolitical changes as well as new developments in the economy, the democratization of life and the opening of the country in relationship to the rest of the world, the Albanian lexicon witnessed a fast internal shift on several levels, including loanwords, and as a result, in French loanwords.

The introduction of many other French words in the Albanian lexicon during this period - where the French influence is very real - is considered justified in all the instances in which the Albanian word or expression pertaining to a new notion, concept or meaning is missing, whereas when the Albanian word for the same concept exists, the acceptance of the use of a loanword can be deemed unnecessary. As J. Thomaj states, the acceptance of loanwords from the second group (not necessary for the Albanian language) happened “because in some ways the care to preserve the purity of the Albanian language and to protect Albanian words faded somewhat. This does not dismiss a level of linguistic “snobbery” which appeared primarily in the intellectual strata of society, in the fields of socio-political, official-administrative, publicity etc.”⁵⁸, meaning by valuing the loanword as more prestigious in communication. Here are some such examples where the French word can be completely replaced with an Albanian word without the need to make the French word part of the Albanian dictionary: *adaptoj* (with *përshitas*), *aksion* (with *veprim*), *azhurnoj* (with *përditësoj*), *balancë* (with *peshore*), *bohem* (with *endacak*), *buqetë* (with *tufë lulësh*), *detaj* (with *hollësi*), *domen* (with *pronë*), *eksitoh* (with *ngacmoj*), *ekstrem* (with *skajshëm*), *elozhe* (with *lëvdata*), *etazher* (with *raft librash*) etc.

⁵⁵ Jani Thomaj, “Leksikologjia e gjuhës shqipe”, Tiranë, 2006, f. 250.

⁵⁶ Bade Bajrami, *Prurjet frënge në terminologjinë administrativo-juridike shqipe*, “Seminari ndërkombëtar për gjuhën, letërsinë dhe kulturën shqiptare”, Prishtinë, 2010, f. 307.

⁵⁷ Bade Bajrami, *Prurjet frënge në terminologjinë administrativo-juridike shqipe*, “Seminari ndërkombëtar për gjuhën, letërsinë dhe kulturën shqiptare”, Prishtinë, 2010, f. 307.

⁵⁸ Jani Thomaj, “Leksikologjia e gjuhës shqipe”, Tiranë, 2006, f. 252.

French loanwords in the Albanian language, just like other loanwords have impacted all linguistic planes, in some respects more than in others: phonetics, lexicon, morphology and syntax. For example, there are French syntactical loanwords constructed like this: *është kjo një (ditë) ...* or *është për këtë arsye që ...* etc.

The focus of this study is primarily on the lexicon as the plane that has the most direct connection to loanwords. French influence has penetrated so much on the lexical level and is used so frequently that quite often, it's become difficult to learn which word is an Albanian word and which is foreign (French). This is quite evident in the lexicon of loanwords selected to study in this work. In order to complete this research, the *Fjalor etimologjik i gjuhës shqipe* (Tiranë, 2017) of the academician Koleç Topalli is being used as a reference keeping in mind that - as the author states - "by using this type of dictionary it is possible to differentiate the historical loanwords, as well as to follow the path through which the words entered the Albanian language, which can be direct or transversal through another language."⁵⁹

The selected lexicon for this subject contains loanwords which Albanian has borrowed in a direct way from French. The cases of French loanwords brought to Albanian in a transversal way from other languages have not been included in this work, such as: *buxhet* (loanword from the engl. *budget*, with a source from fr. *bougette*), *damë* (loanword from it. *dama*, coming from fr., which is based in Latin *domina*), *damixhanë* (loanword from it. *damigiana*, from fr. *dame-jeanne*) etc. Likewise, the cases which are defined as Latin-romance loanwords or romance loanwords (French included), are not part of this study such as: *abdikoj*, *absolut*, *absorboj*, *abstenoj*, *acetik*, *acid*, *aderoj*, *administroj*, *admirorj*, *adptoj*, *afekt*, *aglomerat*, *aksesor*; *abonuj*, *abuzoj*, *adekuat*, *akreditoj*, *akustik*, *alkool*, *binom*, *biografë*, *delikat*, *demarkacion*, *demografë* etc.

French words generally belong to the professional and terminological lexicon and a fair amount of them have an international character. These are words which are used in administration, law, education, in social and political life, in technical fields, in medicine, the arts, fashion, sports etc. They have entered the Albanian language primarily through the written language or even the spoken words amongst the educated part of the population primarily by preserving the pronunciation or compositional traits of the loaning language.

In order to point out some characteristics of French loanwords in the Albanian language, they are being categorized by referring to two criteria: the source and the structure.

In the text above, the lexicon being analyzed was established by singling out the French lexicon which Albanian has borrowed in a direct way (not through other Latin-romance languages). After a mindful research and observation of this lexicon in the *Fjalor etimologjik i gjuhës shqipe*, one can identify two groups of words as far as the source of these words:

1 - Direct French loanwords where the source language is the lending language;

2 - Direct French loanwords where the source language is not also the lending language; in this case French is the (intermediary) loaning language.

Among direct loanwords where the source language is the loaning language the following are notable: *abazhur*, *adresë*, *afishë*, *agrement*, *aliazh*, *ambalazh*, *angazhoj*, *anketë*, *antrakt*, *artisan*, *atelier*, *azhur*, *azhurnoj*, *baladë*, *barazh*, *barrikadë*, *beshamel*, *bezhë*, *bide*, *bilë*, *bizon*, *bizhuteri*, *bluzë*, *bohem*, *bonbone*, *bordero*, *broshurë*, *bufe*, *buqetë*, *buokrat*, *butik*, *byro*, *ceremoni*, *dantellë*, *debat*, *debutoj*, *ekran*, *ekui pazh*, *epruvetë*, *ese*, *eskortë*, *etazher* etc.

As for loanwords where the lending language is not the source language of the word, the following are listed: *albatros* (fr. sourced from Portuguese), *alo* (fr. sourced from English), *amidon* (fr. sourced from Greek), *anekdotë* (fr. sourced from Greek), *autodidakt* (fr. sourced from Greek), *blindë* (fr. sourced from German), *boulevard* (fr. sourced from Dutch), *daktilografoj* (fr. sourced from Greek), *eklektik* (fr. sourced from Greek), *eklips* (fr. sourced from Greek), *elozhe* (fr. sourced from Greek), *emal* (fr. sourced from German), *emfazë* (fr. sourced from Greek), *estradë* (fr. sourced from Spanish), *etalon* (fr. sourced from Germanic), *etapë* (fr. sourced from Dutch), *etiketë* (fr. sourced from Dutch) etc. In these cases, French serves as an intermediary meaning that Albanian has borrowed these words from French, but French itself has borrowed these words from other languages such as Portuguese, Greek, English, German, Dutch, Spanish etc. These are indirect loanwords which have entered the Albanian language through French.

From the point of view of structure, the following types of loanwords become apparent:

⁵⁹ Koleç Topalli, "Fjalor etimologjik i gjuhës shqipe", Tiranë, 2017, f. 5.

1 - lexical loanwords

2 - constructive loanwords

3 - false loanwords (or quazi-loanwords)

Lexical loanwords, in the cases where the whole word is borrowed and is used in the same context and meaning as the loaning language, make up the majority of French loanwords in Albanian. Examples are: *abazhur, adresë, aksident, ambasadë, beton, biberon, bizhuteri, bluzë, bordero, buqetë, bursë, butik, ceremoni, debat, deficit, dekadë, dekolte, deduksion, demokrat, dekor, departament, depo, detaj, diftong, disiplinë, dosje, drenazh, eklips, ekran, ekskursion, ekspres, ekuipazh, ese, etapë, etiketë* etc., as well as these suffixed constructions: *ambalazh, plazh, bagazh, garazh, aliazh* etc., with the suffix *-azh* (fr. *-age*) which is very characteristic of the French language.

During the analysis, another type of loanword was encountered: the constructive loanword where the word is not borrowed as a sound composition, the morphological construction and the morphemic meaning is borrowed whereas the material (prefix, root and suffix) comes from the Albanian language itself. meaning the model of construction is imitated and it is then filled with material from the borrowing language, such as: *shtypje* - from fr. *press + ion; nëndetëse* - from fr. *sousmarin* etc.

Similarly, to the constructive loanwords, false loanwords (or quazi-loanwords) are also identified where only one of the elements which make up the word is translated but the other remains as it is, e.g. the word *kulturor* (cultural) where in lieu of the French subject *-al* (cultural), the Albanian suffix *-or* is used.

Language, as a living organism, is in uninterrupted evolution. From this point of view, even French loanwords, which have become part of the Albanian lexicon have had their own development. these words have been subjected to the Albanian phonetic and grammatical system, meaning they are written and pronounced according to the phonetic value of the Albanian language and inflect according to the grammatical classes and applicable regulations.

The Albanian language has borrowed and molded French loanwords as its own. Thus, they continue to develop in the territory of the Albanian language by becoming manufacturing terms as well such as: from *ekstradoj* – *ekstradim*, from *bursë* – *bursist*. Words of this type of descent can no longer be called loanwords because they are Albanian mutations. These constructions with affixes (primarily suffixes), labelled as *resultants*, have not been marked as distinctive parts in the dictionary, but they are adjacent to the French base-word from which they were created. According to the evolution they have undergone in the Albanian language, some of them have created nests of words with various Albanian suffixes: *-o, -im, -ist* etc, such as: from *etiketë* - *etiketoj, etiketim*; from *emal* - *emaloj, emalim*; from *eksitoj* - *eksitim, eksitues*; from *ekran* - *ekranizoj, ekranizim*; from *debutoj* - *debutim, debutues*; from *debat* - *debattoj, debatim, debatues*; from *daktilografoj* - *daktilografi, daktilografim, daktilografist* etc. However, there are cases where the nests of French loanwords in the etymological dictionary are made of not only the construction with Albanian prefixes, but also by French words, as a derivation of the French source word, such as: from *ekstrem* - *ekstremist* (fr.), *ekstremizëm* (fr.), *ekstremizoj* (created in Albanian), *ekstremizim* (created in Albanian); from *ekspres* - *ekspresiv* (fr.), *ekspresivitet* (fr.), *ekspresionizëm* (fr.), *ekspresionist* (fr.); from *ese* - *eseist* (fr.), *eseistikë* (created in Albanian) etc.

French words which have not changed over time have been categorized separately as they do not have room to expand due to semantic limitations; or in some cases, they have been borrowed along with the traits of their use. The following are examples: *eskortë, etalon, etazher, estradë, dosje, domen, dezurn, byro, butik, boulevard, bezhë, basen, azhur, atelie, abordazh, agreement, aliazh* etc. There are also words derived from proper nouns such as: *amper* (from the name of the physicist and mathematician André-Marie Ampère), *beshamel* (from the name Louis de Béchamel), *boksit* (from the place Le Baux where the mineral was discovered) etc.

After the thorough research about loanwords form a particular language, a question comes naturally: What position do these loanwords maintain in their borrowing language today? As with every other language, it is difficult to accurately evaluate how many words the Albanian language has borrowed from French, but thanks to the *Fjalor etimologjik i gjuhës shqipe* (Tiranë, 2017) from academic Kolec Topalli, this can be determined more precisely. Thus, after a calculation regarding words with a direct source from the French language which have penetrated the Albanian language only from French, without taking into account French loanwords which are resultants form other languages, it is estimated that 4% of the Albanian language contains proper French loanwords in its lexicon, which is dominated by the grammatical lexical category of proper nouns, followed by a much smaller number of verbs and adjectives, and in some more rare cases, some adverbs and expletives.

LITERATURE

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