

## Standard Albanian and the Language of Television Concrete Observations

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### ABSTRACT

*The in every standard language there are phonetic, morphologic, syntactic and lexical norms at work. In the process of standardization of a language, the rules of orthography occupy a central role. Orthography is not an independent system of rules which stands alone by and of itself. To grasp the essence of the main features and problems concerning the orthography of a language it is not enough to learn by heart the basic rules and principles, but also to respect and observe these rules and orthographic norms.*

*The main goal of this paper is to highlight the several violations of the standard of the Albanian language committed by several television channels. Such violations concern not only the written form (subtitles), but also the spoken one. Based on the concrete observations carried out in different mass media, we can say that such violations represent not only a serious problem, but also a grave threat to Standard Albanian.*

*In every instance, we have tried to juxtapose every possible violation with the norm and the respective rule, and we have also given the correct version according to the principles of the Albanian language.*

**Keywords:** Orthography, Albanian language, standard, violation of the norm

### INTRODUCTION

The standard of the Albanian language carries a long history, which has begun in XV–XVIII centuries; the cultivation of the language, however, took place during the National Renaissance and XIX century, a time when the struggle for the literary Albanian language, for its free cultivation, its equalization, purification, enrichment, became every Albanian's concern.

The synthesis of the whole activity of this period is crystalized in the grammar books of Kostandin Kristoforidhi and Sami Frashëri, and also “*The dictionary of the Albanian language*” of Kristoforidhi – which as prof. Androkli Kostallari puts it: “*The book is the first national and not dialectal dictionary, which has remained a standard reference work during the first half of our century*” (1973), dictionary which was republished later under the supervision of prof. A. Xhuvani entitled “*Greek–Albanian dictionary*” (1961).

After the Renaissance, time when the literary language enters on a new stage (Samara, 2005) the Albanian language is faced with two important events in its history:

First: the creation of Albanian Literary Commission in Shkodër (1916–1917), which appreciated the transitional literary variant, based on the dialect of Elbasan, serving as a bridge between the two dialectal variants: Tosk and Gheg, and also laid down some rules of orthography, which affected the equalization of written Albanian language.

Second: Educational Congress of Lushnje (1920) – a congress which approved the laws of Commission, was followed by the Educational Congress of Tirana (1922).

After the Second World War, which is considered as the stage of standardization of literary Albanian, (Samara:127) the work for the equalization of the standard language and its orthography were subject to institutional authorisation. Special commissions were set up tasked with drawing up orthography projects. Thus, a number of projects were drawn up in 1948, 1951, 1953 and 1956. Two scientific sessions were organized in 1952, to discuss the problem of literary language. In 1967, was published by the Institute of History and Linguistics, the new project “*The rules of orthography of Albanian language*”. This project started to be implemented wherever Albanians lived such as, Republic of Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro. In the meantime, efforts for the equalization of the literary language and its orthography were also being made in Kosovo. Concretely, *The Linguistic Conference of Prishtina*, held in 1968 whose driving motto was “*One nation-one literary language*”, was one of the most important events with an extraordinary importance for the equalization of national literary Albanian language, because it decided that the project of orthography of 1968, would be implemented in Kosovo as well, once it was officially approved in the Republic of Albania.

In these circumstances in the history of the standard itself of the Albanian language takes place the crucial event of 1972: *The Orthography Congress*, which established not only the standardization of orthography but the standardization of literary Albanian, a standard language which as prof. Rami Memushaj puts it: “*was born in Kosovë, but was baptised in the capital city of the country of origin, in Tirana (1972).*” (Memushaj, 2002)

A number of important works were published after the *Orthography Congress*, which codified the norm of the standard language, where we can mention: “*Orthography of the Albanian language*” (1973), “*Orthographic dictionary of the Albanian language*” (1976), “*Literary Albanian language for everyone*” (1976), “*Dictionary of today’s literary language*” (1980), “*Dictionary of today’s Albanian*” (1984), “*Grammar of today’s Albanian*” in two parts: I Morphology (1995), II Syntax (1997), “*Dictionary of today’s Albanian*” (2002), followed by a series of synonymic and antonymic and phraseological dictionaries of the Albanian language, to continue with the latest orthographic dictionary “*Orthographic dictionary of the Albanian language*” (2011), co-authored by Ali Dhrimo and Rami Memushaj.

It is obvious that parallel to the publications concerning the abovementioned issues, a lot of conferences and other scientific activities have been organized whose common denominator has been the support of one linguistic standard for all the Albanians, with a view to improve and complement it. Here we mention: The scientific conference “*The literary national language and the Albanian world today*” (Tiranë, 1992); *The conferences of Tirana*, respectively for the 25th and 30th anniversary of The Orthography Congress (Tiranë, 1997, 2002); *The Durres conference* december 2010; *The conference of The Centre for Albanological Studies* (Tiranë, 2011); the various conferences at the University of Tirana: 2010, 2011 and the most recent one which was organized on 9th december 2014.

All the abovementioned activity is a testimony to love and dedication to the Albanian language not only on the part of the academic circles. But this long tradition should not only be appreciated and respected, but at the same time should be further developed, if not, then, it should at least be protected with likewise untiring work and love. Unfortunately, we cannot but admit to the sad fact of perversion and disintegration that the standard has undergone

nowadays and more concretely we refer to the language used in our mass media, in the written as well as the spoken. We try to argue our point through the help of facts given below.

## OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

Media itself mirrors everyday routine, which affects everyone and at the same time it plays the most important role in inculcating the orthographic norm.

What has attracted our attention the most is the several violations of the standard of the Albanian language committed by several television channels. For this, we have carried out systematic surveys in some of the Albanian television channels, such as, *Top Channel*, *Top News*, *Klan*, *News 24*, *UTV*, *Vizion plus* etc.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The power of the written and spoken media seems to be truly unchallenged. Along with the press, radio and television are among the most direct means, which inevitably affect people, as prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaj says: *“The language of the news used in radio and television is important and affect everyone of us nowadays”*. (Shkurtaj, 2006) In fact, it is not rare that we see violations of this norm, in the written or the spoken media. If we see carefully the language of the television, we will see immoderate use of foreign words, void usages, abstract expressions, inflated phrases. Violations of the norm and culture of language can happen also during the special use of words, like: the use of words inappropriately, the juxtaposition of words of the same family, text deficiency or the use of words without economy, the confusion of stylistic planes etc.

In response to the question *“Who is responsible for this lack of care and support for the Albanian language”* prof. Gj. Shkurtaj, the scholar who has dealt extensively with the issue of culture and writing of the Albanian language says: *“First it is to be criticised the decline in the discipline of the state and state and social institutions authorized by the state, regarding the Albanian language. The equalized orthography of the Albanian language is not observed, there are also grave violations of the norms of writing in the academic fields, stressing the tendency to write in upper case every kind of designation, without any orthographic criterion.”* (Shkurtaj, 2012)

The diversity of the violations of the norm of the Albanian language is great, that is why we have tried to list them according to their typology.

1. Disagreement of the plural number of the noun. The wrong use of the words vit/vjet

Regarding the word “vit”, in plural it is used the form **vjet-ët** when the name is accompanied by a numeral or by a word which shows quantity, for example, *shtatë vjet*, *shumë vjet më parë*, *pak vjet më vonë* etc. Whereas the form **vite-t** is used in all the cases when this name is not accompanied by the above words, for example, *vitet e rinisë*, *vite të bukura*, *vitet e fundit* etc. (Memushaj, 2005:70)

In fact, in the language of television we find the following uses:

- a. *Policia, shtetasi Gate Mahmutaj, me precedent penal i dënuar me 22 vite burgim dhe më pas i falur.* (Top News, 16.06.2014)
- b. *Kokobobo: Kam 38 vite mjekë, do shoh panelin e testuesve.* (News 24. 12.01.2015)
- c. *MSH: Ky process ka nisur tashmë që prej pesë vitesh.* (News 24. 12.01.2015)

Thus, according to the rule they should be:

- a. *Policia: Shtetasi Gate Mahmutaj, me precedent penal, i dënuar me 22 vjet burgim dhe me pas i falur.*
- b. *Kokobobo: Kam 38 vjet mjek, do të shoh panelin e testuesve.*
- c. *MSH: Ky process ka nisur tashmë që prej pesë vjetësh.*

## 2. Disagreement of foreign names with the appropriate form in Albanian

Proper foreign names, as a rule, when entering the Albanian language cause pronunciation, orthographic and morphological problems. These names are written differently and pronounced differently. The Commission responsible for establishing the rules of the Orthography of the Albanian language has come to the decision that foreign words and names which enter the Albanian language shall be written in the way they are pronounced in their respective languages of origin but according to the rules of the graphic system of the Albanian language. (Shkurtaj, 2011)

However, writing according to the graphic system of the original languages foreign names come from, is expediting the tendency according to which the formal definiteness of foreign names is not even expressed anymore and consequently they remain indeclinable.

Examples how they are used according to television channels:

- a. *Fitorja e Lë Pen shkakton tërmet në Francë.* (Ora News, 25.05.2014)
- b. *Biden dhe Erdogan kanë biseduar në telefon për të dytën herë këtë vit.* (UTV News, 16.06.2014)
- c. *FNSH dhe policia kontrole në 181 bare dhe lokale nate.* (News 24, 12.01.2015)

By declining the above names in the definite form in the Albanian language, we would have:

- a. *Fitorja e Lë Pen-it shkakton tërmet në Francë.*
- b. *Biden-i dhe Erdogan-i kanë biseduar në telefon për të dytën herë këtë vit.*
- c. *FNSH-ja dhe policia: Kontrole në 181 bare dhe lokale nate.*

## 3. The non-observance of the orthography of indivisible, hyphenated, and words written separately

The orthography of indivisible words or words written separately is based on the semantic and morphologic principles, according to which all those complex units which from the lexical point of view denote a single concept and from the grammatical point of view behave as single word are written as one.

The reality in our media, however, is different.

Examples from television:

- a. *Durrës, përkujtohet 100 vjetori i rënies së kolonelit Tomson.* (A1 Report, 15.06.2014)
- b. *Sëbashku zhvillojmë agrobiznesin.* (reklamë e bankës Credidins tek News 24, 20.07.2014)
- c. *Gjirokastra 9 vjet në UNESCO.* (7 Channel, 20.07.2014)
- d. *Kalaja tre këndore në Butrint.* (Vizion plus, 07.08.2014)

According to the above rule they should be:

- a. *Durrës, përkujtohet 100-vjetori i rënies së kolonelit Tomson.*
- b. *Së bashku zhvillojmë agrobiznesin.*
- c. *Gjirokastra - 9 vjet në UNESCO.*
- d. *Kalaja trikëndore në Butrint.*

#### 4. Deviations and non-normative uses of the punctuation marks

Punctuation marks are used in writing to make more clear and understandable the content of an expression in written form and also the relationship among its parts. Punctuation marks are considered only those graphic signs through which it is achieved the division of a text in sentences and clauses and are marked the boundaries between smaller units inside them. (ASPSR, 1981)

##### I. Full Stop

*Full stop* is a punctuation marks, which in addition to being used at the end of an independent clause or subordinated noun phrase to mark the end of an utterance, falling intonation and a pause in speech, it is also used after the roman or arabic numerals which denote the order of a head, paragraph or the ordering of some points or subheadings of an explanation or resolution; after the word *note* and after the number, when this word is followed by a number; it is used after the first word and also in some acronyms.

Examples from the television:

- a. *UTV News, Kanali nr. 1 i informacionit.* (shfaqet çdo ditë në reklamën e televizionit UTV News)
- b. *ADK: I urojmë mirëseardhjen Donald Lu, ne dhe SHBA dy vende mike* (News 24, 12.01.2015)
- c. *Francë, masat antiterrorizëm Hollande takim me qeverinë* (News 24, 12.01.2015)

In fact, they should be:

- a. *UTV News, Kanali nr. 1 i informacionit.*
- b. *ADK: I urojmë mirëseardhjen Donald Lu-së, Ne dhe SHBA-të dy vende mike.*
- c. *Francë, masat antiterrorizëm, Hollande takim me qeverinë.*

##### II. Comma

*Comma* is used to separate the name of place in which something is written from the date or the year in which it is written; when quoting references, to separate the surname from the name of the author, the title of the work, place, year, number of quoted page, and also to separate the name of the person from his age. (Memushaj, 2005:204)

Examples from the television:

- a. *Tiranë, është arrestuar shtetasi Sotir Ziu 24 vjeç.* (News 24, 15.06.2014)
- b. *Policia e shtetit arrestoi të dyshuarit për sulmin në Lazarat, Xhevahir Doçi 29 vjeç dhe Emiljano Aliko 32 vjeç.* (Ora News, 17.06.2014)
- c. *Vlorë, shkojnë për të vjedhur përleshën me pronarin e shtëpisë* (News 24, 12.01.2015)



Based on the abovementioned rule, according to which between the name and the age a comma should be placed, then it should be:

- a. *Tiranë, është arrestuar shtetasi, Sotir Ziu, 24 vjeç.*
- b. *Policia e shtetit arrestoi të dyshuarit për sulmin në Lazarat, Xhevahir Doçi, 29 vjeç dhe Emiljano Aliko, 32 vjeç.*
- c. *Vlorë, shkojnë për të vjedhur, përleshën me pronarin e shtëpisë.*

### III. Quotation Marks

*Quotation marks* are graphic signs which show that the words or sentences that they surround should be taken to be different from (or, at least, a modification of) that typically associated with it. (Memushaj, 2005:206)

Quotation marks are used in several cases: in direct speech and in quotations to offset the words which are reproduced from the words of the author or from the text in which they are embedded; in slogans when used in text; in words used ironically; in signalling unusual usage; in use-mention distinction; in proper names or nominal phrases which designate newspapers, books etc; streets, squares etc; medals, orders etc; in nicknames and false titles.

Examples from the television:

- a. *Gjirokastër, zhvillohet operacioni i koduar Nisan, ku është sekuestruar një sasi e konsiderueshme droge.* (Ora News, 15.06.2014)
- b. *Leonidha Papa zgjidhet kreu i ri i organizatës OMONIA.* (News 24, 12.01.2015)
- c. *Ndodhemi pranë televizionit ALPO, lgj.18 Shtatori, Gjirokastër* (reklamë e hotelit “Number One” që shfaqet çdo ditë në kanalin “ALPO”).

They should be:

- a. *Gjirokastër, zhvillohet operacioni i koduar “Nisan”, ku është sekuestruar një sasi e konsiderueshme droge.*
- b. *Leonidha Papa zgjidhet kreu i ri i organizatës “OMONIA”.*
- c. *Ndodhemi pranë televizionit “ALPO”, lagjja “18 Shtatori”, Gjirokastër.*

### IV. Abbreviations and Contractions

*Abbreviations* are conventions. They change along with the words they stand for. This is done based on criteria, which aim at representing as easy and as fully as possible the respective words. The words which are abbreviated are: scientific titles; symbols of chemical elements; units of measurements; names of political parties, countries, news agencies, sports associations, organisations, etc. Only the abovementioned words must be abbreviated or contracted. Other words must be written in full. Such abbreviated words seem to have become part of the everyday jargon used mainly by young people.

Examples from the television:

- a. *Sa x temën dhe këta që dalin me fëmijë para makinave, mjafton t’u japësh lekë dhe pastaj largohen.* (Klan, 26.06.2014)
- b. *Çkm Aldo. Prsh motrën që e dua shumë.* (Klan, 27.06.2014)
- c. *M.gjesi Aldo, flm për këngët e bukura që trasmeton.* (Klan, 27.06.2014)

These words must not be abbreviated and this is how they must be written:

- a. *Sa për temën - Dhe këta që dalin me fëmijë para makinave, mjafton t'u japësh lekë dhe pastaj largohen.*
- b. *Ç'kemi Aldo! Përshëndes motrën që e dua shumë.*
- c. *Mirëmëngjesi Aldo! Faleminderit për këngët e bukura që transmetoni!*

#### V. The Use of Lower Case Instead of Upper Case

The use of upper cases when writing proper names is based on the symbolic principle: The upper case serves to distinguish names and designations from the common names. (Memushaj, 2005:169)

Examples from the television: (*Aldo Morning Show*)

- a. *Ne nuk e meritojmë të jemi në europë, alma, kavajë.* (Klan, 26.05.2014)
- b. *Policia i dërgon prok. 3 vendime për ekspertizë balistike.* (News 24, 12.01.2015)

According to the above rule, they must be written:

- a. *Ne nuk e meritojmë të jemi në Europë, Alma, Kavajë.*
- b. *Policia i dërgon Prokurorisë 3 vendime për ekspertizë balistike.*

## CONCLUSIONS

As regards the above we ask the question:

Why are all of these orthographic mistakes made?

We think that the fundamental reasons are:

1. Ignorance of orthographic and grammatical rules of our language on the part of the journalists, lecturers, editors, etc.,
2. The incessant influence of dialect usage in our everyday life,
3. The wide spread of internet. The language of the internet has the tendency to use abbreviations and to spread fast and that is the reason that "a hidden dialect" (Shkurtaç, 2014) is brought into life. And those who make use of it are the young.
4. The lack of proper laws which allow the violators of the norm to operate with impunity.

It is everyone's duty to do something to save the Albanian language.

1. Our language can be protected only by not yielding to foreign languages, especially the morphologic structure of it.
2. Our mother tongue should occupy the right place in our high schools and universities' curricula.
3. More should be talked and written about the values of the Albanian language, also special television programmes should address the culture of language.
4. The Albanian language in high schools should be a subject in its own right and not appended to another subject. This subject should be made obligatory for students wishing to complete secondary education.
5. The state and the educational institutions should show greater care and support by protecting it with laws, something which the academician Rexhep Ismajli openly

articulates: “Even though it is not the state which should establish the norm, it is its duty to support the experts to do it”. (Ismajli, 2013)

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