

LIFE CONTRIBUTION OF ACADEMIC PROF. DR. GJOVALIN SHKURTAJ TO THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY TEXTS



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Abstract

This paper includes the contribution of prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaaj to the Albanian language university textbooks, who is known as a dialectologist and a researcher of language culture issues, sociolinguistics and Albanian onomastics. This paper also covers his contribution to the collection of the dialectal Albanian language to better understand the spoken Albanian language system: in phonetics, morphology, syntax and in its lexicon. Gjovalin Shkurtaaj is well-known for writing university textbooks such as "Sociolinguistics", "Dialectology", "Language Culture", "How to write Albanian", which are related to:

Dialectological studies, one of the basic requirements to achieve standardization and enrichment of the Albanian literary language;

Sociolinguistic studies, based on the study of language in relation to society;

Language culture, based on the standardized language norm as an issue of today's sociolinguistics;

Academic writing, based on language culture and using literary norms accurately.

1. Literature review of Dr. Gjovalin Shkurtaaj contribution to Albanian language

The work of Prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaaj is of a research type dealing with research and studies in the field of linguistics, pedagogical, which has to do with the application of pedagogical textbook methods as a prerequisite of effective teaching, university teaching, which has to do with higher education texts in linguistics, and academic, which is related to texts of a high theoretical and scientific level which responds to the elaborated scientific requirements in the field of linguistics. His studies in the field of linguistics have left indelible traces that will be followed as an example of the vital contribution to Albanian language and culture. A legacy for all those who will be dealing with language studies and not just them, textbooks and university

textbooks of Prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaaj are a synthesis of language knowledge devoted to pupils and students dependent on the level of education.

Prof. Shkurtaaj is known as a dialectologist and researcher of language culture issues, including academic writing. He is also a researcher of sociolinguistics issues. He has been dealing with Albanian onomastic for many years. In recent years, he has been devoted to the problems of language-society relations, deepening in the phenomenon of the ethnography of the spoken Albanian.

Albanian language, one of the most advanced fields of Albanian science, is shaped out into science and knowledge thanks to the contribution and study of prominent linguists who had one purpose: Unifying and enriching the Albanian literary language. Prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaaj for five decades worked hard for this

purpose, so that the use of standardized Albanian language extends not only for scientific and academic purposes, but also to be popularly used by masses.

The basic requirements and principles for achieving the unification of the Albanian standardized language were the collection and arrangement of dialectal data of the Albanian language, in order to better understand the entire phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical system of the spoken Albanian. Scientific research and publishing activity of Professor Gjovalin Shkurtaj is vast and goes to several hundred titles of studies, publications and scientific articles as well as textbooks and university textbooks.

His contribution is in the development of university textbooks such as "Dialectology" (2003), "Sociolinguistics of Albanian- from Dialectology to Speech Ethnography" (co-author with Jorgji Gjinarin, 2009), "Culture of Language" (2006) "How to Write Albanian-Academic Writing Basics" (last 2017), and so on.

Given the methodological-scientific aspect and the didactic-pedagogical purpose of the university textbooks, among other things, we find in these texts some of the study aspects, which relate to:

- The knowledge of Albanian dialects, dialectal researches and dialectal studies of Albanian dialects, sub-dialects, folk groups, dialects of the Arberesh diaspora and of other diasporas dissociated from the Balkan Albanian trunk.
- Sociolinguistic studies as a requirement for language study in relation to society.
- Language culture as a high degree of knowledge of language and the use of literary language.
- The academic writing that is high-level writing of an analytical text or synthesis.

1. The Albanian language data are presented to highlight the linguistic structure within the spoken language system everywhere the Albanian language is spoken, as one of the basic requirements and principles to reach the basic system of unity and enrichment of the Albanian literary language. Professor Gjovalin Shkurtaj has put this premise in front of himself, that a standardized Albanian should be based on dialect variants, based on the actual state of spoken Albanian and in the tradition of

written Albanian.

The university textbook *Dialectology* (2003) is a systematic summary of knowledge based on studies of Albanian dialects, groups, sub-dialects, including the Arberesh-Albanian Diaspora, summarized and sorted materials according to a methodological and scientific, and didactical and pedagogical textbook. As in other previous books by Jorgji Gjinarin (1963 to 1988) with the same subject which wanted to provide knowledge for the same subject, according to the respective high school programs, and as the authors themselves claim "this version varies not a little the former ones" (Gjinarin-Shkurtaj, 2002, p. 7.), gives us a new situation of dialectology according to recent studies. This university book, from the informational point of view, has fulfilled the program requirements of the subject of dialectology, breaking down and simultaneously synthesizing all dialectal material with general theoretical explanations and concrete data on dialects, sub-dialects, spoken form groups and Albanian language spoken forms.

Albanian dialectology as a science is summarized in this book with theoretical and concrete data according to dialectal distribution. This course shows the factors that influence the creation of dialectal divisions to make it easier to define the differences and similarities between dialects, the sub-dialects, and the spoken forms.

Studies of the folks like: Kastrati (Shkurtaj, "Philological Studies", 1967, no. 2-3.), Hoti (Shkurtaj, "D. Sh.", 1971, voll. II.), Kelmendi (Shkurtaj, "D. Sh", 1975, vol. III.), Mbishkodra (Shkurtaj, E folmja e Rranxave të Mbishkodrës, "D. Sh", 1982, vol. IV.) and Lezha's (Shkurtaj, "Philological Studies", 1981 and 1984.) spoken forms, all monograph of the author Gjovalin Shkurtaj, as well as dozens of works for the language of the Arbëresh of Italy, such as: Notes to the Arbëresh language of St-Marcianos (Shkurtaj, "St. fil", 1979, no. 4.), Notes to Arbëreshë language of Mrseduza (Shkurtaj, "St. për A. Xhuvani", 1986.), The verbal system of Arberesh language in the province of Kozenca (Shkurtaj, "St. fil.", 1975, no. 2.), etc., reflect the studies on the Albanian language of the northern sub-dialect of gege, as well as of Arbëresh of Italy language of the most original Arbëresh settlements. The monographs and scientific articles of the language studies and language system in both Albanian dialects became the basis of the dialectology text, it's compilation and elaboration of the subject with the didactical and pedagogical methods of planning a university text such as this.

Dialectology is a textbook that gives an insight into the dialectal division and proximity of the Albanian language, based on

spoken forms, to the distinctive and common features of the two Albanian language protagonist dialects. Thus, dialectology marks the beginnings of sociolinguistic studies. The real language situation in the different spoken forms of Albanian, presented, collected and systematized by the linguistic material, is the "modeled" realistic state of the verified "representative" individual of a territory. Along with others, the individual provides language-based material and further promotes the study of the common features and individual differences of speakers to develop linguistic conformity from individualism. Conformism means the individual sociolinguistic modeling of the individual, from experience and by listening to the others. Dialectology is already assisted by sociolinguistics (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 194). The impact of "conformism" has a natural impact in community reports between the speaker and the social community.

2. The link between language, culture of language and culture of society (Sapir, 1980, p. 235, 236.) is the relation between the speakers and the social community. Speaker-community relations have a "normative character" (Rrokaj, 2010, p. 222.) of community practices, which are imposed to the individual will of the speaker. These remind us that language by being collective and outside of the individual it becomes its own in the dimensions of "conformism", in a nutshell the adaptation of the individual's language to his collective linguistic experiences.

Speaker-community reports emerge on the basis of the main units, "base of dialectal or generally linguistic scale" (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 197.), ranging from tribe, province, people, nation, and state. Professor Shkurtaj sees the discourse as a part of the socially-deciphered behavior (Shkurtaj 2009, p. 18.) defined in sociolinguistics. Social behavior changes and over time changes the language towards "unity". Social change has an impact on language (Martine, 1983, p. 224.) and is a consequence of changing linguistic individuality to each and every one from generation to generation. This change is influenced by social development. Thus, the individual language differences go hand in hand. These differences are found everywhere with the tendency that "conformism" will model and sculpt them. It is precisely the social, economic, cultural and educational development that marks a success on the development of this "conformism" with the tendency towards linguistic unification of the smaller units to the larger ones to the national language standard.

Dialectology marks a series of realization of the general investigation of all dialectal areas of Albanian "within Balkan land and in many parts of the Arberesh diaspora" (Gjinari-Shkurtaj, 2002, p. 8.), described by almost all linguistic aspects

of the Albanian system, in particular of dialectal Albanian. In the other hand sociolinguistics except for the fact that is related to dialectology, elaborates lingual "individualism" and "conformism", linguistic influences and differences, language inequality and prejudice, the social nature of language, and "speaking as a signal of social identity." (Hudson, 2002, p. 121).

The Albanian language is very rich in various segments of communication. The language of the various vital activities for society has been built over the time. This communication has its own characteristics in the field of lexicon, phraseology, toponymy and language in general as a communication tool with which deals sociolinguistics. Changes in phonology, in grammar and lexis between "dialects" are linked to different language functions and new language status (Ismajli, 2003, p.19.). Professor Shkurtaj does not ignore the standardization of language as a general problem of today's sociolinguistics, he deals with it by breaking the "process" from regional varieties into national standard language as a nation's objective orientation (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 156, 157.). Standardized language is seen as a problem of sociolinguistics by many linguistics, they base their opinion on sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic parameters (Paçarizi, 2011.).

While Dialectology deals with the linguistic description of the current linguistic situation in dialects, Sociolinguistics marks more linguistic individuality to linguistic conformation according to a sociolinguistic development of speakers and communities in the real language world where speech as interaction is of a social nature. Prof. Shkurtaj entitled his book "Sociolinguistics of Albanian - from dialectology to spoken ethnography", which from the didactic-pedagogical point of view of a text discusses the subject from where the dialectology ends and continues with the sociolinguistic treatment of the individual's linguistic development "and the way how individualism (and individuality) and conformism (or solidarity) appear in the discourse" (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 195.). This "is understood only in the context of an analysis that goes from the speaker to the community of speakers where he/one is involved" (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 195).

Linguistic diversity aspects intertwine with each other, they interact by being modified and altered, which means you cannot define a closed circle of areas of the application of sociolinguistic, says Prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaj, by referring to eight study areas of sociolinguistics. These study fields (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 49.) such as historical ethnolinguistics, historical semantics, sociology of language, sociolinguistics, sociology of knowledge, diachronic sociolinguistics, synchronic sociolinguistics and didactic-pedagogical aspects of sociolinguistics are interrelated as long as

sociolinguistics considers all aspects to reach its objectives. Furthermore, the relationship between the fields of study is mentioned by Duckrot-Todorov; he adds: "the existence of two separate entities takes place in *discourse* and *society*, and it is studied one through another" (Dykro- Todorov, 1984, f. 94.).

With the interconnection between the basic units of dialectical hierarchy such as *neighbourhood, tribe, people, nation*, and *state*, and if analyzed from the dialectical point of view, we deal with a dialectical hierarchy such as speech, folk groups, sub-dialects, dialects, and a unified literary language. The latter, the literary language, is related to the general social development of linguistic emancipation and language culture, on which lies the standard language, namely the spelling of the Albanian language.

The *didactic-pedagogical aspect of sociolinguistics*, according to the Latin saying, as mentioned by Prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaj: "*uses norma loquendi*" means "the norm of the language is its usage" (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 58.); learning to use language in a speech situation includes linguistic *individuality* towards *conformism* and *modeling* use of language as a social convention.

3. Language culture marks a level of progress, use, and institutionalization of the standard language. The scale of use marks the level of language culture of its users, especially students, teachers, artists, public administration employees, television, radio, etc. The use of language, according to spelling rules as an institutional, university, official and state need is applied by an "idealized native speaker" (Shkurtaj, 2009, p. 58.).

Besides learning and increase the degree of language culture, according to him we need scientific, sociolinguistic and didactic-pedagogical course interconnection. *Language Culture* itself with its essential elements of learning and using the linguistic standard analyzes and summarizes aspects of language development, based on the relation between individual-language-society.

The unified literary language is the highest degree of writing spoken and written language, language culture, and knowledge of the sociolinguistic development of language-society relations. Thus, the use of language according to the academic text writing rules represents a high degree of learning and language culture, which require skills and individual interest.

The "Language Culture" book, according to the author's own preface, includes general aspects of language that are needed by students, teachers, speakers in public, radio, and television

(Shkurtaj, 2006, p. 9.). The literary norm, as one of the elements of language culture, implies sociolinguistic knowledge of the development of equality and "conformism" in language, as well as the degree of competence and linguistic communication of the speakers. Language culture covers the literary norm, correct language use, spelling errors, as well as the importance of the right use of language as the best indicator of the knowledge level of the user. There is no use of standard language without a high level of language culture, which implies university language knowledge.

In line with the previous programs and current program of the Albanian Language and Literature (Raporti i vetëvlerësimit, Universiteti i Prizrenit, 2017.), Language Culture leads and is followed by *How to write Albanian (Academic Writing)* to continue with *Dialectology* and *Sociolinguistics*. According to the program list, including other basic courses such as Phonetics, Morphology, Syntax, and Lexicology, it is considered that students with pre-knowledge of language will gain new knowledge of language system and its function.

This course measures the general knowledge of standard Albanian, consistently updates the unified language, Albanian literary norm, and the spelling rules of writing words. It is essential that this course examines the principles of language spelling, including principles such as phonetic, morphological, lexical-meaning, and historical-traditional. Almost, these four principles regulate the spelling of the words in the Albanian language. From the didactic-pedagogical point of view, written discourse, norm, text, and in line with the functions of the language, there is another book titled *How to write Albanian (Academic Writing)* written by Professor Gjovalin Shkurtaj.

4. Academic writing means writing at the highest level, either analytically or synthetically, creating a planned text based on prior knowledge, and doing research by accurately using the literary norm. This course is helpful to students because it increases the level of knowledge on how to write a text, applying the writing techniques, on a paper, and for scientific purposes.

The didactic-pedagogical aspect of linking these university textbooks to the courses of the curriculum is supplemented with the course of academic writing summarized in the book *How to write Albanian (Academic Writing)*.

Fulfilling a student's knowledge of written language, using and applying writing techniques of a text with a certain theme, implies the implementation of a program-related to other courses, according to the curriculum planning of language learning.

Writing these course-related textbooks requires scientific knowledge; the methodological and didactic-pedagogical part of their design is the main part of the synthesis of knowledge addressed by these books dedicated to students and more.

Besides books for scientific research nature, monographs, articles, publications and other texts, there are also four university books that are used as the first literature courses: *Dialectology*, *Sociolinguistics*, *Language Culture* and *How to write Albanian (Academic Writing)*. These books are useful for *learning and understanding* language formation. From the pedagogical point of view, these courses fulfill the program requirements for the linguistic and scientific formation of students.

Knowledge of dialects and language-society relations, based on social change and linguistic "conformism", completes knowledge of the language culture and use of language in spoken and written discourse.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The contribution of Acad. Prof. Dr. Gjovalin Shkurtaj in academic textbooks of the Albanian language is a sublimation of scientific, pedagogical, university and academic commitment. Known as a dialectologist and researcher of sociolinguistics and language culture, Albanian onomastics as well, he has also devoted himself to the problems of language-society relations, mostly focused on the phenomenon of the Albanian speaking ethnography.

The contribution of Acad. Gjovalin Shkurtaj is found in university textbooks such as "Sociolinguistics", "Dialectology" (co-author), "Language Culture", "How to write Albanian" and so on. In these texts, we can distinguish three study aspects of the Albanian language. Dialectal studies are one of the basic requirements and principles for understanding the system and structure of the Albanian language. To better understand the entire spoken Albanian system, in phonetics, morphology, syntax, and in its lexis, his collection of the dialectal data of the Albanian language helped in the unification of the Albanian literary language. His opinion is that the unified literary Albanian should have been done on the tradition of the written Albanian language, dialect variants, referring to the real state of the Albanian language.

Sociolinguistic studies as a requirement for language study in relation to society, language relations, and culture of society highlight the interconnection of the standard language as a general problem of today's sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistic

studies still help to analyze the "process" from regional varieties into the national language, as a nation's objective.

The Language Culture as a university course derives from the requirement for language learning use based on the literary norm and the need to avoid mistakes that might happen during the written or spoken language.

The basics of academic writing imply a high level of expression of written opinion; rely on prior knowledge of the language, language culture, and the proper use of the literary norm, thus as a necessary course for students. Academic writing enhances the level of knowledge of how to write a text, how to write a scientific paper, in line with the academic writing techniques. This university textbook marks the contribution of Acad. Prof. Dr. Gjovalin Shkurtaj to the Albanian language and culture.

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