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Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences

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## Students' Mobility in the Globalization Era and the Linguistic Problems Faced By Them

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### Abstract

Nowadays, the more the opportunities for free movement of individuals from one country to another increase, the more the barriers that hold back this process get reduced. But the difficulties of crossing the "language borders", however, remain a serious problem for the students. This research address issues dealing with the difficulties that the repatriation of students brings. The level of knowledge of the mother tongue for most of them is at the level of simple parent-child communication, lacking relevant conceptual schemes and significant content in the lexical and morpho-syntactic field. Through a survey and several interviews with repatriated students and parents, as well as with teachers, through an assessment made to the new situation in the Albanian education system, and through the results received from the data collection we will point out an actual problem and offer a solution to facilitate the students' language learning. The focus of the survey is on the main 'skills': understanding, speaking, reading, writing, spoken interaction and spoken production.

**Key words:** students' mobility, repatriation, survey and results.

### 1. Introduction

Education in Albania in the last two decades has gone through a long journey of change and difficulties to bridge the huge gap and differences created by the communist system in the growth and the education of the generations. Various phenomena have accompanied the process of change, many of which have been overcome and others are still presenting difficulties. Recently the Albanian education is facing a new phenomenon which is related to the return of Albanian families from immigration, which in addition to social problems faced, are dealing with a new one: the guarantee of normal continuity of education of their children which have a poor use of their mother language and thus overcome the problems that hinder the success of their learning (Gjokutaj, 2010).

One of the main problems of an emigrating population is the relationship with their mother tongue. Even for the families of Albanian emigrants the issue of language acquisition by their children is a complex problem and for the solution of this problem they should not be left alone, but should be helped in every way by the Albanian society and by the Nation where they live.

Noting that the number of returning emigrant students is increasing from day to day – this figure goes up to 3,000 returning students at all levels of education<sup>1</sup> – the intervention by public and private educational institutions has been necessary to compensate for the linguistic deficiencies at all levels: in comprehension, reading, speaking and writing. For this purpose the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), which since 2007 has undertaken a rehabilitation program called "Second Chance", which has been implemented near the larger urban schools, and consists in the organization, for returning students, of extra curriculum in core subjects such as Albanian language (mother tongue) and other subjects of national character, history, geography etc.

This newly created situation of the Albanian society requires a knowledge and a specialized educational treatment in the language field, so this phenomenon is being paid better attention, but we must keep in mind that some problems are very special specifications and one of them is the issue of language disorders of these children and the poor lexical fund in their native language (Wodniecka, Cepeda 2009; Chomsky 1988; Lambert, Tucker 1972).

In this context and in order to highlight some psycholinguistic and educational phenomena (Donley 2009), we offer this subject of study wanting to find some ways to ease until the complete elimination of language disorders in this target

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education and Science, 2012.

group of returning students for whom the issue of their linguistic training is very important for their further intellectual growth.

The role of the "Second Chance" program was important because it enabled in some way the rehabilitation and compensation of basic communication skills of this contingent in learning the native language. But we note that this program has been insufficient (Koleci 2010), because, according to the data of MES on this phenomenon, it is noticed that the returned students have low scores, even lower than they had in the respective schools where they come from.

In about 30 students pursuing graduation in the 2009-2012 class, has been noted that these students GPA is two degrees lower than before. Analysing the facts from this point of view, the "Second Chance" program with all the assistance that has brought, has highlighted some problems associated with student learning and the specificity of each of them. So we have to admit that it has been a program which is extended only in compulsory education, has been the same for all students, with no classification at different levels of knowledge in order to respond to individual needs of all students. At the time when it was applied, included a smaller number of students (about 100-200), when the number of the contingent already exceeds 3000.

The negative threshold of learning is mainly related to the acquisition of language learning at lexical, grammatical (morfo-syntactic) level and beyond. For this reason the subject of this paper are the linguistic problems of moving students, related to the use of mother tongue in the extent to which it can play all of its cognitive and communicative functions in relation to the learning process of students belonging to various academic levels. Taking into consideration the fact that such a phenomenon affects not only the Albanian society, but is a typical phenomenon that affects all societies tending towards globalization (Lambert, Tucker, 1972), we will try to find and treat this phenomenon in its universality and recommend solutions and scientific treatment in order to help suggesting the intervention we need to do in favor of this group of "travelling" students in the global era of education.

## 2. Methodology

The research methodology is based on three different stages the collection and the description of data; data analysis; extraction and comparison of results. So, we describe, analyze and compare data collected from authentic groups of pupils and students facing the problem outlined above. Pupils, teachers, parents, students and various family members have been questioned and tested and data were collected from schools and higher educational institutions. These data helped us to understand better the problem, but here, we will analyze only the results obtained by pupils and students.

In view of the achievement of this research, the sample of 20 pupils repatriated is chosen by teachers in some schools in the cities of Tirana, Shkodra and Durrës (Albania). Thus, the teacher M.N. of additional classes of "Mustafa Greblesh" school in Tirana has explored a sample of 9 students: 5 girls and 4 boys. The sample of 6 students from Durrës is selected from the group of children tested in 2 elementary schools of Durrës. Such samples consisted of 2 girls and 4 boys of third and fourth grades. In Shkodra were observed 5 students. Eight of pupils were born in Albania, other 12 were born outside Albania; 11 of pupils had spoken albanian with their parents and other 9 didn't speak it. The object of our study were also 14 students of University of Tirana, Faculty of History-Philology and 6 students of the European University of Tirana by the lecturer F.K. provided data that will be analysed in this research. Eleven of students were born in Albania, other 9 were born outside Albania; 13 of students had speak albanian in their family and other 7 didn't speak it.

In order to examine students' understanding, speaking, reading and writing skills, also spoken interaction and spoken production there were used different tests: writing skills of students of the research was assessed through the dictated text entitled: "*The Lion and Doggie*", which is composed of 89 words and 15 punctuation marks. The text in question was read by the class teacher. Reading skills of students of the research was assessed through one text with about 150 words. The same text was used to test the skills of pupils about spoken interaction and spoken production.

There were also two questionnaires: the first one was addressed to pupils who are at the end of the first cycle of education. It consists of five questions for each student (grades 8-9):

Questionnaire 1: *Where do you like to live and why? Who is your best friend and why? Describe with five sentences a day at the beach. How do you think you write the Albanian language? Where do you think you make mistakes?*

The second test was addressed to university students. These questions require extensive response of the essay type: personal experience with Albanian language learning; a letter to the parents/a friend.

### 3. Description and data processing

The first analysis, which was conducted through oral communication, is focused on students' reading skills at the end of Grade 9. The objective of this analysis was to read some common text for all respondents, questions about its meaning, discussions with various questions and answers about this part of the reading. The second analysis, conducted through written communication, aimed to detect various causes that hinder the learning process. The analysis was extended to the logical, linguistic and semantic plan of the training of these students who represent different levels of education. Students' essays were analyzed in a broader scale of their linguistic, semantic and syntactic expressivity.

Thus, using pupils' and students' works to understand what happens with them in view of the use of native language on the level of their education, we will bring an analysis that sheds light on the degree of the comprehension of the language, the lexical richness, the syntactic structure, the spelling and its use in different linguistic registers, which provide an overview of the level of knowledge of this category of pupils and students. The phenomena analyzed in these works will allow us to take a deep discussion on the issues in question and then come to conclusions.

Regarding the pupils' responses on the questionnaire 1, we have the following results which we are anticipating with an authentic presentation of some of the interviewees. On these models, and many others that are not presented here, we have made the following analysis to find the causes and phenomena that affect the use of mother tongue and the returning students learning.

#### Questionnaire 1

On the basis of this survey we analyzed some grammatical phenomena which revealed the real difficulties faced by pupils. Also, we did a comparative reflection of the degree of use of regional dialectal expressions.



Table 1. Results from composition test: grammar skills<sup>2</sup>

	Pupils	Simple sentence	Complex Sentence	Conjunction	Subject	Predicate	Mismatching word
1	Born in Albania	4	5	5	3	9	4
2	Born outside Albania	6	4	6	5	11	3
3	Who spoke albanian in their family	5	7	7	4	11	4
4	Who didn't speak albanian in their family	4	3	3	5	7	5

Table 2. Results from pupils' spelling mistakes

Pupils	Words wrongly read	Repeated words	Shortened words	Distortions in reading (dyslexia)	Inication
Born in Albania	41	27	17	21	wrong
born outside Albania	43	31	24	24	wrong
Who spoke albanian in their family	39	20	15	18	almost correct
Didn't speak albanian in their family	45	36	28	26	wrong

Through table 3 we become acquainted in particular with the quality of writing of pupils returning from emigration and can state that they exhibit numerous deficiencies related to language skills. It is noted in the high degree of non-recognition of Albanian phonemes and graphemes, of the literary traits of Albanian words, but also in a distinct lack of knowledge of the rules of punctuation.

Table 3. Results from pupils' writing mistakes

	Pupils	Fonemas-Grafemas	Influence of Foreign Alphabet	Words	The use of Capital Letter	Distortions in writing (disgraphy)	Punctuation
1	born in Albania	10	3	25	11	16	12
2	born outside Albania	11	5	31	12	19	13
3	who spoke albanian in their family	9	2	21	9	11	8
4	who didn't speak albanian in their family	12	5	33	13	22	15

In addition to writing, part of our analysis was also reading and understanding where the students' results are unsatisfactory. The questionnaire was prepared to provide a detailed check of reading skills and understanding of specific words, of sentences and of entire texts. From the reading of a text<sup>3</sup> by students in class, we understood their difficulties in reading, spelling and comprehension in general. The concrete results of this survey are presented in the following table:

<sup>2</sup>In all tables is shown the average of the results by groups of students tested.

<sup>3</sup>The text of the above was taken from the book of language and literature, class 6, "Priam begs Achilles", which has 150 words.

Table 4. Results from pupils' spoken interaction and spoken production

		Pupils born in Albanian	Pupils born outside Albanian	Pupils who spoke albanian in their family	Pupils who didn't speak albanian in their family
1	Number of words correctly described	63	60	71	42
2	Number of words correctly used	50	49	67	38
3	Number of sentences correctly described	5	6	7	4
4	Number of sentences correctly used	4	4	7	3
5	Number of misinterpreted words	32	30	29	37
6	Number of dialectal expressions	13	16	11	23

Emmigrant students who speak Albanian language in their family, do not have much difficulty understanding text. They are able to discuss. They can ask questions and give answers without much difficulty. Often, their language is filled with dialects. Unlike these, emmigrant students who do not have used Albanian language in their family, have difficulties to understand and to express themselves. Often, they use terms in a second language, in the use of the Albanian language.

Questionnaire 2

Të enjtertë shkollë,  
Të enjtertë shkollë,

Kosha, Arta  
Kam mbetur shprehje e bote  
ne shprehje, kështu e veshkova  
ne. Gjoni, ne qe shprehje qe qelbet  
Tani qe mbetur shprehje e bote  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje e bote  
te veshkova ne. Arta.

Shprehjet qe un kam jone  
qe bote qe shprehje qe bote  
qje, veshkova qe veshkova shprehje  
shprehjet shprehje qe qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje

Të enjtertë shkollë,  
Të enjtertë shkollë,

'Ferre'

Jenda, kështu

E dashur mamë dhe babë të mi, ...

S'ka ne bote ne bote? Ne shprehje qe bote  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje  
qje, veshkova qe shprehje qe shprehje

Table 5. Results from composition test: grammar skills

Students:	Simple sentence	Complex sentence	Conjunction	Subject	Predicate	Mismatching word
1 born in Albania	5	6	7	4	11	3
2 born outside Albania	6	4	4	5	9	4
3 who spoke albanian in their family	6	7	8	3	12	2
4 who didn't speak albanian in their family	5	3	4	4	8	4

As evidenced by the table 5, there are no significant differences between the grammar results of pupils and students. Students, who have used Albanian language in their family, are able to build complex sentences and to respect the rules of syntax Albanian language.

Table 6. Results from students' spelling mistakes

Students:	Words wrongly read	Repeated words	Shortened words	Distortions in reading (dyslexia)	Intonation
born in Albania	34	21	11	12	wrong
born outside Albania	39	23	14	14	wrong
who spoke albanian in their family	31	19	13	9	almost correct
didn't speak albanian in their family	42	27	17	16	wrong

Students read a text with 150 words, through which we identified these errors at their spelling. During reading, they repeated many words, especially compound words. They barely read the double letters. Students, especially those who have not used Albanian in their family, made mistakes both in word and sentence accent.

Table 7. Results from students' writing mistakes

	Students:	Fonemas-Grafemas	Influence of Foreign Alphabet	Words	The use of Capital Letter	Distortions in writing (disgraphy)	Punctuation
1	born in Albania	8	2	22	10	13	10
2	born outside Albania	9	3	25	11	15	13
3	who spoke albanian in their family	6	1	19	8	9	7
4	who didn't speak albanian in their family	10	3	26	12	7	14

Observed errors in writing are numerous. Albanian students returned from Greece, often do not know the Latin alphabet and use the Greek alphabet. Another phenomenon observed is the use of irregular capital letters. Also, punctuation is following the syntactic structure of the second language, which does not fit with their mother tongue.

Table 8. Results from students' spoken interaction and spoken production

		Students born in Albanian	Students born outside Albanian	Students who spoke albanian in their family	Students who didn't speak albanian in their family
1	Number of words correctly described	73	72	82	53
2	Number of words correctly used	61	57	74	48
3	Number of sentences correctly described	7	6	9	5
4	Number of sentences correctly used	5	7	9	4
5	Number of misinterpreted words	17	11	8	21
6	Number of dialectal expressions	12	15	11	19

Students have a very poor vocabulary. Usually, they only recognize simple lexicon family use. They use scientific terms and concepts only in the language of their host country. For this reason, they are not able to use a scientific correct style in their mother tongue. They lack the proper terminology and syntactic structure of the Albanian language. Their discourse is overflowing with dialects. As shown by the Table 8, the most difficult situation is presented to those students who have not used the Albanian language in their daily discourse.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Through the above data we get acquainted in particular with the quality of writing of 8-9 grade students and university students returned from emigration. They clearly show the extent of knowledge of the language according to the skills listed in the tables derived from questionnaires that predicted observation of different skills: reading, writing, understanding, communication.

So, to be more concrete, let us focus on the review of results, their analysis for each category of respondents, and also on a comparison between them in order to identify specific problems for each type.

The results obtained from the above analysis, points out that the difference between the level of knowledge of Albanian language from pupils and students is not very large. Also, among the four categories analyzed, pupils and students with whom parents have spoken in english language, are distinguished. They have more security in the use of the Albanian language and make fewer spelling and grammatical errors. Others have more difficulties and speak the Albanian language as a second language.

One of the most obvious distortions in reading of the 'travelling learners' is dyslexia. As it is known, dyslexia is a reading disorder and can occur regardless of normal intelligence, regular viewing and adequate motivation<sup>4</sup>. This disorder is due to significant difficulties in learning. It is based on language disorders of constructive origin, causing difficulties in encoding some words and mainly include lack of phonological processing ability<sup>5</sup>. Decoding difficulties of some words are surprising, taking into account age and other cognitive and academic skills, they are not the result of general developments or sensory difficulties. Other indicators of reading disorders observed at these students associated with the slow pace of reading, intonation 'borrowed' from the language of the country where they come from, the difficulty in reading long polysyllabic words and groups of consonants.

In the comprehension plan it is noted that these students have difficulty in understanding the message, they find difficulties in reproduce a certain thematic, have a poor vocabulary, do not find the right words, they hardly answer questions they are asked, they make poor analysis, weak descriptions etc. Their speech is accompanied by the elimination of connecting words, the lack of which disrupts the meaning of the sentences. Their participation in free conversation in class is poor. They do not correctly answer the questions they are made and at the same time find it difficult to ask questions. In addition to these difficulties, there are others such as disorder of attention: memory, spatial and visual-spatial perception disorders, difficulty in spoken and written language (disgraphia) etc.

To the difficult repatriation process of students other problems are added not less important that inhibit or promote the success of learning. Among them we can mention: the level of their general education, external factors that do not depend on them, early childhood, the way of learning to read and write, genetical factors, motor skills etc. These and other phenomena related to the quality of reading of repatriated Albanian students, affect their success in learning.

The results of this analysis revealed numerous shortcomings of students primarily in the area of syntax, which makes us realize that their approach to the Albanian language is similar to the approach to a second language. If we take for granted the assertion that a born speaker of any language recognizes a certain aspect of syntax (Chomsky 1957), then we can explain the overlap of different structures between the first and second language, making difficult the process of expression, and also the mutual understanding to our respondents. Some other disadvantages in the field of grammar are: the disproportional use of simple sentences in relation to the use of compound sentences; the lack of conjunctions at both components as well as at the sentences level; uncertainty in using the subject. The Albanian language, as a language with optional use of the subject, as many languages are (Chomsky 1986), has some internal rules for its use or disuse. The students interviewed lack the linguistic perception, which is reflected in the misuse of subject.

Another thing which calls our attention is their difficulty in adapting the words in gender, number, case, forms of nouns, adjectives, pronouns or tense, voice and person of the verbs. Inadequacy is observed also in higher levels of syntactic units such as connection between components or phrases between them. This is proved, among other things, by the use of the wrong prepositions of gender case, joints, adjectives or pronouns. We also note the lack of tense or mode connection or between sentences in a compound phrase. Finally, the frequent use of dialectical expressions is evident in a lexical, phonetical, as well as structural plan, reflecting the knowledge of the language in a family-provincial communication level, far from the literary or standard level. This becomes a serious impediment to full utilization of registers and different styles that the language provides for communication.

<sup>4</sup>Today's Albanian Language Dictionary, Tirana, 2010.

<sup>5</sup>Orton Dyslexia Society.

Texts of our respondents indicated serious deficiencies in terms of spelling. First, it is easily noticed that a good portion of them do not recognize and differentiate properly the phonemes and graphemes of the Albanian language. Numerous difficulties arise mainly in double letters: sh / zh / xh / k / th / f, etc. Also, the lack of literary language reflects all the spelling problems that derive from the dialectal use of language; the words are written in the dialectal form. The disuse of upper case letters is another problem observed hourly. Thus, they do not differ personal from impersonal nouns and what is more disturbing, do not use upper case letters at the top of the statement.

Disgraphia is another disorder in acquiring the skill of writing. Disgraphia indicators are: the lack of a letter (shkolla.. kolla), the change of the letters (trimi-tmiri), the addition of redundant letters (mmakina) or syllables (mailli), the separation in two parts of the same word, or the merging of several words, the lack of point, coma, the problems with capital letters and small letters (Brenda-brenda), problems of distinguishing similar sounds such as "q" and "ç".

It is possible to find even the same disorders as with dyslexia. Reading disorders are often associated with the writing ones even though the mechanism of their appearance is different. The number of dysgraphic students may be twice as great from dyslexic students.

Punctuation is a highly sensitive issue. Students hardly use any punctuation mark between words or sentences, producing a text with a lack of structure. This raises serious questions about perception and syntactic or structural awareness that they have for the language, which guides our analysis to the internal levels of language knowledge, to dwell upon external reflection of different issues that appear in each individual.

Throwing a comparative view between the language uses made by students, first we note that each of them reflects the impact of the language used in migration (Greek A.H., B.B., A.K., J.L., I.J. or Italian A.K., S.B.). This is reflected in syntactic structure: the sequence of words, sentence construction, adjustment between words; in the lexicon: borrowed words, lexical poverty; in phonetics: the emphasis of words and their logical intonation. This proves the assertion of students when asked about the difficulties they had with the use of Albanian. So student K.A. writes: "The difficulties I have are: I know not to use big words required by the university level. I am often confused with the Greek language. I don't understand what the instructor wants, eg. for the homeworks or a question (but not always)."

Student J.L. writes: "I have some problems with word formation and I am trying to read as many as I can about the Albanian grammar, essay and other things that I still do not know about Albanian".

It should be noted, unlike expected, that the results of the comparative analysis between the recognition of the Albanian language by pupils and students witnessed the same problems and equally serious about various language skills, regardless of their age. In this regard, the results of students tested indicate that the level of knowledge of the language does not differ much from that of the students, which indicates a half use of the Albanian language, perhaps only at family level. But now it is becoming the primary language and requires knowledge in undergraduate academic level. In these circumstances the intervention and support of educational institutions should be more serious, in order to help each category according to the respective needs.

To assist returning students who know poorly their native language, first there is a need to recognize and well study the problem in its entirety. First this phenomenon should be associated with the phenomenon of bilingualism, but given that students have different backgrounds and different levels of knowledge of the language, the supporting programs need to be adjusted depending on their needs. Work requires extensive cooperation between school and family, where parents have their undisputed role, but also specialists in various fields such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, etc., in order to respond better to the complexity of this phenomenon.

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#### Web resources

- <http://didatticainreweb20.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.oneweb20.it/24/06/2008/stefano-mizzella-didattica-e-web20/>
- <http://magazine.liquida.it/2008/12/09/insegnamento-didattica-e-web-20/>
- <http://www.ideosfera.org/wp/2008/10/06/servizi-web-20-per-la-didattica/>