

Youth Discourse of The New Millennium: Between Jargon and Multifarious Abbreviations

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Abstract

The discourse or speech of young people (now also including exchanges with the chatting system or on-line communications) deserves to be considered and studied, not only as a type of linguistic communication in relatively closed communities, but also as a manifestation of the formation and realization of the process of growth and transition of the new generation of speakers from a certain stage (mainly of teenage age) to maturity and the formation of their own personality, closing that communication cycle in time.

Keywords: youth, discourse, jargon, abbreviations, communication

Article

This type of communication (both in the form of spoken, oral or face-to-face discourse, and the traditional written form, as well as in the conditions of today's development of technology and online information) still remains in the framework of secret or "coded" speeches or discourses. For example, - *Chat* - (in Italian "*chiaccherata*") which in Albanian means conversation, is already one of the telecommunication services between two or more people and in a wide typological range, both on the phone and also via the Internet (*E-mails*, etc.) or as it is called in English-speaking environments *online chat* (online meeting). Even though these services are very different and diverse between them, they have two basic elements in common: the fact that the dialogue is carried out in real time and the fact that this service can easily put in contact several people completely unknown to one another, usually in an anonymous form. Even the "environment" (virtual space) in which the "*chat*" takes place is usually called *-chatroom-* (literally "the room in which chatting occurs"). It is also

called - *channel* - which is more often given with the abbreviation *-chan.-*. In fact, if we refer to the way this phenomenon is scientifically treated up to now, either in the Albanian language, or as the phenomenon of young people's speech in other languages, it turns out that there have been quite a few studies and the data collected about that type of communication, have not only attracted the interest of researchers, especially dialectologists and ethno-folklorists, but they have also been described and evaluated as an interesting part of research in the field of sociolinguistics. In the case of Albanian language, *firstly*, although sociolinguistics had not yet been developed as a study discipline and as a subject of university training for philologists, researches and publications have been made on the secret speech of some closed social environments, mainly of workers travelling in some provinces, such as the masons of the province of Opar, the *belaxhi* of Shëngjergji of Tirana (travelling workers who sold bread) or for the *xerahs* (folk doctors) of Buali. For them, the very detailed descriptive articles made by the famous folklorist Qemal Haxhihasani, who called them "*social speeches*", are of

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In the Albanian lands, such dialects have been the **purishtja** or the speech of the master masons of Opar (Korçë), the **dogançja** or the secret speech of the tinsmiths of Brezhdan, Limar and the zharej of Buali, the **lovidharçja** of the sawmillers of Kaludhi (Përmet), **dalipbecçja** of belazhin (laborares who worked with spades) of Shëngjergji, Shënmrie, Shëngjin of Tirana. To distinguish them from dialects or territorial dialects of Albanian language, for a long time they were also called "*dialects* or *social dialects*". Later, when real sociolinguistic research began, the designations related to the speech of teenagers as a more or less defined social group (high school students and university students, mainly those who lived in dormitories) would be distinguished from "*secret speech*" also aiming to find a different definition of them. Prof. Gj. Shkurtaj, in the textbook "*Sociolinguistics of the Albanian language*", names them with the term "*Peer group*", as well as the discourse in different communication situations, "*the jargon of schoolchildren and students*", "*the language of lovers*"³, etc.

In European sociolinguistics, also, in the framework of studies on argots and slangs, there have been researches on "*gergodeglistudenti*", on the coded discourses of schoolchildren and other closed social groups, as well as the on soldiers of compulsory or paid military service units, and even prisoners, etc.⁴

The main feature of secret speeches or coded discourses and communications (which also includes the coded discourses of young people) is

¹Q. Haxhihasani, *Të folmet shoqërore*, in "St.fil.", no. 1-2, 1964.

²Q. Haxhihasani, *Të folmet shoqërore*, in "St.fil.", no. 1-2, 1964.

³G. Shkurtaj, *Sociolinguistikë e shqipës*, Tirana, 2009, p. 119.

⁴A. Scholz, *Subcultura e lingua giovanile in Italia. Hip-hop e dintorni*, no 2, 2005.

that they have mainly social functions: they serve to communicate, but, at the same time, to exclude from communication those people and entities they believe to be outside the relevant group, thus strengthening the sense of identification of those within the group. All over the world such social and professional groups, which also have their secret languages, were mainly associations or professional corporations (*blacksmiths, potters, fortune tellers and witches, soldiers, hunters, fishermen, various wanderers*). However, the secret language, in some cases is an expression of social division, of caste in the broad sense of the term, or what is included in the term "*underworld*", thieves, beggars or of division according to age groups: youth slang, etc.

Some secret words, more than some certain people, belong to some *situations or certain cases*: so, for example the language of war and robbery or hunting; in the latter, the ritual and taboos related to hunting, etc., must also be taken into account.

The main transformation of secret speech takes place in the field of the lexicon, and there, without a doubt, the most interesting part belongs to the semantic transformations. For example, the phrase "*We love you, flag*" is a normal sentence, taken from a well-known patriotic song, but in schoolboy jargon it is figuratively used to describe one of the teachers who is thin and all the clothes appear so loose on her, that she looks like a flag stick.

In our treatment, we will use the term "*youth speech*", referring to the meaning it has in Italian sociolinguistics "*Il linguaggioideigiovani*" where, according to current studies, communication via *SMS, e-mail or chat* is more popular than ever. Millions of different *SMS are sent every day*, in which no importance is given to grammar rules, punctuation or spelling. The importance is to achieve communication as quickly as possible, by shortening and abbreviating words, and by widely using metaphorical and symbolic meanings. Likewise, young people often use dialect, as a certain indication of "*disregard*" towards the rules

of grammar, as well as towards the rules of adults in general; also, especially through the *chat system*, they express their emotions by using "emoticon" signs or symbols, combined with acronyms or abbreviations and shortening of words, so that they seem as if they do not belong to the Albanian language. Young people write in this way to distinguish themselves from adults and to mark belonging to a certain group. Young people use social networks to chat and send messages, as well as to find new contacts, devoting themselves to electronic games or adding to the list of friends.⁵

The discourse of young people, as part of secret conversations, until the age of the Internet and online sites (*Facebook, Twitter, Instagram*) has been mainly oral and only rarely in its written form. Today, the discourse of young people is no longer only oral, only spoken, as it was in the past, but with new forms and with visible differences in the form of communication, which has evolved and is also done in written form.

The main aim of the young people in the communication among them is to adapt their discourse to the relevant social context: to avoid the use of expressions that they use only in the relevant "social circle" "ganzissimo", in the discourse and communication at school. It is important that young people be aware of the fact that parents and adults, who they may know well or not, are not to be spoken to in the same way as they do with their friends and classmates, and that a different register is used for communication at school, different from that of *chat*.

It can be said that, even in Albania, especially in the largest urban centers, such as Tirana, Shkodra, Durësi, Elbasani, Vlora, Korçë, etc., in the

circumstances of the globalization process in the last 30 years, great social changes have taken place. Technology has progressed at a very fast pace, simultaneously bringing changes in discourse and up to the use of a special lexicon that characterizes this social environment. With *the chat* e.g. a new genre of conversation is born, a kind of synthesis between writing and speaking: this way of communication makes it possible to exchange via the Internet digitalized messages on a computer comparable to the jokes of a face-to-face dialogue, which is carried out through the simultaneous use of interventions with different signs. The proximity of speech - a phenomenon that also characterizes other forms of recent writing, such as e-mail and telephone messages, *sms*, - includes graphic indicators aimed at reproducing the characteristics of the voice: easy or hard to imitate shouting related phenomena; extensive use of onomatopoeia and exclamations; of repeating the same vowel: *ciaoouoi (hi)*.

Certainly, we are dealing with an interesting phenomenon not only in the solely sociolinguistic approach, but also as a current of thought and mental approach of today's times. Therefore, even within the limited borders of this article, we are bringing some of the research carried out in the most active part of the Albanian society, in the group of young people, having as the main basis the discourse of the young people of the city of Elbasan. We will bring lexical flows, which we have collected based on the data from conversations and surveys with young people who have kindly told us some of the most typical flows of lexematics and semantic and grammatical transformations of exchanges taken from the Internet, on social networks such as *Instagram, Messenger, Whatsapp*, etc.

The case requires that, for the sake of the authenticity of the materials, we emphasize that when it comes to the group of young people, we are talking not only about teenagers (high school students), but also about students, especially those who are completing their studies living in social environments, gathered in shared housing, as dormitories or collective housing for university

⁵According to a study conducted by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in 2012 (JAMES studio), young people between *the ages of 12 and 19 spend their free time when they are alone, mainly with their mobile phone in hand or on the Internet, preferring these digital media now even more than television*. We can say that we are experiencing a similar situation today in a good part of the Albanian youth who live in Tirana and in the big cities where the Internet extension network has been widely spread.

students. Referring to even some previous studies, the most important social environments to be taken into consideration were and still are the students in the "Student's City" in Tirana, as well as the dormitories of other universities, among them a significant number of students in the city of Elbasan, namely "A. Xhuvani" University.

As a result, the main bulk of the data were collected two age groups: teenagers 15-18-year olds and young people aged 18-22. The speech of young people is a type of communication where the teenager will show ideas, thoughts, feelings, desires, attitudes and certain behaviors through which his individuality is determined. If we go back in time, in the past generations the vocabulary used by young people is completely different from the kind of lexicon than today. We are all born with the gift and biological ability to speak, but there are precisely the extra-linguistic factors that bring about changes in language, the ways of expressing and conveying messages. As the Italian researcher Piero Angela says, "*the child is like an unformatted computer, which is formed and grows linguistically in a certain family and social environment*". So, as a part of that formatting, we should also call the period of adolescence and youth, where coded communication or the characteristic discourse of "*peer groups*", which Shkurtaĳ has also spoken about,⁷ play a big role. The language and forms of speech in which young people communicate in daily life, especially in social networks, exist apart and out of speaking or writing the linguistic norms and rules by which a language is built and evaluated, such as the standard language. We can even say that social networks have created their "*language*", a language that apparently has as its main function the speed of communication, as well as the "*secret*" of not being understood by those who are not part of the "*network*" to the relevant "*group*", ignoring the form and manner of writing in terms of grammar, spelling and punctuation rules, etc.

⁶Piero Angela, *Da zero a tre anni*, Mondadori, 2017.

⁷Gj. Shkurtaĳ, *Sociolinguistika e shqipese*, SHBLU, Tirana, 2009.

The first, but also the most important, difference in youth discourse as a manifestation of the secret "*code*" limited to certain environments, is *the lexical system or the vocabulaSubcultura e lingua giovanile in Italia. Hip-hop e dintorniry*. The vocabulary, which many times turns out to be incomprehensible to other generations. It only takes a few hours between them to understand that there are some types of codes, words and even other conversations that leave you speechless. This is also related to the components of communicative competence, *which has to do with the ability of individuals or members of a given social community to communicate with each other under conditions determined by the situation and linguistic, social, psychological, pragmatic, etc. norms*⁸.

But, if until the period of the Internet and online exchanges, however, the grammatical structure of young people's speech was that of Albanian (*relative to any other language*) and the changes were mainly related to the metaphorical or symbolic use of the lexicon general. Now the mixing of words, phrases and especially onomastics (names of actors, models, athletes, etc.), as well as the signs (symbols) provided by the computer system, have come into use. The trend of iconism culminates with the so-called "*faccine*" or "*emotions*", small figures with the shape of a human face marked as punctuation marks that graphically and alphabetically express a series of emotions, *smiley*, which is the densest. To the users of these and various taxigraphic abbreviations such as: *xke"pse"* (*why*), *cmq* "*comunque*" (*anyway*), to "*more or less*" allows *chat users*, especially young people, to distinguish themselves from those who follow the traditional graphic model. In fact, the desire to communicate calmly and without wanting to be understood by anyone, in many cases is the goal of Albanian teenagers. The phenomenon is not unknown. The same thing happens with young Italians, French or Germans or English. In some cases, the young Albanians have even borrowed their jargon. It's

⁸G. Shkurtaĳ, *Sociolinguistika e shqipese*, Tirana, 2009, p. 269.

obvious why they manage to get along, but what if such a message were addressed to a parent, grandparent, older sister or brother? Each generation of students has known changes in word selection over the years. More than anyone else, it is the teacher who experiences the most this change in the selection and use of words.

The forms of speaking and writing, which are used in social networks (*facebook, twitter, WhatsApp, skype, messenger, chat...etc*), come through signs, abbreviations, acronyms, slang, numbers and mathematical signs that tend to show emotions and to express the state of mind.

Writing based on the standard language and fluent communication is deprived in the discourse on social networks, having already given way to a coexistence of a strange mixture, which can hardly be called a real language. A mixture between writing and speaking, with endless reproductions that do not bring anything new to the language, with the use of icons that express the emotional state in which the person is without using words. We can call it a "language without grammar", a language with few words, a language that aims to transmit information through very few letters written incorrectly. So, a special group of Internet users has been created, who, continuing the former coding of metaphors and acronyms and abbreviations and non-compliance with grammatical rules, have created that kind of "jargon" that is not only outside the standard language, but even that there are many and countless differences from the spoken language or dialect of adults. *Influenced by the use of the Internet, young people have created a "language of the Internet", which comes out to us with many peculiarities. It is much more practical to make a dialogue on the Internet, because only two or a few letters are used, often combined with numbers, to express a thought with rich content and to get along better with each other*⁹. would be some of

⁹A. Çepani, *Analizë gjuhësore e shqipes së përdorur në rrjetet sociale, rasti i facebook-ut*, International Seminar on Albanian Language and Literature and Culture, 2016, Pristina, p. 83.

the words that make this type of discourse distinct? Here are some of them:

1. Abbreviations of words with a general meaning or different forms of greetings and congratulations, as in the following cases: For example, *Uni-Universitet (university); nsr-nesër (tomorrow), skr-shkruaj(write), bjm-bëjmë (do), prv-provim (exam), vrt-vërtet (really), prp-prapë (again), amn-aman, flm-faleminderit (thank you!); mrz- mërzitur (bored); ath-atëherë (then); dsh-detyrështëpie (homework); tjt-tjetër (other); tung-tungjatjeta (long live, hello); shmr- shumëmirë (very well).*

2. Words and phraseological expressions that express admiration, love, etc., such as: *mdkt-mëduket (it seems to me), çpb-çfarë po bën (what are you doing); ckm-çkemi (hi), grp-grupi (my group), tkz- tëkamzemër (you are my heart); nrreg-nërregull (okay), nk-nuk (not), lc- hiç (nothing), tn-tani (now), sps-s'kapërse (nothing), sjm-s'jam (I'm not), skgj-s'kagjë (nothing) , klm-kalofshmirë (have a good time), gz-gëzohem (I'm pleased), klb-kalofshbukur (have a nice time), tdf-tëdua fort (I love you so much); motla-motra (sister), zemla-zemra (sweetheart), spilt- shpirt (my soul)etj.*

3. Homophones of letters and numbers, e.g. *vër8-vërtet (indeed); ndo1x-ndonjëherë (sometimes); 3gim-tregim (storytelling); 7zënë-shtatzënë (pregnant); publici8(publicity) etc.*

4. Abbreviations of words aiming at showing affection, built with diminutive suffixes, e.g. *zml-zemël (sweetheart); bb-beybi (baby), angeljllk-engjellushke (angel)*

5. The use of Italianisms, e.g. *c6-ci sei (you are here/you agree); asp- aspetta (wait);*

6. The use of anglicisms, e.g. *plz-please; cu-see u; w8-wait; Hi; Bye; omg- oh my god!*

So, if we were to take a careful look at the messages of young people ¹⁰on social networks, we would understand in a few minutes that not only can we not talk about the enforcement of spelling, but we will encounter serious and deliberate violations of spelling rules, especially by systematically writing *-e-* instead of *-ë-* and *-c-* instead of the Albanian *ç*. Likewise, one can see the lack or non-use of punctuation marks, but the words are also written incompletely, even half-heartedly, where a nearly ignored lexicon can be observed. This is one side of the problem. On the other hand, we see that the language used by young people, from social networks, is being mixed with foreign languages such as English or even other languages. Also, in most cases, slang is also used, usually those words that young people use in their everyday life, not making any distinction between communicating on social networks and communicating in everyday life in different environments. In fact, this kind of "speech", this kind of jargon is moving at a lightning pace, so that if a person does not try to learn or transcribe these kinds of "hieroglyphs", he feels excluded from virtual communication, from the so-called world of social networks. This way of speaking often appears to young people as "creative and entertaining language", as an "evolution", technological and modernizing. So, it can be said that we are facing a new world of communication, which is developing at great speed. One remains in the dilemma whether to become part of this kind of discourse or to reject it. Ultimately it remains a matter of choice. But what should be emphasized is that we see a degradation of language culture. This is also taken into account by the researcher Sh. Islamaj, from the University of Pristina (Kosovo) who states: "Electronic means of information, radios and televisions, especially some of the youth programs in all of these, have become a great helper in the degradation of language culture. ... which will more affirm the language of the street, the extreme

¹⁰The examples given are taken from the various messages of young people nowadays on social networks.

linguistic perversity, indeed the culture of the street
¹¹.

The use of written lectures, using symbols and electronic signs, does not at all exclude the knowledge and use of standard Albanian in cases where it is necessary. Of course, as much as the Internet has opened and expanded the circle of information, at the same time it has closed it in itself, bringing "dry" communication methods, which realize communication, but do not leave a path for uses with stylistic and artistic value, as it is in the nature of spoken and written human languages. Also, let's hope that, after the period of adolescence and youth is over, that kind of discourse will be abandoned by the grown-up people, and in time, even forgotten.

Finally, we can say that the protection of the language and especially its preservation and the effort for a developed language culture remains the duty of all members of the Albanian society and especially the institutions, as representatives of our national identity.

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