

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS I

*Language, Identity,
and Society in Kosovo*

Edited by
Dr. Ruhan Güçlü

EĞİTİM
yayınevi

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS - I

Language, Identity, and Society in Kosovo

Edited by Dr. Ruhan Güçlü

Chairman of the Publishing House Group: Yusuf Ziya Aydođan (yza@egitimyayinevi.com)

Executive Editor: Yusuf Yavuz (yusufyavuz@egitimyayinevi.com)

Interior Designer: Mehmet akır

Cover Designer: Mehmet akır

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Publisher Certificate No: 76780

E-ISBN: 978-625-385-491-1

1. Edition, November 2025

Library Information Card

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS - I

Language, Identity, and Society in Kosovo

Edited by Dr. Ruhan Güçlü

X+516 s., 160x240 mm

Includes references, no index.

E-ISBN: 978-625-385-491-1

© All rights for this edition are reserved for Eğitim Yayınevi Tic. Ltd. Şti. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, electronically or mechanically recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission of Eğitim Yayınevi Tic. Ltd. Şti.

EĞİTİM

yayınevi

Publisher Türkiye Office: İstanbul: Eğitim Yayınevi Tic. Ltd. Şti., Atakent mah. Yasemen sok. No: 4/B, Ümraniye, İstanbul, Türkiye

Konya: Eğitim Yayınevi Tic. Ltd. Şti., Fevzi akmak Mah. 10721 Sok. B Blok, No: 16/B, Safakent, Karatay, Konya, Türkiye
+90 332 351 92 85, +90 533 151 50 42
bilgi@egitimyayinevi.com

Publisher USA Office: New York: Egitim Publishing Group, Inc.
P.O. Box 768/Armonk, New York, 10504-0768, United States of America
americaoffice@egitimyayinevi.com

Logistics and Shipping Center: Kitapmatik Lojistik ve Sevkiyat Merkezi, Fevzi akmak Mah. 10721 Sok. B Blok, No: 16/B, Safakent, Karatay, Konya, Türkiye
sevkiyat@egitimyayinevi.com

Bookstore Branch: Eğitim Kitabevi, Şükran mah. Rampalı 121, Meram, Konya, Türkiye
+90 332 499 90 00
bilgi@egitimkitabevi.com

Internet Sales: www.kitapmatik.com.tr
bilgi@kitapmatik.com.tr

EĞİTİM YAYINEVİ
GRUBU

EĞİTİM
yayınevi

SALON
yayınevi

Kitapmatik
Türkiye

Kitapmatik
Türkiye

EĞİTİM
kitabevi

PREFACE

This volume brings together a collection of sociolinguistic studies written by Master's students enrolled in the Integrated Linguistics Program at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina. The contributors are to be commended for their rigorous engagement with sociolinguistic theory, their careful empirical work, and their commitment to producing research of academic relevance and quality. Produced across two consecutive cohorts of the Sociolinguistics course, under the expert guidance of Prof. Dr. Shykrane Gërmizaj, these chapters represent the intellectual curiosity, analytical skill, and scholarly commitment demonstrated by emerging researchers in Kosovo.

The preparation of this book was made possible through the invaluable academic collaboration of Prof. Dr. Shykrane Gërmizaj whose support facilitated access to the students' studies. Her cooperation enabled the smooth compilation of this volume and motivated her students by allowing them to see their research included in a publishable academic collection. I am sincerely grateful for her contribution, which was essential in bringing this project to completion. The contributors also extend their appreciation to all the participants in the research who dedicated their time, and shared their experiences, and perspectives.

The present volume contains twenty-six chapters, the final one authored by the editor. It brings together research exploring the profound relationship between language, identity, and society in Kosovo while addressing a broad spectrum of sociolinguistic phenomena. Each chapter represents an original contribution by the student authors, demonstrating their ability to apply sociolinguistic concepts to locally grounded data; in this respect, responsibility for language accuracy and proofreading rests solely with the respective chapter authors. The chapters investigate issues such as language maintenance and shift, gendered politeness, media discourse, digital identity, multilingual practices, bilingualism, code-switching, generational communication and variation, digital multilingualism, and online identity performance, offering a multifaceted view of how linguistic behaviour reflects and shapes social life in Kosovo.

By bridging traditional sociolinguistic inquiry with emerging fields such as digital discourse analysis and identity studies, this volume provides new insights into the processes of language change, accommodation, and resilience in multilingual and post-conflict societies. It also emphasizes the importance of situating local findings within global theoretical frameworks, demonstrating that Kosovo's linguistic landscape, while unique, resonates with broader human experiences of communication, adaptation, and identity construction.

Collectively, these studies illustrate how language functions as both a mirror and a motor of social change. They reveal that linguistic forms and attitudes in Kosovo are deeply intertwined with historical memory, post-conflict identity reconstruction, and the adaptation to modern, digital modes of communication. By examining topics that range from classroom discourse to social media interaction, the authors showcase the continuing vitality of sociolinguistics as a discipline that connects theory with lived experience.

This first volume, *International Sociolinguistics Studies I: Language, Identity, and Society in Kosovo*, serves as both a local contribution and an international bridge, connecting Kosovo's sociolinguistic realities with global perspectives. It marks the beginning of a broader academic series devoted to exploring how language reflects social, cultural, and political dimensions across diverse contexts.

Future volumes of the *International Sociolinguistics Studies* series will continue this mission by presenting comparative and interdisciplinary research from different linguistic and cultural communities around the world. In doing so, the series aims to promote collaboration, inclusivity, and the global exchange of sociolinguistic knowledge.

by Ruhan Güçlü
November, 2025
Gaziantep, Türkiye

CONTENTS

PREFACE III

**‘HOW WE ALBANIAN SAY IT’: CODE-SWITCHING, PRONUNCIATION
POLICING, AND PARTICIPATION IN AN ALBANIAN L1 EFL CLASSROOM ... 1**

Yllëza BOJAXHIU

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF NICKNAME USE BY WOMEN AND MEN IN
KOSOVO 11**

Fiona PANDURI

**LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IN IMMIGRANT
MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP 25**

Natyrë BEHLULI

**LANGUAGE USE AND REPRESENTATION OF GENDER ROLES
IN KOSOVAR SOCIAL MEDIA 47**

Malda YMERI

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF POLITENESS USED BY PROFESSORS
AND PUPILS IN KOSOVAR HIGH SCHOOLS 61**

Menduresa KADRIU

THE INFLUENCE OF KOSOVO-ALBANIAN DIALECTS ON SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS, EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND INCLUSIVITY.....81

Shukrie SADIKU HADRI

LANGUAGE AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE WORKPLACE97

Mirëndjellë STOJKAJ

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS IN PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS ... 111

Arjetë BLLACA

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF POWER IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE 139

Sabile HYSENI

SOCIOLINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF EARLY BILINGUALISM IN KOSOVAR CHILDREN..... 157

Lundresa KRYEZIU

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS 173

Liresa NURQAJ

BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUIISM AMONG KOSOVO'S YOUTH: STRENGTHENING SOCIAL TIES OR REINFORCING DIVISIONS? 195

Ana Livia BERISHAJ

**CODE-SWITCHING IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS: A COMPARISON OF
ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS209**

Erjola MAZREKU

**TEACHER CODE-SWITCHING AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN KOSOVO'S ESL
CLASSROOMS241**

Argjend MUHADRI

**INVESTIGATING THE MOTIVATION BEHIND CODE-SWITCHING OF
GENERATION Z STUDENTS265**

Mediha BAJRA

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ENGLISH SLANG ON YOUNGSTERS'
LANGUAGE289**

Florentinë RRUSTOLLI

**EXPLORING WOMEN'S SWEARING IN KOSOVO AND THE SOCIAL
PERCEPTIONS BEHIND IT313**

Blerta ADEMI

**THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON LANGUAGE SHIFT AMONG KOSOVO'S
ALBANIAN SPEAKERS335**

Errona BINXHIJA

**ENGLISH SLANG AS SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONG KOSOVO'S
GENERATION Z357**

Nderim ZUÇAKU

EXPLORING LANGUAGE USE IN A MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITY385

Sara KOÇINAJ

**THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION ON LANGUAGE AND
IDENTITY415**

Eliza KABASHI

**POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN GENDERED COMMUNICATION IN
KOSOVO429**

Zyrafete SYLEJMANI

**SOCIOPOLITICAL INFLUENCES ON LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND
CHANGE IN POST-WAR SOCIETIES 455**

Hava PARALLANGAJ

LANGUAGE USE AND IDENTITY IN ONLINE GAMING COMMUNITIES 469

Endrit JASHARI

GENERATIONAL VIEWS ON LANGUAGE IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION 487

Mimoza ISUFI

**INTERACTIONAL METADISOURSE IN MA THESIS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:
EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN KOSOVAR EFL TEXTS..... 499**

Ruhan GÜÇLÜ

'HOW WE ALBANIAN SAY IT': CODE-SWITCHING, PRONUNCIATION POLICING, AND PARTICIPATION IN AN ALBANIAN L1 EFL CLASSROOM

Yllëza BOJAXHIU¹

INTRODUCTION

In multilingual classrooms, the alternation between languages is often perceived as a problem to be solved rather than a resource to be embraced. Traditional views of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy have promoted “English-only” environments, where the use of students’ first language (L1) is discouraged (Phillipson, 1992). Yet, research in sociolinguistics and education increasingly shows that code-switching serves important interactional and pedagogical purposes (Auer, 1998; Lin, 2013). Far from being a marker of linguistic deficiency, switching between languages can index solidarity, scaffold learning, and regulate participation in classroom discourse (Gumperz, 1982; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

In Kosovo, where Albanian is the dominant language, undergraduates studying English at the University of Prishtina navigate these dynamics in a context marked by both high expectations of English proficiency and strong attachment to their L1. Students in English philology programs are trained for future professional and academic use of English, yet their everyday classroom talk reflects the interplay between Albanian and English. This makes the Albanian EFL classroom a revealing site for examining how code-switching functions socially as well as pedagogically.

This study explores the role of code-switching and pronunciation practices in shaping classroom participation among Albanian-speaking undergraduates. Drawing on survey data (n = 76) and classroom observation, the analysis shows that students switch languages for multiple reasons: to overcome lexical gaps, to clarify meaning, and to share culturally grounded expressions. At the same

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; yllezabojaxhiu@gmail.com

time, switching is shaped by students' attitudes and ideologies. Many expressed fear of criticism for pronunciation, a fear borne out in observed episodes where peer corrections curtailed further participation. Notably, not all L1-influenced features were treated equally: some, like misplaced stress, passed without comment, while others, such as the mispronunciation of *weird*, became socially salient. These patterns highlight how correction practices reflect and reproduce broader ideologies of standard English, with consequences for who speaks and who falls silent.

By situating classroom code-switching within a sociolinguistic framework, this study contributes to an understanding of how language choice, attitudes, and ideologies interact in Albanian EFL contexts. It argues that code-switching should be recognized as an interactional resource and that correction practices must be reconsidered in light of their social effects on participation. The paper is guided by two research questions:

1. What interactional functions does Albanian–English code-switching serve in classroom discourse?
2. How do attitudes and correction practices shape participation and the salience of L1 transfer?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-switching has long been a focus of sociolinguistic inquiry, particularly in multilingual communities where speakers alternate between languages as part of everyday communication. Early work by Gumperz (1982) described code-switching as a contextualization cue, a signal that frames how an utterance should be understood in interaction. Auer (1998) further emphasized the need to study code-switching as a conversational practice, showing that switches are not random but meaningful choices embedded in social context. From this perspective, code-switching is not merely a symptom of limited proficiency but a resource for managing communication, marking stance, and negotiating identity.

In educational settings, however, the practice has been more contested. Traditional “English-only” approaches (Phillipson, 1992) positioned the use of learners' first language (L1) as an obstacle to acquisition. Yet over the last three decades, research has increasingly recognized its pedagogical and affective functions. Lin (2013), reviewing classroom code-switching research, argues that switching often provides scaffolding, supports comprehension, and reduces learner anxiety. Similarly, Creese and Blackledge (2010) describe translanguaging as a pedagogy that views bilingual practices not as interference but as valuable resources for meaning-making. These studies highlight that

classrooms are not linguistically sealed spaces but dynamic arenas where students draw on all their linguistic repertoires.

Attitudes and ideologies play a central role in shaping how code-switching is perceived and enacted. Garrett (2010) notes that language attitudes strongly influence participation, as learners may feel confident or hesitant depending on how their speech is evaluated. In many contexts, the ideology of a single “standard” language persists (Milroy & Milroy, 1999), positioning native-like English as the benchmark of legitimacy. Lippi-Green (2012) extends this point to pronunciation, showing that certain features of accented speech acquire social salience and are stigmatized, while others pass unnoticed. In classrooms, such ideologies often manifest through peer corrections and teacher evaluations, which can encourage or silence participation (Tsui, 1996).

In the Albanian-speaking context, studies are beginning to shed light on how these dynamics play out. Sallauka and Janusheva (2023), examining English-language classrooms across Kosovo, found that both teachers and students switch into Albanian frequently and often unconsciously, especially when managing the classroom or clarifying meaning. Their findings confirm that L1 use is an everyday reality, regardless of formal policies favoring English. Similarly, Tabaku (2014) studied the beliefs of Albanian pre-service teachers and discovered a tension in their views: while many acknowledged that code-switching helps communication, others regarded it as a weakness that should be minimized. This ambivalence reflects how deeply language ideologies shape classroom practice. Beyond the classroom, Thaqi (2025) documented Albanian–English code-switching in social media communication, where switching was associated with creativity, audience design, and identity expression. The contrast between positive evaluations in informal domains and more restrictive views in formal education underscores the contextual nature of attitudes toward switching.

Taken together, these studies highlight that code-switching is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a socially embedded practice shaped by ideology, attitudes, and interactional needs. The Albanian EFL classroom provides a particularly revealing site for examining these dynamics, as students negotiate both the pressures of performing “proper” English and the everyday reality of relying on their L1. This study builds on both global research and regional evidence to investigate how code-switching, language ideologies, and correction practices interact to shape participation in the University of Prishtina’s classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study was conducted with seventy-six first-year undergraduates enrolled in the Faculty of Philology at the University of Prishtina. All participants were native speakers of Albanian who had chosen English as their major subject. They represented a group of learners who were beginning their academic journey in higher education but were already expected to use English across a variety of academic and social domains. Their experiences in the classroom, particularly their reliance on both Albanian and English, provide a valuable perspective on how students negotiate the relationship between their first language and the target language in formal learning settings.

Instrument

Data were collected through a mixed-methods questionnaire that was designed to explore both practices and perceptions of language use in the classroom. The questionnaire included scaled items that measured the frequency of code-switching, the perceived usefulness of Albanian in English-language lessons, and the level of anxiety students felt when speaking English. In addition to these quantitative measures, the instrument included open-ended questions that allowed students to explain in their own words why they switched languages, how they felt about peer corrections, and whether they considered the teacher's occasional use of Albanian as helpful or distracting. In this way, the questionnaire provided both a general overview of trends and more nuanced insights into students' attitudes.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was supplemented by a classroom observation that took place during a ninety-minute English-language lesson. The observation focused on naturally occurring interactions in which students alternated between Albanian and English, with special attention given to instances of peer correction and teacher intervention. While the class was not audio-recorded, detailed notes were taken during the session to capture sequences of talk where code-switching was used as a resource for meaning-making. These sequences were later reconstructed into simplified transcripts, which are presented in the analysis as representative episodes. The transcripts do not provide phonetic detail but instead aim to illustrate the interactional functions of switching and the social consequences of pronunciation policing.

Data Analysis

The analysis combined survey responses with observational data in order to build a comprehensive picture of students' linguistic practices. The survey results were examined descriptively, highlighting the most frequently reported reasons for switching languages and the dominant attitudes toward the role of Albanian in the classroom. The observation notes were analyzed from the perspective of interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982; Auer, 1998), focusing on how code-switching functioned as a conversational resource. Particular attention was given to the functions of clarification, solidarity, metalinguistic explanation, and floor management. In addition, episodes of peer correction were examined in relation to students' subsequent willingness to participate, revealing the ways in which correction practices shaped the flow of interaction. Finally, the concept of salience (Lippi-Green, 2012) was applied to distinguish between pronunciation features that drew peer attention and correction and those that went unremarked. This layered analysis made it possible to link students' self-reported attitudes with their observed behavior, providing a richer understanding of code-switching and pronunciation in this Albanian EFL context.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings from the survey and classroom observation, weaving them together with sociolinguistic insights. The analysis is structured around the two guiding questions: (1) What interactional functions does Albanian–English code-switching serve in classroom discourse? and (2) How do attitudes and correction practices shape participation and the salience of L1 transfer?

The survey and observation together reveal that Albanian–English code-switching is both common and socially significant in the EFL classroom. Students reported switching into their L1 most often when searching for words, when feeling insecure about their pronunciation, and when they wished to explain something quickly. Many also observed that teachers occasionally switched, especially during challenging explanations.

Table 1. *Reported Reasons for Switching into Albanian (n = 76)*

Reasons for switching	Percentage of students reporting (approx.)
Lack of vocabulary / word search	68%
Fear of criticism / insecurity	55%
Easier / faster explanation	49%
Teacher modeling L1 use	37%

These figures suggest that Albanian is not marginal but woven into the fabric of classroom interaction. Observation confirmed this. During a lesson on idioms, for instance, a student introduced the English expression “it’s raining cats and dogs.” Another immediately responded with an Albanian equivalent, producing laughter and shared recognition:

Transcript 1. Idioms and Shared Knowledge

S1: In English we say “it’s raining cats and dogs.”

S2: [ALB] Po, si me thonë “breshër zogjsh” te na [/ALB]

(Yes, like “a hail of birds” in our place).

S3: ((laughter, nodding))

T: Okay, so you see, every language has its own expression.

Here, Albanian was not a fallback but a resource for linking English learning with cultural identity, echoing Auer’s (1998) claim that code-switching functions as a contextualization cue. In another exchange, a student telling a story filled a lexical gap with an Albanian word but kept their turn in English:

Transcript 2. Lexical Gaps and Floor Management

S4: Yesterday I went to the... uh... [ALB] komunë [/ALB]

(municipality).

S5: ((nods))

S4: ...the office where you take documents.

This kind of switching shows that Albanian helps sustain participation rather than interrupting it, consistent with Myers-Scotton’s (1993) observation that code-switching is also about conversational rights. Teachers occasionally did the same when clarifying grammar rules or word meanings, a practice Creese and Blackledge (2010) describe as translanguaging.

Yet despite its usefulness, switching carried stigma. Many students admitted avoiding English speech for fear of criticism, particularly about pronunciation.

This fear surfaced in classroom practice when one student mispronounced the word weird as [wi:rd] and was corrected on the spot:

Transcript 3. Pronunciation Policing

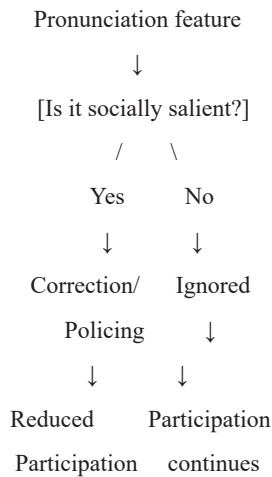
S6: I think this film is very “weird.” (pronounced [wi:rd])

S7: ((interrupting)) No, not “weerd.” It’s “weird.” [wiəd].

S6: ((smiles, looks down, no further turns for remainder of task))

The correction enacted what Milroy and Milroy (1999) call standard language ideology, positioning S7 as a guardian of “proper English” and silencing S6. Interestingly, not all deviations prompted correction. Errors in stress placement, such as ‘listen’ or ‘psychologist’, were ignored, while ‘weird’ was immediately policed. This pattern supports Lippi-Green’s (2012) claim that certain features acquire social salience as markers of “bad English,” while others remain invisible.

Figure 1. *How salience shapes participation*



Note. Salient features tend to attract peer correction, which may silence speakers, while non-salient features are often overlooked, allowing participation to continue.

The interplay of switching, correction, and participation resonates with other studies in Kosovo and Albania. Sallauka and Janusheva (2023) showed that teachers and students regularly switched unconsciously for management or clarification, while Tabaku (2014) found ambivalence among pre-service teachers, with some seeing switching as useful and others as weakness. Thaqi (2025) demonstrated that in online contexts switching was not stigmatized but embraced as a tool for identity expression and creativity.

Table 2. *Contrasting Evaluations of Code-Switching across Contexts*

Context	Evaluation of switching	Main functions highlighted
Classroom (students, present study)	Ambivalent / anxious	Clarification, floor-holding, solidarity
Classroom (teachers, Kosovo; Sallauka & Janusheva, 2023)	Normalized but unconscious	Clarification, management
Pre-service teachers (Albania; Tabaku, 2014)	Ambivalent	Teaching aid vs. sign of weakness
Social media (Kosovo; Thaqi, 2025)	Positive	Identity expression, creativity

Note. Evaluations vary by context, with classroom switching often tied to insecurity and correction, while social use tends to be viewed positively.

This comparison highlights the paradox students navigate. In class, switching is both a communication tool and a risk, tied to correction and silence. Among teachers, it is normalized but rarely problematized, while in wider social life it is often celebrated. These tensions explain why students rely on Albanian for solidarity and clarity, yet also fear it as a sign of deficiency. In summary, the Albanian EFL classroom illustrates the dual nature of code-switching: it is at once a resource for learning and identity-building, and a site of ideological policing that constrains participation.

Taken together, the findings show that code-switching and correction practices are deeply interconnected. On the one hand, switching supports learning by clarifying meaning, building solidarity, and maintaining conversational flow. On the other hand, correction practices—shaped by ideologies of correctness—restrict participation by silencing students who deviate from perceived norms. This tension reflects a broader paradox in EFL classrooms: the L1 is simultaneously a resource and a source of stigma, depending on how it is evaluated by teachers and peers.

These dynamics emphasize the sociolinguistic reality of classroom interaction: code-switching is not simply a matter of language choice but a negotiation of identity, authority, and belonging. Students draw on Albanian to align with each other and to make sense of English, yet they also internalize ideologies that devalue such practices. As a result, switching becomes both empowering and risky, enabling communication while exposing speakers to critique.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Albanian–English code-switching in an undergraduate EFL classroom at the University of Prishtina, focusing on its interactional functions and the impact of correction practices on participation. By combining survey data with classroom observation, the analysis demonstrated that code-switching is not merely a response to linguistic gaps but a socially meaningful practice serving multiple roles. Students switched languages to clarify meaning, maintain conversational flow, and draw on shared cultural knowledge. Teachers, too, occasionally modeled L1 use, signaling that switching could serve legitimate pedagogical purposes.

At the same time, attitudes toward switching and pronunciation were shaped by broader ideologies of language. Many students reported fear of criticism, and observations confirmed that peer corrections, particularly regarding pronunciation, could silence speakers. Not all deviations received equal attention: some, like misplaced stress, were tolerated, whereas others, such as the mispronunciation of *weird*, became socially salient. This selective policing reflects standard language ideology, which positions certain forms as emblematic of “bad English” and, consequently, discourages participation.

The findings have both sociolinguistic and pedagogical implications. Sociolinguistically, classroom code-switching is intertwined with identity, solidarity, and ideology: Albanian serves as an interactional resource that enables communication and maintains social cohesion rather than signaling deficiency. Pedagogically, correction practices should be approached with sensitivity, adopting strategies that encourage continued participation rather than silence. Recognizing the L1 as a communicative and learning tool can help reduce anxiety and foster a more inclusive classroom environment.

Although this study was limited to a single class and cohort, it highlights dynamics likely relevant across similar Albanian-speaking EFL contexts. Future research could explore other classrooms or compare multilingual EFL contexts globally to deepen understanding of how code-switching and language ideologies shape classroom discourse.

Ultimately, this study advocates a shift in perspective: rather than treating code-switching and accented pronunciation as obstacles, they should be seen as socially embedded practices reflecting how learners negotiate meaning, identity, and participation. For Albanian-speaking EFL students, “*how we Albanians say it*” is not merely a matter of language transfer, it is an expression of how linguistic resources are mobilized in the pursuit of learning, belonging, and communicative engagement.

References

- Auer, P. (1998). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. Routledge.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>
- Garrett, P. (2010). *Attitudes to language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lin, A. M. Y. (2013). Classroom code-switching: Three decades of research. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(1), 195–218. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2013-0009>
- Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Milroy, J., & Milroy, L. (1999). *Authority in language: Investigating standard English* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for codeswitching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Sallauka, M., & Janusheva, V. (2023). Code-switching in ELT classrooms in the Republic of Kosovo. *European Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 9(1), 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.26417/ejls.v9i1.p46-54>
- Tabaku, E. (2014). Code-switching: Beliefs and attitudes of Albanian pre-service English teachers. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4(2), 241–247. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2014.v4n2p241>
- Tsui, A. B. M. (1996). Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom* (pp. 145–167). Cambridge University Press.
- Thaqi, B. (2025). *Code-switching in Albanian–English online communication: A sociolinguistic analysis of social media discourse* (Master's thesis, AAB College, Kosovo). <https://dspace.aab-edu.net/handle/123456789/1392>

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF NICKNAME USE BY WOMEN AND MEN IN KOSOVO

Fiona PANDURI¹

INTRODUCTION

Nicknames, which are informal forms of addressing someone, are a common and widespread element of sociolinguistic behaviors around the globe. They fulfill several societal roles, ranging from promoting closeness and unity to expressing collective identity and personal traits. They are frequently predicated on physical attributes like weight, height, color of hair, or habits and mannerisms (de Klerk & Bosch, 1996). This study examines the utilization of nicknames by women and men in Kosovo, an area abundant in cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. This research seeks to reveal the social dynamics and gender norms inside Kosovar culture by analyzing the sociolinguistic patterns of nickname usage. Kosovo, a relatively small country situated in the Balkans, possesses an intricate socio-political past that has greatly influenced its language environment. The population is primarily composed of Albanians, however there are also Serbian, Bosnian, Turkish, and other minority populations that contribute to the linguistic diversity of the region. The presence of several cultures in this environment offers a distinct opportunity to examine the diversity in linguistic behaviors, such as the adoption of nicknames, across various social groups and genders. Names are more than simply symbols; they also indicate privilege, success, prestige, and a feeling of social hierarchy.

Gender, being a key feature of social structure, has a significant impact on several areas of language usage. Prior research has demonstrated that men and women frequently utilize distinct verbal tactics and manners, which are indicative of wider societal roles and expectations. This study aims to ascertain

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; fiona.panduri@student.uni-pr.edu

the presence of gendered trends in nickname usage in Kosovo and to what degree cultural and societal variables contribute to these variations.

The Aims and Objectives of the Study

An area of sociolinguistic study that is particularly fascinating is the correlation between communication and gender. This study seeks to examine the occurrence and purpose of informal addressing in the speech of men and women in Kosovo, taking into account several circumstances. The research intends to accomplish the following particular objectives:

- To categorize the prevalent nicknames employed by Kosovar women and men; this aims to systematically categorize and examine the diverse nicknames used in everyday interactions among individuals of different genders;
- To assess the disparity in the frequency of nickname usage among women and men in Kosovo: This objective entails measuring and contrasting the frequency at which women and men utilize nicknames in their interactions, specifically emphasizing any notable discrepancies depending on gender;
- To investigate the attitudes about nicknames among Kosovar women and men: This aim explores the perception and understanding of nicknames across persons of varying genders, taking into account factors such as societal approval, emotional influence, and cultural importance.

The study seeks to improve our comprehension of gendered communication in Kosovo and make a valuable contribution to the larger area of sociolinguistics by accomplishing these objectives. This study offers valuable insights into the functioning of language in a society that is bilingual and culturally varied. It highlights the intricate ways in which gender impacts linguistic practices and social relationships.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The following research questions are aimed to be answered and gain insights on:

1. What type of nicknames do Kosovar women and men usually use to refer to each other?
2. Is there a difference in the frequency of usage of nicknames between women and men of Kosovo?
3. How are nicknames perceived from Kosovar women and men?

This study has three hypotheses:

H1: It is hypothesized that Kosovar men use nicknames which are short versions of their names or a physical attribute to them, while Kosovar women use nicknames which are usually related to a more mental symbolism.

H2: It is hypothesized that both Kosovar women and men use nicknames more to refer to their same sex.

H3: Nicknames from Kosovar women and men are perceived positively, regarding their closeness that they have with the people who they give nicknames to and who they are given nicknames of.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exploring the utilization of nicknames in the field of sociolinguistics offers vital understanding into the complex connection between language and social identity. According to Kock (2004), face-to-face (ftf) interaction that relies on language is regarded as the most innate kind of communication. Nicknames, commonly regarded as a type of casual address, provide a perspective through which we may analyze wider social patterns. An examination of the utilization and perception of nicknames by men and women in Kosovo provides insight into the gendered communication patterns prevalent in this particular cultural milieu. The current sociolinguistic research has thoroughly recorded how language practices mirror and bolster social structures and gender roles. Studies on nicknames have revealed that these casual labels are not just interesting language phenomena, but are profoundly intertwined with social dynamics, the formation of personal identity, and the distribution of authority. Research has demonstrated that there are distinct differences in the way men and women utilize nicknames, which may be attributed to several variables like age, social standing, and cultural conventions. Nicknames serve to allocate authority within a social collective: they can be enforced, or they can be employed by mutual consent between the person assigning the nickname and the one being referred to (Adams, 2009). Dollinger (2006) asserted that the Ancient Egyptians employed the practice of assigning nicknames to youngsters. The practice of using names different from one's "given" name has a longstanding legacy. Research has demonstrated that nicknames often operate along a spectrum of positive, negative, or neutral meanings and impacts. The reference is from Mehrabian and Piercy's work in 1993. Prior to this, Anderson (1986) observed that nicknames had an impact on a child's self-concept due to the meanings provided by the moniker.

In Kosovo, a territory characterized by its diverse and linguistic features (Mislimi, 2023), the utilization of nicknames might offer distinctive perspectives

on the convergence of language, gender, and cultural identity. Previous studies conducted in comparable sociolinguistic contexts indicate that the use of nicknames might range greatly across various demographic groups, which may be influenced by social dynamics and gender norms. However, there is a lack of study that explicitly examines the Kosovar context, especially on the gendered patterns of nickname usage. This literature review will analyze the current body of research on the utilization of nicknames, the impact of gender on communication, and the sociolinguistic customs prevalent in multilingual society. This study aims to establish a basis for comprehending the role of nicknames as a means of social address among men and women in Kosovo. It will specifically focus on identifying the existing gaps in knowledge and laying the groundwork for the contributions of the present research. This review seeks to position the study within the wider academic conversation and emphasize its importance in enhancing our comprehension of gendered communication in a culturally varied environment. The way Kosovar women and men use nicknames was quite intriguing to know. Dodonov (1987) argues that negative emotions have a greater significance than good emotions as they serve as indicators of potential harm to the organism and prompt adaptive responses to eliminate the current threat. Multiple studies demonstrate the usefulness of nicknaming as a method of identification or classification in cultures where there is uncertainty in the official naming system. Joseph G. Fucilla, in his examination of the use of Portuguese nicknames as surnames, highlights that the primary reason for their existence is the necessity to differentiate between various individuals within a family unit, particularly those who share the same first and family names (Fucilla, "Portuguese" 74). Nicknames are also noticed in close friendships too, as they denote a close relationship to the person. Close friends usually give nicknames to each other because they feel safe to use them. George M. Foster, in studying the speech patterns and social dynamics of Tzintzuntzan, a community in Mexico, asserts that close friends were commonly referred to by nicknames, which were used carefully to indicate a sense of closeness. However, these names might also express hostility and hierarchy, emphasizing the existing relationship as either more personal or distant, depending on how it is viewed. They do not aim to oppose or regulate the relationship, but rather to highlight it. Nicknames can play a crucial role in preserving the essence of social connections as they are perceived by members of a community. Therefore, it can be implied that nicknames are mostly acceptable in close relationships with people. M. Aziz F. Yassin (1978), who investigated personal address among the Kuwaiti Arabic, also observed the utilization of nicknames among intimate acquaintances. Such names, sometimes derived from an individual's conduct or other personal traits, suggest a connection that is more intimate than that indicated by personal names. John H. McGeachy (1978), in his study

on student nicknames for college instructors, observes that nicknames might serve the purpose of integrating the community (p.282). Positive nicknames are considered to indicate a strong and positive bond between individuals or a group. When researchers refer to positive nicknames, they are talking about nicknames that do not cause harm or offense to the individual they are given to (Rahman, et al., 2023). Nickname use depends on various factors. The perception of nicknames is shaped by various factors, including the individual or community responsible for giving or using the name, the geographical origin of the name, the specific circumstances surrounding its creation, the derogatory or sarcastic nature of the name, the context in which the name is used, the formality of the situation, the relationship between the person being named and the person using the name (whether they are friends or enemies), and the amount of time that has passed since the name was given (Bauko, 2012).

The way nicknames are portrayed in women and men in general is interesting to analyze too. Research says most women have fewer nicknames than men. For instance, Paul L. Leslie (1988) provides an investigation of the phenomenon of nicknaming among female blues singers. His research reveals that women acquired a smaller percentage of nicknames compared to their male counterparts. This disparity may be attributed, in part, to societal expectations around gender roles, which limited women's access to vocational prestige and success. However, Thomas V. Busse (1983) provides a concise analysis of the use of nicknames in American high schools, highlighting that they were more prevalent among men than girls. Additionally, he observes that nicknames were mostly employed among certain sectors of the peer group and were often abandoned by maturity. In a linguistic analysis research, Liao's (2006) study revealed a notable disparity in the prevalence of nicknames between men (91.61%) and girls (78.29%), with a p-value of 0.001, signifying a statistically significant distinction. Studies on gender stereotypes have discovered that women are commonly seen as warm, whereas men are commonly seen as competent (Clough et al., 2017; Glick & Fiske, 2011). Prior research has discovered that gender preconceptions can be triggered by names that are associated with a specific gender (Cotton et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2005). Thus, gender preconceptions may impact the assessments of names that are directed towards a specific gender. The research findings revealed that names typically associated with men were ranked higher in terms of competence, whereas names typically associated with women were rated higher in terms of warmth (Etaugh & Geraghty, 2018; Newman et al., 2018). Nicknames are an important part of a human being's life. The participants of a qualitative study conducted by Bowles et al., 2009, expressed a deep sense of being fully present and engaged throughout the talks regarding nicknames. They also had a long-

lasting sense of resolution and acceptance of the past after revealing previously concealed information. The revelations necessitated both courage to confront the associated humiliation and reliance on the group to prevent more shame arising from the disclosures. We have learned that engaging in conversations about nicknames necessitates the use of diplomacy, encouragement, and skillful awareness at the point of interaction to ensure the talks are as secure as feasible.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire, which is planned to be conducted online via Google Forms. The questionnaire was posted online and the participants' identity remained anonymous. The questionnaire included eleven close-ended questions which had to do with more general information, like the participant's name, origin, place of residence, frequency of nickname use, etc. The questionnaire also included five open-ended questions which dig deeper in understanding the story behind the participant's nickname, its effect on the participant, their opinion on the use of their nickname and on women and men differences, if there are any. Web surveys offer advantages in terms of efficiency and reach, allowing researchers to swiftly and easily gather data. Additionally, online surveys are more cost-effective and accessible compared to traditional paper-based surveys. Qualitative data is analyzed using percentages. The responses to the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The snowball method is a technique used to expand a sample by initially contacting individuals who possess a specific characteristic and asking them to refer to others who share the same trait (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Methods and Instrument

For the qualitative aspect, a survey will be utilized as the instrument. Web surveys offer advantages in terms of efficiency and reach, allowing researchers to swiftly and easily gather data from a large number of respondents. A questionnaire with students and teachers online will be shared through social media platforms. The snowball method will be used to find participants. It entails expanding an initial sample of informants by including survey participants who have been chosen by these informants (Audemard, 2020). For the quantitative aspect, a survey will be utilized as the instrument. Web surveys offer advantages in terms of efficiency and reach, allowing researchers to swiftly and easily gather data from a large number of respondents. In general, open-ended inquiries are considered to be highly effective for collecting information, promoting conversation, and obtaining more profound understanding. Whether employed in academic research, professional environments, or informal dialogues, they

empower individuals to investigate concepts, exchange viewpoints, exercise cognitive analysis, and participate in substantial discourse.

Population and Sample

A total of 42 participants agreed to take part in the study and completed the questionnaire. The participants' age in the questionnaire was not taken into consideration, since the questionnaire was not provided for a specific population. Participants were informed that all of their information would be kept strictly confidential, except of their names and nicknames, which were crucial to be included in the research.

RESULTS

This study was conducted in Kosovo with 27 women (64.3%), 14 men (33.3%), and 1 participant who preferred not to disclose their gender (2.4%). Regarding their age, most participants (68.3%) are 18-24 years old. There is only one woman participant who is aged below 18 years old. The participants were told that if they do not understand the questions, they should contact the researcher. However, no problem or issue arised. A less important category was also current place of residence and place of origin. Most participants live and are from Prishtinë, the capital city of Kosovo. Other participants included a wide variety of cities, which are Gjilan, Prizren, Pejë, Ferizaj, Podujevë, Mitrovicë, Rahovec, Deçan, Lipjan, Opojë, Dragash, Vushtrri, Klinë and Skenderaj. Half of participants (22) had finished their Bachelor studies, 11 of them had completed their Master studies, and 9 of them had completed high school. In total, 40 respondents shared their first given name and their nicknames. In the table below, both participant's names and nicknames are presented. There is a pattern of how nicknames are given to both men and women. In general, women had more nicknames than men. When the names of the participants were short already, participants wrote nicknames which were longer versions of their given name (Blerta- Blertushe, Blertuke, Betushe). There were also nicknames which had no linguistic or phonetic relation to their names, for instance Ella being Shega (in English pomegranate), or Kaltrina being called Bufi.

The list below pairs each participant's given name with their respective nickname(s): Ejona-Jona, Jonki; Remzi-Xiki; Erisa-Eri; Valon-Loni; Yllëza-Yzi; Gresa-Gresi; Shpetim-Shpeta; Blerta-Blertushe, Blertuke, Betushe; Lundresa-Lunder, Dundu, Lona; Edita Edi; Dorentina-Dori, Tina; Albesa-Besa; Menduresa-Duresa, Mendu, Minti, Tereza; Melot-Lot; Korab-Lab; Ella-Shega; Alba-Quk, Digi; Natyrë-Tyla, Nati; Hatixhe-Tixhe; Bleona Bona; Aulona-Lona, Lonki; Omer-JarjaZyhra Zyrka; Arjela-Arusha, Arjelito, Ari, David; Kaltrina-Buffi, Tina, Kaltro, ...; Arbenita-Nita; Lule-Lulu; Lorentina-Tina, Lori; Lorena-

Lori, Lena; Shukrie-Shuki, Shuke; Altina-Tina, Altush, Tinush, ...; Ylli-Yllqe, Lyli; Antigon-Gona; Fatos-Fati, Falle; Vjollca-Vjola, Josa; Arti-Biggie.

In the following table, women and men were asked who they are more likely to give nicknames to. As expected, all women who responded said they give nicknames to women more than to men. Only one man said he is more likely to give nicknames to women; other men who responded claim the opposite.

Table 1. *Who are you more likely to give nicknames to? (n = 41)*

Response option	n	%
To women	31	75.6%
To men	10	24.4%

When asked how often they use nicknames, the majority of participants (46.3%) said that they sometimes use nicknames. 36.6% of participants claimed they often use nicknames, 7.3% of them said always, and only one participant said they never use nicknames. Mixed results were evident regarding the group of people participants use nicknames to. 38.1% of participants said they are more likely to call their immediate family members by their nickname more. Family and close friends account for ~70% of cases, indicating that relationship closeness drives usage.

Table 2. *Who do you call by nickname more? (n = 42)*

Group	n	%
Immediate family members (parents, siblings, spouse, children)	16	38.1%
Close friends	13	31.0%
Friends	7	16.7%
Lover/partner	6	14.3%

Surprisingly enough, when asked about the connotation of the nicknames participants give and are given to, more than half of the participants (73.2%) stated that the nicknames tend to have a good connotation. 11 participants (26.2%) said the nicknames have a neutral connotation and only one participants claimed their given and received nicknames had a bad connotation.

Table 3. *Connotation of nicknames you give/receive (n = 41)*

Connotation	n	%
Good	30	73.2%
Neutral	10	24.4%
Bad	1	2.4%

Moving on to the open-ended questions, the answers from participants were different and intriguing to read about. When asked about the story behind their nickname, a strong sense of creativity mixed with funny moments and closeness to people was noticed. While some participants said their nicknames are “just shorter versions of their names”, others found a deep connection to their nicknames. For instance, a participant named Blerta said: “When my close friend started calling me “Blertuke”, it was a sort of awakening moment for me. I started to realize that the love I have for her is mutual. I started feeling more connected to her because she thought of giving me something special. It wasn’t something that people had already thought of. It was rather special. It meant that someone was thinking of me and thought of naming me something sweet.” Another participant said her nickname was Tereza as a child because she used to take care of other children a lot since she was the oldest. And her uncle said she resembled Mother Theresa because of that. Her uncle and other relatives have been calling her Tereza ever since. The participant said her nickname means a lot to her since it probably best describes her personality. A male participant said he gained his nicknames “mainly when I was in high school our nicknames varied based on famous football players. Mine was Buffon, as an Italian goalkeeper.” Regarding a time when nicknames helped create a special connection or bond with someone else, a participant answered “David and Arusha have both helped me a lot in creating new friendships and having people be more interested in getting to know me because they’re both very interesting nicknames”, emphasizing the interest people had in her interesting nicknames. Another participant stated that having a nickname generally creates a connection with ppl with the same nickname, also it’s a pretty rare name so it serves as a good icebreaker when conversing with strangers.” When asked about the reflection of their nicknames on their personality, one participant stated that “It sort of reflects that pureness that people think my personality has, and it sort of makes me feel as though I am full of love. I tend to be very careful and caring towards my people, so I feel like these nicknames try to show that sweetness of connection.” Another participant stated that “her nicknames make her an aunt, a cousin, a lover. Her name is just for documents.” In the last question, which asked participants if they think there are gender-specific trends or expectations regarding the types of nicknames used by men versus women in Albanian culture, participants’ answers were interesting, but not surprising. While the majority had no particular answer or comment on this issue, some participants stated that men’s nicknames “are only shortened, but never changed or added to mean something more. For guys, they “need to be cool”, while for girls they “need to be more symbolic”. I feel like that’s the idea.” Another participant stated the bad and good connotation between nicknames men and women tend to use, by saying that “men have more negative/mocking nicknames since they

are mocked by other relatives more often. Whereas, women have more positive nicknames that are given to them based on their best attributes.” Another participant stated that “women give cute nicknames to women and they give strong, powerful nicknames to men. Loqk, zemrush (sweetheart), Fionush vs Babo, Bishë (beast), Gango etc.” Another man stated that men themselves tend to give harsher nicknames to other men, while women dig deeper when giving nicknames to other women.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to get a closer look at nicknames of Kosovar women and men in Kosovo. The study explored these findings by making use of a qualitative method approach. The open-ended questions in this study produced a diverse range of personal narratives and social intricacies on the use of nicknames among men and women in Kosovo. The participants’ accounts demonstrate the many purposes and significance of nicknames, emphasizing the imaginative, sentimental, and interpersonal aspects of this tradition. An important issue that stands out is the emotional and interpersonal importance of nicknames. For several individuals, nicknames hold more significance than just being abbreviated versions of their complete names. Instead, they convey profound emotional meaning and symbolize unique connections. Examples illustrate how nicknames may function as symbols of fondness and acknowledgement, expressing individual characteristics and strengthening social connections. Nicknames can have a substantial impact on social interactions and the development of one’s identity. Multiple individuals observed that their aliases facilitated the formation of new connections and acted as successful conversation starters. This is consistent with sociolinguistic theories that propose that nicknames may serve as facilitators of social interactions and help develop a sense of collective identity. The participants’ observations offer useful information on cultural norms and expectations about gender-specific trends in nickname usage. Several participants noted that men’s nicknames tend to be more straightforward and centered on portraying a “cool” image, whereas women’s nicknames typically have symbolic significance and emotional undertones. This difference represents wider gender standards in Albanian society, wherein masculinity is linked to physical might and endurance, while femininity is connected to emotional intensity and interpersonal affection. Participants observed that men commonly acquire derogatory or sarcastic nicknames, whereas women’s nicknames tend to be more complimentary, often emphasizing their positive qualities. Moreover, the research indicates that women are inclined to bestow endearing and loving monikers upon one another, whereas men’s appellations for their male counterparts tend to be more rugged or playful in nature. The utilization of gender-specific nicknames highlights

the distinct social dynamics present in interactions between men and women, which are influenced by cultural norms on gender roles and relationships. The study's findings shed light on the many and complex functions of nicknames in Kosovo, demonstrating their effectiveness as means of personal self-expression, social cohesion, and cultural representation. The gender-specific patterns in the utilization of nicknames indicate the fundamental cultural norms that influence the way men and women interact with one another and convey their individualities. These insights enhance comprehension of the sociolinguistic environment in Kosovo, providing significant viewpoints for future study on gendered communication and cultural customs.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several implications could be made in order to understand the use of nicknames in a Kosovar context. As for most people globally, nicknames present a touching topic for Kosovar women and men too. This research presents a thorough examination of the usage of nicknames among men and women in Kosovo, uncovering the complex ways in which these informal names operate within the social and cultural context of the region. The results emphasize the diverse functions that nicknames serve in shaping individual identity, interpersonal connections, and cultural representation. The utilization of nicknames as efficacious catalysts for breaking the ice and initiating conversations further highlights their significance in social dynamics. The study also revealed how nicknames may both mirror and influence impressions of an individual's character. Participants said that their nicknames frequently reflected attributes such as innocence, affection, and nurturing, hence strengthening favorable self-perceptions and how they are seen by others. The disparity in the nature of men's and women's nicknames, with men's being more straightforward and geared towards portraying a "cool" persona, and women's carrying deeper symbolic and sentimental connotations, is indicative of wider societal standards. This study offers interesting perspectives on the sociolinguistic environment of Kosovo, emphasizing the role of nicknames as important cultural relics. They possess significant capabilities for individual self-expression, fostering social connections, and embodying cultural principles. The gender-specific patterns seen in the usage of nicknames indicate the existence of wider societal norms and expectations, which enhance our comprehension of gendered communication in Kosovo. These discoveries create opportunities for more investigation into the intricate functions of informal language practices in many cultural contexts.

Limitations

Although the quantitative technique has its own noted benefits, this study may have obtained more comprehensive data if it had utilized a mixed-method approach. Nevertheless, implementing such a strategy would require more extensive resources for the purposes of gathering data, doing research, and interpreting the results, in contrast to utilizing a solitary method. By including more questions into a mixed-method research, it is possible to get a more profound understanding and generate further inquiries. Another constraint was the insufficient availability of previous research of nicknames in Kosovo and the Western Balkans.

References

- Adams, M. (2009). Power, Politeness, and the Pragmatics of Nicknames. *Names*, 57(2), 81–91. <https://doi.org/10.1179/175622709X436369>
- Alqarni, A. M. (2022). Gender Differences in Online Identity: A Linguistic Contrastive Study of Arabic and English Screen Names in the Saudi Context. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(1), 212. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n1p212>
- Anderson CP. The name game. *New York: Perigree*; 1986.
- Bauko, J. (2012). Investigation of nicknames in a bilingual environment. *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Językoznawcza*, 19(1), 105. <https://doi.org/10.14746/pspsj.2012.19.1.7>
- Bowles, N., Moreno, B., Psaila, C., & Smith, A. (2009). Nicknames: a qualitative exploration into the effect of nick-names on personal histories. *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy*, 4, 40–47. <https://ejqrp.org/index.php/ejqrp/article/view/25>
- Busse, Thomas V. (1983) “Nickname Usage in an American High School.” *Names* 31: 300-06
- Clough, P. D., Bates, J., & Otterbacher, J. (2017). Competent men and warm women: Gender stereotypes and backlash in image search results. *Computer and Human Interaction*, 5, 6620–6631
- Cotton, J. L., O’neill, B. S., & Griffin, A. (2008). The “name game”: Affective and hiring reactions to first names. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(1), 18–39.
- Dodonov, B. I. (1987). V mireemotsiy. *K.: Politizdat Ykrainy*
- Dollinger A. (2006). An introduction to the history and culture of Pharaonic Egypt. *Childhood in Ancient Egypt: Birth, growing up, education, death*. <http://nefertiti.iwebland.com/people/childhood.htm>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878–902
- Kock, N. (2004). The psychobiological model: Towards a new theory of computer-mediated communication based on Darwinian evolution. *Organ. Sci.* 15, 327–348. doi: 10.1287/orsc.1040.0071
- Liao C. (2006). Linguistic analysis of nicknames of junior high school students. *Taiwan: National University of Kaohsiung*
- McGeachy, John A. III. (1978). “Student Nicknames for College Faculty.” *Western Folklore* 37: 281-96.
- Mehrabian A, Piercy M. (1993). Differences in positive and negative connotations of nicknames and given names. *The Journal of Social Psychology*. 33:737–739.
- Mislimi, E. (2023). Multiethnicity and Identity in Kosovo through European Integration The Construction of Group-Differentiated Rights in Kosovo. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1762054/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Leslie, P. L., & Skipper, J. K. (1990). Toward a theory of nicknames: A case for socio-onomastics. *Names*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 273–282. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1179/nam.1990.38.4.273>
- Rahman, S. U., Shah, T. A., Khel, S. M. S. K., Jan, S. A. U., & Rahman, P. A. U. (2023). A Sociolinguistic Study Of Nicknames And Its Application Among The Students Of Bacha Khan University Charsadda. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology*, 20(2), 1320–1332. <https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/11908>
- Skipper, James K., Jr., and Paul Leslie. (1988). “Nicknames and Blues Singers. Part I: Frequency Of Use 1890-1977.” *Popular Music and Society* 12.1:37-48.
- Smith, F. I., Tabak, F., Showail, S., Parks, J. M., & Kleist, J. S. (2005). The name game: Employability evaluations of prototypical applicants with stereotypical feminine and masculine first names. *Sex Roles*, 52(1), 63–82.

- Statistics Canada. (2021). Learning resources: Statistics: Power from data! Non-probability sampling. *Statcan.gc.ca*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/edu/powerpouvoir/ch13/nonprob/5214898-eng.htm>
- Yassin, M. Aziz F. (1978). "Personal Names of Address in Kuwaiti Arabic." *Anthropological Linguistics* 20: 53-63.
- Adams, M. (2009). Power, Politeness, and the Pragmatics of Nicknames. *Names*, 57(2), 81–91. <https://doi.org/10.1179/175622709X436369>

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IN IMMIGRANT MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

Natyre BEHLULI¹

INTRODUCTION

Immigration of people typically involves integration in the community and culture, and language shift and maintenance. The process of language shift and maintenance is rather complex. As immigrant families try to build a new life in their new country and integrate in the community, the challenge of preserving their heritage language and embracing the dominant language of the hosting country is a continuous issue. The term “heritage language” refers to languages that are not the dominant language(s) in a particular social context (Kelleher, 2010). This dilemma plays a crucial role in their identity and social integration. Within immigrant families, immigrant mothers are often perceived as the primary caretakers of their children. As such, it is difficult for them to try and learn the new dominant language and help their children adapt to the new linguistic and cultural environment. Daughters, on the other hand, who are either born in or moved with their families to the new country, try to integrate in this new dominant society and culture. Considering the role of mothers as the gatekeepers of heritage language and culture, their influence in their daughters’ views and attitudes towards the heritage and dominant language is undeniable. The communication between mothers and daughters is primarily enabled through language(s). When living in a foreign country, mothers and daughters may not necessarily be fluent in the same language, making their communication difficult and their relationship more complicated. Therefore, this research seeks to delve into the complex relationship of language shift and maintenance by exploring the experiences of Kosovar immigrant mothers and daughters.

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; natyre.behluli@student.uni-pr.edu

The Aim of the Research

The primary aim of this research is to investigate language maintenance and shift within the immigrant mother-daughter relationship. Additionally, it is sought to understand if and how language shift or maintenance has impacted the relationship between mothers and their daughters, why language shift or maintenance has occurred, and their thoughts on heritage and dominant language. By focusing on the mother-daughter relationship from a sociolinguistic perspective, insights are offered on the lived experiences of immigrant families (specifically mothers and daughters) and the negotiation of perceiving heritage languages or adopting new languages for new cultural contexts. Gathering insights for these aspects is pivotal in understanding the cultural and social context, immigrant communities, and most importantly the language diversity. Taking into consideration all that has been said, the objectives of this research include:

- Finding out if immigrant families preserve their heritage language or shift to the language of the hosting country
- If heritage language is perceived, what impacted the maintenance of the language (methods and practices)
- If language shift has occurred, what are the reasons behind this
- Exploring mothers and daughters' perspective on language shift and maintenance and if this has impacted their relationship
- Understand challenges and barriers in language shift and maintenance.

Research Questions

Research questions help in guiding the research and keep in track the overall content of the research, ensuring that the scope is neither too broad nor too narrow. Considering the objectives of this research, the following research questions will be answered:

1. Is there language maintenance or shift in Albanian immigrant families?
2. What influences language shift and maintenance in immigrant families (specifically mothers and daughters)?
3. How do daughters' bilingual or multilingual identities affect the relationship with their mothers?

These questions make an attempt to explore the perceptions, challenges, and broader implications of language use in this specific intergenerational context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Maintenance and Shift

The issue of language shift and maintenance has gathered significant attention since the publication of Joshua Fishman's pioneering works in this field. Besides serving as a primary means of communication, language greatly impacts how individuals identify themselves and how they are recognized and perceived by others (Oloso, 2021). Montrul (2023) states that a native language is usually acquired from birth and utilised until puberty. However, studies on first language (L1) attrition and heritage language acquisition indicate that native language proficiency can gradually diminish in both children and adults in bilingual environments after prolonged periods of limited use or disuse. Rothman (2007) defines heritage language as one that children learn at home, which is not the main language spoken in the larger national community. As a result, the heritage language is not employed in formal settings including government offices and educational institutions (Idaryani & Fidyati, 2022). Further, heritage speakers are children of first- and second-generation immigrants who are exposed to their heritage language, even though they primarily use the dominant language in daily life (Romanowski, 2021). Heritage speakers learn both their heritage language and the dominant community language simultaneously or sequentially, but typically use the dominant community language primarily as they grow up (Polinsky & Scontras, 2020). Language shift occurs when a community of bilingual speakers gradually stops using their original language in favour of another, eventually replacing their mother tongue, although this outcome is not guaranteed in every language contact situation (Belew, 2020; Veettil et al., 2020; Sarwat et al., 2020). Nyaigoti (2019) believes that this process can eventually result in individuals losing their language or in the complete extinction of a community's language. Whereas, language maintenance refers to a situation where a community successfully preserves its language's vitality, showing strong resistance to the pressure from dominant languages, and continually makes efforts to retain their traditional language use (Mbatha et al., 2023; Ariyani et al., 2021). It also pertains to the utilisation of a speech community's language in certain areas of life (Pauwels, 2004). Komala et al. (2022) explain that languages belonging to powerful and dominant groups have frequently supplanted those of weaker and less influential communities. Similarly, Budiayana (2017) claims that when individuals migrate to new locations or engage more frequently with people from other linguistic communities, they may slowly transition to using a different language as their main form of communication, eventually replacing their native language. Tws ONG (2021) states that speakers and communities often become bilingual, adapting by using both their heritage language and the dominant one. Language

maintenance is needed when heritage language use is limited to specific areas, while the dominant language becomes more prevalent. Moreover, according to Mazzaferro (2018), the processes of migration frequently result in the reorganisation of immigrants' linguistic repertoires, which has an impact on how languages and dialects are distributed and used in society. Whereas, Clyne (2023) believes that it is well acknowledged that heritage languages are no longer spoken by the third or fourth generation of immigrants, at which point the transition to the main host languages is nearly complete. How immigrant populations and the wider society perceive language diversity greatly affects language outcomes. Understanding how languages are transferred and maintained is important because it reveals the complex interactions between linguistic, social, and cultural factors in immigrant communities. Language also plays a crucial role in forming individual and societal identities, acting as a key symbol of cultural connection (Jan et al., 2024).

Reasons for Language Maintenance or Shift

The contact between languages gives rise to unique sociolinguistic phenomena such as bilingualism, multilingualism, code-switching, diglossia, pidgins, creoles, language shift, and language maintenance. When individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds reside together and participate in everyday activities, stable bilingual and multilingual communities can develop (Veettil et al., 2020). The spread of a language into a new environment typically happens through migration, infiltration, or diffusion. This can involve an entire speech community relocating, some speakers moving and introducing their language to another community, or the language influencing others to adopt it (Ostler, 2011). Immigrant communities often struggle between keeping their heritage language and adopting the dominant language, influenced by subtle choices. This shift happens over generations at different speeds, depending on social and linguistic factors. The power dynamics between heritage and majority languages affect their roles and dominance in the lives of heritage speakers (Sevinç, 2016). As a result, immigrants encounter numerous difficulties when determining whether to actively maintain their heritage language, switch to the dominant language of the host country, or use both their heritage language and the official dominant language concurrently (Dagamseh, 2020). As suggested by Matthews (2018) moving to a different community or country frequently results in changes as immigrants seek to conform to the dominant social and economic norms, particularly when the move is made by choice. Sain et al. (2020) points out that in a community where multiple languages are spoken, the topics discussed and the languages chosen by speakers depend on different sectors within society, including family, education, work, and cultural and social gatherings. Further, Melaku and Semu (2023) believe that factors that

contribute to a society maintaining a language include the speakers' favourable attitudes toward it, the communities' long-term stability in one area, and the level of services available in that language compared to nationally recognized languages for education and employment. Dweik and Qawar (2015) discussing the reasons that affect language shift and maintenance, conclude that along with the speakers' attitudes toward their languages, the many differences among communities, including power, size, wealth, prestige, and vitality, are important factors that frequently cause speakers to modify their language-choice patterns throughout their life and/or from generation to generation. Additionally, language is viewed as the most crucial element of culture, essential for conveying values, customs, and beliefs, as well as shaping identity. Consequently, losing a language is seen as a loss of cultural heritage (Alejan et al., 2021). Families play an important role in language maintenance as well. Regarding this, Davies and Elder (2004), stated that the language use of parents, grandparents, and other important relatives is vital for keeping a minority language alive for future generations, especially when there are few chances to use the language outside the home due to social or political reasons (Davies & Elder, 2004; Budiyaana, 2017). Furthermore, age impacts language learning. Discussing language acquisition and age at immigration, Esser (2008) clarifies that specific conditions, such as the age of immigration, can hinder the learning of both languages, and mentions that there is a distinct 'critical period' for acquiring a second language. In his research examining how Haitian immigrants maintained their language in the USA, Lafort (2016) found out that using both languages at home (French and Haitian Creole), participating in church for religious and community interactions, attending social events like Haitian historical celebrations, and listening to French and Haitian Creole radio or TV programs helped in maintaining the language(s). Budiyaana (2017) considers several factors as pivotal in language maintenance and shift, those being identity, the role of nuclear and extended family, staying connected to homeland, and marriage. Therefore, the family, community and even the place where you live affect your language. Puthuval (2017) clarifies that regardless of their year of birth, children brought up in metropolitan areas exhibit a significantly greater tendency to shift the language compared to those raised in smaller towns or rural regions. According to Jagodic (2011), key factors affecting a minority language are the number and concentration of its speakers, mixed marriages, its status locally and internationally, institutional support, and economic pressure from the larger society. Letsholo (2009) claims that the survival of minority languages and cultures depends on the younger generation. Young people must remain loyal to these languages and view them as part of their cultural identity. Otherwise, these languages will face decline and continued low esteem.

Immigrant Families and Children

Particularly for immigrants, preserving one's cultural identity frequently depends on preserving one's heritage language. However, parents who are immigrants find this duty difficult (Inan et al., 2024). For immigrant families, the choice of language is crucial. Maintaining a heritage language connects them to their culture and family, while adapting to a new culture can change language skills and impact family bonds and communication (Cox Jr et al., 2021). When the younger generation adopts a new language, they may become estranged from their roots and family. This can lead to parents feeling unable to pass on cultural values and beliefs, increasing intergenerational conflict and communication gaps (Gudykunst & Lee, 2001; Tannenbaum, 2005). Parents serve as the initial contact for second-generation immigrant children to their heritage language (HL) and are their primary source of HL exposure. Children predominantly communicate in HL with their parents but switch to speaking the dominant language when interacting with friends (Brown, 2011). Language barriers and cultural differences can lead to parent-child conflicts, especially regarding independence, discipline, and friendships. Children may feel they disappoint their parents and lack understanding, making it hard for parents to provide emotional support during adolescence (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Portes & Hao, 2002). Children who become monolingual in the dominant language often find their family's culture irrelevant, leading to estrangement and disrespect towards first-generation ways (Portes & Hao, 2002), however, children can build trust and a strong bond with their parents by embracing and acting according to their cultural identity (Pines et al., 2017). Oh and Fuligni (2010) states that in immigrant families, language barriers often prevent first-generation parents from effectively communicating with their children. As children begin speaking mostly English at home (as a dominant language), parents are compelled to use English, even if they are not proficient in it. This shift can disrupt family relationships, as revealed by adults reflecting on their upbringing in immigrant households. In Fillmore's (2000) case study, language loss among children has significantly affected communication within the family, leading to tension where adults and children struggle to understand each other. This lack of understanding has strained relationships, leaving parents and grandparents feeling disconnected from the children and unaware of their lives.

Gkaintartzi's (2014) research on Albanian parents' views on Albanian language maintenance in Greece concludes that parents who were interviewed claim that they use Albanian at home and with family, but use Greek in public places like work and school. They focus mainly on their children's Greek language skills for academic success and provide limited support for Albanian literacy at home, often relying on Albanian TV channels. Parental attitudes

towards bilingualism vary, with some strongly supporting it while others prioritising Greek for education and career success, showing less concern for maintaining Albanian. According to research conducted by Zhu (2020) with Chinese immigrant mothers in Canada, for immigrant mothers, learning the dominant language is essential to their settlement and mothering experience. It boosts their confidence, employment prospects, and ability to support their children in school. They believe good language skills are crucial for being good mothers, as language barriers can hinder their support for their children's education. In addition, Liang (2018) believes that it becomes awkward for both parents and children when school assignments are shared in different languages, causing difficulty for parents with limited English proficiency to understand their children's schoolwork. Children also struggle to express their emotions fluently in their heritage language to their parents. Farr et al. (2018) in their study highlight that language transfer helps mothers maintain their ethnic identity by fostering a shared cultural bond with their child. However, the study also reveals that children using the dominant language (English in this case) can diminish mothers' sense of ethnicity and closeness with their children. Luo and Wiseman (2000) in their study of ethnic language maintenance among Chinese immigrant children in the United States, say that ethnic language preservation among immigrant children is affected by their interactions with different social groups, such as family and peers. In Chinese immigrant families, there is a challenging balance between maintaining the ethnic language and assimilating into the mainstream culture. Typically, parents favour the ethnic language, while children lean towards the dominant language of society. Overall, the use and cultivation of family languages within the home domain have a significant impact, fostering intergenerational communication, strengthening family bonds, and maintaining access to familial history (Guardado, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the dynamics of language maintenance and shift within the immigrant mother-daughter relationship. Qualitative methodology is particularly suited for this research as it allows for in-depth understanding of personal experiences, perceptions, and the ways in which language maintenance or shift influences intergenerational relationships. Additionally, the literature review and the research questions guided the research process, as it enabled a thorough understanding of concepts and ideas that are relevant to the topic. Moreover, clear research objectives helped interpret the findings.

Method and Participants

The selection criteria for research participants required that 2 of the daughters be fluent in the dominant language while exhibiting significant deficiencies in the heritage language (Albanian) and/or showing reluctance to use it. The other 2 daughters needed to be relatively fluent in both languages. This approach was designed to capture perspectives on both heritage language shift and maintenance. The fifth daughter was selected based on her later exposure to the dominant language. As such, purposeful sampling has been used to choose the participants. Purposeful sampling involves selecting information-rich samples to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon. It allows researchers to choose sources that will help meet the research objectives (Shaheen et al., 2019). The research involves 10 participants in total, comprising 5 immigrant mothers and their 5 daughters. All mothers are of Albanian origin, having immigrated to either the USA or Europe for various reasons. The majority of daughters were born and raised outside of Kosovo (except one case), all of them from Albanian parents. All of the participants gave permission to use their real name, nevertheless, pseudonyms (either their name or surname was changed) were used for their privacy.

Table 1. *Demographic Information About Mothers*

Name and Surname	R.B.	K.S.	M.F.	S.Y.	D.S.
Age	48	44	55	45	41
Employment	Unemployed	Employed	Employed	Unemployed	Employed
Marital Status	Married	Widowed	Married	Married	Divorced
Country of Residence	Texas, USA	Texas, USA	Italy	Switzerland	Switzerland
Reason of Immigration	War	War	Economic Cond.	War	Economic Cond.
Education	High School	High School	Primary School	Primary School	High School

Table 2. *Demographic Information About Daughters*

Name and Surname	F.B.	N.S.	F.F.	E.Y.	R.S.
Mother	R.B.	K.S.	M.F.	S.Y.	D.S.
Age	21	18	27	19	18
Employment	Employed	Employed	Part Time	Unemployed	Unemployed
Marital Status	Single	Single	Married	Single	Single
Country of Residence	Texas, USA	Texas, USA	Italy	Switzerland	Switzerland
Immigration Status	2nd Generation	2nd Gen.	1.5 Gen.*	2nd Gen.	3rd Gen.
Education	College*	College*	High School	High School*	High School*

1.5 Gen.: Born in the country of origin and arrived in the host country before the age of 14.

Participants represented with initials (e.g. K.S.) to ensure anonymity and prevent ethical violations.

F.B., N.S., E.Y. and R.S. are still students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allow for flexibility in exploring topics deeply while maintaining a consistent structure across all interviews. The participants were interviewed during the month of June, 2024. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Mothers and daughters were interviewed separately to avoid any influence on each other's responses. The interviews were conducted online and audio recorded using smartphone voice memos. Two interviews with daughters were in English, due to their limited confidence in using Albanian, while the other interviews were in Albanian. Using Albanian (the participants' mother tongue) to conduct interviews helped build mutual trust, especially when using the same dialect to establish a sense of comfort and cultural connection. These were subsequently translated into English (not all of the interviews, but parts that were crucial for the research) and transcribed using Google Docs. Notes were taken during and after the interviews and later analysed. Data were analysed through inductive approaches. Based on the responses, different themes and categories emerged. Overall, the data analysis process involved a detailed, multi-step process to ensure comprehensive understanding and accurate interpretation of the collected data. The procedure included translation and transcription, coding and thematic analysis, and comparison and contrast of responses.

FINDINGS

Out of the 10 participants, R. and her daughter F., together with K. and her daughter N. were classified as heritage language shift pairs, whereas the pairs D. and R., M. and F., and S. and E. were classified as heritage language maintenance pairs. There were no specific criteria for the order in which the interviews were conducted. Participants were not prioritised in any particular way, as it was determined that the sequence of interviews would not affect the overall findings. Following the analysis of the interview data, distinct themes have been identified and are presented here. Each theme considers the perspectives shared by all mothers and daughters, allowing for comparisons between their viewpoints. The four main themes that emerged are a) pride in heritage language and culture, b) the importance of family and community, and c) language and mother-daughter relationship. All these themes are elaborated below, and within them other important characteristics are considered, such as reasons for language maintenance and shift.

Pride in Heritage Language and Culture

All of the participants, be those mothers or daughters, emphasised the pride they have for their Albanian language and cultural background. As such, the theme of pride in heritage language and cultural background emerged as

a significant aspect of the participants' narratives. Their emotions, values, and beliefs are strongly associated with their heritage language and culture. For immigrant mothers, pride in their heritage language and culture is deeply connected with their sense of identity and the preservation of cultural traditions. On the other hand, for their daughters, this pride has to do with a sense of belonging. R. and K., whose daughters F. and N. exhibit deficiencies in Albanian language, continue to uphold their cultural practices, hoping that exposure and repeated efforts will maintain a sense of pride and connection in their daughters. The mothers claim to use Albanian almost exclusively with their daughters, celebrate traditional holidays and cook traditional food as means to keep the culture alive within their household. Similarly, M., S., and D. mention that they communicate in Albanian within their households, and they continually remind their daughters of their culture, traditions, and different holidays. Moreover, they share stories about Kosovo, their lives there, and predominantly about the Kosovo war (that is the main reason why most of the participants had immigrated) as they think it is important for their daughters to understand what their nation has gone through and regardless of all that suffering, they managed to preserve their language and culture. F., who had immigrated to Italy at the age of 8, explains her love for Kosovo. Although now she is more proficient in Italian than Albanian, she believes that maintaining heritage language is crucial, as one should never forget where they came from and that the sense of pride is not merely about language proficiency but extends to cultural identity, belonging, and the transmission of cultural values across generations. She now has a one-year-old son, and together with her husband they have decided to expose him merely to Albanian as he will speak Italian outside home. This practice likely comes from her experience as an immigrant. Both she and her mother explained how in their household they always spoke Albanian, whereas in school or with Italian friends they used Italian. Discussing the pride in heritage language and culture, as well as the challenges of balancing integration into the dominant culture while preserving one's heritage, inevitably leads to concerns about future generations of second-generation immigrants. When asked about their thoughts on whether future generations will maintain their heritage language and this pride of being Albanian, the participants were rather concerned. This is also expressed in K. comment:

“We do not know. Maintaining the language will be difficult. From what I see, maybe another generation will be able to transmit the heritage language. They will know where they came from and will try to speak Albanian. However, for future generations, that remains uncertain.”

Similarly, F., who was not very interested in her homeland during her childhood, now shares the same sentiment. She rarely inquired about her

culture or heritage language in the past. However, now as she is delving deeper into politics, nations, and languages, she has learned more about Kosovo and started reconnecting with her culture. Despite this, she occasionally feels this is not entirely natural to her. Experiencing one's culture in its native country is different from trying to live it abroad, leading to a different feeling and sometimes a sense of confusion. She also believes this will be the case with the future generations, as she explains:

“I’ve been very scared actually about that, and it has actually been making me want to marry an Albanian man. I’ve seen children who have never been part of a culture and once they discover that they are that part of a culture, they make it their whole personality and they make it seem like they are so connected with it when really they are not, they are truly disconnected, and they are almost insensitive about it, almost making the culture seem like a joke, and that is my biggest fear. I do not want to have kids or them have kids and be completely insensitive to being Albanian. People came from a culture to another culture and they had to learn to adapt and no one will adapt to them and they end up having kids who are very disconnected, and the disconnection just keeps on happening and then the kids eventually won’t identify with that ethnicity until it is only convenient for them. I do not want my future generations to pull that card out only when it is convenient for them. If they want to be connected to the culture, I want them to learn, eat the food, learn the language, read books, learn the history.”

The participants believe that if the Albanian language continues to be spoken as the primary language within their home settings, the chances of future generations preserving the language are higher. Still, they fear that maybe only the two future generations might retain fluency before it starts to diminish significantly.

The Importance of Family and Community

The role of family and community might be the most important one in the processes of language maintenance and shift among immigrant families. The participants believe that it all starts in the family. In immigrant families, the family unit is often the primary domain where heritage language is transmitted and practised. The home environment serves as a space for language learning and cultural reinforcement, especially for children who might not encounter their heritage language in other settings. Mothers, in particular, play a pivotal role in this process due to their traditional roles as primary caregivers. S. and E. exemplify a family where the heritage language, Albanian, is actively maintained and valued. This might come as a result of S.’s lack of proficiency in French, therefore, her daughter E. has to communicate with her in Albanian,

although she is more proficient in French. In comparison with the other participants (daughters) who maintained Albanian, E. showed more reluctance to use it. She understands perfectly and speaks good Albanian, but feels more confident using French, as she thinks her Albanian accent is not that good. Further, D. and R., together with M. and F., explain how they almost always use Albanian as their home language. M. says:

“In our house everyone speaks Albanian, *our* language. Always. The children, I, my husband. Everyone. Outside we speak Italian when we meet with Italian people, when we come back home, we speak Albanian.”

N., contrariwise, blames her family for not showing enough effort to teach her the language. More specifically her father and uncle. She explains that they were given names (herself, her sister, and her cousins) that Americans could easily pronounce, and they were spoken to in English to avoid pronunciation issues when starting school and to prevent being left out. N. believes that her family, having immigrated to the United States as refugees, feared being marginalised, left out, or facing job difficulties. Consequently, her father and uncle made efforts to integrate into society as quickly as possible. Despite this, K., her mother, tried to communicate with her in Albanian. Moreover, within the family frame, elderly people in the family contribute significantly to heritage language maintenance. When participants were asked if there is anyone with whom they communicate exclusively in Albanian, all of them admitted that they speak only Albanian with their grandparents and/or family members that do not speak any other language but Albanian. Although this communication might not be as frequent or fluent as their conversations in the dominant language, it remains a crucial connection to their heritage and family roots.

Another important role is that of the community. D. and R. live in an area populated with Albanians. Therefore, they often meet with each other on weekends, birthday celebrations, religious holidays, or for Independence Day. The following quote by D. reflects her experience with the community:

“My whole family is here; my parents, my brothers, and sisters who are married and they live here with their families. We even have relatives from our village and city (from Kosovo) living near us. Almost every weekend, we get together for dinners or go out for picnics.”

She also mentions that during their gatherings, Albanian is predominantly spoken. Although the children may occasionally switch to French, Albanian remains the primary language used. Unfortunately, that is often not the case with the families living in the United States. R. and F., along with K. and N., reside in an area with a limited Albanian community. Thus, the daughters cannot practise their heritage language skills. R. explained how this Eid Al-Adha they

went to an Albanian mosque for the Eid prayer, and what she heard was not really what she expected:

“When we gathered, most of the Albanians were not speaking Albanian. Those who knew English spoke in English. When I wished them with *Urime Bajrami*, most of them responded in English with *Eid Mubarak*, although all of us were Albanian.”

Having a limited linguistic community and resources can vary significantly, affecting the extent to which they can support language and cultural maintenance. Equally important for language maintenance is visiting the country of origin, Kosovo. All participants based in Europe mentioned they travel to Kosovo twice annually. Conversely, those residing in the United States initially visited every 5 years, but more recently, they manage visits every two years or sometimes annually, despite the considerable distance and high travel costs posing challenges.

Language and Mother-Daughter Relationship

This research was primarily interested to find out if language barriers have an impact on the mother-daughter relationship. Effective communication is foundational to any relationship, and in the context of immigrant families, the language used for communication significantly impacts the mother-daughter bond. Different concepts were discussed with the participants and each gave their viewpoint in this matter.

M. and F. believe that language did not impact the communication and the overall relationship they had with each other. M. speaks very little Italian, whereas F. speaks good Albanian. Although her writing and reading skills in Albanian declined after moving to Italy, her speaking skills remain strong, and this was also observed in her interview. Whatever they had to communicate about, they did it in Albanian. When asked about her transition from Kosovo to Italy, F. mentioned that as a child she did not find it difficult. However, in hindsight, she realises it was not that easy either, as they had to quickly learn Italian to succeed in school and integrate into society. M. noted that her husband initially knew Italian better and would sometimes help the children with their homework, but eventually, they stopped asking for assistance. Further, D. and R. communicate in both French and Albanian. D., who was born and raised in Switzerland, speaks French fluently due to having finished her school in French, having many French friends and working with French-speaking colleagues. Her parents had immigrated to Switzerland, making her daughter R. a third-generation immigrant. Not only does D. speak native-like Albanian, but even her daughter R. speaks surprisingly good Albanian and can use both languages well. She explains that when they have to talk about anything besides school,

they speak Albanian, whereas when they talk about school related things they speak in French, as it is easier. By contrast, S. and E. tend to have difficulties in communicating due to language constraints. S.'s French is weak, and although E. can speak Albanian, she is proficient in French. S. explains that she talks to her daughter in Albanian and she replies in French. Therefore, instead of having in-depth conversations they tend to be brief and this bothers her. She also explains that she barely helps her daughter with anything related to school or other activities requiring French. Regarding this, E. says:

“I am used to doing my homework on my own or my brother helping me and I do not blame my mother for not helping, however, when we communicate with each other I feel more comfortable using French and she wants to use Albanian. This sometimes makes me want to cut the conversation short as I feel like we are going nowhere, and this frustrates her.”

E. says that maybe if they both spoke the same language proficiently, they would communicate more or at least understand each other better. K. and N., and R. and F. face challenges in communication as well. R. and F. were the pair who complained the most about how language and character had impacted their relationship. R. describes how she talks to her daughter in Albanian but she replies in English, and this often leads to conflicts. She also mentions that her daughter frequently misunderstands her expressions because they have different meanings in Albanian and English. Therefore, F.'s lack of knowledge on different Albanian expressions can lead to miscommunication. R.'s stand on whether her relationship with her daughter has changed over time because of language restrictions:

“Yes, to some extent. Or perhaps quite significantly. When I say something, she interprets it differently. I speak to her in Albanian, but she doesn't grasp the meaning as an Albanian would. She doesn't understand our expressions, and this creates a significant impact. It's especially challenging when you intend one thing, but she understands it differently.”

Has this caused conflicts or misunderstandings?

Very often, in many situations.

F. admits that she primarily communicates in English with her mother, especially for important matters. She notes that both she and her mother have strong personalities, making it difficult to communicate or find common ground. F. described her mother as being strict about certain issues, such as going out with friends or dressing in specific ways, often citing religion (Islam) and tradition as reasons. Despite not being a deeply religious family, R. would sometimes use religion to justify these restrictions. F. feels that her mother still

envisions Kosovo as it was in 1999, and R. herself expresses that she no longer belongs to Kosovo or the United States but is caught between the two.

Similar to R. and F.'s relationship, is that of K. and her daughter N., K. believes that if it was not for language restrictions, she would communicate more with her daughter and understand her better, especially when it comes to the emotional side of the relationship. N. explains situations where she has misunderstandings with her mother, saying:

"I'll say one thing and if it sounds too much, it sounds like I'm upset when really it has nothing to do with that...When she tells me to do something and I tell her 'I know, I'm already doing that thing', she is like 'why are you yelling?', when I wasn't yelling at all, and she takes that as backtalk when that's not backtalk, that's just me saying 'I am already doing it, there is no need to say it', and there's that kind of miscommunication, and it can be really frustrating for me... It is like you are misinterpreting almost every word I am saying and there is no point in speaking if all you are trying to do is start an argument."

This can also come as a result of cultural differences. N., born and raised in the United States, can have a different perception of speaking in a certain way, whereas for her Albanian mother, it can mean yelling or being angry. The experiences of Albanian immigrant mothers and daughters illustrate the complex interplay between language, culture, and relationship, highlighting the importance of flexible communication strategies and mutual understanding in navigating the linguistic and cultural aspects of immigrant life.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with mothers and daughters reveals that the negotiation between heritage language and the dominant language of the host country is a complex process that deeply influences the linguistic and cultural identity of both generations. Their value of heritage language is undoubtedly high, as, according to them, it represents a vital link to their cultural roots, identity, and familial history. In general, despite challenges, mothers have successfully managed to maintain their heritage language and have tried to transmit it to their daughters. Considering that the daughters all attended school in the dominant language, and this had an immense impact in language maintenance and shift, their heritage language skills were impressive.

A prominent theme emerging from the interviews is the pride in heritage language and culture. Both mothers and daughters express a strong sense of identity and belonging tied to their roots. For the mothers, this pride is intertwined with a desire to preserve cultural traditions and impart a sense

of identity to their children. They continuously emphasised that Kosovo is their country, their past and future, and that Albanian is their language. Since they grew up in Kosovo, their bonding is stronger. They went to school there, have friends and families, their first home, and many more memories that made them who they are today. In addition, immigrating because of war is not the same as immigrating for other reasons as it often involves trauma and a sudden, forced separation from one's homeland. Therefore, they constantly dreamt of going back and living in a free Kosovo, however, they had already settled in the host country and created a family, making it difficult to go back, thus, living in between places. On the other hand, their daughters, although proud of being Albanian and acknowledging cultural background, for them, language and culture have to do more with belonging. They find it important to have a *term* to identify themselves with. Therefore, language and cultural heritage may not hold the same importance for them as they do for their mothers or families.

Furthermore, family and community play crucial roles in the processes of language maintenance and shift among immigrant families. The home environment serves as the primary domain for heritage language transmission, with mothers often being the main agents of this process. The findings indicate that families who maintain a strong use of Albanian at home create a robust foundation for their children to retain the language. Additionally, the presence of a supportive community that speaks the heritage language further reinforces this practice. However, the varying availability of such communities, particularly in the USA contexts, poses challenges to consistent language use outside the home. It is worth mentioning other differences between immigrants living in the USA and Europe. Albanians living in Europe not only live in a larger community of Albanians, but they also have more sources such as books, TV channels in Albanian, some mentioned to have schools in which you can learn Albanian, and they visit Kosovo more often due to shorter distances and less expenses. Albanians living in the USA do not often have these opportunities, making the preservation of cultural identity and heritage even more challenging.

Examining mothers and daughters' perceptions on how much language shift affected their relationship, the findings from the participants living in the USA reveal that language barriers can lead to significant miscommunication and misunderstandings. These barriers often result in conflicts, with mothers feeling that their daughters do not fully understand cultural nuances and expressions, and daughters feeling misunderstood and restricted by their mothers' expectations. This miscommunication is intensified by the daughters' greater fluency in the dominant language, which sometimes leads

to a preference for using it over the heritage language in daily interactions. In contrast, families where both the mother and daughter are proficient in the heritage language, like D. and R., experience fewer communication issues and report stronger relational bonds. This suggests that maintaining proficiency in the heritage language can facilitate deeper emotional connections and mutual understanding. However, the findings also highlight that proficiency alone is not enough; cultural understanding and flexibility in communication strategies are equally important.

CONCLUSION

Language and culture as well as the mother-daughter bond are highlighted in this research under the context of Albanian immigrants. To reiterate, findings demonstrate how the negotiation between the heritage language, on the one hand, and a new language environment, on the other hand, is a defining feature of the mother-daughter relationship. While pride in language heritage remains strong, the challenges of bilingualism and cultural integration demand ongoing efforts to support language maintenance. Addressing these challenges can help preserve linguistic heritage and enhance intergenerational relationships, ensuring that future generations maintain a strong connection with heritage language and culture. Participants express concern about the future maintenance of their heritage language among subsequent generations. The culture is perceived to be on its deathbed and the language heritage as belonging to the past and not to the future, the latter being impaired due to people's lack of intention to use the language unless convenient. Overall, the issue of language barriers in mother-daughter relationship merits closer study as not enough research has been done in this aspect in general, let alone in the Albanian immigrant context. Ultimately, maintaining linguistic and cultural identity is not only a personal challenge within families but a shared responsibility among all Albanians, ensuring that future generations retain a strong connection to their roots.

Limitations

This research, while providing valuable insights into language maintenance and shift among Albanian immigrant families, has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample involves only 10 participants, therefore, the experiences and perspectives of these individuals may not fully represent the broader population of Albanian immigrants in the USA and Europe. Secondly, the geographic coverage over the USA and Europe does not necessarily consider the immense variation in culture and socio-economic conditions between the continents. Furthermore, the research focuses exclusively on mother-daughter relationship, leaving out the perspectives of other family members

such as fathers, siblings, or extended family, who may also play significant roles in language transmission and cultural practices. Lastly, this research does not consider the role of educational systems and government policies which facilitate language maintenance. These are some limitations involved in the current research which should be resolved in the future studies for the accurate understanding of immigrant language maintenance and shift and cultural identity.

References

- Alejan, J. A., Ayop, J. I. E., Allojado, J. B., Abatayo, D. P. B., Abacahin, S. K. N., & Bonifacio, R. (2021). Heritage Language Maintenance and Revitalization: Evaluating the Language Endangerment among the Indigenous Languages in Bukidnon, Philippines. *Online Submission*.
- Belew, A. K. (2020). *Sociolinguistic Documentation of Language Shift and Maintenance in Iyasa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai'i at Manoa).
- Brown, C. L. (2011). Maintaining heritage language: Perspectives of Korean parents. *Multicultural education, 19*(1), 31-37.
- Budiyana, Y. E. (2017). Students' parents' attitudes toward Chinese heritage language maintenance. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 7*(3), 195. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0703.05>
- Clyne, M. (2003). *Dynamics of Language Contact. English and Immigrant Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Costigan, C. L., & Dokis, D. P. (2006). Relations between parent-child acculturation differences and adjustment within immigrant Chinese families. *Child development, 77*(5), 1252-1267. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00932.x>
- Cox Jr, R. B., deSouza, D. K., Bao, J., Lin, H., Sahbaz, S., Greder, K. A., ... & Arredondo-Lopez, A. (2021). Shared language erosion: Rethinking immigrant family communication and impacts on youth development. *Children, 8*(4), 256. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children8040256>
- Dagamseh, M. M. (2020). Language maintenance, shift and variation evidence from Jordanian and Palestinian immigrants in Christchurch New Zealand.
- Davies, A., & Elder, C. (Eds.). (2004). *The handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 431-450). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dweik, B. S. I., & Qawar, H. A. (2015). Language choice and language attitudes in a multilingual Arab Canadian community: Quebec-Canada: A sociolinguistic study. *British journal of English linguistics, 3*(1), 1-12.
- Esser, H. (2008). Language acquisition and age at immigration: The difficult conditions for bilingualism. *IZA Discussion Papers*.
- Farida Ariyani, F., Ag Bambang Setiyadi, B., & Eka Putrawan, G. (2021). Local language vs. national language: The Lampung language maintenance in the Indonesian context. *Kervan-International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies, 25*(1), 287-307. <https://doi.org/10.13135/1825-263X/5787>
- Farr, J., Blenkinsop, L., Harris, R., & Smith, J. A. (2018). "It's My Language, My Culture, and it's Personal!" Migrant Mothers' Experience of Language Use and Identity Change in Their Relationship With Their Children: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Journal of Family Issues, 39*(11), 3029-3054. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X1876454>
- Fillmore, L. W. (2000). Loss of family languages: Should educators be concerned?. *Theory into practice, 39*(4), 203-210. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3904_3
- Gkaintartzi, A., Chatzidaki, A., & Tsokalidou, R. (2014). Albanian parents and the Greek educational context: Who is willing to fight for the home language?. *International Multilingual Research Journal, 8*(4), 291-308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2014.953004>
- Guardado, M. (2006). Engaging language and cultural spaces: Latin American parents' reflections on language loss and maintenance in Vancouver. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 9*(1), 51-72.
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Lee, C. M. (2001). An agenda for studying ethnicity and family communication. *Journal of Family Communication, 1*(1), 75-85. [10.1207/S15327698JFC0101_09](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327698JFC0101_09)
- Idaryani, I., & Fidyati, F. (2022). The impact of parental language ideology and family language policy on language shift and language maintenance: Bilingual perspective. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture, 7*(1), 192-208. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/e.7.1.192-208>
- Inan, S., Nisanci, A., & Harris, Y. (2024). Preserving Heritage Language in Turkish Families in the USA. *Languages, 9*(2), 56. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages9020056>

- Jagodic, D. (2011). Between language maintenance and language shift: The Slovenian community in Italy today and tomorrow. *Eesti ja soome-ugri keeleteaduse ajakiri. Journal of Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics*, 2(1), 195-214. <https://doi.org/10.12697/jeful.2011.2.1.13>
- Jan, S. A. K., Ali, A., Khan, A., Ullah, N., Hussain, Z., & Lodhi, K. (2024). Examining the Sociolinguistics Factors Influencing Language Shift and Language Maintenance among Immigrant Communities in English-Speaking Countries. *Remittances Review*, 9(2), 2354-2370. <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.122>
- Kelleher, A. (2010). What is a heritage language? *Center for Applied Linguistics*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cal.org/heritage/pdfs/briefs/What-is-a-Heritage-Language.pdf>
- Komal, A., Bashir, R., & Khan, F. (2022). Language Shift and Maintenance: A Sociolinguistic Study of the Attitudes of the Youth towards the Local Language in Multan City. *Journal of Educational Research and Social Sciences Review (JERSSR)*, 2(3), 115-128.
- Laforêt, J. A. (2016). *Language maintenance by Haitian immigrants in the USA: a case study of the Chicago community* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).
- Liang, F. (2018). Parental perceptions toward and practices of heritage language maintenance: focusing on the United States and Canada. *Online Submission*, 12(2), 65-86.
- Luo, S. H., & Wiseman, R. L. (2000). Ethnic language maintenance among Chinese immigrant children in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24(3), 307-324. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(00\)00003-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(00)00003-1)
- Matthews, Delle P. 1983. Language maintenance, shift and death, and the implications for bilingual education. *Notes on Literacy* 39:10-21.
- Mazzaferro, G. (2018). Language maintenance and shift within new linguistic minorities in Italy: A translanguaging perspective. *Translanguaging as everyday practice*, 87-106. 10.1007/978-3-319-94851-5_6
- Mbatha, N. T., Majola, Y. L., & Gumede, Z. S. (2023). Language maintenance: Factors supporting the use and maintenance of isiZulu in Soshanguve. *Literator-Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics and Literary Studies*, 44(1), 1930. <https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v44i1.1930>
- Melaku, Z., & Semu, S. (2023). Language Maintenance and Shift in Dirayata. *Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching (JLLLT)*, 2(2), 61-73. <https://doi.org/10.37249/jllt.v2i2.565>
- Montrul, S. (2023). Heritage languages: Language acquired, language lost, language regained. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 9, 399-418. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-030521-050236>
- Nyaigoti, B. A. W. (2019). Language Shift or Maintenance? A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Ilwana Language of Tana River County. *Les Cahiers d'Afrique de l'Est/The East African Review*, (53). <https://doi.org/10.4000/estafrica.839>
- Oh, J. S., & Fuligni, A. J. (2010). The role of heritage language development in the ethnic identity and family relationships of adolescents from immigrant backgrounds. *Social development*, 19(1), 202-220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2008.00530.x>
- Oloso, Y. O. (2021). Language Maintenance in the Face of Identity Shift—Some Insights from Ilorin, Nigeria. *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education*, 13(1).
- Ong, T. W. S. (2021). Family language policy, language maintenance and language shift: Perspectives from ethnic Chinese single mothers in Malaysia. *Issues in Language Studies*, 10(1), 59-75. <https://doi.org/10.33736/ils.3075.2021>
- Ostler, N. (2011). Language maintenance, shift, and endangerment. *The Cambridge handbook of sociolinguistics*, 315-334.
- Pauwels, A. (2004). Language maintenance. In A. Devis and C. Elder (Eds.), *The handbook of applied linguistics* (pp: 719-737). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Pines, R. L., Kam, J. A., & Bernhold, Q. (2019). Understanding Latino/a language brokers' identity goals in association with parent-child relational quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(2), 490-513. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517734656>

- Polinsky, M., & Scontras, G. (2020). Understanding heritage languages. *Bilingualism: Language and cognition*, 23(1), 4-20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728919000245>
- Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2002). The price of uniformity: Language, family and personality adjustment in the immigrant second generation. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 25(6), 889-912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987022000009368>
- Puthuval, S. (2017). *Language maintenance and shift across generations in Inner Mongolia* (Doctoral dissertation). <http://hdl.handle.net/1773/38650>
- P Veettil, R., Binu, P. M., & Karthikeyan, J. (2021). Language maintenance and language shift among Keralites in Oman. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume, 11*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no4.21>
- Rothman, J. (2007a). Heritage speaker competence differences, language change, and input type: Inflected infinitives in heritage Brazilian Portuguese. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 11, 359-389.
- Romanowski, P. (2021). A deliberate language policy or a perceived lack of agency: Heritage language maintenance in the Polish community in Melbourne. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 25(5), 1214-1234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069211000850>
- Sain, Y. (2020). Language Shift and the Linguistic Maintenance: A Study of Tolaki Language in Kendari City Southeast Sulawesi. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 5(12), 2020.
- Sarwat, S., Kabir, H., Qayyum, N., & Akram, M. (2021). Language shift and maintenance: A case study of Pakistani-American family. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 11(1), 86-92. 10.5539/ijel.v11n1p86
- Sevinç, Y. (2016). Language maintenance and shift under pressure: Three generations of the Turkish immigrant community in the Netherlands. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2016(242), 81-117. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2016-0034>
- Shaheen, M., & Pradhan, S., & Ranajee. (2019). Sampling in qualitative research. In *Qualitative techniques for workplace data analysis* (pp. 25-51). IGI Global. 10.4018/978-1-5225-5366-3.ch002
- Tannenbaum, M. (2005). Viewing family relations through a linguistic lens: Symbolic aspects of language maintenance in immigrant families. *the Journal of Family communication*, 5(3), 229-252. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327698jfc0503_4
- Zhu, Y. (2020). Learning to become good mothers: Immigrant mothers as adult learners. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 70(4), 377-394. 10.1177/0741713620921179

LANGUAGE USE AND REPRESENTATION OF GENDER ROLES IN KOSOVAR SOCIAL MEDIA

Malda YMERI¹

INTRODUCTION

Language use has a major role in molding societal norms and attitudes across various domains. In recent decades, the social media domain has become the primary platform for instant interaction, communication, and information. These outlets offer means for examining societal representations and their influence on societal perceptions. Within this broad field, the study of language use and gender representation holds particular significance, shedding light on how media discourse shapes and reflects cultural attitudes towards gender roles. In Kosovar society, the language used in social media often reflects and continues traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This study focuses specifically on the language use and representation of gender roles in Kosovar media, aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics that prevail in this context.

An Overview of the Problem

This study seeks to investigate within Kosovar society, the widespread influence of media portrayal on societal perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles. Within this context, language elements serve as powerful tools that shape individual understanding of gender dynamics within the Kosovar community. The problem stands due to the general influence of media representation in constructing and carrying out gender stereotypes, thereby impacting individuals' understanding of gender issues within Kosovar society.

¹ MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; malda.ymeri@student.uni-pr.edu

The Aim of the Study

The aim of this research is to investigate the language use and representation of gender roles in Kosovar media. By analyzing the language choices and portrayal of gender roles in Kosovar media, this study seeks to uncover the ways in which media contribute to the construction and reinforcement of gender identities and stereotypes in Kosovar society. Through a qualitative analysis of textual and auditory elements across various media platforms, the study aims to achieve several objectives. Firstly, it seeks to examine the language representations of gender roles, aiming to identify prevalent stereotypes and discursive strategies employed in their construction. Secondly, by collecting data from diverse media sources, including Kosovar online news portals and social media platforms, the research endeavors to uncover repeated themes and language patterns related to gender roles. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of societal perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles represented in Kosovar media.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The core of a research study lies in the research question and hypothesis, to guide scholars through the complex maze of inquiry. As Farrugia et al. (2010) state, a good hypothesis must be based on a good research question at the start of a trial and, indeed, drive data collection for the study. These two foundations not only define the scope and direction of the study, they also set the groundwork for solid methodology, insightful analysis, and a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge. Thus, this paper aims to answer these following questions:

Research Questions:

1. How are gender roles linguistically represented in Kosovar media across different platforms?
2. How do prevailing discursive strategies and stereotypes in Kosovar media influence societal attitudes and perceptions toward gender roles?

Hypothesis:

The study hypothesizes that the language used in Kosovar media will reflect and preserve traditional gender roles and stereotypes, thereby reinforcing existing societal attitudes towards gender. Additionally, it is anticipated that these representations will have implications for shaping individuals' perceptions of gender and their attitudes towards gender equality, with potential variations across different media formats and platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The representation of gender roles in media has long been a subject of academic interest, with research highlighting the powerful influence of media portrayals on societal attitudes towards gender. Within the context of Kosovo, a country with a complex history and a combination of traditional and modernizing influences, the issue of gender representation in media takes on particular importance. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research on language use and gender representation in social media.

Media Representation of Gender Roles

Among various sources that influence gender roles, media overruns an important space and its relevance can be assessed across many different mediums (Rollè et al. 2020). Media portrayals often reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, influencing societal norms and individual behaviors. Studies published emphasize that these stereotypes prolong beliefs about gender roles, reinforcing sexism and limiting career aspirations for both genders. (Santonniccolo et al., 2023). For instance, men are frequently depicted in dominant, authoritative roles, while women are shown in nurturing or sexualized roles. These portrayals contribute to maintaining gender norms and can influence both children's and adults' perceptions of gender-appropriate behavior. A study in *Sex Roles* by Collins, 2011 noted that while some changes in gender portrayals have occurred over the decades, many stereotypes remain ingrained. She further indicates that men continue to be depicted in more active and dominant roles compared to women, who are often portrayed as passive and dependent. Moreover, ongoing portrayals of gender roles suggest the media has not entirely moved beyond traditional gender roles, despite some positive changes.

Language Use and Gender Roles Across Social Media

Social media serves as a digital space where individuals actively construct and perform their identities, including gender identities, through linguistic practices (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Nakamura, 2013). Language serves as a tool for expressing and reinforcing gender identities in virtual environments. Linguistic markers such as pronoun usage, lexical choices, and syntactic patterns have been identified as key elements through which individuals signal their gender identities online (Herring et al., 2015; Matz et al., 2018). Additionally, social media platforms facilitate the performative aspect of gender, where users engage in self-presentation and identity performance through language. Through posts, comments, and interactions, individuals negotiate and reinforce their gender identities within the context of social media communities (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). These performances not only reflect offline gender roles but also

contribute to the construction of new online gender norms and expectations. Studies have examined how linguistic representations of gender on platforms like Twitter or Instagram contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes or challenge traditional gender norms (Tufekci, 2017; Nakamura, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this study draws upon several key concepts that provide insight into the dynamics of language use and representation of gender roles in Kosovar media. One such concept is the notion of gender performativity, as proposed by Judith Butler (1990). According to Butler, gender is not an innate or fixed characteristic but rather a social construct that is continually enacted and reinforced through everyday practices, including language use. In the context of Kosovar media, understanding gender performativity offers a lens through which to examine how linguistic choices contribute to the construction and perpetuation of gender norms and stereotypes (Butler, 1990).

Additionally, the concept of discourse analysis provides a valuable framework for exploring the ways in which language shapes and reflects societal attitudes towards gender roles. Discourse analysis focuses on how language is used to construct meaning within specific social contexts, highlighting the role of power, ideology, and identity in shaping discourse patterns (Fairclough, 2015). In the context of Kosovar media, discourse analysis allows for an examination of the discursive strategies employed to represent gender roles, including the use of language to reinforce traditional gender norms or challenge existing stereotypes.

Moreover, the concept of symbolic interactionism offers insights into how language functions as a symbolic tool through which individuals negotiate and construct their identities. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the importance of symbols, gestures, and language in mediating social interactions and shaping individuals' perceptions of themselves and others (Blumer, 1969). Within Kosovar media, symbolic interactionism provides a framework for understanding how language is used to convey and negotiate gendered meanings, influencing audience interpretations of gender roles and identities.

By drawing on these theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to uncover the intricate ways in which language is used and represented in Kosovar social media to construct and prolong gender roles. Through an analysis of linguistic choices, discourse patterns, and symbolic representations, the study aims to illustrate the broader societal attitudes and perceptions towards gender within the Kosovar community. Ultimately, this theoretical framework provides

a comprehensive lens through which to examine the interaction between language, media representation, and gender dynamics in Kosovar society.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate language use and its reflection of gender roles on social media platforms. Qualitative methods are particularly suited for exploring nuanced aspects of language and identity construction in digital contexts (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Herring & Stoerger, 2014). The methods and instruments used in this study include the collection and analysis of comments and videos from Kosovar social media platforms.

Data Collection

Video Analysis: The study will analyze videos from social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) where gender roles are discussed, performed, or debated. Videos will be selected based on their relevance to gender topics. This includes videos where individuals discuss gender issues, share personal experiences, or participate in debates about gender roles in Kosovo.

Online Comments Analysis: The study will collect comments from various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) that discuss gender-related topics within the context of Kosovo. Comments will be selected based on their relevance to gender issues in Kosovo and will involve identifying posts and threads that generate substantial interaction and discussion around gender roles.

Population and Sample

The population for this study includes users of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) who engage in discussions related to gender roles within the context of Kosovo. This population encompasses a diverse group of individuals, varying in age, gender, socio-economic status, and other demographic factors. The study focuses on social media users within Kosovo who engage with content related to gender roles and equality. This includes both content creators and consumers who actively participate in discussions through comments and reactions. The study makes use of content from 5 Videos, 1 Post, and 15 Comments across various social media applications.

Translation Process

All content from the videos and comments were translated from Albanian to English to ensure comprehension and uniformity in analysis. The translation

aimed to accurately convey the original meaning and nuances of each comment while preserving the context in which they were posted.

RESULTS

Gender Roles in Professions

Video 1 - Facebook Posted by: T7+ Description: A girl from Ferizaj that works as a mechanic - Her biggest dream is to open her own mechanic shop. Relevant Comments: User: D. K.: “You can open the shop, but boys have grown up with wrenches in their hands and girls with make up. This field is an ocean.”

User: B. B.: “I don’t envy her at all, there were no other fields like a hairdresser.”

Video 2 - Tiktok User: K.: Replying to a comment noting that “Freedom is to be equal with men.”: “It depends on what kind of equal rights, if a man goes out, drinks, sleeps with 20 girls, you cannot go ahead and do the same. Men are allowed to have one thousand girlfriends, but girls are allowed to have one. So, when you look for equal rights you omit morals. Why don’t you go ahead and work in construction? Why don’t those that look for equal rights say: My husband you worked enough, from now on, I’ll get to work in the sun and in the cold. You don’t want those types of rights, but then it has to do with morals you mind.”

Video 3 - Instagram

Program: ZANAT

Posted by: T7

In a debate about “How is prom being celebrated in Kosovo” one of the women in the video talks about a comment she’d seen in a video: “Women are equal only when they get on the steel scaffoldings” a quote which she finds absurd. She notes that she saw a lot of women agreeing with the said comment. The host of the show brings up other aspects of employees working in construction. She notes that people that are the most oppressed, underpaid, overworked are the said workers of this field. She goes on to say that those types of workers do not have the rights that their wives have when it comes to going to cafes since they are deemed as unworthy of visiting said places.

A comment under this video noted:

“You are to feel sorry for. Enough with this feminism, what equality do women want, what? Go ahead, work and sacrifice as men do in every field, and then come talk about equality. Bring women into construction, and the buildings won’t get built. Assign them into football teams and you won’t see

them. Join basketball and volleyball and every kind of social sport and no one will follow them. Put them into politics and they will spend funds on nail clinics and not on pavements. Put them into fishing and p** themselves in the middle of the sea from the fear of the night. Put them in the forest for hunting and the number of deer will be reduced by over 80%, even foxes will eat them without permission among the big animals. Tell this empty-headed girl to close her mouth. Demanding gender equality is like stating Israel as innocent for killing thousands of children.”

Video 4 - Youtube

Program: ZANAT

Posted by: T7

In a debate regarding “Gender and Sport” it is discussed about whether football should be mixed as it remains as a sport which is gender divided. During the program the host brings forth that something that is valued in man is bravery whereas for woman is fear. A woman should learn how to always be scared, whereas it is shameless if a man is scared. Another woman adds that for women it is instilled in their DNA to fear breaking norms and we should break free from these fears. Another brings up the fact that sports are not valued by our ancestors as they are seen as unsuccessful, and this belief stands true today as well, then there are examples of Majlinda Kelmendi, and Donjeta Sadiku, in boxing, she’ll go ahead and fight in her category. Should she go ahead and fight with a man in this regard?

Video 5 - Tiktok

Posted by: E.R.

Description: Elita captions the video: What you don’t see on social media.

She is seen in the video doing all the work around the house from organizing the kitchen, her kids’ bedroom, cleaning, cooking, gardening and during a section her husband, a famous singer in Kosovo, Gjiko, is seen eating food.

Relevant comments: P***** e K*****: “Do you want to come and work for my cleaning company?”

B*****: “Make Gjiko clean too, because he knows how to eat eggs and pepperoni.”

Post 6 - Facebook

Posted by: S.M.I

“While we all rejoiced at the appointment of a number of women in ministries and leadership positions in the Assembly, for the first time in Kosovo, just

at the time when our hopes were raised that the men in the Government are convening for women's rights, a lady appears, former Member of Parliament and comments:

But women are not fit for this craft. Terrible.

This was the comment from the former Member of Parliament Myzejeme Selmani from the ranks of AKR, to Minister Rozeta Hajdari, alluding that women are not worthy of such positions.

Sexist Comments on Posts of Police Reported Cases

In a news report of a rape case of the 11-year-old girl from Pristina:

User: I*** S**** “No one can force anyone into the car, but the prostitutes (wh*res) get into the car themselves.

User: L***** H**** T***** “The provocative wardrobe of the woman and thus come the consequence”

User: A**** L**** “It would be so easy for this to not happen if the female gender wouldn't go out half naked but no, we have started to educate even children from the first class how to undress.”

User: L***** S****: “No one can forcefully put you inside without wagging your tail”

User: A***** S*****: “I would set these five men free, and that prostitute should be punished, however if she was raped with violence, then a life sentence for those filthy men.”

Some of the comments about the case of the woman who was forced into the car:

User: M***** A****: “Even the female dogs without wagging their tails, dogs won't jump her but they are wagging their tails.”

User: E** L****: “She wanted it herself and now she goes to the police and acts innocent so that she can get some money. This is how some girls are.”

User: S***** M*****: “Cover up cover up and don't go out naked because there are a lot of sick people on the streets.”

User: D***** D*****: “No, this is a lie 100%, but she wanted it then changed her mind”

User: A*** J****: “I don't understand, was it on the mountain that they forced her into the car, don't you taint the country with these types of news because no one will forcefully put you in the car. Only if you are on the mountains somewhere is that this can happen. For this 11 years old child, may God punish

them. Because for those that go for the money and then they report them, they are the ones at fault. Sorry.”

DISCUSSION

The representation of gender roles in Kosovar social media, as evidenced by the analyzed videos and comments, reveals deep-rooted stereotypes and societal attitudes towards gender. This discussion section aims to interpret these findings in light of the theoretical framework, considering concepts such as gender performativity and discourse analysis. The following sections delve into the prominent themes and findings from the examined videos and comments, highlighting the societal attitudes towards gender roles and equality.

Gender Roles in Professions

Judith Butler’s concept of gender performativity proposes that gender is constructed through repeated actions and language, rather than being innate or fixed. In the Kosovar context, Video 1 exemplifies how linguistic choices prolong traditional gender roles. Comments on this post reflect traditional gender roles and societal expectations: One user implied that boys are naturally more suited for mechanical work due to their upbringing, while girls are more inclined towards doing makeup. Comments such as “boys have grown up with wrenches in their hands and girls with makeup” reinforce the belief that certain professions like mechanics are male-dominated. This comment not only dismisses the woman’s career aspirations but also underscores societal resistance to women entering non-traditional fields. Another user sarcastically suggested that there are no other fields for women except hairdressing, further reinforcing the notion that certain professions are gendered. These comments highlight the challenges women face when entering non-traditional professions and the societal resistance to accepting women in these roles. Similarly, Video 2 highlights double standards regarding morality and behavior, suggesting that women should conform to different standards than men, particularly in terms of sexuality and work. The woman in the video argued that while men can engage in multiple relationships without societal backlash, women are criticized for similar behavior. This double standard reflects the unequal application of moral norms based on gender. The user also questioned the desire for equal rights in fields like construction, implying that such roles are unsuitable for women. This comment suggests that equality is conditional and that women should not aspire to be in roles traditionally held by men. These perspectives underscore the societal expectation that women should adhere to traditional roles and not seek equality in fields perceived as male-dominated. The implication that seeking equal rights is “omitting morals” further entrenches the belief that women should conform to established gender norms.

Discourse analysis reveals the power dynamics inherent in the representation of gender roles in Kosovar media. Comments under Video 3 and Video 4 reflect societal attitudes that devalue women's contributions in various fields. The statement "Women are equal only when they get on the steel scaffolding" in Video 3 implies that equality is conditional upon women performing physically demanding jobs traditionally dominated by men. A comment under this video echoed sentiments against feminism, questioning women's ability to perform in traditionally male-dominated roles. This indicates a broader societal resistance to changing gender norms and a belief that women are inherently less capable in certain professions.

In a discussion about mixed-gender sports in Video 4, participants explored gendered perceptions of bravery and fear: The notion that bravery is a male trait and fear is a female trait was discussed, with participants acknowledging that women are often discouraged from breaking societal norms due to ingrained fears. Examples of successful female athletes like Majlinda Kelmendi and Donjeta Sadiku were cited to challenge these stereotypes.

Despite recognizing successful female athletes, the broader discussion implied that sports, like other fields, are still viewed through a gendered lens, with certain attributes valued differently based on gender. This emphasizes the belief that men and women should occupy different roles based on inherent traits. This discourse is a powerful example of how language is used to sustain harmful gender stereotypes and justify violence, aligning with Fairclough's (2015) emphasis on the ideological role of discourse in maintaining power structures.

Symbolic interactionism emphasizes how language and symbols shape social interactions and identities. Video 5, depicting a woman managing household chores while her husband eats, reflects traditional gender roles within domestic settings. Comments suggesting that the woman should work for a cleaning company or that the husband should participate in household chores illustrate the negotiation of gendered identities and expectations within families. This situation illustrates the symbolic interactionist framework, where media representations and public comments help construct and negotiate gender identities within the domestic sphere.

A post (Post 6) celebrating the appointment of women in leadership positions faced criticism from a former Member of Parliament who stated that women are unfit for such roles: This comment reflects a persistent belief in male superiority in leadership and governance, undermining the progress made towards gender equality in political representation. The criticism of women in leadership positions illustrates the ongoing struggle women face in gaining

acceptance and recognition in positions of power. It highlights the societal barriers that women encounter even when they achieve significant milestones. This reflects Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity, where societal beliefs and language continuously recreate and reinforce the idea that leadership is inherently masculine.

Sexist Comments on Police-Reported Cases

Comments on posts about police-reported cases of rape and abduction reveal deeply fixed victim-blaming attitudes: Users frequently attributed blame to the victims, criticizing their clothing or behavior. Comments such as "No one can force anyone into the car, but the prostitutes get into the car themselves" and "The provocative wardrobe of the woman and thus come the consequence" reflect a societal tendency to hold women responsible for the violence they experience. Other comments used derogatory language and animal comparisons to dehumanize victims, further justifying male aggression. These comments reveal a pervasive culture of misogyny and victim-blaming, where women are often held responsible for the violence they endure based on their appearance or behavior. These comments not only sustain harmful stereotypes but also contribute to a culture of silence around gender-based violence, aligning with Fairclough's (2015) emphasis on the ideological role of discourse in maintaining power structures. The language used in these comments underscores the deep-rooted gender biases that exist within Kosovar society, where women's actions and appearances are often scrutinized and blamed for triggering violence.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the language use and representation of gender roles in Kosovar social media, revealing deep rooted stereotypes and societal attitudes towards gender. Through the qualitative analysis of videos and comments from various social media platforms, several key findings emerged, providing answers to the research questions:

1. How are Gender Roles Linguistically Represented in Kosovar Media Across Different Platforms?

Gender roles in Kosovar media are predominantly represented through traditional and stereotypical language. Men are often depicted in dominant, authoritative roles, while women are portrayed in nurturing or sexualized roles. Comments and discussions frequently reinforce these stereotypes, highlighting societal resistance to women entering non-traditional fields. For instance, comments under videos showcasing women in male-dominated professions or discussing gender equality often include derogatory or dismissive language, emphasizing traditional gender expectations. This linguistic representation

perpetuates the notion that certain roles and behaviors are inherently suited to one gender over the other.

2. How do Prevailing Discursive Strategies and Stereotypes in Kosovar Media Influence Societal Attitudes and Perceptions Toward Gender Roles?

Prevailing discursive strategies in Kosovar media significantly influence societal attitudes and perceptions toward gender roles by reinforcing existing stereotypes and biases. The analysis revealed that language is used to justify traditional gender roles, often under the guise of morality or societal norms. Comments blaming victims of gender-based violence for their appearance or behavior illustrate how discourse carries out a culture of victim-blaming and misogyny. Furthermore, the portrayal of men as brave and women as fearful or dependent reinforces the belief that men and women have inherently different capabilities and roles. This discourse not only reflects but also shapes societal attitudes, making it challenging to achieve gender equality and altering individuals' perceptions of what is considered acceptable or normal behavior for different genders.

In conclusion, the study highlights the critical role of language in fostering traditional gender roles and stereotypes in Kosovar media. The findings underscore the need for conscious efforts to challenge and change these discursive practices to promote gender equality. By addressing the language used in media and encouraging more just representations of gender, there is potential to shift societal attitudes and foster inclusive and balanced views of gender roles in Kosovo.

Limitations

Despite the insightful findings, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged. One significant limitation is the small sample size, as the research analyzed a limited number of videos, posts, and comments. This constraint does not capture the palette of gender representation on Kosovar social media. Furthermore, the process of translating comments and videos from Albanian to English presents another limitation. This translation might have led to the loss of certain nuances or context-specific meanings that are unique to the original language, potentially affecting the accuracy and depth of data interpretation. These limitations suggest that while the study offers valuable insights, one should be cautious when generalizing its findings, and future research should aim to address these issues for a more thorough exploration of gender representation in Kosovar social media.

References

- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. University of California Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and power*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Language-and-Power/Fairclough/p/book/9781138790971>
- Farrugia, P., Petrisor, B. A., Farrokhyar, F., & Bhandari, M. (2010). Practical tips for surgical research: Research questions, hypotheses and objectives. *Canadian journal of surgery. Journal canadien de chirurgie*, 53(4), 278–281. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2912019/>
- Herring, S. C., & Johnson, D. (2015). Gender and language in social media. In D. Tannen & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* Wiley-Blackwell. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/The+Handbook+of+Discourse+Analysis%2C+2nd+Edition-p-9781118584194>
- Herring, S. C., & Stoerger, S. (2014). Gender and genre variation in weblogs. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 18(2), 232-259. <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/san/waysofbeing/data/communities-murphy-herring-2006.pdf>
- Matz, S. C., Kosinski, M., Nave, G., & Stillwell, D. J. (2017). Psychological targeting as an effective approach to digital mass persuasion. *Proceedings of the national academy of sciences*, 114(48), 12714-12719. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1710966114>
- Marwick, A., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114-133. http://educ333b.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/53249911/marwick_boyd_twitter_nms.pdf
- Nakamura, L. (2013). Queer female of color: The highest difficulty setting there is? Gaming rhetoric as gender capital. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, 2. <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/26290/ada01-queer-nak2012.pdf?sequence=1>
- Rollè, L., Santoniccolo, F., D'Amico, D., & Trombetta, T. (2020). News media representation of domestic violence victims and perpetrators: Focus on gender and sexual orientation in international literature. *Gendered domestic violence and abuse in popular culture*, 149-169. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/978-1-83867-781-720201008/full/html>
- Santoniccolo, F., Trombetta, T., Paradiso, M. N., & Rollè, L. (2023). Gender and media representations: A review of the literature on gender stereotypes, objectification, and sexualization. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(10), 5770. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20105770>
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. <https://mediarep.org/bitstreams/f1e818fd-8964-4082-8c65-109cac8f9528/download>
1. T7+. A girl from Ferizaj that works as a mechanic - Her biggest dream is to open her own shop [Facebook video]. <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/TM5gBcRT1pxKmw9t/?mibextid=WC7FNe>
 2. Korisnikaenjoythenow. Freedom is to be equal with men [TikTok video]. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7tZgrZtHMN/?igsh=MTB0cGtiMWhwNno2eg>
 3. T7. How is prom being celebrated in Kosovo [Instagram video]. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7bUWgANu3/?igsh=MXQybncwMXVrY3F4aQ>
 4. T7. Gender and Sport [YouTube video]. https://youtu.be/2qPILTYvuxQ?si=i_Qu3GTE4z22vwpu
 5. Elita Rudi. What you do not see on social media [TikTok video]. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMrjGUkq4/>
 6. Shqipe Metaj Isufi. Celebrating the appointment of a number of women in ministries and leadership positions in the Assembly [Facebook post]. <https://www.facebook.com/share/Y72zcWd3HipwiFEw/?mibextid=WC7FNe>
 7. Ekonomia Online. Comments about the case of the woman who was forced into the car <https://ekonomiaonline.com/komente-seksiste-per-dhunimin-e-11-vjecares-dhe-vajzes-qe-u-fut-me-force-ne-veture/>

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF POLITENESS USED BY PROFESSORS AND PUPILS IN KOSOVAR HIGH SCHOOLS

Menduresa KADRIU¹

INTRODUCTION

As kids, the first thing our parents try to teach us is to be polite toward others. The reason for this is that politeness can be used to build good relationships with other people. As the social beings that we are, we need to socialize and establish relationships. Hence, politeness plays a crucial role in everyday communication between people. However, in the Kosovar context, many people complain about youngsters being impolite nowadays, be it in everyday life and in school settings. The ones who have noticed this phenomenon the most are teachers and parents.

Many factors could affect the level of impoliteness shown by youngsters, starting from social media, parents, and teachers' inability to serve as examples of politeness. Yet, the main reason seems to be the exposure to social media. The impolite language that youngsters can be exposed to on social media platforms can easily be integrated into everyday communication and school environments. However, if more politeness were to be shown, it would enable the creation of good rapport between people, and it would increase pupils' academic achievement in school settings.

Seeing the impact of politeness in everyday life and academic settings, this research was conducted to give an insight into the politeness used in schools between professors and their pupils. The data from this research shows that pupils and professors use politeness to a certain degree when interacting. Pupils and professors had different preferences across genders when using politeness. However, both sides agreed that politeness has a positive impact on strengthening professor-pupil relations and increasing academic success.

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; menduresa_kadriu@hotmail.com

An Overview of the Problem

Observing the current phenomenon, most people complain that youngsters are nowadays less polite than they used to be. Parents and teachers are usually the ones who often point out the decreased level of children's/pupils' politeness shown in schools. To be blamed for this are usually social media platforms. Yet, sometimes teachers and parents also point fingers at one another. Politeness is a must when interacting and must be used in academic environments because not only does it help in saving someone's 'face', it can also be used effectively in classrooms for greater academic success. Hence, to answer these concerns, this research is being conducted to observe whether pupils and professors are showing politeness toward one another.

The Aim of the Study

The aim of conducting this sociolinguistic research is to give a qualitative insight into the level of politeness used between professors and pupils. Finding the most used expressions between the two pairs in the classroom setting and the differences in speech between female and male subjects are also focal points for this research. Moreover, the research aims to determine the reasons behind the level of politeness that both professors and pupils show towards one another, and whether politeness impacts the relations between professors and pupils.

Research Objectives

The objectives that this research seeks to provide insights on are listed below:

1. To determine whether pupils and professors in high schools are using polite expressions with one another.
2. To analyze the differences between male and female participants in this study.
3. To understand the reasons behind the level of politeness displayed between professors and pupils.
4. To verify whether politeness shown in the classroom setting improves the professor-pupil relationship.

Research Questions

To give answers to the research objectives and to gather the data for this research, there are four main research questions that will guide the direction of this research:

1. Are pupils and professors speaking politely with each other?

2. Which gender is more polite in their speech?
3. What are the reasons for speaking politely between the two sides?
4. What are the effects of politeness on professor-pupil relations?

Hypothesis

After reading on the topic and taking into consideration previous research conducted on this matter, it is expected that female participants of this research, be that female pupils or female professors, will be more polite in their speech than their male counterparts. The level of politeness between the two sides is expected to be moderate to some extent, and it is expected to positively impact the relations between professors and pupils.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Definition of Politeness

One of the greatest assets that human beings possess is language. They use it to express their thoughts, ideas, intentions, and feelings. Susanti et al (2020) state that when human beings speak, they perform different speech acts with an intention in mind. However, as Mahmud (2019) notes, when speaking, it is not only the intention and the content that are of importance. The way people deliver their thoughts and feelings is also crucial when interacting with others. Mahmud (2019) further adds that, despite transmitting the message, people should also create a comfortable interaction with one another to have better cooperation. One way to achieve this level of comfort between human beings is by using politeness.

The first linguists to explore politeness and its strategies were Brown and Levinson in 1987, where they developed the Politeness Theory. In the most basic explanation, politeness is considered to be the means of showing consideration towards others (Holmes in Encyclopedia of language & linguistics, 2005). When one speaks, one knows that his/her words will have a certain effect on the face of someone else (Syafrizal et al, 2020). As Brown (2015) states, politeness is the linguistic feature that most clearly presents the social nature of human beings in their speech. Brown (2015) further adds that politeness is located at the very center of human interactions, and it is probably a precondition that each human being should fulfill to be cooperative and included in society. Moreover, politeness is used to present self-image or 'face' (Brown, 2015). Hence, you appear more cooperative the more polite you are when speaking.

However, the only problem with the politeness theory is that it differs around the world. Shen et al (2023) discuss the limitations of politeness theory. According to them, politeness differs among countries since they have various

understandings of politeness and different cultures. Moreover, they also mention other factors that can limit politeness, such as educational background, gender, and age. People of younger generations use politeness differently from older ones, and for people of different cultural backgrounds, it can be challenging to understand the politeness of the other (Taguchi, 2017). Hence, Taguchi (2015) states that politeness is often limited to speakers of the same culture or speakers of comparable cultures.

Despite this, there has been a decline in linguistic politeness used by people, especially between child-parent interactions, teacher-pupil interactions, and between two people who do not know each other (Alief, 2022). The reasons for this are environmental factors and the media that people are now greatly exposed to (Zhu et al, 2018; Masjedi et al, 2018). On their study of the impact that technology has on pupils' politeness, Julia et al (2018) state that social media has a negative impact on relations between pupils and teachers. Moreover, pupils themselves agree that their level of politeness is decreased due to impolite language that they are exposed to on social media (Julia et al, 2018). Hence, resulting in an increasing level of impoliteness among youngsters.

Politeness Strategies

Based on the theory of politeness developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four politeness strategies that people use in their interactions. The strategies mentioned by them are bald-on-record politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald-off-record politeness. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, as cited in Sapitri et al, 2019), bald-on-record politeness is speaking directly and clearly without ambiguity. The most common expressions of this strategy are direct imperatives, which sometimes can be uttered with hedges to soften the utterance. The second strategy mentioned by Brown and Levinson (1987) is positive politeness, which is mainly used among family members, friends, and people you are familiar with. Such a strategy is used when a person wants to be accepted and liked by others. Ramadhani et al (2013) list the most common types of positive politeness, such as attending to the hearer's needs, seeking agreement, asserting common ground, joking, compliments, and others.

Positive and bald-on-record strategies are contrastive to the other two strategies, the negative and bald-off-record strategy. Negative politeness is the strategy used in more formal situations and with people you are not familiar with (Brown & Levinson, 1987). As Sapitri et al (2019) put it, negative politeness is used for social distancing and wanting to be free of any impositions. The most common types of negative politeness are being indirect, giving deference, apologizing, and using hedges (Ramadhani et al, 2013). Whereas the bald-off-

record strategy is the opposite of the bald-on-record. With the bald-off-record strategy, the speaker appears ambiguous and leaves it to the hearer to interpret his utterance (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This strategy is expressed more through giving hints, clues, supposing, using irony and metaphors, etc.

Differences in Politeness Between Females and Males

For decades, linguists have tried to determine which gender is more polite when speaking. The first linguist who was interested in this issue was Lackoff (1973). Lackoff (1973) brought to attention that there were differences in the way females and males spoke. As cited in Ali (2024), Lackoff (1973) notes that females are more polite in speech than males. Whereas males usually appear less polite in their speech. Lackoff (1973) states that the reason why females appear more polite than males is due to using hedges, tag questions, and empty adjectives more often in their speech. Moreover, Lackoff (1973, as cited in Plouzenec, 2022) mentions another controversial reason. In Lackoff's observation, females were taught from an early age that they were inferior to males, and as such, females should speak politely to avoid confrontation from the 'superior' gender. Consequently, the reason why females are more polite is predetermined from early childhood and the social community they live in.

These ideas were highly criticized by other researchers; however, they served as the basis for future research in gender and language (Plouzenec, 2022). In support of Lackoff's idea that females are more polite than males, several findings from previous research in other countries have also suggested that females usually have a higher tendency to show politeness when speaking. Wahyuningsih (2018) observed that females try to achieve compromise and avoid any interaction that may lead to confrontations. Moreover, they also tend to use more positive politeness strategies (Ramadhani, 2013). Schumann et al (2010) conducted research on apologies between females and males. In their findings, females were more frequent in apologizing than males. Holmes (1988) also noted in his study of compliments that females are more prone to giving and receiving compliments, features that are common to politeness.

The Importance of Politeness in Professor-Pupil Interactions

Daulay et al (2022) claim that politeness is needed in every aspect of life because it will help in keeping good relations between the listener and the speaker. In addition, they (2022) state that politeness is especially necessary in academic settings because it improves the learning process. Moreover, Alief (2022) notes that using polite language in the classroom will positively influence pupils' views of teachers, teachers' views of pupils, and pupils' views of each

other. Adding to this, Davis et al (2021) agree that using polite language in the classroom can help and can motivate pupils to achieve learning objectives.

Teachers play a crucial role in the politeness used between them and their pupils since they are the facilitators of the learning process. They can serve as a model that pupils can follow. Therefore, teachers should be able to provide examples of politeness in the classroom for pupils to observe and imitate that linguistic politeness (Al-Obaydi et al, 2021). The language that teachers use with their pupils will trigger similar responses from pupils. Hence, the more polite teachers are in their speaking, the more pupils will be encouraged to respond politely and good communication will be achieved (Fegher et al, 2020; Zheng et al, 2020). However, Alief (2022) mentions that lately there have been plenty of occurrences where teachers deviate in their interactions with pupils. Teachers sometimes tend to be straightforward and impolite towards their pupils, and as a consequence, cooperation fails (Alief, 2022).

Teachers also have differences in the way they express their politeness. Monsefi et al (2015) observed that female professors are more polite since they use more politeness strategies. Whereas male professors are more direct in their speech. When asking students about their preferences for female or male professors, Arif et al (2018) noticed that students believe female professors are more polite because they are more humorous, aim to establish rapport, and students feel more motivated to learn in classes with female professors. Male professors, on the other hand, were seen as more formal in their speeches and focused more on delivering information rather than establishing a good rapport with students (Arif et al, 2018). This is similar to the findings of Keikhaie et al (2013), where both groups of pupils' genders were more polite toward female professors since they were also more polite towards their pupils. All in all, it goes without a doubt that teachers should serve as role models for politeness in order for pupils to follow and express politeness.

METHODOLOGY

Methods and Instrument

For the theoretical framework, previous research and findings on this topic will be consulted and used as the basis for this research. The most prominent findings of earlier studies will be selected to make a comparison with the findings of this research. This research will be conducted through a qualitative approach. Busetto et al (2020) note that a qualitative method is best used when a researcher wants to analyze why a certain phenomenon is happening. Hence, this research will have a qualitative approach to the issue in order to better understand the topic.

To gather the data and answer the research questions, observations will be made, a questionnaire will be shared with pupils, and interviews will be conducted with professors. The observations will be done in order to gather information on the polite expressions that are used between professors and pupils. The groups will be observed in a combination of different genders. Two observations will be made with female pupils, and two with male pupils. One observation will be done when both groups have classes with a female professor and another when they have classes with a male professor. In total, there will be four observations made. The questionnaire will be distributed only to pupils. The questionnaire contains 12 questions and is a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. On the other hand, interviews will be conducted with professors of both genders to understand the reasons and preferences behind the politeness that professors and pupils show towards one another.

Population and Sample

The subjects of this study are professors and pupils of a Kosovar vocational high school. The aim was to find classes containing pupils of the same gender, a class containing only female pupils, and another containing only male pupils. Being favored by luck, there were such classes found in a vocational high school; hence, one class of each gender was selected for the observations. There were 14 female pupils in the first classroom and 12 male pupils in the second classroom. These two classes were observed once when having classes with a female professor, and once with a male professor. This was done to gather data on the differences that genders might have in their interactions.

RESULTS

Results From Pupils' Utterances

This section includes notes taken on pupils' utterances in the classroom. The tables include the politeness features that were taken note of, and the exact expressions that were used by pupils, together with the number of occurrences.

Table 1. *Female Pupils' Interactions with a Female Professor*

Types	Occurrences	Words/Phrases
Greetings	13 out of 14	(7) Good morning (6) Hello professor (1) x
Addressing terms	None	Professor You
Questions	6	(5) Professor, may I? (1) Professor, do you mind...?
Thanking	5 out of 6	(3) Thank you, professor (2) Thanks a lot (1) x
Compliments	5	(3) You look nice today (2) This dress suits you
Responding	7	(3) I can answer it. (2) Yes. (2) No
Apologizing	4 out of 5	(3) I am sorry, professor (1) Sorry, it won't happen again (1) x
Saying goodbye	12 out of 14	(5) Goodbye, professor (7) See you, professor (2) x

Table 2. *Female Pupils' Interactions with a Male Professor*

Types	Occurrences	Words/Phrases
Greetings	11 out of 14	(11) Good morning, professor (3) x
Addressing terms	None	Professor You
Questions	3	(3) Professor, may I ...?
Thanking	3 out of 3	(2) Thanks professor (1) Okay, thank you
Compliments	None	-
Responding	3	(2) I do (1) No
Apologizing	3 out of 4	(2) I am sorry professor (1) Sorry (1) x
Saying goodbye	10 out of 14	(10) Goodbye, professor (4) x

Table 3. *Male Pupils' Interactions with a Female Professor*

Types	Occurrences	Words/Phrases
Greetings	10 out of 12	(7) Good morning (3) Hi/Hello (2) x
Addressing terms	None	Professor You
Questions	4	(2) Can I leave? (2) May I go to the bathroom quickly?
Thanking	3 out of 4	(2) Thanks a lot (1) Thank you, professor (1) x
Compliments	3	(2) You seem happy today (1) You are dressed nicely today
Responding	5	(2) I can (3) Yes
Apologizing	6 out of 8	(4) Sorry, professor (2) I won't do it again (2) x
Saying goodbye	10 out of 12	(6) Goodbye, professor (4) See you next class, professor (2) x

Table 4. *Male Pupils' Interactions with a Male Professor*

Types	Occurrences	Words/Phrases
Greetings	5 out of 12	(5) Good morning, professor (7) x
Addressing terms	None	Professor You
Questions	2	(1) Professor, may I? (1) Can I go?
Thanking	1 out of 2	(1) Thanks, professor (1) x
Compliments	None	-
Responding	2 out of 3	(2) No (1) x
Apologizing	2 out of 7	(2) Sorry, professor (5) x
Saying goodbye	7 out of 12	(7) Goodbye, professor (5) x

Results from Professors' Utterances in the Classroom

This section includes notes taken on professors' utterances in the classroom. The tables include the politeness features that were taken note of, and the exact expressions that were used by the professors, together with the number of occurrences.

Table 5. *Observations in the Female Pupils' Classroom*

Types	Female professor 1	Male professor 1
Greeting	Good morning	Good morning
Addressing (informally)	(3) Girls (2) Yes, you	(4) Girls (2) you
Asking questions	(2) Do you know the answer? (3) Can you answer that? (2) Do you have any questions so far?	(2) How many know the answer? (1) Do you know the answer?
Responding to requests	(5) Yes, you can (1) No, you can't	(1) Yes, you may (2) No
Thanking	(3) Thank you very much (2) That's very kind of you	None
Praising	(3) Good job (2) Nicely done	(2) Excellent
Requesting silence	(3) Girls, please be quiet. (2) Girls, don't make noise.	(2) Please, no noises. (2) Be quiet
Saying goodbye	Bye, girls!	(nods)

Table 6. *Observations in the Male Pupils' Classroom*

Types	Female professor 2	Male professor 2
Greeting	Hello	(nods)
Addressing (informally)	(3) you (5) Boys	(4) Boys (2) Pupils
Asking questions	(2) Who would like to answer that? (3) Is everything clear so far?	(2) Do you know the answer? (1) Do you have any questions?
Responding to requests	(1) I am sorry, but no. (3) Yes, you can	(1) Yes (1) No
Thanking	(2) Thanks a lot (1) Aw, thank you	None
Praising	(4) Good. (2) Excellent	(2) Very good.
Requesting silence	(5) Please, guys. You are interrupting the rest. (3) I hear someone making noise.	(5) Silence. (2) Quit it.
Saying goodbye	Goodbye!	See you!

Results From the Questionnaire Shared with Pupils

In the section below are the charts of the main questions that were part of the questionnaire distributed to 26 pupils, 14 females and 12 males. Only charts from questions 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 will be included below since they are the main questions that answer the research objectives.

Chart 1. Do you think professors speak politely to you?



Chart 7. Are male or female professors more polite?

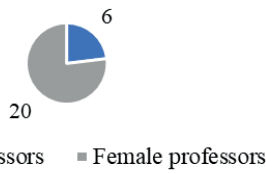


Chart 8. Reasons for choosing female professors

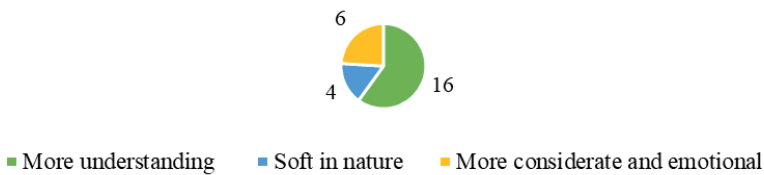


Chart 9. Are female or male pupils more polite?

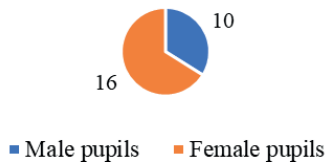


Chart 10. Do you think social media is the reason for youngsters being less polite nowadays?

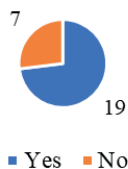
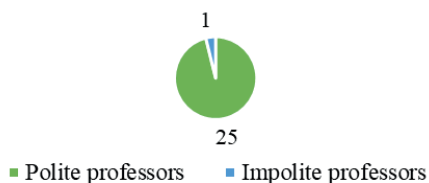


Chart 11. Do you think politeness between pupils and professors can increase academic achievement?



Chart 12. With which professors do you feel more motivated to learn?



Results from Interviews with the Professors

This section includes the main questions and answers of female and male professors from the conducted interviews. The professors who were interviewed were the ones who were observed in both classrooms.

Question 1: Are today's pupils more polite than before? Why? Who is to blame?

Female professor 1: They are less polite today. I think they are influenced a lot by social media and don't really follow the traditional way of speaking to professors, such as greeting, asking politely, thanking, etc. But I think the ones responsible for this are also elementary school teachers and parents. They are not teaching pupils how to speak politely at an earlier age, and then it is harder for us to shape them in their teenage years.

Female professor 2: They are less polite. The way pupils understand politeness nowadays is way different than what I was taught. Today, they think

being funny means being polite. They have started to use informal language when speaking to professors. I think the problem here is the Internet, since they are exposed to everything on there, and of course, they think it is interesting to do and say whatever they have seen on the Internet.

Male professor 1: Unfortunately, they are less polite. And it is mainly due to social media and all the impolite language that they get to hear. They are slowly forgetting how to speak politely to other people.

Male professor 2: They are less. Previous generations would never speak back to their professors. Today, they have no problem with that. They leave classes without permission, they arrive late for classes and don't even apologize, and they see you in the hall and don't greet you. And all of this is because of elementary school teachers and the parents. They are not doing enough to raise these kids properly. And then they blame us for pupils' impoliteness when it might be too late for us high school teachers to do anything.

Question 2: In your opinion, are female or male pupils more polite in the classroom? Why?

Female professor 1: I think females are more polite due to their calmer nature. And they also like to give compliments a lot and apologize whenever they make a mistake. Males not so much.

Female professor 2: Definitely females. They are more likely to greet and give compliments.

Male professor 1: Females are more polite since they usually ask for permission before doing something. And they know how to apologize.

Male professor 2: Females have more consideration towards professors, and you can easily cooperate with them. Males can sometimes be harsh and refuse to cooperate.

Question 3: Are there differences in the way you show politeness towards female and male pupils? Why?

Female professor 1: I think I speak similarly to both genders. Maybe I am a bit more polite with females since being a female myself, I understand them better. But I am polite to males as well.

Female professor 2: I don't make any differences when it comes to that. I behave politely with both groups.

Male professor 1: I think with females, since they are also more polite towards me. With males, I have to be stricter because they know how to get on your nerves.

Male professor 2: I am more polite with females since they are more soft-spoken and more cooperative.

Question 4: Do you think reciprocal politeness between professors and pupils would help in increasing academic achievement? How?

Female professor 1: Yes. It would help in increasing pupils' interest and motivation to participate in discussions or activities. Plus, there would be a healthier relationship between the professor and the pupils.

Female professor 2: Yes, it would motivate pupils for future learning, knowing that they have a mutual understanding with their professors and they show consideration towards one another.

Male professor 1: Yes. It shows pupils that when they are polite, they can work better together, they can achieve more, connect more with the professors, and enjoy classes more.

Male professor 2: Yes, it would instill respect for the professors, and it would help us to further work on their academic achievement.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Pupils' Politeness Features based on Observations

Observations were done in both classrooms with different professors in order to take note of the polite features that pupils and professors used. The focus of the observations was to record the occurrences in which pupils and professors greeted each other, thanked one another, gave compliments, asked questions, apologized, praised, or requested silence. Moreover, from these observations, it was possible to notice pupils' and professors' preferences in using politeness strategies. The data from the observations suggest that there are differences in the way pupils and professors interact with members of the same and the opposite gender.

Generally speaking, female pupils spoke more politely to their professors than male pupils did. Female pupils were polite with both female and male professors; however, they were slightly more polite towards their female professor. Female pupils believe the reason for this is that female professors are usually more understanding and permit them to leave the class when needed. Because of this connection that female pupils have with their female professors, they are inclined to show more politeness. As can be seen from the tables above, the majority of females greeted their female professor, gave compliments more, apologized more when the female professor called for attention, and said their goodbyes. When interacting with male professors, their interactions were fewer, yet their utterances towards the male professor were still polite.

On the other hand, male pupils do not use their politeness similarly with female and male professors. The data suggest that males are more polite toward female professors and less toward their male professors. Male pupils greet the female professor more, apologize more, and also give more compliments. They also agree that female professors are more polite with them, hence, they like to return the favor. Moreover, in instances of asking questions and thanking, male pupils spoke politely to the female professor. This is not the case when interacting with the male professor. From the table above, it can be seen that only half of the male pupils greeted the male professor, and only a few of them apologized when the male professor required them to be quiet. Regarding their rapport with male professors, male pupils agree that male professors are usually stricter when speaking. Due to this, they do not feel encouraged to show more politeness towards their male professors.

Professors' Politeness Features based on Observations

The professors' politeness towards their pupils also differed. The data from the observation suggests that female professors were more polite than male professors. Both female professors who were observed showed politeness towards female and male pupils. They greeted their female and male pupils, praised them more, addressed their pupils with the informal 'you' and 'Boys/Girls', accepted or refused requests politely, and called for attention less, yet more politely. In the interviews that were conducted, female professors believe the reason why they speak slightly more politely to female pupils is due to the fact that they belong to the same gender and, as such, they better understand each other's needs.

However, male professors do not speak similarly to female and male pupils. The findings suggest that they are more polite towards their female pupils and less towards their male pupils. Male professors admit that they speak more politely towards females since they are more soft-spoken and usually try to avoid any possible confrontation. With male pupils, however, their level of politeness changes since for them, male pupils appear as more problematic and often refuse to cooperate and apologize. It is due to this that male professors' language is more straightforward with their male pupils.

Politeness Strategies used by Pupils and Professors

Out of the four politeness strategies mentioned above, positive politeness and bald-on-record politeness are used by pupils and professors the most. These strategies are mostly used since pupils and professors want to achieve familiarity with one another. Negative politeness and bald-off-record were not much present, since there was only one instance of each strategy uttered by the

same female professor. Both pupils and professors often address each other with the informal 'you', which can be interpreted as having achieved a level of comfort and familiarity between them. Hence, being formal in their interactions was not something any of the sides was aiming for. When requesting silence, female professors appear more polite since they show consideration towards pupils' faces, whereas male professors use more straightforward directives to get pupils' attention. Overall, pupils and professors of this high school preferred the positive politeness and the bald-on-record strategy more to interact with one another.

Pupils' Perception of Professors' Politeness

Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire, the majority of pupils agree that professors usually speak politely to them. However, they make a distinction between male and female professors. According to pupils' responses, female professors are more polite than male professors since they are more open to communication and understand pupils' needs better than male professors. Female professors are also more considerate and often permit pupils to leave classes when needed. In contrast to this, the majority of pupils did not describe male professors as being polite since they usually appear as more authoritative and speak more strictly.

As for the impact that politeness can have on their academic achievement, pupils believe that more polite interactions with their professors would positively affect their success. Moreover, politeness between the two sides would motivate them to participate more during lessons. Pupils' answers suggest that they are more motivated to learn in classes with a polite professor, and they are also more likely to behave politely toward that professor. When pupils notice that a professor appreciates their politeness, they become encouraged to continue speaking politely. Hence, they would prefer a polite professor over a neutral or impolite one.

Professors' Perception of Pupils' Politeness

In the four interviews conducted with professors, all of them agreed that pupils are less polite nowadays than they used to be. According to them, the way pupils speak nowadays is greatly influenced by social media. They believe the reason for this is the major exposure to impoliteness and rudeness displayed on the Internet. Being exposed to those, pupils easily pick up on impolite language and use it toward other people, thinking that it is a trend that must be followed. Moreover, two of the four professors interviewed believe that the lack of politeness pupils show is rooted back in their childhood years. They believe that elementary school teachers and parents fail to be a good politeness

model. Consequently, they often do not teach pupils and their children polite language and how to be considerate towards others at an earlier age. This then leads to impolite language and rudeness later in the teenage years.

However, professors were able to make a distinction between female and male pupils and their politeness. All professors agreed that female pupils are usually more polite than males since they have the tendency to show more consideration towards professors and avoid confrontation. In contrast to this, professors note that male pupils are less polite since they often fail to be considerate towards others, and in cases of confrontation, male pupils do not hesitate to use offensive words. Due to this reason, professors are slightly more polite towards female pupils, considering that they interact more politely than males.

Regarding the impact of politeness on academic achievement, professors were aware of the impact that politeness can have. Moreover, they agree that improvement and an increased level of politeness from their pupils are needed. According to them, more polite interactions between the two sides would motivate pupils to learn and communicate with the professors, and would instill a love for further learning. Since the professors admit that they serve as role models for their pupils, despite elementary school teachers and parents, it is their duty as well to motivate pupils to use a more polite language.

CONCLUSION

Politeness is one of the greatest linguistic assets that human beings possess since it can be used to create good relations with other people. Human beings are taught to be polite towards others from early childhood. However, growing up under the influence of the Internet, today's youngsters are less polite than previous generations. That there is a decrease in youngsters' politeness, teachers and parents have been the first ones to voice the issue. In the Kosovar context as well, teachers and parents are often concerned with the decreased level of politeness shown by children/pupils. Due to this concern, this research was conducted in hopes of finding out whether pupils are polite with their professors and vice versa in school settings. The subjects of this study were pupils and professors from a Kosovar vocational high school. Observations were done during classes, interviews were conducted with professors, and a questionnaire was used to gather insights on the issue. This research has a qualitative approach towards politeness used between pupils and professors.

The findings from this research suggest that there is a polite interaction between pupils and professors to a certain degree. The majority of interactions were moderately polite, with the exception of a few instances where politeness was absent. The data suggests that female pupils and professors are generally

more polite than males and that they show politeness towards the members of their gender group and males similarly. Male pupils and professors, on the other hand, appear more polite towards females and less towards their gender. The most used strategies by pupils and professors are the bald-on-record and positive politeness. These strategies are used to achieve comfort between the two sides. Adding to this, the findings suggest that politeness can have a positive impact on pupils' academic success; hence, both professors and pupils should aim for more polite interactions with one another.

Limitations of the Study

This research was conducted on a small scale, with a narrow range of participants. As such, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the entire Kosovar context. Observations were conducted only in two classrooms with four professors of the same school. To further understand the implications of politeness and how it might affect the relations between professors and pupils, a large-scale study is needed with a wider range of subjects. Moreover, other factors influencing youngsters' politeness should be analyzed and observed to fully understand the psychology behind politeness.

References

- Ali, H. V. (2024). The politeness strategies: Male and female politeness strategies in a group discussion. *English Community Journal*, 7(2), 83-92.
- Alief, K., & Nashruddin, N. (2022). Application of language politeness in learning activities at school. *JELITA*, 3(1), 1-11.
- Al-Obaydi, L. H., Doncheva, J., & Nashruddin, N. (2021). EFL college students' self-esteem and its correlation to their attitudes towards inclusive education. *Воспитание/Vospitanie-Journal of Educational Sciences, Theory and Practice*, 16(1), 27-34.
- Arif, N., Muliati, A., & Patak, A. A. (2018). Male and female lecturers' politeness strategies in EFL classroom. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI)*, 1(2), 88-98.
- Ayesha. (2022). Gender based politeness strategies: A case study of department of English University of Gujrat. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 8(1),85–105.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, K. (2005). *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics (Vol. 1)*. Elsevier.
- Brown, P. (2015). Politeness and language. *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences (IESBS)*, (2nd ed.) (pp. 326-330). Elsevier.
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2(1), 14.
- Daulay, S. H., Azmi, N., & Pratiwi, T. (2022). The importance of expressing politeness: English education student's perspectives. *Tarling: Journal of Language Education*, 6(1), 49-68.
- Davis, A. E., Barrueco, S., & Perry, D. F. (2021). The role of consultative alliance in infant and early childhood mental health consultation: Child, teacher, and classroom outcomes. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 42(2), 246-262.
- Fegher, M., Kimathi, C. K., & Olouch-Suleh, E. (2020). Influence of politeness maxims during conflict resolution in faith-based institutions of higher learning in Karen Nairobi, Kenya. *Journal of Marketing and Communication*, 3(2), 1–18.
- Holmes, J. (1988). Paying compliments: A sex-preferential positive politeness strategy. *Journal of Pragmatics*. No.12. pp 445-465.
- Julia, J., Kurnia, D., & Sudin, A. (2018). The impact of social media on communication politeness: A survey of prospective primary school teacher students. *Mimbar Sekolah Dasar*, 5(3), 125-130.
- Keikhaie, Y., & Mozaffari, Z. (2013). *A Socio-linguistic survey on females' politeness strategies in the same gender and in the cross-gender relationship*.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and woman's place. *Language in society*, 2(1), 45-79.
- Mahmud, M. (2019). The use of politeness strategies in the classroom context by English university students. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(3), 597-606.
- Masjedi, N., & Paramasivam, S. (2018). Complaint and politeness strategies used by Iranian speakers of English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 7(4), 38-49.
- Maulana, S. S. (2019). *Politeness and impoliteness expressions of students and teachers in English classroom interaction at PPs UNM*. (Doctoral dissertation, UNIVERSITAS NEGERI MAKASSAR).
- Monsefi, M., & Hadidi, Y. (2015). Male and female EFL teachers' politeness strategies in oral discourse and their effects on the learning process and teacher-student interaction. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 3(2), 1-13.
- Plouzennec, M. A. (2022). *Are women really more polite than men? An overview of existing literature*.
- Ramadhani, P. (2013). *Politeness strategies and gender differences in Javanese indirect speech acts*. (Doctoral dissertation, UNIMED).

- Sapitri, P. A., Chasanah, A., Putri, A. A., & Paulima, J. (2019). Exploring Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies: An explanation on the nature of the politeness phenomenon. *REiLA: Journal of Research and Innovation in Language*, 1(3), 111-117.
- Schumann, K., & Ross, M. (2010). Why women apologize more than men: Gender differences in thresholds for perceiving offensive behavior. *Psychological Science*, 21(11), 1649-1655.
- Shen, Z., Zhao, M., & Lai, M. (2023). Analysis of politeness based on naturally occurring and authentic conversations. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 19(3).
- Susanti, R., Sumarlam, S., Djatmika, D., & Rohmadi, M. (2020). Study of politeness strategy of speech act caring utterances: Discourse Completion Test (DCT) approach. *Utopia y praxis latinoamericana: revista internacional de filosofía iberoamericana y teoría social*, 1, 282-290.
- Syafrizal, S., & Putri, F. S. B. (2020). A linguistic politeness: an analysis of gender differences in speaking classroom. *English Education: Journal of English Teaching and Research*, 5(2), 169-178.
- Taguchi, N. (2015). Instructed pragmatics at a glance: Where instructional studies were, are, and should be going. *Language Teaching*, 48(1), 1-50.
- Taguchi, N., & Roever, C. (2017). *Second language pragmatics*. Oxford/New York: Oxford.
- Wahyuningsih, S. (2018). Men and women differences in using language: A case study of students at STAIN Kudus. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture*, 3(1), 79-90.
- Zheng, L., Bhagat, K. K., Zhen, Y., & Zhang, X. (2020). The effectiveness of the flipped classroom on students' learning achievement and learning motivation. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 23(1), 1-15.
- Zhu, Y., & Bresnahan, M. J. (2018). Collective face, politeness strategies, and discomfort: Communication of American domestic students and Chinese international students. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 47(2), 141-159.

THE INFLUENCE OF KOSOVO-ALBANIAN DIALECTS ON SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS, EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND INCLUSIVITY

Shukrie SADIKU HADRI¹

INTRODUCTION

Feeling the need to connect socially with others is a basic part of human life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, as cited in Jury et al., 2019). To connect socially with others, humans use different forms of communication, one of them language. Language is a tool for sharing opinions, views and thinking (Chen et al., 2014). Additionally, language is also used to share needs and requests with each other, as well as achieve goals. With the development of society, language has also undergone development and changes. A dialect is a “distinct manner of speech that differs in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar from other regional dialects nearby (Wolfram et al., 1999, as cited in Sandel, 2015). A dialect differs from an accent, which is the pronunciation distinction and is part of a dialect (Sandel, 2015). The Albanian language has also its dialects and accents which vary from region to region. There are two dialects of Albanian, Tosk and Gheg, the latter is spoken in many regions, including the regions of Shkodra, North Macedonia, Kosova, Montenegro, Serbia and the isolated village of Arbanasi in Croatia. Even within Kosova, there are differences in dialects between regions, some of them being: the dialects of Regions of Dukagjin, Drenica, Kosovo, Karadaku, Llapi, and Gollaku (Gjinari & Shkurtaj, 2003, as cited in Ademi, 2017). According to Campbell-Kibler (2008), people using linguistic variation to shape their identities and social faces has become an important theme in sociolinguistic studies (Campbell-Kibler, 2008). This research paper will explore the influence of Kosovo-Albanian dialects and accents on social, educational and inclusivity perceptions.

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; shukrie.sadiku@gmail.com

An Overview of the Problem

Language is a skill that can be developed by many factors. On one hand, it is an important factor in social perception, but on the other hand, language does not always necessarily determine the social or educational level of a person. Although a small state by size, Kosova has regions which have their own language characteristics and features that might influence social perception. Within Kosova, there are distinctions between dialects, including the dialects of the regions of Dukagjin, Drenica, Kosovo, Karadaku, Llapi, and Gollaku (Gjinari & Shkurtaj, 2003, as cited in Ademi, 2017). Considering these different dialects, it is necessary to research how Kosovo's residents perceive the different dialects and accents of Kosovo and whether they perceive their social class or status, educational level and inclusivity based on their dialects and accents.

The Aim of the Study

This study aims to conduct a thorough analysis of the social perceptions of different Kosovo-Albanian dialects. It aims to research whether and how people perceive speakers' dialects and accents. Additionally, it aims to explore how people perceive and judge social status and class, educational level and inclusivity based on speakers' dialects and accents. Lastly, this study aims to research how people perceive two Kosovo-Albanian sub-dialects, Gjakova and Anamorava, and identify how they differentiate these dialects.

Research Objectives

This research paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To research how Kosovo residents perceive speakers based on their accents or dialects.
2. To explore the way Kosovo residents associate dialects with educational level and social inclusivity.
3. To explore the way Kosovo residents perceive the two different dialects displayed in the audio, respectively Dukagjin and Anamorava.

Research Questions

This research paper seeks to answer the research questions below, which will serve as a guide to conducting this research:

1. How do Kosovo residents judge speakers' social status and class based on their accents?
2. Do Kosovo residents associate dialects with educational level and social inclusivity?

3. How do Kosovo residents perceive the Dukagjini and Anamorava dialects?

Hypothesis

This research study aims to prove the following hypotheses:

1. People associate high social status and class based on speakers' accents or dialects.
2. People associate the standard Albanian language with a higher educational level and being more competent.
3. There is no difference between the two dialects, Gjakova and Vitia, in social perceptions and educational level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the accent prestige theory, people judge speakers' characteristics based on their accents (Fuertes et al., 2002, as cited in Anderson et al., 2007). They further argue that this theory suggests that people judge other people on their social class, education, success, intelligence, loyalty, friendliness and kindness (Anderson et al., 2007).

Language and Social Perceptions

“Language is one of the traditionally important social markers” (Edwards, 1999, p. 101-102). Although they may or not notice, everyone speaks with an accent (Lippi-Green, 1997; Matsuda, 1991, as cited in Gluszek and Dovidio, 2010). The way people speak, and their accents have an important role in creating and maintaining their social face when communicating with other people (Neuliep and Speten-Hansen, 2013). Similarly, Dixon, Mahoney and Cocks (2002) write that speakers' accents can influence the way people see them. Moreover, people's perception of speakers is influenced by the way speakers choose and use language (Deli, 1975; Eisenstein, 1983; Giles & Johnson, 1981; Granger, Mathews, Quay & Verner, 1977; Lambert, 1967; Lee, 1971; McKirnan & Hamayan, 1984; Mulac, 1976; Schenck-Hamlin, 1978, as cited in Gill, 1991). Thus, the way something is said can have a bigger impact on people's formation of impressions rather than what is said (Giles, Wilson & Conway, 1981, as cited in Eisenchlas and Tsurutani, 2011).

Accents are aspects through which people can identify speakers' nationality, ethnicity or socioeconomic status (Eisenchlas and Tsurutani, 2011). Anderson et al. (2007) argue that accents are a factor that pushes to form judgments about ethnicity and socioeconomic status. (Bayard, Gallois, Pittam, & Weatherall, 2001, as cited in Anderson et al., 2007) further elaborate that these judgements

can be negative or positive, where strong political and historical nations and dominant accents will be perceived higher than other accents. Similarly, Lambert et al. (1960, as cited in Eisenchlas and Tsurutani, 2011) found that non-standard-accented speakers are more likely to be evaluated negatively which influences the way they are treated and they are expected to have lower potential performance (Riches & Foddy, 1989, as cited in Eisenchlas and Tsurutani, 2011).

Moreover, people speaking in standard accents are perceived to be higher in solidarity and status than those speaking in non-standard accents (Anderson et al., 2007). Similarly, in a study conducted by Bochner & Bochner (1973, as cited in Gill, 1991), people saw non-standard-accented speakers of low social status and standard-accented speakers of high social status. In addition, people time after time see accents as a way to infer speakers' intelligence, friendliness and height (Kinzler et al., 2009, as cited in Neuliep & Speten-Hansen, 2013). Likewise, accents spoken in higher social classes or local regions are seen more positively rather than those in lower social classes or foreign regions (Giles, 1970; Giles et al., 1995; Lambert et al., 1960, as cited in Sumantry & Choma, 2021).

Furthermore, prejudices and stereotypes also happened with non-native speakers, who are seen as less clever, less loyal, less qualified and of lower status (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010, as cited in Neuliep & Speten-Hansen, 2013). A possible explanation as to why speakers are prejudiced is that speakers of a certain language think that their language, accent or dialect is higher ranking than another (Edwards, 1999). Additionally, perceptions of a particular language or accent are influenced by the social observations of those language/accented speakers (Giles & Billings, 2004; Giles et al., 1974; Giles & Ryan, 1982, as cited in Neuliep & Speten-Hansen, 2013).

Language and Education

Speakers speaking in standard pronunciation are seen as more competent than those speaking in accent pronunciation (Trudgill, 1975, as cited in Erofeeva et al., 2021). Additionally, non-native-accented speakers tend to be seen as lazy, incompetent, and uneducated (Dixon, Mahoney, & Cocks, 2002; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Munro, 2003, as cited in Kozlowski, 2015). Kozlowski (2015) further argues that the standard native-accented speakers are held as more desirable, familiar, part of a group, and it is spoken by educated speakers of the upper class.

Moreover, Erofeeva et al., 2021 (2021) write that the stronger the accent is, the lower the educational level is assumed for those accented speakers. Similarly, Krause and Podrushnyak (2010, as cited in Erofeeva et al.) write that

speakers who speak in dialects are perceived to have lower education levels. Furthermore, a study conducted by Ball (1983, as cited in Erofeeva et al.) found that Australian regional dialects are perceived as unqualified and immigrants from Italy are seen as unconfident and unqualified. It is important to emphasize that these prejudices can influence people's lives negatively by making them feel undervalued and negatively affecting many aspects of their lives, including their chances of getting employed (Kozlowski, 2015).

Language and Inclusivity

Accent is an important part of people's social identity and through it, important social information is communicated (Edwards, 1999; Giles & Johnson, 1987, as cited in Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Additionally, a study conducted by Derwing (2003, as cited in Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010) found that in Canada, English speakers said to experience discrimination due to their accent. Moreover, accented speakers might feel whether they belong and are accepted in a community (Moyer, 2004; Skachkova, 2007, as cited in Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010), where non-native-accented speakers faced communication challenges, thus they tended to question their belonging in the community (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

Furthermore, with the rejection of an accent, the identity (race, ethnicity, social class) of people speaking with that accent is rejected as well (Lippi-Green, 1994, as cited in Neuliep & Speten-Hansen, 2013). Moreover, in many countries, for example, the United States, there is an "accent hierarchy" where some accents are stereotyped and some others are more favored, such as standard American and Western European accents are seen as high-ranking while Asian and Hispanic accents as lower-ranking (Lippi-Green, 1994; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010, as cited in Kozlowski, 2015). Additionally, people see accents that are almost alike to their own as socially attractive and competent and favor them more (Kozlowski, 2015).

Positive Attitude Towards Accents

In contrast to what was discussed so far, there are instances where the accent is perceived as positive, such as Western European accents being held as positive when compared to Asian or Hispanic accents (Lippi-Green, 1994, as cited in Neuliep and Speten-Hansen, 2013). In addition, a study conducted by Eisenclas and Tsurutani (2011) found that students studying foreign languages displayed favor for unseen speakers with non-standard accents.

Another study done by Kozlowski (2015) showed that the participants of the study formed positive opinions when they imitated accents and saw them as more socially attractive. Similarly, Adank et al. (2013) found that after the

participants imitated the Glaswegian English accent of speakers, they formed positive attitudes towards this accent as well as saw them more socially attractive.

METHODOLOGY

Methods and Instruments

This research study implemented a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. As an instrument for conducting this research, a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was prepared based on the literature review. The questionnaire is divided into two sections and contains 20 questions in total. The first section contains 14 questions, 5 of them are related to demographic information while the other 9 are related to the topic. The second section of the questionnaire contains two audios of speakers speaking in two different Kosovo-Albanian dialects, and there are 3 questions for each audio. Questions 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 are adapted from Campbell-Kibler (2008), while the audios were recorded with the consent of the speakers. The questionnaire contains open-ended questions and close-ended questions. The questionnaire was created in a Google Form, and it was piloted with 3 participants, who then provided me with feedback regarding the questions.

Population and Sample

The population of this research is residents of Kosovo between 20-50 years old. The total number of participants included in the sample is 20. The questionnaire was distributed online through social media platforms. Additionally, the snowball technique was used, where the participants also shared the questionnaire with their friends, but participating in this research was voluntary.

RESULTS

There were 20 participants in this study. Among the participants, 13 (65%) were female while 7 (35%) were male. 85% of the participants were of ages 20-30, 10% of 31-40, and 5% of 41-50. 55% of the participants were at bachelor studies level while 45% were of masters. 7 of the participants were from Gjakova, 3 from Gjilan, 3 from Prizren, 3 from Vitia, 2 from Ferizaj, 1 from Prishtina, and 1 from Vushtrri. Among the participants, 7 of them stated that they speak standard Albanian, 4 of them Gheg, 3 of them a mixture of standard Albanian and the dialect of Anamorava region, 2 of them the dialect of Dukagjini region, 2 of them a mixture of Gheg and the dialect Dukagjini Region, 1 the dialect of Anamorava region and 1 a mixture of Gheh and standard Albanian.

Regarding question 7, *From 1 to 5, how much do you judge the social class or status based on their Albanian accent or dialect and why?*, 1 being the lowest while 5 the highest level, 8 of the participants answered “1”, 4 answered “2”, 4 answered “3”, and 4 answered “4”. Two of them said that they judge people based on their dialect or accent because the way a person speaks plays a big role and that through it tries to understand the speaker’s educational and social level.

As for question 8, *What do think/feel about people who speak in a different Albanian accent from yours? Do you characterize them as intelligent, friendly, professional, etc., based on their accent?*, 11 of the participants said that they do not judge speakers’ social class or status based on their accent or dialect, 4 of them said that they do, and 3 said that they do in an average level. Three of the participants said they do not judge speakers based on their accent or dialect because they focus more on what the speaker speaks (content); one said that they do not judge speakers based on their accent or dialect because they understand that everyone speaks differently because of the environment that surrounded them; and four of them said that they judge speakers’ professionalism, intelligence, and friendliness based on their accent or dialect.

Regarding question 9, *From 1 to 5, how much do you think that speakers who speak in standard Albanian have higher educational levels? Why?*, 1 being the lowest level while 5 the highest, 3 of the participants answered “1”, 1 answered “2”, 9 answered “3”, 3 answered “4”, and 3 answered “5”. Two of them said that the standard language is used more in educational institutions, thus those speaking standard Albanian are more likely to have higher educational levels and three of them said those speaking standard Albanian read more books, and that is why they see them of having higher educational level, but they emphasized that this may not always be the case. On the other hand, two of them said they do not think that people speaking in standard Albanian have a higher educational level because they have seen in their experiences that not everyone speaking standard Albanian has a higher educational level, and one said that the educational level of people does not have an impact on their way of speaking, rather it is the people that surround them that impacts their language dialect.

Regarding question 10, *How do you perceive the educational level of people who speak in an Albanian dialect?*, 6 of the participants said that they do not associate dialect with educational level, where one of them said that one’s dialect does not determine his/her educational level. Additionally, one participant said that they “perceive some dialects as being more educated, but it also depends on the speaker speaking in that dialect”, one of the participants said, “I used to perceive people speaking Albanian dialects as having lower educational level,

but due to my own experiences I have seen that that is not true, and now I try to not judge and associate speakers' dialects with educational level".

Regarding question 11, *Do you think that people who speak standard Albanian are more competent than those who speak in a Kosovo-Albanian dialect? Why?*, 16 of the participants said that do not think that people who speak standard Albanian are more competent than those who speak in a Kosovo-Albanian dialect, 2 said yes, and 1 said "I do not know". One said that people speaking in standard Albanian are more competent because of their ability to articulate sentences. Moreover, 3 participants said that dialect or accent does not determine the intellect or competence of speakers, one said that they do not perceive people speaking standard Albanian as more competent because "I have met many people who speak Albanian dialects are more competent than some who speak standard Albanian", while one said, "people speaking standard Albanian might be more skillful in academic aspect, but not necessarily in other fields of life".

As for question 12, *Have you ever experienced any stereotype or discrimination due to the accent or dialect that you speak? Can you share it?*, 14 participants said they have not experienced it while 3 said that they have. One said that s/he has been discriminated because of the pronunciation of the letter 'r', one said that s/he had been discriminated at the beginning of university studies, and one said that s/he has been discriminated due to speaking the dialect of the Dukagjin region. Additionally, one participant said that "Gjilan is stereotyped due to the usage of 'gj', for example instead of "djali", in Gjilan people say "gjali", or instead of "djathi", people say "gjathi", but I have seen that other people outside Gjilan did not expect us to speak those words that way, because maybe those kinds of pronunciation are maybe more used in rural areas of Gjilan or Kamenica".

Regarding question 13, *Do you think that your accent or dialect has impacted your inclusivity in a new group? Why?*, 15 participants said that their accent or dialect has not impacted their inclusivity in a new group, while 4 participants said that their accent or dialect has impacted their inclusivity in a new group. One participant said, "Usually, in Kosovo, we do not have that big differences regarding dialects, therefore there are no big discriminations/preferences for dialects either". One participant said, "The reason to have impacted my inclusivity in some groups are the previous impressions that people had about speakers of the Anamorava dialect"; another participant said, "The inclusivity among the groups that were from the region of Dukagjin was easier than other regions"; and another participant said, "The language I spoke, either standard or dialect Albanian, depending on the situation it has helped my inclusivity in many new groups because it was more understandable".

Regarding question 14, *Do you perceive any Kosovo-Albanian accent or dialect as socially attractive? If yes, which one and why?*, 11 participants said that they do not perceive any Kosovo-Albanian accent or dialect as socially attractive, 8 said that they do, and 1 said that it depends on the age of the speakers. Two participants, one from Gjilan and one from Ferizaj, said they find socially attractive the dialect spoken in Gjilan, three participants, one from Ferizaj, one from Vitia, and one from Vushtri, said that they find the dialect spoken in Gjakova as socially attractive, one participant from Gjakova said that s/he finds the dialect spoken in Prizren as socially attractive, and one participant from Prizren said that s/he find the dialect spoken in Dragash and Drenice as socially attractive.

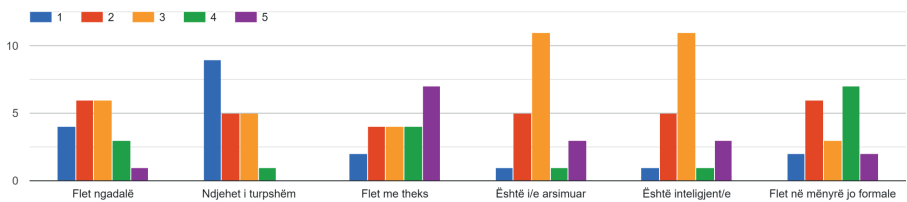


Figure 1: Audio 1, dialect spoken in Gjakova.

Regarding question 15, the majority (6) of participants said that the speaker speaks somewhat, also 6 participants said that the speaker talks slowly at a low rate, 4 said that the speaker speaks slowly at a very low rate, 3 participants said that the speaker speaks slowly, and 1 participant said that the speaker speaks very slowly. Additionally, the majority of participants said the speaker does not feel shy at all, 5 participants said the speaker feels a little shy, also 5 participants said the speaker feels somewhat shy, and 1 participant said the speaker feels very shy. Moreover, the majority of participants (7) said that the speaker speaks with an accent at a very high rate, 4 said that the speaker speaks with an accent at a high rate, 4 said the speaker speaks with an accent at an average rate, 4 said the speaker speaks with an accent at a low rate, and 2 said the speaker speaks with an accent at a very low rate. Further, 11 participants said the speaker is somewhat educated, 5 said the speaker is little educated, 3 said the speaker is very educated, 1 said the speaker is educated, and 1 said the speaker is not educated at all. Furthermore, 11 participants said the speaker is somewhat intelligent, 5 said the speaker is a little intelligent, 3 said the speaker is very intelligent, 1 said the speaker is intelligent, and 1 said the speaker is not intelligent at all. Lastly, 7 participants said the speaker speaks informally, 6 said the speaker speaks a bit informally, 3 said the speaker speaks somewhat

informally, 2 said the speaker speaks very informally, and 2 said the speaker does not speak informally at all.

In question 16, participants had to select among 10 options on how they thought the speaker might be, where 45% of participants said that the speaker is polite, 40% said the speaker is confident, 35% said the speaker is loyal, 30% said the speaker is knowledgeable, 30% said the speaker is hardworking, 25% said that the speaker is funny, 15% said that the speaker is lazy and 15% said that the speaker is annoying. When asked to identify where the speaker is from (question 17), 15 participants said that they think the speaker is from Gjakova, 1 from Ferizaj, 1 from Dukagjin, 1 from Klina, and 1 from Peja.

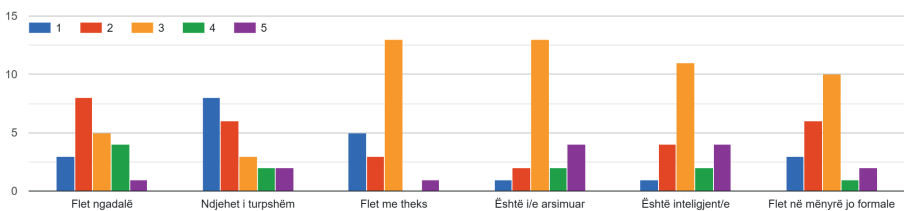


Figure 1: *Audio 1, dialect spoken in Vitia.*

Regarding question 18, 8 participants said the speaker speaks a bit slowly, 5 said the speaker speaks somewhat slowly, 4 said the speaker speaks slowly, 3 said the speaker does not speak slowly at all, and 1 said the speaker speaks very slowly. In addition, 8 of the participants said the speaker does not feel shy at all, 6 said the speaker feels a bit shy, 3 said the speaker feels somewhat shy, 2 said the speaker feels shy, and 2 said the speaker feels very shy. Moreover, 13 participants said the speaker somewhat speaks with an accent, 5 said the speaker does not speak with an accent at all, 3 said the speaker speaks a bit with an accent, and 1 said the speaker speaks highly with an accent. Further, 13 participants said the speaker is somewhat educated, 4 said the speaker is very educated, 2 said the speaker is educated, 2 said the speaker is a bit educated, and 1 said the speaker is not educated at all. Furthermore, 11 participants said the speaker is somewhat intelligent, 4 said the speaker is very intelligent, 4 said the speaker is a bit intelligent, 2 said the speaker is intelligent, and 1 said the speaker is not intelligent at all. Lastly, 10 participants said the speaker speaks somewhat informally, 6 said the speaker speaks a bit informally, 3 said the speaker does not speak informally at all, 2 said the speaker speaks very informally, and 1 said the speaker speaks informally.

As for question 19, participants had to select among 10 options on how they thought the speaker might be, and 45% of participants said that they

think the speaker is confident, 45% said the speaker is polite, 40% said the speaker is knowledgeable, 35% said the speaker is loyal, 30% said the speaker is hardworking, 20% said the speaker is annoying, 15% said the speaker is nostalgic, 10% said the speaker is funny, 5% said the speaker is lazy, and 5% said the speaker is sad.

Regarding the last question (20), *Which city of Kosovo do you think the speaker is from?*, 7 participants said the speaker is from Prishtina, 2 from Gjilan, 2 from Peja, 1 from Deçan, 1 from Podujeva, 1 from Prizren, 1 from Vitia, 1 from Gjakova, 1 said either Prishtina or Gjilan, and 2 said. "I don't know".

DISCUSSION

This research study aimed to explore the role of Kosovo-Albanian dialects and accents on perceptions of social class and status, educational level and social inclusivity.

Social Class and Dialect vs. Standard Language and Dialects

As for the first research question, *How do Kosovo residents perceive speakers' social status and class based on their accents?*, the majority of the participants do not judge speakers' social status and class based on their accents mainly because they focus more on what is said rather than the way it is said, and because *"everyone speaks differently because of the environment and people that surround them.* However, those who do said that they judge speakers' social status and class based on their accents because *"the way a person speaks plays an important role on the first impression, and I try to understand their social and educational background"*. As Anderson et al. (2007) state in their research, accents can push people to form judgments about ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Educational Background vs. Standard Language and Dialects

Regarding the second research question, *Do Kosovo residents associate dialects with educational level and social inclusivity?*, the majority of participants said they do it at an average level. Some do not associate dialects with educational level because speaking standard Albanian does not mean that the speaker has a higher educational level due to the experiences they had meeting people speaking standard dialects but not having a higher education background. Similarly, some participants stated that they do not associate dialects with educational level because *"one's dialect does not determine his/her educational level"*. However, some participants said they perceive speakers of standard Albanian as having a higher education background because *"standard Albanian is used in educational institutions, therefore they have higher*

educational levels". On the other hand, Krause and Podrushnyak (2010, as cited in Erofeeva, Leshchenko, and Likhanova, 2021) argue that speakers who speak in dialects are thought to have lower education backgrounds. Moreover, the majority of participants said that they do not see speakers of standard Albanian as more competent than those who speak a Kosovo-Albanian dialect. This does not agree with a study conducted by Trudgill (1975, as cited in Erofeeva et al.), who stated that people who speak standard language are perceived to be more competent than those who speak in accent pronunciations.

Social Inclusivity vs. Standard Language and Dialects

Regarding social inclusivity, the majority of participants said that they neither experienced any stereotype or discrimination due to their accent or dialect they speak nor that their accent or dialect has negatively impacted their inclusivity in a new group. In fact, their dialect has had a positive impact on their inclusiveness in new groups. This does not agree with a study conducted by Derwing (2003, as cited in Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010), who found that English speakers in Canada experienced discrimination because of their accents. Moreover, the majority of participants do not find any Kosovo-Albanian dialect as socially attractive. However, those who do find the dialect of Gjakova as more socially attractive, and some other than that of Gjilan.

Dialect Spoken in Gjakova (Speaker 1) vs. in Vitia (Speaker 2)

Both speakers were perceived to speak somewhat slowly. In addition, the speaker 1 is seen to be shyer than the speaker 2. Moreover, speaker 1 is perceived to speak more with an accent rather than speaker 2. As for the educational background of the speakers, both were perceived at almost similar rates as somewhat educated. Similarly, both speakers were perceived similarly as somewhat intelligent. Lastly, speaker 1 was perceived as speaking more informally while speaker 2 was perceived as speaking somewhat informally.

Furthermore, at similar rates, both speakers were perceived more as polite, confident, loyal, hardworking, knowledgeable, and annoying. Additionally, speaker 1 was perceived as slightly lazier and funnier than speaker 2. Similarly, a study conducted by (Dixon et al., 2002; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Munro, 2003, as cited in Kozlowski, 2015), found that non-native accented speakers are perceived as lazy. However, speaker 2 was perceived by a minority as nostalgic and sad, while speaker 1 was not seen as sad or nostalgic at all.

Lastly, the majority of participants identified speaker 1 to be from Gjakova, which is true, while for speaker 2, some said from Prishtina, 2 from Gjilan and Peja, and only 1 answered correctly saying the speaker is from Vitia. This

might lead us to think that the dialects spoken in Prishtina, Gjilan, Peja and Vitia might be somewhat similar.

The first hypothesis, *People associate high social status and class based on speakers' accents or dialects*, was not proved because the majority of the participants said they do not associate high social status and class based on speakers' accents or dialects. Neither was the second hypothesis, *People associate the standard Albanian language with a higher educational level and more competent*, because the majority of the participants do not associate the standard Albanian language with a higher educational level and being more competent. Lastly, the third hypothesis, *There is no difference between the two dialects in social perceptions and educational levels*, was not proved either because although there are some similarities between the two dialects, Gjakova and Vitia, there are some differences between them as well.

CONCLUSION

This research study explored how Kosovo residents perceive speakers' social status and class, educational background and inclusivity based on their Kosovo-Albanian dialects and accents. It also explored how Kosovo residents perceive two different dialects spoken in two different cities of Kosovo, Gjakova and Vitia. This research study found that the participants do not associate speakers' dialects/accents with social class and status because most of them focus on the content that is spoken rather than the way speakers speak. However, a small number of participants said that they associate speakers' dialects/accents with social class and status because it has a big impact on first impressions. This research also found that there is almost a similar percentage of people associating standard Albanian with a higher education background and not associated standard Albanian with a higher education background. Regarding the first issue, some participants said that standard Albanian is used in educational institutions, thus people speaking standard Albanian are more likely to have higher educational institutions. Regarding the second issue, some participants simply said that standard Albanian does not determine one's educational level. Moreover, the majority of participants stated that their dialects/accents have not influenced their participation in any new group, while the minority of them who said it did, stated that it influenced them positively. Lastly, Speaker 1 (Gjakova) was perceived as being shyer, speaking more with an accent, speaking more informally, lazier and funnier than Speaker 1. On the other hand, Speaker 2 (Vitia) was perceived as more nostalgic and sadder than Speaker 2. However, in general, both speakers were seen as similarly speaking slowly, somewhat educated and intelligent, polite, confident, loyal, hardworking, knowledgeable, and annoying.

Limitations and Recommendations

The limitations of this research are the low number of participants which cannot represent the whole population of Kosovo. Additionally, the low number of audios displaying different dialects of Kosovo is another limitation. Thus, for further research, it is recommended to include a larger number of participants to get more representative results as well as include audios that display a larger number of dialects spoken in Kosovo, in order to see how different dialects are perceived by Kosovo residents. It is also recommended to conduct interviews to get more detailed information about the topic since through the questionnaire some participants only answered the questions shortly without giving any explanation where needed.

References

- Adank, P., Stewart, A. J., Connell, L., & Wood, J. (2013). Accent imitation positively affects language attitudes. *Frontiers in Psychology, 4*, 1-10. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00280/full>
- Ademi, A. (2017). *Dialektet, funksionet dhe rastet e përdorimit të tyre në raportim për mediat e reja* [Bachelor dissertation, University for Business and Technology in Kosovo]. <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1141&context=etd>
- Anderson, A., Downs, D. S., Faucette, K., Griffin, J., & King, T. (2007). How accents affect perception of intelligence, physical attractiveness, and trustworthiness of Middle-Eastern-, Latin-American-, British-, and Standard-American-English-accented speakers. *Intuition: The BYU Undergraduate Journal of Psychology, 3*(1), 8-11. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/intuition/vol3/iss1/3>
- Campbell-Kibler, K. (2008). I'll be the judge of that: Diversity in social perceptions of (ING). *Language in Society, 37*(5), 637-659. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-in-society/article/ill-be-the-judge-of-that-diversity-in-social-perceptions-of-ing/91C84DB1522ADCCD86FE0A349ACC69FE>
- Chen, S. X., Benet-Martínez, V., & Ng, J. C. (2014). Does language affect personality perception? A functional approach to testing the Whorfian hypothesis. *Journal of Personality, 82*(2), 130-143. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jopy.12040>
- Dixon, J. A., Mahoney, B., & Cocks, R. (2002). Accents of guilt? Effects of regional accent, race, and crime type on attributions of guilt. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 21*(2), 162-168. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/02627x02021002004>
- Edwards, J. (1999). Refining our understanding of language attitudes. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 18*(1), 101-110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X99018001007>
- Eisenclas, S. A., & Tsurutani, C. (2011). You sound attractive! Perceptions of accented English in a multilingual environment. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, 34*(2), 216-236. <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/ara1.34.2.05eis>
- Erofeeva, E. V., Leshchenko, Y. E., & Likhanova, U. L. (2021). Accent in speech of bilinguals and identification of their education level. In D. K. Bataev, S. A. Gapurov, A. D. Osmaev, V. K. Akaev, L. M. Idigova, M. R. Ovhadov, A. R. Salgiriev, & M. M. Betilmerzaeva (Eds.), *Knowledge, Man and Civilization* (pp. 472-480). European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2021.05.64>
- Gill, M. M. (1991). *Accent and stereotypes: Their effect on perceptions of teachers and lecture comprehension* (Publication No. 9129550) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Nebraska]. AAI9129550. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/dissertations/AAI9129550>
- Gluszek, A., Dovidio, J.F., 2010b. The way they speak: A social psychological perspective on the stigma of nonnative accents in communication. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14*(2), 214-237. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1088868309359288>
- Jury, M., Aelenei, C., Chen, C., Darnon, C., & Elliot, A. J. (2019). Examining the role of perceived prestige in the link between students' subjective socioeconomic status and sense of belonging. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 22*(3), 356-370. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1368430219827361>
- Kozłowski, A. (2015). The influence of accents on social perception. *Inkblot, 4*, 12-16. https://engine.org/pars_docs/refs/91/90903/90903.pdf
- Neuliep, J. W., & Speten-Hansen, K. M. (2013). The influence of ethnocentrism on social perceptions of nonnative accents. *Language & Communication, 33*(3), 167-176. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0271530913000384>
- Sandel, T. L. (2015). Dialects. *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi172>

Sumantry, D., & Choma, B. L. (2021). Accent-based stereotyping, prejudice, and their predictors. *Personality and Individual Differences, 179*, 1-6. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886921002695>

LANGUAGE AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE WORKPLACE

Mirëndjellë STOJKAJ¹

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language and power dynamics in the workplace is a very important factor in influencing relationships between employers and employees. Language, both verbal and non-verbal, very often serves as a channel through which power is asserted. This created dynamic can significantly influence decision-making processes, employee engagement, and the overall culture of certain organizations and companies. Language is key to connection, and communication switches us to one another. Both hold the potential to be powerful drivers of inclusion and a reflection of an organization's values, vision and mission (PASAI, 2023).

Such power dynamics are manifested in various forms, while including the distribution of physical space, share of resources, and the decision-making process showing authority. For instance, some authoritative individuals, often receive greater recognition by employees (Gray Group International, 2024). This type of position then reinforces the idea that sometimes, authoritative people that have greater control over the workplace environment. However, such hierarchical structures within specific workplaces can lead to power imbalances when those with more authority have more control. In regards to that, ethical considerations are highly crucial since by adopting inclusive language practices, employers reduce the frequency where this type of exclusion takes place (PASAI, 2023). Therefore, it is highly important for those in authority to uphold ethical considerations and to ensure fairness in regards to their employees (Gray Group International, 2024).

¹ MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; mirendjellestojkaj@gmail.com

Through exploring the language and power dynamics within the workplace, this research aims to find insights that can guide professional development initiatives designed to support employers and employees in order to lower stress in the workplace.

The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between language and power dynamics in the workplace. Additionally, this study strived to provide insights for creating fair, inclusive, and collaborative work environments where authority is distributed equally and all employees feel empowered and valued.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of power dynamics within the workplace and employee perceptions of authority and autonomy

The choice of language employers use can highly impact power dynamics within the workplace, influencing employee perceptions of authority and autonomy. This dynamic can shape the work environment, relationships, and individual experiences. The language that people use in their communications can either reinforce hierarchical structures or create a sense of inclusivity. Inclusive language helps in avoiding bias and creating a sense of belonging (ACDI/VOCA, 2024). Authoritative language from employers can reinforce power differentials, which creates the risk that some employees will feel a lack of control about their autonomy. One example of this is that the use of authoritative language can restrict employee feelings of ownership and control in their own work, meaning they are less motivated and engaged (CIPD, 2023).

Similarly, by using inclusive language that invites collaboration, an environment of belonging and respect is established. Successful use of inclusive language is seen not just through the avoidance of defamatory terms, but also in choosing words that validate and regard the rich lives, experiences and identities of all people (PASAI, 2023).

This strategy helps to preempt certain powers constructs, fostering transparency and teamwork in regards to decision-making. This leads employees to feel valued, which in turn increases their perception of autonomy and the belief that they can influence workplace outcomes. (Growth Tactics, 2023).

Positive language is also a good strategic tool that can turn employees into initiators, positively boosts them and inculcates a helpful work culture. Create psychological safety so whats on peoples minds, can be heard, accelerating a workforce more engaged and innovative (Accelerate UofU Health, 2023).

Understanding and addressing the nuances of power dynamics is essential for leaders who want to create a balanced and healthy work environment. By including employees in the decision and acknowledging their inputs, leaders can use their unique power levers to perpetuate a culture of collaboration. This approach does not only ensure equal power distribution but it also facilitates a sense of trust within the work environment (CIPD, 2023; Growth Tactics, 2023).

However, power dynamics can have a detrimental side when there is an imbalance of power, resulting in potential misuse and abuse. This can lead to an environment where employees do not feel appreciated or supported. These practices focused on recognition of these imbalances and fixing them in justifiable ways generally are inevitable to keep high spirits at the workplace (Growth Tactics, 2023).

In short, the language employers use helps determine power dynamics at work. When employers use inclusive, supportive, and empowering language to support employees' perceptions of authority and autonomy, their workforce becomes more engaged, motivated, and increase productivity. Research highlights that inclusive, supportive, and empowering language from employers can enhance motivation (DeVryWorks, 2024; Inclusivv, 2024). This transparency extends to addressing power imbalances through policies and practices that are both collaborative and transparent increasing the likelihood of a fairer, more inclusive work environment which is beneficial for employees and at an organizational level (DeVryWorks, 2024).

The impact of direct vs. indirect speech acts and linguistic markers or status

Direct speech acts by means of direct and indirect speech reiterated via linguistic markers of status will also determine the balance between contingencies for power among employers to employees. This part of the literature review will consider whether and how these linguistic dimensions contribute to power in professional communication, utilizing empirical findings from recent research as well as theoretical insights.

Localization of intention is as straightforward in a direct speech act as it could be; the speaker's intention is explicitly shown and there is not much space for ambiguity. Poised (2022) states that clear and effective communication in the workplace is the key to boosting productivity, as it gives team members and managers a better understanding of expectations and requirements without leaving room for assumptions. However, this is not the case for some employees since it makes them stressed and fearful.

Indirect speech acts, on the other hand, convey the attitude behind it-usually to tone down an order or request: e.g. “I was wondering if perhaps we could get that report...”. By using indirect speech, you soften the intention of an instruction and make the message appear less authoritative and more collegial which in turn enhances the collaborative aspect within the workplace. Having strategies to mindfully manage power dynamics can assist in using power for good and creating a more inclusive workplace environment” (University of Minnesota, 2023).

Studies suggest a more frequent use of indirect speech acts in workplace contexts, mainly in terms of politeness and conflict evasion. Based on a study by Yin and Kuo (2016), over-reliance on indirect speech act is consequential as it increases conversational misunderstanding, affect clarity leading to inefficiency of project goals. The results of this study, which included Mandarin-speaking professionals, showed unambiguous comprehension discrepancies between direct and indirect speech as a result suggesting that transmitting indirect messages impairs the clarity in the speaker’s intentions and efficiencies in communication (IEEE, 2016).

Using these markers can further entrench the hierarchies and power imbalances in place. In cultures where organizations rely heavily on status markers, the employee may have a higher perceived distance from their bosses and feel less autonomous and empowered. In contrast, using a more democratic language style-such as avoiding formal titles in favor of addressing people by their first names - may help to reduce the sense that some individuals are “better” or entitled, likely creating more open and communicative workspaces (Cambridge University Press February 15, 2021).

This also shows the depth of some levels of politeness strategizing used to steer clear of direct points of confrontation to still have smooth relations with others. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory states that ambiguous speech acts also serve to save face, an action in which the listener is able to ignore the negative content of an utterance due to ambiguity giving the benefitted party plausible deniability since they were not directly implicated in a particular action. However, this indirectness can also contribute to power imbalances if it is seen as a lack of assertiveness or clarity.

In their investigation of indirectness and politeness, Ruytenbeek (2021), highlights how social context and interpersonal relationships shape the use and interpretation of indirect speech acts. The cultural and contextual dimensions play a crucial role in how indirect speech is taken and whether it can improve or reduce successful communication and power relations (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

Employers that know and deal with these linguistic elements may have the ability to take care of power relationships better so as to communicate and also function much more collaboratively. Employers need to be aware of and use strategies to help mitigate language barriers, so all employees feel as if they belong and are understood, thereby balancing power dynamics (UOregon CASLS, 2016). Some training that helps the employees to understand the impacts of indirect speech and which trains them on clear direct communications when needed, this may help in becoming overall beneficial for an institution as well as for employee satisfaction (Conflict Management, 2020).

To conclude, language strategies employed in the workplace such as the use of direct vs indirect speech acts and status markers are key to advancing power relations. Through creating a tone related and respectful workplace in which employees feel respected, yet empowered, an organization can create a more balanced, more functional work environment.

The way we use language can yield a lot of information about the power dynamics at play in the workplace with employers and employees. Such dynamics can be shaped by how language shapes influence, authority, and cooperation or conflict.

Differences in Language and Power Dynamics Across Employers and Employees

Employees and employers might often need to employ more upfront communication which asserts their authority and sets clear expectations. While an effective style around instruction and feedback, this direct communication approach may lead to a hierarchical divide if not matched with openness and respect (CIPD, 2023).

On the other hand, in dealing with their superiors, employees might resort to indirect means of communication to subtly deal with power dynamics. It provides a way to maintain politeness and avoid potential “face” intimidation in such situations, which may result from face-threatening acts, as opposed to on-record speech. Yet if it is employed too often, indirect speech can make communication ambiguous and more murkier in professional settings, which can ultimately result in a reduction of efficiency when carrying out projects or working (IEEE Professional Communication Society, 2016).

Employers and employees are different so the differences reflect in how they communicate with one another, including as each type function in group settings. Programmed (2018) noted that by using inclusive language, in the workplace, everyone is more likely to feel valued and respected. This makes for a happier work environment, resulting in employers feeling more comfortable

in the environment. When employers speak using authoritative language this could contribute to an environment where employees are less likely to feel liberated in expressing their opinions and disagreeing with ideas. But this can inhibit creativity and foster obedience over team work (DiscProfiles, 2023).

Conversely, employees who feel that their employers model open communication and positive power dynamics, including by engaging in active listening and giving context for decisions, tend to be more valued and engaged in their work. Aside transparency the method additionally build a current togetherness, trustfulness and respect and may help with employment moral plus carrying out (CIPD, 2023).

To unpack the power relationships in a workplace, it is essential to comprehend the subtle ways that language acts as a tool of power. One way this hierarchy is encouraged and maintained in these relationships is through linguistic markers of status, like titles and formal address, which define roles. Eurac Research (2023) states that formal titles (e.g., “Dr. Smith”), rather than first names, emphasize status differences, which in turn affects how communication is perceived by employees.

Power relations are not merely the result of linguistic choices but always embedded in economic and cultural contexts. That economic position, that is, whether you are with or without money in your pocket; education level, how much you know of the world and cultural background or where you grew up at, influence use of language but also interpretation. Perceptions of power can be magnified or reduced by these factors, and hence may influence the dynamics and cultures of relations experienced at both interpersonal and organizational levels (Eurac Research, 2023). Organizations can implement a variety of approaches to better address these unbalances and create more effective communication spaces. Employee and manager training regarding direct versus indirect communication can heighten consciousness as well as raise the bar of interaction execution. Training may involve identifying and deploying various types of speech acts for different audience groups (IEEE Professional Communication Society, 2016). Allowing feedback to be given and received openly can also help bridge some of these power gaps. As a result employees will be able to say their opinions out loud without the fear of repercussions (DiscProfiles, 2023). Not using formal titles and promoting the use of inclusive language, employers can contribute to a more inclusive and healthy work environment which will also limit the power distance between employers and employees (Eurac Research, 2033).

To conclude, language power dynamics have a direct influence on how communication and power relations develop in the work environment. By

recognizing these dynamics, employers can create a more honest, and successful workplace.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the language and power dynamic relationships within the workplace and the influence they have on employees. To examine this issue, a qualitative approach was used. Qualitative research is a technique for understanding and learning about different experiences from an individual's perspective (Vishnevksy & Beanlands, 2004).

Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was used during the selection process of participants with the aim of including students who could provide detailed insights into the various factors impacting student engagement. According to Bryman (2016), purposive sampling is a method where researchers chose participants who are relevant to the research topic. This study involved 8 participants from three different sectors: teaching, content writing in the region of Kosovo, and an insurance company in the United States of America. This diverse selection ensured a broad perspective on language and power dynamics within different work environments. Before the interview took place, each participant was contacted via email and other social media platforms such as messenger due to easy access. Each participant was sent the consent form prior to the interview (see Appendix A).

Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). Some of these interviews were conducted face-to-face while the others online via the Google Meet platform. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and they are all conducted in English since it was convenient for the researcher and the participants as well.

Data Collection

The data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews through a qualitative approach. Each interview was audio-recorded and verbatim transcribed with the consent of the participants. With the help of this approach of data collecting, the research topic could be explored in detail while capturing the individual insights of participants.

Data Analysis

Several stages took place during the analysis. Firstly, the interviews were analyzed for each participant at a time to be able to find recurrent themes. To

fully understand the perceptions of the participants, this study employed a thematic analysis method which is a qualitative method used for identifying, and examining recurrent patterns in data collecting (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). For the sake of protecting the personal data of the participants pseudonyms such as Employer A, B, C and Employee A, B, C, D, E were used instead of their actual names. In addition, the main ideas and patterns were collected into themes. Furthermore, the themes were developed further and examples from the interviews were used to support them.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

As discussed above in the paper, this study consisted of 8 participants from different sectors. For the sake of this research, during the data analysis process, the answers of employers and employees were collected and analyzed separately for recurrent themes and patterns from each sector but as a whole. Therefore, the following findings and discussion are separated based on all of the interviewed employers as one, and of employees at the same time.

Employers

The impact of power dynamics within the workplace and Employee perceptions of authority and autonomy

Employers noted that their communication style significantly shapes power dynamics within the company, For instance, employer A, emphasised that “language plays a huge role in building power dynamics between employers and employees”. He mentioned that using collaborative language such as “we” or “us” helps employees feel as if they belong and are part of the company. Respectful and inclusive language was noted as a key factor in influencing employee perceptions of authority. This highlights the idea that inclusive communication fosters a sense of belonging within the work environment. Employer B, pointed out that “by using inclusive and respectful language, I believe we can create a work environments where all feel valued and heard”. At the same time, Employer C stated that “Expressing appreciation and recognizing achievements boosts morale and motivation”, which also showcases the importance of using respectful language in the workplace to boost employee motivation. Another recurrent theme was how the interviewed employers discussed how their way of speaking affects how employees see their authority. Employer B stated that “avoiding overly formal language and focusing on clear explanations with a touch of humor helps employees see my authority as approachable and focused on achieving shared goals”. Similarly, Employer C stated that “providing clear and constructive feedback encourages employees to improve and feel valued” thereby fostering a positive perception of authority and autonomy.

The impact of direct vs. indirect speech acts and linguistic markers or status

Employers highlighted the necessity to balance and indirect and direct communication to maintain positive relationships in the workplace. Employer A noted that “the balance between direct and indirect speech is crucial in our industry, where precision is key but so is the development of positive relationships”. Employer C stated that “direct speech is only needed for tasks or deadlines of high importance”. These indicate that the interviewed employers are well-aware of the effect that such linguistic markers can cause and therefore are quite cautious regarding the time of choosing to use specific language. Besides that, this finding also indicates that a balanced approach to communication is essential for both clarity and relationship maintenance in the workplace. Employer A stated that “Using phrases like please, if you have time, or I know that you are too busy, but..., leads to better outcomes and a more balanced power dynamic”. Employer B also specified that “Phrases that invite participation such as “What are your thoughts on this” or “How can we approach this challenge”? foster partnerships and respect for employees. Employers also state how specific linguistics techniques motivate employees. Employer B shared an experience where praising an employee’s work motivated the employee to work harder. This finding suggests that such strategies such as encouragements, can highly empower employees and lead to success.

Supportive and inclusive language was emphasized as highly important in terms of adopting a positive work environment. Employer C, emphasized that her employer’s calm and collected communication style, even when telling the mistakes, helps us feel supported and motivated to improve. Employer D, added that “an open approach and clear feedback could promote professional developments and help employees feel more comfortable. This finding underscores that supportive and inclusive language is essential in terms of creating a positive work environment and enhancing employee autonomy. When employers communicate in a calm and collected manner, it helps employees feel supported and eager to improve. In addition to that, feedback was also noted as a key element into promoting professional growth which also indicated that in such cases employees feel more comfortable and confident in their role.

Employees

Impact on Power Dynamics and Employee Perceptions of Authority and Autonomy

Employees highlighted how the language used by employers significantly affects their perceptions of authority and autonomy. Employee A mentioned, “A

commanding tone and use of language can make me feel less independent, and... um.. question my abilities". These findings suggest that authoritative language can lower employee confidence and independence, leading to a decrease in their autonomy. Moreover, employee B stated that "using authoritative language makes and employee feel powerless and not appreciated and so it happens to me". This suggests that while the use of authoritative language can evoke feelings of powerlessness, appreciative language fosters a sense of respect. Supportive and inclusive language was noted as key in fostering a positive environment. Employer C, a teacher, added that "an open approach can help teachers feel autonomous and confident". This suggests that calm, collected, and supportive communication promotes a positive work environment, while also motivating employees to improve.

Employees discussed how their employer's communication style affects their perception of authority. Employee C, noted that "using a commanding or authoritative tone can make teachers feel less respected and disinclined to improve. Conversely, supportive language and effective communication encourage collaboration". On the other hand employee D shared that when her employer used terms like "we are family" or "I expect you to be on top of this task" can feel authoritative and sometimes guilt-inducing". These suggest that supportive and collaborative communication styles enhance respect and willingness to improve among employees, while on the other hand authoritative tones can have a negative effect.

Impact of Direct vs. Indirect Speech and Linguistic Markers of Status

Employees recognized the importance of balancing direct and indirect speech to maintain a healthy power dynamic. Employee A expressed that "direct speech works better but the tone should not be intimidating". Employee B added "direct speech has its advantages but commands like 'do this' can feel scary. Requests, even if urgent, should include politeness, like 'Do this by 3 pm, please'". This finding indicates that although direct speech can have positive effects, at the same time, it should be delivered in a non-intimidating manner to reduce the stress and fear of employees. Polite and collaborative language was seen as effective in creating a balanced power dynamic. Employee C mentioned that "requests framed politely such as "can you please take care of this as I know you are the perfect person to handle this" makes me feel very appreciated as an employee. Employee D noted that "indirect speech makes the employer appear more polite and reduces awkwardness". The above findings suggest that polite and collaborative language can enhance feelings of appreciation and reduced dynamic which can also lead to a balanced power dynamic.

Employees stated how certain linguistic strategies can empower them. More specifically, Employer B shared an experience where her employer publicly praised her for her work ethic and as a result made her feel valued. Employee D highlighted that compliments help her feel valued and motivated to improve. Finally, these indicate that at times, public or private appreciation towards employees can lead to positive effects and can serve as powerful tools for employee empowerment while also increasing their motivation in the workplace.

Differences in Language and Power Dynamics Across Employers and Employees

Both employers and employees have observed differences in language power dynamics influenced by company culture and leadership style. Employer A noted that “Being either a ‘strict’ boss or a ‘friendly’ one isn’t the solution; a combination of both is the ideal”. Employer B added that “Different contexts require different communication styles, such as formal language for serious topics and friendly communication for casual conversations”. On the other hand, Employee B shared that a stricter tone is less effective compared to a more relaxed and supportive environment. At the same time, Employee D, mentioned that “authoritarian and rude language decreases employee confidence. The language used by employers has long-term implications for relationships between employers and employees. Employer A emphasized “Respectful language, reward, and appreciation lead to long-term benefits in performance and employee loyalty”. Employer B stated that “Employers can deteriorate relationships through negative comments and harsh language, while respectful communication helps maintain harmony and mutual respect”. Finally, Employee B and Employee D, similarly, stated that “consistent positive and supportive language can build strong ties between team members for a long time”.

The above statements from both employers and employees indicate that language and power dynamics within the work environment are highly influenced by the company culture and style of leadership. A balanced approach toward the combination of a strict and friendly leadership is ideal, as different contexts require specific communication styles. These findings suggest that employees respond better to a supportive and relaxed environment, since authoritarian language can decrease their confidence. Finally, the findings prove that positive and supportive language helps build strong relationships.

CONCLUSION

The study has emphasized the key role that language plays in shaping power dynamics within the workplace. The findings showcase that language, verbal or non-verbal, serves as an important tool through which power is asserted, and as a result relationships within the work environment are influenced. For example, inclusive and respectful language increases positivity and motivation within the workplace, whereas authoritative language can have negative effects on employee morale and confidence. It is highly essential to understand these dynamics in order to promote a culture of respect and collaboration.

The findings of this paper encourage employers and employees alike to use inclusive language since it fosters a sense of belonging among them. This paper also suggests that the establishment of regular constructive feedback boosts the motivation of employees. Finally, by adopting these approaches, the majority of work environments can positively contribute to the overall health of the relationships within the company.

References

- Accelerate UofU Health. (2023). Using positive power dynamics to engage and empower teams.
- ACDI/VOCA. (2024). Why Inclusive Language Matters to Global Development.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Communication. (2018). Linguistic politeness.
- Center for Applied Second Language Studies. (2020). The influence of language differences on power dynamics in MNTs.
- CIPD. (2023). Power dynamics in work and employment relationships.
- Conflict Management at the University of Iowa. (2020). Direct and indirect communication.
- DeVryWorks. (2024). Why Language Matters: Using Inclusive Language in the Workplace.
- DiscProfiles. (2023). Power dynamics in the workplace [manager's guide].
- Dixon, R. M. W. (2006). Complement clauses and complementation strategies in typological perspective. In R. M. W. Dixon and A. Y. Aikhenvald (Eds.), *Complementation: A cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eurac Research. (2023). How do language and power interact?
- Hall, A. (2021). Effective cross-cultural communication: Navigating language and understanding.
- Harvard DASH. (2021). Understanding power dynamics in the workplace.
- IEEE Professional Communication Society. (2016). The impact of indirect speech acts on professional communication.
- Inclusivv. (2024). The Power of Allyship in the Workplace: Building Inclusive and Supportive Work Cultures.
- OnLabor. (2022). The sound of discrimination: How employment law handles linguistic profiling.
- PASAI. (2023). The power of language to create a culture of equity and inclusion.
- PLOS ONE. (2021). The influence of direct and indirect speech on mental representations.
- Poised. (n.d.). Directness in the workplace.
- Portland Community College. (n.d.). How power dynamics might be hurting your ability to give effective feedback to colleagues and subordinates.
- Programmed. (n.d.). Workplace inclusion through language.
- Ruytenbeek, N. (2021). Indirect speech acts. In ***Indirectness, politeness and the social context*** (pp. 141-180). Cambridge University Press.
- Scharp, K. M., & Sanders, M. L. (2019). What is a theme? Teaching thematic analysis in qualitative communication research methods. *Communication Teacher*, 33(2), 117-121. 10.1080/17404622.2018.1536794
- Yin, Y., & Kuo, K. (2016). A Study of How Information System Professionals Comprehend Indirect and Direct Speech Acts in Project Communication. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*.

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS IN PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Arjetë Bllaca¹

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a major role in supporting children's educational, social, and emotional development even though they may not be prepared for teaching children with speech impairment. (Daniel & McLeod, 2017). "Speech-language disorders are the most common of disabilities that affect about 1 in 12 children or 5% to 8% of preschool children" (Adebauy and Mabuku 2014). Children with speech impairment face unique challenges that can significantly impact their educational experiences. The majority of speech and language disorders observed in school children are developmental in nature, meaning the underlying issues originate from birth and become evident as the child grows, displaying slower or atypical development compared to peers. In a minority of instances, speech and language disorders are acquired due to illness or injury that impacts brain function. (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) as cited in Adebauy & Mabuku 2014). As per the findings of Sices et al. (2007), communication impairments are classified into various types, including expressive language disorders, mixed receptive-expressive language disorders, stuttering, and phonological disorders.

Thus, teaching children with speech impairment in primary educational settings requires a thoughtful and inclusive approach. This research's aim was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current teaching strategies that teachers apply for children with speech impairment in primary, public educational settings in Kosove. In addition, its purpose was also to examine the challenges that the educators face implementing these strategies. The research was conducted by quantitative data collection in public schools in Kosove.

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; arjetabllaca1@gmail.com

Those data were then analyzed and interpreted. The data collection, analysis and the literature review served to give an overview of this issue in primary schools in Kosove.

The research's paper's introduction section shall give an overview of this problem, the research questions that were posed and guided the entire paper and data collection as well as what were the expected results of this study.

An overview of the problem

In recent years there has been an increase of children who seem to have problems with their speech, whether that be a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation or a language impairment - all of which affect a child's overall academic performance. According to Tomblin (1997) 5% to 8% of children are prone to having problems with speech and/or language. (Tomblin 1997 as cited in Law et al. 2017). This research paper aims to see what strategies do teachers in primary educational settings in Kosove use in order for these children to reach their full academic performance. This is quite a serious concern and not much research has been done in Kosove regarding this issue - to see and get an idea on how teachers include these students in the classroom. This research will dive into this issue and provide an analysis of these strategies and also will give some future recommendations for teachers.

The aim of the study

The goal of this research paper is to explore, analyze, and provide some valuable insights into the various teaching strategies employed to support children with speech impairment in the context of primary education. By understanding the most effective approaches teachers can contribute to the development of inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students, regardless of their speech abilities.

Research questions

1. What are the existing teaching strategies for children with speech impairment in primary education settings in Kosove?
2. How do current teaching strategies address the diverse needs of children with different types of speech impairment?
3. How do teaching strategies influence the academic performance and overall educational outcomes of children with speech impairment in primary educational settings?
4. What are the challenges and barriers faced by educators in implementing effective teaching strategies for children with speech impairment?

Objectives of the study

Some of the objectives of this research paper intends to meet include:

- 1) To identify the current teaching strategies that teachers in Kosove use to include students who have speech impairment in the learning process.
- 2) To compile a list of the existing teaching strategies employed by teachers in Kosove for children with speech impairment in primary educational settings.
- 3) Based on the data collection, analysis and the literature read and reviews to write this paper to offer some recommendations of teaching strategies that teachers in Kosove can implement in the future.

Expected results of the study

The expected results of this research paper include an identification of effective teaching strategies, and provide a list of evidence-based teaching strategies that have proven successful in supporting children with speech impairment. Give an insight into implementation challenges, identify and discuss challenges faced by educators in implementing these strategies. Finally, based on the data and the literature review offer recommendations for teachers to improve or implement new teaching strategies for children with speech impairment in primary educational settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication disorders, including speech and/or language issues, are among the most frequently encountered developmental challenges in childhood. (Law et al., 2017). “Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is estimated to affect approximately 7% of the population, which is around two students in every classroom of 30”. (Norbury et al., 2016). The integration of these students in the classroom is essential for their academic performance. The integration of students with special needs in mainstream classrooms is a trend occurring in classrooms around the world (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000). Speech impairment among children in mainstream classrooms can be of various types. Communication disorders that negatively impact a child’s academic performance are characterized as speech or language impairments, as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2007. The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (2013) has identified three varieties of speech impairments and five types of language impairments. Speech impairments encompass articulation disorders, voice disorders, and fluency disorders. Articulation disorders involve the mispronunciation of words through omissions, substitutions, and/or distortions. Voice disorders pertain to the abnormal production of vocal sounds, including issues related to loudness,

pitch, duration, or vocal quality. Meanwhile, fluency disorders refer to speech impairments resulting in an unnatural rhythm and timing, such as stuttering. (Colclasure et al., 2019). The five categories of language disorders are:

- Morphological - which are the difficulties in understanding structural changes in words, such as word tense,
- Phonological - which mean the difficulties in organizing speech patterns and sound contrast,
- Pragmatic - which are difficulties understanding the meaning of words and using proper language in social contexts,
- Syntactic - which are the difficulties in understanding and using correct grammar,
- Semantic - difficulties understanding word meaning and vocabulary development. (Colclasure et al., 2019)

The same classification has been made by Adams (2012) who says that primary speech impairment can impact one or more of the following domains: phonology (the arrangement of sounds utilized by the child), vocabulary (the words a child can express and comprehend), grammar (the structure of language the child can use), morphology (significant alterations to words indicating tense, number, etc.), narrative skills (the capability to express a series of ideas), and pragmatic language (the proficiency to grasp others' intended meanings and effectively communicate in conversation). (Adams 2012 as cited in Law et al., 2017).

As per Brice (2012), a significant correlation exists between academic achievement and communication. Brice posits that the success of students in academics relies on their ability to align their communication skills with the teaching style that is prevalent in the classroom. Consequently, educators have various strategies at their disposal to incorporate in the classroom setting. Gelston's (2004) article emphasizes the significance of engaging with students who have speech impairments. Gelston asserts that teachers should be physically near these students and attentively listen to their speech. This approach enables teachers to evaluate the students' speech and clearly understand their communication (Gelston, 2004). Low and Lee's (2011) case study proposes techniques to enhance the speech skills of students facing speech and communication challenges. They advocate for the implementation of methods like "turn-taking," "object-picture matching," and "imitating vocalization," among others, to foster the improvement of speech in these students (Low & Lee, 2011 as cited in Crystal 2015). These strategies aim to expose students to the correct pronunciation of specific sounds, offering an effective approach to enhancing their speech abilities (Low & Lee, 2011 as cited in Krystal, 2014).

The inclusion or exclusion of students is ultimately shaped by the actions teachers take in classrooms (Rouse, 2008 as cited in Glasby et al.,2021).

According to Bornman (2020) there are four teaching approaches that are evidence based when it comes to teaching students with speech impairment. Those include:

a) Communication passports: This method involves capturing and sharing idiosyncratic communication attempts, allowing everyone in the learner's environment to offer consistent feedback on all communication efforts.

b) visual schedules: a variety of symbols which can range from objects symbols to graphic symbols can be employed to represent people, activities, or events to support communication. Visual schedules signal what is about to happen next and helps to assist learners to predict the sequence of events, to make choices, and to manage challenging behavior.

c) Partner training: Since communication involves multiple individuals, it is essential to provide training to communication partners, in this instance, teachers, to ensure responsiveness.

d) aided language stimulation: this strategy implemented in the classroom has as its aim to provide a strong language comprehension foundation by combining the spoken language with the pointing to symbols, in this way it provides learners with visual supplementation. (Bornman, 2020)

In addition, as per Daniel and McLeod (2017) other options, including presenting information through posters, utilizing digital media, and employing written educational materials, could offer more accessible means for these children to participate in activities to improve their communication skills. They also make an emphasis that additional learning support in the classroom, and support for parents is essential to maintain this progress (Daniel & McLeod 2017).

The approach of scaffolding as a teaching strategy has also been discussed by many researchers as an effective approach even when it comes to teaching students with speech or language impairment. Rosenshine (2012) highlights the efficacy of scaffolding, progressively introducing students to new concepts to provide support. According to Rosenshine (2012), this approach can provide students with Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN) with essential information, develop their vocabulary, and establish a strong foundation for independent exploration of a topic or content. In addition, Rosenshine (2012) outlined the Principles of Instruction, which consist of ten evidence-based principles for effective teaching, accompanied by practical recommendations for classroom implementation. These principles, which

will be discussed in more detail in the full literature review, draw upon three sources:

1. insights from cognitive science, which explores the processes of human thought
2. findings from studies on master teachers, and
3. research on cognitive support (Rosenshine 2012).

Hence, this study will look into the strategies that teachers use in classroom environments in Kosove to include these students in the learning process so they reach their full academic potential.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section of this search paper will elaborate in detail how this study was carried out. It will discuss the participants that were used as the research population, the materials used and the design of the research. And finally a very detailed procedure of data collection will be discussed.

Participants

The main criteria that determined participant selection for this research paper was to be a teacher teaching in a primary and public educational setting in Kosove. Thus, the questionnaire was distributed to teachers in four public schools in Gjilan that are - Selami Hallaci, Musa Zajmi, Abaz Ajeti and Thimi Mitko. Seventy teachers took part in the research paper. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants physically because in order for teachers to take part a permission from the schools' principals was required. After taking permission from the principals the questionnaire was distributed to teachers in their common teacher's office. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire and almost all of them agreed and filled it in voluntarily. Out of 70 participants 54 were females and 26 were males. The participants' educational background was common - 63 percent of them hold a bachelor degree. Similarly, almost 64 percent had 10 or more years of experience in teaching.

Materials and design

The quantitative approach was used as the main methodology to carry out this research study. Hence, for the intent of this paper a quantitative questionnaire was designed. The reason why the quantitative approach was deemed as the most suitable method is because it generates data for a large number of participants. Furthermore, the contact with participants is easier and quicker compared to other methods i.e. the qualitative method which requires

interviews or observations. The quantitative approach is regarded to have less limitations with regards to time and the financial aspect (Dawson, 2002).

To begin with the questionnaire contained a section explaining the purpose of the study. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions - 2 questions were demographic related to gender and age; 2 questions were about education background and work experience and the other questions were specifically related to the topic of the research. All questions, but one, were close ended questions. One question was open ended, and surprisingly almost all participants answered it. Different formats of questions were used. Amongst the 15 questions, 1 Likert scale question and 1 rating scale question were included. The other questions were alternative questions. 2 alternative questions were multiple-choice.

Procedure

Pilot Study

Before the actual research was done a pilot study was carried out. To carry out this pilot study 4 teachers in primary schools were asked to fill in the questionnaire. I knew one of those teachers personally and the others I contacted via her. The questionnaire to one of them was distributed physically and to the others via Google forms due to easier access. The reason why this pilot study was done was to see how manageable it is to gather the data, how much time would it take to fill in the questionnaire and to get specific feedback regarding the questionnaire.

Main Study

As mentioned, the questionnaire for the main study had to be distributed physically because it was impossible for teachers to take part without taking permission from the schools' principals. The data collection for the main study was done in 3 days. The data collected then were imported in Excel Sheets to get statistical analyses but also to get the graphic analyses of the data collected which would help with the description and discussion of the results. The data collection proved successful and allowed me to move forward with the main study analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Confidentiality was ensured to the participants, schools, and schools' principals. Besides the fact that the questionnaire was anonymous they were promised that the data would not be shared with outsiders and they would be used only for the purpose of this study. The filling in of the questionnaire was voluntarily. However, before moving on with the questionnaires a consent

form was given to the participants as well as to the schools' principals. The consent form was in the Albanian language and consisted of information about the purpose of the study, the procedure of the study, information about confidentiality as well as my contact information if they needed to contact me about anything related to the study.

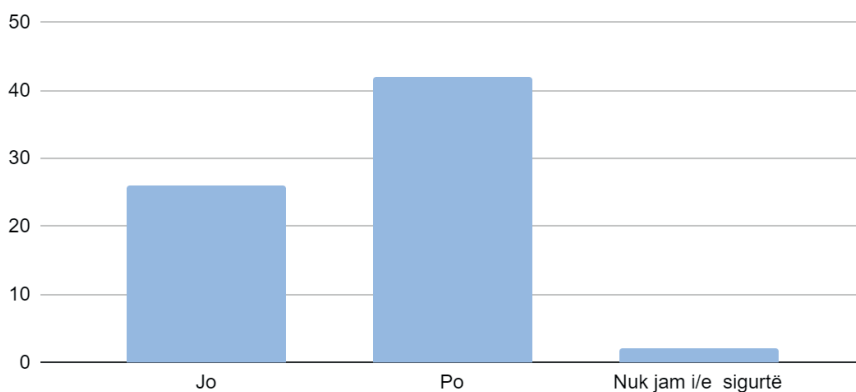
RESULTS

The results from the data collection shall be discussed in this next section. How knowledgeable are teachers when it comes to the phenomenon of speech impairment amongst students, what are the strategies they use to help students with this issue, how successful have these strategies been proven, what are the difficulties they face with the implementation of the strategies, do they collaborate with speech and language therapists - all of these will be discussed in detail backed up with graphs and statistical analyses.

Students with speech impairment ARE present in public education classrooms in Kosove

As mentioned in the section about the overview of the problem, cases of students who have speech impairment in Kosove have increased over the years. Findings show that 42 teachers out of 70 (60 %) currently have students with speech impairment in their classrooms.

Do you currently have students with speech impairment in your classroom?



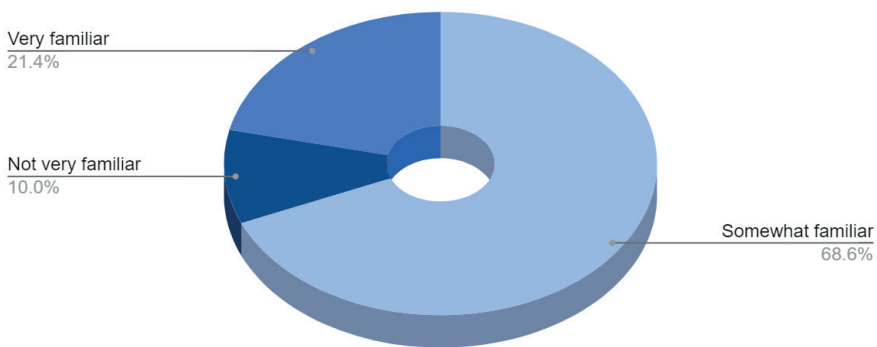
This is a very important finding because it proves that this phenomenon is in fact very present. This finding was also important for this study not only to prove that this phenomenon is present amongst students in Kosove, but also was a precondition to get the data needed with regards to the other points of

this paper - the teaching strategies, the implementation challenges of these strategies and so on.

Teachers in Kosove are familiar with the phenomenon of speech impairment in students

Results from the data collection provide evidence that teachers in Kosove are familiar with the term 'speech impairment'. 68 % of the participants said that they are somewhat familiar; 21,4 % said that they are very familiar - this comprises a percentage of 89% of participants who have knowledge about the term, consequently the phenomenon. Meanwhile only 10 % of the participants answered that they are not familiar at all with the phenomenon.

How familiar are you with the term and phenomenon of "speech impairment" in students?

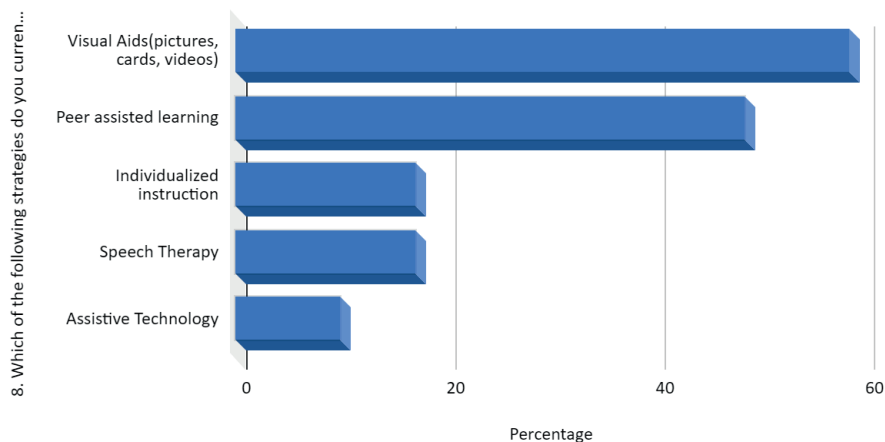


Worth mentioning is that the ones who answered that were very familiar were teachers who had a master degree and also ten or more years of work experience. Moreover, the ones that were very familiar with this issue amongst students were the ones who took part in professional training regarding this issue (see question 13 in the questionnaire).

Strategies that teachers use the most to help students who have speech impairment

The results proved that amongst the strategies that teachers use the most to help students with speech impairment were *collaborative learning (or group work)* and *visual aids (charts, pictures, videos)*.

Which of the following strategies do you currently use to support children with speech impairment?



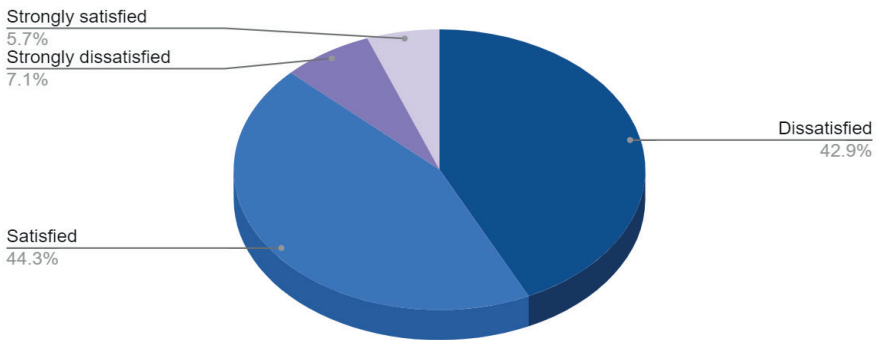
58.1% or 41 out of the 70 participants answered that the strategy they rely the most to help students overcome their difficulties with speech impairment was visual aids (cards, pictures, videos). 48 % said that they use the strategy of group work. Interesting to see was that a fairly great percentage answered that they use individualized instruction and therapy sessions, specifically 17 % each. The opportunity to give a specific example of a strategy that was proven to be successful was given to teachers through an open-ended question (see appendix, question 8 in the questionnaire). The strategies that were mentioned most commonly are: creating a safe and non-threatening learning environment, collaborating with parents, differentiated instruction specifically when it comes to homework, collaborating with speech and language therapists and having extra classes with them as needed. Why teachers have chosen these strategies as the most effective shall be discussed in the discussion section.

Implementation Challenges

When asked to give their opinion when it comes to the challenges teachers face with regards to the implementation of teaching strategies half of the respondents (50%) said that their main challenge was the insufficient professional development and training opportunities. Meanwhile, 37.1% said that their main challenge was the limited collaboration that they have with speech and language therapists. This corresponds to the results of question 15 (see appendix for the questionnaire) which proved that almost the same percentage of the respondents (24.3%) collaborated very rarely with speech and language therapists. In addition, 12,9 % said that they never collaborate with speech and language therapists.

Moreover, the participants when asked how satisfied they are with the resources provided and level to help them implement the teaching strategies for children with speech impairment were split up in half 44,3 % said they were satisfied with the resources offered and 42,9 % said that contrary, that they were not satisfied.

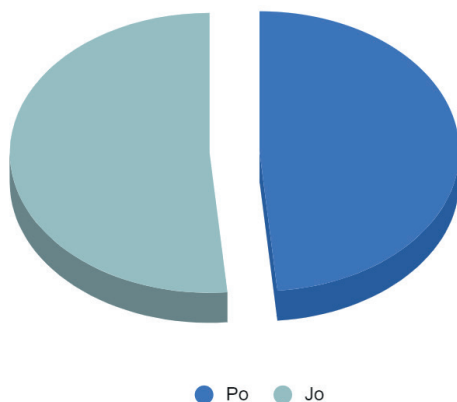
How do you feel about the current level of support and resources provided to address the needs of children with speech impairment in your school?



Experience and opinions about professional development and training

The findings proved that only half of the respondents (48.6%) received professional development or training when it comes to teaching children with speech impairment, meanwhile the other half (51,4%) said that they never received one.

Have you received any professional development or training related to teaching children with speech impairment?



Those who answered *YES* responded to the next question (see question 14) which asked them if these professional development training helped them prepare their teaching strategies to support children with speech impairment. The results from the data collected from this question were that in general their participation in these trainings were helpful - 44.1 % said that it was helpful and 35.3% said that it was somewhat helpful.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the data gathering provided us with the strategies that the teachers use most to help students with their speech impairment issue. The aforementioned strategies shall be discussed in this section combined with theories and findings from the literature review. This discussion section will also elaborate some of the extra teaching strategies that teachers mentioned in their open-ended question and which they found successful. In addition, it shall give some recommendations of teaching strategies based on research that teachers can use in the future with their students.

Evidence- Based Strategies

Based on our data collection findings two strategies that teachers use the most with students who have speech impairment were Collaborative Learning or Peer-assisted Learning and learning through Visual Aids (charts, pictures, videos).

Collaborative Learning or Peer-assisted Learning

As mentioned, based on the findings, one of the strategies that teachers use the most to help students with speech impairment is collaborative learning or peer-assisted learning. This is also a teaching strategy mentioned by many researchers. Collaborative learning includes working in groups or peer-to-peer learning. According to Merrick (2021) communication difficulties pose a particular challenge even for experienced teachers. Thus, according to her a majority of experienced teachers have mentioned inclusive learning as a productive teaching strategy. Students with speech impairment generally tend to be marginalized or victimized so using inclusive learning through group work is one of the top teaching strategies which helps students not only with their academic performance but also with this feeling they might have in the classroom (Merrick, 2021). Similarly, Emerson (2012) highlighted that there are many benefits from cooperative learning structures for students who have speech impairment. More specifically, inclusive or cooperative learning environments offer students the opportunity to express themselves better and more freely. In addition, they can articulate their thoughts without pressure, they can receive constructive feedback from their peers, exchange ideas or skills, have more chances to respond to one another and so on. Anxiety due to fear of mistakes is very common in every classroom. Thus, teachers can provide a supportive, inclusive non-judgmental environment where mistakes are seen as part of learning and not something to dread about. Furthermore, according to Steven and Slavins (1995) students with speech impediments are more prone to have positive learning outcomes if they receive feedback from their peers. Cooperative learning presents a shift in learning style from a traditional approach to a more friendly one which benefits all students including here those with speech impairment (Emmerson, 2013). For instance, the following concepts regarding learning style have shifted:

- “A good class is a quiet class” to “Learning involves healthy noise”
- “Talking is cheating” to “Talking is learning”
- “Keep your eyes on your paper” to “Ask your partner for help” (Kagan & Kagan, 2009)

According to Kagan and Kagan (2009) there are some basic considerations that should be taken into account by teachers when implementing a cooperative teaching strategy. These include the group size, learning goals, direct vs group instruction, individual vs group accountability and so on. Moreover, there are many types of cooperative groups such as homogenous (groups that share the same interest, abilities, personality); heterogeneous groups (mixed abilities, sex, interest, personalities); randomly formed groups; student-selected teams (Kagan

and Kagan 2009). Lastly, integrating cooperative learning in the classroom is also beneficial for the students' social interaction skills (Emmerson 2013).

Learning through visual aids

Using visual aids was the teaching strategy which the teachers who took part in this research study said that they use the most when it comes to teaching children with speech impairment (see results section). Visual aids refer to the use of pictures, photographs, gestures, drawings, written words, or other objects to facilitate communication for a student who has difficulty using or understanding language. According to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) visual aids provide students who have speech impairment with a different mode for communication. According to Nurhizrah (2019) through visual aids teachers use media in delivering the material. The visual aids can be in different formats such as pictures, charts, videos, drawings, paintings, photography and so on. Specifically, Nurizrah (2019) highlighted that visual aids that are usually used in classrooms can be grouped into the following categories:

- The speaker (the teacher) - the teacher can use body language, gestures, face mimics to convey information to students who have speech impairment.
- Objects - teachers can use objects brought to class to help students better understand what is being taught.
- Chalkboard - chalkboards serve as great visual aid that can be used creatively by teachers and that are easy accessible and easy integrated in the classroom
- Videos, Slides, Projectors - they serve as great visual aids to help teachers not only teach students but keep them engaged through materials and topics that spark their interest and attention.

Visual aids are very beneficial when it comes to teaching children with speech impairment for many reasons. First, they serve to create a fun, friendly and non-traditional classroom environment which will aid them to engage actively in speaking activities. Visual aids help students relate what they see to what is being taught which can help with their conceptual and critical thinking. They can provide real-life situations or direct experience to students; they enhance comprehension skills; they facilitate explanation of abstract and complex concepts; they improve memory retention because it helps students encode information in a fun and memorable manner. Overall, visual aids are very valuable to teachers to help their students who have speech impediments to enhance their learning experience as well as provide support for their academic success.

Other Teaching Strategies mentioned by teachers

In the open-ended question (see the results section) that asked the participants to provide successful examples of teaching strategies that they use with children who have speech impairment the ones that were mentioned the most were: Individualized instruction, collaboration with parents and collaboration with speech and language therapists.

Individualized Instruction

Individualized instruction refers to the teaching approach which is tailored to meet the specific needs of students in our case students who have difficulties in speaking. This means that instead of using a one-size-fits-all strategy teachers are aware that students with speech impairment may have special needs and adapt an individualized method of teaching. The individualized instruction strategy has these key components:

- Differentiated instruction - teachers differentiate instruction by adapting the teaching methods to the learning ability of the students
- Regular monitoring and feedback - students are provided regularly with feedback and are monitored closely to see their progress
- Flexible pacing- students are allowed to move in their own pace in their learning journey, they can spend more time in tasks that they find difficult and move quicker in ones they find easier
- Student autonomy - students have the right to make decisions with regard to their learning process such as selecting the topic or classroom activities (Kagan & Kagan 2009).

Individualized instruction is seen as very beneficial, even from this study's participants', because it helps teachers address the students' special needs and abilities, allows students independence to make decisions in their learning experience and it provides a supportive and safe environment.

Collaborating with Speech and Language Therapists

“Collaboration between speech and language therapists (SLTs) and teachers is beneficial for supporting children’s communication skills.” (Glover 2015) The collaboration of teachers and language and speech therapists is very crucial not only to address the students’ communicative problems but also support their overall academic journey. Some of the main benefits that come from this collaboration include: collaborative planning (developing together teaching strategies to address the students’ needs e.g. individualized instruction); coordinated support (providing mutual emotional to students); mutual professional development (they can share knowledge, ideas, strategies

skills); data sharing and progress monitoring (they can share data with regards to the students' progress) (Glover, 2015).

Recommendation of Teaching Strategies

Some alternative teaching strategies that would be helpful to teachers to use with students who have speech impairment are - creating a safe and non-threatening environment and also scaffolding

Creating a safe and non-threatening environment

Teachers have to create a safe environment so their students feel their best to express themselves. According to Altun (2023) practice is essential when it comes to helping students with speech difficulties to reduce speaking anxiety. The more that students talk the better they will be able to communicate and the less anxious they will feel. In order for students to practice, teachers may include collaborative learning, authentic topics for discussions that arouse the students interest and also activities or topics that are related to student's interests. Teaching strategies and activities that do not correspond to student's interests and needs will lead not only to anxious students but also to unmotivated ones. According to Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009), educators can create meaningful relationships with their students by integrating humor, addressing students by their first names, and maintaining eye contact alongside positive body language. As we have seen, anxiety due to fear of mistakes is very common in EFL classrooms. Thus, teachers have to provide a supportive non-judgmental environment where mistakes are seen as part of learning and not something to dread about.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is the teaching strategy by which teachers break down tasks to students so they do not feel overwhelmed. Goh as cited in Hyseni and Lundberg (2023) defines scaffolding as an "instructional strategy or support system designed to facilitate learning and promote students' independent thinking and problem-solving skills". When it comes to speaking, scaffolding is very important because through scaffolding teachers can provide students with prompts, phrase or sentence frames, vocabulary aids, help with grammatical structures, models of conversations and so on - all of which can help students relieve their anxiety and express themselves better. According to Rozi and Farida (2022) through scaffolding and through a moderate and constructive approach when it comes to mistake correction teachers can create a safe and motivating environment in which students can express themselves freely and engage actively in speaking tasks.

CONCLUSION

This research paper has given a comprehensive analysis of the teaching strategies that teachers use in primary educational settings in Kosove to teach students who have speech impairment. It talked in detail about many different strategies - the ones that were derived from the data collection (collaborative learning, visual aids, individualized instruction etc) and also the ones that were recommended by researchers (scaffolding and creating a safe non-threatening classroom environment). This paper through the results of the data collection concluded that students with speech impairment are present in classrooms in Kosove. It provided evidence that teachers have sufficient information with regard to this phenomenon amongst their students. Furthermore, this paper presented the findings that were derived from the data collection which were about the teaching strategies; implementation challenges of these teaching strategies; how teachers felt about the level of support in implementing these strategies; did teachers take part in professional development trainings and how helpful were them in preparing them to teach children with speech impairment; how often do they collaborate with speech and language therapists.

Limitations

There are certain limitations that I faced while carrying out this recent study. First and foremost

the distribution of the questionnaires, the questionnaires had to be distributed physically because a permission of the school's principal was required. This presented a limitation because the questionnaires could not be sent online for filling using Google Forms, and had to be sent and picked up from four different schools which took more than a week to complete.

Another limitation was the use of the quantitative approach. Considering the sensitivity of this topic, maybe using the qualitative approach (conducting interviews and observations) would have helped me gather more information regarding this topic. However, the quantitative approach proved successful because the data gathered and findings answered the research questions this study posited.

References

- Adebayo, S. & Mbuku, M. (2014). The Impact of Speech and Language Disorders on Pupils' Learning and Socialization in Schools of Kalomo District Zambia. Altun, M. (2023). The Impact of Speaking Anxiety on the Development of Communication skills
- Abby C. R., Wilson R., De La Cruz E. Practical Recommendations for Teachers: Language Disorders by Abby Cash Ryan Wilson Eileen De La Cruz
- Brice A. (2012). Language Use in Social Interactions of School-Age Children With Language Impairments: An Evidence-Based Systematic Review of Treatment
- Bornman, J. (2020, August 27). Evidence-Based Practices for Working with Learners with Speech and Language Disabilities. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.
- Colcasue C. B., Thoron C. A., LaRose E. S., (2019). Teaching students with disabilities: Speech and language impairments
- Daniel.R.G., McLeod Sh. (2017). Children with Speech Sound Disorders at School: Challenges for Children, Parents and Teachers
- Dixon, J., Witkowsky, B., & Pardee, E. (1920). WHY I LIKE TEACHING (PRIZE ESSAYS). *The High School Journal*,
- Dobinson, L. K. (2021). Universal strategies for the improvement of expressive language skills in the primary classroom: A systematic review by Keeley L Dobinson
- Emmerson, M. L. (2013). Cooperative Learning in Inclusive Classrooms: Students Who Work Together, Learn Together
- Farida, L. A., & Rozi, F. (2022). Scaffolding Talks in Teaching Speaking Skills to the Higher Education Students, Why Not?. *Asian Pendidikan*,
- Fielding, H. (2005). Effective communication in organizations
- Gelston D. (2004). Inclusion Classrooms: Students with Disabilities Interacting with Instructors and Able-Bodied Peers
- Gasby J., Graham J.L., White L.J.S. Tancredi H., (2022). Do teachers know enough about the characteristics and educational impacts of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) to successfully include students with DLD?
- Glover, A. (2015). Collaboration between teachers and speech and language therapists: Services for primary school children with speech, language and communication needs
- Goh, C. (2017). Research into practice: Scaffolding learning processes to improve speaking performance. *Language Teaching*
- Hyseni, B. & Lundberg, M. (2023). Effective Strategies to Reduce Language Anxiety and Fostering Spoken English Skills
- Kristal A. (2015). Teaching Strategies for Students with Developmental Speech Delays in Mainstream Classrooms
- Kagan, S., & Kagan, M. (2009). Towards a Complex Model of Cooperative Learning
- Kagan, S., & Kagan, M. (2009). *Kagan cooperative learning*.
- Law J, Dennis JA, Charlton JJV. (2017). Speech and language therapy interventions for children with primary speech and/or language disorders.
- Merrick, R. (2021). Inclusive Teamwork for Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs
- Nurhizrah, G. (2018). Using Visual Aids to Develop Students' Speaking Skill
- Rosenshine B. (2012). Principles of Instruction: Research-Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know. *American Educator*
- Stevens, R. J., & Slavin, R. E. (1995). Effects of a cooperative learning approach in reading and writing on academically handicapped and nonhandicapped students. *Elementary School Journal*
- Tsiplakides, I., & Keramida, A. (2009). Helping Students Overcome Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in the English Classroom: Theoretical Issues and Practical Recommendations

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire (in English)

Note: The questionnaire will be looked at again over the course of completing the full literature review. As it is the most important instrument to gather the data it has to be designed carefully. It will also be translated into Albanian.

The aim of this questionnaire is to investigate the teaching strategies that teachers use with children who have speech impairment in primary educational settings in Kosove. In addition, this research will serve to give recommendations to teachers for future strategies.

Participating in this research is voluntary and it will take about 20 minutes of your time. All identifiable data will be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of this research. Completing this questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in the research.

1. Gender:

- Male
- Female

2. Age:

- Under 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 and above

3. Educational Background:

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree
- Other (please specify)

4. Years of teaching experience:

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years

- 10 plus years

5. *What is your primary teaching subject or grade level?*

6. *How familiar are you with the term “speech impairment” in children?*

- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Neutral
- Not very familiar
- Not familiar at all

7. *Do you currently have students with speech impairment in your classroom?*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

8. *Which of the following teaching strategies do you currently use to support children with speech impairment? (Select all that apply)*

8. *Which of the following strategies are applied in your classroom?*

- Visual aids (pictures, charts)
- Assistive technology
- Peer-assisted learning
- Individualized instruction
- Speech therapy sessions
- Other (please specify)

9. *Can you provide an example of a specific teaching strategy that you found particularly effective in helping a child with speech impairment overcome communication challenges?*

10. *On a scale of 1 to 5, how effective do you find the teaching strategies you use in supporting children with speech impairment?*

- 1 (Not effective at all)
- 2
- 3 (Neutral)
- 4

- 5 (Very effective)

11. Please select the most significant challenge you face in implementing teaching strategies for children with speech impairment in your classroom:

- Limited access to appropriate teaching resources
- Insufficient professional development or training opportunities
- Difficulty in individualizing teaching approaches for diverse needs
- Challenges in assessing and monitoring progress effectively
- Limited collaboration with speech-language pathologists or specialists
- Other (please specify): _____

12. How do you feel about the current level of support and resources provided to address the needs of children with speech impairment in your school?

- Strongly dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Strongly satisfied

13. Have you received any professional development or training related to teaching children with speech impairment?

- Yes
- No

14. If yes, how helpful was the professional development or training in preparing you to support children with speech impairment?

- Not helpful at all
- Somewhat helpful
- Neutral
- Helpful
- Very helpful

15. How frequently do you collaborate with speech therapists to integrate their recommendations into your teaching strategies for children with speech impairment?

- Always
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Appendix - Questionnaire in Albanian

Pyetësor

Qëllimi i këtij pyetësori është që të hulumtoj strategjitë mësimdhënëse të cilat mësuesit e nivelit arsimor të ulët në Kosovë i përdorin me fëmijët të cilët kanë crregullime në të folur.

Pjesëmarrja në këtë hulumtim është vullnetare dhe do ju marr rreth 10 minuta të kohës suaj. Të gjitha të dhënat personale do të mbahen të fshehura dhe do të përdoren vetëm për qëllimin e këtij hulumtimi. Përfundimi i këtij pyetësori nënkupon pajtimin tuaj për tu bërë pjesë e këtij hulumtimi.

1. Gjinia

- Mashkull
- Femër

2. Moshë

- Nën 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 plus

3. Niveli juaj i shkollimit:

- Bachelor
- Master
- Doktoraturë

4. Sa vite përvijë pune keni si mesimdhënës?

- Më pak se 1 vit
- 1-5 vite
- 6-10 vite
- 10 vite e më shumë

5. Në cilën klasë të nivelit të ulët arsimor jepni mësim?

- Klasa e parë
- Klasa e dytë

- Klasa e tretë
- Klasa e katërt
- Klasa e pestë

6. Sa keni njohuri për termin “crregullime në të folur” te fëmijët?

- Kam shumë njohuri
- Kam deri diku njohuri
- Nuk kam shumë njohuri
- Nuk kam fare njohuri

7. Momentalisht a keni nxënës në klasën tuaj të cilët kanë crregullime në të folur?

- Po
- Jo
- Nuk jam i/e sigurtë

8. Cilat nga strategjitë e mëposhtme të mësimdhënies i përdorni që të ndihmoni nxënësit të cilët kanë crregullime në të folur?

- Mjete ndihmëse vizuale (foto, video, karta të ndryshme)
- Teknologji ndihmëse
- Mësim në grup me nxënës të tjerë
- Mësimdhënie e individualizar
- Seancë terapie për crregullim në të folur

9. A mund të tregoni një shembull specifik të një strategjie të mësimdhënies e cila sipas jush ka treguar rezultat të mirë për t’i ndihmuar nxënësit tuaj që kanë crregullime në të folur?

10. Nga një shkallë prej 1 nga 5, sa mendoni se ju kanë ndihmuar strategjitë e mësimdhënies të cilat i përdorni me nxënësit të cilët kanë cregullime në të folur?

- 1 (Aspak ndihmuese)
- 2
- 3 (Neutral)
- 4
- 5 (Shumë ndihmuese)

11. *Ju lutem zgjedhni sfidën më të madhe me të cilën jeni hasur për t'i implementuar strategjitë e juaja të mësimdhënies në klasë për fëmijët të cilët kanë crregullime në të folur?*

- Akses i limituar sa i përket resurseve për mësimdhënie
- Zhvillim profesional i pamjaftueshem dhe mundesi te pakta trajnimi
- Vështërsi për të individualizuar metodat e mësimdhënies për nevoja specifike të nxënësve Vështërsi për të vlerësuar dhe monitoruar progresin e nxënësve

- Bshkëpunim i kufizuar me specialist ose patolog të gjuhës dhe të folurit

12. *Sa jeni të kënaqur me nivelin e mbështetjes dhe resurseve të ofruara në adresimin e nevojave të nxënësve me crregullime në të folur?*

- Shumë i/e pakënaqur
- I/e pakënaqur
- I/e kënaqur
- Shumë i/e kënaqur

13. *A keni mar pjesë në ndonjë trajnim profesional që ka të bëjë me mësimdhënien e nxënësve me crregullime në të folur?*

- Po
- Jo

14. *Nëse po, sa ju ka ndihmuar në përgatitjen tuaj për t'i mbështetur në mësimnxënie nxënësve me crregullime në të folur?*

- Nuk më ka ndihmuar aspak
- Më ka ndihmuar deri diku
- Më ka ndihmuar
- Më ka ndihmuar shumë

15. *Sa shpesh bashkëpunoni me terapistë të gjuhës dhe të folurit në mënyrë që t'i përshtatni strategjitë e juaja të mësimdhënies specifkisht për nxënësit me crregullime në të folur?*

- Gjithmonë
- Shpesh
- Me raste
- Shumë rrallë
- Kurrë

Appendix 2 - Consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Study: **Teaching Strategies for Children with Speech Impairment: A Comprehensive Analysis in Primary Educational Settings**

Researcher: Arjetë Bllaca

You are invited to participate in a research study of “Teaching Strategies for Children with Speech Impairment: A Comprehensive Analysis in Primary Educational Settings”

This research is part of the class Language Methodology supervised by Prof. Dr. Shykrane Germizaj from the English Language and Literature Department at the University of Prishtina. You have been selected as a possible participant because your experience as a teacher in a primary school setting will hopefully lead to us finding data regarding this topic. We ask that you read this consent form carefully and ask any questions you might have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to examine the teaching strategies that teachers use in primary education settings with students who have speech impairment, focusing on the current strategies, their experience and giving recommendations for the future.

Procedure: If you agree to take part in this research study you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire which will take about 15-20 minutes of your time. You have the right to skip any questions that you might feel uncomfortable answering, and the right to withdraw or retract, at any time, answers that make you identifiable.

Confidentiality: The questionnaire will be anonymous, therefore, we assure you that only data that will not make you identifiable will be used in our final research study.

Benefits: There is no direct benefit to you, however you will be contributing in further exploring this specific aspect within your profession.

Participating is completely voluntary. If you have any questions, you can contact the researcher at the contact information listed below.

Arjetë Bllaca

UP Master student of English Language - Integrated Linguistics Program

arjete.bllaca@student.uni-pr.edu

Your signature indicates you have read this consent form, received satisfactory answers to any questions, and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Full name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF POWER IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Sabile HYSENI¹

INTRODUCTION

In political science, the intricate linkage of language and power has been examined through discourse analysis. Spring Day: Words matter, and language has the power to make people believe things are true just by saying them over and over again. Politicians also utilize their words as a basic weapon to frame an idea and persuade public opinion and decision-making. Political discourses where words carry unimaginable weight, language is not just a medium to convey the message. But it is not a burden, rather a vital ingredient of power that helps enable identities and shapes images. The study presented through this research paper, intends to investigate the constituent mechanism of reciprocity between language and power in the political sphere, unveiling the instruments of linguistic hegemony as well as its persistence, and resistance. This paper, at its heart, examines how political actors employ language as a tool to create and maintain power relations. This study of how politicians manipulate language to represent events, order tasks and knit public opinion also demonstrates the power of language. By framing, persuasion, manipulation and narrative - all part of the rhetorical devices by which political leaders steer public discourse and best influence policy outcomes from the bully pulpit. For that reason, the role language plays in political discourse becomes very important to be able to unpack politics in contemporary societies. On the other hand, non-dominant groups such as marginalized people and challengers of the status quo might use language to resist hegemonic narratives, advertise their sense of autonomy, and mobilize for social change instead. While investigating an integrated relationship among language, power, and

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; sabileh1@gmail.com

social settings, this research aims to unveil some of the complex mechanisms underlying linguistic domination on the political stage.

An Overview of the Problem

In the area of politics, language is much more than merely a means of communication. It is a powerful tool for creating ideologies, impacting public thinking, and sustaining or provoking power structures (Chilton, 2004). In political discourse, the complex relationship among language and power proposes a need for thorough analysis. Politicians, despite their cultural background or ideologies, utilize different linguistic strategies to achieve their objectives. These strategies can have a significant impact on the public opinion, policy development and social conditions.

But, the exact way politicians use language as a tool of power isn't always straightforward, clear or well-understood. This, in turn, amounts to a number of related problems. In order to ascertain these cross-cultural differences in lingual modalities of power we must compare linguistic approaches with various types of societies. Schäffner (2004), claims that political discourse is context-dependent and the way of interpreting can be understood in relation to national or political contexts. Arguably, such gendered practices in political language indicate how political discourse is situated and shaped by the norms and roles of gender as experienced and learned between women and men regarding power dynamics. Indeed, a paramount challenge remains in how language is leveraged whether to further isolate certain communities or to uplift them especially in multicultural societies. In addition, the changing media landscape is hardening the terms in which political messages are composed and spread, further complicating language as an instrument of power. This evolution shapes public interpretations of political discourse in ways which affect the effectiveness of linguistic strategies but whose impact has not been deeply explored. These cases provide a powerful commentary on the nature of political communication and the ethical implications for its role in shaping public opinion, while also devising effective democratic processes.

The Aim of the Study

The purpose of this paper and its accompanying research is to explore in-depth various layers of language as a tool of power in political discourse through comparative analysis of selected political speeches pronounced by leader figures from both Kosovo and the USA. Through a cross-cultural comparative study, this paper explores the complex ways in which politicians use linguistic devices to gain influence, power

and sociopolitical positioning within their specific political contexts. This is done by exploring political speeches of leaders like Atifete Jahjaga and Vjosa Osmani of Kosovo and Donald Trump and Barack Obama of the United States as case studies, explaining how multilayered cultural, political, and personal factors influence language use in positions of power. The analysis of the study traverses multiple linguistic levels (phono-logical, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) and is aimed at painting a comprehensive picture of language in political action. Through an exploration of these dimensions the research aims to make a contribution to the wider understanding of how language, power and politics work in society today. We hope our results provide some understanding of the workings of political speech, and might direct attention to more thoughtful interpretations of political discourse. At the same time, this study aims at clarifying how language animates political realities and drives democratic processes across a globalized planet.

Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyze linguistic and rhetorical strategies used in political speeches by leaders from two countries, Kosovo and United States of America
2. To investigate phonological properties of political speech, i.e. the use of rhetorical devices like alliterations and rhythmic patterns, and their potential influence on persuasion.
3. To explore the ways in which political language is constitutive of and contributes to power relations.
4. To consider how language is used to discuss and potentially counteract circumstances of marginalization and empowerment in different political contexts.
5. To compare and contrast linguistic approaches employed by male versus female politicians

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The present research will attempt to provide answers for the following questions:

1. Which linguistic strategies used in political discourse can be seen as harboring power dynamics in terms of opinion building, dismissing or supporting decision-making and how?
2. How does the power of language in politics shape meaning and spaces and result in the marginalization or emancipation of some social groups,

and ultimately how do people from within those groups both comply with and contest linguistic authority?

Hypothesis

The linguistic strategies that male and female political leaders of different cultural contexts resort to in their discourses are shaped by the sociopolitical setting of their speech as well as by personal leadership styles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical foundations

Language is a main method for creating political discourse, and it is an important weapon in influencing thoughts, building identity, and determining the masses. Unpacking political discourse: language and power research Political discourse studies are anchored in critical theory and examination. Michael Foucault made major contributions in this arena, and his body of work on discourse, power and knowledge provide some of the reasons for these findings (Foucault, 1972-77). Foucault's (2000) concept of discourse as a system that creates social truths and upholds power relations provides a useful way to understand how language perpetuates or resists hegemonic narratives. In addition, Norman Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) inspired by Foucault studying language in order to (re-)produce power relationships in political and media discourse has recently emerged as a powerful method (Fairclough 1989-1995). CDA offers tools of analysis breakdowns of language tactics employed by politicians that in turn uncover ideological dimension and power structures (Charteris-Black, 2006; Musolff, 2016; Lakoff, 2014).

Language and Power

The intricate line between language and power has for many decades been the focus of linguistic and socio-political investigations. To be more precise, many scholars have done extensive research about how language is employed in different social settings which include political discourse specific to: to exercise power, to maintain and to contest power. The best analytical concept to grasp this is the "symbolic power", a statement that emerged from the ceaseless research of Pierre Bourdieu. The concept of the relation between language has been said, in the words of Bourdieu (1991), "language relations are not merely actions of communication but also connections of significant power that emerge the authority relationships between speakers or the group they pertain to". This perspective situated language as a tool for wielding, resisting, or reproducing power and social order. Based on this framework, scholars have explored the various relationships

between language and power in political contexts. In contrast Van Dijk (1993) suggests public discourse has significantly more powerful currency - positioning and control over the object of scrutiny. In addition, he emphasizes the necessity of speech for maintaining dominance and injustice. According to his theory, the most controversial figures with the power of the speech are also more likely to influence who and how everyone else thinks. The concept of “language ideologies” further enables us to gain a better grasp on the power dynamics interwoven with spoken language. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) refer to these language ideologies as interpretive theories of language, or sets of beliefs about speech that people rely on to explain or legitimate their understandings of how languages work, how they are structured. Those beliefs have an influence on how language is understood and deployed in political contexts because it tends to partially reflect and reinforce existing power structures.

Rhetorical Strategies and Framing in Political Discourse

Zakariya et al. (2018) argued that political speeches would be almost impossible to take place without containing any rhetorical devices. Politicians, trying to achieve their political goal and benefit in the form of an ideology have used different strategies for manipulation and rhetoric at the phonological, pragmatic, semantic, lexical, textual and syntactic levels of language in their political discourse (David, 2014). Research has shown how the rhetoric of political actors is used to shape group identity, build consensus and defend against challenges to authority by making subordinated groups clearly identifiable. Though researchers differ on exactly what counts as a figure of metaphor and what does not, some have looked at the rhetoric (metaphoricity in terms here) of figures of speech - like metaphors or analogies - both implicit and explicit, in political discourse. Metaphorical language evokes feeling responses and helps to impact the mutual narrative (Charteris-Black, 201; Musolf, 2016; Lakoff, 2014). Moreover, researchers like Schöffner & Bassnett (2010) as well as Cap (2013), studied the ways in which politicians use linguistic devices to construct stories and control dialogues while maintaining a good public image. According to their work, “political elites have the ability to control political ends”, public opinion and policy outcomes simply by wielding the tools for constructing compelling narrative and using rhetorical strategies.

Language and the Construction of Identities

In the context of politics, language is a key instrument per se in the process of identity-formation. Researchers have analyzed where and in what ways the language of political leaders is looking for shared identity or personality, community-building and elicitation of sympathy (Ponton & Larina, 2016;

Wodak et al., 2009). Political leaders often try to manufacture a [sense of] unity and oneness with their followers by reminding them that they share inherent traits, histories or values. Conversely, language can also be used as a sieve to rinse of certain communities from the language pool, so that current power inequalities and social injustices remain in place (Van Dijk, 2008; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). An examination of this manner belongs rather to critical discourse analysis, since it aims at revealing ways in which boundaries between “us” and “them” are drawn, e.g. strengthened divisions along class denoted lines and stereotypes preserved (Reisigl & Wodak 2001).

The impact of Digital Technology and Contemporary Media in Political Discourse

In the world of social media, online platforms and cutting-edge technology, language has new significance in politics. Among others, scholars have examined how politicians use social media platforms to promote their agendas, construct identities and connect with voters (Ott, 2017; Ross & Rivers, 2018). For instance, Ott (2017) deals with the influence of Twitter in political discourse. He argues that the structure of Twitter does not reward patience and breeds political speech underground; impatience thrives among those who get little airtime, he says. He also notes the app will not develop informed policy debate and encourages simplistic language, due to the word limitation. Wind further posits that politicians tweet on a whim since Twitter is so easy to use and states or legislative releases come out, often horribly. Ross and Rivers (2018) also went into the impact of Twitter right here. They tackled how politicians use social media to create the face of themselves they want and the tactic of presenting a double-edged sword: they argue that social media allows politicians to speak directly to the electorate without facing the barriers of the mainstream press.

However, the use of social media has also facilitated hate speech, libel and misinformation. There can be a word for it and that means caution must be exercised around how language might be used for evil ends (Bakir & McStay, 2018; Bradshaw & Howard, 2019) Others have critically scrutinized the use of discourse, such as Bradshaw and Howard (2018) and Marwick and Lewis (2017). Emotive language, purposeful ambiguity, and the exploitation of cognitive biases are the three most common strategies utilized to manipulate public opinion in these studies (Tandoc et al., 2018). As a result, Tucker et al. (2018) raise the veracity of political words.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative methodology to analyze political discourse in speeches of leaders on Kosovo and the US side. The research design was inspired by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is a method for analyzing the relationships among discourse and power, as well social context (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). The reason why critical discourse analysis (CDA) is important for this paper, as it enables the researcher to go much deeper than looking at words on a page or screen, to explore in some detail how language functions on the ground in the construction, reproduction and contestation of power in political contexts. This research seeks to reveal hidden ideologies and power structures in political speeches by using CDA.

In addition, CDA is complemented by an inductive coding approach and reflexive thematic analysis in the study. In contrast, the inductive approach to coding shared by Lewins and Silver (2007) derives codes and themes directly from the data rather than imposing pre-existing categories as suggested by Thomas, (2006). This keeps the analysis close to what the speeches are actually trying to convey. The paper also uses the approach of reflexive thematic analysis in developing (i.e., identifying and analyzing) patterns or themes with the text, foregrounding the role of the researcher in interpreting and constructing meaning from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Collection Methods

The study includes the dataset of political leaders' speeches from Kosovo and the United States of America. The speeches were chosen for their relevance to major political occurrences and the ability of them to demonstrate the manipulation of language in power politics. Selection criteria for these speeches were as follows:

- The distinction of the political figure giving the speech.
- The nature of the event at which the speech was given.
- Full transcriptions of all speeches
- The speeches were derived from official government websites, news archives and other reputable organs of political rhetoric. We transcribed each speech verbatim to guarantee the quality of our analysis.

Analytical Approach and procedures

The analysis was done based on the principles of CDA also there were several key stages to follow:

Analysis of Text: A close analysis of the text through consideration of vocabulary, grammar and rhetoric decimal techniques used in the speeches. This study attempts to make explicit some of the patterns and features that depict how power relations are created and regulated.

Contextual Analysis - which places the speeches within their larger social and political context. It takes into account the time and place in which the speakers spoke, and also to whom they were speaking.

Interpretative Analysis :This involves interpreting the findings from the textual and contextual analysis to understand how discourse shapes and gets shaped by power relations. For this purpose, we use theoretical concepts of CDA to analyze the political discourse in more detail.

In addition to CDA, the study employs a type of inductive text interpretation that has some affinity with coding and thus also with reflexive thematic analysis. This is different from inductive coding, where codes are created out of the data without any predetermined categories. It means that the analysis is held close to reality - the speeches as they are (Thomas, 2006).

Reflective-Thematic Analysis (i.e., identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns or themes within the data). Reflexive thematic analysis strongly embodies the constructivist approach by highlighting the profound role of the researcher in shaping up themes and acknowledges that objectivity is inherent in the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Analysis Tools

In order to aid the analysis, different tools and techniques were used;

It was also organized and coded using NVivo (Qualitative Data Analysis software is primarily used for coding of transcripts). NVivo is a tool that helps you manage large volumes of text, and provides an approach to identifying themes and patterns within the data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). **Discourse Analysis Frameworks:** Utilized specific frameworks from the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) literature (e.g., Fairclough's three-dimensional model, Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach) to ensure proper conduct of analysis. These frameworks create systemized ways to understand the relationship between language and power. Through a combination of these methods and tools, this research will gain insights into the political discourse in Kosovo and the United States seeking to understand how language is used for power relations and social reality.

RESULTS

The key findings of the analysis done on eight political speeches with the focus of how language is used by politicians as a tool of power will be presented in this section. An examination of eight political speeches performed by four current presidents, Atifete Jahjaga and Vjosa Osmani from Kosovo, and Donald Trump and Barack Obama from the United States reveals a number of salient observations on different levels of language. These results provide insights into effective strategies for communicating and influencing audience attitudes about a variety of topics. We analyze the political speeches at phonological, pragmatic, semantic, lexical and syntactic levels in this paper. It also studied the rhetorical strategies of all the speeches. At the phonological level, we found all eight speeches displayed normative pronunciation and intonation. Political speeches are typically known to exhibit these patterns. Specifically, both Donald Trump and Barack Obama used rhetorical devices like alliteration, assonance and rhythm in their speeches to emphasize key points and enhance the oratory power of their speeches. In his speeches, Obama used alliteration in phrases like “*calloused hand by calloused hand*” while Trump employed the device in phrases like “*crooked, corrupt and criminals*”. In addition, the pragmatic analysis of the speeches revealed different target audiences among the speeches. In the context of their situation, the speeches given by former president Atifete Jahjaga and current president Vjosa Osmani, were particularly concerned with empowering women, gender equality and entrepreneurship. Taking as an example Osmani’s speech at the UN Security Council meeting used an effective rhetorical strategy in order to evoke empathy and involve the audience emotionally by telling the story of Lirije Muqolli- the sixth month infant who was burnt to ashes by the police and military forces of the Milosevic regime. On the other hand, Obama emphasized voter rights and community service in his speeches. Whereas, Trump’s speeches have a more aggressive tone by attacking his opponents and portraying himself as a freedom fighter against dictatorship. Furthermore, from a semantic analysis it was concluded that the speeches contained semantic fields as well as the usage of connotations was noticed. These were accompanied by specific words or phrases such as: “*empowerment*”, “*opportunity*”, “*progress*” and “*success*” which in Jahjaga and Osmani speeches carried positive connotations. In contrast, words like “*injustice*”, “*discrimination*” and “*barriers*” had a negative connotation. Correspondingly, in Obama’s speeches terms like “*democracy*”, “*freedom*” “*voting rights*” have positive connotations. On the contrary, in Trump’s speeches it was noticed that terms like: “*freedom*”, “*liberty*”, “*fascists*”, “*communists*” and “*marxists*” were used to portray his opponents as enemies of freedom.

At the lexical level analysis, Osmani and Jahjaga speeches indicated a frequency of gender-related words including “women”, “girls”, “discrimination”. Additionally, in Obama’s speeches a more formal language was noticed. He used more rhetorical devices such as anaphora and metaphors. One example of anaphora is this Selma speech: “*We honor those who walked so we could run. We must run so our children soar*”. Whereas, an example of the metaphor used in his speeches is: “*the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice*” meaning although the progress toward justice is slow and challenging, the result leads to a more fair world. In addition, in Trump’s speeches a more colloquial, hyperbole and repetition language was noted. This may be used for emphasis. His speeches include hyperbolic expressions like: “*This country is going to hell*” or “*We will build a great wall*” as well as frequent use of phrases like “*believe me*”, “*drain the swamp*” or “*make America great again*”. The syntactic analysis showed that speeches from Osmani, Jahjaga and Obama had longer sentences with phrases established in the main clause, along with dependent clauses, which is a formative characteristic for political speeches. By contrast, Trump spoke in short, relatively simple sentences. Finally, the textual analysis reveals that the speeches are structured. They follow the standard pattern of including an introduction, body, and conclusion. In order to retain coherence, nodes for cohesive devices such as pronouns, conjunctions, and lexical repetition were identified.

DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

In this section of the paper, the analysis of the data of this qualitative study will be discussed. This study has significantly highlighted the function of language as a powerful instrument in political communication, and leaders have employed divergent language measures to regenerate and uphold control over the populace, appeal to the public, and shape social reality. Yet, as the case of the two former warring states shows, some disparities between a speech pattern utilized in some instances and another employed in others are discernible when comparing speeches by Kosovar and US leaders, with nuances dependent on cultural context (post-socialist Kosovo compared to the long-lasting democracy of the US), gender (male vs. female leaders) or personal agendas. An analysis of eight political speeches delivered by the Kosovan Presidents Jahjaga and Osmani, as well as by the American Presidents Trump and Obama demonstrated several communication strategies used successfully. The persuasion of pronouncement upon speech was also operative in the phonological level, here pronunciation and rhetorical devices like alliteration or assonance are seen. The analysis would note that Kosovar leaders tailored speaking points to different audiences, emphasizing empowerment and gender equality for women in the case of Obama (with a side order of Voter Rights

and Community Service), quicker to go on attack when necessary, which is normally at his opponents.

The third and final method with which we resultantly utilized for framing of our major was semantic analysis of connotations and emotive fields used operationally in political narrative setting. As for Jahjaga and Osmani, a second word crawl was draped over their speeches; this time using terms such as empowerment, opportunity and progress; words associated with slogans of democracy, free indeed with positive verbs in the text of Obama. Meanwhile, Trump employed “freedom” and “liberty” every time he mentioned his foe. These included the lexical profiles of individual speeches, together with his gender-specific word choice; formal language; and rhetorical strategies such as anaphora and metaphors deployed by Obama. In his speech, Trump laid out this implicit commitment with informal language and a repetitive, exaggerated turn of phrase - unpresidential turns intended to make the import of what he was saying more certain. Some insights can be gleaned from the syntactic analysis on this point: whereas Osmani, Jahjaga and Obama used, for building authority, long and complex sentences, Trump preferred to create some relatability with common sentence structures. The development of these discourse strategies were highly transformed in the context of culture and politics. Kosovar leaders tell a tale of empowerment and equality, concepts that Van Dijk would term “Positive self-presentation”, while it looks like Trump uses linguistic features resembling Wodak & Forchtner’s “Politics of Fear”. In his famous 2004 address, U.S. Senator for Illinois and soon-to-be Democratic nominee for president, Barack Obama, used phonological strategies that can help explain how rhetorical devices contribute to persuasive political discourse. The results therefore contribute to the discussion of these power dynamics in political contexts and show there is a highly intricate interplay between language, power, and socio-political change.

The results prioritize the preeminent role of language cueing in political communication, broadening public opinion and policy preference. This also calls for a higher level of public consciousness and media literacy to question that kind of political messaging & more accurately separates the wheat from the chaff in regard to societal impact. Political language thus remains gender-typed, suggesting that the international realm of politics may present particular problems for a woman ordering her public selves in the transnational context. Such results corroborate the initial hypothesis that “male and female political leaders in various cultural contexts use different action strategies which are affected by social-political conditions of their speech, and also-by their leadership style of political action. This analysis reveals marked influences on linguistic strategies from sociopolitical contexts (e.g. post-socialist Kosovo

vs. long-standing US democracy) and personal styles of representation (e.g. Obama's formal rhetoric vs. Trump's colloquial approach). Conclusions as to what extent gender is important cannot be drawn based on this data, but it can help us to problematize support for larger conclusions about gender and political leadership among women leaders across cultural groups. More extensive follow-up using an improved and perhaps more heterogeneous sample may be required to confirm this feature of the hypothesis entirely.

IMPLICATIONS

Political Communication Strategies: The study shows that communication in politics needs adoption of linguistic strategy according to tailor it for each specific cultural context and audience. This is also a cautionary tale for politicians and their staff, who can learn from language effects in terms of public perception and policy support.

Better Public Awareness: Citizens need to hold a more critical view of language and its exploitation in political messaging. It will also make people more aware and have better decisions in their lives or political engagement.

Changes in political language use: for example, male and female leaders still speak differently This gendered aspect remains one of the most persistent features of political communication. This has broad implications for women who run for office and try to occupy traditionally male modes of politics.

Media Literacy: The study also highlights the need for media literacy education, to help people counteract political messages.

Study in Cross-Cultural Understanding: A study comparing the lects of Kosovo Leaders with those of US Leaders highlights the importance that a person who is participating in international level Political Communication and Diplomacy should have enough knowledge about the culture of his/ her country as well as contemporary political issues.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of these eight political speeches by Kosovar and US leaders offers useful insights on how politicians tend to utilize language as a tool of power addressing the research questions and aims. During this analysis it was observed that both Kosovo and US political figures use language as a tool of power with different strategies to create and maintain power dynamics. In the four speeches, Kosovar leaders focused their rhetoric on empowerment and progress, respectively, with women rights and fighting for equality. This method used is in concordance with Van Dijk's (2006) "positive self presentation" - a method frequently used by political actors to support their authoritative

positions. By contrast, Trump regularly deployed much harsher language when describing the competition as fascists and communists. This fits with what Wodak and Forchtner (2018) are calling the “Politics of Fear” - a style of communication which is used to maintain power by continually presenting a threat. Meanwhile, Obama’s speeches demonstrate how phonological devices could increase the power and possibly the persuasiveness of political discourse. All eight discourses demonstrate how leaders manipulate narratives for their betterment by contriving semantic as well as connotative tools. People have used language as power as a way of synaptically bonding with language in order for those individuals to be subordinated and empowered by the tongue they manipulate. Inquiry into how the use of language’s power contributes to social groups being dominated or empowered is analyzed from different points of view through the lens of power and political discourse. Osmani and Jahjaga employing the language while advocating for historically excluded groups as women equal rights is the ideal representation. This further goes along with Fairclough (2010) view that discourse can act as a driver for change in society. There Heaney spoke adversely of Trump and the repeated saying that Trump’s language patterns most likely affects other marginalized communities through what Van Dijk (2015) calls “discursive discrimination”. Syntactic analysis is used to shed more light into the topic. Each politician started to talk in longer sentences, with more complex phrasing - both Obama himself and the Kosovar leaders. This, according to Lakoff (2000), is a strategy for preserving the authority of demonstrating superior linguistic ability. In contrast, Trump could use less complex or simple sentence structures to portray himself as more affable to the general audience, which Wodak (2015) describes as “calculated ambivalence”. The results show, in various political contexts, how language can be used as a lethal weapon. However, others point to studies revealing how politicians shift their repertoire of communication tactics to shape narratives, maintain control, and influence society. This compounds Chilton’s (2004) claim that political discourse is one of a power struggle between languages.

Limitations

Although this study offers important findings concerning the use of language as a powerful tool of politics in discourse, certain limitations are to be mentioned. These restrictions may limit the generalisability and inclusivity of the results:

The size and scope of the research: Drawn from a small sample of rhetoric created by only four political leaders, the study may not fully reflect the wider variety of political speech. More speeches by political figures from

different contexts and with very different subjective experiences would give an expanded panorama of the use of language in political communication. Results were obtained solely from the interpretation culture of speeches which may vary due to the fact that leaders who give speeches in Kosovo and in the United States are in different cultural and political contexts. The results may not generalize to political discourse in other countries with potentially dissimilar sociopolitical contexts. It is our hope that future research will explore a wider range of political contexts to increase the generalizability of our findings.

Time Constraints: The study examines speeches that have been delivered within a defined window of time. Political discourse can evolve, and the tactics of leaders can shift as politicians respond to new political atmospheres and public opinions. New studies should be designed with longitudinal data to uncover the temporal dynamics of language use in political communication.

Subjectivity: Qualitative analysis, especially critical discourse analysis, is to an extent subjective. Of course, the decoding or meaning of discourse strategies and their consequences may differ according to how the analyst interprets them. Searches were made to minimize any possible search bias, but our findings need to be seen in relation to the potential biases of the analytical process. Though constrained by these features, this study adds to the literature on political communication by showing both the nuanced ways in which language is employed for manipulation and how active it can be in maintaining/powering rhetoric. Research in the future that looks to address these limitations can serve to deepen our understanding of language in political discourse.

Recommendations for Further Studies

- Conduct longitudinal studies in order to investigate how political language changes over time, especially in reaction to major events or changes in the public mood.
- Conduct studies on how different sectors of the electorate receive and make sense of the linguistic strategies mobilized by political actors. These activities include things like running focus groups or surveys to test which rhetorical strategies work, and which don't.
- Conduct further research examining a broader collection of cultures and political systems to identify patterns in political discourse that may be universal or particular to a specific culture.
- Analyzing political language to see how this changes with the platforms of social media and how that influences public relation and opinion making.

- Work with political scientists, psychologists and neuroscientists to study the cognitive and affective effects of different linguistic tactics used in giving a political speech.
- Expand studies to a wider range of male & female leaders within many cultural contexts.
- Analyze how oppressed groups create ways of using language to resist dominant political narratives
- Featuring analysis of non-verbal communication (gestures, facial expressions) and visuals (backdrop, attire) to understand political communication better.
- Address the ethical use of language (linguistic strategies) in political discourse and focus on terms that are perceived as being manipulative or causing division.

These recommendations seek to further the work of others and progress research by discussing ways to improve research pointing us toward understanding more about how language plays into power, particularly in political settings, as was seen in this previous study.

References

- Bakir, V., & McStay, A. (2018). Fake news and the economy of emotions: Problems, causes, solutions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 154-175. DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2017.1345645
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). Language and symbolic power. *Harvard University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3685295>
- Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. N. (2018). The global organization of social media disinformation campaigns. *Journal of International Affairs*, 71(1.5), 23-32. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26508115>
- Cap, P. (2013). Proximization: The pragmatics of symbolic distance crossing. *John Benjamins Publishing Company*. DOI:10.1075/ld.4.3.10saf
- Charteris-Black, J. (2011). Politicians and rhetoric: The persuasive power of metaphor. *Palgrave Macmillan*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.1691>
- Chilton, P. (2004). Analyzing political discourse: Theory and practice. *Routledge*
- David, M. K. (2014). Language, power and manipulation: The use of rhetoric in maintaining political influence. *Frontiers of Language and Teaching*, 5(1), 164-170.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and power. *Longman*.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language. *Longman*.
- Fairclough, N. (2010). Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language. (2nd ed.). *Routledge*.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith. Pantheon Books, New York.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (2000). Power: Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984, volume 3. *New Press*.
- Karpowitz, C. F., & Mendelberg, T. (2014). The silent sex: Gender, deliberation, and institutions. Princeton University Press. DOI:10.1111/pops.12350
- Lakoff, G. (2014). *The all new Don't think of an elephant!: Know your values and frame the debate*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Lakoff, R. T. (2000). *The language war*. University of California Press.
- Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide. *Sage*.
- Marwick, A., & Lewis, R. (2017). Media manipulation and disinformation online. *Data & Society Research Institute*.
- Musolf, A. (2016). Political metaphor analysis: Discourse and scenarios. *Bloomsbury Publishing*.
- Ott, B. L. (2017). The age of Twitter: Donald J. Trump and the politics of debasement. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 34(1), 59-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2016.1266686>
- Ponton, D. M., & Larina, T. V. (2016). Discourse analysis in the 21st century: Theory and practice (I). *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 20(4), 7-25.
- Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism. *Routledge*.
- Ross, A. S., & Rivers, D. J. (2018). Discursive deflection: Accusation of “fake news” and the spread of mis- and disinformation in the tweets of President Trump. *Social Media & Society*, 4(2), 1-12.
- Schäffner, C. (2004). Political discourse analysis from the point of view of translation studies. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 3(1), 117-150.
- Schäffner, C., & Bassnett, S. (Eds.). (2010). Political discourse, media and translation. *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*.
- Tandoc Jr, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining “fake news”: A typology of scholarly definitions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 137-153.
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237-246.

- Trimble, L., Wagner, A., Sampert, S., Raphael, D., & Gerrits, B. (2019). Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and Intersectionality: Overview, an Enhanced Framework, and a British Columbia Case Study. *Canadian Political Science Review*, 13(1), 1-29.
- Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Barberá, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., Stukal, D., & Nyhan, B. (2018). Social media, political polarization, and political disinformation: A review of the scientific literature. *William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Politics, ideology, and discourse. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* (pp. 728-740). *Elsevier*.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and power*. *Palgrave Macmillan*.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 466-485). *John Wiley & Sons*.
- Wodak, R. (2015). The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean. *Sage*.
- Wodak, R., & Forchtner, B. (Eds.). (2018). *The Routledge handbook of language and politics*. *Routledge*.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed.). *Sage Publications*.
- Wodak, R., De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Liebhart, K. (2009). *The discursive construction of national identity* (2nd ed.). *Edinburgh University Press*.
- Woolard, K. A., & Schieffelin, B. B. (1994). Language ideology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23(1), 55-82. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.23.100194.000415>
- Zakariya, W. A., Chojimah, N., & Nurhayani, I. (2018). Rhetorical devices in Donald Trump's speech on Jerusalem as Israel's capital. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 18(2), 179-187.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF EARLY BILINGUALISM IN KOSOVAR CHILDREN

Lundresa KRYEZIU¹

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, English plays the same role as Latin did in Europe in the Middle Ages. As the most widely spoken language, English is a universal tool for international communication. It is only logical, that there are many children around the world whose parents speak English as their first or second language, or they live in a country where English is either an official or second language. However, how is it possible that young children born and raised by Albanian-speaking parents, living in a country such as Kosovo, where English is not an official or a second language are proficient in English? This early acquisition of English among Kosovar children is not merely a linguistic trend but a reflection of the broader socio-cultural shifts within the society and it is emerging as a significant sociolinguistic phenomenon. Therefore, this research aims to investigate this phenomenon of early English proficiency among Kosovar children within a sociolinguistic framework. The present research intends to understand the factors influencing bilingualism and its sociocultural implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an Arab proverb that says “learning at a young age is like inscription on a stone” which highlights the importance of learning a foreign language during childhood. Prominent linguists have also studied the significant role that age plays in language acquisition. It is argued that there is a critical period (early childhood until puberty) during which language acquisition must occur if it is to be successful (Penfield & Roberts, 1959; Andersson, 1973; Lennenberg, 1976) Additionally, Lennenberg (1976) states that children who learn a second language during this period are more likely to achieve native-like proficiency

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; klundresa@gmail.com

Furthermore, Krashen (1985) explains how language acquisition is an unconscious process where learners pick up language rules and structures through meaningful exposure rather than through explicit instruction or deliberate study. This means that it is easier for children to attain a foreign language since they do not necessarily practice any deliberate studying and their affective filter is low, or even not prominent at all (Krashen, 1985).

Impact of Technology on Language Acquisition

In recent years, technology has played a significant role in children's development and particularly in how they acquire various skills, including language learning. The amount of time that children spend online has increased significantly over the last few years (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016). Additionally, the age at which children begin to use the Internet has decreased, which means that children are now exposed to the online world from as early as the age of one (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016; Holloway, Green, & Livingstone, 2013). Language is best learned when the learner is exposed to it, especially when the said exposure is slightly above the learner's current level of that language. (Krashen, 1985). The content children are exposed to online is usually above their level, according to Childwise, (2012), the content that children are mainly exposed to online are videos on YouTube and online games.

Among other fields, the dramatic expansion of technology has also affected the field of education in general (Barreto, 2018; Rintaningrum, 2019) and the learning of the English language in particular (Gunuç & Babacan, 2017; Rintaningrum, 2015). Educators now recognize technology as an important tool that enhances the development of language learning and social skills. (Couse & Chen, 2010; Gimbert & Cristol, 2004; Greenhow et al., 2009). In addition, technology provides a variety of ways that can be used by learners of English to improve their proficiency in English (Rintaningrum, 2023).

Furthermore, Hurwitz and Schmitt (2019) found that childrens' early exposure to the internet develops digital skills that lead to higher academic achievement in the future. Similarly, Plowman and Stephen (2003) highlight the importance of early access to technology as it is a crucial first step to college and career readiness. So, early exposure to technology is beneficial not only in language learning but also in developing different skills that are useful for the child's future.

Parental Attitudes and Socio-Economic Background

A child's educational upbringing is largely dependent on their parents. Their views and attitudes towards education, as well as their socio-economic status. During the early stages and throughout childhood it is up to the parents how

much screen time children are exposed to, what schools they attend or what communities they become involved in. A study done by Al-Jarf (2023), gathered mothers' perspectives on their children learning English by kindergarten, and the general stance in the matter is that the majority of the mothers believe that learning English from kindergarten boosts children's self-confidence and eases language acquisition, addressing difficulties seen in older students. They seem to believe that if their children start learning English from a young age, they will have better prospects and higher academic achievement in the future (Al-Jarf, 2023). Which may be true to some extent since another study conducted by Planche (2022) revealed that bilingual children scored higher on an intelligence test compared to monolingual children.

Other ways parents impact their children's education is their socio-economic status and their level of education. According to Huang et al. (2017), children whose parents enjoy a higher socio-economic status tend to have an earlier and more frequent exposure to English. This exposure varies from traveling to English-speaking countries to simpler activities such attending private language learning institutions (Huang et al., 2017). Further research suggests that parents that have a higher level of education tend to be more involved in their children's learning process and (Butler, 2014, 2015; Butler & Le, 2017). Economically privileged learners benefit from a combination of better resources, personal attributes, strategic learning methods, and advantageous social networks, which together enhance their language learning outcomes (Butler, 2014; Feng, 2012; Zou & Zhang, 2011; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question and to gain a deeper understanding of the early childhood bilingualism phenomenon in Kosovo, first research that has been previously done on the matter was consulted. Along with that, the research was further expanded by collecting data using a combination of the qualitative and the quantitative approach. The qualitative component aimed to explore insights and perspectives, while the quantitative component provided statistical analysis. This section provides detailed information on the participants of the study and the reason why they were chosen, and the sampling method. In addition, it describes the instruments and tools used to collect and analyze the data.

The selected population for this study were Kosovar parents whose children (age 3-10 years) are fluent, or somewhat proficient in English. These children are considered bilingual, since their L1 is Albanian. Participants were selected based on their children's proficiency levels. To determine which parents qualify, a post was posted online asking for parents whose children speak English

fluently. The participants took part in the study voluntarily. Participants were not selected on the basis of gender, age, socio-economic or educational level.

After identifying the qualified participants, they were given a survey to fill. The survey was conducted in Albanian since there was no way to know whether the parents would be able to understand and answer the questions had they been in English. If the survey had been conducted in English, it would have limited the number of participants, therefore the data would have also been limited. In total, there were 55 participants and they answered 11 questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

The present research was conducted with 55 Kosovar parents whose children are bilingual, meaning they speak Albanian(L1) and English (L2). Participants filled out a survey of 11 questions. Some of the questions were open ended, which made for qualitative analysis and some of them were multiple choice, mainly collecting information about the demographics and statistics.

Google Forms was used as the tool for the compiling and conduction of the survey since it is very convenient and easy to use. Participants could fill out the survey at any time convenient for them and it was made very simple for them to access and answer the survey questions, and no issues were reported during the data collection period. The questionnaire was available for 2 weeks from the distribution date, but the data was collected sooner than that.

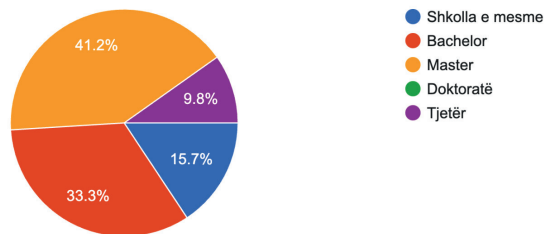
The collected data was initially analyzed and calculated via Google Forms. Further analysis for the recognition of patterns was done manually. Even though the survey was done in Albanian, an English version is also attached.

RESULTS

The survey was conducted as a means of gathering the necessary information and data and to find out any patterns within bilingual children in Kosovo and factors that have impacted their language learning journey. The total number of participants was fifty-five. Most of the participants had a somewhat high level of education with 76% of the participants having either a bachelor's or a masters' degree and only 9.8% declaring that they do not have a high school or university education. This immediately hints to previous research, that parent's educational background has an impact on their children's future prospects (Butler, 2014, 2015; Butler & Le, 2017).

What is your level of education?

51 responses



The most common professions of the participating parents were:

- Teacher-10 participants
- Economist- 6 participants
- Medical field (nurse, dentist, farmacist, physical therapist): 5 participants
- Lawyer- 3 participants
- Housewives- 3 participants
- Engineer- 2 participants
- Make-up artist- 1 participant
- IT- 1 Participant.

As shown in the results, most of the parents whose children are fluent in English, are engaged in professions that require a high level of education, and only 3 of them are not engaged professionally at the moment.

The majority of the participants believe that it is very important to expose their children to the English language at an early age (86.5%).

The ages in which these children first started to learn the English language is fairly early, with some of them being either 1 or less than 1 years old.

The number of children and the age they started to learn English:

- 2-3 years old- 14 children
- 4-5 years old- 12 children
- 6-7 years old- 6 children
- 8-9 years old- 7 children.

So, it is found that the average age in which most of the children have started to learn English is 2-5 years old. This further supports the suggestion that there

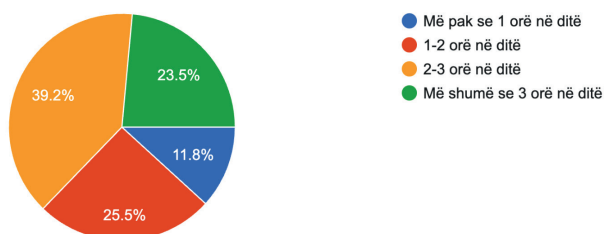
is a critical period in a child's life where they are mostly prone to learning a new language (Penfield & Roberts, 1959; Andersson, 1973; Lennenberg, 1976).

When asked what factor had the biggest impact on learning English, the majority of the parents mentioned technology, followed by private courses and only 3 participants mentioned school as one of the impacting factors.

One of the participants even said that because of technology, their child has started to forget the Albanian language overall.

Since technology was mentioned as the number one factor, it is important to show how much time do these children spend using technology. It appears that most of the children spend at least 2-3 hours per day (or more) using technological devices.

How much is your child exposed to English-language entertainment material (eg, TV shows, movies, YouTube)?
51 responses



Options (Blue: Less than 1 hour per day; Red: 1-2 hours per day; Yellow: 2-3 hours per day; Green: More than 3 hours per day).

According to their parents, most of these children do not use any specific educational applications to learn English during the time they spend online, which supports the claims of Childwise, (2012) that children mainly spend time playing games or watching videos online. So, as a result, these children are learning English through these means.

The parents appear to be quite supportive of their children regarding their English language learning journey, since most of them claim that they invest in their children by enrolling them into private courses, buying them educational materials and books in English or even at times, trying to communicate with them in English.

The primary language that the parents use to communicate with their children has resulted to be Albanian, even though 71.2% of the parents claim to speak English fluently.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the phenomenon of early English proficiency among Kosovar children and highlight several key factors influencing bilingualism in this context. Firstly, parental attitudes and practices play a significant role in fostering English proficiency from a young age. The majority of parents in the study expressed a strong belief in the importance of early exposure to English, often initiating language learning through various means such as private courses, educational materials, and interactive media. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the crucial role of parental involvement and supportive attitudes in children's language acquisition (Al-Jarf, 2023; Krashen, 1985).

Secondly, technology emerges as a predominant factor influencing language learning among Kosovar children. The widespread use of digital devices and online content, particularly in English, provides continuous exposure to the language from an early age. Despite concerns raised by some parents about potential negative impacts on native language retention, the pervasive nature of technology in children's lives facilitates informal and immersive language learning experiences (Childwise, 2012; Hurwitz & Schmitt, 2019).

Thirdly, the findings underscore the impact of socio-economic factors, including parental education levels and professional backgrounds, on children's language development. Higher parental education and professional engagement often correlate with earlier and more intensive exposure to English, highlighting disparities in access to language learning resources based on socio-economic status (Butler, 2014; Huang et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of early English proficiency among Kosovar children. The research questions posed at the beginning have been addressed through a comprehensive exploration of factors influencing bilingualism, including parental attitudes, technological influences, and socio-economic backgrounds. Moving forward, policymakers and educators should consider leveraging parental involvement and technology-enhanced learning environments to promote equitable access to English language skills among all children in Kosovo. Efforts should focus on supporting parents in providing enriching language experiences while safeguarding the role of the native language.

References

- Al-Jarf, R. (2023). Learning English by Kindergarten Children in Saudi Arabia: A Mothers' Perspective. *Journal of Learning and Development Studies* 3(2), 15-32
<https://doi.org/10.32996/jlds.2023.3.2.3>
- Al-Jarf, R. (2008). Impact of English as an international language (EIL) upon Arabic in Saudi Arabia. *Asian EFL Journal*, 10(4), 193-210.
<https://www.asian-efl-journal.com/main-editions-new/the-impact-of-english-as-an-international-language-eil-upon-arabic-in-saudi-arabia/index.htm>
- Butler, Y. G. (2014). Parental factors and early English education as a foreign language: A case study in Mainland China. *Research Papers in Education*, 29(4), 410–437.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264090074_Parental_factors_and_early_English_education_as_a_foreign_language_A_case_study_in_Mainland_China
- Butler, Y. G., & Le, V. N. (2017). A longitudinal investigation of parental social-economic status (SES) and young students' learning of English as a foreign language. *System*, 73, 4–15.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318771229_A_longitudinal_investigation_of_parental_social-economic_status_SES_and_young_students'_learning_of_English_as_a_foreign_language
- Penfield, W. & Roberts, L. (1959). *Speech and brain-mechanisms*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959. ISBN:9780691642635
- Andersson, T. (1973). Children's learning of a second language: *Another view The Modern Language Journal*, 57(5/6), 254-259.
- Planche, P. (2002). Learning a second language in nursery school: What is the role of reasoning in the child? *Bulletin de Psychologie*. 55(5), 535-542.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2002-08247-004>
- Chien, C. W. (2015). Analysis of Taiwanese elementary school English teachers' perceptions of, designs of, and knowledge constructed about differentiated instruction in content. *Curriculum & Teaching Studies*, 2(1), 1-16.
 (PDF) Analysis of Taiwanese elementary school English teachers' perceptions of, designs of, and knowledge constructed about differentiated instruction in content
- Childwise. (2012). *The Monitor Pre-school Report 2012: Key behaviour patterns among 0 to 4 year olds*.
https://www.childwise.co.uk/uploads/3/1/6/5/31656353/childwise_press_release_-_tablets.pdf
- Feng, A. (2012). Spread of English across Greater China. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33(4), 363–377. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01434632.2012.661435>
- Gimbert, B., & Cristol, D. (2004). Teaching curriculum with technology: Enhancing children's technological competence during early childhood. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(3), 207-216.
 (PDF) Teaching Curriculum with Technology: Enhancing Children's Technological Competence During Early Childhood
- Rintaningrum, R. (2023). Technology integration in English language teaching and learning: Benefits and challenges. *Cogent Education*, 10(1). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2164690>
- Barreto, A. M. R. (2018). Motivating English language use by using the benefits of technology. *Education and Learning Research Journal*, 16(1), 117–140. <https://doi.org/10.26817/16925777.428>
- Rintaningrum, R. (2019). What can we learn from ICT users in English language teaching and learning. *Inetal*, 187–193. <http://inetal.um.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/27-Ratna-Rintaningrum-What-Can-We-Learn-from-ICT-Users-in-English-Language-Teaching-and-Learning-Lecturers%E2%80%99-Views.pdf>

- Rintaningrum, R. (2015). *Teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in a global context*. (Doctoral thesis). Flinders University, School of Education. <https://theses.flinders.edu.au/view/a0853ab2-5aaf-477b-9dd1-f8bb6d670451/1>
- Gunuç, S., & Babacan, N. (2017). Technology integration in English language. *The Journal of teaching English for specific and academic purposes*, 5(2), 349-358. <http://espeap.junis.ni.ac.rs/index.php/espeap/article/view/524/320>
- Greenhow, C., Robelia, E., & Hughes, J. (2009). WLLA 2.0 and classroom research: What path should we take now? *Educational Researchers*, 38(4), 246–259. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234590255_Learning_Teaching_and_Scholarship_in_a_Digital_Age_Web_2_0_and_Classroom_Research--What_Path_Should_We_Take_Now
- Huang, B., Shawn Chang, Y. H., Niu, L., & Zhi, M. (2017). Examining the effects of socio-economic status and language input on adolescent English learners' speech production outcomes. *System*, 73, 27–36. doi:10.1016/j.system.2017.07.004
- Engberg, M. E., & Wolniak, G. C. (2010). Examining the effects of high school contexts on postsecondary enrollment. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(2), 132–153. 10.1007/s11162-009-9150-y
- Zou, W. C., & Zhang, S. L. (2011). Family background and English learning at compulsory stage in Shanghai. *English language education across Greater China* (pp. 189–211). <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.21832/9781847693518-012/html>
- Hurwitz, L. B., & Schmitt, K. L. (2019). Can children benefit from early internet exposure? Short- and long-term links between internet use, digital skill, and academic performance. *Computers & Education*, 146:103750
- Can children benefit from early internet exposure? Short- and long-term links between internet use, digital skill, and academic performance | Request PDF
- Plowman, L., & Stephen, C. (2003). A 'benign addition'? Research on ICT and pre-school children. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 19, 149–164. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0266-4909.2003.00016.x>
- Holloway, D., Green, L. and Livingstone, S. (2013). Zero to eight. Young children and their internet use. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1930&context=ecuworks2013>
- Krashen, S.D. (1985) *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman Group UK. <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/iln/LING4140/h08/The%20Input%20Hypothesis.pdf>

APPENDIX**Questionnaire in Albanian**

Dygydhësia e hershme të fëmijët Kosovarë

lundresa.kryeziu@student.uni-pr.edu [Switch account](#)



Not shared

Dinamika Familjare dhe Qëndrimet

Cili është niveli juaj i shkollimit?

- Shkolla e mesme
- Bachelor
- Master
- Doktoratë
- Tjetër

Çfarë profesioni keni? (*shkruani më poshtë*)

Your answer _____

Sa mendoni që është e rëndësishme që fëmija juaj të mësojë gjuhën angleze në një moshë të hershme?

- Shumë e rëndësishme
- Deri diku e rëndësishme
- Jo shumë e rëndësishme
- Aspak e rëndësishme

Cilat gjuhë i flisni rrjedhshëm ju dhe bashkëshorti/bashkëshortja juaj? (zgjedhni të gjitha opsionet e përshtatshme)

- Shqip
- Anglisht
- Serbisht
- Turqisht
- Frengjisht
- Tjetër

Cilat gjuhë i përdorni kryesisht kur komunikoni me fëmijët tuaj?

- Shqip
- Anglisht
- Tjetër

A e praktikoni qëllimisht gjuhën angleze me fëmijët tuaj? Nëse po, sa shpesh?

- Çdo ditë
- Çdo javë
- Rrallë
- Nuk e praktikoj

Sa mbështetës jeni ndaj përpjekjeve të fëmijës suaj për të mësuar gjuhën angleze? Përmendni ndonjë mënyrë se si ju i mbështetni fëmijët në këtë drejtim. (p.sh., libra, kurse, mësimet private)?

Your answer

Ekspozimi dhe Përdorimi i Gjuhës Angleze

Në çfarë moshe ka filluar fëmija juaj të mësojë gjuhën angleze? (*shkruani më poshtë*)

Your answer _____

Sa ekspozohet fëmija juaj ndaj materialeve zbavitëse në gjuhën angleze (p.sh., programe televizive, filma, YouTube)?

- Më pak se 1 orë në ditë
- 1-2 orë në ditë
- 2-3 orë në ditë
- Më shumë se 3 orë në ditë

A përdorni aplikacione specifike në gjuhën angleze ose mjete arsimore për të avancuar aftësitë gjuhësore të fëmijës tuaj? Nëse po, cilat?

Your answer _____

Sipas jush, çfarë ka ndikuar më së shumti në mësimin e gjuhës angleze tek fëmija juaj? (p.sh., teknologjia, shkolla, kurset private)

Your answer _____

Back

Submit

Clear form

Questionnaire in English

Sociolinguistic Implications of Early Bilingualism in Kosovar Children

lundresa.kryeziu@student.uni-pr.edu [Switch account](#)



Not shared

Family Dynamics and Attitudes

What is your level of education?

- High School
- Bachelor
- Master
- Other

What is your profession? (please write below)

Your answer _____

How important is it for your child to learn English at an early age?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important

Which languages do you or your spouse speak fluently? (select all that apply)

- Albanian
- English
- Serbian
- Turkish
- French
- Other

Which languages do you primarily use when communicating with your children?

- Albanian
- English
- Other

Do you intentionally practice English with your children? If yes, how often?

- Every day
- Every week
- Rarely
- I do not practice it

How supportive are you of your child's efforts to learn English? Please mention any ways you support your children in this regard (e.g., books, courses, private lessons).

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form

Sociolinguistic Implications of Early Bilingualism in Kosovar Children

lundresa.kryeziu@student.uni-pr.edu [Switch account](#)



Not shared

Exposure to and Use of the English Language

At what age did your child begin learning English? (please write below)

Your answer _____

How much exposure does your child have to entertainment materials in English (e.g., TV programs, movies, YouTube)?

- Less than 1 hour per day
- 1-2 hours per day
- 2-3 hours per day
- More than 3 hours per day

Do you use specific apps in English or educational tools to enhance your child's language skills? If yes, which ones?

Your answer _____

In your opinion, what has had the most impact on your child's learning of English? (e.g., technology, school, private lessons)

Your answer _____

Back

Submit

Clear form

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Liresa NURQAJ¹

INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of technology, digital communication tools have also altered human interaction, significantly impacting face-to-face communication patterns as well. This study explores the impact of technology on in-person communication by thoroughly examining existing literature and the results of the survey.

Digital communication tools such as social media platforms and video conferencing softwares have greatly facilitated interaction and information sharing. Thus, enabling people to get in touch with others across great distances and easily organize group events or meetings. Although technology has potentially enhanced communication skills and boosted confidence in individuals regarding social interactions, it has also introduced challenges in the quality of face-to-face (F2F) conversations. Constant interruptions from electronic devices and overuse of social media platforms can lead to superficial communication and directly impact relationships and social distancing.

All in all, this paper underscores the importance of finding a balance between the two by using the benefits technology has to offer and preserving the quality of human interaction at the same time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of digital communication tools has significantly impacted human lives in every aspect, and communication is one of them, as highlighted in the World Economic Forum (2024). This literature review explores the impact of technology on face-to-face communication patterns. Various studies have

¹ MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; liresa.nurqaj@uni-pr.edu

been analyzed in order to get a better understanding of the relation between in-person communication and technology.

Firstly, technology has had many positive impacts in facilitating social networking and enabling easy access to various online forums and meetings. This might contribute to enhancing communication skills in face-to-face settings and even positively impact confidence in individuals (Konrath, 2018). Furthermore, one important advantage of technology is the ability to connect with others throughout the globe. Thus, as Sbarra et al (2019) points out, by using many digital tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime and others, it is easier for people to stay in touch and have meaningful conversations with family and friends who are physically distant. Another case of how technology has facilitated interaction amongst people is through the organization of numerous social events and causes. Social media has made it possible for people to spread information faster and easier, enabling them to organize face-to-face gatherings such as community meetings, protests, marches and so on. As a result, they build a sense of community and solidarity among the members of these F2F(face-to-face) interactions (Haciyakpoglu & Zhang, 2015).

While many articles suggest that technology has really been convenient for accessing and sharing information and also in interacting with others, there is evidence that it can also reduce the quality of F2F communication. As Turkle (2017) argues, having electronic devices that constantly interrupt physical conversations by receiving notifications and feeling the need to always check them can result in superficial discussions rather than meaningful ones. The same point is argued by Przybylski and Weinstein (2012) who claim that the mere presence of mobile phones hinder the development of interpersonal and meaningful relationships.

When it comes to communication patterns, digital devices may alter family dynamics and directly affect physical interactions. Both parents and children are often focused on what is going on in their devices and thus notably reducing the quality of F2F communication, which impacts family relationships and bonding (Hiniker et al., 2016). Some participants in the study of Drago (2015) stated that it bothered them when their family members or friends use tech devices when spending time with them.

In addition, the transfer of social media language such as slang and abbreviations into day to day conversations sometimes may lead to misinterpretation and confusion. One may have to add clarification to many expressions because they are context dependent or used only by a specific group of people. These linguistic shortcuts, although efficient in creating a more personalized interaction and connection between various people, when used in

professional settings, may have a negative impact on the audience, since they might feel alienated (Association for Psychological Science, 2024).

Moreover, sometimes one might better understand the speaker's intention by analyzing body language, the tone of voice or facial expressions, which are more evident in F2F interactions and lack in the digital ones. Thus, the absence of these nonverbal elements can lead to decreased emotional connectivity and misunderstandings between individuals (Sherman et al., 2018).

Although technology has connected people digitally, when used excessively, it can play a part in social isolation. Some may substitute physical interactions with online ones and spend more time on social media rather than engaging in F2F conversations. This is supported by Hunt et al. (2018), whose study points out that people who overly use social media are more likely to be isolated from the outside world compared to those who meet people face-to-face.

To add to this, the development of social skills is very crucial for having productive interactions with people, especially in the professional world. For instance, if children and adolescents are very reliant on digital communication and spend too much time with screens, this may directly cause them to miss out on many opportunities to develop such skills, main ones being active listening and reading nonverbal cues. When not confident in interacting with others for lacking these skills, many may experience loneliness and depression, which a study by Twenge (2019) correlates it to the increase in screen time among teenagers.

Technology has also introduced various effective tools to mitigate online communication in the workplace. While digital tools like email, different group chats or online meetings platforms have increased the work efficiency, they have also significantly reduced F2F meetings between colleagues. In the workplace, for the team to have a productive collaboration, it is very crucial for its members to bond and build trust, and they do so by having daily F2F conversations and collaborations (Becker et al., 2018).

In conclusion, this literature review gives an insight to both the perceived benefits and drawbacks of technology in F2F communication patterns. As technology keeps evolving, it is crucial to find a balance between both settings by using the advantages the digital tools have to offer and maintain the human interactions as well.

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study was to show the impact technology has on face-to-face interactions. The procedure followed to determine this impact was achieved through data collection taken from a survey conducted through

Google Forms. This questionnaire was distributed to 50 participants from all ages, covering different levels of education. The snowball sampling research methodology was used for the distribution of the survey, by way of manually sending it to participants and asking them to share it as well as by posting the survey on social media. Google Forms was used to assemble the survey, as well as gather and interpret the data. The whole process of data collection and the results extracted from it was done electronically through Google Forms. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, will be used to analyze survey responses.

Timetable / Procedure

Week 1: Topic Selection and Initial Research

Days 1-4: Brainstorming and selection of topic.

Days 5-7: Conduct preliminary research on the chosen topic.

Week 2: Refinement and Thesis Development

Days 8-11: Refine the topic based on initial research.

Days 12-14: Develop a clear thesis statement.

Week 3-4: In-Depth Research

Days 15-28: Conduct thorough research using academic journals, books, and reliable sources.

Take detailed notes and organize the findings.

Month 2: Survey Implementation, Writing, and Revision

Week 5: Outline and Drafting

Days 29-32: Create a detailed outline of the paper.

Days 33-35: Begin drafting the introduction and literature review.

Week 6-7: Survey Implementation and Data Collection

Days 36-42: Design and distribute the survey to teachers.

Allow 1-2 weeks for teachers to respond.

Week 8-9: Continue Drafting and Analyze Survey Results

Days 43-49: Work on the methodology, results, and discussion sections.

Analyze the survey data and incorporate findings into my research.

Week 10: Peer Review and Feedback

Days 50-52: Share the draft, including survey results, with peers or the mentor for feedback.

Use feedback to refine the paper.

Week 11: Revise and Edit

Days 53-56: Revise and edit the paper for clarity, coherence, and grammar.

Check citations and bibliography.

Week 12: Finalize, Proofread, and Submission

Days 57-60: Prepare the final submission, including any required formatting.

Proofread for any remaining errors.

Submit the research paper.

Data Collection & Analysis

A number of 50 participants filled out the survey. It was crucial for the study that participants of all ages and educational backgrounds participate in the study, which is why no limit was put in place in the first two questions that inquire upon the participant's age and educational background. In total, the survey consists of 22 questions where 20 of them pertain to habits and opinions related to technology which reveal the impact it has on the participants' day to day real life interactions. Majority of the questions ask the participants to choose an option out of the ones given to answer the questions presented to them. The survey also consists of open-ended questions where participants express their own opinions on the questions asked. Once all the responses were given, the data was automatically gathered and deciphered by Google Forms. The analysis of the data and the percentages given on all 22 questions were then taken and presented in the study.

Expected results of the study

The study may reveal common experiences regarding the impact technology may have in face-to-face communication among people of different ages and backgrounds. This could include slangs or expressions transferred from one context to the other and people's perceptions on the use of technology as a means of communication.

This could help identify whether online interaction has created a pattern in in-person conversations or the other way around. The diverse population might reveal interesting information regarding the use of slang or social media language in everyday face to face communication and their insights on the benefits or downsides of the evolution of language since the use of technology.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

Once the process of analyzing the gathered data was completed the following was found:

Out of the fifty participants that took part in the study, 31 one of them declared to be between the ages of 18 to 24, following 12 participants aged 25 to 35, 6 aged 35 to 44, and only one participant between the ages of 45 to 54 (fig.1).

Age:

50 responses

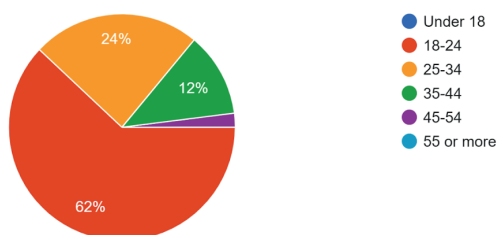


Fig.1. *The percentage of the participants' age*

In terms of their educational background, 27 participants hold a Bachelor's Degree, 14 a Master's Degree, 7 declared some college, and only one participant for an Associate's Degree and one for High School or lower (fig.2).

Education Level:

50 responses

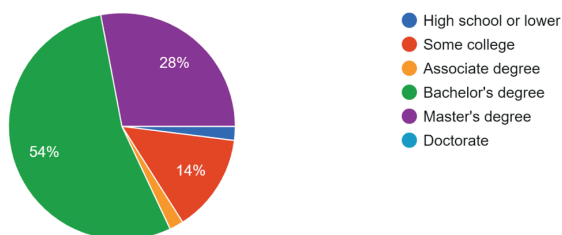


Fig.2. *The percentage of the participants' educational background*

The first section of the survey focused on the usage of technology. 66% of the participants chose 'Always' as the option to the question, how often do you use your smartphone, and 52% ended up choosing the same option to answer the question of how often they used social media platforms. On the question of which social media platforms they used the most, Instagram and Tik Tok emerged as the favorites with 52% and 32% respectively, while LinkedIn, Facebook, and X reported as the least used with only 1% per all three media platforms. The last question of the section focused on the time the participants spent on these social media platforms and the results were as follows: 38.8% stated they spend 2 to 4 hours on social media, 26.5% spent 4 to 6 hours, 18.4% more than 6 hours, and 16.3% only 1 to 2 hours (fig.3).

How many hours per day do you spend on social media?
49 responses

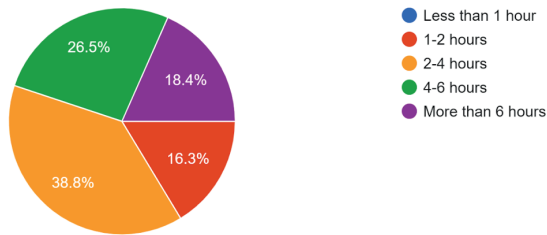


Fig.3. Representation of the participants' answers

The second section dealt with face-to-face communication patterns, with the first three questions inquiring about how often the participants engaged in face-to-face conversations with their family members, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. The data showed that 52% of the participants stated that they often engage in face-to-face interactions with their family members, while 24% answered always, 16% sometimes, and 8% rarely. When it came to face-to-face interactions with their friends, 48% answered often, 28% sometimes, 14% always, and 10% rarely. When asked about face-to-face interactions with colleagues and acquaintances the answers given were 36% sometimes, 32% often, 16% rarely, 14% always, and 2% never. (fig.4).

	Family members	Friends	Colleagues & Acquaintances
Always	12 Participants	7 Participants	7 Participants
Often	26 Participants	24 Participants	16 Participants
Sometimes	4 Participants	14 Participants	18 Participants
Rarely	8 Participants	5 Participants	8 Participants
Never	0 Participants	0 Participants	1 Participant

Fig.4. Representation of the participants' answers

In terms of how many people they had met in person to socialize, the findings show that 34% of the participants said 1 to 2 people, 32% answered 3 to 4 people, 24% stated 7 or more, 6% said 5 to 6 people, and only 4% declared they has met 0 people in person to socialize.

The data gathered from the third section, which focused on the impact of technology on communication, show that 21 out of 50 participants agree with the notion that technology has decreased the quality of face-to-face interactions. Whereas, 19 out of 50 participants feel neutral on the subject of technology increasing the frequency of face-to-face interactions. When asked if they ever had been interrupted during a face-to-face conversation by a notification or a phone call 24 out of the 50 participants answered that they had. The same result was also found for the question, do you think that social media makes it easier to plan face-to-face meetings with others. On whether they found it more comfortable communicating via technology than face-to-face, 14 participants said that they felt neutral on the topic, whereas 19 participants agreed that technology had caused misunderstandings or conflicts in their face-to-face interactions. (fig.5).

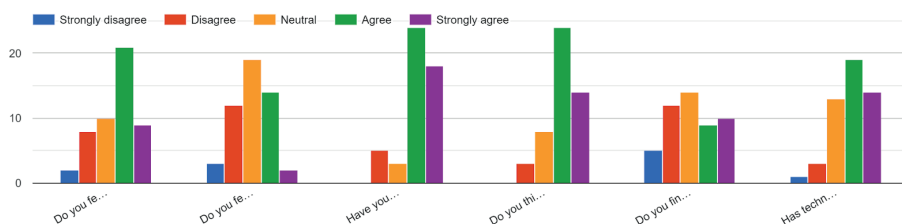


Fig.5. Representation of the participants' answers

Overall, 38% believe that technology has made them somewhat less connected to others, whereas 30% believe that it has made them somewhat more connected to others. The other participants shared that there was no change (18%), it made them much less connected (10%), or much more connected (4%).

The fourth section centered around the use of abbreviations and slang, with 40% of the participants stating that they sometimes use them. Out of the options given the abbreviation OMG (Oh My God) was the most used one (fig.6).

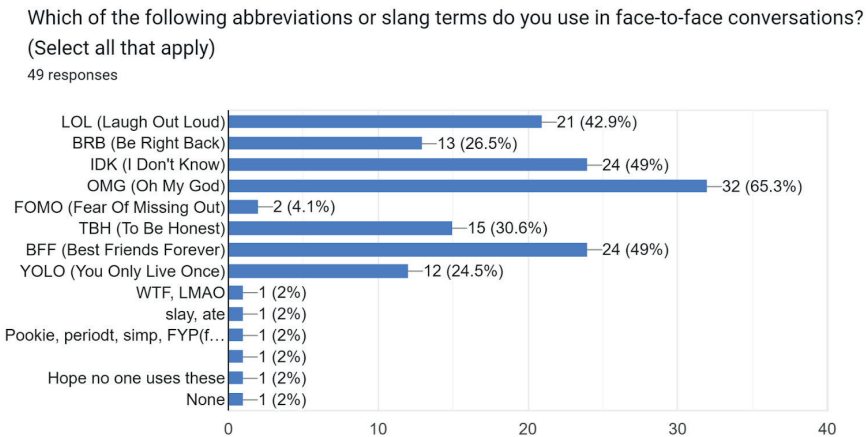


Fig.6. Representation of the participants' answers

62% answered 'No' on whether they felt that using social media slang in face-to-face conversations was appropriate. On whether they have to explain social media slang or abbreviations to someone during a face-to-face conversation, 46% declared that they have to sometimes. 42.9% agreed that the use of social media slang in face-to-face interactions somewhat hinders communication. Lastly they were asked if they notice a difference in the usage of social media slang in face-to-face communication across different age groups and 42% answered sometimes they do notice.

The fifth and last section left a space for personal reflection on the biggest advantages and disadvantages of using technology for communication, how they balance technology usage and face-to-face interactions, and how technology has impacted their face-to-face communication.

Out of all the opinions shared on the question of the biggest advantages technology provides to communication, the most common answers can be brought down to availability, connection, and convenience. Most participants shared that they view the ability to contact people at all times in any place in the world as one of the biggest advantages of technology. Most of them stated that it allows them to keep in touch with their loved ones or meet new people and schedule meetups much more easily. The convenience technology provides to communication was well explained by a participant who said, “Technology allows for communication with people worldwide, making it easy to maintain long-distance relationships. It offers various communication tools like email, instant messaging and video calls, making communications more flexible and immediate. Communication can happen anytime and anywhere, without need for physical presence”. On the other side of the coin, the biggest disadvantage reported by the participants was miscommunication. A participant wrote, “Digital communication can be more easily misunderstood compared to face-to-face communication due to the lack of non-verbal cues.” Along with miscommunication, lack of genuine connection, dependency, time consumption, and less socialization were also listed as the biggest disadvantages technology has on communication. Participants argued that since communication becomes more convenient through technology, it ends up making you dependent on it and consuming your time which can lead to less people socializing in person and in turn developing social anxiety.

On how they balance technology usage and face-to-face interactions, participants stated that they will usually use technology for communicating with people who are not in the same location as them, and prioritize in-person meetings when possible. Some also reported that they try to stay away from tech devices when they are meeting people in person. This set of boundaries allows them to maintain a healthy balance between the online and offline world.

On whether they had any comments on how technology has impacted their face-to-face interactions, there was a division between participants who stated that technology had had no impact on their in-person interactions and participants who reported that it had impacted their communication for better or worse. One participant stated that, “Technology has significantly improved my ability to stay in touch with distant friends and family, but it can sometimes create a barrier in face-to-face communication.” Some participants reported that technology had improved their communication skills and boosted their self confidence, while others reported that it had shortened their attention span and developed a dependency to it.

DISCUSSION

Insightful data has been provided by the survey on the impact of technology on face-to-face (F2F) communication patterns. When compared to the literature review, many of the themes go hand in hand with the respondents' answers, which highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of technology use on communication

The positive impacts of technology on communication highlighted in many articles analyzed in the literature review align with the survey responses.

As noted in the literature, technology facilitates social networking and provides easy access to various online forums and meetings, potentially enhancing communication skills and confidence in F2F settings (Konrath, 2012). Many respondents reported frequent use of smartphones and social media platforms, which supports the idea that these tools enable users to stay connected with distant family and friends (Sbarra et al., 2019; Pew Research Center, 2023).

One respondent noted, "It is easier and a lot more convenient," indicating how digital tools have made it simpler to maintain connections.

Furthermore, the role of technology in promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding is another point in which the survey results support literature findings. Respondents pointed out the ability to interact with people from different cultures, which enhances cultural awareness and empathy. A respondent shared, "It's good for connecting people who live in different parts of the world and fostering mutual understanding."

Nevertheless, the survey also highlights several downsides of technology on F2F interactions, as discussed in the literature. A vast number of respondents indicated that constant notifications and the urge to check electronic devices interrupt physical conversations, leading to superficial discussions rather than meaningful ones (Turkle, 2017, 2023). This interruption negatively affects the quality of F2F communication and family dynamics, as both parents and children often focus on their devices rather than engaging with each other (Hiniker et al., 2016). One respondent mentioned, "Having electronic devices that constantly interrupt physical conversations results in less meaningful interactions."

Moreover, the overreliance on digital communication can hinder the development of crucial social skills, such as active listening and interpreting nonverbal cues, as discussed in both, results and literature as well. Many respondents acknowledged that excessive screen time and digital communication reduce opportunities for developing these skills, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and depression, particularly among adolescents (Twenge, 2019). A

participant noted, “I try to communicate live with family members to balance my technology use and face-to-face interactions.”

A reduction in F2F meetings due to the convenience of digital tools like email and online meeting platforms was noted to be the case in the workplace. While these tools increase work efficiency, they also limit opportunities for team bonding and building trust through daily F2F interactions (Becker et al., 2018). This finding underscores the need for a balanced approach to digital and F2F communication in professional settings. One respondent stated, “We have fewer face-to-face meetings because digital tools are more efficient, but it affects team bonding.”

Additionally, the use of social media language in face-to-face conversations can lead to misinterpretation of the speaker’s intention as some respondents discussed.

This supports the literature’s argument that context-dependent slang and abbreviations, while creating personalized interactions, may alienate some audiences, particularly in professional environments (Association for Psychological Science, 2024). One participant shared, “I use references from viral videos or memes online, but sometimes it causes confusion in real-life conversations.”

Also, the lack of nonverbal elements such as body language, voice tone and facial expressions in digital communication can decrease emotional connection and lead to misunderstandings. This finding aligns with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of nonverbal cues in F2F interactions for conveying emotions and intentions (Sherman et al., 2018; Kazmeyer, 2023). A respondent mentioned, “It’s hard to understand the speaker’s intention without seeing their facial expressions or body language.”

As a result of excessive use of digital communication, many users are prone to social isolation, as some individuals substitute online interactions for physical ones. This finding is consistent with Hunt et al. (2018), who reported that heavy social media users are more likely to experience social isolation compared to those who engage more in F2F conversations. One participant stated, “I started to prefer more writing than speaking, which sometimes makes me feel isolated.”

Lastly, when combined with the literature review, the survey results provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of technology on F2F communication patterns. While technology offers notable benefits in terms of connectivity and social interaction, it also conveys challenges that can affect the quality of F2F communication and the development of social skills. A balance

between digital and physical interactions is crucial for leveraging the benefits of technology while also keeping meaningful human connections.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight a complex relationship between technology and face-to-face communication. On the one hand, online communication and social media platforms facilitate social networking, enhance cross-cultural interactions, and provide convenient ways to maintain relationships over long distances. On the other side of the coin though, technology can also hinder physical conversations, diminish the development of crucial social skills, and contribute to social isolation. To maximize the benefits of technology while mitigating its drawbacks, it is essential to strike a balance between online and offline interactions. By doing so, individuals can stay connected and engaged with their loved ones while preserving the quality and depth of their in-person relationships.

Limitations

It's essential to note that the research faced limitations. Regarding the questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, it was not possible to verify whether the participants met the required criteria to be part of the study. Additionally, there was no way to ensure that participants did not fill out the questionnaire multiple times.

References

- Becker, W. J., Belkin, L. Y., Tuskey, S. E., & Conroy, S. A. (2018). Surviving remotely: How job control and loneliness during a forced shift to remote work impacted performance. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 91*(3), 548-566. DOI:10.1002/hrm.22102
- Drago, E. (2015). The effect of technology on face-to-face communication. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications, 6*(1). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1137/2/the-effect-of-technology-on-face-to-face-communication>
- Hacıyakupoglu, G., & Zhang, W. (2015). Social media and trust during the Gezi protests in Turkey. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 20*(4), 450-466. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12121>
- Hunt, M. G., Marx, R., Lipson, C., & Young, J. (2018). No more FOMO: Limiting social media decreases loneliness and depression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 37*(10), 751-768. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751>
- Kazmeyer, M. (2023). Negative effects of technology on communication. *Techwalla*. Retrieved from <https://www.techwalla.com/articles/negative-effects-of-technology-on-communication>
- Konrath, S. (2012). The empathy paradox: Increasing disconnection in the age of increasing connection. In R. Sternberg & P. Baltes (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom* (Chapter 12). Cambridge University Press. DOI:10.1017/CBO9780511977244.018
- Pew Research Center. (2023). Stories from experts about the impact of digital life. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/07/03/stories-from-experts-about-the-impact-of-digital-life/>
- PowerTextor. (2023). Text abbreviations & acronyms: When and how to use them. Retrieved from <https://powertextor.com/blogs/text-abbreviations-acronyms-guide/>
- Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2012). Can you connect with me now? How the presence of mobile communication technology influences face-to-face conversation quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 30*(3), 237-246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407512453827>
- Sbarra, D. A., Briskin, J. L., & Slatcher, R. B. (2019). Smartphones and close relationships: The case for an evolutionary mismatch. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 14*(4), 596-618. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/1745691619826535>
- Sherman, L. E., Michikyan, M., & Greenfield, P. M. (2018). The effects of text, audio, video, and in-person communication on bonding between friends. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 12*(1). DOI:10.5817/CP2013-2-3
- Turkle, S. (2017). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic Books.
- Turkle, S. (2023). How smartphones are killing conversation. *Greater Good Magazine*. Retrieved from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_smartphones_are_killing_conversation
- Twenge, J. M. (2019). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy—and completely unprepared for adulthood*. Simon and Schuster.
- World Economic Forum. (2024, June 21). Here's how technology has changed the world since 2000. *World Economic Forum*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/11/heres-how-technology-has-changed-and-changed-us-over-the-past-20-years/>

Appendix

Questionnaire: The Impact of Technology on Face-to-Face Communication Patterns

Section 1: Demographic Information

Age:

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55 or more

Education Level:

High school or lower

Some college

Associate degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate

Section 2: Technology Usage

How often do you use a smartphone?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

How often do you use social media platforms? (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

Which social media platform do you use the most?

Facebook

Instagram

Twitter

Snapchat

TikTok

LinkedIn

Other: _____

How many hours per day do you spend on social media?

Less than 1 hour

1-2 hours

2-4 hours

4-6 hours

More than 6 hours

Section 3: Face-to-Face Communication Patterns

How often do you engage in face-to-face conversations with family members?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

How often do you engage in face-to-face conversations with friends?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

How often do you engage in face-to-face conversations with colleagues or classmates?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

In the past week, how many times have you met someone in person to socialize?

0

1-2

3-4

5-6

7 or more

Section 4: Impact of Technology on Communication

Do you feel that technology (e.g., smartphones, social media) has decreased the quality of your face-to-face interactions?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Do you feel that technology has increased the frequency of your face-to-face interactions?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Have you ever been interrupted during a face-to-face conversation by a notification or call on your smartphone?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

Do you think that social media makes it easier to plan face-to-face meetings with others?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Do you find it more comfortable to communicate via technology (e.g., texting, social media) rather than face-to-face?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Has technology ever caused misunderstandings or conflicts in your face-to-face interactions?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

Do you believe that technology has made you more or less socially connected to others?

Much less connected

Somewhat less connected

No change

Somewhat more connected

Much more connected

Section 5: Use of Abbreviations and Slang

How often do you use abbreviations or slang derived from social media in your face-to-face conversations?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

Which of the following abbreviations or slang terms do you use in face-to-face conversations? (Select all that apply)

LOL (Laugh Out Loud)

BRB (Be Right Back)

IDK (I Don't Know)

OMG (Oh My God)

FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out)

TBH (To Be Honest)

BFF (Best Friends Forever)

YOLO (You Only Live Once)

Other: _____

Do you feel that using social media slang in face-to-face conversations is appropriate?

Yes

No

Have you ever had to explain social media slang or abbreviations to someone during a face-to-face conversation?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

Do you think the use of social media slang in face-to-face conversations enhances or hinders communication?

Strongly hinders

Somewhat hinders

No impact

Somewhat enhances

Strongly enhances

Do you notice a difference in the use of social media slang in face-to-face communication across different age groups?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

Section 6: Personal Reflections

In your opinion, what are the biggest advantages of using technology for communication?

In your opinion, what are the biggest disadvantages of using technology for communication?

How do you balance your technology use and face-to-face interactions?

Any additional comments on how technology has impacted your face-to-face communication?

BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM AMONG KOSOVO'S YOUTH: STRENGTHENING SOCIAL TIES OR REINFORCING DIVISIONS?

Ana Livia BERISHAJ¹

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

In Kosovo's post-conflict and multiethnic society, language is more than a tool for communication but it is also considered as a symbol of identity. Kosovo being one of the youngest countries in Europe, it has a youth that was raised in globalization, increased exposure to the digital world, and even some social tensions. Kosovo is characterized by the coexistence of several languages, Albanian being the main language (also known as the mother tongue), Serbian (constitutionally recognized), Turkish, Bosnian, and Romani. English is increasingly becoming more influential, especially among youth, showcasing Kosovo's modernity. This complex linguistic environment raises important sociolinguistic questions about how bilingualism and multilingualism are experienced by Kosovo's youth. Do these multilingual practices serve to bring young people together across ethnic lines, or do they reinforce social boundaries and divisions due to past conflicts or are there other reasons at question?

Kosovar youth today often have multiple linguistic proficiencies. Albanian youth may be proficient in English and other Western European languages, Serbian youth in both Serbian and English, and others in minority languages. Meanwhile, in mixed urban environments and bigger cities such as in Prishtina, Mitrovica, and Prizren have a unique setting for the contact of different languages. International influence and the influence of the diaspora have further enriched the linguistic diversity in Kosovo. Kosovo's youth are also exposed

¹ MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; analivia.berishaj2@gmail.com

to English through social media and various platforms which influence their English proficiency level.

However, linguistic diversity does not always mean that there is social harmony between different people. In many areas, especially those with ethnic tensions, language can also become a boundary. For example, when it comes to Albanian and Serbian, using one language over another may carry political and emotional implications. For many Kosovo Albanians, post-war identity was defined by the extent to which they could disassociate from Serbian cultural dominance (Gorani, 2022). Besides political reasons, there are also certain prejudices against other languages or just the fact that one may not know one language can create a social boundary or division.

Young people in Kosovo are the ones most focused on the future, and they play a big role in how things are changing. The way they use and think about different languages in everyday life can show us whether speaking multiple languages helps build better connections between communities or just highlights old divisions or perhaps something completely different. This research looks at the real experiences of bilingual and multilingual youth to better understand how language shapes friendship and everyday life in Kosovo today.

Problem Statement

Despite the multilingual nature of Kosovo's society, limited research exists on how young people use language to build or break social divisions. Most existing studies on bilingualism in Kosovo focus on institutional language rights, rather than the personal, everyday language experiences of youth. At the same time, growing linguistic diversity, especially the increasing prominence of English, presents new opportunities for youth.

Yet, these opportunities are not experienced equally. Some young people are proficient in three or more languages, while others remain monolingual, often due to socioeconomic factors or lack of contact with other ethnicities or they are simply uninterested in learning other languages. These things raise key questions: Does bilingualism contribute to social cohesion among youth, or does it highlight divisions?

Moreover, Kosovo remains a society marked by ethnic boundaries. Language could be a bridge to social integration, but it could also enhance separation, particularly when certain languages align with group identities. The role of bilingualism and multilingualism among Kosovo's youth is under-researched. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring how language practices among youth either foster connection across communities or reinforce lines of division.

In doing so, it contributes to broader debates in sociolinguistics on the social consequences of multilingualism in diverse societies.

Research Objectives

This study is guided by the following key objectives:

To examine the everyday language practices of Kosovo's bilingual and multilingual youth across different linguistic, ethnic, and regional contexts.

To explore whether and how language use among youth facilitates social integration or contributes to social division.

To investigate how young people perceive the social value and emotions of the languages they speak.

To analyze the implications of youth language practices for dialogue and social cohesion in Kosovo.

Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate whether bilingualism and multilingualism among Kosovo's youth function primarily as tools for strengthening social ties or reinforcing divisions. This study explores how multilingual competencies shape everyday social interactions, peer group formation and experiences. By centering youth voices, the research also aims to challenge top-down interpretations of language identity, offering a bottom-up view of how young people navigate linguistic complexity in their own lives.

Research Questions

To fulfill the above aim and objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

How do Kosovo's bilingual and multilingual youth use language in their daily social interactions?

1. To what extent does multilingualism among youth promote social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, or friendship across ethnic lines?
2. What are the sociolinguistic and emotional associations that young people attach to the languages they speak (e.g., Albanian, Serbian, English, Turkish)?
3. In what ways do youth perceive bilingualism and multilingualism as unifying or divisive?

Significance of the Study

This research holds sociolinguistic and cultural relevance. Firstly, it contributes to the growing body of literature that explores language and identity in diverse societies. By focusing on Kosovo's youth, a generation often caught between tradition and global modernity, it sheds light on how multilingualism is lived. The study will offer insights into the role of language in social cohesion.

Findings may inform policymakers, educators, and NGOs working in intercultural education, peacebuilding, and youth development. It may challenge views of language groups by showcasing the diversity and fluidity of youth linguistic practices. Finally, the research is significant for its potential to elevate youth voices in academic and social discourse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores key scholarly perspectives on bilingualism and multilingualism, particularly within youth communities, post-conflict societies, and the Balkan region. It highlights how language can simultaneously unite and divide, reflecting broader social, political, and cultural dynamics. The review is organized around five core themes: (1) Definitions and dimensions of bilingualism/multilingualism, (2) theoretical frameworks on language and identity, (3) the role of language in post-conflict and multiethnic societies, (4) Kosovo's unique sociolinguistic landscape, and (5) existing gaps in the literature.

Understanding Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Bilingualism refers to the ability to use two languages, while multilingualism extends this ability to three or more. Grosjean (2010) argues that bilingualism should be understood not as equal fluency in two languages, but as a dynamic and context-dependent skill shaped by individual experiences, social environments, and communicative needs. Similarly, García and Wei (2014) promote the idea of "translanguaging," where speakers use the languages they know in fluid and hybrid ways. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), young bilinguals rarely maintain rigid language boundaries. According to them, they mix and adapt language based on context, identity, and audience. In Kosovo, multilingualism is both a part of their history as well as a modern reality.

Sociolinguistic Theories Relevant to Language and Identity

A number of sociolinguistic and socio psychological theories help explain how language intersects with social identity and group dynamics.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979):

This theory suggests that individuals derive a sense of self from their group memberships. Language acts as a key marker of these groups. In multilingual societies, language choices can reinforce in-group belonging or out-group differentiation (Gumperz, 1982). Among youth, language is not just a tool for communication but a resource for identity performance (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

Code-Switching and Language Ideologies:

Code-switching is the practice of alternating between languages and it has traditionally been viewed as either a sign of confusion or cultural richness. Woolard (1998) notes that language choices are imbued with meaning: they signal authority, rebellion, respect, or solidarity. In Kosovo, code-switching can be done for the other person to understand you better, as an act of respect or it can even be politically charged.

Linguistic Capital and Power (Bourdieu, 1991):

Bourdieu argues that language has symbolic power which can act as a form of “linguistic capital” that can bring access to social mobility, especially when aligned with prestigious norms. In Kosovo, proficiency in English or even German may offer youth greater cultural capital than other languages spoken in Kosovo reflecting broader geopolitical aspirations toward Europe and the West.

Bilingualism in Post-Conflict and Multiethnic Societies

In urban centers such as Prishtina, Prizren or Mitrovica, bilingual youth may use Serbian or Turkish in markets, music, or friendships. Young people have developed their own unique way of speaking and their language is shaped by things like global culture, social media, and how much they use digital technology in daily life (Xega & Çyfeku, 2025). These multilingual practices challenge the idea that language divisions are inevitable. Bilingualism may function either as a site of resistance (breaking down ethnic barriers) or a site of reproduction (upholding group boundaries), depending on the context in which it is used (Norton, 2013).

Language Attitudes and Social Boundaries

Language attitudes among youth in Kosovo are shaped by complex factors: family, schooling, media exposure, and peer interactions. English is perceived as modern, neutral, and useful for travel, education, or employment. Multilingualism does not guarantee cross-group empathy. As Kraus & Friedrich (2020) argue, language competence must be paired with positive social attitudes

to foster real cohesion. Thus, understanding the emotional and social meanings attached to language use is as important as tracking who speaks what.

Research Gaps

Although there is a growing body of literature on ethnic identity and education in Kosovo, few studies focus specifically on the youth experience of bilingualism and multilingualism. Most existing research either targets school systems or adult speakers, leaving a significant gap regarding how young adults navigate Kosovo's linguistic landscape on their own. There is also a lack of qualitative data that captures the voices and lived experiences of youth.

Furthermore, existing research tends to focus either on interethnic conflict or on English language learning as a neutral language. Rarely are these themes brought together to ask: how does multilingualism shape social interaction and identity among Kosovo's youth? This research will address that gap by offering a youth-centered exploration of language as a social force in Kosovo today.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which is suitable for exploring the subjective, social, and emotional dimensions of language use among Kosovo's youth. Given the complex sociolinguistic terrain of Kosovo, qualitative methods allow for a more nuanced understanding of how bilingualism and multilingualism function in everyday life.

The research explores how young people use language in their social environments, how they perceive its role in either building or limiting relationships, and what emotional meanings they attach to each language. This design enables rich, context-specific insights that cannot be captured through quantitative data alone (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Participants

Participants consisted of five individuals aged between 18 and 25, all born and raised in Kosovo who also have some prior knowledge and awareness on the linguistic nature of Kosovo. All participants were bilingual or multilingual, with some level of competence in at least two of the following languages: Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, Bosnian, English.

Participants represented a mix of geographic areas (urban and semi-urban locations such as Prishtina, Vushtrri, Viti, Drenica or Ferizaj). Active engagement in digital and social media platforms was a key criteria, as much of Kosovo's multilingual interaction among youth occurs online.

Sampling Method

This study employed a purposive sampling to select participants who meet the specific inclusion criteria relevant to the research aims. This method allows for the intentional selection of individuals with lived multilingual experiences, which is essential for examining how bilingualism and multilingualism affect social integration or division (Palinkas et al., 2015).

To complement purposive sampling, snowball sampling will also be used. Initial participants will be encouraged to recommend peers who fit the profile, increasing the chances of building a comfortable and socially connected focus group. This strategy will help foster trust and open discussion on topics that may involve identity and perceived divisions.

Data Collection

The focus group format is ideal for this study because it encourages dynamic interaction and allows participants to build on each other's experiences. It also mirrors the conversational and socially embedded nature of language practices, particularly in a multilingual context (Morgan, 1997).

The focus group will be audio-recorded with participants' consent, and notes will be taken to capture group dynamics and moments of emphasis (laughter, pauses). The discussion will be guided by prompts organized around key themes:

- Language practices in different social settings (home, school, online)
- Experiences with bilingual/multilingual friendships
- Feelings of belonging or exclusion linked to language
- Attitudes toward different languages (e.g., Albanian, Serbian, English)
- Language and identity construction

Data Analysis

The focus group discussion will be transcribed, including any code-switching, repetitions, and non-standard usage. Thematic analysis will be employed and it will be inductive, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than being imposed from pre-existing frameworks. However, it will be informed by key sociolinguistic concepts such as identity construction, language ideologies, and symbolic capital.

Limitations

This research is qualitative in nature and, as such, is not intended to produce generalizable results. The small sample size and focus on one focus group

discussion mean that the findings will be context-specific and exploratory. The experiences shared by the participants may not represent those of youth in all parts of the country, especially those from isolated or minority communities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key themes that emerged from the interview with five young multilingual Kosovars. The data was analyzed with attention to the research questions, and five main themes came up:

Multilingual Practices in Daily Life

Language and Social Belonging

Attitudes and Emotional Associations with Languages

Language and Social Inclusion/Exclusion

Perceptions of Language as Unifying or Divisive

Multilingual Practices in Daily Life

While Albanian was the native language of all participants, English was commonly used in academic, professional, and online spaces. Turkish and German were also present, mostly through media exposure or international experience. Several participants also had limited knowledge of Serbian.

English had a dominant role in most participants' daily communication, both in formal and informal contexts. One participant noted:

“For the past five years, English is my dominant language... 80% of my time goes by speaking in English, talking in English with the students”.

Interestingly, although Albanian was the mother tongue, some participants felt more emotionally and intellectually expressive in English:

“I feel myself being freer... I feel like I have a wider vocabulary in English than in Albanian”.

Home life was more varied. While Albanian was used with parents, siblings often mixed languages, especially English and Turkish:

“With my sister, we mix Turkish, Albanian and English. It really becomes fun... our parents are like, ‘What are you talking about?’”.

Such code-switching reflects both the influence of global culture and the normalization of multilingualism in the private sphere. This fluid use of languages aligns with recent sociolinguistic perspectives that reject strict divisions between language systems and instead emphasize hybrid, dynamic repertoires.

Language and Social Belonging

Language was not just a tool for communication but a marker of belonging and connection. Participants spoke about forming friendships based on shared language knowledge, especially through English and Turkish.

“I found people online who were fans of a Turkish series... We would just talk about the next episode and slowly get to know each other”.

This illustrates how shared linguistic and cultural references can foster connection, even across borders. Another participant highlighted how using Turkish helped them form deeper relationships:

“I mostly use Turkish to talk some sweet phrases... they're cute and you can use them freely with people around you”.

Online spaces, in particular, were cited as places where English served as a “lingua franca”:

“It's like the lingua franca is English, basically in the online world”.

This kind of linguistic familiarity contributes to feelings of inclusion in both local and global communities. However, participants also noted that knowing Albanian was essential when trying to reconnect with others from the diaspora.

Attitudes and Emotional Associations with Languages

The emotional dimension of language use was deeply present in the data. Participants described different emotional “selves” emerging depending on the language spoken. English was often associated with confidence, competence, and creativity:

“I use English when I want to show that I'm confident... it's like, you see me. I know what I'm capable of”.

Meanwhile, Albanian was described as more emotionally blunt, particularly when expressing anger:

“I think whenever I'm angry or want to express frustration, I always use Albanian. It just sounds so realistic”.

Some participants perceived Albanian as lacking poetic vocabulary compared to English or Turkish:

“Albanian sounds dull or blank... English and Turkish give me more emotions”.

German, in contrast, was described as emotionally distant or even aggressive:

“German is very aggressive... I mostly use it for swearing!”.

This emotional mapping of languages shows how language use is not only shaped by practical needs but also by feelings, identity, and cultural association.

Language and Social Inclusion/Exclusion

While multilingualism allowed participants to build bridges, it could also reinforce boundaries. English, in particular, was seen both as empowering and as a barrier between those who were fluent and those who were not.

Participants who worked as teachers reported witnessing exclusion in classrooms based on language skills:

“You notice when your students gather together because they know English and leave out those who don’t”.

Another said:

“I do judge people who do not know English that much... like, how is it possible?”.

There was clear awareness that this exclusion is problematic, yet it was normalized, especially in elite academic or professional settings.

Participants also described being judged for speaking languages other than Albanian, especially Turkish or Serbian. These judgments were often linked to political and historical tensions in Kosovo. One participant described:

“I tend to avoid talking in English in my hometown... people look at you like, ‘Why are you bragging?’”.

With Turkish, the gendered stereotype of “only women watching Turkish series” added another layer:

“They say, ‘You watch Turkish series? Oh, why?’... like it’s something embarrassing”.

Speaking Turkish brought its own stigma, particularly because of Kosovo’s history:

“When I told a classmate I speak Turkish, he said, ‘How dare you?’”.

These moments show how language can be both a bridge and a boundary, deeply tied to identity, politics, and group membership.

Perceptions of Language as Unifying or Divisive

Participants expressed that, despite the potential for judgment, multilingualism has more unifying than divisive effects. Several highlighted how English in particular acts as a neutral “middle ground” for interethnic communication:

“I met Serbian community members who didn’t speak Albanian. English helped us have conversations, even if we didn’t become friends”.

This suggests that English provides a safe space for interaction across ethnic lines in Kosovo. Others made similar points about using Turkish or Serbian to build unexpected relationships:

“There’s this girl that was Bosnian... she was surprised I knew a bit of Serbian. We became friends because of that”.

However, participants were also honest about the limits of language in overcoming societal divisions. One shared:

“Language can help, but people are still close-minded. Especially with Turkish or Serbian, they just judge you”.

This ambivalence, hope for connection versus awareness of social prejudice was a recurring tension in the data. Still, most participants emphasized the positive potential of multilingualism:

“The more languages you know, the fewer barriers we have”.

Role of Language Education and Policy

A final important theme was the role of schools and language policies in shaping youth experiences. Participants felt strongly that communicative language teaching should replace grammar-heavy instruction:

“Let’s stop focusing on grammar. Teach communication, because if you don’t know how to speak, how can you pass?”.

Several emphasized the importance of teacher attitudes and inclusivity:

“Teachers keep talking about inclusivity but they do nothing about it... They need to change the curriculum and help students connect through real-world language use”.

Participants proposed specific strategies such as student exchange programs, school partnerships with English-speaking countries, and language-focused social events:

“Our schools need to cooperate with schools from other countries. Not just at university level, start in high school!”.

There was also recognition that language skills reflect broader social inequalities:

“People who don’t speak English? It shows a lack of good education in Kosovo. They just got passed without learning”.

Such comments show the deep link between language education and social inclusion and suggest that improvements in this area could help multilingualism become a true force for unity in Kosovo.

CONCLUSION

The young people interviewed for this study live multilingual lives that involve constant switching between languages based on context, emotion, and audience. While English dominates their academic and professional worlds, Albanian remains strong in personal life, and languages like Turkish, German, and Serbian add uniqueness to their identities.

Multilingualism enables connection, intercultural dialogue, and friendship, but also creates spaces for judgment and exclusion. Much of this depends on social attitudes and the quality of language education in Kosovo. Participants want to see more inclusive, communicative approaches in schools and more opportunities for genuine cultural exchange.

Ultimately, these multilingual youth see language not only as a means of expression but as a tool for building relationships and understanding across ethnic and social lines. With the right support and openness from society, their linguistic diversity can be one of Kosovo's greatest strengths.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4–5), 585–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=X85J8ipMpZEC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=The+SAGE+handbook+of+qualitative+research+\(4th+ed.\)&ots=D5O5N7Q3jr&sig=LScdig9GkZuuK4Z1R5xa7H1P5zE](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=X85J8ipMpZEC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=The+SAGE+handbook+of+qualitative+research+(4th+ed.)&ots=D5O5N7Q3jr&sig=LScdig9GkZuuK4Z1R5xa7H1P5zE)
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://ofeliagarciaidotorg.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/translanguaging-in-bilingual-education.pdf>
- Gorani, D. (2022) Resolving the Kosovo-Serbia Differend: A New Lingua Franca for the Region. *Kosovo-Serbia: A Different Approach*, 27. <https://musineinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/02-Libri-me-Ese-ENG07.pdf#page=27>
- Grosjean, F. (2010). *Bilingual: Life and reality*. Harvard University Press. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.4159/9780674056459-intro/html>
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611834>
- Kraus, P. A., & Friedrich, D. (2020). *The politics of multilingualism: Europeanisation, globalisation and linguistic governance*. Routledge. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1075/wlp.6.con/html>
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=iBJZusd1GocC&oi=fnd&pg=PP7&dq=Focus+groups+as+qualitative+research+\(2nd+ed.\)&ots=mBOfgKgJY2&sig=dSSSt3E-JS4Zv2-eRkJUXMkaIl0](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=iBJZusd1GocC&oi=fnd&pg=PP7&dq=Focus+groups+as+qualitative+research+(2nd+ed.)&ots=mBOfgKgJY2&sig=dSSSt3E-JS4Zv2-eRkJUXMkaIl0)
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.21832/9781783090563>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. Multilingual Matters. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/13670069010050030101>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- Woolard, K. A. (1998). Language ideology as a field of inquiry. In B. B. Schieffelin, K. A. Woolard & P. V. Kroskrity (Eds.), *Language ideologies: Practice and theory* (pp. 3–47). Oxford University Press. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118786093.iela0217>
- Xega, E., & Çyfeku, J. (2025). *Youth language: Exploring attitudes and perceptions of Albanian students toward these new linguistic patterns*. *Езиков свят* (Orbis Linguarum), 23(1), 69–80. <https://doi.org/10.37708/ezs.swu.bg.v23i1.7>

CODE-SWITCHING IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS: A COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Erjola MAZREKU¹

INTRODUCTION

The need to communicate makes people use different techniques such as body language, facial expressions or switch to the language they are most comfortable in. Bilinguals or multilinguals around the world are likely to use the language they feel most comfortable with in different situations. Bilinguals are proficient speakers of two languages, while multilinguals are proficient in more than two languages (Dewaele, 2015). This is where the phenomenon of code-switching appears.

The word ‘code’ in this context refers to a system people use to communicate, such as a language or language variation (Harya, 2018). Code-switching is defined as the alternation between languages in one conversation (Nilep, 2006). In simpler terms, it means combining different languages within one or more sentences. Another term that is often confused with code-switching is ‘code-mixing’. Although it does not have an opposite meaning, using it interchangeably with code-switching might not be correct. Code-mixing is present when people use units from one language in sentences from another (Harya, 2018). Thus, it is not the same as code-switching, which usually includes larger units like sentences or clauses.

Code-switching is a practice people use because they see certain codes as more appropriate than others in different social functions, and some think it can be used as a helpful tool that can support EFL learners. However, there are others who view it as an obstacle when used in EFL environments. Based on Hughes et al. (2006), researchers and EFL teachers view code-switching as a negative trait and people who switch to their first language as incompetent in

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; erjolamazreku02@gmail.com

their second language. Nevertheless, code-switching specialists view people who are able to practice it as very competent in their language skills (Mabule, 2015).

In a multilingual country like Kosovo, where languages like Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Turkish, Gorani, and Romani co-exist, code-switching has become a frequent and natural linguistic phenomenon in both academic and informal settings. Therefore, there are many studies done on the use of code-switching in everyday life in social contexts, but also in EFL classrooms. A comparison analysis of the practice of code-switching in academic and social contexts, especially in Kosovo, is unexplored. This is why this study investigates how code-switching differs and how it affects interpersonal relationships and identity performance in social and academic settings.

Significance of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the differences and similarities of code-switching practices in social versus academic environments. This determines how people's code-switching affects their interpersonal relationships and reflects performance of identity, and if these differ when they occur in academic and social settings. Additionally, this study focuses on finding common patterns between code-switching across both contexts.

It is known that code-switching is a widespread practice in Kosovo because of the multilingual communities. Therefore, it is important to understand what drives people to switch languages in everyday life and different contexts. This study deepens the understanding of the practice of code-switching across social and academic contexts by focusing on interpersonal relationships and identity performance.

This study's focus will be on people's personal experiences and the situational, emotional and social factors that make them code-switch in both academic and social settings. Moreover, these findings will contribute to sociolinguistics, offering more inclusive discussions on the role of code-switching in language and the performance of identity.

Research questions

To conduct this study, the following questions will be addressed:

1. How do the motivating factors of code-switching differ in academic and social settings?

2. How does code-switching contribute to the performance of identity in academic and social contexts?

3. How does code-switching shape interpersonal relationships in academic and social environments?

LITERATURE REVIEW

When observing bilinguals or multilinguals speaking, a mix of two or more languages can be noticed. This is the phenomenon of code-switching, which has been studied continuously by researchers from different fields. Being viewed as a significant trait in their communication (Bosma et al., 2019), the need to be investigated became more prominent. As a phenomenon, it has been studied from different perspectives such as sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and structural (Panhwar & Buriro, 2020).

Communication Accommodation Theory

The main reason that makes people code-switch is adjustment to the interlocutor. This brings us to the Communication Accommodation Theory, which states that people change the way they speak to adapt to their co-speaker. They do this by using different strategies such as constructivism, interaction adaptation, response matching, grounding, and mimicry. One of these strategies is also code-switching, which studies show to be a more unconscious process (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Burgoon and Hubbard (2005) state that, unlike other strategies that are used to make the communication flow smoother, code-switching and mimicry are used to fulfil the speakers' needs by making them more comfortable.

Code-Switching Studied by Sociolinguists

The sociolinguistic approaches to code-switching aim to identify the effects and functions of the use of code-switching in real-life situations (society). This is also called a 'macro-linguistic' approach, which studies its use in the community (Almelhi, 2020), while the 'micro-linguistic' approach studies the relationship between the speakers (Panhwar & Buriro, 2020). Based on Panhwar and Buriro (2020), when studying code-switching, linguists divided it into three parts:

Code-switching in society,

Code-switching during conversations, and

Code-switching as a social tool

Code-Switching in Society

The aim of this approach was to see what makes people switch languages. It focused on the speakers taking part in the conversation, the settings in which the conversation is taking place, the topic and the style of the conversation.

There are two types of switching in this division: when people code-switch because the situation changes, and when people code-switch to send a message, also called metaphorical code-switching (Panhwar & Buriro, 2020).

An example of situational code-switching is when two friends speak in Albanian in their EFL class, but switch to English when their teacher, a native English speaker, approaches them. An example of metaphorical code switching is when an EFL teacher, whose first language is Albanian, is explaining a new concept to the students, and to emphasize a certain point, they switch to Albanian.

Code-Switching During Conversations

The focus of this approach was to analyse the ways people ‘code-switch’ during conversations. So, code-switching was seen as a part of a conversation instead of something people chose based on the settings or situation. This approach explored code-switching in real-time conversations. Contextualization clues (facial expressions, gestures and word choice) that help speakers understand the deeper meaning of the utterances were introduced as key elements of this division (Panhwar & Buriro, 2020).

Code-Switching as a Social Tool

This approach views code-switching as a tool to manage social boundaries. As some languages are considered more powerful than others, people code-switch to fit in, show loyalty to a group, for professional gain and many other reasons related to social tools. Some contexts see code-switching as a stigma, others as normal. This means some people consider code-switching as lacking language skills, while for others, this is a normal way of speaking (Panhwar & Buriro, 2020).

Psycholinguistic and Structural Approaches to Code-Switching

The psycholinguistic approach explores how the brain handles two languages and the processes involved. It uses experiments to investigate the language control, attention and memory of the speaker by trying to find which part of the brain activates when code-switching. The structural approach deals with how code-switching follows the grammar rules (meaning, word formation, sentence structure) and supports the idea that code-switching is rule-based (Toribio, 2009).

Types of Code-Switching

Grammatically, there are three types of code switching:

Inter-sentential switching is when code-switching occurs at the sentence level (Fanani & Ma'u, 2018), e.g., This is a cat! Përsërit pas meje! (Repeat after me!)

Intra-sentential switching refers to the language switch within a sentence (Mabule, 2015), e.g., I know I should do it, por jam shumë e lodhur! (...but I'm so tired!)

Extra-sentential switching (Tag switching) occurs when tag elements from one language are inserted into another language in which the discourse is taking place (Fanani & Ma'u, 2018). It may be realised as interjections, discourse markers or fillers (Mabule, 2015), e.g., Actually, se di çfarë të bëj. (...I don't know what to do.)

Code-Switching in Social Context

There are several factors that influence societal bilingualism to emerge. The main ones are social forces and historical events like invasion, migration, colonisation and deportation (Toribio, 2009). The societal multilingualism in Kosovo comes from the diverse ethnic groups living there. The majority of the population is Albanian, but there are many other ethnic groups, such as Serbs, Bosniaks, Turks, Ashkali, Egyptians, Gorani and Roma, and they each speak their own language. Most of the influence for this linguistic diversity came from Kosovo being one of the countries in the Former Yugoslavia, where the official language was Serbo-Croatian. This impact remains even today, with the official languages of Kosovo being Albanian and Serbian (Demjaha, 2017).

Functions of Code-Switching in Social Context

There are different reasons why people practice code-switching in a social context.

Code-switching for humour

Bilinguals or multilinguals are likely to code-switch by adopting stereotypical attitudes of different cultures. They code-switch to match the language of that culture, depending on the situation, or to express humour.

Code-switching for bonding

Bonding is another influential factor that makes people code-switch for identification and intimacy. This is one of the politeness strategies that people use to express solidarity with other people who speak a mutual language.

Code-switching for dampening directions

One of the instances in which people used code-switching to dampen directness was when they tried to elicit a response from someone without

repeating the question. Instead, they repeated it in another mutually intelligible language by practising code-switching. After achieving the goal, they switch back to the initial language the discourse was taking place (Toribio, 2009).

Bilinguals and multilinguals code-switch for many other reasons such as switching languages when they cannot remember the proper word to express something in the language the discourse was initially taking place, quoting what someone has said, to show neutrality with the purpose of exploring the most acceptable “code” in a certain situation. Furthermore, some state that they code-switch for reasons such as being angry, tired or lazy to speak another language (Kim, 2006).

Other reasons and functions mentioned in Candra and Qodriani’s (2019) study are the use of code-switching to assert power and status, to express ethnic identity or to be more informative by conveying messages clearly in the language people understand better. Seeing most of the studies on the reasons and functions of code-switching in social contexts, it can be seen that most of them are “situational code-switching”. Having said that, it can be claimed that most bilinguals and multilinguals code-switch in their everyday life mostly to “fit” with a certain situation.

Bilinguals’ and Multilinguals’ Perspectives on Code-Switching

Bilinguals and multilinguals have different perspectives and motivations regarding code-switching. Dewaele et al. (2014) claim that people’s stances on code-switching depend on their personality, their history of language learning or present linguistic practices. Thus, their study, conducted with 2070 multilinguals who were asked to fill out a questionnaire, shows that extroverted people and those with emotional stability have positive attitudes towards code-switching.

On the contrary, the study of Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) on bilinguals’ perspectives on code-switching, it was stated that bilinguals themselves see code-switching as something negative that is practised by people who are “lazy”. Additionally, they view it as a potential risk to their linguistic performance.

Gardner-Chloros et al. (2005) focused on multilinguals’ attitudes towards code-switching and the motivations that influenced those attitudes. They concluded that the younger generation agreed with the statement that code-switching has advantages as opposed to the older generation, who did not prefer it. Regarding the occupation, people of the lower occupational groups had a more positive attitude toward code-switching. Meanwhile, people with more “professional” occupations were uncertain about their views on code-switching

practices. In this respect, the participants with higher education levels did not have favourable attitudes towards code-switching.

Diaz (2004) studied the attitude of a Spanish/Galician community in London towards code-switching through interviews and questionnaires. It was found that the first generation accepted that their children should be proficient in both Spanish and English. However, they did not accept code-switching as a normal phenomenon because, according to them, it shows a lack of proficiency in both languages. Although their children (the second generation) felt that they were not fully proficient in any of the languages, they had more positive attitudes towards code-switching, as opposed to their parents. The case with them was that they tried to avoid switching to Spanish as teenagers, but as they grew up, they began to practice it more often to express pride for their heritage.

When studying the effects of code-switching in everyday life, it was stated that people who code-switch to fit in, especially in their workplace, add to their pressure and stress (Boffy, n.d.). Some studies show that if a person wrongly assumes the interlocutor is proficient in two languages and switches between them within a conversation, it may lead to miscommunication. Furthermore, code-switching can sometimes be used as a tool for discrimination, where people switch to another language to exclude people from their conversation (Fortlage, 2023).

Functions of Code-Switching in Educational Settings

Although code-switching in a social context (in bilingual and multilingual environments) has become the norm, it is still somewhat unacceptable in educational environments. It has been a focus of studies and debate, and it usually occurs in bilingual educational environments, EFL or ESL classrooms. This phenomenon is present when the teacher, students, or both are proficient in two or more languages. There have been many factors mentioned regarding the reasons for code-switching in the classroom. Fanani and Ma'u (2018) mentioned three of them: quoting text, clarifying intention and instruction.

Quoting text refers to the teacher reading or quoting something from a learning material in the target language and switching to the first language to provide further explanation. *Clarifying intention* refers to teachers using English terminology but then switching to their first language to clarify what they meant and to make sure students understood the utterance. *Code-switching for instruction* is done when the teacher utters instructions such as “Write them down”, “Raise your hands”, “Don’t forget”, etc., in the target language (TL) as opposed to the rest of the utterance, which is said in the first language.

In addition, Nation (2003) stated that in EFL classrooms where both teachers and students have the same first language, they switch to their first language as they find it easier and more effective for communication purposes. To explain it, the first language flows naturally, whereas the second language is not used as frequently. Also, according to Puspawati (2018), the main reason EFL teachers code-switch is to help their students who are not as proficient in the other language.

Moreover, Yletyinen (2004) specifies multiple functions of code-switching that are used by EFL teachers and students. Based on his study, teachers practice code-switching to offer help, for explanation, to transition between different activities in the classroom, check comprehension, explain grammar concepts, and respond to students' spontaneous comments. In comparison, students use code-switching to request help, to self-correct, when they cannot find an English equivalent for something existing in their language, or to engage in informal interactions. Considering all these functions mentioned, code-switching is not simply an adaptive technique but a tool that supports learning in EFL classrooms.

As seen from the examples above, there are researchers who advocate for the use of code-switching in EFL classrooms, arguing that using the first language is inevitable in these settings. As such, these researchers recommend utilizing it as a resource in the language learning process. Others believe the presence of code-switching in the process of learning a second language hinders language learning (Almelhi, 2020). Bista (2010) in his study found that code-switching negatively impacts the language learning process and hinders language learners' abilities in their second language. Similarly, in their study, Ariffin and Husin (2011) found that more proficient learners find code-switching a barrier rather than a helpful tool. Some researchers consider its practice a "linguistic deficiency" (Li, 2008), which is very similar to how bilinguals view it in social contexts.

Attitudes Towards Code-Switching in the Classroom

There have been numerous studies on the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and language learners on the practice of code-switching in the classroom. Jingxia (2010) studied teachers' and students' attitudes toward code-switching in three Chinese universities. The data for this study were gathered through questionnaires and classroom recordings. The findings concluded that code-switching is common in these classrooms and that most of the teachers and students didn't see a problem with this situation. On the contrary, they saw it as something positive in the learning process.

Another study focused on code-switching use in low proficiency students and the effects it has on learning success was done by Ahmad and Jusoff (2009). The participants of this study were both teachers and students, and questionnaires were used as tools to gather data in a university in Malaysia. The findings indicate that learners viewed code-switching as a helpful strategy and teachers found it as an effective method when teaching students with lower language proficiency. Likewise, Shartiely (2016) considers code-switching by teachers as crucial in the teaching process, as it helps fill in the gap between teachers' and students' linguistic skills by facilitating learning.

Bensen and Çavusoglu (2013) conducted a case study with four university EFL professors with different linguistic backgrounds: two bilinguals of Cypriot Turkish and English, one was a native English speaker who understood Turkish, and one's native language was Cypriot Turkish. Regardless of their backgrounds, all four of them reported to code-switch in the classroom because it benefits the students. Besides the factors mentioned from other studies, they emphasized that code-switching leads to an increase in students' participation and motivation. Although they also stated that they encourage code-switching when students need to gain grammar proficiency in a second language, not when they want to improve their communication skills.

Rashid (2014) conducted a study with bilingual participants, Bengali and English-speaking teachers and students. This study showed that both teachers and students see no problem when it comes to switching between languages, even in educational settings. The researcher also stated that based on the responses, students who are used to Bengali as the medium of instruction switch less frequently than those who are used to English. Thus, the researcher stated that language switching in bilingual environments is done entirely because of the speakers' choice.

Sert (2005) also studied the practice of code-switching in the classroom and based on the research, he concluded that it is inevitable to switch to the mother tongue in classrooms where people speak two shared languages, but it should be done within some limits.

Another study conducted by Nofaie (2010) used three research tools to find whether Saudi teachers and students had positive or negative perspectives on code-switching in academic environments. Questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations were used as tools to gather data. The outcome was, for the most part, a positive and welcoming attitude toward code-switching from teachers and students. What makes these results different is that students and teachers had some specific situations which they did not prefer to be addressed in Arabic. Students claimed that instructions and lessons that were

not interesting don't need to be uttered in Arabic, while teachers stated that they do not allow the use of Arabic when students ask questions or when they are having pair work. Another thing that teachers did not prefer regarding code-switching was comparing both languages to one another.

A different perspective on code-switching was mentioned by Cook (2002), who took into consideration that not all students have mutual languages in which they are proficient. Therefore, it cannot be used in instruction as it will cause confusion and result in students feeling left out. Cook also emphasised considering teachers' proficiency in the students' native language. Teachers who are not proficient in the languages the students speak cannot appropriately practice code-switching in their classrooms. This is because code-switching aims to clarify and facilitate learning, but the probability of it confusing the students when practised by non-proficient teachers is very high.

With all these reviews of prior studies and the mixed attitudes toward code-switching in academic contexts, a pattern can be seen in the participants' responses and experiences. Most of them claim that code-switching makes them feel more comfortable and confident to participate in lectures. However, it should also be considered that some hesitate to use other languages in academic environments, and this can be a barrier to their engagement in the lectures. Furthermore, not everyone has the same proficiency in the same languages, which might lead to confusion and even intentional or unintentional exclusion in academic settings.

Code-Switching in Kosovo

The topic of code-switching has also been studied in Kosovo in both social and educational contexts. The studies below show the perspectives of Kosovar bilinguals, students and teachers on the presence of code-switching in everyday speech and classrooms.

A study conducted by Sejdiu et al. (2023) explored bilinguals of Albanian and English and their tendencies to code-switch. Through interviews, they found that code-switching is used by these bilinguals as a strategy to communicate effectively. Furthermore, they state that despite the attitudes that researchers and linguists have toward code-switching effects in language proficiency, it is a behaviour that adds nuance to the speech of bilinguals in Kosovo.

Jusufi and Jusufi (2024) explored code-switching in primary education employing a mixed-method approach using questionnaires and open discussions with students and teachers. They studied code-switching among bilingual students (who spoke Bosnian and Albanian) and concluded that students were more likely to use Albanian in educational settings, although they spoke

Bosnian at home. However, they made distinctions between peer and teacher interactions, where students preferred to switch to Bosnian in collaborative tasks with their peers and tried to use Albanian when addressing their teacher. Teachers also practised code-switching when they wanted to clarify complex concepts.

The upper-secondary level of education was also explored regarding code-switching and its practice in EFL classes. The study from Poshka and Maliqi (2022) aimed to find the factors that influenced code-switching in these classrooms. Through questionnaires, it was found that teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the use of code-switching, as it was mainly used to aid instruction and comprehension. Teachers stated that they do not strictly prohibit code-switching in the classroom, but they allow students to express themselves in Albanian when they cannot do so in English. They also expressed that they code-switch when their students show a lack of comprehension in certain contexts of L2.

Based on the studies on code-switching in both academic and social settings, it can be seen that students use code-switching in academic contexts to help understanding, and its aim is usually to support comprehension. It has a primarily functional and instructional focus, but it also helps build relationships between students among each other and with the professors by reducing anxiety to participate and interact with each other. On the contrary, code-switching in academic contexts is used primarily to manage relationships by expressing solidarity or belonging, but sometimes also to create distance. In addition, it helps people negotiate their (group or ethnic) identities and express emotions. However, the perspectives of people in both these settings are mixed, with some seeing it as significant in academic and social environments, and others seeing it as poor language proficiency that hinders communication.

Performance of Identity Through Code-Switching

According to Stroud (2004), social identity is not fixed, just like language. These phenomena are expected to change when correlated. The study focuses particularly on Mozambique women who switch between Portuguese and Ronga to perform identities. They use Portuguese to express authority or exclusion depending on its usage, and the language shift is used to redefine social norms. Similarly, a study conducted by Treffers-Daller et al. (2020), on how Turkish and English bilinguals manage their cultural identities shows that bilinguals take on different identities depending on the situation they're in. For example, they "act" British or Turkish depending on how they judge the setting, and this shift shapes the way they behave and think.

De Fina (2007) observed and interviewed participants of a male card-playing club in Washington, D.C. She focused on how these participants performed their Italian identity by code-switching between Italian and English. It was concluded that even the participants who were not fluent in Italian used Italian words to connect and express the shared identity. This way, they expressed belonging within the group. The researcher demonstrated cases with examples, one of them being when a new member who didn't speak Italian at all joined, and he gradually picked up Italian terms and started shifting into Italian when playing. This shows that these participants practised code-switching to align with the group identity.

Furthermore, Jaffe (2000) explored how comedians use code-switching between French and Corsican to express complex identities in society. She analysed public comedic performances and media interactions. In these performances, comedians appeal to their bilingual audiences by creating a shared identity through validating their audiences' linguistic experiences. Also, Rojas (2025) stated that people practice code-switching for the performance of identity for several reasons. Some of them are to express solidarity with other members of the community and to create distance or another identity different from others in a certain group.

Based on these studies, it can be seen that language and identity are dynamic concepts, and code-switching is more than just a linguistic act. It is something that shapes how people present themselves to society and how society views them.

Transforming Interpersonal Relationships Through Code-Switching

Huabin (2018) investigated the use of code-switching in three TV series through the dialogues in them. He focused on how code-switching affects interpersonal relationships between characters. It was stated that the characters practised code-switching to express emotions, affection, sarcasm or anger, which influenced their relationships with one another. Furthermore, they managed their relationships by shifting languages to adjust their level of formality or to show solidarity, but also to distance themselves from other characters. For example, some characters switched from Mandarin to English to distance themselves from one of the characters who did not speak English.

Genesee (1982) explored the interactions between bilinguals of English and French in Canada. Regarding the relationships of the people observed, it was concluded that the initial language that people used in a conversation sets the tone of their relationship. Also, they preferred to interact with people who spoke the same language as them. For example, when a customer switched to the language of the salesperson, it was considered an effort to foster relationships,

but when the opposite happened, the salesperson was more distant and less considerate. This study also shows how language choice affects interactions and relationships in society.

A study conducted by Su (2001) investigates how bilingual speakers utilise code-switching to navigate interpersonal relationships. Su analysed phone conversations initiated by a woman to her family members, asking them to participate in research. During these conversations, she shifted between Taiwanese and Mandarin depending on her intention. She used Mandarin to discuss research procedures and switched to Taiwanese to minimise the distance and to convince them to participate.

Through these studies, it can be seen that bilinguals and multilinguals use code-switching strategically to fulfil their social goals. This makes code-switching an important tool to create new relationships or to hinder unwanted ones.

Research Gaps and Relevance

Although code-switching in social and academic contexts has been explored separately, very few of those studies provide a comparative analysis between both contexts. The gap in bilinguals', multilinguals' and students' perspectives on how code-switching impacts their identity performance and interpersonal relationships limits the general understanding of how linguistics plays a significant part in social and academic identity.

Furthermore, these comparisons are even more underexplored in Kosovo. The need for these comparisons and more studies that tackle the performance of identity and relationships relating to code-switching is raised because of Kosovo being a multilingual country where multiple ethnicities coexist and shift their languages in everyday basis, but also in academic environments. Therefore, exploring these aspects in both contexts and comparing how they are similar and different from each other adds another important perspective and layer to sociolinguistic studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study explored bilinguals' and multilinguals' experiences with code-switching. It aimed to find the differences and similarities of what drives people to code-switch across social and academic contexts. By analysing their experiences and insights, this study also aimed to find how code-switching affects interpersonal relationships and reflects identity performance in society and academic environments.

Research Design

To gather data that would answer the research questions, this study adopted a qualitative research design that focused on analysing the participants' experiences, interpersonal relationships and performance of identity. Qualitative research deals with data in the form of words that describe the participants' experiences and attitudes rather than statistics (Busetto et. al., 2020).

Qualitative methods (interviews) provided deep insights into bilinguals' and multilinguals' perceptions, exploring their experiences with code-switching in their everyday life compared to students' experiences with code-switching in academic environments. This research has utilised primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were obtained through interviews that provided insights into bilinguals' and multilinguals' experiences with code-switching, whereas secondary sources were obtained through academic articles and books concerned with the use of code-switching in social and educational contexts.

Participants

The participants of this study are Kosovar multilingual speakers. The purposive sampling method has been applied for the sampling of the participants. According to Rai and Thapa (2015), the purposive sampling method is when the researcher purposely chooses some participants who are relevant to the study.

In this case, five multilingual university students living in Kosovo were chosen because they engage in both academic and social interactions. Therefore, they could provide insights into the practice of code-switching in both academic and social settings. The other purposeful sampling includes five community members living in Kosovo who speak two or more languages. They were chosen to provide insights into the practice of code-switching in a social context without being affected by the academic environment.

Instruments

The instruments that were used to collect the data for this study were semi-structured interviews. The interviews aimed to gather more detailed information on the participants' experiences, perceptions and effects they think the use of code-switching has in academic and social environments. They focused on exploring participants' reflections on their habits with code-switching as well as real-life examples from both settings. Moreover, it explored how the participants see code-switching in relation to interpersonal relationships and performance of identity. There were 13 questions addressed to the community participants and 14 questions addressed to the students, excluding follow-up questions that arose during interviews.

Procedure

Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews. After compiling the same questions in both Albanian and English, the interviews were piloted with two individuals. After piloting, proper changes were made to clarify some questions. The interviews were conducted in person, and they were recorded for transcription purposes with consent from the participants. The interviews with the community members were conducted in Albanian. The quotes were later translated for more convenient illustration on the paper. The data gathered from the interviews was analysed thematically by grouping similar responses and displaying illustrative quotations. To ensure confidentiality, student participants are labelled S1 to S5 and community participants are labelled C1 to C5.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews with students (academic context) and community members (social context) who speak two or more languages. Recurring patterns in participants' experiences from both contexts have been identified through thematic analysis. Based on the research questions, this section covers the motivating factors of code-switching in academic and social contexts, followed by the contribution of code-switching to identity performance and interpersonal relationships.

Factors that Influence Code-Switching in Academic and Social Contexts

The most common factors for code-switching have been reported to be the participants, the setting, and the topic of the conversation. While in academic contexts, code-switching was more intentional and related to explaining terminology or clarifications in discussions, in social contexts, code-switching is more spontaneous and influenced by factors such as inclusion or exclusion strategies, humour or habits.

Clarifying Meaning and Providing Clarity Through Code-Switching

One of the most frequent reasons for code switching was clarifying meaning and ensuring understanding. Student participants mentioned that they usually switch when they are taking part in conversations where technical terminology is present. Many stated that they code-switch when discussing academic topics, especially in ones where English terms are common.

One student shared that they code-switched after noticing that others do the same:

“We were having a discussion in a lecture, I was using the Albanian term for a process, but when I heard one of the participants using that term in English, I code-switched and started using it in English as well.” (S1)

Students also reported switching languages in group work with peers who struggle to understand them or when teaching their own students (mentioned by a teacher-student participant).

“When I teach, I try to use only English, but sometimes if students are having a hard time, I explain something in Albanian to help them understand better.” (S4)

Similarly, community members reported that they switch languages in social settings to ensure easier and successful communication. One participant particularly mentioned that they code-switch when working with customers who are not fluent in the language that was spoken initially.

“I speak Serbian at work when I need to communicate with my Serb customers who are not that fluent in Albanian.” (C2)

This type of switching (to help the audience understand better) highlights interpersonal relationships by building trust in them:

“I feel like it makes my customers more comfortable working with me, if I accommodate to their language.” (C2)

These examples show how code-switching is used as a practical tool that supports clarity and communication, especially when difficulties appear, in both contexts.

Spontaneous Code-Switching in Academic and Social Contexts

While in many cases code-switching was done for strategic purposes, there were many reported cases of switching languages unconsciously or out of habit. Participants from both contexts mentioned that code-switching has become part of their linguistic habits so much that they do not even notice themselves doing it, especially with friends, siblings or peers who speak the same languages as them.

One student described code-switching spontaneously during conversations:

“Whenever I am talking with my friends or sisters, I start talking in one language, then mid-conversation, I continue in another, and sometimes I add some words from a third language.” (S5)

Other participants stated that they insert single words from other languages in the conversation unintentionally:

“Sometimes I use Serbian words in Albanian sentences, without even noticing that they’re not Albanian. This is because they have been normalised.” (C2)

Similarly, students also noted that code-switching occurs in all contexts with friends, peers or other people:

“In all of my conversations, whether at home, school, online, or in any other social setting, I always switch languages... it comes naturally to me.” (S3)

While in academic settings, habitual switching was not as common, it was still present, especially in discussions or conversations with people who share the same linguistic backgrounds:

“Actually, the academic setting is where I use code-switching the most. Whether it be during discussions, group work or just conversations. We all tend to switch in almost every conversation because we all speak Albanian and English.” (S5)

These reports emphasise the presence of code-switching in everyday speech as a strong sense of shared linguistic identity among participants.

Conversation Topic as a Reason to Code-Switch

The topic of conversation was also one of the reasons people switched languages. Many participants mentioned switching languages depending on what they were talking about. In these situations, they switched to the language they felt was the most appropriate one for specific parts of the conversations.

Several students stated that they switch to English when they are discussing concepts they had originally learned in it:

“When I talk about school or my studies, I often use English words because that’s how I learned them.” (S4)

Community participants stated that they used their native language when discussing personal experiences or humour. Many mentioned that some topics sounded better in certain languages:

“If I’m talking to a friend in Albanian and I want to say something funny or cool, I say it in English. Sometimes English just sounds better for certain things.” (C2)

Another similarly stated:

“If the topic becomes more casual or emotional, I switch to Gorani.” (C5)

One student also shared how she and her siblings often code-switch for fun:

“I speak English and Turkish at home as well. I do that with my siblings when I joke with them or even to emphasize something.” (S3)

Through these examples, it can be seen that participants do not simply use code switching because they need it. They fix the depth, tone and emotions of communication.

Code-Switching for Audience Accommodation

Another important factor that makes people code-switch is the background and the language proficiency of the interlocutors. In both academic and social contexts, participants reported adapting their language based on the needs of the people they were speaking with. This was because they wanted to be inclusive and to have efficient communication.

Students mentioned that they code-switch in academic settings when working with peers who have difficulty understanding them:

“When I am working with people whose first language is not Albanian, I switch languages to explain things they do not understand.” (S1)

This desire to adapt is present in the workplace and public service:

“I speak Serbian at work when I need to communicate with my Serb customers who are not that fluent in Albanian.” (C2)

When code-switching is practised to adapt to co-speakers (interlocutors), one participant feels like it affects their relationship with their customers:

“I feel like it makes my customers more comfortable working with me, if I accommodate to their language.” (C2)

Similarly, other participants stated that switching language in social settings signals closeness and solidarity:

“I switch languages with my siblings because I know they will understand the language I am switching to.” (S1)

Code-Switching for Inclusion and Exclusion

In audience accommodation, inclusion and exclusion play an important part. Participants of both contexts mentioned code-switching as a boundary tool that can include or exclude others from a conversation.

In many cases, they stated to have used code-switching when talking about something private so that others wouldn't understand them. One student shared:

“I was telling something to my sister, and we were in a family gathering. We had made plans to go somewhere after, and I didn't want to seem disrespectful, so I switched to English because I knew they wouldn't understand.” (S1)

Another similarly stated:

"It's usually when I don't want others to understand, I switch to English."
(S2)

As mentioned earlier, this was present even in the experiences of community participants:

"I was hanging out with my friend at a café, and I was telling her something private. I knew that the people near us didn't speak Turkish, so I switched to Turkish." (C4)

While they used code-switching for exclusion, they emphasised that their intention was not to be rude but to keep private conversations to themselves. However, there were those participants who shared that they have had cases when they switched to intentionally exclude people:

"I was in a gathering with my extended family, and there were some people speaking Serbian. I didn't like their company, so I spoke Albanian to my family member nearby and pretended I did not speak Serbian." (C1)

Several participants were also aware of when not to switch, particularly when people might feel excluded. In these cases, this decision is seen as a way to keep the conversation inclusive:

"Sometimes I avoid switching because I don't want others to feel left out." (S4)
"If I want others not to feel excluded, I avoid speaking Turkish although it comes naturally." (C4) *"Yes. For example, if I'm speaking Bosnian with a friend and someone who only speaks Albanian joins us, I switch so everyone understands."* (C3)

Through these statements, it is shown that code-switching is shaped by participants' sensitivity. Their decision to include or exclude others, to prevent misunderstandings, shows that they use their multilingual competence to show who was or was not allowed into the conversation.

In summary, through these responses, it can be seen that code-switching is influenced by many factors that differ in academic and social contexts. While in the academic context, code switching is used intentionally to clarify meaning, explain technical terminology, or accommodate linguistic needs, in the social context, code-switching was more habitual, unconscious and depended on emotion, humour and personal preferences. It was also reported that code-switching is used based on the topic, the formality, the participants, and for strategic purposes (exclusion or inclusion). These responses highlight that code-switching is not only a tool used for convenience, but it is a deeper contextual communicative practice.

Code-Switching as a Tool for Identity Performance in Academic and Social Contexts

Through analysing the participants' responses, it can be seen that code-switching is very connected to the ways multilinguals perform their identities in different areas of their lives. In the sections below, there are three themes that are related to identity performance through code-switching based on the responses from the interviews.

Expressing Belonging and Ethnic Identity Through Code-Switching

Many participants expressed that switching to their native language or one of the community languages shaped their expression of belonging. Switching languages allowed the speakers to reconnect to their ethnic background and to connect to the local community. One of the community members described this through their experience:

“When I speak Bosnian, I feel closer to my community. When I speak Albanian, I feel more part of a wider group.” (C3)

Similarly, another participant from a Turkish-speaking background shared:

“I feel more connected to my family and the Turkish-speaking community when I speak Turkish.” (C4)

Through these examples, it is shown that by choosing to speak certain languages in different contexts, participants maintained their linguistic competence while honouring their cultural identity at the same time.

There were also experiences where participant shared their connotation with the languages they can speak:

“I feel closer to people when they speak Albanian rather than Serbian because Serbian was imposed on me because of our history.” (C1)

This shows that code-switching can be a means of resisting connections with certain communities, especially when the language is linked to tensions. Language for these participants was not neutral; it carried an emotional weight and influenced their sense of personal identity.

Identity Variation Through Code-Switching

A common theme across interviews from students was their feeling of a different identity depending on the language they were using. Students associated English with more professional and academic roles, and they saw Albanian and other local languages as more informal and personal. This was more noticeable when they moved between academic and social environments:

“When I use English, it feels more formal. If I use Albanian, it feels more friendly and personal.” (S2)

This shows that students do not just switch their language; they adapt their entire persona based on the language they speak.

Code-Switching to Manage Confidence, Freedom and Expression

A common theme was also the role of code-switching in the participants' expressive strategies. They reported feeling more authentic and articulate when they were allowed to switch between languages. Several students emphasised that being allowed to switch languages helped them participate in lectures:

“I feel confident because I can express myself better, and if I was in an environment where I was required to speak only one language, I would feel limited and more hesitant to express myself.” (S1)

Another similarly stated:

“I feel more free to express myself in environments where I can code-switch. In this case academic ones.” (S5)

This shows that being multilingual allowed participants to communicate what they meant and how they felt. However, this was not always the case. Some students shared that they intentionally avoided code-switching in certain environments because they did not want to be misunderstood or judged as unprofessional:

“I like to avoid code-switching in more professional or academic settings because people may perceive it as something unprofessional or they may assume that I do it to show off.” (S3)

Thus, participants perceived code-switching as both freeing and limiting, depending on who was listening and where.

To summarise, participants practised code-switching to express and negotiate their identities in both academic and social contexts. In social contexts, code-switching reinforced the participants' ethnic belonging and emotional closeness. On the other hand, in academic contexts, code-switching was practised more carefully because students wanted to adjust their linguistic choices to match their roles in more professional settings. So, these contexts differ because in social environments, code-switching was connected to comfort and spontaneity, while in academic contexts, it was used more carefully to correspond with the appropriate conditions.

The Role of Code-Switching in Interpersonal Relationships

The responses from participants of academic and social contexts show that code-switching has a considerable impact on their relationships with other people. This is done through softening or strengthening connections and through inclusion or exclusion, as mentioned before.

Building Closeness Through Code-Switching

Many participants shared that they have used code-switching to strengthen their relationships with people who speak the same language as them. They described code-switching as comforting and an indication for closeness:

“I switch languages with my siblings because I know they will understand the language I am switching to.” (S1)

“It makes my customers more comfortable working with me, if I accommodate to their language.” (C2)

These findings show that people practice code-switching in social interactions to reduce distance with co-speakers and to align with them.

Managing Boundaries Through Code-Switching

Code-switching was also used to manage boundaries in public or group settings. This was often dependent on the situation and was done in a subtle way.

“I didn’t want to seem disrespectful, so I switched to English because I knew others wouldn’t understand.” (S1)

“I didn’t like their company, so I spoke Albanian and pretended I didn’t understand Serbian.” (C1)

So, this was done mainly in situations when something private was being discussed. However, there were participants who made an effort to switch languages with the intention of not making people feel excluded:

“Sometimes I avoid switching because I don’t want others to feel left out.” (S4)

This shows how careful multilinguals are in making linguistic decisions when inclusion or exclusion is involved, to either create distance or to bond with others.

Adapting Code-Switching to Formality

There were cases when participants, especially students, were conscious of avoiding code-switching in certain environments. They wanted to manage their

impressions on other people. Therefore, they were more cautious and avoided it in formal interactions:

“When I am in a more professional environment, e.g., in a job interview, I avoid code-switching because I am afraid I might seem unprofessional.” (S1)

“I like to avoid code-switching in more professional or academic settings because people may perceive it as unprofessional.” (S3)

Overall, participants showed that they were highly aware of how code-switching affects their relationships with others and how others perceive them.

DISCUSSION

After exploring the functions of code-switching, this section will discuss these findings in relation to existing literature.

Code-Switching as a Contextual and Functional Practice

The findings of this research support the idea that code-switching is a very contextual practice, dependent on the setting and the participants of a conversation. Students report having switched in academic contexts to clarify meaning, explain terminology and help peers who struggle to understand. This corresponds to Nation’s (2003) views that using the first language in academic contexts where instruction is given in a foreign language helps support comprehension.

Likewise, it was stated by Puspawati (2018) that teachers switch to the first language to check their students’ understanding and to clarify certain concepts. A similar view is also reflected in this study, from a student-teacher who mentioned switching to Albanian during lectures, to establish understanding. However, Bista’s reports are in disagreement with these because it is argued that practising code-switching frequently in classroom settings may hinder students’ language acquisition (if there is a target language).

In comparison, code-switching in social contexts is more unconscious, habitual and emotionally driven. Participants of this study report code-switching mostly for humour or expressing emotions. These reports align with Kim’s (2006) argument that code-switching occurs for emotional expression purposes. A common instance in this study’s data is using English for informal or humorous purposes, while other languages (Turkish, Bosnian or Gorani) are mostly used for cultural identification or expression of emotions. This is supported by Toribio’s (2009) study that code-switching is connected to the affective and social functions of communication.

Moreover, the findings reported in this study reveal that participants took part in both situational and metaphorical code-switching, as defined by Panhwar and Buriro (2020). Situational switching in this research was demonstrated by participants when they changed their language use in informal and formal group discussions (academic contexts). Metaphorical switching was present when participants switched languages when they moved from academic to personal topics.

These findings restate the belief that code-switching is not random, but rather a behaviour that depends on purpose, context and audience.

Code-Switching and Identity Performance

Through the data collected from this study, it can be confirmed that code switching plays a significant part in identity performance, especially for multilinguals living in multilingual environments. Participants from the social contexts describe feeling “at home” when they speak their native language. They particularly mention feeling closer to their community when they switch to their native language. This is also supported by the claim of De Fina (2007) that code-switching helps people feel belonging and express a shared identity no matter the level of fluency.

Except for belonging, code-switching is sometimes used by participants of this study to distance themselves from certain identities, such as the example of avoiding Serbian because of its historical connotations. This is also reflected in Rojas’s (2025) study, where speakers of different languages may reject speaking a certain language to distance themselves from an identity.

Identity of performance through code-switching is present even in academic settings. It was reported that participants of this study feel a shift in their persona when speaking English, as it was associated with formality and professionalism, while Albanian was linked to friendliness and spontaneity. This is in accordance with Treffers-Daller et al.’s (2020) statements that bilinguals adopt identities depending on the language they are using. As mentioned before, the data from this research shows that students feel more “academic” when they switch to English, rather than Albanian, Turkish or their native language, which makes them feel more themselves.

Identity performance through code-switching is not always accompanied by a feeling of freedom. Some students are hesitant to switch languages in academic or professional contexts because of the fear of being seen as incompetent and the need to keep a more formal image. Findings of Bista (2010) and Li (2008) align with these views that code-switching has often been linked to a lack of discipline or fluency in one of the languages the participants speak.

Although the current study and Li's (2008) perspectives that code-switching might show a lack of competency align in the academic context, they contradict each other in the social one. The community participants of the present study see code switching as a rather normal phenomenon, especially in multilingual communities.

Overall, although code-switching allows participants to navigate different identities, there are also cases where it requires them to make choices on the performed identities. The findings above align with Stroud's (2004) perception that identity can be performed through an individual's linguistic choices and is not fixed.

Interpersonal Relationships and Code-Switching

One of the key findings of this study is that code-switching is a significant influence on people's relationships. Through switching languages, participants expressed distance, inclusion, and emotions in interactions. Switching into a language the other person is more fluent in is seen as showing respect and providing comfort, especially in social contexts. These statements are consistent with Su's (2001) findings that code-switching is a tool that can minimise distance and strengthen relationships.

The reflection of the participants of this study in both academic and social contexts that they adapt their language by switching to meet the needs of other speakers, aligns with the principles of The Communication Accommodation Theory (Dragojevic et al., 2016), which states that people adjust the way they speak to reduce barriers in communication. A more specific example in the present study is that of a community participant switching to Serbian to accommodate customers. When accommodating other people's languages, they build a stronger relationship with them.

Code-switching is also a tool used to manage social boundaries. This study reports that participants have used code-switching to include or exclude others in group settings. This practice is also supported by Fortlage's (2023) findings, which also show that people tend to discriminate against others by excluding them through code-switching. Regarding including people in a conversation, participants showed a level of sensitivity which made them avoid switching languages in group settings if they thought others might feel excluded. This aligns with Genesee's (1982) emphasis on how language choice can control who is included or excluded from interaction.

In summary, the data collected from this study reinforces existing research on code-switching by emphasising its practical, interpersonal and identity performance functions. The patterns from this study and other previous ones

regarding code-switching confirm that code-switching is not a language deficiency but a purposeful act that aids speakers in controlling their identity and relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the ways code-switching functions in both academic and social contexts among multilinguals in Kosovo. The focus was on understanding the factors that influence code-switching, its influence on the performance of identity and interpersonal relationships in both contexts. Relying on data from semi-structured interviews with students and community members, this research highlights code-switching as a complex and socially responsive practice that goes beyond a simple switch between languages.

In academic contexts, code-switching has resulted to be an intentional strategy for clarifying meaning, explaining specific terminology or helping peers with different linguistic backgrounds. Participants were conscious of the formality that was associated with academic settings and adopted the language based on that. Although some lectures were delivered in English, they preferred switching to Albanian or other native languages when clarifying something or helping their peers.

In social contexts, code-switching was usually habitual, used to express emotions or identity. Switching languages in these contexts with family, friends or people who speak the same languages was reported to be without conscious effort. The main motivation factors to code-switch in these settings were expressing emotions, humour and belonging.

This study also confirmed the belief that code-switching plays a crucial part in performing identity. Individuals use it to project different roles (academic, cultural, professional) in different contexts. For some, switching to their native language strengthened their ties to their culture, while for others, choosing not to speak a certain language distanced them from other identities. Regarding relationships, this study found that people switch languages for different purposes that affect their relations with others, but also to create boundaries by protecting their privacy. Whether it was to include people or to exclude them from a conversation, it was a huge factor that played a significant role in interpersonal relationships.

To conclude, this study shows that code-switching is very meaningful and goes beyond linguistic contexts. It reflects different social, educational and personal dimensions. Thus, it contributes to the understanding of code-switching in multilingual societies like Kosovo and emphasises the importance of diversity in academic and everyday social interactions.

Limitations and Recommendations

The use of semi-structured interviews as data collection tools depends on self-report, which is why the responses might be influenced by memory bias and the participants' attempt to answer the questions "correctly" for them to be socially acceptable. Thus, future research can incorporate observation as an additional data collection method for this type of research. Because of the small sample size of the participants and them being from Kosovo only, the generalizability of the data might be affected. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to include more diverse populations in studies of this nature.

For academic instructors, it is recommended that they view code-switching from a different perspective, instead of a barrier or deficiency in the learning process. They could consider code-switching as a tool for communication, learner confidence and inclusion.

For institutions, it is recommended to raise awareness on the social functions of a language. This could be done through workshops or discussions that promote awareness of multilingual practices.

References

- Ahmad, B. H., & Jusoff, K. (2009). Teachers' Code-Switching in Classroom Instructions for Low English Proficient Learners. *English language teaching*, 2(2), 49-55. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v2n2p49>
- Almelhi, A. M. (2020). Understanding code-switching from a sociolinguistic perspective: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of language and linguistics*, 8(1), 34-45. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20200801.15>
- Ariffin, K., & Husin, M. S. (2011). Code-switching and code-mixing of English and Bahasa Malaysia in content-based classrooms: Frequency and attitudes. <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/77679/>
- Bensen, H., & Çavusoglu, Ç. (2013). Reasons for the teachers' uses of code-switching in adult EFL classrooms. *Hasan Ali Yücel Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10(2), 69. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322661827_Reasons_for_the_teachers'_uses_of_code-switching_in_adult_EFL_classrooms
- Bhatia, T. K., & Ritchie, W. C. (2004). Social and Psychological Factors in Language Mixing. In W. C. Ritchie and T. K. Bhatia (eds.), *Handbook of Bilingualism* (pp.336-352). Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118332382.ch15>
- Bista, K., (2010). 'Factors of Code Switching among Bilingual English Students In the University Classroom: A Survey'. *English for Specific Purposes World*, Volume 9, pp.1-19. <https://scispace.com/pdf/factors-of-code-switching-among-bilingual-english-students-1s7wwh9945.pdf>
- Boffy, B. (n.d.). Code-switching in the workplace. *FAIRER Consulting*. <https://www.fairerconsulting.com/blog/code-switching-in-the-workplace>
- Bosma, E., & Blom, E. (2019). A code-switching asymmetry in bilingual children: Code-switching from Dutch to Frisian requires more cognitive control than code-switching from Frisian to Dutch. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 23(6), 1431-1447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006918798972>
- Burgoon, J. K., & Hubbard, A. E. (2005). Cross-cultural and intercultural applications of expectancy violations theory and interaction adaptation theory. *Theorizing about intercultural communication*, 149-171. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290990677_Cross-cultural_and_intercultural_applications_of_expectancy_violations_theory_and_interaction_adaptation_theory
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and practice*, 2(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>
- Candra, L. K., & Qodriani, L. U. (2019). An Analysis of Code Switching in Leila S. Chudori's For Nadira. *Teknosastik*, 16(1), 9-14. <https://doi.org/10.33365/ts.v16i1.128>
- Cook, V. (Ed.). (2002). *Portraits of the L2 user* (Vol. 1). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.02.003>
- De Fina, A. (2007). Code-switching and the construction of ethnic identity in a community of practice. *Language in society*, 36(3), 371-392. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404507070182>
- Demjaha, A. (2017). Inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo. *Seeu Review*, 12(1), 181-196. <https://doi.org/10.1515/seeur-2017-0013>
- Dewaele, J. M. (2015). Bilingualism and multilingualism. *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction*, 1, 1-11. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jean-Marc-Dewaele/publication/284640256_Bilingualism_and_Multilingualism/links/567bf9e308aebccc4dffbd5e/Bilingualism-and-Multilingualism.pdf
- Dewaele, J. M., & Wei, L. (2014). Attitudes towards code-switching among adult mono-and multilingual language users. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35(3), 235-251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.859687>

- Diaz, C. P. (2004). What do bilinguals think about their" code-switching"? *RAEL: Revista electrónica de lingüística aplicada*, (3), 146-157. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28102294_What_do_bilinguals_think_about_their_code-switching
- Dragojevic, M., Gasiorek, J., & Giles, H. (2016). Accommodative strategies as core of the theory. *Communication accommodation theory: Negotiating personal relationships and social identities across contexts*, 1(1), 36-59. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316226537.003>
- Fanani, A., & Ma'u, J. A. R. Z. (2018). Code switching and code mixing in English learning process. *Ling Tera*, 5(1), 68-77. <https://doi.org/10.21831/lt.v5i1.14438>
- Fortlage, C. (2023). *Power of Language: Code switching a double edged sword*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/power-language-code-switching-double-edged-sword-cynthia-fortlage>
- Gardner-Chloros, P., McEntee-Atalians, L., & Finnis, K. (2005). Language attitudes and use in a transplanted setting: Greek Cypriots in London. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 2(1), 52-80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501220508668376>
- Genesee, F. (1982). The social psychological significance of code switching in cross-cultural communication. *Journal of language and social psychology*, 1(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X8200100102>
- Harya, T. D. (2018). Sociolinguistics (code: code switching and code mixing). *LENTERA: Journal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 11(1), 87-98. <https://jurnal.stkipgribl.ac.id/index.php/lentera/article/view/377>
- Huabin, H. W. (2018). Interpersonal meaning of code-switching: An analysis of three TV series. *Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 3-19. <https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.v1n1.4>
- Hughes, C. E., Shaunessy, E. S., Brice, A. R., Ratliff, M. A., & McHatton, P. A. (2006). Code switching among bilingual and limited English proficient students: Possible indicators of giftedness. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 30(1), 7-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016235320603000102>
- Jaffe, A. (2000). Comic performance and the articulation of hybrid identity. *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)*, 10(1), 39-59. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.10.1.02jaf>
- Jingxia, L. (2010). Teachers' code-switching to the L1 in EFL classroom. *The open applied linguistics journal*, 3(10), 10-23. <https://doi.org/10.2174/1874913501003010010>
- Jusufi, S., & Jusufi, J. (2024). Exploring Code Switching and its Educational Implications Among Lower Primary Bilingual Students. *Human Research in Rehabilitation*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.21554/hrr.092407>
- Kim, E. (2006). Reasons and motivations for code-mixing and code-switching. *Issues in EFL*, 4(1), 43-61. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Reasons-and-Motivations-for-Code-Mixing-and-Kim/ae406457161f9cccea34a54fba06c67246de2d72>
- Li, D. (2008). Understanding mixed code and classroom code-switching: Myths and realities. *New Horizons in Education*, 56(3), 75-87. <https://scispace.com/pdf/understanding-mixed-code-and-classroom-code-switching-myths-3w2wo9v4un.pdf>
- Mabule, D. R. (2015). What is this? Is it code switching, code mixing or language alternating. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 5(1), 339-350. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2015.v5n1p339>
- Nation, P. (2003). The Role of the First Language in Foreign Language Learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, 5(2), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.12560333.v1>
- Nilep, C. (2006). "Code switching" in sociocultural linguistics. *Colorado research in linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.25810/hnq4-jv62>
- Nofaie, A. L. (2010). The attitudes of teachers and students towards using Arabic in EFL classrooms in Saudi public schools: Case Study. *Novitas-Royal (Research on youth and language)*, 4(1). <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/111865>
- Panhwar, F., & Buriro, G. A. (2020). An overview of theories and approaches to code-switching. *International Research Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 48(48), 265-281. <https://sujo.usindh.edu.pk/index.php/IRJAH/article/view/1771>

- Poshka, A., & Maliqi, D. (2022). Teacher and Students' Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms in Kosovo: Functions and Perceptions. Master's thesis, South East European University. https://repository.seeu.edu.mk/sites/thesis/ThesisSharedDocs/MA_129057.pdf
- Puspawati, I. (2018). Teachers' Use of Code Switching in EFL Classroom and its Functions. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching & Learning*, 3(1), 42-51. <https://doi.org/10.18196/ftl.3128>
- Rai, N., & Thapa, B. (2015). A study on purposive sampling method in research. *Kathmandu: Kathmandu School of Law*, 5(1), 8-15. https://www.academia.edu/28087388/A_STUDY_ON_PURPOSIVE_SAMPLING_METHOD_IN_RESEARCH
- Rashid, M. H. (2014). Bangla and English code switching in the university classroom: A sociolinguistic perspective. *SUST Journal of Social Sciences*, 22(2), 24-31. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317739034_Bangla_and_English_Code_Switching_in_the_University_Classroom_A_Sociolinguistic_Perspective
- Rojas, B. G. (2025). Code-Switching as Identity Negotiation in Multilingual Communities. *Bulletin of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.59652/bls.v2i1.517>
- Sert, O. (2005). The Functions of Code-Switching in ELT Classrooms. *Online Submission*, 11(8). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED496119>
- Shartiely, N. E. (2016). Code-switching in university classroom interaction: A case study of the University of Dar es Salaam. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, 49(1), 215-231. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-5a4f1e9ce>
- Stroud, C. (2004). The performativity of codeswitching. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 8(2), 145-166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069040080020301>
- Su, H. Y. (2001). Code-switching between Mandarin and Taiwanese in three telephone conversation: The negotiation of interpersonal relationships among bilingual speakers in Taiwan. In *Proc. of the Symposium about Language and Society*. <https://asol.ling.utexas.edu/salsa/proceedings/2001/papers/su.pdf>
- Toribio, A. J. (2009). Themes in the study of code-switching Barbara E. Bullock. *The Cambridge handbook of linguistic code-switching*, 1. <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/65582/1/47.pdf.pdf#page=19>
- Treffers-Daller, J., Ongun, Z., Hofweber, J., & Korenar, M. (2020). Explaining individual differences in executive functions performance in multilinguals: The impact of code-switching and alternating between multicultural identity styles. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 561088. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.561088>
- Yletyinen, H. (2004). The Functions of Codeswitching in EFL Classroom (Master's thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2004). <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-2004950695>

APPENDICES

Semi-Structured Interview for Community Participants

1. What languages do you speak, and how often do you use them?
2. Where do you usually use these languages? (home, work, social settings, online)
3. Can you think of a situation where you switched languages during a conversation?
4. Do you often switch languages with family or friends?
5. What are the most common reasons for switching languages in social settings?
6. Have you ever switched languages to exclude people from a conversation?
7. How do people usually react if you switch languages during a conversation?
8. Do you believe that switching languages affects your relationships with others?
9. Do you feel more connected to certain people or communities depending on the language you're using?
10. Have you ever used a specific language to feel more connected or to distance yourself from a group?
11. Do you feel that switching languages improves communication in different situations?
12. Are there moments when you avoid switching languages, even if it would feel more natural? Why?
13. Do you have any additional experiences or thoughts about code-switching that you would like to share?

Semi-Structured Interview for University Students

1. What languages do you speak, where (home, school, social settings, online) and how often do you use them?
2. Can you describe a situation where you switched languages during a conversation?
3. Do you often switch languages with family or friends?

4. What are the most common reasons for code-switching in everyday situations?
5. Have you ever switched languages to exclude people from a conversation?
6. How do people around you usually react when you switch languages?
7. Do you believe this affects your interpersonal relationships? How?
8. Do you use code-switching in academic settings (lectures, discussions, group work)? In what kinds of situations does it happen more often?
9. How do professors and other students react when you switch languages?
10. Do you think your relationship with your colleagues or professors changes depending on the language you use?
11. Do you feel more confident, free, or limited when you switch languages in academic settings? Why?
12. Do you notice any major differences in how you code-switch in academic versus social environments?
13. Are there situations where you deliberately avoid code-switching? Why?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with code-switching?

TEACHER CODE-SWITCHING AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN KOSOVO'S ESL CLASSROOMS

Argjend MUHADRI¹

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

“Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols” (Sapir, 1921, p.7). For a successful communication process, it is essential that teachers focus on strategies that engage students and motivate them in the learning process. Referring to this, one of the most prevalent approaches in multilingual classrooms is code-switching. Code-switching is defined as the utilization of two languages within a conversation, namely the incorporation of words or even larger units in a single discourse (Stam, 2017).

Building on this, traditionally, the practice of code-switching in ESL contexts has been studied mainly to examine its pedagogical or instructional implications. Teachers alternated between languages to facilitate the students' comprehension, introduce new vocabulary, or clarify grammatical concepts (Qona'atun, 2018). However, more recent research in this field focused on code-switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, investigating how code-switching reflects social factors like power, identity, and group membership within the classroom. As mentioned by Hadei et al. (2016), shifting between languages in a single discourse occurs to reveal the speaker's true identity as a way of showing that they belong within a community with shared principles and experiences.

Correspondingly, Kosovo is a multilingual society, which has an inclusive language policy where many ESL teachers often operate in educational settings

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; argjend.muhadri@student.uni-pr.edu

in which several languages co-exist. In this context, the English language in Kosovo holds a high status and serves as a unifying mechanism for individuals from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, Shabani et al. (2022) notes that one of the reasons that Albanian speakers of English switch languages is to take into account the interlocutor's linguistic background and then adjust their speech accordingly. Thus, demonstrating how bilingual speakers shift languages to fit with a specific linguistic community.

Considering this linguistically diverse setting, teachers play a crucial role in navigating these dynamics through their code-switching practices. Code-switching contributes to teachers' and students' identity development and shapes their sense of belonging in a multilingual classroom (Berisha & Poshka, 2024). Similarly, Makulloluwa (2013) found that teacher code-switching is a useful technique in promoting a supportive learning setting. Switching to the L1 enabled teachers to establish positive rapport with students and create an inclusive classroom environment. These practices highlight the strategic role of language in balancing pedagogical goals with cultural and social inclusion.

Problem Statement

In multilingual classrooms, teachers often need to be mindful not only of the impact the words have in aiding students' understanding but also in building positive rapport with them to encourage a two-sided cooperation. One common strategy promoted in ESL classrooms is code-switching, which many teachers employ to facilitate students' understanding, to navigate through challenging notions, or to assist students who struggle with the target language (Algarin-Ruiz, 2014). This practice is particularly relevant when the majority of the students share a similar linguistic background, as it allows teachers to manage the classroom more effectively. As Macaro (2001) illustrates, using students' native language moderately and in a planned manner can reduce confusion and decrease the cognitive load, while Sert (2005) states that code-switching leads to enhanced teacher-student interactions and stronger communication skills.

Furthermore, language shifts can carry social significance. As Gardner-Chloros (2009) explains, code-switching embodies factors such as the perceived status of a certain language, social networks, and individuals' perceptions of themselves and others. Similarly, Kuang (1999) found that code-switching is linked to sociolinguistic factors such as power and group membership, where individuals alternate between languages as a way of signaling that they belong within a group. Together, these factors highlight how code-switching contributes to social cohesion.

Given that code-switching is a widespread phenomenon in Kosovo's classrooms, it has been investigated mainly to reveal its pedagogical

implications. The majority of researchers had an interest in analyzing its effectiveness on learning outcomes and often overlooked its role in reinforcing the social structures. For instance, the study by Jusufi and Jusufi (2024) showed that students' utilization of code-switching concerned teachers about students becoming dependent; however, they recognized its benefits as an instructional medium. This demonstrates an absence of research focusing on how teacher code-switching is a representation of sociolinguistics factors like power, identity, and group membership within the classroom. In addition, considering Kosovo's rich linguistic background and cultural heritage, it provides a significant potential to explore code-switching in these dimensions. Consequently, this study investigates teachers' perceptions on code switching with an emphasis on sociolinguistic functions.

Aim of the Study

This research aims to investigate how ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers in Kosovo apply code-switching in their classes and which social factors influence them to alternate between languages. Specifically, it intends to determine how teacher code-switching reflects social factors like power, identity, and group membership within the classroom. By identifying similar or contrasting beliefs, this study seeks to provide insights about teacher code-switching from a sociolinguistic dimension and share new perspectives that will contribute to viewing code-switching as a powerful component in the classroom.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate whether teachers utilize code-switching as a way of reinforcing power dynamics in their classes
2. To explore the strategies through which ESL teachers implement code switching as a means of encouraging group memberships and inclusion within the classroom
3. To acquire information from teachers about how they perceive their identity and role when using code-switching

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does teacher code-switching reflect or reinforce power dynamics in the classroom?

2. In what ways do ESL teachers use code-switching to shape students' sense of group membership and belonging in a multilingual classroom?
3. What are ESL teachers' perceptions of their own identity and professional role when engaging in code-switching during classroom instruction?

From the above research questions, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

H1- Teachers are inclined to use code-switching as a supportive strategy to guide classroom interactions, establish clear expectations, and maintain a sense of authority.

H2- Code-switching helps teachers create a more inclusive classroom environment by acknowledging students' linguistic backgrounds and strengthening their sense of belonging.

H3- Teachers see code-switching as a reflection of their dual identity-balancing the professional use of English with personal connections to their first language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-Switching and Power Dynamics in the Classroom

Code-switching in the classroom often carries deeper meaning. Many studies have been conducted to emphasize how teachers' use of multiple languages is linked to power dynamics and classroom roles. For instance, analyzing a large number of published papers, Probyn (2009) stated that teachers made use of students' native language by means of managing students' behavior. Teachers mentioned that when students misbehaved, using their native language kept them more interested and shifted the focus to them when explaining the lessons. Besides that, through code-switching, teachers gained higher response rates in the class. The students would quickly react if they were addressed in their native language.

Whereas, Filayati (2013) used qualitative research methodology to delve deeper into teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of code-switching in maintaining power and discipline in the classroom. The teachers highlighted that the practice of language shifting in the classroom was occasionally used for classroom management. In addition, code-switching occurred when there was an absence of communication, especially when teacher-student interactions did not happen in turn as expected. To do that, teachers switched languages to demonstrate power and discipline in the class.

Similarly, Algarin-Ruiz (2014) suggested that language shifting should be embraced in the classroom and should not be considered an indicator of teachers' inadequacy or lack of professionalism. When applied appropriately, it can serve as a tool to maintain authority and assert dominance, especially when dealing with miscommunication. Apart from that, it was claimed to assist in language development. In addition, the study conducted by Siong and Min (2017) depicted that code-switching is a substantial resource for negotiating with students when sharing a common language. However, if teachers and students have different L1s, then it is suggested to refrain from using another language besides the target one.

Furthermore, the study by Akhtar and Fareed (2016) revealed that teacher code-switching took place as a way of reinforcing relations with the students and to create a welcoming classroom. Integrating code-switching in a homogeneous classroom setting exhibited group membership and classroom unity. Besides that, Nilep (2006) asserted that code-switching in the classroom plays an essential role in classroom interactions. By means of code-switching, speakers will take turns in conversation and accomplish their attained linguistic and social goals.

In other studies, researchers were interested in finding out how code-switching creates an engaging classroom environment, mitigates the challenges, and provides an accessible learning environment. For instance, Ferguson (2003) discovered that language interplay by teachers shapes power dynamics in the classroom. Teachers' selective use of the students' L1 in multilingual classrooms supported emotional rapport, reduced social distance, and encouraged group cohesion. On that account, linguistic and social barriers were surpassed.

Al Arief and Khotimah (2019) employed a qualitative research methodology in order to investigate the function of teacher language alternation among the non-English students. It was found that the teachers employed code switching to facilitate classroom interaction and to make the lesson more accessible for students. One primary finding was that the occasional language shift by teachers enabled students to be more comfortable and reduced the hierarchical distance. Thus, indicating that a balance between the native language and English fosters interactions and promotes learning.

Additionally, Hede and Mardijono (2015) disclosed that teachers shifted between languages in order to improve classroom interaction. There few reasons were stated for code-switching, including guiding students through lesson stages and eliciting students' understanding. In addition, by switching to the students' first language, the teachers could encourage students to participate. Accordingly, Al-Qahtani (2014) conducted interviews with professors from

different ethnicities. Few professors argued that switching languages was inevitable in professional or social contexts. Few of them emphasized that they sometimes would alternate between languages to reinforce behavioral norms in the classroom.

The Impact of Code-Switching on Creating an Inclusive Classroom

Sert (2005) claims that teachers' utilization of code-switching in the classroom promotes an inclusive learning setting. This occurs due to the fact that teachers alternating between languages, either for clarification or reinforcement, assists in establishing positive rapport within the classroom. Students recognize the teachers' efforts to create a united classroom and thus facilitating the learning process. In addition, it was emphasized that code-switching serves as an essential component for bridging the gaps in communication and fostering social interactions among teachers and students. As a result, opposing the viewpoint of a few researchers who claimed that code-switching hinders language development, and that both teachers and students must refrain from using it, despite its other beneficial aspects.

The study conducted by Horasan (2014) revealed that the practice of switching language reflected social factors within the classroom. The teachers' usage of code-switching occurred mostly for humorous purposes and in order to resonate with the students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Apart from that, the findings suggested that the integration of L1 in ESL classrooms lowered students' anxiety as students felt they were treated equally. This shows that code-switching, when used effectively, can serve as a tool for group unity.

Furthermore, Cahyani et al. (2018) carried out an ethnographic study in Indonesia to examine the influence of teacher code-switching in creating a sense of belonging inside the classroom. The study found that shifting between languages improved teacher-student relationships as well as increased students' motivation and participation. The teachers used the English language to acknowledge the students' achievements and switched to L1 to indicate the areas for improvement. Consequently, an inclusive classroom environment was built, and all students' linguistic backgrounds were recognised and appreciated. Thus, suggesting that occasional implementation of code-switching gives the learners the idea that they are members of a group.

Similarly, Azlan and Narasuman (2013) used a mixed method to examine the motivations behind the teachers' and students' language switch during the discussions in the classroom. Both teachers and students mentioned that one of the reasons they alternated between languages was to be identified with a particular group. Since they all spoke the same language, they could be identified with that linguistic community. Besides that, code switching was

found to transcend the language barriers and offered them opportunities to be treated equally.

In another study, Slimane (2024) employed a mixed methodology to investigate factors influencing code-switching. The study disclosed that code-switching happens as a result of having a desire to be affiliated with a community. Many respondents reported that they employ code switching in their daily lives as a way to express their cultural identity. In addition, they highlighted that knowing two languages and switching between them exhibits superiority.

On the other hand, several other research studies pinpoint the drawbacks of code-switching utilization concerning group affiliations in the classroom. The study by Mokgwathi and Webb (2013) indicated that alternating between languages in the classroom may cause students to be neglected or overlooked. The students who shared the same native language as the teacher were eager to participate and were engaged with the lesson. However, few students having different linguistic backgrounds did not feel welcomed in the class. This happened because a small portion of the teaching materials was drafted in a different language from that of the minority of students. As a result, they felt left out of the group.

Correspondingly, Cook (2002) argued that teacher code-switching may pose challenges to students who do not speak the same language as the majority of the students. Those students will feel excluded from the rest of the class as well, and they will be prevented from gaining language proficiency. Taking this into account, it was suggested that the mother tongue only must be implemented if each and every student shares a common language. In addition, the researcher noted that if this practice occurs in the classroom, the teachers should ensure that they possess sufficient knowledge of students' L1 language. If the teacher is not competent in the students' mother tongue, it may cause further confusion among the students.

Code-Switching as an Expression of Teacher Identity

Code-switching is more than a linguistic tool. For many teachers, it is a way of expressing and negotiating their identities within diverse classroom settings. To further explore this occurrence, Raman and Yiğitoğlu (2018) had three English teachers at a language school in Cyprus as their respondents. The study revealed that through code-switching, teachers expressed three types of identities: personal, professional, and linguistic identity. The teachers expressed their personal identity by switching to L1 mainly to be playful with the students or to establish rapport with them. Regarding their professional identity, the language alternation took place when they believed they were incompetent in

some aspects since the English language was not their first language. Whereas the linguistic identity was expressed when the teachers and students spoke the same language, and unintentionally during their conversation, they switched to L1.

Correspondingly, using a qualitative approach, Bilgin (2016) found that the practice of language interplay serves other roles besides linguistic ones. It was observed that there exists an interconnection between identity and code-switching. This referred to how teachers defined themselves or the type of teacher they aspired to be. In addition, the teachers claimed that the usage of code-switching in the classroom did not define them as less professional, lacking competence, or less secure in speaking the English language. They used code-switching to impart knowledge to the students and facilitate the learning process.

Whereas Altun (2019) used a qualitative methodology to examine how novice teachers perceived the utilization of code-switching in the classroom and how it contributed to their identity formation. The results indicated that their past experiences with code-switching, whether as student-teacher or their college experiences, affected their perceptions toward code-switching. If their professor always used the target language (English), they would consider that a sign of professionalism. However, the frequent language shifting was viewed as a lack of English competency, apart from the cases where code-switching occurred occasionally to prevent misunderstanding. Therefore, it was suggested that past experiences shaped their identity and determined their future choices.

Similarly, Camilleri (1996) closely investigated the Maltese teachers' perceptions on code-switching and identity development. The persistent utilization of the English language by the teachers in the Maltese context gave the impression of being a condescending person due to moving away from their values. Whereas, balancing the native language use and English, the teachers were perceived as more educated, given the importance of preserving the native language. On that account, code-switching contributed to identity development as the teachers were confident when shifting languages.

Moreover, Manglila (2020) indicated that the native language is frequently used by teachers as a way of denoting their identity within the classroom. Teachers employed code-switching to communicate certain emotions that can only be understood in the context of the mother tongue and in order to connect with students. Apart from that, the teachers denied that shifting between languages is a lack of professionalism or insecurity. All these factors contributed to shaping their identity within a classroom.

On the contrary, several other research studies highlighted that few teachers avoid code-switching to maintain their credibility and out of fear of compromising their professionalism. For instance, Bilgin (2015) conducted qualitative research to learn more about how novice teachers were perceived by their mentors in the training phase. Amongst novice teachers, few expressed that under the surveillance of their mentor, they avoided code-switching as initially they were viewed as not skilled in teaching, and they were not perceived as professionals. As a result, they faced issues in establishing an identity as teachers and faced a dilemma on the approach they were going to take in the future.

The research by Flores and Rosa (2015) revealed that in several schools, it was prohibited to code-switch in any variety of English except standard English. This occurred due to what was perceived as linguistic appropriateness. The students, to achieve full English competence, had to adapt to the standard language and leave behind their identity. This was established as a policy to keep language purity and maintain national identity. As a consequence, teachers' credibility and social identity were affected.

Furthermore, Vu (2017) carried out a case study to gain insights about English teachers' viewpoints regarding language alternation. Few teachers stated that modifying their language was a violation of their professionalism and social identity. They would not be perceived as an adequate language teacher to teach students English if they violated these norms. In addition, teacher code-switching was viewed as an indicator of insecurity and a hindrance to professional identity development. Consequently, they encouraged other teachers to avoid using students' native language and stated that the language of instruction should be solely English.

In a different research study, Uys (2010) administered interviews with teachers to learn more about code-switching and identity development. The teachers mentioned that code-switching did not define their identity since it was mostly utilized for establishing social relations with their students and managing their behavior. Similarly, in his study, Ibrahim et al. (2013) conducted interviews with Malaysian English teachers to examine how they perceived their identity in relation to code-switching. Teachers promoted English-only classrooms and declared to have employed code-switching only to inform students of their identity. On rare occasions, the teachers inserted local expressions in their speech as a way of showing students to appreciate their identities as Malaysians.

METHODOLOGY

Background Information

This study aimed to investigate the perspectives of the teachers regarding code-switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon and examined its motivations and functions in the academic context. The research adopted a qualitative research approach where the primary data were collected through interviews, whereas the secondary data were gathered from relevant sources on the internet. Miron (1998) deemed the qualitative approach relevant as it focuses on disclosing in-depth information by targeting a small number of participants and revealing multifaceted explanations essential for examining their experiences and behaviors. In this study, teachers were expected to answer questions about the reasons they employed code-switching and how it is associated with sociolinguistic factors such as power dynamics, inclusion, and identity within the classroom. Therefore, by looking at the teachers' perspectives, the study sought to offer an understanding of effective ways to utilize code-switching to improve the classroom dynamics and interactions.

Participants

The participants of this study were chosen using purposive sampling and included ESL teachers in Kosovo. According to Rai and Thapa (2015), in purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants on the basis of their attributes, specific goals of the research, their experiences, and expertise in a particular field. The interviews were conducted with 7 teachers from various cities in Kosovo, having at least 3-5 years' experience in teaching English, to explore whether they switched to their students' native language, if they considered it as effective or an indication of unprofessionalism, and if it reflected various social factors within the classroom. In addition, another criterion for selection was the teacher's and students' linguistic background. They were asked whether they alternated between languages in classes where students did not share the same native language and if that created a sense of exclusion in the classroom.

Data Collection Instruments

This study adopted a qualitative methodology, whereby seven interviews were conducted to gather the necessary data. According to Hannabuss (1996), interviews are customizable and adaptable research instruments that enable researchers to uncover new perspectives, offer detailed explanations, collect a large amount of information, and give rise to new theories. In particular, semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate for this study, as stated by Adams (2015), they permit flexibility to ask spontaneous and follow-up

questions during the interview process while still focusing on the original topic. The interview questions were designed by the researcher so that they closely align with the research objectives.

Furthermore, all interviews were conducted in English and consisted of approximately 20 questions. The questions focused on classroom power dynamics, the ways in which code-switching shapes students' sense of belonging and group membership, and the relationship between teachers' identity and the language used in the classroom. Specifically, the participants were asked about the reasons for language alternation, whether they felt that using the students' first language gave them more control or flexibility as teachers, and if they had noticed any differences in student participation or engagement when using L1. Ultimately, all questions were open-ended to elicit more detailed and insightful information about this widespread sociolinguistic phenomenon in ESL classrooms.

Data Collection Procedure

This study followed two procedures for data collection: the piloting stage and the actual data gathering from the selected participants. Initially, the process of data collection started with piloting interview questions in order to receive feedback on the drafted questions. The major objective of the piloting process was to ensure that the questions were clear and comprehensible for all participants. Taking that into consideration, two teachers were interviewed in order to evaluate if questions were properly drafted, to look for potential bias, and to ensure that the open-ended questions were in line with the aim of the research.

Subsequently, interviews with participants were conducted. The interviews were held for approximately 30-45 minutes, depending on their answers. Each interview was conducted individually in a virtual platform such as Google Meet or Zoom during May 2025 and was recorded for transcription purposes. Before commencing the interviews, a consent form was sent to the participants. Moreover, it was pointed out that there are no wrong or correct answers, as the purpose of these interviews was to learn about their perceptions and experiences as teachers. Ultimately, once the sets of data were collected, the responses were analyzed, and conclusions were drawn as shown in the next section.

Data Analysis

Initially, the recorded data on the aforementioned platforms was transcribed in one of the online tools called the Otter AI transcription tool for quicker transcription. Following that, the data was analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes and patterns in participants' responses related to teacher code-

switching. Thematic analysis followed the six-phase approach as given by Braun and Clarke (2006), which includes familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a final report. This approach enabled the researcher to get the key experiences, beliefs, and attitudes expressed by participants in their own words.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

The researcher conducted interviews with 7 ESL teachers in Kosovo in order to find out how they employed code-switching in their classes. In particular, the study explored how teacher code-switching reflected social factors like power, identity, and group membership within the classroom. Drawing on the insights from the qualitative data, three key themes were identified: code switching and power dynamics, group membership and belonging, and teacher identity and professional role. Overall, this study revealed that ESL teachers in Kosovo utilized code-switching in ways that were influenced by broader social factors, leading them to alternate strategically between languages. In light of the findings, the study demonstrates how code-switching reflects teacher identity, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of its social significance.

Code Switching and Power Dynamics

The findings of this study show that ESL teachers in Kosovo used code-switching to manage classroom power structures and student behavior. Teachers reported how switching to the students' first language was more effective when explaining the rules, maintaining discipline or seriousness, and ensuring immediate compliance. In addition to managing behavior, teachers used code-switching to regain their attention, address confusion, and guarantee comprehension of complex instructions. The findings suggested that code-switching emerged as a flexible tool for classroom management by reinforcing teacher authority and simultaneously supporting student comprehension. The following sub-themes illustrate these dynamics: classroom management and asserting authority and enhancing student comfort, and avoiding hesitation. Taken together, they show how teachers used L1 to balance authority with emotional connection, making code-switching a central practice in guiding power relations.

Classroom Management and Asserting Authority

The majority of teachers considered code-switching essential for addressing disruptive behavior and maintaining classroom discipline. They consistently reported that shifting to Albanian was more efficient at correcting student behavior and encouraging quicker responses. Moreover, few teachers working with adult learners emphasized that code-switching was particularly effective

in establishing a professional tone and reinforcing teacher authority in ways that English alone did not. In such cases, switching to L1 was done to signal a shift in tone and emphasize the seriousness of a situation.

“When students seem unconcerned about the rules that they have broken, I used to code-switch to their first language when they seemed not to take the rules seriously. So, I guess switching to their first language grabs their attention faster and makes the message feel more personal and more urgent. So, it works. It has worked in my classes.” (T2)

“I think I use this just to control the classroom, to keep it, to manage the whole class so the lesson goes smoothly, and I am able to finish whatever I have planned for that lesson. Most of the time it works, that’s why I keep doing it more often.” (T7)

The preceding accounts highlight that code-switching plays a significant role in enabling teachers to manage the classroom effectively. The result revealed that teachers’ switch to students’ L1 was intentionally carried out as a way of asserting discipline, correcting behavior, and reinforcing the seriousness of a particular situation. In addition, it was reported that when teachers attempted through English to convey urgency or elicit immediate responses, sometimes the effort was unsuccessful, so switching to the students’ L1 was more direct and more emotionally compelling for them. This has to do with the fact that many students associate their native language with formality, early learning, or home, thus making it more authoritative in disciplinary contexts. Therefore, it functioned as a behavioral trigger: disobedient students often became quiet and compliant as soon as the teacher shifted into their mother tongue.

“Although with adults you don’t really need to show discipline, but maybe just to kind of show your boundaries, because sometimes adults tend to feel like everything is very accessible and that us teachers are always there for them. So sometimes I tend to switch to Albanian when I’m feeling like the other person is not really understanding me, so that they know that I’m talking more seriously.” (T5)

Furthermore, as illustrated in the example above, teachers of adult learners reported similar experiences, though in these contexts the purpose was not only discipline but also signaling shifts in tone—from casual interaction to professional seriousness. In this way, it reinforces the teacher’s role as a facilitator of discipline and order. For instance, when a class discussion risked becoming disengaged, switching into Albanian helped reestablish structure and expectations. This suggests that the native language holds cultural importance that helps in shaping teacher-student roles, especially with adults. Besides that, these findings indicated that code-switching is not applied the same way across

all age groups, but rather it matches students' age, maturity, and communicative expectations. Thus, making it a highly contextualized practice.

Enhancing Student Comfort and Avoiding Hesitation

Alongside classroom management, teachers consistently emphasized that code-switching helped create a more emotionally supportive learning environment. The majority recognized the importance of balancing L1 use with English language exposure. They described moments when they strategically returned to English after a short switch to L1 or used bilingual paraphrasing and summaries to maintain engagement without preventing immersion. In addition, they identified emotional comfort as a key outcome of code-switching. Students, especially those with low confidence or lower levels of English proficiency, often experienced hesitation when speaking in class. In such cases, using the students' L1 made the environment feel safer and more welcoming. Code-switching was thus used to reduce stress, encourage questions or clarification, and foster participation.

“If the teacher, or in this case myself, speaks only the language that they are learning, rather than the student’s native one, they might feel uncomfortable to ask me to elaborate... they might hesitate to ask me further questions about it...” (T1)

“Some of my students who don’t really feel comfortable with talking in English, and they always go with Albanian, because that’s their safe space. They don’t want to make any mistakes.” (T7)

“It’s also useful to code-switch when addressing emotional or behavioral issues. Because my students are beginners, and they do not have that wide vocabulary that they need in English, sometimes it’s hard for them to express their feelings. So, switching helps in those cases. I switch into their language so they can clearly and more comfortably tell me what they’re dealing with.” (T2)

These insights suggest that code switching reduced the hierarchical distance between students and the teacher and created a safer classroom setting. Quiet or hesitant students often were more engaged after occasional switching to L1, showing that occasional code-switching could boost student confidence and engagement.

“Students who might be passive or hesitant, suddenly become more active.... So, maybe for students who feel overwhelmed by English-only instruction, short moments like this, where we code switch, boosts their confidence.” (T3)

“They need this kind of supportive environment where they can, of course, raise their hand, say their opinion in English. If they don’t know any words,

they might say it in... I mean, they will feel comfortable to say that word in Albanian or ask for help when needed, and that's it." (T6)

By lowering the affective filter, teachers ensured that the classroom was not only a space of discipline but also one of emotional security. This approach encouraged students to take risks, make mistakes, and continue practicing English without fear of embarrassment. Teacher code-switching assured that the classroom was a safe space for them where they felt supported, understood, and seen. This strategy led to higher levels of engagement among students, increased their willingness to take linguistic risks, and acted as a bridge between authority and empathy. Through the promotion of safe and familiar zones, the teachers created emotionally secure zones that fostered trust and confidence among students.

These findings are consistent with earlier studies that have highlighted the pedagogical and sociocultural roles of code-switching in second language classrooms. For instance, Canagarajah (1995) observed that ESL teachers in multilingual classrooms used code-switching to manage classroom hierarchies and classroom order, particularly in contexts where L1 carried emotional or disciplinary weight. Similarly, Cahyani et al. (2018) demonstrated that teachers in bilingual or multilingual classrooms frequently used L1 to manage student behavior while simultaneously reinforcing their professional identity and supporting student comfort. The current study aligns with these findings by showing that Kosovo ESL teachers similarly use code-switching not only for clarification but also to shape the classroom's social and emotional atmosphere.

Group Membership and Belonging

One of the ways ESL teachers in Kosovo used code-switching was to shape students' sense of group membership and belonging within the classroom. The qualitative data showed that teachers intentionally switched languages to reduce anxiety, promote inclusion, and build trust. By strategically using students' first languages, teachers created classroom environments that were more emotionally supportive, socially connected, and culturally inclusive. To elaborate on these approaches, the following sub-themes illustrate the specific ways in which teachers utilized code-switching to support a stronger sense of group membership and classroom inclusion.

Inclusion and Establishing Trust between Student and Teacher

ESL teachers employed code-switching to shape students' sense of group membership and belonging in a multilingual classroom, demonstrating that it is significant for promoting inclusion and fostering student-teacher relationships in multilingual classrooms. This practice fostered a more emotionally supportive

environment, especially for shy or quiet students unfamiliar with the classroom norms. Shifting languages encouraged reserved students to ask questions and participate more actively. In this way, alternating between languages served as a bridge for strengthening teacher-student relationships.

“I think using a shared language builds a bridge between, in this case, me and my students or between people...For example, I’ve seen students who are completely silent during the first weeks of the school or the class or any course and suddenly start raising their hands or join discussions when I tend to code switch. It’s like we build a relationship in that way. I think these small gestures can break the ice.” (T3)

Furthermore, teachers consistently used students’ L1 to reduce emotional tension and to reach learners on a more human level. Code-switching was utilized as a tool for building relationships, especially with students facing linguistic or emotional challenges. This could be seen in their responses, where many of them affirmed that their students “opened up” especially when the language choice was flexible and responsive to their needs.

“Making small talk, even for two to three minutes in English or Albanian, like mixing both of them, a little bit English, a little bit Albanian, so I form that bond with them so that they know that they can feel comfortable with me because I’m not here to judge, I’m here to help, and you should be able to trust me if you want me to help you. And it’s kind of working. I’ve seen improvements.” (T7)

“I believe code switching can be a very effective way to build trust with students. And I think it reduces the distance between a teacher and a student, and it creates, how can I say, maybe a relatable environment.” (T3)

“When I use a student’s first language respectfully, it often strengthens our reports with them, our bonds with them, and I kind of gain their trust. Using their first language shows that I value their background, which makes them more open.” (T2)

On the other hand, teachers expressed concerns about the challenges in multilingual classrooms, particularly the risk of unintentionally excluding students who do not speak the most dominant L1. Therefore, teachers recommended using code-switching selectively to ensure no student feels excluded.

“Those that do not have Albanian as their first language, I can detect how detached from the group work they are, and they have no clue what is going on. So, in those cases, I prefer students to not code-switch to Albanian, but to try to use English instead, so all the other Turkish students do not feel left out.” (T2)

“I did try to avoid using their individual language, only because it is very easy in that kind of classroom to make one or two students feel left out... So, I do try to avoid it as much as possible.” (T1)

“In multilingual classrooms, I avoid using a language that others don't understand, especially when I work in private courses. Of course, there are multilingual students, so I had to find a way. So, it can unintentionally exclude others or create the perception of favoritism. But in those cases, I try to rely more on visual aids, gestures, or to simplify my English.” (T3)

These accounts demonstrate that while teachers viewed code-switching as an effective strategy for fostering trust and inclusion, they also carefully considered its potential drawbacks. Few teachers raised concerns about the overuse of L1 (Albanian) if there are students whose first language is Turkish or another minority language, as it would exclude them. To avoid this linguistic distance, they followed various approaches, such as verbal cues or simplified English that still promoted inclusiveness and cohesive classrooms. Their awareness of linguistic diversity reflects an intentional effort to maintain classroom unity without excluding minority-language speakers. In addition, their approaches show that teachers acknowledge different linguistic backgrounds while maintaining a united classroom environment.

Cultural Bonding and Identity Recognition

Another significant finding was that teachers used code-switching to promote a sense of shared cultural understanding and mutual respect. By acknowledging students' cultural identities through language, they created a space where students felt recognized and valued. Through cultural references or personalized use of L1 in one-on-one conversations, teachers transmitted the message that they valued and respected their students' diverse linguistic backgrounds.

“We have some Turkish students and sometimes I even say some words in their language as well when I talk to them, and that, in a way, helps them feel part of the community.” (T6)

“We use Albanian in our case to sometimes tell jokes and break the ice.” (T6)

“I do make remarks about the culture. So, let's say, uh, for example, uh, I am from Gjakova, and there are some, uh, jokes going on about people, uh, and the culture of Gjakova. And so, when I do make a remark or a joke about it.... uh, I do feel the appreciation that they make because they feel comfortable about it.” (T1)

These responses showed how language acted as a bridge between cultural identity and academic learning. Teachers did not treat language as a barrier but as a resource to strengthen classroom unity. Such small gestures as making a joke in the Albanian language, using cultural expressions, or greeting the students in their first language were understood by them as an act of familiarity and acceptance. In addition, these examples demonstrate that the teacher's recognition of cultural identity reduced anxieties about poor English skills, encouraged participation, and helped even shy or quiet learners to feel more secure in engaging with their peers and teachers. Such an approach enhanced the students' commitment towards the classroom and increased their emotional connections with their classmates as well as with their teachers.

Moreover, in doing so, code-switching fostered a classroom climate where students felt comfortable contributing, recognized themselves as meaningful members of the group, and experienced a stronger sense of belonging. Many of their students were able to express their thoughts freely as well as contribute significantly to discussions. This change from reluctance to participation can be associated with the freedom in alternating between languages and awareness of the students' cultural backgrounds. Through these interactions, it was indicated that code-switching strengthened students' sense of belonging and established a united classroom environment, which enabled students to be valued and appreciated.

These findings are in close alignment with earlier research on the socio-cultural functions of code-switching in language education. For instance, Garcia and Wei (2015) emphasized that intentionally using multiple languages in educational contexts can help reduce hierarchies and foster classroom belonging by acknowledging students' linguistic repertoires. Similarly, Ferguson (2003) found that teachers' selective use of the students' L1 in multilingual classrooms supported emotional rapport, reduced social distance, and encouraged group unity. The current study builds on these insights by showing how ESL teachers in Kosovo strategically use code-switching to balance interpersonal relationships and promote linguistically diverse classrooms.

Teacher Identity and Professional Role

This theme examined how code-switching influenced and reflected teachers' identity and professionalism within Kosovo's English language classrooms. Teachers' reflections reveal how their perceptions about what it means to be a professional language teacher were shaped by their own educational backgrounds, institutional constraints, colleague expectations, and personal experiences in the classroom. For many, code-switching involved adhering to conventional norms, and their beliefs were guided by the idea that a

competent English teacher should speak only English. However, this idea of professionalism over the years seemed to be challenged and redefined over time, and thus, teaching them to be more confident and flexible in their teaching strategies. Therefore, these findings demonstrate that teacher identity is closely tied to the ways teachers explain and negotiate their language choices.

Code-Switching and Professionalism

A central subtheme was the strong connection between professionalism and language choice. Teachers initially associated code-switching with a lack of professionalism. These beliefs were often shaped during their academic studies. Several teachers recalled how, during their undergraduate studies, they were discouraged from using L1 in academic settings and were convinced that English-only classrooms were the ideal ones. These assumptions put pressure on teachers to demonstrate their English fluency and maintain language immersion.

“At the beginning, I was so reluctant to use code switching, but now my opinion has changed quite a lot; such has changed my teaching practices.” (T2)

“When I first started teaching, I felt the pressure to prove my English proficiency to myself, firstly, to my students, or to my colleagues, and follow the rules by using just English.” (T3)

Moreover, institutional expectations and norms played a significant role in shaping how teachers view code-switching. While some schools promoted English-only classrooms, others offered more flexible or informal guidance, which allowed teachers to believe in their own professional judgement.

“In the institution where I work, we are encouraged to use English as much as possible, so of course I try to stick to that.” (T4)

“In the school where I'm working, there is no such policy that prohibits me from using code switching... The whole idea is to not overuse it but to use it for beneficial purposes during our teaching and learning practices.” (T2)

Nevertheless, these views evolved with classroom experience. Teachers described a shift in their perceptions. They no longer saw code-switching as a limitation but rather as a student-centered strategy. Confidence grew as they witnessed how L1 use could enhance learning, emotional connection, and inclusion. These contrasting experiences demonstrate that teacher identity is continually evolving and is mediated through institutional and peer expectations of what is considered to be proper teaching.

“I’ve changed, I’ve grown, I’ve learned new things. I read every day and I see that it’s not a weakness, it’s more of a strength.” (T7)

“I used to think that I shouldn’t use Albanian at all when I first started teaching, but then gradually, as years passed, I saw that sometimes it is a must.” (T6)

This change in perception highlights the dynamic nature of teacher identity: it is not fixed but rather shaped by real classroom experiences, student needs, and ongoing professional reflection. Most teachers claimed that they did not want to use L1 at first as they feared it could be seen as unskilled and inexperienced, but they later changed their perceptions after noticing how alternating between languages strategically had been helping to achieve learning goals as well as encourage participation among students. This demonstrates that teachers attained both greater assurance and versatility in their teaching methods when L1 use was perceived as a facilitator rather than an obstacle. This change indicates a significant development in their professional identity by becoming confident English teachers who support multilingual learning.

Code-Switching as a Reflection of Professional and Personal Identity

A key insight from the data was the extent to which teachers viewed code-switching as integral to both their professional and personal identities. Teachers perceived themselves not only as language professionals but also as multilingual individuals with deep cultural and linguistic connections to their communities. Rather than separating their Albanian and English selves, they embraced both languages as part of who they are as teachers and members of their communities. Speaking both English and Albanian (or other languages) was seen as a reflection of their dual identities.

“Yeah, I’m proud as an English teacher that I can code switch between the two languages, even though Albanian is my first language...” (T7)

“Yes, because I feel like it’s an identity in all of our teachers in Kosovo. It’s something that we keep with us as a powerful tool or as something in like the back of our heads that we can always go back to. It reflects the identity that I have in terms of my background, my language identity in general. (T5)

“Yes, I think it reflects my belief that as a teacher that language is not just a tool but also a bridge to identity and trust. I see it as part of my teaching style as well.” (T2)

These examples illustrate that teacher code-switching is not just a professional decision but a representation of who they are as individuals. They highlighted how being competent in the two languages, English and Albanian, they could

connect to students more personally and meaningfully. Code-switching was seen as an expression of identity, one that was warm, funny, and culturally familiar in ways English was not able to reproduce. This dual identity enabled English teachers to teach efficiently and still be deeply identified with their mother tongue. This suggests that teachers used bilingualism as a strength that empowered them and gave them confidence in their teaching practices.

Furthermore, these findings support the previous research carried out on code-switching and teacher identity, especially when looking at multilingual contexts. Raman and Yiğitoğlu (2018) mention three identities that were expressed through code-switching among teachers, including the personal, professional, and linguistic identities. Similarly, Camilleri (1996) paid close attention to the perceptions of the teachers in Malta on code-switching and their identity. Balancing the native language use and English, the teachers were perceived as more educated as well as they could preserve their native language, thus showing that code-switching contributed to identity development. The reflections of the Kosovo ESL teachers are aligned with these findings, especially in their way of defining code-switching as part of their dual identity. These teachers were able to reshape the perceptions of what being an ESL teacher was by claiming bilingualism as an advantage.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the phenomenon of code switching is a socially motivated practice, expressing the dynamic interaction among power, identity, and classroom relations. The data from interviews with ESL teachers in Kosovo clarified that alternating between languages is not done solely for increasing comprehension but also to shape emotional, social, and cultural aspects in the classroom. Teachers demonstrated that their language choices indicated authority, empathy, and self-awareness. Thereby, revealing that code switching is a purposeful strategy to meet the needs of students in multilingual classrooms.

Moreover, the findings suggested that teachers often employed code-switching as a means of managing classroom interactions and ensuring discipline. Teachers recalled occasions where L1 use helped them to maintain discipline and assert authority and seriousness, which could not be conveyed similarly in the English language. Besides that, L1 proved to be the most effective as it carried symbolic authority that resonated more directly and deeply with students. Even among adult learners, strategic language shifting helped to maintain professionalism and establish boundaries. These support the idea that power can be easily negotiated in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts.

At the same time, the deliberate and balanced usage of code-switching promoted inclusive and supportive classroom environments. Brief moments

of language alternation sometimes served as a bridge between them and students who were hesitant or disconnected. Such gestures were acts of cultural recognition that reduced anxiety, encouraged participation, and strengthened students' sense of membership in a community. These practices highlighted the significance and beneficial aspects of code switching for building a classroom community and supporting their belonging.

Significantly, the study demonstrated that code-switching was associated with teachers' perceptions of their identity within the profession of teaching. At the beginning of their teaching careers, the usage of students' L1 was seen as contradictory to what can be considered a competent language teacher. Nevertheless, gaining classroom experience, their beliefs and practices evolved gradually, leading to viewing code-switching as a reflection of their dual identity that empowered English teachers to teach efficiently and still be deeply connected with their native language. Consequently, they began to embrace code-switching as part of their professional growth, recognizing that their cultural and linguistic heritage was enriched, rather than negatively impacting their classroom practices.

Building on these insights, the findings of this research can help broaden the knowledge on code-switching as a frequent occurrence in ESL classrooms and be informed about how teacher code-switching reflects various social factors. Teachers will be encouraged to alternate moderately between languages to support students' belonging and inclusion in the classroom. Moreover, teachers will become aware of the influence that language choice has on classroom dynamics and will use students' native language to reduce hierarchical distance between them and their students, as well as to maintain their professional identity. Consequently, the teachers will adhere to a more balanced approach to code-switching while ensuring that the students are immersed in the target language.

References

- Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. *Handbook of practical program evaluation*, 492-505.
- Akhtar, H., Khan, A., & Fareed, M. (2016). Code-mixing and code-switching in EFL/ESL context: A sociolinguistic approach. *Balochistan Journal of Linguistics*, 4(1), 29-42.
- Al Arief, Y., & Khotimah, S. H. H. (2019). Code-switching in the English Teaching to Non-English Department Students. *Journal of English Education, Literature and Linguistics*, 2(1), 36-49.
- Algarin-Ruiz, K. M. (2014). Code switching: A tool in the classroom. *The College at Brockport: State University of New York: Education and Human Development*.
- Al-Qahtani, A. (2014). The phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing as practiced among faculty members in a Saudi university. *Language Phenomena in Urban Society*, 8-15.
- Altun, S. (2019). The Interaction of Code-switching and EFL Teachers' Perceptions on their Teacher Identity Development. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 10(1), 163-176.
- Azlan, N. M. N. I., & Narasuman, S. (2013). The role of code-switching as a communicative tool in an ESL teacher education classroom. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 90, 458-467.
- Berisha, V., & Poshka, A. (2024). The Attitudes towards Bilingualism in the Republic of Kosova.
- Bilgin, S. S. (2015). *Code switching in ELT teaching practice in Turkey: Teacher practices, beliefs and identity* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick).
- Bilgin, S. S. (2016). Code Switching in English Language Teaching (ELT) Teaching Practice in Turkey: Student Teacher Practices, Beliefs and Identity. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 11(8), 686-702.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Cahyani, H., de Courcy, M., & Barnett, J. (2018). Teachers' code-switching in bilingual classrooms: exploring pedagogical and sociocultural functions. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 21(4), 465-479.
- Camilleri, A. (1996). Language values and identities: Code switching in secondary classrooms in Malta. *Linguistics and education*, 8(1), 85-103.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1995). Functions of codeswitching in ESL classrooms: Socialising bilingualism in Jaffna. *Journal of multilingual & multicultural development*, 16(3), 173-195.
- Cook, V. (2002). Portraits of the L2 user. In *Multilingual Matters eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853595851>
- Ferguson, G. (2003). Classroom code-switching in post-colonial contexts: Functions, attitudes and policies. *AILA review*, 16(1), 38-51.
- Filayati, M. (2013). *Code Switching of elementary school teacher in Uttering Power Domination* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim).
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard educational review*, 85(2), 149-171.
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2015). Translanguaging, bilingualism, and bilingual education. *The handbook of bilingual and multilingual education*, 223-240.
- Gardner-Chloros, P. (2009). Sociolinguistic factors in code-switching. In *Cambridge University Press eBooks* (pp. 97–113). <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511576331.007>
- Hadei, M., Kumar, V. C., & Jie, K. S. (2016). Social factors for code-switching: A study of Malaysian-English bilingual speakers. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 4(3), 122-127.
- Hannabuss, S. (1996). Research interviews. *New library world*, 97(5), 22-30.
- Hede, G., & Mardijono, J. J. (2015). A STUDY OF CODE-SWITCHING USED BY AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN TEENAGERS'EFL CLASS. *Kata Kita: Journal of language, literature, and teaching*, 3(2), 27-31.

- Horasan, S. (2014). Code-switching in EFL classrooms and the perceptions of the students and teachers. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 10(1), 31-45.
- Ibrahim, E. H. E., Shah, M. I. A., & Armia, N. T. (2013). Code-Switching in English as a Foreign Language Classroom: Teachers' Attitudes. *English Language Teaching*, 6(7), 139-150.
- Jusufi, S., & Jusufi, J. (2024). Exploring Code Switching and its Educational Implications Among Lower Primary Bilingual Students. *Human Research in Rehabilitation*, 14(2).
- Kuang, C. H. (1999). Factors affecting code switching: A case study of an urban family in Petaling Jaya. *Journal of Modern Languages*, 12(1), 77-89.
- Macaro, E. (2001). Analysing student teachers' codeswitching in foreign language classrooms: Theories and decision making. *The modern language journal*, 85(4), 531-548.
- Makulloluwa, E. (2013). Code switching by teachers in the second language classroom. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 6(3), 581.
- Manglila, B. (2020). Bilingualism and Cultural Identity: Exploring teacher and students' use of code-switching in cultural expressions. *Quantum Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(5), 42-54. <https://doi.org/10.55197/qjssh.v1i5.28>
- Miron, G. (1998). Choosing the right research methods: Qualitative? Quantitative? Or both. *Education reform in the south in the 1990s*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Mokgwathi, T., & Webb, V. (2013). The educational effects of code-switching in the classroom—benefits and setbacks: A case of selected senior secondary schools in Botswana. *Language Matters*, 44(3), 108-125.
- Nilep, C. (2006). "Code switching" in sociocultural linguistics. *Colorado research in linguistics*.
- Probyn, M. (2009). 'Smuggling the vernacular into the classroom': Conflicts and tensions in classroom codeswitching in township/rural schools in South Africa. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(2), 123-136.
- Qona'atun, A. (2018). The usage factors of code switching in teaching interaction of English class. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature (JELTL)*, 1(1), 9-18.
- Rai, N., & Thapa, B. (2015). A study on purposive sampling method in research. *Kathmandu: Kathmandu School of Law*, 5(1), 8-15.
- Raman, Y., & Yiğitoğlu, N. (2018). Justifying code switching through the lens of teacher identities: novice EFL teachers' perceptions. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(5), 2079-2092.
- Sapir, E. (1921). An introduction to the study of speech. *Language*, 1(1), 15.
- Sert, O. (2005). The Functions of Code-Switching in ELT Classrooms. *Online Submission*, 11(8).
- Shabani, F., & Munishi, S. (2022). A Conversational Approach to Code-Switching: A Case Study of Prishtina International Schools' Students. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18, 214-228.
- Siong, T. N., & Min, L. H. (2017). SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IMPACTING ON TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS CODE-SWITCHING IN ESL CLASSROOMS IN A RURAL DISTRICT IN MALAYSIA. *Kajian Malaysia*, 35(2), 105-125.
- Slimane, H. K. (2024). Digital linguistic landscapes: Unveiling youth code-switching in computermediated communication. *Akofena Journal*, 12(3), 297-308.
- Stam, N. (2017). *A typology of code-switching in the Commentary to the Félixe Óengusso*. <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/1874/350875/1/Stam.pdf>
- Uys, D. (2010). *The functions of teachers' code switching in multilingual and multicultural high school classrooms in the Siyanda District of the Northern Cape Province* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch).
- Vu, H. H. (2017). "Only when I am not ashamed of myself can I teach others": Preservice English-language teachers in Vietnam and code-switching practices. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 16(5), 285-298.

INVESTIGATING THE MOTIVATION BEHIND CODE-SWITCHING OF GENERATION Z STUDENTS

Mediha BAJRA¹

INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, the concept of code-switching has become very popular and has gained significant attention in sociolinguistic studies. Code switching which is defined by Weinreich (1953) as the practice of shifting between two languages has become popular among bilingual and multilingual communities among the world. In many situations, a person may switch from one language to another, intentionally or unintentionally. This shift can be from one dialect to another, from one language to another or from one style to another for many different reasons (Rihane, n.d.).

Generation Z, which is made up of people born between 1995-2012, is especially known for their code switching in everyday conversation. This generation has grown up in a globalized world and has been exposed to media where multiple languages are used. As a result, the way they communicate and use language has changed significantly, with code switching becoming an important means of communication.

While a lot of research has been done on code switching from a linguistic perspective, there is not much research that focus on the motivation behind the code switching of students in their daily conversations. Grosjean (1982), states that code-switching has several uses, such as quoting what someone has said, identifying the addressee, qualifying what has been said, and discussing past events.

Bilinguals choose their language based on a number of criteria, including who is speaking, what is being said, and when and where a speech act occurs

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; medihabajra1@gmail.com

(Ritchie & Bhatia, 2012). In the view of Kohnert et al. (2005) code-switching is a useful tool for communication which is available for proficient bilingual speakers which they can use when they interact with other bilingual or multilingual people.

Overview of the Problem

With the rise of globalization, there has also been a change in the way people communicate and use language in their daily communication. Code switching, which is known as the process of alternating between two or more languages, has become very popular among bilingual and multilingual communities particularly among people which are part of Generation Z.

As code switching is becoming increasingly common and students tend to use it in their daily interactions, it is of utmost importance to investigate and research this topic in order to find the reasons and factors which lead them to code switch during their daily communication. Researching this topic will not only provide us with the reasons which lead students to code-switch but it will also give us the opportunity to see how code-switching affects or influences their communication as well as social relationships.

The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to research and investigate the motivation behind code switching in the daily conversations of Generation Z students. This study aims to see how common code switching is among Generation Z students and what factors lead them to use code-switching in their conversations. Last but not least, this study aims to gather the opinions of students regarding how code switching influences or affects their daily conversations and whether their experiences with code switching are mostly positive or negative.

Research Questions

The questions which guide this research are:

1. How prevalent is code-switching in the daily conversations of Generation Z students?
2. What are the main factors which influence students to use code switching in their daily communication?
3. How do Gen Z students perceive the impact of code-switching on their social relationships and effectiveness of communication?

Relevance and Importance of the Study

The findings of this study provide important information about code switching and the factors which influence people to code-switch. This study also provides important and relevant information about the prevalence of code switching among Generation Z students as well as the motivation behind their use of code-switching. Other than that, it also shows the opinions of students regarding how code switching affects their daily conversations and whether their experiences with code switching are mostly positive or negative. The findings of this study provide valuable information on code switching and how it reflects the individual identities of students. Additionally, this study leads to a better understanding of how students use language to communicate and express themselves in different contexts and situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Code-Switching

Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that deals with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. It studies language and society and has strong ties to the social sciences, particularly social psychology, anthropology, and sociology (Sudarsi, 2017). In the study of sociolinguistics, the term code-switching is often encountered. The alternation between two languages in a single discourse, sentence or constituent is known as code-switching (Grosjean, 1982).

Code-switching happens in situations where bilingual and multilingual speakers are present (Cook, 2008) and it is sometimes referred as code mixing, language mixing or language switching (Kebeya, 2013). Code switching has recently been defined by scholars as the process whereby speakers move from one language to another either within a single utterance or between one utterance and the next in the same interaction (Bentahila & Davies, 1994).

Code-switching has frequently been associated with language attrition or weakness (Mahootian, 2006). According to Fromkin et al. (2003), in the earlier studies of bilingualism, code switching in children was regarded as a sign that the child was confused or even struggling with the two languages. The majority of scholars today maintain that code-switching is not an indication of a language deficit but rather a typical aspect of bilingual language acquisition and a byproduct of being proficient in multiple languages (Fromkin et al., 2003).

Mahootian (2006) states that code-switching is a systematic rule-governed linguistic behavior. Most of the time, code-switching happens unintentionally on a subconscious level, yet occasionally it is a deliberate and intentional choice.

Code-switching, which is the primary focus of this study, is part of sociolinguistics concerned with the relationship between language and the context in which it is used (Holmes, 2022). Sociolinguistics actually focuses on how a language is used, so the role of sociolinguistics is to manage a language as it functions in society (Sari, 2013).

According to Eyamba Bokamba (1989, as cited in Rihane, n.d), a professor of Second Language Acquisition at the University of Illinois, code-switching is the process of blending words, sentences and phrases from two different linguistic systems across sentence boundaries within a single speech event. Therefore, one phenomenon that arises from bilingualism and multilingualism is code-switching

In multiple situations, a person may intentionally or unintentionally shift from one code to another. This switch may happen from one language into another, from one dialect to another, or from one style to another and this can happen for a variety of reasons. As an example, a bilingual teacher may switch his language in class in order to better elaborate on the topic he is explaining. Sociolinguists refer to this shift as ‘code-switching’ (Rihane, n.d.).

Wardhaugh (1992) states that code-switching frequently occurs subconsciously. It is possible that people may not be aware that they are switching between languages in their conversation. As a result, whenever speakers of multiple languages communicate with one another fluently, they frequently switch between languages and include words and sentences from several languages into a single discourse. In linguistics, this conscious and unconscious conversational approach is referred to as code switching.

As noted by Faltis (1989), when a child from a culturally and linguistically diverse background engages in communication with others, he or she often faces the dilemma of which language to employ when interacting with friends, family and teachers at schools. Alternating between two languages is one of the approaches which could help children to overcome this communication and language barrier. Both bilinguals and monolinguals should get familiar with code switching and code mixing in order to prevent bilingual children from becoming confused by two languages and from feeling excluded in monolingual societies (Kim, 2006).

Reasons for Code-Switching

When bilinguals mix or switch between languages there is a great possibility that they might have a reason or motivation behind that. Grosjean (1982) suggests some reasons which may lead people to code-switch. Some bilinguals, for example, mix two languages when they can't find the right phrases or

expressions, or when there is no adequate translation for the language in question. Additionally, their interlocutors, settings, messages, attitudes, and emotions can also cause code-switching.

Bilinguals tend to use code-switching whenever their second language is linguistically easier, for example, whenever a word is not accessible in their first language, and whenever some words are easier, more distinguishable, or the concepts involved are easier to express in that language (Cheng, 2003). According to Ritchie & Bhatia (2012), code-switching is influenced by participant roles and relationships. Bilinguals may or may not code-mix depending on their conversation partners. The authors also noted that the content of the talk influences code-switching behavior (Velásquez, 2010).

Code-switching is also affected by social factors such as gender, age, religion, social class and level of education (Ritchie & Bhatia, 2012). It was also discovered that code-switching can be done purposefully for the speaker's own benefit. According to Janet Holmes (2022), code-switching can be used intentionally in order to persuade someone or to catch their attention. Cheng (2003) has also pointed out that code-switching can be used to attract attention or exclude someone from the conversation.

Several scholars have also concluded that a speaker may consciously code-switch to indicate group solidarity or to reflect social rank. As Auer (2013) points out, code-switching has a concealed prestige which is made explicit by attitudes. Code-switching can be used to show solidarity between persons from different or the same ethnic groups.

Speakers may use distinct languages to convey a specific social rank or to distinguish themselves from other social classes. Some people use code-switching when they want to sound classier or show that they belong to a group of higher rank (Shabt, 2007). According to Al Khatib (2003) speakers may utilize code-switching to show superiority over the less powerful. Therefore, code-switching can be used to show or even to reflect a person's social class.

A person who can code-switch is considered as a well-educated person who is proficient in two or more languages. Therefore, code-switching can be viewed as a strategy to distinguish oneself. Yasir Suleiman (1999), asserts that code-switching is typically regarded as something prestigious and an indication that a person is educated or proficient in multiple languages.

Topic, on the other hand, appears to also be another major factor motivating a bilingual speaker to code-switch. As stated by Janet Holmes (2022), people may use code-switching to talk about certain issues during a conversational event. As a result, depending on the topic, speakers may employ many languages

within a single utterance. In many cases, a bilingual may prefer to discuss a specific issue in one language over another.

Speakers might employ code-switching to portray different feelings and attitudes. Speakers can switch codes to express anger, happiness, grief, enthusiasm and many other emotions. Furthermore, Janet Holmes (2022) states that people may switch between languages in order to express disapproval. So, if someone is furious, they may code switch.

Previous Research on the Reasons for Code-Switching

Abalhassan & Al Shalawi (2000) in a study done to find the most common reasons why Arab students code switch from Arabic to English as their second language discovered that they use code-switching for different reasons. Some of the most common ones being not knowing a term in their native language, showing off, avoidance of taboo words in their native language, happiness, anger, forgetting the term in their native language, etc.

Irawan (2022), in a study done to analyze the use of code switching between two students of the English education program at Wiralodra Indramayu University in Indonesia, found that the students used code-switching for a variety of reasons, including nervousness, lack of vocabulary, forgetting when speaking and so on. Thus, the main reason why they used code-switching was to improve their conversational fluency.

Astuti (2020) conducted a study in Jakarta, Indonesia, with 50 participants aged 18-20, and discovered that all of them used code-switching in their daily conversations. The majority of them stated that they code-switched consciously, while a small number of them did it unconsciously. The code-switching occurred for a variety of reasons, including the need to clarify their ideas, the lack of vocabulary in their mother tongue, to signal a group membership, to express solidarity, to sound cool, to show off or simply for fun.

In another study done by Sardar et al. (2015) to examine the code-switching behavior of Iraqi speakers and the types of code switching used by them, it was found that group identity was the main reason for code-switching as the speakers shared the same culture and background identity, while the lack of vocabulary knowledge in target language was also a very important reason for code switching. Other factors such as particularizing and expanding details to the co-speakers, lack of proficiency in target language, filling a gap in the conversation, maintaining group privacy, and to a lesser extent being concerned about their English proficiency skills also plays a significant role in Iraqi student's code switching from English to Arabic.

Grosjean (1982) in his study discovered that people mostly use code-switching when they talk to their friends as opposed to their families. In the same study he also found that people tend to code switch with other people who are bilinguals, as well as with people who they feel comfortable with. Zentella (1999) also asserts that code switching is more widespread in informal interpersonal encounters, such as those between family members in natural settings.

As reported in Grosjeans' (1982) study, a Russian- English bilingual stated that when he speaks to another Russian-English bilingual, he feels more comfortable and often blends languages. He also reported that he tends to code-switch when he feels excited or angry.

According to Ritchie and Bhatia (2012), the majority of bilingual have a negative view on code-switching. They see language mixing/switching as a sign of "laziness," an "inadvertent" speech act, an "impurity," an example of linguistic decadence, and a potential threat to their own linguistic performance

According to Grosjean (1982), speakers in bilingual communities frequently swap and mix codes. When asked why they code-switch and code-mix, bilinguals typically respond that it is due to a lack of proficiency in one language when discussing a specific issue. They reported that the code-switch when they cannot find a suitable word or expression or when the language being spoken does not have the necessary vocabulary or translation of a word. Furthermore, some bilinguals say that they code-switch when they are tired, angry or even lazy.

Finally, Greene and Walker (2004) state that code-switching is not meaningless or random. Rather, it has a role, a function and characteristics. It is a language instrument that demonstrates the participants' understanding of different communicative conventions. That is, according to researchers who support code-switching and code-mixing, the primary reason bilinguals switch and mix their languages is not a lack of language skills, but rather an attempt to make their utterances more understandable and meaningful.

METHODOLOGY

Background Information

The aim of this research was to investigate the motivation of Generation Z students behind the use of code-switching in their daily conversations. Based on the experiences and perceptions of Generation Z students, this study provides important information about the prevalence of code-switching as well as the factors which lead students to code-switch between different languages during conversation.

When it comes to data collection, this research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the quantitative part a questionnaire was used which was comprised of 12 questions regarding the perceptions of students when it comes to the use of code switching in daily communication. While for the qualitative part, this study conducted one-on-one interviews consisting of five questions which aimed to find more in-depth information about the experiences of students with code switching as well as the reasons which led them to code switch.

Research Type

This study is cross-sectional meaning that the data for this research was collected from many individuals at a single point in time. This research employed the mixed method approach, meaning that both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for the collection of primary data. For the quantitative method, the instrument used was a questionnaire which was designed and conducted online in Google Forms and which consisted of 12 questions. While for the qualitative part, the data was collected through one-on-one interviews which consisted of 5 questions (some of the questions containing sub questions).

This study used the mixed method approach because it has the ability to provide more detailed and comprehensive data. The quantitative method produced a large number of data which was needed for this research and which was easy to analyze, while the qualitative part provided descriptive data where each response given by students was analyzed more in depth and where students had the opportunity to share any of their experiences which made the data even more reliable. When it comes to secondary data, this research used different online sites such as Google Scholar to find and collect relevant sources for this research.

Data Collection Instruments

As previously mentioned, this research used the mixed method approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect the data. The instrument used for the quantitative part was a questionnaire which was shared online via emails and WhatsApp groups of students. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section was comprised of questions about the demographic information of the participants such as age, the mother tongue of students, and any other languages they speak.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of questions related to code-switching and the opinions and perceptions of students regarding the use of code-switching in daily conversations. The questions consisted of agree\disagree questions, multiple choice questions, Likert scale questions, and so on.

All questions were close-ended. For the qualitative part, this study conducted interviews with five Generation Z students. The interviews were one-on-one so they were done individually, and they consisted of five questions with some questions containing sub questions. The questions were mainly focused on the experiences of students and aimed to gather data regarding the factors which lead them to use code-switching in daily conversations.

Participants

This study used purposive sampling to select the participants who will take part in this research. To be more specific, the participants of this study were Generation Z students, so people born between 1995-2012, from the University of Prizren. The questionnaire had a total of 31 respondents while the interviews were conducted with 5 students.

Procedure

The first step which was taken in order to collect the data needed for this research was to distribute the questionnaire to the target group of participants. Because this questionnaire was conducted via Google forms it was also distributed online in emails and WhatsApp group of the participants. The questionnaire contained instructions and explanations in order to avoid any confusion. It is also worth mentioning that the questionnaire was anonymous and the names of the participants were not displayed to the readers. The questionnaire was open to receive answers somewhere between ten to fifteen days. After collecting the data from the questionnaire, the one-on-one interviews were conducted with 5 Generation Z students. The interviews lasted between 10 to 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire was analyzed with the help of Google forms. The responses were presented in form of charts and graphs and they were analyzed and calculated into averages. Meanwhile, the data gathered from the interviews was analyzed in order to find patterns and themes. After that, both the data from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed and compared with existing literature in order to answer the initial research questions.

FINDINGS

Questionnaire- Investigating the motivation behind code-switching of Generation Z students

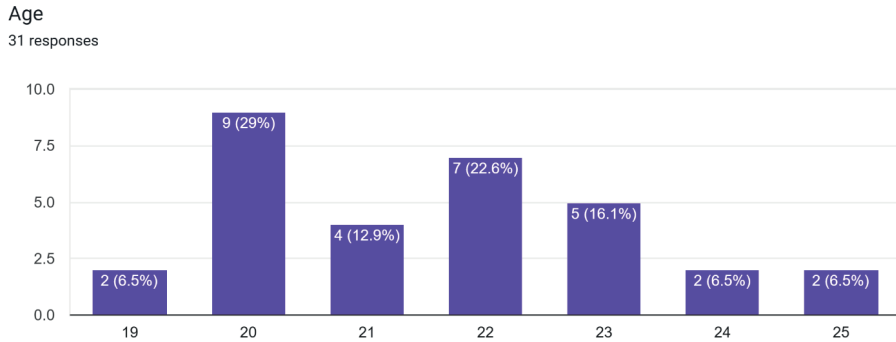


Figure 1. *The Age of the Participants*

The first chart shows the age of the participants who took part in this study. All participants of this study were Generation Z students. The majority of them, were 20 years old, followed by seven who were aged 22, five aged 23, four aged 21. Additionally, there were two participants each for age groups 19, 24 and 25.

Table 1. *Other Languages that the Participants speak beside their Mother Tongue*

What other languages do you speak besides your mother tongue?	
English	15
German	7
Turkish	7
Albanian	6
Macedonian	1
French	1

This table shows the information about other languages that the participants of this study speak beside their mother tongue. The most common language that the participants of this study speak is the English language, with others also reporting that they speak languages such as German, Turkish, Albanian, French and Macedonian.

How frequently do you switch between languages in your daily conversations?

31 responses

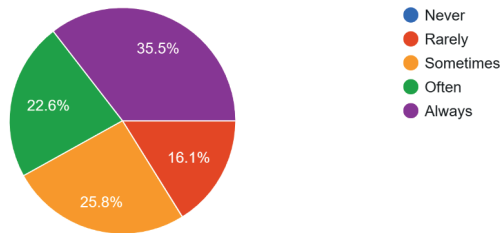


Figure 2. *The Frequency of Code-Switching in Daily Conversations*

This chart shows the frequency of code switching in the daily conversations of Generation Z students. As it is shown in the chart, the majority of participants (35.5%) reported that they “always” use code-switching in their conversations. The second most common answer that they gave was that they “sometimes” use code-switching (25.8%). The next answer which had the most responses was “often” which had a total of seven response or 22.6%, and lastly, there were those who reported that code-switching was used very rarely in their daily conversations (16.1%).

Table 2. *The most Frequently used Languages when Code-Switching*

Which languages are you most likely to switch between in your daily conversations?	
English	18
Albanian	15
Turkish	5
German	2
Macedonian	1
Bosnian	1
Serbian	1

This table shows the responses of participants regarding the languages which they mostly use when they code-switch in their daily conversations. The most frequently mentioned language was English (18 times), followed by Albanian which was mentioned 15 times. Other languages included Turkish which was mentioned 5 times, German which was mentioned twice, and Serbian, Macedonian and Bosnian which were mentioned once each.

When you code-switch, do you do it consciously or unconsciously?

31 responses

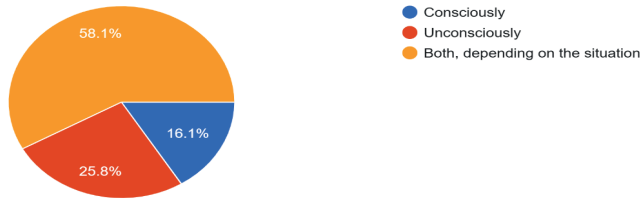


Figure 3. *Participant Awareness of Code-Switching During Conversation*

This chart, which aimed to show if students mostly code-switch consciously or unconsciously, shows that the majority of students, eighteen of them or 58.1%, reported that they use code-switching both consciously and unconsciously depending on the situation that they are in. Next, there were eight participants who reported that they code-switch unconsciously. And lastly, there were some (16.1%) who said that they mostly code-switched consciously, with full awareness.

In which of the following situations are you most likely to code-switch?

31 responses

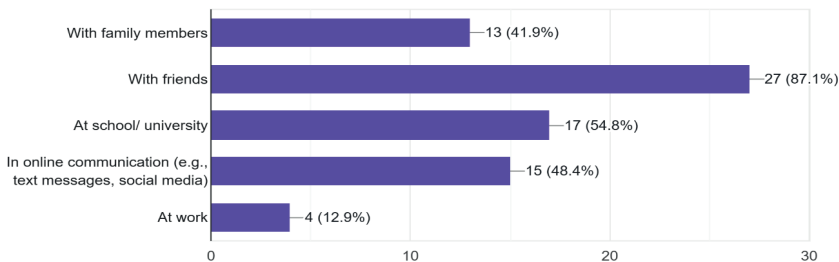


Figure 4. *The Situations in which Generation Z Students are most likely to Code-Switch*

This chart shows the responses of the participants, who took part in this study, regarding the situations in which they are most likely to code switch. In this question students had the opportunity to select all the options which applied to them. The option which had the most answers was the one “with friends” with a total of 27 answers. The second most chosen option was “at school\university” with a total of 17 answers. Next, we have the option “in online communication” with a total of 15 answers. The option “with family members” was next, which had a total of 13 answers. And lastly, the option “at work” which had only 4 responses.

How comfortable do you feel switching between languages during conversations?
31 responses

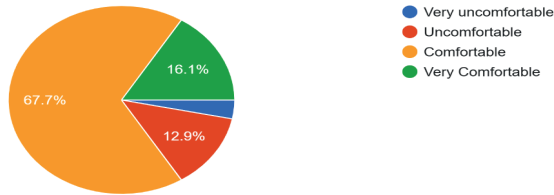


Figure 5. The Comfort Level when Code-Switching

The aim of this question was to see how comfortable students are when they use code-switching in their daily conversations. The answers revealed that the majority of participants 67.7% or twenty-one of them expressed that they are comfortable when they switch languages during conversations. The next option with the most answers was “very comfortable” which had a total of 5 people or 16.1%. Next, we have those who expressed that they are “uncomfortable” when they switch languages (12.9%). Last but not least, there was one participant who said that they feel “very uncomfortable” when they switch languages during conversation.

Why do you think people code-switch? (Check all that apply)
31 responses

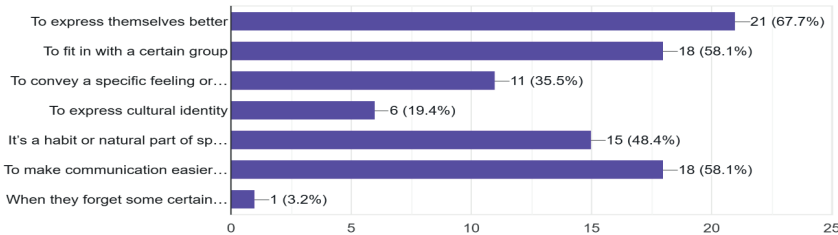


Figure 6. The Perceptions of Students on the Reasons why People Code-Switch

This figure shows the answers of the participants regarding why they think people code-switch. In this question, the participants were allowed to choose more than one options, so all the options that they thought were true. The answers show that the majority of participants (67.7%), twenty-one of them, think that people code switch in order to express themselves better. Furthermore, both options “to fit in with a certain group” and “to make communication easier” have a total of 18 responses. Next is the option “It’s a natural part of speaking” which

has a total of 15 responses. The option “to convey a specific feeling or emotion” is next, which has a total of eleven responses. There were 6 participants who chose the option “to express cultural identity”. Lastly, there was one person who said that code-switching happens when a person forgets a certain word in one language, so they switch to another one.

Do you think code-switching is helpful when it comes to communicating more effectively with others?

31 responses

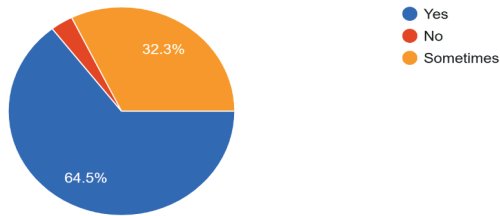


Figure 7. *The Perceptions of Students Regarding the Effectiveness of Code-Switching to Communicate more Effectively*

This question aimed to see the perceptions of students when it comes to the effectiveness of code-switching to make communication more effective. The chart shows that the majority of participants believe that code-switching is helpful when it comes to communicating more effectively, where 64.5% of participants chose the option “yes”. Ten of the participants believe that code switching is “sometimes” helpful for communicating. While, one participant believes that code switching is not helpful to communicate with others more effectively.

Interview Results

This section presents the findings from the interviews conducted with five Generation Z students from the University of Prizren. The aim of the interviews was to find more in-depth information regarding the reasons why students code-switch and how they think code-switching affects their daily conversations.

Question 1. Can you describe a specific situation where you chose to code-switch in a conversation?

-What factors influenced your decision to switch languages in that moment?

The first question aimed to ask students to recall one of their experiences when they code-switched in a conversation and explain what led them to do so at that moment. After analyzing the answers given by students it was found that

they code-switched for four main reasons: due to lexical gaps, to preserve the meaning of a word, to ensure comprehension and because of habit.

Two participants of this study reported that they use code-switching when they are unable to remember a certain word in their native language so they switch to another one. This type of code-switching was used in order to keep the conversation going. As participant 2 stated *“when you forget like that one word in your language, so you just switch up to the other language”*. Participant 3 shared a similar experience *“when I’m trying to tell something and I know a specific word which would describe the situation perfectly in English but I don’t know the same word in Albanian”*.

In addition to this, there was a participant who reported that they code-switched to avoid losing the meaning of a word *“I decided to code switch in a conversation with my friend because translating it in another language would lose the meaning of what I was trying to convey”*.

For one participant, code-switching was used in order to facilitate understanding when a person did not share the same linguistic background as they do *“I said a word she didn’t understand, I repeated the sentence by saying that word in another language.... I think what influenced code-switching in that conversation was the need to be understood*. Another participant stated that code-switching was just a spontaneous thing for them *“I tend to code switch with the flow of the conversation.”*

Question 2. How do you determine when to code-switch in a conversation?

-Do you do it intentionally, or is it more of an automatic response?

When participants were asked if they are aware when they code switch or if they do it in an unconscious way, they gave examples of both conscious and unconscious code-switching.

Many participants stated that they code-switched without being aware, so it came as an automatic response for them. One of the participants noted *“You forget and then you just automatically switch up to the other language”*. Another one added *“... it just happens naturally and subconsciously when I’m having a conversation with people that I know speak English”*. Similarly, participant 5 stated *“I am usually not even aware that I am about to code-switch”*.

Despite of this, participants also reported that they had instances when they code-switched intentionally. For instance, participant 3 stated *“There are cases when I do it intentionally, for example when I want to emphasize something,”* participant 5 also recalled by saying *“I code-switched intentionally because I believed the other person would not understand certain words I was about to say.”*

Some participants stated that it all depended on the situation that they are in. Participant 1 described that they adapt their language based on the familiarity with the listener *“I feel comfortable code switching with some people and I do it naturally, but if I’m speaking to someone new... I try to not code switch.”*. Participant 4 stated that code-switching is only appropriate in some conversational settings *“...when having serious conversations, I try to avoid as much since to me it seems like not very professional.”*

Question 3. Are there certain individuals or groups of people with whom you are more likely to code-switch?

When participants were asked who they were most likely to code-switch with, they reported that they were most likely to do it with their friends or family members. They reported that they felt safer and more relaxed to code-switch in these contexts. Participant 1 shared, *“I naturally and intentionally code switch with my family and friends because I can express myself better... I do not have to think hard or translate some words.”* Similarly, participant 4 explained by saying, *“I mostly code-switch when I’m joking around with my family... this is the result of comfort that we have and how close we are to each other.”*

Another key motivator for their code-switching was shared linguistic competence. Participants emphasized that they were more likely to code-switch when they knew that the listener would understand what they were saying. Participant 3 noted *“all of my friends speak English...so. I think it depends on the people who I’m having a conversation with.”*. Participant 5 supported this by saying *“I am most likely to code-switch with my friends who I know are fluent in the language I am about to code-switch...because I know they will understand me.”*

In contrast, participants avoided using code-switching with non-bilingual speakers. Participant 5 described that she makes adjustment when she talks to her family members. *“I never do it intentionally with my mom or dad because I know they will not understand me and even when I do ... I translate those words in Albanian.”*

Question 4. How do you feel about code-switching in terms of your own personal identity?

Furthermore, participants were asked if code-switching reflects their personal identities. Most of them said that code-switching was a neutral behavior and that it had nothing to do with expressing their own identity. Participant 1 explained *“I don’t think it reflects anything about me personally, I am the same person even when I code switch, ...I just choose to express myself in a different*

language.” Participant 2 emphasized by saying *“it’s not a self-expression... It just comes naturally.”* Participant 5 also reinforced by saying *“I code-switch for my co-speakers to better understand me and not to show my identity.”*

However, one of the participants offered a more elaborate answer, stating that code-switching does reflect one’s identity depending on the languages used, *“when I speak Albanian its more personal because it’s my native language, whereas when I speak English its more professional because I use it daily at work and uni.”*

Additionally, one of the participants said that even though code-switching does not reflect one’s identity, it still is very important in maintaining close social relationships, stating that, *“I think it has become a part of me than only my family knows...They always understand what I’m saying and play along.”*

Question 5. Based on your experiences, do you believe that code-switching is a positive or negative thing in daily conversations?

Participants generally express positive attitudes when it comes to the use of code-switching in daily conversation. They consider code-switching as a helpful tool for communicating with others. Participant 1 explained, *“I never thought of code switching as something negative... I am able to speak and express myself in other languages when I want to.”* Similarly, another participant believed that code switching is a useful strategy for mutual understanding between people, *“It’s a positive thing...it helps people to understand each other better.”* For participant 3, code-switching was also a useful tool for communicating more effectively with others, stating *“... sometimes you can express yourself better in one language than another, so it can be really helpful.”*

While, most participants stated that code-switching is a positive practice, one of the participants gave a different perspective. According to participant 5, code switching is only beneficial when all the people taking part in that conversation understand the language that is being used, *“if there are people in that conversation that don’t speak one of the languages being spoken, it will cause misunderstandings, which makes code-switching a negative thing in daily conversations.”*

Another participant, however, was concerned about the overuse of code-switching in daily conversations, *“Code-switching when done intentionally is fun, but when that becomes your personality, I wouldn’t take it seriously... the conversation becomes unnatural; it loses the serious tone and the point of the conversation.”*

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to investigate the motivation behind the use of code-switching in the daily conversations of Generation Z students. After analyzing the findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews, this research collected a large number of data which gives answers to the initial research questions.

First of all, the findings reveal that code-switching is highly prevalent among Generation Z students, with a large amount of them reporting that they code-switch “always” or “often” in their daily conversations. This is also in line with a study by Astuti (2020) who in his study, done in Jakarta, Indonesia with 50 participants aged 18 to 20, found that all of them used code-switching in their daily conversations.

The participants of this study reported that they were most likely to code-switch with their friends, but also their family members and the people they felt comfortable with. Grosjean (1982) also discovered that people mostly use code-switching when they talk to their friends as opposed to their families. In the same study he also found that people tend to code switch with other bilinguals, as well as with people who they feel comfortable with.

Moreover, the data indicated that Albanian and English were the most used languages by students when they code-switched. This shows that students use their mother tongue in daily conversation, but also English which is a very widespread language, not just in Kosovo but worldwide. English is learned as a foreign language in Kosovo, and it is very popular especially among Generation Z students, who are surrounded by technology and social media.

When it comes to the factors or reasons which lead them to code-switch, there have been several proposed reasons with the main one being for better self-expression, followed by to fit in with other groups and to make communication easier. There were also the ones who reported that they do it “...because translating it in another language would lose the meaning” This is also in accordance with Grosejan (1982) who found that the participants of his study reported that they switched languages when they could not find an acceptable expression or word, or when the language they used lacked an appropriate translation for the required vocabulary.

Cheng (2003) supports this by stating that people code-switch whenever a word is not accessible in their first language, or when certain words are easier, more distinguishable, or the concepts are more effectively conveyed in that language.

Another key finding of this study, is that Generation Z students code-switch both consciously but also unconsciously depending on the situation and other factors such as who they are talking to or how comfortable they feel. Some of them reported that it is an automatic response, saying “*I am usually not even aware that I’m about to code-switch*”. Meanwhile the ones who said that they are aware when they code-switch, said that they did it to emphasize a point or make sure that their co-speaker understands what they are saying. This aligns with a study by Mahootian (2006) who stated that code-switching, most of the time, happens unintentionally on a subconscious level, yet occasionally it is a deliberate and intentional choice.

Wardhaugh (1992) also stated that code-switching mostly occurs subconsciously. It is possible that people may not be conscious that they are changing languages when communicating. Because of this, multilingual speakers usually switch between languages when they speak to each other and incorporate words and sentences from several languages into a single discourse.

However, the finding of this study may not be fully in line with Astuti (2020) who emphasized that the majority of the participants of his study code-switched consciously, while a small number of them did it unconsciously.

Furthermore, the participants of this study also showed that they are very comfortable when they code-switch with their family members or friends, but some of them pointed out that they try to avoid using code-switching in serious conversations setting because “*it seems unprofessional*”.

What is surprising about the findings is that even though a lot of researchers emphasize the importance of code-switching in identity construction, such as Shabt (2007) who says that speakers may use distinct languages to convey a specific social rank or to distinguish themselves from other social classes. Or, the study done by Yasir Suleiman (1999) who said that, code-switching is widely seen as something prestigious, a sign of education and proficiency in multiple languages.

The participants of this study stated that code-switching does not reflect their personal identities. They have mainly seen code-switching as a tool to express themselves better, rather than a tool for expressing their identity. They mainly described code-switching as something which occurs naturally or unconsciously. Others have said that, code-switching is not something special because it is something every bilingual or multilingual person does. This may further suggest that code-switching is very normal in today’s world and since it is very commonly used in everyday speech, it no longer carries that significance as it may have had years ago.

The majority of participants also think code-switching is as a positive rather than negative practice in their everyday conversations. They consider code-switching as a useful tool for communicating with others and expressing their ideas.

However, there were others who pointed out that code-switching can also have negative effects on communication. One participant mentioned that if we overuse code-switching “*the conversation becomes unnatural; it loses the serious tone and the point of the conversation.*”. Another one also pointed out that code-switching may be negative if not all the participants of that conversation understand the language that is being used.

Surprisingly, this study does not fully align with Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), who found that most bilinguals hold a negative attitude toward code-mixed speech, viewing it as a sign of laziness, a form of linguistic decadence, and a potential threat to their linguistic competence.

Overall, the findings indicate that code-switching is very prevalent and frequent practice in the daily conversations of Generation Z students. The most common reasons why they use it is to express themselves better, to communicate more effectively or to fit in with a certain group of people. The participants have confirmed that they feel comfortable when code switching and that they mainly view it as a positive tool for expressing their opinions rather than as a sign of low proficiency of a language.

The findings mostly show agreement with the previous studies particularly for the frequency of code-switching and the reasons for code-switching. However, this study shows that Generation Z students may have shifted the view about code-switching and its link to personal identity, where students reported that code-switching is used by almost every person who speaks more than one language and that it is no longer linked to personal identities of people. And, it is mostly used for fluency, comfort, or as a subconscious habit in speech.

Implications

The findings of this study show that students use code-switching for a variety of reasons, mainly to fill in lexical gaps, to express themselves better when communicating or, to maintain the flow of the conversation. All of this helps us understand that code-switching is not a negative thing in daily conversation rather it is a tool that helps students to communicate more effectively with others and to express themselves better.

This challenges the traditional views of code-switching which view it as a negative practice and something which is associated with not being proficient in a language. On the contrary, the findings suggest that code-switching is very

important for bilingual and multilingual speakers and it reflects that they are proficient in multiple languages.

Understanding this can also help teachers to change their views on code-switching and its use in the classroom. Rather than viewing it as a sign of weak native language fluency, they may recognize and consider it as a sign of language competence particularly for bilingual and multilingual students.

The findings also reveal that code-switching, apart from helping students connect with one another, it can sometimes be a tool which can cause exclusion, especially when it is used with people who do not understand the languages being used. Therefore, it is very important for teachers and students to recognize when code-switching is used for positive practices such as to communicate better and when it might unintentionally exclude others from a conversation.

Overall, the implications of this study emphasize the social, practical and educational importance of code-switching for Generation Z students. Recognizing the motivation behind code-switching can lead to a better understanding of how bilinguals and multilinguals communicate with one another and it can help create a more inclusive and supportive environments in both social and educational settings.

CONCLUSION

The rise of globalization has led to many changes in the world, including how people communicate. As code-switching is becoming more prevalent among Generation Z students, there was a need to discover the reasons behind their code-switching. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate the motivation behind the use of code-switching in the daily conversations of Generation Z students. After investigating this matter with the help of a questionnaire and interviews, the results show that Generation Z students from the University of Prizren code-switch very frequently in their daily conversations and there have been several reasons why they do so. The main ones being to express themselves better, followed by to communicate more effectively and to fit in with certain groups. In contrast to traditional views on code switching, the findings of this study support the idea that code-switching is a useful tool for students which helps them to communicate with each other more effectively and express themselves better. Students mainly consider code-switching as a positive practice in their daily conversation but they also recognize that if overused it can have a negative impact on the people who do not understand those languages. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to recognize code-switching as a tool which helps learners to express themselves more confidently rather than a weakness. This research offers a new perspective on code-switching and how Generation Z students employ it to express themselves better and to connect

with others. It also encourages educators, teachers and educational institutions to see the positive side of code-switching and its ability to connect people with each other.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the small number of participants who took part in the research. This study used purposive sampling and the participants who could take part in this study were only Generation Z students from the University of Prizren. Therefore, the results of this study should not be generalized because if a larger number of participants took part and if those participants were of different study fields, universities or age groups there is a possibility that the results would have turned out differently.

Since this study focuses only on self-reported experiences and perceptions of students it is possible that the data will not be reliable enough. A better way to conduct this study would be to do observations in order to see how students code-switch and how often they do it. But, since the time available to conduct this research was limited, the research methods and the instruments chosen for this research were the most effective ones since they allow for a large number of data to be collected and analyzed in a short amount of time.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, there are several recommendations which can be made for educators, students and other researchers who want to support the use of code-switching among Generation Z students.

First, it is recommended for educators to recognize code-switching as something which helps students to express themselves better and to connect with others rather than a weakness. Teachers are encouraged to allow a certain amount of code-switching in the classroom especially when students are discussing with their peers, as this will help them to express themselves more confidently and it can reduce their anxiety if they have difficulties to express themselves in just one language.

Students are encouraged to reflect on their code-switching practices, such as when and why they do it and how it affects the people around them. They are encouraged to be mindful and to not overuse code-switching when they are in a group of people where not all understand the languages that are being used.

Last but not least, it is recommended for further researchers to include a larger and more diverse sample of students across different regions and universities. It is also recommended for them to not only investigate the perceptions and experiences of students but to conduct observations of students who use code-switching in real time and get even more reliable and trustful data.

References

- Abalhasan, K. M., & Alshalawi, H. G. (2000). Code-switching behavior of Arab speakers of English as a second language in the United States. *Intercultural communication studies*, 10(1), 179-188.
- Al-Khatib, H. (2003). Language alternation among Arabic and English youth bilinguals: Reflecting or constructing social realities? *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 6(6), 409-422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050308667794>
- Astuti, C. W. (2020). Language awareness: Language use and reasons for code-switching. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 23(1), 116-130.
- Auer, P. (Ed.). (2013). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203017883>
- Bentahila, A., & Davies, E. E. (1995). Patterns of code-switching and patterns of language contact. *Lingua*, 96(2-3), 75-93. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841\(94\)00035-K](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841(94)00035-K)
- Cheng, K. K. Y. (2003). Code-switching for a purpose: Focus on pre-school Malaysian children. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.2003.004>
- Cook, V. (2016). *Second language learning and language teaching*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315883113>
- Faltis, C. J. (1989). Code-switching and bilingual schooling: An examination of Jacobson's new concurrent approach. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development*, 10(2), 117-127.
- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2003). *An Introduction to Language. (7th ed.)*. United States: Wadsworth.
- Greene, D. M., & Walker, F. R. (2004). Recommendations to public speaking instructors for the negotiation of code-switching practices among Black English-speaking African American students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 435-442. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4129627>
- Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198754947.003.0009>
- Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2022). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367821852>
- Irawan, D. (2022). An Analysis of the Use of Code Switching in the Students' Conversation. *Scope: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 6(2), 62-66. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/scope.v6i2.11483>
- Kebeya, H. (2013). Inter-and intra-sentential switching: are they really comparable. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(5), 225-233.
- Kohnert, K., Yim, D., Nett, K., Kan, P. F., & Duran, L. (2005). Intervention with linguistically diverse preschool children. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 36(3), 251-263. [https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461\(2005\)025](https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461(2005)025)
- Mahootian, S. (2012). Repertoires and resources: Accounting for code-mixing in the media. In *Language mixing and code-switching in writing* (pp. 192-211). Routledge. <https://www.scribd.com/document/487747320/09-1-pdf>
- Rihane, W. M. Why do People Code-switch: A Sociolinguistic Approach.
- Ritchie, W. C., & Bhatia, T. K. (2012). Social and psychological factors in language mixing. *The handbook of bilingualism and multilingualism*, 375-390. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756997.ch13>
- Sardar, S. S., Ali Mahdi, A. A., & Subakir Mohd, Y. M. (2015). Code-switching in daily conversations among Iraqi students in Malaysia. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Vol. 6*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol6no3.20>
- Sari, H. P. (2013). Code-Switching in the Daily Conversations of University Students in Semarang. *LANTERN (Journal on English Language, Culture and Literature)*, 2(2), 161-173. Retrieved from <https://ejournal3.undip.ac.id/index.php/engliterature/article/view/2551>
- Shabt, P. C. (2007). *The Relationship Between Gender and Types of Code-Switching Among Lebanese Youth*. Beirut: American University of Beirut. <http://hdl.handle.net/10938/7536>

- Sudarsi, E. T. (2017). Code-Mixing used by the students in daily conversation. *Icoefficient Ukit*, 110-115.
- Suleiman, Y. (2013). *Language and society in the Middle East and North Africa*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315829272>
- Velásquez, M. C. (2010). *Language and identity: Bilingual code-switching in Spanish-English interviews*. University of Toronto (Canada).
- Wardhaugh, R. (1992). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in contact*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Zentella, A. C. (1999). *Growing up bilingual*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2000.10.1.133>

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ENGLISH SLANG ON YOUNGSTERS' LANGUAGE

Florentinë RRUSTOLLI¹

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Language is the main means that people use to communicate or interact with one another. Through language people convey their thoughts, ideas and all about their emotional world (Nuraeni & Pahamzah, 2021). The changing dynamics of our lives are accompanied with language evolution; for the moment, technology and social interactions are catalyzing major changes in language usage (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022). In the current digital era, social media networks are at their peak of use. Nowadays, people tend to spend most of their time on technological devices, scrolling down on social media networks such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and many others. Technology evolution and human embracing technology and its offerings has brought a lot of changes in humans' lives, including the way they interact or socialize with each other.

Living in a digitalized era, evidencing the digitalization of communication between human beings has become unavoidable. The extensive usage of social media is marking its influence in people' everyday life but also is making remarkable changes on language use (Mahardika, 2023). When interacting through language, people also depict their identity. Identity is considered to be built by an individual's or a group's characteristics that mark them as unique and different from others (Gervasio & Karuri, 2019). For this intention, language varieties are typically used by different individuals in order to mark

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; florentinarrustolli10@gmail.com

themselves as members of a particular group and stand as distinct from other social, cultural or geographical groups.

A type of language variety used massively in social media is slang (Mahardika, 2023). Being aware that social media's most frequent users are younger generations, Yusuf et al. (2022) depict slang as youths' language. Slang is not part of the formal or standard language, and it is usually used as a means of communication between the members of a particular social group (Silalahi & Silalahi, 2023). "Slang is an informal style of speech, which may be a single word, a group of words, or a sentence" (Kandiawan, 2022, p. 51). Slang language typically marks a social group and differentiates it from the others, because each group tends to form and use their own unique slang words or phrases. This is typical with youngsters who tend to use specific slang in their social media networks to differ from adults (Nuraeni & Pahamzah, 2021). This contemporary way of communicating through social media is socializing youngsters and bringing them together into one group by using innovative slang, but at the same time it is building some borders and excluding from the group individuals who do not fit the criteria of age. This is why Allan and Burridge (2006) view slang as "antilanguage" justifying their view with the argument that slang expels people from groups they do not belong in and makes communication practices use less language each day.

Similarly, older people seem to look down on slang usage by youth and are not happy about this phenomenon. As Coleman (2012) acknowledged, older people strongly associate slang, a language deviation, non-conformist to traditional language norms, with non-conformist behavior. Older people are concerned that this language evolution happening with youngsters' language will deprive them from proper language use. Not sticking to traditional language norms and regulations gives the impression that even youngsters' behavior will confront the existing social norms.

In addition, Saputra et al. (2023) depicted that youth seek expressiveness, inclusivity and exclusivity through slang usage. On the other hand, youth use slang because they want to get a conversation done faster, sound better or "cooler", or create a friendlier or less serious environment. Also, word formation processes that are commonly employed for creating new slang are clipping and acronyms. A typical example of clipped slang is "exam" from examination, which originally was a school slang but nowadays being widely accepted by people, it has been perceived into the standard language (Roth-Gordon, 2021). Slang does have this feature of becoming part of the standard language if it becomes well-perceived and widely used by people, however if the contrary happens, they can cease existing after a particular period of time. The same

happens with social media slang, if a slang becomes trendy, everyone using social media embraces and incorporates that slang into their own vocabulary.

Furthermore, slang used in social media seems to have a bigger influence in youths' everyday speech. Youngsters seem to implement social media slang in their daily communications. Therefore, language is constantly changing and being shaped by these new preferences for expressing thoughts and feelings. Language patterns are being shortened during communications by using more clippings, acronyms or abbreviations. Since youth is more knowledgeable upon these social media slang' meaning, this may impede the communication process with older generations who usually do not recognize the meaning of the contemporary media slang. Therefore, social media slang, undoubtedly, is reshaping and changing language patterns in everyday communication practices. Youth is breaking the traditional grammatical rules and conventions (Gupta et al, 2018), and contemporary language is being enriched with new slang terminology (Rianto & Juliarta, 2024; Zaytaeva, 2009). Therefore, changes in terms of vocabulary and grammar are visible in the language used by youth.

Problem Statement

Youth spend most of their time on social media scrolling down and being exposed to posts, memes, captions, threads, comments and hashtags that consist of slang language. Youth tend to be an active source for new creative slang formation each and every day. This process of slang formation is going on irresistibly through social media, and nowadays youth seem to identify with this "new language". Slang offers them a path to express themselves, their group belonging, and to escape language rules, in a word it gives them the freedom they want. Slang has become the new trend on social media which shows how "cool" or creative an individual or a group is. To be part of this trend, youngsters tend to embrace and utilize new slang created in social media.

In a digital era where social media networks are massively used by youth, getting a deeper understanding of whether the usage of slang has further implications into youngsters' everyday language also remains as one of the main focuses of this study.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine younger generations' perceptions and opinions on social media English slang and reveal more about slang influence in their daily language usage.

This research study attempts to give voice to youths' experiences with social media slang; to reveal the most frequently used slang language and its meaning,

the reasons standing behind slang usage in social media, and how this common communication through slang in social media affects their daily language usage and communication practices. This study objects to investigate the language evolution insinuated by slang usage by youngsters; reveal whether the offline language of youngsters is changing its traditional patterns, the vocabulary evolution, and shifts between formal and informal language (taking into consideration that slang is part of the informal language). Moreover, the study will attempt to examine if this informal variety (slang) is somehow clashing with the language of a formal setting.

Research Questions

Based on the previously mentioned aims and objectives, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1. Which are the most frequently used English slang on social media by youngsters?*
- 2. Why do youngsters use English slang?*
- 3. How does the exposure to social media slang affect youngsters' daily language and tone?*

Relevance and Importance of the Research Study

Considering the widespread use of social media platforms especially by younger generations who tend to spend a great amount of their time scrolling on them, researching the influence that social media has on youths' language dynamics is essential. English slang was in use for a long time, but what enriched this variety of language and facilitated its spread are social media platforms and younger generations. Younger generations use slang to sound more "trendy" or "cool" while communicating through social media, commenting on posts, writing captions, or threads. Being aware that this is the causality of each day of this modern period and of digital interactions between social media users, it is of significance and relevance to understand the motives after social media slang usage, and the further impact it plays in daily language/communication patterns.

Research Hypotheses

This research study seeks to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Youngsters use English slang in social media to sound more "cool and trendy" and communicate faster.

H2: English slang encountered in social media intervenes in the language that youngsters use to communicate in daily life situations by altering the vocabulary and challenging the traditional grammar rules.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing Existing Research in the Field of Social Media Slang

There are several research studies conducted on the role that social media has on the widespread use of English slang. Most of them highlight that the most ardent users of social media remain younger generations. Also, several existing studies attempted to reveal the most prominent reasons that stand behind extensive social media slang usage by youth, and the further consequences that such usage has on youths' daily language. In order to be in touch with these studies and reveal the background of slang and its development through social media amongst young people, several studies will be reviewed.

Stoika and Pitovka (2025) acknowledged that language innovations are majorly happening because of youth adapting to the evolution of technology and attempting for social belonging. Youth tend to be the generation most quickly adapted to social media trends, who constantly evoke the reshaping of the language in a more creative and expressive way.

Firstly, slang formation is an ongoing creative process, which was given rise especially by technological developments. Word formation processes that are mostly being utilized for slang formation are abbreviation, acronym and clipping. Some slang is created even by deforming usually adjectives that are flexible and creative (Saputra et al., 2023).

Shokhrukh (2024) in his research about the impact of social media on teenagers' English slang highlights the explosion of social media usage especially during the recent years. Moreover, this explosion has affected not only how teenagers prefer to spend a great amount of their time but also has made some sociolinguistic implications. Social media slang is being implemented in youngsters' everyday language, and it is influencing their identity and social and cultural belonging.

Another research study done by Mahardika (2023) aimed to examine youngsters' opinions about social media's influence on their extensive use of English slang. In conclusion, it was found that youngsters seem to use the slang they come across in social media because it sounds cooler and trendier, but also in some cases it makes them look smarter. Slang words such as "LOL", "BTW", "OTW", "FYI", "IDK" were chosen as the most frequent ones used among young people. They claimed that slang from social media strongly affects their communication with friends.

Additionally, Khursanova (2024) acknowledges the role of social media in slang distribution and popularity among youth. Slang is a language variety that reflects youth's creativity with how they express their cultural background, non-seriousness, and digital communication. Furthermore, Khursanova (2024) admits that slang has brought innovations to language that openly violate the traditional language norms. It showcases language evolution, creativity and adaptability. For as long as youth continues using slang be it in formal or informal settings, language changes are unavoidable.

Yusuf et al. (2022), on the other hand, point out the most common slang words found after investigating content from WhatsApp platform used by Generation Z (people born in the 2000s and after). The study found a list of slang among them mostly being clippings, acronyms, flippant, and imitative which were used by Generation Z (Gen Z) for their daily conversations. The reasons why these slangs were used came out to be avoiding longer texts, being faster and sounding fancier while communicating.

Nuraeni and Pahamzah (2021) conducted research on teenage slang and concluded that the most frequently used slang by teenagers were created through clipping ("bro" meaning "best friend"), or acronymy ("OTW" meaning "on the way"). Moreover, this study revealed some of the most frequent reasons why teenagers use slang language. The reasons were listed as follows: adding new words to the language, inciting friendliness, being different, making social interaction easier, and getting rid of seriousness in communication.

Generation Z uses slang pretty often not only in social media networks but also in offline communication with their friends. Communication with friends has been facilitated through slang usage, but on the other hand slang created some barriers in communication with older people. Generation Z also tends to use slang in academic assignments; however, teachers seem to be against it. Also, teachers perceive slang as an impediment in students' writing skills development (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022).

Another research study conducted by Puspita and Ardianto (2024) highlighted the importance of social media in language evolution. Generation Z is viewed as this generation closely attached to slang usage for social interactions in social media. However, apart from this, Generation Z seem to be influenced by social media slang, and that is why they employ a great deal of code-switching in their daily interactions (the Gen Z participants included in this research had Indonesian as their first language, therefore they used to switch from Indonesian to English slang and vice versa). Moreover, cases of youth slang hindering successful communication practices with older people

were observed, since slang seems to create confusions at older people who do not recognize their meaning.

Kandiawan (2022) discusses in her research the reasons standing behind Gen Z's code switching from their mother tongue to English slang. Among the most frequent reasons, the research mentions three. Gen Z uses code-switching to English slang when they want to highlight something they are saying, to achieve a particular effect (promote something in social media for selling purposes), or even to express membership to a particular group who uses that specific slang.

Furthermore, Esteron (2021) in a research study conducted upon social media slang, concluded that many youngsters (in total 50) who participated in his study use slang acronyms while communicating with their friends in social media. Some of the most frequently used acronyms are: LOL, ATM, JGH, IDK, FYI, and OTW. Moreover, most of the sampling population admitted that they code-switch from Filipino (their first language) to English when communicating through social media.

Moreover, Popovych (2023) encouraged teachers to incorporate teaching slang into their EFL classes. Popovych (2023) admitted that this would benefit students' listening and speaking skills, and it would provide a more comprehensive communication with native speakers of English especially in non-formal situations when slang usage is higher. Furthermore, he expanded on slang usage by particularly younger generations. According to Popovych (2023) slang tends to be mostly used by youth to depict themselves as part of a group different from that of older generations who tend to stay loyal to traditional language standards and employ less slang in their daily interactions.

Further, Situmorang et al. (2024) depicts the changes that slang emerging from social media (such as TikTok) is bringing to communication patterns and language. Slang is a significant element that marks youths' creativity, through which they express personal preferences and identity but also belonging to a wider social community. Consistent creation of slang terms brings new colors to youths' vocabulary and digital communication. However, slang usage can lead to an unsuccessful communication practice, especially when a social media user communicates with a non-user of social media or a person who belongs to other generations. Similarly, Xursanovna (2025) mentioned that slang usage provides an efficient communication between youth, but apart from this positive view, the research points out that slang can make messages confusing or imprecise during communication with especially older generations.

Rianto and Juliarta (2024) support the claim that exposure to social media slang leads to teenagers' vocabulary enrichment, offering more flexibility when

picking terms during a conversation practice. However, the extensive usage of slang can have side effects, one of them being the difficulty that teenagers may deal with when having to stick to formal language in a formal setting. The researcher also came to conclude that extensive exposure to social media slang hinders the development of writing skills in an academic setting. By being influenced by non-formal communication practices (with a lot of slang in them), students have the tendency to make more spelling mistakes (since all that matters is conveying the message faster) and avoid grammar rules when dealing with academic writing. This is why the researcher calls out to teachers and parents to help teenagers when picking between formal and informal language in accordance with the context.

Concerns around slang usage affecting the formal language of youth were raised even in a research study conducted by Salvador et al. (2024). This research found that university students tend to incorporate a lot of slang into the academic setting. Furthermore, the study highlighted the need to distinguish between contexts and the language that should be used into those contexts. This would be the solution to balancing the benefits from slang usage (e.g. social bounding) and pertaining to the strict requirements on language use in a formal setting.

Despite vocabulary alterations, slang has brought changes to grammar. One of the major changes is extensive usage of abbreviations and acronyms. Words like “LOL” (laugh out loud), “OMG” (oh my God), or “BRB” (be right back) are being used and known not only in digital communication but also in spoken English. Instead of traditional grammar structures, nowadays the short forms are more preferred due to a faster and efficient communication practice (Ivanivna, 2024).

Since social media is driving the trends and is interfering in the way people communicate, it is of utmost importance to stay accustomed to the ongoing updates in the English vocabulary, during this digitalized period. Only in this way people can maintain and experience successful interactions and communication practices (Huma, 2025).

Gaps in the Existing Knowledge

Several research has been conducted in the field of slang in social media. Some of these studies touched superficially the influence of social media slang in youngsters’ language; however, little attention was given to its influence in everyday sentence structuring or vocabulary while communicating.

Moreover, lack of research in the field of slang is depicted in the context of Kosovo. The population of youth in Kosovo needs to be studied in order

to discover new dynamics that would mirror the relationship between English slang and Kosovo's youth daily language. Therefore, this research study will try to fill in these mentioned gaps. This study will enrich the research field in the context of Kosova with new knowledge regarding slang and will focus more on new language patterns (e.g. sentence structures and vocabulary evolution) that have emerged due to excessive usage of social media slang by youngsters in Kosovo.

METHODOLOGY

Method

For the purposes of this research study, the researcher employed qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research does not focus on providing statistical data about a phenomenon, but mainly focuses on discovering about people's experiences, lives, and attitudes by gathering deep subjective insights (Oranga & Matere, 2023). Since delving deeper into participants' opinions and motives was aimed by this study, qualitative research was assessed as the most appropriate methodology to be followed.

Instrument

The main tool that was used to gather the data for this research study is focus group interview. The focus group interview made it possible to gain closer insights into participants' perceptions and experiences with social media slang. The number of interviewees who contributed during the focus group interview was six, and according to Denscombe (2010) in order to have a fruitful and manageable discussion during a focus group interview, the adequate number of participants should be six to nine. For the purposes of this study, a semi-structured interview was compiled and used by the interviewer as a guide during the interview (Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews can put light on unrevealed aspects of an individual or a group, and because of this spirit of inquiry, comprehensibility, and flexibility, they are quite favored by researchers (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Preceding the actual data collection through the focus group interview, piloting of the interview questions was done. Highlighting the importance of piloting, Fink (2003) admitted that piloting offers the chance to test the tools that the researcher will later use to gather the actual data. The piloting was done with two interviewees, who were chosen based on the inclusivity criteria (aged between 15 to 24). The piloting helped in identifying a few areas that needed correction and editing from the list of questions included in the semi-structured interview and helped in reassuring the effectiveness of the questions included.

Population and Sample

Youth are the most frequent users of social media and as such of social media slang. Therefore, youth made the whole population this research aimed to study this phenomenon from. According to the United Nations (n.d.), youth are considered to be all people aged between 15 to 24 years. Considering that the most frequent users of social media and slang as a language variety are youth, the interviewees were chosen in accordance with the abovementioned age. The age of the interviewees who participated in the focus group interview varied as follows: 19, 19, 22, 22, 23 and 24 years old.

Furthermore, this study employed purposive sampling having an inclusivity criterion of age. A purposive sampling technique offers to the researcher the chance to pick the sampling that has the potential of offering the richest data in accordance with the study's aim and objectives (Friday & Leah, 2024). There are several types of purposive sampling techniques that are practical when picking an appropriate sampling in correspondence with the age restrictions mentioned previously. However, for this research study's intentions, snowball purposive sampling was used. This means that the researcher approached one adequate participant who fulfilled the criteria of inclusivity and then that participant suggested the other appropriate members to be recruited as part of the sample (Bhattacharjee, 2012). This sampling technique helped the researcher to access the sampling easier but also have participants who commit to the study's criteria of inclusion.

Procedure

The participants of the focus group interview were chosen through snowball purposive sampling. The focus group interview was held online with the agreement of all the participants. The participants were informed beforehand about the main terms of the interview, and for this purpose a consent form (Appendix B) was shared with them before the meeting. When the participants confirmed their agreement with the terms and conditions included in the consent form, the focus group interview was held online through Google Meet (the interviewees were invited to the meet through a link). In accordance with Denscombe (2010), focus group interviews can be conducted online, as technology nowadays provides less costly and less time-consuming meetings with the interviewees.

Moreover, the interview lasted one hour and fifteen minutes. The interview was audio recorded, with the intention of protecting the authenticity and originality of all the information that interviewees shared during the meeting. The audio record was permanently deleted as promised in the consent form, immediately as the transcription of the interview was done.

Data Collection

Primary data used for the purposes of this research paper are the data gained from the focus group interview. Through the focus group interview conducted by the researcher in the presence and contribution of six interviewees, the primary data collection came true through the audio recording process. The interview, in entirety, was audio recorded (with all participants' awareness and consent for this process) and then transcribed in a Microsoft Word document. Then after, the audio record was deleted permanently from all devices used previously to record it.

Data Analysis

When the transcription of the audio recording of the focus group interview was done, the obtained data was organized in Microsoft Word and then after it was transferred in Excel for an easier data analysis process. During the qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was employed. This is a technique that includes the process of seeking for themes in the qualitative data collected (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). Therefore, firstly, the data was carefully coded. Coding helped to depict some of the most important themes to be used in the findings section.

FINDINGS

After applying thematic analysis to the gained data from the focus group interview, several main themes were extracted, and the results are presented as follows:

Extensive Usage of Social Media Platforms: Characteristics of Social Media Language

All the interviewees admitted that they use social media quite frequently. Some of the social media networks most frequently used by youngsters seem to be TikTok, Instagram, Facebook. Participants expressed that using social media for them means to stay informed and keep up with the latest trends. The most prominent reasons for extensive social media usage seem to be the convenience they offer for communication purposes. Also, participants highlighted that using social media helps them stay updated to the latest trends and learn new things (e.g. learn new languages). Moreover, youngsters like to share photos, videos or stories of them, and social media is the right platform for them. Being exposed to fun content and just having a good time watching videos while relaxing, urges them to constantly seek social media's presence in their free time.

Interviewee 1: “I communicate through social media pretty much every day because it’s fast and convenient.”

Interviewee 4: “Currently, I am learning German and it helps me a lot especially when I follow educational accounts. Similarly, I learned a lot of English on Instagram because the native speakers there would use colloquial language, slangs or idioms which helped me to better acquire the language.”

Interviewee 3: “I use them (social media) because of the fun content, and also to communicate mostly with my friends. You can see cool things in there...”

Interviewee 1: “I use it (TikTok) for entertainment because the content is super engaging and it reflects the latest trends, so you feel like you are up-to-date by really short videos.”

Interviewees claimed that social media language has undergone major shifts in different language aspects. First, the language they are constantly exposed to, through different sites, uses a lot of slang words. Secondly, structures seem to be shorter than the ones used offline; people tend to use way more abbreviations, acronyms and clippings, blending. Therefore, the language used online is far more informal. In an attempt to shorten language patterns, social media language incorporates even emojis instead of full words that stand for these emojis. Also, users of social media seem to use code-switching, from native language to English. Social media language, apparently, allows more room for creativity, people play with words and sentences and even create new words on their own.

Interviewee 3: “I have seen a lot of new words, clipping, abbreviations, and emojis being used. I have seen slangs like: btw, lol, no cap.”

Interviewee 1: “People tend to write much more informally on social media. They go from full sentences to short fragments, abbreviations, or even emojis...I often see how Albanian speakers tend to code switch. They structure sentences half in Albanian and half in English.”

Revealing Major Reasons for Slang Preference by Youngsters

Interviewees, apart from all distinctive characteristics of social media language, admitted that slang is the most outstanding one. One of the interviewees even depicted slang as “the new language of the internet”.

Interviewee 5: “I would say the frequent usage of slang is prominent in social media, and it is the new language of the internet.”

All the six interviewees acknowledged that they frequently use slang in social media platforms. Mainly slang is used for memes, in DMs (when texting

someone through private messages), while commenting on someone's post or simply for captioning posts.

Interviewee 4: "I use slang quite a lot on social media, especially when commenting under my friends' posts. We understand each other better with slang, and that is when I use slang to achieve a particular effect, either joke with something related to the post or

make an eye-catching compliment for the pic. Also, I feel like memes are made for slang."

Additionally, when concerned with the main reasons why slang is highly preferred by youngsters, some similar patterns came into the surface. Participants pointed out that slang is convenient for use; it helps them communicate faster and more efficiently. Slang helps them to achieve sarcastic purposes and joke with friends. It relaxes the tone and makes them sound cooler. Furthermore, interviewees expressed that slang keeps them informed and connected to trends, but also to their own generation who share the same slang words and are easily understood with one another.

Interviewee 1: "I think slang allows me to say a lot with just a single word or a short phrase...if someone looks amazing, I just comment "Slay" and this one word says it all. I also use slang to feel more connected to current trends...A phrase can blow up on TikTok overnight and suddenly everyone is using it. Then using that language makes you feel like you are a part of a community..."

Interviewee 3: "I use slang to talk faster, joke with friends, and to sound cool..."

Interviewee 4: "I mostly use it to sound more relaxed and to joke around with friends. Slang also helps me connect with people my age. It makes conversations feel more "in the moment." Sometimes it's also just quicker to write, and people understand what I mean right away."

English Slang in Social Media and its Influence in Daily Communication

In an attempt to find out the most frequently used slang words during communication practices online, interviewees were asked the following questions: "Can you share with us any slang that you commonly use in social media?" and "What is the meaning of these slang words?". From the received answers and elaborations from the interviewees, the following table was created for a better understanding. On the right side there is a list of slang words used most by youngsters, and the left side portrays the meaning that these slang words convey according to interviewees.

Table 1. *Most Used Slang Language by Youth*

Slang	Meaning defined by interviewees
Delulu	- Delusional
Rizz	- The ability to attract others
Situationship	- A romantic or friendly relationship that is not officially defined
Slay	- Doing something really well - Looking amazing
No cap	- No lie
Cap	- Lie
IYKYK	- If you know, you know
Period	- Done - Well done - Great - Sealed discussion
Ate	- Great job
Cooked	- Something done nicely (positive meaning) - A person that has failed miserably (negative meaning)
Yap	- Someone who talks constantly - To talk a lot without much meaning
Fr	- For real - To agree with someone - To emphasize that you are being serious
Sus	- Suspicious
Blast	- Emphasizing that we had great time
Aura	- The overall energy of something
Bars	- A lyric that is considered good
Bet	- To agree to something
Main character	- Someone who wants to be the center of attention
L	- To indicate failure
W	- To indicate a win
Queen	- To hype someone up - To say it to someone who seems not bothered even though they did not finish a task

Furthermore, being constantly involved in social media trends, and keeping up with the new slang words that are created through social media makes youngsters acquire new terminology.

Interviewee 2: "It (slang) has affected the way I communicate immensely; I have learned a lot of new words which enriched my vocabulary..."

Interviewee 1: "I would say that slang has definitely changed the way I communicate on social media. My vocabulary now includes a lot of trendy and informal expressions that I would not normally use in my daily conversations..."

Youngsters feel like their vocabulary has been enriched with a lot of slang words, which are further incorporated even in daily basis communications outside social media. Interviewees highlighted that due to high exposure and habits of communicating through slang in social media, there is the tendency to be shorter and more direct when talking offline. Moreover, their speech includes more

acronyms and abbreviations. The daily vocabulary seems to be extended with social media slang, and speech seems to be accompanied with way more grammatical errors than usual. To sum up this part, utilizing social media slang in offline language patterns has made offline expression mode more informal.

Offline communications practices have evolved in different aspects due to social media slang, and the following quotes from the interview evidence it best:

Interviewee 2: "My sentences are shorter with more grammatical errors, I have gained a rich vocabulary, and I use more abbreviations."

Interviewee 5: "It (slang) has definitely influenced my daily communication. I write in shorter sentences, and I use a lot of acronyms."

On the other hand, one interviewee expressed that even though the vocabulary is enriched with new slang still it "doesn't expand", meaning that there is the tendency to constantly utilize the same terminology during speech, and this makes the terminology "more repetitive" while communicating.

Interviewee 6: "The vocabulary is rather repetitive and doesn't expand."

On the other hand, constant exposure to social media slang makes young people careless of grammar rules. Youngsters seek more freedom while communicating, and that is when they make use of slang be it during online or offline communication.

Interviewee 5: "It (slang) is affecting my grammar in a negative way, because I tend to forget the correct grammar rules, since it is easier to communicate with slang, I tend to avoid grammatical or spelling correctness and I just go for it."

Interviewee 4: “My grammar is more casual, like I skip punctuation or use lowercase on purpose even when it is not

meant to be used grammatically. I also use more abbreviations, emojis, and short sentences.”

Interviewee 6: “I have noticed that I do not structure sentences in the original order or as they should be ordered...”

Interviewees feel that their language is more relaxed and direct to the point. The sentences are way shorter, making use of acronyms and abbreviations. The focus is on conveying the message, not in writing correctly or accurately in accordance with the grammatical rules. Youth tend to avoid punctuation or using uppercase letters when applied according to grammar rules. One interviewee pointed out that it does not matter anymore if “you’re” is used instead of “your” and vice versa, or “then” instead of “than”, for as long as they can understand each other right away. However, despite the rules broken, the messages are conveyed successfully, and communication practices are performed way easier and faster.

Slang and the Generational Gap

To reveal whether slang impedes or enhances communication, participants were asked to share their experiences when they communicate using slang. It was discovered that youngsters mostly utilize slang when communicating with friends, because they are the ones who can understand the meaning of these slang words. In this regard, slang seems to offer easier and faster communication, sometimes even more enjoyable discussions with friends.

Interviewee 1: “I use slang from social media in my everyday talks, mostly with friends. At this point, it just feels natural, like it is part of how we talk now. With friends, it makes things easier and more fun because everyone gets it, and it is quick to say.”

Interviewees pinpointed that communication through slang is successful when dealing with people who use social media and recognize slang. However, the same does not happen with older generations who do not usually recognize social media English slang. Interviewees mentioned that using slang with older people does not always turn out into a successful communication practice.

Interviewee 5: “It (slang) makes communication easier with my generation and younger people. It is more difficult if I use it with my parents, who most of the time do not understand it.”

Interviewee 2: “I never use slang with my teachers, grandparents and such, because I know that we will not understand each other...with older generations

using these slang words will make the conversation confusing so I avoid using slang with them.”

Therefore, for avoiding miscommunication or confusion, it seems that avoiding slang in conversations with older generations is the best solution for youngsters.

Slang Influence in Youngsters' Tone (In)Formality

Considering that youth are the most frequent users of social media sites brings to question the influence it has in their tone shifting in daily life situations. Results indicate that youngsters' tone has been majorly affected by slang usage. Their online language with the integration of slang, acronyms, abbreviations, emojis, and avoidance of grammar rules or spelling correctness has worn their daily speech into an informal tone. In addition, this influence has been reflected into the offline communication practices as well.

Offline communication has embraced a more informal side of language, and online structures intertwine with those offline. Interviewees highlighted that their offline language is more relaxed, free of grammar rules, and consists of more spelling mistakes. This informality in tone is majorly incorporated when talking to friends.

Youngsters sounded confident when expressing their maturity for distinguishing between formal and informal contexts, assuring that they assess the context before making use of slang. When dealing with an informal context that is when they use slang, but if the context is formal, they make sure to shift into the formal language and adjust their language patterns with the formality of the context.

Interviewee 4: “My offline speech has become more informal with friends, but I can switch it up depending on who I am talking to. Around teachers or at work, I try to sound more formal and avoid slang. So, I guess I do reduce slang when I need to be more professional.”

Interviewee 1: “I think my speech is more informal than it used to be. But again, I consciously adjust my tone depending on the setting. For example, when I am in more formal situations, like with teachers or at work, I try to avoid slang because it would not sound right and might come off as unprofessional.”

Another interviewee who works as a teacher said that:

Interviewee 3: “I speak more informally now. But I still try to be formal when talking to students and parents.”

DISCUSSION

Younger generations are the biggest fans of social media networks and the content it offers. Social media platforms are convenient for use, therefore, avoiding them seems impossible. Some of the most popular social media platforms for youngsters in Kosovo seem to be TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. It is highly important for young people to be updated to the latest trends and be informed on the latest news, therefore social media is perceived as useful in these aspects. Youngsters perceive social media content as fun and that is why they enjoy scrolling down, but also, they depict the usefulness of the educational side of it (the educational content that can be accessed through different educational pages). Moreover, another major reason why social media is highly liked and used by young people is for communication purposes. Youth seem to favor communication online and interact with a unique language they keep creating and expanding each day more, social media language.

A variety of language majorly used in social media by youth is slang. Youngsters depicted slang as “the new language of social media”. If slang is the new trend, youngsters make sure to perceive and utilize it daily to sound as trendy as possible. Youth like to explore content digitally and feel part of the digital world. During this exploration, youth like to adapt their online “image” to what is perceived as “cool” by the internet, therefore they highly embrace the language of social media, particularly social media slang. These findings support the conclusions drawn from the research study of Mahardika (2023).

Youngsters keep up with the fast-paced nature of social media through communicating and interacting with short but efficient language structures. Therefore, communication online is mostly done through slang, emojis, abbreviations, and acronyms. Social media offers room for creativity, allowing youth to express themselves in the way they want without judging spelling, terminology, or grammar accuracy. Social media gives youth the opportunity to experiment with language and create new slang that they identify with as a whole community.

By bringing together generations to identify with one language, social media is marking some borders between younger generations who tend to be the biggest users of social media slang and older generations who do not recognize the new language emerging from social media sites. Slang brings together youth by offering a space where they interact with each other easily and create stronger bonds faster through the slang they use for communication. However, the contrary happens with older people who have this generational gap and are not that involved in social media, therefore, they do not identify with social media slang (Popovych, 2023). Not being involved in the trends and exposed to

social media slang evolution means lesser chances to recognize their meaning or use. Therefore, for more successful communication practices, youth tend to avoid using slang when communicating with older generations. These findings are consistent with those reported by Jeresano and Carretero (2022), Puspita and Ardianto (2024), Situmorang et al. (2024), Xursanovna (2025).

Social media, nowadays, is quite rich in the amount of slang. Some of the slang words commonly used in social media by Kosovo youth are *delulu*, *rizz*, *situationship*, *slay*, *no cap*, *IYKYK*, *period*, *ate*, *cooked*, *yap*, *fr*, *sus*, *queen* and many others. These slang words are used for different functions, be them for memes, in DMs, for captioning posts, commenting on others' posts and others.

There is a variety of slang words used daily by youngsters with the intention of expressing a longer meaning by using shorter structures. From Table 1, it can be concluded that the slang words used by youth are created by various word formation processes such as: clipping (e.g. *sus*, *yap*), acronym (e.g. *fr*), abbreviation (*IYKYK*), blending (*situationship*; *situation* + *relationship*), or simply by a shift in meaning (e.g. from the literal meaning "ate" to the metaphorical meaning "being excellent in doing something"). Obviously, there is a continuous attempt by youngsters for shortening structures.

Social media creates new language habits amongst its users. Apparently, using shorter structures has made communication easier and faster, and more informal (Nuraeni & Pahamzah, 2021). New terminology has entered youngsters' vocabulary (Rianto & Juliarta, 2024; Zaytaeva, 2009). The vocabulary has been enriched with more informal words that are used not only online but also in offline communication. Offline communication has been flavored by social media slang words, that again are more convenient for use and serve to youth's intentions (e.g. expressing a lot while using less words) while communicating especially with friends.

Furthermore, slang relaxes the tone, makes the conversations less serious, and creates a bond between speakers sharing the same language characteristics. The tone for daily communications has undoubtedly shifted to a more informal one. However, this shift is controlled by youth. According to interviewees' perceptions, they can easily adjust and adapt the tone to a particular context. Whenever communicating with friends, it just feels natural to convey messages using slang and that feels all right. Whereas, in a more formal context, youth seem to have the power to shift to a formal tone which is more acceptable and expected from the seriousness of the setting. These findings seem to contradict the results from Rianto and Juliarta (2024) which depict the difficulties that youngsters face when having to shift from an informal tone into a more formal tone in a formal context.

Social media language has brought with itself a language evolution which is especially depicted in the grammatical aspects of youth's language. Youngsters do not pay attention to punctuation or spelling correctness, they seem to care more about exchanging messages faster and efficiently. Structures seem shorter with more acronyms, or abbreviations, and the sentence structure does not follow the usual order predicted by grammar rules. The existing grammar rules seem to be violated, and grammar accuracy is not the focus anymore (Ivanivna, 2024; Gupta et al., 2018).

The findings of this research study reflect the ability of language to adapt to individuals' or groups' needs. Language is evolving and understanding the factors and characteristics of it, will better mirror the role of language for social bonding or belonging.

Contributions to Knowledge

This research study provides new theoretical knowledge that can help to better understand English slang from social media and its relationship with evolving dynamics in youngsters' language use. This research study acknowledges the limited number of studies conducted in this field of research in the context of Kosovo. Moreover, the study calls for further research for a wider knowledge on social media slang and its influence on youngsters' language, particularly with a focus on vocabulary and grammar aspects.

CONCLUSION

Social media networks are highly popular among young people in Kosovo. Youth tend to spend a great amount of time in social media networks posting, commenting, sharing memes, or communicating with friends and family. Social media gives life to new trends and slang words that are then perceived and utilized by youngsters who want to continuously keep up on the latest trends. Communication practices have become easier and faster with slang incorporation into vocabulary. Youth use slang to express more meaning using fewer words. Slang words are mainly shorter versions of longer words or larger structures; through clipping, blending, acronyms and abbreviations slang has been adjusted to simpler, shorter and cooler words.

Social media offers youth more freedom in expressing themselves. Slang is an informal variety of language, and it seems to have occupied the vocabulary of young people. Slang has made communication with people who use social media way easier. However, older generations seem to lack knowledge on social media slang and their meaning, therefore, youth have the tendency to avoid slang usage in communication with older people to avoid confusion or communication failure.

Additionally, English slang has been incorporated by youth into everyday communication. Slang terminology seems unavoidable even when communicating offline, especially with friends who tend to belong to the same age group. Communication is easier when both speakers understand slang meaning and this happens when the speakers are both social media users. Slang has made an evolution on youth's vocabulary; the vocabulary has been enriched with new slang terms. On the other hand, traditional grammar rules seem to be violated; youth's language seems to be careless of the existing rules, and it is being developed independently.

Youngsters expressed a considerable level of sympathy toward slang usage on social media and offline in informal contexts. Slang is one way they evidence their coolness and involvement with social media trends. Social media platforms are a creative source from where new slang keeps getting created. Living in a digital era where social media is the trend that youth keep embracing and following, language innovation will be an ongoing process and major language shifts will be further evidenced in the future.

Limitations

This research study, unfortunately, consists of two limitations important to be mentioned. The first one is the sampling technique used for the sample recruitment. Snowball sampling extends the possibility of selection bias, since interviewees were recruited through approaching one suitable participant who then proposed the other participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. This leads to the possibility of the chosen sample to be biased and not representative of the whole population.

The second limitation is response bias which can come because of the focus group interview. Since participants have to answer out loud and share answers with other participants, this may lead to insincere answers. There exists the possibility that participants do not reveal their true thoughts for different reasons, such as, they can feel uncomfortable or unsure, or simply they can think that the answer they are providing is not the one the researcher is expecting.

References

- Allan, K., & Burridge, K. (2006). *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the censoring of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). *Social science research: Principles, methods, and practices* [2nd ed.]. Global Text Project. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbooks/3/
- Coleman, J. (2012). *The life of slang*. Oxford University Press. https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Life_of_Slang/1g3gHDOE4MC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=traditional+slang+&pg=PP1&printsec=frontcover
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects* [4th ed.]. Open University Press. <https://library.bathspa.ac.uk/items/87259>
- Esteron, M. A. S. (2021). Different language usage on social media. *International Journal of Advanced Engineering, Management and Science*, 7(3), 93-104. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijaems.73.12>
- Fink, A. (2003). *The survey handbook* [2nd ed.]. Sage Publications. <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/the-survey-handbook>
- Friday, N., & Leah, N. (2024). Types of purposive sampling techniques with their examples and application in qualitative research studies. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies: English Language, Teaching, Literature, Linguistics & Communication*, 5(1), 90-99. <http://dx.doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0419>
- Gervasio, M., & Karuri, M. (2019). Marking identity through language in social media discourse by Chuka University students. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 7(8), 43-52. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2347-3134.0708005>
- Gupta, A., Taneja, S. B., Malik, G., Vij, S., Tayal, D. K., & Jain, A. (2018). SLANGZY: A fuzzy logic-based algorithm for English slang meaning selection. *Progress in Artificial Intelligence*, 8, 111-121. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13748-018-0159-3>
- Huma, Z. (2025). The influence of social media on the evolution of English vocabulary: Trends and implications. *ResearchGate*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.14669.96483>
- Ivanivna, L. A. (2024). *Changes in English grammar under the influence of text messaging and social media*. ISU: International Scientific Unity.
- Jason, L. A., & Glenwick, D. S. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780190243654.001.000>
- Jeresano, E. M., & Carretero, M. D. (2022). Digital culture and social media slang of gen z. *UIJRT: United International Journal for Research & Technology*, 3(4), 11-25. <https://uijrt.com/paper/digital-culture-social-media-slang-gen-z>
- Kandiawan, A. B. (2022). Code-switching and slang used by gen z Indonesian on social media. *ELTR Journal: English Language Teaching and Research Journal*, 7(1), 48-56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.37147/eltr.v7i1.165>
- Khursanova, U. K. (2024). Slang and social networks: Threat or development to changes in youth language. *QO'QON UNIVERSITETI*
- XABARNOMASI: ILMYI-ELEKTRON JURNALI*, 13, 352-355. <https://doi.org/10.54613/ku.v13i.1096>
- Mahardika, F. (2023). The impact of social media on the use of English slang. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Pendidikan Dasar (SENSASEDA)*, 3, 87-90. <https://jurnal.stkipbjm.ac.id/index.php/sensaseda/article/view/2599>
- Nuraeni, F. W., & Pahamzah, J. (2021). An analysis of slang language used in teenager interaction. *LITERA*, 20(2), 313-322. <https://journal.uny.ac.id/index.php/litera/index>
- Oranga, J., & Matere, A. (2023). Qualitative research: Essence, types, advantages. *Open Access Library Journal*, 10(12). <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1111001>
- Popovych, M. (2023). *The impact of text message slang on English language learners' communication development* [Master's thesis, Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian

- College of Higher Education Department of Philology]. Dspace. <https://dspace.kmf.uz.ua/jspui/handle/123456789/2880>
- Puspita, V. G., & Ardianto, A. (2024). Code-switching and slang: An analysis of language dynamics in the everyday lives of generation z. *Linguistics Initiative*, 4(1), 76-87. <https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.41127>
- Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management*, 8(3), 238-264. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/11766091111162070>
- Rianto, S., & Juliarta, M. (2024). The impact of social media on language use among teenagers. *Focus Journal Language Review*, 2(2), 33-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.62795/fjlg.v2i2.297>
- Roth-Gordon, J. (2021). Language and creativity: Slang. In J. Stanley (ed.), *The international encyclopedia of linguistic anthropology* (pp. 1-8). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118786093.iela0192>
- Salvador, R. T., Parrar, D. M., Yapiso, L., & Cuadra, J. S. (2024). Sociolinguistic perspectives on slang: Analyzing attitudes and implications in oral communication within higher education. *SSRN*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4940218>
- Saputra, D., Damayanti, V. S., Mulyati, Y., & Rahmat, W. (2023). Expressions of the use of slang among millennial youth on social media and its impact of the extension of Indonesia in society. *BAHASTRA*, 43(1), 21-40. <https://doi.org/10.26555/bs.v43i1.325>
- Shokhrukh, A. (2024). The impact of social media on teenage English slang: Investigating the influence of platforms like Instagram and TikTok on the evolution of English slang among teenagers. *University Research Base*, 86-93. <https://scholar.kokanduni.uz/index.php/rb/article/view/293>
- Silalahi, E., & Silalahi, N. (2023). Linguistics realization analysis on slang words: Social media WhatsApp. *JETAL: Journal of English Teaching & Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 8-13. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36655/jetal.v5i1.1120>
- Situmorang, J. T. L., Natsir, M., Zandrato, S. A., Lestari, V. I., & Margaretha, Y. (2024). The influence of slang use on teenagers communication patterns on social media. *Journal of Learning and Teaching*, 01(02), 61-65. <https://ejournal.reysha.org/index.php/jlt/article/view/30>
- Stoika, O., & Pitovka, V. (2025). Social media and language innovations: a study of slang, abbreviations and emoticons. *Modern Research in Foreign Philology*, 1(27), 226-238. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2617-3921.2025.27.226-238>
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Definition of youth*. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>
- Xursanovna, U. K. (2025). The widespread use of slag and abbreviations among youth on social media. *CONVERSE: Journal Communication Science*, 1(3), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.47134/converse.v1i3.3674>
- Yusuf, Y. Q., Fata, I. A., & Aini, R. (2022). "Gotchuu!": The use of slang in social media by generation z. *LiNGUA*, 17(2), 167-174. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18860/ling.v17i2.17756>
- Zaytaeva, D. M. (2009). Slang as a core element of youth culture. *Humanitarian and Natural Sciences Journal*, 12. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/slang-as-a-core-element-of-youth-culture>

EXPLORING WOMEN'S SWEARING IN KOSOVO AND THE SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS BEHIND IT

Blerta ADEMI¹

INTRODUCTION

Language, apart from being a tool for communication, reflects identity, culture, and social norms. It shapes how individuals interact with the world. Certain linguistic practices carry particular weight; one such practice is swearing. Although stigmatized, swearing is essential in expressing emotion, resisting norms, and asserting identity. It is often seen as a power act that helps individuals assert authority or identity (Gauthier & Guille, 2016).

Men often swear to demonstrate dominance, express frustration, or build brotherhood. Women, however, are judged more harshly when using the same language (Knirnschild, 2019). Their swearing can create cultural tension, reflecting gendered expectations and broader systems of social control (Gati, 2014). As Judith Butler (1997) notes, language is performative, shaping both identity and social reality. From this perspective, swearing is more than a speech act; it transforms the way women express themselves.

In Kosovo, a society balancing traditional values with post-war transformations, gender norms around women's speech are shaped by patriarchy and evolving identities. Language is a crucial lens for observing these tensions.

Women's choices, especially when using taboo language, can trigger judgment, discomfort, or social criticism. They navigate various cultural codes, including traditional familial expectations, modern urban influences, and global feminist discourses. Swearing has often been seen as vulgar or low-registered speech.

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; blertaademi23@gmail.com

However, research recognizes its complex social, emotional, and cultural functions, such as expressing emotion, marking in-group belonging, and challenging authority (Jay, 2009; Stapleton, 2010). Studies show that swear words are interpreted differently depending on the speaker's gender, class, and cultural context. Historically, swearing has been associated with men, while women's language choices have been restricted (Gauthier & Guille, 2016; Lakoff, 1975).

Women's swearing is often viewed as a deviation from acceptable language, reflecting patriarchal norms linking verbal aggression with masculinity (Stapleton, 2010; Holmes & Marra, 2006). From childhood, girls are encouraged to use 'polite' language, while boys are allowed to swear (Aznar & Tenebaum, 2014). These patterns continue into adulthood, influencing perceptions of confidence and social acceptance (Leaper & Smith, 2004).

In Kosovo, language use is shaped by nationalism, religion, post-socialist values, and the legacy of war. Albanian, the dominant language, has a rich expressive vocabulary. Yet cultural expectations limit women's freedom to speak in ways that deviate from traditionally "respectable" norms (Jomaes, 2020). Evidence shows that women swear in private among close peers, but these behaviors are underreported in public, reinforcing gendered double standards (Guille, 2016).

Kosovo's cultural identity is influenced by Ottoman history, socialist legacies, and Western cultures (Kosovo Women's Network, 2018). Dominant nationalists often position women as passive bearers of culture and morality, further restricting public expression (Krasniqi et al., 2020).

Sociolinguistic research on swearing and gender is mostly Western-focused. Few studies address post-war societies like Kosovo, where culture shapes language use. There is limited knowledge about how women engage in swearing, the contexts in which they do so, or social perceptions across genders and age groups. Intersectional factors such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, and digital media also remain underexplored.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study addresses the following questions:

1. How do women in Kosovo use swearing in private and public spaces?
2. What are the social perceptions of women who swear among different genders and age groups?
3. How do women justify, negotiate, or resist societal expectations regarding language use?

Hypotheses:

- H1: Women use swearing as a form of personal empowerment and social boundary testing.
- H2: Gender-based stereotypes create double standards, with women facing greater stigma.
- H3: Swearing among women varies by age, education, and urban/rural location, showing generational shifts.

Relevance and Importance

This study contributes to feminist sociolinguistics and cultural studies, particularly in the Balkans. It provides culturally specific insights that go beyond Western contexts. Practically, the findings can inform teachers, gender advocates, and media professionals, highlighting how women's language reflects social behaviors and identity. Understanding these patterns can guide gender-sensitive teaching, media practices, and public awareness campaigns.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim was to explore women's linguistic behavior regarding swearing in Kosovo and analyze societal perceptions within cultural and gendered norms. Objectives include:

- Exploring when and how women use swearing in different contexts.
- Examining societal interpretations of women's language.
- Understanding intersections of language, gender identity, and social resistance.
- Filling academic gaps by providing original, Kosovo-based research on language and gender.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language is essential in shaping and mirroring gendered experience as a social and psychological phenomenon. The ways individuals use language and the norms that confine them are influenced by cultural, historical, and institutional structures. From the beginning of time, power has been associated with men, while women have been excluded due to society's perception of their ability to maintain power (Lakoff, 1975).

Within this viewpoint, taboo language seems like an open space where we can explore connections between language and power, identity construction, and social resistance. This literature review focuses on the relationships between gender, power, and taboo language, especially women's linguistic freedom. It

also emphasises Kosovo's connection to this topic of how gender roles and language use integrate with one another.

Gender, Power, and Taboo Language

The cooperation between gender, power, and taboo language has been the focus of sociolinguistic research as it uncovers how linguistic practices reflect or reinforce societal gender roles. Cameron (2020) states that language is a medium that maintains gender inequalities alive. In societies where men are the ones who hold the most power, individuals' freedom of expression is shaped by these power structures.

Lakoff (1975) was one of the first to introduce the concept of how women's language includes hedges, tag questions, and a lack of assertiveness. These include phrases like "I think" or "don't you agree", which may seem less confident. The author suggested that this may not be as natural for women; however, it is something that women learn because society expects them to talk in softer ways and to maintain male dominance in society.

In her deficit theory, Lakoff (1975) mentioned that women are taught to speak a language that is less direct and more hesitant compared to men's speech. This positions women's language as weaker and reinforces gendered inequalities. It also resulted in women's language being perceived as less authoritative.

Baxter (2012) further expands on this by identifying two main ways women's language may be discriminated against. The first is the way they are taught to speak and the second is how society reacts to their language. When women use more direct language, which is typically linked with men, they are criticised for not adhering to societal femininity expectations.

Furthermore, studies have also explored how taboo language works within these frameworks of societal expectations. Gyamera (2019) discusses how language is used to construct gender roles. In many cultures, men are given greater freedom in their language choices, including the use of taboo expressions or swearing. On the other hand, women are expected to align with norms of softness, politeness, and quietness.

Recent research has emphasised the intersectionality of language and gender and the way nationalism shapes them both. In Kosovo, The Kanun of Leke Dukagjini positioned women in a subordinate role by denying them legal authority and independence within families and societies at large (Lajci et al., 2024). Additionally, Jovanović (2018) reported that the legacy of conflict and the ongoing process of nation-building has influenced linguistic practices and gendered expectations.

Women's Use of Swearing as Identity and Resistance

Traditional norms discourage women from using taboo language, while on the other hand contemporary research emphasises how women use swearing as a form of expression, identity construction, and resistance. Methven (2020) explores historical and contemporary representations of gender and swearing in Australian legal and media discourse which shows that women's swearing was unladylike. However, this perception is then challenged as women continue to use swearing to assert their autonomy and defy social expectations.

According to Lakoff's (1975) theory of dominance, men dominate linguistic expressions, which reflects broader societal inequalities. Early feminist linguistics has been influenced by this theory. It is divided into two areas: "language as a social interaction" and "language as a system" (Lakoff, 1975).

The first area of this theory looks at how gender inequalities are perpetuated in daily conversations. For example, Fishman (1978) revealed that women tend to speak less as men dominate the conversations. Defrancisco (1991) explained that men can be silent during conversations with women, often limiting their chances of expressing themselves.

On the other hand, the second area of the dominance theory refers to how linguistic structures have evolved to primarily focus on male interactions, further reinforcing male dominance (Spender, 1980). This suggests that the language system itself maintains patriarchal values. According to Sapra (2021), these gendered structures further marginalised women and perpetuated their subordination in society.

Thelwall (2008) carried out a research study on swearing among young people on a social networking site MySpace. The data concluded that female young users were more likely to use swear words on their profiles. This suggests that digital platforms offer more space for women to express themselves freely as they use taboo language to resist traditional gender norms. Gauthier and Guille (2016) stated that the women would swear more strongly in certain settings, particularly on social media, according to some studies.

Moreover, swearing can also be seen as a solidarity tool among women which fosters a sense of community and resistance against patriarchy. This allows women to navigate and challenge the limits that society imposes on them. Gati (2014) explained that women's use of swearing is mostly done in the company of their trusted peers rather than men.

Recent studies have also shown that women's use of taboo language can be seen as a way of reclaiming their autonomy. According to Krasniqi et al.

(2020) women in Kosovo use swearing to challenge traditional constraints and patriarchal interpretations of their behaviour.

Social Perceptions and Double Standards

Social perceptions of swearing are deeply rooted in gendered expectations of how women and men use swearing. Jay (2009) found that women who use swearing are more likely to be seen negatively, often seen as aggressive or unprofessional, while men may be seen as assertive or passionate. This discrepancy mirrors societal expectations that women must maintain a certain level of politeness, which is a reinforcement of gendered behavioural norms.

Methven (2020) further examined how these perceptions are also part of legal and media discourses, further showing that women who swear are often depicted as deviant. This depiction is especially evident in cases where the use of swearing by Indigenous women “deserves punishment” and were often subject to consequences. These practices demonstrate the intersection between gender, race, and language and the systemic biases towards women’s speech. Darvishi (2023) observed that women on Iranian Instagram often censored strong swear words by reflecting internalised social biases toward women.

Moreover, studies conducted by Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (2003) and Holmes (1995) show that women’s language can be seen as more polite and focused on social relationships, while men’s language is associated with giving information or achieving goals. This division between women’s use of “emotional language” and men’s use of “reasonable language” can further enable women to feel subordinated to men in linguistics and social settings.

Beattie et al. (2022) argue that swearing behaviour is shaped by gender and used to “perform” social identity, especially when group norms are particularly important. For example, men often swear more in male-only groups to bond with their friends, while women moderate their swearing based on the people they are surrounded by.

Cultural expectations continue to see women primarily as “passive” and “caregivers” (Lajci et al., 2024). These expectations reinforce double standards that limit their linguistic freedom. These norms contribute to the ongoing marginalisation of women’s voices in public and private spaces.

Cultural Norms Around Language in Kosovo and the Balkans

In the Balkans, including Kosovo, cultural norms around language are influenced by traditional values and patriarchal structures. Research emphasises that women’s speech is constructed by expectations of modesty and politeness and swearing is seen as a transgressive act in many communities in Kosovo

(Balkan Insight, 2023). The Albanian concept of “*nderi*” (honour) is crucial in this regulation as women’s swearing may be interpreted as a challenge to communal honour (Lleshi, 2022).

Lleshi (2022) reflects on her life growing up as a woman in Kosovo and how it was associated with internalising expectations of modesty and silence, often “feeling lost.” She continued by saying that Kosovo’s culture prioritised collective honour over individual freedom. Furthermore, she adds that women are tightly controlled to preserve social norms and gender hierarchies. Lajci et al. (2024) state that gender stereotypes are embedded in society as masculinity is equal to toughness and leadership, while femininity is seen as passivity and softness.

Similar patterns have been observed in other conservative cultures. A study on Sri Lankan undergraduates found that women used English swear words often in private and informal settings to express their emotions or bond with their friends, but they avoided them in professional spaces due to social norms (Mallikaarachchi, 2024).

Despite these limitations, there is evidence that such attitudes are different among younger generations, particularly in urban areas. Deda (2022) highlights that being exposed to global media and digital platforms has enabled women to experiment with language use, including swearing. According to Anderson and Jiang (2018), 95% of teenagers have access to a smartphone, and 45% say they are online almost all the time. This evolution mirrors a broader trend of linguistic emancipation as women try to navigate the tension between traditional norms and modern expressions of identity.

Recent research reports that even though women continue to face cultural expectations to be more polite, younger generations are constantly defying these norms. Auwal (2017) found that millennial women now regularly use strong and obscene language in both same-sex or mixed-sex contexts.

While digital platforms may offer spaces for people to express themselves, they also expose women to new forms of gendered discrimination, including online harassment. Research by Vullnetari (2021) states that women’s use of swearing on social media in Kosovo is often met with backlash, but it allows women to form social networks that go beyond traditional gender norms.

Nevertheless, traditional values continue to influence societal expectations and women who swear may still face social criticism and judgement. Even with gender equality legislation, women’s public and political presence in Kosovo remains limited due to stereotypes, nepotism, and traditional family obligations (Lajci et al., 2024). “Despite these insights, there is still limited research on how

women in Kosovo and similar non-Western contexts navigate these linguistic and social constraints.

Although studies have explored the relationship between gender and language, there are still gaps in the existing knowledge about the context of non-Western countries. Much of the existing knowledge is centred around Western, English-speaking countries, while Balkans are left with a gap in literature. The Balkans, including Kosovo, are a valuable place and case for research studies regarding language and gender.

Additionally, there is a lack of empirical research that explores how women in Kosovo and similar countries navigate these taboos in daily life. Studies that use both qualitative and quantitative methods are necessary to explore how women perceive their use of swearing and their responses to societal expectations. Furthermore, the influence of digital communication, especially on social media platforms, is reshaping language norms and may depict the need for further research.

These gaps must be addressed to improve our understanding of gendered language in Kosovo and also contribute to broader discussions on linguistic freedom, identity, and power structures in cultural and traditional countries. The absence of substantial academic research on women's language use in Kosovo shows a gap in Balkan-focused feminist research (Hoxha, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This study explored the use of swearing among women in Kosovo and sociocultural perceptions around it. It employed a mixed-method approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods to have a better understanding of the topic. This mixed-method approach is especially useful for exploring complex social behaviours as it allows triangulation of data from various sources and perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The qualitative approach offered a detailed understanding of personal experiences, attitudes, and societal perceptions. Qualitative research is one method of collecting data that is related to emotions, thoughts, and patterns; especially important to discover and analyse in-depth information and details (Bryman, 2012; Ugwu & Eze, 2023; Mack et al., 2005).

Whereas the quantitative approach helped us seek any patterns and correlations among the variables of interest, like the frequency of swearing, age, education, and social class. Quantitative data collection involved the use of surveys with a Likert-scale format to gather responses from a larger sample, while qualitative data was obtained through focus group interviews to get a deeper understanding (Bryman, 2012; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The combination of both methods allowed us to get a well-rounded understanding of how women in Kosovo use swearing and how it is perceived by their communities. The qualitative aspect enabled participants to elaborate more on their use of swearing, their emotional motivations, and the societal reactions they experience (Mack et al., 2005; Morgan, 1996).

On the other hand, the quantitative surveys helped us identify trends and patterns, such as whether younger women or women with higher education are more likely to use swearing as a form of self-expression or resistance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The combined results from both approaches offered a well-rounded perspective on women's use of swearing.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this research was to investigate how women in Kosovo use swearing as part of their daily communication and to see whether society interprets and reacts to this linguistic attitude. The study intended to understand whether swearing functions as a form of empowerment, resistance, or social defiance for women who are part of a conservative area. Many societies judge women more harshly than men for engaging in swearing or taboo language (Jay, 2009; Lakoff, 2004). In Kosovo's traditional setting, this dynamic may be particularly present as it identifies swearing women as socially deviant.

To address this, the research first explored the social, emotional, and situational settings in which women use swearing. Secondly, it examined the motivations behind using swearing, including emotional expression, humour, or defiance. Thirdly, it investigated how women perceive others' reactions to their use of swearing. And finally, it evaluated whether the act of swearing can be seen as a resistance against gender norms or reinforcement of cultural expectations in Kosovo.

Methods and Sources

This study conducted a mixed-methods approach to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for a better understanding of how swearing is used and perceived by women in Kosovo. The primary data collection methods included focus group interviews and a survey. This combination allowed the study to explore individual and group attitudes (qualitative) while also identifying patterns across a wider demographic (quantitative) (Creswell & Plano, 2017).

Focus group interviews allow participants to interact easily with one another, which enables the researcher to collect individual and collective perspectives (Morgan, 1996). The group setting also encouraged participants to reflect on their contributions, challenge any assumptions, and explore social perspectives together.

Furthermore, the integration of quantitative analysis offered an understanding of patterns across different demographic groups. According to Jones et al. (2013) questionnaires collect information in a practical way from a large number of people. To ensure the data is measurable and comparable, the questionnaire included Likert-scale items, which helped quantify the intensity of participants' responses (Bryman, 2012).

In addition to primary use of data, the research relied on secondary data from academic literature in sociolinguistics and gender studies. These sources included theoretical literature and empirical research that investigate female language behaviours, especially those related to taboo, identity, and power. Secondary data also helped to position the findings of this study within broader academic discussions.

Participants

Participants were chosen through the purposive sampling method, focusing on age group, educational background, urban versus rural experience. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling method used to choose specific participants based on a specific feature or characteristic that the research attempts to find (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015; Tongco, 2007). This approach is especially suitable for qualitative research that seeks in-depth experiences from a specific population.

The sample consisted of eight female-identifying participants who were adult residents in Kosovo, between the ages of 18 to 40. The research aimed for variety in age, education level, employment status, and urban/rural backgrounds in order to create a range of participants and linguistic behaviours. Criteria for choosing participants included (1) participants identifying as female, (2) participants aged 18 years or older, (3) participants fluent in English, and (4) those who feel comfortable to discuss swearing and social perceptions in a group setting.

In addition to the focus group participants, survey participants were chosen through both purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure consistency across data collection methods. Snowball sampling is a technique in which researchers manage to find at least one participant who will then serve as a gatekeeper to invite other participants that fit in the study criteria and agree to be part of the study (Boise State University, n.d.; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018; Parker et al., 2019).

The survey targeted participants from a diverse range of educational backgrounds, employment statuses, and rural/urban backgrounds. The involvement of both rural and urban participants was especially important to

explore potential differences in perceptions and the use of swearing in these settings.

Each participant was informed in advance about the nature of the study and was asked to sign a consent form before participating in the interview. During the transcription process, pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity. Ethical considerations, including the right to withdraw from the interview, were addressed prior to the interview in accordance with the research guidelines.

Data Collection

Prior to the main data collection, both the interview questions and the questionnaire were piloted with a small group of individuals to ensure their clarity. Piloting is an essential step in the research process as it involves the preliminary testing of data collection instruments, such as interview questions and questionnaires (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). According to Ullah et al. (2023), piloting an instrument is important as it helps improve any issues that may come up while using that instrument.

Data was collected through one semi-structured focus group interview and a survey. The focus group interview was conducted online through the Google Meet platform. The session lasted approximately 100 minutes.

The focus group consisted of eight participants and was conducted in English. The group format allowed participants to build on each other's responses, challenge assumptions, and reflect on shared experiences. The researcher actively observed group dynamics to ensure all participants had equal space to contribute and no single voice dominated the discussion.

The session was audio-recorded, with prior verbal and written consent form from participants. All audio recordings were securely stored and deleted upon transcription. Transcripts used pseudonyms instead of participants' real names to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

An interview protocol was used to guide the discussion while also leaving room for questions or spontaneous contributions. The questions focused on participants' reflection on their use of swearing, the contexts in which they swear, emotional motivations, and the social consequences they associate with female swearing. Participants were also asked about their views on women who swear and whether or not they are judged in their communities.

The discussion also included hypothetical questions to gain a deeper understanding of the taboo language and its implications. Throughout the discussion, the researcher used observational notes on any group dynamics or any moments of tension or agreement between the participants.

Additionally, this study also employed surveys as an instrument to gather more information from various demographics. The survey was distributed to participants before the interview and collected quantitative data regarding participants' experiences, perceptions, and frequency of swearing. It consisted of closed-ended questions that offer measurable data on patterns of swearing among women. The responses from the survey complemented the qualitative data from the focus group interview.

Data Analysis

The audio recordings from the focus group interviews have been transcribed through a transcription software called Otter.ai, which is a speech-to-text tool. Each transcript was manually reviewed and corrected by the researcher to ensure accuracy and protect participant confidentiality.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis by manually identifying patterns and themes that show the perceptions of swearing among women in Kosovo. Thematic analysis is beneficial regarding qualitative research as it enables the researcher to examine themes, opinions, emotions, and other observations throughout the interviews; such an analysis collects in-depth data from responses (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Rosario, 2023; Dawadi, 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Thematic analysis proceeded through six phases, including (1) familiarising with the data by reading and rereading transcripts; (2) creating initial codes related to swearing contexts and perceptions; (3) combining codes into preliminary themes; (4) reviewing and clarifying data; (5) defining and naming themes that show the essential information; (6) combining themes into final categories.

Furthermore, the quantitative data was collected through a structured survey, and then were analysed using descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistical analysis has been used to summarise general trends in participants' responses (Trochim, 2006). Frequencies and percentages were calculated for key variables such as swearing frequency, emotional motivations, perceived social judgement, age, education, and urban/rural background. Cross-tabulations were used to observe relationships between demographic variables (e.g., education level and frequency of swearing). Descriptive analysis enabled patterns to be identified and compared across different participants.

Limitations of the Study

During the design and execution of this research, only a few limitations have been identified. However, they are important to acknowledge so that the findings are better contextualised. Firstly, the use of a single focus group might

have limited the generalisability of the findings from this study. Although the focus was on the depth of information, the perspectives might not have fully captured all experiences of women in Kosovo.

Secondly, social desirability bias may have affected participants' responses. Considering the sensitive and stigmatised nature of swearing, especially for women, some participants might have answered in alignment with perceived social expectations. However, efforts were made to create an open and non-judgmental environment during the interviews to encourage participants to share their experiences.

Thirdly, as a female researcher born and raised in Kosovo, my lived experience has shaped the way I approached this study. Being familiar with both traditional gender norms and social trends, I recognise that my perspective may have influenced the way I interpreted participants' narratives. This positionality allowed me to engage with participants with empathy and cultural awareness. However, I have critically reflected on my own assumptions during the coding and analysis stages.

Implications and Contributions to Knowledge

This research fills an empirical gap in the literature regarding the intersection between gender, language, and sociocultural norms in Kosovo by exploring how women engage with swearing. The study contributes to feminist linguistic research by focusing on women's use of swearing as a taboo language. The research provided a culturally specific lens which helped us understand how women see power, respectability, and resistance through language, especially in a country where gender norms are both reinforced and contested.

On a practical level, the data is used to inform teachers and gender equality advocates by emphasising how language mirrors internalised gender roles and social pressures. For example, the findings provided more information on societal judgements around women's speech and how they can affect participation and self-expression. Additionally, the research serves as a basis for further research that explores similar dynamics across other ethnic groups in the region.

Practicalities and Challenges

This research included a few practical steps that were taken to ensure a successful and ethical process. One of the first potential obstacles was the recruitment of participants who are comfortable with discussing the topic of swearing in a group setting. Considering that swearing may seem like a private or inappropriate topic, participants may hesitate to participate.

To address this, the researcher implemented clear ethical procedures by informing participants on time that they can withdraw from the interview with no consequences. Additionally, to ensure that participants feel open and comfortable, the researcher used rapport-building techniques like pre-session introductions and reassured them about a judgment-free discussion.

Finally, since the study was conducted by one researcher only, time-management challenges arose. However, tasks like organising the sessions, transcribing, and analyzing data were clearly defined within a timeline for each phase of the project. Digital tools, such as transcription softwares, were also used to ease and support the process.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

This paper aimed to understand how women in Kosovo use swearing and how this behaviour is shaped by cultural expectations, gender norms, and identity construction. It is a combination of qualitative data from focus group interviews with survey data from a broader group of women. The findings of this study support and extend existing literature on gendered language, especially in the context of Kosovo.

Table 1. Joint Display of Survey and Focus Group Findings

Theme	Quantitative Findings (survey summary)	Qualitative Findings (quotes)
Meaning of swearing	Many respondents saw swearing as emotional release and humour; a majority described it as “powerful” expression.	“It’s the only thing that reflects how I truly feel.”
Triggers and contexts	Swearing reported mainly in informal settings, especially when angry or stressed.	“It’s like a reflex when I’m angry.”
Social judgment & double standards	93% agreed women are judged more harshly than men for swearing.	“If a man swears, it’s nothing. For a woman, it’s rude.”
Identity & femininity	63% agreed swearing is a form of rebellion, while others valued refusing to swear as self-control.	“Swearing reminds me I’m not defined by others.”
Power & resistance	Some respondents said refusing to swear made them feel more accepted; others saw swearing itself as empowerment.	“Whether I swear or not, I decide how I want to sound.”
Generational shift	75% agreed swearing is becoming more acceptable over time, especially among younger women.	“It’s just how Gen Z talks, we don’t see it as rude.”

Gendered Language, Power, and Taboo

As Lakoff (1975) argued, language both reflects and reproduces social hierarchies. In Kosovo, participants confirmed that women face greater scrutiny and judgement for using strong language. Survey data supports this with 93% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that “women who swear are judged more harshly than men.” This confirms the influence of patriarchal norms on linguistic behaviour. Participants were aware from a young age that swearing was considered socially inappropriate, especially for women.

This reinforced the idea that femininity is often associated with control, politeness, and emotional restraint. Holmes (1995) described similar patterns where women’s language is often characterised by politeness and cooperation, rather than directness or aggression.

Participants explained that the emotional and cultural associations of swearing varied depending on the language used. Swearing in Albanian was often viewed as more culturally difficult and emotionally overwhelming due to its attachment to family honour and social expectations. On the other hand, swearing in other languages, like English or Turkish, was perceived as more neutral and humorous.

In alignment with Spender’s (1980) suggestion that linguistic systems are embedded in power structures and reflect broader gender dynamics, this contributes to the research on code-switching and emotional distancing. Multilingual speakers may shift languages so that they can manage the emotional and social implications of swearing.

These findings directly answer the first research question by focusing on how women use swearing to express and moderate their emotions. They also support Hypothesis 1, as swearing was more common in private or emotionally safe settings than public ones.

Double Standards on Women’s Language

Findings clearly show a gendered double standard in language use. Participants shared experiences in which swearing by women was judged more harshly than when men used the same language. On the same note, Jay’s (2009) findings and McEnery’s (2006) analysis support the idea that women’s use of swearing is often seen negatively in public discourse, especially in legal or media settings.

Several participants mentioned that while men who swear are seen as assertive or humorous, women are labelled as vulgar, aggressive, or unprofessional. Similarly, over 90% of survey responses agreed that society expects women to speak more politely than men. Additionally, the second research question

and hypothesis is confirmed through these findings. Women are judged more negatively for swearing compared to men. Data showed strong patterns of cultural and familial disapproval.

This judgement went beyond the act of swearing itself to how women manage their language in social situations. One participant described how avoiding swearing made her feel socially isolated: “I used to have this mindset that I don’t swear... people would pressure me to say it anyway. Like not swearing meant I thought I was better than others.”

This also reflects Baxter’s (2011) idea that women’s speech is subject to constant regulation, even if they conform or reject social norms. It describes this idea where language is a tool of expression and a way of power struggle.

Swearing, Identity, and Self-Expression

Swearing was also seen as a powerful approach to shaping people’s identities. Women described moments where swearing made them feel honest, expressive, or in control of their emotions. In the survey, 87% strongly agreed that “women should be free to use swear words without social judgement.” As Cameron (2020) suggests, language is a way of constructing social identities and asserting presence. One participant shared: “Swearing reminds me that I’m not defined by what society expects from women. It’s a small act of rebellion.”

This closely follows the framework that feminist linguists offer, like Gati (2014) and Krasniqi et al. (2020), who see swearing as a conscious act of resistance. Swearing enables women to challenge gender expectations that most of the time silence them or limit their emotional expression. 63% of women also agreed that “swearing is a form of rebellion for them.” However, for others, refusing to swear was a form of empowerment itself, as it reflects control and alignment with their values.

This complex perspective emphasises the way women navigate and interpret their language choices. Sometimes, these choices act as models of resistance, while other times they mark their integrity. Participants also expressed the need to code-switch depending on the social context.

In traditional and professional environments, women reported that they carefully observe their language in order to avoid judgement or being seen as “unprofessional.” It also aligns with Defrancisco’s (1991) observation that women often change their conversational behaviour in male-dominated or hierarchical settings. Women in Kosovo actively work in managing the ways in which they present themselves across different social contexts.

Generational Shifts and Digital Communication

Another key theme was age as a key differentiator in swearing. Participants from younger demographics, aged 18-24, described swearing as a “normalised act” within their friend groups. Thelwall’s (2018) research on youth expression in digital spaces also mentioned this view on swearing as a marker of authenticity, emotion, and solidarity. As one participant mentioned, “Swearing is just how we talk. It’s not about being rude, it’s about being real.”

However, this change has not happened as easily as they may mention. Some participants reported that older family members, particularly those who hold traditional views, still believe that women who swear are inappropriate. Respondents over 30 were more cautious. When asked if their upbringing affected their language use, older participants were more likely to say yes.

This intergenerational separation shows a tension between linguistic freedom and constant cultural expectations regarding women and politeness. As Deda (2022) and Lleshi (2022) argue, the post-conflict identity of Kosovo is still deeply related to national, familial, and gendered values, as they all affect the way women’s speech is seen and evaluated.

Digital platforms were considered to be both “liberating” and “risky.” Some women felt a deeper freedom of expression, including swearing, on social media or messaging apps. However, they also mentioned the potential backlash women receive there, especially when their speech was shared in public or broader audiences. This echoes Vullnetari’s (2021) findings that online swearing by women often results in backlash. Future research could explore how platform-specific cultures influence women’s language choices.

Swearing in the Kosovar Contexts and Culture

Kosovo’s sociocultural context offers a specific context for viewing swearing as a gendered practice. The cultural concept of “nderi” (honor) shapes expectations on women’s behaviour, especially regarding speech. Survey responses showed that while many women support swearing in principle, they are selective in principle, especially in formal or traditional settings. One-third of respondents said they rarely or never swear, and of those, many cited cultural or family influence as a key factor. Nevertheless, women are also reshaping these norms by swearing in English, using coded language, or resisting expectations.

As Lleshi (2022) notes, women’s silence and modesty are seen as virtues, while deviation from these norms is seen as a threat to community values. This cultural expectation complicates the way swearing is interpreted as a moral or immoral act. One-third of respondents said they rarely or never swear, and of those, many cited cultural or family influence as a key factor. Nevertheless,

women are also reshaping these norms by swearing in English, using coded language, or resisting expectations.

Gendered language ideologies in Kosovo are shaped by global trends and deeply integrated local values. Kosovar women's lived experiences are a testament of these complexities and biases. However, participants challenged and redefined these values by saying that women negotiate the space for more language choices in society. 75% of surveyed respondents agreed that perceptions around swearing are becoming more acceptable over time.

Whether by swearing in English to minimise societal judgement, swearing as an act of empowerment, or refusing to swear for their personal values, participants had various strategies for navigating these cultural norms. Sapra's (2021) argued that linguistic choices are not a fixed structure, but rather an area for constant negotiation. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between language, gender, and culture in the Kosovar context by focusing on women's experiences with swearing.

All three research questions were addressed through the analysis, and the hypotheses were generally supported. The data confirmed that women in Kosovo use swearing in strategic, emotional, and identity-related ways. Simultaneously, they navigate social judgements shaped by gender, generation, and context.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how women in Kosovo use swearing, social perceptions regarding swearing, and cultural and gendered expectations. The findings confirm that swearing is far more than offensive language, as it continues to be a socially, emotionally, and politically expressive action. Swearing shows more about the speaker's identity, values, and context.

Women in Kosovo reported using swearing for various reasons, including releasing emotional tension, expressing humour, and resisting traditional gendered roles. On the other hand, others who chose not to swear saw it as a reflection of personal principles or a strategy for social acceptance. Across all responses, both in survey and interviews, it was evident that swearing is shaped by social context, language choice, gender norms, and generational identity.

The study affirmed the presence of double standards in society, where women are judged and treated more harshly than men for using strong language. Oftentimes, they are pressured into being more restrictive with their language choices, even in informal situations. Nevertheless, participants showed a sense of autonomy in their approach toward these expectations. They expressed that language is used flexibly to shape gendered identities.

The findings contribute to global discussions on gendered language use, while also focusing on filling this significant gap in research from Kosovo. By focusing on women's voices in a culturally specific context, this study helps us understand how gender, power, and language intersect in everyday life.

The results of this study confirm Hypothesis 1, as many women reported using swearing as a form of empowerment and emotional expression. Hypothesis 2 has also been supported as participants and survey respondents confirmed a strong double standard in how men's and women's use of swearing is socially judged. However, Hypothesis 3 is partially confirmed: despite the generational differences, there was not a significant impact of education or urban/rural background than expected.

Future research should include comparative studies with men and non-binary speakers, explore language use in rural vs. urban areas, and explore how media and education may affect perceptions of gendered language use. As Kosovo continues to change socially and culturally, ongoing research in this area will be essential to understand how language continues to change.

To conclude, the act of swearing itself, whether it was avoided or embraced, is connected to how women in Kosovo claim their emotional space, emotions, and challenge social norms in public and private settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. For teachers

Integrate more discussions of gender and language in language teaching to raise awareness of linguistic stereotypes.

2. For media professionals

Avoid framing women who swear as "deviant" or "unfeminine." Media discourse should be a reflection of different women's voices and a challenge against double standards in society.

3. For policymakers or NGOs

Promote public campaigns that address the stigma surrounding women's linguistic expression and emphasise the importance of linguistic freedom.

4. For future researchers

Conduct comparative studies across Balkan countries to explore regional trends, and include male or non-binary voices to understand the intersectional dynamics in swearing. Digital discourse analysis could also be a way of better understanding language and gender online.

References

- Anderson, M., & Jiang, J. (2018). Teens, social media & technology 2018. Internet & Technology, Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>
- Aznar, A., & Tenenbaum, H. R. (2014). Mothers' talk about emotions to sons and daughters in Spanish and English. *The British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 32(1), 105–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjdp.12029>
- Balkan Insight. (2023). Views of Kosovo women often unheard on TV, attacked online. https://balkaninsight.com/2023/04/03/views-of-kosovo-women-often-unheard-on-tv-attacked-online/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Baxter, J. (2012). Women of the corporation: A sociolinguistic perspective of senior women's leadership language in the U.K. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 19(5), 521–540. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2011.00520.x>
- Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods. (4th ed.). Oxford University Press Inc. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Social-Research-Methods%2C-4th-Edition-Bryman/432eb124202ead1410aaff653847ba8a093bdf4c>
- Cameron, D. (1998). *The feminist critique of language: A reader*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Darvishi, A. (2023). An analysis of gender and swear words: A case study of the Iranian community on Instagram. *International Journal of Humanities, Art and Social Studies (IJHAS)*, 8(3).
- DeFrancisco, V. L. (1991). The sounds of silence: How men silence women in marital relations. *Discourse & Society*, 2(4), 413–423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926591002004003>
- Etikan, I. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.1>
- Fishman, P. M. (1978). Interaction: The work women do. *Social Problems*, 25(4), 397–406. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800492>
- Gal, S. (1991). Between speech and silence: The problematics of research on language and gender. In M. di Leonardo (Ed.), *Gender at the crossroads of knowledge: Feminist anthropology in the postmodern era* (pp. 175–203). University of California Press.
- Gati, P. (2014). *The use of swear words by women: A study of single-sex and mixed-sex conversations* (Dissertation thesis). Halmstad University, Halmstad, Sweden.
- Gauthier, M., & Guille, A. (2017). Gender and age differences in swearing: A corpus study of Twitter. *Pragmatics & Beyond New Series*, 282, 143–167. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.282.07gau>
- Gyamera, V. (2019). The Interface: Language, Gender and Power. *Journal of Gender and Power*, 11(1), 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.14746/jgp.2019.11.004>
- Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, men and politeness* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315845722>
- Hoxha. (2015). *Women's rights in Kosovo: Cultural and religious barriers* (Dissertation thesis). University of Tromsø. https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/10037/8247/2/thesis.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Jay, T. (2009). The utility and ubiquity of taboo words. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4(2), 153–161. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2009.01115.x>
- Jay, T. (2018). Swearing, moral order, and online communication. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, 6, 107–126.
- Jomaes. (2020). Being a woman in Kosovo: Key issues and norms for change. https://www.jomaes.org/index.php/jomaes/article/view/116?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Jovanović, T. (2018). Post-conflict identities and gendered speech: The case of Kosovo. *Journal of Balkan Studies*, 45(2), 225–239. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.balkan.2018.05.001>

- Kosovo Women's Network. (2018). *Kosovo gender analysis*. https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/womens-network.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Krasniqi, V., Sokolić, I., & Kostovicova, D. (2020). Skirts as flags: Transitional justice, gender and everyday nationalism in Kosovo. *Nations and Nationalism*, 26(2), 461–476. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12593>
- Lajci, D., Asllani, G., Gega, G., & Grima, S. (2024). The position of women in Kosovo: Perspectives and socio-economic challenges. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*, 19(1), 199–210. <https://doi.org/10.18280/ijstdp.190120>
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. Harper & Row.
- Lakoff, G. (2009, January 2). *The neural theory of metaphor*. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1437794>
- Leaper, C., & Smith, T. E. (2004). A meta-analytic review of gender variations in children's language use: Talkativeness, affiliative speech, and assertive speech. *Developmental Psychology*, 40(6), 993–1027. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.40.6.993>
- Lleshi, G. (2022). Lost in my own culture. *Kosovo 2.0*. <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/lost-in-my-own-culture/>
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*. Family Health International (FHI).
- Mallikaarachchi, C. S. (2024). Use of English swear words by female undergraduates: A study pertaining to Colombo, Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology*, 11(4), 1225.
- Methven, E. (2020). 'A woman's tongue': Representations of gender and swearing in Australian legal and media discourse. *The Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 41(1), 1–25.
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 129–152. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.129>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Sapra, N. K. (2021). Profanity and women: A linguistic analysis of language and gender – Based on HBO's True Blood (Advanced Essay). *Södertörn University, Institution of Culture and Learning, Teacher Education Programme, Sweden*.
- Stapleton, K. (2010). Swearing. In M. Coulthard & A. Johnson (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Forensic Linguistics* (pp. 291–303). Routledge.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193>
- Thelwall, M. (2008). Fk yea I swear: Cursing and gender in MySpace. *Corpora*, 3, 83–107.
- Ugwu, C. N., & Eze, V. H. U. (2023). Qualitative research. *International Digital Organization for Scientific Research*, 8, 20–35
- Vullnetari, J. (2021). Gender and digital discourse: Women's linguistic agency in Kosovo's social media spaces. *Social Media & Society*, 7(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/205630512098647>

THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON LANGUAGE SHIFT AMONG KOSOVO'S ALBANIAN SPEAKERS

Errona BINXHIIJA¹

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the rapid development of information and communication technologies has redefined how languages evolve, particularly through media consumption. Media platforms such as television, social media, digital publications, and streaming services have become not only sources of information and entertainment but also powerful agents of linguistic change (Androutsopoulos, 2007; Tagliamonte, 2016). These platforms often serve as vectors for dominant global languages, particularly English, influencing linguistic practices across the globe. Kosovo, where Albanian is one of the official and most dominant languages, is experiencing a similar trend, particularly among the younger population aged 18 to 35.

The integration of English words, expressions, and even syntactic structures into Albanian is increasingly evident in everyday communication. This linguistic phenomenon is visible in informal spoken language, online interactions, and even hybrid forms of writing such as text messaging and social media posts (Piller, 2011). The phenomenon of language shift—where speakers begin to incorporate elements of another language into their primary language use—is especially relevant in Kosovo due to the nation's youthful population, extensive digital connectivity, and increasing exposure to globalized content.

The media's role in shaping language preferences and linguistic identity cannot be underestimated. According to Kachru (1985), exposure to English through media contributes to what he describes as the “expanding circle” of English, where the language is used as a foreign language but becomes increasingly influential. In Kosovo, this manifests in the growing tendency of

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; erronabinxhija@hotmail.com

young Albanians to mix English with their native tongue, often unconsciously. This behavior reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics such as identity construction, globalization, and access to international culture (Crystal, 2003).

This study investigates how digital and traditional media impact language shift among young Albanian speakers in Kosovo. It aims to determine the extent to which media influences vocabulary choices, syntactic structures, and overall language preferences, with particular attention to the incorporation of English elements. The findings will offer insight into how globalization, mediated through language, affects linguistic practices in post-conflict, multilingual societies like Kosovo.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the impact of media on language use is crucial for sociolinguistic research, language policy development, and cultural preservation. As Kosovo continues to globalize and integrate with international systems, the influence of global languages, particularly English, on the Albanian language becomes more prominent. Language contact situations, as Thomason and Kaufman (1988) note, often lead to structural borrowing and vocabulary integration, particularly when one language enjoys higher prestige or wider utility. Media, acting as a continuous conduit of English input, intensifies this contact.

By focusing on the youth demographic, this study sheds light on the possible long-term effects on the Albanian language and contributes to discussions surrounding linguistic identity, preservation, and evolution. As Graddol (1997) explains, youth are typically the agents of linguistic innovation, making their linguistic behavior critical in predicting future trends. Consequently, this research will provide valuable evidence for educators, linguists, and policymakers who aim to understand and manage language change in a digital, globalized era.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to explore the influence of digital and traditional media on language shift patterns among young Albanian speakers in Kosovo. It seeks to understand how media-driven exposure to English impacts their vocabulary, syntax, and overall language preferences.

Research Questions

1. How does exposure to English-language media influence the word-choice preferences of young Albanian speakers in Kosovo?

2. What types of media (e.g., social media, television, streaming platforms) have the most significant impact on language shift?
3. To what extent does media consumption correlate with the frequency of English lexical borrowing and code-switching in everyday communication?

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Increased exposure to English-language media is positively correlated with the use of English loanwords in the daily speech of young Albanian speakers in Kosovo.
- H2: Social media platforms, due to their interactive nature, exert a stronger influence on language shift than passive media such as television.
- H3: Code-switching and borrowing from English are more prevalent in informal communication settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language shift, the process by which a speech community transitions from using one language to another over time, is often driven by social, political, and technological influences. Among these, media has emerged as a powerful force shaping language ideologies and usage patterns, particularly in post-conflict and multilingual societies like Kosovo. This literature review examines scholarly perspectives on the influence of media, television, online journalism, and social media, on language shift among Albanian speakers in Kosovo. It synthesizes findings from regional studies in the Balkans and selected insights from European and American contexts to frame Kosovo's linguistic transition within a broader theoretical and empirical context.

The core hypothesis underpinning much of the research in this domain is that the increased exposure to globalized media content, especially in English, contributes to a decline in the exclusive use of native languages such as Albanian in informal and increasingly formal contexts. Media influences extend beyond mere lexical borrowing, they involve cultural aspirations, symbolic value, and identity formation, especially among youth (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

Kosovo's Sociolinguistic Landscape

Kosovo provides a unique sociolinguistic laboratory where questions of identity, ethnicity, and language politics intersect. With over 90% of the population identifying as Albanian speakers, the dominant national language is deeply embedded in nationalistic and cultural discourses (Hajrullahu, 2019). However, Kosovo's exposure to global media post-1999, coupled with rapid digitization, has shifted the linguistic ecosystem. English has emerged

as a prestigious lingua franca associated with education, technology, and internationalism (Mustafa, 2021).

Language policies post-independence have emphasized the protection and promotion of Albanian, while also supporting minority languages like Serbian, Bosnian, and Turkish. Nevertheless, these policies often lack effective media regulation. The liberalization of the media market allowed a flood of foreign content, especially in English, with limited institutional support for Albanian dubbing or subtitling (Dika, 2020). As a result, Kosovo's youth increasingly consume unfiltered English media content.

Media Exposure and English Infiltration

The infiltration of English through media occurs at multiple levels, lexical borrowing, code-switching, and hybrid syntax. Spahiu (2017) highlights how English dominates music, entertainment, and digital platforms in Kosovo, influencing not only vocabulary but also discourse patterns. This process is not unique to Kosovo. In Albania, similar patterns of English borrowing in youth slang and media content are observed (Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2016). Montenegro and North Macedonia also report rising concerns over “linguistic erosion” due to Western media penetration (Petrović, 2018).

Social media accelerates these trends. A study by Shala and Dushi (2022) on Kosovar adolescents found that English expressions such as “chill,” “like,” “vibe,” and “mood” are seamlessly integrated into Albanian messages on Instagram and TikTok. This is indicative of what linguists call “prestige borrowing,” where foreign terms gain symbolic status over native equivalents.

In online journalism, Bytyqi and Rexhepi (2018) note that many Albanian news portals in Kosovo increasingly mix English terms for stylistic purposes or to appeal to younger readers. Headlines like “Rama launches startup hub in Tirana” appear without translation, signalling a shift in journalistic language norms. These shifts are echoed in Serbia and Croatia, where tech-related reporting often uses untranslated English terminology (Kovačević, 2020).

Youth Language Practices and Identity Construction

Language choice among younger generations is particularly susceptible to media influence. In Kosovo, media consumption has shifted from traditional formats like television to digital platforms, particularly among urban youth. This change is not just technological, it reflects evolving linguistic identities that blend Albanian with English, particularly in informal, creative, and peer-group contexts (Shala & Dushi, 2022). As young people engage with global youth culture through YouTube, TikTok, Twitch, and Spotify, their linguistic

repertoire expands to include slang, acronyms, and memes derived largely from English-speaking contexts.

This phenomenon of digitally mediated language shift is not exclusive to Kosovo. A comparative study in North Macedonia by Stanojević and Marković (2019) found that Macedonian-speaking youth on social media use English as a symbolic identifier of modernity and openness. Similarly, in Albania, Xhaferi and Xhaferi (2016) documented how high school and university students used a hybridized Albanian-English lexicon to assert “coolness” and global awareness. These cross-border parallels suggest a region-wide phenomenon influenced more by media exposure and less by direct language contact.

Interestingly, this shift is not just about vocabulary. It represents deeper sociocultural shifts in which English becomes associated with aspiration, independence, and digital fluency, traits highly valued by Kosovo's post-war youth. In contrast, the Albanian language, while symbolically nationalistic, is often viewed as traditional or institution-bound. This symbolic divergence feeds into what Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) describe as the negotiation of identity in multilingual contexts, where bilingualism or code-switching becomes a performative act tied to personal and group identities.

The effects are visible even in educational and professional settings. English is increasingly preferred in private universities, job advertisements, and tech startups in Pristina. Mustafa (2021) warns that this preference, if unchecked, may marginalize Albanian in high-prestige domains, accelerating structural language shift from below.

Case Studies: Media-Language Interaction Across the Balkans and Beyond

A regional comparison highlights that Kosovo is not an isolated case. Montenegro's experience with media and language is instructive. Petrović (2018) notes that Serbian-language television channels imported from Serbia dominate Montenegrin media markets, even after Montenegrin became the official language. This has led to identity confusion and a language loyalty crisis, especially among younger generations.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a highly fractured media system has resulted in a linguistic mosaic, where speakers often switch between Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, depending on the media source (Ćeranić, 2015). While English is less dominant in rural areas, urban youth exposed to international media platforms show growing tendencies toward anglicized communication, both digitally and orally.

Comparative insights from Western Europe and North America further validate media's impact. In Quebec, Canada, exposure to English media was found to influence French-speaking youth's language attitudes, vocabulary, and code-switching tendencies (Lamarre, 2013). In the Netherlands, Blommaert (2010) demonstrated that teenagers from immigrant backgrounds navigated multiple language spheres online, often prioritizing English due to its perceived global relevance.

These studies underscore a global trend: media is not merely a linguistic transmitter but a cultural and ideological force. It shapes the hierarchy of languages within a society by attaching symbolic value to the languages it promotes. For Kosovo, English, via Netflix, YouTube, TikTok, and tech blogs, has become the "language of possibility" for many, while Albanian remains tethered to tradition and formal domains.

Gaps in the Literature and Research Implications

Despite the breadth of scholarship, certain critical gaps remain. Few longitudinal studies exist that track the progression of language shift in Kosovo from the early 2000s to the present. Most research focuses on urban youth, leaving out rural communities where traditional Albanian may still thrive. Moreover, little is known about how gender, class, or religious identity intersects with language preference and media consumption.

Another overlooked aspect is institutional responsibility. While language policy documents emphasize the protection of Albanian, few regulatory mechanisms exist to ensure Albanian media content remains competitive or appealing, especially in digital formats. There is a strong need for state-supported Albanian content creation, including localized streaming services, YouTube channels, and digital education platforms.

Lastly, more interdisciplinary work is needed. Media studies, linguistics, and cultural anthropology must intersect to fully understand how language shift is influenced by not just exposure, but also interpretation, resistance, and creativity.

The relationship between media and language shift is deeply embedded in processes of identity construction, globalization, and digital culture. In Kosovo, this interaction is intensified by a unique historical context, where post-conflict recovery and nation-building intersect with open access to global media. For Albanian speakers, especially among younger demographics, media has become both a cultural resource and a disruptive linguistic force. The increasing dominance of English in entertainment, education, and online spaces reveals

a silent but steady erosion of monolingual Albanian domains, particularly in informal, creative, and aspirational language use.

While media-driven language change is not inherently negative, it raises urgent questions about linguistic equity, cultural continuity, and educational strategy. The prestige associated with English risks relegating Albanian to a more ceremonial or institutional role, potentially weakening its vitality over time. As demonstrated in both regional (Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia) and international (Canada, Netherlands) contexts, this pattern is neither unique nor irreversible, but it requires deliberate policy, creative media intervention, and community awareness to balance global engagement with local linguistic preservation.

Future research must move beyond static snapshots and adopt dynamic, longitudinal, and multi-sited approaches. Ethnographic studies that examine lived linguistic realities across different socioeconomic classes, genders, and rural-urban divides are particularly necessary. Moreover, partnerships between scholars, policymakers, and digital creators could stimulate the production of compelling Albanian-language content that meets youth where they are, on screens.

In sum, the literature reveals that Kosovo stands at a linguistic crossroads. The upcoming stage will be shaped not just by academic perspectives, but also by the ways in which communities decide to manage their multilingual experiences within a media-rich environment.

METHODOLOGY

Kosovo is a multilingual and multiethnic country with a young population and high internet penetration. According to recent reports from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, over 90% of young people between the ages of 18 and 35 have access to smartphones and use the internet regularly, particularly social media and streaming platforms. English is a mandatory subject in the national curriculum and is often perceived as a language of prestige and opportunity, further supported by the dominance of English in digital media content. This combination of sociolinguistic, educational, and technological factors creates a rich context for exploring how media shapes language use. In particular, urban centres such as Pristina, Prizren, and Gjakova offer diverse linguistic environments where local and global influences intersect, making them ideal sites for fieldwork and data collection.

Participants

A total of 100 participants aged 18–35 took part in the survey. Participants were recruited online via social media platforms, ensuring accessibility and

voluntary participation. Stratified sampling was used to achieve demographic balance across gender and urban regions including Pristina, Prizren, Gjakova, and other major cities. The focus group included 7 participants, selected from survey respondents who volunteered for further discussion and represented diverse backgrounds and media use profiles.

Instrument

This study employed a mixed-methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. A structured online questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data on participants' media habits, language preferences, and lexical borrowing practices. Questionnaires, as Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) point out, are highly effective tools in language-related research due to their scalability, structure, and statistical utility.

The survey included multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions covering demographics, social media use, frequency of English word use, and perceptions of language change.

For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured focus group interview was conducted to explore participants' attitudes toward media consumption and language mixing in greater depth. The focus group questions were open-ended, allowing participants to reflect on their personal experiences and to elaborate on themes emerging from the survey results. Both instruments were developed by the researcher and reviewed for clarity and relevance before distribution.

Data Collection

The data collection took place in two phases. In the first phase, the online questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms and remained open for responses over a one-week period. Participation was anonymous, and informed consent was obtained digitally before respondents proceeded to the survey.

In the second phase, a focus group interview was held via Google Meet to facilitate open discussion. Participants were briefed about the research aims and assured of confidentiality. The session was recorded with consent and later transcribed for thematic analysis. This qualitative component aimed to provide contextual depth and validate patterns observed in the survey data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic and behavioral trends, and inferential statistics (e.g., correlation analysis) to examine relationships between media exposure and language use. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the focus group data, identifying recurring patterns and key themes such as language preference,

identity, and perceived impacts of English on Albanian. This mixed-methods triangulation ensured both breadth and depth in understanding the phenomenon of media-induced language shift.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

This chapter introduces the results obtained from the questionnaires and the focus group interview. The survey data is presented in percentages and summaries, while qualitative insights from the focus group offer depth and contextual understanding. The combination of both methods ensures a comprehensive overview of how media influences language shift among young Albanian speakers in Kosovo.

The first section of the questionnaire focused on the demographic background of participants. Among 100 respondents (Table 1.), 58% were women, 39% men, and 3% identified as other. In terms of city residence (Table 2.), 37% were from Pristina, 25% from Prizren, 24% from Gjakova, and the remaining 14% from other cities. These figures indicate that the study mainly involved participants from urban centers where exposure to global media is more prominent. In the focus group, participants from different cities confirmed the widespread influence of English-language media, regardless of regional background.

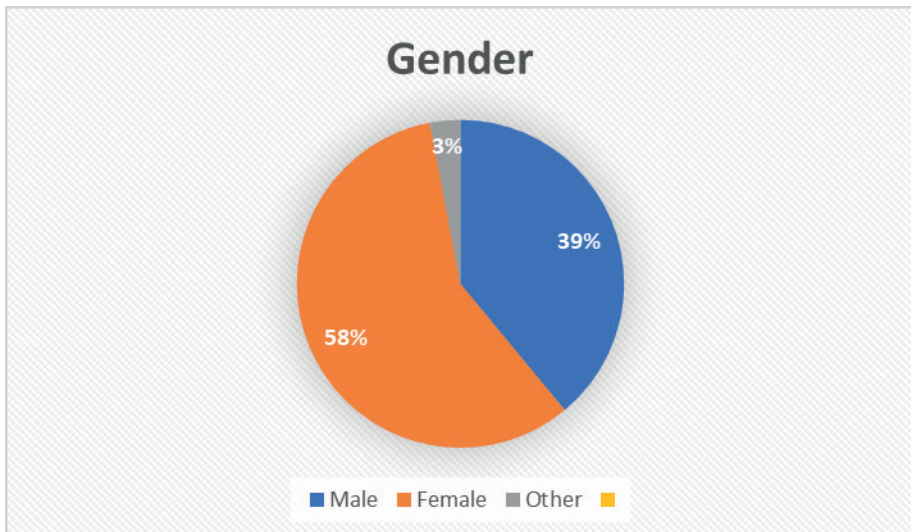


Figure 1. Gender

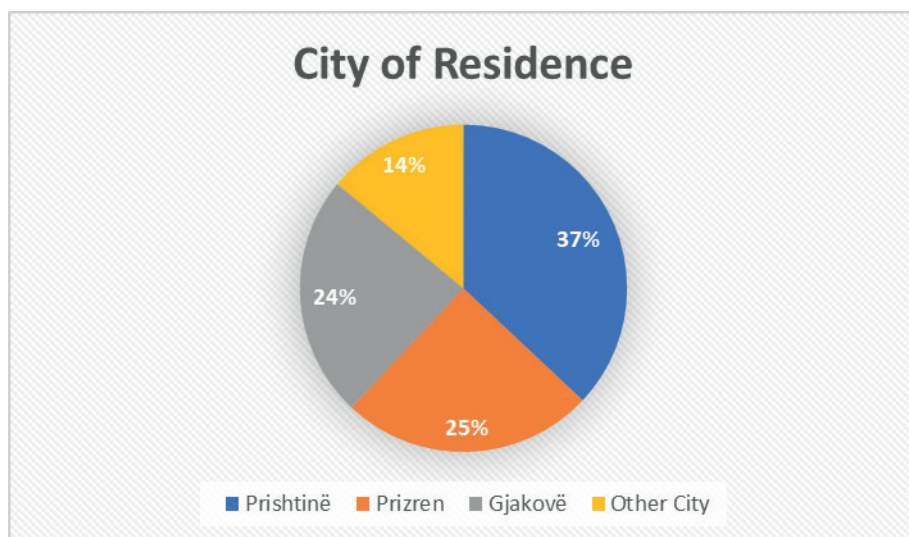


Figure 2. *City of residence*

The following questions explored media usage habits. When asked about daily time spent on social media, 51% of participants reported spending 3–5 hours, 17% more than 5 hours, 31% between 1–2 hours, and 1% less than an hour. These findings reveal a high rate of media consumption, particularly among younger users.

Participants were asked which media platforms they use most frequently (Figure 1). The majority indicated Instagram (82%), followed by TikTok (54%), YouTube (43%), Facebook (41%), streaming platforms such as Netflix (34%), and other platforms (23%). These results confirm that interactive, visual-based platforms are the most widely used. During the focus group, participants frequently mentioned TikTok and Instagram as preferred platforms, emphasizing their algorithm-driven content that keeps users engaged for hours. One participant noted: “In my opinion, TikTok is the most modern social network that people use nowadays.” Another participant added that they learn new English expressions directly from these platforms:

“I spend most of my time on TikTok, so for example, if I see a video about something I’ve read, it sticks in my head. Since I use TikTok so often, I end up using those words a lot too—it becomes easier for me to say them naturally.”

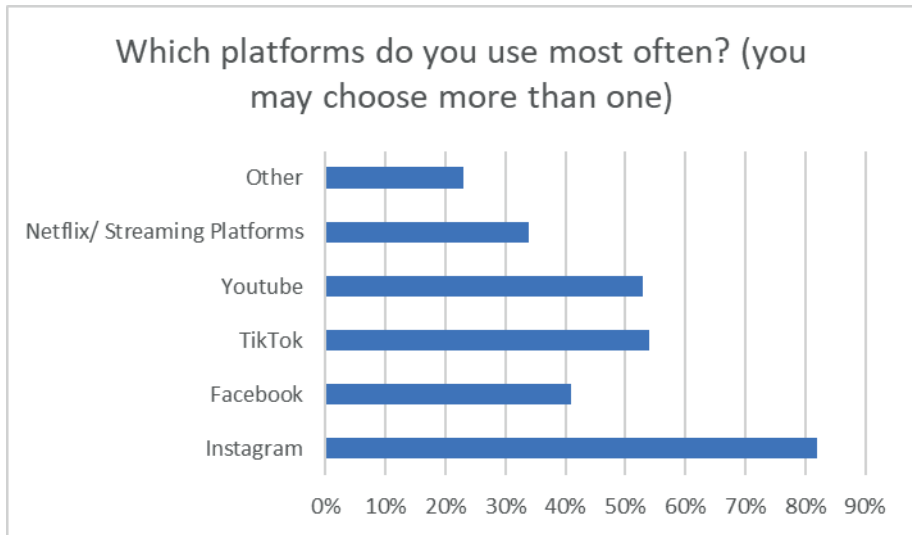


Figure 1. *Most frequently used platforms*

In contrast, when asked about traditional television viewing, 59% said they watch TV rarely, 14% never, 22% occasionally, and only 5% daily.

Regarding language preferences in media consumption, 35% of respondents said they consume media in both Albanian and English, 31% only in English, and another 31% only in Albanian, while 3% mentioned other languages. The focus group reinforced this bilingual tendency, with participants stating that much of the content they enjoy or find educational is in English. Several participants emphasized that the lack of high-quality Albanian content pushes them toward English content: “I had to search in English because what I needed didn’t exist in Albanian.” One participant shared that they had started to prefer English movies and series even with Albanian subtitles turned off: “It just feels more real when I hear it in English.”

Participants were asked to evaluate their English language proficiency. 39% considered themselves advanced, 34% average, 19% very advanced, and 8% beginners. These results align with the frequency of English usage in daily conversations. When asked how often they use English words while speaking Albanian with friends, 30% said often, 43% sometimes, 23% rarely, and 4% never. These findings support the conclusion that English lexical borrowing is widespread. One focus group member commented:

“We use English words even if there’s a word in Albanian—it just sounds more natural to us.” (Participant 6)

The questionnaire included a section assessing understanding of English loanwords used in Albanian media. 61% stated they always understand borrowed words, 25% said sometimes, 12% only if the context is clear, and 2% admitted not understanding them often. The focus group discussion revealed that while some words (e.g., “live,” “okay,” “nice”) are universally understood, others (e.g., “coherence,” “genuine”) caused confusion. One participant said:

“I heard ‘coherence’ on Big Brother, and I had to Google it because I didn’t get it.” (Participant 5)

Another participant explained:

“Sometimes people pretend they know these words, but actually they don’t. It’s more about sounding smart or trendy.” (Participant 1)

Participants were also asked whether they understand specific borrowed English words (Figure 2). For example, the word *live* was understood by 99%, *definitive* by 92%, and *massively* by 86%. However, *genuine* was not understood by 32%, *degraded* by 29%, and *coherence* by 21%. This suggests that while some English words are highly integrated, others remain semantically inaccessible to a portion of the population. In the focus group, some participants admitted to mimicking media language even when not fully understanding it, particularly to seem “in” or humorous. One respondent said:

“A large part of the youth, ..., often use English words and expressions to sound more “in” or more “open”, terms like that, just to keep up with trends.” (Participant 2)

11. Më poshtë janë disa shembuj të fjalëve të përdorura shpesh në media ose nga të rinjtë, por që nuk janë fjalë zyrtare të shqipes. A i kuptoni apo jo shprehjet më poshtë?

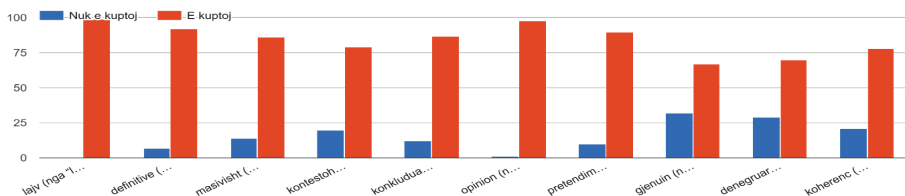


Figure 2. Examples of frequently used borrowed words

When asked to list English words and expressions they commonly use in Albanian conversations, participants mentioned an extensive variety, including: “okay,” “literally,” “cool,” “live,” “nice,” “maybe,” “love,” “I guess,” “thank you,” “hi,” “no way,” and many more. This reflects the casual nature of lexical

borrowing and the normalization of English in informal speech. The focus group echoed this, with participants noting they often insert English phrases unconsciously in everyday communication. One remarked: “It’s like a hybrid language now, especially when chatting online.”

A critical question examined whether using English words in Albanian conversations makes speakers feel more modern or globally connected. 31% agreed, 49% disagreed, and 20% were unsure. The focus group offered nuanced opinions: some participants felt English made them seem more up-to-date or cosmopolitan, while others emphasized cultural loss or saw no connection between language and modernity. Others felt pressured to use English to fit in:

“If you only use English words, you tend to be more easily understood within your social circle.” (Participant 5)

Lastly, the questionnaire asked whether the use of foreign words negatively impacts the development of the Albanian language. 48% expressed concern, 40% viewed it as natural language evolution, 35% believed it depends on context, and 3% had no opinion. This range of responses was reflected in the focus group as well. Some expressed worry that younger generations may lose fluency in academic Albanian. Others believed the shift is harmless or even enriching. One respondent shared:

“This has happened before with Turkish or Serbian. It’s just the next phase, now with English.” (Participant 2)

Another suggested that the solution lies in creating more engaging content in Albanian:

“If Albanian media were more fun or relatable, we’d watch it. But now we just go straight to English stuff.” (Participant 1)

Overall, the combined results of the survey and focus group indicate that media, especially social media, has a substantial influence on the linguistic practices of young Albanians in Kosovo. English lexical borrowing is common and often unconscious, driven by media exposure, bilingual preferences, and social identity factors. The qualitative findings further illustrate how these linguistic behaviors are perceived, adapted, and even questioned by young users themselves. At the same time, opinions remain divided on whether these trends threaten the integrity of the Albanian language or simply represent linguistic adaptation in a globalized world.

Summary of Key Themes from Interviews and Surveys

Theme	Evidence from Survey	Evidence from Interviews
High exposure to social media	51% use it 3–5 hours/day	TikTok and Instagram described as most-used platforms
Preference for English content	31% English only, 35% both languages	Albanian content seen as lacking variety or quality
Lexical borrowing	73% use English words sometimes or often	“Live,” “okay,” “literally” and more used frequently
Comprehension of borrowings	>60% understand frequent borrowed words	“Coherence” or “genuine” not always understood by all
Identity and modernity	31% feel more modern using English	Views range from feeling globally connected to fearing loss
Long-term concern	48% worry about language degradation	Calls for school reform and media awareness to strengthen Albanian

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of digital and traditional media on language shift among young Albanian speakers in Kosovo, focusing particularly on the integration of English loanwords and syntactic features in daily Albanian usage. By adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative survey data with qualitative focus group interviews, the study sought to obtain a comprehensive view of how English, as a global lingua franca, is shaping linguistic behavior in a local, predominantly Albanian-speaking context.

Media Consumption and Linguistic Exposure

The findings strongly support the notion that young people in Kosovo are intensely engaged with digital media, especially social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The survey data revealed that over 68% of participants spend more than 3 hours per day on social media, while traditional television has largely been abandoned by this demographic, with 73% saying they rarely or never watch TV. This reflects a broader global trend among youth populations, where passive media consumption is being replaced by more interactive and personalized digital experiences.

Focus group participants emphasized that the algorithmic structure of platforms like TikTok and Instagram amplifies this shift. Users are constantly served content in English, often with little or no Albanian alternative, leading to increased exposure to English vocabulary, idioms, and even grammar. This aligns with Androutsopoulos (2007), who argued that media serve not only as linguistic input sources but also as participatory arenas where users co-construct linguistic norms through engagement and imitation.

The implications of this finding are profound. Language acquisition, especially lexical borrowing, often occurs passively through repeated exposure. The nature of digital media encourages repetition, remixing, and mimicry, making it an ideal environment for the unconscious adoption of English elements. Participants frequently reported learning English words or phrases simply by hearing them in videos, memes, or comments. One participant described learning the meaning of “coherence” after repeatedly hearing it on Big Brother Albania, a clear example of incidental learning.

Bilingualism and Language Preferences

Another striking finding is the division of media language preferences: 35% consume media in both Albanian and English, while 31% use only English. This suggests a shift toward bilingual media consumption that could, over time, alter language dominance in certain domains. According to Kachru's (1985) model of concentric circles, Kosovo is moving closer to the expanding circle of English usage, where the language is not only learned for external communication but also embedded in internal cultural and identity expressions.

Participants expressed a pragmatic approach to language choice, often preferring English for content that is more engaging, educational, or entertaining. Several focus group members emphasized the lack of Albanian-language alternatives with comparable quality or relevance. This suggests that content availability and perceived prestige are major factors in language preference. If English continues to dominate the spheres of entertainment, education, and lifestyle, it may gradually replace Albanian in informal digital communication.

However, bilingualism does not necessarily equate to language abandonment. Many participants articulated a sense of dual identity, comfortably navigating both linguistic systems. This aligns with Piller (2011), who highlighted the coexistence of multiple linguistic identities in a globalized society. For many young Kosovars, using English does not imply rejecting Albanian but rather expanding their expressive and social toolkit.

Lexical Borrowing and Code-Switching

The phenomenon of code-switching and lexical borrowing was central to both the survey and the focus group. A combined 73% of respondents admitted to using English words either often or sometimes in daily conversations, a finding supported by the focus group in which participants gave numerous examples of borrowed phrases such as “literally,” “okay,” “whatever,” and “cool.” This behavior was most common in informal settings and particularly prevalent in online messaging, supporting Hypothesis 3 (H3).

Thomason and Kaufman (1988) describe lexical borrowing as the first and most common stage of language contact. In this study, the data confirms that English loanwords have permeated everyday Albanian to such a degree that some users are unaware they are switching languages. This unconscious code-switching suggests a high degree of integration. In some cases, words like “live” and “okay” have effectively been naturalized into Albanian speech.

However, comprehension does not always accompany usage. While 61% of survey respondents said they always understood borrowed English words, a significant portion reported difficulty with more complex or less frequent terms like “genuine,” “coherence,” and “degraded.” Focus group participants admitted to imitating words without knowing their full meaning, often relying on context or peer validation. This creates potential for semantic distortion, where words are used inaccurately but still gain widespread acceptance due to media influence.

The long list of English expressions collected in the survey reflects a dynamic, hybridized linguistic environment. It indicates not only lexical borrowing but also a transformation in communicative norms, where certain English expressions have become culturally embedded. The informality and affective power of these words, e.g., “I swear,” “chill,” “literally,” “of course”, may also explain their popularity, as they often express nuance and attitude that native Albanian equivalents may lack or carry differently.

Perceptions of Language Shift and Modernity

A nuanced dimension of the study emerged in how participants perceive the relationship between language use and identity. When asked whether using English makes one seem more modern or globally connected, 31% agreed, while 49% disagreed. Focus group participants expressed ambivalence: some saw English as a symbol of global integration, opportunity, and trendiness, while others viewed it as a threat to cultural and linguistic authenticity.

This finding illustrates the tension between globalism and nationalism in post-conflict societies like Kosovo. On the one hand, English serves as a tool for access—to jobs, education, travel, and global culture. On the other, its dominance may be interpreted as a form of soft cultural imperialism, undermining local language and identity. Crystal (2003) describes this as a key paradox of English as a global language: its utility is undeniable, but its spread often comes at the cost of minority or local languages.

Participants also discussed peer pressure and the social dynamics of language. Several mentioned that using English phrases was a way to fit in, especially online, where group identity is reinforced through shared linguistic codes.

This reflects Tagliamonte's (2016) assertion that youth culture increasingly constructs identity through language borrowed from digital media. In this sense, language borrowing is not just a linguistic phenomenon but a social practice of belonging.

Language Competence and Understanding

Despite high self-reported English proficiency (92% identifying as average to very advanced), gaps in comprehension remain, especially for more complex or context-specific words. The focus group revealed that many participants were confident using popular English words but lacked a deeper understanding of their precise meaning. This partial fluency, what some scholars term "surface bilingualism", can be misleading and may impact academic or professional communication.

From an educational standpoint, this raises concerns. Students may overestimate their English abilities based on passive media exposure, which emphasizes slang, abbreviations, and informal registers. This could result in challenges when confronted with academic English or formal communication contexts. It also calls attention to the need for critical language awareness in education systems, where students are taught not only English grammar and vocabulary but also how to navigate register, tone, and semantic accuracy.

Moreover, the phenomenon of using English words without full comprehension underscores the influence of media as a language teacher. Unlike classroom instruction, media exposure is unstructured and often lacks feedback, making it an unreliable yet powerful source of language learning. As one participant noted, they learned words like "definitive" and "coherence" from watching reality shows, not from schoolbooks or teachers.

Implications for Language Policy and Education

The findings of this study have several implications for language policy, media production, and educational reform in Kosovo. Firstly, there is a clear need for investment in high-quality Albanian-language media that appeals to youth. Many participants indicated that they would consume more Albanian content if it were engaging, creative, and relevant to their interests. This suggests an opportunity for local content creators, educators, and policymakers to strengthen language preservation through digital innovation.

Secondly, schools should address the changing linguistic environment by incorporating discussions on language mixing, media influence, and identity into the curriculum. Rather than discouraging English use outright, educators could guide students in understanding when, how, and why code-switching occurs, and how to use both languages effectively and appropriately.

Language policy must also take into account the realities of digital communication. Purist approaches that seek to exclude English loanwords from Albanian are unlikely to succeed without offering functional, culturally resonant alternatives. As seen in this study, language shift is not merely a matter of preference but of availability, relatability, and social signaling.

Finally, further research should explore longitudinal patterns of language shift in Kosovo. This study provides a snapshot, but a deeper understanding of how media habits evolve and how language use changes over time would offer valuable insights for both linguists and educators. Comparative studies between urban and rural populations, or between Kosovo and other multilingual Balkan contexts, would also enhance the broader applicability of these findings.

In conclusion, this study confirms that digital media, especially social platforms, play a significant role in shaping the language practices of young Albanian speakers in Kosovo. English lexical borrowing is frequent and often unconscious, facilitated by high exposure to English-language content and limited Albanian-language alternatives. While this trend is seen by some as a threat to linguistic integrity, others embrace it as part of a global, bilingual identity.

Through both quantitative and qualitative data, the study has illustrated that media is not simply a background factor but a central actor in linguistic change. As such, efforts to preserve and strengthen the Albanian language must contend with the realities of digital engagement and the cultural capital of English. Balancing these forces will require nuanced, inclusive, and innovative approaches from educators, media producers, and policymakers alike.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the influence of media on language shift among young Albanian speakers in Kosovo, with particular focus on the incorporation of English vocabulary and expressions into daily Albanian communication. Through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from a focus group interview, the research has provided a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of language use in a rapidly globalizing and digitally connected society.

The results confirm that media, especially digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, are central agents in driving language change. These platforms not only expose young people to English but also create environments where the integration of English into Albanian becomes normalized, even unconscious. Survey results revealed that over 80% of respondents regularly consume content on social media platforms, with more than 30% indicating that

they use English words frequently in Albanian conversations. The focus group further contextualized these behaviors, demonstrating that English borrowing is often viewed as a practical, expressive, and socially meaningful act.

A key finding is that many participants, while fluent in casual or colloquial English, may lack deeper semantic understanding of certain borrowed terms. This partial or surface-level fluency reflects the unstructured nature of language acquisition through media and raises questions about the implications for formal education and communication. It also points to the need for educational institutions to address media-driven language exposure through curricula that promote critical language awareness.

The study also highlights that while some young people in Kosovo perceive English usage as a sign of modernity or global belonging, others remain concerned about the erosion of Albanian linguistic identity. This tension reflects broader cultural debates about globalization, identity, and linguistic preservation. As such, the findings reinforce the importance of creating high-quality, youth-oriented Albanian media that can compete with global content and offer engaging alternatives that strengthen local language use.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the study contributes to our understanding of language shift as a complex, multidimensional process influenced by access, prestige, identity, and media habits. It also offers practical implications for educators and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of supporting bilingual competence rather than opposing language contact altogether. The Albanian language in Kosovo is not being replaced by English, but it is evolving in ways that reflect young people's engagement with the wider world.

In conclusion, the influence of media on language use in Kosovo is both powerful and nuanced. While English increasingly permeates everyday communication, especially among the youth, this does not necessarily signal a linguistic crisis. Instead, it calls for strategic and informed efforts to support balanced bilingualism, strengthen Albanian language infrastructure, and cultivate a media environment where linguistic and cultural diversity can thrive. Future research might consider longitudinal studies or comparisons with other regions undergoing similar linguistic transitions, offering further insights into the global-local interplay shaping language in the 21st century.

Implications and Contribution

The findings will contribute to sociolinguistic theory by providing empirical evidence on the mechanisms of language shift in digitally connected societies. For policymakers and educators, the study can offer guidance on language planning and curriculum design that addresses the evolving linguistic landscape.

It may also support efforts to preserve linguistic purity while embracing multilingualism.

Practicalities and Potential Research

This research can be conducted with modest resources, utilizing online tools for surveys and interviews. Future research could expand the age range of participants, compare urban and rural populations, or explore the influence of other languages besides English. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insight into the permanence of media-induced linguistic changes.

Limitations of the Study

This study will shed light on the perspectives of both teachers and students about student engagement in English language learning, but it is not without limitations. Because the study will rely on self-reported data from surveys, there is a chance that participants would give answers that are biased and not reflect their actual opinions, which could alter the results. Furthermore, the use of a quantitative method may limit the depth of understanding that could be gained. The closed-ended nature of the survey items will restrict participants' ability to fully elaborate on their experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, the study will research a sample of students and teachers from a private language course in Prizren, which aren't representative of the broader population of English learners and educators in Kosovo, especially considering potential differences between public and private education settings. Therefore, future research could consider expanding to public schools to enhance generalizability.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how media influences linguistic practices among young Albanian speakers in Kosovo, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of language change in a globalized world.

Recommendations

The findings of this qualitative study reveal that social media platforms play a substantial role in influencing the language practices of Albanian-speaking youth in Kosovo, particularly through the borrowing of English lexicon. While participants acknowledge the functional ease and global connectivity enabled by English usage, they simultaneously express concern about the potential marginalization of the Albanian language. Accordingly, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Integrate Media and Language Awareness in School Curricula

Educational institutions should incorporate elective courses or workshops focusing on the relationship between media, language use, and cultural identity.

Such initiatives would enable students to critically reflect on the effects of digital media on their linguistic choices and develop a more conscious approach to language use.

2. Invest in Albanian-Language Digital Content

Ministries of education and culture, in collaboration with local content creators, should prioritize the development of high-quality educational and entertainment materials in the Albanian language. This includes digital platforms, animated videos, academic tools, and multimedia resources that are culturally relevant and linguistically rich.

3. Develop Media Guidelines to Support Linguistic Identity

National media institutions and regulatory bodies are encouraged to establish guidelines that promote the use of standardized Albanian in public broadcasts. These guidelines should discourage excessive use of code-switching or unnecessary borrowing from English, while also recognizing the evolving nature of language in the digital age.

4. Promote Language Awareness Campaigns Among Youth

Targeted campaigns should raise awareness among young people about the importance of preserving and promoting the Albanian language. Collaborations with influencers, educators, and local figures who model linguistically mindful behavior online can help shift attitudes and reinforce positive language practices.

5. Enhance Teacher Training on Language and Media Literacy

Teacher education programs should include modules that address the intersection of media influence and language change. Educators must be equipped to foster student understanding of linguistic diversity, the impact of globalization on language, and strategies for maintaining linguistic integrity.

6. Encourage Family and Community Engagement in Language Use

Since language development begins in the home environment, parents and community leaders should be included in language preservation efforts. Workshops, community events, and family-centered media programming can promote intergenerational dialogue and active use of Albanian in everyday contexts.

These recommendations aim to support a more balanced linguistic environment where global influences coexist with the preservation and cultivation of the Albanian language and cultural identity..

References

- Androutopoulos, J. (2007). Language choice and code-switching in German-based diasporic web forums. *Discourse, Communication and Media*, 1(4), 29–50.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511845307>
- Bytyqi, M., & Rexhepi, A. (2018). The interplay of Albanian and English in Kosovo's online journalism. *Media Studies Journal*, 5(2), 89–104.
- Ćeranić, J. (2015). Language, media and ethnic identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Southeast European Politics*, 16(1), 77–92.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Dika, A. (2020). Education, media, and language shift in Kosovo. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 24(4), 567–583. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12400>
- Hajrullahu, V. (2019). Language policy and language shift in Kosovo: A sociolinguistic perspective. *European Journal of Language Policy*, 11(2), 165–183. <https://doi.org/10.3828/ejlp.2019.11>
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the Outer Circle. In R. Quirk & H. G. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world* (pp. 11–30). Cambridge University Press.
- Kovačević, I. (2020). Anglicisms in Serbian online journalism. *Slavia Centralis*, 13(2), 45–59.
- Lamarre, P. (2013). Catching “franglais” in Montreal: Hybrid identities, bilingualism, and language practices among youth. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 17(1), 115–144. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12013>
- Mustafa, B. (2021). Globalization and language change in Kosovo: The media's role. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 21(3), 301–316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2020.1849533>
- Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. Multilingual Matters. <https://www.multilingual-matters.com/page/detail/?k=9781853596463>
- Petrović, T. (2018). Language and identity politics in Montenegro: The role of media in the codification of Montenegrin. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 20(4), 335–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2018.1388601>
- Piller, I. (2011). *Intercultural communication: A critical introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Shala, A., & Dushi, D. (2022). The impact of social media on the Albanian language in Kosovo. *Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 10(1), 101–118. <https://journals.aau.dk/index.php/jmcr/article/view/7028>
- Spahiu, I. (2017). English as a threat to Albanian language in Kosovo. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(12), 23–28. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/36760>
- Stanojević, M., & Marković, D. (2019). English influence on Macedonian youth communication. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 13(1), 88–110.
- Tagliamonte, S. (2016). *So sick or so cool? The language of youth on social media*. Oxford University Press.
- Xhaferi, G., & Xhaferi, B. (2016). The effect of English language media on youth language use in Albania. *European Scientific Journal*, 12(17), 157–167. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n17p157>
- Zeqiri, V. (2016). Language maintenance and shift among young Albanians in Pristina. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 29(1), 88–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2015.1128735>

ENGLISH SLANG AS SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONG KOSOVO'S GENERATION Z

Nderim ZUÇAKU¹

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Youth slang, especially in multilingual and post-conflict societies like Kosovo, operates not only as a linguistic style but also as a cultural and social tool for expressing identity, forming peer bonds, and gaining symbolic capital. In the Balkan context, youth language is influenced by multiple languages (Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, English) and reflects shifting power dynamics, globalization, and social stratification. The role of English slang in Kosovo's Gen Z is particularly linked to digital culture, urban status markers, and expressions of modernity and prestige. In the dynamic landscape of post-conflict Kosovo, language has emerged as a central component in the construction of youth identities, particularly in urban areas, where English, once considered foreign, is now increasingly integrated into the vernacular of the younger generation.

Kosovo's population is one of the youngest in Europe, with Gen Z forming a substantial demographic whose linguistic practices reflect broader socio-political and cultural transformations (Nushi, 2016). Within this framework, slang becomes not just a form of playful expression but a tool for accruing social capital, asserting group belonging, and constructing a sense of status. Sociolinguistic studies have long emphasized the social function of slang as a marker of in-group solidarity and out-group differentiation (Eckert, 2000). In Kosovo, this role is magnified by the nation's complex linguistic ecology and its heavy exposure to globalized English through social media, streaming platforms, and diasporic networks. English slang is increasingly seen as a

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo;nderim.zucaku10@gmail.com

prestige variety, especially among urban, digitally connected youth, and is often associated with cosmopolitanism, modernity, and access to global culture (Medjedović & Nastić, 2021).

The adoption of English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z reflects what Bourdieu (1991) describes as the accumulation of symbolic capital, a form of social power derived from language use that can translate into real-world advantages, such as peer status or educational opportunity. In peer interactions, for instance, fluency in contemporary English expressions can serve as an indicator of "coolness" or intellectual superiority, thereby granting users higher visibility and status in both physical and virtual spaces (Ilie, 2018). This linguistic distinction operates alongside traditional forms of capital (economic, cultural) but plays a unique role in negotiating identity in a transitional society. Kosovo's unique history, including war, independence, and ongoing political liminality, has contributed to a fragmented national identity, which makes youth more susceptible to constructing hybrid identities. English slang in this context serves as a tool of identity, facilitating the creative recombination of linguistic resources to assert individuality and group affiliation (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). For many Gen Z individuals in Kosovo, speaking with a "slangy" English-influenced accent or using Anglicized phrases may signal aspirations beyond national borders, toward Europe or the broader Western world. Importantly, slang also serves as a boundary-making tool that delineates social hierarchies within Gen Z subcultures. As Androutopoulos (2010) notes, digital communication platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Discord provide fertile grounds for the circulation and stylization of youth language. In Kosovo, this process is evident in the way certain slang terms are borrowed, localized, and repurposed, creating unique forms of expression that blend Albanian syntax with English lexicon (Selimi & Gorani, 2022). Mastery of such forms often signals cultural literacy and insider status in influential youth circles. At the same time, this trend raises questions about linguistic inequality, as access to English slang is unevenly distributed. Youth from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds may lack the digital exposure or educational opportunities to fully engage in these slang-based practices, potentially reinforcing social divisions (Kraus & Friedrich, 2020). Thus, slang operates as a double-edged sword: a site of empowerment and exclusion.

Previous studies in Eastern European and Balkan contexts reinforce the argument that youth language is a key arena for contesting power, expressing resistance, and claiming visibility. For instance, research from Albania and Serbia has shown how English is being used by urban youth to resist traditional norms and signal progressive identities (Petrović, 2019; Gashi, 2020). These dynamics resonate strongly in Kosovo, where a post-war generation seeks

to reimagine its future using the symbolic tools offered by global culture. English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z is more than a linguistic trend; it is a strategic asset in the negotiation of identity and social capital. Understanding its functions and meanings requires a nuanced sociolinguistic lens that accounts for globalization, digital culture, youth agency, and linguistic hybridity.

Statement of the Problem

In Kosovo's increasingly globalized and multilingual context, English has become a prominent linguistic tool among young people, particularly Generation Z. Within this trend, the use of English slang in everyday communication by Kosovar youth is emerging as more than just a stylistic choice; it appears to serve deeper social and identity-related functions. However, the sociolinguistic role of English slang in shaping social capital and youth identity in Kosovo remains significantly under-researched. Previous studies have noted the growing role of English in Kosovo as a neutral and prestigious language that bridges ethnic divides, especially between Albanian and Serbian communities (Lohaj, 2018). However, while such research offers insight into the broader use of English as a lingua franca, it does not address the specific ways in which slang, informal, non-standard English vocabulary contributes to group belonging, identity performance, and status negotiation among youth. Recent findings in similar regional contexts suggest that young people use English colloquialisms and slang as tools for navigating intercultural communication and performing globalized identities (Flett Klossi, 2024). This indicates that slang may serve not only a communicative function but also a symbolic one, indicating alignment with global youth culture, modernity, and digital fluency.

Moreover, in Kosovo's post-conflict society, identity formation continues to be shaped by education, language policy, and national discourse (Kastrati, 2016). While studies have explored how formal education contributes to ethnic identity construction, they often overlook informal linguistic practices like slang, which may have equally strong effects on how young people perceive themselves and others in their social environment. As digital culture continues to expand, and English slang circulates through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, Kosovo's youth are actively reshaping their linguistic repertoires. There is a pressing need to understand how these language practices interact with local cultural values, educational systems, and social hierarchies. This study addresses the gap in existing literature by exploring how English slang is used among Kosovo's Gen Z as a marker of social capital and identity. It provides insights into how language reflects youth agency, cultural aspirations, and a sense of belonging in a society that stands at the intersection of local tradition and global influence.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the role of English slang in shaping social status and identity among Kosovo's Gen Z. The study aims to understand how slang functions within this demographic, exploring its linguistic, social, and cultural implications. In particular, the research focuses on how slang is used as a marker of social capital and its contribution to the formation of group identity among young people in Kosovo. To achieve this, the following specific objectives guide the study:

1. To examine the nature and functions of English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z, including how it is used to create in-groups and out-groups, as well as its role in establishing social status and identity.
2. To explore the relationship between English slang and social capital, analyzing how the use of slang helps young people establish social connections and signal membership in particular social groups.
3. To investigate how digital media and global pop culture influence the adoption and evolution of English slang among youth in Kosovo, particularly through platforms such as social media and music.
4. To analyze the role of bilingualism and English-Albanian code-mixing in the use of English slang, and how this practice contributes to the creation of a unique linguistic identity within Kosovo's Gen Z.
5. To identify the perceptions and attitudes of different social groups (e.g., parents, teachers, peers) towards the use of English slang, and to understand how these perceptions impact the social acceptance and usage of slang among youth.

These objectives address the research gap concerning the specific role of English slang within Kosovo's youth culture, contributing valuable insights to the fields of sociolinguistics, identity studies, and youth culture.

Research Aim

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the role of English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z, exploring its impact on social identity formation, social capital, and group dynamics. This study examines how the use of English slang serves as a marker of status, belonging, and self-expression among young people in Kosovo, considering both its linguistic and cultural implications. By analyzing how different social groups employ slang, the research aims to understand how youth use English slang to navigate their relationships within peer groups, create in-group solidarity, and assert their social status. Furthermore, the study explores the influence of global media, social networks,

and pop culture on the evolution and dissemination of slang terms among this demographic, particularly in the hybridization of English with the Albanian language.

Additionally, this research examines how perceptions of slang vary across generations and how slang is viewed by older generations, educational institutions, and other authoritative figures. The findings contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics by providing new insights into how global linguistic trends are adapted, appropriated, and localized in Kosovo, with a particular focus on their influence on youth culture, identity, and the construction of social capital in a globalized world.

Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the role of English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z, specifically its impact on their social identity, group affiliation, and cultural expression. The research aims to answer the following primary questions:

1. How does the use of English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z function as a marker of social capital in peer interactions?
2. What role does English slang play in the identity formation of Kosovo's Gen Z, and how do personal experiences shape their perception and use of slang?
3. How do external influences such as social media, pop culture, and peer groups shape the adoption and evolution of English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z?

Significance of the Study

This study offers valuable contributions to the fields of sociolinguistics, language and identity studies, and youth culture, particularly within the unique socio-cultural landscape of Kosovo. By examining the use of English slang among Gen Z in Kosovo, the research explores how language functions as a marker of social capital, reflecting youth identities, social hierarchies, and the influence of globalized digital culture. The study highlights how English slang is not used randomly or merely for entertainment, but rather as a strategic linguistic resource that young people use to position themselves socially. It provides insight into how slang contributes to the formation of in-groups and out-groups, how it signals prestige, and how it reflects aspirations related to modernity, digital fluency, and global connectedness. These findings deepen our understanding of how language practices shape and reflect identity, especially in post-conflict and multilingual societies.

Additionally, this research fills a significant gap in the literature by focusing on Kosovo's youth, a demographic often overlooked in sociolinguistic studies, particularly in discussions of global English slang and digital communication. It offers a localized perspective on how global language trends are adapted, reinterpreted, and given new meaning by a generation growing up in a country undergoing rapid social and technological transformation. For educators and language policy makers, the findings provide important implications for English language teaching (ELT). The study encourages a rethinking of traditional language ideologies that often dismiss slang as incorrect or irrelevant. Instead, it advocates for more inclusive and culturally responsive approaches that recognize the communicative power and social value of youth language.

Furthermore, this research contributes to broader academic discussions on language, power, and identity, offering a case study that illustrates how linguistic practices intersect with socio-economic background, digital access, urban-rural divides, and cultural capital. It also provides a foundation for future research on youth language in the Balkans and other similar multilingual, post-conflict regions. Ultimately, this study not only enriches academic literature but also amplifies the voices of Kosovo's Gen Z, highlighting how their language choices reflect creativity, agency, and social awareness in a rapidly changing world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature and Functions of Slang

While slang has traditionally been dismissed as informal or deviant language, recent scholarship reframes it as a complex, dynamic linguistic system with important sociolinguistic functions. Historically, slang was perceived as peripheral to standard language collection of ephemeral, playful, or vulgar expressions lacking grammatical or lexical stability. However, this narrow view has been increasingly challenged.

Eble (2012) characterizes slang not simply as informal speech but as a "set of words with special connotations, often deliberately different from standard meanings," emphasizing its innovative nature and social embeddedness. Similarly, Coleman (2014) argues that slang is not merely casual speech but a form of stylistic and strategic language used for group cohesion and social commentary. These perspectives highlight the performative role of slang, rather than its grammatical structure or lexical deviations. Matthews (2014) supports this broader definition, noting that slang constitutes a linguistic performance that reflects the speaker's identity, positioning, and creativity. Slang, from this vantage point, is not a defective or lazy form of speech but an adaptive,

expressive modality of human communication. Eckert (2011) furthers this argument by situating slang within “communities of practice,” where language variation is used to express social alignment and identity, particularly among adolescents. In digital and multilingual contexts, slang’s definition expands even further. Androutsopoulos (2016) shows how digital media reshape slang’s boundaries, allowing for rapid innovation and translocal spread of new linguistic forms. Similarly, Zhou and Fan (2013), analyzing Chinese internet slang, demonstrate that slang functions as a socio-cognitive tool for expressing collective identity, humor, and dissent in digital spaces. Together, these studies highlight the limitations of traditional linguistic taxonomies and advocate for a socioculturally situated understanding of slang as a dynamic linguistic repertoire.

Beyond questions of definition, slang serves a range of vital social and cultural functions. It operates as a powerful tool for expressing identity, signaling group membership, and negotiating power relations. One of the most enduring insights in sociolinguistics is that language varies systematically with social structure (Labov, 2010), and slang, in particular, reflects such variation in real time.

Bucholtz (2011) illustrates how youth deploy slang as a means of “doing identity,” particularly within racialized and gendered peer groups. Slang becomes a resource for both aligning with and resisting dominant cultural discourses. Cutler (2010) similarly examines how white teenagers appropriate African American Vernacular English (AAVE) slang as a means of affiliating with hip-hop culture, often without a corresponding understanding of the sociopolitical weight carried by such language. Her analysis highlights the tensions between linguistic borrowing and cultural appropriation. The role of slang in affirming group solidarity is also evident in studies of homosocial talk. Kiesling (2005) argues that slang enables bonding among men by conveying humor, toughness, and insider status, often through play with taboo or competitive banter. Meanwhile, Tagliamonte and Denis (2008), using corpus analysis of teen instant messaging, demonstrate that slang usage is highly patterned across social variables like age, gender, and peer influence, reinforcing in-group norms.

Importantly, slang also operates as a form of resistance and linguistic rebellion. Alim (2009) conceptualizes youth in “hip-hop nations” as cultural theorists who use slang to critique hegemonic power structures and reclaim voice. Slang, in this sense, is a form of sociopolitical discourse. Bowers (2014) echoes this in urban youth contexts, where slang is wielded to contest marginalization and assert agency in everyday life. Cultural specificity further shapes slang’s function. Mooney and Evans (2015) emphasize that slang

embodies local humor, shared experiences, and implicit cultural codes that outsiders may not be able to access. Thus, slang is not only a means of identity formation but also a gatekeeping mechanism, demarcating who belongs within a particular community or discourse.

Theoretical Framework: Slang, Social Capital, and Identity

The foundational work of Labov (1972) emphasized the systematic relationship between linguistic variation and social stratification. In his study of New York speech patterns, Labov demonstrated that variation in pronunciation was not random but patterned along lines of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and age. This principle extends directly to the usage of slang, which often indexes not only youth status but specific subcultural affiliations (Labov, 1972). Slang thus becomes a marker of social differentiation and an agent of linguistic change. Building on this, Gumperz (1982) introduced the concept of code-switching, which refers to the strategic alternation between linguistic codes depending on context and social intent. In multilingual settings like Kosovo, where Albanian, Serbian, and increasingly English interact, code-switching can involve the deliberate use of English slang to project cosmopolitanism, global belonging, or modernity (Gumperz, 1982). This view aligns with Androutsopoulos's (2006) work on the role of English in diasporic and online youth cultures, where multilingual speakers adopt English slang as a flexible resource to articulate hybrid identities.

Another key development in sociolinguistic theory is Eckert's (2000) Community of Practice model, which shifts attention from macro-social categories to the role of local group dynamics in shaping language use. According to Eckert, youth slang is not just a reflection of age but emerges from shared practices, norms, and values of peer groups. This perspective allows for an analysis of slang not merely as age-graded but as embedded in dynamic micro-social formations. Eckert's ethnographic work in American high schools showed how "jocks" and "burnouts" developed distinct linguistic styles, including slang, as part of their identity work (Eckert, 2000).

While sociolinguists have demonstrated the role of slang in identity construction, Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital offers a complementary sociological lens. Bourdieu identified several forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic, which interact to define social positioning. In this framework, language operates as a form of symbolic capital, the value of which is determined by the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1986). Slang, while often devalued in formal contexts, can acquire high social value within peer groups, functioning as a marker of cultural competence and group membership.

For Kosovo's Gen Z, who navigate both local norms and global digital cultures, English slang becomes a form of transnational symbolic capital. As observed in youth sociolinguistic studies (Cutler, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004), mastery of global vernaculars like African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or TikTok-driven slang can enhance one's prestige and influence within digital peer networks. This perspective is consistent with Bourdieu's claim that symbolic capital is contextually defined: what is valorized in one field (e.g., the digital youth field) may be delegitimized in another (e.g., formal education). Moreover, slang also reflects embodied cultural capital; it involves not just lexical knowledge but fluency, style, and performance (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). Youths who employ slang effectively accrue social capital, appearing authentic and 'in the know,' while those who misuse it risk social marginalization. Thus, slang is not merely a linguistic artifact but a social currency that must be properly contextualized and performed.

The sociocognitive underpinnings of slang use are effectively framed by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from group memberships. Language, particularly slang, plays a crucial role in delineating in-groups and out-groups, reinforcing social cohesion among insiders while excluding outsiders. Slang becomes a boundary marker tool for achieving positive distinctiveness by contrasting one's group against others.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that group identity is maintained through cognitive processes such as social categorization, social comparison, and social identification. In the case of Kosovo's youth, English slang, especially when sourced from digital media like YouTube, TikTok, and rap culture, functions as a symbolic resource through which young people align themselves with global youth identities and differentiate themselves from older generations or formal institutions. Bucholtz (1999) provides further support for this perspective, showing how non-mainstream youth groups (e.g., "nerd girls") use linguistic practices including unique slang to resist normative identity categories and assert autonomy. Furthermore, the fluidity of slang, its rapid evolution, and context-dependency mirror the dynamic and situational nature of social identity itself. As youth navigate multiple identities (local, ethnic, digital, gendered), slang offers a malleable tool for expressing those identities in nuanced ways (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). It also allows for performative identity, where one's social identity is not just described but actively constituted through language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

The Digital Age: External Influences on Slang Evolution

This section investigates the external influences that contribute to the evolution and spread of slang, particularly in the digital age. It will explore the role of social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter, as linguistic accelerators for the circulation of slang. Additionally, the section will examine the impact of pop culture, especially music genres like hip-hop and rap, in disseminating slang globally, as well as the role of peer networks and online subcultures in reinforcing and shaping slang usage.

The evolution of slang in the digital age is increasingly shaped by technological, cultural, and social dynamics that extend beyond traditional face-to-face interaction. With the advent of online platforms and global media, slang has become more fluid, accelerated, and internationally diffused. This section explores the critical role of social media, music, and pop culture, and peer networks in influencing the spread and adoption of slang, particularly among youth populations. These external factors have created new pathways for linguistic innovation, enabling slang to function simultaneously as a local identity marker and a transnational linguistic phenomenon.

Social media has emerged as one of the most potent forces in the contemporary spread of slang. Platforms such as TikTok, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and Snapchat allow slang to emerge, be modified, and disseminated at a pace previously unattainable through traditional social interaction. Tagliamonte (2021) emphasizes the growing influence of digital platforms on adolescent language practices, arguing that youth not only consume but actively reshape linguistic forms in digital spaces. These environments serve as interactive arenas where users co-construct and validate emerging slang terms in real time. Similarly, Minaev et al. (2023) highlight how TikTok in particular has become a central site for the formation and distribution of emergent vernaculars. Through short-form videos, trends, and participatory content, TikTok allows users to remix and disseminate slang across cultural and national boundaries with unprecedented speed. Zappavigna (2020) further explores how hashtags function as semiotic markers that both categorize content and encode linguistic identities, reinforcing slang within digital subcultures and facilitating its viral circulation.

In addition to digital media, music, especially hip-hop and rap, continues to serve as a key driver of slang evolution and globalization. As a cultural force rooted in African American Vernacular English (AAVE), hip-hop has long been associated with linguistic innovation and rebellion. Alim (2011) conceptualizes hip-hop as a site of “global illiteracies,” wherein localized expressions are recontextualized and adopted across the globe through stylized performance.

This global linguistic flow allows slang rooted in specific communities to gain symbolic power and prestige internationally.

Cutler (2003) underscores the role of authenticity in the adoption of hip-hop slang, noting how linguistic features associated with African American culture are appropriated by white youth as a means of constructing subcultural identities. This form of stylization reflects a complex interplay of race, class, and linguistic capital, where slang becomes a performative resource. Androutsopoulos (2009) further situates pop music as a transnational medium through which slang and stylized language are normalized, particularly among youth who engage with English-language media globally. Therefore, music and pop culture do not merely reflect existing slang; they actively participate in its creation and redistribution. Through lyrics, visual aesthetics, and artist-fan interactions, music operates as a linguistic transmitter, embedding slang into global youth discourse and often elevating certain terms to iconic status.

While social media and pop culture are powerful engines of slang dissemination, the reinforcement and sustained use of slang occur primarily within peer networks. Slang thrives in these contexts because it functions as a form of in-group communication, signaling belonging and shared cultural understanding. Eckert's (2000) notion of "communities of practice" illustrates how linguistic variation is tied to social practice and group identity. Within these communities, slang serves not only as a linguistic resource but also as a symbolic marker of solidarity. Bucholtz (2002) expands on this idea by examining how youth use stylization to perform and negotiate identities. In peer interactions, both online and offline, slang is often used to mark coolness, defiance, or subcultural alignment. These meanings are reinforced through repetition, humor, and correction, making peer approval a central mechanism in the naturalization of slang.

Online communities further amplify these dynamics. Tagg and Seargeant (2017) analyze how social media platforms facilitate convivial interaction, enabling youth to co-construct shared vocabularies that reflect their values and aesthetics. Through participatory practices such as commenting, sharing, and remixing, slang is not only circulated but also evaluated and reshaped according to group norms. The digital age has restructured the ecology of slang evolution, situating it at the intersection of media, culture, and social interaction. Social media accelerates its visibility, pop culture enhances its prestige, and peer networks ensure its longevity and cultural embeddedness.

Kosovo's Linguistic Landscape: The Role of English Slang

Bilingualism in Kosovo, particularly among younger speakers, is a fundamental feature shaping linguistic practices, including slang. Code-

mixing between English and Albanian has emerged as a common mode of communication, especially in urban centers like Pristina, where linguistic fluidity is seen as a marker of modernity and social agility. Gashi (2019) conducted an ethnographic and survey-based study on language practices among Kosovar youth and found that code-mixing with English was employed not out of linguistic deficiency, but rather as a deliberate stylistic and social choice, signaling cosmopolitan identity and digital fluency. Further reinforcing this trend, Mesthrie (2017) places Kosovo within a broader Balkan pattern of English integration, where English increasingly permeates informal speech registers and is seen as ideologically neutral, flexible, and global. The pragmatic usage of English-aligned slang within Albanian syntactic frameworks is not merely linguistic borrowing, but rather a dynamic expression of hybrid linguistic identity. These findings indicate that slang in bilingual contexts functions not only as informal language but also as a strategic cultural resource for identity performance.

English in Kosovo enjoys significant symbolic capital. It is closely tied to upward mobility, global connectivity, and participation in international youth culture. Phillipson and Skenderi (2021) argue that the widespread perception of English as a prestige language is supported by educational policies, media exposure, and societal aspirations toward Western models of development. Their analysis shows that fluency in English and the use of English slang terms often index an individual's social status, education level, and access to global networks. Muçaj (2018) further explores how English is valorized as a tool of self-differentiation, particularly among young Kosovars who aspire to signal affiliation with modern, transnational identities. This is echoed in Kelmendi's (2020) study, which suggests that for many urban youth, the use of English slang often adapted phonetically and semantically into Albanian speech has become a badge of generational distinction. These patterns illustrate that English slang is not simply emulated, but localized in ways that reflect its prestige and symbolic functions. The study of slang in Kosovo and the broader Balkan region has revealed important insights into youth identity, resistance, and sociolinguistic innovation. Duraku (2022) documents the increasing frequency of English slang in Kosovar youth's digital interactions, particularly on social media platforms where language innovation thrives. The incorporation of slang terms from English into local speech is not passive borrowing but active cultural shaping, allowing youth to redefine norms of linguistic acceptability and coolness. In a comparative study, Trpkova and Nikoloska (2020) analyze slang usage across several Balkan contexts and emphasize its function as a form of symbolic resistance to traditional hierarchies. Their work highlights how slang reflects both global influences (such as American hip-hop culture) and local vernacular

creativity. Petrovic (2016) extends this argument, noting that new urban speech patterns in the Balkans, including slang-infused English-Albanian hybrids, reflect the region's transitional sociopolitical landscape.

From an educational perspective, Bytyqi (2017) finds that slang and code-mixing practices have entered even semi-formal classroom environments in Kosovo, where teachers often tolerate and occasionally adopt English slang expressions to better connect with students. Finally, Gjokaj and Berisha (2021) argue that the emergence of "Kosovar English," a term used to describe the unique blending of Albanian and English linguistic features, may signal the early formation of a localized dialect born out of sustained code-switching and youth innovation.

Attitudes toward English Slang: Social Perceptions and Consequences

This section discusses the social perceptions of English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z and the broader societal implications. It will examine the positive perceptions of slang, including its role in empowerment and youth agency, alongside the negative perceptions, such as the stigma attached to slang by older generations and institutions. Additionally, the section will explore how educational institutions attempt to regulate slang and the paradox of valuing English while stigmatizing its slang.

English slang among youth is often celebrated as a medium of self-expression, social bonding, and symbolic resistance to traditional norms. Studies conducted in Kosovo reveal that slang is a form of linguistic empowerment among Gen Z, enabling them to articulate group solidarity and modern identities (Arifi & Gashi, 2021; Krasniqi, 2018). Slang terms adopted from global digital platforms such as TikTok and Twitter are commonly used to signal alignment with global youth culture and a rejection of conservative linguistic expectations (Blaku, 2021). Mehmeti (2019) found that young Kosovars intentionally use slang to differentiate themselves from the older generation, perceiving it as a linguistic badge of modernity. This phenomenon is not unique to Kosovo. In Nigeria, Odewale (2020) notes that urban youth regard English slang as a "symbol of street-smartness" and sociocultural fluency, even when it deviates from formal norms. Similarly, Bucholtz (2011) in a U.S. context argues that slang functions as an identity practice that enables marginalized groups to negotiate visibility and voice within dominant cultures. These findings reinforce the idea that slang is not simply informal or deviant language but a linguistic strategy for asserting social agency (Eble, 2012). Despite these affirming uses, English slang is often stigmatized by older generations and institutional gatekeepers. In Kosovo, Zeqiri (2020) observes that educators frequently label slang as

“lazy” or “inappropriate,” especially when it infiltrates classroom discourse. This tension mirrors global trends; for instance, in Japan, Yamanaka (2017) found that older educators associated English-influenced youth slang with a decline in traditional linguistic values and cultural erosion. Similarly, studies in the UK highlight a prevailing skepticism toward youth slang, particularly when it blends multiple dialects or reflects perceived “foreign” influences (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox, & Torgersen, 2011). These divergent attitudes reveal a deeper generational and ideological divide: where youth see innovation, older stakeholders perceive degradation. Yet, the persistence of slang in informal and digital spaces suggests its resilience as a cultural form.

Formal education systems often function as sites of linguistic regulation, where the use of slang, particularly English slang, is disciplined or discouraged. In Kosovar schools, teachers tend to differentiate sharply between “standard” English and the informal varieties used on social media or in peer interactions (Zeqiri, 2020). This regulatory stance constructs English slang as a linguistic contaminant rather than a legitimate communicative tool. Mehmeti (2019) notes that this contradiction leads to a paradox: English is valorized as a gateway to global success, yet its most popular and accessible registers, i.e., slang, are socially penalized. This paradox is echoed in other sociolinguistic contexts. In the Philippines, Borlongan and Bautista (2018) report that English slang is often deemed inappropriate in academic settings, even though fluency in informal English is viewed as an asset in globalized industries. Similarly, Trudgill (2000) emphasizes that the institutional preference for standardized English reinforces linguistic elitism and disregards the social functions of informal language among youth. The Balkan-wide study by Stanojević and Savić (2021) also highlights how teachers frequently suppress slang use, associating it with rebellion or indiscipline, despite its evident role in fostering creativity and peer engagement.

Moreover, this suppression often fails to diminish slang use, particularly in digital and peer-to-peer communication. As noted by Matić (2022), youth in Serbia and Montenegro continue to employ English slang in text messaging, gaming communities, and online humor, largely unaffected by educational censorship. This resistance suggests that slang serves not only as a linguistic preference but also as a site of cultural autonomy. Attitudes toward English slang in Kosovo and beyond reflect a broader sociolinguistic tension between institutional authority and youth agency. While educators and older generations often attempt to regulate or suppress slang in the name of linguistic purity and academic excellence, young speakers continue to embrace it as a meaningful vehicle for identity, expression, and global belonging.

Research Gaps and Rationale of the Study

Despite the increasing scholarly interest in youth language practices, identity construction, and social capital, there remains a noticeable research gap concerning the specific context of Kosovo's Gen Z and their use of English slang. Existing studies primarily focus on broader sociolinguistic frameworks or general youth language practices in Western contexts (Adamová et al., 2013; Eckert, 2000). However, the unique sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of Kosovo, as a post-conflict society with a young population heavily influenced by globalization and digital culture, are rarely explored. Moreover, while prior research highlights the significance of language as a tool for expressing group membership and social distinction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), the intersection of youth slang, English language usage, and social capital within the Kosovar Gen Z context remains underexplored. Studies conducted in the Balkans have addressed issues of discourse and ethnic identity (Ilić, 2017), but there is limited literature examining how slang functions as a marker of informal social capital and identity negotiation in everyday youth interactions in Kosovo. This gap is particularly significant given the rise of English as a global lingua franca, especially among digital-native generations. The use of English slang among Kosovo's youth may represent not only linguistic creativity but also a strategic means of gaining social status, signaling group membership, or differentiating from traditional norms. Furthermore, little is known about how slang use varies across different social groups within Kosovo's Gen Z, such as urban versus rural youth, or how digital platforms mediate these practices. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the role of English slang in shaping social capital and identity formation among Kosovo's Gen Z. It seeks to provide empirical insights into the sociolinguistic practices of a contextually unique and underrepresented group, thereby contributing to both the fields of sociolinguistics and youth studies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the use of English slang among Kosovo's youth. Qualitative research is particularly suited for investigating social and linguistic phenomena, as it allows for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, attitudes, and language practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By utilizing qualitative methods, this research aimed to capture the nuanced ways in which English slang is integrated into everyday communication.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 8 young individuals between the ages of 18 and 24, all belonging to Kosovo's Generation Z (Gen Z). This age group was selected purposefully due to their status as digital natives, growing up in a hyper-connected, media-saturated environment where exposure to global trends, including English slang, is particularly prominent (Tagliamonte, 2016; Eckert, 2012). All participants were individuals with diverse educational backgrounds and age groups, rather than solely undergraduate students from the University of Prishtina. They represented a range of academic and professional disciplines such as Social Sciences, English Language and Literature, Business, Marketing, Computer Science, and Linguistics. This diversity is intentional to ensure a rich variety of linguistic practices and perspectives within the sample. Participants were bilingual, with proficiency in both Albanian and English, and demonstrated active involvement in digital communication platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Twitter. This digital engagement was a crucial selection criterion, as these platforms represent key sites for the circulation and appropriation of English slang. Gender balance was considered, aiming to include four male and four female participants, to observe any gendered dimensions of slang use and meaning-making.

Table 1. *Participant Selection Criteria*

Criteria	Description
Age	Members of Gen Z (born 1997–2012)
Education	Students, graduates, professionals
Field of Study/Work	Social Sciences, English, Business, Tech
English Proficiency	Minimum: conversational level
Location	Kosovo
Slang Usage	Regular users of slang
Tech Access	Internet access via phone or computer
Consent	Informed and voluntary participation

Sampling Method

The study employed purposive sampling as its primary sampling strategy. This non-probability sampling method is particularly suited to qualitative research as it enables the deliberate selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). In this study, the key inclusion criteria required participants to (1) belong to Kosovo's Gen Z cohort, (2) use English slang frequently in their everyday communication, (3) have a visible online presence, and (4) be willing to engage

in reflective discussion about their language practices. In addition to purposive sampling, the study utilized elements of snowball sampling to facilitate participant recruitment. Initial participants were encouraged to suggest peers who fit the inclusion criteria, ensuring the recruitment of a group that is not only demographically appropriate but also socially connected. This approach was expected to foster a comfortable, conversational dynamic during the focus group discussion, which is essential when exploring informal language practices like slang that might otherwise be inhibited in more formal settings (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data Collection

Data was collected through a semi-structured focus group discussion, held online via Google Meet. The focus group consisted of the eight selected participants and lasted approximately 90 minutes. The focus group method was chosen due to its suitability for exploring linguistic and social practices through dynamic interaction, peer discussion, and the co-construction of meaning (Morgan, 1997). The discussion followed a thematically organized guide focusing on several key areas: contexts of slang use, meanings attached to slang, the social and identity-related functions of slang, and perceptions of slang as a marker of status or group belonging. Participants were invited to provide concrete examples of slang terms they use, describe situations in which slang is appropriate or inappropriate, and reflect on their motivations for using English slang. The entire discussion was audio-recorded (with informed consent), and supplementary field notes were taken to document non-verbal cues and significant moments of interaction such as laughter, hesitation, or mimicry, which often accompany slang usage (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Data Analysis

Following data collection, the audio-recorded focus group discussion was transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and preserve the richness of the participants' language. The study employed thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method allowed for the systematic identification, analysis, and interpretation of recurring patterns and themes within the data, particularly with slang usage and its social functions. In the initial phase, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data through repeated readings of the transcript. Initial codes were then generated, focusing on specific slang terms, contexts of use, and expressions of identity or group belonging. These codes were later organized into overarching themes. Thematic maps were developed to visualize the relationships between themes, facilitating a deeper understanding of how English slang operates within the social lives of Kosovo's Gen Z.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the highest ethical standards in qualitative research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study. Participants were fully briefed about the aims of the research, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures in place to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored, accessible only to the researcher. Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and research outputs to protect participant identities. Furthermore, sensitive topics or any instances of discomfort during the focus group were handled with care, and participants were reminded that they were not obligated to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable (BERA, 2018).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a central component of qualitative research, referring to the process by which researchers critically consider how their positionality, experiences, and assumptions influence every aspect of the research process, from question formulation and field engagement to data interpretation and representation (Finlay, 2002; Holmes, 2020). Rather than striving for neutrality or detachment, reflexive practice embraces the researcher's embeddedness in the research context and treats this positionality as a valuable source of insight, while simultaneously interrogating its influence on knowledge production (Berger, 2015).

In this study, the researcher occupied a position that shares generational characteristics with participants, including familiarity with digital platforms, pop-cultural references, and colloquial expressions in online communication. While this proximity might have facilitated rapport and enhanced access to rich, nuanced data (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015), it also raised important concerns around bias, over-identification, and interpretive selectivity. Therefore, sustained reflexive engagement was essential to balance the dual researcher role as both cultural insider and analytical outsider (Berger, 2015; Holmes, 2020). To ensure methodological transparency and analytical rigor, a reflexive journal was maintained throughout the research process (Dodgson, 2019). This journal served as a dynamic log of evolving thoughts, assumptions, methodological choices, emotional responses, and emerging insights. It also documented ethically significant moments encountered during the focus group (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), helping to refine questions of representation and researcher-participant power dynamics (Pillow, 2003).

The journal entries were used to continuously interrogate how the researcher's social positioning, such as age, language fluency, digital literacy, and cultural familiarity, might have shaped the research encounter and the analytical lens

(Rose, 1997; England, 1994). This approach aligns with Finlay's (2002) conceptualization of reflexivity as both introspective and intersubjective, where the researcher not only reflects inwardly but also examines the co-constructed nature of meaning between themselves and participants. Moreover, by explicitly articulating positionality and reflexive considerations in the final paper, the study aimed to enhance the credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness of its findings (McGhee et al., 2007). Ultimately, this reflexive framework supports ethical integrity and ensures that interpretations are contextually grounded and self-aware, rather than assumed to be objective or value-free.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a thematic analysis of youth English slang among Kosovo's Gen Z, drawn from verbatim accounts collected through a focus group. The voices of the participants reveal slang as a dynamic, socially loaded, and emotionally resonant linguistic practice. Four major themes emerged from the data, each grounded in direct quotes and lived experience.

Slang as Social Capital and a Test of Belonging

Slang operates as an unspoken social code, a linguistic tool that determines who is "in" and who is "out." Participants described slang as a gatekeeping mechanism that reveals who has cultural fluency and who does not. P1 stated, *"If I use a slang word and they don't understand it... I'm like, can we even be friends?"* Such expressions demonstrate how slang can act as an informal test for social inclusion. P2 added, *"You say a certain word and there is no need to explain it,"* underlining the implicit understanding required for in-group membership. These observations align with Bourdieu's (1986) concept of symbolic capital. Slang, in this context, functions as cultural knowledge that holds value in the peer-based social market. Youths who possess up-to-date slang demonstrate not only relevance but also authenticity and insider status, which Bourdieu would classify as "embodied cultural capital." This extends Eckert's (2000) Community of Practice model, as slang knowledge is produced and reproduced within intimate peer groups through shared norms and creativity.

The finding that slang creates instant bonds and promotes intimacy also supports Kiesling's (2005) analysis of homosocial bonding, where slang becomes a vehicle for humor and relational solidarity. In the words of P3, *"I just throw a little bit of something, and then people just connect through it."* Such use of language also mirrors the idea proposed by Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) that peer influence is central in regulating slang practices. Invented slang, such as P5's claim that *"we make up new words every day,"* reinforces the social and performative function of slang. This aligns with Eble's (2012)

argument that slang is a performative linguistic strategy rooted in innovation and stylistic self-expression. Ultimately, the data confirms that English slang functions not only as a social tool but also as a form of informal capital, allowing Gen Z to define their linguistic economy.

Slang as a Tool for Identity Construction

Slang use emerged as central to participants' construction and performance of identity. Far from being a superficial form of language, slang was revealed to be deeply intertwined with how participants perceive themselves, express personality traits, and navigate group identities. P6 emphasized, "*People know immediately, oh, she's Gen Z,*" highlighting how linguistic behavior is generationally marked and socially legible. This confirms Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) notion of language as performative identity; one does not simply possess an identity but enacts it through linguistic choices. Similarly, Matthews (2014) and Coleman (2014) argue that slang is a performative practice that reflects creativity, positioning, and group alignment. This was evident in P7's declaration: "*I use a lot of sarcasm, I use a lot of jokes and slang... I'd rather express myself in English.*"

In this context, code-switching was not simply strategic; it was deliberate. P7 noted, "*I think in English... sometimes I don't even want to speak Albanian.*" This illustrates what Gumperz (1982) and Androutsopoulos (2006) describe as code-switching used to project hybrid identities. It also supports Gashi's (2019) findings on English-Albanian code-mixing as a form of deliberate stylistic choice, not linguistic deficiency. P3's metaphor "*Sometimes I feel like I'm a mirror... I mirror different people*" reflects the fluidity of identity construction and suggests that slang can be a medium for situational identity performance, supporting Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory. Language becomes a way of managing group affiliations dynamically, adapting one's speech depending on social context and desired impression. These expressions indicate that slang is not just reflective of identity but generative of it. In line with Eckert's (2000) model, slang is not merely associated with adolescence or digital fluency; it is actively co-constructed through participation in youth culture.

Global Influences Driving Local Slang Practices

Participants consistently cited digital platforms, pop culture, and online influencers as key sources for their slang use. P8 remarked, "*The internet has been like the main source of slang development.*" P7 explained that "*the term 'slay' gained popularity mainly because of the internet.*" This is consistent with the work of Tagliamonte (2021), who argues that digital platforms are

now primary incubators for slang innovation, and with Minaev, Zhou, and Tsai (2023), who highlight TikTok's role in slang evolution. P5 observed, "*It's giving... you can give it a lot of meanings,*" demonstrating how global slang is not just copied but recontextualized in creative, locally meaningful ways. This supports Zappavigna's (2020) idea that slang in online spaces is semiotically layered, used for both communication and identity signaling. Androutopoulos (2016) also theorizes the translocal spread of slang in digital media environments, a process directly evident in the participants' uptake of AAVE-based and meme-driven phrases.

Further, P6 said, "*James Charles... I've seen myself incorporating them into my everyday language,*" pointing to the influence of social media influencers as linguistic models. This aligns with Cutler's (2003) discussion of stylization and performance, wherein youth adopt speech patterns from public figures to construct subcultural belonging. Although slang originates globally, participants also localize it. As P5 mentioned, "*We make up a new word literally every day.*" This finding echoes Mooney and Evans' (2015) assertion that slang embodies culturally specific codes that reflect shared humor and experience. The blending of global slang with localized speech acts parallels Gjokaj and Berisha's (2021) study on the emergence of "Kosovar English," a hybrid register fueled by youth innovation and cultural remixing.

Slang and the Power to Include or Exclude

While slang is frequently used to signal belonging, it also functions as a powerful gatekeeping mechanism. Participants described the unease of being excluded or misunderstood due to unfamiliarity with slang. P6 noted, "*It makes me feel like they wouldn't understand and I would just seem unprofessional and unserious,*" pointing to how slang can compromise credibility in intergenerational or formal contexts. This tension supports Bourdieu's (1986) theory that the legitimacy of language is context-dependent. What holds symbolic capital in peer groups is devalued in institutional settings. Mehmeti (2019) identifies this paradox in Kosovo: English is valorized, yet its slang is often stigmatized in education.

P5 articulated the discomfort of being linguistically excluded: "*I feel so out of place when certain words are used.*" This exclusion echoes Bucholtz's (1999) and Pavlenko & Blackledge's (2004) findings that slang often serves as a boundary marker, used to reinforce in-group identities and distinguish outsiders. P4 took this further: "*Slang can be used to offend people... and the other person can never say anything back,*" showing how linguistic proficiency or lack thereof can become a site of power asymmetry. P8 admitted, "*I try not to use slang with older people... too lazy to explain.*" This strategy reflects

what Zeqiri (2020) describes as the generational friction over slang use, where young people opt for avoidance rather than confrontation. Bucholtz (2011) notes that such linguistic navigation reflects not just generational gaps but also ideological divides over what counts as legitimate language. In essence, slang's role as both an inclusive and exclusive force highlights its ambivalence. While it enables belonging, it also draws lines that reflect age, status, digital fluency, and group loyalty. The social stakes of slang are reinforcing its position as both a cultural asset and a contested resource.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of English slang in the social lives and identity formations of Kosovo's Gen Z, revealing it to be a multifaceted linguistic resource. Slang functions not only as a means of communication but also as a performative tool through which youth negotiate belonging, display cultural fluency, and shape personal and collective identities. The thematic analysis illustrated that slang operates as a form of symbolic capital, granting status within peer networks while simultaneously serving as a boundary marker. It is deeply intertwined with digital culture, influenced by global media flows, and actively shaped within local communities of practice. It also plays a role in negotiating generational and institutional boundaries, offering both empowerment and risk.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, several practical recommendations emerge. Educators should consider developing classroom practices that validate students' linguistic repertoires, including slang, as part of culturally responsive pedagogy. This includes encouraging code-switching activities and creating space for youth expression. Policymakers are encouraged to recognize English slang and hybridized speech forms as legitimate reflections of Kosovo's evolving linguistic landscape, potentially integrating multilingual and digital language awareness into curricula. For researchers, the study signals the need to further investigate youth-led language innovation, particularly in underrepresented and transitional societies like Kosovo. Youth media creators are also advised to remain mindful of the linguistic and identity-building roles their platforms play. Finally, fostering intergenerational dialogue through workshops or open forums could help reduce stigma and bridge linguistic divides between younger and older generations.

LIMITATIONS

This study, while offering valuable insights into the sociolinguistic practices of Kosovo's Gen Z, is subject to several limitations. The research was based on a single focus group drawn from an urban setting, which may not fully capture the linguistic diversity of rural or marginalized communities. While participants were fluent in English, cultural nuances in slang usage may have been lost in transcription. The rapidly evolving nature of slang also presents a temporal limitation, as expressions common today may become obsolete shortly. Additionally, the group setting may have introduced social desirability bias, potentially limiting the depth of individual reflection. Despite these constraints, the study provides a strong foundation for future inquiry into youth language, identity, and symbolic capital in Kosovo and similar sociolinguistic environments.

References

- Adamová, E., Granqvist, K., Salo, M., & Tenser, A. (2013). *Individual Papers: Identity Formation and Language Issues in Minority Communities*. XIV International Conference on Minority Languages. Available at: <http://isig.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2013-ICML-XIV-International-Conference-on-Minority-Language.pdf#page=50>
- Alim, H. S. (2009). Translocal style communities: Hip Hop youth as cultural theorists of style, language, and globalization. *Pragmatics*, 19(1), 103–127.
- Alim, H. S. (2011). Global ill-literacies: Hip hop cultures, youth identities, and the politics of literacy. *Review of Research in Education*, 35(1), 120–146. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X10383208>
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2006). Multilingualism, diaspora, and the Internet: Codes and identities on German-based diaspora websites. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 10(4), 419–438. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2006.00287.x>
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2007). Language choice and code-switching in German-based diasporic web forums. In *Stylization of Youth Language Practices in the Media*. John Benjamins.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2009). Language and the three spheres of hip hop. In H. S. Alim, A. Ibrahim, & A. Pennycook (Eds.), *Global linguistic flows* (pp. 43–62). Routledge.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2010). “Language Change and Digital Media: A Review of Converging Trends.” *In Language and Society*, 22(3), 45–65.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2016). Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on Facebook and their implications. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 20(2), 140–156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006914537762>
- Arifi, H., & Gashi, E. (2021). *The integration of English lexical items in the Albanian youth discourse in Kosovo*. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351389229>
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- Blaku, N. (2021). *Digital influence and English slang usage among Albanian-speaking teens*. SAGE Open, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00380261211023894>
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Borlongan, A. R., & Bautista, M. L. (2018). *The use of slang in Philippine English*. *Asian Englishes*, 20(1), 55–72.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood. <https://www.socialcapitalgateway.org/sites/socialcapitalgateway.org/files/data/paper/2016/10/18/rbasvol3-no1-1986-bourdieu-p-the-forms-of-capital.pdf>
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press.
- Bowers, C. A. (2014). Slang and resistance in urban youth culture. *Language and Culture Journal*, 6(2), 98–113.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- British Sociological Association. (2017). *Statement of Ethical Practice*. Retrieved from https://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf
- Bucholtz, M. (1999). “Why be normal?”: Language and identity practices in a community of nerd girls. *Language in Society*, 28(2), 203–223. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4168965>
- Bucholtz, M. (2002). Youth and cultural practice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, 525–552. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.31.040402.085443>
- Bucholtz, M. (2011). *White kids: Language, race, and styles of youth identity*. Cambridge University Press.

- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4-5), 585–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>
- Bytyqi, A. (2017). *Translanguaging in Kosovo Classrooms: Slang, Code-Mixing, and Identity*. Kosovo Journal of Language Education, 5(1), 23–45. <https://kjlle.org/bytyqi2017>
- Cheshire, J., Kerswill, P., Fox, S., & Torgersen, E. (2011). *Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: The emergence of Multicultural London English*. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 15(2), 151–196.
- Coleman, J. (2014). *The life of slang*. Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Cutler, C. (2003). “Keepin’ it real”: White hip-hoppers’ discourses of language, race, and authenticity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 13(2), 211–233. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2003.13.2.211>
- Cutler, C. (2010). *Crossing over: White teens, hip hop and African American English*. Duke University Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Dodgson, J. E. (2019). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 35(2), 220–222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334419830990>
- Duraku, Z. (2022). *The Role of English Slang in Youth Identity in Kosovo*. Language & Society Journal, 18(1), 77–92. <https://langsocjournal.org/kosovo-slang>
- Eble, C. (2012). *Slang and sociability: In-group language among college students*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Eckert, P. (2000). *Linguistic variation as social practice: The linguistic construction of identity in Belten High*. Blackwell. <https://www.worldcat.org/title/44630342>
- Eckert, P. (2011). Language and power in the peer group: Slang, authority, and resistance. In *Language and Power* (pp. 95–113). Oxford University Press.
- Eckert, P. (2012). *Three Waves of Variation Study: The Emergence of Meaning in the Study of Sociolinguistic Variation*. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41, 87–100.
- England, K. V. L. (1994). Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research. *The Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 80–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0033-0124.1994.00080.x>
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4.
- Finlay, L. (2002). “Outing” the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4), 531–545.
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410200200205>
- Flett Klosi, D. (2024). Investigating university students’ colloquial speech utterances of English in intercultural settings: A case study in Albanian context. *European Scientific Journal (ESJ)*, 20(32), 33. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2024.v20n32p33>
- Gashi, E. (2020). “Linguistic Identity among Albanian Youth: A Postmodern Perspective.” *Albanian Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(2), 55–70.
- Gashi, S. (2019). *Language Practices in Kosovo: English-Albanian Code-Mixing among Youth*. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 23(4), 612–630. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12352>
- Gjokaj, A., & Berisha, B. (2021). *Kosovar English: A Hybrid Dialect or Linguistic Innovation?* South-East European Linguistic Studies, 11(1), 64–80. <https://see-lingstudies.org/kosovar-english>
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and “ethically important moments” in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/discourse-strategies/92E10D87B73AD8841EC1A1E1FA36D4ED>

- Hayfield, N., & Huxley, C. (2015). Insider and outsider perspectives: Reflections on researcher identities in research with lesbian and bisexual women. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(2), 91–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.918224>
- Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher positionality – A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920941004>
- Ilić, M. (2017). *Discourse and Ethnic Identity*. Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/download/58359454/Ilic_Marija_Discourse_and_Ethnic_Identi.pdf
- Ilie, C. (2018). “Linguistic Capital in the Balkans: A View from Youth Discourse.” *Balkan Linguistics Review*, 12, 33–47.
- Kastrati, A. (2016). The role of education for identity formation among Albanians and Serbs of Kosovo: The application of the difference-blinded approach for establishing citizenship regime in a multi-cultural society. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, 6(1), 149–150. <https://doi.org/10.26417/ejser.v6i1.p149-156>
- Kelmendi, E. (2020). *English as a Marker of Social Identity in Kosovo*. *European Journal of Language and Society*, 7(2), 89–108. <https://ejls.org/articles/kelmendi2020>
- Kiesling, S. F. (2005). Homosocial desire in men’s talk: Balancing and re-creating cultural discourses of masculinity. *Language in Society*, 34(5), 695–726. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404505050263>
- Krasniqi, V. (2018). *Slang and digital literacies in Kosovo: Youth practices in social media*. *European Journal of Turkish Studies*. <https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/6232>
- Kraus, P., & Friedrich, D. (2020). “Linguistic Justice and Youth Agency in Europe.” *Language Policy*, 19(2), 137–154.
- Kristina, R. (2020). *In, out and in between: Language, identity and social practices of youth*. Available at: <https://rifdt.ifdt.bg.ac.rs/handle/123456789/3981>
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Sage Publications.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/416670>
- Labov, W. (2010). *Principles of linguistic change, Volume III: Cognitive and cultural factors*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Leppänen, S., & Häkkinen, A. (2012). Buffalaxed superdiversity: Representations of the other on YouTube. *Diversities*, 14(2), 17–33.
- Litosseliti, L. (2003). *Using Focus Groups in Research*. Continuum.
- Lohaj, F. (2018). Use of English language by Kosova youth. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)*, 42(4), 111–123. Retrieved from <https://www.gssrr.org/index.php/JournalOfBasicAndApplied/article/view/9575>
- Matić, M. (2022). *Youth and English slang: Resistance or assimilation?* ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363731019>
- Matthews, P. H. (2014). *The concise Oxford dictionary of linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- McGhee, G., Marland, G. R., & Atkinson, J. (2007). Grounded theory research: Literature reviewing and reflexivity. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 60(3), 334–342. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04436.x>
- Medjedović, I., & Nastić, M. (2021). “Global Influences on Youth Slang in the Balkans.” *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 25(1), 89–105.
- Mehmeti, A. (2019). *English language contact and its influence on youth language in Kosovo*. [Institutional Repository].
- Mesthrie, R. (2017). *World Englishes and the Balkans: English Language Contact in Southeast Europe*. *World Englishes*, 36(1), 76–91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12203>

- Minaev, A., Zhou, Y., & Tsai, C. (2023). TikTok vernacular: Emergent slang in short-form video communities. *Social Media + Society*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305123115736>
- Mooney, A., & Evans, B. (2015). *Language, society and power: An introduction*. Routledge.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.
- Muçaj, L. (2018). *Attitudes Toward English in Kosovo: Symbolism and Perceived Value*. *Journal of Balkan Linguistics*, 12(1), 44–63. <https://journals.openedition.org/balkan/455>
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social Motivations for Codeswitching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Nushi, M. (2016). “Language Practices and Attitudes of Albanian Youth in Kosovo.” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 16(2), 287–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2016.1165493>
- Odewale, A. (2020). *Urban youth, slang, and street-smart English in Lagos*. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 14(3), 415–437.
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544.
- Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (2004). *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*. Multilingual Matters.
- Petrovic, T. (2016). *New Urban Speech Patterns in the Balkans: Global Influences and Local Adaptations*. *Linguistic Anthropology Quarterly*, 9(2), 101–123. <https://doi.org/10.1111/laq.12107>
- Petrović, T. (2019). “English in Serbia: Youth, Media, and Popular Culture.” *Slavic Review*, 78(1), 121–139.
- Phillipson, R., & Skenderi, K. (2021). *English in Kosovo: Language Ideologies and Prestige*. *Language Policy*, 20(3), 367–385. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-021-09575-0>
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635>
- Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: Positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21(3), 305–320. <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913297673302122>
- Selimi, G., & Gorani, L. (2022). “Multilingual Practices among Kosovo’s Urban Youth.” *Kosovar Journal of Youth Research*, 4(1), 13–29.
- Stanojević, M., & Savić, M. (2021). *Youth language in the Balkans: Between creativity and rebellion*. *Jeziškoslovlje*, 22(1), 83–105.
- Tagg, C., & Seargeant, P. (2014). Audience design and language choice in the construction and maintenance of translocal communities on social network sites. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 4-5, 161–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2014.08.002>
- Tagg, C., & Seargeant, P. (2017). *Taking offence on social media: Conviviality and communication on Facebook*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/978-1-137-48801-9>
- Tagliamonte, S. A. (2016). *Teen Talk: The Language of Adolescents*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tagliamonte, S. A. (2021). Teen talk in the digital era. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 25(3), 345–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12458>
- Tagliamonte, S., & Denis, D. (2008). Linguistic ruin? LOL! Instant messaging and teen language. *American Speech*, 83(1), 3–34. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2008-001>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W.G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- Trpkova, M., & Nikoloska, S. (2020). *Slang as Cultural Resistance: Balkan Youth and Urban Vernaculars*. *Balkan Linguistics Review*, 15(3), 33–49. <https://balkanlingrev.org/slang-balkan>

- Trudgill, P. (2000). *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society* (4th ed.). Penguin.
- Yamanaka, H. (2017). *English slang and youth language in Japan: Cultural invasion or creative appropriation?* *Asian Englishes*, 19(2), 139–157.
- Zappavigna, M. (2020). Hashtags and social semiotics. *Discourse & Communication*, 14(2), 163–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481320904066>
- Zeqiri, E. (2020). *Youth language and English borrowings: Perceptions in Kosovar classrooms*. CORE. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/328757444.pdf>
- Zhou, Y., & Fan, Y. (2013). The sociolinguistic functions of Chinese internet slang. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(6), 1285–1290. <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.4.6.1285-1290>

EXPLORING LANGUAGE USE IN A MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITY

Sara KOÇINAJ¹

INTRODUCTION

Multilingualism, the ability to communicate in more than one language, is a common phenomenon worldwide, including Kosovo. In today's globalized world, multilingualism is a necessity, as people speak different languages at home, at work, and in the community. Genemo (2021) states that multilingualism is the norm and way of life. The importance of multilingualism extends beyond just communication; it fosters cultural understanding, improves thinking skills, and creates opportunities in both social and professional settings.

While monolingual speakers rely on just one language in every situation, it is natural for bilingual/multilingual speakers to choose between different languages depending on the context. Multilinguals do not use all their languages for the same reasons, in the same settings, or with the same people. For multilinguals, language choice is not random; it is influenced by various social, cultural, and many other factors. Individuals often choose different languages depending on who they are speaking to, where the interaction takes place, and what they are discussing.

In recent decades, interest in multilingualism has grown. In Kosovo, multilingualism is a reflection of its diverse society, where Albanian, the majority language, and minority languages such as Turkish, Serbian, Bosnian, Romani and other languages coexist. Prizren, in particular, is known for its ethnic diversity, making it one of the most multilingual cities in Kosovo. Kosovo has adopted a positive and inclusive approach towards linguistic diversity, recognizing the value of multiple languages and promoting their use in various public and private spheres. The Law on the Use of Languages in Kosovo states

¹ MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; sarakoqinaj@gmail.com

that all the communities have the right to preserve, maintain and promote their linguistic identity (Official Gazette, 2007).

In a world where communication and cultural understanding are more important than ever, studying multilingualism in everyday life has become essential. Language is not only a tool for communication or a skill, but a bridge for social harmony and inclusion. In such communities, where people of different ethnicities live side by side, language choice can reflect deeper social meaning. By examining how languages are used, we can gain a better understanding of how people manage diversity, maintain their cultural identities, and build relationships. This makes the study of multilingualism in Prizren both relevant and necessary in today's world.

Significance of the Study

While there is a lot of research on multilingualism and language choice in various parts of the world, there is a gap in studies focusing specifically on Prizren, a city with significant linguistic diversity in Kosovo. As one of the most ethnolinguistically rich cities in the region, Prizren offers a unique sociolinguistic landscape. This diversity makes it an ideal context for exploring how language choice reflects identity, interethnic relations, and language maintenance.

Aim of the Study

This research investigates language attitudes and choices in a multilingual society. By focusing on Prizren, this study aims to explore language experiences of multilinguals and how they navigate languages in different settings such as social, professional, and personal. Moreover, the study aims to examine how people feel about multilingualism in their community and identify which languages are seen as important for opportunities in Prizren. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of multilingualism in the city and highlight the factors influencing language use in diverse communities.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. to identify the factors that influence language choice among multilingual speakers in Prizren.
2. to examine how bilingual and multilingual speakers in Prizren select languages in different settings.
3. to explore the attitudes of multilingual speakers in Prizren toward different languages.

Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following questions were addressed:

1. What factors influence language choice among multilingual speakers in Prizren?
2. How do bilingual and multilingual speakers in Prizren decide which language to use in different social, professional, and personal settings?
3. What are the attitudes of multilingual speakers in Prizren toward different languages, and how do these attitudes influence their language use?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Multilingualism

There are several definitions of multilingualism which can be found in today's language research. According to Degi (2012, p.650), the main idea remains consistent across much of the literature: "Multilingualism is the capacity of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage on a regular basis with more than one language in everyday life". This definition illustrates the meaning of the prefix 'multi' as 'more than one' and 'lingual' from the Latin word, lingua (language). In the context of multilingualism, "more than one" refers to the number of languages involved, whether spoken by an individual, present in a society, speech community, or institution, or used within a discourse or conversation (Wilton, 2009).

Genemo (2021) describes multilingualism as the act of using polyglotism, or using multiple languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. He further states that multilingualism is seen as a key factor through which different ethnolinguistic groups can successfully coexist. As Genemo points out (2021), it is difficult to provide the exact statistical data on the multilingual speakers and distribution of multilingualism in the world. However, it is known that multilingual speakers outnumber monolingual speakers worldwide.

Based on the work of many researchers, linguists usually make a distinction between individual and societal multilingualism. According to Cenoz (2013, p.5), multilingualism can exist at both personal and societal levels, as it can be considered an ability of an individual, or it can refer to the use of various languages in a society. Aronin (2019, p.3) also argues that it is logical to make a distinction between individual and societal multilingualism. Societal multilingualism is most relevant to this study, as it helps understand how multiple languages coexist within a community and influence communication, identity, and education.

Individual Multilingualism

Individual multilingualism refers to a person's ability to understand and use two or more languages in their daily life. This kind of multilingualism is more personal, as Aronin (2019) explains, individual multilingualism is related to the personal sphere and covers the acquisition and use of several languages by an individual and it deals with an individual's ability to master, and appropriately use, two or more languages. Genemo (2021) describes a multilingual person as someone who can communicate in more than one language, either by speaking, writing, or by understanding languages through listening, reading, or perceiving. Individual multilingualism is sometimes referred to as plurilingualism (Cenoz, 2013, p.5), and is often shaped by personal experiences, such as migration or exposure to diverse linguistic environments.

Societal Multilingualism

Historically, as Genemo (2021) notes, multilingualism referred more to societies than individuals, particularly because prior to the Industrial Revolution, it was rare for Europeans to speak more than two languages. According to Aronin (2019, p.3), "the term societal multilingualism refers to the contexts, circumstances, order, manner and routines of use of languages in different kinds of communities, organizations and groups". As stated by Cenoz (2013, p.5), individual and societal multilingualism cannot be separated, as it is more likely that the individuals who live in a multilingual community speak more than one language than individuals who live in a monolingual society. In a multilingual society, not all speakers need to be multilingual, as people can communicate effectively using the languages that are most relevant to their daily lives and interactions.

Multilingualism vs Bilingualism

Since the terms bilingualism and multilingualism are used frequently throughout the study, it is important to clarify the difference and what these concepts mean in order to ensure a clear understanding. Due to the high number of languages spoken around the world, many people speak multiple languages in addition to their native tongue. This widespread occurrence has led to the development of the theories called bilingualism and multilingualism (Jayanath, 2021). Bilingualism is present in most countries throughout the world, in all classes of society and in all age groups (Liddicoat, 1991, p.2).

Bilingualism refers to the ability of an individual to use two languages fluently. A bilingual person can understand, speak, read, as well as write in both languages. For example, someone who speaks both Albanian and Turkish is bilingual. On the other hand, multilingualism refers to the ability

to use three or more languages. A multilingual person might speak Albanian, Turkish, and Serbian, for example. Similar to multilingualism, bilingualism can exist at individual and societal levels. Many individuals become bilingual or multilingual for various reasons, including career opportunities, expanded educational choices, and, as research has shown, the cognitive benefits that come with bilingualism and multilingualism, such as enhanced thinking abilities (Jayanath, 2021).

Language Choice

Language choice is an important aspect of communication in multilingual societies. According to Alfred (2020), language choice refers to the choices made by individuals about what language to use at particular times. Furthermore, anyone who can speak two or more languages well enough to communicate thoughts and emotions is free to make language choices (Alfred, 2020). In countries where only one language is spoken, there is no concern about which language to use, as they simply use the one available language. Romaine (2021, p.517) states that “in all multilingual communities speakers switch among languages or varieties just as monolinguals switch among styles”. As cited by Alfred, Buda (1983) states that there is no fully satisfactory explanation for why speakers choose one language over another. He further explains that whenever speakers of two or more languages interact, a decision must be made regarding which language will be used in communication (Alfred, 2020).

Factors That Influence Language Choice

Language choices are shaped by both external social expectations and internal preferences. Genemo (2021) notes that researchers have found several factors that affect how language is chosen and used within multilingual communities, including the setting (or domain), the people involved in the conversation, and the subject being discussed. Similarly, individuals from the minority communities often associate particular languages with specific settings. For instance, the language used at home or in the neighborhood may differ from the one used in educational or professional environments (Genemo, 2021). For example, a 22-year-old university student of Bosnian ethnicity might use Bosnian at home, Albanian at school, and English with friends.

As Genemo (2021) highlights, the choice of language can also be shaped by the specific topic of conversation. As suggested by Fishman & Garcia (2010), in multilingual situations, some topics are easier or more appropriate to talk about in one language than in another. Alfred (2020) noted that the choice of language is influenced by practical factors. A speaker might believe that using a specific language will give them an advantage, either within a specific group or

in a broader social context. As stated by Spolsky (2004, p.57), this indicates that “language use in multilingual communities is often a strategic and meaningful decision”.

Code-Switching in Multilingual Communities

According to Genemo (2021), code-switching is a way how bilingual individuals manage and decide which language to use in different situations, and it is quite a dominant effect of multilingualism. Code-switching, the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a single conversation or interaction, is a common and natural behavior in multilingual communities. The fact that speakers choose different languages for different situations shows that not all languages are seen as equally suitable or right for every conversation (Romaine, 2021). Therefore, by switching languages, bilinguals or multilinguals can express themselves more effectively or convey a specific idea that might not exist in one language alone.

In Kosovo, especially in cities like Prizren where Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian, and Serbian language speakers live side by side, code-switching occurs frequently in both informal and formal settings. This is especially noticeable in mixed environments, as Jusufi (2021) highlights that such language alternations are not random but are socially meaningful. In Prizren’s multilingual public sphere, individuals often choose a language that aligns with the social identity they want to express, or to make others feel included or excluded. For instance, a café owner might greet customers in Turkish, switch to Albanian for the main conversation, and use Bosnian when joking or adding emphasis, each shift serving a social function (Jusufi, 2021).

Multilingualism in Kosovo

It is often mentioned that Kosovo has a positive attitude towards multilingualism. According to Law No. 02/L-37 on the Use of Languages in Kosovo (Official Gazette, 2007), every individual has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to ask for, receive, and convey information in the language of their choice without interference. This right extends to cross-border broadcasting, ensuring that individuals can freely access media without restrictions based on language (Official Gazette, 2007). Kosovo, a small and young country, protects language rights as part of broader human rights, which helps support cultural exchange and the preservation of different languages.

Kosovo is known to be a multilingual country and land of diversity, where people from different communities live maintaining their own cultural heritage. It is recognized as an official bilingual country, as confirmed by the Law on

the Use of Languages (2006), the Ahtisaari Plan (2007), and the Constitution (2008). The equal status of the Serbian language alongside Albanian is part of the guarantee package provided to the Serbian community following Kosovo's declaration of independence (Gogić, 2020). As such, this represents the respect of linguistic rights, where the members of the Serbian community, as well as other communities, will feel like equal members of Kosovan society.

Jusufi (2021) showed that the city of Prizren and its surroundings are a good example of how different languages influence each other and how bilingualism and multilingualism develop. The Law on the Use of Languages (2006) gave Turkish the status of an official language in the municipality of Prizren, because of the size of the Turkish community living there. Accordingly, Bosnian is an official language in the municipality of Prizren (OSCE, 2014). Jusufi demonstrated that in Prizren, multilingualism is preserved and strengthened through mixed marriages, education, integration, and employability (2021, p. 70). According to the OSCE's (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Mission in Kosovo (2014), the municipality of Prizren displays around 90 percent of road signs in four languages (Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Turkish).

Prizren is therefore seen as one of the most cosmopolitan areas, retaining pre-war multiculturalism (Abercrombie, 2017). As Abercrombie (2017) noted, the linguistic repertoire of Prizren reflects a legacy shaped by its long-standing Ottoman and more recent Yugoslav past. People often blend languages in everyday speech across various topics, and they are quite aware that they are using a mixed form. People mention how their BCS (Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian) and Albanian are filled with Turkish words, their Turkish includes many 'Serbian' words, and their Romani contains elements from all of these languages (Abercrombie, 2017).

Attitudes Toward Languages

Attitudes toward languages play a key role in shaping how multilingualism functions in society. With multilingualism, there is a risk of language loss and the complexities of maintaining linguistic identity. Hence, the country of Kosovo does face challenges in ensuring language equality. As Krasniqi & Bajraktari (2020) explained, the state has secured the rights to use one's own language, and all institutions, public enterprises, and socially owned ones are obligated to implement language equality. Jusufi (2021) emphasized that language cannot be separated from its speakers; it is deeply rooted in social practices and identity. In this context, it is important to explore how different languages have been affected.

The post-war state has elevated the status of Albanian in the public sphere, increasing its prestige and pushing other languages into more private settings. This shift has affected the other minority languages, mostly Serbian, though Turkish has also seen a decline, as Abercrombie (2017) explains. Romani, meanwhile, has never held prestige or a public presence beyond certain neighborhoods (Abercrombie, 2017).

According to Abercrombie (2017), while BCS (Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian) have largely disappeared from Albanian-speaking areas of Kosovo, local Turkish has endured. However, its role has shifted, from serving as a language of the elite to functioning as a speech style tied to nostalgic expressions of local identity. The Turkish language is recognized as an official language in the municipality of Prizren, and education in Turkish is provided under the Kosovo system of education (Najvirtova & Burema, 2011).

Although Turkish communities receive instruction in their mother tongue, they face challenges in education as textbooks are often imported from Turkey and therefore do not fully align with the Kosovo curriculum (Najvirtova & Burema, 2011). As a result, students following the Kosovo curriculum in Turkish are at a disadvantage during national exams. This educational gap could impact their academic and professional opportunities within the community.

Communities speaking non-Slavic languages, such as Turkish, generally feel free to express themselves in public throughout Kosovo (Najvirtova & Burema, 2011). However, considering that Kosovo is a post-war country, Serbian language is usually frowned upon. The ongoing tensions influence language attitudes, but, as Gogic (2020) notes, all communities in Kosovo should recognize that the country's multilingual nature is not a compromise, but rather a valuable asset. Promoting linguistic rights and encouraging the mutual learning of languages enriches both individuals and society as a whole.

The OSCE (2014) found that while Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Turkish have the status of official languages in certain municipalities in Kosovo, none have recognized the Romani language as a language in official use, although Kosovo Roma communities have traditionally spoken their language in the areas where they have been living. As a result, Romani is not used as a medium of instruction in public schools, and Roma children typically receive education in other languages. Jusufi (2021) also noted that all ethnic communities have the right to receive education in their own language at all levels, except for the Romani community, mostly due to the lack of a standardized Romani language and a lack of qualified teachers.

Furthermore, Roma people have never had any formal education in Romani, and as a result are not familiar with the written form of Romani (Najvirtova &

Burema, 2011). Therefore, it is argued that the municipality cannot translate official documents into Romani when many members of the community themselves are not familiar with using the language's written form in a formal context (Najvirtova & Burema, 2011).

According to Romaine (2021), the lack of schooling in one's native language undoubtedly complicates the preservation of that language, as schools play a significant role in cultural and linguistic assimilation. The lack of recognition and support for Romani in schools shows that it is not valued equally compared to other languages. The OSCE (2014) also noted that awareness campaigns on language rights are very limited, which shows a lack of strong commitment to protecting minority languages like Romani.

In addition to the surrounding local languages, foreign languages have also shaped the linguistic landscape and attitudes. In particular, English has emerged as a dominant and influential language. Therefore, it is no surprise to see its dominant place in Kosovo, where English frequently replaces Albanian. According to Kasapolli (2019, p.316), the excessive use of English by Kosovo Albanians is caused by a variety of factors and circumstances including history, geopolitics, demographics as well as the nature of the language itself. It is also a result of the significant and heavy international presence established in Kosovo after the war in 1999, the influence of globalism, technological advancements and social media. Likewise, Gashi (2021), described Kosovo society as pro-Western and pro-American, and claimed that the youth and their families place a high value on English.

METHODOLOGY

Context

This study took place in Prizren, Kosovo, a city known for its rich linguistic and cultural diversity. As one of the most multilingual cities in the country, Prizren is home to many ethnic communities, such as Albanians, Bosnians, Turks, Gorani, Serbs, RAE (Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian) communities and more, who frequently use multiple languages in daily interactions.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a better understanding of multilingual language choices and attitudes. The research used questionnaires to collect numerical data on language use patterns and interviews to gain deeper insights into personal experiences and attitudes toward multilingualism.

Data Collection Instruments

For this research, both primary and secondary sources were used. Primary sources were obtained through questionnaires and interviews with individuals living in Prizren, whereas secondary sources were obtained through academic articles and books related to existing studies on multilingualism and language use in Kosovo, including sociolinguistic research worldwide.

Questionnaire: A questionnaire was distributed to 54 multilingual speakers in Prizren. The questionnaire included multiple-choice, checkboxes, and Likert-scale questions focusing on language use.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 participants to get detailed responses and explore the reasons behind their language choices, challenges faced, and personal experiences with multilingualism. The participants for the interview were selected from a list of volunteers.

Participants

The participants in this study included individuals aged between 18-40, both genders, and different nationalities to ensure a diverse and representative sample of multilingual speakers in Prizren.

A total of 54 participants completed the questionnaire, with the majority being female 59.3%, and male 40.7%. The majority identified as Albanian (46.3%, or 25 participants), followed by Turkish (25.9%, or 14 participants), and Bosnian (14.8%, or 8 participants). Both Serbian and RAE ethnicities were represented equally, each 5.6% or about 3 participants each. Lastly, 1.8% of the respondents (1 participant) identified as Gorani.

Additionally, 8 participants voluntarily took part in follow-up semi-structured interview to provide deeper insights into their language use and attitudes. The interview also included individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds: two Albanians, two Turkis, two Bosnians, one Serbs, and one from the RAE community.

Sampling

The study used purposive sampling to select participants from the population of multilingual speakers in Prizren. In addition, the snowball sampling method was also used, which involves “identifying one participant who is relevant to the study, and that participant leads to another participant with the same characteristics” (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024, p.96). Initial participants were asked to recommend other multilingual individuals who fit the study criteria, and this continued until the planned sample was achieved. This combination

allowed for the inclusion of diverse voices within the multilingual community and helped access participants who might have been difficult to find.

These methods were used to ensure that participants had experience with multilingual language use in various contexts such as home, work, education, and social life. Individuals who did not speak two or more languages were excluded from the study to maintain the focus on bilingual/multilingual speakers. Participants were from various social and professional backgrounds, including students and community members. This diversity helped in understanding how language preferences vary across different individuals and social contexts.

Ethical Considerations

To protect the privacy of participants, their identities remain anonymous throughout the study. No personal information was collected, and all responses were kept confidential. All data, including questionnaires and interview recordings, were secured and only used for the research's purpose. After the findings were transcribed and analyzed, the recordings were destroyed. Consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring they understood the study's purpose, that participation was voluntary, and that their privacy will be protected. Consent was obtained following the interview protocol and signed by each participant.

Procedure

The study was conducted in several stages during April-June. Before the main data collection, the questionnaire and interview questions were piloted with a small number of participants to confirm their clarity, to gather feedback and to revise unclear questions. The next phase involved data collection and analysis.

The questionnaire was distributed online through social media platforms to multilingual speakers in Prizren. The questionnaire data was reviewed using Google Forms tools to calculate averages and identify patterns and the responses were collected digitally.

Interviews were scheduled with a number of selected participants, some were conducted in person, and some online, depending on the participants' availability. The interviews were recorded (with participants' consent) and transcribed. Once the data was gathered, responses were analyzed, both quantitative and qualitative methods. By combining these two methods, the study provided both numerical insights and deeper perspectives.

FINDINGS

Questionnaire Findings

The first question of the questionnaire asked participants to identify the languages they speak fluently. Participants were allowed to select multiple options out of the languages spoken in the city of Prizren. As illustrated in Figure 1., out of 54 respondents, the majority, 47 participants (87%), reported speaking Albanian fluently. Turkish was the second most fluently spoken language, with 33 participants (61.1%), followed by Bosnian, spoken fluently by 17 participants (31.5%), while Serbian and Romani were reported to be spoken by a lower number, 6 (11.1%) and 2 (3.7%) participants.

Which of these languages do you speak fluently? (Please check all that apply)
54 responses

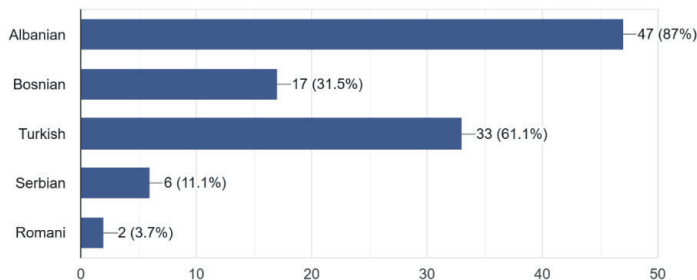


Figure 1. *Languages Spoken Fluently*

Out of the 54 participants who took part in the questionnaire, the majority reported using Albanian most often at work or school, with 47 individuals (87%) selecting it as the main language. Turkish was the second most frequently used language at work or school, reported by 13 participants (24.1%). Bosnian was used by 5 participants (9.3%), and an equal number answered that they use a mix of languages. English was chosen by 4 participants (7.4%), while Serbian was reported by only 1 participant (1.9%). Notably, as shown in Figure 2., none of the respondents indicated Romani as the language they use most often at work or school.

Which language do you use most often at work or school?

54 responses

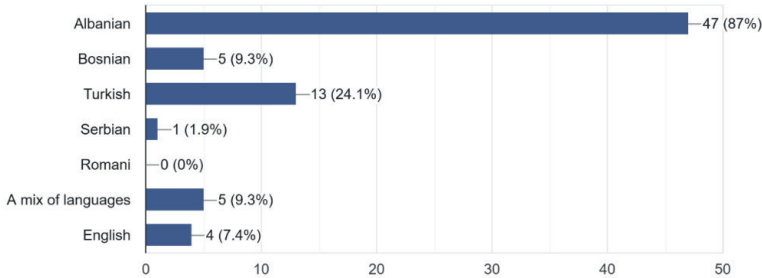


Figure 2. *Most Frequently Used Language at Work or School*

Figure 3 shows participants’ language preferences when communicating with friends. Out of the 54 respondents, 41 (75.9%) reported preferring Albanian, making it the most commonly chosen language for social interactions. English was the second most preferred language, selected by 33 participants (61.1%). Turkish followed, with 18 participants (33.3%) whereas Bosnian was chosen by 7 respondents (13%), and 3 (5.6%) preferred Serbian. Romani was selected by 2 participants (3.7%). Additionally, 10 participants (18.5%) stated that they prefer using a mix of languages when talking with friends.

Which language do you prefer when communicating with friends?

54 responses

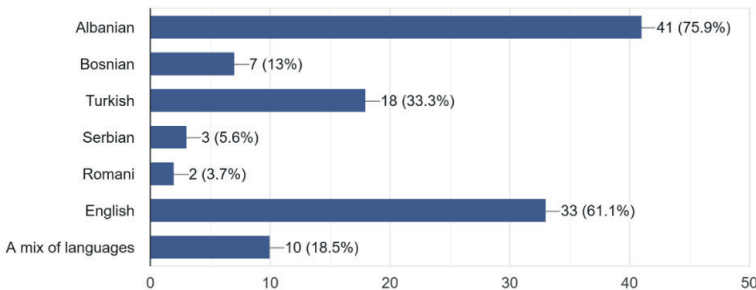


Figure 3. *Preferred Languages for Communication with Friends*

When asked about the languages most often used for media consumption, such as social media and news, participants showed different preferences.

As illustrated in Figure 4, out of 54 respondents, 42 (77.8%) reported using English for media consumption, which makes it the most commonly used language. Albanian followed, with 36 participants (66.7%) and Turkish was also selected by 22 respondents (40.7%). Other languages were less commonly used: Bosnian by 6 participants (11.1%), Serbian by 4 (7.4%), and Romani by 2 (3.7%). One participant (1.9%) selected “other” as their main media language. These findings suggest that while Albanian is used, English has a strong presence in media consumption.

Which language(s) do you most often use for media consumption (TV, social media, news, etc.)?
54 responses

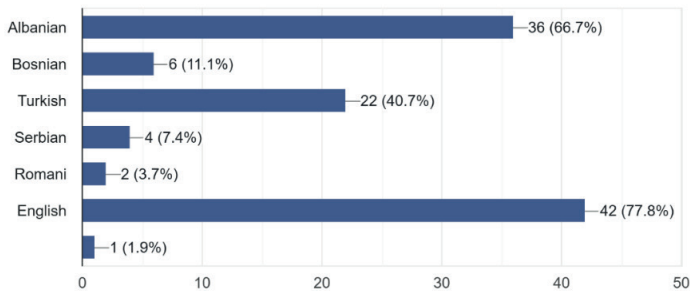


Figure 4. Languages Most Frequently Used for Media Consumption

Figure 5 shows how often participants switch between languages in a conversation; participants showed different levels of code-switching. Out of 54 responses, 16 participants (29.6%) reported that they always switch languages during conversations, and 14 participants (25.9%) said they often do. Additionally, 10 participants (18.5%) indicated they sometimes switch languages. Meanwhile, 7 participants (13%) stated that they rarely switch, and another 7 (13%) said they never switch languages in conversation. These results show that a majority of participants (40 out of 54, or 74%) engage in code-switching.

How often do you switch between languages in a single conversation?

54 responses

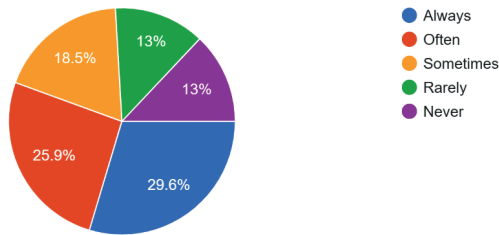


Figure 5. Frequency of Switching Between Languages

When asked which languages they consider most important for opportunities in Prizren, such as for work, education, or social life, participants valued multiple languages. Albanian was identified as the most important, with 53 out of 54 participants (98.1%) selecting it. English followed, chosen by 37 participants (68.5%), highlighting its role in the country. Turkish was also seen as important, selected by 35 participants (64.8%). Bosnian was considered important by 16 respondents (29.6%), Serbian by 4 (7.4%), and Romani by 3 (5.6%). One participant added a written response: “*The more languages you speak, the better,*” reflecting an appreciation for multilingualism in general. These findings indicate that while Albanian is seen as essential, English and Turkish are also widely viewed as valuable for opportunities in the city.

Which language(s) do you think are most important for opportunities in Prizren (e.g. for work, education, or social life)?

54 responses

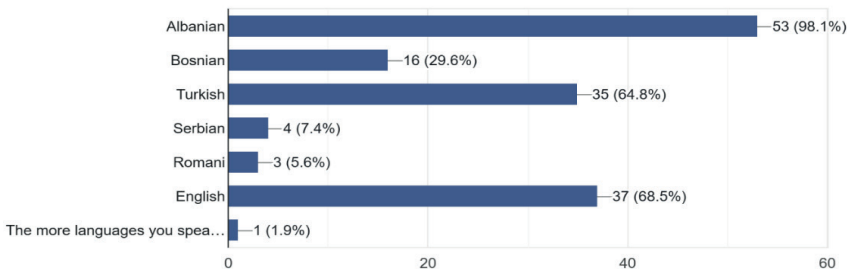


Figure 6. Perceptions of the Most Important Language(s) for Opportunities in Prizren

As for the factors influencing their language choices in daily life, 47 participants (87%) answered that they feel more comfortable speaking their first language in most situations. Additionally, 30 participants (55.6%) reported that they feel more expressive in one language than another. Education was also noted as a factor by 22 participants (40.7%). Social pressures were also noted: 21 participants (38.9%) said they feel pressure to speak a certain language at work or school, and 17 (31.5%) answered that they have a fear of judgment for using their native language in public, as illustrated in Figure 7.

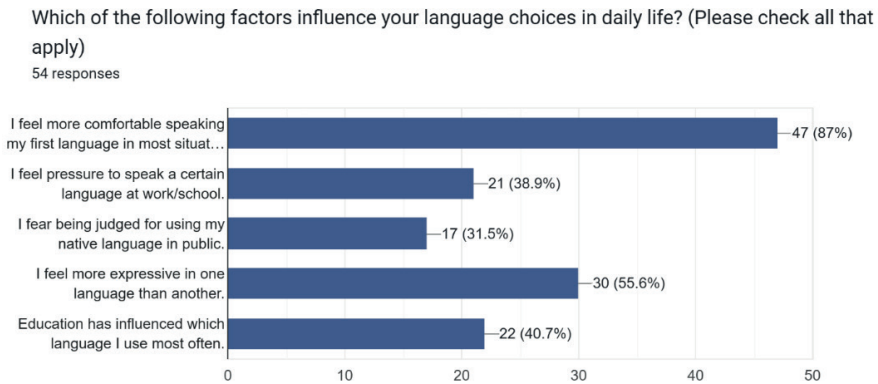


Figure 7. *Factors Influencing Language Choices*

Figure 8 shows how participants choose which language to speak in different situations. Out of 54 respondents, 42 (77.8%) stated that they choose a language based on what is more widely understood. Language choice was also influenced by the language of the person they are speaking to, by 29 participants (53.7%). Additionally, 26 participants (48.1%) reported selecting a language depending on the topic of discussion, and the same number (48.1%) said they choose a language to maintain their identity. Only 14 respondents (25.9%) mentioned choosing to speak a language because it is considered more important. These results highlight that language choices are made based on context and audience, with the aim of effective communication.

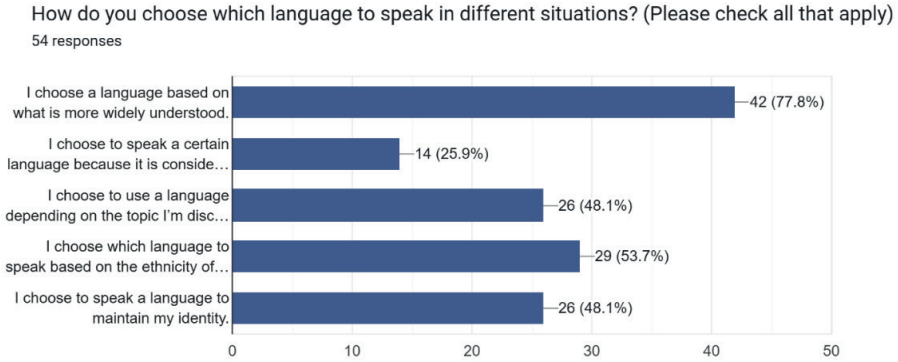


Figure 8. *Choosing Which Language to Speak in Different Situations*

Figure 9 shows participants’ attitudes toward multilingualism in their community, the majority of the participants showed positive views, where 31 participants (57.4%) answered having a *very positive* attitude toward multilingualism, while 21 participants (38.9%) view their attitude as *positive*. Only 2 participants (3.7%) expressed a *negative* attitude, and none reported a *very negative* view.

What is your attitude toward multilingualism in your community?
54 responses

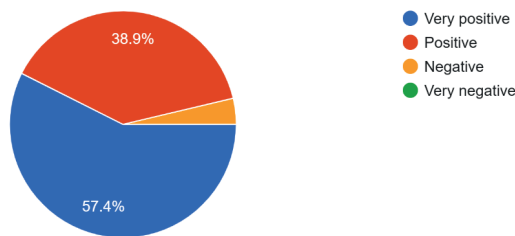


Figure 9. *Attitudes Towards Multilingualism*

The last question of the questionnaire asked participants to choose their level of agreement with statements related to language attitudes. As shown in Table 1., the majority, 49 out of 54 respondents (90.7%), agreed and strongly agreed that all languages spoken in Prizren should be equally valued, with 30 (55.6%) strongly agreeing. When asked whether minority languages in Kosovo are at risk

of being lost, opinions were divided; 23 participants (42.6%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 31 (57.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. On the statement that speaking a minority language is an important part of a person's identity, 46 participants (85.2%) agreed and strongly agreed. Regarding the value of language diversity in the city, 49 participants (90.7%) agreed that it enriches the cultural life. Finally, nearly all respondents, 50 participants (92.6%), agreed or strongly agreed that knowing multiple languages provides more opportunities, with only 3 (5.6%) disagreeing and 1 (1.9%) strongly disagreeing.

Table 1. *Extent of Agreement with Statements*

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All languages spoken in Prizren should be equally valued.	30 (55.6%)	19 (35.2%)	5 (9.3%)	0 (0%)
Minority languages in Kosovo are at risk of being lost.	14 (25.9%)	9 (16.7%)	26 (48.1%)	5 (9.3%)
Speaking a minority language is an important part of a person's identity.	20 (37.0%)	26 (48.1%)	8 (14.8%)	0 (0%)
Language diversity enriches the cultural life of a city like Prizren.	30 (55.6%)	19 (35.2%)	5 (9.3%)	0 (0%)
Knowing multiple languages gives people more opportunities.	28 (51.9%)	22 (40.7%)	3 (5.6%)	1 (1.9%)

Interview Findings

Language Use in Different Contexts

The first interview question was “How do you feel about using different languages in different places (at home, work, with friends)? Can you give an example of a time when you chose to speak one language instead of another?” This question's main objective was to explore participants' language choices in various settings and to understand the reasons behind these choices.

Participants generally expressed that their language use varied depending on the environment and the people they were interacting with. For example, one participant stated, “*When I'm with my friends who are Turkish, we often speak Turkish, even though we all know Albanian too. It feels more personal that way.*” This shows that emotional connection and shared identity can influence language use. Another participant stated “*I feel like I can express myself better if I use certain languages in certain situations...*” showing that people choose languages because they feel they can express themselves more clearly and comfortably in different situations.

One participant shared that switching languages is a daily habit. They reported using Bosnian at home, Albanian or English with friends, and primarily Albanian in academic settings due to limited understanding of Bosnian by others. As they stated *“I would say that speaking different languages in different places is a very common thing for me because I do it on a daily basis, since my native language is Bosnian.”*

Another Bosnian participant expressed the emotional effort in switching languages, saying, *“It’s hard to speak different languages at different places with different people.”* Similarly, another stated, *“Sometimes you can go blank,”* and admitted that it can be *“uncomfortable at times,”* especially due to the fear of making mistakes, although they noted that they had *“gotten used to it”* over time.

Pressure to Speak Certain Languages

The second interview question was: *“Do you ever feel pressure to speak a certain language at work or school? If yes, how does that pressure change the way you choose which language to speak?”* The purpose of this question was to explore factors which influence participants’ language choices. It aimed to reveal any pressures that affect multilinguals’ language freedom or identity in public and professional settings.

One of the Turkish participants reported that they did not feel pressured to speak a specific language, as there are educational options available in Albanian, Bosnian, and Turkish in Prizren. However, they acknowledged the need to use the most widely spoken languages, Albanian, for better communication and understanding, stating *“if I want to be understood better of course I have to speak the most prominent language, Albanian.”* Despite that, they mentioned that they could speak their own language, as it is well understood by many people in the area.

The Serbian participant mentioned the subtle but existing pressure experienced when using their mother tongue in public spaces: *“When I speak Serbian in public, I sometimes feel like people look at me differently. It’s not always negative, but it’s noticeable.”* Furthermore, they added, *“It’s not that anyone directly tells me not to, but I can feel the atmosphere”*. This reveals the social pressure that can influence language choices among minority speakers, particularly when historical or political tensions influence everyday communication.

One participant explained that while they do not feel direct pressure to speak a specific language, there is often an expectation from others, they shared, *“sometimes people expect you to speak a certain language here.”* However,

the interviewee from the RAE community expressed a different experience, sharing, *“Yes, when I’m in public, I feel like I should speak Albanian because speaking Romani in the street will make people give me “the look”.* This highlights the pressure or judgement some minority languages speakers feel when using their native language in public.

Experiences of Exclusion

The third interview question was: “Have you ever felt left out because you did not understand a language? Can you share what happened?” The aim of this question was to investigate whether participants have experienced exclusion or communication barriers due to language differences, and how these experiences affected their sense of belonging and language use.

One of the participants from the Bosnian ethnicity shared that they had never felt left out as they speak Bosnian, Albanian, and Turkish, the most common languages in Prizren. They explained that they avoid speaking their native language in groups where some people do not understand it, instead, they use the language of the people they are communicating with. However, the participant noted that this sometimes made them feel excluded because they always have to adapt to others’ languages. Other participants noted feelings of being left out, with one sharing, *“I’m often in situations where I hear everyone laughing and talking and I just stand there trying to understand.”*

One of the Albanian participants shared an experience at a doctor’s office where some people spoke Bosnian or Serbian to the nurse, explaining, *“It looked like a friendly conversation that lasted pretty long and after that those people cut in line.”* They felt this was done to exclude them and the others by speaking a language not everyone understood. However, the participant added, *“I believe it hasn’t happened to me often because Albanian is one of the most used languages in the community I live.”*

Reactions Towards Others’ Languages

The fourth interview question was: “How do you feel when others speak a language you do not understand around you?” This question aimed to explore participants’ reactions and feelings when faced with language barriers in society. One participant shared, *“I feel left out. Although I know they are speaking in the language they are most comfortable in, I believe the language should switch based on the environment and people present in the conversation.”* This response highlights a desire for inclusivity through adapting language use to the people around.

Another participant expressed that it was not a big issue for them when others spoke a language they did not understand. They explained that they are

curious and open to learning new languages, which makes them feel excited rather than left out stating *“I’m always interested in learning new languages. I’m curious and also open to learning new languages and that always makes me excited.”* They mentioned that hearing unfamiliar languages gives them a sense of having more to learn. However, the Albanian participants also mentioned feeling uncomfortable or impatient in such situations, sharing thoughts like, *“I feel uncomfortable,”* and *“I can’t wait for that conversation to finish.”*

Attitudes Toward Multilingualism in the City

The fifth interview question was: “What is your opinion on multilingualism in your city? Would you say it helps or makes it harder for people to connect with each other?” This question aimed to better understand participants’ attitudes toward the multilingual environment of their city and how they believe it affects connections with people.

The Bosnian participants expressed a very positive view of Prizren’s multilingual nature, with one saying, *“Honestly, I love the multilingual nature of our city. In every corner in Prizren, a very small city, you can hear people speaking different languages and I think that is amazing.”* They noted that multilingualism does not affect communication because *“almost everyone can speak Albanian, which is the main language.”* However, they added that if people only spoke their own languages without knowing Albanian, *“it would be harder to connect with others and would in a way separate all of us.”* Another participant also highlighted the role of Albanian in daily communication, saying, *“everyone should learn to speak Albanian.”*

One of the Turkish participants emphasized the importance of mutual respect for languages, stating, *“We should all try to accept and understand each other’s languages.”* They also noted that for younger generations, language differences are not an issue because *“...they might not know Albanian or Turkish both, but they definitely know English.”*

Multilingualism and Opportunities

The sixth interview question was: “Do you believe that speaking more than one language gives you an advantage in your city, in terms of opportunities for work, education, or social connections? Why or why not?” This question aimed to explore participants’ perceptions of the benefits or limitations of multilingualism regarding employment, education, and social connections.

One participant believed that speaking multiple languages does provide an advantage. They explained, *“When you apply for a job here the employers immediately ask how many languages do you speak.”* They felt that, unlike in

other cities, languages carry more importance in Prizren stating “*While it might be a formality in other cities, I think it has a heavier weight here*”

Many agreed that multilingualism has a positive effect as “*it helps to connect with people*” and “*it can open many doors.*” One participant specifically talked about its role in the job market, explaining, “*There are more job opportunities, because if you can't find a job that requires Albanian, you will find one that requires Turkish.*” However, another participant described their own experience and shared that they never noticed any advantage in work or education due to their multilingualism. They described it more as a personal benefit that may help in social connections but not as something that results in opportunities stating “*it's not like I had any special treatment for speaking more languages than the others.*”

Future of the Languages in Prizren

The seventh and last interview question was: “How do you see the future of the languages you speak, especially the minority languages? Do you ever feel that some languages are valued more than others?” This question aimed to get participants’ views on the state of the languages they use, especially minority languages, and how languages are treated in their community. One participant talked about language mixing in Prizren, saying, “*I think the languages are mixed a lot. There are only a few people who speak clean Albanian, Turkish or other languages....*” They believed that “*these languages will mix with each other even more,*” however, they added, “*I believe that languages with less speakers will not be as valued as the major ones.*”

The Serbian participant shared a similar view, stating, “*Of course some languages are valued more than others, but I don't think it's wrong to value the language which is most spoken in this country, so the official language, Albanian.*” They emphasized the importance of learning Albanian for many reasons: “*It is the language of business, work, schools here....*” However, the Romani participant again addressed issues of discrimination: “*It's wrong that some people discriminate the minority languages and they don't feel happy when they hear minority groups speaking their own language in public.*” They also highlighted the importance of respect: “*Everyone has the right to use their language... language is language. It is something valuable because the more languages you speak the more cultures you will be able to experience.*”

Other participants expressed interesting views, some believed that “*people will still continue to use their own languages,*” and one noted that “*everyone will be able to speak Turkish as the Turkish population is increasing.*” They also stated that “*Turkish and Albanian are equally valued in Prizren,*” highlighting

a sense of balance and mutual respect among the major languages spoken in the city.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed Prizren as a multilingual city, which has strong Albanian dominance, but also co-existence of Turkish, Bosnian, Serbian, Romani, as well as English. As Jusufi (2021) explained, people consider multilingualism in Prizren as a natural phenomenon that has always been around, it is considered normal, and people unconsciously are part of it.

Based on the findings, language choice is a form of social navigation. This aligns with Spolsky's (2004) view of language as a social strategy and supports Genemo's (2021) claim that language use in multilingual contexts is rarely random. Participants' responses showed that individuals make intentional choices about which language to use depending on the context, audience, and purpose of the interaction. These choices reflect an awareness of social dynamics and belonging, as speakers mentioned selecting a language that is more widely understood, switching based on the person they are speaking to, or adjusting to the topic of conversation. For many, speaking a language allows them to connect more personally with others, show their cultural identity, or avoid misunderstandings.

The findings show that Albanian is the dominant and most valued language in the city. Most participants reported fluency in more than one language, with Albanian and Turkish being the most common. The dominance of Albanian is a result of its status as the national language and a lingua franca in Prizren. These findings align with Pacarizi & Tufa's (2019) research that in some areas of Kosovo, non-Albanian people often acquire Albanian as a second language not just for communication, but because Albanian has higher status with advantages in employment, education, and socialization.

As a result, even though schools are available in minority native languages, children from various ethnic backgrounds attend Albanian-language schools due to the predominance of the Albanian population (Pacarizi & Tufa, 2019). Similarly, the findings show that participants emphasized Albanian as essential for public life, education, and employment, reflecting its role as both a practical and prestigious language. The findings reveal that language policies need to actively protect linguistic diversity from being overshadowed by the dominant languages.

Due to multilingualism, the findings revealed code-switching among more than 70% of respondents in the questionnaire. As supported by Sejdiu et al. (2022) using two or more languages in bilingual/multilingual communities is a

natural and common practice. This was also the case in the interview findings, where participants described daily experiences of shifting between languages depending on who they are talking to or where they are. This shows that in Prizren, switching between Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian or even English allows speakers to get along with others, feel connected, and keep their cultural identity. Similarly, Sejdiu et al. (2023) point out that language switching and mixing are used as strategies for achieving conversational goals.

Participants believed that knowing more than one language provides opportunities in education, employment, and social life. In accordance with the research conducted by Brancatelli et al. (2020), linguistic versatility is one of the most demanded skills across all industries and occupations in Kosovo. Albanian, English, and Turkish were the most frequently identified as important for success in Prizren. The presence of Turkish in Prizren is a key factor that gives the city its unique character. According to Jusufi (2021), Prizren has an urban Turkish-speaking culture which often reflects an urban, cultured identity rather than a Turkish ethnic identity. This aligns with the study's findings showing that a majority of the population recognized Turkish as valuable for job opportunities and everyday practical use. As Jusufi (2021) also found, individuals born and raised in Prizren continue to speak Turkish, which highlights the language's value and social importance in the city.

In addition to Turkish's local value, another language increasingly present in Prizren is English, especially among younger participants in media, education, and friendship. While English is not a community language in Prizren, it is a global tool for access and opportunity. As Kasapollu (2019) noted, the use of English in Kosovo reflects the country's aspiration for integration into the wider world. However, its rise may also contribute to the decline of minority languages, especially when younger speakers begin to favor English over their mother tongues. This aligns with the concerns raised by Romaine (2021), who warned that minority languages are often at risk in environments where global languages dominate.

In addition, participants demonstrated very positive attitudes toward multilingualism, with over 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that language diversity is a positive thing and should be valued. Most participants believed that all languages spoken in the city should be equally respected. Multilingualism was seen not only as a strength but also as a cultural asset. Moreover, participants emphasized that hearing multiple languages in the streets of Prizren was something they appreciated and felt proud of.

However, interviews revealed that the experience of multilingualism is not always positive for everyone. As Jusufi (2021, p.73) points out, there is a

discrepancy between the language regulations which are quite positive and the actual language situation, a gap that is clearly reflected in the experiences of Serbian and Romani speakers in Prizren. The minority language speaker from the Romani community described feeling judged and discriminated when using their language in public. Similarly, the Serbian participants reported feeling judged using the language in public. This shows that while multilingualism is generally celebrated, not all languages enjoy equal treatment in everyday life.

As explained in Council of Europe (2023), relations between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs continue to be fragile and tense, and these tensions appear to project themselves into daily language use. Even though no one openly tells them not to speak Serbian, they still feel uncomfortable or “watched”. This feeling does not always come with open negativity, but it’s enough to make the speaker aware of being different. As Lohaj (2018) explained, as a result of the political situation in Kosovo, Albanian and Serbian youth remain distanced and do not learn the language of one another even though they are both official languages in Kosovo.

Consequently, it is important to point out a contradiction between language policies and everyday experiences. While Kosovo is often described as having a positive and inclusive approach toward multilingualism, the data from this study reveal that not all languages are treated equally in daily life. Despite legal frameworks and institutional support for language rights, in practice, minority language speakers may still face social pressure or exclusion. Marković (1996) already noted that the Serbian language in Prizren was retreating and vanishing, highlighting early concern for the loss of minority language identity. Today, nearly three decades later, this appears to be present, with Serbian being spoken by an increasingly smaller and more isolated community.

Unlike Romani and Serbian language speakers, none of the Bosnian participants in this study reported feeling judged or uncomfortable when using their language in public. This suggests a high level of acceptance and recognition of the Bosnian language in Prizren’s multilingual setting. Participants mentioned using Bosnian freely at home and in social contexts, and did not express the same level of linguistic pressure reported by speakers of Serbian, although the languages are quite similar. In line with Jusufi (2021), the freedom of language use for the Bosnian community has notably improved since 1999, possibly as a result of institutional and educational support for the language.

Additionally, although most participants viewed multilingualism as a connector, several interviewees shared stories where language differences led to exclusion. Some described being left out of conversations when others used languages they did not understand. Others described feeling impatient or

frustrated when surrounded by a different language. As Kulkarni & Sommer (2015) point out, having a different native language can pose a threat to one's social identity and may lead to rejection or exclusion by others. Despite these experiences, many participants also emphasized the importance of adapting to others, showing curiosity about learning new languages, and using multilingualism as a bridge rather than a barrier.

There were divided opinions about the future of minority languages in Prizren. While some participants were optimistic that these languages would continue to be spoken within families and communities, others expressed concern that they were not equally valued or were at risk of being lost over time. Some interviewees noted that children are increasingly educated in Albanian, even when other options are available, others mentioned that languages are becoming mixed, and only a few people speak them in a "pure" unmixed form.

CONCLUSION

This study found that comfort, expressiveness, and education were the main factors influencing language use. Social pressures and fear of judgment also played a role, especially among speakers of minority languages, which shows an emotional and social dimension in language choice. Language choice was also reported to be influenced by the topic of conversation and aimed at ensuring mutual understanding.

Speakers in Prizren choose languages based on context, audience, and purpose of interaction. In professional and educational settings, Albanian is most commonly used due to its role as the national and most widely understood language. In personal or home settings, speakers often go back to their native languages, such as Turkish or Bosnian. Many participants switch languages depending on who they are with, as code-switching is frequent.

Most participants showed positive views toward multilingualism, connecting it with inclusion and cultural richness. These perceptions show a strong community support for linguistic diversity, though occasional negative attitudes still exist. Participants viewed multilingualism as a strength, especially when balanced with a shared knowledge of Albanian. Overall, the study showed that many people view their language as part of their cultural identity and want to preserve it. The idea that "*the more languages you speak, the more cultures you can experience*" revealed a desire to maintain linguistic diversity in Prizren.

Study Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications. Throughout the years more and more research has been conducted on bilingualism and multilingualism worldwide, however, to the researcher's knowledge, limited

attention has been given to multilingualism in Kosovo, particularly in the city of Prizren. The study will serve for future studies on language attitudes, linguistic identity, and minority languages in Prizren and other multilingual regions.

Limitations & Recommendations

This study may have some limitations as it relied on self-reported data and there is a chance that participants gave biased answers which did not reflect their true opinions, and could have altered the results. Additionally, both the questionnaire and interviews were conducted in English. Participants who were less proficient in English may have faced challenges in expressing their thoughts clearly, potentially affecting the data. Furthermore, the study focused only on the city of Prizren. While this setting provided a rich example of multilingualism, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other regions in Kosovo or beyond.

To address one of the limitations of the study, future research is encouraged to include multilingual data collection tools. Due to limited proficiency in all local languages, English is chosen as a neutral medium to ensure fairness. The decision to avoid using Albanian, the majority local language in Prizren, is made to prevent potential bias or the perception of favoritism toward one linguistic group over the others.

Therefore, future studies should consider conducting questionnaires and interviews in multiple local languages spoken in Prizren. This approach would enhance inclusivity, allow participants to engage more comfortably and expressively, and result in richer data. Working with multilingual research assistants could also be helpful in securing linguistic accessibility across diverse participant groups.

References

- Abercrombie, A. (2017). *Mixing and unmixing languages: Romani multilingualism in post socialist, post-conflict Kosovo* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester).
- Alfred, S. (2020). Factors affecting language choice in a multilingual society, *Federal College of Education*.
- Aronin, L. (2019). What is multilingualism. *Twelve lectures in multilingualism, 1*(1), 3-34.
DOI: 10.21832/9781788922074-003
- Brancatelli, C., Marguerie, A. C., & Brodmann, S. (2020). Job creation and demand for skills in Kosovo: What can we learn from job portaldata? *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, (9266).
- Cenoz, J. (2013). Defining multilingualism. *Annual review of applied linguistics, 33*, 3-18.
DOI: 10.1017/S026719051300007X
- Council of Europe. (2023). *Fifth opinion on Kosovo. Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*.
Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/5th-op-kosovo-en/1680ab6a79>
- Degi, Z. (2012). Types of multilingualism explored in the Transylvanian school context. *Jezikoslovlje, 13*(2), 645-666.
- Fishman, J. A., & Garcia, O. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of language & ethnic identity* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.
- Gashi, L. (2021). Intercultural awareness through English language teaching: the case of Kosovo. *Interchange, 52*(3), 357-375.
DOI: 10.1007/s10780-021-09441-5
- Genemo, T. B. (2021). Multilingualism and language choice in domains. In *Multilingualism Interdisciplinary Topics*. IntechOpen.
DOI: 10.5772/intechopen.101660
- Gogic, O. (2020). Bilingualism in Kosovo – More Than Just a Symbolism Yet Less Than a Reality. NGO AKTIV.
- Jayanath, T. (2021). A comparative study on bilingualism and multilingualism. *KnowEx Social Sciences, 1*(02), 79-91.
DOI: 10.17501/27059901.2020.1207
- Jusufi, J. (2021). Multilingualism in Prizren, Language Use and Language Policy. *European Journal of Language and Literature, 7*(2), 54-75.
DOI: 10.26417/382voa26o
- Kasapolli, B. (2019). The Linguistic Dependence of an Independent Country-State of the native Albanian, the impact of English and the multilingual perspective of Kosovo Albanians. *Thesis, 8*(2), 295-323
- Krasniqi, S., & Bajraktari, H. (2020). Minority languages in Kosovo. *International Journal of Research-GRANTHAALAYAH, 8*(11), 259-265.
DOI: 10.29121/granthaalayah.v8.i11.2020.2450
- Kulkarni, M., & Sommer, K. (2015). Language-based exclusion and prosocial behaviors in organizations. *Human Resource Management, 54*(4), 637-652.
DOI: 10.1002/hrm.21637
- Liddicoat, A. (1991). Bilingualism: An Introduction.
- Lohaj, F. (2018). Use of English language by Kosova Youth. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR), 42*. 111-123.
- Marković, J. S. (1996). The Serbian Dialect of Prizren. *FACTA UNIVERSITATIS-Linguistics and Literature, 1*(03), 169-171.

- Najvirtova, A., & Burema, L. (2011). Assessing Minority Language Rights in Kosovo. *Pristupljeno*, 17(5), 2014.
- Nyimbili, F., & Nyimbili, L. (2024). Types of purposive sampling techniques with their examples and application in qualitative research studies. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 5(1), 90-99.
DOI: 10.37745/bjmas.2022.0419
- Official Gazette of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo. (2007). *Law No. 02/L-37 on the use of languages*. Prishtina.
- OSCE Mission in Kosovo. (2014). *Municipal language compliance in Kosovo*. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.
- Pacarizi, R., & Tufa, D. (2019). Difficulties to Acquire Albanian as a Second Language by Pre-schooler Age Children of Turkish Nationality in Prizren, Kosovo. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(6), 292449.
DOI: 10.14744/alrj.2019.07379
- Romaine, S. (2021). Identity and multilingualism. *Bilingual youth: Spanish in English-speaking societies*, 42, 7-32.
- Sejdiu, S., Ramadani, R., & Qovanaj, A. (2023). Code-Switching and Code-Mixing as Styles of Language Use. *International Journal of Literacies*, 30(1).
DOI: 10.18848/2327-0136/CGP/v30i01/19-35
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.
DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511615245
- Wilton, A. (2009). Multilingualism and foreign language learning. *Handbook of foreign language communication and learning*, 45-78.

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION ON LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Eliza KABASHI¹

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

The digitalization of communication has changed the way humans interact with one another in the 21st century. In particular, the processes of speaking, writing, and meaning making are evolving at a rapid pace because of new forms of digital expression. For the past ten years, systems of communication (including social media sites, messaging systems, online chat forms, gaming environments, etc.) have fundamentally changed how we use text, and not only in terms of technology, but also language and social processes. Language now operates across diverse digital interfaces, where users construct meaning, negotiate presence, and manage visibility or participation. As friendships and identity formation occur more readily in online contexts, recent research indicates that language is a crucial resource for fostering affiliation and shaping social identity (Baym, 2015; McCulloch, 2019).

Digital platforms are different than traditional communication done face-to-face, as the meaning is not derived from a specific situational context.

Digital platforms rely on multimodal features (e.g., emojis, acronyms, GIFs, memes) which serve to replace traditional visual-spatial features (e.g., body language, tone) and have become an integral range of resources for expressing emotion and subtext (Crystal, 2011). Language has always been used differently in different spaces, whether formal or informal; textual usages can include various styles depending on context, for example, a user may use formal English within a professional context such as LinkedIn, or slang and

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; elizaakabashi@gmail.com

all lowercase text on Snapchat (McCulloch, 2019; Tagg, Sargeant & Brown, 2017).

Involvement with an online community expands beyond simply language variation and enters culturally situated practice. Groups commonly organized around fandoms, gaming, and activism (or other shared notions of interests) often develop their negligible vocabularies, memes, hashtags, and in-group expressions. Language used in these formations indicates not only current group membership, but the existence of social capital (Xoliqnazarova & Elmurodov, 2024).

Multilingualism or stylistic switching, where users mix English with their first language, is often a primary site for negotiating identity in digital space (Androutsopoulos, 2006). Migrants and diasporic users can shift or adapt their typologies based on the platform or audience, which aligns with digital identity as both dynamic and fluid (Boyd, 2014; Yus, 2011).

In conclusion, while digital communication has many inclusive options, it also raises barriers. Digital symbols may exclude or misinterpret someone who does not know the norms of a particular platform.

Having to act like different versions of yourself on different platforms can be tiring and make you feel confused about who you really are (Papacharissi, 2011). These complexities raise important questions about digital inclusivity, access, and power, particularly as they relate to language use.

Problem Statement

While research in digital linguistics has examined online discourse, language variation, and platform affordances, there is still limited understanding of how users perceive the impact of their own digital language practices on their identity. Existing studies often isolate either linguistic change (e.g., grammatical shifts, vocabulary innovation) or social behavior within communities. However, people navigate multiple digital spaces where language use varies by context, and these shifts often influence how individuals see themselves. The dynamic interaction between linguistic choice and identity perception across platforms remains underexplored, especially in multilingual settings where users move between languages and cultural affiliations (Panjaitan & Patria, 2024; Georgakopoulou, 2011).

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The goal of the research is to find out research gaps relating to what people do linguistically online and how they feel about it. It looks at whether users feel their identity shifts when they alter their language in the digital world and how

taking part in communities bolsters or reshapes that identity. It is particularly true in multilingual and multicultural societies, where language is intertwined with heritage, belonging, and self-expression.

Objectives include:

- Understanding how people adjust their language use on different digital platforms (e.g. social media, messaging apps, online gaming).
- Investigating how digital communication informs the construction and transformation of the user's identity.
- Examining the role of online communities in creating or disrupting linguistic identity.
- Presenting examples of different linguistic behaviour among people when they are in digital spaces.

Research Questions

To address these gaps and deepen our understanding of how language and identity interact in digital spaces, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do people shape their language use across digital platforms (social media, texting, and online gaming)?
2. How do users perceive the impact of their digital language use on who they see themselves as being in that context?
3. How do communities shape or interrupt linguistic identity?

LITERATURE REVIEW

For years, scholars as well as people, have been looking into the issues arising between languages and identities. In essence, digital spaces have become the main public space for socialization. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and online gaming platforms have changed the ways we communicate and in turn, our identities. Through the digital spaces, we have the opportunity of self-discovery, identity performance, and re-negotiation, all of which remakes the understanding of language and identity through language.

Language as Identity in the Digital Age

Once again, language has always been a central marker of identity. Hall (1996) articulates that identity is not inherent or fixed but exists in discourse. In a digital space, users are actively constructing their identities through texts, images and symbols. Moreover, digital spaces create flexible, dynamic environments for users to construct and display aspects of self across contexts. Informal

communicative ways and multi-modal communication are predominately used in the performance of identities. Yus (2011) refers to this practice as “cyberpragmatics”, which emphasizes the role of emotional tone, humor, and social positioning being expressed through emoticons, short/abbreviated word forms, memes and strategic uses of language. In the absence of gestures or other, useful physical prompts, users increasingly rely on linguistic creativity to represent themselves. These practices are also necessarily socially cultural and cultural, but they also represent a deep, individual source of identity, audience, and platform.

Multilingualism and Code-Switching in Digital Spaces

Digital communication has increased people’s awareness of multilingual practices too, particularly code-switching and translanguaging. Androutopoulos (2006) suggests that users often use different languages online to perform identity, position, or membership in an international or cultural group. Code-switching is a dual purpose, functional and symbolic practice that is indicative of cultural alignment, group membership, and identity negotiation. More specifically, diasporic users tend to switch languages, primarily between their native language and English, depending on the topic (whether they are using a professional or informal platform) (Georgakopoulou, 2011). Users may uphold formality and grammar standards when using professional networking platforms (such as LinkedIn), with informal and relaxed standard of dialect being evident on informal networking platforms (such as Instagram or TikTok): users may use slang, verbal short-hand, and emojis to connect with each other (Tagg, Seargeant, & Brown, 2017). This dialectical fluency, by which people can switch between varieties and form of dialect reflects social awareness and situational contexts, and exemplifies how identity is always being reconstituted in discursive interactions online.

Online Communities and Linguistic Identity

Participation in online communities significantly shapes linguistic identity. Groups formed around shared interests, gaming, fandoms, activism, or professional circles, often develop unique language norms, memes, inside jokes, and styles. Xoliqnazarova and Elmurodov (2024) describe these as “language enclaves,” where discourse signals group membership, values, and solidarity. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is a property of interaction and an emergent phenomenon. In digital spaces, people can shift their identity (role) based on the group they belong to, the topic of conversation, and the platform. You can see their identity shifts reflected in their language changes. Seargeant and Tagg (2014) underscore the “flowing” of digital identities as not

solely dependent on user intention, but also depends on platform norms and audience expectations.

The Emergence of Digital Dialects

As users mold language to digital contexts, little-used forms of language show up (Digital dialects), with abbreviations (ie, “u” for “you”), emojis, acronyms, platform-specific language (ie, “retweet”, “ghosting”) as forms of indication of communication. While Crystal (2011) asserts that these are creative adjustments to a new communicative environment and not language decline.

Panjaitan and Patria refer the digital forms produce their own social meaning, include, but not limited to how they represent markers of belonging, casualness, or play. However, the use of these forms varies significantly from user to user based on demographics (age, education, digital literacy, etc...). Tagg et al. note younger users have less problems adjusting to these forms and often younger users felt older users were not adjusting to modern communication.

Digital platforms enable users to assume multiple identities across various contexts. Boyd (2014) speaks to “networked publics,” where users are performing identity influenced by imagined audiences. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) showed that self-presentation on social network sites reflects a users’ self-esteem and that this correlation was particularly pronounced among adolescents.

The performances themselves may also be influenced by the intended affordances of the platform. Users tailor language and content to fit different user communities, which may result in positive self-expression, or emotional exhaustion. Papacharissi (2011) notes that digital identity is “fragmented yet coherent”. Users may present different facets of themselves on various social media platforms and still feel a sense of a coherent identity.

Critical Perspectives and Future Directions

While digital forms of interaction can allow for creative identity exploration, scholars caution against being naïve and simplistic in understanding their potential. Thurlow and Mroczek (2011) point to how algorithms and moderation systems associated with platforms restrict what is considered acceptable expression and encourage dominant norms. Users deviating from accepted mainstream styles of language can find themselves marginalized or excluded.

Noble (2018) further argues that algorithms reproduce societal biases, subtly shaping how language is used, and how to portray identity. For example, predictive text, content curation, and moderation can influence how users speak

and what they choose to express. As artificial intelligence, voice technology, and virtual platforms evolve, new linguistic behaviors will emerge. Herring (2013) suggests interdisciplinary research to examine how language, technology, and identity continue to co-evolve in increasingly immersive digital environments.

METHODOLOGY

Method

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore how individuals perceive the relationship between their digital language use and identity. Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews, which allowed participants to share detailed insights about their experiences while providing enough flexibility to explore emerging themes. An interview guide was developed based on the research questions to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing for open-ended responses.

Participants

The study involved five participants aged between 18 and 30 years, residing in different countries: Kosovo, England, Germany, and Italy. Participants were selected purposefully, based on the researcher's personal contacts, with the aim of exploring linguistic and cultural variations in digital communication across diverse European contexts. This small, diverse sample allowed for an in-depth examination of individual perceptions and language practices.

Piloting

Before the main data collection, a pilot interview was conducted with one participant to test the clarity and relevance of the interview questions. Based on feedback from the pilot, minor adjustments were made to improve question phrasing and flow. The pilot interview data were not included in the final analysis.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted both physically and online, depending on the participant's location and availability. Each interview was audio-recorded with participant consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. After transcription, all audio recordings were securely destroyed to maintain confidentiality. The semi-structured format allowed participants to freely express their thoughts while enabling the researcher to probe relevant areas related to digital language use and identity.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with identifying information removed during transcription. The researcher ensured that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time without consequence. Audio data were handled with strict confidentiality and deleted after transcription to protect participant privacy.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview transcripts, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. This approach involved familiarization with the data, coding meaningful segments, identifying patterns and themes, and refining these themes to answer the research questions. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to capture both commonalities and differences in participants' experiences with digital language and identity.

RESULTS

The thematic analysis of five interviews revealed key insights into how participants use digital language to construct identity, manage relationships, and navigate online communities. Five major themes emerged:

Platform-Based Language Variation

Participants consistently reported adapting their language depending on the platform and audience. WhatsApp was often used for both formal and informal interactions, depending on the group (e.g., family, academic, professional). Snapchat, by contrast, was associated with casual language, slang, emojis, and humor. Facebook was considered a more public and formal space, requiring more cautious communication.

Participant 3 shared:

“On Snapchat, I joke around a lot and use informal language. On WhatsApp, I adjust depending on the group... in work or religious groups, I write more respectfully and avoid slang or jokes.”

Similarly, Participant 2 noted:

“On Snapchat, I use more casual language and emojis. On WhatsApp, especially when chatting with my in-laws, I speak more respectfully and avoid slang.”

This suggests that the affordances and perceived audiences of each platform significantly influence language choice and communicative tone.

Code-Switching and Tone Adjustment

All participants engaged in some degree of code-switching, particularly between Albanian and English, depending on their conversational partner and social context. Language choice was often strategic and reflected the social relationship and power dynamics at play.

Participant 1 explained:

“Yes, I often mix Albanian and English, especially with friends. With family, I stick more to Albanian... I’m more relaxed with friends and more respectful with professors or formal groups.”

Participant 5 echoed this, saying:

“I switch between English and Albanian depending on who I’m talking to... it’s more respectful or formal with family, and much more relaxed with friends.”

These shifts also extended to tone and formality. In academic, work-related, or religious group chats, participants consciously avoided slang and adopted a more professional tone.

Online vs. Offline Identity Alignment

Participants expressed different degrees of alignment between their online and offline selves. For some, their digital identity was a natural extension of their real-life personality. For others, the online environment encouraged more reserved or curated self-expression.

Participant 4 stated:

“I don’t think there is any difference. I’m the same person online and in real life.”

In contrast, Participant 3 reflected:

“People sometimes misunderstand me online and think I’m more serious or distant than I actually am in person.”

Participant 5 added:

“I’m more shy in real life, but online I can be more direct and expressive... it feels easier to say what I think without overthinking it too much.”

These accounts highlight how digital communication enables certain expressions of identity that may be restricted or more nuanced in face-to-face settings.

Social Norms and Group Belonging

Participants reported adapting their language style to fit into group dynamics and expectations, especially in family groups, work chats, or formal settings. This included using formal tone, avoiding slang, or mimicking the dominant style of the group to avoid standing out.

Participant 1 shared:

“If you talk too differently, you might feel out of place. Matching the group’s style helps create connection.”

Participant 5 expressed:

“I do change how I speak online depending on who I’m around... I try to fit in with the way others talk, especially in group chats or social media posts.”

This adaptability was not always voluntary. Participant 3 noted:

“There were times I wanted to say something in a group but held back because I felt like it wouldn’t match the tone or mood of the conversation.”

These experiences suggest that linguistic conformity in digital spaces can foster inclusion, but also pressure individuals to self-monitor their expressions.

Emotional and Reflective Dimensions of Online Communication

Beyond the functional role of digital language, participants reflected on its emotional significance. Digital platforms offered emotional relief, confidence-building, and moments of reflection that shaped how participants viewed themselves.

Participant 5 noted:

“Sometimes I feel more confident online than in real life, and that helps me say things more directly... switching between tones and languages shows how many sides of me come out through digital communication.

Participant 4 emphasized the emotional impact:

“Talking online is a great thing because sometimes when you feel lonely or in a low mood, you can talk to people you love and feel better.”

These narratives reinforce that digital communication is not only about utility or social connection, it also plays a role in emotional wellbeing and self-concept.

DISCUSSION

This research examines the language utilization and identity construction that fosters a ‘sense of belonging’ on the Internet, and it adds to the existing

body of knowledge addressing digital communication. The findings indicated that online language practices are not uniform and static. Online communication is contextually responsive and strategic. The variation across the platforms reinforces Baron (2008), who claims that digital media offer different communicative affordances, which lure users to select different platforms for different social functions. Language features significantly in Snapchat and WhatsApp messaging. With regard to Snapchat, informal language may engender creativity in the use of slang. WhatsApp requires a flexible command of dialects or styles as it serves multiple functions, from formal to informal. The switching instances of the bilingual participants between Albanian and English clearly highlights their considerable skill at negotiating between languages. This is indicative of the theorist's markedness and signalling of social identity. People alternate languages and mix for functional reasons. It aids in negotiating identity, building solidarity and communicating a hybrid identity.

Users tend to be more casual and less serious when online as compared to offline. This distance between online and offline self-presentation is in line with Goffman's (1959) performative self theory and Walther's (1996) hyperpersonal communication theory. Users develop an online 'front stage' self in mind of a specific audience and media. It is hard to convey emotions in writing without being able to read body language, this can lead to misinterpretation of feelings. Participants often made comments in this regard according to Derks et al. (2008).

In the end, the affective reflections show that digital communication operates with functional, affective and relational meaning as documented in the case of online self-disclosure and identity exploration (Turkle, 2011). Users can have a more concrete exploration of their personal identity using online sites without restraint. This enhances their self awareness and self-esteem.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Education

How we talk, in whatever mode and way, is dependent on the context in which the talk is happening. Language use helps us make sense of who we are in the world. Schools have an obligation to include digital and sociolinguistic competence as part of language education. Language learners need access to as many versions of language use as possible: formal, informal, hybrid, and code-switching practices. Speaking while using a language is the most advantageous way to utilize the medium. Teachers can use online discourse examples to help develop more pragmatic and flexible learners.

Design of the Digital Platform

Emerging research suggests that texting without visual cues is more likely to lead to miscommunication. While text-based platforms are extremely practical, designers who create platforms could enhance the tools people use to communicate, even though no creator is able to fully encapsulate the experiences of communication. If designers added modified aspects of experiential features into their designs; possibly a voice note, video snippets and animated reactions which would allow individuals to signal their tone--this would potentially reduce misinterpretations due to lost tone and playfulness. All of this would improve and support more nuanced self-presentation and richer interactions.

Social and Cultural Inclusion

To enable everyone to engage online, it is necessary to recognize, acknowledge and appreciate the multilingual and multimodal nature of digital communication. Initiatives and policies promote respectful linguistic diversity that enable users to express multiple aspects of their identity without exclusion. Our work in this area gains significance from recent developments and trends.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how individuals use digital communication platforms to construct and negotiate identity through language. Drawing on interviews with five participants from different cultural backgrounds, the findings show that online language use is context-sensitive, socially strategic, and emotionally reflective.

Participants demonstrated adaptive linguistic behavior across platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Facebook. These adaptations included shifts in tone, register, and language mixing depending on the audience and purpose. Platforms influenced not only linguistic style but also the way users managed their identities in online contexts.

The phenomenon of code-switching, particularly between Albanian and English, served functional and symbolic purposes, signaling cultural affiliation, group membership, and social distance. This aligns with Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model and broader theories of sociolinguistic accommodation

Participants' perceptions of their online versus offline identities varied. While some described a strong alignment between the two, others noted that digital spaces encouraged more serious, emotionally restrained self-presentations. These findings support Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory and Walther's (1996) hyperpersonal communication framework, suggesting that online environments afford controlled identity performance.

Language was also shown to play a critical role in fostering group belonging and maintaining social harmony. Adjusting language to align with group norms was a conscious act aimed at social cohesion. Furthermore, participants shared emotional reflections, illustrating that digital communication offers a safe space for identity exploration and self-expression, particularly for individuals who may feel constrained in face-to-face contexts.

Overall, this research emphasizes that digital language is not merely a tool for information exchange but a vehicle for identity work and relational engagement. It contributes to broader discussions on sociolinguistics, digital literacy, and the emotional dimensions of online interaction.

LIMITATIONS

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. The small, purposively selected sample limits the generalizability of the findings. Participants were all young adults from a relatively similar cultural background, meaning the results may not reflect the experiences of older individuals or users from different regions.

Furthermore, the self-reported nature of the data may be influenced by social desirability bias or selective recall. The study also focused on a limited number of platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Snapchat), and did not include emerging or video-based platforms. Finally, the cross-sectional design captures a single point in time, limiting insights into how digital identity practices evolve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Expand Participant Diversity:** Future research should include participants from broader age groups, cultural backgrounds, and language communities to better capture the diversity of digital language practices.
2. **Use Longitudinal Approaches:** Tracking identity construction over time would reveal how users adapt linguistically and socially in response to evolving platforms and norms.
3. **Integrate Digital Competence in Education:** Language and communication curricula should incorporate digital pragmatics, code-switching, and online identity management to prepare learners for complex real-world communication.
4. **Improve Platform Design:** Designers should develop communication tools that enable users to convey tone, emotion, and nuance more effectively—e.g., richer visual or vocal cues—to reduce miscommunication.
5. **Support Inclusive Digital Spaces:** Institutions and platforms should promote multilingual and identity-affirming communication policies that protect users from exclusion and enable authentic expression.

References

- Androustopoulos, J. (2006). Multilingualism, diaspora, and the internet: Codes and identities on German-based diaspora websites. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 10(4), 520–547. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2006.00287.x>
- Baym, N. K. (2015). *Personal connections in the digital age* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4–5), 585–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>
- Crystal, D. (2011). *Internet linguistics: A student guide*. Routledge.
- Derks, D., Fischer, A. H., & Bos, A. E. R. (2008). The role of emotion in computer-mediated communication: A review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(3), 766–785. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2007.04.004>
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2011). Narrative and identity management: Discourse and social life on Facebook. *Narrative Inquiry*, 21(2), 231–247. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.21.2.06geo>
- Giles, H., & Powesland, P. F. (1975). *Speech style and social evaluation*. Academic Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor Books.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs 'identity'? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1–17). Sage Publications.
- Herring, S. C. (2013). Discourse in Web 2.0: Familiar, reconfigured, and emergent. In D. Tannen & A. M. Trester (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 127–151). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584194.ch7>
- Jones, R. H., Chik, A., & Hafner, C. A. (2015). Language and identity on the internet. In *Discourse and digital practices: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age* (pp. 40–53). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315775340-4>
- Leppänen, S., Kytölä, S., Jousmäki, H., Peuronen, S., & Westinen, E. (2014). Entextualization and resemiotization as resources for identification in social media. *Tampere Studies in Language, Translation and Culture*, 2, 112–145. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2363.7284>
- McCulloch, G. (2019). *Because internet: Understanding the new rules of language*. Riverhead Books.
- Michikyan, M., Subrahmanyam, K., & Dennis, J. (2014). Can you guess who I am? Real, ideal, and false self-presentation on Facebook among emerging adults. *Emerging Adulthood*, 2(1), 55–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696814522564>
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for code-switching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. NYU Press.
- Panjaitan, L. L., & Patria, A. N. (2024). Social media and language evolution: The impact of digital communication on language change. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 7(12), 53–57. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.12.8>
- Papacharissi, Z. (2011). *A private sphere: Democracy in a digital age*. Polity Press.
- Seargeant, P., & Tagg, C. (2014). The language of social media: Identity and community on the internet. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 13(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.13.1.01sea>
- Tagg, C., Seargeant, P., & Brown, A. (2017). Taking offence on social media: Conviviality and communication on Facebook. *Convergence*, 23(1), 85–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856515592512>
- Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic Books.
- Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2011). Online communication and adolescent well-being: Testing the stimulation versus the displacement hypothesis. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(6), 1431–1438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.06.004>

- Walther, J. B. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication Research*, 23(1), 3–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365096023001001>
- Xoliqnazarova, D., & Elmurodov, U. (2024). The impact of social media on language and identity. *International Conference on Modern Development of Pedagogy and Linguistics*, 1(11), 79–81. <https://universalconference.us/universalconference/index.php/icmdpl/article/view/3298>
- Yus, F. (2011). *Cyberpragmatics: Internet-mediated communication in context*. John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.213>

POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN GENDERED COMMUNICATION IN KOSOVO

Zyrafete SYLEJMANI¹

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the use of politeness strategies in gendered communication within Kosovo's cultural context. Using Goffman's (1967) concept of facework, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, the primary goal of this paper is to identify and compare the ways in which men and women use politeness strategies.

This research paper employed a qualitative approach, involving semi-structured interviews and naturalistic observations conducted with 10 adult participants aged 30 to 40 from various professional backgrounds in Kosovo.

The results show that both genders demonstrate awareness of politeness forms with men favoring bald-on-record strategy, using more direct and assertive language, especially in male-peer interactions. On the other hand, women are more likely to use negative politeness strategies, hedging and indirectness, especially in formal and professional contexts aligning with traditional expectations of deference. Findings from this study highlight the dynamic and context-dependent nature of politeness by the fact that both genders modify their behavior based on the gender and social standing of the other person. Additionally, findings support Brown and Levinson's theory while emphasizing that context, more than gender alone, shapes politeness behaviour in Kosovo.

These results contribute to a deeper understanding of how language, gender, and culture interact with one another and offer practical insights for enhancing gender-sensitive communication in Kosovo and similar sociocultural settings.

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; zyrafete.sylejmani@student.uni-pr.edu

INTRODUCTION

Our communication style is influenced by a variety of factors. Among these factors, we find the role of politeness strategies as one of the most critical aspects of human interactions. These politeness strategies include the rules and conventions that guide how individuals express themselves while maintaining social harmony and respect for others. (Yule, 1996).

According to Culpeper, politeness is not just about saying “please” and “thank you”. Instead, it is something flexible, shaped by culture, and depends on the relationship between people. Hence, he defined politeness as a set of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors used to manage social relationships, often aimed at maintaining social harmony and avoiding conflict. (Culpeper, 2011). Therefore, politeness is the way people use language in a respectful way, which leads to harmony in interpersonal interactions.

Understanding the role of politeness in communication is highly important, particularly in the context of gendered communication. Gender and communication refer to how a person’s gender identity shapes their communication behaviors, including how they speak, listen, write, gesture, and interpret messages. Additionally, these behaviors are influenced by different social and cultural contexts, which impact how individuals are perceived and how they engage in conversations based on societal expectations related to gender. (Eunson, 2020).

Research suggests that gender influences language use in terms of politeness, with women more likely to align with politeness norms. Nonetheless, these patterns are shaped by cultural constructs of gender roles rather than natural differences. Therefore, understanding politeness must involve both linguistic behavior and sociocultural context. Studies show that women ask more questions, interrupt less, and use more politeness strategies than men (Ambarita & Mulyadi, 2020).

Politeness strategies, which are employed to use language in a respectful way and maintain social harmony, are an essential component of daily interactions. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness strategies, remains one of the most influential frameworks in examining how individuals navigate social interactions and manage interpersonal relationships through language. However, while much of the research in this area has been focused on general politeness behaviors, less attention has been paid to gendered differences in the use of these strategies, particularly in specific cultural settings such as Kosovo.

According to Brown and Levinson, politeness strategies are categorized into four main types: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and

off-record strategies. (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These strategies function to protect an individual's face, or social identity, while facilitating communication.

In many cultures, including Kosovo, gendered expectations often play a significant role in determining the degree and manner in which these strategies are employed. Women and men may face different societal pressures and norms that influence their communication styles and, consequently, the politeness strategies they use. These gender-based differences are particularly relevant in societies where traditional gender roles still hold significant weight in social interactions.

In Kosovo, like many other societies, social norms dictate distinct expectations for the behaviors of men and women. (Gashi & Berisha, 2023) Men are often expected to embody more assertive, direct forms of communication, while women are encouraged to be more deferential and indirect in their speech. This disparity in communication expectations raises important questions about how men and women employ politeness strategies, and to what extent these strategies are influenced by societal gender roles. While there has been some research into gendered communication in Kosovo, few studies have explored the specific role of politeness strategies in shaping these differences.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the use of politeness strategies among men and women in Kosovo, focusing specifically on the four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson. By focusing on these four core politeness strategies, this study seeks to understand how gender influences communication practices in Kosovo and contribute to the broader field of gendered communication.

Understanding the application of politeness strategies in gendered communication can provide valuable insights into how language both reflects and reinforces societal norms. Gendered communication plays a significant role in shaping social dynamics, and an in-depth understanding of how politeness strategies operate within these dynamics is essential for fostering better communication practices.

Background and context

Politeness is a crucial aspect of communication that serves to maintain social harmony and manage interpersonal relationships. The study of politeness strategies helps explain how individuals navigate social interactions while managing their self-image (face) and respecting the face of others.

Erving Goffman's (1967) concept of facework significantly contributes to our understanding of politeness in communication. Goffman's theory, first introduced in 1955 and later elaborated in 1967, asserts that during interactions,

individuals engage in a type of social performance where they work to protect their face while maintaining the face of others. This notion of facework is vital in understanding the role of politeness in communication, as it lays the ground on which individuals manage social roles and expectations, which are often achieved through indirect strategies designed to avoid conflict and preserve relationships.

Hence, Goffman's work laid the foundation for subsequent theories of politeness, including Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. This theory conceptualizes politeness as a strategic approach to maintaining face, which can be threatened through face-threatening acts in communication. Face-Threatening Acts (hereinafter FTAs) are communicative behaviors that inherently challenge or damage either the speaker's or the hearer's face, that is, their public self-image. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Brown and Levinson argue that politeness involves using specific strategies to avoid these FTAs, thus protecting both the speaker's and the listener's social identity. They identified four primary types of politeness strategies: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on-record, and off-record approaches. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Positive politeness aims to enhance the listener's positive face by fostering closeness, solidarity, and a sense of belonging, using strategies like compliments, affirmations, or shared experiences. Negative politeness focuses on respecting the listener's negative face, or their desire for autonomy, by minimizing imposition through using indirect language, hedging, apologizing, or formal expressions. Bald on-record involves direct communication without any attempts to mitigate the social impact on the listener's face, often used in situations requiring efficiency or urgency. Finally, off-record strategies involve indirect communication where the speaker avoids direct responsibility for a face-threatening act using hints or ambiguous language that allow the listener to interpret the message and protect both parties' faces.

While Brown and Levinson's framework remains foundational in understanding politeness strategies, gendered communication provides a critical lens through which these strategies can be explored further.

Gendered communication refers to how language use is influenced by societal expectations and roles associated with gender. In particular, research has shown that men and women often employ different strategies to maintain politeness and navigate social hierarchies.

Studies have consistently found that women tend to use more indirect, face-protecting strategies compared to men. For instance, research by Lakoff

(1973) highlights how women's speech is often characterized by features such as hedges, tag questions, and indirect requests. In contrast, men's speech, particularly in patriarchal societies, tends to reflect authority and confidence, often through more direct and assertive language.

Such strategies are seen as ways to soften requests or criticisms, reflecting societal expectations that women should prioritize relationship-building and avoid confrontation. Men, conversely, are often thought to adopt more direct and assertive speech patterns, which are associated with traditionally masculine traits such as independence, autonomy, and authority. These gendered communication patterns are not universal but are deeply shaped by cultural norms and societal expectations. Kosovo is a society where traditional notions of masculinity and femininity remain influential in shaping language use.

Additionally, gendered communication in Kosovo reflects broader global patterns of patriarchy, where men are often expected to assert dominance in communication, especially in public or hierarchical settings, while women are encouraged to adopt more passive or conciliatory speech. Hence, this dynamic influences everyday interactions, from formal business settings to casual social exchanges, and often impacts the way men and women approach conversation.

Understanding how these communication patterns operate in specific contexts like Kosovo is crucial for exploring the real-life implications of gendered language use. Hence, this research aims to investigate how gender influences the use of politeness strategies in Kosovo, focusing on how men and women navigate FTA's in both formal and informal contexts. By examining the ways in which gendered norms shape language use, this study will contribute to a broader understanding of how cultural, gender, and sociolinguistic factors intersect to influence communication practices.

To conclude, findings from this study will provide valuable insights into how politeness strategies function in gendered communication, particularly in societies with strong traditional gender roles like Kosovo, and will help illuminate the ways language reflects and reinforces societal expectations.

Overview of the problem

The role of gender in language use, particularly in relation to politeness strategies, has been widely studied in sociolinguistics. Research shows that men and women often use language in different ways to maintain social harmony, navigate power dynamics, and protect their identities. These differences, influenced by social and cultural norms, are particularly evident in how men and women apply politeness strategies in communication.

Politeness strategies refer to the ways people use language to manage social interactions without threatening their own or others' face. According to Goffman (1967), individuals engage in facework during interactions to protect their social identity. This is especially important when considering gendered communication, where women are often expected to be more polite and deferential, while men may be encouraged to use more direct and assertive language.

Additionally, research suggests that politeness is not a fixed or universally agreed-upon concept within different cultures. Instead, it shows that cultural groups are diverse, and what counts as polite or impolite can vary significantly among individuals and groups even within the same society (Mills & Kádár, 2011).

In societies like Kosovo, traditional gender roles play a significant role in shaping how men and women communicate. Kosovo has a patriarchal culture where expectations around masculinity and femininity dictate how individuals interact in both formal and informal settings. For women, the use of polite language, indirect speech, and deference is often seen as a reflection of their role in maintaining harmony. On the other hand, men are often expected to be more assertive and direct, especially in professional or hierarchical environments.

For example, women in Kosovo might use more indirect language when making requests, such as saying, "*Could you please...?*" or "*I hope this doesn't cause any problems.*" This approach, which reflects negative politeness (respecting others' autonomy), is designed to reduce the perceived imposition of their requests. In contrast, men may opt for more direct speech, especially when dealing with peers or in situations where they hold authority.

The challenge of understanding politeness in gendered communication arises from the fact that these strategies often go beyond simple linguistic choices. They are deeply embedded in social expectations and power dynamics. Thus, the way men and women use language to navigate politeness is not just a matter of individual choice but also a reflection of societal norms. By exploring how these strategies function in Kosovo, it is possible to gain insights into the broader patterns of gendered communication in similar sociocultural settings.

Understanding how men and women negotiate face through language is key to understanding the role of politeness in fostering social harmony and reinforcing gender roles in Kosovo. Through this study, we aim to better understand the linguistic choices made by men and women, and how these choices are influenced by cultural expectations and gender norms.

Research questions

This study aims to explore the use of politeness strategies among men and women in Kosovo through the lens of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. It seeks to understand how gender, social norms, and cultural traditions influence linguistic politeness in everyday interactions. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. How do men and women in Kosovo perceive and use politeness strategies in their daily interactions?
2. To what extent do social norms influence the politeness strategies used by men and women in Kosovo?
3. What role does culture and tradition play in shaping gendered communication and politeness strategies in Kosovo?

The aim of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate how men and women in Kosovo use politeness strategies in everyday communication, drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory and Goffman's (1967) concept of facework. Specifically, it seeks to explore the ways in which gender, social norms, and cultural traditions shape the use and perception of politeness strategies in the Kosovar context.

Research objectives

By examining the differences and similarities in linguistic behavior between men and women, this research aims to provide deeper insight into the relationship between politeness and gendered communication within a society marked by both traditional values and modern influences. The study also seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of sociolinguistic variation and gendered language use in multicultural and post-conflict societies. In order to accomplish the aims of this study, the following objectives are set forth:

- Explore how men and women in Kosovo perceive and employ politeness strategies in their daily interactions. This involves identifying the types of politeness strategies commonly used by each gender and understanding the intentions behind their usage.

By focusing on real-life communication situations, the study aims to provide insight into how gender may influence the way speakers manage face, mitigate threats, and express respect or solidarity.

- Examine the extent to which social norms influence the politeness strategies adopted by men and women in Kosovo. This includes analyzing

how expectations around gender roles, interpersonal hierarchy, and situational appropriateness shape language use.

Thus, this research will investigate whether individuals consciously or unconsciously adapt their politeness strategies to align with prevailing social conventions, and how these norms may differ across contexts or relationships.

- Understand the role of culture and tradition in shaping gendered patterns of communication and politeness in Kosovo. This involves exploring how historical values, family structures, and long-standing cultural practices contribute to differences in how men and women communicate politely.

Hence, this study seeks to reveal how deep-rooted cultural influences continue to impact language behavior, and how these may reinforce or challenge contemporary gender roles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Politeness strategies are crucial for maintaining social harmony in communication, as they help individuals manage their own self-image (face) and respect the face of others. In sociolinguistics, politeness has been studied as an important feature of both verbal and non-verbal communication, and gendered communication plays a significant role in this area. Gender differences in politeness strategies have been extensively studied in various cultural contexts, revealing differences in the way men and women use language to navigate social interactions.

This literature review examines how politeness strategies are shaped by theories of face, sociocultural traditions, and gender norms, with a specific focus on the context of Kosovo. It is structured around three key theoretical areas and contributes to both understanding gendered communication and politeness strategies.

Goffman's theory of "Facework"

"The concept of politeness within sociolinguistics owes a great deal to Goffman's original work (1955, 1967) on face." (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015) This introduces the idea that social interaction is a kind of ritual where people manage their own face and respect others' faces. Hence, politeness is crucial in communication, and it influences gendered interactions.

Erving Goffman's (1967) idea of facework is crucial for understanding how people use politeness in communication. He describes "face" as the social image we present to others during interactions. Thus, "face" represents how we want to be seen by others. Goffman argues that communication is like a performance,

where people work to protect their own face and the face of others. This process of managing face in conversations is called *facework*, as coined by Goffman.

Goffman's theory is especially helpful when we think about politeness strategies in communication between men and women. For example, in Kosovo, women might use polite language, like saying "sorry" or softening their requests with phrases like "I hope you don't mind" to protect both their own image and the other person's image. On the other hand, men might be more direct in their speech, but they still use politeness strategies, especially when interacting with people in positions of authority, such as elders or bosses. (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015)

Although Goffman first developed his theory for face-to-face interactions, it has also been applied to digital communication, where there are no visual cues like facial expressions or tone of voice. In online settings, people have to be even more careful with how they use politeness to protect their social image. Studies by researchers like Tomastikova and Horne (2024) show that even online communication still requires facework to keep social harmony intact.

Goffman's ideas also help us understand how culture plays a role in politeness. In Kosovo, where traditional social roles are important, facework isn't just about gender but also about following cultural norms. For example, both men and women might use polite language and indirect speech when talking to older people or in formal situations, showing respect and helping maintain social harmony.

Overall, Goffman's theory of facework is crucial for understanding how people use politeness to manage their image in communication, whether they're speaking in person or online, and how cultural factors shape these politeness strategies.

Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory is a key framework for studying how people use language to show respect for each other's social needs. At the heart of their theory is the idea of "face". According to Brown and Levinson, *face* can be divided into two aspects: positive face, which reflects a person's wish to be appreciated and approved by others, and negative face, which represents the individual's desire to maintain personal freedom and avoid being imposed upon. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

According to Brown and Levinson, there are situations where someone's face might be "damaged". These situations were regarded as face-threatening acts (FTAs). In order to avoid these acts, they suggested different politeness strategies.

One of these strategies is *positive politeness*. Positive politeness focuses on reducing distance between people and shows friendliness or shared identity. Hence, it is used to create a sense of closeness and social connection. It includes compliments, friendly language, and expressions of appreciation to make the listener feel valued and accepted.

For example, saying “*You’re really good at this, can you help me?*” both acknowledges the listener’s expertise and maintains a friendly tone. (Yule, 1996) Women in many cultures, including Kosovo, are often socialized to maintain harmony, warmth, and connection within relationships, which may make them more inclined to use positive politeness strategies. Another politeness strategy is the *negative politeness*. This strategy respects the other person’s desire for independence and often uses indirect or formal language. Negative politeness is used to avoid imposing on others and show respect for their personal space and freedom. This often involves apologizing, using indirect language, or hedging to reduce the impact of a request. (Yule, 1996) For example, instead of directly saying “*Give me your notes,*” a person might say, “*I’m sorry to bother you, but if it’s not too much trouble, could I borrow your notes?*” This acknowledges the listener’s right to refuse while still making the request. (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61).

Speech acts such as requests and refusals can threaten face, necessitating politeness strategies to soften their impact. For example, indirect phrasing like “*Do you think you might close the window a little?*” reduces the imposition more than a direct command like “*Close the window!*” (Yule, 1996)

This could be especially important in Kosovo, where traditional gender roles still influence behavior, particularly in interactions between men and women. Women might use indirect language, apologize more frequently, and use hedging to reduce the perceived imposition of their requests.

Another strategy that saves face is *Off-record strategies* which include indirect utterances and allow the speaker to avoid taking full responsibility for an FTA. Thus, Off-record strategies are indirect ways of communicating that allow the speaker to avoid taking full responsibility for an FTA. These strategies make the speaker’s intentions less clear, leaving the listener to interpret the message. The goal is to minimize the risk of confrontation or embarrassment for both the speaker and the listener.

To exemplify, speakers could say “*It’s getting late,*” to imply that it’s time to leave. They could also use metaphors or irony, such as: “*This room is like a sauna,*” suggesting that it’s too hot. In other circumstances, they could also use vagueness. For instance, instead of directly criticizing, they say: “*I wonder what could have been different*” (Yule, 1996).

Off-record strategies are often used when the speaker wants to avoid responsibility for a potentially awkward or offensive message. (Yule, 1996) Women, for example, may use these strategies more often to avoid conflict, especially in hierarchical or sensitive situations.

On the other hand, *Bald-on-record strategies* are direct and to the point, often without any effort to soften the message. The speaker says exactly what they mean, often without regard for the listener's face needs, which can sometimes be perceived as rude or blunt. To exemplify, speakers use direct commands, unmitigated statements, and strong opinions.

Additionally, this strategy is typically used when there's little risk of causing offense, such as among close friends or in situations where the speaker has authority. Men, especially in cultures where directness is valued, may use bald-on-record strategies more often, but they are also common in professional or formal settings where clarity is needed. In cultures where assertiveness and directness are valued, such strategies could be prevalent. In Kosovo, considering its patriarchal values which may influence communication, men might be more likely to use bald-on-record strategies in interactions that require clarity or in informal contexts.

From a gendered communication perspective, these strategies are not always used equally by men and women. Numerous studies suggest that women, across many cultures, including Kosovo, are more likely to employ negative politeness, off-record strategies, and features such as hedging and apologies, which are seen as linguistically "softer" and more face-protective. These tendencies reflect broader social norms that associate femininity with modesty, cooperation, and deference. In contrast, men are often more associated with bald-on-record or positive politeness strategies that reflect assertiveness and solidarity, especially in informal or hierarchical settings.

Thus, Goffman's concept of face and Brown and Levinson's politeness framework offer a valuable lens through which to understand how gender roles influence politeness strategy choices. The linguistic forms associated with these strategies play a crucial role in how politeness is enacted and perceived in gendered communication.

Gendered Communication and Politeness

Gendered communication refers to the way men and women use language differently, influenced by societal expectations and cultural norms. These differences often manifest in how language is used to maintain politeness and navigate social interactions. Understanding how gender influences

communication is essential for analyzing politeness strategies, particularly in societies with strong traditional gender roles, such as Kosovo.

According to Dong (2014), gendered language use is shaped by traditional social roles. Historically, men occupying dominant positions tend to use more direct and assertive language. In contrast, women are often expected to emphasize relationships and harmony, leading to more indirect, and cooperative speech. These expectations reflect how language becomes a means of reinforcing gender roles. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which suggests that women are more likely to employ both positive and negative politeness strategies, designed to preserve social harmony and show respect, while men tend toward bald-on-record or less mitigated forms of speech.

Dong further notes that women often adjust their speech to demonstrate respect and deference, particularly in cultures where politeness is closely tied to gender norms. This is especially relevant in Kosovo, where traditional views of gender influence communication styles. In such contexts, men are expected to assert dominance in conversations, while women are socialized into more deferential and indirect speech patterns, seen as culturally appropriate and feminine.

Lellio (2016) highlights how these patterns contribute to the marginalization of women's voices, especially in discussions about gender and conflict. In Kosovo, cultural expectations often pressure women to remain silent or to speak cautiously in public, limiting their ability to express themselves freely. As a result, women's speech tends to prioritize politeness and deference over directness or confrontation, reinforcing broader social hierarchies.

Additionally, Demaj and Alla (2023) argue that language serves as a tool for expressing identity and responding to social and political structures. In their view, the expectation for women to use more formal and polite language stems from longstanding gender roles that position women as passive, respectful, and emotionally restrained communicators. (Demaj & Alla, 2023)

The connection between language and gender is also foundational in Lakoff's (1973) work, which argues that women's language reflects their subordinate position in society. She identifies features such as hedges, empty adjectives, tag questions, and indirect requests, forms often associated with female speech, that are not just stylistic, but indicative of socialization processes that discourage assertiveness in women. (Lakoff, 1973) These linguistic traits reflect and reproduce power imbalances, with politeness functioning not only as a social expectation but also as a tool of gendered constraint. (Lakoff, 1973)

Likewise, the use of politeness strategies is deeply embedded in cultural norms and power structures. In Albanian-speaking communities, for instance, traditions of respecting elders, authorities, and family hierarchies heavily influence how politeness is performed (Canaj, 2021). These norms create gendered expectations in communication: women are often expected to speak more indirectly and deferentially, while men are encouraged to be more assertive.

Lakoff (1973) emphasizes that politeness is not merely about social harmony, but it is also a way of negotiating one's position within a power structure. In patriarchal societies, women are expected to soften their speech to avoid challenging male authorities, often through the use of negative politeness (e.g., hedging, indirectness) or positive politeness (e.g., building solidarity). (Lakoff, 1973) This helps explain how gender roles in Kosovo continue to shape communicative behavior: women may be more inclined to use language that avoids confrontation, while men may assert authority through directness.

By applying Lakoff's theory to the context of Kosovo, we gain insights into how societal expectations influence linguistic behavior. Women's use of indirect speech appears to stem from deeply ingrained norms that favor deference and restraint, while men's directness signals autonomy and control. These patterns reveal how gendered communication in Kosovo reflects both universal features of politeness theory and specific cultural dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the approach used to investigate the politeness strategies employed by men and women in Kosovo across different social settings. This study used a qualitative research approach to explore and analyze the ways in which gender influences communication in both formal and informal contexts. The research compared gendered communication patterns, focusing on how social norms, cultural expectations, and traditions influence the politeness strategies used by both genders in daily interactions.

This study was guided by Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and employed semi-structured interviews and observations to collect rich, descriptive data. To gain insight into participants' natural communication patterns, the research emphasized qualitative methods that captured authentic language use in context.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach and a comparative research design to examine the differences and similarities in how men and women in Kosovo use politeness strategies. The study focused on a single age group (ages

30-40) to explore gender differences in communication without introducing the factor of age. By employing a naturalistic observational method alongside interviews, this study aimed to capture the real-time use of language in natural settings and also explore participants' perceptions of politeness strategies through direct interviews. The data collected provides insights into how men and women navigate politeness in both personal and public interactions.

Participants

This study involved 10 participants, consisting of 5 men and 5 women, selected from different professional and social backgrounds in Kosovo. Among their occupations were: Graphic designers, managers and teachers. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure a diverse representation of gendered communication practices across various social and professional settings. The selection of equal numbers of men and women ensures that gender differences in communication strategies can be effectively analyzed.

Data Collection

Data was collected using two main methods: observations and semi-structured interviews.

1. Observations

Observations for this study were conducted in natural workplace settings where participants engaged in informal daily interactions, specifically during lunch and coffee breaks in the school hallway. These interactions offered valuable opportunities to observe spontaneous communication in a familiar environment.

A total of ten participants were observed over a four-week period, with each participant observed for approximately five hours, amounting to about 20 hours of observation in total. At times, up to three participants were observed simultaneously. The aim was to explore how politeness strategies are used in real-time, with particular attention to the ways gender influences linguistic choices. The main focus of the observations included:

- Politeness strategies employed (e.g., positive and negative politeness)
- Linguistic choices used to reduce imposition and express closeness
- Forms of address and affective expressions
- The impact of social dynamics (e.g., gender, familiarity) on communication style

The observations were non-participant, meaning the researcher did not interact with the participants in order not to interfere with their behaviors. This

allowed the researcher to capture natural interactions without influencing the communication process.

Before participation, all individuals were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their role in the research. Participants were required to give written informed consent, ensuring that they understood their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Additionally, to protect participants' privacy, all data collected during the observations and interviews were anonymized. All recordings and transcripts have been securely stored and are only accessible to the researcher.

Semi-structured Interviews

In addition to the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to gain deeper insight into their perceptions of politeness and how they feel social norms and cultural values influence their language use. The interviews will allow for open-ended responses and follow-up questions based on participants' answers.

The interviews covered topics such as:

- Gender differences in communication styles.
- Cultural and social norms that influence politeness in Kosovo.
- Specific situational contexts where politeness strategies are used (e.g., work, family, public interactions).

With the participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. This ensured accuracy and facilitated a detailed examination of the responses.

Data analysis

The collected data from the interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, organize them in categories related to gender differences in the use of politeness strategies. Thematic analysis allowed for the identification of recurring themes across both interview and observational data.

The analysis proceeded as follows:

1. Transcribing interviews: All interviews were transcribed word-for-word, and the transcripts were carefully reviewed for recurring themes related to the use of politeness strategies. Key themes were coded to identify the specific strategies used by men and women in different contexts.

2. Identifying key themes: Themes were identified and categorized according to the four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987):

Positive politeness: Strategies that emphasize closeness, solidarity, and approval.

Negative politeness: Strategies that minimize imposition and respect personal autonomy.

Bald on-record: Direct, unambiguous communication without mitigation.

Off-record: Indirect or ambiguous communication that allows for interpretation.

3. Comparison by gender: Once the data from both interviews and observations were coded, the strategies employed by men and women were compared to identify gendered differences in communication practices. This comparison helped reveal patterns and distinctions in how men and women use politeness strategies across different social settings, providing insights into gendered communication practices in Kosovo.

FINDINGS

This section presents the key findings derived from both interviews and observational data, offering insights into how politeness strategies are used by men and women across various social contexts.

Key findings from interviews

This section presents the findings from 10 individual interviews, being 5 female participants and 5 male participants. All the participants were between 30 to 40 years old, educated, and employed. Among their occupations were: graphic designers, managers, Biology teachers, Physics teachers and English teachers. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns in how men and women perceive and use politeness strategies across various social contexts.

The themes are organized according to the main interactional setting as follows:

Workplace communication and power relations

When requesting something from a superior, both men and women displayed awareness of hierarchical norms. Men often used a brief apology to acknowledge the imposition (e.g., “I’m sorry for interrupting...”), but quickly moved to the point. Women, in contrast, tended to soften their requests using hedging and modal verbs such as “I was wondering if it were possible...” or “Is

it alright if...". These responses suggest that women employed more negative politeness, aligning with social expectations of deference in formal settings.

In contrast, when addressing close colleagues, both genders reported a shift to more relaxed and informal language. Especially when interacting with speakers of the same gender. Men used direct phrases such as "Can you do this for me?" and added terms of endearment such as "*bir*" or "*haver*" ("*bir*" meaning "*son*" while "*haver*" similar to "*best friend*") to express closeness. Women, on the other hand, also used terms of endearment such as "*zembrushe*" or "*yll*" (similar in English "*sweetie*" or "*star*") and sometimes relied on indirect strategies, implying a request rather than stating it (e.g., "*I have so many things to do, I don't think I'll manage...*").

When giving negative feedback, men reported being more direct with male colleagues and more careful with women, often softening their tone. Women also adjusted their language based on the gender and status of the interlocutor, sometimes using hypothetical language like "*If I were you...*" with male colleagues.

These findings highlight that gender, power, and familiarity are crucial in shaping politeness strategies in professional settings.

Public vs. private interactions

In public interactions with strangers, both genders used polite openers such as "*Excuse me, can I ask you a question?*" and reported adjusting tone and body language to appear respectful. Interestingly, many men noted they use the word "*shëf*" (meaning "*boss*") when addressing waiters. Though seemingly authoritative, this term is used to show respect and reduce imposition, functioning as a positive politeness strategy.

In terms of family and informal settings, men often used direct language and nicknames, reflecting a hierarchical or familiar dynamic. Women, on the other hand, tended to use a softer tone or humor to ease requests and maintain emotional harmony. Despite the informality of these settings, gendered expectations continued to influence how politeness was performed.

Disagreements and conflict management

When expressing disagreement in professional contexts, men were generally more comfortable being direct, even with superiors. Women were more cautious, often choosing to stay quiet or express their disagreement as a question (e.g., "*Have we considered...?*"). This suggests a gendered concern with maintaining harmony and avoiding confrontation.

In casual conversations, men reported being straightforward in voicing disagreement, especially among friends. Women frequently used hedging (“*maybe*,” “*I’m not sure*”) or humor to soften their view. These patterns show that men tend to speak more directly, while women are more careful to maintain good relationships in their speech.

Interruptions, apologies, and gratitude

Reactions to being interrupted also revealed gendered differences. Men responded with assertiveness such as “*Wait until I finish*,” especially toward other men. With women, they used more respectful forms like “*te lutem zonjë/zonjushë...*” (In English: “*Please, miss/madam*”). Women typically waited for the other person to finish, unless in close relationships, where they felt more comfortable asserting themselves.

When apologizing for being late, men often skipped a direct apology, using humor instead or offering to compensate (“*I’ll stay later*”). Women were more likely to explicitly say “*I’m sorry*” and explain the reason for the delay, showing more concern for maintaining a positive social impression.

Both men and women expressed gratitude for small favors by saying “*thank you*,” but women were more likely to include non-verbal cues like smiling. These findings reinforce the notion that emotional expressiveness is more characteristic of female politeness norms.

Gender, age, and self-perception

Participants reported adjusting their communication style depending on the age and gender of the interlocutor. Both men and women used more formal language and tone with elders or authority figures, reflecting cultural norms of respect. With younger people, humor and informality were more common.

When speaking to someone of the opposite gender, men noted being more cautious or polite. Women also described adjusting their tone depending on the listener’s gender and familiarity.

In terms of self-perception, men valued being seen as direct but respectful, while women preferred to be viewed as polite, respectful, and emotionally considerate. Both groups acknowledged that their politeness strategies were not based solely on gender but were shaped significantly by the relationship and social context.

Key findings from observations

Observations were carried out over a four-week period during lunch and coffee breaks at a local school in Kosovo, providing a naturalistic workplace

setting. A total of ten participants (five men and five women) were observed for approximately 20 hours in total, with each individual observed for around five hours. The interactions took place informally in the hallways and common areas, where colleagues of equal status engaged in casual conversation. At times, up to three participants were observed simultaneously.

The findings revealed several gendered patterns in the use of politeness strategies, particularly related to indirectness, expressions of closeness, and mitigation of imposition.

Indirectness and mitigation

Female participants were generally more likely to employ indirect speech strategies when sharing information or disagreeing with others. Instead of expressing disagreement overtly, they often used silence, topic shifts, or vague language to signal dissent or discomfort. For instance, when a female participant disagreed with a colleague's comment, rather than expressing direct opposition, she responded with, *"I'm sorry but I'm too tired to even hear what you're saying,"* effectively withdrawing from the interaction without confrontation. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of negative politeness, where indirectness serves to reduce imposition and maintain face.

Male participants, by contrast, tended to be more direct and assertive in similar situations. They rarely used apologies unless necessary and, when they did, often provided explicit justifications rather than softening their tone. Their speech featured unmitigated assertions, and they were more comfortable expressing disagreement openly.

Terms of address and expressing solidarity

Another key difference emerged in the use of affective language and terms of address. Female participants frequently used affectionate terms such as *"loçke"*, *"yll"*, *"dashurie"* etc. (roughly equal to English endearment terms *"sweety"*, *"star"*, *"love"*) when addressing same-gender colleagues, signaling closeness and in-group solidarity. These expressions functioned as positive politeness strategies, helping to strengthen social bonds and minimize social distance.

In contrast, male participants were observed using Albanian colloquial expressions like *"bir"* and *"haver"* (roughly equivalent to *"bro/ man"*), which also served a solidarity function but were embedded in a more casual, peer-oriented masculine style. These expressions helped establish rapport without appearing emotionally expressive.

Apologies and softening strategies

Women were observed using apologies more frequently and more reflexively. Phrases like “*I’m sorry*” were often accompanied by explanations or justifications, even in situations where no offense was clearly committed. This appeared to be a habitual form of softening, aimed at preserving harmony and avoiding potential conflict.

Men, on the other hand, used apologies less frequently, and typically only when explicitly required by the context. Their apologies were more utilitarian and less socially performative.

Gendered adjustments in mixed-gender settings

In mixed-gender interactions, a notable shift occurred in the speech of both male and female participants. Both groups demonstrated a more cautious and polite register, often adopting features of each other’s speech styles. Expressions like “*I think...*”, “*I’m sorry*”, and “*Excuse me*” became more common. This suggests an adaptive politeness strategy, possibly motivated by mutual face concern and the desire to maintain a respectful tone in cross-gender professional communication.

These observations support the broader interview findings that gender significantly influences the use of politeness strategies in Kosovo’s workplace settings. While men and women share the same institutional roles and professional status, their communicative behavior reflects different patterns of socialization, particularly around expressions of deference, disagreement, and emotional alignment.

Table 1: *Thematic analysis of interviews organized according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) four main strategies.*

Politeness Strategy	Men	Women	Key Contexts
Positive Politeness	Use of terms of endearment (e.g., “bir” / “shëf”). Friendly praise and solidarity.	Use of terms of endearment (e.g., “zemrushe,” “e dashur”); Expressing emotional closeness and shared struggles.	Peer interactions; Informal requests; Social bonding situations.
Negative Politeness	Limited use; Mainly formal or hierarchical settings Simple polite phrases (e.g., “Excuse me”).	Frequent use of hedging and elaborate apologies. Softening disagreement; Elaborate mitigation in formal/public contexts.	Workplace; Addressing superiors, elders, strangers or other gender speakers.
Bald-on-Record	Frequent direct requests and commands, Assertive disagreements/interruptions,	Directness mostly softened or accompanied by politeness markers.	Informal same gender peer communication;
Off-Record	Occasional humor or sarcasm, Rarely used for indirect requests.	Frequent use of hints, hypothetical statements, and vague language. Used to maintain harmony in interactions.	Emotionally sensitive or hierarchical interactions, Conflict avoidance

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study highlight both similarities and clear differences between men and women in Kosovo in the way they use politeness strategies. These politeness strategies are shaped by both cultural expectations and the social context in which communication takes place. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and Goffman's (1967) concept of facework, the data demonstrates that while both genders exhibit awareness of politeness norms, the strategies employed vary significantly depending on the setting, the interlocutor's gender or status, and the nature of the relationship.

Consistent with Brown and Levinson's framework, both positive and negative politeness strategies were employed, but women were found to favor negative politeness more frequently, particularly in professional and formal contexts. Through both interviews and observations, women regularly used hedging (“*I was just wondering/ Isha duke menduar nese...*”), indirect requests (“*I have lots of things to do and I don't know whether I'll be able to finish them in time/ Kam shumë punë dhe nuk e di a do të mundem t'i përfundoj të gjitha në kohë...*”), and frequent apologies (“*I'm sorry to interrupt but...*”),

which were often followed with explanations or justifications, reflecting a more elaborate and considerate politeness pattern. This aligns with the traditional view that women are socialized to adopt a more deferential communicative style, especially in hierarchical settings.

In contrast, men tended to use bald-on-record or positive politeness strategies more often, being more direct in both speech and tone, particularly in same-gender interactions and informal settings. To illustrate, one of the participants said: *“I often use the term “bir/bro” to my male-friends or I call the waiter “shef/ boss”.* Kosovan men often use the term *“shef”* (which in English would translate as “boss”) as a positive politeness strategy to show respect and familiarity, and to minimize the imposition of requesting service.

In addition, they also use the term “bir” (which in English means “son” as a term of endearment, to strengthen their relationship and thus indicate closeness. However, men also used negative politeness strategies, but in a more minimalistic way. Thus, they tended to avoid elaborate apologies or make justifications, often using brief phrases like “sorry” or “excuse me” before quickly proceeding with their requests.

These gender-based patterns were not only reported in interviews but were also observable in real-time interactions. During coffee and lunch breaks in the workplace, women were seen to soften disagreements or avoid them altogether, often by changing the topic or responding with silence. Men, on the other hand, did not shy away from expressing disagreement and used more casual and straightforward language, particularly with close colleagues.

Such differences are reflective of Goffman’s notion of “face” and how each gender negotiates FTAs differently. Thus, women seemed more sensitive to how their words might affect the listener’s need for approval and positive self-image, while men prioritized clarity and autonomy, consistent with the desire to protect their own negative face.

Interestingly, both men and women adjusted their speech significantly in mixed-gender settings. Regardless of their usual tendencies, participants employed more polite and softened language when communicating with the opposite gender. Phrases such as “I think...” and “Excuse me...” became more frequent, suggesting that speakers were actively managing both their own face and that of their interlocutor.

This behavioral shift supports the claim that politeness is not purely a matter of gender, but rather a result of the interaction between gender, social norms, and relational context.

The data also emphasize the role of cultural expectations in shaping politeness. In a context like Kosovo, where social harmony, hierarchy, and traditional gender roles are deeply embedded, communication is often guided by unwritten cultural rules. Both men and women reported modifying their speech depending on the age or authority of their interlocutor, showing more respect and indirectness toward elders or superiors. This confirms that politeness strategies are not only gendered but also highly contextual and culturally bound.

Another important observation was related to apologies and expressions of gratitude. Women were more likely to offer detailed apologies and explanations for minor inconveniences, while men either downplayed the situation or provided compensation (e.g., “I’ll stay longer to make up for it”). In terms of gratitude, women more frequently combined verbal thanks with non-verbal cues like smiling. These behaviors reinforce traditional perceptions of emotional labor being more expected of women, a pattern observed in both speech and social interaction.

Lastly, when discussing how they wanted to be perceived, women emphasized being seen as polite and respectful, while men focused on clarity and directness. Despite these differing priorities, both genders emphasized that context mattered more than gender itself. These findings reflect a heightened understanding that effective communication is shaped more by context than by static gender roles.

To summarize, the findings provide empirical support for the theoretical claims of Brown and Levinson while offering a culturally nuanced understanding of politeness. They also suggest that while gender remains an important factor in politeness behavior, contextual variables such as relationship, setting, and power dynamics are equally if not more influential.

IMPLICATIONS

This research has both theoretical and practical implications that contribute to a deeper understanding of how politeness strategies function within gendered communication in a specific cultural setting. By examining the interaction between language, gender, and cultural norms in Kosovo, the study not only adds to academic discussions in pragmatics and sociolinguistics but also offers insights that can be applied in real-life communication practices

Theoretical implications

Understanding how politeness strategies are used in gendered communication can provide important insights into how language reflects, maintains, and sometimes challenges social norms. Since communication between men and women plays a key role in shaping social relationships, analyzing how

politeness works in these interactions is essential. It helps uncover how people express respect, assert power, build solidarity, or manage distance in ways that are influenced by gender expectations and cultural values.

This research contributes to the broader field of pragmatics and sociolinguistics by offering a detailed and culturally grounded perspective on politeness in Kosovo. Much of the existing literature focuses on Western contexts or assumes that politeness strategies work the same way across different societies. By focusing on a local context with unique cultural and linguistic features, this study offers fresh insights into how politeness is shaped by social and cultural norms.

Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory as a guiding framework, the study examines how people manage face, the desire to be respected and not be embarrassed in everyday interactions. At the same time, it draws on Culpeper's (2011) view of politeness as a dynamic and relational process. Rather than seeing politeness as simply using words like "please" and "thank you," the study highlights how politeness depends on context, relationships, and shared cultural understandings.

Practical implications

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study offers valuable practical insights into how politeness strategies reflect and reinforce gendered communication norms in Kosovo. By identifying differences in how men and women express politeness across various social settings, the findings can help educators, trainers, and professionals better understand the impact of gender and cultural expectations on communication. Such awareness is essential for preventing misunderstandings and fostering clearer, more respectful interactions in classrooms, workplaces, and other everyday environments.

References

- Dong, J. (2014). Study on gender differences in language under the sociolinguistics. *Canadian Social Science*, 10(3), 92–96. Doi: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=e-1fe403f817669b141b4c765dc657a3626b0d8a1>
- Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2015). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (7th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. CUP. Doi: <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Politeness/db6tAQAABAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Brown,+P.,+%pg=PR12&printsec=frontcover>
- Vlasyan, G. R. (2018). Linguistic Hedging In The Light Of Politeness Theory. In I. V. Denisova (Ed.), *Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects*, vol 39. European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences (pp. 685-690). Future Academy. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2018.04.02.98>
- Wilson, S. R., & Sabee, C. M. (2011). Politeness theory. In D. O. Braithwaite & P. Schrodt (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 255–267). SAGE Publications.
- Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2015). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (7th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell. Doi: file:///C:/Users/PC/Desktop/SOCIOLINGUISTICS/an-introduction-to-sociolinguistics_compress.pdf
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge University Press. Doi: [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Politeness/db6tAQAABAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Brown,+P.,+%26+Levinson,+S.+\(1987\).+Politeness:+Some+Universals+in+Language+Usage.+CUP.&pg=PR12&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Politeness/db6tAQAABAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Brown,+P.,+%26+Levinson,+S.+(1987).+Politeness:+Some+Universals+in+Language+Usage.+CUP.&pg=PR12&printsec=frontcover)
- Lakoff, R. (1973). *Language and woman's place*. *Language in Society*, 2(1), 45–80. Doi: https://web.stanford.edu/class/linguist156/Lakoff_1973.pdf
- Haugh, M. (2009). *Face and interaction: A sociocognitive approach to the analysis of face* (pp. 1-24). Doi: file:///C:/Users/PC/Desktop/Face_and_interaction.pdf
- Di Lellio, A. (2016). Seeking justice for wartime sexual violence in Kosovo: Voices and silence of women. *East European Politics and Societies*, 30(3), 612–632. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416630959>
- Demaj, U., & Alla, A. (2023). BAC, U KRY! Space, Albanian commemoration and the Gheg variety as a linguistic symbol of state independence in postwar Kosovo. *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics*, 17(2), 145–175.
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Politeness and impoliteness*. In J. Zienkowski, J.-O. Östman, & J. Verschuere (Eds.), *Discursive pragmatics* (pp. 167–183). John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284700350_Politeness_and_impoliteness
- Eunson, B. (2020). *Gender and communication*. In *Communicating in the 21st century* (4th ed., pp. 7.1–7.30). John Wiley & Sons. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340682460_Gender_and_Communication
- Ambarita, R., & Mulyadi. (2020). *Gender and language politeness*. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics Studies*, 2(2), 1–15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344234768_Gender_and_Language_Politeness
- Gashi, E., & Berisha, Q. (2023). *Being a woman in Kosovo: Key issues and norms for change in the perspective of feminist legal theory*. *Journal of Management and Advanced Education Studies*, 5(2), 60–69. https://jomaes.org/2023/vol.5_issue.2_full_issue.pdf
- Mills, S., & Kádár, D. Z. (2011). Politeness and culture. In D. Z. Kádár & S. Mills (Eds.), *Politeness in East Asia* (pp. 21–46). Cambridge University Press.
- Canaj, K. (2021). *Phraseological expressions and proverbs in Albanian folk's dictionary*. *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 9(2), 1–13. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.52950/TE.2021.9.2.001>
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. (pp. 59-69) Oxford University Press.

Putri, S., & Fitrawati, F. (2022). *An analysis of politeness strategies used in Yes Day (2021) movie*. English Language and Literature, 11(4).

SOCIOPOLITICAL INFLUENCES ON LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND CHANGE IN POST-WAR SOCIETIES

Hava PARALLANGAJ¹

INTRODUCTION

Language is more than a means of communication; it is a powerful marker of identity, a vessel of collective memory, and a tool through which communities assert power or resist domination (Anderson, 1983). In sociolinguistic and political theory, language is often described as a symbolic structure that both reflects and shapes the ideologies of its speakers. In societies marked by conflict, the symbolic weight of language becomes especially visible, as language serves simultaneously as a site of trauma and as an instrument for rebuilding national unity (Spolsky, 2004).

Across the world, countries emerging from conflict or colonial domination have experienced the profound entanglement of language and post-war identity politics. In Rwanda, the decision to replace French with English in public institutions after the 1994 genocide represented more than a linguistic shift; it was a conscious political move to distance the nation from former colonial ties and forge new alliances (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). In Ukraine, the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 Russian invasion intensified debates around the use of Russian versus Ukrainian. The rejection of Russian in public life was not simply linguistic but a political act of resistance and self-determination (Bilaniuk, 2010; Pavlenko, 2008). In South Africa, efforts to redress apartheid-era inequalities by recognizing eleven official languages show how policy can seek inclusivity. Yet English and Afrikaans continue to dominate institutional life, revealing the difficulty of overturning entrenched linguistic hierarchies despite progressive reforms (Alexander, 2000; Webb, 2002).

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; hava.parallangaj@student.uni-pr.edu

Taken together, these examples highlight a recurring theme: in transitional or post-conflict societies, language is never neutral. It becomes a frontier where states attempt to realign policies with new political realities, while citizens' everyday linguistic practices, formed over decades, are slower to change (Shohamy, 2006). The tension between language ideology and practice thus remains a defining feature of nation-building efforts worldwide.

Kosovo in Context

Kosovo represents a compelling case of this phenomenon. Historically part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and later an autonomous province within Serbia, Kosovo experienced decades in which Serbian was the dominant language of governance, education, and administration. This linguistic hierarchy marginalized the Albanian-speaking majority, whose institutions were often weakened or dismantled in efforts to assert Serbian cultural and political control (Bugajski, 2002).

The 1999 Kosovo War and the 2008 declaration of independence marked a decisive political rupture and a corresponding linguistic reorientation. Albanian was reasserted as the unifying national language and symbol of sovereignty, while Serbian, though still legally recognized in Serb-majority areas, became widely rejected among the Albanian majority. For many Albanians, Serbian is not simply a "foreign" language but a reminder of violence, suppression, and cultural domination (Haughton, 2005). This distancing has been central to Kosovo's nation-building project, symbolically severing ties with its contested past.

Yet, despite strong ideological rejection, traces of Serbian endure in everyday Albanian speech. Loanwords borrowed during the Yugoslav period remain embedded in informal registers, particularly in domains such as work, technology, governance, and urban slang. Their persistence reflects not ideological loyalty but the inertia of linguistic habit and the practical realities of decades of bilingual life. Add the text without altering the formatting.

Research Problem and Gap

Nation-building in post-conflict societies often involves the deliberate reconfiguration of linguistic identity (Ricento, 2006). In Kosovo, the elevation of Albanian and the rejection of Serbian reflect this broader process of cultural independence (Pavlović, 2014). Yet, the persistence of Serbian loanwords creates a paradox: while Serbian is ideologically rejected, its linguistic remnants remain embedded in daily practice (Kostovicova, 2005).

This paradox exposes a disjuncture between ideology and practice. National policies and narratives emphasize purification of the language, but

actual speech reveals the endurance of habits formed under past social and political conditions. While scholarship on Kosovo has explored institutional bilingualism, education, and formal policy, micro-level practices such as lexical borrowing remain underexplored. This study addresses that gap by analyzing how loanwords operate as both pragmatic tools and symbols of contested identity..

Research questions

To guide this inquiry, the following research questions were addressed:

1. To what extent have the sociopolitical shifts in post-war Kosovo influenced language attitudes among Kosovo Albanians toward the incorporation of Serbian loanwords in formal and informal settings?
2. How do post-war sociopolitical narratives influence the use and perception of Serbian-origin words among different generations of Albanian speakers in Kosovo?
3. How do the emotional and symbolic associations of the Serbian language, shaped by post-war trauma, influence the use and rejection of Serbian loanwords in personal and community-based conversations among Kosovo Albanians?

In line with these questions, the study proposed the following hypotheses:

H1: Kosovo Albanians who experienced the Yugoslav era or the immediate post-war period will display more neutral or pragmatic attitudes toward Serbian loanwords, using them more frequently in both formal and informal settings than younger generations educated post-independence.

H2: The influence of post-war sociopolitical narratives, especially those emphasizing cultural independence and linguistic purification, will correlate with stronger rejection of Serbian-origin words among younger Albanians, while older generations may perceive them as habitual or contextually appropriate.

H3: Strong negative emotional and symbolic associations with the Serbian language, particularly among individuals and communities directly affected by the Kosovo War, will be associated with a conscious avoidance of Serbian loanwords, especially in intimate and community-based interactions.

Relevance and Importance of the Research

This research contributes to debates on language, identity, and post-conflict reconstruction by examining everyday speech. Unlike studies focused on policy or ideology, it shows how ordinary linguistic choices reveal tensions between resistance and continuity.

By comparing Kosovo with Rwanda, Ukraine, and South Africa, the study highlights both shared patterns of post-conflict language politics and Kosovo's unique experience (Pavlenko, 2011).

The findings also offer practical insights for language policy and education in Kosovo. Recognizing generational attitudes toward loanwords can help balance cultural independence with lived linguistic realities. More broadly, the study shows that remnants of a contested language can function both as residues of domination and as sites of resilience.

Ultimately, language is not merely a tool of communication but a symbolic resource through which societies remember, resist, and redefine themselves. The case of Serbian loanwords in Kosovo offers a window into the complexities of post-conflict identity in the Balkans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language, Identity, and Sociolinguistic Change in Post-Conflict Contexts

Language is more than a tool of communication; it carries symbolic value, reflecting identity, ideology, and social power. In post-war societies, this symbolism becomes particularly significant. Bourdieu's concept of "linguistic capital" explains how certain languages gain power through social legitimacy and institutional support (Bourdieu, 1991). In Kosovo, the 1998–1999 war and subsequent independence in 2008 shifted language attitudes, elevating Albanian as a symbol of national identity and resistance while Serbian became associated with oppression and trauma (Kasapolli, 2019; Xharra, 2010).

Post-war language policies and social practices reflect this shift. Efforts to remove Serbian loanwords from formal Albanian, especially in education, media, and government, demonstrate a broader drive for linguistic "purification" and national consolidation (Munishi, 2013; Demaj & Alla, 2023). Even informal usage is affected: older generations may retain Serbian-origin words out of habit, while younger speakers increasingly avoid them to assert cultural and political identity (Jansen, 2012; Musollaj, 2023). This mirrors trends in other post-conflict societies, where language is reshaped to reflect trauma, memory, and political allegiance (Pavlenko, 2008; Helms, 2016).

Symbolic Rejection of Serbian: Loanwords and Language Attitudes in Kosovo

Since 1999, Serbian loanwords in Albanian have been increasingly avoided, reflecting both political and emotional motivations. Studies show that younger Albanians often replace Serbian terms with standard Albanian or English

equivalents, while older speakers retain them for practical reasons (Jusufi, 2021; Elliott, 2017). Public signage, media, and educational settings have reinforced this symbolic rejection, sometimes creating generational and social divides (Demaj & Vandenbroucke, 2016; Shabani, 2023). Social media also contributes to informal policing of language norms, demonstrating how symbolic rejection operates at both institutional and grassroots levels.

Trauma, Memory, and Emotional Avoidance of Loanwords

Language in Kosovo is deeply intertwined with memory and trauma. Serbian-origin words, particularly those linked to military or governmental authority, evoke fear and painful memories for many Albanians (Demaj, 2023). Avoiding these words serves as both an emotional coping mechanism and a moral statement, reflecting collective memory and identity (Albertini, 2012; Canakis, 2018). Generational differences are pronounced: older speakers may use these words habitually, while younger people perceive them as symbols of oppression and cultural disloyalty, even in informal contexts like family or social media (Shabani, 2023).

Generational Language Ideologies in Post-War Kosovo

Generational divides shape how Albanian speakers perceive and use Serbian-origin words. Older Kosovars, socialized under Yugoslav rule, often continue using Serbian loanwords in daily life, while younger generations, raised in independent Kosovo, frequently avoid them to assert national identity and cultural pride (Nuhiu, 2008; Demaj, 2023). Educational and familial influences reinforce these ideologies, creating distinct linguistic norms across generations. Similar patterns can be observed in other post-conflict contexts, where younger speakers adopt new linguistic forms to mark political and cultural identity (Kuperman, 2014; Kulyk, 2016).

Despite extensive research on language and identity in Kosovo, key gaps remain. Few studies examine the usage and emotional significance of individual Serbian loanwords in daily life, or how trauma influences avoidance behavior (Shabani, 2023). Generational differences are noted but rarely explored across diverse regions, and most research focuses on formal domains rather than private and community spaces. Additionally, methodological approaches often lack integration of interviews, surveys, and detailed word analysis, limiting understanding of informal language practices and sociopolitical meaning. This study addresses these gaps by combining qualitative methods to explore how Serbian loanwords are experienced, negotiated, and avoided in everyday Kosovo Albanian speech.

METHODOLOGY

This research investigated how sociopolitical transformations in post-war Kosovo influenced language attitudes and practices among Albanian speakers, with a specific focus on the presence, use, and perception of Serbian-origin loanwords. It analyzed generational differences in these attitudes and explored how they manifested across institutional contexts, particularly within the education system. Additionally, the study sought to understand how emotional and symbolic associations with the Serbian language, shaped by personal experiences and national discourse, affected linguistic behavior in both formal and informal settings.

The specific objectives of the study were to examine the impact of post-war sociopolitical changes on the usage and acceptance of Serbian-origin loanwords in everyday Albanian speech; to compare the language attitudes of older and younger generations of Albanian speakers regarding these loanwords; and to explore how language attitudes intersect with personal memory, emotional connections, and symbolic identity within a post-conflict sociolinguistic landscape.

Participants

The study employed a purposive sampling strategy, selecting participants based on their relevance to the research questions and their capacity to provide insights from personal or professional experience. Five participants were included, representing two generational cohorts:

- Older generation: Two individuals who lived through Yugoslav rule and the Kosovo War, offering perspectives on language practices before and after the conflict and changes in attitudes toward Serbian loanwords over time.
- Younger generation: Three individuals born post-war, educated entirely within independent Kosovo, providing insights shaped by nationalist discourses, revised curricula, and the limited presence of Serbian in daily life.

This small, focused sample was appropriate for qualitative research of this scope, prioritizing rich, narrative data over statistical generalizability and allowing for detailed exploration of individual experiences and thematic patterns.

Data Collection

Participants were recruited via social media networks and personal contacts, selected for their ability to critically reflect on language, identity, and the post-

war sociopolitical context. Purposive sampling emphasized depth, relevance, and diversity of experience, ensuring the collection of detailed qualitative data sensitive to generational and historical differences.

Data Analysis

The interviews were analyzed using descriptive content analysis to identify recurring patterns and meaningful themes in participants' responses. Transcripts were reviewed multiple times, noting repeated expressions, strong opinions, and emotional reactions related to identity, memory, or institutional influence. Responses were grouped into categories, such as avoiding Serbian words in schools, which then informed broader themes like language and national identity or emotional discomfort with Serbian words. Age-related differences and the influence of institutional settings were considered, and illustrative quotes were selected to convey participants' perspectives. Manual coding was used to remain close to the data and emphasize participants' voices.

FINDINGS

This section presents a detailed thematic analysis of five semi-structured interviews with participants from different generational backgrounds in Kosovo. The study aimed to understand how the legacy of war and sociopolitical transformation has shaped the use perception of Serbian-origin loanwords among Kosovo Albanian.

The participants included two individuals who experienced life before and after the 1999 war and three younger individuals born post-conflict. Their insights reflect the complex connection between sociopolitical trauma, memory, identity, and linguistic practices in a society still navigating the long-term effects of war. Findings are presented thematically around the research questions, focusing on generational differences, sociopolitical narratives, emotional responses, and symbolic associations surrounding the use of Serbian-origin loanwords in post-war Kosovo.

Shifting Attitudes Toward Serbian Loanwords in Formal and Informal Settings

The sociopolitical shift following the 1999 war has resulted in widespread linguistic awareness and a gradual distancing from Serbian-origin loanwords, particularly in formal and public settings. This process, referred to by participants as a kind of cleansing is viewed as an essential step in reclaiming national and cultural identity in the post-war period. Speaker 1, who lived during the Yugoslav era, observed a conscious change:

“There’s been a clear effort to cleanse the language of Serbian influences, especially among the younger generation. In my time, people used Serbian-origin words without thinking twice, but now you often see people correcting themselves or avoiding certain terms.”

Similarly, Speaker 2 claimed:

“There’s been a clear effort to cleanse the language of Serbian influences, especially among the younger generation. In my time, people used Serbian-origin words without thinking twice, but now you often see people correcting themselves or avoiding certain terms.”

This is most visible in formal settings, such as education, media and professional communication, where the use of Serbian loanwords is increasingly stigmatized. Several participants including Speaker 4, emphasized a normative expectation in these settings:

“I attempt to avoid them... I want my language to keep its authenticity and originality and not to disappear”

This change is part of a larger effort to clean the Albanian language from foreign words, especially those from Serbian. It is not just about improving the language but also about protecting the national identity. This process goes beyond language, it reflects the desire to take control of how Albanian identity is expressed and remembered. In this way, language becomes a symbol of strength, unity, and cultural independence.

Intergenerational Differences in Perceptions of Serbian-Origin Words

One of the most prominent findings is the clear generational divide in both usage and perception. Older participants described their use of Serbian-origin words as habitual and emotionally complex, tied to time when Serbian was a present in everyday speech during the Yugoslav period, when Serbian was imposed in education, workplaces, and administration.

Speaker 1 claimed:

“We use them out of habit, that’s how we grew up speaking.”

Speaker 2 remarked:

“We didn’t think about it much back then because we had no choice. We were under pressure, under surveillance, and under their system. If you wanted to survive, you adapted, even your speech... You couldn’t avoid it. You went to a state office, they spoke Serbian. You bought medicine, the label was in Serbian. Even the job titles in our workplaces were Serbian.”

Meanwhile, younger participants expressed discomfort with those words viewing them as relics of oppression rather than neutral linguistic borrowings.

Speaker 4 shared:

“Until I was a grown up, I was not even aware that some of the words I am using are not part of my mother language.”

Interestingly, this generational divergence is also geographical. In regions like Prizren, where multilingualism is common, even younger speakers admitted to occasionally using Serbian-origin words in informal situations but expressed a desire to avoid them in their speech

Speaker 3 stated:

“I was born during the war and raised in Prizren, in a city where many cultures and languages mix, my experience with the Serbian language has always been complicated. I grew up hearing Serbian around me, on the streets, in the market, from neighbors, so I naturally picked up the language. I do understand it well, and sometimes I even use Serbian-origin words without even thinking.”

Emotional and Symbolic Weight of Serbian Language Post-War

The data reveals deep emotional and symbolic associations attached to the Serbian language, especially among those who lived through the war.

The language is no longer seen just as means of communication, but as trigger for memory, trauma, and moral conflict.

Speaker 1 described how Serbian transformed to a source of fear:

“Before the war, Serbian was just another... After the war, everything changed. The language began to feel like a weapon.”

Speaker 2 similarly evoked vivid emotional memories:

“I associate it with cold mornings when the police questioned us for hours. I associate it with hearing soldiers laugh in a language I didn't want to understand. The Serbian language is soaked in memory. And those memories aren't kind. So no, I can't hear it and feel nothing.”

Even younger participants who did not directly experience the war carried inherited emotional responses from family stories. Speaker 5 said:

“When I hear Serbian, it brings up memories and stories I've heard from my family and community... So, I don't have a very positive feeling toward it.”

These emotional responses demonstrate how the war has left a linguistic trauma. The symbolic rejection of Serbian-origin words is not only political, but also psychological.

Language as a Marker of National and Cultural Identity.

All participants emphasized the critical role language plays in preserving national identity, particularly in post-conflict contexts. The interviews revealed a shared belief that language foundational element of resistance, survival, and memory in Kosovo's recent history.

Speaker 2 stated:

“Language is identity. You can change borders, governments, currencies, but if you lose your language, you lose yourself.”

This was also supported from Speaker 4:

“Any attempt made towards one's language diminution is an attempt made towards loss of cultural and national identity.”

Participants were worried that using Serbian-origin words could weaken or change their cultural identity, especially among younger generations who may not know the origin of the words. This shows that language choices are not only personal, but also political.

DISCUSSION

This study examined how the war in Kosovo and the sociopolitical changes that followed have shaped attitudes toward Serbian loanwords in Albanian. The findings reveal that language in Kosovo is not merely a means of communication but a deeply symbolic tool reflecting identity, memory, and emotion.

Consistent with previous research (Xharra, 2010; Jansen, 2012; Demaj, 2023), younger Kosovars demonstrate a conscious avoidance of Serbian-origin words, particularly in formal settings, while older generations retain them out of habit or practical necessity. This generational divide illustrates how lived experience, exposure to nationalist discourses, and educational contexts influence linguistic behavior. For the younger generation, avoiding Serbian words functions as both a symbolic act of independence and a means of respecting collective trauma, echoing Helms' (2016) concept of “moral memory.” Older participants, however, often associate these words with the practical realities of life under Yugoslav rule rather than ideological or emotional concerns.

The study also highlights the emotional and symbolic weight of language. Serbian loanwords are frequently linked to fear, oppression, and conflict, making their avoidance a form of emotional self-protection and cultural assertion. This

aligns with Canakis (2018) and Pavlenko's (2008) frameworks on post-conflict language removal and re-ideologization, showing how language becomes a site for both memory management and identity construction.

Moreover, the findings illustrate how Kosovo's linguistic landscape reflects broader post-conflict dynamics. Similar to Rwanda and Bosnia, language here serves as a marker of political alignment and cultural belonging, with Albanian functioning as a symbol of national resilience and Serbian often stigmatized due to historical associations with domination. This study extends existing scholarship by focusing on the micro-level, word-specific experiences, demonstrating how individual choices contribute to collective narratives of identity and trauma.

The generational differences also reveal the role of socialization and institutional influence. Schools, media, and family interactions reinforce avoidance of Serbian words among younger speakers, while older participants' habitual usage underscores the persistence of linguistic habits shaped by pre-war life. These dynamics underscore the complex interplay between language, memory, and identity in post-war Kosovo.

While this study provides rich qualitative insight, its small sample and focus on urban participants limit generalizability. Future research could expand to larger and more diverse populations, incorporate longitudinal designs, and explore informal or private language practices in homes and local communities. Such studies would deepen understanding of how attitudes toward Serbian loanwords evolve over time and across regions.

Overall, the findings suggest that language in post-war Kosovo functions as a symbolic resource, mediating identity, memory, and emotion. The avoidance or use of Serbian-origin words is more than linguistic preference; it is a means of negotiating historical trauma, asserting cultural pride, and navigating post-conflict social realities. Recognizing these dynamics is essential for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to understand the ongoing role of language in shaping social cohesion and collective memory.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how the war in Kosovo and subsequent sociopolitical changes have shaped the attitudes and use of Serbian loanwords among Kosovo Albanians. By analyzing interviews with participants from both pre- and post-war generations, the research revealed that language in Kosovo is more than a communication tool, it reflects history, identity, and collective emotion.

A central finding is that language has become a symbol of pride and resistance. In the post-war context, particularly among younger speakers, there

has been a deliberate effort to minimize the use of Serbian words, especially in formal and public settings. This process is not only about linguistic correctness but also about reclaiming Albanian as a marker of national independence.

The study also highlighted clear generational differences. Older participants, who grew up under Yugoslav rule, continue to use Serbian loanwords out of habit or practicality, while younger participants view these words as reminders of past oppression and often avoid them as a form of respect for history and the victims of the conflict.

Moreover, the emotional and symbolic weight of language emerged as a significant theme. Serbian-origin words evoke strong memories of fear, loss, and conflict, even among those who did not experience the war directly. Avoiding these words serves not only as a personal choice but also as a response to collective trauma and a means of managing emotional memory.

Finally, all participants emphasized that language is integral to preserving Albanian culture and identity. Using Albanian properly is seen as an act of loyalty, a way to honor the past, and a means to protect cultural heritage for the future.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the use or avoidance of Serbian loanwords in Kosovo today is deeply intertwined with historical experience, generational identity, and emotional memory. Language functions as a site of survival, pride, and resistance, offering insights into how post-conflict societies negotiate identity, memory, and cultural continuity.

References

- Alexander, N. (2000). Language policy and planning in South Africa: Some insights. In R. Phillipson (Ed.), *Rights to language: Equity, power, and education* (pp. 170–176). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Bakioğlu, A. (Ed.). (2016). *4+4+4 yapılanmasına ilişkin kapsamlı bir çalışma*. Ankara: Nobel.
- Bilaniuk, L. (2010). Language in the balance: The politics of non-accommodation on bilingual Ukrainian–Russian television shows. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2010(201), 105–133.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Bugajski, J. (2002). *Political parties of Eastern Europe: A guide to politics in the post-communist era*. M.E. Sharpe.
- Canakis, C. (2018). Language and trauma in the Balkans. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 17(1), 35–57.
- Demaj, U. (2023). Digital activism and linguistic norm enforcement among Kosovo Albanians. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 27(2), 187–206.
- Demaj, U., & Alla, A. (2023). Gheg revival and Kosovo’s post-war language policy. *Journal of Balkan Linguistics*, 12(1), 22–45.
- Demaj, U., & Vandembroucke, M. (2016). Language and identity in post-conflict Kosovo: A linguistic landscape analysis. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 13(4), 412–428.
- Elliott, M. (2017). Nation-building and language policy in Kosovo. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 41(2), 145–166.
- Haughton, T. (2005). Constraints and opportunities of leadership in post-conflict societies: The case of Kosovo. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57(6), 803–822.
- Helms, E. (2016). *Innocence and victimhood: Gender, nation, and women’s activism in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Jansen, S. (2012). After the red passport: Towards an anthropology of the everyday geopolitics of entrapment in the EU’s ‘immediate outside’. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 18(4), 825–842.
- Kasapolli, A. (2019). Language reform and national ideology in Kosovo. *Balkan Sociolinguistic Studies*, 8(1), 73–91.
- Kostovicova, D. (2005). *Kosovo: The politics of identity and space*. Routledge.
- Kulyk, V. (2016). National identity in Ukraine: Impact of Euromaidan and the war. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(4), 588–608.
- Kuperman, T. (2014). Language as a symbol of post-genocide unity in Rwanda. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 26(3), 243–256.
- Munishi, R. (2013). Standard Albanian and the dialect debate in Kosovo. *Albanian Philological Studies*, 7(1), 101–117.
- Musollaj, D. (2023). *Attitudes of Kosovo Albanians toward minority languages* (Master’s thesis). University of Prishtina.
- Nuhiu, R. (2008). English and Slavic loanwords in contemporary Kosovar Albanian. *Philology Today*, 3(2), 88–99.
- Pavlenko, A. (2008). Multilingualism in post-Soviet countries: Language revival, removal, and re-ideologization. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 11(3–4), 275–314.
- Pavlenko, A. (2011). Language rights versus speakers’ rights: On the applicability of Western language rights approaches in Eastern Europe. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 10(3), 405–428.

- Pavlović, T. (2014). Language and identity in Kosovo: From oppression to resistance. *Southeast European Review*, 17(2), 97–113.
- Ricento, T. (2006). *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method*. Blackwell.
- Samuelson, B. L., & Freedman, S. W. (2010). Language policy and planning in multilingual post-genocide Rwanda. *Language Policy*, 9(3), 191–215.
- Shabani, B. (2023). Language ideologies in post-war Albanian media. *Pristina Media Review*, 4(1), 77–95.
- Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. Routledge.
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Webb, V. (2002). *Language in South Africa: The role of language in national transformation, reconstruction and development*. John Benjamins.
- Xharra, B. (2010). Kosovo's post-war language policy. *Balkan Insight*, 3(2), 44–58.

LANGUAGE USE AND IDENTITY IN ONLINE GAMING COMMUNITIES

Endrit JASHARI¹

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, online multiplayer games have emerged as more than just a form of entertainment. For many players, they function as vibrant social spaces where communication is central for both gameplay and community building. In these virtual “worlds” players communicate constantly, be it through in-game chat or external platforms like Discord, to coordinate, compete, socialize. This is especially true for fast-paced, team-based genres such as first-person shooters(FPS) and multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBA). In these settings, language plays a crucial role in coordinating, managing conflict and performing one’s place within a team or community. As players compete, cooperate and socialize, their use of language becomes deeply tied in the way identity is shaped and understood within the gaming environment.

Sociolinguistics, the study of language in its social context, provides a critical lens through which to explore these phenomena. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is produced through linguistic practice, shaped in interaction, and indexed through sociocultural norms. Language, therefore, does more than convey meaning, it becomes a performative resource through which gamers signal belonging, establish hierarchies, resist norms, and cultivate community membership. The role of language in gaming communities is not just an extension of popular culture or internet slang, it is a fertile ground for understanding how individuals and groups articulate their identities in digitally mediated environments. Scholars have noted that online gaming creates a “third space” (Gee, 2018; Steinkuehler, 2007) where participants can experiment with identity, construct hybrid linguistic repertoires, and interact across cultural boundaries.

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; endritjashari33@gmail.com

It is also interesting to note the differences in communication in voice-chat centered games and text-chat centered games. For example, in FPS games like Valorant, Overwatch 2, players might adapt the above-mentioned speech forms to claim authority, diffuse situations and bond with teammates, using their voice in voice-chat, in text-heavy interactions games (For example, MOBAs) like League of Legends, communication is used to reflect different interactional patterns, such as sarcasm, frustration, or insider slang (Cote, 2017).

Moreover, gaming discourse provides a unique case study in the globalization of language practices. With many games being played across continents and involving players from different linguistic backgrounds, English often functions as a lingua franca even if it is adapted to fit the specific communicative needs and norms of gaming subcultures (Daniel, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of online gaming as a site of linguistic practice has gained significant momentum over the last two decades, particularly as scholars recognize the communicative richness of these environments. Online games are no longer viewed solely as leisure or entertainment spaces; they are increasingly conceptualized as sociolinguistic arenas where players form identities, build relationships, and navigate complex social hierarchies through language. Communication in these contexts is rarely incidental. Whether through fast commands in voice chat or stylized expressions in text channels, language in gaming is strategic, performative, and deeply embedded in community norms. This review synthesizes existing research across five themes: language practices in gaming, methodological and theoretical frameworks, identity construction, communicative modes, and group dynamics. These themes provide a foundation for understanding how language both reflects and constructs identity in the online gaming context.

Language Use and Practices in Online Gaming

Online gaming environments are rich sites of linguistic exchange. Far from being mere tools for giving instructions or coordinating tactics, in-game communication practices reveal a depth of social meaning, often functioning as key mechanisms for constructing identity and asserting membership within gaming communities. Chen's (2012) work offers a compelling look at how language supports both learning and socialization in a World of Warcraft (WoW) guild. Through detailed observation of novice players becoming "experts," Chen demonstrates that language not only facilitates knowledge transfer but also marks one's status within the group. Players don't just learn how to raid,

they learn how to speak like a raider. Vocabulary like “DPS,” “aggro,” and “pull” is more than technical shorthand; it becomes a badge of legitimacy.

Adding on, Bawa (2018) introduces the concept of an “M-gamer corpus” to account for the distinct discourse that exists within massively multiplayer online games (MMOs). Analyzing recurring phrases, tactical speech patterns, and humor, the study reveals that gaming discourse forms a semi-structured dialect embedded with ritualized expressions. For instance, the repetition of phrases like “ez,” “buff,” or “don’t feed” are not only task-oriented but function to signal affiliation, experience level, and even regional linguistic variation. Bawa argues that such patterned gamer speech warrants recognition as a culturally embedded linguistic repertoire, shaped by context-specific norms and expectations.

While Chen (2012) and Bawa (2018) focus on skill acquisition and socialization, Wright et al. (2002) adds another layer by examining how players wield language to assert or challenge authority. This work shows that players use language to negotiate legitimacy in real time. A phrase like “that’s not real” may seem offhand, but it serves as a powerful discursive move, marking certain claims, styles, or experiences as invalid. This form of linguistic gatekeeping reinforces community boundaries, helping insiders maintain status while pushing others to the margins. Language, in this sense, functions both as a connective tool and a barrier.

Language and Identity in Online Interaction

Online gaming provides fertile ground for studying identity because it allows for a unique combination of anonymity, role-play, and community interaction. Within these digital arenas, players can perform versions of themselves that may differ dramatically from their offline identities. Eklund (2015) captures this fluidity in her study of MMORPGs, highlighting how players shift linguistic styles to reflect evolving roles. A player might adopt deferential or overly polite language when entering a new group, only to adopt confident or authoritative language once their skill is recognized. These style shifts are performative, reflecting a kind of ongoing identity calibration. Wadley et al. (2015) further illuminate this process through their examination of voice chat in FPS games. Their findings suggest that vocal qualities, tone, rhythm, volume, carry significant social weight. Players who speak clearly and assertively are often perceived as competent leaders, regardless of actual gameplay skill. Meanwhile, silence or hedging can undermine perceived status. Voice, then, becomes not just a channel for information but a medium for projecting confidence, emotion, and hierarchy.

Identity signaling also occurs at the lexical and syntactic levels. Players often adopt in-group slang or stylized expressions to index alignment with specific subcultures or ideologies. Terms like “GG,” “nerf,” “grind,” and “meta” are not merely functional, they are cultural markers. Using them correctly signals membership; misusing them may invite ridicule or social sanction. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) remind us, identity is always relational. One becomes a “real gamer” in contrast to a “casual,” or a “shot-caller” in contrast to a “lurker.”

Huomo (2024) shows how multilingual immigrant gamers perform identity in through strategic code-switching and accent adaptation. The study finds that players often toggle between dominant (e.g., English) and heritage languages to simultaneously signal insider status and cultural affiliation. For example, switching to a native tongue during off-task chatter, while maintaining English for tactical commands during gameplay, allows players to use language effectively for both strategic communication and developing social skills. Huomo highlights this as a form of “dual identity performance,” where language is not just a tool but a boundary marker for negotiating belonging in linguistically diverse virtual teams.

Moreover, linguistic identity work in games intersects with broader social categories like gender, race, and nationality. Sundén and Sveningsson (2012), for example, observe how female gamers often engage in strategic language choices to mitigate harassment or assert credibility. Meanwhile, Gray (2012) documents how LGBTQ+ players code-switch or adopt humor to navigate potentially hostile environments. These studies underscore that identity in gaming is not just about performance, it’s about negotiation, often in the face of resistance.

Communication Modes and Interactional Practices

The channel through which players communicate, whether text, voice, or mixed-media platforms like Discord, shapes not only the content of communication but its structure, pacing, and social function. Bogdanov’s (2022) discourse analysis of World of Warcraft and League of Legends offers key insights into how linguistic behavior shifts across genre and platform. In voice-chat heavy environments like WoW, players tend to adopt affective and spontaneous speech acts, using tone and volume to assert leadership or express urgency. In contrast, LoL’s text-dominant format favors abbreviated slang and sarcasm, with phrases like “ggez” or “report mid” functioning as micro-acts of social positioning. Bogdanov argues that communicative modality strongly mediates not just coordination but the construction of in-game reputations and hierarchies.

Discord adds another layer of complexity. As Anderson (2016) notes, Discord serves as a persistent social space that blends synchronous and asynchronous interaction. Its channels may include voice, text, memes, links, and bots, all of which contribute to a group's culture. On Discord, players not only coordinate gameplay but also build social bonds, debate strategy, and share personal stories. Language use here is shaped by platform norms, such as tagging conventions, emoji reactions, or moderation policies, all of which influence how identity is constructed and perceived.

In short, the communicative mode profoundly shapes interactional dynamics. While voice emphasizes presence and immediacy, text allows for nuance and curation. Discord, meanwhile, offers continuity, enabling community-building that persists beyond gameplay. Any serious study of language and identity in gaming must attend to these multimodal dynamics.

Language, Roles, and Group Dynamics in Games

In multiplayer games, especially those requiring team coordination, language becomes a vital mechanism for organizing social roles and maintaining cohesion. Rambusch et al. (2007) highlight how shared linguistic routines, like greetings, role declarations, or tactical shorthand, contribute to team performance and solidarity. These routines create predictability, helping players navigate complex tasks while also reinforcing group identity. Strong (2018) explores how players construct leadership and cohesion through “gamer-speak,” a specialized register that includes shared jargon, stylized spellings, and rhythm-based cues (e.g., “3...2...1...GO”). Players who consistently initiate these routines, are tacitly recognized as leaders, regardless of their in-game rank. Strong emphasizes that leadership in these environments is often enacted discursively, not formally, echoing Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) idea of identity as emergent and negotiated.

At the same time, language can exclude. Players who fail to adopt group norms, misread tone, or breach etiquette may be marginalized. This exclusion is not always explicit, which is usually toxic; it can occur through silence, sarcasm, or subtle refusals to engage. AIAfnan's (2025) study provides several examples of how language can become both glue and gate.

Conversely, humor often functions as a coping mechanism, helping teams navigate stress or failure. Poulous et al (2020) observes that teams who joke together often stay together. Humor can ease tension, mask criticism, or assert in-group identity. It is also performative: who gets to joke, and how, reflects underlying power dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research design to examine how players perform and negotiate identity within online gaming communities. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this research as it allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, attitudes, and language practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The research focused on naturally occurring communication in gaming contexts, specifically text chat and voice chat interactions, as well as semi-structured interviews to capture players' reflections on their language use.

Participants

Participants were recruited from online multiplayer gaming communities, primarily from FPS (First-Person Shooter) communities. The study employed purposive sampling, selecting individuals who were actively involved in online multiplayer games, regularly used text-based or voice-based communication, and were willing to participate in interviews. A total of six participants were recruited.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom or Discord to gain insight into how participants used language in gaming contexts, how they perceived their roles or identities, and whether they intentionally shifted their language based on group dynamics or communication mode. All interviews were recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which enabled both linguistic and conceptual insights into how identity is discursively constructed in gaming contexts. Interview data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings gathered by semi-structured interviews conducted with participants active in online multiplayer gaming communities. The results are presented into three major themes: Identity construction through language use, Communicative practices across platforms and language use and social roles during team-based gameplay.

Identity Construction Through Language Use

Participants agreed that language plays a key role in how they present themselves in online gaming communities. Many stated that there is a difference in how they express themselves in offline/online contexts, in online contexts participants felt that they projected a more unfiltered version of themselves, with one participant saying, *“So you can sort of be yourself, more so than in real life, because in real life you need to, like, take into consideration all the social rules”* (P1). Helping these participants with being more unfiltered is the fact that being online inherently means that they are anonymous and as such they feel less anxious about how others perceive them online, saying *“In online space theres less anxiety involved and because of that its possible to come up with responses i usually wouldnt use.”*(P4).

Because the online “world” is more anonymous than real life, participants said that there are less consequences for their actions online, as they will probably never meet these people physically, and as such are more likely to use harsh language, one participant said *“person from your school or something, you’re gonna have to deal with that, but online u can just turn your pc off”* (P1). Adding on to the fact that people can just leave the interaction, one participant stated that conversation become way more fluid than in real life, where you would be committed to a conversation until it ended, whereas online you can choose to jump in and out of conversations at a moment’s notice. *“social way is, like, my mic and what I type in chat, so it’s, like, really easy to control. I can, like, leave the conversation immediately. So it’s like, yeah, yeah. There’s like, very little, like, commitment if you don’t want to, like, it’s like, very, very easy to go in and out.”* (P1).

Other participants emphasized that because of the perceived anonymity, they feel detached from other users, one participant said *“I don’t really think of them as real people who I shouldn’t hurt their feelings”* (P5), and because others might think of P5 as they think of others, as people who are not real, P5 adopted emotional detachment as a coping strategy to avoid social friction stating *“I don’t try to be real with everyone”* (P5), reflecting a very protective attitude where authenticity, or being “real” is seen as risky move.

Participants also described how they change their behavior based on who they are around, with one participant saying *“ I am definitely unpleasant around crowds I don’t rate”* (P5), showcasing how they intentionally change their behavior when surrounded by people they don’t respect. Such changes in behavior are not always deliberately done to show a specific identity, they could be done as a result of emotional responses to particular social contexts.

How players speak in online gaming communities also changes depending on the familiarity with others in the conversation. When together with close friends, many participants said that they feel more comfortable expressing themselves openly, one participant said “*Like, extremely, it extremely depends on how close I am to the people that I talk to online*”. (P3)

Status within the community also contributed in how participants changed their behavior, Participants described being more careful or respectful when addressing players who are highly skilled. One participant shared “*If I’m playing with Toemas (a prominent Pro figure in TF2) Like one of the best players, I like, try to be respectful*”. (P3)

Participants described that even indirect social proximity, such as when talking to friends of friends, changed how freely they expressed themselves. P6 stated “*Now I’m sort of not like part of this group, but I’m adjacent. I have like a mutual friend. So now I’m, like, a little more careful with what i say*”. Demonstrating how identity is not only tied to direct relationships but also to how players perceive their position within larger social networks.

Misunderstandings are quite frequent in online gaming communities. They mostly happen because of limited or decontextualized language, especially in text chat. Several participants described how their messages shaped how others judged them “*I remember playing a video game and I was being rude in chat. Because those words were the first that I typed, players assumed that that was my personality and from that they based their view*.” (P4) and (P5) “*People have told me they had a very different impression of me*.” Suggesting that identity is quickly constructed and locked in place by other players, even a single comment can frame someone’s identity.

Participants also highlighted how specific jargon is often used to distinguish insiders from outsiders. One participant said that misusing terminology can result in immediate judgement “*“Okay, you call the turret in Overwatch ‘sentry’? Now people think you’re a noob.”*” (P1). Here language functions as a tool to gatekeep people, players who don’t use the correct term are at risk of being perceived as inexperienced or out of place, regardless of how well they play the game. Another participant commented on how failing to use in-group slang could mark someone as being an outsider “*you’ll get called like an outsider for not knowing the local slang*.” (P1)

In addition to this some participants used language as a tool to distance oneself, meaning that they would intentionally speak in a way that distanced them from other players. This was done as a reaction towards unwanted group associations or uncomfortable social situations, as one participant shared “*But after a while, I would just consciously mess up my English so I wouldn’t be, like, associated with these people*” (P2)

Language can also be used as a tool to bully, or harass players within online gaming communities. Several participants reported that they experienced bullying because of their accent, one participant said *“So somebody goes, I take no responsibility, like an in, like a Russian accent. I’m like, what the you’re talking about.”* (P1) another participant stated that they were ostracized due to ethnic associations linked to their accent *“had remarks about me being Turkish in French, which I didn’t really even though it was, like, a bit annoying, you know, because I don’t want to be associated French Turkish people, much like one time when I was like, younger, I got kind of, how do you say this the right word, like ostracized.”* (P3) showcasing how language, and by extension accents, can function as markers that lead to bullying within these communities.

Gender based harassment also emerged as a significant issue in online gaming communities, influencing participants’ communication behavior. One female participant described the impact of unwanted attention from strangers in voice chat *“I’ve experienced total strangers trying to talk to me like they know me because I am a girl”.* (P5) and as a consequence of this harassment, she noticed a change in her behavior *“I do talk way less in VC (short for voice chat)”* (P5). This kind of gender harassment often makes players want to talk less in voice chat, affecting how they connect and work with others during the game.

Communicative Practices Across Platforms

Participants described using all means of communication methods such as in-game voice chat, text chat and third-party applications like discord, and they reported that their communication style depends on the platform they are using.

Most participants agreed that their comfort level and willingness to express themselves depended on the context or familiarity with others. One participant noted that in structured game settings such as scrim (or practice matches), communication expectations are very clear and goal-oriented as everyone wants to win the game and as such everyone works towards that goal *“If I’m talking as if it’s a scrim, I’m going to be instantly more comfortable because I know I’m doing the communication the right way. It would be more uncomfortable to be just talking about some random stuff during a game.”* (P4), this quote showcases how these competitive environments reduce anxiety about being misunderstood, allowing the players to speak more freely.

All of the participants stated that they feel more comfortable using VC (Voice-chat) with their friends and were hesitant to express themselves when they were among unfamiliar people. One participant shared *“For me, it just depends on who I’m talking to. If it’s just randoms, I’m not really comfortable expressing my identity”* (P1) with another one echoing the same sentiment

“With friends I’d say I’d rather be speaking than typing and with anyone else I absolutely do not want to be in voice chat with them just to play a casual game.” (P5). This shows how the sense of “safety” got lowered when interacting with unfamiliar contexts, especially with strangers that they meet while playing the game, leading to hesitancy to speak up.

On the other hand, text-chat was described as offering a sense emotional distance and control over what they write. Several participants said that typing gives them time to actually express their thoughts, and avoids the real-time pressure or emotional tone that is apparent in voice chat. For example, P2 noted that text allows people to more easily express themselves in two ways: firstly, it allows the sender to revise what they are about to write before sending it and secondly it hides your emotions, tone etc. through a text that they read in their screen, someone might be very upset emotionally, but it is very hard to convey these emotions through text, Allowing for this “emotional distance” to be shown. *“Yeah, but you’re not even thinking about, you’re really, you’re thinking about you’re talking to a person, but you don’t hear their voice or you don’t hear their like, their emotions”* (P2). This form of emotional distance made it the preferred medium, amongst participants, when expressing frustration, criticism, or personal feelings *“I mean, maybe they’re very upset emotionally, but then, you know, you cannot see that level of upsetness, I guess, in text.”* (P1) allowing them to “mask” their emotions, which could prevent escalation during the game.

The choice of the communication platform showcased not only functional needs but also the depth of social relationships. Participants agreed that while in-game chat was sufficient for surface level interactions, when they wanted more meaningful or extended conversations, be it just strategically or for personal connection, they switched to platforms like discord. One participant said *“Like you chat in like a casual game and then you become best friends and now you’re in Discord talking.”* (P1) indicating how in-game surface level interactions transition into more extended voice conversations over discord *“Like maybe just get in voice to like chill for like four hours instead of like playing the 15-minute game together and then like, leaving.”* (P1) this quote encapsulates how platform switching is not just a technical thing, done for better voice quality or something similar, instead it is a way for deepening social relationships, from surface level interactions to deeper social bonding.

Language Use And Social Roles In Team-Based Gameplay

The participants agreed that roles in games like Team fortress 2, Valorant, Overwatch 2 come with distinct linguistic behaviors. Participants were also in a consensus that language and social roles mutually influence each-other, and

is not a simple cause-effect relationship but rather it is a cyclical one, with one participant stating *“But, like, it really depends on the person. This is, like, what was first, chicken or the egg? I wonder.”* (P4), one participant suggested that the “main caller” (someone who does the strategy within a game) is usually someone who is extroverted, talkative, and managing *“The people who will be picked as main caller will be those who are more extroverted, generally.”* (P1) and that the flank players are usually more submissive and silent and expected to listen and provide only essential information so that the communications are not cluttered *“And then the flank players, like the flank scout, that’s gonna be, like, the submissive silent guy.”*

Beyond these basic roles, other, more informal roles were described such as, leader, motivator, clown or scapegoat. P2 explains that sometimes people fall into these roles unintentionally stating *“I think sometimes people are forced, like, into these roles without really wanting it, but have to, like, pick it up, and then.”* (P4). A player might fall into being a scapegoat if they are underperforming as will function as a scapegoat within the team *“Yeah, you kind of become the clown, but you also become the rock of the team”* (P2), highlighting how even if you are the “worst” at the game you still offer value, you kind of become an emotional anchor, absorbing blame, helping the team maintain morale, even if it is to some extent dysfunctional. A “clown” like figure uses self-deprecating language *“If you’re a bad player, you kind of have to roll with the punches, you know. Like, you have to know that you’re a bad player.”* (P3), while a leader would adopt a more serious or constructive tone as P3 noted, saying that even someone like “a clown” would shift tone and take responsibility if the team were his own *“No, but if I was playing... If this was, like, my own team, I wouldn’t go like, Oh,, I’m such an awful tragic player. Like, I would just, like, lock in, you know?”* (P3) with another participant adding that the leader must act as a stabilizing figure *“Yeah, you have to have, like, a bit more of a... You have to be a bit more of a father figure for the players.”* (P1).

Additionally, players take on roles either because of gaps in the team structure or due to dissatisfaction with the team’s direction, once they take a role, their language changes to fit it. This change happens from both internal motivation and team necessity, one participant says *“Yeah, there’s the demand and the supply. For, like, personalities and skills. Also, people are not gonna have, like, four talkers or, like, main callers on the same team.”* (P5) showcasing that when it comes to personalities and roles in online gaming communities, there is a limited number of them, in other words there is a supply and demand for each archetype, a team can not function with four dominant voices competing for leadership.

When it comes to leadership and leaders, there are two types of leadership in gaming teams: the “office” or management leader who organizes scrimms (Practice matches) and logistics, and the “main caller” the one who leads communication in-game. *“One guy, like, organizes scrimms and does the office, and one guy is, like, main calling, and that’s the guy who listens to in-game.”* (P2). P2 adds that while the management leader might not speak much, when they do, they do so assertively *“yeah, the leader, the, like, owner of the team won’t maybe talk as much, but he will still speak as if he’s, like, the boss.”* (P2). The participants further explain how individual personalities influence role adoption, for example, someone who is good at planning may take on managerial duties, while someone who is a mechanical player might focus on the game with minimal communication, with one participant noted *“Like, somebody who’s, like, really bad at, like, planning is not gonna manage the, like, scrimms and shit like that. And then, like, people who are more...If there’s, like, a DM (Short for DEATHMATCH) lord, he’s p’obably not gonna be, like, a strategy player.”* (P1).

Another participant noted that it is common for the same person to hold multiple roles like main caller, manager, motivator etc. due to the lack of specialized support. *“There’s, like, the main caller. There’s the strat man. There’s the, like, manager who gets the scrimms in and everything. Which a lot of times, all of these things go on the main caller”* (P4) However this is not ideal, most teams do not have such specialized roles, even though it is something worth fostering.

Wherever there’s communication, conflict is bound to happen and online gaming communities are no exception. In online gaming communities arguments often escalate rather than resolve, when two players disagree about something, especially when it is about how the game should be played, the competitive nature of the game makes resolution difficult. One participant shared *“I think usually in communities like this, it explodes and then it doesn’t go that well.”* (P1). If mutual understanding isn’t achieved then continued collaboration becomes untenable, especially in teams formed for the sole reason of winning *“And they don’t come to the same conclusion. There’s no reason in continuing with the relationship that these two people have. Besides trying to win the game, right?”* (P2). P2 adds that many players will set aside personal or ideological differences just to continue playing the game, the priority for many becomes winning, rather than building relationships. *“Yeah, you’ll put the differences aside sometimes to have a good team.”* (P2). The most common way of resolving conflict, especially when friends are involved, is through a “lets agree to disagree” outcome. *“We agreed to disagree and we did our thing, basically.”* (P3). One participant notes that nice words foster cooperation

avoiding a toxic environment “*Someone who is speaking nicely... is more likely to be listened to*”, and “*“Toxic environment... erodes the atmosphere”*”(P5). Most major disagreements either end in grudging compromise, if the players involved are friends, or in the team disbanding, if the players who are in the team are together only for the reason of winning.

Participants unanimously agreed that the major ways of bonding in online gaming communities are through Humor and venting. Humor, especially inside jokes, were seen as an important way to bond in these communities by the participants, with one of them stating “*So that’s gonna strengthen the bonding. Yeah, humor, basically.*” (P1). Shared slang from online subcultures strengthens relationships “*This has nothing to do with TF2. He uses some funny words from another community that I also engage in*” (P4). The other way that participants bonded was through complaining or venting, usually about bad gameplay. “*I can also bond over what happened in the game, you know? Like, oh my god, that was so bad. Like what we did there or whatever, you know?*” (P5).

The findings of this study suggest that online games are not just platforms where people play, they are also places where complex social negotiation takes place, where language serves both as a tool for strategy and a marker for social belonging.

DISCUSSION

This section will discuss the findings gathered by the interviews and explore how this data relates to the literature review section. The three major themes that emerged from the results are: identity construction through language use, communicative practices across platforms and language use and social roles in team-based gameplay.

Identity Construction Through Language Use

The results confirm that identity construction in online gaming communities is fluid, performative and strategic and is shaped by anonymity, social proximity and the context of the conversation.

The findings of Bucholtz and Hall (2005) which say that identity is emergent and indexed through sociocultural norms is suitable for this study. Participants often described adapting their linguistic behavior based on context, if they spoke to strangers they were drawn back, if speaking to friends they were more willing to speak up and even joke around. The interviews also support Eklund’s (2015) study which says that players calibrate their self-presentation based on group familiarity. Several participants said that they were “being themselves” more freely online, in part due to the reduced consequences of digital interaction. Adding on, this study affirms the so called “third spaces” in online

gaming communities (Gee, 2018; Steinkuehler, 2007) where the limitations of offline identity are relaxed, and it is possible to create an “unfiltered” form of self. Although, this unfiltered identity is not always more authentic, it can also be just an adaptation, as P5 noted, “*I don’t try to be real with everyone*” (P5), suggesting a protective strategy that people use when in hostile social conditions, that is similar with Gray’s (2012) findings.

Additionally the theme of gatekeeping in the study in the linguistic sense, where misuse of jargon or slang results in perceived inauthenticity, is similar to the studies of Wright et al. (2002) and Bawa (2018). Several participants said that master of game specific discourse function as a badge of credibility, misnaming even something as simple as a game mechanic (Calling the turret in Overwatch 2 “sentry”) indicates that someone is an outsider, or is new at the game. Emotional detachment and protective strategies were also by participant. One participant (P5) noted that they do not see others as “real people”, blurring ethical responsibility allowing for linguistic harassment to take place, echoing the of Alafnan’s (2025) findings on toxicity.

Lastly, gender and ethnic harassment was a recurring theme in the study, reinforcing existing literature on online marginalization (Cote, 2017; Gray, 2012). The fact that female participants stopped using voice chat communication because of gendered harassment confirms Wadley et al.’s (2015) study, voice is both a tool of social legitimacy and vulnerability. In the same sense, accent-based harassment was also reported in the study, and unlike Huomo’s (2024) findings of code-switching and accent adaptation among immigrant studies, the data in the study says that adaptation can happen as a form or “survival”.

Communicative Practices Across Platforms

The second theme focused on how players change their communication depending on the platform. Bogdanov’s (2022) study found that different platforms foster different styles of communication, something which is also apparent in this study, who associated text chat with emotional distancing and voice chat with immediacy.

Participants clearly preferred voice chat when interacting with friends, saying that it is more natural and emotionally rich. However, with strangers they leaned on text due to its ability to filter, mask or delay communication, this confirms Herring’s (2004) The ability to curate one’s identity more deliberately through text aligns with the idea of partialness in Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) study, where not all aspects of identity are made available to others at all times.

The results also align with Jones et al.’s (2015) idea of the multimodal nature of digital communication, participants didn’t just simply communicate in voice

or text in isolation, discord for example, was a space where superficial in-game interaction evolved into deeper relationships, with one participant saying that it was a place where simple in-game chat interaction led to four hour long sessions, also aligning with Anderson's (2016) argument that discord serves as a social bridge, where identity work is more complex.

Language Use And Social Roles In Team-Based Gameplay

The final theme, concerning language and social roles, shows that identity in online gaming isn't fixed but is something that changes through practical, often spontaneous, interaction. Roles like "main caller," "flank," "scapegoat," or "clown" don't come with titles attached beforehand. They form naturally in conversation and behavior. This aligns closely with Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) idea that identity emerges in real time, shaped by the context and needs of the moment. Strong's (2018) work on "gamer-speak" as a marker of leadership and group cohesion is confirmed here, several participants mentioned being "pushed into" certain roles based on their gameplay performance or personality, not because they chose those roles, but because others expected them to behave that way. Someone who made frequent mistakes might become the scapegoat or the team clown, not through open accusation but through the way others responded to them.

Leadership within gaming teams also turned out to be more layered than just who talks the most. Participants distinguished between two types: the person who organizes scrims, handles scheduling, and does the "office work," and the person who leads during gameplay by giving directions and reading the match. These leadership styles were expressed differently in speech. The manager might not speak often, but when they did, they spoke with authority. On the other hand, the "main caller" had to be verbal, clear, and confident, which ties back to Wadley et al.'s (2015) findings, the more a player speaks, the more that player is seen as being competent in the game. The role of the "clown" wasn't just about jokes, it often came with emotional labor. These players acted as a scapegoat for the team's frustrations. They made fun of themselves, and absorbed criticism to keep the morale of the team stable. This kind of humor was more than just entertainment, as Poulos et al. (2020) argue, it's a coping mechanism, especially under pressure. Identity, in these cases, wasn't only about who did what, but about who could keep the group functioning emotionally. And even that role wasn't fixed, as one participant said, when responsibility shifts, so does tone, the same person joking around in one moment could suddenly "lock in" and take things seriously when the team needed structure.

Conflict was another area where identity became visible through language use. Arguments did happen but they were often resolved not by domination or

silence, but by negotiation, agreeing to disagree, or just letting things slide to keep the game moving. When there was a real friendship involved, this kind of quiet compromise seemed to work. But in teams formed purely to win, where players didn't really know each other outside of the game, conflict tended to break things apart. Another key observation was how players described the balance of personalities in a team. One participant explained that teams can't function if there are too many dominant voices, that there has to be some kind of equilibrium. This idea of "supply and demand" for personalities shows that identity in online gaming isn't just personal it can also be social, shaped by what a group needs in order to function. Roles emerge not just from within, but in response to who else is present. Rambusch et al. (2007)'s study talked about shared routines helping teams coordinate, this study adds the idea that these routines also help distribute identity, even if imperfectly.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how language is used to shape and express identity within online multiplayer gaming communities. Through qualitative interviews with six players, the research explored how identity is performed, adapted, and negotiated in different gaming contexts, especially FPS games. Players used language to navigate power, build relationships, manage tension, and shape how others see them. Three core themes emerged, Firstly, identity construction was closely tied to anonymity, audience, and familiarity, players reported being more open or "unfiltered" in online settings, but also described holding back or altering their speech depending on who was present. This supports sociolinguistic theories that see identity as fluid and context-dependent.

Secondly, the communication platform played a big role in how players expressed themselves. Voice chat encouraged immediacy, while text offered distance, control, and a way to mask emotions. Discord, in particular, emerged as a deeper space for relationship building beyond the game itself.

Finally, the findings showed that language helps shape social roles within teams. Whether it's the vocal "main caller," the silent "flank," or the humorous "clown," roles were both assigned and developed through interaction, with players often shifting roles depending on group needs or social dynamics. Overall, this study reinforces the idea that identity in gaming is not something fixed or declared, but something people do through language. From strategic silence to joking, from adopting in-group slang to switching platforms to talk more freely, language is central to how players manage themselves and others in these online communities. It also highlights that beneath the competition and gameplay, online games are rich social environments where communication becomes a key part of who belongs, who leads, and how players relate to one another.

References

- AlAfnan, M. A. (2025). Language, Power, and Social Dynamics in Online Gaming: A Discourse Analysis of Toxicity and Inclusivity in Digital Spaces. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 13(2), 62. <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v13i2.7512>
- Anderson, M. (2016). *Running Head: DISCORD AND THE HARBORMEN GAMING COMMUNITY*. Erişim adresi (16 Nisan 2021): <https://mayajanae.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Discord-and-the-Harbormen-Gaming-Community.pdf>
- Bawa, P. (2018). Massively Multiplayer Online Gamers' Language: Argument for an M-Gamer Corpus. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3119>
- Bogdanov, M. (2022). *CONVERSING IN MASSIVE MULTIPLAYER ONLINE (MMO) GAMES: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CHAT INTERACTIONS IN WORLD OF WARCRAFT AND LEAGUE OF LEGENDS*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.19209.93283>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4–5), 585–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>
- Chen, M. (2012). *Leet Noobs: The life and death of an expert player group in World of Warcraft*. Lang.
- Cote, A. C. (2017). "I Can Defend Myself": Women's Strategies for Coping With Harassment While Gaming Online. *Games and Culture*, 12(2), 136–155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412015587603>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. SAGE publications.
- Eklund, L. (2015). Playing video games together with others: Differences in gaming with family, friends and strangers. *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds*, 7(3), 259–277. https://doi.org/10.1386/jgvw.7.3.259_1
- Gee, J. P. (2018). Affinity spaces: How young people live and learn on line and out of school. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(6), 8–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718762416>
- Gray, K. L. (2012). INTERSECTING OPRESSIONS AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES: Examining the experiences of women of color in Xbox Live. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(3), 411–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.642401>
- Herring, S. C. (2004). Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis: An Approach to Researching Online Behavior. *Designing for Virtual Communities in the Service of Learning*, 338–376.
- Huomo, M. (2024). *Linguistic Strategies in Virtual Worlds: A Study Of Multilingualism, Code-Switching, And Identity Among Immigrant Online Gamers*. University of Jyväskylä.
- Jones, R. H., Chik, A., & Hafner, C. A. (2015). *Discourse and Digital Practices: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315726465>
- Poulus, D., Coulter, T. J., Trotter, M. G., & Polman, R. (2020). Stress and Coping in Esports and the Influence of Mental Toughness. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 628. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00628>
- Rambusch, J., Jakobsson, P., & Pargman, D. (2007). Exploring E-sports: A Case Study of Gameplay in Counter-strike. *Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Conference: Situated Play*.
- Schneider, D. (2019). *Hiermit erkläre ich eidesstattlich, die vorliegende Arbeit selbst und ohne fremde Hilfe, nur*.
- Steinkuehler, C. (2007). Massively Multiplayer Online Gaming as a Constellation of Literacy Practices. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 4(3), 297–318. <https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2007.4.3.297>
- Strong, S. (2018). *Gamer-Generated Language and the Localisation of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games* [Doctoral]. UCL (University College London).
- Sundén, J., & Sveningsson, M. (2012). *Gender and Sexuality in Online Game Cultures Passionate Play*. Taylor & Francis.

- Taylor, T. L. (2009). *Play Between Worlds Exploring Online Game Culture*. MIT Press.
- Wadley, G., Carter, M., & Gibbs, M. (2015). Voice in Virtual Worlds: The Design, Use, and Influence of Voice Chat in Online Play. *Human-Computer Interaction, 30*(3-4), 336-365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07370024.2014.987346>
- Wright, T., Boria, E., & Breidenbach, P. (2002). Creative Player Actions in FPS Online Video Games—Playing Counter-Strike. *Game Studies, 2*(2).

GENERATIONAL VIEWS ON LANGUAGE IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Mimoza ISUFI¹

INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of digital communication platforms has brought significant changes to the way people interact with each other (Tagg, 2015). Different messaging platforms are used every day as the primary mode of communication between people of all ages. Amongst other apps ‘Viber’, has become a widely used messaging app and users actively turn to it for personal and professional communication worldwide (Ali, 2022).

Although ‘Viber’ has become one of primary modes of communication for people of all ages, yet little is known about how age influences language use in this app. Age has long been recognized as a critical factor in shaping linguistic behavior. Sociolinguistic research by Eckert& McCConnell-Ginet (2013) has demonstrated that language is not only shaped by social identity, cultural norms, and social class but also by generational differences. In the context of digital communication, where, informality and speed often take precedence over formal grammar, it is expected that younger generations will adopt distinct language practices better compared to older generations. At the same time, older generations may resist or adapt to these changes.

Building on these insights, this study investigates the role of generational identity in shaping language use on ‘Viber’ It seeks to uncover how users from different age groups, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults, adapt their language, tone, and communication preferences. For instance, do younger users modify their language becoming more formal or avoiding the use of abbreviations and emojis and if they do in what occasions do they do that. Do older users adopt more informal communication styles

1 MA student, Integrated Linguistics Program, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo; mimoza.isufi@student.uni-pr.edu

or incorporate digital elements like emojis. This paper will investigate that, focusing specifically on the following research questions:

- How does age influence language use on the messaging platform ‘Viber’?
- What are the generational motivations for using specific linguistic strategies in digital communication on ‘Viber’?
- What are the generational preferences for communication styles and language registers on ‘Viber’?.

Understanding these dynamics is essential in minimizing disconnection between generations. In a world where digital communication is becoming the primary means of interaction it is crucial to recognize how age influences language use and how these differences can be addressed to foster better understanding and collaboration between generations. So, this research aims to shed light into how language choices on platforms like ‘Viber’ are shaped by age and how this influences the form and content of digital conversations. Lastly, platform-specific research remains relatively limited, with much more attention given to other widely-used platforms. ‘Viber’ despite its global user base and unique features such as stickers, disappearing messages, and encrypted calls, it has not been the subject of extensive academic study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rising of digital communication platforms has transformed the way people interact with each other and as a result language also changes in order to adapt with those changes and the nature of online communication. Scholars like Crystal (2006) argue that the internet has not only changed the medium of communication but also the structure, style, and norms of linguistic interaction. Generational language differences are a well-documented phenomenon in sociolinguistics. Prior research has shown that digital communication reshapes linguistic norms and practices (Crystal, 2006).

Whereas many different studies have investigated age-related differences in texting language (Thurlow, 2003), emoticon use (Derks et al., 2008), and digital etiquette (Baron, 2010). The study done by Crystal (2006) shows how digital communication encourages shorter, faster, and more visual ways of talking, especially among younger people. Older generations, however, prefer more formal and clear styles. These differences can lead to confusion or misunderstandings, making the issue important not just in studies, but also in everyday life and business (Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008).

Additionally, the concept of ‘digital nativeness’ plays a significant role in framing generational communication styles (Prensky, 2001). The concept of “digital natives” versus “digital immigrants” highlights a key generational

divide. Prensky (2001) coined the term “digital natives” to describe younger individuals who have grown up immersed into technology and “digital immigrants”, the older adults who are adapting to these technologies later in life. However, the division between generations extends beyond technical proficiency. It includes how comfortable individuals are with emerging linguistic norms in conversation, such as emojis, GIFs, abbreviations (Herring, 2007).

Herring (2007) argues that these features are essential components of digital communication that serve as tools to convey a message in a way that written language alone cannot. He states that they can change the tone, emotion, and the context of a message. Derks et al. (2008) argue that emojis have become an integral part of digital discourse and are a necessity for an effective communication. However, those who did not grow up with these technologies, sometimes feel resistant to use these new forms of communication and they adhere more to traditional linguistic norms, such as using full sentences and formal registers (Jones & Czerniewicz, 2010). Jones & Czerniewicz (2010) claim that such differences can create a communication gap and make it difficult to understand each other’s expectations and preferences.

This generational divide in language use is not limited only to this aspect, such as emojis or GIFs, but it also extends to the structure of conversation and the time spent dialoging online. Conversations where multiple topics are discussed simultaneously are very common among younger users whereas older users may find these digital conversational norms disorienting and confusing (Androutsopoulos, 2006).

Research on digital etiquette also reveals generational divides. Baron (2010) discusses how expectations regarding response time, message length, and tone differ across age groups. Younger users may view delayed responses as disinterest, while older users may prioritize thoughtful, delayed replies (Baron, 2010). The results of these studies show how digital communication is a dynamic interplay of generational preferences and is always evolving. However, there is a lack of research when it comes to platform-specific studies. ‘Viber’ remains an under-examined platform despite its global use.

This contrast in age is also reflected in the findings of Androutsopoulos (2006), who emphasizes how language use in online communities is shaped by identity, cultural context, and age. The findings showed that younger users are more likely to experiment with language, by breaking the grammatical rules and blending linguistic styles to express their personality. Similarly, Holmes and Marra (2004), highlight how gender and age can shape the discourse.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative research method, a survey design. The instrument used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from ‘Viber’ users across four generational cohorts was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: the first section included demographic data such as age and gender, whereas the other sections captured participants’ information regarding their communication styles, language choices, and their attitudes towards generational language differences. The combination of Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions enabled participants with the opportunity to provide qualitative insights and examples related to their language use and their perception in digital communication.

Participants

This study used purposive sampling to recruit participants who actively use ‘Viber’. Participants of the study were categorized into four age groups: teenagers (age 13–19), young adults (age 20–35), middle-aged adults (age 36–55), and older adults (age 56+). This design allows for the analysis of trends, preferences, and linguistic strategies as they vary by age. Each group had 10 participants to ensure a balanced comparison. In order for them to be able to participate in the study they should have been regular users of ‘Viber’ app for both personal and professional communication. This research design has been chosen since it is in line with other sociolinguistic research methods as Milroy & Gordon (2003), state that this design allows exploration of naturally occurring language preferences in a real-world digital context.

Instrument

The instrument used for this research was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was compiled in Albanian and distributed among Albanian speakers, for the purpose of this paper an English version is provided in the appendix. Quantitative data, gathered through Likert scale and multiple-choice questions, provided measurable insights into users’ frequency of emoji use, preference for formal or informal language, response time habits, and perceived comfort with digital communication. In parallel, open-ended qualitative questions captured the contextual richness of participants’ experiences, offering examples of specific language choices, adaptations, and intergenerational communication challenges.

Data Collection

Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through social media, email, and Viber groups. The questionnaire comprised four sections:

- Demographics: Age, gender, location, and educational background.
- Usage Patterns: Frequency of Viber use, preferred devices, types of contacts.
- Language Preferences: Use of slang, emojis, punctuation, and sentence length.
- Attitudinal Insights: Perceptions of generational differences, communication comfort, and adaptability.

Open-ended questions provided participants with space to describe their ‘Viber’ usage habits, reflect on their linguistic choices, and to offer examples of messages they consider typical for their age group.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire was subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analytical procedures in order to better explore the generational differences of digital communication on ‘Viber’. Since the questionnaire included both open and closed-ended questions, the analysis was structured to address both the statistical trends and the context of participant responses. Quantitative data were collected from the multiple-choice and Likert-scale sections of the questionnaire. It included participants’ demographic data, ‘Viber’ usage patterns, language preferences, and attitudes toward digital communication. Quantitative responses from these sections were grouped and reviewed to identify common patterns. These included how often participants used features like emojis, abbreviations, or stickers, and whether they preferred formal or informal styles in different contexts (e.g., family chats vs. professional communication). Trends were examined across age groups, this allowed us to make a comparison how linguistic choices vary in generations. On the other hand, the responses from open-ended questions were reviewed through close reading and manual coding. Each open-ended response was examined for recurring themes, language patterns, or insights into personal communication strategies. Themes were clustered into categories: Informality/Formality, Emoji Use, Response Expectations, and Code-Switching. The responses gave us insights about participants’ comfort levels with new forms of expression, perceived misunderstandings with other generations, and specific strategies that they use in order to adapt their communication style. All the responses were categorized by age group and then they were analyzed to track generational similarities and contrasts.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed clear generational distinctions in the way users communicate on ‘Viber’, both in terms of language features and

communication preferences. Participants were categorized into four primary age groups: teenagers (13–19), young adults (20–35), middle-aged adults (36–55), and older adults (56+). Each group displayed unique patterns in digital language use and attitudes toward communication norms.

Language Features and Digital Tools

Teenagers and young adults demonstrated the highest frequency of emoji, sticker, and abbreviation usage. Over 85% of participants aged 13–19 reported using emojis in “almost every conversation,” often pairing them with internet slang and abbreviations. This group also favored sending short, quick messages instead of lengthy texts. Many of them stated that the emojis and stickers that they use serve as tools for expressing tone or emotion more clearly than words could.

In contrast, only 38% of older adults used emojis regularly, and many of them said that they were unsure about the meanings of certain emojis so they avoided them to prevent miscommunication. This group also expressed a preference for complete sentences, proper grammar, and standard punctuation. Several older respondents mentioned proofreading their messages before sending, particularly when communicating for professional purposes.

Communication Style and Tone

Young adults tended to adopt a mixed communication style that is combining informality and playfulness, especially when switching between conversations with friends and professional interactions. This age group reported adjusting their tone based on the person they text with: using formal greetings with elders and playful abbreviations with friends. Such flexibility was less common among older adults, who preferred maintaining consistent formality regardless of who they are texting with.

Teenagers were more likely to shift tone rapidly within conversations, using memes, GIFs, and even voice notes mid-chat. Whereas the results show that older adults favor more linear conversations. They expressed discomfort with separated messages and sudden switches in communication modes.

Perceptions of Other Generations

Participants from all age groups stated that they are aware of the differences in how they and other generations communicate. Younger respondents often described conversation with older users as “too formal” while older participants found the communication styles of the youngsters to be “confusing,” “rushed,” or “lacking clarity”. Interestingly, several middle-aged participants reported consciously moderating their language depending on the person they were

communicating with. For example, they might use emojis with their children but adopt a more formal tone with elderly parents. This group was the most adaptive overall.

Open-ended responses offered more personal insights into those generational adaptations. One young adult respondent stated: “When texting my grandfather, I avoid using GIFs or abbreviations because I know he won’t understand. I switch to simpler, clearer language.” Another older respondent shared: “Sometimes I try to use emojis to connect with my grandchildren, but I have to Google what they mean first.”

These results are consistent with previous studies that have documented generational preferences in digital communication (Baron, 2010; Herring, 2007; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). The findings support the hypothesis that age significantly influences linguistic choices on digital platforms and reveal how language adapts not only to technological norms but also to interpersonal expectations shaped by age.

Additionally, the findings of this study offer critical insight into the influence of age on language use and communication style in digital spaces. More specifically, the results of this study confirm that digital communication is not a similar experience for each individual but one deeply affected by generational contexts and cultural perceptions of language and technology. The results align with previous research suggesting age influences digital language use (Ling & Baron, 2007; Herring, 2012). Teenagers and young adults show greater linguistic innovation, while older generations adhere to more traditional norms.

One of the most striking observations is the sharp divide in the use of emojis and abbreviations. This supports existing literature suggesting that digital natives—primarily younger users—tend to embrace informal communication practices (Prensky, 2001; Herring, 2007; Crystal, 2006). Emojis and GIFs have become more than just decorative elements; they serve as emotional signifiers that can soften tone, convey irony, or replace entire words (Danesi, 2016). Since older adults, participants of this study claimed that the use of those elements in their conversations is very limited. Their limited use among older adults reflects both a generational unfamiliarity and a cultural emphasis on more conventional forms of communication as Ling (2005) suggested in his study.

Similarly, the preference for standard grammar, complete sentences, and structured message forms among older adults aligns with previous studies that indicate older generations often perceive digital communication as an extension of traditional letter-writing or face-to-face discourse (Thurlow, 2003). Panckhurst and Zourou (2016) argue that digital communication norms are shaped by users’ previous experiences with language. Therefore, older adults

often bring pre-digital habits into the digital spaces, which may sometimes lead to miscommunication.

Another key finding is the flexible communication style of young adults, who frequently adjust their tone and register based on the context and the people they text with. This adaptive strategy indicates a high level of digital literacy and social awareness. This is in accordance with the findings of the research by Tagliamonte and Denis (2008), who documented the pragmatic competence of younger digital users. These individuals act as “bridges” between generations. They use informal language when talking to peers and are also capable of more formal or traditional switches when necessary.

Several participants described feeling either excluded or misunderstood based on how their messages were interpreted. For instance, an older adult may see the use of abbreviations as lazy or disrespectful, while a teenager may interpret formal punctuation as cold or overly serious (Baron, 2008). However, this is the downside of online communication, as Werry (1996) and Walther (2011) note in their study, digital communication lacks many of the nonverbal cues that are present in face-to-face interaction.

In regards to the satisfaction with ‘Viber’ communication results showed a variation across age groups. Middle-aged users reported higher satisfaction. This may be due to the platforms informal features such as stickers, quick replies, GIF integration. Meanwhile, older adults find these features less pleasing, leading to avoidance of them.

Furthermore, open-ended responses from participants added nuance to the quantitative findings. For example, young users expressed a significant shift in their language when addressing older relatives, showing respect and clarity on their digital conversations. This indicates that despite generational differences, many users show an effort to accommodate others’ preferences, which demonstrates empathy and awareness in digital interactions.

Overall, these results illustrate the complex sociolinguistic norms on digital platforms like ‘Viber’. They also emphasize the importance of fostering intergenerational digital literacy. As Androutsopoulos (2006) suggests, digital discourse is not fixed but negotiated among users. In order to understand these negotiations, it requires both technical and cultural fluency. These findings are consistent with broader sociolinguistic research showing that language variation is context-dependent (Eckert, 2000; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003). Age as a factor, just like gender or region, functions as a variable that shapes how people express themselves and how they are interpreted.

As communication is increasingly moving to digital platforms, acknowledging and understanding these generational dynamics is essential—not just for scholars, but for educators, designers, and families. More inclusive communication practices and technologies can help bridge these separations that are made by age.

Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Ogay, 2007) is reflected in the way users adapt their tone or emoji use based on their conversation partners. Middle-aged participants often reported moderating their informal language when messaging their children, while teenagers reported doing the opposite when messaging teachers or older relatives.

The variation in emoji use supports Kaye et al (2016) findings that younger users attach nuanced meanings to emojis, while older users often use and interpret them literally. These findings emphasize the importance of context in interpreting digital messages.

CONCLUSION

This study's aim was to explore how age influences digital language use and communication styles on the messaging platform 'Viber'. Through an analysis of questionnaire data from individuals from four generational groups, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults, the research uncovered significant linguistic and stylistic differences. One of the most important conclusion of this study is that age significantly affects users' comfort, preference, and proficiency with digital communication tools. Younger users, particularly teenagers, tend to embrace informal, rapid, and multimodal communication. They rely on emojis, abbreviations, memes, and voice notes to express their emotions. These results align with what Prensky (2001) described as "digital natives," people who have grown up with technology, their linguistic creativity is not only functional but is also identity-reinforcing (Crystal, 2006; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008).

However, older generations, especially those classified as "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001) approach digital communication with more caution and they have a preference for clarity and correctness. They are more likely to use complete sentences, proper punctuation, and avoid casual expressions. As Baron (2021) suggested this may derive from prior experiences in formal, non-digital communication settings. While these users are not incapable of digital fluency, their communicative choices often reflect a prioritization of clarity (Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011). Young adults stand in a between position, they skillfully can switch registers depending on the audience and context. The data showed that young adults are highly aware of audience-based language strategies. This demonstrates not only linguistic flexibility but

also social awareness (Holmes, 2013). Furthermore, misunderstandings related to the tone of the message, such as interpreting pauses as signs of anger or abbreviations as disrespectful were frequent across age groups. These moments of miscommunication suggest that digital literacy is not just about technical navigation but also about emotional knowledge. This study also brings attention to the social purpose of language on social platforms like 'Viber'. Online communication can serve for interpersonal and social bonding purposes. But, the platform's features, such as stickers, GIFs, and voice messages, are not used uniformly across generations, which highlights the necessity of designing technology that is inclusive for all age groups (Ling, 2005).

Overall, the study concludes that while generational differences in language use on 'Viber' are evident and sometimes cause misunderstandings, they also provide an opportunity to reflect on the evolving nature of digital communication. These differences represent the richness and diversity of digital discourse. This research contributes to sociolinguistic literature by demonstrating that generational identity remains a powerful factor in shaping language behavior in digital contexts. It calls for future research to explore similar dynamics on other platforms and in multilingual or cross-cultural environments. By appreciating these generational nuances, we can foster more inclusive, empathetic, and effective communication in our digital world.

References

- Ali, F. (2022). Exploring the use of Viber in workplace communication. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 59(2), 207-225.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2006). Multilingualism, diaspora, and the Internet: Codes and identities on German-based diaspora websites. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 10(4), 520–547. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2006.00287.x>
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2008). Potentials and limitations of discourse-centered online ethnography. *Language@Internet*, 5(8).
- Baron, N. S. (2010). *Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World*. Oxford University Press.
- Baron, N. S. (2021). *How we communicate: The role of digital technologies*. Stanford University Press.
- Barton, D., & Lee, C. (2013). *Language online: Investigating digital texts and practices*. Routledge.
- Biber, D. (1995). *Dimensions of register variation: A cross-linguistic comparison*. Cambridge University Press.
- Blackwell, Tagg, C. (2015). *Exploring Digital Communication: Language in Action*. Routledge.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bojadjev, D., & Vaneva, T. (2021). Preferences for communication tools in organizational settings: SMS, Messenger, and Viber. *Journal of Communication Management*, 25(1), 44-60.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods (5th ed.)*. Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the Internet (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2011). *Internet linguistics: A student guide*. Routledge.
- Derks, D., Fischer, A. H., & Bos, A. E. R. (2008). The role of emotion in computer-mediated communication: A review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(3), 766–785. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2007.04.004>
- Gee, J. P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method (4th ed.)*. Routledge.
- Giles, H., & Ogay, T. (2007). Communication Accommodation Theory. In B. B. Whaley & W. Samter (Eds.), *Explaining Communication: Contemporary Theories and Exemplars* (pp.293–310).
- Herring, S. C. (2007). A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse. *Language@Internet*, 4(1).
- Herring, S. C. (2010). Computer-mediated conversation: Introduction and overview. *Language@Internet*, 7(2).
- Herring, S. C. (2012). Grammar and electronic communication. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*.
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics (4th ed.)*. Routledge.
- Jones, C., & Czerniewicz, L. (2010). Describing and debating the digital divide. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 26(6), 407–411. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2010.00370.x>
- Kaye, L. K., Wall, H. J., & Malone, S. A. (2016). “Turn that frown upside-down”: A contextual account of emoticon usage on different virtual platforms. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 60, 463–467.
- Lawrence Erlbaum. Herring, S. C. (2007). A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse. *Language@Internet*, 4(1).
- Ling, R. (2005). *The mobile connection: The cell phone’s impact on society*. Morgan Kaufmann.
- Ling, R., & Baron, N. S. (2007). Text messaging and IM: Linguistic comparison of American college data. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 26(3), 291–298.
- Merchant, G. (2001). Teenagers in cyberspace: An investigation of language use and language change in internet chatrooms. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 24(3), 293–306.
- Milroy, L., & Gordon, M. (2003). *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation*.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1–6.

- Tagg, C. (2015). *Exploring digital communication: Language in action*. Routledge.
- Tagliamonte, S. A., & Denis, D. (2008). Linguistic ruin? LOL! Instant messaging and teen language. *American Speech*, 83(1), 3–34.
- Thurlow, C., & Mroczek, K. (Eds.). (2011). *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*. Oxford University Press.
- Walther, J. B. (2011). Theories of computer-mediated communication and interpersonal relations. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interpersonal communication* (4th ed., pp. 443–479). SAGE Publications.
- Varnhagen, C. K., McFall, G. P., Poon, L. W., & Chisholm, T. L. (2010). Lol: New language and spelling in instant messaging. *Reading and Writing*, 23(6), 719–733.

INTERACTIONAL METADISOURSE IN MA THESIS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN KOSOVAR EFL TEXTS

Ruhan GÜÇLÜ¹

INTRODUCTION

MA thesis acknowledgements occupy a liminal position in academic writing. Neither strictly academic nor purely personal, they allow writers to display gratitude, negotiate identity, and situate themselves within educational, social, and cultural networks. As Hyland (2004) has argued, acknowledgements form a distinct academic genre with recognizable rhetorical moves, yet their hybrid nature renders them especially sensitive to cultural norms and individual preferences. Unlike the analytical chapters of a thesis, acknowledgements afford writers considerable rhetorical freedom, enabling them to combine personal narrative with academic conventions.

Metadiscourse provides a powerful analytic framework for understanding how these rhetorical choices are made visible in text. Defined as “discourse about discourse” or the writer’s explicit commentary on the evolving text (Hyland, 2005; Ädel, 2006), metadiscourse captures how writers orient to their readers, structure their messages, and express stance. Within this framework, interactional resources such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers play a central role in positioning the writer and establishing relationships with both imagined academic audiences and explicitly acknowledged individuals (Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Tse & Hyland, 2008).

Despite a growing body of work on metadiscourse in academic genres, acknowledgements by EFL writers in the Balkans remain largely unexplored.

1 Asst. Prof. Dr., Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Türkiye; gucluruhan@gmail.com; 0000-0002-2748-8363

Previous studies in Arabic (Al-Ali, 2006, 2010; Alotaibi, 2018), Thai (Jaroenkitboworn, 2014), and Chinese (Gardner & Han, 2018) contexts have shown that acknowledgements carry strong socio-cultural imprints, including religious values, kinship ties, and politeness norms. However, little is known about Kosovar Albanian MA students, whose academic writing is shaped simultaneously by local traditions and by international English-medium scholarship. Kosovo's sociolinguistic context, marked by multilingualism, historical transition, and strong community bonds, makes it an especially compelling site for examining how gratitude is linguistically encoded in academic texts.

Another underexplored dimension is gender. While gendered patterns of metadiscourse have been documented in research articles, book reviews, and student essays (Crismore et al., 1993; Tse & Hyland, 2008; Yavari & Kashani, 2013), very few studies have systematically compared male and female writers' acknowledgements. Alotaibi's (2018) study of Saudi students at U.S. universities demonstrated that men and women deploy boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions differently, reflecting both cultural expectations and gendered rhetorical styles. Whether similar patterns emerge in a Kosovar MA context remains an open question. The present study addresses this gap by examining gender differences in the use of interactional metadiscourse resources in English MA thesis acknowledgements written by Kosovar Albanian students. Specifically, the researcher tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the types and frequency patterns of interactional metadiscourse markers employed in MA thesis acknowledgements written by female and male Kosovar Albanian EFL students?

2. Is there any statistically significant difference between female and male Kosovar Albanian EFL students in the use of interactional metadiscourse markers in MA thesis acknowledgements?

3. What rhetorical functions do interactional metadiscourse resources perform in MA thesis acknowledgements written by female and male Kosovar Albanian EFL students?

By focusing on acknowledgements, this study not only expands our understanding of academic writing practices in an under-researched setting but also sheds light on how language, gender, and culture intersect in shaping genre conventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Metadiscourse as an Analytical Framework

Metadiscourse has become a central concept in applied linguistics and discourse studies because it illuminates how writers organise texts and construct interpersonal relationships. Hyland (2005) defines metadiscourse as the ways writers “engage with their subject matter and readers,” distinguishing between interactive resources (such as transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code-glosses) and interactional resources (such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers). Interactive resources guide readers through the text, whereas interactional resources project stance and involve readers in the discourse (Hyland, 2010).

Ädel (2006) refines this view by differentiating between references to the discourse world and the real world, emphasising the reflexive function of metadiscourse. This distinction is particularly useful in acknowledgements, where writers often move back and forth between commenting on the text and addressing real individuals. Interactional markers are especially relevant to the present study because they encode affective and interpersonal positioning in highly explicit ways.

Acknowledgements as an Academic Genre

Acknowledgements have been recognised as a distinct academic genre with its own conventionalised structure and communicative purposes. Hyland (2004) identified three main moves in English-medium dissertation acknowledgements: reflecting, thanking, and announcing, with the thanking move as the only obligatory component, typically including thanks for academic assistance, resources, and moral support. Subsequent studies have confirmed that this generic structure is flexible and culturally sensitive. For example, Al-Ali (2006, 2010) showed that Arabic PhD acknowledgements foreground religious expressions and kinship ties, while Jaroenkitboworn (2014) reported that Thai EFL acknowledgements place particular emphasis on politeness and sincerity.

Metadiscourse-based analyses have also revealed both universal and culture-specific aspects of acknowledgements. Alotaibi (2018), in a study of Saudi students’ English dissertation acknowledgements, found a striking absence of hedges and limited use of engagement markers, but gender-based variation in boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Female writers tended to use more affective language and self-references to acknowledge moral support, while male writers relied more heavily on boosters when crediting academic

assistance. These findings suggest that acknowledgements are ideal sites for examining how academic and personal identities are linguistically performed.

Gender and Metadiscourse

Studies on gender and metadiscourse cover many academic genres, including student writing, research articles, and professional reviews, and they show that male and female writers do not always use interpersonal resources in the same way. Crismore et al. (1993), for example, found that male students in American and Finnish contexts used metadiscourse more frequently overall, especially hedges, while female students relied more on attitude markers. In a different genre, Tse and Hyland (2008) reported that male authors writing book reviews in philosophy and biology tended to use more hedges, boosters, and engagement markers. They argue that these patterns are closely connected to both disciplinary conventions and the writer's social identity rather than gender alone. By contrast, Yavari and Kashani (2013) observed only minor gender differences in applied linguistics research articles, which suggests that strong academic norms can sometimes limit individual stylistic variation.

Several researchers have also discussed gender in more theoretical terms. Tardy (2006) points out that interaction in writing is shaped by many factors, including gender, as male and female writers may not draw on language resources in the same way. Hyland and Tse (2004) make a similar point when they describe metadiscourse as a means through which writers not only organize their texts but also present themselves and relate to their readers. From this perspective, choices in metadiscourse can be seen as part of the ways in which identity is expressed in academic writing. Ädel (2006) likewise suggests that gender may influence both how often metadiscourse markers are used and which types are selected.

Gender differences seem to be clearer in less formal genres. Acknowledgements, for instance, give writers more freedom to express personal feelings and relationships. In this context, Alotaibi (2018) showed that Saudi female students used more self-mentions and emotional expressions, while male students focused more on institutional and academic support. A similar pattern was observed in Turkish academic writing. Güçlü (2022) found that in the conclusion sections of MA theses, male writers used more boosters and hedges, whereas female writers relied more on self-mentions. This suggests that even in formal academic texts, gender can still play a role in how writers present their stance and make their presence visible.

Overall, the literature shows that gender effects in metadiscourse are not fixed or universal. They depend on the genre, the academic culture, and the expectations placed on writers. While highly structured genres may restrain

personal expression, more personal sections such as acknowledgements allow individual and gender-related differences to appear more clearly.

METHODOLOGY

Corpus and Data Collection

The corpus consists of 50 MA thesis acknowledgements written in English by Kosovar Albanian EFL students at the University for Business and Technology (UBT), Kosovo. It includes 25 acknowledgements authored by female students and 25 by male students. All texts were retrieved from UBT's institutional digital repository. Only acknowledgements accompanying MA theses fully written in English were included to ensure a relatively homogeneous EFL context.

Acknowledgements were selected as the object of analysis for three main reasons. First, they represent a hybrid academic genre that combines personal voice with institutional and disciplinary conventions (Hyland, 2004). Second, they are culturally sensitive texts that reflect writers' identities, values, and interpersonal relations (Al-Ali, 2010; Jaroenkitboworn, 2014). Third, because acknowledgements allow considerable rhetorical flexibility, they provide a suitable site for examining gender differences in interactional metadiscourse, which may be less visible in more conventionalized genres such as research articles.

The female subcorpus contains 3,797 words, while the male subcorpus includes 3,930 words. Gender identification was based on authors' first names as stated in the theses and was cross-checked, where necessary, using institutional profiles or thesis metadata. Acknowledgements were downloaded in PDF format, manually extracted, converted into plain text files, and checked for formatting inconsistencies, duplications, and irrelevant material prior to analysis.

As the data were drawn from publicly available MA theses, no ethical clearance was required, but all personal identifiers were anonymized.

Data Analysis

Data analysis combined quantitative and qualitative procedures. Quantitatively, frequency counts were obtained for each category of interactional metadiscourse in the female and male subcorpora. Frequencies were normalized per 1,000 words to enable comparability across texts of different lengths, and log-likelihood statistics were used to examine gender-based differences. Qualitatively, representative excerpts were analyzed to illustrate how interactional resources functioned rhetorically in context, with

particular attention to how gratitude was expressed toward academic figures, family members, and institutions.

All texts were imported into NVivo 14 and interactional resources were manually coded. Each acknowledgement was segmented into clauses to facilitate the systematic identification of metadiscourse markers. Coding was conducted in two stages: the researcher first coded the entire corpus based on Hyland's (2005) definitions and exemplars, and a doctoral student in applied linguistics familiar with metadiscourse research independently coded a subset of the data. Inter-coder agreement was calculated using Cohen's Kappa, yielding a coefficient of 0.86, which indicates strong reliability. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus.

Analytical framework

The study employed Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse model, focusing specifically on interactional resources:

1. Hedges (e.g., *might*, *perhaps*, *I suppose*) are used to express tentativeness and to soften the strength of a claim.
2. Boosters (e.g., *undoubtedly*, *certainly*, *never-ending*, *every way possible*) function as markers of certainty and emphasis.
3. Attitude markers (e.g., *grateful*, *fortunate*, *proud*, *blessed*) indicate the writer's affective stance and evaluative position.
4. Engagement markers (e.g., direct address such as *you*, vocatives like *To my...*, and inclusive forms such as *our*) explicitly involve readers in the discourse.
5. Self-mentions (e.g., *I*, *me*, *my*, *we*, *our*) signal the writer's explicit authorial presence in the text.

Hyland's (2005) framework was adopted due to its widespread use in metadiscourse research and its effectiveness in capturing the interpersonal dimensions of academic writing. In line with Ädel's (2006) distinction between discourse-world and real-world reference, linguistic items were coded as metadiscourse when they primarily fulfilled a stance-taking or engagement function in the unfolding discourse. Accordingly, classification was based on functional dominance rather than solely on formal or structural features. For this reason, expressions involving direct address (e.g., *To my beloved husband*), although containing possessive self-reference, were treated as engagement markers when their primary function was to establish interpersonal alignment and explicitly involve an addressee, rather than merely to refer to a person or entity. This approach ensured that coding decisions reflected the communicative

function of each item within its context, rather than a surface-level formal categorization.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the findings in relation to the research questions by integrating frequency-based analysis with qualitative examination of illustrative excerpts. First, the study identifies the types and distribution of interactional metadiscourse in MA thesis acknowledgements written by female and male students and examines whether statistically significant gender-based differences exist. Second, it analyzes the rhetorical functions of these resources, focusing on how writers construct identity, express affect, and establish interpersonal alignment.

Types and Distribution of Interactional Metadiscourse by Gender

Table 1 presents the frequency counts, normalized values per 1,000 words, and log-likelihood statistics for interactional metadiscourse categories across female- and male-authored MA thesis acknowledgements.

Table 1. *Distribution of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers by Gender*

Interactional Category	Female (n = 25)	%	Male (n = 25)	%	LL ratio
Self-mentions	194	5.11	178	4.53	+1.35
Attitude markers	163	4.29	171	4.35	-0.02
Boosters	73	1.92	79	2.01	-0.08
Engagement markers	34	0.90	18	0.46	+5.57*
Hedges	1	0.03	2	0.05	-0.31
Total use of markers	465	12.25	448	11.40	+1.17

Note. Percentages are normalised per 1,000 words. Log-likelihood values above 3.84 indicate statistical significance at $p < .05$.

An asterisk (*) marks categories with statistically significant gender differences ($p < .05$).

A plus sign (+) indicates that the category is used more frequently in female-authored acknowledgements.

A minus sign (-) indicates that the category is used more frequently in male-authored acknowledgements.

Categories without an asterisk do not show statistically significant gender-based differences.

As shown in Table 1, interactional metadiscourse is a prominent feature of acknowledgement writing in both subcorpora. The female subcorpus consists of 3,797 words and includes a total of 465 interactional markers, whereas the male subcorpus contains 3,930 words with 448 markers, indicating comparable corpus sizes across genders. When normalized per 1,000 words, female students

used 12.25 interactional markers compared to 11.40 in male-authored texts. At the text level, female-authored acknowledgements also show a slightly higher mean frequency (19.4 markers per text) than male-authored texts (17.9 markers). However, this difference does not reach statistical significance ($LL = +1.17$), suggesting that male and female students draw on interactional metadiscourse to a broadly similar extent when producing acknowledgements.

This overall similarity indicates that the acknowledgement genre plays a substantial role in shaping writers' linguistic choices. Regardless of gender, writers appear to rely on comparable interactional patterns, suggesting that genre-based expectations exert greater influence than individual demographic factors. This interpretation is supported by Hyland (2004, 2005), who argues that genre conventions regulate how writers position themselves and engage with readers. Likewise, Biber et al. (1998) emphasize that patterns of language use are primarily determined by register and genre rather than by personal variables such as gender. Further support is provided by Yavari and Kashani (2013), whose findings point to the homogenizing effect of disciplinary norms on academic writing practices.

At the category level, clear distributional patterns emerge. Self-mentions constitute the most frequent category in both groups, followed by attitude markers. In female-authored texts, self-mentions occur at a rate of 5.11 per 1,000 words, whereas in male-authored texts they appear slightly less frequently at 4.53. Attitude markers exhibit an almost identical frequency profile across the two groups, with rates of 4.29 in female-authored texts and 4.35 in male-authored texts. More precisely, these two categories account for more than three-quarters of all interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus.

This overwhelming presence of self-mentions and attitude markers indicates that acknowledgements are structured primarily around two discursive needs: (i) positioning the self within the academic narrative, and (ii) evaluating people, processes, and experiences affectively. The genre thus privileges identity- and emotion-oriented resources rather than epistemic qualification or reader negotiation.

Boosters occur at comparable rates in female and male texts, with 1.92 per 1,000 words in female texts and 2.01 per 1,000 words in male texts. This suggests that intensification is a stable feature of acknowledgement writing, used by writers to amplify gratitude and emotional stance. Engagement markers occur at substantially lower rates in both subcorpora, and hedging is almost entirely absent.

Only three hedging expressions were identified across all 50 acknowledgements, confirming that this genre does not function as an

epistemic or argumentative domain. As Hyland (2005) observes, hedging is a central feature of academic argumentation, where writers negotiate claims and manage uncertainty. By contrast, acknowledgements are primarily oriented toward expressing gratitude and evaluation rather than caution or doubt (Al-Ali, 2010; Hyland, 2004). The near absence of hedging therefore reflects the genre's preference for certainty, emotional clarity, and unqualified evaluation over epistemic restraint.

With respect to gender-based comparison, statistical testing indicates that there is no significant difference in overall interactional usage between female and male writers. However, one notable exception is observed in engagement markers. Female writers employ nearly twice as many engagement markers as male writers ($LL = +5.57$, $p < 0.05$), making this the only category in which a statistically significant difference occurs.

This result suggests that gender does not meaningfully affect the overall volume of interactional metadiscourse, but it does influence how interpersonal relationships are linguistically enacted. While both groups make similar use of identity and affect resources, female writers are significantly more likely to construct acknowledgements as explicitly dialogic texts that address recipients directly.

Overall, the quantitative findings suggest a dual pattern: (i) strong genre-driven stability in overall interactional behaviour, and (ii) selective gender-driven variation in interpersonal strategies. These results are consistent with earlier work characterising acknowledgements as affect-oriented genres across linguistic communities (Al-Ali, 2010; Alotaibi, 2018; Hyland, 2004; Jaroenkitboworn, 2014). The Kosovar Albanian data confirm that acknowledgement writing exhibits a stable rhetorical pattern centred on identity and emotion, with limited but meaningful gender-based variation.

Rhetorical Functions of Interactional Metadiscourse by Gender

Although the quantitative results show that female and male writers use interactional markers at similar overall rates, the qualitative analysis points to clear differences in how these resources are used. In this section, the discussion focuses on three areas in which these differences become visible: how writers present themselves, how they express emotion, and how they establish a relationship with others.

Self-mentions and the construction of academic identity

Self-mentions constitute the most prominent interactional resource in both female- and male-authored acknowledgements (see Table 1), confirming that acknowledgement writing is highly self-oriented. Although the quantitative

difference between the two groups is not statistically significant ($LL = +1.35$), qualitative analysis reveals striking gender-specific patterns in the discursive construction of identity.

Female writers tend to construct a relational academic self, embedding identity within networks of family relations, care, and emotional dependency. Self-mentions frequently co-occur with kinship terms and affective evaluations, foregrounding relational identity as central to academic success. This pattern can be seen clearly in the examples below, where expressions of gratitude are closely tied to family roles and emotional bonds.

- 1) “This thesis is a closing of an important chapter in my life as a student.” (F-5)
- 2) “I would not be here today without my mother’s endless support and prayers.” (F-9)
- 3) “My husband and children were my greatest source of strength throughout this journey.” (F-14)
- 4) “I dedicate this achievement to my family, who never stopped believing in me.” (F-21)

These examples illustrate how academic achievement is narrativized as a collective, emotional experience rather than an individual accomplishment. The thesis is represented as part of a biographical narrative embedded in family relationships. This confirms Al-Ali’s (2010) observation that acknowledgements in Arabic academic writing frequently transform education into a “life story” discourse shaped by kinship and emotional bonds. Similarly, Alotaibi (2018) reports that Saudi female writers construct acknowledgements as sites of emotional dependency and gratitude toward family members, thereby positioning academic achievement as morally and relationally grounded.

In contrast, male writers more often construct identity through autonomy, perseverance, and future orientation. The self is represented as an agentive and developmental project linked to professional ambition. This orientation is reflected in the following examples, which emphasize growth, self-belief, and preparation for future challenges:

- 5) “This thesis helped me grow both academically and professionally.” (M-3)
- 6) “I believe this work has prepared me for the challenges ahead.” (M-11)
- 7) “My goals are now clearer than they have ever been.” (M-19)
- 8) “I learned to believe in myself, my work, and my future.” (M-25)

These examples illustrate that identity is framed not in relational terms but through individual development and future orientation, with the MA thesis construed as preparation for professional life rather than as a shared familial achievement. This pattern is consistent with Hyland's (2004) view that acknowledgements can function as sites of professional self-positioning, as well as with Coates's (2013) argument that male self-presentation tends to emphasize agency and independence, and Holmes's (1995) observations on gendered communication styles. Similar tendencies are also reported by Alotaibi (2018), who found that male writers in Saudi EFL contexts privilege autonomy and career advancement, and by Al-Ali (2010), who notes that male-authored acknowledgements often frame education as personal investment rather than collective responsibility.

Attitude markers and emotional evaluation

Attitude markers are the second most frequent interactional category in the corpus (see Table 1), which shows that emotional evaluation is a core feature of acknowledgement writing. Although no statistically significant gender difference is observed in overall frequency ($LL = -0.02$), qualitative analysis indicates clear differences in how affect is expressed and in the rhetorical purposes served by evaluative language.

Female writers typically articulate emotion through explicit evaluative adjectives and through religious or moral discourse that foregrounds gratitude, humility, and emotional dependence. Their acknowledgements often present academic success as inseparable from family support and spiritual guidance. This pattern is illustrated in the following examples:

9) "I am extremely grateful for all the sacrifices my family made for me." (F-4)

10) "I feel truly blessed to have such supportive people around me." (F-10)

11) "I am deeply thankful for the patience and love I received during this difficult time." (F-16)

12) "This thesis would be meaningless without the care and prayers of my loved ones." (F-22)

In these excerpts, affect is expressed directly through adjectives such as *grateful*, *thankful*, and *blessed*, and intensified through adverbs such as *extremely*, *deeply*, and *truly*. Emotional meaning is closely intertwined with moral and spiritual values expressed through references to sacrifice, blessing, and prayer. Academic achievement is thus framed within a relational and ethical context.

Male writers, on the other hand, are less likely to name emotions explicitly. Instead, they tend to encode affect through metaphors of struggle, endurance, and success, presenting the thesis process as a test of personal strength and perseverance. This is evident in the following examples:

13) “Completing this thesis was one of the hardest battles of my academic life.” (M-2)

14) “This journey has shaped me into a stronger and more determined person.” (M-8)

15) “Reaching this stage feels like winning a long and exhausting race.” (M-17)

16) “This thesis represents the peak of years of hard work.” (M-23)

Rather than naming feelings directly, emotional experience is embedded in metaphors associated with effort and achievement. Emotion is thus reframed as resilience, discipline, and progress.

A further tendency in male-authored acknowledgements is the association of emotion with self-development and future orientation, as shown below:

17) “This thesis helped me grow both academically and professionally.” (M-3)

18) “I believe this work has prepared me for the challenges ahead.” (M-11)

19) “My goals are now clearer than they have ever been.” (M-19)

20) “I learned to believe in myself, my work, and my future.” (M-25)

It could be argued that these examples link emotion not to interpersonal attachment but to personal growth and professional readiness. The MA thesis is thus represented as a stage in individual development rather than as a shared family achievement.

Overall, the findings show that acknowledgement sections serve as an important space for emotional expression, though the ways in which emotion is conveyed differ by gender. Female writers tend to draw on relational and moral language to express affect, while male writers more often frame emotion through themes of effort, achievement, and future direction. Rather than differing in how much emotion is expressed, women and men differ in how they express it, relying on distinct rhetorical choices to construct emotional meaning.

Boosters and the intensification of gratitude

Boosters function as key rhetorical devices for strengthening evaluation and expressing emotional certainty. Although frequency differences across gender

are minimal, qualitative analysis shows apparent differences in how these resources are used rhetorically.

Female writers tend to employ boosters to frame gratitude as absolute and unconditional. This use is illustrated in the following examples:

(21) “This journey would never have been possible without you.” (F-3)

(22) “I will always be grateful for your endless kindness.” (F-11)

(23) “I could never thank you enough for everything you have done.” (F-18)

In these examples, boosters such as *never*, *always*, and *enough* remove contingency and present gratitude as unlimited. Support is represented as irreplaceable, and gratitude is expressed in terms of emotional indispensability rather than simple appreciation.

Male writers, in contrast, more frequently use boosters to emphasize expertise, authority, and professional contribution. This pattern can be seen in the following examples:

(24) “His guidance was absolutely essential to the completion of this thesis.” (M-4)

(25) “I am truly honoured to have worked under his supervision.” (M-9)

(26) “This work could never have been completed without their expertise.” (M-20)

In the examples above, boosters such as *absolutely*, *truly*, and *never* function to elevate supervisors and mentors in terms of competence and academic authority. Gratitude is framed less as emotional dependence and more as professional respect and recognition.

These findings are in line with Alotaibi’s (2018) observation that boosters in acknowledgements primarily serve interpersonal rather than epistemic purposes. Unlike research articles, where boosters are typically used to strengthen knowledge claims (Hyland, 1998), acknowledgements employ boosters to intensify sincerity and emotional commitment.

Engagement markers and interpersonal involvement

Engagement markers constitute the only interactional category that shows a statistically significant gender difference ($LL = +5.57$), which highlights their importance for understanding interpersonal orientation in acknowledgements.

Female writers frequently construct acknowledgement sections as dialogic texts through direct address to specific individuals. This orientation is evident in the following examples:

(27) “To my dear mother, I will never forget your sacrifices.” (F-2)

(28) “My beloved husband, thank you for standing by me in every moment.” (F-7)

(29) “Dear sister, your support carried me through the hardest times.” (F-13)

(30) “My children, you are the reason I never gave up.” (F-19)

These forms reduce interpersonal distance and position acknowledgements as personal messages rather than institutional statements. Direct address and vocative forms establish an immediate interpersonal link between writer and addressee, projecting closeness, dependence, and emotional involvement, as also supported by research on personal discourse and address forms in academic and institutional writing (Holmes, 2008; Jaroenkitboworn, 2014; Alotaibi, 2018).

Male writers, by contrast, tend to rely on impersonal formulations that avoid direct engagement with specific addressees. This tendency can be seen in the following examples:

(31) “I would like to express my sincere appreciation to those who supported me.” (M-5)

(32) “I am thankful to everyone who contributed to this work.” (M-12)

In these examples, gratitude is expressed in generalized terms, which maintains social distance and frames acknowledgement as a formal academic convention rather than as a personal message.

This pattern lends support to Alotaibi’s (2018) finding that female students in Saudi EFL contexts use engagement resources more extensively. At the same time, it contrasts with Tse and Hyland’s (2008) findings in research articles, where male academics employed more engagement marking. The difference points to the role of genre: student acknowledgements and published academic texts operate under different interpersonal expectations and therefore license different forms of engagement.

Absence of hedging and non-epistemic orientation

Hedges are almost entirely absent from the corpus, with only three occurrences identified. The few cases that do occur are illustrated below:

(33) “A word of thanks, I suppose, is not enough to express my gratitude to my husband...” (F-6)

(34) “This work would perhaps not have been completed without the support of my family.” (M-25)

(35) “It is somewhat difficult to express how grateful I am to my supervisor for his professional guidance and academic support.” (M-14)

In these examples, hedging does not function to qualify academic claims or limit propositional content. Instead, expressions such as *I suppose*, *perhaps*, and *somewhat* operate at the interpersonal level, softening the emotional force of gratitude rather than managing epistemic uncertainty. The writers do not question the contribution itself; they merely temper the intensity of their own emotional expressions. This pattern supports earlier findings that hedging plays a minimal role in acknowledgement writing (Al-Ali, 2010; Alotaibi, 2018) and contrasts sharply with research articles, where hedging is a core resource for negotiating claims (Hyland, 1998). In acknowledgements, emotional certainty clearly outweighs epistemic caution, and gratitude is asserted rather than negotiated.

CONCLUSION

This study examined interactional metadiscourse in MA thesis acknowledgements written by Kosovar Albanian EFL students, focusing on the types, distribution, and rhetorical functions of interactional resources in texts written by female and male students. By integrating quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative discourse analysis, the study contributes to the growing body of research that recognizes acknowledgements as a meaningful academic genre rather than a peripheral or purely ceremonial component of student writing.

The findings demonstrate that acknowledgement writing is overwhelmingly shaped by interactional and affective concerns. Across both subcorpora, self-mentions and attitude markers dominate, confirming that acknowledgements function primarily as identity-oriented and emotion-centred texts rather than as epistemic or argumentative discourse. The near absence of hedging further supports this interpretation, indicating that acknowledgements are not designed to negotiate knowledge claims but to express emotional certainty and personal evaluation.

With regard to gender, the quantitative results indicate that female and male writers employ interactional metadiscourse at broadly comparable rates. This suggests that genre conventions exert a strong regulatory influence on linguistic choice, overriding individual demographic variables at the level of overall frequency. At the same time, qualitative analysis shows that gender plays an important role in shaping how interactional resources are rhetorically deployed. Female writers tend to construct a relational and emotionally embedded academic self, situating achievement within family networks and moral discourses of gratitude and devotion. Male writers, by contrast, more frequently

construct identity through narratives of autonomy, endurance, and professional development. These findings indicate that gender in acknowledgements is not primarily realized through quantitative differences, but through differences in rhetorical orientation and stylistic preference.

The only statistically significant gender difference appears in the use of engagement markers, which points to a clear functional contrast in how writers relate to their addressees. Female writers more often address others directly and position themselves in personal terms, which gives their acknowledgements a dialogic and emotionally responsive character. Male writers, on the other hand, tend to rely on more impersonal and institutional formulations of gratitude, creating a more distant interpersonal tone. Engagement markers thus appear to be one of the clearest linguistic signals of gendered positioning in acknowledgement writing.

These findings confirm that acknowledgements are not peripheral or decorative components of academic texts, but socially meaningful spaces in which writers construct identity, express emotion, and position themselves within academic and personal networks. The Kosovo context reflects the cross-cultural stability of acknowledgements as an affect-oriented genre, while also revealing locally grounded values relating to family, authority, and responsibility.

The study nevertheless has several limitations. The corpus is restricted to one institution and a relatively small sample of MA theses, which limits broader generalisation. Future research would benefit from the inclusion of larger and more diverse datasets across institutions, disciplines, and academic levels. In this regard, institutional access to student writing is of critical importance. Public and private higher education institutions are encouraged to systematically upload defended theses to open-access repositories, enabling both students and researchers to make scholarly use of these materials. Wider accessibility would support the development of larger corpora and make possible comparative research across educational and cultural contexts.

Overall, the findings show that MA thesis acknowledgements are not peripheral or decorative sections, but meaningful parts of academic writing in which personal experience and scholarly identity come together. Rather than functioning as simple expressions of thanks, acknowledgements operate as spaces where writers shape how they present themselves, express emotion, and relate to others within the academic community.

References

- Ädel, A. (2006). *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English*. John Benjamins.
- Al-Ali, M. N. (2006). Genre-pragmatic strategies in English letters of complaint written by Jordanian EFL students. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(11), 2029–2043.
- Al-Ali, M. N. (2010). Generic patterns and socio-cultural resources in PhD dissertation acknowledgements. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 1–27.
- Alotaibi, H. M. (2018). Metadiscourse in academic writing: The use of hedges and boosters in research articles written by Saudi EFL learners. *English Language Teaching*, 11(3), 1–12.
- Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus linguistics: Investigating language structure and use*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coates, J. (2013). *Women, men and language* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Crismore, A., Markkanen, R., & Steffensen, M. S. (1993). Metadiscourse in persuasive writing: A study of texts written by American and Finnish university students. *Written Communication*, 10(1), 39–71.
- Gardner, S., & Han, C. (2018). Transitions in academic writing: A comparative corpus-based study of English and Chinese student texts. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 32, 88–100.
- Güçlü, R. (2022). *A diachronic and gender-based analysis of Turkish MA theses: The use of metadiscourse markers* (Doctoral dissertation). Hacettepe University.
- Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, men and politeness*. Longman.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (3rd ed.). Pearson.
- Hyland, K. (1998). Boosting, hedging and the negotiation of academic knowledge. *TEXT*, 18(3), 349–382.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. University of Michigan Press.
- Hyland, K. (2005). *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*. Continuum.
- Hyland, K. (2010). Community and individuality: Performing identity in applied linguistics. *Written Communication*, 27(2), 159–188.
- Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2004). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 156–177.
- Jaroenkitboworn, K. (2014). Cultural variation in rhetorical organisation: English genre writing of Thai students. *English Language Teaching*, 7(7), 1–13.
- Sallauka, E., & Janusheva, V. (2023). Multilingualism and identity in Kosovo: Language use in education and digital spaces. *Journal of Balkan Linguistics*, 9(2), 45–67.
- Tabaku, E. (2014). English in Kosovo: Sociolinguistic perspectives on language planning and policy. *Albanian Journal of Linguistics*, 3(1), 21–38.
- Tardy, C. M. (2006). Researching first and second language genre learning: A comparative review and a look ahead. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(2), 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2006.01.003>
- Thaqi, L. (2025). Multilingual practices among Kosovar university students in online communication. *Journal of Sociolinguistic Studies*, 12(1), 66–89.
- Tse, P., & Hyland, K. (2008). Discipline and gender: Constructing rhetorical identity in academic book reviews. *Written Communication*, 25(2), 123–159.
- Yavari, M., & Kashani, A. F. (2013). Gender-linked differences in the use of hedges, boosters, and attitude markers: A comparative study of applied linguistics research articles. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 2(1), 189–201.

