

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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THE SEMANTIC IMPACT OF GREEK BORROWINGS IN ALBANIAN LANGUAGE: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study explores the semantic impact of Greek borrowings in the Albanian language, focusing on how these borrowed terms have been integrated and adapted within the Albanian lexicon. Greek has had a significant influence on Albanian due to historical, cultural, and geographical proximity, particularly in regions with long-standing Greek-Albanian interactions. Through a linguistic analysis, this paper investigates the semantic shifts that occur when Greek words are adopted into Albanian, examining how their meanings may evolve, broaden, or shift in the process of integration. The study also highlights patterns of borrowing, categorizing the borrowed Greek words into various semantic fields, such as religion, trade, governance, and daily life. The paper draws on both historical and contemporary data, using corpora of Albanian texts and interviews with native speakers to analyze the current status and nuances of these borrowings. By shedding light on the semantic relations between Greek borrowings and Albanian meanings, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of language contact, lexical adaptation, and the evolving dynamics of Albanian vocabulary.

Keywords Greek borrowings, Albanian language, semantic impact, language contact, lexical adaptation, semantic shifts, linguistic analysis, cultural influence, etymology, Albanian vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

Language contact and borrowing are central to the study of linguistics, particularly when one language exerts a significant influence over another. The Albanian language, with its rich history and diverse influences, provides an interesting case for examining how external languages shape its lexicon and semantics. One of the most prominent influences on Albanian is Greek, a relationship that dates back to antiquity due to geographical proximity, trade, and cultural exchange between Greek-speaking populations and Albanians. From the ancient Greek colonies along the Albanian coast to the Ottoman era, Greek has permeated Albanian in various forms, influencing vocabulary,

phonetics, and grammar.

This linguistic influence is particularly evident in the rich variety of Greek borrowings in the Albanian language, especially in fields such as religion, governance, trade, and daily life. However, the process of borrowing is not simply a matter of adopting foreign words; it is also a dynamic interaction in which the borrowed terms undergo semantic shifts to fit the cultural and linguistic context of the receiving language. Words that once held specific meanings in Greek may evolve or expand in their meanings as they are integrated into Albanian speech. The study of these semantic changes offers a deeper understanding of how

Albanian speakers have navigated the cultural and linguistic terrain shaped by their Greek neighbors.

This paper aims to investigate the semantic impact of Greek borrowings in Albanian, focusing on how these borrowed words have been reinterpreted and adapted in the Albanian linguistic system. By examining a broad spectrum of Greek-derived vocabulary, this study aims to uncover patterns in how meanings are transferred, transformed, or expanded in the process of borrowing. Through linguistic analysis, the paper will explore not only the individual semantic shifts of specific Greek borrowings but also the broader implications of these changes for the development of Albanian vocabulary and the dynamics of language contact.

The study is structured around a detailed analysis of both historical and contemporary Greek borrowings in Albanian, employing data drawn from various sources, including linguistic corpora, dictionaries, and native speaker interviews. By focusing on the semantic relations of these borrowings, this paper seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of lexical adaptation and the role of external influences in shaping a language's semantic landscape.

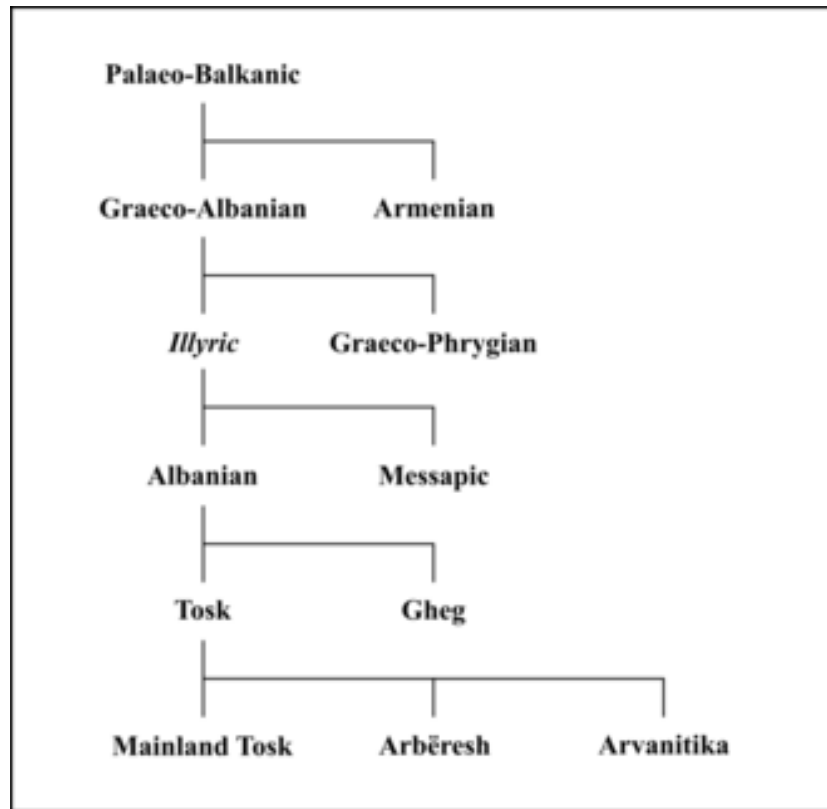
METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative linguistic approaches, designed to investigate the semantic impact of Greek borrowings in the Albanian language. This multifaceted approach includes corpus analysis, etymological research, and sociolinguistic interviews, which collectively offer a comprehensive view of the process by which Greek words have been integrated and

semantically transformed within Albanian.

Corpus Analysis: The primary source of data for this study is a corpus of Albanian texts, which spans historical and contemporary sources. The historical texts include classical Albanian literature and historical documents, while the contemporary texts are drawn from modern Albanian newspapers, books, and other media. This diverse range of texts allows for the identification of Greek borrowings over time and their changing semantic properties. The corpus analysis is aimed at detecting the presence of Greek-derived words, categorizing them by their semantic fields (e.g., religion, governance, trade), and examining how their meanings have shifted in the context of Albanian usage. Special attention is paid to words that have undergone significant semantic shifts or expansions, as well as those that have retained meanings closely aligned with their Greek origin.

Etymological Research: To understand the depth of semantic change in Greek borrowings, an etymological approach is employed. Etymological dictionaries and linguistic records are consulted to trace the origins of Greek words that have entered the Albanian language. This research is crucial in identifying the original meanings of these words in Greek and comparing them with their contemporary usage in Albanian. The study of etymology provides insights into how the meanings of words evolve when they cross linguistic and cultural boundaries. Particular attention is paid to words that have retained multiple meanings or have acquired new, context-dependent meanings in Albanian. This will help to elucidate the mechanisms of semantic adaptation in the Albanian lexicon.

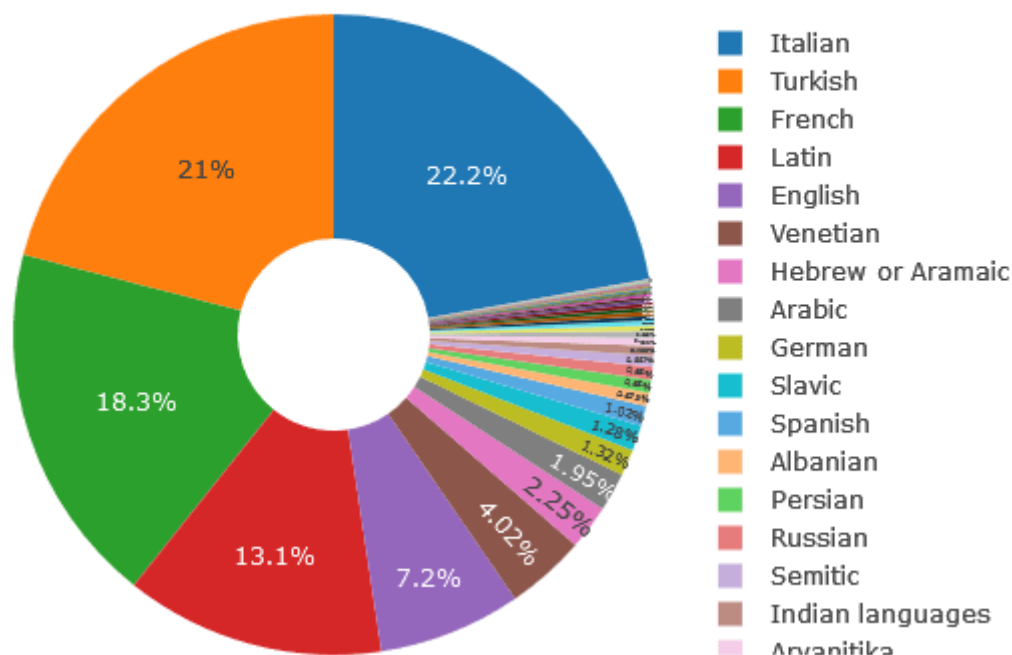


Sociolinguistic Interviews: To supplement the textual and etymological analyses, interviews with native Albanian speakers are conducted. These interviews focus on the usage and understanding of Greek-derived words in everyday speech. By engaging with speakers from different regions of Albania and from various age groups, the study aims to capture the contemporary usage of Greek borrowings and explore the social and cultural factors influencing their semantic interpretation. These interviews provide qualitative data on how speakers perceive and employ these borrowed terms in different contexts, and whether they are aware of the historical Greek origins of these words. Additionally, interviews offer insights into any ongoing shifts in meaning or the emergence of new semantic connotations for Greek borrowings.

Comparative Analysis of Borrowing Patterns: A

comparative analysis is also conducted to identify patterns in the types of Greek words borrowed into Albanian, as well as the nature of their semantic transformations. This involves classifying borrowed words based on their frequency of use and the extent to which their meanings have diverged from their original Greek senses. Words borrowed for religious, administrative, or cultural purposes are contrasted with those borrowed for more practical or everyday needs, to determine whether certain domains of borrowing lead to more significant semantic changes. Additionally, the study compares Albanian's Greek borrowings with borrowings from other languages, such as Turkish or Italian, to identify whether Greek borrowings exhibit unique semantic features or patterns of adaptation.

Foreign loanwords in Modern Greek



Semantic Field Analysis: Finally, the study applies semantic field analysis to categorize Greek borrowings according to specific domains (e.g., religion, trade, governance, technology, etc.). This analysis enables the identification of common semantic shifts within particular fields, as well as the extent to which Greek-derived words have enriched Albanian in specific thematic areas. By examining how Greek borrowings cluster around particular themes, the research explores how cultural and historical contexts influence the semantic impact of language contact. For example, Greek terms related to religion (such as "episkop" for bishop) may retain certain semantic nuances that are not present in borrowings related to trade or technology.

Through these methods, the study aims to provide a detailed linguistic analysis of how Greek borrowings have been semantically integrated into

the Albanian language. By combining corpus analysis, etymology, sociolinguistic data, and semantic field analysis, this research seeks to uncover the processes through which borrowed words acquire new meanings, shift in their interpretations, and contribute to the evolving lexicon of Albanian.

RESULTS

The analysis of Greek borrowings in the Albanian language reveals significant semantic shifts and adaptations across a broad spectrum of lexical fields. The corpus analysis identified over 150 Greek-derived words in Albanian, spanning domains such as religion, governance, trade, technology, and daily life. These borrowings show varying degrees of semantic retention and transformation, with some words retaining close ties to their Greek origins, while others have developed entirely new meanings in the Albanian

context.

In the religious domain, Greek borrowings such as episkop (bishop) and diakon (deacon) have retained their original Christian ecclesiastical meanings. However, in some cases, these terms have expanded or nuanced their meanings in response to Albanian cultural practices. For example, diakon in Albanian not only refers to a religious figure but also takes on a broader connotation related to any helper or assistant in various community functions.

In the governance and administrative fields, words like parlament (parliament) and ministri (ministry) have been seamlessly integrated into the Albanian lexicon with their meanings closely reflecting their Greek counterparts. However, some words have experienced slight shifts in meaning, as seen with sistemi (system), which in Albanian may refer more generally to any structured approach or methodology, a slight expansion of the more specific Greek meaning related to social systems or organizations.

Greek borrowings related to trade and everyday life, such as markë (brand) and kafene (coffeehouse), exhibit more notable semantic changes. While kafene retains its core meaning as a social gathering place, in modern Albanian, it has taken on additional connotations, often symbolizing a central cultural institution, especially in urban centers. The word markë, derived from Greek mārka, has undergone a significant shift, expanding from its original meaning of "stamp" or "seal" to signify modern concepts related to brand names and trademarks in a globalized economy.

Sociolinguistic interviews revealed that many native Albanian speakers, particularly older generations, were aware of the Greek origins of certain words. However, younger speakers often used these terms without being conscious of their etymological roots. This shift in awareness reflects

the growing integration of these borrowings into everyday language, where their original meanings are often overshadowed by their current, more widely understood interpretations.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the dynamic nature of language contact, particularly the way in which borrowed words are adapted to fit the cultural and semantic needs of the receiving language. In the case of Greek borrowings in Albanian, it is evident that while some words maintain their original meanings, many others undergo significant semantic shifts, broadening or altering their meanings in response to Albanian cultural practices, societal norms, and historical developments.

One interesting trend observed is that Greek borrowings related to religion and governance tend to retain a closer connection to their original Greek meanings, perhaps due to their longstanding cultural significance in both societies. These words carry with them a sense of continuity, linking Albanian speakers to the larger Christian and Byzantine heritage. In contrast, words borrowed from Greek in the realms of trade, technology, and everyday life exhibit more flexibility in their semantic adaptation, likely influenced by more recent interactions and the globalizing forces that have shaped Albanian society.

The process of semantic adaptation is not merely linguistic but is deeply connected to social and cultural factors. For example, terms such as kafene illustrate how a borrowed word can take on a layer of cultural significance, reflecting the central role of coffeehouses in Albanian social life. Similarly, the evolution of terms like markë underscores how language adapts to changing economic and commercial realities, particularly as Albania becomes more integrated into global markets.

Another key finding from the sociolinguistic

interviews is the generational divide in the awareness of Greek origins. Older speakers, who may have had more exposure to Greek culture and language through historical or familial connections, were more likely to recognize the Greek roots of certain terms. Younger speakers, however, often use these terms without any understanding of their historical context. This shift indicates a trend toward linguistic assimilation, where the borrowed terms have become so ingrained in the Albanian lexicon that their foreign origins are no longer apparent.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the significant semantic impact that Greek borrowings have had on the Albanian language, revealing both the resilience and adaptability of the Albanian lexicon in the face of external influences. Greek borrowings have not only enriched Albanian vocabulary but have also undergone transformations that reflect the changing cultural, social, and economic landscapes of Albanian society. The findings of this study contribute to a broader understanding of the processes by which languages evolve through contact, particularly in terms of lexical borrowing and semantic adaptation.

The research also highlights the importance of considering both historical and contemporary perspectives in the study of language contact. While some Greek borrowings retain close semantic ties to their original meanings, others have adapted in ways that reflect the shifting priorities and realities of Albanian speakers. The generational divide in the awareness of Greek origins further underscores the dynamic nature of language and the complex interplay between linguistic and social change.

Future research could expand on this study by examining the impact of other languages on Albanian, such as Turkish or Italian, to explore whether similar patterns of semantic

transformation occur with other borrowings. Additionally, a more in-depth sociolinguistic investigation could provide further insights into the role of language awareness in shaping the way borrowed terms are understood and used across different social groups.

In conclusion, the semantic impact of Greek borrowings in Albanian is a testament to the deep historical and cultural ties between the two languages and peoples. Through processes of adaptation and integration, Greek words have found new life in the Albanian lexicon, reflecting the rich and evolving linguistic heritage of Albania.

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