

ON THE STRUCTURE OF ADJECTIVES' SUPERLATIVE DEGREE FORMATION BY MEANS OF ANALYTICAL TOOLS (A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ALBANIAN AND SOME OTHER INDO- EUROPEAN LANGUAGES)

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Abstract: The aim of this scientific paper is to conduct an inquiry on the primary fundamental means Albanian language adjectives construct the superlative degree. The linguistic indicator serving to complete the grammatical category of the adjective's degree in Albanian language by using synthetic tools is apparently different from many other Indo – European languages. As most linguists nowadays generally note and emphasize there have existed three fundamental stages of denoting this category, which evidently differ in terms of the linguistic tools they exploit the first one using lexical means (suppletive forms), the second morphemic tools (different suffixes) and the third analytical and syntactic tools (auxiliary words). As evidence throw light there are no traces of the existence of the first two stages in Albanian. The most convincing argument used to justify this loss is related to the process of reorganizing the class of adjectives, transforming it from a class with synthetic indicators used in final position to a different class using analytic tools placed in the front position. As many examples infer, Sanskrit, Old Greek, Latin, Germanic languages, and many Slavic languages historically have obtained different inflections to shape this category. Trying to provide a satisfactory account of the Albanian potential ways indicating this grammatical category there is a specific need to emphasize the fact that the most available, relevant tools Albanian uses to supply this category are the analytical and syntactic means. The superlative degree formation exposes one of the most significant striking features of analytical based formation, that of obtaining adverbs denoting quantity and nouns which amplify and intensify the degree of quality expressed by the adjective. In other words, the procedures used in constituting superlative degree of adjectives in Albanian are purely analytical. In attempt to conduct a survey and a contrastive analysis between Albanian and some other Indo- European languages among which; English, Italian, French we have exploited an abundant number of adjectives superlative degree formation drawing some general distinctive lines on how and to what extent these differences are elaborated in several languages. Approaching the basic distinguishable properties among the given languages helped us providing a rich supply of arguments sustaining the general aim of this paper.

Keywords: adjectives, superlative degree, analytical means, contrastive analysis, Indo European languages

1. INTRODUCTION

Indo- European is a family of languages descended from common tongue in the third millennium B.C by an agricultural people originating in southeastern Europe. The languages of Europe and those of Northern India, Iran, and part of Western Asia belong to a group known as the Indo-European Languages. They probably originated from a common language-speaking group and then split up as various subgroups migrated. [Nordquist, 2020: 5]

The Indo- European language family, with over 400 languages, is the largest in the world. This family includes major world languages like English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Greek, and Hindi. Linguists have long tried to understand the origin of these languages, and the conventional wisdom is that they originated around 5000 to 6000 years ago. [Vasiloudis, 2023: 8]

The divergence of Indo- European branches in Europe and Asia represents a critical aspect of linguistic and ancestral history. The Germanic, Celtic, and Italian branches split around 4890 years ago, with the Balto-Slavic division happening earlier, approximately 6460 years ago. The separation of the Albania, Greek, Armenian and Anatolian branches occurred even earlier indicating a complex and spread-out timeline of linguistic divergence. Vasiloudis, 2023: 15]

Albanian is an Indo-European language and the only surviving representatives of the Albanoid branch which belongs to the Paleo- Balkan group. It is the native language of the Albanian people.

That Albanian is of clearly Indo-European origin was recognized by the German philologist Franz Bopp in 1854; the details of the main correspondences of Albanian with Indo-European languages were elaborated by another German philologist, Gustav Meyer, in the 1880s and '90s. Further linguistic refinements were presented by the Danish linguist Holger Pedersen and the Austrian Norbert Jokl [Hamp, 2025: 6]

Orlander emphasizes the fact that “Despite constituting its own branch within IE, Albanian is hardly a linguistic monolith. In fact, there are major dialect divisions within the branch, the oldest and most important being a north–south one: the Geg dialect group occurs north of the Shkumbin river (roughly in the middle of present-day Albania), thus covering northern Albanian and the Albanian of the nation-states of North Macedonia, Kosova, and

Montenegro, while the Tosk group occurs south of the river, and includes the Arbëresh diaspora communities of south [Orlander, 2022; 224]

As Hackstein points out “The convergence between Albanian, Greek, and Tocharian be the result of prehistoric areal contacts. The pervasive innovations identify the Balkan Indo-European languages, and thus Albanian, as classical, i.e., Nuclear Indo-European languages. Albanian may even appear to be fairly innovative, as for example (a) the reduction of the inventory of participles inherited from Proto-Indo-European (present *-nt-, mediopassive *-mh1no-, stative *-uōs/uos/us-) is complete in Albanian, contrasting with Greek and many other branches of Indo-European which have kept the nt-participle down to the present day; (b) ablaut is no longer productive in Albanian” [Hackstein, 2024: 12]

The grammatical categories of Albanian are much like those of other European languages. Nouns show overt gender, number, and three or four cases. An unusual feature is that nouns are further inflected obligatorily with suffixes to show definite or indefinite meaning: e.g., *bukë* ‘bread,’ *buka* ‘the bread.’ Adjectives—except numerals and certain quantifying expressions—and dependent nouns follow the noun they modify, and they are remarkable in requiring a particle preceding them that agrees with the noun. Verbs have roughly the number and variety of forms found in French or Italian and are quite irregular in forming their stems. Noun plurals are also notable for the irregularity in the greatest number of them. When a definite noun or one taken as already known is the direct object of the sentence, a pronoun in the objective case that repeats this information must also be inserted in the verb phrase. [Hamp, 2025: 10]

2. THE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY OF ADJECTIVE’S DEGREE IN ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

The linguistic indicator serving to complete the grammatical category of the adjective’s degree in Albanian language by using synthetic tools is apparently different from many other Indo – European languages. As many examples infer, Sanskrit, Old Greek, Latin, Germanic languages and many Slavic languages historically have obtained different inflections to shape this category; *kuphos- kuphoteros*; *sophos- sophoteros- sophotatos* (old Greek); *altus-altior-altissimus*; *celer- celerior- celerrimus* (Latin); *alt-alter-alteste*; *leicht – leichter- (der) leichteste* (German) etc. [Demiraj, 1986: 440]

As most linguists nowadays generally note and emphasize there have existed three fundamental stages of denoting this category, which evidently differ in terms of the linguistic tools they exploit the first one using lexical means (suppletive forms), the second morphemic tools (different suffixes) and the third analytical and syntactic tools (auxiliary words). As evidence throw light there are no traces of the existence of the first two stages in Albanian. The most convincing argument used to justify this loss is related to the process of reorganizing the class of adjectives, transforming it from a class with synthetic indicators used in final position to a different class using analytic tools placed in the front position.

Albanian language documented period provides evidence of prominent extensive use of lexical means to up build the comparative and superlative degree respectively using adverbs of quantity **më** (comparative degree and the relative superlative degree) and **shumë, tepër, fare, fort** (absolute superlative) reflecting a lower degree of crystallization, **i mirë, më i mirë, më i miri, shumë, tepër, fare i mirë**. The adverb of quantity **më** is also used to shape the comparative degree of diminution associated with the adverb **pak (më i ëmbël- më pak i ëmbël** in as much as Albanian language does not wield separated word with opposite meaning with the adjective **më** as many other languages do possess for example, **lat. plus-minus, it. piu-meno, fr. plus-moins, ang. more-less**.

Aside from these analytical devices, many other productive means have been produced in course of the historical linguistic progression in attempt to enhance the figurative stylistic expressive means. Among these tools we could select the placement of a noun which entails in a more extensive and intense degree the qualities expressed by the adjective; **akull i ftohtë, dyllë i verdhë, flakë i kuq, borë i bardhë, sterrë i zi**. [Topalli 2011:553] In this case the nouns have pertained inflective frozen forms up to the point that they do not reflect any specific change related to their grammatical categories, a striking feature, similar to the adverbs used to shape the superlative degree. In addition, due to the position these nouns occupy in relation to the adjective, the adjective is not adjusted with the corresponding noun respectively in the category of gender, case, and number *fytyra ishte akull e ftohtë, duart i kishte akull të ftohta*.

The absolute superlative degree in Albanian language can be fully explained by a high tendency of reflecting this language inner power of constituting idiomatic expressions. These linguistic by-products are direct results of hidden ineffable comparisons especially used in informal speech. It is believed that this process has already exceeded these three stages explained through the following examples [Jashari 2003: 24]

He became yellow as a lemon (Ai u bë i verdhë si limon)

He became yellow lemon (Ai u bë i verdhë limon)

He became lemon yellow (Ai u bë limon i verdhë)

These new meanings have been so far embedded in the semantic structure of the corresponding nouns, which on their side have been generated as a result of a full process of lexicalization of the linguistic figures. Throughout this long and complex process of transference from the stylistic figures (mainly metaphor) toward a new figurative meaning and consequently to the acquirement of a new lexical meaning. We can practically observe this procedure by simply scrutinizing these examples in which the lexical meaning can be hardly perceived as being figurative; **icy old** (akull i ftohtë), **honied** (mjaltë i ëmbël) [Jashari 2003: 24]

As a rule, these permanent and stable constructions follow a fixed and stable word order, where the nominal member stands in the initial position than the adjective is placed. In different specific cases this order can be interchangeable for example, **cold ice** (i ftohtë akull), **sweet honey** (i ëmbël mjaltë), **wavy yellow** (i verdhë dyllë). Many linguists believe that these constructions are extensively used to express a highly intense degree of qualitative values, thus serving as the central ground for constituting the superlative degree of the adjectives, alongside with the adverbs of quantity, **very** (shumë), **extremely** (jashtëzakonisht), **much** (tepër), **fairly /pretty/rather/ enough** (mjaft). The nouns used to fulfill this purpose such as **akull, dyllë, borë, limon, mjaltë, qumësht, prush, flakë**, have a derived meaning, because they do not serve just to denote the referent but more specifically one of the most striking, inherent features of this referent, which appear to possess the quality in a highly extreme degree. [Demiraj 1972:81] As part of the everyday informal speech these linguistic by-products are generally accompanied by a relevant intonation and the nominal elements entail the logic stress of this syntagm. The greatest part of these already fixed structures is historically established but we cannot exclude a high possibility for this process to take place currently. The basic criteria which enforce their existence are related to their potential and actual use in everyday speech and the ability to denote referents which possess an appealing striking characteristic feature. To our opinion these typical Albanian language characteristic constructions have been extensively used as evidence of the idiomatic degree and more concretely to the inner form of the language.

So far, in traditional linguistic discourse the use of the intensifying adverbs is regarded as one the most potential provenance origin means of amplifying the positive degree of adjectives to indicate the scale of intensity of the quality expressed by the given adjective. Historically speaking many of these linguistic devices have not resulted as final functional by-products but have completely conserved their grammatical categorical traits as belonging to the class of adverbs. As a consequence from a logical perspective the superlative degree has not yet acquainted a single dedicated form because the contributing elements elaborated to elaborate this “structure” preserve their independent status either morphological or syntactical [Dhirmo 1972: 175] All this counts as a plausible argument to approach the reflection of the level of interpretation of the Albanian language superlative degree with the help of several adverbs of quantity which generally constitute synonymic pairs and contribute to the linguistic corpus as quality intensifying words.

3. GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE DEGREE OF THE ALBANIAN NOUNS CONTRASTED TO SOME OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN EQUIVALENT COUNTERPARTS

As stated above due to some inner principles Albanian language uses to construct the superlative degree based on analytical devices, we have carefully selected some identifying and representative examples which would give us possibilities to sustain the principle aim of this paper. Meanwhile there is an attempt to establish the basic distinguishing features contrasting Albanian potential means respectively with English, French and Italian by identifying those striking emphasized traits which make Albanian differ a lot from all these other languages.

acâr *adv.* Eng. 1 beautiful, clean, and tiny; 2. rough, sternly, coarsely Fr. joli/e, It. Bella.

acâr,-E *adj.* 1. the frostbite. 2. crystal, pellucid 3. tidy and neat Fr. propre It. Pulito

ACÂR,-I *m.* cold frost, squealed used as an adjective wearing very clean and neat clothes Fr. glace It. ghiaccio

BETËR_I *m.* (Turk. *beter*-really bad, from pers. *bed*- bad); Eng. *scare; scarecrow; ugly face*; **BETËR_{II}** *adj.* (Turk. *beter*- extremely ugly from Persian *bed*-bad); Eng. *extremely bad; very ugly*; Fre. *très mauvais; très méchant*; it. *brutto, bruttissimo*. **BETËR_{III}** *adv.* (Turk. *beter*-shumë i keq, from Persian *bed*-i keq); Eng. *very; extremely*; Fr. *très, extrêmement, bougrement*; It. *molto, moltissimo, straordinariamente*. 1. very (used with adjectives and verbs) 2. really bad

BILÛR,-I_I *m.* Eng. *porcelan*; Fr. *porcelaine*; it. *porcellana*. **BILÛR,-I_{II}** *m.* Eng. *white crystal*; Fr. *cristal*; it. *cristallo*. **BILÛR_{III}** *adj.* Eng. *clear; clean; pure; white*. Fr. *clair/e, transparent, pur* It. *Chiara/ chiaro* **BILÛR_{IV}** *adv.* Eng. *very clean; spotless*, Fr. *Impeccable*, It. *immacolato/a* **BILÛR_V** *adv.* Eng. *very*, Fr. *tres, seul*, It. *molto/a*

BÍST/ËR,-RA_I *f. sh.-ra(t)*. zool. (skr. *bistar*-); (lat. *Belone acus*); Eng. *needle-fish*; Fr. *poisson de neddle* it. *agone*.

BÍST/ËR,-RA_{II} *f.* (Skr. *Bistar*) Eng. *pure, lucid*, Fr. *pur/e, It.pura/o*

BÍSTËR_{III} *adj.* (skr. *bistar*-) Eng. *very sour; acrid*; Fr. *aigre, acide* It. *agresto, agro, brusco*.

BÍSTËR_{IV} *adj.* (skr. *bistar*-) Eng. *resourceful, fast, quick* Fr. *rapide, dissipe*, It. *rapido, dissipato*

BÍSTËR_V *adv.* Eng. *very*, Fr. *tres*, It. *molto*

- BLÓZ/Ě_{-A_I}** *f.* Eng. soot; smut; Fr. suie; It. fuliggine; carbonchio, golpe.
BLÓZ/Ě_{-A_{II}} *f.* Eng. the house beam Fr. la poutre de la maison, It. il raggio della casa
BLOZĚ_{III} *adj.* Eng. messy, dirty, Fr. sale, salissant, It. sporca/o, disordinato
BÓRĚ_I *f.* a precipitation in the form of ice crystals, Eng. snow, Fr. neige It. neve
BÓRĚ_{II} *adj.* Eng. very cold, icy, Fr. glaciee, It. gelito, ghiacciato/a
BÓRĚ_{III} *adv.* Eng. very, Fr. ters, It. molto
BRÍSK_{-U_I} *m.* Eng. razor; safety razor; Fr. rasoir; It. rasoio; temperino.
BRÍSK_{II} *adj.* Eng. very sharp; very cold, Fr. tres forte, It. molto appuntito
BRÍSK_{III} *adv.* Eng. very; extremely, Fr. exterelement It. estremamente,
DÉLE_I *f.* a domesticated ruminant animal with a thick woolly coat and curving horns, Eng. sheep, Fr. brebis, mouton, It. pecora
DÉLE_{II} *adj.* Eng. grey-headed/white-headed Fr. grissonant, It. capelli bianchi
DÉLE_{III} *adv.* Eng. very Fr. tres, It. molto
DENG_I *m.* several objects or a quantity of material gathered or bound together Eng. bundle/bunch, Fr. paquet, It. fascio
DENG_{II} *adv.* Eng. full, Fr. plein, It. pieno
DENG_{III} *adv.* Eng. equally, fifty-fifty, Fr. egalement, It. ugualmente
DENG_{IV} *adv.* Eng. very, much, highly, Fr. becauoup, It. molto
DÝLLĚ_I *m.* a solid, yellowish non glycerine substance allied to fats and oils secreted by bees, plastic when warm and melting at high temperature, Eng. wax, Fr. cire, It. cera
DÝLLĚ_{II} *m.* Eng. woolen lips, Fr. levres en laine It. labra di lana
DÝLLĚ_{III} *adv.* denoting the highest degree of the yellow color, Eng. whey-faced, pale, Fr. pele, bleme, It. palido/a
FARMÁK_I *m.* Eng. poison, venom, Fr. poison, It. veleno
FARMÁK_{II} *adj.* Eng. bitter, acrid, Fr. amer, It. amaro
FARMÁK_{III} *adv.* Eng. very, Fr. plus, It. piu
FLÁKĚ_I *f.* Eng. flame, blaze
FLÁKĚ_{II} *adj.* Eng. shinning like a fire, fiery, ardent, Fr. ardent, It. ardente
FLÁKĚ_{III} *adv.* Eng. very, many Fr. tres, It. molto
FLÁKĚ_{IV} *adv.* Eng. entirely, completely, immediately, Fr. entierement, It. interamente
FÚG/Ě_{-A_I} *f.* something that whirls, revolves or goes around, an apparatus that whirls or revolves; Eng. whirligig, whipping top, Fr. moulin a vent, It. trottola
FÚG/Ě_{-A_{III}} *f.* Eng. fire, flame, blaze, heat, fervor, flambeau, Fr. incendie, chaleur, feu, flambeau It. fuoco, fiamma, calore, fervore
FÚGĚ_{-A_{IV}} *f.* Eng. scurry, running, jerk, rush, Fr. secousse, fonctionnement, se ruer, It. corsa, correre, precipitare, accelerare
FÚGĚ_{VI} *adv.* Eng. immediately, suddenly, Fr. immediatament, tout de suite It. immediatamente, subito
FÝELL_{-I_I} *m.* a musical wind instrument consisting of a tube with a series of finger holes or keys in which the wind is directly against a sharp edge ; Eng. flute, Fr. flute, It. flauto
FÝELL_{-I_{II}} *m.* Eng. bone of the nose, bone, Fr. l'os du nez, It. l'osso del naso
FÝELL_{-I_{III}} *adj.* Eng. straight, upright, empty, hollow, Fr. vide, It. vuoto
FÝELL_{-I_{IV}} *adv.* Eng. very, many Fr. plus, It. piu
GUR_I *m.* the hard substance formed from mineral and earth material, of which rocks consist; Eng. stone, Fr. pierre, It. pietra
GUR_{II} *adj.* Eng. compressed, compact, Fr. comprime/e It. compresso
GUR_{IV} *adv.* very, extremely (used mainly with adjectives)
HÉLM_{-I_I} *m.* a liquid solid or gaseous substance which has an inherent property that tends to destroy life or impair health, Eng. poison, venom, Fr. poison, It. veleno
HÉLM_{-I_{II}} *m.* Eng. helmet, casque, Fr. casque, It. casco
HÉLM_{-I_{III}} *adj.* Eng. very bitter, Fr. tres amer, It. molto amaro
HÉLM_{-I_{IV}} *adv.* in a high degree, extremely, Eng. very, Fr. tres, It. molto
KALLKÁN_{-I_I} *m.* a broad piece of armor, varying widely in form and size, Eng. shield, buckler Fr. bouclier, It. scudo
KALLKÁN_{-I_{II}} *m.* a pendent, tapering mass of ice, Eng. icicle, Fr. echeveau de glace, It. matassa di ghiaccio
KALLKÁN_{-I_{III}} *m.* being situated or acting between two points, stages, things or persons, Eng. intermediate, Fr. intermediaire, It. intermedio
KALLKÁN_V *adj.* extremely cold, Eng. icy, frozen, Fr. gele, It. congelato

KALLKÁN_{VI} *adv.* Eng. very, Fr. tres, It. molto

KĚRTHÍ_I *m.* a young sheep, Eng. lamb, Fr. agneau, It. Agnello; **KĚRTHÍ_{III}** *adj.* not matured, undeveloped, unripe, newborn; **KĚRTHÍ_{IV}** *adv.* Eng. late, behindhand, Fr. en retard, It. in ritardo; **KĚRTHÍ_V** *adv.* Eng. extremely, Fr. extremement, It. Estremamente

KORB_I *m. zool.* Any of several large, corvine birds having lustrous, black plumage and a loud, harsh call; Eng. raven, Fr. rhuabarbe, It. rabarbaro

KORB_{II} *adj.* Eng. very black, Fr. tres noir, It. molto nero

KORB_{II} *adv.* Eng. very, Fr. tres, It. molto

LAVRÁK_I *m.* any of the numerous edible, spiny-finned, fresh- water or marine fishes of the families Serranidae; Eng. bass, Fr. basse, It. spigola

LAVRÁK_{II} *adj.* Eng. thin, slim; Fr. mince, It. sottile

LAVRÁK_{III} *adj.* Eng. agile, spry, Fr. debrouillard, It. l'agile

LAVRÁK_{IV} *adv.* Eng. very, many Fr. plus, It. piu

LĚNG_I *m.* composed of molecules which move freely among themselves but do not tend to separate like those of gases, neither gaseous, nor solid; Eng. liquid, Fr. liquid, It. liquido

LĚNG_{II} *m.* to make liquid, liquefy, Eng. liquidize, Fr. liquefier, It. liquefare

LĚNG_{III} *adj.* Eng. liquid, fluid, Fr. liquid, It. liquido

LĚNG_{IV} *adv.* Eng. extremely, Fr. extremement, It. estremamente (with the adjective slim, thin)

LITÁR_{-I} *m.* a strong, thick line or cord, commonly one composed of twisted or braided strands of hemp, Eng. rope, Fr. corde, It. corda

LITÁR_{-II} *m.* Eng. 10-12 meters long, Fr. 10-12 metre de long, It. 10-12 metri di lunghezza

LITÁR_{III} *adv.* Eng. with thick, dense, inseparable dots, Fr. points epais et denses, It. punti densi e forti

LITÁR_{IV} *adv.* Eng. very, many. Fr. plus, It. piu

MJÁLTĚ_I *m.* a sweet viscid fluid produced by bees from the nectar collected from flowers, and stored in their nests. Eng. honey, Fr. miel, It. miele

MJÁLTĚ_{II} *adj.* Eng. very sweet, Fr. tres doux, It. molto dolce

MJÁLTĚ_{III} *adj.* Eng. glad, happy, content, Fr. heureux, content, pa de soucis, It. contento, felice, nessuna preoccupazione

MJÁLTĚ_{IV} *adv.* Eng. very (with the adjective sweet), Fr. tres (avec l'adjectif doux), It. troppo (con aggettivo dolce)

PAMBÚK_I *m. bot.* soft, white, downy substance consisting of the hairs or fibers attached to the seeds of malvaceous plants used in making fabrics, thread, wadding. Eng. cotton, Fr. coton, It. cotone

PAMBÚK_{II} *adj.* Eng. very soft, Fr. tres doux, It. molto morbido

PAMBÚK_{III} *adv.* Eng. very (with the adjectives soft and white) Fr. tres (avec l'adjectifs douce/doux; blanche/blanc), It. Troppo (con gli aggettivi morbido e bianco)

4. CONCLUSIONS

Randomly picking the examples analyzed above we could simply notice that Albanian analytical sustainable tools of constituting the superlative degree are abundant, diverse and rich. There is a high tendency of an evident transference using conversion patterns generally from nouns to adjectives and consequently adverbs which gives Albanian language ample and intense possibilities to strengthen the corpus of nouns used to express qualitative values and then intensifying the degree of the adjectives by being used as adverbs.

All the nouns used as illustrating examples share one and the only striking feature, they all denote concrete referents and most importantly all these elements of the objective reality excel for a very remarkable characteristic trait, which makes them evident. Besides, accompanied by a corresponding given adjective provides more possibilities to extend and enhance the quality toward a higher scale.

While analyzing the given examples we could emphasize the fact that all the other languages equivalent variants are generally conveyed as mere adjectives, or adverb of quantity + adjective pattern with no implication of nominal analytical tools denoting simultaneously the quality and the degree of quality as all the Albanian examples do provide. As a rule, the structure of the compositions is stable and static, with a definite word order of the componential elements in most of the cases with an amplified degree of figurative and stylistic values. In traditional oral speech these constructions are generally accompanied with an embedded, intensified specific intonation as far as the nominal components have already encompassed the logical stress of the whole word group. The basic emphasized differences between Albanian and other languages observed can be specifically regarded and approached as a clear and trustful argument to prove the original and authentic character of Albanian language as well as individual and independent status contrasted to other Indo-European languages.

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