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THE USE OF ARTICLES IN TOPONYMIC PHRASES IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN

This paper examines noun phrases functioning as toponyms in English and Albanian, with a particular focus on their degree of definiteness. By exploring the role of articles in achieving definiteness, the study conducts a contrastive analysis of article usage in these two languages. Given that the article is a complex grammatical category, acquired progressively across different linguistic levels, the paper aims to analyze and compare its role, grammatical function, and form, as well as the rules governing its use in toponymic phrases. Starting from the premise that English and Albanian belong to distinct language families, the study utilizes a corpus of sentence sets to investigate which linguistic factors influence the use of articles with geographical names. The findings reveal that, in Albanian, syntactic norms – the function of toponymic phrases within sentences – and pragmatic considerations play a significant role in determining article usage. In contrast, article application in English is shaped by the interplay of multiple linguistic disciplines, with semantics exerting the greatest influence. However, syntax also can play a role in dictating usage rules, while pragmatics and historical linguistics provide insights into exceptions and irregularities. This comparative study highlights the differing linguistic mechanisms that govern definiteness in toponymic noun phrases in English and Albanian, offering a deeper understanding of article usage across these two languages.

Key words: articles; contrastive analysis; geographical names; linguistic disciplines; Albanian; English

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to linguistic universals that characterize modern languages, there are also specific features that distinguish one language from another. Certain languages may lack shared linguistic components, and the article system serves as a clear example of this variation. Where articles do exist, they represent a highly complex grammatical category. Alongside challenges such as verb tense and aspect selection or subject-predicate agreement, the correct use of articles has proven to be a significant and often insurmountable difficulty in foreign language acquisition (Miller 2005). Even native speakers of article-based languages frequently face dilemmas when selecting the appropriate article. For speakers of languages that lack an article system, mastering their use in a foreign language can be particularly challenging. Similarly, speakers of languages with article systems that function differently encounter considerable difficulties in applying them correctly.

Although Albanian and English belong to different language families – English as a Germanic language and Albanian as part of the *Balkan Sprachbund*¹ – the presence of articles is a notable shared feature between them. This paper employs a contrastive analysis to examine the rules, functions, and patterns governing the use of articles in nominal constructions represented by toponymic phrases. Articles, as a universal linguistic feature, serve to define or more precisely specify a noun, thereby facilitating clear and coherent spoken or written discourse. As toponyms are inherently specific and individualized proper nouns, their use with articles is governed by distinct rules in both Albanian and English. This highlights the varying influence of linguistic disciplines, such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, in shaping the correct application of articles with toponymic phrases. Through contrastive analysis, the study aims to identify the similarities and differences in the treatment of this linguistic category in the two languages, contributing to a deeper understanding of their respective article systems.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, we begin by employing contrastive analysis as the primary methodological approach, which seeks to compare the use of elements in toponymic phrases and identify both similarities and differences in the relationship between the Albanian and English language pairs. At the outset, we adopt a descriptive method to present

¹ For further details on this topic, readers are encouraged to consult Mišeska Tomić (2006).

the theoretical framework regarding the use of articles in these two languages, drawing on relevant scholarly literature to support our analysis.

The analysis was conducted on a sample of sentences extracted from the grammars of both the Albanian and English languages, which were subsequently classified according to the established rules governing the use of articles in each language. For the Albanian corpus, we primarily relied on the grammar published by the Academy of Sciences of Albania (Agalliu et al. 2002), alongside other relevant grammars and studies on modern Albanian, particularly those addressing the use of specific forms with proper nouns (Demiraj 1972; Beci 2010; Shkurtaj 2010). In contrast, for the analysis of articles in English, we drew on several key English grammar books (such as *Advanced Grammar in Use* by Hewings) as well as advanced-level English textbooks intended for C proficiency (such as *Pioneer C1/C1+* by H. Q. Mitchell and Marileni Malkogianni), based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In addition to the fact that verbs serve as primary carriers of meaning within a sentence (Kukić 2024), nouns, as a lexical category, further elaborate and complete the sentence's meaning, functioning as key elements alongside verbs. Nouns are words that designate living beings, objects, and abstract concepts. In the Albanian language, they exhibit grammatical features such as gender, number, case, and both definite and indefinite forms. A foundational and widely accepted classification of nouns in linguistic theory distinguishes between proper nouns and common nouns. Common nouns refer to general concepts that share characteristics across a group, whereas proper nouns identify specific entities that are distinguished from others based on unique attributes. Proper nouns encompass names of individuals (including personal names, surnames, and pseudonyms), animals, geographic entities (such as countries, cities, mountains, seas, lakes, rivers, islands, and peninsulas), historical periods, events, institutions, organizations, political parties, corporations, titles of literary works, periodicals, and celestial bodies, among others. From a grammatical perspective, proper nouns in Albanian differ from common nouns in that they are typically singular and predominantly occur in the definite form (Begolli 1964; Agalliu et al. 2002; Jashari and Citaku 2009).

In English, nouns exhibit features of number, gender, case, as well as animacy, particularly with regard to human referents (Vuković-Nikolić 1995; Đorđević 2007).

The assertion that proper nouns are predominantly used in the singular and frequently in the definite form is well-established in English grammar. This pattern arises because proper nouns refer to specific entities (e.g., names of people, places, or organizations), and such references inherently imply uniqueness and specificity. For instance, when we refer to *Marco* or *Paris*, we are designating a particular individual or city, rather than a general or arbitrary person or place.

The grammatical categories of nouns in both Albanian and English exhibit significant similarities, as both languages distinguish features such as gender, number, case, and the use of articles (Kurani and Muho 2014).

However, there are instances in Albanian where proper nouns can appear in the plural form. This occurs, for example, with toponyms when two locations share the same name. For instance: *Në rrethin e Tiranës ka dy Selita: Selita e Madhe dhe Selita e Vogël* (Agalliu et al. 2002; Jashari and Çitaku 2009). Similarly, in English, proper nouns can also appear in the plural, particularly when referring to toponyms associated with multiple locations or entities. For example, when cities or towns share the same name, the plural form of the proper noun may be used for clarity (e.g., *The Londons*²). This phenomenon can also extend to situations involving individuals, as in the case of: *There were three Sues in my class at school*. Such usage likely arises from an analogical extension, where proper nouns take on a plural form to differentiate among shared entities (Carter and McCarthy 2006).

Proper nouns used to denote specific geographical entities are referred to as *toponyms* (Cipo 1949). Toponyms are nouns that identify and distinguish various spatial features, encompassing natural formations such as mountains, hills, fields, rivers, and lakes, as well as human-made structures such as factories, settlements, and states. Information about toponyms can be obtained from diverse sources, including geographical and historical texts, scholarly publications, newspapers, geographical and topographical maps, radio broadcasts, and television programs (Ahmetaj 1987; Draga 1987). Toponyms play a critical role in enabling accurate interpretation of cartographic representations of space and reflect the “historical and cultural state of the language of a particular region” – their significance extends beyond the field of onomastics, contributing to research in history, dialectology, ethnology, ethnography, and linguistics (Draga 1987; Mujaj 1987). In the latter half of the 20th century, onomastics, the study of names and their cultural and linguistic significance, developed into a distinct scientific subdiscipline (Hysenaj 2019). Every object with which humans interacted was assigned a name, often reflecting events, personal names, land ownership,

2 In addition to being the capital of England, London is also the name of three cities in the United States.

the physical characteristics of the landscape (such as shape or color), or historical structures. These names are transmitted across generations, preserving traces of history, archaic linguistic forms, and elements of cultural conceptualization (Zulbeari 2019). Toponyms constitute a remarkable aspect of linguistic and cultural research, safeguarding the cultural and historical heritage of a region. They offer valuable insights into the interplay of diverse cultural influences on a given population, serving as a testament to the historical and cultural narratives embedded within language.

4. THE CONCEPT OF DEFINITENESS

The definite article constitutes a lexical-grammatical category present in numerous languages, including English, Armenian, Bulgarian, Italian, Greek, Macedonian, Norwegian, German, Romanian, Spanish, and Albanian. The positioning of the article within a word, however, varies across languages. For instance, in languages such as English, Greek, French, Spanish, and German, the article is prepositive, occurring before the noun. In Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian, it can appear both before and after the noun. Conversely, in Albanian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Armenian, the article is postpositive, appearing after the noun (Spiro 2021). From a Balkanological perspective, articles represent one of the earliest shared linguistic features or Balkanisms of the region. Among Balkan languages, Albanian shares the most characteristics with Romanian regarding the grammatical category of definiteness and indefiniteness (Марковић and Маља Имами 2024). In English, the term *article* refers to a specific subcategory of determinatives that provide the fundamental expression of definiteness and indefiniteness (Pullum and Huddleston 2002). This classification situates articles within the broader category of determinatives, whose primary function is to signal the definiteness or indefiniteness of a noun phrase. Articles consistently appear before the noun phrase, either at the beginning, in the middle, or directly preceding the noun or an accompanying adjective (Vuković-Nikolić 1995). Additionally, articles are classified as central determinatives and exhibit distinct features related to definiteness and indefiniteness, including the use of the so-called *zero article*. This absence of an overt article carries its own grammatical significance, further enriching the complexity of the system.

In Albanian, as in other languages that employ a definite article, the declension of nouns is analyzed through two distinct forms: the indefinite and definite forms (Demiraj 1972). Nouns subject to definiteness include both common and proper nouns, encompassing those that denote natural objects, materials, and proper names of in-

dividuals, rivers, mountains, fields, lakes, and similar entities (Cipo 1952). The declension of proper nouns follows the same grammatical rules as that of common nouns, adhering to the principles of definite and indefinite forms. However, the determination of proper nouns does not carry the same functional significance, as proper nouns are inherently distinguished and individualized by their very nature (Agalliu et al. 2002).

In contrast, English does not exhibit a case system comparable to that of Albanian. Nevertheless, the need for expressing definiteness in nouns is addressed through its article system. The definite article *the* signals specificity, while the indefinite articles *a* and *an* (depending on phonological context) indicate indefiniteness. Additionally, English employs the *zero article* in certain contexts, particularly when generalization is implied, adding an additional layer of nuance to its system of nominal determination.

In the Albanian language, all nouns, both common and proper, are assigned one of three grammatical genders: masculine, feminine, or neuter. The gender of a noun is determined by the postpositive article (*i, u, a, t*) that the noun takes in the nominative singular form. This article system is integral to identifying gender and is thus referred to as the definite article (Begolli 1964; Beci 2010; Millaku and Topanica-Millaku 2021).

In contrast, the English language operates under a natural gender system, where gender distinctions are largely influenced by the social or biological sex of the noun rather than by grammatical rules. Thus, the category of gender in English is regarded as primarily semantic, logical, and inherent, rather than grammatical (Đorđević 2007). Consequently, the articles in English do not serve a grammatical function in assigning gender to nouns.

It is worth noting that some English nouns reflect gender distinctions through the use of specific suffixes or specialized terms, such as *tigress*, *lioness*, or *goddess* (Kukić and Marković 2023). However, these gendered forms are becoming less prevalent as language shifts toward gender-neutral alternatives, such as *police officer* instead of *policeman*, reflecting broader societal trends toward inclusivity.

5. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Proper nouns in Albanian exhibit definite and indefinite forms, much like common nouns. However, their use in the indefinite form is more restricted, and the function of the definite article differs from its use with common nouns. In contrast, in English,

articles are predominantly used with common nouns (Newmark, Hubbard and Prifti 1982; Shkurtaj 2006; Çanta 2018). In Albanian, syntactic factors play a crucial role in the formation of these noun forms, particularly the function of proper nouns within a sentence and their interaction with other types of words, such as numerals, demonstrative pronouns, and indefinite pronouns. These elements act as noun modifiers and, in turn, influence the use of the indefinite form (Agalliu et al. 2002; Jashari and Citaku 2009). The distinction between the definite and indefinite forms in Albanian is largely governed by syntactic rules rather than semantic considerations. Consequently, scholars studying Albanian grammar often assert that proper nouns are usually used in the definite form (Beci 2010) or have a formally determined form (Shkurtaj 2010), particularly when referring to names of countries, political entities, geographic locations, and official government institutions (Veselaj 2009). One of the most prevalent errors in the use of standard Albanian involves the incorrect application of the definite and indefinite forms of proper nouns. This issue is primarily attributed to the extensive integration of foreign names into the Albanian lexicon (Durmishi 2020). Toponyms are often used in their indefinite form when encountered on road signs, such as *Rruga për Tiranë* (Road to Tirana). However, on maps, plans, and sketches, toponyms are consistently presented in their definite form (Veselaj 2009).

In the English language, semantics and pragmatics – specifically meaning and context – are the primary determinants in selecting the appropriate article, whether definite, indefinite, or zero. This emphasizes that syntax plays a secondary role in article usage, as the meaning of the noun takes precedence. Since proper nouns are inherently specific and self-defining, they are typically not preceded by an article, resulting in the use of the so-called *zero article*. However, there are instances where certain toponyms are conventionally associated with either the use or omission of an article, depending on semantics, contextual factors, historical references, or other influences that shape article usage in relation to toponyms.

Toponyms, as a distinct class of words, are frequently encountered in both written and spoken communication. The paper examines the influence of various linguistic disciplines on the use of articles with specific toponymic expressions such as rivers, oceans, islands, mountains, states, and cities. Based on the selected corpus, a contrastive analysis is conducted to identify the similarities and differences in the functioning of the article system in the Albanian-English language pair. Given that proper nouns (particularly toponyms) in English are typically used with the definite article *the*, the initial focus of the analysis is on toponymic phrases that include the definite article, followed by an exploration of those phrases where the article is omitted:

1. Rivers: In English, the definite article *the* is consistently used with the names of rivers (Mitchell and Malkogianni 2017: 192).

The Danube passes through Belgrade.

Danubi kalon nëpër Beograd.

In both English and Albanian, the definite article is applied to river names, albeit with different underlying principles. In English, the use of the definite article is semantically motivated, with the consistently marking river names as unique entities (e.g., the Nile, the Amazon). In Albanian, however, the meaning of the noun – specifically, its status as a river name – does not directly determine the use of the definite form. Instead, the defining factor lies in the noun's inherent uniqueness as a proper noun, which typically assumes the function of the subject³ in a sentence. An important divergence in Albanian arises when a common noun precedes a proper noun. In such cases, the common noun assumes the definiteness marker, and the proper noun assimilates to the common one (Riza 1979)⁴. Here, the proper noun functions as an apposition (alb. *ndajshitim*)⁵ to the definite common noun. Specifically, when a proper noun follows a definite common noun denoting a geographical term, it serves as an appositive, clarifying or specifying the name of the place (Agalliu et al. 2002; Çeliku et al. 2002).

The use of common nouns with proper nouns does not influence the application of the article in English. Regarding the degree of equivalence, the example provided demonstrates full equivalence; however, this equivalence arises from a coincidental alignment between the semantic meaning in English and the syntactic function in Albanian. In Albanian, if the noun were to serve a different syntactic role (e.g., following prepositions that govern the accusative case), it might not necessarily appear in the definite form. Instead, other syntactic norms would dictate its usage. In contrast, English consistently employs the definite article with river names, irrespective of their syntactic role in the sentence. Consequently, in other instances, the equivalence between the two languages may shift, leading to partial equivalence or non-equivalence depending on the syntactic and semantic interplay.

3 The most common way of expressing the subject in a sentence is through a noun in the nominative and definite form (Çeliku et al. 2002).

4 This mechanism in Albanian is also applied to other toponyms when a common noun precedes a proper noun.

5 Apposition (alb. *ndajshitim*) is most commonly expressed by a noun or a nominalized word that shares the same referent as the term it complements. Its primary function is descriptive, serving to provide additional explanation or clarification of the term it accompanies. In Albanian, apposition is typically used in an invariable form, specifically in the nominative singular (Çeliku et al. 2002).

***The** Danube river passes through Belgrade.*
Lumi Danub kalon nëpër Beograd.

2. Oceans: In English, the definite article *the* is used with the names of oceans (Mitchell and Malkogianni 2017).

***The** Pacific Ocean is the largest ocean in the world.*

Oqeani Pacifik është oqeani më i madh në botë.

Pacifiku është oqeani më i madh në botë.

Relying on the rule of assimilation, where a proper noun conforms to a common noun in Albanian, the common noun in the syntagm *Oqeani Pacifik* serves as the bearer of definiteness. If the common noun is excluded, the proper noun assumes the definite article (*Pacifiku*) (Riza 1979; Agalliu et al. 2002; Çanta 2018). Regarding the degree of equivalence, the same principle observed in the previous example applies here.

3. Islands: In English, the use of the definite article with islands depends on the physical concept of a group of islands. The definite article is not typically used with individual islands unless their name includes an adjective or a descriptive phrase (e.g., the Virgin Islands). However, when referring to a group of islands, the definite article is used (e.g., the Bahamas) (Mitchell and Malkogianni 2017).

I visited Hawaii last summer, and the beaches were breathtaking.

E vizitova Havain (Ishullin e Havait) verën e kaluar, dhe plazhet ishin mbresëlënëse.

*They are vacationing in **the** Bahamas, where they plan to relax.*

Ata po pushojnë në Bahamet, ku planifikojnë të çlodhen.

*They sailed around **the** Virgin Islands, stopping at different ports to enjoy the local cuisine.*

Ata lundronin nëpër Ishujt e Virgjër, duke u ndaluar në porte të ndryshme për ta shijuar kuzhinën vendase.

In Albanian, when common geographical names are used in the plural, the common noun is omitted, and the proper noun takes on definiteness (e.g., *Bahamet*),

which mirrors the usage in English⁶ (Çanta 2018). In the case of groups of islands, the degree of equivalence between the two languages is complete, as both syntax and semantics align. In both Albanian and English, toponyms marked by a proper noun in the plural will be used in the definite form.

4. Mountains: In English, individual mountains are generally not preceded by an article (Quirk et al. 1985). This usage parallels that of islands, where no article is employed for individual islands. However, when referring to mountain ranges, the definite article *the* is used, similar to the treatment of groups of islands (Quirk et al. 1985).

*Her project showed the beauty of **the** Andes and their peaks.*

*Projekti i saj e tregoi bukurinë e **Andeve** dhe të majave të tyre.*

Although the genitive plural form in Albanian is identical for both definite and indefinite nouns, it can be concluded that the noun is used in the definite form, as genitive nouns are not typically used in the indefinite form unless accompanied by a determiner that necessitates it. Referring to the earlier rule regarding groups of islands, the same applies to mountain ranges, which are considered a group of mountains. Thus, the noun appears in the plural and definite form (e.g., the Alps – *Alpet*) (Çanta 2018). Based on the same mechanism observed with groups of islands, the degree of equivalence here is complete, as both mountain ranges and island groups are expressed by nouns in the plural form with a definite article.

He plans to climb Kilimanjaro next year.

Ai planifikon të ngjitet në Kilimanxharo vitin e ardhshëm.

The example in English does not include an article due to its semantic meaning, as it refers to a singular mountain. In contrast, in Albanian, the noun will not take the definite form due to the syntactic function of the preposition used with the accusative case (e.g., *në, për, nëpër*)⁷, which typically requires nouns to be in the indefinite form, as in *Jam në Shqipëri* (I am in Albania), *Nisem për Shqipëri* (I am heading to Albania), and *Kaloj nëpër Tiranë* (I pass through Tirana) (Agalliu et al. 2002; Jashari and Çitaku

6 Toponyms that contain a plural form in their name and represent a group or collection of entities (such as mountain ranges or archipelagos) are typically accompanied by the definite article in English. However, it is important to note exceptions, such as nouns whose singular form resembles their plural form by ending in -s (e.g., Athens, Brussels, Belarus).

7 For more on prepositions governing the accusative, refer to: Krijezi, M. (2023). *Semantics of Prepositions in the Modern Albanian Language*. Belgrade: University of Belgrade - Faculty of Philology.

2009; Shkurtaj 2010; Beci 2010). While mountains denote unique concepts, and we know precisely which term is being referenced, in accusative constructions, they are used in the indefinite form and are treated as general locations (Krijezi and Mutavdžić, 2021). When considering the mountain as a distinct entity rather than a mountain range, the degree of equivalence in the given example is complete, yet it arises from the alignment of semantic meaning in English with the syntactic rules of Albanian.

5. Countries: In English, the use of the definite article *the* with country names follows specific patterns. Most countries, particularly those with one-word names (e.g., France, Japan, Brazil), do not require the definite article. However, *the* is used with countries that include terms like *Republic*, *Kingdom*, or *States* in their name, or with plural country names (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands). Furthermore, countries with descriptive phrases also take *the* (e.g., the United Arab Emirates, the Democratic Republic of the Congo). In general, one-word country names do not necessitate an article, while compound or plural names do (Vuković-Nikolić 1995).

She plans to move to France next year.

Ajo planifikon të shpërngulet në Francë vitin e ardhshëm.

*He dreams of studying at a university in **the** United States.*

Ai ëndërron të studiojë në një universitet në Shtetet e Bashkuara.

***The** United Arab Emirates has invested heavily in renewable energy.*

Emiratet e Bashkuara Arabe kanë investuar shumë në energji të ripërtëritshme.

Syntax plays a pivotal role in toponymic phrases related to country names in Albanian as well. In the first example, the proper noun *Francë* appears in its indefinite form due to the preposition governing the accusative case. In contrast, in the second and third examples, the toponyms are presented in the plural form, and thus the noun takes the definite form, in accordance with the plural rule discussed previously, which dictates the use of the definite form. Upon analyzing the degree of equivalence, it is evident that these examples exhibit a full degree of equivalence, resulting from the confluence of established linguistic mechanisms, both syntactic and semantic.

6. Cities: In English, the names of cities generally do not take articles. Whether referring to large cities like Paris, Tokyo, or New York, or smaller towns such as Loznica, city and place names typically stand alone without the definite article *the* or any other article (Quirk et al. 1985). However, when combined with the phrase *of*, the use of the definite article is possible, as in the example of the City of London (L. G. Alexander 2003). Additionally, historical context can influence the choice of article, as seen in the case of *The Hague*. The city's name comes from its Dutch form, *Den Haag*, where *den* translates to *the*. This structure was historically adopted into English, which is why *the* is used with *The Hague*, distinguishing it from other cities that do not take the definite article.

I love the city of London.

Mua më pëlqen qyteti i Londrës.

I visited London last summer.

E vizitova Londrën verën e kaluar.

In the first example, when a common noun (*qyteti*) is used, the proper noun (*Londra*) appears in the genitive case. In Albanian, the genitive case conveys possession, which serves to determine the noun, in a manner similar to other word classes such as possessive pronouns (Agalliu et al. 2002). Therefore, when a noun is in the genitive case, the noun it governs will also be in the definite form, just as the noun determining it is (Topalli 2011). Since the genitive in Albanian indicates possession, the noun determined by the genitive is not viewed as general, but as specific or definite due to the possessive relationship it establishes (Marković 2025). In the given Albanian phrase, both the common noun *city* and the proper noun *Londra* are definite. In contrast, in English, when the phrase is introduced with *of*, the definite article *the* appears only with the common noun *city*, while the proper noun *London* remains without an article. This difference highlights a partial degree of equivalence between the two languages, as the syntactic structure and article usage diverge in relation to the possessive construction.

In the second example, the proper noun adjacent to the transitive verb denotes the direct object and thus appears in the accusative case in Albanian (Agalliu et al. 2002). In contrast, in English, the proper noun representing the city name does not take the definite article, in accordance with the rule for its use. When discussing the degree of equivalence, it can be considered non-equivalence, as the semantic role in English

does not fully align with the syntactic structure in Albanian, despite both languages conveying similar meanings in different ways.

As the preceding contrastive analysis has shown, in English, the selection of articles with toponymic phrases is primarily governed by semantics, or meaning, with historical context occasionally influencing this choice. In contrast, syntax plays a predominant role in the Albanian language in determining article usage with such phrases. As a result, many examples illustrating the syntactic influence in Albanian could not be incorporated into the English discussion. Therefore, in the subsequent sections of this paper, we provide a detailed examination of specific syntactic norms that can affect article selection in Albanian toponymic constructions.

Certain scholars (Demiraj 1972; Agalliu et al. 2002; Beci 2010) have incorporated rules governing the use of proper nouns in definite and indefinite forms, which arise from syntactic norms, into their works. In this paper, we specifically highlight those rules that pertain to geographical concepts:

1. A proper noun is employed in the indefinite form when it functions in apposition, that is, when it serves to define or specify the common noun it is placed alongside⁸.

Në fshatin Gosë, arritëm vonë.

We arrived late in the village of Gos.

2. A proper noun is used in the indefinite form when it functions as a predicate nominative or predicate accusative, i.e., when it follows the verb *quaj*.

Ky qytet quhet Beograd.

This city is called Belgrade.

Këtë qytet e quajmë Tiranë.

This town we call Tirana.

3. A proper noun appears in the indefinite form when used as a vocative, provided it is not accompanied by any specific modifier, such as an adjective, possessive pronoun⁹, ordinal number, or similar element.

Sarajevë, o qytet i bekuar...

Sarajevo, the blessed city...

8 A detailed explanation of apposition in the Albanian language can be found in the first rule of the English language, particularly when the definite article is used with river names.

9 In Albanian *përemrat pronorë*.

In some grammars of Albanian, the vocative is treated as a distinct grammatical case. However, in most instances, it is regarded as a subset of the nominative case, with which it aligns in both the indefinite and definite forms. The vocative in Albanian generally uses the indefinite form of the noun (with exceptions for certain foreign-origin names). This rule is also applied to toponyms unless the noun is further specified by another word class, such as an adjective or possessive pronoun (Agalliu et al. 2002; Malja-Imami 2009).

In Albanian, the standard word order is *noun + adjective*. However, when this order is inverted, the adjective assumes definiteness. Specifically, when an adjective precedes a noun, the adjective is declined, while the noun following it remains unchanged. The declension pattern of the adjective in such cases aligns with the paradigm used when the adjective follows the noun. Moreover, since the declension of adjectives mirrors that of nouns, adjectives are classified according to the same criteria used for nouns (Agalliu et al. 2002).

E bukura Bosnjë...
Beautiful Bosnia...

A proper noun functioning as a toponym is used in the indefinite form when combined with the ablative preposition *prej*. This construction emphasizes movement, specifically the act of starting from a point considered a general or nonspecific location, similar to its usage with the accusative. It serves to denote origin but without providing precise information about the exact location, instead conveying the sense of “somewhere from...”. Conversely, when the nominative preposition *nga* is used with the same meaning, the proper noun takes a definite form. This distinction arises from the rule that nominative forms governed by *nga* typically appear in the definite form (Shkurtaj 2010; Krijezi and Mutavdžić 2021).

Vjen prej Madridi.
He comes from Madrid.

A proper noun appears in the indefinite form of the ablative when it denotes the type or category of something, and the noun it modifies (which precedes it) is also in the indefinite form. If the primary noun in the phrase were in the definite form, the proper noun, functioning as a toponym, would instead appear in the genitive case. In other words, when the first noun is indefinite, the second noun cannot carry a post-positive article and, therefore, cannot express definiteness (Topalli 2011).

Ullinj Berati
Berat olives

Regarding the degree of equivalence, based on the rules outlined for the Albanian language, the examples provided are fully equivalent in English, specifically in the context of city names. This complete equivalence arises from an accidental alignment between the semantic meanings in English and the syntactic norms of Albanian. However, certain deviations may occur in instances where the role of syntax in article usage in English becomes relevant (e.g., in the *of* phrase construction).

6. CONCLUSION

Toponyms are a crucial and intricate aspect of linguistics, as naming something inherently involves creating that thing. In other words, without a name, something remains unnoticed for cognitive and communicative purposes; to name is to assign meaning and significance to a place within the human framework. Toponyms function as “cultural markers”, offering insights not only into cultural shifts but also into changes driven by human activity (Algeo and Algeo 2000).

A fundamental characteristic of both Albanian and English is the presence of the definite article. However, a key difference between the two languages lies in the position of the article. In English, the definite article is prepositive, appearing before the noun it modifies, while in Albanian, it is postpositive, expressed through suffixes that are physically integrated into the noun itself to indicate definiteness. Additionally, in English, the definite article is represented by the form *the*, which remains unchanged regardless of the noun it modifies. In contrast, the Albanian definite article varies based on the gender of the noun, with distinct forms such as *-i*, *-u*, *-a*, and *-t*. While in English only certain groups of proper nouns take the definite article, in Albanian, proper nouns can appear in both definite and indefinite forms, akin to common nouns, depending on the syntactic rules governing their use in specific contexts.

In conclusion, while syntactic norms play a central role in determining the function of toponymic words in Albanian, the application of the article with toponyms in English is largely driven by the semantic meaning of the word, i.e. the specific representation of the noun. The contrastive analysis revealed that although the article system in both languages serves a similar function, their usage differs significantly. In Albanian, syntax exerts a dominant influence, whereas in English, semantics plays a crucial role in determining the form of toponyms. Furthermore, in many cases, there is complete equivalence between the two languages, which arises from accidental matches due to the meaning of the word in English and its syntactic function in Albanian.

From the perspective of native speakers, the use of articles typically poses no chal-

lenge, as their correct application is acquired unconsciously. However, when it comes to learning a foreign language, simply mastering grammatical rules is insufficient. A deeper understanding and awareness of other linguistic domains, such as pragmatics and the role of context, are essential. Through a contrastive analysis of Albanian and English, it becomes evident that the continuous development of linguistic competencies, along with an understanding of the factors that influence article usage, is crucial for achieving precise language proficiency. This comparison offers a systematic exploration of the general principles governing article use, which can be valuable not only in the process of acquiring either of these languages but also in shaping translational theories, methodologies, and future comparative linguistic studies.

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UPOTREBA ČLANOVA U TOPONIMSKIM SINTAGMAMA NA RELACIJI ENGLESKOG I ALBANSKOG JEZIKA

Sažetak:

Predmet rada je razmatranje imeničkih sintagmi sa značenjem toponima u engleskom i albanskom jeziku, odnosno njihovog stepena određenosti. Kako se određenost imeničkih sintagmi u oba jezika postiže upotrebom članova – rad kontrastira upotrebu članova u ovim jezicima. Budući da je upotreba člana kompleksna gramatička jedinica, koja se usvaja postepeno i na različitim jezičkim nivoima, cilj ovog rada je da kontrastivnom analizom prikaže i u isto vrijeme uporedi ulogu, gramatičku funkciju i oblik, kao i pravila po kojima se upotrebljavaju članovi uz toponimske sintagme na relaciji ova dva jezika. Polazeći od stanovišta da albanski i engleski jezik ne pripadaju istoj grupi jezika, rad uvodi korpus koji je sačinjen od setova rečenica sa ciljem da razmotri koje lingvističke discipline utiču na upotrebu članova uz geografske nazive. U radu dolazimo do zaključka da u albanskom jeziku ulogu u određivanju toponimskih riječi imaju sintaksičke norme, odnosno funkcija ovih riječi u rečenici, i pragmatičke reference. Nasuprot tome, primjena člana uz toponimske riječi u engleskom će zavisi od uzajamnog uticaja različitih lingvističkih disciplina, sa semantikom i sintaksom koje diktiraju pravila upotrebe, a pragmatika i istorijska lingvistika pružaju objašnjenja o pojavi mogućih odstupanja.

Ključne riječi: članovi; kontrastivna analiza; toponimske sintagme; lingvističke discipline; albanski jezik; engleski jezik

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