

Agglutinative words and locutions in the Albanian language: Morphological processes in word-formation (Similarities/dissimilarities and interrelations between them)

PhD Maklena Çabej
University of Tirana, Albania

Abstract

Main objective of this study is to analyze the structure of agglutinative words and locutions, as two of the most interesting processes of word formation in the Albanian language. This analysis serves to detect both similarities and differences between them, in order to not confound them. In order to understand how they function and interact between each other, this study highlights the specifics of each morphological process and the criteria for defining them. The criteria that define word formation as a process (semantic criteria, morphological criteria, syntax criteria) are used to analyze both agglutination and locution. The structure of these words/phrases was taken into consideration.

Using the latest dictionaries of the Albanian language (1980 and 2006) and analyzing them based on the previous Albanian and foreign linguist work and the work of this study, we have concluded based on sound arguments that agglutination and locution are two active processes of word formation in the Albanian language, albeit not very productive. They exist separately and independently from each other. However, there is a tendency for locutions to be transformed into agglutinative words by the way of synthetic processes that merge the parts of locutions.

Keywords: agglutination, locution, word formation.

Introduction

Word structures take many forms in the Albanian language. A word can be comprised of a single morpheme, in which case it would be a root morpheme (*punë* - work, *vajzë* - girl, *hap* - open, etc.), or it can be formed of multiple morphemes (*punë-tor-ë* - workers, *vajzë-ri-a* - girlhood, *mbyll-i* - closed, etc.)

Thus, to in order to build a new structure from the root word *punë*, the element *-tor* is added in the process of suffixation. Furthermore, in order to change it from singular to plural, the plural's inflection element *-ë* is added. In the same manner, in order to create the structure *imbyllur* (closed), which is an adjective, the root word *mbyllur*, which is an adjective, is prefaced by the preposition *i*.

The different forms of addition or interconnection of morphemes used to create new forms or words, as well as their new meanings, determine the structure of new words. If the new lexicological or grammatical meanings are incorporated within the root word, by changing its structure, then the new word has a synthetic structure, as is the case with the word *punëtorë*. When the new lexicographic or grammatical meaning is used outside of the root word, then the new word has an analytical structure, as is the case with the word *imbyllur*.

In the Albanian language, the agglutination is a morphological process, used to create new words, where the new meaning is incorporated into the new word (for example, *gjith-motnë* – always, *as-kush* – nobody, etc.). Thus, the agglutinative words have a synthetic structure.

On the other hand, locutions have an analytical structure. Although comprised of several words, they function as a single word in terms of meaning. The structure of locutions in the Albanian language, with one word being the main word and the others being the subservient words, creates problems when looking for them in dictionaries.

Usually locutions, both when they are comprised of inflected or uninflected words, have one main word (*lulemaji* – May flower>noun locution, *ngjyrë argjendi* – silver colour>adjective locution, *vëre* – I notice>verb locution, *me kujdes* – carefully> adverb locution, etc.). The main word is commonly called “the head” of the locution

Based on this criteria, one can find the locution and analyse its structure. On the other hand, if a locution does not have a primary word, but only subservient words, as is the case with conjugal locutions, they can be identified based on their structural construct, i.e., from the special meaning of the first part of the locution (Samara, 1992, p.1-4)

Agglutinative words and locutions in the Albanian language have other differences between them, aside for structural ones. However, to better understand them, one has to analyse first their similarities, explaining how these two processes interact between them.

I. Agglutination, features and criteria for defining it

In general, most linguists do no longer make a distinction between agglutinative words and locutions, including them in the same category of word formation process – composition. However, morphologists separate these two processes by the specific structural building characteristics of agglutinative word on one hand, and locutions on the other.

Thus, in French, the words *toujours* (*tout les jours*)>always and *demi-jour* (*demi+jour*)>midday are considered composite words. However, their building processes are distinctively different. The agglutinative word *toujours* is created by the agglutination of two or more words, which, during a long time in use, are merged in one word, preserving the order they had in the original phrase (Demiraj, 1971, p. 21). In major dictionaries, agglutination is defined as a combination of simple words, without changing their form and meaning (A.S. Hornby, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English, 1974, p. 18). In Petit Larousse, agglutination is defined as the creation of a new word by concatenating two or more simple words, preserving their original meaning (Petit Larousse, 1979, p. 21).

However, in grammatical texts or in studies on word-formation and word structures, languages in which agglutinative words are often used are called agglutinative languages. In these cases, agglutination is defined as the morphologic process of adding to the base words affixes or suffices. Thus, in analysing agglutinative structures, one should consider their composition and compounding.

In many languages, word composition is a very productive way of word-formation, because of their clarity and semantic abundance (Booij, 2010, p. 75). However, different linguists, depending on the language of their expertise, do not use the same categorisation mechanism for word compositions.

Thus, Lieber suggests two forms of word composing in English: synthetic composites and root composites (Lieber, 2005, p. 375-376). On the other hand, Tournier, one of the few French linguists who have specialized in contemporary English lexicology, makes the point that in addition to simple composites (compounds), there are composites created by juxtaposition or amalgamation (agglutination) (Tournier, 1988, p. 63).

Based on these arguments, in this study we will consider agglutinative words as a form of composites, taking into account their distinctive features in the Albanian language. Thus, from a lexicological perspective, an agglutinative word expresses a certain independent notion, that is equal to the sum of the meanings of words comprising it. The agglutinative word *atëherë* (at that time) has an independent meaning. that is the sum of the meanings of two words *atë+herë* (that+time).

The lexicological meaning of agglutinative words separates them from other forms of composites, like word phrases adverbial composites word groups and sentences. Therefore, no matter how many words are agglutinated, an agglutinative word stands alone as a unit – it does not represent relations between morphological units (Buxheli, 2009, p. 70).

From a syntax perspective, agglutinative words are created by lexicalization of a group of words (from locutions). When a group of words merges, the syntax order of the original words remains the same. For example, the agglutinative word *matanë* (on the other side) is formed from the lexicalization of the word group *më + atë + anë* (*on+theother+side*).

From a morphological perspective, the parts of an agglutinative word preserve their forms of epitomizing. In the agglutinative word *paradite*, created from concatenating the words *para* (before) and *ditë* (day) the epitomes are preserved, but the inflection is used on the second word. Thus, the new word is different from a phonetic-morphological perspective.

II. Locutions, features and criteria for identifying them

In general, in the Albanian language, a locution is treated as a group comprised of two or more words, that, as a group, has grammatical and lexicographical characteristics similar to single words and that expresses a unique concept. Locutions might be comprised of non-inflected words or one of them might be inflected. Always one of the words is the main word (the head of the locution). However, it's not always an easy task to identify the boundaries that separate locutions from other similar forms of speech.

As a matter of fact, in many languages, locutions are often confounded with word groups, idioms and other figures of speech. Even in grammatical texts of the same language, one can find cases that a certain group of words is considered an idiom in one text and locution in another.

Thus, in French, a noun syntagma, once it becomes a stereotype, is considered a

locution. However, some noun stereotype locutions like *potato avant-guerre* (before war) are considered as syntagma, rather than locutions – the boundaries between them not being clearly designated. Booij stresses that in many cases is difficult to separate a compound from a locution (Booij, 2010, pp. 81-85).

Similarly, in the Albanian language, locutions are often confused with other similar word groups, like figures of speech phrases, free word groups and compounds. Using some criteria can help to determine somehow the boundaries that separates them.

The criteria that determine the process of word formation (that were treated above in the agglutinations section) can be used for the definition of locutions. The criteria for defining locutions are semantic and morphologic. Using the semantic criteria, a word group is considered a locution when all the members of the group represent a unique functional lexicographic unit; i.e., they can have a meaning in a sentence only as a group (Likaj, Çabej M., 2010, p. 9).

According to the morphological criteria, all members of a locution should function as a unique grammatical unit; i.e., all of them should have similar morphological and syntax features (Likaj, Çabej M., 2010, p. 9). Even when there are words with different epitomes, only one changes morphologically, whereas the other remains unchanged (in the locution *marr vesh* > understand, only the verb *marr* > get undergoes morphological changes, whereas the noun *vesh* > ear remains frozen). In such a case, the unchanged element of the locution has lost its morphologic features (in the locution *me kujdes* > carefully, the noun *kujdes* > care is frozen).

Locutions can be detected by their syntax atomicity (Scalise, 1994, p. 89). They are like atoms, that cannot be separated by the normal rules of syntax, albeit they have an analytical structure. In between the words of a locution cannot be introduced other lexicological units and their order cannot be changed. This unique feature makes locutions distinctive from other word groups.

Similarities between agglutinative words and locutions

After analysing the criteria that separate the morphological processes of the creation of agglutinative words and locutions, one should understand also similarities and interchangeability between them.

First, locutions are a stepping stone towards agglutinative words; the latter are created by the lexicalization of the members of a locution. Currently, in the Albanian language there are locutions that are in the process of lexicalization. For example, in Albanian dictionaries one can find locutions like *sidoqë* (however) or *kurdoqë* (whenever) and also can find their agglutinative counterparts *sidoqë* (however) or *kurdoqë* (whenever). Second, both locutions and agglutinative words are characterized by syntax atomization (Scalise, 1994, p. 89); i.e., they are “atoms” within which syntax cannot “enter” to introduce extra elements or to change the rules of word movements. In agglutinative words this characteristic is obvious, because member words have already gone through a lexicalization process before creating the new word.

Thus, in the agglutinative word *nëse* (if), it is impossible to inject an element between the two parts (*në+se*) or to change their order, which would completely change the meaning. The same is valid for locutions, too. In the locution *nëqoftë se* (if), one cannot

inject an element or change their order, which would completely change the meaning. Third, in the structure of agglutinative words and locutions all type of words can be part of. In both those structures it is noticed a tendency to keep frozen the order of the words.

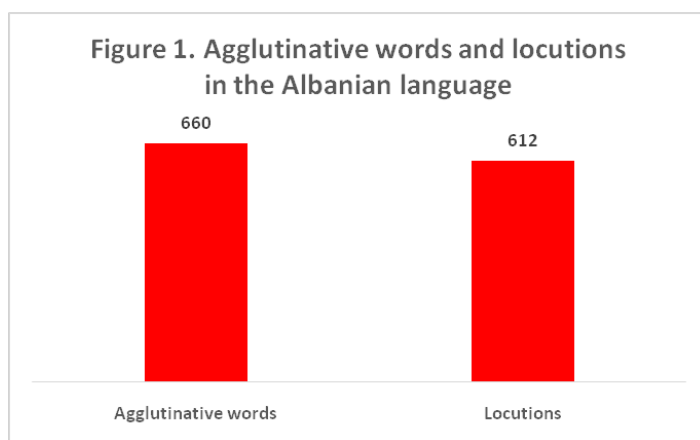
Forth, both these processes more often involve non-inflective words, though in the Albanian language are not as productive as in other languages. Thus, the adverb, which is non-inflective in Albanian and has independent meaning, is involved in around 300 agglutinative words and around 150 locutions.

Differences between agglutinative words and locutions

The most distinctive difference between agglutinative words and locutions is found in their structure. As analysed above, the agglutinative words have a synthetic structure; i.e., two or more words are merged in one (*anembanë, meqenëse, bardhezi, bëzaj*, etc.). On the other hand, locutions have an analytical structure; i.e., the member words of the group haven't merged yet (*nëqoftë se, me qëllimqë, në vend..., copë e çikë*, etc.).

Second, the lexicological meaning of an agglutinative word equals the meaning of the sum of its original member words. On the other hand, a locution acts like a single word but grammatically looks like a small sentence or fragment of a sentence. Therefore, one of its parts might be dependent on the syntax and morphological rules regulating other parts of the sentence.

Using the criteria analysed in this study, a careful examination of the most extensive dictionary of the Albanian language (Fjaloriigjuhëshqipe, 2006) revealed that there are currently 660 agglutinative words and 612 locutions in the Albanian language (Figure 1).



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