

YOUTH LANGUAGE: EXPLORING ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ALBANIAN STUDENTS TOWARD THESE NEW LINGUISTIC PATTERNS

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the complexities of youth language within the Albanian context, focusing on students’ insights and perspectives regarding these linguistic patterns in their everyday communication. It gives a general view on Albanian youth’s “New languages”, by ground-working a theoretical framework of this social organization of conversation within this age group. Drawing upon sociolinguistic theories and methodologies, the research seeks to illuminate the nuanced interplay between language, culture, and identity among Albanian youth. A mixed-methods approach incorporating a questionnaire and qualitative interviews collected data from a diverse sample of students at the University of Korça City, Albania. The students come from diverse educational backgrounds, bringing different attitudes and perceptions about the language they use within their peer groups and about the influence youth language has on the standard language.

The findings underscored a multifaceted landscape of insights into youth language among Albanian students. While some participants viewed youth language as a dynamic expression of contemporary youth culture, others perceived it as a degradation of the Albanian language or a barrier to effective communication. Furthermore, the study revealed that perceptions of youth language were deeply intertwined with broader sociocultural dynamics, including notions of social identity, peer influence, and globalization.

In conclusion, this study serves as a catalyst for further exploration of youth language dynamics in the Albanian context, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate linguistic, sociocultural, and educational perspectives. By focusing on the voices and experiences of Albanian youth, this research endeavors to enrich our understanding of language as a dynamic site of cultural negotiation and identity construction in contemporary Albanian society.

KEYWORDS: attitude, youth language, linguistic innovations, communicative aspect, social identity, Albanian context, interpersonal relationship, social phenomenon.

1. Introduction

The Albanian linguistic context serves as the basis for developing and using the youth language (hereinafter YL). It is a dynamic interaction between the existing language structures, cultural influences, and the creative language practices of young people. YL refers to the distinct set of linguistic patterns, expressions, and vocabulary characteristics of young people within a particular cultural or social group, often reflecting their shared experiences, identities, and subcultural affiliations. This language is dynamic, constantly evolving, and influenced by various factors such as popular culture, social media, peer groups, and generational differences. It can include slang terms, neologisms, abbreviations, and stylistic features that may be unique to a specific youth community.

Drawing on Ferdinand de Saussure’s assertion that “In language, there are only differences” (Wardhaugh, 2000, p.23), it can be seen that even the “new language” used by young people within their peer groups exhibits its unique variations. YL includes words used especially in a certain social context. Before a new slang term enters the mainstream culture, it is often widely used within a subculture and is shaped more by social dynamics than by any single person. Slang has become socially acceptable because it brings a fresh and intriguing aspect to language, and linguists continuously study it as a reflection of the culture that creates and employs it (Britannica, n.d. “Slang”).

In recent years Albania has experienced significant social and economic changes. The younger generation is shaped by global trends and modern values, yet continues to uphold traditional Albanian customs and values. YL is widespread among Albanian youth, reflecting the evolving social and cultural dynamics within the country. These linguistic expressions provide a unique and creative way for young people to express themselves and communicate with their peers.

Language use in adolescence - even in the Albanian context - is also discussed in terms of the structure of adolescent peer groups and the communicative demands of peer group interaction.

Adolescence is an age of communicative nearness, in which dense social networks press for linguistic conformism (Chambers, 1995; Androutsopoulos, 2005, p. 1502).

According to Coleman (2012, p.4), “slang is an attitude expressed in words of coolness and admiration. Slang today isn’t what it was before the age of mass communications, and the Internet. Slang was once considered a sign of poor taste, but now it signifies that the speaker is fun-loving, youthful, and trendy”. The natural development of communicative competence and the natural formation of personality are closely related to language learning, its enrichment, and development, during the process of learning to maintain certain relationships with certain groups. Being a member of a group requires a certain level of social interaction. Through society, young people learn to define their own identity. Communication within such groups provides an opportunity to apply social skills and develop effective strategies for communicating with peers and others. Separation from parents and being part of a wider social environment with non-familial ties is a crucial developmental stage that the adolescent must pass through (Roberts 1985; Coleman 1992, as cited in Arnon et al. 2008, p. 374).

The increased importance of peer groups and youth slang makes the youngster an effective social agent. It is precisely the theory of socialization that reflects the psychological characteristics of teenagers when they grow up; it tends to make them more similar to each other within their peer group environment and less adult-like. Based on the fact that language is a fundamental factor for the expression of perception, feeling, opinion, and judgment, its learning, cultivation, and development should not be understood only as a need or means of intercommunication, orientation, and action, but also as a fundamental factor for the development of competence, proper language, personality formation, awareness, and cultural and social identity. “YL thus serves social functions, setting and proclaiming social boundaries and permitting speakers to assert or claim membership in identity or solidarity groups” (Spolsky, 1998, p. 36).

2.Theoretical framework

Languages consistently exhibit a significant internal variation, and speakers regularly take advantage of the various linguistic options available to them. People do not always speak in the same manner and constantly adapt the nuances of their language for various purposes. As a result, many linguists view any language as a homogeneous entity and each speaker of that language as adjusting only a single style. That language will display an internal variation and single-style speakers who have their style of speaking can not be found. If they are found they may seem quite ‘abnormal’ (Wardhaugh, 2000, p. 5).

Young people enjoy connecting with their peers by using the same words and expressions. Imitation plays a role in their sense of belonging to a group. During adolescence, a crucial stage in their lives, youngsters engage in linguistic practices that contribute to the symbolic creation of their identity. These practices help them stand out from others, shape their unique identity, and allow them to be part of a "clan" or "group" (Baie, 2019). Young people have fun and make fun of the adults’ total incomprehension.

As youth language is dynamic and influenced by multiple sociolinguistic factors, comparing different contexts helps identify how these factors shape language use and reveal how cultural norms and values impact linguistic choices. Youth frequently code-switch or borrow from multiple languages. A comparative approach helps analyze how these practices function across different settings. That is why we may refer even to the French context as an example.

Referring to the French context, the words youngsters use are different from the French language learned at school, they deliberately deviate from the norm. Adolescents always need to create new languages to recognize themselves and be recognized, or to communicate in a peer group by using a common language (Messili & Aziza, 2004, pp. 21-32). The speech of young people, with its various codifications, functions as a sign of belonging to a group in revolt against exclusion. In the French context, as stated by Messili et Aziza (2004), young people have created ways to operate in a transgressive way, to be secretive: truncation of words, inversion of words, and borrowings from other languages. These ways of language creation are the same in our context, as evidenced by the data analysis results. The identification of young people from the cities with the linguistic forms that they use in the name of belonging to a group and in the name of the manifestation of identity seems to reduce language to function according to centering on words and expressions, to be coded and not to be a language any more. For many linguists, the vocabulary of cities is limited. It is based on clichés, verlan

and hyperbole. Many graphic expressions with violent connotations adorn the language of the suburb (Messili & Aziza, 2004).

Similarly to the French context, in the Albanian context, urban language serves as a means for marginalized youth to assert their identity, stand out, and be noticed by others. To communicate with a group of peers, you need a common language. For Messili and Aziza (2004) YL would participate in asserting oneself and opposing the “dominators”.

Sociolinguists focus on the language practices of a group of people who can interact and share not just a single language but a repertoire of languages or varieties. The members of a speech community share norms about the selection of varieties. A small social network forms a speech community - more concretely our students in this study. These smaller networks - groups of people who communicate regularly – also contain consistent linguistic patterns (Spolsky, 1998, p. 26). As Spolsky (1998) states, there are two principles underlying social accounts of language variation. Firstly, languages change over time as new words are added continuously in the youngsters' repertoire to deal with new concepts and to make language more interesting and attractive for the youth groups. Secondly, youngsters who communicate with each other tend to speak similarly (Spolsky, 1998, p. 28). Students in our context form their sub-groups, by age, experience, solidarity, status, values, cultural practices, and generational practices, isolated from other speakers of the language. Teenagers spend more time with their peers, which is the basic reason they have overdeveloped youth speech or slang (Larson & Verma, 1999). When youngsters talk, constructing a speech event means not only having a choice of grammatical and lexical features, but deciding which to choose from, depending on the situation of communication, and on the expectations raised in the speaker and listener by that situation (Kramsch, 1993, p.35). There are different ways of looking at a situation of communication. Each of them highlights a different dimension of the communicative event. One dimension is linguistic, which is determined by the internal context of utterance, which determines the form, appropriacy, and meaning of utterances (Lyons, 1977, p. 572). Meanings also depend on the external context of communication or the situational context of the speech event. Drawing on Kramsch's (1993) concept of communication contexts and situations, I believe these factors explain why shared codes for using youth language and "new" linguistic patterns are so important among young people. Goodwin (1981), in his study of the social organization of conversation, demonstrates that a speaker's awareness of how much information is shared or understood by other participants can influence how the speaker tailors their message to the audience.

Topics are introduced not only because of the participants' intentions but also because of perceived local interactional needs and the constraints imposed by multiple audiences (Kramsch, 1993, p.41). Similarly, Albanian youth use "new languages/expressions" to demonstrate their awareness and connection to the group they wish to belong to, even if not all of them enjoy using this language. This helps them feel more accepted by their peers. This interaction develops its dynamic strategies to be part of their age groups and feel more included. Using YL may be a perfect way to get the attention of the group you want to be part of. Referring to Goodwin (1981), “a word search provides a structure that enables the participants to achieve an appropriate state of mutual orientation, without allowing the task to emerge as a noticeable event in its own right. Instead of focusing on capturing the listener's attention, the speaker is engaged in something entirely different —searching for a word within the language they have created” (Goodwin, 1981, p. 143). “Youth language reflects shared norms, values, and cultural practices within specific youth subcultures or communities. Efforts to preserve youth language should be balanced with a commitment to promoting language proficiency and effective communication skills among young people” (ibid)

3. Methodology of the study

This study consists of in-depth information and perceptions through inductive and qualitative methods. It relies on an empirical framework, based on evidence and the analysis of the questionnaire answers. Essential to the phenomenological perspective and qualitative research is to perceive reality as others perceive and experience it (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 6). In our case, it refers to the use of hidden language by a group of university students within the Albanian context. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), doing qualitative research means seeing the world through the eyes of the participants, and achieving a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from a different perspective.

This research is focused on perspectives and understandings. We have tried to find out the meanings that students attach to their behavior, how they interpret YL, and what perspectives they have on specific issues that lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. We aimed to assess group cultures and cultural connections while exploring the broader meanings that permeate the cultures of various individuals. As Woods (2006) states, the researcher has to be closer to the group, live with them, empathize with them, explore their interests, and understand their relationships.

This study is a descriptive one. Rispaill (2005) suggests that a descriptive approach limits the study's objectives. This approach involves making choices, adopting a specific perspective, and expressing actions that influence social objects. The descriptive attitude assumes the responsibility of transmitting something to someone (Rispaill, 2005, pp. 100-101).

By describing and interpreting, we bring a perception of youth reality from the Albanian students' points of view through the language they use.

3.1. Research questions

The research is concentrated on students' insights into using YL, the complexities of their attitudes toward this language, taking into account factors such as social identity, linguistic authenticity, and cultural context and how they perceive the role of youth slang in shaping contemporary youth culture, by investigating the possible reasons why they use it during communication, according to their perceptions. It determines the frequency with which Albanian youth use YL and the motivations behind students' adoption or rejection of youth language within their peer groups.

The research questions aim to explore the benefits and drawbacks of using YL, based on students' opinions in the questionnaire and the role YL plays in impoverishing or enriching the Albanian language. Additionally, the study explores students' beliefs and perspectives on whether youth language is a legitimate form of expression or a deviation from standard grammar and vocabulary. It also examines how Albanian students perceive the influence of digital communication platforms and social media on the development and spread of YL.

The answers to all the questions raised in this study examine the dimensions of YL dynamics.

3.2. Participants

The study of contemporary YL among university students is valuable for analyzing the ongoing linguistic processes and understanding how these contribute to the formation and reflection of the modern youth's linguistic worldview (Baratovna, 2021, p. 273). That is why, we focused our research on a group of 30 students, 22 females and 8 males chosen from the 3rd year English course, Bachelor Studies, the University of Korça, Albania. A questionnaire is handed out to observe many issues related to the use of YL in students' daily conversations, and the sources from which this language is created. The participants were aware of the study's purpose and procedures. Furthermore, significant data is gathered about the way students learned about YL, the impact they believe they have on standard language, the way they feel when using and exchanging information with each other, and the most frequently used types of these linguistic patterns.

3.3. Data collection procedure

The design of the study survey was a questionnaire that was constructed to address the research questions mentioned above. Data collection included a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions in the form of a written interview, detailing the sequence of each question expressed in percentages and explanations.

The setting where data were collected was the classroom. The questionnaire was delivered to the students. While filling in and choosing the answers, students were free to ask for an explanation if needed. The questionnaire was anonymous and the students' responses were recorded manually. This approach ensures the accuracy and reliability of the data, as participants can provide honest answers without outside influence.

Ethical considerations involve ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of participants during data collection. Personal information provided by participants was securely stored and only accessible to this study. Participants were informed about how their data would be used and were guaranteed that their identities would remain confidential.

4. Data analysis

Through the questionnaire, we explored the attitudes and perceptions of a group of students towards youth language and its impact on language use and communication, including how it affects comprehension, clarity, and social interactions.

The answers to the questions from 1-15 are presented in statistics. The data of questions 15- 19 are interpreted visually in graph 1. Questions 20-24 are open-ended. They generally deal with the impact of digitalization on YL, the benefits, and drawbacks of using it in students' communication with others, and whether students think that YL should be considered a legitimate form of language or a deviation from standard grammar and vocabulary. The questionnaire explores students' motivation behind adapting or rejecting YL. The interviewees shared personal views and experiences in answering them.

1. Based on the frequency of the use of the Albanian Youth language (hereinafter AYL), the data indicates that 60% of the students admit to using it occasionally, 33% very frequently, and 7% rarely.

2. The findings suggest that 59% of the students may be rarely unfamiliar with any youth expression they encounter, and 41% are occasionally unfamiliar.

3. Albanian students use YL for various reasons; 40% use it to fit in their peer groups, to be affirmed, and to express their social identity. These findings support the idea as cited in Lutfullaevna (2021): "The formation of youth slang is influenced by the age characteristics of the psyche of young people, their desire for self-affirmation" (Lutfullaevna, 2021, p.55). 45% of the students use it to be creative with language, and not to be understood by others, and 15% out of snobbism and other reasons, such as fun or for not being bullied by their group.

4. 58% of the interviewed students said they learned about YL from social media, 33% from friends, and 8% from music and other media.

5. The majority of students, about 81%, believe that youth language should not be included in formal education. They feel that this "new language" weakens the existing language by promoting a simplified and often limited vocabulary. 19% say that YL should be included in formal education, pointing out that its use enriches language by reflecting the diversity and creativity of students' experiences and perspectives, introducing new words and expressions that can expand the language's capacity for self-expression.

6. Youth language among the interviewees was used primarily by females made up 37%, while males, accounting for 63%.

7. 55% of the interviewed youngsters feel better when they use their YL, compared to 45% who feel better when using standard language.

8. The highest percentage of students, 62%, use YL at University, and 38% use it in clubs.

9. Albanian and English are the main languages used by 37% of the students with their peers, and 60% use a mix of languages in their YL. Students admit to being engaged in code-switching, the practice of alternating between different languages or linguistic varieties depending on the social context. This involves blending formal and informal language, mixing languages, or adopting specific linguistic styles in different settings.

10. An interesting range of various types of YL creations emerged from the data; 70% of the Albanian students admit that the most frequently used types of AYL are: borrowing, coinage, and creativity. 29% answered that blending, adding suffixes to words, and exchanging syllables is another type of YL. With the widespread use of digital technology and social media platforms, YL among Albanian students has also been influenced by online communication styles. This includes emojis, acronyms, hashtags, and other digital symbols to convey meaning and emotion in text-based interactions.

11. 75% of the students judge this language as necessary, 12% feel pressured by their peer group to use it, and 12% consider it unnecessary.

12. One of the key questions of the survey refers to the impact of this speech on the Albanian standard language; 45% of the students believe that YL deforms it, 16% believe that it is harmful and 16% think that slang enriches it. 12% believe it is unnecessary to be used. Those who support the idea that youth language impoverishes the language argue that it encourages laziness in language use and undermines traditional grammar rules. This view suggests that YL contributes to a decline in language standards, making it harder for young people to develop the communication skills necessary for academic and professional success. On the other hand, the students in favor of YL, believe that it

enriches language by reflecting the diversity and creativity of young people's experiences and perspectives, seen as linguistic innovations enriching it with fresh and new ways of communicating.

13. 54% agree that YL harms language use and communication and is a negative social phenomenon, whereas 46% believe it is a social necessity.

14. Based on the general opinion of the interviewed students, 37% agree that YL is a new social phenomenon, 23% believe it is a tradition and 40% think that it is a technology-driven phenomenon.

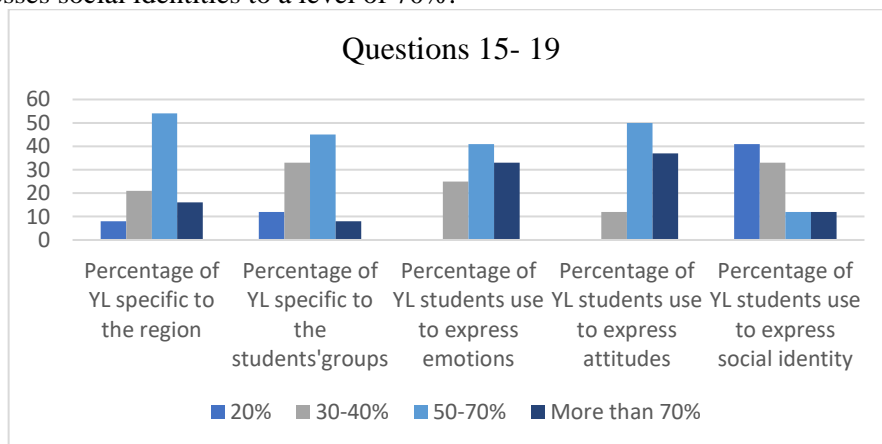
15. When looking at the distribution of YL, most of the AYL expressions are typically regional; 50-70% are specific to the region according to 54% of the students, 30-40% are specific to the region according to 21% of the students, more than 70% according to 16% of the students and 20% by only 8% of the students.

16. According to 45% of the students, 50-70% of AYL expressions are unique to their peer group. Meanwhile, 33% of the students believe that 30-40% of these expressions are specific to their peer group, and 25% of the students think that more than 70% of AYL expressions are particular to their peer group.

17. According to student responses, 41% use YL 50-70% of the time to express emotions. Meanwhile, 33% of students use the YL more than 70% of the time for this purpose, and 12% of students use it 30-40% of the time.

18. 50% of the students use 50-70% of AYL expressions to convey attitudes such as defiance, humor, or sarcasm. In contrast, 37% of the students use more than 70% of these expressions for the same purpose, while 12% of the students use 30-40% of AYL expressions to express attitudes.

19. It is noteworthy that 20% of the respondents believe that YL expresses social identities to a large extent. In contrast, 33% of the respondents think it does so to a degree of 30-40%, and 25% believe it expresses social identities to a level of 70%.



Graph 1

20. Regarding the students' motivations behind adopting or rejecting YL within their peer groups, 40% strongly support the fact that by using shared slang terms and expressions, they reinforce their sense of social identity and belonging within their peer network by trying to seek acceptance and approval from their peers. 22% of the interviewees adopt certain slang terms or linguistic styles, part of YL, to enhance their social standing and popularity or to emulate the language practices of influential peers. YL choice for 23% of the students, is influenced by familial and cultural factors, including parental attitudes toward language use and cultural expectations regarding linguistic norms and conventions. This percentage rejects YL based on their upbringing and cultural background. For 15% of the students, YL serves as a vehicle for creative expression and self-identity. Students experiment with new slang terms, linguistic innovations, and stylistic features as a way of asserting their individuality and distinguishing themselves from others.

21. It is evident from the results that most of the students, 91%, have experienced situations when using YL caused confusion and misunderstanding and 8% have not. This highest percentage, specified examples in intergenerational communication with older family members. Older generations are not familiar with the slang terms and their meanings, leading to confusion or misinterpretation. Another example of misunderstanding/offense is in cross-cultural communication. YL terms in most cases have different meanings or connotations compared to other cultures, and using them without

understanding the cultural context leads to confusion or unintentional disrespect. Some of them admit that even in written communication in the Text analysis discipline, there are cases of essay writing that caused confusion or misinterpretation as the professor was not familiar with the slang terms, even though students are supposed to write in academic or professional style, where clarity and precision are important.¹

22. Related to the question of how students perceive the impact of digital communication platforms and social media on the evolution and dissemination of youth language, 42% view digital communication platforms and social media as facilitators of rapid and efficient communication. They perceive platforms such as messaging apps, social networking sites, and microblogging platforms as spaces where youth language can evolve and spread quickly due to the immediacy and accessibility of digital communication.

25% appreciate the opportunities afforded by these platforms to experiment with new slang terms, expressions, and linguistic styles, contributing to the dynamic evolution of youth language. 33% of the students perceive digital communication platforms and social media as normalizing informal language use, including slang, abbreviations, and emoticons. 40% of the students believe that it is a technology-driven phenomenon. They recognize the role of digital communication platforms and social media in globalizing youth culture and language trends. They observe how linguistic innovations and expressions originating from diverse cultural and linguistic contexts are disseminated and adopted across geographic boundaries, leading to the globalization of the youth language. This is noted in the fact that they borrow linguistic patterns from different languages. Students' perspectives highlight the complex interplay between digital technologies, youth culture, and linguistic innovation in contemporary society. The findings indicated that male and female student groups differed in their perception of YL. Male students primarily used youth language to demonstrate their sense of belonging to a group, while female students saw it as a habit and felt more influenced by social media.

23. According to our initial expectation the use of YL has benefits and drawbacks. Students expressed their points of view related to some positive and negative aspects of using YL expressions in their communication.

Positive aspects involve many opinions related to creativity. 33% often involve the creation of new words and phrases, which can be a funny and creative way for young people to express themselves. Preserving slang can help to encourage linguistic innovation and keep language use fresh and dynamic. The use of YL can also serve as a way for young people to signal their membership in a particular social group or subculture. Furthermore, it serves as a code for communicating with others more efficiently or concisely. They use AYL for fun, to foster a sense of belonging, to help them assimilate, and to easily express their ideas and emotions. 15% of the respondents consider it an advantage because it makes them feel more comfortable and helps them fit in better with their peer groups. They enjoy making jokes, especially when incorporating foreign or mixed languages, as it creates a friendlier atmosphere and makes conversations more entertaining with friends. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that a considerable part of the students strongly support the idea that it can represent an important aspect of youth culture, and preserving it can help to maintain a record of the linguistic and cultural diversity of different communities. It can help to enrich the vocabulary and expression of a language.

In a different light, 26% of the interviewees support the idea that the use of YL leads to misunderstanding as according to them it can be a source of confusion for those who are unfamiliar with it, which can lead to communication breakdown. Some YL expressions may perpetuate negative stereotypes or attitudes towards certain groups of people, which can be hurtful or offensive. Students also provided an interesting perspective on the fact that YL can be inappropriate in certain contexts, such as formal settings or with people who may not appreciate or understand it. Several interviewees, 16%, emphasized that YL refers to casual dialogue and some listeners may perceive it as offensive, vulgar words or may lead to misunderstandings, sometimes harmful, as it deforms the language. It ruins standard language and is about to be lost, as it is mixed with other languages. 9% feel that the use of YL can create a sense of exclusion for those who are unfamiliar with the language by creating barriers to communication. Using YL can impede language learning by promoting non-standard grammar and vocabulary. Preserving YL can hinder language acquisition and limit opportunities for success.

¹ These students' comments refer to the university subject Text Analysis, the Writing section, in the university context.

24. The responses to the question related to the idea of whether YL should be considered a legitimate form of language or a deviation from the standard grammar of vocabulary revealed that the interviewees generally agreed that AYL is a deviation of language, most of the words are invented by youngsters, many of them do not make sense at all, and they cannot be a legitimate form of language. It is more street-like, they are funny and mocking words among youngsters. Many students believe they should use AYL less frequently. Some acknowledge that they use it to fit in with their peer group, even if they do not always understand its true meaning. They do not want to use this language, because they may make others feel bad. Only 16 % feel that AYL has to be considered as a legitimate form of the language inside their peer groups.

5. Discussion of the findings

“Language is by its very nature a communal thing; that is, it expresses never the exact thing but a compromise – that which is common to you, me, and everybody” (T. E. Hulme in Wardhaugh, 2000, p.23). This compromise among youngsters is displayed in detail in our results.

YL is occasionally used by our students from a variety of sources, friends, and media, for a variety of reasons: for creativity, snobbism or to be part of the group. Females use it more often than males. It can be inferred from the data analysis that most interviewees admit that the most frequently used types of YL are borrowing, coinage, and creativity. The other part of the group answered that blending, adding suffixes to words, and exchanging syllables, are as well-used types of this language. These results align with the fact that this is common in all languages. Brooner (2007), in an interview with Jean-Paul Colin, author of *Dictionnaire de l'argot français et de ses origines* (Larousse), highlights Colin's insights into the nature of slang. Colin explains that while the transmission of slang across social groups and generations remains somewhat mysterious, its formation follows well-known linguistic processes. These include applying word transformation rules, such as adding the suffix "-ard" or reversing syllables. Additionally, slang often incorporates borrowings from foreign languages like Arabic, English, and Romanian. Colin also notes that “*le verlan*”², a form of French slang, has been in use since the seventeenth century. (Bronner, 2007).

The data reveals a clear pattern: Albanian and English are the primary languages used by students, who frequently engage in code-switching and adapt their linguistic styles depending on the context. A considerable percentage of the students believe that the use of YL has a deforming impact on the Albanian language decline in language standards, and less than half favor its use as a means of reflecting the diversity and creativity of young people's experiences and perspectives, seen as linguistic innovations enriching it with fresh and new ways of communicating.

The highest proportion of students support the fact that the use of YL impoverishes the language by promoting a simplified and often limited vocabulary.

A notable observation from the analysis is that YL is considered a new social phenomenon, and a technology-driven phenomenon. Additionally, the results indicate that most students view YL as a way to express attitudes, while a significant number also acknowledge that it conveys emotions and social identity.

Drawing on the theoretical framework established by Jorgensen (2010), identities are subject to negotiation. Speakers establish, negotiate, and maintain their roles and positions during interactions. The same aspect is observed with Albanian students; they represent different linguistic backgrounds using YL. As demonstrated by Jorgensen (2010), youngsters try to style themselves, by referring to and negotiating values and associations of language to others. So youngsters use YL to appropriate, explore, and reproduce or challenge influential images and stereotypes of the group that they do not belong to (Rampton, 1999, p. 421). Similarly in our research, the main motivation behind adopting youth language is that it reinforces the students' sense of social identity and belonging, within their peer network by demanding acceptance and approval from their peers. So by choosing to use it wisely, YL serves as a vehicle for creative expression and self-identity.

The data reveals a perceptible trend in the impact of digital communication platforms and social media on the evolution and dissemination of youth language. These platforms have a role in globalizing youth culture language and linguistic innovation. The findings indicated that male and female student

² A variety of French slang in which syllables are inverted and swapped to create a new, often playful, term.

groups differed in their perception of YL. It was found that while male students mostly used it to show that they belonged to a group, female students thought that it was a habit and they reported that they are more affected by social media.

The analysis highlights that the observed youth trends displayed benefits and drawbacks in the use of YL. The number of students highlighting advantages is roughly equal to those pointing out disadvantages. They note that creating new words and phrases is a funny and creative way to belong to a specific social group or subculture, fostering a sense of camaraderie. Students support the idea that YL helps to maintain a record of linguistic and cultural diversity, linguistic innovation, and a reflection of the cultural identity of young people.

On the other hand half of the students believe that the YL they use can impede language learning by promoting non-standard grammar and vocabulary. It may be a source of confusion and misunderstanding for those who are not familiar with it, by perceiving it as offensive.

6. Conclusion

Youth language plays a multifaceted role in shaping social identity, influencing interpersonal relationships, and contributing to the cultural dynamics of the youth community, asserting their autonomy within social contexts. By using YL and informal expressions that reflect their cultural background or social environment, individuals strengthen their cultural identity and heritage. Through innovative language practices, individuals can experiment with different aspects of their identity, including their personality, interests, and worldview, by reinforcing their social identity and acceptance within their social groups. Shared linguistic practices create a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding, fostering stronger bonds and more meaningful interactions within social groups. The use of YL by Albanian students is considered a new social, and technology-driven phenomenon, even though some admit that it is a traditional language used through the years and being updated through the years.

“Individual identity and group identity are very important. Much of what we find in linguistic behavior will be explicable in terms of people seeking to negotiate, realize, or even reject identities through the use of language. Language is a profound indicator of identity, more potent by far than cultural artifacts such as dress, food choices, and table manners. Groups, too, have identities, and their ways of achieving a sense of solidarity among members, so we will be interested in the linguistic characteristics of both individuals and groups” (Wardhaugh, 2000, p.6). “The specific linguistic choices students make in clearly defined situations provide us with a promising insight into how individuals use language to connect with others in subtle ways. A speaker’s choice of a particular sound, word, or expression marks that speaker in some way” (Wardhaugh, 2000, p. 131).

The significance of our findings lies in their contribution to the understanding of the student's language. There seems to be a growing trend of using youth language in the Albanian context. Data analysis consistently shows that a significant percentage of Albanian students use the Albanian youth language occasionally. The results demonstrate that there are various reasons students use AYL: to be creative, to fit in the peer group, to show snobbism, or not be bullied by their mates.

We draw several key insights from the responses - the most frequent types of AYL are based on borrowing, coinage, and creativity, based on sources such as social media, technology, street culture, pop culture, regional dialects, and subcultures. The analysis reveals that AYL serves as a means for Albanian youths to convey emotions, attitudes, defiance, humor, and sarcasm. The questionnaire analysis underscores a spectrum of advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of AYL. On the positive side, it fosters creativity and a sense of belonging within peer groups, enhances communication efficiency, promotes camaraderie, and contributes to a more relaxed and entertaining conversation atmosphere. Conversely, drawbacks include the potential for misunderstandings and hurtful stereotyping, the risk of linguistic heritage erosion due to obsolescence, and the potential for exclusionary dynamics for those unfamiliar with its usage.

YL can be considered a legitimate form of language as it serves as a means of communication and expression for young people. While YL expressions may deviate from standard grammar and vocabulary, it is important to recognize that language is constantly evolving, and new forms of language are created all the time. However, over-reliance on slang can limit language proficiency and the ability to switch between formal and informal registers. This limitation might affect communication skills in contexts where formal language is expected. A generational gap in language understanding may

contribute to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns between different age groups. Some youth expressions may lack precision or clarity in conveying complex ideas, may limit communication skills and hinder the development of a diverse linguistic repertoire.

According to Baie (2019), the language of young people, therefore, plays an important role, because it allows youngsters to be active, creative, sociable, and in social interaction with others. Our society needs communicative, supportive, and liberating citizens.

Overall, the study of YL contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and society. By examining the linguistic practices, social dynamics, and cultural meanings associated with YL sociolinguists gain valuable insights into how language shapes and reflects social identities, power relations, and cultural values among young people in diverse sociocultural contexts.

7. Recommendations and limitations

Youth language is a vibrant and dynamic aspect of linguistic diversity. Through the findings in this article, we try to reinforce the study's contribution to sociolinguistics because it serves as a rich area of study for linguists, sociologists, and researchers interested in understanding the complex relationship between language, culture, and youth identity.

While this research offers valuable insights, it has some limitations since the sample is drawn from a specific group of students from the same university and subject area, which may not accurately reflect the broader attitudes and perceptions of all Albanian students. These findings may be expanded in a wider context, in further research to fully capture the diversity of YL across different regions and social groups in Albania. This will help identify regional variations and provide a more holistic view of how YL is perceived and used across the country.

The analysis underscores the need for future research in the examination of the use of youth language in different types of communication, such as digital communication, and creative writing. Further studies may focus more on the exploration of the use of youth language, not only in monolingual settings, such as our case study, but also in multilingual and multicultural settings, including how this “new language” can function as a bridge between languages and cultures.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Education: ----- Gender: F M
Course of study: _____ Year: _____

- How often do you use youth language in your daily conversation?
a) Very frequently b) Occasionally c) Rarely d) Never
- How often do you encounter youth language that you are unfamiliar with?
a) Very frequently b) Occasionally c) Rarely d) Never
- What are the 3 main reasons you use youth language?
a) To express my social identity b) To fit in with my peer group c) To be creative with language
d) For Snobbism e) Not to be understood by others f) Other reasons (specify)
- How did you learn about new youth language expressions?
a) From my friends b) From social media c) From music and other media d) Other (specify)
- Do you think youth language should be included in formal language education?
a) Yes b) No
- Do you think the use of youth language is more common among males or females?
a) Males b) Females
- Do you feel better when you use?
a) Standard language b) youth language
- Where do you use youth language?
a) school/university b) clubs c) family
- Which language do you use with your peer groups?
a) Albanian b) English c) Italian, d) other e) mixing/merging languages
- How is youth language created? Circle the 3-4 most frequently used types in Albanian language:
a) By adding suffixes to words b) By exchanging syllables c) Back-formation (abbreviation) e) Borrowing f) Blending g) Coinage (inventing a new word) h). Creativity i) Acronyms j) In another way
- How do you judge the use of this secret language?
a) Necessary b) Unnecessary c) Forced by your social group?
- What impact do you think, this speech has on the Albanian standard Language?
a) impoverishes the language b) enriches it c) deforms it d) is unnecessary e) is harmful?
- Do you think that:
a) Youth language should be preserved as a cultural heritage b) Is it a social necessity c) A negative phenomenon for society d) Negative impact on language use and communication?
- Do you think Youth language:

- a) Is a tradition, b) Is a new social phenomenon c) Is it a technology-driven phenomenon?
15. What percentage of youth language that you use are specific to your region or city?
a. 20% b. 30-40% c. 50-70% d. More than 70%
16. What percentage of youth language that you use is specific to your peer group?
a. 20% b. 30-40% c. 50-70% d. More than 70%
17. What percentage of youth language that you use is dedicated to expressing emotions? (example: excitement, surprise, disappointment).
a. 20% b. 30-40% c. 50-70% d. More than 70%
18. What percentage of the youth language you use is dedicated to expressing attitudes? (example: defiance, humor, sarcasm).
a. 20% b. 30-40% c. 50-70% d. More than 70%
19. What percentage of youth language that you use is dedicated to expressing social identities? (example: gender, ethnicity, social status).
a. 20% b. 30-40% c. 50-70% d. More than 70%
20. What is your motivation for adapting or rejecting youth language?
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21. In what percentage do you feel that using youth expressions has caused confusion or misunderstanding in communication?
a. 20% b. 30-40% c. 50-70% d. More than 70%
22. Please specify how you perceive the impact of digital communication platforms and social media on the evolution and dissemination of youth language.
-
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23. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using youth language in your interactions with others?
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24. Do you think that youth language should be considered a legitimate form of language or a deviation from standard grammar and vocabulary? Why or why not?
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