



The Use of 'woman/female' and 'man/male' as a specific gender markers in Albanian language in light of society changes

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Abstract

Gender issues in Languages are very sensitive and interesting, especially in the societies making effort to empower the presence and the role of women in respective society. Kosovar society is one of the examples of such efforts and debates initiated by women's rights groups and organizations. The situation has changed rapidly in some senses of the use of different linguistics markers regarding the use of respective terms that are considered more appropriate or politically correct than the traditional ones. For example, the terms 'gender' and 'sex' are alternating each-other, not only to denote biological distinctions but also cultural ones. The most rapid changes have been noticed in the use of the term 'woman' instead of the traditional term 'female', which in the perception of the average speakers was not an offensive term for women. But, there is still in use the term 'female' to denote the person of certain gender or sex, especially in informal and social use and in instant messaging. One of the issues identified during the monitoring of media for this paper, was the use of masculine plural to cover also the feminine members of certain groups, especially while naming occupations and this situation is unavoidable because the gender in Albanian has clear grammatical features in the plural as well.

To complete this research, I monitored media in different formats (newspapers, online media, social media, radio, and television, in Albanian, Serbian and Macedonian), and also I did a focus group with youngsters on instant messaging platforms.

Keywords: Language; sex; gender; female; woman; uni-gender plural

1. Introduction

The spread of NGOs and the empowerment of civil society in general in Kosovo after its declaring independence in 2008, among others, has raised gender issues. The problem itself outburst first in sense of terminology used to differentiate genders. But the effort to import the terminology from English seems that created more confusion or at least the new terminology wasn't able to be accommodated easily in the Albanian Language. There are four issues to be explained: First, which is the most appropriate terms to distinct genders biologically and culturally – 'gender' or 'sex'; Second, what's the appropriate terms to denote persons of different genders – 'woman' or 'female' vs 'man' or 'male'; Third, what's the traditional background and how it is reflected nowadays in different

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situations and the fourth, how the supremacy of masculine gender is manifested in uni-gender plural in Albanian, where the neutral form is grammatically impossible. The issue itself had a strong reaction on social media, mainly through jokes and memes. The oldest joke, describes the discriminatory approach toward gender distinction in language: "I saw a human and woman" (E pashë një njeri dhe një grua), since there is a strict distinction between terms human (njeri) and man (burrë) in Albanian, and the gender difference of the terms man and woman is not inflectional as it is in English (man vs. woman), but lexical (burrë vs. grua). On the other hand, there is a social distinction between the terms 'gender' and 'sex', which prevents the alternate use of respective terms.

2. Literature review

First of all, the distinction between terms 'gender' and 'sex' continues to be problematic, because, in the mentality of the average speaker, the word 'gender' makes the social difference between male and female, while the word 'sex' still is tabooed and denotes sexual incursion with reproduction aim.

Talbot (2010, p. 7) while bringing the situation in French, Norwegian, and Danish, where the difference between sex and gender is absent, claims that "according to the sex/gender differentiation, sex is biologically founded, whereas gender is learned behavior".

Similarly, Coates (2016), states that "'sex' refers to biological distinction, while 'gender' is the term to describe socially constructed categories based on sex". The same situation is with the Albanian as well, while there is a slight difference in the use of these terms in Albania and Kosovo Albanian is spoken in Albania, in Kosovo, in western parts of Northern Macedonia, in Montenegro, and southern Serbia, but because of the different past in political and social terms, there are significant differences between Albanian spoken in Albania and other parts (ex-Yugoslavia), especially in the social use of Language. Shapiro (1981) when speaking on gender/sex distinction prefers to use "the term 'sex' only when speaking on biological differences between males and females, and uses 'gender' whenever referring to social, cultural, psychological constructs that are imposed upon the biological differences". But McElhinny argues that this model of distinction is problematic from the point of view of feminists because it "implies that there are TWO sexes" (McElhinny, 2003, p. 22).

While in Albania, the term 'sex' to denote the biological difference between man and woman is in use, especially in media, in Kosovo, Macedonia, etc. that's not the case, because of mentality issues and taboo of the term, still denoting "sexual intercourse", even though in the Dictionary of the Albanian language, there are clear explanations and differentiations regarding the use of respective terms in respective situations. In the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language in the entry 'gender' there are eight senses for the word 'gender' (Alb. 'gjini'):

1. historical. Group of people with blood relations or from a joint predecessor, which was the economical and social unit in the primitive community;
2. ethnographic. Relatives from the side of a spouse;
3. Group of people with close blood relations;
4. biological. Group of animals or plants, that includes some close types with joint features;
5. The overall natural features that distinguish males from females, that define each of their specific roles in reproduction;
6. linguistics. Grammatical category in some languages according to which nouns, pronouns, and numerals are divided into masculine, feminine, and neutral;
7. Literature and arts. Subdivision in literature and arts grouping some art creations with joint features (epos, lyrics, drama, etc);
8. Type of something of whatever gender.

While in the entry 'sex' there are three senses:

1. The overall natural features that distinguish males from females, that define each of their specific roles in reproduction;
2. Male and female distinction based on gender;
3. Sexual desire.

As can be seen from above mention explanations given in the Dictionary, word 'gender' and 'sex' are synonymous in their denotative forms, while the word 'gender' semiotically and in terms of word-formation, used to be much more productive than 'sex', and is used in different meanings and senses. While the correct use in such a paper would be 'gender' and not 'sex', we will follow this model. While explaining the difference in the use of these two terms, Cameron, states that "The change reflects a general tendency, at least among social scientists and humanists, for scholars to distinguish gender (socially constructed) from sex (biological) and to prefer gender where the subject under discussion is the behavior and relations of men and women. In a somewhat similar way (and for similar reasons), sex in its 'other' sense of 'erotic desire, practice' has been progressively displaced for the theoretical discussion by sexuality. (Cameron, 2006, p. 1) Following these explanations, we will use the term 'gender', because the idea is to deal with this distinction as a cultural rather than purely natural phenomenon. Talbot (ibid.) gives a scholarly explanation while trying to make the sex/gender distinction: "Basically, sex is a matter of genes and the secretion of hormones and the physical developments that result from them". According to her, the basic point is that "sex is a matter of bodily attributes and essentially dimorphic. One is either male or female".

Nevertheless, I will agree with Coates (2016, p. 5) that "most of the societies operate in terms of two genders, masculine and feminine, and it is tempting to treat the category of gender as a simple binary opposition. Until recently, much of the research carried out on language and gender did so. But, more recent theorizing challenges this binary thinking. Gender is instead conceptualized as plural, with a range of femininities and masculinities available to speakers at any point in time."

The division based on two terms (masculine/mashkullorë and feminine/femërore) in Albanian has to do mainly while discussing gender in grammar, but also as an adjective is used to denote gender in cases 'masculine world' (bota mashkullorë), 'masculine features' (tip are mashkullorë), 'feminine voice' (zë femëror), etc.

Crawford (1995) makes a clear distinction between different approaches regarding the terminology and its use, talking about four approaches: the deficit approach; the dominance approach; the difference approach, and the dynamic approach or social constructionists. According to her, there is an emphasis on the dynamic aspects of interaction. Researchers who adopt this approach take a social constructionist perspective. Gender identity is seen as a social construct rather than as a 'given' social category, because "Gender is not something we are born with and not something we have, but something we do (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This argument led Crawford (1995, p. 12) to claim that gender should be conceptualized as a verb, not as a noun! The observant reader will notice that the phrase "doing gender" was also used in the paragraph on the dominance approach. This is because the four approaches do not have rigid boundaries: researchers may be influenced by more than one theoretical perspective. What has changed linguist's sense that gender is not a static, add-on characteristic of speakers, but is something that accomplishes in a talk every time we speak. (Crawford, 1995, p. 6-7). Talbot speaks as well on gender as socially constructed, learned: "People acquire characteristics which are perceived as masculine and feminine. In everyday language, it makes sense to talk of a 'masculine' woman or a 'feminine' man." (ibid.) So, the main difference is that sex is binary while that's not the same with gender.

3. Terms for male/man and female/woman in Albanian tradition

Amid a debate ongoing in Kosovo's society regarding terms to denote female members of society, in the sense of whether to use the term 'female' (femër) or 'woman' (grua), in Albanian traditional use, there is a clear distinction between terms male/man and female/woman. While 'male' and 'female' are used to distinct persons in the sense of their biological belonging, the terms 'man' and 'woman' have much more of that social and cultural dimension of the meaning. 'Man' (burrë) is an adult person of a

certain age, a noble, brave person, and also is married male, as opposed to 'woman' (grua), who is a married female of a certain age, but not characterized with such qualities as 'man'.

The current situation with the use of terms 'woman/female' and 'man/male' is described by Cameron and Kulick in their book *Language and sexuality* (2003):

"To be a 'woman' as opposed to being a 'female' takes more than just being born with the 'correct' reproductive organs. It is a cultural achievement that has to be learned, and exactly what has to be learned is different in different times and places. To give a couple of examples (they are trivial but a great deal of everyday gendered behavior is trivial): Western women have to learn not to sit their legs apart and to button their coats the opposite way from their brothers. On the other hand, men no longer have to learn to ride side-saddle or lace a corset, which was once an important gender-marker for Western women of a certain class. None of the 'accomplishments' just mentioned, past or present, can plausibly be considered an innate biological characteristic, but there is part of what it means, or meant, to be a woman in a certain society. This sociocultural 'being a woman' is what the term gender is supposed to denote, while sex is reserved for the biological phenomenon of dimorphism (the fact that humans come in two varieties for purposes of sexual reproduction). But the conflation of the two terms remains pervasive, and one consequence is that, among people who are neither political radicals nor academic theorists, the term gender is very frequently used as a sort of polite synonym for (biological) sex." (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 3-4)

In the editorial "Woman vs. female" in *New York Times* on March 18, 2007, William Safire quoted professor Deborah Tannen: "We're hearing woman as an adjective more often now. Female connotes a biological category. I think many feminists avoid it for the same reason they prefer gender to sex. ... I avoid female in my own writing because it feels disrespectful as if I'm treating the people I'm referring to as mammals but not humans." (<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/opinion/18iht-edsafire.4943390.html>)

But the situation with traditional use in English of the terms to denote a female member of society varied during history. "*Being a girl or being a boy* is not a stable state but an ongoing accomplishment, something that is actively *done* both by the individual so categorized and by those who interact it in the various communities to which it belongs." (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013, p. 8). In this way, African American girls and women are rendered..., Eckert and McConnell-Ginet make the distinction. "Thus the dichotomy of male and female is the ground upon which we build selves from the moment of birth. These are linguistic acts set up a baby for life, launching a gradual process of learning to be a boy or a girl, a man or woman, and to see all others as boys or girls, men or women as well." (ibid. :7)

4. Methods

For the purposes of this research, during three years I have monitored the use of terms woman, female, and girls in a different situation, formal and informal. Thus, I monitored at least three TV Shows where women participants talked about elections and the position of women in Kosovar society, in order to have much more focused discussions with the higher intention of the use of the term "woman" under the pressure and in the formal situation. Alongside with TV shows I monitored the press, to have a clear point of view on the use of respective terms in sports reporting, where the intention and focus on the specific terms is much lower than in TV shows regarding the position of the woman.

In order to present the overall background on the traditional view of the speech community, I presented exact explanations of specific terms for woman/female and man/male in Albanian dictionaries in use, and also I gave a picture of how this issue is dealt in the Kosovo's Laws dealing with gender issues, including reserved sites in Parliament for women.

Furthermore, I tried to compare the use of ters in a different situation, in different media formats and discourse, with the traditional use, while giving explanations based on current norms and trends, by using Dictionaries and Laws.

5. Results

Let's take a look into normative explanations of respective terms in the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian (<http://www.fjalorshqip.com/>) of 2002, where the entry 'femër' (female) has six senses:

1. A person with such anatomical and physiological features, who give her the opportunity to have children and who has distinctive features from the male; *wife or daughter; Albanian female. Beautiful female. Female voice. The female organism. Female's team.*;
2. Animals that give birth to young or lay eggs; 3. botanic. Flower ovary.; 4. tech. The inserted or deepened part of a vehicle, a mechanism, or something else, into which the rest enters or is trapped; 5. daily. adj. Feminine, feminine. Female animals etc.; 6. That it is inserted or deepened and enters or is stuck in the rest. etc.

But, the term female is used also in figurative use – for example 'his/her mind is female' is called an inventive person, whose mind works quickly and properly in finding solutions. Also in the Albanian English Historical Dictionary by Stuart Mann, we found an adjective 'gratçor' from the base 'grua' (woman), which means 'fertile', 'productive'. (Mann, 1948, p. 132)

The entry 'grua' (woman) in the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian has three senses:

1. Person of the female sex; mature female distinguished from the girl. *Young (beautiful) woman. Married woman. Brave woman. Women's rights. etc. The girl grew up, became a woman.*; 2. The wife of a man, *the spouse.*; 3. The totality of women, all women together; women's organization in a country. *Albanian woman. Women's organization.*

As we can see, one of the explanations is the distinction between woman and girl (The girl grew up, became a woman), because in Albanian there is a clear distinction in the sense of the age, linked with the adultery. Further distinctions are present under the entry 'vajzë' (girl) and its synonyms 'çikë', 'gocë', 'cucë', etc:

1. Female child; a person of female sex until adulthood; a woman who is not married; *Maid. Beautiful girl (smart, agile). Brave girl. Albanian girls. Girls' dormitory etc.*; 2. Female child versus one's parent, one's daughter; *Maid. Single girl. The eldest daughter. He has two girls* (daughters, while for a 'daughter' there is a term 'bijë'); 3. daily. adj. *The virgin. She is a girl.*

So, if we take a look into the entry 'grua' (woman) and vajzë (girl), we can conclude that there are two main distinction between woman and girl – the first one is the age (although not precisely defined) and the second one is the virginity, in the sense that when a girl is devirginized she isn't any more considered girl, but a woman. But, this concept is a traditional and social and not purely anatomic one. Traditional society considers that a female may enter into sexual relations only after being married – here the two concepts – anatomic and social- become unique. Furthermore, in the entry 'vajzëri' (girlhood) there are explanations like

1. The age of the woman until she gets married, the time she is a girl; 2. Being a girl, virginity. *She maintained her virginity.*

So, these two senses of the entry have to do both with social and anatomic distinction.

But, the same situation is not reflected when dealing with the words 'male' and 'man'. In the Dictionary, 'male' is described as "a person with such anatomical and physiological features that make him capable of fertilizing the female and that has distinctive features from her", while 'burrë' (man) at the first sense is described as a "person of the male sex; mature male. *Mature man. An old man. A*

married man (unmarried). Man of the word. Man of faith etc. While the distinction between terms 'female' and 'woman' is a bit vague in social regard, the distinction between 'male' and 'man' is very clear and strong in the "Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language", although in daily use, mainly in rural areas, the male member of the family is called proudly 'mashkull' ('male'). This word makes that gender distinction, while the term 'burrë' (man) contains other social and personality features. For example, 'burrë' (man) is a character feature for a person that is brave, wise, proud, honorable, and keeps the words and promises. In Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian, the third sense of entry 'burrë' explains: "3. Strong, brave, trustworthy and nobleman...". Also, the word 'burrë' according to "Dictionary...", denotes at the fourth sense of the entry "A prominent person in the state and social activity or who leads and directs, personality. Great man. Statesman.", while there is no such a word like 'gruashtetase' (stateswoman) or 'burrështetase', with a suffix –e that would create feminine gender of that specific noun, although it might be absurd one. Furthermore, the woman that represents these features of her character is characterized as "burrneshë" (she-man), a derived word from the base 'burrë' (man) and the suffix –eshë, which serves to build feminine gender of nouns, as 'profesoreshë' (female professor), 'princeshë' (princess), 'doktoreshë' (female doctor), etc.

But, in explaining the word 'boy' (djalë) with its counterpart 'girl' (vajzë) one cannot find discriminatory language as compared with the pair man/woman. For example, in the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language, 'boy' is "1. Male child up to adulthood; young and unmarried male. *A little boy (young, handsome). Brave boy (hardworking, wise, brave). Bad boy. Dress for boys. A boy was born.* 2. Male child versus his parents, someone's son. *Little boy (djalë i vogël). Our son (djali ynë).* etc. The same situation is with the relative nouns – in Albanian, there isn't a clear distinction in use between 'son' (djalë, bir) and boy (djalë) or daughter (vajzë, bijë) and girl (vajzë), although the words to denote relativeness are present. Albanian parents will say 'Unë kam dy djem dhe një vajzë' (I have two boys and a girl) instead of 'Unë kam dy bij dhe një bijë' (I have two sons and a daughter).

It is interesting the situation with neighboring Serbian and other South Slavic Languages. For example, the name for 'man' in Serbian is 'čovек/čovjek', is the same as to denote the concept 'human'. The word 'čovек' is very stable and productive because as in English, as well as in Serbian the term 'čovecanstvo' (mankind) derives from the word 'čovек'. The same situation with this name is in Albanian as well: njeri/njerëzim (human/mankind Eng. or čovek/čovecanstvo Serb.) The distinction is that in Serbian the same word is used to denote 'man' and 'human', while in Albanian there is a clear distinction with totally different words, respectively 'burrë' and 'njeri'.

In Serbian also there is an interesting situation when making the difference between 'man' and 'male' and 'woman' and 'female'. The term for 'man' and 'husband' is 'muž' and for 'male' person is 'mužjak' (clearly derived from 'muž'). The term for 'woman' and 'spouse' is also the same 'žena', while the term for 'female' is 'ženska' (again clearly derived from 'žena'). The same situation is in Macedonian as well.

Under the pressure of activist groups in Kosovo, especially ones defending women's rights the situation in the use of respective terms to denote female members of society has changed rapidly. Nowadays one can notice that, especially in media, journalists are avoiding the term 'female' (femër), using instead the term 'woman' (grua). After monitoring texts in two online media in the Albanian Language, (Gazetexpress and Insajderi) we noticed that the term 'woman' had a frequency of 87 percent, and the term 'female' was used only 13 percent. Furthermore, in 63 percent of the cases, the term 'female' was used by interviewees in the direct speech form, while journalists in their narration are in the vast majority of the cases used the term 'woman' (grua) or its plural 'women' (gra).

In TV news and debates or talk shows monitored we have noticed much more frequent use of the term 'woman' than the term 'female'. In some cases, when participants in the debates or talk shows used the term 'female', they mostly corrected themselves immediately.

We monitored three TV debates on “Women in Politics” where the participants were women competing in the 2017 and 2019 National Elections, and the third in the beginning of 2020 after the Elections, where the participants were three women activists on human and women's rights. In the first TV debate (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II6OnOZAYUQ>) in National Public TV participated 6 women, all of the candidates of different political parties competing in the National Elections. The show lasted for 68 minutes and was broadcasted on May 30 of 2017. During the whole show, participants used the term 'woman' 100 times, and the term 'female' 79 times. Participants used the term 'girls' (vajza) 6 times while referring to younger women, especially female sportists. The moderator was a man, who used 8 times the word ‘woman’ and 5 times the word ‘female’.

Two years later, in the other National Election Campaign, a Commercial TV on September 30th 2019 broadcasted a TV show “Women in politics” with the participation of 4 women competing in the Election. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtXs82InK9M&t=295s>). During 86 minutes participants used the term ‘women’ 22 times, and the term ‘female’ 28 times, while the anchorman (a male) used the term ‘woman’ 16 times and none the term ‘female’. The same participants used the term ‘male’ 18 times and the term ‘men’ 8 times.

Totally different situation we noticed while monitoring the TV show broadcasted after the elections where the participants were three women: a University Teacher, a Spokeswoman of Kosovo's Ombudsperson Office and a member of a Nongovernmental Organization. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8oCT5iVWVDU>) During 71 minutes of the show participants used the term 'woman' 144 times and none the term 'female'. Also, the moderator (a male) used the term 'women' 20 times and 2 times the term 'female'. During the show, participants used the term 'girls' (vajza) 11 times, mainly while referring to young woman, students, or sportists, among them twice while referring family relationships to denote a ‘daughter’.

			terms used by participants		
TV SHOW	duration	participants	woman	female	girl
2017	68 minutes	6 women	100	79	6
2019	86 minutes	4 women	22	28	-
2020	71 minutes	3 women	144	0	11

Although the participants of monitored TV debates were women, and all of them designed to defend women's rights, they didn't avoid discriminatory language on women, with the exception of TV show of 2020. As Ochieng states “the tracing of this gender stereotype in the unconscious minds of the members of the society suggests that social context influences cognition. In this regard, social stereotypes such as gender bias inhabit the minds of the members of speech community even if they do not exhibit them verbally. (Ochieng. D. 2012:43). It looks that, Ekşi is right, while stating in her work that: “most of the students are from middle-size or smaller residential areas that are likely to be more traditional and conservative ((Ekşi.G. 2009:52).

In the Law on Gender Equality Nr. 2004/2 of year 2004 the word ‘female’ (femër) appears 33 times, and the word ‘male’ (mashkull) appears 31 times, in comparison with the words ‘woman’ or ‘man’ appearing zero times. (<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2457>)

This Law was amended in 2015 (Law on Gender Equality Nr.05/L-020) where terms of gender belonging were the same ‘female’ and ‘male’, not yet ‘woman’ and ‘man’, while in article 3, explaining the respective terms:

Article 3

Female – includes every person that considers themselves as a such regardless the age and marital status.

Male - includes every person that considers themselves as a such regardless the age and marital status. (<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=10923>)

The terms ‘female’ and ‘male’ appear also in the Law on General Elections, Nr.03/L-073:

Gender quotes 27.1 In the candidate's list of each political subject, at least thirty (30 %) percent are males and at least thirty (30 %) percent are female; with one candidate of each gender included at least once in each group of three candidates, which in encountered as the first in the list. (<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2544>)

The only Law where the term ‘woman’ was used is Law on Protection from Discrimination, Nr. 05/L -021 (<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=10924>). In the Article 1, the term ‘women’ was used twice while quoting two Directives, one of Council of Europe and the other of the European Parliament.

In the Kosovo’s Constitution there are references for ‘President’ (presidenti, masculine gender) and Prime Minister (kryeministri, masculine gender) with no reference on eventual woman President (Presidentja/Kryetarja) or woman Prime Minister (kryeministrja). The same situation is in German Constitution (<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/BJNR000010949.html>), where the term ‘Bundeskanzler’ appears 28 times and 0 times the term ‘Bundeskanzlerin’, with feminine grammatical marker (-in). The same is with the position of German Federal President - Bundespräsident mentioned 37 times and zero times Bundespräsidentin (of feminine gender). The situation with Kosovar and the German Constitution is a specific one because the German Prime Minister is a woman (Angel Merkel), to whom the media refers as to Bundeskanzlerin, the term the doesn’t appear in the German Constitution. Also, during five years (2011-2016) Kosovo has had a woman for President (Atifete Jahjaga) to whom media referred as to ‘Presidentja’ or ‘Kryetarja’ (with the feminine grammatical marker ‘-ja’). From the beginning of November after the resignation of Kosovo’s President (Hashim Thaçi) the acting President is a woman (Vjosa Osmani) and we have an absurd formulation of her position “Acting President of Kosovo” (ushtruesja e detyrës së Presidentit të Kosovës) which means that “she is performing his position or duty”.

Motschenbacher (2010) brings an interesting perspective of the use of gender markers in German, which is similar to Albanian. She brings out examples like “Soldatin (female soldier), Schreinerin (female carpenter), verbrecherin (female criminal), Trommlerin (female drummer), Bundeskanzlerin (female chancellor), Richterin (female judge), Professorin (female professor), etc. when ‘Soldatin’ is the perception for the strongest man, to ‘Mutter’ which is the perception for the strongest woman. (Motschenbacher, 2010: 72-74)

While they are some moves in the use of terms ‘woman’ and ‘female’ especially in public domains, still, in public buildings, as in toilets and similar, the signs suggest that the terms female/male instead of woman/man are still in use in Kosovo, while in Albania for example in toilets there are already in use “modern” terms women/men (gra/burra). It is interesting to note that this distinction between the Albanian Language spoken in Kosovo and Albania dates much earlier than the time when the debate spread out in both societies.

In the other hand, the only corpus of Albanian Language made by Russian scientists in St. Pettersburg has a solid corpus made of some print media (mainly based in Northern Macedonia) and a certain number of novels and poems and a dozen of publications from the field of publicistics or religion. In this site, we could find that the word ‘woman’ (gra/grua) appears in 2698 units and subunits, and the word ‘female’ (femër/femra) appears in 1697 units and subunits. (<http://web-corpora.net/AlbanianCorpus/search/>).

Still, it's worth mentioning that one of the prominent linguists dealing with the gender issues in Language, Jennifer Coates in her book "Women, Men, and Language - A sociolinguistic account of gender differences in Language" (2015) uses both terms 'woman' and 'female' alternatively (female speakers, female managers, etc.)

It is interesting that in certain domains the term 'woman' is not used at all. This is the case with sports online media ("Gazetaexpress" and "Insporti"). In the articles monitored we couldn't find any case where female sportists were denoted with 'woman'. Instead, the terms 'female' or 'girl' (as nouns or adjectives) were used.

1. Sarah Bouhaddi won this prize for the second time, whilst last year she won the Champions League in the **females** competition. (<https://www.gazetaexpress.com/kjo-eshte-portierja-me-e-mire-ne-bote/>)
2. The female team of Real Madridit is defeating Espanyol with 2-1. Asllani is part of Real Madrid **females** starting from this edition. (<https://www.gazetaexpress.com/kosovare-asllani-shenon-per-real-madridin-2/>)
3. Apart from "Balon D'Or", tonight was made public the winner of "Balon D'Or" for **females** that for this year went to Megan Rapinoes, the American football player. Kosovar football player Kosovare Asllani, playing for Real Madrid in a **females** competition, was among the nominees for this prize. (<https://www.gazetaexpress.com/zbulohet-renditja-e-kosovare-asllanit-ne-garen-per-topin-e-arte-berishqiponjen-ne-paris/>)
4. This time there were some interesting cases, among other a manipulation of the junior team of "Balkan" and a fight in **females** football. (<https://insporti.com/grushtim-ne-futbollin-e-femrave-komisioni-disiplinor-shqipton-denime/>)
5. In the first week of Superleague in **females** football, all the favorite teams have won. (<https://insporti.com/superliga-e-femrave-fitojne-skuadrat-favorite/>).
6. Tonight at 19:00 in the city stadium Kosovar National **females** team in football will play against Estonia. (<https://insporti.com/kombetarja-e-femrave-te-kosoves-luan-sot-ne-kuader-te-kualifikimeve-per-kampionat-evropian/>)

In the English version of the web-page of Real Madrid womans football team stands the adjective "women's team", but the URL is: <https://www.realmadrid.com/football/female-team>. Also, in Spanish it stands "Real Madrid Feminino" (ibid.)

Nevertheless, in sports media in Albanian, there are cases where the term 'girl' is used to denote female members of sports teams:

1. Istogu is the first finalist of the Cup of Republic of Kosova in handball, in **the girls** competition. (<https://www.gazetaexpress.com/istogu-finalisti-i-pare-i-kupes/>)
2. The match between Real and Valencia in the **girls** category is taking place in Madrid. (<https://insporti.com/kosovare-asllani-shenon-golin-e-pare-te-realit-per-vajzat/>)

A similar situation was noticed by Weatherall: "A relatively recent case that suggests that 'ladies' is still not always an appropriate female reference term was when a sports commentator's use of 'ladies', to refer to female athletes, during Sydney 2000 Olympics was criticised in a newspaper commentary for being anachronistic and out of place. (Weatherall, 2002, p. 25). Also, there is a clear tendency to refer to female sportist with the term 'girls' (vajzat) as it was the case especially in a TV debate, when participants while talking about female sportists regularly used the term 'girls' (our girls, our successful girls, sportist girls etc.) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II6OnOZAYUQ>). The term 'girl' (vajzë) is used in the other TV show (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8oCT5iVWUDU>) where the term 'female' wasn't used at all, in comparison with the term 'woman' used 144 times.

Despite the high consciousness of the three participants clearly defending the women's rights, in using terms 'woman' (144) and 'female' (0), they used 11 times the word 'girls' (vajza) when denoting female students or female children (2 times in the sense of 'daughter'). It seems that Weatherall is right when noticing that "Lakoff argued that 'girl', because of its associations with immaturity, removed the sexual connotations associated with the label 'woman'." (Weatherall, 2002, p. 25) The use of the term 'girl' was present in TV debates in line with the traditional term that in Albanian denotes young, unmarried, or even virgin human female.

Lakoff (2004) argued that the semantic derogation of female words could be seen occurring in America in the early 1970s because the once neutral term 'woman' had been developing negative connotations. Lakoff argued that the terms 'lady' and 'girl' were more commonly used than 'woman' because they seemed more polite.

"As their feminists have also argued, society appears to regard women's sexuality as their main distinguishing feature and as a major threat to society order; euphemistic expressions are one means of attempting to keep women's sexuality out of sight and under control.

A second reason for the use of the term *lady*, Lakoff suggested, is its "polite" use, to add or attribute status to the referent: "Most people who are asked why they have chosen to use lady where woman would me as appropriate will reply that lady seemed more polite". (Lakoff, 2004, p. 153)

Weather all brings a personal experience of a perception with the use of the terms 'woman' in comparison with terms 'lady' or 'girls':

I was provided with the first-hand example of the perception that referring to an adult female was rude when an older shop assistant admonished a younger one for referring to me as the 'woman' wanting some particular information. However, my preference in service encounters is to be referred to as a woman rather than as a lady or a girl. (Weatherall, 2002, p. 25)

6. Discussion

Despite the rapid changes in the use of the terms woman/female, the use didn't change in the informal use, especially in social media or social networks and chat rooms used by youngsters as instant communication platforms. For example, the most frequent terms to denote 'girlfriend' in Kosovo is 'femër' (femra jem- my girlfriend), while this term is unknown in Albania, where instead is used term 'i dashuri/e dashura' (boyfriend/girlfriend or 'beloved'), which are deverbalized adjectives. Although we are talking about the same language spoken in Kosovo and Albania, the social circumstances in Kosovo and Albania were different in, at least, in the second part of the last century. Most probably, in Kosovo this social use of the term is influenced by Serbian 'ženska', a term used both to denote 'female' and 'girlfriend'. To enforce this conclusion, we can compare the term used in informal varieties of spoken Albanian in Kosovo to denote 'boyfriend' – 'frajer', which is the same as in Serbian 'frajer', which is borrowing from German 'freier', meaning 'single male'.

The other issue of interest regarding gender manifestations in the Albanian Language is the use of uni gender plural. During the monitoring of media for this paper, I have noticed that there is the massive use of the plural, especially when denoting groups of people of the same or similar profession or occupation. In Albanian, there is a gender differentiation in the plural as well, but in most of the cases, we can notice the dominance of one of the genders. For example, when talking about doctors, journalists will use the masculine plural 'mjekët', by avoiding the feminine plural 'mjeket' (Mjekët e spitalit të Prishtinës janë mobilizuar për t'iu përgjigjur situatës me virus in COVID 19/ Doctors of Prishtina hospital are mobilized to meet the situation with virus COVID 19). But, there is an opposite situation in the same report, when talking about nurses – at this point, all the staff is denoted by feminine plural 'infermieret' (feminine) by not mentioning 'infermierët' (masculine), even though

among the nurses, there are male nurses as well. This has to do with the overall perception that nurses are of female gender and doctors are mostly men (which is not the case). But, there is a dominance of masculine plural in uni-gender use of such words. For example, when reporting on the beginning of the new school year, journalists will use the terms 'nxënësit' and 'studentët' (masculine plurals) by avoiding the feminine plurals 'nxënëset' and 'studentet'. Because Albanian doesn't have a grammatical form to include both genders in the plural as English does in most cases than the speakers, in general, have that kind of perception to denote plural through masculine gender, except in the situation as described with the plural for 'nurses'. I couldn't notice any other case when feminine plural is used to denote occupations, so I noticed the use of masculine plural for groups of people of the same profession e.g.: qytetarët (citizens), votuesit (voters), mjekët (doctors), pacientët (patients), punëtorët (workers), nëpunësit (employees), nxënësit (pupils), studentët (students), profesorët (professors), deputetët (Members of Parliament), ministrat (ministers), bujqit (farmers), but amviset (housewife), etc. On the other, hand, some professions that are in public perception designed for women are denoted by feminine plural: infermieret (nurses), amviset (housewife), dadot (babysitters), edukatoret (preschooler teachers), pastrueset (cleaners).

Feminine plural dominates when talking about groups of animals. In a report covering farm life, both the journalist and the farmer were talking about 'chicken' (pulat), even though among the chickens there were hens and roosters. But, while Albanian doesn't have a common name as is 'chicken' in English, then feminine plural is dominant. The same situation is with a group of cows (lopë), where bulls are disregarded and no one will say "Ferma e lopëve dhe e qeve" (The farm of cows and bulls), but the common name for horses is 'kuajt' (horses) which is masculine plural. There is no rule for this kind of denotation for the groups of animals and it seems that this is a purely social or traditional view of the speakers.

7. Conclusion

Kosovo is the youngest state in Europe. As such, it's society is undergoing important processes, both political and cultural. In this sense, Language is changing alongside the society belonging to its speakers. One of the cultural responses to these changes is the effort to differentiate culturally the terms for women, as this category is gaining more focus and therefore is followed by changes in the reference to this group, both in political, cultural, and activism sense of it. As Cameron and Kulick stated in 2003 "To be a 'woman' as opposed to being a 'female' takes more than just being born with the 'correct' reproductive organs. It is a cultural achievement that has to be learned, and exactly what has to be learned is different in different times and places". If comparing the senses of the words 'gender' and 'sex' in one hand and words to denote 'woman/female' and 'man/male' one can notice exactly the difference, described by Cameron and Kulick as a cultural achievement, because the terms 'woman' and 'man' are gaining much more space and more rapidly in comparison with traditionally used words 'female' and 'male' instead, although the situation with the word 'man' was a bit different also in traditional use. But, despite the efforts to include the word 'woman' to substitute the word 'female' which is politically incorrect and considered recently offensive for women, there are still cases and situation where these terms haven't been fully accommodated in various situations, mostly in the informal situations, but also informal ones. Still, social perceptions and the overall culture are of great influence, as Ochieng states "political correctness focusing on correcting language production cannot achieve its objectives without focusing on cultural change. The evidence suggests that the society influences the thought of its members in a great deal and that the product of that effect is what is seen in language produced. (Ochieng, 2012, p. 45)

Male dominance in Language use is still present, partly because the dictionaries of Albanian are not updated, but also because the terms 'man' and 'woman' and 'male and female' and especially the

neutrality that characterizes those terms in the sense of political correctness is present mainly in public speech, but not in the informal use of Language. I don't think that the societies with this scale of development will make a breakthrough in this sense, while the problem is present in much more developed societies than Kosovo's young state and society. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, put light on much more developed societies than Kosovo's: "Members of any western industrial society are likely to be able to produce the following set of oppositions: men are strong, women are weak; men are brave, women are timid; men are aggressive, women are passive; men are sex-driven, women are relationship-driven; men are impassive, women are emotional; men are rational, women are irrational; men are direct, women are indirect; men are competitive, women are cooperative; men are practical, women are nurturing; men are rough. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 35). These stereotypes are still present, and very much reflected in everyday use in Language. There are examples such: "don't cry like a woman"; "you hit like a little girl"; "you talk like a woman", meaning "you talk too much". etc.

Further analysis, sent us to the conclusion that there is a dominance of masculine gender, as a result of the perception of patriarchal society, whose traces still can be noticed in the use of language. To that conclusion leads also the use of uni-gender plural nouns in the cases of the work-roles or during the naming of most of the occupations, which are used in the masculine gender, because Albanian has no grammatical means to build neutral forms in the plural to include equally both genders. Interestingly, the situation is very similar in neighboring Serbian and Macedonian, which leads us to the conclusion that the gender issues in Languages are socially and culturally influenced, especially in the Languages where gender distinction is unavoidable in the plural as well.

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Corpus used and monitored

<https://www.gazetaexpress.com/>

<https://insporti.com/>

www.insajderi.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8oCT5iVWDU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II6OnOZAYUQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtXs82InK9M&t=295s>

<http://web-corpora.net/AlbanianCorpus/search/>

<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=10923>

<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2457>

<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2544>

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