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The Definition and Typologies of Conversion and Compounding in Albanian Word Formation in a Crosslinguistic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the processes of compounding and conversion in Albanian, two major types of word formation alongside derivation. Unlike derivation, which has been extensively studied in Albanian linguistics, conversion and compounding have not received adequate theoretical attention. Conversion is often conflated with derivation, lacking a distinct theoretical framework that recognizes its full potential for new word creation. Similarly, the study of compounding in Albanian linguistics has been dominated by orthographic considerations, resulting in a limited understanding of its role in word formation. The research aims to address these gaps by employing a cross-linguistic approach, comparing the capacities of conversion and compounding in Albanian to those in German, English and other Indo-European languages of Europe. This comparison highlights the untapped potential of these processes in Albanian. Due to the isolation of Albanian linguistics from other European linguistic traditions and the marginalization of word formation in morphology studies, these word formation types have been underutilized. The objective is to establish a comprehensive theoretical framework for both conversion and compounding in Albanian, emphasizing their semantic aspects. By doing so, this study seeks to elevate these processes to their rightful place among word formation types and to encourage their use by Albanian speakers. This approach will demonstrate that conversion in Albanian extends beyond merely changing word classes and that compounding should be understood through its semantic unity rather than orthographic criteria.

Keywords: Albanian language; Word formation; Conversion; Zero derivation; Compounding; Orthography; Cross-linguistic approach

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1. Introduction

Since derivation is a word-formation type based on affixes, its definition is much clearer and easier than the definition of other word-formation types. Almost all European languages have built the same approach towards this type of word formation. Problems with definition and typologies emerge while dealing with conversion and compounding on different levels. First of all, in different languages, conversion and compounding are employed differently. For example, while conversion is present and similar in many ways in languages like German, English, and Albanian, this is not the case with Neo-Latin and Slavic Languages—especially if we accept the traditional approach, considering the change of word class as the main criterion.

On the other hand, the same situation is with compounding, which is highly developed not only in German and English, but also in Neo-Latin, Slavic, Greek, and Albanian. However, the definition differs a lot—German has closed and hyphenated compounds with a large number of constituents; while English, in addition, has open compounds; since in both languages compounds are right-headed, in French the head has an overt position in the compound structure; furthermore, Albanian has both left and right headed compounds, but traditionally only closed and hyphenated compounds are recognized, while open compounds are not yet, etc.

2. Literature review

Generally, conversion is defined as a type of word formation where new words emerge without change in the shape. Quite dominant is the definition that during conversion, a new word changes its affiliation to the part of speech or word class, while preserving its shape. The term “conversion” in linguistics, was first used by Sweet in 1900 while trying to explain the change of word class during word formation.

According to Kortmann (2005), “conversion means the derivation of a new lexeme from an existing one, without any particular morphological mark, indicating a change in the part of speech and the

meaning”.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) claim that since the effect of conversion is like that of derivation, many scholars consider it a special case of derivation, zero-affixation, or zero-derivation. So, the noun *spy* derives from the verb *to spy* through a suffix that does not have any phonological realization—zero affixation. In the same line, Strang (1969) talks about zero derivation instead of conversion. Marchand (1960), uses zero-suffix terminology, by not rejecting the term “conversion”, which, according to him, is a “manifestation of a syntactic displacement of the word, saying that conversion is anything but a grammatical issue and is part of the systematic syntax, rather than word formation and derivation”. This kind of approach is considered unnecessary or irrelevant by Bauer and Valera (2005).

Lieber (1992), while developing a psycholinguistic approach to conversion as the cognitive process of preserving words in the mental lexicon, does not see conversion as a morphological or grammatical action but rather a result of a coining, a creation that pertains to the domain of language and pragmatics.

Bauer and Valera (2005) construct a neutral approach to the fundamental definition of conversion as a change of syntactic class. According to them, conversion is defined as a word-formation process that links the manifestations of the same form which belong to different classes of words. However, all this is questioned at some point, although “the concept of conversion remains in use, very much as the conventional system of word classes does in languages for which it is theoretically inadequate” (Bauer and Valera, 2005). Indeed, the fact that a word changes its part of speech cannot be a viable criterion and this is evidenced in the case of Albanian, in which, as will be seen later, the process of acquiring new words without changing their shape, with a clear lexical and semantic difference between the words in this relationship, occurs even without changing the part of speech. It would also be a mistake if conversion is seen exclusively as a shift in a part of speech since the change of part of speech occurs also in other types of word formation.

Thus, Bauer's (2005) definition that "conversion is a relationship between lexemes (lexical items) or is the process whereby one lexical item is derived from another", in my point of view is neutral and very sustainable as such. Štekauer (1996) stated that "the process of conversion should be regarded as a unique, specific, word-formation process, based upon principles different from those that characterize the process of derivation".

Bauer (2018) in a way rules out the theories that consider this set of words as a polysemy. He states that "polysemy is not something inherently present, but something which develops". Usually, it starts with semantic differentiation and switches to the emerging polysemy. In some cases, polysemy advances in gaining the status of lexical unit to the new word, and in some cases, the derived word fades away to disappearance or does not reach the phase of dissolution of the polysemy. This approach to polysemy as a phase of semantic development of the word, arises the discussions about certain stages of derivative words, defined roughly according to this division.

In Albanian Grammar, conversion and zero-derivation (as a subtype of affixation) are considered different types of word formation. While conversion is defined as "a formation of a new word as a result of the transition in another part of speech because of syntactic conditions of its use" (Agalliu et. al., 2002a), zero-derivation is defined as "words which are motivated semantically, although don't have any derivational affixes" (Agalliu et. al., 2002a). But, examples given for each of word formation types do not justify that kind of differentiation.

A widely accepted definition of compounding is one considering it as a process of combining two (or more) words to create a new word with a distinct meaning. A new word emerging in this way is known as a compound word. Words like *football*, *whiteboard*, *part-time*, *mother-in-law*, *real estate*, or *high school* are compounds in English, although differing in several ways, as Bauer (2017) explains, because "they have in common the fact that they consist of two elements, in which case each of them is used

elsewhere in language as an independent word".

Until here, the definition of compounding seems to be an easy task. But, if a cross-linguistic approach is applied, then the definition of compounding will face inevitably some major problems, since different languages have different natures, and different topics of related phrases, resulting in different positions of the head of the compound, different inflection, which means that different languages have different compounding capacities.

Criteria proposed by Donalies (2004), especially those regarding orthographic unity, righthheadedness, and morphological boundaries, are not applicable across the languages. Sanchez-Stockhammer (2018) says that the approach that struggles to test the spelling of compounds certainly cannot support the definition of compounding based on orthographic unity. Szymanek 1998 says the orthographic form of the word cannot be taken as a key criterion to define composites. Although it seems that there is a tendency for institutionalized composites to be spelled as a single word (*blackboard*) or as separate words (*black board*); in other cases, the components are written with a hyphen (*sound-wave*, *tennis-ball*); even some others are written without a hyphen, that is, they are written as separate words (*blood bank*, *game ball*). Štekauer and Lieber (2012) also say that "some English composites appear in all three variants: *flower-pot*, *flower-pot*, *flower pot*, therefore writing cannot be taken as a criterion for compounds, since it reflects only secondary situation in spoken language. The same is true in Albanian, where single concepts are expressed with two separate words as *dhomë gjumi* (bedroom), or in Serbian *spavaća soba*.

Righthheadedness is applicable in German and English compounds, but not in French where compounds are left-headed. Albanian, has both head positions because of the more liberal order of phrases related to compounds, although sometimes the order of the words in the phrase (*udhë[road] hekuriAbl [iron]*) is reversed in respective compound (*hekurudhë [railway]*), which is right headed.

Also, because of the word order in phrases Noun+Adjective (*djalëN i mirëAdj[good boy]*), and

because of the presence of inflection unlike in English, sometimes (in open compounds) left element is inflected (*dhoma*[Pl] *gjumi*) for plural. Although, as stated, conversion is one of the most developed ways of forming new words, Albanian has almost totally neglected conversion as a specific way of forming new words, by employing metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche in the process. Furthermore, in the sole case of dealing with conversion (Agalliu et. al., 2002a), conversion and zero-derivation are presented as different types of word formation, while Agalliu et. al. illustrates the two concepts with same examples, without making clear the distinctions between “conversion” and “zero-derivation”.

3. Methods

The methodology used in this paper consists of a semantic and cross-linguistic approach. By comparing word-formation types in Albanian and other Indo-European language which have the same or similar structure nature and employ the same grammatical features, it is possible to develop a more standardized typology regarding Albanian word formation. Normally, it is done, by taking into consideration specifics of Albanian, such as the preservation of word class during conversion and the orthography and the non-fixed head of compounds in compounding.

4. Result

4.1 Conversion

First of all, the term “conversion” in linguistics was used by Sweet (1900), while talking about the capacities of English to change the belonging of the word to parts of speech, and noticed that this property of the word could change not only through adding the affixes but also without any change in the shape:

When we talk of the whiteness of the snow instead of saying the snow is white, we make the adjective white into whiteness by adding the derivative endings. But in English, as in many other languages, we can often convert a word, that is, make it into another part of speech without any modification or

addition, except, of course, the necessary change of inflection, etc. (Sweet 1900)

Thus, “Sweet did not intend to define types of word formation, but merely indicated a way through which the words change their affiliation with a part of speech” (Paçarizi, 2019).

According to this definition, the change of the affiliation of the words to different parts of speech, cannot be considered as a classification criterion, since the change of the part of speech for the derived word is quite normal, for other word-formation types as well. The criteria to qualify conversion as a different type of word formation must be the changes in meaning or at least in the sense (semantic) and the absence of word formation affixes (morphological), as is the case for other word-formation types as well.

Traditionally, scholars dealing with word formation omitted some facts: the change of the word class happens in all word-formation types, so it cannot be considered as an exclusive feature of conversion (affixation: white [Adj]—whiteness [N]—whiten [V]; compounding: white[Adj]—whiteboard [N] etc.); word formation is rather a semantic than a syntactic process; intention of creating new words is semantic, that is, to have new senses or meanings, rather than syntactic relations.

Even in English, there are cases where the part of speech is not changed, as in the words *drug* (medicament) and *drug* (narcotic); *entry* (lexical) and *entry* (data); *spring* (season) and *spring* (of water), etc. It cannot be called a polysemy, because polysemy does not oppose any form of word formation—it is simply a stage through which the word passes until its conversion into a new lexical entry. As stated previously (Paçarizi, 2019), a language speaker does not need to know and mostly does not know what part of speech is used. Their primary purpose is communicative need, not the creation of grammatical forms or shapes.

Furthermore, the new meaning emerges without any morphological changes in the shape of the new word compared with the original one. This fact does not affect the change of word class. At least, not always. For example, in Albanian, there is the

case when the noun *rreth* (1) (ring) is converted into the preposition *rreth* (2) (about): *Diskutuam rreth kësaj çështjeje* (We discussed about this issue), but in another case, the noun *rreth* (ring) may produce another noun *rreth* (3) (district) which has different properties than the original (e.g. since the word denoting ‘ring’ has plural *rrathë*, the word denoting district has a plural *rrethe*, which means that *rreth* (1) and *rreth* (3) are different lexical entries of the same origin. In this case, “the derivation is undoubted and since a new word with a new meaning emerged from another word without a change in the part of speech, the process can’t be considered anything else but conversion” (Paçarizi, 2019).

In Slavic languages, for example, conversion is not present very much if referring to the traditional point of view on conversion as a change of the word class. Otherwise, in Serbian, there are cases of conversion with no change of the word class: *list* (leaf) / *list* (sheet), *strana* (side) / *strana* (page), etc., and *mlada* (young female) / *mlada* (bride) as stated in Serbian Grammar. A similar situation is in Italian with the words *mela* (apple the fruit) and *melo* (the apple tree), yet in Italian Grammar, it is not considered as a real conversion, but rather a semantic extend or metonym. However, Albanian is highly advanced in this regard. Since only from the Albanian Electronic Dictionary of 2002, which has about 48,000 lexical units, it has identified more than 500 cases of undoubted conversion as well as hundreds of cases of polysemy whose tendency of dissolution goes in favor of conversion, as new words emerge as a new and independent lexical unit.

This way of word formation is very frequent in Albanian—a noun can produce a new meaning while still being noun: *veri* (north): *Ata ikën në veri* (They fled north) and *veri* (wind coming from the north). However, one has to be very careful in identifying whether there is polysemy (which is an early stage of conversion) or whether the new word is sufficiently differentiated (dissolution of polysemy) to be considered a lexical unit on its own.

Let us take the Albanian word *bar* (medicament) in its derived sense (derived from *bar* (grass)). This

word is rarely used in its singular form, but still finds enough use in the plural: *Ka marrë shumë barna* (He used a lot of drugs). Given the fact the word *ilaç* (medicament) also has the meaning of drug, which is not the case with the word *bar*, the word *bar* (in plural) will likely survive. But even if there is a meaningful leveling between the words *bar* (weed) and *ilaç* (medicament), the word *bar* (used for medicament and weed) ensures its existence by its word formation capabilities, because the word *barnatore* (pharmacy, drugstore) derives from that base.

However, it is far more difficult for this word’s meaning to fade, since being fertile has left a trace, and has left successors by being transformed into a topic or derivative word. The relations between the homonyms of *bar* in Albanian can be analyzed following the model of Martsa (2002), analyzing homonymy and polysemy through the homonyms ‘bank’ in English:

(1) *bar* (grass); (2) *bar* (medicament, drug); (3) *bar* (weed, marijuana);

(4) *bar* (bar, night club), (5) *bar* (unit for pressure)

Bar (1) and *bar* (2) are sufficiently differentiated to be considered polysemic words, since each of them is an independent lexical unit. Furthermore, they have different grammatical features: *bar* (1) is uncountable, and has no plural; *bar* (2) is countable, and the plural is more common than the singular. Each of them is productive on its own: *bar* (1) produces *bar-ishte* (herb), *bar-ishtore* (herbaceous); while *bar* (2) produces *bar-natore* (pharmacy).

On the other hand, *bar* (3) is derived from *bar* (1), which has only recently come into use (for sociolinguistic purposes). It has a reverse slang form, *rabi*, which is uncountable and still not productive. In the case of *bar* (1) and *bar* (2), there is a dissolution of polysemy—which means that the process of conversion is concluded—while the relations between *bar*(1) and *bar* (3) are in the phase of emerging polysemy, with no clear chances to dissolution or survival, although there is a difference between *bar* (1) which is eatable, unlike *bar* (3) which is “smokable”. It means in cases (1), (2), and (3), there is systematic homonymy, while in cases (4) and (5), there is acci-

dental homonymy, which has nothing to do with any word formation process.

On the other hand, the word *kyç* primarily was used to denote “knot” or “node”, and then was converted into different meanings and senses. Albanian at first had the word *çelës* (opener, unlocker) to denote “the key”, unlike German which has *shlossel* (equipment to close) or Serbian which has *ključ* (equipment to close). In Albanian, the word *çelës* has a meaning of equipment that serves to open (although it still is used for both, to open and to close). Then, for the speakers emerged the need to have a word that denotes equipment serving to close (padlock) and did it metonymically by using the word for a node, knot (*kyç*) to denote padlock (*kyç*). Then, this word underwent further conversion by producing a verb *me kyçë* (to lock). Since, the word *kyç* has a meaning to connect, to tie, or to join something, and probably influenced by the English sociolectal word “join”, Albanian produced a new sociolectal meaning *kyçje* (joint) and (*me u*) *kyçë* (to take a joint). However, it expanded its meaning by being used in situations like “*U kyça në bisedë*” (I joined the conversation), or “*Nuk po mund të kyçem në internet*” (I can’t connect to the internet), and so on. It means, that metaphors (including metonymy and synecdoche) play a very important role in conversion and leave the space to create new words, without changing their shape and even the word class.

Let’s take a look into English, by analyzing the word “spring”. Old English *springan* (to leap, burst forth, fly up; spread, grow), originates from Proto-Germanic **sprengan*—source also of Old Norse, Old Frisian *springa*, Middle Dutch *springhen*, Dutch Related *springen*, Old Saxon and Old High German *springan*, German *springen*—, from PIE **sprengh-*, nasalized form of the root **spergh-* (to move, hasten, spring) —source also of Sanskrit *sprhayati* (desires eagerly), Greek *sperkhesthai* (to hurry). Now, *spring* has several meanings in English. First, it denotes one of the four seasons: “This year, *spring* came earlier than in the previous year”; the second meaning is “source of a stream or river, flow of water rising to the surface of the earth from below”, for example,

“This water is bottled directly from the *spring*”. But, is this the real order? Most probably not, because the first meaning is “to burst, to come out”, etc. If so, then the noun *spring* to denote the season of the year is metaphorically created from the noun *spring* which denotes the source of water. Further, in figurative use, it means “source or origin of something”. This relation can be tested by comparing different languages. The words to denote *spring* as a season, in European IE languages are related to summer: *primavera* (It.), *pranverë* (Alb.), *prol(j)eće* (SSL). Since these words might have borrowed the model from *primavera* (Italian), there is another word to denote the spring season in some Slavic languages as in Russian, Croatian, and Serbian—*vesna*, which is the Slavic goddess of spring, birth, and renewal, which underwent the same or similar metaphoric procedure as the word *spring* in Germanic languages. Since the word *vesna* was overthrown under the pressure of the word *prol(j)eće*, it managed to maintain its usage as a widely spread patronym in Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, etc. Still, it is interesting that in Slovenian the word to denote spring (as season) is *pomlad*, which means renewal. However, in Slovak *jar* and Czech *jaro* (the words to denote spring) originate from Proto Slavic *jaro* which has the meaning “year”, just like *l(j)eto* (summer) has the same origin as *l(j)et/ l(j)eto*, which means “year”.

4.2 Compounding

Alongside the affixation, compounding is the most common way of word formation in the Albanian language, as well as in most Indo-European languages. Compounding is the formation of new words or new lexical units from two or more items, which are free morphemes and meaningful lexical units of a language. Composition is the easiest way for the speaker to form new words. This capacity comes from the almost automatic nature of compounding.

Words *hekurudhë* (railway), *udhëkryq* (crossroads), *mirësjellje* (politeness), *fatlum* (lucky), *autolarje* (car wash), *bojëgjake* (bordeau), *gushtovjeshtë* (season between summer and autumn), *tekniko-teknologjik* (technical-technological), *mësimor-edu-*

kativ (teaching-educational) and other words, are combinations of bases to denote single mental concepts, accepted as compounds in Albanian grammars. These formations of Albanian are interesting in terms of the topics of the constituents of the compound words in comparison with the corresponding syntactic phrase since in most cases Albanian applies reverse order of the constituents in compounding: *hekur* (steel) 1-*udhë* (road) 2 / *udhë* (road) 1 *e* *hekurt* (steel) 2, *mirë* (good) 1 + *sjellje* (behavior) 2 / *sjellje* (behavior) 1 + *e mirë* (good) 2, but it happens that the order of the phrase is preserved: *udhë* (road) 1 + *e kryqëzuar*, *kryqe* 2 / *udhë* (road) 1 + *kryq* (cross), *bojë* (color) 1 + *gjaku* (blood) 2, etc.

The main problem with composites arises when building a cross-linguistic approach. In this case particular languages demonstrate different capacities in building compounds. This compositional capacity depends on the inflectional nature of the respective language. For example, English, which has only a limited number of inflectional suffixes, finds it easier to attach topics, as the syntactic relations between the components of a compound are not dependent on inflectional suffixes, such as in Albanian, Slavic, or Italian. Also, in the case of English, the rule of the right hand for the head of the compound almost always works, which takes the inflectional suffixes at the same time, referring to the composite as a whole.

Let's compare potential themes for composing in Albanian, German, English, and Serbian: The English word *bedroom* builds its plural with an ending *s* (bedrooms), while its correspondent in German *schlafzimmer* does not need a plural indicator. However, in Albanian, *dhomë gjumi* (bedroom) cannot take inflectional suffixes without interfering within the structure of a compound, because the first element, which is at the same time the head of the compound, will have to deal with grammatical features—*dhomën e gjumit* (Acc) and *dhomat e gjumit* (Pl). The same is with the Serbian corresponding word: *spavaća soba* > *spavaće sobe* (Pl), *spavaćoj sobi* (Dat), etc. Rarely, Albanian breaches this rule as in the cases *fjalëkryq* (crossword) or *udhëkryq* (crossroad), where the grammatical features will

rely on the compound, even its non-head constituent (*fjalëkryqin*, *udhëkryqet*, etc.). The impossibility of including other elements within the structure of the compound is one of the criteria for the definition of the compound in comparison with the phrase (Donalies 2004). According to this approach, the structure of the compound word *blackbird* cannot include any other word, while in the phrase *black bird* one may include words like *a black ugly bird* (Štekauer and Lieber 2012). In the case of Albanian, the word *shpendkeqe* (blackbird) might be a compound, contrary to the phrase *shpend i keq* (bad bird) which could include other elements such as *shpend i zi e i keq* (black and bad bird), *shpend vajtues i keq* (bad crying bird), etc.

Marchand (1960) says that “when two or more words are combined into a morphological unit, then we are talking about composition”. However, this definition is based on the analytical features of English, especially on the absence or limited amount of inflectional morphemes. In inflected languages such as Albanian and Slavic (Czech, Slovak, Russian and Serbian), and Italian, the individual components of syntactic phrases are inflected and linguists such as Bauer, Lieber, Štekauer, etc. think that composites do not come from combinations of words but from combinations of stems. It means that the composite is shaped or inflected as a whole. However, even this explanation has a problem as the constituent bases of the composites might be inflected previous to entering the compounding relations [*marr* (take $V_{partic.}$) + *dhën(ë)* + *je* (give $V_{partic.}$) = *marrjeN* + *dhënieN* = *marrëdhënie* (relation)].

But, let us go back to the explanation by Štekauer (Štekauer and Lieber, 2012), for Slovak where the word *rýchlovlak* (express train) is a compound, as the left-hand component *rýchlyA* (fast) is a free morpheme with an inflectional morpheme and manifests the connecting element *-o*. On the other hand, *rýchly vlak* (fast train: any train that runs fast) is a phrase and not a compound, as the adjective *rýchly* is shaped to fit the noun. The same situation is in Serbian where *tvrda glava* (hard head) is not a compound, while *tvrdoglav* (stubborn) is a compound and takes

the connecting element *o*, as well as in Slovak and other Slavic languages. Moreover, in addition to attributive composites, even coordinated ones such as the Serbian or Croatian word *nosorog* (rhinoceros) are built on this model: *nos* (*nose*) + *o* + *rog* (horn) = *nosorog*, or even cases like *bosonog* (barefoot ANG.; barfuß GER.). Even Albanian in some cases, especially in coordinated compounds, uses the element *o* as a connecting tool: *tekniko-teknologjik*, *kimiko-biologjik* or even *mesoburrë* (middle-aged man) from *mes* + *o* + *burrë*, *gushtovjeshhtë* (approximately meaning autumn in August) from *gusht* (*August*) + *o* + *vjeshhtë* (*Autumn*), or even sociolinguistic form *çikodjalë* (ladyboy).

Indeed, in the case of compound construction, even German uses connecting elements (fugenelementen), as in the case of *klassenaufgabe* (class-work), which is constructed from the themes *klasse* and *aufgabe*, which are connected by the element *n*, etc. While in German it is not disputed in any case whether *klassenaufgabe*, *reihenhaus*, etc. are compounds or not, since an element is inserted there, although, without grammatical or inflectional value, this relativizes to some extent the criterion of the unity of the compound described by Donalies.

As far as English is concerned, it can be said that it is the lack of inflectional morphemes in this language that makes the surface forms of composites and free syntactic groups identical in terms of their morphological forms. There is no morphological difference between the constituents in the composition *blackboard* and the phrase *black board*, except that in the structure of the phrase other words like

a *black dirty board*, or *black old and wet board* can be inserted, while the compound *blackboard* does not tolerate insertions. Further, looking semantically, the composite *blackboard* does not even expose the relationship between “board” and “black”, as the blackboard is not just a board and is not even black in most cases.

Now, does this conventional fact make a difference, so the orthography is a criterion for defining the composition?

As can be seen from **Tables 1** and **2**, while not having the word-forming capacities of German, Albanian can adopt the English model for the treatment of composites by treating the cases of separate lexical units as composite words, even in the cases when the constituents have not managed to be attached. The “bedroom” or “living room” structure in English is treated as composite, just like in German (*schlafzimmer*), but the “living room” structure in English is not formally compound or is an “open compound” (living room, sitting room), in German, it is a closed compound (*wohnzimmer*). Of course, the meanings of different words in the different languages are not quite comparable due to the structure of languages, and their word-formation capacities—for example, the English composite “crossroad” which in Albanian is *udhëkryq*, just like in English *crossroad* (from the phrase “road crossing”) with the same constituents (although in the opposite order, when non-head constituent takes inflectional markers), giving the same meaning, in German, it is not a composite but a suffixed word (*kreuzung*) or in Italian, it is a prefixed word (*incrocio*), and in Serbian is circumfixed *raskrsnica* (ras-krs(t)-nica).

Table 1. Compounds of Albanian in comparison with other languages.

Albanian	English	German	Italian	Serbian
udhëkryq	crossroad	kreuzung	incrocio	раскрсница
hekurudhë	railroad	eisenbahn	ferrovia	железничка пруга
rrokaqiell	skyscraper	wolkenkratzer	grattacielo	небодер
vendpunishte	workplace	arbeitsplatz	posto di lavoro	радно место
zëvendësministër	deputy minister	vize-minister	vice ministro	заменик министра

Table 2. Potential “open compounds” of Albanian in comparison with other languages.

Albanian	English	German	Italian	Serbian
dhomë gjumi	bedroom	schlafzimmer	camera da letto	спаваћа соба
dhomë ndenje	living room	wohnzimmer	salotto	дневна соба
redaktor gjuhësor	language editor	spracheditor	Editor di lingue	уређивач језика
kalë shale	riding horse	reitpferd	equitazione	коњ јза јахање
ministër i jashtëm	foreign minister	außenminister	ministro degli Esteri	министар спољних послова

That composites should not be based on orthographic unity, since they are not as a product of a process, but rather almost automated creation of new “word”, which do not need time to gain the status of lexical entry, as shown by the presence of composites in The Dictionary of Modern Albanian, particularly in composites employing the base *ngjyrë* (color) or its synonym *bojë* (color). For example, the words *ngjyrëkafe* (brown), *ngjyrëvjollcë* (violet), *ngjyrëmanushaqe* (purple) are considered compounds, but *ngjyrë qielli* (light blue), *ngjyrë hiri* (grey) are not, and as such are not included in the Dictionary. The same is true with the words built on the synonymic base *bojë*: *bojëkafe* (brown), *bojëgjaku* (bloody red), *bojë hiri* (grey), *bojë qielli* (light blue). In all the above-mentioned cases, the decision on orthography is arbitrary.

Albanian linguistic has some tradition in avoiding orthographic criterion as decisive in qualifying a word as a compound or non-compound.

Sheperi (1927) deals with Albanian compounds, which he calls agglutinated words (*fjalë të përngjitura*): “The combination of a preposition or a word with another word constitutes new words, which we called agglutinated. Agglutination might be complete or defective, or constitutes collocations”. He tries to make a typology based on orthography, calling “complete compounds” the cases when the compound-word is written together and “defective” when they are not completely joined. (*ditë bardhë* [ditë-day, bardhë-white, which constitutes a exocentric compound meaning “lucky”], and *bukëbërës*, meaning bread-maker).

Myderrizi (1944) also deals with compounds, also calling them agglutinated words. It should be emphasized that neither Sheperi nor Myderrizi intended to call them agglutinative, but in the purist approach

they have built, they have tried to use Albanian words to denote compound words.

However, Cipo,(1949), while speaking of compounds, the orthographically separated words, which in English are known as open compounds, calls “composite sui generis”: “Both elements present a single meaning: *gur kufiri* (boundary stone), *bukë gruri* (wheat bread), *ve pate* (gooseberry), *lule dhensh* (lamb’s flower) *vaj ulliri* (olive oil), etc.”. But, this approach was criticized by Kostallari (1961, 1972, 2017). “Cipo, starting from the criterion of ‘single notion’, treats phrases formed by two nouns as compounds. [...] Feeling difficulties to treat these phrases as compounds, Cipo calls them ‘sui generis compounds”, says Kostallari (2017).

Arapı (2015) develops an interesting view that is related to two important elements, the relationship between the phrase and the compound and the orthography of the composite.

We are talking about fixed word phrases, in the first place about the stable phrase of the type noun in the singular, nominative case + noun in the indefinite ablative case. It is enough to read a newspaper to understand that in the daily “struggle” with new notions that constantly enter, Albanian uses other tools than those defined in Albanian Grammar, and in the first place precisely fixed word phrases. (Arapı, 2015)

She operates with different terminology, but the word here is about open composites, when using the term “fixed word phrase”.

Levi (1978) agrees with Zimmer (1971) when saying that “The dimension of classificatory relevance..., concerns the distinction between naming and description. Everything can be described, but only relevant categories can be named” (Zimmer, 1971). In his attempt to make the essential semantic

distinction between the phrase and the composite, Levi insists that the goal of the phrase is description (*ngul këmbë* [idiomatic phrase with meaning “stand still”], *udhë e kryqëzuar* (crossed road)), while the goal of the composite is naming (*këmbëngul* (insist), *udhëkryq* (crossroad)). Further, Levi analyses Downing (1975) who after experiments “concludes that the speaker who will create composites is usually faced with the situation in which he wants to refer to an entity that does not have a sufficiently specific name for its classificatory or communicative purposes, and because compounds are more semantically transparent than monomorphemes, they are ideal for serving as ad-hoc names” (Levi, 1978). Therefore, Levi thinks that “Zimmer and Downing emphasize the difference in function between descriptive phrases and naming compounds” (Downing 1975).

In the other hand, most English compound words are interpreted in such a way that the left member of the composition somehow modifies the right member. For example, the composition “knee-deep” (She walked in knee-deep water) tells us how deep the water is. Therefore, such composites manifest the so-called modifier-head structure. The term head is generally used to refer to the most important unit in a compound linguistic structure. In composite, the head is the unit that is modified by the other members of the composite. Semantically it means that the set of units denoted by the composite is the subset of the units denoted by the head (Plag, 2003).

The left-hand rule for modifiers and the right-hand rule for heads do not apply in Albanian. It means the head of the compound can be on the left side, as well. Let us compare some compositions according to Plag’s model, where he says that the burden of the grammatical features of the composition is borne by the head, or the main constituent, which is usually located on the right side, while the modifier is located on the left side (2003).

But does this model work for Albanian language? In the case of this composite (*varrmihës* (gravedigger) or *hekurudhë* (railway)), the situation with the structure modifier-head is the same as in English or in German, even though the phrase has reverse order

mihës varresh (digger of the graves). Meanwhile, in the case of the compound *udhëkryqet* (crossroads), this scheme breaks the rule, as the head of the composite is on the left side, while the grammatical features or inflectional suffixes are assigned to the modifier *kryq* (cross):

It means that the reason why the composite acquires the same grammatical features as its main constituent is that the head in English and German composites is to the right, where the inflectional suffixes do attach, and not because the head should acquire grammatical features.

These cases demonstrate how problematic is the compounding process in Albanian since on the one hand there is overt order of the compound words in comparison to the phrases they are built from (if so) and on another hand, there is no sustainable structure (modifier-head) of the compound words themselves.

For example, there are two different structures for three compounds that denote high buildings, in English called “skyscraper”: 1a. *rrokaqiell*, 1b. *prekaqiell*; 2. *qiellgërvishtëse*.

Compound 1a. *rrokaqiell* [*rrok* (catch) + *a* + *qiell* (sky)] – left-headed compound

Compound 1b. *prekaqiell* [*prek* (touch) + *a* + *qiell* (sky)] – left-headed compound

Compound 2. *qiellgërvishtëse* [(*qiell* (sky) + *gërvishtëse* (scraper)] – right-headed compound

The reason why these semantically identical compounds (1a. and 1b) have overt structure, relies on their origin—both are calque formations from Italian [*grattacielo*], while case 2 is, in fact, a calque from English [*skyscraper*]. In fact, in Albanian, it is possible to build overt structures for each of the cases for the signified “skyscraper”: *rrokaqiell* (*qiellrrokëse*), *prekaqiell* (*qiellprekëse*), *qiellgërvishtëse* (*grrithaqiell*).

The composition has been given considerable importance in Albanian grammar, despite the typological problems it still faces. However, this type of word formation in traditional grammar has been treated as separate from the type called “agglutination”, without any serious attempt to offer any substantial explanation as to why composition and “ag-

glutination” are considered different types of word formation, since in both types there are more than one constituents employed.

In Albanian grammar, agglutination is a type of word formation, by which new words are formed from the unification of a phrase, a prepositional group, or a group of words in general. The syntactic connections between the members of the phrase or the group are usually kept clear even in the structure of the attached word: *farefis* [type and tribe (relatives, wide family)], *gjëgjëze* [thing and small thing (riddle)], *thashetheme* [said and say (rumors)], *trembëdhjetë* [three over ten (thirteen)], *drejtpërdrejt* [straight fort straight (directly, live)], *faleminderit* [obeying to your honor (thank you)], *tungjatjeta* [may your life be long (hello)], etc. (Agalliu, et. al., 2002a). The reason for this division is the participation of other elements than the bases as constituents of the complex words (e.g. prepositions, conjunctions etc.). But, still, as with previous cases of compounds, it seems to be a matter of convention or orthography. Otherwise why the combination of colors in some cases are “agglutinative” words and in others not? Why did *bardhezi* (black and white) deserve the status of the lexical unit, but *verdhë e kaltër* (yellow and blue), or *bardh e kuq* (white and red) did not, according to the Dictionary of Modern Albanian?

5. Discussion

The problem regarding compounding in Albanian linguistics has different nature, since there are some quite significant researches on this word—formation type. Compounding faced with terminology problem, by calling at very first as “agglutination” (*përngjitje*) in the researchers struggle to use Albanian words instead of well-established international terminology. This led to absurd division of compound words into “composites” (*kompozita*) and “agglutinated words” (*fjalë të përngjitura*), which led to a confusion, because of implication of grammatical nature of Albanian, which is inflectional, and not agglutinative language such are Turkish or Fino-Ugric languages. The other major problem is that Albanian linguistic took

into consideration the orthography which in case of compounding is not accepted by the vast majority of scholars. By relying on spelling, the good part of compounds in Albanian language were left aside and were treated as “fixed phrases”, which fall within the domain of syntax rather than word formation.

If we rely on Levi’s theory, then the difference between the phrase and the composite (which actually comes out of a phrase) lies in the intention; the phrase aims at describing, while the composite aims at naming, and this ends the debate regarding the border between the phrase and the composite.

6. Conclusions

In Albanian, there are about 700 cases of conversion, when the part of speech remains unchanged. Therefore, the main outcome of this research is that conversion is a type of word formation whereby new signifiers are acquired without morphological changes to the derivative base. Changing or not the part of speech is not relevant, as it happens or does not in other ways of word formation as well.

Thus, conversion could be defined as a process of forming new words without any morphological changes. The eventual change of the word class of the derived word is not a matter of word formation, since this property is not discussed in the case of other word formation types, where it obviously happens.

Albanian is one of the languages with great capacities for compounding, but currently, the main criterion on which Albanian is based, the orthography, should be relativized, as morphological unity must not be an exclusive criterion, as it is not even in English where alongside closed and hyphenated compound, there are also open compounds.

Instead of orthography, the main criterion for defining composites and distinguishing them from phrases should be the semantic unity that such a structure represents. Relying only upon the orthographic criterion is an arbitrary attitude that does not even coincide with the intention of word formation to build “words” that denote objects, words, actions, notions, or concepts.

Even in the case of composition, as in all word formation, new words are made to express new meanings, while the forms that those words take, which are essentially a reflection of the speaker's need for new meanings, are only collateral manifestations. This means that the speaker, when needing to express a new meaning, does not choose the means to make that meaning—the speaker simply uses the tools available to his language (sometimes even borrows) to express that meaning. The speaker does not care if in that case has constructed a composition, a new adverbial word, a word obtained by conversion, etc. It means that the form is a consequence of meaning.

The only criterion that would make it impossible to treat these structures as composites is precisely the impossibility of inflecting the composite as a whole, but this is a problem of the topic of the phrase in Albanian.

Composites are not permanent structures but can be built depending on the needs and competencies of the speaker. A speaker can construct compositions there, just as he builds new words through adjectives or other forms of word formation at the disposal.

Composites in Albanian structurally do not respect the rule of the right hand and this is conditioned by the word order of the phrases, especially when having to do with nominal and adjectival phrases.

However, there are two dominant theories—the morphological theory, largely accepting the criteria of Donalies (2004), and the semantic theory of Levi (1978), which is more suited to Albanian. Levi's theory gains special weight, given the fact that composites overlap with phrases, and the difference between them, especially in languages with poor inflection, such as English, is a central issue when defining a compound. Levi makes a clear division, defining phrases as descriptive and composites as denotative. Again, the analysis of Albanian leads us in this direction, since the vast majority of established Albanian composites, but also potential ones (potentiality in composites is a slippery slope due to their immediate nature) are noun or adjectival compounds, but sometimes adverbial, conjunctive,

prepositional or repetitive onomatopoeic as well, and only a negligible number of them are verbal composites. Although traditional Albanian grammar, does not accept orthographically separated compounds (except in the cases when one of constituents is “colour” or “flower”), in Albanian syntax a clear distinction is made between syntactic phrases and lexical phrases (Agalliu et. al. 2002b), which in English are accepted as compound words, as the concept aims to name a concept or notion, similar to non-composite or non-compositional Albanian nouns.

Finally, by accepting this approach, both conversion and compounding in Albanian would be put on a track and not left on someone's will to consider the same concepts once as a compound word and next time as a non-compound word (regarding compounding) and treat the same word once as conversion and next as zero-affixation (regarding conversion).

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The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation

Conflict of Interest

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

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