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The approach to the names of living beings in Albanian dictionaries (1954, 1980, 2006)

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Abstract

This study examines the treatment of names of living beings in three major Albanian dictionaries (1954, 1980, and 2006) through a comparative diachronic lexical-semantic analysis based on systematically constructed tabulated data. The corpus comprises denominations of domestic animals, wild animals, birds, and fish, organized according to identical criteria to enable direct comparison across lexicographic sources. The analysis addresses both quantitative and semantic developments. The tabulated data indicate a gradual increase in the number of lexical units across all categories from 1954 to 2006, with the most pronounced growth observed in denominations of birds and domestic animals. At the semantic level, the findings reveal a clear developmental trajectory: a predominance of monosemy in the 1954 dictionary, a significant expansion of polysemy in the 1980 dictionary, and a tendency toward stabilization and consolidation of meanings in the 2006 dictionary. The study further identifies differentiated semantic patterns across categories. Birds and domestic animals demonstrate greater lexical enrichment and fluctuation, whereas fish and wild animals exhibit comparatively greater stability. Based on the tabulated data, the lexical field appears to be structurally organized into a paradigmatic core, an intermediate dynamic zone, and a peripheral zone. Overall, the findings suggest that the development of names of living beings in Albanian dictionaries reflects both internal semantic processes and evolving lexicographic principles, underscoring the dynamic and stratified nature of this lexical field.

Keywords: Names of living beings, comparative analysis, diachrony, polysemy, lexicography, Albanian dictionaries.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the treatment of names of living beings in three Albanian language dictionaries (1954, 1980, and 2006) through a detailed quantitative and semantic analysis of the lexical units that constitute this broad paradigmatic group. The study aims not only to identify specific semantic differences across the dictionaries but also

to highlight the structural developments that characterize this lexical field from a diachronic perspective. The analysis is based on a corpus compiled specifically for this research, comprising names of domestic animals, wild animals, birds, and fish. These lexical units were collected and systematized in comparative tables according to identical criteria for all three lexicographic sources. The comparative tables constitute the central analytical framework of the study and function as a tool for identifying diachronic changes in the number of meanings, the presence or absence of lexical units, and their categorical distribution. Each lexical unit is recorded together with the corresponding number of meanings in each dictionary, enabling direct comparison and minimizing subjective interpretation. For methodological reasons, the tables are presented in the appendix to preserve the analytical flow of the chapter and avoid visual overload in the main text. More specifically, the chapter addresses several key issues emerging from the tabulated data:

- How do the number and semantic profile of names of living beings change across the dictionaries? This question relates to the dynamics of lexical meaning and to the relationship between monosemy and polysemy.
- In what form do processes of expansion, reduction, and reorganization of the lexical stock appear within this group? This issue examines whether the observed changes reflect simple additions of meanings or broader structural reorganization.
- Do all subclasses of living-being denominations develop uniformly? This question explores quantitative and semantic differences among domestic animals, wild animals, birds, and fish.
- How is the group of living-being denominations hierarchically structured on the basis of the tabulated data? This issue leads to the identification of a paradigmatic core, an intermediate zone, and a paradigmatic periphery.

By addressing these issues, the paper seeks to provide a comprehensive and verifiable account of the diachronic development and internal organization of names of living beings. In doing so, it demonstrates how tabular analysis can yield structural findings of lexical-semantic and lexicographic significance.

2. Materials and methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is comparative and diachronic, based on the systematic comparison of tabulated data drawn from the three dictionaries. The analysis is conducted according to three primary indicators:

- the presence or absence of lexical units across the dictionaries,
- the number of meanings attributed to each lexical unit, and
- the distribution of changes across categories of living beings.

Within this framework, the tables function as the principal analytical instrument, enabling the identification of both general tendencies and specific differences among the dictionaries. The lexical units were selected based on their function as direct denominations of living beings. The analysis is confined to the changes documented in the tables and does not seek to provide a comprehensive examination of definitions

or figurative uses beyond the recorded data.

This methodological delimitation ensures that the analysis remains systematic, consistent, and verifiable, as it is grounded exclusively in the constructed empirical corpus.

2.1 The Role of Tables in the Interpretation of Results

In this study, the tables do not serve merely as a presentational device; rather, they constitute the foundation for the interpretation of the results. Every conclusion presented in the subsequent subsections is directly supported by the tabulated data, thereby avoiding unsupported theoretical generalizations. This approach ensures methodological transparency and confers an empirical, verifiable, and reproducible character on the analysis. Accordingly, the overview of the corpus and the comparative methodology demonstrates that the adopted framework enables a structured and systematically argued examination of names of living beings in Albanian, positioning the comparative tables at the center of lexical-semantic interpretation.

2.2 The Dynamics of Lexical Meanings in the Names of Living Beings in Albanian

To illustrate concretely the dynamics of lexical meanings in names of living beings, the analysis extends beyond the general tabular overview and focuses on five representative lexical units for each category. These units were selected on the basis of noticeable changes in the number of meanings across the three dictionaries (1954, 1980, and 2006).

The tabulated data demonstrate that the dynamics of lexical meanings are not uniform across the three dictionaries but display significant quantitative and diachronic variation. In the *Dictionary of the Albanian Language* (1954), most names of living beings are recorded with a single meaning, and only rarely with two meanings. This tendency is consistent across all categories: domestic animals, wild animals, birds, and fish. Lexical meaning in this dictionary is predominantly denominative and descriptive, with limited figurative extension or secondary uses. Polysemy is restricted to a small number of cases, indicating a more condensed and less semantically elaborated treatment of this lexical field.

In contrast, the *Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian* (1980) shows a marked increase in the number of meanings for many lexical units. Numerous denominations shift from one meaning to two, three, or more meanings, particularly in the categories of domestic animals and birds. This stage represents the most pronounced phase of semantic expansion.

The *Dictionary of the Albanian Language* (2006) presents a more balanced dynamic. In many instances, the number of meanings recorded in 1980 is retained; in others, a reduction is observed. In several cases, meanings appear more concentrated and stabilized. This pattern suggests a tendency toward semantic consolidation, whereby not all previously recorded uses are preserved, but rather the more stable and frequently used meanings are selected.

Domestic Animals

Five representative units were selected: *dele* (sheep), *dhi* (goat), *gomar* (donkey), *lopë* (cow), and *qen* (dog).

- *Dele*: 1 meaning (1954); 3 meanings (1980); 2 meanings (2006) — semantic expansion followed by partial revision.
- *Dhi*: 1 meaning in all three dictionaries — stability.
- *Lopë*: 1 meaning (1954); 2 meanings (1980); 2 meanings (2006) — expansion followed by stabilization.
- *Gomar*: 1 meaning (1954); 4 meanings (1980); 3 meanings (2006) — significant expansion and later regulation.
- *Qen*: 1 meaning (1954); 2 meanings (1980); 2 meanings (2006) — moderate expansion and stability.

Domestic animals exhibit substantial semantic fluctuation, particularly between 1954 and 1980, followed by adjustments in 2006.

Wild Animals

Representative units include *ari* (bear), *luan* (lion), *ujk* (wolf), *elefant* (elephant), and *dhelpeër* (fox).

- *Ari*: 1 (1954); 2 (1980); 1 (2006).
- *Luan*: 1 (1954); 3 (1980); 2 (2006).
- *Ujk*: 1 (1954); 3 (1980); 2 (2006).
- *Elefant*: 1 (1954); 2 (1980); 2 (2006).
- *Dhelpeër*: 1 (1954); 3 (1980); 2 (2006).

Compared with domestic animals, wild animal denominations demonstrate more restrained semantic dynamics. Although expansion occurs in 1980, the overall development is more stable, with changes primarily reflecting limited polysemous growth.

Fish

Representative units include *peshk* (fish), *levrek* (sea bass), *ngjalë* (eel), *krap* (carp), and *peshkaqen* (shark).

- *Peshk*: 1 (1954); 2 (1980); 4 (2006).
- *Levrek*: 1 (1954); 2 (1980); 2 (2006).
- *Ngjalë*: 1 (1954); 2 (1980); 2 (2006).
- *Krap*: absent (1954); 2 (1980); 2 (2006).
- *Peshkaqen*: 1 (1954); 2 (1980); 2 (2006).

Fish denominations generally display semantic stability, with relatively limited fluctuations and gradual additions rather than structural reorganization.

Birds

Representative units include *zog* (bird), *shqiponjë* (eagle), *lejlek* (stork), *korb* (crow), and *pulë* (hen).

- *Zog*: 3 (1954); 5 (1980); 4 (2006).
- *Shqiponjë*: 1 (1954); 4 (1980); 3 (2006).
- *Lejlek*: 2 (1954); 6 (1980); 5 (2006).
- *Korb*: 2 (1954); 5 (1980); 5 (2006).

- *Pulë*: 1 (1954); 3 (1980); 2 (2006).

Bird denominations exhibit the greatest lexical enrichment, with a substantial increase in polysemy in 1980 and a relatively high level of retained polysemy in 2006.

General Tendencies

The combined analysis of the tabulated data demonstrates that the dynamics of lexical meanings develop unevenly across categories. The 1980 dictionary represents the phase of maximum expansion of polysemy, whereas the 2006 dictionary reflects a tendency toward revision, regulation, and stabilization. In many instances, the number of meanings recorded in 1980 is preserved; in others, a selective reduction is evident, indicating semantic consolidation.

Overall, the data reveal a clear trajectory: monosemy predominates in the 1954 dictionary, polysemy reaches its peak in the 1980 dictionary, and the 2006 dictionary exhibits a phase of consolidation and structural stabilization.

2.3 Quantitative and Structural Dynamics of the Names of Living Beings

The quantitative overview of names of living beings, based on the tabulated data, indicates that their development across the three dictionaries does not proceed uniformly but follows differentiated dynamics according to both category and the internal structure of the lexical field. The total number of domestic animal denominations is 47 units in the 1954 dictionary, 49 units in the 1980 dictionary, and 52 units in the 2006 dictionary, demonstrating a gradual quantitative expansion of the lexical stock in this category. Wild animal denominations number 38 units in 1954, 41 units in 1980, and 43 units in 2006. Although a steady increase is also observed here, it is less pronounced than in the category of domestic animals. Bird denominations exhibit a more marked dynamic: 62 units in 1954, 70 units in 1980, and 74 units in 2006. This category constitutes one of the richest and most extensively developed groups within the lexical field of living beings. Fish denominations, while numerically smaller, likewise display steady growth, increasing from 29 units in 1954 to 34 units in 1980 and 37 units in 2006. Overall, all categories demonstrate quantitative growth from 1954 to 2006. However, this increase is not linear in semantic terms, as the number of meanings does not expand proportionally with the number of lexical units. From a structural perspective, the tabulated data allow for the identification of three principal zones within the lexical field of living beings:

1. **The paradigmatic core**, comprising stable denominations that appear in all three dictionaries with relatively unchanged meanings. These units represent the most consolidated component of the field.
2. **The intermediate zone**, consisting of denominations that undergo semantic expansion or reduction across dictionaries. This zone reflects the internal dynamics of the lexical system.
3. **The paradigmatic periphery**, including units that appear in only one dictionary or disappear in subsequent editions. These items constitute the most unstable and least consolidated segment of the field.

The presence of these three structural zones demonstrates that the lexical field of names of living beings is hierarchically organized rather than homogeneous. Stability, frequency, and semantic development serve as organizing principles within this structure. The tabulated data further confirm that the evolution of this lexical field is closely linked to lexicographic principles, processes of semantic change, and the broader internal organization of the Albanian lexicon.

3. Discussion

The observed dynamics suggest that the evolution of names of living beings in Albanian dictionaries reflects not merely lexical accumulation but also shifts in lexicographic strategy. The predominance of monosemy in the 1954 dictionary indicates a more conservative and condensed lexicographic approach, in which the primary denominative meaning is foregrounded and secondary or figurative uses are incorporated less systematically. This results in a semantically compact representation of the lexical field. The substantial expansion of meanings in the 1980 dictionary marks a phase of semantic broadening. The consistent increase in polysemy across numerous lexical units points to a lexicographic orientation toward greater inclusiveness, with extended and figurative meanings more systematically recorded. This stage represents the peak of semantic proliferation within the period under analysis. By contrast, the 2006 dictionary demonstrates a tendency toward semantic regulation. Although it preserves many of the meanings documented in 1980, it also reduces or consolidates meanings in selected cases. This pattern suggests a selective and evaluative process, in which previously recorded semantic expansions are reconsidered and reorganized. The outcome is a more balanced and stabilized distribution of meanings. The differentiated behavior observed across categories further confirms that semantic development is not homogeneous. Birds and domestic animals—categories more deeply integrated into everyday discourse and metaphorical usage—exhibit greater semantic enrichment. In contrast, fish and wild animals, which occupy a less central position in figurative and cultural usage, display comparatively restrained semantic growth. These distinctions emerge directly from the tabulated data and illustrate the internal stratification of the lexical field. In sum, the findings indicate that the lexical field of living-being denominations evolves through three identifiable stages: initial semantic concentration (1954), expansion and proliferation (1980), and subsequent stabilization and consolidation (2006). This diachronic trajectory reflects both internal processes of semantic change and the evolving principles of Albanian lexicography.

4. Results

The tabulated data clearly demonstrate that the development of names of living beings across the three Albanian dictionaries (1954, 1980, and 2006) is characterized by both quantitative growth and semantic restructuring. From a quantitative perspective,

all categories—domestic animals, wild animals, birds, and fish exhibit a gradual increase in the number of lexical units over time. Although the rate of growth varies across categories, the overall direction is consistent, indicating an expansion of the recorded lexical stock. The most pronounced increase occurs in the category of birds, followed by domestic animals, whereas fish and wild animals display more moderate expansion. Semantically, the findings reveal a clear diachronic trajectory. The 1954 dictionary is predominantly characterized by monosemy, with most denominations recorded with a single meaning. The 1980 dictionary marks a substantial expansion of polysemy, as many lexical units increase from one meaning to two, three, or more meanings. The 2006 dictionary, while retaining a significant degree of polysemy, demonstrates a tendency toward stabilization and selective reduction of meanings in several instances.

The analysis of representative units further confirms differentiated semantic behavior across categories. Domestic animals and birds display the highest degree of semantic fluctuation, whereas fish and wild animals exhibit comparatively greater stability. This uneven development indicates that the lexical field is internally stratified and responds differently depending on the category in question. From a structural standpoint, the tabulated data support the identification of three principal zones within the lexical field: a paradigmatic core (comprising stable and consistently attested units), an intermediate dynamic zone (including units undergoing semantic expansion or reduction), and a peripheral zone (consisting of units that appear or disappear across dictionaries). This structural configuration reflects the internal hierarchy and differentiated organization of the lexical field.

5. Conclusion

The comparative-diachronic analysis of names of living beings in the three Albanian dictionaries (1954, 1980, and 2006), based on tabulated data, demonstrates that this lexical field undergoes both quantitative and semantic changes. Quantitatively, all categories of domestic animals, wild animals, birds, and fish exhibit an increase in the number of lexical units over time.

Semantically, the dynamics of meanings follow three main stages:

- Dominance of monosemy in the 1954 dictionary;
- Expansion of polysemy in the 1980 dictionary;
- Stabilization and consolidation of meanings in the 2006 dictionary.

The development of the lexical field is not uniform across categories. Birds and domestic animals show greater semantic expansion, whereas fish and wild animals exhibit more stable patterns. Structural analysis of the tabulated data allows for the identification of three zones within the lexical field: a paradigmatic core, an intermediate dynamic zone, and a paradigmatic periphery. These zones reflect the internal organization of the lexical field and its hierarchical structure.

Overall, the findings confirm that the names of living beings constitute a dynamic lexical group, whose diachronic development reflects both linguistic evolution

and evolving lexicographic practices in the Albanian language. The full tabulated corpus, which forms the empirical basis of this study, is provided in the Appendix (Supplementary Material). The tables systematically present the lexical units and their corresponding meanings across the three dictionaries (1954, 1980, 2006), ensuring transparency and verifiability of the results.

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