GLOBAL PRESSURES AND THE DYNAMICS OF LOCAL CHANGE:  
A CASE STUDY OF AN ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT AN ALBANIAN UNIVERSITY

BY

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DISSETRATION

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Abstract

This dissertation is a case study of an English Department at a leading university in Tirana, Albania that investigates the Higher Education reforms resulting from the Albanian Government’s commitment to the Bologna Agreement and the subsequent reforms in English Language Education. Both reforms are products of emerging neoliberal global trends, designed to produce a new kind of English-speaking human capital with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure successful national and individual competition in the global markets.

The globalization of English and diverse global pressures framed the study. These global pressures gave rise to both continuity and change in policies related to English Language Education and guided the Albanian Higher Education reforms. As a higher education institution involved in the negotiation, interpretation, and implementation of higher education reforms as well as those in the English Language Education due to the centrality of ELT and the training of English teachers for all levels of education, the English Department was the perfect research site.

The study findings shed light on the Albanian manifestations of global processes and policies, shaped by the local history, economy, politics, and cultural traditions as well as by institutional features such as organizational arrangements and practices, the faculty and students, university key administrators, all with their respective roles in policy negotiation, interpretation, and implementation. Further the findings highlight the influence of the European Union and other similar organizations on the Higher Education and English Language Education policies of Albania, which led to the reorganization of curricula and increasing demands for faculty professional development. Such effects
were in response to policy discourses that emphasized the preparation of young Albanians to be successfully mobile within European and global education institutions and labor markets.

The study has implications for the understanding and the development of higher education not only in Albania but also in countries with a similar history, economy, and politics which have to negotiate, interpret, and implement in their national and local arenas policies driven by global trends, policies, and organizations.
To my father, for encouraging me to learn English
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Chapter 1
Framing the Issues

Introduction

In the mid-90s, two Americans travelling through Northern Albania came across a local high school student in an extremely remote village. Despite having studied English for only one year, she asked, in what they described as very good English, what American people thought about the Albanian president (Scherer & Senechal, 1997, p. 1). This may be considered a rather ordinary occurrence if it were not for Albania’s half-century history of isolation. Situated in South-Eastern Europe, at the cross-roads of civilizations, from 1945 to 1990, the country had experienced different degrees of being tightly closed, highly suspicious of, and greatly resistant to everything and everyone foreign, especially Western. Few people moved across the heavily guarded borders in either direction. News of any form was heavily censored or altogether blocked. The image of Albania to the outside world was carefully engineered to portray a flourishing communist country, built by its own “self-reliant new communist people”, defiant in the face of the surrounding capitalistic world. Based on speculative figures, for lack of accurate statistics, Hall (1990) estimates that only 2,500 foreign tourists between 1976 and 1980, and less than 6000 a year in the following decade, entered Albania (p. 43). No US, Israeli, and Soviet citizens after 1961, were granted a visa, after 1961; all other foreign tourists’ backgrounds were cross-examined in order to keep out the “undesirables” (Hall, 1990, p. 44-45). Some of those arriving at the only Albanian airport described the experience as “leav[ing] a continent and several decades behind” (Daniels,
1991, p. 4). They were subjected to screening for any materials of a “political, religious, or vaguely titillating nature” (Hall, 1990, p. 45), and strict dressing and appearance standards were imposed. Such “proper appearance” standards had once anecdotally led to the ultimatum delivered to a newly-arrived foreign visitor to either have his beard shorn off at the airport barber shop or get back on the next plane out of Albania.

In his article Stalinism and Tourism: A study of Albanian and North Korea, Hall (1990) claims that foreign tourists to Albania were “required to enter the country and move around within it as a permanent, coherent group”, and to follow a highly structured, “prescribed” itinerary (p. 45). Spontaneous meetings between foreign tourists and the local population were curtailed to a minimum under the careful planning and orchestration of the activities by the Albanian authorities. The state police was on constant lookout against the potential contamination of the locals with the bourgeois mentality resulting from chance meetings with tourists, on the one hand, and the potential damaging propaganda by the foreigners upon return to their original countries, that might arise from individual explorations beyond the foreign-proof areas.

Foreign language teachers or advanced university students from the Foreign Languages Faculty worked part-time as tour guides. Along with the drivers of the state-owned busses, they were the only approved locals with whom the foreign tourists were in contact for the duration of their trip in Albania. In a country where only a few select Albanians were allowed to travel abroad, those who came in contact with foreigners were closest to the “forbidden apple” that lay beyond the borders of the country. For most of them, the foreign tourists were also the first native speakers of a foreign language with whom they had ever communicated. The tour guides came from a pool of language
majors in English, French, Russian, and Italian, of which English was the largest group ranking at 45% of all language graduates in Albania (Hall, 1990, p. 43).

**English in Albania**

I graduated with a degree in English at the turn of 1990. I owe much of my interest in and the study of English to my father. At a time when foreign language education in Albania began at 5th grade, and Russian was still largely the dominant foreign language in Albanian schools, he hired an English language teacher for me when I was 8 years old. For reasons beyond my grasp at the time, my father urged me to learn English to the best of my abilities, even when my preference for children’s games trumped the desire to study something that none of my friends did or were asked to do. For me, the attraction of speaking English consisted in being extraordinary: indeed, I could count on the fingers of one hand the speakers of English among the people I knew. Movies like *The Stars Look Down* based on Cronin’s novel broadcast by the only state-owned Albanian TV did little to motivate Albanian pre-teens to learn the language. Neither books nor movies or TV programs for children were available in English. Yet my father argued that irrespective of my future profession, English would be “indispensable”. In his words, I would not be able to successfully compete and get ahead in life if I did not speak English, because, “the whole world speaks English”.

A pharmacist by training, my father did not speak of English in terms of a lingua franca. Neither was he in a position to fully predict the powers that would further drive the rise of English as the “global language” par excellence, as it has currently become. There were no statistics documenting the expansion of English in the world. My father’s
investment in his daughter’s education in English, however, indicated his anticipation of the strengthening of the position of English as a foreign language in Albania, although this reality was far in the future. It was, after all, the early 1970s. Globalization was only in its beginnings. Still a child, I took my father’s advice to heart.

After finishing the 8th grade, I won one of the few seats in the English Division of a Foreign Languages Vocational School. Admission into one of the three vocational schools of foreign languages in the whole country was very competitive. Only the high-achieving students from these schools had the opportunity to pursue the higher studies and major in English. By then, English had made considerable progress compared to Russian and it was closely competing with French for expansion in Albanian education. German, Italian, and Spanish had just been introduced at one of the vocational schools of foreign languages.

Four years from beginning high school, and after another four years of studying in the English Department of a large University in Tirana, I graduated with a degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. That was the only diploma issued by the English Department. With very few exceptions, teaching the foreign language in which they had majored was the destination of all graduates from the Faculty of Foreign Languages’ three departments: English, French, and Russian. I was no exception.

My first job upon graduation was as a teacher of English in grades 6-12 in a northeastern town of Albania. That was the last year when university graduates were assigned jobs by the Government, which they had to fill in order to avoid unemployment. Central employment planning of university graduates had been the norm throughout the communist rule in Albania. But in 1990 the foundations of communism had started to
shake. In the summer of 1990, a massive exodus of Albanians to the neighboring and other European countries took place. It was the first time in 45 years that the communist Government was unable to contain the fury of disappointed Albanians who stormed the foreign embassies in Tirana asking for and being granted political asylum. Likewise, large numbers of people captured ships in the main port city of Albania, and, risking drowning and starvation, sailed away in search of a better life. The beginnings of this massive exodus were only dents to the communist regime. The final blow came at the end of 1990, with the demonstrations of people who joined the revolt of the university students and a few progressive intellectuals. The communist leadership opted to avoid bloodshed and gave into the pressure of those forces by making a few initial concessions. The first and major concession was the founding of other political parties in addition to the Party of Labor of Albania, which led to political pluralism. The year 1991 marked the beginning of a long period of major changes in the history of Albania.

That same year, I moved back to Tirana. In the following months, the country opened up to the world. Speakers of English, the majority of which were English majors, were hired in great numbers by governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as non-profits that moved in or were founded as a result of the political, economic, and cultural changes. Foreign embassies, reputable news agencies, and newly-established foreign companies in Albania also became employers. In the meantime, I had accepted a position as a lecturer in the English Department where I had been a student. Faculty members received many offers for full-time and part-time jobs.

As the demand for the English language increased, so did the need for English teaching. My childhood private English lessons were no longer a unique, isolated case.
English language education expanded dramatically. Teaching English was no longer either the main or the only job for speakers of English. As my father had predicted over a decade ago, knowledge of English was a great advantage and was fast becoming a must for those who wanted to participate in the new opportunities unfolding in the country.

From the point of view of almost two totally different epochs, the pre- and post-1991, the seemingly insignificant meeting between the American travelers and the high school student in the distant northern village of Albania speaks volumes. The removal of obstacles to entering Albania, the freedom to visit wherever they wished, to speak with common people, to take pictures, and tell the story of “High Albania”¹ to the world were signs of the new times.

Albanians were now willing to express their opinions, without the fear of committing a political mistake that could lead to internment camps or jail. High-school students had the courage and the linguistic wherewithal to ask questions which conveyed their pride “in Albania’s becoming … a nation among others, a nation like others” (Scherer & Senechal, 1997, p. 1).

Like most of my compatriots, I took advantage of the tremendous changes in the country to use my knowledge of English. I taught English in the English Department; I taught private lessons to people, young and old, who needed the language for getting a job, holding a job for which English had become necessary, studying in a foreign country, or migrating to an English-speaking country; I interpreted and translated for foreign aid and relief organizations, cultural agencies and foundations, foreign companies and business people, diplomatic missions and military peace-keeping forces, all the while

¹ Edith Durham, a British traveler, artist, and writer became famous for her anthropological work on Albania at the turn of the 20th century. *High Albania*, published in 1909, which focused on the customs and societal organization of the highlands of Northern Albania, is still her best-known book.
using English as a means of communication with people who often did not speak it as a first language. Finally and most importantly, I relied on my knowledge of English to pursue my graduate studies in the United States. During this latter long endeavor, I have regularly visited Albania, stayed in contact with my former colleagues in the English Department, and kept up with developments in the country. With every visit, I have witnessed ever-increasing changes. The initial opening up of the country has turned into intensive interaction with the world. The political forces have launched major campaigns for Albania’s integration in Europe and in the world, through seeking membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Signing agreements has brought the country closer to regional and global networks. The education system is a major factor supporting the country’s successful involvement in global networks. Indeed, in a world operating on the basis of competition, only a country and a society with a highly-educated, highly-skilled workforce can compete successfully. Realizing this imperative, Albania signed the Bologna Agreement in 2003.

**Educational Policies**

**Bologna process**

Bologna Agreement (also known as the Bologna Accord or Declaration) was signed in Bologna, Italy, in 1999 by representatives from 29 countries. One of its goals was the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to be completed by 2010. Such a major goal called for a series of conferences and summits – hence described as the Bologna Process. The agenda was to build on the initial progress by setting additional goals for the future. In line with the creation of EHEA, the Bologna Agreement aimed at
the harmonization of European Higher Education so that people can successfully study and work in any country.

Striving to eliminate the effects of a nearly 5-decade long history of isolation, Albania and Albanians are eager to take every integration opportunity. Assuming its rightful place in the “European family of countries and societies”, as Albanians used to refer to the European Community before it became the European Union, led Albania to be the promoter of many movements and measures. This has persisted even though some of these required painful transitions and sacrifices. Albania’s commitment to implement the Bologna Reform process throughout the higher education is one of those movements. The reform implementation has brought various pressures on the academic community. The pressures exist from the higher levels such as the Ministry of Education and Science that pushed for Albania’s participation in the Bologna Agreement, down to the university students, and all the instances in-between. Bologna reform’s effects have also been felt in pre-university education and the society at large.

The Bologna reform co-occurred with the introducing of a new State Matura\(^2\) exam, in which English had a special place. The unique status awarded to the English language was reflected in the initiative “English-speaking Albania” launched by the Minister of Education and Science.

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\(^2\) State Matura (or the State Maturity) exam occurs at the end of high school (after grade 12). The new State Matura “Merit and Preference” introduced in 2005 measures student achievements upon finishing their secondary education, as the previous State Matura had done. In addition, it serves the purpose of placing students, according to their achievements and preferences, in a higher education school and/or department.
The initiative English-speaking Albania was launched in March 2007. The motives for this initiative resulted from a strong association between the global economic, political, cultural, technological and educational developments and the required mastery of English language. The Minister of Education and Science maintained: “If we as a nation want to master the sciences, the innovative technology, and modern knowledge, if we want to be competitive in the global economy, mastery of English is absolutely necessary” (Pollo, 2007). This initiative signaled a significant shift from the previous English Language Education policies. What had started as a popular movement of massive English language teaching and learning in the first years following Albania’s break from a communist regime and planned economy, necessitated by capitalistic developments and exchanges in all sectors of life, was made official by means of this initiative.

The Ministry of Education and Science took a series of measures to help achieve the goals of “English speaking Albania.” One measure was to assign the maximum coefficient possible to English, if it was selected, as one of the two elective exams in the State Matura. The Ministry also raised the salaries of English teachers’ to the level of information technology and mathematics teachers. Further, it liberalized the textbook market to enable foreign publishing houses to compete with their textbooks and opened a new English Department at a newly-founded university, dedicated solely to the training of English teachers in order to remedy the shortage of specialized teachers.

Considering my two-fold interest in the spread of English in Albania and the development of higher education in the post-communist Albania, I decided to focus my
research on an English Department at a large Albanian university. Indeed, the centrality of English in the Department’s curricula and also in the professional lives of its faculty members and students, made the English Department an excellent case. I wanted to trace the rise of the English language in Albania in the last two decades and the reasons behind this process. Also, the English Department reflects the major processes of higher education development in Albania. The faculty had lived through the implementation of the Bologna Reform in 2005, after a series of preceding higher education reforms. Faculty members and students were in a position to describe their lived experiences within these major transformations in Albanian society and higher education.

**Research Questions and Interpretive Framework**

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What are some of the external pressures, whether enacted or not in policies, that have steered the work of the English Department? How have faculty and students interpreted, responded to, and negotiated these policy pressures?

2. What are some of the organizational conditions that define the work of the faculty and students in the English Department? Under what conditions do the English Department actors perform their daily duties of academic work, and to what extent do those conditions support the faculty’s and students’ work?

3. What are the results that arise at the juncture of external global pressures and organizational conditions in the Department? What is the dynamic emerging from the interaction of external pressures, in the way they are interpreted and negotiated by the faculty members and students?

I frame the interpretation of my findings within two broad concepts: pressures and conditions. I have used the term pressures to refer to the developments and changes that have occurred in Albania in terms of local and global economic, political, social, and technological developments. Although such changes happen in many places, this is a
unique context of critical importance in the history of Albania, dividing it into two main recent periods: (a) communism, which lasted from 1944 until 1991; and (b) post-communism, after 1991. My study compares these time periods from the inside perspective of the English Department at the University of Tirana.

Pressures arose in the English Department from changes that originated outside the Department, such as the Bologna Reform. Despite being an educational policy, the decision to join the Bologna Process, was initiated in the Ministry of Education and Science, i.e., outside the English Department. Regardless where they come from, these pressures affect program development, faculty members and students. Case studies of programs undergoing change provide understandings of how policies affect practices and people, and how people negotiate the consequences within their lived experiences.

I use the term conditions to refer to the internal organizational conditions in the English Department in which the faculty members and students teach and learn respectively. Such conditions include, but are not limited to, teaching, research and professional development for the faculty, as well as the availability of textbooks, libraries, classroom space and other teaching and learning facilities such as laboratories, computers, and Internet, for both faculty and students. “Organizational conditions” are important to the interpretation of findings in this study because these conditions influenced what faculty could do related to the English education reforms.

The outside pressures and the internal conditions are not distinct concepts; rather, they are interconnected. Thus, it is not simple to pinpoint where the Bologna Reform ends as a pressure from outside the Department and where it begins as an internal condition impacting the daily lives of faculty and students. The same argument can be
made with regard to the pressures and conditions of English expansion in the last two
decades. The outside pressure to implement the reforms interacted with the inability of
the Ministry of Education to pay the Department faculty salaries on which they can live
comfortably without feeling pressured to hold multiple jobs in order to survive
financially. Both pressures and conditions influenced their academic work in terms of
teaching and research in the English Department. Recognizing the complexity of the two
concepts of pressures and conditions, I have used them as a heuristic device to guide my
interpretation of the data.

Finally, I discuss the results produced at the juncture of the interaction between
the outside policy pressures and the organizational conditions internal to the Department.
I have used these terms to interpret the outcomes or consequences of the reform in the
Department. However, since outcomes are usually regarded as quantitatively measurable
and consequences may carry a negative connotation, I have opted for the more neutral
term “results”. The discussion of results, however, attempts to answer the question as to
whether these results are positive or negative.

Dissertation Outline

This study consists of the following parts:

1. Chapter 1 – Introduction of the Study
2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review
3. Chapter 3 – The Development of Higher Education in Albania
4. Chapter 4 – Methodology
5. Chapter 5 – Policy Pressures on the English Department,
6. Chapter 6 – Organizational Conditions in the English Department, and

7. Chapter 7 – Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I establish the relation between the rise of English as the global language and the major changes that have happened in the world in the last few decades. Through a comparison of the spread of English as the language of British Empire in the past and the current expansion of the language, I show that the rise of English is a result of the economic, political, cultural, technological, and educational recent developments, which are a characteristic of globalization. A brief analysis of these developments leads me to align with the scholars who argue that today’s world is not simply a result of high internationalization. Rather, the economic, political, cultural, and technological developments point to a new system of integration of a global scale. In as far as a language accomplishes the function of a linguistic infrastructure for the afore-mentioned changes, it enjoys a special status and prestige.

The review of the literature shows that English is indeed closely connected with the major forces of global developments. It serves as the language of significant and the most powerful multinational and transnational corporations; it is the working language of important political organizations that hold in their hands the fate of the world’s peoples; it is the language of popular culture, images and ideas that circulate in the world; it is the language of the Internet, the most advanced and influential technological invention of the recent decades; it is the language of science, scholarship, and higher leaning. Under these circumstances, the march of English over the world is unstoppable. That being said, it is worth considering that every country and society negotiates the rise of English in its own way and at its own pace. The role of English in the EU institutions, in the respective
countries, and around the world confirms the trend toward the expansion of English. At the same time those examples illustrate the differences in the rate of the expansion of the language.

Chapter 3 provides a historical context for the case study of the English Department by presenting a historical overview of the Higher Educational Development in Albania. I argue that the development of Albanian Higher Education is closely related with the history of Albania. For this reason, I focus on the historical processes that have happened in the country as they relate to the purpose of higher education, the organization and structure of higher education institutions during the communist regime and after it, and the changes that the liberalization of the country has necessitated in Albania’s higher education. In this framework, I focus on the higher education reforms, and most importantly, the Bologna Reform, which aims at making Albanian HE part of the EHEA. The implementation of the Bologna Reform underlies Albania’s aspirations to a European and world-scale integration. Indeed, by making its HE comparable to European and world HE, Albania seeks its own place on the world stage of current developments.

Chapter 4 poses the research questions and outlines the methodology of the study. More specifically I explain the decision to use a qualitative case study approach in order to address my research questions. Further I describe the research site, i.e., the English Department of a large university in Tirana, Albania where I collected the data over a period of 5 months, in the Fall semester of 2007. My data sources were faculty members and students from the English Department, with whom I conducted one-on-one interviews. I describe the study participants in order to help the reader situate and
contextualize their experiences in negotiating the pressures of the reforms within the organizational conditions of the English Department. Other data sources for this study were my personal observations and documents that I obtained in the course of conducting fieldwork. Finally, but equally importantly, for each aspect of the methodology included in this Chapter, I have raised issues that surfaced and are worthy of discussion as they have shaped the findings of the study related to the methodology.

Chapter 5 deals with the pressures that shape the English Department. I argue that these pressures are situated within the history of the country. More specifically, they emerge within the economic and labor policies, in the foreign relations, and in the current socio-cultural trends of development. Finally, but significantly important for this study, the Albanian government’s commitment to the Bologna Process and implementation of the Bologna reform, constitutes another major pressure.

The faculty members and students of the English Department are constantly required to make sense of the policy pressures by interpreting what those pressures mean for them. They have to position themselves in relation to such policy pressures and respond to them. In the process of negotiation, several stories of lived experiences from the faculty and the students find expression in this study. I show that the study participants have realized the prominent role that English has assumed in the current stage of Albania’s development and they have taken and continue to take advantage of their mastery of English language. On the other hand, the changes have brought about pressures that produced insecurities and anxieties among the study participants. Many felt pushed into blazing paths that have not been walked before.
Chapter 6 looks into the organizational conditions in the English Department in which the faculty and students have to negotiate their academic work. The pressures discussed in the previous chapter have led to changes in the conditions of faculty and student work. I show that the faculty is required to provide high-quality teaching and conduct research as conditions for their job security. On the other hand, in order to face the rapidly-increasing living standards in the country, which cannot be met with the faculty salaries, they have to hold multiple jobs. Those jobs compete for the faculty’s time and energies, and consequently their teaching and research activities suffer.

Further, I show that the working conditions in the English Department do not accommodate the realization of the goals of the Bologna Reform, and neither do they create adequate conditions for students in the Department to learn English. Shortage of classroom space, of teaching and learning media, of language-learning laboratories equipped with computers and Internet, of libraries and textbooks in a specialized English Department is a paradox. When the higher education institution with the longest tradition in training future English teachers operates in the conditions described, the conditions of schools in general and the quality of their teaching are anyone’s guess.

In Chapter 7, I focus on the results emerging from the interaction between the broader pressures driving the prominence of English and the organizational conditions that define the work of the faculty and students in the English Department. I argue that these results represent shifts in the ways the faculty members view themselves related to their role in the present and the future of their responsibilities and aspirations. I show that a common theme is the shift from an inward look that characterized their viewpoint during the period of communist isolation to a current outward and global perspective.
They constantly refer to their counterparts in the EU or other countries that have adopted the Bologna Agreement and, that like Albania, aim at regional and global integration. Such shifts place the faculty and students at the center of a unique emerging dynamic associated with the rise of English and the global processes taking place in Albania.

By way of conclusion, I outline some important implications related to the internationalization of Albanian higher education as exemplified by the English Department at the center of this study. I consider the work of faculty members and students, the English language education at the policy level, seen through the eyes of faculty and students in the English Department. As the source for future English teachers, their achievements may well represent the tendencies toward the reform goals. Finally, I argue that the success of the project of Englishization and of other educational reforms requires a close cooperation between the policy makers and the higher education institutions that shelter departments like the English Department.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a historical and policy framework to situate and interpret the findings of this study. A heap of findings, no matter how interesting is just that: a collection of interviews, observation notes, and documents. Without grounding within a particular context, the researcher would be hard-pressed to “notice” data of interest and make sense of it. In this regard, the following literature review has helped me address the research questions of this study, namely, the way in which global pressures, enacted (or not) in specific policies, interact with the local factors to produce a unique dynamic of change.

In this chapter, I will discuss the reasons behind the expansion and spread of English language, especially in the last few decades. Through a brief history of the development of the language, I show that the former British colonies and the Industrial revolution are not sufficient reasons to explain the current expansion of the language. I argue that this expansion is related with the phenomenon of globalization, whose very existence has sparked a debate between its proponents, who argue that it is indeed a new phenomenon, and its skeptics who consider it an old phenomenon under a new name. Further and most importantly, I argue that English is closely related with three main pillars of globalization: its economic, political, and socio-cultural aspects. Technological advancements like Internet have given a further impetus to the rise and spread of English. In its expansion, English has become a language that guarantees access to knowledge,
scholarship, science, and different levels of education, especially higher education, much more than other languages like French, Spanish, German, and Italian hailing from the old days and rooted in a history of colonization as well as the increasingly rising languages like Chinese and Arabic.

**A Brief Overview of the Development of English Language**

Six hundred and seventy million people worldwide are estimated to speak English as a first, second and/or foreign language (Crystal, 1997, p. 61), making it one of the most widely spread languages in the world. These statistics are impressive, especially because the current expansion of English is not simply a result of its being the first language of what Kachru (1986) calls the “inner circle” of the traditional bases of the English language in his proposed model of the spread and functions of English. The most analysis-worthy fact is the rate at which English has expanded in the last few decades.

Scholars agree that the beginnings of the spread of the English language are closely related with the military power of the British Empire, which in part made English ‘the language on which the sun never sets’ at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It resulted in countless colonies stretching to the farthest corners of the world and making up the “the outer circle” of English (Kachru, 1986), consisting of such countries as India, Singapore, and over 50 other territories with 150-300 million of people (Crystal, 1997, p. 54). Nevertheless, this colonial expansion of English does not explain the current growth of the language. Nor do the significant technological achievements of the Industrial Revolution which took place in Britain and spread out in other countries through the medium of English, bringing English words and expressions
for the new inventions. Nor can the literature produced in English by writers as famous as Shakespeare be credited with the expansion of English in the last few decades, although it may have been an important factor driving its use in the countries of “the expanding circle” (Kachru, 1986) consisting of China, Russia, and Japan, among other countries, with an estimated population of 100 to 1000 million of the language users (Crystal, 1997, p. 54). Although the economic, political, and socio-cultural factors which contributed to the rise of English in the past are still in place and influential today, they have developed in such a way that a phenomenon known as ‘globalization’ has emerged.

**Globalization: Old Wine in New Bottles?**

Economists, sociologists, political researchers and others are divided in their opinions about globalization, its beginnings and essence. This is also one of the reasons why “no single universally agreed definition of globalization exists” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 3). Scholars, however, align into two main largely opposing camps: those who question globalization, thus earning themselves the title of ‘skeptics of globalization’, and those who believe in globalization, called the globalists.

The skeptics argue that globalization is an “ideological construction, a convenient myth which, in part, helps justify and legitimize the neoliberal global project, that is, the creation of a global free market and the consolidation of Anglo-American capitalism within the world’s major economic regions” (Callinicos et al., 1994; Gordo, 1998; Hirst, 1997; Hoogvelt, 1997; cited in Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 5). In this sense, they believe that globalization is a new name for a process that started long ago and is today at the height of its progress. They question the very essence of “global” in globalization, and
assert that the so-called globalization is nothing more than a high degree of internationalization, namely relations between countries or regions – which started much earlier than even last century – underlying the economic, political, and cultural processes that make the current stage of the world development look like a new phenomenon (Held & McGrew, 2000).

For the globalists, on the other hand, the recent processes are qualitatively different from those of the more distant past. Instead of perceiving globalization as old wine in new bottles, they consider it a process consisting in an “expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 4). In order to prove that globalization is not simply an ideological construction and a convenient myth which helps “politicians and governments discipline their citizens to meet the requirements of the global marketplace” (p. 5), the globalists draw attention to its material aspects exemplified in “the flows of trade, capital, and people across the globe” (p. 3). These, they argue, resemble nothing seen or experienced before. I rely on these material aspects of globalization to argue the transformations that have occurred in Albania in the last two decades point to the country’s becoming part of a global network, rather than its involvement simply in bilateral or regional relations.

**Globalization and English Language**

An overview of the trends of the spread in the English language across the world reveals its beginnings as the language of “geographic globalization” (Arnold, 2006, p. 2). The last few decades, however, indicate an unmistakable increase in the number of
countries and people who acknowledge the value of English as an international language, a lingua franca of our time, and have also taken steps to create the necessary conditions for the language to be taught and learned. This leads to the belief that globalization is indeed closely related with the development and spread of the English language (Huppauf 2004, cited in Coleman, 2006, p. 1). The symbiotic existence between globalization and English language consists in globalization promoting English and English fulfilling the role of the ‘tongue’ of globalization, which insures the communication basis for this world-scale process. Held and McGrew have compared English to a powerful infrastructure – a linguistic one – as necessary as any technological system for facilitating the flows of capital, ideas, and people across national boundaries (2000). Extending the argument further, Clyne (1984, 1995, cited in Coleman, 2006, p. 2) maintains that English is expanding ever so widely

.. through economic, political and strategic alliances, through scientific, technological and cultural cooperation, through mass media, through multinational corporations, through improved communications, and through the internationalization of professional and personal domains of activity.

In this function English has been propelled to the status of the dominant lingua franca in the world and continues to rise higher by the day.

I argue that three of the main pillars of globalization, namely its economic, political, and socio-cultural aspects, are also among the driving forces behind the “rise and rise of English”, as the process has been described, in the world today. In order to support this claim, I focus on the relations between the English language and a) the recent economic trends of the world development exemplified in the globalization of the markets, business, trade, and finance, as well as the role of transnational and multinational corporations in these developments; b) the recent political developments,
and more specifically, the rise of supranational and international organizations and their relationships with the nation-state (Held & McGrew, 2000); and c) the recent socio-cultural developments as reflected in the globalization of the media, the emergence of popular culture, and the development of information and communication technologies which have transformed the world into a global village. In reality, such divisions are oversimplifications, since the lines between them are often blurred.

**Economic globalization and English**

According to Castells (2000), a global economy is “an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale” (p. 259). The skeptics of globalization claim that what we are experiencing now is an intensified stage of internationalization processes, meaning “a simple extension of economic activities across national boundaries.” By contrast, the globalists see the current processes as “the functional integration of internationally dispersed activities” thus shifting the focus from simply quantitative processes in the former case to qualitative ones in the second (Dicken, 2000, p.253).

International economic integration was previously “manifested … through … trade in goods and services between independent firms and through international movements of portfolio capital” (Dicken, 2000, p. 252). By contrast, the world currently reveals “deep integration organized primarily by transnational corporations (TNCs) … [where] … integration extends to the level of the production of goods and services and, in addition, increased visible and invisible trade.” This is the first time in history, Castells (2000) points out, when, “capital is managed around the clock in globally integrated financial markets working in real time … [and] billion dollars-worth of transactions take
place in seconds in the electronic circuits around the globe” (p. 257). This is supported by the new information and communication technologies leading to global flows and interconnected networks of capital, trade, and finance. The latter speak largely of a “transnational organization of finance, production and commerce” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 249) and pave the way to a world economy rising above nation-states and geopolitical borders.

The major players in today’s economic processes are the transnational corporations (TNCs). They are the badge of economic globalization along with the multinational corporations (MNCs). MNCs date back to as early as the 19th century, and well before 1960, a time considered by the globalists as the beginning of globalization and the term itself (Held & McGrew, 2000; Hirst & Thompson, 2000). TNCs and MNCs have ‘webbed’ the world and installed their centers of production, finance, and commerce wherever they find profitable economic conditions in terms of inexpensive raw materials and labor supply, and favorable political conditions of weak nation-state control and labor unions.

Most TNCs and MNCs have their headquarters in a triangle lying in three continents: North America, Europe, and Asia, with three already well-established economies such as the USA, UK, and Japan (Ager, 2003), and several other newly-rising economies like China’s, India’s, and the South-East Asian ones. When corporations establish their centers or enter into joint ventures with local companies in countries where English is not the native or the official language, English is frequently adopted as a lingua franca (Gray, 2002) along with other kinds of infrastructure. The use of English as
a lingua franca is justified given that 566 of the 1000 top corporations are located in English speaking countries (Slowinski, 2000).

Castells (2000) and other globalists claim that in the current conditions of the constant flows of capital, trade, and finance, the old divisions center-periphery, and North-South are disappearing in favor of multiple centers and peripheries and a diversification of North and South themselves, nearly leading to the disappearance of the Third World. The use of English in TNCs and MNCs results in considerable volumes of business documents produced in this language, training in oral and written communication skills for staff, and more English classes taught in local schools and universities (Gray, 2002, p. 154). Such results solidify the relation between economic power and the English language.

Such a relation explains the TNCs preference for English education, especially higher education in non-English speaking countries, where TNCs have expanded their activity and are regarded as highly desirable employers for the local population. Slowinski (2000), referring to the expansion of English in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries – Albania included -- after the end of the Cold War, emphasized that mastery of English is very likely one of the hiring criteria. This role of the language is justified because English is the corporation’s working language in the non-English speaking country and it conditions the employee training practices.

Since most of the big and powerful TNCs rely on their own systems of training, whether they take place at the TNC’s headquarter or in the non-English speaking country of the subsidiary, the ability to participate in this training is determined by the workers’ command of English. Thus English is equal to a passport to employment with these
foreign corporations and translates directly to economic capital. This symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) inculcated in English provides those who know it with ‘linguistic capital’, a form of “cultural capital”, which can be invested and exchanged for economic and/or other forms of capital (Lyotard, 1984). The ability of English to provide its users with economic, cultural, and social capital explains the demand for and the boom that English Language Teaching has assumed in Albania, as the following chapters will demonstrate.

TNCs and MNCs are highly mobile in that they are constantly in search of profitable conditions where they can set up their subsidiaries. A report issued by Silicon.com, defines “true globalization” as the prerogative of corporations

... decid[ing] how to run their business with less heed to national borders than in the past. It means locating each part of the business where it makes the most sense – whether that’s Iceland, India, Wales or indeed somewhere else. (silicon.com, 2005)

Guided by this essence of true globalization, TNCs and MNCs have developed a practice of shutting down production and services at short notice in countries where the nation-state and labor unions gain power and exercise it to control the labor cost and working conditions. With its relatively weak nation-state and labor unions, Albania is highly receptive to and profitable for TNCs, MNCs, and foreign companies generally speaking.

Off-shoring and outsourcing has resulted in a great number of call-centers and service industries in countries like India and the Philippines. For that reason, the technical help about computers, information on bank accounts, and other services often come in “accented English” that draws different attitudes from the US customers (Lippi-Green, 1997). Other times, cultural and linguistic barriers lead not only to difficulties, as
Adiga (2004) argues, but also to misunderstandings about business terms (McGee, 2007) and broken communication. Even a country like India, with its wide-spread ELT, faces difficulties, because “only a small percentage of the two million English-speaking graduates turned out each year by Indian universities have good enough language skills to work in customer-facing operations” (McCue, 2005). Under these circumstances, the issue is not only one of broad ELT education; high-quality ELT education assumes equal importance. For this reason, current ELT policies, among them “English-speaking Albania” as this study will show, have a two-pronged approach: making English the first required foreign language for all students, at all levels of education, while at the same time raising the quality of English language education.

**Political globalization and English**

Supranational and international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN) as well as regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) have become tremendously influential in the world today. Dicken (2000) points out that:

> All the elements of the production chain [in the global economy] are regulated within some kind of political structure whose basic unit is the nation-state but which also includes such supranational institutions as the International Monetary Fund or the World Trade Organization, as well as regional economic groupings such as the European Union or the North American Free Trade Agreement. (p. 255)

The crux of the debate between the skeptics and globalists is the question of whether the nation-state still exists as the primary authority to exercise political power.
over its territory and citizens. While the skeptics argue that the nation-state exists now and will continue to exist in the years to come, the globalists argue that in a world where OECD, EC and EU exercise tremendous power, the political influence of the nation-state is limited (Keohane, 2000; Krasner, 2000; Mann, 2000; Rosenau, 2000; Strange, 2000), and nation-states have to adjust themselves to the new realities (Held & McGrew, 2000; Keohane, 2000).

English is the official or working language of many supra- and inter-national organizations and international political gatherings worldwide (Crystal, 1997). Such is the case with the Association of South-East-Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Wallraff, 2000), the Commonwealth, and NATO. English is also one of the official and working language of the European Community, its commissions, and the EU. Van Els (2006) claims that the EU’s language policy makes it an unusual case, in that “[n]o other international organisation in the public or private sphere has recognized so many languages as its ‘official and working languages’” (p 203). The number of official languages in EU, after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, reached 23 (Owen, 2005; Wikipedia: Languages of the European Union). Because of its peculiarities, and most importantly, the significance of EU for Albania as a long-standing candidate to become an EU member-state, in the two following sections I look at the EU’s institutional and non-institutional language policy and practice.

**Institutional European Union language policy and practice.**

The institutional policy of each member state having its language recognized as “official and working language” in EU dates back to the Treaty of Rome in 1958. According to Article 217 of this Treaty, “all regulations concerning the institutional use
of languages shall be drawn up by the Council of Ministers” (Van Els, 2006, p. 209). German, French, Italian and Dutch, the national languages of the first six member states (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Germany, France, and Italy) counted equally as “official and working languages” of the Communities. With each subsequent expansion of the EU, the corresponding national language was added. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) argue, however, that this equality principle is but a formality. Indeed, Irish, the national language of Ireland, and Catalan, Galician and Basque of Spain did not gain the status of “official and working” languages, thus supporting Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas’s view that some languages, led by English and, to some extent, French, are considered more equal than other languages (1995, p. 38).

The so-called lip-service (Williams, 2005) to the EU linguistic policy has led to an increasing use of English even at the expense of German, one of the three working languages of the European Commission, and to “an increasing divergence in the ‘duopoly’ of English and French among civil servants (and members of the European Parliament): whereas those from the northern member states prefer to use English, those from the southern member states prefer to use French” (Van Els, 2006, p. 213). If the foreign language education in Albania is an indicator of the preference for one of those two languages, it is highly likely that upon its joining the EU, Albania’s representatives would show a preference for English, although French and a few other Western European languages less used in the EU constituencies would not be a barrier to their participation.

EU’s language policy and practice in legal and money matters are also of much significance, as the use of a certain language in these areas definitely gives that specific language more clout. Van Els (2006) confirmed Crystal’s (1997) conclusion that French
is largely used as the language of law in the European Court of Justice located in Luxemburg, whereas English is the “vehicle of money” in the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, thus marking the division of labor in Europe and beyond (Williams, 2005).

The plurilinguistic language use model of the EU\(^3\) is of undeniable significance. It arises, first of all, from the principle of treating all the citizens of the EU member states as equally as possible. An argument in favor of upholding it is that the EU citizens at home should be able to identify with their representatives through the bond of their common language when they speak publicly in the European Parliament. This latter premise, symbolically as well as practically, leads to the requirement that the representatives should be allowed to speak their own language, if they so wish. On the contrary, it “would infringe on the democratic rights of citizens, if, with regard to the knowledge of foreign languages, certain conditions were to be attached to the membership of the EU” (Working Party, cited in Van Els, 2006, p. 218). That would mean that a Member of Parliament who has insufficient command of English and/or French will be not able to function. People whose mother tongue is not English or French have long realized that they should master at least one of these two languages if they are to win a seat in the European Parliament. Van Els (2006) compares the almost explicit requirement for mastery of one or both of these languages to the implicit assumption that Members of Parliament (MPs) also need literacy skills to function in their job. It is clear, however, that while all MPs are on an equal footing regarding the literacy and numeracy skills, the mastery of English or French is an extra demand on those who are not native speakers of those two languages. So while the plurilingualistic principle in the EU and its

\(^3\) Plurilingualistic language use model maintains that all languages of an organization (EU, in our case) are treated and used equally as official and working languages.
institutions sounds like a lofty idealism, it is also a “utopia” (Wright, cited in Van Els, 2006, p. 218). Linguistic pluralism is not always implemented in practice and it comes at very high costs of translation and interpretation (European Commission, 2004).

The practices discussed above show that plurilingualism is not always easy to uphold. Indeed, reality indicates the existence of “various regimes in which the fundamental equality is virtually non-existent” (Van Els, 2006, p. 215). Combined with the institutional language policy and practice in the EU, non-institutional language policy consisting in the language use by citizens is worthy of discussion.

**Non-institutional European Union language policy.**

Van Els (2006) maintains that the EU’s adherence “to the principle that the autonomy of the member states should be honored insofar as possible in matters related to culture and education” (p. 214), a principle also known as the “subsidiary principle”⁴ (Berkens, 2005; Langan, 2001). This prevents the European Commission from intervening in issues such as educational content and quality in the EU member states. Therefore, continues Van Els, “It is not the EU that determines which foreign languages may and/or should be taught, by which citizens, at which age, with which methods or by which means” (p. 214).

The EU however, does have an interest in improving the mobility of its citizens for reasons of employment and/or study (Slowinski, 2002; Van Els, 2006). This interest was made explicit by the Bologna Agreement, as the following chapter of this study will indicate. Knowledge of relevant foreign languages is vital for the mobility of citizens. In demonstrating the commitment of the EU institutions to the principle of multilingualism,

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⁴ For a history of the subsidiary principle, see Langan (2001, pp.26-27).
Jan Figel, the EU’s education commissioner, the first ever commissioner to be responsible for multilingualism, as well, declared:

Multilingualism is [for the first time] a political topic and part of the Commission’s agenda where before it was an administrative part of the whole system. I think this is timely because of the importance of European cultures, identity, languages, communication, understanding, cohesion. Everything now is much more connected with the future of the EU, with the relations of citizens towards the EU, the gap between citizens and institutions. In many of these areas languages play a key role. (EurActiv, 2005, p. 3)

Recognizing the significance of multilingualism in the framework of the EU expansion, Leonard Orban, the Romanian commissioner-designate, was placed in charge of multilingualism in October 2006. Many interpreted this as a symbolic gesture in anticipation of Romania’s joining of the Union in January 2007 (EurActiv, 2006, p. 1). According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2004, 75% of EU citizens thought that English was the most important language to know (European Commission, 2004). The European Commission made it the goal of the Action Plan for the EU citizens to learn two languages in addition to their mother-tongue, an ambitious, but achievable goal, in the Commission’s opinion. Accordingly, the current Foreign Language education policy in Albania aims at making two foreign languages mandatory: English, as the first required foreign language, with a choice among French, Italian, German, and Spanish, as a second foreign language.

Despite all the EU initiatives and programs geared towards multilingualism, achieving their goals is not an easy feat. Van Els (2006) highlights that while “it is in the interest of the EU that the improvement of employment- and education-related mobility involves all the EU member states and not just the larger ones . . . . the situation is such that knowledge of the languages of the ‘smaller’ states is in general rather poor” (p. 214-
Asymmetrical flows of students involved in exchange programs between the East and West are evident. “For every one student going from West to East, four come from East to West” maintained the EU commissioner Figel (EurActiv, 2005, p. 2). But while one cannot argue that language is the single determining factor which causes 680 Erasmus Slovak students to study in Western Europe compared to 170 students from Western Europe going to study in Slovakia, for instance, one might well assume that lack of knowledge of Slovakian language and lack of programs in English and other major Western languages, may be a significant factor.

The teaching and learning of foreign languages is the major focus of this study as it relates to the Albanian context and the English Department. In the next section I turn to the relation between English and political bodies other than the EU for the purposes of shedding light on the relation between English and a history of colonialism and post-colonialism, as well as on critical theories of linguistic hegemony and linguistic imperialism.

**English language’s associations with politics, colonialism, and post-colonialism**

While English is only one of the working languages of regional organizations such as the EU or world organizations such as the United Nations, Crystal (1997) points out that English is the only official language of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Ironically, the countries that are the traditional basis of the English language are not primary exporters in the world. Similarly the working language of the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) is English but only the United Kingdom and Ireland use English as their primary language whereas for several countries and millions of people their first language is not English.
Even meetings with restricted membership with participants who do not speak English and where the proceedings may not be conducted in English, use English to issue their reports for the wider public or to make their official statements to the world media (Crystal, 1997). The choice of English as the language for public statements is based on the same logic guiding the use of English in the slogans used by protesters against the policies of the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO in meetings held in countries where English is not the first or official language. The reason for English use in these situations is that the protesters are aware that their cause will gain world-wide exposure if expressed in English (Gray, 2002). Ironically they resort to the use of the ‘tongue’ of globalization, which is the target of their protests.

In addition, political decisions of paramount importance resulting in far-reaching consequences for the world’s peoples are made in English (Phillipson, 1992). It has been suggested that the United Nations, which is dominated by the use of English, should simply declare English its official world language, but rename it Globalese, so as to imply that it no longer belongs to any one speech community (Nunberg, 2000). This would eliminate issues of ownership over the language.

Those who are born into the birthright of English as their mother tongue would be entitled to all the perks associated with it. As with any association of this kind, the English language speakers’ club operates based on the strategy of granting privileges in the form of a “credit card” (Thiong’o, 2005, p. 150) that produces ready access to and opportunities for upward economic, political, socio-cultural, educational mobility to its own members. Others are disadvantaged by being born in a non-English speaking
country, hence the division of the world peoples into ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, the ‘we’ versus the ‘others’.

The concept of the ‘other’ based on linguistic capital is a problematic one. Just like the ‘other’ based on race, religion, gender or any kind of combination of these and other criteria (Said, 1979; Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002) the person or people otherized based on their language have gained the ability to ‘talk back’. This ‘talking back’ or ‘writing back’ (Wallace, 2002, p. 107) uses the English language as a means of mounting resistance in the process of political struggle.

It is reasonable to assume that the English language during the global expansion of the British Empire was perceived as “a guarantor, as well as a symbol, of political unity” (Crystal, 1997, p. 70) between England and its colonies. It is no wonder then that English resonates in many countries and for many people with colonialism and its consequences. For this reason, many former British colonies, especially in South Asia and Africa, after gaining independence, considered going back to the use of indigenous languages as a criterion for full de-colonization of the mind. Even in these circumstances, however, English was sometimes retained as the official language because it facilitated communication between different indigenous communities within the country and other countries in the region.

In these complex language contexts, it is crucial to discern the various degrees of neo-colonialism. These range from the sheer Anglocentric triumphalism that praises English as “the Queen of languages” with innate qualities that make it better, richer, more flexible, more effective and efficient than any other language, to modern and diplomatic shades of this notion. The subtle hegemonic tones are as important, if not more so,
because it is under ideological guises that such attitudes are disseminated in the world today. Hegemonic is, for instance, the speech of the British diplomat at the European Commission who immediately after warning against complacency at the good fortune of the United Kingdom in having English as its weapon in the global economy of the European Union, hurried to state that “it would be wrong to underestimate the advantages which our [English] language gives us in the construction of Europe” (UK Parliament, 1999). But equally hegemonic, if less subtle, is the greeting of the British Foreign Minister, Douglas Hurd, of the fall of the iron curtain by proclaiming that English should become the first foreign language throughout the former communist countries of the Eastern and Central Europe, the lingua franca of the changed economic and political circumstances, as the royal road to democracy, market economy, and human rights (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 38). ES/FL teachers also, often unknowingly, convey the message or simply “passively accept English as an educational necessity that will shape the lives [of the learners] for better” (Lockard, 1999). The result is linguistic and cultural imperialism perpetuated through education.

**World Englishes and the hegemony of English language**

In his book, *Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and the Models of Non-native Englishes*, Kachru (1986) presents the model of the spread of English in three circles consisting of a) the inner circle, or the traditional basis of English, represented by such countries are the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where English is the first language; b) the outer circle, consisting of such countries as India, Singapore, and over 50 other territories in which English is a second language; and c) the
expanding circle in which English is taught and learned as a foreign language, comprising such countries as China, Russia, Japan, etc.

Halliday (1994, p. 4, cited in Moritoshi, 2001, p. 1) uses the center-periphery model to describe the spread of English. He makes a distinction between the BANA countries, namely, Britain, the Australasian and North American nations which use English as their first language, thus playing the role of English-speaking ‘Centre’ countries, and the non-native English-speaking ‘Periphery’ (Moritoshi, 2001, p. 2). De Swaan (2001, cited in Coleman, 2006, p. 2) uses the world system theory to put languages in one of four categories: (a) the peripheral category comprised of 98% of the world’s approximate six thousand languages, which are used by less than 10% of its population and have no written form; (b) around 100 central languages used by 95% of the population in the capacity of national and official languages, languages of record and higher education; (c) about a dozen supercentral languages, each spoken by over a hundred million speakers, shared across central languages, used for long-distance and international communication as well as for higher education in the ex-colonies; and (d) one hypercentral language used between speakers of different supercentral languages: English. The above categorizations underscore not only the number of people who speak English as a first, second, and foreign language, but also its central, prominent position in relation with other languages, small and big. Similarly De Swaan observes that language exchange among the above-mentioned categories is never on even terms (Moritoshi, 2001, p. 2) in the same way that the flow of goods, technology, and culture is never symmetrical. Likewise, the role of the ‘Center’ and ‘Periphery’ in terms of linguistic exchange and provision of foreign and/or second language teaching follow the same
asymmetrical patterns despite the innovations in teaching as well as in the varieties of English used by people for whom it is not their first language.

Kachru dwells at large on an analysis of the linguistic structure of those varieties of English. However, he seems to bypass a critical and highly controversial issue: Whose language are the new varieties of English, which have undergone change in the process of being used by the people upon whom it was initially imposed by the British Empire? Can Indians, for instance, claim that their variety of English belongs to them? Can Nigerians or South-Africans make a similar claim? How would these claims sit with the linguists or politicians, among other people, who believe English to be the property of the British people who speak it as the first language, and therefore, might be opposed to those varieties and the “transfer of property rights” insofar as the language is concerned?

A lot is at stake in these questions, considering the fact that English is spoken by almost 670 million people worldwide. Native speakers of English might be reluctant to relinquish the ownership of English and see it transformed into new varieties. This claim has surpassed the expertise of linguists and is acknowledged widely. Thus Lord Russell-Johnston, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe said that “the more English is spoken by non-native speakers, the more it is ‘altered’ to suit regional needs” (p. 15). Further he claimed that “linguistic purity is a myth”, thus discarding the claims of those who resent seeing English “changed” by second or foreign language speakers. Kaplan (2001) admits that English is a pluricentric language and “its speakers have never (until very recently) tried to enforce a rigid single standard” (p. 18). Some non-native speakers of English who received their education in English and use it in daily life feel they have the right to claim English as their own. Pierce has proposed a
kind of English called “people’s English” to be used in South Africa, where English as a lingua franca is not to be replaced by an indigenous language, but instead “inflected with different kinds of meanings” (Wallace, 2002, p. 107). This is an example of the world Englishes, a language legitimately used by people as a resource for their own purposes.

Widdowson (1997) insists that,

… English as an international language is not distributed, as a set of established encoded forms . . . but it is spread as a virtual language. If one accepts the notion of spread, as distinct from distribution, then it is difficult to maintain the conspiracy theory that the language itself has powers of suppression, that it is the English language which colonizes, using the English people simply as medium, as a means of transmission. By the same token, if you want to avenge imperial history you do not do it by taking vengeance on the language. If you object to what people are doing with English, your quarrel is with the people not with the language. (p. 139)

Further extending the argument, Kaplan (2001) argues:

It is unlikely that there is some grand conspiracy among English-speakers to disseminate English world-wide: on the contrary, the spread of English is largely accidental, based in part on the quest for an allegedly better standard of living on the part of receiving populations, and in part on the unconscious press of English on other populations. People talk about the “dominance” of English in certain registers or in certain geographic zones, but the language does not have a will of its own to become dominant, and there is nothing in the natural characteristics of English or of English speakers which would make it inevitable that English should become the world language. On the contrary, it is the actions of English-speakers – including journal editors, reviewers and other gate-keepers in science and technology – which underlie the spread of English. English-speaking scientists have also contributed to this phenomenon. Again, there is nothing insidious about the actions of English speakers; it is simply a matter of more-or-less benevolent self-interest. (p. 17)

The findings of this study will show that the students and faculty of the English Department at the center of this study do not hesitate to use English as a weapon to achieve their educational, career, and other ambitious goals. In that sense, they fall under the category of those who take advantage of the perks that come with the language. But
as long as the “more-or-less benevolent self-interest” of the English speakers is concerned, the “English 2000” project launched by Prince Charles for the British Council in early 1995, tips the balance towards a high level of self-interest, and even purposeful and conscientious exploiting of the position of the language. Indeed, Prince Charles announced the project’s aim “to exploit the position of English to further British interests” as one aspect of maintaining and expanding the “role of English as the world language into the next century”. Further, the project meant to utilize the fact that “[s]peaking English makes people open to Britain’s cultural achievements, social values and business aims” (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 95).

There is ample literature to support the proposition that the early spread of the English language and its current role in the globalization era has been at the expense of smaller local languages and cultures. Authors use terms such as “colonialism” “neocolonialism” and the “colonization of the mind” (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Thiong’o, 2005), “linguicism” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994), “linguoracism” (Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2003), “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 1992), “cultural homogenization” (Singh, Kell, & Pandian, 2002), and “cultural imperialism” (Pennycook, 2000). For these authors, English is to blame for the displacement of indigenous languages and the eradication of some of them. Some call English the “killer language” and compare it to a “white shark in the pond of

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5 Linguicism is defined as “ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language”. (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988, cited in Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 42).

6 Linguistic imperialism is a sub-type of cultural imperialism, along with the media, educational and scientific imperialism. English linguistic imperialism is seen as a form of linguicism and can be defined as the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 44).
languages”, which has led to appeals for linguistic rights as well as for an ecology of languages (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995; Tsuda, 1994). Some acknowledge the rise of English to the economic, political, cultural, military, techno-scientific and educational drive behind it. They do not, however, blame the language for the affliction of colonialism and lack of modernization in certain parts of the world. Moritoshi (2001) argues:

Though English may be a necessary, concomitant factor in modernization, it should not be viewed as a sufficient one. How can a language, on its own, assure a society’s development? English, or any other language, is no substitute for a viable, coherent plan for modernization, supported by sufficient funding and appropriate and adequate political and economic policies, implemented by a competent government. It is unreasonable therefore to hold English as a language, or the Centre as its perceived ‘owners’ responsible for the failure of former colonies to develop, particularly when the prevailing social, economic and political contexts in places like India and Africa are far more influential and potentially detrimental to development. (p. 4)

Understanding both sides of the debate and the power structure of English is the first step towards disrupting and subverting it. It is necessary to raise people’s awareness of the ideological hegemony of English, its ‘hidden operation of power’ (Talbot, Atkinson & Atkinson, 2003). Power constitutes hegemony in the Gramscian definition of a socio-cultural leading class ruling by consent in such a way that its rule is projected and accepted as “common sense” and “natural” by the subordinate classes (Chandler, 2004; Gramsci, 1995; Raphael, 2003; Simon, 1991), in contrast to ruling through the use of sheer force. Force, however, seems to have been the pre-cursor to other sources of its power, as it is revealed in Fairclough’s (1989) saying that a language (in our case, English) ”is nothing more than a dialect with a navy and an army” (p. 21). Realizing the
connection between the power structure of today’s society and English may bring people closer to mobilizing resistance to the hegemony of English.

However, this is not an easy process because hegemony is enmeshed with ideology, the “framework of thought that is used in society to give order and meaning to the social and political world in which we live” (McLaren, 2003) and whose influence is almost unavoidable (Eagleton, 1991). It is precisely this naturalization of power that makes the hegemonic ideology (Giroux, 2001) of English difficult to detect. Hence arises the task of critical educators to understand the inner workings of hegemony and ideology so as to unearth the seeds of domination. In our case, it means unearthing the ways the English language is produced and how it can be challenged and overcome through resistance, critique, and social action (McLaren, 2003).

More specifically, in the area of English language teaching, a critical educator is encouraged to take a self-reflexive stance by examining the extent to which she or he questions common assumptions, including personal assumptions, and engages critical pedagogy by examining how the particular approach to education she or he adopts can, if at all, change the status-quo (Pennycook, 1999). In this framework, the critical teacher’s work should empower the students to read not only the word, be that in English or in any other language, but also the world (Freire & Macedo, 2003).

The hegemony of English is closely related with the role the language plays in popular culture, technological advancement and education, as a big part of the cultural development of people, which is the focus of the next section.
Cultural globalization and English

Robins (2000) points out that “[G]lobalization is about growing mobility across frontiers – mobility of goods and commodities, mobility of information and communications products and services, and mobility of people” (p. 195). All the elements of this mobility rely and are dependent, albeit to different degrees, on the “linguistic infrastructure” provided in great part by the English language. According to Held and McGrew (2000), “the English language is becoming so dominant that it provides a linguistic infrastructure as powerful as any technological system for transmitting ideas and culture” (p. 17). It is due to this linguistic infrastructure with the English language at its foundation that the “flow of ideas and cultures” continues despite the different languages that are spoken in different parts of the globe.

Sights like MacDonald, Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut establishments, stores like Gap, Nike, and United Colors of Benetton along with Radisson Hotels, Ramada and Holiday Inns, as well as bright signs and advertisements on billboards and other cultural import-exports have become commonplace beyond the cosmopolitan cities of the world. They no longer stand out even in countries like Albania, a new-comer to the global stage of development. Rather ordinary has become the experience of a Westerner walking down a street in Tirana, for instance, only to hear the latest music that has made the charts in the geographically distant USA or closer, in Europe, blaring from the stereo of a BMW, Mercedes Benz, Peugeot, or Hummer, driven by someone dressed just like him. As the photographs in Scherer and Senechal’s book *Long Life to Your Children: A Portrait of High Albania* (1997) aptly illustrate, side by
side with cargos that they carry on their backs, the villagers of Northern Albania carry satellite dishes for their homes.

Multiple examples point to the tremendous power exercised by the media and information technologies in the new “media-and-technoscapes” (Appadurai, 2000) of today’s world. US-based films dominate the global media market, capitalizing on their historic competitive position in this industry, and media corporations worldwide rely on “the widespread and growing international use of the English language, especially among the middle and upper classes” (Herman & McChesney, 2000, p. 220), which in countries like India, for instance, instantly boost the number of people reached by global media due to their facility with English language.

In *The Global Tongue: English*, Stuart Hall speaks of the emergence of new forms of expression as a result of culture clash in this “century of migration”. Thus, small subcultures of migrants driven by economic conditions, wars, or dreams of a better life for their children, (Castells, 2000) as well as those in cosmopolitan cities like London have created music genres that are neither Indian nor English, but a new hybrid form of music. Although music relies on more than just the use of language, Hall maintains that every time there is a culture clash, there is a language clash, since language is one of the main elements of culture and identity. These clashes result in new cultures and varieties of language. Such a fusion of cultures, even if not linguistic, is reflected in the MTV programs intended for international audiences.

Referring to the case of MTV, the global music television service, Herman and McChesney (2000) highlight that its programs were tailored to the specific audiences around the world through being produced in languages other than English as well as by
incorporating local music. The same is the case with TV programs. They are successful and far-reaching when they reflect cultural sensitivity and do not, intentionally or unintentionally “pour Western programs down people’s throats” (p. 217). For this reason Disney characters were “taught” to speak the local languages, thus adopting the “Disney strategy to think global and act local”.

Broadcasting corporations with a long and successful tradition in disseminating the news globally are considerate of “historical, cultural, emotional” sensitivities and references when they prepare their news programs for international audiences versus their national audiences (The Global Tongue: English). The presentation of the news by BBC, for instance, is guided by the fact that speakers of English who listen to their news program in English may know very little about Britain, yet they choose to get the news about the world from BBC. The assumed credibility of its news is enhanced by the fact that the news is the same for audiences in Hong Kong, Russia, Middle East and Israel, Chile, Brazil and Argentina. The role that English language plays in the dissemination of news at such proportions around the world is self-evident.

Though it may seem of a lesser significance, the amount of advertising in English is another reason that has caused people around the world to learn the language. According to Meinhoff (The Global Tongue: English), because of the programming on German TV, many Germans feel that they need to know English in order to understand the commercials ranging from cars to travel-related services. The advertising may be entirely in English or peppered with English idioms and phrases. The power of advertising is reflected in the fact that even young children may be able to say the English expressions used in TV commercials, although they may have no idea what those
expressions mean. Although the Albanian language does not belong to the same family as German and English, this has not prevented advertising in English which targets particularly the younger generation, as it is the case with the “What’s up?” campaign of the AMC mobile telephone company to add to the use of English spoken in Albania.

Internet plays a special role in the communication and information technologies. Bollag (2000) maintains that a large amount of computer software is written in English and more than 300 million users connect to a resource largely composed in English (p. 1). Therefore, the relation between Internet and English language deserves special attention and will be the focus of the following section.

**Internet and English**

Internet is considered a major, if not the biggest, inventions of information technology. According to statistics (see Table 2), 80% of what’s available on Internet is in English (Wallraff, 2000). This situation is changing to some extent (Crystal, 1997; Gray, 2002; Wallraff, 2000) as the number of non-English speaking Internet users increases. However, it still is the case that whenever a piece of information is deemed worthy of disseminating, authors tends to post it in English, side by side with their native language. Despite the shifting trends, the Internet still remains largely a forum in English language, at least for the present. This is understandable since English is “the language of the new technologies of human interaction, reflection, and knowledge production” (Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002, p. 83).

The data in Table 2, illustrates the fact that while the English-speaking population is only 567 million compared to the 5633 million of the non-English speaking population,
only 339 million of the latter have access to the Internet compared to the 228 million of the English speaking people.
Table 1

Global Internet Statistics (by language) ([http://www.glreach.com/globstats](http://www.glreach.com/globstats))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Internet Access</th>
<th>Internet % of world online population</th>
<th>2003 (est. in million)</th>
<th>Total Population (M)</th>
<th>GDP ($B)</th>
<th>%age world economy</th>
<th>GDP per capita (K)</th>
<th>Net hosts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>$13,812</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>5,633</td>
<td>$27,590</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Languages</td>
<td>192.3</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>259.3</td>
<td>1,218</td>
<td>$12,550</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table from the Internet World Users by Language gives further information with regard to the ranking of specific languages used in Internet.

Table 2

Table From Internet World Stats: Internet World Users by Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOP TEN LANGUAGES IN THE INTERNET</th>
<th>% of all Internet Users</th>
<th>Internet Users by Language</th>
<th>Internet Penetration by Language</th>
<th>Internet Growth for Language (2000 - 2007)</th>
<th>2007 Estimate World Population for the Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>28.9 %</td>
<td>326,781,864</td>
<td>28.6 %</td>
<td>138.2 %</td>
<td>1,143,218,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>14.7 %</td>
<td>166,001,513</td>
<td>12.3 %</td>
<td>413.9 %</td>
<td>1,351,737,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>8.9 %</td>
<td>100,966,903</td>
<td>22.8 %</td>
<td>309.1 %</td>
<td>442,525,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>7.6 %</td>
<td>86,300,000</td>
<td>67.1 %</td>
<td>83.3 %</td>
<td>128,646,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>5.2 %</td>
<td>58,711,687</td>
<td>61.1 %</td>
<td>112.7 %</td>
<td>96,025,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>5.0 %</td>
<td>56,368,344</td>
<td>14.5 %</td>
<td>362.1 %</td>
<td>387,820,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>3.6 %</td>
<td>40,216,760</td>
<td>17.2 %</td>
<td>430.8 %</td>
<td>234,099,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>3.0 %</td>
<td>34,120,000</td>
<td>45.6 %</td>
<td>79.2 %</td>
<td>74,811,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>2.7 %</td>
<td>30,763,940</td>
<td>51.7 %</td>
<td>133.1 %</td>
<td>59,546,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>2.5 %</td>
<td>28,540,700</td>
<td>8.4 %</td>
<td>931.8 %</td>
<td>340,548,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOP TEN LANGUAGES</strong></td>
<td><strong>82.3 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>928,771,711</strong></td>
<td><strong>21.8 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>187.0 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,258,980,280</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of World Languages</td>
<td><strong>17.7 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>200,155,783</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.6 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>435.5 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,315,686,137</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORLD TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,128,927,494</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.2 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>212.7 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,574,666,417</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of people who use the Internet in English tops the chart at 28.9%, leaving those who use the Internet in other languages behind. Thus, the 3 million people
who speak English make up 28.9% of the Internet users, followed by those who use the Internet in Chinese at 14.7%, in Spanish at 8.9%, and in Arabic at 2.5%. It also means that of the 1 billion people who, according to the estimates reflected in this table\(^7\) speak English worldwide, 28.6% of them use the Internet, while 12.3% of those who speak Chinese, 22.8% of those who speak Spanish, and 8.4% of those who speak Arabic around the world use the Internet.

To grasp the idea of what this means, for example, roughly 1 million people who speak Japanese world-wide, 67.1%, well over half of them, use the Internet, marking the highest percentage in the group. Compared to the fact that only 7.6% of all Internet users use the Internet in Japanese, the 67.1% rate of Japanese speakers’ use of Internet is significant. On the other end of the spectrum, 2 hundred thousand users of the rest of the world languages make up 17.7% of the Internet users, and although they make up over 2 billion of the world’s population topping the number of the speakers of English and Chinese world-wide, a mere 8.6% of them use the Internet.

These statistics reinforce the fact that the origin of Internet in the United States is not a lucky coincidence. Combined with the United States’ investment in communication and computer-related technological development which sets the pace for such developments in the world, one can easily make the connection between a powerful economy, finance, commerce, and military on the one hand and such inventions made in

\(^7\) “Tallying the number of speakers of the world's languages is an increasingly complex task, particularly with the push in many countries to teach English in their public schools. How many people can actually use the global language? David Graddol estimated a total of 750 million L1 (first or native language) plus L2 (second or nth language) speakers of English in his Future of English Report for the British Council in 1997. One of the subscribers, Martin Schell, has reviewed Braj Kachru's new book Asian Englishes which claims that India and China combined have over half a billion "users" of English.”

the United States (Crystal, 1997). However, the data also show an impressive rate of change from 2000-2007 among the languages of the Internet revealing trends that may eventually prove Wallraff’s predictions regarding the number of people speaking “global English” compared to other languages. Whereas English users of the Internet have increased by 138.2%, Chinese users have increased by 413.9%, Spanish users by 309.1%, and Arabic users by 931.8%.

The digital divide is also clear in the following table about the Internet usage in Europe.

Table 3
Table from Internet World Stats: Internet Usage in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internet Usage in Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>809,624,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of World</td>
<td>5,765,041,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL WORLD</td>
<td>6,574,666,417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this table, 319 million of the 8 million population of Europe are Internet users, which places them at a 39.4% rate of the Internet users in the world compared to the 14.1% in the rest of the world. A country by country statistic from Internet World Stats: Internet Usage in Europe, reflecting data from June 14, 2007, reveals the digital divide between the Western Europe and Central and Eastern European former communist countries. Countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, and France represent respectively 16%, 11.9%, and 9.8% of all Europe’s percentage of Internet users, where the Internet is used by 61.2% of all Germans, 62.3% of all Britons, and 50.3% of all French citizens. On the other hand, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia contribute
0.1%, 0.7%, 1.6%, and 0.8% of all Internet users in Europe, with the Internet used by 6.1%, 28.7%, 23.4%, and 46.5% of their population respectively.

The data from the same table confirms the divides not only through a West-Central/East Europe line, but also through a North-South line. This issue was raised by Kuttan and Peters (2003), who referred to a North-South divide within the United States also extending to Europe. Ostergren and Rice (2004) argue that Internet usage in the countries with the lowest rates--Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Albania--are due to “an antiquated phone system, which is poorly equipped to handle expanding rapidly” (p. 361). In contrast, the liberalized telecommunication policies in the North keep the Internet rates low and the “English-dominated nature of the Internet” benefits the “more English-savvy” northerners (Kuttan & Peters, 2003, p. 122).

Although the data presented above suggest that English is a weapon in the hands of the ‘globalizers’, Gray (2002) points out that Internet expansion shows the viability of English as the language of emerging resistance to global exploitation and injustice. He refers to the Zapatista statements regularly posted on Internet in Spanish and English as well as the anti-Nike and anti-Gap campaigns aimed at bringing about better conditions for the developing of the world workers. Similarly, the anti-globalization protests which accompany World Bank, IMF, WTO and other world-scale meetings, are organized by a variety of international groups making extensive use of English and the Internet.

**Access to knowledge and English language**

Related to the connection between economic, political, and technological advancements and the use of English is also its rise as the language of science and
scholarship, reflected in the use of English not only as the language of instruction in colleges and universities, but also, and very importantly, as the language of scholarly communication in different forms. Bollag (2000) points out that the current spread of English is “unprecedented” even by Latin in the role of the scholarly language of Europe for almost two millennia, or Greek in the ancient world, before Latin took over it (p. 1). Tracing these phenomena back to the end of the World War II, Baldauf (2001) maintains that the spread of English led to the rapid expansion of higher education, the development of research universities and the development and use of the computer, first as a means for scientific data processing, but increasingly for information processing and retrieval. The co-occurrence of all these factors means that the United States emerged as the greatest contributor to and user of the information pool and that that contribution was in English. As the major contributor to and user of the system, the United States effectively became the manager of the “information cartel” (p. 149) and provided its organization (Baldauf, 2001) in English.

In addition, English has emerged as the sole or one of the main languages of scientific associations in Europe and further, as the preferred language of scientific publications and of other abstracting practices. An analysis of 17 specialized journals in higher education in Europe and Australasia found out that the majority of authors, 75%, were from the English-speaking countries, with only 35% of the articles written by non-English authors from Europe and other parts of the world. However, only 18% of the articles in European-based journals published in English were from UK authors as compared to 41% from other European countries (Tight, cited in Teichler, 2005). So vast is the use of the English language by non-native speakers in Europe that there is a
significant need for scholars to master the English language if they want to be published in journals of the widest readership.

In addition, Teichler (2005) argues that the use of English as the language of scientific publication in Europe has led to an “extremely unbalanced information situation” (p. 464). This imbalance is reflected in the fact that news and small-scale research about higher education and individual colleges in the UK is internationally known. On the other hand, research on higher education in France, Spain, Italy, Germany and the Central and Eastern European countries remain unknown internationally, with the Netherlands and the Nordic countries assuming a position in-between due to the considerable proportion of research presented in English.

English language predominance is also apparent in other fields. Ashcroft and McIvor (2005) point out that although Library and Information Science (LIS) journals are produced in various languages, those published in the English language are open to the widest international readership (p. 2). A search in LIS abstracts for English language articles from peer-reviewed journals for 2004 gave a total of 5179 articles compared to a similar search for non-English language articles for the same period of time which gave 287 – just 5.25% of the total number.

Further, Bollag (2000) cites a study by Eugene Garfield, founder of the Science Citation Index, which tracks science publications, according to which 95% of the 925,000 scientific articles published in thousands of major periodicals in 1997 were written in English (p. 1). Only half of the English articles originated in English-speaking countries. This points to the effects that the predominance of English in the scientific publications must have on researchers whose native-tongue is a language other than
English, or whose command of English does not come up to par with the linguistic standards of publishing in the English language publications.

**Science, Universities and English Language Teaching (ELT)**

For Crystal (*The Global Tongue: English*), ELT is one of the biggest businesses in the world in terms of the number of people that are engaged in it at any one time, about 26 million annually. The unstoppable rise of English has not spared any part of the world.

For Truchot (1997) English is officially considered a foreign language in the education curricula of all countries of the European Union and in the neighboring countries. In some, such as in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, it is a required subject. “This requirement gives English the sociolinguistic status of a second language. … No other language receives such a privileged treatment” (p. 71). Labrie and Quell (1997) point out that while in more than half of the European Community (EC) countries, one foreign language is mandatory, with the exception of two English-speaking countries, English has the lead as the first foreign language.

These high rates of the spread of English require unified standards of English. NELLE (Networking English Language Learning in Europe) is a charity founded in 1988 as a fairly informal initiative to prepare for the 1992 European Union. It focused its attention on the position of English as an international language, as a lingua franca, and as a means of communication. Goethals (1997) points out that NELLE invested most of its energy in the establishment of cross-national standards for teaching and learning English, for the type of English that the would-be European citizens would need, and for a European international accreditation of all foreign language teachers. In 1997, there were 44 member associations of NELLE in 22 European countries. According to Ammon
(2000, p. 483 cited in Van Els, 2006) nearly 19 million students were learning English in school (vs. college or university), about 9 million were learning French, about 3 million German, and just over 200,000 Spanish in all EU member states in the late 1980s (p. 209).

Considering the important role played by English in higher education, Truchot (1997) points out that in most European countries, English is used as a medium of instruction, whereas in France, it is only studied as a foreign language. Universities have a strong interest in attracting foreign students and they do not want the national language to become a barrier. In Belgium, for instance, Flemish universities attract fewer students than do those of French-speaking countries. Therefore, they tend to turn to English to compensate for that handicap. In France, teaching in English is experimental within schools and in higher education as a language-learning tool, but is not used as a medium of instruction. The French language is still relatively attractive to foreign students, according to Truchot (1997).

But with the expansion of English in the north-European countries, Gunnarsson argues that “dangers lurk at all three corners of the language choice triangle” (2001, p. 288), because if “all teaching takes place in English, everything [is] read and written in English,” then

… students will end up lacking academic language in Swedish. Having learnt their terminology in English, they will lack Swedish terms and expressions to describe what they are doing. It will be difficult for them to discuss their research with their contemporaries and therefore dissemination of their research findings will have to be entrusted to others. The choice of language helps to isolate students and researchers from the community they belong to. (p. 288)
Echoing Gunnarson’s concern, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1997) argue that if a diglossic\(^8\) division of linguistic labor emerges as a feature of any EU countries, with English as a High language for prestige purposes, and the local official language as a Low language confined to domestic use, then competence in English may become essential for social functioning and upward social mobility.

The role of English in science and technology holds true for former communist countries as well. Thus Medgyes and Lazlo (2001) argue that the onslaught of English in the scientific life of Hungary is due to two simultaneous processes: a) a global trend which has granted the English language a privileged position, and b) the historical changes occurring in Hungary and the whole of the Central and Eastern Europe. With respect to this second process, Hungary differs from other countries of the region in at least one sense, namely that the expansion of English began earlier and therefore has been more gradual there than in the other countries.

McConnell (2001) has also studied the use of English in East and Southeast Asia. For him, the concept of dominance of a language must extend beyond checklists of countries according to their official languages and spoken languages. McConnell suggests that besides the elements mentioned above,

\[
\ldots \text{dominance includes gathering data on language products (e.g., newspapers, books, hours of radio broadcasts) and on language functions (e.g., learning/studying through English as a medium; learning/studying English as a subject matter by educational level); and that [data], for different socio-political and socio-administrative entities (e.g., countries, provinces, autonomous regions, etc.). (p. 134)}
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\(^8\) Diglossia is a situation where, in a given society, there are two (often) closely-related languages, one of high prestige, which is generally used by the government and in formal texts, and one of low prestige, which is usually the spoken vernacular tongue. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diglossia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diglossia)
Therefore, he urges that if trends are to be discovered, longitudinal studies are necessary to study language trends over time. While costly, a more holistic approach would provide a more in-depth understanding of language change and dominance worldwide.

In his study of the spread of English in East and Southeast Asia, McConnell found that English is studied as a language at the secondary level in fifteen out of the eighteen countries of the region, both inside and outside Anglophone spheres, with only three countries, namely, Mongolia, North Korea, and Cambodia excluded. As a language or medium of teaching in the schools at the post-secondary level, English is less prevalent than as a subject, but it is still used in nine of the eighteen countries. In the late 1980’s, over 15,000,000 students were studying through English on all three levels, mostly in the Anglophone sphere countries of East and Southeast Asia.

**Conclusion**

This literature review has established the link between economic, political, and cultural globalization and the English language as the linguistic infrastructure of the globalization process. In addition, it has shown the dominant role played by English in Internet and the production of knowledge through scholarly publications. Finally, but not less importantly, English is the dominant language of science and universities in Europe and further. This last point is closely related with developments which have brought about globalizing trends in the area of higher education around the world. For the purposes of this study which looks at the global pressures and the local dynamics of change in one English Department in Albania, in the following section I concentrate on
the development of higher education in Albania, and within this context, the place of ELT in the context of educational reforms.
Chapter 3

Higher Education Development in Albania

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I established the link between the rise of English as the global lingua franca and the global pressures in the areas of economic, political, and cultural development. I also showed that English underlies the major technological advancements of the last few decades such as Internet. In addition, the review of literature showed that English supports the production and dissemination of knowledge through its wide usage in universities and scholarly publications. Millions of people are engaged in the teaching and learning of English at any given time around the world. Universities and higher education play an important role in the teaching of English. In this chapter, I focus on the higher education in Albania for the purpose of presenting a larger context for the English Department which is the object of this study.

The development of Higher Education (HE) in Albania is inextricably related with the history of the country. Therefore, I present a brief overview of HE in two distinct periods of Albania’s history: before and after 1991. This year marked the transition from communism to democracy. HE developed in ways that responded to the specific needs of the country and society. The structure and organization of HE did, too. I show that Albania’s aspirations to regional and global integration are reflected in the country’s participation in European and global HE educational programs. The most recent and significant among them is Bologna Process. By joining it, Albania embarked
in the road of major HE reforms. English assumed a special role in the educational reforms, thus creating a shift in the English language education in Albania.

**Historical Overview of Higher Education in Albania**

Until the end of World War II, Albania did not have a HE system of its own. For this reason, Albanians pursued the higher studies abroad, mostly in Europe. During the academic years 1937-1939, 63 Albanian students were studying abroad on scholarships awarded by the Albanian government and 363 relying on personal funds. Those students were receiving their higher education in Italy, Greece, Germany, France, and UK (Koliqi, 2002). Compared to its population and the state budget, Albania had more students studying abroad than any other country in the Balkans for that period.

After the World War II, the HE system in Albania consisted of five so-called High Institutes, which had been founded to meet the country’s emergency needs for specialists in key sectors of life. During the first years after the Liberation of the country from the German Nazi troops, the political ties of the Communist Party of Albania were the closest with the Yugoslavian Communist Party. After they were entirely severed in 1948, the Albanian Communist Party aligned itself with the Bolshevik Party of the Soviet Union. Among other areas of influence, the Soviets helped build the educational system, thus leaving their unmistakable print in its philosophical and ideological foundations, its organization, curricula, and pedagogy. During this time, 839 Albanian students were sent to pursue their higher studies in USSR (Lita, cited in Morgan, 2005, p. 80). In this respect, Albania was not different from other communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, following the World War II, the Soviet Union was the center of the
development for the ‘socialist camp’\(^9\) due to its emergence as a new superpower from the war. De Wit (2003) argues that the Soviet Union “expanded its political, economic, social, and academic control over the Central and Eastern Europe in a … clearly repressive way, bringing academic freedom and autonomous cooperation and exchange almost to an end” (p. 11).

Further describing the situation of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe during that period, Kallen (1991) points out that,

\[\ldots\] higher education, as well as the educational system in general, had been made subservient to the political and economic interests of the state and in fact the Party. The universities were among the chosen and most prestigious instruments for transforming human minds and for providing the State economy with the right numbers and the right kind of highly qualified manpower. (p. 17)

This description of the political, economic, and social purposes of the higher education institutions as well as of their highly ideological content fits the aims of the education reform undertaken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1946. The purpose of education in the years after the Liberation of Albania would be to provide education for all, to eradicate illiteracy, and to fight against as well as to uproot the “old ideology” (Lita, cited in Morgan, 2005). To fulfill this purpose, the country would have to get rid of the remnants of the bourgeoisie as a class and instill the teachings of communist thought. Hence, the ‘red thread’ of Marxist-Leninist philosophy and communist ideology permeated every program of study no matter how social or technical in nature. The Marxist-Leninist philosophy and the communist ideology lay in the foundation of all the five High institutes -- the Pedagogical Institute, the Polytechnic Institute, the Higher Institute of Economics, the Higher Institute of Jurisprudence, and the

\(^9\) The communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe were often called the socialist camp to underline their unity under the leadership of the Soviet Union versus the capitalist and imperialist countries championed by the United States of America.
High Institute of Medicine -- which in 1957 were joined together to form the first Albanian university, the State University of Tirana (Babani, 2003).

Under those circumstances and in the years to come, education was so highly politicized that lessons had to be connected in one way or another, even if farfetched, to the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, the communist ideology, the great communist Party leaders, and the Party congresses that set out the plans for the development of the country in every sector, education included. The University was under the strict control of the Party, which had its designated representatives – the party organization and its secretaries – in every faculty (school). These Party representatives controlled the academic life on behalf of the Party and made sure that the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and the communist ideology were the backbone of the curricula and university organization.

While the reigns of the Party on the education system continued to be strong, the alliance with the Bolshevik leadership showed signs of weakening with the coming to power of Nikita Khrushchev and the easing on the Stalinist policies that followed. Under the prospects of breaking the relations with the Soviet Union, the Albanian leaders sought to purge the education system of effects of the Russian educational model, the Soviet pedagogy, and the total dependence on Soviet literature, which had been built into the Albanian education system. When severing these ties did in fact happen, the Albanian students who had been given scholarships to study at universities in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries “for ideological reasons” (De Wit, 2002, p. 48) were called back to Albania and forced to interrupt their studies. The effects of the once strong alliance lingered for years after the break-up, embodied in the type of the pedagogy, the literature, and the Russian language which had penetrated Albanian education.
Until 1961 and in the years to follow, the main foreign language taught at all levels of education in Albania was Russian, the language of the socialist ‘empire’ during the years after the World War II. Despite the mixed feelings of people who often associated Russian language with the communist regime and experienced it as an imposition by the Soviet Union on the other countries of the socialist camp, this language continued to be widely taught even when Albania turned to China and the Chinese Communist Party for a new alliance.

The alliance with China deepened Albania’s isolation. In the field of languages, however, Chinese never became as widespread as Russian. It was not taught in schools as a foreign language and Chinese literature was not as massively used in the original. While the Russian Department had been in place since the very beginning of the foundation of the University of Tirana, the English Department was established in the academic year 1960-1961, to be followed by the French Department in 1965. Prior to the divorce with the USSR, Albanian students had been sent to the states of the Soviet Union to study Russian, among other disciplines, and Russian professors had come to Albania to teach the language. Post-1961, however, some Albanian students went to major in English in China and Chinese professors came to teach English in the English Department from English language textbooks published in China (Morgan, 2005). It was another 15 years before the alliance with the Chinese Communist Party failed, prompted by the visit of Richard Nixon to China in 1973, which led the Albanian Party leader Enver Hoxha to accuse his Chinese counterparts of selling out to the West. Shortly after, the Chinese experts withdrew from Albania leaving important economic projects unfinished.
Albania’s isolation grew fiercer, but so did the restlessness of the people, mainly the intellectuals, who towards the end of 80’s and early 90’s were closely following the changes happening in the former communist countries. The role of foreign languages and especially English in enabling people to stay updated with the rapid developments in the world and Europe, through such unapproved channels as BBC, Voice of America, Free Radio, etc., is undeniable. Demonstrations, hunger strikes and general strikes occurred in Albania in the winter of 1990-1991, in which hundreds of students supported by intellectuals and other people throughout Albania protested against the regime. They managed to bring down the communist government and the Party of Labor of Albania.

In 1991 students and progressive intellectuals made two requests through their representatives in the meeting with the Secretary of the Party of Labor of Albania and the successor of Enver Hoxha. They asked that the name of Enver Hoxha be removed from the name of the University of Tirana and that Russian as a Foreign Language no longer be considered a requirement in the higher education curricula. More explicitly, they asked that Russian as a Foreign Language be replaced by other Western European languages, preferably English.

Meanwhile, the University of Tirana remained the only university in the country until 1991, when the engineering faculties were brought together in the Polytechnic University. This left the University of Tirana with seven faculties covering the human, economic, natural and medical sciences. Several other universities were founded in the following years, along with changes in the curricula and governance of all universities, reflecting transformations in all aspects of life in Albania after 1990.
Structure and Organization of Higher Education System in Albania

Higher Education in Albania currently consists of 12 units of higher education. Nine of them are universities: University of Tirana, the Polytechnic University of Tirana, the Agricultural University of Tirana, University of Elbasan, University of Shkodra, University of Korca, University of Gjirokastra, University of Vlora, and University of Durres. In addition, there are the Academy of Arts, the Higher Institute of Physical Culture, and a non-university Higher School for Nurses (Hagelund, 2001; Ministry of Education and Science, 1999; Structure of Education System in Albania). Five of these higher education institutions are in Tirana (Ministry of Education and Science, 1999), the capital of Albania, whereas the rest are located in other major cities. In 1990, there was only one university and seven higher pedagogical and agricultural institutes in Albania. By 1999, there were the current 12 institutions mentioned above (Ministry of Education and Science, 1999).

The activity of Higher Education in Albania is managed by the Ministry of Education and Science, based on the “Law on Higher Education”, dated February 25, 1999. Higher Education is public and non-public. It is secular, free and is guaranteed and financed by the state and other legitimate sources (Article 1, Law on Higher Education, the Constitution of Republic of Albania). Changes in the content of the curricula since 1990 have led to the re-conceptualization and specialization of the higher education structures such as faculties, departments, and sections, thus leading to an increase in their number. This process which has often entailed a division of the existing structures has brought about a better correspondence between the structure and its content and has
resulted in a better correspondence between the Albanian higher education structures and their western counterparts.

However, the report on the Strategy of Higher Education in Albania (Ministry of Education and Science, 1999) emphasized that this has not been simply a quantitative change. The change has also been qualitative in that it has established fairly good connections between the new and existing curricula, on the one hand, and the respective administrative and scientific units on the other. As a result, the number of faculties in 1999 had almost doubled in comparison with that of 1990 whereas the number of departments and sections had increased by almost four and nine times respectively.

The implementation of the Law on Higher Education also supported the increase in the number of departments and sections, by outlining their specific functions in the framework of the institutional autonomy of the HE. However, this phenomenon was accompanied with cases of over-fragmentation of the structures in question, which led to limitation of academic freedom. In response, the Ministry of Education and Science prepared legal clauses concerning the standards of these structures based on international standards and the criterion of the correspondence of the structure to the function.

With its Law on Higher Education, the Albanian government was not different from those of other countries, about which Schugurensky (1998) argues:

… on all continents, a myriad of government plans, constitutional reforms, legislative acts, regulations, and recommendations are moving universities closer to the demands of the state and the marketplace. This has serious consequences for the financing, governance, and mission of higher education, and ultimately for the degree of autonomy enjoyed by individual institutions to proactively define their agenda. (p. 284)
The Law on Higher Education in Albania attempted to respond to requests that the
democratic regime and the market economy placed on Albanian higher education and its
graduates.

In addition to providing for the existence of public and non-public institutions of
Higher Education in Albania, the latter being an obvious addition to the higher education
system of the past, when every institution was run and closely supervised by the state, the
1999 Law on Higher Education in Albania provided for the development of public and
non-publications HE institutions and also indicated that they should have “teaching and
scientific research academic freedom” as autonomous institutions, with the respective
rights in terms of organization, governance, financial support and cooperation with other
entities in and out of educational settings.

While the Law provided for increased autonomy, Hatakenaka and Thompson
(2006) claim that it “appears not to have been well thought through” (para. 99) and, as a
result, not fulfilling its purpose entirely. The Law “does not sufficiently recognize that an
increase in university autonomy needs to be balanced both by increased accountability to
the main stakeholders and by having clearer responsibilities for decisions which the
management processes require” (para. 100). They point to the lack of specification in the
roles and responsibilities of the higher education governing and policy-making bodies as
one of the main weaknesses of the Law.

**Tertiary Educational Reforms in Albania**

The tertiary education reforms that started in Albania in the early 1990s have
been defined and redefined several times under the influence of political and socio-
economic developments. For several years after 1991, Albania went through a transition period. With reference to “countries undergoing transition from protected trade to international trade, and from economies dominated by mass production and heavy industry to those organized around knowledge and services,” the Annual Report 1998 of the World Bank on Europe and Central Asia estimated that they

. . . must prepare their people for employment in a market economy. The region’s [Europe and Central Asia] educational systems are not designed to produce workers with profiles that labor markets increasingly demand. Highly specialized and rigid vocational and higher education programs, for example, must be reoriented. Public expenditures should also be rationalized to address inefficient allocations of resources within the education sector and underfunding that has arisen with greater decentralization. (The World Bank Annual Report 1998: Europe & Central Asia)

Those requirements also applied to Albanian HE. In this regard, the Minister of Education in 2003 pointed out that Albanian universities needed to evaluate the requirements of the labor market and accordingly broaden the number of professional diplomas offered by them, especially since the majority of diplomas offered in 2000 fell under the category of liberal arts.

Despite continuing reforms, in 2006 Hatakenaka and Thompson pointed out that “it is not clear that the current tertiary education programmes [in Albania] adequately reflect the changing needs of the economy, in which new types of graduates are needed to lead market-based growth” (para. 5). More specifically, they referred to the difference between a command economy in which graduates are absorbed by the public sector in a planned way, as had been the case in Albania for over 40 years, compared to the post-1991 market economy where higher education graduates would increasingly be employed in the private sector. As a result, graduates should expect to change jobs several times in
their lives rather than start and retire from a career in the same job, as was often the case in the past.

This change was reinforced by the policy decision of the Albanian government which now considers that it has “a duty to young people to enable them to get a good quality degree that will help them to secure employment – wherever it is” (Hatakenaka & Thompson, 2006, para. 7), in Albania or abroad.

The difference, however, between Albania and other market economies consists in the size and the stage of development of the economy. Hatakenaka & Thompson (2006) argued that due to the small size of the market economy and early stages of its development, a national economic plan should be designed “to indicate general directions for future development”, but no return to the planned economy of the past. Rather, such a plan would help establish a “balance of future HE growth in terms of broad subject areas” (para. 13) which would remedy what they considered alarmingly low numbers of Albanian students in engineering and science disciplines and the boom of such students in the areas of Law, Foreign Languages, and Social Sciences. In September 2004, for instance, 4000 candidates competed for 300 seats at Tirana University’s Law School (Puto, 2005) whereas the number of candidates, students, and graduates from the Engineering Schools had seen a dramatic decrease during the period 1997-2002 (Ministry of Education and Science Web Page: http://www.mash.gov.al). Hatakenaka and Thompson advise against this haphazard unplanned and detrimental tendency of imbalance so that Albanian higher education can fulfill the second part of its mission of “help[ing] the social development of the country and supply[ing] highly skilled manpower” (2006, para. 12).
Another harmful trend of HE was highlighted by the Minister of Education and Science (2006), when he pointed out the “clear tendency towards specialized diplomas, with this kind of specialization starting from the Bachelor’s degree level” that had led to an increase fourfold in the number of diplomas issued in 2006. To complicate matters, Albanian universities were in the practice of giving titles to undergraduate diploma programs rather than describing the competences of each individual graduating with such a diploma (Hatakenaka and Thompson, 2006, para. 28). According to this practice, a graduate from the Department of English as a Foreign Language, for instance, would be awarded a diploma as ‘teacher of English for the High School’. Such a diploma, argued Hatakenaka and Thompson, fails to meet the requirements of the market economies. It pigeonholes a graduate into a certain rather narrow position which, “gives the wrong impression to students about what to expect after their graduation” (para. 29), when in fact, that is the wrong idea, and therefore, is misleading. The rather ‘old-fashioned’ assumption that every diploma should be for a particular job produces an attitude that seems to pervade teaching in Albanian universities, which has been diagnosed as arranged in narrow and fairly traditional specialisms and … provided in a classical mode” (Hatakenaka and Thompson, 2006, para. 29). According to the same authors, such programs often translate into a “teaching approach that simply ‘pushes facts’” (2006, para. 33; Minister of Education and Science, 2006; National HE Strategy 2008-2013, 2008).

Job expectations and instructional pedagogy in undergraduate programs are related. The importance of shifting from a teacher-centered, lecturing methodology to a student-centered one, which would stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving skills,
has been often raised in reports on Albanian Higher Education. However, change in this respect seems to be rather slow. The Minister of Education and Science has emphasized the importance of training students to develop problem-solving abilities and skills as well as creative and analytical thinking since “most of those who graduate today” he noted in 2006 “will work until around 2040” (Pollo, 2006).

Traditional lecturing approaches may come easily to the HE teaching staff because this is the way they themselves were taught.\(^{10}\) In this case, they are perpetuating these approaches by ‘sowing the seed’ in the generation of the future teachers. Equally important, traditional teaching methods may preserve the comfort zone for instructors who in the absence of challenging questions from students and of collective efforts towards analyzing and solving problems do not risk losing face.

The quality of academic staff in universities, Hatakenaka and Thompson (2006) point out, is often misleading if only the qualifications of the staff are considered. In other words, if an instructor has a PhD, he is automatically considered a good teacher. By the same token, an instructor who does not have a PhD is automatically considered to be lacking in his teaching skills. Hatakenaka and Thompson argue that a PhD is only necessary for those doing research. It is

\[\text{neither a sufficient, nor even a necessary condition for [the academic staff] to be able to teach. \ldots [T]his is unfortunate both ways round: there are those with a PhD but who are not good at teaching and there are those who are excellent at teaching, but do not have a PhD. (para. 40)}\]

On the other hand, they point out the paramount importance of scholarship activities.

\(^{10}\) This phenomenon was called apprenticeship of observation by Lortie (1975). It refers to the practice of students witnessing thousands of hours of teaching in their own study process. Consciously or not, it influences the way in which the students who continue to become teachers in turn teach their own students.
Undertaking scholarship activities means that the academic staff should read appropriate journals, attend seminars, workshops and occasional conferences (Hatakenaka and Thompson, 2006, para. 72). The purpose of such activities is to keep the academic staff up to date in their subject and pedagogy. While research to create and disseminate new knowledge, according to Hatakenaka and Thompson, should be undertaken only by some academics, scholarship activities are, however, necessary for all the teaching staff (para. 42).

The issues discussed above hold special importance in view of the fact that the preparation of teachers through pre-service teacher training is carried out almost entirely by universities. “Teacher-training is one of the most important functions of the higher education system in Albania” emphasize Hatakenaka and Thompson, who continue to argue that it “does not seem to be done particularly well at present” (2006, para. 48). The English Department at the center of this research study used to issue only one diploma: Teacher of English Language. While the curricula have changed and the diplomas have diversified, the English Language teacher training remains the main and most robust program of the English Department, as the findings of the study will show.

While Albanian higher education in the year 2000 was, by law, gratis, faculties did not have the capacity to accept many of the students who applied for admission. As a result, for the academic year 2000-2001, 50% of the 50 000 students who applied were accepted. More recently, three quarters of secondary education graduates were admitted into higher education compared to only half of them admitted in the past. This number is expected to increase for a variety of reasons, among which is the realization by students and the society at large that tertiary education will help graduates secure better
employment (Hatakenaka and Thompson, 2006, para. 6). The Albania Higher Education Report reveals that

… of 157,000 of the registered unemployed individuals in 2004, less than 2% had university education, compared to about 45% who has upper secondary education. In the private sector, those with more than secondary education were found to earn 75% more than those with secondary education. (Hatakenaka and Thompson, 2006, para. 3)

For over a decade now, Albania has been striving to join the European Union. Educational reform was considered a national goal towards this goal. In 1999, the Minister of Education, pointed out the need for investment in the education system as a prerequisite to achieving European integration. One aspect of this integration would be dependent on the recognition of Albanian university diplomas by the EU and other countries in the region. Macedonia had already recognized Albanian diplomas and they were close to achieving recognition from Turkey in 2003. Commenting on this last achievement, Hagelund (2001) points out that while “the importance to the individual of such [diploma] recognition is probably limited, it is a good sign of mutual respect in the immediate region” (p. 17).

The process of the achievement of European standards has faced some delicate issues that have needed quick solutions, for the tertiary education to gradually: (a) integrate with the European education networks (Bologna Process); (b) adapt to the market demands; (c) have the appropriate institutional autonomy; and, (d) become diversified (Ministry of Education and Science, Annual Statistical Report of Education 2002-2003).

The Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Pollo, demonstrated the commitment of the Ministry of Education and Science to the preparation of the necessary amendments
to the Law on Higher Education, for the renovation of the Higher Education governing bodies based on a modern European legal basis (Ministry of Education and Science, 29 January, 2006).

The quality of tertiary education becomes problematic, however, in view of the increasing number of students who wish to pursue higher education. The issue becomes, as Hatakenaka and Thompson (2006) suggest, one of striking a good balance between quantity and quality of higher education provision. They have strongly advised against opening the doors of the university to anyone who wants to pursue the higher studies in what would be a full liberalization of HE in Albania.

To maintain high-quality education, in 2005, the government emerging from the elections that very year annulled the decision of the previous government of the Socialist Party to radically liberalize the higher education system by opening university doors to anyone with a high-school diploma (Puto, 2005). In order to accommodate the large numbers expected to apply, the previous government had planned to open three new universities in three cities. In 2005, 26,000 students were graduating from high school. Faced with these numbers, the new government overturned the decision of liberalizing higher education. On September 22, 2005, the admission quotas were re-imposed, thus sending Albania from a quota system to a completely open admission and back again to the quota system in the arc of a few months.

According to Puto (2005), the Minister of Education justified the reinstatement of the quota system as necessary to neutralize the ‘hasty and irresponsible’ decision of the previous government to scrap the university entrance exams. However, in line with election campaign promises of the new government to reform higher education admission
Mr. Pollo announced the plan to increase the number of new higher education students by approximately 30%, to reach the total number of 18,000 students and to work to increase the quality of tertiary education.

The minister maintained that the policy of open admissions did not rely on a realistic assessment of higher education in terms of building infrastructure, books, and teaching staff to absorb all the high school graduates. As a result, the standards and quality of higher education were threatened. These reasons led the rectors and deans of the universities to support the decision of the new government.

Maintaining high HE standards is one of the requirements for Albania’s inclusion in regional projects as well as the EHEA to be accomplished by 2020. In 2006, Mr. Pollo announced the inclusion of Albania in the process for the Western Balkans initiated by the European Commission. This process opened greater access for Albanian students and professors to the European programs which were earlier practically closed to Albania as a non-EU member state. One of these programs was Erasmus Mundus through which about 100 students from the West Balkans region would be given the opportunity to follow their graduate studies at the level of MA (Ministry of Education and Science, 29 January, 2006) in a short period of time.

In order to fully understand Albania’s tertiary education reform within the framework undertaken in the European Union member states and more widely in Europe, a brief timeline and summary of each of those activities is presented in the following section.
Educational Programs and Initiatives in Europe and Albania’s Participation

The signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 by the Ministers of Education from 29 European countries marked a major step in the integration of education, in general, and tertiary education, in particular (Field, 2003) in the EU and more widely in Europe. The Bologna Declaration\textsuperscript{11} aimed at removing obstacles to student and graduate mobility within the signatory countries. This increased mobility of students and marketability of graduates was deemed feasible among the signing countries that agreed to reduce the most incompatible elements in their national university systems. One incompatible element was the duration of higher studies. Therefore, the Bologna Declaration decided on a bachelor’s degree of at least three years duration and of a second postgraduate master’s and/or doctoral degree (Field, 2003).

The Declaration of Bologna on the European Higher Education was based on an understanding that:

A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space. The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe. (“The European Higher Education Area”, Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, 1999)

The goals of the Bologna Declaration were: a) the adoption of an easily comparable system of degrees, including the adoption of a Diploma Supplement; b) the adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate; c) the

\textsuperscript{11} For a full text of the declaration see \url{http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/990719BOLOGNADECLARATION.PDF}
establishment of a system of credits – such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) – as a means of promoting student mobility; d) the promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement; e) the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance; and f) the promotion of the European dimension in higher education.

Field emphasizes that the “desire to standardize and integrate education arises partly because of the need to have comparability of training and qualifications to allow freeing up of the movement of workers between countries” (2003, p. 184). The new degree structures, mainly 3+ (1) (2) + (3) – where the first tier is a Bachelor’s degree, followed by a Master’s and/or a Doctoral degree – will facilitate student mobility to the extent that they will be able “to undertake different parts of education in different European countries” (Field, 2003, p. 185).

The Bologna Declaration was not built on a vacuum. The groundwork was laid by the Sorbonne Declaration\(^ {12} \) signed on May 25, 1998, which was the cornerstone of the commitment of European governments towards a common European tertiary educational system (Field, 2003).

The Sorbonne Declaration was a French initiative that compared the French system with other European systems of higher education as the groundwork for the reformation of French higher education system. According to De Wit (2002), the Sorbonne Declaration came as a surprise to the higher education community, because joined European action on higher education “was not high on the agenda of the European Council of ministers” (p. 63). This was the situation until May 25, 1998, when the

Sorbonne Declaration was signed in Paris by the ministers of education of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

In this “Joint Declaration on Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System,” the ministers of the four dominant countries of the EU declared:

We are heading for a period of major change in education and working conditions, to a diversification of courses of professional careers, with education and training throughout life becoming a clear obligation. We owe our students and our society at large, a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence. An open European area for higher learning carries a wealth of positive perspectives, of course respecting our diversities, but requires on the other hand continuous efforts to remove barriers and to develop a framework for teaching and learning, which would enhance mobility and an ever closer cooperation. (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998)

The declarations of Sorbonne and Bologna in themselves, were “an attempt to keep a political grip on developments in the higher education sector” points out De Wit (2002) “and [they] will work as a catalyst for reform of higher education throughout Europe” (p. 65). He also points out that,

. . . the [Bologna] declaration follows the patterns visible everywhere, with competitiveness becoming a driving rationale for the internationalization of higher education. The fact that the Bologna Declaration was signed not only by the ministers of education of the member states of the European Union but also of other European countries is also a sign that education is at the forefront of Europeanization beyond the Union. (p. 65)

In her article *Integrating Tertiary Education in Europe*, Field (2003) claims that one of the main motivations behind the movement for the harmonization of higher education in Europe is the desire of the European countries to counter the appeal and popularity of United States higher education both in Europe and the world. This
popularity “comes as a result of its English-language basis, large numbers of United States students, as well as the use of modern technologies such as Internet (pp. 183-84).

The Bologna Declaration has been criticized by authorities in the field of education in the European countries as “hegemonic,” as coming from a “hegemonic power” such as the United States (Field, 2003). The integration of higher education in Europe can be considered itself as part of a wider “McDonaldization” of education that comes with processes of globalization. In the framework of these globalization processes in the area of education, the New York University of Tirana--the first campus of a foreign university in Albania--opened its doors in October 2002, and there are numerous United States universities in Europe.

Integration and harmonization of higher education, which culminated in the Bologna Declaration, is not restricted to countries in the European Union. From the very beginning, the then 10 prospective EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe, namely, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, as well as Cyprus and Malta which had applied to join the EU, were involved in the processes of higher education integration. The Central and Eastern European countries above participated in the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) and in the research and postgraduate training activities of the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence as well as in the College of Europe in Bruges. Croatia, Cyprus, Turkey, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Albania were offered the opportunity to join the education convergence process in the Prague summit of education ministers in May 2001.
At the Prague Summit\textsuperscript{13}, which followed the Salamanca Convention\textsuperscript{14} held in March 2001, the European University Association confirmed the need to create a European Area of Higher Education by 2010 that would be (a) based on a two-tier degree structure articulating higher education in undergraduate and graduate studies; (b) supported by a credit system providing both transferability and accumulation functions; and, (c) characterized by improved mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff. A major emphasis in this summit was given to quality assurance and the link between higher education and research, lifelong learning, and student involvement.

In conferences held in 2003 and 2005, issues related to degree systems, quality assurance, and recognition of degrees and study periods were debated. The ministers of education at these conference set new priorities for higher education and research and committed to making higher education accessible to all students despite their social and economic background. They also expressed the necessity of making European Higher Education attractive not only to members in the EU but also beyond.

The last Conference (2009) identified progresses that had been made and reported that several countries in other parts of the world were striving to bring their education systems more closely in line with the Bologna framework. This conference decided to make mobility, social dimension, and employability of the graduates of EHEA the priorities for the next two years.

\textsuperscript{13} For more information on the Prague Summit, also see http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/010519PRAGUE_COMMUNIQUE.PDF

\textsuperscript{14} For information on the Salamanca Convention, see http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/EUA1_documents/SALAMANCA_final.1069342668187.pdf
By 1996, ERASMUS and related schemes had financed the mobility of nearly 250,000 EU students and young workers since 1987 (Laffan, cited in Field, 2003, p. 186). The ERASMUS scheme had partly aimed at developing a common sense of identity among students from different member countries. However, De Wit (2002) and Field (2003) point out the imbalance of movement in the ERASMUS scheme. Many more students seek to complete part of their higher education in the United Kingdom “in English, as it will improve their career opportunities” (Field, 2003, p. 187). This is the reason why only a fraction of UK students seek to complete their studies in countries such as France and Germany. In order to make their own countries more attractive to students who choose to study abroad, Scandinavian countries have chosen to provide more courses in English, hoping to reverse the trend of “only 5% of Nordic students choosing to study in neighboring Nordic countries versus the majority of them opting to go to the United States or the United Kingdom” (Field, 2003, p. 187).

The ERASMUS scheme is not the only one in which a preference for the use of English as the instructional language surfaced. SOCRATES, a European Community action program, adopted by EU member states in 1995, intended to use Western languages as languages of instruction. This highlighted the fact that the majority of courses were taught in English, followed by other Western European languages such as German, French, Italian, and Spanish (Slowinski, 1998). As a consequence, numerous teachers of Russian as a Foreign Language found themselves jobless with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the orientation of the Central and Eastern Europe toward the West. Many of them were retrained as teachers of English, in Albania (Dushku, 1996) and other countries.
Programs like ERASMUS and SOCRATES are in high demand for students and researchers in European countries, but especially so in countries like Albania where courses and curricula have changed dramatically, thus necessitating the re-training of academic staff in the modern Western disciplines. Study in the Western European countries and the United States is also associated with high social status. In addition, some graduates consider foreign graduation as a stepping stone to emigration, a prominent phenomenon in the post-communist Albania leading to significant brain drain (Gedeshi et al, 1999; Mema, 2004). Often the ability to participate in study abroad opportunities depends on the mastery of English, which explains the value attached to the language. In addition, participation in today’s competitive world will enable or disable Albanian Higher Education from being part of the Bologna process and EHEA.

While English is valued as important to personal and economic competition of individuals and countries, the supremacy of English needs to be examined. Swan (1998) argues that the role occupied by English as “the center of the linguistic galaxy” in today’s world, is related to the global military, political, economic, and cultural hegemony of the United States, and before that, of the United Kingdom. Other scholars have highlighted this idea in their work, as well (Phillipson & Skuttnabb-Kangas, 1997; Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002; Skuttnabb-Kangas, 2000). As with all global languages, English has risen and will eventually fall along with the rise and fall of those hegemonic powers (Fishman 1998-1999). In the meantime, Albanian higher education must play the cards it has and compete in a world that gives enormous power to some languages over others regardless of the hegemony inherent in this ranking.
Implementation of Bologna Reform in Albanian Higher Education

In the article *Institutional-Level Reform and the Bologna Process: The Experience of Nine Universities in the South East Europe*, Mircea Miklea (2003) evaluates the progress made by nine universities (The University of Tirana, Albania; The University of Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina; The University of Split, Croatia; The University of Zagreb, Croatia; The University of Pristina, Kosovo/UNMIK; the University of Montenegro, Montenegro; The Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje, Macedonia; The University of Novi Sad, Serbia; and the University of Nis, Serbia) in their efforts to adhere to the guidelines of the Bologna Process. The case study analyzes the progress related to the goal of the Bologna Declaration, namely, creating a European Higher Education Area in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens in order to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education.

The study revealed that the degree structure at the University of Tirana, Albania, which was representative of higher education institutions in Albania at that time, still consisted of 4(5) years for Diploma (Bachelor’s degree) and 5 years for Doctoral training. Miclea’s analysis concluded that the existing curricula were not attractive or adequate for the labor market in Albania and the European Union.

Miclea’s analysis also revealed that one of the frequently mentioned obstacles faced by students and staff in attempting mobility was their poor command of foreign languages, especially of English. Undergraduate and postgraduate courses taught in English or other internationally used foreign languages were almost non-existent at some of the universities under investigation. Further, the author argued that academic programs
in English were an important prerequisite for playing the game of brain-gain, or, at least, to reduce the brain-drain (Miclea, 2003, p. 266).

Miclea (2003) emphasizes that offering course programs in English plays a two-fold role. It improves the competitiveness of students entering European and international labor market (p. 266), which is one of the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration. It also attracts foreign students to the institutions offering courses in this language. Miclea adds that the responsibility of designing and offering courses in English lies with each university or higher education institution rather than with “the management level of the higher education system as a whole” (p. 267). This research and other EU pressures, has put enormous pressure on English Departments such as the one at the Tirana University to respond to these needs.

In 2006, a similar evaluation with that of Miclea’s about the achievements of the HE reforms was repeated in the Conference to Launch a Master Plan for the Reform of Albanian Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area. The report *Albania Higher Education* compiled by Hatakenaka and Thompson (2006) lay the basis for the evaluations made by the Minister of Education and Science in that Conference. Later, the report along with the platform of the Conference led to a National HE Strategy for the period 2008-2013 compiled by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Conference participants included academics from the higher education institutions in Albania, rectors of Albanian and foreign universities, representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science in Albania, and authorities from the Council of Europe and other European organizations in charge of key issues in the European Higher Education Area.
The main issues of the conference were:

1. The university degree system in Albania, its organization and how it compares to the European degree system,

2. Quality assurance of HE institutions in Albania and in Europe,

3. The impact of HE development on the development of the country,

4. The place and role of HE and its institutions in the needs of Albanian economy, society and the development not only of Tirana – with the highest concentration of HE institutions – but also of other regions of the country. (TV interview of Mr Sjur Bergan, 24 March 2006)

Regarding the successful implementation of the Bologna Process, the international organizations such as the World Bank and the Council of Europe encouraged the Ministry of Education to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the debate over the HE reforms.

English per se is mentioned only once in the platform of the Higher Education Reform in Albania, alongside information technology. However, according to the Minister of Education and Science, English and technology would be high on the priority list of goals for the existing higher education institutions and the new ones expected to open in the future. This priority set in March 2006 was reinforced a year later, in March 2007, with the initiative15 “Anglophone Albania” (English-speaking Albania) launched by the Ministry of Education and Science (Ministry of Education and Science, 19 June, 2007) and analyzed in more detail in the following section.

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15 “Initiative” and “reform” are used interchangeably to refer to “Anglophone Albania” in the materials of Albanian media. One journalist argues that this initiative deserves to be called “reform” because it addresses a series of elements such as school levels, students, parents, teachers, textbooks, etc. and is supposed to take the due time to achieve its goals (Kulla, 2007).
The Place of English in Albanian Education -- English-speaking Albania

The initiative “English-speaking Albania” was the result of recognizing the English language as the lingua franca of the 21st century. In launching it, Mr. Pollo confirmed the commitment of the current government to creating conditions for a good mastery of the English language. “If we as a nation want to master sciences, innovative technology, and modern knowledge, if we want to be competitive in the global economy, the mastery of English is absolutely necessary,” stated Mr. Pollo (2007). This impetus came in the framework of a series of measures taken by the Ministry of Education and Science for the promotion of the teaching and learning of the English language. Among such measures was the setting of the coefficient of the English language exam at 1.3, one of the highest coefficients for the elective subject for the State Matura exams.16 This meant that those high school students who have a very good mastery of English language and choose to take English as one of their elective exams would have a higher combined score that would help them to pursue their higher studies in their preferred area, not necessarily English. This measure clearly demonstrates the significance attached to the knowledge of English as its mastery is deemed “to make young people competitive in the global work market” (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007).

Other measures that point to the all-inclusive nature of the initiative “English-speaking Albania” were to introduce English as a required language in the 3rd and 4th grades with 2 hours a week for each grade. French and Italian as foreign languages have also been introduced in the 3rd and 4th grades with the same number of hours. In addition, high school students who do not choose to take the English elective exam are not

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16 Maturity exams are exams taken by all students graduating from high school in Albania. Two of the exams are required in the areas of literature (with elements of mother-tongue, this academic year) and mathematics. Two other exams are in subjects that students choose themselves.
penalized. However, 70% of the students who study a foreign language in Albania study English. In addition, 22% of all students who took the State Matura exams in 2007 chose English as compared to 11% of them who chose it the previous academic year.

Another step towards bringing the initiative-in-reform “English-speaking Albania” to fruition consists in the reformation of the textbooks and their publication. Thus, according to the Minister of Education, it has been made possible for foreign publishing houses to compete with local ones for access in the Albanian schools through their respective textbooks. Under these circumstances, Albanian students would not have to study from translated textbooks, or textbooks written by Albanians who have learned English as a Foreign Language. Instead, British, North American, or Australian publishers were expected to launch their textbooks for the academic year 2007-2008 in Albanian schools, thus making it possible for Albanian students to use more appropriate and high-quality textbooks written by those for whom English is the mother-tongue. This was supposed to lead to professional textbooks with high pedagogical and methodological elements embodied in them, which in turn, would help a better mastery of English by the Albanian students.

The increase in the number of students who learn English at primary and secondary levels has led to a growing demand for English teachers. The English Department of the University of Tirana prepares English teachers side by side with other specialists of English language. As the Minister of Education himself admits, however, “we do not have as many English teachers as we need, because many of those who major in English find employment in banks, international offices and organizations and other places” outside of the educational system. At the same time,
25-30% of those teachers who currently teach English have not majored in English. They have simply passed a test of English proficiency. These teachers need to be replaced and we need an additional number of English teachers. We may declare English as the first required foreign language throughout Albania, but we do not have enough English teachers to cover the whole country. (Pollo, 2007)

This is why the Ministry of Education and Science decided to open a new faculty for the training of English teachers at the recently founded Aleksander Moisiu University in Durres, where 100 students were enrolled in the first year of studies to become English teachers. In addition to the regional faculties of English which are solely in charge of training English teachers, the demand for more English teachers necessary in the near future seems to have been conveyed to the English Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages in Tirana. The Ministry of Education and Science (2007) reported that 65 new English teachers started work in August 2006 thus alleviating problems of shortage of teachers (or qualified ones) in this discipline in certain areas of the country. In addition, the Ministry proposed an equal pay raise for English teachers as for those of mathematics and of computer science.

The reform “English-speaking Albania” has had a wide recognition in the Albanian media. The Minister of Education, the initiator of this reform, was invited in TV programs with a broad viewership, as well as to different newspapers and news agencies to give interviews, in which he explained the reasons, significance, and implications of this reform. Thus, explaining the reasons of this initiative, the Minister reiterated:

It is very important for Albanians to learn English, if we want to move at a more rapid pace than what we have so far, under the conditions of a global race in which every nation tries to move as fast as possible. In the 21st century, it is difficult for individuals and the society as a whole to move forward without a good mastery of English – which is the lingua franca of this century, having taken
the place that Latin occupied 2000 years ago – and good knowledge of IT. We must learn from those who have tested these conditions before us and have succeeded at them, and we must, as a country, promote the learning of English. The reason for this is that with a good mastery of English, each individual is capable of mastering the sciences, the technology, and the communication with other people, irrespective of the mother tongue and nationality. At the same time, these individuals would simply be able to find a better job than if they didn’t speak English. (Cani, 15 March, 2007)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a picture of the major trends of HE development in Albania. I argued that education served different purposes and had different goals in communism and post-communism. In post-communist Albania, HE has been geared towards training people that will successfully participate and compete in the global economy. Under the pressure of global and local developments, Albanian higher education has become part of transnational agreements as it is the case of the Bologna Process. Participation in the Bologna Process and other global pressures have increased the need for the mastery of English. The English Department at a large university in Albania has been significantly affected by both, the HE and English education reforms.

The European context and globalization efforts worldwide have both put enormous pressures on developing initiatives toward the teaching, learning, and mastery of English. In particular, they have directly impacted the scope and nature of activities of the English Department of the University of Tirana, which is the object of my study. The following chapter focuses on the English Department as the immediate context of study and home to the study participants. In addition, it deals with issues of the methodology of the study such the tradition of inquiry at the basis of this study, the methods, data sources, data generation techniques and analysis.
Chapter 4
Methodology

Introduction

This dissertation study is broadly concerned with the ways in which English has become a predominant language around the globe. In particular it seeks to explore the transformation of an English Department at a university in Albania within the broader context of economic, political, and cultural changes that the country has experienced over the past two decades. These changes relate not only to the liberalization of Albania’s economy along with its political detachment from communism, but also to other global pressures. As a result of some of these pressures, Albania has sought to become more integrated within Europe as exemplified by its quest to become part of the EU and NATO, and by its decision to commit to the Bologna Process. My interest is in trying to find out how some of the global pressures such as the Bologna Reform implemented in the English Department are experienced and negotiated by its faculty members and students. Further, the lived experiences of the main actors in the English Department are considerably affected by the working and studying conditions in the Department. Those conditions shape and define the faculty’s and students’ experiences and the ways in which they negotiate the external pressures. As a result, at the juncture of the external pressures and the departmental conditions arises a unique dynamic of change, as the following chapters will show. But before proceeding with the findings of this study, in this chapter I describe the research methodology underlying it. After listing the research questions, I argue that a case study approach in the qualitative tradition of inquiry is most
appropriate to shed light on the questions that I posed for this study. Further I describe the research site, the methods used for the data collection, the data sources, and the process of data analysis. For each of those points, I discuss some methodological issues that arouse during the respective stage.

Research Questions

In this study, I ask the following questions:

1. What are some of the external pressures, whether enacted or not in policies, that have steered the work of the English Department? How have faculty and students interpreted, responded to, and negotiated these policy pressures?

2. What are some of the organizational conditions that define the work of the faculty and students in the English Department? Under what conditions do the English Department actors perform their daily duties of academic work, and to what extent do those conditions support the faculty’s and students’ work?

3. What are the results that arise at the juncture of external global pressures and organizational conditions in the Department? What is the dynamic emerging from the interaction of external pressures, in the way they are interpreted and negotiated by the faculty members and students?

The Case for Case Study

Stake (2000), an influential voice in case study research, argues that “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 435). In other words, methodology does not dictate the object of the study. Such is the case with this study of an English Department at a university of Tirana. I did not set out on this project with the intent to utilize case study methodology. Rather, what I wished to study led to the case study methodological choice.
In his book *The Art of Case Study Research*, Stake (1995) defines the case study as the “study of the particularity and complexity of a single case” (p. xi), which is a “bounded, integrated system” (p. 2). The English Department under investigation in my study displays both boundedness and integration. The boundedness consists in space, since the Department is a single, well defined unit with clear boundaries within the Faculty of Foreign Languages. It also displays integration by virtue of being a unit embedded in the system of higher education. I expected this case to present particularities mainly due to the English language at the center of its curricula. In fact, the dimensions of the spread of English in Albania set the English Department apart from the other departments in the same Faculty of Foreign Languages, such as the French Department, the German Department, the Italian Department, and the Russian Department.

Stake differentiates between an intrinsic and instrumental case study, the former being one in which the researcher is interested in the case itself, although it will not help in understanding any other cases by generalizing to them, and the latter being a case which will shed light onto other cases through being closely or distantly related to them (1995, pp. 3-4). Its particularities notwithstanding, my case study represents a mix of instrumental and intrinsic elements. As an integral part of the higher education system and of a larger national and global context, the English Department experiences largely similar external pressures, internal conditions, and resulting consequences and outcomes stemming from them as some other higher education departments. That said, the uniqueness of its central disciplines, and of the faculty and students, lend the Department its particularities and complexity represented in the “the stories of those ‘living the case’” (Stake, 2000, p. 437). For this reason, the English Department could not possibly be
exactly the same as any other department in the Albanian higher education system or elsewhere. I was interested in bringing forth these particularities that distinguish the English Department from other departments of higher education in Albania. Such a case highlights the non-dichotomous nature of instrumental and intrinsic case study types. Stake (2000) points out that “the researcher has simultaneously several interests, particular and general”, which is the reason why “there is no line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental”, and the distinction between them is “a zone of combined purposes” (p. 437).

Researchers argue that a case can be studied by any method, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods (Cresswell, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2000). Stake maintains: “The distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods is a matter of emphasis – for both are mixtures” (1995, p. 36). He goes on to explain that a qualitative study of any tradition includes “enumeration and recognition of differences-in amount”, and, conversely, any quantitative study resorts to “natural-language description and researcher interpretation” as important elements. In my case study, I use numbers to describe change in the size of the Department over the years, the faculty composition according to age-group, the teaching load of the faculty, the number of credits required for a Bachelor’s degree in the framework of the Bologna Reform compared to the previous system, and so on. However, the emphasis is clearly on the use of natural language in describing the case, and my role as researcher in interpretation has a prominent place.

Since the goal of the case study research is to understand human experience, I relied mainly on interviews with the faculty members and students of the Department, on perceptions from my personal observations, and on document analysis. I have presented
this data to the reader filtered through my own interpretation in the form of narrative, so as to provide the reader with the opportunity for what Stake calls an “experiential understanding” of the case (1995, p. 39). Experiential understanding, however, requires that the researcher write “thick descriptions” so as to allow for the reader’s “vicarious experience”.

Thick descriptions, a term for which Stake credits Geertz (1973), “are not complexities objectively described; [they] are the particular perceptions of the actors” (1995, p. 42). For this reason, thick descriptions conveying the details of the case allow readers to be able to draw their own conclusions or reach their own assertions. Also, through the details of the case, the reader can be “transported” to the research site and experience it at several levels: picturing the site and different events taking place there, hearing the participant stories, feeling the atmosphere. This kind of long-distance presence at the research site is what Stake refers to as “vicarious experience” (1995, p. 9-10), from which the reader can draw her own experiential understanding based on the narratives of the researcher. The thick descriptions in this case allow the reader to be present on the site, during my interactions with the study participants.

To establish the conditions for an experiential understanding of the case, as it will unfold in the following chapters, in the following sections I give a brief description of the research site, the fieldwork and the data sources, and the study participants.

**The English Department**

The site for the research at the basis of this study is the English Department at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Tirana, Albania. The English Department,
founded as the English Chair in September 1960, was the second Chair of foreign languages to open at the University of Tirana, after the Russian Chair which dates back to 1947. Upon its foundation, the English Department trained teachers of English, Albanian Language, and Literature for the elementary and secondary schools. With the opening of the departments of Albanian Language and Literature in the Faculty of History and Philology, the training of teachers of Albanian Language and Literature was assumed by them thus making the training of English teachers the sole target of the English Department. Aside from teaching, the mid-sixties found the Department involved in the project of drafting and developing curricula and syllabi, as well as compiling textbooks for several subjects. In addition, the academic and research staff of the English Department expanded its activity beyond the area of ELT, pre-service, and in-service English teacher training. It engaged in further scientific qualification, which led to the degrees of Candidate of Sciences, the equivalent of the current M.A. degree, and Doctor of Sciences, the equivalent of the PhD degree. In addition, the English Department faculty was involved in compiling dictionaries and providing translation and interpretation services.

The political and socio-economic changes in Albania in the last two decades led to an acceleration of communication between Albania and the outside world, specifically, western countries. In this context, English assumed a clear prominence in comparison with other foreign languages.

In the academic year 1997-1998, the English Department added two new study tracks: Translation and Conference Interpreting, and British and American Studies. Since 2000, the Department has been issuing three diplomas: (a) Teacher of English for the
Secondary School; (b) Translator and Conference Interpreter; and, (c) British and American Studies specialist. In September 2005, the English Department, as most HE institutions in Albania, adopted the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process called for intense preparatory work, especially in the area of drafting new curricula that would fit into a new degree structure in accordance with the Bologna Declaration. Details of the Bologna implementation in the English Department will be presented in the following chapters, but the magnitude of the changes was considered by all the participants as “the major reform” in Albanian Higher Education. The changes affected both, the faculty and students’ work, in many ways.

Fieldwork

I conducted the fieldwork for this study during September 2007 – January 2008. I had been granted the IRB authorization as well as an initial permission for research in the Department by the Department Head. I had been a student and had graduated from this very Department in the early 1990s. Later I had gone back to work in the English Department for a few years as a lecturer before leaving Albania to pursue my graduate studies in the United States.

For this research I had to balance my perspectives as an insider to the Department, albeit a long time ago, and the outsider I had become in the last decade or so. My earlier first-hand experiences in the Department provided me background information and insider knowledge. Nevertheless, the time in my graduate studies had added additional layers to my identity. The study participants, especially my former colleagues and former students who had become faculty members, sometimes drew
comparisons between their lived experiences and what they expected to have been mine. Sometimes they reversed the interviewer-interviewee roles and asked me questions about my educational and professional experiences in the United States. I did not want to simply rely on my assumptions of what the study participants might mean. Occasionally, when I was particularly inquisitive, they appealed to my being Albanian and the similar experiences we had shared and still did, thus playing up my insider’s knowledge. I had to remind them that a lot of changes had happened during my absence in the last decade, so I was interested in hearing their side of the story.

Further, changes in the faculty required me to work on building rapport with the study participants. Merely gaining access to the site, as I had expected, did not provide adequate depth of interaction. For the study participants to share their life experiences with me required building trust. I invested time to cultivate personal relationships, as Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recommend, in order to be allowed into their personal space. And allow me in an important part of their lives they did, providing me with in-depth perspectives into the achievements, difficulties, joys, and frustrations that came along with their work.

**Interviews**

Over the 5-month period of data collection, I conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews with 13 English Department faculty members, of which 12 were full-time and one was part-time. I also conducted interviews with three professors in the French Department for purposes of drawing comparisons with their English Department counterparts. In addition, I interviewed nine students from the English Department. All of
the interviews were conducted face-to-face, with the exception of two that were conducted over the phone.

After talking to faculty that I knew before and getting to know the others, I asked them for an interview. Some of my former colleagues and previous students who were now faculty were willing to participate rather early in the fieldwork process. Others took longer to warm up to the idea of “sitting down to talk”, wanting to know in advance what it was about, and if they could have a copy of the questions in advance. Regarding students, I was granted access by a few professors in their respective classes, in which I distributed handouts with information on the research I was conducting. The majority of the students volunteered to be interviewed, and I randomly selected nine of them, aiming to include students from various cohorts, males and females and some who had studied prior to the adoption of the Bologna reform and others who were studying during its implementation.

The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. A few interviews were held in the Department building. Due to shortage of classrooms, the majority were held in the Department library. When the library was being used as a classroom, the interviews took place in a nearby coffee shop. All interviews, with the exception of one, were conducted in Albanian. One faculty member was willing to speak in English, the rest opted for Albanian. Although speaking in Albanian required more work and time dedicated to translation, I was interested in capturing the complex nuances of the interviewees’ responses, so I complied with their preference. The interviews were recorded and transcribed almost verbatim. Only the interview material included in the thesis was translated into English. I gave some of the interview transcripts back to the interviewees
for member-checking. Only a few participants read through the transcriptions and verified the accuracy of the transcript; the majority did not respond to this request.

I used semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions. I was aware that interpretations to reconstruct the participants’ lived experiences is not possible just by correctly registering the descriptions of the interviewees’ lived experiences. I tried to exercise what Kvale (1996) calls the interviewer’s deliberate naiveté, which requires the researcher to remain open to new phenomena, themes, and categories that may arise from the data, rather than stick to ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation. I tried to pick up on the meaning of what was said and what was not said, alike, at times pressing for information in certain areas that the interviewees ostensibly avoided, all the while striving to remain considerate and sensitive to the participants. The widely accepted asymmetry in the power relations between the researcher and participants became clear from the interviewing process. Some participants, no doubt, exercised their right to withhold information; others may have given me answers that they believed I was expecting. I tried to neutralize such effects by being honest with the participants, answering their questions briefly, but not hiding or distorting information. Most importantly, I ensured them full anonymity and confidentiality. I maintained anonymity by using pseudonyms, and not attributing the information to particular interviewees. In addition, I removed all sensitive information that could have pointed to a specific study participant.

With these considerations in mind, I give a brief description of the participants. This description situates their experiences of negotiating the changes and the pressures under the working and studying conditions in the English Department.
**Study Participants**

In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 faculty members and 9 students from the English Department. The average age of the faculty varied from 25 to 50 years old. They all graduated from the English Department, with the exception of one who had graduated from a foreign university. Six of the study participants are under 35 years old and have worked in the English Department from two to ten years, often hired as full time faculty upon graduation. The rest worked between 11 and 25+ years. Liri and Majlinda represent a special category of instructors, who have returned from emigration. Mira and Lumturi were English teachers at the vocational secondary school of foreign languages and a general secondary school, respectively. Agron, Bardha, Bora, Teuta, Vojsava, and Majlinda, top students in their respective classes, were hired upon graduation to fill positions created by those who emigrated abroad for economic or educational reasons, or took more lucrative jobs in Albania.

The daughter of a passionate elementary school teacher, Bardha graduated from a vocational high school of foreign languages. She began her university studies in the English Department in 1996 and graduated in 2000 with a diploma in British and American Studies. In October of that same year, along with four other students from her graduating class, she was hired as a full-time faculty in the English Department. After one semester of teaching English for Specific Purposes at the Faculty of Economics, she was assigned to teach highly specialized courses in the area of American Studies to fourth year students in the English Department. Bardha had completed her MA studies a few years ago and was working towards her PhD degree.
Vojsava came to the English Department from a high school of foreign languages and graduated in the late 1990s. She earned a very high GPA in the university, which at that time was the only qualifying criterion for a faculty position in the English Department. Vojsava was looking for jobs in English teaching to make use of her excellent mastery of English, when she was offered a full-time position in the Department. At the time of this study, she had been teaching for nine years in the English Department. Vojsava successfully completed her MA degree with the first cohort of the English Department faculty hired after 1990, at the time when the process of faculty qualification re-started after a relatively long period of freeze-up following the change of the political regime. When I interviewed her, she was pursuing her PhD studies.

Teuta came to the English Department after graduation from a general high school. Having aspired to study medicine, she felt she settled for less with the English major and decided to supplement it with a second degree to compensate for failing to become a physician. She invested a lot of effort and energy into earning good grades, required because the majority of students came from foreign language vocational high schools. As a result of her achievements, she secured an offer for a full-time teaching job in the English Department. The low salary and poor accommodation for new faculty caused her to decline the job offer. She opted for two part-time jobs in her hometown. At the same time, she began studying at the Faculty of Economics. In a year, Teuta had made the best of the two part-time jobs. At the urging of her classmates who had accepted positions in the English Department, in addition to her desire to exercise the profession she had trained for, i.e., English teaching, she began teaching in the English Department. At the time of this interview, Teuta was about to finish her Business
Administration degree from the Faculty of Economics. She had earlier completed her MA degree in the area of English Literature, which she had been teaching for quite a few years. Like all the faculty of the English Department who had completed their master’s studies, Teuta was in a PhD program. She received a Junior Faculty Development Fellowship to study in the United States during the Spring semester 2008.

Bora’s early interests were also far from a university major in English. She had graduated from a general high school, while also having studied English and German on her own, at the urging of her parents, who wanted their daughter to speak as many foreign languages as possible. She had applied to study at the American University in Bulgaria, but failed to reach the necessary SAT score. Her attempt at getting into the Faculty of Journalism at the University of Tirana was not successful either. Accidentally, she found out that the English Department entrance exam registration at a regional university was not closed yet. Facing the dilemma of wasting the year or studying a major that she had not considered before, she chose the latter. The long years of studying English in and out of school paid off and she got into the English Department, where she grew fond of her major and professors. Her studies were disrupted due to the collapse of financial pyramid schemes in which thousands of Albanians lost 1.2 billion dollars. She transferred to the English Department of the University of Tirana just on time to choose the Translation and Conference Interpreting study track, which was launched that year. Bora graduated in the year 2000 with excellent grades and was offered a full-time job in the English Department, teaching courses in Translation and Interpretation, which she was still teaching at the time of this study. In anticipation of a job as an English teacher, at her personal initiative, Bora went for a 6-month intensive teaching observation at a center for
the teaching of foreign languages. It helped her tremendously with her job as a teacher in the English Department.

Agron graduated with excellent grades from the English Department in 2000, after having studied English at a vocational high school of foreign languages. His high GPA combined with the need for faculty in the English Department secured him a full-time job in teaching specialized courses in the section of American Literature, which fit perfectly with his diploma in British and American Studies. Following closely in the footsteps of his Literature professor and mentor, Agron worked untiringly towards his professional qualification. Because of the importance he attaches to teaching, his name often came up as an exemplary teacher in the interviews with the students of the English Department. His colleagues admired and respected him for his tenacity and high standards.

Majlinda graduated from the English Department in 1991. She was a top student in her class and was offered the job of instructor in the English Department upon graduation. She did not take this position because her family emigrated to a neighboring country. As an emigrant, upon failing to find a job as an English teacher for intermediate or advanced students because she was “overqualified”, Majlinda worked as a travel agent relying on her knowledge of English. Upon returning to Albania in 2000, she took a part-time teaching job at the English Department of a regional university. While she had thought that all the 10 years away had ruined her chances for a faculty position in the English Department at the University of Tirana, she was offered a full-time job and had been teaching there since. As a former student in the English Department, working
abroad, and her faculty job in the English Department, Majlinda was in a position to make insightful comparisons about these different contexts.

Liri, on the other hand, had worked in the English Department for quite a few years before her family emigrated abroad for 17 years. During those years, she taught English. Upon returning to Albania in 2007, Liri was offered a job in the English Department, first as a substitute and then as full-time faculty. She completed her MA degree, and applied for a PhD program. Due to her long absence, Liri was hard pressed to absorb all the changes that had happened in Albania and the Department. Like Majlinda, she was in a position to draw comparisons and contrasts with years before 1990.

Ilir, Drita, Mira, and Lumturi belong to a generation of professors who had taught all of the faculty members mentioned above except for Liri and Majlinda. These long term faculty were among the first generation of the students graduating from the English Department and witnessed the whole gamut of changes in the Department. They are able to capture a broader view of the developments, starting long before 1990.

Ilir was one of the two full professors in the English Department, after the retirement of a number of professors in the last three years. He was the Head of the British and American Literature section and lectured in American Literature, Theory of Literature, and taught a few select seminars. He was held in high esteem by his colleagues and students alike. Ilir has published widely, including textbooks for the English Department. He has directed several Master and Doctoral thesis and was the beneficiary of a Senior Scholar Fulbright Fellowship in the early 1990’s. He also held the position of the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages for a few years.
Drita had worked for more than 25 years in the English Department. Her expertise included English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Methodology of English Language Teaching. She was in charge of the ESP section, consisting of full- and part-time faculty members who teach English in different faculties of the University of Tirana, such as the Faculty of History and Philology, the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, etc. Drita was an advocate for the strengthening of the ELT program in the English Department because she considers ELT the main job market for the English Department graduates. She expressed her objections to the way the Bologna Reform was implemented, in that the ELT specialized courses had been removed in favor of several courses in the area of Translation and Interpretation and British and American Studies. She considered this a serious flaw as it deprived the students of their training as English teachers.

Mira was one of the first graduates of the English Department at the University of Tirana. She recalled the days when Chinese professors taught English to Albanian students. Mira had worked in the English Department since the early 90s. With a group of colleagues she also was teaching at a university in a neighboring country. She taught private English lessons, translated, and interpreted at different functions. The advantage of all these activities was that they kept her in constant contact with English; the disadvantage was that it is very demanding and she did not have as much time as she would like to devote to her main job. She was forced to continue these activities in order to keep up with the high and ever increasing living standards in Albania.

Irma, the part-time faculty was the youngest instructor I interviewed. She graduated from the University of Philology in Moscow, Russia, with a degree in Russian
and English. She had been teaching English to students of other foreign languages, as well as to students in the Department of Albanian Language and Literature. She also taught core courses in the Russian Department. In addition, she worked full time for the main Albanian news agency, where she translated from English and Russian into Albanian. Her broad education background abroad allowed Irma to look critically at two systems of higher education, albeit in one as a student and in the other as faculty.

In addition to the faculty members, I also interviewed Besa, Besim, and Rozafa from the French Department. Further, I also had personal communication with a former faculty member in the English Department and an official in the Ministry of Education and Science.

Of the nine interviewed students from the English Department, six were in their fourth and last year of the study program with the system prior to Bologna, and three in their third and last year of the undergraduate studies according to the Bologna system. Three of the interviewees were male and six female roughly reflecting the ratio between male and female students in the English Department.

Seven of the students, namely, Dritan, Ermir, Dardan, Vesa, Flutura, Shpresa, and Rudina came from the general high school, while Meli and Diella came from the vocational school of foreign languages, where they studied English as a first foreign language. The paths that led to their studying in the English Department display similarities and differences. Dritan, Ermir, Shpresa, and Rudina, entered the English Department after they failed to gain admission into one or more faculties of their choice. Incidentally, these had all graduated from general high school. Meli and Diella, came from a vocational high school of foreign languages. Due to an early specialization and
concentration in foreign languages and social sciences, they were destined to study English because they had few other options. Dardan, Vesa, and Flutura chose the English major out of their own will.

In addition to having studied English and German as foreign languages in high school, Dardan had studied Italian on his own, and had taken five semesters of English classes at a center for the teaching of foreign languages in Tirana. He had come to love foreign languages and chose to take up a major in English. Vesa, who did not expect her knowledge of English from studying it for four years in high school to successfully carry her through the entrance exam, took an intensive English course in her last year of high school, which she credited for her entrance exam high score. Finally, Flutura, whose financial situation did not allow her to take more than one entrance exams due to the fees associated with it, chose to take the entrance exam in an area in which she was confident she would succeed.

Dritan fell into the English Department. On the one hand, his poor grades in high school, which he blamed on the unraveling of the educational system at that period, did not allow him to get into the highly competitive Faculty of Architecture. On the other hand, several semesters of private English lessons taken during high school, helped him pass the entrance exam in the English Department. Dritan claimed to have been alienated from learning in high school, yet he came to love learning and his major, and differently from the other two male students, appeared eager to work as an English teacher despite the low salary of this profession.

Ermir came back from emigration with his family in an English-speaking country. He finished the last year of high school in Albania. He did not have the necessary
preparation to get into his top choice faculties: Computer Science and Sociology. He passed the entrance exam but was not pleased with the lack of competition among the students and quality of the program. He was studying in the ELT program, but he intended to study Law and/or Economics later in order to be able to get a better paying job.

Vesa and Shpresa, both in the ELT program of the English Department, were both excited to become English teachers. Vesa initially settled for this option because she was not sure she would be able to cope with either the Translation and Interpretation or the British and American Studies program requirements. In her last semester before graduation, however, she was happy with her decision also considering the job opportunities for English teachers. Shpresa, who went into the English Department after failing to gain admission into the Faculty of Law, had chosen the ELT program with the idea that a Bachelor’s degree in the ELT program would allow her to work as an English teacher as well as a translator and/or interpreter. Although her plans for a double major (ELT and Translation & Interpreting) did not work out, she did not regret having chosen the ELT program, which she had grown to like.

Observations

I conducted over 25 hours of observation. The observations included several lecture and seminar classes. In addition, I participated in an MA thesis defense by a faculty member, and witnessed the interaction of the study participants and non-participants alike in the library of the English Department, in the Department Office, and in the Faculty building. Further, I taught two lecture classes invited by the respective
professors. I took down observation notes, and when that was not possible, I wrote my observations notes immediately after.

My observations fall under the category of naturalistic observations in the tradition of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), in that they were not intended to interfere with the activities being observed. Researchers can assume the role of an outsider, i.e., total and pure observer, or that of a participant deeply involved in the activities of the study participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Most of the time, I was closer to the observer and participant observer position. I made a conscious effort to be aware of my “situatedness” or positionality, which stem from a variety of factors, such as my identity with regard to my nationality, gender, educational background and work experiences which have been combined to stimulate my interest in this kind of research in this particular site. I also chose to discuss these factors rather than avoid talking about them or consciously silencing them in my interaction with the study participants. I believe that this research is richer as a result of my methodological choices.

**Documents and Other Data Sources**

At the start of the research, I cast a wide net for any kind of documents I would be able to access in the way of faculty meeting data at turning points in the course of the development of the English Department in the last two decades, including: a) documents reflecting decisions for curriculum diversification and the consequent division into different study tracks; b) directives and memos from the Rector’s and/ or Dean’s office requiring the implementation of certain aspects of higher education reform; c) group meeting records during the process of discussion and compilation of the curricula with
the implementation of the Bologna system at the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Such documents would be useful because they provide special meanings within a given context, at a given time (Hodder, 2000, p. 704). However documents of this kind proved difficult to access. The storing and recording of documents was far from systematic, and when they existed, they were not readily made available to researchers. I was not able to access much documentation of this nature.

Among the major documents I was able to access was Kurrikulat sipas Bolonjes, Paketa e Informacionit 2005-2006 [The Curricula according to Bologna, Information Packet 2005-2006]. This book outlines the curriculum for each of the three years of the undergraduate (Bachelor) cycle of studies in all three study programs--English Language Teaching, Translation and Interpreting, and British and American Studies. Students are given a copy of this book in the early stages of their registration. The faculty members own a copy as well. A document preceding the Curricula according to Bologna, Paketa e Informacionit, [The Information Packet] ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), was published by the Faculty of Foreign Languages in 2002. In addition, I also consulted a number of documents from the Ministry of Education’s website. Other helpful documents were articles in print and online media, as well as transcripts of debates and talk shows on various aspects of reform in Albanian Higher Education.

A case study qualitative inquiry requires in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). Yin (cited in Creswell, 1998) recommends six types of information: documentation, archival documents, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts (p. 63). The reason for
relying on multiple sources of data is multi-fold. First, it taps on multiple realities and multiple perspectives. The lived experiences of faculty members and students (Van Manen, 1990) were expected to provide rich data, in that each of these actors as a category as well as individuals has their own perspective and “story” to tell. Global pressures have affected all of them, albeit in different ways. Second, multiple sources of data provide for triangulation. In this way, faculty interviews were triangulated with information from student interviews, observations field notes and documents.

**Data Analysis**

I began the research with a concrete data analysis plan in place. I started the data analysis early on, parallel with the data collection. I kept a running title for the study at different stages of research that reflected my interpretive stance.

I followed Miles and Huberman’s detailed account of the recommended practices while doing data analysis in the process of data collection. I compiled a document which helped me keep track and systematize all the interview materials, observation notes, and documents. While still “in the field”, I decided on a system for storing and retrieving text, that would insure against data loss. Transcribing and systematizing interviews and observation notes began in Albania and was completed in the United States. I identified themes that arose from the data analysis. Typical for qualitative studies, the amount of data I had collected was daunting.

I read through the data multiple times in order to categorize it according to themes. In the process, some themes were collapsed into major themes.
Ryan and Bernard (2000) warn that “themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that investigators identify before, during, and after data collection” (p. 780). While it is true that I went into the field with a number of themes I expected to find, other issues emerged, and some of the former themes were deleted or reframed. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest to start with some general themes derived from reading the literature and then add more themes and subthemes as they emerge from the data analysis. While I was informed by my literature review and studies, I had to make a conscientious effort not to let my anticipated themes cause blind spots in my ability to spot new themes arising from the data.

The three following chapters, namely Policy Pressures on the English Department, Organizational Conditions in the English Department, and Results of Interaction between Pressures and Conditions, are organized according to themes that emerged from the data.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the methodology that guided my research study. I argued that the best approach to answering the questions of this study was to conduct a qualitative case study of an English Department. Further, I described the process of fieldwork, data collection, and the data analysis. I also provided a description of the research site – the English Department – and the study participants, the faculty members and the students of the English Department. In addition, I discussed methodological issues that arose in the course of the study.
In the following chapters, I present the major findings of this study. More specifically, Chapter 5 deals with global pressures in the form of historical, economic, political, and cultural changes that have shaped the English Department in a two-pronged way: a) by leading to the predominance of English language as it is related to the emerging of the country from the communist regime and its gradual climbing into the global stage of economic and political developments; and, b) through the Higher Education reforms, which are in themselves an indicator of global movements in which Albania is involved in order to assume its place in the regional and world development. While the rise of the English language has affected the lives of faculty members and the students of the English Department by being the central element of their current and future careers, respectively, so have Higher Education reforms. A reform of the magnitude of the Bologna Process, which is applied throughout Albanian higher education, has led to several major changes with significant consequences in the lives of faculty members and students alike. This chapter sheds light on the ways in which the major changes that often present themselves in the form of pressures, are interpreted and negotiated by the faculty members and students of the English Department.
Chapter 5

Policy Pressures on the English Department

Introduction

There is mounting literature indicating that English has become the lingua franca at the basis of economic, political, cultural, and technological developments characteristic of the globalization era. English provides the linguistic infrastructure for multinational and transnational corporations, as well as the international and supranational organizations that have spread over the world. In addition, English is associated with the movement of people, ideas, and images, which has increased with the expansion of popular culture, the emerging migration trends, and the rapid advancement in media technologies reflected in broadcasting, telecommunications, and above all, the Internet. This has led to pressures to embrace English, which in education are embodied in calls for internationalization of the curricula.

The globalization of education has been fueled by large number of students traveling outside their home-countries to receive their higher education in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia and by the establishment of English-speaking campuses in non-English speaking countries. English has become the language of education, science, and scholarly publications. Partly because of this movement, HE institutions are in the process of vast and profound reformation.

In this chapter, I focus my attention on a university English Department struggling to come to terms with international trends. Most significantly, these trends revolve around the importance attached to the teaching and learning of English. Based on
the documents examined and the data collected, in this chapter I will discuss some of the pressures with which the English Department at a large university in Tirana, Albania is confronted in the framework of Albania’s transformations in the last two decades. I will argue that these pressures firmly situated in the history of the country arise from a number of sources. They emerge from economic and labor policies, following the country’s breaking out of the communist regime and its embarking into the market economy.

Pressures also stem from changes in foreign relations undertaken by the new democratic government and the re-orientation of the country towards Western Europe and the Unites States in a quest for European and north-Atlantic integration. The emerging economic and political scapes have created a receptive and fertile terrain for the penetration of popular culture and media, as well as new technologies, led by telecommunication and Internet. Further, the opportunities for people to travel, work, and study abroad as well as the rise of a new wave of emigration since the end of WW II have been factors influencing the English Department.

I will describe how the historical changes and the ensuing pressures have defined the work of the English Department. These have come through the HE policies, framed by the Bologna Agreement signed by the Albanian Government in 2003, that aim to align Albanian HE with the European HE system, by making it part of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by the year 2010.

I argue that the pressures from these sources have led to the rise of English as the dominant foreign language in Albania, having replaced not only Russian, but also French and other European languages. I also argue that these pressures, which lead to a number
of imperatives, are interpreted in a variety of ways by faculty and students and are equally variously negotiated in their lived experiences. Both faculty and students’ interpretation and negotiation of these pressures suggest that not only are they aware of the powers related with English; they are also taking advantage of the economic, financial, socio-cultural, and educational opportunities available to them due to their mastery of English language. In addition, I argue that in addition to the advantages knowledge of English brings to those in the English Department, the negotiation of pressures has lead to ambivalence and anxieties associated with treading on a new terrain that is in a constant state of change.

**Historical Changes**

In 1991, after almost half a century, the communist regime, which had reigned in Albania since the country’s emergence from World War II, came to a “sudden and dramatic” (Saltmarshe, 2001, p. 60) end. This historical milestone replaced the authoritarian, single-party system with a democratic pluralistic one. The Albanian communist party, also known as the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA), which had come to power after the Liberation of the country in 1944, had ruled with an iron hand, first under the leadership of Enver Hoxha until the mid-1980’s, and then his successor, Ramiz Alia until 1991. This period was characterized by different degrees of Albania’s isolation from the rest of the world.

For the first fifteen years of the ruling of the PLA, Albania continued the alliance with the Yugoslav Federation, which had started during the National Liberation War. The Yugoslav government contributed considerable economic aid to Albania. Along
with the aid, however, it attempted to interfere with the country’s internal affairs (Institute of History, 2008). At the encouragement of Soviet leaders, the Yugoslav Party aimed at hampering the economic development of Albania. This would eventually lead to the loss of independence and the turning of Albania into the seventh republic of the Yugoslav Confederation (ibid., pp. 196-200).

The place of Yugoslavia in the alliance was taken by the USSR. In 1949, Albania became a member of the communist block’s organization and COMECON\(^{17}\), consisting of communist Eastern European countries under the leadership of the USSR, after the latter’s victorious emergence from the World War II. Compared to Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union’s contribution in economic aid and technical assistance to Albania was considerably larger in volume. In exchange for this contribution, Albania and the communist block’s countries were expected to pledge their allegiance to USSR’s communist ideology and Marxist-Leninist philosophy and comply with the Kremlin leadership. Cultural and educational exchanges were established within the communist block’s organization. For the greatest part, as De Witt argues, these were exchanges between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the rest of the countries, as its satellites (2003, p. 11). The asymmetry in the flow of exchanges was determined by the differential powers of the involved countries, not unlike the current pattern of academic

\(^{17}\) COMECON was an economic organization from 1949 to 1991, linking the USSR with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, East Germany (1950–90), Mongolia (from 1962), Cuba (from 1972), and Vietnam (from 1978), with Yugoslavia as an associated member. Albania belonged to this organization between 1949 and 1961. COMECON’s establishment was prompted by the Marshall Plan. The organization was formally disbanded in June 1991, following an agreement in 1987 that official relations should be established with the European Community, and upon adopting a free-market approach to trading in 1990. http://encyclopedia.farlex.com/Comecon
flows described by Altbach and Knight (2007), which reflect a major pull by the
developed countries.

Former communist educational systems were fashioned after the Soviet one and
rested on the same communist ideology and deeply politicized content (Rama, 2003).
Given the heavy reliance on Soviet economic aid and know-how, as well as cultural and
educational exchanges with the USSR, Russian had naturally become the language of
science, technology, military, politics, higher education, and culture. Like English in the
former British colonies, Russian was the language of the communist empire. Its power
was commensurate with the supremacy of the USSR as the champion of communism and
leader of the communist world. Judging by the sources from which Russian drew its
power and the ways in which it spread, it displayed several qualities of an imperialistic
language, not unlike English.

The alliance with the Soviet Union strengthened the position of Russian in
Albania’s schools making it the main foreign language compulsory at all levels of
education. Russian was key to economic development and scientific advancement, due to
the large volume of economic assistance and know-how, along with the human contacts
between speakers of Russian, even if they were not from the USSR, and Albanians.
Interaction among people from the Soviet block countries was generally conducted in
Russian leading to the status of the language as the lingua franca of Eastern Europe.
Advancement in academe also depended on mastery of Russian, since the greatest part of
and the most updated information was accessible in that language.

In 1961, however, the alliance between Albania and the Soviet Union ended, after
the Soviet party headed by Khrushchev attempted to dissuade Albanian leadership’s
efforts towards the industrialization of the country, which was considered key to its real independence (Duka, 2007, p. 269). Enver Hoxha at the head of the PLA accused the Kremlin leadership of revisionism of the communist ideology and principles. The Soviet Union, in turn, suspended all aid to Albania thus plunging the country into economic hardship. The rupture with the Soviet Union left Albania without any real allies in Europe, and certainly, not any of the stature of the USSR, although the communist countries of the Central and Eastern Europe did not sever diplomatic relations with Albania.

Following up on the support that the PLA had given the People’s Republic of China in the latter’s conflict with the Soviet Communist Party, Albania turned to the communist China of Mao Zedong for yet another ideological alliance, which shifted the economic, political, and cultural relations from Eastern Europe and Moscow further East (Institute of History, 2008, pp. 301-303). The economic aid from China, albeit much needed, fell short of that awarded previously by the USSR. In addition to the delayed deliveries, the goods were of lower standards, and the technological assistance did not reach the Soviet sophistication.

As in the previous alliances, the ideological, political, and economic relations were followed by those in the realms of culture and education. Albanian students were given scholarships to receive their higher education in China, while Chinese academic staff worked in Albanian universities and research institutes. As the faculty members in the English Department recall, a Chinese professor taught English to Albanian students in the English Department of the State University of Tirana (today’s University of
Tirana) in the first years of the foundation of this Department, while several Albanian students went to China to major in English, among other majors.

Despite the flow of exchanges, Chinese did not reach the level of expansion of Russian language in Albania. Unlike Russian, it was not taught in elementary and high education. With insignificant exceptions, neither was Chinese taught at the tertiary level. Chinese did not find as favorable and accepting a linguistic terrain in Albania as Russian and the few western foreign languages such as French and English, which had been introduced gradually in Albanian schools. As a matter of fact, confronted with language barriers, the Albanian and the Chinese were reported to have relied on Russian as a common foreign language.

In the beginning of the 1970s, the relations between Albania and China had been cooling down until they came to a complete freeze in 1978. The PLA accused China’s leaders of having bent the communist principles by, among other policies, allowing President Nixon’s visit to China in 1973. While the Albanian government had been gradually preparing for the eventual split with China and the eminent economic consequences of this event, with the rupture in the relations between the two countries, Albania lost the last of its major economic aid suppliers. Work on a number of industrial projects of high significance for the country, such as the Metallurgic Mill and one of the most powerful hydropower plants planned until that time, was interrupted. The PLA guided the country to an economic policy of self-reliance, and Albania entered one of its darkest periods of poverty (Institute of History, 2008, pp. 309-314).

The fall of the iron curtain and the disintegration of the socialist camp at the end of 1980s found Albania in an extremely impoverished economic situation. Although the
country had established diplomatic relations with a number of western European countries like Italy and France, this was had resulted in insignificant trade volume and cultural exchanges. The Albanian economy had weakened considerably. According to Gerxhani and Schram (2004), the growth rate during the last two decades of the socialist regime “sharply decreased and eventually became negative” followed by a decline in the real income per capita, increasingly lacking number of goods and commodities in the market, and a period of inexistent economic plans and markets (p. 4). This condition continued up to the anti-regime protests of the end of 1990 and beginning of 1991.

The weakened political regime in Albania was trying to hang on to power at all costs. To such an end, the PLA leader hand-picked by Enver Hoxha to succeed him, warned that Albania was not Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. By this time, the communist regimes had either fallen or were in the process of disintegration, as it was the case with the USSR, where President Gorbachev had introduced glasnost\(^{18}\) and perestroika\(^{19}\) and the former Soviet Republics were claiming their independence from the USSR.

Against the background of the crumbling of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the demonstrations of Albanian students in Tirana in December 1990 started as protests against the poor economic conditions and rapidly evolved into protests of a political character (Institute of History, 2008). A number of progressive intellectuals,

\(^{18}\)Glasnost was the policy of maximal publicity, openness, and transparency in the activities of all government institutions in the Soviet Union, together with freedom of information, introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev in the second half of 1980s. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasnost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasnost)

\(^{19}\)Perestroika is the Russian term for the political and economic reforms introduced in June 1987 by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Its literal meaning is "restructuring", referring to the restructuring of the Soviet economy. Perestroika is often argued to be one reason for the fall of communist political forces in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and as the end of the Cold War. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika)
mainly university professors, joined the student protests and put pressure on the PLA leader, who was also the President of Albania, to allow political pluralism in the country. Fearing bloodshed similar to that of Romania in 1989, in which the Romanian communist leader Nikolae Ceausecku and his wife were executed at the hands of the revolting masses, Ramiz Alia reluctantly allowed other political parties in Albania after 45 years of single party rule. To ensure against reversal of that half-hearted concession made on December 11, 1990, in the meeting with a group of students representing the university student body in Tirana, students and intellectuals worked overnight to draft the program of the Democratic Party, which was publicly announced the following day. This was the beginning of the end of the communist regime in Albania.

According to the book *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, several other demonstrations and strikes by students, workers, and other people continued into the first few months of 1991. On February 20, 1991, large crowds of people demonstrated in the streets of Tirana and toppled the monument of the former PLA leader Enver Hoxha at Tirana’s main square. This event symbolically dealt the final blow at communism in its last stronghold in Eastern Europe (The Institute of History, 2008).

The elections of March 1991, left in power representatives from the old regime. Soon after, a general strike and opposition in the main cities of Albania led to the formation of a coalition cabinet with forces from various political parties (Wikipedia, Albania). Among economic collapse and social unrest, the new elections of March 2002 brought to power the Democratic Party.

With the overthrow of the communist regime, Albania sought to make a clean break with its communist orientation of the past half-century and align itself with
Western Europe and the United States of America, as symbols and representatives of freedom, democracy, and a successful economic system. It also sought to assume its rightful place in the European family of countries, a desire adequately conveyed in the slogan “Let’s make Albania like the rest of Europe.” The slogan mobilized people into demonstrations, hunger strikes, sit-ins, and other activities targeting the old regime.

Assuming this new place, however, required changes in economy, politics, and culture.

**Economic and Labor Market Policies**

The years prior to the overthrow of the communist regime in Albania were marked by a deep economic crisis, which played an important role in fueling people’s discontent with the regime. It was under these circumstances and expectations for a fast economic recovery that the new democratic government which came to power in the early 1990s started the implementation of “a profound market-oriented economic program, including macroeconomic stabilization and price liberalization” (Gerxhani & Schram, 2004, p. 3).

The shift from the communist ideology to neo-liberalism was marked by the introduction of a free market economy. The highly planned, centralized socialist economy, which in the last two decades had slipped into further isolation, practically collapsed. For the first time in almost 50 years Albania removed barriers to foreign capital and investment. Laws were drafted for the creation of joint ventures and the establishment of foreign companies in the country.

Foreign trade gradually increased in volume. Albania concluded Free Trade Agreements with Macedonia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia, and Moldova as well
as with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) prior to the latter’s independence. In April 2006, these bilateral agreements were replaced by a multiregional agreement that took effect in May 2007 and is based on the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) model. Nevertheless, in 2007 combined trade with all these countries constituted a small percentage of Albania's trade, while trade with EU member states (mainly Greece and Italy) accounted for nearly 68% (US Department of State Background Note, 2007). With the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2006, in the framework of the negotiations for Albania’s accession to the EU, the Albanian Government signed an FTA with the EU. The agreement foresaw a duty-free regime for almost 90% of agricultural and industrial products. In addition, Albania conducted two-way trade with the United States, although admittedly at a lower scale than the trade with some other European countries (ibid.).

The movement of capital and goods and the intensification of trade were closely associated with the movement of people, including foreign public and private companies, private individuals interested in conducting business with Albania, and Albanian businesspeople travelling abroad. Taking advantage of the opening of the country, Albanian entrepreneurs explored the trade opportunities with the neighboring and other European countries. They travelled as far as China in the East and the North American continent in the West. Thus began Albania’s movement towards regional and global integration, through involvement in a process of “flows of trade, capital, and people across the globe”, which Held and McGrew (2000, p. 3) have regarded as the trademark of globalization.
It became clear early on that trade and capital, on their own, or through the “tongue” of their agents, were partial to English. To the great advantage of its users, English provided the linguistic infrastructure of trade and capital. It was the language on which most people, despite their ethnicity, nationality, language background, and area of expertise, could rely for communication purposes. For Albanians coming out of isolation, the once virtually empty slogan “A foreign language is a weapon in the life struggles” taught to every 5th grade student as one of the great teachings of the Party Leader, took on a concrete meaning. As it was the case in the world (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997) and in the former communist Eastern European countries like Hungary (Medgyes and Lazlo, 2001) and Slovakia (Prendergast, 2008), English emerged as the most powerful weapon among the foreign languages. The opportunities for the speakers of English, in general, and English majors, in particular, expanded like never before.

The English Department graduates, who for years had been destined to be English teachers, felt that they were no longer restricted to a teaching profession. The depressed labor market characterizing the transition from communism to capitalism prompted an agenda of highly pressing socio-economic and political issues competing for the attention of Albanian governments; education was not the highest priority. This was reflected in the teachers’ working conditions and low salaries. As Dushku (2000) pointed out, the dissatisfaction with the ELT profession stemmed primarily, but not only, from it having “been and still remain[ing] a very badly paid profession” (p. 97). Moreover, she argued that the English teachers’ discontent was aggravated by “heavy workloads and teaching big groups of students in unheated classes with no window panes …” (ibid.).
A combination of high labor market demand for English, poor ELT profession conditions, and the fall, along with the communist regime, of the centralized and state planned employment of university graduates provided new opportunities for the English majors. Simultaneously this forced them to take charge of securing their own employment. In great numbers, they opted for jobs that capitalized on knowledge of English requiring skills such as “managerial, secretarial, interpreting/translating and service ones” (Dushku, 2000, p. 109). The participants in this study from the English Department pointed out that those years found English majors working in a wide variety of job – bell-boys and servers in new hotels and restaurants, tour and museum guides, operators in the mobile telecommunication companies, secretaries in foreign banks, managers in construction companies, administrative assistants and translators in NGOs and NPOs, journalists with Albanian and foreign media, directors in government ministries, key figures in the main political parties in the country, and members of the parliament.

Teuta, a faculty member in the English Department, was offered a teaching job in the Department upon graduation in the mid-1990s, along with several other students from her graduating class. Instead of seizing this opportunity, she chose two part-time jobs, one in the finance sector of a small company, and another as an English teacher at a British-Albanian foundation. She pointed out that these two part-time jobs “paid much better than the miserable salary of $120 dollars for new teachers in the English Department” (Italics added).

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20 At that time, she had started her studies in the Faculty of Economics in the area of Business Administration. She pointed out that working in the finance sector of this company gave her studies in Business Administration a practical aspect that she found very helpful.
Bardha, another faculty member, who started teaching a few years after Teuta, also commented on the “lucrative jobs in translation and interpreting with the international organizations”, compared to her salary in the English Department. She explained that until recently, a considerable number of English majors were employed in the numerous NPOs and NGOs which had increased rapidly in Albania after 1991. According to Bardha, “These organizations needed people who, in addition to translation and interpreting, could also handle administrative work. People hired for these jobs were not simply translators and/or interpreters. In such positions, mastery of English was only one of the requirements.”

Students in this study also described jobs requiring the use of English. Ermir, for instance, had worked as a translator and interpreter for foreign relief and development organizations like World Vision and UNICEF. Shpresa was working as a receptionist at a hotel, where the management and most of the clientele were foreigners. She noted: “In my job, I have to use English all the time. The clients speak English, my immediate supervisors and higher level management speak English, the majority of the documentation is in English”.

Since 1991 onward, most people with knowledge of English “were expecting to ... use ... English as a real tool in their efforts to improve their standard of living” (Nika, cited in Dushku, 2000, p. 109). The opportunities of converting the “linguistic capital” embodied in the English language into “economic capital” (Bourdieu, 1991) and of using knowledge of English for upward mobility translated into a heightened desire to learn the language, which in turn led to a boom in the number of English classes. The trend resembled that in most other countries in the world which counts 26 million people
learning English in any given year (Crystal, 1997; The Global Tongue: English, 1998) as well as in Eastern European countries, which like Albania, had broken out of the planned centralized economy of communism (Prendergast, 2008). English was practically taught around the clock, everywhere: in elementary, secondary, and tertiary public and non-public education\textsuperscript{21}, in private schools, language centers and foundations, in government ministries\textsuperscript{22} and state institutions. The latter often made knowledge of English a requirement for the employees to keep their job, which led to a large number of people taking the test of English as a Foreign Language administered by the English Department at the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Successful passing of this test certified proficiency in English. While this test had been in place for several years before 1990, the number of test-takers increased dramatically post-1990.

The English classes offered by English teachers (Baseline study, 2004) and non-English teachers alike in the privacy of their homes or places that called neither for a disclosure of the activity, nor for the approval of the Ministry of Education made it difficult to accurately count the number of people studying English. The English Department faculty and students were subjects and objects of this “feverish movement” for the learning and teaching of English.

Several faculty members from the English Department left teaching for more lucrative jobs with the World Bank, the UNDP office in Albania, the BBC, and various organizations of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo in charge of monitoring the situation after the Serbia-Kosovo conflict of 1999. Those who stayed in the Department,

\textsuperscript{21} According to a Ministry of Education and Science document titled “Information on the additional non-public educational institutions approved”, dated 2008, there were 39 such institutions devoted entirely to the study of foreign languages, with a number of them including IT courses.

\textsuperscript{22} In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Science organized English Language courses, according to ability level, for its officials (I.K., personal communication, October 12, 2008).
tried to maximize the value of their knowledge of English and teaching position in a highly reputable institution, such as the University of Tirana. They were favourably-positioned to be in high demand. It is not a coincidence that all the interviewed faculty members had taught and were currently teaching English elsewhere, in addition to their teaching assignments in the English Department. The reputation stemming from their position as teachers in the English Department afforded them numerous opportunities regarding the number and quality of students as well as the payment they charged for their English lessons. Teuta, for instance, pointed out that not only were the students to whom she taught private English lessons willing to pay for the quality of her teaching, but they recommended their friends and relatives to take English lessons from her. She hardly ever experienced a shortage of students.

Teaching in reputed non-public institutions also paid well. Four of the interviewed faculty members had been teaching English at the Lincoln Center\textsuperscript{23} in Tirana, which, according to its website\textsuperscript{24} is “the premier language center in Albania, providing language courses for children and adults in English, German, Italian, Spanish and Albanian for foreigners” since 1997. Agron, for instance, taught English to adults and professionals. In line with the motto of the Center, which markets its specialized English courses by inviting people to “invest in themselves”\textsuperscript{25}, Agron commented that his students attend English classes after a long day at work for the purpose of staying competitive in the labor market. Bardha, Vojsava, Bora, and Majlinda were teaching at the same Center.

\textsuperscript{23} Lincoln Center (Qendra Linkoln) is described as a business and professional services center which offers foreign language and IT courses, under the motto “The training you need from the people you trust!” \url{http://www.ikubinfo.com/ikubBIZ/businessinfo.aspx?id=1A1795D4-327D-41AF-91CF-4B08666C0407}

\textsuperscript{24} \url{http://www.lincolnalbania.org/AboutUs/Overview/tabid/93/Default.aspx}

\textsuperscript{25} Lincoln Center, e-mail advertisement of Spoken English classes, June 23, 2009.
The rest of the faculty members and over half of the interviewed students had also taught or been students in language schools, centers, and foundations. Rudina, for instance, had attended an English course at a language center as a high school student and was currently teaching English to young children at that very institution. Mira has been teaching for years at a foreign languages foundation, and so had Drita, until very recently.

Opportunities associated with the mastery of English have clearly influenced the English Department. While other departments of foreign languages, such as the Department of French, German, and Russian experienced a decrease in the number of students, the English Department grew twice as large between 1997 and 2007. English majors are well-absorbed by the labour market and this appears to be a significant reason for the Department’s expansion. According to Agron,

The English Department students find it easy to get a job after they graduate, because the country needs translators, interpreters, and teachers of English. The Minister of Education has proclaimed that English is the lingua franca of the 21st century, so it’s a priority everywhere.

Teuta supported Agron’s opinion:

Many of my former students work as secretaries, translators, interpreters, and teachers. A good number work for various government ministries; some are directors, although the latter have usually earned a second degree from another Faculty. But there are jobs for the English Department graduates. (Italics added)

The English Department students also agreed that English graduates find jobs more easily than other foreign languages and several other majors. Vesa, for instance, pointed out that unlike her fellow-students in the French Department, she could find other jobs “such as secretary and bank-teller, which require knowledge of English”. Indeed, the banking sector reflected the policy of the European Central Bank where
English is the sole working language (Van Els, 2006, p. 213). English majors also get employed in administrative and managerial positions in the private sector, including construction companies, foreign foundations, and companies that need translation, interpreting, and other services. These latter jobs were preferred over the ELT profession due to the higher pay, leading the Albanian Minister of Education to point out that “many of those who major in English find employment in banks, international offices and organizations, and other places” (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007).

Some faculty interviewees did not share the same enthusiasm about the job opportunities of the English Department graduates. According to Mira,

A university degree in English may not be highly sought in the future, because the [job] market is saturated. It is true that Albanians are fond of foreign languages and English comes first on that list, but the English Department is by no means the only institution to offer English [classes]. All other faculties have English in their curriculum.

Indeed, the teaching and learning of English has become so wide-spread, as it was illustrated above, that a degree from the English Department has seemingly lost the elusive\(^\text{26}\) uniqueness it once possessed and the advantages it used to offer to those few who mastered it. This is the reason that led Liri to admit:

If I were to advise my own son as to what major to choose, provided that he would not feel strongly about one, I would recommend him to major in Economics, for instance, not in English. This is a tough reality. Some time ago, English majors were in high demand and employment was easier for them. Now that everybody is learning English, the demand for them has decreased.

Some of the interviewed students agreed with Mira’s and Liri’s opinion. According to one of them, “The labor market in Albania has become tough”. This was the main reason pushing him to pursue another degree in Economics and, possibly, in

\(^{26}\) In her book *Buying Into English – Language and Investment in the New Capitalist World*, Catherine Prendergast refers to the elusive power English possessed in the communist regime in that those who knew the language had no way to put it into good use.
Law after graduating from the English Department. Over half of the student interviewees indicated that they wanted to further their education and compliment their English degree with a degree in Law, Economics, International Relations, Public Relations, and Tourism either in Albania or, preferably, abroad. The economic and labor market pressures have clearly shaped and are shaping the decisions of the English Department students about their current and future plans.

Another closely-related way in which the economy and labor market have affected the English Department is the diversification of its curricula and the diplomas it issues. The English Department of the University of Tirana is the oldest and most reputable higher education institution for the training of teachers of English for all school levels. Until 2000, it issued only one diploma, that of “Teacher of English for the High School”. In 1998 the curricula were diversified and the English Department began to train students in three programs, namely ELT, Translation and Conference Interpreting, and British and American Studies. Vojsava speculated that the two latest additions were necessitated by the demands of the market. Ilir elaborated further:

We noticed that the job market needed the specializations in Translation-Interpreting and British and American studies. In the past, the students who majored in ELT also worked in other areas. We deemed it necessary to create more focused specializations in order to respond to [the needs of] the job market.

Faculty and students considered diversification of the curricula a positive development. Many English majors who were employed in areas other than teaching embraced this expansion. Considerations of employment and employability also shaped the quality of the students who attended each program. The best students competed for the distinctly fewer seats in the Translation-Interpreting and British-American Studies programs. I will return to this issue in the following chapters to discuss how this has
affected the organizational conditions of the English Department and its implications for the success of the ELT reform. It is worthy of mentioning here that the economic and financial competition introduced within neo-liberal ideology and the market economy influenced students’ choices of a major and program.

Some high-achieving students in the English Department did choose the ELT program over the newer ones in the last ten years. Mira explained:

That [tendency] was in response to the … many vacancies in English teaching positions [which] opened up, as a result of Russian, and, to some degree, French being phased out of schools. Because English is the dominant Foreign Language at all levels of Albanian education, with all other foreign languages having been relegated to the status of the second foreign language in the school curriculum, the possibility of getting a job as an English teacher is greater by far.

The job possibilities for graduates in other foreign language departments at the University of Tirana lagged behind the jobs available for English majors. Besa, a faculty member in the French Department argued that “French language is in total retreat in Albania,” which is the reason why “Nobody wants to major in French”. She explained:

The job market does not accommodate the [French] graduates. A student who graduates with a degree in French has a very bleak employment perspective. At best, this person would be a French teacher, but teaching jobs have become very difficult to find recently because there is an orientation from the Minister of Education, that French will be removed from the school curriculum altogether. It will be taught [only] as a second foreign language.

English has imperialistically risen at the expense of other languages (Phillipson, 1992) in Albania as well as elsewhere in the world. In its march towards the most widely spread language, it has been unforgiving even to other big languages like French. This shift in Foreign Language Teaching Policy in Albania is in line with European trends that accounted for approximately 19 million students learning English compared to 9 million learning French, 3 million learning German and 200,000 learning Spanish in all EU
member states in the late 1980s (Ammon, cited in Van Els, 2006, p. 209). The decrease of French classes in Albanian schools is primarily an indicator of the declining status of the language in the local economic and labor market at large vis-à-vis the simultaneous rise of English. The Albanian local labor market, as the study has shown, has to a great extent followed the patterns of the regional and international labor markets, which indisputably favor English (Williams, 2005, p. 212). While English majors have opportunities to obtain jobs with foreign companies, international organizations, NGOs and NPOs operating in Albania and practically all the schools of the Albanian elementary, secondary, and tertiary education, jobs for French majors come up short. Thus the French Department professor pointed out:

Some companies in Albania have employed some graduates from the French Department, but the number of such companies is limited. … some of my former students worked at a mine in S. Another company did some road maintenance, I don’t know what has become of it. For a certain period of time, there were some French entrepreneurs. Other students were employed as translators in TV. But these jobs are so scarce that I cannot feel optimistic about [the prospects of] the French Department graduates.

Compared to the diminishing position of French in Albania, Russian faces an even gloomier reality. A faculty in the Russian Department estimated that there is a total of 120 students in that Department versus the over 200-student English Department graduating class alone. She argued that “The study of a foreign language is determined by the demand of the job market for this language. Many years ago, the statistics were very different from what they are now. The situation has changed.” Indeed, there are presently very few schools that offer a class of Russian. The Russian language faculty explained:

Recently, there have been a few more job openings. A Russian ophthalmology clinic employs several graduates from the Russian Language Department. A few
contracts have been signed recently with Russian companies in the chromium mining industry, which have boosted the job market slightly. There are sporadic translation and interpreting jobs, but not too many of them. Hence the small number of students learning Russian.

As this section has revealed, the economic and labor market policies have had a major influence on the expansion of English language in Albania. The interviews with the English Department faculty members and students shed light on their interpretation of those policies and the ways in which they have responded to them. While it is practically impossible to separate the economic and labor market policies from the political factors that have led to the rise of English language, the following section deals with these factors.

**Foreign Policy**

In the last two decades, Albania has been pursuing a path of Euro-Atlantic integration. Its primary long-term goals have been to gain EU and NATO membership and to promote closer bilateral ties with its neighbors, other western European countries, and the U.S. With the change of the regime in 1991, several countries set up their embassies in Tirana. Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union severed in 1961 were restored in July 1990. In his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1990, then Albanian President Alia stated that Albania was willing to establish diplomatic relations with the United States of America (*New York Times*, 1990). The diplomatic relations with the U.S. were officially re-established in 1991.

Several agreements have been signed between Albania and the United States of America. Only in 2003, for instance, Albania and the U.S. ratified several agreements, including a treaty on the Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction,
the Promotion of Defense and Military Relations, and the Adriatic Charter. A Supplementary Agreement to the Partnership for Peace was signed between the U.S. and Albania, for the purpose of strengthening bilateral cooperation and enhancing security, peace, and stability in the region. In 2008, the US Senate unanimously ratified Albania’s Protocols of Accession to NATO and President Bush signed the Accession Protocol that very year (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2008). The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs in the Department of State notes that Albania has enjoyed a whole-hearted support from the U.S. in achieving its EU and NATO membership goals (2009). Albania was admitted as a NATO member state in April 2009 (Shekulli, 2009), marking the fulfillment of one of the long-term goals for Euro-Atlantic integration.

Since 1991, Albania is a member of a number of international organizations, as well as multiple regional organizations and initiatives, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), all the bodies of the United Nations such as the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Stability Pact\textsuperscript{27}, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), among others. In June 2006, Albania and the EU signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), which was a cornerstone in the long process of Albania’s path toward the EU integration. The SAA focused on implementing essential rule of law reforms and curbing corruption and organized crime. In April 2009, upon the ratification of the SAA, Albania applied for EU membership\textsuperscript{28} (Ministry of Integration, 2009).

\textsuperscript{27} The Stability Pact is a short form for the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, which was created in 1998 and functioned until 2008. As envisioned at the time of its inception, in 2008 the Stability Pact was replaced by the Regional Cooperation Council. The RCC is intended to display more regional ownership than the SP, in which the outside partners such as EU had a relatively strong driving influence. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stability_Pact_for_South_Eastern_Europe

\textsuperscript{28} For a more detailed list of the key dates of Albania’s path towards EU, see Albania-EU relations at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidate-countries/albania/eu_albania_relations_en.htm
At the same time, Albanian regional, European, and global integration has been largely affected by the activity of such organizations as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and numerous foreign foundations. Albania joined the World Bank in 1991 and became a member\(^{29}\) of other World Bank organizations such as the International Development Association, the International Finance Corporation, and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. In its work to help build the infrastructure of the Albanian economy, EBRD involves its partners at World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the European Commission, as well as its bilateral partners. Lastly, but also importantly, such levers as the United Nations Development Program and USAID and a great number of foundations aim at the socio-economic development and the progress of democracy in the country.

The majority of the foreign embassies and international organizations operating in Albania, use English as their working language. They present another main line of employment for speakers of English. The interviewed faculty members mentioned that a number of their cohort fellow graduates are currently working for foreign embassies. According to one faculty member, Bardha, her former classmate works at the US Embassy in a position that “fits very well with her specialization in British and American Studies.” Other graduates from the English Department work for a number of other embassies.

International organizations have also absorbed a number of English Department graduates. According to Teuta, several of her former students in the Department work for “very prestigious” institutions like the World Bank, EBRD, OSCE, and UNHCR. Teuta

\(^{29}\) Albania’s membership. 
argued that although her students work as secretaries and administrative assistants in these organizations, “they earn a very good salary, their work is appreciated, they use English all the time, and it’s precisely the mastery of English that has provided them the opportunity to have such jobs.”

On the other hand, not all the English majors employed in these organizations work as secretaries and administrative assistants. A number of them have gone on to study European Relations, Law, and Economics and work in key functions. A few former faculty members and graduates from the English Department are project managers at the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, and UNESCO offices in Albania since the early 1990s. Others have been closely involved with such organizations as translators and interpreters, regarding specific projects. Such is the case of a former faculty member in the English Department who has interpreted and translated widely for various ministries of the Albanian Government as well as for foreign organizations such as World Bank, IMF, EBRD, UNDP, UNICEF, USAID, and the Council of Europe. His activity encompasses the translation of a large mass of materials, including books, in the disciplines of political sciences, law, philosophy, sociology, history, and economics. Other former and current faculty members, graduates, and students from the English Department have been and continue to be involved with international organizations utilizing their mastery of English.

The new regime in Albania gave rise to the civil society with a large number of such organizations as NGOs, NPOs, and charities. Many of them were founded at the initiative of foreign organizations and either continue as such or have been transferred to

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30 For a complete list of his interpreting and translation activities, see the web page at http://www.kastriotmyftiu.com
Albanian management. The multitude of these organizations has presented additional work opportunities for English majors because English is the working language. In Bardha’s opinion, “Good knowledge of English was the main hiring criterion”.

In addition, knowledge of English appears extremely important in the realm of politics. The CVs of Albanian Government ministers reveal that they speak an average of two foreign languages, among which English ranks first. So important is the mastery of English in politics that Teuta argued: “I would probably be exaggerating if I said that 75% of the Albanian politicians are English majors, but half of them are [so] for sure”. Even one of the interviewed students stated his “ambition to get involved in politics”, after pursuing a degree in Law and possibly Economics following his graduation from the English Department.

Most of the English-major politicians have gone on to study Economics, Law, Journalism, in addition to their English major, but Teuta argued that knowledge of English has undeniably been instrumental in the advancement of their political career. One aspect of this instrumentality may be access to information that English has provided them. Being the language of the United States, Great Britain, and widely used in Western Europe, English is considered the language of freedom and democracy. Major documents like the Charter of the Human Rights (Kulla, 2007) are also written in English. In addition, given the de facto prevalence of English in the EU and other major global organizations, English is considered a must for all those interested in the political developments in the EU and further. Active participation in meetings with foreign counterparts would require knowledge of English. In this sense, Teuta argued that English has assumed an indisputable first place among other foreign languages.
Liri also confirmed the predominance of English as a global language. She speculated about the possibility, in the future, of French and German vying for a higher position on the totem pole of EU languages. However, she asserted that “… for the time being, I don’t think they have the same weight. If you know English, you stand in a position to better understand the political processes in Albania, in Europe, and in the world.” Under these circumstances, the English Language Teaching policies that officially elevate English as the most prevalent foreign language in Albania are a geopolitical move that acknowledges the support of the US and Western Europe to Albanian politics (Kulla, 2007). At the same time, they anticipate the political developments of Albania’s expected regional and global integration.

Socio-cultural Policies

**Emigration**

The historical change of 1991 reversed decades of Albanian isolation. For the first time in half a century, Albanians began to travel, work, and study abroad. In addition, they were able to choose and change employment, establish private businesses, engage in trade relations with their counterparts outside the country, as well as freely express their political beliefs and affiliate with political organizations (Baseline Study, 2004). New migration trends appeared, with people being able to migrate within the country and abroad. The exodus of hundreds of Albanians that followed was an outcry for a better life. Emigrants settled in Europe, the United States of America, Canada, and Australia. The latter three countries attracted a considerable number of Albanians through diversity visa lotteries and other organized forms of emigration in which
knowledge of the country’s language(s), with English topping the list, is a clear advantage. The remittances of emigrants count for a considerable portion of Albania’s national GDP and play a significant role in the economic development of the country. The ties that emigrants maintain with their relatives in Albania have further promoted the rapid movement of ideas and images and fueled the desires of other Albanians to make their living abroad.

Emigration has shaped the English Department by affecting its main actors, namely, faculty and students. There are 36 full-time English faculty members, compared to the smallest and second largest Turkish and French Departments with 5 and 20 faculty members. The English Department’s academic staff’s fairly young age has resulted from the departure of several teachers to for better-paying jobs within the country, or due to emigration. Bardha pointed out that “the Department was really in need of instructors” at the time of her graduation. She, Vojsava, Teuta, Agron, Bora, and several other faculty members who were hired upon graduation between 1997 and 2005 were needed to fill vacated positions. Bardha reported:

Lucrative jobs in translation and interpretation with the international organizations that established their offices in Kosovo after the crisis in this region, compared to my teacher monthly salary of $120 in the English Department, and emigration to the US and Canada were the main factors that led to the departure of the English Department’s academic staff at that time.

The English Department illustrates the broader phenomenon of brain drain (Gedeshi et al., 1999). Although there are no studies on the faculty members who left the English Department, their former students, who are now faculty members in the Department argued that the majority of them were well-known, well-established authorities in their area of expertise. As a result, their departure was “a great loss for the
Department”, as Bardha put it, and it left voids that were not easy to fill, especially in the beginning. The Department hired a considerable number of recent graduates, in addition to outstanding high school English teachers. But the stature of some of the emigrated professors was such that “it would take three or four [new faculty members] to fill in only one of their shoes” pointed out Bora, while using a pun of the English expression “to fill one’s shoes”.

In the arc of 15 years, the English Department has also witnessed the seeds of brain-return, which translates into brain-gain. Majlinda and Liri, among the interviewed faculty members are representatives of the return of the brain to the Department.

Majlinda graduated in 1991. She was a top student in her class, and, as a result, was offered a faculty position in the English Department upon graduation. She did not take the job because she emigrated with her family. In the host country, she searched for a job as an English teacher, but was turned down as “overqualified”. While she wanted to teach intermediate or advanced students, the only jobs she was offered were in teaching English to young children. She looked for other jobs and was then hired by a travel agency. That position’s requirements were mastery of English and computer skills. Coming from Albania in 1991, Majlinda had not had a chance to use computers. She took some computer courses and worked as a travel agent for the rest of her stay abroad. Her knowledge of English facilitated communication with the foreign tourists. As a result of her work she develop computer skills and better spoken English, which helped Majlinda improve the “bookish-style English” she had learned in school. Indeed, her teaching in the English Department reflected the benefits from her work experience abroad.
Liri, on the other hand, had taught in the English Department for several years before her family emigrated. Unlike Majlinda, she taught high school English while abroad and was inspiring to her students. In a doctoral course here at the University of Illinois, I met a student of Liri’s who credited her with the love for learning foreign languages and her decision to major in English. Liri brought back a wealth of experience to the English Department when she returned to teach there many years later.

The return of faculty members like Liri and Majlinda to the Department was invaluable. It is important to recognize the effects of harnessing the contribution of the diaspora to the development of the country. Rizvi (2007) has argued that in the era of globalization, the “recent developments in technology… make it possible for skilled workers to emigrate yet remain connected, through various networks, to their country of origin, and still make a contribution to its social and economic development” (p. 227). In view of such trends that take advantage of the national diasporas and value brain circulation and brain gain, the Albanian Government launched the brain-gain initiative supported by several concrete measures to attract and strengthen the ties between the Albanian diaspora and the intellectual elite and their country (Gedeshi & Ngjela, 2008; UNDP, 2006).

The Department had also lost faculty members to studying abroad. Such were the cases of Fulbright scholars from the English Department, who had failed to return to Albania after finishing their course of studies in the United States. Other beneficiaries of scholarships who had returned to Albania, had opted to work in jobs that paid higher salaries, as was the case with foreign and private universities, for example, thus depleting the English Department of much needed intellectual expertise gained abroad.
Use of Technology

Modern technologies in the area of telecommunications, satellite, cable, and digital TV, and above all, the use of Internet, have brought the world into the homes of Albanians. News agencies like BBC and Voice of America, even though heavily censored by the previous political regime were trusted news sources for Albanians during the time of anti-communist demonstrations in the late 1990 and early 1991 due to the perceived objectiveness of their news. In the democratic regime, these news agencies have prime time on the Albanian radio and TV channels.

Images from the world of art, music, fashion, science, and technological advancement also make their way through the satellite waves. They come through MTV, which has given rise to Albanian music programs that keep close tabs on the new music trends and music charts around the world. In addition, there are channels dedicated to the world of fashion, channels showing Hollywood and Disney movies, and Explorer channels dealing with historical and science news. Through the influence of such images and ideas, the western world has, to a large degree, shaped the taste of Albanians regarding the kind of music and art they value, the clothes they wear, and the new movies showing in the multiplex theatres of large urban centers.

Telecommunications services have also seen a leap of development in Albania. The telephone lines have extended through most of the country. Landlines and mobile telephony have reached almost every corner of Albania. Today there is mobile phone access that “covers 84.5% of the territory of the Republic of Albania and reaches up to
99.6% of the Albanian population in urban and rural areas” providing services to more than 1, 127,253 customers (Vodafone, 2008).

Lastly, Internet has broadened the scope of communications between Albanians and the world. Based on “human interaction, reflection, and knowledge production” (Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002, p. 83), the use of computers and Internet call largely for the use of English language. While Albanians who own a computer connected to fast Internet are still a privileged minority of only 6.1% of the population in 2007 (Internet World Stats: Internet Usage in Europe), Internet cafes have mushroomed everywhere, even in some rural communities.

The use of internet occupied a central topic of discussion in the interviews for this study. The Faculty of Foreign Languages has its own computer rooms, albeit with a relatively small number of computers compared to the number of students. The computers were connected to Internet for most of the time that uninterrupted power supply supported the connection. Students also emphasized that the great number of Internet cafes has facilitated their use of the Internet for academic work and their own pleasure.

In all the above-mentioned cases, English is the language that enables people the most to fully engage in and benefit from the use of technological advancements. To fully understand the programming, knowledge of English is crucial. Further, it is not a coincidence that AMC advertises its new service packages under English slogans, as was the case with the “What’s up?” campaign. The message is clear: Albanian youth should speak English, the language that guarantees true connectedness.
The Internet takes the need for knowledge of English further. The majority of computers in the Internet cafes and in the Faculty of Foreign Languages operate with English language commands. Faculty and students argued that not only does one need to know English to use a computer, but English also allows them to make the best use of the materials. Dritan explained in no ambiguous terms that while information in Albanian is limited, due to the small number of people who speak the language and the historical, economic, political, and socio-cultural factors that have influenced the development of Albania, English allows one access to a vast world of information, from all corners of the world, whether English is spoken there or not. The value of English as the key to a society, whose progress depends on access to the most recent and updated information was not lost on the faculty members and students of the English Department.

Educational Policies

HE development in Albania has gone through several changes since 1990. The main and most substantial changes have occurred with the signing of the Bologna Agreement in 2003. The signing of the Bologna Agreement and Albania’s joining of the Bologna Process and participating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) demonstrated again the Government’s commitment to the progress of HE in Albania.

In the Faculty of Foreign Languages, the work for the designing of the curricula according to the Bologna Process started in 2003. *The Curricula According to Bologna – Information Packet 2005-2006* cites a 2-year preparation process consisting of seminars and work in groups in the specific departments and at Faculty level with the assistance and support of several European universities.
The work in the respective departments in the Faculty of Foreign Languages came to fruition in the curricula for the Bachelor and MA degrees. The English Department designed the curricula for its three programs: English Language, Translation and Conference Interpreting, and British and American Studies. While the latter two programs retained the same title they had before, the ELT program of the former system changed to English Language. The French, Italian, and German Departments organized their Bachelor’s curricula into three programs: Language, Literature, and Civilization, Translation and Conference Interpreting, and Language and Communication. The Department of Slavic and Balkan Languages offers two programs: Language, Literature, and Civilization, and Translation and Conference Interpreting.

Regarding the second level of studies, i.e., the Master’s degree, the Research-Scientific Master is still offered in collaboration with the Faculty of History and Philology in the areas of Linguistics and Literature. A novelty of the curricula according to Bologna for the Faculty of Foreign Languages, the Professional Master would be offered by the Faculty of Foreign Languages itself as well as in collaboration with other faculties of the University of Tirana. The Professional Master’s degree was foreseen in the areas of Pragmatic and Literary Translation, Interpreting, Language and Culture for Tourism, and Language for International Communication. In addition, the curricula foresaw a 1-year diploma in Language Teaching for all the departments of the Faculty of Foreign Languages to be offered by the respective department. In the English Department, for instance, the curriculum of this diploma consists of didactic disciplines such as Theory of Foreign Language Teaching, Psycholinguistics, ELT Methodology for the elementary education, ELT Methodology for secondary education, English for
Specific Purposes LT Methodology, Teaching Practicum, and the diploma thesis. All these courses were to be offered by the Faculty of Foreign Languages, while such courses as Educational Psychology, Development Psychology, Classroom Management, Educational Assessment, and Ethics of Teaching Profession would be offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The completion of this one-year’s curriculum would not lead to a master’s degree. Rather, it leads to a diploma of “Teacher of English Language”, “Teacher of French Language”, and so on, for each specific language. The other 2-year Master’s degrees would lead to the titles of Research-Scientific Master in the specific field of study.

The guide for the curricula according to the Bologna Agreement also specifies the requirements for students to be admitted into each level of study. For the first level of studies, a high school diploma guarantees consideration for admission into the Faculty of Foreign Languages. For the Professional Master, students must have completed the Bachelor level of studies and demonstrate high proficiency in two foreign languages. In addition, the guide presents the correlations among the Bachelor degree, the Research-Scientific and Professional Masters, and the 1-year diploma in the area of Language Teaching. A direct correlation exists between the Bachelor level in all three programs for English, French, Italian and German departments, and both programs of the Department of Slavic and Balkan Languages, on the one hand, and the Research-Scientific Master in the area of Linguistics and Literature, in that the student can proceed from one level directly to the next one. Likewise, direct correlation exists between the Bachelor level in Translation and Interpreting and the Professional Master in Pragmatic and Literary
Translation and in Interpreting, which is also the case for Language and Communication/British and American Studies and the Professional Master in Language and Culture for Tourism and in Language for International Communication. Finally, students from the Bachelor level in English Language and in French, Italian, German, Russian, Greek, and Turkish Language, Literature, and Civilization, respectively, could proceed directly to the 1-year diploma in the Teaching of the respective Foreign Language.

In addition to the direct correlations mentioned above, it is possible for students to pursue a Professional Master that does not correspond directly to the Bachelor degree they have earned. In that case, students have to take additional units from the Bachelor program. Thus for instance, if a student who has a Bachelor’s degree in Language, Literature, and Civilization wishes to pursue the Professional Master in Pragmatic and Literary Translation, she would need to complete additional modules offered in the Bachelor program of Translation and Interpreting before admission to the Professional Master’s program.

The doctoral studies were foreseen in the areas of Linguistics, Literature, Methodology, and Translation. Every student with a Master’s degree from the Faculty of Foreign Languages would be eligible to enroll in a doctoral program in one of the four above-mentioned areas.

**Implementation of the Bologna Agreement in the English Department**

According to the faculty members of the English Department, the adoption of the Bologna Agreement was “the initiative of the Ministry of Education”. The directive for its implementation was conveyed to them through the pipeline starting at the Ministry of
Education and Science, continuing with the Rectorate, the Dean’s office of each Faculty, until it reached the respective departments. Agron attributed the beginning of the movement to the signing of the Bologna Agreement by the Albanian Minister of Education and Science. From that moment on, “the process had to be implemented throughout the higher education system of the country”.

For the students, Bologna was a program they faced when they enrolled in the English Department. As Shpresa put it, “They dropped the Information Packet on the new curricula in our hands when we enrolled in the English Department, and that was it”. Some of them, as it is the case with Diella in the last year of the Translation-Interpreting program, did not know why the Bologna Agreement was adopted. Students did not have a choice whether to embrace the Agreement or not. Once the implementation started and the curricula were designed and approved, students had to follow through with it.

The interpretations and experiences of the faculty members and students with the Bologna system display similarities and differences. One of the similarities is the largely top down implementation of the system. Thus Agron spoke of it in terms of “the feeling that we [the faculty members in the Department] have to implement the Bologna system, because we have agreed, the country has agreed [to be included in the process], so we have to adopt the new system … because it is a political decision”. This does not mean that all the faculty members were against this decision and the involvement in the Bologna Process.

On the contrary, others clearly expressed their opinion about the “indispensability of the involvement in this process”, whether or not the timing was right. They recognized the problems that being left out of the Process would have entailed and emphasized that
the disadvantages of side-stepping an educational reform to make Albanian HE part of the EHEA would outweigh the advantages of getting involved despite the difficulties.

On the other hand, the top down political decision about the involvement in the Bologna Process and the task of its implementation in the English Department led to “mixed feelings in the beginning”, because as Agron explained:

Many professors considered the old system to be alright; they did not see anything wrong with its essence. There were certain things in that system that could be improved, but it wasn’t dysfunctional or broken. It wasn’t a bad system.

The implementation process began with “a lot of discussions and even disagreements about how things should be done”, according to Agron. One of the disagreements between the English Department and the Faculty of Foreign Languages administration was the duration of studies in the new system. Both Ilir and Bardha pointed out that the English Department insisted that the program should remain 4 years long, instead of the proposed 3 years, because as Ilir explained:

The system prior to Bologna was the result of a long experience. Before 1990, there was an experiment to change the English Department program from four years to three years. That experiment failed, so we went back to a four-year program, for a more complete and unrushed formation of our students and a fully absorbable program.

Based on the rich experience of the past, the English Department proposed that all the students remain on a 4-year program, during which the first and second year would count for a general formation in the English Language, and the third and fourth year would be their specialization, the same structure of program that existed prior to the Bologna implementation. This proposal was not accepted. Ilir explained the rejection of the proposal on the grounds of misinterpretation of “the orientation of the Bologna Agreement for a first cycle of studies not shorter than three years” (Italics added). In his
opinion, this guideline has been interpreted to mean that all course studies should last three years.

One of the concerns caused by the current course duration according to the Bologna Agreement implementation is the disparity between the diplomas to be received by students in the three programs of study. Ilir explained that with the Bologna curricula, the formerly ELT program students were going to receive a generic diploma in English Language upon completion of their Bachelor degree. Differently from the ELT students from the previous program, they would need an additional year to earn a Language Teaching diploma. The other two programs in the English Department, namely the Translation-Interpreting and the British and American Studies programs, would issue a diploma in the specific specialization to their students upon completion of their Bachelor degree.

In line with the previous concern, the employment of the English Department graduates was suspected to be problematic. Drita and Mira, among other faculty members, insisted that the main job market for the English Department graduates in Albania is English teaching. Under these circumstances, they argued that it is unacceptable and ill-advised that the English Language curriculum would lack the foundations of teaching such as ELT Methodology, Pedagogy, Psychology, and the Teaching Practicum, while the Translation-Interpretation and the British American Studies programs offered numerous classes in theories and practice of translation and interpretation, the terminology of different areas, as well as literary genres, trends and epochs respectively. Drita argued that although the Bologna process could have been a
very effective system had it been implemented in a thoughtful way, it had in fact caused confusion for students who were about to graduate with a Bachelor’s degree.

For faculty members the implementation of the Bologna system appeared to be more about technical matters regarding the number of lecture and seminar hours than responding to the goals of the reform. All faculty members referred to the modular course format and the number of credits for each course. They expressed concern over the compression of the subject matter, which used to be taught over two semesters, into one semester that translated into an over-load for the students. The new curriculum was advertised as the product of long and intensive work of the Department faculty and often equated by the Department administrators with the Bologna Agreement itself. A few faculty members, however, acknowledged that, in reality it was largely a re-packaging of the old curriculum “under a new name”. Faculty members argued that in most cases, the curricula were the same as they used to be in the old 4-year program. Ilir pointed out:

… the main subjects are still on the program. Very few things have been left out, and if things have been left out, they are still there as elective courses. No courses have been eliminated to facilitate the transition from a four year program to the three year one.

The faculty’s description of the program compression was present in all student interviews, whether they were studying the old or the reformed curricula. The resulting overload was described as “tormenting” for students, who no matter how hard they seemed to try, could not manage to “keep up with the material”. One of the Bologna curricula students seemed resigned to failing to absorb the course materials when she argued:

I resent that we do three years of undergraduate studies and we don’t become good professional translators or interpreters. No wonder we can’t achieve a high level of professionalism in only three years. We take all the courses that our
predecessors took in their four-year program, but tightly compressed. Imagine what it is like to absorb in one semester the material which used to be spread over two semesters. We have cruised through the material. Once a chapter is over, it is never touched again. This is what I regret, because when the material extends over a longer time, something will sink in by all means. But when you rush through things, it is more difficult.

Faculty and students often raised the differences between the “Albanian” and the “foreign” Bologna system. Relatives, friends, and friends of friends served as points of reference. Bardha’s close friend’s sister was majoring in English Literature at a university in Italy. Her curriculum was totally different from the curriculum of the students in the British and American Studies program in the English Department in Albania. For others, the difference consisted more in the volume of material to be covered. Thus Diella pointed out:

Bologna system abroad is very different from ours. I have a friend who studies in Bologna, Italy, and she is not as overloaded as we are. She has the same program structure of three years for the undergraduate level of studies to be followed by two years of a master’s degree, and yet, she is not under the same pressure we are here. This is the reason why I don’t have a very good feeling about Bologna.

If we are within the chaos, we can’t change anything. The policies have to be clear, the orientation of education and schools has to be clear for everyone. We can’t fumble around without a clear orientation and without a clear destination of where we are headed. I am against experimental education. Here every year there is a new experiment going on. Endless experiments are carried out and we are constantly in an experimental stage. Every year we feel like guinea-pigs.

Students, too, referred to the cohort studying in the framework of Bologna as an “experimental” one, and considered themselves to be objects of this experiment. The difficulties associated with the reform implementation were often blamed on the “experimental stage” of the system, as were the insecurities that followed those students.

The implementation of Bologna, according to Majlinda, was doomed from the very start because the system lacked the necessary conditions for the reforms. One of those conditions, also emphasized as one of the key-elements of the HE reform in
Albania by the Ministry of Education and foreign experts, are the teaching methods.

Currently, the teacher-centered traditional methods which push facts by rote memorization instead of analytical and problem-solving skills are arguably predominant in the Albanian HE (Hagelund, 2001; Hatakenaka & Thompson, 2006), including the English Department. In order for the Bologna Process to be successful, these teaching methods should be replaced by new, modern ones. But Majlinda argued: “We have changed the curricula while we haven’t changed what should be really changed, the way we teach classes. So these new curricula are simply confusing”.

Another discrepancy in the conditions required to implement the Bologna system is the infrastructure, such as the teaching and learning facilities and equipment. This is also an issue related to the organizational aspects of the English Department in terms of the working conditions. It is worthy of studying the infrastructural terrain and how it might influence the success or lack thereof of reform in the English Department.

Regarding this issue, a faculty member claimed:

We have introduced nothing new, no modern equipment is used to teach a class. We need a flipchart to teach a lecture and we can’t get one. We look for a video projector to teach a class, and we don’t have any. One we had is broken. We have to bring the personal laptop from home to be able to teach a class as we want to. …

Vojsava contributed to the description of the situation by adding:

We don’t have the conditions to adopt the Bologna system here. This factor seems to have been overlooked when they started implementing it. This is a system that requires a lot of individual, research work, which students cannot carry out, not because they don’t want to … Students should have the opportunity, so that they who want to engage in such work can do so. However, it’s useless to ask the students to go and look up something in a certain book or other source. They won’t be able to find it. If there are six copies of a grammar book for three hundred students, for a weekly seminar, it’s physically impossible for them to get access to the book.
Several faculty members thought that the Bologna reform was not thought through in sufficient detail before implementation. One faculty member called this “the root of all problems” and went on to argue:

[Here, reform] Implementation begins before having a plan that foresees the steps of the process, in the hope that things will fall in place and problems will get solved as we go. Some problems you just can’t fix as you go. We are implementing the reform while not only students, but also professors are not sure what the next steps are. This year, the first cohort of Bologna system students will graduate with a Bachelor’s degree. It is not clear what these students will do, since there are neither programs nor teaching staff for the following academic year [for the MA program] for these students.

The issue raised by the faculty member above was confirmed by other faculty members. Vojsava shared that when students asked questions about specific facets of the Bologna system, she could not provide answers. Professors themselves had asked people who were supposed to have the information and had been told that they “will have an answer when those specific issues have been worked out, not before.” This led Vojsava to believe that “some issues are still up in the air, and details have not been worked out.”

Such details are important when students are anxious for information regarding whether they would be able to find a job with a Bachelor’s degree from the Bologna system, whether a master’s degree would be necessary and open to all, or whether it would depend on the GPA. Emphasizing that the implementation of the Bologna reform in the English Department is underway and, therefore, still unfolding, Mira explained that the job prospects of English Department graduates who have been studying in the Bologna system were not clear. She argued:

We have no experience to fall back on. This academic year, the first cohort of the students from the Bachelor cycle will graduate. I am not confident that they will have many work prospects with a diploma in English Language. It is a bit early to predict what they might do. Different voices are going around: Some say that all students who graduate with a Bachelor’s degree this year will be able to get
into the Master’s program. Others say that not all of them will be able to, and the GPA will determine who will and who won’t. It hasn’t been decided yet.

The same degree of (un)preparation held true for the Master’s programs, which were less than a year from starting at the time of these interviews. Mira who had been assigned to teach in a brand-new MA program in the area of Tourism Operators shared that the program was “still at the stage of paperwork” and that work “had not yet moved to the concrete and practical aspects of the program”.

Admittedly, Bologna was perceived as a reform with the potential to boost the quality of HE in Albania and make it comparable to the European HE. In Majlinda’s opinion, the main objective of the Bologna system is for the diplomas of the Albanian students to be equal to those of the EU student. For her this required “an increase in the quality of HE education”. She felt a heightened sense of responsibility in her job. However, lack of information, poor organizational conditions and infrastructure in the Department, and failure to “lay the ground” for the reform, as she phrased it, limited her ability to contribute. She pointed out:

I am eager to do things in a better way, to teach classes better, but I can’t. There is no teaching equipment, there are no classrooms. Bologna requires that classes not be over twenty students, whereas we have had classes with forty and sometimes fifty students. … Last year, there were no seats for all students in a class, that’s how big classes were. They don’t divide classes into smaller ones, because there aren’t enough instructors to teach all those classes. There may be students who are not having class as we speak, because there’s a shortage of teaching staff.

So while faculty members deemed nothing wrong with the Bologna Process per se, they considered its implementation faulty and appeared pessimistic about the reform results. For Majlinda,

... the Bologna system is a failure, because we don’t have the minimum conditions to implement it here. We don’t have the infrastructure. Everything has
remained as it was, only the name has changed. It’s called the Bologna system, not the traditional system, but it is the same old one.

Bardha was also hard pressed to identify any advantages of the reform in the English Department. She argued:

Personally, I don’t know what the positive aspects of the Bologna system are. I am not sure what it is that we wanted to achieve, that we could not achieve with the previous system, because it continues to be uncertain that our higher education diploma will be recognized abroad. The only thing that was insisted upon at the start of the reforms was that we would adopt the Bologna curricula and use them here for the purpose of making our Faculty’s diploma equal and therefore, valid, in Italy and other European countries. This has not been achieved yet, and there is no guarantee that it will be achieved. So why did we have to adopt [Bologna] if the diploma recognition was not achieved? Our only benefit from the implementation of Bologna and, a big success if it happened, would be precisely that. Otherwise, it is not worthy of all the changes and the great stress to which we subjected our students.

Other faculty members had a more tolerant and positive attitude to the reform.

For Teuta, although the Bologna system implied “grappling with an overload” due to the modular form of the curricula, she emphasized,

Things have changed for the better because I have noticed a higher level of involvement by everyone, leading to the qualification of the teaching staff. This is definitely an improvement and a clear sign that things have moved and are continuing to change, because we were facing a state of stagnation where everything was uniform and all was well.

Agron was willing to give the reform more time to prove itself. In his opinion, “education is a field in which you have to invest a lot and you can’t reap the fruits right away”. With an explanation of his own, Agron conveyed the sentiment of some of his colleagues in the English Department and the Minister of Education. Referring to the Foreign Language Teaching reforms undertaken in 2007 under the banner “English-speaking Albania”, Minister Pollo had forecast that their full effects would be clear in 4-5 years. In the same way, Agron argued that the results of the Bologna Reform would be
clear after a full generation of graduates had gone through them. That would also be the proper time span to thoroughly evaluate the reforms and make adjustments accordingly.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I described the new historical, socio-cultural, and educational context in which the faculty and students of the English Department at the University of Tirana have been operating after 1990. The labor and market policies that followed the overthrow of the communist regime in Albania, accompanied by the foreign policies, and the new socio-cultural trends have shaped the lives and careers of the actors of the English Department through a mixture of pressures and opportunities. The implementation of the Bologna Agreement in the English Department was the most recent major educational policy, and was also experienced as a pressure. The economic, political, socio-cultural, technological and educational forces combine to present a vast array of opportunities related to the place of English language and its speakers in the emerging context.

The faculty and students of the English Department were relevant spokespersons related to the rise of English to the status of the dominant foreign language in Albania. Their varied perspectives and life experiences add explanatory power and illustrate the notions of the place of English in the current world order. The job opportunities requiring mastery of English, which sits at the foundation of current developments, are clearly greater today than ever before. On the other hand, this is also the first time that Albania and Albanians face these new phenomena. They have responded to these processes in unique ways by negotiating the pressures and opportunities in what appears to perfectly
reflect the strategy “think globally and act locally” resulting in a unique “glocal” face of the English Department and its main actors.
Chapter 6
Organizational Conditions in the English Department

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed some of the wide-ranging pressures, both global and national, that are steering the changes taking place in the English Department at the University of Tirana. I suggested that these pressures are related to changes in the economy and the labor market, which have shifted the ways students and faculty view the employment prospects of the English Department graduates. I have also argued that the goals of the Albanian Government for the internationalization of Albania and its integration in the EU and NATO, among other regional and global organizations, have led to efforts for educating and training a competitive workforce. In this framework, transnational institutional arrangements such as Bologna Agreement have been embraced by the Government of Albania, and are being implemented in institutions of higher education around the country. Such is the case with the Bologna system which has been in the process of implementation since 2005 in the English Department. The pressures driving the Albanian higher education towards Europeanization, and its commensurate prominence of English language, have considerably shaped the work of the English Department.

In this chapter, I will discuss the organizational conditions for students and faculty of the English Department. I will suggest that the nature of academic work and its rewards has changed. The external pressures have led to high demands placed on the faculty regarding professionalism and qualifications. This is occurring at a time of ever-
increasing living standards in Albania, which can hardly be met with the faculty salaries. As a result, the faculty members take on additional jobs that take away from the time and energy they can devote to their work in the English Department. Factors affecting faculty member’s work include students poorly prepared to cope with the curricula in the English Department, large classes, shortage of classroom space, poorly-equipped laboratories and lack of computers and Internet. I will also discuss student experiences in relation to their expectations of the program, professors, and higher education in general.

I argue that the organizational conditions in the English Department are making it difficult for the faculty and students to meet expectations that are constituted by the external pressures. Stake-holders in higher education look to the faculty and students to respond to the external pressures that are pushing toward the prominence of English. The organizational conditions, however, neither support nor facilitate this process. The faculty members are expected to do more with fewer attending resources and when they do not feel ownership over the reform initiatives. Students are expected to embrace a new culture of competitiveness and high quality while the HE system fails to encourage competitiveness and occasionally rewards mediocrity. Faculty nor students are consulted or informed regarding the curricular reforms, and student feedback about their academic experience is not sought. Under these circumstances, I argue that the project of globalization of English is not a seamless linear process. Rather, it is mitigated by many factors that contribute to its fragmentary and complex nature.
English Department Faculty Composition

The English Department consists of 36 full-time faculty members and several part-time ones. The full-time faculty members teach mainly in the English Department. In addition, some of them teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the other faculties of the University of Tirana, such as the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Law, etc. The part-time faculty members teach ESP classes outside the English Department. Recently, a trend has appeared towards hiring more part-time faculty to teach ESP in an effort to cut costs.

In the last decade or so, the English Department has become younger in terms of the average age of its faculty members. Some of the older and more experienced professors have retired, others have left for more lucrative jobs in Albania or have emigrated abroad. According to the interviewed faculty, over ten full-time faculty members were hired immediately upon graduation between 1997 and 2007 to fill the vacancies created by the departing faculty as well as to respond to the increasing number of students in the English Department alone, which has reportedly more than doubled in the last ten years.

Several themes emerged when faculty and students discussed their academic work. The faculty perceived teaching and professional development to be their primary responsibilities. These were shaped by a variety of factors, such as the working conditions, the financial rewards of their job, the quality of students in the English Department, and their relations with the academic administrators, on the one hand, and with the students, on the other.
**Academic Work in the English Department**

Several faculty members outlined their responsibilities as teaching and research. They were reminded of these responsibilities at key points during the academic year. Agron recalled a statement made at a meeting at the beginning of the semester that prioritized teaching as their primary responsibility: “Every faculty member should be truly professional at teaching in the respective discipline”.

**Teaching**

Faculty members shared experiences that indicated high investment of efforts and energy into the teaching process. Teuta, for instance, was teaching two theoretical courses. She stated that both of them require intensive work on her part due to the voluminous literature and rapid developments in the discipline. Agron, Bardha, Bora, and Vojsava were also among the faculty who attached much importance to their teaching and were demanding of their performance. Drita also sounded highly invested in her teaching, particularly because of the English Language Methodology she taught in the ELT program of the Department.

She argued that the quality and preparation of the English teachers trained in the English Department plays an important role in the formation of new generations of elementary to high school students. To a great extent, these classroom teachers will determine the success or failure of the FL teaching reforms and, in turn, the project of turning Albania into an English-speaking country. English teachers’ pre-service training plays a decisive role in their ability to deliver high-quality English language teaching. To do this would require systematic changes in the preparation of new generations of English teachers. Some of the faculty members referred to considerable difficulties in
their own teaching and held their pre-service training partially responsible for those difficulties.

In the English Department, newly hired faculty members are assigned to teach ESP in different faculties of the University of Tirana for a year or longer. This allows them to get accustomed to teaching at the tertiary level. For the faculty who graduated with a diploma in English Teaching, the only diploma issued by the English Department until 2000, this period served as a gradual transition between their student-teaching practice at either the elementary or high school levels to the university teaching. This was the case for Vojsava, who taught ESP at the Faculty of Social Sciences. In addition to her pre-service training, Teuta also had some experience with teaching English to adult students. She taught ESP at the Faculty of Natural Sciences for two years before being assigned classes in the English Department.

The situation appeared more problematic in the case of the faculty who graduated with a diploma in Translation and Conference Interpreting, as in Bora’s case, or in British and American Studies, as in Agron’s and Bardha’s cases. Teaching-related subjects such as ELT methodology, pedagogy, and psychology were not offered in the curricula of these specializations. Neither was the student-teaching practice. For this reason, Agron, Bardha, and Bora who were hired upon graduation started at a disadvantage caused by a deficit in their teacher training.

Bora was proactive when confronted with the gap of teaching-related subjects in her Translation and Interpretation program. She volunteered to observe English classes for six months at a Foreign Languages Center before her graduation. This observation practice replaced the class-observation part of the student-teaching practice which was a
required course for the ELT program students. Observing classes taught by the highly experienced teachers helped Bora identify issues that arise in classroom-teaching and ways to address them. For Agron and Bardha, on the other hand, the ESP classes were their first real classroom teaching experiences. Agron considered it very valuable because during that time he started to develop his teaching philosophy based on “the other side of the desk”. He realized that teaching is not a one-way street. Much as he taught his students English, he also learned from them in other areas. Bardha also spoke fondly of that time. She worked hard to keep up with the specialized terminology of her ESP course, but she felt they were worthy efforts and a pleasant experience over-all.

In the second semester of work, both Bardha and Bora were assigned to teach highly specialized classes to advanced students in the English Department. In Bardha’s case, this assignment came because the professor who had taught the course for several years emigrated. The course was then taught for one semester by a returning professor, who then left to pursue another job abroad. The Department Head and the Section Head then assigned the class to Bardha. She was appreciative of the trust placed on her, but on the other hand, she found it difficult to teach an advanced-level class to advanced students in the British and American Studies specialization, while she had graduated less than a year before that time. “They were top-notch students and made my work pleasant, but I didn’t feel good, I didn’t feel comfortable,” recounted Bardha. It was during that semester that her insecurities about the deficiencies in her teaching training returned. In Bardha’s opinion:

It would have been better if I had started work at an elementary or high school. Even high school seemed difficult at that time, so you can imagine what it meant to teach my own peers, as it were, and very good students at that. We had no pedagogical tools.
The lack of pedagogical preparation was combined with what Bardha perceived as limitations in knowledge in the specific area she was assigned to teach. She argued:

I did not consider myself an expert in the field. My cohort was the first to go through the division of the English Department program into three different ones beginning in the 3rd year. So I only specialized in American Studies for two years. All I knew was from what I had learned as a student and from my research for the diploma thesis on the cultural encounters between American and Albanian customs. So I had read a little more regarding customs, but US government and everyday life in the USA were topics that needed a lot of work.

Without enough time for course preparation, Bardha recalled it as a stressful time in her career. But her case is not unique.

Bora was assigned to teach an advanced specialized translation course in the second semester of work in the English Department. According to her, “Graduating … [and] starting work in the same year, and being assigned to teach a course in translation to the 4th year students in the English Department is too big a morsel”. She suspected she and her colleagues were subjected to a “sink or swim” method. But the situation of risking “to sink”, which in their opinion was equal to losing face in front of their students, made them uneasy about their position. Some argued that it could have been avoided with adequate planning on the part of the academic administrators and senior staff in the Department.

Drita was one of the longer-working people in the English Department. She claimed that she had repeatedly appealed to the senior professors to invest in training and specialization for newly-hired faculty. She suggested taking them on as assistants, initiating them into the professional development process, and serving as mentors for them. Had this been done, according to Drita, the Department would not be confronted
with unexpected situations caused by the departure or retirement of some professors. One of the younger faculty members felt that the departing faculty were so well-established in their areas that, “it would take three or four of the new faculty like [her] to fill only one of those professor’s shoes.”

Vojsava was assigned to teach in the English Department, when one of the most experienced professors in the Department emigrated to Canada. She was assigned to teach the main course that he had been teaching for a long time. She recalled:

They [the Department Head and senior professors] said they assigned the course to me because they trusted I would do a good job, so I ought to consider it an honor, but I was a little hesitant, especially in the beginning, because I found no materials I could use and build on. So I used my own class notes from the university studies. Later I found other sources and different books which I used to write my own lectures.

Vojsava explained that in the English Department, courses are usually assigned to the faculty in September while classes start on October 1. The professors who are specialized in a certain area and have taught courses in their respective area of expertise are not affected by this practice. The short notice, however, presents a problem when a new course of a theoretical nature is assigned to a faculty member not specialized in the respective area. In Vojsava’s case, she pointed out:

[the Department professors] seemed to have discussed among themselves in advance and decided to assign the course to me, but nobody told me that, so that I could have had a little time to prepare for it. I had to start teaching without too much preparation, because how much could I realistically prepare in the few days before classes started? It was a strenuous effort, because I couldn’t afford to embarrass myself in front of the students.

In Teuta’s case, the course of British Literature was not assigned to her. She volunteered to teach it when the professor who had taught it for decades accepted a position in another university. She, too, ran into considerable difficulties. She recounted:
To tell you the truth, in the first three years I taught this course I didn’t feel I was as prepared as I wanted to be. There was nobody in the Department to whom I could turn for help about books and materials. I had to start writing my lectures from scratch and find materials for the seminars.

While the situation has reportedly stabilized regarding the unexpectedly vacant positions, the faculty members reported considerable efforts in mastering the knowledge in their respective disciplines. Their studies and research towards advanced degrees played a significant role in that process.

**Research**

Research leading to advanced degrees such as MA and PhD is an inseparable part of the faculty’s duties and responsibilities, in addition to teaching. This topic frequently came up in their interviews. Ilir, Drita, Mira, and Agron all emphasized the necessity of professional development, or professional qualification, as they called it, mostly in terms of post-university studies leading to MA and PhD degrees required of every faculty member. Agron pointed out that the Law on Higher Education stipulated that full-time academic staff in higher education institutions should earn their MA and PhD degrees in a 2 and 5-year time period, respectively. Failure to comply with this law would lead to termination of their academic position.

With her long experience as a faculty member in the English Department, Drita pointed out that before 1990, the qualification of the academic staff had been managed by the department. Following the change of regime in 1990, the qualification process was put on hold and did not re-start until 1994. According to Teuta who started work in the English Department in the late 90s, for a period of five or six years there was no qualification activity in the English Department. In the French Department, on the other hand, her peers had been intensively going through post-university studies, both in
Albania and abroad. In 2002-2003, the situation changed. At that time, Teuta recounted, a somewhat unexpected revival of the qualification work began. Faculty members, especially the newly-hired ones, were asked to take immediate action to jump-start their post-university studies. They experienced this process as a mixture of “incredible pressure”, “push”, and “urging and encouragement” all at the same time.

The urging and encouragement came from the Dean of the Faculty of the Foreign Languages, the English Department Head, senior professors, and academic advisors. Teuta pointed out that they had all been very willing to help. The Dean, for instance, had repeatedly offered to set up extra exam sessions so that the faculty members could take the required exams preceding the MA thesis. Drita went so far as to credit the Dean with launching the qualification process in the English Department. She pointed out that in his previous position as Department Head in another department, the Dean had successfully guided the respective faculty through the qualification process. This had not been the case with the English Department. Albeit the largest department in the Faculty of Foreign Languages in terms of faculty and students, the English Department counted only three full professors and a handful of assistant professors among 36 full-time faculty, ranking at a lower qualification rate per faculty member than some smaller departments. The Dean had recently taken it upon himself to rectify this situation.

The Head of the English Department reportedly helped the faculty navigate the bureaucratic process of paper-work and was instrumental in locating advisors outside the English Department for specialization areas of the MA and PhD candidates. In addition, some of the interviewed faculty members expressed their deep gratitude for their academic advisors’ availability and the assistance in preparing their MA theses.
The difficulties of the qualification process were the other side of the coin for many of the faculty members. For some of them, the process began at a rather inopportune time. In addition to being relatively new in their full-time faculty position, both Bardha and Bora had just started a family. Faced with what Bardha called a “take [the qualification work] or leave the job” situation, they had no other choice. They embarked in the process of advanced studies, along with no release time and their additional jobs required to keep up with living costs that have increased significantly in the last two decades.

In addition, there were other factors. One of them was the cap imposed on the Higher Education institutions by the Ministry of Education for faculty members to be admitted in the post-university studies in any given year. This constraint was combined with other factors including the unavailability of academic advisors in different areas of specialization.

A number of the faculty members who had worked in the English Department for a long time and had completed the first stage of their post-university work by 1990, had to start all over again. Such was Drita’s case. She had passed all the required exams for the degree of Candidate of Sciences – an equivalent of the current MA degree – and had already started work on her MA thesis by the time the process came to a halt in 1991. Nevertheless she was not permitted to pick up where she had left when the process restarted in 1994 because the “exams taken in the period of the Party of Labor of Albania were not considered valid”. Drita acknowledged that not only her post-university exams, but all academic work pre-1990 was highly politicized despite the discipline of study. So, for any dissertation or MA thesis to go through, the candidate had to begin with a
quotation from the writing or speeches of the First Secretary of the PLA and make a connection with the Party line. But none of the Candidate of Sciences or the Doctor of Sciences degrees was retracted on this account. Yet, Drita and other faculty members like her had to start the process of qualification anew, which resulted in greater competition for faculty Advanced Post-University Studies slots.

Further, the number of professors qualified to guide students in their MA work in the English Department was limited. One professor was allowed to guide only a certain number of students in any given year. This raised another obstacle for the faculty members in the English Department who wished to start their qualification work. This shortage of advisors meant that they had to look outside the Department. Working with advisors outside the Department appeared to be problematic in a number of ways. First, such advisors may be very qualified in their respective area of expertise, such as the Albanian Language Syntax, for instance, but not so in English. Consequently, the MA candidate needed help from other experts. Majlinda reported that some of the best known professors were “unapproachable and unavailable” to students. “The bigger the name” she argued, “the harder it is to approach the person”. In other cases, those advisors might not be fully qualified to guide the advisee in the chosen area of specialization. For this reason, Bora had lost a year’s worth of work in her doctoral studies when she had to change her thesis topic.

There were further difficulties. Bardha, for instance, wrote her MA thesis in the area of culture under the guidance of one of the best-known cultural sociologists in Albania. In addition to his expertise, he had been very helpful. Nevertheless, she ran into difficulties with framing her work to fit into either the Literature or the Language
Pedagogy track admissible for the MA work in the English Department. Finally, her MA thesis was considered valid and she received her degree. Despite her desire to continue her doctoral work along the same lines, as it is often the case, she was told that only a degree in Social Sciences, a totally different faculty from that of Foreign Languages, would qualify her for such work. For that reason, Bardha switched to an advisor in the English Department who was flexible and accommodating to her preferences and helped her preserve the general direction of her MA work.

Despite the difficulties mentioned above, all the faculty members had earned their MA degree by October 2007 and most of them were pursuing their doctoral studies. Under such circumstances, they rightly regarded the fulfillment of their first step in the qualification process a considerable success. Bardha and Teuta pointed out that had it not been for the pressure and encouragement of the academic administrators, they would not have finished their degree yet.

Some weaknesses were reported in the faculty qualification process. Teuta referred to “the campaign-style of doing things in Albania” which had extended to the area of professional qualifications. She recounted that several of her colleagues had taken multiple exams in each exam session when it had taken her six months each to take two exams in her area. In other words, she speculated that not everyone took the exams as seriously as she did. Further both she and Drita suggested that some of the MA thesis were not satisfactory in terms of quality. Drita commented that differently from the pre-1990 years, when “there was a fine academic and scientific filter” for the post-university degrees, and a thesis was approved only if it was considered necessary and “would serve a good purpose”,

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. . . now anybody can do a Master’s degree provided that they wish to, fill out the paperwork, and find an advisor. So the Master’s degree has fallen to the level of a bachelor’s degree and it is awarded even though the Master’s thesis may be rather weak. Because everybody needs a Master’s degree these days, there is pressure to approve a candidate’s Master’s program and thesis.

Nevertheless, Drita believed that in the past few years, the English Department had made good progress in terms of faculty advancements. Every faculty member had earned a minimum of an MA degree, and the overwhelming majority had been approved for their doctoral studies. This paved the way for the preparation of ten to twelve PhDs in the English Department in the next four years alone. In addition, she underlined that the new faculty members who had completed their MA degree deserved admiration because they had “fulfilled their qualification obligations alongside securing a living for themselves and their families”, which is no easy feat. While the faculty members seemed to have held their end of the bargain, they claimed that the institution had failed them by not creating any in-service development opportunities for them in or outside the country.

Qualification (in)opportunities

The majority of the interviewed faculty members emphasized the lack of qualification activities, or to borrow Hatakenaka and Thompson’s (2006) term “scholarship activities”, organized by the English Department. Asked about the number and types of seminars, workshops, conferences supporting their teaching, faculty members were hard pressed to think of any such organized for them. Majlinda pointed out that while every faculty member had tried their best to get involved in some kind of training relying on personal means, in all her years of work, “the institution has not organized any seminars about, for instance, familiarizing the faculty with modern
teaching methods, or creating the opportunity for them to observe classes in which modern teaching methods are used”.

Vojsava also considered the lack of in-service training as one of the main drawbacks of her work in the Department. She argued that in her decade-long work, she had “never been sent by the Department to an English-speaking country”.

Although the need for training in an English-speaking country was not the only kind of training the English Department faculty mentioned, it was one of their biggest perceived needs and aspirations. In Bardha’s case, it was the need to see with her own eyes the US culture she had studied. She was grateful for the help she had received through her collaboration with the US Embassy in Tirana. When the Embassy officials learned that she taught American culture in the English Department, they listed her as a contact. However she felt the need for real contacts with the US. Such an experience would help Bardha to bridge the gap between the knowledge she gets from books and other sources and the “real” American culture.

Bora, on the other hand, had been more fortunate. The TEMPUS project funded visits of faculty members from different departments of the Faculty of Foreign Languages who taught Translation and Interpretation. She spent a week observing graduate-level classes in the disciplines of translation and interpreting at the University of Westminster in London, UK.

Longer and more substantial training abroad had been constantly awarded to more qualified professors who had spent months participating in seminars and study tours in the UK, France and other EU universities. For this reason, some faculty members felt that

TEMPUS is an EU program which supports the modernization of Higher Education in the countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans, and the Mediterranean region. This activity is conducted mainly through university cooperation projects.
their only chance to specialize abroad was through personal initiative and applications for scholarships. With very few exceptions, they were only informed about such opportunities through their own personal contacts. The majority of the interviewed faculty had applied repeatedly for such scholarships, but very few had succeeded.

It was also through personal initiative that several of the faculty members with degrees un-related to teaching had managed to receive training seminars in TEFL. Both Bardha and Bora mentioned the case of a US English Teaching Fellow who had co-taught with Bardha in the English Department in 2001-2002. Upon finding out that she also had a certificate in Second Language Teaching, the new faculty members had asked her about the possibility of conducting ELT training for them. Bardha described the resulting training as the faculty members’ initiative as well as the willingness of the Teaching Fellow. She explained:

Over a 2-month period, we sat down every Friday for two hours and exchanged our experiences. The Teaching Fellow led the discussion and guided us in the theory of ELT and how our experiences fit into it. The same year, we participated in a conference held at the University of Vlora in the field of ELT, also organized by the same teacher. We were certified by the Department for the participation in these two activities. But both these cases were personal initiatives …

Against the backdrop of lack of qualification provided by the Department, the general sentiment was that such a deficit was used to scold the new faculty members for something that was not their fault. Further still, the administration appeared to have increased the requirements over the faculty versus a vacuum of opportunities. Bora, for instance, argued:

We get reminded all the time in the Department that we have no qualifications in EL pedagogy, but it’s not our fault. When we were hired, they knew of this drawback we had. It’s easy to wiggle a finger in our face. Now it’s time for the Department to do something for us to repair this situation – a graduate course or seminar or workshop or something – because I myself am not able to arrange it.
Had it been up to me, I would not still have this deficit. You see, things are required of us, but never facilitated.

Drita also appeared frustrated with this gap of in-service training in the English Department. She argued:

No matter how hard I try to learn on my own, unless a person more qualified than me helps train me, that’s not training or qualification. How effectively can I test myself if someone authorized to do so due to his qualifications does not test me? Not a single expert from outside the Department has come here to hold a training seminar or workshop with the Department faculty. No such activities have happened so far, with the exception of the three or four workshops conducted by two Fulbright professors, one in this Department, and the other at the University of E.

The Fulbright professor had taught Methodology in the ELT section of the English Department for a semester in the Spring of 2007 along with Drita and another colleague. Asked by the students who were impressed with her classes and Drita who had come to deeply admire her scholarship and teaching practice, the Fulbright professor held a series of workshops in the English Department. According to Drita, however, the participation of the faculty members in these workshops was undermined by the Department Head who seemed to have considered them a challenge to his position. In his opinion, training opportunities should be organized by the administration.

The same had been the case with a seminar on the introduction of the English Language Portfolio by members of the Council of Europe. According to Drita, faculty members from different universities, private and public, had attended the seminar, while the faculty members of English Department had been dissuaded from attending it on account of personal conflicts between the Department Head in a position to influence certain faculty members and the real or perceived organizers of such events. These conflicting attitudes put the faculty members in a dilemma and limited their professional
development possibilities. They are even more detrimental when the number of such training opportunities is limited.

**Faculty Members’ Multiple Jobs**

Faculty members in the English Department reported holding two or three jobs in addition to their academic position in the English Department. Those jobs unavoidably compete for the teachers’ time and efforts invested in their teaching and professional development. By the same token, they affected the quality of their teaching performance and research. Agron, Bardha, Bora, and Vojsava taught at one of the most reputable centers for the teaching of foreign languages. Others taught at various private foreign language schools and foundations as well as private universities. Almost all the faculty taught private English lessons.

The faculty member’s reasons for taking on multiple jobs mostly converged towards the economic constraints placed on them and their families. The salary from their work in the English Department was insufficient to keep up with the cost of living in Albania, and especially in the capital city. The high demand for English instruction meant the faculty had necessarily embraced this opportunity in an effort to sustain themselves and their families.

Agron, for instance, taught professional adults. He argued that teaching is the job he does best. Differently from his university students, those at the Center “attend[ed] English classes after a long day’s work,” thus deserving respect for their drive and eagerness to learn. Therefore, Agron used different teaching strategies for these classes. In addition to the passion he felt for teaching, he also mentioned that the payment for his
second job was attractive, especially compared to the job difficulty. The latter was another reason why he chose to add on this teaching responsibility.

Bardha taught English to young children. Like Agron, she also highlighted her enjoyment of teaching this age group and teaching in general. But she added that teaching the afternoon classes was a means to supplement her income. Teaching an additional two hours every afternoon meant that she needed to “use the night to prepare for the next day’s teaching in the Department” as well as for her doctoral work. “It would be a luxury for me to be able to survive on the salary from the English Department” argued Bardha, but this was not possible.

Bora also worked from morning until late evening, juggling three jobs. Her second job was at a Foreign Languages Center, where she has been teaching for the past seven years. In addition, she had a contract with a governmental agency for part-time translating and interpreting work. Her BA in Translation and Interpretation was directly related with the latter job, which led her to say that she did it “almost willingly”. However, she explained:

It is impossible to make ends meet in Tirana relying on the income from the English Department job alone. I am fortunate because my husband works for [a foreign foundation], so we are financially comfortable. Doing three jobs is exhausting. I start work at 8 AM, with a 2-hour lunch break, and finish teaching at 8 PM at the Lincoln Center. After going home, I have to prepare for the classes of the following day. A 24-hour day is too short for all this.

She was aware that her young age enabled her to manage all three jobs, but she shared her concern that in the future, her university teaching performance might suffer. Bora argued that if it ever came to sacrificing the quality of her university teaching, she would rather give it up altogether than neglect it.
Vojsava, like the majority of her colleagues, was involved in teaching private English lessons, translating, and interpreting. She explained that she preferred short-term part-time jobs, which gave her the flexibility to make sure that they did not interfere with her work in the Department. She considered the additional jobs taxing, but she did not allow them to threaten the quality of her primary job. As a single woman, she readily acknowledged that “these jobs are less necessary than for those who have families to support.” The extra jobs did not take time away from that she would have normally spent with a family. She argued:

If I had a family, I would not have been able to do [everything] I do now. I have chosen Saturday and Sunday for the additional jobs, but had I had a family, these two days would have gone in [its] function. As things stand now, I teach private lessons and do translation or interpretation on weekends.

Two of the interviewed faculty had taught at a private university for one semester, every Saturday and Sunday. For one of them, the weekend was the only time she could spend with her two young children. While with her other jobs she had part of the weekend to spend with them, the demanding workload left her with very little, if any, time to work on her doctoral studies.

One consequence of the heavy workload was that faculty members were driven to violate the rules. According to some, the rules prohibit public university academic staff from teaching in private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Several faculty members from the English Department had worked in private HEIs. Explaining the reasons for this arguably illegal behavior, one of the interviewees argued:

To the extent of my familiarity with the regulation, it is prohibited for a full-time faculty at a public university to teach at a private university. However [the administrators] in our Faculty are aware that we teach in private institutions and don’t object to it, because the reality speaks for itself. When it comes to making
ends meet, I am the one who has to do it. Neither the Dean, nor the Department Head, nor the policy-maker will do it for me.

Referring to the low salary from the position in the English Department, Mira maintained that the faculty members,

… definitely have to take on as many jobs as they can. They translate, interpret, teach private lessons. They are busy all day long. While working in jobs involving English has its [professional] advantages, as it leads to continuous contacts with the language, working from morning until evening takes a physical and emotional toll.

Occasionally, the emotional toll was reflected in the anxiety and despair of the faculty members when they discussed their economic situation. One of them pointed out, “I am very pessimistic. It’s time to retire. I have worked all my life and I haven’t settled down yet, financially.” Her daughter, a recent university graduate had a job right out of school, but she was not happy with it, thus probably deepening the mother’s feelings of insecurity. In addition, she had yet to buy a home of her choice, and was meanwhile living with her parents, along with her family of four. Teaching private lessons in the afternoon as well as teaching at a foreign languages foundation in Tirana, occupied most of her evenings. She was also a lecturer in the English Department of a foreign university, which paid considerably higher salaries than those of the University of Tirana. However this latter job required long hours of travel to and from the university in question, with little time for rest before teaching and a hasty return in order not to miss classes in Tirana. She translated and also interpreted at different functions. Despite all this activity, she felt that she could not afford to slow down, let alone retire.

A major theme in these interviews was the “lack of physical time” to provide high quality teaching at the University, while teaching in their second/third jobs, completing
their professional qualification requirements and still maintaining a healthy life-work balance. This workload challenge was also mentioned in some of the student interviews.

**Working Conditions**

The faculty and students of the English Department negotiate their teaching and learning in less than optimal working conditions ranging from lack of textbooks; poorly-stocked libraries; shortage of classrooms, facilities, study space for students and office space for academic staff; lack of teaching and learning media such as TVs, VCRs, OHPs, video-projectors, of functional modern laboratories, and computers connected to Internet.

**Textbooks**

Both faculty members and students commented on the shortage of textbooks and updated literature for the courses they were teaching or studying. For faculty members, securing textbooks and other teaching materials was a challenge. Bardha, for instance, used one main textbook for one of her courses. Due to an extremely limited number of textbooks for the relatively large number of students, students were forced to photocopy the original book. In addition, she occasionally assigned supplementary readings from a book she owned. Like her colleagues, however, she would not risk putting it on reserve at the library for fear of losing it. Instead, she either summarized the assigned material and put a copy of the summary on reserve at the Department library, or made a photocopy of the material and put the photocopy on reserve. Shortage of textbooks unavoidably added to the workload of the faculty members. In addition, it led to a disregard of copyright laws, which was only one of the laws, rules, and regulations violated out of necessity. Indeed, necessity seemed to prevail over law abidance.
A majority of the lecturers put a copy of their lecture on reserve at the Department library. This was a relatively new practice. Students who wished to buy a photocopy of the lecture placed an order with the librarian and picked it up when the photocopying was completed. Vojsava noted that she was one of the first faculty members in the Department who initiated this practice. “This is the main reason why I had to buy a computer at that time, so that I could type my lectures,” explained Vojsava. The financial burden of this system for faculty and students was balanced by the enhanced opportunities for teacher-student interaction during the lecture class. Vojsava herself pointed out that she switched to this practice because she considered it a waste of time to dictate the lecture to students who wrote it down, while that time could,

… be used to discuss the material, so the professor can explain and make class as interactive as possible, instead of a mere dictation that requires mechanical and tedious writing on the part of the students. If the students know that they will be able to get a copy of that lecture, they don’t need to passively write [during] the whole lecture class.

From her first-hand experience as a student, Vojsava claimed that not only was the lecture class wasted time, but sometimes she was not able to take down good notes. This was particularly the case with new vocabulary that appeared for the first time in a specific lecture. As a student, she had had to ask other students to borrow their notes hoping that they might have written down the new terms, a practice which was fraught with possibility for errors.

Students of the English Department bought course textbooks from distribution centers for books in foreign languages. Mira maintained that “Sometimes the book prices are high … determined by the free market demand [and] not subsidized by the state.” Shortage and high prices for textbooks made the publication of Ilir’s lectures a
noteworthy achievement. According to his colleague, in one of the few questionnaires organized to draw the student opinion a few years prior to this interview, students had expressed their frustration with writing down lectures in their American Literature class. They had stated their preference for a textbook as their main source of information. Based on this feedback, Ilir had decided to compile a summary of lecture materials from written sources and the Internet. The booklet came out at a very attractive price, since it was subsidized by the University Book Publishing House. It cost approximately $4, which would have been the cost of only two pages of photocopies.

Putting lectures on reserve however, had caused an unintended consequence: increased number of absences in lecture classes. Some students had taken to considering it a license to be absent from lecture classes because they already had the notes. Bora’s way to counter the undesired effect was to,

… [e]xpand, elaborate on and interpret the typed lecture notes, which are just the bare minimum of what the student needs to know in order to pass the class. This makes it necessary for the students to attend the lecture because they receive more information by attending it.

Other professors had come up with a bonus system for students who did not miss lecture classes. According to one student, this was an encouragement to attend every class, lecture and seminar. However, other students were not deterred even though there was a policy of a cut-off number for classes they could miss without risking failure. Thus Ermir had exceeded the number of absences in a Monday morning class, due to his weekend visits with his family in a town away from Tirana. The class professor “was reasonable” and “made an exception” for him by allowing him to take the final exam; as a result, he passed the class. While the student benefitted from the exception the faculty
made to the rule, he still insisted that attendance must be optional in all classes, lectures
and seminars alike.

The faculty members were highly resourceful in locating literature for their
classes and their research. Some pooled their resources and shared the books they were
able to access. Majlinda, for instance, had just acquired a book from a colleague in the
Department, which she planned to photocopy and further share with her colleagues in and
out of the Department.

In addition, they used all possible venues to access and obtain necessary
materials, including relatively new practices and opportunities such as book orders by
teaching institution, browsing new titles on the Internet and relying on relatives whose
emigrant status allowed them to locate and afford those materials. Vojsava, for instance,
after exhausting the extant literature in the Department library and the notes from her
university classes for the lectures took advantage of the book order placement at the
Foreign Languages Center where she taught in the evenings to secure the most recent
books in her discipline. Majlinda used the Internet to browse the new titles, which she
then passed along to her relatives in the United States. They, in turn, bought the books
and mailed them to her.

Ilir, however, pointed out that Internet search for new titles was not the same as
physically examining books in a bookstore or library. Often, due to ambiguous titles,
after receiving the book, faculty realized that it was not useful for their work.

Libraries

In the years immediately after 1990, the British Council (BC) set up a resource
center along with an advisor appointed by the BC in the English Department at the
Faculty of Foreign Languages. The resource center housed an open-stack library with up-to-date literature in the area of English Language teaching and learning, different disciplines such ELT Methodology, fiction etc. In addition, it provided tapes, CDs, boom-boxes fitted with tape and CD-players, a TV-VCR, as well as audio and video English teaching materials. For many years it served as one of the best furnished resource centers for the English Department faculty and students alike, as well as for people not directly related with the English Department. Currently, however, it has ceased to function. Ilir explained:

The departure of the British Council from the English Department has led to a halt in the enrichment of this library. It’s not the same as years ago, when the British Council delivered books and resources regularly. Now the center survives due to sporadic donations. The US and Canadian Embassy have donated books, but only a few titles.

Those books, however, were what faculty members often referred to as “second-hand fiction”, which at best served to keep them abreast of the developments of the English language, as Teuta pointed out, despite lack of any high artistic value.

Another source of new books were the personal donations of foreign professors who had taught in the Department. Such was the case of a Fulbright professor, who had taught ELT Methodology in the Spring 2007 and returned for a series of lectures in the Fall of 2007. Drita and Shpresa pointed out that she he added close to 30 titles to the library, for which the ELT Methodology faculty and students were very appreciative.

Otherwise, the formerly well-furnished center, which used to be full of people at all times of the day, was beyond recognition. The materials I managed to find for the purpose of compiling a couple of lectures which I was invited to give to the ELT students in the Department dated back to 1994 and 1997. Covered in dust, the books obviously
had not been used in the near past. The course professors had their personal books at home, but the students had access only to photocopies from those books.

Lack of updated resources had led to a shift of the function of the library from a resource center to a photocopy center. The only photocopy machine was operated by the librarian, limited by the duration of electrical power supply during opening hours. Power cuts often prevented the fulfillment of student photocopy orders. Students then had to borrow the lecture copy on reserve and make photocopies in the numerous service centers surrounding the Faculty of Foreign Languages. These places were powered by generators and did not suffer from power outages.

In addition, the Department Library was often used as a classroom. During that time, it was not open even to place or pick up photocopy orders. The librarian found herself in the unpleasant position between the requests of the faculty and students for access to the Library and the faculty holding classes in the library who did not want to be disturbed. Under these circumstances, complaints and frustration were frequent. Faculty and students seemed resigned to the idea that the situation would continue for as long as the Faculty and the Department administration remained the same. Only changes in the administrative levels, according to some of the interviewees, could lead to the renovation of the English Department Library to approximate the status of the once-coveted British Resource Center.

**Classroom space and study facilities**

The faculty and students in the English Department faced anomalies due to shortage of classroom space. This situation was not new. In my experience as a student in the years preceding 1990, shortage of space was accommodated by holding classes in two
distinct shifts in the existing classrooms, which was not the case with the other faculties of the University of Tirana. According to this arrangement, in a given academic year, the French and Italian departments would hold classes from 7:30 AM to 1:30 PM and the English, German, and Russian departments would have classes from 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM. The next academic year, the departments would switch, so that in the arc of four years of the university studies, students would have had two years of morning classes and two years of evening classes. In those years, power cuts were not common, since the electrical network was not overloaded with all the modern current equipment plugged into an old and overused network. For that reason and because professors and students alike had only one job, teaching and studying, respectively, and did not have other job options competing for their time and attention, evening classes were always regularly held and did not suffer any disruptions. The situation appeared different in the Fall of 2007.

As mentioned earlier, in the period after 1997, the number of students had more than doubled in the English Department alone, but the number of classrooms had increased by only a few. For this reason, the arrangement was again what had come to be known as the “first shift” i.e., the morning classes, and the “second shift” i.e., the evening classes. Despite these arrangements the class times were not clearly divided. Some of the classes for the evening students started as early as 1:00 PM and ended as late at 9:30 PM, while those for the morning students started as early as 8:00 AM and lasted as late as 4:30 PM. This required the students to spend more time in physical proximity of the Faculty building. They needed to study and complete their assignments, but lack of resources at school caused them to spend time in coffee shops and Internet cafes around
the Faculty building. “The coffee-shop” culture had become predominant among the Albanian youth.

As a result of space and service problems at the university, private enterprises mushroomed around the Faculty building, obviously catering to the needs of the students. The same was true with the faculty who tended to spend as little time as possible at a “workplace which they did not feel comfortable with” and where their work needs were not met even at minimal levels.

The organization of classes in “shifts” posed problems for students and faculty alike. Students found it taxing and inconvenient. Rudina, for instance, explained that during the academic year when her classes were held between 1:00 PM and 9:30 PM, she “did not have time either to rest or study for the following day.” Likewise, when classes extended from early morning till late afternoon with a few gaps in-between, students “did not have time to go home” because of the great distance between home and school. “If I went home” one of them explained, “I would have 30 minutes to spend there, and after that I would have to leave and come back to school for the following class.” This would lead to students’ waste of time and energy.

The other and the most important reason of these complaints, however, were the power cuts which rendered the classes after 4:00 PM next to impossible. Ilir, for instance, blamed the power cuts for “considerable losses” in terms of lectures and seminars that students should take in order to be able to sit for their exams. But neither the faculty, nor the students, nor the administrators of the Faculty of Foreign Languages seemed to have found a solution, despite their pleas with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Albanian Electrical Power Corporation. Since this appeared to be the situation with
several faculties, including those of Law, Social Sciences, and some of the faculties in the Polytechnic University of Tirana (Kurtaj, 2007), some faculties had moved to making up for the missed evening classes on Saturdays.

Regarding the evening classes, however, the use of the cell-phones as flashlight seemed to be the underlying motif of the circulating stories. According to Flutura, when the lights went out during a class in which students were doing in-class exercises, the professor asked them to take out the cell-phones and use their light to finish the exercises. Cell-phones also helped not to bump into objects or one another when they tried to find their way out of the building in the dark. Often students were said to wait in the brightly lit surrounding coffee-shops for the next class, just so that the professor could take the attendance before dismissing them. In this way, the list of missed classes increased.

Teaching and learning media

In addition to the poorly equipped library, shortage of classroom space and other teaching facilities, another issue frequently raised was the lack of modern teaching and learning media, especially the equipment that would facilitate the use of modern teaching techniques. Those methods received wide-spread attention among the students not only for their studies but also for their future profession of teaching English to the elementary and secondary education students. These methods and techniques, as many admitted, are highly advocated in the courses taught in the English Department. However, in practice, they were rarely used. Looking at the Department through the eyes of an English teacher who had taught abroad, Liri expressed her surprise that “at this day and age, the book remains the main source of information”. She commented:

Many teaching techniques could be introduced, but unfortunately, the infrastructure and the conditions we work in don’t allow for them. It’s impossible
to make a photocopy. So far, I have spent a fortune making photocopies for the classes I teach, using my own money. It’s a pity that I can’t use a computer or an overhead projector.

One of the teaching techniques often emphasized was the use of audio-visual media. Agron had a firm opinion about the use of technologies in teaching. He explained:

… a blackboard is not enough. Yes, new technology is expensive and it takes money to be able to afford it, but not everything is so terribly expensive and beyond reach. Let’s take an example. The Oxford Dictionary for Advanced Students includes a CD which you can install in your computer for the purpose of learning the word pronunciation. But you can also use a CD player. The more senses students engage in their learning, the more likely they are to enjoy it and the better they’ll understand the subject matter.

Agron pointed out that there is an essential difference between the generation of his parents and the current students. While his parents used to “listen to plays on the radio”, thus relying only on the sense of hearing, Agron’s generation participates in ways that engage more senses. Based on this rationale, he prepared and used Power Point Presentations for his classes, which he displayed on his laptop when the power permitted it. According to Agron, this is a generational difference to which one has to adjust. For him, “it means using new technology: PPT presentations, educational documentaries” and countless other programs. He mentioned the case of his colleague who was using the TV-VCR in the Department library to teach a poem by Edgar Allan Poe relying on an actor to recite the poem. According to Agron, “actually seeing someone recite the poem greatly helps you appreciate it more and, at the same time, it helps to understand it better.”

Bardha shared her experience of trying to show a video-clip about an author that she was teaching about in her American Literature class. However, showing it in the English Department appeared an adventure of sorts. Bardha explained that she was not
able to book the only room that offered the possibility of playing a video. In addition, there was a power cut during her class time.

Teuta argued that even the little equipment owned by the Faculty and the English Department was not made readily available to the faculty. She recalled the difficulties of securing an OHP for her MA thesis defense. “Asking to use the OHP is considered asking for too much. It’s almost as if the OHP is private property of the person who is in charge of the office where it is kept” explained Teuta. The difficulty extended down to the use of chalkboards. Bardha recounted:

Four years ago, when I co-taught a course with an American English Language Fellow, I was thrilled when she brought some big white sheets of paper that stuck on the wall and could be used to write on, because it was practically impossible to use the blackboard – it was so old that the writing was illegible. Those white sheets that she brought to class were a big thing, something that only I had in the whole Department.

While the old blackboards had been replaced with new chalkboards in most of the classrooms, there were still a few that were beyond the point of erasing. The media and facilities in the Faculty of Foreign Languages were inferior compared to those offered by the private institutions. Referring to the Center where she taught in the afternoon, Bardha explained:

There I can use all kinds of equipment that enable me to use the language teaching methods and techniques that I have only read about in books. I have everything I could ask for: DVDs, CD player, big cardboard sheets, in case I want to make a poster, colored pencils and stencils, since I teach young kids, [I have] really everything and anything.

Likewise, a faculty member who taught at a private HEI pointed out the differences: “There I can use computers, and here I cannot, and this is just one of the many differences”.
The interviewed students who had taken English classes at such institutions were also emphatic about the differences in terms of teaching and learning facilities and media. Dardan recalled that at the Lincoln Center,

… the conditions were very good: classes no bigger than fifteen students, neat and well-equipped classrooms, with a functional heating and cooling system and with guaranteed equipment available for every class. There was also a computer lab with many computers, where the students could stay and work after class.

Such conditions stood in stark contrast with those in the English Department where, as Shpresa pointed out,

… most of the professors who try to incorporate audio-visual methods in their classes, bring their own laptop from home. Most of the time, they end up putting the laptop on the lectern or passing it around the desks, where students huddle over it to look at the images or other materials of interest.

She explained further: “There is only one hall in the whole Faculty building which is equipped with dark curtains that allow for a clear projection of images. In the rest of the classrooms, this is impossible”.

Computers and Internet

In the discussion of the teaching and learning media, computers and Internet took center stage. Because of this centrality, they have rightly lent their name to a whole generation of people, in what Agron called “the TV and computer generation” versus “the radio generation.”

An Internet center had opened in the Faculty of Foreign Languages in 2005, for the use of both faculty and students. While appreciative, Mira pointed out that with the increasing number of students, “a single room with Internet-connected computers is not sufficient” especially given “the shortage of electricity for prolonged periods of time, which shortens the window of time when Internet can be used.” Indeed, the use of
computer and Internet re-emphasized the lack of infrastructure necessary for their use. In addition, it raised awareness of the gap between the haves and have-nots among the University students.

Vojsava’s last time to use Internet in the Faculty building had been “when the power was on and the Internet was up”, since as she explained, “there are cases when the Internet is down or it is so slow that you have to wait an hour for one single page to open.” Under these circumstances, students were unable to use the Internet provided by the university, which left them again with using Internet cafes. All of the interviewed students mentioned accessing the Internet from Internet cafes, rather than at school or at home. Dritan commented that the Faculty,

… doesn’t offer either Internet or simply computers for word processing. True, there is a computer room in the Department, with twelve computers, but it’s not functional. There may even be Internet connection in some cases, but when these facilities cannot satisfy the needs of the majority of students, they’re beyond reach.

Many commentators have pointed out the increasing amount of Internet materials in languages other than English. Statistics have shown that users of Internet in Chinese and Spanish make up 14.7% and 8.9% of the total Internet users. The users of Internet in English are currently the majority accounting for 28.9% (Internet World Stats: Internet World Users by Language). Nevertheless, the French and German Department had translated the commands in the operation systems of their computers. An English Department student complained that she could not use the computers in the computer room for the French Department, because,

… the materials are all in French. The password is in French. The staff person speaks French. I speak Albanian, she responds in French. A friend of mine who finally managed to subscribe to use the computer room said she could not turn on
the computer since all commands were in French. I study Italian as a second language, but I cannot use a computer where all the commands are in French.

Consequently this student, like most others, had resorted to the Internet cafes in the Students’ Town for research and study needs. The situation of the study materials appeared difficult to manage, as she explained:

We don’t have textbooks, so we pay to make photocopies of different materials. In addition, we use the Internet in Internet cafes for a relatively long time, because first of all, we need to locate the right information. There’s plenty of information, but it’s important to find reliable information. We could have had an Internet hall in the Department which would have made it possible for us to use Internet there to complete assignments, rather than to go and spend our money at Internet cafes.

Some faculty members believed that Internet use in the Internet cafes added to the higher education expenses, compounding the issue of the income gap between different groups of students creating a digital divide. Vojsava, for instance, maintained:

Internet café charges are somewhat high for students, at about 100 lek per hour. Then you think that students could be spending that money at a coffee shop . . . Then again, Internet connection is a service that should be offered by the university. Computers connected to Internet are not sufficient. Classes are often held in the computer rooms, so there isn’t enough time for the students to use them.

The majority of professors, however, took the Internet use by their students for granted. Agron argued that students can afford to use Internet in Internet cafes. Based on this belief, he explained, “I ask my students to write essays on particular authors, and a good number of them make use of Internet materials and different websites. Internet is now within reach, everybody can use it, and it’s not expensive”.

What was assigned to students, however, sometimes seemed to exceed their financial means as well as their skills. Shpresa, for instance, reported that in addition to assignments entailing Internet research, some professors asked the students to type their

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32 At the exchange rate of the time when the data was collected, 100 lek was equal to 1 American dollar.
assignments. “Some professors accept handwritten assignments provided that the handwriting is clear, but the majority of them require their assignments typed.” Some went as far as to require their students to e-mail the assignments to their professors, which made the typing of the assignment a necessity. As Shpresa explained:

While e-mailing the assignments is quite convenient for the professors and feasible for some students, for others it isn’t very convenient as they do not have computers at home, [they] type slowly, and that means that they will have to spend a lot of time in the Internet cafes where they use computers.

Shpresa had a computer at home, but she rarely connected to the Internet because the dial-up system she used was very slow. Most of the time, she worked in Internet cafes, where the connection was faster. Internet cafes near schools and colleges provided service at rather affordable rates, at about 50 lek an hour. Some others charged 80 lek an hours, and others 100 lek an hour. This was affordable for some students, because, as Shpresa argued:

… it depends on how fast each and everybody works. It depends on how trained students are to do research, because one needs to know how to go about it. Those who don’t know and are not used to doing research, need to spend more time working on the computer, and in these cases, the cost of using the Internet cafes piles up.

A number of the interviewed students pointed out that research skills were left to students to develop on their own. Dritan was emphatic about the lack of training in such skills and the absolute need for such training, especially since he was not studying under the Bologna system. While his successors would probably have the opportunity to receive training in the research skills due to their need to write a thesis, Dritan and some of his colleagues I interviewed were last year students. They did not have to write a diploma.

New Students
Prior to 1990, only students from the vocational high schools of foreign languages had the right to continue their studies in the Faculty of Foreign Languages. They passed through two selective filters: the first one before being admitted to study in a vocational high school of foreign languages, and the second, when they were admitted in the Faculty of Foreign Languages based on their high school achievements. The high schools of foreign languages were highly selective. By 1986, the number of such vocational schools had increased from one – in Tirana, – to four that served the four major areas of the country.

For a long period of time, the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana had been the only one of the kind. As a result, the competition among the vocational high school students was high and those who were admitted, were well-prepared to cope with the higher education curricula.

The general process of transition from secondary to tertiary education underwent changes after 1990. Before the regime overthrow, admission to the university was determined by secondary education achievements and the student’s moral and political formation, determined to a great extent by the moral and political standing of the family (parents, siblings, uncles and aunts, close cousins, spouse, children, and in-laws). Grades earned in high school topped by the grades of the Matura exam constituted the academic achievements of students. This combined with performance in productive labor and physical and military training created the revolutionary triangle at the basis of the educational process.

Every student had to submit a formal request for admission to university, and was asked to list three top choices of majors. It was not rare that the applicant was assigned a
major that not only was not one of the three preferences, but was far from any preference, talent, or skill the applicant had displayed in previous studies. Those were usually the less preferred majors, such as Geology and Mining Engineering or Electrical Engineering, which supposedly doomed the graduate to a life of work in the mines of Albania or the hydropower stations, located far from the major cities. The Faculty of Foreign Languages, in general, and the English Department were among the most preferred faculties. Only students from the vocational schools of foreign languages were considered qualified to study in that area.

In 1992, the Ministry of Education and Science established another filter for the higher education applicants. In addition to their high school achievements and the Matura exam, entrance exams were administered by each department of each Faculty for its own applicants. Therefore, the high school GPA constituted only a part of the criteria. As a result, the Faculty of Foreign Languages opened its doors to students from general high schools. Faculties felt in control of the situation, despite the various educational backgrounds of the applicants. Mira expressed her satisfaction with the new democratic spirit of this system, since higher education applicants had more control over the major they wanted to pursue.

On the other hand, the new entrance exam process allowed students to apply for more than one single faculty. Different faculties administered their entrance exams on different dates. While theoretically possible to sit for several entrance exams, the tendency was to take the entrance exams in similar areas such as Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering, for instance. Student interviews indicated that general high school students who took the entrance exam in the English
Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, also took the entrance exam at the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the Faculty of History and Philology.

Students from vocational high schools of foreign languages were confident of their performance on the entrance exam. But, as Meli indicated, they felt limited in their choice because they had focused mainly on a first and second foreign language. The reduced curriculum in Math and Sciences excluded them from the competition in other faculties. Students from the general high school had a variety of majors from which they could choose.

Further, some of the interviewed students from the general high schools indicated that the English major had not been high on their list of priorities (Shpresa, Rudina). This was true of faculty as well. Two of the interviewed faculty members indicated that their first choices had been Medicine and Journalism. Teuta had failed gaining admission at the Faculty of Medicine. She felt embarrassed to tell people that she was studying English. “What job am I going to do with a major in English?” was her main concern.

Almost all the students from general high schools admitted into the English Department reported having taken English classes in addition to those provided at school. They had studied English at reputable Foreign Language centers, schools, and foundations, in which some of the faculty members were currently teaching. Dritan and Dardan, for instance, had taken several semesters of English at the Lincoln Center. Both of them credited those classes for their successful passing of the entrance exam.

In Dritan’s case, getting into the English Department had been his only chance of pursuing higher education, since his high school GPA had been very poor due to “a deterioration period in Albanian education”. According to Dritan, the effects of this
general trend were enhanced by the “discouraging behavior of teachers, who did not teach classes regularly”. Dardan pointed out that foreign language classes were rather poorly taught in Albanian general high schools, even in the highly-regarded ones of the capital city, Tirana. Compared to the capital city, English classes were poorer in the peripheries of Albania.

In 2007, the Matura exam was revised to become the State Matura: Merit and Preference. According to guidelines for the new State Matura exams, students were to be examined on two required subjects (Math and Literature) and two subjects of their choice. Each elective subject was assigned a coefficient. In an attempt to promote the learning of English in the framework of the initiative “English-speaking Albania”, the Ministry of Education assigned the highest coefficient to English along such subjects as Physics and Chemistry. In other words, if students were to take English as one of their elective subjects and do well, they would amass the highest possible points assigned to such subjects.

At the same time, students were to indicate their preferences for a higher education major when taking the State Matura exam. Students could indicate more than three choices, and this was recommended as it would help to match the student with a preferred major when there was stiff competition. Although several students chose English as one of their two elective exams, relatively few of them intended to study in the English Department. Rather, they were making a strategic choice to collect the maximum points delivered by English in a quest to pursue their preferred major(s).

The start of the new State Matura coincided with the removal of the entrance exam from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and the majority of other faculties. This
brought about some unexpected consequences. Students who had strategically indicated
English as only one of their preferences ended up in the English Department. This caused
the Department to serve as a resort for rejects from other faculties. This attitude was
identified in some of the interviewed students. Although far-along in their studies, they
confessed that English had not been their first love. A few of them had started in the
English Department so as not to waste one year, while waiting for the next opportunity to
get into their preferred faculty. Some of them, however, changed their minds. Rudina,
who had ended up in the English Department after failing admission to the Faculty of
Law, was persuaded to stay only after she entered the Translation and Conference
Interpreting program. Shpresa, who also had aspired to a degree in Law, learned more
about the program of study in the English Department and willingly chose to go into the
ELT track.

The State Matura: Merit and Preference and the removal of the entrance exam, led
to a drastic decrease in the quality of students who entered the English Department. Thus,
Agron reported that a longitudinal study of student achievements in his classes showed a
clear decline in the recent years. Other faculty members reported the same effects,
although on a more impressionistic basis. Similar results were discussed in newspaper
editorials which presented disconcerting statistics.

According to Agron, there was a misconception that students in the English
Department would have the opportunity to learn English starting from the basics. In
reality, the curricula in the English Department are not designed for beginners. Students
who entered the English Department had to have an intermediate proficiency level to be
able to cope with the curricula. Beginners found the program difficult. They typically
failed a number of exams and it took them longer to graduate. For students who have entered the English Department for the sole reason “of escaping the periphery of Albania” where life offers them no opportunities, as Teuta claimed, this Department presents a way out. This was also the case for the students who had no interest in pursuing higher education, but had been pushed into it by their parents. Parents’ desires were in part justified by statistics confirming higher employment rate and higher income for university graduates (Hatakenaka & Thompson, 2006). But in the English Department, the reported consequences were an environment of students who “can not spell and could only say a few error-free self-introductory sentences” in English even in their 4th semester of studies. Such an environment led to lack of competition and was demoralizing for the good students, often magnified by lax standards in coursework and exams by faculty members who give in to external pressures of assigning undeserved passing grades.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the internal conditions within the English Department that define the work of the faculty members and students in this Department. I have shown that academic work changed for both groups. The external economic demands and HE policies resulted in a lot of pressure on the faculty and students alike. The faculty was required to complete advanced degrees and participate in professional activities while maintaining high teaching loads and demonstrating excellent teaching performance. In addition, they had to provide for their families with the relatively low salaries from the English Department. For this reason, they were forced to take on
additional jobs that compete for their time and efforts. The pressure on students also increased with the changes in curricula that have made their course load higher than that of their predecessors.

All this increase in demands is cast against a background of less than optimal working conditions. The data revealed that the constraints included the lack of classroom space, lack of well-stocked updated libraries and other teaching facilities, and the lack of modern teaching and learning media such as audio-visual aids, computers, and Internet. In addition, the new students in the English Department appeared to be less prepared than before, which made the work of the faculty members even harder and the learning environment for the rest of the students less stimulating and competitive.

Generally speaking, this was a typical neoliberal scene where people are asked to do more and increase their productivity with less attending resources and help from the administration.
Chapter 7

Results of Interaction Between Pressures and Conditions

Introduction

In Chapter 5, I described the pressures that have led to the dominance of English in Albania in the last two decades. I argued that these pressures arise from the historical changes that took place in Albania in 1990-1991 and were followed by shifts in economic and labor market policies, foreign policy, socio-cultural trends, and educational policies. While the common goal of these policies has been the integration of Albania in the EU and other regional and global systems, they have led to the emergence of English as the lingua franca of the century. English provides the linguistic infrastructure for the economic, political, cultural, and social developments in the country. I also argued that these pressures have largely shaped the work of the English Department at the University of Tirana by opening up a range of opportunities as well as challenges for its faculty and students.

In Chapter 6, I focused on the organizational conditions, in which the faculty and students of the English Department negotiate their academic work of teaching and learning. I argued that while the pressures on them for the realization and consolidation of the English prominence are greater than ever before, especially with the HE policies in the framework of the Bologna Agreement, the organizational conditions fall short. The faculty members indicated that they are expected to demonstrate high professionalism in their teaching and research, while their teaching load remains high, the salaries remain low, and working conditions in terms of resources leave a lot to be desired. The students
are also affected by lack of resources and a general atmosphere that fails to stimulate competitiveness and quality. Like a few faculty members, students remain largely uninformed and uncertain of the results of the English Department reforms that have been in the process of implementation for the last four years. I have argued that some of these organizational conditions often impede rather than facilitate the realization of major shifts in the work of the English Department, and, by the same token, in the dominance of English.

In this concluding chapter, I focus on the results emerging from the interaction between the broader policy pressures that have pushed towards the prominence of English, and the organizational conditions that influence the work of faculty and students in the English Department. These conditions relate to realizing the economic, political, and socio-cultural integration of the country into regional and global systems. I will suggest that the negotiation of pressures and organizational conditions has led to shifts in the perceptions of the faculty members and students’ perspectives of themselves, their involvement and role in the academic work, current and future careers, and views of their duties, responsibilities, and aspirations. They increasingly look to their counterparts in western universities in terms of standing, duties, responsibilities, rights, and working conditions of peers in HE institutions that have adopted the Bologna Agreement. I argue that both faculty and students are at the center of emerging dynamics that characterize the globalization processes in Albania and the rise of English as the dominant foreign language in the country.

This dissertation poses important implications related to Albanian HE in its efforts toward internationalization; the work of faculty members and students, as the
main actors of HE reforms; the Foreign Language education at the policy level as well as
closer to the ground, namely, the site where the future English teachers are trained. The
concluding observations I make pertain to both the Department and Faculty level as well
as the policy level to support the argument that they should work in a concerted effort for
best results.

Bologna Reform

The involvement of the Albanian Government in the Bologna Process was an
assertion of its will to embrace educational reforms that will lead to Albania’s inclusion
in the EHEA. The measures to implement the reform carried out by the academic
community demonstrated the latter’s commitment to the major goals of the Reform, with
special emphasis on the removal of barriers to the movement of HE students and
graduates in the EU and the “promotion of European citizen employability” (Bologna
Agreement, 1999). The data for this dissertation revealed mixed reviews of the adoption
of the Bologna Process, and particularly, of the way in which it was implemented in the
English Department. The faculty members and students considered it valuable in some
respects and inconvenient, at best, in others.

Goals and achievements of reform

One of the greatest perceived advantages of the adoption of the Bologna
Agreement was the resulting recognition of the Albanian HE degrees in EU and other
countries, which operate under the Bologna Agreement. Both faculty members and
students cited this as the main motivation behind the hard work necessitated by the
adoption. The faculty made preparations before the implementation of the Bologna
reform, which culminated with the designing of the new curricula for the Faculty of Foreign Languages completed in 2005, to fit the Agreement’s goals and standards. Further, the implementation of the reform called for high teaching performance as well as further professional development of faculty members toward advanced degrees. In the name of the recognition of diplomas issued by the Faculty of Foreign Language and the English Department, the faculty underwent countless hours in seminars, meetings, and workshops, for the purpose of familiarizing themselves with the goals of the Bologna Agreement, strategies for its implementation, and for designing new curricula for every section and course. In addition, they invested enormous time and energy into research work to earn MA and PhD degrees and achieve their professional advancement as teachers.

Students, as well, went through a difficult “experimental” stage, as some of them referred to the reform implementation. The reforms brought about significant changes in their academic work regarding the length of program and course load. They, too, however, were willing to overlook the difficulties in exchange for a university degree equal to that of their counterparts in the EU countries. So acute was the perceived difference between a degree recognized in Western Europe and one valid only in Albania, that, despite the challenges, one of the students who had missed the Bologna curriculum by one year, referring to students who were studying the Bologna curricula, said: “They win, we lose”.

Achieving study program transparency for the purpose of degree recognition abroad required transition to study modules, ECTS, and a diploma supplement, among other requirements. Study modules are intended to provide a measurable unit of teaching
and learning. They are measurable in terms of duration, in- and out-of-class work required of students, and learning outcomes. Thus, a degree consisting of a certain number of modules and credits is arguably the same no matter where it is earned, as long as the awarding institution has adopted the Bologna system. This makes a degree earned in an Albanian HE institution valid in any EU or non-EU country that has adopted the Bologna Agreement.

Additionally, and equally importantly, the adoption of modules facilitates the completion of one or more of them in one academic institution and their transference to another academic institution, which has also implemented the Bologna Process. The diploma supplement, published in Albanian and English, contains elaborate course descriptions and serves as an accompanying document to the HE diploma. Equipped with these documents, students ostensibly should experience no difficulties in transferring their credits from Albanian HE institutions to foreign ones operating under the Bologna Process. Students should be able to transfer their earned credits back and forth, from the HE institutions of their home countries to the Albanian ones and vice-versa, without loss of credits.

Aside from the cross-border mobility as one of the main features of the current HE internationalization trends (Knight & Altbach, 2006) and most frequently discussed by students and faculty, modules and credits were to facilitate student mobility within Albania. Students would be able to accumulate credits towards their degree completion by studying in different universities across the country, as well as in different faculties and departments within the same faculty. Studying in different faculties makes interdisciplinary degrees possible.
Interdisciplinary degrees were a novelty in Albanian education, because of rigid disciplinary boundaries upheld prior to the adoption of the Bologna Agreement. Thus, if a student decided to change majors after the first or the second year of study, the academic work conducted in the previous major would be lost, with limited exceptions, and the student would have to start anew. The previous educational system had not made provisions for interdisciplinary degrees because they were not needed. University graduates gained employment upon graduation and, more often than not, retired from the same job or even the same position.

The still unfolding economic and labor market in Albania is expected to require a workforce with an adaptable set of skills, flexibility in responding to new situations, and able to meet the emerging economic needs of the country. As Hatakenaka and Thompson (2006) maintain, such a workforce should be prepared to change jobs several times over its working life. This requires life-long learning due the rapid pace of development in all areas of life. The interdisciplinary degrees facilitated by the implementation of the Bologna reform are one of the directions for training the graduates of the future. Other curriculum innovations in the framework of the Bologna Agreement, as well, are intended to help mold a new type of higher education product.

One of the innovations was the provision of required and elective courses. The division of courses into required (core) and elective has a double function. First of all, it contributed to the re-organization of the curricula suitable for a shorter Bachelor’s degree cycle. The transition from a 4-year program to a 3-year one required adjustments in the number of courses necessary for degree completion. Required and elective courses assist in achieving that balance. Second, the offering of electives side by side with required
courses provides a flexible curriculum in which students are truly free to choose courses that appeal to their academic interests and career plans. Electives constituted a departure from the cookie cutter and rigid academic programs of the past. Several faculty members and a few students considered this revision an advantage of the reform.

The adoption of Bologna Agreement, however, had reportedly fallen short of the expected results in several aspects. The top-down approach at the reform meant that the English Department, along with the other departments and faculties of the University of Tirana, had no choice but to begin its implementation. The government had decided to adopt the Agreement, and this implementation came with a number of expectations. Topping off the list, as mentioned earlier, was the issuing of degrees equal to those of the EU HE institutions, and hence, readily recognized in the EU countries, especially in the Western ones. Such degrees hold a special attraction for Albanians because of a past characterized by isolation and the allure of advanced education and employment abroad. Failure to meet this expectation may prove a big disappointment for many of those involved. The interviewees raised several reasons why this might occur.

Failure to ensure high quality education in the process of implementing the Bologna Agreement was the main reason cited by the faculty and students. It is no coincidence that quality assurance is one of the main goals of the Bologna Agreement. Issues of quality have received special attention from its inception in 1999 and continue to be discussed in all the meetings and summits of the Bologna Process. High quality education requires new content to respond to the new format and improvements in teaching and research. In turn, the latter call for improved organizational conditions within the English Department.
Interviews with faculty members and students revealed that the so-called new courses have almost the same content as courses prior to the implementation of the Bologna Process, but compressed to fit into a shorter time. More specifically, the amount of material that used to spread over two semesters was condensed to fit into the one-semester modules. Some faculty members claimed that leftover material from the required courses was simply dumped into the electives. In view of these facts, they argued that the new curricula were little more than “repackaging of the old curricula” into a new format. As a result, the curricula according to Bologna were old wine in new bottles. They were not re-conceptualized to respond to the goals of the reform. This could potentially lead to a new façade for a higher education that is in fact an old interior. This lack of change would not only defeat the purposes of Albania’s joining the Bologna Process, but also undermine the country’s preparation and ability to meet the challenges arising from involvement in regional and global processes.

At the level of the English Department, the condensing of the previous 4-year program into 3 years had unavoidably led to an overload for the students. Both faculty and students raised this as one of the main problems with the reform. Rather than the intended goal of mobilizing the students to assume a more active role in their own education and reach higher levels of academic work similar to the EU, it had caused demoralization and anxieties. Students felt they were not able to cope with the work load sufficiently to pass their exams. A great number of students had reportedly failed exams leading to smaller graduating classes. While the Bologna reform may not be the only reason for this phenomenon, it seems to have definitely contributed to it. Those students who had passed their exams were concerned with the level of assimilating the content of
their courses. The amount of material covered in a short period of time had led to what
one student described as “cruising through it,” which did not allow for the formation of
competences and learning outcomes, emphasized by the Bologna Agreement ‘s Quality
Assurance goal, and the Dublin Descriptors (Joint Quality Initiative, 2004). Students did
not have opportunities to review the information or see how the pieces fit together. This
was further complicated by lack of clear schema for how the newly-designed courses
were related to each-other due to little active cooperation among the faculty members.
The ensuing lack of sufficient review sessions, haste to cover more information in less
time, and indiscriminate testing of major and minor issues alike had caused students to
feel anxious about their academic results and preparation for their professional lives.
Some of the students were vocal about their perceived deficiencies, and the perceived
deficiencies fed into their insecurities about being able to find “a little niche” in what
they referred to as a highly competitive labor market upon graduation.

Another major source of undermining the achievement of the Bologna Agreement
goals as reflected in the increased quality of HE educational provision was the reported
use of the same teaching methods. The predominance of whole-classroom formats and
teacher-centered approaches to teaching and learning, which occasionally led to students
being reduced to passive note-takers have been cited as a shortcoming of Albanian
education, including tertiary education. Success of the Bologna reform calls for new
teaching methods to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills. While
recognizing this need, faculty members claimed that they lacked progress in this respect.
Although some had attended professional development activities on modern teaching
methods, they were disappointed with the lack of such activities organized for them by
the Department and the Faculty. A number of the faculty members asserted that the institution had not kept its end of the bargain. While requirements and pressure on the faculty members had constantly increased, the opportunities provided to them had not. In other words, the responsibility for locating qualification opportunities had largely been shifted onto the faculty members themselves. This was in stark contrast to the pre-1990’s reality, where the institution was in total control of all kinds of resources, thus diminishing individual initiative. The new “each-to-fend-for-himself” trend that accompanied the arrival of the markets and neo-liberal ideology in Albania had met with the disenchantment of some faculty members who had expected a more gradual manner of transition.

Furthermore, the working conditions in the Department had not changed to accommodate the implementation of the reform. A new Conference Interpreting Laboratory for the Faculty of Foreign Languages was hailed as a great achievement for its usefulness for the Interpretation courses. However, it paled against the lack of infrastructure in the form of sufficient classroom space, well-stocked libraries with updated literature and textbooks, computer laboratories, video- and audio-equipment, and reasonably-sized classes. The commitment of students and teaching staff to the fulfillment of the reform goals was weakened and undermined by such working conditions. While the faculty members felt a heightened sense of responsibility, they had few means to channel new ideas into their teaching. They knew how to teach classes better and what to ask of students, yet they lacked the resources to carry their ideas into practice. They felt it was unreasonable to assign to students tasks that could not be completed due to lack of infrastructure. Students also suffered the lack of resources. The
situation had caused a variety of reactions ranging from helplessness, diffidence and pessimism about the reform, a “coffee shop culture”, where students wasted precious time instead of devoting it to academic advancement in preparation for the future, all the way to anxiety and anger. Some of the faculty and students thought they were being treated as “guinea-pigs of experiment upon experiment”. Some thought they were set up for failure, because there had been no consideration of Albania’s specific conditions when the politicians jumped on the bandwagon of the Bologna Process.

Overall, the faculty’s feeling was that the Bologna Reform was not bad in and of itself. Rather, the shortcomings were in its implementation. Some of the interviewed faculty members and all the students reported lack of sufficient information about Bologna. The faculty members were familiarized with the key aspects, but did not see how they fit together. For instance, they were aware that students received credits for their coursework, but did not know whether and how the course grade affected the credits. Further, there was lack of specific information about whether the faculty members would have to make provisions for instruction missed due to official holidays – which in Albania are numerous – and losses caused by infrastructural problems such as power cuts and shortage of classroom space. A few faculty members had been making up classes so as to reach the number of lecture and seminar classes necessary for the credits assigned to a specific course. Others did not bother to do that. In their opinion, it was not their job to arrange making up for classes that occurred on official holidays. It was anybody’s guess whether the administration bumped up the number of classes to that necessary for course credits, or full credits were assigned despite the incomplete number of lecture and seminar hours.
Unintended consequences

As mentioned above, the adoption of the Bologna Reform is associated with advantages and disadvantages. Nonetheless, the general opinion was that Albania’s involvement in the Bologna Process was an important step forward towards integration in the EU. Although timing may not have been perfect, since Albanian education lacked the infrastructure for the implementation of the reforms, the course of events could not be changed. The Bologna Process was a response to the needs of regional and global developments of the EU and beyond. The decision to join the Process irrespective of the circumstances, so as to push for the inclusion of Albanian HE in the EHEA was generally favored over the decision to sidestep it and thus be left out of the Process. Indeed, the stakes were high.

Profound as the implications for Albania’s HE were, the effects of joining the Bologna Process go much deeper. They define the future of Albania’s place in the EU and beyond in terms of the country’s economic, political, and cultural development, as well as its capacities to integrate in regional and global-scale processes. The global and regional processes, however, play out on the local arena, confirming Douglass’s argument that “all globalization is local” (2005, p. 2). In addition, Fairclough (2006) has extended this argument to the area of education by maintaining that “… re-contextualization and re-scaling in the area of higher education as in others do not follow a single pattern but vary according to the specific characteristics and circumstances of the re-contextualizing context” (p. 80). The Albanian context is very different from that of the Western European countries where the Bologna Agreement originated. Neither is it identical with the context of Eastern European countries, despite some similarities. For
this reason, the Bologna Process differed when implemented in Albania in comparison with the Western and other EU countries, confirming Fairclough’s prediction that “Outcomes of the Bologna reforms are likely to be different in different countries” (2006, p. 80). In truth, the Bologna Agreement has presented slightly different features and challenges in its implementation across different Albanian universities, faculties, and even departments.

One of the differences is the direction of the reforms. The implementation of the Bologna Process in the English Department as part of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and the University of Tirana was a top-down process, for instance, in contrast with both, the top-down and bottom-top processes the Polytechnic University used to implement the reform (Mehmeti, 2006, pp. 63-64). The largely top-down process of the Bologna Agreement implementation is not unique for Albania. In Romania, according to Fairclough (2006, p. 80), the direction of the reform was mainly top-down, “starting from the government”. The top-down direction of reforms seems to have given rise to different ways of interpretation of its specific elements, different implementation strategies, and resistance to some of its aspects at the University, Faculty, and Department level.

The debates about the structure of the first cycle of studies, i.e., the Bachelor, illustrate the different interpretations of the guidelines of the Bologna Declaration. The English Department argued that the guidelines of Bologna Agreement aimed at a common minimum of no less than three years for the Bachelor cycle. Based on this understanding and relying on the previous experience, according to which a 3-year curriculum had not yielded high results, the English Department proposed a 4-year long curriculum for the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Other instances of the Faculty
administration and some departments, however, interpreted the guideline as a fixed length of study of 3 years for the Bachelor level. Unlike the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, the administration of the Faculty of Foreign Languages was not open to different interpretations and suggestions from its component departments.

Further, the occasionally heated debates extended to the area of designing the curricula for each study program. Apparently, the Faculty administration allowed for more interpretation and granted more decision-making freedom to the specific departments in this respect. As a result, different study programs in different departments lead to Bachelor diplomas with different titles. The list of required, and especially that of elective, courses was different across departments. Finally, but not less importantly, the English Department administration reportedly was overly authoritative in the shaping of the different study programs curricula. This had caused discontentment and concern in some faculty members over the deficiencies of the English Language program.

While the length of study in the Bachelor cycle insisted upon by the administration had met with the resistance of the English Department, individual faculty members had demonstrated their resistance to the Reform by failing to re-conceptualize, i.e., re-form, their courses to fit the module format. This resistance, compounded by lack of sufficient guidance and decision-making freedom, may be among the main reasons for inadequate re-structuring of the curricula. In addition, I argue that one of the main reasons of at least some of the faculty members behind this lack of action stems from passive resistance to the curricular aspect of the reform. One of the faculty members hinted at this point when stating: “We are reluctant to leave out parts of the courses we teach for fear that students will not receive a good formation through the new curricula”.
A few faculty members whose opinions about ways of reform implementation had not been taken into consideration or had been rejected, altogether, were expectedly skeptical of the reform outcomes. Their reservations to reform bordered on opposition. Others who felt they did not have sufficient information, either because details had not yet been worked out, or because they had been left in the dark, also expressed reservations. They felt uncomfortable when students asked questions pertaining to the reform that they were not able to answer. They felt equally uncomfortable with the high stakes placed on the reform and on their work while they felt that the institution had abandoned them by leaving them to resort to their own means. This was a clear case of people who did not feel empowered by the reform, did not feel ownership over it, but were nonetheless expected to buy into it through considerable investment of time, efforts, and energy.

Likewise, the majority of students felt outsiders to the reform. Students and faculty members alike spoke of superficial student involvement. One faculty member pointed out that it is hypocritical “to ask students’ opinion” on the reform when “students have not been informed of and made familiar” with it. Another professor from the Faculty of Foreign Languages claimed that student representatives were only formally included in the work groups to design the Bologna curricula, thus making a mockery of students’ partnership in achieving the reform goals, emphasized by the materials of Bologna Process. This resulted in a situation when student cooperation was required for the success of the Bologna Process while little information and no clear expectations of the outcomes were provided. Under these circumstances, students shared their feelings of insecurity over the next stages of education and their employment perspectives.
Longer and more complex educational paths for young Albanians had started long before the Bologna Agreement, as reflected in the double degrees of some of the English Department staff members and several English Department graduates. The adoption of the Bologna Process, however, seemed to have intensified the perceived need for further education among the students of the English Department. While a Bachelor university diploma used to be sufficient educational qualification for the majority of Albanian university graduates in the past, none of the interviewed students who studied under the Bologna Agreement system expected to stop studying after gaining the Bachelor’s diploma. They were concerned that with a 3-year Bachelor’s degree, they would not be able to find a job. Indeed, most of them reported plans of pursuing a master’s degree that would secure them well-paying jobs. “Doing a job you like is good” commented one student. “But let’s be realistic: A job you like is a job that secures you a high level of well-being, and for that, you need money.” Even students who were not studying under the Bologna system were, for the most part, planning to pursue their graduate studies, preferably abroad, in an English-speaking country. One student who aspired to pursuing a Master’s degree in Public Relations said that she wanted to study in the United States and would try to find a job there after graduation. Another admitted he wanted to study International Relations preferably in the UK. With the number of countries offering his preferred program in English, the foreign language he felt most comfortable with, his only concern was a way to fund his studies abroad. Students’ eagerness and plans to further their education confirmed a faculty member’s claim that “a Bachelor’s degree in Albania has come to have the value of a high school diploma”. It seemed that the emerging competitive job market has rendered it a necessity, if not a requirement, for
young people to expand their education for a successful career thus marking a definite shift in the Albanian HE realities.

**Bologna Process and English Language**

The Bologna Reform has been adopted throughout Albanian HE. In this sense, the English Department, or the Faculty of Foreign Languages are not exceptions. The Polytechnic University was the first to embrace the reform and start its implementation. One distinction between the English Department and other Faculties as well as other departments in the Faculty of Foreign Languages is the shared centrality of English language between the Department, the Bologna Process, and the “English-speaking Albania” reform.

The Bologna Reform aims at easily comparable degrees, facilitated by modules which are transferable through ECTS. Indeed, experience has shown that academic exchanges in the framework of the Bologna Process have intensified. Thousands of exchange students involved in numerous exchange programs have studied in EU universities. However, even in this respect, the statistics show an asymmetry, with a higher number of students from Eastern Europe studying in Western European universities than vice versa. In addition to other considerations, students choose to study in universities where the language of instruction is English (De Wit, 2002; Field 2003), with the learning of English considered an added bonus to the exchange program. Even universities in countries where English is not the official language, have made it the language of instruction through offering a large number of classes in English to boost their competitive advantage in attracting foreign students. The EU places a high value on
its multicultural and multilingual policies. Indeed, one of its most popular exchange programs was LINGUA, which promoted the learning of small languages and cultures. The other exchange programs like Socrates, Erasmus, and most recently Erasmus Mundus also focus on learning about different cultures and languages. The reality, however, shows that UK and countries with programs in English attract the greatest number of students. As a result, whether intentionally or not, English language leads the academic exchange processes.

The moves of the academic staff and faculty follow largely the same patterns as those of the students. Boosted by its use in prestigious academic research, publications, and abstracting practices, as well as its role as the language of instruction, English is the most widely used language at the foundation of faculty and academic staff exchanges. Under these circumstances, the spread of English language is not a coincidence. Neither is the launching of the initiative “English-speaking Albania” right after the Conference that formulated the Master Plan for the development of Albanian HE in accordance with the needs of the time. However, the realization of this initiative is mitigated by a number of factors and circumstances.

**English-speaking Albania and Mitigating Factors**

“English-speaking Albania” began as an initiative launched by the Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Genc Pollo, in 2007. To explain the reasons for the undertaking of such an initiative, its goals, and to persuade the public about the need for English Language mastery, the initiative received considerable exposure in the Albanian media. The Minister himself appeared on TV programs and gave interviews to promote
the initiative and enlist the support of academic and non-academic circles alike. To ensure the success of the initiative, several measures were taken towards the strengthening of the teaching process, with a special focus on teachers, textbooks, and length of instruction.

To cover all of Albania with specialized teachers of English, emphasis was placed on the training of a greater number of English teachers. The opening of the English Department at the University Aleksander Moisiu in Durres was supposed to help achieve this goal. In addition, the Ministry made provisions for a salary raise for the English teachers to the level of the salaries paid to teachers of information technology. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, English and IT are two of the highest paid profiles in the teaching profession. Another important aspect for the realization of the reform was ensuring high-quality textbooks for all the levels of education beginning with the 3rd grade all the way to the 12th grade. The Ministry cleared the way for prestigious publishing houses from English-speaking countries to compete with their textbooks in the Albanian textbook market. Finally, the teaching of the English Language was extended by two years, starting at the 3rd grade, instead of the 5th grade, for a total of 10 years of pre-university instruction in foreign languages. All these measures, some commentators have argued, raised “English-speaking Albania” from the level of an initiative to that of a reform. The implementation of these measures was still in its first year during my fieldwork for this dissertation; therefore, clear results could not be expected. However, interviews with faculty and students pointed to pre-conditions and current circumstances and trends likely to render the progress and success of “English-speaking Albania” complex and dependent on multiple factors.
Based on the shared experiences of the students and faculty members and on documents gathered in the process of fieldwork, I argue that EL Teaching and Learning weaknesses have been systemic throughout the educational system. They are intricately interwoven in ways that potentially affect the level of the English mastery throughout the Albanian education, including the number and pre-service training quality of the English teachers, the foreign language textbooks, as well as the foreign languages offered in primary and secondary education. Therefore, the success of the initiative requires not only the identification of these weaknesses, but also a systematic approach of providing remedies for each of them.

As it was rightly construed by the specialists and the policy-makers, the achievement of the “English-speaking Albania” reform goals requires raising the quality of ELT. One of the primary responsibilities for high-quality ELT lies with the English teachers, existing and new. The high school English teachers of the interviewed students had, for the most part, failed to deliver high EL teaching. With few exceptions, all the interviewed students and some of the faculty members had taken English lessons in addition to those of the school curriculum. They did not deem the knowledge derived out of their school English sufficient for them to pass the English Department’s entrance exam successfully. According to a student from one of the most reputable high schools in the capital city of Albania, “The foreign language classes” including English “are poorly taught in Albanian high schools”. The interviewed students in the English Department credited their out-of-school English lessons for passing the entrance exam in the English Department.
Activities geared towards raising the professional competence of teachers, on the one hand, and incentives to raise their motivation to teach well are imperative. The salary raise would have to be accompanied by an enforceable and enforced regulation prohibiting teachers from teaching private lessons to their own students and penalties for those who violate the regulation. These measures would mobilize teachers to apply themselves in their teaching and not hold reserves for students to whom they give private lessons. Practices of indirectly pushing students into taking private lessons because of poor teaching offered in class violate the ethics of the teaching profession thus diminishing its prestige and value in the eyes of students, as one of them pointed out. They also aggravate inequalities among students, with those who can afford private lessons moving ahead, while those who cannot, practically being held back. Indeed, the data showed that special materials and instruction were reserved for students who took lessons from their own teacher for pay, while other students received only the official textbook curriculum. While private lessons enabled the majority of students to pass the English Department entrance exam, those who could not afford to take proper private lessons, resorted to free English lessons taught in churches. None of the students felt confident in the quality of the English they had learned at school. This reflects the generally low quality of ELT in Albanian high schools.

The new English teachers come from the English departments of seven public universities, including the University of Tirana, and some non-public ones. The English departments in the regional universities issue only one diploma, namely, Teacher of English for the High School, while the English Department at the University of Tirana, since 2000, has issued three diplomas: ELT, Translation and Conference Interpreting, and
British and American Studies. However, as it has become clear, the students who can avoid the ELT specialization do so. Those who lacked a competitive GPA and had fallen into the ELT program and the few who had chosen it for its robustness prior to the Bologna curricula, did not plan to work in ELT because of the comparatively low teacher salaries. Under these circumstances, only “very dedicated individuals” or those who have no other job opportunities because of low achievements or lack of high connections, go into English teaching.

Private English teaching is a big business in Albania with the numerous schools, foundations, and centers that specialize in this area. Compared to its size and the population, Albania is contributing its fair share to the millions of people involved in the business of English learning and teaching world-wide (Crystal, 1997), which so far shows no signs of slowing down. The English Department and ELT graduates would rather teach on the side, as their second or third job, and use the income to supplement their primary, non-teaching jobs. As one student pointed out, “I cannot support a family on the salary of an English teacher.” Students openly admitted that they would turn to English teaching only as their last resort. The results of such tendencies constitute another reason why the quality of English Language Teaching has generally suffered so far.

Reforming of the English Language program to focus on the communicative aspect of the language would help the realization of “English-speaking Albania”. From an isolated country, in which English was mainly used for purposes of consulting professional literature, Albania has become part of a global network of moving goods, ideas, and people, which according to Held and McGrew (2000) is an indicator of the degree of a country’s globalization. These movements necessitate mastery of all skills of
the linguistic infrastructure of the global processes. The goal of mastering the speaking and listening components of English, side by side with the reading and writing, can only be achieved if English teachers make an effort to teach the language communicatively. The success of teaching a generation of Albanians who can successfully communicate in English begins with preparing teachers well-versed and well-trained in the modern FLT methodology. This study suggests that the situation in the English Department appeared problematic in this aspect.

The interviews confirmed the Minister of Education’s estimation that “about 25-30% of those who teach English are not graduates of an English Department or even teachers by training” (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007). This has been and continues to be the case mostly in distant regions of Albania where foreign languages are either not offered at all, due to a lack of capable teachers, or they are taught by teachers not specialized in English. The latter are usually people who have passed a test of the English language administered by the English Department at the University of Tirana that concentrates on the writing and reading skills. A faculty member pointed out that teachers of other courses who are assigned to teach English have an advantage in that they have a pedagogical foundation which they can bring to teaching a foreign language. A bigger problem arises in cases when those who teach English are not teachers by training. Lack of qualified English teachers is one of the main obstacles in the way of declaring English the first required foreign language throughout Albania (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007) as a component of the “English-speaking Albania” reform.

Further, the graduates of the English Department who end up teaching English may not have specialized in ELT. While they may be specialists of Translation and
Interpreting or of British and American Studies, they have no training in the theoretical and practical aspects of English teaching. If they have not been involved in teaching while pursuing their university studies, their experience with teaching consists in their own studying. In the end, they most often rely on imitation of their own teachers. Often, the faculty members of the English Departments raised issues of deficiencies in their teaching methodology. If this is the case in the English Department, the highest and most specialized institution in the delivery of English teaching and in training the future teachers, the preparation of English teachers at other levels of education is anybody’s guess. At any rate, the need for good, worthy-of-imitation teachers notwithstanding, achieving the goals of the English language reform should not be trusted solely to the imitation skills of un-educated and un-specialized English teachers.

In addition, the ELT specialization at the University of Tirana appears to have served mostly as a reservoir program for the students who are not competent to enter another program. Both faculty and students, irrespective of their own program pointed out that some of the weakest students in the English Department study in the ELT program. This had led to a distinction between the ELT students and those of the other programs made obvious after the division of students into three specific programs. In the ELT program classes, according to one of the faculty members, teachers have to perform a monologue so as to keep the class moving; students cannot be counted on to participate in class discussions. Another faculty member went so far as to describe the students in the ELT program as people whose only motivation for pursuing their higher studies was their desire to escape the peripheries of Albania, which lack opportunities for employment or further studies after secondary education. For some others, the only reason why they are
in the University is their parents’ wish for their children to have a college diploma. In other words, it appears that the majority of the students in the ELT program of the English Department have been flushed into it for reasons that determine and speak of their preparation. However, upon graduation, these students are the future English teachers charged with the task of carrying out the ELT reform. If students are not stimulated and attracted to pursue their studies in the ELT program, the reform seems a long way from its realization.

The composition of the ELT program in terms of the preparation of students is complicated by a curriculum for the training of EL teachers in the framework of the Bologna system. According to the interviewed faculty, it is lacking in the psychological, pedagogical, and methodological aspects, unanimously regarded necessary for a good English teacher. The other two programs which issue a diploma in Translation and Interpreting and British and American Studies are supported by numerous classes in each respective discipline. The students destined to become EL teachers are issued a diploma in English Language. In the Bachelor cycle of studies, they receive no specialized training in ELT. The above-mentioned weaknesses would have to be addressed in order for the “English-speaking Albania” initiative to have a real shot at success.

**Study Implications and Conclusion**

The success of educational reforms requires a systemic approach. In other words, the success of the “English-speaking Albania” initiative cannot be achieved in isolation from the work of the English Department under investigation in this study and other English departments in other Albanian universities. Neither can it be realized separately
from the work of the HE system and the pre-university education. As this thesis has demonstrated, the preparation of high school students determines the quality of the students in the English Department. Further, the graduates of the English Department’s ELT program are the future English teachers in Albania. The training of these teachers-to-be determines to a great extent the quality of the teaching they are going to provide to their students. For this reason, a solid pre-service training program of English teachers plays a significant role in the quality of teaching of Albanian students. The latter, in turn, will be the proof of the success of ELT reform. It is clear that this chain is only as strong as each individual link, which calls for the strengthening of each of them.

The educational system is broader than the focus of this dissertation. Therefore, more research on the links within this system is needed, so as to better determine the effect they have on one-another. The following suggestions, however, address some of the issues that have arisen and been discussed in this study.

It is important for all parties involved in the reform implementation to understand the nature of change. The HE reforms cannot be expected to produce the same outcomes in Albania as they have in other countries. The faculty members and students demonstrated awareness of the constraints in which these reforms have so far taken place in terms of infrastructure and general support systems. In other words, the resources that are common-place and sometimes taken for granted in Western European countries, are limited at best, or missing altogether in Albania. In this respect, Albania shows similarities with other former communist countries of Eastern Europe like Romania, as Fairclough’s (2006) analysis demonstrates. These circumstances call for adjustments in the implementation strategies, reform goals, and expectations along the way. In itself, this
is a process that depends to a great extent on the understanding, creativity and
resourcefulness of the HE actors. The English Department faculty members and students
have proven to be highly flexible and resourceful in their academic work. They have
made the best of the circumstances in which they operate and have continuously pushed
their own limits to overcome constraints. In addition, they have demonstrated a high
tolerance for ambiguity and have placed their faith and expectations of the reform results
on their hard work.

However, resources are not the only difference. As a matter of fact, they may be
considered the smallest and the easiest-to-overcome barriers to reforms. The remnants of
the former communist regime in terms of the power structures in the society and the old
mentalities that are hard to change are the most important differences between the
Albanian context of HE and some other countries. The top-down directions of reform as
well as demonstrating an un-democratic and un-collegial way of making decisions are a
legacy of communist rule in Albania. The differences between reform implementation
strategies between Western European countries and Albania should not be a source of
despair. Rather, while aiming at high goals and standards, faculty members and students
should take pride in their significant achievements in a relatively short period of time.
The path of achieving the goals in Albania is expected to be different, longer and steeper
from that of other countries. It is due to the complex economic, political, and socio-
cultural context in which these reforms are taking place that their processes and outcomes
may be different as well as hard to predict and manage (Fairclough, 2006, p. 69).

The reform direction, decision-making processes, and work methods and ethics
warrant revision. Bologna and foreign language teaching and learning reforms require
concerted effort from all stake-holders. If stake-holders do not feel included and involved in the reform, and if their voices and contributions are not appreciated, or worse yet, are ignored or rejected, they may lose interest in the success of the reform and withdraw their contribution. On the other hand, it is important to give sufficient time to reforms before evaluating their results and making adjustments. Half-hearted attempts at reforms may be as counterproductive as frequent changes in that neither of them allows for sufficient evidence of what worked and what did not before making necessary corrective changes.

The changing and emerging context of Albanian society calls for patience and flexibility on the part of HE actors including the policy makers and the faculty members and students who grapple with the implementation and results of reforms on a daily basis.

In the framework of re-adjustments that could be required by the reform results evaluation, the newly designed curricula would benefit from an evaluation process. Depending on that evaluation and regular feedback from faculty members and students, the curricula could be shaped and re-shaped so as to serve the reform goals, an ultimate target of which are the students. This, in turn, calls for systematic studies on the further education and employment of English Department graduates. Such studies would replace the rather fragmentary and individual anecdotes about the careers of the English Departments graduates. Based on these studies, the Ministry of Education, the Faculty of Foreign Languages as well as the specific departments could review their policies with regard to the criteria and standards placed on teacher-training programs and the number of seats in the Language Teaching programs versus the Translation and Interpreting, and British and American Studies programs. Equally important, a conscientious cooperation between the Ministry of Education, on the one hand, and the Foreign Language Teaching
programs in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, on the other, would contribute immensely to the success of the FLT reforms.

If the Government intends to really attract the Albanian diaspora of intellectuals who have studied and worked abroad, then it should set in motion all its levers, down to the Faculty and Department administrations, so that the latter become receptive and responsive to expressions of interest by such intellectuals and accommodate them. Unfortunately, this was not the case with a former faculty member in the English Department, whose emigration was described as a “great loss for the Department” by a former student. After years of work abroad during which he had amassed a wealth of skills in the area of translating and interpreting legal terminology, he returned to the English Department inquiring about the possibility of teaching a course in the respective field. His inquiry fell on deaf ears, leading to discouragement of not only the individual in question, but of others who could have been planning similar offers. Likewise, the English Department could benefit from a system of incentives used to attract individuals who return to Albania after advanced degrees in world-class universities, so that they can contribute their skills to the sector of public HE instead of private universities and other smaller private sector enterprises.

This case study that focused on the English Department is a representation of globalization on the ground. While the general trend is towards internationalization of Higher Education through joining the Bologna Process, the view from the shop floor where the engines of integration and globalization turn around reveals that these processes are not smooth and unidirectional. There is not a single way to reach the destination. Rather, it seems that every country, every society, and indeed every sector
will forge its own unique path in this process which combines the traditional and the new, the local and the global. The success seems to lie with those societies which do not refuse to join the new and the modern in the name of preserving their history and tradition. The preservation of the history and the culture while embracing the new and the modern is a fine line to walk, but the rewards are well worth the effort.
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