
GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES OF VERBS IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN

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Abstract: Working with English learners for many years, gives you the opportunity to encounter linguistic obstacles that they face while learning English language as a foreign language. Additionally, teaching for 13 years and observing the learning process, it enables you to recognize the students' needs and at the same time, detect linguistic mistakes that they make, while practicing the target language. During my experience as a teacher, in terms of teaching and learning verbs in general and its grammatical categories in specific, it is noticed that Albanian learners find it relatively difficult the correct use of verbs in context and even more confusing the equivalent use of verbs in Albanian. Since verbs present an important part of speech, this study aims to investigate several differences and similarities between grammatical categories of verbs in English and Albanian. As a result, the Albanian learners of English language will be able to identify some of the major differences and similarities between the grammatical categories of verbs in English and Albanian; overcome the usual mistakes; gain the necessary knowledge regarding verbs and use them properly in English and Albanian.

Keywords: Verb, grammatical category, person, number, voice, mood, aspect, tense

INTRODUCTION

Most of the scholars and linguists agree that verbs represent an important and vital part of speech in a sentence. "Even for grammarians in the ancient world, the verb was the key word in the sentence and this view is shared by many modern grammarians" (Davidson, 2003: vii). Actually, if a sentence is formulated without a verb than the whole sentence loses meaning or produces confusion and incoherent sentence structure. Besides, verbs being significant in terms of revealing a meaning, they also play a crucial role in grammar and its features. Verbs can be elaborated in terms of verb classes and grammatical categories but our point of investigation relies on grammatical categories of verbs. Specifically, this comparative study investigates English verbs in regard to person, number, voice, mood, aspect and tense and their equivalent translation in Albanian. The actual study is based on the idea of Albanian students mistaking the grammatical categories of verbs in English with that of the Albanian language. Since verbs are commonly used in both languages and require educational approach in terms of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, it is necessary to distinguish the most important differences and similarities between grammatical categories of verbs in English and Albanian. While elaborating this study, the Foreign English learners will be exposed to a specific linguistic terminology; introduced to different grammar examples of usage and also, they will be provided with explanations that aim to enhance their understanding of grammatical categories of verbs in both languages. The final purpose of this study is to help English learners deal with obstacles that they face while mastering English verbs.

Before we investigate these linguistic issues among Albanian learners of English language as a foreign language, firstly, it is needed to define verbs and its grammatical categories. According to Davidson 2003:1, "A verb is a word that either describes an action or an event (what someone or something does) or else helps to describe a state or a condition (what someone or something is or is like)". Additionally, Demiraj 2002:259, defines "the verb as part of speech denoting an action and it has the following grammatical categories such as: number, person, voice, mood and tense", whereas Likaj & Çabej 2013:126, define "the verb as part of speech that expresses actions, processes and states given at a certain period of time". Considering the definitions above, it is obvious that verbs basically denote actions, processes, states or conditions and as it follows, there will be given some examples of English and Albanian verbs in order to help the English learners understand the function or usage of English verbs and their equivalent translation in Albanian.

1. Verbs that express **ACTIONS** – (veprime)
Play = luaj
Drink = pi
Speak = flas
2. Verbs that express **PROCESSES** – (processe)
Grow = rritem

Die = vdes

Become = bëhem

3. Verbs that express **STATES** or **CONDITIONS** – (gjendje)

Exist = ekzistoj

Sleep = fle

Suffer = vuaj

(Qesku 2000 ; Kabashi 2000:43)

Even though, there are several verb classes and other classifications, this study will only concentrate on grammatical categories of the verbs. Specifically, verbs in comparison to other parts of speech have several grammatical categories such as; number, person, voice, mood, aspect and tense.

When we refer to the number of English verbs, we mean the number of the subject in a sentence which can be in singular and plural (Kabashi, 2000:59). For example:

English

Albanian

Her mother *is* a nurse. (singular)

Nëna e saj *është* një infermiere. (njëjës)

The boys *are* here. (plural)

Djemtë *janë* këtu. (shumës)

(Davidson, 2003: 1-5)

Regarding the examples above, it is obvious that the number of the verb indicates the singularity or plurality of the subject in a sentence and it has a syntactical character. Specifically, the number of a verb in English and Albanian is realized similarly because the subject ‘her mother’ in English and ‘nëna e saj’ in Albanian are followed by a verb in singular and the subject ‘the boys’ in English and ‘djemtë’ in Albanian are followed by verbs in plural. So, verbs in English and Albanian adapt similarly to the subject in a sentence in order to determine the singularity or plurality of the subject and not the action.

Furthermore, “a person is a grammatical category of the verb that expresses the connection between the subject form and verb” (Demiraj, 2002:267). Also, there are three grammatical persons (singular and plural) in English and Albanian. For example:

English

Albanian

(singular)

(singular)

I. I *read* every day.

I. Unë *lexoj* çdo ditë.

II. You *read* every day.

II. Ti *lexon* çdo ditë.

III. He/she/it *reads* every day.

III. Ai/ajo *lexon* çdo ditë.

(plural)

(plural)

I. We *read* every day.

I. Ne *lexojmë* çdo ditë.

II. You *read* every day.

II. Ju *lexoni* çdo ditë.

III. They *read* every day.

III. Ata/ato *lexojnë* çdo ditë.

(Likaj & Çabej, 2013:133)

It is obvious from the examples above that English and Albanian language has the first, second and third person singular and plural. There is a difference in terms of the third person singular and plural between English and Albanian language. Concretely, there are three forms in the third person singular in English such as; *he/she/it* whereas in Albanian there are two forms in the third person singular such as; *ai* for *he*; *ajo* for *she* but there is not a specific pronoun for the neuter gender *it*. Also, there is a difference in the third person plural in English and Albanian language where for the third person plural *they*, there are two forms in Albanian such as *ata /ato*. Moreover, in terms of the verb *read* which when conjugated in the third person singular, we add ‘- s’ to it, while in other grammatical persons, the verb does not change or stays the same. On the other hand, the verbs in Albanian are inflected differently or take different suffixes in the first, second and third person singular and plural such as; *-j*, *-n*, *-jmë*, *-ni*, and *-jnë*.

Furthermore, according to Kabashi 2000:63, “voice is a grammatical category of the verb showing whether the subject is the doer (the one doing the action) or the ‘receiver’ (the one receiving the action). In English, there are two voices: ACTIVE and PASSIVE voice.” For example:

Active voice (English)

She opened the envelope.

Passive voice (English)

The *envelope* was opened by her.

Diateza veprore (Albanian)

Ajo hapi zarfin.

Diateza pësore (Albanian)

Zarfi u hap nga ajo.

(Davidson, 2003:208)

In terms of active voice in English and Albanian, the subject ‘she’ and ‘ajo’ are considered the doers of the action whereas in terms of passive voice, the subject ‘envelope’ and ‘zarfi’ are regarded as receivers of the action. It is necessary to mention that in terms of active and passive voice, English and Albanian verbs play the same role in a sentence. However, the main difference is that in English there are two grammatical voices whereas in Albanian there is one more besides active and passive voice such as; *diateza vetvetore*. As far as *diateza vetvetore* is concerned, it is literally translated in English as a reflexive voice. For instance:

Diateza vetvetore

Reflexive voice

Kot u munduan *të shfajësoheshin*

They carelessly tried *to justify themselves*.

Mezi *u ngrit* në këmbë

He/ she barely *stood up*.

Likaj & Çabej, 2013: 135-136)

The reflexive voice indicates that the verb is intransitive and the subject is at the same time, the doer and receiver of the action in both languages.

Mood, as one of the following grammatical categories of the verb is also very significant in terms of “indicating the attitude of the speaker towards the content of the sentence” (Kabashi, 2000:63). According to Kabashi 2000:64, there are three moods in English such as; indicative mood that indicates statements and questions; imperative mood that indicates commands and requests and subjective mood that indicates unreality, wishes, supposition and necessity. On the other hand, according to Demiraj 2002:272, there are six grammatical moods in Albanian such as: indicative, subjective, optative, imperative, conditional and admirative. As it follows, there will be given some examples regarding the three moods in English:

Indicative mood

She *comes* every day.

Imperative mood

Behave yourself!

Subjective mood

I *wish* I *were* somewhere else!

Mënyra dëftore

Ajo vjen çdo ditë.

Mënyra urdhërore

Sillu mirë!

Mënyra lidhore

Dua të isha diku tjetër!

(Davidson, 2003:67-74; Qesku, 2000:91; Longman dictionary 2001:104)

In Albanian, there are three additional moods such as: Optative (mënyra dëshirore), conditional (mënyra kushtore) and admirative (mënyra habitore) .

Mënyra dëshirore

Zoti të bekoftë!

Optative mood

God *bless* you!

Mënyra kushtore

Nëse *do të shkoj* në qytet sot pasdite,
do ta blej librin që dëshiron.

Mënyra habitore

Oh! *Shkruaka* mirë edhe ky!

Conditional mood

If I *go* into town this afternoon,
I'll buy that book you want.

Admirative mood

Wow! He *writes* well too!

(Kabashi, 2000:67 & Davidson, 2003:229 & Qesku, 2000)

Indicative, imperative and subjective mood are present in both languages. Specifically, the first three examples show that indicative mood expresses a fact; imperative mood expresses a command and subjective mood expresses a wish whereas the other three moods in Albanian show that optative mood expresses a wish; conditional mood expresses a condition and these two Albanian moods are equivalent with the subjective mood in English, whereas admirative mood expresses surprise which even though might reflect upon a certain truth, fact, or statement and might be close to indicative mood, still the element of surprise is not entirely equivalent to any other grammatical mood in English. Next, through the grammatical category of tense, it is shown the connection between the time referred by the verb and a specific period of time (Demiraj, 2002:273). The following examples will be given in present tenses or specifically, in terms of present simple tense and present continuous in English and their equivalent tense in Albanian.

Present simple tense

Tom *speaks* French and Spanish

Koha e tashme e thjeshtë

Tom *flet* frengjisht dhe spanjisht.

Present continuous tense

We *are studying* English.

Koha e tashme e thjeshtë

Po mësojmë/Jemi duke mësuar anglisht.

The grammatical category of tense in English appears to be confusing to a lot of Foreign English learners because the present simple tense and present continuous are not fully equivalent to present tenses in Albanian. The present simple tense in English is ‘timeless’ and it covers actions in the past, present and the future. Specifically, its function relies on expressing general statements or truths, habitual actions and real present (“a state of affairs that existed in the past, exists now, and is likely to continue to exist in the future Demiraj 2000:74) whereas present simple tense in Albanian - indicative mood expresses actions or states that are repeated occasionally. The sentence Tom speaks French and Spanish / Tom flet frengjisht dhe spanjisht, it is equivalently translated in Albanian but both languages do not refer to the moment of speaking whereas the sentence We are studying English / Po mësojmë /Jemi duke mësuar anglisht, refer to the moment of speaking. In fact, “the present continuous tense is translated into Albanian by present tense forms preceded by the participle PO or by the complex verb phrase JAM + a gerundive” (Kabashi, 2000:78). So, the participle PO in Albanian contributes to the progressiveness of the verb while translating or adapting present continuous tense from English to Albanian. However, in context of the grammatical category of tense in English, we will be discussing shortly the grammatical category of aspect since present continuous tense already is consisted of progressive verb forms. Before we do that, it is necessary to mention that the grammatical category of verbs in terms of aspect shows the manner in which an action is performed (as completed or in progress) and English has two aspects such as: the perfect and progressive. As it follows, there is an example in progressive aspect:

Present progressive: I *am standing* on the path.

Koha e tashme e thjeshtë: *Jam duke qëndruar* në rrugë.

This example refers to someone standing on the path at a definite moment or period of time and it is referred to as an action in a progressive aspect.

CONCLUSION

So, this comparative study reveals several similarities and differences between English and Albanian, in terms of grammatical categories of verbs. Firstly, it is concluded that English and Albanian adapt similarly to the subject in a sentence because both languages are inclined towards determining the singularity or plurality of the subject and not of the action. Secondly, in terms of the grammatical category of person, English verbs take ‘-s’ when conjugated in

the third person singular, while in other grammatical persons, the verb does not change or stays the same. On the other hand, the verbs in Albanian are inflected differently or take different suffixes in the first, second and third person singular and plural such as; *-j*, *-n*, *-jmë*, *-ni*, and *-jnë*. Next, regarding grammatical voices, the main difference is that in English there are two grammatical voices whereas in Albanian there is one more besides active and passive voice such as; *diateza vetvetore*. Moreover, there are three grammatical moods in English such as; indicative, imperative and subjective mood. However, there are six grammatical moods in Albanian such as: indicative, subjective, optative, imperative, conditional and admirative from which optative and conditional mood express a condition and are equivalent with the subjective mood in English, whereas admirative mood expresses surprise and is close to indicative mood but is not entirely equivalent to any other grammatical mood in English. Furthermore, the grammatical category of tense in English (present simple and present continuous tense) appears to be confusing to a lot of Albanian learners because those tenses are not fully equivalent to present tenses in Albanian. In fact, “the present continuous tense is translated into Albanian by present tense forms preceded by the participle PO or by the complex verb phrase JAM + a gerundive” (Kabashi, 2000:78). Finally, the grammatical category of aspect is consisted of progressive verb forms in English and are translated into Albanian by present tense forms preceded by the participle PO or by verb phrase JAM + a gerundive. The results of this study will help foreign learners to recognize and master the most obvious differences between English and Albanian verbs whereas, the language teachers will be provided with examples and teaching perspective on how to deal with students who find it difficult to sense linguistic differences between the two languages.

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