

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NOUNS IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN

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**Abstract:** It is widely known that parts of speech present an essential aspect of language learning. In other words, before you learn a foreign language, it is required to understand and master parts of speech in your mother tongue. Moreover, in terms of building communicative proficiency and developing writing styles in English language, a student needs to use correctly parts of speech at morphological, syntactic and lexical level. Considering the fact that nouns are more present than other parts of speech in most of the verbal communication, textbooks, fiction and storytelling books, it is necessary to investigate their types and grammatical categories, in order to help foreign students not to be influenced by their mother tongue and at the same time, not to apply negative transfer while learning a foreign language. In this regard, working as an English teacher for many years, I have encountered many learning situations where Albanian students are using English nouns in a wrong way because they are being influenced by their mother tongue. As a result, the following study will investigate or compare English nouns to Albanian nouns with the intention to emphasize some similarities and differences in terms of types of noun and number as a grammatical category. The differences found in this actual study will help Albanian students to master nouns correctly in both languages.

**Keywords:** English nouns, Albanian nouns, types of noun, number

### INTRODUCTION

Initially, it is known among linguists and ELT researchers that nouns present an essential part in language learning. Especially, it is claimed that “knowing the definition of this basic part of speech only gets us so far” or that English-language teachers always agreed that teaching the definitions of the parts of speech is an essential in terms of mastering grammar” (Pennington, 2010). Basically, a noun is recognized as a part of speech that names a man, creature, thing, or thought but in a broadest sense, it reflects upon concrete and abstract topics that encourage communication among speakers (Demiraj, 2002:81). Nevertheless, a noun is considered important because it gives a meaning to a sentence and adds more to the text by incorporating the effect of coherence at morphological and syntactic level. In other words, we can say that “nouns create a special kind of cohesion in a sentence (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:274). Moreover, the relevance of learning nouns can be seen even among young English-speaking children who acquire nouns first while learning the mother tongue. In other words, it is said that their lexicon is dominated by nouns (e.g., Fenson et al., 1994; Goldin-Meadow, Seligman, & Gelman, 1976). Even more, nouns can be found more than verbs in textbooks and other materials such as; school subjects, fiction; and storytelling books that I have been teaching with for 13 years with my students. Nevertheless, if a noun is acquired properly than it encourages correct spelling or capitalization while reading, writing or speaking (Wilcox, 1919). According to Baker (2004:95), “nouns and only nouns have criteria of identity” and as such, many foreign linguists and researchers have done a lot of studies so they can cover every aspect of nouns in terms of morphology, syntax, semantics, and ELT but not many of them have done comparative studies of English and Albanian nouns. However, Albanian learners find it difficult to learn English nouns without comparing them to Albanian nouns. Teaching Albanian students for 13 years, it has been noticed that they unconsciously apply the negative language transfer and produce incorrect sentences in English without anticipating that English and Albanian languages besides sharing several similarities, they also share several differences in terms of nouns. In order for Albanian students to develop writing styles and at the same time, be able to produce coherent communicative skills, they need to be aware of differences that divide English nouns from Albanian nouns. For further studies, concerning differences between English and Albanian nouns, there should also be ESL and EFL programs that will promote language learning and provide the students with proper material and activities that will guide them on how to overcome acquisition challenges while learning English nouns.

However, in order to compare English language to Albanian and emphasize some similarities and differences in terms of nouns, it is necessary to define and elaborate this part of speech from different linguistic angles. The

following comparative study will concentrate on several grammatical aspects of noun classes such as; noun types and number. In order to explain clearly the differences between English and Albanian nouns, it is necessary to describe theoretically noun types in both languages and in parallel to stress out several noun differences in both languages. Mainly, all nouns fall into two main types. According to Kabashi (2000:166), the following diagram shows the different types of nouns and their relationship:

**Nouns** : ----- **proper**: Britain, Paris, Andrew

----- **common**: ----- **countable** : ----- **concrete**: book, girl, army  
----- **abstract**: an idea, a remark

---- **uncountable**: ----- **concrete**: suger, milk, gold  
----- **abstract**: love, hope, courage

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These classes of nouns are also present in Albanian too. For instance: proper nouns are translated as ‘*emra të përveçëm*’ in Albanian whereas common nouns are translated as ‘*emra të përgjithshëm*’. In addition, under common nouns there are countable and uncountable nouns which in Albanian are translated as ‘*emra të numërueshëm*’ dhe ‘*të panumërueshëm*’. In terms of countable and uncountable nouns there are also concrete and abstract nouns in Albanian too which are translated as ‘*konkrete*’ and ‘*abstrakte*’. As it follows, there will be shown some examples of Albanian nouns that fall under the same English noun classes:

**Emra të përveçëm** : *Vjollcë, Drin, Shqipëri* - (specific people, places, countries)

**Emra të përgjithshëm**: *ujk* - wolf, *nxënës* - pupil, *fletore* - notebook

**Emra të numërueshëm**: *libër* - book, *shkollë* - school, *qytet* - city

**Emra të panumërueshëm**: *qumësht* - milk, *alkool* - alcohol, *grurë* - corn

**Emra konkretë** : *shtëpi* - a house, *mal* - a mountain, *lope* - a cow

**Emra abstraktë**: *liri* - freedom, *durim* - patience, *dyshim* - doubt

(Demiraj, 2002:81-105)

Considering the diagram above, we can say that noun classes in English are almost the same to noun classes in Albanian language. However, there is a slight difference when it comes to a certain noun class which is present in Albanian but it is not in English. Specifically, Albanian nouns falling under the following noun classes are also present in English but they fall under other noun classes. Concretely, this particular noun class in Albanian is divided into ‘*emrat frymorë*’ dhe ‘*jofrymorë*’ which cannot be translated equivalently in English. It is said ‘*emrat frymorë*’ for nouns that are used for living beings such as: *vëlla* - brother, *nip* - nephew, *vajzë* - daughter, *pulë* - chicken, *kale* - horse (Demiraj, 2002:91) whereas ‘*emrat jofrymorë*’ are nouns that are used for non-living stuff such as; *top* - ball, *veturë* - car, *bottle* - shishe and so forth (Kabashi, 2000: 168).

In addition, we will be discussing some similarities and differences of English and Albanian nouns, in terms of number as a grammatical category. In regard to this, there are two numbers in English and Albanian. A noun is singular or SINGULAR denotes ‘one’ and the PLURAL denotes ‘more than one’ (Kabashi, 2000:169).

According to Demiraj (2002:94), a noun in Albanian language is considered singular (njëjës) if it denotes one person or one thing whereas a noun is considered plural (shumës) if it denotes several people or things. For example:

<b>Albanian nouns</b>		<b>English nouns</b>	
(singular)	(plural)	(singular)	(plural)
libër	- libra	a book	- books
student	- studentë	a student	- students
mal	- male	a mountain	- mountains
fushë	- fusha	a field	- fields

As you can see from the examples above, it is obvious that English and Albanian nouns take suffixes in plural but they take different suffixes. In English, nouns take suffixes such as: ‘-s’ (dog-dogs) and ‘-es’ (box-boxes) while in Albanian, they take suffixes such as: ‘-e’ (qytet-qytete), ‘-a’ (pulë-pula), ‘-ë’ (arsimtar-arsimtarë), ‘-nj’ (thua-thonj),

‘-enj’ ( lumë-lumenj), ‘-inj (gjarpër-gjarpërinj), and ‘-ra’ (bar-barëra) (Demiraj, 2002: 98-104; Tomson &Martinet, 1985: 25).

However, these nouns are considered as nouns with regular plurals whereas as it follows we will investigate some invariable nouns and their plurals in both languages with the intention to spot some similarities and differences. According to Kabashi (2000:184), “a number of English non-countable nouns do not change their form, some of them are always singular and take a singular verb, and some are plural and take a plural verb”. In terms of invariable nouns there are two types:

**Invariable nouns:**

**Singular invariable nouns:** ice – ( akull ) , chalk- (shkumës), coal – (thëngjill)

**Plural invariable nouns:**

- Invariable marked plurals: scissors –(gërshërë), trousers – (pantallona)

- Invariable unmarked plurals: vermin –(parazitë), cattle - (bagëti)

(Kabashi, 2000:184-187& Thomson & Martinet, 1985:26)

In regard to invariable marked and unmarked plurals in English and Albanian, nouns do not change and are always plural. For example, English nouns like: *scissors* /gërshërë-t and *trousers* / pantallona-t, *vermin* / parazitë and *cattle*/ bagëti, are always plural in English and Albanian too. On the other hand, if we consider singular invariable nouns in English such as; ice, chalk and coal, and compare them to the same nouns in Albanian, we can say that these nouns are always singular in English whereas in Albanian, they have a singular and plural form. This can be noticed in the following examples:

**English non-countable  
(singular)**

**Albanian countable  
(singular / plural)**

ice

akull/akuj

chalk

shkumës/shkumësa

coal

thëngjill/thëngjij

Besides these examples, Albanian language differs in other noun cases too. As it follows, there are some other cases where countable and uncountable nouns in English and Albanian do not coincide (Kabashi, 2000:188):

**English non-countable  
(singular)**

**Albanian countable  
(plural)**

News

lajm/lajme

Advice

këshillë/këshilla

Progress

përparim/përparime

Research

kërkim/kërkime

Rubbish

pleh/plehra

Information

informatë/informata

Evidence

evidence/evidenca

(Thomson & Martinet, 1985:28)

**CONCLUSION**

Considering the fact that there are so many nouns in English and Albanian, it is impossible to cover all aspects of nouns in terms of types and grammatical categories. The purpose of this study was to point out several major and obvious differences between nouns in English and Albanian with the intention to guide the Albanian students in learning English language correctly and overcome the typical language obstacles. Through this linguistic research, the analysis showed that there are two additional types of noun in Albanian that have no equivalent in English such as; ‘emra frymorë’ dhe ‘jofrymorë’. Besides, it is evident that there are also several English nouns that do not coincide with Albanian nouns in terms of countable and uncountable aspect. By pointing these linguistic differences, Albanian students will have the opportunity to identify these differences and overcome language negative transfer while using nouns in spoken and written form. Even more, this study will help ESL/EFL teachers to prepare adequate materials and activities that will test linguistic difficulties among ESL/EFL students in terms of noun use.

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