

A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN

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Abstract: It is generally known that adjectives play a significant role in sentence structure in English and Albanian. Without adjectives, we cannot show the qualities of people and things. In other words, their function and proper use reveal the descriptive aspects of nouns in a sentence. Besides describing people and things, the adjectives make sentences sound more vivid, interesting and at the same time, they pose influential effect upon the meaning of the sentences. Considering that adjectives present an essential linguistic and stylistic role in a sentence, this study aims to realize a contrastive analysis of English and Albanian and expose similarities and differences these two languages share in terms of adjective use. Beside this, our focus is also to identify the most common problems foreign students face while using adjectives in learning English language as a foreign language. The research involved 50 students from the English department at State University of Tetova, Republic of Macedonia. In addition, the instrument used in this study was a test of 25 items and it was given to the first year English students that learn English language as a foreign language. The actual test provided us with the required results and enabled us to answer the three research questions posed in this study which relate to characteristics; similarities and differences in English and Albanian and problems that foreign English students face while using adjectives. Thus, the overall results gained from this study, stressed a high level of problematic aspects that foreign students face while using English adjectives in a sentence and when contrastive analysis approach was applied in this test, there were also some main similarities and differences between English and Albanian adjectives.

Keywords: English adjectives, Albanian adjectives, foreign language, common linguistic problems

INTRODUCTION

Most of the linguists emphasize that adjectives describe our opinions and attitudes in a very expressive way. Also, they can describe physical and other qualities too. In this regard, if we consider an adjective in isolation, it is difficult to recognize its meaning and function but when the adjective comes before a noun such as: a short dress – alb. fustan i shkurtër or a young girl – alb. vajzë e re (Iseni, 2006), it is obvious that the adjectives modify the nouns. Specifically, the adjective short shows the size of the dress whereas the adjective young shows the physical quality of the girl. According to Kabashi (2000), “Adjectives in present-day English have the same form no matter whether they refer to people or things in the singular or plural, masculine or feminine. They do not agree with their noun in number and gender”. On the other hand, adjectives in Albanian show the gender, case and number when they modify nouns in a sentence (Zeqiri, 2000). These differences can be seen in the following examples:

Compare the sentences in English and Albanian:

He is young.	‘Ai është i ri’
She is young.	‘Ajo është e re’
They are young.	‘Ata janë të rinj/reja’
to the young girl.	‘vajzës së re’
to the young boy.	‘djalit të ri’ (Kabashi, 2000:286)

Considering the examples above, it is clear that the adjective young in English does not change the form in relation to other word classes whereas the same adjective in Albanian changes when is preceded by the adjectival articles such as; i, e, të, and së.

Moreover, adjectives in English and Albanian have attributive and predicative use. In other words, attributive adjectives in English refer to adjectives that come before their nouns whereas predicative adjectives in English come after the verbs (Thomson & Martinet, 1986:33). In contrast, attributive adjectives in Albanian come after the nouns whereas predicative adjectives come after the verbs. This linguistic process can better be seen in the following examples:

ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN

a rich man	njeri i pasur (Thomson & Martinet, 1986:33)
a happy girl	vajzë e lumtur (Thomson & Martinet, 1986:33)

Predicative adjectives in English and Albanian

Ann seems happy.

Ana duket e lumtur. (Thomson & Martinet, 1986:34)

The idea sounds interesting.

Ideja tingëllon interesante. (Thomson & Martinet, 1986:34)

If we compare English adjectives to Albanian adjectives in terms of attributive use, it is obvious that the adjective in English comes before the noun whereas in Albanian, it comes after the noun. However, in terms of predicative use, adjectives in English and Albanian come after the nouns or the verbs. So, in the second situation, both English and Albanian adjectives come after the verb in a sentence.

Regarding the fact that adjectives are the largest word class in English after nouns and verbs, it is significant to mention their characteristics that go together with nouns (Kabashi, 2000:286). The most important characteristics of adjectives refer to:

Quality:	a beautiful woman	grua e bukur
Size:	a tall man	njeri i gjatë
Age:	a new book	libër i ri
Temperature:	a cold day	ditë e ftohtë
Shape:	a round table	tryezë e rumbullakët
Colour:	a white house	shtëpi e bardhë
Origin:	an American film	film amerikan (Kabashi, 2000:286)

Considering the examples above, it is clear that English and Albanian adjectives share almost the same characteristics but in terms of translation, Albanian adjectives come after the nouns and are preceded by zero adjectival articles or by adjectival articles such as: *e*, and *i*.

METHODOLOGY

The following study was conducted to determine or recognize the common problems Albanian student face while learning English adjectives at University level. Concretely, there were tested 50 Albanian students who study English language and literature at State University of Tetova. The instrument used for this purpose was a test of 25 items which aimed to reveal the usual obstacles foreign students face while dealing with adjectives in terms of identifying them; formulate derivative adjectives; rearranging adjectives in a sentence; using quantitative adjectives properly and forming adjectives at comparative and superlative level. It is important to mention that the test of 25 items is based on the test of 100 items written by Adelabu (2014). However, the tables below will provide answers for the following two research questions such as;

What problems Albanian students face while learning English adjectives?

What are the differences and similarities between English and Albanian adjectives?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented in 5 tables. Each table quantifies correct and wrong answers in percentage.

Table 1. Identification of adjectives. (Part A)

Test item	Total expected responses	Correct responses		Wrong responses	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	50	20	40	30	60
2	50	10	20	40	80
3	50	15	30	35	70
4	50	25	50	25	50
5	50	24	48	26	52

Regarding the first table, the students were expected to identify the necessary adjectives in a text, by underlining them. There were included different types of adjectives. Most of the students or 62, 4 % of the students were not able to identify the adjectives within a text whereas 37, 6 % of the students were able to identify the adjectives correctly. So, majority of the students instead of underlining adjectives, they have underlined the nouns. Those students, who have mistaken nouns for adjectives, might be as a result of L1 interfering L2 since in Albanian, adjectives come after the nouns whereas in English adjectives come before nouns.

Table 2. Derivative adjectives (Part B)

Test item	Total expected responses	Correct responses		Wrong responses	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	50	13	26	37	74
2	50	18	36	32	64
3	50	19	38	31	62
4	50	14	28	36	72
5	50	25	50	25	50

The results of the second table, openly explains the fact that 35, 6% of the students have answered correctly, in terms of using suffixes properly at the end of an adjective whereas 64,4 % have answered wrongly. Considering the results, it can be said that 1st year English students have obstacles when it comes to adding suffixes to adjectives.

Table 3. Rearranging adjectives in a sentence (Part C)

Test item	Total expected responses	Correct responses		Wrong responses	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	50	40	80	10	20
2	50	45	90	5	10
3	50	47	94	3	6
4	50	42	84	8	16
5	50	41	82	9	18

The results of the third table show obviously that 86% of the students know the position of adjectives in a sentence. On the other hand, 14% of the students have responded wrongly in terms of rearranging adjectives in a sentence. It is known that adjectives in Albanian language do not follow the same pattern or word order as adjectives in English language.

Table 4. Quantitative adjectives (Part D)

Test item	Total expected responses	Correct responses		Wrong responses	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	50	10	20	40	80
2	50	10	20	40	80
3	50	15	30	35	70
4	50	21	42	29	58
5	50	23	46	27	54

The results showed in the 4th table, stresses that 68 % of the students have answered wrongly whereas 31, 5 % of the students have responded correctly. In this regard, most of the students have misused adjectives like *many* and *much*. Usually Albanian students put ‘many’ in front of uncountable nouns or ‘much’ in front of countable nouns.

Table 5. Comparative and superlative adjectives (Part D)

Test item	Total expected responses	Correct responses		Wrong responses	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	50	23	46	27	54
2	50	33	66	17	34
3	50	15	30	35	70
4	50	21	42	29	58
5	50	28	56	22	44

The results from this table show that 52 % of the students have answered wrongly whereas 48 % of the students have answered correctly. Half of the students have made a lot of mistakes while using comparative and superlative adjectives. The students who have responded wrongly, it is not about not knowing comparative and superlative adjectives but is about students doing a lot of spelling mistakes while putting the positive form of adjectives into comparative or superlative form.

CONCLUSION

Considering the overall results, it is concluded that most of the students have difficulties in identifying adjectives in context. Also, most of the Albanian students who learn English language as a foreign language are not satisfactory prepared to use properly all the typical suffixes for adjectives. Furthermore, they find it difficult to determine rather ‘many’ or ‘much’ are used before countable or uncountable nouns. In terms of comparative and superlative adjectives, most of the student lack spelling skills or make spelling mistakes when it comes to formulating adjectives at comparative or superlative level. On the other hand, the majority of the students answered correctly when it came to rearranging adjectives and figuring out the proper position of the adjective in a sentence.

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