

A Contrastive Analysis of English Negation and its Albanian Correspondents- A research conducted in a high school in Gostivar, Macedonia

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Abstract

This research analyzes the structural differences and similarities between different kinds of English negation and their Albanian correspondents. These dissimilarities and similarities are regarded as one of the causes of difficulties that the Albanian EFL classroom learners may encounter while learning the different types of English negation. With an effort to raise teachers' awareness of possible errors that Albanian EFL learners may produce when acquiring different negative forms, the language transfer is noticed. Therefore, Odlin (1989) clearly notes that language transfer plays an important role in second language acquisition.

The contrastive analysis has been carried out on the data on English negation collected from fictional discourse and their translation correspondents into Albanian. In addition, the study also involves the error analysis of a test given to 80 Albanian speaking students of "Pançe Popovski" high school in Gostivar, in the year 2012.

The results obtained from the error analysis (Cowan, 2008) reflect on the difficulty of learning that EFL Albanian learners encounter while acquiring certain English negative forms.

Key words: contrastive analysis, second language acquisition, negative transfer, error analysis

Study Background

Teaching and learning a foreign language is quite often difficult for both teachers and learners. However, an EFL teacher would try to find more effective teaching methods by considering both the differences and similarities between the language and culture in contact. When looking at the studies conducted in contrastive analysis until the late 1960s, many important scholars (e.g., Jespersen 1912, Palmer 1917, and Fries 1945) had accepted the idea that the L1 could have a great influence on second language acquisition (Odlin, 1989). The claim made about L1 influence was disputed by some other scholars. In other words, some scholars such as Dulay, Burt and Krashen believed that L1 does not

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determine the learner's language performance. The failure or success achieved in second language acquisition is also influenced by other factors. However, Odlin (1989) clearly notes that language transfer plays an important role in second language acquisition.

The study aims to analyze the structural differences and similarities between the different kinds of English negation and their Albanian correspondents because they may be one of the causes of some difficulties that Albanian EFL learners usually face in the learning of English negative forms.

Purpose of the study

The term *negation* is primarily a semantic concept used to express an idea opposing the affirmative. When learning a foreign language, the learner does not need to know very complex structures to express his/her ideas. The use of only one-word such as *no* helps to convey the message intended. Odlin (1989: 105) claims that: "the use of **preverbal** or **postverbal** negation is indeed an important clue to relations between transfer and universals in second language acquisition." He also claims that word order does not play an important role in expressing negation with one word. On the other hand, the situation changes when the utterances become longer and the words involved seek for new negation patterns.

The terms *preverbal* and *postverbal* mentioned in the citation above are closely related to the subject of this research because English and Albanian have different positioning of the negative particle '*not*'. English has postverbal whereas Albanian has preverbal negation.

The subject of this study is restricted to *verbal* and *nonverbal negation*. Although Albanian uses various types of negation that can be considered as corresponding structures to English negation, the Albanian EFL learners might encounter some difficulties in internalizing English negation because of the differences in the structural patterns.

The study analyzes the structural differences and similarities between the various kinds of English negation and their Albanian correspondents because these differences and similarities can be considered to be one of the main reasons of difficulties that Albanian EFL classroom learners encounter in the learning of the English negation.

When looking at the language performance of Albanian EFL learners, the first thing that becomes visible to the researcher's attention is the use of double negatives:

- Albanian EFL learners tend to use two negative words such as *asgje*, *kurrgje*, within one sentence. For instance:

Sara nuk tha asgje ne lidhje me projektin.

Because of the fundamental difference in the use of negative words between English and Albanian, the analysis of this discrepancy is another important purpose of this study.

Research methodology

Materials

Data collection: The formation of the corpus of English Negation and their Albanian Correspondents

The following sources have been used for corpus collection: three modern English novels and their translated Albanian editions. "Silas Marner" written by George Eliot and translated by Ramazan Hysa; the second novel is "Martin Eden" written by Jack London and translated by Shaban Demiraj and the third one is "The End of the Affair" written by Graham Greene and translated by Isa Zymberi.

The data has also been collected from a test given to students with intermediate and upper-intermediate English language proficiency at the high school “Pance Popovski” in Gostivar. The error analysis of the test has helped in discovering the learning difficulties that Albanian EFL learners experience while learning English negation. It has also either confirmed or rejected the hypotheses we have made in the categorization of the differences and similarities between English and Albanian negation, reflecting their relative learning difficulty.

Procedure

The research has followed the following procedure: the corpus of English negation has been collected from the three above-mentioned English novels and their corresponding translations into Albanian. In addition, the questionnaire done with students and its results is another source of analysis.

The following methodology of contrasting the data has been used, for example:

a) English (preverbal negation): *He did not notice that a young woman had entered the room. (Martin Eden, pg.8)*

Albanian (postverbal negation): *As nuk vuri re se ne atë çast një vajzë e re i kishte hyrë në dhomë. (Martin Eden, fq. 10)*

b) Secondary verb negation (non-finite clauses): *I turned back not knowing where to go. (The end of the Affair, pg. 66)*

Albanian (finite clauses): *U ktheva duke mos ditur ku të shkoja. (Fundi i Aferës, fq. 70)*

c) Negative Raising: *By the way I don't think I've got your number now. (The End of the Affair, pg. 29)*

Albanian (no negative transportation): *Veç tjerash, më duket se nuk e kam numrin tënd tash. (Fundi i Afrës, 31)*

d) Nonverbal negation (negative word ‘never’): *You never hold trumps, you know—I always do. (Silas Marner, pg. 17)*

Double negation form (‘nuk’ & ‘kurre’): *Ty nuk te bie kurre asi, sic me vjen mua. (Sajilles Marner, fq. 32)*

In this way a detailed contrastive analysis of the structural patterns of negation in English and its Albanian correspondents has been carried out. The novels were a good source in gathering the data for corpus analysis. The research is not based just on simple contrastive analysis of two languages, but it gains a pedagogical importance by conducting a test with eighty students from the “Pance Popovski” high school in Gostivar in order to investigate and verify the predictions of the contrastive analysis.

Participants

Eighty intermediate and upper-intermediate level participants took place in the test. All of them were students from the high school “Pance Popovski” in Gostivar. Each group counted 40 Albanian speaking students.

Objectives, Research Questions and Hypotheses

The objectives of this study are:

1. To carry out a contrastive analysis of both *verbal* and *nonverbal* negation of English and their Albanian correspondents in order to find out the differences and similarities between their structural patterns;

2. To categorize the differences and similarities between the English and Albanian negative forms and to hypothesize the possible learning difficulties for the Albanian EFL classroom learners.
3. To verify the hypotheses which have been made in categorization part, on the basis of the errors analysis of the test given to the intermediate and upper-intermediate level high school students.

The study mainly tries to give answers to the following questions:

1. What kind of difficulties the Albanian EFL classroom learners may face while acquiring negation of non-finite clauses in English?
1. Why do the Albanian EFL learners may be expected to use double negatives with negative words in their English language production?
2. Why do the Albanian EFL learners usually have difficulty in learning to use the correct English negative form of the negative words 'no' and 'not'?

The hypotheses of the study are the following:

1. Because the negation in Albanian is realized by double negation, the Albanian EFL classroom learners may face difficulties in acquiring the single negation form used in English.
2. Because of the differences in the realization of negation in Albanian and English, the Albanian EFL classroom learners may have difficulties in trying to learn and internalize the correct use of negative and positive polarity items with negative words.
3. Because of the structural difference of the verb phrases of *secondary verb negation* in English and Albanian, the Albanian EFL learners may have difficulties in learning and internalizing the correct English pattern.

Literature Review

Definitions of Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis determines the differences and similarities between two compared languages. According to Fisiak (1981: 2) there are two types of contrastive studies:

1. Theoretically oriented studies that deal with the way how a universal category is realized in the compared two languages. For instance, Fisiak (1981:2) claims that: 'theoretical contrastive studies are language independent. They do not investigate how a given category present in language A is presented in language B. Instead, they look for the realization of a universal category X in both A and B'.
2. Applied contrastive studies on the other hand deal with how a universal category present in language A is interpreted or translated in language B. In addition, Fisiak (1981:3) clearly notes that: 'another task of applied contrastive studies is the identification of probable areas of difficulty in another language where, for example, a given category is not represented in the surface and interference is likely to occur'.

Another significant issue regarding Contrastive Analysis is 'language transfer', which stems from 'cross-linguistic influence'.

Corder & Crystal (in Arabski, 2006:12) give the following definition of **transfer**:
'A term used in applied linguistics to refer to a process in foreign language learning

whereby learners carry over what they have already known about their first language to their performance in their new language.’

Odlin (1989: 27) also defines the phenomenon of *transfer* in a similar way:

‘Transfer is the influence resulting from the similarities and the differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired’.

Contrastive Analysis of Negative Verb Phrases in Sentences with Auxiliary Verbs

In sentences in which the verb phrase contains just one or more auxiliaries including modal auxiliaries, ‘*not*’ follows the first auxiliary.

The English pattern is: *the auxiliary verb + particle ‘not’ + lexical verb*

The Albanian pattern is: *the particle ‘nuk’+ (aux verb) + lexical verb*

The sentences with modal verbs have the following pattern in Albanian:

the negative particle ‘*nuk*’ or ‘*s*’ + *modal verb (mund, duhet, dua, do, ben) + subjunctive form of the lexical verb*

For example,

The lapse of time during which a given event has not happened, ... (Silas Marner, pg.22)

Periudha e kohës, gjatë së cilës një ngjarje e caktuar nuk ka ndodhur, ... (Sajllës Marnër, fq.46)

The pattern of Albanian correspondents is different because in Albanian the ‘*nuk*’ particle precedes the verb phrase. In addition, there is more than one Albanian correspondent used as the equivalent of the English ‘*not*’ particle. Because Albanian is a polynegative language, the particles ‘*nuk*’ or ‘*s*’ are the elements of simple negation (Gosturani, 1977:36). Consequently, Albanian has more than one correspondent for the English particle ‘*not*’. They are the following: *nuk; s; mos, as, pa, and jo.* (1977:36).

Contrastive Analysis of Negative Verb Phrases in Yes/No Questions

In YES/NO questions the subject and auxiliary inversion contracts with ‘*not*’, and in yes/no questions with no auxiliary verb the particle ‘*not*’ contracts with ‘*do*’ (Cowan, 2008: 90).

In negative interrogative sentences the word order is the following:

Modal/auxiliary verb + n’t + subject + lexical verb’

If the verb ‘*be*’ has a copular use, then the word order is ‘*be + n’t + subject*’. (Carter and McCarthy, 2006:731).

Albanian uses more than one correspondent particle regarding *yes/no* questions. They are the following: *a, vallë, mos (a), thua* and expressions like: *mos vallë* or *mos...vallë, vallë a, a...vallë, a mos, (a) thua (se)*. According to Çeliku et al. (2002: 141), all of them can be placed at the beginning of the sentence and sometimes after the first sentence constituent. They are rarely used at the end of the sentence. Çeliku et al. (2002) stated that ‘*a*’ is a common particle that has only interrogative sense and it is by far the most used one when compared to other particles.

Contrastive Analysis of the Negative Verb Phrases in Question Tags

In English the question tag with positive stems takes a negative tag, while the question tag with negative stems takes a positive tag (Cowan, 2008:90).

Albanian uses different kinds of linguistic items to form question tags. Because of this there is more than one Albanian correspondent used as a question tag. Question tags in Albanian are realized by various linguistic items such as *po, jo, he, e, çe, a, ashtu, ashtu ë, and vërtet*. However, *'apo jo'* is the one most often used. Both positive and negative sentences use the question tag *'apo jo'* as a stem. (Demiraj, 2002: 423). We have limited our description only to two of them: *'jo'* and *'apo jo'* because they contain the negative word *jo*.

Contrastive Analysis of Secondary Verb Negation and its Albanian Correspondents

Clauses That Take Secondary Negation

Secondary verb negation means negating a non-tensed clause, i.e. non-finite clause. In this kind of negation, the negative particle *'not'* appears in the subordinate clause (Cowan, 2008:93). The examples from our corpus confirm the rule that the particle *'not'* precedes the verb in non-finite clauses:

He was then exhorted not to hide his sin, but to confess and repent. (Silas Marner, pg. 8)
Pas kësaj e keshilluan të mos e fshihte mekatin që kishte bërë, por ta pohonte dhe të pendohet
(Sajllës Marnër, fq.10)

In Albanian, when the particle *'mos'* appears in finite clauses, the position of it changes. It is put between the conjunctive *'të'* and the lexical verb. The example above *not to hide* vs. *të mos e fshihte* confirm this difference because in English the particle *'not'* precedes the infinitive clause, while in Albanian the particle *'mos'* stays between the conjunctive proclitic *'të'* and the lexical verb *'fshihet'*

Categorization of the Differences and Similarities between English and Albanian Negation, Reflecting their Relative Learning Difficulty

Because the study deals with the learning of English negation by Albanian EFL learners and is pedagogically oriented, the categorization of the differences and similarities between English and Albanian negation (reflecting their relative learning difficulty) is one of its key goals. This part deals with the possible negative transfer of Albanian EFL learners' mother tongue in their production of English negation.

The categorization of relative learning difficulty is particularly focused on the following:

- a) *Clauses that take secondary negation-* Secondary verb negation deals with negation of a non-finite clause. In this kind of negation, the negative particle *'not'* appears in the subordinate clause (Cowan, 2008:93).
- b) *Nonverbal negation* i.e. *Negative words-* 'The most grammatically complex method of nonverbal negation is through the use of a set of *negative words*' (Cowan, 2008: 97)

Categorization of the Differences and Similarities between English and Albanian Primary Verb Negation, Reflecting its Relative Learning Difficulty

The negative particle *'not'* follows the verb in English. On the other hand, Albanian has two correspondent particles *'nuk'* or *'s'* which, unlike the English *'NOT'*, precede the verb. Since only the position of the negative particle is different in the structural patterns

between the two languages, the English primary verb negation may not present particular learning difficulty for the Albanian EFL learners. For example:

The lapse of time during which a given event has not happened, ... (Silas Marner, pg.22)

The English pattern: the auxiliary verb + particle 'not' + lexical verb

Periudha e kohës, gjatë së cilës një ngjarje e caktuar nuk ka ndodhur, ... (Sajllës Marnër, fq.46)

The Albanian pattern: the particle 'nuk'+ (aux verb) + lexical verb

The pattern that English and Albanian primary verb negation follows is similar. As a consequence, it seems reasonable to predict that Albanian EFL learners would not be expected to have difficulty in learning this negative pattern.

Although the position of the English negative particle 'not' is different in the sentences with the copular verb 'be': *was not a place* vs. *nuk ishte ndonjë vend*, Albanian EFL learners would not be expected to have particular difficulty in learning it because of the similarity in the use of the English 'NOT' with the Albanian particle 'NUK'

The Albanian correspondents and the English *yes/no* question have various similar structural patterns. It is possible to conclude that this discrepancy in the number of patterns and the structural difference between them may cause real difficulty for Albanian EFL learners. Since the examples such as *Didn't he write once...* vs. *A nuk shkroi ai njëherë...* show that the Albanian interrogative particle 'a' has a wide use when compared to other correspondents, the difference between the negative forms; therefore, can be seen in the following structural patterns:

Contracted Auxiliary DO with NOT + subject + lexical verb vs. the particle 'a' + negative particle 'nuk' + lexical verb + subject

Albanian has more than one correspondent used to indicate question tags, but we have limited our description to the question tag 'apo jo' only, because of its widespread use. The structural patterns of English question tags are considerably different from their Albanian correspondents. The constituent parts of the structure 'apo jo' do not have any formal relationship with the English verb phrase as shown in the example below:

A fit was a stroke, wasn't it? (Silas Marner, pg. 6)

Atak do të thotë paralizë, apo jo? (Sajllës Marnër, fq. 5)

The English pattern: a positive stem (was) + a negative tag (wasn't it)

The Albanian pattern: the question tag 'apo jo'

This fundamental difference can lead to a highly probable prediction that Albanian EFL learners may have great difficulty in learning them.

Categorization of the Differences and Similarities between the English Secondary Verb Negation and its Albanian Correspondents, Reflecting their Relative Learning Difficulty

Secondary verb negation in English and its Albanian correspondents have different structural patterns. Because of the striking difference between the patterns of the verb phrases in the two languages, Albanian EFL learners are expected to have difficulty in learning them.

Categorization of the Differences and Similarities between Negative Raising in English and its Albanian Correspondents, Reflecting their Relative Learning Difficulty

The phenomenon of 'not transportation' or 'negative raising' in English has no similar structural pattern in Albanian. For example,

By the way I don't think I've got your number now. (The End of the Affair, pg. 29)

Veç tjerash, më duket se nuk e kam numrin tënd tash. (Fundi i Afrës, 31)

Consequently, a reasonably correct prediction can be made that this difference in their patterns may cause great difficulty for Albanian EFL learners.

Categorization of the Differences and Similarities between the Elliptical Clauses with the Pronoun 'SO' in English and Albanian, Reflecting their Relative Learning Difficulty

Elliptical clauses with the pronoun 'so' in English are structurally different from their Albanian correspondents. For example, *I don't think so* vs. *'s'ma merr mendja'* and *I think not* vs. *'mendoj që jo'*.

Since the pattern that the English and Albanian elliptical clauses with the pronoun 'so' follow is different, we can make a fairly reasonable prediction that Albanian EFL learners should face considerable difficulty in the learning of this pattern.

Categorization of the Differences and Similarities between the English and Albanian Negative Words, Reflecting their Relative Learning Difficulty

The contrastive analysis of English and Albanian negative words, the single negative structural pattern in English such as *a stupid action leading nowhere* is different from the Albanian double negation pattern: *një veprim të marrë që s'çonte askund*. This fundamental difference may cause difficulties for Albanian EFL classroom learners.

Since the phenomenon of *double negation* is a rule in Albanian, but it does not occur in Standard English, there is a difference in the choice of positive or negative polarity items. As a result, we can hypothesize that Albanian EFL learners will tend to produce a structure like I told her *not* to say *nothing* to *nobody* instead of I told her *not* to say *anything* to *anybody*.

Therefore, the difference in their structural patterns may be one of the main reasons why Albanian EFL learners may not be able to use the right polarity items and may have difficulty in the acquisition of the forms that are acceptable in Standard English.

Categorization of the Differences and Similarities between English and Albanian Negative Particle 'NO' and its Albanian correspondents, Reflecting their Relative Learning Difficulty

The contrastive analysis of the English negative particle 'no' and its Albanian correspondents are structurally different from the English one with: *not...any* and *no*, e.g.

'I have no right to ask,' he said (The End of the Affair, pg. 143)

"Nuk kam të drejtë pyes" tha ai, (Fundi i Aferës, fq. 15)

The English negative form with the negative word 'no' has only one corresponding pattern in Albanian, which is realized by verbal negation. For this reason the Albanian EFL learners may be expected to use the English structural pattern that is similar to the 'not...any'-pattern and to avoid the one with the negative word 'no'. For example, it is highly predictable that the negative structural pattern *I did not have any intention to go there* will be the preferred pattern by Albanian EFL learners rather than the negative structural pattern *I have no intention to go there*.

Consequently, a reasonably correct prediction can be made that Albanian EFL learners are expected to have considerable difficulty in the learning of the 'NO' pattern. Because of this the structural pattern with the negative particle 'no' may not be the expected choice in the language production of the Albanian EFL learners.

Discussion of findings

Analysis of the Test Results

The second year students with intermediate level of English were involved in the

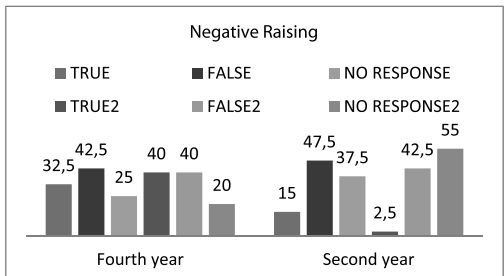
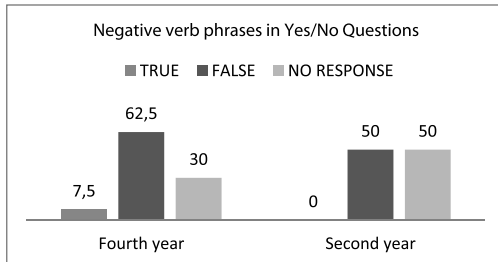
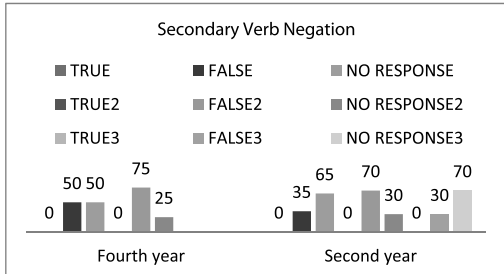
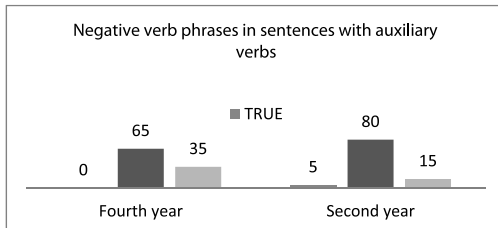
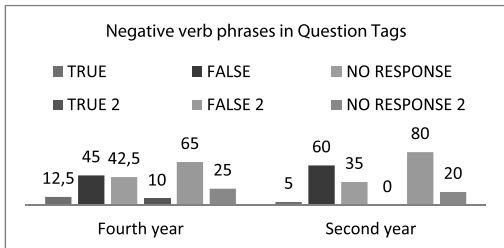
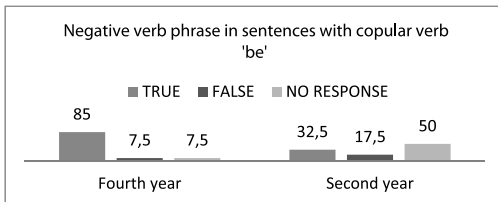
first group and in the second the fourth year students with upper- intermediate level of English at ‘Pançe Popovski’ high school in Gostivar.

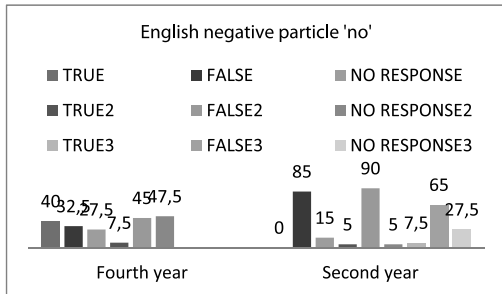
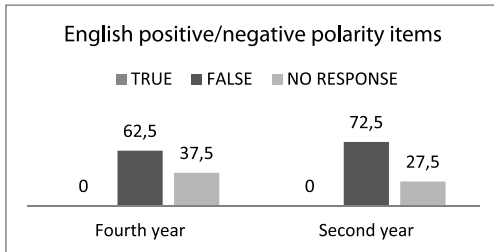
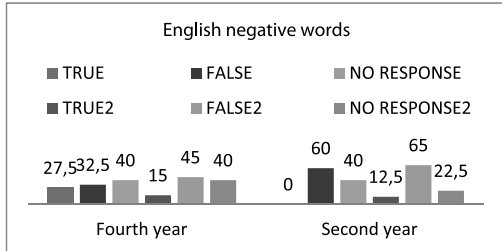
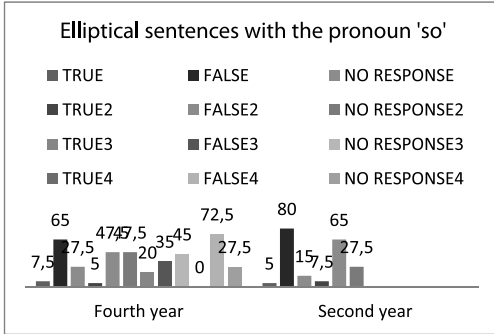
The data gathered from the test is presented according to the types of the errors made by all the second and fourth year respondents. This test was given in order to test the predictions made in the research. The test consists of 19 example sentences which were all taken from English grammar books. The examples were translated into Albanian. The description of the erroneous forms has been carried out according to the following criteria:

- A. Completely incorrect structure
- B. Incorrect person
- C. Incorrect tense
- D. Incorrect constituents of the verb phrase
- E. Incorrect subject verb agreement.

The first key element of this test is to assess the Albanian EFL learners’ ability to create proper English structures containing the English *negative verb phrases* in ten different sentence forms. The second element of this test displays the language progress between the second and the fourth year students. The language progress is presented in greater detail with contrasted results between the second and fourth year students. The contrasted percentage of the language performance and progress is also shown by graphical displays.

The graphical display shows the correct results obtained from all students:





Conclusion

Relying on the categorization of the differences and similarities between English and Albanian negative structural patterns and their relative learning difficulty for Albanian EFL classroom learners, this research has led up to the following key conclusions:

Because the negative structural pattern that English and Albanian primary verb negation follows is similar between them, it seems reasonable to predict that Albanian EFL learners may not have difficulty in learning this negative pattern. This hypothesis has turned out not to be completely correct according to the results of the test since eighty five percent (85%) of the fourth year respondents have used the negative verb phrase in sentences with copular verb *'be'* correctly and thirty two point five percent (32.5%) of the second year respondents have used it incorrectly.

Because of the discrepancy in the number of patterns and the structural differences between English and Albanian yes/no questions, it has been predicted that Albanian EFL classroom learners may have difficulty in acquiring this particular negative pattern. This hypothesis has turned out to be correct according to the test results: only seven point five percent (7.5%) of the fourth year and zero percent (0%) of the second year respondents have used English yes/no question correctly.

Because the structural patterns of English question tags are considerably different from their Albanian correspondents, it can lead to a probable prediction that Albanian EFL learners may have difficulty in their English language production. This hypothesis turned out to be correct according to the results of the test: only eleven point twenty five percent (11.25%) of the fourth year respondents and five percent (5%) of the second year students responded correctly.

The hypothesis that the Albanian EFL learners may face difficulties in learning the negative structural pattern of non-finite clauses proved to be entirely correct; according to the test results, out of eighty participants, there is not any correct response.

Because the phenomenon of ‘not transportation’ in English has no similar structural pattern in Albanian, it was predicted that Albanian EFL classroom learners may have difficulties in producing correctly this structural pattern of English. This hypothesis turned out not to be wholly correct according to the test results: thirty six point five percent (36. 25%) of the fourth year participants have responded correctly and eight only point seventy five percent (8. 75%) of the second year participants.

Since the English elliptical clauses with the pronoun ‘so’ are structurally different from their Albanian correspondents, a reasonable prediction was made that Albanian EFL learners should face considerable difficulty in the learning of this pattern. This hypothesis has turned out to be correct according to the results obtained from the test: eight point twelve percent (8. 12 %) of the fourth year participants have used the structural pattern correctly, whereas only six point twenty five percent (6. 25%) of the second year participants.

The hypothesis that the Albanian EFL learners may not be able to use the correct negative and positive polarity items with negative words has partly proved to be correct; according to the test results thirty eight point seventy five percent (38. 75%) of the fourth and six point twenty five percent (6.25 %) of the second year participants have used the correct polarity items but zero percent (0%) of the second year participants.

Because the English negative structural pattern with the negative word ‘no’ has only one corresponding pattern in Albanian, which is realized by verbal negation, a reasonably correct prediction was made that the Albanian EFL learners may face serious difficulties in learning the use of the ‘NO’ pattern. This hypothesis has turned out to be partly correct according to the test results: twenty three point seventy five percent (23, 75%) of the fourth year participants have used the structural pattern with the negative particle ‘not’ and the second year students have not given any correct response at all.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study has a number of limitations. Because of the limited time, the contrastive analysis of this study has been based on a very limited written corpus: only fictional discourse. This may restrict the general applicability of the results of the contrastive analysis of English negation and their Albanian correspondents only to the students’ written language production.

Another important limitation of this study has to do with the number of negative structural patterns. Since our study has dealt with a considerable number of patterns, they have not been treated in depth. Therefore, it is suggested that a more comprehensive Contrastive Analysis research should be carried out.

Since the data collection has been restricted only to fictional discourse, it is suggested that it should include corpus data from at least two other discourse types such as academic and conversational. This would increase the reliability of the results and would present a more complete description of English negative structural patterns and their Albanian correspondents.

The small number of respondents involved in the test might be one of the limitations. This study has a very limited range of participants: the research was conducted only in one high school; it is suggested that university students should have participated in the test, too.

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