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## **A case study on similarities and differences of word order between English and Albanian language**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this article is to analyze the word-order in English and Albanian and the similarities and differences between them. The main issue I will examine is the syntax and word order.

**Methods:** The method implied for the present work is based on comparative *and contrastive research methodology* in a cross-cohesive review.

**Results:** English and Albanian belong to the same mother tongue, Indo-European but, each of them has its own meaning. The present paper observed that the syntax in Albanian and English is quite different. The word order in Albanian sentences is more flexible compared to English. The cross-cohesive review revealed that the Albanian language has inverse word order and intonation plays a role in the emphasis of the subject. English has a fixed order and intonation does not play a role in determining the order of the parts and sentence type. However, there is a disparity regarding the presence of structure inside and outside direct speech. The syntactic category most impacted by the movement between the parts of sentences in Albanian, coincides with the syntactic function most displaced the direct object.

**Conclusions:** In the end, by a thorough review of the literature in both languages, it was found that even with different grammar rules, both Albanian and English share the same characteristic in terms of the cognitive and social constructs. Language is a vital part of human interaction, and we use it in daily life to convey information, arguments, thoughts, feelings, and ideas. To use it effectively, people must follow its rules based on grammar, morphology, syntax, phonetics, and linguistics.

**Keywords:** English, Albanian, word order, syntactic similarities, differences



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## **1. Introduction**

Language is an abstract system of symbols and meanings governed by grammatical rules (Everaert et al., 2017; Bourdieu et al., 2014; Lardiere, 2014; Hauser et al., 2010). To speak or write a language correctly, one should follow some rules that belong to that language; otherwise, it means that you are misusing the language, and your ideas and thoughts cannot be properly conveyed (Lardiere, 2014; Evans & Levinson, 2009). Language cannot be understood only as a process of *poiesis* (theoretical), but mainly as a process of *praxis* (practical) (Bracaj, 2023). We live in a community where to make ends meet. We acquire diverse knowledge throughout our lives, starting from family to social interactions. Therefore, as people, we become an important part of the past, present, and future of the community (Bracaj, 2023). Knowing a foreign language involves understanding grammar rules and social dynamics (Crystal, 2016; Hilpert, 2013; Epps, 2009, Becker, 2002). Every language has rules on how words must be arranged to construct a sentence. Such rules are principles of syntax and knowing these principles. Grammar is the study of how words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are structured in any language (Wekker & Haegerman, 2002; Aarts, 2001; Carter & McCarthy, 1995). Although scholars argue that Albanian is a language that has preserved some things that show a strong connection between language and identity, through anonymous creations, proverbs, etc. (Priku, 2013), English is a “global contact language” and its effects are seen on different cultures, communities, and societies (Bracaj, 2023; Liu & Wei, 2021; Pietikäinen, 2021; Yamada, 2021; MacKenzie, 2020; Leitner et al. et al., 2018; Prić, 2014; Schreier and Hundt, 2013; Amouzadeh and House, 2010; Csizer and Kormos, 2009). As a global language, English knowledge is crucial for people around the world and Albanian learners (Crystal, 2016; Schreider & Hundt, 2013; Kapo, 2011; Burns, 2003). Grammar plays a very important role in both languages (Downing, 2019; Samarxhiu & Kurani, 2016; Lardiere, 2014). Since in grammar, word order is one of the most crucial parts of syntax, this paper is focused on the examination of these characteristics. Although the languages under study belong to the Indo-European family, yet again we may encounter many differences between them (Müller et al., 2016; Epps & Laddley, 2009; Aarts, 2001). They do share similarities and differences in syntactical terms, which in turn develop opportunities and challenges of both languages both in terms of social development and linguistic empowerment. Although research has addressed the word-formation and linguistic patterns between English and Albania, little is done in terms of examining the syntax and grammar specifics between the two of them at the same time.



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## **2. Method**

The present study used *comparative and contrastive research methodology*. This comparative and contrastive method is an accurate qualitative method to be employed in word-formation research as scholars argue (Spahiu & Spahiu, 2019; Chang, 2011). The examples presented in the grammar of the Albanian language were analyzed for the order, parts of the sentence, for the types of sentences and were compared with the English language to draw out commonalities and differences.

Therefore, the initial procedure was descriptive where the above-mentioned points were explained, and then came the one-by-one contrastive method where I compared the word order in different types of sentences and subordinate sentences of two languages to find out the differences and similarities that exist between them.

### **Objectives**

In this work, we aim to pursue two main objectives. The first, which represents the nucleus of the research, aims to explore possible phenomena of interference in the syntax of today's Albanian due to contact with English. The second is to propose an explanation of the distribution, structure, and function of the syntactic phenomenon of dislocation in the Albanian language, thus contributing to the improvement of the understanding of these structures in writing and everyday speaking. To achieve these objectives, we will use corpora representing three types of Albanian: original Albanian translated Albanian and Albanian in contact with English.

## **3. Research on the examination of grammar patterns**

Studies have revealed that one of the main issues in English and Albanian are mainly reported in in the diachronic development of grammars in the linguistic systems where the syntactic dimension of the language is often addressed (Bracaj, 2023; Draçini & Murati, 2018; Kapaj, 2011; Nuhiu, 2011; Rainer, 2005). English is considered a weakly inflected language compared to Albanian, since its nouns have only inflection of (plurals, the pronouns), and its regular verbs have only four forms: an inflected form for the past indicative and subjunctive (*played*), an inflected form for the third person-singular present indicative (*plays*), an inflected form for the present participle (*playing*) (Chang, 2011). Inflections in English grammar



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include *the genitive 's; the plural -s; the third-person singular -s; the past tense -d, -ed, or -t; the negative particle 'nt; -ing forms of verbs; the comparative -er; and the superlative -est*. Also, there are four cases Nominative, Genitive, Dative, and Accusative (Downing, 2019; Beavais et al., 1987).

Unlike the Albanian language, the structure of the English language makes it easier to identify the subject and find the parts of the speech in which the subject is expressed. The categorization of sentences mentioned by scholars has a key role in this statement (Jespersen, 2013). According to him, the question in a sentence (identification of the subject and the predicate) is related to the assertion that the subject counts more as a logical category than a structural and grammatical one. Most of the nominal and adjectival English loans take inflectional and derivational endings of their respective gender, number, and case, according to the Albanian language rules (Bracaj, 2023; Verspoor & Sauter, 2000). In a deeper grammar view, Albanian shows a complex nominal inflection system (Bracaj, 2023; Draçini & Murati, 2018; Memushaj, 2008). It has a three-gender system (masculine, feminine, neuter), though the neuter gender is disputed. Five cases remain from Proto-Indo-European: *nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, and ablative, though the dative and genitive are morphologically identical* (Draçini & Murati, 2018). The same applies to the order of words in the sentence in both languages. In the English language, there are different theories of word order in sentences developed by different linguists such as Blumfield, Graffi, Chomsky, Greenbaum, Svartvik, Song, etc. (cited in Rainer, 2005). A special characteristic that distinguishes the Albanian language from English is that the Albanian, as an inflectional language, has a rich system of morphological forms that serve to create numerous syntactic structures (Müller et al., 2016). Even the various auxiliary words, prepositions, and conjunctions serve to express syntactic relationships and the creation of various sentences in Albanian (Müller et al., 2016; Thomaj, 2006). According to Nuhiu (2011), the Albanian language a) is an inflectional language, therefore it has a relatively free word order, b) there are dependent inflectional morphemes which themselves determine their function in certain cases, c) the grammatical function is marked in the Albanian words, d) word order is largely a matter of style, whereas in English the function of words is marked and identified mainly by context, and word order is usually the only way to distinguish the different functions of words in a sentence (Nuhiu, 2011).

### **3.1 The word order of the Subject-Predicate-Object in simple sentences**

When talking about word order in a language, we generally think of the two main parts (the subject and the predicate) and the other part which is the direct and indirect object (Rainer, 2005). Since the movement of words in the sentence is free in the Albanian language, the



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syntactic functions of the parts must be the same regardless of the position in which they are found in the sentence (Thomaj, 2006). The same does not apply to English since the movement of the parts is not free, as well as in case of their displacement, it can affect changing syntactic functions (Rainer, 2005). In the Albanian language, there is a correct order of patterns (*subject+ predicate, predicate + adverb, predicate + complements*), the reverse order (*predicate + subject, object + predicate, etc.*), the neutral order (*subject + predicate*) and emphatic-affective order (*predicate + theme*). The position of the parts in the Albanian language, apart from the aforementioned, is also done according to the stylistic, emotional expressive function (*predicate+ theme*) and according to the grammatical function of the word order, which is very defined for determining the syntactic functions and helps to distinguish the subject from the direct object, the subject from the parts, the name of the predicate and so on (Floqi, 1969).

**a. Ana erdhi./ Ann came (right order)**

**b. Erdhi Ana. /\*Ther came Ann → Ann came (reverse order)**

What can be seen in this simple example is that the order in the language Albanian can be right or reversed whenever we want to emphasize the action and it is considered a correct and meaningful sentence. However, when it comes to the English language, the same rule cannot be applied because of the fixed order.

Therefore, studies suggest that syntactic connections in sentences are achieved using three grammatical tools: 1) endings of cases, 2) prepositions, and 3) word order (grammatical and stylistic) (Kapo, 2011; Çeliku, 2011).

Intonation plays a crucial role in the Albanian language. The order of the parts of the sentence and the order of the parts of the statement, on the one hand, and intonation, on the other hand, are the two basic means of shaping the sentence and statement (Çeliku, 2011). Intonation is significant, also for emphasizing a part in the sentence and for interrogative sentences.

For example:

**a. Erdhi dita./Dita erdhi./The day has come. (declarative sentence)**

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**b. Erdhi dita?Dita erdhi?/Has the day come? (question sentence)**

While in the Albanian language, there is an inverse and right order, as well as while intonation plays a role in the emphasis (change of place) of the subject, in the English language we have only correct order (fixed) and intonation does not play a role in determining the order of parts and sentence type (Aarts,2001). The examples above are two typical examples in the Albanian language where intonation is a key factor in determining the type of sentence. In the English language, we cannot say ‘*The day has come?*’ since it is the right order of a demonstrative sentence, for an interrogative sentence, an auxiliary verb ‘*has*’ must be at the beginning of the sentence. Although intonation affects sentence forms like interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory, it does not affect the order of the elements in English (Aarts,2001).

**The subject and the predicate** are an important part of the Albanian language because to have a nominal predicate, the verb must be a participle and the same rule applies to the Albanian language and English (Downing,2019; Çeliku,2011). In this sense, the order in the Albanian language is normally fair and neutral whenever the subject is the theme and the nominal part is the predicate, but it can also be an inverted order, i.e., *predicate + nominal part + subject* or *nominal part + predicate + subject*.

- a. Moti ishte i ftohte./The weather was cold.**
- b. Ishte i ftohte moti./ \*Was cold the weather.**
- c. I ftohte ishte moti./ \*Cold was the weather.**

While in the Albanian language, the reverse order is possible, in the English language such a thing is not possible since the subject must be at the beginning of the sentence and its movement in another position makes the sentence grammatically incorrect. In all three cases, the sentences in the English language will be translated as “*The weather was cold*” (Aarts,2001). However, it should be noted that the reverse order is normally used in literary works when emphatic order is needed, while the correct order is in standard language.

The order **subject + predicate + object** can be the right order or vice versa in the Albanian language.

- a. Ajo bleu një shtëpi të re. /She bought a new house. (right order)**
- b. Një shtëpi të re bleu ajo. /\*A new house bought she. (reverse order)**



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In the two examples above in the Albanian language, the movement of the pattern does not present any problem due to the case endings and free order. In English, it can easily be seen that the reverse order creates a grammatically incorrect sentence. However, the movement of patterns in sentences is not possible in all cases in the English language. It's the direct object, the one that is more concerning for finding syntactic functions in the Albanian language, unlike the English language. The right order is sometimes required to make the distinction between the subject and the object (Draçini & Murati,2018; Çeliku,2001; Floqi,1969).

**Direct object + predicate + subject** can have neutral or reverse order and is a very frequent order in the Albanian language. The object can sometimes be the subject and sometimes it can be the theme. This order is possible due to the cases of the Albanian language and the free order of patterns. First, we give the sentence in the correct order as compared to reverse order:

**Vajza bleu një libër./The girl bought a book. (right order)**

Below the same sentence is given in reverse order:

- a. Një libër bleu vajza. /\*A book bought the girl. (reverse order)**
- b. Një libër vajza bleu. /\*A book the girl bought.**

Here we have two different situations when grammatically similar sentences in the language Albanian are translated into English. While in the first case in the Albanian language, the direct object can stay in the initial position without any problem, in the English language such a thing is not possible because a book cannot buy a girl (Chang,2011). Therefore, if the translation of the first sentence, then the object in the English language goes after the predicate by respecting the right/fixed order (Nuhiu,2011).

**Indirect object + subject + predicate**  
**Ann told her. /\*Her Ann told.**

The movement of the oblique opposition does not affect the accuracy of the sentence in terms of grammar. Here it can be seen that we cannot use the order where the predicate comes first

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because such an order is typical for interrogative sentences, not for demonstrative sentences. Intonation plays an important role both in the order when the object appears at the beginning of the sentence, and in the cases where we have interrogative sentences (Thomaj,2016; Nuhiu,2011).

**subject + predicate + indirect object + direct object:**

**Ann bought Mira a bike.**

This order can be different, and it is considered as a right order by shifting in the second parts, i.e., the objects take each other's place. In this case, the sentence has the **subject order + predicate + direct object + indirect object.**

**Ann bought a bike for Mira.**

While in the Albanian language, there is no difference in terms of case or endings, in the English language the preposition to is added before the indirect object due to the case of the noun. This is a common situation in the English language as it is known as correct and grammatical order. Examples are given above when the direct and indirect objects can be placed in the sentence by occupying the initial position (Millaku,2017; Verspoor & Sauger,2000). The same is possible in the following case. So, in the Albanian language, we can also have the following orders despite the language used, standard language or not, literary style or not:

**Direct object + subject + predicate + indirect object:**

A bike Ani bought Jones. /\*A bike Ani bought Jona.

**Direct object + predicate + subject + indirect object:**

A bike bought by Ani Jones./\*A bike bought Ani Jones.

**Direct object + indirect object + subject + predicate:**

*Një biçikletë Jones Ani i bleu. /\*A bike Jona Ani bought.*

The grammar of the Albanian language allows the movement of the objects in the examples above. Normally, this movement is limited by intonation. If the correct tone is not used during speech, the translation process will not be natural. Complaints or promotions are made in some





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areas to emphasize that is one of the reasons for placing the page in one place, i.e., in the first place (Çeliku, 2011).

### **3.2 Word order regarding the sentence patterns**

Here we will analyze four types of sentences in English and Albanian language, which are declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences. By giving examples for each of them, the similarities and differences will be highlighted.

The order may change depending on the type of the sentence. When there is a word order change, we normally have a change in intonation, especially in the Albanian language (Draçini & Murati, 2018; Nuhiu, 2011).

Let's start with examples in declarative sentences both in English and Albanian language.

#### **Ann sings a song. / Ana këndon një këngë.**

The order S-V-O is the same in both languages since we have the right order of the words. But the reverse order is also possible in Albanian language, having a grammatically correct sentence (Floqi, 1969). However, such a thing cannot be used in English.

\*A song sings Ann. / Një këngë këndon Ana.

Whereas in imperative sentences will be observed that normally, the subject is omitted both in Albanian and English language, just as in the first example.

#### **(1) Do your homework! / Bëji detyrat e tua!**

As a rule, the English language must have a subject all the time in case it does not have a personal pronoun or a noun, the subject is expressed with the pronouns 'it' or 'there' (Downing, 2019). But this rule is an exception when we deal with imperative sentences, like the first sentence. We can omit the subject in both languages and sentences will be grammatically and semantically correct. Sentence (1) is an illustration of how imperative sentences would look without a subject. But there may be other types of sentences where the subject may be added to have a clear imperative sentence, like the following one:

#### **(2) Don't (you) do it! / (Ti) Mos e bëj!**



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While the subject in English is between the auxiliary and the main verb, in Albanian it is in the initial position (Downing, 2019; Çeliku, 2011). The subject cannot be in the middle, but only in the initial position, and in the final position if an inverted word order is used (‘*Mos e bëj (ti)!’*’).

Regarding interrogative sentences in English, they are formed with the auxiliary verb (do/does) in the initial position. Whereas interrogative sentences in Albanian, are normally formed with the question word ‘A’ (Draçini & Murati, 2018; Aarts, 2011). The following examples show the difference between the two languages:

**(3) Do you want an ice-cream? / A dëshiron akullorë?**

**(4) Have you listened to this song? / A e ke dëgjuar këtë këngë?**

Based on Albanian language syntax, this is a correct sentence, which means that it is an interrogative sentence since it contains the question mark at the end, but not in English.

Both free word order and intonation are crucial factors that influence word order patterns in the Albanian language (Thomaj, 2016). If we translate this sentence into English language, then the proper one would be: ‘*Does she come tomorrow?*’ Another informal form to translate the same sentence would be: ‘*She comes tomorrow?*’ Naturally, such a sentence in English cannot be used in written language, but it can only be informally used in spoken discourse (Chang, 2011).

Exclamatory sentences are found both in English and Albanian language. The structure of the sentence is the same, which shows that there is no difference between them (Jespersen, 2013; Floqi, 1969).

**What a movie! / Çfarë filmi! (Exclamatory sentence)**

#### **4. Comparison of subordinate sentences between English & Albanian**

Complex sentences consist of a main clause with one or more subordinate clauses, and they are found in both languages. From the given examples, it will be noticed that the word order in the subordinate sentences of English and Albanian language is almost the same (Jespersen, 2013; Huddleston et al., 1988; Floqi, 1969). They have similarities in this point.



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**She reads books *because she gets satisfaction from reading.***  
**Ajo lexon libra, sepse ajo merr kenaqesi nga leximi.**

This sentence is made of two sentences and the second is a dependent clause. This kind of sentence always has a subordinator in both languages, and it is noticed that both sentences have the same sentence structure expressing the subordinate clauses with the same word order.

In the frame of syntax comparison between two languages, we can notice both similarities and differences and such a thing can be distinguished even when we try to translate from one language to another (Jespersen,2013; Çeliku,2011). The following examples will illustrate the commonalities or differences between the two languages regarding the structure of the subordinate sentences.

#### **Subject + Verb + Complement**

1. *He's angry.*
2. *Ai është i mërzitur.*

#### **Subject + Verb + Adverbial**

1. *You are at home*
2. *Ti je ne shtëpi.*

#### **Subject +Verb**

- 1 *The car disappeared.*
2. *Makina u zhduk.*

#### **Subject + Verb + Object + Complement**

1. *He gave me a gift.*
2. *Ai më dha një dhuratë.*

#### **Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object**

1. *I bought her a gift.*
2. *I bleva asaj një dhuratë.*

When the above sentences are analyzed, it is noticed that the structure in the first three sentences when translated from English into Albanian is the same, which means that they have

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the same patterns of the sentences with the same function, thus, expressing the meaning with the same word order (Müller et al., 2016). Whereas, in the last two examples, the direct or indirect object in Albanian, is usually expressed only with a form of the pronoun in the accusative case, which is (*më, i*) respectively.

### **5. An examination of the role of “*subject*” in Albanian and English grammar**

The morphology, syntax, and phonetics of the English language have undergone numerous changes over its history of evolution. Numerous studies have researched English grammar. Like the Albanian language, subjects in English can be described with one word or several (Jespersen, 2013). The main term has a nominal function and primarily denotes whole, item, person, animal, etc. The subject in English can be an adjective, pronoun, noun phrase, or noun (Rainer, 2005). The subject can have two or more noun phrases, quantifiers, numerals, and collective nouns, depending on the context. For a sentence to be intelligible in English, it is crucial that it have a subject and a predicate, however as we have seen, this is not the case in Albanian. It is important to translate sentences from English to Albanian to see the distinctions between the two languages (Kapo, 2011). The subject is not always at the beginning of the sentence, unlike in English. This can be explained by the fact that the word order in English is fixed, whereas it is free in Albanian, so there is no issue with putting the subject at the start or end of the sentence (Müller et al., 2016; Rainer, 2005). Depending on the type of statement, the parts order may alter. When the order is arranged differently, the intonation shifts to emphasize the stressed part. Here, we should distinguish between simple and compound sentences in terms of word placement and order inside the phrase. Demonstrative sentences can be either positive or negative and take on various shapes to depict the shift (Beauvais et al., 1987). English sentences can be categorized into simple sentences (one sentence) and compound sentences (many sentences) (Nelson & Greenbaum, 2018; Jespersen, 2013). Complex sentences in English are separated into conjunction sentences and clauses related by subordination (complex sentences) (Jespersen, 2013). According to Greenbaum and Nelson (2018), after the division of sentences, the parts of the sentence (sentence components) in English are the *subject (S)*, *predicate (P)*, *(verb/predicate [V/P])*, *direct object (DO)*, *indirect object (IO)*, *subject complement (SC)*, *(complement [OC])*, and *(adverbial [Adv])*. It's noteworthy to note that each sentence in the English language is a component of one of seven sentence patterns, according to Nelson and Greenbaum (2018). It is highly helpful to analyze phrases and recognize syntactic functions in sentences because of its classification into seven groups (Verspoor & Sauter, 2000). In many other grammars as well as the most significant



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English language, Beavais et al. (1987) presented the same classification of groups, and their division in English is as follows:

1. Subject + Predicate [intransitive verb]) - SP (Subject + Predicate)

I speak -Unë flas.

An essential component of a two-part sentence is the subject. The topic has been extensively explored in both languages, just like in all other languages. There is a list of terms in the Albanian language that can be used to describe the topic. The major noun that connects the predicate and the subject in a two-part sentence is the subject (Jespersen, 2013; Çeliku, 2011). The subject is conveyed by a noun, or a pronoun is grammatically independent and gives the predicate an attribute. The subject also needs a predicate to function meaningfully because it wishes to be a complement (Gjata & Koci, 2013). It is crucial to note that, in contrast to English; the third person subject in Albanian sentences might be absent but still be inferred from their context.

The English language's structure makes it simpler to identify the subject and locate the elements of speech that are used to explain it than the Albanian language does (Downing, 2019; Çeliku, 2011). Huddleston et al., (1988) also considers the subject in English, which places the subject before the predicate (which contains the "word") and describes the "subject" of the sentence (the object of the phrase). Therefore, the subject should be at the beginning of the phrase when translating basic sentences into English, and it is uncommon for the procedure to be reversed (Downing, 2019).

## 6. Conclusion

By studying the rules of one language and then comparing them with the ones of the other language, it can be noticed the differences that exist between them (Draçini & Murati, 2018; Nelson & Greenbaum, 2018; Millaku, 2017; Kurani, 2015; Gjata & Koci, 2013; Jespersen, 2013; Kapo, 2011; Burns, 2003; Beauvais et al., 1987). The present work outlined different aspects of the relationship between language and social development and the dynamics a language can reveal while being continuously in progress. It is the contrastive analysis of word order highlights the similarities and differences that exist in both English and Albanian languages. The focus of this paper has been to examine the structure of the sentences and the order of the parts in the Albanian and the English language. From the approach of the two languages, it has been noticed that there were many cases where the sentences had the same and different structures or orders. The syntactic differences in certain cases have been minimal, while in other cases they have been more pronounced. We investigated how English semantics and word formation were learned in everyday interactions between Albanians



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through a cohesive review. According to scholars, English, which is the second most popular language in Albania, is one of the factors that may influence how words are formed and produced in “today” Albanian in response to social and non-social stimuli (Kapo,2022; Kapo,2016; Nuhiu,2011; Kapo,2011). The impact of English-*ism* on Albanian anthropology and psycholinguistic in the word-formation is one of the study’s most intriguing findings (Kapo, 2022). The research findings in a variety of national and international studies, as highlighted in the studies examined in the present work, confirmed how language shapes the human interactions and how it alters people’s thoughts, beliefs, and actions on a global scale (Kapo, 2011-2022; Lou et al., 2018; Bouchard,2018; Müller et al.,2016; Brisset,2013; Thomaj,2006; White & Dunn,2001). Future studies should focus on the growing psycho-economic, social and strategy benefits of learning the Albanian and English language as two separate entities which give opportunities for fostering the understanding of linguistic inter-dynamics.

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