
INTERLINGUAL DIFFERENCES IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN ADJECTIVE USE: IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Abstract: This research paper investigates the interlingual implications of learning adjectives from English to Albanian language, focusing on the morphological, syntactic, and semantic factors that influence adjective acquisition in EFL contexts. In Albanian language instruction, adjectives are often presented as isolated lexical items, with limited attention to their formation, positional behavior, or cross-linguistic transfer. As a result, learners encounter continuous difficulties when identifying, interpreting, and translating English adjectives into Albanian. Using a contrastive analytical framework, this paper analyzes adjectives that end in suffixes, prefixes, compound adjectives, and placement of adjectives in both languages. The findings show significant interlingual differences, such as: Adjectives in English that contain prefixes and suffixes are not always translated into Albanian using the same affixes. Instead, equivalent meanings are often expressed through different morphological forms, in some cases, English adjectives formed with suffixes correspond to Albanian adjectives formed with prefixes. Compound adjectives present particular challenges, as their Albanian equivalents frequently appear as phrases, noun groups, or single adjectives rather than formal compounds. English adjectives are predominantly pre-nominal, whereas Albanian adjectives exhibit morphological adaptation for gender, number, and case and typically occur in post-nominal position. Despite these differences, areas of positive transfer are observed especially in international adjectives with shared lexical roots e.g. *final*, *actual*, *tropical*, etc.. Moreover, this paper also addresses pedagogical variables such as learner age and instructional progression, emphasizing stage-appropriate strategies for adjective instruction. Based on the analysis, this article proposes an interlingual teaching approach that integrates contrastive explanation, structured equivalence tables, contextualized examples, and explicit focus on form–function relationships.

Keywords: adjectives, English language, Albanian language, morphology, translation

1. INTRODUCTION

Adjectives constitute a core component of vocabulary knowledge and play a crucial role in descriptive accuracy and sentence meaning. Research in applied linguistics emphasizes that mastery of adjectives contributes significantly to learners' communicative competence and lexical richness in a second language (Nation, 2001). In Albanian language, there is no specific theory that will explain the transfer of learning adjectives from English language to Albanian language. Our EFL students learn the words as they are, e.g. the word *windy* is learned as it looks. Unfortunately, for all words in the books, no more explanation is given than the meaning and the word group, and in this case the student is interested in the formation of a word himself. Although this type of explanation falls under the area of morphology, however, teachers sometimes need to give additional explanation for them. However, the syntactic component should not be neglected, where the teacher sometimes needs to give a more detailed explanation about the position of an adjective, because it is a difficulty for students of English as a foreign language. In this paper, we will try to deal in more detail with morphology, syntax and semantics, in order to outline strategies and techniques for easier learning of adjectives when translating from English to Albanian. Below are the pedagogical implications for learning adjectives from English to Albanian:

- Importance of learning adjectives from English to Albanian;
- Challenges in learning adjectives from English to Albanian;
- Teaching in learning adjectives from English to Albanian;
- Transfer in learning adjectives from English to Albanian;
- Age in learning adjectives from English to Albanian.

2. IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING ADJECTIVES FROM ENGLISH TO ALBANIAN

Adjectives are important because they are among the most important parts of vocabulary not only in English, but also in other languages. According to their morphological structure, adjectives in Albanian and English can be subdivided into four main groups: simple, derived, participial, and compound. (Millaku, 2024) Every book on learning English as a foreign language includes adjectives as an integral part in terms of vocabulary. When it comes to vocabulary, the most common nouns and verbs are learned first. However, even the simplest structures require an adjective. For example, the auxiliary verb *to be* requires an adjective to form a sentence. The girl *is smart*. In this example, the noun *girl*, which is one of the basic nouns, is taught in introductory English classes. The auxiliary verb

to be is also taught in the first English classes. In order to form a simple or basic sentence, we need an adjective. However, this does not mean that more complex grammatical structures or complex word groups do not require adjectives; moreover, adjectives are proportionally taught together with other word units. In a semantic sense, an adjective can be crucial. An adjective can change the meaning of both nouns and pronouns, as well as the meaning of the entire sentence. This makes adjectives important in a sentence, e.g. She is a *bad* driver. If the adjective is removed, the meaning of the sentence would be completely different. On the other hand, in some cases adjectives are not very important in a noun phrase or sentence. For example, in She is a *smart, nice* and *lovely* girl, removing one of the adjectives, would not affect the overall meaning of the sentence. My own experience of studying adjectives, apart from other benefits, I can freely present my awareness of the importance of adjectives when learning English as a foreign language. This fact encourages me to conclude that the more adjectives we master, the more fluently we speak English and the more confident we become in using the English language.

3. CHALLENGES IN LEARNING ADJECTIVES FROM ENGLISH TO ALBANIAN

Morphology and syntax, as the two main areas of grammar, provide a detailed overview of the way words are used and structured into sentences and phrases. (Nuhiu, 2024). To learn a foreign language, the student needs to know the native language very well, that is, the grammar of that language. To master a foreign language, words should first be filtered through the native language, in which the student will find vocabulary that will be difficult for him to learn. To learn adjectives in English and identify them, the student needs to know the definition of the adjective in the native language, in order to more easily learn them from the foreign language. It is also important for students to know in what form adjectives are found in the English language, which would greatly facilitate the identification of adjectives. Morphological differences between languages often pose difficulties for EFL learners, particularly when adjectives are formed through suffixation and prefixation. English derivational morphology does not consistently correspond to adjectival morphology in other languages, which may result in learner confusion and misanalysis (Bauer, 2003). To learn an adjective from English to Albanian, the student faces difficulties that fall into the areas of morphology, syntax and semantics. Adjectives in Albanian language generally do not have similarities in terms of affixes with adjectives in English. If in English an adjective ends with one type of suffix, this does not mean that in Albanian an adjective would have a single suffix. In Albanian, suffixes and prefixes are used in different forms. In the English language, it is customary to encounter dual adjective phrases composed of combinations of adjectives. (Scontras, 2022). Compound adjective formations differ from English to Albanian in English, all compound adjectives are formed with two words usually connected by a hyphen in the middle of the two words. In Albanian, these adjectives cannot always be translated with a compound adjective formed with two words, i.e. they can be in compound formations, adjectives, phrases or noun groups. Below we will present in the form of a table the adjectives with suffixes, prefixes and compound adjectives in English and their frequent equivalents in Albanian translation. This table will be a relief for students who have difficulty distinguishing and studying the adjective as a word group. The adjectives are presented in *italics*.

Table 1 Easier learning of adjectives with suffixes, prefixes, and compound adjectives in both languages

	Adjectives with suffixes in English language	Translation in Albanian	Albanian correspondents
-y	<i>wealthy</i> people	njerëz të pasur	-ura
-less	<i>primary</i> colors	ngjyra të ndezura	
	<i>purposeless</i> splendor	e shkëlqimit të tij të pakuptimtë	pa + root
-al	completely <i>motionless</i>	krejt e palëvizur	
	<i>provincial</i> inexperience	mendjes sime <i>provinciale</i>	root + al(e)
-ic	<i>metallic</i> cloth	prej cope <i>metalike</i>	
	<i>rhythmic</i> whisper	përshpëritje <i>ritmike</i>	root + ik(e)
	<i>lethargic</i> woman	<i>një grua letargjike</i>	
-ing and -ed participles as adjectives	<i>connecting</i> verandas	verandash të ndërlydhura	1 verb=adjective
	<i>overwhelming</i> surprise	habinë time të madhe	2 noun=adjective
	<i>pleasing</i> contemptuous expression	shprehja e saj e këndshme	3 adjective
	<i>crowded</i> furniture	<i>mobillieve të ngjeshura</i>	root + ur(a)
	<i>vanished</i> trees	pemët e tij të zhdukura	
	Adjectives with prefixes in English language	Translation in Albanian	Albanian correspondents

-un	<i>unquiet</i> darkness	errësirën e paqetë	
	<i>unutterable</i> depression	ligështimin e tij të pamasë	
-in	<i>inevitable</i> chain	një zinxhiri të <i>pashmangshëm</i>	pa+ root
	<i>innumerable</i> receptacles	vazo të panumërta	
-dis	<i>discontented</i> face	fytyrën e merzitur	Different suffixes. -uar and
	a little <i>disgusted</i>	i kapluar nga një ndjesi e pakëndshme	prefixes . ç-, zh-, pa-
<i>comp. adj.</i>	<i>well-rounded</i> man	njeriu i gjithëdijshëm	compound adjectives,
	<i>well-dressed</i> black man	një zezak i veshur mirë	adjectives, phrases
	<i>flat-nosed</i> Jew	një çifut hundështypur	

Source: Data extracted from *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) and its Albanian translation by Stavri Pone.

Apart from the form of the adjective, which presents a difficulty in studying English and Albanian adjectives, another difficulty is the position of the adjective in the English language and its equivalents in the Albanian language. The syntactic placement of adjectives varies cross-linguistically and represents a frequent source of error for language learners. While English typically places adjectives before nouns, many other languages favor post-nominal positioning, requiring explicit pedagogical attention (Quirk et al., 1985). In English, most adjectives are presented in attributive and predicative positions. In the attributive position, English adjectives are both pre-nominal and post-nominal. For pre-nominal adjectives in English, the equivalents in Albanian are found in the post-nominal form, representing an interlingual difference. Post-nominal adjectives in English, on the other hand, in Albanian belong to the post-nominal form, representing an interlingual similarity. Predicative adjectives are generally similar in function and position. The study of adjective placement across languages presents both challenges and opportunities for comparison, particularly when analyzing English and Albanian. The position of adjectives in these two languages plays a significant role in their syntactic structures and semantics. An in-depth examination of the different adjectival positions—attributive and predicative—within both languages can enhance learners' understanding of interlingual syntactic structures. These positions will be presented in the table below for easier study by Albanian students of English as a foreign language. The adjectives are presented in *italics*.

Table 2 Facilitating the study of adjective position in both English and Albanian language

Attributive adjectives		Predicative adjectives	
Pre-nominal adj.in Eng.	Post-nominal adj. in Alb.	Subj. comp. in Eng.	Subj.comp. in Alb.
<i>breathless</i> words	fjalë rymëmbajtëse	I was <i>sure</i>	isha i sigurt
<i>invisible</i> glass	pasqyrë të <i>padukshme</i>	I was <i>confused</i>	ndihesha i hutuar
<i>fascinated</i> eyes	sy të magjepsur	he seemed <i>disappointed</i>	ai dukej i zhgënjyer
<i>indefinable</i> expression	shprehje e papërcaktuar	the flowers were <i>unnecessary</i>	lulet s'ishin të domosdoshme
<i>deathless</i> song	këngë e pavdekshme	she was <i>beautiful</i>	ajo ishte e bukur
Post-nominal adj. in Eng.	Post-nominal adj. in Alb.	Obj.com. in Eng.	Obj.comp. in Alb.
something very <i>sad</i>	diçka tejet të trishtuar	feel <i>uncivilized</i>	ndihem i paqytëruar
nothing <i>valuable</i>	s'kisha ndonjë gjë tjetër <i>më të vlefshme</i>	made me <i>light-headed</i> and <i>happy</i>	më kishte bërë të <i>shkujdesur dhe të lumtur</i>
something <i>elemental</i>	diçka bazale	made them less remotely <i>rich</i>	m'u dukën si më <i>pak të pasur</i>
something <i>happy</i>	diçka të lumtur	made you a little <i>angry</i>	duket se ju mërëzita
anything so <i>hard</i>	diçka kaq të rëndë	made me <i>uneasy</i>	ma humbi qetësinë

Source: Data extracted from *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) and its Albanian translation by Stavri Pone.

3. TEACHING AND LEARNING ADJECTIVES FROM ENGLISH TO ALBANIAN

Teachers should be aware of all possible forms and functions of the adjective. If not completely, the at least partially, he/she should know adjectives from a morphological and syntactic point of view. It is very important to mention that the English language is among the richest languages in the world regarding words. These, the latest dictionaries of the English language have more than a million words. For example, for a single adjective in the Albanian language there are two or more adjectives in the English language that would represent the same meaning.

This fact poses a major problem for Albanian students and learners of English. Here I would suggest that teachers keep in mind that some concepts are better taught directly with English synonyms or English explanations. Another very important point is the source of information, that is, the texts that will be used as books. Fortunately, we have many texts available that can be used to study the English language. However, it is best to use multiple sources on the same topic, such as books from Cambridge and Oxford, but also American books by eminent authors.

4. TRANSFER IN LEARNING ADJECTIVES FROM ENGLISH TO ALBANIAN

Interlingual transfer is a central phenomenon in second language acquisition, whereby learners rely on structures and categories from their native language when learning a foreign language. This transfer may be positive or negative, depending on the degree of similarity between the two linguistic systems (Odlin, 1989). The Albanian language is considered one of the oldest Indo-European languages, with roots in the ancient Illyrian language, and it does not have a close genetic relationship with any other Indo-European language. This characteristic makes it specific in terms of words. On the other hand, the English language belongs to the group of Germanic languages with a rich vocabulary. Here we should also mention the role of Great Britain in world history. Namely, Great Britain played a significant role in colonization. Every country that was a colony of Great Britain contributed new words to the English language. The vocabulary has become so rich that we can freely say that the English dictionary has at least ten times more words than the Albanian language. All these facts affect the transfer when learning the English language by students whose native language is Albanian. Students learning a foreign language often begin with concepts and words that exist in their native language before encountering those that do not. They start from the known to the unknown. Phrase units that are the same are easy to transfer compared to phrase units that are not the same. When it comes to adjectives, Albanian students of English need to find those adjectives that are the same or similar and those adjectives that are different. It is worth mentioning that compound adjective formations are difficult to learn because their equivalents in Albanian language are mostly adjectives, nouns, noun phrases, etc. However, when transferring adjectives from English to Albanian, there is another difficulty, and that is the adjective agreement. Learners whose first language includes adjective agreement may experience difficulty acquiring invariable adjective systems in English (Hawkins & Filipović, 2022). In Albanian, unlike in English, adjectives agree with in terms of gender, number and case. In contrast, English adjectives do not inflect for gender, number and case. The following examples illustrate these types of adjectival agreement in Albanian: a) agreement by gender: *djalë i mençur* (masculine), *vajzë e mençur* (feminine); b) agreement by number: *djalë i mençur* (singular) *djem të mençur* (plural), and c) agreement by case: *një dritë të përhimët* (accusative, definite adjective form). Below we present English adjectives that are similar to Albanian (and therefore easy to transfer) as well as adjectives that differ between the two languages (and are more difficult to transfer). The adjectives are presented in *italics*.

Table 3 Similar (identical) and miscellaneous adjectives in both languages

Adjectives that are similar to transfer		Adjectives that are difficult to transfer	
Pre-nominal adj. in Eng	Post-nominal adj. in Alb.	Post-nominal adj. in Eng.	Post-nominal adj. in Alb.
<i>actual</i> situation	situatë <i>aktuale</i>	<i>bloody</i> towels	<i>peshqirë të gjakosur</i>
<i>formal</i> education	arsim <i>formal</i>	<i>wealthy</i> people	<i>njerez të pasur</i>
<i>final</i> evaluation	vlerësim <i>final</i>	<i>endless</i> drill	<i>lëvizje e pandërprerë</i>
<i>mineral</i> resources	burime <i>minerale</i>	<i>careless</i> people	<i>njerez të shkujdesur</i>
<i>material</i> evidence	prova <i>materiale</i>	more <i>charming</i> than	<i>më magjepsës</i>
<i>normal</i> conditions	kushte <i>normale</i>	<i>surprising</i> amount	<i>forcë të habitshme</i>
<i>colonial</i> period	periudhë <i>koloniale</i>	<i>vanished</i> trees	<i>pemë të zhdukura</i>
<i>sentimental</i> feelings	ndjenja <i>sentimentale</i>	<i>excited</i> officers	<i>oficerë të emocionuar</i>
<i>universal</i> value	vlerë <i>universale</i>	<i>unquiet</i> darkness	<i>errësirën e paqetë</i>
<i>tropical</i> climate	klimë <i>tropikale</i>	<i>undefined</i> concept	<i>koncept i papërcaktuar</i>
<i>artistic</i> expression	shprehje <i>artistike</i>	<i>inevitable</i> outcome	<i>pasojë e pashmangshëm</i>
<i>anaemic</i> student	nxënës <i>anemik</i>	<i>innumerable</i> stars	<i>yje të panumërta</i>
<i>historic</i> achievement	arritje <i>historike</i>	<i>disconcerting</i> news	<i>lajme shqetësuese</i>
<i>Nordic</i> countries	shtete <i>nordike</i>	<i>dishevelled</i> hair	<i>flokë të shprishur</i>
<i>dramatic</i> change	ndryshim <i>dramatik</i>	<i>well-rounded</i> education	<i>arsim i gjithëdijshëm</i>
<i>platonic</i> relationship	marrëdhënie <i>platonike</i>	<i>well-loved</i> eyes	<i>sytë e saj të dashuruar</i>
<i>rhythmic</i> pattern	model <i>ritmik</i>	<i>hard-boiled</i> painting	<i>marrëzish</i>
			<i>portret vetullngrysur</i>

<i>specific example</i>	shembull <i>specifik</i>	wine-colored rug	mbi qilimin në ngjyrë verë të kuqe
<i>romantic gesture</i>	gjest <i>romantik</i>	well-forgotten dreams	ëndërrat e harruara
<i>metallic surface</i>	sipërfaqe <i>metalike</i>	semi-final round	në ndeshjen gjysmëfinale

Source: Data extracted from *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) and its Albanian translation by Stavri Pone.

5. AGE AND LEARNING ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH

Age and developmental stage influence how learners acquire grammatical categories, with younger learners relying more on implicit learning and older learners benefiting from explicit instruction (Slabakova, 2023). Early exposure to a foreign language, beginning around the age of nine, is considered optimal for language learning. For effective acquisition of adjectives from English to Albanian, learners must be able to distinguish adjectives from other word classes and possess a sufficiently developed English vocabulary. As vocabulary expands, adjective learning becomes more manageable. Following Ivir's (1983) classification, adjective acquisition can be divided into five age-related stages. In the *first stage* (ages 9–10), adjectives are introduced as lexical items without grammatical categorization, and learning depends primarily on conceptual familiarity rather than grammatical rules. During the *second stage* (ages 10–12), adjectives are presented in basic pre-nominal attributive positions, with limited focus on predicative use. Learners are also introduced to the positive, comparative, and superlative degrees of adjectives. The *third stage* (ages 12–14) expands adjectival knowledge to include comparative structures of equality and non-comparison, superlatives involving two entities, adjectives without head nouns, and adjectives denoting nationality and language. At the *fourth stage* (high school and university level), learners develop advanced understanding of adjective use, including attributive and predicative distinctions, participial adjectives, adjective order, post-nominal modification, object complements, and formulaic and verbless adjective constructions. In the *fifth stage*, learners acquire complex adjectival structures such as prepositional, clausal, and infinitival expansions of predicative adjectives, as well as advanced comparative and superlative constructions. These stages highlight the importance of age-appropriate and progressive instruction in adjective learning.

6. CONCLUSION

Adjectives are central to vocabulary development and sentence meaning in second language acquisition. English adjectives pose challenges for Albanian learners due to differences in morphology, syntax, and semantics. English adjectives are largely invariable and often pre-nominal, while Albanian adjectives agree in terms of gender, number, and case and are typically post-nominal. These differences can lead to negative transfer, particularly in compound formations and adjective placement. However, positive transfer occurs with similar and internationally recognized adjectives, supporting vocabulary acquisition. Effective pedagogical strategies include contrastive explanation, structured equivalence tables, and contextualized examples, which enhance learners' metalinguistic awareness and accuracy. Age and developmental stage influence acquisition, requiring progressive, stage-appropriate instruction from lexical recognition to syntactic and semantic complexity. Systematic interlingual teaching of adjectives improves grammatical accuracy, lexical richness, and communicative confidence. Overall, integrating contrastive, explicit, and developmentally informed approaches is essential for effective EFL instruction of adjectives.

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