

Contrastive analysis of the dependent subject clause in Albanian and English

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Abstract:

During the process of foreign language learning, it often happens that students are influenced by native language rules while formulating their ideas in a foreign language, thus failing to pay due account of the fact that linguistic aspects are different in different languages. In light of this finding, this paper/presentation intends to make a contrastive analysis designed to demonstrate, both from a theoretical and practical perspective, similarities and differences between subject clauses in English and Albanian, from a syntactical point of view. The following presentation examines some of the linguistic means used to express a subject clause in both languages; their structural typology (based on the conjugation means); the grammatical agreements between the categories of number and person, both direct or otherwise, that this type of sentence establishes with the predicate of the main clause of a complex sentence; as well as its order in the complex sentence.

The similarities and differences we intend to unfold in this analysis are expected to be of value to two target-groups: it shall serve English language students as an example illustrating that failure to take account of these linguistic differences in the way a sentence is formed, would result in the use of grammatically erroneous structures and, consequently, create obstacles in interlingual communication. This presentation shall also serve English language university students who may use this modest and by no means exhausting presentation, and elaborate it to a greater extent and in greater detail in their scientific papers.

Key Words: *subject clause, principal clause, predicate, agreement in person and number, subject-verb agreement, order.*

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Definition of subject clause

Before we define dependent subject clauses, we should have a general insight into what subject is, given that the function of a subject clause in a complex sentence is similar to that of a subject in a simple sentence.

Definition in Albanian language: The subject is the main nominal or pronominal part of a two-component clause that has predicative relations with the predicate.¹ Another definition defines the subject as 'nominal or pronominal part of a sentence that depends on the predicate, that is joined with it, and that defines the subject of the action by joining in predicative relation with the predicate.'²

Definition in English language: The subject of a clause is a person or thing discussed in the sentence. The predicate often comments or refers to the subject.³ Another definition states: the Subject of a clause is a person, thing, place, idea, etc., which is or does something. One may identify the subject if he/she can identify the predicate/verb.⁴

What these definitions have in common, both in Albanian and English, is their nominal or pronominal nature of the subject, which functions as the main part of a sentence and it represents the doer or the causer of an action or state, as well as the object or the phenomenon which the sentence refers to. Consequently, this noun, pronoun, enumerator or any other nominal part of speech is in the definite or indefinite nominative case.

Moreover, the aforementioned definitions have in common the inevitable connection between the subject and the predicate. What does predicative relation imply? What is the impact that predicate has upon subject? The predicate supports the subject to express syntactic modality, syntactic tense and syntactic person. Employing

¹Akademia e Shkencave, *Gjuha Shqipe 2*. Tiranë, 2002, p. 167.

²Buena Haziri, *Gramatika e Gjuhës Shqipe*, Mileniumi i Tretë. Prishtinë, 2009. p. 35.

³Berk. M.Lynn, *English syntax: from word to discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 11.

⁴<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/subjects.htm>

morphological forms of voice in Albanian and English, reflected on the verb-predicate, we express the reality or unreality of a process.⁵ The subject and the predicate are both the principal syntactic components of a clause consisted of two main components.⁶

The aforementioned explanations pertaining to subject shall guide us toward a more complex syntactic phenomenon: to dependent subject clause. A complex sentence consisting of a dependent subject clause is the one which has a dependent clause functioning as a subject of the complex clause, the function of which is the same as a simple subject in a simple clause consisted of only two components⁷ (2002). 10 years later, Mehmet Çeliku is proposing another nomenclature for the subject clause. He presented the term quasi-sentence (*sifjali*) for the clauses functioning as components in a sentence.

He maintains that a sentence with subject clause is the one in which the dependent complementary clause functions as the subject of the verb-predicate to the main clause. Thus, the verb of the main clause needs to be complemented by a subject expressed with the components of the quasi-sentence.⁸ (2012).

The following definition is provided for the subject clause in English language: the dependent nominal clause, which functions as the subject in a complex sentence.⁹

Structural subtypes of subject clause

In Albanian language, subject clauses are categorized into:

- Subject clauses expressed with defining conjunctions: *se, e, që*, with time conjunctions *kur*, and with conjunction *si*; with interrogative particles *a, mos*.

⁵Akademia e Shkencave, *Gjuha Shqipe 2*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 110.

⁶Mehmet Çeliku, *Sintaksë e gjuhës shqipe (përbërësit sintaksorë)*, Tiranë, Shtëpia botuese ILAR, 2012. p. 356.

⁷Akademia e shkencave, *Gjuha shqipe 2*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 503.

⁸Mehmet Çeliku, *Sintaksë e gjuhës shqipe (Përbërësit Sintaksorë)*, Shtëpia botuese ILAR, Tiranë, 2012. p. 356.

⁹Vesel Nuhju, *English Syntax*, III edition, Prishtine, Alfaprint, 2012, p. 130.

Example: Ishte e qartë që ata e kishin marrë vesh lajmin se anija ishte mbytur. I dukej sikur gjithë njërezit i kishin sytë tek ai. I është thënë të vijë pa u vonuar. Dorës i ra në sy menjëherë se Marku ishte ligur mjaft. Po si ndodhi xhanëm që e humbët rrugën? Është fakt se populli shqiptar i kaloi të gjitha këto vështirësi. E keqja është se nuk kemi bërë aq sa duhet. Është e vërtetë se kurrë ndonjëherë nuk është parë ndonjë aktivitet i tillë krijues i masave.

While analyzing “Është e vërtetë se...” in Albanian and “It is true that...” in English, it may be observed that in Albanian the personal pronoun is missing. This is possible because the grammatical category of person of the pronoun acting as the subject is transferred onto the verb through its conjugation. This is not possible in English. The personal pronoun in the function of the subject is always present in order to clarify the grammatical category of person of the verb. This occurs because of the analytical nature of English language as apposed to the synthetic nature of Albanian language.

- Pronominal subject clauses are expressed with pronouns, interrogative adverbs and indefinite conjunctive pronouns: *kush, ç, çfarë, se (me se, nga se), sa, i sati, ku, nga, që kur, gjithë çka, gjithë sa*.¹⁰ Example: **Kush nuk mëson në djalëri** nuk gjen nder në pleqëri. **Ç’fluturon, s’hahet. Gjithë sa tregova më lartë**, ndodhi dy vite të shkuara.

- Dependent Wh-question subject clauses. This type of subject clause may also admit the pronoun “se” in front of the relative pronoun or adverb, and it pertains to verbs and verb phrases of discourse, perception and mental processes.¹¹ These verbs and phrases can be found in interrogative clauses, demonstrative privative clauses or clauses consisted of lexical elements that show uncertainty and raising questions; it contains an interrogative structure, but it almost loses its interrogative intonation; it is joined with interrogative words such as the interrogative pronouns: *kush, cili, cila*, etc.

¹⁰Akademia e shkencave, *Gjuha shqipe 2*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 506.

¹¹Ibid.

Example: Nuk më kujtohet mirë **se me cilin karvan erdhëm në shtëpi**.

In English language, the types of subject clauses are: relative (that) clauses, (Alb. fjali me përemra lidhorë). Example: **That she is still alive** is a consolation; dependent yes-no clauses, dependent wh-questions (Alb. fjali pyetëse e zhdrejtë me ose pa fjalë pyetëse). Example: **How the book will sell** depends on the author. **Whether he will show up** is not clear; finite relative clauses (Alb. fjali me forma të shtjelluara të foljes): **Whoever wants to come**, may come; and non-finite clauses (infinite and gerundial) (Alb. forma të pashtjelluara të foljes dhe emër foljor) Example: **For a bridge to collapse like this** is unbelievable. **Telling unimportant things by telephone** is expensive.

*¹While comparing the abovementioned examples in both languages, we observe the usage of the non-finite verb forms in the English clauses (infinitive and gerundial). In Albanian, these forms are expressed with other linguistic components, with the finite verbs in subjunctive mood and a verbal noun respectively. The non-finite form expressed with *-ing* suffix (gerund) in Albanian corresponds to the verbal noun. In rare cases it can be expressed with a finite verb in the indicative mood.

Example: **Telling unimportant things by telephone** is expensive. **Të bërit/Bërja e bisedave të parëndësishme në telefon** është e shtrenjtë.

The non-finite form (infinitive) in English corresponds to a finite verb form in Albanian, with a verb in subjunctive mood respectively.

Example: **For a bridge to collapse like this** is unbelievable. **Që ura të shëmbet kështu** është e pabesueshme.

Considering the finite character of the verb in the subjunctive mood in Albanian, we can assume that they are inflected to express the grammatical category of tense. There is a tense agreement between

*¹ There are two grammatical meanings expressed with the same form "verb+ing": Present Participle corresponds to the non-finite form of "përcjellore" in Albanian; Gerund corresponds to the verbal noun in Albanian. The latter is the focus of this study.

the verb in the subjunctive mood of the main clause with the verb of the subject clause.

Example: **Që ura të shëmbet kështuëshhtë** e pabesueshme. (Simple Present tense). **Që ura të shëmbej kështuëshite** e pabesueshme. (Simple Past tense)

When the gerundial phrase is placed after the verb and is introduced by the anticipatory "it", it is equivalent to a verb in the subjunctive mood or a verbal noun in Albanian.¹²

Example: It's worth/no good/ no use **saving money**. Ia vlen/Nuk ia vlen **të kursesh para**.(subjunctive mood - "lidhore"). **Kursimi/Të kursyerit** e parave ia vlen/nuk ia vlen. (verbal noun - emër foljor).

The tense of such finite verb in the subjunctive mood depends on the time reference of the verb of the main clause.¹³

Example: It **was** nice **meeting you**. Gëzohem/ Ishte kënaqësi që të **takova**.

In rare cases, when the gerundial phrase corresponds to a subject clause in Albanian, the gerund may be equivalent to a finite verb of the indicative mood in Albanian.¹⁴

Example: His **obtaining** that job didn't surprise me. Nuk **u çudita** që ai ka zënë atë vend pune.

Person and number agreement between the subject clause and the verb of the main clause

As we have mentioned above, there is an unavoidable agreement between the subject and the predicate, which forms the structural and semantic core of a two-component clause.¹⁵ In Albanian language, this

¹²Jani Panolli, *Aspects of contrastive and corrective grammar*, Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, 2000, p. 59.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁵Mehmet Çeliku, *Sintaksë e gjuhës shqipe (Përbërësit Sintaksorë)* Tiranë, Shtëpia botuese ILAR, 2012. p. 7.

is a grammatical relation whereby the predicate and the subject agree in person and number and in some languages even in gender.¹⁶

The same agreement is also found in English language; however, considering the analytical nature of English language, this structural agreement is found in the verbs in the present tense, in the third person singular and in auxiliary verbs "to be" and "to have". On the other hand, Albanian language, as a synthetic language, expresses this agreement in all verb tenses and moods through suffixes admitted by the verb during conjugation. Albanian language, as an inflective language, possesses a wide range of morphological forms, whereby it possesses numerous possibilities to clearly express syntactic relations in a clause.¹⁷ Example: **Ajo vajzë është** nga Durrësi. **Ato vajzat janë** nga Durrësi.

In English language, the agreement is the same and straightforward.¹⁸: This pen **is** mine. These pens **are** mine. What was stated above, pertaining to the agreement in person, however, is referred to the subject and not to the dependent subject clause. As far as the latter is concerned, in Albanian language, the subject clause does not necessarily determine the grammatical category of person and number of the main clause, its verb-predicate respectively.

Example: Nuk **është** ende e qartë **nëse do ta vizitojmë Shqipërinë**. Nuk **e kanë** ende të qartë **nese ai do ta vizitojë Shqipërinë**.

This occurs because frequently the main and the dependent clause do not refer to the same entity or does not imply that the actions referring to both clauses are rendered by the same person. In the given example, we have two configurations whereby it is demonstrated that both clauses of the sentence do not correspond in person and number since the actions expressed by the both respective clauses do not refer to the actions performed by the same persons. If the subject clause would be placed before the main clause the predicate of the main clause would be in the third person singular regardless of the number of the verb in the subject clause.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Akademia e shkencave, *Gjuha shqipe* 2, Tiranë, 2002, p. 68.

¹⁸Vjekoslav Karlovčan. *A survey of English Grammar*, Zagreb, 1985, p. 109.

Example: **Nëse ai do ta vizitojë Shqipërinë nuk është** ende e qartë. **Nëse ata do ta vizitojnë Shqipërinë nuk është** ende e qartë.

We may employ the same logic even on pronominal subject clause. Example: Kush **duron, trashëgon. Sa ishin** shqiptarë, **ishin** burra të vertetë. This grammatical agreement occurs because both clauses of the sentence refer to the same person or persons.

In English, we observe a tendency to utilize the verb in the function of predicate in the third person singular. It is worthwhile to mention that the verb “*tobe*” is more frequently used in comparison to other verbs. We shall observe examples mentioned below that will illustrate the utilization of verb “*tobe*” alongside other verbs in the third person singular. The usual application of the third person singular, like in Albanian, depends on the placement of the subject clause before the main clause. The agreement of the verb in the third person singular occurs also because the subject clause is considered as complete entity, as an abstract unit, as a representative of a fact, phenomenon, occurrence etc.

That he is clever **is** obvious. / That he is clever **doesn't mean** much.

Whether he is writing another book **is** not known. / Whether he is writing another book **won't make** any difference.

Who will come tonight **is** not known. / Who will come tonight **hasn't beentold** yet.

To win the match **was** his greatest ambition. / To win the match **didn't help** him in his career.

The order of subject clauses

In Albanian, the order of clauses in a complex sentence, as well as in a simple sentence, is relatively flexible and loose. The order of the dependent subject clause versus the main one depends on the grammatical or stylistic factors. It is determined by structural reasons when the main clause lacks a subject. It is determined by semantic and stylistic reasons when we want to emphasize the subject clause or the

main clause.¹⁹ In a complex sentence with a dependent subjunctive clause, the order may be both stringent (main clause – dependent clause) and free.

The order of clauses is strict when the subject clause depends on the verbs showing desire, volition, necessity, and when subject clause is a dependent *wh* question or dependent imperative clause. The dependent clause is not divided by a comma¹⁸. The opposite order in these sentences is impossible.²⁰

Example: **Kërkohet që të ngrihet përgjithësisht niveli kulturor i puntorit e i fshatarit.**

The same applies to verbs such as: *ndodh, ngjan, rastis*. Example: **Ju ka ndodhur ndonjëherë të dalldisni nga zemërimi? Ndodh ndonjëherë të zemërohen edhe të urtët.**

The order of clauses is flexible when the predicate is verbal and is expressed with verbs of discourse, perception and mental processes. “dependent clause – main clause” is the most common order. In this case, the main expressive charge lays on the dependent clause. The sentence is not divided with a comma. Example: **Flitej nga qyteti se po i bënëin fërtele tregtarët e mëdhenj.**

The opposite order, (main clause – dependent clause) puts the expressive charge on the main clause. Example: **Që Sulltan Murati e shkeli Shqipërinë në 1421** provohet edhe nga një tjetër burim.

Regarding the order of clauses in a complex sentence in English, in most cases it is as follows: Subject – Verb/Predicate – object. The strict order, as we have noted above, occurs because English language is an analytical language and as such, the functions and syntactic relations of the clause components are expressed through their order in a sentence and not through inflections. Example: John Loves Ann. Ann loves John. The same unchanged word may function as a subject (when it is in the beginning of the sentence) and may function as an object if it follows the verb-predicate. The same applies to subject clauses where we have the same strict order (subject clause – main clause).

¹⁹Akademia e shkencave, *Gjuha shqipe 2*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 508.

²⁰Ibid., p. 510

Sometimes the position of the subject clause is removed from its usual position at the beginning of the sentence to the end of the main clause. This phenomenon is called “extraposition”. In this case, the usual position of the subject is filled by an “empty” (anticipatory, introductory, dummy) “it”.²¹

Example: **To help poor and old people** is very human. It is very human **to help poor and old people**.

In this case, the main verb is always the verb “to be” and the predicate is always nominal. It can be followed by (1) an adjective: It is **advisable** to check out the system to make sure there are no errors in the software. (2) a verbal adjective: It was **embarrassing** to forget her name even after meeting her for the fifth time. Është e sikletshme të harrosh emrin e saj edhe pasi e kam takuar pesë here. (3) gerund (emra foljor): It is pleasant **being** with you here. Është kënaqësi **të jemi** këtu me ju. (4) a finite verb: It’s a fact that she is now the best writer. Është fakt/Dihet që ajo tashmë është shkrimtarja më e mirë. Hence, it is worthwhile to mention, bearing in mind the translation of the abovementioned sentences, that the possessive pronoun “it”, which functions as an empty subject in English, can be omitted in Albanian since the grammatical category of person rests upon the verb through its inflections.

Conclusions:

In this paper, we observed the similarities and differences in complex sentences with a dependent subject clause in Albanian and English. From the undertaken analysis, we have concluded that, in both languages, the subject clause is a nominal or pronominal clause which functions as a subject of the predicate in the main clause. Moreover, the relation between the subject clause and the predicate of the main clause is a direct grammatical and structural relation. In both languages, it is the predicate which complements the subject in order to express the category of modality, tense and person.

²¹Vesel Nuhiu, *English Syntax*, III edition, Prishtine, Alfaprint, 2012, p. 132

As far as the typology of subject clauses is concerned, in Albanian language we have three main streams: subject subjunctive clauses; pronominal clauses and dependent *wh* question clauses. Despite these linguistic devices, in English language we have noticed that the subject clause is also expressed by non-finite verb forms (infinitive and gerund). The latter is expressed in Albanian language with a finite verb forms and with gerund.

As for the order of the subject clause of a complex sentence in Albanian, it is relatively free since syntactic functions of the words are determined by its inflections. Such flexibility does not apply in English language, wherein the order is stricter and the subject clause is followed by the main clause. In particular cases, the subject clause may be positioned at the end of the complex sentence and its place may be occupied by an 'empty' subject which is realized by possessive pronoun 'it.' This linguistic phenomenon is not present in Albanian language. In Albanian language, we may omit the use of possessive pronoun in the function of the subject since the person of the verb indicates the meaning of the pronoun.

Additionally, it was important to take into consideration the relation between subject clause and the predicate of the main clause. As we have mentioned above, there is a direct agreement between the subject and the predicate. Nevertheless, in our analysis, we noted that in the case of a complex sentence with a subject clause, this is not always the case. In Albanian language, we observed two types of sentences: 1) the grammatical category of person of the verb-predicate in the main clause corresponds with subject clause and 2) the grammatical category of person of the verb-predicate in the main clause does not correspond with subject clause. In the first case, from the semantic point of view, we do not deal with a single doer of an action referring to both clauses of the sentence. In English language, we observed the usage of the verb in the third person singular. This occurs since the subject clause is always positioned before the main clause and is thus perceived as an entity, which would correspond to the third person singular.

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