Research Article

NOUN PHRASES AND THEIR SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

Syntax

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Abstract

A phrase is a word or a group of words that may stand as a single grammatical unit. It can be part of a clause or a sentence with or without any specific meaning. Phrases are mandatory constituents of simple, complex and compound sentences. The syntax of Albanian language has an early beginning, but its development is still an ongoing process. The main issues faced by the syntax of Albanian language have been the terminology, definition and classification of grammar and syntactic units. In the syntax of Albanian language there is a constant process of codification, i.e., definition of units and syntactic categories. Our interest here is the definition of the terms *word-group, syntagm, phrase* and *syntactic constituent*. On the other hand, the term *phrase* is well defined in English language. Clear and timely classification of different types of phrases has facilitated syntactic analysis of clauses and sentences. Phrases and the types of phrases are different in English and Albanian language. Apart from the type, the number of phrases is also different. The noun phrase is the most important phrase in both English and Albanian language because of its syntactic functions. While other phrases have more limited syntactic functions, noun phrases may function as a subject, object (direct or indirect object), subject complement, object complement, modifier or apposition.

Research Questions and Research Methodology

While the term *phrase* in English is more than clear, Albanian language has gone through several stages until the definition of the term *phrase* or the widely-known *syntagm*. More specifically, Albanian language has been influenced by different languages regarding grammar terminology. The term *syntagm* in Albanian language is more widely used than the term *phrase*. In fact, they are both the same thing if they are closely analysed. But there is another term that has been widely used in Albanian language – *word group*. It has been and it is still used by the Grammar of the Albanian Language Academy. This term is slightly different from the two above-mentioned terms. What Albanian language needs is the definition of the terminology and a closer approach by linguists on the terms used in grammar. Linguists must keep pace with developments made in other languages, especially in English language.

Noun phrases are very important in both English and Albanian language. The noun phrase is distinguished from other phrases because it is a phrase that can have more syntactic functions than any other phrase. A clear distinction of the syntactic functions is necessary to clearly understand the grammar of a specific language.

The following methods were used for this paper:

Descriptive Method

The definition of the topic of a research is very important part of a paper since it gives a clear idea to the reader. This method describes the topic and object of the research, factors that affect specific terms related to phrases and noun phrases, and the influence that one language may have on another language.

Inductive and Deductive Method

The inductive method aims at developing a theory. On the other hand, the deductive method aims at testing the existing theories. By comparing these two methods we come to different conclusions. Data analysis is important to come to reliable conclusions as well. Researchers by using these two parallel methods use observations to build approaches or describe the phenomena or issues.

Comparative Method

The comparative method is used to perform a feature-by-feature comparison of the given examples with noun phrases in both English and Albanian language. It helps in comparing different types of syntactic functions and identifying similar or distinct features. Examples with noun phrases in English and Albanian language give us a clear idea of their similarities and differences.

Literature Review

Starting from Dionis Trakasi until the 20th century, only two units were used in syntax: *words* and *sentences*. Linguists constantly noticed that something was missing, and it was Bloomfield the one who distinguished *group of words* as a separate unit through the method of *Immediate Constituents Analysis*[1]. According to him, sentences are parsed into a subject and a predicate, and they are further parsed into words, phrases or clauses. This was the beginning of sentence parsing and the development of the well-known tree structure analysis. The development of the X-bar theory, and later the Phrase Structure Grammar approach, was mainly to highlight the properties of languages[2], but the main goal was to make a clear distinction of the sentence constituents.

It is quite interesting to note that Albanian grammar structure was studied from the USSR period. Desnickaja in her study brings out some characteristic features of the development of Albanian language morphology, especially the creation of new inflectional forms (as a result of

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[1] McCawley J. D. 'Syntax and Semantics', Seminar Press, 1972, p. 230.
[2] Fukui N. 'Phrase Structure', in Mark Baltin & Chris Collins (eds.) 'The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory,' Blackwell, 2011, p. 376.

merging analytical syntagms), passing of theme elements to inflections, verb categories expressed through certain grammar indicators[3], etc. Different issues took place after many attempts to set certain grammar norms. According to Celiku, today there are two basic trends and tendencies, i.e., the effort for analysis and classification, and the effort for standardization and codification[4]. Both these efforts have contributed to solving different noun and verb issues in Albanian language. These efforts were not limited only to nouns and verbs, but they helped in solving issues with proper nouns, noun cases, categorization of non-finite verb forms and the introduction of the new term *syntactic constituent* instead of the term syntagm or phrase[5].

The syntax of Albanian language has gone through difficult periods of defining some very important issues. The definition of some basic concepts in syntax was the main goal of linguists. A very important book defining basic terms and concepts was '*Sintaksa*' by Stefan Prifti where the concept of *syntactic unit* is treated. The term *syntagm* is seen as an umbrella term with words derived from foreign words, as potential sentence units, one-word sentences, compound sentences or parts of them. Later, Spiro Floqi in 1968 added a third syntactic unit – the concept of *group of words*[6]. Before generativism, structuralist syntax and the syntax based on group of words did not manage to solve key issues, and structuralist linguistics managed to divide sentences in immediate constituents. Still, it did not achieve proper syntactic analysis. As a result, this issue was overcome by generative linguistics which provided solutions, and even introduced innovations such as the tree diagram which can present syntactic functions of words[7]. This provided a new and really simple approach in sentence analysis. An advantage of tree diagram analysis is that all languages in the world can be analysed using this tree diagram.

The phrase in Albanian language is considered a maximal syntactic constituent and was first used by M. Domi in 1964 who considered it a grammatical, semantic and intonational unit[8]. The use of the term phrase did not end with Domi, but it also continued with M. Totoni. According to her, a phrase is a syntactic unit with completed intonation and a full meaning within a certain context and is considered a complete syntactic unit[9]. But these were not the only inputs in Albanian language regarding these terms. In addition to the above-mentioned terms, a recent term to substitute these terms has been introduced. According to M. Celiku, the term *syntactic constituent* is the closest term with the widely used term in Albanian – *syntagm*. The syntactic constituent is a term almost equivalent with syntagm, phrase or group of words used in contemporary linguistics and it expresses the same concepts[10]. Regardless of the term being used,

[3] Kuçi S. "Studimet mbi strukturën e shqipes në BRSS (Monografi)", Allcoa Impex, Pristina, 2013, p. 71

[4] Çeliku M. "Probleme të morfologjisë së gjuhës së sotme shqipe", Libri Universitar, Tirana, 1997, p. 9.

[5] Çeliku M. "Probleme të morfologjisë së gjuhës së sotme shqipe", Libri Universitar, Tirana, 1997, p. 1.

[6] Memushaj R., "Tri koncepte themelore të sintaksës moderne", Studime Filologjike, 2008, p. 161

[7] Ibid, p. 162.

[8] Domi M., "Sintaksa (për shkollat pedagogjike), Tiranë, 1964; dhe "Sintaksa e gjuhës shqipe II, " konspekt-leksione, Tirana, 1969, p. 1-3.

[9] Totoni M., "Fraza me nënrenditje", SHBLU, Tirana, 2000, p. 9.

[10] Çeliku M., "Sintaksë e gjuhës shqipe (përbërësit sintaksorë)", ILAR, Tirana, 2012, p. 1.

the most important thing is how those phrases are put in sentences and what syntactic functions they have in those sentences.

English language has no issues or uncertainties regarding the term phrase. What we can highlight when comparing Albanian and English language is that there are syntactic rules that apply to both languages. This claim makes us analyse Noam Chomsky's generativism in his '*Syntactic Structures*' book who considers the language as something innate with a system of universal categories, common to all languages in the world. These are the phonetic, lexical (nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc.) and syntactic (noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives phrases, etc.) categories and it was Chomsky the one who introduced *phrase structure grammar*[11]. This shows us that the phrase has a certain structure, its head and modifiers (specifiers or modifiers). Sentence analysis has become easier with the introduction of the X-bar theory[12] which facilitates the distribution of sentence constituents in corresponding phrases, including their heads and modifiers.

Noun Phrases and Their Syntactic Functions

A brief introduction of phrases in English and Albanian language must be given before discussing noun phrases. This introduction is necessary because first of all the number of phrases is not the same in both languages, and there are some differences in the types of phrases as well.

According to Quirk, phrases[13] in English language are divided into:

1. Noun phrases (NP) – *green <u>car</u>/<u>makinë</u> e gjelbër*
2. Verb phrases (VP) - *<u>play</u> badly/<u>luaj</u> keq*
3. Adjective phrases (AdjP) - *very <u>attractive</u>/shumë <u>tërheqës</u>*
4. Adverbial phrases (AP) - *very <u>gently</u>/shumë <u>butë</u>*
5. Prepositional phrases (PP) - *<u>in</u> the morning/<u>në</u> mëngjes*

On the other hand, according to the Grammar of the Academy of Sciences of Albania[14] phrases are divided into:

1. Noun phrases (NP) - *green <u>bike</u>/<u>biçikletë</u> e gjelbër*
2. Verb phrases (VP) - *<u>sings</u> well/<u>këndon</u> mirë*
3. Adjective phrases (AdjP) - *very <u>beautiful</u>/shumë <u>e bukur</u>*
4. Numeral phrases (NumP) - *<u>three</u> of my sons/<u>tre</u> nga djemtë e mi*
5. Pronoun phrases (PronP) - *<u>each</u> of them/<u>secili</u> prej tyre*
6. Adverbial phrases (AP) - *very <u>well</u>/shumë <u>mire</u>*

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[11] Chomsky N. 'Syntactic Structures,' Mouton de Gruyter, 1957, p. 59.
[12] Memushaj R., "Gjuhësia gjenerative", SHBLU, Tiranë, 2008, p. 78.
[13] Quirk R., Greenbaum S., Leech G. &Svartvik J. "A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language", Longman, 1985, p. 38.
[14] Akademia e Shkencave, G. "Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe 2", Tiranë, 2002, p. 85-86

Another approach on phrases has been made by Celiku who recognizes the following phrases (according to him, syntactic constituents): NP, VP, AdjP, AP, PronP and NumP[15]. But why complicate things with phrases in Albanian language when there is another identical division of phrases like phrases in English. Th. Dhima recognizes the same phrases like Quirk, i.e., NP, AdjP, VP, AP and PP[16]. He does not exclude the presence of pronouns or numerals, but they are simply a part of the NP, similar like with the NP in English language.

Noun phrases in Albanian language: Noun phrases in Albanian language can be of the type: *noun + noun (djemtë dhe vajzat), noun + indefinite noun (fletore dhe libra), noun + noun in ablative case (bukë thekre), noun + preposition + indefinite noun (çaj me sheqer), noun + definite noun (makina e shoqes), noun + infinitive (nevoja për të filluar), noun + adjective (liqen i gjerë), noun + numeral (tre shtëpi)* and *noun + adverb (shtëpia lart)*[17]. Noun phrases in Albanian language may have different syntactic functions, as follows:

> *Oqeani* *është aq i bukur./The ocean is so beautiful*. (Subject)
> *Ai bleu makinë./He bought a car*. (Direct Object)
> *Ai i bleu të dashurës së tij një lule./He bought his girlfriend a flower*. (Indirect Object)
> *Ai kishte goma dimri./He had winter tires*. (Modifier)
> *Jonida iku këtë mëngjes./Jonida left this morning*. (Adverbial)
> *Ajo ishte rruga Nju Delhi./It was New Delhi road*. (Restrictive Appositive)
> *Jonida, një vajzë e re e mençur, fitoi kampionatin e shahut./Jonida, a clever young girl, won the chess championship*. (Non-restrictive Appositive)
> *Ku je ti, zemra ime?/Where are you, my sweetheart?* (Vocative)

Noun phrases in English language: Compared to Albanian language, noun phrases in English language have more constituents. This is because the structure of noun phrases may include determiner(s), pre-modifier(s), head and post-modifier(s)[18]. We must point out here that there is no determiner in NP in Albanian language. In Albanian, case inflections are used to express definite nouns (*djalë/boy, djali/the boy*).

Noun phrases in English language with noun as their head are often introduced with determiners using definite (*the*) and indefinite (*a/an*) articles[19]. Other determiners may be used as well, such as *some, this, these,* etc. Noun phrases may also have modifiers (pre-modifiers and post-modifiers) attached to the phrase head. Modifiers normally depend on the head and may be omitted. For example:

> *Jon is here.* (NP)

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[15] Çeliku M., "Sintaksë e gjuhës shqipe (përbërësit sintaksorë)", ILAR, Tiranë, 2012, p. 51.
[16] Dhima Th., "Gjuha shqipe - Sintaksa", SHBLU, Tirana, 2005, p. 28.
[17] Akademia e Shkencave, G. "Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe 2", Tirana, 2002, p. 87-90.
[18] Greenbaum S., "English Grammar", Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 209.
[19] Ibid, p. 209.

the team players (determiner, pre-modifier [N], head of NP)
the girl on the bus – (determiner, head, post-modifier [PP] of NP)
the team players on the bus (determiner, pre-modifier, head, post-modifier of NP)

What we can see from the examples above is that a noun phrase may consist of one word, or more than one word. Pre- and post-modifiers are used to modify the phrase and different words or phrases may be used as modifiers.

What is more important in this paper is the syntactic function of the noun phrase. The noun phrase in English language may function as a subject, object (direct/indirect object), subject complement, object complement, complement of a preposition, pre-modifier of noun/NP/adjective/preposition/adverb, post-modifier of noun/adjective, vocative and adverbial[20]. For example:

My students broke the window./Nxënësit e mi thyen dritaren. (Subject)
They bought a present./Ata blenë dhuratë. (Direct Object)
She gave her mother a present./Ajo i dha nënëns së saj dhuratë. (Indirect Object)
It was a gift./Ishte dhuratë. (Subject Complement)
They elected him president./Ata e zgjodhën atë president. (Object Complement)
It isn't in Albanian./Nuk është në shqip. (Complement of Preposition)
You are dumb, boy!Je budalla, djalosh! (Vocative)
They went there./Ata shkuan atje. (Adverbial)

An interesting feature of NP is that they can be pre- or post-modifiers of different parts of speech[21], such as:

Family gatherings are boring./Grumbullimet familjare janë të mërzitshme.

(Pre-modifier of noun)

Women his age don't like him./Gratë e moshës së tij nuk e pëlqejnë atë.

(Post-modifier of noun)

The cut was six cm deep./Prerja ishte gjashtë cm e thellë.

(Pre-modifier of adjective)

The bank was short two million dollars./Bankës i mungonin dy million dollarë.

(Post-modifier of adjective)

She left a minute before the tragedy./Ajo iku një minutë para tragjedisë.

(Pre-modifier of preposition)

They went a step further in developing the vaccine./Ata shkuan një hap më tutje me zhvillimin e vaksinës.

(Pre-modifier of adverb)

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[20] Greenbaum S., "English Grammar", Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 212.
[21] Ibid, p. 213.

This long list of examples and syntactic functions shows us how complicated a noun phrase may be. Comparing English and Albanian NP, we can see in translated sentences there may be some differences, like having a pre-modifier in one language, and a post modifier in the other language. Still, the analysis of sentence constituents is not that complicated because of the sentence patterns. Noun phrases may be a part of the subject, object, complement or adverbial and are easily identified using a tree diagram or X-bar analysis. A clear distinction of the phrases using tree diagrams or X-bar analysis helps in identifying the syntactic functions of the noun phrase.

Conclusions

There are some differences when analysing phrase types in English and Albanian language. By differences we mean that the number and type of phrases is not the same in English and Albanian, but there is a tendency of unifying the number of phrases in Albanian language similarly to English language.

Noun phrases constitute the most important phrase both in English and Albanian language. The reason for this is that these phrases may have different and vast syntactic functions in both languages. It can easily be noticed that the list of syntactic functions in NP in English is slightly longer than in Albanian language. But if we continue to make a deeper analysis of pre- and post-modifiers of NP in English by not taking into account syntactic functions, we can see a really long list, including nouns, participles, phrases, clauses, numerals, appositives. This is an indicator of a really long list of modifiers used to modify the noun phrase. Furthermore, there are some clear differences of NP syntactic functions in translated sentences from English into Albanian language, such as the case with pre- and post-modifiers.

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