

An Analysis of Interference Problems with Verb Tenses in English and Albanian Language

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Abstract: This study examines the phenomenon of native language interference in the acquisition of English verb tenses by Albanian learners of English as a foreign language. Based on theories of language transfer and interlanguage, the research focuses on how structural and functional differences between the Albanian and English tense–aspect systems influence learners’ grammatical accuracy. The study adopts a quantitative research design and analyzes data collected from 218 written grammar tests administered to first-year university students in Albania. The tests specifically target present, past, and future verb tenses, where cross-linguistic interference is most likely to occur. The findings reveal that Albanian learners experience persistent difficulties in selecting appropriate English verb tenses, particularly the past perfect, present perfect continuous, and future perfect. High error rates were also observed in the distinction between the simple present and the present continuous, as well as in maintaining a consistent sequence of tenses in past-time narratives. These errors largely stem from negative transfer, overgeneralization, and the absence of clear tense distinctions in Albanian that correspond to English forms. The results confirm that native language interference plays a significant role in shaping learners’ interlanguage system and continues to affect grammatical performance even at higher proficiency levels. The study highlights the importance of explicit instruction and contrastive analysis between Albanian and English tense–aspect systems as effective pedagogical strategies for reducing grammatical interference and improving learners’ accuracy in English verb tense usage.

Keywords: native language interference, verb tenses, English–Albanian contrastive analysis, grammatical level, inter language

Introduction

Interference of the native language (also known as language transfer) in foreign language learning refers to the influence that a learner’s native language (L₁) exerts on

the acquisition and use of a second language (L2). It involves the inhibiting effect of the learner's native language on the learning of other languages, resulting from the presence of linguistic structures of the native language in the process of acquiring L2. Researchers have developed various theories to explain how L1 influences the process of second language acquisition, including language transfer and language learning strategies. Native language interference is generally considered inevitable in the process of learning a second language. Linguistic factors that influence native language interference (L1) include structural and functional differences and similarities between the native language (L1) and the target language (L2). These factors affect how learners perceive, process, and produce the target language, often leading to errors or reliance on L1 structures. Brown (2002) supports the view that interlanguage refers to a system that occupies an intermediate structural status between the native language and the target language.

Literature review

On the theory of transfer

Numerous studies have been conducted in the field of native language interference by both classical and contemporary linguists and scholars. According to Weinreich (1953), native language interference refers to "instances of deviation from the norms of either or both languages that occur in bilingual speakers as a result of their familiarity with more than one language." Michael Swan (2008) argues that "it is an illusion to assume that all meanings are the same across languages and that languages differ only in the forms used to express these meanings." He further notes that when learners acquire a second language, they tend to be more economical in their use of vocabulary in L2, which may render communication partially ambiguous. Saville-Troike (2006) defines language interference as the inappropriate influence of L1 structures or rules on the use of L2. Meanwhile, Krashen (1988) suggests that individuals acquire a second language in a manner similar to how children acquire their native language, largely unconsciously and without explicit awareness of linguistic forms. Adults, by contrast, tend to learn an L2 through more conscious processes, in which exposure to the language within the learning environment plays a crucial role.

Although international linguistics has produced numerous studies and publications on the role of the native language in learning English, there is a notable lack of rigorous research in the Albanian language. The phenomenon has been mentioned as a linguistic issue by Albanian scholars such as Xhemali (2017), who argues that a second language can be learned through the comparison of similarities and differences between the native language and the foreign language. Another scholar, Gerveni (2014) emphasizes that in foreign language learning, many types of systematically recurring errors are characteristic of specific violations of linguistic norms, that is, of the rules governing a language.

Transfer can be regarded as both negative and positive. Negative transfer reflects the difficulties encountered in using the target language, which arise primarily when the target language is used in relation to another language. Positive transfer, by contrast, refers to the facilitation of the language learning process; in this case, similarities between L1 and L2 become evident (Kellerman, 1979). This process affects several levels of language, including the phonological, lexical, and grammatical levels, among others. Phonological interference is related to the way a speaker perceives and reproduces the sounds of a second language by interpreting them through the sound system of the native language. Lexical interference occurs when learners use words or expressions from their first language that appear similar to those in the target language but differ in meaning (false cognates). Grammatical interference arises when learners apply the grammatical structures of their native language to the second language (Zhao, 2019).

Based on the above studies, it can be stated that interference is a phenomenon caused by the involvement of the native language in the learning of other languages, in which the characteristics of the first language tend to prevail in the target language. Although linguistic interference may present challenges, it also serves as a foundation for the construction of new knowledge. Effective teaching strategies that take into account the influence of L1 can help learners overcome these challenges and achieve proficiency in English.

Language transfer in grammatical level (verb tenses)

In both languages, the grammatical category of tense expresses the relationship between the time when the action denoted by the verb is carried out and a specific moment taken as a reference point for temporal relations: present, past, and future. We may conceive of time as a line on which the present moment is represented as a point that moves continuously forward. Everything ahead of the present moment lies in the future, and everything behind it lies in the past (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1995).

In Albanian, the grammatical category of tense is mainly realized in the indicative, admirative, subjunctive, conditional, and optative moods, which have different grammatical forms that oppose one another from a temporal point of view. Albanian is rich in verbal grammatical forms through which not only temporal meanings but also (in some cases) various aspectual nuances are expressed (Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe 1, 2002). The relatively extensive use of verb tenses in English and Albanian shows many similarities. However, there are also differences between the two languages. A certain temporal meaning that is expressed in English by a particular tense form may not be expressed by the same tense form in Albanian. Such differences constitute problems that may cause difficulties even for advanced Albanian learners of English (Panolli, 2000).

The basic meaning of the **present simple tense** in the indicative mood is to indicate the performance of an action at a time that includes the moment of speech. The

present simple is used in exclamatory sentences with the verbs *come* or *go*, which are introduced by *here* and *there*, for example: *Look, here he comes!* In Albanian, the present tense is not preferred in this case; instead, the analytic form “*Po vjen.*” is used, which corresponds to the present continuous in English. The present simple is also used to refer to the future after the verbs *hope*, *bet*, *suppose*, and *assume*: *I bet he arrives here on time.* Unlike English, Albanian does not normally use the present tense after verbs such as *shpresoj* (*hope*), *vë bast* (*bet*), or *supozoj* (*suppose/assume*). More natural constructions are the future indicative, the present subjunctive, or the imperfect subjunctive: *Vë bast që ai do të arrijë këtu në kohë.*

The present simple is used to refer to the future in adverbial clauses after conjunctions such as: *after*, *as*, *before*, *once*, *till*, *until*, *when*, *as soon as*, *if*, and *unless*: *I want to be out before it is light.* The same meaning can be expressed in Albanian, but it is conveyed through the present subjunctive rather than the present indicative: *Dua të jem jashtë para se të zbardhë dita.* The present simple is also used to refer to the past with verbs of communication such as: *hear*, *tell*, *learn*, etc. In this case, it expresses the current effect of information received in the past, implying that the information is still valid: *Bardhyli tells me that the job offer is still valid.* In Albanian, this meaning is expressed by the present perfect and sometimes by the simple past: *Bardhyli më ka thënë se oferta për punë është ende e vlefshme* (Panolli, 2000). Albanian uses the present tense for continuous states where English uses the present perfect, for example: *I know him for five years./Unë e njoh atë prej pesë vjetësh*, instead of *I have known him for five years.* Another common error is the omission of the -s ending in the third person singular: *The boy love to play football* instead of *loves*.

The progressive form (present continuous) is used to indicate an action that is in progress at a specific moment and continues at the moment of speech. In Albanian, this form is expressed with the particle *po* plus the main verb or with the present tense of the auxiliary *jam* and *present participle of the main verb*, for example: *Ç’po bën këtu?; Ju do të thoni se jam duke treguar edhe një histori tjetër të jashtëzakonshme.* (Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe 1, 2002). The present continuous is used with dynamic verbs to refer to the future in relation to a plan, programme, or arrangement already made: *I am lunching with Petrit today, mother.* In Albanian, this meaning is usually expressed by the future indicative: *Sot do të ha drekë me Petritin, nënë.*

In both languages, learners may incorrectly use the present continuous with stative verbs such as: *know*, *like*, *understand*, etc., for example: *I’m knowing her* instead of *I know her*. However, particular difficulties arise for Albanian learners when certain stative verbs appear in the continuous form in English. These include verbs expressing perception (see, hear, smell, taste, feel), mental activity (believe, doubt, imagine, know, think, etc.), desire (want, wish, intend), emotions (love, hate, adore), and abstract relations (be, have, belong, consist, etc.) (Panolli, 2000).

Interlanguage interference may sometimes cause difficulties. For instance, starting from the Albanian sentence: *Do ta bëj nesër këtë punë.* (*I am doing it tomorrow.*), a common error in English is the use of the future tense: *I will do it tomorrow*, which in English often indicates a decision made at the moment of speaking. This latter meaning in Albanian should be expressed as: *Po e bëj nesër këtë punë.* Thus, we have: *I am doing it tomorrow./Do ta bëj nesër këtë punë.; I will do it tomorrow./Po e bëj nesër këtë punë.* The present continuous is used with the meaning of future continuous mainly in subordinate clauses of time: *And when you **are whirling** through the air at eighty miles an hour, I'm going to take a good close look at you.* In Albanian, this meaning is expressed by the present continuous subjunctive rather than by the indicative: *Dhe, kur **të jesh duke fluturuar** në ajër me 80 milje në orë, do t'I qep sytë tek ti.* (Panolli, 2000).

The present perfect is used to express actions completed in the past that are connected in some way with the present moment. In Albanian, both the present perfect and the simple past may be used with this meaning. When the adverbs *sapo*, *porsa*, or *saare* used, Albanian typically employs the simple past to express the same meaning as the English present perfect: *"I don't want any coffee, Sally. I've just **had** tea on the train."* *"Nuk dua kafe, Seli. Sapo **piva** çaj në tren."* Both in English and Albanian, the present perfect can express an action or state that began in the past, has continued up to the present, and may continue into the future. However, Albanian may also use the present tense to express the same meaning: *The (meat) contract's **been** mine for fifteen years now. Unë **jam** sipërmarrësi i mishit prej pesëmbëdhjetë vjetësh.* (Panolli, 2000).

In English, the present perfect is also used with a future perfect meaning in subordinate clauses of time: *I'll call you as soon as I **have spoken** to Alban.* Albanian does not use the present perfect for this purpose; instead, it uses the present or perfect subjunctive: *Do të të marr në telefon sapo **të flas** me Albanin.* or *Do të të marr në telefon sapo **të kem folur** me Albanin.*

The present perfect progressive is used to indicate that an action began in the past, continues up to the present moment, is still in progress now, and may also continue into the future, for example: *"Fifteen years it **has been going on** – that's your blessed once in a while."* In Albanian, this use corresponds to the present indicative or the perfect indicative, for example: *Po kjo punë **(po) vazhdon** prej pesëmbëdhjetë vjetësh dhe ju na thoni njëherë!//Po kjo punë ka pesëmbëdhjetë vjet që **vazhdon** dhe ju na thoni njëherë!//Po kjo punë **ka vazhduar** për pesëmbëdhjetë vjet dhe ju na thoni njëherë!* (Panolli, 2000).

An action that began in the past and lasted for a period of time, with a visible result in the present, as well as one used to express anger, annoyance, or irritation, is expressed in English by the present perfect progressive and in Albanian by the perfect tense, for

example: *It **has been raining**. The road is slippery./Ka rënë shi. Rruga është e rrëshqitshme.*; *Who **has been sleeping** in my bed?/Kush ka fjetur në shtratin tim?* Unlike Albanian, conversational English tends to avoid the simple present perfect with verbs such as: *sit, lie, wait, and stay*, which generally denote temporary states. Thus, *I **have been sitting** here all afternoon* is more idiomatic than *I **have sat** here all afternoon* (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1995).

The fundamental meaning of the **past simple** in both languages is to indicate a completed action at a definite time in the past, usually accompanied by adverbials of time such as *yesterday, last year, or two days ago* (Panolli, 2000). Unlike English, Albanian can use either the simple past or the present perfect to refer to a past event, often with little difference in meaning: *I **saw** her yesterday.* (*E kam parë dje/E pashë dje.*)

The meaning of the **past continuous tense** in Albanian is expressed by the imperfect indicative. It denotes an indefinite action that lasted for a more or less extended period in the past: *Sa here që **bisedonin** për protezat, midis tyre binte një heshtje e rëndë* (“Whenever they **talked** about the dentures, a heavy silence fell between them”) (Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe 1, 2002). In English, the past continuous tense, among other uses, expresses an action that was in progress when another action interrupted it: *We **were doing** our homework when the lights went out/Ne **po bënim** detyrat kur u fikën dritat.* (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1995). Due to structural differences between the two languages, Albanian learners often omit the auxiliary verb *was/were* (“I reading a book when she called”) or use only the simple past tense (“I read a book when she called”) instead of the correct form “I **was reading** a book when she called.”

The past perfect tense in both languages denotes an action completed before a specific point in the past: *Kronikanin e **kishte zënë** gjumi, kur u zgjua nga britmat e para të alarmit* (“The chronicler **had fallen** asleep when he was awakened by the first alarm cries”). In Albanian, the form “*kisha + past participle*” is often not perceived by learners as a distinct tense but merely as a variant of the past. For example, learners say: “I couldn’t get into the house. I **lost** my keys./ Nuk mund të hyja në shtëpi. **Humba** çelësat.” instead of the correct “I couldn’t get into the house. I **had lost** my keys/Nuk mund të hyja në shtëpi. **Kisha humbur** çelësat.” Albanian learners also tend to confuse *had* with *have* in English sentences, because Albanian does not make a formal distinction between *kam* (present perfect) and *kisha* (past perfect). As a result, they produce sentences such as “I **have finished** my homework before she came” instead of the correct “I **had finished** ...”.

The past perfect continuous tense in English is used to indicate that an action began in the past and continued up to another point in the past, or that it was relevant at that past moment, for example: *Everything was wet. It **had been raining** for hours.* (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1995). In Albanian, the same meaning is expressed by “*më se e kryer*” tense: *Gjithçka ishte e lagur. **Kishte rënë** shi për orë të tëra.* In addition, in

subordinate clauses of time introduced by subordinating conjunctions such as: *si* (“when/once”) or *pasi* (“after”), Albanian uses the imperfect subjunctive, for example: *Si iku kamarieri, të dy shokët vazhduan për një kohë të gjatë të qeshnin me njëri-tjetrin.* (Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe 1, 2002).

In all cases, it is important to maintain a consistent sequence of tenses, whether in the present or the past, and to avoid shifting from the present to the past, or from the past to the present, within the same sentence. Such shifts constitute errors frequently found in learners’ language use, for example: *He was among the few who want to continue working on the project./Ai ishte ndër të paktët që duan të vazhdojnë punën në projekt.* instead of the correct *He was among the few who wanted to continue working on the project./Ai ishte ndër të paktët që dëshironin të vazhdonin punën në projekt.*

In both languages, the fundamental meaning of the **future tense** is to denote an action that is expected to take place after the moment of speaking. With this meaning, the future form of the type “will + verb” is predominantly used: *It will rain tomorrow./Do të bjerë shi nesër.* Unlike English, Albanian uses the present tense to express a decision made at the very moment it is taken, for example: (the doorbell rings) *I’ll open it!/E hap unë!* In Standard Albanian, there is no direct equivalent of the going to future or of the present continuous with future meaning. Instead, the simple future tense is used in such cases: *I am going to get married in October./Unë do të martohem në tetor.; I am seeing the dentist tomorrow./Do të shkoj te dentist nesër.* (Panolli, 2000).

The future continuous tense refers to an unfinished action or event that will be in progress at a specific time in the future in relation to the present: *This time next week I will be sunbathing in Bali./Këtë kohë javën tjetër do të jem duke bërë banjo dielli në Bali.* In the Albanian language, the form “do të kem punuar” is used very rarely to express the future perfect, that is, to indicate an action that is expected to be completed in the future before another action, for example: *By the time you read this, I will have left./Në kohën kur ta lexosh këtë, do të kemi kur.* Albanian learners encounter difficulties with these tenses because they combine two auxiliary verbs, *will* and *have*, and therefore they tend to simplify the structure, using “*He will come by then*” instead of “*He will have come by then.*” (Panolli, 2000).

To conclude, Albanian learners experience persistent difficulty in distinguishing between tense forms that encode temporal reference and aspect, largely due to cross-linguistic interference from their native language.

Methodology

This chapter presents the research framework employed to investigate the role of native language interference in the process of learning the English language. It describes the type of study, the research setting, participants, sampling procedures,

data collection instruments, and the analytical methods used. The primary objective of the study is to identify the types of interference that occur among Albanian learners during the acquisition of English especially in the grammatical level and to evaluate their impact on grammar and syntactic structure. The main research questions addressed in this study are as follows: 1. What are the most common forms of native language interference in the learning of English? 2. How much is interference pronounced in grammar? 3. To what extent does interference affect learners' accuracy in grammar?

To achieve the objectives of this study and address the research questions, the research was conducted in higher education institutions where English is taught as a foreign language. The participants were randomly selected from two higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania. According to Kalof et al. (2008), random sampling is a technique through which samples are selected by chance. The participant group consisted of learners aged 18 years old. All participants shared similar cultural backgrounds and language proficiency levels. English is a compulsory subject in their academic programs, and their levels of English proficiency did not vary significantly. Furthermore, the collection of qualitative data enabled a more in-depth evaluation and facilitated triangulation of the findings. As part of the procedure, permission was obtained from the relevant institutions to conduct the study, with assurances of confidentiality provided to all parties involved.

The data corpus of this study consists of instruments such as language tests. The language proficiency tests include exercises focusing on verb tenses, where interference is typically observed, resulting in a total sample of 218 tests. The objective of these instruments is to calculate the frequency and percentage distribution of different types of verb tense errors identified in the students' tests. Subsequently, the research findings were synthesized into a conclusion from which the main results of the study were derived.

The study employs quantitative analyses, as this provides a systematic framework for data collection, facilitates the investigation of the extent of the phenomenon, and combines multiple data-collection methods that enhance the efficiency and depth of the research process. Error rates are analyzed statistically to determine the amount and percentages of errors occurring within the interlanguage system. This is followed by explanatory interpretations addressing why native language interference is particularly frequent among Albanian learners. In total, 218 tests were selected for the purposes of error correction and grammatical error identification. In this regard, language transfer and overgeneralization of rules were identified as the main underlying causes of these errors. Following error identification, the errors were classified into the following categories: (a) errors in present tenses, (b) errors in past tenses and (c) errors in future tenses.

Based on the analysis of the written data, charts nr. 1, 2, 3 indicate that students produced errors in the formation of verb tenses, including, for example, the simple

present, simple past, present continuous, simple future, present perfect, future continuous, and past continuous.

Results and discussions

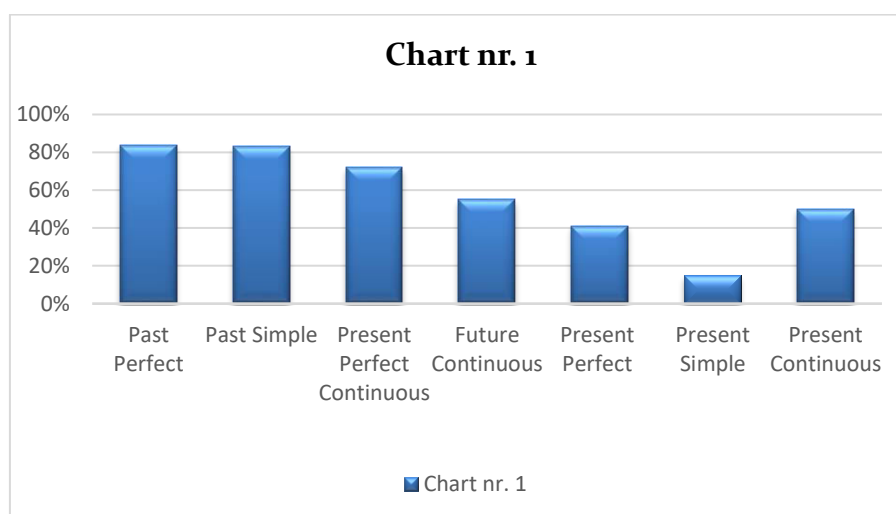
Verb tenses

Students often fail to select the appropriate temporal expression to convey an action and frequently misuse irregular verbs. In this context, learners commonly employ an incorrect verb tense, which results in ineffective communication of meaning. Verb tenses in Albanian and English are comparable to a certain extent; however, there are instances in which they are not used in the same way in both languages, leading to recurring difficulties for learners. In the present study, three exercises related to verb tense usage were employed.

A) Grammar Practice Test

Put the verb in the correct tense.

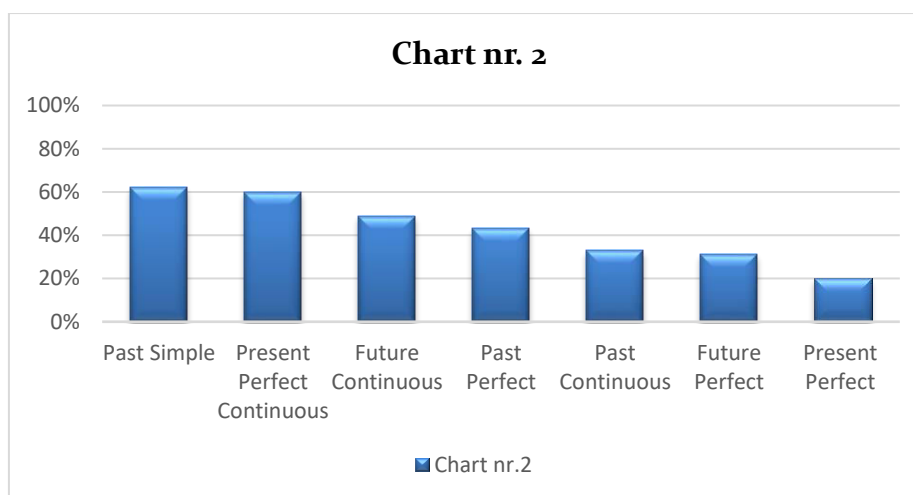
- I (watch) television while my mother (cook).
- My father is outside. He (make) raki.
- He usually (work) in a restaurant, but he (teach) right now.
- I always walk on my tiptoes while my father (sleep).
- I (live) in Përmet for 16 years. (I still live there.)
- Danielle Steele (write) 51 books. (She is still alive.)
- I (see) Brad Pitt in Kocina yesterday.
- Bill Clinton (be) the president of the U.S. from 1994 to 2000.
- I (study) Albanian for 1 year and 3 months.
- Picasso (paint) many strange pictures.
- His mother (ask) him how he (tear) his trousers.
- This time tomorrow we (write) an essay.



The first chart, based on 128 tests, reveals that the past perfect exhibited the highest percentage of errors (84%), followed by the simple past (83%) and the present perfect continuous (72%). The table also indicates that students experienced difficulty in selecting the correct future continuous tense (55%) and the present perfect (41%). Significant errors were observed in the distinction between the simple present (15%) and the present continuous (50%). The primary cause of these errors lies in the structural differences between English and Albanian. In Albanian, the simple present is more frequently used, whereas in English the present continuous is required in specific contexts. For example: *I always walk on my tiptoes while my father sleeps (incorrect)* → *I always walk on my tiptoes while my father is sleeping (correct)*. In both languages, the present perfect shows partial correspondence in usage; however, in Albanian, the simple past is often freely used to express the same meaning. This leads to frequent errors, as illustrated below: *Danielle Steele wrote 51 books. (She's still alive.)* instead of *Danielle Steele has written 51 books. (She's still alive.)* Unlike English, Albanian may use either the simple past or the present perfect to refer to a past event without a substantial change in meaning, which contributes to learners' errors. The former is the more commonly used form, for example: *Picasso has painted many strange pictures* instead of *Picasso painted many strange pictures*. The present perfect continuous is used in English to indicate an action that began in the past, continues up to the present moment, is still ongoing, and may continue into the future, for example: *I have been living in Përmet for 16 years. (I still live there.)* However, learners often produce forms such as: *I live/have lived in Përmet for 16 years*. In Albanian, this usage corresponds to either the present indicative or the perfect indicative, which resulted in a high frequency of errors in the use of the present perfect continuous in the tests.

B) Complete the sentence with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

1. Come back this evening. I _____ (finish) everything by then.
2. Where _____ (you work) this time next week?
3. I need a bath. I _____ (dig) in the garden.
4. I _____ (meet) her and her husband a couple of times - mostly at work parties.
5. You are late. We _____ (start) the lesson 10 minutes ago.
6. I _____ (cross) the road when I saw 10 pounds on the pavement.
7. _____ (you used to) travel a lot when you were younger?
8. We decided _____ (stay) in and watch TV.
9. When I was a student I _____ (live) in Paris for six months.
10. If we _____ (not wake her up), she _____ (sleep) until lunchtime last night.
11. It was great to see Jackie last night. I _____ (not see) her for ages.
12. You look worried. What _____ (you think) about?



The second chart, based on 81 tests, reveals that the simple past exhibited the highest percentage of errors (62%), followed by the present perfect continuous (60%) and the future continuous (49%). Noticeable error rates were also observed in the past perfect (43%), the past continuous (33%), and the future perfect (31%). The present perfect showed a comparatively lower error rate (20%). The table highlights a particularly high number of errors in students' selection of the past perfect and the two future tenses. Albanian learners tend to confuse *had* and *have* in the present perfect and past perfect, as Albanian does not distinguish between *kam* (*present perfect*) and *kisha* (*past perfect*). For example: *It was great to see Jackie last night. I have not seen her for ages* instead of *It was great to see Jackie last night. I had not seen her for ages*. Maintaining a consistent sequence of tenses in past-time narratives is essential, and learners frequently fail to do so by shifting from past to present tense within the same text. Albanian learners also experience difficulty with the future perfect, as it involves the combination of two auxiliary verbs (*will* and *have*). As a result, they often simplify the structure, as in: *Come back this evening. I will finish everything by then* instead of *Come back this evening. I will have finished everything by then*. When referring to an unfinished future action, students incorrectly use the present continuous instead of the future continuous, which is required to indicate an action that will be in progress at a specific point in the future, for example: *Where are you working this time next week?* instead of *Where will you be working this time next week?*

C) Choose the correct item (verb tenses).

1 We when the earthquake struck.

A sleep B were sleeping C have been sleeping D had slept

2 Olga..... studying for her exams since this morning.

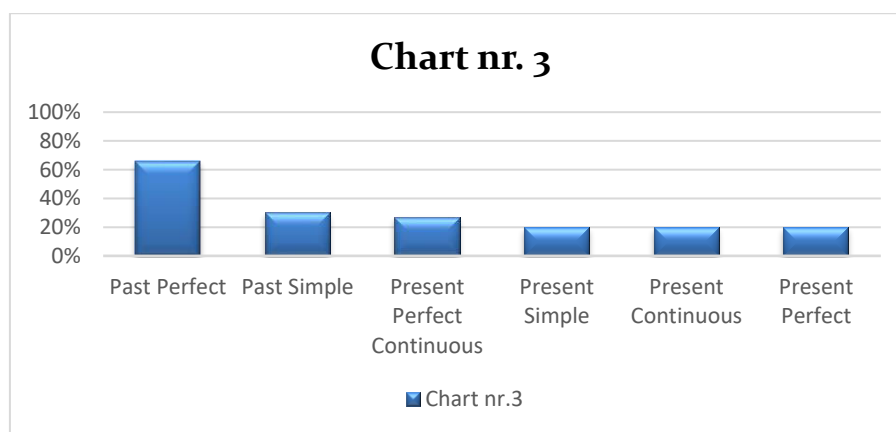
A has been B had been C was D is

3 That gash in your leg bad. You need stitches.

A is seeming B has seemed C seems D seemed

4 It non-stop for four days and some major roads are blocked.

- A snows B has been snowing C snowed D was snowing
- 5 Carol.....lunch with some colleagues right now.
A has B has had C has been having D is having
- 6 The climber fainted with dehydration because he a drop of water for two days.
A hasn't had B hadn't had C wasn't having D hadn't been having
- 7 The play..... at 7:00, so we need to be at the theatre by 6:30.
A is starting B started C has started D starts
- 8 When they were kids, they.....their grandparents every weekend.
A were visiting B have visited C visited D had visited
- 9 My father.....the news every evening after dinner.
A watches B is watching C has watched D has been watching
- 10 Tom a volcano erupt before he went to Iceland.
A has never seen B never sees C had never seen D did never see



The third chart, based on 59 tests, indicates that the past perfect exhibited the highest error rate (66%), followed by the simple past (30%) and the present perfect continuous (27%). In contrast, present-tense forms (simple present, present continuous, and present perfect) accounted for 20% of the total errors in this test. The table highlights a high frequency of errors in students' selection between the present perfect and the past perfect, as well as between the present continuous and the present perfect continuous. Illustrative examples include: *The climber fainted from dehydration because he hasn't had a drop of water for two days* instead of *The climber fainted from dehydration because he hadn't had a drop of water for two days*.; *Olga is studying for her exams since this morning* instead of *Olga has been studying for her exams since this morning*. These findings further confirm that Albanian learners experience persistent difficulty in distinguishing between tense forms that encode temporal reference and aspect, largely due to cross-linguistic interference from their native language.

Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed clear evidence of native language interference in the learning of English as a second language. Native language interference is generally considered inevitable in the process of second language acquisition, a claim that is confirmed by the results of this research. The strongest impact of interference was observed in grammar as a linguistic domain, particularly in verb tenses in both languages. It can therefore be argued that learners experience significant difficulties with this grammatical aspect. The study examined the extent to which interference is pronounced in grammar, especially verb tenses, and how it affects learners' grammatical accuracy.

The results were organized into graphs illustrating the percentages of errors. Albanian learners of English, largely due to structural and functional mismatches between the two tense systems have difficulty with verb tense selection. The high error rates observed in the past perfect, simple past, and present perfect continuous demonstrate that learners tend to rely on L₁ tense usage patterns when faced with complex temporal distinctions in English. This reliance results in tense substitution, overgeneralization, and inaccurate aspectual interpretation. The frequent confusion between the simple present and the present continuous further highlights learners' difficulty with the proper choice, particularly when multiple English tense forms correspond to a single Albanian equivalent.

The high error rates observed in the simple past, present perfect continuous, and future-related tenses indicate a strong influence of L₁ transfer, especially in the absence of a clear tense distinction in Albanian between present perfect and past perfect forms. Learners' frequent confusion between the auxiliaries as well as their failure to maintain a consistent sequence of tenses in past-time narratives, suggest limited internalization of English grammar rules. Additionally, the complexity of future constructions leads learners to simplify verb forms or substitute them with more familiar structures.

The high error rate in the past perfect, together with frequent confusion between the present perfect and past perfect as well as between the present continuous and present perfect continuous, indicates an incomplete mastery of English tense sequencing. As a result, learners often make grammatically inappropriate tense choices. When learners encounter gaps in their L₂ grammatical structures, they tend to adjust the form of their written responses in the target language by relying on grammatical elements from their L₁. As a result, they produce irregular sentence structures. Since the structures of L₁ and L₂ differ, a high frequency of errors emerges in the target language, indicating substantial native language interference.

These findings highlight the need for targeted instructional interventions that emphasize tense sequencing, auxiliary verb usage, and explicit contrastive analysis between Albanian and English in order to reduce grammatical interference and enhance learners' accuracy in verb tense usage. They provide further support for the

role of negative transfer from the native language and highlight the necessity of explicit instruction and contrastive analysis focusing on tense–aspect distinctions in order to improve learners’ grammatical accuracy in English. The study underscores the need for pedagogical approaches that explicitly contrast L1 and L2 tense aspect systems in order to reduce interference and improve learners’ grammatical accuracy. Although linguistic interference may pose challenges, it also serves as a foundation for the construction of new knowledge. Teaching strategies that effectively account for the influence of the native language can help learners overcome these challenges and achieve proficiency in English.

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