Theoretical approach of the concept of phrases analysed morphologically in English and Albanian

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Abstract

The concept and definition of phrases is not unified among languages. This study juxtaposes the theoretical concept of phrases in two languages: English and Albanian. Through morphological analysis of phrases and their classification, it aims to define this concept diachronically. Then it focuses on theoretical similarities and differences between phrases in English and Albanian. After different theoretical viewpoints the paper draws statistical comparisons based on the phrases collected by the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language (DCAL -1980) and Oxford Student's Dictionary (OSD). Then it deals with analysis of phrases, their constituents, morphological features and quantitative juxtaposition represented graphically in both languages based on each dictionary. Another important part of the study includes highlighting the differences and similarities between phrases when translated from English into Albanian and vice versa.

Key words: phrases, English, Albanian, language, dictionary

Introduction

Phrases in Albanian language

Phrases as a separate part of speech are present in many languages. They are generally subject to studies in grammar and lexicology, because in some languages (like German or Russian) they are not studied separately from phraseology or fixed phrases. The Albanian linguistic scholar M Domi[1] has analysed similarities and differences based on different languages and has found out that there are inconsistencies in the definitions for phrases in different grammar books or dictionaries be those general or linguistic. The definitions scrutinized for phrases in some languages (*French, Italian, Romanian,* even *German* or *Russian*) define as *phrases a group of words formed by the union of different clusters of words into a single lexical unit[2]*. Although made up of two or more words, phrases due to their lexicalization, function as a single word. In the morphology of Albanian language, the term "*phrase*"[3] is used to designate *a part of speech made up*

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[1] M. Domi, Studime Filologjike "*Disa çështje të lokucioneve*", 1985, fq 209
[2] M. Domi, same - (*French "locution", Italian. "locuzione", Spanish "locucion", Romanian "locutione"* sometimes even in English *"locution",* but mainly *"phrase"*).
[3] Definition in different languages are not the same, but the above explanation is found almost in all the analysed books. Gramatika e Gjuhës Shqipe I, Tiranë 1995, f. 39

of a group of words with stable connections between them, which grammatically and semantically are equal to a single word, but not the same as it.

To clearly separate phrases from other parts of speech there are three basic criteria we must look into: *morphological, syntactic and semantical.*

- **The morphological criterion** shows that all the constituents must function as a single grammatical unit, i.e. to accept morphological and syntactical indices of one part of speech.

- **The syntactical criterion** deals with the syntactic relationship of words[4]. Although phrases have an open structure they have a rigid order of words.

- **The semantical criterion** defines phrases as a single lexical-functional unit, i.e. the whole unit includes only one meaning[5].

The term "*lokucion*" in Albanian dictionaries over the years has undergone changes in defining the term.

- "*Dictionary of Albanian language*" (1954)[6] defines the term locution as: "*a way of speaking, expression, a group of two or more words which express a single meaning*" such as: *që me natë = very early*".

- "*Dictionary of 1980*"[7] defines it as "a *group of words which grammatically and lexically is equal to a single word and is equivalent to a single word and has at least one constituent noun and designates linguistic expressions*".

- "*Dictionary of 2006*"[8] defines it as "*a group of words usually a designating word and an attributive word equivalent to a single word from meaning and function*".

By analysing phrases collected by the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language (1980) we identify that they are made up of invariable parts of speech[9] such as: *adverbs, prepositions, particles, interjections*, but there are also *verbs (*variable parts of speech*).* Constituents of phrases may lose their semantical and grammatical independence, thus being transformed into an inseparable grammatical unit mainly with the invariable parts of speech. In verb phrases the constituents are distinct, because the first constituent is variable. In cases when the first constituent does not change, the cluster of words is agglutinated, for example *vërej, bëzaj* etc, having the morphological properties of agglutinated words.

Different linguists have studied phrases from different viewpoints. Apparently, there has always been an interconnection between phrases, agglutination and compounding.

Types of phrases based on constituents (as parts of speech) and as a separate unit

By analysing, identifying and highlighting phrases as a separate part of speech (nowadays already accepted as independent) and by looking diachronically into the

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[4] E.Likaj, *Morfologji e shqipes standarde*, 2010, f. 8.
[5] E.Likaj, *Morfologji e shqipes standarde*, 2010, f. 10.

[6] Studime Filologjike 1, 1985, f.213
[7] *Fjalori i gjuhës së sotme shqipe* , Tiranë 1980, f. 1012
[8] *Fjalori i gjuhës së sotme shqipe* , Tiranë 2006, f. 566
[9] Invariable parts of speech in Albanian language are words that are neither inflected, nor conjugated: adverbs, conjunctions, particles, prepositions and interjections.

progress of phrases and their formations, we may say that they are considered as invariable parts of speech. In the Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language, they are found in all parts of speech. So, phrases may be *nouns, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, particles, interjections* and *numerals.*

The total number of phrases collected by DCAL 1980 in Albanian language is 716. They are from all parts of speech. Because phrases are the precursors of agglutinated words[10], we do believe that the number of phrases in the past used to be considerably higher.

Phrases in English language

Phrases in English language morphology are not treated as a separate grammatical category, even the meaning of the word '*locution*' in different dictionaries of English language is not at all the same as the meaning conveyed by the same word in grammar books of Albanian language. The word "locution" derives from Latin (*locution-, locutio,* from *loqui*→ speak). The word "*locution*" in English language came into use in the XVth century during the period of "*Middle English[11]*" in the form "*locucion*" and is typically of the French influence in the English language during that period. This word is found within the same synonymic group of "*phrase, expression, idiom, locution*", however none of these grammatical categories corresponds to the separate Albanian category of phrases in Albanian morphology. Because this word in English is borrowed from French, we also consulted its meaning in French linguistics. According to Le Grevisse[12], the term "*locution*" *morphologically speaking is a group of words written separately, which form one single lexical unit.* Based on the parts of speech of the words that constitute the locution, we classify locutions as: *nominal, pronominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, prepositional, conjunctional,* and *interjective.*

In the dictionary "*Albanian- English*"[13] the word "*lokucion*" is translated as "*locution, phrase, expression, idiom*". In most of the dictionaries of the English language[14]the meaning of the term "**locution**" is defined as follows*: a word, a group of words or expression that is used by one person, or a particular group in a particular place.* It is obvious that the respective term in English does not correspond to the meaning that it has in Albanian language. It is the term "**phrase**" in English which fits best to the Albanian concept for "locution" The definition of the word "*phrase*" in English is: "*a small group of words standing together as a conceptual unit, typically forming a component of a clause*". A **phrase** is a group of two or more words functioning as a meaningful unit within a **sentence** or clause. Generally, phrases in grammars of English language are analysed based on syntactic relations via the syntactic tree[15]. In the grammar of English language[16] there are *Prepositional Phrases – PP*, *Adverbial Phrases - AdvP*, *Adjective Phrases - AP*, *Noun Phrases - NP* and *Verb Phrases - VP.*

But based on our observations, when these phrases are treated syntactically, they correspond to word clusters. The degree of difficulty identified in putting clear cut

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[10] Likaj E., Çabej M., "Morfologji e shqipes standarde", Tiranë 2010, f. 9

[11] Classification of periods in English language

[12] Le Grevisse "*Le bon usage*" 1986, f. 261

[13] *Fjalor Shqip – Anglisht*, Pavli Qesku, EDFA, Tiranë 2002, f. 444

[14] www.memidex.com (free online dictionary/thesaurus and more)

[15] Phrases in Albanian are studied in morphology, whereas in English in synatx (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/342418/linguistics/35090/Morphology) Quirk R, Greenbaum S, et al "*A comprehensive grammar of the English language*", Longman, p 189-202 (Prepositions and prepositional phrases)

boundaries in studying phrases according to their morphological criteria is related to the incapacity to distinguish clearly compound words and phrases.

Theoretically phrases are structures that perform the function of a single word. Another identifying feature is related to the fact that phrases and compound words seem to be almost the same thing, because the constituents of compounds have historically derived from the combination of the words that make up the phrase. This has been treated by Booij[17], who qualifies as distinguishing features for phrases and compounds *agreement* and *stress*. To illustrate this example Booij presents the phrase *red cabbage* (Eng) "*lakër e kuqe*" (Alb) whose analogue in German is the compound *Rotkohl* (formed by the adjective *rot* and the noun *Kohl)*. The same concept in Dutch is translated *rode kool*. Booj treats this combination *rode kool* as a phrase, because the adjective *rode* might be inflected, rod-*e* (inflection), thus it changes gender, number, and case to agree with the noun. It is exactly the coordination of gender, number and case of the adjective with the noun (but not only) that in linguistics is called *agreement*. While in German the adjective *rot* does not change, i.e. it is not inflected.

On the other hand, in English **agreement** is limited to the category of plural of nouns, although in the case of phrases the form "s" of the plural might be attached to the other constituents. For instance, the flower "*forget–me-not"* in plural becomes "*forget-me-nots*". This is not an unusual form, because in English particles (i.e. not) do not get "s", so we think that this element of the phrase has been transformed into a noun. This reflects typically **the morphological criterion** of defining phrases, according to which all constituents of phrases must act as a single grammatical unit, so to accept as a single unit morphological and syntactic index of only one part of speech[18]. Another criterion is the stress. In phrases the main stress of the word is found on the constituents on the right, whereas in compounds on the constituents on the left. According to Booij these combinations cannot accept attributes (e.g., by the adverb "*very*"), as we cannot say *very red-cabbage* "lakër shumë e kuqe" or *heel rode kool*, because these phrases function as a single word, to define a particular type of cabbage. This is related to *the syntactic criterion* of phrases. This criterion in phrases has been defined as syntactic atomicity[19]*,* which implies that the constituents of phrases are atoms where syntax cannot enter, even though they are characterized by an open structure, no lexical units can enter in between them, neither can word order be changed.

Diachronic overview of phrases in English language

Phrases in English have been present since the period of Old English. Old Anglo Saxon manuscripts testify that Old English used to be rich in compounds and considering word formation norms, where compounds are formed by the union of words which are used next to each other for a long period of time, we think that a lot of compounds used to be phrases. Spelling of compounds in English is one of the most discussed issues, as it is widely known that even dictionaries do not have a unified spelling. This is the reason why the category of phrases has enriched and will continue to enrich the category of compounds in English. This issue has been treated even earlier in English language. In 1820 Mr. Jodrell published the book "*Philology of English language*", who suggested that each term made up of two words must be written as a single word. He illustrated his initiative by writing together a lot of words by different authors, who in

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[17] G.Booij, *The grammar of words*, 2010, f. 81-85
[18] Likaj E, Çabej M., *Morfologji e shqipes standarde*, 2010, f. 9
[19] S.Scalise, *Morfologia*, 1994, f. 89

their writings had written them separately. It was never encouraged in literature and is still open today. However, the fact that words which previously were written separately, are often found united leads us to believe that different elements pass from one class to another. Phrases are studied even in lexicology and often the boundaries of transitioning into idioms are easily surmountable. In the preface of the "Idiomatic dictionary English- Albanian[20]" I. Stefanllari highlights that he "*has included idioms of English and American language of high density in usage – sustainable unions that have been historically formed and have been crystalized as inseparable units*". We do think that it is exactly some of these collocations that can be studied and analysed within the framework of phrases. For example.: *all right, all in all, one by one, one day, one another* etc.

Another key issue of English language grammar[21] are the phrasal verbs, a typical construction of English language. *Phrasal verb* [22]is called a verb that is made up of two or more words, i.e. one verb with preposition, adverb or particle. Prepositions are used as particles in the structure of phrasal verbs, they are often used and are highly productive. Not only a specific verb with different prepositions changes its meaning, but there are also a lot of cases when the same combination (*verb+ preposition*) has different meanings (e.g., *take off*). Classification of phrasal verbs according to semantics classifies them into two groups: phrasal verbs with **literal meaning** and phrasal verbs with **idiomatic meaning**. We think that phrasal verbs with literal meaning might be treated as phrases, since a lot of them have been transformed into compounds and have become compound nouns, but because of the high productivity that phrasal verbs have in English they are treated separately. (even in specific dictionaries).

Types of phrases based on constituents (as parts of speech) and as a separate unit

Phrases from the structure are made up of a group of words, whereas from the function act as a single word. The constituents of phrases have a stable relationship between them and are used as a single word without preserving semantic and grammatical uniqueness of the constituents. Phrases may be *nominal, adjectival, verbal*, *prepositional*, *adverbial, pronominal, conjunctional* and *numeral*.

Phrases in English language (*Oxford Student's Dictionary*)

Phrases in English are mainly treated syntactically although they are part of morphology, the constituents of a phrase enter syntactic relation between them. Because of the controversies that have accompanied the criteria for a clear-cut division of phrases from compounds, we have collected and treated as phrases all collocations made up of more than one word that express a unique concept, are rigid and appear in the dictionary as a single structure[23]. Several linguists consider them within compounds and there are no clear boundaries. There is a total of 478 phrases in the English dictionary OSD, which comprise around 1.1% of all the corpus, which is not significant.

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[20] I. Stefanllari "*Fjalor idiomatik Anglisht –Shqip*", Botimet enciklopedike, Tiranë 1998(iii)

[21] *Phrasal verbs are different from prepositional verbs.*

[22] *The Online Dictionary of Language Terminology*: http://www.odlt.org/

[23] During this study we have often run into disorienting classifications E.g.: "**prepositional phrases**" are "a group of words made up of a preposition and its object, which may be a noun, pronoun, gerund etc. which means that forms like "*under the bed, near the ocean*" are phrases, but they are not.

Statistical data of phrases in Albanian and English

Phrases	DCAL 1980	OSD
Quantity per each dictionary compared to the corpus	716	478
Percentage per each dictionary compared to the corpus	1.79 %	1.1%
Total number of words per each dictionary	41000	40000

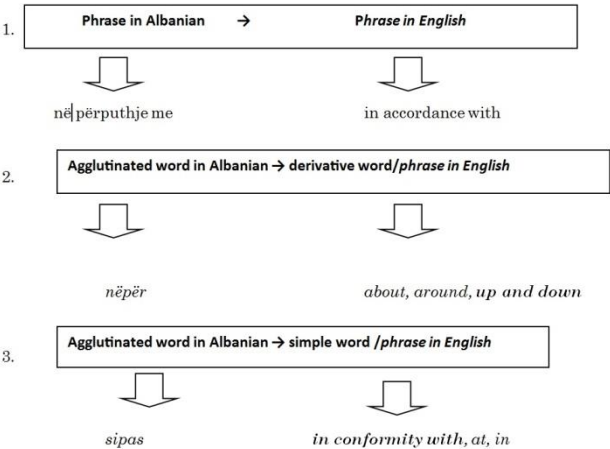Graphical representation of distribution of phrases in Albanian vs English:
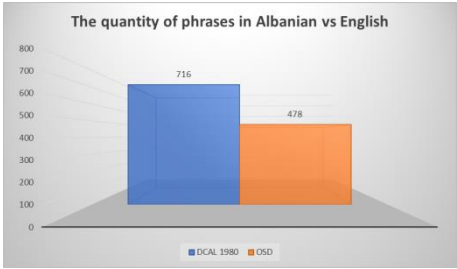
Phrases of DCAL 1980 in percentage (**1.79 %**) – Phrases of OSD (**1.1%**) –
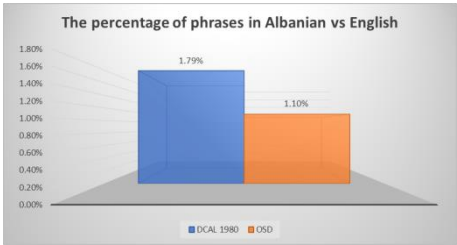
Translation of phrases from Albanian to English

Translation of phrases from one language to another presents us with new issues, i.e. there may be full agreement or discrepancies, as illustrated by the following examples:

CONCLUSONS

- Phrases act as a lexical-grammatical category in both languages English and Albanian.
- In Albanian phrases are widely accepted as a separate word formation technique, whereas in English collocations based on the concept and definition of phrases are treated within the category of compounding, although in this comparative study we have identified phrases separately.
- Statistically the difference between the phrases collected by the Albanian dictionary is significant, respectively 716 when compared to the phrases collected by the English dictionary, respectively 478, almost 1.5 times more in Albanian than in English.
- In both languages phrases might be *nominal, adjectival, verbal, prepositional, adverbial, conjunctional* and *pronominal.* However, there is not full compliance, as in Albanian there are also phrases in particles and interjections, whereas in English no.
- In Albanian language phrases from numerals are infinite, but they have not been recorded in the dictionary (neither are they part of our statistics).
- Translation of phrases from one language to the other results in either the same form *phrase – phrase,* or in different forms: *agglutinated word- phrase, agglutinated word- simple word* or *derivative word.*

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5. Gramatika e Gjuhës Shqipe I, Tiranë 1995
6. M. Domi, "*Disa çështje të lokucioneve*", SF 1, 1985
7. Sh. Demiraj, *Gramatika shqipe*, Tiranë 1949
8. K. Cipo, *Gramatika shqipe*, Tiranë 1940
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