

## WORD ORDER IN ALBANIAN, TURKISH AND ENGLISH-A PRAGMATICALLY ORIENTED RESEARCH



ARNAVUTÇA, TÜRKÇE VE İNGİLİZCEDE KELİME DÜZENİ -  
EDİM BİLİMSEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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**ABSTRACT:** Albanian and Turkish belong to two different language families and their different language structures make these two languages different in regard to their syntactic structure. Albanian is a flexible and analytic language with diversity, while Turkish is an agglutinative language extensive and morpheme accumulation (often with different syntactic functions) within the word makes these two languages more interesting to compare. The syntactic feature of Turkish language is leftbranching generation of sentences. The predicate is the first pattern located at the end of the sentence and then the other patterns of the sentence precede it. This norm has also been referred to as the 'basic syntactic law of the Altaic languages' (the determining element precedes the element which it determines) (Johanson, 2002: 25). Greenberg (1966) classified Turkic as 'the rigid subtype' of the so-called SOV languages, meaning the order of determining elements (complements and determinatives) within the phrase of the Turkish syntax is chained (successive); therefore quite harmonized. Johanson argues that during its use in practice these iterative capsular rules divert to the natural use of the language.

The purpose of this study is to analyze word order in syntactic units as the phrase and the sentence in order to observe how "ruthless / free" are the Albanian speakers when they come up with their first sentences in Turkish, and how this Turkish consistency affects Turkish students when they learn the first syntax of Albanian. Hence, the observation is going to be realized in both directions regarding the contrast of both grammatical systems, and the students are going to be approximately of the same age and approximately the same level of Turkish and Albanian language acquisition (first year Turkish students of the Albanian Language and Literature department who learn Albanian for the first time at the Trakya University in Edirne, Turkey, and Albanian students who learn Turkish for the first time in the Turkish Language and Literature department at the University of Pristina, Kosovo). Moreover, English word order will be analyzed in order to have a clear picture of the contrast of three linguistic typologies taking into consideration word order within the sentence.

**Keywords:** Turkish, Albanian, syntax, structure, pragmatics.

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**ÖZ:** Arnavutça ve Türkçe iki ayrı dil ailesinde yer alırlar ve dil yapıları farklı olduğu için söz dizim açısından da farklıdırlar. Arnavutça, bükümlü ve analitik bir dildir, Türkçe ise sondan eklemeli ve ekstansif bir dildir, ayrıca sözcük içindeki morfem birikimine (genellikle farklı söz dizim işlevlerine) sahiptir. Bu durum Arnavut ve Türk dillerinin karşılaştırılmasını daha da ilginç hale getirmektedir. Türk dilinin sözdizimsel özelliği sola dallanan bir yapıdadır. Yüklem, ilk önce cümlelerin sonuna yerleştirilir ve daha sonra cümlelerin diğer öğelerini sıralar. Bu normun, "Altay Dilleri sentaksının temel kuralı" olduğu söylenir (tamlayan tamlanandan önce gelir) (Johanson, 2002: 25). Türkçe, ÖNY dillerinin 'katı alt tipi'dir (Greenberg, 1966), bu da Türkçe cümlelerdeki öge sıralanışının zincirleme bir şekilde uyumlandığı anlamına gelir. Johanson, bu kuralların pratikte kullanım esnasında değişebileceğini yani yüklem her zaman sonda olamayabileceğini belirtmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, cümlelerin yapısını söz dizim özelliklerine göre analiz ederek, sözlü ve yazılı cümlelerin sırasının, Türkçede cümleyi oluşturken ne kadar "sabit / serbest" olduklarını gözlemek ve ilk Türkçe cümlelerini kullanan Arnavut öğrenciler ile ilk Arnavutça cümlelerini kuran Türk öğrencilerin karşılaştırmasının yapılabilmesidir. Bu nedenle, her iki gramer sistemi de dilbilgisel, karşıtlık açısından her iki yönde de gözlemlenecektir. Yaklaşık aynı yaşta ve aynı seviyede Türkçe ve Arnavutça dil eğitimi olan öğrenciler değerlendirmeye alınacaktır (Trakya Üniversitesi'nde Arnavut Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalının birinci sınıfında ilk kez Arnavutça gören Türk öğrenciler ile Priştine Üniversitesi'nde Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümünde ilk defa Arnavutça öğrenen Türk öğrenciler). Ayrıca, cümle içinde kelime sıralaması dikkate alınarak üç dilbilimsel tipolojinin karşıtlığı hakkında net bir tabloya sahip olmak için İngilizce kelime düzeni incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkçe, Arnavutça, sözdizim, dilbilgisi, edim bilim.

## Introduction

Even though there are six logically possible ways of arranging words into sentences according to their basic grammatical functions of Subject, Object, and Verb (SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OVS, OSV), the SOV and SVO orders account for 86% of word order variation among the world's languages (Dryer, 2005: 330-333).

Word order is the analysis of the order of the syntactic constituents of a language, and that how different languages would employ different orders (Tallerman, 2005). The discrepancies and similarities between orders in different syntactic domains are a matter of interest for linguists (Tallerman, 2005). Some languages are relatively inflexible in their word order. Thus, in order to convey grammatical information, their speakers have to rely on the order of constituents. Other languages are more flexible and convey grammatical information via inflection, case marking, or other markers. This shows that most languages have a preferred word order and use it most frequently than other word orders (Johnson, 2008). Based on Tallerman (2005) there are 6 possible constituent word orders for the world languages:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The classification taken from: (Izadi and Rahimi, 2015: 37-43).

1. Subject + verb + object (i.e. SVO): including English, the Romance languages, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Chinese and Swahili.

2. Subject + object + verb (SOV): the prototypical Japanese, Mongolian, Basque, Turkish, Korean, the Indo-Aryan languages, the Dravidian languages, Persian, Latin and Quechua,

3. Verb + subject + object (VSO): Classical Arabic, the Insular Celtic languages, and Hawaiian,

4. Verb + object + subject (VOS): Fijian and Malagasy,

5. Object + subject + verb (OSV): Xavante and Warao,

6. Object + verb + subject (OVS): Hixkaryana.

Many languages of the world are either SVO or SOV. The most common word order used in simple transitive sentences in Turkish is SOV (Subject-Object-Verb), but all six permutations of a transitive sentence can be used in the proper discourse situation since the subject and object are differentiated by case-marking. However, each word order conveys a different discourse meaning only appropriate to a specific discourse situation. The one propositional interpretation cannot capture the distinctions in meaning necessary for effective translation and communication in Turkish. The interpretations of these different word orders rely on discourse-related notions such as theme/rheme, focus/presupposition, topic/comment, etc. that describe how the sentence relates to its context. e.g. (1):

a. *Ayşe Fatma'yı arıyor.*

*Ayşe Fatma-Acc. seek-Pres-(3Sg).*

*"Ayşe is looking for Fatma."*

b. *Fatma'yı Ayşe arıyor.*

c. *Ayşe arıyor Fatma'yı.*

d. *Fatma'yı arıyor Ayşe.*

e. *Arıyor Fatma'yı Ayşe.*

f. *Arıyor Ayşe Fatma'yı.*

There is little agreement on how to represent the discourse-related functions of components in the sentence, i.e. the information structure of the sentence. Among Turkish linguists (Erguvanlı, 1984) captures the general use of word order by associating each position in a Turkish sentence with a specific pragmatic function. Hoffman (1995), based on Erguvanli research, specifies that generally in Turkish speakers first place the information that links the sentence to the previous context, then the important and/or new information immediately before the verb, and the information that is not really needed but may help the hearer understand the sentence better, after the verb. Erguvanlı identifies the sentence-initial

position as the topic, the immediately preverbal position as the focus, and the postverbal positions as backgrounded information.

English core complements yield two dimensions of structural contrast, a ternary one involving O and a binary one involving PC (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002):

	ORDINARY	COMPLEX
Intransitive	I left. (S-P)	I got better. (S-P-PC)
Monotransitive	I took the car. (S-P-O)	I kept it hot. (S-P-O-PC)
Ditransitive	I gave Jo a key. (S-P-O-O)	

Classifications in terms of transitivity and valency (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 219) are as follows, where the complements are underlined:

	TRANSITIVITY	VALENCY
I. He died.	intransitive	monovalent
II. This depends on the price.	intransitive	bivalent
III. Ed became angry.	intransitive (complex);	bivalent
IV. He read the paper.	monotransitive	bivalent
V. He blamed me for the delay.	monotransitive	trivalent
VI. This made Ed angry.	monotransitive (complex);	trivalent
VII. She gave him some food.	ditransitive	trivalent

Compared to English, Albanian is “freer” in its word order constituent structure, it is more flexible and its word order is relatively free. Albanian parts of speech are mostly unambiguous. Moreover, prepositions and the case markers help to remove ambiguity. In addition, case endings like different suffixes allow speakers to permute word order. This feature enhances expressiveness and more information load can be driven from each of its sentence. Verb endings can provide information about the tense and subject of a sentence. In Albanian subjects can be freely omitted, modifiers usually come after the nouns that they modify. The question particle /A/, which is used in yes/no questions appears at the beginning of the sentences. Even though it belongs to the languages which use SVO, Albanian can use prepositions, too.

Floqi (1978: 25-52) in Albanian linguistic circles achieved to identify around 30 basic sentence patterns in Albanian (with several subtypes), but could not simplify these models due to the very flective secondary category typology of Albanian. Floqi concentrates on the patterns with no significant complexity. Such patterns are called by him Minimal basic structural units, based on Parts of speech categorization, not on functional ones.

The syntactic feature of the Turkish language is leftbranching generation of sentences. The predicate is the first pattern located at the end

of the sentence and then the other patterns of the sentence precede it. This phenomenon is also known as 'the basic law of the Altaic languages in the field of syntax': the determinant element determines the element which it determines (Johanson, 2002: 25). The order of determining elements (complements and determinatives) within the phrase of the Turkish syntax is chained (successive) and quite harmonized (Greenberg, 1966), and Johanson argues that during its use in practice these iterative capsular rules divert to the natural use of the language.

So, in Turkish, word order is variable. "Major constituents can occur in any order in Turkish, but the unmarked order is subject (-object) - predicate (SOV) in verbal sentences and subject- predicate in nominal sentences" (Göksel and Kerslake, 2005: 337). Sentence, having the word order SOV, is a typical unmarked sentence in Turkish. "The major constituents of a sentence, however, can appear in any order" (Göksel and Kerslake, 2005: 343). In Turkish "Word order does not express the syntactic and semantic functions of noun phrases... word order in Turkish is dictated by discourse considerations" Kornfilt, 1997: 215). Turkish fits into the pragmatic word order type (Thompson, 1978).

The fact that Albanian and Turkish belong to two different language families and their different language structures make these two languages different in regard to their syntactic structure makes these two languages more interesting to contrast. Albanian on one hand is a flexible and analytic language with diversity as far as inflection is concerned, while Turkish is an agglutinative language and morpheme accumulation, often with different syntactic functions within the word. English has been also taken into consideration in order to compare and contrast the two languages with one more Indo-European language, less flexible than Albanian and with a more fixed word order of its structural components.

The present study aimed at analyzing the word order in syntactic units such as the clause/sentence in order to observe how "ruthless / free" are the Albanian speakers when they come up with their first sentences in Turkish, and how this Turkish consistency affects Turkish students when they learn the syntax of Albanian for the first time. Hence, the observation is going to be realized in both directions regarding the contrast of both grammatical systems: Turkish students of the Albanian language who learn Albanian for the first time at the Trakya University in Edirne, Turkey, and Albanian students who learn Turkish in the Turkish and Oriental studies department at the University of Prishtina, Kosovo. By applying the contrastive analysis through the translation method, Albanian and Turkish speakers of English from the Albanian and Turkish departments in Pristina will be tested in order to have a clearer picture of the contrast of two linguistic typologies, taking into consideration word order within the clause / sentence.

Moreover, whenever possible, the study will try to give some information structure of the sentences, too, in order to see the pragmatic usage of a particular word order influenced by different topic/comment and background information structure in terms of Hoffman (1995). The change of word order (WO) within a clause, changes automatically the focus of the sentence or the clause and that effects a lot the communication process when a language is written or spoken by a non-native speaker of a language.

### **Methodology Design and Procedure**

The whole procedure is based on testing written ability of students in translating from Albanian into Turkish and from Turkish into Albanian, in combining different words given to them as lexical data in order to create their original sentences in a target language as well as in detecting grammar errors by rewriting the text with as few mistakes as possible. The written errors were mainly of WO scope, and concentrated on the WO in both languages.

Apart from the context-based research, an extra, more specific and more subjective task the participants were requested to do: to list the difficulties they face in learning Turkish/Albanian according to their level of difficulty, from the most difficult to the least difficult one.

### **Participants**

Forty-five students of Turkish language from different years of studies at the Faculty of Philology (Albanians by ethnicity, whose Turkish is a language used in a family or mainly used as a social status language) participated in the research by answering the written questionnaire. The students belonged to two different departments, and twelve students of Albanian language at the Trakya University, whose mother tongue is Turkish and who study Albanian as a second language, responded to the questionnaire, too.

### **Materials**

The questionnaires consisting of five different tasks were disseminated and collected during the practical classes (tutorials) of Turkish at both departments in Prishtina and to the students of Albanian in Edirne, the participants were given one hour time to fill them in manually, and WO distinctive features have been thoroughly analyzed afterwards.

### **The Results/Findings of the Research and the Discussion of Findings**

It should be emphasized that the task of translation of the text from Albanian into Turkish has not been finished by all of the participants in the research and that five of them did not do this task at all. They gave a short notification that they were not sure about their Turkish competence. The

fact they did not translate gives evidence of students' poor competence of Turkish and should be regarded as an important indicator when speaking of it.

Oriental studies <sup>2</sup>						
Sentences: <sup>3</sup>	Correct		Incorrect		No answer	
1.	17	89.47%	1	5.26%	1	5.26%
2.	7	36.84%	10	52.63%	2	10.53%
3.	8	42.10%	7	36.84%	4	21.05%
4.	14	73.68%	3	15.79%	2	10.53%
5.	7	36.84%	7	36.84%	5	26.32%
6.	9	47.37%	4	21.05%	6	31.58%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>54.39%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28.07%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17.54%</b>

Turkish Language and Literature <sup>4</sup>						
Sentences: <sup>5</sup>	Correct		Incorrect		No answer	
1.	9	10%	1	10%	-	0%
2.	3	30%	4	40%	3	30%
3.	4	40%	2	20%	4	40%
4.	4	40%	-	0%	6	60%
5.	1	10%	4	40%	5	50%
6.	4	40%	-	0%	6	60%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>41.66%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18.33%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40%</b>

<sup>2</sup> Prishtina University.

<sup>3</sup> The number of ordered sentences in the first task. The number from 1-6 indicates the number of sentences translated!

<sup>4</sup> University of Prishtina.

<sup>5</sup> The number of ordered sentences in the first task.

Albanian Language and Literature <sup>6</sup>						
Sentences: <sup>7</sup>	Correct		Incorrect		No answer	
1.	7	58.33%	3	25%	2	16.67%
2.	5	41.66%	4	33.33%	3	25%
3.	4	33.33%	4	33.33%	4	33.33%
4.	6	50%	1	8.33%	5	41.66%
5.	4	33.33%	3	25%	5	41.66%
6.	4	33.33%	-	0%	8	66.67%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>41.67%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20.83%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37.50%</b>

Albanian Language and Literature <sup>8</sup>						
Sentences: <sup>9</sup>	Correct		Incorrect		No answer	
1.	11	91.67%	1	8.33%	-	0%
2.	8	66.67%	3	25%	1	8.33%
3.	6	50%	5	41.66%	1	8.33%
4.	7	58.33%	4	33.33%	1	8.33%
5.	6	50%	2	16.67%	4	33.33%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>63.33%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11.67%</b>

Albanian Language and Literature <sup>10</sup>						
Sentences: <sup>11</sup>	Correct		Incorrect		No answer	
1.	1 <sup>12</sup>	8.33%	3 <sup>13</sup>	25%	8	66.67%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>63.33%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11.67%</b>

<sup>6</sup> Trakya University.

<sup>7</sup> The number of ordered sentences in the first task.

<sup>8</sup> Trakya University.

<sup>9</sup> The number of ordered sentences in the second task.

<sup>10</sup> Trakya University.

<sup>11</sup> The number of ordered sentences in the third task.

<sup>12</sup> 80% performed the task correctly.

<sup>13</sup> 20% performed the task correctly.



Albanian Language and Literature <sup>14</sup>				
5	4	3	2	1
9	2	1	-	-
75%	16.67%	8.33%	0%	0%

Based on what the students wrote in the questionnaire, the following are the most difficult grammatical problems for the Turkish students while writing or speaking in Albanian:

1. Noun cases, because of the noun inflectional markers which indicate the noun case and the noun function in the clause, too.
2. The place of predicator in the spoken Albanian mainly, less in the written one.
3. The position of the short forms / clitics.
4. The position of the noun before the adjective.
5. The position of the noun before the possessive pronouns.
6. The noun-adjective gender agreement.

Whereas Albanian students studying Turkish in Prishtina listed mainly:

1. The position of the verb at the end of the clause
2. The combination of derivational suffixes and
3. The usage of past tenses.

Richards and Schmidt (1992) indicated that “the studies regarding errors are carried out in order to (a) identify strategies which learners use in language teaching, (b) identify the causes of learner errors, and (c) obtain information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid to teaching or in development of teaching materials”. Thus, it can be deduced that language learning and teaching cannot be conceived without the findings of error analysis.

DeKeyser (2005) stated that “It appears that at least three factors are involved in determining grammatical difficulty: complexity of form, complexity of meaning, and complexity of the form-meaning relationship”.

After having analyzed thoroughly the students’ answer, one could distinguish several important errors which indicate the difficulties of the students to learn and use properly the foreign language, in this case Turkish and Albanian:

- a) The incorrect positioning of the Subject in the sentence (*Bir haber alma aracıdır internet.* instead of *Internet de bir bilgi aracıdır.*)

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<sup>14</sup> The difficulties, starting from the most difficult one.

b) The place of the predicator which was mainly used in the middle and not at the end of the sentence (Trakya University students);

c) Null Subject usage in one language creates difficulties in using it in the other language, regardless the fact that both languages have the possibility for having Null Subject.

d) Several sentences have been literally translated from Albanian into Turkish, especially students in Prishtina: "*Düşünün ki bütün okul arkadaşlarınız ...*" or "*Düşüncelere göre tüm bilgisayarlar okul arkadaşlarının ... sağlayabilir*" (Trakya University students gave the last option).<sup>15</sup>

e) Difficulties with the identification of the subject in general: "*Şimdi, bu arkadaşların ağlarıyla haberleriniz ...*" instead of "*Şimdi, diğer ağlar da arkadaşlarımızın ...*" (Trakya & Prishtina). Such examples show that students in Prishtina who study Turkish face difficulties with identifying the predicator whereas the Trakya ones have difficulties in identifying the Subject.

f) Since there is no linking verb "*jam*" (*to be*) in Turkish, Prishtina students found it very difficult to find the appropriate deverbal element in the structure of the clause or the sentence and produced sentences without any predicator at all.

### **Topic/Comment/Background Oriented Analysis**

The pragmatics of word order in Turkish has been studied by (Erguvanli, 1984) and (Erkü, 1983). Erguvanli presents a functional approach to word order variation in which each position in a Turkish sentence is strongly associated with a specific pragmatic function. She identifies the sentence-initial position as the topic, the immediately preverbal position as the focus, and the postverbal positions as backgrounded information. Erkü (1983) adopts a Topic-Comment information structure where the topic of the sentence can occur either sentence initially or post-verbally, and must refer to a discourse entity that is uniquely identifiable or a member of a uniquely identifiable set. There is also a focused entity within the comment component of the information structure, where focus is loosely denied as prominent information.

Hauffman, moreover, (1997: 13-15) states that the most common word order used in simple transitive sentences in Turkish is SOV Subject Object Verb. However, all six permutations of a transitive sentence are grammatical. Since case marking rather than word order serves to differentiate the arguments in Turkish, this word order variation within a clause has been called local scrambling. However, each word order conveys a different discourse meaning only appropriate to a specific discourse

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<sup>15</sup> The Predicator is mainly used at the end of the clause/sentence, the place of the predicator changes when one wants to emphasize an action or a state, typical context for such changes is the language of poetry and proverbs (Karahan 2013: 14).

situation. Turkish and Albanian speakers often place the topical information to link the sentence to the previous context at the start of the sentence, the important and/or new information immediately before the verb and the background information that is not really needed but may help the hearer understand the sentence better, after the verb. This context-dependent aspect of meaning is called the information structure of the sentence (Hauffman, 1997).

In the case of the students in Prishtina, whose first language is Albanian and who study Turkish as a foreign or second language, the choice of Topic / Comment differentiation has been analyzed and the following results have been obtained:

	Topic	Comment (the new information given including the elements of the ground)	Focus
1	The Subjects such as: Alb. <i>Djali, I biri, E bija, Universiteti, Libri</i> . (Tur. <i>Oğul,Oğlu,Kızı,Unive rsite,Kitap</i> ),have been used in 95% of cases as a topic, 45 % of this total number in accordance with the Albanian case system, whereas 55% without case markers (influence of Turkish when translating from Turkish into Albanian).	Almost always preceded by the Topic, however the core compliments usually used immediately after the verb, except for the cases when the speaker used location (ground information) before the core complement (Alb. <i>Libri nga druri bëhet</i> . Tur. <i>Kitap ağaçtan yapılır</i> .)In such a case, the ground is the focus, too. One is aware of the influence of Turkish in translation process from Turkish into Albanian.	Only a few results for Focus out of the sentences used, there were only three cases when the Focus has been identified via linguistic means in Albanian, by using the position of the complement in the first place and in Nominative passive, and by giving the agent less importance: (Alb. <i>Melodia e këngës është pëlqyer në festival</i> . Tur. <i>Festivaldeki şarkının melodisi seviliyor</i> .), by positioning the verb in the first place eventhough the new information in such cases is used first: (Alb. <i>Është hapur panairi i librit në Prishtinë</i> . Tur. <i>Prishtine'deki Kitap Fuarı açıldı</i> .), modifiers in front of the noun (not typical order for Albanian, only for stylistical reasons): (Alb. <i>E bukur është vajza e fqinjit tim</i> . Tur. <i>Komşumun kızı güzeldir</i> .)

## Conclusion

To conclude with the outcomes of the research, it can be stated that the typical word order formula for Turkish is not a rigid one (apart for the position of the Predicator / Verb) and the flexibility SO and OS becomes obvious when Turkish language becomes the second language. Speakers of Albanian tend to make this WO pattern freer, by focusing more on discourse markers than on pure grammatical rules. On the other hand, Turkish students of Albanian tend to change the BSP of Albanian, whenever they use it during their acquiring process by using the verb on the ground position (not on the core rheumatic function) and by considering it sometimes an irrelevant element in the clause and sentence structure (influence of Turkish predicator position at the end of the clause).

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