

BASIC STRUCTURAL SENTENCE PATTERNS IN THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT: This paper describes and analyzes the basic structural sentence patterns in the Albanian language. The internal structure of sentences is determined by the verb, which serves as its predicator: the type of verb/ verb valence determines the number and type of complements, and consequently determines the minimal structure of the sentence. A verb like *vdes* “die”, which is monovalent-intransitive, requires only one complement in the function of the subject to complete the sentence. Unlike *vdes* “die”, the bivalent verb *takoj* “meet” requires two complements to convey its meaning: an internal complement in the function of the direct object and an external complement in the function of the subject. Thus, the verb *vdes* “die” forms one of the basic sentence patterns in the Albanian language: S + intransitive verb, whereas the verb *takoj* “meet” forms another basic pattern, namely the pattern S + monotransitive verb + DO. The minimal sentence structure contains the verb together with its valence complements. Therefore, in order to derive the basic sentence patterns in Albanian, the sentence constituents that function as complements were first distinguished from adjuncts, and then it was proceeded with the classification of the type of complements. The description of the basic sentence patterns is made according to the syntactic function carried by verb complements, supplemented by the description according to the syntactic categories and the semantic roles that complements carry.

KEYWORDS: sentence patterns, verb valence, complements, adjuncts, structure

1. Introduction

1.1. On sentence patterns in the Albanian language

This research aims at describing and analyzing typical structural sentence patterns in the Albanian language. A sentence like *Ajo doli* “She left” – has the structure of S + Verb (predicator), whereas the sentence *Ne shikuam një film* “We watched a movie” – has the structure of S + V + DO. These two types of structures constitute two of the possible sentence patterns in Albanian. Thus, serving as sentence patterns, certain structures are derived, on the basis of which all the sentences of a given language can be analyzed. The purpose of this research is to extract and analyze all the basic sentence patterns in Albanian. The description of the structures of a language via certain basic sentence patterns is quite common in the grammars of various languages, such as German, English, etc. In Albanian, the first ones to deal with sentence patterns were Spiro Floqi (1978, pp. 25-52) in one of his articles and German scholars Oda Buchholz and Wilfried Fiedler (1987, pp. 472-497) in their *Albanische Grammatik* grammar.

Floqi (1978, pp. 25-52), describes declarative sentence patterns based on Tesnière’s Syntax (1959), namely based on his theory of verb valence. Thus, depending on the verb, he distinguishes obligatory components, optional components, and components that cannot be realized by certain verbs. He describes sentence patterns in terms of parts of speech and not in terms of syntactic functions. As such, the description gives more details about certain patterns but, on the other hand, the formal description, as opposed to the functional one, increases the total number of sentence patterns, thus failing to derive certain basic sentence patterns for Albanian. Unlike Floqi, Buchholz and Fiedler (1987, pp. 472-497) describe typical sentence patterns based on the syntactic functions of the constituents in the sentence and their patterns represent not only simple sentences but also sentences that contain subordination. Before moving to typical patterns, they first produce all the derived patterns, describing them according to their syntactic categories (NG-Nominal Group, PG-Prepositional Group, etc.). Buchholz and Fiedler distinguish a total of 115 structural sentence patterns, which they then group into four basic patterns: 1. Predicator; 2. Predicator + complement of predicator; 3. Subject + predicator; 4. Subject + predicator + complement of predicator (where all internal complements of the verb are included). Such patterns do not account for passive sentences, subject ellipsis or object ellipsis. Recently, it was also Gëzim Xhaferri who dealt with sentence patterns in Albanian. His study *Valenca e foljes në gjermanishte dhe në shqipë* (2006) is a contrasting German-Albanian study, which does not deal directly with sentence patterns in Albanian, but starts from German patterns to then investigate their equivalents translated into Albanian. As such, this study may not present all possible patterns

realized in Albanian. On the other hand, in Albanian grammars (Rrota, 1942; Cipo, 1952; Prifti, 1962; Domi, 1966, ASA, 2002, etc.), there was no classification of basic structural sentence patterns. These grammars address sentence parts: main and secondary parts (syntactic functions), their form – how they are realized, but there is no addressing of patterns with constituent combinations in the sentence. Such a classification of sentence elements does not indicate what the obligatory constituents for forming a complete structural and semantic sentence are; instead, it simply deals with the dependency relationship between the so-called (in these grammars) main parts and secondary parts, without further analyzing when such dependent elements are obligatory for the sentence, and when not. The element which determines which constituents are obligatory in a sentence and which are optional is the verb, which serves as the organizing center of the sentence. The type of verb determines the internal structure of the sentence. Depending on its valence, the verb controls or determines the number and type of complements, and consequently determines the minimal structure of a sentence. Based on the valence of the verb, we have derived the basic sentence patterns in Albanian. First, complements were distinguished from adjuncts, followed by a description of the type of complements generated in certain sentence patterns.

1.2. Research questions

1. What is the role of the verb in determining the minimal sentence structure?
2. Is the form of the complement always determined by the verb on which it depends?
3. What kind of phrases are used to realize verb complements: are complements always NPs?
4. How can a distinction be made between complements and adjuncts in the Albanian language?
5. When can a PP be a verb complement?
6. Which sentence patterns are most common in the Albanian language?

2. Minimal sentence structure - verb valence

The minimal sentence structure consists of the verb and its complements. The element that determines which components are obligatory in a sentence and which are optional is the verb, which serves as the organizing center of the sentence. The type of verb determines the internal structure of the sentence. Depending on its valence, the verb controls or assigns the number and type of complements. Aivalent verbs form sentences without being complemented by any complement; monovalent verbs form the minimal sentence structure by being complemented by one complement; bivalent verbs by being complemented by two complements, and trivalent verbs by three complements. The term *valence*, which entered linguistics from chemistry, was first used by the French linguist Lucien Tesnière (1959) and refers to the combinatorial abilities of the verb. In other words, according to Koleci and Turano (2011, p. 33), *the need that verbs express to be semantically and structurally complemented by adjacent words or constituents is called valence*. Consequently, the verb together with its obligatory constituents constitute the minimal structure of a sentence. The obligatory constituents of a verb are known as actants or complements, whereas other constituents which can be realized in different sentences, but which are not selected by the verb, are known as adjuncts. Tesnière (1959) limits valence to the number of complements, whereas in the modern theory of valence, it is said that verbs determine both the number and the type of complement (Herbst et al., 2004; Matthews, 2007, p. 3; Crystal, 2008, p. 507; Allerton, 2006, p. 147). Thus, by knowing the meaning of a verb, the speaker knows how many complements are needed and what of kind should the complements be. In this form it also generates the minimal sentence structure.

2.1. Differences between complements and adjuncts

Unlike the tradition of dividing a sentence into two main parts: the subject (NP) and the predicate (VP), studies which are based on the concept of valence and which consider the verb as the central element of the sentence, make a functional ternary division of the sentence:

- verbal bearer of valence;
- actants/complements;

- circostants/adjuncts

In such a division, there is a need to distinguish constituents that function as complements within a given structure from those that function as adjuncts. The difference between complements and adjuncts is one of the most complex issues in valence theory. The necessity of distinguishing these types of sentence constituents lies in the fact that complements depend on the governing verb, whereas adjuncts do not depend on the valence of the governing verb. Consequently, complements are obligatory to realize the meaning of the verb, that is, the minimal structure of the sentence, whereas adjuncts may be left unrealized without affecting the structure of the sentence.

To distinguish the constituents that function as complements from those that function as adjuncts, various tests and criteria have been proposed (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 225), (Reichardt, 2013, p. 142) etc., such as:

- a. Permutation test or topicalization test;
- b. Question test;
- c. Substitution test or anaphora criterion;
- d. Syntactic category;
- e. Licensing;
- f. Elimination test or obligatoriness criterion;
- g. Semantic differences/semantic factors;

The tests or criteria listed above cannot distinguish between complements and adjuncts if used on their own. For this reason, Storrer (2003, p. 778) proposes to combine different test methods when distinguishing complements from adjuncts. Moreover, she states that categorizing certain elements as complements or adjuncts is often intuitive. The rationale for the given categorization then depends on the valence relation being investigated and the valence model being applied. Moreover, the above tests or criteria that serve to distinguish complements from adjuncts are not equally suitable for all languages. Therefore, given their role or value in distinguishing complements and adjuncts in the case of Albanian, we will divide these tests/criteria into two groups:

Group I – tests of little or no explanatory value for the difference between complements and adjuncts in the case of Albanian, which includes tests a. and b, considered to be unsuitable to distinguish between complements and adjuncts, and tests c. and d., which help distinguish complements from adjuncts if used in combination with other criteria, but which cannot be used on their own to make such a distinction about the role of constituents in the Albanian language.

Group II – tests of the highest explanatory value for the difference of complements and adjuncts in the case of Albanian, which includes tests/criteria e, f, and g, which will be briefly addressed below:

e. Licensing

A fairly accurate criterion for distinguishing between complements and adjuncts is the licensing criterion. According to this criterion, complements require a suitable verb in the sentence which licenses their presence, whereas adjuncts, on the other hand, can be realized with any verb, provided they have semantic compatibility with each other. Therefore, complements cannot be used with any valence bearer; they occupy certain empty positions in the sentence; thus, they can only be realized in such structures which are licensed by the verb. Different types of verbs, license different types of complements and, thus, verbs are subcategorized into different types according to the complements they take. For example, in the following sentences:

- A. () *Bubullinte mbrëmë*. “It thundered last night.”
- B. *Plaku vdiq mbrëmë*. “The old man died last night.”
- C. *Besa takoi nënën mbrëmë*. “Besa met her mother last night.”
- D. *Mbrëmë unë e lashë librin në tavolinë*. “Last night I left the book on the table.”
- E. *Ne ia dhamë ndihmën e parë fëmijëve mbrëmë*. “We gave first aid to the children last night.”

The underlined constituents are complements. They are licensed by the verb with which they are used, filling specific positions assigned to them by the verb, as follows: in example A, the verb

bubullin “thunders” is avalent, and as such it cannot take any complements, it does not license any complements, including the subject, which is unrealizable with such verbs; in example B, the verb is monovalent, and this valence is filled with an NP in the role of the subject (*plaku* “the old man”). Such a verb cannot take objects or other complements, because its valence is filled; in example C the verb is bivalent, it assigns two complements: the subject and the direct object, since the verb is mono-transitive; in example D, the verb is trivalent, it assigns three complements: subject, direct object, and locative adjunct, because the semantic type of the verb assigns three semantic roles: agent, theme, and locative; finally, in example E the verb is again trivalent, but unlike in D, in this case the verb is di-transitive, that is, it requires two internal complements (direct and indirect object) and an external complement, the subject. Therefore, as seen from all the above examples, the verb permits some complements and restricts some others, depending on the lexical information it carries. On the other hand, as evident, the temporal adjunct (AdvP) *mbrëmë* “last night”, can be realized in all the above sentences, because this circostant functions as an adjunct, so it does not need to be licensed by the verb, it can be expressed in any sentence, regardless of the type of verb.

f. Elimination test or obligatoriness criterion

The elimination test, combined with the licensing criterion, is one of the tests with the greatest explanatory value for the difference between complements and adjuncts in the Albanian language. The elimination test identifies the minimal elements needed for a grammatically correct sentence. By eliminating the elements that are not part of the verb valence, ie the adjuncts, the minimal structure needed for a certain sentence is reached, which is determined by the valence of the verb. When trying to eliminate a constituent, we will see if the rest of the sentence is still grammatically correct, or not. When the remainder of the sentence turns out to be grammatically correct, the eliminated constituent is not obligatory, ie it is an adjunct, but, if the remainder is grammatically incorrect, then the eliminated constituent is obligatory for the sentence structure, ie it is a complement. In the example below:

(*Dje*), (*në orët e pasditës*), *Agroni e pagoi* (*shpejt e shpejt*) *faturën e energjisë elektrike* (*në qendrën që punonte deri në orën 18:00*).

“(Yesterday), (in the afternoon), Agron paid (quickly) the electricity bill (at the center that worked until 18:00).

- it can be seen that the constituents enclosed in brackets can be eliminated and the sentence is still grammatically correct. Therefore, the bracketed constituents in this sentence function as adjuncts, because the verb is bivalent and its valence is saturated with two NPs, one in the role of the direct object and the other in the role of the subject.

However, when applying the elimination test, it should be borne in mind that not all complements are obligatory, that is, some complements may not be realized phonetically. Therefore, care should be taken at this point not to confuse optional complements with adjuncts. Complements, whether phonetically realized or not, are part of the verb valence, they are selected by the verb. Adjuncts, on the other hand, are not selected by a specific verb, they can be realized with any verb, regardless of its type. Circumstances in which complements may be left unrealized may be: A. context-dependent, or B. context-independent, as seen in the following examples in Albanian:

A. 1. *Dje unë hëngra akullore*. 2. *Arta s’hëngri* _____.

“1. Yesterday I ate ice cream. 2. Arta didn’t _____.”

B. 1. *Ai pi* _____. 2. *Unë i dërgova lulet* _____.

“1. He drinks _____. 2. I sent the flowers _____.”

In the second sentence of example A we deal with a context-dependent ellipsis. The NP is not realized in the second sentence, because it is implied by the context, namely the first sentence. Conversely, in example B we deal with context-independent ellipses – The complement is not realized phonetically and has not been mentioned before, but is understood or implied in the meaning of the verb. In the sentence in B.1. *Ai pi* _____ “He drinks_____”, unrealized complement is easily understood without being expressed = *pi alkool* “drinks alcohol”. The verb *pi* “drink” can be complemented by other complements as well: drink coffee, water, juice, etc.; however, in the Albanian language it is only in the case of alcohol that the verb *pi* “drink” creates a context-independent ellipsis. Likewise, in

the sentence in B.2. the complement that performs the function of the locative adjunct is not realized, but still understood by the semantics of the verb itself; the verb *dërgoj* “send” implies a location to which someone sends something. Therefore, complements, even when not realized phonetically, are part of verb valence – they can only occur in certain specific structures, when permitted or required by the verb to realize its meaning. Adjuncts, on the other hand, as already discussed above, differ from complements by not being selected or permitted by the verb; they can be realized with any verb and be numerous. The verb does not limit their number as it limits the number of complements.

g. Semantic factors / semantic differences

All of the mentioned tests or criteria fail to make a distinction between complements and adjuncts if used on their own. For this reason, different tests or factors must be combined in order to distinguish the constituents that function as complements from those that function as adjuncts. Therefore, in addition to licensing and elimination tests, we will also rely on certain semantic features to distinguish these constituents. As seen above, sentence structure is determined by the lexical information of the verb, which serves as the bearer of valence. The concept of valence, in addition to being used to indicate the number and type of syntactic complements, is also used to indicate the number and type of semantic arguments. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), what is represented by the sentence in syntactic terms is represented by the proposition in semantic terms, and the prepositional meaning of a sentence can be described via the semantic predicator and the arguments that complement it. Thus, the predicator, to create a proposition, is complemented by arguments (the term argument is usually used to describe semantic roles, whereas the term complement is used for syntactic complements) to which it assigns certain semantic roles. Verbs of certain semantic types assign different semantic roles to their arguments. Thus, verbs which require the same number of arguments, for example, trivalent verbs, but which belong to different semantic classes of verbs, assign different arguments or complements:

A. *Ia dhashë vajzës një gotë ujë.* “I gave the girl a glass of water.”

B. *E lashë çantën në klasë.* “I left the bag in the classroom.”

The verbs of both sentences are trivalent, so they require three complements/arguments to realize their meaning. However, regardless of the number, the types of complements they take are different, because these two verbs belong to different semantic types:

- the verb in example A, the verb *jap* “give”, belongs to the group of verbs that change ownership and in order for such a proposition to be realized, the arguments of the verb must perform the semantic roles that it assigns to them. Therefore, in order to realize such proposition, three entities are needed: someone to perform the action intentionally/knowingly – the agent, an entity to be given or to change ownership – the theme, and someone to take the entity given or someone who benefits from this action – the beneficiary.

- the verb in example B, the verb *lë* “leaves”, belongs to the group of verbs that refer to putting an entity in a certain location. Thus, such verbs create propositions in which someone leaves/puts something in a certain place and these entities carry the following semantic roles: agent, theme, and location. Taking into account the semantic aspect, it can be seen that even when these constituents are not expressed phonetically in a specific case or context, they are still distinguished from adjuncts by being participants in the realization of a certain proposition. Moreover, unlike adjuncts, which are free in the sentence, arguments, in addition to the semantic roles they carry, are also subject to certain semantic constraints or restrictions. A verb like *frikësoj* “frighten”, in addition to requiring two arguments to which it assigns semantic roles, requires also that these arguments be animate:

A. *Arta e frikësoi nënën.* “Arta frightened the mother.” – the restriction is respected

B. *Arta e frikësoi çantën*.* “Arta frightened the bag*.” – the restriction is violated

3. Methodology of research

To describe and analyze the minimal structure of a sentence, it is first required to distinguish the constituents that are obligatory for the realization of verb valence, from those that are not part of the verb valence. Consequently, complements were first distinguished from adjuncts, to proceed then

with the types of complements and sentence patterns generated in Albanian. Structural sentence patterns were identified and analyzed in the selected corpus, which consists of texts of different types and groups. All the patterns of canonical sentences in Albanian were analyzed in the corpus. The sentences were initially grouped into four types: sentences with 0, 1, 2 and 3 verb valences, followed by qualitative valence, according to the types of complements that complement a verb with a certain number of valences. Verb complements were described according to functional, syntactic, and semantic criteria. Based on the functional description, the basic structural patterns of Albanian were derived, on the basis of which all the sentences in Albanian can be built. By categorizing the sentence patterns, we also categorized verbs according to their ability to be complemented by a certain number and type of complements. Given the above, this study dealt only with canonical sentence patterns, and not their derivatives, because typical patterns of a language are built from canonical patterns. According to Huddleston & Pullum (2002, p. 218), canonical sentences are: declarative, positive, simple, and with a neutral word order. Given that in inflected languages like Albanian, the order of the constituents does not determine their function, namely it is a free order, we analyzed also the sentence patterns with a non-neutral word order. The order did not affect the structure of a sentence. We also dealt with the cases of complex sentences, when a dependent sentence was complement to the verb of the main sentence, that is, it was an obligatory element of the sentence, part of the verb valence.

The corpus analyzed consists of:

1. A literary text: “E shkëlqyeshme dhe e tmerrshme”, by Bekim Fehmiu; KOHA, 2011;
2. A scientific text: “Standards and identities”, by Rexhep Ismajli, Dukagjini, 2003;
3. An issue of the newspaper “Koha ditore”, February 22, 2016;
4. Ten columns from the collection of columns “Me se bep” by Bardh Rugova, KOHA, 2011;
5. Ten interviews from the spoken corpus of the Albanian language, which are part of the project of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo for the spoken corpus of the Albanian language;

In some cases, when in the selected corpus we did not find examples of certain patterns, we referred to the Corpus of the Albanian language, created by the linguists of St. Petersburg (a project supported by the Academy of Sciences of Russia) and the Dictionary of the Albanian language, produced by the Academy of Sciences of Albania (2004). The selection of specific texts was random, but the selection of text groups: literary and non-literary and, to some extent, of the text types, was intentional, because we wanted to have a more comprehensive textual representation, in order to derive the most typical patterns of Albanian sentences (in written and spoken language).

4. Results

The findings from the analyzed corpus show that the sentence patterns in the Albanian language are numerous. Sentence patterns have been analyzed based on the type of verb. Verbs of different types have assigned different numbers and types of complements: aivalent verbs have formed the minimal sentence structure without being complemented by any complement; monovalent verbs have formed the minimal sentence structure by being complemented by one complement, bivalent verbs by two complements, and trivalent verbs by three complements. After having classified verbs/sentences according to the number of valences they require, the types of complements that complement the one-, two- and trivalent verbs have been analyzed. As a result, the following sentence patterns have been derived:

1. according to the syntactic function performed by verb complements, a total of 12 sentence patterns have been derived;
2. according to the syntactic category via which verb complements are realized, a total of 58 sentence patterns have been derived;
3. according to the semantic roles that verb complements carry, a total of 31 sentence patterns have been derived.

The patterns that are described according to the syntactic function performed by verb complements constitute the basic sentence patterns according to which structure all Albanian sentences are

constructed. Complements of basic sentence patterns are realized via different syntactic categories and carry certain semantic roles. However, to derive the most typical sentence patterns of a language, the description needs to be based on the functional criterion, because in this form all possible patterns of a language can be summarized in a certain number of patterns, in the case of Albanian, in 12 sentence patterns. The basic sentence patterns of Albanian, extracted from the analyzed corpus, are given below together with their corresponding examples:

- I. Impersonal verb (predicate): (*Tashmë*) *është errësuar*. “It is (already) dark.”
- II. S – intransitive verb: *Hili ka vdekë*. “Hili died.”
- III. Verb – internal complement: *Është ftohtë*. “It is cold.”
- IV. S – monotransitive verb – DO: *Bora ka mbuluar qytetin*. “Snow covered the city.”
- V. S – indirect transitive verb – IO: *Këto përralla i interesojnë vetëm Afërditës*.
“These fairytales are interesting only to Afërdita.”
- VI. S – complex-intransitive verb – PC: *Ky është interpretimi im i historisë*.
“This is my interpretation of history.”
- VII. S – intransitive verb – Obligatory A: *‘Çeli’ banon në rrugicën tonë*.
“‘Çeli’ lives on our street.”
- VIII. S – verb – IOP: *Organet e ndryshme në diasporë kanë diskutuar për këtë çështje*.
“Various bodies in the diaspora have discussed this issue.”
- IX. S – ditransitive verb – DO – IO: *Komunat ua japin pagat mësimdhënësve*.
“Municipalities pay salaries to teachers.”
- X. S – complex transitive verb – DO – IOP:
Dikush i quan ato objekte vetëm trashëgimi historike dhe fetare serbe.
“Some call those objects only Serbian historical and religious heritage.”
- XI. S – monotransitive verb – DO – Obligatory A: *Oficeri vuri gotën mbi tavolinë*.
“The officer put the glass on the table.”
- XII. S – ditransitive verb – DO – IOC: *Shitësi e luti milicin që t’i largojë njerëzit nga dyqani*.
“The salesman begged the militia to remove the people from the store.”

5. Discussion

The twelve sentence patterns, described according to the function performed by verb complements, could be summarized into five more general patterns:

1. Verb;
2. Verb – internal complement;
3. Subject - Verb;
4. Subject - Verb – 1 internal complement;
5. Subject - Verb – 2 internal complements.

- in which the number of internal complements is given, but not their type. Such a grouping would reduce the number of basic patterns from twelve to five, and would thus facilitate their description but, on the other hand, this description is very general and as such does not describe the syntactic features of sentence patterns in the Albanian language. Consequently, their subcategorization into certain functional patterns is inevitable.

6. Conclusions

As a result of the research, several conclusions have been drawn:

1. The minimal sentence structure is determined by the type of verb, namely by its valence. The verb valence, in addition to the number, determines also the type of complements.

2. Verb complements in the Albanian language can be classified into two groups: a. complements determined in form by the verb and b. complements not determined in form by the verb;

3. Verb complements in Albanian are not necessarily realized by NPs. Other types of phrases (PP, AdvP, CP, etc.), which are not determined in form by the verb, can also be verb complements, provided that they are part of the verb valence.

4. The difference between complements and adjuncts in the Albanian language can be made based on: a. Obligatoriness criterion (at the level of valence); b. Licensing criterion and c. Semantic criterion, that is, the semantic roles that complements carry.

5. Even prepositional phrases functioning as objects with prepositions as well as certain adjuncts, are verb complements, provided that they are predicted by the valence of the respective verb and that their lack of realization with certain verbs would generate ungrammatical sentences.

6. The most common sentence patterns in the Albanian language are those with bivalent verbs. In the corpus analyzed, the complements of bivalent verbs, described according to the function they perform in the sentence, have generated 5 sentence patterns. The complements of such verbs, described according to the syntactic category with which they are realized, have generated 28 sentence patterns. On the other hand, the complements of such verbs, according to the semantic roles they carry, have generated a total of 13 sentence patterns. The frequency of using sentences with bivalent verbs shows that in Albanian the number of bivalent verbs is greater than a-, one-, or tri-valent verbs.

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