

THE CORRELATION OF TENSES IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN TIME CLAUSES BASHKËLIDHJA E KOHËVE NË FJALITË E PËRBËRA KOHORE NË ANGLISHT DHE SHQIP

ERJON AGOLLI

English Language Department, University of Tirana, Tirana, ALBANIA

Email: agollierjon@yahoo.com

AKTET VI, 4: 407 - 411, 2013

PERMBLEDHJE

Ky punim synon të nxjerrë në pah dallimet kryesore midis fjalive të përbëra kohore në anglisht dhe shqip në rrafshin semantik-gramatikor duke u fokusuar tek funksioni i bashkëlidhjes së formave kohore e mënyrora të foljeve kallëzues. Sipas rezultateve të analizës së korpusit, bashkëlidhja kohore më e përdorshme në fjalitë kohore të para-kohësisë është *past perfect-past simple*; fjalitë e njëkohësisë, nga ana tjetër, kryesisht karakterizohen nga kombinimi i *past continuous-past simple*; ndërsa marrëdhëniet e paskohësisë zakonisht shprehen me anë të bashkëlidhjes së *past simple-past simple*. Pra, mund të themi se bashkëlidhja e kohëve dhe mënyrave të foljes ka një rëndësi të madhe në përforsimin e marrëdhënieve kohore në fjalitë e përbera kohore.

Fjalët kyçe: Fjali kohore, marrëdhënie, bashkëlidhje kohëve

SUMMARY

This paper aims at identifying the main distinctions between complex sentences with time clauses in English and Albanian in the semantic-grammatical point of view, focusing on the function of the correlation of tenses and moods of predicates. According to the results of the corpus analysis, the most frequent tense correlation in time clauses of anteriority is *past perfect-past simple*; simultaneity clauses, on the other hand, are usually characterized by the combination of *past continuous-past simple*; while relations of posteriority are usually expressed by the correlation of *past simple-past simple*. Thus, we can say that the correlation of tenses and moods is of high importance in strengthening time relations in complex sentences with time clauses.

Key words: Time clauses, relations, tense correlation.

Introduction

All tenses express relations between times. In *John had already left*, the past perfect form *had left* expresses two relations: the time of the situation of leaving is represented as anterior to a time of orientation, which is itself anterior to the temporal zero point (the time of speaking) (Declerck 1996: 225-261). In Albanian, the temporal meaning of anteriority, posteriority, or simultaneity becomes clear by the lexical meaning of the predicates and the correlation of tenses (Totoni 2000). Similarly, there is a certain regularity in the use of tenses in English temporal clauses which is dependent, on the one hand, on

the lexical meaning of the finite verbs occurring in these clauses and, on the other hand, on the objective relations of the two actions in the extralinguistic reality (Breithutova 1968: 129-148). For example, when you are talking about the past or the present, the verb in the time clause has the same tense that it would have in a main clause or in a simple sentence (Collins 1992):

- (1) I was standing by the window *when I heard her speak*.

But this isn't the case when talking about the future. Indeed, in time clauses referring to the future, English prefers the present tense

(Yamagashira 2003: 149-152), and Albanian uses a predicate in the present tense of the subjunctive mood in the time clause (Çeliku etj. 2002), instead of a corresponding future form:

(2) *When the school bell rings*, students will exit the historic Catholic high school.

(3) Ai ta tregon vendin ty, *posa të kthehet nga ushtria*.

What is more, in time clauses of anteriority, although *before* implies that the head clause activity is anterior to the activity referred to in the *before*-clause, it is possible to use a past perfect tense in the time clause (Declerck 2002: 720-744):

(4) I bought a car *before he had bought one*.

While agreeing on the fact that the correlation of tenses is not an absolute means of expressing time relations, I evidence that there do exist some regular patterns and that, in certain circumstances, they become determinant in expressing these time relations. The article also sheds light on the main distinctions between typical tense correlations in English and their Albanian equivalents, attempting to offer a new comparative approach to this grammatical issue, which will hopefully benefit both teachers and learners of English, as well.

Materials and Methods

The corpus taken into consideration for the analysis is composed of 360 English complex sentences with time clauses extracted from the novel "The summer before the dark" by Doris Lessing, contrasted to their Albanian equivalents taken from the translated version "Vera para errësirës" by Merita Meçe. Complex sentences with time clauses make up for 12.000 words, out of a total corpus of about 90.000 words comprised in the novel.

To facilitate their study and analysis, all complex sentences with time clauses found in the original text and in the translated one have been stored in computer documents, where they have been classified according to the time relations they express, as well as the tenses used both in the time clause and the matrix clause. The processing

of these quantitative data, has led to very valuable conclusions on the tense correlations occurring more frequently in time clauses of anteriority, simultaneity, and posteriority. The data have also been used in the qualitative aspect of the paper, where the sentences extracted from the corpus have been used to illustrate with examples certain theoretical points drawn by closely studying and analyzing each sentence case by case.

Results and Discussions

Although a variety of tense correlations were identified in our corpus, I have come up with a set of regular patterns that appear to be more frequent, and draw general theoretical conclusions on the semantic and functional characteristics governing the use of tenses in complex sentences with time clauses.

Thus, as we can see from the following table, one of the most frequently used patterns of tense correlation in time clauses of anteriority is past perfect–past simple; simultaneity clauses are commonly characterized by the combination of past continuous–past simple; while temporal relations of posteriority are usually expressed by the correlation of past simple–past simple.

In English, we can often notice the correlation of *past perfect* in the main clause and *past simple* in the *before*- and *when*-clauses to emphasize the fact that the action in the main clause developed earlier than the action in the dependent clause. This case is also characteristic for the Albanian language with the conjunction *kur* followed by the use of perfect forms in the main clause and simple verb forms in the subordinate clause, while time clauses with the conjunctions *para se*, *përpara se* always have the predicate in the subjunctive mood,³ as in (6), below:

(5) a. She **had already given** her address to the taxi man *when she remembered that she had no right to it...* (Lessing 2009);

b. Ajo tashmë i **kishte dhënë** adresën e saj shoferit të taksisë *kur u kujtua që nuk mund të shkonte atje...* (Lessing 2010).

Clause Types Tense Correlations	Anteriority			Simultaneity			Posteriority			
	Before- clauses	Until- clauses	When – clauses	While- clauses	As- clauses	When- clauses	After- clauses	Since- clauses	As soon as – clauses	When- clauses
Past S.- Past S	50%	42%		30%	62%	25%	5%	7%	100%	40%
Past P.-Past S.	8%	10%	100%	9%		20%		15%		
Past C.-Past S.				49%	23%	32%		7%		
Past S.-Past C.				5%	10%	5%				
Present S.-Present S.	8%	19%			5%	9%				
Past P.- Past P.	8%	10%				9%	30%	50%		7%
Past C.-Past C.				7%						
Past S.-Past P.	6%	9%					65%	21%		29%
Will-Present S.	12%	10%								7%
Would-Past S.	8%									17%

Table 1: Tense correlations with regards to clause types

On the other hand, if the main clause refers to an event that will happen in the future before the event presented in the time clause, the present simple is used in the time clause and a future form or present simple is used in the main clause: (6) a. I **will let you know** *before I arrive* (Lessing 2009).

b. Do t'ju njoftoj para se të vij (Lessing 2010).

In our corpus we identified a variety of correlations with the time conjunction *till* and *until*, which also denote anteriority:

(7) a. The children **ran** with her in crowds through the dust *until she stepped into the hotel* (Lessing 2009).

b. Fëmijët **vrapuan** me të në grupe nëpër muzg *deri sa ajo hyri në hotel* (Lessing 2010).

(8) a. I think you **ought to go** to bed and stay there *till you are better* (Lessing 2009).

b. Unë mendoj që ti **duhet të shkosh** në shtrat dhe të qëndrosh atje *deri sa të bëhesh më mirë* (Lessing 2010).

With the Albanian corresponding conjunctions *derisa*, *gjersa*, and *sa* anteriority is expressed in the three time scales (past, present, future), supported by the correlation of predicates with the same tense and mood in both clauses, or the

subjunctive mood in the time clause (Totoni 2000).

2. The correlation of tenses in simultaneity clauses

In the English language, the conjunctions *when* and *whenever* are used with verb forms in the *present simple* or *past simple* in both clauses to describe complete simultaneity of the two repeated events:

(9) a. He **got** into a fury *when/whenever poor people anywhere were mentioned* (Lessing 2009).

b. Ai **xhindosej** *kur/sa herë që përmendeshin njerëzit e varfër* (Lessing 2010).

As we can see above, the connotation of a repeated action, in Albanian, is also strengthened by the use of the same tenses in both clauses.

The conjunctions *kur*, *ndërkohë që*, *ndërsa*, in Albanian, as well as the conjunctions *when*, *while*, and *as* in English, can describe a specific unrepeated event that develops in the background of another event, occurring in a variety of tense correlations:

(10) a. The horse ...**drank** *while the lorry driver was dipping his empty oil can right under its nose* (Lessing 2009) (past s.-past c.)

b. Kali ...**pinte** ndërsa shoferi i kamionit **po shpëlante** kutinë bosh të vajit mu pushtë hundës së tij (Lessing 2010). (imperfect- imperfect)

(11) a. He **stood** by her while she **telephoned** (Lessing 2009). (past s.- past s.)

b. Ai **qëndronte** pranë saj ndërkohë që ajo **telefononte** (Lessing 2010). (imperfect-imperfect)

In our corpus, time clauses with the conjunction *as long as*, although few in number, usually occur in a combination of will/would- present/past simple to express duration along the development of the events i.e. these clauses show that the situations stated and finished at the same time. Whereas, the conjunction *sa kohë që/aq kohë sa* in Albanian is supported by the same verb forms in both clauses, as below:

(12) a. It was clear that these two **would continue...**, *as long as they were together* (Lessing 2009).

b. Ishte e qartë që këta të dy **do të vazhdonin...**, *për aq kohë sa ata të ishin bashkë* (Lessing 2010).

3. The correlation of tenses in posteriority clauses

With *after-clauses*, the predicate in the dependent clause can be in the *past simple* or in the *past perfect* to refer to a completed action in the past and to emphasize that the event in the main clause followed it. The conjunction *when* can be used for the same function especially followed by perfect forms. Past Perfect in the subordinate clause is also common with Albanian specialized conjunctions of posteriority *si, pasi, (mbasi)*:

(13) a. *When/after everyone had scattered across the world, she joined that class of hotel guests* (Lessing 2009).

b. *Kur/pasi të gjithë ishin shpërndarë nëpër botë, ajo iu bashkua atij grupi mysafirësh të hotelit* (Lessing 2010).

Meanwhile, if you mention an event in the main clause that will happen after an event presented in the time clause, we use *present perfect tense* in the time clause, not *future perfect tense* (Collins 1992). While in Albanian, when the situations develop in the future, combinations of *future forms* in the main clause and *perfect forms*

of the subjunctive mood in the subordinate clause are possible (Totoni 2000):

(14) a. *After/When they have had supper, they will come and see me* (Lessing 2009).

b. *Pasi/kur të kenë ngrënë darkë, do të vijnë të më takojnë* (Lessing 2010).

After analyzing all examples with the conjunction *as soon as* found in our corpus, we noticed that the most frequent tense correlation was past simple – past simple adding the notion of immediate succession in time of the two events; similarly, the conjunctions *sapo, posa, porsa* express immediate posteriority in Albanian with a combination of the same verb forms in both clauses:

(15) a. *As soon as they reached the flat, Maureen ran off* (Lessing 2009).

b. *Sapo arritën në apartament, Maurini u largua* (Lessing 2010).

The conjunction of the English language (*ever*) *since* is used to explain that a situation started to exist at a certain time specified in the time clause, and still exists. In this case, *past simple* is usually used in the time clause and *present perfect* in the main clause, or *past perfect-past simple/past perfect*, if this time relation existed in the past. In Albanian language, we noticed that *që kur (nga)* is used with *perfect forms* in the subordinate clause:

(16) a. *But he had grown older since she saw him last* (Lessing 2009).

b. *Por ishte plakur që nga hera e fundit që ajo e kishte parë* (Lessing 2010).

Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that the semantic content of the time conjunction is of high importance when it comes to expressing relations of anteriority, simultaneity, and posteriority. Nonetheless, these temporal relations could be unclear unless they were strengthened by the correlation of tenses and moods of predicates.

Thus, for example, in order to express anteriority in English and Albanian, we often use predicates in *perfect forms* in the main clause. This makes sense, for the use of *perfect forms* emphasizes the fact that the action in the main clause is completed earlier than the action presented in

the time clause. At this point, the use of *perfect forms* becomes almost obligatory especially with the conjunction *when/kur*, which is not a specialized conjunction of anteriority.

The reversed tense correlation pattern (past simple-perfect form) is used in posteriority clauses, where the use of the perfect forms in the time clause infers that the action in the time clause precedes that in the matrix clause.

Another interesting fact is the use of present simple in the time clause to refer to a future action; a phenomenon that, in Albanian, is made possible by the use of the subjunctive mood.

References

- BREITHUTOVA H (1968), The function of tenses used in modern English temporal clauses. *Brno Studies in English*, 7, 129-148.
- COLLINS cobuild English grammar (1992), London: HarperCollins Publishers.
- ÇELIKU M, Domi, M, Floqi S, Mansaku S, Përnaska R, Prifti S, Totoni M (2002), Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe (sintaksa). Tiranë: Akademia e shkencave.
- DECLERCK R (2002), Tense and modality in English Before-clauses. *EBSCO Publishing*, 720-744.
- DECLERCK R (1996), Tense choice in adverbial when clauses. *Linguistics*, 34, 225-261.
- LESSING D (2009), *The summer before the dark*. First Vintage International Kindle Edition.
- LESSING D (2010), *Vera para Errësirës*. Tirana: Skanderbeg Books.
- TOTONI M (2000), *Fraza me nenrenditje*. Tirana: SHBLU.
- YAMAGASHIRA H (2003), Adverbial clauses of time in the future. *Toso*, 33, 149-152. .