EXPLORING THE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PAST TENSE-ASPECT FORMS IN ALBANIAN ESL LEARNERS AND YOUNG NATIVE ALBANIAN SPEAKERS: AN ASPECT HYPOTHESIS APPROACH

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A b s t r a c t

This study investigates the acquisition of tense-aspect systems in Albanian learners, focusing on adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and young native Albanian speakers. Guided by the Aspect Hypothesis (AH), which posits that verb aspectual features influence tense-aspect acquisition, the research explores whether these groups follow universal patterns. Data was collected from adult Albanian ESL learners (bachelor students) and young Albanian pupils (grades 2-5) through written compositions, narrative descriptions, and demographic questionnaires. The findings reveal distinct differences in past tense use: Albanian ESL learners show a more complex and variable pattern, while L1 Albanian speakers follow a more predictable sequence, supporting AH. This study contributes to understanding the application of the Aspect Hypothesis across different languages and age groups, providing valuable insights for improving teaching strategies and curriculum design for Albanian ESL learners.

1. Introduction

The study of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has consistently prioritized the exploration of temporality, particularly in understanding how learners acquire tense and aspect systems. Despite a century's worth of research, the field remains vibrant with various theories offering divergent perspectives on the acquisition process. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse by focusing on the Aspect Hypothesis (AH), which posits that the acquisition of tense-aspect systems is significantly shaped by the inherent aspectual characteristics of verbs. Specifically, this research will investigate the acquisition patterns of Albanian native speakers learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and young learners acquiring Albanian as their first language (L1). By analyzing whether these groups exhibit the universal sequences of tense-aspect development proposed by the AH, the study seeks to deepen our understanding of both SLA and L1 acquisition, as well

as the broader applicability of AH across different linguistic and developmental contexts. The Aspect Hypothesis asserts that the emergence of tense-aspect morphology follows a predictable sequence that is influenced by the semantic properties of verbs. This research will explore whether these sequences are observable among Albanian ESL learners and young Albanian L1 learners, offering valuable insights into the extent to which the hypothesis applies universally. Additionally, this study will examine the potential interactions between Albanian and English, given that Albanian has its own unique tense-aspect system, which could influence the process of English acquisition. Thus, the study will focus on the developmental sequences that both Albanian native speakers learning ESL and young native speakers of Albanian as L1 follow as they acquire and develop tense-aspect systems. Particular attention will be given to how these learners express past forms, which are central to the tense-aspect system in both languages. This exploration not only contributes to the

understanding of SLA and L1 development but also offers a cross-linguistic perspective on the validity of the Aspect Hypothesis.

2. Literature Review

The Aspect Hypothesis (AH) is considered "one of the most tested and researched hypotheses in second language acquisition and as one of the most influential hypotheses regarding tense and aspect in SLA" (Bardovi-Harlig & Comajoan-Colomé, 2020, p. 2). The hypothesis has "its roots in temporal semantics and initially was related to studies and research on child language acquisition." Later, it extended to second language acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, pp. 192-3). This hypothesis emerged more than 40 years ago, initially by Roger Andersen in the 1980s, then followed by Bardovi-Harlig (1999), Li & Shirai (2000), Salaberry (2000), and other researchers.

In essence, the hypothesis has been described as a hypothesis that tests "the universal against the particular, where the universal is represented by the aspect hypothesis, while the particular by learners' variables" (Bardovi-Harlig & Comajoan-Colomé, 2020, p. 2). It is postulated that a universal pattern is to be followed while the temporal systems of any language are learned based on the inherent semantic aspect of the verbs/predicates (Andersen 1991; Andersen & Shirai 1996; Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds 1995). This universality is viewed from a perspective that intertwines the three grammatical categories of the verb, such as tense, aspect, and lexical aspect, the three main constructs of the AH, through which similar sequences of development and marking of tense-aspect systems are predicted.

The former is used to locate "the time of the situation being talked about (event time) with respect to the time at which the speaker utters that sentence (speech time)" (Li & Shirai, 2000, p. 1). In general, almost all languages distinguish three absolute tenses: the past, the present, and the future: "when event time is before speech time, the past tense is used; when speech time is before event time, the future tense is used; and when the two overlap, the present tense is used" (Li & Shirai, 2000, p. 3). The second, also known as the viewpoint aspect, is used to denote "the different ways how speaker views the internal constituency of a situation" (Comrie, 1976, p. 3), generally either as perfect (view the situation from the outside) or imperfect (view the situation from the inside). The latter, "also known as situational aspect, inherent aspect or Aktionsart," refers to characteristics inherent in the lexical items that describe the situations (Li & Shirai, 2000, p. 3). In its simplest form, the Aspect Hypothesis predicts that the tense-aspect morphology in the initial stages of acquisition, particularly the past morphology, will be influenced by lexical categories. Meaning that "the verbal morphology will be attracted to and will occur with predicates with similar semantics" (Bardovi-Harlig & Comajoan-Colomé, 2020, p. 2). These lexical categories or the

semantic meanings of the predicates have been classified and categorized differently in the studies concerned with the Aspect Hypothesis. The main lexical classifications employed in language acquisition include the Vendler Categories (States, Activities, Accomplishments, and Achievements)" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, pp. 213-14). Based on these classifications, the three central claims of the AH, which were later extended, are as follows:

- Perfective past occurs with telic predicates (predicates with inherent endpoints);
- Imperfective occurs with unbounded predicates;
- Progressive occurs with ongoing activities.

The three claims were further developed, from which more easily testable hypotheses were defined and constituting the Aspect Hypothesis. The hypotheses, according to Andersen & Shirai (1996), are as the following:

1. "Past marking (perfective) is used initially on achievements and accomplishments, then extending use to activities and statives.
2. Imperfective past appears later than perfective past, and imperfect past marking begins with statives, extending next to activities, then to accomplishments, and finally to achievements.
3. In languages that have progressive aspects, progressive marking begins with activities, and then extends to accomplishments and achievements.
4. Progressive markings are not incorrectly overextended to statives." (p. 533)

These hypotheses have been tested in numerous languages, amongst which include English (Housen 2000), French (Collins 2002; Salaberry 1998), Spanish (Salaberry 2008), Japanese (Shirai & Kurono 1998), from the perspective of either the first language (L1) and/or second language (L2). However, not all studies and researchers support its universality. Most of the studies that tested the hypotheses "either were fully consistent with the AH (such as Catalan, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), or have supported it partially (Chinese, English, French, and Korean)" (Bardovi-Harlig & Comajoan-Colomé, 2020, p. 8). The variables that affected whether the findings supported or counterevidence were language transfer, language input, learners' proficiency, and task effect. However, even though seen as separate factors, they all tend to simultaneously influence the language learning process.

3. Methodology

The main objective of this study is to observe the development of tense-aspect morphology in English as a second language (L2) and Albanian as a first language (L1). The study employs a cross-

sectional approach, analyzing two written compositions—a retelling task of an animated silent movie and a personal narrative—elicited from L2 English learners and L1 Albanian speakers. The purpose of analyzing the language produced by these learners is to examine the development of morphological markers across different aspectual lexical classes spanning various proficiency levels and groups.

3.1 Materials

Two tasks (two written compositions: an impersonal (retell task) and a personal narrative) are used to form the corpus of this study. For the first retell task, the movies selected for this study include one excerpt from the Pixar Animation Studios movie "Up" and the ACCD Thesis movie "Siblings," both of which are short silent animated movies. The former is 4:32 minutes and is used for L2 English learners, whereas the latter is 3:43 minutes and is used for L1 Albanian speakers. In both movies, there are scenes featuring action and simultaneous events, as well as shifts in setting, which allow the participants to retell and narrate the story on various temporal spheres. Earlier studies testing AH and this study continue to use silent movies to avoid listening comprehension and allow students to express themselves based on their language competence and not be affected by the language they may listen to while the movie is watched.

3.2 Participants

This study focuses on two distinct groups of learners. The first group consists of adult native speakers of Albanian who are studying in the Faculty of Education at the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova. The participants were enrolled in their bachelor studies and were studying for Primary Education and Pre-Primary Education. Generally, they come from five distinct cities in Kosova: Gjakova, Peja, Deçan, Lipjan, and Skënderaj. All of the participants were enrolled in an English course (English I (first year), English II (second year), and English for Teaching (third year). All courses were held in the second semester of the school year 2023/2024. In total, the group consists of 27 participants (all females): 12 of the students were enrolled in their first year of studies, 9 of them were in their second year of studies, while the rest, 6 of the students, were enrolled in their third year of studies. Their ages range from 18 to 30 years old. All participants have been exposed to English primarily through attending school courses in their primary and secondary schools, as well as through television and the Internet. None of the participants lived in a country where they were only exposed to the English language. The classroom is the primary environment where students are required to perform in English. The session for sample elicitation was planned and held at the end of the second semester (the end of the academic year (2023/2024)). The language elicited from these participants is based on the year that

the participants were enrolled. Consequently, in total, three groups were set: Group 1 (first year), Group 2 (second year) and Group 3 (third year).

The second group includes Albanian young pupils who are native speakers of Albanian. They are enrolled in the public lower primary school "Mustafa Bakija" in Gjakova, aged between 7 and 10 years old. In total, 47 pupils participated in the research (29 females and 18 males): 14 of the pupils were enrolled in their second year, 9 of them in their third year, 10 of them in their fourth year, and 14 of them were enrolled in their fifth year. The pupils were chosen randomly, where for each school year (2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th), two pupils per classroom were chosen, which means that the population came from 24 different classes/classrooms.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection process was similar for both targeted groups and was planned and executed in school environments. For the first group, the sessions were held at the building of the Faculty of Education in the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova. In contrast, the sessions for the second group were held at the building of the lower primary school "Mustafa Bakija" in Gjakova. The data collection was executed for five working days, and each session lasted around 70 minutes (00:01:10), 40 minutes for the first task, and 30 minutes for the second task. At the beginning of each session, background information was given on how the session would go, and if there were any questions, further information was provided. The time spent presenting the study and explaining the process was not timed.

Consequently, only the two sessions related to data elicitation were timed. In the first phase, the participants were asked to watch the short animated movie. The participants watched the film twice and were asked to write the story as seen from a witness's viewpoint within minutes of watching the movie. The participants were free to ask any questions related to vocabulary or any uncertainty and help was given whenever inquired. In the second phase, after a short break, participants were asked to write about the happiest or worst day of their life. No further instructions were given, except help for vocabulary when inquired.

One extra step was undertaken for the first group, L2 English learners,who were asked to complete a questionnaire related to their learner variables. Through this questionnaire, data related to the learners' democratic information, academic background, language exposure, and willingness to participate were collected.

3.4 Data Analysis

The main focus of data analysis has been on the verb, verb phrase, and verb morphology. The data analysis comprises three phases: coding, analysis of all verbal constructions, and interpretation. In

the initial coding process, the texts have undergone segmentation into sentences, where verbs and verb phrases were identified. Subsequently, coding and classification occured at two levels: verb forms and lexical aspectual classes. At the verb forms level, tags representing verb morphological properties and tenses were employed. Meanwhile, tags representing lexical aspectual classes were utilized at the lexical aspectual class level. In the former, the verbs were coded based on their morphological properties and tense. In the latter level, that of aspectual class properties, for both languages (English and Albanian) all the predicates identified in the former level were classified based on Vendler's (1967) verb classes. In the second phase, the a*cross-category analysis* approach has been taken into consideration, which has been used extensively in the aspect hypothesis studies by various linguists and researchers such as Salaberry (1999) and Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 2002), among many others. The across-category analysis focuses on identifying where the morphemes occur and highlighting the frequency of these morphemes while considering all aspectual classes simultaneously or simply focusing on the question, "Where do morphemes occur?". This approach calculates the distribution of morphemes across aspectual lexical classes; specifically, it calculates "the sum of all the predicates that occur with a given morpheme across aspectual categories" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, p.134). For example, it will calculate the percentage of all past forms that are states. Each verb token is quantified and presented through raw scores and percentages for this analysis.

4. Results

In this section, the results extracted from the research are presented. The across-category analysis concentrates on the state of verbal morphology (verb forms) and their distribution across the four lexical aspectual classes (particularly on Vendler's (1967) verb classification). For the across-category analysis, for the L2 English dataset, the focus has been on only specific verbal

morphology (verb forms), as: past forms (regular and irregular). Similarly, the focal point for the L1 Albanian data set has been on the tenses representing the past temporal spheres, particularly E kryera e thjeshtë (The Past Definite).

4.1 The Albanian Dataset Overview

This section represents the results obtained from the analyzed L1 Albanian learners' written compositions. The written compositions are of two types: a written text where learners were asked to describe a short silent movie and an essay where they had to describe a day that happened in their life. For the first text, the verbal forms they used were dependent and affected by the actions that occurred in the movie, while for the second text, the verbal forms were dependent solely on the learners' imagination and language competency. In general, the word count for the second text, the free-written compositions, has been lower than that in the first text, the description of the silent movie. In total, for both written compositions, 402 sentences have been analyzed and 1,171 verb tokens have been identified. The totals for the number of sentences and the number of verb tokens are provided in Table 1. The totals included all the identified sentences and verb tokens in the texts produced by all the participants across the four grades, from the second until the fifth grade. Overall, Grade 2 has a higher number of verb tokens compared to the number of sentences, where a rich use of verbs within sentences and a tendency for detailed and action-oriented descriptions has been observed. In contrast to Grade 2, Grade 3 has a higher number of sentences but a comparatively lower number of verb tokens. Grade 4 has the highest number of sentences and a substantial number of verb tokens, where both a high sentence count and a rich verb use are noticed. Lastly, Grade 5 has the lowest number of sentences but a high number of verb tokens, where quite dense use of verbs within fewer sentences has been distinguished.

Table 1. The overall usage in L1 Albanian

	Text 1		*Text 2*		*TOTAL*	
Grade	*No. of sentences*	*No. of verb tokens*	*No. of sentences*	*No. of verb tokens*	*No. of sentences*	*No. of verb tokens*
Grade 2	*63*	*212*	*36*	*107*	*99*	*319*
Grade 3	*89*	*201*	*20*	*60*	*109*	*261*
Grade 4	*83*	*234*	*30*	*74*	*113*	*308*
Grade 5	*65*	*200*	*16*	*83*	*81*	*283*
TOTAL	**300**	**847**	**102**	**324**	**402**	**1171**

4.1.1 The Usage of E kryera e thjeshtë in L1 Albanian

The tense E kryera e thjeshtë, part of the past temporal spheres, is one of the most used verbal forms in the written compositions produced by L1 Albanian learners across all grades. The verbal form count in E kryera e thjeshtë comprises 649 occurrences, compromising 56.09% of all the produced verb tokens. The total count of the verb tokens is predominantly encountered in Text I, with 475 (41.05%) instances, compared to 174 (15.04%) occurrences in Text II.

Looking at how this verb form is distributed across the four lexical aspectual classes, we can see that E kryera e thjeshtë has been used with all the four classes; however, there is a strong emphasis on Achievements (*63.02%*), which compromises the majority of all the verb tokens used in this tense. The other three classes follow, where accomplishments lead (*18.03%*), followed by activities (*13.56%*), and lastly, by states (*5.39%*), which is the least used class with this tense. Generally, each grade (Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5) interestingly shows a similar distribution across the four aspectual classes (States, Activities, Achievements, and Accomplishments). The class of achievement is in the lead, followed by accomplishments, then activities, and lastly, states. In Grade 2, where the majority of the verb tokens come from Text I, the following verb counts has been observed: achievements (*56.81%*), accomplishments (*17.84%*), activities (*17.37%*), and states (*7.98%*). However, the difference between accomplishments and activities is barely noticeable; they are distinguished by only one occurrence. Grade 3 follows the same pattern, but the differences between the verb counts are higher compared to Grade 2. Thus, in Grade 3, the verb count is as follows: achievements (*68.84%*), accomplishments (*15.22%*), activities (*12.32%*), and states (3.62%). Generally, the texts written by the pupils in Grade 3 had a lower verb count than the ones in Grade 2. In Grade 4, we have the same distribution, with the following instances: achievements (*62.16%*), accomplishments (*21.62%*), activities (*14.19%*), and states (*2.03%*). On the other hand, for Grade 5, apart from having similar occurrences, the only difference is between activities and states, which is quite close compared to the other verb tokens in Grade 2, Grade 3, and Grade 4. Thus, in Grade 5, we have the following instances: achievements (*67.33%*), accomplishments (*17.33%*), activities (*8.67%*), and states (*6.67%*). Generally, for all grades, the strong emphasis on Achievements and Accomplishments for both texts (Text I and Text II) highlights the nature of the actions that have been described by the L1 Albanian learners with a strong focus on actions that are fully completed or have clear endpoints.

Table 2. The spread of e kryera e thjeshtë in L2 English

E kryera e thjeshtë							
		Text I		*Text II*		*TOTAL*	
Grade	**Tense**	*#*	*%*	*#*	*%*	*#*	*%*
	States	*8*	*3.76%*	*9*	*4.23%*	*17*	*7.98%*
	Activities	*18*	*8.45%*	*19*	*8.92%*	*37*	*17.37%*
	Achievements	*90*	*42.25%*	*31*	*14.55%*	*121*	*56.81%*
	Accomplishments	*21*	*9.86%*	*17*	*7.98%*	*38*	*17.84%*
Grade2	*TOTAL*	*137*	*64.32%*	*76*	*35.68%*	*213*	*100.00%*
	States	*4*	*2.90%*	*1*	*0.72%*	*5*	*3.62%*
	Activities	*10*	*7.25%*	*7*	*5.07%*	*17*	*12.32%*
	Achievements	*81*	*58.70%*	*14*	*10.14%*	*95*	*68.84%*
	Accomplishments	*17*	*12.32%*	*4*	*2.90%*	*21*	*15.22%*
Grade 3	*TOTAL*	*112*	*81.16%*	*26*	*18.84%*	*138*	*100.00%*

	States	2	1.35%	1	0.68%	3	2.03%
	Activities	15	10.14%	6	4.05%	21	14.19%
	Achievements	77	52.03%	15	10.14%	92	62.16%
	Accomplishments	19	12.84%	13	8.78%	32	21.62%
Grade 4	TOTAL	113	76.35%	35	23.65%	148	100.00%
	States	3	2.00%	7	4.67%	10	6.67%
	Activities	7	4.67%	6	4.00%	13	8.67%
	Achievements	85	56.67%	16	10.67%	101	67.33%
	Accomplishments	18	12.00%	8	5.33%	26	17.33%
Grade 5	TOTAL	113	75.33%	37	24.67%	150	100.00%
	States	17	2.62%	18	2.77%	35	5.39%
	Activities	50	7.70%	38	5.86%	88	13.56%
	Achievements	333	51.31%	76	11.71%	409	63.02%
	Accomplishments	75	11.56%	42	6.47%	117	18.03%
TOTAL	TOTAL	475	73.19%	174	26.81%	649	100.00%

4.2 The English Dataset Overview

This section shows the results from the analyzed L2 English learners' written compositions. The written compositions were the same as the ones for L1 Albanian learners'. The first was the one where the participants had to watch a silent animated movie and narrate the story they watched, whereas, for the second written composition, the participants were asked to write a story about a day in their lives. The difference between the two assignments is that, in the former, the participants' language depended on the actions in the movie they watched. In contrast, for the latter, the participants' language was dependent on what they chose to express and narrate from their lives. From both written compositions, Text I and Text II, 760 sentences have been identified, from which 1,090 verb tokens have been analyzed. There is a higher number of sentences in Text I compared to Text II; as a result, the number of verb tokens is higher in Text I as well. Overall, the number of sentences decreased across the three years, from the first to the third year. The written compositions of the participants attending Year 1 have the highest number of sentences and verb tokens, indicating a rich and detailed use of verbs in both texts. Year 2 shows a decrease in the number of sentences and the number of verb tokens compared to Year 1, indicating shorter and less detailed texts. Similarly, the written compositions of Year 3, show a decrease in the number of sentences and verb tokens and have the lowest numbers concerning sentences and verb tokens, which reflects more concise compositions. The table below represents the raw numbers of the identified sentences and verb tokens produced by the participants each year (Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3) and each text (Text I and Text II).

Table 3. The overall usage in L2 English

	Text 1		Text 2		TOTAL	
Year	No. of sentences	No. of verb tokens	No. of sentences	No. of verb tokens	No. of sentences	No. of verb tokens
Year 1	179	301	155	217	334	518
Year 2	139	214	101	118	240	332
Year 3	105	138	81	102	186	240
TOTAL	423	653	337	437	760	1090

4.2.1 The Usage of Past Simple Forms in L2 English

The identified verb tokens in the Past Simple Tense are one of the most used verbal forms through the written compositions of L2 English. The total verb count of the verb forms in past morphology is 780 and comprises 80.41% of all produced verb tokens considered for this study's hypotheses. The past verbal forms are predominantly more present in Text I, where the verb token count is double, compared to the ones in the written compositions in Text II.

Generally, the past simple tense has been used with all four aspectual classes; however, there are differences in the verb count belonging to each verbal class, assignment type, and the year of studies learners attended. The most dominant verb class in all years (Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3), across both texts (Text I and Text II), is the class of States with 328 verb tokens, compromising 42.05% of all verb tokens. The use of States at this level indicates that the focus on both narrations has been predominantly on states and processes that remain constant and do not change. The class with the second highest frequency is Achievements, with 239 verb tokens comprising 30.64% of the verb tokens taken under consideration. The class of Achievements is followed by the class of Activities, which in total has 134 verb tokens and compromises 17.18% of all verb tokens. The least used lexical class is the lexical class of Accomplishments, with only 79 instances compromising 10.12% of all verb tokens used on past morphology. When analyzed separately based on the year in which the participants attended, the order in which the classes are ranked changes, particularly for the written compositions written by participants in Year 3. For this particular group, the classes of States (37.84%) and Achievements (37.84%) emerge with the same number of verb tokens, then are followed by the class of Accomplishments (15.68%), whereas the least used class turns out to be the class of Activities (8.65%). On the contrary, for the written compositions of the participants in Year 1 and Year 2, the first most used class is States (43.16%/43.69%), followed by Achievements (27.88%/29.28%) and Activities (19.30%/20.72%), while Accomplishments (9.65%/6.31%) are ranked the last. This change in the order in which the classes have appeared may indicate that even though tasks have been the same, the focus on expressing the actions changes as learners show a higher language proficiency level.

Typically, the order in which the aspectual classes have been used and observed for the past simple tense may indicate that this temporal sphere is primarily used for states and conditions that do not change and are consistent and for processes and events that are completed or have clear endpoints. The other two classes do not have a significant impact when actions are expressed in past temporal morphology.

The following table presents the absolute numbers of each verb token for each year across Text I and Text II within the four lexical aspectual classes. The percentages are based on the total count of verb tokens in this tense.

Table 4. The spread of the past in L2 English

Past Forms		Text 1		Text II		TOTAL	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
	States	88	23.59%	73	19.57%	161	43.16%
Year 1	Activities	39	10.46%	33	8.85%	72	19.30%

	Achievements	66	17.69%	38	10.19%	104	27.88%
	Accomplishments	30	8.04%	6	1.61%	36	9.65%
	TOTAL	**223**	**59.79%**	**150**	**40.21%**	**373**	**100.00%**
	States	76	34.23%	21	9.46%	97	43.69%
	Activities	30	13.51%	16	7.21%	46	20.72%
	Achievements	40	18.02%	25	11.26%	65	29.28%
	Accomplishments	9	4.05%	5	2.25%	14	6.31%
Year 2	*TOTAL*	**155**	**69.82%**	**67**	**30.18%**	**222**	**100.00%**
	States	41	22.16%	29	15.68%	70	37.84%
	Activities	11	5.95%	5	2.70%	16	8.65%
	Achievements	38	20.54%	32	17.30%	70	37.84%
	Accomplishments	19	10.27%	10	5.41%	29	15.68%
Year 3	*TOTAL*	**109**	**58.92%**	**76**	**41.08%**	**185**	**100.00%**
	States	**205**	**26.28%**	**123**	**15.77%**	**328**	**42.05%**
	Activities	**80**	**10.26%**	**54**	**6.92%**	**134**	**17.18%**
	Achievements	**144**	**18.46%**	**95**	**12.18%**	**239**	**30.64%**
	Accomplishments	**58**	**7.44%**	**21**	**2.69%**	**79**	**10.13%**
TOTAL	*TOTAL*	**487**	**62.44%**	**293**	**37.56%**	**780**	**100.00%**

5. Discussions

For L2 English, the across-category analysis results from the overall count of verb tokens used in past forms in Text I and Text II show a different pattern than those predicted by the aspect hypothesis. The aspect hypothesis, according to Andersen & Shirai (1996) and Andersen (2002), postulates that past forms (or perfective markers) ought to appear initially with telic predicates (achievements and accomplishments) and then spread to activities and states. However, in the analyzed learners' interlanguage, the overall observed order follows this expansion:

The observed order: *States (42.05%) → Achievements (30.64%) → Activities (17.18%) → Accomplishments (10.13%)*

The deviation is also noticed in all of the three participating groups. In the group belonging to Year 1, the verbal morphology was used in the following order:

The observed order: *States (43.16%) → Achievements (27.88%) → Activities (19.30%) → Accomplishments (9.65%)*

In the interlanguage of Year 2, a similar pattern has been observed. However, the percentage rate for each class was higher than the sequences in Year 1, apart from the class of accomplishments, which showed a low usage rate. Yet, the order in which the lexical classes appear is the same. Thus, the observed order has followed the following sequence:

The observed order: *States (43.69%) → Achievements (29.28%) → Activities (20.27%) → Accomplishments (6.31%)*

On the other hand, in the group of Year 3, there is a noticeable shift between the two last classes, that of activities and accomplishments. The lexical class of activities appears to have a

lower usage rate, while the class of accomplishments is predominantly higher than the ones in Year 2. Meanwhile, the lexical classes of states and achievements are present with a lower usage rate compared to the other previous groups. The following sequences that have been noticed in this group follow this order:

The observed order: *States (37.84%) → Achievements (37.84%) → Accomplishments (15.68%) → Activities (8.65%)*

Consequently, from the observed patterns, past forms have been predominantly used across the three groups, with states violating the predicted order of the aspect hypothesis. The class of achievements, being the second after the states, may indicate some kind of lexical aspectual influence, and it can be proved by the increase of the usage percentage across the three groups. The rate of usage of activities that changes across the three groups cannot allow us to give concluding assumptions. In Year 1 and Year 2, the order in which past forms are used with activities is in accordance with the predicted pattern; however, the shift in Year 3 changes the dynamics, which are not in accordance with the expected pattern of the AH. Similarly, the use of past forms with accomplishments completely contradicts what is postulated by the aspect hypothesis. There is a noticeable difference in the rate of usage of each lexical class across the different groups, through which it is inferred that the operating principles on which these learners are based are not stagnant and are still in development. The differences in usage rates per each lexical class have been specifically noticed as the language proficiency increases. Additionally, when the patterns are compared across the two tasks, Text I and Text II, similar sequences are observed for each group, which means that the task type has not affected the way past markers are used by L2 English learners.

Meanwhile, in L1 Albanian, the observed patterns used with E kryera e thjeshtë,mirror the predicted sequences postulated by the aspect hypothesis. As mentioned above, based on Andersen & Shirai (1996) and Andersen (2002), it is postulated that past forms (or perfective markers) ought to appear initially with telic predicates (achievements and accomplishments) and then spread to activities and states. The postulated pattern is the exact order in which the verbal morphology of E kryera e thjeshë has emerged. The order of the sequences can be seen below:
Overall: *Achievements (63.02%) → Accomplishments (18.03%) → Activities (13.56%) → States (5.39%)*

The identical sequences have been observed in each group across the four grades (2, 3, 4, and 5), even though the usage rates decreased per each lexical class in Grade 4. However, they increased in Grade 5. The observed sequences for each grade are the following:

Grade 2: *Achievements (56.81%) → Accomplishments (17.84%) → Activities (17.37%) → States (7.98%)*
Grade 3: *Achievements (68.84%) → Accomplishments (15.22%) → Activities (12.32%) → States (3.62%)*
Grade 4: *Achievements (62.16%) → Accomplishments (21.62%) → Activities (14.19%) → States (2.03%)*
Grade 5: *Achievements (67.33%) → Accomplishments (17.33%) → Activities (8.67%) → States (6.67%)*

When analyzing the data for each task individually, the observed language in Task 1 follows the same patterns as the overall sequences. In contrast, in the language elicited in Task 2 for Grades 2 and 3, the class of activities is observed with a higher usage rate than the class of accomplishments.

This indicates that the predicted order, instead of following the expected pattern: *Achievements → Accomplishments → Activities → States,* follows: *Achievements → Activities → Accomplishments → States.*
In Grade 4, this order reverses to match the predicted sequence, while in Grade 5, the classes of achievements and accomplishments are established. Still, there is a reversed order between states and activities. The narrative type may influence these changes, with the former being impersonal and the latter personal. However, the learners' language is still developing, and the operating principles generally align with the universal patterns as predicted. Overall, the results of this study highlight distinct patterns in the use of past forms in both L2 English and L1 Albanian. For L2 English, the observed sequences deviate from the predicted patterns of the aspect hypothesis. Instead of past forms initially appearing with telic predicates (achievements and accomplishments), the data show a predominant use of past forms with states, followed by achievements, activities, and accomplishments. This unexpected order was consistent across the three groups analyzed, with only slight variations in the usage rates. These findings suggest that the learners' interlanguage in L2 English does not strictly follow the aspect hypothesis, indicating a more complex interaction between lexical aspect and tense usage in their language development. In contrast, the use of past forms in L1 Albanian (E kryera e thjeshtë) aligns closely with the predictions of the aspect hypothesis. Past forms predominantly appear with achievements, followed by accomplishments, activities, and states. This sequence was observed consistently across all grades, with minor variations in the frequency of usage. The alignment of E kryera e thjeshtë with the aspect hypothesis suggests that, in L1 Albanian, the expansion of past forms follows a more predictable and systematic pattern compared to the more variable patterns observed in L2 English. This contrast between the two languages highlights the influence of language-specific factors on the development and usage of past forms, with L1

Albanian showing a more stable adherence to expected linguistic patterns, while L2 English learners exhibit more variability as they navigate their interlanguage development.

In conclusion, the study underscores the significant differences in how past forms are utilized in L2 English and L1 Albanian. While L2 English learners demonstrate a more variable and complex pattern that challenges the predictions of the aspect hypothesis, L1 Albanian follows a more systematic and predictable sequence. These findings emphasize the role of language-specific factors in shaping tense usage and suggest that learners' interlanguage development in L2 English is influenced by a broader range of factors than in their native language.

6. Conclusions

This study provides valuable insights into the acquisition and development of tense-aspect systems in Albanian ESL learners and young Albanian L1 learners through the lens of the Aspect Hypothesis. The findings reveal distinct patterns in the use of past forms, highlighting differences between L2 English and L1 Albanian. L2 English learners exhibit a more complex and variable pattern, challenging the predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis, while L1 Albanian follows a more predictable and systematic sequence, aligning closely with the hypothesis. However, several limitations should be considered when interpreting these results. First, the study's cross-sectional design provides only a snapshot of the learners' developmental stages, limiting the ability to track changes over time. Future research would benefit from a longitudinal approach, allowing for a more detailed observation of how tense-aspect systems evolve in learners over an extended period. Additionally, the limited number of participants restricts the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the participant pool to include a larger and more diverse group, particularly in different educational settings, would enhance the robustness of the results. This is particularly important given the variation in linguistic input and educational contexts that may influence language acquisition. Lastly, the study's focus on participants from Kosovo presents a geographical limitation. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the acquisition of tense-aspect systems among Albanian learners, future research should include participants from Albania and North Macedonia. This broader inclusion would provide a more nuanced perspective on how regional differences within the Albanian-speaking population might impact language acquisition patterns. In summary, while this study offers important contributions to our understanding of tense-aspect acquisition in Albanian learners, addressing these limitations in future research will help to deepen and refine these insights, providing a more complete picture of the developmental trajectories involved.

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