

Avoiding Common Errors for Albanian Learners of English

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Introduction

This guide is intended to correct points of confusion that are common among Albanian learners of English. Topics that are already covered adequately by most English textbooks used in Macedonia are not included here.

Throughout the guide, words and expressions that are being discussed are written in *italics*. Incorrect forms are marked with an asterisk (*).

Pronunciation

tr and *dr*

These letter combinations are not pronounced the same way in English as they are in Albanian. *Tr* is pronounced like Albanian *çr*, and *dr* is pronounced like Albanian *xhr*.

this vs. *these*

These two words differ in pronunciation in three ways: 1) the vowel, 2) the length of the vowel, and 3) the consonant at the end. *This* has the same vowel as in the words *ship*, *listen*, and *wish*. *These* has the same vowel as in the words *weak*, *cheese*, and *easy*. If you pronounce both sets of words with the same vowel sound, get your local Peace Corps volunteer to say them for you, and listen carefully to the difference between them.

police

The correct stress in this word is on the second syllable. The first syllable is pronounced so weakly that the word often sounds like it only has one syllable.

hotel

The correct stress in this word is on the second syllable.

Syntax and word order

Verb placement

In English, the main verb almost always goes after the subject. There are very few exceptions to this rule. This is not true in Albanian. In Albanian you can say *Ndalohet duhani*, with the verb before the subject, but in English the correct form is *Smoking is prohibited*, not **Is prohibited smoking*. Similarly, *Ma ka dhënë çelësin drejtori* should be translated *The director gave me the key*, not **Gave me the key the director*.

Adverb placement

In general, an adverb cannot go between a verb and its object in English. **She knows very well English* is incorrect; the correct form is *She knows English very well*. This rule also applies to prepositional phrases that function as adverbs. **I saw on Saturday my friend* is incorrect; the correct form is *I saw my friend on Saturday*.

An exception exists when the object of the verb is a long phrase. In this case, an adverb can be placed between the verb and its object, although it is still better to place it somewhere else if possible. Ex. *She read carefully the list of changes to the school schedule* is all right because the object of the verb is a long phrase: *the list of changes to the school schedule*. But it would be better to place the adverb elsewhere: *She carefully read the list of changes to the school schedule*.

Semantics and word selection

Single-word translation errors

There are some Albanian and English words and expressions that look similar, but in fact do not have the same meaning.

<i>Albanian</i>	<i>Incorrect translation</i>	<i>Correct translation</i>
aktualisht	actually (në fakt)	currently
edukim	education (arsim)	upbringing
ekonomist (që merret me një biznes të caktuar, jo me shkencën e ekon.)	economist (ekonomist që merret me shkencën e ekon.)	accountant
gjimnaz	gymnasium (palestër)	high school
inxhinier (që nuk merret me sisteme shumë të ndërlikuara)	engineer (inxhinier që merret me sisteme shumë të ndërlikuara)	mechanic
klasë (në kuptimin e dhomës së nxënësve)	class (shtresë sociale, nivel, grup nx.)	classroom
klasë (nivel shkollor)	class	grade (Am.), form (Br.)
kontrolloj	control (zotëroj)	check (on), monitor
librari	library (bibliotekë)	bookstore, bookshop
notë	note (shënim)	grade (Am.), mark (Br.)
rregulloj	regulate (vë në kontroll, sistemoj)	fix
shef	chief (kryetar) chef (kuzhinier)	boss
shkollë e lartë	high school (shkollë e mesme)	college (Am.), higher education
shkollë e mesme	middle school (klasat 7-8)	high school

Mass (uncountable) nouns

Some words are countable in Albanian, but their closest English translations are not. Here is a list of words like that, with expressions you can use if you need to divide them into countable objects.

<i>Noun</i>	<i>Can be divided into:</i>	<i>If used in the plural, means:</i>
advice	pieces of advice	-
equipment	pieces of equipment	-
fruit	pieces of fruit	kinds of fruit
homework	homework assignments	-
information	pieces of information, facts	-
paper	pieces/sheets of paper	documents
stuff	things	-
travel	trips	all the trips one has made in one's entire life
work	jobs	artistic achievements

Nouns that generally do not take *the*

bed, breakfast, class, dinner, lunch, school, sleep, work

Ex. *I'm at work right now*, not **I'm at the work*. Ex 2. *Isn't it time for you to go to class?* not **Isn't it time for you to go to the class?* Ex 3. *School starts on the third Monday in September*, not **The school starts...*

Other nouns that do not take *the*

Nouns that describe abstract things are generally not used with *the*. Ex. *Life is hard without supportive parents*, not **The life....* Ex 2. *We have serious problems with corruption*, not **...with the corruption*.

home

When used as a location or destination, *home* takes no preposition. Ex. *I get home at 6pm every day*, not **I get to home...* Ex 2. *You can't go home until you finish all your work*, not **You can't go to home...* Ex 3. *They aren't home right now*. Although *They aren't at home right now* is also correct, *home* is used more often without *at*.

town

When used as a location or destination, and when it is already understood which town is being referred to, *town* does not take *the*. Ex. *They live in a village near Peshkopi, and they go to town twice a week*, not **they go to the town*.

Note that this rule does not apply to the word *city*.

there is

The idea of English *there is* can be expressed in Albanian by *ka*. Ex. *There's a bookstore on this street - Ka një librari në këtë rrugë*. It is incorrect to translate Albanian *ka* with English *has* unless *has* has a clear grammatical subject. Ex. *This town has only one hotel* is correct English because there is a clear subject (*This town*), but **It has only one hotel in this town* and **There has only one hotel in this town* are both incorrect. Instead, you should say *There is only one hotel in this town*.

Note that *It has...* is correct if the pronoun *it* clearly refers to something. Ex. *This town is pretty small. It only has one hotel*. This is correct because *it* clearly refers to something (*This town*). On the other hand, *it* in the sentence **It has only one hotel in this town* does not refer to anything, which is why the sentence is incorrect. *It* cannot refer to *this town*, because then the sentence would mean *This town has only one hotel in this town*, which doesn't make sense.

discuss vs. argue

In English, *discuss* is a transitive verb. This means that it takes a direct object. You can *discuss something*, but you cannot simply **discuss*. **Discuss about* and **discuss for* are also incorrect. Unlike Albanian *diskutoj*, English *discuss* cannot mean having an angry conversation. For this meaning, use *argue* instead of *discuss*.

In addition to having an angry conversation with someone, *argue* can also mean giving logical reasons for an opinion. In this sense, the structures *to argue for something* and *to argue that something is/does...* are common. Ex. *She argued that large class sizes were the main reason why less than 60% of graduating students had passed their final exams*. Ex 2. *She argued for smaller class sizes*.

bored vs. upset vs. annoyed

From the point of view of English, the Albanian word *i mërzitur* has a wide range of meanings. *Bored*, *upset*, and *annoyed* are very different things in English. *Bored* means you have nothing interesting to do, or that you are not interested in what you are doing. *Upset* means you are emotionally disturbed by something - maybe angry, maybe scared. *Annoyed* means you are displeased, usually because someone is bothering you. Make sure not to confuse these words. They are not used in the same situations!

get vs. take vs. bring

These words have similar meanings, but there are a lot of situations where only one of them is correct.

Get is used in most situations where something comes into someone's ownership or possession, or is given to someone. Ex. *to get a 4 on a test, to get a haircut, to get a new phone*.

Take can mean to accept something that someone has offered. Ex. *If they offer me a job, I think I'm going to take it*. It can also be used in almost the same sense as *get* above, but implying force or a lack of permission. Ex. *Someone broke into their house and took the television*.

Bring means to carry something from one place to another. *Take* is often used in the same sense. The difference between them is the perspective of the speaker. *Bring* is used when the speaker is looking at the action from the destination point, while *take* is used when the speaker is looking from the point of origin. Ex. *Can you bring a camera to the party?* (the speaker is thinking from the point of view of the party, which is the destination). Ex 2. *You should probably take your umbrella with you* (the speaker is thinking from the point of view of the house, or wherever the person is leaving from).

take a test vs. pass a test

It's easy to get confused about the meaning of *take a test* because it looks like it should mean *marr provim*. However, what it really means is *bëj provim*. *Pass a test* means *marr provim* - in other words, to be successful.

If you *take a test* and are not successful, you have *failed the test*.

others vs. the others

Others means other people in general. Ex. *My parents raised me to be respectful to others*, but not **respectful to the others*. It can also mean other members of a group besides the ones you have just mentioned - but not all the others. Ex. *Some European languages, such as Spanish and Romanian, are descended from Latin. Others, such as English and Dutch, are Germanic languages.*

The others means the rest, or all the remaining members, of a specific group. Ex. *The students in the back of the classroom are a lot noisier than the others*. In this sentence, *the others* refers to all the other students besides the ones in the back of the classroom.

agree

In general, you should translate Albanian *jam dakord* as *to agree*. *To be in agreement* is correct in English, but it is less common than *to agree*. You can either *agree on something* or *be in agreement about something*.

**To be agreed* and **to be agree* are always incorrect.

too vs. very

The difference between these words can be confusing for Albanian learners of English because they can both be translated by the same Albanian word: *shumë*. But they do not mean the same thing in English. In general, you should translate *shumë* or *tepër* as *very* or *really*. *Too* has a more specific meaning. *It's too hot* means it is hotter than it should be, or that it is so hot that it's impossible to do something in particular, like go outside. You can think of *too* ___ as meaning *më shumë ___ sesa duhet* or *tepër ___ për të bërë diçka*.

country vs. place

Country has a few different meanings in English. In general, it refers to a political state, like Albania, the United States, or Japan. In this sense, *country* is a countable noun.

A second meaning is a rural or farming area. In this sense, *country* is almost always used with the article *the*, for example *We live in the city, but our grandparents still live in the country*. In the rural sense, *country* is uncountable and cannot be used with possessive pronouns. If you are from a village, you cannot refer to your village as **my country*.

A third meaning of *country* is terrain or landscape. In this sense, *country* is an uncountable noun. Ex. *There's a lot of mountainous country in Albania* is correct, but **There are a lot of mountainous countries in Albania* is incorrect. The first sentence means there is a lot of land covered by mountains in Albania. This makes sense. The second sentence, because it uses *country* as a countable noun, sounds like it means there are a lot of independent political states that are full of mountains inside Albania. This does not make sense.

Place refers to any location. If you are from Albania, Albania is both the *place* you are from and the *country* you are from. However, if you are from Korçë, Korçë is the *place* you are from, but it is not the **country* you are from. The *country* you are from is Albania.

street vs. road

Road refers to a pathway for going from one place to another, wide enough for vehicles. *Street* means a road within a town or city, with buildings alongside it.

tell vs. say

The pattern of these two verbs is: *to tell someone (something)*, and *to say something (to someone)*. Ex. *You didn't tell me the schedule had changed*, but not **You didn't say me...* The indirect object in this sentence is *me*. Because there is an indirect object, we have to use *tell* and not *say*. On the other hand, if there is no indirect object, use *say*. Ex. *You didn't say that the schedule had changed*, but not **You didn't tell that the schedule had changed*.

The expression *to tell a story* is an exception to the above rule.

turn back vs. come back

In general, you should translate Albanian *kthehem* into English as *come back*, *go back*, *get back*, *be back*, etc. (which one of these you should use depends on the context). *Turn back* does exist in English, but it has a more specific meaning. *To turn back* means to cancel a trip that you are on and go back in the direction you came from.

smoke vs. drink

In English, *drink* means consumption of liquids only, not smoke or any other kind of substance. You can *drink coffee*, but you cannot **drink a cigarette*. Instead, you *smoke a cigarette*.

If you are talking about going to a cafe or bar for a drink, you should use the verb *have* instead of *drink*. You can invite someone to *have some/a coffee*, but not to *drink a coffee*.

Albanian që dikush të bëjë diçka

There are different ways to translate the Albanian structure *që dikush të bëjë diçka*, depending on the context. In general, you can translate this structure as: *someone to do something*. If *someone* is a pronoun, it has

to be in the objective case - *him, her, them*, not *he, she, they*. Ex. *Dua që të dëgjojnë me vëmendje - I want them to listen attentively.*

When the entire structure is the subject of a verb, it should be translated *for someone to do something*. Ex. *Do të jetë më mirë që ata ta bëjnë vetë - It will be better for them to do it themselves.* The entire clause *for them to do it* is the subject of the verb *will be* (although in English, when an entire clause is the subject of a verb, we move the clause to the end of the sentence and replace it with the pronoun *it*).

**That someone to do something* is always incorrect.

Albanian *i bukur*

It is usually a mistake to translate Albanian *i bukur* as *beautiful*. In English, *beautiful* is a strong word. We do not use it often. On the other hand, *i bukur* is used very often in Albanian and is not a very strong word. There is no single word that you can always use to translate *i bukur*, but the word *nice* has a similar meaning in many contexts. Like *i bukur*, *nice* is used often and is not a very strong word.

Albanian *jam me (diçka)*

You cannot always translate Albanian *jam me...*, *është me...* etc. as *to be with*. If these structures mean *jam bashkë me*, then it makes sense to translate them as *to be with*. Ex. *Jam me shokët e mi -> I'm with my friends.* But in other cases, you should translate them as *have/has*. Ex. *Jam me grip -> I have the flu*, not **I am with flu*. Ex 2. *Xhaketa është me tre ngjyra -> The jacket has three colors*, not **The jacket is with three colors*.

know vs. meet

When you see a person for the first time, you are *meeting* them. After you have met someone, you *know* them. You cannot go to a party and **know a lot of new people*. Instead, you *meet a lot of new people*.

wear vs. put on

When a piece of clothing is on your body, you *are wearing* it. If it is not on your body, you can *put it on*. Ex. *Before I go out in the morning, I put my shoes on*, but not **Before I go out in the morning, I wear my shoes*. First you *put* your shoes *on*, and then you *are wearing* them.

before vs. ago

When describing how long in the past it was that something happened, use *ago*, not *before*. Ex. *I talked to Ermal two weeks ago*, not **I talked to Ermal before two weeks*. Notice that *ago* goes after the time expression.

However, it is possible to use *before* to describe how long ago something happened in the past before another past event. The time referred to when this structure is used is the same as with the past perfect tense. Ex. *When I started working as a teacher, I had graduated from high school just a month before*. Notice that in this structure, *before* goes after the time expression, as with *ago*.

by vs. from

Sometimes when a passive verb is used, the agent of the verb is given in the sentence. (The agent is the person or thing that does the action.) The agent of a passive verb is always shown with *by*, never with *from*. Ex. *Several thousand dollars were donated by a Danish aid organization*, not **...were donated from*.

Otherwise, if it is not used to show the agent of a passive verb, you can translate Albanian *nga* with English *from*. Ex. **Our project was supported from the local city government* is incorrect because *was supported* is a passive verb and *the local city government* is the agent of the verb. Instead, the sentence should read *...was supported by the local city government*. But *Our project received support from the local city government* is correct because *received* is an active verb, not a passive verb, and *the local city government* is grammatically unrelated to the verb.

depends on

On is the only possible preposition for this expression. **Depends from* is always incorrect.

for vs. about

When describing the topic of a conversation, book, movie, etc., use the preposition *about*, not *for*. Ex. *This book talks about the American Civil War*, not **This book talks for...*

for vs. in when talking about time

Both *in* and *for* can be used with lengths of time, but they do not mean the same thing. *For* is used with an event that continues through the entire length of time. *In* is used with an event that happens at the end of the length of time. Ex. *We talked for an hour and a half*. Our talking started at the beginning of the hour and a half, and continued all the way to the end. On the other hand, *Class starts in seven minutes*. Seven minutes will go by, and then class will start.

to vs. in

**During summer vacation, we went in Vlora*. This sentence is wrong because it uses the wrong preposition with the verb *to go*. Instead, it should say *...we went to Vlora*. We almost never say *go in*, except when we mean *enter*, and in that case, *in* is not followed by an object. To describe movement from one place to another, we almost always use the preposition *to*, not *in*.

For the same reason, **Welcome in Elbasan* is incorrect. The correct form is *Welcome to Elbasan*. The same applies to the verb *to be* when it refers to traveling somewhere. *I've been to Greece, Italy, and Macedonia*, not **I've been in...*

all vs. whole/entire

In general, *all* is only used with plural nouns. With singular nouns, use *whole* or *entire* instead. Ex. *The whole world uses English*, or *The entire world...* not **All the world...* Ex 2. *My whole family is coming to visit* or *My entire family...*, not **All my family...*

There are some expressions that are an exception to this rule, such as *all day* (but **all the day* is incorrect). Another exception is *all the time* - but be careful about this expression. It means *gjithmonë*. It does not mean *të gjithë kohën*.

laugh at vs. laugh with

The difference between these two expressions is important! To laugh at someone means to laugh in a hurtful or unkind way about something they did or said. To laugh with someone means that both of you are laughing together about some other thing.

The present perfect vs. the past simple

There are many cases where *koha e kryer* is used in Albanian, but English uses the past simple tense, not the present perfect. Here is a list of when to use and when not to use the present perfect tense in English.

The present perfect is not used when:

1. A specific time is named. Ex. *I came back from Tirana yesterday*, not **I have come back from Tirana yesterday*.
2. The result of the action or the condition no longer exists. Ex. *I worked as a mechanic from 1992 to 1997*, not **I have worked...* (I am no longer a mechanic.)
3. The agent of the action is no longer alive. Ex. *Beethoven composed the 9th Symphony*, but not **Beethoven has composed the 9th Symphony*. (Beethoven is dead.)

The present perfect is used when:

1. Someone has had (or has not had) an experience in the past, but it is not important exactly when. Ex. *How many countries have you been to?* Ex 2. *I've never met anyone from Africa before*.
2. The action happened recently and no specific time is named. Ex. *A plane has crashed in the eastern United States. Police are still looking for survivors in the wreckage*. But not **A plane has crashed this morning...*
3. The action or condition started in the past and continues to the present. Ex. *My mom has been a teacher for 18 years*. (She is still a teacher.)

see vs. look vs. watch

These verbs can be confusing because they can all be translated *shikoj* or *shoh*. The main difference between *see* and *look* is that *look* implies intention or purpose, whereas *see* can be unintentional. To *look* at something means you are trying to *see* it. Ex. *I looked into the room, but I didn't see anybody*. To *look* at something can also mean to turn your eyes or your attention to it. Ex. *Why don't you look at me when I'm talking to you?*

Remember that you can *look at something*, but you cannot **look something*.

To *watch* something means to look at it continuously over a period of time. Ex. *They watched the house for six hours, but they didn't see anyone come out*.

hear vs. listen

The difference between *hear* and *listen* is the same as the difference between *see* and *look*. *Listen* implies intention or purpose, whereas *hear* can be unintentional. To *listen* means to pay attention with your ears, or to try to *hear*. Ex. *Sorry, I didn't hear what you said*. Ex 2. *You didn't hear me because you weren't listening*.

Remember that you can *listen to something*, but you cannot **listen something*.

realize

The English word *realize* (or *realise* in British spelling) usually does not mean the same thing as the Albanian word *realizoj*. To *realize* something means to understand that it is true. Ex. *I just realized that I left my keys at home*. Ex 2. *She thinks I'm lazy, but she doesn't realize that I actually do a lot of work*. Ex 3. *Do you realize that everyone you know someday will die?*

Realize can sometimes mean the same things as *realizoj*, but only in relation to goals that are distant and difficult, e.g. to *realize your dreams*. This usage of *realize* in English is very limited. In general, you can translate Albanian *realizoj* into English as *carry out* or *perform*, or sometimes as *render*. Ex. *Bashkia realizoi një sondazh*. -> *The city government carried out a survey*. Ex 2. *Filmi u realizua në Shqipëri nga...* -> *The film was rendered into Albanian by...*

don't have to

A common mistake is to think that *don't have to* means the same thing as *must not* or *shouldn't*. In fact, these expressions have very different meanings. *Don't have to* means you are not obligated to do something, but you can. This mistake often comes from translating *don't have to* into Albanian as *nuk duhet*. Ex. ***Nuk duhet të bëni zhurmë në mësim.*** -> You ***shouldn't*** make noise in class, not *You ***don't have to*** make noise in class. If you say You ***don't have to*** make noise in class, this means that noise is not necessary, but it is permitted.

Transitive verbs

A transitive verb is a verb that takes a direct object. In English, the object of a transitive verb cannot be left out, even if it is understood. Ex. A: *Did you like the movie?* B: *Yes, I liked **it**.* It would be incorrect to answer **Yes, I liked.* Ex 2. A: *Did you watch the game yesterday?* B: *Yes, I watched **it**.* (not **Yes, I watched.*)

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