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Exploring of the Role of Teacher's Input in Fossilization:
An Examination of Some Spoken Errors by Albanian Speakers of English

Abstract: Fossilization in second language acquisition is generally defined as a discrepancy between the foreign language learner's usage of a structure or form and what is considered "correct" in the target language. Second language theory and research generally support the notion that classroom instruction can reduce and, even prevent, fossilization. However, a small body of research suggests that not all classroom instruction may effectively prevent fossilization and some may even promote it. The authors examine research about the relationship between fossilization and classroom practice, then look at the effects classroom practice may have on fossilization, focusing on the role of input. Next they consider the question: How likely are fossilized forms to be ignored or even promoted in a classroom with a teacher who is a non-native speaker of the target language? Anecdotal evidence collected from observations of classroom teachers and students of English in Albania highlights some errors which are fossilized. The study demonstrates that the Albanian context plays a role in several significant ways. Until the early 1990s most Albanian teachers of English had little or no direct contact with native English speakers nor with authentic listening and reading materials. This trend is changing, but there is still a tendency among Albanian teachers to repeat the incorrect forms which were taught to them by their teachers of English. The authors explore a few common errors and suggest some changes to classroom practice to help teachers and their students overcome fossilization using appropriate input, by first recognizing fossilized forms, then revising their output to correct forms.

Keywords: fossilization, teacher input, spoken errors, Albanian context, classroom practice, input

1. Introduction

One of the most fascinating and at the same time debated issues which language teachers and researchers have to deal with is whether classroom instruction can help reduce mistakes and calcified errors made by a foreign language learner, otherwise known as the phenomenon of fossilization. The purpose of this article is to explore some of the issues related to the role of the teacher in fossilization in the Albanian context. The article begins by examining what fossilization is and the effects of classroom practice on fossilization in the foreign language learning context. Then the article will offer some examples from Albania which illustrate various areas of language that can become fossilized and how Albanian teachers of English may be contributing to certain types of errors. Finally, the authors offer some suggestions how Albanian teachers can become aware of these issues in their own language production and help their students avoid these errors by using a wider range of resources in the classroom.

2. What is fossilization?

Selinker and Lamendella (1978: 187), the first to propose this hypothesis, stated that "fossilization is a permanent cessation of Interlanguage [IL] learning before the learner has attained Target Language [TL] norms at all levels of linguistic structure." Selinker (1972: 229) considered fossilization "a mechanism … which underlies surface linguistic materials which speakers will tend to keep in their IL productive performance, no matter what the age of the learner or the amount of instruction he receives in the TL."

More than 40 years have passed and this hypothesis has been widely discussed and interpreted by various scholars and researchers (for example Ellis 1985; Hawkins 2000; Han 2003; Long 2003; White 2003; Birdsong 2004; Toyota 2009). In the meantime, other terms have been added to this notion, such as stabilized errors (Nur 2014), learning plateau (Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Romer 1993), ingrained errors (Myles 2002), cessation of learning (Han 2003), ultimate attainment (Birdsong 2004), and the list goes on. During the development of all these terms and concepts it has to be noted that most studies have been focused on the age aspect of the issue (the critical period hypothesis) and not so much on the instructional aspect.

Additionally, another issue that has arisen in the discussion about fossilization is whether it is even an appropriate identifier. Berns (2015) reviewed the work done by Kachru in the 1980s and 1990s in which she challenged the work of Selinker and others regarding fossilization. Kachru (in Berns 2015: 24) argued that research done on fossilization and interlanguage has too narrow a focus, asserting that "the social and cultural contexts in which English is learned and used" must be

considered when analyzing second language learning. Kachru also provided further evidence of this in her studies of speech act theory, pointing out "weaknesses in the interlanguage hypothesis and its claim for relevance to language pedagogy" (Berns 2015: 25). She asserted that rather than looking at fossilization as errors that researchers should "utilize the wealth of information provided by the varieties of English around the world to understand what really is involved in acquiring a second language" (Berns 2015: 26).

3. The effects of classroom practice on fossilization

In the time since Selinker first put forth this fossilization hypothesis, ideas about language learning and language teaching have changed. Not only have there been debate and discussion about the relevance of fossilization and interlanguage development, there has also been a shift away from more direct styles of teaching which focus on form and accuracy to communicative styles of teaching which focus on fluency and communication. However, concern has arisen among some researchers and educators that this lack of focus on accuracy can lead to fossilization of incorrect forms from the early stages of learning.

Ellis (1985: 48) covers this point by giving the following definition of fossilization:

> Fossilization occurs in most languages and cannot be remedied by further instruction. Fossilized structures can be realized as errors or as correct target language forms. If, when fossilization occurs, the learner has reached a stage of development in which feature X in his interlanguage has assumed the same form as in the target language, then fossilization of the correct form will occur. If, however, the learner has reached a stage in which feature Y still does not have the same form as the target language; the fossilization will manifest itself as an error.

However, some of the research which focuses on instruction does not support Ellis' claim that instruction cannot remediate fossilized errors. In a report on the research about the role of instruction in language learning, Larsen-Freeman (1995) asserts that instruction and natural input both play a role in the language learning process, including the remediation of errors. In a meta-analysis of research done on direct and indirect teaching methods, Lightbown and Spada (1999: 122) contend that "these studies offer support for the hypothesis that meaning-based instruction is advantageous, *not* that form-based instruction is not." In a later examination of this issue, Spada and Lightbrown (2008) support the use of isolated Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) in monolingual classrooms, those in which the learners share the same first language. The learners may have created a similar interlanguage rule which can reinforce errors which are the result of L1 influence. Therefore, "isolated FFI may be needed to clarify misleading similarities between the L1 and L2" (194).

In his study, Wang (2011) also raised concerns about the reinforcement of errors in the monolingual classroom. In an effort to pinpoint where errors may

come from, he identified three sources of classroom input which influence language learning, i.e., teachers, materials, and other learners. First, Wang found that opportunities for learners to communicate in the classroom are often limited and when they communicate with one another, they often repeat one another's errors. Then, because of the nature of teaching materials, the target language is often presented to the learners in limited amounts and forms and in an artificial format. Finally, teachers may supply correct and incorrect input to the learners and they also play a role by how and when they provide feedback. Any of these sources of input can lead to the compounding of errors and fossilization.

Wang (2011) reported on this issue based on data collected about non-native English speaking teachers in China. First, Wang pointed out that teacher talk in the classroom tends to be limited to the content being taught, especially when the teacher is a non-native speaker. Then as second language learners themselves, the teachers may have an imperfect knowledge of and ability to use certain forms. Wang gave the example of a Chinese teacher who may mispronounce a word and transmits that mispronunciation to his or her students. Wang (2011: 65) also pointed out the effect of teacher feedback in this context saying that ill-timed or incorrect feedback or lack of feedback "can prolong the existence of interlanguage deviance, thereby promoting fossilization."

How likely are fossilized forms to be ignored or even promoted in a classroom with a teacher who is a non-native speaker of the target language in other cultural contexts? In an effort to examine the influence of non-native English speaking teachers on fossilization, the authors examined some common errors made by Albanian speakers of English. The goal was to determine the teacher's role in overlooking or even in contributing to these errors.

4. Methodology

This project began as a conversation between two colleagues about second language acquisition, in general, and errors made by Albanian learners of English, in particular. Therefore, this article is not reporting on a formal research project. It is an attempt to bring some order to these conversations, and to identify common errors and arrive at some possible solutions to the problem of Albanian teachers who perpetuate linguistic errors.

Even though there is not a formal research design, this project is loosely based in descriptive qualitative research methodology which usually establishes a research question or questions as a framework. This methodology is especially favored by educators who are often seeking information to inform changes in classroom practices. In this project the authors were interested in identifying specific areas in which teachers of English in Albania promote fossilization of errors with the intention of using this information in order to develop effective ways for these

teachers to become aware of their own fossilized errors and to develop strategies using available technology to promote appropriate communication in their classrooms.

The data collected for this project are anecdotal. They were not collected systematically using a specific formula or protocol. The items chosen for analysis were collected and identified by a native English speaker living in Albania during the course of two semesters and are from a variety of interactions with Albanian speakers of English. In collaboration with the Albanian-speaking author, these examples were selected for inclusion in this analysis to illustrate specific types of fossilized errors.

Since this project does not follow a formal research protocol, there is not a specific participant sample. In general, the fossilization samples were collected from interactions with Master's level students at one university who were studying to be English teachers, university professors who were teaching these students, English teachers and pupils in grades 3–9, and the general public. Each situation and who was involved will be identified in more detail as each sample of a fossilized communication error is described.

4.1. Procedures

One author is a native English speaker from the United States. She was serving for two semesters as an English Language Fellow (ELF) at a regional university in Albania teaching students who were studying to be English teachers. In Albania, students first complete a Bachelor's degree in their content area, such as English, then they pursue a Master's degree to qualify for teaching credentials. Therefore, the Master's students who are studying to be English teachers have completed their English studies. Their course work focuses on pedagogy and teaching. Most of these courses are taught in Albanian, but a few are taught in English, mostly by Albanian speakers of English. During their two years of Master's study, the students observe and participate in English classrooms, generally in grades 3 to 9, and complete a 5-week practicum. Besides teaching several Master's level courses and advising on Master's theses, the ELF oversaw observations and practicums at different grade levels for a number of university students.

The Albanian-speaking author is a regular faculty member at the university where the ELF was assigned. Her particular area of interest is second language acquisition. Besides teaching, advising Master's theses, and overseeing student practicums, she also performs various administrative duties in the university.

Each of the examples of fossilized errors discussed in this article was selected by the native English speaker. She witnessed these errors on more than one occasion during classroom observations and other interactions with teachers and students. The errors were committed by several people which is what brought each one to the observer's attention. In an effort to understand how the errors originated

and to develop strategies to prevent their perpetuation, she would discuss the errors with her Albanian-speaking colleague. From these discussions, they determined that many of these errors were a result of direct transference from Albanian and that they were being reinforced in English language classrooms.

Even though the data were collected informally and not systematically, the analysis of the data most closely follows a thematic analysis, which is generally used for organizing data when the researcher is trying to find "common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report" (Riessman 2003: 3). Thematic analysis generally focuses more on "what" is said rather than "how" it is said. In the case of these data, the "how" something is said actually becomes the "what" in some instances. Using anecdotal evidence, a thematic relationship was established between various errors which were repeated in the classroom and in less formal settings.

5. Fossilization data

The native English speaker who collected these examples interacted with university faculty, Master's students, grade 3–9 teachers of English, and pupils in those grades. The data from university students was collected in the course of the author's teaching and interacting with the Master's level students and their faculty. Because they are responsible for teaching the four skill areas as well as vocabulary and grammar, there is a variety of data that can be examined when looking at how Albanian teachers of English in primary and secondary schools may promote fossilization of certain errors in their students.

The examples selected for this project form a convenience sample in that they were errors that were observed on more than one occasion in one or more formal and/or informal contexts and they were uttered or written by learners and teachers. In this way they were identified as possibly fossilized errors that were being transmitted from teacher to learner.

All of the samples that were selected for inclusion in this article were observed in spoken form, and a few of them were also observed in written form. The authors identified three categories to include in this analysis: mispronunciation; misplaced syllable stress; and inappropriate direct translations from Albanian.

5.1. Mispronunciation

Although there are several letters and sounds in English that cause difficulties in pronunciation, a common pronunciation error made by Albanian speakers of English involves the letter "u." While "u" in English may represent several sounds, in Albanian, the "u" represents the sound approximated in English as "oo."

One example of how this mispronunciation is promoted in the classroom is based on an observation in a 7th grade classroom. The students were reading

a short text about the Incredible Hulk. In English the "u" in the word "hulk" is pronounced like the short u-sound in "come." However, during the observation period, the Albanian teacher of English drilled her students in the pronunciation, "hoolk."

Additionally, this pronunciation of "u" was heard by the native English speaker in a conversation with an Albanian colleague. This colleague teaches English courses to Bachelor's level students. The colleague was talking about a conference proposal she wanted to submit and was explaining the focus of her presentation. She pronounced "focus" as "fo-coos", the "u" sounding like "oo" and with the stress on the final syllable. While she may not be directly teaching her students this pronunciation of "u", they hear it in her classroom.

5.2. Misplaced syllable stress

As demonstrated in the previous example, another common error that Albanian speakers of English make is related to syllable stress. In Albanian, stress may fall on any syllable depending on the word, but, in general, the stress of a poly-syllabic word falls on the next to last syllable or last syllable. This form may be carried over into English. For example, "im**por**tant" may be pronounced "impor**tant**" and "com**pu**ter" as **"**compoo**ter**." With "computer, the "oo" sound also comes into play. The observer noted this particular pronunciation of putting stress on the final syllable of these words numerous times by a number of different speakers with all levels of English proficiency.

Words such as "comfortable" and "vegetable" are also problematic for Albanian learners and teachers. They often put the stress of these words on the penultimate syllable so that the last part of the word is pronounced like the word "**ta**ble." One day in a 6th grade class, the native-English speaker who was observing noted that the pupils were asked by the teacher to name as many "vege**ta**bles" that they knew the name for in English.

Another example of misplaced stress was observed in another 6th grade classroom when a teacher misplaced the stress in the word "adjective." Instead of saying "**ad**jective", this teacher pronounced the word "ad**ject**ive" which may be misheard as "objective" (which does have the stress on the penultimate syllable).

5.3. Inappropriate direct translations from Albanian

The native-English speaker who was collecting data also observed Albanian teachers and students uttering and writing several phrases that on examination proved to be direct translations from Albanian. Some of the phrases were said by students in the university classroom and others were observed in samples of writing by university students studying to be English teachers and by university faculty teaching English.

For example, after their first experience teaching a class in their practicum, several 2nd year Master's students reported that they "had emotions" while teaching. After several students used this phrase, the university practicum supervisor, the native speaker of English, asked them what exactly this meant since everyone has emotions. It turns out that this is a direct translation from Albanian. They were trying to express that they were nervous.

Another phrase that was commonly used by these Master's students was "the way how." Again this is a direct translation from Albanian. For example, they might say, "This is the way how you say this in Albanian." The native English speaker practiced the appropriate form with students on several occasions, telling them to use either "the way" or "how" but not both together in this way. One day when she corrected a student, the student said, "But I hear people say this all the time." When asked, she admitted that they were Albanian faculty members teaching courses in English whom she heard say this, not native English speakers.

Another commonly misused phrase by Albanian speakers is the response to "thank you." In Albanian, the response to the phrase "Faleminderit" (thank you) is "asgje" which translates into English as "nothing." However, "nothing" is not an appropriate response in English. To the native English speaker, the response of "Nothing" to the phrase "Thank you" sounds at best inappropriate and at worst, rude. However, this response is often made by Albanian speakers of English inside and outside the classroom, including English teachers at the primary, secondary and university levels.

6. Discussion

Generally, when someone conducts an error analysis, all errors are collected and examined (Darus and Subramaniam, 2009). They are then categorized as "mistakes", errors which are made by an individual or are made by more than one individual, but are not consistently made. The other type of errors refers to systematic errors which are made consistently by most or all of the people in the sample population. Because of the informal nature of data collection for this project, a formal error analysis was not conducted. Errors that met the criterion of being systematic were purposely recorded for inclusion in the data set.

Even though the data that were selected were not part of a systematic collection process, it was possible to organize the examples into some discrete categories. The examples included two types of pronunciation errors, including samples related to the vowel "u" and to misplaced syllable stress. There were also several pragmatic errors observed which were related to direct translation from L1.

In this section the authors examine the three types of errors in relationship to fossilization using the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) as a framework. Briefly, the CAH was developed as a way of comparing similarities in and

contrasting differences between L1 and L2 in order to describe a learner's inter-language and even to predict possible errors (Brown 2000). Even though CAH has been shown to have limitations especially for predicting errors, it is useful for providing a framework for examining and describing L1 interference and transfer (Brown 2000; Zhang 2005), particularly with the types of direct, systematic examples of errors that are used in this project.

6.1. Mispronunciation

Although pragmatic errors can negatively impact effective communication, pronunciation errors can have a more direct impact on the comprehensibility of utterances. As anyone who has studied the English sound system knows, vowels in English can have more than one sound associated with them. If an Albanian teacher does not have a firm grasp of English phonetics and phonology, he or she can introduce and reinforce Albanian pronunciation of English words promoting fossilization of pronunciation errors.

The reported example shows that in Albanian the sound of "u" represents the sound approximated in English as "oo." For example, "put" sounds more like "poot" and "up" sounds more like "oop." An Albanian teacher who does not know or cannot replicate these variances in the "u" sound will pronounce the English word "hulk" as "hoolk." Unlike the word "computer", which is a common word and is comprehensible even with the elongated "oo" sound, the word "hulk" is a relatively uncommon word. When pronounced in this way it is not only incorrect, it is difficult to say, and generally incomprehensible without the establishment of a clear context.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Brown 2000) may indicate that the direct and indirect teaching of an incorrect pronunciation can lead to fossilization of the error. Such mimicking of the learners' L1 can reinforce their assumption that the teacher is teaching them correctly and this mispronunciation can carry over to other words with "u" in them.

6.2. Misplaced syllable stress

In some cases, misplaced stress in words may have little or no impact on comprehensibility, such as the example "computer." In other situations, this is not the case. Again, these types of errors may be carryovers from the learner's L1. In other instances, they may be overgeneralizations of where stress should lie.

The words "comfortable" and "vegetable" contain the chunk "table" which is a familiar word to most English learners. The stress on the word "table" is on the first syllable, so that the new word is pronounced as though it contains the word "table" rather than a chunk that repositions the stress in the longer word. This error may be the result of overgeneralization. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Brown 2000) suggests that this similarity may be a source of confusion for the learner.

The comparison of a pair of similar words, "adjective" and "objective" used in the English-language classroom also illustrates this issue. If a teacher misplaces the stress on the word "adjective", it may be difficult for the listener to distinguish whether the speaker is saying "adjective" or "objective." In the English word, "**ad**jective", the stress is placed on the first syllable while in the similar word, "ob**ject**ive", the stress is on the 2nd syllable. Therefore, if the Albanian teacher pronounces "**ad**jective" as "ad**ject**ive" it can be difficult for the listener to determine if she or he is saying "adjective" or objective" without considering the context in which the word is said.

As with many pronunciation errors, stress errors can be more or less comprehensible, partly depending on the context in which they are uttered. However, if learners consistently hear words with misplaced stress, stress which follows Albanian speech patterns, then these forms can become fossilized.

6.3. Inappropriate direct translations from Albanian

Like other languages, English contains a wide variety of routine phrases that carry no essential information but which are important for building connections among interlocutors. They are used to develop the depth and breadth of their interpersonal communication (Gass and Selinker 2008; Richards and Rodgers 2001). These communication devices and responses may vary from culture to culture and language to language. Therefore, it is usually neither desirable nor appropriate to depend on a direct translation from one's L1 to English when formulating responses to set phrases.

In the example of responding to the phrase, "Thank you", there are several correct and appropriate choices in English depending on the situation and context. Three choices will be discussed. Generally, the phrase which is taught to native and non-native speakers alike as the appropriate response to "Thank you" is "You're welcome."

However, depending on the situation and context, there may be other responses which are appropriate. In some situations, the respondent may be expressing reciprocity. In this case it may be appropriate to respond to "Thank you" by saying "Thank *you*" or "No. Thank *you*" emphasizing the "you." Perhaps there has been an exchange of help or information so that both parties wish to thank one another.

Finally, one may respond to "thank you" with the phrase, "It's nothing." This phrase is generally used in an informal context and infers that no thanks are necessary, in the same way that the response "No problem" is used. Perhaps the respondent does not see the deed as very important. Perhaps they were going to perform the act anyway. Perhaps they want to downplay their role in the situation. In any case, this response, while similar to the Albanian "nothing" must be uttered as a complete sentence, "It's nothing", in order to be interpreted correctly by the listener.

Similarly, the direct translation from Albanian of the phrases "to have emotions" and "the way how" illustrate transference from L1 to L2 resulting in

inappropriate forms being used by the learner in oral production and writing. While these phrases may not greatly hinder comprehension, they are not standard English forms. As LeGros (2012) points out, such pragmatic errors have more impact on the listener than on the speaker, so that the listener may make negative judgments about the speaker's general behavior not just their language ability.

By teaching a literal translation of these phrases and not emphasizing more appropriate and more correct forms, teachers are opening the door for the inappropriate forms to become fossilized. By ignoring students' use of such phrases, the students come to accept the improper form as being acceptable.

7. Strategies for preventing teacher-supported fossilization

The Albanian teacher of English must be careful not to reinforce these various habits with her or his learners. If the teacher does not realize that he or she is using a form improperly, they will teach the form in this way. The learners also need to develop awareness of differences between their L1 and the target language and this can occur during the teaching and learning process.

Regardless of the type of error there are two steps that must occur. First the teacher must recognize that they are making the error. With 21st century technology the non-native speaker has a variety of ways to analyze their own productive skills.

After pinpointing problem areas, the teacher must take steps not to transmit the errors to the learners. Since indirect strategies may not always be effective in overcoming fossilized errors, a direct approach, such as Form-Focused Instruction (FFI), may need to be employed by the teacher (Spada and Lightbrown 2008). Again, technology can be a useful way to supplement oral production in the foreign language classroom.

7.1. Acknowledging use of incorrect forms

First, the teacher must acknowledge that he or she is not or may not be using standard forms of English. The teacher can do this by listening to input with an "open ear" and recognizing the discrepancies in their own spoken language. The teacher can then take steps to remedy his or her own deficiencies.

For example, a teacher could use *Audacity* to record a passage from the Internet or a cd/dvd which is spoken by a native speaker. They can then record themselves saying the same passage and compare the two recordings. Where there are discrepancies, the teacher can then make adjustments to their pronunciation to match more closely that of the native speaker.

If the teacher cannot use this interactive technique, either due to the lack of technology access or because of their own inability to replicate the sounds, they

can use any of a variety of online or technological resources to supplement their instruction so that their students are hearing appropriate pronunciation.

7.2. Using appropriate input

After becoming aware of their own difficulties with spoken language, the teacher must take steps to prevent those types of reinforced errors which leads to fossilization in themselves and their students. There is a wide variety of authentic and graded materials on the Internet and as part of course material packages that can be used to provide appropriate input which can be used for pragmatic, pronunciation and stress practice.

Using graded materials which can be accessed online can provide the most direct listening activities to provide appropriate input. For example, by listening carefully to conversations among people in various scenarios, the teacher and the learners will hear that in English, one never replies "Nothing" in response to "Thank you."

For teachers who cannot easily reproduce English sounds, technology is an ideal way to support their teaching. Access to pronunciation practice through course material cds and dvds is one way for the teacher and students to learn to listen to and reproduce English pronunciation and stress. There are also numerous sites on the Internet that can be used for listening and pronunciation practice. For example, the website, *Sounds of English*, http://www.soundsofenglish.org/, was developed by Sharon Widmayer and Holly Gray for their students. It offers audio files and activities that can be used in the classroom to practice American English pronunciation. The website *Spoken Skills*, http://www.spokenskills.com/index.cfm?type=15&content=studentactivities, offers learners the opportunity to listen to words and phrases, then to record themselves saying them.

There are also a number of websites that offer graded listening materials specifically designed for the English learner. Listening to and repeating can help students practice pronunciation, stress, and intonation. The *BBC English Learning Home Page*, which can be found at www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml, offers a variety of listening activities at different proficiency levels that can be used to develop listening and speaking skills. The *Voice of America's* website at http://learningenglish.voanews.com/ also offers a variety of listening activities that can be used to practice listening and speaking using American English.

Authentic material from *YouTube* and other sources can also provide teachers and students with access to the variety of sounds of English and the way that stress is used in words and sentences. The *Trailer Addict* website, http://www.traileraddict.com/, has short video clips which students can listen to then use as models to practice speaking. The *National Public Radio (NPR) Podcast Directory*, www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php, has a host of podcast links, such as *Ted Radio Hour*, *Story Corps*, and *On the Media*, which can be used for listening and speaking exercises.

8. Avenues for further study

Because this project was not originally intended as a formal research project, it focused on a very narrow range of errors that were subject to fossilization by learners through teaching practice. A formalized research project which focuses on a content analysis of what goes on in English classrooms in Albania would offer a richer source of material. An action research project (Sagor 2011) focused on fossilized errors could be an effective way to involve teachers in the process. Comparisons among various teachers in various educational settings could also provide avenues for exploring how to address this issue. The examination of the result of exposure to a wider range of authentic materials would also provide information on what types of strategies to develop to help teachers and students in Albania avoid these problems.

These data also provide the basis for research projects which are more broad-based than the Albanian context. Systematic studies could be conducted of fossilized errors in a variety of language families. Comparisons among language families could also shed some light how to approach these issues more effectively in the foreign language classroom.

Finally, projects that examine the use of authentic materials for language learning could also be developed. An action research project which uses authentic listening materials could be set up which compares pre-listening and post-listening use of a discrete number of identified fossilized forms to see how learners respond to direct and indirect teaching of the identified errors.

9. Conclusion

The need for identifying and correcting fossilized errors in English classes in Albania is especially relevant in the 21st century. The Albanian Ministry of Education requires that all Albanian pupils learn English and this requirement has highlighted the shortage of qualified teachers of English. There are not only too few teachers, but there are also a number of teachers whose English skills need improvement.

Until the early 1990s, due to a restrictive communist regime, most Albanian teachers and students had little or no direct contact with native English speakers nor with authentic listening and reading materials. As a result, the English the teachers were taught and the English they taught to their students contained numerous incorrect forms that were transmitted to and reinforced in the younger generations. Additionally, the textbooks used for instruction at the time were written and edited exclusively by Albanians and the language employed was a reflection of the ideals of the era.

This reality did change after the 1990s with the democratization of the country and the advent of freedom of movement and of the press. Teachers and students

were given the opportunity to visit and meet native speakers as well as have contact with authentic language through the media. Western English textbooks started to be used and students and teachers began to become familiar with real life communication and language.

Despite the positive changes, the effects of the fossilized errors still prevail and in most cases the English instructors are unaware of them. Additionally, using technology in Albanian classrooms is not always a given. Access issues for all learners need to be explored and feasible strategies for supplementing classroom materials and resources need to be developed. Regardless of how remediation of such fossilized errors is accomplished, it must begin with recognizing fossilized forms, then revising output to correct forms.

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