CORPUS-ASSISTED ANALYSIS OF ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH INTERROGATIVE AND NEGATIVE FORMS BY MACEDONIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to provide an overview of the verb forms non-native learners of English use in the process of acquisition of interrogative and negative verb forms. It also explores the influence of the first language (Macedonian) on the acquisition of English as a foreign language. The research is based on data taken from the Macedonian Corpus of English Interlanguage, which contains written language of students aged 8-15, A1-B2 level according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages. As the research shows, negative forms are easily acquired, with significant decrease of errors in B1 and B2 level. Similarly, learners also have no difficulties in acquiring interrogative forms. Students at this age easily acquire these forms, and teachers may also expect them to acquire other, rather complex English structures with no explicit explanation, primarily due to the frequent usage of these structures. Nevertheless, the number of errors remains stable across all levels. In addition, there is minimal influence of the mother tongue. Errors could that are a result of transfer from the mother tongue may also be treated as developmental errors, since they also appear in learners with mother tongues other than Macedonian. The existence of developmental errors proves that language learners have their own interlanguage. Such errors help teachers adjust their expectations and teaching methods.

Keywords: acquisition, interrogative form, negative form, corpus, interlanguage.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to study the acquisition process of interrogative and negative forms in all verb tenses in the English language by Macedonian speakers. Data from the Macedonian English Learner Corpus (MELC) were used for the needs of the research; in particular, texts written by students aged 8 to 15, whose level of English ranges between A1 and B2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The texts included three narrative and descriptive stories and a dialogue.

The research has two objectives. The first one is to explore how interrogative and negative forms are acquired throughout all levels included in the corpus. The related hypothesis is that the number of errors is expected to be greater at lower levels (A1 and A2), reducing significantly at B1 and B2 level.The

second objective is to test the hypothesis whether and how Macedonian, being the learners' mother tongue (L1) influences the acquisition of interrogative and negative forms in the English interlanguage of Macedonian learners. The hypothesis here is that L1 has an insignificant influence on word order; negative forms may be influenced in terms of placing the negative particle *not* in front of the verb and omitting auxiliaries, whereas in interrogative forms the auxiliary is omitted as a result of L1 language transfer.

The article begins with a brief overview of ways of forming interrogative and negative forms in English and a comparison with its Macedonian counterparts, in order to identify the differences which might lead to errors or difficulties in their acquisition. This is followed by an explanation of the research methodology and presentation of results for each level separately. In the penultimate chapter results are summarized and finally, a conclusion and pedagogical implications are provided.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.Forming negative sentences

Negation in English is pre-verbal. The negative form is made by adding the negative particle *not* to the verb. *Not* isa full phonological word.

In simple tenses an auxiliary verb is introduced, to which a negative particle is added, and this is then followed by the main verb in infinitive. The auxiliary and the negative particle may have both an uncontracted and a contracted form. In Macedonian, however, there is only a long form.

In compound tenses, the negative particle is added to the existing auxiliary verb, i.e. to the first auxiliary, provided there are more auxiliaries, which is followed by the main verb in the same form as in a positive sentence (infinitive, past participle, or gerund). Here, as well, the auxiliary and the negative particle may be used both in their contracted and uncontracted form.

When the verb *to be* is used as a main verb the negative form is made in the same way as when this verb is used as an auxiliary, i.e. by adding the negative particle *not.* Here too*to be* may be used both in its long and short form.

Modal verbs are negated as other auxiliaries, i.e. by adding the negative particle *not* to the modal. Unlike English, in Macedonian negation is formed in one way only, regardless of the tense. This is done by placing the negative particle *ne* in front of the verb, i.e. in front of the auxiliary, in cases where there are two verbs, orthe particle *kje*for the future tense. The negative particle always precedes the verb, regardless of the verb type, be it a copula, main or modal verb. Unlike English, where *not*is a full phonological word, the Macedonian negative particle *ne* is a clitic, and it forms a stress unit with the verb on its right. In conclusion, all verbs in Macedonian have the same position in relation to the negative particle.

If we compare the ways of formation of the negative form in L1 and L2 of the Macedonian learners, we may assume that difficulties may arise when forming negative sentences by adding an auxiliary. The answer to this question shall be obtained after analyzing the results from the MELC.

2.2. Forming interrogative sentences

The interrogative form in English is madeby subject-verb inversion, where the auxiliary is placed immediately before the subject. Word order remains unaltered, no matter whether it is a yes/no or a wh-question.

In simple tenses, the auxiliary is placed initially, i.e., in second position when the question begins with a question wordand is followed by the subject and the main verb in infinitive.

Compound tenses form questions by inverting the auxiliary (i.e. the first auxiliary in case of more auxiliaries) with the subject, whereas the main verb remains in the same position and in the same verb form as in its positive form.

When *to be* is used as a main verb the interrogative form is made in the same way as when it is used as an auxiliary, i.e. by inverting the verb to be and the subject.
Modal verbs form their interrogative form in the same way as other auxiliaries, i.e. by inverting the modal verb and the subject.

As in all Romanic languages, in Macedonian interrogative sentences are made by inverting the grammatical subject with the main verb or the modal. What is typical about Macedonian is that there are interrogative particles which are used in yes-no questions, but not in wh-questions.
The interrogative form in yes-no questions is made in three ways:

(1) byusing an affirmative sentence with a rising intonation: (*Ти)имаш брат?/(You) have a brother?)*
(2) byplacing the interrogative particle*dali* in front of the verb with a personal verb ending:*Дали сакаш да ми помогнеш?/Would you like to help me?*
(3) by using the interrogative particle *li*, with the following word order: (particle for future tense *kje)* + conjugated (modal) verb + li + (subject) + complement (da-construction, object/adverb/adjective*): Ќе сакаш ли да ми помогнеш*?/*Would you like to help me?*

Only the *sum/to be* copula verb in Macedonian differs from the main and modal verbs. Namely, it is a clitic and cannot stand alone at the beginning of a question; hence it cannot act as an auxiliary for the interrogative particle *li*. In yes-no questions*sum/to be*is used with*dali*or in a positive sentence with a rising intonation.

According to the classification of questions in Macedonianby Minova-Gjurkova (1987, 1990, 1994) theMacedonian language has a wider range of yes-no questions in comparison with English. Macedonian learners may add a certain translation equivalent in their English interlanguage of the particle *dali*,where only inversion of the subject and verb is necessary, or they may omit the auxiliary verb in English.

In Macedonian the interrogative form in wh-questions has the following word order: question word + (kje) + (modal) verb + (subject) + da-construction/adverb/adjective/object?

In wh-questions the copula verb *sum/to be*is inverted with the subject and it placed immediately after the question word.

Due to significant differences in the formation of interrogative forms learners are expected to encounter more difficulties when acquiring interrogative forms as opposed to negative forms.

3.Research methodology

For the needs of the study texts and dialogues from the MELC were used, ranging from A1 to B2 level, written by students aged 8 to 15. The corpus contains approximately 157, 500 words, including 1043questions and292 negative statements. A quantitative method was used to count and classify questions and negative statements. Negative sentences were counted and classified both manually and with the use of the AntCocprogramme. Interrogative forms were processed manually only, as the computer programme could not distinguish between yes-no and wh-questions.

Negative sentences in MELC were divided into 4 categories, according to the ways of formation of the negative form and the part of speech which is negated, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. Formation of negative forms

to be + negative particle*not*	e.g.*is not*
auxiliary verb + *not* + main verb	e.g.*doesn't like*
modal verb + *not* +verb in infinitive	e.g.*can't go*
not+ verb in infinitive/gerund/verb in imperative/adverb/adjective/prepositional phrase	e.g.**to not stop,not very big*

Questions were classified according to two criteria: a) whether they are yes-no or wh-questions, and b) the way of formation of the interrogative form. Questions were divided into these two categories because in Macedonian question formation depends on the question type,and in this way it can easily be inferred whether and how Macedonian influences the acquisition of interrogative forms. In table 2 the classification of interrogative sentences is presented.

Table 2. Classification of interrogative statements according to the question type and the way of formation of interrogative form

yes-no questions	wh-questions
positive sentence with a rising intonation e.g.**You like it?*	question word + positive sentence with a rising intonation e.g.*Why you buy it*?
inversion of*to be* as a main verb and the subjecte.g.*Are you angry*?	question word + *to be* + subject + complement e.g.*How are you*?
auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g.*Did you agree*?	question word + auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g.*What do we need*?
modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g.*Can you show me*?	question word + modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g.*What time should I be there*

Questions such as *Why not?*are not included in the interrogative sentences as they do not contain a verb.After sentence classification correct and incorrect verb forms were counted in each category and for each level (A1-B2). In this way it was easier to determine a) the acquisition process of interrogative and negative forms; b) if and how Macedonian influences their acquisition; andfinally, c) to make a comparison across levels in order to notice the pace of progress of acquisition of these two forms.

It is debatable how high the frequency of a certain form should be in order to be considered acquired. According to Bailey et al. (1974), Brown(1973) and Dulay and Burt (1974) 90% of correct usage suggest

that a certain structure has been acquired. Unlike these authors, Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994) accept only 60%. In this article we maintain that the very occurrence of a certain structure may be considered as acquisition evidence, or more precisely as proof for presence of the form (Grondin &White 1996; White 1992).

4. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Analysis results are shown in tables for each level separately. The number and percentage of correct, incorrect and a total number of negative, i.e. interrogative forms is also presented. This is followed by an overview of the structures of all incorrect forms, which are further analyzed and discussed through the error analysis method and contrastive analysis. The following steps are taken during error analysis:

- most typical errors are presentedand described;
- errors are classified as either developmental or L1transfer-related errors;
- both error types are explained; and
- trends are determined and the hypothesis about L1-L2transfer is tested.

4.1. Negative forms at A1 level

The subcorpus of A1 level contains approximately 13,500 words, yet there are only 23 negative sentences. The small number of negative sentences may be due tothe low level of language proficiency, which prevents students from writing longer dialogues. Furthermore, thetext typesincluded three short essays and only one dialogue, with topics which are related to the student's personality. This, in turn, resulted into descriptive texts, where positive statements prevailed.

4.1.1. Acquisition of negative forms

The table below shows the results from MELC and the acquisition process of negative forms.

Table 3. Negative forms at A1 level

Ways of making the negative form	**Correct form**	**Incorrect form**	**Total number of forms**
to be + negative particle*not*	8 (36%)	0	8 (36%)
auxiliary verb + *not* + main verb	9 (39%)	4 (17%)	13 (56%)
modal verb + *not* + verb in infinitive	1 (4%)	0	1 (4%)
not+ verb in infinitive/gerund/verb in imperative/adverb/adjective/prepositional phrase	1 (4%)	0	1 (4%)

As the table shows negative forms aremostly used with main verbs, whereas merely 4% are modals or other verb forms. It is worth noting that despite the more complex way of formation of the negative form of main verbs (due to adding the auxiliary) learners do eventually manage to acquire this form at this elementary level, as the ratio between correct and incorrect forms is83%:17%.

4.1.2. Error analysis

Despite their low level, learners are very successful at acquiring the negative form. As the results indicate, from a total of 23 statements only 4 are erroneous.

The negative form of*to be*has proven to be easy to acquire, although this kind of formation of negative formsis non-existent in Macedonian. This may be a result of the high usage frequency of such verb forms.[1]Compared to Gavruseva and Haznedar's (2000) study, made with three 5-year-old girls, whose L1 is Turkish, one can notice that the copula *to be* is acquired very early, in all three forms, positive, interrogative and negative, both in present and past tense (e.g.*Which one was the sister? The dog wasn'tin the mud.; Garfield's friends are happy.)*

In the negative sentences there is only one negative form of a modal verb and one of*not* + adjective, which is insufficient for drawing valid conclusions.

Let us now consider the negative formsconsisting of an auxiliary verb + *not* + main verb, which are most often found in negative statements at A1 level.

(1) *I not eat them.*
(2) *I not finished.*
(3) *I don't wearing a long coats and jackets.*
(4) *I don't looking very nice.*

The first two examples have the same construction: *not* + main verb, which might seem as a transfer error from Macedonian. There is evidence that learners of English whose L1 has a pre-verbal negation use this form for a longer period, unlike learners whose L1 has a post-verbal negation, who overcome the*not* + verb phrase sooner (Schumann 1978).This type of error is considered to be a developmental error, because native speakers of English also go through this phase, and through generalization they use *not*for forming the negative form of verbs which normally have an auxiliary verb in the negative form (Wode 1978).

Examples (3) and (4) may be analyzed as partial errors, because the negative form is correct as far as the element with the negative particle is considered; this is not the case with the form of the main verb. Learners mix the forms of the two present tenses in English. The error is developmental because Macedonian has only one present tense, and with time learners do eventually acquire the form of both present tenses.

At A1 level the number of errors is insufficient for valid conclusions to be drawn concerning the influence of L1 on their acquisition. Nevertheless, the small number of errors indicates that learners acquire negative and interrogative forms easily and swiftly.

4.2. Negative forms at A2 level

The sub-corpus at A2 level contains about 70,000 words and 79 negative sentences. Despite the great number of words, the corpus does not contain many negative sentences. This is primarily due to the fact that students were asked to write three narrative and descriptive texts and only one dialogue, which limits learners in the usage of negative utterances.

4.2.1. Acquisition of negative forms

Negative forms produced by learners at A2 level are shown in table 4. Unlike A1 level, in this sub-corpus learners most often negate the verb *to be* (44%), and the least usedone is the negative form of modals (only 4%). At this level there is an increased usage (33%)of*not*+ different parts of speech (which do not include verb tenses).[1]

Table. 4. Negative forms at A2 level

Ways of forming the negative form	**Correct form**	**Incorrect form**	**Total number of forms**
to be + negative particle*not*	33 (42%)	2(2%)	35 (44%)
auxiliary verb + *not* + main verb	12 (15%)	3 (4%)	15 (19%)
modal verb + *not* + verb in infinitive	3 (4%)	/	3 (4%)
not + verb in infinitive/gerund/verb in imperative/adverb/adjective/prepositional phrase	23 (29%)	3 (4%)	26 (33%)

As the table shows the number of errors is only 10% of the total number of sentences. The errors are equally distributed across all ways of formation, except with modals, where there are only a few examples and no erroneous forms.

[1]The fact that the negative form of the verb *to be* is easily acquired has also been proven in a longitudinal study made with 8 children aged 6-8. (Stevkovska, 2012)

4.2.2. Error analysis

Only 10% of the total number of negative sentences is erroneous. There are two errors withthe verb*to be;* the negative particle *not*is placed in front of the verb*to be*: *It was very sad and funny, because not is good for them*. This type of error is very rare, and atA1 level there is no error of this kind. Therefore, we may consider it a developmental error, as it mirrors completely the word order of L1.

Regarding the negative form of main verbs, when an auxiliary is added, let us now consider the following examples*:*

(5)I not believe.

(6) I not make.

Although they may seem like transfer errorsthey areconsidered developmental ones, just as at A1 level, where the same incorrect form is used (see4.1.2 above).

The incorrect forms*not* + verb in infinitive/gerund (*to not stop, to not drop, to not going)* are transfer errors, because they are result of word-for-word translation. Errors of this kind are to be found in other languages which have the same structure as English, but not in native speakers of English. Therefore, this error type may be labeled as a transfer error. Another possible reason for this error is the frequent usage of the infinitive construction, which is an unmarked form andit always has the *to*particle placed initially.

It can be concluded that at A2 level the acquisition of the negative form is easy for Macedonian learners, and L1 influence is insignificant.

4.3. Negative forms at B1 level

The subcorpus at B1 level contains 62,000 words and92 negative sentences. Although there is no significant difference in the numbers as compared to A2 level, one can notice the use of a wider range of vocabulary and more complex sentence structure. Apart from *can*as a modal verb, other modals are used too, as well as indirect speech, passive voice and other constructions.

4.3.1. Acquisition of negative forms

What is typical of negative utterances at B1 level is that all used forms are error-free, as can be seen from Table 5. The most frequently used form is auxiliary verb + *not* + main verb (36 %), and the least used is modal verb + *not* + verb in infinitive (8%). The other two ways are almost as equally used. We can conclude that at B1 level learners have acquired the negative form completely.

Table 5. Negative forms at B1 level

Ways of forming the negative form	**Correct form**	**Incorrect form**	**Total number of forms**
to be + negative particle*not*	25 (27%)	/	25 (27%)
auxiliary verb + *not* + main verb	33 (36%)	/	33 (36%)
modal verb + *not* + verb in infinitive	7 (8%)	/	7 (8%)
not + verb in infinitive/gerund/verb in imperative/adverb/adjective/prepositional phrase	27 (29%)	/	27 (29%)

4.4. Negative form at B2 level

Although this is the highest level in the corpus, B2 level contains only 41 000 words and98 negative utterances. One possible reason for the small number of words is the fact that most students have only written the three texts, but not the dialogue. Students do, however, use negative forms of various structures, particularly in passive and gerund, which is not the case with the lower levels.

4.4.1. Acquisition of negative forms

At B2 level the negative form of the verb *to be* is most frequently used, whereasmodals are least negated. From a total of 98 negative sentences there is only one incorrect form.

Table 6. Negative form at B2 level

Ways of forming the negative form	Correct form	Incorrect form	Total number of forms
to be + negative particle *not*	41 (42%)	/	41 (42%)
auxiliary verb + *not* + main verb	18 (18%)	/	18 (18%)
modal verb + *not* + verb in infinitive	7 (7%)	/	7 (7%)
not + verb in infinitive/gerund/verb in imperative/adverb/adjective/prepositional phrase	31 (32%)	1 (1%)	32 (33%)

4.4.2. Error analysis

Results indicate that at B2 level students have acquired the negative form. The only error found is in the *not* + verb in infinitive (*to not make*) construction, which may be considered a transfer error, as it is the case at A2 level, since it is a word-for-word translation of the Macedonian da-construction.

4.5. Interrogative forms at A1 level

Unlike negative sentences, the number of interrogatives at A1 level is significantly greater (121questions). All interrogative sentences were divided into two groups of question types: yes/no questions (a total of 86) and wh-questions (35). Yes-no questions mostly contain the interrogative form of the modal *can*, because the instructions for both dialogues contain a given model of a polite request. Namely, the set phrase *Can you help me*? is used in most dialogues.

4.5.1. Acquisition of interrogative forms

As shown in the table below both types of questions mostly consist of the interrogative form of the verb*to be* (total 55%), followed questions with the modal*can* (37%) and an auxiliary verb + subject + main verb (22%). There is only one example of formation of yes/no questions where a positive statement with a rising intonation is used.

Table 7. Interrogative forms at A1 level

A) yes-no questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
a positive sentence with a rising intonation e.g.*You training too*?	/	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
inversion of*to be* + subject e.g.Are you fine?	36 (30%)	/	36 (30%)
auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g.*Do you need help*?	11 (9%)	2 (2%)	13 (11%)
modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g.*Can I ask you something*?	36 (30%)	/	36 (30%)
B) wh-questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
question word + positive form with a rising intonation	/	/	0
wh-word +*to be*+ subject e.g.*Where are you*?	25 (20%)	/	25 (20%)
wh-word + auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g.What are you doing?	7 (5%)	2 (2%)	9 (7%)
wh-word + modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g.*What can I do?*	1 (1%)	/	1 (1%)

4.5.2. Error analysis

The number of errors is insignificant, and they occur when the interrogative form of main verbs is made *(Are you have a car? Are you like we going to the park? What time is the match starts? Where do you going?* These are not transfer errors, because question formation in Macedonian never involves insertion of an auxiliary; only interrogative particles (*dali, li*) are inserted into yes/no questions, which is not the case with wh-questions. Errors are developmental because an auxiliary of some kind is used. This suggests that learners are experimenting with their interlanguage, until they are able to find the correct forms and start using them consistently, as is the case at higher proficiency levels.

Using the positive form with a rising intonationis an example of a developmental error, although in Macedonian this is also one of the ways of question formation. According to Gas & Schachter (2003) this is a sensible means, which is both grammatically and communicatively comprehensible, and it, therefore, rarely promotes acquisition of a new form.

According to the results we can conclude that the acquisition of interrogative forms as early as at A1 level is not difficult for Macedonian learners, in spite of the differences between L1 and L2. This also proves that L1 has an insignificant influence on L2 acquisition.

4.6. Interrogative forms at A2 level

At A2 level there are 321 interrogative sentences, with 166 yes/no questions, and 155 wh-questions. At this level, too, there is a considerable increase in the number of questions. The great number of yes/no questions with a modal, just as at A1 level, is due to the fact that the dialogues have been written following a previously given model of making polite requests. The only difference here is that at this level the form with*could* is used *(Could you give me a ride*?) with learners using this memorized question throughout all dialogues several times.

4.6.1. Acquisition of interrogative forms

At A2 level modals are used extensively, primarily from the verb*can,* and the reasons thereof have been listed in 4.6. It is worth noting that the interrogative form of the verb*to be*is used only in 3% of the yes-no questions, and in as much as in 31% of the wh-questions. Only in 4 of the yes-no questions a positive form is used with a rising intonation (*You like it? You will help me?*). In the other question type there are 14 such examples (*Why you buy it*? *When you willcome?*). The number of errors is very small (11.5%), which leads to the conclusion that although this is a higher level, error percentage remains almost unaltered (10% at A1 level versus 11.5 % at A2 level).

Table 8. Interrogative forms at A2 level

A) yes-no questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
a positive sentence with a rising intonation e.g.*You will help me*?	/	4 (1.5%)	4 (1.5%)
inversion of*to be*+ subject e.g.*Are you crazy?*	9 (3%)	/	9 (3%)
auxiliary + subject + main verb пр. *Did you agree*?	35 (11%)	2 (0,5%)	37 (11,5%)
modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g. *Could you do me a favour?/*	108 (34.5%)	2 (0,5%)	110 (34,5%)
B) wh-questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
question word + positive form with a rising intonation wh-word +*to be*+ subject e.g.*Where we will go?*	/	14 (4%)	14 (4%)
wh-word +*to be/*sum + subject e.g.*How are you*?	99(31%)	1 (0,3%)	100 (31,5%)
wh-word + auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g.*What do we need*?	26 (8%)	5(2%)	31 (10%)
wh-word + modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g. *How could you do that*?	10 (3%)	/	10 (3%)

4.6.2. Error analysis

Just as at A1 level the nature and number of errors at A2 is identical. What is typical of this subcorpus is the number of wh-questions containing a positive form of the verb and a rising intonation. This error type might initially seem a transfer error. However, the first studies on acquisition of interrogative and

negative form, made by Cancino et al. (1975) and Klima and Bellugi (1966)with native speakers of English, show the following order of acquisition of the interrogative form:

1. Positive statement with a rising intonation
2. Questions with inversion
3. Question with an auxiliary
4. Wh-questions

This clearly shows that the first phase in native speakers is alsousing a positive sentence with a rising intonation, which means that this error type can be labeled as developmental.

4.7. Interrogative forms at B1 level

At B1 level the number of questions remains relatively the same as at A2 level. There are312 questions, out of which 171 yes/no questions and 141 wh-questions. We can notice here the use of more complex tenses, such as Present Perfect Continuous.

4.7.1. Acquisition of interrogative forms

At B1 level again yes-no questions most often contain the modal *can* (39%). Theyare polite requests from a pragmatic point of view, although they have the form of a question. Wh-questions with modals comprise only 5% of the total number, and most questions contain the verb *to be*.The percentage of incorrect forms is only 4%. This was expected, as it is B1 level and this is where the interrogative form has almost completely been acquired.

Table 9. Interrogative forms atB1 level

A) yes-no questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
a positive sentence with a rising intonation	/	/	/
inversion of*to be*+ subject e.g.*Are you Daniel?*	11 (4%)	1 (0.3%)	12 (4%)
auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g. *Have you seen it?*	36 (12%)	/	36 (12%)
modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g. *Can you give me a ride?*	122 (39%)	1 (0.3%)	123 (39%)
B) wh-questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
question word + positive form with a rising intonation e.g. *When we are going*?	/	9 (3%)	9 (3%)
wh-word +*to be* + subject e.g. *Whereis it?*	102 (32%)	/	102 (32%)
wh-word + auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g. *What have you been doing?*	15 (5%)	/	15 (5%)
wh-word + modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g.*What should I visit*?	15 (5%)	/	15 (5%)

4.7.2. Error analysis

The number of errors is minimal at B1 level. The only error that remains the same as at lower levels is when a positive sentence with a rising intonation is used for wh-question formation. Although question formation is almost entirely mastered, yet '*... students do not produce each structure without an error from the first time they start using it in their interlanguage*' (Braidi, 1999:60). Even at a level this high, learners do occasionally fail to make the necessary inversion or insert an auxiliary.

4.8. Interrogative forms at B2 level

At B2 level there are 289questions;132 are yes-no questions and 157 wh-questions. There are eight correctly formed indirect questions that have not been taken into consideration, as they are used as polite requests. In view of the fact that this is a rather complex construction which is used at higher levels, it cannot therefore be compared to the results of the subcorpus at A1 and A2 level.In yes-no questions the most prevalent form is the modal *can* (31%), whereas in wh-questions the verb*to be*(34%) is most frequently used.

4.8.1. Acquisition of interrogative forms

Table 10: Interrogativeforms at B2 level

A) yes-no questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
a positive sentence with a rising intonation	/	1 (0,3%)	1 (0,3%)
inversion of*to be* + subject e.g. *Are you OK*?	7 (2%)	/	7 (2%)
auxiliary + subject + main verb пр. *Are you going on the match*?	33 (11%)	1 (0,3%)	34 (11%)
modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g. *Can you drop me off somewhere near*?	90 (31%)	/	90 (31%)
B) wh-questions	**correct form**	**incorrect form**	**total number of forms**
question word + positive form with a rising intonation e.g. *Why we don't go to the centre?*	/	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
wh-word +*to be*+ subject e.g. *Where have you been*?	97 (34%)	/	97 (34%)
wh-word + auxiliary + subject + main verb e.g. *What do you think*?	43 (27%)	3 (3%)	46 (30%)
wh-word + modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive e.g.*Where shall we go first*?	12 (8%)	/	12 (8%)

4.8.2. Error analysis

The number of incorrect forms is insignificant (only 4,6%), asexpected at this proficiency level. The same types of errors are repeated as in lower levels, and their small number demonstrates the limited influence of L1, as previously explained in 4.7 and 4.6.

5. SUMMARY OF A1-B2 RESULTS

In this chapter we compare and analyze the data acquired from all levels and conclusions are drawn concerning the acquisition of interrogative and negative forms, andL1 influence.

5.1. Acquisition of interrogative and negative forms

According to the chart below learners tend to use questionsmore often than negative utterances. The number of negative sentences gradually increases from A1 to B2 level, whereas the use of questions decreases from A2 to B2 level, although the difference is very insignificant. It is obvious that the gap between A1 and A2 is very big, and the number of negative and interrogative utterances doubles in A2 level. This might me due to students' motivation, which is often strong at the beginning of learning a language, where students progress very quickly, but after reaching A2 level there is certain stagnation.

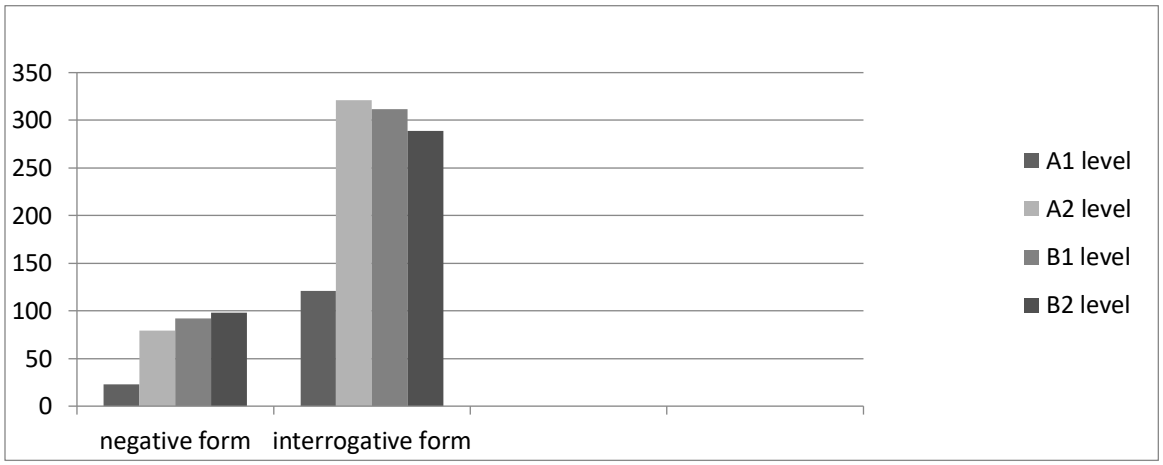


Figure1: Usage of negative and interrogative forms at A1-B2 level

Concerning incorrect forms results are quite surprising. Although the negative form should prove easier to acquire because there is only one element to negate the verb, students tend to make more error in negative sentences. According to the concept-oriented approach the functional load of the negative particle *not* is greater than the one of questions, which means that the number of errors in the negative form should be smaller. Figure 2 shows the opposite.

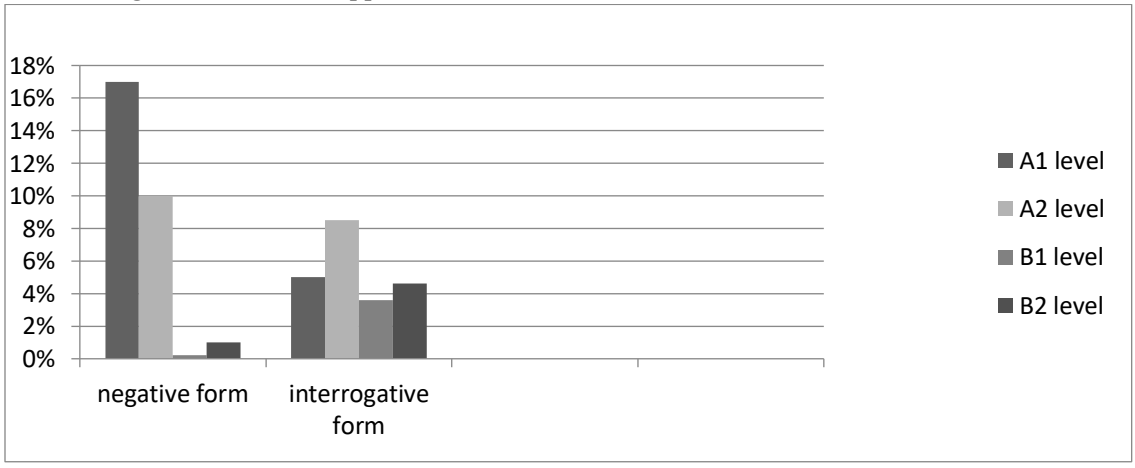


Figure 2: Percentage of incorrect forms of negative and interrogative forms at A1-B2 level

Errors in the negative form at A1 level occur only in the construction auxiliary + *not* + main verb. In comparison to the study of Hanania & Gradman (1977) on acquisition of negative form, this kind of

negation formation can be seen even in the final stage, which indicates that this type of negation formation is difficult and one should not expect it to be fully acquired at a beginner level.

As it can be seen from table 11 the number of errors is quite small across all levels, with no errors at B1 and B2 level. The negative form of*to be*and modals is the easiest to be acquired. Although in this case negation formation differs greatly from Macedonian, L1 does not influence its acquisition at all. One possible reason for negating the hypothesis of Roberto Lado (1957) on*difference=difficulty*, is that there is great usage frequency of these forms, in addition to the simple way of negation formation.

Table 11: Usage of incorrect forms in negative form from A1 to B2 level

	to be+ negative particle*not*	auxiliary + *not*+ main verb	modal verb + *not* +verb in infinitive	*not*+ verb in infinitive/gerund/verb in imperative/adverb/adjective/prepositional phrase
A1 level	/	17%	/	/
A2 level	2%	4%	/	4%
B1 level	/	/	/	/
B2 level	/	/	/	1%

The number of incorrect forms when acquiring the interrogative form is almost the same as in the negative form. The only difference is that the percentage, although insignificant, is evenly distributed across all levels, which was not the case with the negative form, whereas at B1 and B2 level there are no incorrect forms. To conclude, the acquisition of the interrogative form is slightly more difficult than the acquisition of the negative form. As a result, these forms are acquired more slowly and certain errors from A1 and A2 level occur at B1 and B2 as well. Contrary to the claim about the negative form, Roberto Lado's hypothesis can be confirmed, as there are differences between the ways of formation of interrogative form in L1 and L2.

Table 12: Usage of incorrect forms in interrogative form from A1 to B2 level

	a positive sentence with a rising intonation	inversion of*to be*+ subject	auxiliary + subject + main verb	modal verb + subject + verb in infinitive
A1 level	1%	/	4%	/
A2 level	5,5%	0,3%	2,5%	0,5%
B1 level	3%	0,3%	/	0,3%
B2 level	1,3%	/	3,3%	/

Such contradictory results lead to the conclusion that differences or similarities between L1 and L2 cannot be a sufficient reason to explain the difficulty/easeof acquiring a certain form. Nevertheless, Macedonian as learners' L1 has an insignificant influence on the acquisition of interrogative and negative forms in English.This fact should be considered a great advantage which could lead to related pedagogical implications.

5.2. Limitations

Research results are limited dueto the following reasons:

- the number of errors is very small for reliable conclusions to be drawn;
- text types that students were asked to write do not lend the opportunity for the use of a great number of questions or negative utterances;
- the dialogue instructions contain ready-made questions, which limits spontaneous answers.

Results refer only to Macedonian learners aged 8 to 15. If results from older students were studied, there might be more differences in the acquisition process of negative and interrogative forms.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Corpus analysishas partially confirmed the hypotheses set at the beginning of this article. The negative form is easily acquired and the number of errors is greater at A1 and A2 level, and it is minimal at B1 and B2 level. Interrogative form is acquired with similar ease. However, the small number of errors does not decrease from A1 towards B2 level, but it varies, and so at A1 and B2 level the percentage of incorrect forms is almost identical, and at A2 level the percentage is the greatest.

The hypothesis about L1 influence has not been confirmed. The insignificant influence of L1 on the acquisition of interrogative forms is most ostensibly noticed in the omission of auxiliaryverbs when forming the interrogative form or using an incorrect auxiliary, as well as using a positive form of the verb with a rising intonation. After comparing these results to other studies we can conclude that this error type can be defined as developmental, because such errors also occur in speakers with other L1. Hence, we infer that Macedonian does not significantly affect acquisition of the interrogative form.

L1 influence on acquisition of the negative form has also proven to be insignificant, particularly in simple tenses, which can be seen in omission of the auxiliary. This kind of error may also occur in speakers of other L1, which renders this error developmental. The only transfer error may be the incorrect form of verbal negation in infinitive, where the word order reflects Macedonian order of words.

To summarize, nearly all errors made by students are developmental ones, which confirms the existence of an interlanguage in all language learners.

7. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions drawn from the research may find its practical implication in teaching. It is particularly important to know that students at this age (8-15) do not show any difficulties in acquiring interrogative and negative forms. Therefore, the limited number of errors ought to be taken as a sign of progress and restructuring a learner’s language system.

Regarding teaching these two forms, teachers need not always provide explicit grammar instructions. As it has been shown, students at this age easily acquire these forms, and teachers may also expect them to acquire other, rather complex English structures with no explicit explanation, primarily due to the frequent usage of these structures.

The research has also shown that L1 influence on the acquisition of negative and interrogative forms in English as an L2 is insignificant. This is a great advantage both for teachers and students. This means that

teachers may rarely come across transfer errors, probably because students at the age between 8 and 15 do not have the so-called load of previous experience, unlike adult learners, who have already established their own learning techniques and are prone to drawing comparisons between L1 and the target language. Further research should be carried out with students of other ages in order to confirm the hypotheses in this article.

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