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CROSS-LINGUISTIC COMPARISON OF TENSE SYSTEMS AS REALIZED IN THE ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract: This study presents a cross-linguistic comparison of tense systems in the English language and the Uzbek language, focusing on structural and functional differences. The English language, as an analytic system, uses auxiliary verbs and periphrastic constructions to form various tense-aspect combinations, including forms like will, have, and be. In contrast, the Uzbek language — an agglutinative Turkic language — employs verb suffixes such as “-moqda”, “-di”, “-gan”, and “-ajak” to express tense, aspect, and evidentiality within the verb complex.

Using a qualitative contrastive method, the study analyzes representative paradigms and sentence structures from both languages. Results show that English relies on fixed word order and auxiliary-based combinations, while Uzbek integrates temporal and modal meanings into morphological structures. Additionally, the presence of grammaticalized evidentiality in Uzbek, absent in English, highlights a key typological distinction. The findings have implications for linguistic typology, second language acquisition, and translation studies, offering insights into how languages differ in encoding temporal relations.

Key words: tense, aspect, modality, English language, Uzbek language, evidentiality, agglutination, auxiliary verbs, cross-linguistic comparison, language teaching.

Introduction

The study of tense and aspect plays a central role in understanding how languages encode temporal relationships within communication. Tense refers to the grammatical marking of time relative to the moment of speaking, while aspect describes the internal temporal structure of actions — whether ongoing, completed, or habitual. In this regard, the comparison between the English language and the Uzbek language offers a compelling opportunity to explore how different grammatical systems respond to the same communicative need: expressing time.

The English language, a Germanic and largely analytic language, constructs tense and aspect primarily through auxiliary verbs and periphrastic constructions. It features a relatively small inventory of inflectional endings and relies on syntactic structures to create tense-aspect combinations, such as *has been working* or *will have arrived*. English distinguishes twelve such combinations, using auxiliaries like *will*, *have*, and *be*.

The Uzbek language, by contrast, is agglutinative and employs suffixation to convey tense, aspect, and evidentiality. Suffixes such as “-di”, “-gan”, “-moqda”, and “-ajak” are attached directly to the verb stem to express temporal relations and speaker stance. This system allows for dense morphological expression of meanings that the English language encodes syntactically.

An important grammatical distinction lies in evidentiality, which is morphologically encoded in the Uzbek language. Speakers indicate whether an event was directly witnessed or inferred, using suffixes like “-gan” for direct evidence and “-ibdi” for reported or inferred actions. This feature is absent from the English language, which instead uses lexical expressions to convey similar meanings.

This study undertakes a contrastive analysis of the tense systems of the English and Uzbek languages, identifying their structural and functional characteristics, and highlighting implications for translation, language learning, and linguistic typology.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, contrastive linguistic methodology to examine how the English language and the Uzbek language encode tense. The approach combines descriptive grammatical analysis, morphological comparison, and functional categorization. The objective is to highlight the structural differences and similarities in the way these two languages express temporal meaning, and to derive implications for typology, second language acquisition, and translation studies.

Data were collected from established linguistic literature and academic grammars. For the English language, standard references were consulted to extract tense paradigms and their compositional structure. For the Uzbek language, descriptive grammars and typological studies on Turkic languages provided examples of tense, aspect, and evidential forms. Authentic example sentences and verb constructions were drawn from both theoretical sources and practical language materials used in formal instruction.

The study followed four core steps:

1. **Inventory Compilation** – Listing all primary tense and aspect forms in each language. The English language included twelve tense-aspect combinations formed by auxiliaries and verb phrases. In the Uzbek language, forms like “-di”, “-gan”, “-moqda”, and “-ajak” were cataloged.
2. **Morphological Analysis** – Each form was broken down into grammatical components: auxiliaries and participles in English, verb roots and suffixes in Uzbek.

3. **Functional Categorization** – Forms were grouped by their function (e.g., habitual, continuous, perfective, evidential).
4. **Cross-Linguistic Comparison** – Equivalents were identified where possible, and structural gaps or mismatches were analyzed.

The study does not rely on quantitative methods or corpus data, as its goal is to provide a functional and structural comparison rather than frequency-based analysis. All examples were drawn from linguistically verified sources to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Results

The analysis revealed significant typological differences in how the English language and the Uzbek language express tense, aspect, and evidentiality. These differences are closely tied to each language's grammatical structure and typological classification. The English language, with its analytic structure, uses auxiliary verbs and fixed word order to form tense-aspect combinations. The Uzbek language, in contrast, uses a system of agglutinative suffixes directly attached to the verb stem.

In the English language, tense is represented through two core morphological forms (present and past), while additional temporal and aspectual meanings are constructed syntactically using auxiliaries. Examples include:

- He works (present simple)
- He is working (present continuous)
- He has worked (present perfect)
- He will have been working (future perfect continuous)

These constructions rely on auxiliary verbs such as *be*, *have*, and *will*, and reflect the language's preference for periphrastic expression.

The Uzbek language constructs tense and aspect morphologically. Primary forms include:

- “-moqda” or “-yapti” for present progressive
- “-di” for past simple
- “-gan” for resultative or perfect
- “-ajak” or “-moqchi” for future intention or prediction

These forms allow temporal, aspectual, and modal meanings to be encoded in a single verb phrase.

Moreover, Uzbek includes a grammatical evidential system, distinguishing whether an action is witnessed (“-gan”) or inferred/reported (“-ibdi”), a feature absent in English. English speakers typically use lexical markers (e.g., *apparently*, *I heard*) to express evidentiality, but it is not morphologically integrated.

The findings show that some tense-aspect combinations in English, such as the present perfect continuous (*has been working*), have no direct morphological equivalent in Uzbek and must be paraphrased. Likewise, evidential forms in Uzbek pose challenges in translation into English, often requiring rephrased or interpretive renderings.

Discussion

The findings highlight how typological structure influences the ways in which the English language and the Uzbek language encode time, aspect, and speaker stance. The English language, being analytic,

constructs compound tenses through auxiliary verbs and syntactic patterns. The Uzbek language, with its agglutinative morphology, encodes temporal, aspectual, and evidential meanings directly within the verb structure through the use of suffixes.

One of the clearest distinctions is between modularity and integration. In English, expressions such as *will have been working break meaning* into multiple words, each representing a specific grammatical function — tense, aspect, or modality. This approach allows for compositional clarity but often results in lengthy verb phrases. In contrast, the Uzbek verb form *ishlagan ekan* conveys a complex meaning — completed action and evidential stance — within a single verbal unit. Such structural density is characteristic of agglutinative languages.

The presence of grammatical evidentiality in the Uzbek language further distinguishes it from English. Uzbek speakers indicate the source of their knowledge through suffixes such as “-gan” for direct evidence and “-ibdi” for reported or inferred information. In English, these meanings are conveyed only lexically through expressions like *apparently* or *I was told*. This lack of morphologized evidentiality in English creates a gap that must be bridged in translation or teaching.

These grammatical differences affect language learning. Learners of English from Uzbek-speaking backgrounds may have difficulty managing auxiliary-based tense sequences, while English speakers studying Uzbek must adjust to suffix stacking and unfamiliar evidential distinctions. Contrastive teaching methods that highlight these structural differences can significantly improve learner comprehension and usage accuracy.

Overall, the comparison between the two languages supports broader theories in linguistic typology, which link morphological structure to the strategies languages use to encode universal grammatical functions like time and evidentiality.

Conclusion

This study has presented a contrastive analysis of the tense systems of the English language and the Uzbek language, showing how typological structure shapes grammatical expression. While both languages fulfill the universal function of locating events in time, they do so through fundamentally different grammatical means. The English language constructs tense-aspect meanings using auxiliary verbs and syntactic composition, whereas the Uzbek language uses a compact, suffix-based system that integrates tense, aspect, and evidentiality directly into the verb.

The evidential dimension in the Uzbek language introduces a grammatical category that is not morphologized in English. Uzbek speakers routinely mark whether an event was witnessed or inferred using suffixes such as “-gan” and “-ibdi”. In English, similar meanings are conveyed lexically, rather than grammatically. This structural mismatch can present challenges in translation, where one form in Uzbek may require a full explanatory phrase in English.

The pedagogical implications are also significant. Learners of English from Uzbek backgrounds may struggle with the use of auxiliaries and the syntactic complexity of English verb constructions. English speakers learning Uzbek may find its suffixal system unfamiliar, particularly the encoding of evidentiality and aspect. Teaching strategies that explicitly address these contrasts — through side-by-side examples, substitution drills, and contextual practice — can help learners master both systems more effectively.

From a typological perspective, this study supports the view that languages resolve universal communicative needs — such as expressing time — in ways that reflect their broader grammatical architecture. While the English language and the Uzbek language differ in structure and surface form, both provide systematic and efficient means of expressing tense and related categories. These findings

may inform future research in second language acquisition, translation studies, and cross-linguistic grammar development.

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CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

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