

VERB TENSES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY

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Annotation: This article examines the tense and aspect systems of English and Uzbek, focusing on their structural, functional, and pragmatic differences. English employs auxiliary verbs and periphrastic constructions to express twelve distinct tense–aspect forms, whereas Uzbek utilizes morphological suffixes and auxiliary verbs to convey tense, aspect, evidentiality, and modality within a compact system. The study emphasizes the practical implications of these differences for language teaching, translation, and second language acquisition.

KEY WORDS: English verb tenses, Uzbek verb tenses, tense–aspect system, auxiliaries, suffixes, morphological marking, aspect, evidentiality, modality, language learning, translation challenges, grammatical comparison.

The study of tense and aspect systems in English and Uzbek reveals significant typological differences that reflect how these languages organize temporal and aspectual meaning in distinct ways. English, as an analytic language, relies heavily on auxiliary verbs such as *be*, *have*, and *will*, combined with participial or infinitive forms, to construct twelve traditional tense–aspect categories that cover past, present, and future, further divided into simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive forms. Each of these forms carries a strict functional load. The present simple, for instance, expresses habitual or general actions, while the present progressive emphasizes ongoing activity at the moment of speaking. The present perfect highlights completed actions with relevance to the present, and the present perfect progressive stresses the duration of an activity that started in the past and continues into the present. Similarly, past simple, past progressive, past perfect, and past perfect progressive forms indicate completion, duration, or simultaneity in past events. Future tenses, including future simple, future progressive, future perfect, and future perfect progressive, allow speakers to express planned actions, ongoing activity at a future point, completed future actions, and duration of future events. English tense–aspect marking depends on the choice of auxiliary verbs, syntactic structure, and word order, illustrating the analytic nature of the language, where meaning is constructed externally through syntax rather than embedded in verb morphology.

Uzbek, in contrast, represents an agglutinative language, marking tense and aspect primarily through suffixes attached to the verb stem. Common suffixes include *-di*, *-gan*, *-yapti*, *-adi*, and *-ajak*, often in combination with auxiliary verbs such as *ol-*, *qo'y-*, *tur-*, and *bo'l-*. This combination allows speakers to encode tense, aspect, evidentiality, and modality simultaneously. For example, the past tense in Uzbek is more nuanced than in English, distinguishing between witnessed past, reported past, and remote past. The suffix *-di* marks completed past actions, as in *u kitobni tugatdi* (“he finished the book”), while *-gan* combined with auxiliaries such as *edi* or *ekan* signals remote or reported past, as in *u maktabga borgan*

edi (“he had gone to school”) or *borgan ekan* (he reportedly went). The present tense uses *-yapti* for ongoing or progressive actions (*u kitob o‘qiyapti* – “he is reading a book”), while forms like *boradi* express habitual or general truths (*u har kuni maktabga boradi* – “he goes to school every day”). The future tense is expressed with *-adi* or *-ajak*, as in *u maktabga boradi* (“he will go to school”) or *u maktabga borajak*, which can carry formal, poetic, or literary nuance. Uzbek forms often encode multiple semantic layers: a single form may indicate both tense and aspect, and additionally evidentiality or modality depending on context.

The combination of suffixes and auxiliaries in Uzbek allows speakers to convey precise meaning. For instance, the auxiliary *ol-* indicates completion or suddenness of an action, as in *u kelib oldi* (“he came and completed the action”). Similarly, *u yozib qo‘ydi* indicates that an action was fully completed and irreversible. The auxiliary *tur-* signals durative aspect, marking sustained or continuous action, as in *u o‘qib turibdi* (“he has been reading for some time”), and evidentiality is encoded in forms like *borgan ekan*, which expresses reported or inferred knowledge rather than witnessed events. These features show that Uzbek morphology is multifunctional and compact, contrasting with English, which separates tense, aspect, and evidentiality into different grammatical or lexical elements.

Pedagogically, these structural differences have significant implications. Uzbek learners of English may struggle with twelve tense–aspect forms, overgeneralizing forms or confusing them. For example, they may use the present simple (*I go*) instead of the present progressive (*I am going*), or confuse the present perfect (*I have eaten*) with the past simple (*I ate*). English learners of Uzbek may initially perceive Uzbek verb forms as simple due to fewer formal distinctions, but the subtleties of aspect, evidentiality, and modality embedded in suffixes and auxiliaries create challenges. Translators face difficulties in accurately conveying Uzbek tense–aspect meanings into English, as a single Uzbek form such as *boradi* can correspond to multiple English tenses depending on context. Automatic translation systems face similar issues, as they cannot reliably interpret multifunctional Uzbek forms.

The comparison of English and Uzbek tense–aspect systems illustrate two typological strategies in language. English expands grammatical meaning through periphrasis, auxiliary verbs, and fixed syntactic structures, creating a highly specified and complex system. Uzbek, however, achieves expressive richness through agglutinative morphology, stacking suffixes and auxiliaries to encode multiple semantic and pragmatic meanings within a single verb. This compact system demonstrates efficiency, multifunctionality, and economy, showing that languages can vary in strategy yet achieve the same communicative goals.

In terms of practical application, this study highlights the need for context-sensitive approaches in language teaching. Educators can use examples contrasting English periphrastic constructions with Uzbek morphological forms to help students understand tense–aspect usage. Exercises involving translation, interpretation of contextual clues, and sentence restructuring can aid learners in navigating the complexity of English tense–aspect forms and the multifunctionality of Uzbek verbs. For translation, careful analysis of discourse context is essential, as literal word-for-word conversion may fail to convey intended meaning. For instance, translating *borgan edi* requires knowledge of whether the action is reported, remote past, or backgrounded, to choose between past perfect, past simple, or even past progressive in English.

From a theoretical perspective, English and Uzbek exemplify how different languages encode temporal and aspectual meaning in accordance with their typological characteristics. English relies on analytic periphrasis, while Uzbek demonstrates agglutinative synthesis. Both systems are effective for communication but reflect distinct historical, structural, and functional developments. English tense–aspect forms allow for high precision and clarity, whereas Uzbek morphology provides flexibility, economy, and multifunctionality. Understanding these differences is essential for linguists, language teachers, translators, and learners, as it impacts tense–aspect acquisition, translation, and comprehension.

In conclusion, the comparison of English and Uzbek verb systems shows that languages use different strategies to express time, aspect, and modality. English relies on auxiliary verbs and fixed word order to form twelve distinct tense–aspect categories, providing precision in marking duration, completion, and habituality. Uzbek, in contrast, uses suffixes and auxiliary verbs to create multifunctional forms that encode tense, aspect, evidentiality, and modality simultaneously.

These differences have practical implications for language learning and translation. Uzbek learners of English often struggle with the variety of English tense–aspect forms, while English learners of Uzbek must understand the subtleties of suffixes and auxiliaries. Translators and automatic systems must carefully interpret context to convey the correct meaning, as a single Uzbek form can express different temporal or aspectual nuances.

Overall, tense and aspect are not just grammatical categories but essential tools for communication. Understanding the differences between English and Uzbek helps linguists, teachers, learners, and translators handle time, viewpoint, and modality more effectively, showing how languages encode meaning in ways that reflect their structure and history.

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