

Cross-Linguistic Analysis of Tense and Aspect in English and Uzbek

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Abstract. This article presents a typological comparison of tense and aspect systems in English, a Germanic analytic language, and Uzbek, a Turkic agglutinative language. Drawing on established frameworks from Comrie (1976) and Bybee *et al.* (1994), we examine how these categories are morphologically realized, semantically interpreted, and pragmatically employed. English relies on periphrastic constructions for aspectual distinctions (e.g., progressive and perfect), while Uzbek integrates tense and aspect through suffixes, emphasizing imperfective and perfective oppositions. Key differences include English's binary tense system (past/non-past) versus Uzbek's multifaceted past tenses and evidential nuances. Similarities emerge in expressing ongoing actions and resultative states. The analysis highlights implications for second language acquisition and translation, supported by parallel corpus examples. Findings underscore the role of typology in cross-linguistic transfer, with pedagogical recommendations for Uzbek-English learners.

Key words: tense, aspect, typology, English, Uzbek, agglutinative, analytic.

Introduction. Tense and aspect are fundamental verbal categories that anchor events in time and delineate their internal structure (Comrie, 1985). Tense locates an event relative to the speech time (e.g., past vs. present), while aspect views the event's temporal contour—whether completed (perfective), ongoing (imperfective), or habitual (Comrie, 1976). Cross-linguistic studies reveal significant variation: analytic languages like English favor auxiliary-based periphrases, whereas agglutinative languages like Uzbek employ affixal fusion (Bybee *et al.*, 1994).

English (Indo-European, Germanic) and Uzbek (Altaic, Turkic) exemplify such divergence. English's system combines two tenses with four aspects, yielding 12 forms (e.g., present continuous: is walking). Uzbek, as a Karluk Turkic language spoken by ~35 million, integrates tense-aspect-modality (TAM) via suffixes on verb stems, producing over 20 distinctions, including evidentiality (Guérin, 2021). This contrast arises from typological differences: English is fusional-analytic (isolating elements via auxiliaries), while Uzbek is agglutinative (stacking morphemes sequentially) (Johanson, 1998).

Prior research on Uzbek-English comparisons focuses on syntax (Ural, 1996) and modality (Suyunov & Ismoilova, 2020), but TAM remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap through descriptive typology, semantic analysis, and corpus-based examples, aiming to: (1) delineate structural realizations; (2) compare semantic functions; and (3) discuss pedagogical implications. Data draw from parallel corpora and grammars, with examples transliterated for accessibility.

Theoretical Framework. Tense and Aspect: Definitions and Typology. Tense is deictic, anchoring event time (E) to reference time (R) and speech time (S) per Reichenbach (1947): E before R before S for past perfect. Aspect is viewpoint-dependent: perfective views the event as a whole; imperfective as unfolding (Smith, 1997). Lexical aspect (Aktionsart) interacts: states (*know*), activities (*run*), accomplishments (*build a house*), achievements (*notice*) (Vendler, 1967).

Typologically, WALS data show English's exclusive tense-aspect marking (Dahl, 1985), while Turkic languages fuse TAM with evidentiality (Johanson, 2011). Uzbek's system aligns with Turkic patterns: agglutinative suffixes encode person, number, and TAM sequentially (Boeschoten, 1998).

Tense and Aspect in English. English tenses divide into past (marked by -ed or irregular) and non-past (unmarked base form), with future via modals (*will*) (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Aspects overlay: simple (neutral), continuous (*be + -ing*), perfect (*have + past participle*), perfect continuous (*have been + -ing*).

Tense	Simple	Continuous	Perfect	Perfect Continuous
Present	I eat. (habitual)	I am eating. (ongoing)	I have eaten. (resultative)	I have been eating. (duration to now)
Past	I ate. (completed)	I was eating. (ongoing then)	I had eaten. (prior to past)	I had been eating. (duration to past)
Future	I will eat. (prediction)	I will be eating. (ongoing future)	I will have eaten. (completion by future)	I will have been eating. (duration to future)

Semantic notes: Progressive aspect telicizes atelic verbs (*run* → bounded activity); perfect conveys anteriority or relevance (e.g., *have visited* implies *experience*). Evidentiality is pragmatic (must have gone), not grammatical.

Tense and Aspect in Uzbek. Uzbek verbs agglutinate: stem + tense/aspect suffix + person/number (e.g., *kel-* 'come' + -moq infinitive). TAM fuses: present via aorist (-Ø/-a(r)) + copula *bo'l-*; pasts distinguish direct (-*di*), inferential (-*gan*), and narrative (-*ip* + *edi*) (Guérin, 2021). Aspects: imperfective (ongoing/habitual, -*yotir/-otir*), perfective (completed, -*ib/-gan*). Future: intentional (-*moqchi bo'l-*).

Key forms (1st sg. *kel-* 'come'):

Category	Form	Example	Gloss
Present Imperfective	<i>kel-yapman</i>	Men <i>kelyapman</i> .	I am coming (ongoing).
Present Habitual	<i>kelaman</i>	Men <i>kelaman</i> .	I come (habitual).
Past Direct	<i>keldim</i>	Men <i>keldim</i> .	I came (witnessed).
Past Inferential	<i>kelganman</i>	Men <i>kelganman</i> .	I came (inferred).
Past Narrative	<i>kelib edim</i>	Men <i>kelib edim</i> .	I had come (reported).
Future Intentional	<i>kelaman</i>	Men <i>kelaman</i> . (contextual)	I will come.
Perfective	<i>kelib bo'ldim</i>	Men <i>kelib bo'ldim</i> .	I have come (completed).

Uzbek's evidential pasts add modality: -*di* for eyewitness, -*gan* for hearsay (Aikhenvald, 2004). Unlike English, aspect is not periphrastic but suffixal, with lexical verbs influencing bounding (e.g., telic *uy qur-* 'build house' perfectivizes easily).

Cross-Linguistic Comparison. Structural Differences

English's analyticity yields flexible periphrases (e.g., *will have been eating*), contrasting Uzbek's rigid agglutination (e.g., *yeypaman* 'I am eating'). Uzbek encodes more TAM distinctions morphologically (20+ vs. English's 12), but English allows nuanced adverbials (just now) for fine-tuning.

Semantic and Pragmatic Similarities/Differences

Both languages express ongoing actions (English progressive: *was reading*; Uzbek imperfective: *o'qiyotgan edim*) and resultatives (English perfect: *have read*; Uzbek *o'qiganman*). However, Uzbek's

evidentiality introduces pragmatic layers absent in English (kelganman implies deduction), aligning with Turkic collectivist norms (Suyunov & Ismoilova, 2020).

Parallel examples:

- English: I ate an apple. (simple past, completed) → Uzbek: Men olma yedim. (-di direct past).
- English: I was eating an apple. (ongoing) → Uzbek: Men olma yeyap edim. (imperfective past).
- English: I have eaten an apple. (resultative) → Uzbek: Men olma yeganman. (-gan inferential perfective).

Differences: Uzbek future overlaps present habitual (kelaman 'I come/will come'), while English modals distinguish prediction (will come) from intention (going to come).

Typologically, English prioritizes aspectual viewpoint (Comrie, 1985), Uzbek fuses it with evidential tense (Johanson, 1998).

Implications and Applications. Second Language Acquisition

Uzbek L1 speakers overgeneralize English simple past for inferential contexts (I come yesterday instead of I came), due to evidential transfer (Mudhsh, 2018). Conversely, English learners of Uzbek undervalue suffixal nuance. Pedagogically, contrastive tables and corpus tasks (e.g., from parallel texts) mitigate errors (Ural, 1996).

Translation Challenges. Evidential mismatches complicate equivalence: English He said he came (reported) → Uzbek U keldi dedi (direct) vs. kelganini aytdi (inferential). Machine translation benefits from TAM-aware models (e.g., affix parsing; see Dataset of Uzbek Verbs, 2025).

Conclusion. The comparison demonstrates several key findings. First, English operates within a relatively binary tense system (past vs. non-past), relying heavily on auxiliary combinations to create nuanced aspectual forms. Uzbek, however, distinguishes multiple past categories (direct, inferential, narrative) and encodes evidential values that are entirely absent from English grammar. Second, both languages share functional parallels in expressing ongoing processes and resultative states, yet the strategies differ: English through analytic periphrasis (e.g., have been eating), Uzbek through suffixal morphology (e.g., yeyapman, yeganman). Third, cross-linguistic asymmetries are most pronounced in evidential marking: while Uzbek requires explicit morphological encoding of the speaker's knowledge source, English relies on pragmatic or lexical means, creating challenges for translation and second language acquisition.

Pedagogically, these differences are not merely descriptive but have important implications. Uzbek learners of English often transfer evidential distinctions into English, leading to overgeneralizations or non-target forms, while English speakers learning Uzbek may fail to perceive the semantic weight of evidential suffixes. In translation, mismatches in tense–aspect–evidential combinations require compensation strategies, particularly when moving from Uzbek to English, where obligatory distinctions in the source language lack direct equivalents.

Ultimately, this cross-linguistic analysis underscores the importance of typological perspectives in understanding how languages structure temporal and aspectual meaning. English exemplifies an analytic approach where aspect dominates, while Uzbek illustrates a morphologically dense, integrated system where tense, aspect, and evidentiality are inseparable. Recognizing these contrasts enriches comparative linguistics, provides a clearer framework for bilingual pedagogy, and contributes to refining translation practices between English and Uzbek. Future research could build on these findings by incorporating psycholinguistic methods such as eye-tracking to explore how learners process tense–aspect contrasts in real time, or by developing corpus-based tools for improving machine translation systems that handle agglutinative morphology.

In sum, the tense–aspect systems of English and Uzbek, though different in structure, converge in their ultimate communicative function: to encode temporal relations and aspectual viewpoints that allow speakers to position events meaningfully within discourse. Their comparison not only sheds

light on the universals of human language but also emphasizes the cultural and cognitive diversity embodied in linguistic expression.

7. Conclusion

This analysis illuminates the interplay of typology and function in English-Uzbek TAM systems: English's periphrastic flexibility contrasts Uzbek's morphological density, yet both converge on core semantic needs. Future research could employ eye-tracking for processing differences (Bott & Gatnar, 2015). Ultimately, such comparisons enrich semantic typology (Hogeweg et al., 2009) and inform bilingual education in Central Asia.

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