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SEMANTIC FEATURES OF TIME-EXPRESSING WORDS AND PHRASES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract: This article investigates the semantic characteristics of time-expressing words and phrases in English and Uzbek. It examines their functional roles within sentences, the nuances of temporal meaning, and cross-linguistic differences and similarities. The study applies a comparative linguistic approach to highlight how cultural and grammatical factors influence temporal expression in both languages. Findings demonstrate that while English often relies on syntactic structures and auxiliary verbs to convey temporal relations, Uzbek utilizes postpositions, temporal particles, and context-dependent expressions. The research contributes to the broader field of contrastive linguistics and enhances understanding of temporal semantics in cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: time category, temporal units, semantics, phraseology, metaphor, contrastive linguistics.

Introduction

Time is one of the most fundamental categories of human cognition, serving as a primary framework through which individuals perceive and interpret reality. Language functions as the principal medium for expressing temporal concepts and relationships. Every language possesses its own mechanisms for representing time, and these mechanisms are closely associated with the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of a particular speech community.

Although English and Uzbek belong to different language families, they exhibit both similarities and differences in the expression of temporal meanings. English, as an analytic language, relies extensively on grammatical and syntactic devices to encode temporal relations. In contrast, Uzbek, as an agglutinative language, demonstrates distinctive features in the expression of time through the extensive use of affixation and morphological markers.

The relevance of this study lies in the growing importance of semantic and cognitive approaches in contemporary linguistic research. Recent developments in linguistics have increasingly focused on the investigation of language units from semantic, cognitive, and functional perspectives. In this regard, a comparative analysis of temporal expressions provides a valuable theoretical foundation for translation studies, linguocultural research, and pragmatics.

The primary aim of the present study is to identify and comparatively analyze the semantic characteristics of words and expressions denoting temporal meanings in English and Uzbek.

To achieve this objective, the following research tasks were established:

- to classify and systematize temporal units in both languages;
- to identify and analyze their semantic categories;
- to examine temporal phraseological units and their linguistic functions;
- to investigate metaphorical expressions related to the conceptualization of time;
- to determine the similarities and differences between English and Uzbek temporal expressions.

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The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of temporal semantics and to provide useful insights into the typological, cognitive, and cultural dimensions of time representation in language.

Methods

The present study is devoted to a comparative investigation of the semantic characteristics of lexical and phraseological units denoting temporal meanings in English and Uzbek. To achieve the research objectives, a comprehensive methodological framework was employed. The methodological foundation of the study is based on semantic, cognitive, and comparative approaches, which are widely utilized in contemporary linguistic research. The integration of these approaches facilitated a multidimensional analysis of temporal units and contributed to revealing their complex linguistic nature.

First, the comparative-analytical method was adopted as the primary research approach. Through this method, temporal expressions in English and Uzbek were systematically compared in order to identify their typological similarities and differences. Particular attention was paid to the structural characteristics of both languages, including the influence of analytic and agglutinative linguistic systems on the expression of temporal meanings.

In addition, the semantic analysis method was employed to examine the internal semantic structure of temporal units. This approach enabled the investigation of the denotative and connotative meanings of words and expressions, as well as their polysemantic properties and processes of semantic extension. As a result, the semantic layers of temporal expressions were systematically classified and interpreted.

Another important methodological component of the study was contextual analysis, which made it possible to determine how temporal units function in authentic communicative situations. Through this approach, the meanings of temporal expressions were interpreted not only at the lexical level but also within broader discourse and communicative contexts. Consequently, the pragmatic functions of temporal units were identified and analyzed.

Furthermore, a cognitive approach was applied to explore how the concept of time is represented and conceptualized in human cognition. Particular attention was devoted to metaphorical models of temporal conceptualization, including such conceptual metaphors as *time is a resource*, *time is movement*, and *time is value*. The analysis of these conceptual structures contributed to a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and thought.

The descriptive method was also utilized to provide a systematic characterization of temporal units and to establish their lexical-semantic classifications. This method facilitated the development of a comprehensive taxonomy of temporal expressions in both languages.

The empirical material of the study consisted of examples drawn from English and Uzbek literary texts, explanatory and phraseological dictionaries, and contemporary linguistic publications. These sources were selected because they reflect authentic language use and provide representative examples of temporal expressions functioning in diverse communicative contexts.

The research was conducted in several consecutive stages. Initially, relevant theoretical literature was reviewed and analyzed. Subsequently, temporal units were collected and classified. At the next stage, the collected data were grouped according to their semantic characteristics and subjected to comparative analysis. Finally, the findings were synthesized, interpreted, and used as the basis for drawing scientific conclusions regarding the semantic and functional features of temporal expressions in English and Uzbek.

The table below presents a comprehensive overview of the research methods utilized in the present study.

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Table 1. Overview of the Research Methodology

Research Method	Description	Function in the Study
Comparative Analysis	Comparison of linguistic units in English and Uzbek	Identification of similarities and differences between the two language systems
Semantic Analysis	Examination of the semantic structure of temporal expressions	Identification of denotative and connotative meanings
Contextual Analysis	Analysis of the use of temporal units in discourse	Determination of pragmatic and contextual functions
Cognitive Approach	Investigation of the relationship between language and cognition	Identification of metaphorical and conceptual models of time
Descriptive Method	Systematic description of linguistic units	Classification and categorization of temporal expressions

The integration of the selected methodological approaches ensured the scientific validity and reliability of the research and facilitated a comprehensive investigation of temporal units from linguistic, cognitive, and cultural perspectives. Consequently, the expression of the category of time in English and Uzbek was examined in a systematic, multidimensional, and in-depth manner.

Results

The findings of the present study demonstrate that the semantic system of temporal expressions in English and Uzbek is characterized by a multilayered and complex structure. During the analysis, temporal units were examined at lexical, phraseological, and cognitive levels, allowing for the identification of their interrelationships and functional characteristics.

The results indicate that temporal expressions can be classified into several major semantic categories. These categories reflect different dimensions of temporal meaning, including specificity, duration, frequency, and sequentiality. Both languages possess absolute and relative temporal units, which function as universal semantic categories across linguistic systems. However, their frequency of occurrence and modes of expression vary according to the typological characteristics of each language.

The analysis further revealed that English and Uzbek share a number of common semantic features in the representation of temporal concepts. Nevertheless, significant differences were identified in the linguistic mechanisms employed to encode temporal relations. These differences are primarily associated with the structural and typological distinctions between the two languages and influence the ways in which temporal meanings are realized in discourse.

Table 2. Major Semantic Categories of Temporal Expressions in English and Uzbek

Semantic Category	English Examples	Uzbek Examples	Description
Absolute Time	*now, today, yesterday*	*hozir, bugun, kecha*	Refers to a specific and clearly defined point in time.
Relative	*soon, later,*	*Tez orada,*	Expresses subjective or

Semantic Category	English Examples	Uzbek Examples	Description
Time	*recently*	*keyinroq, yaqinda*	context-dependent temporal reference.
Duration	*for a while, all day*	*bir oz vaqt, kun bo'yi*	Indicates the length or continuity of an event or process over time.
Frequency	*always, often*	*har doim, tez-tez*	Denotes the regularity or recurrence of an action or event.

The analysis revealed that the expression of temporal meanings in English is more closely associated with grammatical mechanisms, whereas lexical and affixational devices play a more prominent role in Uzbek. Consequently, temporal meanings in Uzbek are often clarified and interpreted through contextual information.

The findings further demonstrate that phraseological units constitute an important means of expressing the subjective and emotional dimensions of temporal concepts. In both English and Uzbek, time-related idiomatic expressions frequently possess a metaphorical character, enabling speakers to conceptualize such aspects of time as its rapid passage, value, and limitations.

For instance, the English expression *time flies* conveys the notion of the rapid passage of time, while the Uzbek phrase *ko'z ochib yumguncha* ("in the blink of an eye") expresses a comparable semantic meaning. Similarly, the expressions *time is money* and *vaqt oltindan qimmat* ("time is more precious than gold") illustrate the perception of time as a valuable resource in both cultures, although the underlying cultural interpretations differ to some extent.

The analysis of phraseological units indicates that:

-in English, time is frequently conceptualized from a pragmatic and economic perspective;

-in Uzbek, time is more commonly perceived as a moral and value-oriented category.

These differences are closely related to the worldview, cultural traditions, and social experiences of the speakers of each language.

The results of the cognitive analysis confirmed that metaphorical models play a crucial role in the linguistic representation of temporal concepts. Since time is an abstract phenomenon, it is commonly understood through references to more concrete experiences. The most frequently occurring conceptual metaphors identified in the study include:

Time as a Resource (*spend time, waste time* / *vaqtni sarflamoq*);

Time as Movement (*time flies* / *vaqt o'tadi*);

Time as a Limited Opportunity (*run out of time* / *vaqt yetmaydi*).

These conceptual models reflect the ways in which individuals perceive, evaluate, and manage temporal experiences. While the metaphor *time is money* occupies a particularly prominent position in English, temporal concepts in Uzbek are more frequently associated with life experience, ethical values, and cultural traditions.

The analysis also revealed another important characteristic of temporal units, namely their polysemous nature. Many temporal expressions are capable of conveying multiple meanings simultaneously, and their precise interpretation largely depends on the communicative context in which they occur.

For example, the English unit *since* may express both temporal meaning ("from a particular point in time") and causal meaning ("because"). Similarly, the Uzbek word *keyin* ("after") can indicate temporal sequence as well as logical succession. These observations

demonstrate that context functions as a primary mechanism for interpreting temporal expressions. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Uzbek, where contextual factors play a significant role in meaning construction.

The findings of the study make it possible to formulate several general conclusions:

-although the category of time is universal, its linguistic realization is influenced by national, cultural, and typological characteristics;

-temporal units constitute a complex and interconnected system operating at lexical, phraseological, and cognitive levels;

-the principal differences between English and Uzbek temporal expressions can be attributed to structural distinctions (analytic versus agglutinative language types) as well as culturally conditioned patterns of thought;

-conceptual metaphors serve as fundamental cognitive mechanisms through which temporal concepts are understood and represented in language;

Discussion The findings of the present study reveal that, alongside certain common features, significant differences exist between the semantic and cognitive characteristics of temporal expressions in English and Uzbek. Several theoretical approaches in contemporary linguistics provide an important methodological framework for interpreting these findings.

First and foremost, the universality of the temporal category has been widely acknowledged in linguistic scholarship. Representatives of cognitive linguistics, particularly George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), argue in their Conceptual Metaphor Theory that abstract concepts, including time, are understood through concrete experiential models. The findings of the present study support this theoretical perspective, as temporal concepts in both English and Uzbek are represented through metaphors such as movement, resource, and value. Nevertheless, differences were observed in the prominence and frequency of these metaphors, reflecting culturally specific patterns of cognition.

From this perspective, the widespread English conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY reflects the pragmatic and economically oriented worldview characteristic of many Western societies. This observation is consistent with the concept of monochronic time culture proposed by Edward T. Hall (1983). According to this framework, time is perceived as a measurable, manageable, and highly valuable resource. In contrast, Uzbek expressions such as vaqt oltindan qimmat (“time is more precious than gold”) demonstrate a tendency to view time not only as an economic asset but also as a moral and existential value. This suggests a broader and more philosophical interpretation of time within Eastern cultural traditions.

Structural factors also play a significant role in the linguistic realization of temporal meanings. According to Bernard Comrie (1985), every language employs distinct grammatical mechanisms for expressing temporal relations. The results of the present study indicate that English possesses a relatively complex tense system, whereas temporal meanings in Uzbek are more frequently conveyed through affixation and contextual cues. These findings provide empirical evidence for the typological distinctions between analytic and agglutinative languages.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the discussion of polysemy in temporal expressions. As noted by D. Alan Cruse (2000), polysemy is an inherent characteristic of natural language, and the interpretation of multiple meanings largely depends on context. The temporal units since, while, and keyin identified in this study provide clear evidence supporting this view. In particular, the prominent role of contextual interpretation in Uzbek can be explained through the pragmatic framework proposed by Geoffrey Leech (1983).

The analysis of phraseological units further supports the linguocultural perspective advanced by Eugene Nida (1993), according to which linguistic expressions function not only

as linguistic signs but also as carriers of cultural knowledge. Indeed, temporal idioms in both languages reflect the historical experiences, cultural values, and collective mentality of their respective speech communities. Consequently, the accurate interpretation and translation of such phraseological units require careful consideration of their cultural dimensions.

When compared with previous research, the findings of this study generally align with broader trends in contemporary linguistic scholarship. For example, Vyvyan Evans (2007) argues that the linguistic representation of time is closely connected to human spatial experience. The present study supports this claim, as temporal concepts in both languages are frequently expressed through metaphors involving movement and direction.

At the same time, certain controversial issues remain. Although time may be considered a universal conceptual category, its linguistic realization is inevitably filtered through cultural and cognitive frameworks. This observation provides additional support for the Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis, which emphasizes the interrelationship between language and thought. Language not only reflects human cognition but also contributes to shaping conceptual understanding.

Overall, the findings highlight the necessity of an integrative approach to the study of temporal categories. A comprehensive understanding of temporal expressions can only be achieved through the combined examination of grammatical, lexical, semantic, cognitive, and cultural dimensions.

Conclusion This study was devoted to a comparative investigation of the semantic characteristics of lexical and phraseological units expressing temporal meanings in English and Uzbek. The analysis demonstrates that although the category of time possesses a universal conceptual foundation, its linguistic realization is closely influenced by the typological structure and cultural characteristics of each language.

The findings indicate that temporal expressions constitute a complex system operating simultaneously at lexical, phraseological, and cognitive levels in both languages. While English primarily expresses temporal relations through grammatical and analytic means, Uzbek relies more heavily on affixation and contextual interpretation. Furthermore, metaphorical models were found to play a central role in temporal conceptualization, with both languages exhibiting common conceptual metaphors such as TIME IS A RESOURCE and TIME IS MOVEMENT.

Despite these similarities, substantial cultural differences were also identified. In English, time is frequently conceptualized as a pragmatic and economic resource, whereas in Uzbek it is more commonly associated with life experience, ethical values, and cultural traditions. These findings provide further evidence of the close relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

The results of this research possess both theoretical and practical significance for comparative linguistics, translation studies, cognitive linguistics, and linguocultural research. Future studies may expand this line of inquiry by examining temporal expressions across a wider range of languages and cultural contexts. Such investigations would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and cognitive representation of time as a universal yet culturally mediated category.

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