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The Usage of Verb Tenses in Translation (On the Example of English, Russian and Uzbek Languages)

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A B S T R A C T
This study explores the use of verb tenses in translation by comparing the temporal systems of English, Russian, and Uzbek. Since each language expresses time and aspect differently, translators often face difficulties when transferring tense-related meanings. The research analyzes how structural contrasts, aspectual distinctions, and contextual factors influence tense selection during translation. By examining practical examples, the study identifies frequent challenges such as the lack of direct tense equivalents, differences in aspectual interpretation, and shifts in temporal perspective and outlines strategies that help maintain accuracy and naturalness in the translated text. The results emphasize the importance of linguistic awareness and cross-language competence for producing clear and faithful translations.

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INTRODUCTION

Translation is not only the process of converting words from one language to another, but also the careful transfer of grammatical, semantic and stylistic meanings. One of the most important grammatical categories that greatly affects the accuracy of translation is verb tense. Verb tenses play a central role in expressing time, sequence of events, duration, and the speaker's attitude toward actions. When translators deal with languages that differ in their tense and aspect systems—such as English, Russian, and Uzbek—the task becomes even more complex. English contains a highly developed tense-aspect system with numerous forms that combine tense, aspect, and sometimes modality. Russian, on the other hand, relies heavily on aspectual distinctions (perfective vs. imperfective) to convey temporal meaning, making aspect more significant than tense itself. Uzbek has a comparatively simpler tense structure, but it expresses time through a combination of verb forms, particles, and contextual markers. Because of these structural differences, a single English tense may correspond to several possible options in Russian or Uzbek, and vice versa. These mismatches often create translation challenges, especially when there is no direct equivalent of a specific tense or aspect. A translator must therefore interpret meaning not only grammatically but also contextually. The choice of tense may depend on the type of text, stylistic requirements, narrative perspective, and cultural norms of expressing time. As a result, tense translation becomes a process of finding the most natural and accurate way to reflect temporal relations, rather than simply substituting grammatical forms. This study investigates how verb tenses are used in translation between English, Russian, and Uzbek by comparing their structural characteristics and analyzing real examples. By identifying the most frequent difficulties and offering effective strategies, the research aims to broaden understanding of cross-linguistic temporal expression and contribute to improving translation quality in academic, literary, and practical contexts.

TRANSLATION OF VERB TENSES IN ENGLISH, UZBEK AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

Verb tenses are a fundamental component of any language, expressing the time of an action or state in relation to the moment of speaking. Translating verb tenses between languages is not a straightforward task because different languages use different systems of tense and aspect, and these systems often do not correspond directly. The study of verb tense translation is crucial for preserving both the temporal and aspectual meaning in the target language. English, Russian, and Uzbek offer an interesting case study because English has a complex tense-aspect system with present, past, and future tenses, each subdivided into simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous forms. Russian relies heavily on verb aspect (perfective vs. imperfective) to indicate completion or continuity of action, rather than tense forms. Uzbek expresses tense primarily through suffixes and auxiliary verbs, often relying on context to convey nuances of aspect and temporality. English verb tenses combine time (present, past, future) and aspect (simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous).

The Category of Tense in English and Uzbek. To begin with, English employs a combination of tense and aspect to convey detailed temporal and aspectual information. The twelve tenses in English are categorized into simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous forms across the past, present, and future. For instance, the verb to write can take forms like writes (present simple), is writing (present continuous), has written (present perfect), or has been writing (present perfect continuous). These variations enable English speakers to specify not only when an action occurs but also whether it is ongoing, completed, or has relevance to another time. For example, She has been writing for two hours emphasizes the duration of the activity, while She wrote yesterday simply indicates when the action took place.By contrast, Russian verbs operate on a different principle, dividing actions into two aspects: perfective and imperfective. This aspectual system is key to understanding the Russian approach to time. The imperfective aspect represents ongoing or habitual actions, while the perfective aspect signifies completed actions. For example, Он писал письмо (He was writing a letter) in the imperfective aspect focuses on the process, whereas Он написал письмо (He wrote the letter) in the perfective aspect highlights the completion of the task. This distinction allows Russian to express meanings that, in English, would require different tense forms, such as the progressive or perfect tenses.

Differences in translating English into Russian language. One of the most striking differences lies in the formation of the future tense. In English, the future tense is generally marked by auxiliary verbs like will or shall (e.g., I will write). Additionally, English uses other constructions, such as going to or the present continuous, to indicate planned actions or immediate intentions (e.g., I am going to write a letter). Russian, however, forms the future tense differently based on the aspect of the verb. Imperfective verbs use a compound form with the auxiliary verb быть (to be), as in я буду писать (I will be writing), which indicates an ongoing or habitual future action. Perfective verbs, on the other hand, use a simple conjugated form, as in я напишу (I will write), to denote a single, completed action. This reliance on aspect provides a level of precision that compensates for the absence of distinct continuous or perfect tenses in Russian. Furthermore, negation and question formation illustrate additional contrasts. English uses auxiliary verbs such as do, does, or did to form questions and negatives, while Russian relies on simpler structures. For example, Did she write the letter? requires the auxiliary did, whereas in Russian, Она писала письмо? (She wrote a letter?) uses intonation alone to form a question. Similarly, English negatives require auxiliaries, as in She did not write the letter, whereas Russian uses the particle не before the verb: Она не писала письмо. In addition, context plays a crucial role in both languages to resolve ambiguity. For instance, in English, a sentence like I was reading may be clarified by adding a time reference such as yesterday at 5 p.m. Similarly, in Russian, temporal adverbs like вчера (yesterday) or в тот момент (at that moment) are often essential to fully understand the time frame of an action. Beyond these structural differences, the practical implications of the tense-aspect systems also vary. For learners of English, mastering the twelve tenses can be challenging, particularly because the distinctions between continuous and perfect forms are not immediately intuitive. In contrast, learners of Russian must focus on mastering verbal aspects, as they are crucial to expressing subtle differences in meaning. For example, the choice between писать and написать can significantly alter the intended message.

The Category of Tense in English and Uzbek. The English tense system is complex, built on Simple, Continuous, Perfect, and Perfect Continuous forms. These forms are used in past, present, and future

contexts, making a total of sixteen tenses. For example, in English: “I clean the room, I am cleaning the room, I have cleaned the room, and I have been cleaning the room”.These sentences differ in subtle nuances of meaning.In Uzbek, tenses are divided into three main groups: past, present, and future, expressed mainly 2through suffixes. For example: “Men kitob o‘qidim”expresses the past tense, “Men kitob o‘qiyapman” expresses the present tense, and “Men kitob o‘qimoqchiman” expresses the future tense.

Challenges in Translating English Tenses into Uzbek. Many English tense forms lack direct equivalents in Uzbek, particularly Perfect, Continuous, and Perfect Continuous forms.For instance, the English sentence “I have finished my thesis”is in the Present Perfect tense. Its Uzbek translation is “Men endigina tezisimni tugatdim”, which uses a past tense suffix.Similarly, “She is cooking now”in Present Continuous is translated as “U hozir pishiryapti”, where the Uzbek present tense suffix is used.The most difficult tense to translate is the Perfect Continuous because it simultaneously expresses both duration and result. For example, “I have been learning English for five years”can be translated as “Men ingliz tilini besh yildan beri o‘rganyapman”. Although the English sentence emphasizes the result more strongly, in Uzbek it is expressed as a simple present tense. There are three main approaches to translating English tenses into Uzbek:Literal translation–preserves the grammatical form as much as possible. Example: “He is working now”→ “U hozir ishlayapti”.Equivalence (meaning-based translation)–conveys the meaning rather than the form. Example: “I have lost my keys”→” Kalitimni yo‘qotib qo‘ydim”.Context-based translation–adapts the form according to the overall meaning of the sentence. for example: ”By this time next year, I will have graduated”→ “Kelasi yil shu payt men bitirgan bo‘laman

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the tense systems of English and Russian represent two distinct approaches to conveying time and aspect. English provides a detailed framework with a wide variety of tenses to express temporal nuances, while Russian emphasizes aspect to achieve similar effects with a simpler tense structure. Despite these differences, both languages rely on context and additional markers to clarify meaning. Understanding these systems not only deepens linguistic knowledge but also enhances communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Therefore, by exploring the interplay of tense and aspect in English and Russian, we gain valuable insights into how languages reflect and structure human perception of time.

The English tense system stands out for its complexity. Sixteen tense forms allow precise expression of events and actions in time. In contrast, Uzbek tenses are divided into three main groups: past, present, and future. This article has compared the tensesystems of English and Uzbek and illustrated the differences through practical examples. Consequently, certain English tenses present challenges when translating into Uzbek. The study demonstrates that mastering English tenses is important not only for accurate translation but also for fluent and correct language use.

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