ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКАЯ, ПРИКЛАДНАЯ И СРАВНИТЕЛЬНО-СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНАЯ ЛИНГВИСТИКА/THEORETICAL, APPLIED AND COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

MORPHOLOGICAL PECULIARITIES OF PRESENT SIMPLE TENSE IN TAJIK, CHINESE AND ENGLISH (A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS)

Research article

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Abstract

The given article dwells on the comparative morphological analysis of the Present Simple tense in Tajik, Chinese, and English, drawing on examples from Sadriddin Aini`s seminal work entitled as "Reminiscences". While all three languages utilize a present tense to express habitual actions, states, and general truths, their morphological realizations differ significantly. Tajik, as a synthetic language, highlights rich inflectional morphology to mark person and number on the verb. English, a largely analytic language, relies on minimal inflection (primarily the third-person singular -*s*) and auxiliary verbs. Chinese, an isolating language, lacks inflectional morphology altogether, relying on word order and aspect markers to convey tense and aspect. Through a detailed consideration of sentences extracted from Aini`s text, the study contrasts these divergent morphological strategies, revealing the typological differences between the languages and exploring the implications for translation and cross-linguistic understanding.

Keywords: Present Simple Tense, morphology, Tajik, Chinese, English, comparative linguistics, Sadriddin Aini, "Rreminiscences", inflection, analytic, isolating, synthetic.

МОРФОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ НАСТОЯЩЕГО ПРОСТОГО ВРЕМЕНИ В ТАДЖИКСКОМ, КИТАЙСКОМ И АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ (СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ)

Научная статья

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Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается сравнительный морфологический анализ настоящего простого времени в таджикском, китайском и английском языках на примерах из основополагающего труда Садриддина Айни под названием «Воспоминания». Хотя все три языка используют настоящее время для выражения привычных действий, состояний и общих истин, их морфологическая реализация существенно различается. Таджикский язык, как синтетический язык, выделяет богатую флективную морфологию для обозначения лица и числа глагола. Английский язык, в значительной степени аналитический, опирается на минимальное флексионное склонение (в первую очередь на третье лицо единственного числа -*s*) и вспомогательные глаголы. Китайский язык, изолирующий язык, вообще лишен флективной морфологии, полагаясь на порядок слов и маркеры вида для передачи времени и вида. Благодаря подробному рассмотрению предложений, извлеченных из текста Айни, исследование сопоставляет эти расходящиеся морфологические стратегии, выявляя типологические различия между языками и исследуя последствия для перевода и межъязыкового понимания.

Ключевые слова: настоящее простое время, морфология, таджикский, китайский, английский языки, сравнительное языкознание, Садриддин Айни, «Воспоминания», словоизменение, аналитический, изолирующий, синтетический.

Introduction

The linguistic expression of temporality, encompassing the mechanisms by which events are situated within temporal frameworks, constitutes a fundamental characteristic of human language. Grammatical tenses, functioning as morphosyntactic categories, serve as primary instruments for this temporal orientation. Among these, the Present Simple tense (PST) is a widely attested grammatical category that fundamentally conveys actions, states, or events without explicit temporal boundaries. Its defining feature is the capacity to express generality, habituality, timelessness, or, in specific contexts, scheduled future occurrences. Rather than indexing an event to a precise point in the immediate present, the PST typically describes situations that hold true generally or habitually, independent of a specific temporal focus. While the semantic notion of a present tense is commonly observed across languages, its morphological realization exhibits substantial cross-linguistic variation, reflecting underlying typological distinctions. This variability underscores the diverse structural means by which languages encode grammatical concepts, revealing fundamental differences in their organizational principles for expressing information. Thus, the mechanisms by which the PST is formally marked in a language provide insight into the broader architecture of its grammatical system.

The aim of this corpus study is not restricted to cataloging the morphological differences in PST marking across the selected languages. Rather, it seeks to elucidate the principles that govern these variations. This investigation will address the following core research questions:

The rationale for selecting Tajik, Chinese, and English stems from their representation of diverse points on the morphological typology continuum, a framework recognized as pivotal in descriptive and theoretical linguistics for over a century. Within this framework, languages are classified based on their strategies for morpheme combination during word formation.

Literature Review:

This study's literature review encompasses scholarly works on the morphology of PST in Tajik, Chinese, and English, alongside relevant research in comparative linguistics and translation studies.

Tajik Grammar: they are G. Lazard [7], J.R. Perry [11], V.S. Rastorgueva & A.A. Kerimova [12].

Chinese Grammar: they are C.N. Li, S.A. Thompson [8], J. Norman [10], R. Xiao, T. McEnery [13].

English Grammar: they are D. Biber, S. Johansson [3], R. Huddleston [6].

Comparative Linguistics and Translation Studies: they are M. Baker [2], B. Comrie [4], W. Croft [5], P. Newmark [9].

The corpus for this study consists of "Reminiscences" by Sadriddin Aini a key work in modern Tajik literature. This text's stylistic and contextual richness provides ample data for analyzing PST usage. The existence of recognized English and Chinese translations forms a parallel corpus, enabling a direct comparative analysis of how PST is expressed across these three typologically distinct languages. This translational perspective is vital for identifying the challenges and strategies associated with cross-linguistic transfer of grammatical meaning, particularly between languages with divergent morphological systems.

Main results

The main results of the study will present the five selected examples out of "Reminiscences" by Aini alongside with their English and Chinese translations, followed by a detailed morphological analysis of each example.

2.1. Examples and analysis

Example 1:

Tajik: Ū dar Buxoro *zindagī mekunad* [1, P. 22]

English: He/She *lives* in Bukhara

Chinese: 他/她在布哈拉住。(Tā/Tā zài Bùhālā *zhù*.)

The Tajik verb *zindagī mekunad* is a periphrastic construction composed of the noun *zindagī (life)* and the auxiliary verb *kardan (to do)* conjugated in the third-person singular present form, *mekunad*. In contrast, the English equivalent, *lives* exhibits the characteristic third-person singular Present Simple suffix *-s.* The Mandarin Chinese verb 住 (zhù - live) appears in its base form, with the locative information conveyed by the prepositional phrase 在布哈拉 (zài Bùhālā - in Bukhara).

Example 2:

Tajik: Mo kitob *mexonem* [1, P. 30]

English: We *read* books

Chinese: 我们看书。(Wǒmen *kàn* shū).

It is worth stressing that the verb *mexonem* is composed of the verb stem *xon- read* and the present tense suffix *-em,* which marks first-person plural in Tajik. In English, the verb *read* is in its base form, used for the first-person plural. The verb 看 (kàn - read/look at) is in its bare form. The plural subject 我们 (wǒmen - we) is sufficient to indicate the plurality in Chinese.

Example 3:

Tajik: Shumo ba kujo meraved? [1, P. 45]

English: Where do you go? / Where are you going?

Chinese: 你们去哪里？(Nǐmen qù nǎlǐ?).

The final example illustrates the diverse encodings of the PST interrogative *go.* Tajik *meraved* displays morphological fusion of the stem *rav- ('go')* and the present suffix *-ed* (2nd person plural/formal singular). English employs the auxiliary *do* for PST interrogation, distinct from the aspectual rendering of the Present Continuous ('are going'). Chinese utilizes the uninflected verb 去 *(qù) ('go')* and marks interrogation lexically with 哪里 *(nǎlǐ)* ('where').

Example 4:

Tajik: Oftob har sahar *mebaroyad* [1, P. 60]

English: The sun *rises* every morning

Chinese: 太阳每天早上升起。(Tàiyáng měitiān zǎoshang *shēngqǐ).*

In Tajik, *mebaroyad* combines the stem *bar-* — a variant of come out, with the 3rd person singular present tense suffix -ad. And, the verb *rises* uses the suffix *-s* for the 3rd person singular. The verb 升起 (shēngqǐ — rise) is used. The time phrase 每天早上 (měitiān zǎoshang — every morning) reinforces the habitual nature.

Example 5:

Tajik: Har ruz ba maktab meravam [1, P. 15]

English: I go to school every day

Chinese: 我每天去学校。(Wǒ měitiān qù xuéxiào.)

Particularly in the context of habitual aspect, the last example offers a clear illustration of the fundamental typological differences in the morphological encoding of the Present Simple Tense among Tajik, English, and Chinese.

This example elucidates the contrasting morphological strategies employed by Tajik, English, and Mandarin Chinese in expressing PST.

1. Tajik (Synthetic Morphology).

The Tajik verb *meravam* exemplifies synthetic morphology. It is a morphologically complex unit, incorporating:

1. Verb Stem: *rav- (go)*.

2. Present Tense/Imperfective Aspect Prefix: *me-* (obligatory marker of present tense and often imperfective aspect).

3. Person-Number Agreement Suffix: *-am* (first-person singular subject agreement).

The fusion of these morphemes within a single word is characteristic of synthetic languages, where grammatical information is synthesized within the word itself.

2. English (Analytic Morphology):

The English translation, *I go to school every day* demonstrates a more analytic approach:

1. Base Verb Form: *go* (lacking person/number inflection except for third-person singular).

2. Discrete Grammatical Markers: Subject (I) expressed by a separate pronoun; habitual aspect reinforced by the adverbial *every day*.

3. Absence of Obligatory Tense Marker: The verb itself does not require a morphological marker to indicate present tense.

This illustrates the analytic tendency to convey grammatical information through separate words rather than inflection.

3. Chinese (Isolating Morphology):

The Chinese translation, 我每天去学校 *(Wǒ měitiān qù xuéxiào)* exemplifies isolating morphology:

1. Uninflected Verb: *qù (go)* remains constant regardless of tense, person, or number.

2. Word Order: Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order is crucial for conveying grammatical relations.

3. Time Adverbial: *měitiān (every day)* explicitly signals habitual aspect; while context can sometimes imply habituality, its presence is common and reinforces meaning.

4. Absence of Grammatical morphemes. Similar to English.

Discussion

3.1. Typological Contrasts

A comparative summary of the morphological encoding of grammatical information (specifically tense, person, and number as relevant to the verbal system) across the three languages reveals distinct typological strategies:

1. Tajik.

Grammatical information, particularly concerning tense (including the Present Simple Tense), person, and number, is typically encoded through bound morphology. This involves the fusion of multiple grammatical features onto the verb stem via inflectional prefixes and suffixes. This aligns with Tajik's profile as a language exhibiting a degree of synthetic or fusional morphology.

2. English.

Conversely, English predominantly marks grammatical information through syntactic means, employing separate, free morphemes. Person and number distinctions are primarily conveyed by pronominal subjects, while temporal and aspectual nuances (like habituality in the PST) often rely on adverbs and adverbial phrases. Verbal inflection in English is comparatively minimal, with the PST primarily marked only by the third-person singular suffix -s (e.g., 'walks' vs. 'walk'). This characteristic aligns with English's classification as a language exhibiting a relatively analytic morphological profile.

3. Chinese.

Representing a contrasting typological strategy, Chinese relies heavily on syntactic ordering and the use of explicit lexical items, particularly temporal adverbials, to convey grammatical information related to the verb. Word order plays a crucial role in establishing grammatical relationships. Crucially, Chinese verbs exhibit a complete absence of inflectional morphology for tense, person, or number. Temporal reference for the equivalent of the PST is indicated solely through context or the presence of time adverbials. This aligns with Chinese's classification as a highly isolating or analytic language.

3.2. Implications for Translation

The divergent morphological profiles of Tajik, English, and Chinese introduce several complexities in the translation of the Present Simple Tense (PST) and related verbal structures, reflecting their distinct strategies for encoding grammatical information such as tense, aspect, person, and number.

1. Transferring Morphologically Encoded Information (Loss).

When translating from Tajik, which utilizes fusional verbal morphology to encode person and number within suffixes, to analytic languages like English or Chinese, this overtly bound information is not transferred morphologically. Its realization in the target languages relies on obligatory subject pronouns or contextual inference. This shift in the mode of encoding requires the translator to ensure the information's implicit preservation.

2. Transferring Morphologically Encoded Information (Addition).

Conversely, translation from the isolating system of Chinese, lacking verbal inflection for tense, person, or number, into morphologically richer languages like English or Tajik necessitates the explicit manifestation of these grammatical features. Chinese bare verb forms require the addition of auxiliaries, inflections (e.g., English -s), or other markers in English, and person-number affixes in Tajik, to meet target language grammatical requirements.

3. Potential Ambiguity from Under-specification.

The absence of verbal inflection in Chinese results in under-specification regarding the subject's person and number in isolation, potentially causing ambiguity. While Chinese employs syntactic and lexical means (word order, pronouns, adverbials) for clarity, residual ambiguities may exist. Context and temporal adverbials are crucial for the translator's interpretive process to disambiguate and explicitly mark person/number in inflected target languages like Tajik or English.

Conclusion

Thus, the morphosyntactic realization of the Present Simple Tense (PST) across three typologically distinct languages — Tajik, Mandarin Chinese, and English — was rigorously examined in this comparative study, utilizing a corpus from Sadriddin Aini's "Reminiscences." The research aimed to reveal diverse encoding strategies for habitual actions, general truths, and states, highlighting fundamental grammatical differences and their implications for translation and cross-cultural understanding. Findings clearly indicate that despite the capacity to express the semantic nuances of the PST in all three languages, formal realization mechanisms diverge significantly according to typological profiles. The authentic corpus data thus offers valuable insights into PST linguistic mechanisms, demonstrating how typology shapes language architecture. This analysis contributes to our understanding of cross-linguistic variation in temporal encoding and underscores the complexities of cross-cultural communication and translation.

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Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

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Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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