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

SEMANTIC RELATIONS BETWEEN COMPONENTS OF VERB PHRASES (VPS) IN ENGLISH AND TAJIK

Research article

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Abstract

The given article dwells on the comparative analysis of verb phrases (VPs) in English and Tajik, focusing on the structural and semantic relationships between their components. It is noted that phrases are foundational linguistic units characterized by their internal coherence and head-dependent structure, where a nucleus (head) is modified by one or more adjuncts (dependents). The study employs descriptive, comparative, syntactic, and semantic analyses, complemented by corpus-based exemplification, to categorize VPs and their internal semantic relations. The research distinguishes between VPs with directly transitive and obliquely transitive verbal kernels, revealing how the verb's valency influences the phrase's structure and the specific semantic roles of its adjuncts. Thus, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic semantics, demonstrating how diverse linguistic forms can encode shared conceptual representations across languages.

Keywords: verb phrase (VP), semantic relations, adjunct, comparative analysis, syntactic structure.

СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ МЕЖДУ КОМПОНЕНТАМИ ГЛАГОЛЬНЫХ СЛОВОСОЧЕТАНИЙ (ГС) В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И ТАДЖИКСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Данная статья посвящена сопоставительному анализу глагольных словосочетаний (ГС) в английском и таджикском языках, с акцентом на структурные и семантические отношения между их компонентами. Отмечается, что словосочетания являются фундаментальными языковыми единицами, характеризующимися внутренней связностью и структурой «вершина-зависимое слово», где ядро (вершина) модифицируется одним или несколькими адъюнктами (зависимыми элементами). В исследовании применяются дескриптивный, сравнительный, синтаксический и семантический анализы, дополненные примерами из корпуса, для категоризации ГС и их внутренних семантических отношений. Работа проводит различие между ГС с прямо-переходными и косвенно-переходными глагольными ядрами, выявляя, как валентность глагола влияет на структуру словосочетания и специфические семантические роли его адъюнктов. Таким образом, статья способствует более глубокому пониманию кросс-лингвистической семантики, демонстрируя, как разнообразные языковые формы могут кодировать общие концептуальные представления в различных языках.

Ключевые слова: глагольное словосочетание (ГС), семантические отношения, адъюнкт, сопоставительный анализ, синтаксическая структура.

Introduction

In the scientific study of language, particularly within the fields of syntax and semantics, the phrase stands as a fundamental unit of analysis. Defined broadly, a phrase is a group of words that functions as a single syntactic unit, but unlike a clause, it typically lacks a finite verb or a complete subject-predicate structure. Phrases are essential building blocks of sentences, contributing to the hierarchical organization of linguistic structures and facilitating the expression of complex ideas [4], [5].

From a structural perspective, phrases are characterized by their internal coherence and their ability to operate as a unified entity within a larger grammatical construction. They are typically composed of a **head (or nucleus)** — the central word that determines the phrase's type and its syntactic function — and one or more **dependents (or adjuncts)** that modify or complement the head. This head-dependent relationship is crucial for understanding phrase formation and interpretation across languages [6, P. 58–63].

Despite belonging to distinct language families (Germanic and Indo-Iranian, respectively) and having limited historical contact that might induce convergence, both languages exhibit robust systems of verb phrases, providing a wealth of comparable data. The typological differences, such as English's reliance on auxiliary verbs for aspect and voice versus Tajik's more agglutinative tendencies and distinct verb serialization patterns (which may or may not actually be a feature, depending on how tightly the criteria for serialization are defined), allow for a stringent test of hypotheses concerning the universal cognitive underpinnings of predicate formation and meaning expression.

Furthermore, by investigating common semantic relations (e.g., agent, patient, instrument, location) within these structurally divergent VPs, this research implicitly explores the enduring question of linguistic universals — whether similar cognitive processes manifest in similar linguistic structures across unrelated languages.

The identification of shared relational categories, despite differences in grammatical encoding, would provide further support for the notion that fundamental aspects of human thought and experience are reflected in underlying linguistic structures, even when expressed through diverse surface forms. This deliberate selection of genetically and typologically distant languages, therefore, transcends mere convenience to offer a potent test case for linguistic theories concerning cross-linguistic meaning representation.

1.1. Theoretical Frameworks

H. Sweet, instead of the term "phrase", used the term "word groups". He notes that "word groups" are collections of grammatically and logically connected words that can also express a sentence [9, P. 13–19].

Regarding the concept of a phrase, linguist O. Jespersen discussed three series of words, analyzing the word group "terribly cold weather" [3, P. 37]. Here, "weather" is designated as the primary word, "cold" as the secondary, and "terribly" as the tertiary, meaning the words demonstrate a close, graded relationship to each other, serving to express a specific concept. Therefore, O. Jespersen distinguishes three series of interrelated words and calls them phrases [3, P. 42].

According to V.V. Burlakova, a phrase is "a collection of two or more independent words that semantically correspond to each other, are connected through various means, and serve to express a complex concept" [1, P. 73].

Research methods

The corpus of our study employs a contrastive linguistic approach to analyze VPs in English and Tajik. The primary methodology involves a qualitative analysis of syntactic structures and semantic relationships. Specifically, the following methods are utilized:

1. Descriptive Analysis: this involves a detailed examination and characterization of the structural composition and functional roles of VPs in both languages. Data is collected from various linguistic sources, including grammatical texts, dictionaries, and literary examples, to identify recurring patterns and variations.

2. Comparative Analysis: the identified VP structures and their semantic relations in English are systematically compared with their counterparts in Tajik. This comparison aims to highlight similarities, differences, and instances of structural divergence coexisting with semantic convergence.

3. Syntactic Analysis: phrases are broken down into their constituent parts (nucleus and adjuncts) to ascertain the grammatical categories involved and the nature of the dependency relationships between them (e.g., direct transitivity, oblique transitivity).

4. Semantic Analysis: the core meaning conveyed by each VP and the specific semantic roles played by its adjuncts (e.g., agent, patient, recipient, location, time, purpose, benefit) are meticulously examined. This analysis draws upon established semantic theories to classify the relationships accurately.

5. Corpus-based Exemplification: illustrative examples from both languages are provided to substantiate theoretical claims and demonstrate the practical application of the identified phrase types and semantic relations. These examples are drawn from authentic linguistic contexts where possible, with references provided.

6. Classification and Typology: VPs are categorized based on the grammatical properties of their verbal nuclei (transitive/intransitive, direct/oblique object verbs) and the types of semantic relationships they express, following frameworks proposed by linguists like A. Mirzoev for Tajik and established grammatical traditions for English.

By combining these methods, the research aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the structural and semantic parallels and distinctions in VP between English and Tajik.

Main results and discussion

The study of phrases extends beyond mere classification, delving into their semantic contribution and syntactic behavior. Semantically, phrases enable speakers to convey nuanced meanings, often by elaborating on a core concept with additional descriptive or relational information. Syntactically, phrases occupy specific positions within sentences, performing roles such as subject, object, or modifier. Their ability to be moved, substituted, or coordinated as a unit underscores their status as distinct syntactic constituents.

Linguists often categorize phrases based on the grammatical category of their head. For instance, a **Noun Phrase (NP)** has a noun as its head, while a **Verb Phrase (VP)** is headed by a verb, an **Adjective Phrase (AdjP)** by an adjective, and an **Adverb Phrase (AdvP)** by an adverb. This classification provides a systematic framework for analyzing sentence structure and identifying the various types of information conveyed.

As it was above-mentioned, in English, phrases which nuclear element is a verb are designated as VPs. Illustrative examples include: *to fingerprint the arrestee, to interrogate a suspect, knowingly act as a referee in a case, to exercise a set number of peremptory challenges, to perform an act directly.*

VPs are morphologically differentiated into simple and complex categories. Simple VPs are constituted by a verb (serving as the head constituent) and a single dependent component:

– *to close a case (verb + noun phrase object);*
– *to commence a case (verb + noun phrase object);*
– *to sleep soundly (verb + adverbial modifier).*

These simple VPs are characterized by their direct and relatively uncomplicated relationship between the verb and its immediate dependents. However, the English language, like many others, exhibits a wide range of complex verb phrases, which involve more elaborate structural arrangements and semantic layering. Complex VPs typically involve auxiliary verbs, catenative verbs, or other elements that add grammatical or aspectual meaning to the core verb.

For example:

– Auxiliary Verbs: These verbs *(e.g., be, have, do)* combine with a main verb to indicate tense, aspect, voice, or modality. They lack independent lexical meaning and primarily serve a grammatical function:

The case *is being* closed (be + being + closed [past participle] indicates progressive passive);

She *has commenced* the investigation (have + commenced [past participle] indicates perfect aspect);

They *do* not close cases arbitrarily (do + close indicates negation and tense).

Complex verb phrases provide a rich linguistic landscape for understanding how languages package complex grammatical and semantic information. Their detailed study offers insights into the intricate workings of both syntax and semantics.

Within the contemporary English syntactic framework, VPs occupy a position of paramount importance. The relevant significance is not solely attributable to their high frequency of occurrence in discourse; rather, VPs exhibit considerable structural diversity distinguishing them from one another. Furthermore, in complex phrase constructions they can co-occur and align, occasionally forming intricate syntactic arrangements.

The fundamental principle underpinning the classification of VPs is intrinsically linked to the verb itself, which functions as the phrase's nucleus. Specifically, the assignment of a verb to a particular grammatical subcategory dictates the structural properties of the phrase in which that verb serves as the core.

The primary forms of VPs in Tajik and English can be classified based on the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs. According to A. Mirzoev, in Tajik, the classification proceeds as follows:

1) VP which core can be either a transitive or an intransitive verb;

2) VP which core can only be a verb from a specific group;

3) VP which core is exclusively a transitive verb;

4) VP which core is exclusively an intransitive verb [2, P. 67].

In English, two structural types of VPs exist:

1) VP which composition is not differentiated by the verb`s form (transitive-intransitive) meaning its core can be any verb.

2) VP which core can only be a verb belonging to a specific group, either transitive or intransitive.

Each group of VPs is further subdivided into branches and smaller subgroups. In the arrangement of prepositions and postpositions, the frequency of usage (high-frequency vs. low-frequency) of phrases is taken into account. VPs formed with an associative connection are also characterized by high frequency of resorting to: *He always behaves in a strange way — Vay hamesha bo rohi bad raftor mekunad.*

VPs in English constitute the largest category of phrases and occupy a highly significant position. They are categorized into various types based on their internal structure. The analysis of VPs commences with the primary feature upon which their classification is based [7].

It is worth stressing that between the nucleus and the adjunct of VPs in the compared languages, two main types of syntactic relationships are most frequently observed.

1. Objective Relationship: the relevant relationship is observed where the adjunct functions as the direct or indirect object of the verbal nucleus: *to build the house — xonaro soxtan* [8, P. 41], and *to think of the future — dar borai oyanda fikr kardan* [8, P. 59]. This implies that when such phrases are integrated into a sentence, the adjunct fulfills the grammatical role of a complement (object). For instance: *I have built this house with my own money — Man in xonaro bo puli xud soxtam.*

2. Adverbial Relationship (Circumstantial): in this type, the adjunct modifies the verb by providing information about manner, time, place, or other circumstances, functioning as an adverbial modifier within a sentence: *to come early — barvaqt omadan* [10, P. 57], *to live abroad — dar xorija zistan* [8, P. 64], *to uphold fully — purra dastgirī kardan* [8, P. 68].

The adjuncts of these phrases, when part of a sentence, perform the syntactic function of various circumstantial adverbials.

1. *Still, he taught you to speak — Ba har hol, ū turo harf zadan omūzonid* [8, P. 90].

2. *He can learn a language in a fortnight — Ū ba'di du hafta metavonad zabonro omūzad* [8, P. 88].

In the first example, an objective relationship exists between the nucleus "teach" and the adjunct "you". Consequently, the relationship between the action and its object is modified by the object itself.

In the second example, "to learn a language — zabonero omūxtan", an objective relationship is also evident between the components of the phrase. However, in contrast to the first phrase, the object "a language — zabonero" undergoes no change.

The relevant type of phrase can also express relationships where the object can be created or annihilated. For instance:

1. *She arranged all her business affairs before going on holiday — Pesh az ba ruxsatī baromadanash ū hamai korhoi tijoratiyashro rohandozī kard* [8, P. 54].

2. *Sorry, I've burnt the toast — Mebaxshed, man nonro sūzonidam* [8, P. 152].

In the first example, "to arrange business affairs - korhoi tijoratiro rohandozī kardan" is a VP expressing an objective relationship. As a result of this relationship, a new object "business affairs - korhoi tijoratī" comes into existence.

In the second example, "to burn the toast — nonro sūzonidan", an objective relationship is also identified. Contrary to the previous example, in this relationship, the object is annihilated as a result of the action.

In VPs of the type under consideration, an agentive relationship can also be observed:

1. *It is attacked, it'll be defended by Sib — Agar ba on hujum kunand, on az jonibi Sib hifz karda meshavad* [8, P. 129].

2. *He was arrested by the police — Ū az jonibi politsiya dastgir karda shud* [8, P. 157].

In the first example, the phrase "to be defended by Sib - az jonibi Sib hifz karda shudan" consists of the nucleus "to be defended — hifz karda shudan" and the adjunct "by Sib — az jonibi Sib". An agentive relationship is revealed between them, meaning that the performer of the action "to defend" is Sib.

In the second example, an agentive relationship is also observed between the components of the phrase "to be arrested by the police — az jonibi politsiya dastgir karda shudan". This implies that the adjunct expresses the function of a complement, indicating the subject of the action "arrest".

Transitive verbs in the compared languages can form verbal phrases with the help of prepositions. Specifically, in the following examples, verbs are components of phrases constructed using prepositions:

1. *Are you learning English for pleasure or for your work? — Shumo zaboni anglisiro baroi dilxushī yo baroi kor omūkhta istodaed?* [8, P. 179].

2. *Take some aspirin for your headache - Baroi dardi saraton kame aspirin qabul kuned* [8, P. 179].

In the first example, between the components of the verbal phrase "to learn for pleasure — baroi dilxushī omūkhtan", a purposive relationship exists. That is, the prepositional phrase "for pleasure — baroi dilxushī" expresses the purpose of performing the action "to learn — omūkhtan".

In the second sentence, the phrase "to take (something) for your headache — baroi dardi sar (chize) qabul kardan" is present. Between the components of this phrase, a benefactive relationship exists, meaning the adjunct "for your headache — baroi dardi sarat" indicates the benefit of aspirin for treating the headache.

Objective verbs that are trivalent form two closely related phrases. Various semantic relationships are observed between the components of these two phrases. For example:

1. *She has shown them to all her friends — Ū onhoro ba hamai dūstonash nishon dod* [9, P. 77].

In the first example, the verb "to show — nishon dodan", in conjunction with the noun "friends — dūston", forms a verbal phrase constructed with the preposition "to" in English and "ba" in Tajik. The same verb, in conjunction with the objective case form of the pronoun "they" (them) in English, forms another phrase: to show them. This is translated into Tajik as "onhoro nishon dodan — to show them". In both instances, an objective relationship is apparent between the adjuncts "to her friends — ba dūstonash" and "them — onhoro" and the verb "to show - nishon dodan".

However, these two objects, "to friends - ba dūston" and "them — onhoro", differ fundamentally in meaning. The construction "to friends — ba dūston" refers to the recipient of the action "to show". It answers the question "To whom has she shown them? — Ū onhoro ba kī nishon dod?". The second adjunct "them — onhoro" refers to the multiple items that are affected by the subject (she — Tajik: ū). Therefore, between "to show" and "them" there is an objective relationship, and between "to show" and "to friends" there is an addressee (dative) relationship.

Thus, between the adjunct and the nucleus of verbal phrases in both languages, objective, adverbial, temporal, locative, and other types of relationships are observed.

Conclusion

This contrastive study of VPs in English and Tajik reveals a complex interplay of structural divergence and semantic convergence. While the overt syntactic mechanisms for phrase formation may vary significantly between the two languages, the underlying semantic relations expressed by these constructions often exhibit remarkable parallels, underscoring universal cognitive principles in language.

To sum it up, the analysis confirms that while English and Tajik are distinct in their linguistic families and structural typologies, their VP systems exhibit a profound functional equivalence at the semantic level. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic semantics and syntax, illustrating how diverse linguistic forms can effectively encode shared conceptual representations. Further research could explore the discourse functions of these phrases and their acquisition by second-language learners to enrich our understanding of these fundamental linguistic units.

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