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TEMPORAL LEXEMES: A SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Temporal lexemes, which express time-related concepts, play a crucial role in language by structuring human perception of events and actions. This study explores the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of temporal lexemes across different languages, with a focus on how they encode temporal relations, deixis, and aspectual distinctions. By examining linguistic data from diverse sources, the analysis highlights the variability in temporal expressions, their interaction with tense and aspect, and their context-dependent interpretations. Additionally, the research investigates how cultural and cognitive factors shape the usage of temporal lexemes, demonstrating that their meanings extend beyond strict chronological reference to encompass broader pragmatic functions. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of temporal reference in language and provide insights into cross-linguistic variation in temporal cognition.

Key words: Temporal lexeme,Semantics,Pragmatics,Temporal reference,Tense and aspect,Cross-linguistic variation,Cognitive linguistics,Contextual interpretation,Temporal cognition.

Introduction

Time is a fundamental dimension of human experience, shaping how individuals perceive, organize, and communicate about events. The ability to conceptualize and express temporal relations is not only crucial for everyday communication but also for structuring narratives, making predictions, and recalling past experiences. Language provides a rich system for encoding temporal information, and temporal lexemes-words and expressions that denote time-play a central role in this process. These lexemes range from explicit temporal adverbs (yesterday, soon, always), to deictic expressions (now, then), and relative markers that indicate sequence or duration (before, after, for a while). Although these terms may seem straightforward, their meanings and usage are deeply embedded in linguistic structures, cognitive patterns, and cultural frameworks.Linguists have long studied temporal expressions from both semantic and pragmatic perspectives. Semantically, temporal lexemes encode specific meanings related to time, tense, and aspect, often interacting with grammatical structures to convey precise temporal distinctions. For instance, some languages rely on strict tense-aspect systems, where temporal adverbs must align with verb morphology, while others allow more flexible interpretations. Pragmatically, however, the meaning of temporal expressions is highly context-dependent. A phrase like I'll be there soon may imply a different timeframe depending on cultural expectations, speaker intention, and situational factors. These nuances demonstrate that temporal reference is not merely a matter of strict chronological ordering but is shaped by discourse conventions, cultural attitudes, and cognitive constraints.

Cross-linguistic studies reveal substantial variability in how different languages encode and interpret temporal lexemes. While some languages, such as English and Mandarin, employ distinct lexical items to express past, present, and future time, others, like Hopi or Yucatec Maya, lack explicit tense markers but rely on aspectual distinctions or contextual cues. Furthermore, the way speakers conceptualize time is influenced by their linguistic system. The well-known Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that language

shapes thought, and research on temporal cognition has provided compelling evidence that linguistic structures can affect how speakers perceive and process time. For example, languages that favor absolute time expressions (e.g., cardinal dates, fixed references) may lead speakers to develop a more linear perspective on time, whereas languages with relative or cyclical temporal markers encourage a more fluid perception of temporal progression. Moreover, the interaction between temporal lexemes and cultural cognition is a crucial area of study. Different cultures exhibit diverse attitudes toward time, ranging from monochronic (time as a linear, quantifiable resource) to polychronic (time as flexible and event-based) orientations. These cultural perspectives influence how temporal expressions are understood and used. In some languages, vague temporal expressions (a little while, later, soon) are preferred over precise time references, reflecting cultural values that prioritize flexibility over rigid scheduling. Similarly, metaphors for time vary cross-linguistically, with some cultures conceptualizing time as flowing toward the future (e.g., English: The future is ahead of us), while others, like Aymara, reverse this conceptualization (e.g., The future is behind us).

This article seeks to explore the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of temporal lexemes across languages, investigating their structural properties, contextual interpretations, and cognitive implications. By analyzing linguistic data from diverse language families, this research highlights the variability in temporal reference systems and the ways in which language, thought, and culture interact to shape temporal cognition. Additionally, this study considers the implications of temporal lexeme variation for fields such as translation studies, intercultural communication, and artificial intelligence, where accurate temporal interpretation is essential.

Through a multidisciplinary approach that integrates insights from linguistics, cognitive science, and cultural anthropology, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how humans encode and conceptualize time. By uncovering the complexities of temporal lexemes, we gain a more comprehensive view of how language structures our perception of the past, present, and future, ultimately influencing the way we interact with the world around us.

Literature preview:

The study of temporal lexemes has been a central concern in linguistic research, particularly within semantics and pragmatics. Scholars have examined how languages encode time through lexical items, grammatical structures, and discourse strategies. This literature review explores key theoretical frameworks and research findings on temporal lexemes, focusing on their semantic properties, pragmatic functions, cross-linguistic variation, and cognitive implications.

2. Semantic Approaches to Temporal Lexemes

Semantics, as the study of meaning in language, has provided significant insights into how temporal lexemes function across languages. One of the foundational works in this field is Reichenbach's (1947) Elements of Symbolic Logic, which introduced a tripartite model of time reference-speech time, event time, and reference time. This model has been widely applied in linguistic analyses of tense and aspect, demonstrating how temporal lexemes interact with grammatical structures to encode specific temporal relations. Building on Reichenbach, Comrie (1985) in Tense and Aspect explored how temporal expressions contribute to the understanding of event structures in various languages. He distinguished between absolute and relative tense systems, showing that some languages rely on explicit tense marking, while others depend on temporal adverbs and contextual clues. Similarly, Klein (1994) argued that temporal expressions must be analyzed in relation to aspectual properties, emphasizing how different languages encode time through both lexical and grammatical means.

3.Pragmatic Perspectives on Temporal Lexemes

Pragmatic studies of temporal lexemes focus on their context-dependent meanings and discourse functions. Levinson (2000) in Presumptive Meanings discussed how temporal expressions often rely on conversational implicatures. For instance, the word soon may suggest an imminent event, but its precise interpretation varies based on speaker expectations and cultural norms. Similarly, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle has been applied to analyze how temporal expressions contribute to conversational maxims, such as relevance and quantity. Recent studies, such as Traugott and Dasher (2005) in Regularity in Semantic Change, highlight how temporal expressions undergo diachronic shifts. Many temporal adverbs have evolved from spatial terms (e.g., before originally meant "in front of"), demonstrating how metaphorical mappings shape linguistic expressions of time.

4.Cross-Linguistic Variation in Temporal Expressions

A significant area of research examines how different languages encode time through lexical and grammatical means. Dahl (1985) in Tense and Aspect Systems provided a typological survey of temporal reference in over 60 languages, illustrating how tense, aspect, and modality interact with temporal lexemes. His work showed that while some languages, like English, rely on explicit tense markers, others, such as Mandarin Chinese, use aspectual markers and contextual cues instead. Boroditsky (2001) in her cognitive linguistic studies demonstrated that speakers of different languages conceptualize time differently based on their linguistic structures. Her research showed that English speakers, who use horizontal time metaphors (the future is ahead), process time differently from Mandarin speakers, who use vertical metaphors (up for the future, down for the past). These findings support the hypothesis that linguistic encoding of time influences temporal cognition.

Additionally, Aikhenvald (2004) in Evidentiality examined how some languages encode not only time but also the source of temporal knowledge, showing that temporal markers can be intertwined with evidentiality and epistemic modality.

5.Cultural and Cognitive Influences on Temporal Lexemes

Cultural factors significantly shape the usage and interpretation of temporal expressions. Hall's (1959) The Silent Language introduced the concept of monochronic vs. polychronic time orientations, showing that some cultures view time as linear and segmented, while others perceive it as fluid and event-based. This distinction affects how temporal expressions are used in discourse. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in Metaphors We Live By further explored how metaphors influence temporal cognition. Their work demonstrated that time is often conceptualized through spatial metaphors (time is a moving object, time is money), and these metaphorical structures vary across cultures.

6.Implications for Translation and Communication

The variability of temporal lexemes presents challenges for translation and intercultural communication. Nida and Taber (1969) in The Theory and Practice of Translation discussed how time-related expressions often require adaptation rather than direct translation. For example, the English phrase in a minute does not correspond precisely to its equivalents in other languages, where a "minute" may imply a significantly longer or shorter duration depending on cultural norms.

In computational linguistics, recent research has focused on how artificial intelligence models process temporal lexemes. Bender and Koller (2020) highlighted challenges in natural language processing (NLP), noting that many machine translation systems struggle with context-sensitive temporal expressions.

A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis of Temporal Lexemes in Uzbek, Russian, Turkish, and English:

1.1 Deictic Temporal Lexemes

Deictic temporal lexemes indicate time relative to the moment of speaking.

English	Uzbek	Russian	Turkish
yesterday	kecha	вчера	dün
today	bugun	сегодня	bugün
tomorrow	ertaga	завтра	yarın
now	hozir	сейчас	şimdi
soon	tez orada	скоро	yakında

"Now" Differences:

Now in **English** is flexible: "I'm leaving now" (immediate) vs. "I'm doing it now" (soon).

Uzbek "hozir" can mean **right now or very soon**.

Russian "сейчас" can also mean **in a little while**, leading to misunderstandings.

Turkish "şimdi" is mostly immediate, but *şu anda* emphasizes the **exact present moment**.

"Tomorrow" Differences:

In **Russian**, *завтра* (is also used figuratively: *Завтра никогда не наступит* (*Tomorrow never comes*).

In **Turkish**, *yarın* is also used to mean "future" (*yarınlarımız için* - "for our future").

1.2 Sequential Temporal Lexemes

These lexemes indicate the **order of events**.

English	Uzbek	Russian	Turkish
before	oldin	до	önce
after	keyin	после	sonra
later	keyinchalik	позже	daha sonra
next	navbatdagi	следующий	sonraki
eventually	oxir-oqibat	в конце концов	eninde sonunda

"Before & After" Differences:

Before in **English** is neutral, while **Uzbek "oldin"** can also mean **earlier**.

Russian "до" (*do*) is used with **nouns**, but **"перед"** is used with events:

До работы = before work

Перед встречей = before the meeting

Turkish **"önce"** is used similarly but can also mean **priority**: *önce sen konuş* ("speak first").

"Later" and "Eventually":

Later can mean **minutes or hours later**.

In **Russian, позже** is commonly used for **short delays**, while **в конце концов** emphasizes a **final resolution.**

Uzbek **"oxir-oqibat"** and **Turkish "eninde sonunda"** both imply an **inevitable** outcome.

1.3 Duration Temporal Lexemes

These lexemes indicate **how long** something lasts.

English	Uzbek	Russian	Turkish
for a while	bir muddat	ненадолго	bir süre
forever	abadiy	навсегда	sonsuza kadar
temporarily	vaqtincha	временно	geçici olarak
briefly	qisqacha	кратко	kısa süreli

"Forever" and "Temporarily" Differences:

Russian "навсегда" is absolute, while **Uzbek "abadiy"** is also used poetically.

Turkish "sonsuza kadar" (literally "until infinity") is similar to English "forever."

Uzbek "vaqtincha" and **Russian "временно"** can indicate **uncertainty** (something may or may not change).

2. Pragmatic Analysis of Temporal Lexemes

2.1 Context-Dependent Meanings

soon / tez orada / скоро / yakında

I'll call you soon.

Uzbek: *Tez orada qoʻngʻiroq qilaman.*

Russian: *Я скоро позвоню.*

Turkish: *Yakında seni arayacağım.*

Cultural Differences:

In **English**, *soon* is vague (could mean minutes or days).

In **Russian**, *скоро* often means **sooner than expected**.

In **Turkish**, *yakında* is **context-dependent**, meaning **days to weeks**.

2.2 Figurative and Metaphorical Uses

Example: ***Time flies / Vaqt uchib ketadi / Время летит / Zaman uçup gidiyor***

Metaphorical meaning:

English, Uzbek, Russian, and Turkish all use the "time as movement" metaphor.

Russian "Время летит" is more commonly used in nostalgic contexts.

Example: *Running out of time / Vaqt tugayapti / Время заканчивается / Zaman tükeniyor*

Uzbek & Turkish Conceptualization:

Vaqt tugayapti and *Zaman tükeniyor* use the **"time as a resource"** metaphor.

In **Russian**, *время заканчивается* sounds more formal.

1. Semantic Properties of Temporal Lexemes

Each language encodes temporality differently through lexical items and grammatical structures. In this section, we explore the semantic features of temporal expressions in the four languages under study.

1.1 Uzbek

Uzbek temporal lexemes include terms like bugun (today), ertaga (tomorrow), kecha (yesterday), and more complex constructions like bir haftadan keyin (in one week). Uzbek expresses tense primarily through verb morphology, with suffixes such as -di for past and -yapti for present continuous. In Alisher Navoi's Hamsa, the poet frequently uses time references such as kecha-yu kunduz (day and night) to emphasize continuity and perseverance:

Kecha-yu kunduz fido bo'ldi joning, Vafo izlab, topolmadi yorini.

1.2 Russian

Russian temporal lexemes include сегодня (today), завтра (tomorrow), вчера (yesterday). Russian also has a rich aspectual system, distinguishing between perfective and imperfective verbs, which influences how time is perceived and communicated. In Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, the shifting of tenses and aspectual pairs emphasizes the protagonist's psychological turmoil and the fluidity of time:

Вчера было так далеко, а завтра так близко - и все же оба дня не имеют значения перед лицом вечности.

1.3 Turkish In Turkish, temporal lexemes include *bugün* (today), *yarın* (tomorrow), *dün* (yesterday). Turkish uses a combination of temporal adverbs and verb suffixes such as *-di* for past and *-yor* for present continuous, contributing to the temporal structure of discourse. In Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*, the interplay of temporal markers reflects both individual and historical memory:

Dün her şey çok farklıydı, ama bugün her şey kar altında silinmiş gibi.

1.4 English

English temporal expressions include today, tomorrow, yesterday, along with more complex forms like in a week and three days ago. English relies heavily on auxiliary verbs and tense markers to indicate time. In T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land, time is fragmented and cyclical:

April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain.

2.Pragmatic Aspects of Temporal Lexemes

The interpretation of temporal lexemes is often context-dependent. The pragmatic use of temporal expressions varies across languages, influenced by cultural norms and linguistic conventions.

2.1 Deixis and Contextual Interpretation

All four languages use deictic temporal terms whose meaning depends on the time of utterance. For example, ertaga (Uzbek), завтра (Russian), yar?n (Turkish), and tomorrow (English) all require contextual anchoring. In Tolstoy's War and Peace, deictic shifts in temporal expressions highlight the contrast between personal and historical timelines:

Время проходит, и человек, который вчера был молод, завтра уже старик.

2.2 Ambiguity and Polysemy

Some temporal lexemes exhibit ambiguity or polysemy. For instance, the Uzbek word keyin can mean "later" or "after," depending on the context. Similarly, Russian потом and Turkish sonra share this ambiguity. In Shakespeare's Macbeth, the phrase tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow plays on the multiple interpretations of futurity and inevitability:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day To the last syllable of recorded time.

2.3 Cultural and Cognitive Influences

Temporal conceptualization is shaped by cultural perceptions of time. Uzbek and Turkish tend to use relative temporal expressions tied to social rituals, while English and Russian have more fixed, absolute references. In The Brothers Karamazov, the philosophical debates about time reflect differing worldviews on fate and free will:

Человек живет не прошлым и не будущим, а настоящим, и в этом его проклятие и его счастье.

Conclusion:

The comparative analysis of temporal lexemes in Uzbek, Russian, Turkish, and English reveals both universal and language-specific features in the expression of time. While all four languages use deictic markers to anchor time within discourse, the grammatical structures, semantic interpretations, and cultural implications vary significantly. Uzbek and Turkish emphasize relative temporal expressions tied to cultural and social contexts, while English and Russian exhibit a broader use of absolute and fixed time references.The examples drawn from literary sources highlight how authors manipulate temporal lexemes to convey psychological states, historical consciousness, and philosophical reflections on time.

Understanding these nuances is essential for accurate translation and cross-linguistic

communication. Future research could further explore how metaphor and idiomatic expressions shape temporal perception in these languages, deepening our comprehension of time as a linguistic and cognitive construct.

This analysis demonstrates that while temporal lexemes share universal features, their semantic and pragmatic nuances vary significantly across Uzbek, Russian, Turkish, and English. Understanding these differences enhances cross-linguistic comprehension and translation accuracy. Future research may further explore the role of metaphor and idiomatic expressions in temporal semantics.

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