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FUNCTIONAL-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF VERBAL CATEGORIES IN AZERBAIJANI AND POLISH

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ABSTRACT

The fact that Azerbaijani and Polish belong to different language families and represent distinct morphological types gives rise to significant typological differences in the organisation of verbal categories. The primary aim of the study is to identify, from a comparative perspective, the functional-semantic characteristics of such verbal categories as tense, aspect and Aktionsart, mood and modality, voice, transitivity - intransitivity, person and number in the two languages. In Azerbaijani, most verbal categories are formed in accordance with the agglutinative model through the sequential attachment of morphological markers to the verbal stem. In Polish, by contrast, inflectional alternations, conjugation, prefixation, aspectual pairs and the expression of grammatical gender in certain forms occupy a more prominent position. Particular attention is paid to the opposition dokonany-niedokonany, one of the fundamental features of the Polish verbal system. The perfective - imperfective distinction affects the grammatical behaviour of the Polish verb lexeme, including the semantics of tense forms. In Azerbaijani, the corresponding semantic domain is expressed not through a unified grammatical aspectual paradigm, but through tense, Aktionsart, auxiliary verbs, analytical constructions and contextual means. Mood and modality also reveal important structural differences: Azerbaijani possesses broader morphological possibilities, whereas in Polish some modal meanings are realised by means of specific verbs and syntactic constructions. Voice and transitivity function in both languages as mechanisms capable of modifying the participant structure of an event.

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Introduction

Within the grammatical system of language, the verb constitutes a complex categorical structure involved in the expression of time, the position of the subject, the internal boundaries of an action, its relation to reality and the semantic relations between participants. The comparison of Azerbaijani and Polish from this perspective is particularly significant. In Azerbaijani, a considerable proportion of verbal grammatical meanings are formed through the sequential attachment of morphemes to the root or stem. In Polish, alongside the extensive possibilities of inflection, stem alternation, prefixation, aspectual pairs, person marking and in certain forms, gender differentiation play an important role.

In his description of the Azerbaijani verbal system, Kazımov (2010) considers transitivity - intransitivity, voice, conjugation and other morphological categories in their mutual interrelationship. In his classification, the morphological structure of the verb is not isolated from its function within the sentence. Particular attention is devoted to voice, transitivity and the semantic potential of verbal forms

(pp. 159–183). Khalilov (2018) adopts a broader approach in his monographic textbook devoted to the verb: verbal structure, lexical and grammatical types of meaning, transitivity-intransitivity, tense, Aktionsart, finite and non-finite forms are analysed as components of a unified system. The author states that "the semantics of the verb in Azerbaijani and its morphological behaviour cannot be sharply separated from one another" (pp. 19–218).

The situation in Polish exhibits different characteristics. In Bielec's (2012) *Polish: An Essential Grammar*, the chapter on verbs covers the imperative and indicative moods, aspect, present, past and future tense, the conditional, reflexive and modal verbs, impersonal constructions, adverbial participial forms and prefixation (pp. 29–123). This organisation itself points to the close interrelationship between tense, aspect, modality and derivation in the Polish verbal system.

A functional-semantic approach to grammatical categories requires consideration not only of a particular morphological form, but also of the semantic domain expressed by that form. For example, context, adverbial modifiers, aspectual properties and the speaker's attitude towards an event may all contribute to the interpretation of the past tense. The same principle applies to aspect and modality. From this perspective, Verkuyl's (1999) approach to aspect is of particular importance for comparative analysis. He does not restrict aspectuality to verbal morphology and writes: "Aspectuality can be seen as a unified phenomenon concerning certain properties of temporal structuring by natural language, for which languages have developed different strategies to encode it in their morphology or syntax" (p. 126). In Verkuyl's approach, aspectuality is treated as a general phenomenon of temporal structuring that languages encode by different morphological and syntactic means.

This principle yields particularly important results when applied to Slavic languages. In the Slavic linguistic tradition, the opposition between perfective and imperfective verbs is regarded as one of the central verbal categories. Verkuyl (1999) demonstrates that perfectivising elements may generate such semantic properties as completion, delimitation, resultativity, and change of situation (p. 127). Although his examples are primarily based on Russian, the theoretical proposition is also relevant to Polish, since Polish displays the principal characteristics of the Slavic aspectual system.

Nagórko's (2010) treatment of the grammatical system of Polish likewise demonstrates this semantic interrelationship. Within verbal categories, she distinguishes grammatical tense (czas gramatyczny), grammatical and lexical aspect, aspectuality (aspektualność), taxis, mood and modality (tryb a modalność), as well as voice and diathesis (strona i profilowanie treści / diateza) as separate categorical domains (pp. 134–154). In other words, Polish grammar not only differentiates tense, aspect and modality, but also takes into account their semantic interdependence.

The broad morphological potential of the Azerbaijani verb is primarily associated with the agglutinative structure of the language. Morphemes attached to the verbal stem in a specific sequence can express the participant structure of an event, voice relations, negation, tense, mood, person and number. Nevertheless, these categories do not all possess the same grammatical status. Some modify the internal event structure of the verb, whereas others determine how the speaker presents the event in relation to time and reality. The historical development of this system is examined separately in Rahimov's (1965) research. He traces the historical evolution of Azerbaijani verbal moods on the basis of ancient and classical written sources and demonstrates that the modern system represents the outcome of a long process of grammaticalisation. At the beginning of his study, particular emphasis is placed on the important role of the imperative, conditional, optative, necessitative and obligative moods in the modern system (pp. 3–5). In the section devoted to the history of the imperative, changes in person forms are demonstrated on the basis of ancient monuments and examples from the classical literary language.

The historical and semantic flexibility of the Azerbaijani verbal system can be observed not only in the development of grammatical moods but also in the evolution of individual verb lexemes. In Jafarova's (2025) study based on fourteenth-sixteenth-century material, the semantic and functional

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development of such verbs as *ayıtmaq, ulaşmaq, irmək, irişmək, qanmaq* and *dəgirmək* is examined (pp. 131–135). For instance, the author demonstrates that the verb ayıtmaq was actively used in ancient and classical texts in the meanings *"to say", "to tell"* and *"to speak"*.

An interesting point here is that the category of voice is also reflected in the historical structure of words. In presenting existing etymological explanations of the form ayıtmaq, Jafarova (2025) notes that the component -ıt has been associated with a causative voice marker (p. 132). Such evidence suggests that voice morphemes may participate not only in the synchronic grammatical system but also in the historical formation of lexical structure.

One of the most significant typological differences between the two languages emerges precisely in the relationship between tense and aspect. Whereas tense in Azerbaijani is clearly grammaticalised morphologically, aspect occupies a parallel and in many respects, even more fundamental position in the organisation of the Polish verbal system. The Polish opposition between dokonany "perfective" and niedokonany "imperfective" is based on a semantic principle that differs from the mere localisation of an action in the past, present, or future. The central issue is the internal temporal structure of the event: whether the process is conceptualised as a bounded and completed whole that reaches a result, or as an ongoing, repetitive, or unbounded process.

For this reason, Bielec's (2012) grammar treats verbal aspect as a separate section before the tense forms: the section Verb Aspects begins on page 46 and is followed by the present, past, and future tenses (pp. 46–83). This arrangement is methodologically significant, since an adequate interpretation of tense in Polish requires prior identification of the aspectual class to which the verb belongs.

Czelakowska's (2010) study of the history of the Polish grammatical tradition likewise presents voice (strona), aspect, conjugational forms and the relationship between participles and gerunds as separate issues within the boundaries of the verbal paradigm (pp. 131–164). In addition, she discusses the history of the description of conjugation in Polish linguistics in a separate, extensive section (pp. 211–224). This classification demonstrates that aspect in descriptions of the Polish verb is not merely an additional semantic property, but one of the central components of the paradigmatic system.

This leads to an important preliminary comparative conclusion: Azerbaijani possesses the semantic distinction of completion versus non-completion, yet this opposition has not been grammaticalised as an obligatory aspectual pairing encompassing the entire verbal system in the manner characteristic of Polish. Consequently, whether the Azerbaijani verb yazmaq *"to write"* denotes an ongoing, repeated, or completed event in a particular context may depend on tense, Aktionsart, lexical and syntactic devices; in Polish, by contrast, the corresponding meaning frequently begins with the imperfective-perfective opposition represented by such pairs as pisać-napisać.

Kazımov's (2010) treatment of the Azerbaijani verbal system also shows that the semantic function of conjugated forms is not restricted to their formal morphological structure. The author emphasises that "the conjugational system of the verb plays an important role in the expression of complex shades of meaning" (p. 220). In his description of the imperative, he notes the absence of a special morphological marker and demonstrates that this form is mainly constructed by adding person markers to the verbal root or stem: "Imperative form of the verb = verbal root or stem + personal endings" (p. 220).

The structure of the Polish tense system is more explicitly interconnected with aspect. Nagórko (2010) classifies verbal categories into separate functional domains: *osoba gramatyczna – grammatical person; czas gramatyczny – grammatical tense; aspekt gramatyczny, aspekt leksykalny, aspektualność – grammatical aspect, lexical aspect, and aspectuality; taksis – the chronological relationship between events; tryb a modalność – mood and modality; strona – voice* and *diathesis* (p. 154). This classification itself indicates that the temporal semantics of the Polish verb cannot be adequately explained independently of aspect.

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The same relationship is clearly reflected in Gaertner's (1938) classification of Polish verbal forms. In systematising past, pluperfect, future, conditional, imperative and other forms, he shows that present-tense forms are primarily associated with imperfective verbs, whereas formally corresponding forms of perfective verbs have future-time reference (pp. 412–424). This demonstrates that aspect directly affects the organisation of the tense system in Polish. In other words, "although the morphological form of the verb outwardly displays present-tense markers, its perfective status may orient the form towards the future" (Saloni & Świdziński, 1998, p. 13). For example, in Polish, pisać 'to write' is imperfective, whereas napisać is perfective and denotes an action brought to completion. The form piszę may refer to the actual present, whereas napiszę, although morphologically resembling present-tense conjugation, semantically denotes an event that will be completed in the future. In Azerbaijani, by contrast, the opposition between yazıram "I am writing" and yazacağam "I will write" results not from aspectual pairing of the verbal root, but from a change in tense morphology.

Comparative Features of the Categories of Aspect and Aktionsart

One of the most significant categorical differences between Polish and Azerbaijani is observed in the domain of aspect. In Slavic languages, including Polish, the perfective-imperfective opposition constitutes a central organising principle of the verbal system. In Azerbaijani linguistics, by contrast, this semantic domain has traditionally been discussed within the framework of Aktionsart, including such meanings as continuity, inception, completion, repetition and other related aspectual relations.

Verkuyl (1999) demonstrates that it is insufficient to interpret perfectivity in Slavic languages solely as a morphological property located within the verb itself. In his view, aspectual interpretation depends not only on verbal semantics but also on the syntactic organisation of the sentence and its argument structure (pp. 126–129). He associates the semantic functions of perfective prefixes with such meanings as completion, delimitation, resultativity and change of situation: "the perfective prefix works as an operator on a verbal stem providing some sense of total indivisibility, completion, delimitation, resultativity or situation change" (p. 126). Bielec (2012) likewise treats aspect as a separate major component of the Polish verbal system. In her grammar, the section on aspect precedes the tense forms and is followed by discussions of the present, past and future tenses, the conditional, reflexive verbs and modal verbs (pp. 46–123).

In Azerbaijani, however, the category of Aktionsart distributes the same functional domain differently. Khalilov (2018) distinguishes syntactic means, shared suffixes and specialised suffixes in the expression of Aktionsart (pp. 148–152). Meanings such as the inception, continuation, intensity, repetition and result of an action may therefore be expressed through a range of morphological and analytical devices. Consequently, a number of meanings conveyed in Polish through aspectual pairing of verb lexemes are realised in Azerbaijani through a broader morphosyntactic system. This contrast may be illustrated by a simple example:

Polish: pisać - "to write, to be engaged in the process of writing"; napisać - "to write and complete".

Azerbaijani: yazmaq - neutral verbal base "to write"; *yazır* - ongoing process "is writing"; *yazdı* - past fact "wrote"; *yazıb qurtardı* - completed and resultative process "finished writing".

In this case, the resultativity expressed in Azerbaijani by the analytical construction yazıb qurtardı may in Polish frequently be encoded at the lexical-grammatical level through the perfective form of the verb.

In Czelakowska's (2010) study of the development of the Polish grammatical tradition, voice (strona), aspect, conjugational forms and the relationship between participles and gerunds are shown to have been differentiated within the verbal paradigm at various historical stages. The author demonstrates that "aspect was not a peripheral notion added later to Polish grammatical description, but constituted an important theoretical problem in the process of defining the boundaries of the verbal paradigm" (p. 164).

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The Category of Mood and Modality

Verbal moods encode not so much the presentation of an action as an objective fact as the speaker's attitude towards that action. From this perspective, although the category of mood differs formally in Azerbaijani and Polish, the two languages reveal a number of shared functional-semantic domains, including command, volition, probability, condition, necessity and possibility.

The Azerbaijani mood system is characterised by a higher degree of morphological differentiation. Khalilov (2018) presents "the imperative, optative, necessitative, conditional and obligative forms as separate conjugational forms" (pp. 155–175). Each of these forms grammaticalises a particular type of speaker attitude towards the action. For example, *gəl* expresses command and volition, *gələydim* expresses wish and unreal desire, *gəlməlidir* conveys necessity and *gəlsə* marks a conditional relation. Rahimov's (1965) historical study demonstrates that the contemporary Azerbaijani mood system is the result of a long process of historical development. The author traces "the forms of the imperative, conditional, optative, necessitative and obligative moods in different historical periods on the basis of written monuments and classical texts" (pp. 3–9).

In Polish, the relationship between mood and modality is classified in a more compact manner. Under the heading tryb a modalność, Nagórko (2010) emphasises the necessity of distinguishing morphological mood from the broader semantic domain of modality (pp. 146–149). In Polish, indicative, imperative and conditional forms constitute the principal morphological oppositions, whereas other modal meanings, including necessity and possibility, may be expressed by modal verbs and various syntactic constructions.

A closer parallel can be observed in the category of the imperative. Gaertner (1938) demonstrates that "Polish imperative forms follow specific conjugational principles and may employ different stems in different groups of verbs" (p. 424). In Azerbaijani, by contrast, as Kazımov (2010) notes, "the second-person singular imperative has no separate morphological marker and the verbal stem itself can directly perform the imperative function" (p. 220). This contrast clearly reflects the difference between the morphological structures of the two languages.

Functional-Semantic Features of Voice and Transitivity

Voice is one of the principal verbal categories that modifies the relationship between the participants in an action. In Azerbaijani, voice is closely connected with the morphological structure of the verb and indicates how the action is distributed between subject and object. Transitivity-intransitivity, in turn, determines whether a verb requires an object and thus enters into a close relationship with voice.

Kazımov (2010) discusses transitive and intransitive verbs before the category of voice, thereby demonstrating the structural interdependence of these two domains (pp. 176–183). In Azerbaijani, *yazmaq - "to write"* is a transitive verb, as in məktubu *yazmaq - "to write the letter"*, whereas *yatmaq - "to sleep"* does not require a direct object. When voice suffixes are added, the actant structure of the verb may change: forms such as *yazmaq – yazılmaq – yazdırmaq* derive different participant structures from the same lexical root.

In Polish, voice relations are interpreted within the category of strona and, more broadly, within the framework of diathesis. Nagórko (2010) presents this as *"strona i profilowanie treści (diateza)"* (p. 152). This terminological approach is important because what changes is not merely the form of the verb but also which participant in the event is foregrounded in the sentence. Thus, active and passive constructions present the same event from different perspectives. This functional-semantic principle is also characteristic of Azerbaijani. In *"Müəllif məqaləni yazdı" - "The author wrote the article"*, the agent is foregrounded, whereas in *"Məqalə yazıldı" – "The article was written"*, the result and the object occupy the central position. Similarly, in Polish, the difference between active and passive structures changes the syntactic status of the participants in the event.

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Comparison of the Categories of Person, Number, and Gender

The category of person is one of the principal grammatical means by which the verb is related to the subject in both languages. Nevertheless, the interaction of the person-number system with other grammatical categories is not identical in Azerbaijani and Polish.

In Azerbaijani, person and number are primarily expressed by morphemes attached to the end of the verb: *mən yazıram - "I am writing"; sən yazırsan - "you are writing"; o yazır – "he/she is writing"; biz yazırıq - 'we are writing"; siz yazırsınız – "you are writing"; onlar yazırlar – "they are writing".*

The final position of the person marker within the verbal form reflects the sequential organisation characteristic of the agglutinative model. Polish verbs also inflect for person and number, yet the system exhibits more complex inflectional properties. Nagórko (2010) presents grammatical person as one of the primary verbal categories (p. 134). Furthermore, in certain past-tense forms, grammatical gender is also reflected in the form of the Polish verb. The fact that the author treats number and gender under the heading *"Liczba i rodzaj – lustrzane kategorie czasownika"* indicates the close relationship between these categories (p. 154).

In Azerbaijani, by contrast, the verb does not change in the past tense according to the grammatical gender of the speaker or subject. The form O getdi 'He/She left' is identical for both male and female subjects. Polish past-tense forms, however, may display formal distinctions related to gender.

Conclusion

A comparative analysis of verbal categories in Azerbaijani and Polish demonstrates that, although both languages share such major semantic domains as the temporal location of an action, the internal boundaries of a process, the relationship between subject and object, the speaker's attitude towards an event and other components of predication, the grammaticalisation of these meanings differs considerably. The agglutinative structure of Azerbaijani enables such categories as tense, mood, voice, person and number to be expressed through morphological markers attached to the verbal stem in a relatively fixed sequence. In Polish, by contrast, inflectional alternations, conjugational patterns, prefixation, personal endings and aspectual opposition jointly contribute to the formation of the verbal paradigm.

Aspect in Polish also directly affects the temporal potential of the verb; this is particularly evident in the fact that morphologically present-tense-like forms of perfective verbs may express future-time reference. In the domain of mood and modality, Azerbaijani displays a broader morphological differentiation of meanings such as command, wish, necessity, condition and obligation, whereas in Polish some of these functions are realised by modal verbs and analytical constructions. Voice and transitivity in both languages are capable of modifying the syntactic position and semantic role of event participants, although the formal mechanisms underlying these changes are not identical. While the categories of person and number display broad functional similarities, the gender-based differentiation of Polish past-tense forms constitutes an important feature distinguishing Polish from Azerbaijani.

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