



Grammatical Aspect in English and Kurdish

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Prepared by:

Abdulsttar Abdulazeez Hasan

Supervised by:

Dr. Bandar Abdul Qahhar Muhammad

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Abstract

This graduation paper is about the aspect system in Kurdish and English. The objective is to compare and contrast the system in both language to find the similarities and differences.

Aspect is defined as "the duration or type of temporal activity denoted by a verb" (Crystal, 2008). Hence, aspect shows the reader or listener the nature of the action that has taken place whether it is complete or incomplete at the time of speaker or in reference to another action. However, languages show aspect in different ways.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section one is an introduction which includes the problem, aim, significance and methodology. Section two is theoretical background in which we talk about aspect in general and aspect systems in Kurdish and English. Section three is the practical part in which we compare the two systems and show the similarities and differences between them. One of the key findings is that in English "verb to be" or "verb to have" plus bound morphemes "ing, en" show aspect but in Kurdish only some bound morpheme or even an adverbial will show us the aspect of the action or verb.

Section One

Introduction

1.1 Problem

Aspect system is about the nature of the verb to show whether it is continuous or finished. Aspect is different from English and Kurdish. It causes problem in comparison and translation between English and Kurdish.

1.2 Aims

The aim is to compare aspect in English and Kurdish it is to show difference and similarities because there are different numbers of aspect. Another aim is to show the challenge that occurs from the different aspect systems of the two languages especially in language learning and teaching.

1.3 Significance

This paper is important for students, teachers and translators. The students learn how to use aspect correctly and differentiate between the different aspects in the two languages. Teachers know how to teach aspect and show the differences between them. In addition, the translators compare and know how to translate between English and Kurdish regarding aspect.

1.4 Research Questions

Throughout this research we answer these two research questions:

1. Is aspect different in English and Kurdish? How?
2. What are effects/implications of the differences of aspect systems?

1.5 Methodology

The aim is to find the similarities and differences between the aspect system in Kurdish and English. So, first aspect is elaborated in both languages (English and Kurdish) separately. Then they are compared and contrasted to understand them better. All the notes and aspects are explained with examples. However, only simple sentence structures are explained, compound and complex sentences are excluded.

Section Two

Theoretical Background

2.1 The term “aspect”:

Aspect is another category of the verb that is in many approaches to language. For example in the traditional grammar. mixed with tense. Crystal (2002: 458) Defines "aspect as the duration or type of temporal activity denoted by a verb"

Aspect, like tense, is related to the form of the verb. It differs from tense in that tense shows the time of the action but aspect shows the duration of the action. whether it is complete or not.

Accordingly, the difference between 'He drives' and 'He drove' is one of tense; 'He drives' implies a present or habitual action, indicating that the person regularly engages in driving, while 'He drove' suggests a past action, indicating that the driving occurred at some point in the past. On the other hand, 'He drives' differs from 'He is driving' in aspect; 'He is driving' emphasizes the ongoing nature of the action, suggesting that the person is currently in the process of driving

Quirk et al (1985: 188) define "aspect as a grammatical category which reflects the Way in which the verb action is regarded or experienced with respect to time"

Aspect is not relative to the time of the utterance.

This means that aspect is only concerned with the duration of the action not the Time of the action relative to the present time . For example in a sentence like "I was going to school" the action happened in the past and this is shown by the past form of verb to be. The aspect which is shown by was + -ing is progressive and indicates that the action was not completed. And in "I am going to school" the tense is present which is expressed by the present form of verb to be and the aspect is still progressive and is shown by am + -ing.

Aspect: describes the nature or duration of an action whether the action is/was complete or in progress or just finished in relevance to the present time/action or past event.

Time refers to the placement of an action or event in the past, present or future. It's often expressed through verb tenses. Tense in grammar refers to the time of an action, indicating whether it is past, present or future.

2.2 Aspect in English:

Aspect is different from one language to another .each language has its own aspect system. Murcia and Freeman (1999: 112-118) classify aspects into four types: simple Aspect, progressive aspect, perfect aspect and perfect progressive aspect The different approaches to language have identified different numbers of tenses In English; for example the traditional grammar identifies 12 tenses while the Structural grammar identifies 16. Some linguists argue for only two tenses past and Present. However, it can be said that these tenses are not pure tenses; they are Combinations of the tenses with the aspects. It should be made clear that aspect cannot occur alone. It should always combine with one of the tenses. The following are the four aspects and their combinations with past and present tenses.

a .The Simple Aspect

Quirk et al (1985) "use the term simple to describe a verb totally unmarked" for Murcia and Freeman (Ibid: 122) "state that simple aspects refer to events that are conceptualized as complete wholes. Without breaking it down into smaller parts" This means that when a verb is in the simple aspect, it encapsulates the entirety of the action without focusing on its duration or completion.

For example in the sentence "She sings beautifully," the verb "sings" is in the simple aspect. It presents the action of singing as a complete whole, without specifying how long it lasts or whether it's finished. The focus is on the overall activity of singing rather than its duration or completion. In the sentence "He reads a book. The use of the simple present tense "reads" suggests that reading a book is something habitual or routine for the subject. It doesn't specify the exact duration of the action or whether it is completed or ongoing. It simply states the action as a fact or regular occurrence.

b. The Perfective Aspect

The form of this aspect is as follows:

Have + V + Past participle

In the sentence "She has finished her homework," the verb "has finished" is in the perfective aspect.

Murcia and Freeman (1999: 115) "point out that the core meaning of the perfective aspect is "prior" and it is used in relation to some other point in time"

c. The progressive Aspect

Progressive aspect has the following form:

Be + V+-ing

the progressive aspect is formed by combining a form of the verb "to be" with the present verb (-ing form) of the main verb for example In the sentence "They are studying for their exams, "are" is the form of "to be," and "studying" is the present participle of the verb "study." So the verb "are studying" is in the progressive aspect.

Murcia and Freeman (1999: 116) define "progressive as an aspect that is imperfect And portrays an event in a way that allows for it to be incomplete"

a. The present progressive: it describes an action which is in progress in the present Time.

We are watching a movie.

b. The past progressive: it describes an action which was in progress in the Past time.

We were watching a movie.

d. The Perfect Progressive Aspect

This aspect is formed by the combination of the two aspects perfective and progressive. This includes the combination of their meanings.

The perfect progressive aspect has the following form:

Have+ be +p.p. + V+-ing

In the sentence "I have been working on this project for weeks," the verb phrase "have been working" is in the perfect progressive aspect.

Aspect is a reference to the "duration" of an action whether it is/was complete in progress or just finished.

The follow table shows the English aspect system

Aspect combination	Rule	Example
Simple aspect	Main verb in simple form	They watch a movie They watched a movie
Perfective aspect	auxiliary Have + Past participle	They have written They had written
Progressive aspect	Verb to be + Verb+- ing	They are playing balling They were playing balling
Perfect progressive aspect	Auxiliary Have + been + V+-ing	They have been studying They had been studying

2.3 Aspect in Kurdish:

Aspect is different from one language to another .each language has its own aspect system.

Amin (1979:45) states that. "Traditionally Kurdish grammars used the term "tense" in a very broad sense so that forms like "hâtim" (I came), "ahâtim" (I was coming) and "hâtibûm" (I had come) were all considered to be distinct tenses"

However, he restricts the term "tense" to syntactic contrasts in the verb which indicate location in time. While he used "aspect" to refer to oppositions based on the notion of duration, completion.

In Kurdish, the contrast between "nârdim" (I sent) and "danërim" (I will send) is Surely that of tense while the contrast between "nârdim" (I sent) and "damnârd" I was sending) is that of aspect.

According to Amin (1979:45) "Kurdish has three types of aspects: perfective. Imperfective and perfect"

a. the Perfective Aspect

It means the action is complete and it is not expressed by grammatical element on the surface. When a verb is in the past tense it has the perfective aspect.

Xward - m I ate
eat + past I

b. the Imperfective Aspect

It means the action is/was ongoing not complete and the imperfective aspect is marked by da-. It is used with present.

da - xo - m I am eating
da - xo - m I will eat
da - xo - m I eat
impf. eat I

c. the Perfect Aspect

In perfect we link the past with now. The action is finished but it has effect on now. It is used with past and present tenses.

1. The present perfect: it is expressed by -wûa:

nân im xwârd - wûa I have eaten
bread I eat+past perf.

2. The past perfect aspect: it is marked by -bû:

ěwa nûst - bû - n
you sleep+past - you had slept

Perfective has no relation with now but perfect has impact on now.

The follow table shows the English aspect system.

Aspect combination	Rule	Example
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Perfective aspect	Verb+ past	Xwardm I ate
Imperfective aspect	Impf. da- +Verb base	daxom I am eating
Perfect aspect	Verb +p.p perf. ûa Verb +p.p perf. bû	Nânimxwârdwûa I have eaten Ëwanûstbûn you had slept

Qadir (2003:63) gives the general characteristics of Aspect in Kurdish as follows:

- a. Aspect indicates whether an action is completed or it is in progress.
- b. Each aspect is marked by a derivational morpheme that is attached to verbs.
- c. It has two types perfect (expresses the action that has been completed) and imperfect (expresses actions that are ongoing).
- d. It is used with perfect and continuous tenses but not with simple tenses.

Section Three

Data collection and Analysis:

In this section, we talk about the areas of similarities and differences between Kurdish and English regarding their aspect system. The aim is to find its implications on teaching English to Kurdish learners and translators.

3.1 The data:

For our project, the data is some sample sentences for the different aspects in both languages. The sentences are hypothetical mostly, and some other are obtained from other sources. The sentences are simple sentences, not compound or complex sentences. Aspect is seen as a representation of the nature of the action in language.

3.2 Area of Similarity:

Aspects in general are used to refer to the duration of an action. It shows whether the action is completed or is in progress. In this section, we will explore the similarities between English and Kurdish language.

1. English and Kurdish grammarians identify the following aspects:

a. The simple aspect

This aspect is unmarked and expresses complete wholes. It is shown in the Present simple and the past simple tenses.

Past simple aspect: "We traveled together" Describes a completed action of traveling together in the past without specifying duration.

Present simple aspect: "We travel together" Describes a habitual or regular activity of traveling together without specifying duration.

There is no symbol to recognize or modify aspect in these two sentences.

The -ed in the first example is added to the verb to mark the past tense and the aspect in both sentences is unmarked.

This aspect in Kurdish is unmarked with the past tense. While in the present Simple tense the aspect marker (da-) appears at the beginning of the verb
ĕma řořtin. (t- is the past tense marker and the aspect is unmarked)

ĕma dařoin. (da- is the aspect marker, while the tense itself is unmarked)

We do not know whether the tense is present or future .because there is not symbol to recognize or modify tense system.

b. The perfective aspect

The perfect aspect presents an action that happens and ends before a particular point in time for the past tense referential moment is a point in the past for the present the referential point is the present moment and for the future the referential point is some moment in the future. In another word the perfect aspect is used to show that an action is completed before a certain time:

a. Past tense: It shows an action completed before another past event. Example: "I had finished my homework before dinner."

b. Present tense: It shows an action completed before now. Example: "I have already eaten breakfast."

c. Future tense: It shows an action that will be completed before a specific future time. Example: "By next year, I will have graduated from college."

In all cases, we use "have" or "has" with the past participle of the verb to form the perfect aspect.

In English the perfective aspect is used with both past, present and future.

I have finished my work. (Present)

I had finished my work. (Past)

I will have been working. (future)

Kurdish also has this aspect which is only used with the past tense and it is Represented by the morpheme (-bû):

aw kârakay tawâw kirdbû. He had finished his work (Past)

With the present tense the morpheme (-uwa) is added to the verb.

Perfective aspect in the Kurdish traditional grammar is known as the "near past" because it indicates actions that have been completed just before the present moment not as present. Something happen before now.

tawâwi kirduwa. He has just finished or He has recently finished

c. Progressive aspect

It indicates that the speaker is in the middle of the action the action is in progress in English this aspect is used with the past. Present and future.

I was reading. (Past)

I am reading. (Present)

I will be reading. (Future)

In Kurdish this aspect only occurs with the past tense and it is represented by the morpheme (da-)

awân dahâtin They were coming

The present progressive in Kurdish is identified by the simple present and it is Expressed by adverbials.

aw danwêt. (He sleeps)

aw êstâ danwêt (He is sleeping now)

3. In both languages, the term aspect refers to the way of viewing an Internal temporal constituency of a situation .It shows the completion or The non- completion of the action which is described by the verb form

4. Both languages English and Kurdish tense and aspect precede the verb in the deep structure but follow it in the surface structure.

I had cleaned the room. (Surface Structure)

I+ past +- perfect +- verb stem+ the room. (Deep Structure)

aw dwënë hatawa. (Surface Structure)

aw + dwënë +past +- perfect + verb stem. (Deep Structure)

He came back yesterday.

5. In both languages, two main types of aspect can be distinguished: marked or unmarked.

3.2 Areas of Differences:

Aspects in general are used to refer to the duration of an action. It shows

Whether the action is completed or is in progress. In this section, we will explore the differences between English and Kurdish language.

1. There are some aspects in Kurdish that are not regarded as aspects in English. For instance the conditional aspect is considered as an aspect in Kurdish but it is not an aspect in English.

bimtwânyaya ahâtîm

If I could, I would have come.

2. In English aspect is represented by either "verb to have" or "verb to be" plus Specific morphemes added to the verb stem such as (-ing -ed). In other words aspect in English is not formed by morphemes only.

He is waiting. (Present progressive)

She was working. (Past progressive)

We have arrived. (Present perfect)

We had finished our works. (Past perfect)

The auxiliary verbs "have" and "be" indicate the tense of the verb as well and

They show agreement with the subject of the sentence; while the aspect of the verb is shown by both the auxiliary verb and the morpheme that is added to the verb. Aspect in Kurdish is represented without using any auxiliary verbs. But added morpheme such as (ûa).

aw kawtûa.

He has fallen.

3. The perfect progressive aspect this aspect is constructed from the combination of the progressive and the Perfect aspects. It means that the action is in progress before a particular moment.

In English it is used with past, present and future:

I had been working. (Past)

I have been working. (Present)

I will have been working. (Future)

Kurdish does not have the perfect progressive aspect, because the perfect Morphemes (-uwa) and (-bû) do not occur with the progressive morpheme (da-) dakirdbûmawa (I had been opening)

dakirdûmatawa (I have been opening)

However, there is a particular type of aspects that are identified by Amin (1986: 187) which may convey the same meaning as the perfect progressive aspect.

min la îş kirdndâ bûm ka aw hât.

I had been working when he arrived.

This sentence is unmarked in structure but it is marked in semantic (meaning)

Conclusions

The perfective tense is expressed by near past in Kurdish and is marked by adding (wa) to the verb. It is also marked in English but it is expressed by the structure have/has + past participle of the verb. Continuous and simple and even future are expressed by adverbial In Kurdish as they are not marked.

In all languages the terms time, tense and aspect are closely interrelated. Time is a semantic notion; aspect and tense are grammatical notions. Tense refers to the time of situation while aspect indicates the duration and non-duration of the action. English and Kurdish all Indo-European languages. They have some similar and different linguistic items, specially grammatical aspect. As Lado (1959) said "In leaning a second or foreign language, similar items are easy for the learners to learn and different items are somehow difficult for them to understand." By comparing these languages the learners can understand which item they learn easily and where their difficulties arise and need to be paid attention more.

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Kurdish Abstract

ئەم تووژینهوهیه دەر باره‌ی سیستمی ئەسپیکته له هەردوو زمانی کوردی و ئینگلیزی دا . ئامانجی تووژینهوه‌که بەراوردکردنی سیستمی ئەسپیکته له هەردوو زمان بۆ دۆزینهوه‌ی جیاوازیه‌کان و لیکچوه‌کانه. (کریستال. ۲۰۰۸) سیستمی ئەسپیکت وای پێناسه‌ده‌کات "مه‌ودایه‌که یان جووژیکه له چالاکی کاتی که له‌لایهن کاره‌وه‌ ئاماژه‌ پێده‌کریت" هه‌روه‌ها. ئەسپیکت سروشتی کار یان مه‌ودای کار بۆ خوینەر و بیسه‌ر پێشان‌ده‌دات که ته‌واو بووه یاخود ته‌واو نه‌بووه له کاتی قسه‌کردن یان ئاماژه‌ کردن به کاتیکی دی هه‌روه‌ها زمانه‌کان چه‌ندین شیوازی جیاواز پێشان‌ده‌دن که له زمانیک بۆ زمانیکی دی جیاوازه.

ئەم تووژینهوه‌یه بۆ سه‌ر سی به‌ش دابه‌شکراوه . به‌شی یه‌که‌م که پێک‌ده‌یت له پێشه‌کیه‌ک له‌سه‌ر سیستمی ئەسپیکت که کیشه و ئامانج و گرنگی ئەسپیکت و به‌رنامه‌زانی می‌پۆدۆلوجیا له‌خۆ ده‌گریت. به‌شی دووهم پاشخانه‌یه‌کی تیورییه که تێیدا قسه‌ له‌سه‌ر لایه‌نه‌کانی سیستمی ئەسپیکت ده‌که‌ین به‌گشتی وه ئەسپیکت له‌ زمانی کوردی و ئینگلیزی به‌تایبه‌تی. به‌شی سێیه‌م که پراکتیکیه که تێیدا ئەسپیکت له هەردوو زماندا بەراورد ده‌که‌ین جیاوازیه‌کانیان و لیکچوه‌کانیان. له‌ ده‌رئهنج‌مه‌ سه‌ره‌کیه‌کان له‌ زمانی ئینگلیزی هه‌ریه‌ک له "be" و "verb to have" له‌گه‌ل مۆرفیمی پاشگر "ing_en" ئەسپیکت پێشان‌ده‌دن به‌لام له‌ کوردی دا هه‌ندی‌ک له‌ مۆرفیمی به‌ستراو یاخود هاولکار سیستمی ئەسپیکتمان پێشان‌ده‌دن.