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The function of contact verbs in english and uzbek languages

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Abstract

This article describes the structure of the contact frame in English and Uzbek languages. The material includes 16,523 examples of contact verbs from 60 works of fiction. The frame has three main parts: the subject of contact, the action, and the object of contact. Other parts, such as the instrument, manner, purpose and result, appear only in some contexts. English often shows the instrument and manner inside the verb (*kick*, *punch*), while Uzbek usually shows them with suffixes and separate words (*oyog‘i bilan tepdi* ‘kicked with his foot’).

Keywords

contact verbs, frame, instrument, manner, English, Uzbek.

Introduction

Modern linguistics studies verbs not only as words with a dictionary meaning but also as a reflection of how people think about the world. Cognitive linguistics holds that the meaning of a word is connected with human experience, and that physical experience, such as touching or holding things, is the basis for many abstract ideas (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In this approach, words are grouped into categories around a typical member, or prototype (Boldyrev, 2002). For contact verbs, the most typical member in English is *touch*, and in Uzbek it is *tegmoq*.

Another important idea is the functional-semantic field. A field is a group of language units that share one general meaning; it has a centre (core) with the most typical units and a periphery with less typical ones (Bondarko, 2002). Contact verbs form such a field: *touch* and *tegmoq* are in the centre, while verbs such as *put* or *qo‘ymoq* get the meaning of contact only in context.

Finally, every verb has a set of participants that it needs, which are called semantic roles: the agent (who does the action), the patient (who or what is affected) and the instrument (what is used) (Fillmore, 1968). These roles are the basis of the frame described below.

Verbs such as *touch*, *hit*, *hold* and *kick* in English, or *tegmoq*, *urmoq*, *ushlamoq* and *tepmoq* in Uzbek, describe physical contact (Levin, 1993). Each of them calls up a whole situation: someone touches someone or something, often with a hand, a foot or a tool, in a certain way and for a certain reason. In linguistics, such a situation is called a frame. A frame is our general knowledge about a typical event, with places (slots) for its participants (Fillmore, 1982). The frame of English touch verbs has been studied by Fedotova (2007). In Uzbek linguistics, the meaning and valency of verbs were studied by A. Hojiyev (1966; 1973), R. Rasulov (1989; 2008) and S. Muhamedova (2007), who described Uzbek verbs of motion. G‘. Mirsanov (2009) and M. Mengliyeva (2021) compared English and Uzbek verbs of motion and manner of action, and Sh. Safarov (2006) laid the basis of cognitive linguistics in Uzbekistan. However, English and Uzbek contact verbs have not been compared from the point of view of the frame.

The aim of this article is to describe the parts of the CONTACT frame and to show how English and Uzbek express them.

Materials and Methods

We collected 16,523 examples of contact verbs (5,508 in English and 11,015 in Uzbek) from 60 works of fiction, including novels by Ch. Dickens, E. Hemingway, M. Mitchell, Asqad Muxtor and O‘. Hoshimov. In total, 39 English and 31 Uzbek contact verbs were found. We checked the meaning of each verb in dictionaries (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, *Merriam-Webster*, *O‘zbek tilining izohli lug‘ati*). Then we analysed which parts of the frame each example shows and compared the two languages.

Results

The main parts of the frame

Every contact situation has three main parts: the subject (who or what touches), the action (the contact verb) and the object (who or what is touched). These parts are the same in both languages. The subject and the object can be a person, a part of the body, an animal or a thing:

• “She stroked James’s head” (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, p. 27) — the object is a person.

• "He bent down and touched her cheek with his." (Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, p. 25) — the object is a part of the body.

• «Kuchukni jon-jahdi blan shunday ayovsiz tepdiki, jonivorning vangillagani qorong'i kechada butun mahallani yangratib yubordi» [He kicked the puppy so hard that its yelping rang through the whole neighbourhood] (Asqad Muxtor, *Opa-singillar*, p. 391) — the object is an animal.

• «…eri «Bas qil! Javrama!» deb stolni mushtladi» […her husband hit the table with his fist, shouting "Stop it!"] (Asqad Muxtor, *Chinor*, p. 211) — the object is a thing.

Additional parts of the frame

Other parts of the frame appear only when the context needs them. The most common are the instrument, the manner, the purpose and the result. The two languages express them in different ways (Table 1).

Table 1. Additional parts of the CONTACT frame

Part	English	Uzbek
Instrument (what is used)	inside the verb (*kick* – with the foot, *punch* – with the fist) or *with* + noun: "I will hit you with the whip" (Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, p. 576)	*bilan* + noun: «Pastak eshikni oyog'i bilan tepib…» [Kicking the low door with his foot…] (Hoshimov, *Ikki eshik orasi*, p. 52)
Manner (how)	adverbs: "slapped his left hand hard and fast against his thigh" (Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, p. 17)	adverbs and converbs: «…qizning boshiga bir shapati tushirdi» […gave the girl a slap on the head] (Asqad Muxtor, *Chinor*, p. 31)
Purpose (why)	infinitive: "He rubbed the cramped hand against his trousers and tried to gentle the fingers." (Hemingway, p. 16)	context and converbs; the same verb can show different purposes (*turtmoq* – to get attention or to push away)
Result (what changes)	context: "But he only squeezed her hand until he drove her rings into the flesh." (Mitchell, p. 106)	context and auxiliary verbs: *turtib yubordi* 'pushed (so that the person moved away)'
Repetition	inside the verb (*pummel* – to hit many times)	suffix *-kila*: *tepkilamoq* 'to kick again and again'

The instrument shows the clearest difference. The English verb *kick* already means ‘to hit with the foot’, so *with the foot* is usually not said. In Uzbek, the foot is often named even with *tepmoq*, and this makes the action sound stronger: *oyog‘i bilan tepib* ‘kicking with his foot’.

One verb can combine several additional parts (Fillmore & Atkins, 1992). For example, *grab* means ‘to take hold of something suddenly and firmly’, so it contains the instrument (hand) and the manner (suddenly, firmly). In “Mowgli grabbed him by the neck.” (Kipling, *The Jungle Book*, p. 65), *by the neck* adds the place of contact. Such verbs can combine up to four additional parts.

Discussion

The results show that the main parts of the contact frame are the same in English and Uzbek, but the additional parts are expressed differently. English often puts the instrument and manner inside the verb, so one word carries more information (*kick*, *punch*, *pummel*). Uzbek more often uses suffixes, case endings and separate words (*bilan*, *-kila*, *tepib yubormoq*). This difference reflects the grammar of the two languages: English is analytic, while Uzbek is agglutinative. As A. Hojiyev (1966) showed, Uzbek auxiliary verbs such as *yubormoq*, *qo‘ymoq* and *olmoq* add the meaning of manner and result to the main verb; our data show that this is also true for contact verbs (*urib qo‘ydi* ‘tapped lightly’, *urib yubordi* ‘struck hard’). These findings agree with Fedotova (2007), who showed that English touch verbs carry the instrument and manner in their meaning. Our data add that in Uzbek the purpose of contact plays a special role: the same action, for example *turtmoq* ‘to push’, can be a friendly signal, a call to action or an aggressive act, depending on the context.

Conclusion

The contact frame in English and Uzbek has three main parts: the subject, the action and the object. Additional parts — instrument, manner, purpose, result and repetition — appear depending on the context, and one verb can combine up to four of them. English often expresses the instrument and manner inside the verb, while Uzbek uses suffixes and separate words. These results can be useful for teaching English and Uzbek, for translation and for making bilingual dictionaries.

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