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A Comparative Study of Functional Words in the English and Uzbek Languages

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Abstract. This article explores the comparative features of functional words in the English and Uzbek languages through an expanded, human-focused perspective. Functional words, although seemingly small and often overlooked, play a decisive role in meaning-making, syntactic organization, and the expression of relationships within a text. The study analyzes articles, prepositions, conjunctions, particles, auxiliaries and modal verbs within both linguistic systems, highlighting similarities, divergences, and unique structural phenomena. The methodology includes descriptive analysis, contrastive comparison, and contextual interpretation of usage across written and spoken discourse. The findings show that English exhibits a more analytically oriented and category-rich system of functional words due to its syntactic dependence on them, while Uzbek relies more heavily on agglutinative morphology, using affixes instead of many standalone function words. This contrast underlines different cognitive patterns of encoding meaning. The discussion emphasizes the pedagogical importance of teaching functional words for translators, language learners, and linguists.

Keywords: functional words, English language, Uzbek language, comparative linguistics, syntax, morphology.

Аннотация. В данной статье проводится углублённое сравнительное исследование функциональных слов английского и узбекского языков. Несмотря на свою краткость и формальную незаметность, функциональные слова выполняют ключевую роль в структурировании высказывания, создании логических связей и оформлении грамматических отношений. Анализ включает артикли, предлоги, союзы, частицы, вспомогательные и модальные глаголы, с учётом их семантики и функций в естественной речи. Методологическая база исследования содержит описательный, сопоставительный и контекстуально-интерпретативный методы. Установлено, что английский язык опирается на широкую систему функциональных слов благодаря аналитическому характеру, тогда как узбекский язык компенсирует их отсутствие или ограниченность богатой системой аффиксов. Результаты подчёркивают значимость изучения

функциональных слов для преподавания языка, перевода и лингвистических исследований.

Ключевые слова: функциональные слова, английский язык, узбекский язык, сопоставительная лингвистика, грамматика, аффиксация.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tillaridagi funksional so'zlarning keng qamrovli qiyosiy tahlili beriladi. Kichik va shaklan sezilmas bo'lishiga qaramay, funksional so'zlar nutqning mazmuniy yaxlitligi, grammatik tuzilishi hamda birliklar orasidagi mantiqiy munosabatlarni ifodalashda muhim o'rinn tutadi. Tadqiqot jarayonida artikllar, predloglar, bog'lovchilar, yuklamalar, yordamchi va modal fe'llar tabiiy nutq kontekstida tahlil qilindi. Metodologiya tavsifyi, qiyosiy va kontekstual tahlil usullariga asoslanadi. Natijalar ingliz tili analitik tuzilganligi sababli funksional so'zlar tizimi keng rivojlanganini, o'zbek tili esa ularning ko'pini affikslar orqali ifodalab, agglutinativ xususiyati bilan ajralib turishini ko'rsatdi. Xulosa sifatida funksional so'zlarni o'rgatish va o'rganish tarjima, lingvistika va til ta'limida muhim ahamiyatga ega ekani ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: funksional so'zlar, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili, qiyosiy tilshunoslik, sintaksis, morfologiya.

INTRODUCTION. Functional words form an essential but frequently underestimated layer of any language. While content words carry lexical meaning, functional words serve as the connective tissue that shapes structure, clarifies relations, expresses subtle shades of modality, and ensures grammatical cohesion. In English and Uzbek, the systems of functional words differ dramatically due to typological distinctions: English is an analytic language, whereas Uzbek is agglutinative. This leads to differences not only in structure and frequency but also in how speakers conceptualize grammatical relationships. Understanding these differences is crucial for linguists, translators, and language learners who navigate both linguistic systems. The purpose of this research is to analyze how functional words operate in English and Uzbek, how they contribute to meaning, and why their roles vary depending on the grammatical architecture of each language. Through a detailed comparison, the study demonstrates that functional words are not mere formal markers but powerful instruments of thought organization and cultural expression.

METHODOLOGY. This study applies a descriptive and contrastive approach, examining authentic examples from literature, academic texts, everyday dialogue, and translation materials. The focus is placed on natural usage patterns rather than isolated dictionary forms. English functional words were analyzed through corpora such as COCA and BNC, while Uzbek examples were sourced from modern prose, newspapers, and conversational transcripts. The analysis includes articles, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries, modal verbs, particles, intensifiers, and discourse markers. Each functional category was



examined for its semantic role, syntactic distribution, and interaction with sentence structure. Uzbek affixation systems were compared with English standalone functional words to understand how languages compensate for structural gaps. The methodology also incorporates translation-based observation, identifying instances where functional words require reinterpretation rather than direct substitution in the target language. This holistic methodological framework allows the study to reveal not only structural contrasts but the deeper linguistic logic that governs them.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS. The comparison reveals that English relies heavily on functional words because its grammatical relations are mainly expressed through word order, auxiliaries, and fixed patterns. The presence of articles (*a, an, the*) exemplifies this dependence. Uzbek lacks articles entirely, conveying definiteness through context, word order, or affixes. This absence often presents challenges for Uzbek learners of English, who must internalize the semantic nuance encoded by articles.

Prepositions constitute another major functional category. English prepositions carry a wide range of abstract meanings, whereas Uzbek often uses postpositions or affixes. For instance, the English preposition *for* may be rendered in Uzbek as *uchun*, *-ga*, or contextually reinterpreted through word order. This difference underscores the structural flexibility of Uzbek.

Conjunctions also illustrate typological contrast. While both languages use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, Uzbek frequently employs suffixes such as *-sa*, *-kan*, *-ki* to build logical relations, whereas English opts for independent conjunctions such as *although*, *because*, *while*. These suffixes demonstrate how Uzbek integrates functional meaning within the word rather than using separate lexical items.

Auxiliary verbs in English (*be, do, have*) form the backbone of grammatical constructions, including tense, aspect, voice, and interrogation. Uzbek, however, conveys many of these meanings through affixation and does not rely on auxiliaries to the same extent. Modal verbs in English (*can, may, must, should*) have clear Uzbek equivalents, yet Uzbek often uses modal particles or intensifiers to express nuances that English encodes lexically.

The findings emphasize that functional words in English contribute to precision, structural clarity, and fixed grammatical patterns, while Uzbek favors morphological adaptability, fluidity, and context-driven interpretation. For translators, this means that functional words are rarely translated word-for-word; instead, they require semantic reconstruction. For teachers and learners, the contrast highlights the need to pay special attention to English function words that may seem redundant or overly formal from an Uzbek perspective, yet carry essential grammatical meaning.

CONCLUSION. The study demonstrates that functional words, though small in form, carry immense linguistic weight. English depends on them structurally,



semantically, and syntactically, making them indispensable in communication. Uzbek, in contrast, integrates much of this functional meaning through affixes, contextual cues, and flexible word order. This typological contrast reveals not only different grammatical systems but different cognitive approaches to organizing information. Understanding these differences strengthens translation accuracy, enhances bilingual competence, and deepens linguistic awareness. Functional words serve as gateways to understanding the internal logic of each language, highlighting the ways English encodes meaning overtly while Uzbek encodes meaning compactly within its morphological system. Their study is therefore vital for linguists, educators, translators, and anyone engaged in cross-linguistic communication.

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