SOME ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEMPORAL RELATIONS IN UZBEK

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Abstract. This article is written in the framework of cognitive linguistics, briefly outlined here. Cognitive linguistics rests on a number of theoretical assumptions concerning the nature of linguistic knowledge, the source of meaning, the role of metaphor, and the source of linguistic variation. Linguistic knowledge is not considered to be fundamentally different from other knowledge; rather it is an integral part of overall human cognition. Nor are there any autonomous modules within language; instead grammatical meaning forms a continuum. Temporal relations are represented in the language in different discourses by means of various language elements. Firstly they can be expressed by the help of the words with the temporal meaning. That is called a lexical way of expressing temporal relations. The second way is the grammatical way where temporal relations are expressed by different tense forms of verbs. The third way of expressing the temporal relation is syntactical way, which consists of two subtypes. 1) Expressing temporal relations by means of phrase structures. 2) Expressing temporal relations by means of the clauses in composite sentences. The author analyses the temporal relations in Uzbek-one of the Turkic languages used in Central Asia by the speakers living in a vast territories of former soviet republics. The author analyses two types of temporal meanings in Uzbek-Absolute tense meanings and Relative tense meanings. Such kind of division has become possible only when the linguists began using the concepts and methodologies of Cognitive-linguistics. Embodied perceptual experience is the source of meaning. This means that the foundation of all knowledge, including linguistic knowledge, is perceptual input, itself determined by the interaction of our bodies with the world. In addition to direct experiences of our physical surroundings, we have other experiences, such as emotions, imagination, deductive reasoning, abstract thought, etc.

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Two disparate phenomena that are both very characteristic of Uzbek (and of most Turkic languages) are actually conceptually related to each other and derive their semantic motivation from the same source. No one has ever suggested a conceptual link between these two phenomena before. The two phenomena are the aspectual system and the marking of points in time (hours of the day and days of the week) when something occurs with the locative case (Jumada ‘on Friday’, yettida ‘at seven o’clock’). Both of these phenomena are motivated by the way in which Uzbeks conceive of time.

Our understanding of concepts that do not have concrete physical realization is based on our understanding of concepts that do have concrete physical realization e.g. muhabbat bu olovdir (love is fire). (Safarov, 2006, p. 46)

One of the most pervasive types of metaphor usually goes unnoticed. This is ontological metaphor, which is simply the understanding of abstractions as objects. For example, ideas are abstractions with no tangible physical realization. However, if we say things like” Bu fikrlar o’lsa ham uning boshiga kelmaydi” (He can’t grasp those ideas) or „fikringni qog’ozga tushir”(Put your ideas down on paper) we are treating ideas as if they were objects. Ontological metaphor makes manipulation, including cognitive manipulation, possible. As we will see, ontological metaphor is essential to the semantic functioning of Uzbek verbal aspect, and facilitates the relationship to the accusative of time that we will examine. As human beings, we are awash in perceptual input, receiving vastly more information than we can absorb, interpret, or communicate. Ultimately various people and various linguistic communities make various decisions about
what input is used and what is ignored, and about how the used input is organized, leading to linguistic variation. This decision-making includes decisions about the use of source domains for the understanding of abstract concepts. And variations in the organization of knowledge teach us about the nature of human cognition, its dynamics and its limits. (G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, 1996, p.134)

Given what has been said thus far about metaphor and language, it would stand to reason that an investigation of concept that does not have a simple concrete physical realization is likely to yield interesting cross-linguistic results, since the need to understand such concepts in terms of other concepts provides possibilities for variation. Time is an excellent example of an abstract concept. (Gak V. G., 1997, p. 122)

Because the object of our investigation is the conceptualization of time in everyday language, this discussion will focus on how we understand time in our day-to-day experience. An astrophysicist’s conception of the parameters of space-time is irrelevant her because it does not inform the understanding of time that drives human experience and understanding, including linguistic expression. This is therefore not a discussion of the nature of time at all, but a discussion of how people experience time and expresses these experiences. We are aiming at folk theories of how time works, “the unconscious, automatically used, conventional conceptions of time that are part of our everyday conceptual systems” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1996, p. 137).

Time is perhaps the only feature of four existence which we all agree exists despite the fact that we have absolutely no direct evidence of its existence. We have no sensory perception of time whatsoever; we cannot see or hear or touch it nor measure it directly. If time exists at all, it exists purely as an epiphenomenon of effects on ourselves and the things around us. We know time only via observation of present states in comparison with memories of former states. Some of these states have predictable cycles(such as day/night and seasons of the year, as well as other natural processes), permitting us to have illusion that we are measuring time, but time itself is elusive, more of an abstract construct than a tangible reality. Intellectually and linguistically we manage non-tangible concepts via metaphor, by treating them as if they were tangible (in other words, we understand non-physical concepts in terms of experiences of the physical world). Time is an abstract domain, and human beings tend to understand time in terms of the concrete domain with which they are most familiar: space. (Diskey, 2000, p. 28)

Languages of the world provide rich data on the use of spatial metaphors to understand time this is true despite obvious shortcomings in the parallelism between the source and target domains of this metaphor (Arutjunova, 1997; Gak, 1997).

There are many ways to perform the space =>time mapping, as can be seen by comparing languages, or even by comparing time expressions within a single language. Time can be understood in terms of points, lines, paths, spaces, and objects, and that our orientation with respect to time can differ, pointing either to the past or to the future or having no particular orientation.

It is crucial to recognize that although all human beings seem to use experiences of space to understand time we do not all do this in precisely the same way. This can be seen even within a single language. For example, in English we can imagine ourselves as stationary objects with events moving toward us Bahor yaqinlashib kelmoqda (Spring is creeping up on us), or we can imagine ourselves as moving along the timeline toward events that are fixed. Men bu ishni jumagacha tugatamanmi-yo’qmi, bilmadim (I do not know if I can make it until Friday). With a bit of playful imagination, we can even access conceptualizations of time that are considerably more exotic and not conventionalized in English at all.

Moments in time are self-contained entities, existing free of the timeline, and entering it only later, when their time comes. This conceptualization of time is not sanctioned by any conventional features of English. I would like to suggest, however, that this fictional representation of time is perhaps not too far removed from the Uzbek folk theory of time, an understanding of how events behave that motivates both the aspectual system and the use of the accusative of time to designate when events take place.

The two phenomena have been received very differently by the scholarly community. The aspectual question commands a huge amount of semantic analysis, whereas the accusative of time is generally not given any attention at all. Because Uzbek aspect is the subject of a vast literature, there is no hope or intention of doing it justice here. Instead, we will note just a few prominent features relevant to this discussion:

Aspect is for most verbs an obligatory morphological feature in Uzbek languages, whereas in English it is non-obligatory and generally more lexical than grammatical. For there is no abstract notion of a pure, undifferentiated activity; all activities come with an aspectual designation.
Uzbek aspect captures distinctions involving the temporal contours of an event, in other words, how an event occupies time. The basic distinction is between perfective events that are conceived of as definite objects, similar to concrete count nouns, as opposed to imperfective events that are conceived of as unbounded substances, similar to mass nouns.

**U bu yoqqa kelayotgan edi (Oybek)** - He was coming here.

**Qozonlarda sho’rva qaynamoqda edi va palov moyi qizdirilmoqda edi (S. Ayniy)** – The soup was boiling in the pot and the oil was being heated for pilau.

For Uzbek aspect is the primary distinction, and tense is secondary, whereas for English tense is primary and aspect is secondary, if expressed at all.

**Holiqovni ko’rardim, unga gul ham oborardim. (Oydin)** – I used to see Halikov, and I used to give him flowers.

**Shu topda uning butun vujudini cheksiz g’azab egallagan edi. (Oybek)** – And anger was overhelming his body and soul at that very moment.

Abstractly, in terms of a timeline, this means that speakers of English are primarily concerned with where and event is located in a timeline, not what it looks like. Uzbek speakers on the other hand, are primarily interested in the contours of an event; its precise temporal location is a secondary consideration.

**Bu kishi mening tog’am bo’ladi (T. Jurayev)** – This man is my uncle.

**Yig’lamanglar men Oysuluv podshoning o’gli-Kunbotir bo’laman (Ergash Jumanbulbul)** – Don’t cry, I’m Kunbotir – Queen Oysuluv’s son.

Perfective tends to describe single, definite, delimited, discrete, completed, sequenced events. These events occupy time the way a concrete object occupies space. Imperfective tends to describe events that are ongoing, unbounded, simultaneous, or intermittent. These events occupy time the way a substance occupies space. In Uzbek one cannot talk just about singing or smiling; one always has to decide whether a given event is perfective or imperfective.

**Soat yurib turibdi (The watch is working yet.**

**Bu maslahat dangasalarga yoqib tushibdi (Furqat)** – The lazy-bones liked this piece of advice.

Some linguists regard the pairs like: **quvmoq-quvlamoq; turtmoq-turtkilamoq; kulmoq-kulimsiramoq; oqarmoq-oqarishmoq; also oqarmoq-oqarib qolmoq and turtmoq-turtib yubormoq**-as aspect forms in Uzbek. (Mahmudov and Nurmonov, 1996, p. 186)

The accusative of time doesn’t generally receive any semantic explanation at all. It is a phrase that we throw at students like a band-aid, without really justifying it. This phrase covers a multitude of uses, some of which overlap with English, and some of which do not, but we will focus here on one very important and ubiquitous use, the one that is used to say on what day or at what time of day something happens, which involves the preposition **ichiga ‘into’** and the accusative case **ichining**.

It seems that no one has ever offered an explanation as to why the accusative case is used in these time expressions rather than locative case. The use of the accusative in Uzbek strongly suggests motion toward a destination, and the motive for this is not intuitively obvious. After all, in English, the equivalent time expressions are location **(Juma kuni ‘on Friday’, soat yettida ‘at seven o’clock’); they do not suggest direction or movement.

The logic of this metaphor is as follows. In the source domain of space, the point is where an object arrives in space. In the target domain of time, the point is where an event arrives in the timeline, where it makes its mark in history. This may not be an entirely satisfactory explanation, but it points in the right direction. It appears that for Uzbek, there is a similar sense that all events, past present, and future, have an existence external to the timeline of history where they ultimately arrive. The conceptualization of an event as an object is an example of the pervasive metaphorical process known as ontological metaphor that allows us to understand all kinds of abstract non-entities as if they were object and mentally manipulate them. As noted above, ontological metaphor occurs in phrases like **grasping ideas or picking out the features of a pattern or being filled with grief.** In fact, the timeline itself is an ontological metaphor. Once an event becomes an object it gains the rights to all kinds of behavior in our imagination that it would not otherwise have. Aspect helps to perform the transformation of ontological metaphor on verbal action in a way that is more fundamental and prior than that available to languages where aspect is not obligatory.

I would like to suggest that is the very facts of aspect that make it possible for events to move into their destination on the timeline, and it is the lack of aspect as an obligatory feature of English verbs that prevents...
us from saying things like “I’ll get home into 7 o’clock” or “I’ll be working all day to Friday” (note that Lakoff and Johnson 1996: 153 consider English phrases like at 7 o’clock or on Friday to be locations, not destinations). In order for an object to move at all, it must exist as an object of some sort. Things that do not exist cannot move verbal actions come performed, pre-packaged as events, be they perfective or imperfective. In a metaphorical sense, this means that all verbal actions already have some identity as events beyond and prior to the timeline. They have already been given their contours, and are thus objects, objects that can arrive at destinations. In English, events take shape in the timeline; they are not pre-fab objects, which mean that they cannot move into their slots. The shapes of events in English are not prior givens, but often interpretable only upon reflection, as a result of factors beyond the verb itself. The former, qualities, present themselves as non-verbal predicates in Uzbek whereas the latter, phenomena, present themselves as verbal predicates (corresponding to what we have termed “events” above). Phenomena (=events) can be both perfective and imperfective, and their distinguishing feature is the fact that they are localizable in time. I would argue that it is precisely this localizability, in other words, the ability to be placed in time that motivates the use of the accusative of time with verbal predicates. Seliverstova happens to present a few examples that bear this out, such as the contrast between the acceptable use of the verbal predicate and accusative of time in opposed to the unacceptable combination of a non-verbal predicate with the accusative of time in it is an essential feature of Uzbek grammar; the same is not true of English.

The suggested relationship between the Uzbek accusative of time and aspect is also in keeping with the spirit of (Safarov’s) work on the semiotics of Uzbek in particular his work on the extension feature, which is the sole marking of the accusative case, “The extension feature states that its referent has been looked at in a narrated situation, where it stood in a relationship to another component of that narrated situation, and states that this referent has retained its identity after the original narrated situation has terminated”. Here the referent of the extension feature is the day or hour when an event takes place and the other component of the narrated situation is the event itself. Events must have an existence separate from the times when they take place in order to enter into the relationship of the extension feature with points in time. What we are adding to the picture here is the fact that aspect creates events that can enter into this relationship with times when they take place. This notion of semiotic unity, and of deictic relationship among grammatical features, is a hallmark of this approach, and the type of interrelationship between aspect and case presented here is a confirmation of just such an approach.

To conclude: the Uzbek aspectual system assumes the existence of events, conceiving of the entities object to metaphorical manipulation that moves into their slots in the timeline much as physical objects move toward their destinations. Thus aspect motivates the use of the accusative of time.

References