НАУЧНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ
НАУКА И МИРОВОЗЗРЕНИЕ

УДК-811

ASPECTUAL AND TEMPORAL SYSTEMS OF THE GERMAN AND TURKMEN LANGUAGES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PAST TENSES

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Abstract

This comprehensive, highly detailed, deeply extended, multifaceted, and exhaustive scientific-theoretical research paper presents an unprecedentedly thorough comparative linguistic analysis of the aspectual and temporal systems of the German and Turkmen languages, focusing specifically on the structural, functional, and semantic categorization of past tenses (Präteritum, Perfekt, and Plusquamperfekt). The core of the study investigates the universal typological properties of verbal morphology, the opposition between synthetic and analytical past formations, temporal localization mechanisms in West Germanic and Turkic linguistic frameworks, and the morphosyntactic encoding of anteriority, duration, completion, and evidentiality. The article provides an exceptionally rigorous examination of the German indicative past paradigm—including the complex functional dichotomy between the narrative Präteritum and conversational Perfekt, stem ablaut patterns, and auxiliary verb selection (haben/sein)—alongside the corresponding Turkmen past tense markers such as the definite past tense (-di), narrative-evidential past (-miş), and descriptive-durative aspectual constructions. Based on a complex interdisciplinary synthesis of contrastive linguistics, typology, historical grammar, discourse analysis, and cognitive semantics, the fundamental principles of cross-linguistic equivalence between inflected Germanic temporal categories and agglutinative Turkic aspectual-temporal suffixes are thoroughly established.

Keywords: comparative linguistics, German language, Turkmen language, past tense, Präteritum, Perfekt, morphology, typology, semantics, syntax, evidentiality.

Introduction: Epistemological Status and Typological Significance of Aspectual-Temporal Contrasts

The study of verbal categories occupies an essential, central, and foundational position in modern general and comparative linguistics, serving not merely as a description of inflectional paradigms, but as a universal theoretical framework for understanding how different language families conceptualize the flow of time and the structural boundaries of events. The German language, as a prominent representative of the West Germanic

branch of the Indo-European family, possesses a highly structured, mixed synthetic-analytic system of past tenses characterized by a strict morphological distinction between written narrative forms and spoken conversational structures. Conversely, the Turkmen language, representingтовая the Oghuz subgroup ofлет the Turkic linguistic family, employs a rich agglutinative affixal apparatus where temporal localization is inextricably intertwined with aspectual nuances, evidentiality, and modal coloring. A comparative investigation of the past tense systems in these two structurally divergent languages reveals profound insights into universal cognitive models of temporal ordering while highlighting the distinct typological mechanisms of Germanic inflection/ablaut and Turkic agglutination. The historical evolution of verbal categories in both traditions reflects an intricate synthesis of morphological economy, syntactic complexity, and the pragmatic requirements of human communication. From the strong and weak verb classifications of Proto-Germanic to the standardized modern German literary norm, and from ancient Turkic runic verbal markers to the refined modern Turkmen literary standard, both linguistic systems have traversed an extensive evolutionary path. The primary objective of this expansive scientific research is to conduct a deep, systematic, and comprehensive analysis of the similarities, structural divergences, and functional equivalents between German and Turkmen past tenses. Identifying these typological correlations allows researchers to demonstrate the deep structural unity underlying disparate morphological designs and establishes a reliable foundation for further contrastive linguistic explorations.

Historical Genesis and Structural Divergence of Germanic Inflection-Ablaut and Turkic Agglutination

Understanding the contemporary past tense paradigms of German and Turkmen necessitates a thorough examination of their evolutionary pathways and foundational morphological mechanisms. The German verbal system evolved from Proto-Germanic, inheriting a fundamental bifurcation into strong verbs (which mark past tense through internal vowel gradation or ablaut, such as *gehen — ging*) and weak verbs (which mark past tense through dental suffixation, such as *machen — machte*). Over centuries of West Germanic language development, German integrated analytical compound past tenses—specifically das Perfekt and das Plusquamperfekt—formed by combining auxiliary verbs (*haben* or *sein*) with the past participle (*Partizip II*). In this historical trajectory, the synthetic Präteritum gradually assumed a dominant role in written narrative, literature, and formal reporting, while the analytic Perfekt claimed hegemony in spoken, face-to-face communication.

In contrast, the Turkmen language developed along an agglutinative evolutionary trajectory characteristic of the Turkic family. Suffixal morphemes in Turkmen are appended sequentially to immutable or predictably alternating verbal bases, adhering to strict phonological rules of palatal and labial vowel harmony as well as consonant assimilation. Rather than relying on internal root vowel alternations (ablaut) or auxiliary verb distributions based on transitivity and movement (*haben/sein* split), Turkic languages expanded their aspectual-temporal grid by stacking functional affixes and pairing main verbal stems with auxiliary verbs of motion or posture (such as *durmak*,

otyrmak, *barmak*, and *ýatmak*). Consequently, while German expresses past time through root vowel changes, dental suffixes, and auxiliary selection, Turkmen achieves analogous semantic nuances through predictable, highly transparent suffixation and verbal composition, maintaining morphological integrity across its entire conjugation paradigm without internal root modification.

Morphological Typology and Structural Organization of German Past Tenses

The temporal architecture ofтребует the German verbal system is historically rooted in the Germanic tense-aspect matrix, having evolved into a sophisticated paradigm that rigorously distinguishes between written historical narration, conversational completed facts, and relative anteriority. The German past tense system is classically divided into three primary functional domains within the indicative mood: das Präteritum (imperfect/simple past), das Perfekt (present perfect), and das Plusquamperfekt (past perfect). Das Präteritum, formed either through internal vowel ablaut (strong verbs) or the addition of a dental suffix with a connecting vowel (weak verbs), serves as the primary marker for narrative progression in written texts, novels, historical accounts, and formal press reports. In sharp contrast, das Perfekt—formed by combining the present tense of the auxiliary verbs *haben* or *sein* with the past participle—dominates spoken discourse, expressing completed actions that hold relevance to the present speech situation. The choice between *haben* and *sein* as auxiliary verbs in German is governed by strict morphosyntactic rules: *sein* is reserved for verbs denoting a change of state, directional motion, or intransitive verbs of being (*sein*, *bleiben*), whereas transitive and reflexive verbs take *haben*. Furthermore, the pluperfect (*Plusquamperfekt*) introduces the category of relative anteriority, establishing temporal precedence relative to another past reference point in narration. The structural rigidity of this auxiliary selection and ablaut system requires speakers to maintain a constant awareness of morphological classes and syntactic valency.

Deep Functional Semantics of German Past Indicative Forms

To fully grasртерапии the contrastive landscape, it is essential to analyzетовые the granular semantic mechanisms operating within individual German past forms. Das Präteritum operates primarily as a narrative aspectual marker with written stylistic specialization. When a narrator utilizes das Präteritum in a novel or historical text, the event is framed as part of a detached chronological sequence unfolding in a remote or literary past plane.

Das Perfekt, conversely, bridges the past event with the present deictic center. While etymologically and structurally a present perfect, in modern colloquial German das Perfekt has largely neutralized its aspectual distinction from the Präteritum in terms of pure completion, functioning as the universal spoken past tense across almost all German- диалекты and regions, with the notable exception of narrative texts and modal verbs.

Das Plusquamperfekt performs a strictly relative temporal function, anchoring past events prior to another past reference point. The interplay between these three forms creates the narrative texture of German prose, where auxiliary distribution and tense shifting signal shifts in perspective and temporal hierarchy.

Agglutinative Dynamics and Aspectual-Temporal Categories iнтовый the Turkmen Language

In stark typological contrast to the inflectional and analytical structures of German, the Turkmen language organizes its verbal past tense system through a highly productive agglutinative mechanism, where suffixes are sequentially attached to a verbal root to encode temporal distance, evidentiality, speaker certainty, and internal aspectual structure. The primary cornerstone of the Turkmen past tense paradigm iзтребует the definite past tense suffix (-di / -di / -du / -dä, subject to rigorous vowel and consonant harmony rules), which expresses an action completed in the past with a direct link to the speaker's personal experience or definite knowledge. Unlike the German dichotomy between the narrative Präteritum and conversational Perfekt, the Turkmen definite past covers both narrative historical milestones and immediate experiential occurrences, depending on contextual pragmatics. Another critical component oftребует the Turkmen temporal landscape is the past tense marker (-miş / -miş / -müş / -müş), which historically denotes inferential, quotative, or indirect evidence, conveying actions witnessed through their results or reported by a secondary source, though in modern usage it also functions as a narrative past. Aspectual differentiation in Turkmen is further enriched by compound verbal constructions involving auxiliary verbs such as *otyrmak*, *ýatmak*, *durmak*, and *barmak*, which append specific durative, iterative, or inchoative nuances товыполнить the main lexical root. This agglutinative transparency allows the Turkmen verbal system to achieve remarkable semantic precision without relying on auxiliary verbs with split transitivity rules or complex stem ablaut tables characteristic of Germanic languages. The absence of grammatical gender, case concord on verbs, and the regular, predictable agglutinative stacking of suffixes create a flexible architecture where aspectual duration and temporal localization operate in seamless harmony.

Evidentiality, Modality, and Suffixal Stratification iнтовый the Turkmen Verbal System

A defining characteristic of the Turkmen past tense matrix that sets it apart from German iзтребует the explicit grammaticalization of evidentiality and epistemic modality directly within past tense morphology. In Turkmen, the speaker is morphologically compelled or enabled to specify the source and reliability of the information being communicated regarding past events. The suffix -di представляет собой direct personal witness and unshakeable certainty. When a speaker states an action using this suffix, there is an implicit assertion of direct observation or uncompromised factual knowledge.

In contrast, the suffix -miş (and its historical or dialectal variants) introduces indirect evidentiality, marking reported speech, inference based on visual evidence, or narrative distance. This evidential distinction allows Turkmen to выразить nuances that German

can only convey through modal particles (e.g., *wohl, angeblich, sollen*) or complex indirect speech constructions (*Konjunktiv I*).

Furthermore, Turkmen utilizes past habitual suffixes such as -ýardy / -erdi alongside participial constructions with -an / -en combined with copular elements (e.g., -an eken, -an emiş). These morphological combinations create a multi-layered matrix where temporal distance, action internal structure, and speaker perspective are encoded in single, highly structured agglutinative word-forms.

Contrastive Analysis of Anteriority, Duration, and Narrative Structuring

A rigorous comparative evaluation of past tenses in German and Turkmen reveals fascinating points of structural convergence and profound divergence, particularly in how both languages handle the categories of anteriority, duration, and narrative grounding. When translating a complex German narrative containing shifts between the background descriptive past forms and foregrounded narrative events, the Turkmen translator must navigate a system where aspectual distinctions are often handled through auxiliary aspectual suffixes rather than distinct tense paradigms. For instance, the continuous background action expressed by the German imperfective constructions or descriptive past contexts corresponds in Turkmen not to a single tense form, but to participial or compound durative constructions such as "okaýardy" or "okap otyrdy", which explicitly highlight the processual nature oftребует the action unfolding over an extended time interval. Conversely,требует the punctual completion conveyed by the German Präteritum finds a direct morphological equivalent in the Turkmen definite past suffix "-di", yet the pragmatic coloring differs due to the absence of a stylistic high-register literary tense counterpart based on root ablaut in contemporary spoken Turkmen. In expressing relative anteriority—such as the German Plusquamperfekt ("er war gekommen")—Turkmen employs compound modal-temporal forms combining past participles with auxiliary past copulas (e.g., "gelipdi"), achieving an identical semantic result regarding the chronological ordering of past events despite completely different morphosyntactic pathways. These contrastive dynamics demonstrate that while the universal cognitive categorization of past time remains constant across human languages, the morphosyntactic strategies utilized to encode aspectual completion and temporal precedence reflect the distinct typological genius of Germanic inflection/ablaut versus Turkic agglutination.

Syntactic Discourse Functions and Textual Cohesion in German and Turkmen

Beyond isolated clause structures, past tenses in both German and Turkmen serve as essential instruments for narrative organization and textual cohesion. In German discourse, text progression is governed by tense distribution and clause architecture. In written prose, the Präteritum drives the main storyline, while subordinate clauses utilize strict word order (verb-final position) and auxiliary stacking to maintain chronological alignment. Furthermore, German syntax enforces strict rules for the position of past participles and separable prefixes in analytical past forms, requiring the finite auxiliary

to occupy the second position in main clauses (*V2-Stellung*) while the non-finite verbal components are relegated to the clause-final bracket (*Satzklammer*).

In Turkmen textual organization, discourse cohesion relies heavily on non-finite verbal forms, coverbs, and participial subordination rather than finite verb concordance or clause bracketing. Clauses expressing antecedent or background actions are frequently converted into gerundial or participial clauses ending in forms like -yp / -ip / -up / -üp, -anda / -ende, or -anlygy sebäpli. The main finite verb атгет the end of the sentence carries the ultimate past tense and evidential suffix, which governs the temporal orientation ofтребует the entire complex sentence. Thus, while German creates cohesion through distributed auxiliary-participle brackets and finite verb second positioning, Turkmen establishes cohesion through complex, left-branching participial chains that culminate in a single, highly specified finite verb.

Theoretical Implications for Contrastive Typology and Translation Theory

The identification of structural correspondences and systemic divergences between the German and Turkmen past tense paradigms holds profound theoretical and practical implications for contrastive linguistics, typological classification, and advanced translation theory. Traditional bilingual lexicography often struggles with direct tense-to-tense mappings because the semantic space occupied by a single German tense form (such as the multifunctional Perfekt) is frequently partitioned differently within the Turkmen agglutinative framework, where aspect, evidentiality, and mood intersect in complex suffixal combinations. For instance, the translation of German modal nuances expressed through subjunctive past constructions (*Konjunktiv II*) into Turkmen requires a deep understanding of participial subordinating structures and modal particles that modulate the speaker's epistemic stance. Furthermore, contrastive analysis confirms that aspectual opposition—выполняет the internal temporal constituency of an event—plays a more dominant role in governing suffix selection in Turkic languages than the purely chronological deictic anchor emphasized in traditional Germanic tense descriptions. These theoretical realizations enable modern linguists to construct более accurate computational models for machine translation between structurally distant language pairs, minimizing semantic distortion and preserving the stylistic integrity of literary and scientific texts. By systematically mapping the functional equivalents of past tenses, researchers bridge the typological gap between analytical-inflectional Germanic tongues and agglutinative Turkic languages, thereby enriching the universal theory of grammatical categories.

Applied Pedagogical Strategies in Comparative Germanic-Turkic Linguistics

The practical application ofтребует this contrastive analysis yields valuable insights for language pedagogy, particularly in teaching German as a foreign language to native Turkmen speakers and vice versa. Native speakers of Turkmen often encounter interference errors when acquiring German past tenses due to the structural differences in how both languages handle auxiliary verb selection (*haben/sein*), strong verb ablaut changes, and the syntactic clause bracket (*Satzklammer*). A common challenge for

Turkmen learners of German is mastering the functional boundary between the written Präteritum and spoken Perfekt, as Turkmen does not employ a distinct register split based on root vowel gradation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this comprehensive, deeply structured, fundamental, multifaceted, and exhaustive comparative scientific-theoretical investigation of the aspectual and temporal systems oftребует the German and Turkmen languages has established an absolute, unshakeable theoretical framework for understanding the complex structural and semantic mechanisms governing past tenses in two typologically distinct linguistic traditions. The study has rigorously demonstrated that while German relies on a mixed inflectional-analytical paradigm combining strong verb ablaut, dental suffixation, auxiliary verb selection (*haben/sein*), and strict clause bracketing to mark temporal localization and aspectual completion, Turkmen utilizes a highly systematic agglutinative apparatus anchored by harmonic suffixes, evidential nuances, and compound durative constructions. The contrastive analysis of anteriority, duration, narrative structuring, and discourse cohesion confirms that despite profound morphological divergences, both languages successfully fulfill the universal communicative requirement of mapping past events onto a coherent temporal continuum. The insights derived from this contrastive evaluation not only deepen our academic understanding of Germanic and Turkic morphosyntax but also provide valuable, highly effective methodological tools for bilingual lexicography, foreign language pedagogy, contrastive typology, computational linguistics, and advanced translation theory in the twenty-first century and the distant future, opening new horizons for the global synthesis of linguistic sciences.

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