

RUSSIAN PERFECTIVE AND IMPERFECTIVE VERB ASPECTS AND THEIR ENGLISH TENSE EQUIVALENTS: SEMANTIC AND TRANSLATION ANALYSIS

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ANNOTATSIIYA: Ushbu tadqiqot rus tilidagi mukammal va mukammal bo'lmagan fe'llarning ma'nolari va ularning ingliz tilidagi zamon ekvivalentlari: present perfect, simple past va past continuous bilan tarjima mosliklarini o'rganadi. Kontrastiv va semantik yondashuv yordamida rus fe'llari turli kontekstlarda qanday ishlashini tahlil qiladi va ularni ingliz tiliga tarjima qilishdagi odatiy qiyinchiliklarni ko'rsatadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, rus tili harakatning yakunlanishini morfologik usulda ifodalaydi, ingliz tili esa sintaktik konstruktsiyalardan foydalanadi, bu til o'qitish va tarjima amaliyoti uchun foydali ma'lumot beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: rus fe'llari, mukammal va mukammal bo'lmagan fe'l, ingliz zamonlari, present perfect, simple past, past continuous, semantik tahlil, tarjima ishlari

АННОТАЦИЯ: В этой статье рассматриваются значения и переводческие соответствия между русскими совершенным и несовершенным видами глаголов и их английскими временными эквивалентами: present perfect, simple past и past continuous. С помощью контрастивного и семантического подхода анализируется, как русский вид функционирует в разных контекстах, а также выявляются типичные трудности при передаче этих различий на английский язык. Результаты показывают, что русский язык выражает завершенность действия морфологически, тогда как английский использует синтаксические конструкции, что может быть полезно для преподавателей и переводчиков.

Ключевые слова: русские глаголы, совершенный и несовершенный вид, английские времена, present perfect, simple past, past continuous, семантический анализ, переводоведение

ABSTRACT: This study explores the meanings and translation correspondences between Russian perfective and imperfective verbs and their English tense equivalents: present perfect, simple past, and past continuous. By using a contrastive and semantic approach, it examines how Russian aspects function in different contexts and highlights common challenges in translating these distinctions. The results show that Russian conveys action completion morphologically, whereas English relies on syntactic constructions, offering valuable insights for language teaching and translation practice.

Keywords: Russian verbs, perfective and imperfective aspect, English tenses, present perfect, simple past, past continuous, semantic analysis, translation studies

INTRODUCTION

Relevance

The category of aspect in the Russian language is one of its central grammatical categories, playing a key role in expressing the completeness or duration of an action. In English, there is no comparable morphological category; information about the completeness of an action is conveyed through tense forms such as the present perfect, simple past, and past continuous. Despite existing research on this topic, a systematic comparative analysis of these categories from the perspective of semantics and translation remains insufficiently developed, which creates certain difficulties both for linguists and for practicing translators.



Research Aim

The aim of this study is to identify typological, semantic, and translational correspondences between the Russian perfective and imperfective verb aspects and the English tense forms.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the functions of the perfective and imperfective aspects in the Russian language.
2. To compare them with English tenses and identify typological parallels and differences.
3. To reveal the difficulties involved in translating aspectual distinctions and propose possible strategies for overcoming them.

Literature Review

Comparative studies of Russian aspect and English tense forms were conducted by scholars such as Comrie (1976) and Dahl (1985). In the fields of translation and contrastive linguistics, significant contributions were made by Vinogradov (1959) and Baker (1992).

Scientific Novelty

This research focuses on the cognitive and pragmatic differences between the Russian aspect system and English tense forms, which have not previously been systematically examined, and it also offers practical recommendations for teachers and translators.

RESEARCH METHODS

Materials

A variety of linguistic sources were used for the analysis, which made it possible to examine the features of the Russian perfective and imperfective aspects and their English tense equivalents in different contexts.

Literary Texts

These sources make it possible to identify how aspect functions in narrative and artistic discourse:

• Long-lasting processes:

“Он писал письмо весь вечер” → *He was writing a letter all evening* (imperfective aspect, ongoing process).

• Completed actions with a result:

“Она прочитала книгу за день” → *She read the book in one day / She has read the book in one day* (perfective aspect).

• Simultaneous actions:

“Дети играли во дворе, пока шёл дождь” → *The children were playing in the yard while it was raining* (imperfective aspect, ongoing action with a simultaneous event).

Scientific and Academic Texts

These texts allow the formal use of aspects in contexts requiring precise description of actions and results to be examined:

• A fully completed action:

“Исследование было проведено в течение года” → *The study was conducted over a year* (perfective aspect).

• Focus on the process of observation or experimentation:

“Авторы описывали процесс эксперимента” → *The authors were describing the experiment process* (imperfective aspect).

• Indicating a result achieved by a certain moment:

“Эксперимент завершился с положительным результатом” → *The experiment has been completed with positive results* (perfective aspect).



Spoken Language and Dialogues

These materials are used to analyze everyday speech in which aspect and tense choices vary widely:

• **Ongoing action:**

“Я делаю домашку” → *I am doing my homework* (imperfective aspect).

• **Completed action:**

“Я сделал домашку” → *I have done my homework* (perfective aspect).

• **Long-lasting action accompanied by another event:**

“Я читал книгу, когда он позвонил” → *I was reading the book when he called* (imperfective aspect).

• **Result achieved by a given moment:**

“Она приготовила ужин к приходу гостей” → *She had prepared dinner by the time the guests arrived* (perfective aspect).

Electronic Resources and Text Corpora

To check frequency and compare aspect usage, the following resources were used:

- Russian National Corpus (RNC)
- British National Corpus (BNC)

Examples from Corpora:

- “Студенты писали эссе всю неделю” → *Students were writing essays all week* (imperfective aspect, durativity).
- “Студенты написали эссе к понедельнику” → *Students had written the essays by Monday* (perfective aspect, completed action).

Examples of Verbs and Contexts

Russian Aspect	English Equivalent	Context	Explanation
писать (imperfective)	<i>to write / was writing</i>	process in the past	Long-lasting or repeated action with no focus on completion.
написать (perfective)	<i>have written / wrote</i>	completed action	Emphasizes the completion of the action; translated as present perfect or simple past.
читать (imperfective)	<i>to read / was reading</i>	long-lasting action	A prolonged action that may occur simultaneously with another event.
прочитать (perfective)	<i>have read / read</i>	completion of reading	Focus on the result of the action.
делать (imperfective)	<i>to do / was doing</i>	ongoing action	Indicates an action in progress.
сделать (perfective)	<i>have done / did</i>	completed action	Highlights the completion of the action; tense depends on context.
смотреть (imperfective)	<i>to watch / was watching</i>	duration of an action	Continuous action in progress.
посмотреть (perfective)	<i>have watched / watched</i>	result of watching	Completed action with emphasis on the result.
готовить (imperfective)	<i>to cook / was cooking</i>	process of action	Long-lasting or repeated action.



Russian Aspect	English Equivalent	Context	Explanation
приготовить (perfective)	<i>have cooked / cooked</i>	completed action	Emphasis on the result of the action.

RESULTS

The Russian imperfective aspect expresses a process, duration, or repetition of an action without emphasizing its completion. In English, this aspect is conveyed through the **past continuous** (to indicate an ongoing process) or the **simple past** (to indicate a completed action when the fact itself is important rather than the result).

Examples:

Simple Past (a completed action in the past)

- «Я читал книгу вчера» → *I read the book yesterday*
- «Она писала письмо два часа назад» → *She wrote a letter two hours ago*
- «Он сделал работу к вечеру» → *He finished the work by evening*

Past Continuous (an ongoing action)

- «Я читал книгу, когда он пришёл» → *I was reading the book when he came*
- «Дети играли на улице, пока шёл дождь» → *The children were playing outside while it was raining*
- «Она готовила ужин, когда мы вернулись домой» → *She was cooking dinner when we came home*

The Russian imperfective aspect combines the functions of process, duration, and repetition, whereas English requires selecting a tense depending on the context.

The perfective aspect expresses the completion of an action or its result. In English, this is conveyed through the **present perfect** (when the result is relevant to the present) or the **simple past** (a completed action in the past, often with a time marker).

Examples:

Present Perfect (result / relevance to the present)

- «Я написал письмо» → *I have written the letter*
- «Она уже прочитала статью» → *She has already read the article*
- «Мы приготовили ужин к приходу гостей» → *We have prepared dinner for the guests*

Simple Past (a completed action in the past)

- «Я написал письмо вчера» → *I wrote the letter yesterday*
- «Он сделал домашку утром» → *He did his homework in the morning*
- «Она посмотрела фильм на прошлой неделе» → *She watched the movie last week*

The choice of English tense depends on the time marker, context, and pragmatic emphasis.

Translation Difficulties

When translating Russian aspect into English, difficulties arise because the two languages use different grammatical means: Russian distinguishes process and completion morphologically, whereas English does so through tense forms and contextual cues.

Translation Strategies:

- **Literal translation** — the aspect is preserved, and the tense is chosen according to context.
 - «Она написала письмо» → *She wrote a letter*
- **Adaptive translation** — the emphasis on process or result is considered, sometimes requiring a different tense.
 - «Я читал книгу» → *I was reading the book*
- **Contextual translation** — tense adjustments are made to convey nuances of completion.



- «Я сделал домашку вчера» → *I did my homework yesterday*
- «Он прочитал книгу к вечеру» → *He had read the book by the evening*

Cognitive Aspects

The Russian aspect system encodes the conceptual category of action boundaries. English conveys this through tense forms, contextual cues, and time markers.

Examples of cognitive differences:

- «Я писал письмо два часа» → *I was writing a letter for two hours*
(imperfective: process, duration)
- «Я написал письмо за два часа» → *I wrote the letter in two hours / I have written the letter in two hours*
(perfective: completion, result)
- «Она читала книгу, когда он позвонил» → *She was reading the book when he called*
(imperfective with a simultaneous event)
- «Она прочитала книгу к вечеру» → *She had read the book by the evening*
(perfective: completion, result)
- «Мы делали уроки каждый день» → *We were doing homework every day*
(imperfective: repeated action)
- «Мы сделали уроки вовремя» → *We finished our homework on time*
(perfective: result)

Different languages use different cognitive strategies: Russian aspect allows speakers to indicate completion directly, whereas English expresses this through tense, context, and time markers.

Comparison of Russian Aspect and English Tenses with Expanded Examples

Russian Aspect	English Equivalent	Context / Example	Explanation
писать (imperfective)	<i>to write / was writing</i>	«Я писал письмо весь вечер» → <i>I was writing a letter all evening</i>	Process, duration of the action, repetition.
написать (perfective)	<i>have written / wrote</i>	«Я написал письмо вчера» → <i>I wrote the letter yesterday</i>	Completed action; the fact of completion.
читать (imperfective)	<i>to read / was reading</i>	«Я читал книгу, когда он позвонил» → <i>I was reading the book when he called</i>	Long action combined with another event.
прочитать (perfective)	<i>have read / read</i>	«Я прочитал книгу к вечеру» → <i>I had read the book by the evening</i>	Completed action, result achieved by a specific moment.
делать (imperfective)	<i>to do / was doing</i>	«Я делал домашку весь день» → <i>I was doing my homework all day</i>	Action in progress, emphasis on duration.
сделать (perfective)	<i>have done / did</i>	«Я сделал домашку» → <i>I have done my homework</i>	Completed action with emphasis on the result.
готовить (imperfective)	<i>to cook / was cooking</i>	«Она готовила ужин, пока мы смотрели фильм» → <i>She was cooking dinner while we were watching a movie</i>	Ongoing action coinciding with another action.
приготовить	<i>have cooked /</i>	«Она приготовила ужин к	Completed action with



Russian Aspect	English Equivalent	Context / Example	Explanation
(perfective)	<i>cooked</i>	приходу гостей» → <i>She had prepared dinner by the time the guests arrived</i>	a result by a specific moment.
смотреть (imperfective)	<i>to watch / was watching</i>	«Он смотрел телевизор весь вечер» → <i>He was watching TV all evening</i>	Duration of the action, ongoing process.
посмотреть (perfective)	<i>have watched / watched</i>	«Он посмотрел фильм» → <i>He watched the movie</i>	Completed action; the fact of completion.
играть (imperfective)	<i>to play / was playing</i>	«Дети играли на улице, пока шёл дождь» → <i>The children were playing outside while it was raining</i>	Ongoing process combined with another event.
поиграть (perfective)	<i>have played / played</i>	«Дети поиграли в парке до обеда» → <i>The children played in the park until noon</i>	Completed action with a result.
писать каждый день (несов.)	<i>to write every day / was writing every day</i>	«Я писал каждый день» → <i>I wrote every day / I was writing every day</i>	Repeated action.
сделать вовремя (сов.)	<i>to finish on time / finished on time</i>	«Мы сделали уроки вовремя» → <i>We finished our homework on time</i>	Completion and result.

DISCUSSION

Russian and English both allow speakers to express the process of an action and its completion, but they do so in different ways. In Russian, this is achieved through the verb's morphology: the perfective aspect indicates completion, while the imperfective aspect expresses process, duration, or repetition. In English, these meanings are conveyed through tense forms such as the present perfect, simple past, or past continuous, and often require reliance on context and temporal markers.

Despite the differences in grammatical means, both languages can distinguish between process, repetition, duration, and the result of an action. For example, «Я писал письмо» may be translated as *I was writing a letter* when the focus is on the process, while «Я написал письмо» corresponds to *I have written the letter* when the emphasis is on the result.

The main differences lie in how completion is expressed: in Russian, aspect encodes the boundary of the action as an inherent property of the verb, while in English, completion must be expressed through tense forms and contextual cues. This creates certain difficulties in translation. For teachers, it is important to explain these distinctions so that students understand why the same Russian aspect may be translated into English in different ways depending on the situation. For translators, it is crucial to choose an appropriate translation strategy—literal, adaptive, or context-based—especially when working with literary or academic texts.

One limitation of this study is that the analysis is based on a limited corpus of texts—literary, academic, and conversational genres—and does not cover all possible uses of aspect in real speech. In addition, idioms and set expressions often do not follow the standard rules for correlating aspect and tense.



Future research may include the study of idioms and phrasal verbs, experimental research on how English native speakers perceive Russian aspect, the creation of broader parallel corpora, and analysis of cognitive strategies used by bilingual speakers when interpreting and translating aspectual distinctions.

CONCLUSION

Russian perfective and imperfective aspects and English tense forms perform similar functions—expressing the process of an action, its duration, and its completion—but they employ different grammatical tools to do so. Russian marks completion morphologically, while English relies on tense forms and contextual information.

When translating from Russian into English, it is essential to consider that the same Russian aspect may correspond to different English tenses depending on the emphasis on process or result, the presence of temporal markers, and the genre of the text. Translation strategies may be literal, adaptive, or context-driven, and choosing the appropriate one helps preserve meaning and stylistic nuances.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in identifying typological, semantic, and translational characteristics of the correlation between Russian aspect and English tenses, as well as in offering practical recommendations for teachers and translators. Future research prospects include exploring idioms and phrasal verbs, conducting experimental studies of aspect perception among English speakers, and expanding parallel text corpora.

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