

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Simple Sentence Across Language Types: Agglutinative And Analytic Perspectives

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Abstract

This article presents a comparative-typological analysis of the simple sentence in English and Uzbek. It examines key structural parameters, including the expression of grammatical relations, word order patterns, morphological marking, and the minimal structure of a well-formed clause. The study shows that English relies primarily on fixed word order as an analytic language, whereas Uzbek uses an extensive case system and rich verbal morphology, allowing greater syntactic flexibility as an agglutinative language.

KEY WORDS

Simple sentence; comparative grammar; language typology; English; Uzbek; syntax; morphology; word order; agglutinative languages; analytic languages.

INTRODUCTION

The structural analysis of simple sentences occupies a central place in syntactic theory, yet the principles governing clause organization vary significantly across typologically different languages. These differences reflect broader contrasts in how languages distribute grammatical information between morphological and positional means, particularly within the analytic-agglutinative typological distinction. English and Uzbek illustrate this contrast clearly. English, as a predominantly analytic SVO language, expresses grammatical relations mainly through fixed constituent order: the syntactic role of a noun phrase is determined largely by its position relative to the verb, while morphological marking remains limited. Uzbek, by contrast, is an agglutinative SOV language in which grammatical relations are encoded through an extensive system of case suffixes, allowing greater flexibility in constituent order and wider possibilities for pragmatically motivated word order variation [1]. These structural differences influence not only sentence organization but also

the interaction between syntax and information structure.

Despite the theoretical importance of this contrast, comparative studies devoted specifically to simple sentence structure in English and Uzbek remain limited. Existing research has focused mainly on applied issues such as language teaching, translation, or second-language acquisition, while broader syntactic studies often prioritize complex sentence structures over the simple clause itself. Yet it is precisely at the level of the simple sentence that the core structural principles of a language are most clearly observable.

The present study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of simple sentence organization in English and Uzbek. Drawing on the typological framework developed by Greenberg and Croft, the study examines three main parameters: constituent order, the role of case morphology in encoding grammatical relations, and the relationship between syntactic structure and information organization [2]. The aim is to identify the principal structural differences between the

two languages and to situate them within broader typological patterns of morphosyntactic organization.

Theoretical Background

The comparative analysis undertaken in this study rests on two intersecting theoretical traditions: typological linguistics and contrastive syntax. While these traditions have developed largely in parallel, their convergence is both methodologically productive and theoretically necessary for any cross-linguistic investigation that aims to move beyond surface description.

The typological framework most directly relevant here originates with Greenberg's seminal work on syntactic universals, in which constituent order was established as the primary parameter for classifying languages into structural types [2]. Greenberg's insight that word order preferences correlate systematically with a range of other grammatical properties provided the foundation for subsequent typological research, including Croft's more comprehensive account of how morphological and syntactic strategies interact across language types [1]. For the purposes of this study, the key implication of this framework is that the structural differences between English and Uzbek are not arbitrary but follow from their respective positions within a typologically coherent space: English, as an analytic SVO language, and Uzbek, as an agglutinative SOV language, represent two well-documented strategies for organizing predicative structure, each with its own internal logic.

Alongside this typological orientation, the study draws on the distinction between morphological and positional encoding of grammatical relations a distinction that has figured centrally in both functional and formal approaches to syntax, though interpreted differently within each. Rather than adopting any single theoretical framework wholesale, the analysis treats this distinction as an analytical tool: a means of identifying precisely where and how the two languages diverge in their structural organization of the simple clause, without presupposing that one strategy is more basic or universal than the other.

The Simple Sentence in English: Structural Organization

The English simple sentence is primarily organized through clause elements and their fixed sequencing. Following R. Quirk, a simple sentence consists of a single predicative unit subject, verb, and possible complements in which grammatical relations are expressed mainly through constituent order

rather than morphological marking [3]. The canonical Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) pattern is therefore central to English syntax: the grammatical roles of subject and object are identified largely by their position in the clause. Although deviations from this order are possible in constructions such as passives or topicalization, they remain structurally marked and pragmatically restricted.

The verb occupies the central position in the clause, determining the number and type of complements that may appear. R. Quirk identify several basic clause patterns, including SV (Birds sing), SVO (She read the letter), SVC (He became a teacher), and SVOO (She gave him a book) [3]. Across these patterns, the subject consistently precedes the verb, while objects follow it. Since English nouns generally lack case inflections, constituent order becomes the main indicator of grammatical relations.

Morphological marking in English is relatively limited. Nouns mark number, and pronouns preserve some case distinctions (he/him, she/her), but common nouns do not change form according to syntactic role. Thus, the difference between *The dog bit the man* and *The man bit the dog* depends entirely on word order. Verbal morphology is also reduced, with only minimal agreement marking in the present tense. As Greenberg notes, this reflects the broader correlation between analytic morphology and rigid word order [2]. This structural rigidity also shapes information structure in English. Unlike languages with flexible constituent order, English cannot freely rearrange sentence elements for emphasis or topicalization without special constructions such as passives, clefts, or intonational shifts. As a result, the relationship between syntax and information structure in English is more constrained than in morphologically richer languages.

The Simple Sentence in Uzbek: Structural Organization

The structure of the Uzbek simple sentence differs significantly from that of English. As an agglutinative SOV language, Uzbek expresses grammatical relations mainly through morphological suffixes rather than fixed constituent order. This rich morphological system allows greater flexibility in sentence structure.

A central feature of Uzbek syntax is its case system. According to Andrée F. Sjöberg, Uzbek has six grammatical cases nominative, accusative, dative, locative, ablative, and genitive each marked by specific suffixes [4]. The accusative marker *-ni*, for example, clearly identifies the direct object regardless

of its position in the sentence. As a result, constituent order may change without causing ambiguity:

(a) Talaba kitobni o'qidi – “The student read the book.”

(b) Kitobni talaba o'qidi – “It was the student who read the book.”

Both sentences are grammatically correct; the difference lies in information structure rather than grammatical relations. Unlike English, Uzbek can rearrange constituents for emphasis or topicalization without changing the basic meaning.

The verb typically appears at the end of the clause, reflecting the head-final SOV structure described by Joseph Greenberg [2]. Uzbek verbal morphology is relatively rich, encoding tense, mood, aspect, and subject agreement through suffixes. Rano Sayfullayeva and colleagues describe the predicate (kesim) as the communicative centre of the Uzbek sentence, around which other clause elements are organized [5].

Another important feature of Uzbek is subject omission. Since verbal morphology often identifies the subject, overt subject pronouns are not always required. For example, O'qidi (“[He/She] read”) can function as a complete sentence when the subject is understood from context. This pro-drop property distinguishes Uzbek from English, where finite clauses generally require an explicit subject [2].

Finally, Nilufar Yuldosheva describes the minimal Uzbek sentence model as the WPM structure a nominal element combined with a predicative marker from which more complex sentence patterns develop [6]. This reflects the ability of Uzbek verbal morphology to encode predication and subject reference simultaneously, a feature that has no direct equivalent in English.

Comparative Analysis: Structural Parameters of Divergence

The comparison of English and Uzbek simple sentences

The main structural differences between the two languages can be summarized in the following table:

Parameter	English	Uzbek
Primary encoding of grammatical relations	Constituent position (SVO)	Case morphology (suffixation)
Word order flexibility	Rigid; reordering requires structural operations	Flexible; pragmatically motivated reordering available

reveals three major areas of structural divergence: the encoding of grammatical relations, the flexibility of constituent order, and the minimal structure required for a complete clause. These differences reflect two distinct typological strategies for organizing predication.

The primary distinction concerns the locus of grammatical encoding. In English, grammatical relations depend mainly on constituent order: the subject normally precedes the verb, while the object follows it. In Uzbek, grammatical roles are identified through case suffixes such as accusative -ni or dative -ga, which makes constituent order less important. For example, reversing noun phrases in English changes the meaning of the sentence (The teacher saw the student vs. The student saw the teacher), whereas in Uzbek word order may change without affecting grammatical relations because case marking preserves them. This difference directly influences word order flexibility. English relies on a relatively rigid SVO structure, and changes in constituent order usually require special constructions such as passives or clefts. Uzbek, by contrast, allows pragmatically motivated reordering of constituents while maintaining the same grammatical structure [1]. This reflects the broader typological distinction identified by Joseph Greenberg between SVO and SOV languages: Uzbek consistently follows a head-final pattern, while English is predominantly head-initial [2].

Another important contrast concerns the structural minimum of the clause. English finite clauses generally require both an overt subject and a finite verb (She left, It rains). Uzbek, however, permits subject omission because verbal morphology encodes agreement and identifies the subject. Forms such as Keldi (“came/he came”) or O'qiyapti (“is reading”) can function as complete sentences when the context is clear [6]. As a result, Uzbek clauses may contain fewer overt elements than English clauses while remaining grammatically complete.

Agreement morphology	Minimal (3sg. present only)	Rich; encodes tense, aspect, mood, person, number
Obligatory overt subject	Yes (including expletive subjects)	No (pro-drop licensed by agreement)
Structural minimum of finite clause	Subject + Verb	Verb (with agreement suffixes)
Information structure strategies	Passivization, cleft, intonation	Constituent fronting, stress, particle placement

Table 1. Structural differences between English and Uzbek simple sentences.

Overall, English depends primarily on positional syntax and fixed constituent order, whereas Uzbek relies more heavily on morphology and agreement marking. These differences shape not only grammatical structure but also the ways each language organizes information within the clause.

Implications for Syntactic Research and Annotation

The comparison of English and Uzbek simple sentences demonstrates that the analytic-agglutinative distinction has important syntactic consequences. English relies mainly on constituent order to express grammatical relations, while Uzbek depends more heavily on morphological marking. These differences affect clause structure, word order flexibility, information structure, and the minimal form of a grammatically complete sentence.

The contrast also has methodological implications for syntactic annotation and corpus research. Many annotation frameworks were developed primarily for English and other European languages, where grammatical relations are closely connected to constituent position [1]. When applied to Uzbek, such systems require adaptation because Uzbek identifies grammatical relations through case suffixes rather than fixed word order. Existing research on Uzbek syntactic annotation notes that the mismatch between available annotation tools and Uzbek morphosyntax often produces systematic annotation difficulties [7].

More broadly, the comparison shows that syntactic categories developed for one language type cannot automatically be transferred to another. Categories such as "subject" or "object" may exist in both English and Uzbek, but they are structurally realized in different ways. Cross-linguistic analysis therefore requires category definitions that are not restricted

to the assumptions of a single language tradition [1].

Conclusion

This study examined the structural organization of simple sentences in English and Uzbek from a comparative-typological perspective. The analysis demonstrated that the differences between the two languages extend beyond basic word order patterns and reflect broader contrasts in morphosyntactic organization.

English primarily encodes grammatical relations through constituent order, which results in rigid SVO structure and obligatory overt subjects. Uzbek, by contrast, relies on morphological case marking and rich verbal agreement, allowing greater flexibility in constituent order and frequent subject omission. These differences illustrate the close relationship between morphological type and syntactic organization.

The findings also highlight the importance of typologically sensitive approaches in syntactic research and annotation. Frameworks developed for analytic languages cannot always be directly applied to agglutinative languages without adaptation. The comparison therefore supports the broader typological view that universal syntactic principles are realized differently across languages depending on their morphosyntactic structure. As the basic unit of syntax, the simple sentence provides a useful foundation for understanding these broader typological differences. Further comparative and corpus-based research may contribute to a deeper understanding of English, Uzbek, and cross-linguistic syntactic variation more generally.

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