Short Temporal Adverbials in English and Macedonian – Semantics, Morphology and Sentence Position

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Abstract *This paper presents a study of short temporal adverbials in English and Macedonian. It includes their semantic, morphological and syntactic (sentence position) description. The study and the findings are corpus based, whereas the corpus is composed of Macedonian literary texts translated by native English speakers. The findings aim at presenting: a) the semantic complexities of Macedonian temporal adverbs through the usage of English as meta-language, b) the morphological and phrasal forms within which these short adverbs occur, and c) the differences/similarities in occupying sentence positions. The study should aid language professionals of different profiles in both, English and Macedonian (theoretical linguists, language teachers, translators, etc.).*

Keywords: *short temporal adverbials, comparative, Macedonian, morphology, sentence position*

1. Introduction

This paper deals with short temporal adverbials in English and Macedonian. The findings are a part of a larger corpus based comparative research of temporal adverbials in English and Macedonian. The findings present clear results regarding the semantic complexity and sentence position of the short temporal adverbials in Macedonian, thus using English as a metalanguage and comparison positional milestone.

1.1 Research corpus

A special research corpus was formed, which comprised works of mainly Macedonian literary authors, as well as fewer academic works (dealing with historical topics), together with their English translations. For maintaining objectivity in the findings, the chosen works were translated by native English speakers.

1.1.1 Processing of the corpus

Translational equivalents of host sentence-like constructions (clauses) of short time adverbials were extracted, and their features in terms of meaning (semantics), form (morphology) and sentence position were compared and contrasted. The results were statistically analyzed and presented in tables and graphs.

1.2 Project objective

The objective of the project is to enhance Macedonian linguistics and aid Macedonian English language professionals (English language teachers, translators, and others) with using temporal adverbials. Another objective is presented by the comparative component. Both languages, English and Macedonian, illustrate certain relational characteristics. Additionally, we came to a conclusion that Macedonian short temporal adverbials are semantically extremely complex, which was shown by the variety of the English translational equivalents. In this way, English served as a meta-language.

2. Findings

2.1 Morphological/semantic

Temporal adverbials are mostly represented by adverb phrases. Their predominance in the overall Macedonian corpus, with more than 67% (2122 out of 3160), is generally attributed to the nature of the corpus. The majority of the adverb phrases are extracted from the literary part of the corpus, which is abundant with time-setting temporal adverbials which serve as story-line connectives.

Biber et al. (1999) rate the frequencies of simple temporal adverbial in English (from top to bottom). In Table 1, we have included the corresponding rate of frequencies in Macedonian (based on our corpus findings), and we can clearly see that the rate of occurrence of certain adverbs is somewhat at the same level.

Table 1 – Rate of occurrences in the research corpus	
English corpus	**Macedonian corpus**
now	sega (*now*)
then	**pak/povtorno (*again*)**
again	**vekje (*already*)**
always	**ushte (*still*, *anymore*)**
still	**togash (*then*)**
today	**posle/najposle (*later*)**
never	denes(ka) (*today*)
ago	sekogash (*always*)
ever	nikogash (*never*)
just	nekogash (*sometimes*)
yesterday	sè ushte (*still*)
already	podocna (*later*)
sometimes	utre (*tomorrow*)
yet	vednash (*now*)
later	prvo/prvin (*first*)
often	dolgo/podolgo (*long-er*)
usually	chesto/pochesto/chestopati(*often*)

Furthermore, there are certain short temporal adverbs that specifically caught our attention. They are mostly anaphoric or deictic, and many times can have different translational equivalents, depending on their meaning. Such examples are: *togash*, *posle*, *ushte*, *vekje* and *pak*. Their rate of occurrence is extremely high in Macedonian, while at the same time they are the adverbs which the translators usually did not find necessary for completing the meaning of the sentence, and omitted. Their English translational equivalents are given in Table 2, where we can clearly observe their semantic complexity.

Table 2 – Macedonian short temporal adverbials and their English translational equivalents

Macedonian adverbs	English translations
togash	then, already, at that instant, back then, in those days, now, *no translation*
posle	then, afterwards, before long, from then on, after a while, *keep*+V, *no translation*
ushte	still, yet, very; once again, again, one last time, never, a little/much longer; another, somewhat, further, even, now, more, *no translation*
веќе	already, now, again, even, rather; any more, any/no longer, never again, *no translation*
пак	again, once again, still, now, then, always, soon, *no translation*

2.2 Sentence position

English is a highly configurational language, especially in canonical sentences. The position of the sentence elements has the capability of assigning sentence functions. Adverbials are the optional elements which display the highest rate of inter-sentential movement.

The sentence positions of temporal adverbials in English are based on three criteria: semantics, length and phrasal type. The first criterion, semantics (temporal), offers a variety of sentence positions – temporal adverbials are the most mobile sentence elements. They are more likely to be found in initial position than any other adverbial type (place, manner, etc.), thus slightly bending the 50% inclination of all adverbials to occupy the sentence final position in English. This can be partially attributed to the time-setting feature of temporal adverbials. The remaining criteria, length and phrasal type, are somewhat interconnected. Prepositional phrases are the most inert ones, tending to occupy the extreme ends of the sentence. Adverb phrases are usually composed of single temporal adverbs and can occupy almost every single position available to adverbials in general.

Macedonian is considered to be a free word order language[1]. The functions of the sentence elements are usually not connected to their sentence positions. As an analytic language, full of clitics and inflectional suffixes for person, tense and gender (3rd person singular), Macedonian lines sentence elements by the rule of Functional Sentence Perspective, i.e. uses extra-grammatical information, such as communicativeness, pragmatics, focusing, etc.

For the purpose of the research, according to the attempts of English linguists Quirk et al. (1985) and Biber et al. (1999), we devised special positional criteria, which could be applied to both languages, thus offering common grounds for comparison (Table 3). However, even in Macedonian as a language with scrambling features, certain preferences and patterns could be extracted. There is a 20% higher rate of placing temporal adverbials at the *near-the-beginning* positions of the sentence (initial and medial-initial).

Table 3

Criteria of the specifications of possible sentence positions of time adverbials in English and Macedonian					
Corpus	Position				
	Initial	Medial-initial	Medial-medial	Medial-final	Final
Macedonian	*At the beginning of the sentence, before any other sentence elements*	*Before the VP, but after another obligatory sentence element*	*Between the verb сум/имам and a verboid*	*After the VP, before any other sentence element*	*At the end of the sentence, after all the remaining sentence elements*
English	*At the beginning of the sentence, before the subject*	*After the subject, before the VP*	*Between the operator and the main verb[2]*	*After the VP, before any other sentence element*	*At the end of the sentence, after all the remaining sentence elements*

Macedonian short adverbs, due to their shortness can be found in every single position in the sentence (even between the verb and its direct/indirect object/s). However, since most of them tend to be close-range subjuncts (they "stick" to the elements they modify), no distinctive positional patterns could be displayed. *Pak (again)* presented the exception to this rule.

2.2.1 The case of *PAK (AGAIN)*

Pak illustrated the only definite comparative positional difference between Macedonian and English. While in English, *again* is mostly found after the verb (or at the end of the sentence), in Macedonian *pak* is mostly pre-verbal (initial or medial-initial position). In 80% of its occurrence, *pak* is shifted in final position in the English translational equivalents, which proves the final-position preference. In the remaining 20%, it keeps its initial position. In the following Table 4, the positional shift in *пак*'s translation is given statistically:

Table 4

Positions of *again* in translation from Macedonian into English	
initial to final position	94
initial to initial position	28

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[1] A characteristic common for all Slavic languages.

[2] This criterion includes all the positions between the auxiliary verbs. However, we have witnessed very few examples of sentences with more than 2 auxiliaries.

medial-initial to final position	21
medial-final to final position	12

In the following examples, the most common shifts to final position (Table 4), i.e. initial to final (1) – (6) and medial-initial to final (7)-(8), are illustrated:

(1)   I   ***pak***   kje   se   fati.
        and   **again**   will   itself   take root-it-PRESENT (perf.)

        … and   takes   root   ***again.***

(2)   ***Pak***   se   poglednaa...
        again   themselves   look each other-they-PAST (perf.)

        They glanced at one another ***again***...

(3)   … i   *pak*   si   legnuvam   kraj   decata.
          and   **again** myself lay down-I-PRESENT (imperf.) next to   children-THE.

        ...and lay down next to the children ***again***.

(4)   ***Pak***   si   napravil   nekoja budalshtina...
        Again   to be-you-PRESENT   do-l-form   some   stupidity…
                                                        (Unwitnessed past)

        You've been up to one of your stupid tricks ***again***.

(5)   ...***pak***   se   kleshteshe   Adam Lesnovec.
          again   himself   shrieked-he-PAST (imperf.)   Adam Lesnovec

        …Adam Lesnovec shrieked ***again***…

(6)   Potoa ***pak***   kje   se   zafati   so   jadenjeto.
        then **again**   would   himself   engage-he-PRESENT (imperf.) with   eating-the.

        Then he started eating ***again***.

(7)   …no   toj ***pak***   ja   grabnal   i…
          but he **again** her-direct object   grabbed-PAST (unwitnessed) and

        …but he grabbed her ***again***,…

(8)   ..., i   rekata   ***pak***   proteche,...
          and   river-the   **again**   flow-it-PAST(perf.)

        …, and the river began to flow *once **again***.

3. Conclusion

This research of short temporal adverbials culminated in invaluable findings in Macedonian linguistics concerning the semantic complexity of certain short temporal adverbs, as well as their positional preferences.

The insight that Macedonian English language professionals obtained is highly referent to their professional work (in teaching, translating, theoretical linguistics and many interdisciplinary fields). The output of native English speakers proved to be a very efficient methodology in this research.

We hope for further advances in this field.

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