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ASPECTUAL DYNAMICS OF VERTICAL MOTION VERBS ACROSS RUSSIAN, UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Abstract. This paper offers a contrastive analysis of how telicity (boundedness) and durativity (processual character) are encoded in vertical motion verbs across three typologically distinct languages: Russian (fusional, satellite-framed), English (analytic, satellite-framed), and Uzbek (agglutinative, with verb-framed tendencies). The study demonstrates that Russian grammaticalises aspect through obligatory perfective/imperfective oppositions encoded in prefixes and suffixes; Drawing on data from the verbs подниматься / спускаться, rise / fall / climb, and chiqmoq / tushmoq, the paper argues that the aspectual "packaging" of vertical events is rigidly determined by the typological profile of each language, yet all three systems are equally capable of expressing the full range of aspectual distinctions through language-specific means.

Keywords: aspect, telicity, durativity, vertical motion verbs, Russian, English, Uzbek, serial verb constructions.

Introduction. The category of aspect, broadly understood as the temporal structure of situations, constitutes one of the core domains of grammatical semantics. As Comrie (1976, p. 35) observes in his foundational study, the fundamental opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect lies in whether the speaker presents a situation as a bounded whole, viewed from the outside, or as an unfolding process, viewed from the inside. Smith (1997, p. 40) refines this insight by proposing a two-level model: at the first level, situation types are distinguished (states, activities, accomplishments, achievements) on the basis of inherent temporal properties; at the second level, the speaker's viewpoint selects which portion of the situation is foregrounded.

The choice of vertical motion verbs as the object of study is motivated by two considerations. First, vertical movement represents a universal human experience grounded in embodied perception of gravity and the upright posture, making it an ideal domain for cross-linguistic comparison (Padučeva, 2004, p. 112). Second, the verbs of ascent and descent exhibit rich aspectual behaviour: they can denote instantaneous events (the stone fell), prolonged processes (the balloon was rising), repeated actions (price keep falling), or emergent situations (he began to climb), thus providing a fertile testing ground for aspectual theories. The present study focuses on three representative verbs or verb pairs in each language: Russian подниматься / подняться ('to rise/get up') and спускаться / спуститься ('to descend/go down'); English rise, fall, climb (along with their phrasal variants with up/down); and Uzbek chiqmoq ('to go out/up') and tushmoq ('to go down/fall').

In Russian, the aspectual character of vertical motion verbs is grammatically obligatory and is encoded through prefixation, suffixation, and the systematic opposition of perfective and imperfective stems. Apresjan (1995, p. 190) provides a detailed semantic analysis of the pair padat' (imperfective) and upast' (perfective), both meaning 'to fall'. The imperfective form designates a downward movement presented as a process that may be durative, iterative, or open-ended, without any inherent indication that the movement reaches a final surface. The perfective form, by contrast, signals the achievement of the endpoint – the moment of contact with the ground or another surface. This distinction is most clearly illustrated by the following contrastive examples:

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Samolet padal tri minuty. – 'The aeroplane was falling for three minutes.' (Imperfective: durative process, no indication of the outcome; the falling may or may not have ended.)

Samolet upal za tri minuty. – 'The aeroplane fell in three minutes.' (Perfective: the endpoint is reached within the specified interval; the falling has terminated.)

As Padučeva (2004, p. 162) explains, the prefix *u-* in *upast'* serves a dual function: it indicates the spatial direction downwards while simultaneously transforming the atelic activity into a telic achievement by imposing a natural boundary on the event. This pattern is systematic for Russian vertical verbs. Consider the pair *podnimat'sja* / *podnjat'sja* ('to rise/get up'): the imperfective *podnimat'sja* denotes the process of rising, which may be ongoing or repeated, whereas the perfective *podnjat'sja* marks the successful completion of the act of rising, the moment when the subject reaches an upright position or a higher level. Similarly, *vzletat'* (imperfective) vs. *vzletet'* (perfective) distinguishes between the process of taking off and the complete take-off.

English differs fundamentally from Russian in that it does not possess a grammaticalised category of aspect in the morphological sense. However, as Dixon (2005, p. 144) rightly observes, aspectual meanings are systematically expressed through the inherent lexical properties of verbs, through particles and prepositions, and through periphrastic constructions such as the progressive (*be + -ing*) and the perfect (*have + past participle*). For vertical motion verbs, these different strategies interact to create a flexible but less morphologically rigid system.

Levin (1993, p. 269) classifies English verbs of motion according to their inherent aspectual properties and their compatibility with various syntactic frames. The verb *rise* exemplifies this variability: it can function as an **activity** (atelic, durative) when it denotes a gradual, unbounded increase, as in *prices are rising* (where no upper endpoint is specified), and as an **accomplishment** (telic) when it is accompanied by a delimiting phrase indicating a specific endpoint, as in *the balloon rose to a height of 100 metres*. Similarly, the verb *fall* exhibits aspectual flexibility: *the rain fell for hours* (activity, durative, no inherent endpoint) contrasts with *the vase fell and shattered* (achievement, instantaneous and telic, though the falling itself is punctual while the breaking may be consecutive).

A crucial role in English aspectual expression is played by the **progressive aspect** (*be + -ing*), which unambiguously signals durativity, processual character, and the speaker's focus on the internal temporal structure of the event. As Quirk and colleagues (1985, p. 195) document, the progressive with vertical motion verbs forces a processual reading: *He was climbing up the ladder* presents the ascent as an ongoing, incomplete process, whereas the simple past *He climbed up the ladder* may be interpreted as either a completed action (telic) or a simple narrative sequence (aspectually neutral).

The **perfect aspect** (*have + past participle*) shifts the focus to the result of the vertical movement and its relevance to the present moment: *He has risen from his chair* indicates that the act of rising is completed and its result (the standing position) is currently relevant. As Dixon (2005, p. 145) notes, the interaction between perfect and progressive forms (*has been rising*) allows for even finer aspectual distinctions, combining durativity with present relevance. This demonstrates that English, while lacking a morphological category of aspect, has developed a sophisticated periphrastic system that can encode a wide range of aspectual meanings.

The causative alternation in English vertical verbs introduces additional aspectual complexity. Dixon (2005, p. 143) highlights the suppletive pair *rise* / *raise*: the intransitive *rise* denotes self-initiated upward motion, while the transitive *raise* involves an external agent causing upward movement. Crucially, *raise* is almost always telic, as it implies that the object is moved to a higher position and the action is completed (*She raised the flag* implies the flag is now up). By contrast, *rise* is aspectually neutral and may be either telic or atelic depending on the context (*The sun rises at six* – habitual, atelic; *The sun has risen* – resultative, telic). Particles such as *up* and *down* also contribute to the expression of telicity: *He climbed up* strongly suggests reaching the top, while *He was climbing up* (progressive) suspends

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the telic reading. Thus, English encodes aspectual distinctions through a combination of lexical semantics, particles, and periphrastic morphology, with no single component being strictly obligatory, which yields greater flexibility, but less systematicity compared to the Russian aspectual system.

The most typologically distinctive strategy for encoding telicity and durativity is found in Uzbek. As Kononov (1960, p. 317) establishes in his comprehensive grammar, Uzbek lacks a grammaticalised category of verbal aspect. Instead, the temporal structure of an event is expressed through contextual cues and, most importantly, through a rich system of analytical (serial) verb constructions that combine the main lexical verb with a set of auxiliary verbs, each contributing a specific aspectual nuance.

Hojiyev and Mahmudov (2000, p. 98) provide a systematic inventory of these constructions as applied to verbs of motion. For the basic vertical verb *chiqmoq* ('to go out/up'), the following analytic forms are particularly relevant:

chiqib qoldi (main verb + auxiliary *qol-*, literally 'to remain/stay') – this construction marks sudden or unexpected completion of the upward movement. The *-ib* suffix converts the main verb into a converb (*gerund*), while *qol-* adds the semantic component of unexpectedness and finality. U *birdan chiqib qoldi* translates as 'He suddenly got up / came out unexpectedly', where the focus is on the abrupt and completed nature of the event.

chiqa boshladi (main verb + auxiliary *boshlan-*, 'to begin') – this is the inchoative construction, denoting the onset of a durative process. U *chiqa boshladi* means 'He began to go up/out', where the emphasis is on the initiation of the movement, without any implication of its completion. This form directly corresponds to the Russian imperfective with an inchoative prefix or to the English progressive with a start verb.

chiqib turdi (main verb + auxiliary *tur-*, 'to stand') – this construction expresses durativity, presenting the upward movement as an ongoing, sustained process. U *chiqib turdi* can be glossed as 'He was standing/going up (and continued)', highlighting the prolonged character of the action. The auxiliary *tur-* adds a stative, durative component to the dynamic motion verb.

chiqa olmadi (main verb + auxiliary *ol-*, 'to take' in the negative) – this is the abortive/resultative construction, indicating that the subject attempted but failed to complete the upward movement. U *chiqa olmadi* translates as 'He could not get out/up', where the focus is on the non-achievement of the endpoint.

The preceding analysis reveals three distinct strategies for encoding the aspectual dynamics of vertical motion verbs. Russian employs grammaticalised morphology, where the perfective/imperfective opposition is an obligatory feature of every verb, systematically marking telicity or durativity. English relies on a **lexical-syntactic system**, where aspectual meanings are distributed across verb classes, particles, and periphrastic constructions (progressive, perfect), with no single component being strictly obligatory. Uzbek utilises an **analytic serial system**, where a set of auxiliary verbs combines with the main verb to express inchoativity, durativity, suddenness, resultativity, and other aspectual shades, compensating for the absence of grammatical aspect.

These differences can be summarised in the following comparative matrix:

Aspectual Parameter	Russian	English	Uzbek
Primary encoding means	Morphological prefixes and suffixes	Lexical semantics + particles + periphrasis	Serial verb constructions (auxiliaries)
Obligatory telicity marking	Yes (perfective vs. imperfective)	No (context-dependent, though some verbs are	No (context-dependent; neutral form is aspectually unspecified)

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		inherently telic)	
Durativity marking	Imperfective aspect	Progressive (be + -ing)	Auxiliary tur- (durative) , context
Inchoativity marking	Prefixes za-, po- + perfective	start/began + infinitive	Auxiliary boshlan-
Suddenness / unexpectedness	Prefix s- + perfective (svalit'sja)	Lexical verb choice (plummet, tumble)	Auxiliary qol-
Resultativity	Perfective aspect	Perfect (have + past participle)	Contextual, sometimes auxiliary qol- or bo'l-

This contrastive investigation of telicity and durativity in vertical motion verbs across Russian, English, and Uzbek has demonstrated that the same semantic domain can be "packaged" through fundamentally different structural strategies, each determined by the typological profile of the language. Russian obligatorily grammaticalises aspect through morphological oppositions, forcing the speaker to specify whether a vertical event is bounded or unbounded. English expresses aspectual distinctions through a flexible combination of lexical semantics, particles, and periphrastic constructions, allowing for more pragmatic variation. Uzbek, lacking grammatical aspect, compensates through a rich inventory of serial verb constructions with auxiliary verbs that encode inchoativity, durativity, suddenness, resultativity, and other aspectual nuances with remarkable precision.

Crucially, the absence of a grammatical category in Uzbek does not signify semantic poverty. On the contrary, the analytic serial verb system allows Uzbek to express all the aspectual shades available in Russian and English, though through means that are more "distributed" and less morphologically compact. This finding corroborates the theoretical claim that language structures are characterised by functional equivalence despite formal diversity. The universal cognitive need to distinguish between bounded and unbounded events is met by language-specific mechanisms that reflect the particular morphological and syntactic resources of each linguistic system.

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