

ALIGNMENT TYPOLOGY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SYNTACTIC ROLES AND CASE MARKING

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how English and Uzbek distribute syntactic roles and mark grammatical relations through their alignment systems. Although both languages follow a nominative–accusative pattern, they diverge significantly in the way these relations are encoded. English relies mainly on fixed word order and a limited case paradigm, while Uzbek expresses grammatical roles through an extensive case-marking system and flexible syntactic structure. By comparing subject and object behavior, case patterns, and argument alignment, this study highlights typological distinctions that help explain the deeper structural logic of each language. The findings show that English tends toward analytic alignment strategies, whereas Uzbek demonstrates agglutinative and morphologically explicit alignment. These observations contribute to cross-linguistic typology and provide insights for translation studies and language pedagogy. **Keywords:** *alignment typology, syntactic roles, case marking, nominative–accusative, English, Uzbek.*

Alignment typology explores how languages encode the core grammatical relations of subject, object, and agent [1]. Although this field is often associated with ergative languages, nominative–accusative languages also show meaningful variation in the distribution of syntactic functions [2]. English and Uzbek, while both fitting into the nominative–accusative category, represent two distinct structural traditions. English is analytic and relies heavily on word order, whereas Uzbek is agglutinative and expresses grammatical roles morphologically [3]. Because of these differences, both languages present an interesting comparative model for understanding how alignment emerges across linguistic systems. [4]

The aim of this study is to describe how English and Uzbek assign syntactic roles, mark arguments, and maintain structural coherence. The analysis considers word order, case marking, verb–argument relations, and morphological visibility of alignment patterns. [5]

Theoretical Background

Alignment typology classifies languages by the ways they treat the core arguments of transitive and intransitive verbs [1]. In nominative–accusative systems, the subject of an intransitive verb (S) aligns with the agent of a transitive verb (A), while the object (O) is marked differently [2]. English follows this pattern primarily through syntactic constraints [3]. Uzbek also follows a nominative–accusative system, yet expresses distinctions more transparently through case morphology [5].

Earlier studies on alignment often focus on ergativity or argument structure in polysynthetic languages [1]. However, recent typological works emphasize that even languages with straightforward case systems can show interesting variation in how syntactic functions are realized [4]. This perspective provides the theoretical basis for comparing English and Uzbek within a shared typological category but different structural environments [2].

Alignment in English

English alignment relies mainly on the relationship between word order and syntactic roles [3]. Since the loss of most case endings in Middle English, word order has become the primary signal of grammatical function. The standard Subject–Verb–Object structure effectively distinguishes the agent from the patient in a sentence [2].

English preserves only a small remnant of morphological case in the personal pronouns (he/him, they/them) [4]. Even in these forms, the case distinction functions only within a narrow syntactic context, and most nouns remain uninflected. Because of this, English alignment is best described as **structurally positional** rather than morphological [3]. Prepositions also play an important role: instead of marking relations on nouns directly, English expresses additional semantic roles through prepositional phrases [4].

The result is a system where alignment is clear but its expression is mostly implicit. Structural predictability, rather than morphological marking, maintains the nominative–accusative pattern [1].

Alignment in Uzbek

Uzbek represents a contrasting model within the same typological type. As an agglutinative language, Uzbek marks grammatical roles directly on nouns through a set of well-developed case suffixes [5]. The nominative is zero-marked, while the accusative, dative, locative, ablative, and other cases are clearly distinguished [6].

Because case endings show the syntactic function overtly, Uzbek allows a flexible word order without losing clarity [5]. Although the neutral word order is Subject–Object–Verb, many argument permutations are grammatically possible due to explicit case morphology [6]. In this respect, Uzbek alignment is **visibly encoded** and does not rely heavily on position [5].

Further evidence of explicit alignment is found in differential object marking, where the accusative suffix is used to distinguish specificity or definiteness [6]. This feature strengthens the nominative–accusative distinction at the morphological level and contributes to fine-grained interpretation [5].

Comparative Discussion

The comparison of English and Uzbek alignment reveals structural parallels and core contrasts [1]. Both languages assign the same alignment roles conceptually: S aligns with A, and O receives a separate marking [2]. However, the strategies used to express this organization differ markedly.

English:

- relies on strict word order,
- has minimal case morphology,
- uses prepositions to encode additional relations,
- depends on sentence structure for clarity.

Uzbek:

- relies on explicit case suffixes,
- tolerates flexible word order,
- distinguishes roles morphologically,
- uses verb agreement to reinforce syntactic relations.

These differences also impact translation [4]. An Uzbek sentence can shift the position of arguments for emphasis without altering meaning, while English requires careful preservation of syntactic order to maintain alignment [3]. For pedagogical purposes, learners must recognize that English hides alignment in structure, whereas Uzbek reveals it through form [6].

Conclusion

Although English and Uzbek belong to the same alignment type, the mechanisms that uphold this alignment differ substantially. English represents a typologically analytic system where grammatical roles are determined by the structure of the sentence. Uzbek, on the other hand, uses explicit case morphology to mark the same roles independently of word order. By examining these differences, the study highlights how languages can share a typological classification yet implement it in structurally

divergent ways. Understanding such contrasts deepens our knowledge of linguistic typology and supports more accurate translation and teaching practices.

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