

Analysis of the Use of Tenses, Modal Verbs, and Constructions in Polish and English Languages

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Abstract

The article evaluates sentence construction rules using tenses, modal verbs, and constructions in Polish and English. As we know, language is a national phenomenon characterized by typological features that distinguish it from others. However, due to the influence of history and constant interaction between languages, languages have an increasing affinity. It is manifested in lexical similarities, rules for using tense forms, sentence constructions, and modal means. Despite this, each language has its own grammatical features regarding tense forms, modal verbs, and constructions, complicating its study and translation. This study aims to analyze the rules of sentence construction using tenses, modal verbs, and constructions in Polish and English. Comparative-typological, inductive, and deductive methods were employed to achieve this goal. The analyzed rules and features of sentence formation were examined depending on the verb's tense-aspect-mood system, with specific details on the constructions of main and so-called auxiliary tenses formed by combining components of this system.

Keywords: modal verbs, syntactic typology of language, tenses, sentence structures, syntax, typology of the Polish language, typology of the English language, modality

1. Introduction

Language is a national phenomenon characterized by typological features that distinguish it from others. It carries the code of a nation, its history and traditions. Shared history and culture are the basis for the affinity of languages: similarity of spelling and pronunciation of words, rules of sentence formation, and use of tenses and modal verbs.

As we know, English is one of the most widespread languages in the world. It is rightfully considered a language of international communication, especially in the scientific, tourist, and global spheres of life. English has a considerable functional load as an intermediary language between the national and other languages.

In recent decades, people in Ukraine have shown a growing interest in learning Polish. This is driven by the Ukrainians' desire for European integration, shared history, and the kinship between Polish and Ukrainian, which makes learning a foreign language easier.

Learning foreign languages requires the study of the main typical features of the phonological, morphological, syntactic structure, and lexical system. Therefore, it is relevant to determine the general type and typological characteristics of foreign languages (Leshchenko, 2023; Zaluzhna, 2019).

2. Literature Review

Today, the role of each language as a national one continues to grow. Lexical and grammatical resources of languages constantly expand due to the interaction and contact between languages. It contributes to learning new foreign languages and improving translation activities (Kononenko, 2015).

For the study and subsequent use of any foreign language, it is essential, in addition to acquiring vocabulary (having a sufficient vocabulary), to learn how to use these words in a sentence correctly. Any language in the world has its own system, which is a generalization of the partial and individual. The presence of common features forms the typological characteristics of a language, the knowledge of which facilitates the process of learning a foreign language. The basis of any language's speech consists of sentences and phrases formed according to certain types and rules characteristic of that language, determining the language's syntactic structure or syntactic typology (Leshchenko, 2023).

Among the basic tenses in most languages worldwide, including Polish and English, linguists classify the past, present, and future.

Sometimes, the pluperfect tense is also distinguished - "czas zaprzyszły" in Polish and "past perfect" in English. This tense is used to describe an event that occurred earlier than another event in the past, which is currently being discussed (Nikonova, 2018). In addition, some types and ways of verbs increase the number of tenses and can create additional times. Therefore, linguists often consider the *tense-aspect-mood* complex as a grammatical "coordinate system" for the verb (Willoughby & Manns, 2020; Tenedero, 2023). Let us take a closer look at this system:

Tense. It is a grammatical category of the verb that is a specific linguistic reflection of objective time. It serves to localize the event or state mentioned in the sentence temporally. Through tense, simultaneity, precedence, or consequence, the event is expressed relative to the moment of speech or some other reference point. In most languages, including Polish and English, tense is expressed through a specific verb form. It is represented by inflecting the verb or using auxiliary constructions.

Aspect. This grammatical category of the verb indicates "how the action specified by the verb unfolds in time or how it is distributed over time." Unlike the category of tense, the aspect is not associated with the temporal localization of the action but with how this localization occurs in time.

Mood. It is a grammatical category of the verb that shows the relation of the action or state from the speaker's perspective. Mood expresses such meanings as possibility, desirability, necessity, and other conditions for realizing the action (state).

Being fluent in even a basic level of knowledge requires having a large vocabulary and knowing how to use modal verbs correctly. It helps us express our ideas, thoughts, wishes, opportunities, and intentions and emphasizes emotionality in the context as clearly and accurately as possible (Dziatko, 2023).

Modal verbs are a type of verbs that are always used together with other verbs and do not directly express action or state but reflect modality, i.e., the speaker's attitude towards the action. Typically, this involves demonstrating the speaker's intention, necessity, or ability to perform a certain action.

This study aims to analyze the rules of sentence construction using tenses, modal verbs, and constructions in Polish and English.

3. Methods

The following methods were employed in the study:

- comparative and typological method to determine the common, distinctive, and specific features of the use of tense forms and modal verbs for sentence construction in Polish and English;
- systematization of the research material was carried out using the inductive method;
- deductive method was used to generalize and compare tense forms, modal verbs, and constructions in Polish and English and to identify their common and distinctive features.

4. Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, in Polish and English, there are three main tenses:

- past (czas przeszły and past, respectively);
- present (czas teraźniejszy and present, respectively);
- future (czas przyszły and future, respectively).

It is worth noting that there is no independent form to denote the future tense in English. Depending on the context, it is expressed through various constructions or the modal verb "will." This has led to the idea that English actually has only two tenses, present and past, while a distinct structure represents the future.

Present tense verbs are used to reflect an action happening at the moment of speaking and discuss it. Past tense forms inform about an action that took place before the conversation. Also, the future tense forms indicate an action that will occur later than the moment of speaking.

The next component of the *tense-aspect-mood* complex is aspect. In Polish, two aspects are distinguished:

- Perfective (aspekt dokonany).
- Indicating the completion of an action and imperfective (aspekt niedokonany).
- Showing an action that has not yet been completed or is repeated.

Imperfective verbs can be used in any of the three tenses, while perfective verbs are used only in the past and future tenses. In English, four aspects are identified:

- simple, indicating the fact of an action;
- continuous or progressive, indicating its duration;
- perfect, showing the result of an action;
- perfect progressive, revealing both the result and duration of an action.

There are three moods in Polish and English:

- indicative (tryb oznajmujący and indicative mood, respectively);
- imperative (tryb rozkazujący and imperative mood, respectively);
- subjunctive (tryb warunkowy and subjunctive mood, respectively).

The combination of basic tenses, their aspects, and moods forms the temporal forms and constructions that allow for a more detailed characterization of a specific action.

The interesting nuance of the present tense in the Polish language is the absence of a personal pronoun next to the verb. The person performing the action is reflected in the verb ending (VSETUTpl.com., 2019; Belyaeva & Pelekhata, 2011). In English, a similar nuance is present only for the third person singular (*he/she/it*), where the verb is suffixed with -s. Meanwhile, for other pronouns (*I/you/we/they*), the base form of the verb is used. An exception is the verb "be," for which the forms *am/is/are* are used for *I/he, she, it/you, we, and they*, respectively.

In the Polish language, present tense verbs are categorized into verb conjugations (koniugacja), characterized by specific endings depending on the person performing the action (Table 1) (polishpod101.com; Holter, 2019; Levytska, & Levytskyi, 2011; Lobas, 2017; Lukyanova, 2023). There are a total of 4 conjugations, but since words in the IV conjugation have the same endings as in the III, some linguists consider them not separately but only as a subgroup of the III conjugations. For example: *ja piszę, ty piszesz, on pisze, my piszemy, wy piszecie, oni piszą* (I koniugacja); *ja płacę, ty płacisz, on płaci, my płacimy, wy płacicie, oni płacą* (II koniugacja); *ja mam, ty masz, on ma, my mamy, wy macie, oni mają* (III koniugacja) and *ja jem, ty jesz, on je, my jemy, wy jecie, oni jedzą* (IV koniugacja).

Table 1. Endings of the Polish present tense conjugations

Osoba	I koniugacja	II koniugacja	III koniugacja	IV koniugacja
JA	-Ę	-Ę	-aM	-eM
TY	-eSZ	-iSZ/ -ySZ	-aSZ	-eSZ
ON / ONA / ONO / PAN / PANI	-e	-i -y	-a	-e
MY	-eMY	-iMY/ -yMY	-aMY	-eMY
WY	-eCIE	-iCIE/ -yCIE	-aCIE	-eCIE
ONI / PANOWIE / PAŃSTWO	-Ą	-iĄ/ -Ą	-aJA	-eJA/ -eDZA

Source: (VSETUTpl.com., 2019).

For the past tense, there are separate verb forms for three singular genders and two plural genders, the endings of which are always the same for all words of any conjugation. It is only necessary to remove the -ć ending from the verb and add the appropriate ending according to the singular or plural gender (Table 2).

It should be noted that in the Polish language, in the plural, a distinction is made between masculine (men or a group of people where there is at least one man) and non-masculine gender (women, children, animals, objects).

Table 2. Verb endings in Polish in the past tense

Liczba pojedyncza (singular)					
Rodzaj męski (masculine)		Rodzaj żeński (feminine)		Rodzaj nijaki (neuter)	
JA	-łem	JA	-łam	JA	-
TY	-leś	TY	-łaś	TY	-
ON / PAN	-ł	ON / PAN	-ła	ON / PAN	-ło
Liczba mnoga (plural)					
Rodzaj męskoosobowy (masculine)			Rodzaj niemęskoosobowy (non-masculine)		
MY	-liśmy		MY	-łyśmy	
WY	-liście		WY	-łyście	
ONI / PANOWIE / PAŃSTWO	-li		ONE / PANIE	-ły	

Source: (Lobas, 2017; Lukyanova, 2023).

Like the past tense, the future tense in the Polish language has various forms for three singular genders and two plural genders. Additionally, depending on the aspect, it has two ways of formation: compound (*czas przyszły złożony*) and simple (*czas przyszły prosty*). The simple future tense (*czas przyszły prosty*) is used for perfective verbs (answering the question "What to do?") and is conjugated according to the rules of the present tense (for example: *Zrobię zadanie domowe*). The compound future tense (*czas przyszły złożony*) is used for imperfective verbs (answering the questions "What will I be doing?" or "What will I do?") and is formed using the verb "być" in the future

tense and the verb in the past tense in the third person or the verb "być" in the future tense and the infinitive verb (for example: Będę robiła/robić zadanie domowe) (Table 3).

Table 3. The construction of the compound future tense in Polish

będę będziesz będzie	+ bezokolicznik	=	będę będziesz będzie	+ Forma czasu przeszłego III osoba l.p.
będziemy będziecie będą	+ bezokolicznik	=	będziemy Będziecie Będą	+ Forma czasu przeszłego III osoba l.mn.

Source: (Lobas, 2017; Lukyanova, 2023).

Now, let us take a closer look at the temporal constructions in the English language. Their formation is based on tense and verb aspect (tense-aspect) (Nikonova, 2018; Syarki, 2023; Saulenko, & Khorolets, 2023):

- The Simple Group includes Simple Tenses, which describe events at a specific moment in time (past, present, or future) and are used to indicate general truths, habits, and facts without specifying the duration or completion of actions (for example: play(s)-played-will play).
- The Continuous Group comprises Continuous Tenses, used to describe ongoing actions at a specific moment in time: in the present, in the past, or anticipated in the future (e.g., planned future actions) (for example: am/is/are playing-was/were playing-will be playing).
- The Perfect Group consists of Perfect Tenses, where the key is the result of the action. This group of tenses is used to describe actions whose consequences can be evaluated in the present or actions that occurred in the past or will happen in the future up to a certain moment in time (for example: have/has played-had played-will have played).
- The Perfect Continuous Group includes Perfect Continuous Tenses. Tenses in this group are applied when discussing an action that started in the past and continues to the present (present perfect continuous), lasted until a specific moment in the past (past perfect continuous), or will last until a specified moment in the future (future perfect continuous), emphasizing the duration of a specific action and highlighting its connection to the specified time interval (for example: have/has been playing-had been playing-will have been playing).

Each mentioned tense has its own usage and time markers and is formed according to specific rules, which are systematized in Figure 1.

ASPECT \ TENSE	SIMPLE	CONTINUOUS	PERFECT	PERFECT CONTINUOUS
PRESENT	I/you/we/they + V/ he/she/it + V-s	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/ etc + am/are/is + V-ing	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/etc + have/has + V-ed/V3	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/etc + have/has + been + V-ing
PAST	I/he/she/it/they/etc + V-ed/V2 The verb be has the forms was/were .	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/ etc + was/were + V-ing	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/etc + had + V-ed/V3	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/etc + had + been + V-ing
FUTURE	I/you/we/he/she/etc + will (to be going to) + V	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/ etc + will + be + V-ing	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/etc + will + have + V-ed/V3	I/you/we/they/she/he/it/etc + will + have + been + V-ing

Figure 1. Tenses in the English language

Source: (Nadolna, 2022).

The expression of processes and states is characteristic of simple verbs. However, when there is a need to indicate how an action takes place or the degree of possibility, necessity, desire, or permission regarding this action, modality is used, primarily in the form of modal verbs. Their peculiarity lies in the fact that they do not express the action itself but add a sense to another verb, reflecting possibility, necessity, desirability, probability, and other states (Nadolna, 2022; Shepel & Goncharova, 2021; Torres-Mart ínez, 2018).

In the Polish language, modal verbs like *móc*, *musieć*, *mieć*, *chcieć*, etc., have irregular forms and change depending on the person being referred to (polish-dictionary.com; onlinepolishcourse.com; Levytska & Levytskyi, 2011).

Modal verbs *can*, *may*, and *must* are the most commonly used in the English language, as they have the broadest meanings and sometimes

can replace other modal verbs (see Figure 2).

MODAL VERBS AND THEIR EQUIVALENTS				
Modal verb	Equivalent	Present	Past	Future
CAN	Be able to	Can Am/is/are able to	Could Was able to Were able to	----- Shall be able to Will be able to
MUST	Have to Be to	Must Have to (has to) Am/is/are to	Had to Was (were) to	----- Shall have to Will have to
MAY	Be allowed to	May Am/is/are allowed to	Might Was allowed to Were allowed to	----- Shall allowed to Will allowed to
OUGHT TO	-----	Ought (to)	-----	-----
HAVE TO	-----	Have/has (to) Am/is/are (to)	Had to Was (were) to	Shall have (to) Will have (to)
SHALL	-----	-----	-----	Shall
SHOULD	-----	Should	-----	-----
WILL	-----	-----	-----	Will
WOULD	-----	-----	Would	-----

Figure 2. Modal verbs and their equivalents in English

Source: (Rizvanly, 2021; Zeniakin & Kozlov, 2022).

The peculiarity of modal verbs in English is their inability to be used independently. They can only be used in conjunction with another verb's base (first) form. Unlike simple verbs, modal verbs do not express actions independently. However, they serve as complements, comments, and descriptions of our thoughts and attitudes. They describe the likelihood of an event occurring or an action being performed in the future (Nadolna, 2022).

Through the use of modal verbs, a person can express their own attitude towards an action, the desire or necessity of its execution, the likelihood or possibility of a certain event, personal doubt, the ability to perform the action marked by the infinitive, and so on (Kharkevych & Tsolyk, 2022). Therefore, despite their small number, modal verbs are quite commonly used, emphasizing the speaker's attitude towards the action.

Modal verbs in different languages usually do not have clear equivalents; however, they intertwine with various words. In some languages, especially those of Slavic origin, they may be conveyed through emphasis or sentence construction.

Table 4. The most common modal verbs in Polish and English

Meaning to be used with	Polish	English
Physical or mental ability	<i>mieć możliwość, mieć okazję, mieć sposobność, and an outdated expression mieć możność</i>	<i>can/could</i>
Assumptions, desires, uncertainties, the possibility of performing a certain action	<i>być może</i>	<i>may/might</i>
Culpability and strong assumption (duty, necessity, or high probability)	<i>Musieć</i>	<i>must</i>
Circumstantial obligation	<i>trzeba, wolno, nie wolno</i>	<i>have to/had to</i>
Legal or moral obligation	<i>musieć i powinien</i>	<i>have to/had to</i>
Minor, weak commitment, recommendation	<i>winiem/ powinien/ powinno być</i>	<i>should/ought to</i>
The meaning depends on the form and lexical meaning of the verb it is used with. It can express the obligation or necessity to perform an action according to a plan or schedule	<i>być/ mieć/ musieć.</i>	<i>to be to (synonymous with have to)</i>
The need to do something	<i>potrzebować, wymagać, brakować</i>	<i>need</i>

Source: (Kharkevych & Tsolyk, 2022).

5. Conclusions

Like most languages worldwide, the Polish and English languages have similar tenses and verb forms. However, the number of possible tense forms and constructions in these languages differs due to different verb types. Each language has its own peculiarities in forming such constructions, challenging language learning and translation.

In both investigated languages, modal means, primarily modal verbs, are often employed to convey shades of meaning that are not always easily expressed using the basic tense forms: possibility, probability, obligation, necessity, etc.

Due to the grammatical peculiarities of tense forms, modal verbs, and constructions in foreign languages, studying them poses a challenging task. The difficulties in translating modal words as part of idiomatic expressions and idioms determine the prospects for further research.

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Authors contributions

In this study, each author made a significant contribution, which is reflected in the joint authorship. Together formed the concept and design of the study, as well as the analysis and interpretation of data; engaged in data collection and their initial processing; wrote the manuscript and revised it critically for important intellectual content and consulted on methodology and assisted in formulating the scientific conclusions. All authors actively participated in editing the manuscript and approved the final version for publication.

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