

**CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEMPORALITY IN RUSSIAN AND PERSIAN: A
FUNCTIONAL-SEMANTIC APPROACH**

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Abstract

This article examines the category of temporality within the framework of functional grammar, focusing on its representation as a functional-semantic field in Russian and Persian. The study analyzes the structural organization of the temporal field, including its core and peripheral components, as well as the interaction between grammatical, lexical, and contextual means of expressing temporal relations. A comparative approach reveals both universal and language-specific features in the conceptualization of time. The findings demonstrate that while both languages share a common temporal framework based on past, present, and future distinctions, they differ in the distribution and interaction of aspectual and temporal meanings.

Keywords

temporality, functional grammar, functional-semantic field, Russian language, Persian language, tense, aspect, linguistic conceptualization

1. Introduction

The category of temporality has been extensively studied in modern linguistics, particularly within the framework of functional grammar. This approach allows researchers to consider temporality not as an isolated grammatical category, but as a complex system of interacting linguistic means.

According to A. V. Bondarko, temporality is best understood as a functional-semantic field (FSF), which includes grammatical, lexical, and contextual means used to express temporal relations.[1] Such an approach emphasizes the systemic nature of language and highlights the interaction between different linguistic levels.

The relevance of this study lies in the need to analyze how temporality is conceptualized in different languages, particularly in Russian and Persian, which demonstrate both typological similarities and differences. The objective of this article is to describe the structure of the functional-semantic field of temporality and to identify its core and peripheral components in both languages.

In addition to its grammatical dimension, temporality is closely connected with cognitive and cultural processes. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, temporal relations are not merely objective reflections of reality but are shaped by human perception and conceptualization. Time is interpreted through linguistic categories that reflect cultural experience and mental structuring of events.

From this perspective, temporality should be viewed as a multidimensional category that integrates grammatical, lexical, and pragmatic levels of language. The functional-semantic approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of these levels, revealing how different linguistic means cooperate in the expression of temporal meanings.

Furthermore, temporality plays a crucial role in discourse organization. It structures narrative sequences, determines the order of events, and influences the interpretation of actions. In narrative texts, temporal markers serve as essential tools for establishing coherence and logical progression.

2. Methods

The study is based on the principles of functional grammar and employs a comparative linguistic approach. The analysis focuses on:

- identifying the core and peripheral elements of the functional-semantic field of temporality;
- examining grammatical, lexical, and syntactic means of expressing temporal relations;
- comparing the temporal systems of Russian and Persian.

The theoretical framework is grounded in Bondarko's theory of functional grammar, which defines criteria for distinguishing the core of a functional-semantic field. These include:

1. maximum concentration of basic semantic functions;
2. specialization of linguistic means;
3. structural organization of oppositions;
4. regularity of usage.[2]
5. In addition, elements of contextual analysis were employed to examine how temporal meanings are realized in actual language use. This includes the analysis of discourse fragments where temporal relations are not explicitly marked by grammatical forms but are inferred through contextual cues.
6. The study also considers the interaction between temporality and modality, as modal constructions often imply temporal reference, particularly in relation to future-oriented actions. This interaction is especially relevant for understanding peripheral components of the functional-semantic field.

3. Results

The core of the functional-semantic field of temporality in both Russian and Persian is represented by the system of tense forms. These include three main temporal planes: present, past, future.

In Russian, the core consists of tense forms of the indicative mood in the active voice³. These forms express the relation of an action to the moment of speech or another reference point.

The periphery of the temporal field includes both near and distant elements. The near periphery consists of: participial constructions (*was examined, is examined, will be examined*);

- full participles of present and past tense;
- iterative forms (*used to go, used to sing*);
- verbless constructions expressing present meaning (*Night. Cold.*)⁴.

The distant periphery includes:

- adverbial modifiers (*now, yesterday, in two weeks*);
- temporal conjunctions (*when, while, as soon as*);
- contextual markers (*at that time, later, in those years*);
- modal constructions implying future reference (*You should go; Let's help*).[4]

In Persian, the core of temporality is also represented by the system of tense forms. According to A. Gol'fām, the grammatical category of tense reflects the temporal localization of events and includes three basic oppositions: precedence, simultaneity, succession.[5]

However, each tense includes several aspectual and temporal forms. For example: present tense: simple present, continuous present, subjunctive; past tense: preterite, imperfect, pluperfect, continuous past; future tense: categorical future. This demonstrates a strong interaction between temporal and aspectual meanings.

One of the key findings is that temporality cannot be analyzed independently of aspect. Aspectual meanings describe the internal structure of an action, while temporal meanings determine its position in time.

In Persian, aspectual distinctions are closely integrated into tense forms, often making it difficult to separate tense and aspect as independent categories. In contrast, Russian maintains a clearer distinction between these categories.

A significant role in the expression of temporality is played by lexical means, particularly temporal adverbs and adverbial phrases. Although these elements belong to the periphery of the functional-semantic field, they provide essential information about the temporal characteristics of an action.

Temporal adverbs such as *now*, *then*, *yesterday*, *soon*, *recently* contribute to the specification of temporal relations by indicating:

- duration (*for a long time*);
- frequency (*often*, *repeatedly*);
- sequence (*then*, *afterwards*);
- immediacy (*immediately*, *at once*).

In many cases, lexical means compensate for the недостаточность grammatical forms. For example, a verb form may indicate only a general temporal reference, while adverbial modifiers specify the exact temporal coordinates.

Moreover, lexical units often carry evaluative and expressive meanings, which contribute to the subjective interpretation of time. This demonstrates that temporality is not purely objective but includes a subjective and pragmatic dimension.

4. Discussion

The comparative analysis reveals both universal and language-specific features of temporality.

Both Russian and Persian share:

- a three-part temporal system (past, present, future);
- the central role of verbal tense forms;
- the use of lexical and syntactic means for уточнение temporal relations.

This confirms the universality of temporal conceptualization in human language.

However, the languages differ in:

- the degree of integration between tense and aspect;
- the distribution of grammatical and lexical means;
- the role of contextual elements.

In Persian, aspectual meanings are embedded within tense forms, while in Russian they are expressed through a separate grammatical category.

Although lexical and contextual means occupy a peripheral position in the functional-semantic field, they play a crucial role in temporal orientation.

Thus, the periphery is essential for the full realization of temporality in discourse.

An important aspect of temporality is its role in discourse interpretation. Temporal relations influence how events are perceived and understood by the speaker and the listener.

In narrative discourse, temporality determines:

- the sequencing of events;
- the distinction between foreground and background information;
- the interpretation of causal relationships.

For instance, shifts in tense can signal changes in perspective or highlight significant events. Similarly, the use of temporal markers can create coherence and guide the reader through the narrative structure.

In Persian, contextual and lexical means often play a more prominent role in discourse organization, while in Russian grammatical forms are more explicitly used for temporal structuring. This difference reflects broader typological distinctions between the two languages.

5. Conclusion

The study confirms that temporality is a complex functional-semantic category represented by a system of interacting linguistic means. Its core is formed by grammatical tense forms, while its periphery includes lexical, syntactic, and contextual elements.

The comparison of Russian and Persian demonstrates that, despite structural differences, both languages share a common conceptual basis for expressing temporal relations. At the same time, each language reflects its own specific way of organizing temporal and aspectual meanings.

The results of this study also indicate that temporality should be considered not only as a grammatical category but as a dynamic system integrating multiple linguistic levels. Its analysis requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account cognitive, cultural, and communicative factors.

Future research may focus on the role of temporality in different types of discourse, including literary texts, media communication, and intercultural interaction. Such studies would further contribute to understanding the complexity of temporal conceptualization in language.

References

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