

## **Verbal Inflection: A Contrastive Analysis on English and Turkish**

**Siti Sa'diah, Hyunisa Rahmanadia**

FKIP Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan I No. 33 Cikokol, Banten, Tlp

Freelance translator

e-mail:dhasadiah@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate differences and similarities of English and Turkish verbal inflection. It was limited on verbal inflection of the three common tenses which are present, past, and future. The data used in this study were gained from both library and field research. The field research conducted was interview to two informants having background as Turkish teachers and one informant as a learner studying Turkish. The result showed that English and Turkish verbal inflections had differences and similarities. The difference was English verbal inflections were occurred in *Simple Present Tense* and *Simple Past* while Turkish verbal inflections were occurred in the three tenses present which is called by *Şimdiki Zaman*, past which is called by *Geçmiş Zaman*, and future which is called by *Gelecek Zaman*. The other difference was on the affixes used to transform the inflection. Turkish had more affixes than English. Whereas, the similarity appeared on the rules in which the process of affix inflection depends on the subjects used. This similarity was only occurred on *Simple Present Tense* in English in which the inflected verb referred to the subject (the third singular person).

Keywords: Verbal inflection, English, Turkish, Contrastive analysis

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language shows someone's identity. It can be seen from the simplest example like people talking in Sundanese might be guessed that they are from Bandung, Sumedang, Bogor, or Tasik; people talking in Javanese might be from Solo, Jogja, Malang, Surabaya, or other areas where the people use it in their daily life. In addition, the identity means even broader. It shows not only hometown but also country like Indonesia has Indonesian Language (called by Bahasa in this study), England has English, and Turkey has Turkish.

Those various languages have their own structures and rules. For example, the word "visited" in a sentence "I visited my grandmother yesterday" identifies that the activity has been done. The bare infinitive "visit" is inflected into "visited" as there is the adverb of time "yesterday" that shows the time when the activity is done. But when the sentence is translated into Bahasa, it will become "*Saya mengunjungi nenek kemarin*". There is no change in the verb "mengunjungi" eventhough it is done in future or present. This difference shows that language is unique. In other words, each language has its typical characteristics or systems that are different from other languages.

Beside the differences, the two sentences have same structure that consists of subject, verb, object, and adverb (SVOA) or in Bahasa *subjek, predikat, objek, and keterangan* (SPOK). It means that eventhough each language has its own system, there can be similar rule from one another. As stated by Kridalaksana (2004), language is universal, meaning that one language to other languages can have similar characteristics or rules.

Based on the differences and similarities described prepiusly, this study discusses the English and Turkish verbal inflection. It aims to investigate whether there are differences and similarities between both languages. In order to get deeper description, contrastive analysis will be used. As stated by Johanson (2008), contrastive analysis is to compare systematically two or more languages with the purpose of describing their similarities and differences.

According to James (1998), contrastive analysis can be done in four steps. The first is description, describing comparable feature of first language and second language. The second is selection, selecting the certain parts in the languages for contrasting. The third is contrasting, comparing the elements of languages that have been selected in order to spot the mismatches that would be predictably. The last is prediction, predicting the elements that have been contrasted in order to be able to predict the students' mistakes and errors. The three steps will be covered in this study while the last is not.

### **Inflection**

Aronoff dan Fudeman (2005) state that inflection derives from Latin, *flect* meaning flex in English. Etymologically, inflection is the change of word form in which the new form can place a certain and suitable position in a sentence. Inflection includes tense, aspect, number and case. In addition, inflection does not change lexical meaning or part of speech.

Katamba (1994) conveys the concept of inflection is related to the syntactical rules which are predictable, automatic, systematic, and consistent. In line with Katamba, Samsuri (1984) states that in European language, especially English, inflection is recognized consistently such as: books (from book), stop, stopped, stopping (from stop); prettier, prettiest (from pretty).

Furthermore, there are some priciples of Inflection as described in detail below.

- Inflection is related to syntactical rules (Bauer, 1988; Katamba, 1993), meaning that inflectional morpheme is needed to complete a word as demanded by grammatical rules and it does not change the category or identity of the word. For example, *form* can be transformed into *forms* (*form-s*). If *form* is used as a verb, the addition of suffix *-s* is needed to fulfil the grammatical rule in which suffix *-s* is used by the subject of the third singular persons in simple present. If *form* is used as a noun, the addition of suffix *-s* is a demand to make it plural. Sytactically, these rules involve in grammatical agreement/ concord. The new form does not change the category or identity of the word (Scalise, 1984), for instance, a verb still remains as a verb and a noun remains as a noun.

- Inflection is predictable (Bauer, 1988; Scalise, 1984). The change of the base form as input into a new word as output usually fulfils generality principle. It means that the word formation in syntactic can be generalized. For example, in order to form plural nouns in English, usually suffix –s is added in the end of the nouns.
- Affixes of inflection tend to have fixed meaning (Bauer, 1988). It means that eventhough there is a new form, it does not change its meaning. Inflectionally, the word *call* becomes *call–s*, *call–ed*, (*has*) *called*, so it does not change the base meaning of the base word.
- Inflection uses a set of affixes which are closed one another (Bauer, 1988). The affixes in inflection are not able to change so its existence adheres on language syntactic system.
- Inflection rules are required (Scalise, 1984). If the principles are used, the languages which do not require inflection in each word in a sentence are involved as zero inflection. It means that syntactically inflection is insisted.

Inflection can be categorized into verbal inflection and noun inflection. Below is the inflection categorization taken from Haspelmath (2002).

Table 1. Inflection Categorization

Noun	Verb	Noun, Verb, Adjective, and Adposition
<b>Number</b> (Singular, Plural, ...)	<b>Tense</b> (Present, Past, Future, ...)	Agreement on number, case, person, and gender
<b>Case</b> (Nominative, Accusative, Genitive, ...)	<b>Aspect</b> (Perfective, Imperfective, Habitual, ...)	
	<b>Mood</b> (Indicative, Subjunctive, imperative, ...)	

The table shows that inflection involves the formation of grammar – past, present, future; singular, plural, gender, and others – from a lexeme.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative approach. Moelong (2010) states that qualitative research produces analytical procedures meaning that it does not use procedures of statistical analysis or other quantification. The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive which is done by using contrastive analysis methodology.

Furthermore, the data used in this study are gained from library research and field research. The field research done in this study is interview conducted to the following informants.

- Ms. Gulsum as a Turkish teacher at one of the private schools in Depok.
- Ms. Ade Solihat as a Turkish teacher at one of the public universities in Depok.
- Ms. Wulan as a Biology teacher at one of the private school in Depok who took a Turkish course conducted by the school.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, both English and Turkish have verbal inflection. But, there are some differences on them. Below is detail description of the verbal inflection on English and Turkish.

### Verbal Inflection on English

In English inflection is occurred on noun and verb. But, this study only discusses inflection occurred on verb that focuses on tense (present, past, and future) on positive sentences.

#### □ Simple Present

This tense is used to talk about facts and habitual action. The adverbs like today, everyday, everyweek are several time markers that can be used as the identification of this tense. The verbal inflection occurred in this tense is related to the third singular persons which are *She*, *He*, and *It* as subjects of the sentence. In addition, the suffixes used are *-s* or *-es*.

Example:

She sleeps at 9 p.m. everynight.

He goes to school.

The suffixes '*-s*' on the verb '*sleep*' and '*-es*' on the verb '*go*' show that the two verbs are inflected.

#### □ Simple Past

This tense is used to describe the activity that has been done in a certain time. The adverbs like yesterday, last week, last month, two days ago are several time markers that can be used as the identification of this tense. The verbal inflection occurred in this tense is not related to the subject of the sentence. Whatever the subject, whether it is singular or plural, the suffixes used are '*-d*' or '*-ed*'.

Example:

They decided to go to Bandung last night.

She called her mom ten minutes ago.

They called their mom ten minutes ago.

The suffixes '*-d*' on the verb '*decide*' and '*-ed*' on the verb '*call*' identify te inflected verb. Eventhough the subjects on the second and third sentences are different, the suffix used for the same verb of them is the same. It is because of the rule of irregular verb in which if the verb ended by '*-e*', it is not necessary to add by '*-ed*'.

Furthermore, the verbal inflection on *Simple Past* can also be found in irregular verbs like the example below.

He took an English course last year.

We ate fried rice last night.

The verbs ‘took’ and ‘ate’ express the irregular verbs from the bare infinitives ‘take’ and ‘eat’. They also identify inflected verbs. In other words, the irregular verbs can consist of irregular inflection.

### Verbal Inflection on Turkish

In Turkish, there are 29 alphabets or letters which are written in Latin letters. Below are the twenty nine letters:

“Aa, Bb, Cc, Çç, Dd, Ee, Ff, Gg, Ğğ, Hh, Iı, İi, Jj, Kk, Ll, Mm, Nn, Oo, Öö, Pp, Rr, Ss, Şş, Tt, Uu, Üü, Vv, Yy, Zz”

Out of the twenty nine letters, there are 21 consonants and 8 vowels. The table below shows the two classifications.

Table 2. Turkish consonants and vowels

Consonant	Vowel
Bb, Cc, Çç, Dd, Ff, Gg, Ğğ, Hh, Jj, Kk, Ll,	“Aa, Iı, Oo, Uu, Ee, İi, Öö,

Turkish that is categorized as an agglutinative language has its own rules in making a sentence. As other languages, Turkish also has tense. It is divided into three categories, present (*Şimdiki Zaman*), past (*Geçmiş Zaman*), and future (*Gelecek Zaman*). In addition, the structure of sentence is Subject, Object, and Verb or SOV.

Example:

“Ben pilav yiyorum”  
S O V

“Sen beni yakaladın”  
S O V

The addition of suffix *-um* on *iyorum* and *-in* on *yakaladın* identify verbal inflection. Besides, there is other inflection found on the second sentence. The pronoun *ben* added by suffix *-i* identifies inflection occurred on object.

The inflection occurred in Turkish involves on noun, pronoun, and verb. Nevertheless, this study only discusses inflection occurred on verb that focuses on tense (present, past, and future) on positive sentences.

#### □ *Şimdiki Zaman*

*Şimdiki Zaman* is the easier tense and it is most-often used. In English *Şimdiki zaman* can be categorized as *Present Continuous Tense* because they have the same function. But in *Present Continuous Tense*, some experts stated that there is an aspect because English combines aspect and tense. In fact, there is *Geniş Zaman* which is called *Simple Present* in English that emphasizes on routine activities and it is usually used the word ‘her’ (setiap). But, the application of this tense sometimes is interchangeable with *Şimdiki Zaman*. So, based on the

frequency this study prefers focusing on *Şimdiki Zaman* to *Geniş Zaman*. Below is the formulation to make positive sentences using *Şimdiki Zaman*:

Verb + - (ı, i, u, ü) yor + *Şahıs eki*

*Şahıs Ekleri* or (*Şahıs eki*) is affix identifying pronouns for subjects. Like other affixes on Turkish, *Şahıs Ekleri* or (*Şahıs eki*) has different affixes for different subjects. It can be seen on the table below.

Table 3. Affixes on *Şimdiki Zaman*

Subjek	Şahıs Ekleri or ( <i>Şahıs eki</i> )
Ben	(-ım, -im, -um, -üm)
Sen	(-sın, -sin, -sun, -sün)
O	-
Biz	(-ız, -iz, -uz, -üz)
Siz	(-sınız, -siniz, -sunuz, -sünüz)
Onlar	(-lar)

Furthermore, below is the detail description on verbal inflection for each subject in sentences.

*Ben siliyorum*

*Sen siliyorsun*

*O siliyor*

*Biz siliyoruz Siz*

*siliyorsunuz*

*Onlar siliyorlar*

The base form of verb on the above sentences is *silmek*. When the verb is put on sentences, it will be inflected. Inflection on the sentences can be seen on the use of 'yor' on each sentence showing that the sentences use *Şimdiki Zaman*. In other words, 'yor' is a device of *Şimdiki Zaman*. Affixes, *-um, -sun, -uz, -sunuz,* and *-lar,* adhered on the verbs are subject devices. The addition of vowel 'i' that is put after the base form of the verb and before *Şimdiki Zaman* device is caused by the rule in Turkish in which when consonants join other consonants, it will occur vowel interpolation or vice versa based on consonants or vowels coming previously.

*'silmek'* + -(ı, i, u, ü) yor + (-ım, -im, -um, -üm) → *silyorum* → *siliyorum*

The following example uses the verb 'yemek'.

*Ben pilav yiyorum*

The word 'yiyorum' is formed as follow:

*Yemek + -(ı, i, u, ü) yor + (-ım, -im, -um, -üm)*

Suffix *-mek* or *-mak* on the base form of verb is not attached on inflection so that '*yemek*' becomes '*ye*' (this rule works on all verbs). On the sentence above, '*ye*' becomes '*yi*'. It is occurred because vowel '*e*' merges when it is adjoining vowel '*i*'. This rule can be seen on the chart below.

a, ı	→	ı
e, i	→	i
o, u	→	u
ö,	→	ü

Chart 1. Vowel Merger

The rule is used for the suffix of tense and subject. Therefore, the suffix of subject on the sentence above uses suffix *-um*. In other words, the addition of suffixes for tense or vowels on the verb has an important role. Then, the next process will depend on the chart showed above.

The following sentences show the inflection occurred on their verbs.

*Sen pilav yiyorsun*  
*O pilav yiyor*  
*Biz pilav yiyoruz Siz*  
*pilav yiyorsunuz*  
*Onlar pilav yiyorlar*

Subject '*biz*' does not have suffix of subject devices so it is directly added by '*yor*' after the verb.

#### □ **Geçmiş Zaman**

*Geçmiş Zaman* is used to convey the past events. This tense is called by *Simple Past Tense* in English because they have same function. Below is the formulation to make sentence in *Geçmiş Zaman*:

Verb + di, ti (*Geçmiş Zaman Eki*) + *Şahıs eki*

The rule of *Şahıs eki* for *Geçmiş Zaman* can be seen on the following table.

Table 4. Affixes on *Geçmiş Zaman*

Subjek	Şahıs Ekleri or ( <i>Şahıs eki</i> )
Ben	(-ım, -im, -um, -üm)
Sen	(-ın, -in, -un, -ün)
O	-
Biz	(-ık, -ik, -uk, -ük)
Siz	(-ınız, -iniz, -unuz, -ünüz)
Onlar	(-lar)

Example:

*Ben oynadım*  
*Sen oynadın`*

*O oynadı*

*Biz oynadık*

*Siz oynadınız*

*Onlar oynadılar*

The sentences above use the verb 'oynamak'. Suffix '-dı' on the verb is used to refer on the last vowel 'a' on 'oyna' which demands the appearance of vowel 'ı' afterwards. The verb shows a device of past tense and suffix '-ım, -ın, -ık, -iniz, and -lar' show subject device. The suffix addition makes inflection to the verb 'oynamak'.

Furthermore, there is the verb followed by suffix '-ti'. This suffix is used on the verb ended by 8 consonants (after omitting -mak/-mek). The eight consonants are *f, ş, t, k, ç, s, h, p*.

Example:

*Ben baktım*

*Sen baktın*

*O baktı*

*Biz baktık*

*Siz Baktınız*

*Onlar baktılar*

The example above derives from the verb 'bakmak'. After omitting '-mak' on the verb 'bakmak', inflection can be seen by the suffix 'tım, tın, tı, tık, tınız, tılar' on the verb 'bak'. As stated in previous description, the difference of suffix used is because of the subject. Whereas, the suffix '-tı' as past tense device is used because the verb 'bak' is ended by consonant which includes in *f, ş, t, k, ç, s, h, p*.

#### □ **Gelecek Zaman**

*Gelecek Zaman* is used to describe the future events. This tense is recognized as *Future Tense* in English because they have the same function. The suffix used in this tense is "ecek/acak". The use of this suffix depends on the last vowel which adheres on the verb. The following example uses the verb 'yemek' in *Gelecek Zaman*.

*Yemek + ecek + suffiks subjek -im ye + ecek + -im yiyeceğim →*

The suffix '-ecek-' is used because of the last vowel of the verb 'ye' (after omitting -mek) and suffix of '-im' is used because of the previous vowel that is 'e' on '-ecek-'. The change of 'ye' becomes 'yi' uses the rule that has been described previously. Consonant 'ğ' on the inflected verb derives from 'ecek/acak'. In other words, consonant 'k' merging to be consonant 'ğ' because it is flanked by two vowels 'a' on '-acak' and 'i' on the suffix of subject device. Formulation used in *Gelecek Zaman* is as follow:

Verb + acak/ecek (Gelecek Zaman Eki) + Şahıs eki



The adhesion of future device (*acak/ecek*) and subject device show that there is inflection on the verb.

Furthermore, the rules of *Şahıs eki* for *Gelecek Zaman* are showed on the following table.

Table 5. Affixes on *Gelecek Zaman*

Subjek	Şahıs Ekleri or (Şahıs eki)
Ben	(-ım, -im, -um, -üm)
Sen	(-sın, -sin, -sun, -sün)
O	-
Biz	(-ız, -iz, -uz, -üz)
Siz	(-sınız, -siniz, -sunuz, -sünüz)
Onlar	(-lar)

Example:

*Ben geleceğim*

*Sen geleceksin*

*O gelecek*

*Biz geleceğiz*

*Siz geleceksiniz*

*Onlar gelecekler*

*Ben yapacağım*

*Sen yapacaksın*

*O yapacak*

*Biz yapacağız*

*Siz yapacaksınız*

*Onlar yapacaklar*

## CONCLUSION

English and Turkish have different characteristic. English is an isolative language while Turkish is an agglutinative language. Nevertheless, the two of them have inflection on their verbs. In English, verbal inflection occurs on *Simple Present* and *Simple Past*. There are suffixes ‘-s’ and ‘-es’ as inflection devices on *Simple Present* while suffixes ‘-d’ and ‘-ed’ as inflection devices on *Simple Past*. There is no inflection happened on *Future Tense*.

However, verbal inflection in Turkish occurs on the three tenses *Şimdiki Zaman*, *Geçmiş Zaman*, and *Gelecek Zaman*. Inflection in Turkish expresses not only tenses but also subjects. In other words, the process of affix inflection depends on the subjects used. The affix used must be appropriate with the last vowel or consonant adhered on the verb.

The similarities and differences described show that language is unique. Every language has their characteristic. Besides, when referring to the language learning, the similarities of the language can make the learners easier to understand the language since they have schemata on it while the differences of the language may give problem to the learners since they have to return, compare, and synchronize their schemata then.

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