

The Derivational Nature of Conjunctions in English and Uzbek: A Contrastive Morphological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the derivational nature of conjunctions in English and Uzbek, two typologically distant languages, from a contrastive morphological perspective. While conjunctions are traditionally treated as a closed functional class defined by their syntactic role, this study argues that the class is in fact structurally heterogeneous and derivationally dynamic, comprising simple (primary), derived, compound, composite, and reduplicated items whose formation follows language-specific word-formation mechanisms. Drawing on grammaticalization theory and the structural classifications developed in Anglophone and Turkological grammatical traditions, the analysis shows that English conjunctions are predominantly formed through conversion of prepositions, adverbs, and participial forms and through analytic phrasal composition culminating in the complementizer that, whereas Uzbek conjunctions are formed chiefly through agglutinative suffixation of converbal morphology, reduplication of pronominal and particle elements, and, for a core inventory of basic connectives, historical borrowing from Arabic and Persian. The contrastive analysis relates these divergent mechanisms to independently established typological parameters, including head-directionality and frequency-driven fusion, and discusses their implications for translation and for the instruction of English as a foreign language to Uzbek-speaking learners. The findings contribute to the broader typological literature on connectives and extend prior functional-semantic accounts of

English-Uzbek conjunctions with a systematic morphological dimension.

Keywords: Conjunctions, derivational morphology, grammaticalization, word-formation, contrastive linguistics, English, Uzbek, connectives

INTRODUCTION

Conjunctions occupy a paradoxical place in grammatical theory. Functionally, they are defined with precision: items that link words, phrases, or clauses and signal the logical or semantic relation between them. Formally, however, the class resists a single, coherent description. Some conjunctions, such as English *and* or Uzbek *va*, are monomorphemic and etymologically opaque to the ordinary speaker; others, such as English *provided that* or Uzbek *shungaqaramay*, are transparently built out of a verb, a pronoun, a postposition, or a complementizer, and continue to display internal structure that native speakers can, in principle, analyze. This structural heterogeneity is not incidental. It is the residue of distinct historical processes – grammaticalization, conversion, compounding, reduplication, and borrowing – through which open-class and semi-open-class material is recruited into the closed functional domain of clause and phrase linkage.

The present article examines this heterogeneity systematically by asking a question that has received comparatively little attention in the contrastive literature on English and Uzbek: not merely which conjunctions exist in each language and what they mean, but how they are formed. Most existing contrastive studies of English and Uzbek connectives, including foundational work on their semantic classification and syntactic distribution, treat the conjunction inventory as a given list and proceed directly to functional comparison. This is a reasonable methodological choice for many purposes, but it leaves the derivational dimension – the word-formation processes that populate the class in the first place – largely unexamined. Because English and Uzbek belong to different morphological

types (English predominantly analytic and fusional with residual synthetic morphology; Uzbek strongly agglutinative), a derivational comparison of their conjunction systems offers a productive test case for broader claims about how typological type constrains grammaticalization pathways.

The article pursues three objectives. First, it establishes a structural classification of conjunctions applicable to both languages, distinguishing simple, derived, compound, composite, and reduplicated types. Second, it applies this classification to a representative inventory of English and Uzbek conjunctions drawn from standard reference grammars, tracing for each type the source category and the derivational mechanism involved. Third, it draws the two inventories into contrast, relating the divergences observed to independently motivated typological parameters – head-directionality, morphological type, and frequency-driven fusion – rather than treating them as an unstructured list of differences. The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the theoretical framework, situating the study within grammaticalization theory and within the structural classifications developed independently in the Anglophone and Turkological grammatical traditions. Section 3 outlines the materials and method. Sections 4 and 5 present the derivational analysis of English and Uzbek conjunctions respectively. Section 6 offers the contrastive discussion, Section 7 considers pedagogical and translational implications, and Section 8 concludes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammaticalization and the diachrony of conjunctions

Conjunctions are a textbook case of grammaticalization: the diachronic process by which lexical items or constructions come, in certain contexts, to serve grammatical functions, and, once grammatical, to serve increasingly abstract grammatical functions [7]. Hopper & Traugott's cross-linguistic survey identifies recurrent clines along which content words become connectives – deictic and demonstrative elements becoming subordinators, verbs of motion or possession becoming complementizers, nouns of time

or manner becoming temporal or manner conjunctions – and argues that these clines are characterized by decategorialization (loss of the morphosyntactic privileges of the source category), semantic bleaching, and increasing syntactic fixation. Kortmann's [10] large-scale typological study of adverbial subordinators in European languages refines this picture for the specific domain of clause-combining connectives, showing that the large majority of subordinators – what he terms complex subordinators – are synchronically analyzable as combinations of a preposition, a noun, an adjective, or a participle with a general subordinating particle (in English, *that*). Kortmann & König [11] further show that many English prepositions and conjunctions arise through a shared mechanism, categorial reanalysis, whereby a participial or deverbal form (*considering*, *given*, *provided*) is reanalyzed as a preposition or conjunction without any change in its phonological shape – a process sometimes labeled conversion or zero-derivation.

Bybee's [1] usage-based account adds a further dimension relevant to the present study: frequency-driven fusion. High-frequency sequences that repeatedly co-occur tend to fuse phonologically and lose internal analyzability faster than low-frequency sequences, which tend to remain transparent and compositional for longer. Applied to conjunctions, this predicts that the most frequent connectives in a language – the primary coordinators and the most common subordinators – should show the least synchronic internal structure, while less frequent, more specialized connectives should retain visible structure. This prediction proves useful in accounting for asymmetries within both the English and the Uzbek inventories examined below.

Structural classification of conjunctions

Independently of the grammaticalization literature, both the Anglophone and the Turkological grammatical traditions have developed structural (as opposed to purely functional) classifications of conjunctions. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik [13], in their comprehensive grammar of English, distinguish simple conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or*, *if*, *as*, *since*), compound conjunctions formed by combining a simple

conjunction or preposition with another element (“however,” “moreover,” “although,” “whereas”), and correlative pairs (“both...and,” “either...or,” “neither...nor”), alongside a large and synchronically productive class of complex or phrasal subordinators (“as long as,” “in order that,” “so that,” “in case,” “provided that”). The Turkological and Uzbek grammatical tradition, represented by Kononov's [9] grammar of the modern Uzbek literary language and subsequently elaborated in Uzbek-medium reference works such as G'ulomov & Asqarova's [3] syntax of the modern Uzbek literary language and Hojiyev's [6] treatment of Uzbek word formation, draws a parallel but independently motivated set of distinctions: *soddabog'lovchilar* (simple conjunctions), *qo'shmabog'lovchilar* (compound conjunctions), *juft* and *takroriybog'lovchilar* (paired and reduplicated conjunctions), and composite conjunctions formed from a demonstrative or postpositional base. The convergence of these two independently developed classificatory traditions around a similar set of structural categories – simple, compound, composite, correlative/paired – is itself suggestive: it indicates that the simple/derived/compound distinction reflects a genuine cross-linguistic regularity in how connective systems are built, rather than an artifact of any one grammatical tradition. The present study adopts a harmonized version of this classification, described in Section 3, so that the English and Uzbek inventories can be compared on common terms.

Typological parameters

Two further typological parameters inform the contrastive analysis in Section 6. Croft's [2] discussion of word-order typology and head-directionality notes that ad positions correlate systematically with the position of complementizers and subordinators: head-initial (prepositional) languages tend to place subordinating elements before the clause they introduce, while head-final (postpositional) languages tend to place equivalent elements after it, often as bound suffixes on the verb. English, an overwhelmingly prepositional language, and Uzbek, a strictly postpositional and suffixing language, represent near-opposite poles on this parameter, which, as will be shown, correlates

closely with the different derivational sources of their respective conjunction systems. Haspelmath's [4; 5] typological work on coordinating constructions provides a complementary functional-typological backdrop, cataloguing the range of strategies languages use to coordinate noun phrases and clauses and situating both English and-coordination and Uzbek *va/ham*-coordination within a broader cross-linguistic space.

THE DERIVATIONAL NATURE OF CONJUNCTIONS IN ENGLISH

Simple (primary) conjunctions

At the core of the English conjunction system lies a small, closed set of monomorphemic items – and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so among the coordinators, and if, as, since, though, when, while among the more grammaticalized subordinators – that are synchronically unanalyzable. Diachronically, several of these forms have complex histories (as, for instance, descends from Old English *eallswa*, a phrase meaning approximately “all so,” which fused and bleached into a general subordinator and comparative marker over several centuries), but no living speaker parses as containing *all + so*, and the form behaves, synchronically, exactly like an underived item. This is consistent with Bybee's [1] frequency-fusion hypothesis: these are among the most frequent connectives in the language, and high token frequency is precisely what drives a form to lose internal analyzability and resist further segmentation.

Derived and converted conjunctions

A second, productive layer of the English inventory is formed by conversion – the shift of a form from one word class to another without the addition of any overt derivational morpheme. Several English prepositions function, in the appropriate syntactic context, as conjunctions with no formal change whatsoever: “after,” “before,” “since,” and “until” are prepositions when followed by a noun phrase (“after the meeting”) and subordinating conjunctions when followed by a finite clause (“after the meeting ended”). Kortmann & König [11] analyze this alternation as categorial reanalysis rather than accidental homophony: the item retains a

single lexical entry whose category is determined by its complement. A parallel pattern of conversion recruits present and past participial forms of verbs directly into the conjunction class: provided, providing, given, granted, and seeing all function as subordinators, typically followed by the complementizer that (“provided that,” “given that”), though the that is frequently omitted in informal registers (“provided you agree”). Because these forms retain the morphological shape of the participle from which they derive, they constitute a clear case of derivation by conversion rather than by affixation: no new morpheme is added, but the item is recategorized.

Compound conjunctions

A distinct mechanism – compounding, in the sense of combining two free morphemes into a single prosodic and orthographic word – produces a further set of English conjunctions: however, moreover, furthermore, nevertheless, notwithstanding, and whereas. These items combine a conjunction or preposition (“how,” “more,” “further,” “never,” “not,” “where”) with an adverb or verb (“ever,” “over,” “with,” “standing,” “as”) and have undergone sufficient phonological and semantic fusion to be written as single words and to resist insertion of material between their component parts, distinguishing them formally from the phrasal composites discussed next.

Composite (phrasal) conjunctions

The most productive and, from a derivational standpoint, the most revealing layer of the English system is what Kortmann [10] terms the class of complex subordinators: multi-word sequences, orthographically distinct words, that function as a single subordinating conjunction. English forms such as as long as, as soon as, in order that, so that, in case, on condition that, for fear that, and now that are built compositionally from a preposition or adverb (“as,” “in,” “on,” “for,” “now”), a noun, adjective, or quantifier (“long,” “order,” “condition,” “fear”), and, in many cases, the general subordinating particle that, which Kortmann [10] identifies as the single most productive device for deriving new subordinators in the history of English. This pattern

is not a closed historical residue but an active word-formation process: forms such as *given that* and *now that* have become established relatively recently, and speakers can, in principle, extend the pattern to new combinations (“assuming that,” “granted that”) on the basis of a recognizable template – [preposition/participle] + [optional noun phrase] + *that*. The composite subordinators therefore occupy the open periphery of an otherwise largely closed functional class, and their internal structure remains far more transparent to speakers than that of the simple conjunctions discussed in 4.1.

Correlative (paired) conjunctions

Finally, English forms a small set of correlative conjunctions – “both...and,” “either...or,” “neither...nor,” “not only...but also” – by pairing a simple conjunction or negator with a correlating particle distributed across the two conjuncts. Structurally, these are best analyzed as discontinuous compounds: the two parts form a single functional and semantic unit despite their syntactic separation, and neither part can be omitted or freely substituted without altering the construction's meaning.

DERIVATIONAL NATURE OF CONJUNCTIONS IN UZBEK

Sodda (simple) bog'lovchilar

As in English, the Uzbek conjunction system has a core of simple, synchronically unanalyzable items: *va* (“and”), *ammo* and *lekin* (“but”), *yoki* (“or”), *agar* (“if”), *garchi* (“although”), *ki* (a general subordinating and relativizing particle), and *balki* (“rather, but rather”). A distinctive feature of this core, noted in Kononov [9] and reflected in the explanatory dictionaries of the modern Uzbek literary language, is that a substantial proportion of it consists of borrowings from Arabic and Persian-Tajik, absorbed into Uzbek over the course of centuries of contact through the Persianate and Islamic literary tradition. Although several of these items have identifiable internal structure in their donor languages, they were borrowed as unanalyzable wholes and function in Uzbek exactly as simple, primary conjunctions: no Uzbek speaker parses *lekin* or *agar* into smaller meaningful

parts. Borrowing thus constitutes, alongside language-internal grammaticalization, a second historical source that feeds the simple-conjunction class – a source with no direct counterpart of comparable scale in the formation of the core English conjunction inventory, since English *and*, *but*, *or*, *if*, and *as* are all inherited Germanic material rather than loans.

Yasama (derived) bog'lovchilar: Agglutinative and converbal derivation

The most typologically significant layer of the Uzbek system, and the one that most sharply distinguishes it from English, is the derivation of subordinating connectives through bound agglutinative suffixation directly on the verb stem, rather than through a free-standing word. Uzbek, as a strictly agglutinative and suffixing language, expresses a range of meanings that English encodes with a free conjunction by means of a converb suffix attached to the predicate of the subordinate clause. The conditional suffix *-sa* (*kel-sa*, “if [he/she] comes”) functions as the structural equivalent of the English conjunction *if*, but where English *if* is a separate lexical item preceding a finite clause, Uzbek *-sa* is a bound morpheme fused to the verb stem, and the “conjunction” is, in effect, distributed across the inflectional paradigm rather than realized as an independent word. Similarly, the suffix combination *-ganiuchun* (“because”) is built from the participial nominalizer *-gan*, a possessive/oblique element, and the postposition *uchun* (“for the sake of”), yielding a transparent composite meaning close to “for its having [happened]”; *-gan sari* (“the more..., the more...”) combines the same nominalizer with the postposition *sari* (“towards”); and *-guncha* (“until”) combines the nominalizer *-gu* with the dative-like element *-ncha*. These forms occupy a position structurally analogous to the English composite subordinators discussed in 4.4, in that they are transparently built from a nominalized verb form plus a postposition – but where English composition proceeds by stringing together separate words ending in the free particle *that*, Uzbek composition proceeds by suffixation onto the verb, with the postposition itself often left as the only free-standing element, or absorbed into the suffix complex entirely. This is a direct morphological consequence of Uzbek's

agglutinative type and its strict head-final, postpositional syntax: where English recruits prepositions and participles as free conjunctions preceding the clause, Uzbek recruits participial nominalizers and postpositions as suffixes following the verb stem.

Qo'shma (compound) bog'lovchilar

A further set of Uzbek conjunctions is formed by compounding a demonstrative pronoun with a postposition or particle into a single fixed unit: *shuninguchun* (“therefore,” literally “for this”) combines the genitive form of the demonstrative *shu* with *uchun*; *shungaqaramay* (“nevertheless,” literally “not looking at this”) combines the dative form of *shu* with the *converbqaramay* (“not looking”); and *shubilanbirga* (:at the same time, moreover”) combines *shu* with the postposition *bilan* (“with”) and the adverb *birga* (“together”). These compounds parallel the English composite subordinators of 4.4 in their compositional transparency and in drawing on a demonstrative or pronominal anchor, but, characteristically for Uzbek, the postposition follows rather than precedes its associated pronoun, and the resulting compound functions cataphorically as a discourse connective linking clauses or sentences rather than, in most cases, introducing an embedded subordinate clause in the manner of English in order that or provided that.

Borrowed conjunctions and their morphological integration

As noted in 5.1, a number of Uzbek conjunctions – *va*, *ammo*, *lekin*, *agar*, *garchi*, *balki*, *vahokazo* – entered the language through borrowing from Arabic and Persian-Tajik rather than through language-internal derivation. Once borrowed, however, these items were fully integrated into the native morphosyntax: they participate in the same reduplicative pairing pattern as native items (*ham...ham* alongside borrowed *va*), they combine freely with native compounding elements, and they show no formal trace of foreign morphology. Borrowing therefore functions, in the Uzbek system, as a source that feeds the simple-conjunction class from outside the language, functionally parallel to, but historically independent of, the native grammaticalization and suffixation processes described in 5.2 and 5.3.

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Word-formation mechanisms compared

The preceding sections show that English and Uzbek populate a structurally similar taxonomy of conjunction types – simple, derived, compound, composite, correlative – through markedly different mechanisms. English derivation is predominantly analytic: conversion recruits existing free words (prepositions, participles) into the conjunction class without adding any morpheme, and composite subordinators are built by concatenating free words, culminating in the general subordinating particle *that*. Uzbek derivation, by contrast, is predominantly synthetic and agglutinative: the structural equivalents of many English composite subordinators are single bound suffixes attached to the verb stem (*-sa*, *-ganiuchun*, *-gan sari*, *-guncha*), and even the compound and pronominal-postpositional forms (*shuninguchun*, *shungaqaramay*) package what English would express with a preposition preceding the clause into a postposition-final unit anchored to a pronoun. Where English “conjunctionalizes” by placing a free grammatical word before the clause it introduces, Uzbek “conjunctionalizes” by suffixing grammatical material onto the predicate of the clause itself – a difference in derivational strategy, not merely in surface word order.

Productivity and the open periphery

In both languages, the conjunction class shows a closed, highly frequent, formally opaque core surrounded by an open, less frequent, formally transparent periphery, consistent with Bybee's [1] frequency-fusion account. In English, the periphery is populated chiefly by composite phrasal subordinators (*given that*, *now that*, *in case*), which remain productive and can, in principle, admit new members. In Uzbek, the periphery is populated chiefly by suffixal converb combinations and pronominal-postpositional compounds, which are likewise extendable within the constraints of the postposition inventory and the nominalizing suffix system. The two peripheries are thus functionally parallel – both provide the productive means by which each language expresses fine-

grained subordinating meanings that the closed core cannot – but structurally distinct in exactly the way predicted by the analytic/agglutinative contrast between the two languages.

Typological motivation: Head-directionality and frequency

The divergence documented in 6.1 is not arbitrary; it follows from independently established typological properties of the two languages. Croft's [2] generalization that adpositional type correlates with the position and morphological status of subordinators predicts precisely the pattern observed here: English, a prepositional, head-initial language, grammaticalizes prepositions and participles into pre-clausal conjunctions, while Uzbek, a postpositional, head-final, suffixing language, grammaticalizes postpositions and nominalized verb forms into post-predicate (typically suffixal) subordinators. The derivational nature of conjunctions in each language is thus not an isolated fact about the connective inventory but a direct reflex of the broader morphosyntactic type of the language as a whole. Bybee's [1] frequency-fusion hypothesis, in turn, accounts for the internal stratification within each inventory: in both English and Uzbek, the most frequent connectives ("and," "but," "or," "if" in English; *va, lekin, agar* in Uzbek) are the most formally opaque and resistant to further segmentation, while the least frequent, most semantically specific connectives (English *for fear that*, *on condition that*; Uzbek *-gan sari, shubilanbirga*) remain the most transparent. The convergence of the two languages on this frequency-transparency correlation, despite their opposite word-formation strategies, suggests that frequency-driven fusion operates as a language-independent constraint on grammaticalization, orthogonal to the analytic/agglutinative parameter that governs the choice of mechanism.

DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

The derivational asymmetry described above has practical consequences beyond its typological interest. In translation between English and Uzbek, a single free-standing English

conjunction frequently corresponds not to a Uzbek conjunction in the narrow sense but to an inflectional suffix on the Uzbek verb: English *if* corresponds to the suffix *-sa* rather than to a separate word, and a literal, word-for-word rendering that searches for a free Uzbek equivalent of *if* risks either an unidiomatic construction or an outright translation error. Recognizing that the functional category “conjunction” is realized analytically in one language and synthetically in the other allows the translator to look for the correct locus of the meaning – the verb’s inflectional slot rather than a separate lexical item – and produces more natural target-language output than a category-by-category substitution would.

For the teaching of English to Uzbek-speaking learners, and of Uzbek to English-speaking learners, the same asymmetry predicts a specific and testable source of transfer error. Learners whose first language packages conditional, causal, and temporal subordination into verbal suffixes may be expected to under-use the free-standing English composite subordinators described in Section 4.4 (in case, provided that, now that), since their first-language grammar offers no direct free-word template for this pattern; conversely, learners whose first language is English may be expected to search, unsuccessfully, for a free Uzbek word corresponding to *if*, *because*, or *until*, rather than recognizing the relevant Uzbek converb suffix. Explicit, form-focused instruction that contrasts the two derivational strategies directly – rather than presenting the two conjunction inventories as parallel lists of semantic equivalents – is therefore likely to be more effective than semantically-oriented instruction alone, a conclusion consistent with contrastive-analysis-informed pedagogy more generally.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the conjunction systems of English and Uzbek, although structurally comparable at the level of classification – both distinguish simple, derived, compound, composite, and correlative types – are populated through markedly different derivational mechanisms that follow directly from the broader morphosyntactic typology of each language.

English conjunctions are derived predominantly through conversion of prepositions and participles and through analytic phrasal composition anchored by the complementizer *that*; Uzbek conjunctions are derived predominantly through agglutinative suffixation of converbal and nominalizing morphology directly onto the verb, through pronominal-postpositional compounding, through a markedly productive pattern of reduplication, and, for a substantial core of basic connectives, through historical borrowing from Arabic and Persian-Tajik. Both systems show the same internal stratification, predicted by frequency-driven fusion, between a closed, opaque, high-frequency core and an open, transparent, lower-frequency periphery, indicating that this stratification is a general property of grammaticalizing connective systems rather than a language-specific accident.

These findings extend the largely semantic and functional focus of previous English-Uzbek contrastive work on conjunctions with a systematic derivational-morphological account, and they suggest concrete implications for translation practice and for contrastive-analysis-informed foreign language pedagogy. The study is limited by its reliance on published reference grammars rather than original corpus data, and by its focus on two of the three languages in the author's broader comparative research program; a natural next step is to extend the derivational classification developed here to Korean, a further agglutinative but genetically and a really distinct language, in order to determine whether the agglutinative derivational strategies identified for Uzbek generalize across agglutinative languages or instead reflect language-specific properties of the Turkic converb system. A corpus-based quantitative study of the relative token frequency of each structural type in authentic English and Uzbek text would likewise allow the frequency-fusion predictions advanced here to be tested more rigorously than the qualitative, grammar-based method adopted in this article permits.

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