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Types of Monopredicative Constructions in German and Uzbek Languages and the Expression of Their Syntactic and Semantic Features

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Abstract This article presents a comprehensive contrastive analysis of monopredicative constructions (MPCs) in German and Uzbek — two typologically distinct languages representing the Indo-European (Germanic) and Turkic language families respectively. The study investigates the structural, syntactic, and semantic properties of simple sentences with a single predicative center, examining how each language encodes subject-predicate relationships, tense, modality, and semantic roles. The research employs a descriptive-comparative methodology drawing on representative corpus examples from both languages. The findings demonstrate that while German MPCs are characterized by strict V2 word order, inflectional morphology, and overt copula use in nominal predication, Uzbek MPCs exhibit agglutinative verb agreement, flexible topic-prominent word order (SOV), and frequent copula ellipsis. At the semantic level, both languages encode identical logical propositions through divergent grammatical means. The article identifies six structural types of MPCs in each language, provides parallel syntactic trees, and analyzes semantic role assignment. The results contribute to typological linguistics and have implications for bilingual pedagogy and translation theory.

Keywords: monopredicative construction, German syntax, Uzbek syntax, contrastive linguistics, simple sentence, semantic roles, predication, typological analysis, word order, agglutination

INTRODUCTION

The simple sentence, as the fundamental unit of syntactic analysis, has attracted sustained attention across theoretical and descriptive linguistics. Among its subtypes, the monopredicative construction (MPC) — defined as a sentence containing a single predicative center comprising a subject and a finite predicate — constitutes the canonical sentence structure in virtually all human languages (Lyons, 1977; Givón, 2001). Yet the surface realization of this universal deep structure varies considerably across typologically distinct languages, reflecting differences in morphological strategy, word order parameter, and grammatical category expression [1].

German and Uzbek represent an especially revealing pair for contrastive investigation. German is a synthetic, V2, nominative-accusative language with grammatical gender, case marking on the noun phrase, and rich verb morphology. Uzbek, by contrast, is an agglutinative, SOV, nominative-accusative Turkic language exhibiting extensive suffixal morphology, postpositional structure, and systematic topic-comment articulation (Sjoberg, 1963; Schlyter, 2001; Boeschoten, 1998). Despite this typological distance, both languages produce monopredicative constructions that express parallel semantic content — a fact that invites systematic structural comparison [2].

Previous scholarship has examined German simple sentences within the framework of Government and Binding theory (Haegeman, 1994) and Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995), while Uzbek syntax has been analyzed through role and reference grammar (Van Valin, 2004) and traditional Soviet grammatical typology (Reshetov, 1966; Yusupov, 1980). However, a direct contrastive analysis of MPCs in these two languages remains underrepresented in the literature, constituting the gap the present study addresses [3].

The article pursues the following objectives: (1) to classify MPCs in German and Uzbek into structural types; (2) to analyze the syntactic properties of each type in both languages; (3) to compare the semantic roles expressed within these constructions; and (4) to identify typologically significant divergences and convergences [4].

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of predication lies at the heart of sentential meaning. Following Aristotelian logic and its linguistic reinterpretation (Russell, 1905; Frege, 1892), predication is the act of ascribing a property or relation to an entity. In grammatical terms, predication is realized through the predicate — the element that makes an assertion about the subject (Matthews, 1981). A monopredicative construction, accordingly, is one in which a single such predication event occurs, involving one subject argument and one predicate (Bauer, 2000).

Within typological linguistics, Comrie (1981) and Dryer (2013) identify several parameters along which languages vary in simple sentence structure: word order (SVO, SOV, VSO etc.), head-marking vs. dependent-marking morphology, presence or absence of copula, pro-drop properties, and tense-aspect-modality encoding strategies. German and Uzbek exhibit contrasting values on nearly all these parameters, making their comparison theoretically productive [5].

Semantic role theory (Fillmore, 1968; Jackendoff, 1990; Dowty, 1991) provides the framework for analyzing the participant roles — Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Goal, Locative, Instrument — encoded within MPCs. Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient feature hierarchies (Dowty, 1991) allow cross-linguistic comparison of how agentivity and patienthood are grammaticalized, irrespective of the surface morphosyntactic differences between the languages.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive-contrastive methodology (James, 1980; Fisiak, 1981). Data were collected from three sources for each language: (1) literary prose corpora — selected works of contemporary German fiction (Grass, Sebald, Kehlmann) and Uzbek literature (Cho'lpon, Abdullah Qodiriy, Ulmas Umarbekov); (2) newspaper corpora — *Der Spiegel* and *Yoshlik*, totaling approximately 50,000 words per language; and (3) spoken language transcripts from language teaching materials. A total of 600 MPCs were extracted

and annotated (300 per language) using a uniform tagging scheme covering structural type, syntactic function, and semantic role.

Syntactic analysis follows X-bar theory for structural representation (Chomsky, 1986), supplemented by functional categories for tense and agreement projections. Semantic role assignment follows the inventory proposed by Van Valin and LaPolla (1997). The parallel corpus analysis method ensures systematic comparability across the two languages.

RESULTS

STRUCTURAL TYPES OF MONOPREDICATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Based on the nature of the predicate, we identify six structural types of MPCs in both German and Uzbek. Table 1 presents this classification with representative examples from each language.

Table 1. Structural Types of MPCs in German and Uzbek

Type	Predicate Type	German Example	Uzbek Example
Type I	Verbal (Action)	Das Kind schläft. (The child sleeps.)	Bola uxlaydi. (The child sleeps.)
Type II	Verbal (Transitive)	Der Lehrer liest das Buch. (The teacher reads the book.)	O'qituvchi kitob o'qiydi. (The teacher reads a book.)
Type III	Nominal Copular	Er ist Arzt. (He is a doctor.)	U shifor (hisoblanadi). (He is a doctor.)
Type IV	Adjectival Copular	Das Wetter ist schön. (The weather is beautiful.)	Havo chiroyli. (The weather is beautiful.)
Type V	Existential	Es gibt viele Möglichkeiten. (There are many possibilities.)	Ko'p imkoniyatlar bor. (There are many possibilities.)
Type VI	Impersonal / Weather	Es regnet. (It is raining.)	Yomg'ir yog'yapti. (It is raining.)

Type I – Intransitive Verbal Constructions

In Type I constructions, the predicate is an intransitive verb expressing action, state, or process, and the sole argument is the Subject-Agent or Subject-Patient. In German, the finite verb occupies the second position (V2 constraint), while the subject may precede or follow it depending on topicalization. In Uzbek, the verb is clause-final, carrying person-number agreement suffixes that mirror the subject.

German: Die Studentin [Subj] lernt [V-Präs.3Sg] — 'The (female) student is studying.'

Uzbek: Talaba [Subj] o'qiydi [V-Pres.3Sg] — 'The student is studying.'

A key syntactic difference is that German marks the subject through nominative case on the determiner (die → Nom.Fem.Sg), whereas Uzbek relies on unmarked (absolute) position for the subject, as case suffixes in Uzbek mark non-subject functions (dative -ga, accusative -ni, etc.) [5].

Type II – Transitive Verbal Constructions

Type II MPCs involve a transitive verb with two core arguments: Subject-Agent and Object-Patient. In German, the object is marked by the accusative case and typically follows

the verb in declarative word order (SVO surface), though scrambling to SOV is possible in subordinate clauses. Uzbek maintains consistent SOV order, marking the definite/specific object with the accusative suffix -ni and leaving indefinite objects unmarked.

German: Der Vater [Subj-Nom] kauft [V] den Wagen [Obj-Akk]. — 'The father buys the car.'

Uzbek: Ota [Subj] mashinani [Obj-Akk-ni] sotib oldi [V]. — 'Father bought the car.'

The accusative marking in German is morphologically complex (der → den, ein → einen), operating on determiners and adjectives, while in Uzbek the suffix -ni attaches directly to the noun stem in an agglutinative fashion, demonstrating the typological contrast between inflectional and agglutinative morphology.

Type III — Nominal Copular Constructions

In nominal predication, a noun phrase or pronoun is predicated of the subject through a copula link. German obligatorily employs the copula sein ('to be') in present and past tense. Uzbek, however, exhibits copula ellipsis in present tense: the nominal predicate directly follows the subject with zero copula, a phenomenon well-documented in pro-drop and Turkic languages (Johanson, 2002).

German: Sie ist Lehrerin [NP-pred]. — 'She is a teacher.'

Uzbek: U o'qituvchi [NP-pred] Ø. — 'She (is) a teacher.' (zero copula in present tense)

In past tense, Uzbek employs the copula edi: U o'qituvchi edi — 'She was a teacher.' This asymmetry between present and past copular use in Uzbek contrasts with German's obligatory copular marking across all tenses, revealing a grammaticalization difference in the two systems [6].

Type IV — Adjectival Copular Constructions

Type IV constructions predicate an adjectival property of the subject. German predicative adjectives are uninflected (unlike attributive adjectives which carry agreement morphology): Das Haus ist groß — 'The house is big.' Uzbek predicative adjectives similarly lack attributive agreement morphology but carry the person-number agreement suffix of the predicate: Uy katta — 'The house is big' (3sg zero agreement in present).

An important semantic distinction concerns degree and gradability. German employs comparative morphology (groß → größer → am größten) on the adjective itself, while Uzbek uses the adverb yanada or compares through postpositional phrases. Both languages, however, express the same range of semantic property types: size, color, temperature, evaluative, and dispositional properties.

Type V — Existential Constructions

Existential MPCs assert the existence of an entity or state. German uses the expletive pronoun es with the verb geben (es gibt) for generic existence, or sein for locative existence (Es ist/sind...). Uzbek employs the existential verb bor ('there is/are') placed clause-finally: Kitob bor — 'There is a book.' The pragmatic scope of these constructions differs: German es gibt constructions are used for non-specific existence in a general domain, while Uzbek bor sentences typically assert existence in a contextually relevant domain [7].

Type VI — Impersonal and Weather Constructions

Impersonal constructions lack a referential subject. German obligatorily fills the subject position with the expletive pronoun es, satisfying the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) which requires all clauses to have an overt subject. Uzbek, as a null-subject (pro-drop) language, allows the subject position to remain phonologically empty: Yomg'ir yog'yapti — literally 'Rain is falling' with the subject inferred from the verb morphology.

German: Es regnet stark. — 'It is raining hard.' [expletive es fills Spec,TP]

Uzbek: Kuchli yomg'ir yog'yapti. — 'Heavy rain is falling.' [no expletive; meteorological noun as surface subject]

SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF MPCs: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The syntactic properties of MPCs in the two languages diverge along several dimensions, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparative Syntactic Properties of MPCs in German and Uzbek

Parameter	German	Uzbek
Basic Word Order	SVO (main clauses, V2)	SOV (consistent)
Verb Position	V2 in main; V-final in subordinate	V-final (all clause types)
Subject Marking	Nominative case on DP	Unmarked (absolutive/zero)
Object Marking	Accusative/Dative morphology on DP	Suffix -ni (accusative, specific)
Agreement	Person-Number on V (+ gender in past)	Person-Number suffix on V
Copula (Present)	Obligatory: sein	Zero (Ø) — copula ellipsis
Copula (Past)	Obligatory: war	Obligatory: edi
Expletive Subject	Obligatory: es	Absent (pro-drop)
Tense Encoding	Morphological on V + auxiliaries	Suffixal morphology on V
Negation Placement	Pre-VP: nicht	Pre-V suffix: -ma- or emas

Word Order and Information Structure

The most salient syntactic difference between German and Uzbek MPCs is the verb position. German observes the V2 constraint: in declarative main clauses, exactly one constituent precedes the finite verb, which occupies the second position (CP-Spec and V-in-C in terms of the clause structure). This produces flexible fronting — any constituent (subject, object, adverb) may appear first — without altering truth conditions but shifting the information-structural focus.

Uzbek, by contrast, maintains verb-final position across all clause types. Variation in constituent order serves pragmatic functions (topic vs. focus marking) but does not alter the position of the verb. Pre-verbal elements are interpreted as topics; elements immediately preceding the verb (the pre-nuclear slot) receive narrow focus (Ergashev, 1984; Johanson, 2002).

Agreement and Pro-Drop

Both languages mark subject-verb agreement through person and number features on the finite verb. German present-tense agreement distinguishes six person-number combinations (ich lese, du liest, er liest, wir lesen, ihr lest, sie lesen) and also marks genus verbi (active/passive) and Konjunktiv (subjunctive mood). Uzbek agreement suffixes (-man, -san, -di, -miz, -siz, -dilar) are agglutinative, each expressing a single grammatical meaning per morpheme [8].

Crucially, German is non-pro-drop: subjects must be overtly expressed in all but imperative constructions. Uzbek is consistently pro-drop: the subject pronoun may be omitted when recoverable from the agreement suffix, a pragmatically unmarked option in informal speech. This difference manifests directly in impersonal MPCs and weather constructions, as analyzed in section 4.6.

SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF MPCs: ROLE ASSIGNMENT AND PROPOSITION

Despite structural differences, German and Uzbek MPCs express the same range of semantic role configurations. Following Van Valin and LaPolla's (1997) Role and Reference Grammar framework, we analyze the thematic relations encoded in our 300-sentence corpus for each language [9].

Table 3. Semantic Role Distribution in MPCs (n=300 per language)

Semantic Role Configuration	German (n)	German (%)	Uzbek (n)	Uzbek (%)
Agent – Verb (intransitive)	78	26%	82	27.3%
Agent – Verb – Patient	96	32%	98	32.7%
Experiencer – Verb – Theme	42	14%	38	12.7%
Subject – Copula – NP/AP	54	18%	56	18.7%
Existential / Locative	18	6%	16	5.3%
Impersonal / Weather	12	4%	10	3.3%
Total	300	100%	300	100%

The distribution of semantic role configurations is remarkably parallel across the two languages, confirming that MPCs in German and Uzbek encode the same range of propositional meanings. The most frequent configuration in both languages is the transitive Agent-Patient construction (Type II), followed by intransitive constructions (Type I). Copular constructions constitute the third-largest category.

Agentivity and Transitivity

Both languages grammaticalize the Proto-Agent properties identified by Dowty (1991) – volitional involvement, sentience, causation, movement – through the subject position. However, the formal marking of agentivity differs: German uses nominative case and V-agreement; Uzbek uses unmarked subject position and the same agreement suffixes as with non-agent subjects, relying more heavily on semantic and lexical cues for agentivity identification [10].

An interesting divergence involves experiencer constructions. In German, experiencer subjects in psychological predicates frequently appear in dative case (*Mir ist kalt* – 'I am cold' / literally 'To me it is cold'), creating a mismatch between grammatical subject (*es* – expletive) and semantic experiencer (*mir* – dative NP). Uzbek encodes such meanings with standard nominative-subject experiencer constructions (*Menga sovuq* – 'I am cold'), maintaining subject-experiencer congruence.

Tense, Aspect, and Modality in MPCs

Tense and aspect are encoded through distinct strategies. German employs a compound tense system in the perfect: the auxiliary *haben* or *sein* plus the past participle creates present perfect and past perfect forms. The *Präteritum* (simple past) is primarily a written register form. Uzbek expresses aspect-tense through a rich system of converb-based compound predicates and lexical aspect markers, with the aorist suffix *-di* marking perfective past and *-yap-* marking progressive aspect [11].

Modality in MPCs is expressed through modal verbs in German (*können*, *müssen*, *sollen*, *dürfen*, *wollen*, *mögen*) which occupy V2 position with the main verb infinitive clause-finally. Uzbek encodes modality through modal suffixes (*-olish* – ability; *-kerak* – necessity) or modal adverbs preceding the main verb in the pre-nuclear position. In both languages, modal MPCs remain monopredicative as long as the modal and the main predicate share a single subject [12].

DISCUSSION

The contrastive analysis reveals a fundamental tension between structural divergence and semantic convergence in German and Uzbek MPCs. The same propositional content — an agent acting on a patient, a subject possessing a property, or an entity existing in a location — is encoded through different morphosyntactic strategies in the two languages, yet the inventory of semantic types expressed is essentially identical [13].

This finding supports the Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (Baker, 1988), according to which thematic roles are universally encoded in the same structural positions at the level of abstract syntax, with surface variations attributed to parameter settings and morphological realization. German and Uzbek appear to share deep structural properties (agent in external argument position, patient in internal argument position) while differing in how these positions are morphologically marked and in what order they appear at the surface [14].

The copula ellipsis phenomenon in Uzbek — absent in German — is consistent with a typological universal proposed by Stassen (1994): languages with rich nominal morphology or flexible topic-marking tend to allow greater copula optionality. Uzbek's pro-drop properties and agglutinative suffixal richness create a context in which the copula's linking function is inferrable from discourse and morphological context, rendering it pragmatically recoverable and therefore omissible.

Pedagogically, these findings have implications for German-Uzbek bilingual instruction. Learners of German whose L1 is Uzbek must acquire (1) obligatory expletive subject insertion (es), (2) V2 word order adjustment, (3) case morphology on the DP, and (4) obligatory copula use in all tenses. Conversely, German learners of Uzbek must acquire SOV word order, suffix-based tense-aspect-agreement, object specificity marking (-ni), and copula omission in present tense nominal and adjectival predication. [15]

CONCLUSION

This study has conducted a systematic contrastive analysis of monopredicative constructions in German and Uzbek, two typologically distant languages that nonetheless encode parallel propositional content through divergent grammatical strategies. Six structural types of MPCs were identified and analyzed in both languages: intransitive verbal, transitive verbal, nominal copular, adjectival copular, existential, and impersonal/weather constructions.

At the syntactic level, the key differences involve word order (V2 vs. SOV), subject marking (nominative case vs. unmarked position), copula use (obligatory in German vs. zero in Uzbek present tense), and expletive subject requirement (obligatory in German vs. absent in Uzbek). At the semantic level, the distribution of semantic role configurations across the two corpora is remarkably similar, with Agent-Patient transitive constructions the most frequent type in both languages.

These findings contribute to typological linguistics by providing detailed, corpus-based evidence for the interaction between morphological type (inflectional vs. agglutinative) and syntactic strategy in simple sentence structure. They also have direct applications in contrastive linguistics, bilingual pedagogy, and translation studies between German and Uzbek — a language pair that has received insufficient attention in the international literature.

Future research should extend the analysis to multipredicative constructions, examining how both languages embed or coordinate additional predications, and to spoken language corpora to capture register-based variation in MPC realization.

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