

Comparative-Linguistic Study of Transitivity and Terminativity Relations in Verb Combinatorics

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Abstract: This article examines the relationship between transitivity and terminativity in verb combinatorics in English and Uzbek. Transitivity is traditionally connected with the ability of a verb to take an object, while terminativity refers to the semantic feature of an action reaching a limit, endpoint, or result. However, in real speech these categories do not function separately. They interact through verb-object relations, aspectual meanings, auxiliary constructions, case marking, and contextual modifiers. In English, the terminative meaning is often formed through the combination of verb semantics, object type, prepositions, particles, and perfective interpretation.

Keywords: transitivity, terminativity, telicity, verb combinatorics, verb semantics, English, Uzbek, aspectual meaning.

Introduction

Verb combinatorics refers to the way a verb combines with objects, adverbials, prepositions, auxiliaries, particles, and other grammatical elements. These combinations influence the meaning of the verb and determine whether an action is interpreted as complete, incomplete, directed toward an endpoint, or open-ended.

In comparative linguistics, the relationship between transitivity and terminativity is especially important. A transitive verb usually involves an action directed from an agent toward an object. A terminative verb or verb phrase, by contrast, presents the action as having a natural endpoint. These two meanings often overlap. For example, in English, write can be non-terminative in write letters, but terminative in write a letter. In Uzbek, yozmoq may be neutral, while xatni yozib bitirmoq clearly expresses completion.

Hopper and Thompson argue that transitivity is not limited to the presence of an object. They state that "Transitivity involves a number of components," including such factors as punctuality, telicity, agency, and affectedness of the object. This view is important because it connects transitivity directly with terminativity: the more affected and completed the object is, the more transitive and terminative the whole construction becomes. Very convenient for linguists, naturally terrible for students.

Theoretical Background

The concept of terminativity is closely related to telicity, that is, whether an action has an inherent endpoint. Comrie defines aspect as the study of the "internal temporal constituency of a situation," which means that aspect shows how an event is viewed in time. In this sense, terminativity belongs to the aspectual structure of the verb phrase.

Vendler's classification of verbs into states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements is one of the main theoretical foundations for analyzing verb semantics. His model shows that activities are usually non-terminative, while accomplishments and achievements are

terminative because they contain a natural endpoint. For example, run is an activity, but run to the station becomes an accomplishment because the prepositional phrase introduces a goal.

Tenny's theory of aspectual roles is also useful here. She treats aspectual roles as linguistic elements through which lexical semantic phenomena can be described. This idea helps explain why the object of a transitive verb often "measures out" the event. For example, eat apples is open-ended, but eat an apple is bounded and terminative.

Transitivity and Terminativity in English Verb Combinatorics

In English, transitivity is usually expressed through the presence of a direct object:

- He opened the door.
- She wrote a letter.
- They built a house.

In these examples, the verbs are transitive because they take direct objects: the door, a letter, and a house. At the same time, these constructions are also terminative because the object can be affected or completed. The action of opening the door ends when the door is open; writing a letter ends when the letter is complete; building a house ends when the house is finished.

However, transitivity does not automatically create terminativity. Compare:

- She wrote letters.
- She wrote a letter.

The first sentence may describe a repeated or general activity. The second sentence is more clearly terminative because the singular countable object a letter gives the action a natural endpoint. This supports the idea that terminativity in English is often created not by the verb alone, but by the whole verb phrase.

Table 1. English verb combinatorics and terminative meaning

Verb combination	Transitivity	Terminativity	Explanation
<i>write letters</i>	+	- / weak	The object is plural and indefinite
<i>write a letter</i>	+	+	The object gives the action an endpoint
<i>read books</i>	+	- / weak	General or repeated activity
<i>read the book</i>	+	+	The object is definite and complete
<i>run</i>	-	-	Activity without endpoint
<i>run to the station</i>	-	+	Directional phrase creates endpoint

Thus, English terminativity depends on verb meaning, object type, quantity, definiteness, and directional or resultative elements.

Transitivity and Terminativity in Uzbek Verb Combinatorics

Uzbek expresses transitivity through object relations, especially through the accusative marker -ni when the object is definite:

- U kitob o'qidi. He/she read a book/books.
- U kitobni o'qidi. He/she read the book.

The form kitobni marks a definite object and strengthens the transitive relation. However, terminativity becomes even clearer when the verb combines with auxiliary elements:

- U kitobni o'qib chiqdi. He/she read the book completely.
- U xatni yozib bitirdi. He/she finished writing the letter.

- U choyni ichib bo'ldi. He/she finished drinking tea.

Uzbek uses many analytical verb constructions to express aspectual and terminative meanings. The construction verb-IB BIT- / BITIR- expresses the completion of an action at its terminal point, and bitir- is used with transitive actions. The construction verb-IB CHIQ- expresses completion "from the beginning to the end," while verb-IB BO'L- expresses full completion with lasting relevance.

Table 2. Uzbek verb combinatorics and terminative meaning

Uzbek construction	Example	Transitivity	Terminativity	Meaning
Verb + object	<i>kitob o'qimoq</i>	+	weak	To read a book/books
Object + -ni + verb	<i>kitobni o'qimoq</i>	+	medium	To read the book
Verb + -ib chiq-	<i>kitobni o'qib chiqmoq</i>	+	strong	To read completely
Verb + -ib bitir-	<i>xatni yozib bitirmoq</i>	+	strong	To finish writing
Verb + -ib bo'l-	<i>choyni ichib bo'lmoq</i>	+	strong	To finish drinking
Verb + -ib yubor-	<i>eshikni ochib yubormoq</i>	+	strong	To open suddenly/completely
Verb + -ib qo'y-	<i>soatni buzib qo'ymoq</i>	+	strong	To do something with result

The Uzbek construction verb-IB QO'Y- expresses an action that causes a change of state and has lasting relevance. This means that Uzbek often marks terminativity more explicitly than English through auxiliary verb combinations.

Comparative Analysis

English and Uzbek both show a close relationship between transitivity and terminativity, but they express this relationship differently.

In English, the object often determines whether the action is terminative:

- He ate apples. Non-terminative or repeated.
- He ate an apple. Terminative.
- He ate the whole apple. Strongly terminative.

In Uzbek, the same meaning can be expressed through object marking and auxiliary constructions:

- U olma yedi. He/she ate an apple or apples.
- U olmani yedi. He/she ate the apple.
- U olmani yeb bo'ldi. He/she finished eating the apple.
- U olmani yeb qo'ydi. He/she ate the apple, with a resultative nuance.

The difference is that English often leaves terminativity to the interaction between the verb and its object, while Uzbek can mark completion directly through auxiliary verb constructions.

Table 3. Comparative features of English and Uzbek

Feature	English	Uzbek
Main marker of transitivity	Direct object	Object + accusative -ni
Main marker of terminativity	Object type, particles, prepositions, perfect aspect	Auxiliary constructions, suffixes, object marking
Example of weak terminativity	<i>read books</i>	<i>kitob o'qimoq</i>
Example of strong terminativity	<i>read the whole book</i>	<i>kitobni o'qib chiqmoq</i>

Resultative meaning	<i>break the glass, write up the report</i>	<i>sindirib qo'ymoq, yozib bitirmoq</i>
Directional endpoint	<i>run to the station</i>	<i>bekatgacha yugurib bormoq</i>

Discussion

The analysis shows that transitivity and terminativity are not isolated categories. They form a semantic system inside verb combinatorics. A verb becomes more transitive when the action is directed toward a definite and affected object. It becomes more terminative when the action reaches a result or endpoint.

Hopper and Thompson's model is useful because it treats transitivity as a scale rather than a simple yes/no category. Their work includes such parameters as participants, kinesis, telicity, punctuality, volitionality, and affectedness. This explains why *break the glass* is more transitive than *look at the glass*: in the first case, the object is strongly affected, while in the second case, it is not.

In English, verb combinatorics depends strongly on the object and surrounding elements:

- Verb + object: write a letter
- Verb + particle: finish up the work
- Verb + preposition: run to the station
- Verb + quantified object: drink a glass of water

In Uzbek, verb combinatorics depends strongly on analytical verb forms:

- Verb + -ib chiq-: o'qib chiqmoq
- Verb + -ib bitir-: yozib bitirmoq
- Verb + -ib bo'l-: ichib bo'lmoq
- Verb + -ib qo'y-: sindirib qo'ymoq

This shows that Uzbek has a more morphologically visible system of terminativity, while English often expresses the same meaning syntactically and lexically.

Conclusion

The comparative-linguistic study of transitivity and terminativity in verb combinatorics shows that both English and Uzbek connect object relations with the endpoint structure of an action. In English, terminativity is mainly expressed through object type, quantification, prepositions, particles, and aspectual interpretation. In Uzbek, it is expressed more explicitly through auxiliary verb constructions such as -ib chiq-, -ib bitir-, -ib bo'l-, -ib yubor-, and -ib qo'y-.

The study confirms that transitivity is not merely the presence of a direct object. It is a broader semantic relation involving agency, affectedness, telicity, and result. Terminativity, in turn, shows whether the action reaches a boundary or final point. Therefore, the interaction between transitivity and terminativity is best analyzed through verb combinatorics, because the meaning of a verb becomes clear only when it is studied together with its object, modifiers, auxiliary elements, and context.

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