Transitive verb

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A **transitive verb** is a verb that accepts one or more objects. This contrasts with intransitive verbs, which do not have objects. Transitivity is traditionally thought a global property of a clause, by which activity is transferred from an agent to a patient.[1]

Transitive verbs can be classified by the number of objects they require. Verbs that accept only two <u>arguments</u>, a <u>subject</u> and a single <u>direct object</u>, are monotransitive. Verbs that accept two objects, a direct object and an indirect object, are *ditransitive*,[2] or less commonly *bitransitive*.[3] An example of a ditransitive verb in English is the verb *to give*, which may feature a subject, an indirect object, and a direct object: *John gave Mary the book*.

Verbs that take three objects are *tritransitive*.[4] In English a tritransitive verb features an indirect object, a direct object,

and a _prepositional phrase_ – as in *I'll trade you this bicycle for your binoculars* – or else a _clause_ that behaves like an argument – as in *I bet you a pound that he has forgotten.*[5] Not all _descriptive grammars_ recognize tritransitive verbs.[6]

A _clause_ with a prepositional phrase that expresses a meaning similar to that usually expressed by an object may be called *pseudo-transitive*. For example, the _Indonesian_ sentences *Dia masuk sekolah* ("He attended school") and *Dia masuk ke sekolah* ("He went into the school") have the same verb (*masuk* "enter"), but the first sentence has a direct object while the

second has a prepositional phrase in its place.[7] A clause with a direct object plus a prepositional phrase may be called *pseudo-ditransitive*, as in the Lakhota sentence *Haŋpíkčeka kiŋ lená wé-čage* ("I made those moccasins for him").[8] Such constructions are sometimes called *complex transitive*. The category of complex transitives includes not only prepositional phrases but also dependent clauses, appositives, and other structures.[9] There is some controversy regarding complex transitives and tritransitives; linguists disagree on the nature of the structures.

In contrast to transitive verbs, some verbs take zero objects. Verbs that do not require an object are called <u>intransitive verbs</u>. An example in English is the verb *to swim*.

Verbs that can be used in an intransitive or transitive way are called *<u>ambitransitive verbs</u>*. In English, an example is the verb *to eat*; the sentences *You eat* (with an intransitive form) and *You eat apples* (a transitive form that has *apples* as the object) are both grammatical.

The concept of <u>valency</u> is related to <u>transitivity</u>. The valency of a verb

considers all the arguments the verb takes, including both the subject and all of the objects. In contrast to valency, the transitivity of a verb only considers the objects. Subcategorization is roughly synonymous with valency, though they come from different theoretical traditions.

History

Transitive phrases, i.e. phrases containing transitive verbs, were first recognized by the stoics and from the Peripatetic school, but they probably referred to the whole phrase containing the transitive verb, not just to the verb.[10][11] The advancements

of the stoics were later developed by the philologists of the <u>Alexandrian school</u>.[10]

Lexical versus grammatical information

Traditionally, transitivity patterns are thought of as <u>lexical</u> information of the verb, but recent research in <u>construction grammar</u> and related theories has argued that transitivity is a grammatical rather than a lexical property, since the same verb very often appears with different transitivity in different contexts. Consider:

- Does your dog *bite*? (no object)

- The cat *bit* him. (one object)
- Can you *bite* me off a piece of banana? (two objects)
- The vase *broke*. (no object; <u>anticausative</u> construction)
- She *broke* the toothpick. (one object)
- Can you *break* me some toothpicks for my model castle? (two objects)
- Stop me before I *buy* again. (no object; <u>antipassive</u> construction)
- The man *bought* a ring. (one object)
- The man *bought* his wife a ring. (two objects)

In grammatical construction theories, transitivity is considered as an element of [grammatical construction](), rather than an inherent part of verbs.[12]

In English

The following sentences exemplify transitive verbs in English.

- We're going to **need** a bigger boat.

- You need to **fill in** this form.

- Hang on, I'll **have** it ready in a minute.

- The professor **took off** his spectacles.

Other languages

In some languages, morphological features separate verbs based on their <u>transitivity</u>, which suggests this is a salient <u>linguistic</u> feature. For example, in <u>Japanese</u>:

> 授業が**始まる**。
> *Jugyō ga **hajimaru***.
> The class starts.
> 先生が授業を**始める**。
> *Sensei ga jugyō o **hajimeru***.
> The teacher starts the class.

However, the definition of transitive verbs as those with one object is not universal, and is not used in grammars of many languages.

<u>Hungarian</u> is sometimes misunderstood to have transitive and intransitive conjugation for all verbs. The concept of transitive, intransitive is misplaced here.

- There is only one general conjugation.

In present and future, there is a lesser used variant – a definite, or say emphatic conjugation form. It is used only when referring to a previous sentence, or topic, where the object was already mentioned. Logically the definite article a(z) as reference is used here—and due to verb

emphasis (definite), word order changes to VO.

- If you don't want to be definite you can simply
  házat látok — I see (a) house – (general)
  látom a házat — I see the house – (The house we were looking for)
  almát eszem — I eat (an) apple – (general)
  eszem az almát — I eat the apple – (The one mom told me to)
  bort iszom — I drink wine – (general)
  iszom a bort — I drink the wine – (That you offered me before)

In English one would say 'I do see the house', etc., stressing the verb – in Hungarian, the object is emphasized – but both mean exactly the same thing.

In Pingelapese

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In the Pingelapese language, transitive verbs are used in one of four of their most common sentence structures. Transitive verbs according to this language have two main characteristics. These characteristics are action verbs and the sentence must contain a direct object. To elaborate, an action verb is a verb that has a physical action associated to its

meaning. The sentence must contain a direct object meaning there must be a recipient of said verb. Two entities must be involved when using a transitive sentence. There is also a fixed word order associated with transitive sentences: subject-transitive verb-object.[13] For example:

Linda (Subject) e aesae(transitive verb) Adino (object) This sentence translates to, Linda knows Adino.[13]

In Polish

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The definition of transitive verbs as those with one object is not used in grammars of many languages. For example, it is generally accepted in <u>Polish grammar</u>[14][15][16][17] that transitive verbs are those that:

- Accept a <u>direct object</u> (in <u>accusative</u> in the positive form, and in <u>genitive</u> in the negative form)
  OR

- Undergo passive transformation

Both conditions are fulfilled in many instances of transitive verbs:

Maria widzi Jana (Mary sees John; *Jana* is the accusative form of *Jan*)

Jan jest widziany przez Marię (John is seen by Mary)

See also

- [Morphosyntactic alignment](#)

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