

دراسة تحليلية لظاهرة التعدي

في اللغة الإنكليزية

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الملخص

تُعتبر ظاهرة تعدي الفعل لمفعول به ذات أهمية نحوية ودلالية كبيرة في اللغة إذ تلعب دوراً مهماً في تحديد بنية الجملة ومكوناتها فوجود مفعول به واحد أو أكثر أو غياب ذلك المفعول يؤثر على بنية الجملة وشكلها بشكل كبير، لذا يسعى هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على هذه الظاهرة في اللغة الإنكليزية مع التركيز على أنواع الأفعال من حيث التعدي مع الإشارة إلى أنّ التصنيف التقليدي للأفعال بوصفها متعدية أو لازمة لم يعد مناسباً سيما أنّ بعض الأفعال اللازمة تُستخدم كأفعال متعدية والعكس بالعكس. لذا نعتمد على فرضية التعدي وفق مقياس Hopper and Thompson (1980) لتصنيف تعدي الأفعال في مستويات مختلفة وفق مجموعة من المعايير الدقيقة.

كما ويتناول البحث أيضاً الآلية التي تؤثر في خاصية التعدي عند الفعل سواء من خلال إضافة مفعول به لفعلٍ لازمٍ (كالمفعول المطلق) أو حذف المفعول به لفعلٍ متعدٍ كما هو الحال في جمل المبني للمجهول على سبيل المثال. وأخيراً يُقدّم البحث بعض المقترحات والتوصيات بخصوص تعليم الأفعال وضرورة إيلاء ظاهرة التعدي الاهتمام الكافي بحيث يتمكن الطالب من تعلّم الكثير من التفاصيل التي تختص بكل فعل على حده.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ظاهرة التعدي، بنية الجملة، الأفعال المتعدية، الأفعال اللازمة، فرضية التعدي، المفعول المطلق.

An Analytic account of Transitivity in English

Abstract

This paper is dedicated to the universal concept of transitivity and discusses issues that relate to this concept because it plays a central role in sentence structure. Lexical categories can be classified in terms of being transitive or intransitive such as verbs in addition to nouns, adjectives and prepositions. The paper analyses the various thematic roles that an argument may take including Agents, Patients, Themes, Instruments, Beneficiaries, Experiencers, Locations, Sources, and Goals. Levels of transitivity are explained in detail and the need for the Transitivity Hypothesis (a group of parameters according to which transitive verbs vary in their effectiveness between high and low transitivity) will be explained. The paper ends by discussing some valency changing processes such as valency reducing in passive clauses and detransitivised verbs as well as valency adding as in cognate objects. Finally, it provides a summary of some pedagogical implications of the study.

Key Words:

Transitivity, sentence structure, transitive and intransitive verbs, the Transitivity Hypothesis, cognate objects.

1 Introduction

Transitivity is such a significant topic in grammar as it has to do with the internal structure of the English clause which may have various manifestations due to the nature of the verb. This paper aims at presenting a full and consistent analysis of this concept focusing on its classes, the semantic or thematic roles that a verb may have and the Transitivity Hypothesis and pointing out some pedagogical implications. Although most of the properties of transitivity are generally universal, there are some language specific things (such as a verb being transitive in one language but intransitive in another). Therefore, it is natural that a teacher who has a good understanding of these concepts will be more qualified to teach English verbs and clauses whether at school or college. Learning the grammar of a language will be easier when learners become more aware of the distributional properties of individual words such as verbs.

Transitivity is basically a property of verbs that link arguments. It is related to the number of objects a verb may have and this depends on whether the verb is transitive or intransitive. Hopper and Thompson (1980, p. 251) define it as "a global property of an entire clause such that an activity is 'carried over' or 'transferred' from an agent to a patient". Huddleston and Pullum (2005, p. 78) define transitivity as the "dimension that relates to the number of objects in the clause is called transitivity. An intransitive clause has no objects, a monotransitive clause has one object, and a ditransitive clause has two objects, indirect and direct." In fact, the difference between the types of verbs becomes straightforward and the term of 'transitivity' is used to refer not only to verbs but also to clauses. Thus, a clause that has a transitive verb is called a transitive clause according to Hopper and Thompson (1980). Thus, transitivity can

be defined as the linguistic realization of a transitive event (Kim, 2006).

However, Lyons (1968) defines transitivity in terms of the number of places (i.e., positions for arguments) which a verb may have. In fact, Lyons classifies verbs into a number of types according to the number of noun phrases the clause may have. Thus, there are one-place, two-place, and three-place verbs or verbal predicates. Intransitive verbs, according to Biber et al. (1999) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002), are one-place verbs because an intransitive verb takes only one NP and the one-place in this case is the subject position which can be filled by the NP '*the old man*' as in the example in (1):

- 1) The old man died.

In fact, Can (2008) differentiates between two types of intransitive verbs in English: "the subclass of intransitive verbs like *laugh*, *swim*, *speak* and *smile* that take immediate causers as their subjects will be called unergative verbs". Let us consider the following examples, which are taken from Can (2008, p. 47):

- 2) a. Mary swims in the lake.
b. *Her father swims Mary in the lake.
c. John smiled when he heard the good news.
d. *The good news smiled John.

It is evident that the verbs in the above examples are intransitive and accept no object as can be seen from the ungrammaticality of (2b & d), where the verbs are used transitively. However, one common thing about these verbs is that the NP subject of each one of them is responsible for the event (or action) that the verb expresses and it deliberately causes it.

The other class of intransitives includes verbs like *appear*, *fall*, *occur*, etc. as in the following examples which are taken from Can (2008, p. 47):

- 3) a. Dark clouds appeared on the horizon
- b. *Lightning in the sky appeared the dark clouds on the horizon.
- c. The leaves fall in autumn.
- d. *The wind falls the leaves.

It is also evident that the verbs in the examples in (3) are also intransitive as can be concluded from the ungrammaticality of (3b & d), where the verbs are used transitively. As for the subject NP in these examples, it is clear that it does not cause the action. These verbs are referred to as unaccusative verbs. Thus, according to Can (2008), unergative and unaccusative verbs are intransitive but with a difference. The transitive verb is unergative if it expresses volitional control and this means that the action or the event of the verb results from the subject's will or decision, as argued by Can (2008).

A transitive verb, on the other hand, is a two-place verb since it allows two NPs to occur in the clause (one in the subject position and the other in the object position) as in the following example in (4):

- 4) She likes Chinese food.

For the verb '*like*' to express full sense in (4), it requires two NPs: the subject NP '*she*' and the object NP '*Chinese food*'.

Similarly, a ditransitive verb is known as a three-place verb since it requires three arguments to complete the meaning of the verb as in the following example in (5):

5) John gave Mary the books.

The verb '*give*' involves three participants: the giver, the given to, and the thing given, so it requires three arguments and, therefore, it is a three-place verb.

2 Transitive categories

Transitivity is widely known to be a property of verbs, which are traditionally divided into transitive and intransitive verbs. However, the term can undoubtedly be used to refer to other word classes that require arguments to complete their meaning including nouns, adjectives and prepositions (Lowe, 2017), as we see in the following sections.

2.1 Verbs / Predicates

According to traditional grammar, the predicate is the part of the clause or sentence that predicates (i.e., tells) something of the subject of the sentence which consists of a subject and a predicate. Thus, the predicate is the rest of the sentence (apart from the subject). However, the term predicate has another use. In this paper, the predicate and the verbal predicate are used to refer to the verb and the auxiliaries and modals that co-occur with it (such as verbs *to be*, *to have*, *may*, *can*, *should*, etc.) as in the following examples:

6) a. John has kicked the ball.

b. The wind was blowing.

c. It is a nice morning.

It is clear that predicates may express an action or an event or a state as in the examples above. Now, let us consider the example in (7):

7) Peter visited Mary.

The sentence in (7) has a verb and two nouns and together they describe the action of '*visiting*' which involves two participants or people: *Peter* and *Mary*. The verb '*visited*' may also have some auxiliaries (*has visited, was visited, etc.*) and the verb together with its auxiliaries are called the (verbal) predicate of the sentence. Thus, the predicate expresses the event, the state or the action of the clause.

The verb in (7) is transitive because it involves two participants. The sentence will not be grammatical if there is only one NP as in (8):

8) *Peter visited — .

This means that the verb is transitive. In other words, the verb requires another NP (i.e., a direct object) in addition to the subject to complete the meaning and this is the problem in (8). Therefore, this kind of verb is referred to as a monotransitive verb as it has only one object. Moreover, it is also possible for the verb or the predicate to require another NP complement as in the following example in (9):

9) John bought his daughter a new car.

This sentence has three NPs: one for the subject, and two objects. Therefore, the verb is called a ditransitive verb.

2.2 Transitive nouns

Nouns, like verbs or predicates, may show transitivity and, therefore, can be classified as being transitive or intransitive according to whether or not they require a complement. Consider the following example:

10) The enemy's destruction of the city.

For the action of *destruction* in (10) to take place, there is a need for a destroyer who does the action of destroying (i.e., an agent) and the thing that is affected or destroyed (i.e., a patient). However, it has to be pointed out that transitive nouns may be used intransitively as in (11):

11) The destruction was so extensive.

In the example in (11), the N *destruction* takes no arguments at all suggesting that the relationship between a noun and its arguments is not as strong as it is between a predicate and its complements. According to Tallerman (2011), this is generally common in examples that involve nominalization where a verb in a construction becomes a noun as in:

12) Kim hated [_{NP} Lee's losing his license].

The nominalized noun *losing* is derived from the verb *lose* and it has the same argument structure of the verb and both arguments (*Lee* and *his license*) are necessary. Thus, the NP containing the nominalized noun is equivalent in meaning to the sentence: (*Lee lost his license*).

2.3 Transitive adjectives

Adjectives may also be transitive or intransitive. A transitive adjective is one that expresses some kind of relationship between two arguments as in the following example:

13)a. John is fond of Mary.

b. *John is fond.

For the adjective '*fond of*' to convey complete sense in the above example, it requires two NPs: one expresses the person who is *fond of* (i.e., John) and the second expresses the one or the thing *John* is fond of (i.e., Mary). A more straightforward example is the comparative form of adjectives here there is always a need to have two arguments for the comparison to hold as in:

- 14)a. John is thinner than Mary.
b. *John is thinner.

The adjective *thinner* requires two arguments; otherwise, the comparison will not hold.

2.4 Transitive prepositions

Even prepositions can be classified in terms of transitivity (i.e., being transitive or intransitive) and they behave like verbs in this sense. Consider the following example:

- 15) The books are on the desk.

In this example, the two NPs *the books* and *the desk* are related via the preposition *on*, which specifies the order of each of the theme and the location. Prepositions can also be used intransitively as in the following example in (16):

- 16) It is too cold here, so let us go inside.

It is clear that the preposition *inside* in this example lacks an object, so it is used intransitively.

3 Thematic roles

According to Payne (1997), a thematic or semantic or Θ -role is an underlying relationship that holds between participants in the event or action that the main verb in a clause expresses. Croft (2003, p.

156) points out that "most theories of Θ -role argue that there is only a limited number of these roles". It is significant in this regard to make clear that the correspondence between grammatical relations such as subject and direct object and semantic roles like Agent and Patient or Instrument is too loose (Comrie, 1989). This can be seen in the following examples:

- 17) a. John opened the door with the key.
b. The key opened the door.
c. The door opened.

It is clear from these examples that the subject has a different semantic role in each of the examples in (17). There is nothing to indicate the semantic role of the subject. They are all NPs that occupy the subject position; yet they have different semantic or thematic-roles. Thus, one problem with semantic roles is that they do not correspond to grammatical/ structural categories in a one-to-one relationship.

Sometimes the same NP can be assigned more than one semantic role as in the following example:

- 18) John rolled down the hill.

In this sentence, the subject NP *John* can be understood to be the Agent (with the subject willingly doing the rolling) or the Source. In other examples, a verb like *buy* may be understood to express more than one action (selling in addition to buying) and this may lead to ambiguity in semantic roles.

Different NPs may have different semantic roles in accordance with the position they have in a sentence such as the agent, the patient, the theme, the experiencer, etc. as in Yule (1985), and Langacker (2004). Now Let us move to study the most important thematic roles that are used in an English sentence.

3.1 Agent

The Agent is usually the 'doer' or instigator of the action denoted by the predicate as argued by Aarts and Aarts (1982). First, the agent is an NP that usually, but not necessarily, comes in a pre-verbal position. This is the position of the structural subject of the sentences. According to Langacker (2004), the semantic role that the agent has "is that of a person who volitionally carries out physical activity resulting in contact with some external object and the transmission of energy to that object". Thus, in a situation that conveys an event or an action such as:

19) John kicked the ball.

The verb *kick* describes an action that takes place; the NPs *John* and *the ball* describe the roles of these entities have in the realization of the action of kicking (i.e., the kicker and the kicked). It is *John* the pre-verbal NP that performed the action of kicking and this is the NP that has the semantic role of the agent.

Of course, it is also possible for the agent to occupy the structural object position as in passive voice constructions as in:

20) The ball was kicked by John.

Here, *John*, which is in the object position plays the semantic role of the agent or the kicker of the ball.

Yule (1985) argues that agents are typically human but they can be non-human entities such natural forces like the wind or like a machine such as a car, for instance. Consider the following examples, which are taken from Yule (1985, p. 117):

21) a. The wind blew the ball away.

b. The car ran over the ball.

According to Yule, both *the wind* in (21a) and *the car* in (21b) have the semantic role of the Agent although they are both non-human.

3.2 Patient

As for the patient, it is usually an inanimate object which "absorbs the energy transmitted by externally physical contact and thereby undergoes some change of state" as stated by Langacker (2004). In the example in (21), the NP *the ball* has the patient role because it is the entity that is affected by the agent. In other words, it is the acted upon NP within the sentence. Structurally, it usually comes in the structural object (i.e., a post-verbal) position as in (21), above. Thus, the patient semantic role is usually expressed by an inanimate object NP which absorbs the energy that is transmitted through physical contact and causes some change of the object's state.

3.3 Theme

The theme role, according to Yule (1985, 117) is usually an NP or "an entity that is simply being described". This means that it may not contribute to the event or take part in an action that a sentence conveys as in the following example:

22) The ball was yellow.

The NP *the ball* in the example in (22) has the semantic role of the theme in the sense that it is what the sentence is about. Palmer (1976, 158) states that the theme is "what is being talking about". This is similar to the topic used by other traditional linguistic theories.

3.4. Instrument

The instrument is usually the medium via which the event or action expressed by the predicate is carried out. Langacker (2004) argues

that the instrument role is often expressed by an object which is inanimate through that the agent uses to affect the patient such as using *a key* to open *the door* or *a knife* to cut *the cake*, as in the following example:

- 23) a. He opened the door with a key.
b. Mary cut the cake with the knife.

Moreover, the instrument role in (23a) is expressed by *a key*, which an NP object of a preposition. It is an inanimate object through which an agent affects the patient as in (23b), where the agent *Mary* affects or cuts the cake with the instrument *the knife*.

3.5 Beneficiary

There are some NPs that may have the beneficiary semantic role in the clause. This is the case where an argument is advantaged by an action or an event. Consider the following example:

- 24) a. Mary offered the guest some biscuits.
b. George sold his new flat to his cousin.

In these examples, *the guests* and *his cousin* benefited from Mary's offering some biscuits and from George's action of selling his new flat.

3.6 Experiencer

This is a living entity that experiences an event or some psychological state, such as feelings and emotions, denoted by the predicate as in the following example in (25):

- 25) John felt happy.

As for the experiencer role, it is usually expressed by a person who is engaged in a mental activity, as pointed out by Langacker (2004). In cases where the verb expresses a feeling, or a perception like *see*,

know, enjoy, or love, there is no action taking place in this situation as in the examples in (26):

- 26) a. Did Peter see Mary?
b. He was worried.

In the first example, *Peter* is the experiencer (i.e., the seer). As for *Mary* in this example, it has the role of the theme. Similarly, (28b) involves no action. In general, the experiencer usually has the semantic role of an NP which experiences the effect of an action which might be sensory, or which may involve neither volition nor any change in state. The experiencer semantic role is usually expressed by a person engaged in activities to do with the senses, the feelings and the mind.

3.7 Location

The semantic role of location usually refers to the location where the event or the action of the verbal predicate takes place. Let us consider the following examples:

- 27) She did most of her research work in the library

It is clear that the place where the research work was done is the library, so this NP has the Location semantic role.

3.8 Source

As for the Source as a semantic role, it refers to the direction from which the event or the action starts or from where the entity concerned in the clause moves as in the following examples in (28):

- 28) a. She borrowed the books from the library.
b. Tim bought some coffee from the supermarket.

It is clear in these examples that source from which the actions of borrowing and buying that took place is the library in the first and the supermarket in the second.

2.9 Goal

This role is usually expressed by the indirect object NP; it is the same as the recipient of the action in the clause. It also refers to the entity towards which something moves (Radford, 1997), as in the following example:

- 29) a. She handed the check to the client.
b. She handed the client the check.

In this sentence, the Θ -role of the goal is conveyed by the indirect object NP *the client*.

The semantic role of the goal can also be fulfilled with the place to which an argument moves or the direction of an action. Let us consider the following examples:

- 30) a. John ran to the gate.
b. She threw flowers at him.

It is clear that *the gate* in (30a) and *him* in (30b) have the goal theta-role because the actions of running and throwing involves movement toward a particular point. However, it has to be pointed out that the verb *go* may assign a goal Θ -role to the following NP even if there is no preposition. Consider the following example:

- 31) Where did she go — ?

The wh-word *where* in (31) is understood to be a goal. There is no need for the preposition that is usually used with NPs assigned the goal Θ -role in this case.

4 Levels of transitivity

Traditional accounts of transitive verbs recognize two classes of verbs in terms of transitivity: transitive verbs and intransitive verbs. In other words, grammar makes a binary distinction between verbs. This means that a verb is either transitive, which takes a direct object (such as *kick*, *love*, or *visit*) or intransitive, which does not take a direct object (such as *die*, or *sleep*). However, it is evident that there are many languages, such as English, where a verb can be used both transitively and intransitively (i.e., ambitransitive verb) and that verbs are not necessarily transitive in the same way. Therefore, there is a need to reclassify verbs in terms of transitivity taking into consideration these issues. In fact, this can be achieved if we consider transitivity as a continuum/ scale of values instead of having only two options (transitive and intransitive) as suggested by Hopper and Thompson (1980). This helps in explaining the degree to which an action passes over from the subject to affect the object. According to this, the verb *love*, for example, can be said to have lower transitivity than the verb *kick*.

Many English verbs are transitive in the sense that they subcategorize for an object; however, they may not have the same level or degree of transitivity as argued by Hopper and Thompson (1980) and Naess (2007). In fact, this has to do with the thematic roles that both the subject and object may have in the realization of the event or the situation. Consider the following examples:

- 32) a. John kicked the ball.
- b. John bought a new flat.
- c. John speaks many languages.
- d. John weighs 70 kg.

It is clear that each of these sentences contains a transitive verb. In other words, each sentence has an agent in the subject position and a patient or theme in the object position. Nevertheless, the agent in (32a) is quite different from the agent in (32c), for example. In (32a) the subject *John* has the role of a full agent whereas in (32d), there is not much of an agent in the subject position. In fact, the same thing can be said about the object because there is not much of a patient that is affected by the action in (32a & d), for instance. It is this fact that drove linguists like Trask (2007) to argue for the need for more levels of transitivity. This is consistent with research conducted by Hopper and Thompson (1980), who argue that transitivity is a scalar property. Hence, it is possible to look at transitivity as a matter of gradation and think of low transitivity and high transitivity according to the transitivity hypothesis that they introduced for this purpose.

According to the Transitivity Hypothesis, as proposed by Hopper and Thompson (1980), the notion of transitivity should be broken down into measurable component parts. The transitivity hypothesis they introduce suggests that transitivity varies from one verb to another according to "the effectiveness or intensity with which the action is transferred from one participant to another" (Hopper and Thompson, 1980, p. 251). Thus, although some verbs may be transitive, but it is possible that the transitivity of one of them is higher on the transitivity scale than the transitivity of the other verb. To accomplish this, Hopper and Thompson introduce a set of ten variables or parameters (or features) of transitivity as presented in the table below which is taken from Hopper and Thompson (1980, p. 252). Each parameter has two values: High and Low transitivity. The parameters themselves are in the leftmost column. The other two columns of the table present the values of these parameters. The higher the value of the parameter is, the higher the transitivity of the verb or predicate is. According to the Transitivity

Hypothesis, an action can be more effectively carried over than another action in accordance with the parameters as demonstrate by the following table:

Table 1 Parameters of transitivity and their qualities.

	HIGH TRANSITIVITY	LOW TRANSITIVITY
A. PARTICIPANTS	2or more participants	1 participant
B. KINESIS	action	non-action
C. ASPECT	Telic	Atelic
D. PUNCTUALITY	Punctual	non-punctual
E. VOLITIONALITY	volitional	non-volitional
F. AFFIRMATION	Affirmative	Negative
G. MODE	Realis	Irrealis
H. AGENCY	A high in potency	A low in potency
I. AFFECTEDNESS OF O	O totally affected	O not affected
J. INDIVIDUATION OF O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

Here is an explanation of the parameters of Hopper and Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis:

A. PARTICIPANTS: The more participants are involved in the transfer of the action, the higher the transitivity of the verb is. Thus, a verb has to have two participants at least or it will be impossible for the action to transfer from one participant to another. Let us consider the following examples:

- 33) a. John was reading the newspaper.
b. John was reading.

According to the first parameter of the transitivity theory, the sentence in (33a) is more effective, and therefore more transitive, than that of (33b), which has only one participant namely the agent.

B. KINESIS: This has to do with the action of the verb and any motion it may involve. Kinesis is high if there is something happening in the clause and not static. It may depend on whether the action involves movement or not. Compare the sentences in (34):

- 34) a. *John kissed Mary.*
b. *John likes Mary.*

Kinesis is high in (34a) but low in (34b) since the verb *kiss* involves more action that can be transferred from the subject to the object than the verb *likes*, which expresses a state.

C. ASPECT: The aspect of the verb is important. It can be telic (perfect or complete) or atelic (imperfect or incomplete). Notice the difference between the examples in (35):

- 35) a. I ate my pizza.
b. I am eating my pizza.

In the first example, the transferral of the action is fully carried out and the eating is done while it is only partially accomplished as indicated by the progressive aspect used in (35b). Thus, transitivity is high (i.e., telic) in the first example and low (i.e., atelic) in the second.

D. PUNCTUALITY: It has to do with actions that take less time or duration between the initiation and the completion of the action as expressed by '*hit*', which takes a very short period, when

contrasted with '*carry*', which takes much longer time to be achieved as in the following examples:

- 36) a. She hit the ball.
b. She carries her baby.

The action in (36a) happens in a very short time while in (36b) takes much longer. Therefore, clauses containing the verb *hit* are more effective and higher on the transitivity scale than those having *carry* according to this parameter.

E. VOLITIONALITY: This is concerned with the Agent of the action acting intentionally or on purpose instead of being non-volitional as the following examples show:

- 37) a. I wrote her name.
b. I forgot her name.

The first example is higher in transitivity because it is more volitional in the sense that the subject I purposefully *wrote* her but I did not intend to *forget* her name in (37b).

F. AFFIRMATION: This is about the sentence being in the affirmative or in the negative form. Of course, affirmative sentences are higher on the transitivity scale as shown by the examples in (38):

- 38) a. Suzan ate an orange.
b. Suzan didn't eat an orange.

According to the table above, the second example is more effective and is higher on transitivity although both sentences are transitive.

G. MODE: This has to do with the event of action being realis (i.e., or real and did occur) or irrealis (i.e., non-real and did not occur). If it is real, it will be more effective and will be higher on transitivity.

39) a. I am a student.

b. If I were a student, I would work very hard.

The sentence in (39a) uses the indicative form and it expresses a real situation while the sentence in (39b) uses the unreal past tense to refer to an imaginary situation. The realis sentence is more effective and more transitive than the irrealis one.

H. AGENCY: Agency refers to the subject or the participant (i.e., doer of the action in the clause). Participants with high Agency can cause a transfer of an action more effectively than those with low Agency as in the following examples, which are taken from Hopper and Thompson (1980, p. 252):

40) a. George startled me.

b. The picture startled me.

It is evident that the doer of the event of startling in the first example is perceptible and referential while in the second one is an internal state. The agent in the first sentence is more effective and is higher on the transitivity scale than the agent in the second.

I. AFFECTEDNESS OF O: The transitivity of a clause will be higher if the object (henceforth, O) is highly affected by the event or action. There is a difference between O being totally affected or being only partially affected by the event as seen in the following examples, which are taken from Schibisch (2006):

41) a. The child ate up the pancake.

b. The child ate some of the pancake.

In (41a) the whole of O is affected (i.e., eaten) while in (41b) only some of it is affected, so one can conclude that the former is more transitive than the latter.

J. INDIVIDUATION OF O: Individuation here refers to the extent of how distinctive the object is. For this parameter of the Transitivity Hypothesis, the more distinct and definite the object is, the more effective the transferral of the action will be as in proper names. For example, a definite or an individuated object will be more effective and higher on transitivity than an indefinite or a non-individuated one as in (42):

- 42) a. John kicked the ball.
b. John kicked a ball.

The verb *kick* has lower transitivity in (42b) than in (42a) because O in the first example is definite (the ball) while it is indefinite (*a ball*) in the second one. In fact, Schibisch (2006), states that "a highly individuated O is a proper name, or at least human, animate, concrete and in the singular. It can be counted and it is referential and definite. A non-individuated O, on the other hand, is common, inanimate, abstract and in plural".

Finally, it has to be pointed out that a verb may comply with more than one of the above explained parameters of the Hypothesis Theory at the same time. For example, the verb *kick* complies with most, if not all, of the Transitivity Hypothesis listed in the table, above: it has two participants, there is action or movement, it is telic (i.e., action is done), it is punctual, it volitional when done by a human being, it is declarative not negative), it is real and not hypothetical, it is agentive and the object is totally affected and individuated or definite. Therefore, *kick* is a verb of high transitivity according to the Transitivity Hypothesis.

By contrast, the verb *see* in (43) has a rather low level of transitivity:

43) Mary saw the accident.

Most of the values of the parameters mentioned above point to low transitivity of this verb. Similarly, the verb *wish* in the example in (44):

44) I wish you were here.

The verb *wish* is low on transitivity because it has the Irrealis (i.e., unreal) value of the MODE parameter since the whole event is only hypothetical and not real.

5 Valency-changing processes

These are processes where some verbal derivation may affect the number and order of the arguments of a predicate. These processes may either reduce or increase the number of core arguments in a clause, as argued by Tallerman (2011). However, according to Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000), there are cases where the number of core arguments may be maintained but with a change in the semantic roles as we will see later. In fact, grammatical relations that hold between the verbal predicate and its arguments are not static and they may change in accordance with any change in the form of the verb or the number of arguments that results from certain transformational processes as argued by Tallerman (2011). These transformations are known as valency-changing processes and they include valency reduction and valency expansion (or adding) as can be seen in cases of promotion and demotion of the core arguments of the clause (i.e., the subject and the object NPs). Of course, this phenomenon is common in most human languages.

5.1 Valency reduction

A language may have one or more processes that lead to a valency change in constructions such as passives, applicatives, causatives, etc. as argued by Tallerman (2011). Valency in a language may

change either through reducing or adding an argument. As for the English language, change in valency is mainly common in passive voice clauses. Voice is directly related to valency since voice alternations affect the number and marking of arguments of the verb. Transitivity and voice are both typically expressed by argument marking, and verbal morphology and word order play a role in their expression. Moreover, grammatical roles and relations (such as agent, patient, subject, and object) are central to both transitivity and voice. A very straightforward example of valency reduction is passive voice constructions. In a passive voice clause, one argument, usually the agent (i.e., the doer of the action) is deleted or dropped. Let us consider the following examples in (45):

- 45) a. The police arrested the criminal.
b. The criminal was arrested.

The verb '*arrest*' is a transitive verb and it requires two argument: the Agent '*the police*' and the Patient '*the criminal*' as in (45a). However, in (45b), the Agent is missing and there is only one argument left in the clause. Thus, this is a clear case of valency reducing. Even if the Agent is provided via a by-phrase, the argument will not be as essential as it will usually be when it appears in the subject position of an active clause. However, Mattia-Viviès (2009) points out that not all transitive verbs can be passivized. In particular, stative, or non-dynamic, do not appear in the passive form as in the following examples which are taken from Mattia-Viviès (2009, p. 94):

- 46) a. The suit fits me.
b. *I am fitted by the suit.
c. I was fitted by the tailor.
d. The car weighs two tons.

- e. *Two tons are weighed by the car.
- f. The letter was weighed by John.

These sentences have transitive verbs but they usually cannot be used in the passive although each has a complement as can be understood from the ungrammaticality of (46b & e). In fact, this has to do with the semantic role of the object. Mattia-Viviès (2009) argues that if the subject has an agentive semantic role, it may be possible to passivize the verb the grammaticality of (46c & f).

On the other hand, Mattia-Viviès (2009) shows that some intransitive clauses can be passivized as in the following sentences:

- 47) a. Someone has slept in this bed.
- b. This bed has been slept in.

One concludes that the passive test to show transitivity and grammatical relations has to be applied with some caution. It is also becomes clear that the traditional binary classification of verbs as transitive or intransitive needs revision since some verbs can be used both ways.

Furthermore, the process of detransitivization may count as a case of valency reductions because this process involves the omission of the direct object of an originally transitive verb. The outcome of this process is an instance of a null object as in the following examples:

- 48) a. She was reading a book.
- b. She was reading.

Marantz (1984, p. 214) refers to the type of sentences in (48b), where a transitive verb is used intransitively, as "indefinite object deletion constructions". Traditionally, verbs such as *read* are looked

at as ambitransitive verbs because they can be used both transitively and intransitively.

5.2 Valency expansion

Another type of valency changing is valency increasing. This kind of valency changing is possible with idiomatically transitive verbs which are, in fact, intransitive ones, but they take an object so they become transitive as in the following examples:

- 49) a. She walks every morning
b. She walks the dog every morning.

However, valency increasing involves adding an argument to those that the verb usually takes. The verb *walk* in (49a) is intransitive and takes only an Agent role in the subject position. However, the same verb becomes transitive and takes an object in (49b).

This process usually increases the valency of the verb. In fact, this process involves the addition of a morpheme (a prefix) to an intransitive verb such as '*run*', so it becomes a transitive verb such as '*outrun*'. Consider the following examples:

- 50) a. George runs faster than Peter.
b. George runs his own company.

Here, the verb *run* can be used transitively or intransitively with a difference in meaning. But in the next example, the intransitive verb *run* is used transitively after it has undergone some morphological change via the addition of the affix *out-*.

- 51) a. George outran Peter.
b. Peter was outrun by George.

The verb *outrun* in (51a) is a transitive verb and this can be confirmed by the fact that it can be used in the passive voice as in (51b).

5.2.1 Cognate objects

Cognate objects constitute another case of valency expansion because they are objects of verbs that are originally intransitive but are used transitively. This is a case where an intransitive verb is transitivized. These objects are understood and are not necessary so they do not actually contribute much to the meaning of the clause. According to Can (2008), a cognate object is a direct object whose semantic content is more or less identical to that of the verb which governs it as can be understood from the following examples, which are taken from Trask (2007, p. 48):

52) a. *I dreamed a dream last night;*

b. *I'm thinking terrible thoughts.*

The direct objects in these examples are cognate ones. Can (2009) argues that unergative verbs can form constructions with *cognate objects* as shown in (52 a and b). Using the following examples, Can (2008, p. 61) observes that cognate objects in such structures usually appear with a modifier which functions like an adverbial as in:

53) a. *Louisa slept a restful sleep.*

b. *Malinda smiled her most enigmatic smile.*

Similarly, Oshita (1997, p. 47) stresses the same point and provides the following examples to show that cognate objects are usually modified in some way:

54) a. The couple waltzed the most elegant *waltz* in the competition.

b. Nancy danced an exotic *dance*.

However, cognate objects are not common with ergative verbs as pointed out by Can (2008, p. 61), who uses the following examples:

55) a. *The mirror broke a jagged break.

b. *She arrived a glamorous arrival

c. *The apples fell a smooth fall.

e. *Phyllis existed a peaceful existence.

The ungrammaticality of the examples in (55) confirms that English ergative verbs like *break*, *arrive*, *fall* and *exist* may not take a cognate object at all.

5.2.2 Idiomatic expressions

Finally, I want to refer to a case where there is a change in thematic roles of the arguments due to the kind of NP used in the object position. This is usually seen in clauses containing metaphors and idiomatic expressions, as argued by Marantz (1984). Consider the following examples which are taken from Marantz (1984, p. 49):

56) a. throw a baseball

b. throw support behind a candidate

c. throw a boxing match

d. throw a party

e. throw a fit

These examples share the same verb *throw* but with a change in the object. This change in the object leads to a change in the meaning of the verb and consequently to a change in the thematic role that is

assigned to the object and this makes the valency of the verb different. For example, the VP [*throw a fit*] consists of the V *throw* and an NP *a fit*. But the phrase is equivalent to 'become angry', which is intransitive with no real complement/argument. Thus, the idiomatic expression is transitive in form but it is intransitive semantically since there can be only one participant in a clause like

57) a. John threw a fit.

b. John threw a baseball.

In fact, the verb *threw* is used and interpreted transitively in (57a) but it is interpreted intransitively although it is used transitively in (57b). Thus, one may conclude that the idiomatic expression in the example in (57b) involves an instance of valency expansion.

6 Pedagogical implications

In this section, I discuss how it is possible to benefit from the analysis of transitivity in English to both partners of the educational field: teachers and learners. It is the case that when a teacher has fully understood the phenomenon of transitivity adequately, s/he will be better at teaching it to their students. Teachers with a thorough knowledge of issues related to transitivity will, no doubt, be more qualified as potential teachers of English grammar since they will be more capable of explaining the differences between the two languages in so far as transitivity and subcategorisation are concerned. They will be equipped with the skill to demonstrate this contrast in an organized way.

It is also evident that having a good understanding, on the part of the learners of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL), of the relations between verbs and their arguments or complements within a sentence will make it possible for them "to identify the linguistic clues ensuring communication; e.g. the clues helping to distinguish the subject and the object ... facilitate the identification of the subject and the direct object", as stated by Schosler (2001, p. 273). Needless to say that language is used basically for daily

communication through expressing ideas, passing information from one person to another or conveying feelings, etc. This takes place mostly verbally (i.e., through speech or writing) and it involves choosing the appropriate verbs that convey the required functions in the English language. Thus, ensuring that students do understand transitivity will undoubtedly contribute to the success of the learning process.

Due to mother tongue interference in EFL production in the sense of Brown (2000), Syrian learners of English tend to translate literally from Arabic into English with little knowledge of the variation in transitivity between the two languages. Thus, it is natural that they may produce English constructions that are ungrammatical due to problems in transitivity. One such difference between English and Arabic, which causes problems, has to do with the use of prepositions. In fact, one usually encounters cases where students may, for example, change the subcategorization properties and insert a preposition between a verb such as *pass* and a direct object like *the exam*, as in (57a), which is ungrammatical:

57) a. *The students passed *in* the exam.

b. The student passed the exam.

In (57a), the object NP *the exam* is the complement/object of the preposition *in* rather than the verb *pass*. The English verb in (57b) is transitive but some Syrian students tend to add a preposition probably because this verb takes a PP in Arabic. Further support for this comes from examples like (58):

58) a. *This causes *to* you many problems.

b. *The boy entered *to* the flat.

b. *He has less *of* knowledge.

The examples in (58) were produced by secondary school students in Homs. In fact, the problem in these examples reflects the difference between English and Arabic in terms of the assignment of

thematic roles. The difference between the two languages or systems in this respect may cause Syrian EFL learners a great difficulty in producing English transitive constructions correctly. Therefore, Syrian EFL learners tend to copy from Arabic and produce ungrammatical English constructions due to lack of good knowledge of transitivity and subcategorisation of lexical items such as verbs in the foreign language.

Understanding individual words like verbs and their properties including their subcategorisation features and storing them in the learner's lexicon is a significant task. This will enable learners to insert these verbs correctly into a D-Structure representation. This is consistent with Ingham's (1996, p. 35) view that "the task facing L2 learners in acquiring the syntax of a language may be facilitated if they become aware of the distributional properties of individual words". Learners need to learn how words fit into sentences. Thus, teaching verbs, and the various ways they can be used, becomes a significant area of language instruction. It is indeed the verb and its transitivity that determine not only the number but also the order (or position) of the constituents that a sentence has.

7 Summary

This paper has addressed the concept of transitivity and discussed a number of issues that relate to it. The focus was on categories that can be classified in terms of being either transitive or intransitive such as predicates or verbs as well as nouns, adjectives and prepositions. The paper has also presented a detailed analysis of various thematic roles that hold in the English sentence including the Agent, the Patient and the Theme, among others. After that, levels of transitivity were explained and the need for the Transitivity Hypothesis was justified. The paper ends by discussing some valency changing processes such as valency reducing in passive clauses as well as detransitivised verbs and valency adding as in cognate objects and the idiomatic use of some verbs.

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