(IN)TRANSITIVITY is a category of the VERB.

Verbs which require an OBJECT are called TRANSITIVE verbs.

- My son [VP made a cake] – (compare: *My son made)
- We [VP keep pigeons] – (compare: *We keep)
- I [VP recommend the fish] – (compare: *I recommend)
In contrast, some verbs are *never* followed by an object:

- Susan [VP smiled]
  The professor [VP yawned]

These are known as INTRANSITIVE VERBS.

- Most verbs in English can be both transitive and intransitive, so it is perhaps more accurate to refer to transitive and intransitive *uses* of a verb.
The following examples show the two uses of the same verb:

- **Intransitive**: David *smokes*.
- **Transitive**: David *smokes cigars*.
- **Transitive**: *He turned his head and looked back*.
- **Intransitive**: *He turned to the left*.
In terms of transitivity, we can recognize the following 7 types of main verbs in English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitivity type</th>
<th>Clause pattern</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intransitive&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>S V</td>
<td><em>The tree fell down.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intransitive&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>S V A</td>
<td><em>The milk is in the fridge.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copula/link</td>
<td>S V Ps</td>
<td><em>The milk is cold. The leaves turned yellow.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monotransitive&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>S V Od</td>
<td><em>The dog chased the cat.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monotransitive&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>S V Od A</td>
<td><em>She keeps the milk in the fridge.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditransitive</td>
<td>S V Oi Od</td>
<td><em>He gave her a rose.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complex-transitive</td>
<td>S V Od Po</td>
<td><em>She found him attractive. She made him unhappy.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intransitive verbs

• (S – V): Dogs bark. The tree fell.

• A special kind are the 'weather verbs’ - events involving no participants: It is raining; It snowed a lot last year.

• Two-place verbs (S – V – A). The A expresses time, place, or manner:
  The milk is in the fridge.
  The lecture lasted for two hours.
  This poem scans well.
Copular/link verbs

- (S – V – Cs) 

  - ascriptive type - ascribes a quality or property (e.g. The house is big or John is a teacher) or 

  - equative type - identifies the referent of the Subject in a different way (e.g. The ambassador is the skinny man over there).
Note the following points:

- A current copula + Cs specifies what something is (*The leaves were green*), whereas

- A resulting copula + Cs specifies what something becomes (*The leaves turned yellow*).
Copular/link verbs

- In an equative copula construction, the S and the Cs can change places (*The skinny man over there is the ambassador*).

- In an ascriptive copula construction, this is not possible when the Cs is a noun phrase (*A teacher is John.); it is highly unusual when the Cs is an AdjP (*Tender is the night* (title of novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald)).

- A clause with a copula cannot be passivized.
Monotransitive verbs

• (S – V – Od). Typically, the subject is an agent and the direct object an affected entity.
  *The police dog bit the ambassador.*

• but other combinations of participants can also be represented (the Od can represent e.g. effected entity, cause, location, instrument).
Monotransitive verbs

- causative meaning (i.e. somebody (the initiator) makes somebody else (the actor) do something)

The S then represents the initiator of the action, the Od the actor (She jumped the horse across the fence, He walks the dog every night).

(Here the agent is both initiator and actor.)
Monotransitive verbs

• (S – V – Od – A): *She keeps the milk in the fridge.*

What's the difference between:

• *Max was a businessman.*
• *Max spotted a businessman.*
Ditransitive verbs

- (S – V – Oi – Od)
- The iO typically represents the recipient: *He gave her a rose.*
- If the Oi refers to an inanimate entity it is, typically, the affected entity: *He gave the door a kick.*
- The recipient role can be expressed by a PP rather than by the Oi: *He gave the rose to her.*
- This PP is not syntactically an iO, but it expresses the same content as an iO. Such a PP is called an oblique Object.
Complex-transitive verbs

- (S – V – Od – Po)
- The Po ascribes a quality or property to the referent of the Od.
- current relationship (They considered him a fool. vs. He was a fool.)
- resulting relationship (They made him a lieutenant. vs. He became a lieutenant.)
- passivization
Spasov distinguishes transitive, intransitive and link verbs.

- *He turned his head and look back.*
- *He turned to the left.*
- *He turned pale.*

- *Transitive, intransitive or link verb?*
Syntactic Valency

Lecture 12
Defining the category

- \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \)
- The term \textit{valency} is used about the number of elements a given verb requires in order to complete its meaning:

\textit{He arrived.} (single participant)

\textit{Mary took the book.} (two participants)
Differences in the membership of the sets of expressions

- *Billy gave her the book.*
- *I put the bottle on the table.*

Valency of 3:
- *give* + S, Od and Oi
- *put* + S, Od and Loc.
Intrinsic valency

- the greatest valency of verbs is 3
- transitive verbs in English are intrinsically bivalent: *John opened the door.*
- transitive verbs in passive are monovalent: *The door was opened.*
Causative construction

- increases the valency of the V by 1

- *The soldiers marched home.* (intr. Val.1)
- *They marched the soldiers home.* (tr. Val.2)
- *The boy stood against the wall.* (intr. Val.1)
- *They stood the boy against the wall.* (tr. Val.2)
‘syntactic valency’ - the combining power of words in relation to other words in syntactically subordinate position

- The syntactic valency can be
  - obligatory or
  - optional
The obligatory valency of the verb must be realized for the sentence to be grammatically correct:

*They offered me a well-paid job.*

Oi  Od

*He placed the book on the desk.*

Od  Adv. mod.

*She became a nurse.*

Cs = Predicative
The optional valency of the verb is not necessary realized in grammatically correct sentences:

*They arrived in London at noon.*


of place of time

*He woke up a rich man.*

Cs
Lyons makes a classification of the verbs to explain the notion of valency better.

- **situation**
- **states**
- **events, processes and actions**
He draws a high-level distinction between static and dynamic situations.

- **Static situation** → existing homogeneous, continuous and unchanging
- **Dynamic situation** → happens it may be momentary or enduring it may (not) be controlled by an agent
• a process (e.g. *improve, develop*) - a dynamic situation extended in time
• an event (e.g. *hit, jump, take*) – a momentary dynamic situation
• an action (e.g. *run, kick, sing, laugh*) - a dynamic situation under the control of an agent
• an activity – a process that is under the control of an agent
• an act - an event that is under the control of an agent
The door was opened. The door opened.

- the former represents the situation as an act in which the agent is not referred to,
- whereas the latter represents the situation as an event (which may or may not be an act).
Jackson (1990) classifies verbs a little bit differently.

- **event** – a situations where there is no agent involved, e.g. *The apple fell from the tree.*
- **an action** is performed by an animate agent, which makes it voluntary and intentional, e.g. *The girl picked some flowers.*
The semantic classification is grammatically relevant.

a. Verbs of state cannot be used in the progressive since STATES do not develop in time (own, belong to, etc.);

b. Verbs of quality and verbs of event cannot be used in the passive since there is no agent involved in the situation (He fell to the floor).;
The semantic classification is grammatically relevant.

c. Verbs of momentary event and momentary act denote series of similar momentary situations, when used in the progressive;
The door was banging in the wind.
The boy was kicking the ball against the wall.

d. Transitional events and transitional acts cannot be used in the progressive since such situations are not of durative nature.
He went out. She turned pale.
stative vs. dynamic verbs in ESL/EFL

- Progressive verbs refer to actions rather than states: *They are knowing English very well.*

- This meaning has been overgeneralized a bit in ESL/EFL.

- Verbs can be switched from one class to the other for special purposes:

  
  He was tasting the soup for salt when he dropped the box of salt in the pan.

  The soup tastes pretty salty now.