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Transitivity and its Reflections on Some Areas of Grammar

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Abstract. Traditionally verbs can be classified into transitive and intransitive verbs according to complementation and consistent with this classification, verbs that do not require an obligatory object complement while forming clauses are labeled as intransitive verbs. In early 1980s, as a further classification, intransitive verbs were divided into separate sub-classes on the basis of their semantic and syntactic aspects.

This study briefly explores the distinctive characteristics of two sub-classes of intransitive verbs, namely unergatives (e.g. “walk”, “smile”, “dream”, “swim”) and unaccusatives (e.g., “appear”, “emerge”, “exist”, “occur”) by comparing and contrasting their “Lexical-Semantic Representations” and “Argument Structures”, and examines how these differences between two sub-classes of intransitives affect various areas of grammar such as formation of -er nominals, adjectives and interpretation of pronoun “they”.

At the end of the review, the findings are connected with grammar teaching briefly within the framework of Ausubel’s Meaningful Learning Theory.

Key Words: Transitivity, unaccusative verbs, English Grammar.

Özet. Fiiller geleneksel biçimde, aldıkları tamamlayıcılara göre geçişli ve geçişsiz olarak sınıflandırılırken, zorunlu tamamlayıcı olarak nesne almadan

cümle oluşumuna olanak veren fiiller geçişsiz fiiller olarak adlandırılmaktadırlar. Ancak, 1980'lerin başında, geçişsiz fiiller, sözdizimsel ve anlamsal özellikleri dikkate alınarak daha ileri bir sınıflamaya tabi tutulmuşlardır.

Bu çalışmada, önce “walk”, “smile”, “dream”, “swim” gibi, geçişsiz fiillerin bir sınıfını oluşturan fiillerle, “appear”, “emerge”, “exist”, “occur” gibi, geçişsiz fiillerin diğer sınıfını oluşturan fiiller arasındaki farklılık, sözdizimsel ve anlamsal gösterimlerinin kıyaslanmasıyla ortaya konmakta, ardından bu farklılıkların fiillerden isim türetme, fiillerden sıfat türetme ve üçüncü çoğul şahıs zamirinin anlamlandırılması gibi dilbilgisinin değişik konuları üzerindeki etkileri tartışılmaktadır.

Çalışmanın sonunda da tartışılan konular, Ausubel'in Anlamlı Öğrenme Kuramı çerçevesinde, dilbilgisi öğretimi ile ilişkilendirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: geçişlilik, kılıcsız eylemler, İngilizce Dilbilgisi.

1. The importance of verbs in grammar teaching.

Gass and Selinker (1994:272) claim that one major task of second language lexical research is “to discover what second language learners know about the lexicon of second language, how they learn it, and why this particular path of development is followed”, because, as Levelt (1989:181) states, “the lexicon is the driving force in sentence production”, and “this means that grammatical encoding is mediated by lexical entries”. In the same line, Ingham (1996:35) claims 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* [emphasis added]”, and adds that “it is important, then for researchers to have a better understanding of how lexical semantics could assist the language learner in acquiring properties of syntax”.

When the concern is teaching grammar, Little (1994:106) argues that “whether we are concerned with explicit or implicit grammatical knowledge, words inevitably come before structures”, because, as he adds, “explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is useless unless we know some of the words whose behaviour the rules describe”. When grammar is considered from the above perspective, Owen describes the following tendency in teaching grammar:

A cornerstone of the grammar we shall be looking at is the belief that a description of the language should be organised much more closely around *the ways in which words behave* [emphasis added] than around abstract structures into which we can slot items selected from a wordstore or ‘lexicon’ ” (1993:168).

It is widely accepted that the final goal of language instruction is to train “native-like” speakers of the target language. In defining the knowledge of native speaker and an important aspect of this knowledge, Cook states that

a speaker of English knows not just what a word means and how it is pronounced but also *how it fits into sentences*. The Universal Grammar model of language acquisition ...claims that *learning how each word behaves in sentences is crucial* [emphasis added] (1991:43).

Considering the functions of language, “to communicate our ideas” constitutes “the most widely recognised function of language” (Crystal 1987:10), because “it [the language] is the principal medium of human communication” (Clark et al.1998:41). This communication takes place chiefly by means of sentences¹ and as Dixon (1991:9) states “verb is the centre of the sentence”. From *this* viewpoint, teaching verbs, especially their behaviours in relation to grammar, seems to be one of the important areas of language instruction, since it is the verb that establishes the relationship between semantics (*meaning*) and syntax (*structure*). Consequently, the number and order (or position) of the obligatory sentence constituents according to the pragmatic function of the sentence are determined by the verb.

2. Classification of verbs: Transitives and Intransitives

In grammar, verbs can be classified according to various criteria. For example, there are *lexical verbs* and *auxiliary verbs* based on their functions within the verb phrase of a sentence, or one can mention *one word verbs* and *multi-word verbs* (that is, phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs or

¹ Sentence is the intersection of two aspects of language. In one hand, it is “capable of standing alone to express a coherent thought” (Trask 1993:250), that is, a sentence has a communicative intention such as asking a question, a request for action, warning of something etc. On the other hand it is the “unit of language in which parts of speech (e.g. nouns, verbs, adverbs) and grammatical classes (e.g. word, phrase, clause) are said to function” (Richards et.al. 1992:330).

verb+noun+preposition idioms) according to the number of words that these verbs have.

Another important type of classification based on complementation depends on whether or not the lexical verb in a clause can occur on its own (i.e. without a complement) or with its obligatory complement word(s) that complete(s) its meaning (Aarts and Aarts 1982:40). Traditionally, verbs that can occur on its own are called intransitive verbs, and these intransitive verbs have been defined in contrast to transitive verbs. While a transitive verb requires an object, either nominal (a word functioning as noun) or clausal, an intransitive verb does not require one. From this viewpoint, verbs are classified into two groups such as *transitive verbs* and *intransitive verbs*.²

3. Sub-types of intransitive verbs

Contrary to the traditional approach, it is proposed that intransitive verbs can also be sub-classified. Perlmutter (1978) was the first linguist who claimed that intransitive verbs can be divided into separate classes on the basis of different semantic and syntactic patterns. This classification rests on “the thematic nature of the sole argument that these verbs project”, (that is the semantic role held by the noun phrase required for the grammaticality of the sentence in which the verb takes place) as well as on “its [argument’s] initial position in syntactic configuration” (Montrul 1999:191).

For example, the italicised verbs in (1a-d)³ are intransitive verbs, for these verbs can form grammatical sentences without any obligatory “object” complement⁴.

² Of course more detailed classification is possible according to the *type* and the *number* of the complement(s) that a verb can have. For example, Aarts and Aarts (1982:41) mention “monotransitive verbs” that have only one complement (*The farmer kicked the horse*), ditransitive verbs that have two complements (He gave *her a book*), complex transitive verbs (*They find him a bore*) and non-transitive verbs (*This box contains sugar*) that have different type of complements.

³ Most of the sentences were quoted from **Random House Webster’s Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus** (1992: CD Version)

⁴ Every obligatory complement might not be object. For example the italicized obligatory complements in the sentences “She has *a car*” and “She is *a nurse*” are not objects and consequently the verbs within the sentences are not transitives.

- (1) a. The children **laughed** at the clown
b. Mary **swims** in the lake
c. The chief engineer **speaks** with an Italian accent
d. John **smiled** when he heard the good news.

In these sentences (1a-d), the underlined noun phrases preceding the verbs serve as subjects, and these subjects “*The children*”, “*Mary*”, “*The chief engineer*” and “*John*” are responsible (or accountable) for the events (or actions) denoted by the verbs because in the sentences it is the subject that causes the event deliberately. It is important that these verbs **do not** normally take an object as shown in (2a-d)

- (2) a. *The clown laughed the children.
(cf. The clown made the children laugh)
b. *Her father swims Mary in the lake.
(cf. Her father made Mary swim in the lake)
c. *The manager speaks the chief engineer.
(cf. The manager made the chief engineer speak)
d. *The good news smiled John.
(cf. The good news made John smile)

The subclass of intransitive verbs like *laugh*, *swim*, *speak* and *smile* that take immediate causers as their subjects will be called **UNERGATIVE** verbs within this work. It should be noted that unergative verbs such as *laugh*, *swim*, *speak*, *smile*, *dance*, *shout*, *skip*, *sleep*, *smirk*, *talk*, *telephone*, *walk*, and *yell* imply volitional⁵ control.

From the viewpoint of complementation, the case is the same for the following verbs in (3a-d), for they can also form grammatical sentences without obligatory object complements.

- (3) a. Dark clouds **appeared** on the horizon
b. Water does not **exist** on Mars

⁵ Volitional control means that the action denoted by the verb is the result of “the choice or decision made by the will of the subject”.

- c. The leaves *fall* in autumn
- d. Tuberculosis *occurs* most often in damp climates

The verbs in (3a-d) are also intransitives since they do not take objects but they differ from (1a-d) in that preceding noun phrases which serve as subjects are not the *immediate* causers of the event denoted by the verbs. For example in sentence (3a), it might be *the wind* that drifts the clouds to a place where they are visible. In sentence (3b), *the conditions* might be responsible for the non-existence of water on the planet, in (3c) it is *the gravitational force* that moves the leaves, and finally in (3d) the cause of the tuberculosis is *the environment*.

However, the verbs in (3a-d) do not allow transitive use with grammatical objects as seen in the ungrammatical sentences in (4a-d):

- (4) a. *Lightning in the sky appeared the dark clouds on the horizon.
(cf. Lightning made the dark clouds visible)
- b. *Improper conditions do not exist water on Mars.
(cf. Improper conditions prevent water from existing on Mars)
- c. *The wind falls the leaves.
(cf. The leaves descend under the force of wind)
- d. *Unhealthy conditions occur tuberculosis.
(cf. Unhealthy conditions cause tuberculosis)

Such verbs in (3a-d) will be called **UNACCUSATIVE** verbs.

4. An account for the distinction between two types of intransitives: Unergative verbs and unaccusative verbs

The distinction between unergative verbs and unaccusative verbs can be shown by means of Lexical Semantic Representations (henceforth LSR) and Argument Structures (henceforth A-Structure) of unergative and unaccusative verbs. The analytical framework adopted here is the Government-Binding Theory of Chomsky, which was further elaborated by subsequent developments on lexical theory in the work of Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995).

LSR is the level of representation that encodes the syntactically relevant aspects of the meaning in terms of *semantic role lists* and *predicate decompositions* where the meaning of a verb is represented by means of a fixed set of primitive⁶ predicates such as *do*, *cause*, *be*, *become* or *state*. Semantic roles can be identified with particular representations⁷ associated with these predicates. For example, LSR of a verb meaning that expresses an action which results in a changed STATE of something due to the CAUSE created by the performer of this action can be shown as:

[x CAUSE [y BECOME STATE]] (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995:75).

In this representation, “x” represents the performer of the action and “y” the entity that undergoes the directed change.

In English, a simple sentence normally contains a subject and a finite verb as components. In the structure of a sentence, there is one (or more) noun phrase(s) bearing a specific relation to the verb. These noun phrases are called “**arguments**” and their overt or implied presence is required for well-formedness in structures containing that verb (Trask, 1993, p.20). Arguments may be identified either in terms of syntactic functions (such as *Subject*, *Direct Object*, etc.) or in terms of semantic roles (such as *Agent*, *Patient*, etc.). The specification of the number and types of arguments which a verb requires for well-formedness is called “**argument structure**” (A-Structure) of this verb (Trask, 1993, p.20).

For example, the argument structure of the verb “*break*” in sentence [*The child broke the bottle*] can be shown as [(x(y))] where “x” represents the noun phrase “*The child*” (performer of the action) and “y” represents the other noun phrase “*the bottle*” (the entity that undergoes the directed change.) Following is the relation between LSR and A-Structure of the transitive verb “*break*” in the sentence *The child broke the bottle*:

⁶ Primitive means “any one of the minimal elements in terms of which the system is constructed, and which cannot be defined in terms of any other elements in the system. All other elements used in the system must be defined in terms of the primitives” (Trask, 1993:217). Crystal states that primitives are certain constructs in scientific investigations, which are taken as ‘given’ by a theory (1992:276).

⁷ Semantic roles are expressed in a particular state that is filling the argument position of the primitive. Such templates are called ‘lexical semantic templates’ by Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:24).

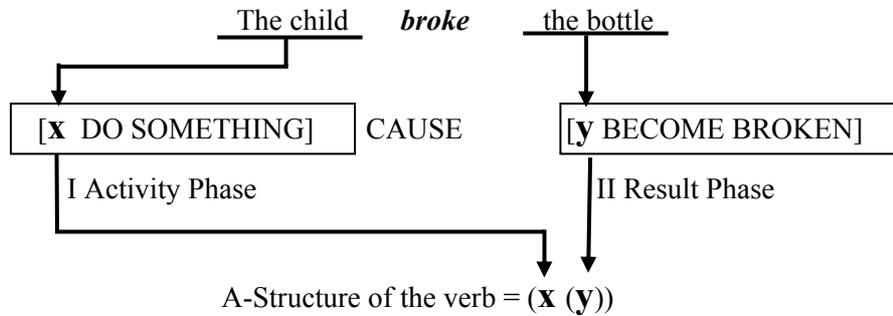


Figure 1: Relation between LSR and A-Structure of a transitive verb

The above representation shows that there are two phases within the eventuality described by the verb “break”. The entity that performs the action of *breaking* (here it is “The child”) is indicated by “x” (in terms of semantic roles it is the *Agent*) and is contained within the first (or activity) phase. Since “*breaking*” normally causes a change of state, the entity that undergoes a change as the result of the action (here it is *the bottle*) is indicated by “y” (in terms of semantic roles it is the *Theme*), and is contained in the second phase. According to “Immediate Cause Linking Rule”⁸ “x” constitutes the *external argument*, and according to “Directed Change Linking Rule”⁹ “y” constitutes the *internal argument*. Consequently, A-Structure of the verb *break* in the above sentence can be represented as (x(y)).

The prototypical UNERGATIVE verb *laugh* in the sentence “The child laughs” has the LSR: [[x LAUGH] CAUSE [_____]]. Following is the relation between LSR and A-Structure of the UNERGATIVE verb “*laugh*” in the same sentence.

⁸ It is a linking rule proposed by Levin and Rappaport Hovav, which states that “[t]he argument of a verb that denotes the immediate cause of the eventuality described by that verb is its external argument” (1995:135).

⁹ It is the second linking rule which states that “[t]he argument of a verb that corresponds to the entity undergoing the directed change described by that verb is [called] its direct internal argument” (Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:146 (24)).

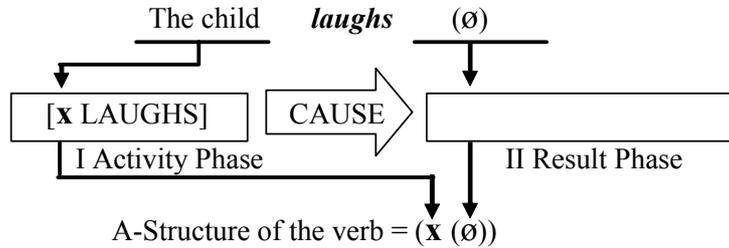


Figure 2: Relation between LSR and A-Structure of an UNERGATIVE verb

The entity that *laughs* (here it is *The child*) is indicated by “x”, and is contained in the first (or activity) phase of the eventuality described by the verb. Since in the activity phase there is no action that *affects* something, we use the verb itself (*laugh*) to express the action instead of primitives such as *do*, *be*, etc. The second phase (the change of state) is shown blank since “*laughing*” normally does not cause a state or a change in a state. As for the A-Structure; the “Immediate Cause Linking Rule” (see footnote 3) projects “x” to the *external argument* position in LSR, since “x” represents the immediate causer of the event described by the verb. Since LSR does not include an entity that undergoes the directed change described by the verb, the internal argument position is shown as null, (∅), and the A-Structure of the UNERGATIVE verb “*laugh*” is represented as [(x(∅))].

Finally, the prototypical UNACCUSATIVE verb “*exist*” in the sentence “*The idea exists in my mind*” has the LSR: [[_____] CAUSE [y BE (P_{loc} z)]]

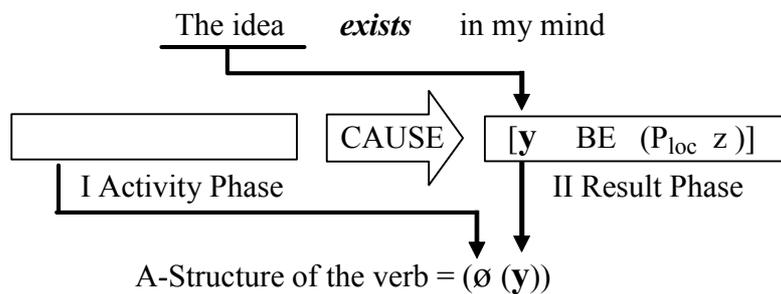


Figure 3: Relation between LSR and A-Structure of an UNACCUSATIVE verb

In LSR of the unaccusative verb “*exist*”, the activity phase is shown blank since there is no stated entity and no expressed (relevant) activity that causes a change. Within the second (state) phase, the entity which *exists* (here, *The idea*) is represented with “y” with its locative preposition [P_{loc}]¹⁰ indicating its location “z”. Since LSR does not include an entity that is responsible for the eventuality described by the verb, the external argument position is shown as (∅). But the *existing* entity which is represented with “y” in the second (state) phase is connected to the *internal argument* position by the “Existence Linking Rule”¹¹. At D-Structure¹² the internal argument (y) is projected as an NP, and this NP fails to receive “accusative case” because the verb “*exist*” lacks an external argument. Consequently the NP moves to Subject position at S-Structure¹³ and receives “nominative case”¹⁴ there, avoiding violation of “Case Filter”¹⁵. Finally, representation of the unaccusative verb “*exist*” is represented as [(∅(y))].

The discussion above indicates that sub-classes of intransitive verbs differ from each other in that their arguments bear different thematic roles and different initial syntactic positions. More explicitly, **unergative verbs which have external but no internal arguments [(x(∅))]** differ from **unaccusatives verbs which have internal but no external arguments [(∅(y))]**.

¹⁰ Prepositions also assign semantic roles to arguments and from this viewpoint, the preposition which indicates the location of its complement can be called [P_{loc}] “locative preposition”(Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:21)

¹¹ It is the third linking rule which proposes that “[t]he argument of a verb whose existence is asserted or denied is its direct internal argument” (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:153(46)).

¹² D-Structure is the initial syntactic representation to which arguments of A-Structure are projected. It shows the basic form of the sentence, and it can be considered an abstract level of representation where semantic roles are assigned to the sentence (Richards et al 1992:117).

¹³ S-Structure is a representation which is obtained from D-Structure by movements of constituents from one syntactic position to another, which are called transformations

¹⁴ Case is a distinctive and overtly marked form of a NP. This marked form indicates that that NP bears some identifiable grammatical or semantic relation to the rest of the sentence (Trask 1993:35). Nominative is a case form used for subjects of both transitive and intransitive verbs (Trask 1993:184).

¹⁵ Case Filer is a module in Government & Binding Theory, which “stipulates that every overt (non-empty) NP must be assigned only one Case” (Trask 1993:35).

5. The Reflections of unergative unaccusative distinction on various areas of grammar

Various aspects of these two sub-classes of intransitive verbs affect the grammar and the distinction between unergative and unaccusative verbs can be observed in various areas of grammar. The following sections explore the effects of this distinction in grammar.

5.1. Formation of *-er* nominals

Most of the *-er* nominals are derived from transitive verbs; e.g. the nominal *driver* is derived from the verb *to drive*, or *writer* from *to write*.

The following examples are taken from the British National Corpus¹⁶, and include nominals derived from verbs such as *dream*, *swim* etc.:

- (5) a. My wife Ann is also a *dreamer*. (CR-1)
- b. This helps to prevent the *glider* from bouncing. (CR-2)
- c. He's the school's best *swimmer*. (CR-3)
- d. My father encouraged me as a high *jumper*. (CR-4)
- e. The *beeper* alarm on Diane's watch sounded. (CR-5)

As the examples in (5a-e) indicate, unergative verbs such as *glide*, *swim* and *jump* can form *-er* nominals. However, not all intransitive verbs can appear as a base of an *-er* nominal. For example **appearer*, **approacher* **erupter* [**ariser*, **arriver*, **dier*, **enterer*, **exister*, **happener*, **occurer*, **remainder*] are ungrammatical (Keyser and Roeper 1984:397 (49)).

The examples of *-er* nominals above indicate a generalisation that “the referent of an *-er* nominal is a potential subject of a sentence whose predicate is its base verb” (Oshita 1997:20). That is, **these nominals correspond to the subject, not the object, of a sentence in which the respective verb appears as the predicate function of this sentence**. For example, the nominal *jumper* refers to one who jumps and this corresponds to the subject of a sentence in which the verb *jump* appears as predicate. In argument structure terms, the suffixation with *-er* can be considered as an argument structure alternation process that makes the referent of a derived noun (*-er* nominal), semantically correspond to the *external argument* of the

¹⁶ On line query is available at <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/> . CR represents Corpus References at the end of the References section.

base verb. As seen in their Argument Structures [(x(ø))], unergative verbs have external arguments and this external argument (x) makes the same alternation process possible for unergative verbs, and as a result, *-er* nominals can be derived from unergatives. On the other hand, in their Argument Structures [(ø(y))], unaccusative verbs have no external argument (x) that makes the alternation process possible, and unaccusative¹⁷ verbs fail to form *-er* nominals. Consequently, in English, **while the *-er* nominals can be formed from unergative verbs** (such as *dancer, runner*), **unaccusative verbs do not form *-er* nominals** (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:139).

5.2. Passive and perfective adjective formation from verbs

Formation of deverbal¹⁸ adjectives that have the same form as the past participle of the base verb is another piece of morphological evidence for the distinction between ergatives and unaccusatives (Bresnan 1982:30; Oshita 1997:23).

Very often, these adjectives are derived from regular **transitive verbs** as seen in the sentences (6a-e) quoted from the British National Corpus;

- (6)a. Sir W.Osler was one of the most **respected** medical practitioners. (CR-6)
- b. Better **tested** materials than ours have met with a similar fate. (CR-7)
- c. The beautifully **furnished** rooms have lovely views (CR-8)
- d. He ran his eyes down the **typed** message (CR-9)
- e. There is a clearly **written** text with an illustrated chronology (CR-10)

It should be noted that the adjectives derived from transitive verbs have a **passive reading**.

Respected medical practitioner → Medical practitioner who *was respected*

¹⁷ The *-er* nominals *comer* and *goer*, which are derived from unaccusative verbs *come* and *go* never appear in this form, but do appear either in compounds like “*late comer*” and “*church goer*” or in a noun phrase such as “*earlyriser*” (Oshita 1997:19).

¹⁸ The word “deverbal” denotes, in word formation, a lexical item of another class derived from a verb or verbal stem. For example, “*realisation*” is a deverbal noun derived from the verb “*realise*” Likewise, **deverbal adjective** denotes **an adjective derived from a verb or verbal stem** (Trask 1993:81).

Tested materials → Materials which *were tested*.
Furnished rooms → Rooms which *were furnished*

In contrast to the adjectives above, the following adjectives in sentences (7a-e) are derived from **intransitive verbs**¹⁹. Sentences were quoted from the same corpus.

- (7) a. The chamber seemed darker beyond the *elapsed* time (CR-11)
b. Pepita began to pick up the *fallen* bananas (CR-12).
c. It's dangerous to hunt among chasms full of *drifted* snow (CR-13).
d. I think it is a *failed* attempt (CR-14).
e. It is a specific medical treatment for *undescended* testis (CR-15).

In this case, adjectives derived from intransitive verbs (more specifically unaccusative verbs) have a **perfective reading**:

Elapsed time → time which *has elapsed*.
Fallen bananas → bananas which *have fallen*.
Drifted snow → snow which *has drifted*.

From the viewpoint of argument structures of verb types that can form deverbal adjectives (whether they have passive or perfective reading) both types, transitives [(x(y))] and unaccusatives [(ø(y))], have *internal arguments* (y) in their argument structures. In formation of passive and perfective adjectives from transitive and unaccusative verbs, **the internal argument of the verb [(y)] is associated with the referent** (the identity which is modified) **of the derived adjective** (Oshita 1997:25). For example, the argument structure of the transitive verb *to test* in a sentence like *Joe tested the method* has both the external argument²⁰ [(x)=Joe] and the internal

¹⁹ Word search criterion in the corpus is based on verbs mentioned by Bresnan (1982:30 (47)) and Levin and Rappaport (1986:654 (101))

²⁰ In formation of deverbal adjectives from transitive verbs, the external argument (x) is deleted. The deletion of (x) is necessary because unlike the regular passivisation of a transitive verb, in which the external argument remains potentially available as an argument of *by phrase* (Jaeggli 1986:600) (as seen in sentence (a) below), but the external argument of the base verb for the adjective formation is not available in any way. (as seen in sentence (b) below)

a The method was *tested* (by Joe)
b This is a *tested* method (*by Joe)

argument [(y)=method]. The deverbal adjective *tested* in “*tested method*” modifies the referent “*method*” which corresponds to the internal argument of the verb. The case is the same for unaccusative verb *fall* in sentence “*The leaf has fallen*”. Although the argument structure of the unaccusative verb *fall* does not have an immediate causer which is projected there as external argument, *the leaf* corresponds to the internal argument, since it is the entity which undergoes directed change. Consequently, **unaccusative verbs can constitute deverbal adjectives** since the deverbal adjective “*fallen*” in “*fallen leaf*” modifies the internal argument “*leaf*”. On the other hand, **unergative verbs** that do not have any internal argument in their argument structures [(x(ø))] fail to form deverbal adjectives. As Levin and Rappaport state, **run man*, **coughed patient*, **swum contestant*, **flown pilot*, **cried child*, **exercised athlete*, **sung artist*, **yawned student* and **laughed clown* are ungrammatical (1986:654 (102)).

5.3. Formation of adjectives from verbs with the *-ing* suffix

Another type of morphological evidence observed in grammar, which stems from unergative versus unaccusative distinction is formation of adjectives from verbs with the adjectival suffix *-ing*. In sentences (8a-d) the adjectives are derived from transitive verbs with the suffix *-ing*. The examples below were cited from the corpus;

- (8) a. They were steep walls of water **dropping** like guillotines (CR-16)
b. [It] could be a very mind **broadening** experience for people (CR-17)
c. Pain **relieving** medicines are used for headache (CR-18)
d. I'm just a money **making** machine (CR-19)

It should be noted that, derived *-ing* adjectives appear as compound adjectives with a *left-hand constituent*. Otherwise, they are ungrammatical unless the original internal argument, if there is one, is projected as a left-hand constituent of the compound adjective²¹ (Oshita 1997:27). For example, in the argument structure of the transitive verb “*form*” in a sentence

²¹ The same type of adjective compounds such as “*breath-taking*”, “*fact-finding*”, “*heart-breaking*”, “*life-giving*”, “*record-breaking*”, “*self-defeating*”, “*self-justifying*” are called “**verb and object type**” by Quirk et al (1985:1576 (Sec.I.68)). But, psychological causative verbs such as “*frighten*” and “*discourage*” are exceptions to this generalisation (Oshita 1987:27 Footnote 16)

like “*Suffix forms adjective*”, there are both external [(x)=*suffix*] and internal [(y)=*adjective*] arguments. When the *-ing* adjective is derived from the verb *to form* (**forming suffix*), the referent (the identity which is modified) of the derived adjective corresponds to the external argument of the base verb. But, in such structures, contrary to *Passive and Perfective Adjective Formation*, the internal argument (y) is still intact and available. For that reason, the internal argument is projected as a left-hand constituent of the compound adjective as seen in “*adjective forming suffix*”

Unergative verbs which have argument structure [(x(∅))] **do not form compound adjectives** since there is no internal argument (y) in their argument structures, which has to be projected as left-hand constituent.

Following sentences quoted from the corpus indicate the case:

- (9) a. There's a *flying* saucer in the car park (CR-20)32
b. He was the nearest possible to being a *walking* encyclopedia (CR-21).
c. She can become the next *sleeping* beauty (CR-22).
d. The bus driver kicked the *travelling* salesman (CR-23).
e. There were *flying* fish all around us (CR-24).

Consequently, compound adjectives within the following phrases in (10a-d) are ungrammatical since they are derived from unergative verbs:

- (10) a. **patient-walking* miracle medicine
b. **child-crying* horror movies
c. **audience-smiling* auditoriums
d. **friend-grinning* weddings (Oshita 1997:29 (34))

On the other hand, *unaccusative verbs which have internal argument in their argument structures* [(∅ (y))] **can form compound adjectives**, in which the internal argument appears as left-hand constituent as seen in (11a-d), and they are ungrammatical without left-hand constituents as in **watering garden vegetable* or **dropping additional suggestion*.

- (11) a. *mouth-watering* garden vegetables
b. *jaw-dropping* additional suggestions

- c. *pulse-pounding* psychological thrillers
- d. *knee-shaking* anxiety (Oshita 1997:30 (35))

As a result, *-ing* adjectives derived from unergative verbs appear as independent word, (e.g. *sleeping* beauty) but *-ing* adjectives derived from unaccusative verbs have to appear with a left-hand constituent which serve as the internal argument of the base verb. (e.g. *voice-quavering* anxiety)

5.4. Interpretation of the pronoun *they*

Interpretation of the third person plural pronoun “*they*” in a sentence, whether it has a *definite referential reading*²² or an *indeterminate arbitrary reading*²³, might vary according to the type of the verb within the sentence.

Jaeggli (1986:62) claims that it is possible to have either a definite referential reading or an indeterminate arbitrary reading for the subject pronoun *they*, as long as the referents are understood to be human (cited in Oshita 1997:31). According to this claim, sentences (12 a-d) are ambiguous since the subject pronoun *they* in these sentences might have either *definite referential reading* or an *indeterminate arbitrary reading*.

- (12) a. *They* rarely dance in Japanese weddings
- b. *They* walk faster in big cities
- c. *They* sell cigarettes at all gas stations
- d. *They* do not allow dogs on the beach (Oshita 1997:31 (37))

For example, in (12 c) and (12 d), the subject pronoun *they* either refers to a specific group of people (e.g. *Children who are not aware of the risk* sell

²² In this case *they* functions as a personal pronoun which refers to particular group of things, or to a particular group of people as in (a) “*Newspapers reach me on the day after they are published*”, or as in (b) “*There are two boys here, they are both students*”. In (a) “*they*” refers to *newspapers*, and in (b) refers to *boys*.

²³ In this case, *they* refers to “people in general as in *Isn’t that what they call love?*” (Sinclair et al. 1990:30). Quirk, et. al. (1985:353) call the case of “*they*” in “*They say it is going to snow today*” ‘**generic use** of personal pronoun’. It should be noted that sentences including “*they*” which has indeterminate arbitrary reading can be replaced by passive sentences with unspecified agents.

cigarettes at all gas stations, *Lifeguards* do not allow dogs on the beach) or people in general. In the second case, sentences (12c) and (12d) can be paraphrased as sentences (13 a-b)

- (13) a. Cigarettes are sold at all gas stations
b. Dogs are not allowed on the beach.

On the distributional restriction of the arbitrary third person plural pronoun “*they*”, Jaeggli (1986) generalises that “**an arbitrary plural pronominal** [word functioning as, or resembling a pronoun] cannot **be in a chain that is case -or theta- marked directly by a verb**” (cited in Oshita 1997:32 (41)). In the following examples of the passive sentences in (14 a-d), the pronouns do not allow arbitrary reading since they are in a chain that is case marked²⁴ by the verb.

- (14) a. They are arrested all the time by the police.
b. They are seen on the beach every Sunday morning.
c. They are admired in this country.
d. They will be found in the hotel lobby. (Oshita 1997:32(39))

Moreover, pronouns in the following sentences (15a-d) which have three semantic subtypes of **unaccusative verbs** [verbs of existence in (15a, b), a verb of inherently directed motion in (15c), and a verb of appearance in (15 d)] **do not allow** arbitrary reading, either.

²⁴ For example, sentence (14 a) was derived from *The police arrested them all the time* at D-Structure. When the passive morpheme is added (... are arrested *e*), the chain of the object, that is, the empty category “*e*” [any of abstract element which has no overt realisation but which is posited as occupying NP position (Trask 1993:90)] cannot stay as *object* since the passive morpheme absorbs *accusative case*. Otherwise, it will remain caseless, violating the *case filter*” (see footnote 15). Therefore, it has to move to a position where it should get a case. As a result, accusative marked “them” becomes “they” and has to move to subject position in a passive sentence to get nominative case. [*They_i* are arrested *e_i*]. These two, *They* and *e* form a chain. Since *e* is the chain of the S-Structure subject, it was the object (of the verb), which is marked with case at D-Structure, and it is θ role assigned.

- (15) a. They **exist** without any water on this planet
b. They **remained** in their home country
c. They **arrive** really tired after such a long trip
d. They always **appear** without prior notice (Oshita 1997:32(40))

Pronouns in sentences in (14) and (15) **cannot be interpreted as arbitrary pronoun “they”** since “they” in passive and unaccusative sentences are **surface subjects generated in object position**, where they are theta-marked by the verb. Likewise, the third person plural pronoun appears in **object position of a transitive verb** (as in 16a,b) cannot have arbitrary reading either, since the pronoun is both case-marked and theta-marked by the verb.

- (16) a. I haven't seen them in gas stations.
b. The police will arrest them. (Oshita 1997:31 (38))

Jaeggli's generalisation leaves room for the ambiguity between the definite and arbitrary readings of “they” in (12 a-d) because in transitive and unergative sentences, the subject arguments are neither case-marked nor theta-marked directly by the verb. Consequently, **in sentences including transitive and UNERGATIVE verbs, it is possible to have either a definite referential reading or an indeterminate arbitrary reading** for the subject pronoun *they*. On the other hand, **in sentences with unaccusative verbs, subject pronoun they does not allow an arbitrary reading.**

5.5. Constructions with “Cognate Object”

Cognate object is defined as:

a direct object whose semantic content is more or less identical to that of the verb which governs it. The direct objects in the following examples are cognate objects: *I dreamed a dream last night; She sang a song; I'm thinking terrible thoughts* (Trask 1993:48).

As Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:40) state, unergative verbs can form constructions with *cognate objects* as shown in (17 a-d). Levin (1993:95)

observes that cognate objects in such structures usually appear with a modifier which functions like an adverbial.

- (17) a. Louisa slept a restful *sleep*.
b. Malinda smiled her most enigmatic *smile*.
(Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:40)
- c. The couple waltzed the most elegant *waltz* in the competition.
d. Nancy danced an exotic *dance*.
(Oshita 1997:47 (64a,b))

On the other hand, no ergative verb appears in a construction with a cognate object, as seen in (18)

- (18) a. *The mirror broke a jagged break.
Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:147 (28a))
b. *She arrived a glamorous arrival.
c. *The apples fell a smooth fall.
d. *Karen appeared a striking appearance at the department party.
e. *Phyllis existed a peaceful existence.
Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:148 (31a,b;32a,b))

6. Summary of the areas of grammar involving unergative-unaccusative distinction

The following table summarises the various areas of grammar affected by the sub-types of the intransitive verbs, morphologically or structurally. From the pedagogical viewpoint, the distinctive characteristics of the intransitive verbs and relevant grammar points might be connected and some grammar points can be taught in connection with these characteristics of intransitive verbs.

Table 1. Areas of Grammar involving unergative-unaccusative distinction

AREAS OF GRAMMAR	UNERGATIVE VERBS	UNACCUSATIVE VERBS
Formation of <i>-er nominals</i> from verbs	(+) swimmer	(-) appearer
Passive and perfective adjectives from verbs	(-) swum contestant	(+) fallen banana
Compound <i>-ing adjectives</i> from verbs	(-) child er crying movie	(+) knee shaking anxiety
Interpretation of <i>they</i> as indeterminate arbitrary pronoun	(+/-) They walk faster in big cities	(-) They always appear without prior notice
Constructions with “Cognate Object”	(+) sleep a restful <u>sleep</u>	(-) fall a smooth <u>fall</u>

7. Pedagogical Implications

As a personal experience, teaching grammar to English Teacher Candidates for four years has revealed that most teacher candidates who have analytical and critical thinking skills were not satisfied with the explanations of some specific grammar points just referring to *assumption-like rules* without *whys and wherefores*.

Consider the following question;

Although all the verbs mentioned here are intransitives, why can the verbs *to jump*, *to sleep* and *to run* form grammatical nominals such as **jumper**, **sleeper** and **runner** while the intransitive verbs *to exist*, *to emerge* and *to appear* cannot form similar nominals such as **exister*, **emerger* and **appearer*?

As evidence, the above bonus question for teacher candidates has always remained unanswered (even I promised to award extra 20 points in the final exams to those who could find satisfactory answer), with the exception that most teacher candidates had prepared lists of intransitive verbs arranged in groups that can form nominals and that cannot form nominals.

From the pedagogical perspective, making lists of intransitive verbs that can form and cannot form nominals, and trying to memorize these lists can be

considered *rote learning*, as defined by Ausubel (1968), “the process of acquiring something as discrete and relatively isolated entities that are relatable to cognitive structure only in an arbitrary and verbatim fashion, not permitting the establishment of [meaningful] relationship” (cited in Brown 2000:83). On the other hand, as supported by many theories (especially schema and gestalt theories) a primary process in learning is relating the new concepts to the relevant ideas in the existing cognitive structures. In other words, for a learner to learn something meaningfully, s/he must relate new knowledge to what s/he knows.

Under the light of this reasoning, referring to Ausubel’s theory of meaningful learning, a linguistic framework based on the semantic and syntactic properties of two sub-classes of intransitive verbs might be an effective way of teaching some grammar points mentioned within this study.

The following quotation seems to emphasize the importance of the issue:

The distinction between rote and meaningful learning may not at first appear to be important since in either case material can be learned. But the significance of the distinction becomes clear when we consider the relative efficiency of two kinds of learning in terms of retention, or long term memory. We are often tempted to examine learning from the perspective of input alone, failing to consider the uselessness of a learned item that is not retained (Brown, 2000:85).

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Data cited herein has been extracted from the British National Corpus Online service, managed by Oxford University Computing Services on behalf of the BNC Consortium. [<http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html>]

CR- 1 (**AS7 226** *My wife Ann is also a dreamer, but fur more practical*)

AS7 *Tales of the loch*. Sandison, Bruce. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company Ltd, 1990, pp. 1-102. 1850 s-units, 37218 words

CR-2 (**A0H 520** *This helps to prevent the glider from bouncing on any rough ground.*) **A0H** *Gliding safety*. Piggott, Derek. London: A & C Black (Publishers) Ltd, 1991, pp. 9-91. 1829 s-units, 39217 words.

CR-3 (**AT4 502** *He's the school's best swimmer and he can run as well.*) **AT4** *Who, sir? Me, sir?* Peyton, K M. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 5-138. 4137 s-units, 45340 words.

CR-4 (**K5J 1354** *It was my father who encouraged me as a high jumper.*) **K5J** *[Scotsman]*. u.p., n.d., Leisure material, pp. ?? . 4985 s-units, 113147 words.

CR-5 (**FYY 599** *The beeper alarm on Diane's watch sounded as they were driving back, the signal that it was time for her to go and collect the litterbug Jed from his minder.*) **FYY** *The boat house*. Gallagher, Stephen. Sevenoaks: New English Library, 1992, pp. 43-185. 2676 s-units, 40496 words.

CR- 6 (**B79 207** *Sir William Osler, one of the most respected medical practitioners of the early 20th century, recommended it as the best means to reduce pain in lumbago.*) **B79** *New Scientist*. London: IPC Magazines Ltd, 1991, pp. ?? . 591 s-units, 12638 words.

CR-7 (**G0W 1058** *Better designed and better tested materials than ours have met with a similar fate.*) **G0W** *National Congress on Languages in Education materials*. Brighton: National Congress on Languages in Education, 1988, pp. ?? . 3397 s-units, 65956 words.

CR- 8 (**EET 892** *The beautifully furnished rooms have lovely views of the waterfront or city, and guests can relax by the pool with its impressive views out to sea.*) **EET** *Sovereign worldwide*. Crawley: Sovereign worldwide, 1989, pp. ?? . 2846 s-units, 27142 words.

CR- 9(**CN3 3017** *He ran his eyes down the typed message.*) **CN3** *Whirlpool*. Forbes, Colin. London: Pan Books Ltd, 1991, pp. 1-120. 4107 s-units, 41105 words

CR-10 (**CKV 757** *There is a clearly written text with an illustrated chronology of the country's history taking it up to 1992*) **CKV** *The Art Newspaper*. London: Umberto Allemandi & Company, 1993, pp. ?? . 1175 s-units, 29928 words.

- CR- 11 (**G02 2113** *And the chamber seemed darker beyond the elapsed time.*) **G02** *Cathedral*. Maitland, I. London: Headline Book Publishing plc, 1993, pp. 199-341. 3525 s-units, 40488 words
- CR-12 (**ARW 1110** *Pepita began to pick up the fallen bananas and place them back in their crate.*) **ARW** *Spare Rib*. u.p., n.d., pp. ?? . 1743 s-units, 31411 words
- CR-13 (**BNU 1962** *It's too dangerous to hunt them there among all those crags and chasms full of drifted snow.*) **BNU** *Against a peacock sky*. Connell, Monica. London: Viking, 1991, pp. ?? . 2173 s-units, 39644 words.
- CR-14 (**ARW 763** *However, while I think it is a failed attempt, there is a lot in the film which deserves attention, particularly the initial sequences.*) **ARW** *Spare Rib*. u.p., n.d., pp. ?? . 1743 s-units, 31411 words.
- CR-15 (**FT0 965** *We classified specific medical treatments that mimic physiological processes (human chorionic gonadotrophin for undescended testis and indomethacin for patent ductus arteriosus) as secondary prevention.*) **FT0** *British Medical Journal*. London: British Medical Association, 1976, pp. 9-513. 1709 s-units, 36221 words
- CR-16 (**ASV 547** *Now they were steep walls of water dropping like guillotines onto the reef.*) **ASV** *Walking on Water*. Martin, Andy. London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd, 1991, pp. 60-163. 2691 s-units, 36459 words.
- CR-17 (**JYN 264** *Well I think I think growing up with gay or lesbian parents I think, I think could be a very mind broadening experience for people it will certainly teach you about social life in a, in a lot of different ways that er*) **JYN** Aston University psychology department: lecture (Educational/informative). Recorded on 28 January 1994 with 7 participants, totalling 19439 words, 1563 utterances (duration not recorded).
- CR-18 (**HWV 1659** *Pain relieving medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen are used for headache, pain, and arthritis.*) **HWV** *The Lancet*. London: The Lancet Ltd, 1993, pp. ?? . 2079 s-units, 44073 words.
- CR-19 (**CEP 1894** *I'm just a money making machine*) **CEP** *Today*. London: News Group Newspapers Ltd, 1992, pp. ?? . 11230 s-units, 195186 words.
- CR-20 (**HTU 2787** *There's a flying saucer in the car park.)* **HTU** *The suburban book of the dead*. Rankin, Robert. London: Corgi Books, 1993, pp. 103-264. 5540 s-units, 43742 words.
- CR-21 (**BN3 496** *He was the nearest possible to being a walking encyclopedia.*) **BN3** *Memories of the Gorbals*. Caplan, Jack. Durham: The Pentland Press Ltd, 1991, pp. 1-97. 2550 s-units, 33215 words.
- CR-22 (**C8P 737** *If the person picks up the keys, then he or she can become the next sleeping beauty.*) **C8P** *Colin the Clown's party book*. Francome, Colin. Hemel Hempstead, Herts: Argus Books, 1990, pp. 5-96. 2198 s-units, 30229 words.

- CR-23 (**HWN** 1984 *The bus driver kicked the travelling salesman where Cornelius had kicked Hamish.*) **HWN** *The book of ultimate truths.* Rankin, Robert. London: Doubleday, 1993, pp. 13-142. 4567 s-units, 38693 words.
- CR-24 (**G1K** 3399 *There were flying fish all around us, heading into shore.*) **G1K** *Red bride.* Fowler, C. London: Warner Books, 1993, pp. 183-340. 3501 s-units, 41845 words.

Geçişlilik ve Dilbilgisinin Bazı Alanlarına Yansımaları

Özet

Dilbilgisi öğretimine yönelik araştırmalara göre, sözcüklerin dilsel birimler içinde ne tür işlevler üstlendiklerinin bilinmesinin dil öğrenme üzerinde önemli etkisi vardır. Hatta sözcüklerin dilsel yapılar içinde sözdiziminin kurallarını da belirleyen davranışları bilinmeden dilbilgisi kurallarının biliniyor olmasının çok da yararlı olmadığı düşünülmektedir.

Dili genel olarak çeşitli iletişim gereksinimlerimizi karşılayan “cümleler” olarak kullandığımızı, fiillerin de bu cümlelerin yapısını, sözcük sayısını ve bu sözcüklerin sözdizimsel sırasını belirlediğini göz önüne aldığımızda, fiillerin öğretimünün dilbilgisi öğretimi açısından önemi ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Farklı ölçütlere göre farklı şekillerde sınıflandırılabilen fiiller, geleneksel olarak, aldıkları tamamlayıcılara göre, geçişli ve geçişsiz fiiller olarak sınıflandırılırlar. Ancak, yakın geçmişte, geçişsiz fiiller de, içinde yer aldıkları cümleyi oluşturan cümle fonksiyonlarına yükledikleri anlamsal rollere göre, daha ileri sınıflamaya tabi tutulmuşlar, “gülmek (laugh)”, “koşmak (run)”, “yüzmek (swim)”, “yürümek (walk)” gibi öznenin doğrudan kontrolü altında gerçekleşen eylemleri ifade edenler; “düşmek (fall)”, “varmak (arrive)”, “görünmek (appear)” gibi dolaylı olarak, başka bir araçla ya da başka bir olayın sonucu olarak gerçekleşen eylemleri ifade edenlerden ayrı olarak düşünülmüşlerdir. Her ikisi de geçişsiz olmalarına rağmen, “koşmak (run)” eylemini, işi yapan doğrudan kendi iradesiyle ve isteğiyle gerçekleştirirken, “varmak (arrive)” eylemi, kendisinden önce gerçekleşen bir yer değiştirmenin ikincil sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu farklılık, “Sözdizimsel Anlamsal Gösterim” adı verilen bir yaklaşımla somut olarak ortaya konabilmektedir.

Geçişsiz fiillerin bu ileri sınıflaması sonucunda ortaya çıkan alt gruplarında yer alan fiiller arasındaki farklılıklar dilbilgisinin bazı alanlarına yansımaktadır.

İngiliz dilinde fiilden isim türeten *-er* son eki, yüzmek (swim), koşmak (run) gibi fiillerin sonuna gelerek isim türetebilirken, ikinci grup geçişsiz fiillerle bu mümkün olmamaktadır.

Diğer yandan, “düşmek (fall)”, “sürüklenmek (drift)” gibi ikinci grup fiiller, “fallen apples” ya da “drifted snow” örneklerinde olduğu gibi, bir son ekle bir öbeğin niteleyicisi olarak sıfat işlevinde kullanılabilirken, birinci grup fiillerle bu mümkün olamamaktadır.

İkinci grupta yer alan fiiller, “*knee-shaking anxiety*” örneğinde olduğu gibi, bir son ek alarak, önlerinde yer alan başka bir sözcükle birlikte bileşik sıfat işlevinde kullanılabilirler. Ancak, birinci grupta yer alan fiillerle bu mümkün olmamaktadır.

İngiliz dilinde, “they” zamiri, normal olarak üçüncü çoğul kişiyi ifade ederken, bazı durumlarda da, edilgen yapıda olduğu gibi, eylemin bir özne ile sınırlanmadan, genel olarak gerçekleştirildiğini belirtir. İngiliz dilinde, birinci grup fiillerle kurulan cümlelerde yer alan “they” zamiri, hem öznenen bağımsız genel bir eylemi, hem de üçüncü çoğul kişinin eylemini ifade edebilirken, ikinci gruptaki fiillerle kurulan cümlelerdeki “they” zamiri, öznenen bağımsız genel bir eylemi ifade edememektedir.

Son olarak, “She slept a restful *sleep*, He smiled his most enigmatic *smile*, Nancy danced an exotic *dance*” örneklerinde görüldüğü gibi, İngiliz dilinde cümle içinde bir belirteç işlevinde, eylemi tanımlayan, eylemle özdeş bir tamamlayıcı yer alabilmektedir. Bu tamamlayıcı, birinci grup fiillerle kurulan cümlelerde yer alabilirken, ikinci grup fiillerle oluşturulan cümlelerde yer alamamaktadır.

Geleneksel dilbilgisi öğretimi yaklaşımında, bu farklılıkların nedenleri açıklanamamakta, farklı yapılarla kullanılabilen fiil listeleri verilmekte, öğrenenlerin bu listeleri ezberlemeleri beklenmektedir.

Bu çalışmada, farklı fiillerle oluşturulabilen farklı yapıların, birlikte kullanıldıkları fiillerin değişik özelliklerinden kaynaklandığı nedenleriyle açıklanabilirse, dilbilgisi öğretiminde de Ausubel’in tanımladığı “anlamalı öğrenmenin” gerçekleştirilebileceği önerilmektedir.