
TRANSITIVE VERBS IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the grammatical category of transitive verbs in the Russian language, emphasizing their case behavior, syntactic patterns, and pedagogical implications. Examples and teaching strategies are provided to help learners master usage, alongside a brief comparison with English transitivity.

KEYWORDS

transitive verb, Russian grammar, accusative case, teaching Russian, syntax.

INTRODUCTION: Understanding the grammatical category of transitive verbs is essential for mastering the Russian language. Transitive verbs, which take a direct object, are central to sentence structure and case assignment. This paper examines the definition, grammatical features, syntactic behavior, and pedagogical implications of transitive verbs in Russian. Comparative aspects with English and practical teaching strategies are also discussed. The topic is relevant for linguists, educators, and students learning Russian as a foreign language, as it sheds light on verb valency, case governance, and communicative patterns that form the backbone of syntactic accuracy.

2. Definition and Grammatical Characteristics

Transitive verbs (переходные глаголы) are defined as verbs that require a direct object to complete their meaning. This object typically appears in the accusative case without a preposition. Common examples include:

- Я читаю книгу. (I am reading a book.)
- Он ест яблоко. (He is eating an apple.)

These verbs answer the questions 'что?' (what?) or 'кого?' (whom?). Transitive verbs can typically form passive constructions, which is a key grammatical indicator of transitivity.

3. Syntactic Behavior and Case Usage

Russian transitive verbs interact directly with the case system, especially the accusative case. For animate masculine nouns in the singular, the accusative coincides with the genitive, while for inanimate nouns, it matches the nominative. For example:

- Я вижу собаку. (I see a dog — animate, accusative = genitive)

- Я вижу стол. (I see a table — inanimate, accusative = nominative)

Negation also affects case use: with some transitive verbs under negation, the object may shift from accusative to genitive:

- Я не читал газету. / Я не читал газеты.

4. Semantic Flexibility and Verb Pairs

Many Russian verbs are polysemous, meaning their transitivity can shift depending on meaning and structure. For instance:

- Я варю суп. (I am cooking soup — transitive)

- Суп варится. (The soup is cooking — intransitive, reflexive)

Verb pairs in Russian often consist of transitive/intransitive forms, which learners must distinguish contextually. These pairs are essential for aspectual understanding and correct sentence formation.

5. Teaching Strategies for Transitive Verbs

Effective teaching of transitive verbs requires focus on:

- Practicing accusative case through drills and substitution exercises
- Using visual cues to identify direct object relationships
- Contrasting Russian and English examples to highlight syntactic differences
- Introducing passive voice constructions for reinforcing transitivity
- Employing context-based storytelling and role-play to use transitive verbs communicatively

6. Comparison with English

Both English and Russian distinguish between transitive and intransitive verbs. However, English relies primarily on fixed word order to show grammatical roles, while Russian uses case endings. In English, the object directly follows the verb:

- She eats an apple.

In Russian, the word order may vary because morphological endings indicate roles:

- Яблоко ест она. / Она ест яблоко.

Additionally, certain verbs that are transitive in English may be intransitive or require prepositions in Russian:

- I like music → Мне нравится музыка.

CONCLUSION

Transitive verbs are integral to understanding Russian syntax and developing accurate language use. Their interaction with cases, especially the accusative, and their role in both active and passive constructions make them foundational in Russian grammar. Teaching these verbs effectively requires a combination of explanation, practice, and contextual use. Learners must become comfortable with case endings, aspectual variations, and syntactic patterns to achieve fluency and precision in expression.

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