Web of Scholars: Multidimensional Research Journal
ISSN: 2751-7543
Volume 05 Number 03 (2026)
https://innosci.org/wos

Article

Boundedness and Unboundedness in Verb Semantics: a Comparative Study of English and Uzbek

Inamova Dilfuza Ergashevna[1]

1. "English applied translation" department, Translation faculty Uzbekistan state university of world languages

* Correspondence: email@gmail.com

Abstract: This article examines the semantic meanings of boundedness and unboundedness in English and Uzbek verb systems. Boundedness refers to an action that is understood as having a natural endpoint, result, or limit, while unboundedness refers to an action perceived as continuous, repeated, habitual, or without a clearly defined endpoint. The study analyzes how these meanings are expressed through lexical aspect, verb-object relations, grammatical aspect, auxiliary constructions, and contextual factors. In English, boundedness is often formed through lexical aspect, quantized objects, prepositional phrases, and perfective interpretations. In Uzbek, boundedness is frequently expressed through verbal constructions such as -ib bo'l-, -ib bitir-, -ib chiq-, -ib yubor-, and -ib qo'y-, while unboundedness is commonly realized through progressive, habitual, and context-dependent verb forms. The comparison shows that both languages express boundedness and unboundedness, but they use different grammatical and semantic mechanisms.

Keywords: boundedness, unboundedness, verb semantics, lexical aspect, telicity, English verbs, Uzbek verbs, aspectual meaning.

1. Introduction

Verb semantics is one of the central areas of linguistic analysis because verbs do not simply name actions; they also show how actions develop in time. An action may be viewed as completed, ongoing, repeated, resultative, or unlimited. In this sense, the semantic opposition between boundedness and unboundedness is closely related to aspect, telicity, and event structure.

In linguistic theory, aspect describes how the internal temporal structure of an event is presented. Comrie explains the perfective and imperfective opposition as two different ways of viewing a situation: either as a whole or from inside its internal development. Vendler's classification of verbs into states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements remains one of the main theoretical bases for analyzing event structure and lexical aspect. In English and Uzbek, boundedness is not expressed in exactly the same way. English often relies on the combination of verb meaning, object type, and aspectual form. Uzbek, being an agglutinative Turkic language, actively uses suffixes and auxiliary verb constructions to express whether an action is completed, ongoing, sudden, resultative, or exhaustive. Uzbek aspectual constructions such as verb-IB BITIR-, verb-IB BO'L-, and verb-IB QO'Y- are especially important for expressing completion and result.

Theoretical Background

The concept of boundedness is closely connected with telicity. A telic event has an inherent endpoint, while an atelic event does not. For example, in English, write a letter is bounded because the action ends when the letter is complete. By contrast, write letters or write for an hour may be interpreted as unbounded because the sentence does not necessarily show a final completed object.

2. Materials and Methods

Citation: Inamova.D.E. Boundedness and Unboundedness in Verb Semantics: a Comparative Study of English and Uzbek. Pioneer: Journal of Advanced Research and Scientific Progress 2026, 5(3), 457-463

Received:10thMar2026
Revised:21thApr2026
Accepted:08thMay2026
Published: 20thJune 2026

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Smith's theory of aspect distinguishes between situation aspect and viewpoint aspect. Situation aspect concerns the type of event itself, while viewpoint aspect concerns how the speaker presents the event grammatically. This distinction is useful for comparing English and Uzbek because the two languages may express similar meanings through different forms.

3. Results

Table 1. Main aspectual classes and boundedness

Aspectual class	Semantic feature	Bounded or unbounded	English example	Uzbek example
State	Static condition	Usually unbounded	*know, love, believe*	*bilmoq, sevmoq, ishonmoq*
Activity	Dynamic process without endpoint	Unbounded	*run, swim, read*	*yugurmoq, suzmoq, o'qimoq*
Accomplishment	Process with endpoint	Bounded	*write a letter*	*xat yozib tugatmoq*
Achievement	Instantaneous change/result	Bounded	*find, arrive, break*	*topmoq, yetib kelmoq, sindirmoq*

Vendler's model is important because it shows that boundedness is not only a grammatical matter. It is also connected with the semantic structure of the verb phrase.

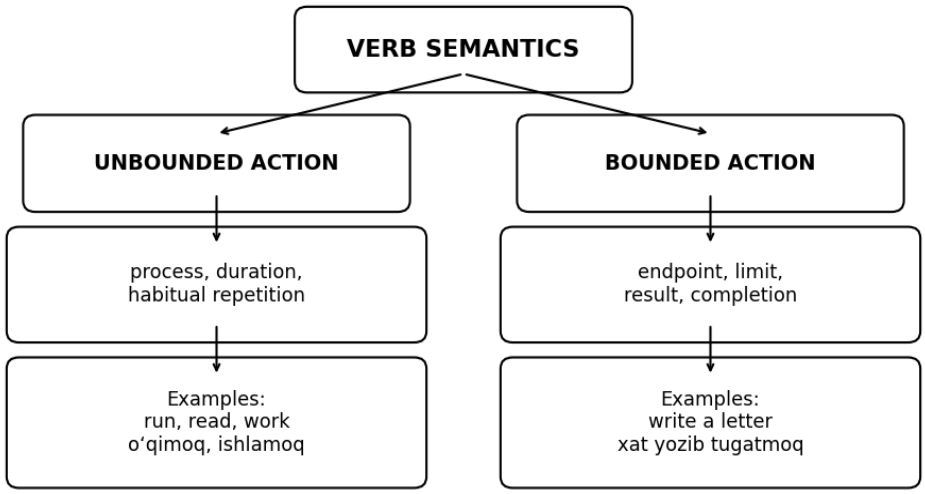

Figure 1. General model of boundedness in verb semantics

This model shows that boundedness depends not only on the verb itself but also on the whole construction. Humanity invented grammar and then had the nerve to make it context-dependent.

In English, boundedness is commonly created through the interaction of four elements:

lexical meaning of the verb;
type of object;
grammatical aspect;
contextual modifiers.

For example:

He read books. The action is unbounded because the object is plural and indefinite.

He read the book. The action is more bounded because the definite object suggests a complete event.

He was reading the book. The progressive form presents the action as ongoing and therefore weakens the idea of completion.

He has read the book. The perfect form emphasizes result and completion.

English aspectual interpretation is therefore strongly connected with the structure of the whole verb phrase. Modern aspect theory also emphasizes that lexical aspect and grammatical aspect work together rather than separately.

Table 2. English markers of boundedness and unboundedness

Construction	Example	Semantic interpretation
Verb + indefinite plural object	*She wrote letters.*	Unbounded or repeated action
Verb + definite singular object	*She wrote the letter.*	Bounded completed action
Verb + measure phrase	*He ran five kilometers.*	Bounded by distance
Verb + duration phrase	*He ran for an hour.*	Unbounded process
Progressive aspect	*She was writing a letter.*	Ongoing, internally viewed action
Perfect aspect	*She has written a letter.*	Completed action with result

In Uzbek, boundedness can be expressed through lexical meaning, case marking, adverbial modifiers, and especially auxiliary verb constructions. Uzbek often uses compound verbal forms to specify the result, limit, suddenness, or completion of an action.

For example:

- U kitob o‘qidi. “He/she read a book.” Depending on context, this may be bounded or neutral.

- U kitobni o‘qib chiqdi. “He/she read the book through.” The construction -ib chiq- gives the meaning of completing the action fully.

- U xatni yozib bitirdi. “He/she finished writing the letter.” The construction -ib bitir- clearly marks the terminal point of the action.

- U choyni ichib bo‘ldi. “He/she finished drinking tea.” The construction -ib bo‘l- expresses full completion and relevance of the completed action.

The Uzbek tense-aspect-modality description states that verb-IB BIT- / BITIR- expresses completion at the terminal point of an action, while verb-IB BO‘L- is a basic form for full completion. The same source describes verb-IB QO‘Y- as expressing an action that causes a change of state and has lasting relevance.

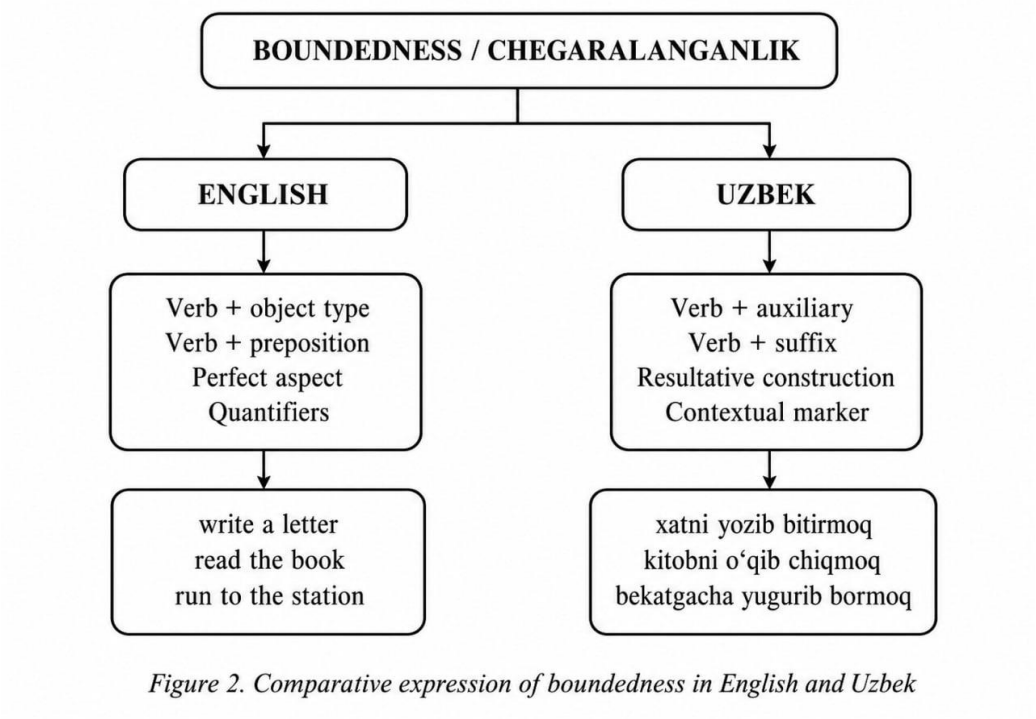

Figure 2. Comparative expression of boundedness in English and Uzbek

This diagram shows that English depends more on syntactic composition and object structure, while Uzbek often uses auxiliary constructions and agglutinative forms. Uzbek morphology carries a heavy workload here, because apparently one verb was not suffering enough.

The comparison of English and Uzbek shows several important similarities and differences.

First, both languages distinguish between actions with and without endpoints. In English, this distinction is strongly influenced by the noun phrase following the verb. For instance, eat apples is unbounded, while eat an apple is bounded. In Uzbek, the same distinction may be expressed lexically or through additional aspectual constructions:

- olma yemoq - to eat apples, general/unbounded;
- olmani yeb bo‘lmoq - to finish eating the apple, bounded;
- olmani yeb qo‘ymoq - to eat the apple with resultative meaning.

Second, English progressive forms often present the action as unbounded or incomplete:

- She was writing a letter.

In Uzbek, the progressive meaning is usually expressed through forms such as -yap-, -moqda, or contextual constructions:

- U xat yozyapti.
- U xat yozmoqda.

These forms focus on the process rather than the endpoint.

Third, Uzbek has a richer set of auxiliary constructions for expressing different shades of boundedness. For example, -ib chiq- emphasizes full coverage of the action, -ib bitir- emphasizes finishing, and -ib qo‘y- emphasizes result and lasting effect. The Uzbek TAM source specifically describes -ib chiq- as expressing completion in full extent and -ib qo‘y- as expressing an exhaustively completed change of state.

Table 3. English and Uzbek comparison

Semantic meaning	English expression	Uzbek expression
Ongoing action	*He is reading.*	*U o‘qiyapti.*
Completed action	*He has read the book.*	*U kitobni o‘qib chiqdi.*
Finished action	*He finished writing.*	*U yozib bo‘ldi / yozib bitirdi.*
Sudden completed action	*He suddenly opened the door.*	*U eshikni ochib yubordi.*
Repeated/habitual action	*He reads every day.*	*U har kuni o‘qiydi.*
Almost occurred action	*He nearly fell.*	*U yiqila yozdi.*

Boundedness is not always fixed inside the verb. Context may change the interpretation of the same verb.

Example 1: English

- He read. Unbounded or general.
- He read the article. More bounded.
- He read the article in ten minutes. Clearly bounded because the time phrase marks completion.

Example 2: Uzbek

- U o‘qidi. General or neutral.
- U maqolani o‘qidi. More specific, potentially bounded.
- U maqolani o‘qib chiqdi. Clearly bounded because -ib chiq- marks complete performance.

Thus, the same lexical verb may become bounded or unbounded depending on object definiteness, quantity, aspectual markers, and discourse context. This supports the idea that aspectual meaning is not only lexical but also compositional and contextual. Smith’s two-component approach to aspect is especially useful here because it explains how event type and grammatical viewpoint interact.

4. Discussion

The analysis shows that English and Uzbek use different linguistic tools to express similar semantic distinctions. English relies heavily on syntactic structure, object quantization, and grammatical aspect. Uzbek relies more visibly on suffixes, auxiliary verbs, and compound verbal constructions.

A key difference is that English may express boundedness through object structure:

- drink water - unbounded;
- drink a glass of water - bounded.

Uzbek may express the same idea through object definiteness and auxiliary completion:

- suv ichmoq - to drink water;
- bir stakan suvni ichib bo‘lmoq - to finish drinking a glass of water.

This means that Uzbek can make boundedness more explicit through verbal morphology and auxiliary constructions, while English often leaves the interpretation to the combination of grammar and context.

5. Conclusion

Boundedness and unboundedness are important semantic categories in both English and Uzbek verb systems. In English, boundedness is mainly expressed through lexical aspect, object type, prepositional phrases, perfect forms, and contextual modifiers. In Uzbek, boundedness is often expressed through compound verb constructions such as -ib bo‘l-, -ib bitir-, -ib chiq-, -ib yubor-, and -ib qo‘y-. Unboundedness in both languages is associated with process, duration, repetition, habit, and lack of endpoint.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that English and Uzbek differ not in the presence of boundedness as a semantic category, but in the grammatical and contextual mechanisms used to express it. English tends to rely on syntactic composition, while Uzbek uses auxiliary verb constructions and agglutinative morphology more actively. Therefore, the study of boundedness and unboundedness in verb semantics helps reveal deeper differences between the aspectual systems of English and Uzbek.

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