

Functional Equivalence in Predicate Structures: A Comparison of Uzbek Auxiliary Verbs and English Light Verbs

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Abstract. This article investigates the functional correspondence between two distinct grammatical features: Uzbek auxiliary verbs (*ko'makchi fe'llar*) and English light verbs (LVs). While these features originate in separate language families (Turkic and Germanic), they demonstrate striking parallels in their structural role, which is the grammaticalization of semantic content related to aspect, duration, and change of state. By examining common English LVs such as *go*, *keep*, and *turn* against their functional counterparts in Uzbek AV structures, this analysis reveals a shared cognitive strategy for creating complex, nuanced predicates without relying on fully lexical verbs.

Key words: auxiliary verbs, light verbs, grammaticalization, aspect, Turkic, English, complex predicates.

Introduction

In linguistic analysis, **complex predicates**—verb constructions where multiple elements combine to express a single, unified action or state—are crucial for understanding how languages convey subtlety. Both Uzbek and English employ specialized verbs that have undergone **semantic bleaching** (Hsiao, 2023) (or *lightening*) of their original meaning to fulfill this structural function. In English, these are typically known as **light verbs** (LVs) (Kettnerová & Lopatková, 2018), such as *take* a nap or *give* a try. In Uzbek, a morphologically agglutinative language, these are strictly defined as **auxiliary verbs** (AVs) or *ko'makchi fe'llar* (Hojiev, 1966).

The purpose of this article is to move beyond terminological differences and establish a **functional equivalence** between the two systems, focusing on how both AVs and LVs modify the main predicate to express concepts related to duration, continuity, and result.

The Role of Auxiliary Verbs in Uzbek

Uzbek auxiliary verbs operate by attaching to the non-finite form of the main verb, specifically the **converbial form** (often ending in *-ib* or *-a*). The AV then carries the inflection (tense, person, and number), while the main verb contributes the core semantic content (Menges, 1995). The primary function of these AVs is to convey **aspect** (how the action unfolds in time) or **modality** (the speaker's attitude toward the action).

For instance, the AV **qo'ymoq** (literally "to put/place") transforms the meaning of the main verb:

- *Yozmoq* (to write) → *yozib qo'ymoq* (to write down **for good** or **to put aside**). The AV adds a sense of completed action for future reference or permanence.

The Function of Light Verbs in English

English light verbs, by contrast, often combine with nouns or adjectives. Unlike their Uzbek counterparts, they frequently precede the main semantic element. Crucially, in these constructions,

the LV loses its independent meaning and merely serves as a vehicle for tense and subject agreement, allowing the noun or adjective to carry the primary lexical load.

Common English LVs include:

- **Keep:** Used to express duration (*keep talking*).
- **Go/Turn/Grow:** Used to express inchoative or resultative aspect (*go bad, turn pale, grow weary*).
- **Take/Give/Have:** Used with nouns to form verbal phrases (*take a shower, give a try, have a look*).

Functional Correspondence in Aspect and Duration

The most direct correspondence exists in how both languages grammaticalize (Heine & Narrog, 2023) concepts of **continuation** and **duration**.

Continuation and Iteration (*Keep* vs. *Bermoq*)

In English, the LV **keep** and **go on** are the prototypical expression of continuous or iterative action: *She kept running*. This function is paralleled in Uzbek by AVs such as **bermoq** (literally "to give"), **bormoq** (literally "to go") and **turmoq** (literally "to stand").

English LV Structure	Uzbek AV Structure	Functional Meaning
He kept working.	U ishlay berdi .	Continuous/Durational action (Hojiev, 1966).
The brain goes on developing and changing.	Bosh miya rivojlanib, o'zgarib bormoqda .	Continuous/Durational action.
The climate always keeps changing.	Iqlim doimo o'zgarib turadi .	Persistent/Habitual action.

In all cases, a verb of physical motion or stasis (*keep/go/bermoq/turmoq/bormoq*) is repurposed to describe the **temporal flow** of the action expressed by the main verb stem.

Functional Correspondence in Change of State (Resultative Aspect)

Another key area of equivalence is the expression of **resultative aspect**—a change from one state to another, often occurring suddenly or intensely. English LVs like **go**, **grow** and **turn** frequently express this:

- The leaves **turned** red.
- He **went** silent.
- She **grew** tired.

In Uzbek, the AVs **ketmoq** (literally "to leave/go away") and **qolmoq** (literally "to stay") are commonly used to express an abrupt, rapid, or uncontrolled change of state, mirroring the function of *go, grow* or *turn* when they mark a sudden, negative, or intense shift.

English LV Example	Uzbek AV Example	Functional Meaning
The food went bad.	Ovqat achib ketdi .	Sudden or completed negative change of state.
He turned pale.	Uning rangi oqarib ketdi .	Abrupt change in appearance or state.
She grew old.	U qarib qoldi .	Noticable change in appearance.

The verbs of motion (**ketmoq, qolmoq**) lose their spatial meaning and instead conveys **temporal velocity** or **completeness** in the change of state. Similarly, English *go* loses its directional meaning to mark an inchoative process.

Conclusion

The comparison between Uzbek auxiliary verbs and English light verbs reveals that both languages utilize a similar grammatical strategy—**grammaticalization through semantic bleaching**—to

augment the main predicate. Whether it is the Uzbek AV **bormoq** marking duration or the English LV **grow** marking an inchoative change of state, the ultimate function is identical: to convey subtle aspects of time and manner that a simple, lexical verb cannot express alone. This functional equivalence underscores the deep cognitive similarities in how human languages structure complex thoughts and actions, despite their vastly different historical and morphological origins.

References

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