

Does  $V-(i)b\ bo'$ - express  
(im)possibility in Uzbek?

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Seoul International Altaistic Conference 2023 @ Seoul National University, Korea  
2023/7/21 (Fri.) 11:00~11:30

# 1. Introduction

**V-(i)b boʻl-** [V(erb Stem)-CVB.SEQ be-] in Uzbek (Turkic, the southeastern group)

■ The completion of an action by V-(i)b

(1) *Men bu hikoya-ni yoz-ib boʻl-di-m.*

1SG this story-ACC write-CVB.SEQ be-PAST-1SG

‘I finished writing this story.’ (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

■ The possibility of the action by V-(i)b

(2) *Hamma ilim-ni faqat savod orqali=gina oʻrgan-ib boʻl-a=di.*

all science-ACC only literary through=only learn-CVB.SEQ be-NPST=3

‘One can learn all the sciences only by being a literate person.’ (Ibrahim 1995: 207)

**Problem:** Previous studies have not fully explained the conditions under which different meanings appear in V-(i)b boʻl-.

**Our aim:** clarifying these conditions through a corpus examination and interviews with native speakers.

**Conclusion:** V-(i)b boʻl- expresses the (im)possibility if it is **formally marked**;

V-(i)b boʻl- refers to the completion of an action if it is **formally unmarked**.

# Outline

1. Introduction
2. Previous research and problems
3. Analysis
4. Conclusion
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## 2. Previous research and problems

We can see two patterns of the descriptions of *V-(i)b bo'l-* in prior studies.

### The first pattern:

- The positive form, *V-(i)b bo'l-*, can express completion or possibility

(1) *Men bu hikoya-ni yoz-ib bo'l-di-m.*

1SG this story-ACC write-CVB.SEQ be-PAST-1SG

'I finished writing this story.' (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

(2) *Hamma ilim-ni faqat savod orqali=gina o'rgan-ib bo'l-a=di.*

all science-ACC only literary through=only learn-CVB.SEQ be-NPST=3

'One can learn all the sciences only by being a literate person.' (Ibrahim 1995: 207)

- The negative form, *V-(i)b bo'l-ma-*, can express impossibility (Kononov 1960: 265, Ibrahim 1995: 207, Rentzsch 2011, 2015).

(3) *Nasib-dan qoch-ib bo'l-ma-y=di.*

destiny-ABL flee-CVB.SEQ be-NEG-NPST=3

'One cannot escape one's destiny.' (Rentzsch 2015: 94)

*V-(i)b bo'l-* is used only impersonally in the case where *V-(i)b bo'l-* expresses possibility (Rentzsch 2011: 86).

That is, the third person marker always attaches to *V-(i)b bo'l-*.

## 2. Previous research and problems

We can see two patterns of the descriptions of *V-(i)b bo'l-* in prior studies.

### The second pattern:

- The positive form *V-(i)b bo'l-* expresses only the completion of an action

(1) *Men bu hikoya-ni yoz-ib bo'l-di-m.*  
1SG this story-ACC write-CVB.SEQ be-PAST-1SG  
'I finished writing this story.' (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

- the negative form (4), or a rhetorical question (5) using *V-(i)b bo'l-*, denotes difficulty or impossibility (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

(4) *Buloq-qa och-il-gan yo'l-dan ikki chelak-ni ol-ib o't-ib bo'l-mas=di.*  
spring-DAT open-PASS-PTCP.PAST road-ABL two bucket-ACC take-CVB.SEQ pass-CVB.SEQ be-PTCP.FUT=PAST  
'In the path that led to the spring it was difficult to carry two buckets.' (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

(5) *Hozir-gi zamon-da har kim-ga ishon-ib bo'l-a=di=mi?*  
now-ADJLZ time-LOC every who-DAT believe-CVB.SEQ be-NPST=3=Q  
'In our times is it possible to believe anyone? (It is not).' (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

### The first pattern:

- The positive form, *V-(i)b bo'l-*, can express completion or possibility
- The negative form, *V-(i)b bo'l-ma-*, can express impossibility (Kononov 1960: 265, Ibrahim 1995: 207, Rentzsch 2011, 2015).

### The second pattern:

- The positive form *V-(i)b bo'l-* expresses only the completion of an action
- The negative form (4), or a rhetorical question (5) using *V-(i)b bo'l-*, denotes difficulty or impossibility (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

Which of these patterns is correct?

If either is correct, neither can be (2) or (5).

The first pattern cannot explain (5) even if it is correct

- (5) *Hozir-gi zamon-da har kim-ga*  
now-ADJLZ time-LOC every who-DAT  
***ishon-ib bo'l-a=di=mi?***  
***belive-CVB.SEQ be-NPST=3=Q***  
'In our times is it possible to believe anyone?  
(It is not).' (Bodrogligeti 2003: 725)

The second pattern cannot explain (2) even if it is correct.

- (2) *Hamma ilim-ni faqat savod orqali=gina*  
all science-ACC only literary through=only  
***o'rgan-ib bo'l-a=di.***  
***learn-CVB.SEQ be-NPST=3***  
'One can learn all the sciences only by being a literate  
person.' (Ibrahim 1995: 207)

This lack of explanation is caused by the absence of a statement of the condition when *V-(i)b bo'l-* expresses possibility in the first pattern, and the description that the negative form *V-(i)b bo'l-* conveys impossibility in the second pattern.

# 3. Analysis

3.1 Corpus examination

3.2 Interview examination

# 3.1 Corpus examination

We used corpus data from “Turkic web—Uzbek” in Sketch Engine.

- This corpus has 18,720,334 words from websites whose URLs include the domain .uz.
- The total number of examples, including *V-(i)b boʻl-*, was 4,816.
- In this study, we analyzed 200 examples; 53 are in the positive form, and 147 are in the negative form.

Section 3.1.1 covers the data on the positive form, while Section 3.1.2 reviews the data on the negative form. We investigated all examples through four questions:

- (1) Is there a lack of balance of verb stem in *V-(i)b*? (lexicon)
- (2) What are morphological features? (morphology)
- (3) What kind of sentences are used? (sentence type)
- (4) What meaning is expressed in each form? (semantics)



## 3.1.1 The positive form

53 examples out of the original 200 contained the positive form.

As for the first question, **‘Is there a lack of balance of the verb stem in *V-(i)b?*’**,

- tokens appearing more than once in Table 1 convey a concrete action, except for *tasavvur qil-* ‘imagine’.
- tokens appearing only once denote a concrete or abstract action.

Grey lines denote that sentences including *V-(i)b bo‘l-* are retorical questions; that is, these examples communicate the idea of impossibility. Verb stems in these examples refer to

- utterance (*ayt-* ‘say’, *de-* ‘say’)
- abstract action (*tasavvur qil-* ‘imagine’, *bil-* ‘know’, *ishon-* ‘believe’, *oqla-* ‘prove innocence’, *esla-* ‘remember’ [before the auxiliary verb *qol-*], *tenglash-* ‘become equal’)

Table1: Verb stems of the positive form

Verb stem	Meaning	Token
<i>o'ta-</i>	carry out	7
<i>yarat-</i>	create, make	3
<i>o'rvat-</i>	put in place, set up	2
<i>qabul qil-</i>	receive	2
<i>shakllan-</i>	take form, take shape	2
<i>tasavvur qil-</i>	imagine	2
<i>to'la-</i>	pay	2
<i>yoz-</i>	write	2
<i>almashtir-</i>	trade, change.	1
<i>ayt-</i>	say	1
<i>bil-</i>	know	1
<i>de-</i>	say	1
<i>egalla-</i>	take over, master	1
<i>etil-</i>	be said	1
<i>gulla-</i>	flower	1
<i>ishon-</i>	believe	1
<i>izla-</i>	search for	1
<i>ket-</i>	leave	1
<i>kechik-</i>	be late	1
<i>ko'chir-</i>	copy	1

<i>ta'mirla-</i>	repair	1
<i>nura-</i>	become worn out	1
<i>o'lcha-</i>	measure	1
<i>o'qi-</i>	read	1
<i>o't-</i>	pass	1
<i>o'zlashtir-</i>	master	1
<i>oqla-</i>	prove innocence	1
<i>qamra-</i>	surround	1
<i>qanday qil-</i>	how do	1
<i>qol-</i>	remain	1
<i>salomlash-</i>	greet one another	1
<i>sina-</i>	try, test	1
<i>so'k-</i>	curse	1
<i>sot-</i>	sell	1
<i>tayyorla-</i>	prepare	1
<i>tenglash-</i>	become equal	1
<i>tush-</i>	fall	1
<i>yasa-</i>	make	1
<i>yetkaz-</i>	convey	1
Total		53

# 3.1.1 The positive form

As for the second question,

**‘What are the morphological features?’**

- Each inflectional suffix and personal marker are attested to (see tables 2 and 3).
- However, all rhetorical questions (9 examples out of 25 finite ones) include the third person marker.

Table3: Personal markers attached to *bo’l-* in the positive form

	1st person	2nd person	3rd person	No personal marker	Token
Finite	3	3	25	-	31
Non-finite	2	3	13	4	22
Total					53

Table2: Inflectional suffixes attached to *bo’l-* in the positive form

Syntactic feature	Suffix	Gloss	Token
Finite	<i>-di</i>	PAST	12
	<i>-a</i>	NPST	7
	<i>-gan</i>	PRF	7
	<i>-ar</i>	FUT	2
	<i>-sa</i>	COND	2
	<i>-sin</i>	IMP.3	1
Non-finite	<i>-gan</i>	PTCP.PAST	18
	<i>-digan</i>	PTCP.NPAST	1
	<i>-gach</i>	CVB.SEQ	2
	<i>-ib</i>	CVB.SEQ	1
Total			53

## 3.1.1 The positive form

53 examples out of the original 200 contained the positive form.

As for the third question, **‘What kinds of sentences are used?’**, all types can be used (see Table 4). That said, all interrogatives express a rhetorical question.

Table4: Types of sentences of the positive form including *V-(i)b bo‘l-*

Type	Token
Declarative	21
Imperative	1
Interrogative	9
	31

## 3.1.1 The positive form

53 examples out of the original 200 contained the positive form.

In the fourth points of view **‘What meaning is expressed in each form?’**,

- The declarative and imperative indicate the completion of an action.
- The interrogative refers to impossibility (6).

(6) *Italyan oshxona-si-ni ... pomidor-siz, tasavvur qil-ib bo‘l-a=di=mi?*  
Italian restaurant-3.POSS-ACC tomato-PRIV image do-CVB.SEQ be-NPST=3=Q  
‘Is it possible to imagine an Italian restaurant without tomatoes?’ (infoteka.uz)

## 3.1.2 The negative form

Regarding the negative form, 147 out of the original 200 examples had this form.

We now examine the question, **'Is there a lack of balance of the verb stem in *V-(i)b?*'**

We can attest to some lack of balance.

- The verb *de-* 'say' accounts for about 10%,
- The verb *tasavvur qil-/et-* 'imagine' accounts for about 15% of tokens.

Table5: Verb stems of the negative form

Verb stem	Meaning	Token
<i>de-</i>	say	14
<i>tasavvur qil-</i>	image	11
<i>tasavvur et-</i>	image	10
<i>erish-</i>	reach	7
<i>top-</i>	find	7
<i>tani-</i>	know	6
<i>qiyosla-</i>	compare	4
<i>yum-</i>	close (eye)	4
<i>bahola-</i>	affix a price to	3
<i>foydalan-</i>	use	3
<i>hal qil-</i>	solve	3
<i>kechiktir-</i>	delay	3
<i>qo'y-</i>	put	3
<i>solishtir-</i>	compare	3
<i>ayt-</i>	say	2
<i>bajar-</i>	carry out	2
<i>boshqar-</i>	manage	2
<i>ishon-</i>	believe	2
<i>kechir-</i>	forgive	2
<i>kifoyalan-</i>	be sufficient	2
<i>ko'r-</i>	see	2

<i>qabul qil-</i>	receive	2
<i>qaytar-</i>	return	2
<i>qil-</i>	do	2
<i>to'ldir-</i>	fill out	2
<i>tut-</i>	hold	2
<i>yech-</i>	take off, solve	2
<i>almashtir-</i>	trade	1
<i>angla-</i>	understand	1
<i>aniqla-</i>	ascertain	1
<i>baqir-</i>	shout	1
<i>ber-</i>	give	1
<i>chida-</i>	endure	1
<i>chiqar-</i>	take out	1
<i>gapir-</i>	talk	1
<i>havas qil-</i>	desire	1
<i>ilg'a-</i>	see (only in neg.)	1
<i>jilovla-</i>	bridle	1
<i>ma'qulla-</i>	accept	1
<i>o'lcha-</i>	measure	1
<i>o'ngla-</i>	set straight	1
<i>o'rnat-</i>	place	1
<i>o't-</i>	pass	1
<i>o'zgartir-</i>	change	1

<i>ol-</i>	take	1
<i>oqla-</i>	whitewash	1
<i>qara-</i>	look	1
<i>qol-</i>	remain	1
<i>quri-</i>	dry	1
<i>qutul-</i>	be free	1
<i>rish-</i>	?	1
<i>sig'dir-</i>	fit	1
<i>siljit-</i>	move	1
<i>so'ra-</i>	ask	1
<i>ta'rifla-</i>	describe	1
<i>taqiqla-</i>	prohibit	1
<i>taqqosla-</i>	describe	1
<i>tashla-</i>	throw	1
<i>tenglashtir-</i>	make equal	1
<i>toqat qil-</i>	endure	1
<i>tur-</i>	stand	1
<i>ulan-</i>	be connected	1
<i>unut-</i>	forget	1
<i>uyg'on-</i>	get up	1
<i>yoz-</i>	write	1
<i>yuv-</i>	wash	1
Total		147

## 3.1.2 The negative form

Regarding the negative form, 147 out of the original 200 examples had this form.

In terms of the second question, **‘What are the morphological features?’**, there is no example with a first- or second-person marker (see tables 6 and 7).

Table6: Inflectional suffixes attached to *boʻl-* in the negative form

Syntactic feature	Suffix	Gloss	Token
Finite	<i>-ma-y</i>	NEG.NPAST	92
	<i>-mas</i>	FUT.NEG	3
	<i>-mas=di</i>	PTCP.FUT=PAST	2
	<i>na ... V-a</i>	NEG ... NPST	1
Non-finite	<i>-ma-ydigʻan</i>	NEG-PTCP.NPST	31
	<i>-maslik</i>	VN.NEG	10
	<i>-mas</i>	PTCP.FUT	8
Total			147

Table7: Personal markers attached to *boʻl-* in the negative form

	1st person	2nd person	3rd person	No personal marker	Token
Finite	0	0	98	-	98
Non-finite	0	0	16	33	49
Total					147



## 3.1.2 The negative form

Regarding the negative form, 147 out of the original 200 examples had this form.

Regarding the third question, '**What kinds of sentences are used?**', only the declaratives are attested to (see Table 8).

Table8: Types of sentences of the negative form including *V-(i)b bo'l-*

Type	Token
Declarative	98
Imperative	0
Interrogative	0
	98

## 3.1.2 The negative form

Regarding the negative form, 147 out of the original 200 examples had this form.

As for fourth question, ‘**What meaning is expressed in each form?**’, the negative form expresses only impossibility, as in (7).

- (7) *Tana-miz-da*      *yo‘qotish-lar o‘rn-i-ni*      ***to‘ldir-ib bo‘l-ma-y=di,...***  
body-1SG.POSS-LOC loss-PL      place-3.POSS-ACC fill-CVB.SEQ be-NEG-NPST=3  
‘Losses in our body cannot be filled with the other.’ (lit. Losses in our body cannot be filled with those places) (abduhamid.uz)

## 3.2 Interview examination

There is no example such as (2), which includes ***faqat ...gina*** ‘only’ + *V-(i)b bo‘l-* in the instances we analyzed.

(2) *Hamma ilim-ni*      *faqat savod orqali=gina*      ***o‘rgan-ib***      ***bo‘l-a=di.***  
all      science-ACC    only    literary    through=only    learn-CVB.SEQ    be-NPST=3

‘One can learn all the sciences only by being a literate person.’ (Ibrahim 1995: 207)

We asked two native speakers (a male and female speaker born in the city of Tashkent in 1990 and 1994, respectively) whether they would permit the use of sentences without *faqat ...gina* ‘only’ from (2) as in (8). They regarded (8) as odd.

(8) ?? *Hamma ilim-ni*      *savod orqali*      ***o‘rgan-ib***      ***bo‘l-a=di.***  
all      science-ACC    literary    through    learn-CVB.SEQ    be-NPST=3

# 4. Conclusion

If the positive form of *V-(i)b bo'l-* expresses the completion of an action, it has no special features.

Table 9: Results from the corpus analysis

	Positive form except for rhetorical questions	in rhetorical questions	Negative form
1. Is there a lack of balance of the verb stem in <i>V-(i)b</i> ? (lexicon)	Number of variable verb stems	Yes. Verb stems referring to an utterance or abstract action	Yes. <i>de-</i> 'say' and <i>tasavvur qil-/et-</i> 'image'
2. What are the morphological features? (morphology)	Variable forms	Only the third person marker	Only the third person marker
3. What kinds of sentences are used? (sentence type)	Variable sentence types	Only questions	Non-finites or declaratives
4. What meaning is expressed in each form? (semantics)	Completion	Impossibility	Impossibility

# 4. Conclusion

If the positive form of *V-(i)b bo'!* expresses the completion of an action, it has no special features.

Table 9: Results from the corpus analysis

	Positive form		Negative form
	except for rhetorical questions	in r	
1. Is there a lack of balance of the verb stem in <i>V-(i)b</i> ? (lexicon)	Number of variable verb stems	Yes. Ver	Tokens express a concrete or abstract action, as outlined in Table 1.
2. What are the morphological features? (morphology)	Variable forms	Only marker	Variable forms are attested to as displayed in tables 2 and 3.
3. What kinds of sentences are used? (sentence type)	Variable sentence types	Only	Variable sentence types—except for rhetorical questions—are attested to in Table 4.
4. What meaning is expressed in each form? (semantics)	Completion	Imp	

# 4. Conclusion

If the positive form of *V-(i)b bo'l-* in rhetorical question or the negative form of *V-(i)b bo'l-* conveys impossibility, then *V-(i)b bo'l-* has some special features.

Table 9: Results from the corpus analysis

	Positive form		Negative form
	except for rhetorical questions	in rhetorical questions	
1. Is there a lack of balance of the verb stem in <i>V-(i)b</i> ? (lexicon)	Number of variable verb stems	Yes. Verb stems referring to an utterance or abstract action	Yes. <i>de-</i> 'say' and <i>tasavvur qil-/et-</i> 'image'
2. What are the morphological features? (morphology)	Variable forms	Only the third person marker	Only the third person marker
3. What kinds of sentences are used? (sentence type)	Variable sentence types	Only questions	Non-finites or declaratives
4. What meaning is expressed in each form? (semantics)	Completion	Impossibility	Impossibility



# 4. Conclusion

If the positive form of *V-(i)b bo'l-* in rhetorical question or the negative form of *V-(i)b bo'l-* conveys impossibility, then *V-(i)b bo'l-* has some special features.

Table 9: Results from the corpus analysis

	Positive form		Negative form
1.	There is some lack of balance of the verb stem in <i>V-(i)b</i> . Verb stems referring to an <u>utterance</u> or <u>abstract</u> action tend to be attested to, as presented in tables 1 and 5.	ns in rhetorical questions	Yes. Verb stems referring to an utterance or abstract action <i>de-</i> 'say' and <i>tasavvur qil-/et-</i> 'image'
2.	Only a <u>third person number</u> or no marker is attested to, as seen in Table 7.		Only the third person marker
3.	<u>Questions</u> in the <u>positive form</u> , or <u>declarative sentences</u> and <u>non-finite forms</u> in the <u>negative form</u> , are attested to as depicted in tables 4 and 8.		Only questions Non-finites or declaratives
4.		Impossibility	Impossibility

## 4. Conclusion

In addition, we clarified that the positive form of *V-(i)b bo'l-* with *faqat ...gina* 'only' express limited possibility.

Table 9: Results from the corpus analysis

	Positive form		Negative form
	except for rhetorical questions	in rhetorical questions	
1. Is there a lack of balance of the verb stem in <i>V-(i)b</i> ? (lexicon)	Number of variable verb stems	Yes. Verb stems referring to an utterance or abstract action	Yes. <i>de-</i> 'say' and <i>tasavvur qil-/et-</i> 'image'
2. What are the morphological features? (morphology)	Variable forms	Only the third person marker	Only the third person marker
3. What kinds of sentences are used? (sentence type)	Variable sentence types	Only questions	Non-finites or declaratives
4. What meaning is expressed in each form? (semantics)	Completion	Impossibility	Impossibility



# 4. Conclusion

We concluded that

- *V-(i)b bo'l-* conveys **(im)possibility** if it is formally marked.
- *V-(i)b bo'l-* denotes **the completion of an action** if it is formally unmarked.

In other words,

- if *V-(i)b bo'l-* expresses **(im)possibility**, positive forms in a rhetorical question or with *faqat ...gina* 'only' and negative forms are attested to.  
In addition, these cases have the third-person marker or no personal marker.
- If *V-(i)b bo'l-* conveys **the completion of an action**, no formal feature is attested to.

# 5. Future research

From a **diachronic** perspective,

Rentzsch (2015: 94) pointed out that *V-(i)b bo'l-* is only attested in a negative form in the 16th-century memoir *Baburnama*, which was written in Chaghatay, a literary language of Central Asia.

- Uzbek may have newer features than Chaghatay based on the conclusions of this study. The positive form of *V-(i)b bo'l-* with *faqat ... =gina*, which means 'only', or in a rhetorical question, expresses (im)possibility.
- However, we must examine the details of the system for possibility in Uzbek and Chaghatay to demonstrate the suggestion made above.

# 5. Future research

From an **areal** viewpoint,

Hidaka (2023) showed that *V-(I)p bol-* in Turkmen and Uzbek can express (im)possibility compared to other Turkic Languages of Central Asia, such as Turkmen (the southwestern group), Kazakh, Kyrgyz (the northwestern group), Uzbek, and modern Uyghur (the southeastern group).

- *V-(I)p bol-* in Uzbek can express only participant-external possibility. However, in Turkmen, one can convey not only participant-external possibility, but also deontic possibility.
- Hence, we need to scrutinize the details of the system regarding possibility in Uzbek and Turkmen to determine how *V-(I)p bol-* has been expanded.

# Possibility expressions in Uzbek

- ***V-(i)b ol-*** [V-CVB.SEQ take]  
participant-internal/external possibility
- ***V-(i)sh mumkin*** [V-VN possible]  
participant-external possibility, deontic possibility
- ***V-sa bo'l-*** [V-COND be-]  
deontic possibility