

THE VERB: ITS STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC TYPES, AND THE THEORY OF ITS GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES (NUMBER, PERSON, MOOD)

Teshaboyeva Nafisa Zubaydulla qizi

**Jizzakh branch of the National University of Uzbekistan
named after Mirzo Ulugbek**

**The Faculty of Psychology, the department of Foreign languages
Philology and foreign languages**

Scientific advisor: nafisateshaboyeva@gmail.com

Raximova Feruzabonu Umarali qizi

Student of group: @feruzabonuraximova14@gmail.com

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Abstract: This article presents an expanded and detailed analysis of the verb in modern English. It explores its structural and semantic classifications, emphasizing their role in understanding language organization. Special attention is given to the theoretical interpretation of grammatical categories—number, person, and mood—highlighting how these categories shape the morphosyntactic behavior of verbs. The study draws on classical and contemporary linguistic theories, offering a deeper insight into the nature and functioning of the English verb.

Key words: verb, structural classification, semantic classification, grammatical categories, number, person, mood, verb morphology, syntax.

The verb is universally acknowledged as one of the central elements of grammatical structure. In virtually all languages, verbs serve as the nucleus of predication, functioning as the core of the sentence around which other elements are organized. The importance of verbs lies not only in their ability to convey actions, states, and events, but also in their rich grammatical system, which encodes temporal, modal, aspectual, and agreement relationships. English verbs exhibit complex behavior, reflecting historical changes from Old English to Modern English. In Old English, verbs were richly inflected, while Modern English relies more heavily on periphrastic constructions. Despite this reduction in morphology, the verb continues to maintain essential categories—particularly number, person, and mood—which remain central to syntactic agreement and speaker intention. This article provides an in-depth exploration of the structural and semantic types of verbs as well as the theoretical foundations of the grammatical categories of number, person, and mood.

Structural Types of Verbs. Structural classification focuses on the internal structure and morphological composition of verbs. A detailed examination reveals several major types.

Simple Verbs. Simple verbs consist of a single root form with no affixation. Examples: go, see, write, eat. They represent the most basic and historically original forms of verbs. Many simple verbs belong to the class of strong (irregular) verbs, showing vowel alternation (e.g., sing–sang–sung, write–wrote–written). These verbs form the core vocabulary of English and are among the most frequently used words. The simplicity of form does not imply semantic simplicity; simple verbs often have multiple meanings depending on context (take, set, make have numerous senses).

Derivative Verbs. Derivative verbs are formed through prefixation or suffixation. Prefix Derivatives: Common prefixes: re-, un-, dis-, over-, under-, mis-. Examples: rewrite, uncover, disconnect, overestimate. Suffix Derivatives: Productive suffixes: -ize, -ify, -en, -ate. Examples: modernize, classify, strengthen, activate. They are highly productive and allow the expansion of the verb lexicon. Derivational affixes contribute semantic meanings such as negation (disconnect),

repetition (redo), reversal (unwind), or intensification (overthink). These verbs are particularly common in scientific and technical terminology.

Compound Verbs. Compound verbs combine two lexical stems to form a new lexical unit. Examples: to babysit (baby + sit), to broadcast (broad + cast), to sightsee (sight + see). The meaning is often predictable but sometimes idiomatic. Stress patterns differ: often the first component is stressed. Frequently used in informal and descriptive contexts.

Phrasal Verbs. Phrasal verbs consist of a main verb + a particle (adverb or preposition). Examples: look after, give up, take off, run into. Often idiomatic: the overall meaning cannot be deduced from parts (give up ≠ physically giving something upward). They are extremely frequent in spoken English but also occur in formal texts. Some phrasal verbs are transitive and allow object movement (e.g., pick up the book / pick the book up), whereas others do not (look after cannot be separated). Phrasal verbs contribute significantly to English expressiveness and linguistic flexibility.

Semantic Types of Verbs. Semantic classification focuses on the meanings that verbs convey.

Action Verbs. Action verbs denote activities or processes performed by an agent. Examples: run, write, build, analyze. Subcategories: Physical actions: jump, open, move. Mental actions: think, guess, imagine. Social actions: promise, argue, explain. They often occur in dynamic contexts. Can combine with adverbs showing manner (quickly run). Frequently used in progressive forms (I am writing).

Stative Verbs. Stative verbs describe conditions, feelings, perception, or possession. Examples: believe, know, love, own, need. They rarely appear in progressive aspect (I am knowing is incorrect). Express states that are relatively stable. Subgroups include: Cognitive states (know, remember). Emotive states (love, hate). Perceptual states (see, hear).

Linking Verbs. Linking verbs do not express independent action but serve to connect the subject to its complement. Examples: be, become, seem, appear. They carry minimal lexical meaning. Their main function is grammatical: to link the subject to an adjective or noun (He became angry). The verb be is the most common linking verb and has multiple forms (am, is, are, was, were).

Modal Verbs. Modal verbs express modality—possibility, obligation, permission, or ability. Examples: can, must, may, should, might. They do not take the -s ending in the third-person singular. Do not have infinitive or participle forms. Require a following bare infinitive (must go, can see). Modal verbs play a crucial role in expressing the speaker's attitude and communicative intention.

Auxiliary Verbs. Auxiliary verbs help form grammatical constructions. Primary auxiliaries: be, have, do. Examples: She is reading. He has finished. Do you like tea? These verbs are essential for forming tenses, voices, and emphatic forms.

Grammatical categories represent systematic sets of forms expressing grammatical meanings. The categories of number, person, and mood remain fundamental to verb grammar.

Number. Number indicates whether the subject is singular or plural. In Modern English, number agreement is limited due to morphological simplification. Number distinction appears mainly in the third-person singular present tense: He walks vs. They walk. Most verb forms do not show visible number markers. In Old English, verbs had distinct endings for almost all persons and numbers, but after Middle English phonetic changes, these endings were lost. Although

morphological distinctions are few, number is important for subject–verb agreement and grammatical correctness.

Person. Person expresses the relationship of the action to the speaker. Categories: First person: I, we (speaker involved). Second person: you (listener addressed). Third person: he, she, they (others mentioned). They limited markings: only writes (third-person singular) shows person explicitly. Pronouns carry person distinctions more than verbs do. Person is crucial in communication as it defines participants in the speech event. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), person is a “deictic category”—its meaning depends on the speech situation.

Mood. Mood expresses the speaker’s attitude toward the action as real, unreal, possible, necessary, or hypothetical.

Indicative Mood. Used for factual statements and questions. Examples: She teaches English. Do they live here? The default and most common mood. Expresses real events and information.

Imperative Mood. Used for commands, requests, and instructions. Examples: Close the window. Be careful. They usually occurs without an explicit subject (subject “you” is implied). Can express politeness through modal adverbs (Please sit down).

Subjunctive Mood. Expresses hypothetical, unreal, desirable, or necessary situations. Examples: If I were you... It is essential that he be present. Weakly expressed in modern English but still used in formal and literary contexts. Central to conditional sentences. Types of Subjunctives: Present subjunctive: I suggest that he go. Past subjunctive: If I were rich... The English subjunctive reflects logical, not temporal, distinction.

In conclusion the verb in English is a complex and multifunctional grammatical unit. Its structural and semantic classifications reveal how verbs are formed and how they convey different kinds of meanings. The grammatical categories of number, person, and mood reflect deep theoretical principles that govern subject–verb agreement and speaker intention. Although English has lost much of its historical inflection, these categories continue to play an essential role in communication. Understanding the nature of verbs is crucial for both theoretical linguistics and practical language teaching.

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