

# **THEORY OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR**

The Verb

# The Verb

Verb is a part of speech with grammatical meaning of process, action. Verb performs the central role of the predicative function of the sentence.

Verbs are characterized by specific forms of word-building. The stems may be simple ex: go, take, read. Sound replacive: food-feed, blood-bleed. Stress replacive ex; Import- to impOrt. The composite verb stems ex: to black mail.

# Grammatical categories

Tense

Aspect

Mood

Voice

Person

Number

2 large sets: the finite set and non-finite set.

According to their functional significance verbs can be notional (with the full lexical meaning, includes the majority of verbs), semi-notional – auxiliaries, modal verbs, link-verbs (of partial nominative value).

# Notional verbs

1. The relation of the subject of the verbs to the process: **Actional and Statal**

**Actional** verbs denote the actions performed by the subject as an active doer, e.g.: to go, to make, to build, to look, etc.;

**Statal** verbs denote various states of the subject or present the subject as the recipient of an outward activity, e.g.: to love, to be, to worry, to enjoy, to see, etc.

# Notional verbs

2. Aspective characteristic. Two aspective subclasses of verbs should be recognized in English **limitive** and **unlimitive**. The basis of this division is the idea of a processual limit. That is some border point beyond which the process doesn't exist.

**Limitive** verbs present a process as potentially limited, directed towards reaching a certain border point, beyond which the process denoted by the verb is stopped or ceases to exist, e.g.: *to come, to sit down, to bring, to drop, etc.*

**Unlimitive** verbs present the process as potentially not limited by any border point, e.g.: *to go, to sit, to carry, to exist, etc.*

# Smaller groups of notional verbs

Verbs of ingression (*begin, start, resume, set out, get down*);

verbs of instantaneity (*burst, click, knock, bang, jump, drop*);

verbs of termination (*terminate, finish, end, conclude, close, solve, resolve, sum up, stop*);

verbs of duration (*continue, prolong, last, linger, live, exist*).

### 3. Combining power of the verbs – **transitive, intransitive** verbs.

The combining power of words in relation to other words in syntactically subordinate positions is called their syntactic valency.

Transitive verbs denote an action directed toward a certain object; in a sentence they are obligatorily used with a direct object. Constructions with transitive verbs are easily transformed from active into passive, e.g.: *He wrote a letter. – The letter was written by him.*



**Verbal transitivity**, as one of the specific qualities of the general "completivity", is the ability of the verb to take a direct object, i.e. an object which is immediately affected by the denoted process. The direct object is joined to the verb "directly", without a preposition.

**Verbal objectivity** is the ability of the verb to take any object, be it direct, or oblique (prepositional), or that of addressee. **Transitive** verbs are opposed to **intransitive** verbs; **objective** verbs are opposed to **non-objective** verbs.

# The category of Tense

Expresses grammatical time.

1. The process has absolute time characteristics where past is opposed to the present tense. (-t, -d, -id, vowel interchange). Called – primary time.
2. Relative time is shown. Future is opposed to present. Called – prospective time (prospect).

The category of primary time shows the process in reference to the moment of speech. This category is based upon the opposition of "the past tense" and "the present tense". Future tense is included.

- ▣ Jill **returns** from her driving class at 5 o'clock.
- ▣ Jill **returned** from her driving class at 5 o'clock.
- ▣ Jill **will return** from her driving class at 5 o'clock.

# Grammatical transposition:

The transposition of a certain grammar form into a new syntactical distribution with a resulting effect of contrast. The so-called “Historical present”: a verb in the Present Indefinite form is used against the background of the Past Indefinite narration, creating the effect of vividness, an illusion of “presence”.

- ▣ Then he **turned** the corner and what do you think **happens** next? He **faces** nobody else that Mr. Greggs.

# Future forms

Shall/will + Infinitive

O. Jespersen discussed this question more than once (O. Jespersen. The Philosophy of Grammar.) The reason, why Jespersen denied the existence of a future tense in English was that the English future is expressed by the phrase "shall/will+infinitive" and the verbs "shall and will" which make part of the phrase preserve, according to Jespersen, some of their original meaning (shall are element of obligation and will are element of volition). In Jespersen's view, English has no way of expressing "pure futurity" free from modal shades of meaning that is it has no form standing on the same grammatical level as the forms of the past and present tenses.

In some context future forms do not preserve their original meaning. The verb "will" is used as an auxiliary of the future tense and where at the same time, the meaning of volition is excluded by the context. E.g. I am so sorry, I am afraid I will have to go back to the hotel. The verb "will" cannot be said to preserve even the slightest shade of the meaning of volition here. It can have only one meaning-that of grammatical futurity.

# The category of aspect

Aspect is a grammatical category that expresses the speaker's interpretation of the internal character of the action in its relation to such features as internal limit, result, duration, iteration etc.

# The category of aspect

1. Semantic interpretation of the aspect (G. Curme, M. Deutschbein, A.G. Kennedy).
2. The approach denying the existence of aspect in Modern English (H. Sweet, O. Jespersen, L. Alexander), or: the interpretation of aspect within the category of tense.
3. The so-called “blend” approach to the category of tense, aspect and perfect (I.P. Ivanova, V.L. Kaushanskaya et al, V. V. Gurevich).
4. Interpretation of aspect as a separate grammatical category (A.I. Smirnitsky, V.N. Yartseva, B.A. Ilyish, B.S. Khaimovich, B.J. Rogovskaya, M.Y. Blokh, Leipzig grammar of English).



# The category of aspect

Shows the mode of the process.

**Blokh distinguished 2 oppositions:**

**Continuous forms** of the verb & non-continuous or indefinite form of the verb. It's the aspective category of development. The strong member is the continuous - build up by the discontinuous morpheme **be+ing**.

**Continuous form** denotes an action proceeding continuously at a definite period of time, within certain time limits.

**Non-continuous form** denotes an action not limited but either occurring repeatedly or everlasting, without any notion of lasting duration at a given moment.

# The category of aspect

The category of retrospect. It constituted by the opposition of **the perfect form** of the verb to **the non-perfect**. The strong member is perfect, which is built up by the discontinuous morpheme **have-en**. The categorial individuality of the perfect was shown by Smirnitsky (This category is different from both tense and aspect). The content of the category-priority expressed by the perfect form against the non-expression of priority by the non-perfect forms.

# The category of aspect

H. Sweet, O. Jespersen put them among the tense forms of the verb. Actually the continuous usually goes with a verb, which **express a simultaneous action**. But the timing of the action is not expressed by the continuous. One more fact about the non-temporal meaning of the continuous its use in the verb form perfect continuous. It can only be understood as expressing aspectuality. The opposition of the category of development undergoes different reductions ex: The man stood (introductory word-neutralization "+") smoking (participial construction "-") a pipe.

# The category of aspect

Another view (I. Ivanova) – a blend of temporal and aspective meanings.

Many scholars (Smirnitsky) are of the opinion that the English perfect – non-perfect forms represent a special grammatical category – the category of correlation which is expressed in the system of two-member opposeemes: **writes – has written; wrote – had written; writing – having written; to be written – to have been written**, etc. showing whether the action is viewed as prior to (perfect forms) or irrespective of other actions or situations (non-perfect forms).

# The category of aspect

There are certain restrictions as to the use of the continuous aspect. Some verbs do not usually have the forms of the continuous aspect. They are referred to as statal verbs.

# The category of voice

It shows the direction of the process in connection with the participants of the situation. It is reflected in the syntactic construction. It is expressed by the opposition of the passive form to the active form of the verb in English.

The passive form is marked by the combination to **be + Part II**. Formula – **be ... en**.

Its meaning is reception of the action by the subject of the syntactic construction.

# The category of voice

This category is more represented in English than in Russian because in English not only transitive verbs but also intransitive objective verbs can be used in Passive:

**I've just been rung up by the police.**

**The dress has never been tried on.**

Not all the verbs are takable to be used in a passive even if they take direct objects. Some statal verbs are not used in a passive (belong, resemble, have, fail, etc.).

The category of voice is connected with syntax. This is expressed in transformational relations between the active and passive constructions:

**The guards dispersed the crowd** in front of the presidential palace.

**The crowd** in front of the presidential palace **was dispersed by the guards.**

In various contents either the active or passive presentation of the same event is possible.

We find the object as the center when the subject is unknown or we don't want to mention it, when the attention is centered on the action:

**Dinner was announced** and our conversation stopped.

**The defeat of the champion was very much regretted.**



# The medial voices

The use of the voice forms in the other meaning.

**I will shave and wash and be ready for breakfast in half an hour.**

**I'm afraid Mary hasn't dressed up yet.**

Reflexive voice – the actions are confined to the subject. The subjects constitute the object of the action. It is called reflexive meaning; expressed by combining reflexive pronoun:

**I will shave myself. The friend will be meeting tomorrow.**

The action is performed reciprocally, the meaning is reciprocal. Pronouns are used here:

**The friends will be meeting one another.**

They are treated as special uses of the active voice.

# Middle voice

One more meaning connected with the cat. of voice - Middle voice: the actions are confined to the subject but it is described as if going on of its own accord. This use is understood as neutralizing reduction of the voice opposition:

**The books are selling wonderfully.**

**The new paper-backs are selling excellently.**

**Large native cigarettes smoked easily.**

# The passive voice and compound nominal predicate

The difference between the form of the passive voice and compound nominal predicate with the link verb "to be" (You may consider me a coward but there **you are mistaken** - comp nom predic. **They were all seized** in their homes - passive v). The difference is found in the semantic character of the construction. If it expresses an action, it is the passive voice form, if it exp. A state - nominal predicate (The door was closed by the butler - passive v; The door on the left was closed - comp predic).

Sometimes the context has the inflect of suppressing the voice meaning or stimulating it (I was often mistaken for my friend Otto, though I never could tell why). Some forms of the verbs (future, contin, perf forms) may by stimulating for the voice, except for limitive verbs (The fence is painted - predic. The fence is painted green - predic. The fence will be painted. The fence has just been painted. The fence is just being painted).

# The category of Mood

The category of MOOD is the most controversial category of the verb.

The category of MOOD expresses the character of connection between the process denoted by the verb and the actual reality, either presenting the process as a fact that really happened, happens or will happen, or treating it as an imaginary phenomenon, i.e. the subject of a hypothesis (предположение), speculation (размышление), desire.

## OPPOSITION

Strong member (Forms of oblique mood meaning, i.e. those of unreality)

Weak member (Forms of direct mood meaning, i.e. those of reality)

Division of moods: indicative (actually taking place) - conditional (merely imaginary)

# Number of MOODS

1. Ilyish 3 moods (indicative, subjunctive, imperative)- meaning form;
2. M.Deutschbein: 16 moods a functional approach;
3. Prof. Smirnitsky (+ O.S.Akhmanova, M.Gashina, N.Vasilevskaya): 6 moods(indicative, imperative, subjunctive I, subjunctive II, suppositional, conditional) - form и meaning;
4. L.S. Barhudarov, D.A. Shteling: 2 moods (indicative, subjunctive);
5. G.N. Vorontsova: 4 moods(indicative, optative, speculative, presumptive).

Subjunctive mood includes forms homonymous with Past and Past Perfect, but they differ in time correlation and absence of time as such.

Systems comprising **two moods** have been proposed by **M.Y.Blokh** and **L.S. Barchudarov**. Let's now consider each of them in detail.

The category of mood according to **M.Y. Blokh** expresses the speaker's interpretation of the situation as actual or imaginary. He distinguishes **two moods in Modern English: The Indicative and the Subjunctive**, which stand in opposition to each other, thus, forming a unity of the system. The **indicative** mood represents an action as actual, while the subjunctive mood shows it as imaginary.

The subjunctive mood is further subdivided into **spective** and **conditional** moods, which in their turn have further subdivisions. **Spective** is represented by **pure spective** (be and imperative) and **modal spective** (may, let, should + infinitive). **Conditional** consists of **stipulative** (were, knew) and **consecutive** (had known). For the sake of simplifying the working terminology **M.Y.Blokh** calls moods, which belong to the **Subjunctive**, the following names: Subjunctive I (pure spective), Subjunctive II (stipulative), Subjunctive III (consecutive) and Modal Subjunctive (modal spective)

# The spective mood

The spective mood (a variety of the subjunctive mood). The spective mood is the mood of attitudes which expresses suggestion, recommendation, and inducement. And they all are the meanings of the imperative. Blokh uses the method of equivalent transformations, e.g. “Be off” doesn’t differ from “I demand that you be off” (subjunctive mood) in meaning and structure. Even emphatic imperative forms – “Do be careful with the papers” / “My request is that you do be careful with the papers”. Blokh believes the imperative forms are a variety of the spective mood.

# Stipulative mood (Conditional)

1. were:

If I were in your place I'd only be happy.

2. should/would + Infinitive (expresses imaginary consequences):

If two people were found with a great bodily resemblance the experiment would succeed.



All in all, there are four types of the subjunctive mood: the pure Spective (*It was recommended that the elections start on Monday*), the modal Spective (*may/might+ Infinitive, should+infinitive, let+Objective*), the stipulative Conditional (*I wish my brain weren't in such a whirl all the time*), and the consecutive Conditional (*If the peace-keeping force had not been on the alert, the civil war in that area would have resumed anew*)

Prof. L.S. Barkhudarov did not recognize the Subjunctive mood owing to its formal characteristics, which are similar with the Indicative mood.

O. Jespersen also spoke about the imaginative use of tenses. He held that unreality is expressed by past time verbs: *I wish I had money enough to pay you. You speak as if I had money enough.*

N.A. Kobrina and E.A. Korneyeva believe that the modal meaning is a structural meaning and is due to a certain syntactic environment (cf.: *He went there ÷ If only he went there! If he went there I would be happy.*). The only forms that are considered to be special forms of the Subjunctive mood are the following: *he be, he go, I were, he were*, all the rest of the forms used to render hypothetical meaning are homonymous with the form of the Indicative mood and it is difficult to understand whether it is the Indicative or the Subjunctive

# Person and number

The categories of person and number are closely connected with each other.

It refers the process denoted by the verb to the subject of the situation.

The category of person is expressed in the English verb only in the present tense forms of the Indicative Mood. Also presented in the Future Tense. It is not expressed in the Past Tense.

# Person and number

1. Modal verbs – have no personal inflections
2. The verb “to be” has 2 different suppletive personal forms: am (1<sup>st</sup> person, sing), is (3<sup>d</sup> person, sing), are (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>d</sup> persons plural).
3. All the other verbs – (e)s in the 3<sup>d</sup> person singular.

# Archaic system of persons

Elevated speech – solemn addresses, sermons, poetry.

Modal verbs – the ending of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular: canst, mayst, wilt, shalt, shouldst, oughtst.

The rest of the verbs – come – comest – comes

Future Tense – shall/will

# The Category of number

The category of number is expressed in the English verb only in the present tense forms and only together with person distinctions, i.e. the English verb has no specific inflections of number.

The number is distinguished only with verbs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person in the present tense: He goes (Sg.) vs. They go (PL). The verb “to be” has special number distinctions, but they are also realized only in combination with person distinctions of the verb. In the present tense, the verb has the following forms expressing number.

The singular number is expressed by “am” and “is”. The plural number cannot be distinguished, since the form “are” is correlated both with the singular and plural nouns. In the past tense, the singular number is expressed by the form “was”. The plural number cannot be distinguished either, since the form were is used both for singular and plural.