

عنوان المحاضرة: verbs in English

المادة الدراسية: النحو المقارن

المرحلة الدراسية: 3rd class

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القسم: الترجمة

2.1 The Verb Phrase

The verb phrase functions under the V element of a clause. In the clause

1. The boys (S) will see (V) the play (O).

SVO

the second place is realized by a class of phrases termed the verb phrase. It is to be noted that sometimes both the class and the position occupied by the class are referred to as the 'verb'. This is confusing; it is useful to draw a distinction between the position (place) and the class occupying that position. In this book the symbol V will be reserved for the element of a clause, and the verb or the verb phrase for the class of phrases occupying that position at the level next below the clause.

The above argument is also true of Arabic. In (2) the clause has three elements, VSO.

1. The boys (S) will see (V) the play (O).

يرى (٧) الاولاد (٥) المسرحية (٠) ٢

VSO

The first of the three places is filled by V at the level of the clause. Under, V, at the level of the phrase there is a phrase, which is the verb phrase يرى which is the verb phrase.

2.2 The Verb Phrase in English

The Verb phrase in English is built round a main verb, which belongs to an **open class** of words. This may be considered the head of the verb phrase. The head may be preceded by one or more elements. In (1) above, the verb 'see' is the head and is preceded by 'will'. On this basis, we distinguish **two** types of **verb phrases**: those made up of just 1- **one element**, the head, an 2- **those made up of more than one** element. The former are called **'simple'** the latter **complex**. In (1) above, the verb phrase 'will see' is complex because it comprises two elements; whereas in 'The boys went to the market', the verb phrase 'went' comprises one element; it is simple.

All the elements of a verb phrase are normally referred to as 'verbs'. It is however important to distinguish a number of subclasses of verbs. This will be explained in the next section.

2.3 Verb Subclasses in English

The first subdivision is drawn between 1- **auxiliary** and 2- **lexical** verbs. The lexical (main) verb is the head element and comes last in the complex noun phrase, the elements preceding the head are auxiliaries. The distinction between lexical and auxiliary verbs is drawn on the basis of three grammatical processes: Interrogation, negation and proform.

Distinctions

(A) Interrogation

In interrogative sentences the auxiliary verb is placed before the subject.

In (3)

3. She **will** read this story. مثبتة

Will she read this story? سؤال yes-no question

When **will** she read this story? Wh- question

will is an auxiliary verb because it can be placed before the subject '**she**'. In (4) the verb 'wrote' cannot be placed before the subject; it is therefore not an auxiliary.

4. She **wrote** a letter. مثبتة

"Wrote she a letter?*" سؤال

Wrote is a lexical verb. In such sentences the form '**Do**' is used as **auxiliary**.

5. Did she write a letter?

What did she write?

(B) Negation

In negative sentences, 'not' is placed after the auxiliary.

6. She will read this book.

She will **not** read this book.

In (7) It is not possible to place 'not' after the verb and turn the sentence Into negative; the verb is not auxiliary.

7. She wrote a letter.

"She wrote not a letter.

Here too the auxiliary 'Do' is needed to carry 'not'.

8. She did **not** write a letter.

(C) Proform جملة تعويضية

The word 'proform' means a word which stands for another word or words. In the sentence

Q_ She likes oranges.

Her brother **likes oranges. (Join using : so)**

Answer_ She likes oranges and so **does her brother**

'does' stands for 'likes', it functions as proform and is therefore an auxiliary. In (10), on the other hand, It is not possible to use the verb wrote as proform; it is not an auxiliary.

10. "She wrote a letter and so **wrote** All. خاطئة.*

Again the verb 'Do' is used as an auxiliary proform.

11. She wrote a letter and so **did** All. صحيحة

It is clear from the above discussion that dividing the verb class into auxiliary and lexical is grammatically important because the auxiliary verb performs certain grammatical function, whereas the lexical verb carries the meaning.

The auxiliary verbs in English belong to a closed system and they can be listed. They are: Be, Have Do, Shall (Should), Will (Would). Can (Could), May(Might), Must, Ought to, Need and Dare.

It is not necessary that only one member of the auxiliary group should occur in a sentence at a time. It is possible to find up to four auxiliaries in one sentence. In each of these sentences more than one auxiliary is found.

12. She will be reading the book.

13. She may have been reading the book.

A four-element auxiliary, though rare, is also found in, for example:

'He may have been being examined'. In sentences where more than two auxiliaries are found it is useful to distinguish between the first auxiliary and the others because it is the first auxiliary which is used in Interrogation, negation and as proform.

14. Will she be reading the book Must she have been reading the story?

15. She will not be coming.

They may not have been ready.

16. He will be attending the meeting and so will Ali.

I can speak French and so can my brother.

The auxiliary which performs these functions is called operator. No special term is needed for the other auxiliaries, if there are any

17. The door **may have been** broken by the wind.

Aux Aux Aux

Auxiliary and **Operator**

2.4 Subclasses of Auxiliary Verbs in English

Dividing the auxiliary elements in a verb phrase into operator and the rest of auxiliaries is based on the functional considerations inside the verb phrase. The list of auxiliaries stated in the previous section is often divided in

Isolation into two main groups or subclasses.

(a) Primary Auxiliaries: Do, Have, Be.

(b) Modal Auxiliaries: Shall, will, etc.

The primary auxiliary Do is semantically empty; it is a purely grammatical word used in negative, interrogative, emphatic and pro-form functions.

18. He **does** not like poetry. (Negation)

19. **Does** he like poetry. (Interrogation)

20. He **does** like poetry. (Emphasis: said as a response to, He does not like poetry.)

21. He likes poetry and so **does** his sister. (Proform)

The verb Have is used for **perfective aspect** (see Ch. 3) followed by the past participle (ed.).

22. They **have** just arrived from Baghdad.

The train **had** left when they finally reached the station.

The auxiliary verb Be is used (a) with the -ing form to express the progressive aspect and (b) with the past participle to form the passive voice.

(e) The Progressive Aspect

23. I **am** reading the newspaper.

My friend **was** writing a poem.

(b) The passive Voice

24. That house **is** sold.

This novel was written in the nineteenth century.

The wall has been painted orange.

(The progressive aspect will be discussed in Ch. 3 and the Voice in Ch. 17.)

2.5 The Modal Auxiliaries in English

The modal auxiliaries, besides their grammatical function as auxiliaries -express certain meanings such as possibility, probability, certainty, obligation, willingness, Intention, etc. Thus they have grammatical and semantic functions. Semantic function is usually termed 'modality'.

25 This thing may be dangerous.

(Possibility)

He must be at home.

(Certainty)

You must stay here.

(Obligation)

Can I leave?

(Permission)

(The modal auxiliaries will be discussed in Ch.6.)