



THE PROBLEM OF SEMANTIC FEATURES OF THE VERB IN MODERN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the verb in Modern English. It discusses the semantic features, types and the classifications of the verbs in Modern linguistics.

As we know that the semantic features of the verbs play an important role in modern linguistics. Most of the scholars have investigated about the theme, such as, A.I.Smirtinskiy, I.S.Barkhudarov, B.A.Ilish, I.I.Ivanova. B.N.Jigadlo, B.A.Khaymovich and B.I.Rogovskaya [1].

Professor G.M.Xoshimov considers that the verb is a lexico-grammatical word which shows state and quality of the action and divides the verbs into the following types:

standard or regular - nonstandard or irregular

invariable

mixed

finite-nonfinite

The basic semantic features related to these situations are possible duration and possible telicity.

Duration - this feature can be related both to stative and dynamic verbs; states, activities and accomplishments have the feature [+duration], and achievements the feature [duration]. Having discussed the states, we could start from the examples with the situations denoting some duration, and these examples include typical activity verbs like dance, do, eat, laugh, learn, live, make, read, spend, stare, stay, take, wait, write. For example:

(4a) ...like clamorous patients who have been waiting all night for the doctor's surgery to open; (4b) The heads of other men present have been swiveling from side to side, like spectators in a tennis match, during this argument. (4c) The students who have been writing everything down now look up and smile wryly at Robyn Penrose, like victims of a successful hoax. (4d) Robyn looks up from the copy of North and South from which she has been reading this passage, and surveys her audience with a cool, grey-green eyes. (4e) 'They've learned what's expected of them in a patriarchal society.' (4f) 'I haven't danced for ages.' (4g) 'I don't think I've ever read that one.' (4h) Whereas you've been working for yourself in the company's time [3].



Most of these examples with the above-mentioned verbs indicate continuation from the unspecified point or period in the past to the present moment, thus belonging to the type called perfect of persistent situation (4a, b, c, d, h). The example (4f) is a specific kind of the perfect of persistent situation because it denotes the continuation of the nonexistence of a situation (not dancing for ages). However, in the example (4e), which implies a reached goal (what's expected of them), the type of perfect is the perfect of result or recent past, and in the example with the adverbial ever (4g) the type is experiential perfect – implying that the subject did not have a certain experience (reading a certain book). The second group of examples, those with the feature [- duration], or momentary verbs, includes the verbs like appear, arrive, ask, borrow, bring, close down, decide, deliver, discover, finish, invite, lend, meet, offer, pay, reach, reduce, sell out, split up, start, trigger. Some of the typical examples are:

(5a) The pressure of his foot on a wired pad under the stair-carpet has triggered the burglar alarm... (5b) She carries the Daily Mail, which has just been delivered.(5c) Marjorie has now appeared at the lounge window... (5d) Vic grunts, unsurprised that his Marketing Director has not yet arrived. (5e) 'Have you brought me to the phone just to tell me that?' Robyn inquired icily. (5f) 'I've sent off that reference to America.'

As expected, momentary verbs typically denote the situation immediately preceding the moment of speech, which is often accompanied by the adverbials just and now (examples 5b, 5c), or yet in case of the non-realization of the situation (5d). In the examples without adverbials modifying present perfect, the implication is also immediate or very near past (examples 5a, e, f). So, these examples belong to the perfect of recent past. However, some momentary verbs with adverbials denoting frequency (never, ever) also indicate experience up to now, which classifies them into the experiential perfect:

(6a) He has never met Beryl, said to be Everthorpe's second wife, and formerly his secretary. (6b) It has already been used twice for the circulation of internal mail and resealed by means of staples and Sellotape. (6c) 'Haven't we met before?' he said. (6d) 'That's because you haven't met him yet.'

There are just a few such examples in the corpus and they imply a context which unambiguously indicates repetition of the momentary situation up to now, most of them with the verb meet. As for this verb, it is interesting to point out the difference between the perfect of recent past and the experiential perfect: with the adverbials like just, recently, this verb is interpreted as recent past, and with the adverbials like ever, before as experiential perfect [2].

Telicity - telicity is the feature in the semantic structure of some dynamic lexical verbs and verb phrases which denotes the existence of a goal. This goal could be indicated by the presence of the direct object, adverbial particle or other syntactic elements. The following examples (and some of the above-mentioned) indicate the presence of a goal: (7a) Vic Wilcox has now, strictly speaking, left the city of Rummage and passed into an area known as the Dark Country... (7b) 'Have you signed the Official Secrets Acts?' (119) (7c) Halted at a red light, Robyn consults her A to Z, but before she has found the place on the map, the lights have changed and cars are hooting impatiently behind her. (7d) Anyway they've just discovered that compulsory retirement is unconstitutional... (7e) 'Mr Wilcox has dropped his pen, Marion,' she said. (7f) 'I'll tell Swallow that I've changed my mind.'



As it has been pointed out, if the nonprogressive verb is followed by a well-defined object (NP or a nominal clause), it usually implies a goal (examples 7a, b, c, d, e, f). The combination of the feature [+telicity] with the present perfect (nonprogressive) indicates that the goal was reached immediately before, or a short time before the point of speech, which is usually interpreted as the perfect of recent past (the examples under 7) or possibly the perfect of result.

As expected, some examples from the corpus were ambiguous when it comes to the above-mentioned types of present perfect, even when their semantic features and the context were taken into account. For example:

(8a) Now we've gone into reverse. (8b) Raymond Williams has called them "Industrial Novels" because they dealt with social and economic problems... (8c) He's been trained, hasn't he? (8d) Foundtrax has stolen the Rawlinson's bone from you... (8e) I've had enough,' said Penny Black, getting to her feet. (8f) 'I mean, I've had enough of this heat.' (8g) 'No. I've had enough of the rat race [5].'

The verb in the example (8a), go, is dynamic, durative and atelic, or momentary and telic if its meaning is 'leave', but it is difficult to establish the type of perfect it implies: the possible interpretations include recent past or result. There is a similar problem with the example (8c): the training could be related to recent past or could present a result of a past process. The second example (8b) contains a telic momentary verb call (meaning 'give a name'), but it could hardly be designated as recent past, result or experience. It is not a typical persistent situation either, because the situation itself does not continue up to now, so it is perhaps best described as "current relevance" of the situation. The example (8d) is closest to recent past, with the verb steal being dynamic, momentary and telic. Finally, the last three examples (8e, f, g) contain the phrase 'have enough' in present perfect; it seems that these verbs denote the perfect of persistent situation, that is an undesirable continuation of a situation up to now. These examples (but also some of the previous ones) illustrate the difficulties one faces in classifying the concrete sentences with present perfect into a certain type which is determined within a specific theoretical framework [6].

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