



THE STRUCTURE OF PREDICATION

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Each of the main components can be a single word:

S P
They / danced.

or a phrase:

S P
His cousin / studies at that college.

SUBJECT (CONT.)

- Verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases may also function as subjects.

Verb (Infinitive)

S

P

To obey / is to follow a command or request.

Present participle

S

P

Living with those people / is rather unpleasant.



SUBJECT (CONT.)

Adjective phrase

S

P

Helpful to the blind / is what you should be.

Adverb

S

P

Here / is too dark.

Prepositional phrase

S

P

On the pavement / is where they are standing.



PREDICATE

- A predicate can be **a word alone** or **a verb with its modifier**, or **its complement**; that is, a predicate can be one of the following syntactic structures: a structure of modification, a structure of complementation, or a structure of coordination.

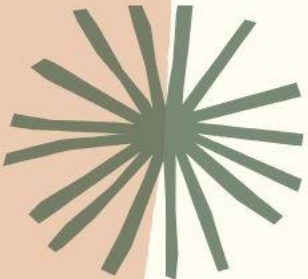
Example(s):

S

P

1. The baby / smiles.

The verb **smiles** is one-word predicate.



PREDICATE (CONT.)

Example(s):

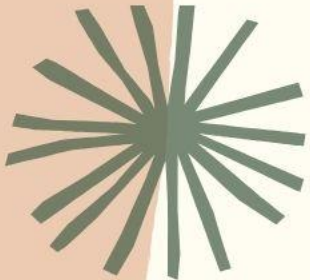



S **P**
2. They / always laugh. (structure of modification)

The verb **laugh** is modified by the adverb **always**.

S **P**
3. Mary / eats ice-cream. (structure of complementation)

The noun **ice-cream** is the direct object of the verb **eats**.





English verbs can be classified according to seven features: person, tense, aspect, voice, status, phase, and mode (Francis 1958: 330).

In the following discussion, we shall concentrate on the first five as they are generally used in identifying verb forms.

- Person
 - Tense
 - Aspect
 - Voice
 - Status
- 



Person

- Every English verb except the modal auxiliaries has two persons: common and third singular.
- Verb forms comprising the base form and the. Inflectional ending {-s} are in the third-singular person, whereas all others are in the common person.

| Person | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Third-Singular | Common |
| Linda <u>wants</u> to study French. | Tom and Jerry <u>plan</u> to visit Japan next week. |



Tense

- English verbs have two tenses: the present tense, or the common tense and the past tense.
- These two tenses are distinguished by inflectional endings.
- The present tense form may be the base + zero allomorph of the present tense morpheme or the base + inflectional ending {-s}.
- The past tense form consists of the base + zero allomorph of the past tense morpheme or the base + the inflectional ending {-ed}.
- The past tense form of English irregular verbs does not have the inflectional ending {-ed}; instead, it has a vowel change and sometimes both a vowel change and a consonant change.



Tense (cont.)

| Tense | |
|--|---|
| Present Tense | Past Tense |
| The children <u>have</u> breakfast at 7 o'clock. | Five years ago, the Smiths <u>bought</u> an apartment in the suburbs. |



Aspect

- The two common aspects of English verbs are the progressive aspect and perfective aspect.
- The progressive aspect is formed by the auxiliary be + verb in present participle form.
- The perfective aspect, however, is formed by the auxiliary have + verb in past participle form.

| Aspect | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Progressive Aspect | Perfective Aspect |
| Mary is <u>typing</u> her term paper. | We <u>have worked</u> hard for two weeks. |



Voice

- The two voices of English verbs are the active voice and the passive voice. The passive voice is formed with the auxiliary be + verb in the past participle form.

| Voice | | |
|--|---|---|
| Active Voice | → | Passive Voice |
| Sally and Mike <u>applied</u> the final coat of car wax. | → | The final coat of car wax <u>was applied</u> by Sally and Mike. |



Status

- English verbs have five statuses: the affirmative, the interrogative, the negative, the negative-interrogative, and the imperative.
- The interrogative status is indicated by a change in word order. In many cases, the auxiliary **do** helps form the interrogative status.
- The negative status is shown by the word **not**. The word **not** is added immediately after the verb **to be**, the auxiliaries and after some modal auxiliaries.

| Verb to be + not | Auxiliary + not | Modal auxiliary + not |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Jim <u>is not</u> here. | They <u>do not</u> work in the afternoon. | They <u>could not</u> swim. |



Status (cont.)

- The negative interrogative combines the negative **not** and interrogative with the use of auxiliary **do** in the pattern of the interrogative form. The subject may occur before **not** or after **not**.

| Subject before not (more formal) | Subject after not (less formal) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Was he not talking to you? | Wasn't he talking to you? |



Status (cont.)

- The imperative is used in giving a command and making a request. The subject of the verb is understood but not generally expressed. The second person imperative has the same form as the infinitive without **to**.

Let + noun/pronoun + infinitive without to

1st person imperative:

Let's go to the concert tonight.

3rd person imperative:

Let John enter the room.

REFERENCE

Jotikasthira, P. (2014). Introduction to the English Language : System and Structure. Bangkok:
Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

