

Chapter 6 Verbs (Em)Powering the Clause: The Verb

Additional paper or project ideas

1. The most frequently used English verbs are as follows: *to be*, *to have*, *to do*, *to go*, *to say*, *to see*, *to take*, *to get*, and the modal verbs *can* and *will*. These verbs are all irregular. Why are these ten most common verbs in English irregular verbs rather than regular verbs? Review the two articles below on regular and irregular verbs to answer this question!
 - Lieberman, E., Michel, J. B., Jackson, J., Tang, T., & Nowak, M. A. (2007). Quantifying the evolutionary dynamics of language. *Nature*, 449(7163), 713–716. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature06137>
 - Steenhuisen, J. (Oct 10, 2007). Irregular verbs: Use them or lose them: study. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/2007/10/10/us-language-evolution-idUSN1025847720071010/>
2. Seen vs. saw. Go to the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase;page=simple>) and perform a search for the verb forms *seen* and *saw*. Then, go to the Corpus of Regional African American Language (CORAAAL) (<https://oraal.github.io/coraaal>) and perform the same search. Compare your findings from these two corpora. How are *seen* and *saw* used differently by speakers in these two corpora? Can you describe the pattern? What does this tell you about grammatical patterns?
3. More verb forms. Go to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>) and perform a search for simple past tense verb forms such as *wrote*, *did*, *took*, and so on. See if any of them appear after the auxiliary *have* (so, forms such as *have wrote*, *has wrote*, *had wrote* and so on). Analyze the results of what you're finding. For instance, are these forms increasing or decreasing over time? Are they more common in some subset of the corpora or others? Who uses these forms most/least? What does this tell you about the status of past tense forms vs. past participles of verbs?
4. Review the article by Norberg on the representation of girls and boys in corpora. She analyzes, among other things, the kinds of verbs used with “girl” and “boy” in subject slots. Summarize her findings. Write a reflection on those findings. Then, analyze a college textbook, novel, or short story and replicate that analysis. Which verbs did you find that “boys” do and which verbs did you find that “girls” do? What does this tell us about gender expectations and stereotypes?

Norberg, C. (2016). Naughty Boys and Sexy Girls. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 44(4), 291–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424216665672>

answer keys for additional exercises

Exercise 1

resonated (PT); have *left* (past part.); had *woven* (past part.); *painted* (PT); *retreated* (PT); *remain* (I); are *awaiting* (Pres. Part.).

Exercise 2

- a) We *run* = 1st ps pl
b) They *make* = 3rd ps pl

Exercise 3

- a) If somebody come up and *push* me then I'll just probably have to push back. (ChE)

<i>push</i>	+	-Ø	=	<i>push</i>
infinitive		inflectional suffix: -Ø-morpheme		3 rd person singular form

➤ can endure verb inflections such as *pushing* and *pushed*

- b) We all *understand* what you meant. (sE)

<i>understand</i>	+	vowel change	=	<i>understood</i>
infinitive		past tense maker		past tense form

➤ can endure verb inflection such as *understanding*, *understands*

- c) Yesterday we *play* another team for the championship. (AAE)

➤ already in past tense

<i>play</i>	+	-Ø	=	<i>play</i>
infinitive		inflectional suffix: -Ø-morpheme		past tense form

➤ can endure verb inflections such as *playing*, *plays*

- d) They were *looking* out the window. (sE)

<i>look</i>	+	-in	=	<i>looking</i>
infinitive		inflectional suffix: present participle maker		present participle form

- e) She went up to the principal, she *tell* him that I had an illegal weapon. (ChE)

- already in past tense

<i>tell</i>		+	-Ø	=	<i>tell</i>
infinitive			inflectional suffix: -Ø-morpheme		past tense form

- can endure verb inflections such as *telling, tells*; past form *told*

Exercise 4

- Copula (*easy* = SC)
- Monotransitive (*all the mice* = DO)
- Intransitive (no required constituents after verbs)
- Ditransitive (*the cats* = IO; *many questions* = DO)
- Monotransitive (*an answer* = DO)

Exercise 5

word	morphological evidence	syntactic evidence
a) <i>applicant</i> = N	inflectional plural -s suffix possible: <i>one applicant</i> – <i>two applicants</i>	occurs after determiner <i>the</i> & <i>other</i> ; functions as part of object of prep
b) <i>know</i> = V	Past-tense form possible: <i>know</i> - <i>knew</i> ; could also add 3 rd ps -s: <i>teenager knows</i> ...or -ing: <i>They are knowing</i>	monotransitive verb (takes DO); occurs after subject and before DO
c) <i>more</i> = Adv	N/A	describes/intensifies adjective (<i>funnier</i>) in premodifier position
c) <i>funnier</i> = Adj	comparative/superlative possible: <i>more/most funnier</i> (also <i>funny/funnier/funniest</i>)	occurs in predicative position; modifies noun <i>cats</i>
d) <i>long</i> = Adj	comparative/superlative possible: <i>long/longer/longest</i>	occurs as attributive adjective, prior to noun it describes (<i>time</i>)
d) <i>time</i> = N	<i>time</i> = uncountable here; so plural is possible as in <i>one period of time</i> and <i>two periods of time</i> (something like <i>for two long times</i> would be conceivable, but sounds a bit odd)	occurs after DET + ADJ; functions as part of object of prep

e) <i>run</i> = V	inflectional <i>-ing</i> suffix possible <i>running</i> ; 3 rd ps sg <i>-s</i> also possible: <i>She runs</i> ; could use past tense form <i>We ran</i>	occurs after subject <i>They</i> ; intransitive verb (requires no object)
e) <i>beach</i> = N	inflectional plural <i>-s</i> suffix possible: <i>one beach</i> – <i>two beaches</i>	occurs after determiner <i>the</i> ; functions as part of object of prep
f) <i>geese</i> = N	singular/plural possible: <i>one goose/two geese</i>	occurs after determiner <i>the</i> ; functions as part of subject
g) <i>enjoyable</i> = Adj	comparative/superlative possible <i>more/most enjoyable</i>	occurs in predicative position; modifies noun <i>picnic</i>