

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

Additional information and practice

Additional morphological analysis (see 6.2.3 Putting inflection and derivation to work)

Below, we provide two more examples of how to do the morphological analysis for verbs.

- (1) Then she *got* some soap. (sE)

<i>get</i>	+	<i>vowel change (apophony)</i>	=	<i>got</i>
infinitive		past tense marker		past tense form

- (2) He *started* playing the piano [last year]. (sE)

<i>start</i>	+	<i>-ed</i>	=	<i>started</i>
infinitive		inflectional suffix: past tense marker		past tense form

Subjects + Predicates – more examples

As you know, a verb selects certain constituents required for the predicate in order for a sentence to be grammatically complete. Specifically, a sentence breaks down into the subject and predicate. The predicate includes the verb and everything to the right side of the verb. We've italicized the verbs and underlined the predicate in these additional examples below.

- a) It *spinned perfectly*.¹ (sE)
- b) I *bought a horse*. (sE)
- c) Certain people *cooked certain foods*.² (AAE)

¹ Davies, M. (2018), *The iWeb Corpus*. Available online: <https://www.english-corpora.org/iWeb/>.

² Kendall, T., M. Quartey, C. Farrington, J. McLarty, S. Arnson, and B. Josler, B. (2018). *The Corpus of Regional African American Language: DCB (Washington DC 2016)*. Version 2018.10.06. Eugene, OR: The Online Resources for African American Language Project. <http://oraal.uoregon.edu/coraal>. Transcript ID DCB_se1_ag1_f_03_1.

- d) They are professors. (sE)
- e) They called us Hotlanta.³ (AAE)

Supplemental material on the verb Conversate (not included in the text)

This section highlights the morphology of an oft-contested verb: to conversate. First, take a look at the following verb-to-noun conversions:

elevate > elevation

delineate > delineation

negate > negation

innovate > innovation

abbreviate > abbreviation

It looks like converse > conversation could fit right into that pattern! However, conversate is actually a backformation from the noun conversation (see chapter 2). This means that the noun conversation existed before the verb conversate did. To know this, you'd have to do some etymological research. We did just that: The verb converse entered English in the late 14th century from French converser, entering French from Spanish conversar, Italian conversar, and originally from late Latin conversārī (as noted by Oxford English Dictionary). At this time, the word had a much broader meaning associated with a manner of living with others. It began to take on the more nuanced definition referring to “discourse” or “talk” in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

³ Farrington, C., T. Kendall, P. S. Brooks, L. Jenson, C. Tacata, and J. McLean (2020), *The Corpus of Regional African American Language: ATL* (Atlanta, GA 2017). Version 2020.05. The Online Resources for African American Language Project. <https://oraal.github.io/coraal>. Transcript ID ATL_se0_ag1_m_01_1.

Paralleling the verb's change in meaning is the noun conversation, also taking on the sense of talk between people at the same time, during late 16th and early 17th century. The verb conversate thus existed in the late 16th century to convey the more general “manner of living” and briefly existed in the late 19th and early 20th century referring to the “act of talking with another.” However, in the late 20th and early 21st century, the verb to conversate re-emerged through the process of backformation—that is, speakers began taking off the derivational noun marker -ion and used the resulting conversate as the verb. Regardless of how conversate emerged, it is an actual word that people use. Still, it is generally listed as non-standard in dictionaries and tends to be viewed as a feature of AAE, although it is being used by non-AAE speakers as well (as is the case with many dialect forms in general!).

More practice from Exercise 1

Identify verb forms. Label the italicized verb forms in the excerpt⁴ below as infinitive (I), 3rd person singular (3rd ps sg), past tense (PT), present participle (Pres. Part.), or past participle (past part.).

Their soft purrs *resonated* like soothing melodies, which have *left* an impression on all their forest friends. The secret narrator had *woven* secrets and untold adventures into this story. And as dawn *ainted* the sky in hues of rose and gold, the cats *retreated* to their cozy nooks, but their dreams *remain* filled with visions of endless exploration and boundless curiosity, which means they are *awaiting* the next chapter in their timeless tale eagerly.

More practice from Exercise 2

Identify person (1st, 2nd, 3rd) and number (singular, plural.) for the italicized verbs in the sentences below.

- a) We *run* together in the park. (sE)
- b) They *make* their juice theirselves.⁵ (AAE)

⁴ based on an excerpt produced by OpenAI, 2024.

⁵ Kendall, T., M. Quartey, C. Farrington, J. McLarty, S. Arnson, and B. Josler, B. (2018). *The Corpus of Regional African American Language: DCB (Washington DC 2016)*. Version 2018.10.06. Eugene, OR: The Online Resources for African American Language Project. <http://oraal.uoregon.edu/coraal>. Transcript ID DCB_se2_ag2_f_01_1

More practice from Exercise 3

Using inflectional (and derivational morphology, where applicable) to provide evidence that the italicized words are all verbs.

- a) If somebody come up and *push* me then I'll just probably have to push back.⁶ (ChE)
- b) We all *understand* what you meant. (sE)
- c) Yesterday we *play* another team for the championship.⁷ (AAE)
- d) They were *looking* out the window. (sE)
- e) She went up to the principal, she *tell* him that I had an illegal weapon.⁸ (ChE)

More practice from Exercise 4

Identify the verb type for the italicized verbs in each of the sentences (the first has been done as an example) and label all required constituents correctly.

- a) The exam *was* easy. (sE)
- b) The cats *chased* all the mice. (sE)
- c) The cats *purred*. (sE)
- d) We *asked* the cats many questions. (sE)
- e) The cats *didn't give* an answer. (sE)

More practice from Exercise 5

Identify the lexical category of the italicized word(s) in each sentence below and support your claim with morphological evidence and syntactic evidence by filling in the chart. For sentence a), we have provided answers. Complete the rest!

- a) Taylor is smarter than the other *applicant*. (sE)
- b) People be thinkin' teenagers don't *know* nothin'.⁹ (AAE)
- c) The cats are *more funnier* than the dogs. (sE/non-sE)
- d) I Ø been doing dancing for a *long time*, for eight years already.¹⁰ (ChE)
- e) They *run* on the *beach*. (sE)
- f) The *geese* are flying home. (sE)
- g) The picnic *was enjoyable*. (sE)

⁶ shortened from Bayley and Santa Ana, 2004, p. 169.

⁷ Kendall, T., M. Quartey, C. Farrington, J. McLarty, S. Arnson, and B. Josler, B. (2018). *The Corpus of Regional African American Language: DCB (Washington DC 2016)*. Version 2018.10.06. Eugene, OR: The Online Resources for African American Language Project. <http://oraal.uoregon.edu/coraal>. Transcript ID DCA_se1_ag1_m_05_1.

⁸ Bayley, R., and O. Santa Ana (2004), 'Chicano English: Morphology and Syntax', In B. Kortmann, B., E. Schneider, K. Burridge, R. Mesthrie, and C. Upton, (eds), *A Handbook of Varieties of English*, vol. 2, 374-90, Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, p. 169.

⁹ Baker-Bell, A. (2020), *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity and Pedagogy*, New York: Routledge, p. 43.

¹⁰ Barrón and San Romón, n.d., p. 30–31; cited in Bayley, R. (2012). "Chicano English," In B. Kortmann, and K. Lunkenheimer, (eds), *The Mouton World Atlas of Variation in English*, 156-165, Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, p. 160.