

THE VERB TO BE IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR: A COMPARATIVE ANALYTICAL STUDY OF PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES**Ahmedov Azimjon***teacher of Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages.*

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Annotation: *This article presents a comparative and analytical study of the verb to be in English grammar based on the perspectives of major pedagogical grammarians, including Raymond Murphy, Betty Schramper Azar, Michael Swan, as well as Oxford and Cambridge grammar traditions. The paper examines how the verb to be is conceptualized in terms of form, meaning, and function, with particular attention to its role as a main verb and an auxiliary verb, its tense forms, and its use in nominal, adjectival, and existential constructions. By analyzing these approaches sequentially, the study identifies both shared principles and methodological differences in grammatical description and teaching practice. The findings highlight the central role of the verb to be in developing grammatical competence and emphasize the importance of combining structural accuracy with semantic and communicative interpretation in English language teaching. The article concludes with generalizations relevant to grammar instruction and applied linguistics research.*

Keywords: *Verb to be, copular verb, auxiliary verb, English grammar, grammatical function, pedagogical grammar, Murphy, Azar, Swan, Oxford, Cambridge.*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu maqola ingliz tili grammatikasidagi to be fe'lini yetakchi pedagogik grammatika olimlari — Raymond Murphy, Betty Schramper Azar, Michael Swan hamda Oxford va Cambridge grammatika an'analari qarashlari asosida qiyosiy va tahliliy tarzda o'rganadi. Maqolada to be fe'lining shakli, ma'nosi va funksiyalari, xususan uning mustaqil fe'l va yordamchi fe'l sifatidagi o'rni, zamon shakllari hamda nomli, sifatli va mavjudlik konstruksiyalarida qo'llanilishi alohida e'tibor bilan tahlil qilinadi. Ushbu yondashuvlarni ketma-ket tahlil qilish orqali grammatik tavsif va o'qitish amaliyotidagi umumiy tamoyillar hamda metodologik farqlar aniqlanadi. Natijalar ingliz tilini o'qitishda grammatik kompetensiyani shakllantirishda to be fe'lining markaziy o'rnini ko'rsatadi hamda strukturaviy aniqlikni semantik va kommunikativ talqin bilan uyg'unlashtirish muhimligini ta'kidlaydi. Maqola grammatika o'qitish va amaliy tilshunoslik tadqiqotlari uchun dolzarb bo'lgan umumiy xulosalar bilan yakunlanadi.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *To be fe’li, bog‘lovchi fe’l, yordamchi fe’l, ingliz tili grammatikasi, grammatik funksiya, pedagogik grammatika, Murphy, Azar, Swan, Oxford, Cambridge.*

Аннотация: *В статье представлено сравнительно-аналитическое исследование глагола to be в английской грамматике на основе взглядов ведущих специалистов по педагогической грамматике, включая Реймонда Мёрфи, Бетти Шрамффер Азар, Майкла Свона, а также грамматические традиции Oxford и Cambridge. В работе анализируются форма, значение и функции глагола to be, в частности его роль как смыслового и вспомогательного глагола, временные формы, а также употребление в именных, прилагательных и экзистенциальных конструкциях. Последовательный анализ данных подходов позволяет выявить общие принципы и методологические различия в грамматическом описании и практике преподавания. Полученные результаты подчеркивают центральную роль глагола to be в формировании грамматической компетенции и необходимость сочетания структурной точности с семантической и коммуникативной интерпретацией в обучении английскому языку. Статья завершается обобщениями, имеющими значение для преподавания грамматики и исследований в области прикладной лингвистики.*

Ключевые слова: *Глагол to be, связочный глагол, вспомогательный глагол, грамматика английского языка, грамматическая функция, педагогическая грамматика, Murphy, Azar, Swan, Oxford, Cambridge.*

The verb to be occupies a central position in English grammar and is one of the first grammatical items introduced to language learners. Despite its apparent simplicity, to be performs a wide range of grammatical and semantic functions, serving both as a main verb and as an auxiliary verb. It plays a crucial role in expressing identity, state, existence, tense, aspect, and voice. Because of its multifunctional nature and high frequency of use, the verb to be has received extensive attention in pedagogical grammar. This article aims to provide a comparative and analytical examination of how major grammar authorities conceptualize and present the verb to be, focusing on form, meaning, function, and pedagogical implications.

Murphy’s Practical and Form-Oriented Perspective

In *English Grammar in Use*, Raymond Murphy presents the verb to be in a highly accessible and learner-friendly manner. Murphy emphasizes the basic present and past forms (am, is, are, was, were) and introduces them as independent grammatical units rather than as part of a broader verb paradigm. His explanation focuses on clarity of form and immediate communicative usefulness.

Murphy conceptualizes to be primarily as a linking verb that connects the subject with a noun, adjective, or prepositional phrase. Typical examples illustrate identity (She is a teacher), description (He is tired), and location (They are at home). Murphy also pays close attention to question and negative forms, highlighting inversion and the use of not without auxiliary support. From a pedagogical standpoint, his approach reflects a rule-based but practical methodology aimed at preventing common learner errors.

Azar’s Meaning-Based and Instructional Framework

Betty Schramper Azar’s Fundamentals of English Grammar presents the verb to be within a structured instructional framework that integrates form, meaning, and use. Azar emphasizes the semantic role of to be as a verb that expresses states rather than actions. She explicitly contrasts to be with action verbs to help learners understand why it behaves differently in grammatical structures.

Azar also provides systematic explanations of tense forms, including present, past, and future (be going to), as well as the use of to be in progressive and passive constructions. Visual aids such as charts and timelines are frequently used to illustrate these functions. Her approach reflects a pedagogical philosophy that prioritizes learner awareness and gradual conceptual development.

Swan’s Analytical and Descriptive Interpretation

Michael Swan’s Practical English Usage approaches the verb to be from a descriptive and problem-oriented perspective. Rather than focusing on step-by-step instruction, Swan addresses the conceptual complexity of to be and clarifies areas that typically cause confusion for learners and teachers alike.

Swan distinguishes between to be as a copular verb and to be as an auxiliary, emphasizing that these functions follow different grammatical rules. He also discusses stylistic and pragmatic aspects, such as contracted forms, emphasis, and the use of there is / there are as existential constructions. Swan’s analysis highlights that to be does not merely serve grammatical purposes but also contributes to discourse organization and information structure.

Oxford and Cambridge: Functional and Communicative Approaches

Oxford and Cambridge grammar traditions present the verb to be through a functional and communicative lens. Their materials often introduce to be in meaningful contexts such as personal identification, classroom interaction, and everyday descriptions. Rather than isolating forms, these resources emphasize usage in authentic communicative situations.

Oxford grammar sources highlight the role of to be in nominal and adjectival predicates, while Cambridge materials extensively address its auxiliary function in continuous and passive constructions. Both traditions integrate corpus-based insights, showing how to be is

used in real spoken and written English. This approach supports communicative competence while maintaining grammatical accuracy.

Comparative Analysis of Pedagogical Approaches

A comparative examination reveals significant overlap among the scholars regarding the fundamental functions of the verb to be. All agree on its central role in expressing state, identity, and grammatical relations. However, their pedagogical priorities differ. Murphy emphasizes simplicity and error prevention, Azar focuses on conceptual understanding and instructional clarity, Swan prioritizes analytical depth, while Oxford and Cambridge promote contextualized and communicative learning.

These differences reflect broader methodological trends in applied linguistics, ranging from form-focused instruction to meaning-based and usage-oriented approaches. Each perspective offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the verb to be.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings suggest that effective teaching of the verb to be requires an integrated pedagogical approach. Learners benefit from explicit explanation of forms, clear semantic interpretation, and exposure to authentic communicative contexts. Overemphasis on mechanical drills may limit functional understanding, while purely communicative exposure may result in structural inaccuracies. Combining rule-based instruction with contextualized practice provides a more balanced and effective learning experience.

General Conclusions

In conclusion, the verb to be represents a cornerstone of English grammar, functioning as both a lexical and grammatical element. The comparative analysis of Murphy, Azar, Swan, and Oxford and Cambridge grammar traditions demonstrates that its complexity extends beyond basic forms to include semantic, syntactic, and discourse-level functions. An integrated pedagogical framework that combines structural accuracy, semantic clarity, and communicative relevance offers the most effective approach to teaching and learning the verb to be. This study contributes to ongoing discussions in grammar instruction and applied linguistics research by highlighting the importance of multifaceted grammatical analysis.

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