Marginal Verbs in English

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(وَتَبَارَكَ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَعِندَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ)

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

(الزخرف:٨٥)

To Our Mothers, with Respect and Love.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The present study aims at presenting marginal verbs in English. Marginal verbs represent a class of verbs that can function as both main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

The study consists of one chapter which is divided into two sections. The first section presents a look at marginal verbs in terms of definitions and nature. The second section tackles the classes of marginal verbs which are primary verbs and semi-modals. These two classes are explained in terms of definitions, grammatical functions and uses. Finally, the conclusions sum up the findings of the research.

Contents

Chapter One
Marginal Verbs in English

1.1 A Look at Marginal Verbs

Every sentence must have a verb. Verbs in English, as well as in other languages, form a large and versatile group. They differ in relation to the meaning they express. As far as the forms they take, they can be divided into groups; the number of the groups differ from one to another. The main reason behind the differences in the classification is the point of view grammarians take into account. For some of them, the most important factor of the classification is the meaning of the verbs; others look at their morphological forms. Although there are so many differences, all grammarians agree that modal verbs form a distinctive verb phrase when compared with lexical verbs (Kukucz, 2009: 5).

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 92)divide verbs into two main classes. These are lexical verbs and auxiliary verbs. The main criterion for this classification is the inflectional morphology and their syntax. Auxiliary verbs are divided into two classes. The first verb class is modal auxiliary verbs such as **'can**, **may**, **will**, **shall**, **could**, **must**, **ought to**, **need'**. The second verb class is non-modal auxiliary verbs which includes ' **be**, **have** , and **do'**.

Quirk et al (1985: 18) classify verbs into major groups. The classification is related to the function of items in the verbs phrase. They distinguish lexical verbs from the closed system of auxiliary verbs and subdivide the latter into primary and modal auxiliaries:

A. Lexical verbs such as **walk**, **write**, **play** etc.

B. Auxiliary verbs which are subdivided into:

i . Primary verbs which include ' **do**, **have**, **be** '

ii. Modals such as **may**, **can**, **shall**, **will**, **might**, **could**, **should**, **must**,

 ought to, **used to**, **need** and **dare** .

 Many English verbs have five forms: –S present third person singular, -ING present participle, - ED past tense and -ED past participle. Regular lexical verbs have the same -ed inflection for both the past tense and the -ed participle. Irregular lexical verb forms vary from three (e.g. put, puts, putting) to eight (**be**, **am**, **is**, **are**, **was**, **were**, **being**, **been**). Modal auxiliaries are defective in not having infinitive (*to may) -ING participle (*maying), -ed participle (*mayed) or imperative (*may) (Quirk et al, 1985: 18).

 Some of the modals differ in their inflectional and syntactic behavior from others and are referred to as marginal. On the other hand, further items like **'had better** or **tend to'** could be added to the list since they have a similar semantic relation in the verb phrase to the modals. These expressions are often called semi-auxiliaries (Ibid).

 Alexander (1988: 208) points out that structurally modal auxiliaries resemble primary verbs **'be**, **have** and **do'** in some ways and differ from them in others. Both primary verbs as well as modal auxiliary verbs take the negative particle **'no'** in negation. In questions, they take the pre-subject position. However, modal auxiliaries, unlike primary auxiliaries, are defective verbs because they lake some of forms that ordinary lexical verbs have.

Palmer(1987:158) adopts the term '**Marginal verbs**' referring those verbs that have the same function. These verbs are divided into two classes, the first one is the primary verbs (**have**, **do**, **be**) and the second one is semi-modal such as (**dare**, **need**, **ought to**, **used to**). Both of them have a function as auxiliaries and also as main verbs. Primary verbs occur as full verbs in sentences once they are not followed by any other verbs.

The other type of marginal verbs is semi-modals (**dare**, **need, ought to**, **used to**). Semi-modal verbs often called auxiliary verbs and also known as marginal modal verbs. A marginal modal is a verb that displays some but not all of the properties of an auxiliary verb. There are many properties related to marginal verbs First, in terms of meaning, they resemble modal auxiliaries like **can**, **must**, etc. Second, they can be constructed either as pure auxiliaries or as main verbs without a difference in meaning. Thus, they differ from primary auxiliary verbs, which also occur in different constructions, but with a clear difference in meaning as far as the uses between the auxiliary and main verb (Quirk et al, 1985: 138).

1.2 Classes of Marginal verbs

This section sheds light on the classes of marginal verbs which are divided, according to Palmer (1988:158), into two groups: The first group is Semi Modals which include: **dare**, **need**, **ought to** and **used to**. The second group includes Primary Verbs which are '**be**, **have** and **do'**.

1.2.1 Marginal Modal Verbs

Semi-model auxiliary verbs, also known as marginal modal verbs, are those verbs that can function as modal auxiliary verbs. The bare form of the main verb always follows semi modal verbs which are **dare** , **need**, **used to** and **ought to.** Semi modal verbs are used with main verbs, but they cannot be used as main verbs by themselves (Alexander, 1988: 208).

Quirk et al (1985: 138) state that marginal modal verbs that can be regarded as the central modals in each verb has also a homophonic verb which is constructed as a main verb :

1. She needn't play tennis. (auxiliary verb)

2. She doesn't need to play tennis. (full verb)

1.2.1.1 DARE

Dare has a jumble of forms. In one occasion, it can be used as a main verb and in other occasions, it is used as an auxiliary verb. It has one infinitive with or without **'to'**:

3. Some people dare (to) walk along here at night .
4. Few of us had dared to consent the challenge .
(Quirk et al, 1985: 139)

'Dare' can be used mostly in negatives and questions than in positive. The negative cases are **'do not**, **does not**, **did not dare** where **dare** here is a main auxiliary verb. But **'dare not'** or **'dared not'** as auxiliary verbs. In interrogatives, one can use **'do'** or **'did'** with **'dare'**:

5. Do they **dare** ask for more? (main verb)
6. They do not **dare** speak about what happened. (main verb)
7. He **daren't** escape. (modal auxiliary verb) (Hornby, 1975: 11)

'Dare' is the verb that can be used with all the characteristics of a main verb, and when it is used as main verb it requires an object. It can be followed by to-infinitive or an infinitive without **'to'**. When the verb **'dare'** comes as a main verb, it has to be replaced by **'do'** in reduced clause constructions:

8. She didn't dare to speak to us . Did she?

Also, it can be used in idiomatic construction expressing a threatening rebuke :

 9. How dare you do such a thing? (Quirk et al, 1985: 139)

1.2.1.2 NEED

'Need' is a semi-modal verb because in some ways it likes a modal verb and in other ways a main verb. When the verb 'need' is used as a main verb, it has -S third person singular; and questions and negatives are made with **'do'**. It is usually followed by **'to'**:

10. Everybody needs to rest sometimes.

11. Do we need to write that? (Swan:2005: 342)

But when **'need'** is used as a modal auxiliary, it does not have –s; and questions and negatives are made without **'do'**. Also, it is not followed by an infinitive with **'to'**. As an auxiliary verb, it can be used without the inflected **-ed** form:

12. She needn't to eat .

The modal auxiliary **'need'** normally refers to immediate necessity. It is often used to ask for permission; usually permission not to do something. It is not used to talk about habitual or general necessity:

13.   It's ok- you needn't /don't need to pay for that phone call .

The present tense forms of '**need**' are used when making decisions about the future as in:

14. Need I come in tomorrow ?

'Will need to' can be used to talk about future obligation , and give advice for the future:

15. We'll need to repair the roof next year .

After the verb **'need',** an –ing form can be used with the same meaning as a passive infinitive, especially in British English:

16. That sofa needs cleaning again.((Swan:2005: 342)

'Need' can be used with unnecessary things. If one says that 'somebody needs not have done something', one means that he or she did it, but that it was unnecessary - a waste of time:

 17. I needn't have cooked so much food , nobody was hungry .

 'Need not' or **'do not need to**' is used to say that there is no obligation; **must not** is used to say that there is an obligation not to do something , but used for necessity:

18. You needn't tell John – he already knows. (Swan, 2005: 343)

1.2.1.3 OUGHT TO

'Ought to' is a verb from of a marginal modal that can be used as an auxiliary verb or a full verb:

19 . We ought to write our lesson .

20 . Ought they to stop talking?.

When 'ought to' is used as an auxiliary and someone wants to negate it, it can be negated with the contracted negative **'oughtn't to'** and uncontracted negative **'ought not to'**. It normally has the to-infinitive; and this style can be the bare infinitive that occurs in non-assertive contexts:

21. You ought to stop smoking .

22. You oughtn't to stop smoking .

23. Ought you to smoke so much? (Quirk et al,1985: 139)

The particle **'to'** that follows **'ought'** is also optional and can be omitted as in:

24. Yes, I think I ought (to).

In assertive contexts, however, the to- less form is unacceptable:

25. We ought to give him another chance.

Once **'ought to'** is considered as a main verb, in this case, it may take a range of different types of

complements such as   an infinitive with 'to' as in (26) or a noun expression as in (27):

26. They did not ought to do that sort of thing.

27. Did we ought to have done the job ?

Here, the particle **'to'** of **'ought to'** is optional following ought in ellipsis (Radford, 2004 : 40).

1.2.1.4   USED TO

According to Quirk et al (1985: 140), **'used to'** can be used as a full verb and modal an auxiliary verb. It   is used to talk about things   which   happened in the past and expresses a habit or state that existed in the past. Semantically   not so much a modal auxiliary as an auxiliary of tense and aspect in category. It usually comes with   **-to** infinitive and only happens in the past tense:

28. She used to attend regularly. (was in the habit of attended….')

29. I used to   be interested in bird-watching. ('I was formerly….')

This marginal verb can be used as auxiliary verb as in (30) and as a main verb as in (31):

30. It used not to rain.

31. They did not use(d) to run fast.

In the negative case and when the negative is understood   as negating   **'used'**, here **'used'** is an auxiliary verb. Otherwise   '**used**' a main verb or a full verb like the verb **'prefer'**:

32. He prefers not to act like that.   (Palmar, 1987: 170)

'Used to' occurs both as an operator and with **Do**-support. In the latter case, the spellings **'use t**o' and **'used to**' both occur. Uncertainty of the status of this verb is as to whether it is to be treated as an invariable form, like a modal auxiliary, or as a form with an infinitive like a full verb:

33. He didn't use to smoke

34. He used not to smoke

The interrogative operator construction used (he) is rare even in British English:

35. Did he use to smoke ?

36. He used to smoke, didn't he? (Alexander, 1988: 285)

1.2.2 Marginal Primary Verbs

Primary verbs (**have**, **do**, **be**) represent one subclass of marginal verbs. They can function as main verbs once they occur alone in the sentence, and not followed by any other verbs. These verbs can be also as an auxiliary verbs when precede other verbs in the sentence (Palmer,1988:158).

The primary verbs **'be**, **have**, and **do'** take part in the formation of various grammatical constructions. Their function could be either main verbs or auxiliary verbs. Primary verbs are sometimes referred to as primary auxiliaries.

1.2.2.1 Have

'Have' is the most versatile verb. It takes one form with different uses. **'Have'** is a kind of marginal Verbs that functions as a full verb and auxiliary verb. When **'have'** can be used as a full verb, there is a close formal similarity in the following pairs :

37. He has three houses .

38.He owns three houses.

It is necessary to distinguish two uses here. One is stative and indicating possession in the general sense; the other is dynamic and indicating experience, achievement, etc. Semantically, the difference can be seen in the two possible interpretations of the following:

39. We had sandwiches .

40.She had a son .

In the stative use, these mean we took sandwiches with us and she was the mother of a boy. In the dynamic use, they mean we ate sandwiches and she gave birth to a son(Palmer, 1987:162).

There are at least four formal distinctions between the two uses :

A- In the stative use, **'have'** commonly has the weak form found in the auxiliary

41. He's no friends .

42. I've plenty of time .

B- Stative '**have'** is   often replaced in colloquial speech by   **'have got'**   which   is   morphologically,   but   not semantically, the perfect of the verb **'get'**:

43. I have three pounds

C- Stative **'have'** commonly occurs with nice properties:

44.I haven't any money.

D- Stative '**have'** never occurs in the passive. So, it is not possible to say:

45. Three pounds are had by me.

But   passives   are   rare   with   dynamic   use.   Consequently, one   can   notice   that   the   stative   use   of   have   has   the notion   of   possession,   in   the   wide   sense,   i.e.   to   include ownership(Palmer, 1987: 163).

Dynamic   **'have**'   occurs   in   a   variety   of   senses, referring   to   experience,   achievement,   receiving   plus some types of action:

46. Have a holiday

47. Have difficulty. (experience)

There   is   some   idiomatic   restrictions   on   the   possible objects, since one can have a drink but not have an eat. There   is   the   most   easily   explained   form   of   the construction.   The   subject   of   the   sentence   has   a   co-referential   pronoun   later   in   the   sentence   either   after   a preposition or in the possessive form. This is shown by:

48. She had the child taken from her.

49.I had my house burgled last night.

In theory, the passive and **have** construction taken together can move the position of the noun phrase in the active sentence:

50. Arthur took Bill's book from Claude to Dennis .

51. Bill's book was taken from Claude to Dennis (by Arthur) .[passive] (Palmer, 1987: 165)

1.2.2.2 Be

It is a verb which is used in English and has multiple forms. It can be used as a full verb and an auxiliary verb . As a lexical verb, Biber et al(1999: 428) state that it is the most copula verb in English, serving to link the subject noun phrase with a subject predicative or obligatory adverbials:

52. The odds are favorable enough.

The full verb **'be'** has certain characteristics of an auxiliary. It takes all the finite and non-finite positive forms as **'is**, **are**, **am**, **was**, **were**, **been** and **being'** ; and it takes all the weak forms. At the same time, it is related to its position in many places in terms of negation, inversion, question and emphatic affirmation without do:

53. They aren't sad.

54. Is she sad?

55. That woman is a teacher.

The full verb and the auxiliaries of the verb **'Be'** does not usually occur with **'do'**. However, **'do'** may occur with auxiliary 'Be' in the imperative form and also in the negation of the imperative, because it cannot be used in the form of **'be'nt'**:

56. Do be reading when I come in !

57. Don't be lazy when I come in !

The full verb **'be'** can occur with **'do'** where the auxiliary cannot :

58. Why don't you be more careful ?

59. Why don't be reading

Here, the forms with **'do'** suggest single occasions perhaps to niggle about a careless action, to blame a naughty child as in:

60. Why do you more carful ?

'Do' seems a little less likely if the situation doesn't have negation:

61. Why do you be so foolish? ?(Palmer, 1965: 159)

As an auxiliary, **'be'** has two distinct functions: marking progressive aspect and passive voice:

62. You are going so slow.

63. Shareholders will be advised of the outcome as soon as possible. (Biber at al, 1999: 428)

There are other forms related to **'be'** which include: **'Is to**, **are to**, **am to**, **was to**, and **were to'** which function rather modal verbs:

64. He's to come tomorrow.

The set doesn't, however, contain any non-finite forms. They cannot take **'be to**, **being to** or **been to**. It's unsuitable to refer to the verb **'Be to'**; instead it will be

referred to as '**Is to**'. It has the feature of an auxiliary; these forms don't have finite forms and don't precede any other verbs. There are four basic uses for **'Is to'**, the first two essentially temporal, the other two modal:

A- Present tense indicate future events that are planned or to arrangement:

65. There is to be a new leader.

Futurity can be referred to by an infinitive form of verb with to but no 'is, are, am'

B- Past tense forms refers to a future in the past

66. Worse was to follow.

C- Past and present forms refer to what is sensible or possible ,for example:

67. I cannot see how this is to be avoided

D- The present tense refer to command or instruction:

68. You are to come tomorrow. (Palmer,1987: 160-1)

Consequently, **'be'** and **'have'** can't be interpreted as auxiliaries, it's not possible to say "He hopes to be playing" or He hopes to have finished, but only say 'He hopes to be a policeman', 'He hopes to have a care' (where Be and Have are lexical verbs) (Ibid).

2-1-3- Do

The verb **'do'** can occur as an auxiliary or as a lexical verb depending on whether it occurs alone in the verb phrase or precede other verbs. As an auxiliary, Thomson and Martinet(1986: 120) sustains that **'do'** is

used to form the negative and interrogative of the present simple and past simple tenses of ordinary verbs:

69. He does not work.

70. Did he work?

Thomson and Martinet(1986: 127) add that there are certain contexts in which **'do'** is an auxiliary verb and is used to avoid repetition of a previous ordinary verb. They include: short agreements and disagreements as in (71), tag questions as in (72), emphasis as in (73) or additions as in (74):

71. Tom talks too much. ~ Yes, he does./ No, he doesn't.

72. He lives here, doesn't he?

73. I do agree with you.

74. She lives here but I don't.

As a full verb, Palmer(1965: 148) maintains that **'do'** has no weak forms. It can be used in the continuous or simple forms of the past or present:

75. What is he **doing** tomorrow? (near future)

76. What does he **do** in the evening? (habit)

Conclusions

Marginal verbs referring the verbs have the same functions , both of them have functions as auxiliaries and main verbs. Marginal verbs are divided into two classes . The first class is Semi-modals which include 'dare , need used to ought to'. Semi-modal auxiliary verbs are verbs that sometimes behave like modal auxiliary verbs. They are also known as marginal modal verbs.)Like the "proper" modal verbs, they are used with the base form of verbs (the infinitive without to) to create a unique meaning. **Dare** and **need** are considered semi-modal because they can also function as main verbs, able to take nouns and infinitives as objects and to conjugate for person, tense, and number. **Ought to** and **used to**, while unable to be main verbs, are considered semi-modal because they are always followed by infinitives, as compared to true modals, which can never be followed by infinitives.

English has three primary auxiliary verbs: **'do**, **be**, and **have'**. They represent the second class of marginal verbs due to their dual functions as auxiliaries, preceding other verbs, and main verbs, when alone in the sentence and playing the main role. All three verbs take part in the formation of various grammatical constructions, but carry very little meaning themselves. **'Have'** is considered as the most versatile verb due to its different uses.

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