

Soroka L. T.,

Lecturer at Department of Foreign Languages  
National University "Lviv Polytechnic"

Pukaliak M. V.,

Lecturer at Department of Foreign Languages  
National University "Lviv Polytechnic"

## ASPECTUAL CLASSES OF PREDICATES IN MODERN ENGLISH

**Summary.** The article provides a brief survey of the aspectual classifications of predicates, starting from Z. Vendler's classification of verbs into achievements, accomplishments, activities, and states. Semelfactives, as the fifth aspectual class, are discussed in details by C. Smith. The paper explores the criteria for the aspectual classifications of verbs and verbal phrases. Attention is paid to the study of telicity as the main parameter which determines the aspectual value of a predicate. Telicity in English is a property of verbal phrases. Therefore, it is not applicable to the classifications of verbs. The latter differ as to the objects they are valent to. The verbs followed by incremental objects denote an event of change (telic events). The verbs which take non-incremental objects denote atelic processes.

**Key words:** aspectuality, telicity, achievements, accomplishments, states, activities, semelfactives.

**Formulation of the scientific problem. Analysis of the latest investigations of the question.** On the basis of modern cognitive investigations in reference to the character of the representation of conceptual picture of the world the problem of the verbalization of the concept "the character of realization of the action in the time" arises that actualizes the necessity of new investigations of aspectual features. In linguistics, aspect has received considerable attention over the past 40 years and, most especially, in recent years.

Besides that the aspectual verbal classification of Z. Vendler, which is basic in the field of lexical aspect, caused the discussion among other researchers about the possibility and rightfulness of the definition of the aspectual features of verbs. This classification is also of an importance today. The classification of Z. Vendler became the basis of the investigations in the field of aspectual features of such linguists as B. Comrie (1976) [1], D. Dowty (1979) [4], C. Smith (1997, 1999) [9], M. Moens (1988) [7], S. Rothstein (2004, 2008) [8], J. Dölling (2003, 2013) [5], H. Verkuyl (1972) [12].

The aim of the article is to analyse and give a precise description of the the main aspectual classifications of predicates in modern English. It also consists in the complex study of semelfactive verbs as the separate class of predicates.

**Presentation of the basic mathrial and interpretation of the results of the investigation.** Z. Vendler distinguished four classes of verbs, based on empirical evidence such as different patterns of cooccurrence with various kinds of temporal modifiers. The classification is semantic, since the different verb classes are distinguished by the different properties of the events in their denotation. The four classes that Z. Vendler distinguishes are states, such as *love*, *know* and *believe*; activities, such as *run*, *walk* and *swim*; achievements, such as *arrive*, *die*, *notice*, *realise*, and *reach*; and accomplishments, such as *read (a book)*, and *build (the house)* [11, p. 37].

Activities and accomplishments are distinguished from achievements and states in that the former allow the use of continuous and

progressive aspects. Activities and accomplishments are distinguished from each other by boundedness: activities do not have a terminal point (a point before which the activity cannot be said to have taken place, and after which the activity cannot continue – for example "*John drew a circle*") whereas accomplishments do. Of achievements and states, achievements are instantaneous whereas states are durative. Achievements and accomplishments are distinguished from one another in that achievements take place immediately (such as in *recognize* or *find*) whereas accomplishments approach an endpoint incrementally (as in *paint a picture* or *build a house*) [11, p. 40].

The classification of Z. Vendler is based on such pairs of antonyms as [+/-dynamic], [+/-durative], [+/-telic]. Aspectual classification of Z. Vendler is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Aspectual classification of Z. Vendler [11, p. 143–160]

Aspectual class	[+/-telic]	[+/-dynamic]	[+/-durative]	Examples
Achievement	+	+	-	<i>to reach, to spot</i>
Accomplishment	+	+	+	<i>to run a mile</i>
Activity	-	+	+	<i>to run, to draw</i>
State	-	-	+	<i>to love, to believe</i>

As we see this classification with above mentioned examples passes the limits of one verb and reaches the predicate. For example, the verb *draw* as monolexemic unit belongs to the category of activity and the predicate *draw a circle* belongs to the class of accomplishment. The problem of the Z. Vendler's classification consists in a choice of the criterions: the [+/-telic] quality cannot be the characteristic of verbs, as far as the limit in English is defined compositionally on the level of a word combination and sometimes on the level of a sentence.

The [+/-durative] quality differentiates momentary actions from durative, while the [+/-dynamic] characteristic defines the verb as dynamic or static. The category of a state includes the verbs, which point out quality and property of a thing and do not express the change of state. The verbs of state do not express semantic meaning of a process. But there are such cases, when they are used in progress. The meaning of a temporal character of the action actualizes in such situations. For example, Z. Vendler and C. Smith indicate that when the verbs are used in a function of a stative verbs, they do not have a stative meaning in progress, but they change in the time. Which means that the verbs from the class of state change into the class of activity [9; 11].

The activities of Z. Vendler do not foreknow any limit in their progress. The activity can be infinite in theory and the continuance

of its realization can not determine its discontinuance in any way. The verb of the category of activity can change into the class of accomplishment, if its object is indicated. The predicates of state and activity are [-telic], while the predicates of accomplishment and achievement are [+telic]. The [+/- durative] quality is crucial in the separation of two last aspectual classes. The accomplishment is defined as a culminating processes and the achievement as a momentary activity.

The dissimilar approach of Z. Vendler (the same verb belongs to different aspectual classes in its classification) provoked a considerable discussion. The first, who indicated the lack of correspondence in the classification of Z. Vendler was D. Dowty. He pointed out that the attempt to divide the verbs outright in aspectual category is artificial and primarily mistaken, as far as the considerable variance is characteristic of verbs in expressing of aspectual peculiarities. The same verb obtains the different categoric characteristics in different contexts and afterwards the primary aspectual class of the verb (which, for example, was indicated on the basis of its denotative semantics) matches not always with the aspectual class of its contextual projections [4, p. 62]. The verbal phrase (predicate) D. Dowty considers as the unit of aspectual classification. The view of H. Verkuyl is interesting in this sense. He thinks that the aspectual features should be defined not only on the level of the verb or predicate, but also on the level of whole sentence [12, p. 32].

Proceeding the tradition of Z. Vendler, it is important to mention that there are verbs which apparently do not fit into any of his four commonly known classes. There is a very obvious class which does not fit into the classification. Namely the class of semelfactive verbs, such as *to kick, to knock, to jump, to skip, and to flap (its wings)*, which are homonymous with activity verbs but which denote 'single action events', as when *knock* denotes a set of events in which one's hand or an object in one's hand comes into contact with a hard surface only once.

In his discussion of lexical aspect, B. Comrie (1976) distinguished the category of semelfactive or punctual events as a fifth kind of event and thus a fifth class of verbal predicates. His division of the categories is as follows: states, activities, and accomplishments are durative, while semelfactives and achievements are punctual. Of the durative verbs, states are unique as they involve no change, and activities are atelic (that is, have no "terminal point") whereas accomplishments are telic. Of the punctual verbs, semelfactives are atelic, and achievements are telic. The following Table 2 exemplifies the lexical aspect in English.

Table 2

## Aspectual classification of B. Comrie [1, p. 13]

	No duration	Has duration
Telic	Achievement	Accomplishment
	<i>realise</i>	<i>drown</i>
Atelic	Semelfactive	Activity
	<i>knock</i>	<i>walk</i>

C. Smith (1991/1997) introduced a new term: situation type. Situation types are concepts, idealized classes of situations formed according to their distinctive temporal features. She distinguishes five types of situation: state, activity, accomplishment, semelfactive, and achievement. They play a role in the linguistic presentation of situations. The categories are defined by the temporal semantic features Static vs. Dynamic, Telic vs. Atelic, and Durative vs. Instantaneous (see Table 3).

Table 3

Situation type	Temporal properties	Examples
state	stative, durative; (telicity is irrelevant to stative situations)	<i>know the answer, love Mary</i>
activity	dynamic, durative, atelic	<i>laugh, stroll in the park</i>
accomplishment	dynamic, durative and telic (i. e. consisting of process and outcome)	<i>build a house, walk to school, learn Greek</i>
semelfactive	dynamic, atelic, punctual (i. e. non-durative/instantaneous)	<i>tap, knock</i>
achievement	dynamic, telic, punctual (i. e. non-durative/instantaneous)	<i>win a race, reach the top</i>

States consist of a single, undifferentiated, static period. Events, in contrast, are dynamic, with successive stages which take up time. Dynamism consists in the property of successive stages. The distinction between telic and atelic events turns on whether an event results in a change of state. Telic events have a natural final endpoint which constitutes the goal (telos) or outcome of the event. In contrast, atelic events have arbitrary final endpoints and can stop at any time. Thus telic events may be completed or terminated, while atelic events are only terminated. Durative events and states involve intervals, whereas instantaneous events occur in principle at a moment – the minimal interval [9, p. 286].

Situation types are realized linguistically at the level of the clause by the verb constellation of a given sentence. They are determined by rules which compose the relevant lexical values of the verb, its arguments, and adverbials and other forms. The rules automatically invoke the schema of a situation type. The most important differences between schemata involve endpoints. Event (non-stative) schemata have two endpoints if they are durative, a single stage if instantaneous. In contrast, the stative schema has no endpoints: the coming-about and ending of a state involve changes, distinct from the state itself. Situation types are covert linguistic categories with unique distributional properties. We shall use the terms Stative, Activity, etc., to refer to situation types, verb constellations, and sentences [9, p. 287].

M. Moens and M. Steedman [7] offer their own aspectual classification of verbs, which details the types of events and states. The basis of this aspectual hierarchy is the difference between events and states. The events are characterized as atomic, that is to say momentary, without complicated inner structure and extended, which foresee the presence of state. The second criterion of the characteristic of events is [+/- consequent]. M. Moens and M. Steedman distinguish two types of momentary occurrences: a culmination of the events (*to die, to win*) and momentary activities (*to knock, to blink*). The culmination of the events foresees the presence of the result, the transition into new state, while the momentary activities are without result. Taking into consideration the enumerated characteristics and examples we can conclude, that culminations of events of M. Moens and M. Steedman meet achievements of Z. Vendler. Momentary activities are new category, which is not indicated by Z. Vendler. It is aspectual class, which, as it was mentioned above, C. Smith defined as semelfactives. Such verbs denote momentary action and have a frequentative meaning in continuous aspect and also in combination with adverbial modifiers of continuous action.

The continuous events are culminating processes (*to erect*) and processes (*to work, to run*). The culminating processes are characterized by the [+culminated] quality, which is evident from

the name, that is they foresee the presence of result by reaching of culmination of events. The processes are [-culminated].

The division of states into habitual state, consequent state, progressive state and lexical state is new. The state is the lexical state in the traditional understanding of a static character, which is represented by the verbs of state, which we can define as stative verbs on the basis of their denotative semantics (*to know, to believe, to understand*). The progressive state calls for special attention. On the one hand, the contradiction lies in the name, because the continuance presupposes that the action and the state is of continuous meaning. On the other hand, according to the words of H. de Swart this category is universally acknowledged in linguistics, and denotes the state, in which the action is in the moment of continuance [3, p. 353]. The habitual state represents the constant regular action, while the consequent state denotes the action with culmination of events.

The classification of J. Dölling is similar to the classification of M. Moens and M. Steedman in its hierarchical structure [4]. The author defines 13 aspectual classes of predicates. The difference between the happenings and the point forms the basis of this derivational structure. Happenings are divided into boundaries and moments. These two categories J. Dölling correlates with already known achievements and semelfactives, accordingly, the processes and events correspond to the activities and accomplishments. However, J. Dölling differentiates such constructions, as *to drink a glass of beer, to climb to the summit* on the one hand, and *to play the sonata, to climb a mile* on the other hand, though both types of constructions denote culminating process. The first type predetermines the change, the transition to the new state, and the second does not foresee it. Thus, the first type is defined as aspectual class of changes and the second as aspectual class of episodes.

The figure 1 demonstrates that the states of J. Dölling [4, p. 12] are different. They are divided into habitual states (*use to drink*) and episodic states (*be drunk*). The habitual states have common features with occurrences, which contain [+/-telic] events, as far as both demand the homogeneous actions (which are neither begin, nor the end) for their realization at least. However they are different, because the events consist of temporal adjoining actions (intervals), while the habitual states are formed by means of actions, which take place in different periods of time. The events, which occur constantly, form habitual states. For example, the habitual state *John uses*

*to drink beer* foresees the repeated realization of process of beer drinking by John in different periods of time.

All aspectual classifications, which appeared in form of critical response to the verbal categorization of Z. Vendler, are realized on the level of predicates. In this connection points arise: how aspectual classification of verbs is achieved and realized? We find the answer by S. Rothstein. She chooses the quality of some verbs to denote change, transition into a new [+/- change] state, and also presence or absence of [+/- stages] inner structure. The investigator divides the verbs into four known classes of Z. Vendler on the basis of these characteristics. The answer about the difference between accomplishments and activities is still inexplicable, which was always the cornerstone in all aspectual classifications. Both contain the stages in their structures, that is they have complete inner [+stages] structure, but, while the accomplishments denote the change of state [+change] activities do not [-change]. The [+/-change] quality is similar to the difference between [+/- telic] predicates, because the [+telic] predicates denote the change of state, and [-telic] do not foresee the change of state (and do not have culmination). The [+/-change] quality realizes on the level of verbs so: it is observed, that some verbs (that are verbs of accomplishment in this case) have the quality to combine with nouns in the position of direct object, which set limits, make the [+telic] action denoted by the verb, while other verbs (the units of the category of activity) do not have this characteristic. The direct object of the accomplishment verbs, which is called incremental (because the verbs are often called incremental) appear in a role of incremental theme (theta role) on the level of deep syntax.

The term “incremental thet” a role was introduced by D. Dowty (1979, 1991) as a prototype to the patient, which makes homomorphic connection with the action, which is denoted by the verb – element  $x^1$ , which is the part of the patient X, corresponds to the element  $e^1$ , which is the part of the action denoted by the verb E, element  $x^2$  corresponds the element  $e^2$  etc. The mereological theory (the part of the whole) of M. Krifka is based on homomorphic connection. He introduces this term for the designation of an incremental theta role – gradual patient [5, p. 198].

The accomplishment without quantifier have [-telic] meaning in combination with nouns in plural form, as far as homomorphic connection, which establishes with the verb and object, has not any quantitative limitation, is [+telic]. The direct objects of the verbal category of activity are not under the influence of the verbs (are not exhausted), thus are not incremental: *to push a cart, to tickle a girl* (neither cart, nor girl undergo qualitative changes).

Another two aspectual classes of S. Rothstein, namely the achievements and states are interpreted from the traditional viewpoint: both do not contain the stages in their structure and differ concerning the definition of change. The achievements denote the change. Aspectual classes of S. Rothstein are shown in Table 4.

Aspectual classification of W. Croft [2] is more complicated than the classification of Z. Vendler, as far as W. Croft defines his categorization as two-dimensional: he includes time (t) and quality (q) parameters. Under the quality parameter it is understood the interchange of states (not the change). According to the definition of the author, the lexical type of aspectuality describes the action, which is going on and expends in the time.

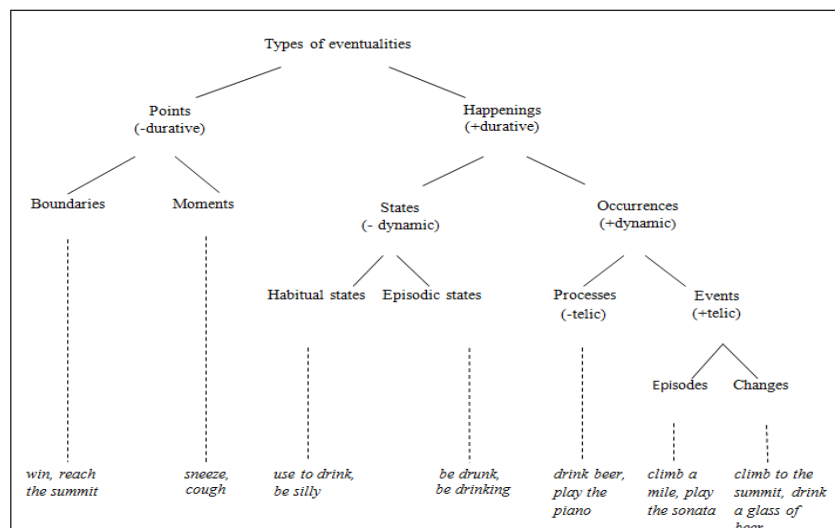


Figure 1. Aspectual classification of J. Dölling

Table 4

## Aspectual classification of S. Rothstein [8, p. 194]

Aspectual classes	[+/- stages]	[+/-change]	Examples
Achievement	-	+	<i>to spot, to find</i>
Accomplishment	+	+	<i>to write, to read</i>
Activity	+	-	<i>to push, to run</i>
State	-	-	<i>to love, to believe</i>

The achievements in this classification fall into 3 types:

- 1) reversible directed: *The door opened*;
- 2) irreversible directed: *The window shattered*;
- 3) cyclic (semelfactive) achievement: *The mouth squeaked* [2, p. 24].

The consequent state of reversible achievements predetermines the return in previous, primary state and it is obvious from the name of this type. Reversible achievement does not include this change. The same as S. Rothstein, W. Croft does not distinguish semelfactives as a definite aspectual class, but defines them as achievements of a separate type, though W. Croft defines them as a cyclic type, while S. Rothstein defines them as achievements, which does not denote the change of state.

The activities of W. Croft are divided into directed activities and indirected or cyclic activities. The directed activities include the change of a long duration in accordance with the quality parameter, but they do not denote the transition into a consequent state (e. g.: *The soup cooled* [2, p. 25]). The cyclic activities represent the consequence of cyclic achievements. For example, such verbs as *to chant, to talk, to sing* express the repeatedness of sounds, while *to run, to walk, to dance* are the consequence of some steps.

The states of W. Croft include 4 types:

- 1) acquired states: *The window is shattered*;
- 2) inherent states: *She is French*;
- 3) transitory states: *The door is open*;
- 4) punctual states: *The sun is at its zenith* [2, p. 23].

It is possible to combine the first 2 types into one category of permanent state – according to the terminology of B. Comrie “absolute states” [1, p. 104]. The predicate can have not only permanent, but also transitive meaning: on the one hand *be dry* denotes transitive state by the description of clothes, on the other hand it denotes the permanent state, for example by describing a desert.

**Conclusion.** Having analysed the theoretical sources we may conclude that in the study of semantics, the aspectual verb classification attempts to identify the internal temporal constituency of verbs used in varying situations. This basically means that we divide verbs into what are four main classes, depending on the semantic meaning associated with them when used in sentences that represent different situations in the world. These, for the most part, undisputed classes are (1) states, (2) activities, (3) achievements, and (4) accomplishments.

States are verbs that do not reflect external change, such as *know* or *believe*. Activities include verbs that do have external change, have a homogenous description (there is only a process with no endpoint in the action), and have an agent, such as *run* or *eat*. Achievements reflect external change and are homogeneous (but this time have an endpoint with no process) and do not have an agent. Achievements, according to D. Dowty, include *to notice, to fall asleep, to receive a letter, to break, to knock, and to shatter*. Finally, accomplishments reflect external change and are heteroge-

neous (so they include both a process and an endpoint) and have an agent. Accomplishments are verbs like *to draw a circle, and to build a house*.

While these four aspectual verb classes are for the most part undisputed among semanticists, some have proposed that there are a few remaining verbs that do not seem to fit into these categories. The proposed fifth aspectual class called *semelfactives* may be necessary to cover such verbs as *break, knock, rap, tap, and shatter*.

**Perspectives for further investigations.** The modern aspectual classification (in particular the classification of S. Rothstein) opened new perspectives for the investigation of categorical semantics of the verb, involving into the analysis not only the lexical semantics, but also its combinatorial analysis, which is an argument structure on the deep level of syntax.

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**Сорока Л. Т., Пукаляк М. В. Аспектуальна класифікація предикатів у сучасній англійській мові**

**Анотація.** У статті досліджуються основні аспектуальні класифікації предикатів, які виникли у формі критичної відповіді на аспектуальну класифікацію З. Вендлера. Зокрема, проаналізовано класифікації М. Моенса та М. Східмана, К. Сміт, Д. Дауті, Дж. Дьолінг, В. Крофта. Досліджено критерії для виокремлення аспектуальних класів дієслів і дієслівних конструкцій. Звернено увагу на питання граничності предикатів як основного параметра, який визначає аспектуальну вартість досліджуваної одиниці. Обґрунтовано правомірність визначення категорії виду на рівні дієслова. Проаналізовано семelfактиви як окремих аспектуальний клас дієслів.

**Ключові слова:** аспектуальність, граничність, досягнення, виконання, стани, дії, семelfактиви.

**Сорока Л. Т., Пукаляк М. В. Аспектуальная классификация предикатов в современном английском языке**

**Аннотация.** В статье рассмотрены основные аспектуальные классификации предикатов, которые возникли в форме критического ответа на аспектуальную классификацию Э. Вендлера. В частности, проанализированы классификации М. Моэнса и М. Сидмана, К. Смит, Д. Даути, Дж. Делинг, В. Крофта. Исследованы критерии для выделения аспектуальных классов глаголов и гла-

гольных конструкций. Обращено внимание на вопрос предельности предикатов как основного параметра, который определяет аспектуальную стоимость исследуемой единицы. Обосновано правомерность определения категории вида на уровне глагола. Проанализированы семельфактивы как отдельный аспектуальный класс глаголов.

**Ключевые слова:** аспектуальность, предельность, достижения, выполнение, действия, семельфактивы.