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verb group

group of verbs traditionally analysed as consisting of a main verb and one or several auxiliary verbs.

Verbgruppe
eine Gruppe von Verben, die traditionell als aus einem Hauptverb und einem oder mehreren Hilfsverb/en bestehend analysiert wird.

Examples of verb groups include the relevant sequences in the sentences *She* [*is baking a cake*], *She* [*had baked a cake*], *She* [*will be baking a cake*], *She* [*should have been baking a cake*], *The cake* [*has been baked*], *The cake* [*should have been being baked*].

The justification for the traditional analysis of a verb group as consisting of a main verb and one or more auxiliaries derives from the fact that verbs like *bake* are lexical verbs, i.e., verbs containing detailed semantic content, and that the auxiliaries have only abstract meanings and serve certain grammatical functions. In Cognitive Grammar, however, a verb group is regarded as consisting of a tense- and modality auxiliary - serving as the grounding predication - and a complex clausal head. The latter is considered to be a functional equivalent of a head noun in a nominal group. For example, in a sequence like *should have been being washed* (in a clause like *The car should have been being washed*), *should* is regarded as the grounding predication, while the sequence *have been being washed* is taken to be the clausal head.

According to *Langacker (1991: 194-195)*, structural evidence for this analysis comes from the following observations:

(i) An infinitive (marked by *to*) may be formed on a main verb together with any combination of auxiliaries as long as elements marked for tense and modality are excluded (cf. *to wash*, *to be washing*, *to have washed*, *to have been washed*, *to have been being washed* vs. **to washed*, **to should wash*, ** to should be washing*, ** to had been washed*, **to should have been washed*). *Langacker* argues that this observation indicates that the fundamental division in the sequence *should have been being washed* falls between tense/modality and the rest of the group.

(ii) Tense/modality is obligatory. According to *Langacker*, this supports the analysis of tense/modality elements as grounding predications.

(iii) Elements marked for tense/modality are excluded from infinitival *to*-phrases. *Langacker* argues that this observation follows from the fact that these elements ground a clause and thereby make it finite.

Semantically, Langacker's analysis is based on the consideration that tense/modality auxiliaries are the only auxiliaries which specifically invoke the ground as a reference point: tense locates the designated process with reference to the time of the speech event, while the presence or absence of a modality element indicates whether the speech act participants accept the profiled relationship "as a matter of established reality" (cf. *Langacker* 1991: 195).

References

- [grounding](#) (Cognitive Grammar)
- Modalität (Cognitive Grammar)
- [predication](#) (Cognitive Grammar)
- Zeit (Cognitive Grammar)

Literature

- *LANGACKER, R.W.* [1991] Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Vol. 2: Descriptive Application. Standford, CA