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# An Analysis of The Morphological and Syntactic Properties of Visual Cognitive Verbs

Karimjonova Shahlo Ravshanjonovna

Fergana State University, Senior Lecturer, Department of Practical English, Doctor of Philosophy in Philology (PhD), Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** Visual cognitive verbs play a key role in expressing perception and cognition. This paper explores their morphological properties, including inflections and derivational forms, as well as their typical syntactic patterns, such as argument structure and complementation. By analyzing a selected corpus of contemporary written and spoken texts, we investigate how these verbs function in real usage. The results highlight both core similarities and subtle distinctions among visual cognitive verbs, shedding light on their role in conveying perception and mental processes. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how expresses visual and cognitive meaning through specific verbal constructs.

**Keywords:** Verb, see, look, linguistics, language, cognitive linguistics.

**Introduction:** The concept of “cognitive science” is among modern scientific terms and encompasses various scientific fields aimed at studying the processes of how knowledge is formed, processed, stored, and effectively used in the human mind. This field serves to explore the essence and mechanisms of cognitive activity by conducting a systematic analysis of human mental processes. Specifically, cognitive science focuses on the subjective processes of human perception and the creation of new knowledge based on the results of understanding the world. Logical philosophy has long carried out the study of cognitive processes and methods of acquiring knowledge. As a result, contemporary cognitive sciences are also developing aspects not directly related to language. Nonetheless, the study of perception is currently advancing in linguistic research because language, by its very nature, manifests itself as a form of thought. In the cognitive approach, the concept of knowledge holds a central position.

When Professor A.Mamatov analyzes the language system from a cognitive point of view, he emphasizes that while cognitive science is focused on studying cognitive processes, cognitive linguistics deals with how these cognitive processes are reflected and verbalized through language. According to him, a cognitive approach to language involves viewing linguistic forms as reflections of the human mind, cognition, and cognitive structures. “Cognition” is regarded as a structure that represents any type of knowledge based on human cognitive activity.

Professor A.Mamatov’s view clearly elucidates the essence of cognitive linguistics. He points out that while cognitive science is a field that studies general cognitive processes, cognitive linguistics specifically investigates how these cognitive processes are manifested in language and what kind of verbalization process they entail. This standpoint highlights one of the core principles of the cognitive approach: the intrinsic connection between language and thought.

Here it is crucial to stress the idea that the formation of language is closely connected with the human mind, thought, and cognitive structures. After all, language is not only a means of communication but also a structure that reflects human cognitive processes. In this respect, language systems develop based on cognitive activity and reflect the systematization of various categories of knowledge.

Hence, Professor A.Mamatov’s approach reinforces the theoretical foundations of cognitive linguistics, underscoring the need to study language as a complex system linked to cognition and thought. This approach is particularly important in semantic analyses, the

cognitive properties of metaphors, and linguistic research related to human worldview.

Visual cognitive verbs (VCVs) in English – commonly exemplified by see, look, watch, gaze, stare, observe, notice, and view – encode both the act of vision and the cognitive interpretation of that visual input. While these verbs share semantic commonalities, their morphological and syntactic properties can differ significantly. A detailed examination of their forms and structures can reveal how the English language captures nuances of perception and cognition.

Recent studies in cognitive linguistics and comparative philology (e.g., Langacker, 2008; Talmy, 2000) underscore the interplay between perception verbs and conceptualization, demonstrating that verbal forms often encode both physical and metaphorical aspects of seeing. Nevertheless, a precise account of their morphological patterns (inflectional and derivational) and syntactic behavior (valency, transitivity, complementation, etc.) is crucial for understanding how English speakers express mental states and perceptual processes.

## METHODS

### Data Collection

A corpus-based approach was employed to ensure empirical grounding. Two main sources of data were used:

1. The British National Corpus (BNC): A balanced corpus of modern British English, containing both spoken and written texts.

2. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA): To capture regional and stylistic variation in American English.

From these corpora, a keyword search for the verbs see, look, watch, notice, observe, gaze, and stare was performed. Each verb's occurrences were filtered to obtain 200 random samples per verb, ensuring a total of 1,400 tokens.

### Analytical Framework

1. Morphological Analysis:

Inflectional Forms: Tense, aspect, and person (e.g., see, sees, seeing, saw, seen).

Derivational Extensions: Adjectival or nominal forms (e.g., watchful, observer, noticeable).

Frequency Counts: Proportion of each form relative to total occurrences.

2. Syntactic Analysis:

Argument Structure: Determined whether verbs are used transitively (e.g., She saw the dog), intransitively (e.g., He looked), or with complement clauses (e.g., I see that you're busy).

Complementation Patterns: Presence or absence of direct objects (e.g., notice something), prepositional objects (e.g., look at something), or bare infinitives (e.g., see someone do something).

Modifiers: Common adverbs and prepositional phrases that occur with each verb (e.g., watch carefully, gaze intently).

### Data Analysis

Each token was coded for:

Verb Form: Simple present, simple past, present participle, past participle, or derivational forms.

Syntactic Pattern: Transitive vs. intransitive usage, type of object or complement, and presence of prepositions.

Contextual Meaning: Literal (physical perception) vs. metaphorical (cognitive/figurative usage).

The results were tabulated to facilitate quantitative comparisons, and illustrative examples were selected for qualitative discussion.

## RESULTS

### 1. Morphological Characteristics

Inflectional Variation: All verbs followed regular tense and aspect patterns (see → saw/seen, look → looked, looking, looks, etc.). However, see showed irregular forms (saw, seen), while most others (look, watch, notice) were regular.

Derivational Forms:

Observe → observer, observation, observant

Notice → noticeable, noticeably

Watch → watcher (rare), watchdog (compound), watchful

See → seer (archaic), foresee, foreseeable

These derivatives often shift the focus from the act of seeing to the agent (observer) or the quality of being noticeable (noticeable).

### 2. Syntactic Patterns

Transitivity:

See, watch, notice, observe → predominantly transitive, taking direct objects (see a friend, watch a movie, notice a change, observe a pattern).

Look → predominantly intransitive, requiring a preposition when taking an object (look at something).

Gaze, stare → often intransitive with directional prepositions (gaze at the stars, stare into space).

Complementation:

See, notice, observe → commonly introduce object + bare infinitive (see him run, observe them discuss).

Look → typically requires a preposition or adverb (look at something, look around).

Watch → frequently collocates with object + gerund or object + bare infinitive (watch him singing, watch her dance).

**3. Frequency and Contextual Usage**

Literal vs. Metaphorical: See was found to have a higher number of figurative uses (e.g., I see what you mean), while gaze and stare were more literal.

Register: Observe and notice were more frequent in formal contexts (academic articles, reports), whereas look and watch were found commonly in conversational texts.

**DISCUSSION**

The morphological and syntactic examination reveals both shared and unique characteristics among English visual cognitive verbs. While certain forms (e.g., look at, see something) appear straightforward, deeper analysis uncovers the ways in which each verb can expand or shift meaning in various contexts. For instance, the combination of see with a bare infinitive (see someone do something) emphasizes direct, complete perception, whereas a gerund construction (watch someone doing something) highlights an ongoing action.

Moreover, morphological derivatives such as noticeable or observant demonstrate how core perception verbs link to broader cognitive processes (evaluation, awareness). The corpus analysis confirms that visual cognitive verbs are not only about perceiving with the eyes but also about interpreting and conceptualizing that perception.

A key contribution of these findings is in clarifying the gradient between purely physical seeing (look, watch) and cognitively loaded perception (observe, notice). For language pedagogy, understanding these distinctions can aid learners in choosing the correct verb depending on context—watch for continuous attention, notice for sudden awareness, or observe for a more deliberate act of perception.

**CONCLUSION**

This study has shown that English visual cognitive verbs exhibit a range of morphological forms and syntactic patterns. Irregular verbs like see and derivatives from notice or observe expand their functional scope. Syntactically, while transitivity is common, certain verbs (e.g., look, gaze, stare) often depend on prepositions for objects or directions. These nuanced features influence how English speakers encode both immediate visual experiences and cognitive interpretations.

Future research could compare these findings cross-linguistically (e.g., with Uzbek, Spanish, or Russian) to see how different languages handle visual and cognitive perception. Incorporating psycholinguistic experiments may also reveal the cognitive load of choosing between different perception verbs in real-time communication.

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