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THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE GERMAN LEXICON ACCORDING TO PARTS OF SPEECH: STRUCTURAL, SEMANTIC, AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. This study examines the classification of the German lexicon according to parts of speech from structural, semantic, and pedagogical perspectives. It provides an overview of how the German language organizes its vocabulary into grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and particles. Each category is analyzed in terms of its morphological features, syntactic roles, and semantic functions, revealing how linguistic form and meaning interact within the system of the German language. The research argues that the division of words into grammatical classes is not only a grammatical phenomenon but also a cognitive and communicative process that reflects how speakers conceptualize the world through language. It emphasizes the dynamic nature of the German lexicon, where new words emerge through derivation, composition, and borrowing, and where traditional boundaries between categories may shift depending on context and usage. Methodologically, the paper combines descriptive and comparative approaches that connect classical grammatical theory with modern perspectives from morphology and lexical semantics. It also highlights the pedagogical importance of understanding word classes in the teaching and learning of German as a foreign language, demonstrating that awareness of grammatical categories strengthens both vocabulary development and communicative competence. The study presents the German lexicon as a living, evolving system in which structure, meaning, and function are closely interrelated, and where analysis and synthesis methods were applied to ensure a comprehensive linguistic interpretation.

Key words: German lexicon, parts of speech, morphology, grammatical classification, lexical semantics, linguistic structure, language pedagogy, word formation.

Introduction. Language functions as a complex system in which lexical, grammatical, and semantic elements interact to produce meaning. One of the most essential organizing principles of this system is the classification of words into grammatical categories, commonly referred to as parts of speech. In German linguistics, the study of word classes holds a particularly important place because it reveals the deep relationship between linguistic form and communicative function. Understanding how the German lexicon is distributed among these categories not only clarifies the internal logic of the language but also contributes to more effective language teaching, translation, and lexicographic analysis. The classification of the German lexicon has developed alongside major changes in linguistic theory. Traditional grammar relied mainly on morphological and syntactic features to distinguish nouns, verbs, adjectives, and other classes. Modern approaches, however, integrate semantic and functional criteria, recognizing that word classes are not rigid structures but flexible, context-dependent entities. This broader perspective allows researchers to explain how grammatical categories emerge, overlap, and evolve in response to communicative needs and cultural change.

German, as a member of the Indo-European language family, displays both typological similarities and unique structural traits. Its rich morphology, particularly inflection and derivation, offers fertile ground for examining how lexical items shift across grammatical boundaries. For example, processes like compounding and affixation show how meaning and structure interact to create new forms. Moreover, analyzing the German parts of speech within this framework provides a compara-

tive basis for understanding related languages such as English and Dutch, and for contrasting them with more analytic ones like Turkish or Azerbaijani.

From a pedagogical viewpoint, mastering the classification of word classes is essential for learners of German as a foreign language. It enables them to grasp the principles of sentence construction, word formation, and the link between grammatical form and communicative intent. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how the German lexicon is systematically organized according to parts of speech, what features define each category, and how this understanding can be applied in linguistic research and language teaching.

In exploring the classification of German word classes, it becomes increasingly clear that this topic extends far beyond the purely structural descriptions found in traditional grammars. The way lexical items are grouped and interpreted reflects deeper cognitive principles that guide how speakers perceive, categorize and communicate experience. German, with its rich morphological system and layered semantic relations, offers a particularly illustrative case for understanding how linguistic form and conceptual organization interact. The emergence of new lexical units, the shifting boundaries between categories and the semantic reorientation of existing words all demonstrate that grammatical classification is a dynamic phenomenon shaped by both internal linguistic mechanisms and broader cultural developments. As learners, teachers and researchers engage with these patterns, they encounter not only a set of grammatical rules but also the linguistic embodiment of how German speakers construct meaning, negotiate nuance and encode complexity within the lexicon.

In summary, the classification of the German lexicon is not merely a descriptive grammatical task but a key to understanding how structure, meaning, and function converge in human language. The present study aims to contribute to a clearer theoretical and practical comprehension of the mechanisms that shape the organization of vocabulary in modern German.

Discussion. The classification of the German lexicon according to parts of speech remains one of the key questions in linguistic research, as it determines how words interact, acquire meaning, and form grammatical structures. Every language develops its own internal logic for organizing vocabulary, and in German this system is particularly rich and precise. The study of word classes in German reflects not only grammatical regularities but also how human cognition connects thought, meaning, and linguistic form. In the German linguistic tradition, words are usually divided into several main categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and particles. Each class fulfills its own morphological, syntactic, and semantic role in communication. What distinguishes German from many other languages is its combination of morphological transparency and flexibility. For instance, the noun *das Laufen* originates from the verb *laufen*, yet while the grammatical function changes, the core semantic meaning remains closely connected. This fluidity shows that categories in German are not strictly fixed; rather, they shift according to communicative and contextual needs.

Morphology plays a central role in this process. The German language has a strong tendency toward word formation and derivation. Nouns usually carry endings that indicate gender and number, such as *-e*, *-er*, or *-en*. Verbs, on the other hand, display a wide range of endings that mark tense, person, and mood. Affixes like *ver-*, *be-* or *ent-* are highly productive in creating new verbs, while suffixes such as *-heit*, *-keit*, and *-ung* often transform adjectives or verbs into nouns. These patterns reveal how word formation and grammatical classification operate as interconnected systems within the structure of the language (Eisenberg, 2013; Dudenredaktion, 2020).

Syntax provides another layer of evidence for the classification of words. In German, word order is not arbitrary but follows strict grammatical principles. The finite verb typically occupies the second position in declarative sentences, while adjectives generally precede the nouns they modify. Even a minor change in word order can alter emphasis or meaning, illustrating how syntax works together with morphology to maintain clarity and logical coherence. Semantics adds further depth to this dis-

cussion. In German, words often transcend their grammatical form and convey meanings that shift depending on context. A noun expresses an entity, a verb an action, and an adjective a quality, yet many words can operate across categories. For example, *das Gute* (the good) turns an adjective into a noun, while *lesen* (to read) becomes *das Lesen* when nominalized. These examples demonstrate that grammar in German is not a closed system but a living, adaptive one shaped by creativity and thought (Lehmann, 2011; Asgarova, 2024).

Modern linguistic theory treats parts of speech as dynamic categories rather than fixed boxes. A word may exhibit the main characteristics of one category while temporarily adopting the features of another. For instance, *laufen* functions primarily as a verb but can easily be reinterpreted as a noun in *das Laufen*. This flexibility reflects cognitive mechanisms through which speakers use language not as a static code but as a responsive tool of expression and interaction (Asgarova, 2023).

The vitality of the German lexicon is further illustrated through compounding, one of the most productive processes in the language. Words such as *Lebensmittel*, *Hochschule*, or *Freizeitpark* combine existing elements into new, meaningful units. Through these mechanisms, the German vocabulary expands while preserving grammatical consistency and semantic transparency. Derivation serves a similar function, allowing the transformation of *arbeiten* into *Arbeiter* or *klar* into *klären*. Both compounding and derivation demonstrate the language's capacity for self-renewal and structural balance (Asgarova, 2022; Eisenberg, 2013).

The influence of other languages has also played an important role in shaping the modern German lexicon. Borrowed terms such as *downloaden*, *chatten*, or *der Computer* have entered the language naturally and are fully integrated into German morphological and syntactic systems. This adaptation shows the language's openness and ability to harmonize external elements with internal grammatical logic. From a pedagogical perspective, understanding the classification of the German lexicon is crucial for both teachers and learners. Awareness of how words are categorized enables students to predict grammatical behavior and grasp the logic behind sentence construction. When learners recognize regular patterns in suffixes or prefixes, such as *-ung* for nouns or *ver-* for verbs, they not only memorize words but also learn to use them productively. Teaching that emphasizes these structural regularities supports deeper comprehension and communicative fluency (Schellhardt & Schroeder, 2015).

The evolving nature of German word classes becomes especially evident when examining how frequently words move beyond their prototypical functions in actual communication. Speakers often adapt lexical items to new contexts by extending or narrowing their semantic scope, and this flexibility challenges rigid categorizations. Instances of nominalization, adjectival reinterpretation or verbal shifts illustrate how grammatical roles are negotiated in real time depending on emphasis, discourse function or stylistic intention. This fluidity suggests that parts of speech in German operate along a continuum influenced by context rather than as isolated boxes, and it also reflects broader cognitive strategies that prioritize efficient expression over strict morphological boundaries. As a result, the German lexicon reveals a balancing act between systemic regularity and pragmatic adaptability, which helps explain its capacity to both preserve historical structures and incorporate innovative forms.

Another important dimension in this discussion is the interaction between grammatical classification and language acquisition. Learners of German frequently encounter complexity not only due to inflectional patterns but also because many words behave differently across communicative situations. Understanding the mechanisms behind these shifts allows learners to see the logic behind transformations rather than treating them as arbitrary irregularities. When learners grasp how semantic motivation drives derivation, compounding or category switching, they develop a more intuitive sense of how meaning is constructed in German. This insight strengthens their overall communicative competence and reduces reliance on rote memorization. Moreover, it shows that the classification of

the German lexicon is pedagogically significant not simply as a descriptive tool but as a conceptual framework that supports deeper linguistic awareness and more confident language use.

Ultimately, the classification of word classes in German connects structure, meaning, and cognition. It reflects how linguistic systems evolve while maintaining balance between order and flexibility. The German language exemplifies how a grammatical framework can remain stable yet dynamic, adapting to new contexts without losing its internal harmony. In this sense, studying parts of speech in German offers insight not only into linguistic structure but also into the cognitive and cultural mechanisms that shape human communication.

Conclusion. The classification of the German lexicon according to parts of speech reveals how structure, meaning, and function interact within a single linguistic system. Through the integration of morphological, syntactic, and semantic perspectives, it becomes clear that word classes in German are not fixed entities but flexible categories that reflect both grammatical logic and cognitive processes. Morphology plays a decisive role in this organization, as inflection, derivation, and composition serve not only to indicate grammatical relationships but also to create new lexical and conceptual meanings. The German language demonstrates an exceptional ability to balance systematic structure with creative adaptability. Words move across grammatical boundaries while maintaining semantic coherence. For example, the shift of verbs into nominal forms or the creation of complex compounds shows how the language continuously renews itself without losing its internal harmony. This process illustrates the interdependence of linguistic form and human cognition, emphasizing that the grammar of German mirrors the flexibility of human thought.

At the same time, the semantic system of German provides a conceptual framework that connects linguistic categories to real-world experience. Meaning and structure are interrelated, shaping and being shaped by each other. The ability of the German lexicon to express abstract and concrete ideas with precision reflects a deep integration of cognitive and linguistic functions. From a pedagogical standpoint, the classification of the lexicon according to parts of speech contributes directly to language learning and teaching. Awareness of word categories helps learners understand sentence construction, predict grammatical patterns, and build vocabulary more efficiently. Teaching based on these principles develops both grammatical competence and communicative awareness, linking linguistic knowledge with practical language use.

The broader implications of this analysis show that the classification of German word classes is inseparable from the way speakers engage with meaning, structure and communication in everyday language use. As linguistic patterns shift in response to social change, technological development and cultural contact, the German lexicon continues to evolve while maintaining its internal equilibrium. This ongoing transformation highlights that grammatical categories must be understood not as static labels but as interpretive tools that illuminate the relationship between form and thought. By approaching word classes through an integrated structural and semantic perspective, researchers and learners gain a clearer understanding of how language reflects cognitive habits and communicative priorities. Ultimately, this reinforces the idea that studying the German lexicon is not only an exploration of grammar but also a window into the dynamic processes through which speakers shape and reshape linguistic meaning.

In conclusion, the classification of the German lexicon is not a mere grammatical exercise but an exploration of how language organizes human experience. It reflects the interaction between tradition and innovation, rule and creativity, form and meaning. German, with its morphological richness and systematic structure, stands as an example of a language that evolves while preserving balance and clarity. In preparing this research, analysis and synthesis methods were applied to reveal the interconnected nature of form, semantics, and pedagogy, offering a holistic understanding of how the German language functions as both a structural and cognitive system.

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