

THE TYPOLOGY OF PREDICATES IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

The essence of the research lies in the analysis of expressions with lexical units that actualize the category of property within the structure of a sentence-statement, selected by the method of full sampling from English-language scientific texts. To identify the semantics of lexical units, interpretative and component analysis of the lexical meaning of the examined language units is conducted.

Keywords: Predicate, property, category, stativity, inactivity, uncontrollability, sentence-statement.

Introduction

Research on the problems of conceptualization and categorization of experience in language continues to attract the attention of linguists. The linguistic representation of the semantic category of property in scientific texts is no exception. One of the main ways to express property linguistically is through the predicate. At first glance, the category of property in linguistics may primarily be actualized through adjectives. The question arises: what other means can be used to express the category in question? This article attempts to find an answer and confirm the hypothesis that the predicate is, in fact, the main means of representing the semantic category of property and the categorical situation of static possession of a property in English-language scientific texts.

The predicate indicates the characteristic of an object, its state, and its relationship to other objects. The concept of a "predicate" is a universal semantic category, as it pertains to human language in general and is connected to the linguistic expression of various categories of human thought. All predicates are divided into two major groups based on certain features: essentiality, timelessness – randomness, episodicity. This distinction clearly separates two large types of predicates: on one side, there are predicates of "property" (quality), and on the other side, there are predicates denoting "phenomena".

Properties (qualities) represent characteristics of an object that are relatively independent of the passage of time and, at the same time, describe the surrounding world, for which the corresponding predication is true. "Phenomena" refer to a moment or a period of the object's existence and only describe a specific (transitory) "state of the world". According to a classification based on the dominant components of predicate meanings, identified from lexical

paradigms, the following predicate classes are distinguished: **1) class predicates, 2) properties, 3) states, 4) processes, 5) actions.**

Let's look at examples of how the category of property is realized in different predicate classes in English-language scientific texts:

Class predicates – "statements about the belonging of an object to a specific category, kind, or class" [Polenz, 1988]. They are expressed by predicate nouns. With class predicates, it is impossible to have circumstances of place and time. Belonging to a particular class is an essential, rather than a random, property of the object:

(1) "... gravel, particles of rock, i.e., stones and pebbles, usually round in form and intermediate in size between sand grains and boulders"

Gravel, which consists of particles of rock, i.e., stones and pebbles, usually round in shape and intermediate in size between sand and cobbles. In example (1), the property of gravel is defined by its belonging to a more general class – stones and cobbles – as well as by shared characteristics with sand and pebbles (shape and size). The absence of temporal and locational characteristics justifies categorizing this predicate (stones and pebbles) as a class predicate.

Property predicates – these are "statements about the states of living beings, things, or abstract concepts that are fundamentally unchanging, i.e., relate to their constant features". These predicates are less stable over time than class predicates, as they do not touch upon the essence of the object. Property predicates are contrasted with action and process predicates in all classifications, as they describe something happening at a specific moment or time period, but they are often grouped with class predicates:

(2) Some shells reach several inches in diameter, but most species are less than a millimeter in diameter.

In this case (example 2), the property of shells is represented by their size, which is unchanging. However, the property predicate expressing the size of the shells can be compared with class predicates: items of different sizes, but still belonging to the same class – shells.

State predicates are defined as "statements about fundamentally changeable states, i.e., once occurring and once ending physical and psychological states of living beings, objects, or abstract concepts. They are expressed by adjectival, verbal, or nominal phrases":

(3) A gas expands as the temperature rises.

The state predicate in the example is formed by the verb expand, which semantically implies change, meaning a transition from one state to another. The state predicate expresses the property of the subject. The property of the gas is that it can change its state – expand under certain conditions (as the temperature rises), meaning that the physical state of the object (gas) changes – it begins and ends under the influence of an external factor.

Process predicates – these are statements about events caused by factors other than the intention of the acting subject (agent). These events (changes, processes) occur with the object (living being, thing, or abstract concept) without the influence of an external force:

(4) Some of these chemicals are biodegradable and quickly decay into harmless or less harmful forms, while others are nonbiodegradable and remain dangerous for a long time.



The predicate in sentence (4) is expressed by the adjectives biodegradable and nonbiodegradable, which denote a process that is not dependent on an agent or external influence. However, these adjectives also represent properties, as they describe the objects.

Action predicates express phenomena based on the act of will of the agent, which causes this phenomenon:

(5) Most fungi are capable of asexual and sexual reproduction.

This sentence shows that the action of reproduction, either asexual or sexual, is a phenomenon based on the fungi's will.

In example (5), the predicate is the noun reproduction, which represents an action caused by the agent (fungi). The property in the sentence is expressed by the linking verb are capable. It is complemented and specified by the action predicate: the ability to reproduce in different ways is the property of fungi.

It is important to note that, since scientific texts are meant to be objective, modality is weakly traced in them. As a result, it is somewhat challenging to identify the types of predicates presented above. The logical nature of the narrative and the standardization, clichéd expressions are also key functional characteristics of this type of text. However, it becomes easier to identify these characteristics due to the relative boundaries between the various types of predicates. This can be explained by the fact that the temporal reference is connected with the denotative status of the arguments. As seen from the examples above, the property of subjects is manifested through predicates of different classes.

Predicates of Property and Their Features

Let us take a closer look at the predicates of property, which are of particular scientific interest. This type of predicate is characterized by features such as staticity, uncontrollability, and the inactivity of the subject.

The feature of stativity, which links property predicates to state predicates, distinguishes them from dynamic actions. Property predicates differ from state predicates in that states are temporary, transient, and accidental. A property, rather than a state, can characterize an object. Property predicates represent a "relatively time-independent characteristic of an object while also characterizing the world for which the corresponding predication is true," while a state usually implies a beginning and an end. This reveals the opposition between "temporal localization of states" and "temporal non-localization of properties". Any situation of possessing a property "is not localized in space or time". While property predicates cannot denote "either a one-time situation or a series of repeated separate instances," states represent a "transient," "accidental" trait, and describe only a certain moment or period in the existence of an object, thus characterizing a specific (transient) "state of the world". Therefore, property predicates do not combine with adverbs indicating duration, such as for a moment, for weeks, all this time, because the feature of duration is directly related to temporal localization.

In modern linguistics, the study of predicates plays a central role in understanding the structure and meaning of sentences. A predicate, in its simplest form, refers to the part of a sentence or clause that expresses what is said about the subject. Predicates are essential in conveying information about the state, action, or condition of the subject, and they are indispensable in



constructing meaning in both spoken and written language. The typology of predicates explores the various categories and classifications of predicates based on their semantic roles, syntactic functions, and morphological structures. This article delves into the typological distinctions of predicates and their significance in modern linguistics.

A predicate is typically defined as the part of the sentence that provides information about the subject. It often consists of a verb or a verb phrase, but it can also include adjectives, nouns, or prepositional phrases that modify the subject. Predicates can be classified based on the type of information they convey about the subject. In terms of syntax, the predicate is the part of the sentence that expresses the action or state of the subject and is usually positioned after the subject.

For example, in the sentence, "The cat sleeps on the mat," the subject "the cat" is followed by the predicate "sleeps on the mat." The verb "sleeps" is the core of the predicate, and the prepositional phrase "on the mat" further elaborates on the action.

Predicates can be classified into several types depending on various criteria, such as their syntactic structure, semantic function, and temporal characteristics. The most prominent classifications of predicates are based on their semantic roles, which include the following:

a) Predicates of Action (Verbal Predicates)

Predicates of action describe events, processes, or activities performed by the subject. These are typically verbs that describe actions, movements, or changes in state. In syntactic terms, these predicates are often accompanied by direct or indirect objects to complete their meaning.

- **Example:** "She writes a letter."
- In this sentence, the verb "writes" is the predicate of action, describing the activity performed by the subject.

b) Predicates of State (Stative Predicates)

Stative predicates describe the state or condition of the subject, rather than an action. These predicates usually involve linking verbs such as "to be" or other copular verbs that connect the subject to a complement, such as an adjective or a noun.

- **Example:** "The sky is blue."
- Here, "is" serves as the copular verb linking the subject "the sky" with the adjective "blue," describing the subject's state.

c) Predicates of Possession (Possessive Predicates)

Predicates of possession indicate that the subject possesses something or has a relationship with an object. These predicates often involve possessive verbs or constructions like "have," "own," or "belong to."

- **Example:** "She has a car."
- In this sentence, the verb "has" expresses the subject's possession of the object "a car."

d) Predicates of Becoming (Causative Predicates)

Predicates of becoming describe a change in state or condition of the subject. These are often expressed through verbs like "become," "turn," "grow," or other causative verbs that indicate a transformation.

- **Example:** "The weather became cold."
- In this sentence, the verb "became" shows the transition of the subject "the weather" into a new state (cold).

e) Predicates of Existence (Existential Predicates)

Existential predicates are used to state the existence of something or someone. These predicates are usually expressed through the verb "to be," but in some languages, there are specific existential verbs.

- **Example:** "There is a book on the table."
- The verb "is" in this sentence functions as an existential predicate, indicating the existence of a book on the table.

3. The Role of Predicates in Sentence Structure

Predicates are fundamental to sentence structure. They help establish the relationship between the subject and the rest of the sentence. In many languages, the verb plays a central role in forming the predicate. In languages with a strict subject-verb-object (SVO) order, such as English, the verb typically follows the subject and precedes the object.

- **Example:** "John (subject) kicked (verb) the ball (object)."

In other languages, such as Japanese or Latin, the order of the elements in a sentence may differ, but the predicate still functions as the core component that provides meaning.

4. Predicative Adjectives and Nouns

Predicates can also be expressed through adjectives or nouns. In these cases, the subject is linked to a property or characteristic described by the adjective or noun. Predicative adjectives are adjectives that follow a linking verb and provide additional information about the subject.

- **Example:** "The car is red."
- Here, the adjective "red" functions as the predicate, describing the color of the subject "the car."

Similarly, nouns can also act as predicates when they describe the identity or role of the subject.

- **Example:** "She is a doctor."
- In this sentence, "a doctor" is the predicative noun, providing information about the subject's profession.

5. Temporal and Aspectual Features of Predicates

Another important distinction in predicate typology is based on the temporal and aspectual features of predicates. Predicates can be classified according to whether they describe actions or states that are ongoing, completed, or habitual. Aspectual distinctions include the progressive aspect (ongoing actions) and the perfective aspect (completed actions).

- **Example:** "She is reading" (progressive aspect) vs. "She has read" (perfective aspect).



6. Predicates in Complex Sentences

Predicates are also crucial in the construction of complex sentences. In complex sentences, multiple predicates may appear in coordinated or subordinate clauses. Each clause in a complex sentence will contain its own subject and predicate, contributing to the overall meaning of the sentence.

- **Example:** "She went to the store, and he stayed home."

Here, "went to the store" and "stayed home" are two independent predicates within the complex sentence.

The typology of predicates is a critical area of study in modern linguistics, as predicates are central to the structure and meaning of sentences. Understanding the various types of predicates—action, state, possession, becoming, and existence—enables linguists to analyze the ways in which languages express different kinds of relationships between the subject and the rest of the sentence. Predicates are not only defined by their syntactic and semantic properties but also by their interaction with other elements in a sentence, including the subject, objects, and complements. Through the study of predicate typology, linguists gain valuable insights into the underlying structures of language, providing a deeper understanding of how meaning is conveyed across different languages and cultures.

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