

# Linguistic Background on Predicatives

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## 1 What are Predicatives?

In class (as in HPSG) we've used the term **predicative** for the category of expressions that can be complements to the copula. These include present participials, passive participials, and predicative noun phrases, as well as predicative adjective phrases and predicative prepositional phrases.

### (1) Complements of *Be*

- a. Present participial:  
Black Bart was making a run for the Oklahoma line.
- b. Passive participial:  
Pecos Slim was pursued by lawmen from four different jurisdictions.
- c. Predicative prepositional phrase:  
Nohorse Bob was on his one-eyed mule.
- d. Predicative adjective phrase:  
Buckshot Pete was desperately low on funds.
- e. Predicative noun phrase:  
Tumbleweed Jack was the meanest hombre north of the Rio Grande.

In class we motivated analyzing predicative adjectives and nonfinite verb forms as having a tectotype of the form  $A \multimap B$  (with  $A$  corresponding to the 'understood subject') but a pheno of the basic type  $s$ . The data given below can be used to motivate analogous arguments for other types of predicatives.

Though other traditions often refer to “equative *be*”, “predicative *be*”, “passive *be*”, etc., coordination facts suggest examples like those in (1) all involve the same *be*:

(2) **Just One *Be***

- a. Black Bart was making a run for the Oklahoma line and pursued by lawmen from four different jurisdictions.
- b. Tumbleweed Jack was desperately low on funds and the meanest hombre north of the Rio Grande.
- c. Nohorse Bob was on his one-eyed mule and desperately low on funds.
- d. Pecos Slim was the meanest hombre north of the Rio Grande and making a run for the Oklahoma line.

## 2 How Nonverbal Predicatives are VP-like

First, nonverbal (and verbal) predicatives can be complements of certain RTO predicates (such as *consider*, *take*, *judge*, and *proclaim*) that also take infinitive VP complements:

(3) **Nonverbal Predicatives as RTO Complements**

- a.
  - i. Sheriff McGraw considered Tumbleweed Jack to be the meanest hombre north of the Rio Grande.
  - ii. Sheriff McGraw considered Tumbleweed Jack THE MEANEST HOMBRE NORTH OF THE RIO GRANDE.
- b.
  - i. Sheriff McGraw considered the high desert north of Sidewinder Gulch to be under his jurisdiction.
  - ii. Sheriff McGraw considered the high desert north of Sidewinder Gulch UNDER HIS JURISDICTION.
- c.
  - i. Sheriff McGraw considered it to be too hot for the posse to continue the pursuit.
  - ii. Sheriff McGraw considered it TOO HOT FOR THE POSSE TO CONTINUE THE PURSUIT.
- d.
  - i. Sheriff McGraw considered Pecos Slim to be too mean to tangle with single-handed.
  - ii. Sheriff McGraw considered Pecos Slim TOO MEAN TO TANGLE WITH SINGLE-HANDED.

Second, pronominal or reflexive complements of nonverbal predicatives act just like objects of verbs with respect to which other NPs in the sentence can/cannot be their antecedents:

(4) **Pronominal and reflexive complements within predicatives**

- a. i. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> admires/loves him<sub>1/\*2</sub>.  
ii. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> admires/loves himself<sub>\*1/2</sub>.
- b. i. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> is fond of/crazy about him<sub>1/\*2</sub>.  
ii. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> is fond of/crazy about himself<sub>\*1/2</sub>.
- c. i. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> is behind/above him<sub>1/\*2</sub>.  
ii. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> is behind/above himself<sub>\*1/2</sub>.
- d. i. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> is a parody/an imitation/the opposite of him<sub>1/\*2</sub>.  
ii. Kim<sub>1</sub> thinks Sandy<sub>2</sub> is a parody/an imitation/the opposite of himself<sub>\*1/2</sub>. [himself<sub>1</sub> okay as a correction]

And third, some nonverbal predicatives license dummy subjects:

(5) **Nonverbal predicatives licensing dummy subjects**

- a. It is obvious/beyond any reasonable doubt/a foregone conclusion that Fido is a dog.
- b. It now obvious/beyond any reasonable doubt/a foregone conclusion that Fido was a cat, his career in the field of domestic security came to an ignominious end.
- c. These considerations make it obvious/beyond any reasonable doubt/a foregone conclusion that Fido is a dog.
- d. It seems to be obvious/beyond any reasonable doubt/a foregone conclusion that Fido is a dog.

### 3 Other Environments for Predicatives

(6) **Subjectless absolutes**

- a. READY TO ANYTHING TO PLACATE THE SCREENING COMMITTEE, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.

- b. A BIG DONOR TO ALL THE RIGHT SCHOOLS, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.
- c. ON THE BOARDS OF NINE FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.
- d. EXERTING VAST INFLUENCE IN THE CITADELS OF POWER, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.
- e. CONSIDERED A MAJOR-LEAGUE MOVER AND SHAKER, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.

(7) **Subjectful absolutes**

- a.
  - i. His mule was too tired to go on.
  - ii. His mule TOO TIRED TO GO ON, Nohorse Bob headed for the Oklahoma border on foot.
- b.
  - i. It was already too hot to go on.
  - ii. it already TOO HOT TO GO ON, Black Bart dozed in the shade of a cactus and waited for evening to fall.
- c.
  - i. His sidekick Buckshot Pete was a crack shot and an able cook.
  - ii. His sidekick Buckshot Pete A CRACK SHOT AND AN ABLE COOK, Tumbleweed Jack was able to focus on planning the robberies and counting the money.
- d.
  - i. His canteen was now at the bottom of the gulch.
  - ii. His canteen NOW AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GULCH, Pecos Slim had to head into the high desert without water.

(8) **Subjectful Absolutes with (*what*) *with***

- a. (What) with his aunt Buffy READY TO DO ANYTHING TO PLACATE THE SCREENING COMMITTEE, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.
- b. (What) with his aunt Buffy A BIG DONOR TO ALL THE RIGHT SCHOOLS, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.
- c. (What) with his aunt Buffy ON THE BOARDS OF NINE FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.

- d. (What) with his aunt Buffy EXERTING VAST INFLUENCE IN THE CITADELS OF POWER, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.
  - e. (What) with his aunt Buffy CONSIDERED A MAJOR-LEAGUE MOVER AND SHAKER, Butch was sure to be admitted to the secret society.
- (9) **Concessive (*though-*)adverbials**  
 Though ALLERGIC TO CATS/A LIFELONG VEGAN/IN TEXAS /RUNNING FOR OFFICE/HOUNDED BY CREDITORS, Dana did what was expected of him.
- (10) **So-called “Depictive” adverbials**  
 Kim came back from Texas READY FOR BUSINESS/A REPUBLICAN/IN A BOXCAR/ DRIVING A BENTLEY/ PURSUED BY LAWYERS FROM FOUR STATES.
- (11) **Complements of *see/regard/view ... as***  
 I don’t see/view/regard him as REASONABLE/A QUALIFIED CANDIDATE/READY FOR PRIME TIME/TAINTED BY THE SCANDAL/HELPING OUR CAUSE.
- (12) ***While*-temporal adverbials**  
 While SICK/A GRAD STUDENT/OUT OF WORK/LOOKING FOR A JOB/ INVOLVED WITH SEVERAL HOPELESS CAUSES, Chris became addicted to blue M&M’s.
- (13) **Locative/Predicative Inversion**
- a. Predicative PPs:
    - i. BESIDE HIM sat a very fat Malay chewing tobacco.
    - ii. BENEATH THIS was another table commemorating the manifold virtues of the Parkers’ daughter.
    - iii. AWAY ON THE HILL stood a figure he could only see as a silhouette.
  - b. Predicative APs:
    - i. ALSO BENEFICIAL was the camaraderie.
    - ii. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT is convenient and reliable service.

- iii. CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT was Mary,
- c. Predicative NPs:
  - i. ALSO REPUBLICANS are Ohio's two senators, Mike DeWine and George Voinovich.
  - ii. A FURTHER CONSEQUENCE OF THE AXIOM OF CHOICE is the theorem that every infinite boolean algebra has a nonprincipal ultrafilter.
- d. Present participial VPs:
  - i. QUICKLY SLIDING TOWARD THEM was the stack of 4' x 8' plywood that moments before appeared to be resting securely on the top shelf.
  - ii. CROSSING THE ROAD AHEAD was a doe that appeared to have become disoriented.
- e. Passive participial VPs:
  - i. PASSED BY A VOICE VOTE was a resolution thanking Tom Delay for meritorious service.
  - ii. NARROWLY DEFEATED was a proposal to amend the Constitution to define marriage as being between a man and a woman.
  - iii. LIKEWISE SHOWN TO BE INDEPENDENT OF ZF was the Generalized Continuum Hypothesis.

(14) **If we exclude predicative NPs . . .**

. . . an even greater range of environments predicatives becomes available:

- a. Optional second complement in *there* constructions:  
There is a unicorn FAST ASLEEP/IN THE GARDEN/STUFFED WITH KAPOK/SLEEPING.
- b. Postnominal modifiers (“reduced relatives”):  
A unicorn THAT FLAMBOYANT/IN A RED TUTU/WEARING BLACK FISHNETS/ STUFFED WITH KAPOK is seldom seen in these parts.

## 4 Unresolved Issues

- What is the connection between (so-called) attributive (i.e. prenominal) adjectives and adjectival predicatives?
- What is the connection between nominal predicatives and ordinary NPs?
- What is the category of a coordinate structure whose conjuncts are different kinds of predicatives, as in *a Republican and proud of it*?
- How should we analyze locative/predicative inversion?
- How should we analyze (both subjectful and subjectless) absolutes?