



## TYPES OF THE PREDICATE USED IN SPEAKING AND WRITING

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**Annotation:** The predicate in English is an integral part of both oral and written speech. Those who are at least a little familiar with the grammatical structure of this language are well aware that it is impossible to build a correct English sentence without a predicate. Along with the subject, it forms the grammatical basis of the sentence. Even when using the imperative mood - this is the only case when the subject in English can be omitted - the predicate remains and acts as a "framework" for the whole idea that the speaker or writer is trying to convey.

**Key words:** predicate, verbal predicate, nominal predicate, simple verbal predicate, compound verb predicate.

The two immediate constituents of a structure of predication are a subject and a predicate, usually, but not always, coming in that order. Each of these may be a single word, a word with accompanying function word(s), a phrase, or one of the three other kinds of syntactic structure-modification, complementation, or coordination. In addition, the subject may itself be a structure of predication of the type we shall later define as included clause. For the present, we shall confine our discussion to the simpler types of subject and predicate, postponing consideration of more complex structures of predication.

Since the best distinguishing mark of a structure of predication is the predicate, let us begin with it. Once a predicate has been identified, its subject usually becomes apparent without difficulty.

The predicate is usually a more or less complex structure or structure or structures, with the verbs at its core. In analyzing such predicates, we may have to work our way through several structural layers before we can finally isolate the verb. But the verb is the heart of the matter, and certain formal qualities of the verb determine important elements in the structural meaning of the predicate.

English verbs exhibit formal distinctions which can be classed under seven heads: person, tense, phase, aspect, mode, voice, and status. These distinctions are made by means of inflections, auxiliaries and other function words, word order, and prosody-all the signals of syntactic structure except derivational contrast. In the



following discussion we shall concentrate on the first three, since they usually are sufficient to permit identification of the verb-form and are all that are available in the written language. But in one or two cases we shall have to call upon prosody to make distinctions between forms that are otherwise formally identical.

### **1. Person**

All English verbs except the modal auxiliaries (can, may, shall, will, must, dare, need) have two persons, which can be called common and third singular. Verb forms consisting of base form + {-s} inflection is in the third-singular person; all others (except certain forms of be) are in the common person.

The distribution of the third-singular form of English verbs is quite complicated and exhibits some variation from one dialect to another. It can, however, be described in general terms as follows. The third-singular person is used whenever a simple verb is the head-verb in a predicate whose subject is one of the following:

(1) A noun for which he, she, or it, may be substituted, as in: the man walks; the sun sets.

(2) One of the pronouns he, she, or it.

Examples: he feels; she speaks; it comes (but note exception in watch it come).

(3) The function-nouns this or that.

Examples: this looks good; that goes here.

(4) A structure of modification of which one of the above is head.

Examples: the tall man in the car drives; that in the dish tastes good.

(5) Any other part of speech beside a noun, or a structure of modification or complementation with such part of speech as head or verbal element.

Examples: here seems like a good place; eating candy causes tooth decay.

(6) One of certain special structures of predication: the included clause and infinitive clause, as in: what I want costs money; how it got there remains a mystery.

(7) A structure of coordination is or, nor, (n)either ... (n)or, or not (only) ... but (also) and in which the last coordinate element belongs to (1)-(6) above: also one of certain other special structures of coordination.

Example: either his mistakes or his bad luck keeps him poor.

All other kinds of subjects correlate with the common form of the verb. Chief of these are nouns for which they can be substituted; the pronouns I, you, we, they, me, him, her, us, them; the function nouns these and those; structures of coordination with coordinators and, both . . . and, and the like; a few special included clauses.

### **2. Tense**



All English verbs except a few auxiliaries (ought, must) have two tenses, the common (present) tense and the past (preterit) tense. These are distinguished by inflections. The past-tense form consist of the base + {-ed}; the common tense forms are the base alone and the third-singular (base + {-s}). Examples:

Past tense:

We walked

They studied

Common tense:

We walk

He comes

### 3. Phase

All English verbs except a few auxiliaries have two phases, the simple and the perfect. The perfect phase is marked by have/has/had with past-participle form of the verb: she has spoken, we may have been..., he has gone. In addition, certain verbs, all of the kind we shall later define as intransitive, have a resultative phase, formed with the auxiliary be and the past-participle form of the verb: he is gone, they are finished with the homework. Verbs not formally marked as in the perfect or resultative phase are in the simple phase.

### 4. Aspect

English verbs have three aspects, the simple, the durative, and the inchoative. The simple aspect is unmarked. The durative is formed by the auxiliary be and present-participle (base + {-ing}) form of the verb. The inchoative aspect is formed by the auxiliary get and the present-participle form of the verb.

*Durative:*

*He is talking*

*She was swimming*

*We ought to be working*

*Inchoative:*

*We got talking*

*Let's get going*

*We ought to get working*

### 5. Mode

English verbs have a variety of modes. The modes can be classified on the basis of form into two groups: (1) those formed by the modal auxiliaries with the base form of the verb, and (2) those formed by certain other auxiliaries with the infinitive (to – base) form of the verb. The modal auxiliaries are can, may, shall, will,



must, dare, need, do. All of these except must and need have past-tense forms; do also has a third-singular form, does. The auxiliaries which form modes with the infinitive are have, be, be going, be about, used, ought, get, have got.

Modal auxiliaries:

He can go

We might see

They should have spoken

You will come

Everybody must die

Nobody dared do it

## 6. Voice

English verbs have two voices, the normal or active voice and the passive voice. Passive voice forms consist of some form of the auxiliary be with the past-participle form of the verb. Another passive, formed with get as auxiliary and the past-participle, seems to be increasing in frequency, though grammarians are at present not agreed as to its status. The three types of voice-forms are illustrated in the following examples:

Active:

He kills

They built a house

We have done the work

be-passive:

he is killed

the house was built

the work has been done

get-passive:

he gets killed

the house got built

the work has got done

Two structures which are exactly alike in the written form and sometimes alike in speech are be-passive and the verb be with a past participle a subjective complement. Consider the following sentences:

a. The house was built by experts

b. The house was built of wood

In (a), there is a passive verb, was built, as head with the prepositional phrase by expert as modifier, the whole structure of modification serving as predicate. In (b),



on other hand the verb is was, with the structure of modification built of wood serving as subjective complment. These structures are also formally distinguished is the presence, actual or possible, of a phrase containing the preposition by.

## 7. Status

English verbs have four statuses, the affirmative, the interrogative, and the negative-interrogative. The interrogative status s marked by a change in word order, involving the inversion of the subject and the auxiliary, or the first auxiliary if more than one are present. Verbs which have no auxiliary in the affirmative status use the auxiliary do/does/ did to form the interrogative, except be, which always simply inverts subject and verb, and have, which may invert or may use the forms of do. The auxiliaries get, used (to), and have (to) also use the forms of do. The following examples illustrate interrogative status.

Inverted forms:

Is he working

Has he worked

Should he have worked

Is he going to work

Do-forms:

Does he work

Did he work

Did he get killed

Does he have to work

Did he used to work

The negative statuses marked by the inversion of the special function word not, immediately after the first auxiliary. Again the forms of do are used if no auxiliary is otherwise present. The forms of do are used when the auxiliary is used (to), have (to), or a simple form of get. the following examples illustrate various cases of negative status:

He is not working

He has nor worked

He should not have worked

He is not going to work

He does not work

The negative-interrogative status combines the two former, as its name indicates. The use of the auxiliary do follows the same pattern as in the interrogative forms. This structure brings the subject and the function word not together at the



same point in the midl of the split verb-phrase. Either of them may come first, but the form with the subject before not is somewhat more formal, as the following examples show:

not-First form:

isn't he working

hasn't he worked

shouldn't he have worked

doesn't he work

hasn't he any money

doesn't he have any money

does he not have any money

We may summarize this sevenfold classification of verbs by a tabular analysis of four typical verb-phrase:

- a. He is to be told
- b. They should not have been working
- c. Ought we to get going
- d. Mightn't he have been getting run over

### **Simple verb predicate**

This is the first predicate in the English language that anyone who begins to study English grammar encounters. It is thanks to him that it is possible to create such a large number of species-temporal forms and structures. With its help, you can express almost any simple thought or idea, talk about some event that has already happened, is happening or will happen in the future.

For a simple verbal predicate, tenses in English vary, defining the components included in this very predicate. So, for the tenses of the category Simple, when forming a predicate, only the main verb, modified in accordance with the rules, is sufficient. In more complex constructions, as well as in questions and negations, a simple verbal predicate in English may include one or more auxiliary verbs and the particle not.

Examples of a simple verb predicate

As mentioned earlier, it can only consist of the main verb:

It happened yesterday - It happened yesterday.

She reads interesting books - She reads interesting books.

From the main and auxiliary verb:

Will you marry me? - Will you marry me?

This boy is playing - This boy is playing.



She has not met him yet - She has not met him yet.

For a simple verbal predicate, the voice of the verb in English does not matter. It can be either active, as in all the examples given, or passive:

This house was build four years ago - This house was built four years ago

### **Compound verb predicate**

A compound predicate in English, in addition to the main verb, includes an additional member of the sentence, which introduces an additional semantic load and changes the meaning of what was said. A compound verbal predicate always contains a main verb and a verb object, which most often serves to clarify. In addition, it can include one or more auxiliary verbs and the particle not.

It is important to distinguish the compound verb predicate in English from the complex forms of the simple verb predicate. In a simple predicate, only one verb, the main verb, has a real semantic load. There are at least two of them in a complex predicate.

Examples of compound verb predicate

The simplest example of this predicate in English is sentences like this:

I like to read. - I love to read.

She wants to travel all over the world. - She wants to travel all over the world.

### **Compound nominal predicate**

This type of predicate in English consists of a nominal part and a linking verb. The nominal part conveys the main meaning, while the linking verb is necessary in most cases only to maintain the correct grammatical structure.

The most commonly used verb as a link is to be, translated into Russian - to be. Of course, it changes according to the species-temporal form used. In addition to be, the following verbs can act as an auxiliary verb:

to become - "to become";

to remain - "remain";

to seem - "to seem";

to look - "look".

It is not difficult to distinguish the nominal part of a predicate from a simple object. Take the following two sentences as an example:

He was here some years ago. - He was here a few years ago.

He was tired. - He was tired.

In the first case, a simple verbal predicate is used. The main semantic load is carried by the verb was - "was". In the second case, the important thing is not that he



"was", but the fact that he was "tired". Without a nominal part, the sentence completely loses its meaning. Therefore, this is a compound nominal predicate.

Examples of compound nominal predicate

In English, examples of this kind of predicate can be found no less than in Russian. Here are the simplest of them, suitable for understanding the general principle of their compilation:

We are professionals. - We are professionals.

She became a doctor. - She became a doctor.

Let's remain friends forever. - Let's be friends forever.

You seem tired. You didn't sleep enough this night, did you? - You seem tired.  
You didn't get enough sleep tonight, did you?

I don't want to look silly! - I don't want to look stupid!

Like the two previous types of predicate, the compound nominal predicate can be diversified by complicating the nominal part or using a complex aspect-temporal form of the linking verb.

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