

Chapter 1

Introduction

These are by no means the first words ever written about predication. In the Western philosophical tradition, predication was among the first topics to appear on the scene. Nor are these at all likely to be the final words on predication. There are doubtless many ways in which the ideas expounded in these pages will be found to be in need of revision, or simply wrong. What, then, justifies this new study of predication? My answer is that its *raison d'être* lies in the specific avenue toward predication taken here—an avenue that puts great emphasis on meaningless elements (meaningless in the sense of having no semantic load) that play an essential role in the establishment and syntactic manipulation of predication relationships. So rather than focusing on the meaningful parts of predication structures, this study gives pride of place to what I call **RELATORS** and **LINKERS**. The former mediate the relationship between a predicate and its subject in the base representation of predication structures; the latter connect the raised predicate to the small clause harboring its subject in so-called Predicate Inversion constructions, in which—as the name suggests—the predicate inverts with the subject.¹

I first started studying **LINKERS** in the early 1990s (see Den Dikken 1994 for an initial report), when I tried to make sense of the obligatoriness of the copula *to be* in sentences of the type in (1b) (see Moro 1990, 1997 for the original observation), which alternate with constructions like (1a) in which no copula is needed.

- (1) a. Imogen considers Brian (to be) the best candidate.
b. Imogen considers the best candidate *(to be) Brian.

I found out that an analysis of what Moro (1997) calls “inverse” copular sentences in terms of A-movement of *the best candidate* into subject position could derive the obligatoriness of the copula from the locality theory

just proposed in Chomsky's (1995, chap. 3) minimalist program, in terms of domain-extending head movement and equidistance. That analysis, lending strong support to the movement analysis of inverse copular sentences (which, in the generative literature, goes back at least to Blom and Daalder 1977; see also Heggie 1988; Heycock 1991, 1994; Hoekstra and Mulder 1990; and especially Moro 1997), identified the copula as a syntactic aid to the inversion of the predicate around the subject: the copula as the reflex of locality—theoretically forced movement of the functional head of the small clause to a higher head. This view of the copula as a “pivot” for Predicate Inversion was found, in subsequent work (see Den Dikken 1995a; Bennis, Corver, and Den Dikken 1998), to extend naturally into the nominal domain, where the LINKER element *van* rears its head in Dutch examples like (2b), which alternate with uninverted constructions such as (2a).

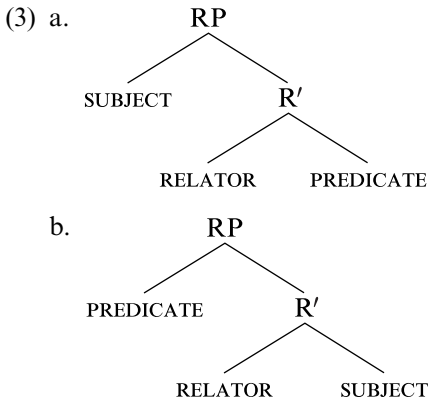
- (2) a. een vent als een beer (Dutch)
 a bloke as/like a bear
 b. een beer van een vent
 a bear of a bloke

A wide variety of constructions (in clauses as well as nominal phrases) were identified to support the generalization that inversion of a predicate around its subject gives rise to a LINKER element as a result of syntactic constraints imposed on the inversion process. The syntax, then, was seen to be entirely responsible for the distribution of copular elements in such contexts as (1b) and (2b).

Uninverted predications, however, may also feature meaningless elements between the two relata (subject and predicate). Thus, in (1a), although *to be* is by no means obligatory, whenever the matrix verb selects a *to*-infinitival complement, *be* must be included (*Imogen considers Brian to *(be) the best candidate*). And similarly, in (2a) the element *als*, the Dutch cognate of English *as*, is inomissible. These meaningless pieces are not there to facilitate inversion of the predicate around its subject, for in the a-examples there has been no such inversion. These, therefore, are lexicalizations of a different functional head in the structure—one that mediates the syntactic relationship between the predicate and its subject in the base. I call elements that perform this mediating function RELATORS. They originate in the functional head of small clauses, the RELATOR-head.

It is the responsibility of the RELATOR to establish the relationship between the predicate and its subject in the syntactic structure. In the exam-

ples in (1a) and (2a), that relationship is established in such a way that the subject is the specifier of the RELATOR-head and the predicate is its complement (see (3a)). This state of affairs is indeed the most common way the connection between the predicate and its subject is syntactically created. But there is no reason to think, a priori, that it is the only one. What if the predicate were base-generated as the specifier of the RELATOR and the subject as its complement? Does the structure in (3b) serve any purpose? Are there constructions that instantiate it? I will argue in chapter 2 that indeed there are several such constructions, and that, therefore, predication relationships, while always hierarchically asymmetrical, are fundamentally nondirectional.



This study is organized into four substantive chapters, sandwiched between this introduction and the brief summary presented in chapter 6 of the major results of this study of predication and Predicate Inversion. Chapters 2 and 3 develop the hypothesis that *all* subject-predicate relationships are syntactically mediated by a RELATOR and that subject-predicate relationships in syntax are configurational and fundamentally nondirectional (chapter 2), and will explicitly refute claims to the effect that “bare” small clauses (subject-predicate structures lacking any internal functional structure) exist (chapter 3). In the course of the discussion in chapter 3, a typology of copular sentences is presented that leaves room for just two types (Moro’s “canonical” and “inverse” copular sentences). In chapter 4, the focus will be on inversion of the predicate around its subject and the distribution of LINKER elements surfacing between the inverted predicate and the subject. Presenting an in-depth analysis of the syntax of Predicate Inversion, chapter 4 shows that inverse

copular sentences, and Predicate Inversion constructions in general, involve A-movement of a null-headed small-clause predicate around the subject, the null-headedness of the predicate holding the key to the distribution of Predicate Inversion. Chapter 4 also takes care to distinguish between two types of Predicate Inversion constructions: those whose well-formedness is dependent on the projection in the tree of a LINKER element (such as the cases in (1b) and (2b), specimens of Copular Inversion) and those in which no LINKER is needed because the head of the predicate raises to the RELATOR-head of the small clause.

While chapters 2 through 4 concern themselves primarily with cases of predication inside finite and infinitival clauses, chapter 5 is a study (building on Den Dikken 1995a) of predication and Predicate Inversion in the nominal domain. Here, qualitative binominal noun phrases such as (2b) are examined in detail. The discussion will show that all qualitative binominal noun phrases share the fact that they involve two noun phrases entertaining a predication relationship, with the first noun phrase serving as the predicate of the second. In a case study of the central hypothesis that there are two ways, in principle, in which a predication relationship can be projected in the underlying representation (see (3a, b)), it will be shown in chapter 5 that qualitative binominal noun phrases come in two types, one employing the predicate-specifier structure in (3b) and base-generating the surface order of predicate and subject, and the other featuring the predicate-complement structure in (3a) and deriving the surface order of constituents via Predicate Inversion. Both types of qualitative binominal noun phrase give rise to a “nominal copula” (Dutch *van*, English *of*) between the predicate and the subject: in the predicate-specifier type, this copula is the lexicalization of the RELATOR, while in the predicate-complement type, whose derivation involves Predicate Inversion, the nominal copula is a spell-out of the LINKER. The case study of qualitative binominal noun phrases in chapter 5 thus lends support to the configurationality and fundamental nondirectionality of predication, and by identifying a copular element inside the nominal phrase and analyzing its distribution, it both furthers the parallelism between clauses and nominal phrases and vindicates the view that copular elements are meaningless spell-outs of functional heads inside or immediately outside small clauses (RELATORS and LINKERS).

After establishing the analysis of qualitative binominal noun phrases, chapter 5 proceeds to a brief discussion of other instances of noun-phrase internal predication and Predicate Inversion, reviewing *wh*-interrogative

and *wh*-exclamative DPs, cases of DP-internal adjectival predication, possessed noun phrases and relative-clause constructions, and drawing on a variety of languages to illustrate its claims. Overall, the study of predication and Predicate Inversion in the complex noun phrase at the same time highlights the pervasiveness of predication and Predicate Inversion in the grammar, confirms the conclusions reached on the basis of the investigation of clause-internal Predicate Inversion in chapter 4, and provides us with a new window on the internal structure of the nominal phrase.

My general objective in this work is to present a syntax of predication and the inversion of the predicate around its subject. The analysis will be cast in the mold of the principles-and-parameters theory of generative grammar—specifically, its recent “minimalist” incarnation (Chomsky 1995 and later work). Of particular importance in the technical discussions will be the ingredients of the *locality* theory, including the minimal domain and the phase. Though prior knowledge of these ingredients will definitely expedite the reader’s progress through these discussions, I have made a concerted effort to introduce the key concepts at the points at which they become relevant. Though the bulk of the discussion should be accessible (and of interest) to readers with only a general knowledge of generative syntax, there are some parts—particularly in chapter 4 (see especially section 4.3)—where the discussion is of a rather technical nature. Those not interested in the theoretical nitty-gritty may want to concentrate on the more empirically oriented portions of this study.