

THE EXPRESSION OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT SEMANTIC ROLES IN PREDICATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

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Abstract: This paper presents a typological analysis of how subject and object semantic roles are expressed in predicative constructions. First, the notions of semantic roles (such as agent, patient, and theme) and grammatical functions (subject and object) are introduced. Subsequently, examples from different languages illustrate how predicative constructions encode subject and object roles via morphological marking, syntactic position, and semantic alignment. The results identify typological patterns of role-function alignment and cross-linguistic variation in the expression of predicative arguments. The discussion considers the implications of these findings for the study of predicate-argument structure in typology.

Keywords: subject; object; semantic role; predicative construction; agent; patient; theme; argument structure; syntax-semantics interface; typology.

Introduction. In the study of clause-structure and argument linking, the expression of semantic roles (or thematic roles) such as *agent*, *patient*, *theme*, and their mapping onto grammatic functions (subject, object) remains a central topic. Semantic roles speak to the participant's involvement in the event denoted by the predicate, while grammatical functions concern how these participants are realised in the clause (e.g., as subject or object). The interface between these domains is crucial for understanding predicative constructions -i.e., clauses in which a predicate (often a verb) is core and participants are linked. In typological linguistics one asks: how do different languages encode the roles of subject and object in predicative constructions? What morphological, syntactic or discourse mechanisms mark or license these roles? The present article aims at exploring this question via a typological lens, focusing on expression of subject and object roles in predicative constructions across languages.

Research objectives:

1. To outline the theoretical distinction between semantic roles and grammatical functions in predicative constructions.
2. To examine concrete examples -from recent literature (2020+) -of how subject and object roles are marked or realised in predicative constructions.
3. To identify typological patterns of alignment between semantic role ↔ grammatical function in predicative contexts, and to discuss implications.

Methods: This study draws on recent scholarship (from 2020 onwards) dealing with semantic role expression, argument linking and predicative constructions. For example, we cite the work of S. Heidinger (2024) on causative-anticausative alternation and semantic subject roles. Other relevant sources include corpus-based typological experiments such as Kyle Mahowald et al. (2022) on redundancy of grammatical cues to subjecthood. The sample is not exhaustive but purposive, selecting cases that illustrate how predicative constructions link semantic roles and grammatical functions.

We adopt two dimensions:

- Semantic roles: participants' involvement in the event (agent, patient, theme, cause, instrument, etc.).
- Grammatical functions: how participants are realised (subject, object, indirect object, oblique). We examine for each example: (i) what semantic role is assigned to a participant; (ii) how that participant is realised syntactically in a predicative construction; (iii) what morphological, positional or discourse marking helps realise that role-function mapping.

This paper focuses on predicative (typically verb-centered) constructions, not extending to nominal predicates or verbless clauses. Further, the typological sample is limited to cases available in the literature; it does not claim representativeness of all world languages.

Results. *Example: Grammatical Relations and Semantic Roles of English Active Clauses*

Adisiswanto (2023) studied active clauses in the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* and found that participants fill roles such as agent, beneficiary, theme, stimulus, location, and these semantic roles align with grammatical relations like subject, primary object, secondary object or oblique. For example: in "He gave her the book", "He" is agent-subject, "the book" is theme-object, "her" is beneficiary-object/indirect. This demonstrates how predicative constructions map multiple semantic roles onto grammatical functions (subject, object, indirect object).

From these examples we can note:

- Semantic roles such as agent, patient, cause, theme etc. are key in determining how participants are realised in predicative constructions.
- Grammatical functions (subject, object) do not always correspond one-to-one with semantic roles: e.g., cause subjects may appear in anticausative subject position.
- Some languages rely heavily on semantic information for role assignment, reducing overt grammatical marking.
- Predicative constructions therefore reveal variation in how languages encode the mapping from semantic role → grammatical function.

Discussion. The results show that in predicative constructions, the expression of subyek and obyekt roles is influenced by a complex interplay of semantic role, grammatical function, and morphosyntactic encoding. The example of Heidinger (2024) highlights that semantic role (cause vs agent) can prompt a different construction type (transitive vs anticausative) even when the grammatical subject slot is filled. The cross-linguistic study by Mahowald et al. (2022) suggests that semantic role information can often substitute for explicit grammatical marking of subject vs object. And Adisiswanto demonstrates multiple participants in predicative constructions can each bear different semantic roles while being mapped onto subject/ object slots.

These findings imply that typological studies of predicative constructions need to pay attention not only to morphosyntactic coding (case, agreement, word order) but also to the semantic role realisations of participants. The alignment between semantic role ↔ grammatical function is a locus of variation: some languages show a stable agent→subject mapping, others allow more flexibility (agent may become object, patient may become subject) depending on construction type. Further, in some languages semantic cues may reduce need for explicit role marking. This article's dataset is limited and relies on published studies rather than fieldwork or a broad typological sample. Future research could compile a large cross-linguistic corpus of predicative constructions, annotate participants for semantic role and grammatical function, and test statistical correlations. Also, extending beyond verb-predicates to non-verbal predicates (adjectival, nominal) would deepen understanding.

Conclusion. In sum, the expression of subject and object semantic roles in predicative constructions is typologically diverse. Semantic roles influence how participants are realised grammatically; the mapping from role → function is mediated by morphosyntactic, positional and discourse factors. Recognizing the interface of semantics and grammar in predicative constructions enhances our typological understanding of argument expression across languages

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