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Non-verbal predication: theory, typology, diachrony

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0. Introduction

This study of theoretical, typological, and diachronic aspects of non-verbal predication starts from the hypothesis, brought forward in Dik (1980, 1983, 1987), that all constructions containing a form of the (equivalent of the) verb *to be* on the one hand, and those containing no verb at all on the other, are members of a single class of non-verbal predications. This approach allows for a unified treatment of nominal, copula, locative, existential, and possessive constructions and makes it possible to generalize across languages that do and those that do not make use of one or more copulas in the expression of non-verbal predications.

The main constituents of the constructions that I will be concerned with are (i) a main predicate of a category other than verb and (ii) its argument(s). These constituents may or may not be accompanied by (iii) a copula. The intended construction types thus have the following general format, where the actual order in which the constituents are presented is irrelevant:

- (1) Argument(s) (Copula) Predicate_v

Constructions conforming to this general format will be termed *non-verbal predications*. Any auxiliary element occurring in such constructions, including pronominal copula morphemes, existential particles, and the like will be termed *copula*. Some (pseudo-) English examples are given in (2):

- | | Argument | (Copula) | Predicate _v |
|--------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| (2) a. | <i>John</i> | <i>Ø</i> | <i>ill</i> |
| b. | <i>Peter</i> | <i>he</i> | <i>my best friend</i> |
| c. | <i>the dog</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>in the garden</i> |
| d. | <i>a meeting</i> | <i>there.is</i> | <i>at ten o'clock</i> |

The construction types illustrated in (2) differ with respect to the type of the main predicate (an adjective in (2a), a noun phrase in (2b), a prepositional phrase in (2c-2d)) and with respect to the type of copula (no copula in (2a), a pronominal copula in (2b), a verbal copula in (2c), an existential copula in (2d)). They have in common that their main predicate is of a category other than verb, and this is what makes them qualify as instances of non-verbal predication.

The theoretical part of this study is written within the framework of Functional Grammar. This theory not only provides the hypothesis that is at the heart of this study, but will also serve as the framework for the analysis of the typological data. The Functional Grammar formalism will thus serve as a metalanguage within which the linguistic observations made are reformulated. The need for such a metalanguage is particularly felt in the investigation of language universals, since this type of research requires the possibility to generalize over typologically highly divergent languages.

2 *Non-verbal predication*

The organization of the material is as follows:

Chapters 1 and 2 contain preliminary information necessary for a proper understanding of later chapters. A brief outline of some relevant aspects of Functional Grammar is given in chapter 1. Chapter 2 gives an account of the method used to arrive at the language sample from which the data for this study are taken.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 investigate non-verbal predication from a primarily theoretical perspective. Chapter 3 defines and delimits some notions crucial to the field of non-verbal predication. In chapter 4 the categorial differences between verbal and non-verbal predicates are investigated and a new typology of parts-of-speech systems is developed. Chapter 5 then presents a full classification of non-verbal predication types, building on the results of the preceding chapters.

Chapters 6, 7, 8 are of a primarily typological nature. Chapter 6 investigates the degree of non-verbal predicability of the languages of the sample, i.e. the extent to which they make use of the non-verbal predication types distinguished in chapter 5. Chapter 7 deals with the alternatives languages use for non-predicable non-verbal predication types. Chapter 8 studies the expression formats languages use for predicable non-verbal predication types, including the extent to which they require the presence of copulas of different types. In all three chapters the variation found across languages is shown to be highly systematic.

Chapters 9 and 10 put the typological data in a wider typological and diachronic perspective. Chapter 9 shows that there is a systematic correlation between the system of non-verbal predication displayed by a language on the one hand, and its parts-of-speech system on the other. Chapter 10 looks at systems of non-verbal predication, as emerging from chapter 9, from a diachronic perspective.

Chapter 11 is a chapter in its own right, in that it investigates theoretical, typological, and diachronic aspects of the use of non-verbal predication in the expression of tense, mood, aspect, and polarity distinctions. The *auxiliary uses* of non-verbal predication types are described in relation to their basic uses.

Chapter 12 brings together the findings of the previous chapters in terms of a general typology, based on the major parameters determining the way in which and the extent to which languages make use of non-verbal predication.