
Utterance-predicate complementation

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In a classic work on complementation, Noonan (2007) restricts the term “utterance predicate” to predicates such as ‘say’, ‘tell’ and ‘ask’ in constructions with a propositional complement, as in (1a). In contrast, constructions like (1b) are taken to involve a distinct type of predicate referred to as “manipulative” (examples from Noonan 2007:120).

- (1) a. Floyd told Zeke that Roscoe buried the mash.
 b. Floyd told Zeke to bury the mash.

Thus, the term “utterance predicate” is defined as a cover term for predicates that describe assertions or polar questions, but not for predicates that describe directive speech acts. Likewise, Cristofaro’s (2013) study of utterance-predicate complementation excludes constructions like (1b). In this paper, we argue that these approaches to utterance predicates are less than ideal. Firstly, they miss generalizations across predicate types: for example, perception- and knowledge-predicate complements often exhibit contrasts that are both morphosyntactically and semantically similar to that in (1). The goals of this paper are: 1) to document the parallel between complements of utterance-predicates and other predicate types, 2) to test Cristofaro’s claim that utterance-predicate complements tend to be balanced, and 3) to argue that assertive and question predicates take propositional complements, while directive predicates take state-of-affairs complements (Boye 2012: 410-411). The study is based on data from a genetically stratified sample of 173 languages.

References: • Boye, K. (2010): Reference and clausal perception-verb complements. *Linguistics* 48(2), 391-430. • Cristofaro, S. (2013): Utterance Complement Clauses. *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. <http://wals.info/chapter/128> (19 November, 2015). • Noonan, M. (2007): Complex constructions. In: Timothy Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.