TYPES OF PREDICATES IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN[1]

Abstract: *The paper aims at presenting the types of predicates specificity in both English and Romanian. In English, a predicate consists of a verb in a personal mood either expressed or implied. The predicate classification is made according to the criterion of content and to that of structure. There are verbal predicates, nominal predicates and mixed types of predicates. In Romanian, there are verbal predicates and nominal predicates as well, and there are distinct types of predicates – adverbial and interjectional.*

Key-words: *linking verb, predicative, verbal, nominal, personal mood*

TYPES DE PRÉDICATS EN ANGLAIS ET EN ROUMAIN

Résumé: *Cet article se propose de presenter les types de spécificités des prédicats en anglais et en roumain. En anglais, un prédicat est formé d'un verbe à un mode personnel exprimé ou implicite. La classification des prédicats est faite en fonction du contenu et de la structure. Il existe des prédicats verbaux, des prédicats nominaux et des types mixtes. En roumain, il existe aussi des prédicats verbaux et nominaux et il existe aussi des catégories comme le prédicat adverbial et interjectionnel.*

Mots-clés: *verbe connecteur, predicative, verbal, nominal, mode personnel*

Sentences are interpreted in English in similar terms in grammar and in logic. It has been proved that most of the information is transmitted through the predicate group (the verb + objects + adverbial modifiers), while the subject group (noun or noun equivalents plus attributes) is the element spoken about, described, analysed,etc. The subject group is known as the "theme", while the predicate group is described as the "rheme"- the element of action, the carrier of the essential information about the theme.

The predicate-part of the sentence attracts most of the attention and has the greatest prominence through phonetic factors too: stress, pitch, rhythm. Although the subject and the predicate are considered in many languages the main parts of the sentence, in English the role of the subject is more reduced than that of the predicate, in spite of its almost obligatory presence.

The predicate is that principal part of the sentence which ascribes an action, a state or a quality to the subject:

..."The sun *was brighter* and the glare *came* on the water and then, as it rose clear, the flat sea sent it back at his eyes so that it *hurt* sharply and he *rowed* without looking into it." (Hemingway, *The old man and the sea*)

The predicate includes a verb in a personal mood, either expressed or implied. When the verb is expressed, it may belong to any of the types or categories of the verb. As

[1] **Mincă** Nicoleta Florina, University of Piteşti, nico.minca@yahoo.com

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

a rule, parts of the sentence which do not include a verb in a personal mood, but only a non-finite or non-personal form (infinitive, gerund or participle) are not considered to be a predicate. There are cases where some forms can be deprived of their personal verbal form through ellipsis:

Care for a cigarette?
You ought to speak to him, *tell* him he is wrong…

Unlike the classification of subjects, which is made first according to the criterion of content and then to the criterion of composition / structure, the classification of predicates is usually made from both these points of view at the same time. So, we can identify: *verbal predicates, nominal predicates* and *mixed types of predicates.*

1. Verbal Predicates in English

They include at least one personal form of a notional or auxiliary verb – generating simple predicates – or a non-personal form of a notional verb preceded by a semi-auxiliary of modality or of aspect – generating compound verbal predicates.

1.1. Simple Predicates

The Simple Predicate Proper (Simple Verbal Predicate) states an action and possibly the time when it is effected. It is expressed by a verb in a personal mood, in a certain tense:

She *said* that by that time she *would have been waiting* for an hour already.
Have you *hurt yourself*?

We can range within simple predicates even analytic forms or compound tenses, irrespective of the number of auxiliaries they include, because these tenses are conceived as morphological units and the auxiliaries contributing to their formation are considered grammatical instruments, devoid of semantic force.

1.1.2. The Phrasal Predicate

It consists of phrases which form a whole, indivisible from the semantic point of view, sometimes tending to be replaced by a single verb and depending for their meaning on other words in the phrase than the verb.

Robert *gave* a violent *start.*
They usually *take a walk* before they have breakfast.

1.2. Compound Verbal Predicates

They are predicates which indicate both the action and the way in which it is performed and its relation to the time factor.

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

1.2.1. The Compound Modal Verbal Predicate

It includes a modal verb or a modal phrase with a verb in a predicate mood + a verbal (non-finite form) of the verb to be conjugated. The modals may be either defective (*must, can, should,* etc.) or non-defective (*to have to, to wish*, etc.). The modal phrases may have various structures – 'I would rather', 'you had better', 'I can't help', etc.

He decided that he *wouldn't wait* for them any longer.
They *have to obey* our rules in this company.

1.2.2. The Compound Aspect Verbal Predicate

It is made up of a personal form of a verb denoting a lexical aspect and a non-personal form of the principal / predicative verb. Thus, unlike the forms denoting grammatical aspect (common or continuous / progressive) and giving rise to simple verbal predicates, the verbs lend to the main verb which they precede the other – lexical - aspects, changing its content or value: 'to start', 'to begin', 'to stop', 'to cease', 'to go on', 'to keep on', 'used to'.

Has he *started studying* yet?
Why doesn't she *stop teasing* her sister?
Go on trying!
He *used to go* to market every Saturday.

2. Nominal Predicates in English

2.1. The Nominal Predicate Proper

It shows the state or quality of the subject or the evolution of that state or quality. The nominal predicate proper is made up of a linking verb and of a predicative:

Steve was ready to talk; it was only time that seemed to be wanting.

The linking verbs or copulas are all intransitive verbs. They take upon themselves the task of indicating the morphological categories of the verb, therefore the formal elements of the predicate (aspect, voice, mood, tense, person and number) while the meaning of the predicate is generally not expressed by them.

There are several categories of semi-auxiliary verbs which can be used as linking verbs:

● Verbs of being or state – *to be, to stand, to feel*:

The ground *was wet* with dew.
The meeting *stands adjourned*.

● Verbs of remaining or continuing – *to continue, to keep, to remain, to hold*:

The weather still *continues fine*.
The rule still *holds good*.

● Verbs of becoming or of transition from one state to another like: *to become, to get, to grow, to turn, to fall, to run, to prove, to turn out*:

The leaves *were turning* gold and red.
They *were whispering* together before they *fell asleep*.

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

● Verbs of seeming or appearing, which retain a certain modal force: *to seem, to appear, to look*:

He *appeared bewildered*.

At that time she *looked a wiser woman* than in the days she wanted nothing but facts.

A certain variety can also be found among predicatives that may be expressed by various parts of speech:

♦ a noun in the nominative or genitive:

He is *a doctor*.

The bag is *Susan's*.

♦ predicative adjectives:

Her face is *aglow*.

It is *kind* of you to help them.

♦ personal, possessive, indefinite or interrogative pronouns:

This computers is *his*.

That is indeed *something*.

♦ a noun, a gerund or pronoun accompanied by a preposition:

Jenny looked *in* perfect *health*.

His son looked *like him*.

♦ a cardinal or an ordinal numeral:

They were *twenty*.

That man was *the eighth*.

♦ an infinitive or an infinitival phrase:

"*To be or not to be*, that is the question." (Shakespeare)

♦ a gerundial phrase:

His hobby is *hunting the second-hand bookshops*.

♦ a predicative clause:

What you are telling me is exactly *what I had expected*.

2.2. The Double / Complex Predicate

The Double Predicate is a form specific to the English language which hardly finds proper equivalents in other languages. The prototype is the famous sentence "The moon rose red" which shows that in a double predicate we have to do with the contraction of the predicates of two sentences (*The moon was red when it rose* or *The moon rose. It was red*.)

The general meaning of this type of predicate is sometimes that of a nominal predicate of being, at other times it is one of becoming, of appearing, of remaining, etc.

The houses *lay silent* in the moonlight.

The sun *came out hot*.

3. Mixed Types of Predicates in English

There are types of predicates which may combine together, creating mixed forms, such as phrasal and nominal predicates, or compound modal and phrasal predicates, compound

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

modal plus aspect verbal predicates, compound verbal and nominal predicates, verbal aspect plus compound nominal predicates, etc.

Rainy days *can be unpleasant*. (compound modal verbal plus nominal predicate)

To be sure I *will give you a call* as I pass. (compound modal verbal + phrasal predicate)

He *began to feel hungry*. (compound aspect verb + nominal predicate)

In Romanian, the predicate is exclusively expressed by personal mood verbs. Only a personal mood verb is admitted in the position of a predicate because auxiliary, modality and aspect verbs are not recognized as contextually non-predicative. There are two main types of predicate – the verbal predicate and the nominal predicate; the predicates expressed by adverbs, which do not admit the relation to a linking verb, and through interjections are thought to be verbal predicates, while that one expressed by an adverb and a linking verb – a nominal predicate.

Any verb in a predicative mood accomplishes the syntactic position of a predicate, thus the non-predicative specificity of the linking verb is not recognized. On the other hand, the unique character of the position of a predicative is recognized, as it is unilaterally dependent to the regent verb, which is not considered a linking verb but a regent verb of the predicative in the nominative.

4. Verbal Predicates in Romanian

4.1. The Simple Verbal Predicate

It is expressed by a predicative verb in a personal mood or by a verbal phrase or an impersonal verbal phrase in a personal mood:

Tânărul *îndeamnă* calul ţinând scurt zăbala.

Flăcăul *n-a luat seama* că negustorul i-*o luase înainte*.

I-a explicat *să nu puie la inimă* cuvintele babei.

The verbal predicate realized by a verb in the infinitive with an imperative value is characteristic to very rare constructions such as: ‘a se agita bine înainte de folosire’, ‘a nu se pleca în afară’, ‘a nu se fuma’. This type of predicate is competed by some sentences with predicative forms: *Se agită* bine inainte de folosire!; *Nu vă plecaţi* în afară!; Fumatul *este interzis*!

4.2. The Compound Verbal Predicate

It is made up of a semi-auxiliary modality verb – *a putea, a trebui, a vrea, a fi, a avea, a părea,* or of a semi-auxiliary aspect verb – *a începe , a prinde, a da, a sta, a porni, a apuca,* and a verb in the ‘conjunctiv’ or infinitive moods, or even seldom, in the participle or in the ‘supin’ moods.

Predicative phrases with modality verbs:

Cum *ai putut să*-mi *calci* moşiile de la tată-meu?

Dacă te-ai băgat in joc, *trebuie să joci*.

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

Zamfir *era să innebunească* de multă bucurie.

Predicative phrases with verbs of aspect:

După aceea, el *începu să se plimbe* în lungul odăii.

Afară *stă să plouă*.

Stânca *stă să se prăvale* în prăpastia măreaţă.

Când *dă să zboare*, cade jos şi moare.

From a functional point of view, both verbs of the phrase make up a unit with the same syntactic position. The verb in the 'conjunctiv' or infinitive moods is modified from a syntactic function point of view by the semi-auxiliary which precedes it. Thus, the mood, tense, person and number that characterize the semi-auxiliary are the same as concerns the predicate.

The second member of the compound verbal predicate could be a verbal phrase or a verbal expression in the 'conjunctiv' mood or in the infinitive mood:

Îi vine *să se dea cu capul de pereţi*.

Trebuie să-ţi dai seama de adevăr.

There are some verbs which are admitted in the position of a compound verbal predicate by various verbs in the passive voice:

Copilul *a început a fi apreciat* de profesori.

Ion *urmează să fie trimis* in delegaţie.

Peste două zile, *avea să fie văzut* prin oraş.

5. Nominal Predicates in Romanian

The nominal predicate is made up of a predicative and a linking verb which is a syntactic instrument for the nominal predicate structure. The position unity of the linking verb and of the predicative consists in the whole predicative phrase that realizes the interdependence relation to the subject. In the structure of the nominal predicate the most frequent linking verb is the verb 'a fi'. Somehow, there is a difference between the verb 'a fi' and the other possible linking verbs: 'a părea', 'a rămane', 'a însemna', 'a ajunge', 'a se face'. These verbs bring a semantic characteristic to the nominal predicate structure:

George *părea fratele* mai mare; Valentin *era fratele* mic.

In the first sentence, the subject function of characterization is realized by the whole predicative phrase – părea fratele; the verb 'părea' brings to the predicative phrase the significance of 'appearance'. In the second sentence, the linking verb 'era' identifies the subject through the predicative 'fratele'. If we tried to change the place of the two verbs, we would also change the meaning of the communication.

There some predicative phrases that are built 'in absentia', without the linking verb 'a fi'. In these cases, the verbal element is eluded and the statement becomes a nominal sentence:

"Feţişoara lui, / *Spuma* laptelui; / Mustăcioara lui, / *Spicul* grâului; Perişorul lui, / *Pana* corbului; / Ochişorii lui, / *Mura* câmpului."

'The nominal verbal predicate' is made up of a predicative and a lexical and grammatical linking verb and can signify:

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

● permanence:

Mă cheamă Radu si *am stat ucenic* la episcopie.

Hanul lui Haramin *se afla aşezat* la o răspântie de drumuri.

● keeping quality:

Tot *obraznic ai rămas*, nene Iancule!

Poporul *se păstra* cu stoicism *liber*.

● equivalence:

'Bunar' *înseamnă* în limba nohailor *fântână*.

Tu *să nu te* mai *numeşti prieten* al meu.

● hypothesis, appearance:

Eu *îi păream* lui *grozav de înţelept*…

El *s-a arătat mirat* de povestirea monahului.

● obtaining a quality:

Nu se face el *ofiţer* cum *nu mă fac* eu *popă*!

Nedelcu *s-a ales un pungaş* de rând.

The nominal realization of a predicative can be realized through:

♦ a noun in the nominative, accompanied by an article, if it is determined and through expansion:

Ion *este* ***inginer.***

Maria *este* ***economista***.

♦ a pronoun:

Cartea mea *este* ***aceea*** de pe masă.

Soluţia pe care o propun *este* ***alta***.

♦ a noun in the genitive:

Caietul *este* ***al lui Gheorghe***.

Pălăria *pare* ***a Mariei***.

♦ an adjective and a numeral in the nominative:

Fata *este* ***frumoasă şi cuminte***.

Fiul meu *este* ***al treilea*** din stânga.

♦ a prepositional nominal phrase in the genitive or in the accusative:

Noi *suntem* ***împotriva propunerii*** tale.

El *nu este* ***pentru alegerea*** ta.

♦ The predicative can be expressed by a nominal form of the verb. The infinitive occurs in the position of a predicative just like any other noun in the nominative:

Unul din scopurile noastre *este* ***de a combate*** lipsurile şi ***de a lupta*** împotriva inechităţii.

The 'supin' mood with the function of a predicative is permanently marked by the preposition 'de':

Multe *sunt* ***de făcut*** şi puţine ***de vorbit***.

Calmul lui *este* ***de invidiat***.

The form of a participle in the position of a predicative resembles that of an adjective:

Femeia *părea* ***supărată.***

Copiii *sunt* ***agitaţi şi neliniştiţi***.

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

♦ The adverbs in the position of a predicative are co-occurrent with a subject expressed by an infinitive, a 'supin' or a subjective clause and can be preceded of followed by a linking verb:

A plănui *este* ***mai uşor*** decât a îndeplini planul.
Este ***imposibil*** de oprit apa.

♦ The subordinate predicative clause is introduced by relative pronouns and adverbs, or by the conjunctions: 'să', 'că', 'dacă':

Întrebarea *este* ***ce mâncăm azi***.
Situaţia *a rămas* ***cum o ştii.***
Întrebarea *este* ***dacă îl mai găsim***.

6. Adverbial Predicates

The adverbial predicate is realized by adverbs or predicative adverbial phrases which do not admit the co-occurrence of a predicative verbal form in the same sentence, but they form a predicate which is interdependent towards a non-personal subject. The interdependence relationship to the sentence subject is realized through the connective 'că':

Bineînţeles că totul s-a petrecut aşa.
Fireşte că voi veni la timp.
Desigur că este adevărat.

7. Interjectional Predicates

The predicate realized through interjections is a specific type, being considered a distinct class. The interjections in a predicate position characterize imperative statements, that can be orders or urges addressed directly to the collocutor:

Hai să mergem!
Iată-l pe prietenul nostru!
Poftim, dragă, o cafeluţă!

The realization of the predicate through onomatopoeias has a referential purpose, they update by approximate imitation the physical noise produced during different processes. These processes suggested by the onomatopoeia – predicate may be updated in the past, but, expressly, they are always connected to the moment of speaking:

Copilul ***zvâr*** cu piatra şi sparge geamul.
Atunci vrabia ***zbâr*** repede din copac.

Conclusions

The problem of the predicate in English is closely linked to that of predication, analysed in connection with a verb. The classification of predicates is usually made from both points of view of content and of structure at the same time. So, we can identify: verbal predicates – simple, phrasal and compound; nominal predicates – subdivided into proper and double; and mixed types of predicates, joining elements from predicates of the first type to others from the second type.

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)

In Romanian, any verb in a predicative mood accomplishes the syntactic position of a predicate, thus the non-predicative specificity of the linking verb is not recognized. On the other hand, the unique character of the position of a predicative is recognized, as it is unilaterally dependent to the regent verb. There are verbal predicates – simple and compound and nominal predicates, made up of a predicative and a linking verb which is a syntactic instrument for the nominal predicate structure. The position unity of the linking verb and of the predicative consists in the whole predicative phrase.

The adverbial predicates are realized by adverbs or predicative adverbial phrases which do not admit the co-occurrence of a predicative verbal form in the same sentence, but they form a predicate which is interdependent towards a non-personal subject.

The interjectional predicate is realized through interjections being considered a distinct class from the others.

References:

Alexander, L., G., (1999), *Longman English Grammar*, Longman, London and New York
Avram, Mioara, (2001), *Gramatica pentru toţi*, Editura Humanitas, Editia a III-a, Bucureşti
Bantaş, Andrei, (1991), *Essential English,* Editura Teora, Bucureşti
Bădescu, Alice, (1994), *Gramatica limbii engleze,* Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucuresti
Budai, Laslo, (2002), *Gramatică engleză*, Editura Teora, Bucureşti
Dictionary of Contemporary English, Longman, Second Edition, 1994
Diaconescu, Ion, (1989), *Probleme de sintaxă a limbii române actuale. Construcţie şi analiză*, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti
Huddleston, Rodney and Geoffrey K. Pullum, (2002), *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
Iordan, Iorgu, Robu Vladimir, (1988), *Limba română contemporană,* Editura Didactică şi pedagogică, Bucureşti
Irimia, Dumitru,(1997), *Gramatica limbii române,* Editura Polirom, Iaşi
Levitchi, Leon, Preda, Ioan, (1992), *Gramatica limbii române*, Editura Mondero, Bucureşti
Levitchi, Leon, (1995), *Gramatica limbii engleze,* Editura Teora, Bucureşti
Mccawley, James, (1998), *The Syntactic Phenomena of English*, University of Chicago Press
Paidos, Constantin, (2001), *English Grammar. Theory and Practice,* Editura Polirom, Bucureşti
Swan, Michael, (1996), *Practical English Usage*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
Thomson, A., J., Martinet, A., V. (1995), *A Practical English Grammar*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
Van Valin, Robert, (2001), *An Introduction to Syntax*, Cambridge University Press

Nicoleta Florina **MINCĂ** is a lecturer at the Department of Applied Foreign Languages, Faculty of Theology, Letters, History and Arts, University of Piteşti. She has been teaching English as a foreign language for twenty five years and held a Doctor's degree in Philology in 2008, at "Lucian Blaga" University, in Sibiu. Her area of interest includes applied linguistics, translation, and English for Specific Purposes. She is the author of several English practical courses in Economics and Law such as: *A Practical Course in Economics*, *English for Business, Economic Matters in English, English for Students in Law, Business English.* She also published a number of papers and articles focused on linguistics, didactics, ESP, English literature.

BDD-A31104 © 2019 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.143 (2026-11-19 08:46:39 UTC)