Chapter Twenty

The Predicate

20.1 Defining the Predicate

The predicate has a clump structure just like the one established for the Nominal Clump (see §6.1). It consists of one or more phrases that can be referential. The Predicate Clump has illocutionary force and denotes either a state (or situation if you will), a change of state, an event, a process or an action (see Van Valin and Lapolla 1997: 83). I refer to states and changes of states simply as states and to events, processes and actions simply as events. Illocutionary force does not need to be expressed morphologically, but can be inferred in the process of achieving maximum relevance for an utterance. The denotation of the predicate can help in this process, e.g. if it consists of an interrogative word, the illocutionary force is interrogative. When illocutionary force is expressed morphologically (by enclitics), it has to be on the predicate. The definition of the predicate is thus: a clump consisting of one or more phrases that denotes a state or event and is the locus of the illocutionary force. If no illocutionary force is morphologically expressed, it has to be inferred, except when the predicate contains an interrogative word. The semantic head of the phrase or phrases making up the predicate has to be a member of the predicative words class (see Chapter 3). This is a schematic representation of the predicate:

Predicate → Clump denoting a state or event + illocutionary force

Clausal constituents expressed before or after the predicate cannot carry operator enclitics, which means that operator enclitics are predicate enclitics, not enclitics that stick to the very end of the clause regardless of where it is. The phrases of which the predicate can consist can refer to an individual or group of individuals, but this is not necessarily the case, e.g. when the semantic head of the phrase is a verb or adjective and thus denotes an event or state.

That predicates consist of phrases in made clear by structures like those in (616) and (617).

(616) teʔewdo Indiacianok
    teʔew =do  {[India] =ci =an} =ok
    now =TOP  India =LOC =FOC =ASP
    ‘Now, [they are] back in India.’
In (616) we see that the predicate consists of a phrase, *India*, referring to a place. The phrase is marked as a Location by the locative phrasal enclitic and marked as new information by the focus enclitic before aspect is assigned to it.

Example (617) presents the first three clauses of a story. The first two clauses are presentative clauses and the third is a declarative clause. Both clauses consist only of a predicate. The first predicate is made up of a Nominal Clump (see §6.1) which in turn contains a Noun Phrase and a Quantifier Phrase. The second predicate consists of a single NP with a derivational and a pragmatic role enclitics attached to it.

(617) *morot məŋʔsanoro, mo †jəwʔtaraanokmo. wa? niʔokno.*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[} & \text{[morot]} \text{NP} = \text{[məŋʔ} \text{sa]} \text{QTFP NC} = \text{no} = \text{ro} = \text{mo} \\
& \text{person CLF: HUMANS one = QUOT = DECL CONF} \\
\text{[} & \text{[jəwʔ]} \text{NP} = \text{tara} = \text{an} = \text{ok} = \text{mo} \\
& \text{mother ONLY = FOC = ASP = CONF} \\
\text{waʔ} & \text{ niʔ = ok = no} \\
& \text{father not.exist = ASP = QUOT} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘[There is] a person, it is said, ok. [She has become] single mother ok.’ The father is no more, it is said.

In the same vain, the head of a phrase in a predicate can consist of a word from the predicative word class that denotes an event, like *sandī* ‘search’ in (618) or state, like *cuŋ* ‘big’ in (619).

(618) *dadaparaaw sandiaŋaroŋaro aŋba*

\[
\begin{align*}
dada & = \text{[para} = \text{aw sandi} - \text{aŋ = aroŋ = aro} = \text{ba} \\
& \text{elder.brother = & CO = ACC search - AWAY = PROG = DECL 1SG = ADD/CT} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘I’m searching my elder brothers, I’m telling you!’

(619) *ue waye bəloŋen cuŋano.*

\[
\begin{align*}
ue & = \text{e bəloŋen cuŋ} = \text{a} = \text{no.} \\
& \text{DST spirit = CT very big = CUST = QUOT} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘That spirit is very big, it is said.’

I will define the predicate head as the word that tells us what the predicate is about. In case of a predicate consisting of a Nominal Clump with more than one phrase, the head is the word with the most specific denotation, in the case of (617), this is *morot*. This word denotes an individual whereas the classifier denotes a class of individuals and is thus considered less specific. In cases where a predicate consists only of a Quantifier phrase, it is the quantifier that is considered the head. In (618) and (619) the underlined verb and adjective are the head of their respective predicates. The notion of head is not only of descriptive importance to define the predicative word class. To describe predicates denoting events (verbal predicates) it is also an important notion, since some verbs can