

## Structural and frequency studies of dominant propositions of utterances with implicative predicates

Artemenko Yulia Oleksandrivna, Lecturer,  
Translation Department of Kremenchuk Mykhailo Ostrohradskyi National University, Kremenchuk, Ukraine

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**Abstract:** The article deals with the analysis of propositional features of implicatures of utterances with implicative predicates in the English informal discourse on the material of modern serials and feature-length films. The definition of proposition is given and its structure from the point of view of case grammar is outlined. The list of case frames of dominant proposition P of utterances with implicative predicates is proposed from the point of view of their occurrence frequency. We registered 28 variations of case frames, nine of which are proved to be the most used ones. 96% of the examined propositions are atomic and monopredicate. The semantic analysis of predicates being able as a head of a whole proposition to take the only open right position after an implicative predicate enabled us to bind them into six main groups: 1) action predicates; 2) process predicates; 3) state predicates; 4) mental activity predicates; 5) perception predicates; 6) speech activity predicates. From the point of view of verb valence, the examined dominant predicates are one-place, two-place, three-place and four-place ones. Considering the fact that semantic nucleus and dominant proposition predicate is a verb-complement under no requests or limits except grammatical ones, any verb of English can become a potential predicate in our case frames. Hence we cannot affirm that utterances with implicative predicates exploit a definite, distinctive deep structure. The basic case frames of P proposition are the frames, commonly used by English speaking people give or take a certain percent.

**Keywords:** *implicative predicate, implicature, case, case frame, proposition, propositional features.*

**Introduction.** At the present stage of progress of linguistics the term *proposition* has become firmly established. It's one of the key concepts in logic, where it means "sentence, judgment, utterance" – the category, the actual range of which consists of truth-values [12, c. 482-484]. Linguists started using it in the second half of XX<sup>th</sup> century. There exists a lot of linguistic studies of proposition [1; 3; 5; 6; 9; 14; 15; 20; 22 etc.], but scientists hasn't found the common denominator in definition and some aspects of this concept yet. As for the propositional features of implicatures of utterances with implicative predicates (IPs) in English informal discourse, they, as far as we know, are still unexplored. It determines the actuality of our study.

The object of our research is utterances with IPs in English informal discourse being analyzed for the purpose of establishing their implicatures features by means of interpretative and logical-semantic methods. The material is 2,000 utterances with IPs, picked by means of continuous sampling from seven seasons screen script of modern American television serial "Gilmore Girls" and 130 full-length films. The purpose of the paper is to establish the propositional features of implicatures of utterances with IPs in English informal discourse and classify such utterances from the point of view of certain case frames usage.

**Results and discussion.** The modern linguists interpret proposition from two main positions: objectivistic (proposition is a human mind-independent structure) and subjectivistic one (proposition exists in a speaker's mind). As

the anthropocentric approach has established in modern science of language, the latter rises as more appropriate one. In our study we rely on the concept of proposition as L.R. Bezugla interprets it – as "a form of human mental representation, which is a configuration of concepts being activated in mind in the process of cognitive-communicative activity" [4, c. 92]. Proposition is a cognitive [10, c. 138] and universal phenomenon, i.e. not tied to any specific language or utterance [14, c. 36].

According to their structure, propositions are divided into atomic (consisting of one or several arguments and a predicate) and composite ones (having two or more predicates) [1]. As for the verbalization degree, they can be complete (explicatures), incomplete (implicatures) or implicit ones (implicatures) [4, c. 93].

Proposition has its own configuration that reflects both in surface and deep structures, in the latter one – in corpore. Following by I.P. Susov, we understand the structure of proposition as a non-linear semantic configuration of semantic predicate and semantic actants, where predicate dominates actants [16].

In English there is a group of predicates – implicative verbs (IVs) and implicative verb phrases (IVPs) – which take infinitive or gerund sentential complements and presuppose their truth or falsity. These are implicative predicates [21]. In their deep structure sentences with IPs are complete constructions with predicate actants [8, c. 5]. Such patterns are hierarchically organized not only in structural, but in semantic plane too. In the utterance *John managed to solve the problem* the predicate expression [John manage X] is the main one. On the surface level it is responsible for the grammatical design of the sentence, but is semantically incomplete. The predicate expression [John solve problem] is dependent, but main one from the point of view of semantic filling. Thus we define V1 [manage] as grammatical predicate of the utterance, and V2 [solve] as its semantic one.

The ability of dependent predicate to be the semantic nucleus of an utterance is implemented even in cases, when there are more than two predicates in deep structure of utterance with IP, for example:

Randolf: *Is the Government prepared to make an opening statement?*

Ross: [standing] *Yes sir.* Ross walks to the jury box. [continuing]: *The facts of the case are this: At midnight on August 6th, the defendants went into the barracks room of their platoon-mate, PFC William Santiago. They woke him up, tied his arms and legs with rope, and forced a rag into his throat. A few minutes later, a chemical reaction in Santiago's body called lactic acidosis caused his lungs to begin bleeding. (+> His lungs began to bleed +>> His lungs bled) He drowned in his own blood and was pronounced dead at 32 minutes past midnight. (A few good men)*

In the surface structure of the sentence *A few minutes later, a chemical reaction in Santiago's body called lactic acidosis caused his lungs to begin bleeding* the IV *cause* functions as a predicate, the verb *begin* stands as its infinitive complement and at the same time, being an IV, starts a new chain "IV + complement", since it is a nucleus of the implicative pattern "*begin bleeding*", and the

verb *bleed*, respectively, is its gerund complement. There are three predicates on the deep level of this utterance, therefore, there are three propositions, at that the semantic nucleus of the utterance is V3 *bleed*. Hereinafter in the utterances with IPs we will study the propositional features of the last subject-predicate group on the right, since this proposition, the frame of which matches the implicature contour, is the dominant one.

The study of propositional features of implicatures caused by utterances with IPs, foresee the involvement of case grammar theory introduced by Ch. Fillmore [17]. As we stated before, we consider predicate to be the key element in implicatures. According to its semantics it determines the character and quantity of actants, each being a bearer of one out of all possible relationships with it [7, c. 13]. Linguists mostly call the predicate's ability to open positions for actants the valence. The case grammar theory has become widely used in linguistics, though the linguists' approaches to the case grammar differ in the issues of the logic sentence structure definition, terminological body, methods and criteria of case inventory definition and final number of cases and their permissible combinations (the survey in [7; 13]). Linguists rely on different quantity of deep cases – from five on the initial stage of Ch. Fillmore's study up to 25 invented by Y.D. Apresian – but the set of universal semantic roles is similar on the whole. We consider the set of 12 cases that agree in the classifications of semantic actants, invented by different linguists [2; 5; 6; 7; 11; 16; 18], to be the most relevant to the purposes of our study. They are: (1) agentive (Agt) – animate being-action producer; (2) experiencive (Exp) – animate being-perception subject, bearer of emotions and sensations; (3) patients (Pat) – animate being, to which animate being-action producer directs useful or harmful action or sends information; (4) resultative (Res) – animate or inanimate being that appeared, stopped existing or changed in the result of action producer's action; (5) objective (Obj) – animate or inanimate being taking part in action, but not undergoing changes in quality; (6) perceptive (Per) – perception object; (7) instrument (Instr) – object, by means of which action is performed; (8) elementive (Elem) – inanimate being, process or spontaneous force as the source of changes in state of things; (9) locative (Loc) – the place of action; (10) ablative – the place, where the motion starts; (11) finitive (Fin) – the place which is the terminal point of motion; (12) transitive (Trans) – the place through which path lays.

We registered 28 variations of case frames of utterances with IPs, nine of which are proved to be the most used ones. Their structural analysis shows that 96% of propositions are atomic and monopredicate. The semantic analysis of predicates being able as a head of a whole proposition to take the only open right position after an IP enabled us to bind them into six main groups: 1) action predicates; 2) process predicates; 3) state predicates; 4) mental activity predicates; 5) perception predicates; 6) speech activity predicates. From the point of view of valence of a verb, acting as a proposition nucleus, the examined predicates are 1) one-place (27,2%), 2) two-place (57,5%), 3) three-place (15%), and 4) four-place (0,25%).

The minimum dominant proposition case frame of utterance with IP looks like P = V (Agt). This frame is not only typical for these utterances, but the most used one – 20.6% in empiric material of our study. In our opinion it can account for "laconic" nature of examined implicatures. In the surface structure it is an IP, that plays the main part. In the deep structure the semantic center shifts to predicate, which is a verb-complement in the surface structure. In both planes in the limelight is action or state. To make the conclusion if the proposition reflecting action or state, is true, it is enough to have the minimum information about action itself and its performer, like in the following discourse fragment:

Lorelai: *Come on, Mom, this is silly. I mean, think back to before the whole Friday night dinner thing. We still had a relationship.*

Emily: *You mean the one where I would trick you into calling me by leaving a message on your answering machine saying I had something important to tell you, but I wouldn't include the details so you had no choice but to call me.*

Lorelai: *Yes.*

Emily: *And then when you did call, we'd talk about the weather, you'd ask about the DAR, and then you'd put Rory on the phone, even when she was too young to talk. (+> She didn't talk. P = -V 'talk' (Agt 'she'))*

Lorelai: *It was not always like that. (Gilmore Girls, season 3, episode 20)*

The second frequently used is the frame P = V (Agt, Obj) – 15.2% of retraced cases. This statistics agrees with the data, that the most generic model of a declarative sentence surface structure in English is SVO one, where S is subject, V is predicate and O is object [19; 7, c.11], especially if we take to account the fact, that such configurations of propositions as P = V (Agt, Pat), P = V (Agt, Res), P = V (Exp, Per), V = (Exp, Obj), V = (Elem, Obj) and V = (Elem, Res), actualized under this surface structure on the deep level, together with the frame P = V (Agt, Obj) give in overall 50% of SVO sentences in our empiric material:

Sophie's music shop. [Michel and Lorelai enter]

Michel: *I don't even know why **we are bothering to select music.** (+> We are selecting music. P = V 'select' (Agt 'we', Obj 'music')) Why not just turn on the radio*

*and hope for the best? Maybe we'll get lucky and a hip-hop station will be playing Snoop Doggy Dogg.*

Lorelai: *Michel, come on. I said I'm sorry. We're gonna have a beautiful ceremony. Look, here's Zach. Hi, Zach. [...] Zach's gonna do the music for the ceremony. (Gilmore Girls, season 7, episode 14)*

The frame P = V (Agt, Res) is on the third position – about 13% of cases. Let us have a good look at the following discourse fragment:

[They stop at the open door of a classroom.] Rory: *Check it out. I had him for microeconomics last year.*

Professor: *Pricing must be more than fungible, but also scarce. Take our seashells example. While fungible, they exist in infinite supply and so fail a scarcity test. (+> They don't pass a scarcity test. P = -V 'pass' (Agt 'they', Res 'test'))* [Chris pretends to snore.] Rory [smacks him, horrified]: *Dad!*

Chris [pretending to wake up]: *What? Uh, uh, fungible?*

Rory: *Dad! That's a Nobel Prize winner. (Gilmore Girls, season 6, episode 14)*

This fragments also shows the ability of some IVs and IVPs to act in complete and compressed constructions with predicate actants at the same time. Such structures are synonymic in meaning, but not absolutely identical even with all possible transformations. In the sentence *They fail a scarcity test* V2 [pass] is not arranged syntactically. As this structure meaning component it is implicit, but this fact doesn't prevent it from being the semantic predicate of the whole utterance.

Case frames P = V (Agt, Pat), P = V (Exp, Per), P = V (Agt, Pat, Obj), P = V (Agt, Fin), P = V (Agt, Loc) and P = V (Elem) are found in empiric material of our study with frequency from 2 and up to 12% each. The rest 19 are rarely used – from 0.1 up to 1.4%.

**Summary.** Considering the fact that semantic nucleus and dominant proposition predicate is a verb-complement under no requests or limits except grammatical ones, any verb of English can become a potential predicate in our case frames. Hence we cannot affirm that utterances with IPs exploit a definite, their own distinctive deep structure. The basic case frames of dominant P proposition are the frames, commonly used by English speaking people give or take a certain percent.

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#### Артеменко Ю.А. Структурный и частотный анализы доминантных пропозиций высказываний с имплицативными предикатами

**Аннотация:** Статья посвящена изучению пропозициональных свойств имплицатур высказываний с имплицативными предикатами в англоязычном разговорном дискурсе на материале современных сериалов и полнометражных кинофильмов. Дается определение пропозиции и очерчивается ее структура с позиций падежной грамматики, предлагается частотный анализ падежных рамок доминантной пропозиции Р высказываний с имплицативными предикатами. В ходе анализа эмпирического материала нами было зарегистрировано 28 вариаций таких рамок, девять из которых использовались наиболее часто. 96% исследованных нами пропозиций являются атомарными и монопредикатными. Семантический анализ предикатов, способных во главе пропозиции занять единственную открытую правостороннюю позицию после имплицативного предиката, позволил нам объединить их в шесть основных групп: 1) предикаты действия; 2) процесса; 3) состояния; 4) ментальной дея-

тельности; 5) восприятия; 6) речевой деятельности. Что касается их валентности, то исследованные нами предикаты являются одно-, двух-, трех- и четырехместными. Принимая во внимание тот факт, что семантическим ядром и предикатом доминантной пропозиции Р высказывания с имплицативным глаголом является глагол-комплемент, то потенциальным предикатом в исследованных нами падежных рамках может стать любой глагол английского языка. Таким образом, мы не можем утверждать, что высказывания с имплицативными предикатами эксплуатируют какую-то определенную, свойственную лишь им глубинную структуру. Базовыми падежными рамками пропозиции Р являются рамки, которые обычно используют англоговорящие собеседники с поправкой на определенный процент в ту или другую сторону.

**Ключевые слова:** *имплицативный предикат, имплицатура, падеж, падежная рамка, пропозиция, пропозициональные свойства.*