

Predication in English Existentials

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English existential sentences of the type *there are people who don't like their jobs* have been subject to major debate in recent theoretical thinking. In this talk, I will look at two analyses that take *there* to be part of the predication structure in the sentences (contra the Chomskyan position): While Moro (1997) takes *there* to be the predicate, Williams (1994, 2006) and Hazout (2004, 2008) argue that the noun phrase is the predicate in these sentences. I will show that neither of the two analyses is adequate. Moro (1997) makes the wrong predictions for the extraction data in *there*-sentences, therefore his analysis cannot be upheld. At the same time, it is clear that the noun phrase in *there*-sentences does not behave like a predicate nominal in several respects. This leaves us with the paradoxical situation that *there*-sentences seem not to have a predicate in their structure (if we do not assume an existential verb *be* that selects for two arguments). I will propose a solution to this paradox: I suggest that English existential sentences provide a syntactic predication structure (in the sense of Bowers 1993 and follow-up work) in which the noun phrase occupies the predicate position. I will argue that this configuration is interpreted in the semantic component as an information structural predication, athetic statement about a situation (picked up by *there*) to which an individual with the properties given in the noun phrase is added. This analysis will lead me to an investigation of the nature of syntactic and semantic predication and the relation between the two.

References

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