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## SYNTACTIC COMPRESSION IN THE NEWSPAPER TEXT

*Метою даної статті є систематичний аналіз явища синтаксичної компресії, визначення способів та форм реалізації компресивних структур у газетному стилі англійської мови.*

**Ключові слова:** синтаксична компресія, вторинна предикація, еліпсис, інфінітивні конструкції, герундій, дієприкметниковий комплекс, ергономіка, мовна економія тощо.

*The objective of the article is the systematic analysis of syntactic compression, as well as different ways of realization of compressed structures in the newspaper style of the English language.*

**Key words:** syntactic compression, secondary predication, ellipsis, infinitive constructions, gerund, participial construction, ergonomics, language economy etc.

With the acceleration of modern rhythm of life, constant increase of wide information streams, it becomes more and more important and necessary to take into consideration different ways of economical use of language means for optimization of communication processes in various spheres of human activity, especially mass media.

Newspapers and magazines are read by intellectually inhomogeneous public. The main task of a journalist is to present the information in the newspaper quickly and laconically, its statement must not require a specific reader's competence, context dependence has to be the least possible. All these factors dictate the characteristic feature of the newspaper style – the tendency to maximal compression, i.e. the minimal use of language means with the simultaneous preservation of transmitted information.

The famous Russian scientist Boduen de Kurtene was the first to stress the significance of language compression. He wrote that “the life is a constant organic work, and in this organic work one can notice an attempt to language economy (...), to rational efforts, movements and benefits” [3, p.154]. In the context of publicistic functional style compression allows to get rid of the text redundancy and excessiveness without sacrificing the content.

Compression embraces two principal language levels: syntactic and semantic ones. On the syntactic level it comprises the basic devices of various verbal complexes of secondary predication, elliptical constructions, the use absolute genitive case, the verb-representative *do* etc.

Compression is represented on the lexical level by transformations of word-groups and expressions into a phrase or a single word with the use of conversion, the use of causative complexes, adverbial verbs, abbreviation of word-combinations etc.

In the present article we shall focus on the study of syntactic compression and different ways of its realization, the analysis of grammatically compressed structures and their usage in English newspaper texts.

It is necessary to admit that the notion of compression lies in the very basis of functioning of the publicistic style as it is caused by a great amount of information that a newspaper source has to present to the reader.

The process of language compression was under the broad scope of such outstanding scientists and linguists as S. Bali, R. A. Budagov, A. Martine, B. Kurtene, L. N. Murzin etc.

According to Korunets I.V., syntactic compression is a syntactic process involving omission or reduction in the number of excessive syntactic elements completely preserving the content of the original text [2, p.281].

Shveitsler A.D. wrote that compression is achieved by gapping excessive elements of the sentence, the ones possible to resume from the context or by using more compact constructions.

In our research we share the idea of K. A. Bobrova that syntactic compression implies the process of language units' syntactic and structural transformation in the text the result of which is the tendency to more economical and semantically compact expression than when used paradigmatically [1, p. 67]. In our opinion, the latter definition provides the most detailed description of the investigated compressed constructions.

Having analysed 42773 printed linguistic units and having applied the method of total selection, 3183 compressed structures were selected out of newspaper articles (256 pages in volume, published in the section "Arts and Entertainment").

As it has been mentioned above, at the syntactic level compression is expressed with the help of:

- various secondary predication structures;
- elliptical constructions;

The Gerund complex dominates in its use all the other compressed constructions (the Infinitive and the Participial structures), especially in elliptical form. The number of both constructions in which the verbal element expressed by the gerund was in the predicate relation either to the subject or to the nominal element of the sentence constitutes 29% out of 100% compressed constructions. When the subject of such a complex is easily established in the context or understood in a broad sense, there appears the possibility for realization of economy of language means and a relative structural compactness of the sentence. The tendency to the ergonomics when using Gerund constructions reveals every time it is possible.

In contrast to subordinate clauses, by the way, this research shows that Gerund is used more frequently in the texts in all syntactic functions. It calls for a strong active becoming a language norm trend to the minimal rational and

effective usage of structural units of the language. This is done at the expense of compact structures, which allow to express the ideas creating two notional (content) lines in the elementary sentence containing these constructions.

Another tendency of preserving idiomatic structure of the language is visualized owing to the high-level activity of the original gerundial complex created according to the language rules.

As a result, the frequent coincidence of the subject of the Gerundial complex with the subject of the sentence leads to the intensive functioning of the Gerundial ellipsis.

e.g. *Seeing is disbelieving* [4]

e.g. *Speculating about the Big Day is now a national pastime* [4]

In the majority of the studied Gerundial constructions its verbal, not nominative character prevails that resembles the Participial complexes 9 % of all Gerundial secondary predication complexes are represented by so-called *split* Gerund:

e.g. *'In one letter I wrote to my mother honestly saying America was like being in a garden of very little sweet children who don't know anything at all but are very nice to you,' she says, laughing.* [4].

The functioning of Gerundial structures is extended at the expense of contracting the use of the Infinitive ones. The advantage of the former (Gerundial) consists in the indication of the process, not the action alone expressed by the Infinitive.

The number of the latter in the whole spectrum of the compressed secondary predication structures makes up 22 % of which 11 % are The Objective Infinitive Constructions and 8% – Subjective Infinitive Constructions.

In the course of our research the tendency to omit the particle "to" in the Infinitive clusters of the newspaper style of the English language was noticed.

On the one hand, it makes the utterance sound emphatic, colloquial and on the other, this fact acknowledges the compressed side of the Infinitive constructions.

As the research has showed, the Infinitive usually combines with nouns and verbs associated with the future action of the type: *expect, turn, hope, enjoy* etc.

e.g. *Sadly, the lady she turns to look like a Yeti.* [4].

Thus, the fact that Infinitive can indicate both present and future action leads to the valence amplification of the Infinitive secondary predication structures which contributes to reflect the particularity of the discourse and the communicational direction of the style.

The notion of compression is closely connected with the language category of "syntheticity/analyticity". It can be easily viewed when examining the nominative absolute participial constructions which constitute 18% of all structures under research and consist of a synthetic or an analytical paradigm of the present participle. This type of secondary predication complexes may have the form of a synthetic or an analytic paradigm of the participle. For example, in the underlined nominative absolute participial construction *The*

*duty done*, *the doctors left the room*, the paradigm of the participle is simple, i.e. synthetic. It has been derived, respectively, either from a less extended (*The duty done*), or from a more extended/full analytical paradigm of this participle (*The duty having been done*).

The contracted and less extended forms of the nominative absolute participial complexes are much more occurring in present –day English, especially in such a concise language functional style as newspaper’s, than their full paradigmatic forms, in which some emphasis is always laid on the categorial meanings (tense, aspect, voice) of the action expressed through the componential parts of the paradigm.

Cf. *The duty having (perfective aspect) been (passive voice) done (accomplished action)* [22, p. 279].

When no emphasis is laid on the categorial meanings in the paradigm of the participle, only it’s (the past participle) nucleus is used.

The number of components/elements in the paradigm of the participle has actually no influence on the expression of meaning.

It must be taken into consideration that only the analytical paradigms which contain the constituent elements of the passive and perfect participles of some verbs may be condensed. When the participial paradigm is represented in the nominative absolute participial complexes through a single present participle expressing an action of the secondary subject, it cannot be transformed into a contracted paradigm. Thus, the present participle *opening* in the sentence *Children entered, the door opening* cannot undergo any complete transformation through reduction.

Thus, because of their compressed form secondary predication constructions represented by the Gerundial, the Infinitive and the Participial complexes are mostly employed in the newspaper style of the English language for the sake of economizing the speech efforts, for creating some dynamism or easiness in the texts and for achieving the necessary expressiveness.

*Elliptical structures* which presuppose the omission of this or that element of the utterance that can be easily restored from the context or the concrete situation turned out to be less frequently used in the newspaper style of the English language than the secondary predication complexes. They make up 31% of all compressed language items found in the texts of the corresponding discourse.

In the course of our research we decided to make a division between the following types of elliptical sentences:

omission of the subject:

e.g. *Has never been and never will be* [5].

omission of the predicate in patterns with *there is, there are*, e. g.:

e.g. *He shook a finger at the room: “Too many men nowadays, and they don’t know what they want”* [5]

omission of auxiliary, copulative and other function verbs:

e. g. *You going to take the first place?* [5];

omission of the subject and auxiliary verb:

e.g. *Remember that accident?* [5].

Some of the above given types of elliptical sentences have become regular idiomatic expressions:

e. g. colloquial *See?* for *Do you see?*

*That do?* (= *will that do?*) [5].

All above-presented kinds of ellipsis utilise compression for a certain language element is reduced from the situation but is implicated.

But certain restrictions are reasonably to be placed on the recognition of ellipsis as a specific form of compression, in terms of this investigation, since there is often the danger that we may base some part of our analysis on "understood" items in a context where there is little reason for taking ellipsis into account.

Imperative sentences, for instance, are generally expressed with no subject; and even when a subject is expressed in such sentences, the subject may be *somebody* or *anybody* rather than *you*, e. g.:

*Somebody fetch a piece of chalk* [6].

To treat commands, therefore, as sentences from which the subject *you* has been omitted would be erroneous. Commands and requests seem to be more reasonably described by stating that they are subjectless sentences in which one of a very restricted number of possible subjects may on occasion be inserted.

It would be probably wrong to say that when a speaker indulges in what grammatically may be referred to as ellipsis, he has always a clear idea of what he omits or neglects to express. It is more likely that the speaker very often has no definite idea of what he is omitting – indeed, that he would rather not be forced to render the idea or thought too carefully and exactly.

If, then, in such cases ellipsis should be assumed, it is because in each instance the complete grammatical construction would require more; it cannot be assumed that the speaker would necessarily fill out his construction, even in his own mind.

The first to be mentioned here are sentences presented by predicatives without a verb.

e. g.: *Splendid! Charming! Beautiful!* [7]

Another specific type of elliptical constructions was found in the sentences where all the nouns denoting the circumstances of the place are omitted and the restoration of the ellipsis is due to the absolute use of prepositions.

e.g. *The pubs emptied into the coffee-bars* [7].

Ellipsis in such an example is restored not only with the help of the verb, but the verb with the subject, i.e. with the help of the whole sentence.

Elliptical constructions are mostly understood as such that contain reduced elements necessary for the completeness of the language structure or its meaning.

In our research we determined that secondary predication structures and ellipsis are the two most productive forms of compression used in the newspaper style of the English language.

The newspaper style pertains more to the Gerundial complexes as a specific form of compression which is confirmed by their quantity ratio (29%) than to the other equivalent secondary predication constructions (the Infinitive and the Participial ones). The former allow to introduce the ideas creating two notional (content) lines in the elementary sentence preserving the simple structure of the sentence and economizing language tools.

The functioning of Gerundial structures is extended at the expense of contracting the use of the Infinitive ones. The advantage of the first (Gerund) consists in the indication of the process, not the action alone expressed by the Infinitive.

Newspaper texts minimize the use of absolute participial constructions which constitute 18% of all structures under research and are presented by synthetic and analytical paradigm of the present participle.

Elliptical constructions are mostly understood as such that contain shortened elements necessary for the completeness of the language structure or its meaning. Consequently, ellipsis as a syntactic process performs in the language the function of language reduction. Its transformational potential is mostly used in the newspaper style for economising the speech effort as well as for achieving the necessary stylistic expressiveness in written texts.

Thus, the newspaper style of the English language with its originally inherited compactness, brevity and laconic character is, moreover, characterized by the maximum of compression that is revealed in the variety of compressed language items. As our research has shown, the notion of compression is caused not only by the principle of language minimalism but also by the pursuit of expressiveness that is so important and natural for the newspaper style of the English language.

Stylistic devices based on reduction of syntactical model: one-member sentences, asyndeton, aposiopesis, apokoinu can possibly considered as the perspective basis for future research.

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