FUNCTIONAL-SEMANTIC TYPOLOGY OF INCOMPLETE CONSTRUCTIONS IN DIALOGIC DISCOURSE (ENGLISH AND UZBEK COMPARATIVE DATA)

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to the elaboration of a functional-semantic typology of incomplete constructions in dialogic discourse on the basis of comparative English and Uzbek material. Proceeding from the assumption that formal syntactic incompleteness correlates with definite communicative functions, the author distinguishes five functional classes of incomplete constructions: (1) informative-rhematic, (2) economic, (3) expressive-emotional, (4) phatic, and (5) modality-marking. Each class is characterized by a specific set of formal means in English and Uzbek, and the typological differences in formal realization are shown to be functionally motivated. The analysis is performed on the material of everyday dialogues, dramatic dialogue, and dialectal speech samples. The proposed typology is intended as an annotation scheme for a parallel corpus-syntactic study and as a contribution to the theory of dialogic syntax.

Keywords: functional-semantic typology; incomplete construction; dialogic discourse; communicative function; English; Uzbek.

1. Introduction

The first stage of our research established that incomplete (elliptical) constructions represent a norm-governed, systemic phenomenon of dialogic speech in both English and Uzbek, and that the two languages demonstrate functional-semantic proportionality in the organization of dialogic incompleteness despite their typological distance [1]. The present article takes the next step: it elaborates a functional-semantic typology of incomplete constructions in dialogic discourse and demonstrates its applicability to comparative English–Uzbek material.

The need for a functional-semantic typology is dictated by the state of the art in ellipsis studies. Existing classifications are either purely formal (based on the position of the gap: subject ellipsis, predicate ellipsis, verb-phrase ellipsis, sluicing, gapping, stripping, etc. [2; 3]) or purely descriptive-stylistic (colloquial, bookish, occasional ellipsis). Neither type answers the question that is central for discourse studies: what communicative work does the incomplete construction perform for the dialogue partners? Meanwhile, it is precisely the functional load of an incomplete construction that determines its distribution in dialogic discourse and its acceptability judgements.

The aim of the article is to elaborate and substantiate a functional-semantic typology of incomplete constructions in dialogic discourse, to describe the formal means realizing each functional class in English and Uzbek, and to reveal the typological regularities of the correlation between function and form. The material consists of (a) samples of everyday dialogic speech recorded by the author; (b) dramatic dialogues as a literary imitation of colloquial speech (English and Uzbek drama); (c) dialectal speech samples (British English regional dialects and Uzbek regional dialects). The total volume of the analyzed material comprises approximately 2,500 dialogic utterances.

2. Methodological foundations

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The study is based on the functional-semantic approach to syntax according to which the syntactic form is treated as a sign whose meaning (functional-semantic load) is primary with respect to its formal expression [4; 5]. Methodologically, the research combines: (1) the descriptive-analytical method, applied to the systematization of incomplete constructions; (2) the method of functional-semantic analysis, aimed at establishing the correlation between formal types and communicative functions; (3) the comparative method, revealing typological differences in the formal realization of identical functions; (4) the method of contextual analysis, used to establish the conditions of recoverability of omitted components; and (5) elements of quantitative analysis of the distribution of types in the material.

The basic unit of analysis is the dialogic turn (replica). A turn is classified as containing an incomplete construction if (a) some component obligatory for the canonical syntactic model of the language in monologic written speech is absent, (b) the absent component is recoverable from the preceding context, the situation, or communicative presuppositions, and (c) the turn retains full communicative self-sufficiency for the dialogue partners. This operational definition, proposed in the first stage of the research [1], allows the researcher to avoid the circularity of 'sentence-based' definitions in the analysis of dialogue, where the notion of 'sentence' itself is problematic [6].

3. Functional-semantic typology

Analysis of the material permits distinguishing five functional classes of incomplete constructions in dialogic discourse.

3.1. Informative-rhematic constructions. Function: foregrounding the informative core of the message against the background of known (thematic) information. This is the most numerous class (about 55 per cent of all incomplete constructions in the material). It is typically realized in answers to questions, where only the rheme is expressed:

— Have you finished the report? — Almost. / Hisobotni tugatdingmi? — Deyarli.

— Where are you going? — To the bazaar. / Qayerga bormoqchisan? — Bozorga.

In English, this class shows a preference for pronominal substitutes (do, so, not, one) where the verb phrase is reduced; in Uzbek, the finite verb may be omitted entirely, with the person-number meaning transferred to the predicative adverb or the zero form of the copula. Despite the formal divergence, the functional identity of the two mechanisms is obvious: both implement the thematic-rhematic organization of dialogic information.

3.2. Economic constructions. Function: minimization of articulatory and processing effort under conditions of real-time speech production. Realizations include: (a) omission of auxiliaries and copulas in informal English (You coming? for Are you coming?); (b) omission of the subject pronoun in informal English registers (initial-mention subject drop: Hope you are well); (c) omission of the finite verb in Uzbek parallel coordinative structures (Men uyga, u ishga 'I (am going) home, he (is going) to work'); (d) pro-drop licensed by the finite verb morphology in Uzbek (Keldi 'He came'), which is ungrammatical in standard English but has analogues in regional dialects.

The comparative data show that the economic function is realized more consistently in Uzbek, where the agglutinative person-number markers on the verb make the subject pronoun frequently redundant, whereas English relies on a mixed strategy of auxiliary deletion, contraction (I'm, it's), and pronominal substitution. Regional dialects of English (e.g., Southwestern dialects) demonstrate a higher degree of subject deletion, approximating the Uzbek pattern — a fact of considerable interest for the dialectal part of the research.

3.3. Expressive-emotional constructions. Function: intensification of the emotional coloring of the utterance, creation of the effects of abruptness, emphasis, indignation, tenderness, etc. This class is

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characterized by a marked prosodic design and is especially frequent in emotionally charged dialogic exchanges:

— You did it again! — Never! / Yana qilding! — Hech qachon!

If only I had known! / Bilganimda!

In Uzbek, expressive ellipsis is frequently combined with modal particles (ku, e, chi, o'zi), which perform an intensifying function and partly compensate for the absence of expressive intonation in writing; in English, the corresponding role is played by intensifiers and prosodic emphasis. The combination 'incomplete construction + particle' is a characteristic feature of Uzbek dialogic discourse that has no direct structural analogue in English.

3.4. Phatic constructions. Function: establishing, maintaining, and terminating contact between dialogue partners; regulation of turn-taking. This class comprises conventionalized incomplete formulas of greeting, farewell, gratitude, response, and discourse marking:

Morning! / Hayr! (farewell) / Rahmat! / See you! / Yaxshi! (approval) / All right? / Qalaysan? (how are you).

The comparison reveals a fundamental proportionality: both languages possess a closed inventory of phatically loaded incomplete formulas; the difference consists in their internal structure (English formulas are often historically reduced sentences with a fixed form; Uzbek formulas frequently consist of an incomplete construction plus a particle, e.g., Xayr e!). From the standpoint of discourse organization, both classes perform identical functions of contact management.

3.5. Modality-marking constructions. Function: expression of the speaker's attitude (epistemic, deontic, volitional) with maximum economy. Realizations include: truncated questions of confirmation (Right? / Tog'rimi?), evaluative fragments expressing agreement or disagreement (Exactly! / Aynan!), and hortative fragments (Let's! / Keling!). This class occupies an intermediate position between phatic and informative-rhematic constructions and demonstrates the highest degree of conventionalization.

4. Functional-semantic proportionality: comparative conclusions

The comparative analysis confirms the hypothesis of functional-semantic proportionality of incomplete constructions in English and Uzbek dialogic discourse. The five communicative functions distinguished in the typology are universal for the dialogic speech of both languages; they are determined by the general logic of dialogic interaction (information management, effort economy, emotional expression, contact management, modality expression) and not by the structural properties of a particular language.

At the same time, the formal means of realization are typologically divergent and are determined by the grammatical structure of each language. English, an analytic language with obligatory subject expression in the standard variety, develops strategies of substitution (pro-forms) and auxiliary reduction; Uzbek, an agglutinative language with developed predicative suffixation, freely permits zero realization of the subject and, in parallel structures, of the finite verb. The formal difference is thus not arbitrary but motivated by the different 'division of labor' between syntactic and morphological devices in the two languages.

An important intermediate conclusion concerns regional dialects. Preliminary analysis of dialectal material shows that regional varieties of English (with their subject deletion, double modals, and reduced interrogatives) display incomplete-construction patterns that are typologically closer to Uzbek than standard English is. This convergence of dialectal English and Uzbek with respect to dialogic incompleteness constitutes a promising object for the parallel corpus-syntactic analysis and will be examined in detail at the next stage of the research.

5. Conclusion

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The article has elaborated a functional-semantic typology of incomplete constructions in dialogic discourse, distinguishing five functional classes: informative-rhematic, economic, expressive-emotional, phatic, and modality-marking. Each class has been characterized by its communicative function, formal means of realization in English and Uzbek, and distribution in dialogic material.

The comparative analysis has demonstrated the functional-semantic proportionality of incomplete constructions in the two languages: identity of communicative functions combined with typological divergence of formal means. The typology proposed in the article serves as an annotation scheme for the parallel corpus study and contributes to the elaboration of a discourse model of dialogic syntax adequate to both an analytic and an agglutinative language.

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