

SYNTACTIC VALENCY OF PREDICATIVE COMPONENTS

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Abstract:

This article focuses on syntactic valency of the units with nuclear and non-nuclear predicative relations, on the basis of English sentences. The difference between nuclear and non-nuclear predicative relations is stated, the number of valencies of the syntactic units according to their position is classified by junctional analysis and component models with some examples. This article may take interest of those who study philology for master's degree, who are making research work on functional syntax and/or syntactic valency and anyone who is interested in linguistic valency.

Key words: valency, nuclear predicative relation, non-nuclear predicative relation, subordinate relation, coordinate relation, junctional analysis, component model.

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This article was written as the result of series analysis of English sentences taken from works of modern English and American literature. As it is known, the theory of valency has been the object of research works since the 1940th, yet there is no single and definite definition of it. There are different approaches to valency theory in the world linguistics such as semantic, lexical, and stylistic and so on. As to syntactic valency, most linguists base on verb centrism and identify syntactic valency by the verb's lexical-semantic features. That linguistic valency has not been researched completely and in detail makes the subject actual.

Linguistic valency has been under scientific consideration of world linguists and most research works have been done on the base of European languages. The following linguists made valency the object of their research: S.D.Katsnelson, L.Tesniere, R.Longacre, G.Zandau, J.Erben, G. Helbig, K.Zommerfeldt, E.P.Logoceva, V.Bonsio, V.V.Burlakova, N.N.Stepanova, M.V.Vlavatskaya, E.V.Razova, U.I.Yuldasheva and others.

Valency is studied in all linguistic levels: in morphological level M.D.Stepanova, G.Helbig; in lexical level V.Yu.Rozentsveich, E.N.Melnikova, D.J.Allerton, S.M.Kibardina, T.V.Ebert.

In most of these works valency is based on the lexical meaning of the verb, its combinability with other parts of the sentence and according to these features verbs are classified as one-valency, two-valency, three-valency and so on.

Valency in syntactic level is divided into obligatory valency and optional valency [Апресян, 1974; Зоммерфельдт, 1975]. But in all these research works linguists define valency by lexical-syntactic characteristics of the verb in the position of the predicate. In any language there exist sentences without a verb; in this case how do we define syntactic valency of such sentences? As it is mentioned in some research works done on syntactic valency in English syntax structure any syntactic unit has a valency [Asadov, 2014, 2015].

The novelty of the research is that monovalency and polyvalency syntactic units in English sentence structure are analyzed through linguistic methods defining their syntactic relations and positions.

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The following linguistic methods are used in the research work: experimental method, distributional method, method of componential and syntaxeme analysis, junctional method. Sentences collected from various English and American fiction books are taken as the material of the research.

Studying a great number of scientific works on linguistics we decided to support idea that any syntactic unit may have valency whether there is a verb in the sentence or not. The number of valences is defined according to the number of their syntactic relation, which means a syntactic unit which has one syntactic relation is a one-valency element and that having two syntactic relations is a two-valency element.

In the structure of the sentence one can observe the following syntactic relations: predicative relation, subordinate relation, coordinate relation and appositive relation. Predicative relation in itself is divided into two types: nuclear predicative relation and non-nuclear predicative relation.

1. Characteristic feature of the nuclear predicative relation is that it connects the two main components of the sentence which are not dependent on any other component and can be a complete sentence. Nuclear predicative relation has the following sign in the junctional model (). As to say in traditional grammar nuclear predicative relation connects the subject and predicate of the sentence.

2. Non-nuclear predicative relation is the relation between the syntactic units which are in predicative relation but are not the subject and predicate of the sentence. In traditional grammar, such components are classified as complex subject and complex object. Non-nuclear predicative relation is in opposition to nuclear predicative relation and is considered in the same level with other relations such as subordinate, coordinate and appositive relations; but there is difference between these relations too. Usmanov U.U indicates the difference between the subordinate and non-nuclear relation as follows: "in subordinate relation one component is subordinate in unilateral direction to the main component, while in non-nuclear relation there is equal connection to both directions" [Usmanov, 1990]. Non-nuclear predicative relation has the following sign in the junctional model (). Non-nuclear predicative relation links components which are not the principal parts of the sentence but are in predicate relation with each other. In traditional grammar this relation is seen in objective and subjective constructions with non-finite forms of the verb. In such constructions the participant, which is expressed by a noun in common case or a pronoun in objective case is called non-nuclear dependent predicated component – \tilde{NDP}_1 , and the other participant expressed by a verb form is called non-nuclear predicating component – \tilde{NP}_2 .

Participants of the nuclear predicative relation, the subject which is called nuclear predicated component – NP_1 and the predicate the one called nuclear predicating component – NP_2 can have one, two or three valencies. Whereas non-nuclear dependent predicated component can have two or three valencies and non-nuclear predicating component can have one or two valencies. To prove this theory we define valency of nuclear and non-nuclear syntactic units analyzing the following sentences by componential and junctional models:

1. He could make them think (RGH, 126).

There are both nuclear and non-nuclear predicative relations in this sentence. So He is the nuclear predicated component – NP_1 , could make is the nuclear predicating component – NP_2 , them is the non-nuclear dependent predicated component – \tilde{NDP}_1 , think non-nuclear predicating component – \tilde{NP}_2 of the sentence.

Here we would like to mention that componential model of the sentence is limited only by presenting differential syntactic signs and does not demonstrate formal side i.e. morphological characteristics of the components completely. Therefore, we have to use some morphological signs in my research. Signs used to express morphological features: Prp – pronoun personal, m – modal verb, Vinf – infinitive form of the verb. The junctional model (J.M) and the componential model (C.M) of the above example are as follows:

1	2	3	4
He could make them think			

1	2	3	4
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J.M. 1

1	2	3	4
NP ₁	NP ₂	NDP ₁	NP ₂

Prp	mVinf	Prp	Vinf
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C. M. 1

The first, second and fourth components of this sentence are one-valency syntactic units because they get into one syntactic relation with other syntactic units. That is to say NP₁ and NP₂ are in nuclear predicative relation with each other and, NP₂ has non-nuclear predicative relation with NDP₁. The third syntactic unit of this sentence has two valencies i.e. this component is a bivalence component as it has two syntactic relations: one is subordinate relation with NP₂, the other is non-nuclear predicative relation with NP₂. In traditional English grammar books, the third and fourth syntactic units of the above given example are considered as “the objective with the infinitive construction” [Quirk, Greenbaum, 1982]. This objective infinitive construction is looked at as one syntactic unit called a complex object. Yet, in English grammar, interpreting this construction as one syntactic unit – complex object – has been one of the argumentative problems among linguists. Because the question by what syntactic relations the second component with the third component as well as the third component with the fourth one are connected has not been answered yet.

That the third component of the sentence (them) is really bivalence can be proved via the method of transformational analysis of omission, that is by dropping out the syntactic unit expressed by the non-finite form of the verb (think):

1) He could make them think → He could make them ...

In spite of the fact that the result sentence of this analysis seems grammatically close to the target one, in fact it is semantically not complete. Consequently, it proves that non-nuclear predicative relation is as essential as other syntactic relations. That is why to preserve this relation non-finite form can be transferred into the finite form, which, in its turn, changes the non-nuclear predicative relation into the nuclear predicative one without losing the semantic meaning of the combination:

(1) He could make them think →... them think → they thought

The result carries the conclusion that converting “objective with the infinitive construction” into a sentence indicates the existence of non-nuclear predicative relation between the components of the phrase [Mukhin, 1999; Tikotskaya, 1985]. The difference between nuclear and non-nuclear predicating components is that while the former is always the predicate of the sentence, the latter can never be the predicate in a sentence structure.

We can draw conclusion that a syntactic unit having a nuclear predicative relation can be monovalency or bivalency whereas a syntactic unit with a non-nuclear predicative relation is always bivalency however; it may have three valencies in case of having coordinative relation.

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