

## ON SEMANTIC AND COMMUNICATIVE MOTIVATION IN WORD ORDER CHANGE

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In his comparative word order studies V. Mathesius (1975) pointed out a characteristic tendency of Modern English as a language with fixed word order for the thematical conception of the subject. It has developed as a sort of agreement between the grammatical requirements and the requirements of functional sentence perspective for the sequence of sentence parts. Apart from syntactic reconstructions this tendency gave rise to various semantic shifts and even to changes in the whole semantic make-up of the sentence. The semantic aspect of the sentence in modern English has been further investigated in contrastive studies (Kirkwood 1970, Duskova 1975) stimulated by development in semantics of the sentence, chiefly by Fillmore's (1968) case grammar.

The purpose of the present paper is (a) to ascertain the significance of the semantic and communicative factor in the process of formation of Modern English constructions, and (b) to analyse intermediate ways of realization of the semantic and communicative content of the utterance. Our texts belong to the period in the development of the English language (the 15th — the beginning of the 16th cent.) usually regarded as transitional from the word order point of view (Trnka 1930, Simko 1957).

Let us consider several examples from the novel "Morte d'Arthur" by Th. Malory together with their Modern English translations:

- (1) And anone as he was aslepe hym byfelle a vision (Malory 1959, 688)
- (1a) and that night he was vouchsafed a vision (Malory 1963, 399)
- (2) there was com into hys londe gryffens and serpents (Malory 1959, 33)
- (2a) his whole kingdom was overrun by griffins and serpents (Malory 1963, 36)
- (3) So there answerde a voice (Malory 1959, 711)
- (3a) Then, one day Solomon heard a voice (Malory 1963, 412)

(4) and than oute of eche floure com oute many floures and fruyte grete plente (Malory 1959, 689)

(4a) Immediately each flower multiplied and then bore fruit (Malory 1963, 399)

In (1) — (4) the main function of the predicative verb is to introduce a new element carrying high communicative value. That determines the meaning of the verb which conveys the notion of appearance of an object, i.e. expresses existential relations in the wide sense of the word.

In modern constructions we can observe two tendencies: (a) to combine existential with other types of notions: benefactive (1a), locative (2a), experiential (3a), causative (bore fruit) (4a), i.e. to express the meaning of appearance indirectly, (b) to eliminate completely the introductive function of the verb (flower multiplied) (4a). Depending on whether the first or the second tendency predominates, the idea of action conveyed by the verb is either weakened or made more prominent: (2a) looks more dynamic than (2) due to the presence of the agent object.

Besides, in (1) - (4) we find a strict correspondence between the syntactic functions of the participants of the verbal action (hym, into hys londe, oute of eche floure) and their semantic content (benefaction, location). As to the subject, the notion of existence (or appearance) can be considered as inherent in the nature of the grammatical subject as that of agency.

In (1a) - (4a), on the contrary, the grammatical subject covers a very wide range of notions. This lack of balance between the semantic and syntactic content of the participants accompanied with the multifunctional and/or dynamic character of the verb was, in our opinion, one of the main factors which opposed the process of assuming the form of the subject by thematic elements. Their frequent position after the verb (2) shows that the process was more gradual and much more complicated than it was supposed to be by the linguists (Fries 1940), who attributed it directly to the loss of endings and the pressure of the initial position.

In connection with the said above it should be noted that the point of view according to which the grammatical subject may be regarded as exclusively a surface-structure phenomenon devoid of any connection with any semantically constant value (Fillmore 1968:17), though reflecting the situation existing in modern English, deprives the linguistic research of one of the main criteria in the analysis of typological changes.

To such criteria also belongs the extent to which the use of constructions with inverted word order is subject to various restrictions. The limits are more evident when there are additional complications connected, for example, with the difficulty of distinguishing between the subject and the direct object:

(5) but this caused my wife, it was all by her counsel (Caxton, 1960, 110)

(6) this told Wykes me for verray certeyn (Paston 1904, IV, 282)

Ambiguity is eliminated by using the personal subject, on the one hand, and the verb of a special semantic range in which the causative type is most typical, on the other. Besides, the inverted word order is motivated in these cases by the considerable level of difference in communicative value between the subject and the verb which is highly predictable in the type usually referred to as identifying.

The difference in communicative value between the predicative verb and the subject motivating the inverted word order, which in other cases would have been unlikely or even impossible, is often created by communicative intensifiers. The most important of them is negation, the use of which is especially effective when it is supported by the rhythmic weight of the subject (8):

(7) And I wene if thei get the place upon me ther helpith my lif no pardon (Paston, II, 173)

(8) Tho helped the bear neither flattery nor chiding (Caxton, 58)

Additional complications may be also created by ambiguity in the distribution of communicative value between the predicate and the subject. We find such cases with the most dynamic verbs implying some kind of contrast: expressing negation, evaluation, emotiveness, a change (or lack of change) in the state of affairs (Pala 1974):

(9) There nor bleef (tarried) neither man nor wife, but all ran as fast as they could (Caxton, 59)

(10) And there was not forgetyn non unkyndnesse of my Mayster J. P., zour brother, of sleyn of hise man Wormegey (Paston, III, 210)

We have here special cases of double negation. The second (subject) negation helps to achieve a more definite distribution of communicative value motivating the inverted word order. The use of the first (verbal) negation seems to be indispensable, as the strong contrast, if it were absent, would make the utterance difficult to understand.

However the most important was the tendency at that period to semantic and structural simplification of the predicate in preposition to the subject. It was realized in the wide use of existential introduction — there + semantically weak verb — as a stable, relatively independent way of giving the sentence a communicatively neutral character, and, to a great extent, a means of unifying its structure. If we compare the number of such constructions in the

translations of the gospels belonging to different periods, their correlation will be as follows: Anglo-Saxon (995) — 31,7%, Wycliffe (1389) — 23,6%, Tyndale (1526) — 44,7%. Let us consider some of the most typical examples:

(11a) and hyre ne bith nān tācn geseald; (b) and hyre ne byth geseald, būton Ionas tācen; (c) ne bith thisse cneorisse tācen geseald (Gospel 1888, Anglo-Saxon, 60, 82, 206)

(12a) and tokne shal nat be gouen to it; (b) and a tokene shal nat be gouen to it; (c) if a tokene schal be gouun to this generacioun (Wycliffe, 61, 83, 207)

(13a) but there shall no signe be geven to them; (b) there shall nonother sygne be geven vnto them; (c) there shall no signe be geven vnto thys generacion (Tyndale, 61, 83, 207)

Examples (13 a, b, c) constitute a blend between the inverted word order with the theme-rheme sequence, and the direct word order with the post-position of the predicate. The agreement between the requirements of the different word order principles is made, however, at the expense of complicating the syntactic status of the elements and their relations. The most important place among such complex formations, which were characterized at the given period by great variety, belong to negative constructions. The great number of negative "split" constructions in Early New English gave grounds to suppose (Jacobson 1951:210) that the position of the verb can be partly explained by the tendency to put the negation closer to the verb (negative attraction, Jespersen 1954:426). It should be noted, however, that in similar constructions we often find quantifiers or other communicative intensifiers increasing communicative value of the subject:

(14) ther be many of them woll do her parte (Paston, II, 223)

(15) There were diverse of the tenauntis seid that thei wost not what to do (Paston, V, 126)

Such cases show that the main function of the existential introduction here is to de-dynamize the theme and to some extent the whole make-up of the sentence containing negation or some other communicative intensifier. The great number of "split" negative constructions is connected evidently with high degree of their motivation by the difference in communicative value between the negative subject and the existential section of the utterance (distinct relief, Firbas 1961:79). In Old and Middle English it was the verbal negation that was preferred in corresponding constructions both with the inverted and direct word order. In the first case (11, a, b, c) it rendered the utterance more emotional, in the second (12 a, b) more dynamic.

Illustrative in this respect are the following examples:

(16) ther was neyther I ner no frend of here wold reseve her (Paston, V, 39)  
(17) The baly ner Patrych knewe not at that tyme whan myn unkyll was to us ward (Paston, V, 230)

The need for the existential introduction seems to be justified in (16) if we take into account the fact that the first part of the negative correlative conjunction was usually dropped (17) which produced in a different way communicatively neutral, de-dynamized opening of the sentence.

This special way of forming the thematic section of the utterance, where the subject takes part in conveying the information of high communicative value, shows most obviously that the process of converting the theme of the utterance into the grammatical subject had a very gradual and complicated character, and was marked by contradictory tendencies and intermediate stages.

If we compare (13 a, b, c) with usual Modern English translations:

(18a) they won't be given any sign, or (b) they will be given no sign

we can easily see that the former illustrate most clearly the principle of motivation of inverted word order by the considerable level of difference in communicative value between the predicative verb and the grammatical subject, and the principle of semantic motivation found in the tendency to convey various semantic notions in a more definite, unambiguous way, to preserve the correspondence between the semantic content and its syntactic realization.

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