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New Approaches to the Study of the Theory of Actual Parts of Sentences

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Abstract: This article provides a brief overview of the theory of actual sentence division, outlines the historical development of this theory and analyzes new approaches that have emerged within the framework of modern linguistics. Alongside scholarly perspectives from European and Russian linguistics, particular attention is also paid to the treatment of this issue in Uzbek linguistics.

Keywords: actual division, theme–rheme, focus, information structure, communicative-pragmatic approach.

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Introduction

The study of the semantic and communicative structure of the sentence occupies an important place in linguistics. The theory of actual sentence division, namely, the distinction between theme and rheme (or information structure), emerged in the 20th century and has since assumed a central position in contemporary linguistic research. This theory is explored not only within syntactic and semantic frameworks, but also from pragmatic and cognitive perspectives.[1]

As a result of extensive scholarly inquiry, views on actual sentence division have evolved on the basis of new principles and, in recent years, have gained renewed relevance in addressing a range of issues arising in text linguistics and translation studies. In particular, a deeper investigation of the general and specific aspects of the relationship between the pragmatic–communicative features of the sentence and its formal-grammatical structure, as well as the means of actualization across all levels of language, especially from a cross-linguistic comparative perspective, is of great importance for ensuring communicative adequacy in intercultural interaction, regardless of its form.[2]

A thorough examination of the role of actual division in communication remains one of the pressing tasks of modern text linguistics. For this reason, although the theme-rheme concept has been studied for nearly a century, the boundaries between alternative notions remain rather blurred. This is largely due to the fact that researchers have often failed to take into account the diverse realizations of theme and rheme across different genres.[3]

The foundations of the theory of actual sentence division were first laid by representatives of the Prague Linguistic Circle, notably F. Daneš and V. Mathesius. They advanced the idea of dividing the sentence into components such as theme and rheme and emphasized the significance of information structure .

This approach was subsequently developed in Russian linguistics through the works of N.S. Valgina, O.I. Moskovich and T.A. van Dijk. For instance, according to Valgina, the theme represents the part of the sentence that is already known or inferable from the context, whereas the rheme conveys new information .[4]

The psychological approach to sentence communicative structure also deserves particular attention, as it was further elaborated by Russian linguists building upon the ideas outlined above. Many scholars note that similar interpretations can be found in the works of F. Fortunatov and A.M. Peshkovsky. In particular, A.M. Peshkovsky's views are of special interest. He argues that when a sentence is isolated from its context, it becomes a construction open to multiple interpretations. In sentences characterized by semantic ambiguity, meaning is clarified through the following means: word order; intonation; and the association of word combinations with adjacent forms or with other lexical material (in this case, the context).[5]

If we take into account that the predicate is not only a grammatical but also a psychological notion, it becomes evident that the process of verbalizing thought may be analyzed independently of purely grammatical means. However, since the psychological subject and predicate do not always coincide with their grammatical counterparts, the factors that determine their external markers acquire particular significance.[6]

Perspectives on the communicative structure of the sentence reached a new level through the research of the prominent Czech linguist V. Mathesius. As noted by E.L. Ping, scholars of the Prague School regarded the systematic and large-scale investigation of the concepts of theme and rheme as one of their primary objectives. Functionalism lay at the core of this school's approach, understood as "a complex set of context-dependent analytical decisions that must be adopted by the analyst in order to achieve the intended result. A distinctive feature of the Prague School's research is that it laid an essential foundation for subsequent studies and offered a comprehensive account of the phenomenon of actual sentence division.[7]

Nowadays, the study of the information structure of a sentence involves not only structural, but also pragmatic and discourse-based approaches. For example, P. Lambrecht interprets the theme-rheme concept as a cognitive model of information structure. According to him, the information structure of a sentence is determined by how it conveys new information to the audience.

Moreover, theme-rheme separation technologies are widely used in interactive communication, media information transmission, and machine translation systems. Within the field of computational linguistics, the automatic identification of focus and background information is being actively studied.[8]

Research on the information structure of sentences has also been conducted in Uzbek linguistics. Notable works in this area include those by A.A. Madvaliev, N. Tokhlieva, and G. Qodirova. In her study, N. Tokhlieva investigated the syntactic markers specific to the Uzbek language, as well as the intonational features of theme and rheme, analyzing how the positioning of theme and rheme affects word order.

Currently, algorithms capable of automatically determining the informational structure of sentences are being developed within discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and sentence syntax. This trend necessitates the use of technological tools alongside traditional linguistic methods.[9]

Regarding the positioning of theme and rheme in sentence structure, word order plays a significant role in expressing their relationship. Although the usual word order in Uzbek is

subject-object-predicate, it can change depending on the context. This is especially evident when the element functioning as the rheme is placed in the final position. For example, in the sentence *"Bolalar o'yinchoqni sindirishdi"* ("The children broke the toy"), *'bolalar'* functions as the theme, and *'o'yinchoqni sindirishdi'* as the rheme. If the speaker wants to shift attention to another element, the word order can be changed: *"O'yinchoqni bolalar sindirishdi"* ("It was the toy that the children broke"), where *'o'yinchoqni'* may become the rheme. Such changes are determined not only by syntax but also by communicative purposes.[10]

Conclusion

Intonation also plays an important role in the linguistic expression of theme and rheme. By emphasizing certain parts of the sentence, rheme elements are distinguished, and the flow of information is conveyed to the listener in a comprehensible manner. These features are studied in both phonetic and communicative aspects.

The theory of information structure continues to be applied in various fields of linguistics and is constantly developing. New approaches are contributing to its refinement. In particular, research on the theme-rheme relationship in Uzbek is of significant importance. In the future, there are promising opportunities to investigate these relationships through corpus linguistics and artificial intelligence technologies.

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