

About the Different Kinds of Meanings of a Sentence

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Abstract—The article investigates a sentence. It states that a sentence is a unit of speech whose grammatical structure conforms to the laws of the language; it serves as a chief means of conveying the thought. The works regarding English grammar by foreign and Azerbaijani linguists such as O. I. Musayev, V. L. Kaushanskaya, R. L. Kovner, J. Lyons, F. R. Palmer, S. Potter and others have been studied by the author and theories suggested by them have been thoroughly considered. The author also writes about the importance of the sentence not only the means of communicating something about reality but also a means of showing the speaker's attitude to it. The author explains the differences between declarative, interrogative, negative sentences using various linguistic sources as well. She comes to the conclusion that the kinds of sentences are very important to be used either in speech or in written language.

Index Terms—sentence, simple, compound, complex, meaning, context, declarative, interrogative, negative

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the scientists such as O.I.Musayev, V.L.Kaushanskaya, R.L.Kovner and others the sentence can be classified according to two principles: a) according to the purpose of the utterance; b) according to the structure. Investigations show that according to the purpose of the utterance four kinds of the sentences can be distinguished. They are the declarative sentence; the interrogative sentence; the imperative sentence; the exclamatory sentence. According to the structure simple sentences are divided into two-member sentences and one-member sentences. A two-member sentence has two members – a subject and a predicate. It is necessary to state that a two-member sentence may be complete and incomplete. A one member sentence is a sentence which has only one member. This member is not considered to be either the subject or the predicate. Simple sentences both two-member and one-member can be unextended and extended. An extended sentence has only primary or principal parts. An extended sentence consists of the subject and one or more secondary parts (objects, attributes, or adverbial modifiers) (Kaushanskaya and Kovner 1973, p.221).

All syntactical constructions can be classified according to the structural, semantical and pragmatological aspects. It is necessary to state that in the structural classification of the sentence the functional signs are considered to be the main parts. From this point of view the structure of the sentence can be classified according to the division of a one member sentence, a two member sentence, an extended sentence, an unextended sentence etc. Each sentence carries a relevant complete thought. The content of a sentence is actualized with a help of its predicate which is considered to be its undividable part. The predicativity is a syntactical category which forms a sentence. This category helps to give the information which connects the events with the reality. It is necessary to state that the connection with the reality is relevant in each sentence. The sentence turns into a unit of a sent information, but separately, or in the isolated form it is not a unit of communication. Because inside a sentence communication cannot be observed. K.M.Abdullayev writes: "An isolated sentence can be acted only as a melodic unit because this sentence doesn't perform any active performance though it has been taken from inside a text. It is just a melodic unit" (Abdullayev 1998, p.18). It states the importance of the fact that an only sentence can not be considered to carry out experiments or investigations. From this point of view nowadays the investigation tends to be carried out using texts either macro, or micro.

II. METHODOLOGY

As it has been stated by the linguists the sentence is essentially a grammatical unit; indeed it is the function of syntax to describe the structure of the sentence and thereby to define it. English sentences generally consist of a subject noun phrase and a verb phrase as its predicate or complement. Each of these may be a single word as in *Birds fly*. It is true that the syntax determines more complex structures than this one. It is undeniable that these kinds of complete sentences are not often observed. It is simple enough to envisage a situation in which someone simply says *Horses*. This could be a reply to a question such as *What are those animals in that field?* Although some scholars have talked of 'one word sentences' in describing such expressions, it seems more helpful to treat *Horses* as a sentence fragment and as an incomplete version of *They are horses*.

III. ANALYSIS

J.Lyons states that for talking about its meaning one need to reconstruct the complete sentence in this way. Most fragments are closely linked to their linguistic context and handled in terms of ellipsis (the omission of parts of the sentences). Ellipsis in turn is related to the feature of 'pro-formation' (the use of pronouns and similar forms that replace verbs and other parts of speech). All are devices for not repeating everything that has already been established in the discourse. So, in *John saw Mary and spoke to her*, *John* is omitted, but *Mary* is replaced by *her* in the second half of the sentence. Not all sentence fragments are linked to the previous discourse. *Coming?* Or *Coming!* May be used instead of *Are you coming?* Or *I'm coming!* Moreover, in actual speech people often fail through lapse of memory or inattention to produce complete or grammatical sentences. Speaker may break off, they may forget how to start, they may confuse two or more constructions etc. Nevertheless, the interpretation of all of these depends upon their relation to the sentences of the grammar (Lyons 1995, p.38).

J.Lyons notes that it is possible to recognise sentence fragments, or incomplete or ungrammatical sentences, if people know what a complete grammatical sentence is (Lyons 1995, p. 155).

IV. DISCUSSIONS

It is noteworthy to mention that the meaning of a sentence can be predicted from the meaning of the words it contains. Each sentence that the speaker uses has a meaning, or if the sentence is ambiguous it may have two or more meanings. For instance, *I went to the bank*. This sentence may have more meanings. However, there are other kinds of meaning that are not directly related to grammatical and lexical structure.

The meaning in the spoken language is carried by the prosodic and paralinguistic features of the language such as intonation, stress, rhythm, loudness etc., as well as such features as facial expressions and gestures. For instance, using the intonation the sentence *That is very clever* mean sarcastic attitude like that is not very clever. Other example, *I don't like coffee* with a fall-rise intonation may well imply 'I like tea' and *She is very clever* may suggest 'She's rather ugly'. Using intonation what is important, contrastive or new can also be meant. The difference between *I saw John this morning*, *I saw Jóhn this morning*, and *I saw John this morning* doesn't concern the information itself, but the relation between that information and previous information known to speaker and hearer (Lyons 1995, p.40).

The structure of the sentence is important. But the structure doesn't show all meanings that the sentence carries. Each sentence differs with its relation to the reality. In the division of the sentence modality, and concrete semantic meaning play an important role.

There are different opinions about the division of syntactical constructions in the linguistic sources. According to R.V.Zandvort sentences can be divided into simple, compound and sentence groups. But this linguist can not give a complete definition of the simple sentence. He writes: "Sentences are separated from one another with some definite signs in writing and in speech". For instance, they are written in capital letters in the beginning, and at the end they are ended with some certain punctuation marks such as full stop, question mark, exclamation mark etc. A sentence can consist of a word, or some words, a one-member sentence, a two-member sentence. Each sentence should carry its predicate" (Zandvort 1963, p.5). As we see, the exact definition of a simple sentence is not explained in this citation given by R.V.Zandvort. Then he writes about a compound sentence: "If a construction carries a subject and a finite verb this kind of construction is called "amplification clause" and this sentence is a compound one" (Zandvort 1963, p.15).

Some scientists call these kinds of sentences complex and use them for subordinating sentences. For instance:

When the authorities had arrived, the ceremony began. (Rəsmilər gəlib çatmışdılar ki, mərasim başladı).

R.V.Zandvort advises to divide these kinds of sentences into two types: main clause, and sub-clauses (Zandvort 1963, p.16).

Some scientists such as O.I.Musayev suggests to call sub-clause as subordinate clause or dependent clause. For the main clauses he uses head clauses and principal clause. It is necessary to state that R.V.Zandvort also supports these terms. (Musayev 2009, p. 287).

In traditional grammar a simple sentence is a sentence that contains only one clause. Non-simple sentences fall into two classes: compound and complex. A compound sentence have two or more co-ordinate clauses; the complex sentences have a main clause (which may be simple or composite) and at least one subordinate clause. J.Lyons suggests to use for these traditional distinctions with the term the propositional content of sentences. The distinction between simple and what J.Lyons call composite sentences is the distinction drawn in logic between simple and composite propositions. He (J.Lyons) suggests no distinction can be drawn among different kinds of composite propositions that matches the grammatical distinction between compound and complex sentences (Palmer 1986, p. 168). For example,

If he passed his driving test, I am a Dutchman. It is complex, but Either he did not pass his driving test or I am a Dutchman - is compound.

The propositions expressed by the above two sentences are normally formalized in the propositional calculus by means of implication and disjunction, respectively,

"*p implies q*",

on the other hand, and

"*either not-p or q*",

on the other. It is necessary to state that these two composite propositions and look as if they might differ semantically, but as they are standardly interpreted by logicians, they do not. They have exactly the same truth-

conditions. Granted that “*p implies q*” and “*either not-p or q*” correctly formalize the range of propositions that can be asserted by uttering the above mentioned sample complex and compound sentences and it follows that the sentences in question must have the same propositional content. J.Lyons gives such examples as the following (Palmer 1986, p.158):

He was poor and he was honest.

He was poor but he was honest.

Although he was poor, he was honest.

Looking at these example, first of all anyone would think that they differ in meaning, but the second one which is compound is closer in meaning to the third, a complex sentence than it is to the first which is another compound sentence. It is necessary to mention that the composite propositions expressed by these sentences are normally held to be semantically equivalent.

The English scientist S.Potter dedicates a special chapter for a sentence in his famous book “Our language” (for a note we want to state that the book was published for 26 times, firstly in 1950, last in 1984) (Potter 1984, p.154). He (S.Potter) defines the sentences as a unit of consisting of two elements. For an explanation the two elements cover the subject and the predicate. S.Potter considers the subject as a main element, the predicate as a dependent one and explains that the predicate is used to give information about the subject: *What am I talking about? What have I to say about it?* (Potter 1984, p.91). S. Potter determines three kinds of the sentence according to its classification:

1) According to its form:

a) A simple sentence (simple) - I know it. (Mən onu tanıyıram)

b) A compound sentence - I know it, and I am proud of it. (Mən onu tanıyıram və onunla fəxr edirəm).

c) A complex sentence - I know that he will come. (Mən bilirəm ki, o gələcək).

2) According to its function. There are four kinds of sentences according to its function:

a) A declarative sentence - I know it. (Mən onu tanıyıram.)

b) Command-wish sentences - Long live the King! (Qoy kral çox yaşasın!)

c) An interrogative sentence - Are you coming? (Gəlirsən?)

d) Exclamatory sentences - How good you are! (Siz necə yaxşısiniz!)

According to S.Potter’s explanation the predicate is used at the beginning of wish and interrogative sentences (Potter 1984, p. 150).

Sometimes the word order can be changed according to the structure of the sentence in English. For example, I hope (that) he will come, He will. I hope, come. He will come.

It is not the same in Azerbaijani. Let’s compare:

Ümid edirəm ki, o gələcək.

I hope he will come.

If we compare it in German it will be like this: Ich hoffe, dass er kommen wird. (Ümid edirəm ki, o gələcək); Hoffentlich wird er kommen. (Güman ki, o gələcək).

Besides it, S.Potter divides the sentence into three kinds according to its style:

a) loose, b) balanced and c) periodic (Potter 1984, p.151).

In the first one, the speaker and the writer narrate the facts one after one independently and figuratively. The meaning of the sentence becomes clear in the periodic style. The speaker is in the anxious state till the end of the sentence. The thought is in the parallel state after one another and becomes its antitheses. For instance,

First come, first served. (Birinci gəldi, birinci xidmət olundu).

It means that the sentences carry some certain information, and they have the subject and the predicate except the imperative sentences. Each of the sentences has its own syntactic structure and intonation. The sentence informs something, asks questions, answers the questions, commands something or expresses the speaker’s emotional state.

The quasi types of sentences either express exclamation, or claim something or express speech etiquettes. They don’t have the above mentioned structures. They are used only to show communication relation. For instance,

Have you come, Ahmed?

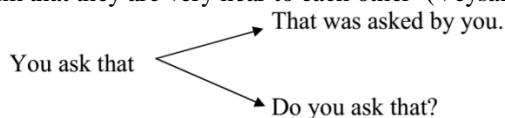
Me, why me?

Why, you don’t understand me?

Good!

It is not your cup of tea! And others.

Declarative and interrogative sentences are very similar to each other as both of them are used to give information and to receive information. The question form of a declarative sentence and their transformation give us a reason to think that they are very near to each other (Veysalli 1970, p.164).



As it is seen, the verb is transitive and in the communication process the declarative and interrogative sentences can replace each other. On the other hand, the interrogative form can be changed into the declarative one. For instance, What do you ask me?, You ask me., etc.

Some scientists think that the structural signs can also be observed in the division of the sentence according to the purpose of the utterance (declarative, interrogative and imperative). Q. Q. Pochepsov writes that the declarative and interrogative sentences can be tended to the realization of the action. For instance,

Are you still here? Go away at once! (Sən hələ buradasan. Get buradan, bu saatda!).

These kinds of sentences exhibit neither a declaration nor an interrogation (Pochepsov 1982, p. 168).

It is necessary to mention that in each of these sentences has its own special feature such as word order, the use of the interrogative word etc. As we stated above intonation is also important in this case as it has very special distinguishing feature. The example can illustrate it.

It may be serious?

It may be serious.

The Azerbaijani scientist F.Y.Veysalli also states the importance of intonation. He (F.Y.Veysalli) writes: "Intonation is a phonological means which is considered to be the succession of sounds that the speaker pronounces with various tones, timbres and strength. With the help of it words and word combinations turn into a complete thought and the listener accepts it as a complete thought" (Veysalli 1970, p.9). It is important to stress that phonetic plays an important role in distinguishing the meaning like semantics and grammar. The following examples can illustrate it:

"He is not enjoying the party". (O, məclisdən zövq almır)

If the stress is on the word "party (məclis) in this case the main information is *his not enjoying the party*.

If the stress is on the word

"enjoying" (zövq alma) the meaning will completely differ.

As it is seen the stress and intonation can change the meaning. F.Y.Veysalli also states the importance of prosodic elements in distinguishing the meaning and form in the sentence. J. Lyons notes that metalinguistic functions need to be taken into attention as well as with the prosodic elements (Veysalli 1970, p.19).

There are many ordinary-language metalinguistic statements which are unambiguous when spoken, but not necessarily when written. The role of punctuation marks cannot be deniable for to express the structural signs in writing and for distinguishing the correct meaning of the sentences. The differentness between the ordinary-language metalinguistic sentences and the speech sentences are observed. For instance,

I can not stand, Sebastian!

I can not stand "Sebastian".

The difference is clearly seen.

In the first example the speaker mentions the name of a person whose name happens to be Sebastian and in the other example a sentence is about the name 'Sebastian'. It is necessary to stress that the conventional use of quotation-marks for such purposes in ordinary written English is not obligatory (Lyons 1995, p.41).

None of these suppositions is questionable. Each of them sounds correct. It needs to mention that the meanings of the sentences are clear not only with the meanings of the words but also with the grammatical structure of them. The sentences which consist of the same words can have different meanings depending on their grammatical structure. Let's give such examples:

She is dying now. (O, indi can verir.)

Is she dying now? (O, indi can verir?)

As we see, the first sentence is a declarative one, and the other one is an interrogative sentence. The grammatical structure between them is seen in the grammatical structure that they introduce. The other example:

John dies for Mary. (Con Meriyə üçün ölür.)

Mary dies for John. (Meri Con üçün ölür.)

Both of these sentences are declarative ones. But there are also differentness of form and meaning between them. J.Lyons call these differentness as word-meaning and sentence meaning (Lyons 1995, p.32). The sentence meaning is predictable directly from the grammatical and lexical features of the sentence, while the utterance meaning includes all the various types of meaning. The distinction can be considered to be useful, while there are two reservations. Firstly, it is not always clear what is sentence meaning and what is utterance meaning. It can be arguable that the intonation of a sentence is part of its grammatical form, and that intonation signals sentence meaning, not utterance meaning, a sarcastic intonation have the same function as a negative. Yet in practice the prosodic and paralinguistic features are so varied and so variable in what they signal that it is advisable not to attempt to include them within the grammatical analysis. It is arguable that the presuppositional meaning is contained in the lexical and grammatical characteristics of the sentence: stop includes in its meaning that the activity was carried on previously, while any noun phrase such as The King of France, indicates that the item referred to exists. Secondly, the term utterance is a little misleading. Utterances are usually taken to be unique speech events and no two utterances are the same (Palmer 1986, p.150).

The negative sentences have a very special place in the kinds of sentences. It is said that if the predicate is in the negative form the sentence can be called a negative one. In English general negative form is formed by adding the negative particle *not* after the auxiliary verb *to do*. For example, *I don't want to answer. He doesn't want to answer* etc. It is a general form of negation. Besides, there is also a special kind of negation. This kind of negation is formed by adding the negative particle *not* after the link verb *to be* such as *It was not Mark* etc. The negation in English is observed after the elements like /nobody/ (heç kim), /nowhere/ (heç yerdə), /never/ (heç vaxt).

There are various ways in which negative sentences are constructed in natural languages. There is not any reason to say that a negative sentence is grammatically composite by contrast with the corresponding positive, or affirmative sentence. Generally speaking, corresponding sentences of opposite polarity have the same clause-structure, and it can be identified easily with propositional negation. It is applied within clauses and does not extend to whole sentences. Investigations prove that in many languages (including Finnish and Irish) the negative polarity of a clause (like its mood or its tense) is marked not by means of a separate particle like the English not, but by special forms of the verb, or predicate. Yet the traditional negation of the particle of the predicate is equivalent to negation of the proposition.

There is one kind of predicate-negation which is clearly not equivalent to the negation of the whole proposition. This may be exemplified by:

John is unfriendly.

differs from:

John is not friendly.

The second example expresses a proposition that is not just the contradictory of the proposition expressed by *John is friendly*. *John is unfriendly* is not simply the negation of *John is friendly*: it implies *John is hostile*. It is quite possible for *John* to be neither *friendly* nor *unfriendly*. It is a fact that *John is not friendly* is often used in everyday conversation as if it had the same sense as *John is unfriendly*. Scientists suggest three ways of solving this fact. Firstly, there are two distinct sentences represented in English by *John is not friendly* and that they are distinguished in spoken English by means of rhythm and intonation. But rhythm and the fine differences of intonation that are involved in cases such as this are universally excluded by linguists from what they consider to be part of the prosodic structure of sentences. The second way is that there is one sentence, and that it is structurally ambiguous. The third way is to draw upon the distinction between sentence-meaning and utterance meaning and to say that *John is not friendly* is a single unambiguous sentence which can be uttered in a particular way, and perhaps also in identifiable contexts, with more or less the same communicative effect as the utterance of *John is unfriendly* (Palmer 1986, p. 158).

It is also possible to have negated nominal expressions occurring as clause-constituents. For instance,

Non-students pay the full entrance-fee. This sentence expresses a proposition which differs from, and doesn't entail the proposition expressed by *Students do not pay the full entrance-fee.*

This kind of nominal negation (non-students), like predicative negation (do not pay) has an effect propositional content of the clause in which it occurs and is in truth-functional; but it cannot be readily formalized in propositional logic (Palmer 1986, p.171).

V. CONCLUSION

We come to the conclusion that each sentence is a definite construction. Here the term construction means the true signs of language events. The sentence is considered to be a definite column for other language events. Leaving some helpful elements inside a sentence cannot spoil the completeness. It is related to the facultative elements. The sentence should have internal connections as well as absolute-distributive connection.

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