

EDN: QMPVQC
УДК 81.37

Irregular Loading of Sentence Meaning: a Cognitive-Pragmatic View

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Received 22.05.2022, received in revised form 16.03.2023, accepted 25.04.2023

Abstract. The cognitive-pragmatic analysis of the sentence meaning reveals the implicitly represented structures of knowledge and shows the cognitive basis of their construal. The purpose of this article is to analyze the cognitive strategies underlying the construal of implicit knowledge. Strategy is defined as a type of procedural knowledge aimed at processing declarative knowledge stored in a person's memory. As a result of the factual analysis, the following cognitive strategies for processing knowledge have been identified: domain development, domain duplication, categorial deviation with its subtypes – quasi-subordination, interpersonal parenthesis, phraseological invasion and hyperbaton. Domain is defined in the sense of R. Langacker's cognitive semantic theory of domains as a part of the encyclopaedic knowledge configuration. Deviation is opposite to norm, it refers to a selection of an unconventional linguistic construction. Every time, when a specific word order or sentence structure does not abide by the rule of that particular language structure, we define it as a grammatical deviation. All cognitive strategies are described by revealing their cognitive and pragmatic functions, that pertain to the factor of anthropocentrism. Saving language means by construing the implicit information is one of the goals of communication and irregular loading of sentence meaning is the way to achieve it. The obtained results can find the application in the study of cognitive strategies for knowledge processing in order to increase the semantic load of a sentence on the material of other languages.

Keywords: cognitive-pragmatic approach, irregular loading, knowledge construal, processing strategy.

Research area: transdisciplinary research.

Citation: Furs L.A. Irregular loading of sentence meaning: a cognitive-pragmatic view.
In: *J. Sib. Fed. Univ. Humanit. soc. sci.*, 2023, 16(6), 953–961. DOI: QMPVQC



Неравномерная нагруженность смысла предложения: когнитивно-прагматический подход

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Аннотация. Когнитивно-прагматический подход к анализу смысла предложения позволяет раскрыть имплицитно репрезентируемые структуры знания и показать когнитивную основу их конструирования. Целью данной статьи является анализ когнитивных стратегий, лежащих в основе конструирования имплицитного знания. Стратегия определяется как тип процедурного знания, направленный на обработку декларативного знания, хранящегося в памяти человека. В результате фактологического анализа выявлены такие когнитивные стратегии по обработке знания, как развитие аспектов когнитивной области, дублирование аспектов когнитивной области, категориальное отклонение с его подтипами – квазиподчинение, межличностная парентеза, фразеологическое включение и инверсия. Когнитивная область, согласно теории когнитивной семантики Р. Лангакера, определяется как часть конфигурации энциклопедических знаний. Грамматическое отклонение противоположно норме и связано с использованием неконвенциональной синтаксической конструкции. Каждый раз, когда определенный порядок слов или структура предложения не подчиняется грамматическим правилам языка, имеет место явление категориального отклонения. Все когнитивные стратегии описываются путем раскрытия их когнитивных и прагматических функций, соотносимых с фактором антропоцентризма. Экономия языковых средств за счет представления некоторых структур знания имплицитно – одна из целей общения, а неравномерная нагруженность смысла предложений – способ ее достичь. Полученные результаты могут найти применение в изучении когнитивных стратегий обработки знания с целью увеличения смысловой нагрузки предложения на материале других языков.

Ключевые слова: когнитивно-прагматический подход, неравномерная нагруженность, конструирование знания, когнитивная стратегия.

Научная специальность: 5.9.8 – теоретическая, прикладная и сравнительно-сопоставительная лингвистика.

Цитирование: Фурс Л. А. Неравномерная нагруженность смысла предложения: когнитивно-прагматический подход. *Журн. Сиб. федер. ун-та. Гуманитарные науки*, 2023, 16(6), 953–961. DOI: QMPVQC

Introduction

This paper addresses the question of irregular loading of sentence meaning from a cognitive-pragmatic view. A cognitive-pragmatic approach comes from the major pillars in the pragmatic literature, such as Grice's account of implicatures and how they

are worked out (Grice, 1975), or Searle's definition of the hearers' steps to go through in order to interpret indirect speech acts (Searle, 1975). Referring to Grice's Cooperative Principle, D. Sperber and D. Wilson begin to develop their own model of relevance in connection with human cognition. This model is based on

conventional and conversational implicatures, which mean the process and the result of being implied without being directly expressed. According to this view, the nature of conventional implicatures is semantic, whereas the meaning of conversational implicatures depends on the situation of the utterance (Sperber & Wilson, 1987). Besides G. Fauconnier and M. Turner examined the conceptual integration with the focus on a context-dependent component (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998; 2002), which pointed out the need to complement the pragmatic approach with cognitive dimensions. As H-J. Schmid has noted, “a cognitive-pragmatic approach provides the focus on the cognitive aspects of the construal of meaning-in-context” (Schmid, 2012).

As irregular loading of sentence meaning can be interpreted in the context, its analysis requires cognitive-pragmatic approach, which allows to focus on cognitive aspects of implicit construal.

Theoretical framework

We believe that hearers practically automatically interpret the implicitly communicated information correctly. As is clear from G. Lakoff, there are basic clause types and deviations from the basic clause type (Lakoff, 1990). These deviations are conventional, they refer to a word-order variation and serve as means of “nested attention” (Talmy, 2011). As L. Talmy proposes, the attention is distributed across multiple elements of the sentence. The graded distribution of attention across different linguistic attractors has been termed “nested” attention (Talmy, 2007; 2011). Grammar contributes to this process, as knowledge of prototypical linguistic structures is stored in long-term memory and forms the basis for predictive processing (Kuperberg & Jaeger, 2015).

After all, any unexpected turn in information processing is claimed to refer to irregular loading of sentence meaning. The aim of this paper is to examine the processing strategies that underlie the construal of implicit communication. The solution to this goal will reveal the cognitive basis of pragmatic aspects of implicit communication.

One proposal for cognitive processing comes from T. Givon’s conception on mental representations. He proposes that “there are three major, distinct but closely interacting systems of mental representation in the human mind: 1) permanent semantic memory (the generic lexicon); 2) episodic memory (the propositional information about events); 3) working memory or attention (the current speech situation)” (Givon, 2005). R. Jackendoff contribution to mental representations’ conception is also worth noting. That is, both a speaker and a hearer are quite aware of conventional and deviated syntactic configurations (Jackendoff, 1995). It turns out that any syntactic deviation is the result of a processing strategy activation. A strategy is defined as a kind of procedural knowledge, aimed at declarative knowledge processing (Flavell, 1979; Furs, 2018; 2021). If declarative knowledge correlates with concepts and their characteristics, procedural knowledge is subjective, it relies on strategies, the explanation of which makes it possible to reveal the cognitive dynamics of a person’s speech-thinking activity (Furs, 2018; 2021).

Statement of problem

The study of processing strategies, which are activated in implicit knowledge construal, leads to revealing the cognitive and pragmatic functions of irregular loading of sentence meaning. They include strategies of domain development, domain duplication, categorial deviation with its subtypes – quasi-subordination, interpersonal parenthesis, phraseological invasion and hyperbaton.

Methods

To achieve the aim of this study such methods as cognitive analysis, semantic analysis and discourse analysis are used. Cognitive analysis allows to define cognitive strategies which underlie the knowledge configuration. Semantic analysis makes it possible to predict the implicitly constructed meaning. On the basis of discourse analysis cognitive and pragmatic functions of irregular loading of sentence meaning are interpreted.

Discussion

1. Domain development strategy

Domain is defined in the sense of Langacker's cognitive semantic theory of domains as a part of the encyclopaedic knowledge configuration. The concepts are usually complex because they can be fully understood only on the basis of a set of domains, which are accessed in a communicative situation and are called their conceptual or domain matrix (Langacker, 1987; 2008). Thus, it can be concluded that with the reference to speaker's intentions one domain or a few domains can become salient when others lose its prominence. In case of domain prominence, it can be developed according to the communicative focus and subjective goals of a speaker. This leads to irregular loading of sentence meaning. For example, the construal of speech event includes following domains: SPEECH EVENT → ADDRESSER – SPEECH ACTION (subdomains WAY OF EXPRESSION; GOAL; RESULT) – ADDRESSEE – MESSAGE (subdomains VERBAL; NON-VERBAL).

However, in certain cases subdomains WAY OF EXPRESSION and GOAL are activated and developed under the contextual pressures. Consider (1):

(1) *They talked me into going to the meeting (BNC).*

An expression of opinions takes the form of arguments in favour of going to the meeting, that turns a speech action into an act of causation with a goal to overcome addressee's objections to attending the meeting. It is clear that this strategy of domain development leads to the additional semantic load.

Taking contextual factors into account, we can also make statements about the activation and development of a specific subdomain in the following:

(2) *He stormed a speaker with questions (BNC).*

WAY OF EXPRESSION is specified for highlighting the addresser's angry and vigorous manner of directing questions at an addressee. As this information is implicit, this is another example of irregularly loaded sentence meaning.

2. Domain duplication strategy

Tautological sentences of the form "A is A" represent the repetition of the same word, that might seem abnormal. The researchers consider the statements, in which one says the same thing twice, under different approaches. P. Grice addresses the question of how tautologies are interpreted under a pragmatic approach. According to P. Grice, *War is war; Women are women* infringe the maxim of Quantity to the extent that they are totally uninformative at the level of what is said, and they are only informative at the level of what is implicated (Grice, 1975; Sakai, 2012: 39). Further discussion is related with the maxim of Relevance, that plays a crucial role (Levinson, 1983: 111), as far as the issue of interpretation is concerned.

A. Wierzbicka under a semantic approach interprets sentences *War is war; Women are women*, focusing on the following assumptions: a) they express a sober attitude toward complex human activities; b) they express tolerance toward human nature; c) they express an obligation; d) they express appreciation, indifference, or absolute generalization (Wierzbicka, 1987).

In addition, it is worth considering F. Recanati position with focus on Contextualism, that provides strong support for the idea that a tautological sentence of such a form cannot be associated with any propositional content (Recanati, 2004). Similarly, T. Sakai (Sakai, 2012) puts forward the claim that tautologies are contextualizing expressions. We assume that the duplication of a word in a tautological sentence indicates the dominance of this aspect of an event or any subjective characteristic, which, in turn, convinces the addressee to conjecture what is implicitly expressed. Context allows for different interpretations of the implicit meaning with focus on modus variation. For example, *Business is business* can be interpreted as "business is business" and (1) there is no place for emotions; (2) there is no room for friendship; (3) there are disappointments here; (4) there is fierce competition; (5) everything here is aimed at making profits, etc.

Thus, domain duplication is a processing strategy, aimed at encoding some information by implicit means, that is decoded on the contextual basis. This strategy leads to an increase

in the sentence meaning and its cognitive function is to make some information dominant, whereas its pragmatic function is modus variation.

3. *Categorial deviation strategy*

Deviations from the categorial meaning of a syntactic construction are another manifestation of the irregular loading of sentence meaning. Deviation is opposite to norm, it refers to a selection of an unconventional linguistic construction (Chi & Hao, 2013). When people use a language, they must obey some rules. However, due to the subjective factors during the communication the issue of creatively using language arises. G. Leech made a systematic summary of deviation. He categorized deviation into eight types – lexical deviation, grammatical deviation, phonological deviation, graphological deviation, semantic deviation, dialectal deviation, deviation of register and deviation of historical period, and considered them in poetry (Leech, 2014). As observed by M. Short (Short, 1996: 47), grammatical deviation includes violating the grammatical rules (the structure of the language). Any language structure has its own way of arrangement of the words and sentences. In its broad sense, it deals with the ordering of words and sentences. Therefore, when a specific word order or sentence structure does not abide by the rule of that particular language structure, we can say that there is a grammatical deviation.

We propose that rearrangement of syntactic structure is a consequence of categorial deviation when the syntactic categorial status changes due to information foregrounding. Taking into account the nature of this procedure, we consider a categorial deviation as a processing strategy, that manifests itself in three subtypes. In the following section, quasi-subordination as a subtype of a categorial deviation strategy is examined.

3.1. *Quasi-subordination*

Quasi-subordination involves the cases when subordinate clauses function as independent ones. Along with the fact of objective reality, they also represent the speaker's subjective attitude to this fact. N. Evans uses the term in-

subordination to refer to this phenomenon. He defines such clauses as “the conventionalized main clause use of what appears to be formally subordinate clauses” (Evans, 2007: 367), or, in more simple terms, “as the independent use of constructions exhibiting prima facie characteristics of subordinate clauses” (Evans, 2016: 2).

This paper focuses on aspects of triggering the implicit meaning of this construction as a reference to its irregular loading. Consider the implicit meaning as in:

(3) *If only I were young again!*

(4) *As if I cared!*

When converted into a subordinate clause, the meaning of this quasi-subordinate structures change substantially. Instead of expressing emotive meaning, (3) shows an unreal condition (*If I were young again, I would do it*) and (4) presents a counterargument or lack of agreement with the addressee (*I do not care*). The fact, that it is possible to bring implicit information to the surface level, proves the irregular loading of sentence meaning.

3.2. *Interpersonal parenthesis*

Another subtype of categorial deviation is the use of interpersonal parentheticals. The ordinary parenthesis is indicated by the use of round or square brackets, dashes, or commas. Parentheticals are structures that are linearly represented in a given sentence, but seem structurally independent at the same time. As observed by N. Dehe and Y. Kavalova, parentheticals typically function as modifiers, additions to or comments on the current talk. They often convey the attitude of the speaker towards the content of the utterance, and/ or the degree of speaker endorsement (Dehe & Kavalova, 2007). Parenthetical elements can be variable in length: one-word expressions such as *what, say, like*; adverbials *honestly, certainly*; reporting verbs *I think, I guess*; nominal appositions *My sister, Mary, likes it*; interpersonal connections *In London I met you will never guess who*. They occur in the sentence initially, medially or finally. The relation between a host sentence and parentheticals is captured in D. Blakemore (Blakemore, 2005: 1179), who claims that “host and parenthetical make a collective contribution to the interpretation of

the utterance at the level of implicit content". Another view is presented in M. T. Espinal (Espinal, 1991), who shows that parentheticals are not visible to the host in the same way as arguments or adjunct constituents are, i.e., they are not subject to the same syntactic operations in the host. In N. Dehe and Y. Kavalova (Dehe & Kavalova, 2006; 2007), parenthetical *She becomes greedy (and who can blame her) for recognition* is seen to implicitly communicate speaker's assumptions. The authors argue that without the parenthetical, the hearer will not be in a position to directly access certain implications and the hearer may stray away from the intended inferential route. Thus, it makes sense to see interpersonal parentheticals as a strategy to represent implicit information and to address it as an example of irregular loading of sentence meaning. Consider the following:

(5) *Bob married someone you'll never guess who last year (Kluck, 2011: 118).*

(6) *He is writing you can't imagine what (Matsuyama, 2015: 87).*

A transformation of (5) to *You'll never guess who Bob married last year* leads to a different knowledge configuration, when a kind of communication – in – communication loses its interpersonal orientation and becomes assertive. Likewise, (6) transformation to *You can't imagine what he is writing* puts out the line of interactivity and reduces it to a message about the fact of reality. We can thus observe that a direct appeal to the addressee contributes to both his inclusion in the discussion of the reported event, and the transfer of the speaker's opinion about the improbability of what is happening.

The next section covers a processing strategy of phraseological invasion.

3.3. Phraseological invasion

A traditional view on a phraseological unit as a multiword lexical unit that is characterized by presenting a certain degree of fixation or idiomaticity is argued by A. Naciscione. She pinpoints that "stability of phraseological units is an inherent, categorial feature not only in the system of language but also in stylistic use", challenging that "stability in the system of language and flexibility in discourse do not contradict each other" (Naciscione, 2010: 9–10).

Our view includes the idea that stability of phraseology is a categorial property and any violation of stability is considered as a deviation from the categorial status of the unit. If the phraseological unit is used in the complement function and is combined with other structural components of the sentence, then this is a clear evidence of knowledge processing. In accordance with the line of reasoning this procedure should be considered as a processing strategy.

In order to explore the phraseological invasion as a processing strategy, we need to address two views on similar syntactic constructs. First is G. Lakoff's view on syntactic amalgamation (Lakoff, 1974) as the phenomenon of combination of sentences that yields parenthetical-like constructions like *John invited God only knows how many people to his party*, and second is the issue of Interrupting Clauses (Kluck, 2011). Following G. Lakoff, the syntactic amalgams are such constructions that involve a radical form of shared constituency, where two or more matrix sentences share the same subordinate sentence, in a multiply-rooted phrase marker (see two separate propositions: *John invited people to his party + I don't know how many*). M. Kluck analyzes what appears to be merely a wh-phrase (*how many people*) as an interrogative clause whose sentential part is deleted under sluicing like *I don't know [how many people] John invited*. This paraphrase reveals the implicit information of a deeper sentence level (Kluck, 2011).

Another issue that needs explaining is a correlation between the parenthesis and phraseological invasion. As M. Guimarães offers, "syntactic amalgams are not the same thing as parenthetical constructions, as amalgamation involves the sharing of some syntactic material between the invasive and the invaded clauses in a way that parentheticalization does not; and this has major consequences for the establishment of syntactic relations across these domains" (Guimarães, 2004: 543). That is, the phraseological unit *God knows* is claimed to be the invasive structure within the invaded clause. Consider the following:

(7) *Half of the pages are stuck together with god knows what and are unreadable (BNC).*

(8) *Those who spent the night have gone on to God knows where (BNC).*

(9) *They'll be here for God knows how long (BNC).*

(10) *He has boxes and boxes of stuff from God knows when (BNC).*

The speaker finds it difficult to provide accurate information on various aspects of the event or evades providing such information, therefore, applies the strategy of phraseological invasion. The presence of hidden information indicates the fact of irregular loading of sentence meaning.

Further, we can view the processing strategy of hyperbaton.

3.4. Hyperbaton

In English, with its settled word order, departure from the expected order of sentence components is seen as a syntactic deviation. This is known as a hyperbaton. It is said that by using a hyperbaton, words or phrases overstep their conventional placements and result in a more complex and intriguing sentence structure. The speaker deliberately places some words for a maximum emphasis. It is clear that any change in the sentence schema “subject – predicate – object” is caused by a speaker’s communicative goal and leads to knowledge reconfiguration.

We can exemplify several types of hyperbaton:

1. Adjective phrase hyperbaton

(11) *Very green and neat and precise was that yard (L. M. Montgomery).*

2. “Preposition + noun” phrase hyperbaton

(12) *To bed went Matthew (L. M. Montgomery).*

3. “Preposition + pronoun” phrase hyperbaton

(13) *Ahead of us stretched endlessness (R. Specht).*

4. Adverb phrase hyperbaton

(14) *Then came the sound of a key turning in the lock (R. Osborne).*

5. “Adverb + adverb” phrase hyperbaton

(15) *Only once had old Piers slipped (T. Wilson).*

6. Multi-word hyperbaton

(16) *But through the air there runs a thrill of coming stir (K. Jerome).*

Putting words of different parts of speech into the initial position leads to the additional semantic load of a sentence structure. The speaker intends to communicate that the information, represented by initial structural components, is the most significant at the moment. Getting the information highlighted, the speaker implicitly says “I want to draw your attention exactly to these aspects of the event”.

A transformation to a conventional configuration leads to the loss of prominence: *And there, dim in the darkness, was the hummock of Mrs. Winslow’s shoulder (H. G. Wells)* → *The hummock of Mrs. Winslow’s shoulder was dim there in the darkness.*

Our observations on processing strategies of knowledge configuration and their cognitive and pragmatic functions are summarized in Table 1. Cognitive functions refer to knowledge construals and pragmatic functions are related with the type of implicit information. In their unity, they represent a model of irregular loading of sentence meaning.

As Table 1 shows, processes of irregular loading of sentence meaning have a cognitive--

Table 1. A model of irregular loading of sentence meaning

Processing strategy	Cognitive function	Pragmatic function
Domain development	Domain salience	Assessment of the event aspect
Domain duplication	Cognitive dominance	Modus variation
Quasi-subordination	Categorial change	Counterargument or lack of agreement
Interpersonal parenthesis	Communication – in – communication	Personal comments on the subject of communication
Phraseological invasion	Shared constituency	Evasion to provide accurate information
Hyperbaton	Information foregrounding	Maximum emphasis on inverted components

pragmatic nature. On the cognitive side, they pertain to knowledge construal on the basis of such cognitive strategies, as domain development, domain duplication, quasi-subordination, interpersonal parenthesis, phraseological invasion and hyperbaton, that generally function as types of procedural knowledge, that is involved into processing a declarative knowledge. On the pragmatic side, they pertain to the implementation of the speaker's communicative goals to implicitly express some information.

Conclusion

As the analysis shows, the irregular loading of sentence meaning is complex and multifaceted, so no simple formulation can be justified. Our basic conclusion is that this issue needs explaining under a cognitive-pragmatic approach. This position pertains to the theory of conversational implicatures, on the one hand, and the theory of knowledge construal – in – context, on the other hand.

As noted earlier, the attention is distributed across elements of the sentence, being graded across different linguistic attractors (Talmy, 2007). Moreover, T. Givon (Givon, 2005) believes cognitive processing to come from closely interacting systems of mental representation

in the human mind, such as the generic lexicon, the propositional information about events, and the current speech situation. These systems of mental representation stand as shared knowledge, and both a speaker and an addressee are quite aware of this knowledge. If they see a deviation from the conventional knowledge configuration, that is non-prototypical linguistic structure, they find it to be the basis for predictive processing.

That is, both a speaker and a hearer are quite aware of conventional and deviated syntactic configurations. Any syntactic deviation is the result of a processing strategy activation. We examined a few processing strategies: domain development, domain duplication, categorial deviation with its subtypes – quasi-subordination, interpersonal parenthesis, phraseological invasion and hyperbaton. These strategies are described by revealing their cognitive and pragmatic functions, that pertain to the factor of anthropocentrism. According to this factor, it is a speaker who has communicative intentions to efficiently fulfill all communicative goals. Saving language means is one of the goals of communication and irregular loading of sentence meaning is the way to achieve it.

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