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NOMINATIVE UTTERANCES OF PARTIAL OR ZERO PREDICATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY ARTISTIC DISCOURSE

The article considers formal and semantic characteristics of the so called “nominative sentences” — a particular type of partial or zero predication utterances (UP/ZP), focusing upon the allomorphic and isomorphic parameters of their usage in modern Ukrainian and English fiction. The rocketing increase in occurrence frequency of UP/ZP types is revealed for the artistic discourse of the 21 c. The phenomenon of multiple interpretations is argued and described.

Key words: *utterances of partial or zero predication, nominative sentence, multiple interpretations.*

У статті розглядаються формальні та семантичні характеристики так званого «номінативного речення» — різновиду висловлень з частковою або нульовою предикацією (ВЧ/НП). У центрі уваги — алломорфні та ізоморфні параметри їх використання в сучасній українській та англійській художній літературі. У досліджених текстах художнього дискурсу ХХІ ст. зареєстрований злет частотності ВЧ/НП, виявлено, аргументовано і описано феномен множинного тлумачення частини таких висловлень.

Ключові слова: *висловлення часткової або нульової предикації, номінативне речення, множинне тлумачення*

В статье рассматриваются формальные и семантические характеристики так называемого “номинативного предложения” — разновидности высказываний с частичной или нулевой предикацией (ВЧ/НП). В центре внимания — алломорфные и изоморфные параметры их использования в современной украинской и английской художественной литературе. В исследованных текстах художественного дискурса ХХІ века зарегистрировано резкое увеличение частотности ВЧ/НП, выявлен, аргументирован и описан феномен множественного толкования части таких высказываний.

Ключевые слова: *высказывания частичной или нулевой предикация, номинативное предложение, множественное толкование.*

Problem statement. The article considers the phenomenon of text fragments which do not explicate the structure of predication in full or do not contain it at all. Such fragments are titled within the ongoing research as Utterances of Partial or Zero Predication (UP/ZP) [1].

Analysis of recent research and publications. Unsolved aspects of the problem. Artistic discourse — texts of fiction — alongside with the social networks messages inevitably register new trends and tendencies in the use of language. One of the most common features characteristic of various texts in both English and Ukrainian fiction in the XXI century has become extremely wide use of Utterances of Partial or Zero Predication (UP/ZP). Such fragments are still “at the periphery” of the grammatical theory of English (and other European languages) [2, p. 104–105, 114; p. 3, 4], partly because of their forms and contents variety and rather rare use in the previous historical periods, partly due to the fact that such fragments are often referred to as communicative speech units, items of phraseology rather than grammar phenomena. Ukrainian syntax theory provides a rather detailed illustrative forms and content description of various types of one-member and structurally incomplete sentences (see, [4, p. 64–66, 112–149; 5, p. 130–190, 315–338; 6, p. 182–295]. Still, in both languages grammar theory the syntactic status of such fragments remains disputable: they are labelled as either “sentences” or “non-sentences”, “sentence-equivalents”, “utterances”, “speech units”, “communicatives”, “vocatives”, “syntactic idioms” etc. To overcome the contradiction such “sentences characterised by specific forms of predicative relation” [7, p. 705–716] need to be the object of an all-round systemic comparative study.

The article purpose and objective. The *aim* of the article is to describe functioning in modern fiction of the nominative UP/ZP type, focusing upon the usage frequency, typical models of the nominative UP/ZP forms, and their content. The research results are based upon the samples database (over 20000 examples) selected systemically from the most popular belle-lettre works of authentic Ukrainian and English fiction prose — ten books for each of the languages [8; 9].

The research main findings and rationale. The nominative type of UP/ZP are utterances, the only principal member of which is expressed by a nominal part of speech: either a noun or an infinitive (in both English and Ukrainian) or a gerund (in English); such sentence element may be coordinated with a homogeneous element or modified or completed by second-

ary sentence elements — modifiers (attributive/adverbial), objects. These include fragments, like the following ones:

Акація за віконом, вона шелестіла і скрипіла всією собою. Вітер і краплі дощу по шибах [10]. *Ну так — пані Ірена. Королева ірисів. Малесенького зросту дивовижна істота — патетична, іронічна, нервова, наївна* [10]. *Така досить немаленька бородавка, завбільшки з вишню. Колись її за таку штучку могли й на вогні спалити. Знак Диявола!* [11]

The research reveals that the nominative (in the classical understanding of the term) utterances, as to their form, are the most variable among the UP/ZP types — they contain from 1 to over 40 words (in English) within an utterance, an average quantity of words within an utterance equals 11 words, the most frequent being those nominative UP/ZP containing 4 words. Compared to English, Ukrainian nominative UP/ZP are mostly about 5–10 words, the average being that of 8 words.

As to their structure, the nominative UP/ZP in the English language database fall under 3 basic models: Article + Noun, Noun + Adjective as a post- or pre-positional attributive modifiers, and a combination of the previous two models. e.g. *The director. Indoor skydiving. The Glass Cathedral* [12]. *I flicked through the documents. My parents' marriage certificate. Their birth certificates. My own birth certificate* [13].

The first model (English) corresponds to the one-word model in Ukrainian: *Стукім. Або краще сказати гупання, цілком розмірене, завжди в однаковому ритмі — так наче десь унизу під нами працював якийсь величезний молот, можливо, пневматичний* [10]. The attributive modification model is registered in both English and Ukrainian: *The speed of the pen. Another brand-new biography* [13]. *Цілком непогана ідея. Це заслабке слово. Такий футбол* [10]. *Служба медична!* [11]. The same is true of the models combinations.

According to the formal features infinitival and gerundial utterances are also regarded as a kind of nominative UP/ZP. In English such instances are found exclusively in situations of enumeration of plans items, as in: *The plan was this: Leave the hospital. Get the money from the safe-deposit box and pay my medical bills. Drive to the orphanage and drop Sohrab off with John and Betty Caldwell. Then get a ride to Islamabad and change travel plans. Give myself a few more days to get better. Fly home. That was the plan, anyway* [14]. In Ukrainian no similar examples have been found within the materials analyzed. The Few instances of the infinitival form UP/ZP reveal

multiple interpretation, e.g.: *Але йому подобалоя бути офіцером запасу в червоній армії, це точно. Носити — нехай тимчасово — пістолет, портупею, пахнути кирзюю й одеколоном «Шипр». Якоюсь мірою з нього при цьому перло недожите дитинство — така собі забава у війноньку.* (the UP/ZP complete the meaning of the predicate *подобалоя*, besides the UP/ZP discloses the meaning of *бути офіцером запасу в червоній армії* and thus, functions as its appositive modifier). Naturally, there have been registered no instances of the gerundial nominative UP/ZP, which are rather frequent in English, e.g. (the extract is presented in the author's style format, though abridged a little — complex sentences have been eliminated):

These are some of my *Behavioral Problems*:

Not talking to people for a long time

Not eating or drinking anything for a long time

Not liking being touched

Not liking being in really small places with other people

Groaning

Not liking yellow things or brown things and refusing to touch yellow things or brown things

Not smiling

Doing stupid things

Hitting other people

Hating France

Driving Mother's car [15].

Both languages databases reveal occurrences of potentially multiple interpretations. Multiple interpretation has been registered in over 8 per cent of formally “nominative sentences” examples. Without the context, judged by the formal criteria exclusively, the utterances fall under the traditionally labelled category of “nominative sentences”. But viewed through the prism and in connection with the particular situation described in the text, such “nominative sentences” clearly show characteristics of either “parcellates” or/and “elliptical (incomplete) sentences”, e.g.:

На вулицях міста — ні душі. Тільки вечірнє світло сонця та ще запах диму, ностальгії й холоду. Пахло зимою. І пуста на вулицях. І повноповнісінько жовтого листя [12].

All the UP/ZP utterances in the example above are connected with the very first sentence of the fragment, which makes the whole into one period

parceled into several parts. The same is true of the following text fragment in which the nominative UP/ZP are found to be closely associated with the very first sentence of the abstract — all of them, each in its turn, function as objects to the infinitive “to study” which is part of the compound verbal predicate within the first sentence: *your eye needs to study*:

*When you read a manuscript that has been damaged by water, fire, light or just the passing of the years, your eye needs to study not just the shape of the letters but other marks of production. **The speed of the pen. The pressure of the hand on the page. Breaks and releases in the flow. ...The intention of the writer, his thoughts, his hesitations, his longings and his meaning** [16].*

Connected with the previous context such utterances at the same time often disclose the contents of the preceding sentences and fragments. As such these “nominative sentences” acquire qualitative characteristics of appositive modifiers besides those of parcellates and/or “elliptical sentences”. In this case the UP/ZP disclose the meaning of the generalisation *other marks of production*, therefore functioning as its appositives.

Speaking of the nominative UP/ZP semantic features we should emphasize that in case of multiple interpretation the nominative UP/ZP contents is revealed exclusively through the context and is decoded as its part.

Those essentially nominative UP/ZP which do not necessarily need the broad context to be understood correctly are used in both language databases of examples to nominate the following:

- phenomena or objects perceived by the hero non-verbally, that is such phenomena have been heard, seen, observed, felt or tasted, etc. (72%)
- phenomena or objects perceived by the hero verbally — these include titles and names of places, objects, etc. (14%)
- measurement of time flow and events (9%)
- Particular results of speculation over certain problems or situations, reflection on objects of thought, emotional attitude towards phenomena and objects thought of (5%)

Let's illustrate these positions.

(non-verbal perception):

Банзай зайшов у клас. Усі втупились у нього. Середнього зросту, коротка акуратна зачіска, невеликі бакенбарди, темні, як і волосся. Баки, як у Траволти в «Бріоліні». Велика біла футболка з кольоровим словом YES, розфарбованим у стилі «Мамо, я малюю!». Добре спокійне лице флегматика. Під словом «YES» пише «the new art-rock genera-

tion». *Великі сірі балахонисті штани з глибоченими кишенями та з додатковими кишеньками на колінах* [12].

UP/ZP within the extract provide the new teacher's portrait in the way as the new character is "seen" by his new students. Similarly in the next extract the father and son on their way along the road observe places and objects:

He studied what he could see. The segments of road down there among the dead trees. Looking for anything of colour. Any movement. Any trace of standing smoke. The road was empty. Below in the little valley the still gray serpentine of a river. Motionless and precise. Along the shore a burden of dead reeds. He stood and looked over the building. The pumps standing with their hoses oddly still in place. The windows intact. The door to the service bay was open and he went in. A standing metal toolbox against one wall. He stood looking around the garage. A metal barrel full of trash. He went into the office. Dust and ash everywhere. The boy stood in the door. A metal desk, a cashregister. Some old automotive manuals, swollen and sodden [17].

("verbal" perception — perceived are objects names, titles, their verbal signs rather than particular objects as such):

Видавництво «Наукова думка» готує до друку:

Банзай Ю., Мокоша С. «Ілюстрований путівник по циклу Кребса в алегоріях»; Банзай Ю., Мокоша С. «Цикл Кребса для «чайників»; Мокоша С., Банзай Ю. «Цикл Кребса в прислів'ях і приказках» (видання друге, доповнене і перероблене) [12].

The engraved granite slab in front of the building bore the answer: CERN Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire; King Kohler's mobile command center [13].

(measurement of time flow and events):

Fremont, California. 1980s. Two weeks later. Easter Sunday, 1959 [14].

(results of speculation over certain problems or situations, reflection on objects of thought, etc):

Ага, футбол. Ти ним цікавився? Такий футбол [10]. *Інтерв'ю з місцевими жителями, які бачили інопланетян, Банзай вирішив не читати, а викинув газету до сміття. Запах зими. Думки про дим. Пам'ять про Дарцю, згадки про Солю. Запах диму, думки про Дарцю, пам'ять про зиму, згадки про Солю. Згадки про Солю. Соля* [12]

If they could figure out what churches were southwest of here, maybe one of them would spark Langdon's memory. Air, he pressed. Air. Bernini. Sculpture. Air. Think! [13]

Conclusions. The research reveals both allomorphic and isomorphic features in the nominative UP/ZP forms, contents and usage in the modern English and Ukrainian artistic discourse. Common characteristics are mostly related to the nominative UP/ZP contents and usage, differential parameters are related to the forms of the respective UP/ZP which is caused by the absence of the gerund category in Ukrainian. Up to 8% of formally “nominative sentences” in the traditional understanding reveal potential double or multiple interpretations in both languages.

Prospective study should be focused upon the reasons of an extreme increase in frequency of the UP/ZP types in modern fiction.

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