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THE IMPACT OF WORD ORDER AND ACTUAL DIVISION ON LEARNING LANGUAGES OF DIVERSE FAMILIES AND GROUPS

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SUMMARY

The article addresses the necessity of taking into account word order and the specific features of the communicative structuring of speech, that is, its actual division in both the target foreign language and the learner's native language in order to form a correct understanding of the degree of importance of information within a sentence. Examples in Ukrainian are interpreted as a model for identifying the most important information highlighted in a sentence, since word order in an Ukrainian utterance, when analyzed from the perspective of actual division, most consistently reflects the informational actualization of an expressively neutral sentence. The languages compared in the study are English, Chinese, Japanese, and Turkmen. A comparison of the communicative paradigms of sentences with identical informational content in different languages demonstrates that an utterance may have a different number of communicative forms that vary according to their actual division. This provides grounds for a new communicative-paradigmatic approach to teaching the choice of word order in foreign language learning.

Key words: *word order, communicative structure, actual division, communicative-paradigmatic approach, methods of teaching foreign languages.*

Introduction

Topicality. The linear nature of speech is generally accepted in linguistics as an axiom. Words are pronounced in a certain

sequence established by the speech traditions of different peoples and established in the rules of language and speech, which today are formulated and approved by philologists in academic institutions. An unusual, non-linear arrangement of phrases in speech leads the recipient to perceive it as abnormal and prompts them to pay attention to the meaning and, if possible, to the author of the speech segment. It is well known that many methods used to create the effect of abnormal speech, including violations of word order, are often employed by creators of advertising. Word order is also frequently disrupted in spontaneous speech, in particular psychological states, in cases of mental disorders, and also in the speech of those who speak a foreign language. However, the goal of a person who wishes to achieve fluency in a foreign language is to eliminate any manifestations of abnormality in their non-native speech.

In contemporary instructional literature on foreign languages, attention is given – to a greater or lesser extent – to word order in different communicative situations. However, word order is usually presented only for the most commonly used constructions, such as declarative, interrogative, imperative, and optative sentences. When word order is variable, the authors of most textbooks do not go into detail, as is often the case when explaining the “free” word order of the Ukrainian sentence. The essence of the problem lies in the fact that the theory of the actual division of sentences in linguistics develops independently, while the **methodology** of teaching practical foreign-language speech develops separately, taking into account mainly only the core structures. In syntactic theory today, we follow Maria Peshchak, Anatoly Zagnitko, Kalenyk Shulzhuk, Svitlana Shabat-Savka, Oleksandr Mezhev, Ievgenii Stepanov, and a number of other scientists confidently speak about the structural-linguistic and structural-speech triad and examine the syntactic, semantic, and communicative structures of the sentence or utterance (for example: Пешчак 2000; Загнітко 2001; Шульжук 2004; Шабат-Савка 2014; Межев 2021; Гарлиєв, Степанов, 2023 etc.). However, in language teaching methodology, terms containing the key component communicative (such as “communicative approach,” “communicative method,” “communicative-activity-based

teaching,” etc.) are generally used in a broad sense. They are understood as referring to teaching speech for the purpose of establishing social contacts, as a means of introducing learners to the spiritual values and scientific and technological knowledge of other peoples, as well as teaching communication through speech activity, and so on. Michael Canale, Efim Passov, Svitlana Korol, other scientists having substantiated the positive features of the communicative method of teaching foreign languages and considering practical speech orientation to be both the main goal and the primary means of this method, outlined the fundamental guidelines and principles (for example: Canale 1983; Король 2012 etc.). However, the implementation of these principles is impossible without the application of new developments in linguistic theory. One of such developments is precisely the theory of word order and the actual division of the sentence that correlates with it.

Results and discussions

Modern researchers and methodologists, when studying the patterns and features of word order in different languages or applying them for practical purposes, today rely on the concept proposed by Joseph Greenberg regarding six language groups distinguished according to word order (Greenberg 1963). The classification of these groups is based on the dominant arrangement of the basic components of the semantic structure of a sentence: the subject (S), the predicate (V), and the object (O). The scholar considered the predicate to be a verbal element, although this is not always the case. For example, the infinitive form of a verb may often function as other components of the semantic structure. In addition, the analysis was originally based on only 30 languages. According to his concept, the following word orders may dominate in languages: SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS, OVS, and OSV. Matthew S. Dryer expanded the list of analyzed languages to 1,377 (Dryer 2013). The results of this analysis show that among these languages, 565 (41 %) are languages with dominant SOV word order; 488 (35.5 %) have dominant SVO word order; 95 (6.9 %) have VSO; 25 (1.8 %) have VOS; 11 (0.8 %) have OVS; and 4 (0.3 %) have OSV. In 189 languages (13.7 %), no dominant word order is observed.

Among the five languages analyzed in our study, Japanese and Turkmen belong to the SOV group, which is the largest group of languages. This group also includes other Turkic languages, Korean, Hindi, the Sorbian languages, Tibetan, and the languages of several smaller ethnic groups. The group of languages with SVO word order includes the other three languages considered in our analysis: Ukrainian, English, and Chinese. In addition, this group also includes Swahili, many Slavic languages, Finnish, Indonesian, Vietnamese, and many others. Although these languages rank second in number within the typological classification, they are spoken by the largest portion of the world's population. The remaining groups of languages are less numerous, but they still require the attention of language teaching specialists, since their speakers also study foreign languages, just as speakers of the first two groups do.

The rules governing **word order in the Ukrainian sentence** have been examined in a number of authoritative works (for example: Вихованець 1993; Вінтонів 2013; Загнітко 2001; Read Ukrainian 2026; Zahnitko, Myronova 2013: 98–99, etc.). It has been demonstrated that in the Ukrainian language word order serves as an indicator of the actual division of the sentence. Below we present an interpretation of four communicative paradigms of sentences. These paradigms are most fully represented in Ukrainian, in which – if only the basic components of the semantic structure are considered, without additional modifiers – the dominant order is Subject → Predicate → Object, that is, SVO. For example:

1) (S) *Хлопці* (V) *грають* (O) *у теніс* (Local) *на дитячому майданчику*. With the dominant word order, the adverbial of place is actualized. This element, functioning as an extending component of the sentence, carries the role of the rheme (the most informative part of the utterance).

2) (Local) *На дитячому майданчику* (S) *хлопці* (V) *грають* (O) *у теніс*. Here the word order that is considered dominant for the Ukrainian language is also preserved. However, the element that becomes actualized is one of the basic components – the indirect object – which is placed at the end of the sentence. Depending on the preceding context, the object may function as

the rheme independently, in combination with the predicate, or together with both the predicate and the subject.

3) (Local) *На дитячому майданчику* (V) *грають* (O) *у теніс* (S) *хлопці*. Here the word order is peripheral. However, the sentence is not considered anomalous. In this case, the subject functions as the rheme, carrying the main informational focus of the utterance.

4) (O) *У теніс* (S) *хлопці* (V) *грають* (Local) *на дитячому майданчику*. Here the word order corresponds to a pattern that dominates in only 0.3 % of the world's languages. Although it is not dominant in the Ukrainian language, it is still fully acceptable in both spoken and written speech. In this case, the adverbial of place, which functions as an extending component, becomes the element that is actualized. However, a situation is also possible in which the rheme is two-part: along with the adverbial of place, it may also include the object (*у теніс*), which appears at the beginning of the sentence.

5) (O) *У теніс* (Local) *на дитячому майданчику* (S) *хлопці* (V) *грають*. The arrangement of the basic components is the same as in the previous sentence; however, in this case the predicate appears in postposition and functions as the rheme, carrying the main informational focus of the utterance.

Among the languages whose examples were analyzed, English and Chinese are considered similar in terms of word order, as Joseph Greenberg and Matthew S. Dryer argue, since both languages are characterized by the dominant SVO word order (Greenberg 1963; Dryer 2013). At the same time, while Ukrainian is generally regarded as a language with relatively free word order, no such view has ever been expressed about Chinese, which is a root language, or about English, which has almost completed the transition from an inflectional to a root-type language, where the position of a word determines not only its informational actualization but also its grammatical and lexical meaning. We believe that, in order to incorporate the achievements of linguistics in the field of the communicative structure of the sentence into the methodology of teaching languages as foreign languages, it is necessary to consider not only the dominant order of the basic components but also that of the extending

components. In addition, it is important to identify the means by which the actualized information is expressed. Our analysis has shown that in both English and Chinese the communicative paradigm of a sentence may contain a different – usually smaller – number of members than in Ukrainian (Гарлиєв, Степанов 2023). Let us compare several of the paradigms presented above.

For comparison with word order and the ways of expressing actual division in **English** and other languages, we selected the second paradigm. Taking into account all the rules of translation and the situations in which a particular word order functions (Word Order in English Sentences 2026) led us to the necessity of constructing a rather uniform communicative paradigm. In this paradigm, in all five situations represented in the Russian communicative paradigm, the basic components occupy the same position, which is dominant for English (as well as for Ukrainian):

Written variants (communicative paradigm):

- 1) (S) **Guys** (V) **play** (O) **tennis** (Local) *on the playground.*
- 2) (S) **Guys** (V) **are playing** (O) **tennis** (Local) *on the playground.*
- 3) (S) **Guys** (V) **play** (O) **tennis** (Local) *on the playground.*
- 4) (S) **Guys** (V) **play** (O) **tennis** (Local) *on the playground.*
- 5) (S) **The guys** (V) **are playing** (O) **tennis** (Local) *on the playground.*

It can be assumed that the information which functions as the rheme and, in neutral written Russian speech, is placed at the end of the sentence, in English speech is determined by phrasal stress, the article, the grammatical category of tense, and the context. Consequently, given the strict order of the basic components of an English sentence, it should display a greater degree of communicative dependence than Ukrainian on the semantic and grammatical indicators contained in its words, as well as a stronger contextual dependence on the surrounding sentences within the text.

In spoken Ukrainian, as in both written and spoken English, word order is less dependent on the actualization of the components contained in the sentence, since the rheme can be

highlighted by phrasal stress. Therefore, it is not necessary for the rheme to be placed at the end of the sentence. It may be assumed that, due to the different approaches of Ukrainian speakers to word order in written and spoken speech, and because of the different means used to actualize information (in written speech – only word order, and in spoken speech – word order and/or phrasal stress), Ukrainian is commonly considered to have free word order. However, in the practice of language teaching, these features should be examined in detail. Exercises that train these aspects should be included in manuals and textbooks already at the initial stage of language learning. Let us compare: in **spoken** English and Ukrainian, with the same word order (according to the concepts of Joseph Greenberg and Matthew S. Dryer), the speaker can use **phrasal stress** to actualize any of the content words, which – regardless of its position in the sentence—can perform the function of the rheme.

(English)

1) (S) **Guys** (V) *play* (O) *tennis on the playground.*

2) (S) *Guys* (V) **play** (O) *tennis on the playground.*

3) (S) *Guys* (V) *play* (O) **tennis** *on the playground.*

4) (S) *Guys* (V) *play* (O) *tennis* **on the playground.**

(Ukrainian)

1) (S) **Хлопці** (V) *грають* (O) *у теніс на дитячому майданчику.*

2) (S) *Хлопці* (V) **грають** (O) *у теніс на дитячому майданчику.*

3) (S) *Хлопці* (V) *грають* (O) **у теніс** *на дитячому майданчику.*

4) (S) *Хлопці* (V) *грають* (O) *у теніс на дитячому майданчику.*

5) (S) *Хлопці* (V) *грають* (O) *у теніс* **на дитячому майданчику.**

In the Ukrainian paradigm, a greater number of forms occurs due to the expression of the attribute as an independent word, whereas in English there is only a locative attributive element, expressed as a compound word.

In the Chinese language, when an adverbial modifier of place is present in a sentence, the order of components may change,

but not as radically as in the Ukrainian language (for example: 陆俭明 1980; 吴为章 1995; 施春宏 2004; 刘春光 2016, etc.).

Written variants (communicative paradigm):

1) (S) 大家 (Local) 在操场上 (V) 打 (O) 网球。 [(S) dà jiā (Local) zài cāo chǎng shàng (V) dǎ (O) wǎng qiú].

2) (Local) 在操场上 (S) 大家 (V) 打 (O) 网球。 [(Local) zài cāo chǎng shàng (S) dà jiā (V) dǎ (O) wǎng qiú].

We can see that only the extending component can change its position, whereas the order of the basic components remains the same. Since Chinese is a root (isolating) language, the main role in determining the communicatively actualized information in a sentence is carried by **phrasal stress**. With its help, in **spoken** speech, the speaker can express the information that is being actualized.

1) (Local) 在操场上 (S) 大家 (V) 打 (O) 网球。

2) (Local) 在操场上 (S) 大家 (V) 打 (O) 网球。

3) (Local) 在操场上 (S) 大家 (V) 打 (O) 网球。

4) (Local) 在操场上 (S) 大家 (V) 打 (O) 网球。

In written speech, this actualization is not reflected.

Nevertheless, argues that in a Chinese sentence, only the expanding component can change its position, while the order of the basic components remains unchanged. Since Chinese is a root (isolating) language, phrasal stress plays a key role in determining the communicatively actualized information in a sentence. With its help, the speaker can express actualized information in oral speech.

However, Zhou Baoyan found that the Chinese language exhibits word order flexibility in a number of situations (Zhou Baoyan 2024). Word order typically changes in so-called “Ba” sentences, passive constructions, and in some other cases: « “Ba” sentences is in SOV order, and passive sentences are in OSV order. They break the basic word order and reflect the flexibility of Chinese word order. Of course, SOV and OSV are special linguistic structures in Chinese, and their proportion is limited, SVO is still the main language order in modern Chinese». Zhang Bojiang [张伯江, 2000], Su Lichang (苏立昌 2002), Wang Yan (王艳, 2018), Fu Jia (傅佳 2023) put forward some versions

of explanations for the reasons for such transformations of word order in these constructions of the Chinese language.

Among the languages with the dominant word order SOV (of the basic components of the semantic structure of the sentence), we analyzed sentences from Japanese and Turkmen.

As the authoritative Japanese linguist Hitashi Noda states, **in the Japanese language**, word order within a sentence is strictly regulated: a verbal or nominal predicate typically appears at the absolute end of the sentence. The subject or object cannot follow the predicate, and the object generally does not precede the subject; however, the grammatical roles of the subject and object are marked by particles (such as は [wa] and を [o]), which allows some flexibility in their ordering without violating grammatical rules. Attributes must appear before the noun they modify, and therefore may occur before both the subject and the object. Adverbial modifiers of time can also precede the subject. When a verb phrase appears before a noun, it functions as a relative clause, modifying the noun rather than serving as the main predicate (野田尚史, 2000). Thus, all five forms of the communicative paradigm of the sentence “*Хлюці грають у теніс на дитячому майданчику*” that are possible in written Ukrainian are reduced in written Japanese to a single form:

(S) みんなは (Local) 運動場で (O) テニス (V) をします。
[(S) Minna wa (Local) undōjō de (O) tennisu (V) o shimasu].
The actualization of information within a sentence in spoken Japanese occurs through the placement of phrasal stress on the component that functions as the rheme. Compare:

- 1) (S) みんなは (Local) 運動場で (O) テニス (V) をします。
- 2) (S) みんなは (Local) 運動場で (O) テニス (V) をします。
- 3) (S) みんなは (Local) 運動場で (O) テニス (V) をします。
- 4) (S) みんなは (Local) 運動場で (O) テニス (V) をします。

Despite our practical research among native Japanese speakers, there are studies by Japanese scholars that are less clear-cut about the strict word order in Japanese sentences. For example, Zhou Baoyan asserts that currently «Japanese word order is generally flexible, and the subject, predicate, and object can interchanged in many cases» (Zhou Baoyan 2024). Such features are pointed out by Hisashi Noda (野田尚史 2000), as well as

by specialists in the field of comparative studies of the Japanese and Chinese languages Li Bo (李波 2014) and Wang Mingdan (王明丹 2020). According to Zhou Baoyan, the ability to change word order in Japanese sentences is due to the presence of case particles, which indicate functions within the sentence (Zhou Baoyan 2024).

Describing the basic **word order in the Turkmen language**, English linguist David Gray writes: «The usual word order is: subject (e.g. *sen*) → (indirect object (e.g. *çagalara*)) → object (e.g.: *derman*) → verb phrase (e.g.: gerund + main verb *aldyňmy?*) – *Have you bought medicine for the children?*» (Gray 2011: 28 (9)). Since the author of this article is a citizen of Turkmenistan, and Turkmen is my native language, observations were conducted among Ashgabat residents of different ages. The results of this study indicate the following. With the dominant arrangement of the basic components of the semantic structure Subject → Object → Predicate (SOV), and with a communicative structure oriented toward spoken speech – where the actual division of the sentence into theme and rheme is expressed through phrasal stress – the written communicative paradigm of Turkmen language allows permutations of the basic components. These permutations are used specifically to highlight the rheme by placing it at the end of the sentence. Written variants (communicative paradigm):

- 1) (S) **Hemmeler** (Local) *meýdançada* (O) *tennis* (V) **oýnaýarlar**.
- 2) (Local) **Meýdançada** (S) *hemmeler* (O) *tennis* (V) **oýnaýarlar**.
- 3) (O) **Tennis** (S) *hemmeler* (Local) *meýdançada* (V) **oýnaýarlar**.
- 4) (Local) *Meýdançada* (O) **tennis** (S) *hemmeler* (V) **oýnaýarlar**.
- 5) (O) **Tennis** (Local) *meýdançada* (S) **hemmeler** (V) **oýnaýarlar**.

In Turkmen, the elements preceding the predicate may change their order to highlight the rheme, whereas the predicate typically remains in sentence-final position.

In addition to the communicative paradigm of the sentence “*Хлюці грають у теніс на дитячому майданчику*” in Ukrainian, English, Chinese, Japanese, and Turkmen, we also analyzed the communicative paradigms of 19 other sentences in all these languages. The results of the analysis indicate that in the practice of teaching the selected languages, the functions of word order

are treated rather superficially. While for native speakers of these languages the use of word order becomes habitual and they often cannot explain many of the functions of a particular word order. Learners who study these languages as foreign languages and aim to achieve a high level of proficiency still face many questions. However, they often cannot find answers to these questions in the available teaching literature.

Conclusions

Thus, it can be concluded that the comparative analysis carried out demonstrates the need for the systematic integration of rules governing the use and functions of word order into language teaching practice, particularly in the teaching of foreign languages. At the same time, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the possibilities and specific features of word order functioning in spoken and written speech. In addition, one of the directions for improving the communicative method of foreign language teaching should be the adoption of a communicative-paradigmatic approach to the study of the sentence as the basic unit of syntax and to the ways of expressing the actual division of the sentence in the languages being studied.

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ВПЛИВ ПОРЯДКУ СЛІВ І АКТУАЛЬНОГО ЧЛЕНУВАННЯ НА ВИВЧЕННЯ МОВ РІЗНИХ СІМЕЙ І ГРУП

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АНОТАЦІЯ

У статті йдеться про необхідність урахування порядку слів і специфіки комунікативного структурування мовлення, тобто його актуального членування як у мові, яку вивчають, так і в рідній мові учня з метою формування правильного розуміння ступеня важливості інформації у межах речення. Приклади з української мови інтерпретовано як модель для визначення найбільш значимої інформації, поданої в реченні, оскільки порядок слів в українському висловлюванні, розглянутий з позиції актуального членування, найбільш послідовно відображає інформаційну актуалізацію експресивно нейтрального речення. У дослідженні зіставлено також англійську, китайську, японську і туркменську мови. Зіставлення комунікативних парадигм речень з однаковим інформаційним змістом у різних мовах демонструє, що висловлювання може мати різну кількість комунікативних форм, які варіюються залежно від їхнього актуального членування. Це дає підстави для впровадження нового комунікативно-парадигматичного підходу

до навчання правил вибору порядку слів у процесі вивчення різних іноземних мов.

Ключові слова: порядок слів, комунікативна структура, актуальне членування, комунікативно-парадигматичний підхід, методи навчання іноземних мов.

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