

ON LINGUISTIC STATUS OF STOP-SHORT UTTERANCES IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

As noted in numerous studies of speech, one of its characteristic features is compression - phonetic, morphological and syntactic. The most interesting and least studied manifestations of compression on the syntactic level are stop-short utterances. The **aim** of our study is to examine the general linguistic prerequisites of formation of stop-short utterances in English.

Proceeding from the thesis, that any reduction of the initial structure of the utterance as a means to achieve the goal with the least possible effort spent, eliminating certain units, is an implementation of the principle of speech economy, it is possible to put forward the following hypothesis: a stop-short utterance is a manifestation of the principle of the economy of language means in speech.

Considering stop-short utterances as the manifestation of the tendency to the speech economy, it is necessary to mention the current opinions existing in linguistics that 'economical' are only the structures with monosemantic reconstitution of the clipped constituents. Consequently, it is possible to assume, that stop-short utterances have nothing to do to the phenomenon of speech economy. However, we believe that it is the variability of interpretation as an opportunity to convey more information than by monosemantic reconstitution of implicit elements, serves as a means of speech economy while rendering new information the text conveys.

The semantic level such clipping of the sentence structure does not affect because the meaning of the utterance is always complete owing to its situational and contextual attachment.

On the pragmatic level the clipping of the sentence structure can lead to pragmatic transposition that is the use of the structure of one communicative type in the sphere of functioning of another communicative type.

Keywords: compression, stop-short utterance, syntactic structure, semantic structure, monosemantic reconstitution, speech economy.

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of problems that arise when defining the linguistic status of stop-short utterances has become especially relevant with the shift of emphasis in the study of the language from its structure to its functioning. One more point should be mentioned here, due to its marginality a stop-short utterance is a reflection of all the major aspects of linguistic action. There is a meaning to the missing part. It shows contextual links. There are social value judgments attached to it. There is a speaker and hearer involved.

To the indispensability of the definition of linguistic status of a stop-short utterance a lot is added by the variety of its forms and significant variation in the degree of its incompleteness, from *But...*, *So...*, *But here...* to *I'm your second...* *You all know what I think...*

Analysing stop-short utterances we proceed from the statement that economy of language means as one of the tendencies of language development, should be envisaged in the diachronic

and synchronic aspect. In the former it is the reason of fundamental changes of the language. In the latter it is a selection of one of the synonymous or the close in content means.

To begin with, let us mention that a stop-short utterance is defined by us as a functional variant of a full member complete statement, which in turn differs from the traditional unit of structural syntax (a sentence) in the following ways.

First, the differences between a sentence and an utterance are functional in nature. Two aspects are distinguished here: the aspect of functional dependence, that is, the form of a stable mutual connection between a sentence as a unit of the language system and an utterance as a unit of its functioning; and the aspect of external manifestation of the features inherent in the utterance, its functioning in the text system, (for example, the presence of the elements in the utterance structure that indicate its relationship with the reference and communicative situation; text elements that include it in the framework of a broader formation of super - phrasal unity and text).

Second, the difference between a sentence and an utterance is of a functional-semantic nature. The semantic and syntactic structure of the utterance, in contrast to the sentence, includes a performative verb, which indicates the type of a speech act.

Stop-short utterances can be incomplete due to various factors: their belonging to the structure of a higher rank, text, the communicative intention of the speaker, utterances incomplete due to the peculiarities of the situation nominated further subdivided into two groups: stop-short utterances denoting feelings and stop-short utterances denoting emotions and the mechanisms of text generation.

RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

Proceeding from the opinion, that any cutback of the primary structure of the utterance as a means to achieve the aim with the least possible effort spent, eliminating certain units, is an implementation of the principle of speech economy, it is possible to put forward the following assumption: a stop-short utterance is a manifestation of the principle of the economy of language means in speech.

Stop-short utterances which are incomplete due to the fact that they belong to the structure of higher rank, text, or the communicative intention of the speaker favour this thesis. *“Look, I took his letter at its word - about putting me up? — but if...”* (Fowles, 2006, p. 125).

On the level of the structure of the utterance speech economy here is based on the principle of the use of the part of the structure instead of the whole structure. Our possibility to use the part of the structure instead of the whole structure is based on the fact that in the situation of speech communication one part of complex stimulus can compensate the missing part of it and produce the same effect as the whole complex stimulus. Our ability to perceive the part instead of the whole is based on the mechanism of a 'salvatory' understanding of the text.

Considering patterns of transition from the language units making the external form of the text to its denotative structure, it is necessary to mark, that the understanding of the text is not carried out by understanding its constituent elements in a consistent way, but by perceiving complete pieces 'quantums' of information where the meaning of separate elements might not be realized completely. Full comprehension of all elements is carried out on the basis of preliminary understanding and judgement of the whole.

As for the sentence perspective is concerned, speech economy leads here to singling out a communicatively important constituent (rheme) of the utterance by means of an explicitly expressed part as a marker of an implied one, that is according to the principle of 'a cry behind the door', on which the theory of poetic alienation is based and which acts on the imagination stronger than any most detailed description. Consequently, the requirement is met - the maximum communicative effect is achieved with minimal linguistic resources.

The semantic level this clipping of the sentence structure does not affect because the meaning of the sentence is always complete owing to its situational and contextual attachment.

Considering stop-short utterances as the manifestation of the tendency to speech economy, it is necessary to mention that current opinions existing in linguistics find 'economical' only structures with monosemantic reconstitution of the clipped constituents. Thus, for example "*If only something happened...*" we could continue '*I would be happy*', or '*It would be better*' or '*I wouldn't mind it*'. Consequently, it is possible to assume, that stop-short utterances have nothing to do to the phenomenon of speech economy. However, we believe that it is the variability of interpretation as an opportunity to convey more information than by monosemantic reconstitution of implicit elements, serves as a means speech economy while rendering new information the text conveys.

Compression is carried out here not at the level of the given, well-known, and, therefore, not requiring repetition information, but at the level of new, unknown to the communicant information for which, in fact, the certain message is undertaken.

On the pragmatic level the clipping of the sentence structure can lead to pragmatic transposition and serve as the marker of understatement. Out of the body of stop-short utterances with versatile motives of incompleteness collected we have taken only those which are incomplete due the communicative intention of the speaker under the influence of speech etiquette norm. The meaning of these stop-short utterances incorporates a specific claim by the speaker in what he says to the hearer. For example:

"All I was trying to say that perhaps if we tried to sharpen our wits and think of a likely place..." (Christie, 2002, p, 240).

The claim corresponds to an expectation on the part of the speaker of agreement. It is hypothetical by nature and is based on logical procedure of implication if → then. In discourse interpersonal arguments interfere and entail a change in what the utterance is to convey literally. Here the speaker tries to respect the hearer's negative face, his need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed on by others. (Jule, 2008).

Among interpersonal arguments which may determine or help to determine the form of an utterance we are interested in arguments relating to the question of whether the content to be verbalized can harm the hearer. If an utterance formulation is hearer-motivated, and the literal utterance content in some way is influenced by hearer-motivation, then the literal meaning apparent in the formulation is not identical with what is actually meant.

"That being, as I say, in low water financially, you met this rich old lady and cultivated her acquaintance assiduously. How if we are in a position to say that you had no idea she was well off, and that you visited her out of pure kindness of heart ..." (Christie, 2002, p, 105).

What is meant in this stop-short utterance can be reproduced in a different sentence, or in the continuation of the same one, in which the hearer-motivated restrictions of the original sentence are not considered, and only the adequacy between sentence content and the world is

sought. The unmanipulated content of this utterance can be *"I consider you visited this rich old lady with some sordid motives."*

Thus, such stop-short utterances can be generally described in terms of a paraphrastic relationship between two utterances: the one which is actually uttered and is hearer-motivated and the one which is meant and is content-motivated. Despite their difference, the two readings can be interpreted as paraphrases since the difference disappears, when they are interpreted as originating from the speaker.

One more important point should also be mentioned here. The fewer and the lighter the adequacy conditions made by an utterance are the greater the chance of them being fulfilled. The smaller the liability commitment on the part of the speaker is the less likely the sentence will be negated by the hearer.

"What are you doing on Friday evening, Charles? - Charles looked a trifle surprised. - As a matter of fact, the Ewings asked me to go in and play bridge, but if you would rather I stayed at home... - No, - said Mrs. Barter with determination - Certainly not. I mean it, Charles. On that night of nights I should much rather be alone". (Christie, 2002, p, 108).

The content of this stop-short utterance has been manipulated in such a way that it becomes more acceptable for the hearer than the unmanipulated content could be. It should be possible for the Sentence A here, which is to be read as an understatement, to be paraphrased by the Sentence B (*I don't want to stay at home, I plan to play bridge at my friends'*) which entails more adequacy conditions than A and thus appears to be more determinate.

However the use of stop-short utterances as markers of understatement implies some structural and pragmatic restrictions. Mostly communicatively incomplete utterances, and those, based on the logical procedure of implication if → then where the second part is omitted can serve as the markers of understatement.

"... Everyone asserts the incredibility of its being smuggled ashore ..." (Christie, 2002, p, 236).

The mark that the utterance is not finished lets the hearer understand that the speaker is leaving something unsaid and he lets the reasons for his doing so be understood and he wants the hearer to understand what he is leaving unsaid.

"People don't leave fingerprints and cigarette ash nowadays, Miss Marple. - But this, I think, she suggested was an old-fashioned crime ..." (Christie, 2002, p, 56).

As far as pragmatic restrictions are concerned, stop-short utterances as makers of understatement, occur mainly in two types of speech acts: in representatives, containing self-praise or criticism of oneself, self-criticism and praise of others and in directives.

a) *"Oh - said the inspector, - you've been bitten with all this psychoanalysis stuff? Now, I'm a plain man ..."* (Christie, 2002, p, 83).

b) *"We must place him at once. What applications have we? If you will hand me the file ..."* (Faulkner, 1977, p. 321).

To sum it up, the linguistic conditions for formation of stop-short utterances as understatements lie in the indirect nomination of the signified by the speaker caused by his desire to minimize the threat to the face. Where the face means public self-image of a person and refers to that emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. So, the use of the understatement as a strategy of saying less than one means occurs where the general question of the emotional acceptability of the content of the utterance

becomes acute. Its aim is to make utterances more acceptable and thus to increase their chance of ratification by the hearer.

Utterances which were incomplete due to the peculiarities of the nominated situation (stop-short utterances with various emotional motives of incompleteness) as the reflection of the emotional state of the speaker, in speech activity cannot be considered as the implementation of the principle of speech economy. Since the emotional regulation of verbal behaviour is carried out in this case not on a conscious, coming 'from above', level of consciousness but on the unconscious, caused the system of emotional reactions level.

However, in artistic modelling of speech, where this type of incompleteness of the sentence structure is used by the author deliberately as a means of increasing the expressiveness of narration, as a stylistic device, we are dealing with the manifestation of the principle of speech economy of a higher rank. It serves not only as a means of compressing subject-logical information, but also as a means to influence the reader, create an aesthetic effect.

"What is it? Me?" "No, you are easily the most beautiful... desirable woman I've ever... there couldn't be ..." (Osborn, 1983, p. 21).

Utterances which are incomplete due to the mechanisms of text generation striving for actualization in speech of vocabulary and structures which best suit a particular communicative intention leads to redundant speech realizations. In examples like *"It's just... it's just that... it's just that you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. With animals!"* (Albee, 1963, p. 72). The process of formation of the programme of this utterance proceeds at the same time with its realization in the language code, the speaker, beginning the utterance, indistinctly imagines its general content. He says initial words mechanically, aspiring to fill with them a pause necessary for the definition of a specific content of a reply. If the process of the formation of the program of the utterance is not completed by the time 'the intermediate structure' exhausts itself, the further filling of the pause becomes impossible the speech intention remains unrealized and the structure becomes superfluous.

When considering redundancy as the property of informal conversation one should keep in mind that communication is a two-way process and from the position of the addressee of speech to redundant can be attributed parts of the utterance which complicate the perception of speech.

At the text level to redundant can be attributed not only elements of the utterance but the utterance itself as a whole having one communicative goal and several variants of its realization.

CONCLUSION

From the above mentioned statements it can be concluded that stop-short utterances, as the manifestation of the principle of speech economy, combine two types of compression: the compression on the level of expression of information, manifested in the reduction of the units of expression of information with no change in the plane of content, and the compression on the content level, manifested in the availability of 1n degree options of variation in the interpretation of the part of the utterance which is not said in words. Ways of interpreting the implicit part of the utterance reflect various aspects of the situation nominated and for the quantitative and qualitative composition depend on the amount of the text thesaurus and the thesaurus of the reader.

Yet, such a method of economy in the transmission of information has certain functional and stylistic restrictions. It is peculiar only to the artistic, and, to some degree publicistic style, where the possibility of variation in the interpretation is dependent and doesn't contradict the basic properties of these styles.

However, the language means economy is not only the economy of efforts of the speaker, but it is also aimed at quick understanding by the hearer. Not every clipped structure in our case a stop-short utterance can be regarded the manifestation of the principle of speech economy and produce the structure which best suits a particular communicative intention.

Such questions as who leaves, what is unsaid and when, and who completes, what is left unsaid and how, constitute an integral component of communicative competence. Creative writers use stop-short utterances for depicting a wide range of behavioral patterns of social relationship, expressing nuances of emotions, feelings, attitudes, intentions, etc., and for providing an insight into the interpretative procedures and accomplishment of understanding during the ongoing process of conversation and its development.

Finally, we would like to add that the use of stop-short utterances in interpersonal communication corresponds to the nature and character of the English mentality which is characterized by tolerance, broadmindedness, non-judgmental attitude. National-cultural pattern of behavior of English communicative culture media is based on the active use of stop-short utterances as understatements, providing communication partner a greater freedom in the choice of different interpretations of what is left unsaid in them and in the choice of different reactions to them.

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