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**INTERCHANGEABILITY IN REPRESENTATION OF STATIC
AND DYNAMIC SITUATIONS IN ENGLISH SYNTAX**

Svetlana Rakhmankulova (a), Marina Safina (b)*, Anna Enina (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Minina ul. 31a, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, tsvet.sveta@yandex.ru

(b) Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Minina ul. 31a, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia,
marinasafina22@gmail.com

(c) Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, Lenina pr. 38, Magnitogorsk, Russia, annadmenina@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper looks into syntactic representation of static and dynamic situations in the English language. The representation of dynamic situations is exemplified by situations of uncontrollable action, whereas the static situations representation is demonstrated by situations of quality attribution. The utterances representing the static and dynamic situations in question have been analysed in terms of the syntactic structure and number of arguments. The analysis of utterances retrieved mainly from contemporary English literature has revealed a number of instances structured as static situations representing a dynamic one and vice versa. While both static and dynamic situations have prototypical means of syntactic representation in the English language, we have discovered that the syntactic models associated with static situations and those corresponding to dynamic situations can interchange. This study aims at identifying the cognitive mechanisms enabling the interchangeability of syntactic models corresponding to static and dynamic situations respectively, which in turn will help to shed light on basic conceptualization features of the situations in question. The findings presented in this paper demonstrate that static via dynamic and dynamic via static representations are possible due to conceptual metaphor and conceptual metonymy, which prove to be effective cognitive mechanisms that allow applying the syntactic models prototypically representing one situation to other situations.

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1. Introduction

The notion of ‘situation’ (event) is fundamental to studying syntax in terms of conceptual representation. In the present paper, the term ‘situation’ is used in a wide sense and denotes a combination of elements existing in the speaker’s mind while producing an utterance (Gak, 1998). Situations fall into two large categories: static situations and dynamic situations. Static situations describe properties and states and are characterized as permanent and unchanging over a certain period. Dynamic situations include processes, events and actions, which may or may not be “under the control of agents” (Lyons, 1977).

A situation structure and the relationship between arguments are represented in language by the syntactic model with a minimal number of syntactic positions appropriate for the type of the relationship represented. Thus, each type of static and dynamic situations corresponds to a certain prototypical number of arguments and a particular syntactic relation between them, i.e. a particular syntactic model.

The number of basic syntactic models varies from three distinguished by Hathaway (1967), to over thirty described by Pocheptsov (1971), depending on the approach undertaken. The current research employs seven syntactic models identified through the analysis of valency models of English verbs denoting basic, prototypical relations (Kuzmina, 2015). Each of the syntactic models below is believed to prototypically represent a particular situation:

- $SP_{Comp.Nom}$ is a model with a compound nominal predicate representing a property, a quality or a state.
- SP is a model with a verbal predicate representing a non-object-directed action.
- SPO_{Dir} is a model with a verbal predicate and a direct object, which is associated with an object-directed action.
- $SPO_{Ind.O_{Dir}}$ is a model with a verbal predicate, a direct object and an indirect object representing transmission of an object.
- $SP_{Link + A.Stat.Loc}$ is a model with a compound predicate and an adverbial locative complement representing a location.
- $SPA_{Dir.Loc}$ is a model with a verbal predicate and an adverbial modifier of direction, which is associated with independent motion.
- $SPO_{Dir.A_{Dir.Loc}}$ is a model with a verbal predicate and an adverbial modifier of direction representing caused motion.

2. Problem Statement

As has been illustrated above, a syntactic model is strongly associated with a certain situation type. As far as static situations are concerned (those comprise properties, qualities, states and locations), they are prototypically reflected in language by the models $SP_{Comp.Nom}$ and $SP_{Link + A.Stat.Loc}$. Utterances based on these models include an animate or inanimate subject and a locative complement (the latter only applies to $SP_{Link + A.Stat.Loc}$). The subject, both animate and inanimate, is neither the initiator nor an active participant of the situation, but a passive carrier of a quality, state, etc. The other five syntactic models serve to represent dynamic situations. The obligatory argument in dynamic situations is an active subject,

which can independently perform an action; other arguments may include an object and a locative complement.

However, the means of syntactic representation of static and dynamic situations are not restricted to the syntactic models prototypically associated with them. Due to the basic cognitive mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy described notably by Lakoff (1993), dynamic situations can be represented in language via the syntactic models corresponding to static situations and vice versa. It is assumed that instances of non-typical use of syntactic models can reveal new facts about conceptualization of static and dynamic situations in the English-speaking cultures.

Yet another important aspect is to understand what metonymy and metaphor act like at a sentence pattern level.

According to the cognitive approach to language studies, metaphor is interpreted as a cognitive model combining concepts from different domains and retaining the two semantic domains, as well as an imagery element (Pesina et al., 2021). At the sentence pattern level, it goes down to understanding a situation of one type in terms of a situation of another type (Kuzmina, 2015).

Metonymy is another productive means of conceptualization in syntax. Unlike referential metonymy that relates one entity with another, non-referential, or propositional, metonymy relates two propositions (Barcelona, 2002; Warren, 2006) and describes the whole situation through one of its stages or through its direct or indirect results assuming there is a certain kind of logical relation between the concepts e.g. temporal, causative-consecutive, etc. (Rakhmankulova, 2018). Propositional metonymy is, actually, closely connected to the multi-phase nature of an action (desire, intention, planning, attempt, result, etc.), thus, taking on the form of a logical sequence where each stage can be used to represent the total of the previous ones and imply the possible realization of the following ones (Silnitskiy, 2012; Zaliznyak 1992).

3. Research Questions

One of the key questions raised in this paper is which syntactic models are used to represent a static situation via a dynamic one and vice versa. This question entails other issues that will be touched upon in this paper, namely, what underlying cognitive mechanisms enable the non-typical representation of static and dynamic situations and what can be inferred about conceptualization of static and dynamic situations from non-typical use of the syntactic models representing the corresponding situations. Another significant question posed in this paper is why speakers may (intentionally or unintentionally) give preference to a certain metaphorical or metonymical means of syntactic representation when describing a static or dynamic situation.

4. Purpose of the Study

The current research attempts to identify instances of syntactic interchangeability in representing static and dynamic situations in the English language and to reveal their syntactic and argument structure. The study focuses on discovering metaphorical and metonymical representations of static situations through the syntactic models typical of dynamic situations and, vice versa, dynamic situations

representations via the patterns of static situations. Another important objective set by the authors is to analyse the conceptual implications of this interchangeability and to distinguish basic conceptualization features of the situations investigated.

The situation of uncontrollable action was chosen as an instance of a dynamic situation; and the situation of quality attribution was selected to exemplify a static situation.

5. Research Methods

The material for the study was selected manually by continuous sampling. The main sources of the study material were literary works by contemporary English-speaking authors. Besides, a number of online English-language corpora were used to find examples of particular structures in a context (British National Corpus, Corpus of Contemporary American English, iWeb: The 14 Billion Word Web Corpus).

The discovered utterances which met the selection criteria further underwent structural analysis in terms of syntactic and argument structure. The inductive method allowed arriving at conclusions concerning the whole class of situations based on individual examples.

6. Findings

6.1. Representation of dynamic situations via static ones

The paper focuses on a specific type of dynamic situations which is the situation of uncontrollable action. The uncontrollable action is understood broadly, as “anything that looks like an action but which it is not” (Levontina, 2006, p. 195). However, what is common to both action proper and uncontrollable action is that an animate subject shall be involved in the extralinguistic situation described by the utterance (should it or not assume the form of the grammatical subject). In some contexts, mainly those with value judgment as the key component, also an observer being distinct from the situation subject is required. The types of situations recognized as uncontrollable actions in the present paper are as follows: visually perceivable physical and emotional responses, accidents, involuntary doings and mistakes, actions that started as intentional but could not reach the desired result or rather had some unintentional effect.

6.1.1. Metonymic shift

Firstly, if in the course of live communication an observer that is distinct from the actual subject of the situation provides an evaluation of the subject’s emotional reaction, incl. in the form of an SP_{Comp,Nom} pattern utterance, such a statement, unless the observer is a telepath, shall imply some unintentional manifestations of one’s body language:

1) *I can’t tell if **she’s impressed or repelled** (S. Hannah, Haven’t They Grown).*

2) ***She’s surprised to see me and not in a good way; she can’t hide it either** (S. Hannah, Haven’t They Grown).*

The description of body language can form part of a predicative complex, too:

3) *[he] was a quivering mess – he could barely stand at the microphone (K. Atkinson, Transcription).*

Secondly, should an unintentional emotional impact be the case, the said effect can be rendered through an evaluation expressed by the observer being the experiencer of the influence:

4) *He watched her eat. It was unnerving (K. Atkinson, Transcription).*

Thirdly, uncontrollable characteristics of an otherwise controllable action can be shown through an SP_{Comp.Nom} judgment as well:

5) *His blows were ineffectual and the man he hit barely noticed (I. McEwan, The Children act).*

Sometimes evaluation given to one situation by the observer can also mean the uncontrollability of another action that is implied, e.g. when an MI5 stenographer marks some parts of the overheard conversation as inaudible that virtually means that she struggles to distinguish what is being said but fails:

6) *WALTER. The main point is this, you see. But you know I expect they will ([the words are] inaudible) (K. Atkinson, Transcription).*

Finally, metonymic use of the static location model adds suddenness and dynamism to the description of an accident, e.g. falling or otherwise losing balance:

7) *They were big and I registered the job uniform — jeans and bomber jackets. The next moment I was on the floor and one was kicking me and the other was hitting me in the face (BNC).*

6.1.2. Metaphoric shift

A situation describing manifestations of emotions such as a smile, a laugh or tears can be represented as a situation of a vessel being filled with some substance where the vessel stands for the real life subject and by the substance one's emotional reaction is understood.

1) *And I was full of tears until I heard the trumpets sound (I. McEwan, The Children act).*

The model describing the location of an object can be used to talk about an accident where the latter is represented as an object in space:

2) *There had been another cup-dropping incident yesterday (K. Atkinson, Transcription).*

Other uncontrollable situations and processes such as a scream, a sigh or a crying fit can be described as if they were a material element of the environment.

3) *There were screams on every side (J.K. Rowling, Ickabog).*

Speech situations or audible emotional manifestations such as crying or laughing are another example of uncontrollable action. As the result of a metaphoric shift, the speech fragments or emotional manifestations serve as the grammatical subject of the sentence and the agent of the situation. And their spontaneity and unintentionality are rendered through location models as those words or sounds are not said, pronounced or made but rather get out or slip away by themselves escaping from the speaker's body:

4) *She hadn't realized she was reporting treason, until the words were out of her mouth and it was too late (J.K. Rowling, Ickabog).*

6.2. Representation of static situations via dynamic ones

The situation of possessing a quality is a vivid example of a static situation. In this paper, the term 'quality' is regarded as a property characterizing a person or a thing as an object of cognition and,

consequently, depending solely on the subject of cognition. Thus, this static situation involves an observer who attributes a quality to an object and who is often the producer of the utterance. As a result, a quality has a subjective and evaluative nature.

The prototypical means of syntactic representation of the quality of an object situation is the syntactic model $SP_{Comp.Nom}$:

1) *He was truly **attentive and skilful** (I. McEwan, Sweet Tooth).*

The syntactic structure of an utterance representing a quality of an object is usually a one-place predicate, the only obligatory argument being the subject.

An important role in representing the quality of an object situation by syntactic models of a dynamic situation is played by conceptual metaphor. Through the cognitive mechanism of metaphorical transfer, a quality of an object can be conceptualized as either an active agent or a patient.

6.2.1. Quality as an agent

In utterances representing a quality as an agent based on the syntactic model SPO_{Dir} , the observer can assume the role of a patient:

1) *Her **certainty** frightened me (I. McEwan, Sweet Tooth).*

2) *Its **solidity** in turbulent times must have soothed her (I. McEwan, Sweet Tooth).*

Moreover, the person or thing in possession of a quality can become patients themselves:

3) *Forgiveness softened her tone (I. McEwan, Atonement).*

Besides, a quality of an object can be reflected as an agent in an utterance where the grammatical subject does not coincide with the actual agent:

*They all seem to be bursting **with vitality** and full of life! (iWeb)*

To prove that *vitality* is indeed conceptualized as the agent, one can transform utterances of this type by putting the quality, which takes the position of an instrument, to the subject position: *Vitality was bursting out of them*. According to (Volkhina & Popova, 2003), this transformation is only possible due to the agentive meaning of the lexeme in the position typical of an instrument.

The presented examples obviously indicate to a great prominence of the quality in the speaker's mind, comparable to a physical presence.

6.2.2. Quality as a patient

Conversely, a quality of an object represented by the model SPO_{Dir} may be metaphorically conceptualized as a patient manipulated by the agent possessing the quality:

1) *He positively radiated **a combined aura of benevolence and bonhomie** (BNC).*

2) *Again he showed **enormous potential** (BNC).*

These utterances of metaphorical representation of a quality reveal the significance of the quality to the speaker and turn the quality into a visible, material object.

The reasons for using the syntactic model SPO_{Dir} to represent static situations may vary from highlighting the importance attached to a certain quality by the speaker or the effect produced on the speaker or the observer by a quality to expressive use with the purpose of influencing the listener in a particular way.

7. Conclusion

The syntactic means of static and dynamic situations representation are not reduced to the simple sentence patterns traditionally associated with this or that type of a situation but prove to be rather diverse e.g. allowing one to represent inherently dynamic situations via inherently static ones and vice versa, the main conceptualization mechanisms being metaphor and metonymy. Two types of situations of static (quality of an object) and dynamic (uncontrollable action) nature were chosen to study the way they can be represented through conventional dynamic and static relationship patterns respectively. The conclusions are as follows:

1. An uncontrollable action can be conveyed metonymically by means of a value judgment represented by the SP_{Comp.Nom} model. The dynamic situation in question can either be directly mentioned in the utterance, or exist in the form of a logical implication, e.g. the observer's conclusion on the interlocutor's emotional state that cannot but be based on their body language. The SP_{Comp.Nom} pattern can also serve as a mechanism of the dynamic situation representation when it is a metaphoric way of describing an event, e.g. understanding a person and their emotional responses as a vessel filled with substance.

2. The SP_{Link} + A_{Stat.Loc} pattern can serve as a metonymic way to add dynamism to a motion-related situation as well as helps to represent situations metaphorically where one's words, emotional and physical manifestations or accidents are shown as material objects located somewhere in the environment.

3. The leading role in representing a quality of an object via inherently dynamic concepts belongs to cognitive metaphor. The SPO_{Dir.} model turned out to be the most productive syntactic means in this sense. The quality attribution is, thus, associated with an object-oriented action where the quality itself can pose as either the agent of the situation or the object at which the action is directed. Attributing characteristics of a material object (if not an animate doer) to an abstract matter such as a quality shifts one's focus towards the said quality and the impact it causes in the observer or the subject and inevitably makes it seem more prominent to the reader.

Dynamic via static and static via dynamic representations can be chosen when one would like to highlight a certain component of the situation, add dynamism and abruptness to the description, make the utterance more concise or avoid the syntactic pattern repetition.

The discussed mechanisms appear to pose considerable interest for cognitive sciences, semantics and stylistics and are certainly worth further investigation.

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