

COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES FUNCTIONING IN THE MINIMAL TEXT UNITS (DICTEMAS)

SENTENÇAS COMPOSTO-COMPOSTO FUNCIONANDO NAS UNIDADES DE TEXTO MÍNIMAS (DICTEMAS)

ORACIONES COMPUESTAS-COMPLEJAS FUNCIONANDO EN LAS UNIDADES MÍNIMAS DE TEXTO (DICTEMAS)

Olga N. PROKHOROVA¹
Igor V. CHEKULAI²
Galina V. MIRONOVA³
Elena V. PUPYNINA⁴
Alisa S. POYMENOVA⁵

ABSTRACT: The article studies the compound-complex sentences functioning in the minimal text units – dictemas. The authors analyze the location of minimal constructions of a compound-complex sentence within a dictema and they conclude that the most typical position is the middle of the dictema. The study shows that the minimal constructions of the compound-complex sentence can be both optional and meaning-forming components of a minimal text unit. The minimal constructions of the compound-complex sentence are polyfunctional. They realize intra-dictemic and inter-dictemic functions, as well as the text-forming function in the text.

KEYWORDS: Compound-complex sentence. Minimal text units. Dictemas. Communicative type. Information structure. Thematic-rhematic line.

RESUMO: O artigo estuda o funcionamento das sentenças compostas-complexas nas unidades mínimas do texto - dictemas. Os autores analisam a localização de construções mínimas de uma sentença complexa composta dentro de um ditame e concluem que a posição mais típica é o meio do ditame. O estudo mostra que as construções mínimas da sentença complexa composta podem ser componentes opcionais e formadores de significado de uma unidade de texto mínima. As construções mínimas da frase complexa composta são polifuncionais. Eles realizam funções intraditêmicas e interditêmicas, bem como a função de formação de texto no texto.

¹ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobeda Street, Belgorod, 308015, Russia. prokhorova@bsu.edu.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7328-7896>

² Belgorod State University, 85 Pobeda Street, Belgorod, 308015, Russia. chekulai@bsu.edu.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3121-3610>

³ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobeda Street, Belgorod, 308015, Russia, e-mail: Mironova_g@bsu.edu.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0885-7872>

⁴ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobeda Street, Belgorod, 308015, Russia. pupynina@bsu.edu.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0514-8712>

⁵ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobeda Street, Belgorod, 308015, Russia. poymanova@bsu.edu.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4349-1968>

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Frase complexa-composta. Unidades mínimas de texto. Dictemas. Tipo comunicativo. Estrutura da informação. Linha temático-remática.

RESUMEN: El artículo estudia las oraciones compuestas-complejas que funcionan en las unidades de texto mínimas: dictemas. Los autores analizan la ubicación de construcciones mínimas de una oración compuesto-complejo dentro de un dictema y concluyen que la posición más típica es la mitad del dictema. El estudio muestra que las construcciones mínimas de la oración compuesta-compleja pueden ser componentes opcionales y formadores de significado de una unidad de texto mínima. Las construcciones mínimas de la oración compuesta-compleja son polifuncionales. Realizan funciones intradictémicas e interdicitémicas, así como la función de formación de texto en el texto.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Oración compuesta-compleja. Unidades mínimas de texto. Dictemas. Tipo comunicativo. Estructura de la información. Línea temática-remática.

Introduction

To determine the features of the functioning of compound-complex sentences in the text, it is necessary to identify the ratio of compound-complex sentences with minimal text units.

In our research, we proceed from the fact that the elementary text unit thematization formed by sentences is the dictema. The concept of dictema was nominated by Professor M. Y. Blokh (1984). He considers that the text as a product of the speaker's speech activity is divided into elementary situational-thematic units of a text – dictemas (from Latin: *dico, dixi, dictum* – "I say, I state"). Dictemas obey the general reverse law of the level hierarchy of the language (from phoneme to dictema) and are formed from one or several sentences as units of the immediately underlying level of language segments (BLOKH, 2000).

Methods

In modern linguistics, a complex approach to the object of research is particularly relevant. To study the minimal compound-complex sentence functioning in the dictema we use the transformation method to convey their main functions in the minimal text units. As one of our goals is to prove the contextual dependence of the minimal compound-complex sentence, we apply the contextual analysis of both a micro context and mega context.

Main part

The dictema stands out for its clear function in the context of its integrative purpose of the text to express a certain theme.

The analysis of the material shows that the minimal constructions of a compound-complex sentence are mainly components of the dictema, its building material (POZDNY SHEVA, 2004).

The peculiarity of minimal constructions of a compound-complex sentence is that most often they occupy the middle position in the dictema, regardless of the communicative type (RAKOVA, 2003). E.g.:

We found Mrs. Rubelle still enjoying herself at the window. When I introduced her to Mr. Dawson, neither the doctor's doubtful looks nor the doctor's searching questions appeared to confuse her in the least. *She answered him quietly in her broken English, and though he tried hard to puzzle her, she never betrayed the least ignorance, so far, about any part of her duties.* (COLLINS, 1994).

This dictema describes the personality traits of Mrs. Rubel, the minor character of the novel "The Woman in White" by W. Collins.

The analyzed three-part compound-complex sentence is characterized by three thematic lines of a simple information structure: (T1 – R1) – (T2 – R2) – (T3 – R3). This sentence develops the idea that Mrs. Rubel has a reserved manner of bearing herself: she answered the doctor calmly in broken English, and although he tried very hard to confuse her, she showed no sign of ignorance or confusion.

The first thematic-rhematic line (*She answered him quietly in her broken English*), continuing the author's thought, is retrospectively connected with the preceding sentence (the doctor's searching questions). The third line (*she never betrayed the last ignorance...*) has a prospective connection with the last sentence of this dictema (This was doubtless the result of strength of mind).

This construction, which outlines the strained relationship between the doctor and Mrs. Rubel, details the previous sentence, which reflects the doctor's intention to confuse Mrs. Rubel, but the information in the sentence under consideration is optional, which is confirmed by applying the transformation method:

We found Mrs. Rubelle still enjoying herself at the window. When I introduced her to Mr. Dawson, neither the doctor's doubtful looks nor the doctor's searching questions appeared to confuse her in the least. This was doubtless the result of strength of mind, as I said before, and not of brazen assurance, by any means.

As a result of this transform after removal of the analyzed sentence the dictema meaning does not change. However, without the information disclosed in the compound-complex sentence of this dictema, the character description is unmarked and the conclusion in the last sentence of the dictema is not fully convincing. The use of sentences detailing previous constructions is a mandatory element of a literary text that requires detail to form more plausible living images.

The analysis shows that sentences of the first communicative type, regardless of their position in the dictema, always perform an optional role. E.g.:

Then Harris tried to open the tin with a pocket-knife, and broke the knife and cut himself badly; and George tried a pair of scissors, and the scissors flew up, and nearly put his eye out. *While they were dressing their wounds, I tried to make a hole in the thing with the spiky end of the hitcher, and the hitcher slipped and jerked me out between the boat and the bank into two feet of muddy water, and the tin rolled over, uninjured, and broke a tea-cup* (JEROME, 2001).

The dictema consists of two complex sentences. The theme that unites the components of the minimal text unit is the characters' attempts to open a tin can: while opening the can, Harris broke a pocket knife, George disfigured scissors and almost put out his eye, and the third character fell overboard, attempting to hole the can with a boat hook.

The analyzed four-part compound-complex sentence, completing this dictema, is characterized by four thematic lines of a simple information structure: (T1 – R1) – (T2 – R2) – (T3 – R3) – (T4 – R4). The first thematic-rhematic line (*While they were dressing their wounds*), continuing the author's thought, is retrospectively connected with the preceding sentence (cut himself badly; nearly put his eye out). The third line (*the hitcher ... and jerked me out between the boat and the bank*) has a prospective connection to the following dictema (Then we all got mad. We took that time out on the bank...).

The cited sentence, contributing to the development of the narrative and giving it dynamism, is an optional element of the dictema. Applying the transformation method to this minimal text unit is possible, since omitting the analyzed sentence does not violate the meaning:

Then Harris tried to open the tin with a pocket-knife, and broke the knife and cut himself badly; and George tried a pair of scissors, and the scissors flew up, and nearly put his eye out.

(Then we all got mad. We took that tin out on the bank...)

Thus, sentences belonging to the first communicative type take part in the development of the general thematic line of the minimal text unit and are part of the information that forms the dictema.

The compound-complex sentences of the second communicative type with two lines of a complicated information structure mainly take a place in the middle and in rare cases at the beginning of the dictema. E.g.:

And now I can recall the picture of the gray old house of God rising calm before me, of a rook wheeling round the steeple, of a ruddy morning sky beyond. I remember something, too, of the green grave-mounds; and I have not forgotten, either, two figures of strangers straying among the low hillocks and reading the mementoes graven on the few mossy headstones. *I noticed them, because, as they saw us, they passed round to the back of the church; and I doubted not they were going to enter by the side-aisle door and witness the ceremony.* (BRONTE, 1994).

The cited dictema consists of simple and complex sentences. The theme that unites all the components of the dictema, taken from Charlotte Bronte's novel "Jane Eyre", is a description of the morning recollections before the wedding of Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester. The passage describes what Jane saw: an old gray church with a rook flying around it, green graves, and the figures of two strangers wandering among the monuments.

The analyzed five-part compound-complex sentence is located in the middle of the dictema, from which the reader learns about strangers and their behavior at the sight of Jane and Mr. Rochester. Jane noticed them because they had entered the church when they saw her and Mr. Rochester, and she had no doubt that the strangers were going to be present at the ceremony.

This five-part sentence, which represents two thematic lines of a complicated information structure, is characterized by a simple cross-cutting theme (I), which follows from the previous context. The complex rheme of the first line (*noticed them, because, as they saw us, they passed round to the back of the church*) consists of a part of the main and two subordinate parts that expand the rhematic zone. The second line has a complicated rheme (*doubted not they were going to enter by the side-aisle door and witness the ceremony*), the expansion of which is due to the postpositive subordinate part. The formula for the cited sentence information structure is (T1 – R1 / R' + R'') – (T2 – R2 / R'+ R'').

It is in the context of this sentence that it becomes more meaningful, and if you omit this construction, then the thread of the narrative is lost and the two strangers that Jane drew attention to are not focused on by readers as a significant element of the topic of the minimum

text unit. Thus, the cited sentence, being one of the main semantic elements of the dictema, carries a large information load in the formation of a common semantic line. It is against the background of a seemingly peaceful rural landscape that Jane's inner excitement is felt more strongly, her premonitions of trouble that the appearance of strangers brings.

Thus, the minimal construction of a compound-complex sentence of the second communicative type with a rhematic extension, being an obligatory dictema semantic element, serves to develop the narrative in a minimal text unit.

Compound-complex sentences of the second communication type sometimes take an entry-level position in the dictema. Usually such sentences are characterized by thematic expansion in lines or simultaneous expansion of the thematic and rhematic zones. E.g.:

(«Tell Mary that I shall want a fire in my room today, and send down to Fordham, the Horsham lawyer»).

I did as he ordered, and when the lawyer arrived I was asked to step up to the room. The fire was burning brightly, and in the grate there was a mass of black, fluffy ashes, as of burned paper, while the brass box stood open and empty beside it. (DOYLE, 2002).

This dictema describes the room as John Openshaw saw it: the flames were burning brightly, and the grate was thick with ashes, apparently from burnt paper; next to it was an open empty box, at the sight of which he started, because he noticed on the inside of the lid a triple "K" - exactly the same as he had seen on the envelope in the morning.

The analyzed dictema consists of three sentences, the first of which is a minimal compound-complex sentence, belonging to the second communicative type. This sentence states that John did everything he was told, and when the lawyer came, John was called to his uncle's room.

The cited compound-complex sentence, which is a combination of closed-type subordinating blocks, belongs to the subtype with thematic and rhematic expansion of the second communicative type. Formula for the information structure of this sentence is (T1 – R1/ R' + R'') – (T2/T' + T'/' - R2). This sentence is characterized by two thematic-rhematic lines of a complicated information structure: the first line has a simple theme (*I*) and a complicated rheme (*did as he ordered*), expanded by a postpositive subordinate clause; the second line is formed from a complex theme (*when the lawyer arrived, I*), stemming from the preceding context (send down to Fordham, the Horsham lawyer), and a simple rheme (*asked to approach the room*).

The initial arrangement of this sentence forms an intersystem connection, connecting this dictema (*I did as he ordered...*) with the previous one (Tell Mary that I shall want a

fire...). And at the same time, the cited sentence, opening the minimum text unit, begins to expand the topic - the description of the room (*the room...*). Therefore, the presence of several thematic- rhematic lines in the sentence is the optimal means for the formation of intra-dictemic connections.

In this case, it is impossible to omit the considered construction from the dictema, since the analyzed sentence is a mandatory element of the topic of the minimum text unit.

Thus, the minimum structure compound-complex sentences of the second communication type with thematic and rhematic extension located at the beginning of dictema is an indispensable means of forming a common sense line dictema, and also serves as a link between minimal text units.

Sentences of the third communicative type concluding the dictema are not so frequent, and the most typical position of a sentence of this type is the middle part of the dictema. E.g.:

The woman who had given him the letter was an elderly woman; but she had not spoken a word to him, and she had gone away towards the south in a great hurry. That was all the gardener could tell us (COLLINS, 1994).

This dictema is a compound of two simple and two complex sentences. The subject that unites the elements of this dictema, taken from the novel "The Woman in White" by W. Collins, is a conversation about the woman who was met by the gardener. The minimal construction of the compound-complex sentence, which occupies the middle position in the dictema, gives all the information known by the gardener about the woman who handed him the letter. The old woman didn't say a word to him and walked away in a southerly direction. Hence, in this dictema the analyzed sentence offers the most information and is the means of its distribution across semantic line of the dictema. From this sentence, it is clear why Marian Halcombe and Walter Hartright were looking for the gardener and what information they obtained.

Applying the transformation method to this sentence is impractical, since it is impossible to omit the analyzed construction in this dictema, since it is the main element of the meaning of the minimum text unit.

The formula for the information structure of this sentence is (T1 /T' + T''/ - R1) – (T2 – R2) - (T3 – R3). This sentence consists of three thematic-rhematic lines, the first of which is characterized by a complicated structure: an extended theme (*The woman who had given him the letter*), which increases its volume due to an interpositive subordinate clause, and a simple rheme (*was an elderly woman*).

All subsequent lines of the cited sentence have simple themes (*she; she*) and simple rhemes (*had not spoken a word to him; had gone away towards the south in a great hurry*).

As the analysis of this dictema shows, the compound-complex sentence with an extended theme serves as a link between the considered minimal text unit and one of the distant ones. In addition, this sentence accumulates information obtained from the external and internal context as much as possible.

Conclusion

Thus, for constructions of the first communicative type with separate lines of a simple information structure, the middle position in the dictema is characteristic, in the development of which they take part. The analysis showed that such constructions, being optional in the dictema, contribute to a more vivid disclosure of the character's image.

Compound-complex sentences of the second communicative type with two lines of a complicated information structure, occupying an initial position in the dictema, form a common thematic core of the minimal text unit. Such sentences are an integral part of the dictema.

The typical position of sentences of the second and third communicative types in a dictema is the middle of the minimal text unit of which they are an integral part. The constructions of these communicative types are mandatory components that form the theme of a minimal text unit. The presence of several separate lines with an extension in these constructions is the optimal condition for the development of the subject and the accumulation of information.

Completing dictemas, sentences of the third communicative type with several lines of a simple and complicated information structure act as the final meaning-forming component of a minimal text unit.

Results

The most typical position of minimal constructions of a compound-complex sentence in the dictema is the middle of the minimal text unit, in the formation and development of which they take part.

The analysis shows that minimal constructions of a compound-complex sentence perform intra-dictemic and inter-dictemic functions in the text and its units, depending on the position in the dictema.

The constructions under consideration, occupying an initial or final position, perform an integrating function, acting as a means of inter-system communication.

Minimal constructions of a compound-complex sentence, located in the middle of the dictema, realize the text-forming function, contributing to intra-dictemic development.

References

- BLOKH, M.YA. Diktema v urovnevoj strukture yazyka. Voprosy yazykoznanija, №4. — M., 2000. - S.56-67. (in Russian). 2000.
- BLOKH, M.YA. Problema osnovnoj edinicy teksta. Kommunikativnye edinicy yazyka : tezisyy dokladov Vsesoyuznoj nauchnoj konferencii. - M., 1984. (in Russian). 1984.
- BRONTE, CH. Jane Eyre. - Penguin Books Ltd, 1994. – 447p. 1994.
- COLLINS, W. The Woman in White. - Penguin Books Ltd, 1994. - 569p. 1994.
- DOYLE, C. A Study in Scarlet. - Sharon Publications, Inc., Closter, NJ, 1981. – 188p.
- DOYLE, C. The Best of Sherlock Holmes. - Moscow: IKAR Publisher, 2002. – 316s. 2002.
- JEROME, K. JEROME, Three Men in a Boat. - Moskva: Menedzher,– 288s. 2001.
- POZDNYsheVA, G.V. Minimalnye konstruksii polipredikativnogo predlozheniya s sochineniem i podchineniem (na material angliyskogo yazyka). Dissertatsiya kandidata filologicheskikh nauk. Belgorod. - 203s. (in Russian). 2004.
- RAKOVA, K.I. Polipredikativnoye predlozhenie: gipotakticheskiye konstruksii. - M.: Gumanitarnyy izdatelsky tsentr Vldos. 160s. (in Russian). 2003.