

MODELING OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN THE WORLD PICTURE OF HUMAN MIND BY MEANS OF ALTERNATIVE RELATIONS

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Abstract: *In the article the syntactic constructions with disjunctive conjunctions are analyzed from the viewpoint of their ability to convey various fragments of the world picture. The research made on the basis of the English, Russian and German languages helps to establish universal rules in the perception of different situations as alternative by the human mind which is confirmed by their expression by the analogous language structures. The obtained data serve as one more evidence of the similarity in the cognitive processes of human consciousness.*

Key words: *world picture, linguistic world picture, syntactic constructions with disjunctive conjunction, alternative relations.*

Introduction

The topicality of the research is determined by the role of the cognitive paradigm at the present stage of the development of linguistics. It presupposes the investigation of the meaning of language units in connection with the human being and the reality reflected by the human mind. The processes of cognitive modeling are not perceived directly, the information about them can be received through the analysis of their representation in the language means.

The aim of this article is to reveal the elements of the world picture structured with the help of alternative relations which is possible through the study of the syntactic structures with the disjunctive conjunctions in the Russian, English and German languages. The achievement of this task presupposes the following steps: firstly, the characteristics of the epistemological character of alternative relations; secondly, the description of the semantic and functional peculiarities of conjunctions as the main language units conveying the idea of relation; thirdly, stating the prototype alternative situation as the element of the world picture of any member of the language community expressed by the construction with the disjunctive conjunction; fourthly, systematizing the situations, modeled by the human brain as alternative and depicted by the same language means.

The originality of such an approach consists in the fact that the category of alternative is analyzed in the framework of cognitive modeling and conceptualization of human experience.

The nature of alternative relations and the disjunctive conjunctions

The relation is defined as the dependence of one object on another or interdependence of several objects which are connected externally or internally, directly or indirectly. Most relations have epistemological nature as they exist not in the surrounding world but in the human mind being the result of its mental reflection of reality. With their help things, qualities, actions are brought together in the course of brain work [Свидерский, 1983]. Thus, stating the relations between the phenomena people cognize the environment.

The information which is received during the perceptive activity of the individual and processed by the consciousness finds its expression in the language [Маслова, 2007а]. Conjunctions belong to the language means which nominate the type of relation of one object to the other [Васильева, 1998]. Uniting words, phrases and sentences in speech conjunctions indicate the relations which people distinguish between different phenomena of reality expressed by these words, phrases and sentences. Being formal words conjunctions differ from notional words in the way their meaning is actualized [Гак, 1998]. Since the relations conveyed by conjunctions are impossible without objects they connect, the semantics of the latter presupposes the presence of other language means. So, the meaning of conjunctions depends on the context, or, according to G. Lakoff, conjunctions possess inherent features whereas in the utterance they acquire contextual features [Lakoff, 1970]. Though conjunctions have the meaning of their own, it is rather abstractional and generalized due to the fact that the relations they denote are the outcome of the brain work, and while the conjunction is used in the context its meaning is specified. In other words, the scarce diversity of syntactic relations taken separately is compensated by their modifications under the influence of lexical-grammatical contents of the syntactic structure [Слюсарева, 1986; Смакотина, 1987].

To understand the essence of alternative relations one should consider the everyday life. In all of its spheres there regularly occur the situations when certain objects and phenomena are regarded by human mind as excluding each other either absolutely or under some circumstances. It is determined by different kinds of incompatibility, such as logical, temporal, locative, social, ethical etc. Mutually exclusive situations are mentally related to one another as alternative. Due to their epistemological nature alternative relations are not present in the surrounding world but since the cognitive process is carried out through establishing the relations between real objects and even whole situations, alternative relations exist in the vision of the world created by the human consciousness. The cognitive process is impossible without language which fixes its results. The language means conveying alternative relations are the disjunctive conjunctions *или, либо* in Russia *or, either... or* in English, *oder, entweder... oder* in German. They function in the syntactic constructions uniting words, phrases and sentences which denote objects and phenomena considered by the humans as mutually exclusive.

The vision of the world reflecting the reality and the language forms depicting this reflection are interdependent [Маслова, 2007б]. On the one hand, the surrounding world, the conditions and circumstances of existence influence the mental activity, which in its turn is rendered by the language; on the other hand, an individual identifies and interprets the reality through the forms of his native language [Маслова, 2007а]. One can observe the same interdependence between the alternative relations taking part in the creation of the mental image of the world in the mind and the disjunctive conjunctions expressing alternative relations between the objects and phenomena, represented by the elements of the sentence which they unite. Thus, the human ability to see and describe various situations as alternative is explained by the fact that the meaning of the corresponding conjunctions tends to be modified in the context. At the same time, thanks to this modification various situations can be perceived and depicted as alternative.

Alternative relations in the world picture

The analysis of the extensive language material enables to single out several situations which are perceived by human mind as alternative. They are rendered in speech by syntactic structures consisting of language elements of various complexity joined by disjunctive conjunctions. These constructions serve for description situations originally alternative (the archetype of alternative relations) and situations interpreted as alternative.

Taking into account the generally accepted definition of alternative as the necessity to choose between several mutually exclusive opportunities [ФЭС, 1997], the situation when the person has to make this choice can be called originally alternative **[A or B]**; the disjunctive conjunctions in this case express the alternative relations of the archetype. The imposed choice can be determined by objective or subjective factors, namely, ontological restrictions, social laws and rules, logical incompatibility, scarce productive and consuming abilities, the system of human values etc., as well as the combination of such factors. The decision is based on personal goals and ambitions, ideals and moral principles, preferences and conventions, physical, mental, financial abilities, inner impulses and outer circumstances etc.:

Он двигался по той самой железной трубе, которая, наконец, дождалась его и теперь предоставляла ему на выбор свои два единственных пути – **вперед или назад** (В. Дудинцев, Белые одежды). In the supermarket in Townsville I had been torn between spending the last of the money I had kept for provisions on **an extra bag of rice or some dried fruit** (L. Irvine, Castaway). Ich denke, ich fahre **morgen Abend oder übermorgen früh** (E. Remarque, Drei Kameraden).

The situations which are interpreted by human consciousness as alternative are numerous. Thus, our mind uses alternative relations to reproduce such state of affairs when it is known that only one of several events occurred, is occurring or will occur, but is still unknown which one **[possibly A, possibly**

B]. In this case the speaker does not have enough information due to its unavailability, unreliability, imprecision, vagueness [Шувалова, 1990]. Comparing the situation of deficient knowledge with the alternative situation of the archetype one can discover similarity in the reasons of mutual exclusiveness of events in question, in particular:

- logical incompatibility owing to the contrary nature of objects or phenomena, which is expressed by language units with opposite meanings or is seen from the context:

Команда застыла у орудий, готовая **или победить, или умереть** (К. Паустовский, Северная повесть). Charisma is something **you have or you don't have** (P.D. Cornwell, Postmortem). **Entweder ist sie deine Tochter nicht**, dann spare das gute Geld, das du den obskuren Leuten dort für nichts und wieder nichts hinwirfst! **Oder – sie ist deine Tochter**, dann sei Manns genug und hole sie her (J. Brězan, Christa);

- temporal and/or locative incompatibility owing to the impossibility for one and the same object to be in several places simultaneously:

Она следила, как ветер тревожил и уносил дальше какое-то давно засохшее растение, **рожденное, может быть, в синих смутных долинах Копет-Дага или на сырых берегах Амударьи** (А. Платонов, Такыр). Because the homicides began two months ago, he may have been recently released **from prison or a mental hospital** (P.D. Cornwell, Postmortem). Vielleicht sollte sie einmal **sonnabends oder sonntags** nach Dresden fahren, ins Theater, schlug der Lehrer vor (J. Brězan, Christa);

- quantitative or qualitative incompatibility owing to the characteristic features of the material world:

Утром пришли к нему **трое или четверо гостей**, старых его товарищей... (Ф. Достоевский, Неточка Незванова). The trace evidence we'd found on the slain women's bodies could be something else, such as **a sodium nitrate with uses ranging from fertilizer to a component of dynamite. Or it could be a crystal carbonate** used as a constituent in photography developers (P.D. Cornwell, Postmortem). Je nach ihrer Bedeutung waren die Baken **rot-weiß oder schwarz-weiß** gestrichen... (H. Krack, Kein Zurück für Elke);

- social incompatibility owing to the structure of society:

После института его зашлют в область, в район, **в народный суд или прокуратуру** (А. Рыбаков, Дети Арбата). She is a strong type. Usually aggressive, **may be a lawyer or doctor or businesswoman**, and often wears suits in the colors I just described (P.D. Cornwell, Body of Evidence). ...dann könnte sie **auf die Fachschule gehen oder aber das Abitur machen und auf der Universität studieren** (J. Brězan, Christa).

Human mind interprets as alternative the situations of alternation, when several events take turns, thus excluding each other during the period of realization [**sometimes A, sometimes B**]. The situation of

alternation differs from the prototype situation of choice as well as from the situation of deficient knowledge because all described events take place in reality:

All those years I didn't see her I **used to send her a lot of Canada or a Wintario ticket for her birthday**, sometimes a book of them, when I had money, but she never won (M. Atwood, Bodily Harm).

В дни отдыха Люба и Никита ходили гулять по зимним дорогам за город или шли, **полуобнявшись по льду уснувшей реки Потудани** далеко вниз по летнему течению (А. Платонов, Река Потудань). In der Pause **saß oder stand sie unter den anderen Mädchen der Klasse**, mischte sich aber von selbst nie in ihre Gespräche (J. Brězan, Christa).

Human mind interprets as alternative the situations of distribution when qualities, actions and even whole events are spread between some amount of animate or inanimate objects in such a way that a certain group of these objects is characterized by particular qualities, fulfills particular actions or is involved into particular events, which excludes other qualities, actions, events ascribed to other group **[some A, others B]**. Here all described events take place in reality as well as in the situation of alternation:

Все тетки были или старые девы, или вдовы с кучей детей на руках (К. Паустовский, Северная повесть). **Appointments had been pushed weeks ahead, or canceled**, and lectures and demonstration autopsies had been rerouted to Fielding (P. Cornwell, Body of Evidence). **Die Menschen eilten nach Hause, in moderne Wohnungen oder in ihre Hütten** am Rande der Stadt (G. Harkenthal, River Passage).

Human mind interprets as alternative the situations of motivation, when the occurrence of one event is encouraged by possible consequences either actual or exaggerated which otherwise may take place. The motivated event is described in the part of the utterance preceding the disjunctive conjunction, while the motivating consequences are mentioned in the part following the disjunctive conjunction. In this case there is an implied condition contrary to the contents of the first part of the construction **[A, otherwise if not A, then B]**:

Убирайся с глаз, или топором пришибу (В. Матушкин, Любаша). Heu, you gotta eat, or you won't last here (C. Sheldon, I Tomorrow Comes). Lass mich los. Oder ich schreie (J. Brězan, Christa).

Finally, human mind interprets as alternative the situation of correction when the speaker describing something realizes that the chosen way of nomination is not clear or exact enough and fails to fulfill his intentions [Морозова, 1998] and makes an amendment **[A, better said B]**. The situation of correction has similarity with those of choice and deficient knowledge consisting in the occurrence of only one described event in reality:

Она зябла чего-то и **поправляла или жалела** на себе бедную одежду (А. Платонов, Фро). According to my records, **she was on the train, or at least somebody with her ticket was** (P.

Cornwell, Body of Evidence). Dann **legen wir uns schlafen. Oder** besser gesagt, **wir versuchen es** (B. Lebert, Crazy).

Conclusion

Thus, the constructions with disjunctive conjunctions are used to depict the situations of pure alternative when the necessity of choice is evident [**A or B**], as well as the situations of deficient knowledge [**possibly A, possibly B**], alternation [**sometimes A, sometimes B**], distribution [**some A, others B**], motivation [**A, otherwise if not A, then B**] and correction [**A, better said B**], which are interpreted as alternative by our mind. It is proved by the fact that all of them are expressed by one and the same language means, namely, the syntactic structures with the disjunctive conjunction. In its turn, the ability of the constructions with the conjunctions *или, либо* in Russia *or, either... or* in English, *oder, entweder... oder* in German to express various types of alternative situations is determined by the capacity of the semantics of these conjunctions to be modified under the influence of the context. The results of the research confirm the universal character of cognitive processes of human mind.

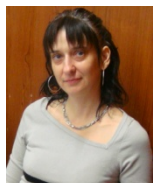
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