

XV International Conference “Linguistic and Cultural Studies: Traditions and Innovations”, LKTI
2015, 9-11 November 2015, Tomsk, Russia

“Structural-systemic” Redundancy as Manifestation of Typological Features in Modern German

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Abstract

This article views the phenomenon of language redundancy and peculiarities of its occurrence on the grammatical level in modern German. The article determines the grammatical redundancy types, conditions and causes for their appearance. Taking into account the typological originality of modern German, such type of the “systemic” redundancy as the “structural-systemic” redundancy is distinguished, which reflects all the past changes and all the current changes in the language.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of LKTI 2015.

Keywords: Functional (speech) redundancy; morphological and syntactical categories; “structural-systemic” redundancy; trend to isolation.

1. Introduction

There is an extensive literature on the topic of language redundancy. The study of this phenomenon began primarily in the context of the language changes (Paul, 1960). Later the phenomenon of redundancy was more often viewed in connection with the economy phenomenon (Martine, 1960) as two opposite phenomena. However, the linguistic literature pays less attention to the phenomenon of redundancy than to its correlate (Moser, 1970; Ronneberger-Sibold, 1980). The interest to the problem of language redundancy was aroused as part of another correlation “hypercharacterization/ellipsis” (Borovik, 2006; Grudeva, 2008).

Thus, the problem of language redundancy in linguistics is not new, and its research is still relevant nowadays,

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because the phenomenon of redundancy characterizes both varieties of parts of the language system and speech activity. In this regard, it is necessary to mention a recently published book of articles (Voeykova, 2010) dedicated to the problems of language redundancy and methods of its investigation. Its authors describe different types of redundancy in the grammatical system of the Russian language (e.g. paradigmatic and syntagmatic redundancy; redundancy occurring in the speech act etc.). Voeykova considers the diversity of various viewpoints and suggests that this collective study will be the basis for future creation of a unified redundancy concept (Voeykova, 2010, p. 7).

To accomplish such a global task it is important to study the grammatical redundancy in connection with the typological features of a particular language system. The typological originality in modern German is accounted to justify the existence of one more type of the grammatical redundancy in its system, and explain the conditions, causes and mechanisms of its occurrence as it is shown in the article.

2. Research Design

2.1. Grammatical redundancy

“Redundancy” in its broad sense can be understood as existence of two or more means to express one and the same content in the system of a language or speech. For this article, one special type of redundancy distinguished in the linguistic literature is important – grammatical hypercharacterization or overcharacterization (Rogovoy, 1965a).

The grammatical hyper- or overcharacterization means redundancy of the means of expressing the grammatical categories. The grammatical categories are peculiar for their obligatory character of usage in speech. Cf.: One of the main features of the categorial grammatical meaning is the bound implementation of this grammatical content in each particular lexical unit, included in that grammatical class in every functioning act of this unit (Bondarko, 2002, p. 159). At the same time the corresponding category is often expressed not only by a word form, i.e. grammatically, but also by the other lexical means (lexical markers, syntactic structure etc.). E.g.: Er **fährt** *jetzt* **fort**. On *sejchas* **chitaet** lekciju (He **is giving** a lecture *now*). In the given German and Russian examples the meaning of present is expressed twice: by the verb in the present tense (*fährt*, *chitaet* (is giving)) and by the temporal adverb of the present tense (*jetzt*, *sejchas* (*now*)). In this context the word form of the verb verbalizing the present tense becomes excessive.

The will to express one or another content in communication more precisely dictates the need to use an appropriate adverb of time in speech (an adverb of the present tense in the given case), that makes the expression of the present tense by the word form of the verb excessive. Thus, the binding to express the categorial meaning has the effect of redundancy.

In the next example the meanings of person and number are expressed twice – by the pronoun and by the ending of the word form: **Du sagst**. However, in modern German this redundancy does not take place when expressing the meanings of person and number by the syncretic form. “Syncretic form in morphology means an enlarged grammeme. As such, it is understood in the context of discretism – the differences of the corresponding homogeneous grammemes in the other part of the morphological system of a language in the corresponding period of its development” (Ermolaeva, 1987, p. 21). E.g.: **Wir** sagen. The syncretic form of the plural of the present tense of the verb *sagen* (*wir*, *sie*) expresses undifferentiated meaning of person unlike nonsyncretic forms of the singular of the present tense (*ich*) *sage* and (*er*) *sagt*. According to the definition of syncretism the categorial meaning of the syncretic forms is wider than the categorial meaning of the nonsyncretic forms. The categorial meanings of the word forms *sage*, *sagt*, included in the microparagigm of person, are the first and the third person singular respectively. The syncretic form of *sagen* (*wir*, *sie*) does not express these categories of person differentially. Its categorial meaning is wider, it expresses non-second person plural. When a nonsyncretic form is used there is no need to express the categorial meaning with a pronoun, since it is possible to adequately convey the message without using it. But for such complex system as language, structural redundancy is a necessary factor for reliable and stable operation under various conditions (Katsnelson, 2004, p. 77). The data of the linguistic-psychological experiments with the degrammatized texts demonstrates this fact. This data shows that a significant part of the grammatical indicators in the texts is not absolutely necessary. These grammatical elements could be recovered from context and their presence is not necessary for proper understanding. Nevertheless, as it is noted by Rogovoy

(1965b), due to unpredictable character of the individual distortions there is a need in the “means of insurance”, that provide a proper understanding. Significant part of the grammatical hypercharacterization are the “means of insurance” to deal with psychological disturbances. According to his point of view the “work” of the nervous system might be interfered with disturbances, occurring on two levels: disturbances might be found in the signals reaching the senses or happening as a result of probable processes in the nervous system itself. The latter type might be very likely: it appears that there are aspects in the functioning of the nervous system that can only be understood as suppression of disturbances. Possible examples might be maintenance or introduction of redundancy (Rogovoy, 1965b). However, this is not the only role of the grammatical hypercharacterization in language, which will be illustrated in this article.

2.2. Functional and systemic redundancy

The analysis of the examples of the grammatical hypercharacterization allows differentiating it between optional and obligatory redundancy. The first one only occurs in speech when more than one mean is used to express the proper meaning. E.g.:

Ich werde morgen kommen. (1)

Ich habe ihn gestern besucht. (2)

In the given examples the future (1) and the past (2) are expressed twice: by the form of the verb and by the adverb of time. The usage of the appropriate adverb of time specifies the time of the action and makes the grammatical means expressing the future or the past excessive, because these meanings are understandable from the context. This redundancy occurs, when the verb word forms are used in the fitting context and might be called functional or speech redundancy. This type of redundancy does not always take place when the corresponding time form of the verb is used. It depends on the purpose of communication and the speaker's will. The functional redundancy is essential for the full accomplishment of language's primary function – the function of communication.

Unlike the functional redundancy the obligatory redundancy is always observed when the required grammatical form is used. For example, in German the binomiality of the sentence is obligatory, that is why in many cases the person and the number of the verb are shown in the structure of the sentence through the subject. There is a syntactic paradigm of person and number in the modern German language (Pronina, 1982). One of the requirements of the allocation of the word changing paradigm is its obligatoriness. This ensures the regularity of the use of the corresponding morphological category. As it is noted by Moskalskaya (1981), to determine the paradigm of the sentence it is necessary to keep the same principles of the paradigm division on the morphological and syntactical levels (Moskalskaya, 1981, p. 99). In this case the usage of the above given principle of the morphological category division in the syntax could only be established if the corresponding means of expression are obligatory. In the Germanic languages personal pronoun in the position with the verb form performs the syntactical function of the subject in the sentence and its obligatory usage is concerned exactly with this syntactical function of one of the main parts of the sentence, i.e. the relation to the person and the number is expressed syntactically – by the correspondence of the verb-predicate with the certain subject – the personal pronoun. The combination of the personal pronoun with the verb form is considered as a predicative combination. Unlike the Slavic languages and Russian in particular, where one-member sentences are possible, there could be only two-member predicative combination in the modern German. The change of the predicative combination in person and number creates the syntactic paradigm of person and number, since not only morphological, but also “...a stable syntactic paradigm might be a mean of expressing the generalized grammatical category” (Yartseva, 1975, p. 5). All this makes it possible to conclude that in modern German the meanings of the morphological categories of person and number are excessive since the corresponding meanings are expressed on the syntactical level. E.g.: **Ich sage. Er sagt.** In modern German some of the functions of the morphological means are transferred to the syntactical means, i.e. the change of the relation between the syntactical and the morphological levels takes place, which indicates a trend towards isolation in the language system. “Unexpressed relations between words in the words themselves are a sign of isolation. The more the degree of the isolation the higher is the analyticity of a language” (Solntseva & Solntsev,

1965, pp. 83-84). In this regard, cf. the expression of the person and number of the verb in modern German with their expressions in Russian and English:

(Ja) Idu v kino. (I go to the cinema). (1) The meanings of person and number are expressed *morphologically*.

Ich gehe ins Kino. (2) The meanings of person and number are expressed *morphologically* and *syntactically*.

I go to the cinema. (3) The meanings of person and number are expressed only *syntactically*.

In modern Russian the meanings of person and number are expressed by the morphological form, because its system has the morphological categories of person and number. If both the subject and the predicate are used in sentence the meanings of person and number happen to be expressed twice: morphologically and syntactically, i.e. the expression of the meanings of person and number is characterized with redundancy. However, this redundancy does not always take place when it is necessary to express person and number, because it is not obligatory to build two-member sentences in modern Russian. Cf.: Idu i vizhu (I go and I see). **Ja** idu, a **oni** stojat (I go, but they stand). In this case the redundancy occurs when the finite form of the verb is found in a certain context and it is an example of the functional or speech redundancy. In contrast to Russian, the expression of the meanings of person and number is always accompanied by the obligatory redundancy in the system of modern German. This redundancy takes place irrespective of the speaker's wish and the communicative intention (cf. the functional redundancy), because it is always observed when it is necessary to express the meanings of person and number. Therefore, it does not occur in the functioning process of the language system in speech, but it is a part of the system which manifests itself in use. This redundancy might be called "systemic" redundancy. Being a part of the system of the language it characterizes certain peculiarities, features of this system. "Systemic" redundancy conditioned by the coexistence of two categories (syntactical and morphological) to express the same things in the language system reflects the changes occurring in the system of the modern German language: the shift in expressing the corresponding categories from the morphological means to the syntactical ones. Obviously, this process is of gradual nature, due to the fact that the language fulfills its functions as a mean of communication. That is why such coexistence of the syntactical and the same morphological categories and therefore the "systemic" redundancy is inevitable. In the system of modern German coexist not only the morphological and syntactical categories of person and number, which were mentioned above, but the morphological categories of direction/indirection (direct/indirect speech) (Zhukova, 2008), Volition/Non-volition (Zhukova, 2003).

2.3. *Types of systemic redundancy and its interaction with functional redundancy*

The "systemic" redundancy is caused by the changes happened in the system of the language and this shows its diachronic aspect, but at the same time it reflects the changes happened in synchrony. In other words, the systemic redundancy, on the one hand, is caused by the development of the language system and it is explained by this development, on the other hand, such redundancy makes further changes in the language system possible as it provides easy flow for those changes in communication, i.e. "systemic" redundancy is the result and condition for the language changes.

It should be noted that there is no sharp boundaries between the "functional" and the "systemic" redundancy and their mutual transition is possible. When two-member combination in German was not obligatory, as it is now in modern Russian, the "systemic" redundancy was not observed (there were no syntactical categories of person and number in Old High German). Cf. Brāhtun imo man stumman ... (They brought to him a mute man...) (Moskalskaya, 2006, p. 68). When both the subject and the predicate were used, in the sentence occurred the "functional" redundancy (cf. **Ik** gihorta dat seggen ... (I heard that they said that ...) (Moskalskaya, 2006, p. 112), which in the course of the language development and the fixation of the norm of the obligatory two-member combination in the sentence became the "systemic" redundancy. Naturally, such "systemic" duplication in expressing some categories cannot remain forever. Overcoming the "systemic" redundancy means finishing the transfer of some functions from morphology to syntax, the completion of the analytism process. Cf. the system of modern English where the expression of the meanings of person and number happens only when using syntactical means (the exception is the third person singular in the present tense). The process of overcoming this redundancy also occurs in some cases in the system of modern German. These are the cases of syncretism. The categorial meaning of the syncretic forms is wider than the corresponding nonsyncretic forms (see above given example of syncretism). This wider meaning is expressed morphologically. The differentiation between the first and the second person occurs at the syntax level. That is why the redundancy that inevitably takes place when using nonsyncretic

forms does not occur. Cf., for instance, the form of the non-second person singular of the preterite indicative (ich, er) sagte. The very fact of existence of the syncretic forms reflects the gradual character of overcoming the systemic redundancy, which in its turn means gradual linguistic changes.

The “systemic” redundancy which represents systemic duplication in expressing certain meanings shows the character of *relations between the levels of the language system* (morphological or syntactical). That is why in this case it is appropriate to talk about not just “systemic” but “structural-systemic” redundancy. The “structural-systemic” redundancy belongs to the language system; it occurs when this system is being used and it reflects the relations between the levels of the language system. In its turn, the relations character between the levels of the language and the changes of these relations might be considered as typologically relevant since language belongs to the same type for as long as the same relations are kept between the units of different levels (Solntsev, 1978, p. 38). Then the “structural-systemic” redundancy reflecting the changes of relations between the morphological and syntactical levels in the system of modern German is typologically marked and shows the tendency to analytism.

In the examples of the “structural-systemic” redundancy given above the interaction between the units of morphological and syntactical levels in the system of the language takes place. In case of the “functional” (speech) redundancy the interaction takes place between the lexical and the grammatical units in speech.

The functional redundancy is explained by the objectives and conditions of communication, in accordance with them the selection of the language units being made when constructing the utterance. In this sense, the functional redundancy is specifically communicative. The systemic redundancy is conditioned by the peculiarities of existence and fixation of certain meanings in a particular language system and the forms implementing them. However, the occurrence of this redundancy cannot be explained only by the internal features of the language system. The systemic redundancy as the functional redundancy is conditioned by the communicative function of the language and in its turn it ensures the accomplishment of this function. As it was noted earlier, the systemic redundancy, and the “structural - systemic redundancy” in particular, plays a significant role for the development of the language system since it represents the result and the condition of the language changes. In this regard, it is reasonable to mention the variability. It represents an example of the systemic redundancy and belongs to one of the phenomena of the transitional period when several units that express the same meaning coexist in the language (which is explained by the happened and happening changes). For instance, the synthetic and the analytical irrealis coexist in the system of modern German. For justification of the status of their relations as variable refer to Zhukova (2005). The variability of the synthetic and the analytical irrealis reflects the happening changes in the system of German in timeline and shows the tendency to analytism on the morphological level.

3. Conclusion

In the light of the above mentioned facts it would be appropriate to raise a question about the types of the grammatical redundancy and distinguish between “systemic” and “structural-systemic” redundancy, unlike these types the *“functional” redundancy occurs in speech and does not belong to the language system*. However, as it is shown in the history of the German language, it could transform into the “structural-systemic” one. *The “systemic” redundancy belongs to the language system and it is “withdrawn” from speech* when the speaker makes choice between the variants existing in the system. *The “structural-systemic” redundancy occurs in both the language system and in speech*, which confirms the validity of its distinction since the relations between the units of the different levels are represented both in the language system and in its functioning.

Redundancy as a necessary condition for reliable “work” of the language is a universal phenomenon. However, languages differ from one another in their various forms. As it was shown above, the “functional” redundancy is exactly the type of redundancy that represents a universal phenomenon. There are also different types of the “systemic” redundancy in the language (e.g., the existence of the “structural-systemic” redundancy in modern German and the absence of it in modern Russian and English) just as there are different states of one and the same language in the different periods of its development. In this regard, it appears useful to study the problem of the language redundancy in conjunction with the typological features of one or another language system. As it was noted, the “structural-systemic” redundancy plays an important role for the development of the language system. Reflecting the changes that occur in the structure of the language (the changes of the relations between

morphological and syntactical levels) in timeline, it serves as some kind of productivity indication of the corresponding morphological categories. Cf. the idea that at the certain stage of the language development the productive morphological categories are being those categories that get consistent expression on the morphological level and are not being duplicated by the means of the other language levels (Zhukova 2012, p. 5). The excessive morphological categories are on the periphery of the morphological subsystem of modern German and they play the leading role in expressing the corresponding semantics to the syntactical means. This perspective emphasizes the importance of the “structural-systemic” redundancy and refers it to the phenomenon that helps to reveal the mechanism of the language and to evaluate “...the results of work and describe the current object of study at different stages of language development” (Baudouin de Courtenay, 1963, p. 67).

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