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Systematization of holophrastic constructions' properties

Систематизація властивостей голофрастичних конструкцій

Summary. *Having analyzed the interpretations of holophrastic constructions' characteristic features, given in various scientific sources, the authors presents a generalized classification of their linguistic properties as well as provides examples of their actualization in English literary texts. The carried out analysis allowed the authors to systematize English holophrastic constructions according to the following most significant features of their linguistic expression: communicative-and-pragmatic aim, form of expressing meaning, degree of their emotional loading, syntactic function in the sentence and their structure. The paper advanced the idea that the substantiated classification can serve as a methodological tool for structuring classes, subclasses and groups of the experimental material within the scope of similar linguistic research.*

Key words: *holophrastic constructions, linguistic properties, classification, pragmatic aim, meaning, structure, English literary text.*

Анотація. *На основі аналізу викладених у наукових джерелах уявлень про голофрастичні конструкції у статті обґрунтовано узагальнену класифікацію їхніх лінгвістичних ознак. Представлена у графічному вигляді класифікація слугує основою для систематизації голофрастичних конструкцій за такими лінгвістичними параметрами: комунікативно-прагматична мета, форма вираження їхнього значення, ступінь емоційного навантаження, синтаксична функція в реченні та їхня структура. Шляхом аналізу прикладів актуалізації голофрастичних конструкцій у текстах англійської художньої літератури, згрупованих відповідно до зазначених критеріїв, автори акцентують увагу на тому, що обґрунтована класифікація здатна слугувати надійним методологічним інструментарієм для структурування класів, підкласів або груп експериментального матеріалу під час виконання подібних лінгвістичних досліджень на матеріалі інших мов.*

Ключові слова: *голофрастичні конструкції, лінгвістичні ознаки, класифікація, англійський художній текст.*

Introduction

The contemporary development of the English word building system is characterized by the intensive formation of compound and composite words, regarded as the most economical means for denoting different notions and world phenomena. Therefore, one of the fields of studying the English word-formative means today is targeted at solving and revealing the features and mechanisms of composite words creation in general and holophrastic construction in particular.

The study of holophrastic construction's functioning in literary texts seems highly topical since its investigation will make it possible to reveal their functional specificity and role in realizing informational and emotional potential of literary texts.

Therefore **the objective** of the present research is to reveal the regularities of holophrastic constructions' functioning in the English literary prose by means of identifying and classifying the most significant features of their linguistic expression.

Methodological background of the research

The carried out study of linguistic and non-linguistic sources allows us to formulate our own definition of the notion of a "holophrastic construction". *Holophrastic construction* is regarded in the paper as a synthetically formed composite lexical unit that combines features of a word, a word-combination, or a sentence, and which figuratively and precisely represents in communication the integrative pictures of the individuals' thinking or behavior, fixed in their memory as a corresponding concept, for decoding of which the recipients use their communicative and cognitive experience.

In this connection, let us consider the sequence of methodological procedures for the substantiation and classification of the generalized characteristics of holophrastic constructions functioning in literary texts, presented on Fig. 1.

Results and Discussion

As a result of the analysis of generalizing communicative and pragmatic functions and purposes for the holophrastic constructions use, we came to the conclusion that the most adequate classification is offered by A. Kalyta [4, p. 41–45]. The author of this work convincingly shows that the most general functions of the utterances in fiction texts are their evaluative and influential functions. Besides, the influential function can be divided into inducing a person to and restraining him/her from actions. In its turn, the evaluative function can be differentiated into the evaluation of the surrounding reality and the evaluation of communication results. The analytical generalization of the mentioned information enabled us to classify the use of holophrastic constructions' communicative and

pragmatic aims in the texts of literary prose into *inducement to actions*, *restraining from actions* and *evaluation of something/somebody*.

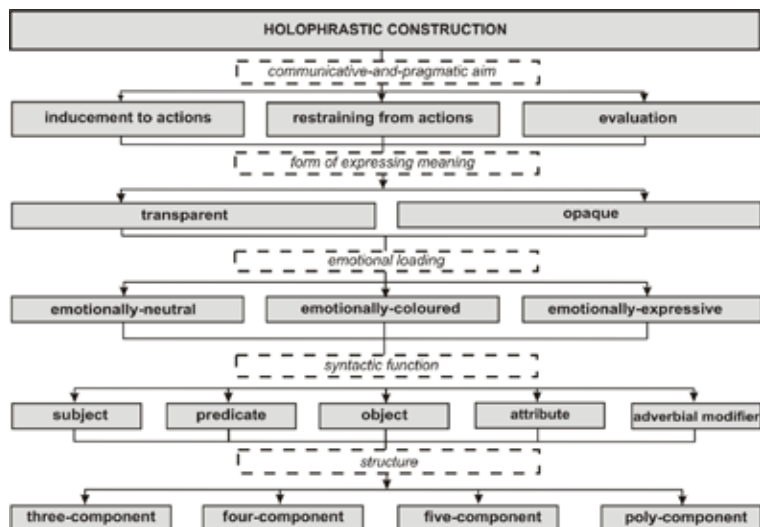


Fig. 1. Methodological classification of holophrastic constructions' basic features

In our classification (Fig. 1) these aims are located on its upper hierarchical level with their communicative-and-pragmatic aim as a criterion for the elements differentiation (see dotted rectangular *communicative-and-pragmatic aim*).

Realizing the fact that the form of semantic expression plays in communication the role of leading complex means for achieving a definite communicative-and-pragmatic aim, we have analyzed the corresponding opinions of linguists. The generally accepted and applied division of the form of holophrastic constructions' semantics expression into transparent and opaque proved to meet the aims of our study at best [2, p. 198, 577–578].

According to the accepted classification criterion (see *form of expressing meaning*) the division mentioned above is featured on the second hierarchical level of the present classification.

Let us illustrate the essence of the undertaken holophrastic constructions' differentiation with the help of the following examples from the experimental corpus:

1) **semantically transparent** – if the holophrastic construction's meaning is obvious from its constituents, i.e. whose whole meaning can

be figured out by the analysis of the holophrastic construction's parts or morphemes, e.g.:

*She wouldn't have felt so bad about not enjoying herself if they'd been having the **two-for-the-price-of-one pepperoni and double-cheese special** at Luigi's (O'Flanagan 2009, p. 1);*

*She was too wide awake to sleep now and she was fed up thinking about her parents. A **blood-and-the-guts thriller** would be far more relaxing (O'Flanagan 2009, p. 44);*

*Kathryn laughed. "And you probably would've hit me over the head as I went to get it." "Possibly," admitted Romy. "I was in **act-first-think-afterwards mode** (O'Flanagan 2009, p. 328);*

2) **semantically opaque** – the holophrastic constructions, whose meaning cannot be understood by the analysis of its constituents, i.e. if their meanings are unrelated to the meanings of their constituents. In some cases such holophrastic constructions originate from idioms, e.g.:

*Tom was a **nuts-and-bolts sort of person** and that was what Kathryn had inherited from him – a **nuts-and-bolts mentality** (O'Flanagan 2009, p. 379);*

*I turned around. Christ, it was Wads! And Mrs Wads, who was a **too-much-money-meets-too-much-Librium train wreck**. Wads was fat and smiley – you could tell he prided himself on his bonhomie and his **hail-fellow-well-met personal style** (Keyes 2005, p. 367) – meaning: the holophrastic construction is used for a greeting on a most intimate footing or for a description of someone whose behavior is hearty, friendly and congenial;*

***Fair-to-middling insane**, as I was, I'd experienced a window of sanity and realized that Owen was my boyfriend (Keyes 2005, p. 512) – idiomatic phrase, meaning: slightly above average.*

It should be mentioned here that **semantically opaque** holophrastic constructions which originated from the phraseological units may be further classified into:

- 1) phraseological collocations;
- 2) phraseological unities;
- 3) phraseological fusions.

The third hierarchical level of the holophrastic constructions' classification was based on the criterion of their *emotional loading*. According to this criterion, as shown in Fig. 1, the holophrastic constructions are classified into *emotionally-neutral*, *emotionally-coloured* and *emotionally-expressive*. Let us consider here the most frequent examples of holophrastic constructions used in highly emotional texts. It should be mentioned that this subgroup represents holophrastic constructions which are mostly *occasionalisms* coined uniquely by the author to strike the addressee with their unusualness and singularity, e.g.:

“So we’re friends?” he asked **oh-so-appealingly** (Keyes 2006, p. 302);
“And guess what age she is.” “Thirteen,” I hazarded. “No!”, she
shouted. “**Thirty-bloody-seven!**” “Good God!” I said. I was shocked
(Keyes 2006, p. 341).

“It wasn’t like that. I **honest-to-God** think the jacket was just a
coincidence (Keyes 2005, p. 421).

Considering the *syntactic function* as one of the important means of
expressing the text semantics we take it for the criterion of the fourth
classification level. Within this criterion we have used traditional
linguistic classification of syntactic functions performed by holophrastic
constructions in the quality of a *subject*, *predicate/predicative*, *object*,
attribute and *adverbial modifier*.

To illustrate the essence of such a classification consider the following
examples:

1) that of a **subject**, e.g.:

Traveling-to-a-place energy and living-in-a-place energy are two
fundamentally different energies, and something about meeting this
Australian girl on her way to Slovenia just gave me such a jones to hit the
road (Gilbert 2010, p. 81–82);

This **not-entirely-unpleasant thought** somehow screeches me,
however, into a horrible skid about how I just don’t want to go through
any heartache again (Gilbert 2010, p. 282).

2) that of a **predicate/predicative**, e.g.:

“She’s not really your **take-time-out-to-smell-the-roses girl**
(O’Flanagan 2010, p. 300);

“She’s not a **stay-at-home person** (O’Flanagan 2009, p. 373);

Tom was a **nuts-and-bolts sort of person** and that was what Kathryn
had inherited from him – a **nuts-and-bolts mentality** (O’Flanagan
2009, p. 379) – here we have one and the same holophrastic construction
which performs even two different syntactic functions within one and the
same complex sentence: 1) **nuts-and-bolts sort of person** – predicative,
and 2) a **nuts-and-bolts mentality** – object.

3) that of an **object**, e.g.:

She was really hurt by the **marriage-we’re-not-allowed-to-mention**
(O’Flanagan 2010, p. 15);

I drank enough of that damn **Saint-John’s-wort-tea** to cheer up whole
a Russian gulag, to no noticeable effect (Gilbert 2010, p. 52);

4) that of an **attribute**, e.g.:

The year I turned twenty Mum married a **dull-but-worthy Irishman**
and moved to live with him in Dublin. (Keyes 2005, p. 223) – **dull-but-
worthy** is an attribute to the object Irishman;

Out-doorsy-loving-style clothing: jeans and big, tick navy fleece suitable for North Pole. Footwear, however, cause for interest: trainers in anthracite colour – in fashionista circles **anthracite** known as “**Black for risk-takers**” (Keyes 2009, p. 74);

When Smashie and Nicey opened their mouths, their language was, typically of you, right on the button: **rib-tickle-tabulous** (Kelly 2008, 104);

5) that of an **adverbial modifier** of manner, e.g.:

Suddenly Becky was **toe-to-toe** in front of Jojo. (Keyes 2005, p. 141);

They jerked awake simultaneously, looked at the clock and stared at each other; **wild-eyed and sticky-up-haired with fear**. (Keyes 2005, p. 199).

Regarding the fifth, or the lowest hierarchical level of the holophrastic constructions' actualization features, classified by their *structure* criterion, we should pay attention to the following.

Within compounding Th. Biermeier distinguishes *multiple word combinations*: *a fly-on-the-wall documentary*; *it seemed dog-in-the-mangerish*; *four-words-and-laugh* [1, p. 72–74], which we define as holophrastic constructions. As an example Th. Biermeier takes the combinations (holophrastic constructions) containing at least two hyphens (i.e. starting from three constituents) which speaks in favour of the classification on the number of components criterion that we also suggest in the present study. Th. Biermeier shares Leisi and Mair's opinion [3, p. 94–95] as to the high productivity pattern of this type of word-formation being very characteristic of the English language.

It should be noted that the analysis of the holophrastic constructions' structural aspect allows us to distinguish the units *on the basis of the number of their components*, leading component and the components correlation. We believe that in order to distinguish compound words from holophrastic constructions and to avoid any misinterpretation, a minimal component number criterion should be singled out. Considering the fact that some linguists argue that it takes only two units to coin a compound word, the component criterion is regarded by many linguists as marginal and even is not included into the classification of compound words. It seems quite logical that the holophrastic construction should combine at least three components to be termed as the holophrastic construction proper.

Proceeding from all mentioned above, the holophrastic constructions were classed in this paper into **3-component**, **4-component**, **5-component** and **poly-component** (i.e. consisting of 6 or more components) ones.

Consider the following examples of their actualization:

1) **three-component** holophrastic constructions:

like once-a-week Cinderella (Keyes 2009, p. 585);

in speed-limit-breaking silence (Keyes 2009, p. 641);
Helicopter wack-wack-wacked; rawl-rawl-rawl men (Keyes 2009, p. 711);

2) **four-component** holophrastic constructions:

the thought of middle-of-the-night feeds (Keyes 2009, p. 184);

woman in a skirt-and-flowing-top combo (Keyes 2009, p. 270);

He gave a what's-the-big-deal shrug (Keyes 2009, p. 436);

kiss-and-make-up sex. (Keyes 2009, p. 465);

3) **five-component** holophrastic constructions:

poor-me-and-poor-Edward version (Kelly 2008, p. 216);

blink-and-you'd-miss-it review (Keyes 2005, p. 268);

4) **poly-component** holophrastic constructions:

the same boy-meets-girl-and-get-married rules (Kelly 2008, p. 31) – 6-component holophrastic construction structure;

“this-is-what-all-these-people-are-like” argument (Gilbert 2010, p. 335) – 8-component holophrastic construction structure;

this you-may-not-need-it-but-do-you-want-it sensibility (Keyes 2005, p. 467) – 10-component holophrastic construction structure; sentence + question structure;

in a might-as-well-be-hung-for-a-sheep-as-for-a-lamb moment (Kelly 2008, p. 68) – 12-component structure, etc.

Apparently, there are no limitations as to the number of constituents within the holophrastic construction. The longest holophrastic units under study include 25 and 29 components, e.g.:

Hat tried to work out whether this was an (1) oh-fuck-she's-rung-what-am-I-going-to-say-wish-I-hadn't-answered-the-phone hello or an (2) oh-hi-thank-God-you've-rung-because-I-haven't-had-the-nerve-to-ring-you-but-I've-wanted-to-so-much-can-we-make-up hello (Weird 2002, p. 82) – in this case we have two holophrastic constructions in one sentence (the 1st holophrastic construction consists of 16 components, the 2nd holophrastic construction has 25 components);

Instead let us move straight on to the much more fascinating subject of your-beard-is-clearly-in-love-with-you-and-it-looks-like-you-might-be-feeling-the-same-way-what-the-hell-are-you-going-to-do-about-that? (Weird 2002, p. 262–263) – a 29-component holophrastic construction structure.

Conclusions

Thus, the carried out analysis allowed us to systematize holophrastic constructions according to the following most significant features of their linguistic expression: communicative-and-pragmatic aim, form of expressing meaning, degree of emotional loading, syntactic function and structure.

We believe that the substantiated classification can serve as a methodological instrument for structuring classes, subclasses and groups of the experimental material within the scope of similar linguistic research.

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