

to us we find two principal ways of expressing possessiveness: the verbal type, which makes use of the verb of the Lat. habere type (to have - mít) and the nominal type we know from Russian (u nego dengi, u menja net deneg).

The first type, using the verb of the habere type, takes as its starting point the possessor: My father has a house with a garden; but we can also take the thing which is owned as this starting point, in which case we naturally use different verbs, such as to belong - patřit. In using both these variants of the verbal type the usage in English does not differ substantially from that in Czech. Nevertheless, the nominal tendency found in English predications makes itself felt even here, and such nominalized variants are, as a rule, not found in Czech. Thus, aside from the verb to possess we can also use, mainly in specialized texts, constructions such as to be in possession of. Similarly, aside from the verb to belong there is also the construction to be in someone's possession.

The other type of possessive predication, the nominal, known from Russian, is of course quite unknown both in English and in Czech.

So much for the two main pillars of the sentence, its subject and its predicative parts. In the following chapters we shall be concentrating on some features characterizing the English sentence as a compact whole.

Bibliographical note

On predication, see Breivik (1983); Dušková (1972); Mathesius (1913 and 1917); Poldeus (1961).

Vachek

VACHEK + HLADEK

(13) Nominal tendencies and condensation in the English sentence

In the preceding passages we have repeatedly pointed out the presence in English sentences of the NOMINAL TENDENCIES by which they differ strikingly from their Czech counterparts. Our analysis of types of predications in English has fully endorsed the validity of our earlier occasional accounts of this difference. The presence of strong nominal tendencies in English does not mean, of course, that verbal predications are unusual in English. It is fairly common there, too, but the fact is that nominal predication plays a more important part in English than in Czech, though in the latter case, (too), nominal tendencies may occasionally

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x eg. us - unchanging qualities

IE language - verb (referring) changed position

be found, mainly in highly specialized texts.

Nominal tendencies in English are important not only for language practice but also for general linguistic theory, which sets itself the task of finding out the basic characteristic features of English (in Mathesius' term, the linguistic characterology of English). It should especially be borne in mind how often English dispenses with the use of the full-fledged finite verb form in actional predications. In classical Indo-European languages it was exactly this finite verb form which was primarily entrusted with the task of expressing those qualities of persons or things which are changing, or at least changeable. Indo-European adjectives, on the other hand, used, as a rule, to express relatively stable, unchanging qualities of persons and things to which they referred. However, the situation that has developed in Modern English is usually very different from what it was in the ancient languages, and still is in most Slavonic languages, including Czech and Slovak. As a matter of fact, it has often been found that the English adjective does not always denote a permanent quality of a person or thing but one which obtains only in that particular situation to which the given sentence refers, e.g. She is slow at figures 'Počítá pomalu'. It is this ability of English adjectives which at times enable them to function in predications where a Czech equivalent would make use of a finite verb form.

to have a breakfast to take a shower

In this connection, it will also be useful to recall once more how English verbs easily can change their categorial meanings (subjective into objective, non-reflexive into reflexive, etc.). The easiness of such categorial shifts shows how far the English verb has distanced itself from the Indo-European type of verbal meaning still preserved in Czech. The most important feature of English predications is of course the frequent shift of the semantic centre of gravity from the finite verb form to some nominal element of the given sentence - this happens, for example, in sentences such as I have my breakfast early in the morning; We do our shopping in the late afternoon; We'd better get ready for the party.

2 classes of categorial shifts

subjective - known

shift of the centre of gravity from the finite verb to some nominal element

All these facts, as well as others which lack of space prevents us from enumerating here, make us conclude quite unequivocally that in English, unlike in Czech, the old Indo-European function of the verb, i.e. that of denoting some action, has been most perceptibly weakened. As a matter of fact, we could even go so far as to conclude that in quite a number of instances the semantic content of the English finite verb form has become so vague that it reminds us of a copula, the main function of which is in fact to express the formal grammatical categories of person, number, mood and voice, rather than some distinct and concrete semantic reference.

On the other hand, the above-quoted English sentences, compared with their Czech counterparts, appear to suggest that English substantives,

the semantic content of the English finite verb is that of a copula

like adjectives, can in some situations acquire the ability to express some action. In other words, that from the semantic standpoint English nouns (both substantives and adjectives) appear to constitute a less static category than nouns in Czech. We might thus arrive at the conclusion that in English, reference to actions has ceased to be the privilege of the finite verb-form (as it still is in synthetic languages, including Czech), and that the function to express actions is entrusted to that member of a word class which happens to have the best chance of doing so in the given context. Sometimes it may indeed be some finite verb form, but at other times some verbo-nominal construction serves, in which the semantic centre of gravity has clearly been shifted to the nominal ∇ element. Above all, however, it should be stressed that the performance of this function is entrusted to a word not by virtue of the word class concerned, but by the situational context, that is by the given sentence functioning as a compact whole.

*Semantic
center
of given
sentence
is the
nominal
element*

I like reading = subject - nominal element

Reading is interesting - subject

*when I was walking
I met a friend.*

It should be added that the semantic vagueness which has been ascertained in the English finite verb is a relatively recent phenomenon. Comparisons of Old English texts with their Modern English counterparts can show quite convincingly that the OE finite verb was characterized by a distinctly higher amount of dynamism in the action referred to by it. The general build-up of the OE sentence also reveals that its general tenor was much more verbal and much less nominal than the tenor of its ModE counterparts.

*address
a time-verb*

NOTE. The above formulation of some problems of English predication is based, as has already been mentioned, on theses by Vilém Mathesius which, however, have been followed to some of their logical conclusions, not always explicitly developed by Mathesius, as well as on some fruitful discussions with Bohumil Trnka, whose critical remarks have been incorporated into the theses presented here. It should be added, however, that at least in theory, another solution to the problems of the nominal tendency is possible. This other solution was suggested by the American syntactician George O. Curme in his Grammar (1931-5). In Curme's opinion, the popularity of nominal expressions in English should be explained in terms of an effort at a more concrete and distinct expression of factual content. In principle, that is, the noun is semantically more concrete than the verb. The theory is certainly interesting and may even be followed to further conclusions at a more general level. If the theory is right, we might pose the question whether English (and some other European languages in which the nominal tendency appears to be prominent) has not in the course of its development re-evaluated the content of the opposition of nouns vs. verbs. In the older stages of Indo-European languages it was obviously conceived as 'referring to things relatively static' or 'referring to things changing or changeable'. In languages with an analytic grammatical

*Original - Verbs - referring to things relatively changing, changeable
Latin - referring to things relatively static*

structure it appears, if Curme is right, to be increasingly re-evaluated into an opposition between 'reference to facts more concrete' and 'reference to facts more abstract'. The idea is certainly worth further investigation; it seems, however, that such re-evaluation has not yet been effected on a larger scale, though it undoubtedly appears to have begun in English.

Adjunctive element in a Czech simple sentence would correspond to a complex sentence

The nominal tendencies found in the English sentence will stand out with particular prominence if more complicated sentences are submitted to comparison with their Czech counterparts. Very frequently we can ascertain that the equivalent of a simple English sentence, containing, naturally, quite a number of adjunctive sentence elements, is a complex sentence in Czech, in some instances, though less often, a compound sentence. This means that the information transmitted in Czech by a dependent clause or by another main clause is squeezed into the English sentence by means of another element being added to it, the character of such an additional element being, of course, nominal. As a result of this, the English sentences compared with their Czech counterparts appear to be syntactically more condensed, so to speak; thus, the nominal elements, expressing what would otherwise have to be presented in a dependent clause, may be denoted by the term **SENTENCE CONDENSERS**, or, for short, 'condensers' (Mathesius spoke, in such situations, of 'complex condensation').

As might be expected, the most important part in this condensing process is played by nominal forms derived from verbal bases. There are mainly three such grammatical forms: the infinitive, the participle and the gerund. We want to show here briefly the part played by each of these three forms in the condensation of English sentences.

NOTE. The onomatological content of the infinitive and gerund in English was subjected to detailed analysis by Poldauf in 1954 and 1955. In the present analysis we shall be discussing only the syntactic part played by the said two grammatical forms, i.e. their condensing functions, not their onomatological aspects.

The English **INFINITIVE** functions as a condenser mainly in final clauses, for example He works hard to earn his living (Těžce pracuje, aby se uživil' (note here, as elsewhere, the Czech dependent clause corresponding to the English infinitive). The infinitive can condense a sentence even if the two subjects are not identical: I'll leave the door open for you to hear the baby.

Infinitive - main clause

The condensing infinitive may be found to occur in other syntactic functions as well: It's still too early for him to leave. '... aby už šel'; Captain Scott arrived at the South Pole, only to find the flag of Captain Amundsen hoisted there a week before. '... dorazil na jižní pól a našel tam...'; The stranger was believed to be a policeman. 'Lidé si mysleli, že ten cizí člověk je policista'. To think that I have helped him! 'Když si jen pomyslím, že ...'; Rather than cause trouble, they left. 'Než by působili ...'; That's where to go for your next holiday. '... kam můžete jet ...'. The infinitive is also used in a number of (listing, summative, or comment phrases, such as) to begin (with), to sum up, to be honest, to say the least.

lavioj
of
infinitive

It should be noted that, unlike in Czech, the condensing capacity of the English infinitive is greatly increased by its differentiation according to tense, i.e., by the existence, in addition to the present infinitive, of the perfective infinitive. There can even be found, as a postponed attribute, an infinitive with a future passive meaning, such as, the task to be done, the books to be published, i.e. the task which should be done in the near future. Let us point out again that the Czech translations of all the English infinitival condensers adduced here above must replace the infinitive by a dependent clause (though of course in some instances the use of the infinitive would not be entirely excluded even in Czech).

having part of the meaning explicit expression not

2

The second condenser, the PARTICIPLE, is very popular in English. One thing should be noted from the outset: in English participles are forms which are very much alive, without any trace of archaic flavour clinging to them: this feature differentiates them markedly from some of the Czech participles, a large percentage of which are felt to be formal, if not downright archaic. Another important feature of English participles is their use in other than temporal meanings: such use in Czech would sound fairly archaic but is still quite common in English. See, for example, Being a stranger in the place, he could not give us the desired information 'Protože se v tom místě sám nevyznal, nemohl nám dát žádané informace'.

English
Czech
archaic

Another noteworthy feature of English participial constructions is the fact that they can also condense a complex sentence found in Czech, in which the subject of the dependent clause is not identical with that of the main clause. This may be found, for example, in the following condensed sentence: All precautions having been taken, no one could be blamed for the accident. 'Protože byla učiněna všechna bezpečnostní opatření, nikdo nemohl být obviněn z nehody'. As is well known, such absolute constructions are inadmissible in Czech, and if they are sometimes used, it is only with a marked comic effect. In English, absolute constructions are not very frequent and are regarded as formal, with the exception of a few stereotyped phrases such as all told, weather/time permitting,

different subjects when active? - like that? (with reports usual)

vyjít z knihy - dle se do knihy. Dívky to z knihy

podstatná část věty - pro podstatná věta
práva:
reading books - četba knih
- nominál, pas. příčestí
- když je muž, přikládá příčestí
the reading of books - čtení knih

difficult to find a word to describe the condensing capacity

God willing, present company excepted. Here again it should be noted that like the English infinitive, the English participle is also richly differentiated according to tense and voice (present - perfective, active - passive). This differentiation considerably increases the condensing capacity of English participles. *This increases its condensing capacity*

NOTE. Condensation is taken one stage further if the participle is omitted and the result is a verbless clause: (Being) Too nervous to reply, she sat there quietly staring out of the window.

⑤ The third category of English condensers is the GERUND - a grammatical category quite unknown in the Czech grammatical system. It is sometimes compared to our verbal noun (podstatné jméno slovesné), but in many of its aspects it has still preserved a number of important verbal features. It thus still governs the substantival and pronominal objects which follow it in the same way as the corresponding verb from which the gerund has been derived: reading books just as I read books; the real verbal noun has the object in the genitive case: the reading of books, just as Czech 'čtení knih'. Moreover, the gerund can be further determined by an adverb: speaking slowly, speaking loudly, just as I speak slowly, I speak loudly. So much for the verbal features of the gerund. *gerund can have verbal verbal capabilities*

If, however, the gerund is contrasted with the corresponding finite verb, it is seen to behave like a noun: like the infinitive and the participle it does not distinguish either the person or number of the agent. Positively, the gerund qualifies as a noun by virtue of often being introduced by a preposition, as well as by being qualified with the help of a preceding adjective: I strongly object to his treating me like a child. 'Důrazně protestuji proti tomu, že se mnou zachází jako s dítětem'. The use of the gerund enables the English sentence to save one finite verb form, and in consequence of this one dependent clause. It is for this reason that the English gerund ranks as one of the important sentence condensers. (The pattern 'possessive pronoun + gerund', however, is regarded as formal in contemporary English: Do you mind my smoking here? belongs to formal style and is often felt to be awkward or stilted. Do you mind me smoking here? is preferable and Do you mind if I smoke here? is the best solution.) *formal*

However, like the infinitive and the participle, the gerund can also be differentiated according to tense and voice, as can be seen from the following examples: Would you mind opening the window? 'Otevřel byste, prosím, okno?'; The accused denied ever having met the witness. 'Obviněný popřel, že se vůbec někdy se svědkem setkal' (the use of the perfective form is not necessary if it is obvious from the rest of the sentence that the gerund refers to a past action: I'm sure I posted your letter - I remember posting it); The boy was ashamed of being taken to task in public 'Chlapec se styděl, že ho veřejně kárají'.

NOTE. Some scholars, for example Otto Jespersen, Etsko Krusingsa, Bohumil Trnka and Ivan Poldauf, do not distinguish between the gerund and the participial ing-forms at all and denote the grammatical form in which they unite the two as 'the ing-form' or 'the ing-verbid'. Nevertheless, in the vast majority of instances the differentiation between the two forms is perfectly clear, the examples in which the difference is not clear enough constituting only relatively very few peripheral cases which cannot be decisive in solving the given problem. For this reason, we distinguish between the said two categories not only as traditional historical categories, but also as forms which still differ so clearly in function that the distinction between them can be upheld.

x

x

x

Particularly characteristic of the English sentence construction is one specific type of condensing which reveals an especially complex sentence structure. Since Mathesius' days this is referred to in this country as a COMPLEX CONSTRUCTION (komplexní vazba). Such constructions are characteristic mainly of specialized texts, and frequent examples of them can be found in journalese.

If we are to grasp and evaluate complex constructions properly, we should first of all recall what has been said here about passive constructions with indirect affection of the subject (see Chapters Six and Eleven). As we know, this term denotes sentences which in Czech express the person affected by the action by referring to him or her with the dative case within the framework of the active sentence, for example Vylomili mi dveře. On the other hand, an English sentence has to be built up quite differently. As we have already shown above, the person affected by the action, even if this affection is only indirect, must be referred to by the subject of the sentence. One must, naturally, also somehow express the fact that the affection is indirect only. This is done by relating the said subject with a participle form denoting the process of the action or its result; the putting of the two into the said relation is effected either by using the verb to have or also by some verb of perception (to see, to feel, to find, etc.). Thus, the English counterpart to the above-mentioned Czech sentence will be either I had my door broken or I found my door broken in. Further examples: She felt her heart beating violently 'Srdce jí prudce bilo'; They saw all their property lost in less than a week 'Báhem necelého týdne přišli o všechnu majetek'.

What is called a complex construction can originate from the sentence of the type we have just commented on by transforming the finite verb form of such a sentence into a nominal form (i.e., into one of the condensers),

the nominal construction thereby obtained being made dependent on an introductory clause. Thus, the above-adduced nominal constructions will be turned into corresponding complex constructions as follows: I was surprised to have my door broken in (or: to find) 'Překvapilo mne, že mi vylomili dveře'. Let us note again the Czech complex sentence corresponding to the English simple sentence, where simplicity has been preserved thanks to the inclusion in the sentence of the complex construction. Similarly, They were shocked to see all their property lost in less than a week 'Byli zdrceni tím, že během necelého týdne přišli o všechny majetek'.

Bibliographical note

On the infinitive and the gerund, see Poldauf (1954 and 1955).
On condensation, see Vachek (1961); Nosek (1954); Hladký (1961).

(14) The place of functional sentence perspective in the structure of the sentence

Here we would like to re-examine the subject discussed in Chapter Nine and try to find out the place of functional sentence perspective in the structure of the sentence and in the structure of language viewed as a complex whole. We shall be drawing heavily here on the results of research undertaken by Jan Firbas, whose long series of papers deals with the problems involved. In doing so, we shall also be preparing the ground for a characterization of the main principles of English word order (to be discussed in the next chapter). It has already been shown that functional sentence perspective is closely connected with facts of word order.

First of all, we need to turn our attention to the hierarchy which the thematic part of the sentence is seen to constitute from the viewpoint of the development of the utterance. It is quite obvious that the elements constituting this thematic section will play only a modest part in this development: they either add nothing whatever to the knowledge of the hearer/reader receiving the message, or they do so only to a very limited degree. In other words, the thematic elements display what may be termed a zero, or almost zero degree of COMMUNICATIVE DYNAMISM (this term was used for the first time by Firbas: see especially 1961). On the other hand, the rhematic elements contribute very essentially to the knowledge of the