

THE PRONOMINAL VARIANTS OF NEGATIVE SYNTAXEMES IN MODERN ENGLISH

Marina A. Asonkova

The present paper deals with the negative syntaxeme of substance, which can be defined as an elementary syntactic unit (invariant), represented in language by a system of its variants, which may be expressed by both negative pronouns and negative adverbs¹. The basic (prevalent) syntactico-semantic feature is the negative one, which manifests itself through formal distributional characteristics, such as the ability to combine with other syntaxemes, as well as the range of their syntactic positions in sentences².

Invariants (we are dealing with the negative syntaxemes of substance) relate with their variants like particular and general³. To begin with, we investigate the pronominal variants of the negative syntaxemes of substance as the expressive means of syntaxemes, in other words, we deal with the syntaxemes, which are manifested by the following pronouns: "nobody", "no one", "neither", "none", "nothing"

The study of syntactic semantics is what the above-mentioned elements, being the morphological means of expressing negative syntactic semantics, possess even in their name (nomination) – "the negative pronominal elements" It must be said that the pronouns "none" and "neither" within Modern English sentences manifest the syntaxemes of substance as well as the syntaxemes of qualification. Cf.: (1) Neither of them made a sound (O'Connor); (2) None of these things surprised the girl (Bates); (3) Neither boy noticed him (O'Connor); (4) None other fitted (Christie). The syntactic position of the negative syntaxeme of substance (neither, none) in the sentences (1), (2) is the position of the subject of the sentence, which is defined upon the close predicative relation to the predicate of the sentence. Negative syntaxeme of qualification, being used in the dependent position on the basis of the subordinate relation in the

sentences (3), (4), is opposite to the negative syntaxeme of substance in (1), (2). These syntaxemes differ in their ability to combine with the elective syntaxeme of the whole, manifested by the noun or pronoun with the preposition "of" (of them, of these things).

This paper deals with the negative syntaxemes of substance only. We study the syntactic semantics of these language units on the basis of their functional relations.

Hence, the negative syntaxeme of substance range of its syntactic position in sentences, such as of subject and a dependent unit. It is represented by the following negative syntaxemes.

N e g a t i v e a g e n t i v e s y n t a x e m e : (5) Neither of us spoke (du Maurier); (6) But neither spoke (O'Connor); (7) Nobody lunched generally before one o'clock (du Maurier); (8) No one answered Stanwyk that time (McDonald); (9) I waited but none came (Steinbeck); (10) Nothing happened (du Maurier); (11) I wished that none of this had happened (du Maurier); (12) None of us spoke (du Maurier). The variants of the above-mentioned syntaxeme are expressed by the negative pronouns "neither" (5), (6), "nothing" (10), "none" (9), (11), (12), "nobody" (7), "no one" (8).

In the position of the subject of the sentence this syntaxeme is characterised by its ability to combine with the active syntaxeme of process in the predicate position in some tense forms (spoke, lunched, answered, came, happened, had happened). This ability can be defined as an obligatory one, because only on the basis of this very ability we can state the syntactico-semantic feature of agentivity.

No less importance should be attached to the ability of other variants of the syntaxeme under investigation. Pronoun "none" must be mentioned first of all. It is characterised by the ability to combine with a demonstrative (11) or a personal pronoun (12) with the preposition "of", expressing the elective syntaxeme of the whole or the ability to be used without any combination (9). As for the variant, expressed by the pronoun "nothing", its typical ability is the ability to combine: first, with the qualitative syntaxeme, expressed by the adjective

in postposition, cf.: (13) Nothing so thrilling had happened there for years (Maugham); second, with "else", as the expression of additive syntaxeme, cf.: (14) Nothing else would have happened (O'Connor); and third, the possibility to combine with additive syntaxeme, cf.: (15) Nothing came of it (McConochie) → Nothing else came of it. The transform sentence proves the possibility of substitution.

The possible replacement of the pronouns "none" by "neither" and "nobody" by "no one" characterises them as optional variants of the negative agentive syntaxeme. The key and transform sentences prove this statement, cf.: (16) Nobody moved in the hall (du Maurier) → No one moved in the hall; (17) No one moved in the hall; (17) None of the strangers spoke (Michener) → Neither of the strangers spoke.

N e g a t i v e s y n t a x e m e e x p r e s s i n g q u a l i t y : (18) None of it was particularly interesting (Christie); (19) Nothing is very new (Maugham); (20) No one could naturally be quiet so early in the morning (Maugham). In these sentences (18), (19), (20) we draw the following correlation of syntactic positions. The qualitative syntaxeme of qualification, expressed by adjunct verb "to be" or modal verb "can" and link verb "to be" (was interesting, could be quiet, is new) in predicate position, determines the qualitative feature of the syntaxeme under consideration in the subject position. This is the only one position for the given syntaxeme (none, nothing, no one).

The system of variants of this syntaxeme includes the negative pronouns "none", "neither", "nobody", "no one", "nothing". The ability to have optional variants is demonstrated by the key and transform sentences (18, 18a), 20, 20a): (18) None of it was particularly interesting (Christie) → (18a) Neither of it was particularly interesting; (20) No one could naturally be quiet so early in the morning (Maugham) → (20a) Nobody could naturally be quiet so early in the morning.

N e g a t i v e s y n t a x e m e e x p r e s s i n g s t a t i v i t y : (21) Neither of them felt like eating (O'Connor); (22) I suppose nobody knows here you were Edward Driffel's first wife (Maugham); (23) None of

us knows the hour our Blessed Lord may call us (O'Connor).

Taking into consideration the two-directional character of predicative relation we may distinguish the feature expressing stativity as a characteristic one for the syntaxeme (neither, nobody, noni); in the subject position corresponding to the syntaxeme of stativity in the predicate position, expressed by the verbs "to feel", "to know" in their tense forms (felt, knows) in sentences (21)–(23). The syntaxeme of stativity cannot combine with the syntaxeme of means, expressed by the adverb "rapidly". Usually the active syntaxeme of process combines with such a syntaxeme.

Negative syntaxeme of possessiveness (24) Nobody's business is the most common ready-made phrase (Maugham); (25) No one's brain can stand that (McDonald).

Being used in the position of a dependent unit in the sentences, having the optional variants, the negative syntaxeme of possessiveness in its pronominal variants (nobody's and no one's) is observed only in the fixed position (before the noun).

Considering the negative pronouns one must take into account that in every case negative, personal and possessive pronouns are not variants of the same syntaxeme of substance. Cf. the other agentive syntaxeme: (26) He refused her offer of tea; (27) His hunger rose with every step; (28) We turned. The negative pronouns express the variants of the specific syntaxemes, namely, the negative ones. The negative syntactico-semantic feature manifests itself by the distributional characteristics of the negative syntaxeme, such as the ability to combine with the elective syntaxeme of the whole (1), (2), (5), (11), (12), with the additive syntaxeme, expressed by "else" (15), (14), with the qualitative syntaxeme, expressed by the adjective in postposition (13).

The most peculiar feature of negative syntaxemes is that only one negative syntaxeme may occur in the same sentence. As for the negative syntaxemes in Russian, it is quite different. Cf. (29) Nobody answered (du Maurier); (30) Никто не ответил. The negative agentive syntaxeme of

substance occurs in Modern English sentence (29) as the only one negative element, but in Russian sentence (30) there are two negations – negative syntaxeme of substance НИКТО and negative syntaxeme of process НЕ ОТВЕТИЛ. The peculiarity of distribution in the English sentence refers to the fact of using the indefinite syntaxeme together with the negative one in the same sentence, cf.: (31) Nobody can tell you anything, – he said (O'Connor).

The above considerations show that a study of syntactic units expressed by negative pronouns in Modern English sentences should be based on their syntactic semantics. The task of investigating the syntactico-semantic content of negative units on the basis of syntactemic analysis (in terms of syntaxemes and their variants), the determination of the system of variants of negative syntaxemes and, to be exact, the manifestation of such main formal distributional feature as their ability to combine with other syntaxemes in the sentence gives life to the specific syntactico-semantic feature – the negative one. In conclusion we must pay attention to the fact that there must be a whole set of negative syntaxemes of substance in Modern English. We have described here 4 of them with the universal syntactico-semantic features of substantivity and negation. They differ from one another by such syntactico-semantic features as agentivity, the state of quality, the state of stativity and possessiveness.

REFERENCES

¹ About the adverbial elements as means of negative syntaxeme of substance see: Asonkova M. A. On Syntactic Semantics of Negative Adverbs in Modern English Sentences. Linguistic Investigations, Moscow, 1986. p. 8–17.

² Mukhin A. M. Syntactic Analysis and the Problem of Language levels, Leningrad: Nauka, 1976. p. 193–195.

³ Solncev V. M. Language as a System and Structure Foundation, Moscow, 1977. p. 11.

ABBREVIATIONS USED:

BATES – Bates, H. E. Seven by Five. An Omnibus Short Stories. – London, 1977.

CHRISTIE - Christie, Agatha. The Clocks. - London, 1976.

du MAURIER - du Maurier, Daphne. Rebecca. - Moscow, 1956.

MAUGHAM - Maugham, W. Somerset. Three Comedies (The Circle. Our Betters. The Constant Wife). - New York, 1974.

McCONOCHIE - McConochie, Jean A. Twentieth Century American Short Stories. - Moscow, 1979.

McDONALD - McDonald, Gregory. Fletch. - Avon, 1975.

MICHENER - Michener, James A. The Drifters. - USA, 1972.

O'Connor - O'Connor, Flannery. Short Stories. - Moscow, 1980.

DABARTINĖS ANGLŲ KALBOS NEIGIAMŲ SINTAKSEMŲ PRONOMINALINIAI VARIANTAI

Marina A. Asonkova

R e z i u m ė

Straipsnyje analizuojama dabartinės anglų kalbos neigiamųjų įvardžių sintaksinė semantika pagal M. M. Muchino pateiktą metodiką. Neiginio sintaksiniai-semantiniai bruožai turi specialią distribucinių charakteristikų.

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