

The Concept Of Scrambling In Different Languages

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Abstract

Comparison of various languages of the world shows us that word order may be mainly of two types: a fixed word order, as for instance, in the English and German languages, where the slightest deviation from the norm is considered to be abnormal and a free word order, as for instance, in the Russian language, where the word order may be easily changed and this change doesn't corrupt the grammatical and logical meaning of the sentence, because such deviation doesn't change the deep structure of the sentence; all changes take place in the surface structure. In the article, problems of a free word order in the English, German and Russian languages and the ways of their solution from the perspective of the generative grammar are highlighted.

Keywords: Generative grammar, neutral scrambling (N-scrambling), focus scrambling (F-scrambling), deep structure, surface structure, long-distance scrambling, medium scrambling, short scrambling.

Introduction

If we compare various languages of the world, we can see that the word order in them is radically divided into two groups; it is a fixed word order, as, for instance, in English and German, when the slightest deviation from the norm is considered an anomaly: "The table is at the window"; "Der Tisch ist an dem (am) Fenster", where the change of the word order is not allowed; and a free word order, i.e., when it is customary to consider several variants of word orders acceptable, as, for instance, in Russian: "A table is by the window. There is a table by the window". Both variants in Russian are thought to be grammatically correct.

The article raises the question of which problems may arise with the deviation of the order of words in English, Russian and German and how to solve them from the generative point of view.

According to Noam Chomsky's generative grammar, any sentence is a unity of deep (D-structure) and surface (S-structure) structures [1, 111]. The change in the word order is the change in the surface structure of the sentence, while the deep semantic structure must remain unchanged.

The question is why in some languages the shift of the word order is possible and is considered grammatically correct, while in some languages it is perceived as logically unacceptable?

In order to answer this question, we must determine differences in the types of shifts allowed in the languages under consideration. In languages with fixed word order, there is a shift mainly of lexical units and in languages with a free word order this is a shift of a different type, which is called scrambling (from the English scrambling "mix up") [1, 112].

In accord with the shift of the categories in the deep structure of the sentence, there are three types of scrambling:

1. short scrambling, when the category, as a result of the shift does not go beyond the verb group and usually follows the subject;
2. medium scrambling, when the category moves above the subject but does not go beyond the sentence;
3. long-distance scrambling, when the category is taken out of the sentence [1, 120].

The above mentioned types of scrambling can be seen in the following examples:

In English:

1. She said that she had passed her exam. (short scrambling)
2. She said that her exam she had passed. (medium scrambling)
3. Her exam she said that she had passed. (long-distance scrambling)

In Russian:

1. Она сказала, что она сдала свой экзамен. (short scrambling)
2. Она сказала, что свой экзамен она сдала. (medium scrambling, the object follows the conjunction that)
3. Свой экзамен она сказала, что сдала. (long-distance scrambling, as the direct object goes beyond the base sentence)

In German:

1. Sie hat gesagt, das Sie die Prüfung abgelegt hat. (short scrambling)
2. Sie hat gesagt, das die Prüfung Sie abgegeben hat. (medium scrambling)
3. Die Prüfung Sie hat gesagt, das abgegeben hat. (long-distance scrambling)

As we can see from these examples, sentences with the short scrambling type are mostly used in English, less often than medium scrambling (inversion is permissible from the stylistic point of view) and sentences with the long scrambling type are not used at all.

In Russian, all three options are acceptable, while the last two types of scrambling are used to emphasize a particular word in the sentence (stylistic inversion).

In German, as in English, two types of scrambling are acceptable, short and rarely medium scrambling, and sentences of the third type are not used at all, i.e. long-distance scrambling is unacceptable in the syntax of the German language.

It turns out that in some of the previously mentioned languages, some types of scrambling are allowed and some are not. Questions arise: what causes such phenomena in syntax? What affects the admissibility of shifting categories in sentences? Which syntactic laws does scrambling obey?

First of all, it must be emphasized that scrambling differs from all other types of shift in that it is a shift at the level of the surface structure and does not affect the deep structure and thus, does not affect the grammaticality of the sentence. However, despite this fact, we do not use all three of the presented shift options in the given languages. Sometimes it seems that scrambling is a shift that has no logical basis and does not obey the laws of grammar. Is it actually so?

It can be assumed that scrambling is context dependent, i.e. depending on this or that situation, we emphasize a certain category in the sentence and shift it at the basic level without violating the deep structure of the sentence.

Then, why in Russian the shift of categories occurs more freely; there are fewer restrictions on the shift compared with English and German?

Let's compare the shift of the indirect object in the given languages according to the principle of adjunction:

In Russian:

1. Она отдала брату книгу.
2. Она отдала книгу брату.
3. Брату отдала она книгу.

The shift of the indirect object occurs without violating the deep structure of the sentence and, consequently, its grammaticality.

In English:

1. She gave a book to her brother.
2. She gave to her brother a book.
3. To her brother she gave a book.

The third type of shift (long-distance scrambling) does not exist in English even in terms of stylistic inversion.

In German:

1. Sie hat das Buch dem Bruder gegeben.
2. Sie hat dem Bruder das Buch gegeben.
3. Dem Bruder Sie hat das Buch gegeben.

We see here the same thing as in English; the third type of shift does not exist in the syntax of the German language.

If the goal of scrambling is to arrange words in the sentence according to some principles that are still incomprehensible to us, it is important to note the existence of focus in sentences “as the bearer of new information”.

T. King believes that “the order of words in a sentence follows from the given to the new”, i.e., it is some cognitive principle, not a linguistic one. Conventionally, in linguistics it is called a functional form (FF) [4,26]. Sentences that are built on the principle of FF shift (N-scrambling, i.e. neutral scrambling) are perceived by us as grammatically correct, otherwise, a failure occurs and we perceive such sentences as logically incorrect.

Focus in sentences can be distinguished not only syntactically, but also phonetically, i.e., intonationally and even by phrasal stress [1, 136].

Let's compare:

In Russian:

Учитель позвал студЕНта.

Студента позвал учитель.

Студент позвал учителя.

Two shifts are possible and the latter one changes semantics of the sentence.

In English:

The teacher called the STUdent.

The student called the teacher.

Only one shift option is possible, which completely changes semantics of the sentence.

In German:

Der Lehrer hat den StuDENTen gerufen.

Der Student hat den Lehrer gerufen.

Also, only one variant of the shift is possible, which changes semantics of the sentence.

This type of scrambling is called focus scrambling (F-scrambling) [5, 135]. It should be noted that focus scrambling does not bear a semantic load, since the syllable highlighted in the word does not contain full lexical meaning.

Professor G. Kazymov associates such shifts with the actual division of the sentence and calls them a theme and a rheme. The rheme differs from the theme in logical stress and constitutes the communicative core of the sentence. The position of the topic and rheme in the sentence depend on the goal of the speaker's utterance [6, 93]. FF shifts have analogy with the topic and rheme, but not in all languages; you can stress any word in a sentence and call it a rheme. Examples that clearly demonstrate this, will be given below.

FF shifts can be implicit and explicit: explicit shifts are what we can see in the surface structure, and implicit shifts can be revealed by reconstructing sentences, i.e., in order to do this, you need to make up sentences, taking into account the word order, which is accepted in this language [2, 90].

For instance, in Russian: На занятие она не пришла. Уехала в деревню. Дедушку проведать. Дедушка заболел. (explicit shift)

[Она ip [не пришла vp] [на занятие t]]

[Она e] [уехала vp] [в деревню t]]

[Она ip] [уехала vp][в деревню t][чтобы e][проведать vp] [дедушку t]] – implicit shifts

[дедушка ip] [заболел vp]]

As can be seen from these examples, there is no scrambling only in the last sentence.

In English: To the class she didn't come. Went to the village. To see her granddad. The granddad had fallen ill.

[she ip [didn't come vp] to the class t]]

[she e [went vp][to the village t]]

[she went to the village e] in order e [to see vp] [her granddad t]] – implicit shifts.

[the granddad ip] [had fallen ill vp]]

As we can see, there is no scrambling only in the last sentence.

In German: Auf die Beschäftigung ist sie nicht gekommen. Ist ins Dorf abgefahren. Den Großvater zu besuchen. Der Großvater ist krank geworden.

[Sie ip][istvp][auf die Beschäftigung t][nicht gekommen vp].

[Sie e] [ist vp][ins Dorf t][abgefahren vp].

[Sie ist zum Dorf gegangen e] [um Großvater t] [zu sehen vp]

[Der Großvater ip] [ist krank geworden vp]

Again, there is no scrambling in the last sentence.

As we can see from these examples, explicit scrambling is more clearly manifested in Russian, without causing any logical contradictions, and therefore, from the cognitive point of view, the examples given are perceived adequately. That can't be said about English and German languages. Such variations, as in Russian, are unacceptable in the three languages we are considering, although the word order, both in Russian, English and German is the same - SPO.

Since explicit shifts in English and German are not as free as in Russian, we assume the effect of implicit shifts, so we can say that these languages differ in terms of scrambling only at the level of the surface structure. The structure of the deep sentence is the same in all the given languages .

Thus, free word order is a special type of shift called scrambling, which is completely free in some languages and not in others. Scrambling cannot be directly related to the type of language, its syntactic structure, intonation type, phrasal stress in the sentence, stylistic inversion or the context.

Of course, these factors affect the shift of words in the sentences of the earlier mentioned languages, but it cannot be argued that scrambling is absolutely dependent on these factors. The given examples prove the opposite.

Scrambling, as has already been mentioned, is a special kind of shift, which is most likely associated with certain cognitive processes, which, unfortunately, have not yet been sufficiently studied. Therefore, the topic is still open and requires further study.

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