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FUNCTIONAL AND INFORMATION-STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ELLIPTICAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN XIV-XVII CEN. ENGLISH

Ellipsis is the deletion of syntactically important elements from the sentence surface structure, which can be recovered with the help of antecedent. Recent investigations on the theory of ellipsis [1; 3; 4; 5] serve the theoretical background for the study. The methodological principles of the study are drawn from the works of the modern researchers [2; 6] working on the theory of generative grammar. While analysing elliptical constructions, their licensing, identity, recoverability and information structure should be taken into account.

Investigating different ellipsis types in XIV-XVII cen. English we found out that in most cases they are characterized by the functional characteristics inherent in the Modern English language.

Contextual analysis of the Early Modern English texts proves that elliptical constructions are widely used in the written records of that time. The most widely spread ellipsis types of the period in question are semantic, answer ellipsis, noun phrase ellipsis and comparative ellipsis, which total 85% of the examples. As compared to Early Modern English, Middle English is generally marked with a less frequent usage of elliptical constructions.

From the viewpoint of information structure, elliptical sentences bear a higher level of the communicative dynamism. Sentences with syntactic ellipsis preserve old information (topic) in their deep structure, which can be recovered antecedentically, since it is based on analogy. Semantic ellipsis also doesn't weaken the informational function of a sentence, since the meaning of the omitted parts can be drawn from the context. The examples provide the evidence, that ellipsis always elides topic or its constituent, while the force phrase and the finite phrase are optional and depend on the ellipsis type. Focus is the element, which is always preserved in the elliptical sentences. The elements irrelevant for interpretation tend to be elided, making a communicative unit more laconic. Thus, breaking the syntactic structure, elliptical sentences don't weaken their communicative function.

Thus, we may conclude that elliptical constructions are widely employed in the English language of XIV-XVII centuries and can be characterized by the functional and information-structural peculiarities generally attributed to the modern ones. It is the evidence of the language system simplification throughout its development.

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