Syntax.Basic syntactic notions.The word-group theory.

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Plan of the lecture #10:

- 1. General characteristics of syntax.
- 2. Syntactic theories.
- 3. A brief outline of modern approaches to analyzing syntactic units
- 4. Basic syntactic notions.
- 5. Syntactic relations.

1. General characteristics of syntax

The grammatical structure of language comprises two major parts – **morphology** and **syntax.**

Morphology deals with **paradigmatic** and **syntagmatic** properties of morphological units – morphemes and words. It is concerned with the internal structure of words and their relationship to other words and word forms within the paradigm. It studies morphological categories and their realization.

Syntax studies the way in which the units and their meanings are combined. It also deals with peculiarities of syntactic units, their behavior in different contexts.

2. Syntactic theories.

- The main point of the **Transformational-Generative Grammar** is that the endless variety of sentences in a language can be reduced to a finite number of kernels by means of transformations. These kernels serve the basis for generating sentences by means of syntactic processes. Different language analysts recognize the existence of different number of kernels (from 3 to 39). The following 6 kernels are commonly associated with the English language:
- (1) NV – *John sings*.
- (2) NVAdj. – *John is happy*.
- (3) NVN – *John is a man*.
- (4) NVN – *John hit the man.*
- (5) NVNN – *John gave the man a book*.
- (6) NVPrep.N – *The book is on the table*.

- **Constructional Syntax.** Constructional analysis of syntactic units was initiated by **Prof. G.Pocheptsov** in his book published in Kyiv in 1971. This analysis deals with the constructional significance/insignificance of a part of the sentence for the whole syntactic unit. The theory is based on the obligatory or optional environment of syntactic elements. For example, the element *him* in the sentence *I saw him there yesterday* is constructionally significant because it is impossible to omit it. At the same time the elements *there* and *yesterday* are constructionally insignificant – they can be omitted without destroying the whole structure.
- **Communicative Syntax.** It is primarily concerned with the analysis of utterances from the point of their communicative value and informative structure. It deals with the actual division of the utterance – the theme and rheme analysis. *Who is at home? - John is at home.*
- *Where is John? – John is at home.*

3. A brief outline of modern approaches to analyzing syntactic units

Pragmatic approach to the study of syntactic units can briefly be described as the study of the way language is used in particular contexts to achieve particular goals.

Speech Act Theory was first introduced by John Austin. The notion of a speech act presupposes that an utterance can be said with different intentions or purposes and therefore can influence the speaker and situation in different ways

Discourse analysis focuses on the study of language use with reference to the social and psychological factors that influence communication.

Cognitive linguistics is a relatively new theory of language. This approach to the study of language is based upon human perception and conceptualization of the world.

4. Basic syntactic notions.

- The syntactic language level can be described with the help of special linguistic terms and notions: *syntactic unit, syntactic form, syntactic meaning, syntactic function, syntactic position, and syntactic relations*.
- **Syntactic unit** is always a combination that has at least two constituents. The basic syntactic units are a word-group, a clause, a sentence, and a text.
- **Syntactic meaning** is the way in which separate word meanings are combined to produce meaningful word-groups and sentences.
- **Syntactic form** may be described as the distributional formula of the unit (pattern). *John hits the ball* – N1 + V + N2.
- **Syntactic function** is the function of a unit on the basis of which it is included to a larger unit: in the word-group *a smart student* the word 'smart' is in subordinate attributive relations to the head element.
- **Syntactic position** is the position of an element. The order of constituents in syntactic units is of principal importance in analytical languages. The syntactic position of an element may determine its relationship with the other elements of the same unit: *his broad **back**, a **back** district, to go **back**, to **back** sm.*
- **Syntactic relations** are syntagmatic relations observed between syntactic units. They can be of three types – coordination, subordination and predication.

5. Syntactic relations.

- The syntactic units can go into three types of syntactic relations.
- **Coordination (SR1)** – syntagmatic relations of independence. SR1 can be observed on the phrase, sentence and text levels. Coordination may be symmetric and asymmetric. Symmetric coordination is characterized by complete interchangeability of its elements – *pens and pencils*. Asymmetric coordination occurs when the position of elements is fixed: *ladies and gentlemen*.
- **Subordination (SR2)** – syntagmatic relations of dependence. SR2 are established between the constituents of different linguistic rank. They are observed on the phrase and sentence level. Subordination may be of three different kinds – adverbial (*to speak slowly*), objective (*to see a house*) and attributive (*a beautiful flower*). Forms of subordination may also be different – agreement (*this book – these books*), government (*help us*), adjournment (the use of modifying particles *just, only, even, etc.*) and enclosure (the use of modal words and their equivalents *really, after all, etc.*). **Predication (SR3)** – syntagmatic relations of interdependence. Predication may be of two kinds – primary (sentence level) and secondary (phrase level). Primary predication is observed between the subject and the predicate of the sentence while secondary predication is observed between non-finite forms of the verb and nominal elements within the sentence. Secondary predication serves the basis for gerundial, infinitive and participial word-groups (predicative complexes).

- **THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !!!!!**