

Comparative Overview of the Categories of Taxis and Relative Tense

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Abstract: The Categories of Taxis and Relative Tense have been comparatively analyzed and characterized in light of Functional Grammar.

Keywords: category, taxis, tense, relative, absolute, time, reference, relation, functional-semantic, shifter.

Since the concept of taxis entered the field of linguistics relatively recently and was not recognized uniformly, it was necessary to distinguish it from other functionally-semantically similar categories. For this reason, before the representatives of the field, it is important to determine the existing and potential relationships between the categories that are close to each other, such as taxis, predicativeness and deixis, taxis and evidentiality, taxis, relative tense, tense order and aspect, as well as defining a clear border between them. In this article, we aim to express our analytical attitude to the same issue.

Taxis, originally, is defined by R.O.Jakobson as a non-shifter category, that is, focused on the semantics of the expressionⁱ. Due to the separation of the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the expression, all grammatical categories are divided into types that express the semantics or pragmatics of the expression. The categories related to the semantics of expression, in contrast to the categories related to pragmatics, reflect the dependence (subordination) on the moment of speech and the situation of communication (from Russian: *ситуация общения*). Categories related to semantics are considered to be non-shifting, i.e., categories that do not “shift” with a change in the communication situation. On the contrary, the categories related to pragmatics are “displaced”; therefore, it is considered a shifterⁱⁱ. Taxis, expressed as a non-shifting semantic category, makes it possible to express the interaction of facts (actions) without defining the relationship of each individual action to the moment of speech. The category of tense, unlike taxis, connects the content of the expression with the moment of speech; accordingly, it is pragmatic and shifter.

The functional-semantic category of taxis has a universal character and is expressed in all languages of the world. However, the means of expressing it typologically differ significantly in different languages. Most languages known to us, including Slavic (especially Russian) and Germanic (especially English and German), do not have morphological forms of taxis. In such languages, taxis semantics is mainly expressed at the level of syntax. And the relative tense is evaluated as a form of expression of taxis relations.

The integrity of the time frame (integrity of the temporal boundary) in which taxis relations take place (being established) belongs to one of the plans of the past, present or future time, which serves as the “starting point” for the category of time (absolute time). Taxis does not express relations such as simultaneity, coming before, coming after, condition(ing) in relation to the moment of speech, but to any explicit or implicit situation in the context (initially, the term used by A.V.Bondarko, Y.S.Maslov and other taxologists of the St.Petersburg linguistic school)

represents relatively. We called this type of “situation” in Uzbek as “*бошланғич нуқта*”; in Russian it is called “*точка отсчёта*”, and in English it is called “*point of reference*”ⁱⁱⁱ. In this interpretation of the starting point, the concepts of taxis and relative tense coincide

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There is a view that the concepts of taxis and relative tense intersect or correspond to each other. We also agreeing with A.V.Bondarko’s views, we believe that in reality these categories partially overlap, but are not completely identical.

Indeed, today there are different opinions about the linguistic nature of the categories of taxis and relative tense. In particular, cases of not being able to establish a clear boundary between these two concepts and considering them to be exactly the same categories, and using them interchangeably, often occur.

Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to clarify what the difference between taxis and relative time, as well as between relative time and absolute time is determined. If we take into account that, like Y.Penchev, the relative tense does not grammatically mean a relation to the time of speech, and the absolute tense, on the contrary, means a relation, then it is the relation to the time of speech that turns out to be a sign underlying the contrast between the categories of tense and taxis and the concepts of relative and absolute tense^v.

If different tense forms interact in the whole time period, then there are both taxic and relative tense categories. If this state exists outside of the integral time period, then there is no taxi here. After all, a complete time period is the most basic condition for the existence of a taxis. Usually, taxis relations are formed from two absolute, cognate, independent tenses, where no proportion is necessary. The relationship of different tense forms is based on a relative basis, but the unity of the whole time period and the denotative-temporal characteristic does not allow the application of taxis. In order for the relative tense to exist, it is not necessary to have a whole time period, that is, a denotative-temporal unity. In other words, it can exist outside the polypredicative complex.

Relative tense, according to a common opinion, is not the determination of the time of action (fact) in terms of the time of speech, but in terms of the time taken as a basis for other time relations^{vi}.

Points of intersection of these concepts are observed, along with cases where relative tense is clearly different from taxis. In this regard, A.V.Bondarko comes to the following conclusion based on the difference between taxis and the relative tense: “...можно выделить три типа отношений между понятиями относительного времени и таксиса: данный языковой факт представляет собой а) относительное время, но не таксис; б) таксис, но не относительное время; в) таксис и вместе с тем относительное время” [Бондарко, 1984: 76]. The above-mentioned points once again confirm that the idea that the tense and the relative tense are exactly one linguistic phenomenon, that is, a category, is a fallacious argument.

In some languages, for example, in Dagestan, in particular, in Lezgin, Dargin and Avar, the categories of relative tense and tense are expressed using independent morphological means that allow them to be differentiated based on empirical (factual) material. In English, however, the opposite is true, and the relative tense can also represent a taxis. In English, relative tenses require a suitable construction of the expression in order to express taxis relationships. Relative tenses are the finite forms of the verb and they take part in the function of an independent participle in the main cases. In this regard, issues such as tense relations between the functional forms of the verb in Germanic languages, especially in English, or the occurrence of the relative tense as a result of the correlation of the finite form with the non-finite form, have not been widely studied yet: *I expected her to overreact*^{vii}. According to S.N.Khanbalaeva, who studied the meanings of taxis in Dagestan languages, the forms of the relative tense cannot be interpreted as morphological units specially designed to express taxis relations^{viii}.

Consideration of theoretical and terminological issues regarding the relationship between the concepts of taxis and relative tense also requires special attention. As it can be seen from the analysis of the views presented above, there is no unanimous opinion among linguists about the relationship or connection of these concepts.

According to Y.S.Maslov, in the framework of the indicative, in addition to the basic tense forms, there are also the so-called relative tense forms, which are usually expressed by another tense form, have the special meanings of simultaneity, coming before and after, in relation to the orientation moment^{ix}. In this regard, according to Y.S.Maslov's concept, these concepts represent different stages of the same linguistic phenomenon.

Analyzing the interaction of these categories, N.A.Slyusareva specifically shows that the effort to distinguish the grammatical category of independent taxis is primarily related to the solution of the problem of relative tense in the language. According to her, the category of taxis is an expression of the category of universal relative tense^x. We also partially agree with this opinion, but we would like to emphasize that the manifestation of the taxis category is not always related to relative tense. That is, firstly, taxis is not a means of expressing the category of relative tense, on the contrary, relative tense can be considered as one of the main means of expressing the category of taxis. Secondly, taxis, being a larger concept than the relative tense, cannot be a structural division (part) of the whole.

As noted, A.V.Bondarko suggests a distinction between these concepts. According to him, the concepts of relative tense and taxis partially overlap, but are not completely compatible with each other. He distinguishes the categories of taxis and relative tense from each other in terms of the presence of a single tense plan sign. The appearance of the relative used case of the tenses and the disappearance of taxis relations, according to A.V.Bondarko, is evident when the future tense is used in terms of the past tense plan: *Белинский был ужасно раздражен против Гоголя. Впоследствии докажет это его письмо к нему* (С.Аксаков). Another case in which the relative tense occurs instead of the semantics of taxis is manifested in the use of the relative future tense in explanatory-complementary constructions: *Он ожидал, что мы вернемся*^{xi}. A.V. Bondarko also distinguishes cases in which taxis is not a relative tense, but rather: *Я ощущаю этот сон и одновременно ощущаю комнату и голос жены* (А.Толстой)^{xii}. In this sentence, the relation of simultaneity is applied, and each part of the polypredicative complex is directed separately in relation to the time of speech and is used in absolute form. Convergence of taxis and relative tense categories, according to A.V.Bondarko, is manifested in constructions with the interlocutor, such as *"Поднимаясь по лестнице, они громко разговаривали"*. Here the relative tense is reflected due to the fact that the action expressed by the adverb is defined in relation to another action. Also, taxis is expressed in this expression, because within the framework of a single time plan there is a polypredicative complex that is entering into a relationship with each other in the sense of simultaneity and multi-temporality. In the constructions with the complementary clause, such as *"Я видел, что он колеблется"*, not only the relative tense, but also the meaning of simultaneous taxis expressed within the single time plan of actions occurred^{xiii}.

In general, according to the concept of A.V.Bondarko and representatives of the Petersburg linguistic school, relative tense is a narrower concept than taxis. Taxis can be expressed both in the relative orientation in time of one of the members of the polypredicative complex, and in the absolute orientation in time of all predicates of the complex. In a broad sense, the meaning of taxis is the moment relationship of the participants of the polypredicative complex.

Taxis and relative tense are not the same categories, but at the same time, it turns out that their opposition is not so correct, given that these concepts are not exactly opposites of the same aspect^{xiv}.

Taxis is a syntactically expressed category. The relative tense or the relative use of tense forms is one of the main morphological tools that represent the universal category of taxis.

Summarizing the analysis and views, it can be said that the study of various categories related to the expression of one or another aspect of the linguistic and philosophical concept of time has not lost its relevance, on the contrary, due to its multifaceted nature and the opening of new categories, linguists are faced with the task of establishing relations and connections between them, defining the boundaries has been putting new important tasks such as identification of their functional-semantic features.

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