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THE TAXIS STRUCTURE IN THE SHORT STORY 'THE NEVA STAR' BY C. D. ROSE

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Abstract: This paper proposes an analysis of the taxis system in the short story The Neva Star written by the British writer C.D. Rose. The taxis system, formed of parataxis and hypotaxis sub-systems, refers to groups and phrases which are given an equal status within complex sentences in the case of paratactic relations and to groups and phrases that have an unequal status, in the case of hypotactic relations. We are going to use the systemic functional approach, taking into consideration the metafunction of language, pointing out the fact that, within this approach, combined clauses do not form a grammatical unit as within the traditional approach.

The first part of the paper makes a short presentation of the taxis system within systemic functional framework, and the second part analysis the general characteristics of this short story which belongs to contemporary British literature, paying attention to the types of structures used.

Keywords: taxis, parataxis, hypotaxis, metafunctions, groups and phrases

I. General considerations the system of taxis

When we analyse a clause complex we take into consideration the ideational metafunction of language and the ways in which a clause can combine with further clauses in order to form a clause complex. In this paper we are not going to discuss the parts of a clause, but ranking clauses within systemic functional framework. In systemic functional grammar the main clause is called "primary clause" to which we can add a theoretically unlimited number of other "secondary" clauses. The most important difference between traditional approach and the systemic functional approach is that in the former case the combined clauses form a grammatical unit named "sentence", while in the latter case they do not form a new grammatical unit.

Traditional grammar understands this series as forming a unit of a higher rank-the "sentence" and further distinguishes simple sentences (one sentence), compound sentence (two or more clauses in coordination) and complex sentences (two or more clauses, of which one is the main one and the other depend on it). However, there are some problems in considering the sentence the basis for our analysis. The clearly signalled organization of sentences by means of punctuation, in the written text sustains the existence of a unit of language above the clause, but we are to consider how clauses relate to each other in a way that is not restricted to the written form of language.

The systemic functional approach however, uses the term *clause complex* to define a combination of two or more clauses into a larger unit. The merit of the term is that it is neutral in terms of differences between spoken and written texts and enables us to consider clause complexes that are split by punctuation. In addition, when analysing spoken language,

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intonation and pausing do not always correspond directly to the larger grammatical units in utterances.

Suzanne Eggins argues that "while the sentence is an orthographic unit of written language, the clause complex is a grammatical and semantic unit, and it is a unit that occurs in both spoken and written language" (*An introduction to Systemic Function Linguistics,* 2004: 255-256).

According to systemic functional linguistics, clauses within complexes are interrelated grammatically in two systems, taxis and logico-semantic. Taxis is concerned with the interdependency relations between grammatical units forming a complex or between groups forming a group complex or between clauses forming a clause complex. Logico-semantic system is represented by two types of relationships: *expansion* which includes the meanings realized by conjunctions and *projection* which includes direct and indirect speech and thought. Systemic Functional linguistics further divides expansion into: *elaboration*, in which one clause expands another clause by restating in other words, clarifying it, specifying details, adding comments or examples; *enhancing* when clause expands another by qualifying it with some circumstantial feature of time, place, cause, concession, condition, etc. and *extension* which is used so that a clause expands another by extending beyond it; it provides new information, gives an exception to it or offers an alternative.

When analyzing the clause complexes relationships in a text the first step is to identify the boundaries between these clause complexes. In written cases there is no problem in identifying the boundaries due to the fact that they are signalled orthographically by full stops, in the case of sentences, commas or semi-colons between clauses. The second step is to determine whether a particular logico-semantic relationship (expansion or projection) holds between two clauses forming a complex or it is a cohesive relationship between two clauses complexes.

In this paper we will concentrate on the analysis of the system of taxis, pointing out that the hypotactic relations are, by far, more used than paratactic relations.

II. Analysis of the system of taxis in *The Neva Star* by C.D. Rose

This short story, which is 25 pages long, is about three Ukrainian sailors who are stranded on a ship in the port of Naples, the perfect place to set a timeless short piece about people on the edge of a society. The rest of the crew, which was 70 at the beginning, has left the ship leaving behind only three men – all named Sergei. These three men didn't want to leave the ship due to the fact that they won't be paid if they leave. So, they wait.

The Neva Star offers a gentle insight into the slow loss of an identity, the men's identities coagulating into one. Their minds and their distinctions flow into each other. They share the same names and the same experience, spending the last three years together, on the ship. As a result, their personalities diluted, becoming one. *The Neva Star* is a psychological, sharp, full of geographic details, short story.

The following section of our paper focuses on identifying and analysing the types of relationships that establish between clauses in clause complexes throughout the text.

In terms of types of causes, the author mainly uses simple structures, to sustain the unsophisticated form the short story embraces. Many of the clauses are clause simplexes of the type:

e.g. *There are now three sailors on board.*
Late that evening, she turned up back at home.
He doesn't want to wait too long.

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From the total number of clause complexes the short story contains there is a significant proportion of complexes made up of only two clauses as in the following examples:

e.g. *There used to be a crew of 70, // but 67 of them (mostly Russian, some Ukrainian, many Romanian, and many others from other countries) have all now disappeared.*
At night the road was dimly illuminated with fuzzy yellow light, // and they can see a few people loitering in the blocked yellow spaces under the shadows of the tall ugly buildings.

Three-clause complexes are less represented, being the next proportion of complexes from the total number of complexes:

e.g. *The man with red face recognizes Serghei's accent, // and asked him// where he's from.*
Their flat was as small as a ship's cabin,// he remembers,// although the view from the window was always the same.
They met at a party// when they were eighteen // and married soon after.

As we continue analysing the remaining clause complexes, a constant feature of the story shapes through: the higher the number of clauses in a clause complex, the fewer the instances are to be found. Thus, there are only a few instances of four-clause complexes:

e.g. *Waking, he remembers his dreams// and remembers// that he is supposed to be two travellers// who imagine a third.*
He loses himself, // finds himself lost// and has to ask a group of Polish people under the main station// where the way back to the port was.

The number decreases considerably for complexes with five or six clauses:

e.g. *He thinks// it's one of the most beautiful things// he had ever seen, //and thinks about// how it would be to live there forever.*

Throughout the story clauses are related mostly by hypotactic relationships, parataxis representing only a small part of the total number of clause nexuses. The predominance of such types of relations helps the reader go into the characters' minds. The style of the story is characterized by repetition of structures and slight variation.

In terms of means of linking, paratactic relations are signaled in most cases by conjunctions and punctuation. As far as conjunction system is concerned, the most frequently used are the conjunctions ***and*** and ***but:***

e.g. *A few days ago, there was an article in the newspaper about them […],* ***but*** *they never saw it because the journalist never sent them a copy of the paper even though he promised to.*
She reminds him of Masha, ***and*** *he wonders where she is now.*

Besides the examples illustrated so far, parataxis in the story also occurs within hypotactic constructions:

e.g. *In the future the people will say stories about the sailors // who spent three years on a boat.*

α β

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He wonders// what any fish who might live in the waters of the port of Naples would eat//
α β1
and what he would find in the belly of a fish.
β2

Considering the place of the dominant and dependent clause in hypotactic relations, the author employs both thematically marked and unmarked sequences. Unmarked structures, where the dominant clause is followed by the dependent clause, seem to prevail in the hypotactic relations in the story:

e.g. *He dreams of being trapped on board the Neva Star for three years, of being on board this very ship, a dream // which is inseparable from reality.*

However, there are however instances of thematically marked sequences with the dependent clause being followed by the dominant clause:

e.g. *It worries him mostly // because in this dream there are only two of them, not three.*
When they go out on the deck and look at the city beyond the docks,// they see rows of ugly, tall, barrier-like white cement buildings.

Although the vast majority of the dependent clauses in the story are finite, there are also a few examples of non-finite clauses

e.g. *After a while, though, the novelty faded and people stopped // dropping by.*
The king told him // to go down again
They're still waiting for him // to come back up.

The logico-semantic relations expressed by means of parataxis or hypotaxis may be well illustrated with examples from the story.

All three types of ***expansion*** identified in systemic functional linguistics are employed in the story:

(i) In ***elaboration*** one clause expands another clause by restating in other words, clarifying it, specifying details, adding comments or examples. Such a clause does not add any essentially new element to the message, but gives supplementary information about what is already stated. Paratactic elaboration is not present in the text; on the other hand hypotactic elaboration is represented by a relatively great number of non-defining relative clauses in the story which add extra information to an element in the message, ; most often such clauses are introduced by ***who*** *or* ***which:***

e.g. *Parthenope fell in love with one of Odysseus' men //* ***who*** *ignored her by blocking his ears*
α =β
and sailing right past her.
[…] *there are many ships in many ports around the world //* ***which*** *have found themselves*
α =β
abandoned by bankrupted owners […]

(ii) An ***enhancing*** clause expands another clause by qualifying it with some circumstantial feature of time, place, cause, concession, condition, etc. Again both parataxis and hypotaxis are to be found, although the latter seem to be slightly favoured:

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e.g. *[…] he saw Sergei counting and wonders // where it came from and where he's hidden it now.*
This is one of the things he remembers // as he passes away the many days lying on the small bunk in the same cabin […]

(iii) ***Extension*** is used so that a clause expands another by extending beyond it; it provides new information, gives an exception to it or offers an alternative. Examples of both paratactic and hypotactic extensions can be found throughout the text:
e.g. *He wonders what has happened to Sergei in his dream,// but there's no answer.*

The two options available for *projection* - locutions and ideas - may be exemplified with instances from the text; nevertheless there is an obvious preponderance of projecting ideas over locutions:
e.g. *His mother got fed up with him doing nothing […] // and <u>said</u> that if he didn't give up he'd turn into a fish.*

a) ***Locutions*** are the representation of the content of a verbal clause – what is said. There are only very few the examples are hypotactic, with only few instances of paratactic exemplifications. We also have to mention that locutions are not very numerous in the text.
e.g. *They would wave back,// and the two groups would <u>shout</u> things to each other in mutually incomprehensible languages.*

b) ***Ideas***, on the other hand, refer to the representation of the content of a mental clause - what is thought; the projecting clause represents a process of cognition rather than a verbal one. There are no examples of paratactic ideas while instances of hypotactic ideas may be found in the following passages. The ideas are by far more numerous than locutions in the text:
e.g. *Nobody knows // what happened to the captain.*
Still, he sometimes misses her // even though he now thinks // he never really loved her.

Conclusions

Taking into account the analysed data, the main features of the short-story *The Neva Star* by C.D. Rose regarding the relationships between clauses led us to the conclusion that there numerous instances of clause simplexes, i.e. sentences consisting of only one clause and the preponderance of unsophisticated clause complexes made up of two or three clauses. Longer clause complexes have fewer exemplifications following the normal rule that the greater the number of clauses in a clause complex, the smaller the number of occurrences in the story.

In terms of the tactic relationships established between clauses within clause complexes, the author seems to favour hypotaxis, since hypotactic relations outnumber consistently paratactic relations. Paratactic relations are signalled most often by punctuation (coma and semi colon) and by the system of conjunctions, ***and*** and ***but*** being the most frequently used.

Hypotactic relations employed are usually thematically unmarked, with the dominant clause being followed by the dependent clause. Most of the clauses in this relation are finite; of the non-finite clauses used, the infinitive and the gerundial clauses are more often employed.

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The logico-semantic relations of expansion (elaboration, extension and enhancement) and projection (locutions and ideas) are expressed through both paratactic and hypotactic relations throughout the story, the author favouring more or less a type of syntactic relations. Elaboration seems to be realized mostly by hypotactic relations in terms of numerous non-defining relative clauses introduced by ***which*** or ***who***, while paratactic elaboration is not present in the text. Regarding enhancing, both parataxis and hypotaxis are to be found, although the latter seem to be slightly favoured. Examples of both paratactic and hypotactic extensions are to be found with no obvious preference for one type or the other.

In the case of the logico-semantic relations of projection, there is a noticeable preference for projecting ideas over locutions. Most of the locutions are projected in hypotactic relations since the text lacks dialogues and direct quotes. In terms of ideas, there are no examples of paratactic ideas, and only examples of hypotactic projected ideas can be noted in the text.

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