



## Complex Symbols in English and Kurdish Grammar

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**Dilovan Sayfuddin Saady**

English of Department, College of Education, Salahaddin University-Erbil

Dilovan.ghafoory@su.edu.krd

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### Abstract

A group of lexical items which are stored in the lexicon in a form of some symbols are called complex symbols. This research attempts to deal with transformational grammar relating to complex symbols. Complex symbol is a morpheme with a set of semantic and syntactic features. These features are :category ,inherent ,selectional and subcategorization features . As far as the literature review for this study ,this topic has not been written about by any researcher . It may not only be significant for a researcher to write about a topic which had been conducted in a way different from the way he is writing about .But it is also important for a researcher to write about those topics that have not been researched yet. This is a descriptive and qualitative study .Finally ,it is concluded that as far as subcategorization feature , in Kurdish language ditransitive verbs are not subcategorised for two NP complements but it is for an NP and a Prep. P .In English language it is. In idioms of both Kurdish and English languages ,selectional restrictions do not work and have no role. The inherent feature in Kurdish language seems to be similar to that of English language by assigning semantic roles to the lexical items.

**Keywords:** complex symbol, category, inherent, selectional and subcategorization features.

### 1.Aims of the research

The objective of this research is not to explain the transformational grammar but it is to show the semantic and the syntactic features of the words stored in the lexicon in both English and Kurdish languages along with the differences and similarities between the two.

### 2. Significance of the research

The significance of the study lies in the fact that learners, at the end of the research, will be able to know how to indicate or identify the four features of the morpheme. Learners are also shown the comparison in the complex symbols between the two languages . Readers and/or learners can benefit from them in case they would like to conduct researches about objects ,transitive and intransitive verbs or if their research is about semantic or syntactic features of subject and object . Here the researcher takes some specific closed-system and open-class items .

### 3.Problems of the research

The problem of the research is that sometimes learners are incapable of recognizing these features . This is due to students' lack of knowledge about the features . Another side of the problem is that learners do not know the difference between the types of features in neither Kurdish nor English .

### 4.Hypothesis of the research

It is hypothesized that there exist similarities and differences between Kurdish and English languages as concerned with complex symbols.



## 5. Transformational Generative Grammar

Hartman and Stork (1972) state that it is a grammar which uses transformation rules in its description of a language. While Bussmann (1996) points out that it is a theory illustrating the implicit knowledge of a language opposite of a structuralism of Harris and Bloomfield which is based on segmentation and clarification of concrete language data. They maintain that transformational generative grammar emphasizes on the elaboration of a logically consistent theory which can adequately explain and formulate explicitly the deep structure of sentences. In a later exposition of the theory, Chomsky added semantics. He wanted to say that meaning should be treated like syntax.

## 6. Complex Symbols

This is defined by Adetuyi and Fidelis (2016:14) "as a collection of features peculiar to the particular linguistic item in its occurrence in utterances of the language". On the other hand, Crystal (2003) puts forward that complex symbol is a term used in some models of Generative Grammar to refer to a symbol in a phrase marker which has an internal structure of its own. It consists of an unordered set of syntactic features, e.g. N, +abstract, +animate and in some accounts the morpheme which the set of features specify, e.g. +N, +human, -proper, man. Bernard Spolsky (1999) states that based on Chomskian approach to syntactic theory a continued focus has been on grammars which have a number of components and whether such grammars and the languages generated by them are amenable to learnability considerations.

## 7. Syntactic and Semantic Features in English Language

These features known as syntactic and semantic features are those that form a complex symbol by means of which the words in the mental dictionary are identified and characterized. Below is the elaboration of each of the features with examples.

### 7.1 Category Feature in English Language

It is one of the features that specifies the primary class of the lexical item, namely it shows if the item is a noun, verb, adjective or etc. Parker and Riley (2005:54) state that "even today school children learn that there are eight parts of speech in English. However, because categories have been with us so long, it is easy to be misled into thinking that they are part of the observable aspect of language", as in:

1. Sandy likes to refrain from conversation. (Brown and Miller, 1999:66)

Here (Sandy) is a noun as it is a name of a human and is a subject coming before a verb, while (likes) is a verb as it follows the subject of the sentence. The word (conversation) is a noun by the addition of the nominal suffix -ation.

There can be open-class items that can be recognized by inflectional and derivational suffixes. For example, some words take these suffixes to become nouns: -s, 's, ation, -ment, -ness.... (like: development, conversation, boy's, girls...). Some words take these suffixes to become adjectives: -ive, -able, -ful, -less.... (like: careless, stressful, adaptable, productive....). On the other hand, some words take these suffixes to become verbs: -en, -ify, -ate.... (like: regulate, beautify, lighten...). Some other words take these suffixes to become adverbs: -ly, -wise.... (like: quickly, clockwise...).

## 7.2 Inherent Features in English Language

It is another feature that identifies a special characteristic of a lexical item. This feature is likely to affect the syntactic function of a lexical item. This embraces plus and minus features ; for instance: +concrete , -male , +uncountable , -animate etc. Bussmann (1996) states that this term is coined by Porzig to denote the syntagmatic relationship of compatibility between the pairs of linguistic expressions with a unidirectional semantic implication. Consider this example:

2. Colorless green ideas sleep furiously. (Fromkin et al ,2003:574)

Example (2) shows that the noun (ideas) has some inherent features which are: -hard , -liquid , +abstract , -touchable.

3. John rewards the actress.

The noun (the actress) has the inherent features like: +female , +animate , -liquid, -abstract , +concrete

## 7.3 Selectional Features in English Language

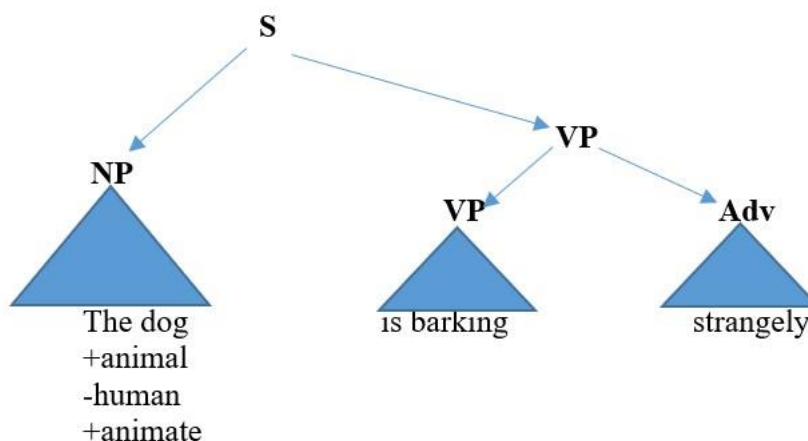
The feature that makes the complex symbol here deals with the restrictions on the co-occurrence relations , namely on the selection of verb ,subject ,object etc. Here the inherent features are also used .Trask (2007,p. 250) states that “a restriction on the combining of words in a sentence resulting from their meaning ”. Fromkin et al (2003:164) concerning selectional restrictions ,state that “ the lexicon represents the knowledge that speakers have about the vocabulary of their language .This knowledge includes the syntactic category of words and what elements may occur together ”.

4. The man is barking strangely .

In (4) it is to be mentioned that the sentence is odd semantically but has no problem syntactically. This is because for a man to bark is strange . Here the features of the position that in the noun phrase (the man) occurs are to be found in a subject having the feature of -human , + animal because of the following finite verb (barking). So the oddness of the sentence can be removed or in other words the sentence can be disambiguated as in (5) below:

5. The dog is barking strangely.

Here the features selected for the subject of the sentence are +animal , -human and +animate .This sort of subject fits this position in this sentence as shown in the diagram below:



6. The student poured out of the classes.



In (6) above ,there is clash of features or violation of selectional features , for the verb (pour) is in need of a plural subject. It should become (7) below:

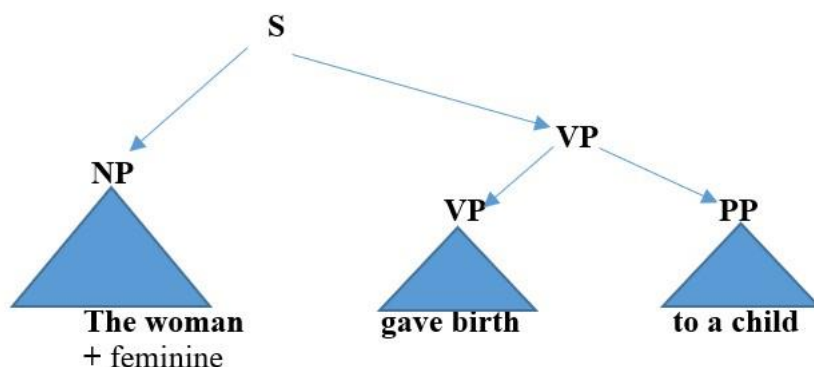
7. The students poured out of the classes.

The same thing is true with the selection of a feminine subject for the sentence (8) due to the following verb phrase .

8. The man gave birth to a child .

The above-mentioned sentence can be disambiguated semantically as (9) below:

9. The woman gave birth to a child . ( See the tree diagram below for the e.g 9 )



#### 7.4 Subcategorisation Features in English Language

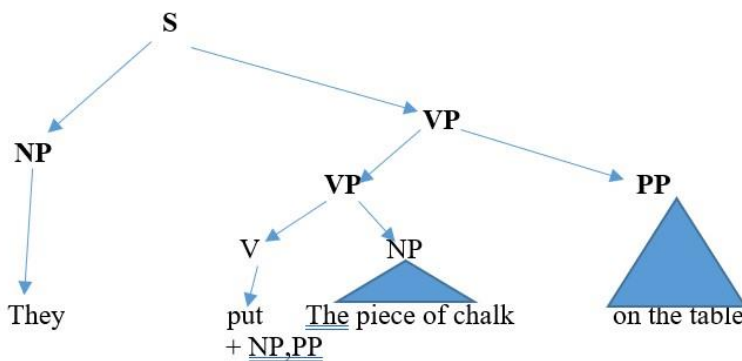
Subcategorization is a linguistic term that refers to the necessity of lexical items normally verbs to require the presence of syntactic arguments that they co-occur with .So they are those features that identify the type of complement that follows a predicate(verb or adjective). In this type of feature ,there exists classification of verbs into transitive(mono ,di and complex) and intransitive . As Hartmann and Stork(1976:223-4) state that “the specification ,usually by a set of rules of what kind of items may represent a class or category in a particular environment” .Matthews(2007) points out that “the assignment of a lexical item to a subclass of its part of speech especially with respect to the syntactic elements with which it can combine ”

This is for example **tell, buy ,bring** .etc take two Nps each ,while **put, place ,lie** .etc take one NP and a Prep.P. On the other hand verbs like **make ,consider , regard** .etc take one NP and another NP as complement ,an adverb ,participles .Sometimes we have adjectives like **envious ,worthy** .etc. that takes Prep P. Study these examples:

10. They put the piece of chalk.
11. My colleagues are envious her success.

There is violation of subcategorization rules because there is no prepositional phrase and preposition after the verb put and the adjective envious respectively in both 10 and 11 above. To correct both of the ungrammatical sentences ,look at 12 and 13 below :

12. They put the piece of chalk **on the table**. ( See the tree diagram below for the e.g 12 )
13. My colleagues are envious **of her success**.



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Therefore ,as Brown and Miller(1999) state , we are not free ,in some constructions ,to fill one of the positions with any lexical item of a suitable category but it should be determined by the other words in the construction.

Thus , sentences violating subcategorization are less grammatical than those violating selectional restrictions. In other words violation of PS- rules construct the least grammatical sentences.

In English language verbs like give, bring ,send ,buy ,tell etc. can be subcategorized for two NP complements .This may be further clarified in (14 a and b).

14a. Tom brings his son 13 iPhone pro max.

14b. Tom brings 13 iphone pro max for his son.

In (14a), the two NP complements (his son) and (13 iPhone pro max) are indirect and direct objects successively. These two Nps subcategorise the verb (bring). But the verb can also be subcategorized for an NP and a Prep. P (see 14b above) which is something unavailable in Kurdish language . (See 8.4 below) .

## 8.Syntactic and Semantic Features in Kurdish Language

The same as it is in English language , these features do exist in Kurdish language .Here the complex symbols identify the words in the mental dictionary. The upcoming examples are all about Kurdish language.

### 8.1 Category Features in Kurdish Language

Category features specify the parts of speech of the lexical item. These can be nouns, verbs ,adjectives etc. In Kurdish language unlike English ,the adjective is realised after a noun or after intensifiers like :zor , ta radayak ,kamek, handek, yakjar..etc. To realise noun ,it is the same as English but verbs come at the end of sentence following an object , an adjective or an adverb. Adverbs in both languages describe the verb .They usually come before verb or after the subject .This example may clarify more:

15. Rebwar kurechy zor chalaky qutabkhanakayaty boya barezawa sair dakret.  
(Rebwar boy very active school his therefore with respect look past participle at)

(Rebwar is a very active boy in his school therefore he is looked at with respect)

Here (zor chalak) as an adjective phrase comes after the noun(kurechy) . The word (barezawa) is a manner adverb coming before or modifying the verb (sair dakret).



## 8.2 Inherent Features in Kurdish Language

Another feature that assigns specific characteristics to a lexical item is inherent feature. This feature may affect the syntactic function of a lexical item and it includes plus and minus features; for instance: +concrete, -abstract, +male, -countable etc. As it is illustrated by Jukul(2008), this is related to theta role assignment, meaning the semantic features mentioned above. This sort of feature in Kurdish language seems similar to that of English language. Here Chomsky (1981) emphasizes on having semantic roles to the lexical items. Consider example 16 below:

16. Sayaraka padashty Kazhaly dadatawa .  
Car the reward 3<sup>rd</sup> Person singular -s Kazhal  
Sayaraka rewards Kazhal

In (16) Sayaraka cannot be the doer; I mean it cannot be the subject of a sentence. To make it subject, we should change the semantics of the word. This is so because rewarding is not done by a subject which is inanimate. Thus we should give the feature of +animate to the position of the subject in (16) to change sayaraka to Pyawaka which is +animate. So it becomes like (17):

17. Pyawaka padashty Kazhaly dadatawa  
Man the reward 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular -s Kazhal  
The man rewards Kazhal

## Selectional Features in Kurdish Language

This is another feature that deals with the restrictions on the co-occurrence relations being used with inherent feature too. Malmkjaer(2006:408) points out that "semantic information about a word generates selection restriction, for instance that certain verbs may only combine with animate objects". The selection here embraces verb, subject, object etc. with certain semantic roles like agent, animate, abstract, non-human etc. In Kurdish language, the NP (nwezh krđn) becomes object but it needs an animate and an agent subject. But this NP does not become object in English language because the verb(krđn) and the noun (nwezh) can be manifested in the verb only. Consider the northern Kurdish example from Muhammad Salih Barwary(2004) below:

18. Az nivezhan dikam (mn nwezh dakam) {Central Kurdish}  
I pray do present progressive  
I am praying.

Usually in idioms, selectional restrictions do not work in both Kurdish and English languages. Perhaps, there exist many or some examples for this purpose. Below is one of them.

19. The pot calls or mocks the kettle black.  
20. Qal ba Qal dale rut rash bet (the Crow tells the other Crow; Let your face be black)

In both (19) which relates to English language and (20) which relates to Kurdish language, we have the same meaning. The verbs (calls) and (dale :tell) do not have animate subject.



## 8.4 Subcategorisation Features in Kurdish Language

In Kurdish language there are some points of similarities and differences with its English language counterpart. The process of joining the head with its complement for the formation of phrase is known as subcategorization.

[WWW.silewp/2006/-006.html](http://WWW.silewp/2006/-006.html)

Here ,transitive verbs take a vital role in having NPs and sometimes NPs and Prep.P together in a sentence .Sometimes there is neither NP nor are there NP and Prep P together following the verb. This verb is called intransitive verb. Fattah (2014:148)states that “most verbs in central Kurdish are inherently transitive and intransitive e.g cu:n ‘to go’ ra:krdn ‘to run’ kawtin ‘to fall’ are inherently intransitive whilst bi:ni:n ‘to see’ bi:stn ‘to hear’ and birdin are inherently transitive.”

Consider these examples:

21. gaishtma Koshk (Fattah ,2014:173)  
Come past 1<sup>st</sup> p sg palace  
I came to the palace

In 21 ,the verb ‘gaishtn’ to come or ‘to reach’ is an intransitive verb that has no NP following it. ‘Koshk’ here is an adverb of place that this special verb subcategorises for.

22.a. Mn la girfanm dana  
I in pocket 1<sup>st</sup> p sg pro put Past  
I put it in my pocket

22b. Mn parakam dana  
I definite article money 1<sup>st</sup> person sg pronoun put Past  
I put the money

22c. Mn parakam la girfanm dana ( Wlya , 2009:83 )  
I definite article money 1<sup>st</sup> person sg pronoun in pocket 1<sup>st</sup> person sg pronoun put Past  
I put the money in my pocket

In 22 a ,b ,c above, the verb (danan , put)is subcategorized for an NP and a PP while other verbs may not precede any or one of the two phrases . So 22c is the most grammatical sentence for the verb takes both of the noun phrase (paraka) and the prepositional phrase (la girfan) .

Here (paraka) is an object noun phrase because it consists of a head and the post modifier as definite article (ka). This is known in Kurdish (morphimy Izafa) meaning suffix.

(Hussein and Mirza,2010:218, 223)

In Kurdish language ditransitive verbs are not subcategorised for two NP complements but an NP and a Prep. P .

23. Nasrin dyariyachy bo brakay kry.  
Nasrin gift definite article for brother 3<sup>rd</sup> person sg pronoun buy Past  
Nasrin bought her brother a gift

Here (dyaryachy)is direct object ,and (bo brakay) is a Prep.P although the verb (bring) can be subcategorized for two NP complements in English language.



## 9. Conclusion

The researcher ,in the conclusion, reaches some points . In the complex symbols of Kurdish language, ditransitive verbs are not subcategorised for two NP complements but for an NP and a Prep. P . While in English language, ditransitive verbs are subcategorised for two NP complements instead of being subcategorized for an NP and a Prep. P . In the complex symbols of both Kurdish and English language idioms , selectional restrictions do not work . The inherent feature in Kurdish language seems similar to that of English language by assigning semantic roles to the lexical items . In Kurdish language , adjectives follow nouns or intensifiers . Verbs come at the end of a sentence following an object , an adjective or an adverb. Adverbs in Kurdish usually precede or follow verbs . In English language ,the adjective precedes noun but follows intensifiers .Verbs sometimes come at the end of a sentence ,sometimes precede an object , an adjective or an adverb.

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