

The Unmarked Word Order of Free Verbal Modifications in Czech

(With the Main Reference to the Influence of Verbal Valency in the Utterance)

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Aim of Research

The aim was to verify the unmarked sequence of the chosen contextually non-bound free verbal modifications (adverbials) in Czech depending on, particularly, valency and their semantics.

Existing Research

The existing research on unmarked order of free verbal modifications (Sgall, Hajičová, Buráňová 1980; Uhlířová 1974; Firbas 1979) explored this matter without regard to the verb (and its valency characteristics) the modifications are connected with.

Main Results of Existing Research

Systemic Ordering

1. time (when)
2. locative (where)
3. manner (how)
4. direction (to where)
5. cause (why)

(Sgall, Hajičová, Buráňová 1980, p. 77; shortened)

Valency in Prague Dependency Treebank

Any modification is either obligatory (obligatorily present at the deep – not necessarily at the surface – structure level), or optional (not necessarily present).

The dialogue test by Panevová (1974)

The dialogue test is used for determining whether a given modification is obligatory or optional – e.g.:

A: *She was missing....*

B: *Where?*

A: **I don't know.* – the answer is not possible → the modification “locative” is obligatory in this case.

B: *When?*

A: *I don't know.* – the answer is possible → the modification “time” is optional in this case.

Examples of Czech sentences

1. *Moji přátelé se sejdou příští týden.*(optional time) *v baru.*(obligatory locative) *Segafredo.*

Lit. *My friends will meet next week.*(optional time) *in the bar.*(obligatory locative) *Segafredo.*

2. *Váš muž se chová na úřadech.*(optional locative) *velmi nevhodně.*(obligatory manner).

Lit. *Your husband acts at the office.*(optional locative) *very inappropriately.*(obligatory manner).

3. *Peterka naniřl míč parádně.*(optional manner) *do brány.*(obligatory direction) *soupeře – a gól!*

Lit. *Peterka aimed the ball brilliantly.*(optional manner) *at the goal.*(obligatory direction) *of the rival – and he scores!*

Methods

- The question was which order of verbal modifications is more frequented (for example, if it is more typical in Czech to use *He was born when where or where when*).
- The analysis was based on the data from *Prague Dependency Treebank*.
- The characteristics of the utterances which were analyzed: declarative sentences without negation which contained two (or more) contextually non-bound free verbal modifications.
- All verbal modifications were in a non-clause form.
- A scale of supposed basic word order of five selected free verbal modifications was established.

Results of Research

The established unmarked order of contextually non-bound examined free verbal modifications in Czech*:

1. optional time (when)
- 2.–3. optional locative (where)
- 2.–3. optional cause (why)
4. optional manner (how)
- 5.–8. optional direction (to where)
- 5.–8. obligatory locative (where)
- 5.–8. obligatory manner (how)
- 5.–8. obligatory direction (to where)

* The results are based on the linguistic analysis of more than 1,700 utterances. Nowadays, there is wider research that should show more precise tendencies in the Czech word order.

Conclusion

- In the unmarked word order in Czech, the contextually non-bound optional free verbal modifications come first followed by the obligatory modifications.
- The semantic categories of free verbal modifications seem to be secondary in most cases as a factor of word order.

Sources

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