

FUNCTIONAL SEMANTICS AND COMBINATORICS OF SYNTACTICALLY INDEPENDENT ELEMENTS IN THE SENTENCE (BASED ON ENGLISH AND UZBEK)

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Abstract: This article examines the functional-semantic characteristics and combinatorial properties of syntactically independent elements in Uzbek and English from a comparative-typological perspective. The primary objective of the study is to identify the communicative functions, semantic load, and the role of these elements in the structural and pragmatic organization of sentences. The article analyzes the syntactic nature of vocatives, parenthetical words and phrases, modal expressions, parenthetical clauses, interjections, and emotionally expressive devices within the framework of modern functional grammar and communicative syntax. Furthermore, it investigates the combinatorial properties of these linguistic units, including their compatibility with other syntactic components, semantic coherence, and pragmatic functions from a comparative perspective.

Keywords: syntactically independent elements, functional semantics, combinatorics, vocatives, parenthetical expressions, modal expressions, pragmatics, communicative syntax, comparative linguistics, English, Uzbek

Introduction. The development of twenty-first-century linguistics has increasingly emphasized the investigation of linguistic units not only within the framework of grammatical structure but also in close connection with their functional, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse-related characteristics. Owing to the advancement of functional grammar, communicative syntax, and cognitive linguistics, scholarly attention has shifted from the formal organization of sentences toward their communicative structure, information organization, and discourse functions. From this perspective, syntactically independent elements have come to be recognized as an essential component of language systems.

Syntactically independent elements are linguistic units that are not directly subordinated to the grammatical structure of a sentence but significantly enrich its semantic, communicative, and pragmatic content. Although they do not belong to the predicative core of the sentence, these elements contribute to communicative effectiveness by expressing the speaker's attitude, evaluation, emotional state, or source of information. Consequently, they should be regarded not merely as syntactic phenomena but also as functional-semantic categories.

In Uzbek, syntactically independent elements generally include vocatives, parenthetical words and phrases, parenthetical clauses, interjections, and modal expressions. In English, similar functions are performed by vocatives, parenthetical expressions, discourse markers, interjections, and comment clauses. Although these units possess comparable grammatical status in both languages, they differ considerably in semantic potential, frequency of use, and communicative functions.

Today, the study of syntactically independent elements is of considerable importance not only for theoretical grammar but also for text linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and translation studies, since these units frequently become sources of semantic loss in translation.

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that the functional-semantic and combinatorial characteristics of syntactically independent elements in English and Uzbek have not yet been comprehensively investigated from a comparative-typological perspective. Most previous studies have focused primarily on their grammatical classification, whereas their communicative functions, discourse roles, and combinatorial potential require more comprehensive analysis.

Research methodology. The aim of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of the functional-semantic nature and combinatorial potential of syntactically independent elements in English and Uzbek.

The objectives of the study are: to identify the theoretical foundations of the concept of syntactically independent elements, to describe their functional-semantic characteristics, to compare their combinatorial potential in English and Uzbek, to analyze their communicative and pragmatic functions, to identify their similarities and differences.

The object of the study is the system of syntactically independent elements in English and Uzbek. The subject of the study is the functional-semantic and combinatorial properties of these linguistic units. The research employs comparative-typological, descriptive, distributive, componential, and functional-semantic methods of analysis.

Theoretical Foundations of the Concept of Syntactically Independent Elements. Syntactically independent elements are linguistic units that do not belong to either the principal or secondary parts of a sentence from a grammatical perspective but actively participate in shaping its overall meaning. Their defining characteristic is the absence of a direct syntactic relationship with the predicative center of the sentence. However, this does not imply that they are semantically or pragmatically secondary. On the contrary, they represent one of the key devices through which the communicative orientation of an utterance is established.

Representatives of traditional syntax generally regarded syntactically independent elements as external components of sentence structure, whereas scholars of functional grammar consider them active constituents of the communicative organization of the sentence. In particular, M. A. K. Halliday, within the framework of Systemic Functional Grammar, interprets these units as important realizations of the interpersonal metafunction. According to Halliday, speakers not only convey information but also express their attitudes, evaluations, and communicative intentions. This interpersonal function is largely realized through syntactically independent elements.

For example: Unfortunately, the meeting has been cancelled.

In this sentence, unfortunately functions as a syntactically independent element. It is not grammatically connected to either the subject or the predicate, yet it expresses the speaker's evaluation of the entire proposition. A comparable example in Uzbek is: Afsuski, yig'ilish bekor qilindi.

Here, afsuski is likewise grammatically independent but assigns a modal evaluation to the entire predicative meaning of the sentence. Thus, the primary function of such elements is not to introduce new factual information but to indicate the speaker's interpretation, evaluation, or

attitude toward that information. In theoretical linguistics, syntactically independent elements are generally classified into the following major categories:

Vocatives, which indicate direct address to the interlocutor.

Parenthetical words and phrases, which express the degree of certainty, the source of information, or the speaker's attitude.

Modal expressions, which convey meanings such as probability, certainty, doubt, necessity, and obligation.

Interjections, which express emotional and expressive reactions.

Parenthetical clauses (comment clauses), which provide additional explanation or explicitly indicate the speaker's standpoint regarding the main proposition.

Each of these categories possesses its own semantic and pragmatic functions and plays a significant role in ensuring the communicative effectiveness of discourse.

Discussion. Functional-Semantic Characteristics of Syntactically Independent Elements. Although syntactically independent elements do not belong to the grammatical core of a sentence, they play a significant role in clarifying its meaning, determining its communicative orientation, and enhancing its pragmatic impact. From the perspective of modern functional grammar, such elements are closely associated with the interpersonal and textual metafunctions of language. Through these linguistic units, speakers not only convey information but also express their attitudes toward it, direct the listener's attention to particular aspects of the message, and establish the emotional background of communication.

A common characteristic of syntactically independent elements in both Uzbek and English is that they are not integrated into the system of sentence constituents from a grammatical point of view, yet they ensure the completeness and precision of meaning. At the same time, their use is determined by the grammatical structure, pragmatic conventions, and discourse characteristics of each language.

Vocatives and Their Functional-Semantic Characteristics. A vocative is a syntactically independent element used to address the interlocutor. Although it does not form part of the predicative structure of the sentence, it constitutes an essential component of communication. Through vocatives, speakers establish contact with listeners, attract their attention, or express social and interpersonal relationships. For example, in Uzbek: *Aziz do'stlar, bugungi mavzuni boshlaymiz.* ("Dear friends, today we will begin our topic.")

In this example, *Aziz do'stlar* is not the grammatical subject of the sentence. The actual subject ("we") is implied, whereas the vocative merely identifies the addressees. Similarly, in English: *Dear students, today's lecture is devoted to syntax.*

Here, *Dear students* is likewise independent of the sentence's grammatical structure. Vocatives perform several important communicative functions, including expressing direct address, establishing communicative contact, attracting the listener's attention, and conveying social relationships and emotional attitudes.

For example: *John, could you open the window?*

Even without *John*, the sentence remains grammatically complete. This demonstrates that the vocative is motivated not by grammatical necessity but by communicative purpose.

In Uzbek, however, vocatives possess even broader stylistic and pragmatic potential. For example: Usto, sizning fikringiz qanday? ("Professor, what is your opinion?") Or Onajon, sizni juda sogʻindim. ("Mother, I missed you very much.")

In these examples, the vocatives express not only direct address but also respect, intimacy, affection, and emotional closeness.

Thus, while English vocatives primarily serve to identify the addressee, Uzbek vocatives function as an important pragmatic instrument reflecting national speech etiquette and cultural values.

Parenthetical Words and Parenthetical Phrases. Parenthetical words and phrases constitute one of the most productive groups of syntactically independent elements. Their principal function is to express the speaker's attitude toward the information, evaluate its reliability, or indicate its source. Halliday (2014) refers to such units as markers of the interpersonal metafunction because they express the speaker's position rather than the propositional content itself.

For example, in Uzbek: Afsuski, tajriba muvaffaqiyatsiz yakunlandi. ("Unfortunately, the experiment ended unsuccessfully.")

Here, afsuski expresses the speaker's evaluation rather than the factual content.

The English equivalent is: Unfortunately, the experiment failed.

Semantically, both expressions perform the same interpersonal function. Parenthetical expressions can be classified into several semantic groups. Expressions indicating the degree of certainty include the Uzbek forms ehtimol, chamasi, balki, and shekilli, which correspond to the English expressions probably, perhaps, maybe, apparently, and presumably.

For example: Probably, he has forgotten the meeting. Ehtimol, u yigʻilishni unutgandir.

In both cases, the speaker indicates uncertainty regarding the factual accuracy of the proposition. Expressions indicating the source of information include mening fikrimcha, aytishlaricha, and ma'lumotlarga ko'ra in Uzbek, while English employs expressions such as according to experts, reportedly, in my opinion, and as far as I know.

For example: According to recent studies, bilingualism improves cognitive flexibility. So'nggi tadqiqotlarga ko'ra, ikki tillilik kognitiv moslashuvchanlikni rivojlantiradi. These expressions identify the source of information and are particularly frequent in academic writing. Expressions conveying emotional evaluation include Uzbek forms such as baxtimizga, afsuski, xayriyat, and ajablanarlisi shundaki, together with their English equivalents fortunately, luckily, surprisingly, and regrettably.

For example: Fortunately, nobody was injured. Xayriyat, hech kim jarohatlanmadi. These expressions do not modify the factual content of the proposition but communicate the speaker's emotional evaluation of it.

Semantic Potential of Modal Expressions. Modal expressions constitute a distinct category of syntactically independent elements. Rather than describing objective reality, they reflect the speaker's subjective attitude toward the proposition.

For example: Certainly, the results require further analysis. Albatta, natijalarni yana tahlil qilish zarur. Here, certainly and albatta express epistemic certainty. Additional examples include: Obviously, language reflects culture. Tabiiyki, til madaniyatni aks ettiradi. and

Perhaps, they misunderstood the question. Balki, ular savolni noto‘g‘ri tushungandir. These examples demonstrate that modal expressions do not alter the propositional meaning of the sentence but rather indicate the speaker’s epistemic evaluation. Interjections are syntactically independent units that express strong emotional reactions.

For example: Oh! I forgot my passport. Voy! Pasportimni unutibman. Another example is: Wow! That’s incredible. Voy-bo‘! Juda ajoyib ekan. Interjections typically express surprise, fear, joy, regret, anger, and warning. For example: Alas! The manuscript has been lost.

Here, alas conveys regret. Comparable Uzbek expressions include Afsus! and Attang!, which perform similar communicative functions. From a pragmatic perspective, interjections occur predominantly in spoken discourse, whereas they are rarely found in academic writing. Discourse Functions of Parenthetical Clauses. Parenthetical clauses represent one of the more complex forms of syntactically independent elements.

For example: To tell the truth, I expected different results. Uzbek equivalent: To‘g‘risini aysam, boshqa natijani kutgandim. Another example is: If I may say so, the methodology needs revision.

Uzbek equivalent: Agar aytishga ijozat bersangiz, metodologiyani qayta ko‘rib chiqish lozim. Such constructions increase the naturalness of communication while simultaneously revealing the speaker’s communicative strategy.

The analysis demonstrates that syntactically independent elements perform several major functional-semantic roles. They may express direct address through vocatives, evaluation through expressions such as unfortunately and fortunately, certainty through markers such as probably and perhaps, the source of information through expressions like reportedly, emotional attitudes through interjections such as oh and wow, and discourse management through comment clauses such as frankly speaking.

In conclusion, although syntactically independent elements occupy a peripheral position within the grammatical structure of the sentence, they constitute central components from communicative and pragmatic perspectives. They shape the emotional, modal, and discourse-related dimensions of communication and substantially influence the interpretation and reception of information.

Combinatorial Properties of Syntactically Independent Elements in English and Uzbek. Language units do not function in isolation; rather, they operate through their relationships with other linguistic units. This principle is explained in linguistics by the concept of combinatorics. Derived from the Latin *combinare* (“to combine”), combinatorics is the branch of linguistics that studies the patterns governing the combination of language units in speech. In contemporary linguistic research, combinatorics is interpreted as the interaction of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors. Although syntactically independent elements do not belong to the grammatical structure of sentence constituents, they establish specific distributive and syntagmatic relationships with other components of the sentence. Therefore, the investigation of their combinatorial properties is important not only for syntax but also for functional grammar and discourse analysis. The analysis of combinatorial properties seeks to answer several key questions. It examines the positions that syntactically independent elements occupy within a sentence, the linguistic units with which they can combine, the influence of their

position on semantic and pragmatic meaning, and the differences in combinatorial restrictions between English and Uzbek.

Positional Combinatorics. One of the most distinctive combinatorial features of syntactically independent elements is their positional flexibility. These units may occur at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a sentence. However, changes in their position often influence their pragmatic function.

The sentence-initial position is the most common pattern in both English and Uzbek.

For example: Unfortunately, the conference was cancelled.

Certainly, we will discuss this issue again. Uzbek equivalents are:

Afsuski, konferensiya bekor qilindi. Albatta, bu masalani yana muhokama qilamiz.

When placed at the beginning of a sentence, these elements prepare the listener for the information that follows and present the speaker's evaluation before the proposition itself.

Syntactically independent elements may also occur in the middle of a sentence.

For example: The experiment will, probably, continue next month.

Uzbek equivalent: Tajriba, ehtimol, keyingi bosqichda davom ettiriladi.

This position is especially common in academic writing, where it functions as a strategy of hedging by reducing the degree of certainty expressed by the author.

Sentence-final position is comparatively more productive in English than in Uzbek.

Examples include: He has forgotten the meeting, perhaps. They will agree, hopefully.

Comparable Uzbek examples are: U keladi, shekilli. Ish tugaydi, chamasi.

Sentence-final placement generally increases the emotional or conversational character of an utterance and is particularly frequent in spoken discourse.

Syntagmatic Relations

Although syntactically independent elements are not grammatically subordinate to sentence constituents, they are semantically related to the proposition as a whole.

For example: Frankly speaking, the proposal is unrealistic.

The expression frankly speaking is not connected solely with the predicate but modifies the speaker's evaluation of the entire proposition.

A similar pattern can be observed in Uzbek: Ochig'ini aytganda, loyiha qayta ishlanishi kerak. Here, the parenthetical expression likewise refers to the whole statement rather than to a single constituent. Consequently, syntactically independent elements modify propositions rather than individual sentence parts. **Semantic Compatibility.** The combinatorial potential of syntactically independent elements also depends on semantic compatibility.

For instance, the modal expression certainly usually combines with factual statements expressing confidence.

Example: Certainly, this theory explains the phenomenon.

By contrast, the following sentence appears semantically inconsistent:

Certainly, maybe he is right. The combination of certainly and maybe creates a semantic contradiction because one expresses certainty while the other expresses uncertainty.

The same phenomenon can be observed in Uzbek.

Albatta, balki u kelar. Although grammatically acceptable, this sentence is semantically contradictory. Thus, the combinatorial potential of syntactically independent elements is determined not only by syntax but also by semantic compatibility.

Combinatorial Patterns of Modal Expressions

Modal expressions generally modify the entire proposition rather than individual lexical items.

For example: Probably, the results are reliable.

Here, probably does not modify the adjective reliable alone but expresses uncertainty regarding the whole statement.

The Uzbek equivalent is: Ehtimol, natijalar ishonchlidir.

Another example is: Apparently, the data were collected incorrectly.

Uzbek equivalent: Ko‘rinishidan, ma’lumotlar noto‘g‘ri yig‘ilgan.

Such expressions establish the epistemic modality of the entire sentence rather than that of a single constituent.

Combinatorial Characteristics of Vocatives

Vocatives commonly occur in several structural patterns.

One frequent model consists of a vocative followed by a declarative sentence.

For example: Dear students, today we will begin a new topic.

Another productive model combines a vocative with an imperative sentence.

For example: John, close the door.

Uzbek equivalent: Azizim, eshikni yop.

Vocatives may also occur with interrogative sentences.

For example: Professor, could you explain this concept?

Uzbek equivalent: Ustoz, buni yana tushuntirib bera olasizmi?

These examples demonstrate that vocatives are compatible with all major communicative sentence types, including declarative, imperative, and interrogative constructio. Combinatorial Potential of Parenthetical Expressions

Among syntactically independent elements, parenthetical expressions demonstrate the highest degree of combinatorial flexibility. They may occur in a wide variety of communicative contexts and sentence types while preserving their functional independence.

For example, the English parenthetical expression apparently may occur in declarative, interrogative, complex, and subordinate clauses, as well as in academic writing, journalistic discourse, and everyday conversation.

Examples include: Apparently, nobody noticed the error.

Apparently, did nobody notice the error?

Apparently, although the experiment failed, valuable data were collected.

Comparable examples can also be found in Uzbek:

Aytishlaricha, loyiha muvaffaqiyatli yakunlangan.

Ko‘rinishidan, u hali kelmagan.

These examples demonstrate that parenthetical expressions possess a high degree of syntactic flexibility and can easily adapt to different discourse environments without losing their semantic or pragmatic functions.

Combinatorial Nature of Discourse Markers. Discourse markers constitute another productive category of syntactically independent elements, particularly in English. Their primary function is to establish logical and semantic relationships between clauses, sentences, and larger stretches of discourse.

Frequently used English discourse markers include however, moreover, therefore, besides, nevertheless, actually, indeed, and in fact.

For example: However, further research is required.

Moreover, the hypothesis has been confirmed.

Comparable discourse markers in Uzbek include *biroq*, *bundan tashqari*, *shuningdek*, *demak*, *aslida*, and *xususan*. These linguistic units ensure textual coherence by indicating contrast, addition, conclusion, clarification, or emphasis. Unlike ordinary conjunctions, discourse markers operate primarily at the discourse level and contribute to the logical organization of communication.

Combinatorial Restrictions

Not every syntactically independent element can be combined freely with any proposition. Their compatibility is often restricted by semantic and pragmatic considerations. For instance, the parenthetical expression unfortunately normally accompanies situations that are perceived as undesirable or negative.

For example: Unfortunately, the patient died.

This sentence is both grammatically and pragmatically natural because the speaker expresses regret regarding an unfortunate event.

By contrast:

Unfortunately, she won the competition.

Although this sentence is grammatically correct, it appears pragmatically unusual unless a specific context justifies the speaker's negative attitude toward the event. The same phenomenon exists in Uzbek. *Afsuski, u imtihondan yiqildi*.

This sentence is entirely natural because the event is conventionally viewed as unfortunate.

However,

Afsuski, u Nobel mukofotini oldi.

Without additional contextual explanation, this sentence creates pragmatic inconsistency because receiving the Nobel Prize is generally interpreted as a positive achievement. These examples illustrate that the combinatorial behavior of syntactically independent elements is governed not only by grammatical rules but also by cultural expectations, contextual interpretation, and pragmatic appropriateness. *Combinatorial Differences Between English and Uzbek*

Comparative analysis reveals several important differences between English and Uzbek regarding the combinatorial behavior of syntactically independent elements. English demonstrates greater positional flexibility, allowing these elements to appear naturally in sentence-initial, medial, and final positions. Uzbek also permits positional variation, although intonation plays a considerably more significant role in determining communicative interpretation.

Punctuation serves as an important grammatical indicator in both languages; however, its role is particularly prominent in English, where commas frequently distinguish syntactically independent elements from the core sentence structure.

English possesses a wider range of discourse markers and epistemic modal expressions, especially in academic and formal writing. Uzbek, by contrast, relies more heavily on emotional

and expressive devices, reflecting national traditions of politeness, interpersonal communication, and speech etiquette.

Vocatives exhibit greater stylistic diversity in Uzbek than in English. Uzbek speakers frequently employ honorifics, kinship terms, and affectionate forms of address to express respect, familiarity, or emotional closeness. English vocatives, although productive, generally serve a more limited function of identifying the addressee.

Parenthetical clauses also occur more frequently in English academic and professional discourse, whereas Uzbek tends to employ shorter parenthetical expressions and modal words to achieve similar communicative goals. Overall, English syntactically independent elements primarily facilitate discourse organization and the expression of epistemic modality, while Uzbek places greater emphasis on emotional expressiveness, politeness strategies, and interpersonal communication.

Conclusion. The combinatorial analysis demonstrates that the use of syntactically independent elements is governed by systematic linguistic principles rather than random choice. Their position within the sentence, semantic compatibility with surrounding expressions, and discourse functions are subject to identifiable syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic constraints. Although these elements remain grammatically independent in both English and Uzbek, they play a fundamental role in maintaining the communicative coherence and pragmatic integrity of discourse. Their positional flexibility, semantic compatibility, and stylistic functions constitute the principal factors determining their combinatorial potential. Consequently, syntactically independent elements should be regarded not as peripheral components of sentence structure but as indispensable resources for effective communication and discourse organization.

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