

## FUNCTIONING OF MULTICOMPONENT CONTRACTED PREDICATES IN 'A QUESTION OF TRUST' BY PENNY VINCENZI

Yuriy Dzyadyk

Assistant, University of Ghana, Ghana

e-mail: yuridlviv@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0002-9639-1020

### Summary

The aim of this paper is to find out how contracted predicates function in the novel 'A Question of Trust' by Penny Vincenzi. A series of predicates help the author to make characterization rich, endow characters with love, desire for life when they make crucial decisions in order to overcome conflicts. The article deals with a topical and scientifically reasonable theme related to the Syntax of the English Fiction written by a woman (Women's Writing) of the early 21st century. The topicality of the paper is stipulated by the syntactic approach to the disclosure of the structural, semantic and functional mechanisms of the organization of sentences with contracted predicates in the language and text of the English Postmodern Fiction. Descriptive, contextual, syntagmatic and paradigmatic analyses of text fragments were used to describe syntactic models. A special attention is paid to the coordination which connects predicates with other sentence parts and strengthens inner connection among contracted parts in verbal/nominal series. Equality of semantic and syntactic functions of predicates goes along with the similarity of content of semantic groups formed by means of both predicates and secondary parts of a sentence, as well as with morphological parallelism, which is expressed in the cases of repetition of auxiliary verbs in the analytical forms of verbal predicates.

**Keywords:** syntaxeme, coordination, postmodernism, parallelism, indicator.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23856/3802>

### 1. Introduction

Modern theory of contracted (homogeneous) parts of speech is preceded by a long linguistic tradition. The linguistic analysis of contracted parts was mostly based on the types of sentences with contracted predicates (*Brown, Bailey, 1958; Greenbaum, 1996*), independent sentence parts (*Curme, 1931*), punctuation (*Skellton, 1949*), predication (*Onions, 1971*), complex predicate (*Kittredge, Farley, 1913; Warriner, 1957*), synthetic predicate (*Shevelov, 1963*), conjunctions (*Roberts, 1964*), joined constructions (*Baker, 1989*), syntactic description (*Givón, 1993*), subordinate structure (*Fransis, 1958*).

An important step in understanding the nature of homogeneity was the recognition of the special syntactic status of contracted parts of speech. Syntactic science made this step due to classical linguistic theory beginning from logical postulates and including the contemporary study of contracted parts in the structure of a sentence and text. The coordination between the contracted elements in a sentence became a significant sign of homogeneity, its relevant feature. Homogeneity is impossible without coordination. A specific intonation of enumeration and conjunctions that connect the contracted parts of speech are determiners of homogeneity. The subjects that define the same predicate are always homogeneous, as well as the predicates that define the same subject are also homogeneous. However, the impossibility of inserting a coordinating conjunction between homogeneous parts leads to a loss of homogeneity. The study of homogeneity deals with grammatical, lexical and semantic, semantic and syntactic

approaches. Homogeneity as a grammatical phenomenon is based on the functional equivalence and independence of parts of speech that is found in coordination between contracted parts of speech and their parallel inserting in the structure of a sentence. The homogeneity in terms of the semantic approach is interpreted as equality of semantic relations derived from the lexical meaning of coordinating words.

## **2. Contracted predicates in the general system of predicates**

In terms of formal, semantic complexity and role in a sentence, no part of the sentence can compete with the predicate. The functioning of grammatical categories of the predicate covers the whole sentence and determines its specificity. The predicate is included in the structural scheme of the sentence as its principal part; it adds the modal and temporal characteristics to the predicative feature, it is correlated with the subject in the semantic and syntactic structure of the sentence. The predicate is considered to be a part of a sentence on which the secondary parts of sentence as the most significant elements of the sentence structure are dependent (object, adverbial modifier). Both predicate and dependent on it secondary parts of a sentence help the sentence to function and express the main meaning contained in it. This is the necessary structural and informational sufficient minimum, without which the sentence as a communicative unit does not exist. It can be defined as the semantic and grammatical nucleus or the semantic and grammatical minimum of a sentence. Since the predicate determines predicative categories of a sentence, it can be considered a constituent element of the sentence.

Basic categorial features of homogeneity are often complemented by morphological ones. The same morphological arrangement of predicates adds more clarity to homogeneity, but it cannot be considered relevant, since contracted predicates may belong to different parts of speech and can be characterized by different ways of morphological arrangement. The analysis of contracted predicates is based on the fact that homogeneity is a grammatical phenomenon. However, the semantic factor is taken into account, too. In a verbal series, contracted predicates make quantitative changes in the structure of a sentence and affect its structure, in particular by extending it with secondary sentence parts. Having a central position in the sentence, the predicate organizes almost the entire structure of the sentence and plays an important role in determining the nature and main content of the same sentence. As constituents of the nominal predicate, both copula and a nominal part (noun, adjective, numeral, participle) express characteristics, quality or state. The difference is that only the verb can express predicativity, that is, it can correlate noun characteristics, quality or state with reality.

## **3. Functioning of contracted predicates on a postmodern text level**

The phenomenon of homogeneity is not new in linguistics, but functioning of contracted parts of the sentence, including predicates, both nominal and verbal, on the text level has not been described completely yet. On the basis of the context, new semantic relations that differ from mere sentences with homogeneous parts of speech are formed between contracted predicates. The grammatical characterization of the nouns/adjectives and verbs that are included in the homogeneous series depicts the emotional state of the characters of the novel, shows their mood in various situations which are altered under the influence of certain events, relations between characters. Constructions with contracted predicates are studied from the perspective of the author's style, as one of the means of realization of the author's intention in the novel. The structural variety and semantic content of the series with contracted predicates allow to

reproduce the effectiveness of the novel, to actualize its content. A number of functions (characterization, behaviourization, psychologization, intimation, as well as socialization) affect the events in the novel. Contracted predicates that are constructed of two or more structural elements denote certain actions that ultimately reflect the real or imaginary world of the person that is revealed by the author, and bring the narration closer to reality, with the reader's presence in the world of characters. Grammatical markers, temporal forms of verbs help fully express the phenomenon of homogeneity.

Postmodernism as a new trend in philosophy and art replaced modernism with its social rebellion and concentration on inner world of an individual. This process went on in literature, too. Postmodernism as a trend in literature was a synthesis of phenomena that occurred both in fiction and philosophical views. A new trend changed the relations between the elitist stories and stories about ordinary people. Science fiction, detective and adventure stories, intrigues, sentimental stories, household themes prevail in literary works. Pluralism, fragmentation, cult of independent personality, uncertainty, irony, art in the form of a game without rules, perception of life as a chaotic accumulation of tendencies and views are features that separate postmodernism from modernism. Postmodernist sentiments can be found in disappointment that has been promoted, beliefs in the victory of wisdom and the unlimited possibilities of human potential. The post-structuralist, deconstructive ideas of French philosophers contributed to the creation of new trend in the British literature. Women's novels started a new era. Novels written by women show the world how they see it. We can see a woman and her environment: family, friends, society in the centre of the novels. The emotional state of heroines based on the lexical and syntactic means is described in the sentence structures by the authors. Expanding horizons of the story and its openness is a deliberate strategy that writers use to allow the reader to add his own ideas at the end of novels. Warfare, family problems, historical events become the background on which the main actions of the literary works are depicted, and contracted predicates fill narration with emotionality and expressiveness.

#### 4. Women's writing as a distinctive genre

At present, such features as fragmentation, multi-level organization of the text, immersion in own world and the formation of one's 'ego' prevail in the British postmodern literature. However, there is no detailed analysis of the phenomenon, especially when it comes to 'women's writing'. If the novels of women writers are analyzed, it is in the plane of 'men's novels', which, in our opinion, is not justified, because they are two different types of postmodern discourse.

The works of Hassan (a theorist of postmodernism) (*Hassan, 1982*), Head (*Head, 2002*) deserve special attention. Head examines the problems of Great Britain in the second half of the 20th century and helps to understand modern English literature. However, the author does not highlight the trends of the postmodern novel. These trends have been the subject of Wagner's research, but he does not offer a clear genre-thematic diversity of the English postmodern novel (*Wagner, 2010*).

One of the main factors influencing the development of 'women's writing' was the feminist movement in Western Europe, which penetrated social, political, economic and cultural life and did not bypass literature. The feminist movement contributed to the self-identification of women in society. 'Women's writing' is mostly a term used by French experts. It is less used by German or British experts in gender literary criticism. In the Western world we find such names as *Romance*, *Frauenroman*, *Dameroman*, *Liebensroman* – a love novel written by a

woman about women, for women (*Lodge, Wood, 2000*). In the novels created by women, the picture of the world is shown in a different, unusual way. Women's literature contains texts of different style, genre, type, degree of talent and influence on the literary process, which are combined by a single factor – the author's gender. The structure of the text is open, it can be freely expanded without borders. The characters appear alive, and the truth is taken from the details of everyday life (*Huddle, 1991*). The emphasis is on emotional experiences, thoughts, on the inner world; what is seen and heard influences further decisions. Dialogues prevails over monologues. A woman wants to be heard, she convinces the opposite sex of the correctness of her worldview, defends her dignity directly or indirectly, fights for her place in a society.

The world of women exists, and it is different from the world of men. Since there is a world of women, there is women's literature. Women paint their own structure of the society. The woman portrayed in 'male literature' is the image that the conservative society usually wanted to see: a female slave, a female victim, a female prostitute, a female clown. Women writers create the image of a woman in a new system. This is a new heroine, a self-sufficient woman who (if wishes) breaks with her binary responsibilities as a mother and a wife:

(1) They bought a pretty little mews house in Knightsbridge, exactly what she (Diana) had dreamed of, and **she had** the greatest **fun decorating** and **furnishing** it and then **settled** into what seemed at first a perfect life as London continued to ignore the fact that there was a war on. She **enjoyed looking after** Johnathan and **being a good wife**; she **ran** the house beautifully, **was** a wonderful hostess, entertaining is clients as well as their friends, never **overspent** on her admittedly generous household budget, and even **cooked** some simple meals herself when they were alone at home, which he liked very much (*Vincenzi, 2017: 41–42*).

Novels written by women differ in a variety of genres: socio-psychological novel, cross-cultural novel, intellectual novel, documentary novel, love story, novel-biography, 'novel of the English idea' with the emphasis on the national identity, processes of age transformations, Victorian heritage and reaction to multicultural trends (*Head, 2002: 121*). The focus is on a woman who solves both social and women's problems. We find features of postmodernism on the pages of postmodern novels: the cult of independent personality, the desire for the unconscious world, the combination of polar truths, the interweaving of story styles, irony, the principle of the game, uncertainty, fragmentation (*Hassan, 1982: 267*). Therefore, classical norms of 'premarital status' behavior are perceived in 'A Question of Trust' in an unusual way:

(2) How can this be happening? When ordinary people **are homeless and hungry**... Both of them had finally been released from hospital, Tom invalided out of the army, Laura returning to school part-time until the spring term. They were both living in her little flat, while he tried to come to terms with his new, empty situation and what he might do: even with the small diamond on her finger, this could never had happened before the war, a young couple, unmarried, living together under the same roof. Tom's parents were shocked and Laura's headmaster was very vocal on the subject (*Vincenzi, 2017: 66*).

Some part of the novel shows that certain events happen during the war. We follow how the writer uses the lexemes 'war', 'soldiers', or contextually shows that there is a shortage of food in the country, and the population is deprived of the necessary things: 'ordinary people **are homeless and hungry**'.

Contracted nominal predicates reveal the state in which ordinary people appeared. The conjunction 'and' adds more information: it is not enough that there are many homeless people in the country, but they are still starving. Sacrifice, obstacles are shown as an author's strategy:

(3) ...she (Laura) couldn't get lost, and besides, trucks filled with soldiers kept passing her, as if leading her on her way. But it was difficult; and the rain and the wind were driving against her, slowing her down. ... She tried not to think of anything, to save her emotional as well as her physical energy for Tom, for getting to Tom, for not failing Tom. She would get there because she must; there was no alternative. An animal, a dog or even a cat, ran across her path; she slammed on her brakes but they didn't work, the bike slithering wildly on the wet road. She **fell off, climbed** back on, battling against tears, against panic. Keep going, Laura, keep going, it couldn't be much further (*Vincenzi, 2017: 56*).

Wagner draws attention to the fact that history is depicted in the form of a story about the past – history turns into a background (*Wagner, 2010*). The story of the soldiers on the trucks contains some additional information about the military events, helps to understand the difficulties of that time: transport problems, economic downturn, moral decline. Even weather conditions are against the woman. Despite this, Laura is persistently moving towards her goal. Contracted predicates 'fell off', 'climbed' which are used in the text, help to understand the helplessness in the situation. The preposition 'back' indicates that the heroine is not discouraged, because her lover is waiting for her in the hospital. Contracted predicates extend the sentence, introduce an additional element of cognition of the object. Penny Vincenzi uses contracted predicates to convey the emotional and mental state of the characters. Grammar and punctuation markers slow down or speed up the pace of the story.

### 5. Types of coordination in the postmodern texts

Analyzing sentences with contracted predicates, we come across multielement series of contracted verb forms, between which coordination as a component of homogeneity is expressed polysyndetically. A polysyndetic series of predicates is formed by repeating the conjunction 'and' (or its equivalent) before each structural element, emphasizing the autonomy of each of the homogeneous elements in a multi-component series of predicates. It seems that the development of the action ends after each individual predicate. However, the action is restored by means of new components of a series. A special affect is achieved if no punctuation is used between the contracted elements. The conjunction, thus, builds a series and forms a semantic basis on which verb forms are located. Only women writers can describe a lady's appearance in a detailed manner:

(4) Tom waited patiently while help was organized, and he watched Diana as she **chatted and laughed and winded** the baby; Diana with her gleaming dark beauty, and her slightly low-pitched voice with its perfectly honed, clipped accent and her perfect legs, those at least unsullied by childbearing, crossing and uncrossing themselves as she shifted in her chair to re-settle the baby (*Vincenzi, 2017: 102–103*).

(5) Tom **picked** him (Kit) **up** and **held** him in silence for a while, repeatedly kissing the top of his blonde head; and then **sat down, took** him onto his knee, and **held** him very close (*Vincenzi, 2017: 538*).

(6) She (Diana) **stood up, held out** her hand and then **dropped** it again, **bent** and **kissed** him (Leo Bennett) on the cheek and **said**, 'Thank you so, so much for the most wonderful lunch and for being so nice about it all, and I do hope you find something else to put in your column tomorrow,' and **ran** out of the restaurant (*Vincenzi, 2017: 451*).

(7) Jillie **was** very **clever**, and not conventionally **pretty**, but extremely **attractive, tall** and very **slim**, with long straight brown hair and green eyes (*Vincenzi, 2017: 76–77*).

In asyndetic series, the actions are clearly separated:

(8) ‘Yes, well, what we can definitely do,’ said Tom, ‘next summer, we could all **come**, **bring** the baby up for holiday, **let** him – her – **ride** on the donkeys, **show** her how to dig sand-castles. It’d be so lovely.’ (*Vincenzi, 2017: 127*).

(9) He (Tom) **waved** at him (the telegram boy), **hurried** forward as fast as he dared, **took** the yellow envelope, **opened** it with clumsy fearful fingers (*Vincenzi, 2017: 89*).

In the sentences with predicates in a monosyndetic series each constituent element of the series can complete the sentence. The conjunction serves as a formal indicator of the unity of the series, expressing the final stage of enumeration and helping the predicates to extend the sentence:

(10) As he (Tom) sat there, watching Diana, waving for the waiter, ordering champagne, taking in the surroundings, which were scarcely familiar in themselves, but which induced a sensation he recognized from being in Jillie’s house – and even, he reflected with some surprise, being in the Southcott house with its glorious warmth that freezing day surrounded by books – he **settled back** in his chair, **took** the champagne from the tray the waiter was offering him and **surrendered** to – what? A sort of rich pleasure, a sense that this was quality in its purest sense, and that while this was not where he belonged, he had reached it and not without some difficulty, and having the ability to recognize that, he had every right to enjoy it (*Vincenzi, 2017: 220*).

Equality of syntactic and semantic functions of predicates is often based on the similarity of the content of semantic groups, which are formed from predicates and secondary parts of the sentence, which depend on these predicates. The sentence is divided into equal parts that are similar in content, and although the subject is expressed in the first part, it refers to the following parts. The similarity of the content of parts of a sentence is manifested when each of the predicates has secondary parts – in most cases, direct objects. It should be noted that if each predicate has secondary parts, the similarity of content in the group of predicates appears not on the basis of lexical similarity of verbs, but on the basis of similarity of complexes created by predicates. If contracted predicates do not have secondary parts or the same secondary parts belong to different predicates in a series, the similarity of content in the group of predicates is based on the semantic similarity of the verbs themselves, which are either synonymous or united by a common thought.

## 6. Parallelism in the multicomponent series of contracted predicates

Sometimes the similarity of the content in the group of predicates is emphasized by the previous sentence. When having similar content in the group of predicates, the syntactic structure of the sentence is characterized by parallelism. Secondary parts can be the same for each of the predicates. Parallelism can be observed in the morphological forms of contracted verbal predicates. In most cases, such contracted predicates are expressed by the same tense, as well as aspect forms. Morphological parallelism is expressed in cases where auxiliary verbs are repeated in analytical forms of verbal predicates. The polypredicative character of sentences with contracted verbal predicates significantly increases their informative weight. Repetition of the auxiliary verb before the next component in a homogeneous series creates redundancy, but this does not interfere with the integrity of the sentence. Obviously, Penny Vincenzi wants to emphasize the actions performed by the subject, so she uses the auxiliary verb several times. In a homogeneous series, predicates can also be extended by the same secondary parts, so due to redundancy, the distance of predicates is overcome. While having a stylistic colouring, the story moves forward, and each component of the series becomes more important:



(11) He (Tom) had lain for hours, white faced, still, staring at the ceiling, trying to make sense of it all: of his absolute despair, his bewilderment that she could fail him, his terror that something dreadful had happened to her, his rage that something, anything could have robbed him of the happiness that he **had waited** for so long and **had thought** that at last he could reclaim (*Vincenzi, 2017: 57*).

(12) She (Laura) **would** either **have mocked** him (Tom) or **despised** him, probably both (*Vincenzi, 2017: 226*). The *Daily News*, the paper he (Josh Curtis) worked for, was a middle-market broadsheet, edited by Harry Campbell who **had been raised** and **trained** on some of the finest newspapers in Fleet Street; and the *Daily News*, very much Harry's creation, was hugely admired (*Vincenzi, 2017: 174*).

We come across sentences with contracted predicates connected by means of the conjunction that expresses the alternative relations. However, the phrase 'probably both' at the end of the sentence shows that the character might have performed both actions. The conjunction in this example expresses the relations of alternation, sequence. Sentences of this type are characterized by syntactic parallelism and similarity of content in the predicate group. Syntactic and semantic equivalence makes it possible to rearrange verbal predicates in the sentence. Predicates express actions that are autonomous from each other; each of them is directly related to the subject. It happens in the text fragments that there is an order of predicates according to which, the predicate that expresses the effect of physical movement, location in space, goes first. The second predicate is expressed by a verb of another meaning: psychological state, mental perception:

(13) Alice **sat** in bed, cuddling Kit, and **thought** how lucky she was (*Vincenzi, 2017: 272*).

While occupying the position of the first predicate in the sentence, the verbs of movement 'to go', 'to come', as well as the verb 'to take', have the ability to weaken their meaning along with a full verb, forming certain syntactic constructions that function as one unit. Therefore, we separate them from contracted verbal predicates:

(14) I'm on duty in an hour. I'll **go and get** a meal and you should get back to the nurses' home and – well, have a good look at yourself (*Vincenzi, 2017: 171*).

(15) 'Diana,' said Wenderlien patiently. 'Blanche doesn't need to know that. We'll **go** to Amies **and look** at the suits.' (*Vincenzi, 2017: 163*).

(16) 'Now, have I missed lunch? Shall I **go and eat** it in the kitchen, with Cook, or up in the nursery with Jamie? That would be better, wouldn't it, more acceptable.' (*Vincenzi, 2017: 153*).

Sentences with such syntactic constructions can be transformed into combinations that consist of the verbs of movement and the infinitive in which the goal is expressed: 'I'll go to get a meal'; 'We'll go... to look at the suits'; 'Shall I go to eat it (lunch) in the kitchen?' It is clear how pseudo-homogeneity is lost in these structures.

Contracted predicates, unlike other contracted parts of a sentence, influence the whole structure of a sentence. In a multi-component series of contracted predicates, each of the predicates can be extended by the same or different secondary parts. The main indicator of the coordination is a conjunction, which serves as a formal marker of the unity of a homogeneous series. An important point in understanding the essence of the nature of homogeneity was the recognition of the special status of sentences with contracted predicates and their functioning in the literary text. In feminist literature, contracted predicates acquire a new sound, as they allow the author to delve deeper into the inner world, to observe changes in a personal development. However, the structures of 'women's' novels and the components of these structures – a series of contracted predicates, which can have both synthetic and analytical forms of expression, as well as changes in the structure of text discourse are to be studied (*Subordination, 2008: 135–161*).

Grammatical theory presupposes a multifaceted analysis of syntactic units given the diversity of their syntactic, pragmatic, semantic and functional features (*Tallerman, 2019; Syntax and semantics, 2006: 182–190*). From the semantic and syntactic point of view, the predicate is the main syntaxeme, the valence of which depends on the quantitative and qualitative composition of the sentence (*The syntax of the sentence, 1994: 333; Syntax and lexis, 2005: 319*). Therefore, its characteristics are an important link in the study of semantic and syntactic organization of the sentence (*The Routledge, 2014: 307–322; Radford, 2004: 4*). Although the study of the phenomenon of homogeneity is not new in linguistics, but modern perception of the nature of contracted elements in a text have started in contemporary syntactic science. In interpreting the essence of the syntactic phenomenon of homogeneity of sentence parts, general principles are outlined: coordination between homogeneous parts of a sentence; common syntactic and semantic functions; identity of syntactic relations; specific connection of homogeneous parts of the sentence with other parts of the sentence; grammatical independence of homogeneous elements from each other; common lexical meaning and morphological design. A semantic feature should be found either in the context or in a certain situation.

## 7. Conclusions

Sentences with a multicomponent series of predicates differ in fiction in terms of frequency of their use and a set of structural and semantic. In the novel ‘A Question of Trust’ by Penny Vincenzi, these constructions have a stylistic significance which is based on structural and semantic peculiarities. When considering the stylistic potential of coordination types (monosyndetic, asyndetic, polysyndetic), their expressive direction is taken into account, i. e. polysyndetic series of predicates lead to the expressiveness of the studied syntactic constructions, while monosyndetic types have contextually stylistic significance that depends mainly on other structural and semantic peculiarities. The stylistic significance of the asyndetic series – a structure with a weakened grammatical connection – is primarily based on its main grammatical function of expressing incompleteness. This grammatical function is associated with the ability of the asyndetic series to create semantic and expressive tension of the context. Sentences with contracted predicates are stylistically relevant in the rhythmic organization of the literary text. The originality of the rhythm of these constructions is due to the structural features – the nature of multicomponent series, complete or incomplete expansion of predicates by secondary sentence parts, different types of coordination, lexical semantics of the series, the nature of temporal relations between predicates.

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