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THE CATEGORY OF “IMPERSONALITY” IN MODERN ENGLISH

Summary. The article is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the problem of “impersonality” in Modern English. This issue is investigated through the relationship between linguistic and logical predicative structures. Special attention is paid to constructions with the so-called impersonal *it* (*It is cold, It rains*), sentences with introductory *it*, emphatic (cleft) *it*, constructions such as *It was Winifred who...*, as well as the *There is...* model and nominative sentences. The authors consider the main approaches to the interpretation of these phenomena in Ukrainian and foreign linguistics. Particular attention is given to the controversial question of the supposed incongruity between the grammatical structure of the sentence and the logical structure of a judgement.

The research is based on the theory of reflection, according to which a linguistic utterance is not related directly to real world but to a thought formed in the mind of the subject of thinking. Predicativity is understood as a universal form of organizing thought, which exists in two forms: amorphous and structured (in the form of judgement). The authors believe that judgement is basically two-membered, as it reflects the processes that take place in the world, and emphasize the unity of ontological and subjective elements in the structure of predication.

Sentences with “impersonal” *it* are defined as two-member sentences with a generalized substantive meaning of the subject, rather than as one-member or semantically “empty” structures. In constructions with introductory *it*, the element *it* is treated as a full semantic subject, while infinitive and subordinate clauses are regarded as appositive elements; such structures are described as sentences of deductive formation of the subject of thought. Emphatic constructions are analysed as the result of the successive generation of two predicative units and are defined as complex sentences with a special communicative function.

In conclusion, the author states that the apparent discrepancy between logical and linguistic predication arises from ignoring the internal transformations of thought structures in the process of linguistic reflection of reality.

Key words: judgement, logical predicative structure, Predicativity, impersonal *it*, introductory *it*, emphatic *it*, amorphous, clearly structured.

Problem statement. The problem of the interrelation between Language and Thought and, in particular,

between their fundamental structural units – the linguistic and logical predicative structures – is known to be one of the essential issues in linguistics. Its significance is conditioned by a number of linguistic phenomena whose characteristic feature lies in their inability – unlike the overwhelming majority of utterances in Indo-European languages – to be projected, because of their structure, onto a logical judgement.

In English, such phenomena include the so-called *impersonal it*, the *introductory it*, the *emphatic it*, sentence types such as *Winter, Dusk of a summer night* as well as the construction *There is....* Each of these phenomena constitutes a separate problem in English linguistics, and diverse viewpoints have been expressed regarding each of them

First of all let us analyze the so called *impersonal* sentences, with the *impersonal pronoun it* at the beginning of the sentence (e.g., *It often rains in winter; It is five minutes past six*, etc.. The term *impersonal* was introduced by the linguists who deny the existence of a direct correspondence between the structure of the sentence and that of the judgement. According to them, the element *it* is devoid of any referential meaning, performing solely a syntactic-organizational function within the sentence. In the sentence *It is cold*, , no independently distinguished subject is conceived [1, c. 47].

Theoretical background. From this point of view, such sentences are, two-member structures, at the linguistic level, since they contain both subject and predicate, whereas their corresponding logical judgements are single-member, consisting only of a predicate. The thesis regarding the discrepancy between linguistic and logical predicative structures, as we see, originates precisely from this type of sentences. In its extreme, absolutized form, this thesis is extended to all linguistic utterances without exception, including clearly structured, canonical two-member sentences.

Another viewpoint concerns the status of *it*, the very element that has caused so much controversy

among linguists. According to this view, *it* should be regarded as a *genuine grammatical subject*, rather than as a pseudo-subject. This position is shared by a sizable group of linguists, [1, c. 140–142]. The most thoroughly substantiated version of this view is found in the works of L.M. Finoghina. She arrives at this conclusion by correlating sentences beginning with *it* with processes of objective reality, and correlating their structural components (the element *it* and the predicate) with corresponding components of this reality (a substance and the mode of its existence in time and space) [1, c. 72]. Closely related to the phenomenon just examined are English sentences containing the so-called *introductory it*. As has already been noted, these sentences likewise constitute a problem in English linguistics. Debates continue to this day regarding both the status of *it* and the status of the element it purportedly “introduces.” The most widespread view holds that *it* functions as a purely formal subject (i.e. one devoid of semantic content, whose role is limited to occupying the syntactic subject position). The “notional” subject, in this case, is assumed to be represented by the infinitive or subordinate clause, whose role is thus reduced to that of the semantic core of the utterance, *it* being the actual (semantic) subject of the sentence, while the infinitive or subordinate clause is an appositive element referring to it [1, c. 199].

Equally complex is the problem submitted by sentences containing the so-called *emphatic it* (or, in alternative terminology, *cleft sentences*). These are sentences of the type *It was Winifred who went up to him* (Galsworthy). Owing to their structural complexity, such utterances resist classification within any of the existing syntactic typologies of the sentence. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are treated as representing a separate structural-semantic type – “pseudo-two-member sentences” [1], or “cleft sentences [2, c. 67].” In some works the very syntactic type of these sentences remains undefined..

The general indeterminacy surrounding this type of sentence gives rise to differences in how their constituent parts are interpreted. Some linguists classify both parts as separate sentences – main and subordinate – although they do so with certain reservations, especially with regard to the main clause, the *protasis*, which is introduced by *it*. The information distributed between the ‘main’ and the ‘subordinate’ clauses can be expressed by a simple sentence. The “main” clause (the *protasis*) is thus assigned a purely emphatic role, as a result of which it is considered the bearer of emphatic information, while the subordinate clause carries the semantic content proper. From this it follows that the “main clause,” although structurally complete, expresses nothing except emphasis and is therefore semantically “empty.” Thus, once again, we encounter the assertion of a mismatch between linguistic and logical predicative structures. Seeking to resolve this situation, some scholars propose a com-

promise – treating this type as “pseudo-complex sentences” [1].

As for the theory of the cleft sentence itself, the discrepancy between linguistic and logical predicative structures is assumed in advance. This viewpoint is grounded in the doctrine of theme – rheme articulation, whose fundamental postulate is precisely the acknowledgment of such a discrepancy. In the interpretation of cleft sentences, the notion of informational “division” also appears, but now on a different basis – namely, the theme – rheme principle, which, like emphasis, serves merely as a means of imparting communicative expressiveness to utterances [2, c. 353].

According to this approach, any simple sentence acquires a special communicative distinctness when its structure is “split” into two communicatively opposed parts: the *focus* (the centre of new information) and the *theme* (already known information, a kind of informational “point of departure” [2, c. 353]. The grammatical status of this type of sentence, however, remains essentially undefined. R. Quirk, for example, designates this type as a *construction*, and its components as “sections,” each containing a verb [2, 361]. The coexistence of multiple viewpoints and the lack of a clear grammatical definition – both of the sentence as a whole and of its constituent parts – sufficiently demonstrate that the problem of the so-called *emphatic it* has not yet been definitively resolved. The issues surrounding the so-called *nominative* sentences and the construction *There is...* are likewise discussed within the framework of the correlation between logical and grammatical predicative structures.

Material Presentation. From the material presented above, it may be concluded that the solution to the problem of the grammatical nature of all the aforementioned phenomena largely depends on determining *what exactly* these linguistic units reflect, and *in what manner* they do so.

The analysis of theoretical sources aimed at clarifying this question demonstrates that in linguistics and philosophy – particularly within the framework of the theory of reflection – there already exists a significant body of work which, after appropriate reinterpretation, forms a rather coherent and consistent picture of the reflective process.

Let us focus on the most essential elements of this picture.

One of the most important aspects of reflection is that it “does not occur along the direct *object* → *name*. Between them stands the perceiving subject” [4, c. 48;]. This means that the crucial processes associated with reflection take place precisely within this mediating link.

Any attempt to project linguistic phenomena directly onto objective reality, while bypassing the mental processes through which this reality is conceptualized, is inherently flawed or, at the very

least, liable to considerable distortions. The processes of mental representation – what occurs at the level of logical reflection—may be described as the primary and most fundamental stage of synthesizing the content of the object being reflected. Among the extensive semiotic manifestations of this synthesis, the most essential place is occupied by utterances, which may be conventionally described as the sphere of *predicativity* (from Latin *prae-dico*: “to proclaim, to narrate, to indicate”).

Predicativity may manifest in two forms:

1. an *amorphous* (diffuse, unstructured) form, and
2. a *clearly structured* form.

The first form – predicative amorphousness – is historically the earliest mode of reflection, corresponding to reflection at the level of impressions. The second – structured predication – corresponds to reflection in the form of the judgement.

Historically, the structured form is secondary in relation to the unstructured one and emerged during the cognitive development of human thought.

With the emergence of predication, the first form of predicativity (hereafter simply *predicativity*, in order to distinguish it from *predication*) did not disappear. It remains as characteristic of modern human thinking as structured predication. Both forms coexist harmoniously in human consciousness, complementing one another and one often changes into another. Predication as the most developed form of predicativity represents the synthesis of the subjective and the objective; it is, in a sense, their quintessence. Structurally and semantically, predication – comprising a substantial concept and the specification of its existence in time – is nothing other than an analogue of the structural organization of the world: the process. Accordingly, the discussion may properly concern only a *two-member* structure of the judgement; assumptions regarding the existence of one-member or three-member judgements lack substantiation.

Carrying within itself the general idea of the world’s structure, predication also embodies subjectivity. This is evidenced by its ability to determine the relative significance of the substantive components of a process-relation. The most essential among these components appears as the *subject of judgement*. This property has not escaped the attention of linguists, who, when attempting to analyse the deep (semantic) structure of sentences, employ such oppositional terms as *subject vs. object (of thought)*, *agent vs. patient*, *bearer of the process vs. completer (completor) of the process*, and so forth. Thanks to this capacity, the structure of predication can function – in particular within relational judgements – as a model of human activity, its representation. For comparison: *subject of thought* → *predicate [(temporal specification of the relation)+(substantive concept – completer of the relation)] //subject of activity* → *type of activity* → *object of activity*

Thus, the structure of predication is not only a universal formula for the organization of the world but also a representation of the human being’s interaction with that world.

Other manifestations of subjectivity realized through the structure of predication include:

- the projection of the substantive concept onto time;
 - the quantitative evaluation of the subject of predication;
 - the evaluation of the correspondence between mental content and reality;
 - subjective evaluation of the manner of existence of the concept in time (beginning, end, etc.).
 - the necessity or inevitability of a process, etc.

Therefore, the structure of predication is the locus where ontological and subjective information about the world is concentrated – its bearer of meaning.

The correctness of this conclusion is confirmed, in particular, by the definition of meaning proposed by the philosopher S. O. Vasyliiev, who understands meaning as the “capacity to be determined by something” [5, c. 85]. According to the scholar, this concept is equivalent to *thought* [5, c. 19].

Let us compare this with linguistic definitions of predicative structure. In the view of A. K. Korsakov, the structure of predication corresponds, in objective reality, to *a substance and the mode of its existence in time and space* – that is, to a concrete elementary process of objective reality [6, c. 8–10].

Thus, the philosopher’s and the linguist’s definitions converge: the structure of predication, through the specificity of being (= “being determined by something”), correlates with thought.

Taking into account A. K. Korsakov’s reasonable proposition that awareness “is accompanied by mental activity and is conditioned by the complete complex correlation of components,” [6] the final act of reflection may be defined as *thought*.

At the level of language (speech), predication is expressed by utterances, which may be divided into two types:

1. Utterances that are not sentences (or *simple utterances*) – corresponding to the unstructured (continuous) form of reflection, i.e., reflection at the level of impressions.
2. Utterances that are sentences – corresponding to structured reflection, i.e., reflection in the form of the judgement, and serving as the expression of elementary, structured thoughts.

Let us attempt to determine the grammatical nature of the more complex cases that constitute the object of our analysis. Let us begin with the sentences *It is cold*, *It is summer*, and, first of all, with the question of what these utterances correspond to at the level of thought.

As we have already noted, the judgement is always two-member. This is objectively conditioned by its very nature. It is no coincidence that the majority of sentences in any natural language – both simple and complex – are structurally two-member. This indicates that, in most cases, a person’s perception of the material world is not only *discrete* – that is, one in which each component of a process is perceived independently – but also *concrete*.

The structural organization of a judgement, its two fundamental components – one of which is perceived as the *substantial* element,

and the other as the *specification of its being* – enables a person to formulate not only the processes whose components are clearly perceived but also those cases in which the *material substrate* is not explicitly, concretely apprehended. What is consciously perceived in such instances is not the material entity itself but merely *its manifestation* in time. The material substrate is perceived only in its most general features.

It is precisely to such cases that the so-called *impersonal it*-sentences belong. And it would be incorrect to treat *it* in these sentences as semantically “empty” (as the term *impersonal* might superficially imply).

Nor can the sentences with *impersonal it* be interpreted as directly corresponding to the processes of objective reality, as L. M. Finoghina maintains, since this obscures their specificity when compared with ordinary two-member sentences. Indeed, the latter also correspond to processes of objective reality, both globally and element-wise.

The specificity of “impersonal” *it*-sentences, as shown above, becomes apparent precisely at the logical level and is conditioned by the dialectical and structural flexibility of the judgement. In view of this, we consider sentences with “impersonal” *it* to correspond not to a process but to a *specific thought* – whether elementary or extended – in which the subject of thought conveys only a general idea of substantiality. Therefore, such sentences should be classified not as *impersonal*, but rather as two-member sentences whose subject possesses generalized substantial semantics.

As for the cases of the so-called *introductory it*, in our opinion, the element *it*, just as in sentences conveying a generalized idea of substantiality, should be treated not as a pseudo-subject but as a genuine semantic subject, which likewise expresses a concept of substantiality. As for the status of the elements that *it* ostensibly “introduces,” these, in relation to *it*, function as appositive constructions.

This type of sentence, unlike the one previously discussed, is not primary. It arises as the result of an “algebraic” operation performed upon a two-member sentence and reflects the gradual, deductive process of forming the subject of thought. The principal function of this type of sentence is to *postpone* in time (and in the linear arrangement of speech) the naming of the subject of thought, thus allowing it to crystallize fully.

Taking into account the deductive character of the formation of the subject of thought – from the general to the specific – we propose designating such sentences as *sentences of deductive formation of the subject of thought*, or simply *deductive sentences*.

A similarly complex algebraic character can be discerned in sentences with the so-called *emphatic it*. In our view, the generation of these sentences takes place sequentially.

First, under the influence of certain communicative factors, the speaker forms a *deictic sentence*, the essence of which lies in highlighting the most significant element of the communicative situation – whether actual or purely linguistic. The second sentence, formed immediately after the first, is *explanatory* (background-providing). From this explanatory sentence we learn what the speaker thinks about the component identified in the preceding deictic sentence. Depending on the content of this thought, the component acquires a certain logical configuration. At the level of speech, this is expressed through the correlation of the predicative component with any member of the second, explanatory sentence – and sometimes even with its predicate (*It’s teaching that*

he does (2, c. 365]).

The fact that these sentences are generated sequentially is confirmed by the analysis of numerous linguistic data, particularly by the observation that the component introduced by *it* is often highlighted not by “splitting” the utterance itself, but is instead extracted from the surrounding context [7, c. 114–241].

Before we can definitively determine the grammatical status of this type of sentence, it is necessary to formulate an operational definition of the *sentence*, since all the theoretical prerequisites for doing so have already been established within the theory of reflection.

Given that the basis of every sentence is the primary structure of predication, we shall understand a *sentence* as: “a group of words (or a word) that contains or implicates (fully or partially) the primary structure of predication and serves as a means of expressing a specific elementary or extended thought.”

Drawing on this definition, we may assert that *both parts* of the so-called *emphatic it*-sentence (and not only the second part – the apodosis) are fully formed sentences. Structurally and semantically, each part entirely corresponds to the definition provided above: each contains the primary structure of predication and expresses a concrete thought.

The fact that the first part expresses a thought is based not only on the structural-semantic self-sufficiency of the primary predicative structure. It is also confirmed by the fact that this part of the cleft construction is analogous to a *deictic sentence*, whose status in linguistics has never been questioned.

From this it follows that, in terms of status, such constructions should be regarded as *complex sentences with subordination*. Unfortunately, traditional linguistics does not offer a clear answer to the questions of what specific subtype of complex sentence this construction represents, nor what type of subordinate clause it contains.

Given that the main functional load of the first part of such sentences includes an element of emphasis, we believe that the traditional designation “*sentence with emphatic it*” may for now be retained.

Relying on the principles of the theory of reflection described in this article, it is also possible to analyse the so-called *There is...* construction, nominative sentences, and similar phenomena.

Conclusions, Summarizing the analysis of all the aforementioned cases, we arrive at the conclusion that all linguistic utterances should be divided, from the standpoint of their structural organization, into:

Primary utterances, which correspond to simple two-member judgements, and *Secondary utterances*, which arise as the result of a series of consecutive propositional operations performed upon judgements, with the aim of reflecting the material world in all its complexity.

Failure to take into account the structural transformations that occur within a judgement and its components when projecting complex linguistic phenomena onto the logical level inevitably leads to the mistaken belief that there exists an alleged discrepancy between the logical level of reflection and the level of language – that is, between the linguistic and logical structures of predication.

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Жаборюк І., Таланова Л. Категорія безособовості у сучасній англійській мові

Анотація. Стаття присвячена комплексному аналізу проблеми «безособовості» в сучасній англійській мові. Дана проблема аналізувалася крізь призму співвідношення мовних і логічних предикативних структур. Особливу увагу ми приділяли конструкціям з так званим безособовим *it* (*It is cold, It rains*), реченням з формальним (introductory) *it*, емфатичним (cleft) конструкціям типу *It was Winifred who...*, а також моделі *There is...* і номінативним реченням. Автори розглядають основні підходи до інтерпретації цих явищ у вітчизняній і зарубіжній лінгвістиці. Особливо детально автори зупиняються на дискусійному питанні про нібито невідповідність між граматичною структурою речення і логічною структурою судження. Теоретичним підґрунтям даного дослідження є теорія відображення, відповідно до якої мовне висловлення співвідноситься не безпосередньо з об'єктивною реальністю, а з думкою, що формується у свідомості суб'єкта пізнання. Предикативність

тлумачиться як універсальна форма організації мислення, що реалізується у двох формах – аморфній (неструктурованій) та структурованій (у формі судження). Автори обґрунтовують положення про принципову двочленність судження як відображення процесів, що відбуваються у світі та наголошують на цілісності буттєвого й суб'єктивного елементів структури предикації. На основі цього пропонується нова інтерпретація аналізованих конструкцій. Речення з «безособовим» *it* визначаються як двоскладні з узагальноною субстанційною семантикою підмета, а не як односкладні чи семантично «порожні». У конструкціях з introductory *it* елемент *it* трактується як повноцінний семантичний суб'єкт, тоді як інфінітивні та підрядні компоненти розглядаються як апозитивні; такі структури кваліфікуються як речення дедуктивного формування суб'єкта думки. Емфатичні конструкції аналізуються як результат послідовного породження двох предикативних Жаборюк одиниць і визначаються як складнопідрядні утворення з особливою комунікативною функцією. У підсумку автор доходить висновку, що уявна розбіжність між логічною та мовною предикацією виникає через ігнорування внутрішніх трансформацій мисленневих структур у процесі мовного відображення дійсності.

Ключові слова: судження, логічна предикативна структура, предикативність, безособове *it*, вступне *it*, емфатичне *it*, аморфний, чітко структурований.

Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 24.02.2026

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 23.03.2026

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 29.04.2026