Olesia Sidak
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1750-1162

RENDERRING SUBJECT "IT" INTO UKRAINIAN

Розглянуто функції займенника It в сучасному англомовному дискурсі. Встановлено місце займенника It у бізнес-дискурсі, охарактеризовані граматичні трансформації займенників англійської мови у процесі їхнього перекладу українською мовою. Виявлено тенденції до спрощення видів передачі безособових займенників в усному та писемному мовленні.

Ключові слова: *дискурс, займенник, переклад, перекладацьке перетворення, граматична трансформація.*

The article is devoted to study of English *it* as 'dummy' subject in the professional discourse, and its rendering into Ukrainian language.

In order to explain dissimilarities of using 'dummy' subjects in English and Ukrainian languages we consider the following levels: syntax, pragmatics, semantics and general discourse functions of 'dummy' subjects.

Ukrainian and foreign linguists have already approached 'dummy' subject constructions. It was demonstrated by the scientific articles and works written around the topic. The study of 'dummy' subject constructions historically gives an insight into syntactic change and evolution, as well as into present-day language typology. Some accounts of 'dummy' subjects have been presented from a diachronic perspective. "It" as a 'dummy' subject in English has been discussed, in particular, by Breivik (Breivik 1989) and Jorgensen (*Jorgensen* 1996) in their works.

There is a tendency to research different parts of a sentence and their translation into different languages (Korsun, Shvets, Karamysheva, Hogg, Bennis, Kroeger). They explored the transformation of English pronouns into the Ukrainian language.

The *scientific novelty* of the work is accounted for by the fact that the rendering of subject "it" into Ukrainian professional discourse has not been studied in great detail yet.

The *theoretical* and *practical significance* of the research is in its accordance to the tendencies of modern English discourse research.

The *purpose* of the research is to find out and illustrate the ways of rendering the 'dummy' subject "it" in the Ukrainian discourse.

The *object* of our research is the 'dummy' subject "it" in the English discourse, the *subject* being the ways of rendering "it" into Ukrainian.

This research focuses on the description of pronoun *it* on the one hand and that of the use of dummy pronoun *it* in professional discourse on the other hand. Both these have to be related with one another in order to condition the occurrence of pronoun forms in linguistic as well as social contexts. So, the following two methods have been chosen to analyze the data and accomplish the research work undertaken.

The Descriptive Structural Linguistic Methodology shows the possibility of a descriptive study to present the structure of the pronoun *"it"*. This kind of study will present the occurrence of pronouns in the professional discourse.

'Dummy' words are fairly common in analytic languages.

Most of the theoretical contrastive studies stem from the generative linguistic tradition and require a high level of formalization. They discuss dummy subjects in a perspective which concentrates on the formal possibilities and constraints. In order to attain objectives, we consider and contrast a wider selection of construction types, and often rely on data generated by the linguists' mind.

English speakers usually use the pronoun *"it"* to talk about the weather. The *"it"* that we use to denote weather conditions ("it was drizzling…", "it's hot…").

The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language says that "it" in such cases has no semantic meaning and serves "the purely syntactic function of filling the obligatory subject position." (*The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* 200).

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) describes dummy "it" as "a semantically empty or non-referential subject" that dates back to Old English, where it was frequently used in statements about the weather (OED 7).

"It" is used in *Oxford English Dictionary's* citation and given a modern English translation: "as if you at feasting should sit with your lords and subjects in wintertime, and a fire be lit and your hall warmed, and it should rain and snow and storm outside."(OED 7).

These usages would include statements about the time or the season ("it was about noon" … "it was winter"); about space, distance, or time ("it was long ago" … "it's too far"); and about other kinds of conditions ("how is it going?" … "it was awkward" … "if it weren't for the inconvenience").

The Cambridge Grammar doesn't use the term "dummy subject" to describe most of these non-weather usages. In its view, a dummy subject "cannot be replaced by any other noun phrase."

So, *The Cambridge Grammar* regards the *it* in a sentence like "It is five o'clock" or "It is July 1" as a predicative complement rather than a dummy subject, because "it" could be replaced by "the time" or "the date".

An important account of dummy subject constructions English and Ukrainian has been presented by Karamysheva I. D. (Karamysheva 137), who draws her attention on the comparison of *"it"* position in English and Ukrainian sentences. The study focuses on the deep thematic structure of two languages, but also considers the pragmatic aspect of the topological arrangement of the individual sentence elements in the individual language systems.

Some constructions require a semantically empty dummy subject to be used. According to Barbosa *"it"* can also be called a non-referential subject (Barbosa, 21). Such a subject does not convey any semantic content. It is used to complete the sentence in a grammatical way. Dummy subject is most commonly used in clauses expressing information about weather, distance or time.

1. It is windy.
2. It's ten o'clock.

3. It's 2 kilometers to the nearest bus station.

According to David Cole the dummy elements are semantically empty (Cole 560–561).

H. Bennis writes that subject position is important in English and must be filled even if it doesn't have any semantic relevance (Bennis, 354):

It seems that we are always late.

It was believed that everybody was ill.

R. Carter claimed that the "weather *it*" refers to a general state of affairs in the context of the utterance. In this case, it would not be a dummy word at all [18, 173]. Possible evidence for this claim includes exchanges such as:

"Was it nice yesterday?"

"No, it rained."

The word *referential* literally means "with a referent." Referential sentences, then, are sentences whose subjects refer to everything in the world very clearly. Such examples are the sentences:

1. It's raining.

2. It's my birthday.

If a pronoun is referential, we are able to come up with a noun or noun phrase to stick in as a substitute for the pronoun. We can see the referential use easily in the following: *I broke my leg, and it hurts*. In this sentence, the word *it* is a clear substitute for the leg of the speaker, and we can switch back and forth between saying *it* and *my leg* at will.

In example sentences 1, 2 the referent is much less definite naturally. If someone asks, *What's the weather like?* and there is an answer *it's raining*, the meaning is perfectly clear, but saying *the weather* instead of *it*, and we end up with the strange sounding sentence *the weather is raining*. This singularity is caused by the fact that the subject "it" is a nonreferential subject rather than a referential subject.

When looking to identify the subject of such sentences, we identify the word *"it"* as the subject. The word *"it"* fulfills the grammatical role of subject for the sentence. It lacks is a semantic role. A word *"it"* means either the weather, or the day or the time, but that we always like to just say *it* for these sentences because rain is always about the weather, and birthdays are always about days, and hours are always about time. We don't need to say the longer noun phrase, and we just always say *it* in these kinds of sentences. This explanation is satisfactory for quite a long while for most learners.

"It" is used as a dummy subject when the postponed subject is a clause. The postponed subject may be either a finite or a non-finite clause (typically a *to*-infinitival clause or an *ing*-participial clause).

It does not matter what you say; she will still leave.

It worries me that he brought a real gun to the party.

I think it would be fun to host the Academy Awards.

"It" is used as a pure dummy without a related postponed subject with verbs and predicative adjective phrases denoting weather conditions, distance, and time. In these expressions *it* is a true dummy, which is semantically empty and just fulfils the subject requirement in English.

It is used as a dummy with verbs and predicative adjective phrases denoting weather and other similar conditions (light, noise, etc).

It is raining.

It's freezing outside.

It gets dark much earlier in October.

When the weather condition is expressed in a postponed noun phrase, *"it"* is used in accordance with the general rule.

We would expect expressions involving specific temperatures to behave like other weather conditions with respect to the possibility of using *there* as a dummy subject. However, *it* is used even with the head noun *degree*.

It was eighty degrees in the shade.

"It" is used as a dummy with verbs and predicative adjective phrases denoting distance.

How far is it from here to London?

"It" is used as a dummy with verbs and predicative adjective phrases denoting time. As with expressions denoting distance and temperature, even if time is expressed in a noun phrase, *it* is used.

It is only three days since I got here.

It was late in the noon, and the sun was beginning to set.

In Ukrainian sentence the subject can be used without predicate. It is not possible in English, so when translating such sentences we should use the pronoun as a subject. However, it is not always clear which kind of pronoun to use, for example, *Дивлюся – хтось іде. Підходить ближче та й каже...* At first it is not clear which pronoun – he or she – must be used here. Of course, further context clarifies this issue, and the problem will be resolved for a translator. However, the oral translator will find himself in a more difficult situation here because he has to deal with it instantly.

Although the Ukrainian pronoun, which is also often used to refer to anything unrelated to the term person, cannot be considered to be a subject pronoun, it is used to refer to animals, creatures of small age – animals and humans – whereas in English it can only be used for animals, indefinite creatures or pejorative.

An impersonal sentence is a sentence which predicate refers to neither person nor subject or the abstract concept. Impersonal sentences describe the events of the environment that occur regardless of the will or desire of people and are the result of the development of abstract thinking. The significance of impersonality is shown differently by linguists, but most often it is defined by the feature of personality. In Ukrainian language the impersonal sentence do not need to have a subject, but there is always a formal subject in English, expressed by the pronoun *it*, which is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

Split of a sentence is associated with a number of objective difficulties stemming from the fact that sometimes there is a mixture of grammatical, logical and psychological relationships. The most striking example is constructions with an expletive words *it, this, there* because there is a contradiction between the grammatical subtext being semantically insignificant.

The expletive word usually has limited meaning. If you take such examples as: *It is my book, It is he who…, It is curious to know…*, then in each of these sentences the expletive word expresses the directionality of thought on the subject. Denotation begins with a definition that immediately precedes the denotation of an object. In each case, the speaker seems to define extensional constraints and set the starting position for the object to be marked. This contributes to the fact that it is not only an expletive and insignificant element, but, on the contrary, it is a means of defining certain extensional relationships.

"It" has no lexical meaning in impersonal sentences, it just has grammatical function of formal subject and is not translated into Ukrainian. W. Chafe calls the type of sentence *It is raining* ambient and claims that the verb is represented here as a compelling element. According to R. Carter, it is only an external element (Chafe 182–184).

Kroeger expresses the view that the pronoun *"it"* provides some abstract content of the type of general atmosphere that contributes to the perception of the situation.

According to N. Irteneva, the main difference of the impersonal sentences is to fill in the position of the subject in English, as opposed to zero expressing it in sentences in Ukrainian. The element *it*, which occupies the position of subject, with the impersonal content of the English sentence, loses the actual essence of its etymon – the personal pronoun it – and thus acts as the homonym of the latter. The impersonal content of this type of sentence is determined by the object of the message (Irteneva 43–45):

The pronoun *"it"* is used in the sentence as a formal subject in:

The messages about a state of nature:

It is getting dark. – 'Сутеніє'.

to rain, to snow, to freeze тощо:

It often snows in February. – 'У лютому часто йде сніг'.

It has been raining since three o'clock. – 'Дощ іде з третьої години'.

The pronoun *"it"* in the function of formal subject is used with some verbs in a passive voice. Such passive constructions are translated into Ukrainian by impersonal constructions: *it is said that* – Кажуть, що …, *it is believed that …* – Вважають, що …, *it is expected that …* – Чекають, що … *It is said that power corrupts* – 'Кажуть, що влада корупційна'.

It is believed that the winter will be cold. – 'Вважають, що зима буде холодною'.

It is expected that the products will be cheaper – 'Очікується, що продукти будуть дешевшими'.

Pronoun *it* in the function of formal subject is also used with subject denominated by infinitive, gerund or subordinate clause and is located after the predicate:

It was difficult to find a suitable steamer. – 'Було важко знайти зручний пароплав'.

In conclusion, the main distinguishing feature of the impersonal sentence of the English language is that the grammatical subject, expressed by the impersonal pronoun *it* is lexically inferior. A personal verb can perform only the function of predicate.

Pronouns do not express a specific meaning, but act as substitutes for the sentence members, pointing to a person or object, so they should be carefully entered into the text. This is especially true of the third person pronoun *"it"*. It may be unclear if this pronoun is related by gender and number to several nouns. The most common mistake is that it is not clear from the text which word the pronoun refers to, which adds ambiguity to the text.

Business papers are issued on behalf of the institution, enterprise, organization. However, the pronoun in this situation is omitted. Documents usually begin with verbs in the first person of the scissors: please ..., send ..., inform ... The pronoun *it* is used in the management request, the plant reports, the firm sends, management reports, the dean's obliges, to emphasize respect, courtesy in oral and written professional language.

It is believed that a key to saving the world's economy from recession is ... – 'Вважається, що ключем до порятунку світової економіки від кризи є …'.

It is reported that virtual worlds can be important places where children practice what they will do in real life. – 'Повідомляється, що віртуальні світи можуть бути важливими місцями, де діти займаються тим, чим будуть займатися в реальному житті'.

Therefore, in order to achieve adequacy in the translation of the dummy subject it at the lexical, grammatical and syntactic level, analyzed in our study the sentences with impersonal pronouns, impersonal constructions, passive voice were considered.

In the following sentences, there is a grammatical replacement during the translating from English into Ukrainian, because in English, constructions of *it is said, it is essential* type are common in a sentence.

It is not generally *known*, but more coal lies west of the Mississippi River. – 'Зазвичай невідомо, що більше вугілля знаходиться західніше річки Місісіпі'.

It is essential to protect endangered species. – 'Необхідно захищати види, що знаходяться під загрозою зникнення'.

In these sentences it is necessary to use grammatical replacement of the full English construction into Ukrainian.

It can be said that more specialized computer programs were developed for detailed linguistic analyses of specific types of structural elaboration. – 'Можна сказати, що були розроблені більш спеціалізовані комп'ютерні програми для детального лінгвістичного аналізу конкретних видів структурної розробки'.

It might be suggested that our modern life style has led to dirtier air over the years. – 'Можна припустити, що наш сучасний спосіб життя призвів до більш забрудненого повітря протягом багатьох років'.

As a result of the research suggested it has been concluded that rendering "it" into the Ukrainian language can be associated with some problems which, in turn, are mostly accounted for by the different grammatical structure of the language involved in the process of translation – English being an analytical language, Ukrainian – a synthetic one.

Therefore, in order to achieve adequacy in the translation of the dummy subject it at the lexical, grammatical and syntactic level, analyzed in our study the sentences with impersonal pronouns, impersonal constructions, passive voice were considered.

Further prospects of the research are meant to study the peculiarities of rendering "it" in different types of oral/writing professional discourse.

References

1. Beylinson, Lyubov. *"Professionalnyy diskurs: priznaki. funktsii. normy (na materiale kommunikativnoy praktiki logopedov) (Professional Discourse: Signs, Functions, Norms (based on the material of the Communicative Practice of Speech Therapists))"* Diss. Volgograd, 2009. Abstract. Print.
2. Vorobyova, Olga. "Pro potriinyi pidkhid do tekstu ta yoho katehorii (About the Triple Approach to the Text and its Categories)". *Inozemna filolohiia (Foreign Philology).* 106 (1993): 46–53. Print.
3. *Dyskurs yak kohnityvno-komunikatyvnyi fenomen (Discourse as a Cognitive-Communicative Phenomenon).* Kharkiv: Konstanta, 2005. Print.
4. Ieshchenko, Tetiana. *Rol tekstu i dyskursu u formuvanni profesiinoho movlennia studentiv tekhnichnykh spetsialnostei (The Role of Text and Discourse in the Formation of Professional Speech of Students of Technical Specialities).* URL: http://irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/ cgibin/irbis_nbuv/ cgiirbis_64.exe?C21COM=2&I21DBN=UJ
5. Irtenyeva, Natalia. *Teoreticheskaya grammatika angliyskogo yazyka (Theoretical Grammar of the English language).* Moskva: Vysshaya shkola, 1969. Print.
6. Karamysheva, Iryna. *Kontrastyvna hramatyka anhliiskoi ta ukrainskoi mov (Contrastive Grammar of English and Ukrainian Languages).* Lviv: Nova knyha, 2017. Print.
7. Kybryk, A. *Novoye v zarubezhnoy lingvistike. Sovremennyye sintaksicheskiye teorii v amerikanskoy lingvistike (New in Foreign Linguistics. Contemporary Syntactic Theories in American Linguistics).* 11 (1982): 460 pp. Print.
8. Kuzmenkova, Yuliia. *Anhlyiskyi yazyk dlia tekhnycheskykh napravlenyi (English for Technical Areas).* Moskva: Yurayt, 2019. Print.
9. Levytskyi, Andriy. *Porivnialna hramatyka anhliiskoi ta ukrainskoi mov (Comparative Grammar of English and Ukrainian languages).* Kyiv: Osvita Ukrainy, 2007. Print.
10. Ponomarenko, O. "Utochnennia linhvistychnoi terminolohii doslidzhen suchasnoho dyplomatychnoho dyskursu (Clarification of the Linguistic Terminology of Research of Modern Diplomatic Discourse)". *Visnyk Kyivskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni Tarasa Shevchenka. Inozemna filolohiia (Bulletin of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv). Inozemna filolohiia (Foreign Philology).* 1 (2015): 38–41. URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/VKNU_If_2015_1_12
11. Fedorenko, O. *Hramatyka anhliiskoi movy. Teoretychnyi kurs (English Grammar. Theoretical Course).* Lviv: Vydavnychyi tsentr LNU I. Franka, 2006. Print.
12. Shvets, O. "Typolohiia nominatyvnykh rechen v anhliiskii, frantsuzkii ta ukrainskii movakh (Typology of Nominative Sentences in English, French and Ukrainian)". *Molodyi vchenyi (Young Scientist).* № 5 (2017): 189–192.
13. Barbosa, Pilar. *Null Subjects.* Cambridge, 1995.
14. Baker, M. Corpus linguistics and translation studies: Implications and applications. In: M. Baker, G. Francis and E. Tognini-Bonelli [eds]. *Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair.* Amsterdam: Benjamins (1993): 233–250. Print.
15. Bennis H. *Gaps and Dummies.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005. Print.
16. Biber, D., Johansson, G., Leech, S., Conrad, E. 1999. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English.* London: Longman, 1999. Print.
17. Birgitta, Svensson. *Form-function Relations in Narrative Development: How Anna became a writer.* Amsterdam / Philadelphian: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018. Print.
18. The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language, 2020.
19. https://www.oed.com/

List of Abbreviations

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

RENDERRING SUBJECT "IT" INTO UKRAINIAN

Olesia Sidak

Germanic Philology and Translation Department, National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic", Poltava, Ukraine.

Abstract

Background: The work is devoted to study of English *"it"* as 'dummy' subject in the professional discourse, and its rendering into Ukrainian language. Syntax, pragmatics, semantics and general discourse function of dummy subjects are considered. The originality of the research is connected to the fact that the rendering of subject **it** into Ukrainian professional discourse has not been studied. This shows the relevance of the research in its accordance to the tendencies of modern professional discourse research. This paper is also useful for English and Ukrainian translators.

Purpose: to find out the place of the dummy subject "it" in Ukrainian professional discourse.

Results: Dummy subject it is widely considered by Ukrainian and foreign linguists because of systemic differences in the discussion of impersonal constructions. It is referential and its meaning is understood from the context or intonation. Subject "it" is obligatory for English sentence and can be missed in Ukrainian sentence because of grammar differences of these languages. The word it fulfills the grammatical role of subject for the sentence. The purpose of the work is achieved, its tasks being performed in full.

Discussion: The practical significance of the research is that its results can be used in training courses in language theory, linguistics of text, translation, philological analysis of text. Imperical material of the study can be used in the creation of communicatively-pragmatically oriented manuals designed to improve language proficiency.

Keywords: discourse, pronoun, rendering, translation, subject.

Vitae. Olesia Sidak is a Candidate of Philology, Senior Teacher of Germanic Philology and Translation Department at National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic". Her areas of research interests include cognitive linguistics, comparative linguistics, discourse linguistics.

Correspondence: olesiasidak@gmail.com