

A Linguistic Analysis of Dummy subject It

Sarab Kadir Mugair AL – Shammary

Diala University

Basic Education College

1.1 Introduction

The term reference has already been used to contrast with denotation. It is also used in a useful, but wider sense, to contrast with sense, to distinguish between two very different, though related, aspects of meaning.

Reference deals with the relationship between the linguistic element, words, sentences, etc. and the non - linguistic world of experience. Sense relates to the complex system of relationship that holds between the linguistic elements themselves, it is concerned only with intra – linguistic relations. (Palmer, 1988: 30).

Perhaps, the most interesting linguistic phenomenon of all is the idea. That we have to recognize the unity of English sentence, paragraph and even a text partly by the grammatical structure of clause and sentence , but more important , by its semantic integrity , by cohesive relation between an element in the text and some other element which is crucial to the interpretation of it.(Trotter,1980 :109). Thus, Hallilay and Hassan (1976:2)state that a text as well as a sentence are both semantic and grammatical Units.

Accordingly, reference is one type by which we can achieve what is called cohesion. So reference is a semantic relation (identification or comparison) between a reference item and its referent, e.g., pronoun, whose primary function is deictic (exophoric reference to the context of situation), have a secondary (endphoric) function of referring backward (anaphoric usage) or rarely , forward (cataphoric usage) (ibid:9).

This paper tries to analyses the Dummy subjects It linguistically with paying a great attention to great linguists' considerations.

1.2 What is a Dummy Term?

Dummy is a term used in linguistics to refer to a formal grammatical element introduced into a structure or an analysis to ensure that a grammatical sentence is produced. Apart from their formal role, “Dummy elements” have no meaning – they are semantically empty, e.g., there in “There were many people at the club.” it in “it’s raining.”. When this element acts as a locus for grammatical contrasts, it is referred to as a “dummy carrier”, e.g., do in question forms is a “dummy auxiliary”, which carries the Tense/Number contrast for the verb phrase (do/did you know, do/does he know). Notions involving zero (e.g. “zero morpheme”) could also be considered types of dummy. In Transformational grammar, “dummy symbols” are sometimes introduced into the deep structure of a sentence, to facilitate the derivation of classes of sentence, but they never appear in the sentence’s surface structure, e.g. the various kinds of boundary symbol, or the delta (▲) symbol which acts as a “place – holder” for lexical items (specified as complex symbol).

(Lyons (1968 : 85)), Crystal (1988 : 103)).

1.3 A Linguistic Study of Dummy Subject “it”

Our teacher in grade school taught us that all pronouns must have an antecedent, but we can’t figure out how there can be an antecedent in :

it’s raining

It’s shining.... etc.

We can’t find an antecedent in It’s raining as well as in It’s shining. What Miss Fidditch (2004,94) states that referential pronouns have to have an antecedent. But not all pronoun usage is referential. Pronouns are not always atomic, meaningful words like book and keep, quite often they’re ionized for use as pieces of grammar. Like the – s in *bookkeepers*.

Thomson and Martinet (1988) in different pages remark that all the common contractions with subject it are really grammar marking:

It’s	meaning [it is]	Progressive or Passive
It’s	meaning [it has]	Perfect

It'd meaning [it would] Conditional
 It'd meaning [it had] Pluperfect
 It'll meaning [it will] Future

English is the kind of language (an “analytic” or “positional” language) that has most of its grammar concerned with word order, which word to use, prepositions and pronouns and “little words” and how they’re organized. In a word, syntax.

Languages farther toward : the “synthetic” end of the analytic – synthetic axis, (e.g. German , Spanish, Latin , Homeric, Greek, Sanskrit, Navaho, Lushootseed, and Inuit) tend to use more and more affixes and other form – changing kinds of grammar (in a word, Morphology) , and syntax is less and less important in them(Miss Fidditch, *ibid.*).

Quirk , et. al, (1989 : 1302) mention that Morphology and syntax are, respectively , the internal economy of words , and together they make up Grammar.

Let us guess, so what about *It’s raining?*. Quirk, et al, (*ibid.*) state that *It’s* it’s a kind of construction called a Dummy it . That is , the it has no meaning what- soever and is used strictly as a placeholder.

English syntax has this rule that says in ponderous and self – enforcing tones *Thou Shalt Have A subject In Every Finite Sentence.*

Ordinarily, Fidditch (2004: *ibid*) said that subject is some noun or referential pronoun that is the salient agent or experience or patient of whatever the verbal predicate refers to:

- a. the writer in He wrote it.
- b. the hearer in He heard it.
- c. the hurter in He hurt it.

But, this falls down when dealing with some predicates. Rain is a superb example. Rain is a thing and an event, both nouny and verby. In using it as a verb, we must endow it with a subject, But it’s already its own subject, self – activity. (Quirk, etal., 1989 : 1307) .

Thus, we have to distinguish between it in “its raining” as others called it “weather it” from “Distance it” as in:

- a. It’s a long way to Baghdad.

Or Extra position it in.

b. It's important to me that she be present.

which is related by a syntactic rule called Extrapolation to

c. That she be present is important to me.

(Quirk, et al. 1989).

And there are other Dummies as well, like the there in:

d. There is a unicorn in the garden.

or It in.

e. Why don't we do it in the road?

Dummy words, placeholders are fairly common in analytic languages.

As we have mentioned, previously, "it's raining" it's a kind of construction called a Dummy "it". That is "it" has no meaning whatsoever. So how about

"'s raining?"

's raining / s renIng / is one way of many that we can pronounce *It's raining*. (Roach, 1985). The beginning of a sentence, especially if it's predictable and meaning – free, is a frequent place for sound loss in pronunciation. Others of this type include:

a. Never see that a gain [I'll deleted]

b. Daughter's on the phone, Bob. [your deleted]

c. Never been there. [I've deleted]

Generally Speaking, we are probably not right to identify 's raining with *Is raining*. That's an /s/ , not a /z/ ; that is , we would not say /z renIng/. But is has a /z/ , not an /s/ , and it shows up in fast speech rules when it really means is. For instance , if we meant to say He's reading and we were in a hurry , we'd say /z ridIng/, not /s ridIng/ . So the contraction is just that... a shortening of a predictable sentence part.

There is a fact, said that " language change". Language change is both unconscious and social, not conscious and individual . Miss Fedditch (2004, 98) remarks:

Rather, someone got into the habit of saying
" The weather is rainy" or " The weather is
raining" or possible " The sky is raining today"
(in some pre-modern form or another).And ,
over the year, that became shortened and shortened, to the
form we see today: "It's raining."

In other hand, *it's raining* means either the weather is rainy or the sky is raining. And this way of thinking, like all ways of thinking, is optional.

Conclusions

To sum up, a Dummy subject obeying the letter but not the spirit of the Rule.

Language, indeed, changes in that the concept of weather "it" and Distance "it" came along to be mutated into current form "it's raining", i.e., we don't think assigning a name or recognizing a null value in the sentence matters much, because the sentence we use today is not the sentence that prompted original use of the pronoun or its antecedent. Moreover, we have to pay attention to the point of "stress" or what is called stress-time for it helps delimit constructions, and so on. But it sure teaches English speakers how to get rid of unnecessary unstressed syllables, which they do with great abandon.

According to "it's raining" it isn't a referential pronoun, because I think, and the descriptivist thinks, too, that the reference in "it's raining" was dropped before that particular descriptivist was born.

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