

Peculiarities of the Impersonal Sentences in the Languages of Different Systems: Mari, German and English

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Abstract: In the study, the comparative analysis of impersonal sentences is given in languages of different systems: Mari, German and English. The researchers reveal particular features of this type of sentences in the languages. They investigate ways of expression the predicate and find similarities and differences in the organization of impersonal sentences in Mari, German and English.

Key words: Syntax, methods and means of expression, interference, comparative analysis, languages

INTRODUCTION

In the study of any foreign language difficulties often occur in syntax. In the research, we focus on the structure of the impersonal sentences in three languages of different systems: Mari, German and English. Impersonal sentence has of particular interest due to its expressiveness and conciseness as it is quite widespread in the literature and it is often used in everyday speech, especially in the dialogue. As a rule impersonal sentences express the state of nature, the environment, person's mood his or her mental and physical condition. It is easier to formulate impossibility, the inevitability of action, denial with the help of such sentence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of this research is to determine the characteristics of the impersonal sentences' order in Mari, German and English. Examples were taken as the factual material for the investigation from the works of Russian, German and English researchers. Works of Finno-Ugric and Russian linguistics, the work of German and English researchers were the theoretical and methodological basis. In the research various methods and techniques of syntactic units' analysis were used: descriptive, comparative which allow establishing universal and specific construction of the impersonal sentence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Mari, German and English the impersonal sentence belongs to the category of simple sentences. In the

modern Mari language simple sentence can be mononuclear one or two-member sentence. The Mari impersonal sentence refers to the group of mononuclear one as it does not have a subject and any mention is absent about an acting person, for example: 'it was getting dark'. 'It is getting cold'.

Vasikova (1990), the researcher of the Mari language, notes that "in the organization of the structural scheme of the mononuclear sentence one main member participates and it can be expressed with one component (one-word) or with two components (less with more than two words)".

On the basis of categorical words' accessory with which the main member of the sentence is expressed, the researcher identifies three classes of structural diagrams of the mononuclear sentence: verbal class, nominal class and adverbial class.

In the verbal class which the impersonal sentence belongs to the main component is a verb in the form of 3-person in singular number for example: 'it is getting evening'. 'It is shivering'. 'It has got dark'. In these examples impersonal verbs can only be used.

In the case, when the verbs define the state and the process in nature and in environment there is no a boundary in such structures for personal and impersonal verbs for example. 'In the garden it smells delicious' (literally). 'It is long expected' (literally).

Timofeeva (1987) offers to divide impersonal sentences on the basis of their meaning and the use in the speech into the following groups:

- Sentences, describing natural phenomena such as: 'it is silence. It is getting dark on Pekul forest. It is getting very dark'

- Sentences which show physical and mental state of a human for example: ‘lying on the cold ground in the morning, I’m getting cold... It is shivering me (literally)’ (Timofeeva, 1987)
- Sentences, describing the place of action or condition for example: ‘when the fire is burning it is warm in our trench’ (Timofeeva, 1987)
- Sentences with modal meaning, e.g., ‘working with pleasure in the world we need to live in peace’ (Timofeeva, 1987)

L.P. Vasikova notes that impersonal sentence has the most complex structure among common mononuclear sentences. The researcher emphasizes that it is difficult to determine the significance of such sentence and in this regard it is important to know what the predicate is expressed by in this type of sentence (Vasikova, 1987). The principal member in impersonal sentences can be expressed by:

- Impersonal verb for example: ‘it is getting dark. The moon has risen’ (Vasikova, 1987)
- Personal verb with impersonal meaning for example: ‘it smells nice in the garden’ (Vasikova, 1987)
- Participle, for example: ‘blond hair is cut short’ (Vasikova, 1987)
- Infinitive ending on and impersonal predicative combination of words like ‘it can be’, ‘it demands’, ‘it needs’, ‘be due to’, ‘it touches’, ‘it comes across’, ‘be punished’ for example: ‘although, the bear is strong they catch him. So, Khan can be defeated’. ‘Vachi looked after the horses well too, he needs to be rewarded too’ (Vasikova, 1987)
- Negative gerund and auxiliary verb ‘it can be (it cannot be)’ for example: ‘bees cannot be watched after’. ‘It cannot be without explaining us, people’ (Timofeeva, 1987)

Despite of the fact that the verb is the principal member of the impersonal sentence, there are examples of nominal parts’ using of speech as the main members of the impersonal sentences of the Mari language. Such examples were marked by V.T. Timofeeva for example:

- The adverb combined with a verb for example: ‘In the fresh air it is felt to Boris very hard’ (Timofeeva, 1987)
- Onoma-topoetic words combined with the verb for example: ‘it’s very hot in the hall. It starts to feel in the head of Boris vyzh-vyzh’ (literally) (Timofeeva, 1987)

The peculiarity of the German language in comparison with the Mari language, is that the German sentence is a two-member an verbal sentence. These sentence’s markers are obligatory, according to Krushelnickaya (1961) they demonstrate “...the tendency to the unification of the main members of the sentence”. Binomiality of the sentence in the German language is obligatory not only in the examples where it is determined by the content of the sentence, but also when it contravenes the content. The impersonal sentence is a two-member one formally in the German language. The impersonal pronoun *es* substitutes for the subject grammatically. There are several types of the impersonal sentences in the works by Gulyga and Natanzon (1959).

Sentences in which possessor of specified quality expressed by the verb, doesn’t have name and it is impossible to imagine it for example: ‘it is raining. It is cold. It was a fierce war. It suddenly became very quiet in the next room’ (Gulyga and Natanzon, 1959).

Sentences in which possessor of the state is expressed by the noun in the accusative or the dative examples: ‘it is cold to me’ (literally), *esgehtmir gut* ‘It is fine to me’ (literally), etc.

One can also refer the sentence of this type to two-member (binomial) sentences because the formal subject is on the first place in the construction (Gulyga and Natanzon, 1959).

Sentences in which the speaker excludes medium of marker consciously, focusing on the action or other moments, e.g., *Garten. In wildem Galoppginges die* ‘They chirp in the garden. In a wild gallop the road was led straight down’ (Gulyga, Natanzon, 1959). Sentences with impersonal passive construction or with one-member passive where pronoun *es* is used only if it is on the first place in the sentence, take a special place among such sentences, e.g., ‘it was imputed with landing of the troops’. ‘It was read out with allowance’ (Gulyga and Natanzon, 1959). V.G. Admoni points out the following cases of using of impersonal sentences:

- Elements of nature, seasons, etc., for example: ‘it is raining. It is spring’ (Admoni, 1973)
- External or internal condition of a person (with facultative *es* under the influence of topological factor), e.g., ‘it is cold to me’ (Admoni, 1973)
- Semantics of an action or condition on the basis of verbal passive without real subject (with facultative *es* if adverbial modifier is on the first place in the sentence), e.g., ‘they work. It’s not smoking here’ (Admoni, 1973)

E.I. Shendels stresses that in stylistic purpose for depersonification pronoun *es* can be used even with verbs in personal meaning, e.g., ‘my eyes are dry but everything inside of me cries’ (Shendels, 1988).

English as German refers to the Germanic group of languages. English impersonal sentences as well as German are characterized by the presence of a special element; this element is required for the place of subject. English impersonal pronoun *it* like *es* in German has no lexical meaning. It is not translated into Russian.

Smirnitsky A.I. notes that in English language impersonal sentences convey the state, not the action and they don’t name the concrete subject which carries out that action.

The researcher also points out that impersonal formal subject does not denote any real subject: that elusive content which is enclosed in subject (well-known environment, real-life situation) as it dissolves in the content of the predicate and it can’t be separated and reviewed independently. Belyaeva M. A. names possible forms of predicate in sentences of these types:

- A compound nominal predicate, consisting of the link-verb-to be and the nominal part and expressed by an adjective or a noun substantive. As a copula such verbs to become, to get, to grow can be used with meaning to become, be made
- A simple predicate expressed by the verbs, denoting the state of the weather: to snow to rain to freeze, etc.

It is known that in English impersonal sentences are used to express:

- Phenomena of nature, weather conditions, for example: it is/(was) winter. It often rains in autumn. It was getting dark. It is cold. It snows
- Time, distance, temperature, for example: it is early morning. It is five o’clock. It is two miles to the lake. It is late
- Assessment of the situation in sentences with compound nominal (sometimes verbal) predicate which are followed by the subject of the sentence expressed by the infinitive, gerund or a dependent clause, for example: it was easy to do this. It was clear that he would not come
- With some verbs in the passive voice in phrases, corresponding to the Russian indefinite-personal construction for example: it is said he will come

An utterance is the main unit of communication. The order of utterance is the central problem in modern linguistics.

The object of the study is impersonal constructions that are considered as certain nominal structures and as units of communication.

The subject of the study is the consideration of impersonal constructions in the languages belonging to different language groups and in particular Mari (Finno-Ugric group) and German and English (German language group). Features of order of impersonal sentences are of particular interest to the linguists. This interest is related to nominal unique of different types of utterances, semantic links and the use of their elements.

Impersonal constructions are similar in the level of content in considered languages they are characterized by “semantic incomplete”. But these sentences are different in the level of expression as they can be mononuclear (in the Russian, the Mari languages) and two-member (in the English, the German languages).

CONCLUSION

Thus, stated above affirmation suggests that the meaning of impersonal sentences in compared languages is almost similar but there are differences in the method of constructing such sentences. The main difference in the structure of the impersonal sentence that it is mononuclear one in Mari and it is two-member sentence in German and English. The main feature of impersonal sentence in the Mari language that there is a complete absence of the subject. In the German and the English languages a grammatical subject, expressed by an impersonal pronoun, does not correlate with any person, and a predicate is characterized by using only in the form of third person in singular number.

Such usual usage as to form the impersonal sentence without a subject, i.e., without a pronoun *es* in the German language and it in English, concerns to the area of the interference of native language, i.e. in the Mari language and it is necessary to try to overcome this for teachers of the German and English languages when they work with Mari speaking audience.

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