VERBAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE " THERE IS" TYPE

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Abstract*: The present paper presents the verbal constructions of the " there is " type in several types of sentences, emphasis being laid on the existential sentences. When " there" is accompanied by the verbs " to be" in different tenses, it is no longer an adverb of place in the sentence but an introductory subject. The constructions of this type in English, with " there is" as subject, represent verbal constructions of incomplete predication, because they must always be accompanied by a noun or a noun substitute. The subject of a clause is thematic in typically conveying given information. But when the subject is an indefinite noun phrase, it introduces new information*

Keywords: *sentences, constructions, subject, predication, noun*

The sentence is a structure, which contains two main constituents: the noun phrase functioning as the subject of the sentence, and the verb phrase, functioning as its predicate.

There can be used as subject. The preparatory subject *there* is used in sentences where the logical subject is indefinite:

e.g. *There are some books on the table.*
There won't be enough money.

Sometimes *there* is used with verbs other than *to be. To happen, to occur* and *to come* are such verbs:

e.g. There happened that he forgot everything.

There comes a time when you have to make a choice.

The adverb there *can function as a* formal- grammatical subject *in a sentence when it is accompanied by tenses of the verb* to be. *In this case it is no longer an adverb or an adverbial in the sentence.*

In a sentence like: *"There were a few new tape – recorders in the office"* , *there were* is the formal subject, while the logical subject is *tape – recorders.*

The constructions of the *"there is"* type in English represent verbal constructions of incomplete predication, because they must always be accompanied by a noun or a noun substitute, like in the following examples:

e.g. *There will be a concert in open air tonight.*
There is no place like home.
Are there any copies left ?

With these constructions the subject is definitely a new element to the reader or interlocutor; its determinative is epiphoric. On the other hand, the noun – logical subject, can be also a proper name or a common noun determined by *the,* that is anaphoric; but then the meaning of *there is* is different:

e.g. *There's John coming.*
There's the birthday cake.

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Other meanings of *there is* can be noticed in the following sentences:

e.g. There's a good joke!

There's a fine gentleman!

Besides the verbal forms of *to be, there* can also be associated with other few verbs too:

e.g. *There came the rain.*

There lived once an old woman in the forest.

In constructions introduced by *there* emphasis is laid merely on the *existence* or *absence* of the real subject. When verbs, others than *to be* are employed, which happens more rarely, emphasis is laid either on existence or on the semantic content of these verbs:

The introductory subject *there* is indispensable in all sentences referring to existence that is all those intended to describe the contents of a room, bookcase or the location of objects, of geographical elements.

Existential sentences are principally those beginning with unstressed word *there,* and are so called because when unstressed *there* is followed by a form of the verb *be,* the clause expresses the notion of existence:

e. g. There is nothing healthier than a good sleep..

There is a regular relation of equivalence between existential clauses with *there + be* and clauses of the standard types. The equivalence applies however, only if the clause of the normal pattern has an indefinite subject, and a form of the verb *be* in its verb phrase. We may derive existential clauses from regular clauses by means of a general rule:

Subject + (auxiliaries) + *be* + predication

→ *there* + (auxiliaries) +*be* + subject + predication

The subject of the original clause may be called the " notional " subject of the *there* – sentence, so as to distinguish it from *there* itself, which for most purposes is the "grammatical" subject.

Existential *there* is a device for leaving the subject position vacant of content.

The subject of a clause is thematic in typically conveying given information. But when the subject is an indefinite noun phrase, it introduces new information. Hence in sentences like *A book is on the table* there is a certain awkwardness, which may be avoided by introducing *there* and postponing the indefinite noun phrase to a non – thematic position: *There is a book on the table.*

Examples of the seven clause types are (where the elements of the sentence are thus abbreviated: S= subject; V= verb; C= complement; O= object; A= adverbial):

SVC: *Something must be wrong → There must be something wrong.*

SVA: Was anyone around ? → Was there anyone around ?

SV: No one was waiting → There was no one waiting.

SVO: Plenty of people are getting promotion → There are plenty of people getting promotion.

SVOC: Two bulldozers have been knocking the place flat → There have been two bulldozers knocking the place flat.

SVOA: A girl is putting the kettle on → There's a girl putting the kettle on.

SVOO: Something is causing her distress → There is something causing her distress.

Passive versions also occur:

SV: A whole box has been stolen → There has been a whole box stolen.

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SV: No shops will be left open → There'll be no shops left open.

The bare existential sentence postulates the existence of some entity or entities. It has a simple clause structure *there + be +* indefinite noun phrase:

e.g. *Undoubtedly, there is a God. ("God exists")*

There have always been forbidden love stories (" Forbidden love stories have always existed ")

The rule that existential sentences should have an indefinite noun phrase as " notional subject" prevents the derivation of sentences like *There 's the money in the box* from *The money is in the box.* This limitation can be waived, however, in answers to existential questions (actual or implied):

e.g. *Is there anyone coming to dinner ?*

Yes, there's Harry and there's also Mrs. Jones

Also acceptable is the indefinite exclamatory *the* followed by the superlative as in:

e.g. There's the oddest – looking man standing at the front door !

Existential *there* occurs widely in dependent clauses: *Let me know if there's anyone waiting.*

It is also fronted as subject in a type of sentence like the following:

e.g. *There appears to be something wrong with the road.*

The *there* of existential sentences differs from *there* as an introductory adverb both in lacking stress, and in behaving in most ways like the subject of the clause:

It often determines concord governing a singular form of the verb, especially in declarative sentences, even when the following " notional subject" is plural:

e.g. *There's two ladies in the waiting room.* (informal)

There are two ladies in the waiting room. (formal)

It can act as subject in *yes- no* and tag questions:

e.g. *Is there any more soup ?*

There's nothing wrong, is there ?

It can act as subject in infinitive and - *ing* clauses:

e.g. *I don't want there to be any misunderstanding.*

He was disappointed at there being so little to do.

There is an important additional type of existential sentence which consists of *there + be +*noun phrase + clause resembling a post modifying clause. Such sentences can be related to sentences of basic clause types without the two restrictions: the verb need not be a form of the verb *be,* and although there must be an indefinite element it need not be subject:

e.g. *Something keeps bothering him → There's something that keeps bothering him.*

I'd like you to meet some people → There's some people that I'd like you to meet.

The pronoun *that* can be omitted even when it is subject of the relative clause formation.

There is also a common existential sentence pattern *there + be +* noun phrase *+ to* – infinitive clause:

e.g. *There was no one for us to talk to.*

There's plenty of housework to do.

Such infinitive clauses are also allied to relative clauses, as we see comparing

At last there was something to write home about.

with

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At last there was something about which to write home.

This type of existential sentence sometimes has a definite noun phrase as notional subject:

e.g. *There's the man next door to consider.*

There is also a restricted idiomatic construction consisting of *there* + *be* + *negative* + participial – *ing* clause::

e.g. *There's no telling what he'll do.*

A sentence beginning with unstressed *there* shows the word order P – S, the verbal predicate consisting of a verb denoting a state or a motion:

e.g. *There is a man at the door.*
There have been many accidents lately.
There seems to be a mistake.
Once upon a time there lived a king.
There comes a time when it is useless to struggle.

The construction is occasionally found with a passive predicate, in which case the word order is either P – S or p – S – P(where P stands for predicate, S stands for subject, and p stands for predicative):

e.g. *Then there was committed the greatest crime of that or any succeeding age. **
There was very little work done that morning.

In sentences with a pronoun – subject and a nominal predicate concord of number in English sometimes operates differently.

In emphatic and identifying sentences the verb *to be* agrees in number with the pronoun – subject.

There was a knock.

When we say that something exists we normally begin the sentence with *there + be* and put the subject after *be.*

e.g. *There is a bank in the center of the town.*

We do not normally say A *bank is in the center of the town.*

We use this structure with " indefinite " subjects, such as: *a man, some letters anybody.*

e.g. *There is a man at the door.*
There are some letters for you.
" Is there anybody at home?"
" No, there isn't. "

We can use this structure with different forms of *be.* For example:

e.g. *There is a bank in the center of the town.* (present tense)
There was a telephone call for you last night. (past tense)
There has been an accident. (present perfect)
There will be a lot of people at the party. (future)

If the subject is plural, *be* takes a plural form also:

e.g. *There is a man at the door. There are some men at the door.*
There was a telephone call for you last night. There were two telephone calls for you last night.
There has been an accident. There have been a lot of accidents recently.

If we compare *there is, there are* and *it is, they are* we notice that we use *there + be* to say that something exists and we use a personal pronoun (*it, they+ be* or another verb) to give more details.

e.g. *There is a letter for you. It's from Australia.*
There is a man at the door. It's Mr. Davis.

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There are some biscuits in the kitchen. They are in the cupboard.
There were some flowers on the desk. They were for you.
There will be one person waiting for you at the airport. He is your travel guide.

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