

INVESTIGATION OF SUBJECT AND PREDICATE CLAUSES

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There are two types of sub-clauses that function as one of the essential elements of a two-member sentence: **subject clauses** and **predicate clauses** [1, 71].

A subject clause may contain either a statement or a question. In the former case it is preceded by *that*: in the latter it is introduced by the same words as interrogative object clauses.

(a) *That he will help us leaves no doubt.*

That he had not received your letter was true.

(b) *What you say is true.*

Whether he will stay here is another question.

Commoner that the patterns with the initial *that* are sentences introduced by *it*, with the *that-clause* in end-position. This type also occurs in interrogative composite sentences.

It seemed utterly grotesque to him that he should be standing there facing a charge of murder in a court where the register, the shorthand writer and other officials were all known personally to him ((ASKD, 109).

It was true that he had assisted Dr. Munro at the operation ((ASKD, 110).

And it suddenly sprang into James' mind that he ought to go and see for himself ((ASKD, 11).

It is manifest to me that in his letter of May 20 he assented to a very clear proposition ((JSGW, 233).

Subject sub-clauses at the given type are, in fact, used as delayed appositives to the initial *it*. Sentence patterning of this kind permits postponement of the subordinate clause while *it* represents them in the positions which would otherwise be normal for them.

Some grammarians prefer another angle of view, according to which the pronoun *it* at the beginning of the main clause is referred to as a "formal subject" (sometimes called a "sham subject"), and the sub-clause following the main clause – the real subject [2, 77; 23, 401].

The choice of either alternative remains, in fact, a matter of subjective angle of view.

Note. It is to be noted, in passing, that it can represent not only this type of sub-clauses, but is similarly used with great frequency in other types of composite sentences.

Familiar examples are:

I'll leave it to you which route we take.

In main interrogatives this *it* is sometimes inserted directly in front of clausal appositives, as in *why is it that we can't get together?*

Sometimes even in declaratives it precedes declarative-clause appositives directly, and acts as a kind of buffer for them – after predicators and prepositions that do not accept them as completers.

I resent it that such a thing is done.

I'll see to it that a good typewriter is available.

You can rely on it that he will do this work without delay.

It often represents subordinate clauses, or nucleuses of subordinate clauses, which are hardly in apposition with *it*.

He says he's been mistreated, but he shouldn't take it out on you.

It might help if we did it.

He can't help it if he likes company.

It makes him unhappy when people think he's unfriendly.

It is to be noted that the grammatical organisation of subject-clauses sometimes offers certain difficulties of analysis [3, 102].

If, for instance, the order of the two members of a composite sentence is inverted they do not only change places but functions as well. Compare the following:

(a) *That he did not come to speak with you was what surprised me most.* (a subject sub-clause)

(b) *What surprised me most was that he did not come to speak with you.* (a predicate sub-clause)

In other cases subject sub-clauses will hardly offer any difficulties of syntactic analysis, e. g.:

Not her fault that she had loved this boy, that she couldn't get him out of her head – no more her fault that it had been his own for loving that boy's mother ((JSGW, 233).

No satisfaction to Fleur now that the young man and his wife, too, very likely, were suffering as well ((JSGW, 133).

Predicate sub-clauses function as the nominal predicate of a composite sentence. They are introduced by the same words as subject clauses; they may also be introduced by *as*. Variation in their grammatical organisation may be illustrated by the following examples:

*This was **what had happened to himself!*** (EHFA, 34).

*The chief hope was **that the defence would not find it necessary to subpoena Jean. That would be too much*** (EBWH, 45).

*The question for me to decide is **whether or not the defendant is liable to refund to the plaintiff this sum*** (CDHT, 21).

*„The principle of this house", said the architect, „was **that you should have room to breathe – like a gentleman**"* (CDHT, 56).

Some grammarians are inclined to include here patterns with *it is... that* of the following type [27, 250; 30, 408; 31, 302].

*It's because **that he's busy that he can't help you.***

There are such patterns of complex sentences as consist of a subject clause and a predicative, the only element outside these clauses being the link verb, e. g.:

*What I prefer now **is that you should not leave at all.***

Predicative sub-clauses have sometimes a mixed or overlapping meaning. In some cases there is a clear suggestion of temporal relations, in others the meaning of comparison.

Relations of time, for instance, are generally observed in clauses introduced by *when*. This is often the case when the subject of the principal clause is expressed by nouns denoting time, e. g.:

*Time had been **when he had seen her wearing nothing*** (CDBH, 78).

Predicative sub-clauses introduced by *as if* and *as* are suggestive of , the secondary meaning of comparison, e. g.:

*My horses are young, and when they get on the grass they are **as if they were mad*** (ASKD, 51).

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