

PRESENTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH AND LITHUANIAN

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The article focuses on the type of existential sentence which is known in linguistic literature as a presentative construction. This type is distinguished on functional grounds: its communicative function is to introduce a new entity into a discourse. In addition, presentative structures exhibit different syntactic and distributional behaviour from that which is evident in the existential sentence. In Lithuanian scholarly writings the presentative type is referred to as 'introductory' or 'existential'; however, no systematic treatment of the issue is available in the literature. The article advances arguments for the need to distinguish a corresponding presentative construction in Lithuanian and offers a linguistic description of the basic characteristics of the structure under discussion.

1. Introduction

It has long been recognised that *there*-structures in English fall into two distinct groups: existential-*there* and presentative-*there* constructions. Traditionally, this latter construction is claimed to contain a main verb other than 'be' (cf. Birner & Ward 1998: 106). However, the 'presentational' function of the verb 'be' has been noted in a number of studies (e.g. Bolinger 1977, Breivik 1990). On the other hand, this particular function is not entirely restricted to *there*-sentences. To quote Lambrecht (1998: 39), 'English, like other languages, has a special 'presentational' construction, involving a small number of intransitive verbs like *be* and *come*, the subjects of these verbs, and the deictic adverbs *here* or *there*. The point of using this construction is to call the attention of an addressee to the hitherto unnoticed presence of some person or thing in the speech setting. This construction is called 'presentational' because its communicative function is not to predicate a property of a given entity but to introduce a new entity into a discourse'.

It has often been argued that presentative-*there* constructions in English exhibit different syntactic and distributional behaviour from that which is evident in the existential sentence (cf. Hetzron 1971, 1975, Hannay 1985, Givón 1990, Rochemont & Culicover 1990, Abbott 1993, Birner & Ward 1998, among others). Sentence (1) below is claimed to be a presentative clause, whereas (2) is existential:

(1) *There strode into the room a tall young woman.*

(2) *There was a moment's silence.*

The two examples given below demonstrate that the presentative-*there* construction allows for two distinct positions of the noun phrase (NP). The verbal existential sentence (henceforth

ES), where the NP immediately follows the main verb, is termed the 'inside verbal ES', as in (3); in the 'outside verbal ES' the NP is separated from the verb by a prepositional phrase, as exemplified in (4) (cf. Milsark 1974, Lumsden 1988):

- (3) *There began a rainstorm.*
- (4) *There walked into the bedroom a unicorn.*

Hannay (1985: 10) lists some of the differences in the distribution of the two structures. One is that existentials allow subject-AUX inversion, as in example (5); this is not the case with *there*-presentatives in (6). Consider:

- (5) *Were there any serious problems involved?*
- (6) *?Did there live in that castle anyone important?*

Next, *there*-presentatives do not occur with raising verbs:

- (7) *There happened to be a stranger sitting next to me.*
- (8) *??There happened to sit a stranger next to me.*

Hannay (loc.cit.) also quotes Guéron's (1980:671) observation that *there*-presentatives do not allow 'VP-preposing', as is brought out in (10):

- (9) *John said there would be a man on the lawn, and a man on the lawn there was.*
- (10) *??John said there would sit a man on the lawn, and a man on the lawn there sat.*

As regards the reversed VS order of elements in existential-presentative clauses, Givón (1990) questions the claim that this type of sentence has subject-verb inversion and builds his argumentation on two assumptions. First, the existential verb often lacks concord with the post-verbal NP and behaves like a neutral 'grammaticalized particle marking the indefinite subject NP' (Givón 1990: 745), as in (11):

- (11) *There's two men here.*

Second, the verbs *be* and *have* are void of lexical-semantic content and are thus viewed as 'semantically bleached' (loc.cit.). Therefore, another predicate may function as a lexical verb in the ES:

- (12) *There were big wrought-iron planters placed along the sea-wall...*

The fact that this informationally-loaded predicate is placed after the indefinite subject allows Givón to conclude that '...the copula of existential-presentative VS construction has indeed become *grammaticalized*, and is thus the marker of REF-indefinite subjects. And the real – information-bearing – predication ("comment") in such constructions indeed *follows* the subject' (Givón 1988: 271).

2. Presentative sentences in Lithuanian

In Lithuanian scholarly writings the presentative type of sentence (referred to as 'existential' or 'introductory') is mentioned in passing by Sirtautas (1982: 66) and Sirtautas & Grenda (1988: 14); however, no systematic treatment of the issue is available in the literature.

As is the case in English and other languages (cf. Kahn 1973: 246 for Greek, Arutiunova & Širjaev 1983: 55 for Russian, Grzegorek 1984: 165 for Polish data, and Givón 1990: 741 on general issues), presentative structures in Lithuanian are used to perform a very definite function, that is, to introduce a new referent into the world of discourse. As regards its syntactic

structure, the presentative type is commonly rendered by the *Slot 1* (the domain of existence) + *Slot 2* (*būti* 'be'/lexical verb) + *Slot 3* (Subject NP) pattern. Note some typical examples:

- (13) *Tarp kitų kūrinių buvo ir garsusis Siksto Madonos paveikslas.*
'Among other works of art there also was the famous painting of Sistine Madonna'
(14) *Kitą kartą, labai seniai, buvo lomoj didelis, bebaigiąs užakti ežeras.*
'Once upon a time, long long ago, in the valley there was a big, almost overgrown lake'

All structural elements in the presentative sentence type are obligatory, and each of them is assigned a very distinct function. Moreover, the presence of one element entails the obligatory appearance of another.

The verb in the presentative type can be claimed to perform a double – subject-introducing and existence-asserting – function. The existence-asserting function of the verb is most naturally associated with a certain location. Thus *Slot 1* in presentative structures is meant for specifying the domain of existence, which is rendered by diverse spatio-temporal expressions. In example (13), 'location' is a certain class of entities, whereas (14) has both time and place adverbials. As regards the verb *būti* (which appears in *Slot 2*), its role in the presentative type is essential; it is due to this verb that the subject referent is literally 'pushed' onto the scene. This pragmatic value of the verb *būti* makes a crucial difference between the locative-existential type, where the verb can be optional (note example (15) below), and presentative constructions (cf. (13) and (14) above), in which *būti* is obligatory, even though both types exhibit an identical syntactic structure, that of *Loc + būti* 'be' + NP.

- (15) *Rinkinyje 37 eilėraščių, o iki to laiko poetė jau buvo parašiusi jų per du šimtus.*
'There are 37 poems in the collection, even though till then the poetess had already written over two hundred of them'

The obligatory presence of all constituents in the presentative sentence can be explained by the stylistic, rhetorical and pragmatic functions performed by this construction. The verb *būti* in presentative structures has to perform a dual function: first, it has to state the existence of the subject referent in some spatio-temporal location, and second, to establish it as an available item in the world of discourse, locating the entity introduced into the 'mental space' that interlocutors build up in the process of communication (cf. Fauconnier 1985). Moreover, the importance of this dual function of the verb is manifested through the fact that *būti* in presentative structures cannot be used in the negative form: this would definitely work against its presentative function.

One more comment on the subject-introducing function of *būti* in presentative clauses is called for. The subject of such utterances is presented by the verb for further characterisation as the discourse unfolds. Moreover, in this type of predication the subject needs some anchoring, which is why the existential and locative value of *būti* in presentative clauses is generally ranked first on the scale.

Another property which follows directly from the textual-discourse function performed by presentative structures is that the presentative type cannot be used in isolation due to the fact that the subject referent, introduced as a *discourse-new entity*, is interpreted as a starting point for the following narrative (cf. 16); it therefore has to be taken up later in the discourse.

- (16) *Žemaičiuose buvo turtinga, didžiai išgarsėjusi ir visoje Raseinių apygardoje labiausiai gerbiama Bilevičių giminė, laikiusi save Mindaugo atžala.*
'In Samogitia there was a rich and very famous family of Bilevičiai, who were respected in all the district of Raseiniai and who claimed themselves kin to Mindaugas'

If the subject referent happens to be a person, quite often *būti* is replaced by *gyventi* 'live':

- (17) *Gyveno kartą senelis ir senelė.*
'Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman'

Slot 3 (i.e. the subject NP) in presentative clauses occurs finally. It is at this point that we come to a much-debated issue, especially in English, of the (un)acceptability of definite terms in the post-verbal NP; this phenomenon has been known as the *definiteness restriction* since Milsark's (1974) analysis of English existential sentences. It is important to state that the presentative-*būti* construction in Lithuanian, as is the case in English, readily accepts definite NPs. The only restriction that applies to this type of Lithuanian 'be'-sentences is that the subject referent has to be *new to the discourse* (see example (13) above and (18) below):

- (18) *Paryžiuje yra ir garsi visame pasaulyje Dievo Motinos katedra, o visoje Prancūzijoje daug senų vienuolynų ir bažnyčių.*
'In Paris there is also the Cathedral of Notre Dame, famous all over the world, and all over France there are a lot of old churches and monasteries'

The compound sentence in (18) is an illustrative example of how Lithuanian distinguishes between presentative and locative-existential types. The first clause contains the form of *būti* – this is a typical presentative sentence with a definite subject referent; due to the reasons discussed above, the presence of the verb in this type is obligatory. The second clause in (18), on the other hand, is an existential-locative sentence. The verb 'be' here is optional; due to the contextual factors it is easily recoverable and is therefore only implicit. Thus, the second clause in (18) has only those constituents which are communicatively important, i.e. the location and the subject referent, and this communicative strategy is reflected in the syntax of the sentence. Note also that indefiniteness of the post-verbal NP in this clause is expressed by the partitive genitive case.

The structure in (19) is a perfect example of the presentative use of *būti*. The typical fusion of the locative-existential-presentative values of *būti* in the first clause culminates in introducing the subject for discussion; the topic is immediately taken up for the narrative in the same sentence, but the second mention of the subject NP is already anaphorically definite and is introduced by the definite pronoun *tie* 'these':

- (19) *Aplink Juodsodę yra daug Dirmeikių, tai ir tie Dirmeilčiai ėmė ieškoti giminytės.*
'Around Juodsodė there are a lot of people called Dirmeilčiai, so even these started looking for kinship'

Returning to the discussion of the subject NP, it has to be pointed out that the post-verbal NP in presentational sentences is sensitive to the discourse-status (this topic has been widely debated, for instance, by Prince 1992, Abbott 1992, 1993, Birner & Ward 1998, among others). Due to this pragmatic restriction the post-verbal NP, even though definite in semantic and grammatical terms, is easily admitted in presentative sentences if it represents *discourse-new* information (cf. examples (13) and (16) above). On the other hand, discourse-new information is very commonly also *hearer-new*. Example (20) below represents the case when the introductory sentence is both discourse-new and hearer-new; the function of such a statement is to raise a certain problem as a topic for further discussion. Typically, this is carried out by the presentative formula 'there is x that'; the regular presence of the indefinite pronoun *toks* 'such' and the *nominative NP* is an example of the specific indefinite reference. Note also that this type of presentative sentence has the structure of *Slot 2* (*būti*) + *Slot 3* (subject NP) + *Slot 4* (extension):

- (20) *Yra toks neteisingas požiūris, kad bemiukai noriai žaidžia su šautuvais, o mergaitės su lėlėmis.*
'There is/exists this incorrect attitude that boys willingly play with guns, while girls prefer playing with dolls'

It should be stressed that the presentative existential assertion in (20) is much more personal, based on the speaker-type assertion (note the use of the descriptive adjective *neteisingas* 'incorrect') than the general assertion of existence in existential sentences 'proper' (cf. example (2) above).

One more comment on the presentative type of ES is in order. Lithuanian scholars (cf. Sirtautas 1982: 66, Sirtautas & Grenda 1988: 14) in fact apply the term 'an existential sentence' to what is defined here as an introductory-presentative sub-type. There are grounds to claim that a distinction should be made between the presentative type as such, on the one hand, and the introductory sentence in the function of a paragraph-opener, on the other. The two differ in their communicative organisation: a presentative utterance (cf. (18)-(19)) consists of two basic information blocks, i.e. old (thematic) and new (rhematic) elements, while the introductory sentence is the so-called 'unpartitioned', i.e. all new, utterance (cf. Babby 1980: 94, Ambrasas 1986: 93). This difference is demonstrated in examples (21) and (22) below (from Sirtautas & Grenda 1988: 14). The sentence in (21) is an 'unpartitioned' utterance containing only new information, whereas (22) shows the two-way division into the thematic (the subject NP) and the rhematic (predication) elements:

- (21) *Gyveno du seneliu.*
'There lived an old man and an old woman'
(22) *Juodu eidavo kas rytą lydimų kirsti.*
'Every morning they used to go to cut out some forest in order to have some farming land'

Moreover, the all-new introductory sentence can be considered a marked member of the presentative-'be' construction due to its limited freedom of occurrence (i.e. at the beginning) in the text. Consider in this respect (23); note also definite subject referents in the second clause:

- (23) *Du senu buvo Pagiriu sodžiujė: Grainio liepa ir skerdzius Lapinas.*
'There were two old things in the village of Pagiriai: the Grainiai linden-tree and the herdsman Lapinas'

2.1 Lexical verbs in a presentative function

As stated above, the group of English existential sentences characterised by the appearance of notional verbs is traditionally known as a *presentational* construction. Correlated with this formal distinction is a functional one. Thus, existential sentences are generally concerned with the assertion of conceptual existence, which may or may not coincide with real physical existence; presentational sentences, on the other hand, mainly serve the purpose of introducing a new referent into a discourse. As for the range of semantic classes of verbs acceptable in a presentative structure, Lithuanian presentative ESs corroborate Lakoff's (1987: 572) assertion to the effect that '... the only constraint that we have placed on the head verb of the verb phrase is that it must be intransitive. This is an implicit claim that any intransitive verb should be able to work here providing that the verb phrase functions to set up an appropriate background for the noun phrase'.

This point is given substance by the examples adduced below. The first group of verbs that appear in Lithuanian presentatives includes the verb *būti* 'be' (see example (16) above) and 'be'-replacers, that is, verbs which have to do with different aspects of existence:

- (24) *Svėdasų miestelio pakrašty, prie pat Alaušo ežero, gyveno puodžius Ciplinskas.*
 'On the outskirts of Svėdasai, on the banks of the Alaušo lake, there lived a potter Ciplinskas'
- (25) *O priekyje, prie pat stalo, žinoma, stovi Mikalka.*
 'Right in the front, close to the table, there of course stands Mikalka'
- (26) *Netrukus pasirodė lietuvių kalba matematikos, geometrijos, geografijos, chemijos vadovėliai ir kitos gamtos mokslų bei technikos knygos ...*
 'Soon there appeared text-books in Lithuanian on mathematics, geometry, geography and chemistry as well as other books in natural sciences and technical literature'

The verb *gyveno* 'lived' in (24) and *stovi* 'stands' in (25) replace the verb 'be' in its respective vital and locational senses, while *pasirodė* 'appeared' in (26) is a prototypical verb of appearance (cf. Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995).

There is one distinct group of verbs which do not occur in essentially existential sentences, but is readily accepted in presentative constructions, and these are *verbs of motion*, for instance, *važiuoti* 'ride' exemplified in (27), *atvykti* 'arrive', as in (28), *prieiti* 'approach' in (29), *įdardėti* 'rattle' (30), *įeiti* 'enter', *ateiti* 'come', and *verbs of manner of motion*, such as *(į)skristi*, *(į)lėkti* 'fly', *bėgti*, *bėgioti* 'run', etc.

- (27) *Važiavo ponas su tarnu per mišką.*
 'Once a master and his servant were riding through the forest'
- (28) *Atvyko ir keletas Lietuvos kunigaikščių, tarp kurių buvo ir Vytautas.*
 'There also arrived several Lithuanian dukes, Vytautas among them'
- (29) *vieną prietemėlę priėjo prie manęs mokyklos kieme Jonas ...*
 when it was quite dark in the school yard, there came up to me Jonas...'
- (30) *Įdardėjo slyką per pusryčius kėman platus vežimas, dvejetu arklių lankytas ...*
 'Once, during breakfast time, there rattled into the yard a large cart drawn by two horses'

The reason why verbs of motion are readily accepted in presentative structures is undoubtedly related to the function which this sentence type performs in a discourse. Since narratives create mental spaces (cf. Fauconnier 1985) of their own, the verb of motion is perfectly suited 'to push' the entity designated by the subject noun phrase 'onto the scene', in other words, to bring it 'into the mental space of the hearer, which is also the space of the narrative' (Lakoff 1987: 570). Thus in the case of presentatives, the general idea of 'emerging existence' commonly conveyed by verbs of occurrence is additionally rendered by verbs which have to do with the process of 'changing to a new state' or 'moving to a new location'.

3. The syntax of Lithuanian presentative clauses

It is a commonly accepted view that the basic value of the verb 'be' is 'to be somewhere' (cf. Kahn 1973, Ewing 1985, Lakoff & Johnson 1999). Similarly, presentative sentences in Lithuanian take the classical *Locative + Verb_{exist} + Subject NP* structural pattern, like other semantically diverse types of locative existence.

However, presentative clauses in Lithuanian exhibit a very specific behaviour in terms of word order patterns that such sentences can take. It is an established fact that the main principle governing the actual arrangement of lexical items in Lithuanian utterances is communicative, as opposed to the grammatical principle in English (cf. Ambrasas 1986, Firbas 1966, 1979). It is due to this fact that existential sentences in Lithuanian, as any other type of utterance, show diverse word order patterns (see Kalėdaitė 2002). Yet, this is not the case with presentative clauses – word order in this type of sentence is fixed.

To illustrate what is at issue here, let us first consider the relevant examples of locative-existential sentences. The choice of this particular semantic type of ES is determined by the fact that both, locative and presentative structures, take identical structural elements, i.e. *Locative + Verb_{aux} + Subject NP*.

- (31) *Prisimenu, kai dėl cenzūros tėvo gaunamame laikraštyje "Vilniaus rytojus" būdavo mažesnės ir didesnės baltos dėmės.*
'I remember when because of the censorship in the newspaper "The Future of Vilnius", which my father used to read, there were white spots all over it'
- (32) *Buvo nemaloni pažintis tuščioje Vilniaus gatvėje ...*
'There was an unpleasant meeting in an empty street in Vilnius ...'
- (33) *Dažnai ir juokingų situacijų būdavo.*
'There used to be funny situations as well'

As regards the range of possible word order variations within the locative-existential type, any of the three constituents – subject, existential verb or location – can occur in final (focus) position. Thus, in the neutral pattern of the locative model, i.e. *Loc + V + S* (note example (31)), the verb is regularly preceded by a locative phrase and appears in the unmarked medial position. Clause-initial position (see example (32), which shows the *V + S + Loc* pattern) provides the verb with additional emphasis: when the verb comes first, both the verb and the subject get stressed. On the other hand, example (33) seems to suggest that clause-final position in the sequence *Loc + S + V* neutralises the verb – it is actually left unstressed.

Presentative structures, on the other hand, always show a fixed *V + S* ordering. The only possible variation with respect to the clause elements is the position occupied by a locative element: it can occur in a pre-verbal position, as in example (13), or it can be placed in a post-verbal position, as in (14):

- (13) *Tarp kitų kūrinių buvo ir garsusis Siksto madonos paveikslas.*
'Among other works of art there also was the famous painting of Sistine Madonna'
- (14) *Kitą kartą, labai seniai, buvo tomaj didelis, bebaigių užakti ežeras.*
'Once upon a time, long long ago, in the valley there was a big, almost overgrown lake'

4. Conclusion

To conclude, let us sum up the main points that have arisen out of the discussion presented above.

- (1) Presentative constructions in both English and Lithuanian are regarded as functional sub-types of existential sentences. The basic communicative function of such structures is not to predicate a property of the subject NP but to introduce a new important referent into the field of discourse.
- (2) The presentative construction in both languages takes the *Loc + V + S* structural pattern.
- (3) Lithuanian, typologically a flexible word-order language, allows variations of communicative sentence patterns within each semantic type of the existential construction. Presentative structures, however, exhibit a fixed word order pattern, where the subject NP, whether definite or indefinite, is always placed clause-finally. The same strategy is found in English presentative clauses.
- (4) In addition to the verb *būti/be*, presentative sentences in both languages accept other lexical verbs. The semantic classes of verbs include 'be'-replacers (i.e. verbs having to do with different aspects of existence) and essentially presentative verbs, namely, verbs of motion.

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PRISTATOMIEJI SAKINIAI ANGLŲ IR LIETUVIŲ KALBOSE

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Santrauka

Straipsnio tyrinėjimų objektas – vadinamieji pristatomieji sakiniai. Anglų kalboje šio tipo sakiniai skiriami jų atliekamos funkcijos pagrindu, nors struktūriškai jie yra tapatūs egzistenciniams sakiniams. Traktuoti juos kaip du atskirus sakinį tipus leidžia skirtinga šių sakinų sintaksinė organizacija, be to, pristatomiesiems sakiniams netaikomi tam tikri apribojimai, būdingi egzistenciniams sakiniams. Pavyzdžiui, egzistenciniuose sakinuose apibrėžtos referencijos veiksnys gramatiškai nepriimtinas, bet pristatomuosiuose sakinuose toks veiksnys yra gana dažnas. Tam tikrų skirtumų randama ir šių sakinų veiksmažodžių semantikoje. Pagrindinė pristatomųjų sakinų funkcija pasireiškia teksto lygmeniu; daugelio tyrinėtojų nuomone, šios konstrukcijos vartojimo tikslas – įvesti naują svarbų referentą į 'diskurso erdvę'. Atitinkama konstrukcija lietuvių kalboje nėra plačiau nagrinėta. Straipsnyje aptartas lietuvių kalbos pristatomųjų sakinų skyrimo pagrindumas, pasiūlyta tam tikra jų klasifikacija, aprašyti ir analizuoti esminiai egzistencinių ir pristatomųjų sakinų panašumai ir skirtybės.

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