

SYNTACTIC PECULIARITIES OF CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH

L. G. TORCHYAN

Lecturer at Gavar State University

The literary English language exists in two interacted forms: in the form of written speech and in the form of colloquial speech. One important characteristics of the linguistic approach towards the study of language is that it is not concerned merely with the written language, but also with the spoken one.

Depending on the level of education and social status of native speakers two main kinds of present-day English may be distinguished: educated or standard English and uneducated or non-standard English. They are marked by significant differences in their grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

Educated or standard English is the sort of English naturally used by the majority of educated people in speaking and writing. It is uniform-national, not limited socially or geographically.

At the present period of its development educated or standard English is marked by a great number of different functional varieties, also called *styles or registers*, appropriate to given situations. The most common functional varieties or styles are: written English and spoken English. The main two varieties are treated as of equal importance, but this article places rather more emphasis on spoken English. Other highly specialized varieties are ignored here.

The written variety of English is the type of language taught at school and universities and generally used by press, radio and television. It is also used by educated speakers in formal situations for some serious purpose, for example, in literary prose, in official reports, scholarly articles, theses and reviews, scientific textbooks and essays, formal correspondence and business letters, and also in public speeches, addresses, or possibly in formal conversation (especially between strangers). Literary English is nearly always written, except when used in formal public speeches, broadcast talks, prepared lectures, etc. These types of communication are chiefly carried on in the form of monologue addressed from one person to many, and often prepared in advance. Thus, written English, typically used in formal contexts, is informative and discursive.

Spoken language is the type of language naturally used by the majority of educated speakers in private two-way everyday communication and partly in familiar letters to close friends. It is characteristically maintained in the form of a dialogue which is supported in its explicitness by the appropriate speech situation and the meaningful modulation of the voice: its rise and fall, its pauses and stresses, and all kinds of gestures. There is constant feed-back between the speaker and the listener in dialogue intercourse whose main function is the mutual intelligibility and communicative effectiveness.

Conversational spoken speech, as its name indicates, seldom appears in its purity even in the dramatic dialogue of plays and novels, where it is never a faithful reflection of actual conversation. But contemporary authors imitate everyday speech to the extent that it looks and sounds the way people talk in ordinary communication, thus presenting good patterns of spoken English of today. On the other hand, conversational style should not be used in formal writing.

The spoken variety of language is by its very nature spontaneous, momentary, fleeting. The written language, on the contrary, lives rather a long life; it changes more slowly than the spoken and is therefore far more conservative and homogeneous. Ordinary conversational speech is as highly personal and individual as the written style of talented writers, while technical language tends to be impersonal.

The spoken grammar has certain morphological peculiarities but they are few in number. One of the morphological feature typical of dialogue speech is the use of the analytical emphatic forms in the present and past tenses of the indicative mood and also in the imperative mood.

The colloquial character of everyday conversation also reveals itself in the use of the first and second person pronouns *I* and *you*, which are common in a dialogue. There are some other grammatical divergences between informal and formal English, for instance: the use of *who* and *whom*; *I* and *me*; *he* and *him*, etc., the preference in use of finite forms (in sentences and clauses); the placing of a preposition at the beginning or at the end of a sentence (a clause) and others.

Let's dwell on some peculiarities of Conversational English. The characteristic feature of colloquial syntax is that of brevity and complexity of constructions, sentences, and the usage of non-finite forms of the verb as a

predicate, non-verbal sentence in interrogative, exclamatory, imperative and impersonal sentences, various kinds of incomplete sentences. Usually in conversational English the dialogue has a great emotional coloring. There are special structural emotional-expressive means in colloquial speech which in definite positions of remark or report in dialogues lose their lexical meaning partially or wholly and serve only to express the speaker's emotion.

1) Repetitions usually express surprise, indignation, dissent and the idea which follows.

e.g. I think she is nice. - Nice? Don't say that.

2) The wide use of constructions doesn't he? Did he! Which express indignation, confidence and usually after these constructions the interlocutor expresses his idea which is just contrary to the idea of the first one. But sometimes it can be the continuation or the extension of the idea of the first one.

e.g. Doesn't he feel important? Doesn't he!

3) The use of the pronouns *what*, *why* which have both lexical and emotional sense in dialogues.

e.g. I'm spending the day with Miss Warren. What! Do you know Warren?

4) The adverbs *really*, *indeed*, *well* partially preserve their lexical meanings and obtain emotional coloring.

e.g. He might fall any minute. — Really. Is it as bad as that?

5) The wide use of interjections which have certain emotional coloring in dialogues.

e.g. Kate, our company doesn't have enough money. — Mm! I know what you mean.

Ellipsis typically occurs in dialogues and plays as an important part in the connection between sentences said by different speakers.

e.g. Are you very rich? -No. Living from hand to mouth. (Subject and part of predicate are missing)

Various types of inversion are of common use in colloquial syntax which includes: a) initial object (*Money, Mr. Mackenzine welcomes*), b) initial position of the nominal part of the predicate (*Rude am I in my speech*), c) initial modifier (*Eagerly I wished the morrow*), d) initial attribute (*Bright the carriage was*).

All the above mentioned sentences are never used in written speech. They are built and used spontaneously in the process of speaking.

Now let's focus on some peculiarities of simple sentences in spoken English. We touch upon some syntactic peculiarities of declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory sentences.

Declarative sentences are endless in their variety and they are very common in everyday conversation. Most declarative sentences are characterized by a direct word order and generally pronounced with a falling tone. Sentences beginning with *here* and *there* with the verb *be* or a verb of motion in Present simple tense are rather common in everyday speech, it is often accompanied by subject-predicate inversion.

e.g. Here comes the bus. There's your brother.

But when the subject is a personal pronoun the subject-predicate inversion doesn't take place.

An interrogative sentence is used to ask a question. Most interrogative sentences are formed by means of inversion, i.e. by placing the predicate or part of it (usually an auxiliary or modal verb) before the subject. General and special questions are the most important kinds of questions.

General questions may be used in the negative-interrogative form. This form is more common in ordinary speech. In lively conversation as many as a third of general questions contain a negative finite form.

e.g. Isn't your car working? (= Is it really true that your car isn't working?).

This construction is widely used to indicate the speaker's feelings or to make a question rhetorical which doesn't require any answer, but it is a veiled statement expressing some kind of emotion.

In spoken English a general question is often formed without inversion, i.e. by putting it in the form of a declarative sentence and giving it a rising intonation of a question.

e.g. You want me to laugh? -Yes.

The interrogative word with which a special question begins may be any part of the sentence except the subject. It may be an object or attribute to an object, or predicative, or adverbial modifier. When the interrogative word is the subject, the word-order is that of a declarative sentence, i.e. no inversion is found.

e.g. Who got here first? (subject)

There is a sub-type of the alternative question which is like a general question as it requires “Yes” or “No” as an answer. In this case we have in both parts of a sentence the same duplicated verb, one in the affirmative form, the other in the negative.

e.g. Are you coming or aren't you?

The imperative sentences are widely used in speech when the speaker induces the person addressed to fulfill an action. This may be done in the form of a command, order, request, offer, etc. Most imperative sentences normally have no overt grammatical subject.

e.g. There was a hesitation, then a gentle tap on his door. – Come in.

Exclamatory sentences are used for expressing the speaker's own feelings or strong emotion. They are characterized by emphatic intonation in speaking and by an exclamation mark in writing.

e.g. “What a rotten trick!” I muttered at last.

All the above mentioned patterns are most frequently used in conversational English. They are simple in their structure and used in everyday conversation of native speakers.

We should also take into consideration some syntactic peculiarities of composite sentences in conversational English. In everyday conversation there is a tendency to avoid ambiguity by using simple syntactic structure rather than composite. Conversational English is less complex in structures of subordination than written English. Yet composite sentences are of common use in speech of educated people and it is notable that coordinate structures are often preferred to equivalent structures of subordination.

e.g. *It was wet and we decided to stay at home* is preferable to *As it was wet, we decided to stay at home*.

In terms of function, subordinate clauses can be divided into subject, object, predicative, attributive, adverbial clauses.

There are two kinds of subject subordinate clauses:

a) composite sentences with an unusual word order, i.e. opening with a sub-clause introduced by the conjunctions “whether”, “that” or adverbs “what”, “where”, “why”.

e.g. Whether we need it is a different matter. (formal style)

b) Composite sentences with usual word order, i.e. beginning with the introductory subject “it”, and the subject subordinate clauses placed at the end of the sentence.

e.g. It is a different matter whether we need it. (informal style)

Clauses beginning with “who”, “where”, “when” and other “wh-words” are sometimes used as subject clauses, but they mainly occur as predicative clauses.

e.g. “Is that why you brought the money?” “Yes, it is.” he said earnestly.

When an object subordinate clause is introduced by the conjunction “that”, the latter is frequently omitted in informal style.

e.g. You know, I told you I’d something to tell you.

When the relative pronoun “who” is used as an object of an attributive subordinate clause, there is some choice between the nominative case “who” and the objective case “whom”. In rather formal style the use of the objective form “whom” is obligatory; the nominative form “who” is widely current in informal conversation.

e.g. The girl to whom he spoke is my sister. (rather formal). The girl who he spoke to is my sister. (informal)

There are various types of adverbial clauses, expressing a great number of adverbial relations and modifying a verb, an adjective or an adverb in the principal clause. Adverbial clauses may occupy different positions in a complex sentence: precede the principal clause, follow it or even interrupt it. For instance, adverbial clauses of time are introduced by the temporal conjunctions “when”, “before”, “after”, “as soon as”, “till”, “since”, “once”. An adverbial clause of time may precede or follow the principal clause.

e.g. When I last heard of him, he was living in London.

To sum up we must mention that conversational English is less complex in structures of subordination than written English. Yet composite sentences are in common use in speech of educated people and it is notable that coordinate structures are often preferred to subordinate structures.

Key words: *syntax, subordination, composite sentences, complex sentences, formal style, informal style, written speech, colloquial speech, grammatical divergences, adverbial clauses*

ԽՈՍԱԿՑԱԿԱՆ ԱՆՂԵՐԵՆԻ ՀԱՐԱՅՈՒՄԱԿԱՆ ՅՈՒՐԱՅԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ

Լ. Գ. ԹՈՌՉՅԱՆ

Գղձ դասախոս

Հոդվածում ներկայացված են խոսակցական անգլերենի շարահյուսական յուրահատկությունները անգլերենի ստանդարտ և ոչ ստանդարտ տեսակների համար, որոնք աչքի են ընկնում քերականության, արտասանության և բառապաշարի ոլորտներում աչքի ընկնող զգալի տարբերությամբ: Նշվում է, որ տարբերությունն հիմնականում նրանում է, որ խոսակցական անգլերենին, ի տարբերություն գրավոր անգլերենի, բնորոշ չեն բարդ ստորադասական կառույցները, սակայն բարդ նախադասությունները գերակշռում են կրթված մարդկանց խոսքում, և հատկանշական է, որ տվյալ դեպքում համադասական կառույցներն ավելի գերադասելի են, քան ստորադասական կառույցները:

СИНТАКСИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ РАЗГОВОРНОГО АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Л. Г. ТОРЧАН

Преподаватель ГГУ

В статье представлены особенности синтаксиса разговорного английского языка стандартных и нестандартных типов, которые отличаются на грамматическом, орфоэпическом и лексическом уровнях. Отмечается, что разница заключается в основном в том, что разговорному английскому языку, в отличие от письменного английского языка, не присущи подчиненные сложные структуры, однако речь образованных людей полна сложными структурами, и следует отметить, что в этом случае сложносочиненные предложения более предпочтительны, чем подчиненные структуры.