

Linguistic Study of Existential and Locative "There" with Reference to Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter

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Abstract

English language has two main kinds of "there": Existential "there" and locative "there". The two uses of "there" are polysemic variations of the same word. In fact, "there" can be understood in different situations with different interpretations either to be existential "there" or locative "there". As existential, "there" is a formal device refers to the existence or the presence of someone or something. It also points to a specific syntactic structure: It functions as a grammatical subject. In addition, "there" as a locative expresses various abstractions of space. It functions as an adverbial rather than as a grammatical subject. This paper investigates the various syntactic, semantic, phonological, and discorsal properties of existential and locative "there". Additionally, this paper formulates an analysis of existential and locative "there" at its syntactic and discorsal levels in English. For this reason, literary work has been chosen. The data of this paper consists of ten texts from Hawthorn's Scarlet Letter.

1.0 Introduction

Existential "there" is a formal device used together with an intransitive verb to predicate the existence or non-occurrence of something (including the non-existence or non-occurrence of some thing) (Biber et al , 1999:943).Generally, the two kinds of "there" are exemplified in the following sentences :

- 1) There's a vulture on the back of your chair
- 2) Look! There's a vulture, over there. (Hurford, 2004:100)

Existential "there" sentence like(1) conveys new information, but the sentence like(2) doesn't convey new information because (2) is a locative "there" sentence, not an existential "there" one.

The researcher will tackle the main points about existential and locative "there", their definitions, properties (syntactic, semantic, phonological and discorsal properties of them). Moreover, an applicable study will be held to some texts of fiction that are chosen from "The Scarlet Letter" novel to be analyzed. The choice of this novel reflects clearly the use of the two kinds of "there" especially "there" as an existential because of the main theme of it i.e., the existence of sin and scarlet letter "A" which stands for guilty of adultery.

1.1 What is an Existential "There"

Grammarians differ as to how a "there" sentence should be defined. Some of them see those sentences which contain a form of be as having the semantic status of existential sentences.

Lyons (1968:389-90) argues that "there" as an existential derived both synchronically and diachronically from an adverbial of place. Moro (1997: 33) demonstrates that existential "there" asserts the existence or non existence of something when the subject has not already been defined. For this purpose English relies on constructions introduced by "there" (known as the existential "there")

Most typically, a clause with existential "there" has the following structure:

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There + be + indefinite NP(+place or time position adverbial).

The noun phrase following be is usually indefinite and referred to as the notional subject. (Biber et al , 1999:944-945)

Hurford (2004:100) briefly mentions that indefinite noun phrases are the only kind normally used after existential expressions (there is or there are) as in

3. There are some grey hairy things at the back of the fridge.

This is exactly what we would expect , that "there is " construction is used to state the existence of something.

Baker(1989:356) refers to the noun phrase that comes after (Be) in the existential construction as the "lower subject", to distinguish it from "there" that serves as the subject of the sentence as a whole. For example :

4.a. There is a fly in my soup.

b. There is a cat on the mat.

thus, " a fly" and a "cat" are the lower subjects in (4).

Landman (2004:434) states that the noun phrase is often complex for example:

5. There is something extra and a little heroic about him.

Existential clauses often contain a time or place adverbial because things exist or happen in the context of time and place for example :

6. There are no trains on Sundays.

1.2 Variation in the Verb Phrase

In fact, most of the existential clauses contain a form of the verb "be", which may be preceded by auxiliaries or semi-models: has been, have been , had been, will be, shall be , will have been, is to be, is supposed to be, used to be ."Be" may also appear in a to infinitive complement of a lexical verb with the force of a hedge : happen to be , appear to be, is said to be, etc. For example:

7. There used to be a house on the end of the common up at Clarendon Road.

8 There is supposed to be a plot between you and me to get hold of his wealth.

9. There seem to have been a lot of people who took up painting for a while and then dropped it.

10. There is said to be a mismatch between the mother tongue and the target language at these points. (Biber et al, 1999:244-245).

Verbs other than be sometimes occur in existential clauses, mainly intransitive verbs denoting existence or occurrence. For example:

11. There seems no likelihood of a settlement.

12. There came a roar of pure delight as it closed around him and carried him on.

13. In all such relations there exists a set of mutual obligations in the instrumental and economic fields. (ibid)

1.3 The Main Properties of Existential "There"

Generally, existential "there" can be expressed according to syntactic, semantic, phonological and discursal properties

1.3.1 Syntactic property.

Syntactically, existential "there" behaves like a grammatical subject, it occurs before the verb in declarative clauses and can be used in question tags for example:

14. There's still no bead [there], is there?

(Freeze 1992:221)

Grammatically, existential sentences contain only those "there" sentences which have a form of the verb (be). According to this opinion, cases which have a lexical verb like "begin", "move", "seem", "come" or "occur" are distinguished from existential "there" sentences. They are known as "there_ presentatives". Existential "there" has a unique syntactic role; "there" is no other word in English which behaves in the same way. It is somehow described as an anticipatory subject.

1.3.2 Semantic property

The semantic definition of existential sentences is not derived from the presence of "there" plus one of the verbs (be, begin, move, occur, ..., etc), but from the content of the verb itself. Breivik (1982:5) describes the semantic property of existential sentences as one where the verb expresses the existence of something, or its coming – into- existence. This means that an existential sentence explicitly refers to semantic property, i.e., to a sentence whose meaning is to describe the (non -) existence of something.

1.3.3 Phonological property

Phonologically, existential "there" is reduced to /ð(r)/ i.e., unstressed. However, minimal pairs in the verb + there discourse construction were discovered suggesting that stress is contrastive and signals meaning differences. In this construction, a stressed "there" for example (Sit There) refers to a particular space whereas an unstressed "there" for example (sit there) refers to a more subjective type of space.

(Diana, 2005:1)

1.3.4 Discourse functional properties

Biber et al (1999:251-253) State that existential "there" typically manifests most or all of the following functions of discourse. First, it is used to introduce new elements into the discourse. This agrees with the typical occurrence with an indefinite notional subject.

Secondly, existential there comes in handy as a device to bring attention to things which are to be done.

Thirdly, existential "there" is used to focus on the existence or occurrence of something (including the non_ existence or non-occurrence of something). It is most typically used with indefinite notional subject. The use of existential "there" is in agreement with the information principle. It serves to delay, and prepare the ground for, new information later in the clause.

Fourthly, another way of using existential "there" is to develop the text by using it to introduce a series of items. This seems to focus particularly on the fact that there is a sequence of items, rather on each individual item.

Fifthly, definite notional subjects should occur in existential "there" constructions. In some of these cases, the effect of the existential "there" is to bring something already known back to mind.

McNally(2005:3)demonstrates that one of the discourse functions of existential "there" is the intuition that existential "there" serves primarily to introduce a novel referent into the discourse. It also serves not only to introduce novel discourse referents but also to reintroduce or focalize referents that have already been mentioned.

1.4 Locative "There"

Baker (1989:356) points out that not every English sentence has begun with "there" is an existential sentence. The sentences in (15) illustrate an entirely different English construction.

15. a. There is Jones.
- b. There is the picture of Fred.
- c. There goes your father.

In these sentences, the initial word "there" is a genuine locative phrase or motion phrase. As the accent marks indicate, it always receives a fairly heavy degree of stress when it is spoken. By contrast, the "there" of the existential construction is always spoken without any stress at all. Obviously, locative "there" doesn't convey new information as in (16) in contrast to existential "there" which conveys new information as in (17)

16. There is the book on the table.
17. There is a book on the table.

Diana (2005:1) argues that locative "there" is used not only to function by substitution and to behave distinguishably from pronouns. Its behaviour is best accounted for in a tripartite associative process rather than bipartite referring process common to pronoun. This means that, locative there (1) associates with referents that (2) serves to reconfigure its undefined space, which in turn (3) provides a place wherein events or entities can be situated. It is argued that the model of associative process proposed herein reflects not only the use of space in real life but also the functional capacity of existential "there", thus depending the same functional capacity for both uses of "there".

1.5 The Main Properties of Locative There

Like existential "there", locative "there" has properties on the syntactic, semantic, phonological, and discursal levels. Syntactically locative there functions as an adverbial rather than as an grammatical subject.

Semantically, locative there is much more diversified than expected, it can express locative and temporal meaning, and it can reflect various abstractions of space. Additionally, locative there can be used to indicate more subjective types of meanings. Moreover, notions of "presence" and "existence" can be known. It has a capacity to express a wide range of meanings that are conditioned by syntax, stress, and context.

Phonologically, locative "there" tends to be stressed, whereas existential "there", is unstressed.

Finally, the frequency of locative there is particularly rare in academic prose, this is because of its abstract nature. Where locative there occurs in academic prose, it tends to refer to the text rather than the setting. In contrast, existential there is more common in all registers, although there are some differences in distribution. (Biber et al, 1999:948). Milsark (1974:65) argues that the similarity between existential and locative sentences is superficial or spurious, at least in some languages .

1.6 The Analysis of Existential and Locative "There"

In this section, texts are chosen from the SCARLET LETTER to be analyzed. The choice of this novel of the seventeenth century Puritan New England reflects clearly the use of "there" in its two distinct meanings, i.e., as existential and locative meanings. Particularly, we find that the use of the existential "there" is very clear in this novel since it deals with the existence or presence of sin, sham, and guilty of adultery. In addition, we find the scarlet

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letter "A" (which stands for adultery). These chosen texts will be analyzed in relation to the syntactic and discourse functional properties of " there"

Text (1)

In the way of furniture, there is a stove with a voluminous funnel; an old pine desk, with a three-legged stool beside it; two or three wooden – bottom chairs, exceedingly decrepit and infirm; and, - not to forget the library,- on some shelves, a score or two of volumes of the Acts of congress, and a bulky Digest of the Revenue laws.

(p.39)

This text is taken from the " Custom House " is a stand- alone section of the novel. Hawthorne (as narrator) ascribes there construction by using(there) with the form of the verb (be). Here, it is described as an anticipatory subject and occurs with complex notional subjects because the narrator introduces a series of elements. In this text, existential 'there" is used to develop the text by giving for the full description of the place, i.e., the Custom House, its , furniture, stove , desk , three legged stool, chairs and library. His analysis of the place is harsh and critical. He wants to develop the text by introducing a series of elements

Text (2)

There would have been something sad, unutterably dreary, in all this, had I not been conscious that it lay at my own option to recall whatever was valuable in the past. It might be true, indeed, that this was a life which could not, with impunity, be lived too long ; else, it might make me permanently other than I had been, without transforming me into any shape which it would be worth my while to take.

(P. 56)

In this text, the narrator uses existential there which behaves like a grammatical subject plus a form of the verb (be) which is in turn preceded by (would have) and followed by a notional subject. It is typically an indefinite noun phrase, i.e. , (something sad). The narrator remembers, imagines the sadness of his life and notes that upon losing his job as the custom Surveyor, the difficulty of his life is increased. Here, the effort of the existential there is to bring something already known back to mind, rather than asserting that it exists.

Text (3)

There were traces about it of gold embroidery, which, however, was greatly frayed and defaced; so that none, or very little, of the glitter was left. It had been wrought, as was easy to perceive, with wonderful skill of needlework; and the stitch gives evidence of a now forgotten art, not to be recovered even by the process of picking out the threads. This rage of the scarlet cloth,___for time and wear, and a sacrilegious moth, on careful examination, assumed the shape of a letter. It was the capital letter A.

(p. 61)

Here, the narrator uses the existential "there" with the form of the verb (be) to present or introduce new element into the discourse when he discovers a scarlet letter "A" on a small piece of cloth along with the set of papers that become the foundation of his novel. This text also presents the novel referent i.e., the scarlet letter "A" which stands for sin, sham and adultery. Biber et al (1999:251) state that " given examples of this type, we can conclude that existential "there" is used to focus on the existence or occurrence of something (including the non- existence or non – occurrence of something). As definite noun phrases refer to known

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entities or phenomena whose existence is not at issue, existential "there" is most typically occur with indefinite notional subjects. The use of existential there is in agreement with the information principle, as it serves to delay, and perhaps the ground for, new information later in the clause".

Text (4)

There he stood, with a border of grizzled locks beneath his skull – cap; while his gray eyes, accustomed to the shaded light of his study, were winking, like those of Hester's infant, in the unadulterated sunshine.

(p.91)

The situation here reflects the use of "there" as an adverbial rather than as a grammatical subject. The locative meaning of "there" is very clear in this situation . This scene describes Mr. Wilson who steps forward and delivers a sermon against sin, after which Hester is allowed to return to the prison.

Text (5)

There used to be a swarm of these small apparitions, in holiday time; and we called them children of the Lord of Misrule. But how gat such a guest into my hall?

(P.132)

The speaker " Governor Bellingham " here uses the existential there to be the focus of interest, and it is then picked up by later references in the text. Firstly, he sees pearl dressed lavishly in her scarlet out fit, standing in front of him. She introduces herself and tells them her name " pearl". The point of interest here is the parallelism between pearl, the scarlet letter, and the red rose. Thus pearl is called a " Red Rose" for the end of this text. In this text " there" is used as a grammatical subject with the form of the (be), which is in turn preceded by (used to).

Text (6)

" Indeed hath he " , answered the magistrate, " and hath adduced such arguments, that we will even leave the matter as it now stands; so long , at least, as there shall be no further scandal in the woman.

(p.137)

In this text, existential " there" is used with the form of the verb (be) which is preceded by an auxiliary (shall) to express the non – existence or non – occurrence of something. This conversation between Hester and the Governor Bellingham who suggests that it would be better for the child to remove from her mother's care. He indicates also that the scarlet letter is precisely the reason they want to remove Pearl from her mother's care.

Text(7)

There is no good for him,___ no good for me,___ no good for thee! There is no good for little pearl! There is no path to guide us out of this dismal maze!.

(p.191)

The speaker " Hester" here uses existential there in another way to enrich the text. Here, existential there constructions occur in a series. Particularly, the use of there in this way to focus on the fact that there is a sequence of items, rather than on each individual item. Hester tells Mr. Chillingwath that she plans to reveal his true identity to Mr. Dimmesdale. He is unmoved by this, telling her that they cannot change anything . In fact, it is clear that definite notional subjects occur at all in existential there constructions of this text.

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Text (8)

There had been a period when Hester was less alive to this consideration; or, perhaps, in the misanthropy of her own trouble, she left the minister to bear what she might picture to herself as a more tolerable doom. But of late, since the night of his vigil, all her sympathies towards him had been both softened and invigorated.

(p.210)

In this context, existential construction contains a form of the verb "be", which is preceded by (had) and followed by a definite noun phrase (notional subject) and an adverb of time. Here, the effect of the existential there is to bring or to remember something already known back to mind, rather than focusing on its existence. Hester, after seven years of desperately wanting forgiveness, she puts her arms around Mr. Dimmesdale and pleads with him to forgive her, which he finally does. He longs for a friend who knows his secret, she offers to be his friend, but she tells him that he is living with an enemy.

Text (9)

There played around her mouth, and eamed out of her eyes, aradiant and tender smile, that seemed gushing from the very heart of womanhood. A crimson flush was glowing on her cheek, that had been long so pale. Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrerocable past.

(p. 220)

The effort of existential there here, is to bring attention to the new thing which is to be done. This is represented by Hester's arguments for leaving and live a new life. Mr. Dimmesdale allows himself to be come by this new decision. He is happy once he makes the decision to go with Hester. In this scene, existential "there" construction contains verbs other than be like(played, eamed, seemed....). Here, we have a new scene of sunshine, a new thing through the use of existential there. Hester is invigorated, brought to a new sense of life, so much so that she lets her hair down and away the scarlet letter.

Text (10)

There were human beings enough, and enough of highly wrought and symphonious feeling, to produce that more impressive sound than the organ – tones of the blast, or the thunder, or the roar of the sea, even that mighty swell of many voices, blended into one great voice by the universal impulse which makes likewise one vast heart out of the many.

(p.263)

In this scene, existential there is used as a device for bringing attention to an important thing which is to be done. This thing represents the Dimmesdale's final act of confession upon the scaffold. He reveals the scarlet letter, finally, shedding light on his own sin, shame that he could hardly bear. In fact, this function represents one of the most important functions of discourse of the existential there. It is used here with the form of the verb be and a complex noun phrase(i.e., notional subject).

Conclusions

The following concluding remarks are come out with :

1. Existential and locative "there" can be identified by the syntactic, semantic, phonological and discorsal properties
2. Generally, existential "there" enriches literary texts by developing a strategy of the theme , for its use of various contexts .

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3. The analysis of the texts has shown clearly the use of the different discursual functions of existential there.
4. The frequency of locative there is particularly rare in literary work.
5. Existential there constructions are overwhelmingly associated with the verb "be" and without "be" are very rare and make up a very small proportion of all existential constructions.

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الخلاصة

دراسة لغوية لـ "there" الوجودية و المكانية بالإشارة إلى هوثيرن سكارلت لتر
هنالك نوعان أساسيان من "there" في اللغة الانكليزية : الوجودية و المكانية.
هذان الاستخدامان هما تنوعات متشابهة بالشكل مختلفة بالمعنى. في الحقيقة تفهم "there" في
مختلف المواقع بتفسيرات مختلفة إما أن تكون وجودية أو مكانية. "there" كمعنى وجودي هي وسيلة
رسمية تشير الى وجود أو حضور شخص ما أو شيء ما. وإنما أيضا تشير إلى تركيب خاص محدد.
وظيفتها هي كفاعل نحوي. علاوة على ذلك "there" كونها مكانية توضح تحديداً مكانية متنوعة.
وظيفتها كظرفية وليس كفاعل نحوي.
يتقصى هذا البحث الوسائل النحوية و الصوتية و الدلالية و الخطابية لـ "there" كوجودية و
مكانية فضلاً عن أن هذا البحث يعد تحليل لـ "there" لمستويين هما النحوي و الخطابية في اللغة
الانكليزية. و لهذا الغرض، تم اختيار عشر عينات من نص أدبي . و النص المختار هو "سكارلت لتر"
للمؤلف (هوثيرن).