

**University of Al-maarif**  
**College of Education**  
**Department of English**



# **A University Grammar of English**

**Randolph Quirk**

**&**

**Sidney Greenbaum**

**Prepared by MA. Mena Ahmed**

## Empty *it* subject

- A subject may lack semantic content altogether, and consists only of the meaningless 'prop' word *it*, used spatially with climatic predication: *It's raining / snowing* etc. *It's getting drack*
- **Note**
- The 'prop' subject *it* as discussed here must be distinguished from the 'anticipatory' *it* of sentences like: *It was nice seeing you*, where the 'prop' subject is a replacement for a postponed clausal subject (*Seeing you was nice*).
- **Locative and effected object**
- Apart from the AFFECTED OBJECT, semantic types of direct object are the LOCATIVE OBJECT and the EFFECTED OBJECT. An example of the 'locative object' is: *The horse jumped the fence* (... jumped over the fence)

- There are similar uses of such verbs as **turn, leave, reach, surround, penetrate, mount, cross, climb** .
- An effected object is one that refers to something which exists only by virtue of the activity indicated by the verb:
- *Baird invented television.*
- *I'm writing a letter.*
- With **agentive subject** and an **affected object**, one may always capture part of the meaning of a clause (e.g. X destroyed Y) by saying **X did something to Y**; but this does not apply to an effected object—Baird invented television does not imply Baird did something to television.
- One major kind in this category also the type of object (sometimes called “cognate”) which repeats, partially or wholly, the meaning of the verb, as in sing a song.

## ● Note

- A more doubtful category of object consists of phrases of extent or measure, as in:
  - *He ran a mile. It cost ten dollars. It weighs almost a ton.*
- As these clauses do not generally permit the passive transformation, there is reason to analyze them as SVA rather than SVO. However, the final element behaves at least marginally like a direct object, as is shown by question forms with What alongside How much:
  - What does it weigh?
  - How much does it weigh?
- A third type of effected object takes the form of a verbal noun preceded by a common verb of general meaning, such as do, make, have, take, give. This construction is often more idiomatic, especially in colloquial English, than an equivalent construction with an intransitive verb.

*He did little work that day* (He worked little that day)

*He made several attempts to contact me* (He attempted several times to contact me).

*The prisoner made no comment*

*He's having a bath/a holiday* (BrE)/ *a smoke*

*He took a rest/a vacation* (AmE)/ *a dislike to her/a dive into the water*

*He gave a jump/a yell, etc*

**Have** and **take** in these examples have agentive subjects (have being the typical British, and take the typical American form), while give usually has an involuntary force and therefore accompanies an 'affected' subject.

Note

**Have** can more easily have an affected subject than take (\*The baby had/took a bath), but cf. He took a beating.

## **Affected indirect object**

There is only one exception to the rule that the indirect object has the role of 'recipient': this is when give (or sometimes related verbs like pay, owe) has an 'effected' object as direct object and an 'affected' object as indirect object:

*I paid her a visit (I visited her)*

*I gave the door a couple of kicks (I kicked the door a couple of times)*

These clauses, as the paraphrases make clear, are equivalent to clauses with a direct object as 'affected' object.