

# Formally-Two-Particle Proposals: Ellipse of the Subject

F. A. Kulaeva and L. B. Abdulvakhabova  
*Chechen State University, Grozny, Russia*

**Keywords:** Sentence, Subject, Indefinite-Personal and Impersonal Pronoun.

**Abstract:** A special, rather extensive group of sentences consists of formally two-part constructions or, as they are also called, unfounded elliptic sentences. This group of sentences is represented by indefinite-personal and generalized-personal structures with the pronoun *man* and impersonal sentences with the pronoun *es*. It is characteristic that in the Russian language, indefinite-personal and generalized-personal constructions are distinguished as two separate types of unambiguous sentences, due to their different design. In German grammars, however, they are not distinguished as separate types of sentences, attention is paid only to the shades of meanings within the general group of indefinite-personal constructions. Some grammars, such as *Kleine deutsche Grammatik* (W. Jung), are completely silent about structures with *man*. Most likely, this is because there are no formal differences between indefinite-personal and generalized-personal structures in German. In this article, we will try to compare formal two-part sentences in German and Russian, consider their use cases, and identify their similarities and differences.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The term ellipse comes from the Greek (*élleipsis*) and means absence, deficiency or even omission. In linguistics, this means skipping parts of a sentence. The very translation of the word indicates that one of its components is missing in the sentence (Valgina, 2003). Elliptical omissions can be reconstructed using linguistic or situational context. In an elliptical sentence, any component may be missing, sometimes even an essential part of the sentence, but the ellipse is always clear. For example: *Je früher der Abschied [ist], desto kürzer [ist] die Qual;*

*Erst [kommt] die Arbeit, dann [kommt] das Geld.*

*[Das] Ende [ist] gut, alles [ist] gut! or [Wenn das]*

*Ende gut [ist], [ist] alles gut!*

*(Ist) Noch jemand (hier) ohne Fahrschein?*

*Je schneller [du hier bist], um so besser.*

*[Ich wünsche dir einen] Guten Morgen!*

*[Ich bitte Sie um] Entschuldigung!*

*[Möchten Sie] Sonst noch was?*

Representatives of linguistic schools of different periods and trends believe that the omission of a noun in the language system is used to save language resources, for the convenience of utterance. Today, when globalization processes are rapidly taking place in the world and the Internet plays a huge role in human communication, the form of oral and written

speech in different languages is actively changing. Saving language means helps the perception of a large amount of information. In this regard, the study of elliptical sentences becomes especially relevant. The relevance of comparing German elliptical constructions with Russian ones is dictated by the difficulties our students face when using and translating these constructions (Jung, 2013).

The phenomenon of the ellipse is the subject of separate works of many linguists. G. Paul is one of the first who touches upon the phenomenon of the principle of economy of words in the language. For example, in the chapter "Economy of Language Means" of his work "Principles of the History of Language" he argues that economy in language occurs primarily at the level of syntactic units. Most often, this happens in colloquial speech, namely, in dialogue.

The German linguist S. Bally believes that the expression of thought using all the necessary nouns would make human communication unbearable. In fact, the economy of language means does not negatively affect the content of a particular statement. Simply, conversational speech occurs most often spontaneously, they do not prepare for it in advance, it depends on the situation, the context (Golden pen: German, 1974). In a situational ellipse, there is most often no subject, expressed in grammar by the

pronoun of the first person singular. For example: *wünsche dir alles Gute (Ich wünsche dir alles Gute); möchte mit dir über dieses Problem sprechen (Ich möchte mit dir über dieses Problem sprechen)* (Wolf, 1930). The subject ellipse in dialogic speech is quite productive, since questions and answers in a dialogue are always interconnected, the answer depends directly on the content of the question. Here, the speaker hopes that the listener should understand him from the context.

Materials and methods: As a practical research material, this work uses examples from the works of German writers (H. Heine, B. Kellermann, Fr. Wolf, W. Bredel). The article uses the following research methods:

- the method of continuous sampling of the analyzed practical material,
- method of comparative analysis,
- method of interpretation.

## 2 MAIN PART

Compared to Russian, there are a number of features in German, due to which a subject must be present in a German sentence. A sentence is a psychological act of connecting representations. But since the connection is impossible without the presence of at least two elements, then any construction, as an expression of this act, also consists of at least two parts (Kellermann, 1980). This means that the sentence must be two-part in its structure. Personal sentences are always two-part, the presence of a subject in them corresponds to their semantic structure. But in German, both indefinitely personal and impersonal constructions can look two-part. The indefinite personal pronoun *man* and the impersonal pronoun *es*, which are necessarily present in such sentences, come to the aid of their two-part structure. It is known that neither *man* nor *es* denote any specific person or thing, although they act as the subject of a sentence. Accordingly, the two-part nature of such constructions will be considered formal. *Man* performs only a formal function in sentences of an indefinite personal or generalized personal nature. *Wie spricht man das Wort aus?*

*Man denkt heute anders darüber.*

*Man schlug das Fenster zu.*

*Man verlangte sein Geld zurück.*

The pronoun *es* is exceptional in its meaning. It has more functions than any other pronoun in German grammar. We will consider its impersonal meaning. For example: 1) its use with verbs describing weather phenomena - "*es schneit*", "*es donnert*", "*es blitzt*",

"*es ist sonnig*", "*es ist bewölkt*", "*es ist windig*"; 2) with verbs describing personal or sensory impressions, when the protagonist is not defined - „*Es riecht gut in der Küche.*“ (etwas riecht gut), „*Es wird mir schlecht*“, „*Es freut mich, dass du kommst*“; 3) with the verbs "*sein*" and "*werden*" - "*Es wird besser*", "*Es wird kalt*", "*Es ist schon spät*"; 4) when indicating the time, day and seasons - "*Es ist Herbst*", "*Es ist 7 Uhr*", "*Es sind Winterferien*"; 4) in some fixed phrases and expressions - "*Es geht mir gut*", "*Es geht mir gut*", "*Ich habe es eilig*", "*Es tut mir Leid*", etc.

*Es* indicates the removal of the subject from both speech and thought. There are a small number of impersonal sentences in German that do not use the impersonal pronoun *es* (*mich friert, hier wird gearbeitet, etc.*), but they do not have an impersonal meaning either (Heine, 2010).

Unlike German, in Russian both indefinitely personal and impersonal constructions belong to one-part sentences. They do not have a subject and in this they coincide with their semantic structure.

In indefinite personal sentences, a specific actor is not called, although in reality it exists. It may not be called for various reasons: the speaker may not know who specifically performs the action, or does not want to name it for some reason.

In impersonal constructions, the subject is not present, because the person performing the action is also absent in reality. *Es* is used as a formal subject in impersonal structures. In impersonal constructions, there is no specific actor or object that could be discussed. *Es war schwül wie seit Tagen, es witterleuchtete manchmal und regnete etwas* (Golden pen: German, 1974).

*madam! Ich habe es im Französischen weit gebracht!* (Heine, 2010) The impersonal pronoun *es* itself is not translated into Russian, and the whole construction is translated using equivalent words, most often also impersonal. For example: *Es wild Tag.* / It's getting light. *Es ist früh.* / Early. *Es regnet.* / It's raining.

*Es* can be used as a substitute for a noun, for example: *Das Auto ist rot. Es ist Ferrari*, and as a replacement for a whole set of words, for example: "*Was macht unsere Tochter?*" - "*Ich weiß es nicht.*" This is done in order not to repeat the whole statement again. After all, from the context it is already clear what it is about. ("*Ich weiß nicht, was unsere Tochter macht*"). Sometimes *es* is used to replace an adjective, but this is not as common. „*Meine Mutter ist sehr jung. Deine ist es nothing*“ (Wolf, 1930).

*Es* can also be used as an adjective, in which a natural phenomenon is considered as a state of rest. *Es war noch sehr früh, als ich das Haus verließ.*

Da wird es auch schon fühlbar kälter. Es wild Abend. (Heine, 2010)

"Oh, was für ein entsetzlicher Winter, schon wieder scheint es." (Kellermann, 1980)

In impersonal sentences denoting sensations, feelings, etc. es is also present. For example: Es wurde ihm schwindlig. Es war ihm schwül geworden...

Ein leises trauriges Lied klang eines Abends durch meine Seele. Mich frostelte... (Kellermann, 1980)

Es can also replace part of a sentence, for example, the action: "Maria du solltest doch das Geschirr abwaschen!" - "Warum hast du es noch nicht gemacht?" (Moskalskaja, 2004).

Es is often used as a subject with impersonal verbs denoting natural phenomena: Die Luft ist kühl und es dunkelt. (Heine, 2010)

Es in impersonal sentences with passive verbs can only take the initial position. Es wurde an der Tür geklopft. / There was a knock on the door.

From what has been said, it follows that Russian one-part (non-subject) constructions correspond to German two-part sentences with a formal subject. For example: They ask about your father. Man fragt nach deinem Vater.

This book is often talked about. Über dieses Buch spricht man oft.

It was warm. Es war warm.

Soon it began to get dark. Bald begann es zu dunkeln.

From a comparative point of view, formal two-part sentences with the subject man are especially attractive. In German grammar textbooks, they are usually presented as indefinitely personal sentences. Quite remarkable is the peculiarity of the ambiguous attitude to the character of the protagonist of these constructions - man plus the verb in the third person singular. These constructions, with absolutely the same external design (man plus subject and predicate in the third person Singular) and performing the same general task, give us the opportunity not to name a specific character. The listener himself unambiguously completes what has already been given to a complete sentence and thereby understands the speaker. They can refer to the character of an unnamed person both in an indefinitely personal and generalized personal sense. In indefinite personal sentences, the person is not named, because the speaker does not know or does not want, due to some circumstances, to name him. In generalized-personal sentences, the person has a generalized character. It all depends on the circumstances, the action can be attributed to any person.

In Russian, these two types of constructions are formed differently and, accordingly, are two separate types of non-two-part constructions. The difference in these two types of sentences is felt, first of all, in the form of the predicate: in indefinite personal constructions, the predicate is expressed by the verb in the form of the third person plural. There is no subject at all in such sentences. In generalized personal sentences, sometimes the corresponding pronoun acts as the subject. The predicate in such sentences is a verb in the second person singular or plural. For example (Bredel, 1963): 1) Man sagte dir davon. / You were told about it.

2) Wenn man Gesundheit haben will, muß man viel Sport treiben.

If you want to be healthy, you must (should) do a lot of sports.

3) Was man säet, das wird man ernten. / What goes around comes around.

As you can see, one German construction expressing two different meanings corresponds to two separate Russian sentences.

In German generalized personal constructions, the subject man can correspond to "generalized" objects. Such additions are expressed by the pronoun einen, einem. The presence of these objects in German sentences is mandatory, as well as man as a subject. When translated into Russian, it can be equivalent to the pronoun of the second person singular in all cases, except for the nominative.

Die Stadt Düsseldorf ist sehr schön, und wenn man in der Ferne an sie denkt und zufällig dort geboren ist, wird einem wunderbar zumute. The city of Düsseldorf is very beautiful, and when you think of it in a foreign land, being by chance a native of it, your soul becomes somehow vague. (Heine, 2010)

Man constructions are very often used as stylistic synonyms for personal structures. Here man expresses concrete persons known to us from the context, i.e. mentioned earlier in the conversation. Such a replacement of personal pronouns is a frequent phenomenon in the German language, we can observe it both in colloquial speech and in the language of fiction. In colloquial speech, man most often corresponds to the first or second person.

Indefinite personal and generalized personal structures in Russian in some cases correlate with the meaning of personal constructions, but not as often as in German. Probably, this may be due to the non-uniformity of these constructions in German and their non-two-part structure in Russian.

Am Morgen muss man früh aufstehen.

You have to get up early in the morning. Or: In the morning (we) need to get up early.

Man will doch etwas freie Zeit haben. / After all (I) want to have some free time.

Man ist schließlich auch Mensch. /After all, I'm human too.

Man sieht sich ja kaum. / After all, we hardly see each other.

Hier darf man nicht laut sprechen./ Here (we) cannot speak loudly (Duden, 2004).

Such sentences are translated into Russian using personal pronouns, since the person is determined by the context. Students usually do it easily. Things are more complicated when using einen and einem, and even man as a generalized person, since students are used to translating man into Russian in the third person plural. When conveying the generalized personal meaning of the sentence, students correlate them with similar constructions of the Russian language, using the predicate in the second person singular. For example: You look at this house and wonder... / Du schaust dir das Haus an...

In some cases, structures with man are synonymous with impersonal-passive constructs. They are related to the actions of specific individuals.

For example: Ich verbrachte diese drei Monaten im Erholungsheim. Es wurde gebadet und geschwommen, abends getanzt. / I spent these three months in a sanatorium (Man badete, man schwam, abends tanzte man.) ... (We) bathed, swam, danced in the evenings.

Wo gehobelt wird, fallen Späne. (Wo man Holz haut, fallen Späne.) / They cut the forest - chips fly.

Due to the differences that exist between German and Russian language constructions, our students face a lot of difficulties. They are used to using indefinitely personal and impersonal constructions, according to their content, without the presence of a subject. Often mistakes are made with the omission of man and es. Most often this happens in subordinate constructions and when a minor member is at the beginning of a sentence, for example:

Anlässlich dieses großen Tages veranstaltete ein Feuerwerk. (Anlässlich dieses großen Tages veranstaltete man ein Feuerwerk.

Wir beschlossen Rast zu machen, da schon spät wurde. Instead: Wir beschlossen Rast zu machen, da es schon spät wurde (Moskalskaja, 2004).

Results and discussions: The study revealed: 1. Elliptical sentences are used in communication to save language resources. Those parts of the sentences that can be understood from the context and can be easily restored if necessary are omitted.

2. In German, the subject ellipse is extremely rare. For example: 1) the subject expressed by a noun can

rarely be omitted. This type of incomplete sentences are most often found when talking about religious topics: Behütel!;

2) the subject expressed by the pronoun of the 1st person: danke, bitte, weiß wohl, etc. Such sentences are used mainly in colloquial language and in literary, imitating folk speech;

3) the subject, object, circumstance are often incompletely presented when the noun with an adjective or with an attributive genitive is omitted as quite understandable: Er hat neuen getrunken (Wein) or Es gibt junge Damen, die nie dreißig überschreiten;

4) the ellipse takes place both in the main and in the subordinate clause, and sometimes in both at the same time: Wie gewonnen, so zerronnen. Gesagt, getan. Jung gewohnt, alt getan. In most cases, these are colloquial expressions and phraseological turns. They cannot be considered incomplete sentences in terms of completeness and clarity of expression of meaning; on the part of their formal composition, these are stereotyped phrases fixed in language practice, clichés of address, greetings, wishes, etc.

3. In Russian, quite often, if the context allows, there is a loss of the subject expressed by a personal pronoun. Most often this happens in dialogic speech, if the subject coincides in the main and subordinate clauses, for example: "Will he go with you? - (Yes), he will go. Did you know about this? - (Yes), knew, etc.. When the full form of the answer to such a question must necessarily use the statement "yes", in the answer where the subject is omitted, you can not use this statement, for example: "Are you informed about this? - Informed", when with a full answer: "Are you informed about this? "Yes, we are informed." The use of such "non-subjective" sentences is almost impossible in German in response to questions without a question word, for example: Wissen Sie darüber? - Ja? wir wissen. Sind sie eingeladen? - Ja, sie sind eingeladen. Of course, we can sometimes only answer "Ja" or "Nein", but this form of answers is not accepted in German. In response to interrogative sentences with a question word, things are different. Here we can afford to omit the subject, for example: Warum willst du schon gehen? - Habe viel zu tun. Was ist dir passiert? - Habe Kopfschmerzen (Bredel, 1963).

4. In German, there are also monomeric verb sentences. In terms of their functional significance, they act mainly as incentive proposals or proposals containing wishes, congratulations, greetings, etc. In addition to the forms of the verb in the second person singular and plural, non-binary verbal incentive constructions can be expressed by the infinitive, participle. For example: 1) "Aufmachen!" dröhnte der

Vater und versetzte der Tür einen Faustschlag (Kellermann, 1980);

2) Leutnant: Antreten! Einsteigen! aber ein bißchen plötzlich! Aussteigen! Ein - Aus - Ein - Aus - Ein - Aus! (Golden pen, 1974); or, for example: Angetreten! Alles in Stellung! ...kommendiert der Hauptmann. Hinlegen! Laden und Sichern! (Golden pen, 1974);

3) Die Leute des Kommandanten waren angetreten. Braunewell! Herhoren! (Kellermann, 1980).

4) Rube (singt) ... Denn die Stiefelwichse kann man gut entbehren: Stillgestanden! Abgezahlt! Or, for example, take a negative sentence: Hilda: Paul! Fliegerüber die Stadt! Gas! Nichtrennen. (Golden pen, 1974).

Heine, H., 2010. *Idea. Das Buch Le Grand*. p.385.

Kellermann, B., 1980. *Der 9. November*. p. 162.

Moskalskaja, O. I., 2004. *Grammatik der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*. p. 352.

Bredel, W., 1963. *Fünzig Tage*. p. 78.

Duden, K., 2004 *Duden - Foreign Dictionary*. p. 824.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

So, having compared the formal two-part sentences in German and Russian, we came to the conclusion that in German the presence of both the subject, albeit formal, and the predicate is mandatory. In Russian, the presence of a character is not necessary, there are so-called indefinite-personal constructions such as: Do, write, etc. For example: They say it will rain today. In German, the subject in such structures is expressed by the indefinite personal pronoun man or the impersonal pronoun es. One German indefinitely personal construction expressing two different meanings corresponds to two separate Russian sentences - indefinitely personal and generalized personal.

German subordinate clauses always have a subject. In Russian, when the subject coincides in the main and subordinate clauses, the subject falls out in the subordinate clause. For example: Your parents could not come because they were ill. Ihre Großeltern konnten nicht kommen, weil sie krank wurden. Such sentences give students difficulties in translating, most often they translate them with the omission of the subject. Sie konnten nicht kommen, weil krank wurden.

### REFERENCES

Valgina, N. S., 2003. *Modern Russian language: Syntax*. p. 416.

Jung, W., 2013. *German Grammar*. p. 243.

*Golden pen: German, Austrian and Swiss poetry in Russian translations (1812-1970)*, 1974.

Wolf, F., 1930. *Das trojanische Pferd*. p.124.