

40. Personal pronouns (4) - *le* as neutral pronoun

1 Referring back to sentence elements

When the object pronoun *le* is used to refer to parts of a sentence other than a noun, it is said to be a **neutral pronoun**. In this case it is often not translated by the equivalent neutral pronoun in English, *it*. The neutral pronoun *le* can refer to:

- **an adjective**

Autrefois Pierre était très timide, mais il ne l'est plus

Pierre used to be very shy, but he isn't any longer

Cet étudiant est plus doué que je ne l'ai d'abord cru

This student is more gifted than I first thought

- **a past participle**

Elle vient d'être sélectionnée pour un prix: elle ne l'a jamais été auparavant

She has just been nominated for a prize: she never has been before

- **a clause**

Je peux garder les enfants. Dites-moi si vous **le** voulez avant le week-end

I can look after the children. Tell me if you want me to before the week-end

2 Anticipating facts, ideas etc.

2.1 The neutral pronoun *le* is often used to anticipate a fact, idea, statement etc. when in English a pronoun is not normally used:

Comme vous **le** savez déjà,...

As you already know,...

Comme je vous l'ai déjà dit,...

As I have already told you,...

2.2 By contrast, sometimes the object pronoun *le* is not so used where the equivalent construction in English does use the pronoun *it*:

Je trouve difficile de m'installer ici

*I find **it** hard to settle down here*

Verb constructions acting like this include *trouver*, *juger* and *estimer* + adjective + *que*.