

Subject and Object Complements

The complement of an intransitive verb always says something about the subject and is therefore called subject complement.

Alice is beautiful. (Here the complement beautiful says something about the subject Alice.)

She seemed upset.

The chief verb of incomplete predication is be (is, am, are, was, were). Others are seem, appear, look, become, grow, feel, turn, taste etc.

The night grew dark.

The milk turned sour.

The fish tasted awful.

The subject complement may be of different kinds. It could be an adjective, a noun, a pronoun, a participle, an infinitive, an adverb or a phrase.

Her brother is a good writer. (Noun)

The little girl looked upset. (Adjective)

The old woman was talking to herself. (Present participle)

He is to go. (To-infinitive)

Mosquitoes are everywhere. (Adverb)

Object complement

Now study the following sentences:

They made Harry Chairman.

The President appointed him Governor.

In sentence 1, Harry is the object of the transitive verb made. But if you say 'they made Harry', the sense is incomplete. In addition to the object Harry, we need another word to complete the meaning of the verb made. The word Chairman which completes the meaning of the sentence is called a complement. Since it says something about the object it is called an object complement.

The jury found him guilty.

The captain's death forced the soldiers to surrender.

The calamity threw them into a fit of despair.