

## **16. The Components of a Sentence**

### **Summary**

This chapter relates the functional structure of sentences described in Chapter 15. to the conventional mode of sentence description described in Chapter 1. Under this, concept words are categorised as nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, and adverbs, and a sentence is structured with the components {subject – verb – object – complement – (adverbial)}.

A {verb} describes the action or state of a sentence, and thereby specifies the unique functional type to which the sentence belongs. A stative {verb} includes attributive and locative functions. A {verb} takes the form of either a distinct word or an auxiliary in combination with another word.

A {noun} is a concept word in a sentence which is not a {verb} or a {complement}, and which is necessary for the sentence to be meaningful. A sentence can only contain one {verb}, so that all other concept words necessary for its meaning are {noun} or {complement}.

A {subject} is a {noun} which is engaged in the action or subject to the state described by the {verb}. A {verb} and its {subject} are a semantic unit.

An {object} is a {noun} which a {verb} places in a state, condition, or relationship, and which is not a {recipient} or a {beneficiary}. A patient is an {object} which a sentence alters or affects, and a {creation} is an {object} which is created.

A transitive sentence is one whose {subject} and {object} are distinct entities. An intransitive sentence is one whose {subject} and {object} are the same entity.

A {complement} describes the state, condition, or relationship into which a {verb} places an {object}. It is absent if its purpose is performed by the {verb}. It cannot be a {recipient} or {beneficiary}.

An {object} and its {complement} may be definite or indefinite, except in the case of a negative or question, a supposition or proposal, a modal, a preventive, a cessative, or an interrogative. For these sentence types, the {object} and its {complement} may be definite or indefinable, but not indefinite.

A definite {noun} or {verb} includes restrictive qualifiers attached to it. A restrictive qualifier attached to an indefinite {verb} or {object} is a {circumstance}, and is the {complement} of the {object}.

Non-restrictive qualifiers are not necessary for the meaning of a sentence, and express another sentence. A non-restrictive qualifier of a {noun} expresses a further sentence of which the {subject} is the {noun}. A non-restrictive qualifier of a {verb} is an {adverbial}, and expresses a further sentence of which the {subject} is that {verb} in noun form.

By identifying the {subject} of a {verb} with the topic of the sentence, the discourse structure of a sentence can be aligned with the functional structure. It follows that if the grammatical verb is identified with the {verb}, it is in agreement with the topic. While this argument is valid for the majority of sentences, on certain occasions the grammatical verb is in agreement with the comment.

An existential sentence has the structure {object – complement}.

### **Terms Defined or Introduced**

Verb, subject, object, complement, adverbial, noun.

## Overview

The conventional sentence description, “subject – verb – object – complement – adverbial”, has achieved wide acceptance for the good reason that it corresponds with the way sentences behave. Sentences generally include a subject, concerning which a verb stipulates an action or state. For a “transitive” sentence, the verb operates on an object, and for an “intransitive” sentence, it does not (“transitive” and “intransitive” are so written because of the lack of precision with which these terms are often used). In addition, a complement is often needed in order to provide more information on the object. The sentence is analysed as a subject, which it is about, and a predicate. The predicate consists of the verb and all the rest of the sentence, and provides information on the subject. An adverbial may be attached to qualify the verb.

The terms themselves suggest their grammatical function. “Subject” suggests a topic. “Verb” comes from the Latin for “word”, which suggests that it is the core word in the sentence. “Object” is what the verb operates on. “Complement” is what is needed to complete the sentence. “Adverbial” is attached to a verb.

As we have discussed in detail earlier, linguists have puzzled over the use of these terms because, on closer analysis, it has proved difficult to give them a precise definition which applies to all sentence types. Is a subject a topic or an agent? What is the relationship between the subject of an active and that of a stative sentence? Does the model apply to a passive or an existential sentence? How does it apply to languages which separate the topic and the subject, to “impersonal” sentences which appear to have no subject, or to sentences with an element in focus? Why do some sentences have an object and others not? How do modal sentences fit into the structure? What is a complement, other than something which completes a sentence? The huge variety of sentences which languages construct, in English and in languages with a different structure to English, are difficult to fit into the model except by making arbitrary assumptions.

The second source of problems is that the structure “subject – verb – object – complement – adverbial” is evidently not complete. Additional elements are needed:

“John picked up the litter from the ground with a grabber.”  
“The litter was picked up by John from the ground with a grabber.”

Where do “with a grabber” and “by John” fit into the model? They cannot simply be adverbials, as they are essential to an understanding of the core sentence. Moreover, sentences are conventionally divided into “simple” and “complex”, for example:

“John picked up the litter while you were watching.”  
“John said that he had picked up the litter.”  
“John would have picked up the litter if you had asked him.”  
“John intends to pick up the litter tomorrow.”

These “complex” structures are conventionally handled by arbitrary extensions to the model, which again show its insufficiency and lack of precision.

A third difficulty is that subjects, verbs, and objects do not fall into separate semantic categories. According to a simple interpretation of the model, a verb should be a word which describes an action or state, while a subject or object should be a word which describes a person or thing. This is evidently not the case; languages possess verbal and adjectival nouns which can be either subjects or objects, according to the semantic range possessed by the verb:

“She is skilled at playing the cello; her skill is famous.”  
“He translated the novel in French; the translation was well received.”  
“He argued the case well; I sought to disprove his argument.”  
“I was surprised at your arrival so soon; my surprise was obvious.”

We attempt to address these questions in three stages. In Chapter 13, the topic-comment structure of a sentence is distinguished from the subject-verb structure. It was shown that the purpose of a sentence in discourse can be denoted by analysing it in terms of three types of identity: {definite}, {indefinite},

and {indefinable}, supported by {select} and {circumstance}. The three discourse elements {not}, {but}, and {query} provide for negation and enquiry. Chapter 14. summarises how this topic-comment structure is realised in actual languages, by means of grammatical words and rules of word order. Addition, alternation, aspect, generality, and inference are also features of discourse, denoted by further elements in the topic-comment structure.

Chapter 15. analyses all sentences into about 37 functional sentence types, which describe the way in which a sentence expresses meaning. Each functional sentence type is uniquely specified by the elements which make it up, of which 27 occur in only one sentence type and 21 occur in more than one. The discrepancy between the 37 sentence types and the 27 unique functional elements arises because some sentence types have different negative and positive versions, or different definite and indefinite versions. We have also classified causatives, preventives, inchoatives, and cessatives as separate sentence types, when in reality they are the same as the sentence types which they are causing, preventing, inchoating, or cessating.

The functional sentence types are independent of discourse structure. Any functional element can be part of a topic and any can be part of a comment, and accordingly can be {definite}, {select}, {circumstance}, {indefinite}, or {indefinable}, except that these discourse elements themselves occur as functional elements in certain sentence types. The same functional structure applies for statements, negative statements, questions, and hypotheses, and for sentences which are specific and general. It is also the same whether a sentence refers to an action or to the results of an action. The pairs of sentences:

“The cat sat on the mat”; “The cat was sitting on the mat”;  
“He noticed his friend from a distance”; “His friend was seen at a distance”;

have the same functional elements although one sentence refers to a process and the other to a state resulting from it.

Discourse and functional analysis are the first two stages of our analysis of sentence structure. The third stage, which is the subject of this chapter, is to consider again how the conventional sentence description “subject – verb – object – complement – adverbial” represents it. The following notes summarise our conclusions. We have already noted that for many sentences the topic-comment structure is adequately expressed as “subject – predicate” (where the predicate is everything other than the subject), and where it is not, the “subject – predicate” construction can often be adapted to do so.

In addition to representing its role in discourse, a sentence has to express an action or state. If we isolate the 27 elements which occur only in each functional sentence type, we find that each one uniquely describes the action or state of the sentence. That element can be designated the {verb} of the sentence. The {verb} therefore determines how the rest of the sentence should be structured, that is what other elements are needed to make it meaningful.

In this way, we find that the verb is indeed the core word in the sentence, since around it the rest of the sentence is structured, and we have defined a class of words as {verb}. Since the {verb} determines the structure of a sentence, a sentence can have only one {verb}. It can also have only one {complement}. We therefore need a term to describe the remaining concept words in a sentence, for which we use {noun}. We find moreover that all the {noun} in sentences belong to one of the 22 elements which we have identified as arising with more than one sentence type.

We go on to define a {subject} as the {noun} which is engaged in the action or subject to the state described by the {verb}. By identifying the {subject} with the topic, we can align the discourse structure and functional structure of a sentence. The {subject} of a sentence is therefore definite, and includes any restrictive qualifiers attached to it.

We observe that all sentence types assign a state, condition, or relationship to a particular {noun} which we define as an {object}, the state, condition, or relationship being the {complement}. If the {object} is definite, it includes any restrictive qualifiers attached to it. If the {object} is indefinite, the {complement} includes a restrictive qualifier as a {circumstance}.

An {adverbial} can be defined as a non-restrictive qualification of a verb. It therefore supplies additional information to the sentence containing the verb, and amounts to a further sentence of which the {verb} is the {subject}.

These definitions achieve a degree of precision in use of the conventional sentence description, and account for the difficulties in that conventional description. The five elements so defined {subject – verb – object – complement – adverbial} are the *components* of a sentence, and study of them is *component analysis*. They have implications for the use of the terms which are outlined in this chapter, but which we will summarise here for convenience:

- (i) A {verb} includes both an auxiliary and the word which the auxiliary supports. Examples (underlined) are: “He has come home”; “We were frightened”; “You are Mr Jones”.
- (ii) In an existential sentence, the {verb} is the {circumstance} and the indefinite object is the {object}. In “There is a fly in the ointment”, the {object} is “a fly” and the {verb} is “there is in the ointment”.
- (iii) A {verb} must be so constructed that it is clear what is its {subject}.
- (iv) {verb} includes adjectives, attributes, identifications, and locatives. Example (underlined) are: “This is difficult”; “She is in love”; “He is a grocer”; “They are in the shop”; “The computer was on”.
- (v) A definite {noun} includes any restrictive qualifier which is needed to identify it, for example: “the wheels of my car”, “the king of France”, “the eighteenth century”, “the marriage of Figaro”, “the man who came to dinner”, “the lady with the little dog”. An indefinite {noun} includes any {circumstance} needed to identify it, for example: “a wheel from my car”; “a king of France”; “someone who came to dinner”; “a lady with a little dog”.
- (vi) An {object} is the same entity as a {subject} if the {verb} operates on its {subject}, for example (underlined): “We went home”; “The water rose”; “The Minister was dismissed”.
- (vii) An {object} is the same entity as a {subject} if the {verb} expresses the state, condition, relationship, or constituents of its {subject}, for example (underlined): “The king is dead”; “The idea was accepted”; “Mr Jones was Chairman”; The car has an electric motor”; Mrs Smith is on the list of attendees”.
- (viii) The {object} of an embedded perception or communication is the same entity as the {subject} (underlined): “The birds are heard by us to sing”.
- (ix) The {verb} of a modal is the modal “can”, “ought to”, “must”, etc. The {object} of a modal is the {object} of the modal activity (underlined): “She can speak French”; “She ought to study German”.
- (x) A perception or communication is a {noun}, even if is structured as a verb (underlined): “We heard the birds singing”; “We heard the singing of the birds”.
- (xi) The {noun} in many sentence types include categories which are not covered by {subject} and {object} as we have defined them. These include {target}, {recipient}, {beneficiary}, {base}, and {participant}, and {agent} and {instrument} when they are not the {subject}. {definite}, {select}, {circumstance}, {indefinite}, and {indefinable} also occur in sentence types in functions where they are not the {subject} or {object}.
- (xii) Since a {complement} is the {verb} of the resultant sentence, it is formulated in the same way as a {verb}. If no {complement} is stated, it is the same entity as the {verb} (underlined): “We obeyed the rules”; “Constable ainted the landscape”.
- (xiii) Sentences in focus are generally identification, locative, or time in function: “It was Jack who stole the tarts”; “It was in Florence/on Tuesday that we met.”

- (xiv) In some topic-comment sentences, the {verb} performs differently from the grammatical verb: (Russian) “Vash bagazh otpravlyat v gostinitsu.” [Your luggage they-take to hotel.]

### Classification of Sentence Elements

The approximately 37 functional sentence types described in the previous chapter are an attempt to explain how languages describe an action or state, independently of how they perform in order to integrate sentences into a discourse. Each functional sentence type is different, and that difference is defined by the elements that make it up. Certain elements are common to more than one sentence function, or do not describe the action or state of the sentence:

{agent}	person who intentionally performs an action.
{instrument}	physical object which effects an action.
{creation}	created entity which did not previously exist.
{constituent}	previous constituents of a creation.
{attribute}	state or quantity which an {object} is in or to which it is changed.
{sequence}	sequence of a {time}.
{location}	position in space of an {object}.
{beneficiary}	person to whose advantage or disadvantage an action or state occurs.
{base}	base of a comparison or measurement.
{object}	person or thing which is in or enters into a state or relationship, other than a {beneficiary} or {recipient}.
{participant}	person with whom an {agent} participates.
{target}	person or thing towards which an action occurs without any effect being stated.
{original}	that which is replaced in a substitution.
{competence}	competence whereby a {role} is fulfilled.
{recipient}	person possessing a relationship with an {object}.
{representation}	created representation of an {object}.
{correct}	entity which is omitted by an {error}.
{definite}	entity whose identity is known.
{select}	{definite} entity selected from a class of {definite} entities.
{indefinite}	entity which exists but whose identity is not known when the sentence is uttered.
{circumstance}	{definite} restrictive qualifier to an {indefinite} entity.
{indefinable}	entity whose existence is not ascertained.
{causer}	person or thing at whose instigation an {agent} or {instrument} performs or does not perform an action.

An ambiguity may exist in expressing the actions of animals. They are treated as a person to the extent that they are considered to have an intention, and as a thing to the extent that they are not.

Other elements only occur in one sentence function only, and describe the action or state of the sentence:

{create}	action to create an entity which did not previously exist.
{transform}	action to alter an {object}.
{attribute}	state or quantity of an {object}.
{locative}	relation in space of an {object} to a {location}.
{move}	movement in space of an {object} relative to a {location}.
{time}	unit in which the point in time of an {object} is expressed.
{constitute}	constituent or dimension of an {object}.
{effect}	involuntary state or condition of an {object} under the effect of an external cause.
{free}	state of freedom of an {object} from the {effect} of an external cause.
{depend}	risk to which an {object} is subject.
{relief}	action to relieve a risk on an {object}.
{identification}	entity with which an {object} is identified.
{substitute}	action of substitution.
{compare}	difference between a characteristic of an {object} with that of another entity.

{participate}	action by an {agent} towards a {target} which does not alter or affect it.
{role}	function in human society fulfilled by virtue of an {competence}.
{style}	quality or style by which an action is performed.
{possession}	relationship between a {recipient} and an {object}.
{lack}	need by a {recipient} for the {possession} of an {object}.
{perceive}	mental impression by a {recipient} of new information concerning an {object}.
{opinion}	considered mental response by a {recipient} to known information concerning an {object}.
{suppose}	consideration by a {recipient} of a hypothesis concerning an {object}.
{communicate}	communication of new information concerning an {object}.
{propose}	communication of a hypothesis concerning an {object}.
{benefit}	advantage or disadvantage arising to a {beneficiary}.
{able}	ability of a person to fulfil a hypothetical action.
{ought}	obligation of a person to fulfil a hypothetical action.
{error}	action or state contrary to the intention or expectation of a causer, agent, or recipient.

{locative}/{location} and {time} can occur in any sentence which occurs in physical space or time. However, there also exists specific locative and time sentences in which these elements occur alone. This dual purpose is discussed further below (The Adverbial Component). In addition, a {locative} or {time} may be a restrictive qualifier to a definite or indefinite entity (The Noun Component; The Circumstance Component).

{attribute} is the state of an {object}, whether or not it results from a {transform}.

{create} is an action which applies to both a {creation} and a {representation}.

### The Verb Component

We therefore observe that each sentence contains a word which uniquely specifies the function of sentence, and which therefore contains its primary information. That information may be an action or a state. We can use the term {verb} for that word. If the {verb} of a sentence is known, the sentence function is known, and the other elements which are required to complete the functional meaning can be inferred and included by the speaker. We may therefore replace each of the elements which occur in only one sentence function by {verb}. On that basis, the following list summarises the sentence types which were described in Chapter 15., but without the optional elements:

Creation:	{agent – verb – creation}.
Attribute:	{object – verb}.
Transformation:	{object – verb – attribute}.
Locative:	{object – verb – location}.
Movement:	{object – verb – location <sub>1</sub> – location <sub>2</sub> }.
Transformation locative:	{object – verb – attribute – location}.
Time:	{object – verb – sequence}.
Constituent:	{object – verb – attribute}.
Effect:	{object – verb – instrument}.
Freedom:	{object – verb – not – definite}.
Dependency:	{object – verb – indefinable}.
Relief:	{object – verb – not – indefinable}.
Identification:	{object – verb}.
Substitution:	{object – verb – original – identification}.
Comparison:	{object – verb – base}.
Participation:	{agent – verb – target}.
Role:	{object – verb – target}.
Style:	{object – verb – definite}.
Possession:	{recipient – verb – object}.
Deficiency:	{beneficiary – verb – not – object}.
Exchange:	{agent – verb – object <sub>1</sub> – object <sub>2</sub> – recipient}.
Perception:	{recipient – verb – object – select/indefinite/}

	circumstance}.
Negative perception:	{recipient – verb – object – not – definite/indefinable}.
Opinion:	{recipient – verb – definite}.
Supposition:	{recipient – verb – indefinable}.
Communication:	{agent – verb – object – select/indefinite/circumstance – recipient}.
Negative communication	{agent – verb – object – not – definite/indefinable – recipient}.
Proposal:	{agent – verb – object – indefinable – recipient}.
Interrogation:	{agent – verb – query – object – definite/indefinable – recipient}.
Representation:	{agent – verb – object – representation}.
Benefit:	{beneficiary – verb – definite/indefinite}.
Warranty:	{agent – verb – object – definite/not – indefinable}.
	{causer/beneficiary – verb – object – not – indefinable}.
Modal (ability/necessity /responsibility)	{recipient – verb – object – indefinable}.
Error	{recipient – not – verb – not – object – indefinable}.
	{definite – verb – object}.

The {verb} of a causative, preventive, inchoative, or cessative sentence is a causative, preventive, inchoative, or cessative version of the {verb} which is being caused or prevented (below, The Subject as Topic).

As we shall see, the {verb} of an existential sentence is a {circumstance}. An existential sentence is not listed among the 37 or so functional sentence types in Chapter 15., but among the seven discourse sentence types in Chapter 13.

To test this definition, we select one dynamic sentence and its stative (or dynamic) resultant sentence from each functional category, underlining the {verb} in each case:

“Joan <u>wrote</u> this book on linguistics.”	→	“The book on linguistics <u>is by</u> Joan.”
“John <u>painted</u> the fence green.”	→	“The fence <u>was painted green</u> .”
“He <u>laid</u> the book on the table.”	→	“The book <u>was on</u> the table.”
“The meeting <u>took place on</u> Tuesday.”	→	“The meeting <u>was on</u> Tuesday.”
“The meeting <u>was held</u> for one hour.”	→	“The meeting <u>lasted</u> one hour.”
“He <u>cleaned</u> the leaves out of the drain.”	→	“The drain <u>was clean</u> of leaves.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“She <u>has four</u> brothers.”
“The houses <u>were given</u> slate <u>roofs</u> .”	→	“The houses <u>have</u> slate <u>roofs</u> .”
“She <u>selected</u> five books from the library.”	→	“The five books <u>were from</u> her <u>library</u> .”
“The results <u>were surprising</u> to us.”	→	“We <u>were surprised</u> at the result.”
“Contractors <u>have freed</u> the building of asbestos.”	→	“The building <u>is free</u> of asbestos.”
“Subsidence <u>placed</u> the building <u>at risk</u> of collapse.”	→	“The building <u>is at risk</u> of collapse.”
“He <u>rescued</u> his friend from drowning.”	→	“His friend <u>did not drown</u> .”
“His bedroom <u>became</u> his <u>office</u> .”	→	“His bedroom <u>is his office</u> .”
“A young swan <u>is called</u> a <u>cygnet</u> .”	→	“A cygnet <u>is a young swan</u> .”
“Lloyd George <u>replaced</u> Asquith as Prime Minister.”	→	“The Prime Minister <u>was Lloyd George</u> .”
“The shopkeeper <u>priced</u> these apples at 50 pence less than those.”	→	“These apples <u>are</u> 50 pence <u>cheaper</u> than those.”
“He <u>obeyed</u> the rules of the Society.”	→	“He <u>was obedient to</u> the rules of the Society.”

“Louis XIV <u>acceded as king</u> of France.”	→	“Louis XIV <u>was king</u> of France.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“He <u>was meticulous</u> in preparing the accounts.”
“Mary <u>lent</u> the book to John.”	→	“John <u>has</u> the book <u>on loan</u> .”
“My driving license <u>was withdrawn</u> .”	→	“I <u>lack</u> a driving license.”
“She <u>sold</u> the book to a friend for £10.”	→	“Her friend <u>owns</u> the book.”
“Mary <u>recollected</u> that the appointment was due.”	→	“Mary <u>remembered</u> the appointment.”
“I <u>was given</u> a tiepin <u>as a present</u> .”	→	“I <u>have</u> a tiepin <u>as a present</u> .”
“We <u>took pleasure</u> in the play.”	→	“The play <u>pleased</u> us.”
“We <u>imagined</u> that it might rain.”	→	“We <u>supposed</u> it might rain.”
“Henry <u>telephoned</u> to James the date of the appointment.”	→	“James <u>knew</u> the date of the appointment.”
“He <u>alleged</u> that they had committed the crime.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)
“He <u>asked</u> when the train would depart.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)
“We <u>translated</u> the book into Greek.”	→	“The book <u>was available</u> in Greek.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“She <u>was kind</u> in offering him a loan.”
“We <u>helped</u> him complete the task.”	→	“He <u>was able to</u> complete the task.”
“The rain <u>forced</u> her to go under the shelter.”	→	“She <u>went</u> under the shelter.”
“I <u>promised</u> to pay a contribution.”	→	“I <u>ought to</u> pay a contribution.”
“The child <u>started</u> to ride the bicycle.”	→	“The child <u>rode</u> the bicycle.”
“I <u>stopped</u> him going to work.”	→	“He <u>did not go</u> to work.”
“He <u>misdirected</u> his efforts.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)

It can be seen from the above examples that:

- (i) A dynamic {verb} is generally a single word, but may comprise an auxiliary and another word, which may be a verbal adjective or a verbal noun (underlined):

“We are playing a game of croquet.” “We do not play croquet.” “Do we play croquet?”

Hindi: “laṛke ne pūrā pannā parh diyā” “The boy read out the entire page.”  
[Boy-by entire page reading gave.]

- (ii) In a sentence which describes the constituent or dimension of a person or thing, the {verb} either consists of an auxiliary verb and the constituent or dimension or it is the constituent or dimension (underlined):

“The builder roofed the houses with slate”; “The houses are roofed with slate”.  
“The contractor lengthened the road by 20 metres”; “The road is 20 metres longer”.  
“She selected five books from the library”; “The five books were from her library.”

Chinese: “Zhè ge fāngjiān shí mǐ kuān.” “This room is ten metres wide.”  
[This unit room ten metre wide.]

- (iii) In languages with the auxiliary “be”, a stative {verb} which describes an identification comprises “be” and the identification noun, and a stative {verb} which describes a state or condition comprises “be” and an attribute or quantity.

In addition, we saw in Chapter 13. that many languages do not have an auxiliary “be” or do not use it for all identifications or states. In these cases, a stative {verb} describing an

identification is the identification noun, and a stative {verb} describing a state or condition is the attribute:

Russian: “Moskva – stolitsa Rossii.” “Moscow [is the] capital [of] Russia.”<sup>1</sup>

Turkish: “Vesika kasada.” “The document is in the safe.” [Document safe-in.]

In English, there are also stative {verb} describing a state or condition:

“The book includes an index.” “The box contained some groceries.”

- (iv) A stative {verb} describing a {possession}, that is a relationship between a person and a thing or another person, is often a single word. Alternatively, it consists of an auxiliary such as “have” and a noun describing the {possession}, or the auxiliary “be” and a possessive attribute. If a language does not have the auxiliary “have”, an alternative auxiliary is employed:

Hindi: “mere pās ek gārī hai” “I have a car.” [Me-with a car is.]

- (v) An auxiliary can assist in the formation of a causative and preventive {verb} from the verb which is caused or prevented:

“The noise made us jump.” “The delay prevented the meeting taking place.”

- (vi) An auxiliary can assist the {verb} in its discourse functions of identity, aspect, tense, generality, negation, and interrogation:

“They were preparing to go out.” “We have eaten lunch.” “She will have gone out.”  
“We do not play croquet.” “Do we play croquet?” “We may have played croquet.”

On this basis, we can extend our definition of {verb}: a {verb} is a word which expresses the unique action or state of a sentence. It may be distinct word or an auxiliary in combination with an attribute or noun which describes that action or state. In the case of a causative or preventive {verb}, it may be an auxiliary in combination with another verb.

In conventional grammatical usage, a verb is the first word of a predicate and so describes the action or state of the {subject}, as we shall discuss below. This corresponds in many respects with our definition of {verb}. However, {verb} is always a concept in the world. If an auxiliary is present, the {verb} is both the auxiliary and the word which the auxiliary is supporting. This means, for instance, that in a stative locative or time sentence the {verb} includes the locative or time preposition:

“The book was on the table.”

“The meeting was on Tuesday.”

Since a {verb} is an action or state, it includes our concept of an adjective or attribute:

“The drain was clean of leaves.”

“We were surprised at the result.”

“The building is free of asbestos.”

“The building is at risk of collapse.”

As we observed in Chapter 15. (The Locative Sentence), a {verb} of movement includes the direction of movement:

“The spider climbs up the drainpipe.”

“The visitors walked around the park.”

This definition of {verb} is reflected in the grammar of Maori. In Maori, the {verb} appears at the start of the sentence, and may be a conventional verb, an identification, an adjective, locative, or possession. The language does not have the auxiliaries “be” or “have”:

“Kei te pupuri te taitama i to hōiho.” “The young man is holding the horse.”

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<sup>1</sup> Wade, 104.

[At the hold the young-man <sub>(object)</sub> the horse.]  
 “Kei to puritia te hōiho e te taitama.” “The horse is being held by the young man.”  
 [At the being-held the horse by the young-man.]  
 “Ko te kaiwhakahaere a Rōpata.” “Ropata is the organiser.” [It-is the organiser the Ropata.]  
 “He tino ātaahua tēnā kete huruhuru.” “That feather kete is very beautiful.”  
 [A very beautiful that kete feather.]  
 “Kei roto ngā kapu i te kapata.” “The cups are in the cupboard.”  
 [At inside the <sub>(plural)</sub> cup of the cupboard.]  
 “Nā tōku whaea tēnei tiki.” “This tiki is my mother’s.” [Belong-to my mother this tiki.]<sup>2</sup>

A further difference from conventional usage arises if we apply the definition of {verb} to an existential sentence (underlined):

“There is a telephone call for you.” “There is a commotion outside.”

These sentences could be rephrased:

“A telephone call is for you.” “A commotion is outside.”

The unique action or state of the sentence (“is for you”; “is outside”) is definite information which introduces the indefinite subject “a telephone call”; “a commotion”). In Chapter 13. (Existential Sentence; Statement), we called this definite information a {circumstance}. Accordingly, in an existential sentence the {verb} is the {circumstance}. The {verb} either consists, as in English, of an auxiliary and definite information (often a locative) or, if no auxiliary is present, it is the definite information itself:

Russian: “Na stole vaza.” “There is a vase on the table.” [On table vase.]

The same applies to a negative existential sentence:

“There is no telephone call for you.” “There is no commotion outside.”

The {circumstance} is again the {verb} and the subject is indefinable.

Since the {verb} of a sentence is its unique action or state, a sentence can only include one {verb}. Other words constructed as verbs may appear, but they have different purposes:

- As a {complement}: “He put the book on the table”; “She loaned the book to her friend”; “I heard that the man had come to dinner”; “I said that the man had come to dinner”.
- As a restrictive qualifier to a definite or indefinite {noun}: “the/a man who came to dinner”. Since in that case the verb (“came”) exists only to give an identity to the qualified {noun} (“man”), it is definite and part of the {noun} (below, The Noun Component).
- As a non-restrictive qualifier: “the man, who had come to dinner”. Such a {verb} is a separate sentence.
- As a separate sentence connected by a conjunction, as summarised in Chapter 14.

### The Subject Component

It follows from the foregoing that, since a {verb} describes an action or state, a sentence generally includes a word for that which is engaged in the action or subject to the state. We can call this word a {subject}, and can test this concept on our sample sentences:

“ <u>Joan</u> wrote this book on linguistics.”	→	“ <u>The book</u> on linguistics is by Joan.”
“ <u>John</u> painted the fence green.”	→	“ <u>The fence</u> was painted green.”
“ <u>He</u> laid the book on the table.”	→	“ <u>The book</u> was on the table.”
“ <u>The meeting</u> took place on Tuesday.”	→	“ <u>The meeting</u> was on Tuesday.”

<sup>2</sup> Foster, 17, 48, 58, 83, 89.

“ <u>The meeting</u> was held for one hour.”	→	“ <u>The meeting</u> lasted one hour.”
“ <u>He</u> cleaned the leaves out of the drain.”	→	“ <u>The drain</u> was clean of leaves.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“ <u>She</u> has four brothers.”
“ <u>The houses</u> were given slate roofs.”	→	“ <u>The houses</u> have slate roofs.”
“ <u>She</u> selected five books from the library.”	→	“ <u>The five books</u> were from her library.”
“ <u>The results</u> were surprising to us.”	→	“ <u>We</u> were surprised at the result.”
“ <u>Contractors</u> have freed the building of asbestos.”	→	“ <u>The building</u> is free of asbestos.”
“ <u>Subsidence</u> placed the building at risk of collapse.”	→	“ <u>The building</u> is at risk of collapse.”
“ <u>He</u> rescued his friend from drowning.”	→	“ <u>His friend</u> did not drown.”
“ <u>His bedroom</u> became his office.”	→	“ <u>His bedroom</u> is his office.”
“ <u>A young swan</u> is called a cygnet.”	→	“ <u>A cygnet</u> is a young swan.”
“ <u>Lloyd George</u> replaced Asquith as Prime Minister.”	→	“ <u>The Prime Minister</u> was Lloyd George.”
“ <u>The shopkeeper</u> priced these apples at 50 pence less than those.”	→	“ <u>These apples</u> are 50 pence cheaper than those.”
“ <u>He</u> obeyed the rules of the Society.”	→	“ <u>He</u> was obedient to the rules of the Society.”
“ <u>Louis XIV</u> acceded as king of France.”	→	“ <u>Louis XIV</u> was king of France.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“ <u>He</u> was meticulous in preparing the accounts.”
“ <u>Mary</u> lent the book to John.”	→	“ <u>John</u> has the book on loan.”
“ <u>My driving license</u> was withdrawn.”	→	“ <u>I</u> lack a driving license.”
“ <u>She</u> sold the book to a friend for £10.”	→	“ <u>Her friend</u> owns the book.”
“ <u>Mary</u> recollected that the appointment was due.”	→	“ <u>Mary</u> remembered the appointment.”
“ <u>I</u> was given a tiepin as a present.”	→	“ <u>I</u> have a tiepin as a present.”
“ <u>We</u> took pleasure in the play.”	→	“ <u>The play</u> pleased us.”
“ <u>We</u> imagined that it might rain.”	→	“ <u>We</u> supposed it might rain.”
“ <u>Henry</u> telephoned to James the date of the appointment.”	→	“ <u>James</u> knew the date of the appointment.”
“ <u>He</u> alleged that they had committed the crime.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)
“ <u>He</u> asked when the train would depart.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)
“ <u>We</u> translated the book into Greek.”	→	“ <u>The book</u> was available in Greek.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“ <u>She</u> was kind in offering him a loan.”
“ <u>We</u> helped him complete the task.”	→	“ <u>He</u> was able to complete the task.”
“ <u>The rain</u> forced her to go under the shelter.”	→	“ <u>She</u> went under the shelter.”
“ <u>I</u> promised to pay a contribution.”	→	“ <u>I</u> ought to pay a contribution.”
“ <u>The child</u> started to ride the bicycle.”	→	“ <u>The child</u> rode the bicycle.”
“ <u>I</u> stopped him going to work.”	→	“ <u>He</u> did not go to work.”
“ <u>He</u> misdirected his efforts.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)

These sentences illustrate the variety of functions which a {subject} performs. The {verb} states what action or state the sentence describes or refers to, and the {subject} states who or what is engaged in the action or subject to the state. The function of the {subject} evidently varies according to the nature

of the {verb}, and is one of the elements common to the different sentence functions listed above (Classification of Sentence Elements):

<u>subject</u>	<u>what the verb describes</u>
{agent}	an action of a person;
{instrument}	an action of an inanimate object;
{object}	an action undergone, or a state entered into, or a relationship with a person, or an identification, or a style, or a role;
{target}	a participation by a person;
{original}	substitution with an identified entity;
{recipient}	a relationship with a person or thing;
{beneficiary}	availability of an advantage or disadvantage;
{causer}	instigation or prevention of an action by an {agent} or {instrument};
{definite}	action or relationship undertaken in error.

We saw in Chapter 15. that many of these purposes can be combined, for example:

{agent/object}	an action by a person on him/herself.
{agent/beneficiary}	an action of a person to his/her advantage or disadvantage.
{agent/recipient}	an action of a person so that he/she enters into a relationship.

We can see also that the verb is constructed grammatically to be particular to its {subject}, so that if a different element is its {subject}, the verb is generally different. In this way, {subject – verb} is a semantic unit.

A {beneficiary} does not in general occur as a {subject} in English, except in combination with an {agent}, but is found in other languages:

Tagalog: “Ipagaalis ng tindero ng bigas sa sako ang babae.”  
 “For the woman, some rice will be taken by the storekeeper out of a sack.”  
 [Will-be-taken-for-her a storekeeper some rice from sack the woman.]

Indonesian:  
 “Adiknya dibelikkannya buku.” “His brother was bought a book by him.”  
 [Brother-his was bought-for-him book.]<sup>3</sup>

Japanese:  
 “Watashi wa chichi ni kamera o katte moratta.”  
 “I was bought a camera by my father.”  
 [I (topic) father-by camera (object) buying received.]

Swahili: “Wamenunuliwa sukari.” “For them, sugar has been bought.”  
 [They-have-been-bought-for sugar.]

In all the above examples, the {subject} is the topic of the sentence. We consider below (The Subject as Topic) whether that is necessarily so for all sentences. If it is, the “subject” of an existential sentence cannot be its {subject} since it is {indefinite}, and for a negative existential it is {indefinable}:

“There is a telephone call for you.” “There is a commotion outside.”  
 “A telephone call is for you.” “A commotion is outside.”  
 “There is no telephone call for you.” “There is no commotion outside.”

<sup>3</sup> Sneddon, 251.

We shall see below that the “subject” of an existential sentence is its {object}.

### The Object Component

A number of the functional sentence types of Chapter 15. include an element object, patient, or creation, the difference being that the patient is altered by the action of the sentence, the creation is created, while the object is unaltered. The standard sentences which we have been using are listed with the object, patient, or creation, if present, underlined:

“Joan wrote this <u>book</u> on linguistics.”	→	“The <u>book</u> on linguistics is by Joan.”
“John painted <u>the fence</u> green.”	→	“ <u>The fence</u> was painted green.”
“He laid <u>the book</u> on the table.”	→	“ <u>The book</u> was on the table.”
“ <u>The meeting</u> took place on Tuesday.”	→	“ <u>The meeting</u> was on Tuesday.”
“ <u>The meeting</u> was held for one hour.”	→	“ <u>The meeting</u> lasted one hour.”
“He cleaned <u>the leaves</u> out of the drain.”	→	“ <u>The drain</u> was clean of leaves.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“She has four <u>brothers</u> .”
“ <u>The houses</u> were given slate roofs.”	→	“ <u>The houses</u> have slate roofs.”
“She selected <u>five books</u> from the library.”	→	“ <u>The five books</u> were from her library.”
“ <u>The results</u> were surprising to us.”	→	“We were surprised <u>at the result</u> .”
“Contractors have freed <u>the building</u> of asbestos.”	→	“ <u>The building</u> is free of asbestos.”
“Subsidence placed <u>the building</u> at risk of collapse.”	→	“ <u>The building</u> is at risk of collapse.”
“Lloyd George replaced Asquith as <u>Prime Minister</u> .”	→	“ <u>The Prime Minister</u> was Lloyd George.”
“He rescued <u>his friend</u> from drowning.”	→	“ <u>His friend</u> did not drown.”
“ <u>His bedroom</u> became his office.”	→	“ <u>His bedroom</u> is his office.”
“ <u>A young swan</u> is called a cygnet.”	→	“ <u>A cygnet</u> is a young swan.”
“The shopkeeper priced <u>these apples</u> at 50 pence less than those.”	→	“ <u>These apples</u> are 50 pence cheaper than those.”
“ <u>He</u> obeyed the rules of the Society.”	→	“ <u>He</u> was obedient to the rules of the Society.”
“ <u>Louis XIV</u> acceded as king of France.”	→	“ <u>Louis XIV</u> was king of France.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“ <u>He</u> was meticulous in preparing the accounts.”
“Mary lent <u>the book</u> to John.”	→	“John has <u>the book</u> on loan.”
“ <u>My driving license</u> was withdrawn.”	→	“I lack <u>a driving license</u> .”
“She sold <u>the book</u> to a friend for £10.”	→	“Her friend owns <u>the book</u> .”
“Mary recollected that <u>the appointment</u> was due.”	→	“Mary remembered <u>the appointment</u> .”
“I was given <u>a tiepin</u> as a present.”	→	“I have <u>a tiepin</u> as a present.”
“We took pleasure <u>in the play</u> .”	→	“ <u>The play</u> pleased us.”
“We imagined that <u>it might rain</u> .”	→	“We supposed <u>it might rain</u> .”
“Henry telephoned to James <u>the date</u> of the appointment.”	→	“James knew <u>the date</u> of the appointment.”
“He alleged that <u>they</u> had committed the crime.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)
“He asked when <u>the train</u> would depart.”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)
“We translated <u>the book</u> into Greek.”		

	→	“ <u>The book</u> was available in Greek.”
(no dynamic sentence)	→	“She was kind in offering him a <u>loan</u> .”
“We helped him <u>complete the task</u> .”	→	“He was able to <u>complete the task</u> .”
“The rain forced <u>her</u> to go under the shelter.”	→	“ <u>She</u> went under the shelter.”
“I promised to pay a <u>contribution</u> .”	→	“I ought to pay a <u>contribution</u> .”
“ <u>The child</u> started to ride the bicycle.”	→	“ <u>The child</u> rode the bicycle.”
“I stopped <u>him</u> going to work.”	→	“ <u>He</u> did not go to work.”
“He misdirected <u>his efforts</u> .”	→	(no separate resultant sentence)

The common feature of each of the underlined entities is that the dynamic sentence places it in a state, condition, or relationship, which the resultant stative sentence expresses. On that basis, we can define an {object} as a person or thing which a sentence places in a state, condition, or relationship. Consistent with this definition, the term {object} can be extended to an identification sentence, and the relevant words are underlined above.

We argued in Chapters 6. and 7. that the term “object” is loosely and therefore unhelpfully applied in conventional grammatical usage. The foregoing definition provides some precision to the term, while separating its purpose from that of other sentence elements. A patient is an {object} which a sentence alters or affects. For a creation verb, an {object} is a {creation} or {representation} which did not previously exist:

“She gave birth to the baby.” “She took a photograph of the scene.”

For other sentence types, the sentence often states some state or condition of the {object}, or its relationship with some part, or with a person. The {object} is underlined in these examples:

“He turned on the computer.” “He put the lid on the box.” “He cut the paper in half.”  
 “He gave the money to his wife.” “He said that the train was late.”  
 “He asked when the train would depart.” “He named his son ‘Frederick’”.

This definition of {object} varies in several ways from the conventional one. In the following examples, the {object} is underlined:

- (i) An {object} can be the same entity as the {subject} of a sentence, if the sentence is:

reflexive: “Mary went to Cambridge.” “Mary drove herself to work.”  
 inceptive: “The dust blew in the window.” “The meeting took place on Tuesday.”  
 passive: “The dust was hoovered up.”  
 inchoative: “She began to sing.” “The wind stopped blowing.”

- (ii) Since a stative sentence expresses the state, condition, or relationship that an {object} is in, the {object} is {subject} of such a sentence:

“ <u>The book</u> was on the table.”	“ <u>The meeting</u> was on Tuesday.”
“ <u>The drain</u> was clean of leaves.”	“ <u>The houses</u> have slate roofs.”
“ <u>We</u> were surprised at the result.”	“ <u>The building</u> is free of asbestos.”
“ <u>His bedroom</u> is his office.”	“ <u>A cygnet</u> is a young swan.”

- (iii) A participation sentence expresses an action in which an {agent} participates:

“We played a game of croquet.” “She looked after her elderly parents.”  
 “She defended her thesis.” “He obeyed the rules of the Society.”

It could be argued that the {object} of these sentences are “game”, “her parents”, “her thesis”, and “the Society”. However, while these elements may have been affected by the participation action, the sentences do not say what that effect was. On the other hand there has been an evident effect on the {agent}: a game of croquet has been played, a caring action

has been undertaken, a thesis has been defended, rules have been observed. The {object} is therefore the {agent}, and the suggestion in Chapter 7. (The Participation Function) that participation sentences are intransitive is confirmed.

- (iv) A substitution replaces one entity with another:

“The weather today has turned sunny instead of the rain.”

The resultant of this substitution is “It sunny, not raining today”. Its {object} is therefore not “rain”, which has been displaced, but “the weather”, the function or role in which the sun now predominates.

- (v) A style sentence expresses the quality of an {agent} in performing an action. The {agent} is therefore also the {object}:

“John was meticulous in preparing the accounts.” “George was sincere in his regrets.”

- (vi) For a possessive sentence, the {recipient} is often the {subject}, if it is {definite} and placed in topic position. The {object} is the entity connected with the {recipient} by the {possession}:

“John has the book on loan.” “James lacks a driving license.”  
“Her friend owns the book.” “James knew the date of the appointment.”  
“Mary remembered the appointment was due.”

In the corresponding dative sentence, the {object} is what is transferred:

“Mary lent the book to John.” “She sold the book to a friend.”  
“The Court withdrew the driving licence from James.”  
“Henry telephoned to James the date of the appointment.”

Receptive and adoptive sentences also transfer an {object} to or from a {recipient}:

“John acquired the book from Michael.” “James gave up his driving licence.”  
“Mary learned the date of the appointment.” “Mary studied the information in the diary.”

- (vii) The {object} of a perception, supposition, communication, proposal, or interrogation sentence is that concerning which the perception, supposition, communication, proposal, or interrogation is made:

“He realised that the train would be late.” “He said that the train was late.”  
“He alleged that the train would be late.” “He asked when the train would depart.”

Generally, an {object} is definite or indefinite. A supposition or proposal may, however, only refer to an {object} which is definite or indefinable: “He hopes for a train which is not late”; “He intends to catch a train which is not late.”

- (viii) The {object} of a communication or perception may be in topic position if the {verb} is embedded:

“The train was reported to be late.” “The train was believed to be late.”

- (ix) An opinion is the relationship between a {recipient} and a {definite} event, in the form of a considered mental reaction that the {recipient} holds. The event is therefore the {object}:

“He resented the intrusion by his neighbour.” “He resented that his neighbour had intruded.”

- (x) The {object} of a benefit is the advantage or disadvantage made available to the {beneficiary}:

“She had the advantage of a good education.” “She was kind in offering him a loan.”  
“This calculation is our example.”

- (xi) A modal is a relationship between a {recipient} and a hypothetical action which operates on an {object}. If the action were to be performed the {object} would be placed in a state or relationship. This {object} is therefore the {object} of the modal:

“You can repair the machine.” “You should write the letter.”  
“You must go home now.” “You ought to buy a car.”

As with other hypotheses, the {object} of a modal is either definite or indefinable. As in the third example, if the hypothetical verb is intransitive, the {object} may be the same as the {recipient}.

- (xii) A causative or preventive sentence initiates or prevents an action by an {agent} or {instrument}, in consequence of which an {object} is placed in a state or relationship. The {object} of such a sentence is therefore the {object} on which the {agent} or {instrument} is acting:

“She had her secretary prepare a reply.” “He flew the plane to Rio.”

In the case of a preventive or cessative, the {object} is definite or indefinable: “She stopped her secretary preparing the/a reply.” “He avoided preparing the/a reply.”

- (xiii) An inchoative or cessative sentence initiates, continues or ceases an action or state by an {object}:

“He started talking.” “She kept the conversation going.” “He stopped the discussion.”

- (xiv) In an error sentence, the action of a causer or agent towards an {object} is misdirected or the perception of a recipient towards an {object} is misapprehended, contrary to that person’s intention or expectation:

“She addressed the letter incorrectly.” “He misunderstood the instructions.”  
“He missed the opportunity.” “She overestimated the quantity.”

Since every sentence describes a state, relationship, or identification, every sentence has an {object}. It follows that the purpose of the {object} varies with the nature of the state, relationship, or identification so described:

- (a) A transitive sentence places the {object} in a state or identification which is described by its resultant. The {subject} and the {object} are not the same.
- (b) An intransitive sentence places an {object} in a state or identification which is described by its resultant. The {subject} and the {object} are the same.
- (c) A transfer sentence connects an {object} to a {recipient} by means of a {possession}.
- (d) A benefit sentence makes available an {object} as a {benefit} to a {beneficiary}.
- (d) A modal sentence hypothesises a state, relationship, or identification for an {object}.
- (e) A causative, preventive, inchoative, or cessative sentence initiates, prevents, continues, or terminates an action, state, relationship, or identification for an {object}.

An {object} can be definite or indefinite according to the rules laid out in Chapters 2. and 13. However, when the state, relationship, or identification of an {object} is hypothetical, the {object} can only be definite or indefinable. This arises if the sentence is:

- A negative or question.
- A supposition or proposal.
- A modal.
- A preventive.
- A cessative.

## The Complement Component

We have defined an {object} as a person or thing which a sentence places in a state or relationship, or to which it gives an identification. It follows that the state, relationship, or identification which a sentence expresses of an {object} is a separate component, which we can call a {complement} in accordance with conventional usage. This again gives a more precise definition to the term “complement”, which we criticised for lack of clarity in Chapter 6. For example, the {complement} of a transformation or locative {verb} is its {attribute}, which becomes the {verb} of the stative sentence. In all these examples, the {complement} is underlined:

“She tore the paper <u>into shreds</u> .”	→	“The paper <u>was in shreds</u> .”
“She pushed the window <u>open</u> .”	→	“The window <u>was open</u> .”
“He turned <u>on</u> the computer.”	→	“The computer <u>was on</u> .”
“He put the lid <u>on the box</u> .”	→	“The lid <u>was on the box</u> .”

The {complement} of a {time} is the time:

“The meeting took place <u>on Tuesday</u> .”	→	“The meeting <u>was on Tuesday</u> .”
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The {complement} of an identification {verb} is the identification:

“They named his son <u>‘Frederick’</u> .”	→	“Their son was called <u>‘Frederick’</u> .”
“She became <u>a nun</u> .”	→	“She <u>was a nun</u> .”

The {complement} of a substitution is the {identification} which replaces the {original}:

“ <u>Lloyd George</u> replaced Asquith as Prime Minister.”	→	“The Prime Minister <u>was Lloyd George</u> .”
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The {complement} of a dative, receptive, adoptive, or possessive sentence is the {possession}, which expresses the connection between the {object} and the {recipient}. It is usually the same as the {verb}:

“Mary <u>lent</u> the book to John.”	→	“John has the book <u>on loan</u> .”
“The Court <u>withdrew</u> the driving licence from James.”	→	“James <u>lacks</u> a driving license.”
“She <u>sold</u> the book to a friend.”	→	“Her friend <u>owns</u> the book.”
“Henry <u>telephoned</u> to James the date of the appointment.”	→	“James <u>knew</u> the date of the appointment.”
“Mary <u>remembered</u> the appointment was due.”	→	“Mary <u>has</u> the date of the appointment <u>in mind</u> .”
“He <u>gave</u> the money to his wife.”	→	“His wife <u>has</u> the money.”
“His neighbour’s intrusion <u>caused</u> him <u>resentment</u> .”	→	“He <u>resented</u> the intrusion by his neighbour.”
“We <u>took pleasure</u> in the play.”	→	“The play <u>pleased</u> us.”

The {complement} of a communication is that which is communicated concerning the {object}:

“He said that the train was late.”

The {complement} of a supposition or proposal is that which is supposed or proposed concerning the {object}. Unlike a perception, opinion, or communication, the {complement} of these sentences are {indefinable}:

“He alleged that the train <u>would be late</u> .”	→	“He supposed that the train <u>was late</u> .”
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As noted in Chapter 15. (The Interrogation Sentence), the {complement} of an interrogation is either {definite} or {indefinable}:

“He asked when the train would depart.” “He asked whether the train would depart.”

The {complement} of a creation sentence is the state of creation of the {object}, and is again usually identified with the {verb}:

“She gave birth to the baby.” → “The baby was born.”

The {complement} of a participation sentence is the participation {verb} and any {participant} who is mentioned:

“We played a game of croquet with our friends.” “She looked after her elderly parents.”  
“She defended her thesis.” “He obeyed the rules of the Society.”

The {complement} of a constituent sentence is the attribute or quantity of the constituent:

“The houses were given slate roofs.” → “The houses have slate roofs.”  
“She selected five books from her library.” → “The five books were from her library.”  
“A spider has eight legs.”

The {complement} of a benefit sentence is the benefit:

“She had the advantage of a good education.” “She was kind in offering him a loan.”

The {complement} of a modal sentence is the state or condition which the ability, necessity or responsibility hypothesises for the {object}:

“You can repair the machine.” “You should write the letter.”  
“You must go home now.” “You ought to buy a car.”

The {complement} of a causative, preventive, inchoative, or cessative sentence is the action or state which is caused to occur or not to occur for the {object}:

“She had her secretary prepare a reply.” “He flew the plane to Rio.”  
“She stopped her secretary preparing the/a reply.” “She started reading the letter.”  
“She avoided reading the letter.”

The {complement} of an error sentence is the erroneous state of the {object} in consequence of the error:

“He put the letter in the wrong file.” “He saw his friend as an enemy.”  
“She overestimated the quantity.” “He misdirected the motorist to the wrong road.”

We have seen that while the {complement} of most functions are {definite} or {indefinite}, that of certain functions are {definite} or {indefinable}:

- A supposition or proposal.
- A modal.
- A preventive.
- A cessative.
- The indefinite {complement} of an interrogation.

The {complement} of other functions are {definite} or {indefinite} provided that that function is not negative. If a function is negative, its {complement} must be {definite} or {indefinable}. The following indefinable {complement} are underlined:

“She did not tear the paper into shreds.” “She did not become a nun.”  
“John did not have the book on loan.” “The houses were not given slate roofs.”

While a function may be non-negative, it is possible for its {complement} to be negative. This construction is discussed further in Chapter 18. (The Complementary Sentence).

### The Noun Component

In the conventional grammatical description, concept words are classified into the categories noun (and its substitute, pronoun), number, verb, adjective, adverbial, conjunction, and preposition/postposition. A conjunction is a means of linking two sentences in discourse structure, as described in Chapter 14. A verb and adjective (as predicate) are included within {verb} as we have defined it. A locative pre/postposition is either a {verb} (in a locative sentence) or a restrictive qualifier. An adverbial, if non-restrictive, is a further {adverbial} sentence or, if restrictive, is an identifying {circumstance}. We therefore have to consider the functions of a noun and other pre/postpositions.

The great majority of words in a language are nouns. The origin of the term, the Latin for “name”, indicates its general nature; an alternative in many languages is “substantive”, meaning something possessing substance. A noun is a word which refers to a person or thing. In the sentences we have been using as examples, the {subject} and {object} have been nouns or pronouns representing nouns. More generally, a {noun} fulfils in a sentence those elements which are listed above (Classification of Sentence Elements) as common to more than one functional sentence type, or as not describing the action or state of a sentence, or as not describing the state or condition of the {object}. As we have seen, in different sentences many of these {noun} elements are realised as {subject} or {object}, and are marked by word order. However, in other sentences, they are realised in English by a preposition which marks their purpose in the sentence:

“He dug the soil with a spade to a depth of two feet.”  
 “She indexed the book for the publisher with her colleague.”

In these sentences, there are {noun} elements (underlined) which lie outside the “subject – verb – object – complement” pattern, but which are integral to the meaning of the sentence and not simply adverbial.

In inflecting languages, {noun} elements (if not distinguished by word order) are marked with inflexions, which in general we have called a “link” (Chapter 4., Links):

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| {agent}       | Samoan: “Ua fasia le pua’a e <u>Ioane</u> .” “John has killed the pig.”<br>[Has been-killed the pig by John.] <sup>4</sup>  |
| {instrument}  | Russian: “Gora pokryta <u>snegom</u> .” “The mountain is covered with snow.”<br>[Mountain covered snow (instrumental).] <sup>5</sup>  |
| {object}      | Russian: “On polozhil <u>ruku</u> na golovu rebënka.”<br>“He placed his hand on the child’s head.”<br>[He placed hand (accusative) on head (accusative) child (genitive).] <sup>6</sup> |
| {location}    | Hungarian:<br>“ <u>Kéteemeletes házban lakom</u> .” “I live in a two-storey house.”<br>[Two-storey-having house (inessive) I-live.] <sup>7</sup>  |
| {beneficiary} | Turkish: “ <u>Hizmetçi</u> bir palto alacağız.”<br>“We are going to buy a coat for the servant.”<br>[Servant (dative) a coat we-will-buy.] <sup>8</sup>                                 |
| {creation}    | Turkish: “ <u>Bu gazeteyi</u> çıkarmak zor bir iş.”<br>“To publish this newspaper is a hard job.”   |

<sup>4</sup> Marsack, 72.

<sup>5</sup> Wade, 122.

<sup>6</sup> Folomkina & Weiser, 370.

<sup>7</sup> Rounds, 101.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, 36.

[This newspaper (accusative) to-publish hard a job.]<sup>9</sup>

- {attribute} Russian: “Ugol’ vesit tonnu.” “The coal weighs a ton.”  
[Coal weighs ton (accusative).]<sup>10</sup>
- {original} “Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister.”
- {base} Russian: “On starshe menya na tri goda.” “He is three years older than me.”  
[He older me (genitive) onto three years.]<sup>11</sup>
- {object} Russian: “On lyubit Mashu.” “He loves Masha (accusative).”<sup>12</sup>
- {participant} Russian: “Vy poobedaete so mnoi?” “Will you have dinner with me?”  
[You will-dine with me (instrumental)?]<sup>13</sup>
- {recipient} Hungarian:  
“Gábornak fáj a lába.” “Gabor’s leg hurts.” [Gabor (dative) hurts the leg.]<sup>14</sup>
- {causer} Hungarian:  
“Csak kíváncsiságból kérdeztem.” “I only asked out of curiosity.”  
[Only curiosity (elative) I-asked.]<sup>15</sup>

This analysis suggests that we can define a {noun} as any concept word used to complete a sentence, including but not limited to {subject} and {object}, which is not a {verb} or a {complement}. An {adverbial} is not included in this definition, as it provides additional information and is not needed for the sentence to be meaningful. A pronoun is included in the definition, since it represents a noun. This definition accords with the conventional approach, in which concept words are generally categorised as nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

We saw in Chapter 13. (Statement), Chapter 14. (Identity), and above (The Circumstance Component) that a {noun}, if indefinite, may gain an identity through a restrictive qualifier:

- “Mary lent a book out of her collection.”  
“Mary lent a book which I had asked for.”

Since an identity is necessary for a {noun} to fulfil its purpose in a sentence, it includes all the restrictive qualifiers which identify it. The {object} of these examples is “a book out of her collection” or “a book which I had asked for”. A restrictive qualifier, if a relative clause, includes a grammatical verb and conforms to the grammatical rules of the language for a sentence. In this example “which I had asked for”, the grammatical verb “ask for” has the subject “I”. However, “ask for” is not the {verb}, since the action described by the sentence is “lent”. The same restrictive qualifier could also have been expressed by means of a participle:

- “Mary lent a book requested by me”, or a noun in apposition:  
“Mary lent a book, my request to her.”

We saw in Chapter 2. (Pronoun) that a restrictive qualifier can be applied to a definite pronoun in order to express a {noun}, even though a grammatical noun is absent:

- “Mary lent me what I had asked for.”

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Wade, 105.

<sup>11</sup> Wade, 200.

<sup>12</sup> Wade, 105.

<sup>13</sup> Folomkina & Weiser, 584.

<sup>14</sup> Rounds, 113.

<sup>15</sup> Rounds, 105.

In contrast, a non-restrictive qualifier which is not needed to identify a {noun} is not part of the {noun} but is a separate sentence with the {noun} as {subject} or {object}. The {object} of:

“Mary lent me her copy of ‘War and Peace’ which I had asked for”

is “her copy of ‘War and Peace’”. “I had asked for it” is a separate sentence.

Similarly, an indefinite {locative} can be identified by a restrictive qualifier:

“We went to a shop which she had recommended;”

“We went where she had recommended.”

The qualifier contains the grammatical verb “recommended” but is nevertheless part of the {locative} {noun} “shop” or “where”. The same expression can be a non-restrictive qualifier, and in that case is a separate sentence with “recommended” as {verb}:

“We went to the fashion shop, which she had recommended.”

Since a {noun} includes all persons and things appearing in a sentence, apart from the {verb} and {complement}, it includes a {noun} describing an action or state which appears as the {subject}, {object}, or other {noun} of a {verb}. These verbal nouns are categorised in more detail in Chapter 12. They have their own syntactical links (underlined), as they would have if they were verbs:

“Travelling to London takes an hour.” “The length of the day was 8½ hours.”

“His marriage to her was in haste and his repentance was at leisure.”

“She likes speaking at these meetings.” “Sheila’s happiness at the news was extreme.”

“Giving presents is the custom at Christmas.” “The blow broke the vase.”

“The walk along the canal made him feel better.” “Her look at the report was cut short.”

“The visitors’ curiosity was short-lived.”

Verbal nouns also appear in {verb} constructions, with a verbal auxiliary, but here they are classed as {verb} under our definition (underlined):

“They made three journeys to London last week.” “The days are increasing in length.”

“She made a speech of welcome.” “She had a meeting with her friend.”

“They launched an attack on the enemy.” “I started work on the batch.”

“She paid a visit to her neighbours.” “They had a game of chess.”

Another verbal noun is one which described a state or condition, which becomes an attribute by means of an auxiliary, a construction we have called in Chapter 4. “converse link”. These are also {verb} (underlined):

“We are at liberty to go home.” “Our area is under threat from redevelopment.”

“We are in search of a new candidate.” “Rome was at war with Carthage.”

A second sort of {noun} derived from a verb is one which describes the agent of an action, which we have called a *role* in Chapters 12 and 15. They can also have their own syntactical links (underlined):

“The doctor is treating my illness.” “The scientists researched the problem.”

“The villains concocted their plan.” “The hero rescued Andromeda from the monster.”

“The haulier transported the goods to the port.”

“The viewers of the programme watched in silence.”

“The store’s customers selected their purchases.”

“The victims of the earthquake were rescued.”

The functions that these verb-derived {noun} fulfil in their sentences lie within the 17 functions of {noun} outlined in this section, that is they are an {agent}, {instrument}, {object}, {creation}, {location}, {beneficiary}, {base}, {target}, {competence}, {participant}, {recipient}, {definite}, {indefinite}, {indefinable}, {select}, {circumstance}, or {causer}.

Within their sentences, they therefore do not encroach on the {verb} element which can only occur once in the sentence. Acting as verbs, they can also have their own dependent syntactical links, but these are restrictive qualifiers of the verbal noun or role, and accordingly do not affect their status as {noun}.

It will be seen from these examples that the {object} of a communication or perception is in fact a qualifier of the {complement}. Such a construction is normal in Turkish:

“Kapıyı kilitlemenizi tavsiye ederim.” “I recommend that you lock the door.”  
 [Door (object) locking-your (object) recommendation I-make.]  
 “Kapıyı kilitlediğinizi unutmayınız.” “Do not forget that you have locked the door.”  
 [Door (object) locked-having-your (object) forget-not-(subjunctive)-you.]<sup>16</sup>

Finally, we can review the various functions of a preposition or postposition (underlined), and their equivalent inflexions:

(i) a {locative} verb or attribute:

“We are sitting in the garden”; “The flowers in the garden are coming into bloom”;

(ii) the marker of a noun:

“The speech was given by the chairman”; “The chairman spoke to the audience”;

(iii) the marker of an attribute formed from an attributive noun (a converse link):

“A body will remain at rest or in constant motion in a straight line unless acted on by an external force”;

(iv) the marker of a possessive or {possession} qualifier:

“The voice of the speaker is too soft to be heard”; “The speaker with the soft voice stood up”;

(v) the marker of the whole or part of a {constituent}:

“The keyboard of my computer is broken”; “The computer with a broken keyboard is mine”.

(vi) the dependent syntactical links of a verbal noun or role:

“The talk by the speaker to the meeting was inaudible.”  
 “The speaker to the meeting spoke inaudibly.”

### The Subject as Topic

In our study of the sentence we have adopted three modes of analysis, all different:

- Discourse analysis, in which a sentence consists of a topic in the form of a {definite} element, plus a comment, enquiry, or hypothesis, which may be {definite}, {select}, {circumstance}, {indefinite}, or {indefinable}. An existential sentence consists of an {indefinite} element and a {circumstance}.
- Functional analysis, which identifies the {verb} as the unique action or state of the sentence, supported by the other elements necessary for that action or state to be meaningful.
- Component analysis, in which the {verb} is the unique action or state of the sentence as identified by functional analysis, the {subject} is that which is engaged in the action or state, and the {object} is that which the sentence places in a state, called a {complement}. {subject – verb} is a semantic unit. Other {noun} elements such as {instrument}, {recipient}, or {beneficiary} may be present.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, 254.

We emphasised that discourse analysis is distinct from functional analysis, in that any functional element can be topic and any can be comment, enquiry, or hypothesis. For example, in the questions and answers:

“Who stole the tarts?” “It was Jack”, the topic is “who stole the tarts”;

in “What did Jack do?” “He stole the tarts”, the topic is “Jack”;

in “What happened to the tarts?” “They were stolen by Jack”, the topic is “the tarts”.

These sentences have the simple structure subject, verb, and object, and their identification with the components {subject}, {verb}, and {object} as we have defined them depends on the assumption that the {verb} is the same as the verb as this is conventionally understood. If this assumption is accepted, the {subject} may not be the same as the topic (although it very often is the same), and we indeed have three distinct modes of interpreting a sentence.

Let us however consider the possibility that the {subject} is necessarily the same as the topic. If we can find that this is so, then we have a way of aligning the three modes of sentence analysis. The {subject} is, on this supposition, the {definite} topic of a sentence and the {verb} is both the unique action or state of the sentence and the core word of the comment, enquiry, or hypothesis. The {verb} (plus the {object} if that is a distinct element) is accordingly {select} or {indefinite} in a positive statement and {definite} or {indefinable} in a negative statement or question.

As we shall show at the end of this section, in an existential sentence the {verb} is the {circumstance}, there is no {subject}, and the {indefinite} or {indefinable} element is the {object}.

The implication which is evident from the preceding three examples is that, if our supposition is correct, a {verb} may not be the same as a verb as conventionally understood (although it very often is the same). We have already noted in this chapter (The Verb Component; The Noun Component) sentence structures in which the {verb} (underlined) differs from the conventional verb in English:

- A conventional verb may not be present:

Arabic: “hāʔulāʔi hunna banātī” “These are my daughters.” [These they daughters-my.]

- A verb may be an adjective or locative:

Japanese:

“Hon wa takai.” “The book is expensive.” [Book<sub>(topic)</sub> expensive.]

Turkish: “Vesika kasada.” “The document is in the safe.” [Document safe-in.]

- A {verb} is a concept word: “We are at work on the task.”
- The {verb} of an existential sentence is the {circumstance}: “There is a fly in the ointment.”

In addition to these, the principal structures in which the conventional verb is not a {verb} arise with focussing sentences, causative/preventive sentences, and some topic-comment sentences. As examples of focussing, let us consider the three examples at the start of this section. In the second and third: “Jack stole the tarts”; “The tarts were stolen by Jack”, there is no focussing. The {verb} is the conventional verb and describes the action of stealing, and the {subject} is the topic. The sentence is a deficiency sentence as described in Chapter 15. In the first example, there is focussing:

“It was Jack who stole the tarts”

The {verb} is not the conventional verb “stole”, but “was Jack”. The {subject} is “who stole the tarts”. The action or state which the {verb} describes is not the action of stealing, but the identification of Jack as the perpetrator of the crime. According to the categories in Chapter 15., the sentence is an identification sentence.

Two further examples of focussing are:

“When was Caesar assassinated?” “On the Ides of March.”  
“What happened on the Ides of March?” “Caesar was assassinated.”

Without focussing (“Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March”), these are transformation sentences, in which the topic and {subject} are “Caesar”. With focussing, the first sentence has the topic “Caesar was assassinated”. If we express this as a {subject} in the form of a {noun}, the sentence becomes:

“The assassination of Caesar was on the Ides of March.”

The second focussing sentence has the topic “the Ides of March”. If we express this as a {subject} in the form of a {noun}, the sentence becomes:

“The Ides of March was the day Caesar was assassinated.”

The focussing sentence are both time sentences with the {verb} “was on” or “was the day of”, not transformation sentences as is the unfocussed sentence. We recall that the {verb} must be the action or state of one of the functional sentence categories of Chapter 15. The {verb} cannot be, for example, {agent}, {object}, or {recipient}, since these cannot have a {subject}.

The foregoing interpretation may be placed on other clefting sentences, for example in Irish (<sub>(f)</sub> is the focus):

“Do tháinig sé inné.” “He came yesterday.” [Came he yesterday.]	(unfocussed)
“Is inné a tháinig sé.” “It was yesterday <sub>(f)</sub> that he came.”	(focus)
[Is yesterday that came he.]	
“Is é a tháinig inné.” “It was he <sub>(f)</sub> who came yesterday.”	(focus)
[Is he who came yesterday.]	

It can also be applied to some languages which retain the unfocussed word order, but mark the focus with a particle. In Malay, it is “-lah”:

Malay: “Dialah yang memberitahu saya.” “It was he who informed me.”  
[He <sub>(focus)</sub> who informed me.]<sup>17</sup>

In Chinese, it “shì” before the focus element:

Chinese: “Shì wǒ dǎ pò zhèi gè bēizi de.” “I was the one who broke this cup.”  
[(<sub>(f)</sub>focus) I hit break this unit cup (<sub>(f)</sub>focus)-]<sup>18</sup>

It may be relevant that in Malay, “-lah” is part of the word “adalah” which means “be”, and in Chinese “shì” means “be” for identification sentences. The examples can be interpreted as “He it-was [who] informed me” and “It-was I break this cup of”. The particles function as auxiliaries which convert the focus into the {verb} of the sentence, leaving the rest of the sentence as the {subject}. In Japanese, it is not the focus which is marked, but the topic, by the particle “wa”. The first of the following sentences is unfocussed, in the second the focus is “fruit”:

“Kudamono wa Nihon de oshii.” “The fruit in Japan is delicious.”	
[Fruit <sub>(topic)</sub> Japan-in delicious-is.]	
“Nihon de oishii no wa kudamono da.” “What is delicious in Japan is fruit.”	
[Japan-in delicious being <sub>(topic)</sub> fruit ( <sub>(f)</sub> is).] <sup>19</sup>	

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<sup>17</sup> Dodds, 130.

<sup>18</sup> Yip & Rimmington, 133.

<sup>19</sup> Private information.

In this way, the element in front of the topic particle “wa” retains its function as {subject} and the focussed element is the {verb}. However, we must note that not all languages with focussing particles are so readily interpreted in this way. The Hindi focussing particle is “hī”:

“Banāras ke log hindī bolte hai~.” “The people of Banaras speak Hindi.”  
 [Banaras-of people Hindi speak.]  
 “Banāras ke log hindī hī bolte hai~.” “It is Hindi that the people of Banaras speak.”  
 [Banaras-of people Hindi <sub>(focus)</sub> speak.]<sup>20</sup>

The topic of the second sentence is “Hindi”, but it is not the grammatical subject of “speak”. “Hindi” is only the {subject} by a focussing interpretation of the whole sentence.

In addition to clefting and focussing particles, we have noted in Chapters 1. and 4. that focussing is achieved by changes in word order from the unfocussed sentence. The topic is put in subject position even though it is not the conventional subject, and the focus is put in comment position even though it is not the conventional verb or object. In this way, the topic is marked as {subject} and the focus as {verb}. In German and Spanish, the topic can be at the start and the comment at the end (<sub>(t)</sub> is the focus):

“Die Studenten unterrichten zu diesen Zeiten die Kinder.” (unfocussed)  
 “The students teach the children at these times.”  
 [The students teach at these times the children.]  
 “Zu diesen Zeiten unterrichten die Kinder die Studenten.” (focus)  
 “It is the students who teach the children at these times.”  
 [At these times teach the children the students <sub>(t)</sub>.]<sup>21</sup>

“Mi secretaria ha escrito una carta.” “My secretary has written a letter.” (unfocussed)  
 “Esta carta la escribió mi secretaria.” (focus)  
 “It was my secretary who wrote this letter.”  
 [This letter it wrote my secretary <sub>(t)</sub>.]

These focussing sentences can be interpreted as identification sentences with the focus as {verb}. In Turkish, that construction is not possible because the grammatical verb is always final. However, the focus is placed as late as possible before the grammatical verb:

“Resam bize resimlerini gösterdi.” (unfocussed)  
 “The artist showed us his pictures.” [Artist to-us pictures-his showed.]  
 “Bize resimlerini ressam gösterdi.” (focus)  
 “It was the artist who showed us his pictures.”  
 [To-us pictures-his artist <sub>(t)</sub> showed.]<sup>22</sup>

In other languages, in unfocussed sentences the verb is at the start, followed by the subject and then the rest of the comment. In focus-topic sentences, the focus is at the start and in this way is marked as the {verb}. The conventional verb and object follow the focus element and are accordingly marked as the {subject}:

Welsh: “Collodd y dyn ei fag ar y trêrn ddoe.” (unfocussed)  
 “The man lost his bag on the train yesterday.”  
 [Lost the man his bag on the train yesterday.]  
 “Y dyn a gollodd ei fag ar y trêrn ddoe.” (focus)  
 “It was the man who lost his bag on the train yesterday.”  
 [The man <sub>(t)</sub> who lost his bag on the train yesterday.]  
 “Ei fag a gollodd y dyn ar y trêrn ddoe.” (focus)  
 “It was his bag that the man lost on the train yesterday.”  
 [His bag <sub>(t)</sub> which lost the man on the train yesterday.]

<sup>20</sup> McGregor, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Lockwood, 346.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, 240-1.

Inuit: “Pitaap arviq tuquppaa.”	“Pitaaq killed the whale.”	(unfocussed)
	[Pitaaq <sub>(agent)</sub> whale killed.]	
“Pitaamuna arviq tuqukkaa.”		(focus)
“It was Pitaaq <sub>(f)</sub> who killed the whale.”		
[Pitaaq <sub>(agent)</sub> -that whale killing-he-it.]		
“Arviquana Pitaap tuqutaa.”		(focus)
“It is the whale <sub>(f)</sub> killed by Pitaaq.”		
[Whale-that Pitaaq <sub>(agent)</sub> killed-his.] <sup>23</sup>		

Note that in the Inuit example, “killed” in the unfocussed sentence is a grammatical verb, while in the focus sentences it is a participle in agreement with the {subject} as topic. The unfocussed sentence is a transformation sentence, while the sentences in focus are identification sentences, on “Pitaaq” and “whale” respectively.

We noticed earlier (The Verb Component) that the Maori sentence begins with the {verb}, whether that is a conventional verb, an identification, an adjective, locative, or possession. Consistent with this rule, an element in focus is placed at the start of the sentence and so is treated as {verb}:

“Nā te taitama te hōiho i pupuri.”	“It is the young man <sub>(f)</sub> who is holding the horse.”
	[Belong-to the young-man the horse did hold.]
“Ko Rōpata te kaimahi nāna tērā whare i hanga.”	
“Ropata <sub>(f)</sub> is the workman who built that house.”	
[It-is Ropata the workman belong-to-him that house did build.] <sup>24</sup>	

Chapter 18. discusses how the Maori {not} words “kāhore” and “ēhara” also occur in {verb} position.

We now turn to the causative/preventive construction (Chapter 11., Causative), in which the topic of the sentence is often the {causer}. We note that in English the subject of the caused verb is in general not the {causer}. This is so, whether the subject is an {agent}, an {object}, a {target}, an {instrument}, or a {recipient}:

“I made him write the letter.”	“I had the letter written.”
“I made him obey the rules.”	“I made him go to work.”
“I made her read the article.”	“I caused the trees to be felled.”
“I had the rules obeyed.”	“I had the speech given.”
“The sun made the rain dry up.”	“The earthquake made the building fall.”

In the first two of these sentences the {causer} is “I”, but in the first case the subject of the grammatical verb is “him” and in the second it is “the letter”. This causative construction therefore appears to break our rule that the topic is the {subject}, if we interpret the grammatical verbs of these sentences as {verb} and their subjects as {subject}. The rule is, however, not broken if no separate subject is expressed; the subject is then the same as the {causer}:

“He was made to write the letter.”	“The trees were caused to be felled.”
“The rain was made to dry up.”	“The engine was kept running.”
“He walked the dog.”	

The rule is also not broken if we understand the {verb} of a causative/preventive differently, not as “run”, “go”, “write”, “fell”, “dry up”, etc, but as “cause to run”, “cause to go”, “cause to write”, “prevent from running”, “prevent from going”, “keep running”, “keep writing”, etc. This interpretation of the {verb} of a causative/preventive has already been suggested (The Verb Component). If it is accepted, the {subject} becomes the {causer}, the subject of the caused verb is simply another element ({agent}, {object}, {target}, {instrument}, or {recipient}), and the rule is retained.

We find such a causative construction in many languages. The {verb} is either a causative variation of the caused verb or is the caused verb supported by a causative auxiliary, and in both cases has the {causer} as subject. The subject of the caused verb is marked with the equivalent of “to” or “by”:

<sup>23</sup> Fortescue, 184.

<sup>24</sup> Foster, 59, 73.

French: “Je fais lire ce livre à mon fils.” “I make my son read this book.”  
[I make read this book to my son.]

Hungarian:  
“Kivasaltattam az ingemet a férjemmel.” “I had my husband iron my shirt.”  
[Iron-caused-I the shirt-my (accusative) the husband-my-by.]

Arabic: “ʔansāhumu l-kaṯīra mina l-ʔarāʔibi” “It made them forget many strange things.”  
[It-made-forget-them many of strange-things.]<sup>25</sup>

Turkish: “Mektubu müdüre imzalattım.” “I got the director to sign the letter.”  
[Letter (accusative) director-to sign-caused-I.]

Hindi: “maĩ apne bhāi se pustak chapvāũ gā” “I shall get my brother to print the book.”  
[I my brother-by book print-cause-shall.]

Indonesian/Malay:  
“Saya mencucikan pakaian pada wanita itu.”  
“I have my clothes washed by that woman.” [I wash-make clothes by woman that.]

Japanese:  
“Tomodachi wa watashi ni chippu o harawaseta.” “My friend made me leave a tip.”  
[Friend (topic) me-to tip (object) leave-caused.]

Swahili: “Wasimamishe watoto.” “Make the children stand up.”  
[They-stand-cause (imperative) children.]

Inuit: “Pisariaqartunik ikinngutinnit nassitsippunga.”  
“I had my friend send the necessary things.”  
[Necessary-being-with friend-my-by send-cause-I.]<sup>26</sup>

In Japanese, if the caused verb is involuntary or unintentional, its subject is marked as a transitive object:

Japanese:  
“Chichi wa watashi o aruite kaerasete.” “My father had me walk home.”  
[Father (topic) me (object) on-foot return-caused.]<sup>27</sup>

We now come to the third sentence construction in which, if the {subject} is the topic, it does not appear as a semantic unit with the {verb}. These are some ergative and topic-comment constructions, as we have already mentioned in Chapter 13. (Background). An ergative construction is one in which the agent is marked even when it is the topic of the sentence. In some instances, such an ergative topic is also the {subject} in semantic union with the {verb}:

Basque: “Elinek hondo hitzegiten du euskaraz.” “Elin speaks Basque well.”  
[Elin (agent) well speaking has in-Basque.]

Inuit: “Akkam-ma aataaq aallaavaa.” “My uncle shot the harp-seal.”  
[Uncle-my (agent) harpseal shot-he-it.]

In others, it is the topic but is not in semantic union with the verb:

Hindi: “usne kitāb likhī” “He wrote the book.”  
[Him-by book (feminine) written (feminine)-.]

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<sup>25</sup> Badawi et al, 375.

<sup>26</sup> Fortescue, 85.

<sup>27</sup> Makino & Tsutsui, 392.

The verb of this sentence agrees grammatically with the {object} “book”, not with the topic “by him”. As with the previous Hindi example, if the {subject} is the topic, the {verb} is not the same as the grammatical verb of the sentence. A similar interpretation can be placed on the other examples listed in Chapter 13.:

Italian: “Mi piace cioccolato.” “I like chocolate.” [To-me pleases chocolate.]

Russian: “U menya kniga.” “I have a book.” [With me book.]

Japanese:

“Watashi wa Eigo ga wakaru.” “I understand English.”  
[I (topic) English (subject) is-understandable.]

In these instances, the verb agrees grammatically with the {object}, respectively “chocolate”, “book”, and “English”, not with the {subject} as topic, respectively “to me”, “with me”, “as for me”. In the Russian example the {verb} is the same as the {object}.

The reverse of this construction appears with those languages which can form the passive by placing the object in topic position. The {object} is {subject}, but is not grammatically linked with the verb:

Spanish: “La reacción la provocó una alergia o una enfermedad.”  
“The reaction was produced by an allergy or illness.”  
[The reaction produced-it an allergy or an illness.]<sup>28</sup>

Italian: “Di Camilla Cederna leggevo tutto.” “I read everything by Camilla Cederna.”  
[Of Camilla Cederna I-read everything.]<sup>29</sup>

Russian: “Vash bagazh otpravlyat v gostinitsu.” “Your luggage will be taken to the hotel.”  
[Your luggage they-take to hotel.]<sup>30</sup>

Chinese: “Nèi běn zhēntàn xiǎoshuō wǒmen mài wán le.”  
“We have sold out of that detective novel.”  
[That unit detective novel (topic) we sell finish now.]<sup>31</sup>

In the following sentences, the {subject} as topic is the {object} of a constituent or possession, but is not the grammatical subject of an identification sentence:

Arabic: “al-ḥujratu llatī yaʿmalu fihā jawwuhā xāniqun”  
“The air of the room in which he works is suffocating.”  
[The-room the-one-which he-works in-it, air-its suffocating.]<sup>32</sup>

Malay: “Sopir itu namanya Pak Ali.” “The name of that driver is Mr Ali.”  
[Driver-that (topic), name-his Mr Ali.]<sup>33</sup>

The common feature of these constructions is that the {object} is the topic, and therefore the {subject} on our interpretation, but the verb is not in semantic union with it. We can therefore only pursue our theory that the {subject} is always the topic by assuming that the constructions are in some way unusual, in that the verbal conjugation is not sufficiently flexible to accommodate them (as it is, for example, in Tagalog). We can argue that this indeed the case, by observing that in these same languages the verb is in agreement with the topic in the great majority of sentences.

Finally we turn, as previously mentioned, to the existential sentence, such as “There is a fly in the ointment.” We observe in Chapter 13. (Existential Sentence) that the discourse structure of such a

<sup>28</sup> Butt & Benjamin, 396.

<sup>29</sup> Maiden & Robustelli, 359.

<sup>30</sup> Folomkina & Weiser, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Yip & Rimmington, 112.

<sup>32</sup> Badawi et al, 327.

<sup>33</sup> Sneddon, 278.

sentence consists of two elements {indefinite – circumstance}. The {verb} expresses the unique action or state of the sentence, which in the case of an existential sentence is that something or someone exists. In our example, it is “there is in the ointment”. The apparent subject of such a {verb} is that which the sentence declares to exist, namely the subject “a fly”. However, since “a fly” is indefinite it cannot be the topic. If we assume that the topic is the {subject}, “a fly” is not the {subject}.

To resolve this question, we note that an existential sentence describes a state or condition, that of existence. That which is in the state or condition must be its {object}, which can be indefinite. The apparent subject of an existential sentence therefore conforms to our definition of {object}, and in the notation of this chapter an existential sentence has the structure {object – verb}. It follows also that an existential sentence has no topic or {subject}.