

The Structure and Function of Modern English
Semester VI
UNIT 5
CLAUSES

1.ELEMENTS OF THE CLAUSE

There are five elements of clause. They are :

Subject (S), object (O), verb (V), complement (C), adverbial (A)

Subject

- The subject is a noun or noun phrase, pronoun or subordinate clause.
 - The dog was sick. Fred felt funny. (noun)
 - Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun. (noun phrase)
 - I am happy. They are jealous. (pronoun.)
 - What she said is untrue. (subordinate clause)
- In this kind of analysis a series of noun phrases is a single clause element.
- Pronouns used as subject are in the subject case (I, she, they not me, her, them)
- The subject controls singular-plural verb agreement (You go; she goes) and agreement of reflexive pronoun objects (I injured myself; they amused themselves)
- A subject is usually present in a clause, but it may be omitted in non-standard (especially spoken) structures (Drinks like a fish. Gets here when?) or imperatives (Listen to this).

Object

- These usually follow the verb. They may be direct or indirect.
 - Direct object: Fred bit his thumb. The chimpanzees groomed each other.
 - Indirect object: Jane gave the gorilla a kiss. Jane gave a kiss to the gorilla. (Note that here there is also a direct object = a kiss)
- Just as with subjects, they may be nouns, noun phrases, pronouns or subordinate clauses.
- Just as subjects are, pronouns are in the appropriate (object) case (me, her, and them).

- As above, reflexive pronoun objects agree with their subjects (They amused themselves).
- But unlike subject, the object has no effect on agreement of verb.

Verb

- This is the central and obligatory element. A clause must contain at least one verb phrase, which may be a single verb: Jesus wept. They are drowning. The cow jumped over the moon.
- The choice of verb will largely determine what other elements are in the clause.
- The verb usually has a subject. A transitive verb is one which takes a direct object. (Strictly this is a tautology since transitive = “taking a direct object”)

Complement

- Complement (verb) means “go with”. (Do not confuse with compliment). In clause syntax, the complement is anything which adds to the meaning of the subject (subject complement) or object (object complement).
- Subject complement usually follows the verb. The most common verb for a subject complement is the verb to be, but some other verb may be substituted where the meaning of be is expressed. These are called copular (= linking) verbs or simply copulas. In the examples complements are in red type, copular verbs underlined: She is a doctor. That smells heavenly. The students are feeling dazed and confused.
- Object complement usually follows the direct object: Sunshine makes me very happy. The voters elected Clinton president of the USA.

Adverbials

- These clause elements add to or complete the meaning of the verb element. They may be single adverbs. But they also include nouns, noun or verb phrases and subordinate clauses: They ran quickly. He went home twice nightly. We walked on the playground. My friend phoned me this morning. I was happy when I saw her again.
- Adverbials may appear in several positions in the clause, but are most common at the end: Often I dream. I often dream. I dream often.
- Adverbials may perform different functions:
 - Adding information: I walked quietly.
 - Linking clauses: The bus was full. However, Fred found a seat.
 - Adding a comment on what is expressed: Quite frankly we disapprove of violence.

- Some verbs (like put) must have an adverbial to complete their meaning: Please put the gun down. The path runs around the field

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