

## SECONDARY PREDICATE

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Another syntactical phenomenon which is best considered under this heading of transition to the composite sentence is based on what is very aptly termed "secondary predication". Before starting to discuss the syntactical phenomena involved, we shall therefore have to explain briefly what is meant by secondary predication.

**Key words:** secondary predication, separation, expresses, predicate.

In other cases, that is, with other verbs, the separation of the two elements may not bring about a change in the meaning of the sentence. Thus, if we look at our example *I saw him run*, and if we stop after *him*: *I saw him*, this does not contradict the meaning of the original sentence: *I saw him run* implies that *I saw him*.

Another case in which the two elements of the phrase cannot be separated is found when the verb expresses some idea like order or request and the second element of the phrase is a passive infinitive. With the sentence *He ordered the man to be summoned* we cannot possibly stop after *man*.

There is no doubt, therefore, that with some verbs (and some nouns, for that matter) the two elements of the phrase following the predicate verb cannot be separated. It is, however, not certain that this is a proof of the syntactic unity of the phrase. This is again one of the phenomena which concern the mutual relation of the semantic and syntactic aspects of the language. The choice between the two possibilities: complex object or object and objective predicative remains largely a matter of arbitrary decision. If we make up our mind in favour of the second alternative, and state in each case two separate parts of the sentence, this will add to our list of secondary parts one more item: the objective predicative. The objective predicative need not be an infinitive: it may be a participle (*I saw him running*, *We heard them singing*), an adjective (*I found him ill*, *They thought him dead*), a stative (*I found him asleep*), sometimes an adverb, and a prepositional phrase. The sentence *I found him there* admits of two different interpretations. One of them,

which seems to be the more usual, takes the sentence as an equivalent of the sentence *There I found him*: the adverb *there* is then an adverbial modifier belonging to the verb *find*. The other interpretation would make the sentence equivalent to the sentence *I found that he was there*. In this latter case the adverb *there* does not show where the action of finding took place, and it is not an adverbial modifier belonging to the predicate verb *found*. It is part of the secondary predication group *him there* and has then to be taken as an objective predicative: *I found him there* is syntactically the same as *I found him ill*, or *I found him asleep*.

The choice between the two alternatives evidently depends on factors lying outside grammar. From a strictly grammatical viewpoint it can be said that the difference between an adverbial modifier and an objective predicative is here neutralised. In every sentence there is bound to be predication, without which there would be no sentence. In a usual two-member sentence the predication is between the subject and the predicate. In most sentences this is the only predication they contain. However, there are also sentences which contain one more predication, which is not between the subject and the predicate of the sentence. This predication may conveniently be termed secondary predication. In Modern English there are several ways of expressing secondary predication. One of them is what is frequently termed the complex object, as seen in the sentences, *I saw him run*, *We heard them sing*, *The public watched the team play*, *I want you to come to-morrow*, *We expect you to visit us*, etc. Let us take the first of these sentences for closer examination. The primary predication in this sentence is between the subject *I* and the predicate *saw*. *I* is the doer of the action expressed by the predicate verb. But in this sentence there is one more predication, that between *him* and *run*: the verb *run* expresses the action performed by *him*. This predication is obviously a secondary one: *him* is not the subject of a sentence or a clause, and *run* is not its predicate. The same can be said about all the sentences given above.

On the syntactic function of the group *him run* (or of its elements) views vary. The main difference is between those who think that *him run* is a syntactic unit, and those who think that *him* is one part of the sentence, and *run* another. If the phrase is taken as a syntactic unit, it is very natural to call it a complex object: it stands in an object relation to the predicate verb *saw* and consists of two elements.

If, on the other hand, the phrase *him run* is not considered to be a syntactic unit, its first element is the object, and its second element is conveniently termed the objective predicative.

The choice between the two interpretations remains arbitrary and neither of them can be proved to be the only right one. In favour of the view that the phrase is

a syntactical unit, a semantic reason can be put forward. In some cases the two elements of the phrase cannot be separated without changing the meaning of the sentence. This is true, for instance, of sentences with the verb *hate*. Let us take as an example the sentence, *I hate you to go*, which means much the same as *I hate the idea of your going*, or *The idea of your going is most unpleasant to me*. Now, if we separate the two elements of the phrase, that is, if we stop after its first element: *I hate you . . .*, the sense is completely changed. This shortened version expresses hatred for "you" which the original full version certainly did not imply.

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