

The Extension Object.

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After the routine of parsing and analysis has once been fairly mastered by the student in grammar, he imagines perhaps that all will be plain sailing for the future, and that his rules and methods being perfect, will enable him to group all the niceties and explain all the subtleties of that vast and wonderful growth—the English language. But the very fact that it is a natural growth, as much a real production of nature as an oak or an elephant, will always preserve it from the uniformity so dear to the mathematician, so utterly “stale, flat and unprofitable” to the lover of nature and the admirer of beauty. The variety which nature loves and which art cannot imitate we meet at every stage in our study of the English tongue. As a tree has its main branches, ramifying into smaller branches, these dividing into twigs, and these again bearing each its share of leaves, flowers and fruit, so we have the majority of words, in a well-arranged discourse, grouping themselves naturally into phrases and propositions, these joined to form sentences, and these sentences again combined to form the main branches of an argument or a narrative. But some leaves and leaflets of an independent turn of mind will grow out directly from the branches, and some twigs will spring directly from the main trunk, eluding our classifications, however deftly made, and only proving our rules by forming exceptions to them. There are words and phrases in our language which have the same independent vitality, and scorning to be bound in any cast-iron set of grammatical rules, depend upon their inherent force or beauty for their existence, and are justified in living by common usage and universal acceptance by the best writers.

In the limited time and space at my command to-day, I must confine myself to words, and I have selected a class of nouns, joined upon a sentence, like leaves growing on a branch, without a supporting twig, and forming a part of it without the usual connecting link of a transitive verb or a preposition. If we take the sentences—“He ran a mile,” “Fight the good fight,” “Victoria was crowned queen,” “Show me the road,” the words *mile*, *fight*, *queen* and *me* are unquestionably in the objective case, but we have no governing word, and our rule “the objective case follows an active transitive verb or a preposition” seems altogether at fault. In one case only, that of the word *me*, can a preposition be supplied without injuring the sense; two of the verbs are intransitive and one is transitive, but in the passive voice. The attempt to parse such a word as *mile* by the rule “nouns of time, place and measure are in the objective case without a governing word,” should be regarded as a bare-faced fraud, subversive of the first principles of grammar, and in flat contradiction to the dictum of one of the most successful teachers of grammar of whom Canada can boast. The late Mr. Robertson, of the Normal School, Toronto, laid it down as an axiom in grammar that “One word belongs to another,” and to recognize Independent Objective, which is not the object of any other word, is simply confessing our inability to trace its connection with the rest of the sentence.

But there are special rules for each of the four

examples chosen which will bring them into logical connection with the sentences to which they severally belong. Taking the first, “He ran a mile,” we can apply the rule.—Nouns limiting the action expressed by the verb, as to time, place, manner or degree, like adverbs, are in the objective case, and parsed as the adverbial object. *Mile* limits the verb “ran” as to the degree or amount of distance traversed, and is therefore parsed as the adverbial object after the verb “ran.”

Our second rule is:—Nouns of similar signification to the verb can follow an intransitive verb as the cognate object. The noun *fight* is of similar signification to the verb “fight,” and is therefore parsed as the cognate object of that verb.

The rule applicable to the third sentence is:—When a noun becomes an object it is by the action of the verb, it is in the objective case and called the factitive object. “Factitive” is from the Latin “facio.” I make, and since, in theory at least, a queen is made in the ceremony of coronation, *queen* is the factitive object of the verb “crowned.”

In the fourth sentence, *me* is called the indirect object of the verb “show,” and the difficulty is often evaded by supplying the preposition “to,” when the sentence becomes, “Show the road to me.” This renders it exactly similar to the dative case in Latin, and the adverbial object supplies in most cases the place of the Latin ablative case.

My object in reading the present paper was not to point out these constructions, which are no doubt sufficiently familiar to many of those now present, but to show the difficulty and incongruity of so many different rules and constructions for a single case, all being considered objects of more or less peculiarity. It is obvious that all belong to the verbs they follow, but an application of the principles of grammatical analysis will show that in one important particular they all differ from the objective case as defined by rule, sometimes called the direct object. The direct object always completes the verb, and the sense of the sentence would be incomplete without the object following it. But in all these sentences the verb requires no completion, and an extension of the predicate can be readily substituted for the constructions under consideration. “He ran very quickly,” “Fight only in a good cause,” “Victoria was crowned in Westminster Abbey,” “He sold a horse,” are grammatically as complete as before. In one case the verb is satisfied by the direct object which is its proper completion, and the others being intransitive require no completion at all.

It appears, therefore, that there are two objective cases entirely distinct from each other, and we can satisfy all the requirements of a logical classification by dividing nouns in the objective case into objects completing the predicate, and objects extending the predicate. In analysis, the former should be called completions of the predicate and the latter extensions. All the necessities of correct parsing will be met by calling them respectively completion objects, and extension objects.

The point is of sufficient importance to demand the careful consideration of every one engaged in teaching grammar, and it can now be safely left in your hands with the assurance that you will bestow upon it the attention it deserves.

APPENDIX.—The following authorities may be consulted upon the various points raised in the paper.