

# Remedial English Book 2

*Njoku, C.N.  
Iziagba A.C.*



The sentence By Ihejirika, R.C. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

# Chapter 4

## The Sentence

*By*

**R.C. IHEJIRIKA**

Several attempts have been made to define the term sentence. To some scholars, sentence is a complete statements, or question, or command. others see it as the largest grammatical unit used to express statement, question or command. But for the purpose of this write-up, sentence could be defined as any linguistic utterance which contains a subject and predicate used to express complete thought. Based on this definition, the following are examples of sentence.

- (i) He has been reading all day long.
- (ii) The driver was rather reckless,
- (iii) I saw him.

Note, however, that it is not the length of an utterance that determines whether it is a sentence rather it is the thought expressed. Any utterance which is capable of expressing a complete thought no matter how short or long is a sentence. Therefore the following utterances cannot be regarded as sentences because they do not express complete thought.

- (i) As I was coming to the lecture

- (ii) The man who visited her yesterday
- (iii) The tall beautiful young lady

These utterances are really meaningful but they do not express complete thought. However, they could be made sentences as follows:-

- (i) As I was coming to the lecture, I saw the man.
- (ii) The man who visited her yesterday has come again.
- (iii) The tall beautiful young lady is my friend.

Many a time students apply full stop wrongly because they do not know what is a complete thought. You should note that you can only apply full stop when you have an utterance that expresses complete thought.

### Types of sentence according to construction

1. **Simple Sentence:** A simple sentence is the one that contains only one main clause and expresses one complete thought:

- Example:
- i. John is my name
  - ii I need some money
  - iii She has never impressed me.

2. **Compound sentence:** Unlike a simple sentence, a compound sentence is made up of two main clause joined together by a conjunction. In fact, a compound sentence expresses two complete thoughts. Example:

- i John is singing and Mary is dancing
- ii He passed the course but he never learnt anything.
- iii I visited him but I did not see him.

The underlined words are conjunctions.

3. **Complex sentence:** A complex sentence is the one that has one main clause plus one or more subordinate clauses.

- Examples:
- i. He flogged me because I came late.

- ii. As soon as he came, the lecture started.
- iii. I saw him while he was playing.

The underlined expressions are main clauses while the expressions not underlined are subordinate clauses. For the purpose of punctuation, note when a subordinate clause begins a sentence, it is usually marked off from the rest of the sentence with a comma as can be seen in sentence 2 above.

4. **Compound-complex sentence:** This is a sentence that has two main clauses plus one or more subordinate clause.

Eg.

- i. John is playing and Mary is dancing because their parents are not at home.
- ii. I visited him but I didn't see him because he travelled.

Apart from the above classification, sentences can also be classified into four according to the purposes they serve.

- 1. **Statement (declarative)**
- 2. **Question (interrogative)**
- 3. **Command (imperative)**
- 4. **Exclamation (Exclamation)**

**Statement (Declarative Sentence):** This is a sentence in which the subject is always present and generally precedes the verb. Statements usually end with a full stop.

Examples:

- i. The boy is happy.
- ii. The car was damaged.
- iii. The country will survive.

**Question (Interrogative):** A question is a sentence that asks for information. It usually ends with a question mark.

Examples:

- i. What is your name?
- ii. How old are you?

- iii. Are you hungry?

Types of question:

1. **Polar or Yes or No question:** This is a question that requires yes or no answer. Example:

- i. Will you attend the party?  
ii. Did you pass the course?  
iii. Are you tired?

Formation of polar question.

(a) By subject-operator inversion:

A polar question can be formed by inverting the subject and operator of the same sentence.

Example:

He is reading.

The above sentence is a statement and it has "he" and "is" as subject and operator respectively.

If the subject and the operator are inverted the statement would be transformed into a question. Example:

Is he reading?

Other examples are:

He has gone home-Has he gone home?

You are tired- Are you tired?

She has slept - Has she slept?

(b) By retaining the normal word order but with a rather rising than falling intonation at the end.

Example:

- i. You are going - You are Going?  
ii. He failed - He failed?  
iii. She is respectful - She is respectful?

2. **Wh-Question:** This is a question that begins with interrogative pronouns such as who, whom, whose, which, what, when, where, why how and usually ends in falling intonation.

Examples:

- i. Where did you go?
- ii. Who killed the goat?
- iii. How old are you?

Note that questions that begin with "How" as in question No. iii above is also a wh-question.

3. **Tag question:** This is a question that has a Tag. Examples:

- i. He did not come here, did he?
- ii. You don't have some money, do you?
- iii. She dances very well, doesn't she?

#### **Formation of tag question.**

As can be seen in the above examples, a tag question is made of a statement and a tag. In forming a tag question, positive statement goes with negative tag while negative statement goes with positive tag.

Note that a statement is positive when it does not contain "no" "not" or "n't", on the hand a negative statement is the one that contains "no", "not" or "n't". Examples:

- i. He come here - positive
- ii. He did not come here - negative
- iii. She isn't in the class - negative.

Formular: I: Positive statement goes with negative tag. Examples:

- i. He plays well, doesn't he?
- ii. The lecturer has come, hasn't he?
- iii. They are playing, aren't they?

Formular II: Negative statement goes with positive tag. Examples:

- i. He does not play well, does he?
- ii. The lecturer has not come, has he?
- iii. They are not playing, are they?

### Answering a Tag Question:

In answering a tag question, positive answer goes with positive tag and negative answer goes with negative tag.

Example:

He plays well, doesn't he?

Answer: Yes, he does or

No, he does not.

It is wrong to say

\* Yes, he does nor or

\* No, he does.

### Command (Imperative sentence)

This is a sentence that expresses command, it is usually formed from a statement by simply deleting the subject and having the verb in the base form. Examples:

Statement - Command.

He waited - Wait.

She is a nice woman - Be a nice woman.

She brought good news - Bring good news.

Other examples of command are:

i. Stay there.

ii. Stand on your desk.

iii. See me later.

### Exclamation (Exclamatory Sentence)

This is a sentence that shows strong feelings about something. It usually ends with an exclamation mark. Examples:

(i) You don't say!

(ii) What a nice day!

Types of Sentence according to development.

1. Loose Sentence: The main clause comes first e.g., He started as soon as he came

2. Periodic sentence: The main clause comes last e.g As soon as he came, he started.
3. Balanced Sentence: When two or more clauses have equal importance Example: Obi is singing and Ada is dancing.
4. Mixed Sentences: The main clause/idea is in the middle. e.g When the students left the classroom, they went to the auditorium because they had another lecture.

## SENTENCE (CLAUSE) STRUCTURE

In modern grammar as opposed to traditional grammar, a sentence may be seen as comprising five units called elements of sentence (or clause) structure. Such elements include subject, verb, complement, object, Adverbial (Adjunct), here abbreviated as follows:

**S, V, A, C, O**

S            A            V            O

**John/carefully/searched/the room**

S        V    A        C            A

**The girl/is/now/a students/at a large university.**

S            V        C            A

**His        brother grew/happier            gradually**

S            V            O            O

**He/        has given/ the girl/ an apple.**

## SUBJECT

The subject of a sentence has a close general relation to what is being discussed, the theme of the sentence with other parts of the sentence referring to it. Other features of a



subject include:

1.     Obligatory: A sentence cannot exist without a subject unless imperative sentences such as  
                    Give it to him.  
or elliptical sentences such as  
      (a)     Has he gone?  
      (b)     Just left (He has just left).
2.     The subject normally precedes the verb except in some questions, e.g. Is he a student? or in a sentence like: Rarely is he unhappy. Except in these cases, a subject normally precedes a verb.
3.     The subject may be questioned by *who* or *what* before the verb, e.g. Who has done the job? John has done the job.  
                    What fell on the floor?  
                    The book fell on the floor.  
          Exception:  
          It is raining  
          \*What is raining?
4.     If the subject is not a pronoun, it may be replaced by a pronoun (he, she, it, they) e.g. The man left. In the above sentence, "The man" which is the subject of the sentence can change to 'He' and the sentence turns out to be: He left.
5.     There is always concord between the subject and the verb of the same sentence. Concord here simply means the agreement between two grammatical element such that if one has a particular feature (plurality) then the other would have the same feature e.g  
          *The student attends* lecture regularly.  
          The students attend lectures regularly.

6. The subject is usually realized by a noun, pronoun, noun phrase, noun clauses, gerund and infinitive, e.g.
- Dogs* are dangerous. (noun)  
*He* visits me always (pronoun)  
*The beautiful lady* has come. (Noun Phrase)  
*That she came* surprised me (Noun Clause)  
*Smoking* is dangerous to health (gerund)

*To err* is human (Infinitive)

## VERB

The verb element of a simple sentence is usually realized by a verb including auxiliary verbs.

## OBJECT

- (1) Object is usually obligatory with many verbs. e.g. *He found it*. In this sentence, *it* is the object and if it is removed and the sentence reads *He found* makes the sentence ungrammatical.
- (2) The object normally immediately follows the verb. Adverbs like "suddenly" cannot occur between object and verb. E.g it is ungrammatical to say *He found suddenly it*. But we can have *He felt suddenly very tired* because 'very tired' is not an object.
- (3) The object may be questioned by *who(m)* or *what* after verb e.g.  
*He found it*  
*They saw him*  
 The objects *it* and *him* in the above sentences can be questioned as follows:

What did he find?  
Who(m) did they see?

4. There is no concord between object and subject or object and verb. E.g. *He sees them.* In this sentence there is no concord between *he* and *them* or *sees* and *them*.

5. If the object is not a pronoun, it may be replaced by a pronoun. E.g. He sees the girl.  
can read  
He sees her.

6. For many sentences with object, there is corresponding passive sentence which has its subject what is the object on the non-passive version. E.g. the sentence: *He sees the girl*, can read, *The girls is seen by him.* *The girl* which is the object in the first sentence is now the subject in the second sentence.

7. The object is usually realized by a noun, pronoun, noun phrase or clause e.g. He bought a pen (noun)  
He sees the girl (noun phrase)  
He said that he would go. (noun clause)  
I saw him. (pronoun)

### Types of Object

There are two types of object, namely direct and indirect objects. Direct object is something that is done for or received by the indirect object. E.g.

S      V      Oi      Od

He/ gave/the girl/the book

In the above sentence, *the girl* is the indirect object (Oi) while

*the book* is the direct object (Od)

The difference between direct and indirect object.

1. An indirect object where both objects are present, precedes the direct object except in rare instances like British English e.g.

V    Od   Oi

Give/it/me.

2. Usually there can be an indirect object in a sentence only if there is also direct object e.g

S    V    Oi    Od

He/ gave/the girl/ the book

S    V    Oi    Od

He/ told/ the police/ his story.

3. Indirect object is often optional e.g

S    V    Oi    Od

They/cooked/him/a good meal

The indirect object *him* in the sentence could be removed and the sentence remains correct e.g

They cooked a good meal.

Indirect object often expresses the recipient of the direct object or the beneficiary of the verbal action.

5. Indirect object ordinarily refers to people.  
6. Indirect object may be a noun phrase but not a clause.

## COMPLEMENT

A complement is a noun phrase, an adjective phrase or a clause with a nominal function, having a co-referential relation with the subject or object. It is called subject complement when it refers to the subject and object complement when it refers to the object.

## SUBJECT COMPLEMENT

Subject complement has the following features.

1. It is obligatory with intensive verbs. Intensive verbs are verbs that express intensive relationship, that is, they express or ascribe qualities e.g

S    V    C

He/is/tall

In the above sentence *tall* is the subject complement.

Other examples are:

S        V        C

He/becomes/angry

S        V        C

She/looks/hungry

S        V        C

She/seems/jilted

2. Subject complement generally follows verb. However, adverb may occasionally comes between subject complement and verb e.g

S        V        A        C

He/was/suddenly/angry

3. Subject complement is not usually replaceable by a pronoun e.g

S        V    C

John/is/tall

4. If subject complement is a noun phrase, often there is concord between it and the subject, e.g

S        V        C

They/are/students.

*Not:* They are a student.

5. No corresponding passive in which subject complement is made subject, e.g.

S        V        C

He/became/a student.

cannot be: \*A student was became by him.

6. Subject complement may be a noun phrase or adjective phrase, e.g.

He is *the winner* (NP)

He is *very tall*. (Adj.p).

- Also a prepositional phrase can realize the subject complement element e.g.

A        V        C

He/is/of average height

## OBJECT COMPLEMENT

The features of object complement are as follows:

- (1) there is always intensive relationship between the object and object complement. E.g.

S        V        O        Co

They/found/it/satisfactory

- In the above sentence there is intensive relationship between *it* and *satisfactory*.

2. The object complement normally follows the object, e.g.

S        V        O        Co

They/made/him/president

3. There is often concord between the object and the object complement e.g.

S        V        O        Co

He/considered/them/*the best candidates*.

4. No corresponding passive in which object complement is made subject, e.g.

S       V       O       Co

They/made/him/their president

cannot be: \*Their president was made by him.

5. Object complement is realized by Noun phrase or adjective phrase e.g

S       V       O       Co

He/considered/them/the best candidates

*The best candidates* here is a noun phrase.

S       V       C       Co

They/considered/him/very good

*very good* here is adjectival phrase.

### ADVERBIAL (ADJUNCT)

The features of Adverbial are as follows:

1. Adverbial is often optional, e.g

S       V       A       A

He/swam/in the river/yesterday

The adverbial elements in the above sentence could be removed and the sentence still stands. He swam or He swam in the river or He swam yesterday.

However, locative adverbials are not optional, e.g

S   V       A

He/is/in Lagos

In the above sentence, *in Lagos* is a locative adverbial and it is mandatory in the sentence if it were to be meaningful.

2. Adverbial is often mobile, that is, it can occur in different positions in a sentence e.g

S       V       A       A

He/swam/yesterday/in the river

A                      S       V       A

Yesterday/he/swam/in the river:

3. Adverbial is realised by the following:

- a) Adverbial phrase e.g.  
He swam *very well*
- b) prepositional phrase (PP) e.g.  
He swam *in the river*.
- c) Adverb e.g.  
*He drives slowly.*

## SENTENCE PATTERNS:

In the previous discussions, we have been able to identify five elements of a simple sentence or clause structure. Based on these elements, Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:166) identified seven sentence patterns which could be formed from the elements:

1. SVA:            S    V    A  
                     Mary/is/in the house
2. SVC:           S    V    C  
                     Mary/is/kind
3. SVO:            S        V    O<sup>b</sup>  
                     Somebody/bought/the ball
4. SVOA:          S    V    O    A  
                     I/put/the plate/on the table
5. SVOC:          S    V        OD    CO  
                     We/have/proved/him/wrong
6. SVOO:          S        V    O<sub>i</sub>    O<sub>d</sub>  
                     She/gave/me/expensive presents
7. SV:             S        V  
                     The child/laughed.



The sentence By Ihejirika, R.C. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).