Direct and indirect objects

The direct object is the receiver of the action mentioned in the sentence.

John hit the ball. (Direct object: the ball)

Be careful to distinguish between a direct object and an object complement.

They named the boy Christopher.

In this sentence ‘boy’ is the direct object and ‘Christopher’ is the object complement.

The object complement is a word that describes the object.

They elected him their mayor.

Object – him; object complement – mayor

The indirect object identifies the person/thing for whom/what the action of the verb is performed.

The indirect object is usually a person or thing.

Study the examples given below.

My mother bought me a necklace. (Indirect object – me; direct object – necklace)

John told Peter a story. (Indirect object – Peter; direct object – story)

Note that the object pronouns me, him, us, them etc., are not always indirect objects. Sometimes, they also serve as direct objects.

Help me! (Here the object pronoun ‘me’ is the direct object.)

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Kill him! (Here again the object pronoun ‘him’ is the direct object.)

In English, nouns and the articles and adjectives that accompany them do not change form when they are used as objects, subjects or indirect objects.

He hit the ball. (Object – ball)

The ball is in the goal. (Subject – ball)

As you can see the same word is used as the subject and the object.

However, pronouns change their form. Pronouns have different forms for different functions.

He loves his mother. (Subject – he)

His mother loves him. (Object – him)

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