Complement clauses are dependent clauses which function as the argument of a predicate (Noonan 1985: 42). Semantically, the complement clause completes the meaning of the matrix verb. Some complement-taking verbs will take either an object or a propositional complement. Others take only a propositional complement.

Tshangla complement clauses, like the participial adverbial clauses described in Chapter 13, contain a participial verb, with either the infinitive suffix -le or the nominaliser suffix -wa. The complement clause may take an optional locative/genitive case marker -ga. A complement clause in Tshangla always shares at least one of its arguments with the matrix clause. This sets the complement-clause construction apart syntactically from other types of subordinate clauses such as adverbial clauses. This type of complement clause has elsewhere in the literature occasionally been called a ‘partially embedded’ or a ‘merged clause’ structure (e.g. Longacre 1983). Such a complement clause distinguishes itself from the fully embedded type of complement clause in which no arguments are shared, such as the so-called ‘that-complement’ in English. Examples (1) and (2) show two somewhat different complement clauses in Tshangla:

(1) Jang waktsa rokha di-wa thong-ma.
   1s child fall go-NOM see-NOM
   ‘I saw the child fall down.’

(2) Semcen ro ngame cam-pa-la.
   animal 3 chew-INF be.about.to-NOM-COP
   ‘The animal was about to eat him.’

In example (1), thongma ‘saw’ is the complement-taking verb. Waktsa rokha diwa ‘the child fall down’ comprises the complement. The argument shared by complement and matrix clauses is waktsa ‘child’, which is subject of the complement and object of the matrix clause. In example (2), the complement-taking verb is campala ‘was about to’, and the complement is ngame ‘to eat’. The argument shared by complement and matrix clauses is semchen ‘animal’. Semantic and syntactic differences between these two as well as other complement clause constructions will be accounted for in the following sections.
14.1 Semantic parameters of complement-taking verbs

In languages like English, a distinction is made between two types of complement clause constructions, the equi-subject, and non-equi-subject (Noonan 1985: 65). In the equi-subject construction, the matrix subject and complement subject are coreferential, and the complement subject may be deleted. This is known as ‘equi-NP subject deletion’ or simply, ‘equi-deletion’. Example (3) is of this first type. In the other type, the non-equi subject, the matrix subject is not coreferential with the complement subject. In this case, for languages like English, the complement subject may not be deleted. Example (4) is of this second type.

(3) I tried Ø to come.
(4) I made him come.

This syntactic distinction in complement clause constructions corresponds to a semantic distinction between modal expressions such as ‘want to…’, ‘try to…’, ‘be about to…’, ‘be able to…’, ‘ought to…’ etc. on one hand, which are equi-subject, and causative constructions such as ‘caused X to…’, ‘made X…’, ‘allowed X to…’ etc. which are non-equi-subject.

In Tshangla, the same sort of distinction is useful. However, the distinction cannot be made on the basis of coreferentiality of the subjects. As discussed in section 6.1 above, agents of transitive verbs are frequently omitted or ‘suppressed’, allowing the patient argument to stand alone as the only argument of the verb. In Tshangla, there is no special passive morphosyntax to distinguish this ‘functional passive’ from an ordinary active clause.

(5) Ji-gi ro she-wa.
   1s-AGT 3 kill-NOM
   ‘I killed him.’

(6) Ro she-wa.
    3 kill-NOM
   ‘He was killed.’ / ‘Someone killed him.’

The result of this is that constructions comparable to the English examples (3) and (4) above may be formally indistinguishable from each other. Consider the Tshangla modal and causative constructions in examples (7) and (8):

(7) Jang u-phe la-ma.
    1s come-INF want-NOM
    ‘I wanted to come.’