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Grammar Course for Second Year Students

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Lecture Four: Adjective Clauses (Relative Clauses)

I. Definition

Adjective clauses are also referred to as relative clauses. A **relative clause** is a subordinate clause that identifies someone or something or provides information about them.

- *A mole is an animal **that lives underground**.*
- *We were driving along a rough jungle track **that was never meant for cars**.*
- *Patrons **who arrive late** may not be admitted to the concert.*
- *A psychiatrist is a doctor **who treats disorders of the mind**.*
- *He was a man **whose greatest pleasure was looking after his garden**.*
- *She was someone **on whom you could always rely**.*
- *That is an option **which I have always rejected**.*
- *This is a list of people **who were abducted by the terrorists** and about **whose fate nothing is yet known**.*

➤ The noun, pronoun, phrase or clause that is identified, described or commented on by the relative clause is called the **antecedent**:

- *Voters whose names begin with the letters M to Z should go to Room 2.*
- *That photo is a reminder of **someone** who was very important to me.*
- *Hands up **everyone** who would like a drink!*
- *A mole is **an animal** that lives underground.*
- *He was accused of **being drunk in charge of a vehicle**, which is a serious offence.*

➤ The word that links the relative clause to its antecedent is a **relative pronoun**. The words **that**, **which**, **who**, **whom** and **whose** are relative pronouns:

- *A mole is an animal **that** lives underground.*
- *I have a friend **who** once sailed across the Pacific in a small yacht.*
- *You're starting down a path **which** can only lead to unhappiness.*
- *You'd be surprised at the number of children in this school **whose** parents are divorced.*

➤ The conjunctions (relative adverbs) **where**, **when** and **why** can also be used to form relative clauses whose antecedents are nouns referring to places, times and causes respectively:

- *I often walk past the house **where** I was born.*

- Do you remember that time **when** you fell into the swimming pool?
- I don't remember the reason **why** I went there.
- When referring to people, the relative pronouns to use are who, whom, whose and that. When referring to animals or things, the pronouns to use are which, that and whose. When referring to things, you can use of which instead of whose: e.g. *a book the cover of which was torn*.
- The relative pronouns who/whom, which and that can generally be omitted:
 - Have you still got the book I gave you? (= the book that I gave you)
 - Is that the man you saw? (= the man that you saw)
 - Is that the man you were speaking to? (= the man that you were speaking to, or the man to whom you were speaking)
 - Who was the girl I saw you with last night?
 - She was someone you could always rely on.
 - That is an option I have always rejected.
- But if they are the subject of the clause, they cannot be omitted:
 - Is that the man **who** saw you?
 - Is that the man **who** was speaking to James?
 - Who was the girl **who** was with you last night?
- Notice that the relative pronoun may not always be the first word in its clause. Sometimes it is preceded by a preposition. And the pronoun may be preceded by both a preposition and also a word such as some, several, all, both, most, etc. or a number:
 - the man **to whom** you were speaking a job **for which** I was paid handsomely
 - the hammer **with which** the woman was bludgeoned to death
 - The men, **both of whom** are lorry-drivers, were charged with theft.
 - She was attacked by a group of boys, **most of whom** were in their teens.
 - He has a large collection of photographs, **some of which** are very old.
 - I bought half a dozen eggs, **four of which** were broken by the time I got

Restrictive and Non-restrictive Relative Clauses

- Relative clauses that identify, pick out or describe a particular person or thing are called restrictive or defining relative clauses. A restrictive relative clause is not separated from its antecedent and the rest of the sentence by commas:
 - Have you still got the book **I gave you**? (This identifies one particular book.)
 - I have a neighbor **who comes from Italy**. (This identifies one particular neighbor.)
 - Who is that man **you were talking to**? (This identifies a particular man.)
 - He's engaged to a girl **who's the daughter of an MP**.
- Relative clauses whose purpose is not to identify a particular person or thing but simply to provide some

further information about them are called non-restrictive or non-defining relative clauses. A non-restrictive relative clause is separated off by commas:

- My neighbors, **who come from Italy**, make wonderful pasta dishes. (The relative clause does not identify the neighbors but makes a comment about them.)
- 'The Hobbit', **which was written by Tolkien**, is the story of the adventures of Bilbo Baggins.
- He's engaged to Daisy Smith, **who's the daughter of an MP**.
- The book, **which was lying on the table**, was something to do with UFOs.

That as a Subordinating Conjunction (noun clause) and as a Relative Pronoun (relative clause)

That can be both a subordinating conjunction beginning a noun clause and a relative pronoun beginning a relative clause. There are, however, several ways of distinguishing between the two uses of the word:

- If **that** is a relative pronoun, it will have an antecedent:

She had lost **the ring that** I had given her for Christmas. Penguins are birds **that** swim.

If **that** is a conjunction, there will be no antecedent:

I know **that** she doesn't like me. I don't believe **that** she is telling the truth.

- If **that** is a relative pronoun, it can be replaced by **which**; if it is a conjunction, it cannot be replaced by **which**:

She had lost the ring **that** I had given her for Christmas. OR

She had lost the ring **which** I had given her for Christmas.

I know **that** she doesn't like me.

BUT NOT: I know which she doesn't like me.

- If **that** is a conjunction, then what follows it in the subordinate clause can make a complete statement on its own:

I don't think that she is coming with us.

We found out that Ricardo had won the prize.

Bart told me that Janet's looking for a new job.

If **that** is a relative pronoun, then what follows it in the clause will not be a complete statement:

She had lost the ring that she had been given for Christmas.

Where's the book that I left **on the table**?

(She had been given for Christmas and I left on the table are not complete statements - they don't say what she had been given for Christmas or what I left on the table.)

Appositive Clauses

Appositive clauses are clauses that are in **apposition** to the words they relate to. They provide information about a preceding noun such as *belief, thought, possibility, feeling...*

- *The belief that the world is flat was widespread in the Middle Ages.* (the belief = that the world is flat)
- *The thought that my mother might find out horrified me.* (the thought = that my mother might find out)
- *The saying that absence makes the heart grow fonder is absolute nonsense.*

Appositive clauses look very similar to relative clauses, but there are some differences between them:

- ✓ In an appositive clause, **that** is a subordinating conjunction, not a relative pronoun, so it cannot be replaced by **which**.

I have a feeling that something is wrong.

BUT NOT / *have a feeling which something is wrong.*

- ✓ In an appositive clause, the words that follow **that** make a complete statement on their own:

I have a feeling that something is wrong

- ✓ In a relative clause, the words that follow **that** do not make a complete statement:

The feelings that I had for her amounted almost to an obsession.

Practice

1/ Draw one line under each adjective clause. Draw an arrow to the noun or pronoun that it modifies.

1. The days when thousands of buffalo roamed the plains must have been long ago.
2. Is this the documentary that you wanted?
3. The flood happened at a time when everyone was away from home.
4. King, who smelled the smoke, woke us up by barking.
5. I have seen the movie that you are discussing.
6. My favorite class is the one that Mr. Clark teaches.
7. Simone met our new neighbor who lives down the street.

8. Anyone who disagrees with the proposal should vote no.
9. The crystal vase, which was a present from Aunt Sandra, is filled with roses.
10. Is Ralph the neighbor whom you invited to the party?
11. Boris knows the captain whose team won the tournament.
12. Have you talked to the artist who painted this picture?
13. Uncle Vincent bought the biggest refrigerator that he could find.
14. Bridalveil Falls, which is in Yosemite National Park, is lovely.
15. The person whose place I held wants to get back in line.

2/ Find the relative clauses inside these sentences:

- 1) Tom Ford was a man who worked for Kastler Company.
- 2) And then I had the vegetarian option, which was a wonderful spinach cheese thing with good veggies.
- 3) The ninety per cent figure he keeps talking about is totally irrelevant.
- 4) That's the part of the earth that faces the sun.
- 5) He's probably the cleverest man I've ever met.
- 6) The best cheese was probably the brie at the farmhouse where we were staying.

3/ Combine each of the following pairs of sentences to form one complex sentence. To do this, change the second sentence to an adjective clause, and then add it to the first sentence.

1. Wallace Stevens was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1879. Wallace Stevens is considered one of the greatest American poets.
2. The fact that Stevens did not win the Nobel Prize for literature surprised many Americans. The Americans were familiar with his work.

4/ State whether **that** is a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun in the following sentences.

- 1/ She prefers dictionaries that have pictures in them.
- 2/ I can hardly believe that you said that.
- 3/ You had better phone the office to say that I'm not well.
- 4/ We walked down the path that led to the lake.

5/ We did enjoy the fruit that you sent us.

6/ The reason for the delay is that there is no driver for the train.

7/ The company that she set up has gone bankrupt.

8/ It is very surprising that she didn't come with us.

5/ Combine the following pairs of sentences into a single sentence by means of a relative pronoun.

Example

Question: Cinderella had a wicked stepmother. The stepmother was very unkind to her.

Answer: Cinderella had a wicked stepmother, who was very unkind to her.

1. That is the nurse. That nurse checked my blood pressure.
2. Penguins are birds. Penguins cannot fly.
3. My aunt is coming to visit us. She lives in London.
4. The coat was hanging in the hall. The coat was badly stained.
5. I want the spade. The spade is in the tool shed.
6. I'll catch the number 52 bus. The number 52 will take me right to the theatre door.
7. The professor of French was a tall thin man. I forgot his name.
8. We visited the farm. Robert Burns once lived there.
9. The man is my daughter's father-in-law. The man won a prize for the best chrysanthemums.
10. The man is my daughter's father-in-law. They gave the man the prize for the best chrysanthemums.
11. Go and see the nurse. She will check your blood pressure.