COMPLEX SENTENCE

KEY TASK 1. Identify the subordinate and main clauses in the following examples:

- [[When I asked for his opinion], [he said] [that he could not say anything at present]]
- [Road-building in those mountains is dangerous] and, [[since work began in 1968], [hundreds of labourers have been swept away by landslides]]
- [[Whatever happens], [don't panic]]
- [[On hearing this], [she rushed to the bank]]
- [[With the money under her belt], [she felt better]]
**COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCE**

A compound **SENTENCE** in which at least one of the main **CLAUSES** contains one or more **subordinate clause**. In the following sentence, the second main clause (after **and**) contains a subordinate **since-clause**: Road-building in those mountains is dangerous and, since work began in 1968, hundreds of labourers have been swept away by landslides. See **SUBORDINATION**.

**SUBORDINATION**

**TASK 2.** Identify the subordinate and main clauses and classify the former as finite, nonfinite and verbless

- He used to be shy, staying on the fringes at parties
- She will help you, if at all possible
- He got angry after I started to beat him at table-tennis
- Most Iranians are Indo-Europeans who speak Persian
- Most Iranians are Indo-Europeans who speak Persian
- If necessary, I’ll phone you

**TASK 3.** Identify the subordinate clause and identify its function: nominal, relative, adverbial, nominal-relative, comparative, etc.

- That he was losing his hearing did not worry him unduly
- He knew that he was losing his hearing
- She saw a star that she had not seen before
- You should put it back where you found it
- The weather is just as nice as it was yesterday

**KEY TASK.**

- [[That he was losing his hearing] [did not worry him unduly]] (Nominal clause working as Sbj)
- [[He knew] [that he was losing his hearing] [Nominal clause working as DO]]
- [[She saw a star] [that she had not seen before]] (Relative clause)
- [[You should put it back] [where you found it]] (Adverbial clause working as an Adjunct)
- [[The weather is just as nice] [as it was yesterday]] (comparative clause)

**SUBORDINATION**

The joining of a subordinate clause to a higher linguistic unit.

Subordination is often formally indicated by the use of a **SUBORDINATOR**, particularly in adverbial clauses. There may be no marker in some nominal clauses, nor in comment clauses, e.g.

- Whatever happens, don’t panic
- On hearing this, she rushed to the bank
- With the money under her belt, she felt better

See also **MULTIPLE subordination**.

**SUBORDINATION**

In grammatical theory, a relationship between two units in which one is a constituent of the other or dependent on it. The subordinate unit is commonly a subordinate clause organized under a superordinate clause. Such organization can be described in two ways: the subordinate unit as a constituent of the superordinate unit, and the subordinate unit as dependent on but distinct from the superordinate unit. In the sentence, they did it when they got home, the subordinate when-clause may be either a constituent of its superordinate main clause, which begins with when and is coextensive with the entire sentence, or dependent on a more limited main clause. They did it. There is in principle no limit (apart from comprehensibility and practicality) to the subordination of clauses one under another. In the sentence, They saw that I was wondering who had won the competition, the subordinate who-clause is a constituent of or dependent on its superordinate that-clause (which ends with the competition), while the that-clause is also a subordinate clause, in turn a constituent of or dependent on its superordinate clause beginning with They. Subordinate clauses may also be constituents of or dependent on phrases: in What's the name of the woman who's winning the competition?, the who-clause modifies the noun woman.

**SUBORDINATION**

**Function**

Subordinate clauses fall into four functional classes: nominal, relative, adverbial, comparative. Nominal or noun clauses function to a large extent like noun phrases: they can be subject of the sentence (That he was losing his hearing did not worry him unduly) or direct object (He knew that he was losing his hearing). Relative or adjective/adjectival clauses modify nouns: the adverbial modifies star in ‘She saw a star that she had not seen before’. Adverbial or adverb clauses function to a large extent like adverbs: the adverb there could replace the where-clause in ‘You should put it back where you found it’. Comparative clauses are used in comparison and are commonly introduced by than or as: ‘The weather is better than it was yesterday’. ‘The weather is just as nice as it was yesterday.’

**SUBORDINATION**

**Form**

Traditionally, part of a sentence can only be classed as a subordinate clause if it contains either an identifiable or an ‘understood’ finite verb. In contemporary grammatical analysis, however, subordinate clauses may be classed as finite (I think that nobody is in), nonfinite (He used to be shy, staying on the fringes at parties), and verbless (I’ll phone you, if at all possible). Traditionally, the second category would be classed as a participial phrase and the third as a clause with the verb understood (It is). Finite subordinate clauses are usually marked as subordinate either by an initial subordinating conjunction (after in He got angry after I started to beat him at table-tennis) or by an initial wh-word that also functions within the clause (who in Most francophones who speak Persian, where who is the subject of the subordinate clause). These subordinate markers sometimes introduce nonfinite clauses (while in I listened to the music while revising my report), and verbless clauses (if in if necessary, I’ll phone you).

**SUBORDINATION**

subordinator 1. = dependency.

2. = modification (1). The first sense is usual and traditional: thus subordination or ‘hypotaxis’ (respectively the Latin and the Greek for ‘ordering under’) is opposed to coordination or ‘parataxis’ (‘ordering beside’). The second sense is that of, among others, Bloomfield.


NOMINAL CLAUSES

TASK 4. Classify the following nominal clauses

- What happened next remains a mystery
- She alleges she doesn’t remember a thing
- The question is how we should proceed
- I’m not sure if we should report this
- It depends on what happens next
- The question, whether this is a criminal matter, is not easy to answer
- He’s talking about facing the music
- To err is human
- All I did was laugh

NOMINAL CLAUSES

NOMINAL CLAUSE

nominal clause 1. A clause functioning like a noun (or noun phrase). (Also called noun clause.)

Nominal clauses, other than nominal relative clauses, tend to be abstract in meaning. A nominal clause can be a subject, object, or complement in sentence structure:

- [What happened next] remains a mystery (S)
- He alleges [(that) he doesn’t remember a thing] (O)
- The question is [how we should proceed] (C)

and can function in various other ways:

- I’m not sure [if we should report this] (compl. of adjective)
- It depends on [what happens next] (compl. of preposition)
- The question, [whether this is a criminal matter], is not easy to answer (apposition)

RELATIVE CLAUSE

TASK 5. Classify the following relative clauses into adnominal, nominal-relative and sentential:

- She exercises for an hour a day, which would bore me
- The book that I have just read
- My uncle, who lives in Brazil, is coming to see us
- My uncle who lives in Brazil is coming to see us
- He says whatever he likes
- I found what you were looking for
- The game which they were playing
- He kept on bragging about his success, which annoyed all of us
- I put the money in
- The music she composed

RELATIVE CLAUSE

KEY 5

- She exercises for an hour a day, which would bore me (Sentential)
- The book that I have just read (Adnominal)
- My uncle, who lives in Brazil, is coming to see us (Adnominal)
- My uncle who lives in Brazil is coming to see us (Adnominal)
- He says whatever (anything that) he likes (Nominal-relative)
- I found what (that which; the thing that) you were looking for (Nominal-relative)
- The game which they were playing (Adnominal)
- He kept on bragging about his success, which annoyed all of us (Sentential)
- I put the money in (Adnominal)
- The music she composed (Adnominal)
RELATIVE CLAUSE

A clause which modifies the head of a noun phrase and typically includes a pronoun or other element whose reference is linked to it. E.g. in the man who came, a relative clause who came modifies man: cf. modification (1). Within this clause, who is a relative pronoun (traditionally seen as anaphoric to man) which does not have an independent referent.

Hence to clauses with a similar element that are not modifiers: e.g. who dares is a free relative clause in Who dares wins. Also to modifying clauses in which a relative pronoun is seen as null or deleted. Thus you saw, or, with a null element, $Ø$ you saw, is a relative clause in That is the man you saw.

ADNOMINAL RELATIVE CLAUSE

The adnominal relative clause (also relative clause; noun clause). This clause modifies a noun as in: (the book) that I have just read.

- It may be introduced by a RELATIVE PRONOUN such as who, which, that, or by a phrase containing a relative pronoun, such as for which, to whom in the presence of whom, or by a relative adverb, such as where, when. (She noted) where he stayed.
- Under certain circumstances, the relative pronoun may be omitted: (the music) she composed; (the safe) put the money in.
- Adnominal relative clauses of the type (She told me the reason) that they gave are to be distinguished from the superficially similar appositive clause that also modifies a noun: (She told me) that they left.
- The appositive clause is introduced by the conjunction that, which may sometimes be omitted: (the reason) they left. The difference between the two types of clause is that the appositive clause is incomplete in itself (they left not they left the reason), whereas the relative clause requires the relative item to be present or to be understood, since it functions in the clause (they gave that, meaning they gave the reason).
- The relationship between a noun and its appositive clause differs from that between a noun and its relative clause in that it may be expressed by inserting the verb be between the two. This is not as it seems. Furthermore, the nouns that are modified by an appositive clause are restricted to a small set of general abstract nouns such as fact, idea, news, report.

SENTENTIAL RELATIVE CLAUSE

The sentential relative clause

- This clause does not modify a noun. It may refer back to part of a sentence (She exercises for an hour a day, which would bore me: that is, the exercising would bore the speaker), to a whole sentence (He kept on bragging about his success, which annoyed all of us: that is, the continual bragging about his success annoyed everybody), or occasionally to more than one sentence: I didn’t enjoy the work. The weather was atrocious. I felt thoroughly homesick. And the locals were unpleasant. Which is why I have never been back there again.
- Which is the most common relative word to introduce a sentential relative clause, sometimes within a phrase (in which case, as a result of which), but other relative expressions with this type of clause include whereon, wherefrom, from when, by when.

RESTRICTIVE AND NON-RESTRICTIVE

The two major types of adnominal relative clauses are restrictive relative clauses and non-restrictive relative clauses.

- A restrictive relative clause (also defining relative clause) is a restrictive clause with the semantic function of defining more closely what the noun modified by the clause is referring to. In the sentence My uncle who lives in Brazil is coming to see us, the relative clause who lives in Brazil restricts the reference of my uncle. The restrictive modification would distinguish this uncle from any others who might have been included.
- A non-restrictive relative clause (also non-defining relative clause) adds information not needed for identifying what a modified noun is referring to. The sentence My uncle, who lives in Brazil, is coming to see us contains the non-restrictive relative clause who lives in Brazil. This clause provides information about the uncle, but its identity is presumed to be known and not to need further specification. Non-restrictive relative clauses are usually separated from the noun phrases they modify by parenthetical punctuation (usually COMMAS, but sometimes dashes or brackets). In speech, there may be a pause that serves the same function as the parenthesis.

SENTENTIAL RELATIVE CLAUSE

Nominal relative clauses

- In the adnominal and sentential relative clauses, the relative word has as antecedent, a word or longer unit to which the relative word refers back: in the game which they were playing, the antecedent of which is the game, since in its clause which substitutes for the game (they were playing the game). The relative word in the nominal relative clause has no antecedent, since the antecedent is fused with the relative: I found what (that which; the thing that) you were looking for. He says whatever (anything that) he likes.
- Because they are free of antecedents, such clauses are sometimes called independent or free relative clauses. See ADJECTIVE CLAUSE.
NOMINAL-RELATIVE CLAUSE

nominal relative clause A type of clause which has a nominal function, but which like many relative clauses begins with a wh-word, though unlike a relative clause it contains the antecedent within itself. (Also called fused relative construction, independent relative clause, or free relative clause. In popular grammar, nominal relative clauses are not distinguished from nominal/noun clauses.)

A nominal relative clause can refer to people and things, as well as to abstract ideas. Examples:

I don't know what happened (= I don't know [that which] happened)
Whoever told you that was wrong (= [that person who] told you that was wrong)


ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

adverb clause Any clause (finite, non-finite, or verbless) functioning adverbially, that is, expressing notions such as time, reason, condition, concession, etc.:

I'll come when I'm ready
They succeeded because they persevered
Don't do it, unless you're sure
Although injured, he struggled on
While travelling, he contracted jaundice
Make it Thursday, if possible

In more traditional usage, only the finite clauses (i.e. the first three examples) would be included here.

Adverb (or adverbial) clauses are often classified on semantic grounds into such categories as clauses of TIME, PLACE, CONDITION, CONCESSION, PURPOSE, RESULT, COMPARISON, MANNER, and COMMENT.


Main Grammar References:


Main Dictionaries: