

## Chapter 7: Subordinate Clauses

Clauses, as we have seen, can be coordinated with each other, so that the sentence consists of a set of conjuncts. A clause can also serve other grammatical functions inside another clause: A clause which serves a grammatical function (other than conjunct) inside another clause is called a subordinate clause. Subordinate clauses have specific structural features that distinguish them from main clauses and serve a range of grammatical functions (most of which we have already discussed in considering the grammatical functions of noun phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases and prepositional phrases).

### Structures

A clause is a predicate and its subject (if it has one) and any clausal modifiers and subordinating conjunctions which relate the clause to other clauses. A main clause as we have noted before is always finite -- it always has a verb which is marked for tense and agreement (where appropriate) and it can contain a modal auxiliary and its subject (if a pronoun) will be in the subject case. Many subordinate clauses are finite clauses as well.

1. I said that I might go.  
(*that I might go* is a finite clause acting as a direct object in a larger clause.)
2. When she leaves the house, you should call me.  
(*When she leaves the house* is a finite clause acting as an adverbial in a larger clause.)
3. Marvin likes the woman who is helping him with the project.  
(*who is helping him with the project* is a finite clause that modifies the noun *woman* in the larger clause.)

### Nonfinite Clauses

Many subordinate clauses, however, are nonfinite clauses. A nonfinite clause in English is distinguished by the fact that the first verb in the VP does not mark tense or agreement; it cannot be a modal auxiliary, and its subject (if there is one) is never in the subject case. There are four general types of nonfinite subordinate clauses -- infinitives, participles, gerunds, and verbless clauses. (Non-finite constituents are often traditionally treated as phrases, but in most modern analyses treat them as clauses.)

- **Infinitives** Infinitives are VPs whose first V must be unmarked. There are two kinds of infinitives:

**Full Infinitives:** In full infinitives, the first (obligatorily unmarked) verb of the VP is preceded by *to*, as in

4. For John to win would be amazing.
5. I expect them to leave on time.

6. Mary is working hard to make money.
7. To believe in magic requires a high level of gullibility.

Full infinitives can appear with subjects as in (4) and (5) or without as in (6) and (7).

**Bare Infinitives:** In bare infinitives, the first (obligatorily unmarked) verb of the VP is not preceded by *to*, as in

8. I made Sue leave.
9. The children are watching him dance.
10. They won't let me help him.

In almost all cases bare infinitives have subjects; the verb *help* can occur with subjectless bare infinitives.

In both kinds of infinitives, the subject (if there is one) is in the object case, so a finite version of the subordinate clause in (9) would be *He dances*, but the infinitive form has an object case subject *him* and the verb doesn't mark tense or agreement -- it is obligatorily unmarked.

It is perfectly possible to say

11. They want him to be able to look after himself.

but

12. \*They want him to can look after himself

is ungrammatical, because modal auxiliaries cannot appear in infinitive VPs.

Infinitives can appear in different aspects and voices, so

13. I expect to be working tomorrow. (Progressive Active)
14. Marge wanted to have left already. (Perfect Active)
15. The teachers expected us to have been working for the last hour. (Perfect Progressive)
16. I want to be honored by my peers for my brilliant discoveries. (Simple Passive)
17. I want my peers to honor me for my brilliant discoveries. (Simple Active)

The subject of an infinitive is always in the object case if it appears at all. Bare infinitives always have subject; full infinitives sometimes have overt subjects and sometimes don't, depending on the structure of the rest of the sentence. So

18. I want him to leave. (*him* is the subject of *to leave*)
19. I want to leave. (no subject for *to leave*)
20. I made him leave. (*him* is the subject of *leave*)

21. \*I made leave.

- **Participles**

Participle clauses are clauses in which the first verb in the VP is a participle.

As we already know, participles are of two kinds: present or *-ing* participles and past or *-en/ed* participles. Present participle and past participle are, in fact, the traditional names, but they are quite misleading since neither participle provides any information about tense, so in *The man covered with paint is decorating the living room*, *covered with paint* is a past participle clause, but it isn't set in the past; in *The general leading the rebel forces was George Washington*, *leading the rebel forces* is a present participle, but it isn't set in the present.

*-en/ed* participles are sometimes also called passive participles (presumably because the form is used in passive VPs, as well as in perfect VPs); this label is less misleading since *-en/ed* participle clauses are always passive in sense, while *-ing* participles can be active or passive.

22. The contestant knowing the most answers will win the game..

23. The victim splattered with blood stood helpless.

24. While being treated for his injuries by the intern, Charley talked to me about his accident.

*-en* participle clauses never show variation in aspect, but *-ing* clauses can be perfect or perfect progressive, as well as simple.

25. Having sat here all day, Evelyn was completely bored.

26. The performers were exhausted, having been singing for hours.

As with other nonfinite clauses, participles do not mark tense or agreement and cannot contain modal auxiliaries. Participles are always used as modifiers or adverbials.

- **Gerunds**

Gerund clauses are clauses in which the first verb in the VP is a gerund, an *-ing* form. The subject of a gerund may be omitted or may appear in either objective case or possessive, but it can never be in the subject case.

27. I was surprised at them/their losing the race.

28. I was surprised at losing the race.

Like infinitives and *-ing* participles, gerunds can appear in various aspects and voices.

29. I was surprised at having lost the race. (Perfect)

30. They asked me about him/his having been meeting with known felons. (Perfect Progressive)

31. Omar is pleased at being given the "Student of the Year" award by his classmates. (Passive)

32. Having been attacked by bears at the zoo convinced me not to visit there any more.  
(Perfect and Passive)

- **Verbless clauses**

Verbless clauses are, as you might expect, clauses that appear to have no verbs. For example, in (33) - (36) the underlined constituents act just like clauses, but have no verbs.

33. Though afraid of bears, Oliver was still willing to go to Yosemite.
34. Those children, while nice enough, can't be trusted to do the right thing.
35. Unhappy with the school, those parents threatened to withdraw their children.
36. Mary solved amazing mathematical problems, while still a child.

Notice that these clauses all act like subject complements and a missing verb *be* and a subject the same as the subject of the clause which contains them. So (33) could also be expressed as

37. Though he was afraid of bears, Oliver was still willing to go to Yosemite.

These clauses are quite similar to adverbial participle clauses -- so the participle clause in (38) bears a striking resemblance to the finite clause in (38).

38. While lying in wait for his victim, Jack the Ripper played with his knife.
  39. While he was lying in wait for his victim, Jack the Ripper played with his knife.
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### Digression on *-ing* Forms

As you probably noticed, there are several different uses of verb + *ing* forms in English. For example, *-ing* can be suffixed to a verb to make the first verb in the VP of a participle clause as in the participle examples above and *-ing* can be suffixed to a verb to make the first verb in the VP of a gerund clause as in the gerund examples above. As we discussed in talking about VPs, verb + *ing* forms are used in progressives, as in

- a. I was *drinking* tea yesterday.
- b. They have been *helping* me with my homework.

*-ing* can be suffixed to a verb to make an adjective, as in

- c. Picasso painted some *amazing* pictures.
- d. Nobody *interesting* would attend that *boring* party.

*-ing* can be suffixed to a verb to make a noun, as in

- e. The *killing* of the swans shocked us.

f. The teacher was pleased with their competent reworking of the problem.

**Progressive Verbs vs. Adjectives:** It is possible to confuse these superficially similar forms, but there are ways to distinguish them. Consider the progressive form

g. His diatribes were boring us.

and the subject complement adjective form

h. His diatribes were boring.

How can we tell the difference? One clear way is to notice that lexical verbs like *bore* can take DOs, if the verb is transitive, but adjectives NEVER take objects. So since the (g) contains a direct object *us* -- *boring* must be a progressive lexical verb. In (h), *boring* does not have an object. Since *bore* is a monotransitive verb, *boring* in (h) must be an adjective.

Another argument that *boring* in (h) arises from the fact that you can modify many adjectives with *very*, but no verbs. Notice that *His diatribes were very boring* is fine, but *\*His diatribes were very boring us* is ungrammatical. So once again, *boring* in (g) is a lexical verb; *boring* in (h) is an adjective.

In many cases there is no possibility of confusing the two forms. For example, if the *-ing* form is serving as an attributive adjective after a determiner, as in *His boring diatribes were unending*, *boring* here could not be a lexical verb, since no lexical verb can appear in this role. Similarly, if the adjective undergoes further derivation that the verb could not as in *unending* -- since there is no verb *\*unend*, we know that *unending* must be an adjective.

**Progressive Verbs vs. Gerunds:** Again it would be possible to confuse a progressive verb with the first verb of a gerund clause acting as a subject complement to a main verb *be*. Consider (i) and (j) below:

i. In a fit of madness, he was killing swans.

j. The primary symptom of his madness was killing swans.

In (i) we have a progressive VP -- *was killing*, while in (j) we have a main verb *was* followed by a subject complement gerund clause *killing swans*. How can we tell the difference? In (i), the subject is limited to an agent or an instrument, because *kill* constrains its subjects that way. In (j), the subject is constrained to being a abstract action or idea or event since the subject of a subject complement clause must be the same as the subject complement and gerunds can only refer to actions, ideas, or events. Another way to distinguish is that in (j), *killing swans* can be replaced by a NP *his killing of swans* or *his slaughter of swans* as in *The primary symptom of his madness was his killing/slaughter of swans*, while in (i) it cannot since *\*In a fit of madness, he was his killing/slaughter of swans* is quite ungrammatical.

Moreover, in (i) we can just change the aspect and get a grammatical sentence with a slightly different aspectual sense, *In a fit of madness, he killed swans* (simple aspect). However if we make the same change in (j) we get something that means something quite different, *The primary symptom of his madness killed swans*.

If the gerund functioned as anything other than a subject complement, it could not be confused with a progressive verb because it would not fall in the same place.

**Adjectives vs. Gerunds:** NPs containing *-ing* adjectives and gerund clauses can also be confused. Consider (k). On one reading, *flying planes* is a NP, a head noun modified by *flying*. On the other reading, *flying planes* is a gerund clause which has a VP *flying* and a DO *planes*.

- k. Flying planes can be dangerous.

Notice that the ambiguity goes away if the modal auxiliary is removed, leaving a verb which will show agreement. The first will be (l) and the second (m).

- l. Flying planes are dangerous (the subject is a plural NP)
- m. Flying planes is dangerous (the subject is a clause -- therefore third person singular).

Consider also what happens if you add a determiner -- it will precede an adjective phrase, so the sentence will be

- n. Those flying planes can be dangerous

but a determiner will immediately precede the noun (since the verb is not part of the NP), so the sentence will be

- o. Flying those plans can be dangerous.

**Gerunds vs. Nouns:** Most of the other *-ing* forms are distinguishable because they mean different things. But consider something like

- p. Belle's reading was wonderful.

It is really not possible to distinguish whether this is a gerund clause with *Belle* as its subject and *reading* as its VP or it is a noun *reading* with a possessive NP *Belle's* as its determiner. Notice that it is possible under other conditions. For example, only nouns can be made plural,

- q. Belle's readings were wonderful.

How can we tell that *readings* here is a noun? Several ways. (1) Verbs can take direct objects (and indirect objects and subject complements etc.), but nouns can only have PP modifiers. So if we take *Belle read the sonnets* and make it a gerund, we get *Belle('s) reading the sonnets*, but if we make it a noun, we get *Belle's reading of the sonnets*. Compare (r) and (s),

- q. Belle's readings of the sonnets were wonderful.

- r. \*Belle's readings the sonnets were wonderful.

(r) is ungrammatical because nouns cannot have direct objects and verbs cannot be marked as

plural, so *readings* can't be either a noun or the verb of a gerund clause.

Similarly, nouns can be modified by determiners, while gerunds only appear to be -- that is, if you try to put anything in the subject slot of a gerund other than a possessive or object case NP, the structure produced is ungrammatical. If, on the other hand, you put a determiner like *the* or demonstratives or other determiners, it is grammatical. So compare (s) with (u) and (t) with (v). The ungrammaticality of (u) and (v) is because *reading* is forced to be both a noun (and so modifiable by *the*) and a verb (and so able to take direct object).

s. The reading of the sonnets was wonderful.

t. The readings of the sonnets were wonderful.

u. \*The reading the sonnets was wonderful.

v. \*The readings the sonnets were wonderful.

Moreover, VPs can be found in perfect aspect and passive voice, but nouns can't contrast in aspect or voice, so (w) is grammatical because *Belle's having read the sonnets* is a gerund, but (x) and (y) are ungrammatical because it attempts to mark perfect aspect on the noun *reading* and (z) is grammatical because *The sonnets being read by Belle* is a gerund clause, while (aa) is ungrammatical because *The sonnets being read of by Belle* would be a noun showing voice.

w. *Belle's having read the sonnets was wonderful.*

x. \**Belle's having read of the sonnets was wonderful.*

y. \**The having read of the sonnets was wonderful.*

z. *The sonnets being read by Belle was wonderful.*

aa. \**The sonnets being read of by Belle was wonderful.*

Finally, if one wants to modify *reading* as a noun, it is modified by an adjective phrase, as in

bb. *Belle's beautiful reading of the sonnets was wonderful.*

not with a adverb phrase, as in

cc. \**Belle's reading of the sonnets beautifully was wonderful.*

but if one wants to modify the verb *reading*, it must be modified by an adverb phrase, as in

dd. *Belle's reading the sonnets beautifully was wonderful.*

not with an adjective phrase, as in

ee. \*Belle's beautiful reading the sonnets was wonderful.

In all these cases, we can see that the distinctions between *-ing* forms that are gerunds and those that are nouns arises directly from the differences between NPs and clauses, and between nouns and verbs.

**Gerunds vs. Participles:** NPs in which the head is modified by an *-ing* participle and gerund clauses can also be confused. Consider (af) and (ag) below.

ff. The bears attacking the innocent hiker were vicious.

gg. The bears(') attacking the innocent hiker was surprising.

In (ab), the noun *bears* is modified by the participle clause *attacking the innocent hiker*. If you replace *the bears attacking the innocent hiker* with a pronoun, it will be *they* -- clearly demonstrating that we have a plural NP. In (ac) *the bears(')* is functioning as the subject of the predicate *attacking the innocent hiker*, giving a clause *the bears(') attacking the innocent hiker* as the subject of *was surprising*. Notice that if you replace *the bears' attacking the innocent hiker* here with a pronoun, you would replace it with *it*, as in *It was surprising*. This demonstrates that in this case *the bears' attacking the innocent hiker* is not a NP with *attacking the innocent hiker* as a participial modifier, instead it is a clause serving a nominal role and so can only be replaced with *it*.

One distinction between gerunds and participles that was hinted at above is that they clearly differ in function: Gerunds always fill NP functions (subject, direct object, indirect object, object of a preposition, etc.), while participles are always modifiers -- noun or pronoun modifiers or adverbials.

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### Practice Identifying the Structure of Subordinate Clauses

Identify whether each of the underlined subordinate clauses below is finite or nonfinite. Identify each nonfinite clause as an infinitive, a participle, a gerund or a verbless clause. Identify each infinitive as bare or full. Identify each participle, as an *-ing* participle or an *-en* participle. (Note: Not all the subordinate clauses have been underlined in the texts below.)

The first time Jake saw her, he was stunned by Miranda's appearance. As she entered the room, she seemed to be bathed in golden light. While standing with the sunlight all around her, she looked like an angel, with her white dress, golden hair and innocent blue eyes. The president of the company led Miranda over to introduce her to Jake. She smiled glowingly and held out her hand, but Jack acted as if he had never seen a gesture like that before. Swept off his feet, he

could not take his eyes off her, and he could not find a word to say. After a few embarrassing seconds, he shook her hand, stammering out an almost incoherent greeting. Miranda continued smiling at him in the courteous pretense that he had behaved perfectly normally. This was not the first time her beauty had left a man standing speechless before her. She asked him pleasantly what he did at the company. By that point he had pulled himself together and could tell her he worked in communications. They looked at each other and the incongruity of his answer and his behavior clearly struck each of them simultaneously and made them burst out laughing. That was the beginning.

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## Functions

Most of these functions should look familiar – they've been discussed in earlier chapters, filled by other structures. Predeterminers, determiners, adjective phrases and prepositional phrases can all modify nouns or pronouns; noun phrases typically serve in nominal roles, i.e., as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, etc; adverb phrases, prepositional phrases and noun phrases can all be adverbial; prepositional phrases can be adjective complements. Comparative clauses are different in that the standard of comparison in a comparative clause has historically been a clause only.

- **Noun-Modifying Clauses**

Nouns and pronouns can be modified by a range of clauses: (1) relative clauses, (2) participle clauses, (3) infinitive clauses, (4) finite noun clauses, and (5) infinitive noun clauses.

**Relative clauses:** Traditionally, the term **relative clause** has been used to refer to finite clauses which modify a head noun and which contain a relative pronoun

40. The kid who stole that bike needs help.
41. The bike which he stole wasn't worth ten cents.

or which could contain a relative pronoun

42. The kid that stole that bike needs help.
43. The bike he stole wasn't worth ten cents.

Many traditional analyses would treat the *that* in (42) as a relative pronoun—but it is clear on examining the distribution of *that* in relative clauses that it is not the same as *who* or *which*.

How does *that* differ from *who* or *which*? *That* cannot be the object of a preposition in the

position directly after the preposition: *\*The kid to that I talked was crazy*. (Notice that, while the preceding sentence is ungrammatical, the parallel sentence containing a true relative pronoun is fine: *The kid to whom I talked was crazy*). Similarly it cannot be a possessor: *\*The kid that's bicycle was stolen was angry*. (Again the parallel sentence containing a true relative pronoun is fine: *The kid whose bicycle was stolen was angry*).

Instead of being a relative pronoun, *that* in relative clauses operates as it does in other subordinate clauses—as a marker of subordination, a subordinating conjunction. It is also clear that a simple relative clause cannot contain both a relative pronoun and a subordinating conjunction since strings like *\*The kid that who stole the bike needs help* and *\*The kid who that stole the bike needs help* are ungrammatical. If a relative clause contains a relative pronoun, then that relative pronoun is interpreted as having a syntactic role in the relative clause: in (1) *who* is the subject of the relative clause and in (2) *which* is the direct object of the relative clause. *That*, since it is not a pronoun, does not fill a NP role in (3); instead there is a gap in the relative clause in the subject position and we interpret that gap as though it was filled by *the kid*. It is also clear from (4) that under some conditions we can find relative clauses which contain neither a relative pronoun nor an overt subordinator (*that*). These conditions are relatively easy to specify. As in other relative clauses without relative pronouns there must be a gap or apparently unfilled role in the relative clause. If the relative clause has neither a relative pronoun nor a subordinator, the gap cannot be the subject of the relative clause: *\*That kid stole that bike needs help* or a possessor of another noun: *\*The kid('s) bike was stolen needs help*.

44. *The woman whose friend you helped* wants to talk to you.
45. *\*The woman whose you helped friend* wants to talk to you.
46. *\*The woman that's friend you helped* wants to talk to you.
47. *\*The woman that's you helped friend* wants to talk to you.
48. *\*The woman's friend you helped* wants to talk to you.

(This is grammatical in the reading that the woman's friend wants to talk to you, but not in the reading that the woman wants to talk to you)

49. *\*The woman's you helped friend* wants to talk to you.
50. *\*The woman friend you helped* wants to talk to you.

(This is grammatical in the reading that the friend who is a woman wants to talk to you, but not in the reading that the woman who has a friend whom you helped wants to talk to you)

51. *\*The woman you helped friend* wants to talk to you.

There are, therefore, three kinds of noun-modifying relative clauses: those with relative pronouns, those with *that*, and those with neither. If the role of the gap in the relative clause would be that of possessor, there must be an overt relative pronoun. If the role of the gap would be that of subject of the subordinate clause, then there must be either a relative pronoun or the subordinator *that*. Elsewhere in restrictive relative clauses all three kinds of relative clauses are possible.

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### A Digression on Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Modification

Adjective phrases, prepositional phrases, and relative clauses among other noun modifiers can be either restrictive or non-restrictive modifiers. Restrictive modifiers contain information which the speaker or writer considers necessary for the hearer or reader to be able to pick out the referents of the noun phrase which contains the modifier:

- a. I have one uncle in Massachusetts and one in California. My uncle *who lives in Massachusetts* is a baker.

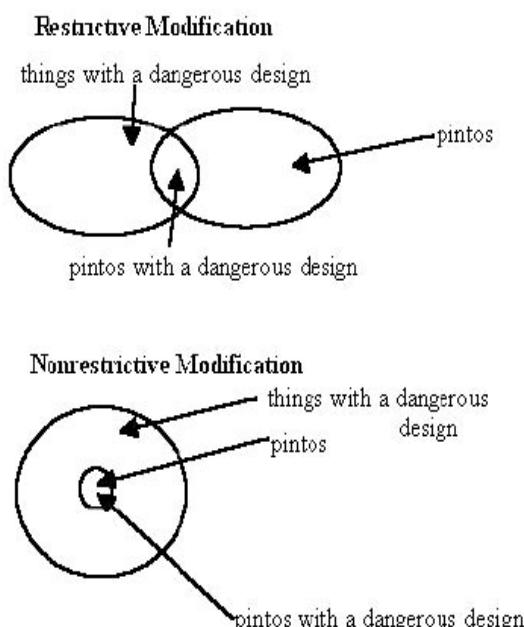
In the example above, the information that the uncle in question is the one living in Massachusetts is intended to help you pick out with uncle I am talking about. Nonrestrictive modifiers occur in noun phrases which the speaker or writer thinks the hearer or reader can determine a referent for without using the material in the relative clause.

- b. My mother, *who lives in California*, is a lawyer.

You don't need the information about where she lived to pick out which of my many mothers I was talking about. It is possible for a nonrestrictive modifier in any NP in which the information provided is not necessary to pick out the referent for that NP; that is not the same as saying that the nonrestrictive modifier is unnecessary to the sentence or that it does not convey any information. In fact, non-restrictive modifiers are more likely to provide new, rather than already established information, than restrictive modifiers. Restrictive modifiers to help you pick out the referent typically use already established information. Nonrestrictive modifiers can offer new information, but not information needed to pick out the referent for the NP as a whole. It isn't necessary for the NP to have a unique referent. Notice the difference between (c) and (d):

- c. Pintos *which had a dangerous design* were recalled.
- d. Pintos, *which had a dangerous design*, were recalled.

In (d) there is a class of cars which includes some which were badly designed. (The relative clause restricts or limits the referents of the NP to a subset of pintos. In (e) there is a class of cars, pwhich are badly designed(The relative clause doesrestrict or limit the referents of the NPs, instead it merely tells you something more about the set.) This semantic difference correlates



with a structural difference and an orthographic difference.

Nonrestrictive relative clauses always require the presence of a relative pronoun, as shown in

- f. The president, *whom I talked to yesterday*, decided not to take my advice.
- g. \*The president, *that I talked to yesterday*, decided not to take my advice.
- h. \*The president, *I talked to yesterday*, decided not to take my advice.

while, as we have seen above, restrictive relative clauses can occur without relative pronouns, as shown in

40.i. The student *that I talked to yesterday* decided not to take my advice.

41.j. The student *I talked to yesterday* decided not to take my advice.

In writing, the non-restrictive relative clause is set off with commas (that is, there is a comma before and a comma after the relative clause), while the restrictive relative clause is not. (This correlates with the typically intonation pattern found with these clauses: nonrestrictive relative clauses are usually preceded by a pause and followed by one, which restrictive relative clauses are not.) A traditional distinction between restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers has been to claim that the nonrestrictive modifiers are not necessary: however, as we have seen, this way of discussing the distinction is misleading. Both restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers are typically not needed in the sense that the sentence will be ungrammatical without them. Further, many students interpret this as meaning that nonrestrictive relatives do not convey information. That interpretation is clearly wrong: the nonrestrictive modifier typically carries as much information as the restrictive modifier does or more; the information is just not pertinent to establishing the referent of the NP in which it occurs. The relative clauses italicized in (k) -(n) below are all restrictive modifiers, while those in (o) -(p) are nonrestrictive.

40.k. My brother wants anything *(that) he can get*.

41.l. The person *who left first* missed important things.

42.m. I sold John a house *which had no roof*.

43.n. Harriet left the book *she had written* on the table.

44.o. Yesterday I called my father, *who lives in Los Angeles*.

45.p. Charley jumped out of his car, *which had burst into flames*.

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**Participle Clauses:** Another way to modify nouns or pronouns is with participles. Participial noun modifiers never have overt subjects in the clause with the participle. Notice that participial modifiers are typically interchangeable with relative clause. So in (52) the *-ing* participle clause modifies the noun *lock*, while in (53) the (finite) relative clause serves the same function and conveys the same meaning.

52. The lock *hanging from the box* was attacked with a hammer.

53. The lock *which was hanging from the box* was attacked with a hammer.

Similarly, in (54) the *-ed* participle clause modifies *Charley* (nonrestrictively), while in (55) the (finite) relative clause modifies *Charley* and provides the same information.

54. Charley, *abandoned by his girlfriend*, wept constantly.

55. Charley, who was abandoned by his girlfriend, wept constantly.

Each of these participial noun modifiers can be changed into relative clauses by adding an appropriate relative pronoun and form of *be*. It is however not quite that simple since if the verb of the participle clause is not one which could be used in the progressive, it is not enough to add a relative pronoun and form of *be*, instead one has to change the verb to a different form to avoid progressive aspect, as in

56. Anyone *knowing about his problems* would forgive him.

57. \*Anyone *who was knowing about his problems* would forgive him.

58. Anyone *who knew about his problems* would forgive him.

In general, however, one can check out whether a form is a noun-modifying participle clause by seeing whether one can convert the participle clause into a finite relative clause without changing the meaning.

**Infinitive Clauses:** A somewhat less frequent form used to modify nouns is an infinitive clause.

59. The food *for the children to eat* at the party is here.

60. The chapter *to read for Friday* is nineteen.

61. I gave the students a new assignment *to have completed by the end of the week*.

62. I gave the students a new assignment *to be working on for the next two weeks*.

63. Harold built this house *for them to live in*.

When an infinitival noun modifier has an overt subject as in (59) and (63), it is always introduced by the subordinating conjunction *for* and the subject of the infinitive (as with all overt subjects of infinitives) is in the object case if the subject is pronominal.

Notice that noun-modifying infinitive clauses differ from noun-modifying participle clauses in several ways. Noun-modifying participle clauses do not refer to a time after the time of the main clause. Noun-modifying participle clauses never contain overt subjects. The noun or pronoun modified by a participle clause is interpreted as the semantic subject of the participle clause; the noun or pronoun modified by an infinitive clause is never interpreted as the semantic subject of the infinitive clause.

**Noun Complements--Finite and Infinitive:** There is a class of noun-modifying clauses which look superficially like relative clauses without relative pronouns. These clauses are sometimes called noun complements, sometimes called noun clauses, and sometimes called appositive

clauses.

64. My fear *that a plane will crash into my moving car* is clearly silly.
65. Oscar can't accept the idea *that he might lose the race*.
66. Many people agree with his contention *that war is evil*.
67. The fact *that Henry is lazy* amazes everyone.
68. We entertained a suspicion *that Mink had cheated*.

These clauses are semantically and structurally distinct from relative clauses: First, they cannot replace the subordinator with a relative pronoun: \**My fear which a plane will crash into my moving car is clearly silly* and \**Oscar can't accept the idea that he might lose the race*. Second, the clause after the that is a complete clause—it contains no gaps or unfilled syntactic roles: *A plane will crash into my moving car, He might lose the race*. This contrasts with relative clauses containing that : *The kid that stole my bike is ...* would give \**Stole my bike*. Third, the head of NP modified by a noun clause must refer to an idea, claim or other proposition since the noun clause is a proposition and the noun clause is the proposition referred to by the head; that is, *that a plane will crash into my moving car* IS *my fear*, while *that stole my bike* is an attribute of *the kid* in the NP, it is not itself *the kid*.

There are infinitive clauses which fill the same role as finite noun clauses. They modify nouns which name propositions by stating the proposition.

69. Her decision *not to study* resulted in failure.
70. The adults found it hard to accept the children's claim *to be in charge*.
71. They were astonished by *my desire for you to win a million dollars*.
72. The decision *to drink heavily during classes* is rarely a good one.

#### • Adverbial Clauses

Clauses can serve essentially all the adverbial functions we have already discussed: time, location, reason, purpose, conditions, concessions/contrasts, among others.

Finite clauses serving as adverbials are introduced by a subordinating conjunctions: *when, while, before, after, since, until, because, if, unless, even if, as if, so that, in order that, as, though, although, even though, whereas, etc.*

73. *When the doctor came*, we all felt great relief.
74. Jennifer cried *because someone stepped on her toes*.
75. That guy in the corner, *if Bill is right about him*, might be very dangerous.
76. Harvey might, *if the light is right*, take beautiful pictures.

Adverbial clauses can typically be put in the same places in the sentences as other adverbials --

so they can be initial as in (73), final as in (74) or medial after the subject as in (75) or after the first auxiliary as in (76).

Participle clauses serving as adverbials can be introduced by some of the subordinating conjunctions, *when*, *while*, *if*, *even if*, *unless*, *though*, *although*, and *even though* as in (77-79) or they can be used without any subordinating conjunctions at all as in (80-82).

77. *If assisted by a nurse*, a patient can come to the meeting room.
78. Andreas made many friends in artistic circles, *while living in France*.
79. Harriet might, *though confused by the many misleading street signs*, still come in first.
80. *Watched by the FBI during many nefarious acts*, the archfiend was unaware of his vulnerability to arrest.
81. Oscar could, *seeing Emily*, hardly believe his luck.
82. The kids have played Monopoly all day, *amazing their parents with their concentration*.

Adverbial infinitive clauses express purpose, as in (83-85).

83. O'Brien dieted for three weeks *to lose three pounds*.
84. She is going to France in order *to study art*.
85. I bought a car to drive to school.

- **Nominal Clauses**

Nominal clauses are clauses which serve in roles typically filled by noun phrases: roles like subject, direct object, indirect object, objects of a preposition, subject complement or object complement.

**Gerund Clauses:** Gerund clauses only fill nominal roles and fill the widest range of nominal roles. Gerund clauses like other nominal clauses can serve as subjects as in (86) and direct objects as in (97) and subject complements as in (88). Unlike other nominal clauses they can serve as objects of prepositions as in (89) and indirect objects as in (90).

86. a. *Riding a roller coaster* gives some people a thrill.  
b. *That man('s) winning the race* surprised everyone.
87. a. Does your brother like *writing hack novels*?  
b. You reported *Harold('s) stealing the money from your desk*.
88. a. Juliette's favorite activity is *winning blue ribbons*.  
b. The most ridiculous performance was *Bill's telling jokes about the bishop to the priest*.
89. a. Maria earns money by *working at the school*.  
b. I was horrified at *Harold('s) stealing the money from your desk*.

90. a. Harriet gave *buying that overpriced dress* a lot of thought, but decided against it.  
b. Harriet gave *Miriam('s) flying a plane to France* no credence.

Gerund clauses can serve as object complements (as in 91), but they almost always sound better flipped so that the gerund clause serves as the direct object instead (as in 92).

91. a. The students considered the first task *writing an outline for their group project*.  
b. I found the most heinous act *Harold('s) stealing the money from your desk*.
92. a. The students considered *writing an outline for their group project* the first task.  
b. I found *Harold('s) stealing the money from your desk* the most heinous act.

**That Clauses and Infinitive Clauses:** *That*-clauses and infinitive clauses are really only good as subjects (as in 93), direct objects (as in 94), and subject complements (as in 95).

93. a. *That Oscar stole money from the bank* shocked his parents.  
b. *For you to accuse me of unkindness* is unjust.  
c. *To write hack novels* is a strange activity.
94. a. Do you believe *that Oscar stole money from the bank*?  
b. They expected *you to accuse me of unkindness*.  
c. I like *to write hack novels*.
95. a. The most shocking claim was *that Oscar stole money from the bank*.  
b. The worst thing that could happen would be *for you to accuse me of unkindness*.  
c. They thought the worst possible misbehavior was *to write hack novels*.

Bare infinitives are really only good as direct objects (as in 96).

96. a. I saw *Oscar steal the money*.  
b. Oscar had *me steal the money*.

**Indirect Questions:** Indirect questions are questions embedded in nominal roles in another clause. For example (97) has an indirect question as a subject, (98) and (100) have indirect questions as direct objects and (99) has an indirect question as a subject complement.

97. *What you did* is the question.
98. I asked Suzette *where Oswald had left the car*.
99. The question is *whether/if you know the answer*.
100. I wonder *what to do*.

Indirect questions can be either finite (as in (97-99)) or infinitive (as in (100)). Finite indirect questions differ from main clause/direct questions in two major ways: (1) in all questions an operator is not required and (2) in yes-no questions a subordinating conjunction, *whether* or *if* is required. The direct questions that parallel the indirect questions in (97) and (98) are *What did you do?* and *Where had Oswald left the car?* In both direct questions, an operator is required to precede the subject of the question; in the indirect questions, no operator can grammatically

precede the subject, so *\*What did you do is the question* and *\*I asked Suzette where had Oswald left the car* are ungrammatical.

Similarly in (99) no operator can precede the subject of the indirect question as it would in the parallel direct question, *Do you know the answer?* Instead a subordinating conjunction, either *whether* or *if* is required, so *\*The question is whether/if do you know the answer*, *\*The question is do you know the answer*<sup>1</sup>, and *\*The question is you know the answer* are ungrammatical.

Indirect questions also differ from direct questions filling the same role, because direct discourse in general constitutes using the exact words of the person to whom the words are attributed, while in indirect discourse the structure of the question is changed to fit the sentence in which it appears. Specifically, pronouns and tense are changed to fit the current structure. So, using direct discourse forms, one might say *Bill asked me “What are you doing?”* while using indirect discourse to convey the same information, one would say *Bill asked me what I was doing*. The question serving as the direct object in the first example is presented as Bill’s exact words: the clause is in the form of a direct question, with an operator preceding its subject, a second person pronoun (because Bill was talking to me using a question with me referred to as the subject) and the question itself is asking about the time of the utterance, so it is in the present tense. In the second example, there is no operator before the subject, the pronoun in the indirect question is “I” because its subject is the same as the speaker of the entire sentence and the tense is past because the current sentence is talking about past time.

**Headless Relative Clauses:** These oddly named clauses are another kind of nominal clause -- unlike other nominal clauses they are used to refer to entities, rather than propositions, questions or events. Unlike the noun-modifying relative clauses discussed above, these clauses are not used to modify nouns. They are sometimes called nominal relative clauses and sometimes called headless relative clauses. They serve as complete noun phrases (therefore as in the first label) without any head noun in the noun phrase (therefore headless as in the second label). Therefore, since that serve as

101. *What you saw was not a UFO.* (subject of the main clause)
102. *I will grab whoever creeps in the window after curfew.* (direct object of the main clause)
103. *Charley gave what I told him serious thought.* (indirect object of the main clause)
104. *Whichever book you choose from the list will meet our requirement.* (subject of the main clause)
105. *Mary will come with whoever has a car.* (object of a preposition in the main clause)
106. *I will call you what(ever) you want to be called.* (object complement of the main clause)

These clauses are all interpreted as though they had a head. *Who(m)ever* is used for humans; *whichever*, *what*, *whatever* are used for inanimates; *whichever* and *whatever* are used as (non-

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<sup>1</sup> Notice that a direct question can act to fill these grammatical roles in some of these questions, as in *I asked Suzette “Where has Oswald left the car?”* and *The question is “Do you know the answer?”*. In direct questions the speaker is directly quoting the person to whom the question-asker.

possessive) determiners. The only *wh*- word in the set that can occur in these clause without -*ever* is *what*. In formal SAE the choice of *whoever* or *whomever* is determined by the role of the pronoun in the headless or nominal relative clause: so

- 107.a. *Whoever saw the thieves* should come forward.
  - b. *Whomever the thieves robbed* should come forward.
- 108.a. I will talk to whoever needs help.
  - b. I will talk to whomever I can help.

not

- 109.a. \*I will talk to whomever needs help.
- b. \*I will talk to whomever I think needs help.

Unlike ordinary relative pronouns, however, the preposition in the subordinate clause which has the *wh*-word as its object cannot move to the front of the clause with the pronoun:

- 110.a. \*Susan will buy with whatever tools you designed that.
- b. Susan will buy whatever tools you designed that with.

- **Adjective Complement Clauses**

Just like prepositional phrases, *that*-clauses and infinitive clauses can serve as adjective complements. As with other adjective complements, the adjective determines whether it can have a complement and what kind of complement it may be. For example, *afraid* can have a prepositional phrase complement with the preposition *of*, as in *I am afraid of bears*, or a *that*-clause complement, as in (111), or a full infinitive clause complement, as in (112).

111. I am afraid *that they are lost*.

112. I am afraid *to go*.

Other adjectives can't take infinitive clause complements -- so *aware* and *conscious* can both take *that*-clause complements as in (113) and (114), but not infinitive clause complements.

113. Jane was conscious *that something unpleasant had happened*

114. The bear seemed aware that we were watching it.

Some adjectives can take infinitive clause complements, but not *that*-clause complements, like *eager* or *reluctant*, as in (115) and (116).

115. He's eager *to help me*.

116. I'm reluctant to let him help me.

In all these cases, if the adjective were change the form of the complement or even the possibility of having a complement would change. Consider adjectives like *tall* or *devout* -- none of them allow complements. If any of them were to be used in place of the adjective heads in the subject complement adjective phrases in (111) - (116), the resulting sentences would be ungrammatical.

On the other hand, an adjective like *happy* or *sad* which allows both kinds of clausal complements can be substituted in the appropriate place in (111) - (116) and the resulting sentences would mean something different, but they would be grammatical.

- Comparative Clauses

When you draw a comparison of one thing to another, the thing being compared to is the standard of comparison. You can note the equality between something and the standard and comparison or an inequality. The standard of comparison is typically expressed in a clause after the subordinating conjunction *as* when the thing compared is being equated to the standard of comparison (equative), as in (117), or after the subordinating conjunction *than* when the something is greater or less than the standard of comparison (comparative), as in (118). The main clause in both equative and comparative sentences contains a marker that indicates the kind of comparison is being drawn, *as* is used in equative sentences and *more* or a comparative adjective or adverb (a form with the suffix *-er*) in comparative sentences.

117. Charley is as wide as he is tall.
118. Mary likes ravioli more than Charley hates spaghetti.
119. Mary sings more often than she dances.
120. Charley sings as well as he dances.

When the things being compared are on different dimensions, the subordinate clause must be a complete clause. So in (116) - (119), the *as* clause and the *than* clause contain complete subjects and predicates. When the predicates of the two clauses would be the same, the predicate in the standard of comparison clause can be reduced or omitted altogether, as in (121-125)

121. Charley is as tall as Mary is.
122. Mary likes ravioli more than Charley does.
123. Mary is as tall as Charley.
124. Mary likes ravioli more than Charley.
125. I did less than I should have.

If the subject and verb phrase of the two clauses are the same, the subject and verb phrase can often be reduced or omitted altogether, as in (126-127)

126. The children like spaghetti as much as (they do/like) ravioli.
127. The children like spaghetti more than (they do/like) ravioli.

Sometimes, however, it cannot be, so (128) is ungrammatical.

128. \*Charley is as wide as tall.

One result of this kind of reduction is ambiguity. When you have a sentence like (129),

129. Charley likes Mary more than Susan.

it is ambiguous between the reading in which *Susan* is the subject of the clause *than Susan likes Mary* and the reading in which *Susan* is the direct object of the clause *than Charley likes Susan*. In formal written English, this is distinguished when *Susan* is replaced with a pronoun, since the first reading will result in *Susan* being replaced by *she*, as in (130), while in the second reading *Susan* would be replaced by *her*, as in (131).

130. Charley likes Mary more than she.

131. Charley likes Mary more than her.

In less formal usage, *Susan* would be replaced with *her* in both readings, suggesting that in less formal usage, *than* can be used as a preposition which takes an OP naming a nominal standard of comparison as well as a subordinating conjunction which must appear in a clause which contains an overt predicate. (This is stigmatized in formal writing. It is easy to avoid, however, by simply using an overt, verb-ful clause like (122)-(126).)

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### Practice Identifying the Structure and Function of Subordinate Clauses

- a. Identify the function (noun/pronoun-modifying, nominal, adverbial, adjective complement, comparative) of each of the underlined subordinate clauses in Text 1 below (the same text as earlier in this chapter).

**Text 1:** The first time Jake saw her, he was stunned by Miranda's appearance. As she entered the room, she seemed to be bathed in golden light. While standing with the sunlight all around her, she looked like an angel, with her white dress, golden hair and innocent blue eyes. The president of the company led Miranda over to introduce her to Jake. She smiled glowingly and held out her hand, but Jack acted as if he had never seen a gesture like that before. Swept off his feet, he could not take his eyes off her, and he could not find a word to say. After a few embarrassing seconds, he shook her hand, stammering out an almost incoherent greeting. Miranda continued smiling at him in the courteous pretense that he had behaved perfectly normally. This was not the first time her beauty had left a man standing speechless before her. She asked him pleasantly what he did at the company. By that point he had pulled himself together and could tell her he worked in communications. They looked at each other and the

incongruity of his answer and his behavior clearly struck each of them simultaneously and made them burst out laughing. That was the beginning.

- b. Underline each of the subordinate clauses in Text 2 below.
- c. Identify the structure (finite, infinitive, participle, gerund) of each of the clauses you underline in Text 2 below.
- d. Identify the function (noun/pronoun-modifying, nominal, adverbial, adjective complement, comparative) of each of the clauses you underline in Text 2 below.

**Text 2:** The sad truth is that many Americans do not vote. In fact, when there is no presidential election, the overwhelming majority of Americans do not go to the polls. Where is the excitement which people in a republic should feel about participating in the governing of their town, state and nation? Why is it so difficult to vote? Why are people who care about their community and participate in local and national regular and primary elections viewed as extremists? Why do people believe that politics, the source of the people's power, is a "dirty business"?

I don't know the answer to these questions, but I do know that part of the problem is the suggestion that government itself is the problem for a free people. A president of the United States, Ronald Reagan, campaigned on the premise that the government is the problem. If government is the problem according to the people controlling the power in our government, how can we expect the people to want to participate in the creation and running of the government?

We are in danger of losing our republic when we don't engage in the easiest and yet greatest responsibility and privilege of citizenship. What can we do that is more important than choosing the men and women who serve us by running our government? If, as the founders of our nation believed, the only legitimacy a government has is the consent of the governed, then how can we have that consent if the populace considers participation in the political process to be dirty or

unimportant? I wonder how we can continue as a republic when the only elections we applaud are those of other nations. Fights for power may not be pretty, but fights for honorable debate and the struggle to find our way toward a brighter future are crucial and noble. Ultimately if we back away from politics, we hand our future and our children's future over to those who would make all governance dirty.

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