



ما يجب على معلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية/ثانية أن يعرفه عن العبارات الوصفية

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المستخلص : الهدف من هذه الورقة البحثية هو التمعن في العبارات الوصفية. في البداية يتم التركيز على معني العبارات الوصفية. بعد ذلك ينتقل التركيز إلى أنواع العبارات الوصفية وهي العبارات الوصفية الضرورية والإضافية (الغير ضرورية). وتناقش أيضا هذه الورقة الفروق ما بين العبارات الوصفية الضرورية والإضافية فيما يخص المعني والتركيبية. وفي الختام تناقش الورقة كيفية تقليص العبارات الوصفية والفروق ما بين العبارات الوصفية والعبارات المكملة للأفعال التي تستخدم كحال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العبارات الوصفية، العبارات الوصفية المقيدة، العبارات الوصفية غير المقيدة، تقليص العبارات الوصفية

What an EFL/ESL Teacher should Know about Relative Clauses

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to look into relative clauses. Some light is first shed on the meaning of relative clauses. Then the paper proceeds with the types of relative clauses, namely restrictive and non-restrictive clauses. The paper also discusses the distinction between restrictive clauses and non-restrictive clauses in terms of meaning and structure. Furthermore, the last part of the paper is dedicated to how relative clauses are reduced and the differences between relative clauses and clausal complements of verbs.

Keywords: Relative clauses, restrictive relative clauses, non-restrictive relative clauses, reduction of relative clauses.

INTRODUCTION

Relative clauses can be very confusing to nonnative speakers of English. An EFL/ ESL teacher should therefore, be aware of the different constructions of relative clauses in English and should present them in a way that helps students better understand them. The teacher should pay attention to the syntactic and semantic distinctions between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses which can be very subtle sometimes. This paper therefore, attempts to analyze the constructions of relative clauses in English- including reduced relative clauses and adverbial relative clauses. It also elaborately discusses some of the syntactic and semantic distinctions between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses.

Relative Clauses.

The term 'relative clauses' stems from the fact that these clauses relate back or refer to an antecedent noun phrase, the noun headword, in a preceding clause (Morley, 2004, p. 130). A relative clause is usually introduced with the complementizer *that*, or a relative pronoun (e.g. *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*) by which it is tied with its antecedent, although sometimes the relative pronoun can be left out (Morley, 2004, p. 130). However, there is a distinction between these relative pronouns, while the relative pronouns *who*, *whom*, *whose* are used to refer to personal nouns, the relative pronoun *which* is used to refer to non-personal nouns. The complementizer *that*, on the other hand, can be used for both personal and non-personal nouns, although there are some restrictions to its usage. Some of the restrictions on the usage of the complementizer *that* are that it can be used only in restrictive relative clauses, and when it occurs after a preposition, it must be replaced with one of these relative pronouns *whom* or *which*, depending on whether the head noun is personal or non-personal (Jackson, 1990, p. 187).

Restrictive Relative Clauses.

Relative clauses can be restrictive or nonrestrictive. Restrictive clauses are embedded clauses that provide further information to help identify a noun phrase referent (Jacobs, 1995, p. 304). Let us first start with some examples to illustrate the various types of restrictive relative clauses (De-lahunty & Garvey, 2010, p.420-22).

- (1) a. The lady *that I rented the apartment from* has left the country.
- b. The lady *who(m) I rented the apartment from* has left the country.
- c. The lady *from who(m) I rented the apartment* has left the country.

- d. The lady *whose apartment I rented* has left the country.
- e. The lady *Ø I rented the apartment from* has left the country.

As can be seen in these sentences, the finite relative clauses- relative clauses that have tensed verbs, can be introduced by the complementizer *that* (1 a), WH- relative pronouns such as *who*, *whose* (1 b, d), a complex relative pronoun- a preposition + a relative pronoun (1 c), or without an introducer (1 e) (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010, p.420-22). There is also a gap, indicated as *e*, in each of these relative clauses that would need to be filled if these clauses were to be rephrased as complete sentences (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010, p.420-22). In (2 a) the head noun of the NP modified by the relative clause, *the lady*, functions as the subject of the relative clause, which makes the gap be in the subject position of the relative clause. The head noun of the NP modified by the relative clause in (2 b), *the apartment*, functions as the direct object of the relative clause, so the gap in the relative clause is in the direct object position. Whereas in (2 c, d), the head noun of the NP modified by the relative clause, *the lady*, functions as the object of a preposition in the relative clause. We can also see that in both (2 c) and (2 d) the gap is immediately after the preposition.

- (2) a. The lady *that/ who e* rented the apartment to me has left the country. [Subject]
- b. The apartment *that/ which* the lady rented to me *e* is very spacious. [Direct Object]
- c. The lady *that/ which/ Ø* I rented the apartment to *e* is very kind. [Object of preposition]
- d. The lady *that / who* I rented the apartment from *e* has left the country. [Object of preposition]

As said earlier, a relative pronoun can be omitted, but it can be omitted only in the following conditions: when the relative clause functions as direct object (3 a) or when the relative clause functions as an object of a preposition and note that the preposition goes to the end of the relative clause (3 b) (Jackson, 1990, p. 188).

- (3) a. I bought the book *Ø you mentioned to me*. [Direct Object]
- b. I met the man *Ø we bought the car from*. [Object of preposition]

Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses (appositives).

Nonrestrictive clauses, on the other hand, are embedded clauses that give supplementary information about a noun whose referent has already been identified as in the following example (Jacobs, 1995, p. 304):

- (4) John, *who(m) we met yesterday*, is an English teacher (nonrestrictive relative clause).

In written English, the nonrestrictive relative clauses are different from the restrictive clauses in that nonrestrictive relative clauses are enclosed by commas that separate the relative clause from the

preceding noun phrase and the rest of the sentence (Jacobs, 1995, p. 310). Also, unlike restrictive relative clauses which can always be reduced, nonrestrictive clauses can sometimes be reduced as in (5 b), but sometimes they cannot as in (5 d) (Celce- Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p.596).

- (5) a. David, *who is my teacher*, is out of town this weekend.
 b. David, *my teacher*, is out of town this weekend.
 c. John, *who is standing in front of my office*, is my teacher.
 d. *John, *standing in front of my office*, is my teacher.

The phrase *my teacher* is what is known among traditional grammarians as an appositive, which is a group of words that occurs after an expression to further define that expression.

Another distinctive feature of nonrestrictive relative clauses is that they do not allow the omission of the relative pronoun as in (6 b) (Brington, 2000, p.232). However, there are other semantic and syntactic differences between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses that I will discuss in the next section.

- (6) a. John, *who left the country last year*, is coming back next week. B.
 *John, *left the country last year*, is coming back next week.

Re-

strictive versus Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses.

Let us now discuss some of the distinctions between restrictive and nonrestrictive relatives.

I. Restrictive clauses can be introduced with the complementizer *that*, whereas nonrestrictive clauses cannot (McCawley, 1988, p. 418-19):

- (7) a. The car *that was stolen last week* was found yesterday. [Restrictive relative clause]
 b.* John's car, *that was stolen last week*, was found yesterday. [Nonrestrictive relative clause]

Note that the complementizer *that* is not found in all restrictive clauses because the complementizer *that* or $\emptyset$ can replace only a simple relative pronoun but not a complex relative pronoun (McCawley, 1988, p. 418-19):

- (8) a. The knife *which/that/ $\emptyset$ he chopped the onion with* is very sharp.
 b. The knife *with which he chopped the onion* is very sharp.
 c.*The knife *that/ $\emptyset$ he chopped the onion* is very sharp.

II. There are different restrictions on restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses with regard to what they can be attached to. While only restrictive clauses can be attached to indefinite pronouns such as *everyone* and *someone*, only nonrestrictive clauses can be attached to proper and common nouns as in the following examples:

- (9) a. Everyone *who came to the party yesterday* had fun.
b. *Everyone, *who came to the party yesterday*, had fun.
c. John, *who was watching TV when we arrived home*, has just left.
d. *John *who was watching TV when we arrived home* has just left.

III. While restrictive clauses can be stacked, more than one restrictive clause can be attached to the same noun phrase, nonrestrictive clauses cannot (McCawley, 1988, p. 418-19):

- (10) a. The person *who took the driving test who failed it* wants to take it again.
b. *Fred, *who took the driving test, who failed it*, wants to take it again.

IV. Whereas restrictive clauses can be extraposed, moved out of the noun phrase to the end of the container clause, nonrestrictive clauses cannot (McCawley, 1988, p. 418-19):

- (11) a. A man *who was looking through the window when you came in* has just left.
b. A man has just left *who was looking through the window when you came in*.
c. John, *who was looking through the window when you came in*, has just left.
d. *John has just left, *who was looking through the window when you came in*.

Restrictive Relative Clauses versus Clausal Complements of Verbs:

As has already been shown in this paper, relative clauses can be tensed- that is, they contain a tensed verb as in the following example:

- (12). The man *who robbed the bank* fled the country.

This kind of relative clauses may look like clausal complements of verbs. However, they differ from such complements in many ways (Lobeck, 2000, p. 306):

First, relative clauses follow a head noun, which they modify, whereas clausal complements complete a verb phrase and do not modify nouns. Let us consider the following examples:

- (13) a. I met *the man who won the prize*.
b. I wonder *who won the prize*.

In (13 a) the relative clause *who won the prize* modifies the noun *man*, whereas the same clause in (13 b) follows the verb *wonder* and is a complement of that verb, rather than a modifier of a noun.

Second, relative clauses form a constituent with a noun phrase that can be replaced with a pronoun as in the example below (Lobeck, 2000, p. 306):

- (14) a. James met *the man who won the prize*, and I met *him* too.

Whereas clausal complements form a constituent with a verb, and thus they cannot be replaced with a pronoun, but rather replaced by performs such as *so that* pronominalize clauses but not noun phrases as in this example:

b. James wonders *who won the prize*, and so do I.

Another distinction can be made between relative clauses and verb complements is that since relative clauses constitute noun phrases, they then can undergo the same movement rules that other noun phrase do such as passivization as in the following example (Lobeck, 2000, p. 307):

(15) a. The audience gave *the man who won the prize* applause.

b. *The man who won the prize* was given applause by the audience.

Clausal complements, on the other hand, do not undergo passive as can be illustrated in this example:

(16) a.

I wondered *who won the prize*.

b.**Who won the prize* was wondered by me.

Finally, relative clauses are introduced with relative clauses like *who*, *when*, *why*, *where*, *which*, or the complementizer *that*, linking the relative clause with the noun it follows to modify, rather than complementizers as shown in the examples below (Lobeck, 2000, p. 306-08):

(17) a. the lady *who/ that* I met.

b. the lady *who/ that* met me.

c. the reason *why* I met her.

d. the day *when* I met her.

e. the place *where* I met her.

f. the car *that/ which* she had.

As can be seen in the above examples, the relative pronouns refer to the head noun of the noun phrases. Also relative pronouns are identical to the interrogative pronouns in the clausal verb complements, except the relative pronoun *that*, in that in both relative clauses and WH- verb complements, WH-Movement applies. Let us consider this example (Lobeck, 2000, p. 08):

(18) I wonder [who they met_____].

Wh-Movement occurred in this clausal complement, moving the interrogative pronoun *who* to clause-initial position. Wh-Movement also occurs in relative clauses as in the following example:

(19) a. the person [they met the person]

b. the person [they met who]

c. the person [who they met _____]

The relative pronoun *who* in example (19), moved by WH-Movement, refers to the head of the noun phrase, *person*, whereas in example (18) *who* does not have an antecedent in the sentence at all.

Reduced Relative Clauses.

Reduced relative clauses are marked by the omission of the relative pronoun and an inflected form of the verb *be* as in (20) (Lobeck, 2000, p. 316).

(20) a. The man *who is standing in front of my office* is my teacher.

- b. The man *standing in front of my office* is my teacher.
- c. The woman *who was accused of embezzlement* was arrested yesterday.
- d. The woman *accused of embezzlement* was arrested yesterday.

As shown in (20), the relative clauses are reduced by the omission of the relative pronoun *who* and the inflected forms of the verb *be* (*is, was*). Consequently, this kind of relative clauses is sometimes called *participial modifiers* or *participial relative clauses* because the remaining verb is in the present participle, V + ing, as in (20 b) or in the past participle, V +en, as in (20 d). However, this is not always the case. Let us examine this sentence:

- (21) a. I talked with a teacher *who was angry at John*.
b. I talked with a teacher *angry at John*.

After the omission of both the relative pronoun *who* and the verb *be* in (21 b), the part of the relative clause remaining is *angry at John*, which is an adjective phrase and not a participial form.

Therefore, it is not true that all reduced relative clauses are participial phrases (Lobeck, 2000, p. 316).

It is also

worth noting that there is a semantic difference between the present and past participle clauses. In (20 b) for example, the present participle corresponds to the active voice, which means that *the man* is the one who does the standing, whereas in (20 d), the past participle corresponds to the passive voice, which indicates that *the woman* is not the one who accuses, but she is the one who is accused (Jacobs, 1995, p. 313).

One final point to be made about reduced relative clauses is that not all present participles, V + ing, in non-finite relative clauses correspond to progressive forms in relative clauses. For example, stative verb (e.g. resemble, contain, consist.etc...) can appear in the present participle form even though they do not have the progressive in the finite relative clauses as in (22 b) (Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartik, 1972, p. 876).

- (22) a. The man *who resembles* John is his brother.
b. The man *resembling* John is his father.

Relative Adverbial Clauses.

The other type of relative clause that I have yet to discuss here is the relative adverbial clauses.

Relative adverbial clauses are relative clauses in which the relative pronouns are *where* and *when* (Jacobs, 1995, p. 314). The adverbial pronoun *where* is used to define place nouns as in (23 a), and it corresponds to some complex relative pronouns such as *in which* or *at which* as in (23 b). The adverbial pronoun *when*, on the other hand, is used to define nouns of time as in (23 c), and it corre-

sponds to complex relative pronouns such as *at which*, *in which*, and *during which* as in (23 d) (Jacobs, 1995, p. 314):

- (23) a. This is the school *where* I learned English.
b. This is the school *in which* I learned English.
c. 1985 is the year *when* I was born.
d. 1985 is the year *in which* I was born.

Conclusion.

Since exhaustive coverage of relative clauses was not intended in this paper, I therefore, attempted to discuss some of the semantic, syntactic, and formal distinctions between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses in English. I also shed some light on the adverbial relative clauses, introduced with adverbial pronouns *when* and *where*. Furthermore, I touched upon some of the distinctions between restrictive relative clauses and clausal complements of verbs.

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