

Chapter XVI (Part Two)

Adjective Clauses

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An adjective clause—also called an adjectival or relative clause—should meet three conditions. First, it will contain a subject and a verb. Next, it will begin with a relative pronoun such as *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *that* or *which* or a relative adverb such as *where*, *when* or *why*. Finally, it will function as an adjective answering questions such as *what kind?* *how many?* or *which one?* An adjective clause does not express a complete thought, so it cannot stand alone. Here are some examples:

- Hind felt manipulated by the clown, whose big, brown eyes pleaded for another cookie.
- Chewing with her mouth open is one reason why her lover cannot stand sitting across from her.

For example, in the sentence *I met a man who wasn't there*, the subordinate clause *who wasn't there* is a relative clause, since it modifies the noun *man*, and uses the pronoun *who* to indicate that the same "man" is referred to within the subordinate clause..

There are six adjective clauses in the model paragraphs below. Let's look at them and discover in what ways they are similar and in what ways they differ.

1. Students who go abroad to study.
2. Assignments that their teachers give them.
3. Everything anyone says to them.
4. Grammar, which is essential for communication,
5. Things you don't understand.
6. Classmates, whose experiences are different from yours,

- a. Similarities. Each clause has a subject and a verb and it modifies the word which precedes it.
- b. Differences. The clauses differ from one another in several ways

Marked versus Unmarked Adjective Clause

- Note that items 3 and 5 do not have any clause markers. Clauses of this type are sometimes called unmarked. The difference between marked and unmarked relative clauses generally corresponds to a difference in the antecedent on which the subordinate clause is grammatically dependent.
- Clause marker = subject versus clause marker + subject. When the modified word is also the logical subject of the verb in the clause, as in items 1 and 4 (students go abroad, grammar is essential), one word serves both functions, clause marker and subject.
- When the modified word is the logical direct object of the verb in the clause, as in 2 (teachers give them assignments) and 5 (you don't understand things), a separate clause marker (that, which, or whom) or no clause marker is used. When the subject of the clause refers to something owned or experienced by the referent of the modified word, the clause marker is the possessive word *whose*, as in item 6.

Restrictive versus Non-restrictive Adjective Clause

- Most adjective clauses in speech and in informal writing are essential to the meaning of the sentences in which they occur. They serve to identify, to specify or to limit the referents of the words they modify. These are the ones we call restrictive and we do not punctuate.
- Occasionally we add a clause which is not essential to the main message of the sentence. The information could just as well be put into another sentence or left out altogether. These we pronounce in a special way and we place commas before and after them. These are the ones we call non-restrictive or non-essential.