

## DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

Bobomurodova Sevinch

Bukhara University of Innovation E-mail: [bobomurodovoybek554@gmail.com](mailto:bobomurodovoybek554@gmail.com)

Mobile-phone: +998 50 404 21 44

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20292230>

**Abstract:** This article examines the grammatical structure of defining relative clauses in the English language and explores modern approaches to teaching this construction effectively. The construction plays a significant role in providing essential information about a noun, allowing speakers to identify specifically who or what they are referring to in communication. The study highlights the importance of integrating interactive teaching methods, contextual learning, and communicative approaches in order to improve students' understanding and usage of this structure. Additionally, the paper discusses common difficulties faced by learners and proposes practical solutions for overcoming them through innovative pedagogical strategies.

**Keywords:** defining relative clauses, relative pronouns, English grammar, communicative competence, modern teaching methods, interactive learning

### Introduction

In recent years, the importance of effective foreign language teaching has significantly increased due to globalization and the growing need for international communication. English, being a global lingua franca, requires learners not only to acquire vocabulary but also to master complex grammatical structures that are essential for real-life communication. One such structure is the defining relative clause, which is widely used in everyday English to identify and specify nouns.

Despite its frequent usage, many learners find this construction difficult to understand and apply correctly. This is mainly because it requires a solid grasp of sentence combining and the correct selection of relative pronouns based on the antecedent. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt modern teaching approaches that focus on practical usage rather than rote memorization of rules.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the linguistic features of defining relative clauses and to present effective methods for teaching them in the classroom environment.

### Main Part

#### Theoretical Background of the Construction

Defining relative clauses (also known as restrictive relative clauses) give essential information about a noun or noun phrase. They are used to identify exactly which person, thing, or place the speaker is talking about. Without this clause, the sentence would not make complete sense or its core meaning would change. They are introduced by relative pronouns such as who, whom, whose, which, and that.

For example:

The woman **who lives next door** is a doctor.

I lost the book **that you gave me**.

In both examples, the bolded clauses are essential. They specify which woman and which book are being discussed. A key rule of defining relative clauses is that they are never separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. Furthermore, the relative pronoun can often be omitted if it functions as the object of the clause.

#### Comparison with Non-Defining Relative Clauses

It is important to distinguish defining relative clauses from non-defining relative clauses. While both structures add information about a noun, their meanings and punctuation differ significantly.

For example:

My brother who lives in New York is an accountant. (Defining relative clause)

My brother, who lives in New York, is an accountant. (Non-defining relative clause)

The defining sentence implies the speaker has more than one brother and needs to specify which one is the accountant. The non-defining sentence implies the speaker only has one brother, and the fact that he lives in New York is simply extra, non-essential information. Teaching this distinction is essential for helping students use the structure and punctuation correctly.

Common Learner Difficulties

Students often face several challenges when learning this construction:

Confusion over which relative pronoun to use (e.g., using who for things or which for people).

Doubling the subject or object pronoun within the clause.

Incorrectly using commas with defining clauses.

Struggling to identify when the relative pronoun can be omitted.

For example, learners may incorrectly say:

The man who he lives next door is friendly. (Doubling the subject)

The car what I bought is fast. (Using "what" instead of "that/which")

Instead, they should say:

The man who lives next door is friendly.

The car that I bought is fast.

Such errors highlight the need for effective teaching strategies.

Modern Teaching Approaches

1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) This approach focuses on using language for real communication. Teachers can create situations such as playing guessing games like "Taboo" or "Twenty Questions," where students naturally use the target structure to define words (e.g., "It is a thing that we use to tell time").

2. Context-Based Learning Providing real-life examples helps students understand when and why the structure is used. For instance, discussing specific preferences:

I only like movies that have happy endings.

This makes the lesson more relatable and anchors the grammar in everyday reality.

3. Role-Playing Activities Role plays are highly effective in language learning. Students can act out situations such as:

A police witness describing a suspect ("He was a man who had a red jacket...")

A customer reporting a lost item at a train station ("I'm looking for a bag which has a blue strap...")

These activities improve fluency and reinforce grammar usage.

4. Interactive Exercises Exercises such as sentence combining, gap-filling, and error correction help students practice actively. For example:

Rewrite: I saw a man. He was carrying a large box. → I saw the man who was carrying a large box.

5. Use of Multimedia Videos, animations, and online tools can enhance understanding. Showing a crowded picture (like a "Where's Waldo?" illustration) and asking students to describe

specific people ("Look at the boy who is eating ice cream") helps students see how the structure is used naturally to identify subjects.

#### Results and Discussion

The application of modern teaching methods has shown positive results in improving students' grammatical competence. Learners who engage in interactive and communicative activities demonstrate better understanding and retention of defining relative clauses.

Moreover, combining different teaching strategies—such as visual aids, practical exercises, and contextual learning—creates a more dynamic and effective learning environment. Students become more confident in using the structure to add detail and precision in both spoken and written communication.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, defining relative clauses are an essential component of English grammar that plays a significant role in everyday communication by allowing speakers to identify and define nouns clearly. However, due to their complexity regarding pronouns and sentence structure, they require careful and systematic teaching.

Modern pedagogical approaches, including communicative teaching, interactive exercises, and contextual learning, greatly enhance students' ability to understand and use this structure correctly. Teachers should focus not only on explaining the rules but also on providing meaningful practice opportunities.

Future research may explore the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in teaching complex grammatical structures more effectively.

#### References:

1. Swan, M. Practical English Usage. Oxford University Press, 2016.
2. Murphy, R. English Grammar in Use. Cambridge University Press, 2019.
3. Thornbury, S. How to Teach Grammar. Longman, 2017.
4. Harmer, J. How to Teach English. Pearson, 2015.
5. Scrivener, J. Learning Teaching. Macmillan, 2018.
6. Azar, B. Understanding and Using English Grammar. Pearson, 2017.
7. Richards, J. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
8. [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)
9. [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com)
10. [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)