

This chapter is concerned with one of the three major classes of finite subordinate clause; the other two classes, relative and comparative clauses, are covered in the next two chapters, while non-finite subordinate clauses are the topic of Ch. 14.

1 Subordinate clauses

A subordinate clause characteristically functions as dependent within some larger construction:

- [1] i [*The book she recommended*] *is out of print.*
 ii *He knows that she is right.*
 iii [*Although the paper is poorly written,*] *it contains some excellent ideas.*

The underlined clause is modifier of the noun *book* in [i], complement of *knows* in [ii], and complement of *although* in [iii]. Note that in [iii] *it contains some excellent ideas* is a clause contained within a larger construction (the clause that forms the whole sentence), but it has the function of head, and hence is a main clause, not a subordinate one.

■ Marking of subordination

Subordination is very often marked by some feature in the internal structure of the clause:

- [2] i *It is clear [that he made a mistake].*
 ii *They interviewed all those [she mentioned __ in her affidavit].*
 iii *She's asking [how many copies we will want].*

One very simple case is illustrated in [i], where *that* serves directly to mark the clause as subordinate. In [ii] it is the absence of the understood object that distinguishes the subordinate clause from a main clause. And in [iii] what marks the clause as subordinate is the combination of a prenuclear interrogative phrase and the subject + predicator order, for the corresponding main clause has subject–auxiliary inversion (*How many copies will we want?*).

Not all subordinate clauses are structurally marked as such

English does not require that subordination be marked in the structure of the subordinate clause itself. In *He knows she is right*, for example, the underlined clause is subordinate by virtue of functioning as complement to *know* but it is structurally identical to the main clause *She is right*. We examine the conditions under which the marking is omissible in §3.1.