

Extension exercises

Chapter 27: Relative clauses

Exploring English

Choose five or six pages of any written text. Skim through these pages and identify all the examples of relative clauses.

- 1 How often are relative pronouns used in contexts where they could be left out?
- 2 How often is *that* used in contexts where another relative pronoun (for example, *who*, *whom*, *which*) could be used?
- 3 Would any of these relative clauses pose particular problems of comprehension for your students?

Exploring how learners use English

Investigate the difficulties your students have with relative clauses by carrying out one or more of the following tasks. (You may also want to devise and use additional or alternative tasks.) These tasks all presuppose that your students have a reasonable level of English already.

- 1 Ask a class to carry out an exercise in constructing relative clauses. Use materials from the students' coursebooks if they have these. Alternatively, you could ask them to:
 - combine sentences to make single sentences containing main and relative clauses (for example, combine the following using a relative clause: *I saw a child. The child was crying.*).
 - complete sentences with gaps (for example, fill the gap with a relative pronoun if one is necessary: *I saw a child _____ was crying.*).

Ask them to indicate which answers (if any) they are:

- sure are correct.
- particularly unsure about.

Analyse their work to identify any common problems. Interview students to discover how aware they are of their difficulties. Consider to what extent their difficulties are related to the difference between their own language and English. (You can carry out this exercise before a lesson or lessons focusing on relative clauses, and can then repeat it subsequently.)

- 2 Over a period of time analyse the compositions that students in one of your classes write.
 - How much do they use relative clauses?
 - How correctly do they use them?
 - Do they avoid using them?

Teach a lesson which aims to help them with problems you have identified. Use the term 'relative clause'.

- What changes in their output do you notice subsequently?

3 Arrange to interview a small group of students. Ask them:

- to write down examples of different kinds of relative clause.
- to tell you when we use relative clauses and how we construct them.
- what problems they are aware of in understanding sentences which include relative clauses.
- what problems they have in using relative clauses.

Course materials

Choose materials which aim to teach or practise relative clauses. You may need to look through a coursebook or a series of coursebooks in order to identify those parts which deal with this aspect of grammar.

- 1** What attention does the material pay to the reasons for using relative clauses?
- 2** What help and guidance is provided in understanding relative clauses?
- 3** Are relative clauses introduced bit by bit over a period of time or are they considered as a single, major, topic?
- 4** Does the material make it clear that we use relative clauses in spoken as well as written English? Are there spoken as well as written practice activities?
- 5** How clear are the explanations?
- 6** How comprehensively are features of relative clauses explored?
- 7** How much of the material concentrates on aspects of form?
- 8** Does the material deal with defining and non-defining clauses separately from relative clauses?
- 9** Does the material encourage learners to use relative clauses other than in controlled practice activities? How?