



Unit 37 – Defining & Non-defining Relative Pronouns (*The girl that I met at the park..*)

A) Relative Clauses are a type of dependent clause that cannot stand alone in a sentence. They provide extra information about the subject or object and essentially act as an adjective. Relative clauses usually begin with a relative pronoun which substitutes a noun, a pronoun or a noun phrase in the sentence.

-> The most commonly used relative pronouns in the English language are **who**, **that**, and **which**. Compare:

-> She's wearing a sweater. I gave her that sweater. -> She's wearing the sweater **that** I gave her.

-> That guy took my phone. He's been arrested. -> The guy **who** took my phone has been arrested.

Note: -> There are two types of relative clauses: i) defining & ii) non-defining. Both begin with a relative pronoun which can sometimes be removed from the sentence altogether:

B) Defining relative clauses – contain information that is necessary to define the noun. The noun is general, (such as 'girl') and therefore needs information to help define it. We normally define people or things in relative clauses.

i) Defining People:

subject	who	that		
object	who	that	no relative pronoun (∅)	whom

When speaking, it is common to drop the relative pronoun (**whom / who / that**) when it refers to the object:

-> The girl (object) **whom / who / that / ∅** I met at the swimming pool will compete in the Olympics.

Note: -> 'whom' is very formal and rarely used in English anymore except in academic context

more formal	whom	The lady whom I met today was intelligent.
↑	who	The lady who I met today was intelligent.
↑	that	The lady that I met today was intelligent.
less formal	∅	The lady ∅ I met today was intelligent.

However, when the relative pronoun is the subject of the sentence, we must use either **who** or **that**:

-> I met a girl at the swimming pool **who / that** will compete in the Olympics.

ii) Defining Things:

subject	which	that	
object	which	that	∅

When speaking, it is common to drop the relative pronoun (**which or that**) when it refers to the object:

-> The movie (object) **which / that / ∅** we watched yesterday was very touching.

However, when the relative pronoun is the subject of the sentence, we must use either **which** or **that**:

-> We watched a movie yesterday **which / that** was very touching.

C) We can also use **that** as a subject after **something** and **anything**; pronouns such as **all**, **little**, **much**, **none** and noun phrases that include superlatives.

-> The doctors did **all that** was possible to save him. -> There was not **much that** could be said.

That (or no relative pronoun) can be used as an object after **something/anything**, **all**, etc. and **superlatives**:

-> Skydiving is **something (that)** I've always wanted to try. That was the **best show (that)** I've ever seen.

Note: -> **which** can come after **something/anything**, **all**, **superlatives**, etc. but this is less common.

D) Non-defining relative clauses – contain information that is not necessary to define the noun. The noun can be specific such as the proper name of a person (*Tim*), place (*Seoul*) or thing (*my English class*). The relative clause, then, is extra information that doesn't define the noun, so commas are required.

Defining People:

subject	who	
object	who	whom

Defining Things:

subject	which	that
object	which	that

We can use **who** or **whom** as an object when defining people, although **whom** is very formal and academic:

-> My neighbor, **who(m)** I've known for 10 years, always visits us during Christmas.

Note the example of a relative clause as subject: -> I visited my neighbor today, **who** was recovering from surgery.

We can use **which** or **that** when adding information to things, although **which** is much more natural:

-> Silicon Valley, **which** is considered the epicenter of technology, is located nearby San Francisco.

Relative clause as subject: -> I recently visited Silicon Valley, **which** is the epicenter of technology.



Unit 37 – Exercises:

37.1 – Join the sentences so that the second sentence becomes a **defining relative clause**. (37-B)

1. We met at the restaurant. Rebecca recommended it to us last week.
_____.
2. Why don't you ever wear the gloves? I gave them to you last Christmas.
_____.
3. Do you remember Mark? He used to work in our office a few years ago.
_____.
4. We attended an interesting lecture today. It was given by a well-known professor in the field of AI.
_____.

37.2 – Reduce the two sentences to one using a **non-defining relative clause**. (37-D)

1. I saw the truck today. It was used in the bank robbery.
_____.
2. The students are in grade 10. I reported them to the principle for cheating.
_____.
3. The road construction causes major traffic delays. I have to deal with it every day.
_____.
4. I thanked Dr. Kirk. He operated on my father's hip yesterday.
_____.

37.3 – Correct or make improvements to the following sentences if necessary. (37-C)

1. Today was the coldest day I can ever remember! correct or '..that I can ever..'
2. Melissa has something which she wants to tell you after class. _____
3. My mechanic told me there isn't much can go wrong with this car. _____
4. That was the biggest decision which the CEO has ever made. _____
5. We looked at several apartments but none really interested me. _____
6. My new puppy just does anything which he wants. It's really cute! _____

37.4 – Combine the two sentences provided to make both a defining and non-defining clause. (37-B/D)

1. Mary brought a salad to dinner. The salad was really delicious.
Defining: Mary brought a salad to dinner **which / that** was really delicious.
Non-defining: The salad, **which / that** Mary brought to dinner, was really delicious.
2. Jennifer is going to present an annual budget. It is quite important.
Defining: _____
Non-defining: _____
3. Colin brought a dog to class today. The dog is an American Cocker-spaniel.
Defining: _____
Non-defining: _____
4. Ms. Smith wrote sentences on the board today. The sentences weren't too difficult.
Defining: _____
Non-defining: _____
5. I borrowed a book from the library today. The book was about economics.
Defining: _____
Non-defining: _____
6. Molly was wearing a brand new jacket today. The jacket looked expensive.
Defining: _____
Non-defining: _____