Section 19 relatives

language notes

The grammar of relative clauses depends to some extent on whether the clause is ‘identifying/defining’ or ‘non-identifying/non-defining’ (terminology varies). The more common ‘identifying’ type probably still needs most attention at this level, but it’s worth introducing non-identifying structures if students need to develop their command of formal written English.

Pronunciation: some students may have trouble perceiving unstressed relative pronouns in fast speech. The ‘Pronunciation for grammar’ exercises will help with this.

possible further activities

The purpose of the quotations is simply to give entertaining examples of the use of relative pronouns. Students don’t need to do anything except read them, using a dictionary if necessary.

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language notes

Relative pronouns in English (and most other European languages) do two things: they act as conjunctions, joining two clauses together, and they replace the subject or object of the second clause. In other languages, these two functions may be performed by separate words:

*There’s a man at the door that he wants to speak to you.
*This is the car which I would like to buy it.

The distinction between who (for people) and which (for things) may not be matched in the students’ language(s):

*Is there a train who goes directly to Glasgow?
*We had a teacher which couldn’t explain things very well.

possible further activities

Who or which? Say a series of article + noun expressions for people and things; students reply ‘who’ or ‘which’ as appropriate. Like this:

‘the man’ – ‘who’
‘a chair’ – ‘which’
‘a girl’ – ‘who’
‘the house’ – ‘which’

Keep it moving, but not so fast that students get confused.

Personalisation Get students to complete sentences beginning ‘I like people who …’ and ‘I don’t like people who …’.

Definitions and vocabulary expansion Get students to suggest animals they’d like to know the names of (or to find the names in their dictionaries). For each animal, they write a definition using that (help with vocabulary as necessary).

Cow: an animal that gives milk.
Alternatively: they give you definitions with that and you tell them the names of the animals.
‘An animal that has a long neck and lives in Africa.’ ‘Giraffe.’
You can use the same activity, for example, to teach the names of machines.
‘A machine that washes plates and cups.’ ‘Dishwasher.’

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.

➔ Section 19 continues
Mobile phones  Students pretend that they have the next generation mobile phone, which will do even more than the current ones. Get them to say what their phone can do. Like this:
I've got a phone that makes coffee.
That's nothing. I've got a phone that cleans my shoes.

etc

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language notes

Dropping relative pronouns is strange for speakers of most languages. It can add to the comprehension difficulty often caused by relative clauses (see pages 276—277), which can put together things that don’t belong together and separate things that do:
The car Andrew has just bought keeps breaking down.

possible further activities

Personalisation  Ask students to write a few interesting sentences beginning:
A man/woman/girl/boy I know …
A man/woman/girl/boy I met once …

Internet  Ask them to look for interesting sentences on the internet beginning in the same way.

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language notes

Some languages use the equivalent of what in certain cases where English uses that:
*Everything what she said was wrong.
*The only thing what I want is a long holiday.

We teach the use of a singular verb in structures with what. However, a plural verb is also possible if what is the complement to a plural noun:
Keys are what you open doors with.

possible further activities

Vocabulary expansion: extending Exercise 2  Teach or revise some useful nouns, along with simple definitions like those in Exercise 2. For example:
Perfume is what makes you smell nice.
Paint is what you put on walls to make them beautiful.
Glue is what sticks things together.
Enamel is what you have on your teeth.
Fertiliser is what makes things grow.
A saucepan is what you use to cook things like soup.
A kettle is what you use to boil water.
Exercise is what makes you healthy and tired.
A torch is what you use to see when it’s dark.
Propaganda is what makes people believe lies.
A lid is what you put on a saucepan.
Then:  1. Give students the definitions and see if they can remember the nouns.
2. Give them the nouns and see if they can remember the definitions.
**Saying and thinking**  Get students to suggest ways of completing the following list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT PEOPLE SAY</th>
<th>WHAT THEY THINK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's nice to see you.</td>
<td>It isn’t nice to see you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really like your hair.</td>
<td>Your hair looks terrible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you very much.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do have some more coffee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your little girl sings beautifully.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Do people tell the truth?**  Ask students to complete one or more of the following sentences:

- What people say is usually … what they think.
- What politicians say is usually … what they think.
- What small children say is usually … what they think.
- What I say is usually … what I think.

Help with suitable modifying expressions if necessary (‘very different from’, ‘a bit different from’, ‘the opposite of’, ‘not at all’ …).

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**Language notes**

This structure will be of most importance to students who are aiming at a good command of formal written English.

You may need to point out that *whose* can be used to refer to things as well as people.

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**Possible further activities**

**Quiz**  The following version would suit students with a certain kind of cultural background knowledge. The format can be easily adapted, however, (by you or by the students themselves) to suit classes with other areas of interest.

Students read the questions (using dictionaries where necessary) and choose the right answers (underlined here) from the alternatives given. They will need some help with vocabulary.

- A composer whose ninth symphony includes a choir.
  - Beethoven
  - Mozart
  - Tchaikovsky

- A country whose 16th president was assassinated.
  - Russia
  - South Africa
  - The United States

- A painter whose most famous picture has a mysterious smile.
  - Rembrandt
  - Leonardo da Vinci
  - Andy Warhol

- A play whose author also wrote *Hamlet*.
  - Gone with the Wind
  - Romeo and Juliet
  - The Cherry Orchard

- A country whose capital is on the River Seine.
  - Belgium
  - Japan
  - France

➔ Section 19 continues
An animal whose home is in the Arctic.
    Polar bear
    Giraffe
    Llama

A king whose wives had a 50–50 chance of surviving.
    Herod the Great
    Charlemagne
    Henry VIII

A girl whose lover used her shoe to find her.
    Cinderella
    Red Riding Hood
    Helen of Troy

A girl whose grandmother got eaten by a wolf.
    Cinderella
    Red Riding Hood
    Helen of Troy

A queen whose beauty caused a ten-year war.
    Cinderella
    Red Riding Hood
    Helen of Troy

A Swiss town whose name begins with Z.
    Zürich
    Zaragoza
    Zanzibar

A theory whose originator was Swiss, but emigrated to the US.
    Evolution
    Relativity
    Astrology

Your class might respond better to questions (easily prepared) that begin for example:
    A football team whose captain comes from …
    A band whose lead singer …
    A singer whose biggest hit is …

Students could draw up one or more questions themselves individually or in groups.

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language notes

The preposition-final structure will be strange for most students (like questions that end in prepositions – see page 107). Students may find it easier to produce sentences with prepositions before relative pronouns, but these are generally unnatural in speech: There's the man about whom I was talking.

possible further activities

Vocabulary expansion; dropping ‘that’ Build on Exercise 1–3 by teaching some more useful nouns, and getting students to write definitions beginning ‘A thing you …’, ‘Something you …’, or ‘Things you …’ and ending in prepositions (help with vocabulary as necessary). Like this:

'a lawnmower' – ‘a thing you cut grass with’
'skeleton keys' – ‘things burglars open doors with’
Paraphrase  Tell students that they are having a conversation with English-speaking friends, but they keep forgetting words. How can they use relative clauses to make themselves clear? Give them some simple words to paraphrase. They can practise dropping that at the same time. Like this:
‘cup’ – ‘something you drink out of’
They won’t always have to use the preposition-final structure, but it will often be needed. Relative where will also be useful:
‘kitchen’ – ‘a place where you cook / a room you cook in.’

Personalisation  Ask everybody to write an interesting sentence beginning ‘A boy/girl I went/go to school with …’
A girl I went to school with is a world-famous rock singer.

Guessing identity  Tell students to think of somebody in the class and say something about him/her, beginning ‘The person I’m thinking of’ (without giving the person’s name). The others have to decide who is meant. Like this:
‘The person I’m thinking of comes from Brasilia and likes dancing.’ ‘Jo.’

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language notes
Students may not need a productive knowledge of this structure unless they will need to write in a relatively formal style. However, if they are not familiar with it, it can cause comprehension difficulty (see page 277).

possible further activities

Internet  Ask students to try to find one or more sentences on the internet beginning in each of the following ways.
“the man suspected” (meaning ‘the man who is/was suspected’)  
“cheese made” (meaning ‘cheese that is/was made’)  
“people living near” (meaning ‘people who live/lived near’)  
“passengers arriving at” (meaning ‘people who arrive/arrived at’) 

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language notes
This type of relative clause, and the identifying/non-identifying distinction, will be of most importance to students who are aiming at a good command of formal written English.

possible further activities

Building sentences  Make up sentences about people who are likely to be well known to the students, with the same structure as the ones below. Cut each sentence into three, write the separate parts on cards (including the punctuation) and give them out. Students then have to go round trying to join up with the two others whose sentence-parts go with theirs.
Princess Diana, | who married Prince Charles, | died in a car crash.
Barack Obama, | who was elected in 2008, | was the first black President of the USA.
language notes

This lesson focuses on structures which can make formal written English difficult to read. It will be particularly useful for learners who need to develop more advanced reading skills.

possible further activities

Building sentences  Write the separate parts of the sentences below (or other sentences with a similar structure) on cards. Give out the cards; students then have to go round trying to join up with the two others whose sentence-parts go with theirs. You can make it more challenging if you wish by not using capital letters or full stops.

The woman | our dog bit | is still in hospital.
The house | my parents bought 20 years ago | is worth ten times what they paid for it.
Some students | my brother plays football with | are in trouble with the police.
A painting | my neighbour found in his attic | has been sold for £50,000.
Some boxes | a dustman found in the street | contained secret documents.
Not all of the things | John was taught at school | were useful to him in later life.
Places | people want to go back to | are often disappointing on a second visit.

Building sentences: reduced relative clauses  Do the same as in the above exercise, with sentences like these.

The tiger | seen wandering in the park | had escaped from the city zoo.
A diamond necklace | found on a table in a burger bar | had been stolen from a local jeweller’s.
82 % of the children | questioned | said they did not believe in Father Christmas.
Police | called to a wedding party | found a fight in progress.
Most of the people | asked for their opinions | had nothing to say.
The two children | kidnapped in Berlin last week | have been released unhurt.