

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

**University of Babylon**

**College of Education for Human Sciences**

**Department of English**



**A Contrastive Study of Relative Clauses in English and Arabic**

**A Paper**

Submitted to the Council of the Department of  
English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ University of  
Babylon in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of B. A.  
in English Language and Linguistics

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**2022 A. D.**

**1443 A. H.**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
لُكِنِ الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ  
وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ ۚ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ  
وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أُولَئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

صدق الله العليّ العظيم

النساء الآية (162)

# **To My Family**

## **Acknowledgments**

Thanks are first due to Almighty Allah for giving me the strength and ability to reach this stage. I am grateful to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Dunya Ijam (Ph.D) for her effort and help to achieve this research. I am very thankful to my family.

**List of Contents**  
**Chapter One: Introduction**

<b>1.1 The Problem</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Aims</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 Hypothesis</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.4 Procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.5 Limits</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.6 Value</b>	<b>3</b>

**Chapter Two**  
**Relative Clause in English**

<b>2.1 Relative Clause</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.2 Relative Words</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.3 Types of Relative Words</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3.1 Relative Pronouns</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>2.3.1.1 Relative Pronoun Who</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3.1.2 Relative Pronouns: Whom</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.3.1.3 Relative Pronoun: Whose</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.3.1.4 Relative Pronouns: Which</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3.1.5 Relative Pronouns: That</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.3.2 Relative Adverbs</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.3.2.1 When</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.3.2.2 Where</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.3.2.3 Why</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.4 Types of Relative Clauses</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.4.1 Defining Relative Clauses</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.4.2 Non- Defining Relative Clauses</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.5 Postmodification by Relative Clauses</b>	<b>11</b>

**Chapter Three**  
**Relative Clause in Arabic.**

<b>3.1 Relative Clause in Arabic.</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.2 Relative Pronouns</b> الأسماء الموصولة:	<b>12</b>
<b>3.2.1 What They Refer to:</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.3 The Relative Clause</b> جُملة صلة الموصول:	<b>14</b>
<b>3.4 English and Arabic relative constructions differ in a number of ways.</b>	<b>16</b>

**Chapter Four**

<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>18</b>

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 The Problem**

Relative clause is a dependent clause in a complex sentence that modifies nouns or pronouns. It is also called an adjective clause. (Spears, 1998:6)

The present study tries to answer the following question:

- 1-What is the definition of relative clause ?
- 2-What is the structure of relative clause?
- 3.What are the types of relative clause ?
- 4-What is the function of relative clause?

#### **1.2 Aims**

The present study aims to achieve the following:

- 1-Finding out the definition of relative clause
- 2-Pointing out the structure of relative clause.
- 3-Mentioning the function of relative clause
- 4-Denoting the types of relative clause.

#### **1.3 Hypotheses**

The present study hypothesized that:

- 1-Relative clause is a dependent clause in a complex sentence that modifies nouns or pronouns. It is also called an adjective clause. (Spears, 1998:6)
- 2- English and Arabic relative constructions differ in a number of ways.

#### **1.4 Procedures**

The following steps will be followed in this paper:

- 1-Review the literature related to use of relative clauses in English
- 2.Review the literature related to use of relative clauses in Arabic.



3. Presenting conclusions based on the hypotheses being presented in chapter one.

#### 1.5 Limit

This paper is limited to the study of relative clauses in English and Arabic.

#### 1.6 Value

This paper tries to define the function and the types of relative clauses for all learners who are interested in this area. Besides to pave the way for further research in this area.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Relative Clause in English**

#### **2.1 Relative Clause**

A dependent clause in a complex sentence that modifies nouns or pronouns. It is also called an adjective clause. (Spears, 1998:6)

For example, the two sentences “He had a nasty gash. The gash needed medical attention” share the same noun “gash” and they are related to each other that is why it is possible to combine them by using the relative pronouns and here the relative pronoun “which” is suitable in this sentence. So the new sentence will become:

**1-**He had a nasty gash which needed medical attention.

(Greenbaum and Nelson, 2009:68)

#### **2.2 Relative Words**

A relative clause usually begins with relative words which are either relative pronouns or relative adverbs. These relative words are used to join two clauses which have one subject or object, for example:

**2-**The boy is outside. He is selling sweets.

-The boy who is selling sweets is outside.

**3-**The town is big. I was born there.

-The town where I was born is big.

In these two examples, the noun or pronoun are omitted, this is due to the fact that there cannot be two subjects or two objects when sentences are related together. (Hussein, 2008:295)

## **2.3 Types of Relative Words**

### **2.3.1 Relative Pronouns**

#### **2.3.1.1 Relative Pronoun Who**

**a-**The relative pronoun who can be used to refer to people and sometimes to pet animals. It is used with defining and non-defining relative clauses, for example:

**4-**I think there'd be a lot of children who'd love to have a climbing wall in school. (defining referring to people)

**5-**That's the dog who doesn't like me. (defining; referring to a pet animal)

**6-**There's this guy at work, who's one of my friends, well he's never been on a train. (non-defining)

#### **b) Subjects and objects**

We can use who as the subject or the object of the relative clause, for example:.

**7-**She's going out with a bloke who's in the army.  
(who as a subject)

**8-**The woman who I saw yesterday was Sheila.

(who as an object)

#### **c) Who + prepositions**

Who can be used as the complement of a preposition, for example:

**9-**It was Cath who Ian gave the keys to. It wasn't me.

**d)**The preposition should come at the end of relative clause Not immediately after who, for example:

**10-**Of all my friends, she's the one who I know I can rely on.

Not:

\*Of all my friends ,she's the one on who I know I can rely.

e) Who with collective groups of people.

We use who with collective human nouns like team, group ,government..etc ,for example:

11-Nicola phoned the fire brigade, who then alerted the police and social workers.(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/amp/british-grammar/relative-pronouns>)

### **2.3.1.2 Relative Pronouns: Whom**

a)Whom is a relative pronoun refers to persons as the object of the verb ,for example:

12-The man whom you saw yesterday is my father.

b)Whom + prepositions

c) The preposition can be put at the end of the sentence in less formal style ,for example:

13-There's the man whom I was telling you about.

While we put the preposition before whom in more formal style ,for example:

14-Drama in schools is particularly good for pupils for whom English is a second language. (Frank,1993:274)

### **2.3.1.3 Relative Pronoun: Whose**

a)Whose is used to show possession by people or animals.It used instead of possessive pronouns or x's in defining and non-defining clauses ,for example:

15-He's marrying a girl whose family don't seem to like him.

### **b)Whose + prepositions**

whose + noun can be used as the complement of a preposition .In formal style it is possible to put the preposition immediately before the relative pronoun or at the end of the relative clause in more informal style, for example:

**16-**Thomas Goldney III, in whose house and garden several generations of Bristol students have now lived ,was described in the late 18th century as ‘a very curious gentleman’.

**17-**Thomas Goldney III, whose house and garden several generations of Bristol students have now lived in, was described in the late 18th century as ‘a very curious gentleman’.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/amp/british-grammar/relative-pronouns>

### **2.3.1.4 Relative Pronouns: Which**

**a)**Which is a relative pronoun which is used to refer for non-human (animals) and things.It is used with defining and non-defining relative clauses,for example:

**18-**You need to tick the box which says yes. (defining)

**19-**He won’t have much time to prepare for the meeting, which is this afternoon. (non-defining)

### **b)Subjects and objects**

We can use which as the subject or the object of the relative clause,for example:

**20-** The pens which are on the desk are mine. (which is used as a subject)

**21-**It was the same picture which I saw at the National Gallery.(which is used as an object)

### **c)Which + prepositions**

which can act as the complement of a preposition ,for example:

**22**-Early in the Autumn Term there is a reception at which you can meet current staff and students.

In formal style we put the preposition immediately before the relative pronoun, while in informal style we put it at the end of the relative clause, for example:

**23**-The title of the poem indicates that the poet knows himself to be separated from the community in which he grew up.(formal style)

**24**- I've never felt close to the community which I grew up in.(informal style). (Hussein,2008:300-305)

### **2.3.1.5 Relative Pronouns: That**

#### **a)**

The relative pronoun can be used to refer to people, animals and thing instead of who, whom or which in relative clauses.It is used to introduced defining clauses only ,for example:

**25**-We met somebody last night that did the speech therapy course two years after you. (refers to a person)

**26**-The 8.30 is the train that you need to get. (refers to a thing)(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/amp/british-grammar/relative-pronouns>)

#### **b)Subjects and objects**

The relative pronoun that can be used as the subject or the object of the relative clause ,for example:

**27**-The woman that is standing there is a doctor.(that as a subject)

(Hussein,2008:297)

**28-**The man that I saw was Mr.Jones.(that as an object)

(Schramper,1999:268)

**c)**That after superlatives

We sometimes use the relative pronoun that after superlatives, for example:

**29-**The Wimbledon men's final was the best game of tennis that I've ever seen.

**d)**That + prepositions

That can be used to refer to the complement of a preposition, for example:

**30-**We've got some tennis balls that you can play with.

**e)**We don't use the preposition before that unlike which, whom and whose.(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/amp/british-grammar/relative-pronouns>)

## **2.3.2 Relative Adverbs**

### **2.3.2.1 When**

It is used to refer to time ,for example:

**31-** I will never forget the day when I met you.

### **2.3.2.2 Where**

It is used to talk about places ,for example:

**32-**I can't remember the place where I put my book.

### **2.3.2.3 Why**

It is used to talk about reasons ,for example:

**33-**The reason why he left early was that he was tired.

### **2.3.2.4.**

The relative pronoun which preceded by a preposition can be used instead of the relative adverbs ,for example:

**(a)**When will be replaced by (in, on, at)which ,for example:

**34-**May is the month when we start our exams.

-May is the month in which we start our exams.

**(b)**Where will be replaced by (in, on ,at ,to)which ,for example:

**35-**This is the park where we went last week.

-This is the park to which we went last week.

**(c)**Why will be replaced by for which

**36-**That's the reason why I resigned.

-That's the reason for which I resigned.

(Hussein,2008:297-298)

Sometimes relative pronouns can be omitted from the relative clause.This case is called a zero relative pronoun.We can omit them when the omission does not bring a verb to the head of the relative clause,for example:

**37-**The car (that) we saw yesterday was too expensive.

**38-**The people(whom) we know are not very responsible.

(Strumpf and Douglas,:348)



## **2.4 Types of Relative Clauses**

### **2.4.1 Defining Relative Clauses**

A defining relative clause is essential part of the main clause, It gives necessary information. If it is omitted, the sentence will not give us a complete idea, for example:

(Eckersley and Eckersley, 1960:324)

**39--**My brother who is abroad has sent me a letter.

In this sentence, the relative clause is necessary to identify what the noun is referring to. It is called a restrictive relative clause because it restricts the noun to mean "the brother I'm talking about"

A defining relative clause should be not put between commas because it is essential part of the sentence.

Preposition used with relative pronouns in defining clauses:

**a)** in the formal style we use the preposition at the beginning of the relative clause. We should use the relative pronoun "whom" not "who" because it is used as object, for example:

**40--**The person to whom I was talking seems to be interested in the matter.

**41--**The problem about which we had so much discussion has been solved.

**b)** In the informal style we use the preposition at the end of the relative clause, for example:

**42--**The man who/whom I was talking to is my friend

**43--**The chair which I used to sit on is broke.

If the relative pronoun refers to the object of the verb in the defining clause only, we can omit them, for example

**44--**The film (which) I watched was interesting.

**45--**The person (who/whom) I work for is Italian.

The relative pronoun “that” can also be used instead of the relative pronouns (who, whom and which) in defining relative clause.

(Ibid)

#### **2.4.2 Non- Defining Relative Clauses**

A non-defining relative clause is not an essential part in the main clause ,it gives extra information .If it is omitted, the sentence will give us a complete idea ,for example:

**46-**Mr.Jones ,who lives next door ,is the manager of a big company.

In this sentence, the relative clause is not necessary to identify what the noun is referring to.It is just added as extra information and called a non restrictive relative clause.it is optional and if we omit it ,this will not affect on the meaning of the sentence. (Hussein,2008:299-300)

#### **2.5 Postmodification by Relative Clauses**

There are three components for the relative clauses:the head noun, the relativizer , and the gap.

**(a)**The head noun is referred to the noun that is modified by the relative clause.

**(b)**The relativizer is referred to the relative pronouns who or that.

**(c)** The gap is referred to the location of the missing constituent in the relative clause and it is found in all relative clauses.

Let's take the relative clause:

**47-**the diamond earrings that Mama wore.

-earrings is the head noun.

-that is the relativizer which referring to the ‘earring’.

-The gap occurs in the direct object position after the verb wore.

There are many variations acceptable with the relative clause.As well as the relative clause can occur with different gap positions.

(Biber, et al.2002:281)

## Chapter Three

### Relative Clause in Arabic

#### 3.1 Relative Clause in Arabic.

Relative clause is one of the subordinate adjective clauses underlying the complex sentence in Arabic . The relative clause (جملة الصلة) follows the relative noun (الاسم الموصول) in order to clarify the meaning of the relative noun and its antecedent. The relative noun is a noun which has no meaning without the relative clause. It is essential to have a referent pronoun (العائد أو الرابط) that refers to the relative noun.

(Fayyad, S. 1996: 33)

#### 3.2 Relative Pronouns الأسماء الموصولة:

Relative pronouns in Arabic are two types: special and common. The special relative pronouns are the those that have singular, dual, plural. These are six: اللَّاتِي ، اللَّتَانِ ، الَّتِي ، الَّذِينَ ، اللَّذَانِ ، الَّذِي and اللَّتَانِ become اللَّذَيْنِ and اللَّتَيْنِ in the accusative and genitive cases. The common relative pronouns that has the same form for the singular, dual, and plural. These are مَنْ and مَا. The first مَنْ is used for human, while مَا is used for non-human.

##### 3.2.1 What They Refer to:

(a) الَّذِي is used for human and non-human masculine singular nouns, as in these examples:

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| الرَّجُلُ الَّذِي  | ‘the man who’-1    |
| الْكَلْبُ الَّذِي  | ‘the dog which’-2  |
| الْكِتَابُ الَّذِي | ‘the book which’-3 |

(b) اللّذَان is used for human and non-human masculine dual nouns, as in these examples:

البَيْتَان اللّذَان ‘the two house which’-4

الطَّيِّبَان اللّذَان ‘the two physicians who’-5

الأسَدَان اللّذَان ‘the two lions which’-6

(c) اللّذِينَ is used for human masculine plural nouns only, as in these examples:

الرَّجَالُ اللّذِينَ ‘the men who’-7

الأَطْفَالُ اللّذِينَ ‘the men who’-8

(d) الَّتِي is used for human and non-human feminine singular nouns as well as for non-human masculine and feminine plural nouns, as in these examples:

البِنْتُ الَّتِي ‘the girl who’-9

لَا ‘the books which’-10

(e) اللّتان is used for human and non-human feminine dual nouns, as in these examples:

القِطَّتَانِ اللّتان ‘the two cats which’-11

السَّيِّدَتَانِ اللّتان ‘the two ladies who’-12

(f) اللَّاتِي is used for human feminine plural nouns, as in these examples:

السَّيِّدَاتِ اللَّاتِي ‘the ladies who’-13

الطَّيِّبَاتِ اللَّاتِي ‘the female physicians who’-14

(g) مَنْ is used for human masculine and feminine singular, dual, and plural nouns. The kind of nouns it refers to is known from the relative clause that follows, as in these examples:

أَحْتَرَمُ مَنْ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ. 'I respect him who says the truth.'-15

أَحْتَرَمُ مَنْ يَقُولُونَ الْحَقَّ. 'I respect them who say the truth.'-16

(h) مَا is used for non-human masculine and feminine singular, dual and plural nouns. Like

مَنْ the noun it refers to is known from the context, as in these examples:

قَرَأْتُ مَا كَتَبْتَ مِنْ مَقَالَاتٍ. 'I read what you wrote (of the articles).'-17

؟(هَلْ سَمِعْتُ مَا قَالُوا (مِنْ خَبَرٍ) 'did you hear what they said? (of the news)'-18

Dickins, j. and Watson, j. (1998: 235-237)

### 3.3 The Relative Clause جُمْلَةُ صِلَةِ الْمُوصُولِ:

The relative clause جُمْلَةُ صِلَةِ الْمُوصُولِ is the sentence that follows the relative pronoun الْإِسْمُ الْمُوصُولُ to specify it and complete its meaning. It can be a verbal sentence, a nominal sentence, or a semi sentence. When verbal or nominal, it must include a pronoun (separate, attached, or

implicit) that refer to the relative pronoun. A semi-sentence does not include a pronoun that refers to the relative pronoun.

3.4 Arabic has two types of relative clauses depending on the grammatical definiteness of the head NP (antecedent): syndetic (definite) and asyndetic (indefinite):

19 -syndetic- وصلَ الذي دعوته.))

20 -asyndetic- رأيْتُ بيتاً بناء عليّ.))

In a complex sentence with a syndetic relative clause , the antecedent NP must be definite and a relative pronoun is always present:

21 -رأيْتُ الولد الذي كسر الباب.

In the following sentence the relative pronoun الذي, which refers back to the definite head NP الولد , ties the relative clause to the main clause . It is used adjectively since it refers back to the antecedent with which it agrees in number and gender.

22 -syndetic- وصلَ الذي دعوته.

Asyndetic relative clause is used when the antecedent is indefinite. In this case the relative pronoun cannot be used and the resumptive pronoun cannot be deleted:

23 -asyndetic- رأيْتُ بيتاً بناء عليّ.

(Ibraheem,Z., Kassabgy, N., Aydelott,s.,2000: pp50-51)

### **3.4 English and Arabic relative constructions differ in a number of ways:**

- (1) The relative pronoun in English assumes the grammatical function of the relativized noun, whereas in Arabic the resumptive pronoun assumes this function.
- (2) In English, the relative pronoun appears whether the antecedent is definite or indefinite. In contrast, in Arabic, the relative pronoun is used only if the antecedent is definite.
- (3) In English the relative pronoun can be optionally deleted when it replaces an object NP. In contrast, Arabic does not allow the deletion of the relative pronoun since it functions as a tie between the main clause and the relative clause.
- (4) English, unlike Arabic, allows preposition fronting ,i.e., placing the preposition before the relative pronoun: المدينة التي تحدثت عنها هي القدس
- (5) Arabic relative clauses require a resumptive pronoun that is coreferential with the object relative pronoun, while English ones do not. In other words, Arabic requires pronominal anaphora in relative clauses, while English requires zero anaphora.
- (6) Finally, English relative pronouns show animate /inanimate distinction (who/which), while Arabic relative pronouns show number , gender , and ,only in the dual, case distinctions.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Conclusion**

- 1-Both English and Arabic have relative clauses.In English they are called relative clauses .While in Arabic they are called الاسماء الموصولة.
- 2-In English, the relative pronoun appears whether the antecedent is definite or indefinite. In contrast, in Arabic, the relative pronoun is used only if the antecedent is definite.
- 3- In English the relative pronoun can be optionally deleted when it replaces an object NP. In contrast, Arabic does not allow the deletion of the relative pronoun since it functions as a tie between the main clause and the relative clause.
- 4-English and Arabic relative constructions differ in a number of ways which confirm the hypothesis of the study.



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