



The Structures of Finite Clauses in English for Students at the University of Transport and Communications Campus in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract: In terms of syntactic and functional analysis on Finite clauses, English language acquisition has been a long and hard road. During their learning a foreign language, students are often influenced by their native language, even its grammatical and functional rules in organizing and expressing their ideas in a foreign language. This paper employs the advantageous perspectives of corpus analysis (discourse discussion) to categorize clauses clearly and theoretically so that students can enhance and understand all the theoretically and practically functional and syntactic valuation of features and use these structures correctly and effectively.

Keywords: Finite clauses, language acquisition, syntactic analysis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the process of learning English, students at the University of Transport and Communications campus in Ho Chi Minh City in particular and non-English major students in general have encountered many difficulties in parsing syntax and functions of the Finite clause. Since students are not native speakers, making mistakes will feel uncomfortable as they apply English syntax to their language skills. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze and synthesize the analyzes based on theory and based on Finite clauses to analyze them in detail with the view of current language definition and descriptions of syntactic and functional properties, and to classify clauses based on syntax, function, and position of each type of clause in a sentence. Students can perform analysis, discussion, and understanding on a larger scale. Besides, this article will introduce ways to use English clauses through specific examples.

2. Definition of the Finite Clause

A finite clause is a clause that includes a Finite verb phrase, a component that makes up a verb expressing mood, showing harmony between subject

and verb. This is a Finite verb (conjugated verb) that can be the verb of an independent clause (main clause) or of a subordinate clause (Miller, 2002; Parrot, 2000). A Finite clause contains a Finite verb which is a component that makes up the verb in a sentence (Reichardt, 2013; Hajizadeh, 2011; Owen and Leonard, 2007).

Example:

- *I talked to Jane last night.* (main verb: past)
- *He will call her as he comes to the airport.* (main verb: future; subordinate: present)

3. Finite Clauses and Corpus-Based Analysis

This article analyzes and classifies Finite clauses, resulting from the ineffective and ungrammatical use of these types of clauses in English courses by students in classes we are in charge. With the advantages of the corpus-based analysis method, Finite clauses are analyzed and classified (Granger, 2004; Aarts, 1997; Biber et.al., 1998). Finite clauses are used very commonly and frequently, however, it can be seen that it is not at all easy for non-native students to understand clause structure and how to use Finite clauses thoroughly

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and reasonable. That is also the reason why English students spend a lot of time learning these types of clauses, the structure, function and position of clauses, as well as how to transform sentences. (Mackova, 2015; Caplan, 2012; Greenbaum and Quyrk, 1997).

3.1. Syntactic Function and Position of the Finite Clauses

Based on the structural and functional analysis approach to sentence analysis, clauses in sentences are classified with reference to the syntactic functions we perform in sentences (Reichardt, 2013; Caplan, 2012). According to the definition of Herring (2012), the Finite verb phrase always contains a Finite verb (conjugated verb). Furthermore, a Finite clause includes at least one subject and one Finite verb that agrees with the subject in terms of tense, form, specific and appropriate manner. According to Greenbaum and Quyrk (1990) and Parrot (2000), the characteristics of Finite clauses are explained as independent clauses and subordinate clauses with subordinate clauses classified into five types: noun clauses, adjective clauses, adverb clauses, reporting clauses and apparent clauses.

3.1.1. Independent Clauses

Independent clauses include minimal grammatical completeness and simple sentences essentially contain one independent clause. Independent clauses express complete meaning and can stand on their own. Besides, two independent clauses are combined into a compound sentence using linking conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, adverbial conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs (Downing and Locke, 2006; Azar, 2002). Connecting conjunctions are used to connect 2 words, 2 phrases or 2 independent clauses in a sentence. Connecting conjunctions are mainly classified into the following groups:

- **“and” group** is used to express additional information and includes conjunctions such as **AND, moreover, furthermore, besides, in addition, not only...but also..., both...and...**
- **“but” group** is used to press contrast or difference and includes conjunctions such as **but, however, nevertheless, nonetheless...**
- **“or” group** is used to express another choice and includes conjunctions such as **or, either, neither, nor, either...or..., neither...nor...**
- **“so” group** is used to express results and includes conjunctions such as **so, therefore, thus, hence...**
- **“for” group** is used to express reasons or causes and includes conjunctions or connecting words such as **for, for this reason, in consequence, ...**

3.1.2 Subordinate Clauses

A subordinate clause is one of two components that make up a complex sentence. Non-native students often make errors in complex sentences because of the differences between their mother tongue and English (Biber *et al.*, 2002). A subordinate clause is a specific group of words attached in a certain way to the main clause. In the categories of syntax, function and position, subordinate clauses are Finite clauses, which are classified and analyzed in the following sections.

3.2. Classify Subordinate Clauses Based on Syntactic Function and Position of the Finite Clauses

3.2.1. Noun Clauses

Noun clauses that function as a noun or noun phrase can use a noun as a subject, object, complement... in the main clause on which it depends because the noun clause substitutes for nouns or noun phrases (Herring, 2012; Huddleston and Pullum, 2007; Parrot, 2000). A noun clause can be linked to the main clause by subordinate linking conjunctions including *That, If* or *Whether* and interrogatives such as *What, Where, How, When*, etc. Based on functions and features grammar and syntax, noun clauses perform eight main functions in English grammar including subject, subject complement, direct object, indirect object, object complement, object of gender words, adjective phrase modifiers and noun phrase modifiers.

a. Subjects

A noun clause functions grammatically as a subject. A subject is a word, phrase, or clause that performs the action or actions followed by the verb (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007). A noun clause that functions as a subject will be a Finite clause or a non-finite clause. For example:

- *What you have done is surprising to me.*
- *That the course is cancelled disappoints me.*

b. Subject Complements

A noun clause can function grammatically as a subject complement. A subject complement is a word, phrase, or clause that comes after a linking verb and describes the subject of the clause. Noun clauses that have the function of modifying the subject are called predicate nouns (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). Both Finite and non-finite noun clauses can serve the function of complementing the subject. For example:

- *The truth was that he used to be the best student in his class.*
- *The solution is whether they will tell the truth.*

c. Direct Objects

Third function, noun clause functions as direct object. A direct object is a word, phrase, or

clause that follows a transitive verb and answers the question “who?” or “what?” influenced by verbs (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). For example:

- *The little boys are wondering if the cat will leave the mouse running away.*
- *It is definitely hard for them to do whatever their classmates tell.*

d. Object Complements

Noun clauses function to complement the object word. Object complements are defined as words, phrases, and clauses that directly follow and modify the direct object. Although infrequent, both Finite and non-finite noun clauses can function as object complements due to the frequency of non-finite clauses' function. For example:

- *Students consider their difficulty whether they can get a suitable job.*
- *The government has announced their decision how long the provision of unemployment support will last.*

e. Indirect Objects

Noun clauses act as indirect objects. An indirect object is a word, phrase or clause that tells who or what action the transitive verb has two objects (ditransitive) is performing. Ditransitive verbs are verbs that require two objects to modify the verb (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). For example:

- *The child gave his toys to whom he liked.*
- *Their parents often bring food for who really need.*

f. Prepositional Objects

A noun clause is a prepositional object. A prepositional object is a word, phrase or clause that directly follows a preposition, and completes the meaning of the prepositional phrase (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). Both Finite and non-finite noun clauses can function as prepositional objects. For example:

- *Many students cannot keep pace with what happens in the course.*
- *He used to not know about how he could solve the math problems.*

G. Adjective Phrase Complements

The seventh function, the noun clause functions as a complement phrase from an adjective phrase. A complement from an adjective phrase is a phrase or clause that modifies and completes the meaning of an adjective phrase (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). In contrast to the above functions, only Finite noun clauses can function as complements from adjective phrases. For example:

- *They were really surprised that their 1-year-old son could say as a child.*
- *Those men in black were happy that they could buy the stylish car at a good bargain.*

H. Noun Phrase Complements

Noun clauses function as additions to noun phrases. A noun phrase complement is a phrase or clause that modifies and completes the meaning of a noun phrase. Only Finite noun clauses can function as additions to noun phrases. For example:

- *I had a hunch that you would call.*
- *Students' problem in writing is the fact that they cannot identify and analyze the clauses in a sentence.*

3.2.2. Adjective Clauses

It can be seen that this section helps students recognize and understand systematic adjective clauses so that students pay attention to where and why adjective clauses are used. Adjective clauses are used to provide information about someone, something that is specifically identified through the information provided (Eastwood, 1994; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Hering, 2012). An adjective clause functions as an adjective because the adjective clause replaces the adjective (Hering, 2012; Huddleston and Pullum, 2007; Parrot, 2000). Adjective clauses can be linked to the main clause by subordinate linking conjunctions including relative pronouns such as *Who, Whom, Whose, that* and *which* or relative adverbs such as *Where, When, Why*. Adjective clauses are classified into defining relative clauses and non-defining relative clauses and are used to modify noun (phrases) called antecedents.

a. Defining Relative Clauses

Use defining relative clauses to provide essential information about someone or something. Information we need to understand what or who is being referred to. Defining relative clauses often appear immediately after the noun they describe (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). We often use relative pronouns including *who, that, which, whom, whose* to introduce defining relative clauses. For example:

- *Those are some tissues which have been affected.*
- *They should give the money to somebody who they think needs the treatment most.*

In defining relative clauses, we often use *that* instead of *who, whom or which*. This is very common in informal writing. For example:

- *They are the people that want to buy our house.*

We often omit relative pronouns as objects of verbs, for example:

- *They are the people she wanted to meet before leaving.*

Relative pronouns function as an object of a preposition. The most common use of *whom* is with prepositions. For example:

- *Play-role exercises in class is particularly good for students whom English is a second language for.*

We can place a preposition before a relative pronoun that functions as a complement of the preposition. For example:

- *The girl whom I talked went to work in France last year.*

We often use *whose* as a relative pronoun to express possession. In formal writing, we can also use *whose* instead of objects. We use the pronoun *whose* before nouns instead of possessive adjectives such as *my, our, his, her, their, its* and *X's* in defining and non-defining relative clauses. For example:

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

We can use *whose + noun* as the complement of a preposition, and we can put the preposition before *whose + noun*. For example:

- *The girl whose sister I used to share a house with went to work in France last year.*

b. Non-Defining Relative Clauses

We use non-defining relative clauses to explain more about a clearly defined object (person or thing). Non-defining relative clauses often appear immediately after the noun they describe and a comma (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). We often use relative pronouns including *who, which, whose* and *whom* to introduce non-defining relative clauses. As analyzed above, the relative pronoun *who* plays the role of a subject while *whom* plays the role of an object. *Which* has the function of subject and object.

We use *which* in a relative clause to indicate that the object is something. Additionally, we always use the word *which* to introduce non-defining relative clauses when used to refer to an entire sentence or clause as in the following examples:

- *They have passed the final exam 2 years early, which isn't easy for the average students.*
- *They were only him and Max at the party, which surprised him a lot.*

In these example sentences, the relative pronoun *which* indicates the entire meaning of the sentence before it.

3.2.3. Adverb Clauses

An adverb clause is a group of words that functions as an adverb. This clause also includes a subject and a verb, which is a subordinate clause connected to the main clause using a subordinating conjunction (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). However, subordinating conjunctions are used based on the purpose of the clause. Each of these subordinating conjunctions begins a particular type of adverb clause. There are nine types of adverb clauses as follows (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002):

a. Adverb Clauses of Time

The beginning of an adverbial clause of time is a subordinate linking conjunction of time such as *after, before, when, while, since, as, by the time, once, until, whenever, as soon as, hardly...when, no sooner...than, as long as, etc...* For example:

- *While he was waiting, she made some tea quickly.*
- *As soon as he came home, it had raining so heavily.*

However, an adverbial clause of time can come after the main clause in a sentence without a comma. For example:

- *She quickly made some tea while he was waiting.*

b. Adverb Clauses of Places

The beginning of an adverb clause of place is a subordinate linking conjunction of place such as *where, wherever, whenever*. Adverb clauses of place come after the main clause. For example:

- *She quickly made decisions to go wherever he goes.*

c. Adverb Clauses of Purposes

Adverb clauses of purpose begin with subordinating conjunctions of purpose such as: *so that, so as that* and *in order that*. The destination adverb clause comes after the main clause. For example:

- *She quickly made decisions where to go so that he could not change his mind.*
- *She has learnt hard so that she can get high marks in the exam.*

d. Adverb Clauses of Result

Adverb clauses of result begin with subordinate linking conjunctions of result, for example: *so...that, such...that*. The adverb clause comes after the main clause. For example:

- *She made decisions where to go so quickly that he could not change his mind.*
- *It was such a quick decision where to go that he could not change his mind.*

e. Adverb Clauses of Cause

The beginning of the adverb clause of cause is with subordinate linking conjunctions of cause such as *because, as, since*. For example:

- *Because he was waiting there, he was the witness of that serious accident.*
- *As my little boy doesn't like fish, he prefers eating meat and eggs.*

However, an adverb clause of cause can come after the main clause in a sentence without a comma, for example:

- *He was the witness of that serious accident because he was waiting there.*

f. Adverb Clauses of Condition

The beginning of a conditional adverb clause is a conditional subordinating conjunction such as *if, unless, provided that, even if*. Conditional adverbial clauses are classified into real conditional clauses and unreal conditional clauses. For example:

- *If you throw a stone into water, it sinks.*
- *Unless he studied hard, he would fail to pass the exam.*
- *If Max had known that his mother was ill, he would have visited her.*

However, conditional adverbial clauses can come after the main clause in a sentence without a comma. For example:

- *Max would have visited her if he had known that his mother was ill. (Max didn't know that his mother was ill).*

G. Adverb Clauses of Contrast/Concession

The beginning of the adverb clause of contrast/concession is with auxiliary linking conjunctions of contrast/concession such as *although, although, even though*. For example:

- *Although he was waiting there, he didn't pay attention to the quarrel.*
- *Though my little boy didn't like fish, he tried to eat some yesterday's dinner.*

However, adverbial clauses of contrast/concession can come after the main clause in a sentence without a comma. For example:

- *He didn't pay attention to the quarrel though he was waiting there.*

H. Adverb Clauses of Comparison

Comparative adverb clauses begin with comparative linking conjunctions such as *as/so...as, more...than, less...than, and the more/less..., the more/less...* Adverb clauses of comparison comes after the main clause. For example:

- *She made decisions where to go as quickly as he did.*

- *I can speak English more fluently than I used to.*

i. Adverb Clauses of Manner

Adverb clauses of manner begin with subordinate linking conjunctions of manner such as *as, like and as if...* Adverb clauses of manner come after the main clause. For example:

- *She quickly made decisions where to go as if she couldn't be allowed to give her opinion.*
- *He ate the food so quickly like he hadn't eaten anything for a long time.*

3.3 Reporting Clauses

We often need to tell others what others say. There are two ways to do this. One is to say similar sentences and use quotation marks. That's called direct speech. Another method is to summarize, or talk about what someone has said called reported or indirect clauses (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). The reporting clause can be a *That-clause* if the direct speech is a statement, or it can be a noun clause starting with a *Wh-word* if the direct speech is a question with a *Wh-word* interrogative, is a noun clause starting with *If/Whether* if the direct statement is a *Yes-No question*. If the direct speech is an order or request, the reported clause begins with the infinitive. Reporting clauses come second only to the main clause (Huddleston & Pullum, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2002). For example:

- *"I ate so much for dinner", David said → David said that he had eaten so much for dinner.*
- *"Are you trying to do the washing, Mary?" the mother said → Mary's mother asked/said to Mary if she was trying to do the washing.*
- *The doctor said, "What time will you come, Mary?" → The doctor asked Mary what time she would come.*
- *The doctor said, "Hold your mouth open, Mary." → The doctor asked Mary to hold her mouth open.*

3.4 Apparent Clauses

Sometimes we need to express an opinion or concept, so an apparent clause is used to convey this purpose. Apparent clauses are often connected to main clauses such as *I think, I suppose...* For example:

- *This film is one of the best films, I think.*
- *We ought to prepare our lesson carefully at home, I suppose.*

4. CONCLUSION

This article introduces a simple and effective way for students of the University of Transport and Communications in particular and non-English majors to learn, remember and improve their understanding of types of Finite clauses and their use. Students will save time to achieve their goal of

learning English in general and Finite clauses in particular. This article is useful in introducing the relationship between these clauses as well as their functions and syntactic features. This article has analyzed and compared related clauses so that we can perform analysis, discuss and understand the functions and specific examples to illustrate the types of Finite clauses, functions and their typical uses. Based on this advantage, students can achieve effective and confident use of Finite clauses.

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