

# Relative Clauses

- English
  - I liked the **man** [who came to dinner].
  - A **man** [that I met] helped me.
  - We would like to go back to the **cities** [where we were born].
- A subordinate clause that modifies a noun, restricting it to a particular individual or subset that the speaker wants to talk about.
  - I liked the man + the man came to dinner
  - A man helped me + I met the man.
  - We would like to go back to the cities + we were born in the cities.

- Relative clauses start with a wh-word (relative pronoun) or the complementizer *that*.
  - NOTE: In some cases they don't start with anything:
    - A man [I met] helped me.
- Relative clauses contain a gap in the relativized position:
  - [who [\_\_ came to dinner] ]
  - [that [I met \_\_] ]
  - [where [we were born \_\_] ]
- The complementizer *that* can always be replaced by a wh-word:
  - A man [whom [I met \_\_] ] helped me.
- Thus, relative clauses involve wh-movement internally.

- Externally, relative clauses modify a head noun
  - They function as adjuncts of the noun

### EXAMPLES:

- That storm we had last night was amazing.
- I wouldn't want the job Lee applied for last week.
- The application forms that arrived yesterday look quite hard.
- Kim picked up a book which Lee had left lying on the stairs.

### – QUESTIONS:

- What are the head nouns?
- What are the relative clauses?
- What is the relativized position (gap) in each relative clause, and what grammatical relation does it have?

# Cross-Linguistic Variation in Relative Clauses

- Probably, all languages have relative clauses.
- Relative clauses in all languages involve a restrictive clause modifying a head noun.
- But there are often syntactic differences:
  - Presence or absence of relative pronoun or other relativizer.
  - Relative clause follows or precedes the head noun
  - The relative clause does or does not contain a gap.

- Yimas

- **ɲaykum** [irut m-naampa-nt-um]  
women mat REL-weave-PRES-3PL  
‘the women who are weaving the mats’
- Relative marker is a verb prefix, not a relative pronoun

- Japanese

- [kimura-san-ga \_\_\_ katte-iru] **inu**  
Kimura-Mr.-NOM keeps-NONPAST dog  
‘the dog that Mr. Kimura keeps’
- Relative clause precedes the head noun

- Hausa

- **wuqud** [da ya kashe ta da *ita*]  
knife REL he killed her with it  
'the knife that he killed her with \_\_\_\_'  
– Relative clause contains a 'resumptive pronoun' instead of a gap.

- In informal English, we also sometimes find a resumptive pronoun instead of a gap:
  - There's that **guy** in the leather jacket [that we saw *him* around a few times in the market].

# Complex NPs within sentences

- Noun phrases modified by relative clauses can fill any NP slot in a matrix clause:
  - English
    - [The dog that Mr. Kimura keeps] has a bad cough.
    - [The child to whom Mr. Kimura gave a dog] has a bad cough.
    - I've never liked [the dog that Mr. Kimura bought].
    - I've never liked [the child to whom Mr. Kimura gave a dog].
  - Japanese
    - [Kinoo Ziroo-ga \_\_\_ yondeita hon]-ga nakunatta  
yesterday Ziro-NOM (ACC) was.reading book-NOM missing  
'[The book that Ziro was reading \_\_\_ yesterday] is missing.'

# Practice Problems

- Tallerman (p.234-240)
  - Problem 1 (Turkish wh-questions)
  - Problem 4 (English complex NPs with either complement clauses or relative clauses)
  - Problem 5 (Relative clauses in Malayalam, Nduka, Romani, and Welsh)