

RELATIVE CLAUSES

Schuele, C. M. (2009). *Complex syntax coding manual*. Unpublished coding manual, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.

The content below has recently been added to our complex syntax manual, cited above. We have routinely found that relative clauses are particularly challenging to identify. Historically, researchers have focused on four types of relative clauses (e.g., Tyack & Gottsleben, 1986): SS, SO, OS, OO. The first letter indicated the position of the noun phrase in the sentence (i.e., subject noun, object noun) and the second letter indicated the type of the relative clause (i.e., the gap in the relative clause). This classification has been confusing at times because “subject relative” has been used to refer to SS and SO relative (i.e., subject noun modified) as well as SS and OS (i.e., gap in the relative is in the subject position).

Type	Modified NP	Type of Relative	Example
SS	Subject noun	Subject relative clause	The girl who lives here rides her bike to school.
SO	Subject noun	Object relative clause	The girl that I know rides her bike to school.
OS	Object noun	Subject relative clause	The girl has <u>a bike</u> that is blue .
OO	Object noun	Object relative clause	The girl has <u>a bike</u> that I like .

Recently, Diessel and Tomasello (2005) presented a much more inclusive framework of relative clauses, which we illustrate in the table below. Each relative clause can be categorized based on the head of the relative and the relativized NP.

RELATIVE CLAUSE TYPES WITH ARGUMENT GAPS: Example Utterances and Simple Sentences from which the Example Utterance was Derived

	Head of Relative Clause What is the sentential position of the noun phrase that is modified by the relative clause? In all utterances below cat is the head of the relative clause.				
Relativized NP Where is the gap location in the relative clause?	PN Presentational Nominal (This is the cat.) noun is in presentational nominal (e.g., this is the cat)	NP Isolated Noun Phrase (The cat.) noun stands alone	SUBJ Sentential Subject (The cat meowed.) noun is subject	OBJ Direct Object (The girl found the cat.) noun is direct object	OBL Object of the Preposition (The girl looked at the cat.) noun is object of preposition
SUBJECT	This is the cat that ____ chases mice. [This is the cat; the cat chases mice]	the cat that ____ chases mice. [the cat; the cat chases mice]	The cat that ____ chases mice eats cheese. [the cat eats the cheese; the cat chases mice]	The girl found the cat that ____ chases mice. [the girl found the cat; the cat chases mice]	The girl looked at the cat that ____ chases mice. [the girl looked at the cat; the cat chases the mice]
DIRECT OBJECT	This is the cat THAT the dog chased _____. [this is the cat; the dog chased the cat]	the cat THAT the dog chased _____. [the cat; the dog chased the cat]	The cat THAT the dog chased ____ eats cheese. [the cat eats cheese; the dog chased the cat]	The girl found the cat THAT the dog chased _____. [the girl found the cat; the dog chased the cat]	The girl looked at the cat THAT the dog chased _____. [the girl looked at the cat; the dog chased the cat]
NOUN PHRASE WITHIN A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE	This is the cat THAT the boy sat on _____. [this is the cat; the boy sat on the cat]	the cat THAT the boy sat on _____. [the cat; the boy sat on the cat]	The cat THAT the boy sat on ____ eats the cheese. [the cat eats the cheese, the boy sat on the cat]	The girl found the cat THAT the boy sat on _____. [the girl found the cat; the boy sat on the cat]	The girl looked at the cat THAT the boy sat on _____. [the girl looked at the cat; the boy sat on the cat]
<i>Note.</i> Argument gaps are indicated by ____ within the utterance. The simple sentences from which the utterance arose are marked in brackets []. Where the relative marker - THAT - is printed in small caps, the relative marker is optional. Only in the SUBJ row is the relative marker obligatory; that is, in a subject relative the gap is in the subject position and the relative marker is required. In this row, a relative marker omission results in an ungrammatical utterance. Relative markers can typically include <i>that</i> , <i>who</i> , <i>or which</i> in the utterances in this table, and typically <i>that</i> or <i>who</i> . In the tables in the next section, "noun phrase within a preposition phrase is referred to as OBL, or oblique.					

INDIRECT OBJECT NOUN PHRASES AS THE HEAD OF THE RELATIVE CLAUSE

The noun phrase that is modified by the relative clause can also be in the indirect object position. But based on data reported in Diessel (2004) and other sources as well as our own data, relative clauses of this nature appear to be virtually non-existent in the spontaneous expressive language of preschool and early school-age children. Thus, we chose not to include these types in the table above, but list them below.

The girl gave the cat the cheese.

Cat is the indirect object. In the example utterances in the table below, the indirect object is the head of the relative clause.

	Head of Relative Clause What is the sentential position of the noun phrase that is modified by the relative clause?
Relativized NP (i.e., gap location in the relative clause)	IO noun is in indirect object
SUBJ	The girl gave the cat that ____ chases mice the cheese. [the girl gave the case the cheese; the cat chases mice]
OBJ	The girl gave the cat that the dog chases ____ the cheese. [the girl gave the case the cheese; the dog chases the cat]
OBL	The girl gave the cat that the girl looked at ____ the cheese. [the girl gave the cat the cheese; the girl looked at the cat]

In our coding we have used two relative categories [src] and [rc]. All relative clauses in which the relativized noun phrase is in the subject position (i.e., the gap) we code as [src]. We put these relatives into a single category because the relative markers is obligatory. The remainder of the above relative clauses are coded as [rc].

There is an additional relative clause type that we have identified in the language samples of preschool and early school age children: *it's a little building thing where there's (a) a fun zone (an*) and bouncer/s (and stuff)*. The clause *where there's a fund zone and bouncers* modifies the noun phrase *a little building thing*. These relatives seem to be most consistently labeled as “adjunct relative clauses”. We might restate this utterance as the simple sentences: *It's a little building thing. There's a fund zone and bouncers in the little building thing.*