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Problems Encountered by EFL Learners in English Relativisation

The Case of Third Year License Students at the Department of English at Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University-Jijel

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Declaration

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “Problems Encountered by EFL learners in English Relativisation” is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

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DIDICATION

'In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful'

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents. Their love and support have been my guiding light throughout this journey. They have constantly pushed me forward, believed in me, and provided the encouragement I needed to pursue my goals. I am forever grateful for their presence in my life, as they are the reason I have become the person I am today.

To my dear brothers and sister, you have been my constant source of motivation and inspiration.

Your support and presence have meant the world to me.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my partner, who has worked tirelessly alongside me to create this piece of work..

To my best friends, and lovely relatives thank you for always being there with your cheerful and positive spirits.

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Abstract

The present study investigates the problems that EFL learners at Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University-Jijel encounter in English relativisation , with a particular focus on identification and production problems. The first assumption posits that EFL learners encounter problems in identifying the different types of relative clauses and fail to recognize all relativizers. The second posits that they fail to produce grammatically correct relative clauses. To validate these two assumptions, a grammar test and a questionnaire were administered to 42 third-year EFL students at the aforementioned university. The findings of the study revealed a number of problems, including a lack of knowledge regarding the appropriate usage and placement of relative pronouns, problems in determining the boundaries of relative clauses, incorrect utilization of the comma as a punctuation mark for non-restrictive relative clauses, and an inability to produce relative clauses that adhere to grammatical rules. Based on these findings, some recommendations were provided to students and teachers and a suggestion was made to researchers.

Keywords: relativisation, relative clauses, restrictive/non-restrictive, relative pronoun, test, questionnaire

List of abbreviations

ADLM : Audio Lingual Method

ASTP : Army Specialized Training Program

CA : Communicative Approach

CBA : Competency Based Approach

CLT : Communicative Language Teaching

DP : Determiner Phrase

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

ESL : English as a Second Language

GTM : Grammar Translation Method

L2 : Second Language

NP : Noun Phrase

OP : Object of a Preposition

Q : Question

RC : Relative Clause(s)

RP : Relative Pronoun(s)

SLA : Second Language Acquisition

TBLT : Task Based Language Teaching

TG : Traditional Grammar

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General Introduction

Introduction

In English as foreign language learning, one of the most problematic aspects for learners is grammar. It is considered as the hardest part of the English language, particularly due to its complexity. According to Yusob (2018), grammar is a difficult skill to master. Even experienced teachers, will inevitably face challenges in teaching it, as each student has a unique learning style. So the teacher needs to be aware of that and should consider these differences (p.156).

In order to comprehend and produce correct sentences, learners need to master the different aspects of grammar. One of these aspects is the relative clause."Relative clauses have always been an important issue to EFL and ESL educators because of their complex syntactic structure and therefore being a learning problem to the language learner" (Selinker, 2001) , as cited in (Mohammed,2016, p.1). In other words, due to their complex grammatical structure, relative clauses have always been a source of difficulty for learners, resulting in errors when attempting to use them.

1. Background of the Study

Relative clauses have been a topic of interest for researchers in grammar. Yong (1987) claimed "The study of relative clauses form is one of the most important and interesting topics in language typology and universals. It is considered to be as a rich field of inquiry which has attracted many second language acquisition (SLA) researchers to focus on"(p, 50).Thus, different studies have been conducted to shed light on the problems faced by EFL learners in English relativisation.

Doughty (1991) conducted a study to investigate the impact of instructional methods on second language acquisition of relative clauses. The study had a control group and two experimental groups, and involved pre-testing and post-testing to measure the

subjects' knowledge of relativisation. The pre-test involved a variety of tasks, including a grammaticality judgment task and an oral measure of relativisation production. The study compared the improvement in relativisation ability between the group that received no instruction in relativisation (the control group) and the group that received exposure and an instructional treatment. The results showed that the latter group performed better in acquiring the ability to use the object of a preposition (OP) relativisation and applying this knowledge to more complex sentences.

In a similar vein, Gass (1979) investigated the receptive and productive knowledge of English relative clauses among 17 high intermediate and advanced adult L2 learners from nine different native languages. The study included two tasks: a grammaticality judgment task and a sentence combining task, and the results showed that errors were classified based on parameters of world languages. Statistical tests did not find significant differences among the testing sessions, but group differences were found based on the subjects' native language. The study also discussed qualitative differences between the tasks, where the sentence combining task reflected the subjects' actual competence better than the grammaticality judgment task. The study concluded that the difficulty level of relative clauses for L2 learners can be predicted based on the accessibility hierarchy.

Another study was conducted by Eng and Heng (2005) who examined the ability of 94 Malay learners of English to comprehend and produce relative clauses in English. The participants' proficiency level was determined using the Oxford Placement Test, after which they completed a grammaticality judgment task and a sentence combining task. The study found out that the learners struggled with grammatical relative clauses, especially those with object extraction from upper and embedded clauses. They had also difficulty distinguishing between grammatical and ungrammatical relative clauses. The sentence-combining task indicated weaknesses in the learners' ability to produce subject and object

relative clauses from embedded clauses. The study suggested that these difficulties are due to differences between Malay and English relative clause formation and highlighted the importance of adequate exposure and practice in the target language.

In a study conducted by Mohammed (2016) at the Sudan University of Science and Technology, the researcher aimed to measure the proficiency of fourth-year students in using relative clauses. The study sought to identify the issues students face in using relative clauses and determine their root causes. Data was collected using a test, consisting of four questions with six statements, each aimed at investigating the challenges faced by students in using relative clauses. The results revealed that the majority of students had difficulty using relative pronouns and commas with relative clauses and were not familiar with their function or how to reduce them.

The studies discussed in this context focused on exploring the difficulties that second language learners of English face in learning relative clauses. Our study is also aimed at investigating the challenges faced by EFL learners in this area. While Doughty's study employed pre-testing and post-testing to assess learners' proficiency, the other studies of Gass, Eng and Heng, and Mohammed used a test exclusively to identify learners' difficulties, which is similar to our approach of using a test. Moreover, the studies employed different tasks, such as grammaticality judgment and sentence combining, to assess learners' relative clause knowledge, which is comparable to our test's various tasks. Our study takes place in an Algerian context that may have variables that are not necessarily the same as those contexts investigated by the studies reviewed here in the literature. Since all of the abovementioned studies highlighted that EFL learners had difficulty distinguishing between grammatical and ungrammatical relative clauses and producing subject and object relative clauses from embedded clauses, it is expected that at least some of these problematic issues will be re-explored in our study. These studies also

emphasized that sufficient exposure and practice to the target language are crucial for acquiring relative clauses. Additionally, they highlight the role of learners' native language in their ability to acquire relative clauses in the target language. Our study, it is hoped, will attempt to find out from the findings what should be done academically at the Departments of English in Algeria.

2. Statement of the Problem

To effectively acquire a foreign language, one must understand its grammatical syntactic structures. This particular aspect of the language has proven to be challenging. According to an informal discussion with the teachers of grammar and written expression at the Department of English, Mohamed Seddik Benyahia University, Jijel, the teachers told us that many students encounter obstacles when it comes to constructing correct sentences, including relative clauses, due to their limited knowledge of grammar. The obstacles appear particularly in tasks and exams where the poor performance of the students in identifying and producing the relative and other clauses is evident. Since the relative clause is one of the most important clauses in English and the studies in the reviewed literature all revealed problems with English relativisation, we believe that such a problem deserves to be addressed in the Algerian context.

3. Aim of the Study

The main aim of the present research is to examine the difficulties EFL learners encounter when they are tasked with identifying and producing relative clauses, with a specific focus on the syntactic aspect of these clauses.

4. Significance of the Study

Since the present study sheds light on the potential mistakes that students may make in English relativisation, this will help teachers focus on these mistakes and find ways of how to enable students to avoid them. Similarly, the students themselves might benefit from the study by sifting through the tasks in the test and examining the mistakes spotted and analysed in the test analysis. In addition, it is hoped that the study would provide insights for curriculum designers to design syllabuses according to students' needs and take into account English relativisation. Finally, the study would hopefully add to the pool of knowledge in English didactics gathered in an Algerian context, especially that grammatical issues are not much dealt with despite the fact that grammar is a cornerstone in learning any language.

5. Research Questions

1. Which problems EFL learners encounter in identifying relative clauses and relative pronouns?
2. Which problems EFL learners encounter in using relative clauses?

6. Assumptions

1. EFL learners encounter problems in identifying the different types of relative clauses, and do not recognize all relative pronouns.
2. EFL learners encounter problems in producing grammatically correct relative clauses .

7. Research Methods and Instruments

The present study is a quantitative research as a questionnaire and a test will be given to third-year EFL learners at the Department of English, Mohamed Seddik Benyahia University, Jijel in order to collect data and obtain reliable answers to the research questions. The choice of third-year students is based on the assumption that they possess sufficient proficiency in the target language and are expected to have a solid grasp of grammar. The questionnaire and test will be used to find out the difficulties that students encounter in identifying and producing relative clauses and their components.

8. Structure of the Study

The present study is structured into two main parts. The first part, consisting of two chapters, focuses on theoretical aspects. Chapter one provides definitions of the relative clause and its constituents, while chapter two explores the teaching of grammar and relative clauses in EFL context. The second part of the research is empirical. It includes a description of the study's respondents and the instruments used. Moreover, it presents the results obtained from the test and the questionnaire administered to the students. Finally, the study ends with the main research findings, limitations of the study ,and pedagogical recomondations.

Chapter One: The Relative Clause

Introduction

Relative clauses are among the most frequently used types of complex grammar in the English language. Alroudhan (2016) claimed that relative clauses are generally considered subordinate clauses in complex sentences (p.33). In many aspects, they are among the most intriguing structures in English, partly due to their function as modifiers (Williams,2005,p.142). Leech and Svartvik (2002) added that “the main function of a relative clause is to modify a noun phrase” (p.404). This chapter will provide a theoretical background of the present study by giving essential information on relative clauses. It deals mainly with how researchers defined and categorized this complex syntactic structure.

1. Definition of the Relative Clause

According to Harzallah and Alawi (2019) the relative clause is thought to be a global structure, and its analysis has been a hot topic among linguists, particularly in the generative model. A relative clause is a clause that contains a subject and predicate; it modifies a noun in a preceding determiner phrase (DP),p.7).

For Andrews (2007) “a relative clause (RC) is a subordinate clause which delimits the reference of a noun phrase (NP), specifying the role of referent of that NP in the situation described by the relative clause” (p.206) . To put it simply, a relative clause is a subordinate clause that specifies the function of the referent (or noun) of the noun phrase in the situation described by the relative clause.

“A standard relative clause functions just as a standard adjective does, it modifies nouns, pronouns or other nominals. Relative clauses are introduced by real relative pronouns, relative adverbs or relative determiners”. For instance, in the sentence "I crave the dress that she wore to the wedding," the relative pronoun "that" connects the relative

clause "that she wore to the wedding" to the main clause "I crave the dress," and the relative clause clarifies which dress the speaker craves. In this case, the antecedent of "that" is the direct object "dress"(Strumpf & Douglas,1997,p.270).

Foley and Hall (2003) described relative clauses as subordinate clauses that identify or add extra information to the noun of the main clause (p.298).Similarly, Azar (2002) added that “an adjective clause is a dependent clause that modifies a noun. It describes, identifies, or gives further information about a noun (An adjective clause is also called a relative clause)” (p.267).

1.2. The Form of the Relative Clause

In English relativisation, embedding is the process that creates the fundamental structural relationship between sentences. In this process, one clause is placed within another higher order clause. This embedded clause becomes a part of the sentence . For Example “ The fans who were attending the concert had to wait in line for three hours”.In this well structured sentence, the head NP (the fans) is directly related to the embedded clause (who were attending the concert). ‘Who’ in the embedded clause relating to (the fans) is a relative pronoun .Moreover, the embedded clause’s modifying function is similar to an adjectival clause. It informs the reader about which fans had to wait a very long time (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016,p.606). In the relative clause, the relative pronoun appears clause initial .In fact, this is the general rule for English relative clause formation. The relative pronoun must appear at the beginning of the clause or the very least as part of the clause’s initial noun or prepositional phrase.(Comerie,1989, p.140).

1.3. The Function of the Relative Clause

According to Leech and Svartvik (2002) the primary role of relative clauses is to function as a post modifier in noun phrases, with the relative pronoun pointing back to the head of the noun phrase (p. 265). In a complex sentence relative, clauses can function as:

A subject: here are some examples “***That they will win*** is known for sure.”, “***That she is beautiful*** doesn't mean so much to me.”

When we analyze the two sentences, we find that it is possible to replace the relative clause in bold with the pronoun *it*. As we can see, the pronoun (*it*) comes before the predicate (Mohammed,2016,p.20).

A direct object

In complex sentences, relative clauses which function as an object typically have human subjects. However , it's worth noting that not all relative clauses functioning as objects necessarily have human subjects. They mostly include reported speech, like “He said that he was proud with his company.”, “ They emphasized that homework has to be done by tomorrow.” (Mohammed,2016,p.20).

The relative clause in the first example, "He said that he was proud with his company," serves as the object of the sentence. It provides additional information about what he said, with the pronoun "he" as the subject. In the second example, the relative clause " that homework has to be done by tomorrow" functions as the object and adds details to what they emphasized. The subject in this relative clause is "homework." Both relative clauses expand on the reported speech, offering more information about the statements made.

A subject complement

Without using a complex sentence, the relative clause can function as a subject complement, such as “ It seems that she is nervous.” , “ What annoyed me was that she did not pay the attention” (Mohammed,2016,p.20).

In the first example, "It seems that she is nervous," the relative clause "that she is nervous" functions as a subject complement. It provides additional information about the subject "it" and describes the state of being nervous. The relative clause clarifies what " it " refers to and adds detail to the overall meaning of the sentence.

In the second example, "What annoyed me was that she did not pay attention," the relative clause "that she did not pay attention" also serves as a subject complement. It explains what specifically annoyed the speaker, emphasizing the action of not paying attention. The relative clause enhances the meaning of the sentence by providing crucial information about the speaker's feelings and the cause of his annoyance.

1.4.The Use of Relative Clause

In the field of linguistics , the study of relative clauses and their usage in different contexts has attracted significant attention.

1.4.1.In Conversation

Fox and Thompson (1990-2007) , as cited in (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016) have conducted some of the most fascinating and in-depth research on the use of relative clauses in spoken English. They have looked at how speakers' linguistic choices to control information flow in interactional contexts affect the patterns of relative clauses used. The following sections highlight the communicative functions related to the patterns that Fox& Thompson found:

Grounding: it is the process by which speakers make a newly introduced NP meaningful for their listeners by connecting it to a referent already understood by their interlocutors. So, for instance, this relevance is frequently provided for a personal pronoun (I, she, we) representing a person or persons known to the listeners. For example:

- The car that she borrowed had a low tire.

This example demonstrates one of the striking patterns Fox and Thompson discovered. When nonhuman head nouns served as subject (car), the relative clauses modifying them usually had relativized objects (that, substituting for car) with a context-relevant pronoun (she) as the relative clause's subject.

Through the speaker's use of a pronoun representing someone familiar to listeners in order to mark the head noun's relevance to the discourse, the complete relative clause (that she borrowed) functions to ground a head noun that has not been until this time established in the discourse.

Characterizing: it is a second pattern, where nonhuman head NPs act as the main clause's object with relativized subjects in the modifying relative clause. Here are two examples:

- They are selling [these candies] that explode when you chew on them.
- I don't like [the pants] that come down narrow and then bell out.

In this pattern, the relative clauses tend to define the head NP. They provide descriptive information about the object head nouns (e.g. these candies, the pants) because they are frequently definite and already grounded in the discourse (p. 620-621).

1.4.2. In Writing

According to Larsen-Freeman et al. (2016), many studies have been conducted on the use of relative clauses in written language. Biber et al.'s (1999) analysis of written and spoken English, as cited in(Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016) confirmed that relative clauses are more commonly used in news, fiction, and academic writing compared to conversation (p.622).

Larsen-Freeman et al. (2016) also mentioned a study by Temperley (2003) that investigated the choice between using a relative pronoun or omitting it in written discourse. The study analyzed articles from the Wall Street Journal and identified two factors influencing the decision to include the relative pronoun or not. The first factor is ambiguity avoidance, where including the relative pronoun aids to avoid potential ambiguity in meaning. The second factor is anaphoricity, which refers to whether the pronoun in the relative clause has been mentioned before or not. Furthermore, Larsen-Freeman et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of relative clauses in written texts, especially in academic genres. They referred to a study by Tse and Hyland (2010) that examined the use of relative clauses in academic journal articles across different disciplines. The findings revealed that relative clauses were commonly used to specify certain aspects related to the format of acceptable contributions, research teams, the journal itself, and the audience (p.623).

1.5 . Types of Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are preceded by relative pronouns or adverbs , and the information they provide may or may not be essential to the completeness of the sentence (Herring,2016, p.919).

1.5.1. Defining Relative Clauses

According to Peter Herring (2016), the defining relative clause is also known as the *restrictive relative clause*. It identifies a noun and provides additional information in order to make its meaning clear. This additional information is necessary; so it is not separated from the rest of the sentence by any kind of punctuation marks. For example “I saw the guy ***who delivers my mail*** in town yesterday” , “I’ll always remember the river ***where we learned to swim***” . In the aforementioned sentences, the restrictive relative clauses are in bold, and omitting these clauses will raise questions about ‘who’ or ‘what’ the speaker means with these sentences. After the relative clause had been removed, the noun became unclear and the sentence incomplete (p.920).

1.5.2. Non-Defining Relative Clauses

In a sentence with a non-defining (or non-restrictive) relative clause, the noun is already identified and this clause is used only to add extra information that is not essential for the sentence; removing it will not make a difference in the meaning. It is usually separated from the sentence by commas. Here are some examples “Paris, ***where I spent six months studying***, is the most beautiful city in the world” , “The woman down the street, ***whose children are the same age as ours***, invited us over for dinner next week”.

In these sentences, the non-restrictive relative clauses did not identify the noun, but rather gave unnecessary extra information about it, and removing it will neither change the meaning nor make the sentence ambiguous (Peter Herring, 2016, p.920).

The following table summarizes the difference between defining and non-defining relative clauses.

Table1: Differences between Defining and Non-defining Relative Clauses (Larsen-Freeman et al.,2016,p.633)

SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RESTRICTIVE AND NONRESTRICTIVE RELATIVE CLAUSES	
<i>Restrictive</i>	<i>Nonrestrictive</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides information needed to identify or limit a noun in the main clause. 2. Derived from an underlying embedded source. 3. No pauses or special punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off the relative clause from the main clause. 4. May not modify an entire proposition, only a head noun. 5. <i>That</i> is freely used as a relative pronoun (as well as <i>wh</i>-pronouns <i>who(m)</i>, <i>which</i>, etc.) 6. Does not usually modify proper nouns.² 7. May modify a head noun with a generic determiner like <i>any</i> or <i>every</i>. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides additional information that is nonessential to determining the identity of a noun in the main clause. 2. Derived from two independent underlying sentences. 3. Commas (or parentheses or dashes) in writing and special pauses and lower pitch in speech set the relative clause off from the main clause. 4. May modify either a head noun or an entire proposition in the form of a comment. 5. <i>That</i> cannot be used as a relative pronoun. Only <i>wh</i>-pronouns are possible. 6. May modify proper nouns as well as common nouns.² 7. May not modify a head noun with a generic determiner like <i>any</i> or <i>every</i>.

1.6.3. Relative Adverb Clauses

A relative adverb clause is another construction or a type of relative clauses. It starts with a relative adverb (Larsen-Freeman et al.,2016,p.636). These relative adverbs are used to form clauses when the purpose of adding information is to express time, place or the reason of an action. Moreover, they function as modifiers of the verb in the sentence. For example “The house **where I was born** is a very special place” (‘Where’ modifies the verb *was born*)” , “I love casual Fridays, **when we get to wear jeans to work**” (‘When’ modifies the verb *wear*)” , “I don’t know **why he got so angry**” (‘Why’ modifies the verb *got*) (Herring, 2016, p.920-921).

1.5.4. Reduced Relative Clauses

A reduced relative clause can be formed by shortening the relative clause that modifies the subject and not the object of the sentence (Beare, 2019). Furthermore, Larsen-Freeman et al. (2016) stated that one can delete relative pronouns that replace certain types of objects in a relative clause. For instance, in the sentence *The curry that I cooked was too hot*, the relativized object ‘that’ can be omitted to form *The curry I cooked was too hot*. However, it is important to note that relative pronouns replacing the subject of the embedded relative clause cannot be deleted. For example, in the sentence *The ice skater who is in the show looks familiar*, the relativized subject pronoun ‘who’ cannot be deleted on its own. Nevertheless, deletion is possible if the subject is followed by the verb ‘to be’ as in *The ice skater in the show looks familiar*. In the following sections, we will examine various types of reduced relative clauses (p.633).

1.5.4.1. Present Participle Phrases

According to Larsen-Freeman et al. (2016) removing the relative pronoun and ‘to be’ from a restrictive relative clause results in a structure that may involve participle phrases. Specifically, if the relative clause has a subject that is being modified and a verb in the progressive form, taking out the relative pronoun and ‘be’ will lead to a present participle phrase that describes the main noun. Examples “The full relative clause: *How old is that boy who is riding the surfboard near the pier?*” , “The reduced relative clause: *How old is that boy riding the surfboard near the pier?*” (p.635).

1.5.4.2. Past Participle Phrases

The process of creating a past participle phrase from a relative clause involves removing the relative pronoun and the verb ‘be’ from the clause that modifies the subject of a sentence, and placing the remaining past participle phrase after the modified noun.

This construction can be seen in the examples given, such as the sentence *The car, which was purchased in Seattle, was a vintage Mustang* being reduced to *The car purchased in Seattle was a vintage Mustang*. Another example is the sentence, *The elephant, which was born in captivity, was set free* being reduced to *The elephant born in captivity was set free* (Beare, 2019).

1.5.4.3.Past Participle

The process of transforming a relative clause into a past participle involves eliminating the relative pronoun and the verb ‘be’ from the clause that describes the subject of a sentence, and positioning the resulting past participle before the noun that is being modified. This structure can be seen in the given examples, such as *The desk, which was stained, was antique* being converted to *The stained desk was antique*, or *The man who was elected was very popular* being simplified to *The elected man was very popular*(Beare,2019).

1.5.4.4. Prepositional Phrases

When a relative clause is reduced, it can result in a prepositional phrase that modifies a noun. However, sometimes it is unclear whether the prepositional phrase is acting as an adverbial or a reduced relative clause. For example, the phrase ‘in the den’ in the statement *Carla drew the picture in the den* can either indicate the location where Carla drew the picture, in which case it is adverbial, or which picture Carla drew, in which case it is adjectival and originates in a restrictive relative clause that has been reduced. However, not all post nominal prepositional phrases are connected to reduced relative clauses, and writers may choose to use a full relative clause rather than a prepositional phrase to avoid ambiguity (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016, p.634-635).

1.5.4.5. Adjectives and Adjective Phrases

To condense a relative clause into an adjective, one needs to remove the relative pronoun and the verb (usually ‘be’ but also ‘seem’, ‘appear’, etc.) from the clause that modifies the subject of a sentence, and then put the adjective before the noun that is being modified. For instance, the sentence “*The children who were happily played until nine in the evening* can be reduced to *The happy children played until nine in the evening*” On the other hand, to turn a relative clause into an adjective phrase, one needs to eliminate the relative pronoun and the verb, and then place the resulting adjective phrase after the noun that is being modified. For instance, the sentence “*The product, which seemed perfect in many ways, failed to succeed in the market*” can be simplified to “*The product, perfect in many ways, failed to succeed in the market*” (Beare,2019).

1.5.5.Free Relative Clauses

A free relative clause is a type of relative clause that includes the antecedent within itself and begins with a wh-word . It can refer to people or things and can function as a subject, complement, or object. Unlike other types of relative clauses, a free relative clause's wh-pronoun (e.g. what, where, how) does not refer back to any other part of the sentence. Additionally, according to traditional grammar the relative pronouns used in free relative clauses are different from those used in other types of relative clauses. For example, what and how can serve as free relative pronouns but not as appositive or restrictive pronouns, whereas which can serve as a restrictive or appositive relative pronoun but not as a free relative pronoun (Nordquist, 2019).

1.5.6.Bound Relative Clauses

In bound relative clause, the relative pronoun is embedded within another clause and tied to its antecedent phrase, thus creating a relationship between the two. This

relationship allows the clause to provide additional information about its antecedent. For instance, in the sentence *The student who withdrew from the course is seeking to return to it*, the bound relative clause *who withdrew from the course* modifies the noun *student* and gives more information about the specific student being referred to. Similarly, in the sentence *I gifted a ring that did not cost much to my mother*, the bound relative clause *that did not cost much* modifies the noun *ring* and provides extra information about the specific ring that was given as a gift. In essence, bound relative clauses are considered a prototypical concept of a relative clauses as they always involve two distinct elements related to each other. They are embedded within a sentence and are tied to their antecedent phrase, which allows them to provide additional information and modify the noun being referred to (Trotta, 2000,p.176-177).

1.6 . Relative Pronouns

In English, a relative pronoun is used to initiate a clause or part of a sentence that identifies a noun (Thyab ,2022, p.232). Azar (2002) stated that relative pronouns (also called adjective clause pronouns) are used to connect the dependent clause to the independent clause. The adjective clause pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *which*, *that* and *whose* (p.267). Relative pronouns are used to add details to help the reader understand who or what the sentence is referring to. They can serve as the subject or object of the relative clause, and just like other pronouns, they have the same grammatical function as nouns. *Who*, *whom*, *whose* and *that* are the most frequently used relative pronouns (Herring,2016, p.920) .

The following is a table adapted from Termjai (2021, p.90-91), which summarizes the usage of the different relative pronouns and adverbs, together with examples.

Table 2: *Relative Pronouns and Relative Adverbs: Usage and Examples (Adapted from Termjai, 2021,p.90-91)*

	Usage	Examples
Who	It refers to people.	I have a friend who plays guitar.
Whom (formal)	It refers to people when it replaces an object in the RC.	The boy whom Elena had shouted at smiled.
Which	It refers to things.	The paintings which Mr. Flowers has in his house are worth around £100,000.
That	It refers to people or things, usually in spoken English.	That's the man that I met at Alison's party.
Whose	It refers to possessives.	Stevenson is an architect whose designs have won international praise.
Where	It refers to location.	This was the place where we first met.
When	It refers to time.	He wasn't looking forward to the time when he would have to leave.
Why	It is used after the noun "the reason."	I didn't get a pay rise, but this wasn't the reason why I left.

1.7. Relative determiners

A relative determiner is a specific type of relativizers that is always found together with a noun, appearing before it. E.g, In the sentence "The novel was published in 2001, by which time the writer was already internationally well-known," the relative determiner is "by which" . It introduces a relative clause that gives additional information about the time when the novel was published. The phrase "by which time" acts as a relative determiner and connects the main clause "The novel was published in 2001" with the relative clause "The writer was already internationally well-known"(Hedvall,2008,p.6).

Conclusion

The present chapter mainly has shown that the relative clause has several grammatical aspects. Its form as well as its function may vary. Its meaning and use also

may vary depending on how such a clause is used by the users and on the situation of such a use (conversation, writing, formality, etc.). Its complexity and wide use in the language are features that should be taken into account in its teaching and learning because the mastery of its use is of crucial significance in an EFL context. This is the reason that lies behind devoting the second chapter of the present dissertation to such an issue.

Chapter Two: Teaching grammar: Approaches and Methods

Introduction

Grammar is a fundamental aspect of language that plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. In this chapter, several key issues related to grammar teaching and learning have been addressed, including the definition of grammar, different types of grammar, and various approaches and methods for teaching grammar effectively. Additionally, it tackled teaching relative clauses.

2.1. Grammar Definition

Grammar is considered as the most important feature in learning any language, it constitutes the core of the language since it covers the rules that govern the ways speech and writing are structured. However, researchers did not agree on one specific definition. Mary Ansel (2000) claimed that “the grammar of the language is an analysis of the various functions performed by the words of the language as they are used by native speakers and writers” (p.25). According to her, the language can be analyzed in different ways, in which words are named according to their functions and role in the sentence; words that express actions are called verbs, while words that are used to name things are referred to as nouns. To illustrate the point, Ansel gave the following examples: “water is one of the necessities of life”. Here the word water functions as a noun, whereas in the example: “Do you water your plants once a week?” It functions as a verb (p.26).

Thornbury (1999) claimed that grammar is conventionally seen as the study of the syntax and morphology of sentences. In other words it is the study of both the way words are chained together in a particular order and also of what kinds of words can slot into any link in the chain (p.2). To put it plainly, grammar is the study of the possible structures of sentences. The latter consists of words and the order of these words is its main concern.

Similarly Richards and Schmidt (2010) grammar is a description of the organization of a language and the manner in which linguistic elements, such as words and phrases are joined together to form sentences in that language (P.251-252).

2.2. Types of Grammar

Language teaching history witnessed several debates among specialists regarding the syllabi of grammar teaching . Consequently , as various teaching approaches and methods have come and gone, different types of grammar have also emerged, each of them has been designed to serve the objectives of a specific approach.

2.2.1. Generative Grammar

The 1960s witnessed the emergence of generative grammar, which was based on Chomsky's works (Brown,2007, p.11). According to Chomsky (1965), “ Generative grammar is a system of rules that in some explicit and well-defined way assigns structural descriptions to sentence” (p.8). This system of rules can be examined based on three components , namely the syntactic, the phonological and the semantic components (Chomsky ,1965, p.16). To put it plainly, generative grammar is a set of rules that helps to understand how sentences are structured. These rules can be examined based on three components. Generative Grammar heavily contributed to the shift that occurred in linguistics, namely moving from an analysis of sentence structure to the study of the knowledge that enables to understand and construct sentences. This contribution was thanks to Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance. Competence refers to the existing knowledge of the language. Its vocabulary and grammar, and how this knowledge is gathered in an appropriate way. However, performance is production, whether written or spoken and comprehension when reading and listening (Brown ,2007,p. 36).

2.2.2. Functional Grammar

Functional grammar was developed by M.A.C Halliday (Li & Li, 2015,p.289). Functional grammar is a way of using grammar to describe the functional terms of languages. It is concerned with developing the grammatical systems as a tool of interaction. Halliday named it functional grammar because it is based on a functional conceptual framework. In functional grammar, language is regarded as a system of meaning complemented with forms that allow the realization of that meaning. It is based on systemic theory, which is the theory of meaning as a choice. It is considered functional in three different , but connected ways in its interpretation of texts, its interpretation of systems and its interpretation of the elements of linguistic structures (Panggabean, 2011, p.47).

2.2.3. Traditional Grammar

The origins of traditional grammar can be traced back to the 15th century with the works of numerous scholars like Plato, Aristotle and Panini. It is based on meaning since it considers the sentence as a group of words that express a complete idea, thus the sentence is analyzed from meaning to form. Traditional grammar (TG) provides a description at the surface level because it does not take the context into consideration; rather, it analyses the sentence in isolation. Furthermore, it solely focuses on the written form of language, disregarding the oral language (Li & Li,2015,p.287). TG refers to the type of grammatical system set out in and presupposed by standard modern grammar of Greek and Latin. Grammar of this kind contains three parts: a phonology that deals with the sounds of the language, a morphology that deals with the formation of words and finally a syntax that

deals with the combination of words to constitute a phrase or a sentence (Butts & Hintikka, 1977, p.50).

2.2.4. Structural Grammar

The emergence of structural grammar began with Ferdinand de Saussure's works. He produced legions of linguists who chose to approach the study of language by describing it in an attempt to challenge the illogical prescription of traditional grammar. To analyze language, de Saussure introduced the concepts of *langue* and *parole*. He made a distinction between the two, in which *langue* is the system of rules that govern the vocabulary, grammar and sound system of any language. *Parole*, however, refers to the oral and written communication by individuals of a particular speech community. Structural grammar is the kind of grammar that analyses both written and spoken languages. It is concerned with the different parts of speech and how they are arranged together to form sentences (Williams, 2020, para.20).

2.3. Grammar in the Methods of Language Teaching

Throughout the history of EFL teaching and learning, various instructional approaches have emerged, each attempting to enhance and address the limitations of preceding methods. Despite the significance of grammar as a fundamental aspect of any language, it was not uniformly approached across these different methods.

2.3.1. Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

For Richards and Rodgers (1986), grammar Translation Method (GTM) was considered the oldest method which was used to teach Latin and Greek. In the nineteenth century, GTM started to be used to teach modern languages like English, French and German. These languages were taught following the same basics that were used to teach

Latin in which grammar points were listed and rules on its use were described and exemplified by sample sentences (p.3).

Richards and Rodgers (1986) added that GTM is mainly characterized by its focus on the analysis of grammatical rules, translation exercises and selection of vocabulary through reading texts. In GTM, language learning is regarded as the memorization of rules to comprehend its syntactical and morphological system. It pays more attention to reading and writing and places little emphasis on listening or speaking. GTM follows a deductive approach to teach grammar, the teacher presents the rules to the students, and then students practice those rules through translation exercises (p.3).

However, this method was criticized, Richards and Rodgers (1986) claimed that "It is a method for which there is no theory, there is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it that attempt to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory." (p.5). In short, there is a lack of empirical or theoretical support for this method, and it is not grounded in any established scientific or educational principles.

2.3.2. The Direct Method

Richards and Rodgers (1986) stated that the teaching of foreign languages underwent a change in the late 1880s. Speech took over as the language's main element. The so-called reform movement brought about these significant improvements. Francois Gouin was one of the reformers who thought that developing a successful approach should be based on how children acquire languages, in a natural way, which later became known as the direct method. The direct method was based on the idea that all the instructions should be in the target language, such as discussions, conversations, reading and even thinking. Translation, however, was not allowed, neither in vocabulary nor in grammar (p.9). According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), the first and the main procedure applied in the direct method classroom is the exclusive use of the target language, as previously

mentioned. Furthermore, the main focus was on teaching everyday vocabulary, thus the emphasis was on speaking and listening. Concerning grammar, it was not introduced directly but acquired inductively in the teaching context. Yet the correct grammar was really important. However, the Direct Method failed due to its overemphasis on the use of the target language, and required a highly competent teacher (p.10-11).

2.3.3. The Audio lingual Method

The outbreak of world War Two created a need for Americans to become more proficient in the language of their enemies. This led to the development of the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), or the Army Method. This program focused heavily on aural/oral skills, and habit formation with little emphasis on grammar and translation. In the 1950s, the Army Method came to be known as the Audio lingual Method. This approach was very successful and soon educational institutions began to adopt it. Despite its widespread use, the Audio lingual Method was criticized for not achieving the expected results. Students were unable to apply the skills acquired through ADLM in real communication and it was boring and unsatisfying (Brown, 2007, p.111)

Prator Cele Murcia (1979) summarized the characteristics of the ADLM , as cited in (Brown 2007) in the following list:

- Structures are sequenced by means of contrastive analysis and taught one at a time.
- Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills.
- There is no grammatical explanation: grammar is taught by inductive analogy rather than deductive explanation.
- There is great effort to get students to produce error-free utterances (p.111).

2.3.4. Communicative Language Teaching

Richards and Rodgers (1986) stated that, in the late 1970s and 1980s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) came to change language teaching traditions. It saw functional and communicative proficiency to be more important than structural and linguistic proficiency. Teaching institutions and teachers soon started to reform their teaching syllabuses and classroom materials. It was also called the Communicative Approach (CA), in which communication and interaction were said to be both the material and aim of the study (p.64-65).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) , as cited in (Brown 2007) summarized the main characteristics of the CLT and claimed that the goal of classroom tasks is to focus on communicative competence rather than linguistic competence .Fluency and accuracy were heavily emphasized (p.241).

2.3.5. Task Based Language Teaching Approach

Task based language taching first emerged with Prabhu's Bangalore Project, in which he tried to replicate natural acquisition processes by having students' work through a syllabus of tasks for which no formal grammar instruction was supposedly needed, nor provided (Thornbury,1999,p.22).

According to Bula-Villalobos and Murillo-Miranda (2019), a task-based approach is an activity that is used as a major component of planning in language instruction (p.1869). TBLT is a teaching approach that focuses on the use of communicative and interactive tasks as basic units to plan and deliver information (Richards & Schmidt,2010, p. 585).

Fotos and Ellis (1991) , as cited in (Bula-Villalobos and Murillo-Miranda 2019) indicated that task-based instruction provides space for students who acquired language through tasks. A task is an activity that is designed to help achieve a particular learning goal (Richards and Schmidt, 2010, p.584).

2.3.6. Competency Based Approach (CBA)

Boukhentache (2020) stated that in the early 20th century, authors like Taylor (1911) and Bobbit (1980), began showing interest in educating the tasks that must be performed in real life. These tasks or instructions were regarded as the beginning of instructional programs. The works of Taylor (1959), in which he established a new framework for planning instruction, encouraged these programs (p.105). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), as cited in (Boukhentache, 2020), competency-based language teaching involves the incorporation of competency-based strategies in language teaching. CBA is based on the principles of analyzing tasks, breaking them down into parts, then treating each part separately. In this approach, the four skills are equally important (p.107).

2.4. Deductive and Inductive Teaching of Grammar

Based on the previously mentioned points, it can be said that the different methods of teaching English as a foreign language followed different perspectives regarding grammar teaching. According to Ellis (2006), grammar teaching includes different instructional approaches that attract learners' attention to a certain grammatical form in such a way that it aids them in either metalinguistically understanding it or processing it in comprehension or production so that they can integrate it (p. 85). Therefore, choosing the appropriate approach for grammar instruction was a major topic of discussion among teachers. Some of them adopted the direct way, which refers to inductive teaching while others preferred the indirect way, which is known as deductive teaching. As Thornbury (1999) pointed out that in order to comprehend a rule, there are essentially two routes that a learner can take: the deductive path, and the inductive path (p.49).

2.4.1. Inductive Approach

In the inductive approach, without having met the rule, the learner analyses examples and draws an understanding of the rule from these examples. The inductive route appears to be the way ones learn their first language merely by being exposed to a huge amount of input; thus, the rules and patterns of the language become obvious. More interestingly, it is highly associated with second language instruction approaches that are based on first language acquisition such as the direct method and the natural approach (Thornbury,1999 p.49). Additionally, Thornbury (1999) highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of the inductive approach. He said that the rules that students come up with themselves are more likely to fit into their own mental frameworks than rules they are given. Because of the mental work required, there is a higher level of cognitive depth, which again increases memorability. Apart from this, instead of being merely passive users of information, students actively participate in the learning process which makes them more likely to pay attention and be motivated. In contrast, he mentioned that students may mistakenly believe that rules are the goal of language acquisition rather than only a means because of the time and effort put into developing them. They may hypothesize the incorrect rule or their interpretation of the rule may be overly broad or too restricted in its application. This is especially dangerous when there is no overt testing of the hypothesis, either through practice examples or by eliciting an explicit declaration of the rule. The inductive approach frustrates students who, due to their unique learning style or previous learning experience (or both), would prefer to be told the rule (p.54-55).

2.4.2. Deductive Approach

In the deductive approach, the grammar rule is taught and the student interacts with it by studying and manipulating examples (Thornbury 1999, p.49). Harmer (2007) ,as cited in (Shirav and Nagai,2022) stated that the deductive approach is regarded as a

conventional, teacher-centered, form-focused instructional strategy. Most students from various backgrounds are familiar with this approach because it has been used extensively in many countries (p.102).

In his summary of the benefits and drawbacks of the deductive approach, Thornbury (1999) claimed that the deductive approach is time-saving since it gets right to the point. There will be more time for practice and application of many rules, especially those of form, also rules can be conveyed more quickly and simply than through the use of examples. Besides, the approach recognizes the importance of cognitive processes in language acquisition and respects the intelligence and maturity of many students, especially adult students. Also, it meets the expectations of many students regarding in-class instruction, especially for those who prefer an analytical learning approach(p.54).

According to Thornbury (1999) to begin a session with a presentation on grammar could be overwhelming for the learners, especially the younger ones. They can lack the necessary metalanguage or be unable to comprehend the concept at hand. Grammar explanation promotes teacher-fronted (transmission-style) learning environments, frequently at the expense of student engagement and interaction. Such an approach reinforces the assumption that learning a language is just an issue of understanding the rules; this poses a risk, especially when the hypothesis is not explicitly tested, either through practice examples or by eliciting an explicit statement of the rule. Furthermore, the inductive method frustrates students who, due to their own learning preferences, prior learning experiences, or both, would prefer to be told the rule straight up (p.55).

2.5.Teaching Relative Clauses

Teaching relative clauses in EFL learning can be a challenging task, as it involves introducing a complex grammatical structure. Larsen-Freeman et al., (2016) agreed on the

importance of relative clauses as an essential grammatical structure to focus on in writing. It should be emphasized that teaching their use should be contextualized and viewed as part of a modification system which also includes other simpler forms. They also stated that linguists such as Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1994) accorded on the point that relative clauses and participles are not nearly as common as prepositional phrases used as adjective modifiers following nouns. Therefore they recommend that teachers acquaint students with the variety of constructs used by writers for similar purposes (p.623). RC which are linked to independent clauses via a RP can act as either the subject or the object within the RC. An effective way to explain to students the distinction between subject and object relative pronouns is to divide sentences into two separate clauses. Step-by-step instructions should be given for sentences that contain a relativized object NP, encouraging the students to identify the object NP in the target clause, and then asking them to replace it with a relative pronoun. Finally, the need for a linking element to join the two clauses should be stressed (Williams,2005, p.142-144).

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explore the various aspects of grammar teaching and learning. It has been shown that grammar was conceived differently by different schools of thought and that the methods that were adopted in language teaching, including teaching grammar, differed in their focuses and objectives. A recurrent point in the whole discussion has been whether to teach grammar directly or indirectly, deductively or inductively, as a means or as a goal in itself. As for relative clause teaching, some proposals have been made by grammar researchers

Chapter Three: Fieldwork

Introduction

This chapter represents the practical part of the present study. It explores the challenges encountered by EFL learners in English relativisation at the Department of English, Mohamed Seddik Benyahia University-Jijel. The chapter starts with the description and administration of the data collection instruments, namely a questionnaire and a test designed for students in the aforementioned department. It then proceeds to analyze the findings and to present a comprehensive discussion of such findings.

3.1. Research Methods

The present study employs a quantitative research method to examine the obstacles faced by EFL learners in English relativisation . By focusing on the identification and production of relative clauses, as well as exploring students' perceptions about these challenges, the study adopts a descriptive research method .According to Singh (2006), descriptive research aims to assess state or condition of the phenomenon being investigated (P.104). In this context, the primary goal is to collect and analyze data in order to gain a better understanding of the existing problems within the research. To gather sufficient data for a reliable and consistent analysis, the study utilizes a combination of a test and a questionnaire.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The population of the present study consists of third year LMD students at the Department of English, Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University, Jijel. Third-year students were chosen as the population of the study since they have completed two years of studying grammar and are expected to have a good understanding of its various aspects making them qualified candidates to comprehend and respond to the questionnaire and the test. Concerning the sample, forty-two (42) participants were randomly chosen from the total number (241) of third year LMD students to gather information about the problems they face in English relativisation.

3.3.Data Collection Instruments

Since this research aims mainly at investigating the problems encountered by EFL learners in English relativisation, the test and the questionnaire have been judged as the appropriate tools to gather information about these problems.

3.3.1. Students' Test

In this study, the primary tool used is a test designed to discover the challenges faced by students with regard to English relativisation. The test aims to examine the students' ability to recognize, comprehend, and construct relative clauses and their components.

3.3.1.1. Description and Administration of the Students' Test

The test was administered to 42 third-year students at the Department of English, Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University, Jijel, on May 2 , 2023. It aimed at investigating the challenges that confronted students. Students were invited to sit for a one-hour test. The

researchers were present at the time of testing to answer any potential questions from the respondents.

The test was made up of 9 questions, which were divided into three tasks. Task One dealt with the relative clause, including its definition, its description, its punctuation and the relative pronouns. Task Two consisted of three activities, the first one was about the identification of both the relative pronoun and clause, the second one was about the punctuation of the relative clause, and the last one was about whether the sentences were correct or not. Task Three contained two activities, activity one was about combining sentences and activity two was about producing sentences with relative clauses.

The following is the model and correct answers.

The first question in task one asked the students to tell what a relative clause is. A model answer might be “A relative clause is a type of subordinate clause that modifies or provides additional information about a noun or pronoun in the main clause of a sentence”.

In the second question, the students were asked to pick up the right answer (s) from six options. They were asked whether the relative clause is independent, dependent, subordinate, a modifier, a pre-modifier or a post-modifier, in this question all the answers should be selected except ‘ independent clause’ which is the wrong option. Similarly, the third question required the students to choose the correct punctuation mark, namely the comma, to set off the non-restrictive clause.

The fourth question demanded from the students to mention the relative pronouns, relative determiners, relative adverbs they know. The relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *that*. The relative determiners are *whose* and *which*. The relative adverbs are *where*, *when*, and *why*.

As mentioned earlier, Task Two consisted of three activities. The first activity contained eight sentences, in which students were asked to underline the relative clauses and circle the relative pronoun, relative adverb, or relative determiner. In this activity, students should circle *whichever*, *who*, *whose*, *whom*, and *that* and underline the relative clause as follows :

1. He warned the public not to approach the men, (who)are armed and dangerous.
2. (Whichever) way you plant the seed, the roots will invariably grow downwards.
3. She said that everything was mouldy. (no relative clause)
4. Style being a relational concept, the aim of literary stylistics is to be relational in a more interesting sense than (that) already mentioned
5. I read the book you mentioned. (no relative clause)
6. The man (whom) you met is my teacher.
7. The character depicted in the novel is a man having a significant charisma. (the relative clause is normally: who is having a significant charisma. This is a reduced relative clause that appears as a participle phrase)
8. The man (whose) wife you met is a wrestler

As far as the second activity is concerned and where the students were required to insert the comma to set off the non-restrictive clauses in the sentences and to say whether the relative clause is restrictive or non-restrictive, only sentence 4 included a restrictive relative clause. All the remaining sentences, namely sentences 1,2,3,5,6,7, and 8 contained non –restrictive clauses, which should be put between two commas. The answers should be

1. The woman, who lives next door ,is a lawyer. (non-restrictive)
2. Kay Jenson, who lives next door, has been appointed as the general manager. (non-restrictive)
3. Jason got off work early, which was nice. (non-restrictive)
4. The curry that I cooked was too hot. (restrictive)

5. Mr. Chun, who is our new neighbor, comes from Taiwan. (non-restrictive)
6. The man whom I met in the airport is a politician, who lives abroad. (non-restrictive)
7. Lansing, which is the capital of Michigan, has a population of 115,000. (non-restrictive)
8. Mr. Smith, whose car is blue, is now in Beijing, where he will meet a Chinese delegation. (non-restrictive)

Activity three demanded the students to determine if the given sentences were correct or incorrect and to identify and correct any mistakes. Among the eight sentences, only sentences **2** and **7** were accurate, while the remaining sentences contained errors.

Thus incorrect sentences and their correction are as follows:

1. I don't like stories who have unhappy endings.

I don't like stories that have unhappy endings.

2. What was the name of the person who phoned? (correct) .

3. Where's the nearest shop who sells bread?

Where's the nearest shop that sells bread?

4. Dan said some things about me they were not true

Dan said some things about me that were not true.

5. Anna told me about her new job that she's enjoying very much.

Anna told me about her new job, which she's enjoying very much

6. My office that is on the second floor is very small.

My office, which is on the second floor, is very small

7. The office that I'm using at the moment is very small (correct)

8. Sarah's father that used to be in the army now works for a TV company.

Sarah's father, who used to be in the army, now works for a TV company.

Task Three encompasses two activities. The first activity asked students to combine each couple of sentences to form one sentence, using the words in brackets to make a relative clause. Students should form the sentences as follows:

1. “We stayed at the Park Hotel, which a friend of ours recommended”.
2. “We drove to the airport, which was not far from the city”.
3. “Kate's husband, whom I have never met, is an airline pilot”.
4. “Lisa, whose job involves a lot of travelling, is away from home a lot”.
5. “The new stadium, which will be finished next month, will hold 90,000 spectators”.

In the second activity, students were required to produce four sentences. Two of these sentences had to be with a non-restrictive relative clause, for example:

- “The Eiffel Tower, which is located in Paris, is one of the most famous landmarks in the world”;and
- “My friend Jane, who loves to travel, is planning a trip to Japan next month”

The other two had to be with a restrictive clause, for example:

- “The book that I borrowed from the library yesterday was very informative”; and
- “The person who won the award for best actor gave an emotional acceptance speech”

3.2.2. Students’ Questionnaire

In order to increase the reliability and validity of the study, a second instrument, namely a questionnaire, was completed by the same students who took the test. The questionnaire was used to collect information about students’ perceptions about grammar in general and the relative clauses in particular.

3.3.2.1. Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of eight questions, with six being closed-ended and requiring a simple "yes" or "no" answer or selecting from a given set of options. The remaining two questions were open-ended, requiring respondents to provide explanations for their selected answers. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections.

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of six (6) questions:

- The first question was whether grammar is an essential aspect in learning English.
- The second question was whether grammar is easy to learn or not.
- The third question intended to discover learners' preferences about how to receive grammar rules either by the teacher or to discover them independently.
- The fourth question aimed at identifying the learners' preferences regarding the aspect of grammar they wanted focus to be placed on, namely, meaning, form or use.
- The fifth question required students to specify in which module, grammar or written expression, they dealt with complex sentences, specifically the relative clauses.
- The sixth question investigated whether students relied on classroom instruction or on their own research and exploration when it comes to learning grammar.

The second section involved two questions. The first question was designed to assess the students' capability of identifying relative clauses. The ones who said they had difficulties were asked to select the reason(s) from the given choices. Similarly, the second question attempted to assess students' opinions about their ability to produce and utilize the relative clause accurately.

3.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following section presents, analyzes, interprets, and discusses the results obtained from utilizing the two research tools.

3.4.1. Test Analysis

Within this section, researchers will examine each question of the test and shed light on the difficulties that the respondents encountered when identifying and creating relative clauses. Each question is analyzed and presented in tables. For the sake of facilitating the process of analyzing the questions, the participants' copies were numbered from 1 to 42.

Task 1

Table 3: *Students' Definition of the Relative Clause*

Category	Number of the students	Percentage%
Correct answers	9	21.43%
Incomplete answers	12	28.57%
Wrong answers	18	42.86%
No answers	3	7.14%
Total	42	100%

The table above aimed at categorizing students' definitions of the relative clause. As a result, students' definitions are categorized into four categories namely correct answers, incomplete answers, wrong answers and no answers. As shown in the table, only 21.43% of the respondents gave correct answers, with the remainder giving either incomplete (28.57%), wrong (42.86%) or no answer (7.14%).

These results suggest that the students who were able to answer correctly were conversant enough with relative clauses as grammatical structures. For instance, student (33) defined relative clause “as a clause that gives the reader more information about another noun, it modifies a noun or a noun phrase and it starts with a relative pronoun”, and student (6) defined it as “a type of subordinate clause that modifies a noun or noun phrase in a sentence by providing additional information about it”. Those participants

provided accurate definitions of the relative clause, along with its function, noting that it begins with a relative pronoun. In contrast, those who provided incomplete answers appeared to have only a superficial knowledge of relative clauses, recognizing them as constructions that begin with relative pronoun structures. For example, student (23) said that “a relative clause is what comes after a relative pronoun, like which” and student (5) described it as “a dependent clause that is attached to an independent one by a relative pronoun, determiner or adverb”. Furthermore, those who provided incorrect answers seemed that they did not even have a basic knowledge of relative clauses, such as student (2) who defined it as “a sentence which needs a main clause to complete its meaning”. For this part, student (9) said that “it is a clause that help in avoiding repetition”. Those respondents wrote irrelevant details in their definitions and failed to give an appropriate description of the term relative clause. Finally, those who left the question empty appeared to have no comprehension of what a relative clause is, or maybe were not interested in answering that question.

All in all, these findings show that the majority of the respondents lack a theoretical background related to the English relative clause though they were exposed to the definition of this clause in the module of written expression in their first year.

Table 4:

Students' Description of Relative Clauses

Categories		Number of students	Percentage
Correct answers	All the correct options were selected (5)	2	4.76%
	Acceptable answers		
	One correct option	11	26.19%
	Two correct options	13	30.95%
	Three options	6	14.29%
Wrong answers	No correct option	10	23.81%
Total		42	100%

Table 2 displays the responses of the students related to their description of relative clauses. The answers provided were grouped into three categories: correct answers, wrong answers, and acceptable answers.

The respondents who provided correct answers (4.76 %) demonstrated an understanding of the defining features of relative clauses. On the other hand, those who gave partially correct answers (26.19%, 30.95%, and 14.29%) only had a general idea about relative clauses and were unable to identify all of their characteristics. Finally, those who selected incorrect answers (23.81%), like student (3), had no knowledge of the main features of relative clauses.

Taken together, these results indicate that most of the participants had inadequate knowledge of the main features of relative clauses.

The purpose of this question was to support the first question in assessing students understanding of relative clauses and their characteristics. Generally, the results revealed that those who had problem answering the first question were found to be the same participants failed to choose the right options in responding to the second question . However, a few students answered randomly. For instance, students (2) and (9) provided a correct response to this question, but their definitions of relative clauses in the first question were incorrect. It is possible that they used external sources, such as their phones, in looking for the definition during the test, even though we explicitly instructed them not to do so.

Table 5:

The Punctuation Mark Used to Set off Non-restrictive Relative Clauses

Category	The number of students	The percentage%
Correct answer	32	76.19 %
Wrong answer	10	23.81 %
Total	42	100 %

Table 3 illustrates the participants' selection of the appropriate punctuation mark for setting off non-restrictive relative clauses. Four options were given, namely semicolon, period, parenthesis, and the comma. The responses were classified into two categories: correct and incorrect answers. The correct answers account for 76.19% of the total number of participants, while the incorrect answers make up 23.81%. To put it differently, the correct responses were given by the majority of the participants, while a small proportion provided incorrect answers.

Based on these findings, it could be said that most of the students have knowledge of the use of commas as the appropriate punctuation mark for setting off non-restrictive relative clauses. Conversely, the results may also indicate that the remaining participants lacked attentiveness to the correct grammatical punctuation for setting off non-restrictive relative clauses.

Table 6:

Students' Knowledge of Relative Pronouns, Determiners and Adverbs

Category	The number of students	The percentage
Correct answers	16	38.1%
Correct but incomplete answers	4	9.5%
Correct answers accompanied by incorrect answers	19	45.2%
Wrong answers	1	2.4%
No answers	2	4.8%
Total	42	100

Table 4 represents students' knowledge of relative pronouns, relative determiners, and relative adverbs. The data were grouped into five groups based on the accuracy of the students' answers. The first category represents students who provided entirely correct answers, comprising 38.1% of the total number of responses. This indicates that a significant number of the students showed a good knowledge of the different relative pronouns, relative determiners, and relative adverbs. The second category refers to students who gave answers that were correct but incomplete, accounting for 9.5% of the total number of responses. Those participants either mentioned only relative pronouns, for example, student (1) answered “relative pronouns: who, whose” or only relative adverbs, such as student (15) who answered “relative adverbs: where, when”, or only relative determiners. This may suggest that these respondents have some understanding of the various types of relative pronouns, but they need to improve their knowledge and ability to know other types of relative pronouns, adverbs, and determiners and use them correctly. The third category includes students who provided both correct and incorrect answers, accounting for 45.2% of the total number of respondents. In this case, the students provided the correct relative pronouns, determiners and adverbs in addition to other irrelevant items. For example, student (7) answered with “whom, who, whose, which, that, where, when, why, what, a, an, the”, the irrelevant items that the respondent added being “*a, an , the*” The students who gave those answers seem to be unable to distinguish between relative pronouns and articles.

The fourth category represents students who provided wrong answers, accounting for 4.8% of the total number of responses. This shows that a small percentage of students had a serious difficulty recognizing relative pronouns, relative determiners, and relative adverbs. The last category represents students who did not provide any answers ,

accounted for 4.8% of the total number of responses. This suggests that a few students were not able to answer the questions at all or were not at all interested in answering them.

In short, the test shows that approximately half of the respondents appeared to have good knowledge of relative pronouns, while the other half of them either had difficulty distinguishing relative pronouns from other items or did not have sufficient knowledge of them.

Task 2

Activity 1

Table7:

Students' Ability to Identify Relative Clauses and Relative Pronouns

Category		The number of students	The percentage
Pronoun +RC	2 sentences	12	28.57%
	3 sentences	4	9.52%
	4 sentences	6	14.29%
Pronoun		8	19.05%
Wrong		9	21.43%
Empty		3	7.14%
Total		42	100%

This table is designed based on the respondents' responses. The first category (pronoun + RC) involves the respondents who correctly circled the relative pronoun but their correct answers about RC varied from 2 to 4 correct RC, these represent 52.38% of the total number. The second category, with a percentage of 19.05%, represents those respondents who only circled the relative pronoun. The last two categories contain

respectively the respondents who provided wrong answers (21.43%) and those who did not answer at all (7.14%).

The findings revealed that the majority of students recognized the relative pronoun only but found difficulty in determining where the (RC) ends. In other words, they may know that a relative pronoun is present there, but struggle with identifying the clause as a whole and fail to distinguish it from the rest of the sentence. To illustrate the point, some students answered correctly only about sentences where the relative clause is at the end, such as student (39) in the sentence “*He warned the public not to approach the man, who are armed and dangerous*”. Here the respondent correctly circled and underlined both the RP and RC which are “who” and “who are armed and dangerous”, whereas in the sentence “*The man whose wife you met is a teacher*”, he appropriately circled the RP “whose”, but wrongly answered on the RC by underlining the whole segment that came after the RP “*whose wife you met is a wrestler*”. To put it simply, he confused the RC when it came in the middle of the sentence.

The remaining respondents who left the question empty gave the impression of not knowing the answers or did not want to respond. However, those who provided incorrect answers appeared to be either unaware of both the RC and RP or they just answered randomly. For instance, respondent (1) circled the words “*the book*”, “*are armed*” as a RP in the sentences “*I read the book you mentioned*” and “*he warned the public not to approach the men, who are armed and dangerous*”. In the sentence “*whichever way you plant the seed, the roots will invariably grow downwards*”, he underlined “*the roots will invariably grow downwards*” as the relative clause. Thus, this student does not know the relative pronouns and that the RC directly follows the relative pronoun.

The results indicate that some respondents have not fully grasped the concept of relative clauses and need more grammatical support in understanding how they function , where they are located in a sentence and from where they start and end .

Activity 2

Table 8:

Students' Ability to Distinguish between Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Relative Clauses and to Use the Comma Appropriately

Category		The number of respondents	The percentage
Correct answers	2-3 sentences	5	11.90%
	7 sentences	3	7.14%
Incomplete answers	4-6 sentences	4	9.52%
Wrong answers		25	59.52%
No answers		5	11.90%
Total		42	100%

As can be seen in table eight , students who provided correct answers were very few. Only 7.14% answered 7 sentences correctly, while 11.90% answered just 2 to 3 sentences. 9.52% of the respondents gave incomplete answers, in which they inserted only

the commas without clarifying whether the sentences are correct or wrong. Conversely, the majority of the respondents' (59.52%) answers were wrong.

The results obtained clearly show that most of the students lack the ability to distinguish between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses. For example, student (6) considered the sentence "*Jayson got off work early, which was nice*" as a restrictive relative clause while it is the opposite. Also for the respondents who answered wrongly, they had probably a misconception about the use of the comma with the non-restrictive relative clause. For instance, student's (2) answer was "*Mr. Chun, who is our new neighbor comes from Taiwan.*" the respondent inserted only one comma before the relative pronoun and did not put the other comma at the end of the relative clause to set it off from the rest of the sentence. In addition, some respondents failed in both cases. For example, student (20) incorrectly identified the non-restrictive clause as a restrictive one in the sentence "*Jason got off work early which was so nice*". However, in the sentence "*The man whom I met in the airport, is a politician who lives abroad*", the same student identified the clause as non-restrictive but failed to insert the second necessary comma, and even the first comma was misplaced, which probably means that he was answering at random. Likewise, those who did not provide any answer either lacked the ability to differentiate between the two types of clauses and to use the two commas correctly, or were simply not interested in answering the question.

The small percentage of respondents who provided accurate answers appeared to have a working understanding of the two types of relative clauses and knew that the non-restrictive clause requires two commas to set it off from the rest of the sentence. However, they still encountered some difficulty with certain statements. Perhaps those statements were unclear for them.

On the other hand, the respondents whose answers were incomplete knew that the non-restrictive clause should be put between two commas, but did not specify the type of the RC either because they could not recognize them or they were uninterested in putting in the effort required to complete the answer to the question.

Category	The number of the students	The percentage
1-3 Right answers	14	33.33%
4-5 Right answers	11	26.19%
6-7 Right answers	13	30.95%
Wrong answers	4	9.52%
Total	42	100%

On the whole, most of the students found difficulties in dealing with the two main types of the RC. Taken together and in relation to the previously explained activity that involved the appropriate punctuation mark used to set off the non-restrictive RC, the above-mentioned examples of students (20) , (6) and (2) who answered correctly to activity two (appropriate punctuation mark), demonstrate that their answers were given randomly.

Activity 3

Table 9:

Learners' Performance in Predicting Whether the Sentences are Right or Wrong and in Correcting the Wrong Ones

Table nine presents the students' decisions to whether the sentences given to them are grammatically right or wrong. The table provides information about the distribution of students answers where they were asked to identify and correct wrong sentences. It

demonstrates that the largest percentage of respondents (33.33%) provided 1-3 right answers, whereas 26.19% of the respondents answered 4 to 5 sentences correctly, and 30.95% of respondents gave 6 to 7 right answers. Only a small percentage of respondents (9.52%) answered incorrectly.

Overall, the majority of the respondents got at least half of the questions right, with only a small percentage providing wrong answers. This may suggest that most of the respondents had a good understanding of the grammatical rules needed to identify and correct mistakes in relative clauses.

Task 3

Activity 1

Table 10:

Students' Combination of Sentences

Category	The number of students	The percentage
5-4 Correct answers	6	14.29%
3-2 Correct answers	15	35.71%
1 Correct answer	7	16.67%
Wrong answers	14	33.33%
Total	42	100%

This table provides a recapitulation of how well the students performed in combining two sentences using a relative pronoun. It shows that a significant proportion of the participants (35.71%) gave 3-2 correct answers. The percentage of students who gave

5-4 correct answers is relatively small (14.29%), suggesting that these respondents have a good understanding of how to combine clauses and how to choose appropriate relative pronouns and determine their correct placement in sentences. The percentage of participants who provided only 1 correct answer is also relatively low (16.67%); they showed lack of adequacy in combining clauses (or sentences). The percentage of students whose answers were all wrong is quite high (33.33%). In this category, there are students who showed inability in choosing a correct relative pronoun and determining where to place it in addition to grammatical mistakes. For example, student (19)'s answer was "we drove to the airport, because the airport was not far from the city" here the student did not use any relative pronoun instead he used the subordinating conjunction because thus he does not even know what a relative pronoun is, also student (42) answer was "the stadium will be finished next month in which he will hold 90.000 spectators" this respondent was not able to place the relative pronoun correctly in addition to other grammatical mistakes.

To recapitulate, the results denote that most students have difficulty choosing the suitable relative pronoun and determining its appropriate location in the sentence.

Activity 2

Table 11:

Students' Ability to Produce Non-restrictive Relative Clauses

Category		The number of students	The percentage
Correct non-restrictive relative clauses	1 sentence	5	11.90%
	2 sentences	3	7.14%
Wrong answers		16	38.10%
No answers		18	42.86%
Total		42	100%

The above table represents the respondents' ability in producing correct non-restrictive clauses. It shows that the majority of the respondents either provided wrong sentences (38.10%) or did not provide any answer (42.86%). Only a small number of the students (7.14%) produced correct sentences, and 11.90% of the participants produced one acceptable sentence.

This indicates that the majority of the students were unable to construct sentences with a non-restrictive relative clause or were not interested in answering the question. It also indicates that those students perhaps do not know the rules. For instance, student (9)'s answer was "I love my teacher, Jane, she is so nice". This student wrote a sentence at random, which does include neither a relative pronoun nor a non-restrictive relative clause. Another possibility is that these deponents knew the rules but were incapable of applying them. For example, student (23) wrote "I ate the apple that I bought". Though the produced sentence contains a relative pronoun and a relative clause, the latter is not a non-restrictive relative clause. In contrast, only a very small number of students were able to produce two correct sentences, suggesting that they knew the rules and how to apply them appropriately, and an approximately similar number of students produced only one correct sentence, suggesting that they were familiar with the rules but sometimes were confused as to their proper application.

Table 12:

Students' Ability to Produce Restrictive Relative Clause

Category		The number of students	The percentage
Correct restrictive relative clauses	1 sentence	6	14.29%
	2 sentences	7	16.67%
Wrong answers		9	21.43%
No answers		20	47.62%
Total		42	100%

This table shows the respondents' ability in generating correct sentences with restrictive relative clauses. According to the collected data, 47.62% of the respondents did not answer at all and 21.43% of them answered wrongly, while a small number of respondents produced correctly either one sentence (14.29%) or two sentences (16.67%).

The results, as shown in the table, reveal that the majority of respondents could not produce correct restrictive relative clauses. This demonstrates that they either do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of restrictive relative clauses and hence their production or they lacked motivation and were not really interested in taking pains to generate sentences. For instance, student (38) wrote “the girl in the house is a girl having a lot of problems”. As one can clearly see here, the respondent did not incorporate any relative pronouns or clauses into their response or seemed just giving the answers at random to finish the test. On the other hand, a small percentage of students showed an ability to construct two correct sentences, demonstrating their ability in not only understanding the rules but also in properly using them in written production. The fact that almost the same percentage of respondents only managed to construct one correct sentence also suggests that they were aware of the rules, although they occasionally used them incorrectly in written production.

On the whole, the analysis of the two tables given above indicates that the English relative clauses are constructions that the Algerian EFL learners at the Department of English at the University of Jijel find difficult to produce correctly.

3.4.2. Questionnaire Analysis

Section One

Q1: Do you think that grammar is an essential aspect in learning English?

Table 13:

Respondents' Perceptions about the Importance of Grammar

Options	The number of students	The percentage%
Yes	39	92.86%
No	3	7.14%
Total	42	100%

According to the results recorded in the table above, most of the students (92.86%) recognized the significance of grammar in learning English language; this may be due to their awareness of the crucial role it plays in achieving the proficiency in learning any language. The rest of the respondents, with a 7.14% percentage, did not view grammar as an important aspect. It can therefore be suggested that they did not prioritize its study, perhaps due to a lack of interest or appreciation.

Out of the total number of respondents who were asked to justify their answers, only 34 gave justifications, which can be summarized as follows:

- To produce accurate language and constructing well-structured sentences.
- To improve the writing skills.
- To achieve fluency.
- To better understand.
- The language.
- Grammar is the core of the language.

While the majority of participants acknowledged the significance of grammar in the process of learning English, their performance in the test in general was not satisfactory. This indicates a notable difference between their perceived views about the acquisition of grammar and their actual level in grammar, or at least in the relative clause.

Q2: Is grammar easy to learn?

Table 14:

Respondents' Opinions about the Easiness of Learning Grammar

Options	The number of students	The percentage%
Yes	13	30.95%
No	29	69.05%
Total	42	100%

As shown in table 12, (30.95%) of the respondents viewed grammar as easy to learn. This may suggest that those students do not confront difficulties in learning grammatical structures. The majority of the participants, making up (69.05%), claimed that grammar is a hard skill to master. They justified their answers by saying that grammar can be challenging due to the large number of rules that need to be memorized and the difficulty in determining which rules to apply and that the complexity of such rules makes it hard to comprehend them. They also mentioned that learning grammar requires a lot of practice and takes time. To put it clearly, the majority of students consider grammar to be the most challenging aspect of the language.

In the same vein, most students hold the belief that grammar is a hard subject. This belief was reflected clearly in their performance in the test on the relative clause, where most of the participants encountered difficulties when it comes to constructing, identifying, and producing relative clauses accurately, for example in activity two (task2) 59.52% of the learners were unable to identify and distinguish between the two types of relative clause, namely the restrictive and non-restrictive relative clause.

Q3: When learning grammar do you prefer

Table 15:

Learners' Preferences in Learning Grammar

Options	The number of students	The percentage%
To receive the rules from the teacher	28	66.67%
To independently discover the rules	12	28.57%
Both	2	4.76%
Total	42	100%

This question was asked with the aim of knowing about the respondents' preferences in learning grammar. The table illustrates that 66.67% of the students chose to receive the rules from the instructor. One possible explanation for this might be that these respondents struggled with comprehending the complexities of the rules by themselves or they were unmotivated to make personal efforts to learn them. However, 28.57% of them preferred to discover the rules by themselves, giving the impression of being active learners. The rest (4.76%) selected both options, welcoming thus learning by both deduction and induction. It is not readily known whether these respondents were really proponents of the combining of more than one method in learning, which might be justified, among others, by the type of the task being assigned, or they were just answering randomly to quickly finish the questionnaire.

Q4: In learning grammar do you prefer focus to be placed on:

Table 16:

Respondents' Preferences of the Aspects to be Focused on in Learning Grammar

Options	The number of students	The percentage
Form	5	11.90%
Meaning	12	28.57%
Use	16	38.1%
All of them	9	21.43%
Total	42	100%

The aim of this question was to investigate which aspects the respondents prioritized when learning grammar. 38.1% of the respondents said that they focused on use, giving the impression that they paid close attention to the appropriate use of the language in both writing and speaking in real communicative contexts. As researchers and from our being conversant with teacher's feedback on their students' level in writing and speaking, it is hard to accept that such a percentage (38%) really pay attention to use given the inability of a large segment of the population to produce clauses and sentences in real communicative situations. A percentage of 28.57% of the respondents said that they focused on meaning perhaps because their attention was turned to the effect of the grammatical rule might have on the meaning of the sentence. The answers in the test do not really show the importance given to meaning by, at least a certain percentage of, the respondents. As for the remaining percentage of the respondents, namely 11.90%, they said that they focused on form, which perhaps reflects why they were still grappling with the mastery of the different structures of grammar such as sentence structure and syntax. For instance, student (27) in activity one (task 3) was supposed to combine the two clauses using a relative pronoun to form well-structured sentences, but most of his answers were wrong and only few of them were correct. Thus, it is necessary to overlook the form as an initial stage in order to facilitate the improvement in that area. The remaining respondents (21.43%) selected all the options, this indicate that they are aware of the importance of each aspect and able to make a balance between them. Whether this percentage was really aware of all the three aspects and believes strongly in their importance in learning the relative clause or was just filling the questionnaire randomly cannot be known for sure and maybe further investigation needs to be done in this respect.

These results suggest that the respondents had different aspects to focus on, form, meaning, use or all of them, depending on their actual needs or merely on their beliefs.

Q5: You dealt with complex sentences and clauses, including the relative clause in:

Table 17:

The Module in Which the relative Clause was Instructed

Options	The number of students	The percentage%
Written expression	29	69.05%
Grammar	13	30.95%
Total	42	100%

From table 15, 69.05% of the students said that they dealt with relative clauses in the module of written expression; these respondents seemed to be active learners as they could remember the module in which sentences and clauses were covered in their first year of study. The respondents who chose the grammar module (30.95%) appeared to have forgotten such a module. The mistakes that were made in the test by the respondents who managed to remember the module could either be due to the fact that they did not assimilate well the relative clause or to that fact that they did assimilate it by then but forgot the rules with time and failed to integrate its different components and aspects in their active knowledge.

Q6: In learning grammar, do you rely only on what you are taught in class or do you also consult other references?

Table 18:

Students' Reliance on Sources: Classroom Instruction vs. External References

Options	The number of students	The percentage%
Rely on what is taught in classroom	18	42.86%
Other references	24	57.14 %
Total	42	100%

According to the results shown in the table, 42.86 % of the learners contended themselves to receiving what they were taught in the classroom. These learners seemed to lack motivation in seeking additional resources to improve their overall language skills. By contrast, those who said they sought other resources (57.14 %) gave the impression that they had the motivation to learn and that they valued the importance of exploring what classroom classes do not cover.

Section 2

Q7: Do you find difficulties in identifying relative clauses and their constituents?

Table 19.1:

Students' Recognition of Relative Clauses and their Constituents

Options	The number of students	The percentage%
Yes	36	85.71%
No	6	14.29%
Total	42	100%

According to the data, most of the respondents (85.71%) said that they had found problems in identifying RC and its constituents. This can be explained by the fact that those respondents did not possess a sufficient theoretical background about the RC and the rules governing it. Conversely, a few number of respondents with a percentage of 14.29% reported that they did not have problem recognizing the RC and its constituents. This gives the impression that such a percentage had a good comprehension of the relative clause.

These results are clearly reflected in the respondents' responses in the test. In activity 1, Task One) only 21.43% of the respondents provided an accurate definition of RC while most of them were not able to provide an accurate or a correct definition. In the same context; in activity 1, Task Two) half of the students did not recognize the RP

(21.43%) and RC (19.05%) in the sentence, and 7.14% did not recognize both of them. That is to say, learners lacked even a basic knowledge of relative clauses.

To carry on with the respondents who answered “yes”, these respondents were asked to select the reasons of difficulties from the options mentioned in the table below:

Table 19.2:

The Reason of Difficulty in Recognizing Relative Clauses and their Constituents

Options	The number of the students	The percentage
No sufficient knowledge of grammar rules	8	19.05%
Confusing between the rules of the mother tongue and those of the target language	3	7.14%
Knowing the rules but unable to apply them appropriately	16	38.10%
All of them	5	11.90%
Empty	10	23.81%
Total	42	100%

As clearly shown in the table, the majority of the participants (38.10%) justified their answer by saying that they knew the rules but were unable to apply them appropriately. These answers can be supported by cases from the test. For instance, in activity 1 (Task 3) of the test, student (36) knew that a relative pronoun was required to combine a relative clause in a sentence. For example, in the sentence “*the new stadium which will be finished next month will hold 90.000 spectators*”, the student knew the rule but misplaced the relative pronoun “*which*”. A percentage (19.05%) of the respondents said that they did not have sufficient knowledge grammar rules. To illustrate such a state of affairs, student (25), in activity 1 (Task 2), circled the subordinating conjunction “*than*” as a relative pronoun. A small number (7.14%) of the respondents confused between the rules of the mother tongue and those of the target language. Additionally, 11.90% of them selected all the options, suggesting that they struggled with all the mentioned reasons. The

rest of the students (23.81%) did not select any choice either because they said no or they had other reasons not envisaged in the questionnaire.

Q8: After studying relative clauses, are you now able to produce and use them appropriately in writing?

Table20:

Students' ability to produce relative clauses

Options	The number of students	The percentage%
Yes	27	64.29%
No	15	35.71%
Total	42	100%

The given data demonstrates that 64.29% of the students said that they were able to properly produce relative clauses. However, the results of the test do not support such a claim. In activity 2 (Task 3), when students were asked to produce sentences with the two main types of relative clauses (restrictive and non-restrictive), 47.62% of them did not produce any sentence with a restrictive clause and 21.43% of them produced incorrect sentences. Similarly in sentences with non restrictive RC, 42.86% of the respondents did not construct any sentence while 38.10% of them constructed wrong sentences.

Thus these results suggest that their answer with “yes” was random.

3.5. Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of the data from the study revealed that third year license students at the Department of English, at Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University Jijel, encounter great difficulties in English relativisation. After combining the findings obtained from both the test and questionnaire, it has been sufficiently and clearly shown that many respondents

perceived grammar as a challenging subject and despite acknowledging its importance in English learning, the participants' overall performance in the test was unsatisfactory, indicating a gap between their perceived understanding of grammar acquisition and their actual proficiency, at least with regard to relativisation. Based on the respondents' answers to the definition and features of the relative clause, the majority of them lacked a solid theoretical understanding of relative clauses and grappled to shape its concept. Besides, when asked to identify the appropriate relative pronoun, many of the respondents failed. Hence, they faced challenges in selecting the suitable relative pronoun and determining its correct placement within sentences. Furthermore, they were unable to identify the boundaries of relative clauses and often considered the whole segment after the relative pronoun as the clause. When it came to the determination of the two types of the relative clause (restrictive and non-restrictive) in a sentence, most students also had difficulty distinguishing between them. In addition, they had limited knowledge of the punctuation rules for relative clauses, particularly non-restrictive clauses, and were unaware that these required the use of two commas to set them apart from the rest of the sentence. Even among those who were aware of that, many misplaced the comma. Moreover, when instructed to generate examples of both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, the majority of the respondents were unable to do so and struggled to construct and produce relative clauses accurately.

In summary, the assumptions formulated at the beginning of the study have been confirmed from the findings, which indicate that English relative clauses, as syntactic grammatical structures, can be considered a challenging subject for EFL learners at Mohamed Seddik Benyahia University- Jijel.

3.6. Limitations of the Study

The present study has some limitations. Firstly, it was conducted solely with third-year LMD students at Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University, which restricts the generalizability of the results to all EFL learners. In addition, some respondents did not take the questionnaire and the test seriously, providing random answers. Also, due to time constraints, we were unable to employ other data collection instruments, such as an interview with written expression teachers. This limited their ability to gather insights from both teachers and learners. Lastly, the time available for conducting the study was limited.

Conclusion

Being the practical part of the dissertation, this chapter has provided a thorough analysis of the questionnaire and the test, together with the interpretation of the findings. Based on the findings of this study, it can be safely claimed that EFL learners encounter various difficulties when dealing with relative clauses. These difficulties encompass a lack of knowledge regarding the appropriate relative pronoun and its placement, challenges in determining the boundaries of the relative clause, incorrect usage of the comma as the punctuation mark of non-restrictive RCs, and the inability to produce grammatically accurate relative clauses.

General Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the difficulties experienced by third-year EFL learners at the Department of English, Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University-Jijel, in the area of English relativisation. The research addressed two key questions:

RQ1: Which problems EFL learners encounter in identifying relative clauses and relative pronouns?

RQ2: Which problems EFL learners encounter in producing and using relative clauses?

The study was divided into three main chapters. The first chapter focused on relative clauses, covering their definition, form, function, types, as well as the associated relative pronouns and determiners. The second chapter highlighted important concepts related to grammar, including its definition, types, approaches, and methods for teaching grammar and teaching relative clauses in EFL context. The third chapter covered the analysis and interpretation of the student questionnaire and test responses, enabling us to answer the aforementioned research questions.

Regarding the first research question, the analysis revealed that third-year EFL students at the University of Mohammed Seddik Benyahia faced a number of problems . These problems encompassed a lack of understanding regarding the appropriate usage and placement of relative pronouns, inability to determine the boundaries of relative clauses, and incorrect utilization of commas as punctuation marks with non-restrictive relative clauses.

Regarding the second research question, the findings revealed that the students generally exhibited an inability to produce grammatically accurate relative clauses.

Our research, along with the studies we have reviewed, demonstrates that EFL learners face various problems with relative clauses. Our findings align with Eng and Hengs' (2005) study, which unveiled that learners had struggled with grammatical relative clauses. Additionally, their study showed that distinguishing between grammatical and ungrammatical relative clauses posed difficulties for the learners. In our study, we also found weaknesses in the learners' ability to produce relative clauses, as revealed through the sentence-combining task and sentence production task.

Mohammed's study (2016) findings are also in line with ours. They demonstrated that the majority of students had difficulty using relative pronouns and commas with relative clauses. The students were found to have lacked familiarity with the functions of relative pronouns and how to reduce them. Similarly, in our research, we observed that students lacked awareness of using commas with non-restrictive relative clauses and had insufficient knowledge of relative pronouns and their usage.

Furthermore, Doughty's study (1991) revealed that a group receiving exposure and instructional treatment in relativisation performed better in acquiring the ability to use relative clauses. Although our research was not experimental like Doughty's, our overall results are initially suggestive of the need for increased exposure of students to relative clauses with the aim of improving their knowledge and skills in this area.

In conclusion, the research findings confirmed the assumptions and highlighted the problems faced by EFL learners in identifying and producing relative clauses and relative pronouns.

Pedagogical Recommendations

Finally, the researchers judge it beneficial to present readers with some pedagogical and other recommendations relevant to relativisation.

For students :

- ✓ Students should familiarize themselves with the main types of relative clauses and their structures and the way they are punctuated and engage on their own initiative in their identification and analysis in various contexts.
- ✓ They should develop a sufficient understanding of relative pronouns and their usage and pay more attention to the antecedents they refer to.
- ✓ They should train themselves in producing relative clauses in both spoken and written forms, moving from simpler forms to more complex ones.
- ✓ They should read extensively to expose themselves to a wide range of sentences containing relative clauses. This would enable them to use varied forms and patterns of relative clauses more comfortably.

For teachers :

- ✓ Teachers should ensure that learners receive comprehensive knowledge of relative clauses rather than solely focusing on surface-level structures, considering the widespread use of relative clauses in the grammar of the English sentence and in writing and speaking in general.

For further research:

- ✓ Researchers can conduct further investigations into the underlying reasons or factors that contribute to the difficulties learners face with relative clauses. This

exploration can lead to a deeper understanding of the challenges involved and potentially inform more effective instructional strategies.

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Appendices

Student's Test

This test has been designed to serve as a research tool for a Master Dissertation in Didactics. You are kindly requested to answer the questions thereof. All of the test's questions revolve around the relative clause and its constituents.

Task one : Answer the following questions

1. What is a relative clause ?

.....
.....

2. The relative clause is a: (you choose the right answer or answers)

An Independent clause	A Dependent clause	A Subordinate clause
A Modifier	A Pre-modifier	A Post-modifier

3. Which punctuation marks is used to set off the **non-restrictive** clause from the rest of the sentence?

a) A Semicolon b) A Period c) A Parenthesis d) A Comma

4. Mention the relative pronouns, relative determiners, relative adverbs you know.

.....
.....

Task Two

Activity One: Underline the relative clauses in the following sentences. Circle the relative pronoun, relative adverb, or relative determiner.

1. He warned the public not to approach the men, who are armed and dangerous.
2. Whichever way you plant the seed, the roots will invariably grow downwards.

3. She said that everything was mouldy.
4. Style being a relational concept, the aim of literary stylistics is to be relational in a more interesting sense than that already mentioned
5. The man whom you met is my teacher.
6. I read the book you mentioned.
7. The character depicted in the novel is a man having a significant charisma.
8. The man whose wife you met is a wrestler.

Activity Two: Insert the comma to set off the non-restrictive clauses in the following sentences. Next to each sentence, say whether the relative clause is restrictive or non-restrictive.

- 1- The woman who lives next door is a lawyer.
- 2- Kay Jenson who lives next door has been appointed as the general manager.
- 3- Jason got off work early which was nice.
- 4- The curry that I cooked was too hot.
- 5- Mr. Chun who is our new neighbor comes from Taiwan.
- 6- The man whom I met in the airport is a politician who lives abroad.
- 7- Lansing which is the capital of Michigan has a population of 115,000.
- 8- Mr. Smith whose car is blue is now in Beijing where he will meet a Chinese delegation.

Activity Three: Are these sentences grammatically right or wrong? Correct the wrong ones.

1- I don't like stories who have unhappy endings.

.....

2- What was the name of the person who phoned?

.....

3- Where's the nearest shop who sells bread?

.....

4- Dan said some things about me they were not true.

.....

5- Anna told me about her new job that she's enjoying very much.

.....

6- My office that is on the second floor is very small.

.....

7- The office that I'm using at the moment is very small

.....

8- Sarah's father that used to be in the army now works for a TV company.

.....

Task Three

Activity One: Combine each couple of the sentences below to form one sentence, using the words in brackets to make a relative clause.

a. We stayed at the Park Hotel. (A friend of ours recommended this hotel.)

.....

b. We drove to the airport. (The airport was not far from the city.)

.....
c. Kate's husband is an airline pilot. (I have never met Kate's husband.)

.....
d. Lisa is away from home a lot. (Lisa's job involves a lot of travelling.)

.....
e. The new stadium will hold 90,000 spectators. (The stadium will be finished next month.)
.....

Activity Two : Produce two sentences:

A/ With a non-restrictive clause:

S1:

S2:

B/ With a restrictive clause:

S1:

S2:

Student's Questionnaire

This questionnaire is our second research tool, which you are kindly requested to fill in.

Section One

1. Do you think that grammar is an essential aspect in learning English?

Yes

No

Why ?

.....

2. Is grammar easy to learn?

Yes

No

If no, say why.

.....

3. When learning grammar, do you prefer?

a. To receive the rules from your teacher.

b. To independently discover the rules.

4. In learning grammar, do you prefer focus to be made on:

Form

Meaning

Use

5. You dealt with complex sentences and clauses, including the relative clause, in:

a. The Written Expression module

b. The Grammar module

6. In learning grammar, do you rely only on what you are taught in class or do you also consult other references?

Yes

No

Section Two

1. Do you find difficulties in identifying relative clauses and their constituents?

Yes

No

If yes , is it because:

- a. You do not have a sufficient knowledge of grammar rules.
- b. You confuse between the rules of the mother tongue and those of the target language.
- c. You know the rules, but you are unable to apply them appropriately.

2. After studying relative clauses, are you now able to produce and use them appropriately in writing?

Yes

No

Résumé

La présente étude examine les problèmes que les apprenants d' EFL à l'Université Mohammed Seddik Benyahia-Jijel rencontrent dans la relativisation anglaise, tout en mettant en relief les problèmes d'identification et de production. La première hypothèse suppose que les apprenants d'anglais rencontrent des problèmes pour identifier les différents types de propositions relatives et ne reconnaissent pas tous les aspects de la relativisation. Le second postule qu'ils ne produisent pas de propositions relatives grammaticalement correctes. Pour valider ces deux hypothèses, un test de grammaire et un questionnaire ont été administrés à 42 étudiants de troisième année anglais à l'université susmentionnée. Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé un certain nombre de difficultés, notamment un manque de connaissances concernant l'utilisation et le placement appropriés des pronoms relatifs, les problèmes de délimitation des propositions relatives, l'utilisation incorrecte de la virgule comme signe de ponctuation pour les propositions relatives non-restrictives et l'incapacité de produire des propositions relatives qui respectent les règles grammaticales. À partir de ces constatations, certaines recommandations ont été fournies aux étudiants et aux enseignants, et une suggestion a été faite aux chercheurs.

Mots clés: relativisation, clauses relatives, restrictives/non restrictives, pronom relatif, test, questionnaire.

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى البحث عن المشاكل التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى - جيبل بخصوص الجملة الموصولة في اللغة الإنجليزية، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على مشكلات التعرف على هذه الجمل وتحليلها وتنص الفرضية الأولى أن متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يواجهون مشاكل في التعرف على الأنواع المختلفة من الجمل الموصولة ويفشلون في التعرف على بعض الضمائر الموصولة، بينما تنص الفرضية الثانية أنهم غير قادرين على تحرير جمل موصولة سليمة من الناحية النحوية. للتحقق من هاتين الفرضيتين، تم إجراء اختبار نحوي وتوزيع استبيان على 42 طالباً من طلاب السنة الثالثة في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعة المذكورة أعلاه. كشفت نتائج الدراسة عدداً من الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة ، من ضمنها عدم معرفة الاستخدام المناسب والموضع الصحيح للضمائر الموصولة، ومشاكل في تحديد بداية و نهاية الجمل الموصولة، واستخدام غير صحيح للفاصلة كعلامة وقف للجمل الموصولة التوضيحية، وعدم القدرة على تحرير جمل موصولة سليمة من الناحية التركيبية. استناداً إلى هذه النتائج، تم تقديم بعض التوصيات للطلاب والأساتذة وتم تقديم اقتراح للباحثين.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الجمل الموصولة- الجمل الموصولة التوضيحية/غير التوضيحية اسم الموصول- اختبار- استبيان