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## UNIT 8: FINITE SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

Sentence structure is a pretty complicated area of English grammar, because a sentence can be extremely long and complex. And mistakes in sentence structure, unlike (for example) tense or number, are harder to correct, because they involve so many factors.

The most important things to remember are that:

- (i) a sentence is made up of one or more **clauses**; and
- (ii) the clauses of a sentence are connected in some way, either through **coordination** (joined by *and, or, but*), or **subordination** (linked by a **subordinator**).

This unit explores one type of subordinate clause, i.e. **finite** subordinate clauses, which have basically the same structure as main clauses, but with a **subordinator** (like *that, whether, when, because*, etc.) at the beginning. The subordinator marks the clause as a **subordinate** clause, as well as indicates its relation to the main clause -- e.g. *because* indicates that the subordinate clause is about the reason for what happens in the main clause.

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS

#### QUESTION 1:

Most of the sentences in this text are neither ‘simple sentences’ nor ‘compound sentences’. In other words, they contain subordinate clauses (which are underlined below). Don’t worry if you see a mixture of finite and non-finite subordinate clauses, some of which are not covered in Unit 8. It’s enough at this stage to recognise that they are subordinate and not main clauses. The subordinate clauses are underlined below:

‘The atrocity is above and beyond politics and partisanship. It would not have made any difference if the crime had been committed in reverse – if American terrorists had hijacked Afghan or Iraqi civilian planes and deliberately crashed them into the commercial centre of Kabul or Bagdad with the sole purpose of killing as many innocent civilians as possible. No matter what the cause may be, no matter which side of the conflict is right or wrong, nothing on earth could possibly justify or explain so heinous a crime against humanity. No civilised human being, of whatever persuasion (pro-American, anti-American, Christian, Muslim) would hesitate to condemn it in the strongest possible terms, and to demand that something be done against the perpetrators (whoever they may be). Those who could see something to

cheer about at the sight of thousands of innocent people being blown to pieces or burning or leaping to their deaths had better look into their hearts, and ask themselves whether they are really human.'

### QUESTION 2:

The subordinate clauses are underlined below, and marked F (finite) or NF (non-finite):

1. Because he was a tourist, he was easily cheated. F
2. Being a tourist, he was easily cheated. NF
3. He booked his ticket early in order to be sure of a seat. NF
4. He booked his ticket early so that he could be sure of a seat. F
5. Before he went to bed, he usually had a drink. F
6. Before going to bed, he usually had a drink. NF
7. He told me that I should study harder. F
8. He told me to study harder. NF

### QUESTION 3:

The different parts of the subordinate clause are enclosed in brackets, and marked by a label (S,V,O,C or A) above each part. The 'extra' word (the subordinator) is indicated in bold print.

- S            V
1. **Before** [the star] [arrived], everybody was waiting impatiently.

- S            A            V            A
2. **When** [the star] [finally] [arrived] [in a limousine], everybody rushed forward to see her.

- S            V            O
3. The singer had to cancel the concert **because** [he] [had lost] [his voice].

- S            V            C
4. **Since** [you] [are] [my student], you'll have to obey me.

- S            V            O            O
5. **After** [she] [had given] [him] [all her money], she never heard from him again.  
[NB. 'him' is an Indirect Object, and 'all her money' a Direct Object.]

- S            V            O            C
6. The committee told him **that** [they] [had elected] [him] [president].  
[NB. 'him' is an Object, and 'president' an Object Complement.]

#### QUESTION 4:

Missing subordinators are inserted in bold and underlined. If they are optional, they are enclosed in brackets:

1. A large majority thought (**that**) oral skills were important.
2. There are different opinions about **whether** leadership ability is important or not.
3. The majority disagreed **that** an attractive appearance is important.
4. The respondents considered **that** appearance is not an important quality.
5. Scientists find **that** the super carrot can inhibit cancer.
6. Do you know **how** coal was formed? (NB. You cannot have two subordinators, *that* and *how*)

#### QUESTION 5:

Missing subordinators are inserted in bold and underlined. If they are optional, they are included in brackets (which means the sentence is grammatical with or without them):

1. He thinks (**that**) he is the cleverest student in class.
2. She said (**that**) she would come to my party.
3. Magellan proved **that** the earth is round by sailing round the globe.
4. Anne Frank wrote **that** she still believed human nature to be good.
5. He wanted to know **whether** the flight had arrived or not.
6. She wondered **whether** she would win the competition.
7. **That** the earth is round was known to only a few in ancient times.
8. **Whether** he is guilty or not has never been proved beyond doubt.
9. **That** I have not said a word does not mean that I have no opinions.

#### QUESTION 6:

It is important to know that a subordinate clause can function as the Subject, Object, Complement or Adverbial of another clause, as if it were a single word or phrase. In sentences (1-4) in this exercise, all the subordinate clauses function as the **subject** (or **S**) of the main clause. You can replace them all with *it* or *this*, or any ordinary subject, like *the rumour*, *the problem*, *his action*, *his last words*, etc.

The following are some suggested ways of joining the two sentences in (5-8) into a single sentence, by turning one of them into a subordinate clause functioning as the **subject** (underlined below):

5. That Hong Kong will be the site of a new Disneyland theme park has caused a lot of excitement.
6. Whether the continent of Atlantis existed in ancient times has been debated for centuries.

7. Why he gave up everything to become a monk puzzles me.
8. What he said just before he died is known only to his wife.

#### QUESTION 7:

The underlined subordinate clauses in (1-5) function as the **object** of the main clause. You can replace them with any ordinary object, like *the answer, the truth, the secret, the trick, his wish*, etc.

The following are some suggested ways of joining the two sentences in (6-9) into a single sentence, by turning one of them into a subordinate clause functioning as the **object** (underlined below):

6. He found out that his wife was having an affair with his boss.
7. Einstein discovered that matter is a form of energy.
8. I cannot read what he wrote.
9. He wants to know whether he passed the exam.

#### QUESTION 8:

The subordinate clauses in (1-5) function as the subject (or object) **complement** in the main clause. They can be replaced by ordinary complements like *a surprise, strange, an old one, puzzling, a madman*, etc.

The following are some suggested ways of joining the two sentences in (6-9) into a single sentence, by turning one of them into a subordinate clause functioning as the **complement** (underlined below):

6. The truth is that no-one can succeed without self-reliance.
7. The real issue is whether we should sacrifice principle to expediency.
8. The reason for his absence is that he had to attend an emergency meeting in Beijing.
9. Our hope is that Mainland China and Taiwan may come to a peaceful settlement.

#### QUESTION 9:

The subordinate clauses in sentences (1-6) function as **adverbials** in the main clause. They can be replaced by ordinary adverbials like *immediately, for a good reason, suddenly, in spite of his poverty, at a young age, selfishly*, etc.

Here are some suggested answers for (7-11), where one of the sentences is changed into a subordinate clause functioning as an **adverbial**:

7. My flight was cancelled because the airport was flooded.
8. He saved every dollar he could because he wanted to put his son through college.
9. The building collapsed before he could get out.
10. Though he lost everything in the earthquake, he is happy to be alive.
11. I saw a terrible accident as I was driving to work.

## ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

### TEXT 1:

Three women died and 21 other people - 17 of them fire officers and ambulancemen - were injured yesterday when a fireball tore through a flat where a woman was apparently trying to commit suicide.

The explosion, which rocked the 22-storey building in Tsui Chuk Garden, took place after firemen broke down the door of the flat in a rescue operation.

In the evening, the charred body of another woman was found inside the kitchen of the flat where the blast occurred in block E.

Four firemen were seriously injured with burns to their faces while another seven were in stable condition.

Five other officers were treated and discharged while another was under observation in hospital. Four other residents in the block of flats were injured.

Several of the rescue workers who were injured were in a lift on the way to the scene when the explosion sent it plunging from the fifth floor to the second.

### TEXT 2:

China seems to be in the throes of a burgeoning English craze. More than 50,000 people attended this month's Beijing Foreign Languages Festival, where English was the star attraction.

English programmes are being strengthened at all levels of schooling, and more university courses are being taught in English. With an eye on the Olympics, thousands of police officers, taxi drivers and public servants are being given English lessons.

Of course, it is not for the love of Uncle Sam or English syntax. Learning English is seen as a way for individuals to earn more money, and for the country to accelerate its rise as a world power.

"Li expressly espouses learning English in order to catch up with and overtake the West, a vision he shares with the government and many Chinese intellectuals," said Barry

Sautman, **an** expert on Chinese nationalism at **the** Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Mr Li **said** that Americans expect Chinese people to learn **their** language, while they make little effort themselves **to** learn Putonghua - even while living in China. **A** Chinese person's first response when meeting a **foreigner** in China is usually to apologise for **whatever** English deficiencies they might have. Crazy English **specifically** targets this sense of insecurity with its **emphasis** on overcoming shyness.

### **TEXT 3:**

After all, the proposals affect everyone and only fools **will** say that these proposals do not affect them. It **is**, of course, true that 99 per cent of **the** Hong Kong population will never be traitors, or subvert **the** central government, or steal state secrets.

But do they **know** that the new proposals will have the effect of **eroding** the freedom of the press, the freedom of association, **of** assembly, of procession and of demonstration - all of which **are** vital to any modern and vibrant society such **as** Hong Kong? **Do** they know that if the freedom **of** the press goes, then no other freedom is safe? Do they know that a community which does not enjoy **these** freedoms will produce people without creative or independent minds? Do **they** know that this lack of creativity and independent thinking **is** causing concern for the governments in Singapore and China?

**So**, if you want your children and their children to **grow** up without creativity, please support the proposals.