

## 4 Worksheet on Grammar: Relative clauses

Text: Randeep Ramesh, "Monsanto's Chapati Patent Raises Indian Ire", from: Mita Banerjee and Susanne Stadler, *India*, Viewfinder Topics (München: Langenscheidt, 2010), pp. 56-57.

### A RELATIVE CLAUSES

For many German learners of English, relative clauses are difficult because in German there is no difference between defining and non-defining relative clauses as far as punctuation or relative pronouns are concerned: In German, there is always a comma between main clause and relative clause, and there are no restrictions as to the relative pronouns, provided they are used with the appropriate gender form.

#### DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSE

Defining relative clauses are there (as the term suggests) to define the word in the main clause - without the definition provided by the defining relative clause, the main clause remains incomplete, unclear, or even entirely incomprehensible. There is no comma between the main clause and the defining relative clause.

As relative pronouns, "who", "which" and "that" are possible: "who" for people; "which" for animals, things and abstract nouns; "that" for everything.

Example: \*This is the man.

*Without any context, this sentence does not make sense.*

This is the man who sold me the tickets.

*Here the word "man" is defined in the defining relative clause.*

If the relative pronoun is the object of the defining relative clause, it can be omitted. All four versions of the following example are correct:

The woman who we saw yesterday is not here today.

The woman whom we saw yesterday is not here today.

The woman that we saw yesterday is not here today.

The woman we saw yesterday is not here today.

### NON-DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSE

Non-defining relative clauses provide extra information that is not necessary to understand the main clause; it is often used as a kind of comment on the main clause. There must be a comma between the main clause and the non-defining relative clause.

As relative pronouns, only “who” and “which” are possible - “that” is not used in non-defining relative clauses.

Example: The ticket inspector was very polite.

*This sentence is perfectly understandable without a relative clause.*

The ticket inspector was very polite, which I found rather pleasant.

*The non-defining relative clause adds extra information.*

For more information on relative clauses, refer to a grammar book of your choice, e.g. Sonia Brough and Vincent J. Docherty, *Langenscheidts Standardgrammatik Englisch* (München: Langenscheidt, 2000), pp. 194-198.

## B TASK

Go through the text “Monsanto’s Chapati Patent Raises Indian Ire” on pp. 56-57 of your Viewfinder Topic and make a note of all the relative clauses it contains. Then explain why the author used a comma or why he did not and put your results in a table like the one below - the first item has been done for you as an example:

quotation (line number)	def./non-def.	reason
a strain of wheat whose gene sequence makes it ... suited to ...	defining	rel. clause defines what is so special about this particular type of wheat

Be careful: Not every “that” is a relative pronoun. It can also be a conjunction (like the German “dass”), e.g. in “A spokesperson for Monsanto in India denied that the company had any plan ...” (ll. 36-37). Furthermore, “that” can be a demonstrative pronoun, e.g. in “Rice production in India alone exceeds that of the American maize market” (ll. 52-53).

This exercise will make you more sensitive towards using the correct type of relative clause in your own texts.

*(Peter Ringeisen)*