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HOW TO DISTINGUISH RELATIVE PRONOUNS FROM CONJUNCTIONS

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ABSTRACT: Relative pronouns are different from conjunctions. The relative pronouns are important connecting devices. They not only connect two clauses but also act as the subject or object of the verb in the relative clause. This is the main difference between conjunctions and relative pronouns. Conjunctions merely connect two clauses. They do not serve any other purpose.

Relative pronouns are used in complex sentences. They are **part of the clause** which follows a noun or noun group and make the clause dependent. Clauses which begin with relative pronouns are sometimes called relative clauses or adjectival clauses. Use a relative clause to give more information about a noun or pronoun. A **relative pronoun** is a pronoun that relates to the word that it modifies and is not specific. In English, relative pronouns are *who, whom, which, whose, and that*.

Keywords: Relative pronoun, interrogative pronoun, linking words, a subject, an objective compliment, conjunction.

INTRODUCTION

A relative pronoun is a word that is used to connect an independent clause to a dependent clause. Relative pronouns are meant to provide more information about the subject (noun or pronoun) it relates to. These relative pronouns function exactly like adjectives, and so they can also be called adjective clauses.

According to the Collins Dictionary, ‘a relative pronoun is a word such as ‘who’, ‘that’, or ‘which’ that is used to introduce a relative clause’. The Macmillan Dictionary gives a similar definition of relative pronouns. According to them, it is ‘a pronoun such as ‘who’, ‘that’, or ‘which’ that introduces a relative clause in a sentence’.

Main part:

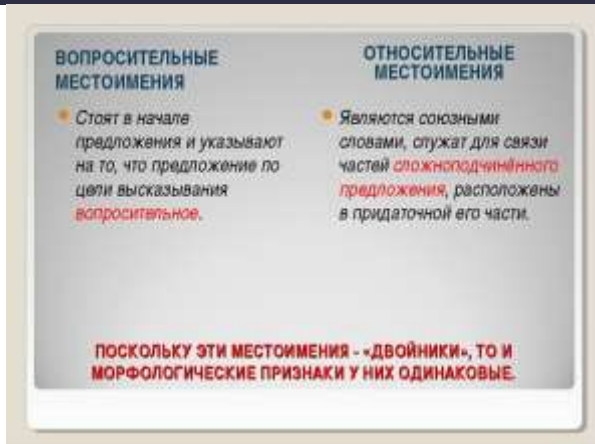
A relative pronoun is a pronoun that introduces a relative clause. It is called a "relative" pronoun because it "relates" to the

word that its relative clause modifies. Here is an example: **The person who phoned me last night is my teacher.**

In Russian, among the numerous categories of pronouns, two of them are very similar — these are interrogative and relative pronouns. They are exactly the same in spelling and sound, but they have a different meaning and syntactic function in a sentence, that is, they are homonyms in relation to each other.

How not to confuse the categories of pronouns? To do this, you need to understand what their essence is, finding out their characteristic morphological and syntactic features in the sentence.

To distinguish the difference, please look at the chart below.



Interrogative pronouns. They stand at the beginning of the sentence and indicate that the sentence for the purpose of the statement is **interrogative**.

Relative pronouns are linking words, which serve to connect parts of a compound sentence, are located in its subordinate part.

Since these pronouns are similar, i.e. look-alike, then they have the same morphological features.

1. Relative pronouns

Words from this category of pronouns indicate the subject, their attribute and belonging to someone or something or quantity. The words of this independent part of speech belong to the category of relative pronouns:

How many, what, who, which, whose.

They are usually used as conjunctions in compound sentences. Such pronouns perform the role of linking words that retain all the signs of their part of speech and act as a member of the sentence, in contrast to the official part of speech of the union.

Я не знаю, **кто** мне **послал** это извещение. - I do not know **who sent me this notice**.

Let's learn more about what relative pronouns in Russian and English.

Some examples of relative pronouns:

К куртке ей больше подошёл тот берет, который был серого цвета. - **The beret which was gray, suited her better according to the colour of the jacket.**

Я спросил у прохожего, какой трамвай идет до стадиона. - **I asked a passerby which tram goes to the stadium.**

Никто не ответил, чей это кошелек. - **No one answered whose wallet it was.**

2. Interrogative pronouns

In Russian language the interrogative pronouns are very similar to relative pronouns — no wonder they are so often confused. They sound and are written exactly the same way: "who", "what", "how much", "which" and so on. The rules of their changing by case are also the similar. The pronouns "what", "who" and "how much" change only in accordance with the cases, the rest of the words — by numbers, genders and cases.

But this category of pronouns has one fundamental difference. The interrogative pronoun can be used exclusively in sentences where a question is asked. In any of the cases, it emphasizes that the person who is going to ask a question does not know something and turns to someone or something to get reliable information.

Let's get acquainted in more detail with interrogative pronouns in Russian.

Some examples of interrogative pronouns:

Сколько граммов весит это яблоко? - [How many grams does this apple weigh?](#)

Чья эта чёрная куртка? - [Whose is this black jacket?](#)

Кто первым полез в драку? - [Who started the fight first?](#)

The difference between interrogative pronouns and relative pronouns

It is not difficult to distinguish two groups of these pronouns from each other. For example, in the phrase "Who will fix the car?" an interrogative pronoun is used, since it is used to form a special question. But in the phrase "I know who will fix the car", the word "who" is a relative pronoun, since the question is not asked. In addition, the relative pronoun acts as an allied word in a compound sentence. And the interrogative pronoun is most often used in simple sentences.

Table 1 «The main differences between relative and interrogative pronouns»

Criteria	Interrogative pronouns	Relative pronouns
Examples of pronouns	Who! What? Which one? Whose? How? How much?	Who! What? Which one? Whose? How? How much?
What are they used for	to express a question	to link simple sentences into complex ones
In which sentences are they used for the purpose of the statement	In interrogative sentences	In declarative sentences
Where are they placed in the sentences	At the beginning	In the middle
Samples	How old are you?	I found out what holiday it is today.

Conclusion:

Relative pronouns are one of several groups of pronouns in English language. These pronouns are necessary to connect subordinate clauses with the main clause in a complex sentence. Thus, they are allied words. It is linking words, not unions. After all, relative pronouns in English not only connect subordinate clauses, but are themselves members of these sentences. After unions, as you know, cannot be members of a sentence.

Thus, relative pronouns connect the subordinate clause with the main clause, while

they differ from conjunctions in that they are members of the subordinate clause:

I know the lecturer **who** will make today's report. ("who" serves as the subject of a subordinate clause)

Я знаю лектора, **который** сегодня будет делать доклад.

Who

The relative pronoun "**who**" denotes people: This is the engineer **who** has designed the new engine.

Вот тот инженер, который создал новый двигатель.

- **Whose**

The pronoun “**whose**” reflects belonging to animate objects:

Do you remember the man **whose** car was stolen yesterday?

Помнишь человека, чью машину вчера угнали?

- **Which**

“**Which**” refers to inanimate objects:

He showed me the museum **which** was founded 400 years ago.

Он показал мне музей, который был основан 400 лет назад.

- **That**

The relative pronoun “**that**” can refer to both animate and inanimate objects:

The musician **that** won the award is Italian.

Музыкант, который выиграл премию - итальянец.

I like the book **that** I read today.

Мне нравится книга, которую я прочитал сегодня.

In brief, we use the relative pronoun “**who**” instead of personal pronouns when we talk about people (animate persons).

E.g. *The boy **who** won the first prize is only fifteen years old.* – Мальчику, который выиграл первый приз, всего 15 лет.

*The man **who** built our house lives in Moscow.* – Мужчина, который построил наш дом, живет в Москве.

When we talk about objects (inanimate objects) or animals, we use the relative pronoun “**which**”.

E.g. *The movie **which** you advised me to watch is very boring.* – Фильм, который ты посоветовал мне посмотреть, очень скучный.

*The dog **which** you gave me ran away.* – Собака, которую ты мне подарил, убежала.

In both cases presented, the pronoun “**that**” can be used instead of the relative pronouns “**who**” and “**which**”. Therefore, if you cannot choose the right pronoun in a certain situation, you may use “**that**” and you will be right. Mistakes can be avoided.

E.g. *Have you met the man **that** sent you flowers?* – Ты встретила с мужчиной, который послал тебе цветы?

*This is a diamond ring **that** I got for my birthday.* – Это бриллиантовое кольцо, которое я получила на день рождения.

We replace possessive pronouns (adjectives) with another relative pronoun in English. Using “**whose**” instead of the specified words in relation to people, animals and objects, we express the belonging of something to someone:

E.g. *What is the name of the writer **whose** most famous novel is ‘War and Peace’?* – Как зовут писателя, самым известным романом которого является «Война и мир»?

*Tina is the girl **whose** father works in a bank.* – Тина – та девушка, чей отец работает в банке.

One more point: the relative pronoun “**which**” can be used in relation to the whole sentence. For example:

E.g. *He helped me to carry my bags, **which** was very kind of him.* – Он помог мне донести сумки, и это было очень любезно с его стороны.

By the way, after nouns that are defined by adjectives in the superlative degree, ordinal numerals or the words like all, any, only, we use only the relative pronoun “**that**” (but not “**which**” or “**who**”):

E.g. This is **the second** correct answer that I got. – Это второй правильный ответ, который я получил.

If a relative pronoun in English is the subject of a subordinate clause, it cannot be omitted. How to determine that the relative pronoun in this sentence is the subject? Look at the subordinate clause. If there is no noun or other pronoun between the relative pronoun and the verb in the sentence, then the relative pronoun “**that**” is the subject.

E.g. I know a boy **who** is from India. – Я знаю мальчика из Индии.

I believe there are people **who** can help in difficult situations. – Я верю, что есть люди, которые могут помочь в трудных ситуациях.

If the function of the relative pronoun in the subordinate clause is an objective complement, we can safely omit the pronoun itself in the sentence. The meaning of the sentence will not be affected by this. How to determine that the

relative pronoun in this sentence is an objective complement? If there is a noun or other pronoun between a relative pronoun and a verb, then it will be the subject, and our relative pronoun will be the objective complement.

E.g. The nicest city (**that**) I ever visited is Madrid. – Мадрид – самый прекрасный город, в котором я когда-либо была.
Sorry, I forgot to bring you the book (**that**) you asked. – Извини, я забыла принести тебе книгу, которую ты просил.

Prepositions can be used with relative pronouns. In formal style, the preposition stands before the pronoun, in colloquial – at the end of the subordinate clause.

E.g. The drawer, **in which** I keep my documents, was unlocked. (a formal style) / The drawer, **which** I keep my documents **in**, was unlocked. (a colloquial style) – Ящик стола, в котором я храню свои документы, был открыт.

<i>who</i>	people and sometimes pet animals	defining and non-defining
<i>which</i>	animals and things	defining and non-defining; clause referring to a whole sentence
<i>that</i>	people, animals and things; informal	defining only
<i>whose</i>	possessive meaning; for people and animals usually; sometimes for things in formal situations	defining and non-defining
<i>whom</i>	people in formal styles or in writing; often with a preposition; rarely in conversation; used instead of <i>who</i> if <i>who</i> is the object	defining and non-defining
no relative pronoun	when the relative pronoun defines the object of the clause	defining only



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