



EXPLORING SUBORDINATE CLAUSES IN *THE STORY OF AN HOUR*

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Abstract

This is a brief analysis of subordinate clauses found in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*. Three types of clauses were identified according to their function within the complex sentences to which they belong. The data analyzed are qualitative, with inductive approach. The three types are complement clauses, relative clauses, and adverbial clauses. Complement clauses are marked by *that*. Relative clauses are introduced by *that*, *who*, *which*, or *whose*. Adverbial clauses are marked by *as* or *when*. In terms of their structural types, two types of clauses were found: finite and non-finite clauses.

Key words: complement clause, relative clause, adverbial clause, finite, non-finite

1. INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that human language is characterized by a number of features. Two of the key features are discreteness and compositionality. The first reveals the fact that a given language has distinct units, and the distinct units can be identified and used by speakers of the language. The second refers to hierarchical relationships between one linguistic unit and other(s) in the sense that smaller units combine as building blocks of larger units. Words, phrases, and sentences are three of the linguistic units. Among these three units, words are the smallest, phrases are intermediate units, sentences are the largest units. It follows then that words are building blocks for phrases, and phrases are building blocks for sentences. (Quirk et al., 1985; Cruz-Ferreira and Abraham, 2011)

Some sentences are simple; some are multiple sentences. Simple sentences have only one full predication in the form independent clause. Multiple sentences can be categorized into two: compound and sentences. Compound sentences are those having two or more independent clauses. Complex sentences are the ones having an independent clause and one or more dependent (subordinate) clauses. This paper focuses on exploring subordinate clauses in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One way to classify subordinate clauses is by functions. In terms of functions, subordinate clauses can be classified into three types. The first type is called complement clause. A complement clause is a subordinate clause functioning to modify either verb or

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Exploring Subordinate Clauses In *The Story Of An Hour*

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noun. It can function as subject or object in a clause. For example, *that environment should be kept clean* in the sentence *we like the idea that our environment should be kept clean* modifies *the idea*. The second type is relative clause. A relative clause is a subordinate clause whose function is to modify a noun. The third type is adverbial clause. An adverbial clause is a subordinate clause which modifies another clause. (Trask, 1993; Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002; Cruz-Ferreira and Abraham, 2011)

Another way to categorize subordinate clauses is by structural types. In terms of structural types, we recognize finite clauses, non-finite clauses, and verbless clauses. A finite subordinate clause is sensitive to tense, person and number. In the sentence *the man who often accompanies the president lives in Jakarta*, for instance, the verb *accompanies* agrees with the subject *the man*. As for a non-finite subordinate clause, the opposite holds. The main verb in a non-finite clause is non-finite. Unlike finite and non-finite clauses, which both have verbs, verbless clauses do not have verbs. *Although seldom helpful* in the complex sentence *although seldom helpful, Mark was liked very much* is an instance of verbless clauses. (Quirk et al., 1985; Burton-Roberts, 2016; Jančovičová, 2017)

Subordinate clauses have several properties. One of the properties is that subordinate clauses are dependent clauses; they cannot stand on their own. Besides their inability to stand on their own, subordinate clauses are constrained by declarative syntax. Subordinate clauses are also limited in other respects, such as prepositional fronting and tag questions. For instance, **The person who into the room came was my neighbour* is not accepted. (Miller, 2008)

There are other indicators of subordination. One of them is the presence of subordinating conjunction. A subordinating conjunction usually introduces a subordinate clause. The subordinator is in the subordinate clause. Some subordinators such as *because* and *if* are simple; some are complex, like *in order that* and *given (that)*. Other indicator of subordinate clause is the presence of a *wh*-element. The *wh*-element initiates a subordinate clause.

3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

This exploration of subordinate clauses found in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* is qualitative in nature. In this inquiry, the researcher functions as the key instrument, the data analyzed are qualitative, with inductive approach. Through this research, the author sheds light on the subordinate clauses in the classic short story authored by Kate Chopin. More

specifically, this research concerns with the complement clauses, relative clauses, and adverbial clauses used in the short story and their constructions.

The data collected through observation were analyzed through qualitative procedures. The author began this stage by simplifying and organizing the data in such a way, in line with the research questions. Simplified and organized data were analyzed further using several relevant techniques, such as substitution, transposition, extension, and deletion. (Creswell, 2009; Sudaryanto, 2015; Mahsun, 2017). These analyses resulted in portray of the subordinate clauses used in the short story *The Story of an Hour* authored by Kate Chopin.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Sentences in Kate Chopin's short story *The Story of an Hour* vary in terms of full predication. Some of the sentences are simple. These sentences contain only one full predication in the form of independent clause. *Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey* is an example of a sentence containing only one independent clause. Some sentences are compound. They contain more than one independent clause. One of the sentences belonging to this type is *She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs*. Still some sentences are complex. They contain not only independent (main) but also dependent (subordinate) clauses. As indicated previously, there are three major types of subordinate clauses. The following discussion focuses on the three types of subordinate clauses identified in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* and their constituent structures.

4.1 Three Types of Subordinate Clauses

Some of the subordinate clauses in Kate Chopin's short story *The Story of an Hour* are finite relative clauses. The main verb in these relative clauses are finite. The finite verbs are sensitive to tense as well as person and number. The finite relative clauses are marked by complementizer, which can be seen in the sentences presented as (1). The relative clauses are in italics.

- (1) a. It was her sister Josephine *who told her*, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing.
- b. The notes of a distant song *which some one was singing reached her faintly*, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.
- c. She was young, with a fair, calm face, *whose lines bespoke repression* and even a certain strength.

Nazara, Wa'ōzisōkhi (2024).

Exploring Subordinate Clauses In *The Story Of An Hour*

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d. She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees *that were all a quiver with the new spring life*.

All of the relative clauses in (1) are post modifiers. The relative clause *who told her* in (1a) follows and modifies the noun phrase *her sister Yosephine*, the clause *which some one was singing* reached her faintly in (1b) follows and modifies the noun phrase *the notes of a distant song*. Similar phenomena are shown by the relative clauses in (1c) and the one in (1d) respectively, that is, relative clause *whose lines bespoke repression comes after and functions as a modifier* to the noun phrase *a fair, calm face*; *that were all a quiver with the new spring life* follows and modifies the noun phrase *the tops of trees*.

A few non-finite relative clauses are also in Kate Chopi's short story *The Story of an Hour*. Examples of such non-finite relative clauses can be seen in the complex sentences presented as (2) below.

- (2) a. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name *leading the list of "killed."*
b. There stood, *facing the open window*, a comfortable, roomy armchair.
c. There was something *coming to her* and she was waiting for it, fearfully.

Like finite clauses, non-finite relative clauses function to modify the noun phrase which they follow. The non-finite relative clauses *leading the list of "killed"* in (2a) modifies its head the noun phrase *Brently Mallard's name*; the non-finite relative clause *facing the open window* modifies *a comfortable, roomy armchair* in (2b); the non-finite relative clause *coming to her* modifies *something* in (2c). Unlike finite clauses, which are sensitive to tense and person and number, non-finite clauses are characterized by non-finite verb. Non-finite verbs are not sensitive to tense, number and person.

Besides relative clauses, complement clauses are in Kate Chopi's short story *The Story of an Hour*. Examples of the complement clauses can be seen in sentences (3).

- (3) a. She knew *that she would weep again* when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead.
b. She breathed a quick prayer *that life might be long*.
c. She was beginning *to recognize this thing* that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving *to beat it back with her will*—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.
d. A clear and exalted perception enabled her *to dismiss the suggestion* as trivial.

The complement clause *that she would weep again* in (3a) functions as a complement. This subordinate clause modify the verb *knew*. The clause *that life might be long* in (3b) conveys the content of the quick prayer. The clauses *to recognize this thing* and *to beat it back with her will* in (3c) function as complement. The clause *to dismiss the suggestion* in (3d) also functions as complement.

Relative clauses and complement clauses are not the only subordinate clauses found in Kate Chopin's short story *The Story of an Hour*. As a matter of fact, there are also adverbial clauses in the classic short story. Examples of the adverbial clauses can be observed in (4).

- (4) a. *Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble*, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.
- b. *When the storm of grief had spent itself* she went away to her room alone.
- c. *When she abandoned herself* a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips.
- d. *When the doctors came* they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

The adverbial clauses in (4) fall into two categories. The first is adverbial clause in (4a). According to its meaning, this is an adverbial clause of reason. In terms of form, the adverbial clause is a non-finite clause. By the same token, subordinate clauses in (4a-c) are adverbial clauses of time. More specifically, the subordinate clause *knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble* gives information about why *great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death* in (4a), the subordinate clause *when the storm of grief had spent itself* about the time *she went away to her room alone*, the subordinate clause *when she abandoned herself* gives information of the time *a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips* in (4c), and the subordinate clause *when the doctors came* (4d) gives information about the time *they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills*

4.2 Constituent Structures of Subordinate Clauses

As cited in section 2 of this paper, in terms of structural types subordinate clauses in English fall into three. The three categories are finite clauses, non-finite clauses and verbless clauses. The first two types of clauses appear in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*, namely finite subordinate clauses and non-finite subordinate clauses.

Compared to non-finite subordinate clauses, more finite subordinate clauses appear in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*. Examples of this type of subordinate clauses, which are relative clauses, can be seen in (1), rewritten as (5) below.

Nazara, Wa'ōzisōkhi (2024).

Exploring Subordinate Clauses In *The Story Of An Hour*

IJOTL-TL (2024, January), 9(1): 120--128. DOI 10.30957/ijotl.v9i1.781.

- (5)
- a. It was her sister Josephine *who told her*, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing.
 - b. The notes of a distant song *which some one was singing reached her faintly*, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.
 - c. She was young, with a fair, calm face, *whose lines bespoke repression* and even a certain strength.
 - d. She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees *that were all a quiver with the new spring life*.

As claimed previously, finite subordinate clauses in (5) are relative clauses: *who told her* in (5a), *which some one was singing* in (5b), *whose lines bespoke repression* in (5c), and *that were all a quiver with the new spring life* in (5d). Each of these relative clauses is introduced by a complementizer, namely *who* (5a), *which* (5b), *whose* (5c), and *that* (5d). Besides, each of the relative clauses in (5a-d) contains a finite verb phrase, which is sensitive to tense. The verbs in (5a), (5c) and (5d) indicate the use simple past tense; the verb in (5b) shows past progressive tense. The verbs in the relative clauses in (5a), (5b) and (5c) are non-copula verbs; the verb in the relative clause in (5d) is copula. Relative clauses in (5a), (5b) and (5d) are restrictive relative clauses; in (5c) relative clause is non-restrictive clause.

As shown in (3a-b) and rewritten as (6a-b) below, a few sentences in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* contain a finite complement clause. The subordinate complement clauses are introduced by a complementizer.

- (6)
- a. She knew *that she would weep again* when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead.
 - b. She breathed a quick prayer *that life might be long*.

Complement clauses initiated by the complementizer *that* in (6a-b) contain a finite verb. The finite verbs are inflected for tense. The verb in (6a) is non-copula and the one in (6b) copula verb. Each of the copula verbs is preceded by a modal auxiliary (*would* in (6a); *might* in (6b)). The complement clause *that she would weep again* in (6a) is present to fill in the slot for the argument required by the transitive verb *knew*. The complement clause *that life might be long* serves a different function compared to the complement clause in (6a). The complement clause *that life might be long* in (6b) functions to convey the content of the prayer.

As presented in subsection 4.1, some of the sentences in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* contain adverbial clauses. The examples of such clauses in the sentences were presented as (4) and are rewritten as (7) below.

- (7) a. *Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble*, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.
b. *When the storm of grief had spent itself* she went away to her room alone.
c. *When she abandoned herself* a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips.
d. *When the doctors came* they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills

The subordinate clause *Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble* in sentence (7a) is a non-finite clause without overt subject. This clause has two immediate constituents. The first is non-finite verb *knowing*; the second is the complement clause (or noun clause) *that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble*; whose presence is required by the verb *knowing*. The complement clause which functions as the object in the non-finite clause which it is part of is non-finite. It consists of complementizer *that*, subject *Mrs. Mallard*, predicate *was afflicted*, and adjunct *with a heart trouble*.

Each of the subordinate clauses in (7b-d) are introduced by subordinator *when*. Each of them contains the noun phrase functioning as the subject and finite verb as the predicate. The predicates of the subordinate clauses in sentences (7b) and (7c) are transitive verbs and therefore they have the objects. The predicate of the subordinate clause in sentence (7d) is intransitive, so it does not have the object.

Two other forms of non-finite clauses appear in the sentences in *The Story of an Hour*. These two forms of non-finite clauses can be seen in the sentences presented as (8) below.

- (8) a. She sat with her head *thrown back upon the cushion of the chair*, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.
b. She did not stop *to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her*.

The non-finite clause *thrown back upon the cushion of the chair* in sentence (8a) is a subordinate clause. The subordinate clause cannot stand alone. The word *thrown* in the non-finite clause *thrown back upon the cushion of the chair* in sentence (8a) is passive participle verb. The passive participle verb does not indicate tense. The clause *to ask if it were or were*

not a monstrous joy that held her in sentence (8b) is also a subordinate clause. It cannot stand alone. The verb is to-infinitive verb, and therefore it is not inflected for tense.

5. CONCLUSION

In standard references, subordinate clauses are generally classified in two ways: by structural types and on the basis of semantic functions. By structural types, subordinate clauses fall into three types. The three types are finite clauses, non-finite clauses and verbless clauses. On the basis of semantic functions, three major types of subordinate clauses in English are usually cited. The three major types are complement clauses, relative clauses and adverbial clauses.

In the paper whose data source is Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*, three types of subordinate clauses, namely complement clauses, relative clauses and adverbial clauses are cited. As for classification of subordinate clauses according to structural types, only two types are discussed. The first is finite subordinate clauses. The second is non-finite subordinate clauses. Some of the subordinate clauses identified are with subject; a few without subject.

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Exploring Subordinate Clauses In *The Story Of An Hour*

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