



## THE SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS OF WH- AND THAT-NOMINAL CLAUSES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE WITH REFERENCE TO ANIMAL FARM BY GEORGE ORWELL: THE CASE OF DIALOGUE SECTION

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### Abstract

The present study analyses the syntactic functions of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses in English Language with reference to *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. The study employed documentary research method for data collection. This paper also employed the interpretivist paradigm and has analysed the data both qualitatively and quantitatively. The study further used the descriptive and case study designs. In this study, the descriptive research employed the George Orwell's novel, *Animal Farm*. The focus of the study was to analyse syntactic functions of the **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses as used in the novel. The findings of the study show a total number of thirty four (34) **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses in the dialogue section. There are five (5) **Wh-**nominal clauses and a total of twenty nine (29) **That-**nominal clauses. The study concludes that the dialogue section reflects a wide range of **That-**nominal clauses relative to their **Wh-** counterparts. The study further demonstrates that the dialogue section of *Animal Farm* demonstrates a variety of syntactic functions of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses. The data illustrates four (4) syntactic functions, subject, object, adjective complement and appositive. The **Wh-**nominal clauses are indicated as subject and object while **That-**nominal clauses are observed as subject, object, adjective complement and appositive. The study thus illustrates that **That-**nominal clauses show more variety of syntactic functions than the **Wh-** ones.

**Keywords:** syntactic functions, **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses, English Language

### Introduction

The **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses are subordinate clauses which are identified within a complex sentence. Complex sentence is a type of sentence which contains more than one verb in a multi-clause sentence joined together by subordinating conjunctions. Maleke (2011) observes it as a sentence consisting of a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. A main clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and can stand by itself as a complete sentence (Steffani, 2007). However, a subordinate clause is an embedded clause which is attached to the main clause. Steffani (ibid) notes that a subordinate clause cannot stand alone as a sentence because it depends on another clause to make a complete thought. The subordinate clauses are observed in two types namely, finite and non-finite. Maleke (ibid) defines finite clause as one with a finite verb and its subject. A finite verb is tensed and agrees with its subject in person and number. This present paper focuses particularly on finite subordinate clauses.

According to Morato-Maleke (2019), subordinate finite clauses are classified into three typologies: relative, adverbial and nominal clauses. The present study deals with the finite nominal clauses. These are clauses which perform the functions of noun phrases such as subject, object and noun complement. The nominal clauses are classified into subordinate declarative clauses (**That-**clauses), subordinate interrogative clauses (**Wh-**clauses) and subordinate exclamative clauses (Frank, 1972). The subordinate declarative clauses provide content commented upon by the main clause and are introduced by the subordinating conjunction, *that*. On the other hand, Frank (ibid) indicates that a subordinate interrogative clause is an indirect question expressed in a form of a subordinate clause and is introduced by **Wh-**words as subordinators. These include, *who*, *whose*, *which*, *why*, *whatever*, *whenever*. The present paper adopts Frank's (ibid) definitions of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses.

The current study is interested in analysing the syntactic functions of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses. A syntactic function in this study is construed to mean a grammatical relationship of **Wh-** or **That-**nominal clause(s) with the main clause within a complex sentence. The functions of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses are diverse in a complex sentence. Frank (1972), Quirk et al. (1985) and Eastwood (1994) identify the following six syntactic functions of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses: subject, object, subject complement, adjective complement, prepositional complement and appositive. The present study affirms with these authors' view that nominal clauses serve different syntactic functions in a complex sentence.

## Background

Studies have been conducted before to investigate syntactic complexity of the writing of the research subjects. They used different syntactic complexity measures. These investigations were done in English as the First Language and English as Second Language. Some of such studies explored the syntactic functions of the subordinate clauses as measures of their syntactic complexity such as Maleke (2011), Morato-Maleke (2019) and Mothibeli (2022). However, such studies did not explore the syntactic functions of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses alone but used all types of subordinate clauses (finite and non-finite) in their studies. Similarly, Reitrova (2008) studied the frequency of occurrence of nominal and relative clauses as well as their syntactic functions and contexts. The conclusion drawn from her study was that nominal clauses, especially declarative clauses, demonstrated high frequency of occurrence.

## The study

The present paper investigates the syntactic functions of the **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses in the dialogue section of the novel called *Animal Farm* which is written by George Orwell. The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the syntactic functions of the **That-**nominal clauses identified in the dialogue section of *Animal Farm*.
2. To explore the syntactic functions of the **Wh-**nominal clauses noted in the dialogue section of *Animal Farm*.

### Distribution of Syntactic Functions of **That-**clauses

Figure 1 presents the findings of the study for the syntactic functions of **That-**nominal clauses.

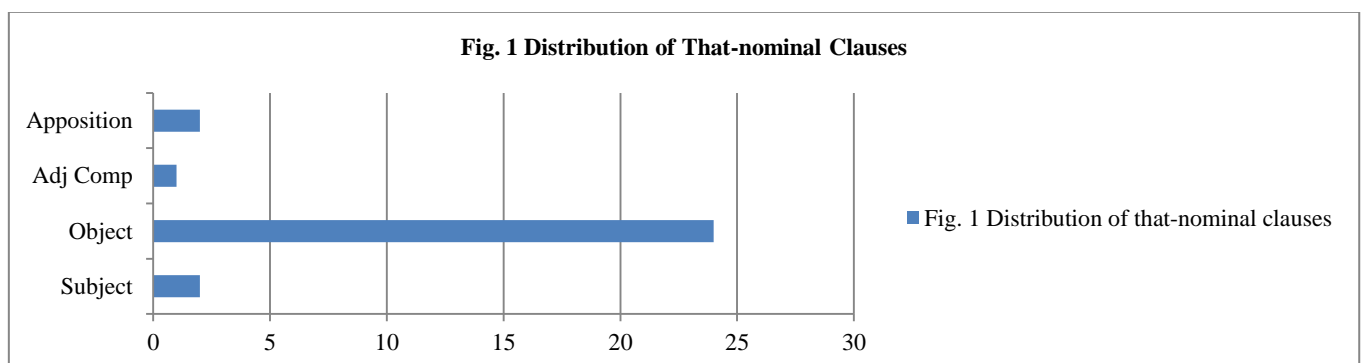


Figure 1 shows the distribution of the syntactic functions of **That-**nominal clauses. The total number of **That-**nominal clauses which were identified is 29. The bar chart also indicates that **That-**nominal clauses serve a number of syntactic functions which include the subject, object, adjective complement and apposition. The subject is observed in two (2) incidences in the sample. This means the author did not favour nominal clauses in the subject position. An example of a sentence which reflects **That-**nominal clause as a subject is shown in (1).

(1). *It is for your sake that we drink that milk* (Orwell, 1946:23).

The dialogue section was purposively selected throughout the ten chapters of the novel, *Animal Farm* spanning from page one to page 95 as the sample for the current study. The researcher in the current study purposively targeted complex sentences which were made up of **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses in the dialogue section of the *Animal Farm*. He identified all the **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses for syntactic analysis in the dialogue section of the novel.

The novel, *Animal Farm* was employed as the sole instrument to collect data from. This instrument was appropriate for the current study because it allowed the researcher to determine the frequency of use of the **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses and their functions. It is through this instrument that the researcher was able to analyse the syntactic functions of the **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses. Stewart (1984) asserts that the documents are used as secondary data sources because they contain information which was not specifically collected for the research questions at hand. The advantage of using documentary evidence in this study was that the documents are not biased because they were prepared for other purposes other than for research.

## Data Analysis

The study used Content Analysis (CA) as a method of data analysis. Cohen et al. (2007) demonstrate that in order to perform content analysis, the researcher must first define the units of analysis and categories to be used for analysis and then review the text in order to code the units and place them into categories; then count the occurrences of codes and categories. In the present study, the researcher read through all the pages in the ten chapters of the novel, *Animal Farm*. He then identified the **Wh-** and **That-**nominal clauses which appeared only in the dialogue of the novel by underlining them. He assigned different codes to each of them.

## The findings

Twenty nine (29) **That-**nominal clauses and five (5) **Wh-**nominal clauses identified. The **That-**nominal clauses found in the novel were used to perform different syntactic functions. That is, the nominal clauses are identified functioning as Subjects (SU), Objects (OB), Adjective Complements (Adj Comp) and as Appositive. The findings demonstrate the total occurrence of each function as identified in **That-**nominal clauses.

Example (1) demonstrates **That**-nominal clause, *that we drink that milk*, extraposed to the end of the sentence due to the English end-weight principle which dictates that heavy elements such as long subject clauses should be moved to the end of the sentence. According to Quirk et al. (1985), **That**-nominal clause in examples such as this, functions as a subject after expletive, *it*. Biber et al. (1999) assert that the dummy, *it* does not refer to any discourse entity but it serves a syntactic purpose of filling in the subject position when nothing else is available. Reitrova (2008) and Lestari (2013) also noted the same finding where **That**-nominal clauses are reflected in extraposed positions.

Furthermore, the results of the present study reflect that **That**-nominal clauses are used in twenty four (24) instances as objects in all the selected chapters. This shows that the author preferred to use nominal clauses in the object position than in any other position. This finding was also noticed by Reitrova (2008) in her study. She noted that majority of nominal clauses are used as objects in the post-predicate position to the verb in the main clause. A sentence which contains a **That**-nominal clause where it is used as an object in the present study is provided in 2(a).

2(a). *I forgot that I was wearing iron shoes* (Orwell, 1946:28).

From example 2(a), it is noticed that the nominal clause, *that I was wearing iron shoes*, is a direct object to the verb, *forgot*, which precedes it in the main clause.

In some cases the objects appear as indirect objects in sentences. Tambunsaribu (2010) confirms that a **That**-nominal clause may function as an indirect object in a complex sentence. A situation in which a nominal clause functions as an indirect object is shown in example 2(b).

2(b). *We will teach this miserable traitor that he cannot undo our work so easily* (Orwell, 1946:48).

2(b) is an example of a **That**-nominal clause, *that he cannot undo our work so easily*, which functions as an indirect object to the verb, *will teach* whose direct object is the noun phrase, *this miserable traitor*. The author employed a variety of nominal clauses both as direct and indirect objects.

The **That**-nominal clause is also reflected functioning as an adjective complement in one (1) occasion in the sample of the present study. This finding shows that the adjective complement function is not observed in most of the sample. The limited use of adjective complements is also noted in the findings of Reitrova (2008), Tambunsaribu (2010) and Lestari (2013) where adjective complements are used once or twice in their data. When using **That**-nominal clauses for this function, the author wrote sentences such as the one provided in (3).

(3). *But I am almost certain I saw this* (Orwell, 1946:30).

The example in (3) reflects a **That**-nominal clause, [*that*] *I saw this*, as a complement to the adjective phrase, *certain*, which appears in the main clause. The subordinator, *that-*, is omitted in introducing the nominal clause but remains grammatically correct according to English grammarians such as Quirk et al. (1985) who explain that the subordinator, *that*, could be omitted when they introduce nominal clauses as adjective complements. This finding is also attested to by Biber et al. (1999). They point out that ellipsis of *that-* can be done when a **That**-nominal clause functions as an adjective complement in a complex sentence. Lastly, **That**-nominal clauses are noted in two (2) occurrences functioning as appositives. This indicates that **that**-nominal clauses are not observed in most of the chapters. Lestari (2013) noted the same finding in his study where he noted that **That**-nominal clauses are not commonly used in this syntactic position. An example indicating **That**-nominal clauses in apposition is reflected in (4).

(4). *You, Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power, Jones will sell you to the knacker* (Orwell, 1946:5).

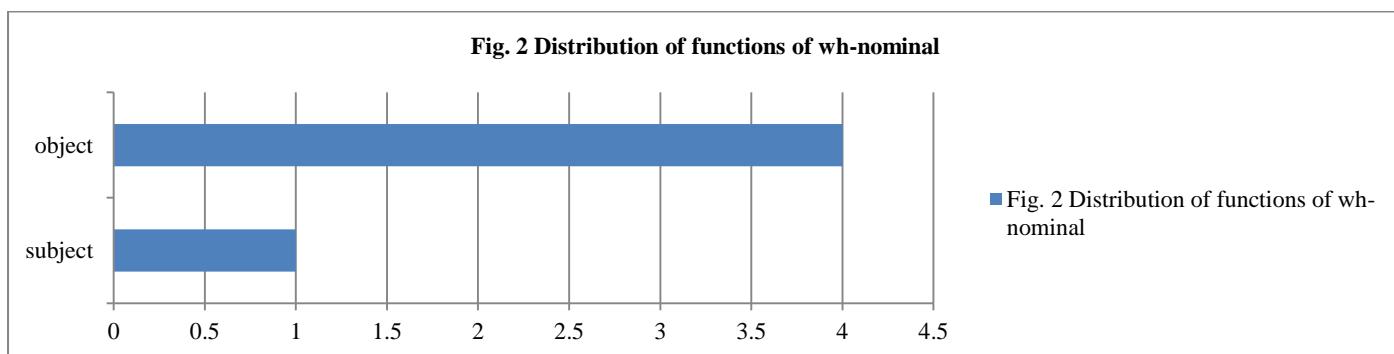
Example (4) shows **That**-nominal clause, *that those great muscles of yours lose their power*, appositive to the noun phrase, *the very day*, which it modifies.

Although English grammarians, (Quirk et al. 1985, Biber et al.1999 and Huddleston et al., 2002) as cited by Reitrova (2008), explain that **That**-nominal clauses could also function as noun complements, there is no single occurrence in which they serve that function in the current examined section of the novel. This is because all **That**-nominal clauses functioning as subject complements are demonstrated only by non-finite forms. This incidence indicates that in some cases, **That**-nominal clauses may not be used as noun complements.

### Distribution of Syntactic Functions of Wh-nominal Clauses

The **Wh**-nominal clauses are indicated in only two syntactic functions in the chosen section of the novel. They are used to either serve as a subject or as objects in the entire sample, probably because the author appeared to favour direct questions in the dialogue section instead of indirect questions. Although the use of **Wh**-nominal clauses is still limited in the reviewed studies, **Wh**-subordinators are not observed introducing direct questions either. As a result of this, the present study considers the wide use of **Wh**-subordinators introducing direct questions as a new finding of the study.

Figure 2 presents the findings of the study for the syntactic functions of **Wh**-nominal clauses.



The bar chart 2 shows the total number of **Wh**-nominal clauses in the selected dialogue section of the novel. There are five **Wh**-nominal clauses which are noted in the sample. This type of clauses is not generally used in the sample. The same finding was observed by Lestari (2013) in his study on the analysis of grammatical functions of noun clauses. He noted that the use of **Wh**-nominal clauses in all the articles of the *Hello* magazine in his study is limited relative to those introduced by **That**-subordinator. In all the instances, the **Wh**-nominal clauses are introduced by *what* and *when* in the present study. The **Wh**-nominal clause is observed as the subject only once in the current study. This finding is similar to those which were noted by Reitrova (2008), Tambunsaribu (2010) and Drancak (2019) in their studies where the use of **Wh**-nominal clauses is not wide. When using the **Wh**-nominal clause as subjects, the nominal clauses are reflected in sentences such as the one provided in (5).

(5). *What he has done since is different* (Orwell, 1946:55).

In (5), the example demonstrates the **Wh**-nominal clause, *what he has done since*, appearing at the initial position of a sentence and as such functions as the subject of that sentence. It is a subject to the verb, *is*, in the main clause. The finding is consistent with the explanations of English grammarians such as Quirk et al. (1985), Biber et al. (1999) and Huddleston et al. (2002) that a nominal clause may function as the subject of the sentence. The finding is also supported by Tambunsaribu's (2010) findings where **Wh**-nominal clauses are noticed functioning as subjects in the initial positions of the sentences.

The findings of the current study further indicate the occurrence of **Wh**-nominal clauses in four incidences as objects. This finding means that the **Wh**-clauses are not commonly employed in the dialogue section under study. This result is commensurate with the findings of Drancak's (2019) in his study which demonstrated that **Wh**-nominal clauses are not widely used. An example indicating **Wh**-nominal clause as an object in the present study is illustrated in (6).

(6). *I do not know when that Rebellion will come* (Orwell, 1946:5).

In (6), the **Wh**-nominal clause, *when that Rebellion will come*, is reflected as the object to the verbal phrase, *do not know*, which precedes it in the main clause. The nominal clause is introduced by the **Wh**-subordinator, *when*.

The relative frequency of functions is represented. That is, it explains the proportion of each syntactic function relative to the total number of **Wh**- and **That**-nominal clauses observed in the sample.

#### Percentage Comparison of Nominal Clauses in each Type of Nominal Clauses

Figure 3 shows the percentage of syntactic functions in each type of nominal clauses.

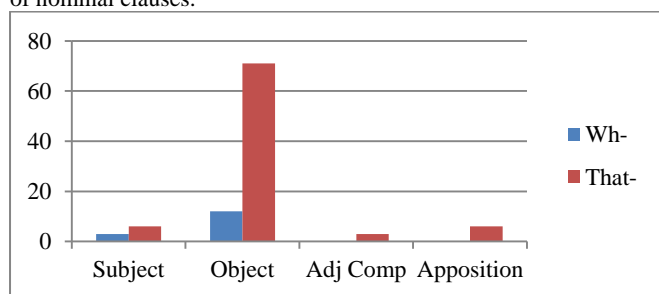


Fig. 3

Figure 3 indicates the percentage each function represents relative to the total number of nominal clauses in the sample. The findings reflect that the **Wh**-nominal clauses are only shown in the subject and object positions and constitute 15 percent of the nominal clauses noted in the dialogue section. Generally, the findings show that **Wh**-nominal clauses are not widely used so that different syntactic functions could be noted in the novel. Relatively, even when they are used as objects, their use is numerically limited compared to **That**-nominal clauses in the same syntactic position. It shows that the author preferred **That**- over **Wh**-nominal clauses. This finding is confirmed by Drancak's (2019) observation in his study that most of the people tend to prefer **That**-subordinator over **Wh**- in spoken English such as the dialogue section in the present study. In his study, Orwell employed interviews which bear the same characteristics of spoken English as a dialogue.

About 3 percent of the **Wh**-nominal clauses are reflected functioning as subjects and 12 percent of them are demonstrated as objects. The finding is supported by Tambunsaribu's (2010) study that the most frequent usage of nominal clauses in the novel, *The Moonstone* is in the object position. The present study also noticed that all of the **Wh**-nominal clauses are used as direct objects and none as indirect objects, the same finding Reitrova (2008) observed in her study. The reason for the scarcity of **Wh**-nominal clauses in the current study may probably be attributed to the fact that there was a tendency by the author to use **Wh**-clauses as direct questions in the dialogue section which made up the sample. From the five **Wh**-nominal clauses observed in the sample of the current study, the introductory words are not diverse. The three **Wh**-nominal clauses are introduced by the subordinator, *when* as in (7).

(7). *Never listen when they tell you that man and the animals have common interests* (Orwell, 1946:5).

The **Wh**-nominal clause in (7), *when they tell you*, is introduced by the subordinator *when*, and is a direct object of the verb phrase, *never listen*. It was noticed that a complex sentence may contain both the **Wh**- and **That**-nominal clauses as illustrated in (7) where, *that man and the animals have common interests*, is the second nominal clause preceded by a **Wh**-nominal clause. This finding goes beyond what the reviewed studies indicated and as such, this is a new finding in the present study. Thus, **Wh**- and **That**-nominal clauses could be used simultaneously in a sentence with one functioning as a direct object of the verb in the main clause and the other as an indirect object of a verb which appears in a nominal clause that precedes it.

The **Wh**-nominal clauses which are introduced by the subordinator, *what*, are employed only twice in the sample, one in the subject position and the other in the object position. One of the examples of **Wh**-nominal clauses which are introduced by the subordinator, *what*, is reflected in (8).

(8). *Then we have won back what we had before* (Orwell, 1946:71).

In (8), **Wh**-nominal clause, *what we had before*, is introduced by the subordinator, *what*, and is object to the verb, *have won back*.

In the case of **That**-nominal clauses, the subject category represents 6 percent of the nominal clauses observed in the sample. This percentage illustrates that **That**-nominal clauses are not preferred as subjects in the dialogue section. In all of the three instances where **That**-nominal clauses are used in the subject position, preference is given to extraposed subjects over pre-predicate ones. Reitrova (2008) noted the same finding in her study



where only four **That**-clauses are used and all function as extraposed subjects. She asserts that preference is given to the extraposed **That**-clauses due to the end-weight principle. According to Biber et al. (1999), the end-weight principle dictates that heavy elements such as long subject clauses should be moved to the end of a sentence and be replaced by a dummy, *it*, in the initial position. An incidence illustrating the occurrence of an extraposed **That**-nominal clause is observed in 9(a)-(b).

9(a). *It was certainly true that nothing of the kind existed in writing* (Orwell, 1946:44).

Example 9(a) reflects a situation where a **That**-nominal clause, *that nothing of the kind existed in writing*, is extraposed to the end of the sentence and is replaced by a dummy, *it*, as the subject. It is argued that the same sentence could be rearranged to place **That**-nominal clause at the subject position to form a pre-predicate subject as in the manner shown in 9(b).

9(b). *That nothing of the kind existed in writing was certainly true.*

In 9(b), the nominal clause, *that nothing of the kind existed in writing*, is a pre-predicate subject but according to the end-weight principle this construction should be avoided. This might explain the reason why George Orwell favoured extraposed **That**-nominal clauses over pre-predicate nominal clauses in the subject position.

The findings further reveal that the object category has the highest frequency of 71 percent of all the nominal clause functions noted in the sample. The same finding was observed by both Tambunsaribu (2010) and Reitrova (2008) in their studies that there is a tendency for writers to employ nominal clauses in the object position over any other syntactic position. These clauses most frequently appear in post-predicate positions and function as direct objects. This shows that **That**-nominal clauses are widely employed as objects. The present study further found out that the adjective complement constitutes 3 percent while apposition function demonstrates the frequency of 6 percent of the nominal clause functions noted. This also shows that the two categories, adjective complement and apposition, are not largely observed in the sample. The same finding is reflected in the findings of both Tambunsaribu (ibid) and Reitrova (ibid) respectively.

## Conclusions

The first research question of this study was: What are the syntactic functions of the **That**-nominal clauses identified in the dialogue section of *Animal Farm*? and the second one was: what are the syntactic functions of the **Wh**-nominal clauses noted in the dialogue section of *Animal Farm*? With regard to both questions 1 and 2, the researcher had assumed that the dialogue section of the *Animal farm* reflects a significant number of **That**-nominal clause functions relative to **Wh**-nominal functions.

The findings of this study based on the dialogue section from *Animal Farm* prove the study's assumption right. Thus, they support it positively since they indicate that **That**-nominal clauses reflect four syntactic functions while two are noted with the **Wh**-nominal. **That**-nominal clauses are demonstrated in two incidences employed as subjects of the sentences. They are used twenty four times as objects in the sample. They further appear once as adjective complement and reflect in two instances as appositives. On the other hand, the **Wh**-nominal clauses are employed once in the subject position and are indicated four times in the object position. Looking at the conclusion drawn on the assumption for the first research question, the present study concludes that **That**-

nominal clauses are used widely than **Wh**-nominal clauses in the texts that reflect spoken English such as the dialogue section in the current study.

Drancak's (2019) findings are similar to the conclusion drawn based on the first assumption in this study as the findings of his study show that there is a tendency to use **That**-subordinator more than the **Wh**- in introducing nominal clauses in the conversation-interviews. His research instruments were various magazines. He extracted columns on conversation-interviews to determine the register representing the spoken English. On the basis of the conclusions drawn with regard to the first assumption in the present study and the findings of Drancak's (2019) study, it is concluded that **That**-nominal clauses are a characteristic feature of spoken English.

## Recommendations

In the present study, the researcher only paid attention to the syntactic functions of finite **Wh**- and **That**-nominal clauses, but the analysis of the grammatical functions and constructions of nominal clauses could be extended further. Therefore, the current study recommends that further research be carried out to analyse the syntactic functions of other finite clauses, relative and adverbial clauses as well as those of non-finite clauses.

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