

## Week 9: Reducing Relative Clauses to Phrases

### 1. Introduction

→ We already know that relative clauses can function as adjectives, modifying the NP:

**The man who we saw last night arrived yesterday**

→ We also know that we can reduce the relative clause by removing the RelPron:

**The man we saw last night arrived yesterday**

→ Notice, we can also form a relative clause from a passive construction:

**The man who was seen last night arrived yesterday morning**

→ Reducing the relative clause, we get:

**The man seen last night arrived yesterday morning.**

The phrase “seen last night” is a participial phrase – a past participle.

### 2. Present participles and PPs

→ Similarly, we can reduce relative clauses to produce NP-modifying PPs: “boys in the yard”, present participial phrases “the boys eating pizza”

→ Here is how we do it:

The boys who are in the yard are my students

The boys ~~who are~~ in the yard are my students = the boys in the yard are my students

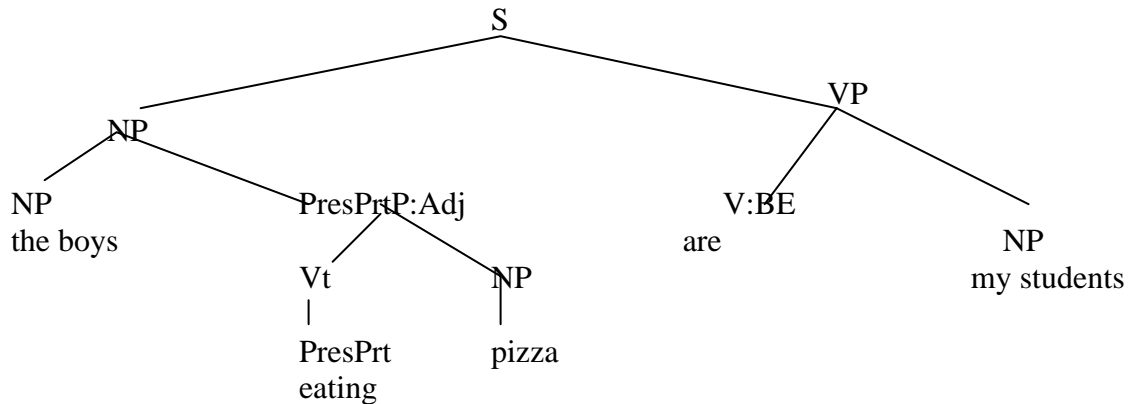
The boys who are eating pizza are my students

The boys ~~who are~~ eating pizza are my students = the boys eating pizza are my students

→ Importantly, the present participial phrase “eating pizza” and the PP “in the yard” are inside the NP constituent.

→ Also, the participial phrase has all the trade-marks of the VP: it has the verb, i.e. the participle and the object!

→ Here is a tree for the reduced relative with a present participle:



→ present participial phrases are verb phrases and can involve transitive, intransitive, ditransitive, consider-type, and be-verbs:

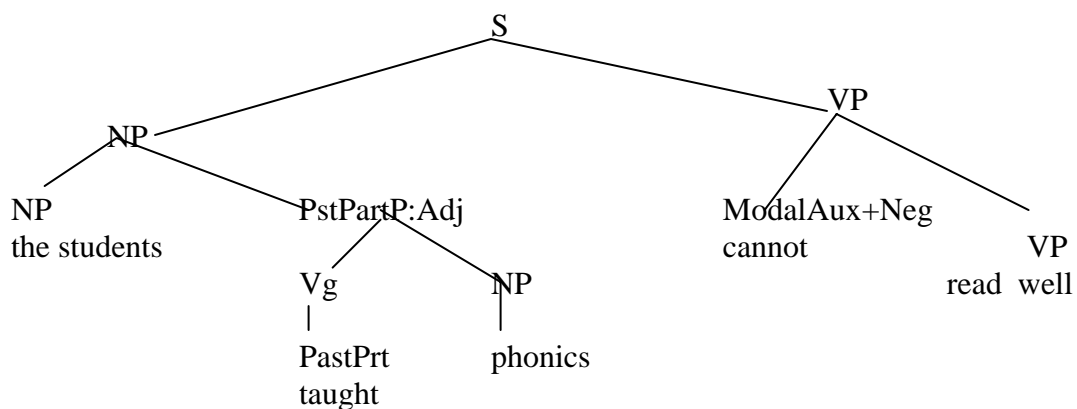
→ NPs modified by present participles can be objects or subjects!

- The boys eating pizza
- The boys running around
- The man selling flowers to the girl
- The student driving me crazy
- The students being obnoxious ..

→ While present participles are derived from active clauses: *The boys who are eating pizza* → *the boys eating pizza*, past participles are derived from passive clauses:

The students [who are ] taught phonics can't read well

The students taught phonic can't read well

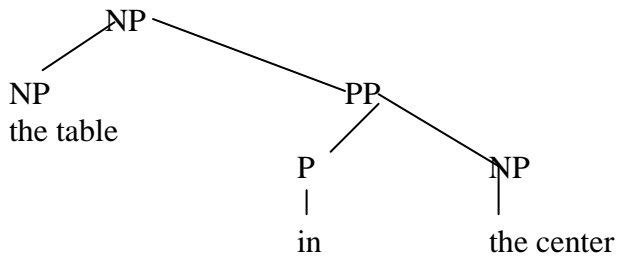


**Embedded prepositional phrases are derived from clauses with BE:**

The table ~~that is~~ in the center is missing one leg

The table in the center is missing one leg

We do not have to represent the omitted “that is” and simply insert the PP inside the NP:



The PP can also function as an adverb if it is modifying the verb:

The students sitting on the desks = PP:Adv

The students with backpacks = The students who have backpacks  
“Who have” is replaced with “with”

**3. Restrictive vs. non-restrictive modification**

Biologists, who study stem-cell research, often come under attack =/=

Biologists who study stem-cell research often come under attack

**What is the difference between these two sentences?**