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## UNIT 9: NON-FINITE SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

There are a number of reasons why **subordinate clauses** are even more difficult for our learners than main clauses:

- 1) Subordinate clauses can be either **finite** or **non-finite** (the finiteness distinction does not exist in Chinese);
- 2) The **form** of a subordinate clause depends on its finiteness, and both types of subordinate clauses are different from each other as well as from the main clause;
- 3) The finite subordinate clause requires a **subordinator** (which does not exist in Chinese);
- 4) The non-finite subordinate clause requires a non-finite verb, but not a subject or a subordinator (which can appear only under certain conditions).

If you've worked through Units 8 and 9 conscientiously, you should have got a pretty good grasp of their differences. Let's face it: a typical English sentence has a lot more subordinate clauses (both finite and non-finite) than a typical Chinese sentence. That's how the language works. If you stick to a kind of English that has lots and lots of simple and compound sentences, but few complex sentences (i.e. sentences with subordinate clauses), your writing will probably be monotonous and lacking in variety. So it'll be to your advantage to learn how to use subordinate clauses properly. In the following examples, the finite subordinate clauses are marked (F) and the non-finite subordinate clauses (NF).

1. Because he was a tourist, he was easily cheated. (F)
2. Being a tourist, he was easily cheated. (NF)
3. He booked his ticket early so that he could be sure of a seat. (F)
4. He booked his ticket early in order to be sure of a seat. (NF)
5. Before he went to bed, he usually had a drink. (F)
6. Before going to bed, he usually had a drink. (NF)
7. He told me that I should study harder. (F)
8. He told me to study harder. (NF)

## SUGGESTED ANSWERS

### QUESTION 1:

There are three general differences:

#### FINITE SUB. CLAUSE

Has a **finite** verb

Has a **subject**

Starts with a **subordinator**

#### NON-FINITE SUB. CLAUSE

Has a **non-finite** verb

Has **no subject** (normally)

Has **no subordinator** (normally)

### QUESTION 2:

Julius Caesar was a great Roman general who wanted to be crowned emperor of Rome. Fearing Caesar's ambition, Brutus discussed with his friends what to do. Drawn together by their love of democracy, the conspirators killed Caesar in the Capitol.

Caesar's friend, Mark Antony, gave a speech at his funeral. Speaking at the top of his voice, he asked the Romans to lend him their ears. Stirred up by his fiery speech, the crowd then turned on the conspirators. Completely taken by surprise, they fled, and a civil war followed. Knowing that the end was near, Brutus killed himself.

### QUESTION 3:

Ungrammatical non-finite clauses are marked with (X):

1. Driving to work this morning, John saw an accident.
2. (X) He driving to work this morning, John saw an accident.
3. Disappointed with her performance, the boss decided to sack her.
4. (X) He disappointed with her performance, the boss decided to sack her.
5. Peter applied to ten different universities in order to get into one.
6. (X) Peter applied to ten different universities in order he to get into one.
7. To be eligible for a scholarship, you have to be a permanent resident.
8. (X) You to be eligible for a scholarship, you have to be a permanent resident.

ANSWER: Non-finite clauses cannot normally have subjects on the surface.

### QUESTION 4:

The 'logical' subjects of the non-finite subordinate clauses are given in brackets:

1. (John) driving to work this morning, John saw an accident.
3. (the boss) disappointed with her performance, the boss decided to sack her.
5. Peter applied to ten different universities in order (Peter) to get into one.
7. (you) to be eligible for a scholarship, you have to be a permanent resident.

ANSWER: The ‘logical’ or ‘understood’ subject of a non-finite subordinate clause is the same as the subject of the main clause that it depends on.

#### QUESTION 5:

In all these examples, what is wrong is that the ‘logical’ subject of the non-finite subordinate clause is not the same as the subject of the main clause. There’s more than one way of correcting the sentences – the ones given (in *italics*) are only suggestions (you may have slightly different answers):

1. Swimming in the sea, the salt water got into his eyes. – *While he was swimming in the sea, the salt water got into his eyes.*  
[NOTE: By having a **finite** subordinate clause, we’re able to have a different subject.]  
An alternative: *Swimming in the sea, he found salt water getting into his eyes.*
2. Destroyed by the earthquake, the workers started re-building the houses. – *The workers started re-building the houses destroyed by the earthquake.*  
[We’ve turned the non-finite clause into a relative clause which describes the houses directly.]  
An alternative: *Destroyed by the earthquake, the houses are beginning to be re-built.*
3. Angered by the noisy demonstrators, the speech was cancelled. – *Angered by the noisy demonstrators, he cancelled the speech.*
4. Talking on the mobile phone, the operation was badly done by the surgeon. – *Talking on the mobile phone, the surgeon did the operation badly.*  
An alternative: *The operation was badly done by the surgeon, who was talking on the mobile phone.*

#### QUESTION 6:

A non-finite subordinate clause can have a surface subject only if the subject is marked by the preposition *for*. (This is a general statement of the most common pattern.)

#### QUESTION 7:

*The ungrammatical sentences are marked with (X).*

1. (X) As having become a citizen, he is entitled to apply for a passport
2. Having become a citizen, he is entitled to apply for a passport.
3. (X) Because having been there before, he doesn’t want to join the tour to Beijing.
4. Having been there before, he doesn’t want to join the tour to Beijing.
5. (X) That being a Chinese, he naturally loves Chinese food.
6. Being a Chinese, he naturally loves Chinese food.

**ANSWER: They are ungrammatical because, in these cases, a subordinator is not appropriate.**

**QUESTION 8:**

*The non-finite subordinate clauses are marked by (NF). They are all grammatical.*

1. Since he became a Christian, he has given up gambling.
2. (NF) Since becoming a Christian, he has given up gambling.
3. When you ride a horse, be careful not to frighten it.
4. (NF) When riding a horse, be careful not to frighten it.
5. Though he was defeated, he did not lose heart.
6. (NF) Though defeated, he did not lose heart.

**QUESTION 9:**

The functions of the underlined subordinate clauses are given in capitals. You can test the answers by replacing them with 'ordinary' subjects, objects, etc. (e.g. (1) 'Space travel is an exciting experience', (3) 'He hates noise':

1. Flying a plane is an exciting experience. SUBJECT
2. Being chased by a vampire can be very scary. SUBJECT
3. He hates being chased by vampires. OBJECT
4. She enjoys swimming in the sea. OBJECT
5. His favourite pastime is to watch girls passing by. COMPLEMENT
6. His greatest regret is not having studied harder in his youth. COMPLEMENT
7. Attacked on all sides, the soldiers had to surrender finally. ADVERBIAL
8. After finishing his homework, he enjoys watching a movie. ADVERBIAL
9. She opened the door and let the intruder in, thinking that he was her husband. ADVERBIAL
10. Having worked tirelessly for forty years, he finally decided to retire. ADVERBIAL

**QUESTION 10:**

*There are several possibilities. Here are just some suggestions:*

1. After escaping from jail/ Having escaped from jail, he was arrested again by the police.
2. Upon reading the letter/ Having read the letter, he started to cry.
3. Being a mother is no easy task.
4. She enjoys watching old movies.
5. His biggest achievement was to climb Mount Everest/ climbing Mount Everest.
6. (While) Travelling in Egypt, he saw the pyramids.

## ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

### Text 1:

**Having read the report in yesterday's South China Morning Post** about abode seeker Wong Lau-shi, I feel both sympathy and disgust - sympathetic towards the mentally disabled deaf and dumb girl and disgusted at the Hong Kong government.

Just what does it take to activate the government's discretionary powers on humanitarian or compassionate grounds? This 26-year-old woman has no one on the mainland **to take care of her**, but has two able-bodied parents who can give her love and support right here in Hong Kong. **If she is sent back to the mainland** with no proper care available, she will almost certainly be taken advantage of in some way.

### Text 2:

A hidden army of obese Hong Kongers are living indoors for fear of **being laughed at**, says an expert who released figures yesterday **showing** 29 per cent of the adult population is grossly overweight.

About one in 20 adults weighs double their ideal body weight and are classified as morbidly obese, Chinese University of Hong Kong dean of medicine Sydney Chung Sheung-chee said.

"That figure may come as some surprise because **when we walk in the street** we don't see it," Professor Chung said.

"But the truth of the matter is **that morbidly obese patients tend to stay at home**; they don't want to be seen."

### Text 3:

**As the massive Three Gorges Dam project enters its next phase**, critics charge that issues ranging from environmental protection to the forced relocation of 1.1 million people have yet **to be properly dealt with**.

"Despite two-thirds of the Three Gorges Dam construction project being finished, problems such as environmental protection and migration are not yet solved," said Kevin Li Yuk-shing, a researcher for the International Rivers Network, a US concern group.

The Three Gorges Dam was begun in 1992 and is expected **to be completed by 2009** at a cost of 198 billion yuan (HK\$187 billion).

China hopes the project will control flooding of the Yangtze River and generate 84.7 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, but critics have argued **(that) it could also have a disastrous impact** on displaced people and the environment.

More than 1.1 million people living around the Three Gorges Dam area have been forced to leave their homes **because the land they live on will be flooded** when the dam is completed.

There have been reports of resettlement funds **being embezzled, misappropriated or illegally used.**