Sentence Component Jigsaw Puzzles:
How to Teach Relative Clauses to Beginning ESL/EFL Students*

NAMAI Kenichi

Abstract

Observation suggests that many ESL/EFL students experience problems in understanding standard grammar instruction, the content of which actually has not changed very much over the years (Ellis 2006). To help resolve this state of affairs, a new way to capture several grammatical constructions is suggested in the form of jigsaw puzzles. These puzzles are purely visual, and they are also easy even for very young learners. The present article specifically argues that reanalysis of relative pronoun that as a subordinating conjunction (e.g. Huddleston 1984) helps solve the problem of many illogical subrules associated with relative clauses, which in turn makes the puzzle formalism work more straightforwardly. It also urges scholars and teachers to look into this kind of approach to grammar instruction in order to better serve the needs of beginning ESL/EFL students.

Introduction

‘Contextualization’ has been the norm in ESL grammar pedagogy, and I have recently confirmed this in the U.S., where I observed several college-level ESL classes for a semester. This trend of communicative instruction was strictly followed in virtually every class and even expected by many students. Form-focused instruction was always followed by lengthy communicative activities, which students (and teachers) seemed to enjoy much more than the explanation of grammatical rules. Hence, students, who were also constantly exposed to English outside the classroom, greatly improved their conversational skills, far beyond the level that we could normally expect in an EFL country like Japan.

There was one thing that concerned me, however: the content of grammar instruction. Teachers were blindly following whatever was written in the grammar textbook, the contents of which were almost identical to those of the textbooks I studied as an EFL student in Japan 30 years ago. This is presumably because it is still widely believed that no explicit knowledge of grammar is convertible into implicit knowledge and therefore explicit grammar instruction is ineffective (e.g. Krashen 1981), which in turn discourages teachers from actively seeking knowledge of grammar, much less exploring what aspects of it are important and more useful to students (Andrews 2006). This would also explain why the contents of grammar textbooks have changed so little over the years (Ellis 2006). As I still remember, however, my old grammar textbooks always gave me the impression that grammar was nothing but a dull collection of numerous ad hoc rules. This, unfortunately, is still true of most textbooks we use in Japan, because of which quite a few students develop antipathy toward English (McVeigh 2005). The ESL students I observed in America must have felt the same way about their grammar textbooks, although they, being happy with the communicative activities that always followed form-focused instruction, did not complain very much.

However, the communicative approach to ESL instruction seems to have its weaknesses as well; one of them is that it tends to invite students not to pay careful attention to grammar, even in writing. As a result, whenever they write, they make numerous fundamental mistakes. The
the advanced ESL students that I observed.

(1) *I love Jesus, he is me everything.
(2) *I always think and take him as role model for my future life is my uncle.
(3) *U.S population is increases on the college attendance.

At this point, I am reminded of what Olga Tuchman, an education consultant from the Division of Language Minority and Migrant Programs in the Indiana Department of Education, said at the 2006 INTESOL Conference: ‘We only need to teach academic English in ESL programs, since students need it to survive at school or to get a decent job. No need to worry about their conversational skills, since they will pick them up anyway. Just teach academic grammar.’ Having noticed even advanced students are prone to write sentences such as (1)-(3), I must agree with Tuchman. But then, we need to do something about the old contents of grammar textbooks and their presentation, which both ESL/EFL students and (some) teachers find discouraging.

To this end, here I propose what I call ‘sentence component jigsaw puzzles’ for grammatical constructions like those involving complementation and relative clauses. These puzzles are purely visual, and they are simple enough even for very young learners. As I will show in what follows, they work more accurately and straightforwardly with a reanalysis of the grammatical constructions, especially the analysis of relative pronoun *that* as a subordinating conjunction. I have tried this teaching technique with junior high school students in Japan and achieved fair success. It is hoped that the present article will present itself for ESL/EFL professionals as concrete evidence that there is still much that can be done to better serve the grammatical needs of beginning students.

**Complementation**

When a (main clause) verb and a clause are combined, the subordinating conjunction *that* is often used. Hence, we have sentences such as (4).

(4) I think that he plays golf.

This *that* is omissible, however, as can be seen in (5).

(5) I think he plays golf.

In order to capture these facts, the following puzzles are useful.

To match the shape of the main clause verb, we need to add the piece labeled *that*, as in Figure 1. The important point here is that there is a labelless piece that functions exactly like *that* as Figure 2 shows. This particular piece comes in handy when solving relative clause puzzles as well, as we will see later.

**Indirect Questions**

How indirect questions are formed can be explained in the same way. What we need to introduce to students first is that all *wh*-words have the same shape as that of the subordinating conjunction *that*, as shown in Figure 3.
Thus, (6)-(8) below can be schematized as Figures 4, 5, and 6, respectively.  

(6) I wonder who plays golf.  
(7) I wonder what he plays.  
(8) I wonder whether he plays golf.

![Figure 4](image)

= I wonder who plays golf.

Figure 4

![Figure 5](image)

= I wonder what he plays.

Figure 5

![Figure 6](image)

= I wonder whether he plays golf.

Figure 6

In the case of (6), since the wh-word who, being a subject, is at the beginning of the subordinate clause, nothing has to be moved to solve the puzzle. In (7), what cannot stay in the object position, so it has to be moved to clause-initial position, where it completes the puzzle. In (8), we need to add another piece (i.e. whether or if) to solve the puzzle, since this puzzle has no existing wh-piece to be moved.

**That-Relative Clauses**

Structurally speaking, that-relatives, such as those in (9) and (10) below, are similar to the subordinate clauses that we saw earlier (i.e. those in (4) and (5)). Crucially, we do not wish to treat that as a relative pronoun (e.g. Huddleston 1984). (The advantage of this analysis becomes clear shortly.)

(9) Mary loves students that speak Japanese.  
(10) I read stories that John writes.

One characteristic of that-relatives is that they have either subject or object (including prepositional object) missing. This state of affairs can be schematized as in Figures 7 and 8, where the piece labeled N corresponds to the head noun modified by the relative clause. Compare these with the ordinary subordinate clauses in Figures 1 and 2, where nothing is missing.

![Figure 7](image)

= students that speak Japanese

Figure 7

![Figure 8](image)

= stories that John writes

Figure 8

Relative clauses are also subordinate clauses and therefore they are introduced by the subordinating conjunction that. It is this element that indicates the beginning of a relative clause. Moreover, since this that has its label-less variant, we expect (11) and (12) to be acceptable as well.

(11) *Mary loves students speak Japanese.  
(12) I read stories John writes.

However, only (12) is acceptable. Why? This is easily explained if we look at the relevant parts of the jigsaw puzzles of (11) and (12).

![Figure 9](image)

= students speak Japanese

Figure 9

![Figure 10](image)

= stories John writes

Figure 10
As is clear from Figure 9, if we choose the labelless subordinate conjunction when the subject is missing, the sequence we obtain is *students speak Japanese*, where nothing suggests the beginning of the relative clause; it looks as if this sequence is a full-fledged main clause. Hence, the resulting sentence in (11) *Mary loves students speak Japanese* becomes unacceptable. On the other hand, in Figure 10, *John, being a subject, can still indicate the beginning of a new clause, just as he in (5) I think he plays golf does*. In Figure 10, however, the object of the transitive verb *writes* is missing, signaling that *John writes* is a relative clause, not an ordinary subordinate clause.

**Wh-Relative Clauses**

Structurally, *wh*-relative clauses are identical to indirect questions; the only difference is whether they follow a verb (= indirect questions) or a noun (= relative clauses). Thus, the puzzles of the relative constructions in (13) and (14) below will look like Figures 11 and 12, respectively.

(13) Mary loves students **who** speak Japanese.

(14) I read stories **which** John writes.

As is predictable from the shape of the *wh*-words, which are called relative pronouns here, the subordinating conjunction *that* or its label-less variant is not called for.

In contrast to the subject or object gap that characterizes *that*-relatives, relative pronouns in *wh*-relatives have some morphological variations (i.e. *who, whose, whom,* and *which*) and therefore they give us several different types of relative clauses.

(15) The author **whose book** we read is talking today.

(16) That is the organization **which he referred to**.

(17) That is the organization to which he referred.

*Whose* in (15) is a possessive relative pronoun and therefore it cannot stand on its own; it forms a noun phrase by attaching to a noun, *book*. It is only this noun phrase, namely *whose book*, that functions as the object of *read* and moves to clause initial position. This may be schematized as in Figure 13.

[Diagram: Figure 13]

In the case of (16), if we take *referred to* as a kind of phrasal verb (i.e. one unit), the relevant part of the puzzle will look like the following, which we have already seen in Figure 12.

[Diagram: Figure 14]

However, *which* has an option of forming a unit with the preceding preposition, *to*. If this (often formal) option is taken, *to and which* merge into a new *wh*-piece, and this piece moves to complete the puzzle, as illustrated in Figure 15.

[Diagram: Figure 15]
Another important characteristic of \textit{wh}-relatives is that they may also be used nonrestrictively, and when they are, they are conventionally set off by commas, which reflect the intonation patterns of such modifiers. See the following examples from Williams (2006: 28).

(18) The guests who brought food were sitting in the garden. (restrictive)
(19) The guests, who brought food, were sitting in the garden. (nonrestrictive)

The two instances of \textit{who brought food} in (18) and (19) are structurally identical and can be schematically represented exactly like Figure 11. As for the semantic distinction between restrictive and nonrestrictive use of relative clauses, the reader is referred to Williams (2006) for his elegant explanation using Venn diagrams. For the present purposes, it suffices to note that nonrestrictive use is available only to \textit{wh}-relatives, but not to \textit{that}-relatives.

**Traditional Treatment of \textit{That}**

Let me first summarize the characteristics of \textit{that}-relatives and \textit{wh}-relatives so far.

(20) \textit{That}-Relatives
   a. They are headed by the subordinating conjunction \textit{that}, which has an invisible (or inaudible) variant.
   b. Either subject or object (including prepositional object) is missing.
   c. They are used only restrictively.

(21) \textit{Wh}-Relatives
   a. They involve relative pronouns (i.e. \textit{who, whose, whom, which}).
   b. They may be used either restrictively or nonrestrictively.

These distinctions between \textit{that}-relatives and \textit{wh}-relatives are crucial in learning how to form and use relative clauses correctly.

Unfortunately, however, in virtually all ESL/EFL grammar textbooks that are currently available, including Azar (2003), Hewings (2005), Sinclair (2005), these distinctions are very much blurred by treating \textit{that} as a relative pronoun, on a par with \textit{who, which}, etc., often in a chart like Figure 16, which is from Thomson and Martinet (1986: 81) with slight modification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for persons</td>
<td>who</td>
<td>whom/who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for things</td>
<td>which</td>
<td>which</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 16**

Thus, (10), repeated below as (22), is usually analyzed as in Figure 17; notice that this analysis is identical to that of a \textit{wh}-relative in Figure 12.

(22) I read stories that John writes.

**Figure 17**

This is why ESL/EFL textbooks are forced to make several unfortunate exceptions like the following.

(23) a. \textit{That} does not have a possessive form.
   b. \textit{That} cannot be preceded by a preposition.
   c. \textit{That}-relatives cannot be used nonrestrictively.

(23a) is certainly mysterious if \textit{that} is indeed a relative pronoun. 6 In fact, I have observed on many occasions in Japan that students wrongly use \textit{that}'s as the possessive form of this `relative pronoun', as in (24).

(24) *The man \textit{that}'s car was stolen called the police.

(23b) is also an exception that needs to be emphasized in this traditional treatment of \textit{that}. I also have had students in Japan who have written sentences that are structurally equivalent to (25).

(25) *This is the organization to \textit{that} he referred.
According to these students, since both (26a,b) below are possible, (17), repeated here as (27), should also have its that variant, namely, (25).

(26) a. That is the organization which he referred to. (= (16))
   b. That is the organization that he referred to.
(27) That is the organization to which he referred.

(25), however, is not a grammatical sentence.

Furthermore, given a chart like Figure 16 and an analysis like Figure 17, the fact that only wh-relatives, but not that-relatives, may be used nonrestrictively is indeed hard to swallow. In fact, even advanced ESL students that I have recently observed erroneously have written sentences such as the following.

(28) *This material, that was called dynamite, had a great effect on blasting rock, ...
(29) *Ronald Reagan, that everyone knows, is the best president in the United States ...

To avoid the nonrestrictive use of that-relatives, the exception in (23c) is needed, but it is often forgotten by students, as these sentences clearly show.

The ungrammatical sentences in (24), (25), (28), and (29) are all logical formations if that is treated as a relative pronoun. Indeed, if that is a relative pronoun on a par with who and which, it should have a possessive form, just as who and which do. Also, a sequence such as to that should be allowed, just as to which, with whom, etc. are. Furthermore, if that-relatives and wh-relatives are structurally identical, that-relatives too should be able to function nonrestrictively. In order to avoid these conclusions, we need to force students to memorize the exceptions in (23), but we cannot really blame them if they get the impression, just as I did, that grammar is nothing but a dull collection of numerous illogical rules after all.

On the other hand, if we treat that as a subordinating conjunction, as in this article, these problems do not arise. Being a conjunction, that is not expected to have a possessive form or function as object of prepositions, precluding the possibility of the ‘preposition - that’ sequence. Being (relative) pronouns, however, who and which (i) have the possessive form whose, just as personal pronouns do (e.g. my, your, her, etc.), and (ii) can function as object of prepositions (e.g. to which, with whom), also like personal pronouns (e.g. to me, for you, with her). Moreover, we may further assume that the availability of nonrestrictive use to wh-relatives is specifically due to the pronoun nature of relative pronouns. In this connection, see the following sentence.

(30) I haven’t skipped my favorite English class, which, by the way, my girlfriend doesn’t really enjoy.

In (30), there is a strong sense that which is actively referring back to my English class, just like this class (= a combination of a demonstrative pronoun and a noun) in (31) below does.

(31) I haven’t skipped my favorite English class; this class, by the way, my girlfriend doesn’t really enjoy.

This referring function is totally absent in that-clauses such as (10), repeated here as (32).

(32) I read stories that John writes.

The fact that that in (32) does not refer to anything (hence not a relative pronoun) is made clearer by sentences such as (33), where that is omitted (or replaced by its label-less variant).

(33) I read stories John writes. (= (12))

Thus, the unavailability of nonrestrictive use to that-relatives simply follows from the fact that they do not involve relative pronouns, precluding the exception in (23c).7

Omissibility of Relative Pronouns

In the traditional account of relative clauses, the omissibility of relative pronouns is presented with a rule that comes with many exceptions.
Ackles (2003: 138), for example, says, ‘English has a very strong rule that says every clause must have a subject. Therefore, relative pronouns can never be omitted from subject [relative] clauses in Standard English.’ This is why (34a) is fine, but (34b) is not, since the subject relative pronoun who has been omitted.

(34) a. Mary loves students who speak Japanese.
   b. *Mary loves students speak Japanese. (= (11))

Unfortunately, however, this rule comes with at least three additional subrules. First of all, whose, which cannot function as subject on its own, can never be omitted. In (35) below, whose is only part of the object noun phrase which book, and yet it is not omissible.

(35) *The author whose book we read is talking today. (cf. (15))

Second, relative pronouns are omissible when they are objects of prepositions, which is indeed in accordance with Ackles’s rule. Which in (36), for instance, is the object of the preposition to, not a subject, and therefore it is omissible.

(36) That is the organization which he referred to. (cf. (16)).

However, if which is preceded by to, it is no longer omissible, although it still functions as the object of to.

(37) *That is the organization to which he referred. (cf. (17))

Finally, in nonrestrictive relative clauses, relative pronouns are never omissible. Notice that which in (38) is the object of had bought, and yet it cannot drop (if we want to retain the nonrestrictive use of the relative clause).

(38) *He sold his Mazda, which he had bought the year before.

Thus, the omissibility of relative pronouns is another source of frustration for ESL/EFL students.

In contrast, with the characterization of that-relatives in (20a), which is repeated as (39) below, we can solve all these problems. In fact, what it amounts to is that what seems to be an omitted relative pronoun is in fact a case of the invisible (or inaudible) that.

(39) [That-relatives] are headed by the subordinating conjunction that, which has an invisible (or inaudible) variant.

Observe the following sets of sentences. Notice that the omission of a ‘relative pronoun’ is allowed only when there is also an option of that-relative.

(40) a. I read stories which John writes. (= (14); wh-relative)
   b. I read stories that John writes. (= (10); that-relative)
   c. I read stories John writes. (= (12); omission possible)

(41) a. That is the organization which he referred to. (= (16); wh-relative)
   b. That is the organization that he referred to. (= (26b); that-relative)
   c. That is the organization he referred to. (omission possible)

(42) a. The author whose book we read is talking today. (= (15); wh-relative)
   b. (That-relative unavailable)
   c. *The author whose book we read is talking today. (= (35); omission impossible)

(43) a. That is the organization to which he referred. (= (17); wh-relative)
   b. (That-relative unavailable)
   c. *That is the organization to which he referred. (= (37); omission impossible)

(44) a. He sold his Mazda, which he had bought the year before. (wh-relative)
   b. (Nonrestrictive that-relative unavailable)
   c. *He sold his Mazda, which he had
bought the year before. (= (38); omission impossible)

This means that relative pronouns are never omissible, and all the sentences that allow omission derive from *that*-relatives. This is why the omissibility of relative pronouns is not even mentioned in the characterization of *wh*-relatives in (21), which is repeated as (45) below.

(45) *Wh*-Relatives
   a. They involve relative pronouns (i.e. *who, whose, whom, which*).
   b. They may be used either restrictively or nonrestrictively.

At this point, one might wonder why omission is not allowed in the pair of (34), repeated here as (46), since there is a *that* variant available in this case, namely, (47).

   b. *Mary loves students speak Japanese. (= (11))
   (47) Mary loves students that speak Japanese. (= (9))

This, however, has already been explained with Figure 9.

**Conclusion**

As far as language acquisition is concerned, many ESL/EFL students are considered adult learners and therefore they need to rely on grammatical rules of English in order to firmly acquire the language. The (accurate) knowledge of grammar becomes more important if students’ goal is to study or to find jobs in an English-speaking country. Much effort has been made to facilitate the learning of English through numerous ingenious communicative activities, but the task of improving the description of grammatical facts in ESL/EFL textbooks seems to have been lagging behind. As a former EFL student who suffered a great deal from the way English grammar was presented in textbooks, I can guarantee that the majority of current ESL/EFL students too must be desperately pleading for better grammar textbooks and instruction. What I offered in this article is only an example of what English teachers may consider doing in their grammar teaching to meet this demand. It is by no means my intention, however, to claim that the puzzle formalism will be applicable to all grammatical constructions of the English language. But I hope to have shown that it, coupled with the assumption that *that* in relative clauses is a subordinating conjunction, does the job of capturing grammatical facts about relative clauses very straightforwardly. Since the main purpose of the present article is to show that there is still plenty that can be done to make complex grammatical phenomena more accessible to beginning ESL/EFL students, if this article can motivate more scholars and teachers to look into this line of investigation to better serve students’ needs, I will be a happier colleague.

**References**


Notes

1. The reviewer correctly points out that ‘this may work as long as the corpus is closely controlled’, but this is exactly what needs to be and is actually being done in pedagogical grammar instruction, especially at the beginning level. For example, Scovel (2005) explains how he not only avoids the use of the past perfect when he teaches grammar to Chinese ESL students, but he even forbids it for purely pedagogical reasons. Likewise, the corpus here should only include complement clauses headed by that and its label-less version, excluding other complement types altogether. Moreover, we should also avoid mentioning the fact that adverbial material may intervene between the main verb and its clausal complement, as shown in (i).

2. The reviewer wonders how students know that what ‘starts out’ after the verb of the complement clause. They know this from the fact that English has the basic word order of SVO.

3. It should be noted here that this is only a teaching tip for ESL/EFL teachers, not intended as a general statement on subordinating conjunctions of all languages in the world.

4. This should not be confused with ‘ungrammatical’. Although (11), under the analysis in Figure 9, is grammatical, it is still deemed unacceptable due to a processing problem resulting from the lack of an element that suggests the beginning of the relative clause. In this regard, (11) is comparable to cases of center-embedding, such as (ia) below, whose structure is given in (ib).

(i) She believes quite sincerely that he plays golf.

The structure of sentences like this is a bit too complicated for beginners, with the marked word order of adjunct (quite sincerely) followed by complement (that he plays golf). Nor should the fact be mentioned that that here cannot be retracted by its label-less version, although it may receive explanation from the need to avoid perceptual problems (Huddleston and Pullum 2002). All this is beyond the scope of beginning ESL/EFL grammar instruction.

(i) a. man that a woman that a child that a bird that I heard saw knows loves
b. a man [that a woman [that a child [that a bird that I heard] saw] knows] loves

Notice that there is nothing structurally wrong with (ia), and yet it is virtually impossible to correctly interpret it. Returning to (11), the processing problem seems to somehow dissipate with existential there, since Quirk et al. (1985: 1250) give there’s a table stands in the corner as a grammatical sentence, which in turn points to the grammatical status of (11).

However, the reviewer suggests that the unacceptable, as opposed to ungrammatical, status of (11) ‘runs counter to a slew of published judgments and the general understanding in the literature (e.g. Rizzi 1990)’ and therefore ‘the analogy with center embedding seems faulty.’ This is only true for those who adopt, say, standard Principles and Parameters model of grammar, which indeed does not generate sentences like (11) but does examples like (i) above. On the other hand, for those who adopt other models, this is not necessarily the case. The reviewer seems to be under the wrong impression that grammaticality, as well as acceptability, is directly accessible to the intuitions of the speaker of the language. As Newmeyer (1983) points out, however,
this is false, since grammaticality is only ’a theoretical construct’ and ’makes sense only with respect to a particular formal representation of an individual’s competence’ (p. 51). Newmeyer further writes, ’if two linguists disagree about the grammaticality of a sentence, it is incorrect to conclude that they necessarily disagree about the data (about the sentence’s acceptability)’ (p. 52) and gives (ii) below as a concrete example to show this point.

(iii) a. That he left is a surprise.
   b. He left is a surprise.

In the model developed by Chomsky and Lasnik (1977), the unacceptability of (iib) is directly reflected in its ungrammaticality, whereas in the analysis of Bever (1970), (iib) is a grammatical sentence, whose deviance is attributed to a processing problem. But both parties agree as to the sentence’s unacceptability. Newmeyer also explains that the grammatical (but unacceptable) status of Colorless green ideas sleep furiously in Chomsky (1957) and its ungrammatical (and unacceptable) status in Chomsky (1965) are attributed to the two different grammatical models developed by Chomsky in the two works mentioned (p. 58). Thus, there is nothing wrong in treating sentences like (11) as grammatical but unacceptable sentences in the pedagogical grammar model assumed in the present article, which is exemplified by that of Quirk et al. (1985), at least for the point in question. Hence, the analogy with center embedding firmly stands.

Clearly adopting a Principles and Parameters model, the reviewer further claims ’the issue of deletability before a subject trace actually suggests that complementizer that and relativizer that are distinct elements, since they show precisely opposite behavior in this environment’ and gives the following set of examples.

(iii) a. students *(that) speak Japanese
   b. students (that) Mary believes *(that) speak Japanese.

Huddleston (1984), however, explains that the restrictions on the omission of that in (iii) have their origin in perceptual considerations; that is, if we omitted that from (iia), the subordinate speak Japanese would initially be construed as a main clause predicate with students as subject. Similarly, the obligatory absence of that in the most embedded clause in (iib) may also be a result of a processing problem of some kind, since if we introduce another element before the predicate speak Japanese, the acceptability does improve (e.g. Bresnan 1977).

(iv) the students Mary believes that [in her opinion] speak Japanese

Thus, I don’t think we should jump to the conclusion that complementizer that and relativizer that are distinct elements; they may have to be in the model the reviewer is assumed, but once outside the model, other analyses of the facts become equally possible. Therefore, it is certainly fine in the present article to analyze these two instances of that as the same complementizer that shows different behaviors under different circumstances that impose different perceptual constraints.

5 Technically, refer to is not a phrasal verb; it is a ’prepositional verb’ in the sense of Quirk et al. (1985), although most ESL/EFL textbooks do not make this distinction. Genuine phrasal verbs include, for example, look up, as in I looked up the word in the dictionary. Most phrasal verbs allow the preposition to be separated from the verb, creating a sequence like I looked the word up. This word order becomes obligatory when the object is realized as a pronoun; compare I looked it up and *I looked it. In contrast, prepositional verbs do not share this characteristic, so I referred to it is fine, but *I referred it to is not. And it is only prepositional verbs that allow the preposition to combine with a relative pronoun. Hence, This is the word which I looked up is grammatical, but *This is the word up which I looked is not.

6 The reviewer points out that the lack of a genitive form does not show that’s pronoun status, since even when it is uncontroversially a pronoun, it lacks the form that’s:

(i) a. That pleased him (that nominative)
   b. He liked that. (that accusative)
   c. *That’s flavor (that genitive (cf. the flavor of that!)

This objection seems to be missing a point, however, since what I am arguing against in the main text is the conventional treatment of that as a relative pronoun on a par with who, which, etc., not the plausibility of analyzing that in (i) as a demonstrative pronoun. If the conventional treatment were on the right track, it wouldn’t have to make so many exceptions for ’relative pronoun’ that, including its lack of a genitive form.

7 This means, when wh-relatives are used restrictively, relative pronouns are nonreferential, just like the subordinating conjunction that. One may wonder at this point which function is primary to wh-relatives, nonrestrictive modification (= referential) or restrictive modification (= nonreferential). The following fact about which suggests that nonrestrictive modification must be primary.

(i) Nothing (that) you say makes sense to me.
(ii) ??Nothing which you say makes sense to me.

To modify a nonreferential noun like nothing, we can
use a *that*-relative (or its label-less variant), as in (i), presumably because *that* is not referential either. On the other hand, we cannot readily use *which* to modify this noun, a fact that will follow if the (primary) function of *which* is to refer, and in the case of (ii), there is nothing for *which* to refer to (e.g. Bolinger 1980).

Here is a suggested order of teaching relative constructions in class (which I have been following in my classes): (i) *that*-relatives (restrictive modification), (ii) *wh*-relatives (nonrestrictive modification), and (iii) *wh*-relatives (restrictive modification). This particular order is due to the widely held view that ‘‘[t]he linkage of one form to one function is a common strategy in second language acquisition’’ (Master 2002: 332).

Hence, at the stages of (i) and (ii), I treat *that*-relatives and *wh*-relatives, which are structurally distinct, as two different constructions with two different functions, and even give them two different names: ‘‘adjective clauses’’ for *that*-relatives (restrictive modification) and ‘‘additional clauses’’ for *wh*-relatives (nonrestrictive modification). Once students are fully familiar with these two distinct constructions, I introduce (iii) as a special use of *wh*-relatives with some fine tuning, such as the preference of *that over which* for restrictive modification in academic American English (e.g. *Grammar Smart* 2001). As a result, I now see far fewer errors of relative constructions in my students’ writings.

9 I am certainly not claiming that the analysis of *that* as a subordinating conjunction is my original idea, as my reference to Huddleston (1984) clearly shows. But as I mentioned in the main text, as far as I know, all ESL/EFL textbooks currently available outside Japan, including Azar (2003), Hewings (2005), Sinclair (2005), treat *that* as a relative pronoun. Likewise, all beginning EFL textbooks inside Japan, including those official ones designated by the Ministry of Education, also treat *that* as a relative pronoun. Although I do not doubt there may be some that adopt the conjunction analysis of *that*, such as the Japanese one(s) the reviewer claims (without giving references) to have used (for beginning level EFL courses?), it nonetheless seems safe to assume that virtually all EFL textbooks that beginning students in Japan encounter still treat *that* as a relative pronoun, which was the reason for my writing this article in the first place.