

RELATIVE CLAUSES I

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

Relative clauses in Turkish are formed through participles, not through finite clause structures. The relative clause precedes the noun it modifies and functions as an adjectival modifier.

1. Function

Relative clauses identify or specify a noun by encoding information about an action or state. The clause modifies the noun directly and functions syntactically as an adjective.

2. Forms

At this level, Turkish uses two core participial forms:

- -(y)An for subject relative clauses.
- -DIK for object relative clauses.

Both participles attach to the verb stem and appear before the modified noun.

3. Morphology

-(y)An

- Marks subject relative clauses.
- The modified noun corresponds to the subject of the action.
- The suffix has a single form: -(y)An.
- The buffer consonant -y- appears after vowel-final stems.

-DIK

- Marks object relative clauses.
- The modified noun corresponds to the object of the action.
- The suffix follows four-way vowel harmony.

Suffix shape:

- -DIK → dık / dik / duk / düük

Object relative clauses formed with -DIK require possessive suffixes that mark the subject of the relative clause.

4. Syntax

The relative clause always precedes the noun it modifies.

No relative pronoun is used.

- In -(y)An clauses, no overt subject appears inside the relative clause.
- In -DIK clauses, the subject of the relative clause is expressed through a possessive suffix.

The modified noun appears immediately after the relative clause.

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5. Usage

- -(y)An is used when the modified noun corresponds to the subject of the action.
- -DIK is used when the modified noun corresponds to the object of the action.

The choice of participle is determined by grammatical role, not by tense.

Examples

- Gelen adam kapayı açtı.
• (The man who came opened the door.)
- Konuşan kadın öğretmen.
• (The woman who is speaking is the teacher.)
- Okuduğum kitabı çok ilginç.
• (The book that I read is very interesting.)
- Gördüğün filmi hatırlıyor musun?
• (Do you remember the movie that you saw?)
- Yaptığımız çalışma uzun sürdü.
• (The work that we did took a long time.)
- Aradığın kişi burada değil.
• (The person that you are looking for is not here.)

Notes

- Relative clauses precede the noun they modify.
- -(y)An forms subject relative clauses.
- -DIK forms object relative clauses and requires possessive suffixes.
- No finite verb or relative pronoun appears in the relative clause.