

Predicative Pronouns

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1 Problems with Pronouns as Determiners

Traditional approaches to English pronouns take them to be (definite) determiners for several reasons: pronouns pattern with functional rather than lexical categories; pronouns generally resist modification; and (free) pronouns denote entities, not predicates (Abney 1987, Postal 1966, Kratzer and Heim 1998, Elbourne 2013 i.a.).

Other approaches suggest that pronouns can consist of different categories, including pro DPs, NumP or PhiP, and NP or nP (Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002, Ritter 1995, Cardinaletti 1994 i.a.).

This paper shows examples of two types of pronouns in English that cannot be analyzed as determiners: **predicative pronouns**, so-called because they must function as predicates (rather than entities). The types are **depronominalizations** as in (1) and **pronominal restrictive relative clauses** (PRRCs) as in (2).

- (1) I was looking for **the other he**.
- (2) **He who laughs last**, laughs best.

Goal: show empirical patterns supporting a type of pronouns as predicates, and provide an account of predicative pronouns that is compatible with other identified types.

⁰Thank you to Betsy Ritter, Barbara Citko, Edith Aldridge, and the members of the UW Syntax Roundtable for invaluable assistance in developing these ideas. Please email me for expanded references or data.

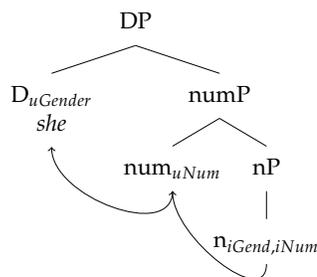
2 Proposal: n heads blocked from raising

Proposal: Predicative pronouns and other types of pronouns begin in *n*. Other pronouns undergo head-raising, but predicative pronouns are blocked and remain in *n*.

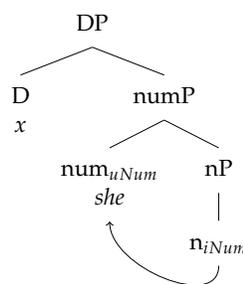
Three sub-types of pronouns roughly correspond to Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002):

- **Referential pronouns** (3a) = DP pronouns, denote entities, are definite and may be free (Type B under Binding Theory)
- **Variable pronouns** (3b) = PhiP or NumP pronouns, act as variables to be bound by antecedents or quantifiers (Type A under Binding Theory)
- **Predicative Pronouns** (3c) = nP or NP pronouns, denote predicates, not (on their own) subject to binding theory; essentially act like nouns

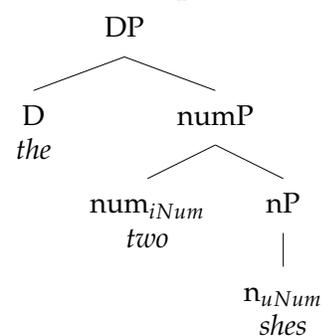
(3) a. Referential pronouns:



b. Bound variables:



c. **Predicative prns:**



Sub-types fall out from either head-raising or being blocked from raising. Support for the validity of this proposal w/r/t predicative pronouns will come from evidence that predicative pronouns are distributionally distinct from referential and variable pronouns, that they are semantically predicates, that they are distributionally *similar* to nouns, but also that they are in complementary distribution with lexical nouns.

3 Data: depronominizations

Depronominizations are uses of pronouns as nouns. Some types of pronouns already act as nouns (e.g. English '*the other one*'; Japanese '*kare*'). Depronominizations refer to nouns that don't *usually* act as nouns. Data in (4) are both attested spontaneous utterances from native English speakers.

- (4) a. We were waiting for the other she
 b. I want to meet a she I can trust

Previous analyses of depronominizations have concluded that these uses are a type of category-switching (e.g. Melchin 2015); my proposal is largely compatible with this, but goes further to explain the mechanism of *how* the category is determined.

Restrictions on depronominization

- Can't be referential (5a) with pragmatic or non-local antecedent
- Can't be bound by quantifier or local antecedent (5b)
- **Can** be modified by nominal modifiers: adjectives, articles, plural -s (5c)

- (5) a. *That's Janet_i. I know a she_i is smart. (Can't be referential)
b. *Every student_x knows a he_x is smart. (Can't be bound)
c. Those are the two shes I was talking about Plural -s suffixed

Although depronominizations usually combine with an indefinite article, definite articles and other modifiers are also possible.

- (6) a. Chelsea is not a/*the he
b. We were looking for the taller he

Depronominizations can include personal pronouns, which can combine with definite if context supports a set construal.

- (7) *the you
(8) *Speaker A*: I have a bunch of little dolls that look like us. Here's me, and you, and I have one of Barbara. Which one do you want?
Speaker B: I want the you

Summary: depronominizations are subject to restrictions that set them apart from both other pronouns and lexical nouns; they can be modified by most nominal modifiers and aren't subject to usual binding conditions.

4 Data: pronominal restrictive relative clauses

Depronominizations can be modified by relative clauses (4b), but RCs can also modify pronouns without articles.

- (9) a. He who does not study history is doomed to repeat it.
b. We who are about to die salute you.

Note that RCs can modify both plural (9b) and singular (9a) pronouns; while this construction is associated with a literary-sounding register, it is active and productive in contemporary Englishes (Conrod 2018).

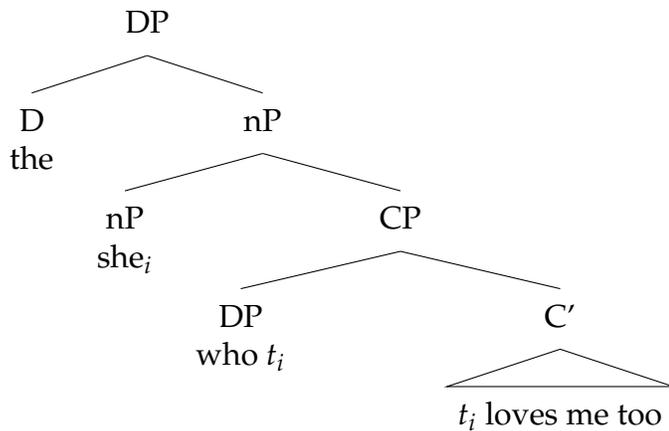
The restrictions on pronominal relative clauses (PRCs) are similar to those on depronominizations (can't be referential or bound), with one addition – as Zobel (2015) observes, the pronominal head must be construed as a *generic kind*. Thus, overly-specific PRCs will be infelicitous, which contributes to the literary 'sound' of the construction.

This requirement of generic reading explains why some examples appear infelicitous or ungrammatical (10a); however, with sufficient context to support a generic interpretation these are recoverable (10b).

- (10) a. * he who she married (Postal 1966:47)
 b. When a man and a woman are in love, they may marry. He who she marries must always respect his wife.

In order for a RC to combine with a pronoun syntactically and result in a restrictive reading, the RC should be attached lower than D. The generic requirement, as well as the possibility of external determiners, supports my proposal that English pronouns may appear in a lower nominal projection than D. (11) shows a sketch of the syntactic structure– I discuss details further below.¹

- (11) a. A good relationship doesn't need promise, terms and conditions. It just needs a SHE who can TRUST and a HE who can be LOYAL! (Conrod et al. 2016)
 b. the she who loves me too. [twi.1072]
 c.



Summary: in order for relative clauses to restrict pronouns, the pronouns are subject to similar constraints as depronominizations—with the additional constraint that they must be generic. This supports an analysis of these pronominal RC heads as lower nominal heads.

¹I discuss the derivation of the RC itself in Conrod (2017b) and Conrod (2019) more extensively, including the question of whether the pronoun moves out of the RC or is matched with a RC-internal *pro*; it's outside the scope of this paper and doesn't change the analysis of predicative pronouns more generally.

5 Comparison between names and pronouns

The head-raising approach I propose for pronouns is similar to Matushansky's 2015 analysis of proper names; in fact, the depronominization construction is closely parallel to the un-proper names Matushansky identifies:

- (12) the two Brents that live in Seattle
- (13) Both Brents walked into the room.
- (14) Which Brent do you know better?

Matushansky proposes a naming predicate R_0 which is composed of a functional head n and a root \surd containing the actual content of the name.

- (15) $[[Magritte]] = \lambda x \in D_e . R_{\langle e, \langle n, t \rangle \rangle} . R(x)(\text{"Magritte"})$
 where n is a sort of the type e (a phonological string or some other PF output representation)
 (Matushansky 2015:340)

- (16) $[[\text{the Magritte}]] = \iota x . R_0(x)(\text{"Magritte"})$
 (Matushansky 2015:340)

The restrictions that I identified for depronominizations are the same as the restrictions on modification of proper names: that is, if a proper name is (restrictively) modified, it no longer acts as an R-expression by itself but is acting as a predicate. Due to this close parallel, my proposal results in an analysis of pronouns that are essentially **proper names, but without the name**. That is, pronouns are the purely grammatical counterpart to (very lexical) proper names.

- (17) $[[[_{DP} \text{he} [_{nP} \text{he}]]]] = \iota x . R_0(x)(\text{"he"})$
 (referential, non-predicative) "he" \approx the person whom we have agreed to call "he"
- (18) $[[[_{DP} a [_{nP} \text{he}]]]] = \lambda x . R_0(x)(\text{"he"})$
 (non-referential, predicative) "he" \approx some person whom we have agreed to call "he"

(17) shows a (somewhat approximated) denotation for the pronoun *he* that utilizes Matushansky's R_0 function; for convenience in the section below I further abbreviate this function as MASC.

Elsewhere I discuss the grammatical/lexical relationship between pronouns and proper names (Conrod 2017a, 2019); however, for the purposes of this paper I take this analogy as support for an analysis of pronouns as starting in n , where n is the syntactic representation of Matushansky's R_0 element.

6 Structures and denotations

Returning to the structures given in (3), I here include the structure for predicative pronouns including the semantic denotation that I adopted above, slightly expanding (18) to show its

This analysis provides support for:

- **different structures for different subtypes of pronouns** (cf Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002)
- **domain parallelism with "little" heads** (cf Borer 2005)
- framework for understanding relationship between lexical and grammatical counterpart categories

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