

SOME REMARKS ON INTERROGATIVE AND RELATIVE PRONOUNS IN ENGLISH

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The English words used as interrogative pronouns have the same phonological shape as some relative pronouns. The problem whether one could postulate different basic forms for the two groups and regard this morphological identity as accidental, or whether the identity of the superficial forms is a consequence of their syntactic or semantic identity, has obtained different interpretations in the current transformational analysis of English. For J. Katz and P. Postal (1964: 129), "occurrences of *wh* are found not only in structures underlying questions but also in those underlying relative phrases", i.e., the P-markers of both interrogatives and relatives are identical and contain the same *wh*-element dominated by the Determiner node. For some other authors (S.-Y. Kuroda 1968: 244), both the types represent the same underlying structure, though the problem of whether or not the *wh* interrogative and relative words are also related substantially or semantically is still open. The others (including the UCLA group), postulate, though not explicitly, distinct underlying representations for interrogative and relatives. E. S. Klima (1964 a : 246) tries to find some formal distinguishing markers and approaches the problem in the following way: "Basing relative pronouns and adverbs on the pronominalization (incorporation of the element PRO, transformational in origin) of repeated constituents also serves to differentiate the relative pronoun *which* from the interrogative pronoun *what* ...".

The problem of the analysis of *wh*- words is closely related to the description of the determiner system in English. The exhaustive analysis of the entire determiner system, however, would need much more space and fall beyond the scope of the present paper. The linguistic investigation will be limited then to settling the issue by the analysis of three *wh*- words: *what*, *which*, and *who*, which are most frequently used as interrogative and relative pronouns in English. An attempt will be made here to find some formal syntactic

markers distinguishing these two uses and consequently to postulate distinct feature matrices for them.

The first thing to be investigated here is the derivational history of the relative pronoun, which will help in establishing common syntactic features of all relative pronouns. Relative pronouns, as has been extensively discussed in the transformational analyses of English, appear to be based on combining repeated pronominalized constituent with the relativization marker *Wh*. The majority of linguists postulate the element *Wh* in the terminal strings underlying both relative and interrogative constructions (N. Chomsky 1964 : 69, J. Katz and P. Postal 1964). Relativization is applied only if the Noun in the matrix sentence is the same as that in the embedded sentence. If there are no co-referential nouns in the basic structure, the string is an interrogative. The marker *Wh* then represents the common characteristic for interrogatives and relatives, namely the preposing of *wh*- words. This common syntactic feature, however, will be also accounted for, even if the basic form of the relative structure does not contain the *Wh*- marker (cf. Terry et al. 1967). The present analysis of the relativized Noun Phrase in the relative — complex sentence assumes the following basic form of the NP's:

$$(1) \text{ Det}_1 \text{ N}_1 \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{[Det}_2 \text{ N}_2] \\ -\text{Def} \\ +\text{Spec} \\ -\text{Wh} \end{array} \right]$$

under the condition of co-referentiality of N_1 and N_2 , e.g.:

$$(2) \text{ The boy who is coming here is a friend of mine}$$

with the underlying form:

$$(3) \begin{array}{c} \text{the boy (some boy is coming here) is a friend of mine} \\ \text{Det}_1 \text{ N}_1 \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{[Det}_2 \text{ N}_2 \text{ x} \\ -\text{Def} \\ +\text{Spec} \\ -\text{Wh} \end{array} \right] \text{ x} \\ \text{boy in N}_1 = \text{boy in N}_2 \end{array}$$

[*Specific*] (Ch. Fillmore 1966) is a feature which distinguishes the SOME's which are converted into *any* in negative and interrogative sentences, [-*Spec*], from those that are not, [+*Spec*], e.g.,

$$(4) \text{ Have you seen any boy here? } [-\text{Spec}] \text{ SOME}$$

vs.

$$(5) \text{ Have you seen some boy here? } [+ \text{Spec}] \text{ SOME}$$

It is claimed that the *some* with the feature specification [-*Def*, +*Spec*] appears in the basic representation of the determiner preceding the pivotal noun¹ in the constituent sentence of the relative-complex construction. Moreover the above analysis assumes the feature [-*Wh*] as a marker of the deep structure article underlying the relative pronoun in its basic form on the grounds of the possible interpretation of (2) by means of (3). Relativization of the pivotal noun brings about the transformational addition of the feature [+*Rel*] to the feature matrix of its determiner, simultaneously converting [-*Wh*] into [+*Wh*]. When the relativized noun in the constituent sentence is deleted, another rule feature, [+*Pro*], is acquired by the determiner preceding it (Terry et al 1967). The features [+*Rel*, +*Wh*, +*Pro*], then are introduced transformationally into the matrices of indefinite pronouns as they are not present in their underlying deep structures. The noun in the constituent sentence of the relative-complex construction is characterized by the features [-*Attach*, +*NDeletion*, +*Pro*]. [*Attach*] is a feature accounting for the possibility of attaching Det stems marked [+*Attach*] to N stems assigned the same feature (P. Wolfe and B. Partee 1967). [+*NDel*] accounts for the fact that the repeated noun must be obligatorily deleted, the feature [+*Pro*] is then a natural consequence of this procedure. In order to establish these features formally let us consider the sentences containing *who*, and *which*:

(6) *The book which is on the shelf is a dictionary.*

(7) **The book which book is on the shelf is a dictionary.*

(8) *I saw a girl who was eating a banana.*

(9) **I saw a girl who girl was eating a banana.*

Sentences (7, 9) where the rule of Noun Deletion has not been observed, are obviously ungrammatical.

As can be seen from the argument above the basic form underlying the relative pronouns will appear as

$$(10) \text{ Det}_1 \text{ N}_1 \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{[Det}_2 \text{ N}_2 \text{ x}] \\ \text{some} \\ \left[\begin{array}{c} \pm \text{Hum} \\ -\text{Attach} \\ +\text{NDel} \\ +\text{Pro} \end{array} \right] \\ \left[\begin{array}{c} -\text{Def} \\ +\text{Spec} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{x} \\ +\text{Wh} \\ +\text{Rel} \end{array} \right] \text{ x}$$

$\text{N}_1 = \text{N}_2$

which undergoes the following change in the process of relativization:

¹ The term '*pivotal noun*' used in this paper was proposed by Kuroda (1968 : 247) and denotes the noun which appears both in the matrix and constituent sentences of the *relative-complex construction*. He calls a sentence *relative-complex* if it contains a relative clause.

$$(11) \text{ Det, } N_1 \quad [\text{Det}_2 \quad \text{x}] \quad \text{x}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} -\text{Def} \\ +\text{Spec} \\ \pm\text{Hum} \\ +\text{Wh} \\ +\text{Rel} \\ +\text{Pro} \end{bmatrix}$$

The matrix of Det_2 with the feature $[\pm\text{Hum}]$ will yield *who*, while with $[-\text{Hum}]$ will generate the pronoun *which*.

To account for particular interrogative words such as *what*, *who*, *which*, it is assumed that certain constituents of the sentence may be incorporated into the *Wh*-marker (Klima 1964 b: 252-3). It is generally accepted that the interrogative pronouns are analysed into the element *Wh*, the definite or indefinite determiner, and a nominal item as follows:

$$(12) \text{ Wh } + \text{ some } + \text{ thing} \Rightarrow \text{ what}$$

$$[-\text{Def}]$$

$$(13) \text{ Wh } + \text{ some } + \text{ one} \Rightarrow \text{ who}$$

$$[-\text{Def}]$$

$$(14) \text{ Wh } + \text{ the } + \begin{cases} \text{thing} \\ \text{one} \end{cases} \Rightarrow \text{ which}$$

$$[+\text{Def}]$$

The definite-indefinite distinction of *wh*-words was first postulated by Katz and Postal (1964). They claim that *what* and *who* (as well as *where* and *when*) are indefinite, as opposed to *which thing*, and *which one*, which are definite. The basic form generating *what* from the marker *Wh* and the indefinite *something* has been substantiated and incorporated into the transformational analysis of the English syntax. According to some authors, however, *who*, (also *where* and *when*), does not seem to bear this dichotomy at all (A. Koutsoudas 1967) or appear to be ambiguous (Kuroda 1968: 251), derived either from the indefinite *Wh* + *someone*, or definite *Wh* + *the one*, on the grounds that e. g. the sentence in Kuroda (op. cit.: 252):

(15) *You may see Chomsky or Sartre*
may be followed by both:

(16) *Who do you prefer to see?*

or

(17) *Which one do you prefer to see?*

Hence the distinction between interrogative determiners *which* and *what* may be regarded as one of $[+\text{Def}] - [-\text{Def}]$, while *who*, following Kuroda, is ambiguous and as such may be generated either from (13), or from (18)

$$(18) \text{ Wh } + \text{ the } + \text{ one} \Rightarrow \text{ who}$$

$$[+\text{Def}]$$

in which form it is synonymous with *which* from (14). Recapitulating, we have arrived at the conclusion that the interrogative pronoun *which* is derived from $[+\text{Def}]$ determiner, as opposed to the relative *which*, generated from the $[-\text{Def}, +\text{Spec}]$ article. While the relative *which* refers only to non-human Nouns, the interrogative one may be either $[+\text{Hum}]$ *one* or $[-\text{Hum}]$ *thing*. The interrogative *what* is assigned $[-\text{Def}]$ feature, being in contrast to $[+\text{Def}]$ interrogative *which*. The relative pronoun *who* contains the features $[-\text{Def}, +\text{Spec}]$ in its deep structure, as opposed to $[-\text{Def}]$ and $[-\text{Spec}]$ (i.e. converting into *any*) ones, or $[+\text{Def}]$, characteristic for the interrogative *who*.

The next step in our procedure will be the examination of interrogative pronouns in respect to $[\text{Attach}]$, $[\text{N Deletion}]$, and $[\text{Pro}]$ features. In order to do that, the following examples will be considered:

(19) *What are you asking for?*

(20) *What thing are you asking for?*

(21) *Which book is yours?*

(22) *Which is yours?*

(23) *Who are you?*

(24) * *Who man are you?*

The mechanical distribution of the examined syntactic features of the interrogative words in the above questions, suggests some obvious implication of contrast with the same set of features in the relative pronouns. To account for this fact the following basic forms may be postulated for the particular interrogative pronouns:

$$(25) \text{ Wh } + \text{ Det } + \text{ N} \Rightarrow \text{ what}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} -\text{Def} \\ +\text{Attach} \\ -\text{N Del} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} +\text{Attach} \\ -\text{Pro} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\text{some} \quad \text{thing}$$

$$(26) \text{ Wh } + \text{ Det } + \text{ N} \Rightarrow \text{ what thing}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} -\text{Def} \\ -\text{Attach} \\ -\text{N Del} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} -\text{Attach} \\ -\text{Pro} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\text{some} \quad \text{thing}$$

$$(27) \text{ Wh } + \text{ Det } + \text{ N} \Rightarrow \begin{cases} \text{which one} \\ \text{which thing} \end{cases}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{Def} \\ -\text{Attach} \\ -\text{N Del} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} \pm\text{Hum} \\ -\text{Attach} \\ -\text{Pro} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\text{the} \quad \begin{cases} \text{one} \\ \text{thing} \end{cases}$$

