

The Differences between the Traditional and the Structural View on Grammatigal Analysis of Pronouns

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I. Introduction—Brief Comparison of Traditional Parts of Speech with Sledd's

In order to make an analysis of pronouns clear and intelligible, it is necessary, first of all, to take a brief look at the differences between the traditional and Sledd's classifications of parts of speech. Traditionally, eight parts of speech are generally recognized: noun, verb, pronoun, adverb, adjective, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. The traditional definitions of these classes are not clear, in that they are made in terms of meaning in some cases while in others they are based on the functions or uses of such classes. A noun is, according to Curme, defined as the name of a living being or lifeless thing such as *Mary*, *dog*, *hat*, and *house*. His definition was worked out by meaning, whereas he defined a pronoun in terms of function or use by saying: "A pronoun is a word used instead of a noun."¹ Thus, the traditional definitions of those classes are ambiguous by confounding the meaning with the use or function.

According to Sledd, our parts of speech are divided into two groups: one is morphological classes and the other syntactic classes. Morphological classes are those distinguished by inflectional and derivational suffixes, while syntactic classes are those classified by the positions occupied by words, phrases or clauses in a given sentence. There are four parts of speech distinguished by inflectional suffixes: noun, verb, pronoun and adjective. An adverb belongs to the class distinguished by a mixed class of both inflectional and derivational suffixes. Syntactic classes are again subdivided into two groups: main syntactic classes and minor syntactic classes. The main syntactic classes consist of four parts of speech: nominal, verbal, adjectival, and adverbial; the minor syntactic classes consist of eight parts of speech: determiners, prepositions, conjunctions, relatives, interrogatives, intensive-reflexives, auxiliaries, and adverbials of degree. Here it should be noted that pronouns classified by inflectional suffixes are limited to what are usually called personal pronouns and to the relative and interrogative pronoun *who*, which show either or both of the two features: (1) distinct subject and object forms; (2) two possessives, not related one to the other as singular to plural. For instance, a personal pronoun of the first person, singular has distinct subject and object forms *I* and *me* and two possessives *my* and *mine*; the word *who* has also subject and object forms *who* and *whom* as well as a possessive form *whose*. Although the form *whose* is the same, its usage in the first possessive case

1) George Curme (1947), *English Grammar* (New York: Barnes & Noble), p.13.

is distinctly different from that in the second possessive.

Except these two kinds of pronouns, personals and *who*, other subclasses of the traditional pronouns are not pronouns at all for some reason or other, according to Sledd. In other words, he has given the label pronouns only to the personals and *who*, and treated the other traditional pronouns in terms of positions which are occupied by them in a particular sentence. These subclasses of pronouns, therefore, can according to their positions in sentences be nominals, determiners, relatives, interrogatives or intensive-reflexives which belong not to the morphological or semantic classes, but to the syntactic or positional classes. In short, the definitions of parts of speech by Curme are sometimes semantic and sometimes functional, while those by Sledd are first in terms of inflectional and derivational suffixes, and second positional, with systematic reasoning and analysis.

II. Conflicts between Curme and Sledd on the Analysis of Pronoun

Traditionally, pronouns are classified into seven classes. They are as follows:

1. Personal Pronouns—I, me, thou, thee, he, him, she, her, it; we, us, ye, you, they, them
2. Reflexive Pronouns—myself, thyself, yourself, himself, herself, oneself or one's self, itself; ourselves, yourselves, themselves
3. Reciprocal Pronouns—each other, one another
4. Relative Pronouns—who, that, which, what
5. Indefinite Pronouns—somebody, anybody, everybody, nobody, something, somewhat, anything, aught, nothing, naught
6. Interrogative Pronouns—who, what, which
7. Limiting Adjectives used as Pronouns—subdivided into three groups:
 - (a) Intensifying adjectives such as *yourself* in sentences like: "You are not *yourself* today" or "Did you ever know a woman pardon another for being handsomer than *herself* (=she herself)?"
 - (b) *This, This One*, etc. in sentences like: "*This* is the picture of my wife and *that* the picture of her mother." (c) Indefinites such as *any, all, anyone* etc. in sentences like: "*All* is not gold that glitters."

Curme further treated these seven classes of pronouns in accordance and again in syntax of parts of speech. His methods and procedures in analysis of pronouns are by no means clear and systematic and they seem in part to be positional and functional instead of being semantic.

According to Sledd, most of these seven classes of pronouns have been weeded out from the categories of pronouns and he gave the name pronoun only to the personals and the word *who* in accordance with either or both of the two distinctive features—subject and object forms and two possessive forms as I have mentioned earlier. Several reasons for his objections against the traditional classifications of the various pronouns are as follows:

1. A pronoun must be classified by inflectional endings, the distinct subject-object forms and two possessives; whereas the traditional reflexive and intensive pronouns belong to the positional classifications depending on position in sentences, not on inflectional endings. Traditionally, forms like *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, and *themselves* are called reflexive pronouns when they are used in sentences like *He cut himself*, and intensive pronouns when they occur in positions like *The teacher herself didn't know*. It is obvious that this classification depends on position in sentences, not on inflectional endings. Furthermore, the traditional relative and interrogative pronouns like *which* and *that*, with the exception of the word *who*, do not have distinctive object forms. Therefore, none of the pronouns *which*, *that*, *what* is a pronoun, since *which*, *that*, and *what* do not have object forms. The forms with *-ever* such as *whoever*, *whichever*, or *whatever* also need some discussion, but let us postpone them until we talk about his word definition.

2. A word must consist of a single base; whereas the traditional reflexive and intensive pronouns such as *ourselves*, which are traditionally classified as words distinct from phrases or clauses, consist of two bases: the first base *our* and the second base *selves*. Therefore, forms containing more than one base like *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, and *themselves* cannot as units be placed in any word class. The forms with *-ever* such as *whoever*, *whichever*, or *whatever*, for this reason, are not pronouns at all, since they also consist of two bases. Other forms, consisting like *ourselves* of more than one base, which, therefore, cannot be classed as pronouns, include following words: *another*, *each other*, *one another*; *anybody*, *everybody*, *nobody*, *somebody*; *anyone*, *everyone*, *no one*, *someone*, *anything*, *everything*, *nothing*, *something*. Thus, he rejected the traditional subclasses of pronouns, since they do not meet and satisfy these criteria he has arbitrarily set up, and he labeled as pronoun the personals and relative-interrogative *who* only, since these two classes only are in conformity with the criteria.

III. His Attitude toward Solutions of These Traditional Subclasses of Pronouns

As I have explained so far, it is obvious that, in the traditional descriptions, no distinction is made between words like *all* and *each*, which take no endings, and words like *one* and *other*, which are inflected as nouns; and forms consisting of two or more bases like *another* and *one another* are grouped with forms consisting of just one base like *both* and *some*. Sledd, therefore, criticized this as being "haphazard classification," and further denounced the principle of such classification as being "in part position in sentences and in part an old-fashioned attempt to classify English forms according to the Latin forms which they translate."²)

He first separated the single-base forms from those of double-base and then classified as nouns according to their noun inflections a few words like *one*, *other*, *body*, and *thing*,

2) James Sledd (1959), *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (Chicago: Scott & Foresman), p. 78.

since they are inflected as nouns: *one, ones, one's; other, others, other's; body, bodies, body's; thing, things, thing's*. He also denied the label pronouns to the traditional demonstrative pronouns, *this* and *these*, *that* and *those*. He applied the noun inflections alike to them and labeled them as nouns, because *this, these, that* and *those* are parallel to *man* and *men* which are inflected as a noun. He then classified most of the traditional subclasses as nominals in terms of position, because many of them do "take the place of nouns in the sense that they frequently stand in positions which nouns also consistently occupy." Let us take a few examples and examine them to see whether they fill in the test frame of the nominals.

In the sentence *John seemed good*, traditional pronouns like *each, anybody, everybody, somebody, nobody* can take the place of noun *John*, which is nominal in position; thus we can say, *Each (anybody, somebody) seemed good*. Likewise, in the sentence *They love John*, we can substitute *each other* or *one another* for the nominal position, *John*; thus we can say, *They loved each other* or *They loved one another*. This leads us to conclude that many traditional subclasses of pronouns fit into the two original frames of nominals shown above without disturbing their structure, although stress and pitch levels may sometimes change; therefore, all traditional subclasses of pronouns that fit into such test frames of nominals are grouped with, and classified as, nominals according to Sledd.

I have so far mentioned the pronouns which are classified as nominals by Sledd, but there still remain unclassified some of the traditional pronouns, which, according to Sledd, are subdivided into determiners, relatives, interrogatives, or intensive-reflexives. To take a glance at these subdivisions of pronouns will be helpful to clarify the differences between Curme and Sledd.

1. Determiners: According to Sledd, words like *a, an, the, your, our, and their* are always determiners and "they stand under third stress or weakest stress before a following nominal," as in the following examples:

The man seemed good

or

His manner seemed good.

All forms, therefore, that precede a nominal in this test frame under the third or weakest stress, are determiners such as: *another, any, each, either, every, her, his, its, my, neither, no, one, some, that, those, this, these*. Here it should be noted that (1) the first possessive of personal pronouns like *my, our, your, her, his, its, their* are all determiners by their positions; (2) words *that, those, this, and these* which are traditional demonstrative pronouns are nouns by their inflections and are adjectivals when they are used as determiners. In other words, a word can be a noun or pronoun by its inflections, but by the positions it occupies in a certain sentence, it is sometimes a nominal and sometimes a determiner which is a subclass of adjectivals. For instance, in the sentence *One doesn't like to be snubbed*, *one* is a noun in isolation, but positionally it is a nominal because it

occupies a nominal position: on the other hand, *one* is adjectival when used as a determiner in the sentence *I have one pencil*, since *one* can be replaced by an adjective such as *red* with the following singular form of noun *pencil* changed to plural: thus we can say, *I have red pencils*.

2. Relatives: Among the traditional relative pronouns *who*, *which*, *that*, the word *who* (whose, whom) is the only one that Sledd treated as a pronoun, as I already mentioned earlier. Since the words, *which* and *that* have no inflections, he devised positionally a subclass of nominals for them, which is simply called the relatives. They are *who*(whose, whom), *which*, and *that*. For example:

The student *who* asked the question felt silly.

or

The question *which/that* he asked was silly.

Forms in—*ever*(*whoever*, *whichever*, *whatever*) also often belong to this class in the sentences such as:

Whoever answers the door, deliver my message.

Give the message to *whoever* opens the door.

Sledd treated the word *whoever* in the two examples above as members of the syntactic class of relatives not as relative pronouns, because adverbials can be substituted for the clause *whoever...door* in the first sentence, and nominals for the clause *whoever...door* in the second sentence. It should also be noted that traditional relative pronoun *what* is not regarded as a relative by Sledd and therefore excluded from this category.

3. Interrogatives: However, when the words *who* and *which* stand initially in sentences, they are not relatives but belong to what he called the interrogatives. For example, *who*, *which* and *what* are interrogatives in the following:

Who caused the difficulty?

What caused the difficulty?

Which do you like better, an apple or a pear?

Since the interrogatives *who*, *what* and *which* act as subjects and objects, he defined this group of interrogatives as another subclass of nominals. But they sometimes appear in the adjectival position distinct from the nominal position. He classed the interrogatives of this kind as a subset of adjectivals. Examples are shown in the following:

Which man seemed good?

What statement caused the difficulty?

4. Intensive-reflexives: Finally, he established the intensive-reflexives and classed it as the last subgroup of nominals. The traditional intensive pronouns and reflexive pronouns belong to this classification. Examples are:

The man *himself* was injured.

The man cut *himself*.

Himself in the first sentence is an intensive usage and that in the second is a reflexive

usage.

N. Conclusion

I have so far tried to give a picture of the major differences between Curme and Sledd and to point out several reasons for Sledd's dissent from the traditional classification of various pronouns. To summarize it, he first gave the label pronouns only to the traditional personal pronouns and *who* by their inflections, and then classified the demonstrative pronouns as nouns according to their inflections, treating them as either determiners or nominals positionally. He then gave the syntactic label nominal to all the traditional pronouns to which the testing frames of nominals can be applied, placing the so-called intensive and reflexive pronouns in a separate subclass of nominals called the intensive-reflexives, some of the traditional relative pronouns in a syntactic class of relatives, and the interrogative pronouns again in a syntactic class of interrogatives.

Sledd's definition of pronouns by inflections is thus much more simpler and so is his syntactic classification of the subclasses of the traditional pronouns by limiting the various traditional pronouns to the personal pronouns and *who* which he called pronouns according to their inflections. It is more reasonable and systematic to place all that do "take the place of nouns" in the positional class of nominals as a whole. In other words, Sledd's method of approach to English grammar may be said to be more systematic and intelligible in his analysis and classification, whereas Curme's is confusing and both semantically and functionally equivocal.

There are, however, some aspects on which one may disagree with Sledd. For instance, he treats as nouns the traditional demonstrative pronouns *this* and *these*, *that* and *those*, and indefinite pronouns *one* and *other* according to their noun inflections, but such classification seems rather awkward and remains open to question. It may be preferable not to treat them as nouns like Sledd or as pronouns like Curme, but to classify them only syntactically as subclasses of either nominals or adjectivals without giving any specific label. It is noteworthy that Sledd gave no definite label to *what*, treating it only positionally. The same is true with them since semantically they clearly belong to the traditional pronouns but inflect as nouns morphologically.

Despite some drawbacks in Sledd's analysis as we have seen so far, his approach is nevertheless very instructive and enlightening, particularly in terms of a comparative study of his analytic approach and Curme's traditional "catchall-fashion" classification. This leads to the conclusion that any one who approaches English grammar by means of Sledd's method will find the traditional classification rather ambiguous, confusing and unreasonable.

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