

That COMP-fusions

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## That COMP-fusions<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Introduction

It is unclear what the status of relativizing that, henceforth "R-that", is. In the twenties Jespersen, Kruisinga, and Deutschbein reacted against the tradition of their days, and argued that R-that wasn't a relative pronoun, but a conjunction or particle. Transformationalists, too, have devoted attention to the problem of the status of R-that. They soon agreed that R-that was a complementizer. As a matter of fact, every grammarian of English, whatever his/her theoretical conviction, is confronted with the R-that problem. Thus the view that R-that is a complementizer is also found in Functional Grammar (Junger 1981:169-170). Conversely, the view that R-that is not a complementizer is found in Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (Gazdar 1981:163), Realistic Syntax (Brame 1980:88), and in papers such as Bolinger (1972a) and Watts (1982)<sup>2</sup>. Below I discuss some of the arguments for the conjunction, particle, and complementizer hypotheses, and present a new hypothesis.

### 2. R-that is not a relative pronoun, but a conjunction or particle

Jespersen (1924:85, 1926:106-107, 1927:165-168), Kruisinga (1924, 1925:164, 1927a:29, 1927b:199), and Deutschbein ([1926] 1931:242) seemed to have independently claimed that R-that was not a relative pronoun, as had been the traditional claim (Sweet 1898:80; Onions [1904] 1932:147; Wendt 1911:213; and even Kruisinga 1922:453-455), but, in the words of Jespersen and Kruisinga, a conjunction, or, in the words of Deutschbein, a particle.

#### 2.1. R-that is not a relative pronoun

One can find at least eight arguments. For lack of space I can only discuss four.

Argument 1 With some relativized PPs, relative clauses can start with the preposition immediately followed by the WH-relativizer or they can start with the WH-relativizer and have the preposition later on. In modern terminology, WH-relativizers allow both pied piping and preposition stranding. R-that only allows preposition stranding.

- (1)a This is the man about whom I have spoken.
- b This is the man whom I have spoken about.
- (2)a \*This is the man about that I have spoken.
- b This is the man that I have spoken about.

One assumes that a pronoun should be able to follow a preposition. Therefore, the fact that R-that can't suggest that R-that isn't a pronoun. (Jespersen 1924: 85, 1926:106; Krusinga 1924:142-143; Deutschbein 1953: 223; Erades 1955:53)

Counterarguments First, from the fact that R-that can't follow prepositions it certainly follows, as Arai (1958:90) has first claimed (cp. Horn 1923:72-73; Smith 1982:77), that R-that doesn't have every one of the usual characteristics of a pronoun, but not that R-that isn't a pronoun at all. Second, the data about the distribution of prepositions and relativizers must be handled with care. If pronominal relativizers are to allow both pied piping and preposition stranding, then one should say that the WH-relativizers of infinitival and independent relatives are not pronominal, for they only allow pied piping, respectively, stranding (see Emonds 1976:192; Helgander 1971:207-209,268).

- (3) a I found an usher from whom to buy tickets.  
 b \*I found an usher who to buy tickets from.  
 (4) a They liked whatever they went to.  
 b \*They liked to whatever they went.

Argument 2 Who, whom, and what are sensitive to gender. R-that isn't, hence it might not be pronominal.

- (5) a The man who attracts her ...  
 b \*The book who attracts her ...  
 (6) He then scoured what/??who was left.  
 (7) The man/book that I like ...

(Krusinga 1924:141-143; Deutschbein 1953:223)

Counterarguments First, to some extent it is true that R-that isn't gender-sensitive, but neither is whose, nor was which.

- (8) This is the man/book whose cover I dislike.  
 (9) Our father, which art in heaven ...

Yet whose and the which of (9) are never said to be non-pronominal. Second, it isn't fully true that R-that is genderless. In his corpus of written British who(m),  $\emptyset$ , and R-that relativizations of the thirties and forties, Malmberg (1947) found that only 1.63 % of all human antecedents took R-that, while 88.98 % took who(m) (and 9.39 %  $\emptyset$ ). It appears from Quirk's (1957:106) study of spoken educated British of the fifties that R-that subject relatives prefer a non-human antecedent: the [+Human]/[-Human] ratio is 1/9. And, to stress the parallel with whose, it isn't fully genderless either: whose is predominantly [+Human].

Argument 3 One can find R-that relatives that contain a non-relative pronoun coreferential with the relativized constituent.

- (10) That's the problem that I asked you to find out from Fred about it.

If R-that were a pronoun, too, i.e. in addition to it, its function would be unintelligible. (cp. Jespersen 1927:109-110, 165-168)

Counterarguments First, one can find relative clauses that contain a non-relative pronominal reflection of the relativized constituent, and are introduced by WH-relativizers.

- (11) I have to type the footnotes and the bibliography which I don't know how long they're going to be.

What's more, Jespersen (1927:111) found more such examples with which than with R-that. Note also that it is no accident that the relative clauses in (10) and (11) are complex, that the relative pronoun occurs in the bridge clause, and the non-relative one in the embedded clause. The "double pronoun strategy" is a way to facilitate the comprehension (cp. Comrie 1981:140; Van der Auwera 1984a). Second, the double reflection strategy is found with who, too, especially when the second reflection involves a possessive adnominal.

- (12) ... the fellow who you don't know his name.

The basic point of all this is that nobody would use (11) and (12) as evidence for a claim that which and who are not pronominal. Why treat (10) differently?

Argument 4 R-that can't be a pronoun, for it often means as much as on/in/at which. (Kruisinga 1924:141-143; Jespersen 1927:162; Deutschbein 1953:223)

- (13)a I remember the day { that } he came.  
b { on which }

- (14)a ... in the same cordial fashion { that }  
b { in which }  
we had met

Counterargument The interchangeability of R-that and preposition + WH-pronoun is as compatible with the idea that R-that is not always pronominal, as with the idea that it is never pronominal.

## 2.2. R-that is a conjunction or particle

When Kruisinga and Jespersen maintain that R-that is a conjunction, they mean that R-that is the same as the conjunction that, henceforth "C-that", as found in (15).

- (15) I believe that the earth is flat.

For Deutschbein, R-that is a (relative) particle, which is to mean that R-that and C-that are similar, though not identical (cp. also Zandvoort 1950:186). The Jespersen-Kruisinga-Deutschbein views have been supported by at least seven arguments. For lack of space, I can only discuss one.

Argument 5 Both C-that and R-that are deletable; if we say that they are the same, we arrive at a nice generalization. (Jespersen 1924:85, 1927:165; Kiima 1964:6)

- (16) I know that/∅ Antwerp has a harbor.  
 (17) I know the man that/∅ you've mentioned.

Counterargument The deletion conditions for C-that and R-that are entirely different. For C-that, Bolinger (1972b:18-23; cp. Jespersen 1927:33; McDavid 1964) draws attention to the frequency of the main verb: deletion would be easier for high-frequency verbs such as know than for low-frequency ones such as snigger.

- (18) He sniggered that/?∅ it was easy.

Another factor is the presence of an indirect object. (Bolinger 1972b:23-24)

- (19)a He wired her ∅ I was coming.  
 b ??He wired ∅ I was coming.

What is relevant for the deletion of R-that, and irrelevant for that of C-that is whether the relativized constituent is the subject of the relative clause.

- (20)a There is a man {that/∅} wants to speak to you.  
 b  
 (21)a I met the woman {that/\*∅} loves John.  
 b

For subjects, "zero" or "contact clause" relativization has a highly restricted function. (21)b is simply unacceptable, and (20)b serves a very specific focussing function and is typically colloquial (see Van der Auwera 1984b).

The general conclusion on the work of Jespersen, Kruisinga, and Deutschbein is that though they must be credited for noticing a large number of idiosyncrasies of R-that, none of their arguments - not the four discussed here, nor the eleven left undiscussed - prove that R-that is a conjunction or particle.

3. R-that is not a relative pronoun, but a complementizer. There are various kinds of conjunctions. The big split is that between subordinating and coordinating conjunctions. C-that, when, and although are subordinators. Of course, there is still a big difference between C-that, on the one hand, and when and although, on the other,

and it would seem useful to have a special term for C-that-like subordinators. Rosenbaum (1967) suggested "complementizer", and his suggestion was well received.

In a sense, it was too well received. When a term becomes popular, investigators often appropriate it in their own ways, and the result is confusion. In the case of "complementizer", Bresnan (1970, 1972) has widened the meaning to the extent that "complementizer" becomes synonymous with "clause-introducing particle". As a result, we now have confusion and vagueness (cp. Goldsmith 1981:551; Smith 1982:10-11,26-27): there is the narrow Rosenbaum definition, the broad Bresnan definition, and at least one in-between position, in which "complementizer" is synonymous with "subordinator" (Downing 1973; Geoghegan 1975; Stahlke 1976; Lightfoot 1979:314; Smith 1982:35-36). For the purpose of this paper, however, I do not need to get into this any further. In essence, all the moderns who say that R-that is a complementizer support the view that R-that is the same as C-that.

### 3.1. R-that is not a relative pronoun

All but one of the old arguments reappear. Sometimes they are presented as new, the reason being that the moderns are not always informed about the heated discussions of the twenties. Of the classical authors on R-that, only Jespersen is still widely read; Kruisinga is vaguely remembered; Deutschbein and such protagonists as Horn and Johansen - to be discussed in 4 - seem to be totally forgotten. The list below gives an idea of the continuing appeal of Arguments 1 to 4.

Argument 1: Bresnan (1970:318, 1972:43, 1977:175), Gregg (1972), Morgan (1972:70), Downing (1973:7-8), Geoghegan (1975:31), Emonds (1976:142), Stahlke (1976:588-589), and Lightfoot (1979:314)

Argument 2: Gregg (1972) and Downing (1973:6-7)

Argument 3: Downing (1973:9-10), Geoghegan (1975:31-32), Stahlke (1976:591,599-600), and Smith (1982:80)

Argument 4: Downing (1973:11-12), Schachter (1973:27), and Larson (1983)

There are seven new arguments. Space permits me to discuss two.

Argument 6 The relative pronoun who shows case: its oblique forms are whom (objective) and whose (genitive). The genitive of what is also whose. If R-that were like who and what, one would expect it to show case, too. It doesn't; so perhaps it isn't a pronoun. (Gregg 1972; Downing 1973:6-7; Geoghegan 1975:32; Smith 1982:37)

Counterarguments First, which doesn't have any declension, yet that doesn't make it any less pronominal.

Second, neither who nor what are less pronominal just because whom is disappearing and because whose is used as a suppletive genitive for which. Third, in the genitive, the oblique form that sits strongest, Scots has developed a genitive that's (Jespersen 1927:111; Romaine 1980:227).

(22) The dog that's leg has been broken ...

Argument 7 Downing (1973:18,25) claims that predicate nominals do not allow WH-relatives.

(23)a Ann isn't the woman { \*who } she used to be.  
 b { \*which }  
 c { that }

The unacceptability of (23)a and b follows from the general restriction that predicate nominals cannot be pronominalized.

(24) \*J. was president, and K. was it, too.

If R-that were pronominal, one would expect (23)c to be ungrammatical, too.

Counterargument Downing's views on (23)b are probably not representative. The claims of Poutsma (1916:963-964), Kruisinga (1925:165-166), Jespersen (1927:123-124), Curme (1935:164), and Deutschbein (1953:223) are still valid: predicate nominals can be relativized with which. The reason why both R-that and which, but not who are acceptable is, as Jespersen (1924:242-243; 1927:123-124,156) has pointed out, that they are felt to be neuter, and that a predicate nominal is considered neuter, too. Compare:

(25) What is he? Just nothing at all as yet.

3.2. R-that is a complementizer

All of the old arguments reappear or are rediscovered. Argument 5 surfaces in Gregg (1972), Downing (1973:7), and Stahlke (1976:592,596-597). There are two new arguments, but space prevents a discussion.

The general conclusion, because of space - again - only half-argued for, is a negative one: the case for the non-pronominality of R-that, and the C-that - R-that identity is as shaky as it was sixty years ago.

4. R-that is a highly pronominal relativizer

4.1. R-that is a relativizer

The proponents of the view that R-that is the same as C-that deny that R-that is a relativizer, i.e. that it conveys "relativeness". Thus they must show that something other than R-that is responsible for the relative clause meaning. This "something" could only be the fact that a relative clause with R-that is like one with a WH-relativizer, except that there is no WH-relativizer

or, in other words, that this "something" is the  $\emptyset$  relativizer. In this perspective (26)a is analyzed as (26)b or (26)c.

- (26)a I like the man that you've seen.  
 b I like the man  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{that } \emptyset \\ \emptyset \text{ that} \end{array} \right\}$  you've seen.  
 c

With respect to object relativizations, this suggestion carries some plausibility, for  $\emptyset$  is indeed sufficient to mark a relativization (see (17)). Not so for subject relativizations, of course. In (21)b  $\emptyset$  is insufficient.

- (21)b \*I met the woman  $\emptyset$  loves John.

Add R-that and the relative clause meaning is clear. Hence, in subject relatives anyway, R-that must be considered a relativizer.

There are at least two reasons to think that R-that is no less of a relativizer in object relatives. For one thing, R-that can be replaced by WH-relativizers in subject and object relativizations alike.

- (27) I like the man that/whom/who you've seen.  
 (28) I like the man that/who has seen you.

For another thing, given the analyses in (26)b and c, and given that  $\emptyset$  is interchangeable with WH-relativizers, there is no reason why the following shouldn't be grammatical.

- (29)a I like the man ~~that~~ whom/~~that~~ who you've seen.  
 b I like the man ~~whom~~ that/~~who~~ that you've seen.

They are all ungrammatical<sup>4</sup>, which suggests that R-that is itself a relativizer.

The claim that R-that is a relativizer still allows for the Deutschbein position that R-that is a relative particle. I will now come to the pronominality issue.

#### 4.2. R-that is highly pronominal

4.2.1. Is it strange that R-that, if pronominal, is invariant? No. English only has vestiges of (pro)nominal declensions. As to WH-pronouns, I have already remarked that which is invariant, that what has lost whose to which, which thereby got a suppletive genitive, and that the who-whom contrast is breaking down. Furthermore, given the claim - to be argued for in 4.2.2. - that R-that originated as a conjunction only to become a pronoun later on, it would be strange if it acquired a declension, when the general "drift" of English was one of losing declensions. True, the genitive is still strong, but then there is at least one dialect (Scots) in which R-that has got a genitive.



Suppose then that R-that is a pronoun. It certainly makes it easy to understand why R-that is so often replaceable by who, whom, and which, which are pronominal too. It also sheds some explanatory light on the problem why R-that is hard to delete in a subject relative. Present-day English is very strict about it that each finite clause have its overt subject. Under the pronoun hypothesis, R-that subject relativizations have their overt subject in R-that;  $\emptyset$  subject relatives do not have an overt subject. Thus  $\emptyset$  subject relatives go against a very strong generalization, and this can only happen under special, pragmatic conditions (Van der Auwera 1984b).

4.2.2. So far I have suggested that R-that is pronominal. I will now refine this and say that R-that isn't fully pronominal, but only highly pronominal. The hedge with "highly" takes us back to the fact that R-that can't follow a preposition.

- (30)a ... the man to { whom } I have given a book.  
 b ~~{ that }~~

Pace Jespersen (1927:166), Downing (1973:7-8), and Geoghegan (1975:31), the claim that R-that can't follow a preposition is not equivalent with the claim that R-that can't be the object of a preposition. If we have reasons to believe that R-that is an object, respectively, a subject in (27) and (28), then we shouldn't doubt that it is a prepositional object in (31).

- (31) ... the man who/whom/that I have given a book to.

In (31), the preposition is "stranded", but it still governs the relative pronoun. The unacceptability of (30)b is not due to any "ungovernability" of R-that; it is only a fact about word order.

What is the explanation of this bizarre and strict word order rule, one which sets R-that apart from the WH-relativizers and, given that one would want a pronoun to be precedable by a preposition, makes it a less than a "full" pronoun? Part of the answer is historical.

It is very plausible to assume that R-that goes back to the ME subordinator þat, which was a coalescence of the OE relative particle þe and the subordinator þæt (Horn 1923:72-73; Helgander 1971:276-278; Geoghegan 1975). What happened was that þe disappeared and that its function was taken over by þæt. This process seems to have started in compound conjunctions such as ðe þe (until) and þa hwile þe (while) (Kivimaa 1966:258-259), constructions in which there had been partial overlap

even in OE (some conjunctions demanded þe, some þæt, and some allowed both). When þæt/bat established itself in the relative clause, we can assume that this process was facilitated by the fact that OE had a neuter relative pronoun þæt. Thus we can understand why þat, in at least some dialects of Early ME, first preferred inanimate antecedents, and that þe held out longest for animate ones (McIntosh 1947; Miyabe 1959; Brunner 1962:149-150; Kivimaa 1966:85-87; Samuels 1972:157; Dekeyser 1983:100; Watts 1982:25-26). Note that this does not mean, pace Anklam (1908:75-76), Kellner (1924:205), Onions (1932:148), Mustanoja (1960) and Kivimaa (1966), that ME R-þat was simply a continuation of the OE neuter relative þæt. There are three facts which such an account would leave mysterious (cp. Traugott 1972:153; Dekeyser 1983:101): ME R-þat allowed WH-pronoun-þat constructions, it occurred in adverbial constructions of the type on the day that, and it did not tolerate any prepositions in front of it. On the þe-þæt account, these facts fall into place. The appearance of WH-þat forms is a testimony of the way the conjunction þat was expanding its use (Kivimaa 1966:251-255); the ME R-þat of the on the day that type was merely fulfilling a function it had inherited from þe; that ME R-þat couldn't follow a preposition is a reflection of two facts: (i) þe couldn't follow any prepositions either, and (ii) though the conjunction þæt-þat could follow a preposition, it then formed a compound conjunction with a double clause scope structure (as in Modern English in s[that s[...]]s), unsuitable for a relativization involving a constituent scope preposition.

Given the independently arguable claims that present-day R-that is pronominal, but that its ancestor was conjunctive, we must draw the conclusion that R-that changed categories. As with all changes, there is no reason to assume that the change has reached its completion. For a change to be complete, it would have to have itself felt in all environments. Now, one environment in which the change definitely couldn't start was the preposition + relativizer pattern; it simply wasn't available for the ancestor of R-that. If English was going to allow a preposition to precede R-that, this pattern would have to come into existence at a point when R-that would be pronominal on account of other factors. Only then could there be some analogical pressure to make R-that behave like any other relative pronoun and follow a preposition. But we know that R-that still doesn't follow prepositions. This means that the pronominalization process hasn't reached its completion. Though R-that has become highly pronominal, it hasn't become fully pronominal.

In essence, the view that R-that is pronominal, and that its repugnance against a preceding preposition is an inheritance from its Anglo-Saxon conjunctive ancestors is not new. It goes back to Horn (1923:72-73) (cp. Johansen 1935:139)

4.2.3. The thesis that conjunctive R-bat-bat changed into a highly pronominal R-that can be supported in some other ways: (i) we can see that R-that grew increasingly more gender-sensitive (Saito 1961:84-85; Dekeyser 1984); (ii) we can understand why the WH-bat was to disappear: as bat grew pronominal, WH-bat grew redundant; and (iii) we can understand why the R-that + pronoun pattern (see Argument 3) was more popular in ME (Helgander 1971:272-273; Traugott 1972:157-158), a period in which R-that was less pronominal and the R-that + pronoun pattern was less redundant.

4.2.4. There is no evidence that the pronominalization of R-that is setting through and pushing it to accept a preceding preposition. On the contrary, there is a feature of R-that that seems to effectively block the completion of the category change. Ever since its appearance in relative clauses, R-that has had a use in which it is synonymous with a WH-adverb or with a preposition + WH-pronoun pattern.

- (32) I came the day that/when/on which John came.  
 (33) I don't like the way that/in which he mispronounces my name.

This R-that, it must be admitted (cp. Argument 4), is adverbial and non-pronominal.

And yet, this adverbial R-that is less non-pronominal than might be thought. Adverbial R-that often goes with a bare-NP adverbial antecedent (see Larson 1983). These NPs can function as adverbials without the help of a preposition; membership in the class of possible bare-NP adverbials is lexically determined. In this light, it is easy to claim that (i) there is a relative pronoun that can function as an adverbial - without the help of a preposition; (ii) membership in the class of possible bare-pronoun relative adverbials is lexically determined (of all relative pronouns, only R-that qualifies; and (iii) it is only natural that the bare-pronoun relative adverbial tends to go with the bare-NP antecedent adverbial.

Adverbial R-that may counteract the analogical pressure on pronominal R-that to accept preceding prepositions in a double way. First, the very existence of an adverbial, non-pronominal R-that will probably diminish the urgency with which highly pronominal R-that should go fully pronominal. Second, both adverbial and pronominal R-that are presently clause-initial. If a pattern of

a preposition followed by R-that were to develop, it would disturb an otherwise exceptionless regularity. 4.2.5. What do I mean when I claim that there are two R-that's, a pronominal and an adverbial one? Nothing more than when one says that the day has two uses, a nominal and an adverbial one. When the relative clause assigns the relativized constituent a nominal role, R-that is pronominal, and when the relativized constituent is to play an adverbial role in the relative clause, then R-that is adverbial. However upsetting this switching category membership may be for linguists, it seems to be useful for speakers.

### Notes

- 1 This is a reassembling of excerpts from a longer paper (in progress) on the same subject. I am grateful to C. Braecke, J. Bruyndonx, X. Dekeyser, B. Downing, L. Goossens, J. Kirby, R. Larson, and E. Smith.
- 2 Interestingly, Watts (1982) turns the hypothesis that R-that is a conjunction/complementizer upside down, and claims that complement clause that is a pronoun. I do not think that this position is defensible, but it is a most forceful illustration of the way the that facts underdetermine their theories.
- 3 On the independence of this claim, Kruisinga (1927b: 199) notes that "It is evidently an idea that has been 'in the air' for some time." Though Jespersen precluded upon his later views as early as in 1885, he did it in a Danish school grammar, which, though a Nordic success (8 Danish editions and 2 different Swedish translations) didn't get any international attention. Moreover, his 1885-views were not very explicit (cp. Kruisinga 1927a:29).
- 4 The WH-pronoun + R-that pattern was grammatical in ME. See sections 4.2.2. and 4.2.3.

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