1

On So-Called "Pronouns" in English

Paul Postal

1966

1.1 Lasting Insights

How do personal pronouns (like *he* and *she*) and reflexives (like *himself* and *herself*) relate to noun phrases (like *the man* and *a woman*) in terms of phrase structure? If we think that they are all noun phrases, and that *the man* consists of a determiner followed by a noun, should *he* be viewed as a determiner (possibly followed by a null noun) or as a noun (possibly preceded by a null determiner)? Postal's article addresses this question and argues that pronouns like *he* are determiners, followed by a noun which is either deleted or, when followed by a restrictive relative clause, realized as *one*, whereas reflexives like *himself* consist of a determiner (*him*) plus the noun *self*.

Postal's proposal can be broken down into three main components. The first is that what we call pronouns are not in fact a subtype of noun. The second is that pronouns are a subtype of determiner, closely related to definite articles. The third is that pronouns, though not themselves nouns, are followed by a noun that is usually not pronounced.

Postal's view is that pronouns, like canonical determiners such as *the*, are added in the course of the syntactic derivation, and that their phonological realization depends on the features of the head noun. For example, if the head noun consists of a set of features that includes [+Pro, +Human, +Definite, +Masculine, +III, −II, −I, +Nominative], the determiner is *he*. But if the head noun consists of the features [+Pro, +Reflexive, +Human, +Definite, +Masculine, +III, −II, −I, +Genitive], the determiner is *him* and the resulting form *himself*.

One advantage of this proposal is that it straightforwardly accounts for the fact that pronouns behave like definite noun phrases in many ways. This is because a

pronoun is viewed as one member of the set of determiners that can lexicalize a definite feature. A second advantage is that it correctly predicts that pronouns should be able to co-occur with nouns, as other determiners do. This is in fact what we see in cases such as *we men, you guys, we honest policemen, you amusing comedians,* etc. In predicting forms like *he-one, we-ones, you-ones,* alongside the familiar *the one(s)* followed by a restrictive relative clause, this proposal also provides a natural treatment of the forms *we'uns, us'uns, you'uns* that are attested in certain varieties of English: they are simply viewed as resulting from the absence of a rule deleting the nonreflexive head noun *one.* Moreover, this approach to pronouns, which puts *they, them, their,* and *theirs* in the same class as *the, this, that, these,* and *those,* is consistent with the observation that this is the class of elements where we find a voicing of the interdental fricative [ð]. Finally, Postal's proposal makes the identity of pronouns and definite determiners found in Romance (e.g., Italian *la, lo,* Spanish *el*) seem entirely natural.

The development of the DP hypothesis in the 1980s (cf. Abney 1987 and, in this volume, Longobardi 1994, Ch. 21, and Szabolcsi 1994, Ch. 22) allowed an elegant integration of the main ideas of this article into contemporary syntactic theory. This, together with the strength of the empirical support for this proposal, contribute toward its being a continuing source of inspiration for much syntactic and semantic discussion of nominal pro-forms (e.g., Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002; Elbourne 2005; Roehrs 2009; among others).

1.2 Excerpts from "ON SO-CALLED 'PRONOUNS' IN ENGLISH"

A Introduction

The following is an informal discussion of certain regularities in the syntactic behavior of forms traditionally called 'pronouns' in discussions of English syntax. By informal I mean that, although the analysis suggested involves a number of highly complex grammatical rules and a very special conception of the theory of grammar, no attempt has been made here to formulate or present any of the rules in their correct form. Nor is very much said about the theoretical assumptions these require. My aim is the much weaker one of trying to suggest that a class of facts requires that English grammar be formulated in such a way that it can contain such rules.

Our traditional lore about English grammar [Jespersen 1961, Part VII: 125–126; Curme 1977, Vol. II: 557; Long 1961: 338–356] recognizes a class of forms often called 'pronouns' or 'personal pronouns' which include *I, we, you, he, she, it, they.* At the start we may ignore for simplicity the various case forms *us, your, him,* etc., as well as reflexives, although these will become crucial later. Very often it was said that such forms 'stand for' or 'replace' or 'are substitutes for' previously mentioned or understood noun forms. Certain modern students of English such as Robert Allen have noted [in a paper read to the Linguistic Society of America], essentially correctly, that in many ways such forms actually 'replace' whole noun phrases (henceforth NP) rather than nouns, since they cannot occur with articles, relative phrases, and other elements which can occur in the same NP with ordinary nouns.

Compare:

(1)   the young girl said that she would go

where on one reading *she* can be said to 'stand for' the whole NP *the young girl* with:

(2)   the large girl can't stand the small one

where *one* can only be said to 'stand for' the noun *girl*. However, as I argue later, this contrast is a bit misleading since there is reason to assume that the form *one* or its variants is also relevant at one stage to the 'replacement' which occurs in sentences like (1).

   Early transformational descriptions of English have shown that the vague and unclear traditional notion of 'stand for' can, in its <u>sentence internal</u> meaning, be precisely formalized by transformational derivation. Thus in a transformational grammar a structure like:

(3)   O'Hara is more intelligent than he seems to be

would be derived from a more abstract structure schematically like:

(4)   O'Hara is more intelligent than O'Hara seems to be

However, obviously not all pronouns can be so derived, which leads to a differentiation between transformationally introduced pronominal structures and those introduced in the underlying or basic forms, as in:

(5)   he is sick

The fact that pronouns have two different origins can then be suggested as the explanation for the ambiguity of reference of the pronoun in sequences like:

(6)   Schwartz claims he is sick

   There is a great deal right in all this and no one who wishes to discuss English pronouns can afford to ignore the insights and observations which underlie the kinds of descriptions just mentioned. It is the thesis of this paper, however, that these analyses ignore some important facts and that there is concomitantly a good deal also wrong in them. Furthermore, what is wrong can be seen to arise from the almost inevitable tendency in grammatical research to assume wrongly that the surface or superficial syntactic forms of sentences provide direct insight into (or are even identical with) their deep syntactic forms.

B   The 'article' character of so-called pronouns

In a transformational grammar, each sentence and hence, derivatively, each part of each sentence has two distinct syntactic structures as part of its overall grammatical description; a highly abstract Deep structure relevant for semantic interpretation and a Surface structure relevant for phonetic interpretation. These two aspects of syntactic form are in general connected by a long and complex chain of transformational rules which, furthermore, derive a sequence of intermediate forms [cf. Chomsky 1965]. In such a grammar it makes no sense to ask such

traditional questions as: 'Is such and such occurrence of form F a noun?' It only makes sense to ask such questions <u>contextually</u> with respect to a specified structure. That is, one can ask whether such and such occurrence of a form F is a noun in the Deep structure, a noun in such and such intermediate structure, a noun in the Surface structure of the sentence, etc. The answer to some of these questions may be yes, to others no without contradiction. Furthermore and equally importantly, the fact that an element is present in the Surface form does not mean it was present in the Deep structure and, conversely, absence from the Surface form does not necessarily entail absence from the Deeper aspect of grammatical structure.

I mention all this only because it is fundamental to my basic claim which is that the so-called pronouns *I, our, they*, etc. are really <u>articles</u>, in fact types of <u>definite</u> article. However, article elements are only introduced as <u>segments</u> in intermediate syntactic structures. In the Deepest structures they are, I shall suggest, not present segmentally but are represented as syntactic features of nouns, features analogous to Animate, Human, Countable, etc. Rather deceptively, the articles which have traditionally been called pronouns are, as a result of certain transformational operations, in many cases assigned a derivative Noun status in Surface structures.

[. . .]

Moreover, further facts strongly suggest that, while it is right to assume that more abstract NP structures of Superficial pronoun-containing NP involve definite articles, it is wrong to assume either that the articles are *the* or that at the relevant stage the pronouns are nouns. Most important in this regard are the reflexive forms such as those in:

(19)   a.   Horace washed himself
         b.   the girl washed herself
         c.   I washed myself

As has been argued by Lees and Klima [1963], it is quite clear that reflexive elements must be derived transformationally from underlying NP which are identical to other preceding NP, this identity being subject to certain conditions. These have never been fully or exactly stated, but they concern occurrence of the two NP within the same <u>simple</u> sentence structure. This may be ignored here. Thus a sentence like (19)a must be derived from a more abstract, Deep structure of the sort schematically indicated: *Horace washed Horace* (subject of course to the remarks of footnote 4 [in the full article]). In previous transformational descriptions, reflexive words such as *myself*, *themselves*, etc. have been treated as compounds of pronouns and a special, transformationally introduced by the very rule which carries out the reflexivization operation as determined by NP identity within simple sentence structures.

This analysis of reflexive forms will not do, however. The identity and simple sentence constraints are fundamentally correct and unquestioned here although they involve some mysterious and far from fully solved problems. But the treatment of the element *self* as a grammatical formative is untenable. In fact *self* must be taken to be a noun stem as we see clearly in such phrases as *the expression of self in our*

society, selfish, selfless, etc. Compare *piggish, brutish, boyish* and *witless, spineless, timeless*, etc. Notice also the *self/selve* plural alternation parallel to that in such unquestioned noun stems as *wife/wive, life/live*, etc. If, however, the stem *self/selve* in reflexive words is a noun stem, what is the preceding element *my, our, him*, etc.? My answer is that they are, of course, articles, definite articles, in fact genitive type definite articles. I view the process of reflexivization as a complex of a number of partially independent operations, some of which are relevant for other grammatical developments such as nonreflexive pronominalization and, most crucially, determination of the Surface forms of so-called pronouns. The relevant rules include PRONOMINALIZATION, DEFINITIZATION, REFLEXIVIZATION, GENITIVIZATION, and DEFINITE ARTICLE ATTACHMENT.

However, it will be impossible to understand these grammatical operations if it is not recognized that the terminal elements of Deep syntactic structures, i.e. the morphemes, are not unanalyzable atomic symbols. Rather, they are complexes of syntactic, phonological, and semantic features or properties. Phonology and semantics do not concern us here. But the fact that underlying noun stems have a syntactic feature analysis is crucial. The features involved for English must, apparently, include such as Animate, Human, Masculine, First Person (I), Second Person (II), Third Person (III), Definite, Demonstrative, Proper, Pronoun (Pro), Reflexive, Genitive, etc. The claim is then that, instead of nouns cooccurring with article morphemes in Deep structures as in previous transformational and other treatments, Superficial structure article differences are represented at the most abstract level by differences in features of nouns, features like Definite, Demonstrative, and, as we see subsequently, also those involving person and gender properties.

[. . .]

Nothing in our analysis thus far accounts for the difference between the terminal two morpheme structure of reflexive words and the single formative character of nonreflexive pronominals. That is, what we have said would suggest that the output NP in Figure 1 [in the full article] should be *heone*. This is not the case here nor is the actual phonological form of the pronoun ever present in analogous forms in the standard language. We can only assume, therefore, the existence of a special rule to drop the nonreflexive pronoun stems in such cases. This is the rule called PRONOUN DELETION [. . .]. Although this seems a bit ad hoc, it in fact provides the basis for an interesting and important justification for the posited analysis which we shall give in the next section. I am definitely claiming, however, that were it not for this highly restricted and low level rule, our so-called pronouns would in fact have the terminal forms **Ione*, **usones*, **herone*, **itone* (or perhaps better **itthing* analogous to the indefinite [*something*]). This should make clear why I said earlier that the contrast pointed out by Allen between pronominals like *he, she, it*, etc., which replace whole NP, and pronouns like *one*, which replace individual nouns, is misleading in part. For in fact I claim that the pronoun which would be pronounced *one, thing*, etc. is also really present in the so-called pronominal cases as well. Further very strong evidence of this will be presented below.

[. . .]

C   Justification for the Analysis of the So-Called Pronouns as Articles

In the previous sections we have outlined an account of forms like *I, us, their*, etc. whereby they are treated as forms of definite article. In our terms this means that they are segments added to NP whose head nouns are [+Definite]. The contrasts among the various definite articles are due to other contrasting features of the head noun. The major motivation of this analysis thus far is the parallelism with respect to properties like Animate, Masculine, I, II, III, etc. between *he/him* and *himself*, *it* and *itself*, *I/me/my* and *myself*, etc. Once it is recognized that the reflexives consist of something plus a noun stem and that this something differs from the forms of pronouns only in case properties (Genitive and Nominative values), it is quite natural to assume that pronominalization and reflexivization involve specifying a noun as [+Pro, +Definite, −Demonstrative] and that these along with the inherent features of the noun then determine the form of the article. Hence by parallelism with *himself* we are led to regard *him* as an article whose underlying head noun (which would otherwise show up phonologically as *one*) has been deleted because it was [+Pro] either inherently or derivatively by identity. While perhaps not completely implausible, thus far we have certainly given little conclusive ground for accepting such an analysis. Basically it has been shown only that it is possible and that it provides a natural way of handling the definiteness of nonderivative pronouns like *I, him, you* and shape parallelisms between these and derivative pronoun forms of the reflexive and nonreflexive varieties. And furthermore the analysis is compatible with the hitherto ignored fact that *self/selve* is a noun stem. More serious evidence in favor of the article analysis is, however, available.

It should be emphasized that the analysis accounts for an otherwise unexplained gap in the NP system with respect to the concurrence of third person pronouns, definite articles, and restrictive relative phrases. One finds real pronouns actually occurring with the definite article *the* if there is a restrictive relative phrase or one of its reduced variants present in the NP:

(23)   a.   I met the one who Lucille divorced
       b.   I met the man who Lucille divorced
(24)   a.   I ate the one Schwartz gave me
       b.   I ate the apple Schwartz gave me
(25)   a.   I bred the small one
       b.   I bred the small lion

but without the restrictives, reduced or not, the pronoun form *one* cannot so occur:

(26)   a.   *I met the one
       b.   I met the man
(27)   a.   *I ate the one
       b.   I ate the apple

(28) a.   *I bred the one
      b.   I bred the lion

Notice that the analogues with the indefinite article are alright regardless of whether the head noun is [+Pro] or not:

(29) a.   I met someone
      b.   I met some man
(30) a.   I ate something
      b.   I ate some apple
(31) a.   I bred something
      b.   I bred some lion

My suggestion is that the gap left by the definite, nondemonstrative form with [+Pro] head absences in (26) – (28) is actually filled by the so-called pronoun forms, or, more precisely, by that subset which are third person. That is, the so-called third person pronouns, *it, he, her, them*, etc. are exactly the articles assigned to nouns containing the features [+Pro, +Definite, −Demonstrative, +III, −II, −I] <u>in the absence of restrictive relative phrases in the relevant NP.</u> This simultaneously explains the failure of the so-called third person pronouns to occur with restrictive relative phrases or their reductions.

    [. . .]

However, in this discussion of underlying features for pronouns we have ignored the question of features like I and II. But these involve some of the most important problems and provide some of the most significant evidence for our analysis. One's initial impression is that, under the assumptions which have been made here, it will be necessary to restrict underlying feature specifications [+I] and [+II] in such a way that they occur only in nouns which are [+Pro] and only in nouns which do not have restrictive relatives. This will be necessary to prevent such impossible elements as *I boy*, *you person*, *you girl who Jack loves*, etc., allowing only abstract *Ione, youone, weones, youones*, which become actual Surface *I, you*, and [*we*]. However, although there are real restrictions here, the just given statement of them is certainly wrong, or rather too general. For it is fundamental to the present analysis that, in the plural, nonthird person elements can occur with both nonpronouns and/or restrictive relative phrases.

    The first forms relevant to this claim are those such as *we men, you guys*, etc. which we take to be cases of [−Pro, +II . .]. Jespersen [1961, Part II: 85], who of course noticed such forms, implied in effect that they were derivatives from appositive relative clauses. In transformational terms this would naturally suggest derivations like, schematically: *we, who are men* ⇒ *we men*; *you who are children* ⇒ *you children*. If this solution could be maintained, it would obviate taking *we* and *you* to be articles in such phrases as is insisted here. But in fact this proposal of apposi-tive derivation cannot be right since forms like *we men*, etc. occur in a variety of contexts where appositive relatives may not. Thus, for example, Smith [1964: 48–49] has noted that NP which are the objects in questions may not have apposi-tive relatives:

(33)   a.   *did you see Bill, who is six feet tall
        b.   *who wrote a novel, which was published by McGraw Hill

And as she also observed there are negative contexts which exclude appositive clauses:

(34)   a.   *he didn't eat the mango, which I bought for him yesterday
        b.   *he didn't write a novel, which was banned as obscene

Similarly, other negative contexts exclude appositives:

(35)   a.   *no American, who was wise, remained in the country
        b.   *none of the cars, which were Chevrolets, were any good
        c.   *they never insulted the men, who were democrats

But the forms like *you guys* occur in all such appositive-excluding environments:

(36)   a.   did you see us guys
        b.   who insulted you men
        c.   he didn't like us Americans
        d.   he did not insult you Communists
        e.   none of you guys are any good
        f.   neither of us professors is quitting
        g.   they never agreed with us planners

    Furthermore, there are other grounds for doubting the appositive analysis. Notice that the final relative phrase in such pre-article constructions as:

(37)   a.   that one of the men who is sick

is really associated with the first noun *one*, as shown by the agreement with *sick*. There must therefore be a rule to shift it over the following structure to the end. In nonpronoun NP this following structure can include article, prenominal modifiers, and post-nominal modifiers:

(38)   a.   that one of the tall men who is sick
        b.   that one of the men here who is sick
        c.   that one of the men who I like who is sick

Observe, however, that the same relative shift rule must operate in pronoun-containing NP:

(39)   a.   that one of us who lives here
        b.   that one of you guys who betrayed me
        c.   that one of you foolish soldiers who deserted his post

Under the analysis suggested here, where *we, us, you*, etc. are articles, the structure over which the relative must shift in (39) is <u>exactly the same</u> as that in (38). But under the appositive analysis the structure would necessarily be radically different, complicating the shift rule, since the derived structure of elements like *we men, you foolish sailors*, etc. would have to be rather like [Figure 4]:

```
              NP
            /    \
        Noun     NP
          |      /  \
         We  (foolish) sailors
```
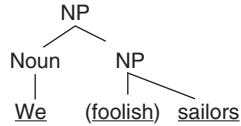
Finally, Jespersen to the contrary notwithstanding, the appositive derivation would assign the wrong interpretation since in fact such phrases do not have appositive meanings, at least not always. This is shown clearly by such examples as:

(40) a. you troops will embark but the other troops will remain
      b. lets us three men leave first

which are certainly not paraphrases of:

(41) a. you, who are troops, will embark but the other troops will remain
      b. *lets us, who are three men, leave first; lets us three, who are men, leave first

The fact that (41)b is in addition ungrammatical is further evidence of the inadequacy of an appositive derivation for such forms.

It seems clear then that the only conclusion is that such Surface NP as *we men*, etc. must be derived from underlying nouns which are [−Pro] and yet contain [+I] or [+II] specifications. Hence in such sequences we actually find the so-called pronouns *we/us* and *you* as <u>articles</u> in <u>Surface structures</u>. And this is among the strongest evidence for our overall claim that so-called pronouns have essentially the same type of derivation and status as traditionally recognized definite articles.

Having shown that in the plural first and second person forms can occur with ordinary nouns, we can turn to the question of their occurrence with restrictive relatives. And here also we find a contrast with the situation in the singular. For in fact such phrases as:

(42) a. you men who wish to escape
      b. we Americans who have been struggling here

seem perfectly natural. And this is even more true when the restrictives are reduced:

(43) a. you men here
      b. we honest policemen
      c. you amusing comedians
      d.   you diligent Democrats shouldn't put up with lazy ones
      e. Johnas didn't criticize us intelligent workers, only the dumb ones

The occurrence of first and second person forms in the plural with restrictive relatives and their reductions leads to a significant justification for the claim that the so-called pronouns are articles and, in particular, for the claim that for standard English a more abstract set of forms *Ione, heone, weones, themones*, etc. underly [sic] the Surface elements *I, he, we, them*, etc. We illustrate a relevant derivation for the *we* case (on one analysis. I claim that *we* is in general ambiguous).

[. . .]

Most striking is the fact that the hypothetical pronoun stem *one* actually shows up in Surface structures in such forms as:

(44) a. you great ones
      b. us quieter ones
      c. we religious ones

We take these to have structures exactly analogous to those of *you important men, we diligent Democrats*, etc.

[. . .]

Jespersen [1961, Part II: 261–262], who noticed examples like (44) had the following to say:

> '*Ones* may be used after a personal pronoun in the plural. This is not astonishing when an adjective intervenes (as in *you great ones* above . . . or . . . it is very annoying to *us quieter ones*); but it is more difficult to see why *ones* should have been added to a single *we* or *you*. This is found in Scotch dialect . . ., and it is evidently from Scotch that American has taken it. *We'uns* and *you'uns* are especially frequent in the vulgar speech of the Southern states . . .'

Jespersen obviously recognizes the problem which such forms as (44) cause for a view which treats *we, you*, etc. as pronouns. His remark that the occurrence of a following noun is not astonishing when an adjective intervenes is defensive. Why is it not astonishing? But even more, the view falls apart completely when faced with the dialect forms *we'uns, us'uns, you'uns*, etc. The latter provide one of the most crucial justifications for our analysis. For they illustrate a case where the hypothetical forms *weones, youones*, etc. actually are related to pronunciation without the ad hoc rule of nonreflexive pronoun stem deletion which must be posited for the standard language. In comparison to Jespersen's puzzlement, the analysis suggested in this paper provides a natural treatment of such forms. For such dialects as contain *us'uns*, etc. my claim would be that the underlying forms and most of the rules are identical to those suggested here for the standard language. But in these lower class systems the rule which drops nonreflexive pronoun stems after attached definite articles is, at least in first and second person cases, restricted to the <u>singular</u> and does not work for both singular and plural as in the standard language.

[. . .]

Given three features of two values, there are eight possible combinations. And in the plural, in fact, six of these occur:

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{III} \\ +\text{II} \\ +\text{I} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} +\text{III} \\ +\text{II} \\ -\text{I} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} +\text{III} \\ -\text{II} \\ -\text{I} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} +\text{III} \\ -\text{II} \\ +\text{I} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} -\text{III} \\ -\text{II} \\ -\text{I} \end{bmatrix}^{*} \quad \begin{bmatrix} -\text{III} \\ -\text{II} \\ +\text{I} \end{bmatrix}^{*} \quad \begin{bmatrix} -\text{III} \\ +\text{II} \\ +\text{I} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} -\text{III} \\ +\text{II} \\ -\text{I} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\quad\;(1)\qquad\;(2)\qquad\;(3)\qquad\;(4)\qquad\;(5)\qquad\;(6)\qquad\;(7)\qquad\;(8)$$

Only the combinations (5) and (6) are impossible in the plural. (1) is, for example, the analysis of the reflexive form in:

(48)   you and I and John can't perjure ourselves

(2) is the analysis of the reflexive in:

(49)   you and John shouldn't bother yourselves about it

(3) is of course the analysis of all so-called third person forms. (7) is the inclusive *we* and (4) is the exclusive *we*. Notice that only the former occurs in the environment after *let's*.

   In the singular, on the other hand, only three of the eight possibilities are possible, namely, those in which one of the three features has a plus value and the other two minus values. But since more than four exist in the plural it is clear that two features will not suffice. It should be emphasized that in these analyses I agree very much with Long [1961: 338], who insists that *we* is not the plural of *I* in the same sense in which *boys* is the plural of *boy*. That is, in our terms none of the three possible combinations of features which yields the article *we* differ from the combination which yields the article *I* only in the value of the feature Singular. Features II and III necessarily have different values as well and the feature Pro may also differ since *we* can occur with nonpronouns while *I* cannot.

   An important justification for the three feature analysis of person properties is that it provides an important part of the basis for giving a general characterization of the first person–second person interchange in questions and answers. Given feature analyses like those suggested above, the condition is simply that if the values of the features I and II do not agree in any noun form of the question, the 'corresponding' forms in the answer must have the opposite values for each. Thus *did you* (singular) *eat yet* where the underlying subject noun is [−I, +II] must be answered *yes I ate already* where the underlying noun is [+I, −II]. The question *did you* (plural) *leave* must be answered *yes we left* in which the underlying noun is [+I, −II], i.e. the *we* is understood as exclusive. But *we* can also answer questions which contain *we*. *do we have 10 dollars*; *yes we do*. This is possible because the question noun has the specification [+I, +II . . .], i.e. is inclusive, and does not meet the oppositeness condition requiring a switch in the answer. That *we* questions may also take *you* answers follows from the fact that some *we* are [+I, −II], i.e. exclusive. These facts of question–answer first and second person relations are thus good evidence of the ambiguity of English *we* NP. Obviously these question–answer facts discussed here are not really special to English but again involve universal features of language which must ultimately be built into any correct linguistic theory. That this

means features like I, II, III, Pro, etc. must be universals is simply a further confirmation since this seems clear on many other grounds.

There is one final minor argument in favor of the claim that the traditional personal pronouns are actually forms of definite article. Morphophonemically voicing is essentially predictable in dental, nonstrident continuants, i.e. there is no real [ ] – [ð] contrast in English. In particular, voicing may be predicted in such elements in articles, *the, this, that, these, those*, and in so-called pronouns, *they, them, their, theirs* (not too long ago one could of course have added *thee, thy, thine, thou*). But by assuming that pronouns are articles, these two environments are reduced to one. Analysis of generally so-called adverbial elements also suggests that forms like *then, there, thus* actually have the structure <u>definite article + certain types of pronoun</u> so that the same environment covers these as well.

Having mentioned phonology, I can conclude by observing that an analysis like that proposed here for English is to me even more obvious for languages like German and Spanish where, for example, the respective pronoun–definite article similarities between *er-der, sie-die* and *el-el, ella-la* are evidently no accidents. But I leave it for those who know these languages better than I to consider the possibility of such analyses.

1.3 Questions

1   In some languages, for example French, Postal's proposal is supported by the fact that some pronouns (the third person direct object clitic pronouns *le* (m.sg.), *la* (f.sg.), and *les* (pl.)) are identical in form to the definite article. Other third person pronouns are not, such as the subject clitics *il* (m.sg.), *elle* (f.sg.) and their plurals *ils* and *elles*. How might we reconcile this with Postal's proposal?

2   In English, no third person pronoun is identical to the definite article *the*. Yet *the* resembles other elements in English. What are they, and what conclusions could we draw from these resemblances?

3   (Extra credit) All languages seem to have pronouns, but many languages appear to lack definite articles. Give examples of such languages from five different families and discuss the significance of those languages for Postal's proposal.

4   In languages like French, the definite article and third person pronouns are either identical or similar. First and second person pronouns, on the other hand, don't look like the definite article at all. Assume that French is typical, in this way, of languages with definite articles. How should we interpret such a discrepancy between first and second person pronouns and third person pronouns?

5   In French and other Romance languages, as well as in German, Scandinavian languages, and Slavic languages, there is a strong parallelism in form and behavior between first and second person pronouns and some elements that we call reflexives. Pick three of these languages and illustrate this parallelism in as many ways as possible. (Hint: Contrast all of these pronouns with the third person ones.) (Second hint: Take a look at possessives.)

6   (Extra credit) Why should some reflexives be so parallel to first and second person pronouns (cf. question 5)? To what extent could first person vs. second person vs. reflexive be seen as parallel to *here* vs. *there* vs. *where*?

7 Although all languages have pronouns, not all languages have third person pronouns. Find an example of such a language. Why might third person pronouns be special in this way?

8 Are what we call pronouns single morphemes? Find evidence in English that they are not. (Hint: Concentrate on the third person pronouns. Bring in Corver and van Koppen 2011 and van Koppen 2012.)

9 Are reflexives of the English sort single morphemes? If not, why not? What is the significance of nonstandard forms like *hisself*? Bring in Helke (1973); Pica and Snyder (1997); Kayne (2002); and Reuland (2011).

10 If pronouns in at least some languages are not single morphemes, how does that bear on Postal's proposal that pronouns are akin to definite articles?

11 The *which* found in English relative clauses like *the book which is on the table* is often called a relative pronoun. From the perspective of Postal's proposal, what does this *which* have in common with *he, they*, etc. that could justify the use of the term relative pronoun? To what extent could we reasonably use the term interrogative pronoun for the *which* of *Which do you like best?*? Same question for the *which* of *Which book do you like best?*

12 From Postal's perspective, would it be reasonable to call the *these* of *I would prefer these* a demonstrative pronoun? How about in *I would prefer these books*?

13 (Extra credit) Discuss the difference that holds in English between *I would prefer these* and *I would prefer this*. Is *this* a pronoun in Postal's sense? Extend the discussion to three other languages of your choice.

14 Postal supports his idea that pronouns are definite articles by calling attention to the similarity between *the linguists* and *we linguists/us linguists*. Yet alongside *the linguist* there is no **I/me linguist*. Why would the plural act differently here from the singular? To what extent is this a problem for Postal? Bring in Delorme and Dougherty (1972).

15 Why does Postal link pronouns to definite articles and not to indefinite articles? Are there languages where some pronouns have the same form as the indefinite article? (Big hint: Take a look at Romanian.) Are there languages where definite and indefinite articles (paradoxically) look alike? (Hint: Look around in Scandinavian.)

16 To what extent can we say that the *one* of *They have a blue one* is a pronoun? Similarly for *They have blue ones*. (Hint: Look at Spanish *unos*.)

References

Abney, S. 1987. *The English noun phrase in its sentential aspect*. Doctoral dissertation, MIT.

Chomsky, N. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Corver, N., and M. van Koppen. 2011. NP-ellipsis with adjectival remnants: a micro-comparative perspective. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 29: 371–421.

Curme, G. O. 1977 [2 vols, 1931, 1935]. *A Grammar of the English Language*. Essex, CT: Verbatim.

Déchaine, R.-M., and M. Wiltschko. 2002. Decomposing pronouns. *Linguistic Inquiry* 33: 409–442.

Delorme, E., and R. C. Dougherty. 1972. Appositive NP constructions: we, the men; we men; I, a man. *Foundations of Language* 8: 1–29.

Elbourne, P. 2005. *Situations and Individuals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Helke, M. 1973. On reflexives in English. *Linguistics* 106: 5–23.

Jespersen, O. 1961 [1909–1949]. *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles (in 7 parts)*. London: Allen & Unwin / Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard.

Kayne, R. S. 2002. Pronouns and their antecedents. In S. D. Epstein and T. D. Seely (eds), *Derivation and Explanation in the Minimalist Program*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 133–166. [Reprinted in Kayne (2005, Ch. 6).]

Kayne, R. S. 2005. *Movement and Silence*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Koppen, M. 2012. The distribution of phi-features in pronouns. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 30: 135–177.

Lees, R. B., and E. S. Klima. 1963. Rules for English pronominalization. *Language* 39: 17–28.

Long, R. B. 1961. *The Sentence and Its Parts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Longobardi, G. 1994. Reference and proper names: A theory of N-Movement in syntax and logical form. *Linguistic Inquiry* 25: 609–665.

Pica, P., and W. Snyder. 1997. On the syntax and semantics of local anaphors in French and English. In A. M. Di Sciullo (ed.), *Projections and Interface Conditions*: *Essays on Modularity* Essay, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 235–250.

Reuland, E. J. 2011. *Anaphora and Language Design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Roehrs, D. 2009. *Demonstratives and Definite Articles as Nominal Auxiliaries*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Smith, C. S. 1964. Determiners and relative clauses in a generative grammar of English. *Language* 40: 37–52.

Szabolcsi, A. 1994. The noun phrase. In F. Kiefer and K. É. Kiss (eds), *The Syntactic Structure of Hungarian. Syntax and Semantics* 27, San Diego: Academic Press, pp. 179–274.