LEXICAL RESTRICTIONS AND PRONOUN DISTRIBUTION

1.0. "In the last analysis it is difficult to find a definition valid for all pronouns, though there is much in their often peculiar paradigms and usage to justify our setting them up as a separate word class" (Otto Jespersen).

1.1. One of the peculiarities which serves to "justify" an interpretation of the pronoun (or, in this case, the Russian pronoun) as an independent word class is its completely unique distribution, that is, the syntactic combinations to which it lends itself.

Pronouns are commonly - and correctly - conceived of as a kind of noun, by which I understand substantives, adjectives, and adverbs. A given pronoun may be characterized as substantival, adjectival, or adverbial, and be therefore said to take the place of or substitute for a substantive, adjective, or adverb. The word itself, points the way to such an interpretation. 1)

1.2. The pronoun has fewer distribution possibilities at its disposal than the noun. Pronouns can substitute for nouns only in certain syntactic contexts; in other contexts substitution is impossible.

1. *мальчик пришел 2. он пришел
3. высокий мальчик (пришел) 4. *высокий он (пришел)
5. высокий дом 6. такой дом
7. довольно высокий (дом) 8. *довольно такой (дом)
9. (он) долго жил 10. (он) тогда жил
11. (он) очень долго (жил) 12. *(он) очень тогда (жил)

Asterisked examples 4, 8, and 12 demonstrate that a pronoun cannot replace a noun when the latter is accompanied by a "secondary element". In other words, the pronoun seems to lack the ability to function as a "primary element". A substantival pronoun can function as the subject or object of a sentence (in the broad sense), but cannot be accompanied by an attribute (cf. 1, 2, 3 and 4). An
adjectival pronoun can function as an attribute or adjective in apposition (see below), but cannot subordinate an adverbial modifier (cf. 5, 6, 7 and 8), and an adverbial pronoun can accompany a verb, adjective, or adverb as a "secondary element" in a given syntactic function, but cannot subordinate an adverbial modifier (cf. 9, 10, 11 and 12).

1.3. In the following examples the terms "primary" and "secondary" elements begin to lose their equilibrium.

13. *Высокий он 14. он высокий
15. *Одетый он 16. он (вомшел) одетый

(NB. The adjectives in 13 and 15 are to be interpreted as attributives).

Examples 13 and 15 are impossible because their pronouns are "primary elements" with respect to an accompanying attribute. How then are we to account for the fact that examples 14 and 16 are acceptable? If we define the pronouns in both cases as "secondary elements", we immediately meet with two inconsistencies. In example 14 we come up against the common concept of the nexus connexion (a connexion between two elements in mutual dependency) where both elements must be seen as a kind of "primary element"; in example 16 we must interpret a pronoun as subordinate to an adjective in apposition, that from a purely grammatical point of view (in terms of the grammatical categories of gender, number and case) is identical with the pronoun (or rather is governed by the pronoun).

2.0. The solution to this dilemma must doubtless lie in the terms "primary element" and "secondary element" themselves. As generally applied to the description of a given syntagm (including the predicative syntagm or nexus connexion), the term "primary element" refers to the element that governs, the independent element, the constant (in Hjelmslev's terminology), while the term "secondary element" refers to the element that is governed, the dependent element, or (again in Hjelmslevian terminology) the variable.
2.1. If we posit two types of relations - one grammatical, the other lexical - between the two elements in a given syntagm (which as a matter of principle is always conceived of as a binary structure), we can instead of resorting to the terms "primary element" and "secondary element" characterize the elements in the syntagm as grammatical constant/variable on the one hand and lexical constant/variable on the other.

2.1.1. The grammatical constant in a given syntagm would then be the element which furnishes the prerequisites for the syntagm from a purely grammatical start point, that is, by means of its grammatical categories. In following examples the underlined element represents the grammatical constant.

17. красивая девушка
18. любить отца
19. девушка (ваша) одетая
20. девушка красивая

Grammatically these syntagms are impossible without the underlined forms; an attributive adjective cannot function syntactically without a substantive (17), an object needs a verb (18), an adjective in apposition or a predicate adjective - like an attributive adjective - is governed by the form of the substantive to which it refers.

The grammatical variable may be defined as the element in a binary structure which is not a constant.

2.1.2. The lexical constant would therefore correspond to what in other contexts is called "rheme" (as opposed to "theme"), that is, the informative kernel of a statement, the essence of the message to be communicated [cf. Achmanova, 1966, p. 384], conceived of here in the framework of any (not exclusively a predicative) syntagm.

In the following examples the underlined elements must be seen as lexical constants in addition to their function as grammatical constants:
21. красная девушка (вчера)
22. одетая девушка (вчера)

In the next set of examples grammatical and lexical constants do not merge. I have underlined the lexical constant.

23. девушка красная
24. девушка (вчера) одетая

In 23 and 24 the adjective has acquired "lexical emphasis" by shifting its position. I shall regard this lexical emphasis as a shift from lexical variable to lexical constant within a given syntagm. In comparison with examples 21 and 22 there is no change in grammatical dependency between the given substantive and the given adjective. In all four examples the substantives function as grammatical constants.

The lexical variable, like the grammatical variable, is the element which is not a lexical constant.

3.0. If we replace nouns (in this case substantives) with pronouns in examples 21–24, we obtain the following (the underlined element is the lexical constant):

25. *красная она (вчера)
26. *одетая она (вчера)
27. она красная
28. она (вчера) одетая

(NB. The adjectives in 25 and 26, like those in 13 and 15, are to be interpreted as attributives.)

The asterisked examples are unacceptable because they require the pronoun to function as a lexical constant. The pronoun has no difficulty functioning as a grammatical constant (cf. 27 and 28) since it exhibits all the requisite grammatical categories, in this instance gender, number, and case. But the pronoun clearly lacks the lexical qualities to enable it to function as an informative kernel or lexical constant.
3.1. The foregoing considerations require that one accept a description of the predicative syntagm or nexus connexion which states that the subject in an indicative nexus connexion with normal word order (subject + predicate) is a grammatical constant, while the predicate in the same nexus connexion is a lexical constant. This assertion is in accord with the commonly accepted conception of the nexus connexion as an example of mutual dependency; both elements are constant and variable simultaneously, and therefore express two kinds of relationships: one grammatical, the other lexical.

The same description holds for the syntagm (consisting of a substantive pronoun with an accompanying non-attributive adjective) in 28. No matter what one calls this construction (I have used the term "adjective in apposition"), there can be no doubt that it is closely related to the nexus connexion; precisely the same relationships are at work: the subject is a grammatical constant and the accompanying adjective is a lexical constant.

The above interpretation can be demonstrated as follows. In a given subject (a substantive or substantival pronoun in this instance) the grammatical categories are, one might say, implied. They do not conform to the categories of any other element; they are closely connected with, they characterize the subject, which is expressed by a substantive or a (substantival) pronoun. The corresponding categories in the predicate are identical with the categories in the subject, but are not equally "inherent". The process or state expressed by the predicate can scarcely be said to be bound to categories like gender, number, and case. Even the category of person belongs more to the subject. The predicate has its own categories (tense, mode, etc.) which have not reference to the nexus connexion as syntagm. It is for these reasons one may say that the categories which establish the nexus connexion as a grammatical relationship are implied - have a constant - in the subject.

Inversely the lexical focal point of the nexus connexion lies in the predicate; without a predicate there can be no information. Though the conception of the subject as a grammatical constant holds for any nexus connexion, we must stress that the conception of the predicate as a lexical constant can hold only for indicative
constructions (see below) with normal word order. In a sentence with several elements in addition to the subject and predicate any element - depending, among other factors, on the word order - can receive emphasis and thereby become a lexical constant. Since we are dealing exclusively with the relationship between subject and predicate, however, what we maintain above is still valid: the predicate cannot be expressed by a pronoun if it comes last in the sentence and therefore functions as a lexical constant.

29. он (тот, ты, кто?...) учитель
30. учитель он (тот, ты, кто?)

4.0. Nexus connexions of the following type present a special problem.

31. кто он?
32. где ты?
33. как она?
34. ты никто!
35. это так (!)
36. он ничего
37. (я же сказал, что) он такой!

Examples 31, 32, and 33 are all in the interrogative (non-indicative) mode. Their grammatical predicate is expressed by means of (interrogative) pronouns. The basic quality of a question is a lack of information; a question indicates a desire for information in the form of an answer. It therefore follows that the interrogative sentence lacks a lexical constant and that its predicate, which in such a case is not a lexical constant, is expressed by a pronoun.

The remaining examples (34, 35, 36, and 37) in which the predicate is likewise expressed by a pronoun, may be explained by their specific lexicality. The underlined pronouns (in the predicate in these examples) are no longer "pure" pronouns; they have acquired emotional emphasis and are therefore endowed with a more specific meaning than pronouns normally have. We must emphasize in this
connexion that the "rule" given here for pronoun distribution (that pronouns cannot function as a lexical constant) is a lexical rule, and lexical rules may be broken whenever one wishes to obtain a particular stylistic effect. In a sentence like 34, where an indefinite pronoun is used to characterize something which is in fact quite definite, the sense is very special, with the result that the indefinite pronoun loses its proper pronominal meaning.

5.0. Pronoun distribution is determined exclusively by lexical restrictions. The pronoun can function only as a lexical variable; it cannot function as a lexical constant, that is, it cannot provide a basis for the communication of new information. Although lexical restriction has syntactic consequences, they can however be violated should a special lexical meaning be desired.

The problem of what specific lexical qualities (or lack of qualities) determine the distribution of pronouns lies outside the realm of this article. My goal has rather been to treat some of the issues connected with "their often peculiar...usage" which justifies "our setting them up as a separate word class".

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FOOTNOTES

1) Ideas of the scope of the pronoun class vary somewhat. I have chosen to use Isačenko, Die russische Sprache der Gegenwart, I, Chapter 7 (Halle, 1968) as my point of departure.

2) I have used the terms "constant" and "variable" to avoid the term "element". It is too concrete in this context because it is too closely associated with purely syntactic articulation.

3) Achmanova characterizes constructions like on chodit sonnyi and on vernulsja p'jan as "semipredicative" elements. Another term that might be used is "free predicates".

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Distribucijo zaimkov določajo zgolj leksikalne omejitve. Zaimek je leksikalna variabla; ne more rabiti kot leksikalna konstanta, t.j. ne more prenašati novega obvestila. Leksikalne omejitve imajo sintaktične posledice glede distribucije zaimka. Če se te omejitve prekršijo, nastane poseben leksikalni pomen.