

*Journal of Language Pedagogy and  
Innovative Applied Linguistics*  
December 2023, Volume 1, No. 5, pp: 7-15  
ISSN: 2995-6854  
© JLPAL. ([jainkwellpublishing.com](http://jainkwellpublishing.com))  
All rights reserved.



## Relative Pronouns' Functional, Semantic, and Syntactic Aspects

**Aleksandr Volkov \***

*Teacher of the Department of English Philology, Armavir State Pedagogical University, Russian Federation*

### Abstract

*The semantic and syntactic roles of relative pronouns in complicated subordinate clauses are identified and defined in this article. Furthermore, the writer attempts to elucidate the characteristics of their use in a sophisticated subordinate clause, as well as the semantic and syntactic evaluation of relative pronouns' roles in complicated subordinate sentences.*

**Key Words:** *syntaxes, syntactic semantics, personal, possessiveness, syntaxemic analysis, qualificative, substantial.*

### Paper/Article Info

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Volkov, A. (2023). **Relative Pronouns' Functional, Semantic, and Syntactic Aspects.** *Journal of Language Pedagogy and Innovative Applied Linguistics*, 1(5), 7-15.  
<https://doi.org/10.1997/0q2sm127>

\* Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1997/0q2sm127>

Pronouns are distinct from substantive, adjectival, and other categories of lexemes in that they identify the presence of unique variations in syntax, individual, but expressiveness (pronominal and prepositional adverbs are similar to them in this regard, as well as particles that, like pronouns, receive individual reflection when designating variants of syntax); Pronouns present some challenges to the researcher when it comes to their classification, which is fundamentally tied to syntactic semantics, as we will attempt to demonstrate here, particularly with respect to different non-categorical syntactic-semantic features. The experience of A.M. Peshkovsky, who felt it was improper to distinguish a distinct category of possessive pronouns in the Russian language and instead dissolve them into a broad category of "personal pronouns," demonstrates how genuine these challenges are. He adds that "traditional grammar gives the classification of pronouns by meaning, as is well known [1]." Here, as in other departments, conventional grammar requires us to make several changes to this categorization since the meanings of roots and grammatical components of words are often confused. Nonetheless, the roots' meanings in this context are equally grammatical. However, in this case, it's critical to distinguish between the variations in them and the variations in affix meanings (pronominal and non-nominal words are identical in this regard).

Traditional grammar violates this principle when it speaks, for example,

about the pronouns "personal" (I, you, he, we, you, they), "reflexive" (yourself) and "possessive" (my, yours, ours, yours), since by the meaning of the roots I, you, he, we, you, they, my, yours, ours, yours are all personal, and yourself, yours are reflexive, according to the meaning of the affixes, I, you, he, we, you, they, themselves are nouns, and my, yours, yours, ours, yours are adjectives. As for the shade of "possessiveness" in these adjectives, it is not particularly expressed in them and is due only to the pronominal meaning of the roots, so there is still a question whether it should be emphasized". Proceeding from this, A.M. Peshkovsky distinguishes the following "personal pronouns: I (me)T is mine, in my opinion, you, yours, in your opinion, he (she, it, his, him, her, etc.), his (folk), her (folk), in his, we (us, us, us), our, in our, you, your, in your opinion, they (them, by them), theirs (almost literary), in their way".

A. M. Peshkovsky based the allocation of "personal pronouns" on the commonality of their roots, thus combining personal and possessive pronouns, as well as some adverbs (the latter we do not touch here). At the same time, morphological features of the combined pronouns and their syntactic specificity, primarily related to their syntactic semantics, were left out [1]. But it is the consideration of the morphological characteristics of possessive pronouns in the Russian language and especially their syntactic semantics that prompts us to allocate these pronouns into a special group. By their morphological structure, possessive pronouns in the Russian language (my, yours, etc.) are distinctly

different from the group of pronouns, for which the name “personal pronouns” is attached by tradition (I - me, you - you, etc.). And with this morphological difference, the differences in the syntactic semantics of those and other pronouns are in accordance, which cannot be ignored in syntaxemic analysis [2]. The theoretical and methodological problems arising here are very closely related to the problems of syntaxemic analysis, which is associated with the differentiation of units of morphological and syntactic levels of language and taking into account their interaction. According to their systemic relations at the syntactic level of the language, possessive pronouns it is precisely how the means of expression of syntaxes and their variants in business are distinctly different from personal pronouns. Cf., for example: 1) equivalence relations of possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives, as well as nouns in the genitive case when expressing various possessive syntaxes, in particular the possessive proper: your house, fathers' house, father's house, etc.; 2) equivalence relations of personal pronouns and nouns in the form of the nominative case as a means of expressing agentive syntaxes, in particular the particulars of the own-agency: you have arrived, the father has arrived, etc. The syntactic semantics of possessiveness has predetermined the very name of these pronouns, although this name – “possessive or possessive pronouns” — does not mean at all that they cannot be carriers of other syntactic semantics. Similarly, in English, there is a group of possessive pronouns that are in

equivalence with the genitive case of nouns (sometimes referred to as the “possessive case”), although they may be carriers of other syntactic semantics. True, in modern English, the possessive pronouns my, your, etc. are morphologically not separable, unlike the corresponding pronouns in Russian, but this only emphasizes the fact that possessive pronouns are allocated to a special group of pronouns, taking into account their syntactic semantics. And the basis of the allocation of personal pronouns into a separate group based on the material of the Russian language, in essence, is the consideration of syntactic semantics, as well as their morphological features. However, in their very name, syntactic semantics does not receive any reflection, and this is explained by the fact that personal pronouns have different case forms — nominative, genitive and other cases, each of which has a variety of syntactic and semantic content. Under these conditions, you can only use such a general and inaccurate name like “personal pronouns”, which is largely conditional, since personal pronouns denote not only persons (pronouns that are not personal can also denote persons). In modern English, where personal pronouns are virtually devoid of case forms, it is possible to distinguish between two groups of personal pronouns, called above “subject” and “object” pronouns. These names already partly reflect syntactic semantics, although, as in the case of possessive pronouns, their very name should not be interpreted in the sense that some of them denote only the subject of an action or state, others

only the object. The subject pronoun also serves as a means of expressing the object syntaxeme in the position of the nuclear predicated component, and the object pronoun can represent an agentive syntaxeme in a dependent position (in combination with the preposition by); cf.: I was invited by them, etc.

According to syntactic semantics, all and both are close to the last of the groups of pronouns mentioned above, which are also means of expressing both substantial and qualificative syntaxes; for example: a) All are present. All that I remember is true (Christie). Both were punished; 6) ... and he had put all his clothes over him for warmth (Maugham). Have you never had a moment's regret for all the unhappiness you caused them? (I bid.). He lived here all his life. He sat up all night. Both sisters are doctors. Both his brothers are teachers. The proximity of these pronouns to the indefinite pronouns any (any), every, each, etc. discussed above is due to the fact that both are carriers of the syntactic-semantic sign of collectivity (collectivity), i.e. both serve as means of expressing collective syntaxes - from the categories of substantial and qualificative. However, the question arises: is it possible, in relation to the pronouns all and both, to establish a syntactic-semantic sign of indeterminacy (uncertainty), the presence of which in pronouns any, every, etc. justifies their very name as "indefinite pronouns?". If this meaningful feature is alien to the pronouns all and both, then, of course, they should not be combined together with these pronouns under the general

name "indefinite pronouns". There is reason to believe that this is exactly the case with these pronouns, which, unlike indefinite pronouns, should be called "collective pronouns" in accordance with the presence of the mentioned syntactic-semantic feature of collectivity, or collectivity. This conclusion can be reached by studying the paradigmatic series of variants of substantial collective syntaxes, in the expression of which the pronouns all and both participate. The equivalence relations of each of these pronouns differ significantly from the equivalence relations of the indefinite pronouns any, every, etc., and this is manifested not only in the fact that among the variants of substantial collective syntaxes expressed by the pronouns all and both, there are no complex pronouns on -body, -one, -thing, but also (mainly) the fact that the functional equivalents of the pronouns all and both are syntactically indivisible combinations, which include two pronouns at the same time. We mean, in particular, complex, or composite, variants of syntaxes, the first element of which is a personal pronoun (subjective or objective), and the second is the pronoun all or both: They both went there. They are both gone. We all love him. They all came late I know it all. I see them both. We wrote to them both, etc. Such combinations, which would serve as means of expressing indefinite pronouns any, every, some, etc., are impossible. In turn, the indivisibility of these pronominal combinations, representing variants of various substantial collective syntaxes, is

emphasized by their equivalence to indivisible pronominal combinations, the first the element of which is the pronoun both or all, the second is a personal (object) pronoun with the preposition of: both of them, all of them, and t, P. Pronominal combinations of both kinds form pairs of optional variants of the corresponding substantial collective syntaxes, as evidenced, for example, by the following substitution transformations: They both went there → Both of them went there. They are both gone → Both of them are gone. We all love him → All of us love him. They all came late → All of them came late. I know it all → I know all of it, etc. At the same time, such pairs of combinations as they both — they all or both of them — all of them, etc., make up connotative variants of the corresponding syntaxes, differing in semantic shades that the pronouns both and all contribute to them. A syntactically indivisible combination representing a variant of a particular substantial collective syntaxeme may also include a noun as a variable S with the preposition of (variants of both of S, all of S); for example: Both of these possibilities must be taken into account. Such a variant can be replaced by a compound pronominal variant with the preposition of, which was mentioned above; cf.: Both of these possibilities must be taken into account → Both of them must be taken into account. As the above example with the variant of both of S shows, a noun in the latter may have a pronominal element (these) with it, which is natural, since we are talking about substantial syntaxems, which are

characterized by compatibility with pronominal elements.

From the indefinite pronouns some, any, every, etc., the pronouns both and all considered here also differ in their distributive features - as a means of expressing collective syntaxes. In particular, this applies to the pronouns both and all, expressing a qualificative collective syntaxeme: they are characterized by the use in a dependent position before a noun that has a possessive or demonstrative pronoun, or a definite article (all his clothes, both his brothers, all the unhappiness, etc., see the above examples of group b), whereas for indefinite pronouns expressing one or another qualifying taxeme, for example, indefinite, or indefinite quantitative, or indefinite collective (cf. the corresponding examples of the group), such use is excluded. This difference in the distributive order is obviously affected by the absence of a sign of nndefiniteness in the syntaxeme, the means of expression of which are the pronouns both and all. As for the substantial collective syntaxes expressed by the pronouns both and all, then in distributional terms, their difference from the substantial indefinite syntaxes, we would associate primarily with the presence of composite variants, including the pronoun both or all and the combination of the object pronoun with the preposition of (both of them, all of them, both of S, etc.), which can be replaced by compound pronominal variants of the type they both, they all, them both, them all. It is these composite, or complex, variants, and not simple ones, expressed by the

pronouns both and all, that are obviously the main and variants of various substantial collective syntaxes, in particular collective agentive (They both went there. Both of them went there), collective object (I see them both. I see both of them), collective indirect-object attribution (We wrote to them both. We wrote to both of them), etc. Substantial indefinite syntaxemes do not have such composite variants, and the prepositional group with of represents a separate syntaxeme, with which one or another substantial indefinite syntaxeme is combined, expressed by the pronouns some, any, every one, etc. In relation to substantial collective syntaxes, it is possible to note the compatibility with the syntaxeme expressed by the adverb (adverbial particle) else, although this compatibility is apparently realized only on the material of the pronoun all; for example: For everything she did ... was separated from all else that I heard or saw or touched (Snow). This distributive feature of the pronoun all indicates that it is necessary to take into account not only the common thing that unites the pronouns all and both as means of expressing the same syntaxeme, but also the specific thing that each of them has in the sentence structure. However, this applies to the pronominal variants of all other substantive and qualificative syntaxes, including those that will be discussed later. Like the negative, indefinite and collective pronouns already considered, demonstrative pronouns also serve as means of expressing syntaxes from the categories of substantial and qualificative, which are carriers of the syntactic-semantic sign

of definiteness (definiteness). Substantive definitive syntaxemes are represented by demonstrative singular and plural pronouns this, these, that, those, and in different syntactic positions these pronouns either by themselves or in combination with a service element express various substantive syntaxemes. Cf., for example: a definitive identifiable syntaxeme (What is this? Who is this? Perhaps these are they. These are my children. What is that? Who is that? Ave those your children? Is that all the luggage you are taking?), definitive identifying (Fine art is that in which the hand, the head, and the heart go together), definitive syntaxeme of the quality carrier (This is new and that is old), definitive agentive (Dogs are more faithful animals than cats — these attach themselves to places and those to persons. Those who wish to go may do so. Work and play are both necessary to health; this gives us rest and that gives us energy), a definitive object (I don't like this at all. Will you have this or that?), definitive object and indirect object (I prefer these to those), definitive locative ablative (You filthy beast, get out of this), etc. Representing the same substantive definitive syntaxemes, the pronouns this and that, these and those are their connotative variants (also in combination with prepositions), since they differ in semantic shades: this and these indicate close, that and those — distant objects. This semantic difference between this and that (these and those) underlies some specific cases of their use recorded in dictionaries, when, for example, this indicates the last (second) of the subjects named

earlier in the text, that indicates the first (cf. the examples given: Work and play are both necessary to health; this gives us rest and that gives us energy, etc.).

Along with demonstrative pronouns, some other pronouns, in particular he - him, she - her, they - them, which are among the personal pronouns, also serve as means of expressing substantial definitive syntaxes. The use of these pronouns, however, has a pronounced combinatorial character: they are used in the main sentences in the presence of subordinate clauses introduced by a relative pronoun (without a preposition or with a preposition). Cf. in the corresponding relations he that.... the one who..., he of whom... The one about whom ... to him who .... 'to the one who... etc . D.: 1) He that believes .... He of whom you speak is my best friend. The prize goes to him who comes in first; 2) She that believes .... Site whom you saw is my best friend; 3) They who believe ... They do least who talk most. In sentences of the third type, it is possible to use the demonstrative pronoun those instead of the personal pronoun they (cf. the above example: Those who wish to go may do so), the pronouns he and she usually do not allow their replacement with the demonstrative pronoun that (not to mention the pronoun this). It can be said that the personal pronouns he - him, she - her, and they - them (without a preposition or with a preposition) are combinatorial variants of substantial definitive syntaxes, since their use is allowed only in these correlative combinations. The system of variants of the above-

mentioned definitional identifiable syntaxeme, along with the demonstrative pronouns this, that, these, those, also includes the pronoun it, which is devoid of a specific semantic shade characteristic of the pronoun this or that (an indication of a near or distant object): Who is it? - It is the postman (cf. the above examples: Who is this? Who is that?). All this indicates that, when studying the system relations of variants of various substantial definitive syntaxes, one should not lose sight of other pronouns that are functionally closely in contact with them. In this respect, demonstrative pronouns can be compared, for example, with the indefinite pronouns some and any, which, being the means of expressing indefinite quantitative syntaxes (from the category of substantial, as well as qualifying syntaxes), are in close contact with another category of lexemes - the pronominal adjectives many, much, little, etc. The above factual material, no matter how limited it may be, clearly shows that substantial definitive syntaxemes, expressed by demonstrative, as well as sometimes personal pronouns of the 3rd person, occupy a special position among the elementary units of the deep structure of sentences. They cannot be functionally identified with any other substantial syntaxemes expressed, for example, by nouns, although often one or another substantial definitive syntaxeme can be replaced in a sentence by a substantial syntaxeme expressed by a noun in combination with an indicative pronoun, as well as a personal pronoun; cf.: These are my children →

These boys (they) are my children. Are those your children? → Are those boys (they) your children? etc. These transformations become possible because both the original sentence and the transformation sentence include a substantial identifiable syntaxeme, however, in one case the substantial syntaxeme is also a carrier of the sign of definiteness, in the other it is devoid of this syntactic-semantic feature. The sign of definiteness in the transform is already endowed with another syntaxeme, expressed by the demonstrative pronoun *these* or *those*, which belongs to the category of qualifying syntaxemes. The qualificative definitive syntaxeme can be represented by all the demonstrative pronouns mentioned above, but the system of its variants no longer includes the personal pronouns *he*, *she*, *they*, and *it*, which are capable of indicating a substance, but cannot denote its sign or characteristic. Cf. also the pronouns *this* and *that* as variants of the qualificative definitive syntaxeme in the dependent position with the noun: *Look at this picture. By this time he was far away. Everybody is agreed on that point; in this place, this morning, since that time, etc.* As with the expression of substantial definitive syntaxemes, pronouns *this*—*that*, *these*—*those* often serve as connotative variants of the qualifying definitive syntaxemes, which is especially evident in cases of their semantic opposition, also registered in dictionaries, for example: *This book is interesting and that one is not.*

The specificity of the definitive syntaxemes, substantial and qualificative, especially clearly appears in their

comparison with the above-considered indefinite syntaxemes, substantial and qualificative. If we tried to replace in the sentences given here any definitive, substantive or qualifying syntaxeme with the corresponding indefinite syntaxeme expressed, for example, by the pronoun *some* or *any*, in most cases this would lead to a complete distortion of the sentence. The uniqueness of the syntactic and semantic content of both directly affects their environment. So, if the substantive indefinite syntaxemes expressed by the pronouns *some* and *any* are often combined with the elective syntaxeme of the whole, expressed by a noun or a pronoun with the preposition *of* (*Some of the boys come very early. If any of them should see them, etc.*), then for substantial definitive syntaxemes in general, such compatibility is not characteristic. The immediate environment of the qualifying definitive syntaxeme often includes the intensifying syntaxeme *very* (*He lives in this very place. Come here this very minute! from this very day; at that very moment*); the qualificative indefinite syntaxeme, expressed by the pronouns *some*, *any*, absolutely does not allow such an environment, etc. All these distributional differences must be carefully identified so that the role of demonstrative and indefinite pronouns in the construction of sentences is fully disclosed. It is also important to pay attention to the fact that, unlike indefinite pronouns, demonstrative pronouns are used to express a wide variety of syntaxemes, which cannot be attributed either to the category of substantial or, moreover, to the



category of qualifying syntaxes. We are referring to examples such as I'm not the sort of man that women love I've always known that (Maugham). I didn't come here for that (I bid.). It was about five years after this that I decided to live in Paris for a while (I bid.). I did not see him for several days after that (I bid.). Here, the demonstrative pronouns this, that do not serve the purpose of designating any objects or substances, unlike the examples above, where they functionally come into contact with nouns and can replace them or be replaced by them. However, demonstrative pronouns here also have a certain syntactic semantics by themselves or in combination with a preposition, being means of expressing various definitive syntaxes - definitive object, or definitive causal, or definitive temporal, etc. These definitive syntaxemes, devoid of a categorical syntactic-semantic feature, differ from

substantial definitive syntaxemes in that the system of their variants does not include the demonstrative pronouns these and those. This circumstance allows the researcher to resort to experiments with substitutions of one variant with another when distinguishing between those and other definitive syntaxes. Note also that the pronoun it (without a preposition or with a preposition) may be a variant of some definitive syntaxes devoid of a categorical sign of substantiality; cf.: I like her for it (Maugham). She just missed being beautiful, and in missing it was not even pretty (I bid.).

Thus, when considering demonstrative pronouns from the side of their syntactic semantics, we also encounter the presence of such units that remain outside the three main categories of syntaxes - substantive, qualifying and procedural.

## References

- [1]. Peshkovsky A.M. Russian syntax in scientific coverage. 7th ed. M., 1956. with 152.
- [2]. Mukhin A.M. Syntaxemic analysis and the problem of language levels. L., Nauka, 1980. -302 p.
- [3]. Кубрякова Е.С. семантика синтаксиса и некоторые вопросы словобразования// Предмет и методы синтаксической семантики. – М.: Наука, 1977-129с.
- [4]. Филлмор Ч. Дело о падеже// Новое в зарубежной лингвистике. -1981. Вып.10, с.369-495