

## Prologue

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This book is a follow-up to my research monograph on *Colloquial English* published by Cambridge University Press in 2018. It was originally intended to form a chapter of that book, but both *Colloquial English* and the prospective additional chapter on relative clauses became so long that the publisher suggested that my research on relative clauses should be published as a separate monograph – and this book is the result.

As part of the second edition of my textbook *Analysing English Sentences* (published by Cambridge University Press in 2016), I included a lengthy discussion of the syntax of relative clauses in contemporary English (Radford 2016: 394–438). The discussion mainly focused on the derivation of the filler–gap relatives found in standard varieties of English, e.g. in structures like those bracketed below (from Radford 2016: 394, examples 28a–e):

- (1)
- a. I only work with people [*who* I can trust —]
  - b. This is something [*which* you have to take — seriously]
  - c. There are places [*where* they sell counterfeit watches —]
  - d. They lived in times [*when* money was tight —]
  - e. There are reasons [*why* he kept quiet —]

Clauses like those bracketed above are introduced by a filler which appears to have moved from the gap position (—) to the italicised position at the beginning of the relative clause. The filler is an overt relative pronoun in structures like (1), but is null in *that*-relatives like ‘I only work with people *that I can trust*’, and also in zero-relatives like ‘I only work with people *I can trust*.’

However, for a number of years, I have been collecting data on non-canonical structures found in colloquial English, mainly sourced from recordings of live, unscripted broadcasts on popular British radio and television stations. My broadcast English data contain hundreds of examples of four types of non-canonical relative clause which are in widespread use in colloquial English.

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One such type is illustrated by the relative clauses bracketed below:

- (2)
- a. Martin was one of those people [*who*, everything on the football side, he was responsible for] (Graham Taylor, BBC Radio 5)
  - b. This is a girl [*who*, in real life, you'd never let her have the keys to your house, right?] (Jeremy Clarkson, BBC2 TV)
  - c. Paul Scholes was one of those players [*who* you never got to know what his voice sounded like] (Lee Dixon, BBC Radio 5)
  - d. Supermarkets are now making a big thing about selling wonky vegetables, [*which* years ago they would just have been discarded] (Sean Farrington, BBC Radio 5)
  - e. I hope he doesn't have to make a decision [*which* we'll all debate whether it was wrong or right] (Mark Lawrenson, BBC Radio 5)

The relative clauses bracketed in (2a–2e) above represent a type of structure in which an (italicised) relative pronoun like *who/which* at the beginning of the bracketed relative clause is reprised by an (underlined) resumptive pronoun like *he/her/his/they/it* lower down in the clause. I will refer to clauses of this type as *resumptive relatives*, and will discuss these in detail in Chapter 2.

A second type of non-canonical relative occurring in colloquial English is that found in clauses like those bracketed below:

- (3)
- a. It's the world [*in* which we live in] (Gary Lineker, BT Sports TV)
  - b. That really was the bedrock [*on* which that victory was built on] (Darren Fletcher, BBC Radio 5)
  - c. You now have a new Manchester United manager [*with* which you'll be dealing with] (Nick Collins, Sky Sports TV)
  - d. They're selling a series of money-can't-buy prizes [*for* which you can bid for on e-Bay] (Richard Keys, Talksport Radio)
  - e. We have made gains in a number of key seats [*of* which we can be proud of] (Caroline Flint, BBC Radio 4)

These involve a phenomenon widely referred to as *preposition doubling*, in which an (italicised) preposition followed by a relative pronoun appears at the beginning of the relative clause, and an (underlined) copy of the preposition is found at/near the end of the clause.

Alongside doubled preposition structures like those in (3) above, we also find structures like those below which contain two mismatching prepositions:

- (4)
- a. Every sport needs some power house [*with* which other teams can measure their success by] (Russell Fuller, BBC R5)
  - b. There are issues [*on* which you agree with the Labour Party leader over] (Norman Smith, BBC1 TV)
  - c. The thing you have to watch with Portugal is the speed [*with* which they play at] (Andy Townsend, ITV)

- d. The freedom [*in* which we played with] was gratifying (Eoin Morgan, Channel 5 TV)
- e. Things went slightly wonky at Chelsea because of the intensity [*in* which they were working under] (Ray Wilkins, Talksport Radio)

Structures like (3) and (4) both involve non-canonical ways of relativising a prepositional object: in Chapter 3, I discuss such structures in detail.

A further type of relative clause found in colloquial English is illustrated by the structures bracketed below:

- (5)
  - a. The main target was to finish ahead of Ferrari, [*which* we've extended our lead by 4 points] (Christian Horner, BBC Radio 5)
  - b. He's not played for Arsenal for a month, [*which* he had 90 minutes for Switzerland a week ago] (Commentator, ITV)
  - c. It's a chance for him to look at one or two others, [*who* there's always someone who comes from nowhere] (Matt Holland, Talksport Radio)
  - d. The same can't be said for Kittel, [*who* it was a bit messy in the final sprint] (Daniel Lloyd, Eurosport TV)
  - e. He's a fabulous player [*who*, given the right conditions and the right management, we could be talking about one of the best players in the world] (Sid Lowe, Talksport Radio)

Relative clauses like those bracketed above are puzzling from the perspective of standard English relatives like those in (1) because they appear not to involve any filler–gap dependency. For this reason, they are commonly referred to as *gapless relatives*. I discuss these at length in Chapter 4.

Accordingly, the main body of the book is structured as follows. In Chapter 1, by way of background, I discuss the structure and derivation of the canonical types of filler–gap relative clause found in standard varieties of English. I then go on to examine the various types of non-canonical relative clause found in my data, looking at resumptive relatives in Chapter 2, prepositional relatives in Chapter 3, and gapless relatives in Chapter 4. This is followed by a short epilogue which provides a brief summary of the main findings arising from my research. After this comes a glossary of key technical terms used in the book (excluding common grammatical terms which will be familiar from introductory textbooks): the Glossary is intended not only for people with a limited linguistic background, but also for linguists who work in a different framework. The Glossary also includes an integral list of abbreviations. It is followed by a list of references to all works cited in the book.

As already noted, the data on which my research here is based are mainly drawn from recordings which I have made of popular programmes on British radio and TV stations over the past decade, using live, unscripted broadcasts in

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order to avoid possible prescriptive influences from copy-editors. Typical sources were popular sports broadcasts from BBC Radio 5, BBC Radio 5 Sports Extra, BBC World Service, Talksport Radio, BBC TV, ITV, Sky TV and BT TV. However, the data also come from live, unscripted TV or radio interviews with a wide range of people from all walks of life (including Prince Harry, a fashion designer, an extortionist and so on). Programmes recorded included discussion forums, phone-ins, interviews and sports commentaries. The data were collected in an informal (unscientific) manner and transcribed orthographically by me. In addition, I also made use of some internet-sourced data. For obvious reasons, I excluded utterances containing dysfluencies (e.g. incomplete sentences), as well as structures produced by non-native speakers.

My own data are supplemented and complemented by data from the relevant research literature. In addition, I was fortunate enough to have access to a corpus of resumptive relatives collected by Tony Kroch at the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1980s, which Tony kindly made available to me: I shall refer to his data as the *Kroch corpus*.<sup>1</sup>

The data on non-canonical relative clauses presented here are of more general interest for (at least) four different reasons. One is that they raise the question of whether such examples are instances of sloppy grammar or fractured English produced by people who have an inadequate mastery of the syntax of ‘proper English’, so that sentences like those in (2–5) have no real structure (or have a ‘wild’ structure not conforming to principles of Universal Grammar/UG). I shall argue strongly against this view here and in favour of the view that the relevant data constitute a compendium which (as Neil Smith points out) is as important – and as enlightening – as data from New Guinea or manuscripts from the Qumran caves. I shall also argue that they have a UG-compliant structure of their own, and that detailed examination of this structure tells us a great deal about syntax and syntactic variation.

<sup>1</sup> As should be obvious, there are methodological shortcomings in using a randomly collected set of anecdotal data. For a discussion of the relative merits and reliability of different methods of collecting linguistic data, see Schütze (1996); Cowart (1997); Hoffmann (2011: ch. 2); Weskott & Fanselow (2011); Schütze & Sprouse (2014); Radford (2016: 1–9). On the drawbacks of collecting linguistic data from a corpus (or from the web), see Schütze (2009). For a defence of the use of introspective judgement data rather than other sources of data, see Newmeyer (2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) on usage-based data, and Sprouse (2011), Sprouse, Schütze & Almeida (2013), and Sprouse & Almeida (2011a, 2011b; 2012, 2013) on experimental data. For evidence that linguists may give different grammaticality judgements about sentences than non-linguists, see Dąbrowska (2010).

A second reason non-canonical relatives like those in (2–5) are interesting is that they raise challenging descriptive, typological and theoretical questions about the nature of relative clauses. For example, could it be that non-canonical resumptive relatives like those in (2) have the same type of movement-based derivation as canonical filler–gap relatives like those in (1), or (more specifically), could they perhaps involve Antecedent Raising (an operation in which the antecedent originates inside the relative clause and from there raises to a position outside it)? Do non-canonical relatives in English reflect the range of typological variation found in other languages? Could it be that gapless relatives like those in (5) represent a type of structure in which the relation between the relative clause and its antecedent is similar to that found in gapless topic structures in colloquial English (as described in Radford 2018: ch. 2)?

A third reason non-canonical structures are interesting is that they offer the potential to shed light on the nature of microvariation in English, and thereby contribute to our understanding of microcomparative syntax. They also raise the sociolinguistic issues of whether (some) such structures are restricted to use in certain ‘fringe’ registers or varieties of English, and whether others might be the result of hypercorrection.

A fourth reason non-canonical structures are of interest is that they raise the psycholinguistic question of whether (some) such sentences could be ‘slips of the tongue’ (e.g. processing errors arising from memory lapses or blends). For example, could it be that doubled preposition relatives like those in (3) arise when speakers forget whether or not they already spelled out the preposition in front of the *wh*-pronoun at the beginning of the relative clause? If so, speakers who wrongly think they have not spelled out the preposition at the beginning of the clause will spell out another copy of the preposition in its canonical position at the end of the relative clause, thereby resulting in preposition doubling.

This book follows in the footsteps of a burgeoning tradition of work which adopts a theoretical approach to the syntax of non-dialectal register variation. In this sense, it is cast in the mould of research on registers such as diary styles (Haegeman 1990a, 1990b, 1997, 2000b, 2013; Matushansky 1995; Horsey 1998; Haegeman & Ihsane 1999, 2001), newspaper headlines (Simon-Vandenberg 1981; Stowell 1991, 1996), recipe books and instruction manuals (Haegeman 1987, Massam 1989, Massam & Roberge 1989, Culy 1996, Sigurdsson & Maling 2007), note-taking (Janda 1985), telegrams and text messages (Barton 1998), telephone conversations (Hopper 1992), online blogs (Teddman & Newman 2010), and emails/postcards

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(Nariyama 2004, 2006). By virtue of focusing on a specific phenomenon (relative clauses), it is also in the same mould as research on specific syntactic phenomena such as subject, object and article drop (Weir, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017), non-standard patterns of agreement (Adger & Smith 2010), and extra *be* constructions (Massam 2017). However, the present book is unique in that (apart from my own 2018 book on *Colloquial English*), there are no existing monographs or textbooks on the syntax of colloquial registers of standard languages.

Overall, this book has four main goals. One is the goal of dispelling the prescriptive myth that colloquial English is an inferior form of speech characterised by sloppiness and an absence of ‘proper grammar’. The second is the descriptive goal of increasing awareness of the range of structural variation found in non-dialectal forms of colloquial English, and showing that this variation can be characterised in formal syntactic terms. The third is the theoretical goal of showing how the syntax of non-canonical relative clauses can contribute to debates in contemporary theoretical linguistics. And the fourth is the methodological goal of showing how a usage-based approach can contribute an invaluable source of data which complements other (e.g. introspective and experimental) approaches and leads to a deeper understanding of the nature of syntactic structure and variation in contemporary colloquial English.

I hope this book will inspire, inform and guide researchers working on relative clauses, and serve as a useful source for (graduate or advanced undergraduate) research seminars on syntactic theory and description, and on English syntax. I also hope that you will have as much fun reading it as I had collecting and collating the data!