

Fachfragen

In einem Beitrag zur Rassenfrage in Großbritannien las ich folgenden Satz: "According to Monty Meth [...] Britain's labour force now includes about 750,000 coloured workers, *whom*, he says, are here to stay". (Meine Auszeichnung).

Ich kann es mir kaum vorstellen, daß diese Form *whom* an der betreffenden Stelle durch sprachlichen *usage* hinreichend abgesichert ist, zumal sie ja ohnehin nicht im (mündlichen) Umgangsendenglisch verwendet wird. Ist also der Gebrauch des *relative pronoun* im *object case* hier zu vertreten? Wenn nicht, wie wäre dann eine solche Fehlleistung eines *native speaker* zu erklären? Vielleicht dadurch, daß das Relativpronomen hier nicht

als aktives Subjekt, sondern der ganze Relativsatz als vom Verb *say* abhängiges Objekt empfunden wird?

NORBERT HEINRICH · KIEL

The usage is certainly wrong, and would be automatically corrected in any test with native speakers. Why, then, was it made? It is difficult to be sure, but probably this is the influence of prescriptive traditions making itself felt. Most native English speakers have been brought up to believe that there is a 'problem' about the use of *whom* – and indeed controversy over its use has been a fact for some years. The relative pronoun system of English has been in a state of flux for many hundreds of years; and over the past 50 years or so the form has become progressively less and less used in colloquial English. (This is as far as one can tell: in the absence of precise records about colloquial English in the nineteenth century and before, it is not at all clear how long-standing this development is.) It would be wrong to say that it is *not* used, of course: it is still the expected form when preceded by a preposition, as in *to whom*, etc., and it is still a normal part of most kinds of formal speech, discussions, etc.

The general recommendation in the traditional grammars is that *whom* should be used when the relative pronoun is object; whereas most people these days in informal speech use *who*, if they are going to use a pronoun at all (*real* informal speech doesn't usually bother with it, as in: "*This is the boy I saw*"). The educated speaker has intuitions about both these states of affairs, through his school training; and the conflict that results may at times be reflected by confused syntax and the phenomenon of 'hypercorrection'. This may be what has happened here. The author's uncertainty, moreover, will have been increased by the separation of the relative pronoun from the rest of the construction, in this journalistic style; and also by the use of the verb *to be* in the clause, as it is sometimes by no means clear whether an item preceding this verb is best analysed as the grammatical subject or not. In other words, answering this question is more the task of the psycholinguist than the grammarian. The relationship between the relative clause and the verb *say* can certainly have nothing to do with it.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Im Englischunterricht machten mich Schüler bei der Lektüre auf Textstellen aufmerksam, die ihnen falsch vorkamen. Ich versprach, eine „Autorität“ zu befragen. (Die Seitenangaben beziehen sich auf die *Penguin Editions*).

Aus John Wain, *Strike the Father Dead*:

1. Seite 18: “Of course I knew Jeremy had behaved very *wrongly*.”

Müßte es hier nicht *wrong* heißen, da prädikativ?

2. Seite 113: “You know it won’t wash, don’t you?” “Yes,” I said, “I knew it, but too *good*.”

Müßte es hier nicht *well* heißen?

3. Seite 157: “I’m not demanding and *I never have demanded* the same standards from a young person.”

Müßte es nicht *I have never demanded* heißen?

4. Seite 199: "[...] most of the people he hung about with in Paris were Americans. There were a few *English*, but he didn't bother with them much."
Müßte es hier nicht *Englishmen* heißen?
5. Seite 232: "[...] and naturally this meant I had to act *confident* and look the dealer straight in the eye, ..."
Müßte es nicht *confidently* heißen?
6. Seite 260: "Strange, how *the spring* had never lost its hold on me."
Müßte es nicht *how spring had ...* heißen?

Aus John Braine, *Room at the Top*:

7. Seite 24: "[...] was empty except for two girls behind the counter. The *elder*, a plump girl with black eyes, attended to me."
Müßte es nicht *older* heißen?
8. Seite 34: "Three quarters of the working population of Dufton *was* unemployed in 1930."
Müßte es nicht *were* heißen?
9. Seite 120: "As cars had become more dependable and the city had become *more dirty*, the rich people had moved out to towns like Warley."
Müßte es nicht *dirtier* heißen?

Aus John Brain, *Life at the Top*:

10. Seite 82: "And Barbara is Daddy's girl, isn't *it*?"
Müßte es nicht *she* heißen?
11. Seite 212: "Arthur's looking as if he'd wet his *britches*"
Ist diese Schreibung für *breeches* möglich?

Aus Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*:

12. Seite 40: "[Lenina] went out to see if one of the vibro-vacuum machines *were* free."
Müßte es nicht *was* heißen, da indirekter Fragesatz?

Aus Edna O'Brien, *The Country Girls*:

13. Seite 7: "Mama had a *new clippers*"
Müßte es nicht *a new pair of clippers* heißen?
14. Seite 8: "It looked silly, the little egg in the big cup, but it tasted very *well*."
Müßte es nicht *good* heißen?
15. Seite 28: "So Mama *was gone there*, even though she didn't like it."
Müßte es nicht *had gone there* heißen?

16. Seite 34: "A stranger *going the road* might have thought that ours was a happy farm."

Läßt sich eine transitive Verwendung von *to go* rechtfertigen?

KURT MIRK · FRANKFURT

This set of queries is a very good indication of the difference between the rules of English grammar as presented in the standard handbooks, and the realities of contemporary usage as reflected in the writing of the so-called "real life" authors. All the usages listed here are not simply idiosyncrasies of the authors, but may be heard in specific contexts in everyday usage as a whole. These authors have a very good ear for the rhythms and constructions of everyday speech; and whenever one comes up against a usage that is unfamiliar or incompatible with grammar-book traditions, one's reaction should immediately be to try to define the effects the author was attempting to capture. A few comments on each extract will indicate the kind of effect involved.

1. "Of course I knew Jeremy had behaved very *wrongly*." ... *wrong*. The vast majority of adverbs in the language end in *-ly*, and the process of analogy is at work to make the irregular forms conform. In colloquial speech, one may therefore find some free variation between "He said it *wrong*" and "He said it *wrongly*". Note that *wrongly* is already established in such constructions as "wrongly handled, the lion could become fierce". The normal usage after full verbs, however, is *wrong*, as in "It went *wrong*", "What have you done *wrong*?", where the *-ly* form is not possible.
2. "You know it won't wash, don't you?" "Yes", I said, I knew it, but too *good*." ... *well*. *Well* is the standard form, but one may hear *good* being used to replace it in colloquial speech, especially if the speaker has been influenced by American or Australian speech. Compare, for example, "You don't look too *good* today". In the present context, the usage is clearly sub-standard, and provides an indication of the background of the narrator.
3. "I'm not demanding and *I never have* demanded the same standards from a young person." ... *I have never* ... It is rhythmical-

ly euphonic to maintain a parallelism between coordinated constructions, and many speakers try to do this. In the present example, the more "elegant" use would be to keep the same order of auxiliary and negative element; but in the heat of conversation, where it is difficult to maintain a careful control over one's output of constructions, such parallelisms frequently fail to appear. With appropriate emphatic intonation and stress, Wain's version is quite normal.

4. "[...] most of the people he hung about with in Paris were Americans. There were a few *English*, but he didn't bother with them much." ... *Englishmen* ... Both versions are possible in standard English. If we take the pair of sentences "I like the English" and "I like Englishmen", the latter implies seeing the nation more as a collection of individuals, probably with a few specific people in mind. In the context of the extract, then, the use of the word *English* has a depersonalising effect, and is more suitable for an attitude of contempt.
5. "[...] and naturally this meant I had to act *confident* and look the dealer straight in the eye, [...]" ... *confidently* ... This is the reverse process to that found in 1 above. Here the normal, standard usage is the *-ly* form; the reduced form is only used in regional or sub-standard speech. It is in fact quite common in Cockney-influenced varieties of English.
6. "Strange, how *the spring* had never lost its hold on me." ... *spring* ... The use of the definite article adds a greater specificity to the concept, but otherwise there is no difference.
7. "[...] was empty except for two girls behind the counter. The *elder*, a plump girl with black eyes, attended to me." ... *older* ... Here *elder* is normal, dictionary-recommended usage: *older* is the adjective, *elder* the noun. But because *elder* has some archaic senses, and is the more irregular form, it is becoming increasingly common to see *older* used as a noun in conversational speech.
8. "Three quarters of the working population of Dufton *was* unemployed in 1930." ... *were* ... After nouns which permit a collective sense, it is possible to have either a singular or a plural verb, depending on whether the noun is seen as a single concept or as an aggregate of individuals. In

the present example, both are possible, but the context makes the latter interpretation the more likely. If this is so, the occurrence of *was* can only be explained in terms of a sub-standard or regional substitution (as in "We *was* walking down the road").

9. "As cars had become more dependable and the city had become *more dirty*, the rich people had moved out to towns like Warley." ... *dirtier* ... Normally, the periphrastic comparative is used only with adjectives longer than two syllables, and the inflectional comparative with adjectives that are monosyllabic. There is considerable vacillation over two-syllabled adjectives, and both *more dirty* and *dirtier* may be heard. In the present context, the rhythmic balance with the previous construction is one factor which might account for the periphrastic form. Also, in colloquial speech this form is becoming increasingly common, even with monosyllables, in hesitant or emphatic speech.

10. "And Barbara is Daddy's girl, isn't *it*?" ... *she*. There are two possible explanations. The usage may be dialectal: Cockney and Welsh English are two dialects which often use *it* in place of the usual pronouns, especially in tag questions. Alternatively, the speaker might be using the *it* to refer to the whole phrase "Daddy's girl" – as if he were saying, "isn't that the case?". And thirdly, it may be a 'de-personifying' use – here expressing humour or endearment rather than rudeness.

11. "Arthur's looking as if he'd wet his *britches*." ... *breeches*. In its sense of trousers, and in all its related senses (e.g. *breeches buoy*, *breech birth*), the word has the spelling with *-ee-*. The spelling with *-i-* is an attempt at a representation of a more colloquial pronunciation, and would be found only in conversational contexts.

12. "Lenina went out to see if one of the vibro-vacuum machines *were* free." ... *was* ... *Were* is quite possible, but its use adds extra tentativeness or formality to the discourse. "I asked if John was in" is normal colloquial standard English. "I asked if John were in" is a more formal version, or presents the speaker's implication that John probably isn't.

13. "Mama had *a new clippers*." ... *a new pair of clippers*. It is not necessary to express the concept of "pair" separately, when the noun is unambiguous; and in colloquial speech it is usually omitted, as in "a new scissors".

14. "It looked silly, the little egg in the big cup, but it tasted very *well*." ... *good*. *Well*, in the sense of "nice", is a rather archaic usage for standard English, reminiscent of nineteenth century speaking styles (in Jane Austen, for instance). *Good* is a possible contemporary usage, but *nice* is probably even more common.

15. "So Mama *was gone* there, even though she didn't like it." ... *had gone* ... *Was gone* is possible in colloquial English in this sense. Compare such sentences as "She was gone only five minutes when John came in" and "She was gone by three o'clock". It is not a particularly common usage, however, and may not be used with all verbs.

16. "A stranger *going the road* might have thought that ours was a happy farm." Is it possible to justify a transitive use of "go"? This is not a normal idiom, but transitive senses of *go* within idiomatic constructions are quite common in English, e.g. *go bail*, *go halves*, *go my way*. The Webster Dictionary lists nine distinct senses of the transitive usage.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Fachfragen

Es geht um folgenden Lesebuch-Passus: In dem Lesestück von George Santayana, "Character and Opinion in the U.S.A." (*Britain and America*, alter Oberstufenband, S. 59) kommt der Satz vor:

"The American is [...] the most adventurous of Europeans [...]. What *has existed* in the *past*, especially in the remote past, seems to him not only authoritative, but irrelevant, inferior and outworn." ¹

Ein Kollege wies darauf hin, daß hier das Wort "past" und sogar der Ausdruck "the remote past" in Zusammenhang mit einer ihm hier falsch erscheinenden Perfektkonstruktion verbunden ist.

Wie ist das Perfekt in diesem Satz zu begründen? Kann man das Perfekt damit erklären, daß hier das Vergangene für die Gegenwart, für das Empfinden des Gegenwarts-Philosophen von Bedeutung ist, ähnlich wie in dem Satz aus der englischen Grammatik von Josef Raith, Seite 118: "This subject has been

¹ Meine Auszeichnung.

treated by Aristotle in his Ethics." Raith schreibt: „Der unterschiedliche Gebrauch der einfachen und zusammengesetzten Vergangenheit beruht weitgehend auf der subjektiven Einstellung des Sprechenden zur Vergangenheit. Das bedingt ein gewisses Schwanken: scheinbar ohne ersichtlichen Grund bevorzugt die Sprache manchmal die eine, manchmal die andere Form.“

G Ü N T E R W Ö H L E R · S C H Ö N I N G E N

Raith is quite right. A great deal of unnecessary confusion has been introduced into the teaching of English tenses due to people having too rigid a conception of the time range of a tense-form. Terms such as "recent past", "removed past" and "general truth" have to be viewed with caution, as in the last analysis their meaning is relative and subjective. If the sentence above had been "What has existed in the recent past ...", there would have been no problem over the use of the perfect tense-form. Even without the word "recent", the noun "past" itself is vague, and could be construed as being relatively recent in implication: there is nothing wrong with the use of the perfect tense-form here. The problem would seem to come with the explicit time phrase "remote past", which is not far removed from such phrases as "many years ago", where the perfect form is not normally used. But there is no problem, as the writer is really using the phrase "especially in the remote past" with a parenthetical force; it would have been possible to print it within dashes, or within brackets, thus placing it structurally outside of the immediate time-range of the verb form. In fact commas have been used, obscuring its parenthetical role. Even if this were not the case, however, it would be possible to interpret the sentence in such a way so as to permit the perfect tense-form. If the sentence had been, for instance, "What has existed in the remote past ...", there is an acceptable interpretation to be arrived at, namely that the writer is viewing the concept of "the remote past" as if it were relatively recent or of particular relevance to him. Compare: "What has existed in the remote past is no concern of mine". A view of the perfect tense in terms of "current relevance" is far more satisfactory than one in terms of absolute temporal distance.

D A V I D C R Y S T A L