

# Abstracts

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## Relative pronouns in Oklahoma

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Studies of relative pronouns often analyze data found in written documents such as books or newspapers; however, linguists should not assume that they can project conclusions drawn from written corpora onto actual speech patterns. Systematically obtained speech samples are difficult to obtain, but one valuable source is the Survey of Oklahoma Dialects (SOD). SOD's taped field records allow us to examine restrictive relative pronouns in vernacular speech, and to compare the results with written documents and other dialects.

The data for this study consists of about 1000 restrictive relative clauses collected from orthographic transcriptions of the SOD field records. I record each relative pronoun (i.e., *who*, *that*, *zero*, *what*, *where*, *when*), and code its function in the relative clause. I also analyze the importance of human, nonhuman, and inanimate antecedents, expletive *there*, definiteness of the antecedent, and the occurrence of resumptive pronouns in the locative and genitive. I look at the influence of gender and education level, and I attempt to find trends in apparent time by comparing data from the 80-year-old and 20-year-old age groups.

Kikai, Schleppegrell, and Tagliamonte (1987), in their analysis of data taken from newspapers, journals books, radio, and television, find that total *wh-* is 34%, total *that* is 45%, and total  $\emptyset$  is 21%. This may be true in written documents and formal speech; however in the Oklahoma speech sample, total *wh-* is 7% (neither *whom* nor *which* occur at all), total *that* is 58% and total  $\emptyset$  is 35%. In an even greater change from written standard English,  $\emptyset$  seems to have generalized from object position into subject position, where it occurs in 18% of the samples, or more than twice as much as *who*.  $\emptyset$  occurs significantly more often with human antecedents, and may be replacing *wh-*. The results of this study suggest that relative clauses in the Oklahoma vernacular differ dramatically from the usage found in written corpora and grammar handbooks.