

The Syntax of *Wherewithal*

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1. Introduction

English, or at least some English, allows:

(1) They don't have the wherewithal to buy that big a house.

in approximately the sense of *They don't have the means/money to buy that big a house*. A lexicalist approach to syntax in the spirit of Chomsky (1970), although it might well recognize that *wherewithal* is composed of three morphemes, *where*, *with* and *al(l)*, would, since it takes words to be atomic with respect to Merge, deny that the three morphemes of *wherewithal* are put together by Merge.

On the other hand, if the morphemes that constitute a word can be put together by Merge, as they could be in an updated and generalized version of Chomsky's (1957) affix-hopping analysis of English forms such as *played*,¹ then the component morphemes of *wherewithal* could be, too. Yet allowing that the three morphemes of *wherewithal* are treated as atoms by Merge underdetermines the derivation of (the relevant part of) (1) to a significant degree. We don't automatically know whether *where*, *with* and *al(l)* are affected solely by external merge or whether they are also subject to internal merge (movement). Nor do we automatically know in what order Merge affects them. Finally we don't automatically know whether or not there are in (1) additional relevant morphemes that are not pronounced.

In this paper, I will try to spell out what an analysis might look like that takes the component morphemes of *wherewithal* to be manipulated by Merge. In so doing, I will suggest (the beginnings of) an account of the absence in English of various words that resemble *wherewithal* but are not at all possible. For example, the following are unacceptable:

(2) *whatwithal; *whenwithal; *herewithal; *therewithal; *wherewithboth

A merge-based account of (2) is, I think, within our reach, in a way that would seem not to be the case within a lexicalist (non-merge) approach to internally complex words.

It should be noted that to call *wherewithal* a word is in effect to take it to be a constituent. But words in standard orthography, although they may well correspond to syntactic constituents in many cases, do not necessarily do so,² and in fact the analysis to be suggested in what follows leans toward the conclusion that *wherewithal* is not a syntactic constituent in sentences in which it occurs.

2. The subparts

The *wherewith* subpart of *wherewithal* recalls the following English words:³

(3) whereby; thereby; whereupon; therefore; wherein

These are to one degree or another still part of contemporary English. In earlier English, words of this form were more productive (e.g. *whereof*, *thereof*, *wherefore*), in the manner (as a first approximation) of

¹Cf. Baker (1985; 1988), Pollock (1989) and Roberts (2017), among others.

²Cf. Myers (1987), Koopman and Szabolcsi (2000), Julien (2002).

³Also *whereabouts*, which raises somewhat different questions; see Kayne (2014).

contemporary Dutch and German.⁴ As in van Riemsdijk's (1978) original discussion, we can take, say, *therefore* to be very close to *for that* (or more exactly to 'for that REASON' with a silent noun corresponding to *reason*), and in the same way we can take *wherewith* to be very close to *with what*, apart from the difference in order between adposition and wh-word, and the difference between the R-pronoun *where* and the non-R-pronoun *what*.

As for the *-al* subpart of *wherewithal*, it seems virtually certain that it is simply *all*.⁵ (On the spelling difference, cf. *alright*, *altogether*, *almost*, *also*, *already*, all with *al-* rather than *all*; also *careful*, *spoonful* vs. *full*.) Taking the *-al* of *wherewithal* to equal ordinary *all* might seem a bit surprising at first, insofar as *all* in English cannot normally be preceded by *the*, whereas the *-al* of *wherewithal* normally is (though not immediately preceded), as in (1).

However, the definite article in (1) recalls that found overtly with *whole* (as in *the whole day*), which has a fair amount in common with *all*. In addition, the fact that *the* in (1) cooccurs with *all* (written as *-al*) recalls even more specifically:

(4) He gave it his all.

in which *all* is not in its more usual DP-initial position.⁶

Returning to the *wherewith* component of *wherewithal*, let me take it to be an instance of a relative pronoun followed by an adposition, parallel to:

(5) They had a plan whereby they would both leave at the same time.

From this perspective, (1) should be thought of as:⁷

(6) ...the wherewith all to...

In contrast to (5), though, there is no visible noun in (6) between the determiner (*a*, *the*) and the relative pronoun *where*. Two possibilities come to mind. First, the apparently missing noun might be *all* itself. The second possibility, which is the one I will prefer here, has there being a silent noun in (6), much as there is arguably a silent noun present in headless relatives of the sort seen in:⁸

(7) They ate what was put in front of them.

If *all* itself is not the nominal head of the relative in (6),⁹ the question arises as to what the status of this *all* is. Let me take as a clue the existence in earlier English of interrogative *wherewithal*, as in:¹⁰

⁴Cf. Kayne (2004, Part III) on a possible link within Germanic to 'OV' vs. 'VO'. For recent discussion of OV/VO, see Cinque (2016).

⁵Note that the final vowel of *wherewithal* (equal to that of *all*) is not reduced, as opposed to that of *refusal*, *removal*.

⁶In this example, there is very likely a silent N, too (akin to EFFORT, perhaps), within the DP containing *his all*.

⁷Note the parallelism with:

i) They don't have the money with which to buy that big a house.

Some speakers accept :

ii) They would like to buy that car, but they don't have the wherewithal.

iii) They don't have the wherewithal for that car.

recalling Collins (2014) on deleted relatives.

⁸Cf. Groos and Riemsdijk (1981).

⁹Keeping in mind that the term 'head (of a relative)' here is not the X-bar sense of that term.

¹⁰This example is from the King James version of the Bible, as given by the Oxford English Dictionary (*wherewithal*). Archaic *withal* is found in the OED, too; in some of its uses, it may be accompanied by a silent WHERE.

(8) Wherewithall shall wee be clothed?

which to my more recent ear recalls McCloskey (2000, 66) on West Ulster English sentences such as:

(9) Who all did you give tea to?

(10) Where all did you move the books to?

If so, then we can think of (8) as:

(11) Wherewith all...?

with the difference in position of the adposition reflecting the extensive use in earlier English of *wherewith*, *whereof* et al.

If the *-al* of earlier English interrogative *wherewithal* is, as I am suggesting, related to McCloskey's *all* in (9) and (10), then it is plausible to think that current English relative *wherewithal*, as in (1)/(6), also contains an *all* that is substantially the same as that of West Ulster English. Thus we now have additional grounding for taking the *-al* of current *wherewithal* to equal *all*.

As for the constituent question alluded to earlier, i.e. the question whether *wherewithal* in (1)/(6) is a syntactic constituent, it is logically possible that it is a constituent, but the presence of the adposition *with* between relative pronoun *where* and *al(l)* makes that unlikely. If so, then *wherewithal* is an example of a word that is not a syntactic constituent.

3. Derivation

As for more specific questions of properties and derivation, we can take *wherewith(al)+infinitival* relative in (1)/(6), repeated here:

(12) They don't have the wherewithal to buy that big a house.

to have a lot in common with:

(13) They don't have the money with which to buy that big a house.

even though a simpler *where*-initial infinitival relative is at best marginal in English (as opposed to French):¹¹

(14) ?They need a place where to store their books.

Sharply impossible, on the other hand, is the result of adding *all* to (13):

(15) *They don't have the money with which all to buy that big a house.

It may be that the contrast between (12), which allows '...wherewith all...', and (15), which disallows '...with which all...', can be understood as follows. Contrary to appearances, (12) does have a pronounced relative head, namely *all*, or more likely *all*+silent noun (N), meaning that (12) would have at an intermediate stage in its derivation:

(16) all N wherewith to buy...

Wherewith would then move to the left of *all* (perhaps via remnant movement). This movement would have something in common with the movement of relative clauses from postnominal (post-head) position to prenominal (pre-head) position suggested for languages like Chinese and Japanese in Kayne (1994, sect. 8.3), especially for cases like *the recently arrived letter*, in which the preposed relative ends up being preceded by *the*, as well as having something in common with the movement of *destruct-* past *-ion* in the derivation of derived nominals like *the destruction of the bridge*, as proposed in Collins (2006) and Kayne (2008).

¹¹Note that the English restriction found in infinitival relatives:

i) *We're trying to think of someone who to invite.

is found in both French and Italian even with finite relatives, with direct object *qui*, *cui*; cf. Kayne (1976) and Cinque (1982).

The idea would then be that the specificity of *wherewith* in contemporary English is precisely that it, and it alone, is subject to movement past *all*, so that (15) is not derivable. Of course (15) is not derivable for a second reason, from this perspective, namely that it would have two heads, both *money* and *all* (or *all+N*, henceforth just *all*), as also seen in:

(17) *They don't have the money wherewithal to buy that big a house.

Removing (*the*) *money* from (15) and undoing the movement of *with which* yields:

(18) *They don't have all with which to buy that big a house.

the unacceptability of which is almost certainly linked to that of:

(19) *They bought all which was on the top shelf.

Relatives headed by *all* are hardly possible with relative *which*.

In a similar vein, we can note the impossibility in contemporary English of:

(20) *They don't have the money wherewith to buy that big a house.

In effect, *wherewith* is currently possible only in combination with *al(l)*, in a way that recalls the limitation of German relative *was* ('what') to light-headed relatives.¹²

English relatives headed by *all* are to some extent possible with *that* rather than *which*:

(21) ?They bought all that was on the top shelf.

In contrast to (12) with *wherewithal*, though, (21) cannot have *the*:

(22) *They bought the all that was on the top shelf.

That the *all* of *wherewithal* can be preceded by *the* within its DP recalls French *le tout* (on the assumption that French *tout* is a good match to English *all*, which seems plausible), as in:¹³

(23) Le tout a été envoyé à Paris. ('the all has been sent to Paris' = 'the whole thing...')

and also recalls, though the determiner is different, (4), repeated here:

(24) He gave it his all.

as well as, less directly:

(25) They watched his every step.

(26) They ate the whole cake.

Why universal quantifier-like elements can sometimes be preceded by *the* and sometimes not is left an open question.

4. *al(l)* vs. *both*

That the *al(l)* of *wherewithal* and the *all* of (24) are closely related is supported by the fact that neither can be replaced by *both*:

(27) *wherewithboth

(28) *He gave it his both.

nor with *all*+numeral:

(29) *wherewithalthree

(30) *He gave it his all three.

nor with *whole* or *half* or *almost all*:

(31) *wherewithwhole; *wherewithhalf; *wherewithalmostal

(32) *He gave it his whole/*his half/*his almost all.

Possible, on the other hand, is:

(33) He gave it his whole effort.

¹²Cf. Citko (2004).

¹³On *le tout* vs. *tout* alone, see Obenauer (1994).

but not:

(34) *wherewithwholeeffort

due to the fact mentioned in the discussion of (20), namely that *wherewith* is restricted to occurring in combination with bare *all* (or *all* + silent N) as relative head.

The restriction seen in (27) is also found in West Ulster English, in the sense that the West Ulster English examples (9) and (10), repeated here:

(35) Who all did you give tea to?

(36) Where all did you move the books to?

have no counterparts with *both*:¹⁴

(37) *Who both did you give tea to?

(38) *Where both did you move the books to?

This gives further support to the idea that the *all* of *wherewithal* is related to the *all* studied by McCloskey (2000).

We can now see clearly, I think, that the non-existence of (27) is not an accidental isolated fact about the English lexicon, but is tied to differential syntactic properties of *all* vs. *both* seen in (24) vs. (27) and in (35)-(38). This linkage is expressible, though, only if words like *wherewithal* (and by plausible extension all words containing more than one morpheme) are put together in the syntax (via Merge, both external and internal).

There remains, needless to say, the question why *all* and *both* diverge in their behavior in these specific ways. The core of an answer may be as follows. *Both* is more complex than *all*, just as *all three* is more complex than *all*.¹⁵ *Both* is comparable to *all two*, perhaps with a silent ALL. The appearance of *all* in (24) and in (35)/(36), and therefore in *wherewithal*, depends on its (relative) lack of complexity (i.e. on its not being accompanied by a numeral). Consequently, there can be no examples of words like (27) (and perhaps similarly for (31), at least for *almost all* and for *half*).

5. Romance

In addition to accounting for the absence of certain logically possible words in English, the perspective outlined above can account for the absence of *wherewithal* itself in any Romance language (as far as I know), in terms of the absence of *wherewith* (along with *whereby*, *whereof*, *wherefore*) in any Romance language (as far as I know).¹⁶

6. Other impossible words

¹⁴I am grateful to Jim McCloskey (p.c.) for the judgments.

¹⁵The *all* in question may have something in common with the *ever* of free relatives.

¹⁶As for why these are absent from Romance languages, see note 4 on the VO vs. OV question, keeping in mind that English is more 'OV' than any Romance language when it comes to compounds of the *magazine reader* or *magazine reading* sort - cf. Emonds and Faarlund (2014,20) - though the details of this linkage remain to be worked out. Some 'OV'-ness may also be a necessary condition for 'V DP Prt' order of the *pick the book up* sort, which seems to be absent from all Romance languages (Andrea Padovan, p.c.), as opposed to 'V Prt DP', which is found in some Romance.

More complex than the *where-X* cases are those with *there*; it may be, though, that French *là-dedans* ('there of in') is closer to *in there* than to *therein* - cf. McCawley (1988, note 12) and Rizzi (1988).

The syntax of (*the*) *wherewithal* that I have proposed takes its *where* component to be a relative pronoun. If a relative clause structure is the only way to reach that sort of complex word, then we may have an account of the following:

(39) *They don't have the herewithal to buy that big a house.

(40) *They don't have the therewithal to buy that big a house.

since *here* and *there* are not possible in English as relative pronouns.

Somewhat similarly, if *wherewith* in *wherewithal* is of the *whereby* type found more robustly in Dutch and German, then we can exclude:

(41) *They don't have the whatwithal to buy that big a house.

(42) *They don't have the whenwithal to buy that big a house.

in terms of the general exclusion within Germanic of forms like:¹⁷

(43) *whatby, *whenby

with non-R-wh-words.

7. Challenges

In my English, *wherewithal* has no plural:

(44) *We don't have the wherewithals to buy that big a house.

From the present perspective this may be related to:

(45) *We gave it our alls.

To judge by a Google search, however, there seem to be speakers for whom sentences like (44) are possible. It may be that the silent N arguably present with *wherewithal* can be accompanied by plural *-s* for some speakers, but not for others, though it remains to be understood why I allow plural *-s* with a silent noun in:

(46) the others; two four-year-olds; the extra-wides
while disallowing it in (44).

A second challenge comes from the fact that some speakers accept:

(47) We don't have the wherewithal with which to do it.

Such speakers must be allowing adposition doubling, recalling the existence, in some English, of cases like:

(48) the problem to which they're alluding to

The speakers in question must also be allowing, from the present perspective, two wh-phrases (*where*, *which*) both of which have 'all N' as antecedent, thereby having something in common with:¹⁸

(49) Prof. Mary Smith, whose students' admiration for whom is well-known,...
and perhaps also with German:¹⁹

(50) Ich habe Blumen gebracht. Was für welche? ('I have flowers brought. What for which? (= 'What kind?')')

8. Conclusion

¹⁷In all likelihood, examples like:

i) What about were you guys talking?

which are acceptable to Bob Frank, are of a different character.

¹⁸Cf. Kayne (1983; to appear).

¹⁹Durrell (2002, 93).

In conclusion, then, sentences containing *wherewithal* have a richer syntax than might at first glance be apparent. This richer syntax provides a handle on the absence of various potential words such as **whatwithal*, **whenwithal*, **herewithal*, **therewithal*, **wherewithwhole*, **wherewithhalf*, **wherewithalmostal*, **wherewithboth* that an approach associated with a less rich syntax could not provide.

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