Functional restriction: English possessives
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1. syntactic categories (e.g. NP); syntactic functions (e.g. SU [subject], DO [direct object], PO [prepositional object], PD [predicative], and DT [determiner, marked by the '-s-possessive])

2. category X with (default) function set X_F; Default Category-Function Mapping: If a rule describes expression of category X, then these expressions can serve in all the functions in X_F

3. functionally restricted subcategories of category X: not available in full X_F

4. some N-headed functionally restricted types:
   4.1. count nouns, denoting body parts, which can occur with the expressing possession, but only as PO (and with DO denoting the possessor): hit Kim on the shoulder, punch me in the eye [Quirk et al. (1985: sec. 5.35)]
   4.2. count nouns denoting unique roles (captain, dean, treasurer), which can be articleless, but only as PD [Quirk et al. (1985: sec. 5.42)]
      (a) PD become captain, be dean for seven years, remain treasurer of the LSA, elect Marty chair
      (b) SU *Treasurer of the LSA asked for dues, DO/PO *We met (with) treasurer of the LSA, DT *Treasurer's role is not easy
   4.3. 'dummy' pronominal NPs (e.g. expletive there, weather it), which can serve as SU, DO, or PO, but not DT (PD?)
      (a) SU There is snow in Mongolia, It snows in Mongolia a lot; DO I know there to be snow in Mongolia, know it to snow a lot in Mongolia; PO I hate for there to be snow in my boots, I hate for it to snow a lot in Mongolia
      (b) DT *there's being no food here, *Its snowing a lot in Mongolia upsets us; PD *How to do it is there t consider (cf. There is how to do it to consider)
   4.4. demonstrative pronominal NPs (that, this) which occur in all NP functions except DT
      (a) SU That's the answer, DO I know that, PO I'll go for that, PD What we saw was THAT
      (b) DT *that's being the answer

5. singleton function sets (4.1-2), larger natural class of functions (4.3-4)

6. leading idea: each rule of syntax assigns to a constituent type not only a category but also a set of permitted functions

7. four types of NPs with no N head, also restricted to the argument functions of NPs (all but DT), just like the demonstratives in 4.4:
   7.1. generically understood missing heads:
      mass sg The ordinary is inescapable, the inescapability of the ordinary; but *the ordinary's inescapability
      count pl The blind are happy, the happiness of the blind; but *the blind's being happy
      [not all speakers restrict this type - Nina Auerbach, review of John Carey, The Intellectuals and the Masses, New York Times Book Review, 26 December 1993, p. 10: 'Arnold Bennett's "Old Wives' Tale," which I too would love to see restored to literary attention, is not the paean to ordinariness that Mr. Carey fondly evok it is an ironic account of the ordinary's inescapability.]
   7.2. anaphoric missing heads [again, grammatical for some speakers]:
      count sg/pl The rich cousin(s) made a lame suggestion, but the poor made a good one; but *The rich cousin's/cousins' suggestion was listened to carefully, but the poor's was ignored completely
      mass sg the taste of the yellow corn was good, but the taste of the blue was exquisite; but *The yellow corn's taste was good, but the blue's was exquisite
   7.3. 'PEOPLE Deletion' (for nationality adjectives ending in sibilants; Pullum 1975): count pl The Chinese are friends with us, the friendship of the Chinese with us; but *the Chinese's friendship with us
   7.4. free-standing possessives mine, their etc.: Mine is/are pink, the color of mine; but *mine's color (cf. a frienc mine's hat)
8. constructions that lack the internal syntax of NPs but can nevertheless serve some NP functions, in particular

(a) some are eligible for DT function -

8.1. PPs: *under the rug's being a bad place to hide*
8.2. Wh-Cleft clauses: *how they talk's being a problem for you*

(b) but most are not -

8.3. manner adverbs: *Beautifully was how they sang; but* *beautifully's being how they sang*
8.4. ‘nominal gerund’ (possessive + gerund, PGer): *Your walking me home really pleases me; but* *your walking home's really pleasing me*
8.5. accusative + gerund (AGer): *You walking me home really pleases me; but* *you walking me home's really pleasing me*
8.6. infinitival clauses: *For you to walk me home really pleases me; *for you to walk me home's really pleasing me*
8.7. finite clauses: *That you'll walk me home really pleases me; but* *that you'll walk me home's really pleasing me*

9. some expression types with the full internal syntax of NPs, but nevertheless resistant to DT
9.1. action nominals: *The destroying of the flag distresses us; but* *the destroying of the flag's really distressing us (cf. destruction of the flag's really distressing us)*
9.2. bare NP adverbials (for many, but not all, speakers): *Now is the time, but* *now's being the time; This Tuesd is a good day for me, but* *this Tuesday's being a good day for me*

10. one conclusion: expressions barred from some function don't necessarily fall under one generalization (4.3-4 7.1-4, 8.3-7, 9.1-2)
11. Pullum (1991) assumed otherwise for PGer: ‘The possessive clitic -'s...requires a noun-headed NP as host.’
   [note that the N head must be overt, if this generalization is going to take in the (superficially) headless N types in 7.1-4]
11.1. incomplete: fails to block DT in 4.3 (dummy pronominals), 4.4 (demonstrative pronominals), 9.1 (action nominals), 9.2 (bare NP adverbials), all of which are N-headed NPs
11.2. incorrect: excludes DT in 8.1 (PPs) and 8.2 (Wh-Cleft clauses); PPs are not NPs and don’t have N heads, while Wh-Cleft clauses are not NPs in their internal composition (though they might be assigned NP status because of their external syntax) and certainly don't have overt N heads in any case

12. construction-specific functional restriction, as in 4.1-4, with, in addition, some variability among speakers as to which constructions are restricted

References