

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 (or 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 is to 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 evokes; 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 friend's 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*

8.7. finite clauses: *That you'll walk me home really pleases me*; but **that you'll walk me home's really pleasing*

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 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 Tuesday 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 (4.3-4.4, 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

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