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In written English, possessive pronouns appear without 's in the same environments where non-pronominal DPs require 's.

- (1) a. your/*you's/*your's book
- b. Moore's/*Moore book

What explains this complementarity? Various analyses suggest themselves.

- A. Possessive pronouns are contractions of a pronoun and 's. (Hudson 2003: 603)
- B. Possessive pronouns are inflected genitives (Huddleston and Pullum 2002); a morphological deletion rule removes clitic 's after a genitive pronoun.

Analysis A consists of a single rule of a familiar type: Morphological Merger (Halle and Marantz 1993), familiar from forms like *wanna* and *won't*. (*His* and *its* contract especially nicely.) No special lexical/vocabulary items need be postulated. Analysis B, on the other hand, requires a set of vocabulary items to spell out genitive case, as well as a rule to delete the 's clitic following such forms, assuming 's is a DP-level head distinct from the inflecting noun.

These two accounts make divergent predictions for dialects with complex pronominals such as *you all* or *you guys* (and *us/them all*, depending on the speaker). Since Merger operates under adjacency, Analysis A predicts that intervention by *all* or *guys* should bleed the formation of *your*: only *you all's* and *you guys'* are predicted. There do seem to be dialects with this property, as witnessed by the American Heritage Dictionary (4th edition, entry for *you-all*). Call these English 1. Here, we may claim that pronouns inflect for only two cases, and Merger operations account for the rest.

Given the simplicity of Analysis A, it would be nice if English 1 were the one and only English. It is in this sense unfortunate that dialects also exist with possessive forms *your all's* and *your guys'* — a fact totally unaccounted for if Analysis A holds universally.

- (2) I think that works with your all's schedules. (White House press secretary Scott McClellan, March 22, 2005)
 - (3) We've had a proposal that's been out, subject to your all's review ... (White House press secretary Joe Lockhart, June 12, 2000)
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Such dialects (English 2) are clearly incompatible with Analysis A's basis in contraction; rather, the data suggest that possessive pronouns are being analyzed as inflected genitives, in line with Analysis B. In fact, English 2 forms like *your all's* neatly showcase both halves of Analysis B: a genitive case feature is spelled out on *your*, and separately, the presence of *all* bleeds the rule deleting 's. The doubly marked possessive of English 2 is reminiscent of the pattern of definiteness marking in Swedish DPs, where we find a doubled expression of definiteness: DET ADJ N-DET. English 1, for its part, mimics the definiteness pattern of Danish, where we find DET ADJ N(*-DET). Thus, dialectal variation within English mirrors wider crosslinguistic variation in Germanic. See Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2005).

Since Analysis A is simpler than Analysis B — both require one rule, but A requires no special vocabulary entries — the existence of English 2 is puzzling. Why are some learners positing an unnecessarily complex grammar? One possible line of attack: is there a sense in which the Merger rule found in English 1 is more complex than the Deletion rule found in English 2?

References

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