

THE DYNAMICS OF THE GENITIVE MARKER IN MODERN ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article deals with the morphological changes of the genitive marker in modern English. Genitive is defined as a construction that links two or more than two nouns, to convey a meaning and the most frequent is possession. Genitive can be expressed in English by *of* and *'s*. In fact, this article is about the latter, especially, the morphological changes that *'s* genitive marker undergoes in the utterances. We have noticed that the genitive marker changes morphologically (apostrophe or apostrophe +s) and those changes cause a lot of difficulties to English grammar learners and non-English native speakers. This work aims at analyzing the morphological aspects of the genitive marker. Word order is very important in the building and comprehension of utterances, then, this work will shed light on the impact of the genitive marker's changes on utterances.

Keywords: morphological changes-*'s* genitive marker- modern English- word order- syntax.

LA DYNAMIQUE DU MARQUEUR GÉNITIF EN ANGLAIS MODERNE

Résumé : L'article se propose d'analyser les changements morphologiques du marqueur génitif en anglais moderne. Le génitif est défini en grammaire comme un cas qui exprime un rapport de possession ou de dépendance entre deux noms. Il y a différentes façons d'exprimer le génitif en anglais moderne comme la construction avec *of*, celle avec le marqueur génitif *'s*. Cet article est basé sur ce dernier, spécialement, les différentes formes morphologiques qu'il revêt. Nous avons remarqué que le marqueur du génitif change morphologiquement de forme (apostrophe seulement ou apostrophe plus s) et ces changements de formes causent quelques problèmes aux apprenants de la langue anglaise. Cet article vise à nous édifier sur la morphologie du marqueur génitif en anglais. L'ordre des mots joue un rôle important dans la construction des énoncés, de ce fait, ce travail nous donnera des éclaircissements aussi sur l'impact des changements de ce marqueur sur la syntaxe.

Mots clés : changements morphologiques- marqueur génitif *'s* - anglais moderne- ordre des mots- syntaxe.

Introduction

According to the Larousse dictionary, grammar is defined as the full description of language. It defines the principles of organization of a language. The main point is accuracy and there is no accuracy outside grammar. Grammar is not an end in itself. It allows us to master the mechanisms of functioning of a language and make in practice its rules, in our daily activities, in learning and teaching etc.,.. It helps all those who are interested in a language, to know the inner mechanisms of it, then to shed light on dark points. Grammar has several categories like the verb, the noun etc.,. Each category can have subcategories.

This work is about the genitive, especially the dynamics of the genitive marker's. that can be written either by an apostrophe or by an apostrophe plus s. Grammar is defined in an utterer-centered approach as how words are combined to give special meanings. (Adamczewski 1992). Word order is an important point to understand the utterances. Then it is important to check the impact of the genitive marker on word order.

To deal clearly with the topic, we have to base on an utterer-centered approach which is an explicative and unifying framework that is needed for the good understanding of this work. Its importance lays especially on the fact that it accords much attention to describe linguistic phenomena in languages, a description that can be fully done if one can detect and explain clearly the operations that exist in utterances to convey special meanings.

Thus, a lot of work has been done about genitive. As research is an everlasting field, some research can still be added to the topic. Grammar is also a way to express oneself in a language. Then, English learners and teachers used to express themselves in English about genitive. Given that the genitive marker can be written either by only an apostrophe or by an apostrophe plus s, learners can face some difficulties towards those changes. So what's the origin of 's genitive marker in English? How does the genitive marker functions in English as far as the morphological aspects are concerned? What is the impact of its functioning on syntax? This article is written in order to shed light on those interesting questions, but also to contribute in linguistic field of study.

To write this article, a lot of research has been made in some libraries, books and in the internet. For the good handling of this work, we are going first to talk about the origin of 's in English and then underline the different changes that it undergoes in modern English, in order to deal with the impact of those changes on syntax so that to shed light on the misunderstandings of its study for English learners.

1. The origin of the genitive marker

For the genitive in 'S, it is said in the Meriam -Webster dictionary that the 'S clitic originated from old English as an inflectional suffix marking genitive case. In modern language, it can often be attached to the end of an entire phrase as in the following examples:

The king of Spain's wife

The man who you met yesterday's bicycle

Indeed, the role of the apostrophe shifted over time. The S at the end of a word indicating possession: "the king's fashion sense" probably come from the old English custom of adding "'S'" to singular genitive masculine nouns. If we refer to the ancient form: *the kings fashion sense*, in modern English: *the king's fashion sense*. From this reasoning, we can say that the apostrophe replaces the *e*. Indeed it derived from old English structure, which commonly used an *es* as an ending of certain words. In fact, language keeps on changing. By this changing feature of language, the 'e' was replaced by an apostrophe but the use of an independently written participle for the possessive can be seen in the related German language. We say related because it is very close to the English language. Such a construction is: "*de man z 'n hand*". This expression means literally in English *the man his hand*. In German "*z'n* is short for *zij*", that means *his* in English. The "'s" occurs in south German both the "'s" and the "of" express the genitive there. Besides, its relative language English maintains both items for genitive constructions. The purpose of this study is the different changes of 's genitive marker. The authors Henri Adamczewski and Jean Pierre Gabilan (1992) argued on the same path that possessive case has kept the S Saxon genitive, and the apostrophe is just the trace of the *e* from *es* endings as in the word: "*hàmes*" the authors argued also that 's is the marker of the possessive case. In old English, it was the end of the genitive. Modern German always kept it. They gave examples:

Meines Vaters Wagen: my father's car in English.

In English grammar, we can express the genitive by a noun plus the genitive marker's (apostrophe plus s') plus another noun, written as N'SN, for example:

Jean's book

N'SN

In genitive, the first noun is the possessor and the last noun is the possessed

In number of cases, we have this structure, but sometimes we can have only the apostrophe without s. Let's study the different variations of this genitive marker for the next point.

2. The Morphological variations of the English genitive marker

In genitive constructions with 's, depending on the nature of the possessor, this genitive marker can have morphologically different forms. Sometimes we may have only the apostrophe without the s or even the apostrophe plus s. So these morphological changes can cause some problems to English learners, about the phonology and the syntax. So the possessor can be different from one case to another. We can have genitive constructions in which the possessor is a singular noun. Let's study the following examples:

- (1) Derek's car
- (2) Jane's camera
- (3) Mr Church's children

In (1), the possessor is Derek. It is about a proper noun of person which is in singular. In (2), the possessor, Jane is a proper noun. In (3), the possessor M. Church is a proper noun. We have an apostrophe plus S. For each of the examples with singular nouns.

We have to note that there are singular proper nouns ending with s, z, x etc. Let's study the following examples for those types of nouns:

- (4) James' s room
- (5) Gomez's dog
- (6) Marx's

These types of nouns keep the same rule as singular nouns possessive form. We have an apostrophe plus s.

The possessor can be about a plural noun. For plural nouns, there are regular plural and irregular plural nouns. Regular plural nouns are nouns that take an S at the end to make their plural forms. By irregular plural nouns, we mean nouns that become plural by changing their spelling in other ways than adding s to the word. Let's deal with regular plural nouns first.

Regular nouns are nouns that take S at the end of the word to make their plural forms as in the examples:

cat- cats, king- kings, noun- nouns.

Now let's check the following examples to know the morphological changes that happen in ' S construction for regular plural possessors:

- (7) My sisters ' room
- (8) Our friends' house
- (9) Airplanes' wings

In (7), the possessor is 'my sisters' and the noun 'sisters' is a regular plural noun, because it forms its plural by the singular form 'sister' to which it is added S. We can say that as the possessor ends by S, we have only the apostrophe.

In (8), the possessor is 'friends'. The noun 'friends' is a regular plural noun. In (8). It adds to the singular noun friend.

In (9), the possessor which is a regular plural noun, is airplanes. It is formed with the singular noun plus s.

From the examples given we can say that in English to form the plural of nouns we can add 'S' to the end of the singular noun, the nouns that follow that rule to make their plural are regular plural nouns. We have to retain also that for genitive constructions in 'S with regular plural possessors, for the genitive markers, we have the first noun and the apostrophe without S plus the second noun.

Irregular plural nouns have an ending other than s at the end of the singular noun (Adamzewski, Gabilan 1992) as in stimulus, stimuli or tooth, teeth. Let's consider the following instances about the variation of the genitive marker.

(10) The children's toys

(11) Mice's feet

(12) Bacteria's invasion

To make their plural forms, words have other endings than s added to the singular form, what makes them being called irregular plural nouns. Then *children* is the plural of *child*, *mice*, the plural form of *mouse*.

In (10), the possessor is an irregular plural possessor. In fact the noun *children* is the irregular plural form of the word '*child*', then we have apostrophe plus S for the genitive marker.

In (11), the possessor *mice*, is an irregular plural noun. The construction form is apostrophe without s.

In (12), N1 is an irregular plural noun, we have apostrophe plus S for the genitive marker. The noun bacteria is an irregular possessor, the form of the genitive marker is apostrophe without s.

Then we can say that for irregular plural nouns, we have the first noun plus apostrophe plus s.

The possessor can sometimes be about proper nouns with classical origin. Let's study the following examples:

(13) Archimedes' law or Archimedes' s law

(14) Ulysses' journey or Ulysses's journey

(15) Jesus' time or Jesus' s time

We have two choices for the writing about nouns with classical origin, either we put the first noun, apostrophe without s or we put an s after the apostrophe. (De- Lepine 2000) At any rate, both writings are correct. Archimedes, Ulysses and Jesus are nouns with classical origin.

Then for nouns with classical origin, as a genitive marker, we can have either s after the apostrophe or only the apostrophe.

Sometimes, the genitive construction with 'S can have some other changes where we have the first noun and apostrophe S without the second noun as in an elliptical genitive. So let's study that point in the next step.

(16) I can hear a car. I think it's the doctor's

(17) Mr Morgan's is a very old cat

(18) She is at the chemist's

In (16), (17) and (18) the genitive marker is apostrophe s, even though there lacks the second noun. Then in elliptical genitive, the genitive marker appears in its natural form: apostrophe plus s.

3. The impact of the different variations of the English genitive marker on syntax

Grammar really deals with the good ordering of elements. Coherence is so crucial in grammar. The genitive marker changes morphologically ('s or '). Let's consider the following chart for the variations:

The different constructions	singular nouns, proper nouns ending with s, z, x, etc.,	regular plural nouns	irregular plural nouns	nouns with classical origin	elliptical genitive
morphological changes of the genitive marker's	Noun + apostrophe + s . N'S N Jane's camera	Noun+apostrophe, plus Noun N'N airplane's wings	Noun + apostrophe + s +noun N'SN Women's dresses	- Apostrophe - Or apostrophe s +nounArchimedes'law	Noun + apostrophe +s N'S At Mary's

The genitive marker can be written with an apostrophe plus s, it can also be an apostrophe without s. the impact of these variations is clearly noticed on the syntactic level of genitive constructions. As said David Crystal, *there is no accuracy outside grammar*, (1988), then the changes impact on the syntax of genitive utterances.

Singular nouns, sometimes, proper nouns ending with s, ch etc,, nouns with classical origin, elliptical genitive and irregular plural nouns, have an apostrophe plus s as a genitive marker. We have only an apostrophe without s for regular plural nouns. the variations do not base on the phonology, we mean that we put an apostrophe after hearing the sound s. then the different variations of the genitive marker obeys the coherent ordering of elements in grammar.

Conclusion

This work has shown first the origin of the English genitive marker, what shows that the use of the apostrophe is important. It has replaced the *e* in old English. Through this work, we can say that all the variations of the genitive marker depend on the nature of the first noun, the possessor. Besides, the possessor can be a singular noun: Derek, a noun with classical origin: Archimedes, a plural noun. For the plural nouns, we can have regular plural nouns that are about singular nouns of the words in question plus s. There are also nouns that make their plurals other than that: irregular plural nouns: children. We have the genitive marker: *apostrophe* for genitive constructions which possessors stand for regular plural nouns, sometimes, proper nouns with classical origin. we have apostrophe s for irregular plural nouns,

sometimes nouns with classical origin that end with s,. Dealing with this topic allows English learners to know that the morphological dynamics of the English genitive marker, impact on the syntax (' or's) . English learners, once they deal with the English genitive marker dynamics, will know about the functioning of the noun in English, to distinguish regular plural nouns from irregular plural nouns. they will also know the functioning of the genitive marker in elliptical genitive so that to understand the impact of these changes on the syntax.

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