REVIEW

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Heidi Quinn's book is not for the faint-hearted or uninitiated, but for those with the basics, it is a well-researched, theoretically informed, well-structured and well-argued treatise on the problem of variation and consistency in the choice of pronominal case-forms in English. It also serves as an effective advanced introduction to several major theoretical approaches to the determination of case forms.

Readers with a background and interest in historical linguistics, or formal semantic or syntactic theory should find it a particularly rewarding read, as it explores and selects between various theoretical accounts of the syntactic structures underlying examples of English pronouns in a number of relatively little-studied contexts, and arrives at quite satisfying conclusions that do justice to the subtlety of the data without abandoning theoretical rigour.

The introduction gives a concise overview of the problem: how to explain the variation in the choice of pronoun forms in various syntactic contexts in English, and the proposed solution: a set of five violable constraints that can be re-ordered with different weightings to account for individual variation. The following chapters cover historical changes to case-marking in the English pronominal system (Allen 1995; Kemenade 1987); Argument case (Wunderlich 1997), Positional case, (Chomsky 2000) and default case forms; a rich set of elicited data and grammaticality judgements; phonological feature-

structures and their impact on pronoun forms (Kenstowicz 1994; Dogil and Luschützky 1990); an introduction to OT and competing models of constraint-weightings (Prince and Smolensky 1993; Guy 1997; Mohanan 1998), and the application of the model to numerous combinations of pronouns in several constructions.

The overview of the final conclusions and analysis presented in the introduction are extremely useful, both in framing the discussion to follow, and in serving as a ready reference as analysis progresses. The book is also so well-laid out, and most of the chapters are so short and well-focussed, that it is easy to find the right place to re-read the points that do not sink in the first time through. (With a topic as complex and technical as this, drawing on a number of competing analyses from such a range of sub-disciplines, I'm sure most readers will find some part that challenges their preconceptions and comprehension, but that is what we look for in a text like this.)

The technical complexity of the topic is generally made accessible through the clarity and logic of Quinn's prose, and her direct and relaxed style. These, along with meticulous cross-referencing, make it relatively easy to navigate through the complexities, to arrive at a deeper understanding of the topic. Some circularity, and repetition is virtually inevitable, but this will no doubt be an advantage when using this book — as I am sure many will — as a ready reference on every imaginable aspect of pronominal case forms at different times in the history of English.

For those interested in methodologies for the elicitation of syntactic data, the discussion of the research design and the pitfalls of the techniques the author used to elicit native-speaker judgements also make refreshing and thought-provoking reading.

It would have been helpful to have a few more definitions of key distinctions set out in the Introduction, especially the notions of strong vs weak and robust vs gracile pronouns, since these feature continuously throughout the early discussion. I found the discussion of *it*-clefts particularly difficult to digest, both in the theoretical discussion of their structure, and in the review of the forms of pronouns found therein.

In the later chapters, I also came to feel that there are so many competing versions of syntactic analysis for any given structure, and so many possible factors contributing to the selection of case-forms in Quinn's analysis, that it seemed virtually inevitable that there would always be some combination of the two that would account for each set of data. Whether the reader considers this a 'Good Thing' or not, will depend on their beliefs about the nature of

syntactic processing: a good analysis *should* work in all cases, but the more conventional view is that the best account is a single parsimonious one, not one based on a rich array of flexible fluctuating interacting choices. To my mind though, this only makes the present work, unlike more simplistic OT analyses, more satisfyingly subversive: the view of (English) syntax that the data brings to light is strikingly different from the idealized view of a uniform system shared by all speakers that is typically assumed in works on formal syntactic analysis. Syntax emerges as, in fact, a hodge-podge of idiosyncratic systems that differ from speaker to speaker, and that may well be in flux within individual speakers. This constitutes a refreshing, and challenging view of syntax that deserves much greater attention.

References

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