Possessive preproprial determiners in North-West British English

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1   Introduction

Phenomenon: North-West British English[1] (NWBE) possessive pronouns with personal names:

(1)   <u>Our John</u> came to visit yesterday.

- Characterisation (§2): restricted to kin; non-contrastive; exclusive and 'royally' plural first person; generally restricted to first and second person.
- Analysis (§3): logophoric (Clements 1975) preproprial (Matushansky 2008) D forms particular to personal names.
- Typological situation (§4): NWBE evades the predictions of Longobardi's (1994) theory of reference.
- Conclusion (§5)

2   Characterisation

NWBE possessive pronouns with personal names are restricted to kin, non-contrastive, exclusive and 'royally' plural in the first person, and generally restricted to first and second person.

1. dialect area
2. examples from popular culture
3. meaning
4. person restriction

2.1   Dialect area

- Parts of North-West England + Northern Ireland.
    - urbanised south of historic Lancashire – now the metropolitan counties of Merseyside, dominated by Liverpool, and Greater Manchester.
    - Belfast and surrounds (ferries).

Figure 1: Partial map of the British Isles; dialect area for NWBE circled

2.2   Examples from popular culture

(2)   Liverpool
       <u>Our Cilla</u> – Cilla Black, the late singer and *Blind Date* host.

(3)   Bolton
       <u>R Wayne</u> – talent show entrant in Peter Kay's *Britain's Got the Pop Factor… and Possibly a New Celebrity Jesus Christ Soapstar Superstar Strictly on Ice*.[2]

(4)   Belfast
       "Did you hear about <u>our John</u>? He's a gay man now." – catchphrase of comedienne Catherine Tate's character, John Leary's mum.[3]

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[2] Thanks to Chris Hicks for pointing me to this one.

[3] For many iterations, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooWIoSwEsZo [last accessed 17/01/2017]. A particularly clear example is at 3'51'' – 3'58''.

(5)   Greater Manchester
        Peter Kay's Car Share, Episode 4:[4]
        [John and Kayleigh are colleagues. John recently began giving Kayleigh lifts to work as
        part of a workplace car-share scheme. Last night Kayleigh went to a Beyoncé concert.
        Kelly is Kayleigh's cousin, whose emigration to Australia has been discussed before, but
        who John has never met.]

        Kayleigh: <u>Our Kelly</u>'ll be well jeal[ous] when she finds out. She's always
                            wanted to see [Beyoncé] – she loves her.

        John: How is <u>your Kelly</u> getting on in Australia? Has she settled in yet?

2.3   Meaning

1. Kin restriction
    - Family members and very close friends (e.g. childhood friends, boy/girlfriends, etc.).
    - *our/your Kelly* = Kayleigh's cousin Kelly.
    - Some affective semantic content; but default when referring to kin.
        o   pragmatic connotations arise far more from their absence.

2. Not contrastive[5]
    - Possessive pronoun does not alter the direct and unique reference of a proper name.
    - Cf. standard English – *our John … your John* also discourse salient.
    - No other Kellys in (5).

3. Exclusive and 'royally' plural first person.
    - Exclusive – sphere of kinship for *our Kelly* limited to Kayleigh, excluding John.[6]
    - 'Royal': *our* not necessarily semantically plural – Kayleigh could be Kelly's only cousin;
      also by only children of their parents.
    - Singular only possible, and more common than plural, within the nuclear family.
        o   e.g. a wife of her husband: *my John*.

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[4] A preview of this episode, containing the quoted passage at 1'09'' – 1'18'', can be found at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNorQgFCkWM [last accessed 17/01/2017].

[5] Though the possessive pronoun may in part be spelling out the very weak contrast inherent in
the direct reference of a name; i.e. the contrast between Kayleigh's friend Kelly, and all other
Kellys in the world.

[6] The plural is inclusive by circumstance when speaker and addressee have the same kinship
circle with respect to the referent.

2.4   Person restriction

- General restriction (6) to first (a) and second (b) person; third person (c) ungrammatical, except in circumstances (7) to be elaborated in §3.3:

(6)   (a)   (i)   <u>My John</u> is out tonight.   (ii)   <u>Our Mary</u> is hosting tomorrow.

       (b)   Has <u>your Mary</u> been to visit lately?

       (c)   <u>*His/*Her/*Their Mary</u> came to visit yesterday.

(7)   John$_i$ said his$_i$ Mary's coming at the weekend.

3   Analysis

NWBE possessive pronouns with personal names = logophoric preproprial determiners; i.e. logophoric (Clements 1975) D forms anteced by a logophoric perspective centre (Sells 1987) particular to personal names (Matushansky 2008).

1. Matushansky's theory: the naming convention and preproprial forms
2. distribution: NWBE and Catalan
3. decomposition of R$_0$; logophoricity
4. summary

3.1   Matushansky's theory of proper names

- Matushansky's (2006a, 2008, 2015) definite description theory of proper names.
- Proper names are two-place predicates: standard individual argument slot + a second argument slot for the naming convention R (Recanati 1997).
- R relates an individual with the phonological string of a name.
    - Example lexical entry for the name *Alice* in (8) (Matushansky 2008: 592, ex.58):

(8) $[[Alice]] = \lambda x \ \varepsilon \ D_e \ . \ \lambda R_{<e, \ <n, \ t>>} \ . \ R \ (x) \ (/æl\text{ɪ}s/)$
       where n is a sort of the type e (a phonological string).

- Proper names (9) in predicative position (a) – R anaphoric on the naming verb; in argument position (b) – free variable R$_0$.

(9)   (a)   Call me Alice.
       (b)   Alice visited last Saturday.

- R_0 = the contextually salient naming convention in force between speaker and hearer.[7]
- Meaning of *Alice* in argument position (10) (Matushansky 2008: 592, ex. 59):

(10) $[[Alice]] (R_0) = \lambda x \; \varepsilon \; D_e$. R_0 holds between x and the phonological string /ælɪs/

- Prepropprial articles, e.g. Catalan (11): special forms (a) of the definite article (b) with personal names:[8]

(11)   (a)   en Pere   (b)   el gos   (Longobardi 1994: 656, ex.91)
                 the Peter   the dog

- Matushansky (2006a): prepropprial articles reflect a relation between D and R_0.[9]
- Claim: possessive pronouns with personal names in NWBE = prepropprial determiners.

3.2   Distribution

Catalan[10] prepropprial articles (12, 14, 16, 18) and NWBE possessive pronouns with personal names (13, 15, 17, 19) are both:

 1. Compatible only with personal names[11]

(12)   (a)   (i)   En Pere   (ii)   Na Maria
          (b)   (*En) Barcelona

(13)   (a)   (i)   Our Peter   (ii)   Our Mary
          (b)   (*Our) Liverpool

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[7] Or, more strictly, the naming convention of the speaker presupposed to be shared by the hearer (Matushansky 2008: 592; cf. Recanati 1997: 140).

[8] Other languages with prepropprial articles include Tagalog, Malagasy, Maori, some Polynesian languages, and some Scandinavian dialects (Matushansky 2006: 286, 303).

[9] Matushansky (2006a) implements the relation as m-merger (Matushansky 2006b). I argue against m-merger in the Appendix.

[10] Thanks to Afra Pujol i Campeny for help with the Catalan data.

[11] Speakers of both Catalan (a) and NWBE (b) vary in their acceptance of the special prepropprial form with pet names (i), probably correlating with their tolerance of its anthropomorphising connotations:
          (i)   (a)   % En Roc
                  (b)   % Our Fido

2. Incompatible with restrictive modification

(14)   (a)   *En Joan que coneixia ja no existeix.   (Longobardi 1994: 657, ex. 93; cf.
       (b)   El Joan que coneixia ja no existeix.   Matushansky 2006a: 303f., ex. 44)

(15)   (a)   *Our John that I used to know no longer exists.
       (b)   The John that I used to know no longer exists.

3. Incompatible with plural names

(16)   (a)   *Ens Peres són trempats.   (cf. Longobardi 1994: 656, ex. 92)
       (b)   Els Peres són trempats.

(17)   (a)   *Our Peters are clever.
       (b)   Peters are clever.

4. Incompatible with naming construction

(18)   Va   resultar que *(en) Johnny el   van   anomenar (*en) Jonathan
       go-3SG turn.out that   the Johnny him go-3PL name   the Jonathan
       'It turned out that Johnny had been named Jonathan.' (Matushansky 2008: 581, ex. 21)

(19)   It turned out that *(our) Johnny had been named (*our) Jonathan.

- Same distribution, so…
    o NWBE possessive pronouns with personal names are preproprial forms
    o reflecting a relation between D and R_0.

3.3   Decomposing R_0, and logophoricity

NWBE motivates two advances beyond Matushansky's theory: a finer-grained R_0 and logophoricity (Clements 1975).

- R_0 decomposable according to who bears responsibility, by virtue of kinship, for the naming convention in force between speaker and hearer.
- First and second person (recall §2.4) – relation between D and R_0 has a different morphological reflex according to which discourse participant is responsible for R_0:
    o speaker R_S (*my/our*)
    o addressee R_A (*your*).

- Third person (20) ungrammatical out of the blue (a); but compare (b):[12]

(20) (a)   *His Mary came to visit yesterday.   cf. (6c)
      (b)   John$_i$ said his$_i$ Mary came to visit yesterday.   = (7)

- Antecedent necessary but not sufficient (21): topic (a) vs. perspectivising (b) frames:[13]

(21) (a)   ??Speaking of Bill$_i$, his$_i$ Mary's visiting at the weekend.
      (b) $^?$According to Adam$_i$, his$_i$ Mary's visiting at the weekend.

- Third person requires an antecedent that is a logophoric perspective centre (Sells 1987).
    - third party R_T (*his/her/their*) responsibility for R_0.
- Reconciliation with R_S and R_A: speaker and addressee inherently logophoric as centres of perspective in the discourse.
- Overall: grammatical if anteceded by a logophoric perspective centre (Sells 1987).[14]

3.4   Summary

- NWBE possessive pronouns with personal names = logophoric preproprial determiners.
- Preproprial forms reflect a relation between D and R_0 – speaker-hearer convention.
- Distributional similarity between NWBE and Catalan.
- Decomposition of R_0: R_S (*my/our*), R_A (*your*), R_T (*his/her/their*).
- Logophoricity: requires an antecedent that is a logophoric perspective centre.

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[12] The data in (20) and (21) have the same status with *her* and feminine antecedents. However, *their* is ungrammatical in (ii), on either a gender-neutral third person singular or 'royal plural' reading. *Their* is only grammatical with a plural, perspective-bearing antecedent, as in (iii):
    (ii)   *John$_i$ said their$_i$ Mary came to visit yesterday.
    (iii)   The Smiths$_i$ / [Angie and Bob]$_i$ said their$_i$ Bella came to visit yesterday.
I have no explanation for why the 'royal we' reading should be possible with *our* + personal name, but an analogous 'royal they' reading is impossible with *their*.

[13] For the contrast in perspectivisation in (21), consider the minimal pair in (iv) (Dubinsky and Hamilton 1998: 688, ex. 15). Since *according to* endows *John* with perspective (a), *John* cannot corefer with the antilogophoric epithet *the idiot*. *Speaking of*, by contrast, does not imbue *John* with perspective (b), allowing *John* and *the idiot* to corefer:
    (iv)   (a)   *According to John$_i$, the idiot$_i$ is married to a genius.
             (b)   Speaking of John$_i$, the idiot$_i$ is married to a genius.

[14] Taking 'antecedence' literally would mean adopting a theory where speaker and addressee are syntactically represented – e.g. Speas and Tenny (2003), Wiltschko (2015).

4   Typology

NWBE evades predictions of Longobardi's (1994, 2005, 2008) theory of reference arising from the preproprial determiner analysis.

1. Longobardi's theory of reference
2. the typological evasiveness of NWBE

4.1   Longobardi's theory of reference

- Longobardi's (1994, 2005, 2008) Topological Mapping Theory of reference.
  - o 'Topological' – interpretation ~ structural position in DP.
- Common nouns: D a substantive referential operator; N defines range.
- Generics: D not a substantive operator; N refers generically to the class or kind.
- Proper names: D not a substantive operator; N achieves direct reference by (c)overtly raising and substituting for D.[15]
- Parameterisation re realisation of non-substantive D: strong vs. weak person languages.[16]
- Strong, e.g. Italian – all interactions between D and N overtly realised.
  - o Non-substantive D realised as an 'expletive article' (22) with (a) generics, both plural (i) and mass (ii); and (b) proper names (i), unless overt N-to-D (ii):

(22)   (a)   (i)   *(I) castori sono mammiferi.   (Longobardi 1994: 630, cf. ex. 39a, 40a)
                                the beavers are   mammals
               (ii)   *(Il) vino è fatto   di uve.
                                the wine is made of grapes
         (b)   (i)   *(Il) mio Gianni   (Longobardi 1994: 623, cf. ex. 28)
                                the my   John
               (ii)   Gianni mio

- Weak, e.g. English – only substantive definite articles overtly realised.
  - o Non-substantive D null (23):

(23)   (a)   (i)   (*The) beavers are mammals.
               (ii)   (*The) wine is made out of grapes.
         (b)   (*The) John telephoned.

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[15] That proper names originate in N makes the spirit of Longobardi's theory compatible with Matushansky's definite description theory of proper names from §3.

[16] And also, perhaps, languages in which Person is not grammaticalised at all, e.g. Japanese (Longobardi 2008).

4.2   The typological evasiveness of NWBE

- Longobardi (1994: 631f., note 28): "no dialect of English appears to admit anything like *il Gianni*"… but *our John*?
- NWBE prepropial determiner analysis… expletive, non-substantive D? strong person?
- Predicts, wrongly (24), expletive articles with generics (a) and other proper names (b):

(24)   (a)   (i)   (*The/*Our) beavers build dams.

         (ii)   (*The/*Our) milk is white.

(b)   (*The/*Our) Liverpool is a beautiful city.   cf. (13b)

- NWBE has prepropial determiners, but is not a strong person language…
- Not due to prepropial form, *our*/*the* vs. *il*; Catalan (*en*/*el*) has expletive articles (25):

(25)   (a)   (i)   *(Els) tigres son mamifers.

                 the   tigers are mammals

         (ii)   *(La) llet es de color   blanc.

                  the milk is of colour white

- But are NWBE and Italian comparable wrt strong/weak person? is *our* expletive like *il*?
    o Not semantically: *our* carries possessive and affective semantic content.
    o Not syntactically: *our* not a unitary head, straddles spec-DP and D (Abney 1987).
- Overall, despite having prepropial determiners, NWBE is not a strong person language.

5   Conclusion

1. Introduction
    - Phenomenon: NWBE possessive pronouns with personal names.

2. Characterisation
    - Kin; non-contrastive; exclusive and 'royally' plural first person; generally 1/2 person.

3. Analysis
    - Prepropial determiners (cf. Catalan), reflecting a relation between D and R_0.
    - Decomposition of R_0: R_S (*my*/*our*), R_A (*your*), R_T (*his*/*her*/*their*).
    - Logophoricity: antecedent a logophoric perspective centre.

4. Typology
    - Prepropial D analysis ~ strong person language, expletive articles.
    - NWBE not strong person; *our* neither syntactically nor semantically expletive.

5. Future research
   - NWBE possessive pronouns with common nouns such as *lad*, *mam*, or *kid* (26):

(26)   Manchester
         <u>Our kid</u> – Oasis lead guitarist Noel Gallagher, re younger brother and ex-bandmate Liam.
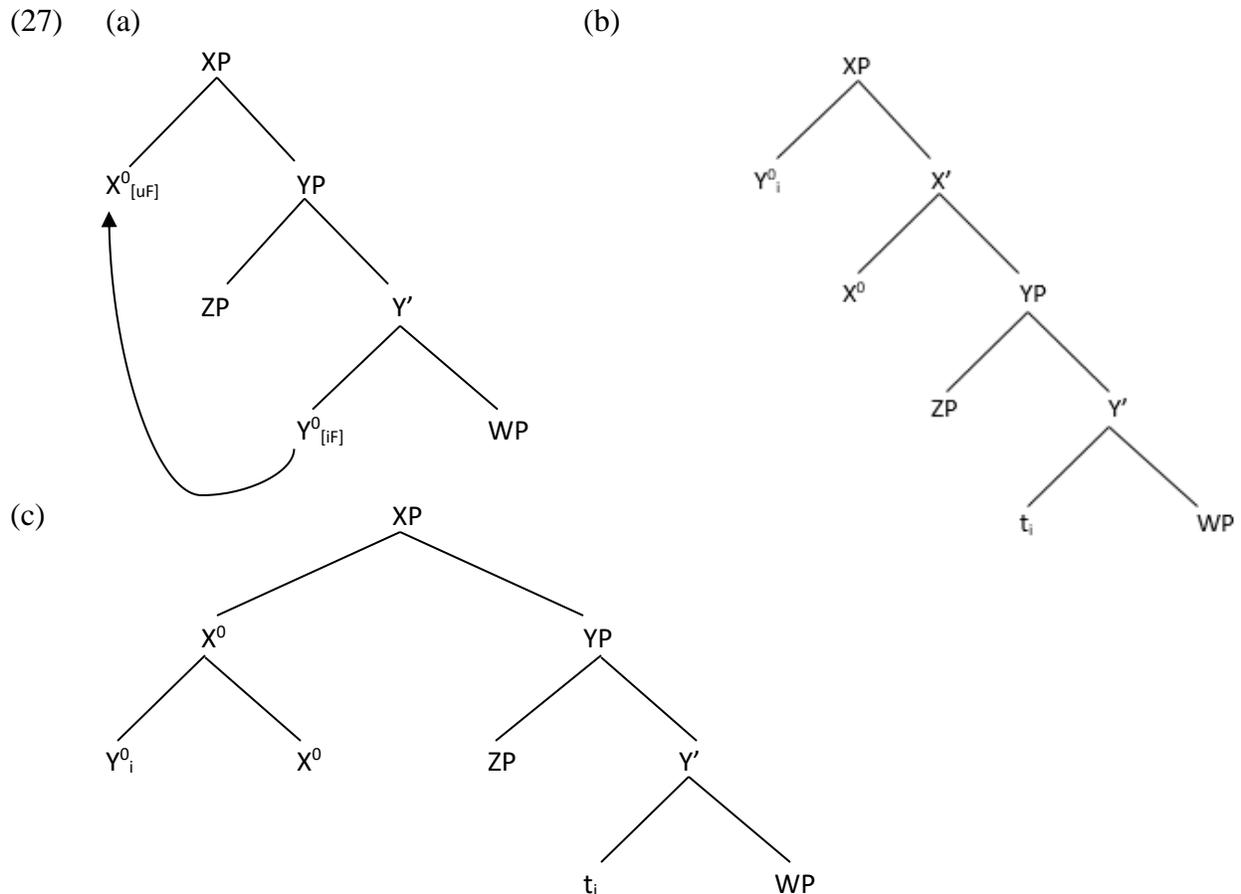
   - Other English dialects: possessive pronouns with personal names in North-East English (Beal et al. 2012); extensive use of the definite article in extreme northern (Buchstaller and Corrigan 2015) and Celtic (Hickey 2007) varieties of English.
   - Other languages: Dutch, Korean, Hindi, …

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A1   The D – R₀ relation: against m-merger

- Matushansky (2006a) implements the preproprial D – R₀ relation as m-merger.
- Matushansky (2006b: 81, ex. 10; cf. 2006a: 297, ex. 34) decomposes head movement (27) into two operations:
  - (a) movement of a head to specifier of attracting head; plus
  - (b) m(orphological)-merger: takes two adjacent syntactic heads, returns one (c):

(27)   (a)   (b)

XP

$X^0_{[uF]}$ YP

ZP Y'

$Y^0_{[iF]}$ WP

XP

Y^0_i X'

X^0 YP

ZP Y'

t_i WP

(c) XP

X^0 YP

Y^0_i X^0 ZP Y'

t_i WP

- M-merger applies to $[_{DP}\ D^0\ [_{NP}\ N^0\ \ldots\ ]\ ]$, affixing D to N (Matushansky 2006a: 297, ex. 35); obligatorily triggered by [+proper] – the syntactic correlate of R.
- Hence D morphologically conditioned to take on a preproprial form: *en/na* in Catalan, null in standard English (Matushansky 2006a: 297); possessive in NWBE, I argue.

Two arguments against m-merger:

1. M-merger as defined cannot apply across DP and NP.
   - M-merger: "the input to m-merger is two heads in a particular (specifier-head) configuration" (Matushansky 2006b: 94) – i.e. within the projection of a head…
   - Cannot be resolved by adding the movement step from (a) to (b) in (27); restrictive modification argued to block m-merger (Matushansky 2006a: 296) – recall (14) and (15).

2. M-merger applied successively incorrectly – recall (16) and (17) – rules in preproprial articles with plural names.

- Matushansky (2006a: 298): Num intervenes between D and N[+proper]; but two iterations of m-merger affixing N to Num and N-Num to D would bring D and [+proper] into the same head.[17]
- Agree (Chomsky 2000, 2001): hierarchical disruption of the preproprial relation between D and R_0 by Num formulable in terms of Relativized Minimality (Rizzi 1990).

A2   'Kin' versus R

- Matushansky takes proper names (28) in the naming construction (a) to be basic:
   o R allows naming verb to determine precise relation between bearer and string.
- R shoehorned into proper names elsewhere:
   o argument position (b) – free variable R_0
   o non-specific indefinite and quantified NPs (c) – existential quantification over R.

(28) (a)   I baptise you Alice.
      (b)   Alice visited last Saturday.   (=9b)
      (c)   An Alfred Russell joined the club today.   (Matushansky 2015, ex. 22b)

- Alternatively, naming as a function of names; place (29), another personal name (30):[18]

(29) (a)   [[Stockwell]] = λx. x is from Stockwell
      (b)   [[Richard Stockwell]] = Richard (from) Stockwell

(30) (a)   [['s son]] = λy. λx. x son of y
      (b)   [[Kyle Johnson]] = Kyle, son of John

- NWBE: naming as a function of 'kin' (31):

(31)

ιx. x is kin of us Λ x is called /dʒɒn/

the   λx. x is kin of us Λ x is called /dʒɒn/

λx. x is kin of us   λx. x is called /dʒɒn/

KIN   us   N   /dʒɒn/
λy. λx. x is kin of y   λn. λx. x is called n

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[17] This derivation grants m-merger across projections of different heads, contrary to point 1.

[18] Thanks to Ed Keenan for alerting me to this, and to Kyle Johnson for talking through it.