

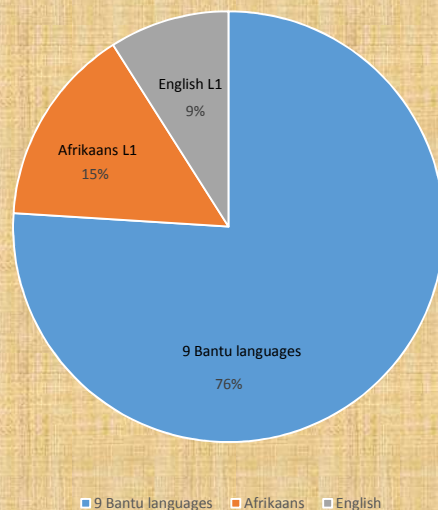
*Cross-linguistic regularities in genitive  
variation and how they (might) affect  
contact varieties of English:  
The case of animacy splits in English and  
Afrikaans*

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Question of interest for workshop

*Which probabilistic constraints are  
universal and stable,  
and which are culturally malleable ?*

## Languages of South Africa (L1)



(cf. Statistics South Africa, Census 2001)

## Outline

### I. Animacy in genitive variation in English and Afrikaans

→ method: (comparative) corpus analysis

### II. Animacy in genitive variation in South African English(es)

→ method: experimental study

## Genitive variation in English and Afrikaans

|           | Prenominal genitive |                   |              | Postnominal genitive |                   |                   |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|           | Possessor           | Possessive marker | Possessum    | Possessum            | Possessive marker | Possessor         |
| English   | <i>Harry</i>        | 's<br>↓           | <i>heart</i> | <i>the corner</i>    | <i>of</i><br>↓    | <i>the street</i> |
|           | s-genitive          |                   |              | of-genitive          |                   |                   |
| Afrikaans | <i>Harry</i>        | <i>se</i><br>↓    | <i>hart</i>  | <i>die hoek</i>      | <i>van</i><br>↓   | <i>die straat</i> |
|           | se-genitive         |                   |              | van-genitive         |                   |                   |

### Donaldson (1993: 99)

“There are rules in English which determine which nouns can take 's; it is not usual, for example, to use it with inanimate objects, e.g. *that building's roof* is better said *the roof of the building*, but *that dog's tail* is quite acceptable. This distinction does not exist in Afrikaans, thus *dié gebou se dak* and *dié hond se stert*.”

(Donaldson, Bruce. 1993. *A Grammar of Afrikaans*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.)

## Animacy-based possession splits

possesive construction(s) x

↓  
[+ animate] possessor

↓  
prenominal position

e.g. Dutch: *Jans huis*/  
*Jan z'n huis*

possesive construction(s) y

↓  
[- animate] possessor

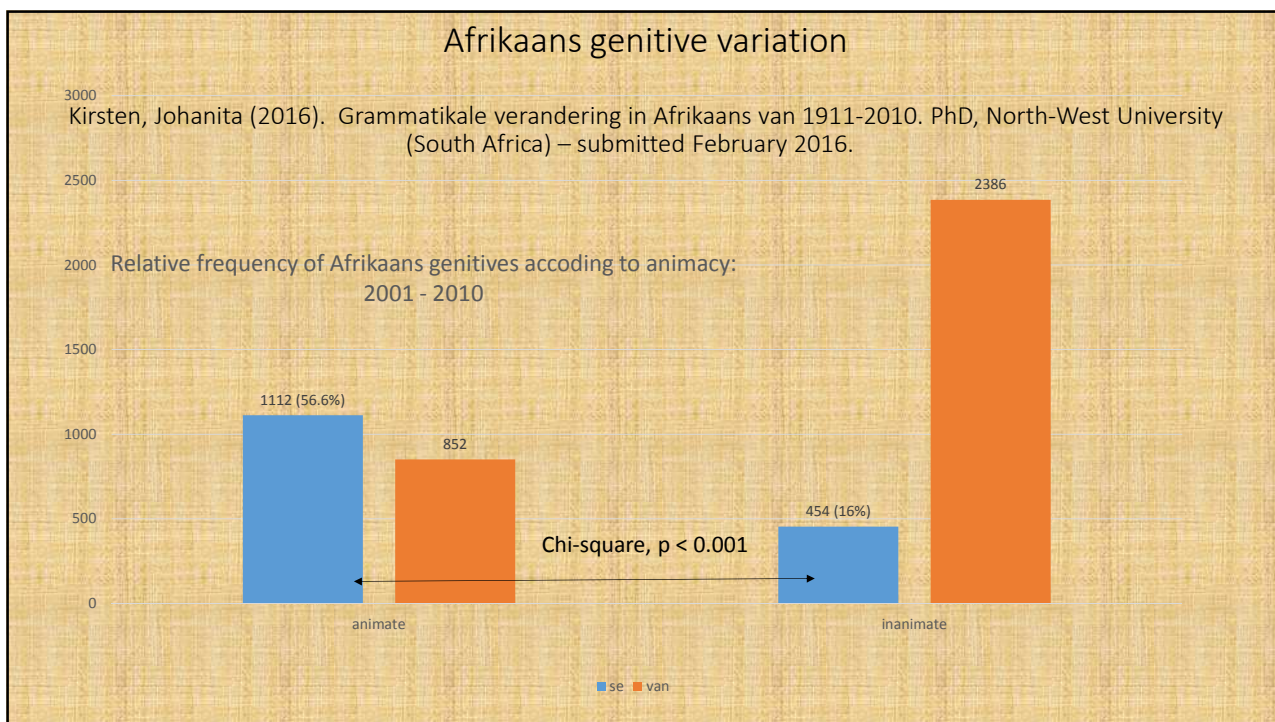
↓  
postnominal position

*het dak van het huis*  
(\**het huis' dak*)

cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2002), Rosenbach (2008), Stolz et al. (2008)

|                                    | English                     |                               | German   |  | Dutch                         |   | Russian                                       |   | Italian             |                            |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|----------------------------|
| possessor                          | prenominal genitive         | postnominal genitive          | prenominal genitive  | postnominal genitive                             | prenominal genitive           | postnominal genitive                    | prenominal genitive                           | postnominal genitive                    | prenominal genitive | postnominal genitive       |
| high in animacy/<br>referentiality | <i>my house</i>             | * <i>the house of me</i>      | <i>mein Haus</i>   | * <i>das Haus mein</i>                           | <i>mijn huis</i>              | * <i>het huis mijn/het huis van mij</i> | <i>моя сестра</i><br>'my sister'              |   | <i>la mia casa</i>  |                            |
|                                    | <i>John's house</i>         | ?? <i>the house of John</i>   | <i>Annas Haus/der Anna ihr Haus</i>                                  | ??? <i>das Buch Annas</i>                        | <i>Jans huis/Jan z'n huis</i> | <i>het huis van Jan</i>                 | <i>Petina šapka</i><br>'Peter (dim.)'s cap'   | <i>šapka Peti</i>                       |                     | <i>la casa di Gianni</i>   |
|                                    | <i>the man's house</i>      | ? <i>the house of the man</i> | <i>dem Mann sein Haus/??des Mannes Haus</i>                          | <i>das Haus des Mannes/das Haus von dem Mann</i> | <i>de man z'n huis</i>        | <i>het huis van de man</i>              | ?? <i>mal'ckiova šapka</i><br>'the boy's cap' | <i>šapka malcika</i><br>'the boy's cap' |                     | <i>la casa dell'uomo</i>   |
|                                    |                             |                               |  |  |                               |   |   |   |                     |                            |
|                                    | (?) <i>the house's roof</i> | <i>the roof of the house</i>  | * <i>des Hauses Dach/ *dem Haus sein Dach Berlins Buergermeister</i> | <i>das Dach des Hauses/das Dach von dem Haus</i> | * <i>het huis' dak</i>        | <i>het dak van het huis</i>             | * <i>kuklina šapka</i><br>'the doll's cap'    | <i>šapka kukly</i><br>'the doll's cap'  |                     | <i>il tetto della casa</i> |
| low in animacy/<br>referentiality  | ? <i>a car's fumes</i>      | <i>the fumes of a car</i>     |  |  |                               |   |   |   |                     |                            |

cf. Rosenbach (2008: 165); see also Aissen & Bresnan (2002) and O'Connor et al. (2013)



### Genitive variation in English and Afrikaans

|                  | Prenominal genitive |                    |              | Postnominal genitive |                     |                   |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
|                  | Possessor           | Possessive marker  | Possessum    | Possessum            | Possessive marker   | Possessor         |
| <b>English</b>   | <i>Harry</i>        | 's<br>↓            | <i>heart</i> | <i>the corner</i>    | <i>of</i><br>↓      | <i>the street</i> |
|                  |                     | <i>s-genitive</i>  |              | <i>animacy</i>       | <i>of-genitive</i>  |                   |
| <b>Afrikaans</b> | <i>Harry</i>        | <i>se</i><br>↓     | <i>hart</i>  | <i>die hoek</i>      | <i>van</i><br>↓     | <i>die straat</i> |
|                  |                     | <i>se-genitive</i> |              | <i>animacy</i>       | <i>van-genitive</i> |                   |

## Corpus of translations (novels): Afrikaans – English

| Language   | Afrikaans   | English   |
|--|---|---|
| Original   | Etienne van Heerden: <i>Die Swye van Mario Salvati</i> .<br>Chapters 1-12.                | J.K. Rowling: <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> .<br>Chapters 1-10.    |
| Translation  | J.K. Rowling: <i>Harry Potter en die Towenaar se Steen</i> .<br>Chapters 1 – 10.          | Etienne van Heerden: <i>The Long Silence of Mario Salvati</i> .<br>Chapters 1-12. |
| Number of genitive tokens<br>(extraction according to project's manual/criteria) | 736   | 652   |
| Total number of genitive tokens  | 1388  |   |
| Coding   | animacy of possessor:<br>[+ animate] = humans, higher animals<br>[- animate] = all others |   |

## Why translations ?

How does genitive choice differ across the two languages,  
all other things being equal ?

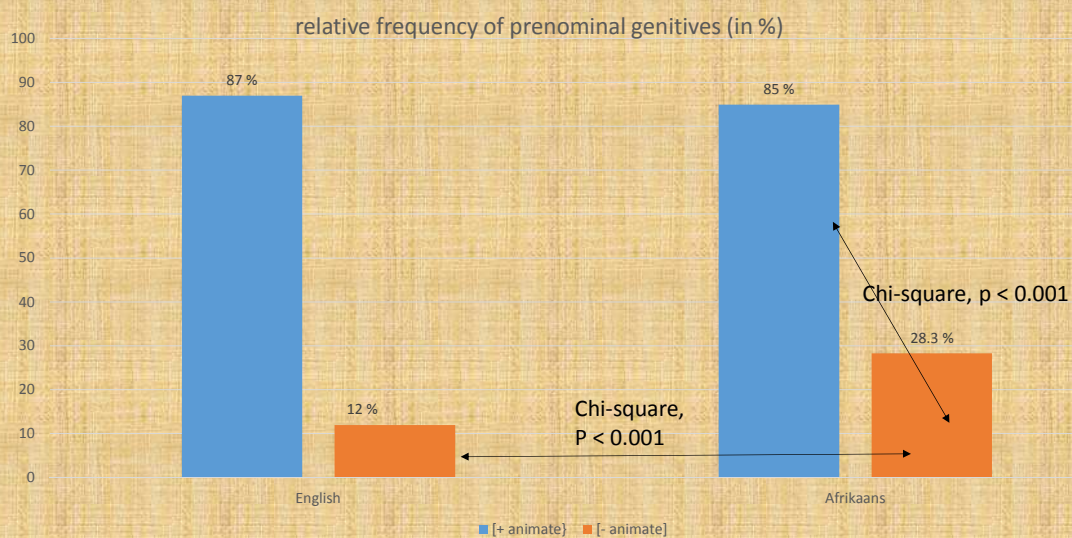
- ➡ direct comparison of genitive choice between 2 languages
- ➡ Translations as a matched cross-linguistic corpus (> parallel corpus)



## Overlap in genitive choice

| possessor                         | Afrikaans                                 | English                                    |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>human proper noun</i>          | <i>Harry se brief</i>                     | <i>Harry's letter</i>                      |
| <i>human definite common noun</i> | <i>sy oom se gesig</i>                    | <i>his uncle's face</i>                    |
| <i>collective</i>                 | <i>die ander span se Soeker</i>           | <i>the other team's seeker</i>             |
| <i>inanimate noun</i>             | <i>die trein se oop deur</i>              | <i>The train's open door</i>               |
| <i>temporal noun</i>              | <i>die vorige aand se doppe</i>           | <i>the previous night's drinking</i>       |
| <i>locative noun</i>              | <i>Berg Onwaarskynlik se kranse sweef</i> | <i>Mount Improbable's cliff-faces</i>      |
| <i>Indefinite noun</i>            | <i>'n man se lyf</i>                      | <i>a man's life</i>                        |
| <i>measure genitive</i>           | <i>miljoene ponde se messelwerk kos</i>   | <i>million of pounds' worth of masonry</i> |
| <i>phrasal (Group genitive)</i>   | <i>[Lily en James Potter] se seun</i>     | <i>[Lily an' James Potter]'s son</i>       |

## Results corpus analysis



| possessor                          | Afrikaans              |                        | English                |                        | German  |   | Dutch                         |                      |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|
|                                    | prenominal genitive    | postnominal genitive   | prenominal genitive    | postnominal genitive   | prenominal genitive   | postnominal genitive                      | prenominal genitive           | postnominal genitive |
| high in animacy/<br>referentiality | <i>my huis</i>         |                        | <i>my house</i>        | *the house of me       | <i>mein Haus</i>  | *das Haus mein                            | <i>mijn huis</i>              |                      |
|                                    | <i>Anna se huis</i>    | die huis van Anna      | <i>John's house</i>    | ?? the house of John   | <i>Annas Haus/der Anna ihr Haus</i>                                       | ??das Buch Annas                          | <i>Jans huis/Jan z'n huis</i> | het huis van Jan     |
|                                    | <i>die man se huis</i> | Die huis van die man   | <i>the man's house</i> | ? the house of the man | <i>dem Mann sein Haus/??des Mannes Haus</i>                               | das Haus des Mannes/das Haus von dem Mann | <i>de man z'n huis</i>        | het huis van de man  |
|                                    |                        |                        |                        |                        |   |   |                               |                      |
|                                    | <i>die huis se dak</i> | die dak van die huis   | ?the house's roof      | the roof of the house  | *des Hauses Dach/<br>*dem Haus sein Dach<br><i>Berlins Buergermeister</i> | das Dach des Hauses/das Dach von dem Haus | *het huis' dak                | het dak van het huis |
| low in animacy/<br>referentiality  | ?n motor se dampe      | die dampe van 'n motor | ?a car's fumes         | the fumes of a car     |   |   |                               |                      |

↑ Relative frequency of prenominal possessive

↑ high in animacy/  
referentiality

↓ low in animacy/  
referentiality

cf. also Rosenbach (2008: 165)

## II. Animacy in genitive choice in South African English(es)

*Do weaker animacy effects carry over from Afrikaans to South African English?*



## South African Englishes

### 1. Transplanted colonial variety (L1):

- **White South African English (WSAfE)**

### 2. Shift varieties (L1):

- Indian SA English
- Black SA English
- Coloured/Cape Flats SA English

### 3. L2 varieties:

- **Afrikaans L2 English**
- L2 English of various Bantu languages

## Experimental study

- Questionnaire study
- Forced choice between *s*-genitive and *of*-genitive in English (cf. also Rosenbach 2002, 2005)
- Items from parallel corpus, embedded in narrative context, interspersed with fillers
- instructions
- Personal details (age, language background)
- Duration: 10 – 15 minutes

## Experimental study: Design

| Subject groups   | White South African English (WSAfE)   | Afrikaans L2 English   | British English (control group)  |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| Subjects         | 44 subjects,<br>L1 English/ L2 Afrikaans<br><br>age 18 - 83<br>(average age: 55.2 years), | 43 subjects,<br>L1 Afrikaans/L2 English<br><br>age 25 – 84<br>(average age: 49.3 years), | 43 subjects,<br>no knowledge of Afrikaans<br><br>age 23 – 81<br>(average age: 57 years), |
| Condition tested | [- animate] possessor, 11 items   |  |  |

## example

*The San were here first. They'd occupied the cave on the mountain and they'd left their paintings on the walls for **[generations to come/coming generations]** to puzzle over in **[wonderment/amazement]**.*

*When he was **[finished/done]**, the captain blew the paint dry carefully and showed the picture to the guide, who nodded approvingly. Earlier he had waited outside **[the mouth of the cave/ the cave's mouth]** while Captain Grid crept down beside the walls, touching the paintings with hungry fingertips as **[though/if]** he wanted to steal them from the rocks.*

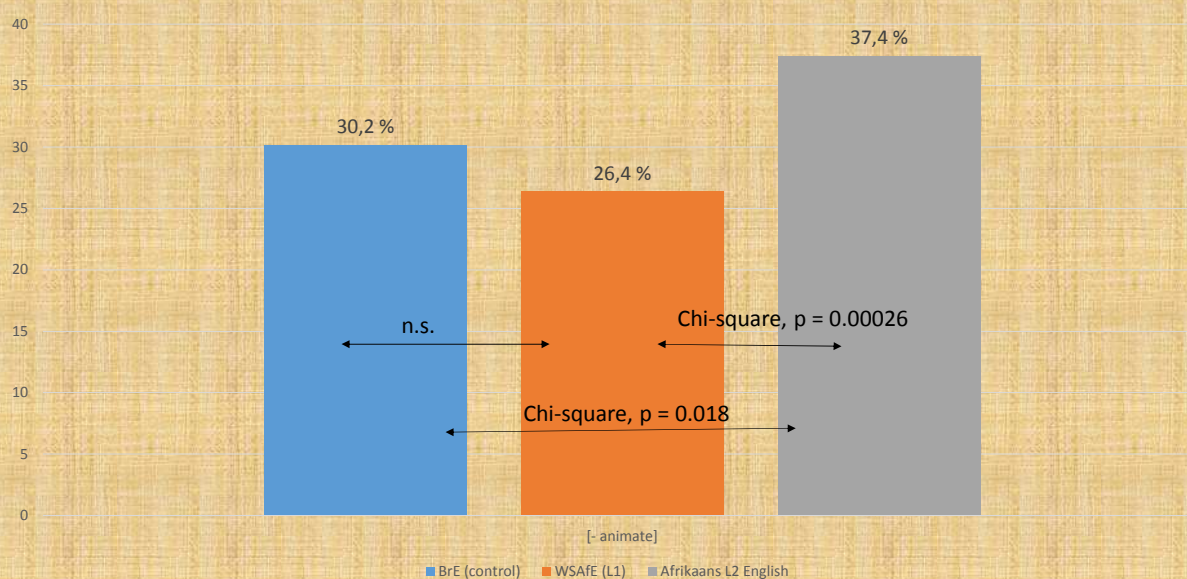
## Prediction(s):

If the weaker animacy effects in Afrikaans carry over to English, then the 2 SA Englishes tested – in contact with Afrikaans - should show a higher use of the *s*-genitive with inanimate possessors,

1. via their L2 (WSAfE)
2. via their L1 (Afrikaans L2 English)

compared to the BrE control group.

Experimental study: Relative frequency of *s*-genitive with [- animate] possessors in 3 subject groups



## Interpretation of results

Research question:

*Do the weaker animacy effects in Afrikaans carry over to SA Englishes ?*

→ Yes, they do in the case of Afrikaans L2 English.

→ No, they don't in the case of White South African English (L1).

## Animacy in varieties of English

Animacy is the most volatile factor across varieties of English (region), register (spoken/written), genres and diachronically (time) in genitive variation (cf. e.g. Rosenbach 2002; Wolk, Bresnan, Rosenbach & Szmrecsanyi 2013; Jankowski & Tagliamonte 2014; Szmrecsanyi, this workshop).

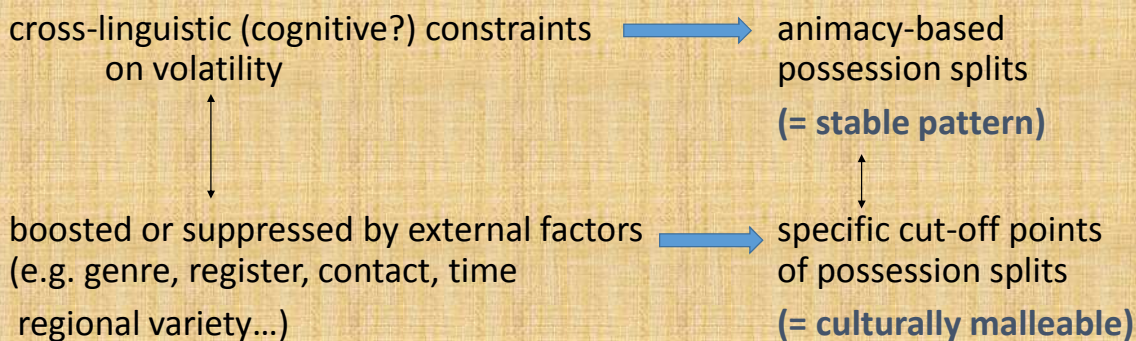
AmE > (BrE/ WSAfE) > NzE/ CanE



strength of animacy effect in genitive choice

| possessor                             | Afrikaans                          |                                 | American English                  |                                  | British English/<br>(WSAFE)       |                                  | Canadian<br>English/ New<br>Zealand English |                                      | Dutch                              |  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
|                                       | prenominal<br>genitive             | postnominal<br>genitive         | prenominal<br>genitive            | postnominal<br>genitive          | pre-<br>nominal<br>genitive       | postnominal<br>genitive          | Pre-<br>nominal<br>genitive                 | Post-<br>nominal<br>genitive         | prenominal<br>genitive             | postnominal<br>genitive                |
| high in<br>animacy/<br>referentiality | <i>my huis</i>                     |                                 | <i>my house</i>                   | *the house<br>of me              | <i>my house</i>                   | *the house<br>of me              | <i>my<br/>house</i>                         | *the<br>house of<br>me               | <i>mijn huis</i>                   | *het huis<br>mijn/*het<br>huis van mij |
|                                       | <i>John se huis</i>                | <i>die huis van<br/>John</i>    | <i>John's<br/>house</i>           | ?? the house<br>of John          | <i>John's<br/>house</i>           | ?? the house<br>of John          | <i>John's<br/>house</i>                     | ?? the<br>house of<br>John           | <i>Jans huis/<br/>Jan z'n huis</i> | het huis van<br>Jan                    |
|                                       | <i>die man se<br/>huis</i>         | <i>die huis van<br/>die man</i> | <i>the man's<br/>house</i>        | ? the house<br>of the man        | <i>the man's<br/>house</i>        | ? the house<br>of the man        | <i>the<br/>man's<br/>house</i>              | ? the<br>house of<br>the man         | <i>de man z'n<br/>huis</i>         | het huis van<br>de man                 |
|                                       |                                    |                                 |                                   |                                  |                                   |                                  |   |                                      |                                    |  |
|                                       | <i>die<br/>huis<br/>se<br/>dak</i> | <i>die dak van<br/>die huis</i> | ? <i>the<br/>house's<br/>roof</i> | <i>the roof of<br/>the house</i> | ? <i>the<br/>house's<br/>roof</i> | <i>the roof of<br/>the house</i> | ?? <i>the<br/>house's roof</i>              | <i>the roof<br/>of the<br/>house</i> | *het huis'<br>dak                  | het dak van<br>het huis                |
| low in<br>animacy/<br>referentiality  |                                    |                                 |                                   |                                  |                                   |                                  |   |                                      |                                    |  |

### How to account for this volatility?





Question of interest for workshop

*Which probabilistic constraints are universal and stable, and which are culturally malleable ?*



Animacy combines aspects of both.

## Conclusions

### 1. Animacy effects in genitive variation across languages

Animacy effects in genitive variation are not specific to English. Animacy-based possession splits can be observed cross-linguistically.

### 2. Diverging animacy effects in genitive variation across varieties, registers, genre and time

There are 'universal' (cognitive?) constraints on animacy-based possession splits but variable cut-off points and frequencies across varieties (and languages).

### 3. Contact varieties of English

- Animacy effects from a L1 may carry over to (L2) English. (There is no evidence, however, that animacy may carry over from a L2 to an L1.)
- Implications for L2 varieties and shift varieties of English ?

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