

Skeptical Linguistic Essays

Chapter 4 Chromaticity: An Overlooked English Grammatical Category Distinction

Section 1 Basics

This essay argues for the existence of an English grammatical category distinction which, as far as I know, has not been previously recognized. This distinction bifurcates the class of nominals into subtypes I will refer to as *chromatic* and *nonchromatic*. Instances of these are seen in (1) and (2):

(1) Chromatic DPs =

{some fox, any fox, no fox, what fox, whatever fox, many computers, that hat, much soup, some place, some week, what way, what reason,...}

(2) Nonchromatic DPs =

{something, anything, nothing, what, whatever, squat, stuff, someone, everyone, who, somewhere, where, sometime, when, how, why....}

Most DPs belong to the chromatic class, which is open. The nonchromatic class consists though of a restricted, if not tiny, group of forms.¹ The choice of the terminology adopted is based on the fact that systematically the nonchromatic forms have extremely general and non-specific meanings, ones as it were lacking ‘color’. Kishimoto (2000: 563) approaches the same meaning property by speaking of the nouns underlying nonchromatic DPs as ‘semantically light’ and claiming they are ‘devoid of lexical meaning’. The latter claim seems too strong. So, while both of the objects in (3) are nonchromatic, certainly they differ in meaning:²

(3)a. Rhonda criticized something unusually evil.

b. Rhonda criticized someone unusually evil.

That is, the DP in (3b) restricts the object referent to humans, which that in the *a* example does not. If neither had any lexical meaning, how could they differ?

A proper *subset* of nonchromatic DPs are the elements which Kishimoto (2000) argues involve nominal-internal N-raising into the associated D. This N-raising can be taken to underlie at least two properties of the relevant subset, the characterization of which is briefly touched on in Section 5.

(4)a. Unlike chromatic DPs, unrestricted in this regard, elements of the subset are systematically single word forms.

b. Those nonchromatic DPs having property (4a) never permit prenominal simplex adjectives.

Following Kishimoto's logic, which I believe is essentially correct, this would follow from a structure for the forms in question along the lines of (5):³

(5) [DP [D D_x + N] [NP (Adj) [Noun Ø]]]

That is, since the normal position of simplex adjective phrases is prenominal within NP, if the N ends up outside the NP but inside the D, it will precede any simplex adjectives. As Kishimoto (2000) observes then, this yields rightly contrasts like (6):

(6)a. some vicious fox

b. *some fox vicious

c. something vicious

d. *some vicious thing

Actually, (6d) is not, of course, in fact ungrammatical. But I would argue that on its good analysis, it represents a chromatic DP; thus a nominal stem thing is found in both the chromatic and nonchromatic categories (whereas, e.g. the stem fox is found only in the former). This dual view of certain N-stems like thing is also advocated by Kishimoto (2000) and is supported further below.

While it is argued here that the chromatic/nonchromatic distinction is a syntactic one, it seems to correlate with some kind of semantic contrast underlying the choice of terminology. This involves a lack of whatever semantic substance it is that a typical lexical noun contributes. The property shows up clearly in the case of pseudoclefts, as in (7):

(7)a. What Edgar purchased was some house/boat/manuscript.

b. *What Edgar purchased was something.

c. What Edgar purchased was not any house/boat/manuscript.

d. *What Edgar purchased was not anything.

e. What Edgar purchased was something interesting.

f. What Edgar purchased was not anything which I would have wanted.

That is, the predicate in a pseudocleft cannot consist of a simple existential nonchromatic DP. It can however consist of that plus a modifier, as in (7e, f). The restriction might seem to be that the predicate DP

add some semantic substance. If so, the contrast in (8) reveals something important about the ‘semantically light’ or ‘nonchromatic’ aspect of the semantics of nonchromatic nouns. That is, while the clearly syntactically nonchromatic form someone is animate and human like the chromatic a person, the former seemingly lacks a semantic property which the chromatic a person has:

(8) What Edgar saw was *someone/a person.

Perhaps one can appeal to a difference between presupposed or backgrounded meaning and another kind, the former being all that can be associated with nonchromatic nouns. But this topic is beyond the scope of these remarks.

So far three properties systematically distinguishing (a subset of) nonchromatic DPs from more common chromatic DPs have been noted: (i) single word status; (ii) nominal-internal position of simplex adjective phrases and (iii) possibility of occurrence as focus of pseudoclefts. A fourth property involves the possibility of combination with pre-D, pronominal modifiers, in particular, even and only. These are only possible with chromatic DPs (here capitalization indicates strong stress):

- (9)a. Even every MAN agreed with that.
b. *Even everyone agreed with that.
c. Even some GORILLA spoke Spanish.
d. *Even someone spoke Spanish.
- (10)a. Only every NURSE advocated such a policy.
b. *Only everyone advocated such a policy.
c. Only some CHIMP spoke Spanish.
d. *Only someone spoke Spanish. ⁴

There is, arguably, also a fifth property sensitive to the chromatic nonchromatic DP distinction. This involves the distribution of the form else.

- (11)a. Herb discussed every/some/no problem/issue (*else).
b. Herb discussed everything/something/nothing (else). ⁵
c. Herb looked in every/some/no place/bar (*else).
d. Herb looked everywhere/somewhere/nowhere (else).
e. Did Ethel check any room (*else)?
f. Did Ethel check anything (else)?
g. What (*else) bar (*else) did they burn down?

- h. What (else) did they burn down?
- i. Whatever (*else) principle (*else) we adopt, they will reject it.
- j. Whatever (else) we adopt, they will reject it.
- k. Some (*else) linguist (*else) was rejected.
- l. Someone (else) was rejected.
- m. What (*else) linguist (*else) was rejected?
- n. Who (else) was rejected?

It appears, that is, that else is possible (only) with members of the same subset of non-chromatic DPs that are characterized in (4).⁶

Further, consider the issue of which DPs can occur as preposed genitives:

- (12)a. some/every/no doctor's wife
- b. someone's/everyone's/no one's wife
- c. what/which man's wife
- d. whose/who else's wife

With human DPs, preposed genitives are clearly not restricted as to chromaticity. But with nonhuman DPs, contrasts appear:

- (13)a. some/every/no car's carburetor
- b. *something's/everything's/nothing's carburetor
- c. what/which car's carburetor
- d. *what's/*what else's carburetor
- (14)a. some/every/not a single/any person's blood
- b. someone's/everyone's/not a single one's/anyone's blood
- c. what/which person's blood
- d. whose/who else's blood
- (15)a. some/every/not a single/any car's oil
- b. *something's/*everything's/*not a single thing's/*anything's oil
- c. what/which car's oil
- d. *what's/*what else's/*whose (inanimate) oil

(16)a. that car's motor

b. *that's motor

The initial generalization seems to be that for inanimates, genitives are systematically possible on chromatics but blocked on nonchromatics. There is though one problem. While whose cannot of course be used as an inanimate interrogative form, it is a fine inanimate relative pronoun.

(17)a. an integer whose successor is even

b. an/some explosion whose cause was unknown

c. no discovery whose origin is at issue

The generalization proposed would then lead one to expect that nonchromatic heads with such relative pronouns would be impossible. But this does not seem to be in accord with the facts:

(18)a. something whose analysis is incomplete

b. everything whose cause is unknown

c. nothing whose origin is at issue

It is argued in Section 3.5 that restrictive relative pronouns agree with their heads in chromaticity. If so, then the instances of whose in (18) would all be nonchromatic, and the generalization that inanimate genitive nonchromatics are blocked would be false. I have no better solution at this point than to say that the generalization linking nonchromatics, and inanimate genitives simply does not hold of relative pronouns. Since it does hold elsewhere though, an argument for the relevance of the chromaticity dimension in English syntax still emerges.

A seventh grammatical generalization also supports recognition of the chromaticity dimension. This involves a restriction on Topicalization illustrated in (19):

(19)a. Jerome understands something/everything/someone/everyone/stuff.

b. Jerome understands some movies/every movie/some singers/every singer/cheap stuff..

c. *Something/*Everything/*Someone/*Everyone/*Stuff, Jerome understands.

d. Some movies/Every movie/Some singers/Every singer/Cheap stuff, Jerome understands.

The generalization, in effect partly noted in Postal (1993b), appears to be that ‘unmodified’ nonchromatic DPs, those consisting at most of a combined D + N, cannot be topics.⁷

Section 2 Selections

So far, seven properties have been cited which support the existence of a chromatic DP/nonchromatic DP distinction. However, the most important features arguing for the existence of the grammatical categories of chromatic and nonchromatic DPs involve selections. While standard contexts permitting DPs make no selectional distinction between chromatic and nonchromatic DPs, as in (20), there is, nonetheless, a range of environments which distinguish chromatic and nonchromatic DPs.

(20)a. Henrietta cooked some fish/something.

b. The priests offered nothing/no gifts to the demons.

First, various environments permit DPs of the form some/any/no/the etc. + lexical noun, but bar all of the inanimate indefinite pronouns something, anything, nothing, their wh variants what, whatever, etc. Examples are given in (21)-(28).

(21)a. Joe attended some/no/the Catholic school/*something/*nothing/*stuff/*that thing.

b. Joe didn’t attend any school/*anything/*squat.

c. *Whatever he attended was in Boston.

(22)a. Sue spoke some/every Slavic language/the language/*the thing/*something/*everything/*stuff.

b. Sue didn’t speak any Slavic language/*anything/*squat.

c. *What (else) do they speak in Bangladesh?

(23)a. Mike scored some baskets/the basket/*the thing/*something/*stuff.

b. Mike didn’t score any baskets/*anything/*squat.

c. *Whatever Mike scored was not a three pointer.

(24)a. Mike took some time/the time/*something/*everything/*stuff/*the thing to call his mother.

b. Mike didn’t take any time/*anything/*squat to call his mother.

c. What *(amount of time) did Mike take to mark the exams?

(25)a. Vanessa committed perjury/*something/*everything/*nothing.

b. What crime/*What did Vanessa commit?

c. No matter what crime/*what Vanessa committed, I still respect her.

d. Vanessa didn’t commit any crime/*anything.

(26)a. Glen swore an oath/*something/*everything/*nothing.

b. What kind of oath/*What did Glen swear?

c. Whatever oath/*Whatever Glen swore, he was just kidding.

- d. Glen didn't swear any oath/*anything/*a damn thing.
- (27)a. Vanessa carried out a threat/some threat/*something.
- b. What threat/*What (else) did Vanessa carry out?
- c. No matter what threat/*what Vanessa carried out, ...
- d. Vanessa didn't carry out a single threat/any threat/*anything/*a damn thing.
- (28)a. Kim spent some part/*something of her life in Topeka.
- b. Kim didn't spend any part/*anything of her life in Topeka.
- c. What part/*What of her life did Kim spend in Topeka?
- d. Whatever part/*Whatever (else) of her life Kim spent in Topeka, ...

A further case is pointed out by my colleague Mark Baltin:

- (29)a. Arnie dissuaded/deterred Rosalie from some course of action/*something/*everything/*stuff.
- b. Arnie did not dissuade/deter Rosalie from any course of action/*anything/*a damn thing/*squat.
- c. What course of action/*What did Arnie dissuade/deter Rosalie from?
- d. No matter what course of action/*what Arnie dissuaded/deterred Rosalie from, ...

One can, in the light of earlier remarks, characterize the contexts in (21)-(29) as ones *obligatorily requiring chromatic DPs*, or, equivalently, ones excluding nonchromatic DPs.

Note that the chromatic/nonchromatic distinction may cleave differently for a *morphological* verb depending on its meanings. That is, one meaning may require a chromatic type of DP in a particular context, another meaning not, as illustrated in (30).

- (30)a. He didn't spend _{<monetary>} any money/anything/squat in Hawaii.
- b. He didn't spend _{<temporal>} any time/*anything/*squat in Hawaii.
- c. He didn't assume _{<logical>} any principle/anything/squat.
- d. He didn't assume _{<physical>} any position/*anything/*squat.
- e. He didn't attend _{<matriculation>} any school/*anything/*squat.
- f. He didn't attend _{<physical presence>} any lecture/anything/squat at that conference.

So spend in the monetary sense is indifferent to the chromaticity of its object, but spend in the temporal sense requires a chromatic object. Similarly, assume in the logical sense takes either chromatic or

nonchromatic objects but in the physical sense requires a chromatic one. The same pattern is seen with attend, whose physical sense is equally compatible with object chromaticity or its absence but whose matriculation sense requires a chromatic object. Such facts seem quite anomalous at first glance but have at least a simple description if one can appeal to the grammatical category distinction argued for here.

A second category of selectional fact supporting chromaticity as a grammatical category dimension in English is that some DP environments require *nonchromatic* DPs. Two such environments are formed by the subjects of the expressions be the matter with + DP and be wrong with + DP, noted to take antipronominal subjects in Chapter 3.

- (31)a. Nothing/Something/Everything/(Terrible) Stuff is the matter/wrong with that car.
b. *Some problem/*Power loss/*Rust/*Old-age/*Over use is the matter/wrong with that car.
c. I don't believe anything/squat/a fucking thing to be the matter/wrong with that car.
d. *I don't believe a flat/rust/an oil leak/electrical problems to be the matter/wrong with that car.

Another nonchromatic environment, whose existence I am indebted to Christopher Potts for pointing out to me, is the subject of the use of eat on which it means something like 'bother'.

- (32)a. Something/(Bad) Stuff/Nothing/Not a damn thing/That (thing) is eating Gilbert.
b. What (else) is eating Gilbert?
c. *Some problem/Hair loss/Boredom/Lack of charisma/Overweight is eating Gilbert.
d. I don't believe anything/squat/jack shit to be eating Gilbert.

A further environment selecting nonchromatic DPs is seen in (33):

- (33)a. They named their daughter something/that/the same thing I named mine/*some (stupid) name
b. They did not name their daughter anything/a damn thing.
c. I need to know who named their daughter what (*name).

And further adverbial instances are found in (34) and (35):

- (34)a. Trolls resided *some bridge/*every bridge/somewhere/everywhere.

- b. Trolls resided *no bridge/nowhere.
- c. Trolls didn't reside *any bridge/anywhere.
- d. *What bridge/Where (else) did trolls reside?
- e. No matter *what bridge/where trolls resided, ...

- (35)a. Juanita played golf *some way/*some manner during her vacation..
- b. *What way/*What manner/How (else) did Juanita play golf during her vacation?
 - c. No matter *what way/*what manner/how (else) Juanita played golf,...

Taking it as granted now that there are selections defined on the chromatic/nonchromatic distinction, the question arises of whether all such facts can be taken to involve purely semantic requirements of the selectors in question. This question is relevant, evidently, to the issue of whether all selection is semantic; see e.g. Grimshaw (1979, 1981), Pesetsky (1995). Consider first a verb like attend on its matriculation sense which requires a chromatic object. Could this follow from some purely semantic requirement? It is not easy to see how. The relevant requirement would seem to be (36):

(36) The object of matriculation attend denotes an institution of learning.

The problem then is that there is no reason why such a condition would block e.g. (37a, b), given that, as (37c, d) illustrate, there is no general barrier to nonchromatic forms denoting institutions of learning:

- (37)a. *Celia attended _{<matriculation>} something/everything/stuff.
- b. *What Celia attended _{<matriculation>} was the University of Vermont.
 - c. Celia was discussing something (namely, her high school) with Billy.
 - d. What Celia was referring to was the University of Vermont.

Given data like (37c, d), there is no visible reason why the nonetheless clearly deviant (37a, b) would violate what appears to be the semantic condition on the relevant verb, matriculation attend, that represented as (36).

Turning to the opposite sort of selectors, those like matter with, which require nonchromatic subjects, it is also difficult to envisage a motivated purely semantic condition which would block only the bad cases of (38a), especially given the grammaticality of those like (38b):

- (38)a. They didn't prove anything/a damn thing/squat/*leukemia/*bulimia/*whooping cough to be wrong with her.

b. What they proved to be wrong with her was leukemia/bulimia/whooping cough.

My tentative conclusion then is that the selectional constraints involving the chromaticity dimension are syntactic, entailing more generally that not all selection is semantic.

To conclude this section, the two types of selectional evidence contribute, strongly, I think, to supporting the syntactic reality of the chromatic/nonchromatic distinction. But the sort of evidence which shows this perhaps most strongly of all involves what will be argued to be a range of *agreement* phenomena.

Section 3 Chromatic Agreement

3.1 Remark

I believe that several types of constructions in which constituents of type A are known to manifest agreement with others of type B in properties such as person, gender and number are such that constituents of type A must agree in chromaticity value with those of type B. This state of affairs is harder to show than for agreement involving person, gender or number, because what I suggest is chromaticity value agreement has no direct *morphological* realization. That is, no expression B which can be argued to manifest agreement in, say, positive chromaticity value differs in morphological form from the corresponding element manifesting negative chromaticity value. Nonetheless, there are restrictions which seem best characterized as agreement of chromaticity value.

3.2 Chromatic Agreement of Ordinary Visible Definite Pronouns

First, I suggest that ordinary definite pronouns like it must *agree with their antecedents* in chromaticity value. So, consider (39):

- (39)a. *Jerome spent _{<temporal>} something (namely, Easter) in Bermuda.
b. Jerome spent _{<temporal>} some holiday (namely, Easter) in Bermuda.
c. Jerome discussed something (namely, football/bunions/ice cream).
d. Marsha discussed *something_i/some holiday_i because Jerome spent _{<temporal>} it_i in Bermuda.

The already mentioned fact that the *temporal* spend excludes nonchromatic objects accounts for the badness of (39a). But (39c) shows that discuss, like most verbs, is *not* subject to such a constraint. Nonetheless, the nonchromatic version of (39d) is ill-formed. Given that the chromatic version is good, this can not be due

to the mere presence of a pronoun in the bad version. The facts would though follow if something like (40a, b) were both true:

- (40)a. An English definite pronominal DP must agree in chromaticity value with its antecedent.
b. The temporal verb spend requires *any* object DP it occurs with to be chromatic.

To make sense of (40a), one must assume minimally that the English definite pronominal forms it, its, they, them, their, etc.,⁸ are analyzed as both chromatic and nonchromatic. In this respect, they would be like the noun thing touched on earlier, which also needs to be taken to have both chromatic and nonchromatic forms, whereas most nouns are only chromatic. The point would then be that while e.g. it has syntactically distinct chromatic and nonchromatic variants, these do not differ morphologically in the way that e.g. the syntactically distinct singular masculine nominative and singular masculine and feminine forms he and she do. This makes chromaticity value agreement less visible than agreement in gender value, but not necessarily thereby less real.

Incidentally, the reason that all of the definite pronouns listed are inanimates has to do with the fact that while there are arguments (from else, etc.) that forms like someone are human nonchromatics, I do not know of any environment which *selects* for human chromatics or nonchromatics. Thus there is no environment currently available to show agreement in chromatic value for human DPs.

Another case of the same sort as (39) is seen in (41):

- (41)a. Mike spoke *something/some language.
b. Mike studied *something_i/some language_i despite not speaking it_i.
c. No matter *what_i/what language_i Mike praised despite the fact that he did not speak it_i,...

Here the facts in (41b) would follow from (40a) together with assumption (42).

- (42) The verb speak requires *any* object DP it occurs with to be chromatic.

A third case is found in (43):

- (43)a. Abdul composed his poems in some African language/*something/*everything.
 b. Abdul did not compose his poems in any African language/*anything/*a damn thing.
 c. What language/*What (the hell) did Abdul compose his poems in?
 d. Zeke was interested in some language₁/*something₁ because Abdul composed poems in it₁.
 d. Whatever language₁/*Whatever₁ Zeke is interested in, Abdul composes a poem in it₁.

A fourth case is (44):

- (44)a. Sheila attended <matriculation> *something/some school.
 b. Sheila's parents looked into *something₁/some school₁ because Sheila was thinking of attending <matriculation> it₁ in the fall.
 c. No matter what₁/what school₁ Sheila's parents praised, she refused to attend <matriculation> it₁.

And a fifth is:

- (45)a. They diagrammed something (= physical position)/some physical position.
 b. They diagrammed *something₁/some physical position₁ right after Stan assumed <physical> it₁.
 c. What₁/*What position₁ did they diagram right after Stan assumed <physical> it₁?

A sixth case is:

- (46)a. Their star scored *something/two goals.
 b. When that team needs *something₁/a goal₁, their star scores it₁.

A seventh case is found in (47):

- (47)a. Barry drove <baseball> in *something/some runs.
 b. *What did Barry drive <baseball> in? ⁹
 c. Barry didn't drive <baseball> in *anything/*a damn thing/any run.
 d. The manager was hoping for *something₁/a run₁ just before Barry drove <baseball> it₁ in.

The strength of the latter case as support for principle (40a) is increased by the fact that the same verb also takes human objects with, strangely, pretty much the same meaning as the non-human objects of (47). But the human object position is *not* restricted with respect to chromaticity value. And, notably, analogs of (47d) are then fine:

(48)a. Barry drove _{<baseball>} in someone/a baserunner.

b. She was pointing at someone_i/a baserunner_i just before Barry drove _{<baseball>} him_i in .

I believe that the (arguably) agreement data just gone over support in a clear way the reality of chromaticity value agreement. And this seems true despite the lack of direct morphological manifestation of such agreement. Evidently though, the existence of such a phenomenon is only possible on the basis of the underlying existence of the chromatic/nonchromatic category distinction itself.

3.3 Chromatic Agreement and Subject Control

The overall set of facts relating to chromaticity agreement has non-trivial theoretical implications relevant to much discussed issues. Consider first cases such as (49):

(49)a. Something_i/A specific amount of money_i had to be discussed after Ø_i being spent _{<monetary>} in Spain.

b. *Something_i/A specific week_i had to be discussed after Ø_i being spent _{<temporal>} in Spain.

The obvious factual point is that, although in (49), there is no superficially visible pronoun to show agreement, the contrast in (49b) is nonetheless strikingly reminiscent of the chromaticity agreement contrast with temporal verb spend seen in (39), while the lack of contrast in (49a) parallels the lack of a chromaticity agreement contrast with the monetary verb spend seen in (50).

(50) Something_i/A specific amount of money_i was set aside/saved so it_i could be spent _{<monetary>} on vacations.

One finds in (49) of course an after adjunct with a *controlled* subject. Now, it has been an issue since at least the account in Postal (1970) whether cases of control involve invisible pronominal elements or not. The work just cited argued for the former view. But many have since denied it; see e.g. Chierchia (1984),

Chierchia and Jacobson (1985, 1992) and Dowty (1985). What seems to be a chromaticity agreement fact in (49) then supports the invisible pronominal view. For such cases would force an alternative to the invisible pronominal view to somehow account for the contrast in (49) with some further mechanism M distinct from that in (40), where M would have nothing to do with pronominal agreement.

To drive home the relevance of chromaticity constraints to control, it is important to see that (49) is not an isolated or anomalous instance of subject control. Relevantly then, control into subject complements also reveals parallels to clear pronominal chromaticity value agreement:

(51)a. *Something /A strange position was assumed _{<physical>} by the gorilla.

b. Its₁ having been assumed _{<physical>} by the notorious gorilla made *something₁/a strange position₁/famous.

c. Ø₁ Having been assumed _{<physical>} by the notorious gorilla made *something₁/a strange position₁ famous.

(52)a. *Something/Some language was spoken by the cloned scientist.

b. Its₁ having been spoken by the cloned scientist wouldn't necessarily make *anything₁/any language₁/of interest to the CIA.

b. Ø₁ Having been spoken by the cloned scientist wouldn't necessarily make *anything₁/any language₁ of interest to the CIA.

Chromatic relevance to subject control is also seen in structures with too/enough:

(53)a. Some school₁/*Something₁ had to be too expensive/cheap enough for it₁ to be attended by Sheila.

b. Some school₁/*Something₁ had to be too expensive/cheap enough Ø₁ to be attended by Sheila.

The point is also made by the sort of subject control found in conjoined clausal structures with then:

(54)a. Some language₁/*Something₁ was chosen and then, Stella claims, it₁ was spoken by all of the students.

b. Some language₁/*Something₁ was chosen and then, Stella claims, Ø₁ was spoken by all of the students.

Overall then, it seems clear that chromaticity facts argue for the role of invisible pronouns in a range of subject control structures.

3.4 Chromatic Agreement and Non-Subject Control

Chromaticity value agreement is arguably also involved in several distinct types of non-subject control. First, there is the type associated with too/enough (see e.g. Fiengo and Lasnik, 1974; Postal, 1994a):

(55)a. Some position₁/*Something₁ was too difficult for Jerome to assume _{<physical>} it₁.

b. Some position₁/*Something₁ was too difficult for Jerome to assume _{<physical>} Ø₁.

Second, chromaticity is relevant to non-subject control in those purposives of the sort which permit it (see e.g. Bach, 1982; Browning, 1987):

(56)a. He composed poems in some Siberian language/*something.

b. He chose *something₁/some language₁ for the purpose of composing poems in it₁.

c. He chose *something₁/some language₁ to compose poems in Ø₁.

d.. He studied Mongolian₁/*something exotic₁ to speak it₁ to his mother-in-law.

e. He studied Mongolian₁/something exotic₁ to speak Ø₁ to his mother-in-law.

f. She set aside a week₁/some period of time₁/*something₁ to spend it₁ with her fiancé.

g. She set aside a week₁/some period of time₁/*something₁ to spend Ø₁ with her fiancé.

Note that the starred form of (56c) is irrelevantly grammatical on a reading where something denotes a location and not an NL, in which case the controlled position also then denotes a location.

Third, the chromaticity dimension is relevant to the sort of marginal ‘instruction set’ non-subject control touched on in Postal (1994a):

- (57)a. Choose some comfortable position_i/*something_i and assume it_i for a short period.
 b. Choose some comfortable position_i/*something_i comfortable and assume \emptyset _i for a short period.

Fourth, chromaticity status is relevant to the non-subject control characteristic, according to Postal (1993a, 1994a, 2001a, 2001b), of parasitic gaps (but see Levine, Hukari and Calcagno, 2001 for a strongly opposing opinion):

- (58)a. What language_i/*What_i did they discuss/argue about t_i immediately after hearing the spy speak it_i?
 b. What language_i/*What_i did they discuss/argue about t_i immediately after hearing the spy speak \emptyset _i?
 (59)a. That is a holiday_i/*something_i that Freddy thought fondly of t_i without ever spending _{<temporal>} it_i in Naples.
 b. That is a holiday_i/*something_i that Freddy thought fondly of t_i without ever spending _{<temporal>} \emptyset _i in Naples.

3.5 Chromatic Agreement and Restrictive Relative Clauses

Just as restrictive relative pronouns, visible or not, appear to agree with the heads of the nominals they form in gender and number, as illustrated in (60), they can be argued to show agreement along the chromaticity dimension as well:

- (60)a. the woman who praised herself/*himself/*themselves
 b. the man who praised himself/*herself/*themselves
 c. the children who praised themselves/*herself/*himself

First, consider cases where the overall DP formed with a restrictive relative is itself chromatic:

- (61)a. Some language/*Something which Teresa spoke \emptyset was discussed at length.
 b. Some position/*Something which the gorilla assumed _{<physical>} \emptyset was discussed at length.

Evidently, when the overall DP is chromatic, its contained relative clause can contain a relative extraction gap in a position which is required to be chromatic, but this is impossible if the overall DP is nonchromatic.

This would follow if the relative pronoun (visible or not) had to agree with the head DP in chromaticity value.

The parallel point is made when one chooses relative clause gaps in positions which are required to be nonchromatic. This is only possible when the head DP is also nonchromatic:

(46)a. The thing/*problem that Ø is eating Gilbert is unknown.

b. Something strange/*Some strange problem that Ø used to be the matter with my car is now affecting Ted's car as well.

c. The thing/*name/that they named her Ø was strange.

All these facts would follow if a principle like (62) held:

(62) A restrictive relative pronoun agrees in chromaticity value with its head DP.

3.6 Chromatic Agreement and Non-Restrictive Relative Clauses

It should not be surprising at this point to observe that non-restrictive relative pronouns also manifest chromaticity agreement:

(63)a. Quentin discussed *something/some period of time, which he spent _{<temporal>} in Bermuda.

b. Quentin diagrammed *something/some position, which he was unable to assume _{<physical>}.

(64). The manager was counting on *something/a run, which Tim was unable to drive in _{<baseball>}.

These non-restrictive relative contrasts would follow from the independently existing constraints defining chromatic and nonchromatic positions if the following principle holds:

(65) A nonrestrictive relative pronoun agrees in chromaticity value with its head DP.

3.7 Chromatic Agreement: Conclusion

I have argued that strong grounds for the reality of the chromaticity dimension in English grammar are presented by what I have suggested are agreement phenomena. These are of two types: first, agreement involving superficially overt items including ordinary definite pronouns, restrictive relative pronouns and non-restrictive relative pronouns, and second, agreement involving invisible or covert elements including controlled pronouns and restrictive relative pronouns. In all cases, modulo the fact that the chromaticity dimension is not morphologically marked, the facts of chromaticity value agreement seem parallel to those for person, gender and number agreement, arguing that chromaticity is a grammatical dimension in the same sense that these traditional categories are.^{10, 11}

Section 4 Ellipsis Phenomena

I believe the chromaticity dimension also has implications for the description of ellipsis phenomena like Gapping, Nominal Gapping, Pseudogapping, VP Deletion and Comparative Deletion. Consider:

(66) Gapping (see e.g. Jackendoff, 1971; Nejit, 1980; Loebeck, 1995)

- a. Jerome spoke some African language and Carol some Asian one.
- b. Jerome discussed something African and Carol something Asian.
- c. Jerome spoke some African language and Carol some Eurasian language/*something Eurasian.
- c. Something simple is the matter with my car and something complex with Ted's.
- d. *Something simple is the matter with my car and some very bad problem with Ted's.

(67) Nominal Gapping (see Jackendoff, 1971)

- a. Lucille's spending of a week in Bermuda and Janet's of a month in Spain were unusual.
- b. *Lucille's spending of a week in Bermuda and Janet's of something even more indulgent in Spain were unusual
- c. Lucille's assumption _{<physical>} of a common position and Janet's of a hitherto unknown position were unexpected.
- d. *Lucille's assumption _{<physical>} of a common position and Janet's of something hitherto unknown were unexpected.

(68) Pseudogapping (see Levin, 1978, 1986; Lasnik, 1999a; Baltin, in press)

- a. Although Jerome did not speak any African language, he did some Asian one.

- b. *Although Jerome did not speak any African language, he did something Asian.
- c. Although nothing is the matter with my car, something serious is with Ted's.
- d. *Although nothing is the matter with my car, some serious problem is with Ted's.

(69) VP Deletion (see e.g. Sag, 1976; Fiengo and May, 1994; Johnson, 2001)

- a. Some African language, Terry did speak but some Eurasian language/*something well-known in America, he didn't.
- b. Although nothing seemed to be the matter with my car, something/*some problem/*a serious problem was.

(70) Comparative Deletion (see Bresnan, 1973, 1975; Kennedy, 1997)

- a. Susan has studied the same language that Ted discussed/speaks.
- b. Susan has studied the same thing that Ted discussed/*speaks.
- c. Susan diagrammed a different position than Ted discussed/assumed _{<physical>}.
- d. Susan diagrammed a different thing/something different than Ted discussed/*assumed _{<physical>}.

These data show that the same selectional restrictions found in clauses with visible selectors like speak, the matter with, spending, assumption, etc., show up in clauses (and nominals) manifesting ellipsis of various sorts determined by phrases containing those restricted selectors. This supports a view that this sort of ellipsis actually involves invisible versions of the syntactic entities which determine the selections. It also suggests that the zeroed constituents contain actual DPs of the sort which can manifest the chromatic or nonchromatic categorization.

Section 5 Types of Nonchromatic DPs

It was seen in Section 1 that one type of nonchromatic DP required a single word combination of D + noun, as argued by the positioning of simplex adjectives after the nonchromatic noun:

- (71)a. Something terrible took place.
- b. Some terrible event took place.
- c. They did not witness anything terrible.
- d. They did not witness any terrible event.

Now, it was claimed but not explicated that the one word property, analyzed by Kishimoto (2000) in terms of N raising, is only characteristic of one subtype of nonchromatic DP. Given what has been established about the existence of certain selectional positions only allowing nonchromatic DPs, one can support the earlier claim by showing that in such positions one finds both one word and multiword DPs, hence multiword nonchromatic DPs.

Consider then:

- (72)a. (Only) Something minor was the matter with her liver.
- b. *Some problem/*Some disease/*Some rare condition was the matter with her liver.
 - c. A terrible thing was the matter with her liver.
 - d. The awful thing that was the matter with her liver caused her to be hospitalized.
 - e. The only thing that was the matter with her liver was not serious.
 - f. That frightening thing was also the matter with my liver.
 - g. Certain frightening things might be the matter with his liver as well.¹²
 - h. Herb doesn't believe a damn thing to be the matter with her liver.

Cases like (72b) argue, as already indicated earlier, that the subject of the matter with must be a nonchromatic DP. But then cases like (72c, d, e, f, g) show clearly that some nonchromatic DPs do not manifest the D + N as single word feature.

I do not have a good understanding of the DP internal structural factors which distinguish the distinct types of nonchromatic DPs, but roughly it may work as follows. First, the single word feature is clearly not associated with definite DPs, as in (72e, f). Second, it seems that there is a division among *non*-definite DPs which cuts along the lines separating some from a forms. So, informally:

(73) The single word feature (N-raising in Kishimoto (2000)'s terms) is associated only with indefinite DPs of the some type.

An obvious observation is that for (73) to have any chance of being viable, it is necessary to analyze a range of Ds not manifesting surface instances of the morpheme some as being of the some type. These include most obviously anything, nothing, everything, what, whatever, as in:

- (74)a. She doesn't believe anything serious to be the matter with the liver.
- b. She believes nothing serious to be the matter with the liver.
 - c. (Just about) Everything conceivable is the matter with the liver.
 - d. What does she believe to be the matter with the liver?
 - e. No matter what she believes to be the matter with the liver, ...
 - f. Whatever she believes to be the matter with the liver is likely to be serious.

Less obviously, there is also a range of slang forms including those of (75) which need to be categorized as indefinite some forms: ¹³

- (75)a. Harry proved stuff to be the matter with the liver.
- b. Harry proved zilch/zip/zippo/zero to be the matter with the liver.
 - c. Harry did not prove beans/crap/dick/diddley/diddley-squat/fuck-all/jack/jackshit/jack-squat/piss-all/poo/shit/shit-all/squat to be the matter with the liver.

These conclusions seem to me to have no known undesirable consequences.

Section 6 Coordination of Chromatic and Nonchromatic DPs

When DPs of distinct categories coordinate, the resulting complex DP is assigned to a category as a function of the categories of the conjuncts. This is most visible in agreement phenomena. So, in an NL with both dual and plural number, the conjunctive coordination of two singulars yields a dual, the coordination of a singular and dual or plural yields a plural. ¹⁴ In English, with no dual/plural distinction, conjunctive coordination of any DPs yields a plural:

- (76)a. Mike is tall.
- b. Roberta is tall.
 - c. Mike and Roberta are tall.
 - d. Mike and those two runners are tall.

With respect to person, in English and possibly universally, coordination of a first person with any person yields a first person (plural), coordination of a second person DP with any non-first person DP yields a second person DP:

- (77)a. We are proud of ourselves.
 b. You are proud of yourselves.
 c. You and I are proud of ourselves/*yourselves.
 d. Those guys and I are proud of ourselves/*themselves.
 e. You and those guys are proud of yourselves/*themselves.

Strangely though, it seems that conjunctive coordination of chromatic and nonchromatic DPs yields a complex DP which cannot be taken to be *either* exclusively chromatic or exclusively nonchromatic. The evidence is that apparently no mixed conjunctive coordination of chromatic and nonchromatic DPs can occur in any context restricted to *either* chromatic or nonchromatic forms. This is true both for pure selectional cases and for those involving what I have taken to be pronominal agreement.

(78) Required Chromatic Context

- a. Renee attended _{<matriculation>} some school/*something expensive.
 b. *Renee attended _{<matriculation>} at various times some private school and something inexpensive.
 c. *Renee described some private school₁ and something cheap₂ after attending _{<matriculation>} them_{1,2}.

(79) Required Nonchromatic Context

- a. Something grave/*Some minor problem was eating Gilbert.
 b. *At different times something grave and some minor problem were eating Gilbert.
 c. *Renee described something grave₁ and some minor problem₂ after learning they_{1,2} were eating Gilbert.

It is unclear to me how one should react to this data. One possibility would involve a claim that such coordinate phrases must be taken to be *both* chromatic and nonchromatic, indicating that one cannot analyze these in a way equivalent to taking them to be plus and minus values of a single binary feature. Another possibility would be to claim that such coordinations are assigned to *neither* the chromatic nor

nonchromatic categories. Not having studied these facts in any detail, I am not in a position to offer anything which chooses between the alternatives nor to offer any distinct solution.

Section 7 A Prescriptively Disfavored Type of Agreement

Normally, English morphologically singular DPs determine, not surprisingly, morphologically singular pronominal agreement:

- (80)a. The doctor₁/That doctor₁/Some doctor₁/Every doctor₁ claimed he₁ was ethical.
b. A professor₁/This professor₁/A certain professor₁/No professor₁ was sure she₁ was right.

Replacing he/she by they in these cases would preclude the antecedent relation which is marked. However, there are cases where plural pronominal agreement involving they, them or their is possible, although prescriptively looked down upon:

- (81)a. If everyone₁/someone₁/no one₁ thinks they₁ are a genius/their₁ child is a genius,
b. Who₁ here thinks they₁ are a genius?
c. No matter who₁ thinks demons are after them₁, ...
d. Whoever₁ thinks they₁ are/their₁ child is a genius is probably a moron.
e. Anyone who₁ thinks they₁ are a genius is probably a moron.

While the regular, expected singular agreement is also possible in such cases, apparently only the *human* subclass of the same subset of nonchromatic forms which permit else permit this 'fake' plural agreement:

- (82)a. *If a philosopher₁/a certain guy₁/a specific fellow₁ thinks they₁ are a genius/their₁ child is a genius,
b. *What guy₁ thinks they₁ are a genius?
c. *No matter what guy₁ thinks demons are after them₁,...

Those are at least my judgments. But The Oddments and Miscellanea column of The Vocabulary Review (whose prescriptive motto is 'A society is generally as lax as its language') Vol. 3, No. 7 of July 2001 states:

“Each month, "Oddments and Miscellanea" will focus on a particular matter of faulty grammar, slipshod syntax, or improper punctuation. This month's admonition: Avoid using the plural pronoun *their*, *them*, or *they* following words like *each* and *one*, *every* and *any*, *everyone* and *everybody*, *anyone* and *anybody*, *someone* and *somebody*, and *no one* and *nobody* when the antecedent is clearly singular.”

The prescribers then present the following list of putatively bad examples and their proposed improvements:

- (83)a. Each of the women during this eight-week program developed their body as well as their mind and emotions. USE *her*; *her*.
- b. Everyone has their own story. USE *his or her* or *his* or *her*.
- c. No one wants their name and information given to anyone and we at Elante Luggage hold this to be paramount to good business. USE *his or her* or *his* or *her*.
- d. A quick e-mail to thank somebody for their time goes a long way. USE *his or her* or *his* or *her*.
- e. Every international student when they first came to Toorak College must have felt a bit nervous and homesick. USE *he or she* or *he* or *she*.
- f. If you want to see what someone truly feels they deserve, just take a look at what they have. USE *he deserves* or *she deserves* or *he or she deserves*; *he has* or *she has* or *he or she has*.
- g. Every one of the contestants wore a patch on their vests. USE *his vest* or *her vest* or *his* or *her vest*.
- h. How do you tell someone that you love them? USE *him or her* or *him* or *her*.
- i. It's time for anyone who still thinks that singular "their" is so-called bad grammar to get rid of their prejudices and pedantry! USE *his or her* or *his* or *her*.

As prescriptive grammar goes, this is high quality. The authors provide a rich list of examples and a clear indication of the construction they feel should be avoided. Note though that while their pre-exemplification text cites essentially nonchromatic antecedents, of their nine examples, only six involve nonchromatic antecedents. For me, such a heterogeneous collection misses a distinction. That is, I regard (83a, e, g) as truly ungrammatical, while the other six examples are fine. It is unclear that the Vocabulary Review's prescriptive remarks are incompatible with my claim that plural agreement with singulars is only possible with a (subtype) of nonchromatic DP antecedent. Because, arguably, for its authors, all such agreement is ungrammatical. What is unclear is whether the sentences they believe they are prescribing, including (83a, e, g), really occur and 'need' prescribing, or whether they have just been made up randomly to illustrate a point by authors concerned only to devalue all plural agreement with singular antecedents.

The evidence in Pinker (1994: 390-391) is also a bit equivocal. Six of the seven examples of ‘fake agreement’ that he cites have nonchromatic antecedents. The seventh, said to be a quote from J. D. Salinger’s Catcher in the Rye, was:

(84) He’s one of those guys who’s always patting himself on the back. ¹⁵

But I find this ungrammatical, raising the issue of dialect variation.

In any event, my view that the existence of the plural agreement with singular antecedence phenomenon supports the relevance to English grammar of the chromatic/nonchromatic distinction is supported *if* the following holds. There are some speakers like I claim to be who restrict such antecedence to that subtype of nonchromatic antecedents which determine one word character and sanction a following else. ¹⁶

Section 8 Limitations of Informal Statements

It will not have escaped the reader that the discussion of this chapter has been entirely informal. I have not provided a precise account of the internal structure of DPs to support the claim that English DPs divide into the chromatic and nonchromatic. Nor have I spelled out mechanisms which could account for the conclusion, argued in some detail, that chromaticity is a dimension relevant for agreement of various types.

These are serious limitations but, fortunately, not ones directly relevant to the chief point of this essay, which is merely to document the existence of the chromatic/nonchromatic distinction, one which past linguistics seems to have overlooked.

One point though that is worth expanding is this. Just as e.g. nouns like man/woman, boy/girl, etc., must be the core locus of the distinction of grammatical gender, just so nouns must be the core locus of the distinction between chromatic and nonchromatic. Since, however, the distinction ultimately divides large DP constituents into corresponding types, it is evident that a proper grammatical framework must allow for some kind of ‘projection’ of the lexical noun distinction to one distinguishing as well their minimal containing DPs. There are various extant approaches to such questions and I have nothing to add to understanding of the matter here.

Notes

1 While small, the class of nonchromatics is not really rigidly closed in sense that e.g. the class of tense endings is. For instance, vulgar slang forms like jack, jack shit and squat are nonchromatics but seem to be relatively recent additions to standard English.

2 Moreover, if as is indicated for reasons touched on below, interrogative when, where, how and why are nonchromatic, the claim is even less tenable.

3 Kishimoto actually gives a somewhat more complex structure for theoretical reasons having no grounding in any of the facts considered here.

4 It cannot be maintained that 'Only someone spoke Spanish' is bad because only requires stress on the N, while nonchromatics like someone do not permit this. For note the contrast:

- (i) Only SOME chimp spoke Spanish.
- (ii) *Only SOMEone spoke Spanish.

That is, only is content with strong stress on the D of a chromatic DP, but not on a nonchromatic form. This makes a pure stress account difficult to defend.

5 One finds, of course, also the grammatical, though literary, expression all else:

- (i) All else is illusion.
- (ii) When all else fails, ...

This may be analyzable as a variant of the more transparent everything else, although all else seems limited to subject position:

- (iii) Shelly threw out everything/*all else.
- (iv) Shelly gave everything/*all else a lot of thought.
- (v) Shelly argued about everything/*all else.
- (vi) What I don't understand is everything/*all else.

Beyond the presence of else, the nonchromatic character of all else is shown by facts like:

- (vii) a. *Everything else/*All else/Every week/part/moment of the month was spent _{<temporal>} in study.
- b. Everything else/All else/*All the problems that was/were the matter with her liver was minor.

6 All the single word ‘adverbial’ interrogatives when, where, why, how, like the nonadverbial interrogatives what, who, permit else:

- (i)a. When else can we meet?
- b. Where else can we meet?
- c. Why else would she have said that?
- d. How else can we discover the truth?
- e. What else did she say?
- f. Who else did she insult?

This plus their single word character requiring postposed adjectives (if any), suggests the nonchromatic character of all of these, as touched on in note 2.

Arguably, too, it is only the nonchromatic relative pronoun forms which delete:

- (ii)a. the only time (when) I can go
- b. the only place (where) I can live
- c. the only reason (why) he did that
- d. the only way (*how) he can do that

Note for instance that the only locative forms which can occur in the relative-internal gap position in (iib) are nonchromatic:

- (iii) I can live *some town/*some ranch/somewhere/someplace.

A parallel point holds for e.g. the manner case if one makes the assumption that the nonchromatic manner relative pronoun is obligatorily not optionally null, and that there are no non-interrogative nonchromatic manner forms corresponding to the locative somewhere/anywhere.

- (iv)a. He can do that in some way.
- b. *He can do that someway.
- c. *He can’t do that anyhow.

7 I take the last example of (19d) to indicate that the noun stuff has a chromatic analysis. Other data, e.g. that in (19c) and (31a) and (32a) below argues that it also has a nonchromatic analysis. This is also supported by pseudocleft data:

- (i). *What Milo likes is stuff.
- (ii) What Milo likes is cheap stuff.

While the two instances of stuff in (19c, d) contrast in the presence or not of an adjective, the relation between this noun and adjectival occurrence is not straightforward. That is, while the nonchromatic stuff of (19c) has no adjective, the cases in (31a) and (32a) suggest that nonchromatic stuff can also occur with an adjective. Given that, one issue then is why the last example of (19c) is ill-formed. One possibility would be to say that *chromatic stuff* is only possible in the presence of some sort of ‘modifier’. Given the ban on inanimate genitive nonchromatics, this would properly predict contrasts like:

- (iii)a. cheap stuff’s cost
- b. *stuff’s cost
- (iv)a. evil stuff’s implications
- b. *stuff’s implications

8 The chromatic analysis of the weak definite pronouns is what permits grammatical expressions like (i), given the earlier conclusion that inanimate genitive nonchromatics are impossible:

- (i) their motors
- (ii) its engine

9 Actually, there is a grammatical usage for clauses like that starred here, one extremely common at least in New York area English, and represented by:

- (i) What did he drive in last year, 60 runs?

This usage seems to form pseudo-polite weak assertions disguised as questions. Thus (i) is roughly equivalent to:

- (ii) He drove in roughly 60 runs last year, didn’t he ?

Notably, on this use, the form what is semantically quite distinct from the normal interrogative what, and means 'how many'. So (i) is also roughly equivalent to:

(iii) How many runs did he drive in last year, 60?

Arguably, this usage of what is not restricted to the category nonchromatic. For it is possible for it to link to a gap in a position which must be chromatic and, else is impossible:

(iv)a. What (*else) language (*else)/What (else) does he speak?

b. What (*else) does he speak, ten languages?

This might support an analysis of cases like (iv) relating them to those with chromatic DPs like that in:

(v) How many languages does he speak?

A parallel argument indicates that the somewhat different non-interrogative what of examples like (vi), also characteristic of New York English, is also not restricted to chromatic contexts:

(vi)a. What (*else) is he, an idiot!

b. What (*else) are you, a clown!

These are insulting assertive reactions to perceived inept remarks or acts, equivalent respectively to a bit weakened forms of: 'He is an idiot', 'You are a clown'. Notably though, they are possible linked to chromatic gap positions:

(vii)a. *What are you speaking? (request for information)

b. What (*else) are you speaking, an/some ape language! (an insult)

c. *What are you attending <matriculation>? (request for information)

d. What (*else) are you attending <matriculation>, a school for idiots! (an insult)

This also might suggest an analysis of cases like (vii b, d) involving underlying chromatic DPs, e.g. something like X + some ape language and X + a school for idiots. How to execute such an analysis is though not obvious.

10 This point is strengthened by the fact that like agreement in person, number and gender, chromaticity value agreement is also found between what are usually considered distinct sentences in a discourse, e.g. question/answer pairs:

- (i)a. Who did the boy₁ call? He₁/*She₁/*They₁ called the director.
- b. Was Jane studying *something₁/some language₁? Yes, but she didn't speak it₁.

11 However, one difference involving conjunction is discussed in Section 6.

12 Examples like (72g) indicate that nonchromatic DPs, though usually grammatically singular, need not be. See also:

- (i)a. The things that are the matter with his liver are not life-threatening.
- b. Lots of things are eating Gilbert.
- c. The things they thought about naming him were silly.
- d. Those things, I am sure are no longer wrong with him.
- e. Most of the things that are still wrong with him are minor.

13 Speakers differ radically in which subset of in particular the forms in (75c) they use and/or know.

14 This is the case in e.g. the NL Mohawk of the Iroquoian family; see Postal (1979) and Baker (1996).

15 I must confess though that although I reject (84), it is nonetheless possible in my speech, as apparently in that represented in that example, to form a partly plural looking reflexive themselves, whose existence is also noted in Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 426, 494). But I seem to restrict it essentially to just the set of antecedents found in (81):

- (i)a. If everyone₁/someone₁/no one₁ praises himself₁/*themselves₁, ...
- b. Who₁ praised himself₁?
- c. Whoever praised himself₁/*themselves₁ was not modest.
- (ii)a. *If every guy₁/some guy₁/no guy₁ praises himself₁, ...
- b. *What guy₁ praised himself₁?
- c. *Whatever guy₁ praised himself₁ was not modest.

The first vowel of this very nonstandard themselves is a schwa and must be unstressed. The grammatical cases of (i) are prescriptively even less acceptable than those of (81), a prescriptivism built into my version of Microsoft Word, which doggedly insists on changing themselves to themselves. I suspect that many people who use ‘fake plurals’ would still not use themselves. Moreover, I do not believe this reflexive can be used as an *emphatic* reflexive, yielding contrasts like:

- (iii)a. Somebody was criticizing himself/themselves.
- b. Everyone wanted to buy himself/themselves a new dress.
- c. If someone is himself/*themselves incapable of distinguishing right from wrong, ...

16 Comments from Christopher Potts and further reflection suggest that this claim is too strong. Potts observes that for him, examples like (i) with the general noun person are grammatical, and they are for me too:

- (i)a. If a person₁ thinks they₁ are a genius, beware.
- b. Any person₁ who thinks they₁ are immortal should not buy life insurance.

This seems to indicate that the nonchromaticity requirement for antecedent of fake plural pronouns is at least slightly too strong, weakening support for the category from this phenomenon. It seems that gender neutrality is relevant, given contrasts like:

- (ii) If an individual₁/being₁/*guy₁/*stud₁/*dude₁/*babe₁/*chick₁ thinks they₁ are a genius, beware.

However, more is involved, since even the gender neutral nouns of (iii) also make terrible antecedents:

- (iii) If a(n) *doctor₁/*earthling/*jerk/*idiot/*programmer₁/*linguist₁/*politician₁/*server₁ thinks they₁ are a genius, beware.

I think it relevant that the good antecedent nouns of (i) and (ii) are maximally general, restricting the individuals they denote only to being sentient and possibly human, while the bad cases impose further constraints on possible denotata. Possibly then, the nonchromatic category I have argued for is actually a subtype of a slightly larger ‘colorless’ noun category, which includes being, individual, person, but not earthling, politician, etc.

There is actually a bit of additional ground for this. Consider the question of what nouns can compound. It seems that none of the few potential compounders here characterized as nonchromatic can:

- (iv)a. room/car/cabin/boat/equipment/gear cleaning

b. *stuff/*thing cleaning

However, the bad cases of (ivb) cannot be blocked by mere appeal to nonchromaticity since we saw that the two nouns involved are ambiguously members of both the chromatic and nonchromatic classes. A restriction barring compounding of nonchromatics only accounts for the badness of (ivb) on one analysis.

Moreover, limiting noncompounders to nonchromatics is independently too limited, since:

(v)a. earthling/guy/stud/dude/babe/chick/humanoid chasing

b. *person/*individual/*being chasing

That is, those general human nouns known to me which seem, along with nonchromatics, to be able to antecede fake plural pronouns also fail to compound, suggesting that there is a grammatical characterization here. Further study is obviously in order.