Chapter 6, Problem 6: English Possessive Pronouns

A. Nouns must agree with their specifiers (as encoded in our grammar via the SHAC). If *my* is [AGR *1sing*] then *books* must also be [AGR *1sing*], if they are to agree. This is clearly not the case: we know *books* to be third person plural. Likewise, *cousin* is third person singular, not second person as it would have to be if *your* had the AGR value suggested in the problem.

The above answer, appealing to known AGR values for the common nouns, is sufficient. Given the way agreement works in our grammar, we can also add the following:

Subject-verb agreement (i)-(ii) and pronoun-antecedent agreement (iii)-(iv) show that *my books* must be $\begin{bmatrix} \text{AGR} & \begin{bmatrix} \textit{plural} & \\ \text{PER} & \text{3rd} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$.

(i)*My books am missing.

(ii) My books are missing.

(iii)*I looked for [my books]$_i$, but I can't find me$_i$.

(iv) I looked for [my books]$_i$, but I can't find them$_i$.

Examples (i)-(iv) show that the whole NP *my books* is 3rd person plural. By the Head Feature Principle, the noun *books* must share the AGR specification of the whole NP. By the SHAC, the determiner *my* must also share this specification. Therefore its lexical entry must be consistent with those constraints, although it may be underspecified.

Similarly, the examples in (v)-(viii) show that *your*'s AGR value in *your cousin* must be *3sing*, not [PER 2nd].

(v)*Your cousin sleep soundly.

(vi) Your cousin sleeps soundly.

(vii)*[Your cousin]$_i$ contradicted yourself$_i$.

(viii) [Your cousin]$_i$ contradicted himself$_i$.

B. $$\begin{bmatrix} \text{MODE} & \text{none} \\ \text{INDEX} & i \\ \text{RESTR} & \left\langle \begin{bmatrix} \text{RELN} & \text{speaker} \\ \text{INST} & j \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{RELN} & \text{poss} \\ \text{POSSESSOR} & j \\ \text{POSSESSED} & i \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} \text{RELN} & \text{the} \\ \text{BV} & i \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle \end{bmatrix}$$

C. Our grammar licenses two tree structures for the string *my book*, since it does not constrain the CASE value. We have shown the [CASE acc] tree here.