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Two case studies on the non-local conditioning of variation

This paper addresses the representation of variable phenomena in the linguistic systems of individual speakers. We present results from two case studies: one examining the effect of NP heaviness on English auxiliary contraction; the second on the effect of persistence on (TD) and (ING). We argue that heaviness and persistence, unlike the phonological and morphological factors that also condition these variables, are best interpreted as extra-grammatical, as they operate outside a grammatically local domain. The implication is that variable phenomena must be the purview of at least two systems: the generative grammar, and a separate system for language use.