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**“On the morphosyntactic acquisition of the German DP by Italian adult
L2 learners: Possessive constructions, Noun placement and inflectional
morphology on nominal modifiers”**

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Chapter 1 – Possessive Constructions and Noun Placement in the Determiner Phrase

Abstract

This chapter seeks to revisit recent theoretical proposals on the internal structure of the Determiner Phrase considering in particular different hypotheses on: (i) genitive case checking positions and possessor licensing positions inside the DP (De Wit 1997, Cardinaletti 1999, Longobardi 2000); (ii) NP movement and adjectival configurations in the Determiner Phrase (Cinque 2005a, 2005b Shlonsky 2003); (iii) the architecture of the left periphery of DPs (Gavrouseva 2000, Haegeman 2004, Giusti 2006). Following Haegeman's (2004) and Giusti's (2005, 2006) proposal of a "split D" based on work by Rizzi (1997) on the clausal left periphery, I adopt the hypothesis that the Determiner Phrase also consists of three layers (DP, IP and NP) and several functional heads. The main aim is to reconstruct a fine structure of the noun phrase in order to account for the differences in the distribution of pronominal as well as non-pronominal possessors in German and Italian possessive constructions. The picture that emerges suggests that Possessor Movement and NP Raising are two kinds of parametric variation which together constitute a radical difference between German and Italian nominal syntax. I then consider the implications that such variations may have for the process of Second Language Acquisition, focusing in particular on the acquisition of Saxon genitive constructions by Italian L2 learners of German.

1.0 Introduction

Since Abney's proposal (1987) on the "DP hypothesis", a great deal of research has been conducted on possessive constructions. The principal aim of Abney's work was to define a strong parallelism between clausal and nominal domains, especially concerning structural case positions and phrasal modification. Since then a lot of work on nominal syntax has been carried out and, nowadays, the constant interest of researchers provides us with a wide range of interesting contributions in this field.

My analysis on the acquisition of possessive constructions by Italian L2 Learners of German is based on the assumption that (i) several positions for licensing of pronominal and non-pronominal possessors may be activated in the high as well as in the low DP area¹ and that (ii) the opposite linear order of non-pronominal possessors and nouns in Italian and German possessive constructions is the result of movement of both elements in the DP.

The chapter is structured as follows: section 1.1 is concerned with (i) recent theoretical studies on possessive constructions; (ii) differences between German and Italian in this particular

¹ I will assume here that possessors are selected as the "subject" of the nominal head (see Szabolcsi 1994, Siloni 1997), hence in the specifier position of the lexical NP layer (but see Ouhalla 1991, Delsing 1993, 1998 for the hypothesis that possessors can be selected as the complement of the noun). Following Kayne (1994) and Chomsky (1995), I will also assume that the specifier where possessors are inserted is projected to the left of N.

syntactic domain. Section 1.2 is devoted to proposals on NP raising and on noun placement in German and Italian. Finally, in section 1.3 I consider some potential problems in the acquisition of German Saxon genitive constructions by Italian L2 learners.

1.1 Possessor placement in the Determiner Phrase

On the basis of the distributional properties of possessors and the determiner $a(z)$ in Hungarian noun phrases, Szabolcsi (1983,1987,1994) proposes for the first time the idea that the nominal projection contains two different prenominal positions for possessors: SpecDP and Spec(N+I). The derivation in (1)a vs. b illustrates this fact:

- (1)a $[_D a [_{\text{Spec(N+I)}} \text{Mari} [_{\text{(N+I)}} \text{kalap-ja}]]]$
 the MariNOM hat-POSS.3sg
 “Mari’s hat”
- b $[_{\text{SpecDP}} \text{Mari-nak}_i [_D a [_{\text{Spec(N+I)}} t_i [_{\text{(N+I)}} \text{kalap-ja}]]]$
 Mari-DAT the hat-POSS.3sg

The author identifies an “external dative possessor” – the *-nak* possessor in (1)b – which is supposed to move from the merge position to the SpecDP where it is assigned the dative case from the lexicalised nominal head D. On the contrary, the “internal nominative possessor” (see (1)a) has as its basic position Spec(N+I) and it is assigned the nominative case from the complex head (N+I). Furthermore, the different positions of nominative possessor and dative possessor with respect to the determiner $a(z)$ are taken by Szabolcsi as evidence for possessor movement inside the DP.

As for Germanic languages, a similar proposal was developed by De Wit (1997) for the Dutch DP. According to this analysis, two internal case-positions labelled respectively PossP and NumP can be identified:

- (2) $[_{\text{SpecDP}} [_D [_{\text{SpecPossP}} [_{\text{PossP}} [_{\text{SpecNumP}} [_{\text{NumP}} [_{\text{SpecNP}} [_{\text{N}}]]]]]]]]]]]$

Let us briefly concentrate on the structure in (2). In Dutch a possessive relation may be expressed by possessive elements occurring in prenominal position, such as bare proper name possessors with an *-s* affix or pronominal possessors:

(3)a Jans moeder
 Jan-GEN mother
 “Jan’s mother”

b sin moeder
 “his mother”

In De Wit’s system both possessive elements are analysed as clitics: they merge in SpecPossP and move from an XP position to a functional head position. As pointed out by the author, this last step is caused by the fact that possessive elements determine the definiteness value of the DP²:

(4) [_{SpecDP} [_D Jans_i/sin_i] [_{SpecPossP} t_j [_{Poss} moeder [... [_N]]]]]]

Furthermore, once the possessive pronoun is moved to D, it can be doubled by an element in SpecDP. This structure is called a “Double clitic possessive construction” and is characterised by the presence of a clitic which agrees in phi-features with the possessor³:

(5) [_{SpecDP} Jan [_D z’_n] [_{SpecPossP} t_j [_{Poss} moeder [... [_N]]]]]]

Moreover, a possessive relation may be also be expressed by an analytic construction in Dutch. In this case the possessor occurs in postnominal position and is introduced by the preposition *van* which, according to De Wit (1997), is licensed in the lower case position, as exemplified in (6):

(6) [_D de [[_{Poss} moeder]_j [_{SpecNumP} van Jan [_{Num} t’_j] [_{SpecNP} [_N t_j]]]]]]

Interestingly, in De Wit’s proposal three different positions are available for possessors in the Dutch DP: the outer one – SpecDP- is reserved for a non-pronominal possessor in Double clitic possessive constructions (see example in (5)), while the two internal ones – SpecPossP and SpecNumP – are the merge positions of bare proper name possessors with –s affix, possessive pronouns and nominal arguments introduced by the preposition *van*:

² In De Wit’s proposal, the noun is supposed to be licensed in PossP in possessive constructions.

³ This construction is possible only with third person singular possessive clitics in Dutch.

(7) [_{SpecDP} non pronominal possessor [_D [_{SpecPossP} -s possessors/possessive pronouns [_{Poss} N_i[_{SpecNumP} van PP [_{Num} [_{SpecNP} [_N t_i]]]]]]]] ←

A refinement of this proposal based on West Flemish Double clitic possessive constructions was made by Haegeman (2004), who argued in favour of a “split DP” based on work by Rizzi (1997) on the clausal left periphery⁴. Haegeman’s work is mainly concerned with the parallelism between the DP-periphery and the clausal periphery. According to this analysis, the nominal D parallels the clausal C and also consists of separate functional heads. Crucially, the position where definiteness and indefiniteness are encoded in the D domain is parallel to the Fin position in the C domain. DFin is the lowest functional head of the D-system, where, according to Haegemann, the definite article is merged:

(8) [_{SpecDfinP} [_{Dfin} [_{SpecIP} [_I [_{NP}]]]]]

In Haegeman’s analysis, the clitic possessive pronoun is merged in an inflectional head of the nominal system and undergoes I-to-Dfin movement in order to check a [+def] feature, whereas the possessor inserted in SpecNP targets SpecDFinP through SpecIP. The derivation in (9) illustrates this pattern:

(9) [_{SpecDfinP} Marie_m [_{Dfin} euren_i [_{SpecIP} t_m [_I t_i [_{NP} foto]]]]]
 Marie her foto
 “Mari’s foto”

In the non-doubling pattern, the clitic possessive pronoun moves from the I head to the DFin position and licenses a ”possessive” *pro* in SpecIP:

(10) [_{Dfin} euren_i [_{SpecIP} *pro* [_I t_i [_{NP} foto]]]]]
 “her foto”

The interesting aspect in Haegeman’s proposal lies in the existence of two subject positions in the Determiner Phrase: a SpecIP position which hosts *pro* in the non-doubling pattern (see example (10)) and a SpecDFinP position, which hosts DP possessors in the Double clitic possessive constructions (see example (9))⁵.

⁴ In Rizzi’s proposal, CP consists of a sequence of functional positions projected between a Force Phrase (ForceP) which encodes illocutionary force and a Fin Phrase (FinP) which encodes finiteness:

Split CP
 ForceP>TopP*>FocP>TopP*>FinP

⁵ This analysis assumes Cardinaletti’s (1997) hypothesis on the specialization of subject positions in the clausal domain:

The idea of a split-DP has been also adopted by Giusti (2005; 2006) who proposes that the left-periphery of the noun phrase may contain a “discourse feature” which is named Contrast [Kon] and it is assigned to a Topic position sandwiched between the highest functional projection, DP, and the lower one labelled dP:

(11) DP>KonP>dP⁶

The crucial assumption made by the author is that such an articulated DP-periphery is not always projected and, when it is not, it is reduced to a single projection DP/TopP which may be specified for the feature [Kon]. This analysis is based on cross-linguistic data concerning word-order violation of the APs’ universal hierarchy⁷, which, according to Giusti (1996), has to be related to a marked discourse interpretation. The following Italian examples illustrate this fact:

(12)a le sue lunghe trecce bionde
 the.fm.pl. her.fm.pl long.fm.pl plait.fm.pl blond.fm.pl
 “her long blond plaits”

b le **lunghe** sue trecce bionde/le **bionde** sue trecce lunghe
 the.fm.pl. long.fm.pl her.fm.pl plait.fm.pl blond.fm.pl/ the.fm.pl blond.fm.pl her.fm.pl long.fm.pl
 plaits.fm.pl

The complex DP in (12)a reflects the Italian AP’s unmarked linear order, where the highest adjective is always the possessor. Hence, in this case, the left periphery of the noun phrase is represented by the single DP projection hosting the definite determiner *le*. Giusti’s representation of (12)a is given below:

(13)a [DP le]_{[Agr-layer [AP sue]_{Agr°} [lunghe]_{Agr°} [Agr°+N trecce]] [bionde]_{[NP-layer [AP sue]_[N trecce]]}}

In (12)b the adjective of shape *lunghe* shows up in a different position and this is usually associated with a contrastive interpretation. According to Giusti’s (2006) analysis, the fronted

(i) [Agr1P....[Agr2PVfin [...

The lowest position (Agr2P) is the landing site for expletives, quasi-arguments, impersonal subjects and where subject DPs check the nominative case features/phi-features. Agr1P attracts fronted constituents other than the subjects such as, for example, predicative elements, fronted dative and locative phrases.

⁶ DP is parallel to the clausal ForceP and small_d is parallel to the FinP in Giusti’s analysis. In the nominal domain DP is the projection where the feature of case is checked, while small_d realizes the number feature

⁷ She refers to the AP hierarchy originally proposed by Cinque (1994). See section 1.2 for a more detailed description on the position of adjectives in the extended nominal projection.

AP occupies a peripheral position projected between the DP and the highest agreement projection in the lexical layer where the possessor is hosted. This peripheral position corresponds to KonP, as illustrated in the representation in (13)b:

(13)b $[_{DP} \text{le}] [_{KonP} [_{AP} \text{lunghe}]]_{Kon} [_{Agr-layer} [_{AP} \text{sue}]]_{Agr^\circ} [\text{lunghe}]_{Agr^\circ} [_{Agr^\circ+N} \text{trecce}] [_{bionde}] [_{NP-layer} [_{AP} \text{sue}]] [_{N} \text{trecce}]$

Similarly to Italian, the Albanian DP-periphery may also contain a KonP projection, whose specifier is the target position for fronted APs that are licensed prenominally when emphasized⁸:

(14)a gruaja tjetër e bukur
 woman-the other nice
 “the other nice woman”

b e bukura grua tjetër
 the nice woman other

c $[_{DP} [e \text{ bukura}]_i] D [_{KonP} [e \text{ bukur}]_i]_{Kon} [_{AgrP} [Agr^\circ/N \text{ grua}]]_{AgrP} [\text{tjetër}]_{N} [_{AgrP} [_{AP} e \text{ bukur}]_i]_{N} [_{NP} \text{N}]]]$

Furthermore, Giusti (2006) adopts the idea of an internal merge of possessors inside the lexical layer due to theta role assignment. Interestingly, further movement of the possessor to the highest Agr position is triggered by the requirement to check the EPP-feature, hence it is related to the presence of a Possessor Criterion parallel to the Subject Criterion proposed by Rizzi and Shlonsky (2004) for subject movement in the clause. In this sense the author maintains a strong parallelism between DP and CP, as often proposed in the literature of noun phrases⁹.

An approach based on multiple positions for possessor licensing is adopted by Cardinaletti (1998) in her analysis of possessive pronouns. In analogy with the tripartition proposed by Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) for the personal pronominal system, the author suggests that the surface positions of possessive pronouns vary across languages according to their

⁸ As pointed out by Giusti (2006), the noun always precedes adjectives in the unmarked order:

(i) djali i parë i mirë
 boy-the first good
 “the first nice book”

⁹ Giusti also discusses Serbo-Croatian adjectival modification, but for reasons of space such data is not included here.

deficient/strong nature and different licensing conditions. The scheme in (15) illustrates the three positions identified for each class of possessive pronouns:

(15) [_D possessive clitics [_{AgRP} weak possessives [_{NP} [N] strong possessive]]]

The crucial assumption in (15) is that the prenominal field hosts deficient possessives (weak and clitic possessives in Cardinaletti's terms), while the postnominal one is occupied by strong forms of pronouns.

Let us concentrate on each class separately starting with possessive clitics. In Cardinaletti's proposal, possessives are merged in SpecNP where they are theta marked by the noun. Due to their "deficient" internal structure, clitics have to be adjoined to a functional projection, in this case the highest functional head of the DP, the D position:

(16) [_D possessive clitics_i [... [_{SpecNP} t_i [_N N]]]]

This fact correlates with some peculiar morphosyntactic properties of possessive clitics such as: (i) their incompatibility with determiners; (ii) their occurrence in prenominal position; (iii) their "reduced" morphological form if compared with the one used in isolation or in postnominal position. The three facts are illustrated by English prenominal possessives:

(17)a (*the) my book

b *book my

c **my** book

d the book of **mine**

Furthermore, possessive clitics can be neither coordinated, nor used in isolation:

(18)a *My and your book

b Whose book is this? *My

Let us now focus on weak possessive pronouns which share the same distributional and semantic properties of clitics. The former differ from the latter because they co-occur with determiners. In Cardinaletti's proposal weak possessive pronouns are licensed in the specifier of a functional projection immediately below D, which is labelled AGR_SNP:

(19) [D [AgrP weak possessives_i [... [NP t_i [N]]]]]

As noted by the author, Paduan is particularly interesting in this respect because, contrary to Standard Italian¹⁰, weak possessive pronouns are morphologically distinct from the strong forms, as illustrated by the examples in (20):

(20)a el **me** libro
the.ms.sg my book.ms.sg
“my book”

b el libro **mio**/*el libro **me**
the.ms.sg book my.ms.sg
“the book of mine”

Furthermore, Paduan prenominal possessives cannot be contrasted nor coordinated (these facts are discussed in Poletto and Tommaselli (1994)):

(20)c *el SO gato, no mio
the.ms.sg his cat.ms.sg, not mine.ms.sg.

d *el me e to gato
the.ms.sg my and your cat.ms.sg

Finally, strong possessives are licensed in all those environments where weak and possessive clitics cannot occur, such as in the postnominal predicative position, in isolation, when coordinated or contrasted:

(21) Sto libro ze mio
this.ms.sg book.ms.sg is mine.ms.sg
“This book is mine”

(22) Sto libro di chi zelo? Mio
this.ms.sg. book .ms.sg. of who is? Mine
“Whose book is this? Mine”

(23) el gato SUO, no mio
the.ms.sg. cat.ms.sg, his.ms.sg, not mine
“His cat, not mine”

(24) el gato mio e suo
the.ms.sg cat.ms.sg my and your
“My and your cat”

¹⁰ I focus on Standard Italian possessives in paragraph 1.1.2

As for the licencing position of strong possessives, Cardinaletti (1998) argues that it is presumably the position where they are merged, hence in SpecNP:

(25) [D la [...[XP casa_i [NP sua [t_i]]]]]

As clearly illustrated for Standard Italian in (25), the linear order N-Poss is the result of N movement to a higher functional projection¹¹.

A different point of view is taken by Longobardi (2000) in his analysis of the internal structure of the Determiner Phrase. The author tries to explain the variations in the distribution of determiners, nouns, adjectives and possessive elements in different languages in terms of different parameters involving at least: (a) the number of case checking positions as well as non-prepositional case realization for nominal arguments (i.e. the possessor) (b) the overt realization of the D position and the syntactic strength of D as well as functional heads responsible for attracting the noun to high positions inside the nominal projection. Longobardi's proposal on the internal structure of DP is illustrated in (26):

(26) [D[GenS[Num[H1[S-or [M1 H2 [M2 H3 [Arg H4 [GenO [_a Poss [Subject [Object...N...]]
α]]]]]]]]]]¹²

The lowest DP area - the lexical layer - hosts the nominal arguments (possessor, subject and object) which are hierarchically ordered. Among those elements, the possessor occupies the most prominent position, as shown by data on binding (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991) and subject extraction (Cinque 1980). The inflectional nominal projection hosts functional heads that serve as possible landing-site for N movement¹³. Furthermore, the specifiers of such functional heads may be occupied by adjectives.

As illustrated in (26), two structural genitive case positions may be available for non-prepositional genitives: the higher one labelled GenS is preadjectival and is projected below D, whereas and the lower one labelled GenO is always postadjectival and is projected above the

¹¹ Of course another kind of derivation has to be assumed in languages where the noun is not supposed to undergo further movement through the DP and the possessive shows up in postnominal position like, for example, in the English possessive construction with *of*-insertion (see example (17)d). Cardinaletti adds nothing on this particular aspect.

¹² D= determiner position; GenS= position of construct state genitive, perhaps unmarked Romance possessive As; Num = based position for numerals and in many languages for other determiners ; S-or= Subject/Speaker oriented adjectives; M1 and M2= manner adjectives; Arg= Argument Adjective; H_{1...4} = different target positions for N-raising in different languages ;GenO=position of postnominal Genitive; P,S,O=base position for Possessors, External and Internal arguments respectively; N= base position for N; α=phrase including N and its arguments (Longobardi 2000: 597)

¹³ In the structure shown in (26) the functional heads are generic and indicated with the letter H.

lexical layer¹⁴. The crucial assumption made by Longobardi (2000) is that the activation of one or both positions is subject to parametric variation among languages¹⁵. English seems to activate the highest one, Modern Greek the lowest¹⁶, while in German both positions are available. The three different patterns are illustrated by examples (27)a, b and c¹⁷:

¹⁴ Longobardi identifies five different formal realizations of the genitive case:

- 1) the 's final affix of English Saxon genitive constructions
- 2) the -s word final affix in German
- 3) The inflectional fusional ending of Latin or Slavic languages
- 4) Phi-feature agreement with N (e.g. possessive pronouns)
- 5) "zero realization" such as, for example, the Semitic construct state

¹⁵ Gianollo, Guardiano and Longobardi (2004) propose a "genitive module" according to which the languages may vary on the basis of two different structural configurations: the "free genitive" and the "functional genitive". The most frequent realization of the former is the prepositional one (although a language may have a non-prepositional free genitive realized with an inflectional ending, such as in Classical Latin or Classical Greek); while the latter consists in realizing the genitive case in a Spec/Head configuration in two dedicated functional projections of the DP (GenS and GenO in the representation given in (26)).

¹⁶ Genitive complements may be displaced in prenominal position in Modern Greek. This fronting is triggered by the necessity to assign emphasis or to bring this constituent into prominence and suggests that a more articulated structure also has to be assumed for the highest DP layer in Modern Greek. The following examples taken by Horrocks & Stavrou (1986) illustrate this fact:

(i) to vivlio tu Chomsky
the book the-GEN Chomsky
"Chomsky's book"

(ii) tu Chomsky to vivlio
the-GEN Chomsky the book
"CHOMSKY'S book"

Furthermore, Horrocks & Stavrou (1986) and Alexiadou (in prep.) point out that genitive elements can be also displaced from the DP to peripheral positions of the clause, as exemplified by the interrogative genitive element *tinós*:

(iii) Tinos mu ipes pos dhiavases to vivlio?
Who-gen me-GEN said-2sg that read-2sg the book
"Whose book you told me you read?"

In these analyses, genitive extraction as in (ii) is interpreted as movement to the specifier of a focus peripheral projection. Further evidence in favour of this comes from extraction data of other nominal constituents in the Greek DP, namely the demonstrative. This element can precede the article in Modern Greek and can also be extracted for focalisation, as illustrated by the examples (iv) and (v) respectively:

(iv) Afto to vivlio
This the book
"This book"

(v) Afto mu ipes pos dhiavases *(to) vivlio
This me-gen said-2g that read-2sg the book
"you told me that you read this book"

Interestingly, when a demonstrative precedes the determiner (see example iv), fronting of the genitive DP is not possible. Both elements seem then to compete for the same position:

(vi)a *afto tu Jani to vivlio
this the John-GEN the book
b ?*tu Jani afto to vivlio
the John-GENn this the book

(27)a **John's** beautiful book

b **Marias** sorgfältige Beschreibung **Ottos**
Maria-GenS accurate description Otto-GenO
„Maria's accurate description of Otto“

c το καλό βιβλίο του Γιάννη
the nice book the-John-Gen2
“John's nice book”

As for the prepositional genitive, Longobardi (2000) argues that nominal arguments introduced by a preposition, such as arguments preceded by the dummy preposition *di* in Italian, are likely to be licensed in a position inside the lexical layer¹⁸:

(28) [_D il [_Hquadro_i [_α di Gianni [..t_i..]]]]
the.ms.sg picture.ms.sg. of John
“the picture of John”

Furthermore, Longobardi assumes that the high structural case position labelled GenS may coincide with the position where non-focalised prenominal pronominal possessors are licensed.

Contrary to the proposals presented so far, no movement within the DP layer is assumed in case of Germanic prenominal possessors in Longobardi's analysis. Languages may differ with respect to the strength of D, which attracts the noun to the DP layer in order to check a [+def] feature¹⁹. Semitic languages are an example of “strong” D attracting the noun in visible syntax. In the Construct State possessive construction, both the article-less head noun and the possessor form a syntactic unit with a surface linear order N-Poss. Nothing can split the two elements and the noun phrase has a definite meaning. In Longobardi's system the head noun targets the D position, the nominal argument is licensed in GenS and the attributive AP follows the complex N-Poss, as illustrated in (29):

c *tu Janis mu ipes pos agorases afto to vivlio
the John-gen me you said that bought-2sg this the book

On the basis of these patterns Horrocks & Stavrou (1986) and Alexiadou (in prep.) conclude that extraction of a genitive DP in Greek is possible through a left-peripheral position activated in the highest layer of the noun phrase.

¹⁷ All the examples are taken from Gianollo (2005):31

¹⁸ The dummy preposition *di* has been analysed as the morphological realization of the genitive case on the possessor in Italian (see Giorgi and Longobardi (1991)) and it does not have the status of a real preposition.

¹⁹ He postulates the existence of a “D-strength parameter”, according to which object referring expressions must target D in overt syntax in all those languages where this position is specified with a “strong” value

(29) $[_D \text{ bab}_j [_{GenS} \text{ d-dar}_i [_H \text{ l-qehwi} [t_i [t_j]]]]]^{20}$
 door the-house the-brown
 “the brown door of the house”

N-to D movement applies in a more restricted manner in Romance languages. In Italian, for example, this phenomenon is mainly restricted to constructions involving a proper name. Let us consider the examples in (30):

(30)a *il mio Gianni*
 the.ms.sg my.ms.sg John
 “My John”

b **mio Gianni*
 my.ms.sg John

c *Gianni mio*
 John my.ms.sg

The patterns in (30)a,b and c show that lack of determiner forces N-to-D movement and that, in this case, the proper name and the pronominal possessive pronouns swap positions²¹.

Contrary to Semitic languages and Italian, in Germanic pronominal possessive constructions the weak features in D do not trigger N movement to the DP layer in overt syntax. On the contrary, this movement is delayed until LF and, in this kind of construction, the D is empty²²:

(31) $[_D e [_{GenS} \text{ John's}_j [_{HF} \text{ beautiful} [_{SpecNP} t_j [_{NP} \text{ book}]]]]]]$

To sum up, I have revisited recent theoretical proposals concerning the availability of different positions for possessors inside DP in different languages. Overall, the contributions analysed converge in postulating different licensing positions for pronominal and non-pronominal possessors. More controversial seems to be the problem of accounting for the

²⁰ Example taken by Van de Craats et al. 2000

²¹ According to Longobardi, filling the empty D with a raised proper name is also necessary for semantic reasons: an empty D position would induce an existential interpretation which is not compatible with a singular non mass noun like *Gianni*.

²² Longobardi (1994) points out that further evidence for lack of N-to-D movement in Germanic languages comes from English, where proper names occur without article and may be modified by a pronominal APs but not by a postnominal one:

- (i)a Old John came in
- b *The old John came in
- c *John old came in

Let us briefly concentrate on the complex DP structure given in (32)a and b. I take the lexical layer (the NP projection) as the projection where the noun and its arguments (i.e. the possessor) are merged. The inflectional layer (the IP projection in Haegem's terms) can be also split into several FP projections that function as landing sites for NP movement and whose specifiers may host APs²⁵. The highest layer corresponds to the DFinP projection where I assume that definiteness/indefiniteness is checked²⁶.

The adoption of such an articulated DP structure is motivated by the different patterns available in German and Italian possessive constructions. Moreover, as I will show in Chapter III, this proposal allows an interpretation of some L2 patterns which emerged in the present study in terms of possible options made available by UG.

1.1.1 Possessive constructions in German and Italian

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the distribution of possessors - pronominal and non-pronominal- and nouns in German and Italian possessive constructions²⁷. In order to account for the different patterns available in the two languages, I will refer to the articulated structure of the noun phrases proposed in (32) where several target positions for possessors may be activated in the high (example (32)a) as well as in the low DP area (example (32)b). This section is structured as follows: in paragraph 1.1.2.1 I concentrate on pronominal possessors in German and Italian, while paragraph 1.1.2.2 is concerned with postnominal possessors in the two languages.

²⁵ The functional projections hosted in the nominal IP may correspond to a Gender Phrase (as proposed by Picallo (1991) and Bernstein (1993) for Spanish), a Num(ber) Phrase which is responsible for nouns' singular/plural marking (as proposed for Hebrew by Ritter (1991) and by Valois (1991) and Picallo (1991) for Romance languages). Other classes of "determiners" such as demonstratives or quantifier expressions are taken to be merged within the inflectional layer and project their own functional projection such as, for example, DetP (see Szabolcsi 1994), QP (see Shlonsky (1991) and Giusti (1991)), DemP (Brugé 2002).

²⁶ According to Giusti (2002), the highest functional projection (FPmax in Giusti's terms) is the locus where the "referential value" of the noun phrase is interpreted at LF. Modifiers of the noun that provides referential features to the noun phrase include possessive APs, referential adjectives, possessive noun phrases and proper names. These elements provide with semantic content the NP.

²⁷ I do not deal with ellipsis construction in this work

1.1.2 Prenominal possessors

1.1.2.1 German

Modern German distinguishes four major types of prenominal possessors: (i) possessors with –s suffix; (ii) pronominal possessors; (iii) non-pronominal genitive possessors; (iv) non-pronominal dative possessors.

Let us first concentrate on (i). In Modern German the word affix –s is used with determinerless bare proper names (henceforth BPN Poss) and kinship terms:

(33)a *Ilse's Tasche*
Ilse-GEN bag
„Ilse's bag“

b *Mutters Tasche*
Mother-GEN bag
„the mother's bag“

The –s affix is invariable with respect to gender and number distinction and may be attached both to masculine or feminine bare proper names/kinship terms:

(34)a *Vaters Haus*
Father-GEN home
“The father's home”

b *Mutters Haus*
Mother-GEN home
„the mother's home“

As noted by Lindauer (1998), inanimate bare proper names with –s suffix may also appear in prenominal position in Modern German:

(35) *Amerikas Entdeckung*²⁸ (Lindauer 1999: 110)
Amerika-GEN discovery
“the discovery of America”

However, inanimate BPN Poss with –s affix are more likely to be placed postnominally:

(36)a *die Entdeckung Amerikas*
„the discovery of America“

²⁸ Of course in this case *Amerikas* cannot be understood as the possessor of the event nominal *Entdeckung*, but rather as its object.

vs.

- b ?die Beschreibung Ilses
the description Ilse-GEN
“Ilse’s description”

The BPN Poss with –s affix cannot co-occur with D-elements and quantifiers and it is specified as [+def]²⁹:

- (37) a *Das Peters Buch/*Peters das Buch
the-NOM/ACC.neut.sing Peter-GEN book/ Peter-GEN the-NOM.neut.sing book
“Peter’s book”

- b *Diese Ilses Tasche
This-NOM/ACC.fem.sing Ilse-GEN bag
“This bag of Ilse”

- c *Meine Johans Beschreibung
My-NOM/ACC.fem.sing Johan-GEN description
“My description of John”

- d *Alle Peters Bücher
All-NOM/ACC.pl Peter-GEN books
“All the books of Peter”

When other attributive APs modify the head noun, the BPN Poss precedes both elements and surfaces with a linear order BPN Poss-AP-N:

- (38)a Ilses neue rote Tasche³⁰
Ilse-GEN new-NOM/ACC.fm.sg red-NOM/ACC.fm.sg bag
“Ilse’s new red bag”

The position of the BPN Poss with –s affix with respect to APs/NP and its complementarity with the determiners, suggest that this element is licensed in a high functional position of the DP. Following De Wit’s (1997) proposal for Dutch Saxon genitive constructions, I will adopt the idea that BPN Poss undergoes a two-step derivation: from the merge position inside the lexical layer, it targets SpecIP and ends up in SpecDFin³¹. This last step is required by BPN Poss to check the [def] feature. The derivation in (39) illustrates this fact:

²⁹ German prenominal possessive constructions containing a BPN Poss with –s affix have inherited definiteness just like the English Saxon genitive construction: the definiteness of the noun phrase depends on the definiteness of the possessor noun

³⁰ Attributive APs have two paradigms of inflection in German: strong inflection and weak inflection. In this case the APs are inflected according to the strong paradigm which applies when the DP has no overt determiner. Otherwise, APs are inflected according to the weak paradigm.

³¹ Several proposals have been developed on the nature of the feature that BPN Poss has to check in SpecIP: a structural genitive case feature (Clahsen H., Eisenbeiss S., Vainikka A., 1994; Longobardi 2000, Gavrusseva 2000);

(39) [_{SpecDFinP} Illes_i [_{DFin} [_{SpecIP} *t*_i [_I [_{SpecFP} rote_{[F} [_{SpecNP} *t*_i [_{NP} Tasche]

Prenominal pronominal possessors share with BPN Poss with –s affix the same distributional properties. They cannot co-occur with other D-elements³²; they are restricted to prenominal position only and are specified as [+def]:

(40) *meine Johans Beschreibung
 my-NOM/ACC.fm.sg. Johan-GEN description
 “My description of John”

(41) *die/eine meine Tasche
 the-NOM/ACC.fm.sg./a-NOM/ACC.fm.sg. my-NOM/ACC.fm.sg bag
 “My bag/ a bag of mine”

(42) *das Buch mein
 the-NOM/ACC.nt.sg book my-NOM/ACC.nt.sg
 “My book”

Contrary to BPN Poss with –s affix, possessive pronouns agree in person with the possessor and in number and gender with the possessee:

(43)a die Bluse des Vaters
 the-NOM.fm.sg shirt the-GEN.fm.sg father
 “the father’s shirt”

b seine Bluse
 his-NOM.ms.sg shirt
 „his shirt“

Similarly to BPN Poss with –s affix, pronominal possessors precede prenominal APs that modify the head noun:

(44) Meine neue blaue Tasche
 my-NOM/ACC.fm.sg bag new-NOM/ACC.weak.fm.sg blu-NOM/ACC.weak.fm.sg bag
 “my new blue bag”

an EPP-feature (Lindauer 1999, Giusti (2006); a Topic feature (Penner Z. e J. Weissenborn, 1996). In the present work I will maintain the idea that BPN Poss movement to SpecIP is triggered by case feature checking.

³² As noted by Giusti (1993), prenominal pronominal possessors may co-occur with demonstratives in German:

(i) ?Diese meine Frage vs. *die meine Frage (Giusti 1993: 64)

This-NOM/ACC.fm.sg my-NOM/ACC question/the-NOM/ACC.fm.sg my-NOM/ACC.fm.sg question
 In Giusti (1993) this pattern is accounted for by assuming that demonstratives are nominal modifiers merged immediately below D but higher than possessors, and that they move to the DP layer in order to check a [def] feature.

Following De Wit (1997) and Cardinaletti (1998), I will assume that German pronominal possessors are treated as to clitics; they move from an XP position to a functional head position. This derivation is illustrated in (45) below:

(45) [[_{DPin} meine_i [_{SpecIP} t_i [_I [_{SpecFP} rote [_F [_{SpecNP} t_i [_N Tasche]

Let us now focus on full genitive prenominal DPs. The possibility of placing them in prenominal position is constrained by semantic factors; the genitive DP must be specified as [+animate] (see Olsen (1988) and Bhatt (1990)):

(46) des Mannes Hut
 theGEN.ms.sg. manGEN.ms.sg hat
 „the man’s hat“

(47) *der Tische Beine
 theGEN/DAT.fm.sg. table legs
 „the legs of the table“

Moreover, the possibility of such a construction seems to decrease when the case marker on the prenominal genitive DP is not morphologically specified:

(48)a ? der Frau Haus
 theGEN/DAT.fm.sg woman house
 „the woman’s house“

b des Mannes Haus
 the-GEN.ms.sg. man-GEN.ms.sg house
 “The man’s home”

According to Olsen (1988), possessive constructions as in (48)a do not exist any more in Modern German.

As for placement with respect to APs/N, prenominal full genitive DPs share the same distributional properties as with BPN Poss with –s affix and possessive pronouns: they precede APs/N and they cannot co-occur with D-elements:

(49) des Mannes neues Haus
 the-GEN.ms.sg man-GEN.ms.sg new-NOM.strong.neut.sg house
 “The man’s new house”

(50)a *Das des Mannes Haus/*des Mannes das Haus
 the-NOM.nt.sg./ the-GEN.ms.sg. man-GEN.ms.sg house

b *Dieses des Mannes Haus
 This-NOM.nt.sg the-GEN.ms.sg house

For possessive constructions containing prenominal full genitive DPs I propose the same derivation of BPN Poss with –s affix. They are merged in the lexical layer and are raised to SpecDFinP through SpecIP, as illustrated in (51):

(51) [_{SpecDFin} des Mannes_i [_{DFin} [_{SpecIP} **t**_i [_I [_{FP}[_{SpecNP} **t**_i [_{NP} Haus]

Finally, I conclude this section with the non-pronominal dative possessor appearing in the so-called Double possessive construction. An example of this pattern, which occurs in colloquial High German and in Swiss German³³, is given in (52)a and b³⁴:

(52)a dem Vater sein Buch
 the-DAT.ms.sg his-NOM.sg.ms book
 “the father’s book”

b dem Vater seine Mutter
 the-DAT.ms.sg his-NOM.sg.fem book
 “the father’s mother”

c dem Vater seine Bücher
 the-DAT.ms.sg his-NOM.pl. books
 “the father’s books”

The data above shows that in a Double possessive construction the possessor is realised as a full DP bearing dative case while the head noun (the possessee) is introduced by a possessive pronoun which agrees both with the possessor and the head noun with respect to number and gender.

Following Gavoruseva’s (2000) analysis of possessor extraction patterns in Germanic languages, I will adopt the idea that the German nominal I head can be specified with two kinds of case features [+Gen] or [+Dat] and a set of phi-features (person,number,gender). I will then assume that, when the possessor is a bare proper name, the nominal I is specified only as [+Gen], and attracts the possessor in its specifier, in order to check the case feature represented by the affix –s. The output of this derivation is a Saxon Genitive type construction like the one illustrated in (39) and repeated here as (53):

³³ It also occurs in Dutch and Scandinavian languages.

³⁴ Examples taken from Gavoruseva (2000)

(53) $[_{\text{SpecDFinP}} \text{Ilse}]_i \text{ } [_{\text{DFin}} [_{\text{SpecIP}} \text{t}_i \text{ } [+Gen] \text{ } -s] \text{ } [_{\text{SpecFP}} \text{rote}]_{[F \dots]} [_{\text{SpecNP}} \text{t}_i \text{ } [_N \text{Tasche}]]$

In the case of full DPs, the nominal I can be specified as [+Dat] and bears a set of phi-features (person, number and gender). This two-way agreement is expressed both on the possessor DP, which is inflected to indicate the dative case, and on the I head through the insertion of a possessive pronoun agreeing with the possessor and head noun with respect to number and gender:

(54) $[_{\text{SpecDFinP}} \text{dem Vater}]_i \text{ } [_{\text{DFin}} [_{\text{SpecIP}} \text{t}_i \text{ } [+Dat]_i \text{ } [\text{phi-features}]] \text{ } \text{sein}]_{[FP \dots]} [_{\text{SpecNP}} \text{t}_i \text{ } [_N \text{Haus}]]$

Moreover, I assume that further movement of possessor DP to SpecDFinP is necessary in order to check a [def] feature³⁵.

1.1.2.2 Italian

Contrary to German, only possessive pronouns appear in prenominal position in Italian possessive constructions. Crucially, possessive DPs do not have inherited definiteness in Italian and a prenominal possessor has to be introduced by a definite or indefinite determiner which agrees in phi-feature with the head noun:

(55)a *la mia borsa/questa mia borsa*
 the.fm.sg my.fm.sg bag/this.fm.sg. my.fm.sg. bag
 “my bag”/”this bag of mine”

b *una mia borsa*
 a.fm.sg my.fm.sg bag
 “a bag of mine”

An exception is represented by kinship terms which do not require a determiner when they have a definite interpretation and are introduced by a possessive pronoun:

(56)a *mio figlio è medico*
 my.ms.sg son is-3°.sg doctor
 “my son is a doctor”

³⁵ In Gavrouseva’s analysis DFinP corresponds to DP and I to Agr/D. Furthermore, the author points out that German prenominal possessors do not target the DP layer and are licensed in the Agr/D projection. She assumes SpecDP to be the escape hatch for possessor movement outside the nominal projection. Due to the fact that neither BPN Poss with –s affix nor dative possessors can be extracted out of the DP in German, she proposes that both elements are licensed in a functional projection just below D.

b *il mio figlio è medico
the.ms.sg my.ms.sg son is-3°.sg doctor
“*the my son is a doctor”

c un mio figlio è medico, l'altro è avvocato
“one of my son is a doctor, the other is a lawyer”

As pointed out by Cardinaletti (1998), the only pronominal possessives that do not display adjectival properties in Italian DP are the possessive *loro* and the relative pronoun *cui*³⁶:

(57)a la loro auto/*l'auto loro
the.fm.sg their car
“their car”

b le loro borse
the.fm.pl. their bags
“their bags”

c i loro cani
the.ms.pl their dog.pl
“their dogs”

(58)a il cui amico/*l'amico cui
the.ms.sg whose friend.fm.sg
“whose friend”

b la cui amica
the.fm.sg whose friend.fm.sg

c i cui amici
the.ms.pl whose friend.pl
“whose friends”

As illustrated by the examples from (57) to (58), *loro* and *cui* are invariable with respect to gender and number distinction. Moreover, as for placement of pronominal possessives with respect to APs/ N, it is worth pointing out that, as observed by Crisma (1993) and Cinque (1994), they precede both elements in Standard Italian³⁷:

(59) la mia prima nuova motocicletta
the.fm.sg my.fm.sg first.fm.sg new.fm.sg motorbike
“my first new motorbike”

³⁶ See Cardinaletti (1998) for a detailed analysis of the distributional properties of both elements in Italian

³⁷ The surface position of pronominal possessors varies between dialects. Northern dialects display a linear order Poss-N, while southern and central dialects prefer the order N-Poss. See Manzini & Savoia (2005) for a detailed overview of the patterns attested in Italian dialects.

1.1.3 Postnominal possessors in German and Italian

1.1.3.1 German

Possessors occurring in postnominal position in Modern German are (i) full genitive DPs; (ii) possessors introduced by the preposition *von* (the so-called analytic construction) and (iii) bare proper names with *-s* affix.

In section 1.1.2.1 I underlined the fact that full genitive DPs occurring in prenominal position have to be specified as [+animate]. Furthermore, the possibility of such a construction decreases when the case marker on the DP is not morphologically specified as [genitive]. The same does not hold for full DPs occurring in postnominal position, as shown by the contrast between the examples in (62) and (63):

- (62)a **der Tische Beine*
theGEN/DAT.fm.sg. table legs
„the legs of the table“
- b *die Beine der Tische*
the.pl leg.pl theGEN/DAT.fm.sg table
- (63)a ? *der Frau Haus*
theGEN/DAT.fm.sg woman home
“the woman’s home”
- b *das Haus der Frau*
theNOM.nt.sg theGEN/DAT.fm.sg woman

The data above show that the postnominal position of full genitive DPs does not trigger the dropping of the determiner of the head noun and, when an AP that modifies the noun is inserted, the genitive DP must follow both elements. In this case the surface word order is Det-AP-N-DP_{gen}, as shown by the example (64):

- (64) *das neue⁴⁰ Haus des Mannes*
the.NOM.net.sg new.NOM.weak.neut.sg home the-GEN.ms.sg man-GEN.ms.sg
„The new house of the man“

The same morphosyntactic properties affect BPNs with *-s* affix appearing in postnominal position. Moreover, this kind of construction is considered absolutely grammatically correct when the BPN poss is [-animate] or is a well-known person:

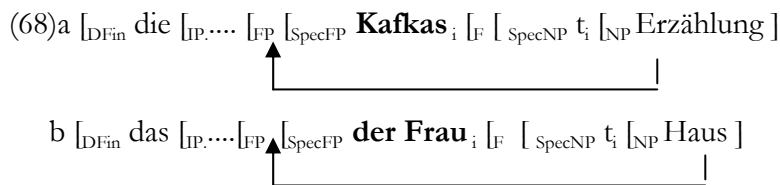
⁴⁰ In this case the modifier is inflected according to the “weak” adjectival declension.

(65) Die schönste Straße Stuttgarts
 the.NOM.fm.sg. most beautiful.NOM.weak.fm.sg road Stuttgart.GEN
 „Stuttgart’s most beautiful road”

(66) die Erzählung Kafkas
 the.NOM.fm.sg novel Kafka.GEN
 „the novel of Kafka“

(67) ?Die Tasche Ilse
 the.NOM.fm.sg bag Ilse.GEN
 „the bag of Ilse“

The distributional properties of postnominal genitive DPs suggest that there must be a strict adjacency between the noun and the possessor. Following Longobardi (2000), I assume a case position in the low DP area where genitives are licensed in German. The postnominal position of possessors is then the result of a “short” NP movement to a functional node projected immediately above the low case position:



I take the low case projection labelled FP in (68) to also be the target position of *von*-PP - the so-called analytic construction - which may select as complements both animate or inanimate possessors⁴¹:

- (69)a Das Buch von Peter
 the.NOM.net.sg book of Peter
 “the book of Peter”
- b Die Erzählung von Kafka
 the.NOM.fm.sg novel of Kafka
 „the novel of Kafka“
- c Die schönste Straße von Stuttgart
 the.NOM.fm.sg most beautiful road of Stuttgart
 “The most beautiful road of Stuttgart”

⁴¹ Although not grammatically incorrect, the realization of analytic possessive constructions when the possessor is a BPN is not appropriate in High German and it is more frequent in colloquial German.

A reason to suppose that *von*-PPs are licensed in SpecFP like genitive DPs lies in the nature of the preposition *von*. Lindauer (1998) points out that, similarly to the Italian dummy preposition *di*, *von* can be analysed as a defective preposition with a structural feature that has to be checked in a functional projection. Further evidence for this claim comes from binding data; a DP inside a *von*-PP can bind out of the PP. According to Lindauer (1998), *von*-PPs are then transparent for binding and are not full PPs. This fact is illustrated by the example (70):

(70) der Brief von Oskar_i an sich_i (Lindauer 1999: 123)
 the.NOM.ms.sg. letter of Oskar_i to him_i
 “Oskar’s letter to/for him”

Moreover, a linear adjacency between N and the *von*-PP seems to be required in German. Let us consider an event noun that selects two arguments introduced by the preposition *von* (the object) and the preposition *durch* (the agent):

(71)a Die Entdeckung von Amerika durch Kolumbus (Lindauer 1999: 122)
 the.fm.sg discovery of America by Columbus
 “America’s discovery by Columbus”
 b *Die Entdeckung durch Kolumbus von Amerika
 the.fm.sg discovery of America by Columbus

As noted by Lindauer (1998), the contrast in (71)a vs. b suggests that the *durch*-PP cannot appear between the noun and its object because it would block *von*-PP movement to SpecFP which is triggered by the requirement to check the structural case feature. The same ungrammaticality occurs when the agent is realised in postnominal position, through the addition of –s affix and the object is introduced by a *von*-PP:

(72)a *Die Entdeckung Kolumbus von Amerika (Lindauer 1999: 122)
 b *Die Entdeckung von Amerika Kolumbus

The data above seem to confirm that only one structural case position is possible in the low DP in German. Crucially the *von*-PP is licensed there rather than in the lexical layer, otherwise the structures in (72) would be grammatical.

1.1.3.2 Italian

(Non) pronominal possessors and possessive pronouns⁴² may appear in postnominal position in Standard Italian:

(73)a *La macchina di Gianni/del ragazzo*
 the.fm.sg car of John/of him
 “John’s car”

b **La (di) Gianni macchina/?? La di lui macchina*
 the.fm.sg (of) John car/the.fm.sg of him car

c *La macchina SUA/? La macchina sua*
 the.fm.sg car HIS
 “His car”

The examples in (73)a and b show that bare proper names, pronouns and common nouns are licensed postnominally through *di*-insertion in Italian possessive constructions. In prenominal position bare proper name possessors are ungrammatical (**La (di) Gianni macchina*), while third person singular pronouns introduced by *di* are marginal and rarely used in Modern Italian⁴³. Following Longobardi (2000), I simply assume that *di*-possessors do not move from their merged position inside NP, where more slots for possessors are available and reiteration of *di*-PP is a possible grammatical option⁴⁴:

(74)a *Il quadro di Luisa_[possessor] di Rembrant_[agent] di Berlino_[theme] è meraviglioso*⁴⁵

b [_{DFin} il [_{IP} quadro_i [_{FP}... [_{SpecNP} di Luisa [di Rembrant [di Berlino] [<sub>N..t_i]]]]]]]
 the.ms.sg. picture of Luisa of Rembrant of Berlin
 “Luisa’s picture by Rembrant of Berlin”</sub>

⁴² The exceptions are the invariable possessives *loro* and *cui*, which appear in prenominal position (cfr. 1.3.1.2).

⁴³ Interestingly, Cardinaletti (1998) points out that bare third person singular pronouns *lui/lei* may appear as prenominal possessors in Old Italian:

- (i) *il lei marito* (Cardinaletti 1998 : 31)
 the (of) her husband
 “her husband”
- (ii) *la lei bellezza*
 the (of) her beauty
 “her beauty”

⁴⁴ But see Cinque (2005b) for a proposal on merging the *di*-PP higher in the extended nominal projection based on Kayne’s analysis (1999, 2001, 2002) of PPs.

⁴⁵ Longobardi (2000) underlines the fact that the ordering of prepositional genitives is quite free and does not have to obey the hierarchical order of nominal arguments inside NP possessor>agent>theme. See also Gianollo (2005) on this particular aspect.

Possessive pronouns occurring in postnominal position usually bear contrastive stress in Standard Italian⁴⁶:

- (75)a Guido la macchina MIA, non la tua
 I drive the.fm.sg car my.fm.sg, not the.fm.sg. your.fm.sg
 ‘I drive MY car and not yours’

Although they are homophonous, pre- and postnominal possessive pronouns do not have the same distributional properties, as underlined by Cardinaletti (1998). In her analysis the former are licensed in a higher functional projection of the DP due to the fact that they are weak pronouns, while the latter do not move from their merge position inside the lexical layer because they are strong pronouns, as exemplified in (76) below:

- (76) [_{DFin} la [_{IP} macchina_i [_{FP} ... [_{SpecNP} MIA [_{NP*t*_i]]]]]}

Following this idea, I simply assume that postnominal possessive pronouns occupy the same position of *di*-PP possessors in Italian. Hence, they are licensed in their merge position and do not move up any further through the extended nominal projection⁴⁷.

1.2 Noun placement in the Determiner Phrase

Based on the assumption that adjectives are hierarchically ordered within DP according to their semantic properties, Crisma (1993) and Cinque (1994) argue that variation in N placement with respect to APs in Germanic and Romance languages is a result not of the position of adjectives but rather of the noun. Hence, the differences between the linear orders in different languages should be accounted for in terms of parameterised options of leftward raising of the noun over APs⁴⁸. Ten years later, further cross-language studies force a refinement of this analysis. While the assumption that APs occupy fixed positions on the basis

⁴⁶ The same does not hold true for Italian dialects (see footnote 37).

⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it seems plausible to think that postnominal pronominal possessors bearing a contrastive stress may be licensed in a focus position activated in the lower DP area that does not correspond to SpecNP. See Bernstein (2000, 2001) for a proposal on this issue.

⁴⁸ According to this theory, the noun targets –at least – an intermediate functional head crossing argument and manner adjectives in Romance languages but not in Germanic languages:

[*Subject or speaker oriented adjectives* [*Manner1 (appositive)* **N**_{Romance} [*Manner2 restrictive* [[*Argument adjectives ...*]]]

N_{Germanic}]:

(i)a L'evidente _{Speaker-or} deliberata _{M1} provocazione di Gianni
 John's evident deliberate provocation
 b *la provocazione evidente deliberata di Gianni
 * John's provocation evident deliberate

of their semantic properties remains substantially unchanged, an approach based on phrasal movement seems to be more adequate both from a theoretical and a descriptive point of view. I will now briefly revisit recent works by Shlonsky (2003) and Cinque (2005a), which seek to demonstrate the validity of the NP-movement analysis over the head raising one⁴⁹.

According to Shlonsky (2003) there are several aspects in the syntax of Semitic Noun Phrases that may not receive an adequate explanation in terms of noun raising: (i) lack of strict linear adjacency D-N; (ii) configuration of numeral phrases in Hebrew; (iii) distribution of adjective phrases in Semitic languages⁵⁰. Let us focus on (i) first. The N-to-D analysis traditionally adopted for Semitic DP⁵¹ would predict that no lexical material should intervene between the determiner and the noun. This is what happens when adjectives or genitive PPs show up within the DP:

(77)a ha Volvo ha xadaš/ *ha (ha) xadaš Volvo
 the Volvo the new/ the (the) new Volvo
 “the new Volvo”

b ha Volvo šel Schneider/ *ha šel Schneider Volvo
 the Volvo of Schneider/ the of Schneider Volvo
 “Schneider’s Volvo”

However, in some Arabic dialects and in colloquial Hebrew, cardinal number may co-occur between D and N. This fact is illustrated here for Arabic spoken in Cairo and Hebrew in (78)a and b respectively:

(78)a el xamas banaat
 the five girls
 “the five girls”

b #ha xamišim šekel/škalim
 the fifty Shekel/Shekels
 “the fifty Shekels”

Furthermore, no such strict D-N linear adjacency is to be found in Hebrew adjective phrases containing adjectives such as *me’od* (very), *yotex* (more) and *paxot* (less):

⁴⁹ I would like to point out that I will concentrate my attention only on those aspects which I consider significant for demonstrating the superiority of NP-movement analysis over the Head Raising analysis. For a more detailed treatment of the content of both works I refer the reader to the articles quoted in the bibliography

⁵⁰ The phrasal movement approach is adopted by Shlonsky (2003) to account for the morphosyntactic properties of the Semitic Construct State as well. For reason of space I will not deal with this topic in the present section

⁵¹ See Ritter (1988,1991) and Siloni (1997) among others.

(79)a ha haca'a ha me'od svira
the decision the very reasonable
“the very reasonable decision”

b ha haxlata ha yoter/ha paxot btuxa
the decision the more/the less sure
“the more/less sure decision”

Despite the fact that the determiner and the lexical element which follows exhibit weak phonological boundary in Semitic languages, the distributional properties of numerals and adjectives observed so far force the author to conclude that nouns and determiners do not occupy the same position as a result of N-to-D raising.

As for (ii), Shlonsky (2003) assumes that the base hierarchy of projections hosting cardinal and ordinal numerals is the one which occurs in Arabic:

(80) Ord#P > Card#P > N

?awwal-u xams-i muhaadaraat-in
first-nom five-GEN lectures-GEN
“the first five lectures”

However, Hebrew is an example of a word order where the noun appears between the cardinal and the ordinal numerals. This fact is illustrated in (81):

(81) Card#P > N > Ord#P

šaloš simfoniot rišonot
three symphonies first
“first three symphonies”

Interestingly, Shlonsky (2003) points out that it is not possible to derive the Hebrew word order in (81) from the basic one in (80) through head noun raising, due to the fact that the possible Hebrew surface word order in case of N-to-D raising would be the unattested N > Card#P > Ord#P.

Finally, further interesting evidence for an NP movement analysis comes from the distribution of adjective phrases, and from the fact that the order of APs in Hebrew is the opposite of that in English. Here, for reasons of space, I will limit the comparison between the two languages to four classes of adjectives only⁵².

⁵² For a detailed description of these patterns see Shlonsky (2003)

(82) English: color>nationality

a a brown Swiss cow

b *a Swiss brown cow

(83) Hebrew: nationality>color

a *para xuma švecarit

b para švecarit xuma

(84) English:shape>color

a the long black table

b *the black long table

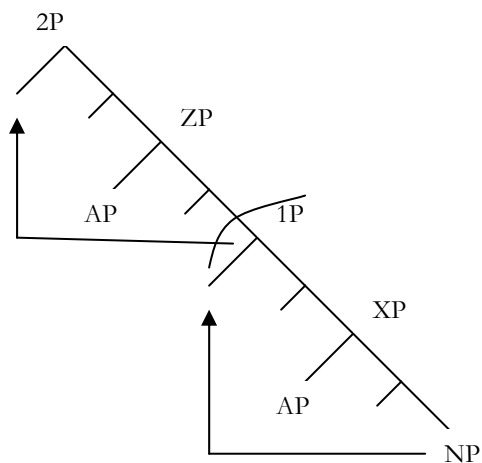
(85) Hebrew: color>shape

a *ha-šulxan ha-‘arox ha-šaxor

d ha- šulxan ha-šulxan ha- šaxor

Let us concentrate on the difference in the order of APs in English and Hebrew, as illustrated by examples (82) to (85). As pointed out by Shlonsky (2003), assuming the hypothesis that adjectives occupy specifier positions (see footnote 48), the only way to derive the mirror image effect on the placement of APs in the Hebrew examples given so far, is to assume that NP targets the specifier position above the projection where the adjective is merged. The second step in the derivation consists in moving the entire NP containing the adjective up to the higher AP. This derivation is illustrated in (86) below:

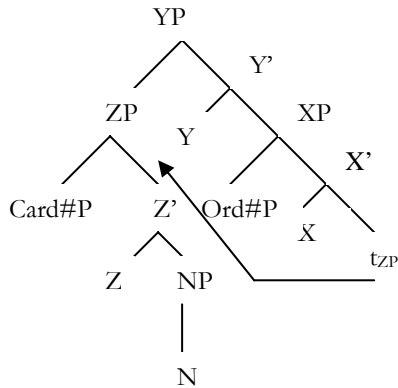
(86)



The same line of reasoning is applied to derive the Hebrew word order with numerals, as exemplified in (81) and repeated here as (87):

(87) šaloš simfoniot rišonot
 three symphonies first
 “first three symphonies”

Card#P>N > Ord#P



In Shlonsky’s (2003) proposal, the entire phrase ZP containing the cardinal numeral in its specifier and selecting the noun as complement, moves to the specifier of YP, which, in turn, dominates the category XP whose specifier is occupied by the ordinal numeral.

Similarly to Shlonsky (2003), Cinque (2005)a develops a proposal based on NP phrasal movement in order to derive all the attested word orders across different languages and none of the unattested ones forseen by Greenberg’s (1963) Universal 20, which states the following: “When any or all the items (demonstratives, numeral and descriptive adjectives) precede the noun, they are always found in that order. If they follow it, the order is either the same or its exact opposite (p. 87)”. According to these statement, the basic word order of adnominal modifiers of the noun is the one exemplified in (88):

(88) Dem>Num>A>N⁵³

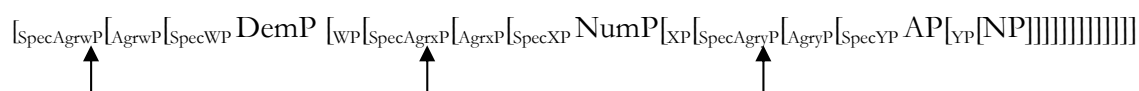
In postnominal position two reverse surface orders are possible:

- (89)a N>Dem>Num>A
- b N>A>Num>Dem

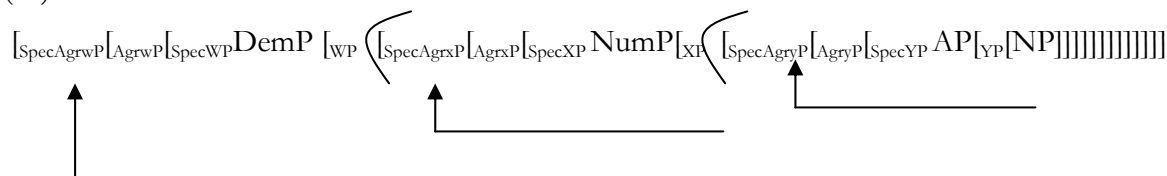
⁵³ Dem= demonstratives; Num= numerals; A= attributive adjectives; N noun.

In Cinque's (2005)a proposal, the sequence in (88) represents the merge order which is very common in many languages of the world, whereas both combinations in (89)a and b are the result of NP raising through the DP. Crucially, the NP may move as single maximal projection from specifier to specifier or in a "roll-up" fashion through pied-piping⁵⁴. The former movement produces the order in (89)a, which occurs only in a few languages, while the latter produces the very common word order in (89)b⁵⁵. The two different kinds of NP raising are illustrated in (90)a and b respectively:

(90)a N>Dem>Num>A



(90)b N>A>Num>Dem



The hypothesis developed by Cinque (2005)a is based on the fact that the possible combinations of Dem, Num and A in **postnominal position** generate 24 options. Among them, only 14 are attested in the languages of the world. Crucially, an NP raising approach can derive all the 14 attested orders, while, at the same time, it forseees the impossibility of deriving the 10 unattested ones. Two basic assumptions are required in order to maintain this idea: (i) the following fixed merged order of nominal modifiers $[[_{WP} Dem[_{XP} Num [_{YP} AP[_{NP} N]]]]$; (ii) the fact that the NP may move partially or totally with or without pied-piping through the extended nominal projection. Furthermore, head movement or movement of a phrase which does not contain an NP is not possible.

Let us briefly concentrate on the way Cinque's (2005)s analysis derive two attested options and two unattested ones⁵⁶:

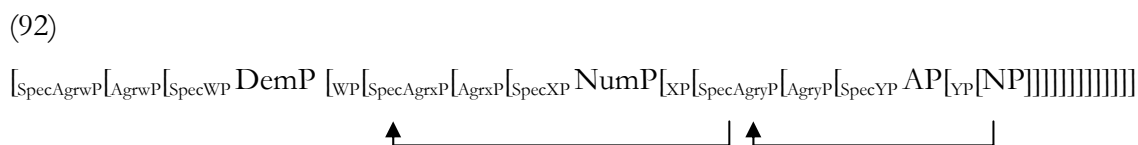
⁵⁴ Cinque maintains that nominal modifiers occupy the specifiers of agreement projections projected above the lexical layer.

⁵⁵ On the basis of the variuos options possible in different languages, Cinque (2005)a underlines the fact that NP movement without pied-piping as in (89)a represents a marked option. compared to NP movement with pied-piping as in (89)b.

⁵⁶ See Cinque (2005)a for a detailed discussion of the 24 possible word orders generated through the combination of N, Dem, Num and A

- (91)a Dem>N>Num>A (attested only in a few languages)
 b N >A >Dem>Num (attested only in a few languages)
 c A>Dem>Num>N (not attested)
 d A>Num>Dem>N (not attested)

The option in (91)a is obtained if the NP moves partially over adjectives and numerals without pied-piping, as exemplified in the derivation in (92):



The linear order in (94)b is obtained through raising of NP over A. Subsequently, a further movement with pied-piping of the complex [N A] over numerals, and movement without pied-piping over demonstratives, is also assumed. The derivation in (93) illustrates this fact:



The linear orders in (91)c and d cannot be derived because, even assuming that the NP has not moved, the modifiers in prenominal position do not reflect the universal merged order. Concerning these particular aspects, the author points out that all the N –final orders showing the “wrong” merged sequence of modifiers are not in used in the languages of the world. This fact could suggest that raising of the NP is actually involved in determining word order variation and that more orders of modifiers are possible in postnominal position due to the fact that the NP – or an XP containing it – may be raised up to the extended nominal projection in different ways. Cinque (2005)a also addresses also the important question as to why the NP moves. One reason may lie in the licensing conditions imposed on demonstrative, number and adjective phrases, and namely the need to be endowed with a nominal feature in order to be licensed. Agreement may be realised either through NP movement to the specifier of an agreement head projected above each Phrase (the Agr heads in the derivations from (93) to (94), or, alternatively, through the “Agree operation” proposed by Chomsky (2000), namely a “long-distance” agreement between a nominal feature directly merged in the specifier position of the agreement head, and the unraised NP.

In his final remarks, Cinque (2005)^a undelins the fact that the all the structures examined so far represent only a “fragment” of the internal structure of the DP. The picture may become more complex if universal quantifiers, numerals and relative clauses have to be taken into consideration, due to the fact that, in this case, the number of possible combinations would increase. Crucially, a way to restrict the number of options is to mantain the idea of a fixed hierarchical structure of nominal constituents, and to assume that word order variation is determined by the raising of maximal projections containing NPs.

Let us now focus in more detail on noun placement in German and Italian.

1.2.1 Noun placement in German and Italian

It is a well know fact that one of the most striking differences between Romance and Germanic nominal syntax is the position of adjectives with respect to the noun. As already pointed out in section 1.2, Crisma (1993) and (Cinque 1994) offer for the first time an anlysis in terms of partial head noun movement through the extended nominal projection in Romance but not in Germanic in order to account account for the specular N placement with respect to the same class of APs such as, for example, adjectives of color as in the example (94)a vs. b:

- (94)a schöner grosser **roter** Ball (Cinque 1994)
 beautiful.NON.strong.ms.sg big.NOM.strong.ms.sg red.NOM.strong.ms.sg ball
 “a beautiful big red ball”
- b una bella grande palla **rossa**
 beautiful.fm.sg. big.fm.sg. red.fm.sg ball

However, some evidence to the contrary is provided by certain Romance adjective orderings which are mirror-images of the Germanic ones. For the sake of brevity I focus only on German and Italian. The relevant patterns are given in (95)a vs. b:

- (95)a eine wunderschöne rote Tasche
 a.fm.sg. beautiful.weak.fm.sg. red.weak.fm.sg bag
 “a very nice red bag”
- b una borsa rossa bellissima
 a.fm.sg bag.fm.sg red.fm.sg beautiful.fm.sg

The Italian adjective ordering in (95)b is quite unexpected given the same universal hierarchy of APs in both languages. What should vary is the target position of the noun in Italian, rather

than the sequence of APs. Hence, one would expect only the following linear orders to be possible:

(95)c una bellissima borsa_i rossa t_i (N-raising over *rossa*)
 a.fm.sg beautiful.fm.sg bag red.fm.sg

d una borsa_i bellissima t_i rossa t_i (N-raising over *rossa* and *bellissima*)
 a.fm.sg bag beautiful.fm.sg red.fm.sg

In order to account for the AP placement in (95)b, Cinque (1994) proposes that both adjectives are predicative rather than attributive. As a consequence, they do not have to obey the ordering restrictions imposed on attributive APs. In Cinque (2005)b a refinement of this proposal is developed on the basis of NP phrasal movement together with the existence of two sources of prenominal APs: (i) the direct modification source is represented by adjectives merged in dedicated functional positions within DP; (ii) the indirect modification source is represented by adjectives which enter the derivation as reduced relative clauses⁵⁷. This fact is illustrated in (96):

(96) [DP[SpecFP4 **RRC indirect modification** [F4 [SpecF3 [F3[SpecF2 **AP direct modification**[F2 [SpecF1 AP...[NP]]]]]]]]

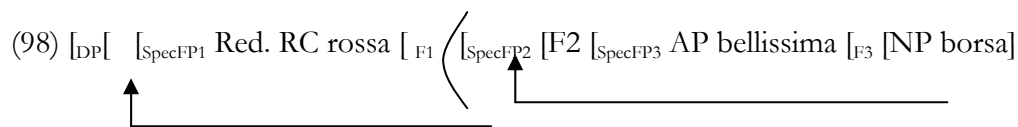
The crucial assumption made by Cinque (2005)b is that direct modification APs are closer to the noun than indirect ones and that the former, unlike the latter, are rigidly ordered. According to Cinque's (2005)b analysis, the modification implied in the examples (95)a and b is of the direct type, with the APs merged in specifier positions and then rigidly ordered. The German adjective ordering in (95)a reflects the merge order of APs without NP raising. In Italian the reverse order of postnominal APs affecting direct modifications, as shown in (95)b, is derived via "roll-up" NP raising plus pied piping of the kind illustrated in (97):

(97) [DP [SpecFP1 [F1 [SpecFP2 AP bellissima [F2 ([SpecFP3 [F3 [SpecFP4 AP rossa [F3 [YP[NP borsa]]]]]]]]]]]

An example of indirect modification in Italian is given in (95)d, where the strict linear order noun - adjective of color *rossa* is broken up by the adjective of quality *bellissima*. This AP linear order is interpreted by Cinque (2005)b as the result of merging *rossa* higher up as a reduced

⁵⁷ The merge position of the reduced relative clause is prenominal in Cinque's (2005)b analysis

relative clause. The postnominal position of the adjective of color is derived through raising of the complex NP/direct modification AP over *rossa*. This pattern is exemplified in (98):



As noted by Cinque (2005)b, an interesting case of indirect modification in German is represented by the so-called *Partizipialkonstruktion* (Participial constructions): participles may appear in prenominal position function as “attributive APs”. Crucially, the anteposition has a visible morphological result; the participle is inflected like an attributive adjective and agrees in phi-feature with the head noun, as exemplified by the contrast between (99)a and b:

(99)a Die Studentin, ihr Studium seit langem hassendØ, fiel durch ihr Examen
 the.fm.sg. her study for a long time hating, failed her exams
 “As she has been hating her study for a long time, the student failed her exams”

b Eine [ihr Studium seit langem hassende] Studentin fiel durch ihr Examen
 a.fm.sg. her study for a long time hating student
 “A student hating her exams for a long time”

Furthermore, as opposed to Italian, indirect modification APs are always prenominal in German due to the fact that the NP is never raised as high as in Italian:

(100)a Le lettere [arrivate recentemente]
 the.fem.pl. letter.pl arrived recently
 “the recently arrived letters”

b *le [arrivate recentemente] lettere
 the.fem.pl. letter.pl arrived recently letter.pl

c le lettere che sono arrivate recentemente
 the.fem.pl. letter.pl that arrived recently
 “the letters that arrived recently”

To sum up, German and Italian differ with regard to NP raising within DP: in German the NP crosses over neither the direct modification APs nor the indirect ones; in Italian, on the other hand, both options are possible.

1.3 Implications for the acquisition of Saxon genitive constructions by Italian adult learners.

The comparative approach adopted so far suggests that two kinds of parametric variation constitute radical differences between German and Italian nominal syntax. One variation has to do with the inherited definiteness at work in German possessive constructions and the possibility that referential elements other than determiners (i.e. full genitive DPs, Dative possessors, BPN with –s affix, pronominal possessors) may occupy the outer specifier of the determiner phrase (SpecDFinP according to the articulated DP structure proposed in (32)). The opposite situation is to be found in Italian, where no inherited definiteness is involved in possessive constructions, and the possibility that referential elements rather than determiners may be licensed in the DFinP-layer is restricted to possessive pronouns occurring with kinship-terms and a few groups of common nouns.

The second parametric variation is mainly concerned with NP placement within the DP. In this particular respect, Italian differs from German in that the NP raises high up through the extended nominal projection. As a consequence, some classes of APs occur only in postnominal position, others only in prenominal position, while a third class of adjectives may either precede or follow the noun. The same does not hold true for the German DP, where the NP is supposed to undergo only “short” movement over structural genitive DPs complements. Hence, in German, a strict AP-N order is observed.

Crucially, the interaction of both parameters causes the two languages to have the opposite word order:

- (101)a Ilse rote Tasche
Ilse-GEN red.fm.sg.strong bag
“Ilse’s red bag”
- b La borsa rossa di Ilse
the.fm.sg bag.fm.sg red.fm.sg. of Ilse
“the red bag of Ilse’s”

In my research on the acquisition of German possessive constructions by Italian L2 learners, I take the Saxon genitive structures as the domain where the syntactic differences between German and Italian nominal syntax emerge most clearly. One of the problems for Italian learners of German in acquiring these kind of constructions may lie in the “ambiguous” categorial status of BPN Poss with –s affix. It is a non-pronominal element with D-like properties, hence licensed in the outer specifier of the DP projection. Such a possibility is

restricted to very few classes of elements in Italian. Moreover, Italian learners of German also have to face the different N placement in the L2 with respect to their L1. Acquiring the morphosyntactic properties of Saxon genitive constructions may then represent a complex process, due to the interaction of the two parametric variations at work in this particular syntactic domain.

Chapter 2 – The Experiments

Abstract

In the following chapter I concentrate on the experimental designs and the data analysis of the present research. I investigated original L2 German data collected by means of two different kinds of elicitation tasks (oral and written), which were administered to two groups of Italian adults (32 experimental subjects in total) learning German at the University of Siena during the academic years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. The results of both studies were analysed separately and then compared in order to identify similar tendencies in the acquisition of some aspects of German nominals, which may contribute to confirm some current hypotheses on the role of L1 and UG in the process of Second Language Acquisition. As far as this aspect is concerned, the main findings of the present research seem to indicate a three-stage process in L2 acquisition during which the L2 learner progressively “builds up” and refines his/her interlanguage grammar, reaching a target-like performance.

2.1 Aim of the Research

The aim of this study is to investigate the acquisition of some aspects of the morphosyntax of nominals by a group of Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced Italian L2 learners of German. As far as this particular domain of L2 research is concerned, it is worth pointing out that there has been very little research done on these topics. Two recent research projects have focused on Germanic languages; Van de Craats et al. (2000) investigate the acquisition of possessive DP structures by Turkish and Moroccan adults and children learning Dutch without substantial classroom instruction. Di Domenico & Bennati (2006) analyse the acquisition of Saxon genitive constructions in Italian learners of English in a formal environment. Concerning L2 German, Parodi, Schwartz and Clahsen (1997, 2004) explore the acquisition of German nominals by three different groups of untutored L2 speakers (Korean, Turkish and Romance learners)⁵⁸. These three studies represent an important term of comparison for the results I obtained and I will refer to them in the discussion of the data at the end of this chapter.

Concerning the aspects of nominal syntax I investigated, I consider in particular the interaction of two different kinds of parametric variation that differentiate the syntax of Italian and German possessive DPs, namely (i) the different position of NP with respect to adjectives and (ii) the different position of bare proper name possessors (henceforth BPN Poss). The relevant patterns are exemplified in (102) and (103) respectively:

⁵⁸ On the contrary, many studies on the L1 acquisition of Germanic possessive constructions have been carried out. See, for example, Tracy (1986), H. Clahsen, S. Eisenbeiss, A. Vainikka (1994), Z. Penner & J. Weissenborn (1996), S. Eisenbeiss (2000) for German, Bernardini Röst (2004) for bilingual first language acquisition of Swedish and Italian, Stenzel (1994) for bilingual first language acquisition of French and German.

- (102)a la borsa rossa
 the.fm.sg bag.fm.sg red.fm.sg
 “the red bag”
- b *la rossa borsa
 the.fm.sg bag.fm.sg. red.fm.sg
- c *die Tasche rote
 the.NOM.fm.sg bag.fm.sg red.NOM.fm.sg.weak
- d die rote Tasche
 the.NOM.fm.sg red.NOM.fm.sg.weak bag.fm.sg
- (103)a Ilse rote Tasche
 IlseGEN red.NOM.fm.sg.strong bag.fm.sg
 “Ilse’s red bag”
- b *di Ilse borsa rossa
 of Ilse bag.fm.sg red.fm.sg
- c la/una borsa rossa di Ilse
 the.fm.sg/a.fm.sg bag.fm.sg red.fm.sg of Ilse
- d la/una sua borsa
 the.fm.sg/a.fm.sg her.fm.sg bag.fm.sg

As for (i), assuming Cinque’s proposal (1995, 2005) that adjectives are organized in a universal hierarchy based on their semantic properties, the variation in noun placement with respect to APs has been interpreted as a result of NP movement inside the nominal functional projection⁵⁹; NP obligatory targets an intermediate specified position in Italian but not in German⁶⁰. As for (ii), assuming the traditional analysis that possessors are inserted in the lexical layer since they bear a theta-role assigned by the head noun, the fact that German BPN Poss precedes adjectives and does not occur with any determiner suggests that it is licensed in a high position outside the NP layer⁶¹. Moreover, prenominal possessors of the type in (103)a force a definite interpretation of the whole DP in German. Contrary to German, Italian BPN Poss does not occur in prenominal position (103a vs. 103b); instead it is licensed postnominally through preposition. Only a pronominal possessor shows up in prenominal position and it co-occurs with a definite or indefinite determiner (see 103d).

On the basis of the multi-layered, articulated DP structure proposed in Chapter I, I assume for the possessive constructions in (103)a and c the following derivation:

⁵⁹ I will adopt the proposal that the noun moves through the DP as a maximal projections (NP) rather than as a bare head (N). See Chapter I, section 1.2 for an overview of the NP raising analysis proposed by Shlonsky (2003) and Cinque (2005a) and (2005b).

⁶⁰ See Chapter I, section 1.3.3 for the distributional properties of NP in German and Italian.

⁶¹ See Chapter I, section 1.1 for an overview of different analyses proposed on the position(s) of licensing of prenominal possessors.

(104)a $[_{SpecDFinP} \text{Ilse}_i [_{DFin} [_{SpecIP} t_i [_{I} [_{SpecFP} \text{rote} [_{F} [_{SpecFP} \text{Tasche}_j [_{F} [_{SpecNP} t_i [_{NP} t_j]]]]]]]]]]]$

“Ilse’s red bag”

b $[_{DFin} \text{la} [_{IP} \dots [_{SpecFP} \text{borsa}_j [_{F} [_{SpecFP} \text{rossa} [_{F} [_{SpecNP} \text{di Ilse} [_{NP} t_j]]]]]]]]]$

“The red bag of Ilse’s”

The scheme in (104)a illustrates the fact that BPN Poss with *-s* affix undergoes a two-step movement in the German DP: from its merge position (SpecNP) it raises to SpecIP in order to check the genitive case feature. Further movement to SpecDFinP is triggered by the requirement to check a [def] feature. Furthermore, NP targets a SpecFP position just below the lexical layer. Contrary to German, BPN Poss is licensed in situ in Italian possessive constructions through the insertion of the preposition *di*. In this language, NP raises to an intermediate SpecFP position, as exemplified in the derivation in (104)b.

With this basic description in mind, let us now turn to the acquisition of German possessive constructions by Italian L2 learners. On the basis of the contrast that has emerged in the derivations in (104)a vs. b, I propose that this process of acquisition involves the resetting of two parameters which I will call respectively: (i) NP Raising Parameter; (ii) BPN Poss Movement Parameter. Italian L2 learners have to acquire that, on the one hand, German does not allow NP to raise over APs and, on the other hand, it does allow BPN Poss to be licensed in a high functional position of the DP. Furthermore, this property correlates with the fact that BPN Poss does not co-occur with determiners.

According to a minimalist model of grammar (Chomsky 1995), movement to functional projections of lexical items such as BPN Poss or NP is triggered by a “feature checking” requirement. This means that if the L2 word order is to be achieved, Italian learners of German have to reset the feature strength responsible for NP raising from the strong Italian value to the weak German value and, at the same time, they have to reset the feature strength responsible for BPN Poss movement from the weak Italian value to the strong German value.

2.2 The Experimental Procedure

In order to investigate these phenomena, I administered two different kinds of tasks to two groups of L2 learners:

- (1) an oral picture description task (henceforth PDT) to a group of 18 Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced Italian learners of German. The same test was administered to a control group of 8 native German speakers;
- (2) a written sentence completion task (henceforth SCT) to a group of 14 Beginner/Intermediate Italian learners of German. The same test was administered to a control group of 10 native German speakers.

A detailed description of each task is given in the next paragraphs.

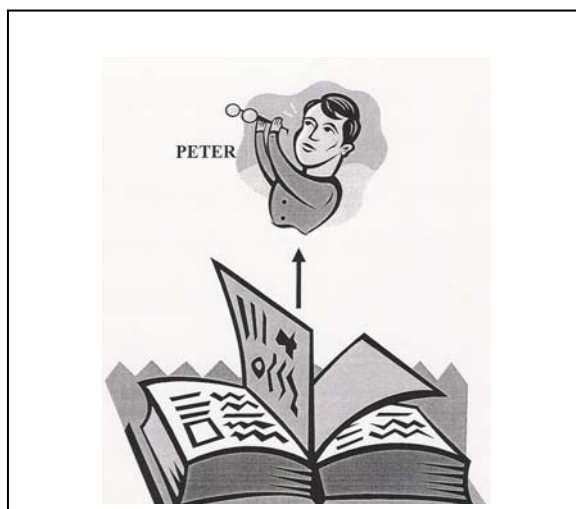
2.2.1 The Picture Description Task (PDT)

In the PDT, the subjects were asked to look at a drawing while listening to some information about the content of the picture and then to answer a question posed by the investigator. The subjects were also advised to answer with sentences containing a verb. The task consisted of 40 fillers and 25 items. The items aimed to elicit possessive constructions containing BPN Poss with –s affix in simple as well as in modified DPs. Furthermore, the PDT gives cues on accuracy in morphology suppliance on BPN Poss (presence vs. omission of –s affix) and on attributive APs (presence vs. omission of agreement morphology).

Possessive constructions were tested under two structural conditions:

Condition 1 – Simple possessive constructions in predicative position:

(105) Investigator: Wessen Buch ist das?
 „Whose book is this?”



Expected answer: Das ist Peters Buch
 “This is Peter’s book”

Condition 2 – Possessive constructions containing an attributive AP and in predicative position:

(106) Investigator: Wessen blaue Bluse ist das?
“Whose blue shirt is this?”



Expected answer: Das ist Inges blaue Bluse
„This is Inge’s blue shirt“

Only adjectives of nationality and color were included in the task. This restriction was due to the fact that such classes of APs occur in postnominal position in Italian, while they are always prenominal in German. Hence, they represent a good test to detect lack of NP raising in the interlanguage productions of Italian L2 learners.

As for fillers, several kinds of questions were asked to the subjects. Some of them were predominantly concerned with a picture naming task (example (107)). Other questions implied the description of an action illustrated in the picture (example (108)), or the formulation of a new sentence that had to include attributive adjectives (example (109)).

(107) Investigator: Was ist das?
„What is this?“



Expected answer: Das ist ein Wecker
„This is an alarmclock“

(108) Investigator: Was macht das Kind?
„What is the child doing?“



Expected answer: Es/Das Kind spielt Klavier
„He/The child is playing piano“

(109) Investigator: Wen trifft der Student?
„Who does the student meet?“



Expected answer: Er trifft eine italienische Studentin
„He meets an Italian student“

2.2.2 The Sentence Completion Task (SCT)

The Sentence Completion Task contained 35 fillers and 15 items given in a random order. The experimental subjects and the controls were asked to complete a total of 50 sentences using lexical/functional elements given in brackets and discarding only one of them when they deemed it necessary in order to construct a well-formed sentence. The “intruder” contained in all items was a definite article. This element had to be discarded in order to obtain a target sentence. The

aim of this test was to verify (i) co-occurrence between the determiner and the prenominal BPN Poss and (ii) noun placement with respect to adjectives. The Saxon genitive constructions were tested under two structural conditions:

Condition 1 – Simple Saxon genitive constructions in argumental position

- (i) n. 6 sentences where the Saxon genitive construction was selected as object of a preposition:

(110) <i>Ich</i>	<i>[mit ; fahre; Peters Auto; dem; nach Berlin]</i>
(111) <i>Sie kommen</i>	<i>[um 12; aus; der; zurück; Michaels Wohnung]</i>
(112) <i>Markus hat</i>	<i>[gestern; Olgas Villa; geschlafen; in; der]</i>
(113) <i>Die Kinder</i>	<i>[dem; schlafen; Erwins Bett; auf]</i>
(114) <i>Kannst du bitte</i>	<i>[hinter; dein Fahrrad; die; Stefans Garage; stellen?]</i>
(115) <i>Er hat</i>	<i>[in; gearbeitet; Alberts Firma; der]</i>

Considering that the L2 learner had to discard the definite article in order to obtain a target sentence, the expected answer was a structure displaying the linear order preposition [BPN Poss-noun] with the dropping of the determiner on the head noun:

- (116)a *Ich fahre mit Peters Auto nach Berlin*
 I go with PeterGEN car to Berlin
 “I go to Berlin with Peter’s car”

vs.

- b **Ich fahre mit dem Peters Auto nach Berlin*
 I go with the.DAT.ms.sing PeterGEN car to Berlin
 “I go to Berlin with the Peter’s car”

- (ii) n. 5 sentences where the Saxon genitive construction was selected as object of a transitive verb:

(117) <i>Die Eltern haben</i>	<i>[in das Zimmer; das; gebracht; Karls Geschenk]</i>
(118) <i>Sie</i>	<i>[gegessen; die; haben; Annas Pizza]</i>
(119) <i>Mario</i>	<i>[ruft; Giselas Lehrerin; die; an]</i>
(120) <i>Sie besuchen</i>	<i>[in; Pauls Freundin; die; Rom]</i>
(121) <i>Kannst du</i>	<i>[das; mir; Richards Halstuch; geben?]</i>

Similar to the previous items, the expected answer was a structure displaying the linear order verb -[BPN Poss-noun] with dropping of the determiner on the head noun:

- (122)a *Sie haben Annas Pizza gegessen*
 They have AnnaGEN pizza eaten
 “They have eaten Anna’s pizza”

vs.

- b *Sie haben die Annas Pizza gegessen
They have the.ACC.fm.sing. AnnaGEN pizza eaten
“They have eaten the Anna’s pizza”

Condition 2 –Saxon genitive constructions containing an attributive AP and in argumental position

- (iii) n. 4 sentences where the Saxon genitive construction was selected as object of a transitive verb:

- (123) *Der Polizist* [Tasche; Ilses; sucht; rote; die]
(124) *Die Frauen* [den; Ingeborgs; lesen; Brief; langen]
(125) *Die Kinder* [schwierige; beantworten; Joans; Frage; die]
(126) *Luisa* [Tochter; nette; kennt; die; Evas]

The expected answer had to display the order [BPN Poss-Adjective-N] with dropping of the determiner on the head noun:

- (127)a *Der Polizist sucht Ilses rote Tasche*
The policeman looks for IlseGEN red bag
“The policeman looks for Ilse’s red bag”

vs.

- b **Der Polizist sucht die Ilses rote Tasche*
The policeman looks for the.ACC.fm.sing IlseGEN red bag
“The policeman looks for the Ilse’s red bag”

The nominal heads contained in all items consisted of 15 singular countable nouns and most of them were non-event nominals; the possessors consisted of 15 bare proper names. As far as simple DPs are concerned, the head noun and the BPN Poss were presented in a unique sequence displaying a fixed linear order [BPN Poss – Noun]. The main aim was to verify the tendency of L2 learners to insert a determiner with a prenominal possessor. The four modified DPs contained a thematic adjective of color (*rot-e*), an adjective of quality (*nett-e*) and two modal adjectives (*schwierig-e; lang-en*).

With regard to fillers, the task included 35 sentences where L2 learners had to discard lexical as well as functional items:

- (128) *Die Frau* [Kaffee; einen; trinkt; Zug]

Expected answer: (128)a *Die Frau trinkt einen Kaffee*
The woman drink.3p.sing a.ACC.ms.sing coffee

“The woman drinks a coffee”

Example of a possible non-target answer:

(128)b *Die Frau trinkt einen Zug
The woman drink.3p.sing a.ACC.ms.sing train
“The woman drinks a train”

(129) *Brigitte* [*ein; braucht; Hotelzimmer; in dem*]

Expected answer: (129)a *Brigitte braucht ein Hotelzimmer
Brigitte need.3p.sing a.ACC.neut.sing hotel room
“Brigitte needs a hotel room”

Example of a possible non-target answer:

(129)b Brigitte braucht in dem Hotelzimmer
Brigitte need.3p.sing in the.DAT.ms.sing hotel room
“Brigitte needs in the hotel room”

Furthermore, some of the fillers did not contain an “intruder” and all the elements given in brackets were necessary to construct a well-formed sentence:

(130) *Was hat* [*Garten; gefunden?; im; Paul*]

Expected answer: Was hat Paul im Garten gefunden?
What has Paul in.DAT.ms.sing garden found?
“What did Paul find in the garden?”

Both the experimental subjects and the control group had 30 minutes to complete the task.

2.3 The L2 Experimental Subjects

The experimental subjects participating in both tests consisted of two different groups of L2 learners, as listed in tables 1 and 2 below:

Table 1 – SCT L2 Subjects

Table 2 - PDT L2 Subjects

L2 Subjects	Age	Level of Proficiency	L2 Subjects	Age	Level of Proficiency
B	26	Intermediate	S1	20	Beginner
E	28	Beginner	S2	20	Beginner
F	25	Intermediate	S3	19	Beginner
G	26	Intermediate	S4	20	Beginner
H	27	Intermediate	S5	19	Intermediate
L	28	Beginner	S6	20	Intermediate
M	25	Intermediate	S7	21	Intermediate
Q	24	Intermediate	S8	21	Intermediate
R	20	Beginner	S9	21	Intermediate
S	26	Intermediate	S10	21	Intermediate
U	25	Intermediate	S11	24	Intermediate
V	24	Intermediate	S12	34	Intermediate
Z	35	Beginner	S13	21	Intermediate
W	22	Beginner	S14	22	Intermediate
			S15	21	Advanced
			S16	21	Advanced
			S17	22	Advanced
			S18	25	Advanced

The PDT was administered to 18 Italian learners of L2 German attending German classes at the University of Siena during the 2003-2004 academic year. The informants' ages ranged from 19 to 34. The level of proficiency was determined by proficiency tests administered at the beginning of their courses. Furthermore, the experimental subjects were trained before the task that was administered to each L2 learner individually. Each individual production was first recorded and then transcribed.

In the SCT, a group of 14 Italian informants were tested⁶². All of them were adult monolingual learners of German who had received formal instruction in the L2 and were attending German classes at the University of Siena during the 2002-2003 academic year. Their ages ranged from 20-

⁶² This group is part of a corpus of L2 German data analysed in Matteini (2006) and (2007a).

35 and, similarly to the previous group, their level of proficiency was determined by a standardized proficiency test that was administered at the beginning of their courses. In both studies, I only included the informants who decided to participate in the research project freely. For this reason, all of the L2 learners maintained a very positive attitude during the tests.

2.4 The Data

This section is divided into two parts. In the first part, a data analysis of the results on the acquisition of possessive constructions in the PDT and in the SCT will be given. The second part is focused on the tendency that emerged in both tests concerning NP placement.

2.4.1 The Picture Description Task (PDT)

2.4.1.1 Possessive Constructions

Before discussing the data in detail, it is necessary to give a general overview of the types of possessive DP structures produced by the L2 learners participating in the PDT. As already pointed out, the PDT was designed to elicit Saxon genitive constructions orally as answers to questions made by the investigator. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that L2 learners resorted to different options – some of them are not grammatical in the L2 - for expressing the possessive relation. An overview of the various possessive constructions produced is given in Table 3 below. The classification of L2 patterns is based on the pre- vs. postnominal position of the possessor:

Table 3 – Overview of the Types of Possessive DP Structures

Prenominal Possessor
➤ Linear order: Possessor-Noun/Possessor-Adjective-Noun
(131)a Das ist Peters Buch „This is Peter’s book“
b Das ist Inges blaue Bluse „This is Inge’s blue shirt“
Postnominal Possessor
➤ Linear order: Noun-Possessor
(132)a ? Das ist das Buch Peters „This is the book of Peter“
b *Das ist das Buch des Peters „This is the book of Peter“

➤ **Linear order: Noun-Full genitive DPs**

(133) Das ist das Buch eines Kindes
This is the book aGEN childGEN
“This is the book of a child”

➤ **Linear order: Von PP – Possessor**

(134) Das ist das Buch von Peter
„This is the book of Peter“

➤ **Linear order: Verb-Possessor**

(135) Das Buch gehört Peter
„The book belongs to Peter“

(136) *Das Buch gehört zu Peter

Other

➤ **Haben-clauses**

(137) Peter hat ein Buch
„Peter has a book“

➤ **Relative clauses**

(138) Das ist Ute, die einen neuen Ring hat
„This is Ute who has a new ring“

As exemplified in Table 3, the structures in (131)a and b – the Saxon genitive constructions – represent the most natural answer to the question *Wessen Buch ist das?* in German – “*Whose book is this?*” – when the possessor is a BPN Poss and is specified as [+ animate]. Among the structures produced with a postnominal possessor, (132)a represents a very marked option in L2 and I will turn to that in the next paragraph. In (132)b, the genitive declension of full common noun DPs has been applied to proper names resulting in a non-target structure. The structure in (133) is fully grammatical in the L2 but in this case the BPN Poss has been replaced by a common noun possessor. Hence, the L2 learner failed to produce the expected form – the Saxon genitive construction – . The structures in (134) and (135) are possible L2 options (the only available in the L1). In (136), the construction *gehören zu* is incorrectly used for expressing the possession⁶³. The structures in (137) and (138) are grammatical in the L2 but they do not represent the expected answer in the elicited context. Now let us turn to the L2 patterns in detail. Table 4 below illustrates the types of possessive constructions produced by the L2 learners based on their level of proficiency:

⁶³ *gehören zu* means “to be part of a whole”, like in the following example:

(i) Dieses Bild gehört zu seinen besten Werken
This picture is one of his best works

Table 4 – Types of Possessive Constructions Produced by L2 Learners and Controls

	Simple DP				Modified DP			
	Prenominal Poss (Poss-N)	Postnominal Poss (N-Poss/Von-PP/V-Poss)	Other (haben/relative clauses)	No Target (omit Poss/no answer)	Prenominal Poss (Poss-N)	Postnominal Poss (N-Poss/Von-PP/V-Poss)	Other (haben/relative clauses)	Non Target (omit Poss/no answer)
Beginners (n. 4 subjects)	0/60 (0%)	51/60 (85%)	0/60 (0%)	9/60 (15%)	0/40 (0%)	28/40 (70%)	2/40 (5%)	10/40 (25%)
Intermediate (n.10 subjects)	55/152 (36%)	68/152 (45%)	2/152 (1%)	22/152 (14%)	32/100 (32%)	67/100 (67%)	0/100 (0%)	1/100 (1%)
Advanced (n.4 subjects)	38/60 (63%)	13/60 (21%)	0/60 (0%)	9/60 (15%)	27/40 (68%)	13/40 (32%)	0/40 (0%)	0/40 (0%)
Controls (n.8 subjects)	82/120 (68%)	31/120 (26%)	1/120 (1%)	6/120 (5%)	55/80 (69%)	25/80 (31%)	0/80 (0%)	0/80 (0%)

The results in Table 4 indicate a clear developmental path among the experimental subjects as far as the use of Saxon genitive constructions is concerned. Let us focus on the three groups of L2 learners.

Beginners only resort to constructions more similar to their L1 where the BPN Poss is licensed in situ through a case assigner. Hence, they mainly produce possessive DP structures where the BPN Poss is introduced by a preposition or a verb as in (139) and (140) respectively (85% in simple DP and 70% in modified DP):

(139) *Das ist das Buch **von** Peter*
 „This is the book of Peter“

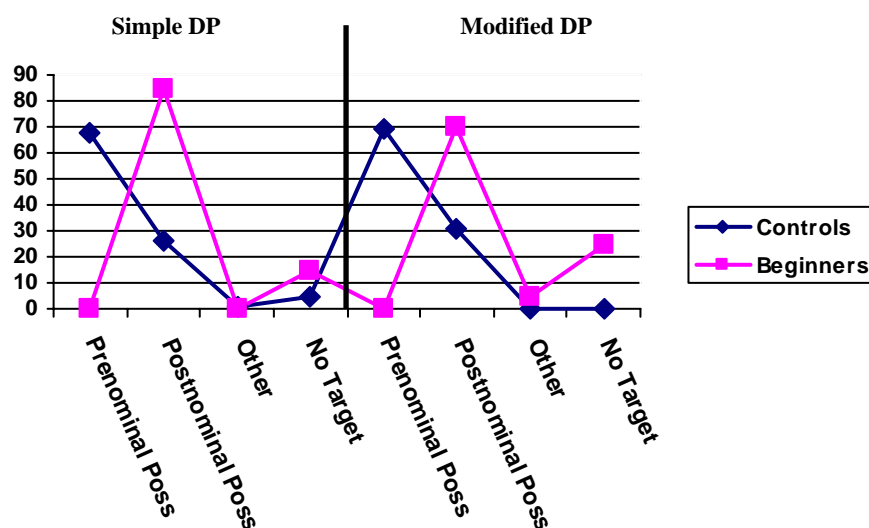
(140) *Das Buch **gehört** Peter⁶⁴*
 “The book belongs to Peter”

⁶⁴ Among Beginner L2 learners, subject 1 expresses the possession also with the construction *gehören zu*.

(i) *Die gelbe Tasse gehört zu Uta

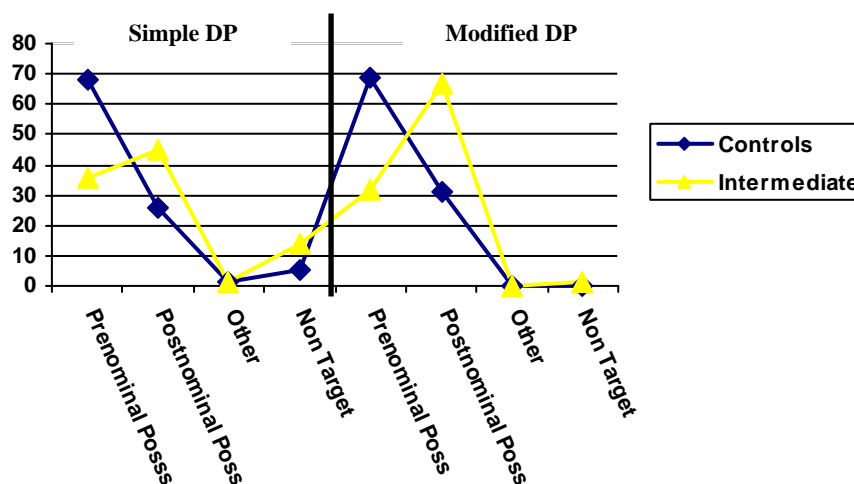
This strategy can be analysed as a L1 Transfer effect, due to the fact that in Italian the verb *appartenere* selects the preposition *a*

Figure 1 – Types of Possessive Constructions Produced by Beginners and Controls



In Intermediate L2 learners, the percentage of Saxon genitive constructions increases considerably (36% in simple DP and 32% in modified DP) even if the cases of BPN Poss in postnominal positions remain high (45% in simple DP and 67% in modified DP):

Figure 2 – Types of Possessive Constructions Produced by Intermediates and Controls

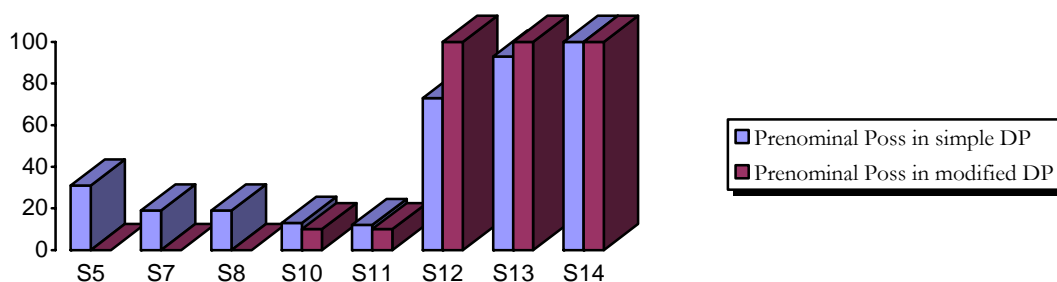


It is worth pointing out that 3 out of 8 Intermediate L2 learners (Subject 5, 7 and 8) prefer to express the possessive relation only by means of a case assigner (*von*-insertion or use of the lexical verb *gehören*) in modified DPs⁶⁵. On the contrary, a limited use of Saxon genitive constructions is attested in their interlanguage in simple DP (see Figure 3 below). Hence, they seem to resort to

⁶⁵ Subject n.6 and Subject n.9 have been excluded because they only resort to analytic constructions, both in simple and in modified DPs.

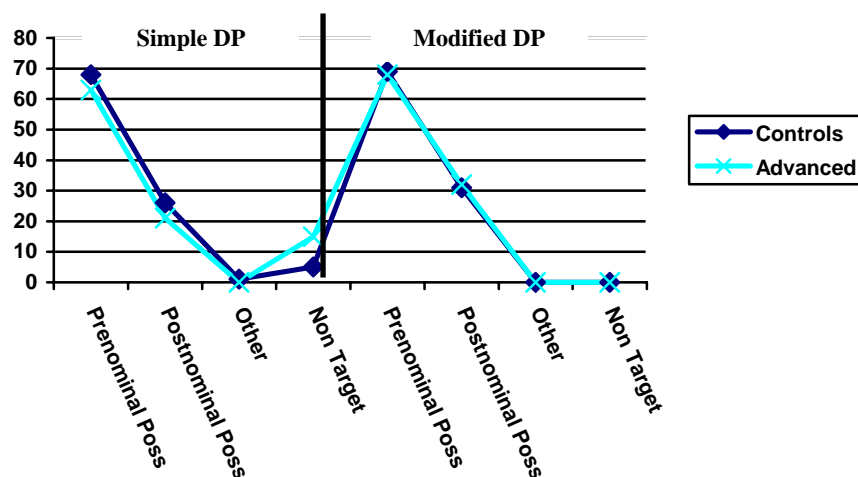
an L1 option when the syntactic context appears more complex (in this case the presence of attributive APs in the possessive construction). Nevertheless, as a general observation, prenominal placement of BPN Poss is not optional/random in this group of L2 learners. Figure 3 illustrates the individual patterns observed:

Figure 3 – Prenominal BPN Poss Placement: Individual Tendency Observed in Intermediates L2ers



An opposite tendency is to be found in Advanced L2 learners, where the Saxon genitive construction represents the favourite option in both contexts (simple and modified DPs). According to these findings, Advanced L2 learners' performance is target-like.

Figure 4 – Types of Possessive Constructions Produced by Advanced and Controls



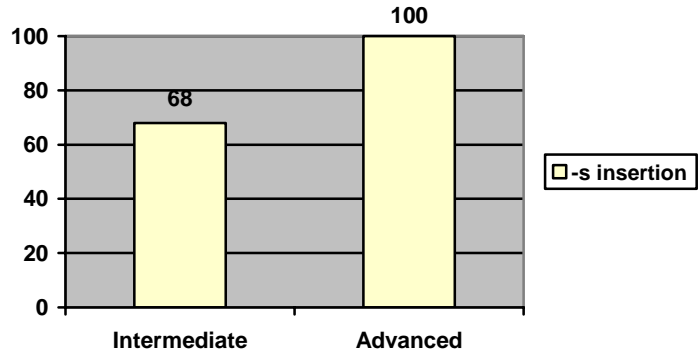
2.4.1.2 Suppliance of Overt Morphology on Possessors and Attributive Adjectives

As already pointed out, the PDT gives cues on accuracy in morphology suppliance on BPN Poss (presence vs. omission of –s affix) and on attributive APs (presence vs. omission of agreement morphology).

Figures (5) and (6) illustrate the result regarding the insertion of –s affix on BPN Poss in Saxon genitive constructions. Due to the fact that Beginners never produce such patterns, the data analysis is restricted to Intermediate and Advanced L2 learners. While in the former the

percentage is attested at 68%, the latter shows a target-like performance: the –s affix is always supplied when BPN Poss is in prenominal position.

Figure 5 – Suppliance of Overt Morphology on Prenominal BPN Poss



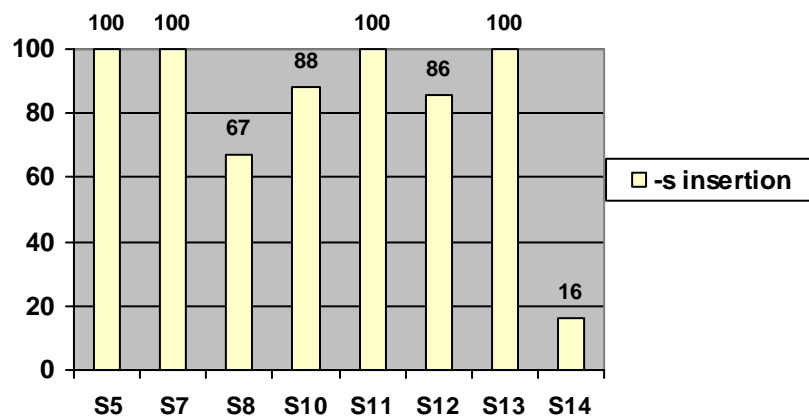
Regarding the Intermediates’ performance, it is worth pointing out that only 4 subjects out of 10 omit the appropriate morphology on the possessor (see Figure 6 below). However, if we analyse the L2 subjects’ answers individually, it emerges that only one experimental subject consistently avoids –s insertion (16% of morphology suppliance):

(141) *Es ist Uta Ring (Subject 14)
 „It is UtaØ ring“

(142) *Sie ist Uta gelbe Tasse
 „It is UtaØ yellow cup“

Hence, as a general observation, genitive morphology is correctly supplied in prenominal BPN possessors. Figure (6) illustrates this tendency:

Figure 6 – Intermediate L2learners: Suppliance of overt morphology on prenominal BPN



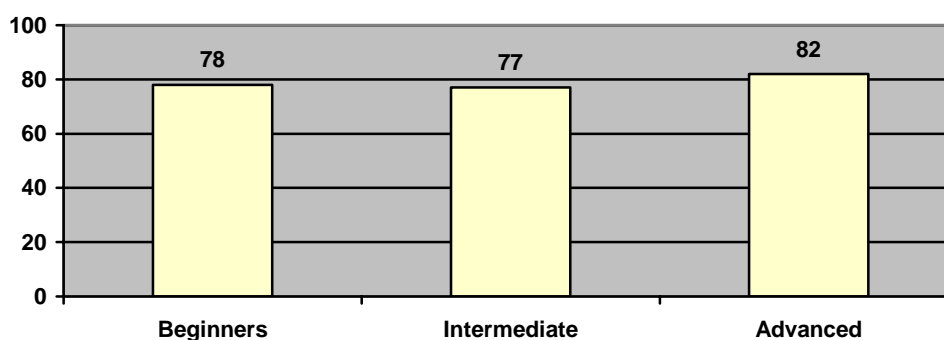
The PDT also gives the possibility to investigate suppliance of agreement morphology on attributive APs. Regarding this aspect, I considered all DPs where prenominal adjectives appear in the root form without agreement morphology:

(143)a *eine gelbØ Blume vs. eine gelbe Blume (Subject n.3)
 aNOM.fm.sg. yellowØ flower.fm.sg vs. eineNOM.fm.sg gelbeNOM.fm.sg Blume
 “ a yellow flower”

b *der blauØ Regenschirm vs. der blaue Regenschirm (Subject n.8)
 the.NOM.ms.sg blue umbrella.ms.sg/ the.NOM.ms.sg blue.ms.sg umbrella.ms.sg
 „the blue umbrella“

Figure 7 illustrates the tendencies observed according to L2 learners’ level of proficiency:

Figure 7 – Suppliance of Agreement Morphology on Attributive APs
 According to Levels of Proficiency



The most striking result is that suppliance of agreement morphology is attested at a high rate in all three groups of L2 learners⁶⁶ and that this tendency does not seem to vary depending on the level of proficiency. Furthermore, only 3 subjects out of 18 (subjects 7, 8 and 10) show

⁶⁶ Among the cases of suppliance of agreement morphology I have included the following patterns:

(i) Suppliance of target morphology (Subject n.2)

der weisse Mantel (NOM.ms.sg)
 “the white coat”

(ii) Feature Matching

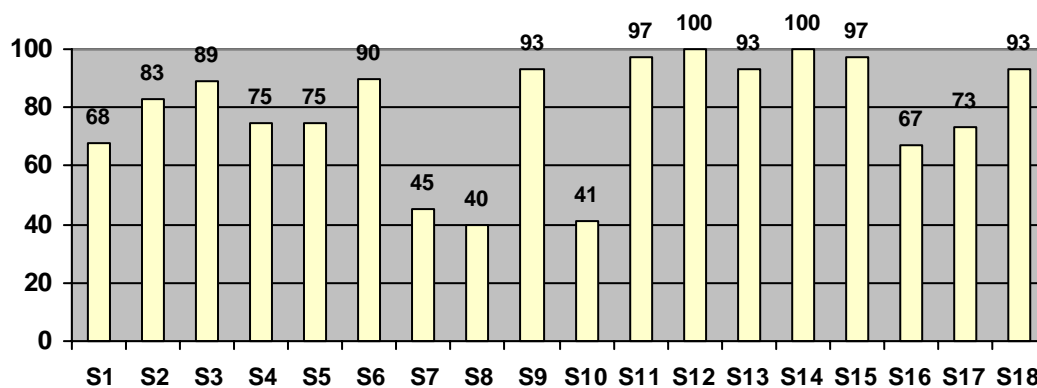
*Einen schwarzen Fahrrad (NOM.ms.sg) (Subject n.5)
 vs. Ein schwarzes Fahrrad (NOM.nt.sg)
 „a black bike“

(iii) Feature Mismatching

*Die roten Halstuch (Subject n.9)
 the.NOM.fm.sg red.DAT/GEN.pl scarf
 vs. das rote Halstuch (NOM.nt.sg)
 „the red scarf“

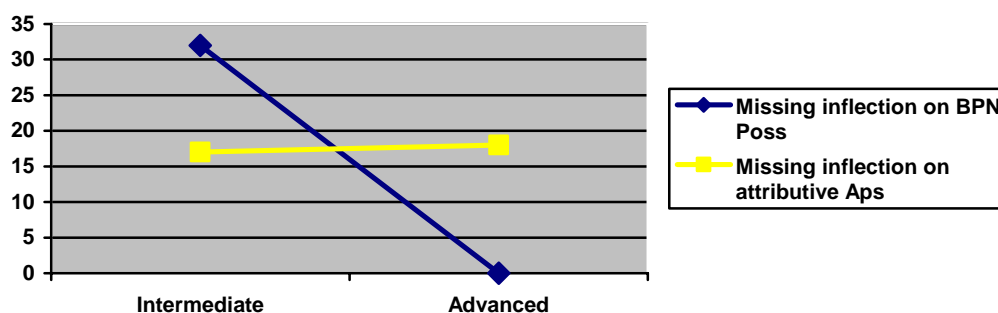
optionality in the suppliance of agreement morphology on APs. This fact is illustrated by Figure 8:

Figure 8 – Suppliance of Agreement Morphology on Attributive APs: Individual Tendency Among L2 Learners



Moreover, comparing the data on morphology suppliance on BPN Poss and attributive APs, it emerges that accuracy increases depending on proficiency level only in the case of –s affix⁶⁷:

Figure 9 – Missing Inflection on BPN Poss and Attributive APs: Tendencies Observed According to Levels of Proficiency



2.4.2 The Sentence Completion Task (SCT)

2.4.2.1 The L2 Patterns

The results of the SCT are given in Table 4 below. Due to the nature of the task, a direct comparison with the results obtained from the PDT is not possible. First of all, the SCT cannot provide further support for the data on morphology accuracy collected by the PDT since the former, contrary to the latter, consisted of a manipulation task where items and fillers were

⁶⁷ The comparison is restricted to Intermediate and Advanced L2 learners due to the fact that Beginners never produce possessive constructions where the possessor is a BPN with –s affix.

already given inflected and in German. Secondly, this task looks more in detail at a particular property of German Saxon genitive constructions, namely the fact that the prenominal BPN Poss with –s affix do not co-occur with determiners. The aim is to investigate if Italian L2 learners of German tend to extend a property of their L1 (co-occurrence of determiners and prenominal pronominal possessors, i.e. *la sua borsa*) into the L2 (* *Die Ilses Tasche*) and how (or if) they are able to “restructure” their interlanguage grammar, reaching a target-like performance⁶⁸.

Table 5 below illustrates the tendency that emerged according to the level of proficiency.

Table 5 – L2 Patterns According to Level of Proficiency

Experimental Subjects	Simple DP		Modified DP				Non target
	Prenominal Poss		Prenominal Poss			Postnominal Poss	
	*Det-Poss-N	Poss-N	*Det-AP-Poss-N	*Det-Poss-AP-N	Poss-AP-N	Det-(AP)-N-Poss	
Beginners	*28/56 (50%)	28/56 (50%)		*10/19 (53%)	3/19 (16%)	4/19 (21%)	2/19 (10%)
Intermediate	*38/99 (38%)	61/99 (62%)		*12/35 (34%)	11/35 (31%)	11/35 (31%)	1/35 (4%)
Controls	0/110 (0%)	110/110 (100%)		0/40 (0%)	33/40 (82%)	7/40 (18%)	0/40 (0%)

Table 6 below offers a summary of the Saxon genitive constructions produced by the informants. Similarly to the PDT, the classification of L2 patterns is based on the pre- vs. postnominal position of the possessor:

Table 6 – Types of Saxon genitive constructions Produced by L2 Learners and Controls

Prenominal Possessor	Postnominal Possessor
Poss – N/ Poss-AP-N	Det-AP-N-Poss
(144) Mario ruft Giselas Lehrerin an „Mario phones Gisela’s teacher“	(148) ? Der Polizist sucht die rote Tasche Ilses „The policeman is looking for the red bag of Ilses“
(145) Der Polizist sucht Ilses rote Tasche „The policeman is looking for Ilse’s red bag“	(149) ? Die Frauen lesen den langen Brief Ingeborgs „The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg“
(146) *Die Kinder schlafen auf dem Erwins Bett „The children sleep in the Erwin’s bed“	

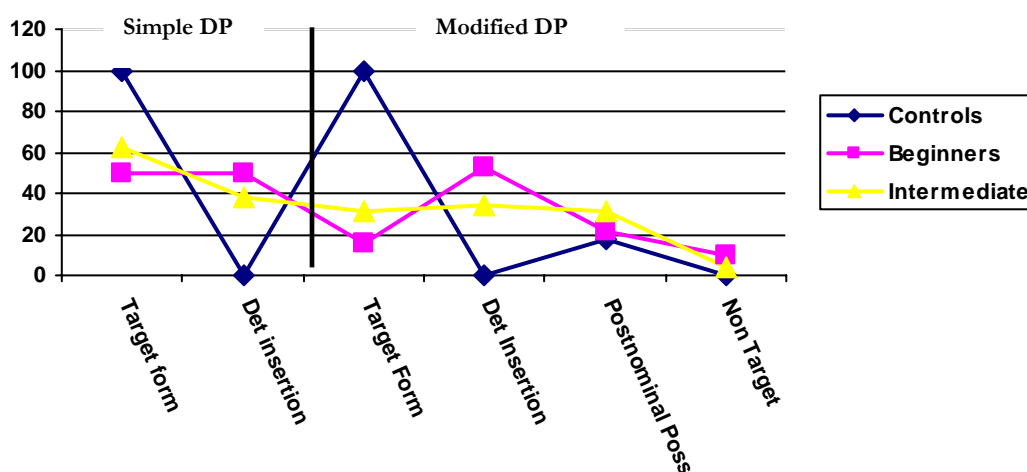
⁶⁸ Matteini (1999) observed this pattern in the written production of a group of Italian learners of German with an Intermediate level of proficiency in the L2.

(147) *Die Kinder beantworteten die schwierige
 Joans Frage
 „The children answer the difficult Joan’s question“

With regard to the L2 patterns, the target forms (see examples (144) and (145)) alternate with non target possessive constructions where the BPN Poss is introduced by the definite article that belongs to the head noun (examples in (146) - (147)). Another frequent option adopted by the L2 learners is exemplified in (148) and (149) where the BPN Poss appears in the postnominal position. It is worth noting that, although not ungrammatical, the postnominal position of BPN Poss with –s affix is perceived as very marked by German informants. Interestingly, as shown in Table 5, the Control Group of SCT resorts to such an option in 18% of the items produced. An explanation for this pattern will be provided in section 2.4.2.2

Let us now focus in detail on the L2 patterns and, in particular, on the co-occurrence of definite determiners and BPN Poss. Although the percentage of determiner insertion decreases in Intermediate L2 learners (38% in simple DP and 34% in modified DP) with respect to Beginners (50% in simple DP and 53% in modified DP), the difference between the two groups is not as clear-cut as in the PDT. This fact is particularly evident in Figure 10, where the Beginners’ and the Intermediates’ patterns are compared to that of the controls’.

Figure 10 – Co-occurrence PBN Poss and Determiner in L2 Learners and Controls



Based on this fact, I decided to classify the 14 learners according to the L2 patterns I observed. This led me to identify three different groups:

Table 7 – Classification of the L2 Learners According to the Patterns Observed

Experimental Subjects	L2 Patterns
Group A (n. 4 L2 subjects)	Target-like performance
Group B (n. 3 L2 subjects)	Non Target-like performance
Group C (n. 7 L2 subjects)	L1 Transfer

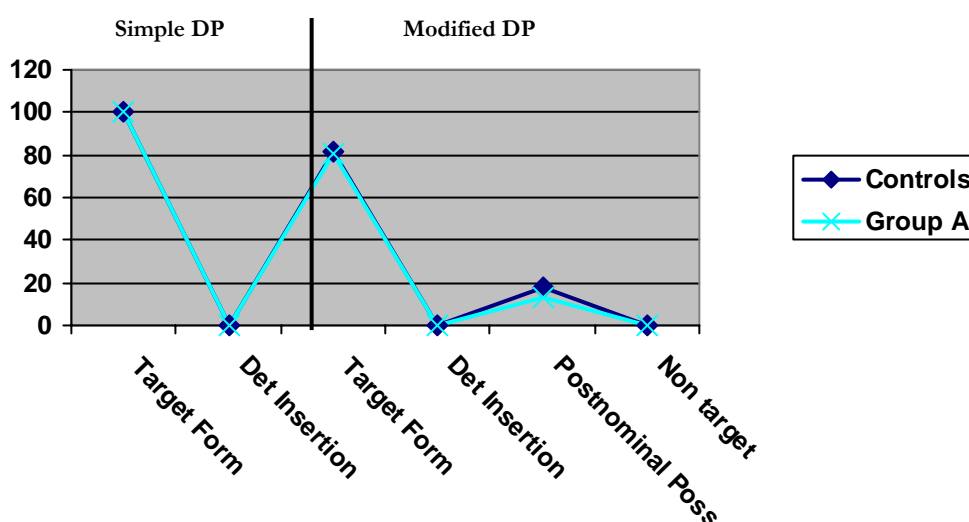
Concerning the data analysis, I will focus on each group separately. For the sake of the discussion, I decided to present the items produced by only one experimental subject per group. The whole corpus is given in the Appendix at the end of this dissertation.

Group A consisted of 4 experimental subjects: subjects S, U and V (Intermediates) and subject Z (Beginner). The results of Table 8, as well as the tendency in Figure 11, show that no differences emerge between controls and L2 learners:

Table 8 – German Saxon genitive constructions: Patterns Produced by Group A

Group A - “Target-like performance” (n. 4 subjects)	Simple DP		
	Poss-N	*Det –Poss-N	other
	100% (44/44)	0% (0/0)	0% (0/0)
	Modified DP		
Poss-AP-N	Det-AP-N-Poss	other	
81% (13/16)	13% (2/16)	6% (1/16)	

Figure 11 – German Saxon genitive constructions: Comparison Between the Patterns of Group A and Controls



Let us now concentrate in detail on the two structural conditions investigated. Concerning simple DPs, controls and L2 learners exhibit the same pattern: there is no evidence for insertion of the determiner when BPN Poss is prenominal (0% L2 learners – 0% controls). This finding is exemplified by Subject U:

Saxon genitive construction as object of a transitive verb:

- (150) Mario ruft [Giselas Lehrerin] an
„Mario phones Gisela’s teacher“
- (151) Sie haben [Annas Pizza] gegessen
„They have eaten Anna’s pizza“
- (152) Sie besuchen [Pauls Freundin] in Rom
“They visit Paul’s girlfriend in Rome”

Saxon genitive construction as object of a preposition:

- (153) Die Kinder schlafen auf [Erwins Bett]
„The children sleep on Erwin’s bed“
- (154) Ich fahre mit [Peters Auto] nach Berlin
„I go to Rome with Peter’s car“
- (155) Markus hat gestern in [Olgas Villa] geschlafen
„Yesterday Markus slept at Olga’s place“

The same result holds for BPN Poss placement within a modified DP, where the possessor generally precedes the attributive adjective (order BPN Poss-AP-N 83% L2 learners vs. 82% controls):

- (156) Der Polizist sucht [Ilse’s rote Tasche]
„The policeman searches Ilse’s red bag“
- (157) Die Frauen lesen [Ingeborgs langen Brief]
„The ladies are reading Ingeborg’s long letter“
- (158) Die Kinder beantworten [Joans schwierige Frage]
„The children reply to John’s difficult question“
- (159) Luise kennt [Evas nette Tochter]
„Luise knows Eva’s nice daughter“

Furthermore, BPN Poss appears postnominally in only two cases (13% L2 learners vs. 18% controls). The examples provided are taken from subject S and V respectively:

- (160) Die Frauen lesen [den Brief Ingeborgs]
„The ladies are reading the letter of Ingeborg“
- (161) Die Frauen lesen [den langen Brief Ingeborgs]
„The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg“

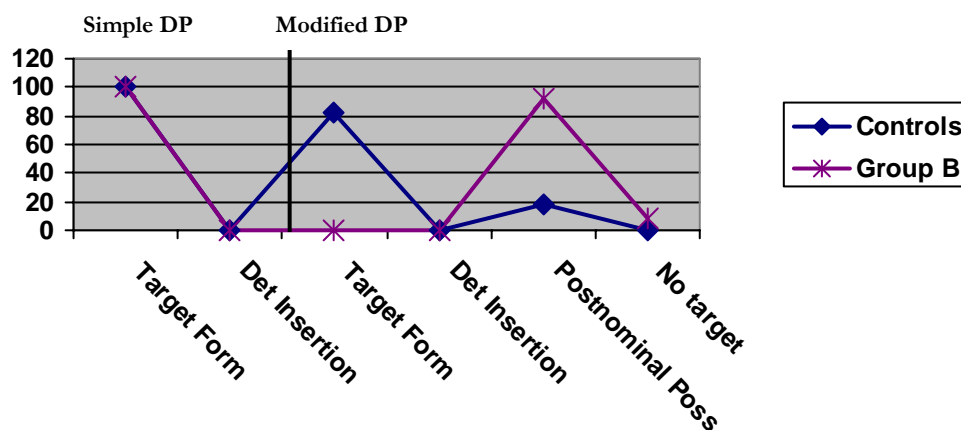
Overall, the results of this group seem to suggest that L2 learners have acquired the cluster of properties related to German Saxon genitive constructions: dropping of the determiner of the head noun and BPN Poss raising over APs.

Group B consisted of 3 L2 learners: subjects G and M (Intermediates) subject L (Beginner). As the contrast in Table 9 and Figure 12 clearly suggests, the most striking result observed in this group is the discrepancy that emerged between simple and modified DPs as far as the position of BNP Poss is concerned:

Table 9 – German Saxon genitive constructions: Patterns Produced by Group B

Group B - “Non Target- like performance”	Simple DP		
	Poss-N	*Det –Poss-N	other
	100% (33/33)	0% (0/0)	0% (0/0)
	Modified DP		
	Poss-AP-N	Det-AP-N-Poss	other
0% (0/12)	92% (11/12)	8% (1/12)	

Figure 12 - German Saxon genitive constructions: Comparison Between the Patterns of Group B and Controls



The pattern is exemplified by subject G:

Saxon genitive construction as object of a transitive verb:

(162) Mario ruft [Giselas Lehrerin] an
„Mario phones Gisela’s teacher“

(163) Sie haben [Annas Pizza] gegessen
„They have eaten Anna’s pizza“

(164) Sie besuchen [Pauls Freundin] in Rom
“They visit Paul’s girlfriend in Rome”

Saxon genitive construction as object of a preposition:

(165) Die Kinder schlafen [auf Erwins Bett]
„The children sleep on Erwin’s bed“

(166) Ich fahre mit [Peters Auto] nach Berlin
 „I go to Rome with Peter’s car“

(167) Markus hat gestern in [Olgas Villa] geschlafen
 „Yesterday Markus slept at Olga’s place“

Saxon genitive construction in modified DPs:

(168) Der Polizist sucht [die rote Tasche Ilses]
 „The policeman is looking for the red bag of Ilse “

(169) Die Frauen lesen [den langen Brief Ingeborgs]
 „The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg “

(170) Die Kinder beantworten [die schwierige Frage Joans]
 „The children reply to John’s difficult question“

(171) Luise kennt [die nette Tochter Evas]
 „Luise knows Eva’s nice daughter“

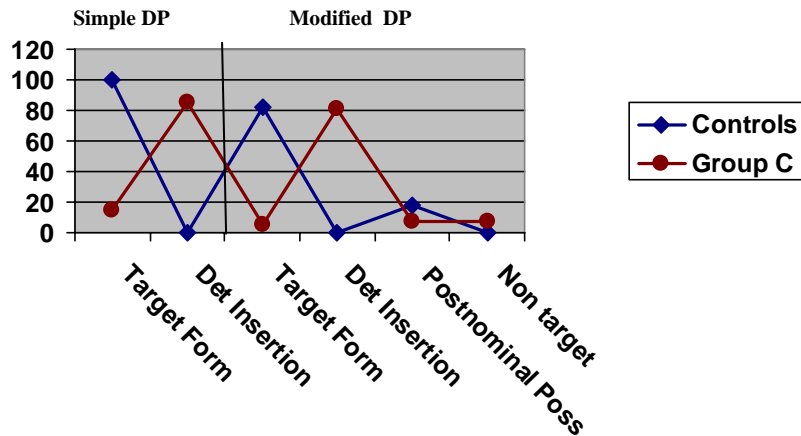
In this group of L2 learners, the fact that prenominal BNP Poss involves dropping of the determiner (there is no evidence for article insertion in simple DPs: 0% in L2 group; 0% in controls) should correlate with a preadjectival position of BNP Poss. Contrary to this expectation, BNP Poss always appears in postnominal position within modified DPs (92%). The dissociation that emerged between simple and modified DPs, regarding the position of BPN Poss, suggests that L2 learners seem to master BPN Poss placement with respect to determiners but not with respect to attributive APs. As a consequence, Italian learners produce the L2 target word order BPN Poss-N only with simple DPs, while resorting to the L2 marked word order Det-AP-N-BPN Poss with modified DPs.

Finally, let us concentrate on the third group. Group C consisted of seven L2 learners: subjects B, F, H, Q (Intermediates) and subjects E, R and W (Beginners). The relevant patterns observed are exemplified in Table 10 and Figure 13 below:

Table 10 - German Saxon genitive constructions:
 Patterns Produced by Group C

Group C - “L1 Transfer”	Simple DP			
	Poss-N	*Det –Poss-N	other	
	15% (12/78)	85% (66/78)	0% (0/0)	
	Modified DP			
	Poss-AP-N	*Det-(Poss)-AP-(Poss)-N	Det-(AP)-N- Poss	other
5% (1/27)	81% (22/27)	7% (2/27)	7% (2/27)	

Figure 13 - German Saxon genitive constructions: Comparison Between the Patterns of Group C and Controls



Contrary to the other groups, L2 learners of Group C resort to the insertion of the determiner both in simple and modified DPs (85% L2ers vs. 0% controls in simple DPs - 81% L2ers vs. 0% controls in modified DPs). This pattern is exemplified by subject E:

Saxon genitive construction as object of a transitive verb:

(172) *Mario ruft [die Giselas Lehrerin] an
 „Mario phones the Gisela’s teacher“

(173) *Sie haben [die Annas Pizza] gegessen
 „They have eaten Anna’s pizza“

(174) *Kannst du mir [das Richards Halstuch] geben?
 „Could you give me Richard’s scarf?“

Saxon genitive construction as object of a preposition:

(175) *Die Kinder schlafen auf [dem Erwins Bett]
 „The children sleep on the Erwin’s bed“

(176) *Ich fahre mit [dem Peters Auto] nach Berlin
 „I go to Rome with the Peter’s car“

(177) *Markus hat gestern in [der Olgas Villa] geschlafen
 „Yesterday Markus slept at the Olga’s place“

Furthermore, only two occurrences of BPN Poss in postnominal position are attested (7%):

(178) Die Frauen lesen den langen Brief Ingeborgs
 „The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg“

Concerning the position of BNP Poss in modified DPs, three different patterns are to be found; 2 out of 7 L2 learners only produce the word order *Det-AP-BPN Poss-N where the possessor shows up between the attributive adjective and the noun:

Subjects H,R:

- (179) *Der Polizist sucht [die rote Ilse's Tasche]
The policeman is looking for the red Ilse's bag
- (180) *Die Kinder beantworten [die schwierige Joans Frage]
The children reply to the difficult John's question“
- (181) *Luise kennt [die nette Evas Tochter]
Luise knows the nice Eva's daughter“

The word order *Det-BPN Poss-AP-N, where the possessor precedes both the adjective and the noun, is attested in only 1 experimental subject out of 7:

Subject Q

- (182) *Der Polizist sucht die Ilse's rote Tasche
The policeman is looking for the Ilse's red bag
- (183) *Die Kinder beantworten die Joans schwierige Frage
The children reply to the John's difficult question
- (184) *Luise kennt die Evas nette Tochter
Luise knows the Eva's nice daughter

The third pattern is characterised by more variability in the placement of BPN Poss, which may precede or follow the adjective. This word order is attested in 4 subjects out of 7. This tendency is exemplified by Subject W:

- (185) *Der Polizist sucht die rote Ilse's Tasche
The policeman is looking for the red Ilse's bag
- (186) *Die Frauen lesen den Ingeborg's langen Brief
The ladies are reading the Ingeborg's long letter
- (187) *Die Kinder beantworten die schwierige Joans Frage
The children reply to the difficult John's question
- (188) *Luise kennt die nette Evas Tochter
Luise knows the Eva's nice daughter

Interestingly, these results suggest that L2 learners seem to adopt an L1 option as far as the co-occurrence of the determiner and the possessor is concerned: they insert an article in D° when the possessor is prenominal.

Concerning the placement of BPN Poss, L2 learners adopt two options: (i) they raise BPN Poss to an intermediate position below D which is presumably the position of licensing of pronominal possessors in Italian, as in the example (186); (ii) they allow BPN Poss to appear in a lower position (presumably its merge position inside the lexical layer), as in the examples (185), (187) and (188).

2.4.2.2 The Controls' Data: Some Speculations on the Postnominal Position of BPN Poss with –s Affix

In section 2.4.2.1, I pointed out the fact that some occurrences of BPN Poss in postnominal position are attested in the Control Group (18%). The relevant items produced by L1 informants are given below⁶⁹:

Control A

(189) Luise kennt die nette Tochter Evas
„Luise knows the nice daughter of Eva“

Control G

(190) Die Frauen lesen den langen Brief Ingeborgs
„The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg“

(191) Die Kinder beantworten die schwierige Frage Joans
„The children reply to the difficult question of John“

Control H

(192) Die Frauen lesen den langen Brief Ingeborgs
„The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg“

(193) Luise kennt die nette Tochter Evas
„Luise knows the nice daughter of Eva“

Control I

(194) Die Frauen lesen den langen Brief Ingeborgs
„The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg“

Control M

(195) Luise kennt die nette Tochter Evas
„Luise knows the nice daughter of Eva“

⁶⁹ A detailed overview of the controls' data is given in the appendix at the end of this dissertation.

As pointed out in chapter I, bare proper names with the –s affix appearing in postnominal position are, in most cases, extremely marked, if not ungrammatical in Modern German. Although the occurrences of BPN Poss in postnominal position are very limited (7/40), it is interesting to observe that this pattern is attested only with certain nominals (*Brief* (letter); *Frage* (question) and *Tochter* (daughter)), but not with others (*Tasche* (bag)).

Table 11 illustrates the correlation between the different kind of nominals involved in the possessive constructions and the prenominal vs. postnominal distribution of BPN Poss:

Table 11 – Placement of BPN Poss According to Different Nominal Heads

	Possessive Constructions	
	Prenominal BPN Poss (Poss-N)	Postnominal BPN Poss (N-Poss)
Tasche „bag“	10/10	0/10
Frage “question”	9/10	1/10
Brief “letter”	7/10	3/10
Tochter “daughter”	7/10	3/10

In order to give an account of this pattern, I refer to two different hypotheses developed by Lindauer (1998) and Longobardi (2000). According to these proposals, all types of thematic “genitives” can, in principle, be placed either pre- or postnominally in Modern German (the examples are adapted by Lindauer (1998) and Longobardi (2000))⁷⁰ :

(195) $Annas_{Poss/Subject}$ Bücher/ die Bücher $Annas_{Poss/Subject}$
 “Anna’s books/ the books of Anna”

(196) $Jans_{Subject}$ Erfindung/ die Erfindung $Jans_{Subject}$
 „Jan’s invention; the invention of/by Jan”

(197) $Amerikas_{Object}$ Entdeckung/ die Entdeckung $Amerikas_{Object}$
 “America’s discovery/ the discovery of America”

(198) $Marias_{Poss/Subject/Object}$ Beschreibung/Die Beschreibung $Marias_{Poss/Subject/Object}$
 “Mary’s description/ the description of/by Mary”

In Longobardi’s proposal this fact is accounted for with the assumption that if only one argument of the head noun is present, it may be licensed and “freely interpreted” in one of the

⁷⁰ Under *genitivus thematicus* one may understand all the arguments of the head noun that can bear a theta-role: subject, object and possessor.

two structural case positions that are available in the German DP: the higher one labelled GenS or the lower one labelled GenO:

- (199)a [D [GenS [[H1 [H2 [H3 [H4 [GenO [α P[S[O...N...]] α]]]]]]]]]
- b [\emptyset [Annas_{Poss/Subject/Object} GenS [[H1 [H2 [H3 [Bücher_{H4} [GenO [α Poss [Subject [Object...N...]] α]]]]]]]]]]
“Anna’s_{Poss/Subject/Object} books”
- c [die_D [GenS [[H1 [H2 [H3 [Bücher_{H4} [Annas_{GenO} [α P[S[O...N...]] α]]]]]]]]]]]
“The books of Anna’s_{Poss/Subject/Object} ”

According to this proposal, a thematic genitive like *Annas* in (199) can be licensed either pre- or postnominally and receives a “free interpretation”. Hence, in this case, *Annas* is the Possessor, the Subject or the Object of the noun *Bücher*.

On the other hand, in Lindauer’s (1999) proposal genitive arguments of the noun must be licensed in the only genitive case position available which dominates NP and is labelled FP:

- (200)a Das Buch eines Kindes
“The book of a child”
- b [_{DP} Das [_{AgrNP} Buch [_{FP} eines Kindes [_{NP}]]]]

Contrary to full genitive DPs, Lindauer claims that nowadays German speakers waver between two morphological analyses of the –s affix: either case marker or possessive marker with the preference of the latter over the former. When the –s marker is analysed as a “possessive” marker it is licensed in prenominal position where all the attributive adjectives show up in Germanic languages⁷¹:

- (201)a Annas Buch
- b [_{SpecDP} Annas [_D [_{AgrNP} Buch_i [_{FP} [_{NP} t_i]]]]]
“Anna’s_(AP) book”

⁷¹ Additional evidence for this claim is provided by the fact that bare proper names with –s suffix cannot appear in all positions where genitive DPs are normally licensed:

- (i) as complements of genitive-governing prepositions: (Lindauer 1999: 132)
*wegen Annas kamen wir zu spät
because-of AnnaGEN came wir too late
“Because of Anna we came too late”
vs
wegen Anna kamen wir zu spät
because-of AnnaDAT came we too late
- (ii) as complements of genitive-governing verbs:
*wir gedachten Annas
we remember AnnaGEN

This evidence could suggest (as claimed by Gallmann (1998), Lindauer (1998) that –s affix is not a case marker at all. Nevertheless, in this study I maintain the traditional view that the –s affix is a case marker inside the NP.

On the contrary, when a BPN Poss occurs postnominally it means that it has been analysed as a determiner-less genitive and licensed in FP:

(201)c ? [_{SpecDP} das [_D [_{AggrNP} Buch_i [_{FP} Annas [_{NP} t_i]]]]]]
 “The book of Anna’s_(DP)”

Concerning the tendency observed in the controls, I think that there are two aspects to be considered here; (i) **why** do the controls resort to this L1 marked option (ii) **why** do they produce the L1 marked word order Det-AP-N-BPN Poss more frequently with some nominals rather than with others?

As for (i), I would propose that the reason lies in the experimental design, namely the possibility given to the subjects to insert the determiner. In simple DPs the insertion of the determiner gives as output an ill-formed structure due to the fact that BPN Poss was presented to the experimental subjects in the fixed linear order [Poss-N]. On the contrary, the insertion of the determiner was a possible (even though marked) grammatical option in modified DPs (see item (202) vs. (203)):

(202) a Die Kinder [dem; schlafen; **Erwins Bett**; auf]
 b Die Kinder schlafen auf Erwins Bett
 c *Die Kinder schlafen auf **dem** Erwins Bett

(203) a Die Kinder [**Joans**; beantworten; **Frage**; **schwierige**; die]
 b Die Kinder beantworten Joans schwierige Frage
 c ?Die Kinder beantworten die schwierige Frage Joans

Further evidence for this claim comes from the results obtained in the PDT, where 31 occurrences of postnominal possessors are attested. Interestingly, in only one case the BPN Poss with –s affix appears in postnominal position, otherwise the controls resort to the insertion of a case assigner like a *von*-PP or the verb *gehören* in order to express the possession:

(204) Investigator: Wessen Buch ist das?
 „Whose book is this?“

(205)a Das ist das Buch Peters (Control subject n.1)
 „This is the book of Peter’s“
 b Das ist das Buch von Peter (Control subject n.2)
 „This is the book of Peter’s“
 c Das Buch gehört Peter (Control subject n.4)
 “This book belongs to Peter”

It is worth noting that, contrary to the PDT, in the SCT no alternative option like (205)b or (205)c was possible because all possessors were bare proper names with –s affix. Hence, this fact suggests that in the SCT the experimental design played a crucial role in determining the shape of the controls’ answer.

As for (ii), I would propose that the reason lies in different related factors: (a) the kind of nominal heads involved in the possessive constructions⁷²; (b) the theta-roles the BPN Poss may bear. First of all, let us concentrate on the controls’ data again.

As a general observation, the fact that only 7 BPN Poss with –s affix out of 40 occur in postnominal position confirm the claim made by Lindauer that the unmarked order in German possessive constructions containing a BPN Poss with –s affix is Poss-N. Contrary to Lindauer (1998), Longobardi (2000) and Gianollo (2005) maintain the idea that German is a language where BPN Poss may be optionally realized in postnominal position and that this option is subject only to stylistic factors. The pattern emerged in the control group of the SCT seems to suggest that this is not the case. L1 informants prefer the BPN Poss-N order over the N-BPN Poss to a greater extent and resort to the latter over the former only with certain nominals but not with others. In fact, as illustrated in Table 11, none of the ten German informants ever produce the order N-BPN Poss with the nominal *Tasche* (“Bag”). In my opinion, a way to account for this fact assumes that noun like *Tasche* has a “reduced” argument structure where only the position of external argument is available. In this case, *Tasche* can select only one argument which is merged in the most prominent specifier of the lexical layer reserved for R-related arguments (possessors) - as proposed by Longobardi (2000) - and is licensed in the highest functional position available for non-prepositional genitives in German:

(206) a Der Polizist sucht Ilse_{Poss} rote Tasche
 „The policeman searches Ilse’s_{Poss} red bag “

In contrast, the fact that BPN Poss with –s affix shows up in postnominal position with nouns like *Brief*, *Frage* or *Tochter* may suggest that more than one licensing position is available for Subject, Object and Possessor with this kind of nominals. As a consequence of this fact, in case only one argument is selected it would be licensed in postnominal position and receive a “free interpretation”:

⁷² I refer here to the traditional dichotomy proposed by Grimshaw (1990) between nouns associated with an argument structure (event nominals) vs. nouns that do not have argument and event structure (non-event nominals).

(207)a Die Frauen lesen den langen Brief Ingeborgs_{Poss/Subject/Object}
 „The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg’s“

b Die Frauen lesen Ingeborgs_{Poss/Subject/Object} langen Brief
 „The ladies are reading Ingeborg’s long letter“

In (207)a and b, *Ingeborgs* could be interpreted as the possessor (the person who has the letter), the subject (the person who wrote it) or the object (the argument of the letter). Hence, it seems to me that the free licensing and free interpretation of genitive non prepositional nominal arguments proposed by Longobardi (2000) is not available for all kinds of German nominals. A noun such as *Tasche* would not allow the BPN Poss to occur in postnominal position due to the fact that a lower position for the licensing PBN Poss with –s affix is not available here. This could be the reason why all ten L1 informants only produce the Poss-N with this kind of nominal head.

2.4.3 Noun Placement in PDT and SCT

Table 12 and 13 illustrate the data obtained in both tasks as far as the position of attributive APs with respect to the noun is concerned. The most surprising result is that L1 order N-AP is completely absent in all L2 learners of both tests. On the other hand the L2 order AP-N is produced at a high rate among the three groups of experimental subjects depending on their level of proficiency (Beginners 86%, Intermediate 93%, Advanced 100%). Furthermore, the percentage of target forms for Beginners and Intermediates in PDT and SCT are exactly the same.

Table 12 – AP-N Order in PDT

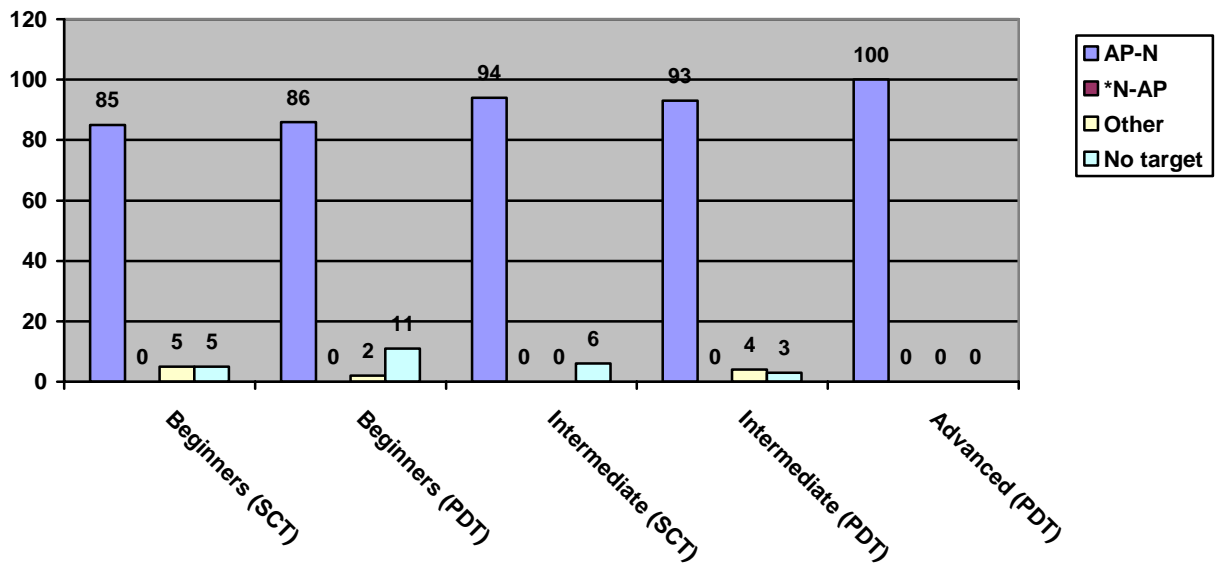
	AP - N	*N - AP	Omit AP	Do not answer
Beginners	105/122 (86%)	0/122 (0%)	3/122 (2%)	14/122 (11%)
Intermediate	280/300 (93%)	0/300 (0%)	12/300 (4%)	8/300 (3%)
Advanced	120/120 (100%)	0/120 (0%)	0/120 (0%)	0/120 (0%)
Total	505/543 (93%)	0/543 (0%)	15/543 (3%)	23/543 (4%)

Table 13 – AP-N Order in SCT

	AP - N	*N - AP	Omit AP	Do not answer
Beginners	17/20 (85%)	0/20 (0%)	1/20 (5%)	1/20 (5%)
Intermediate	34/36 (94%)	0/36 (0%)	0/36 (0%)	2/36 (6%)
Total	51/56 (92%)	0/56 (0%)	1/56 (3%)	3/56 (5%)

Interestingly, although the experimental procedures adopted for the two tasks are completely different, the L2 tendencies found are similar in this particular domain of investigation. This fact is illustrated in Figure 14 below:

Figure 14 – Noun Placement. Comparison between the PDT L2 learners and the SCT L2 learners according to level of proficiency



2.5 Discussion

The discussion of the data will focus separately on the three aspects under investigation: (1) BPN Poss Movement Parameter, (2) NP Raising Parameter, (3) Acquisition of agreement morphology on the BPN Poss and attributive APs

As for (1), the results of both studies suggest that three different stages of acquisition may be identified:

a. an **initial state** where the interlanguage grammar is clearly influenced by L1 representation, hence, L1 represents the starting point of L2 acquisition (Schwartz & Sprouse (1996)). This initial state is represented by Beginners L2 learners in PDT and L2 learners of Group C in SCT. In both cases, it is clear that L2 learners prefer the pattern they already know from their L1. Hence, in the PDT, Beginners opt mainly for analytic constructions (*Das ist das Buch von Peter*) rather than Saxon Genitives ones (*Das ist Peters Buch*), while in the SCT L2 learners of Group C transfer the syntactic property of Italian pronominal possessors to German non-pronominal ones (i.e co-occurrence of determiners and possessors **die Iles rote Tasche*).

Similar tendencies could be found in the work on L2 Dutch carried out by Van de Craats et al. (2000) and on L2 English in the research by Di Domenico & Bennati (2006). Both studies are particularly interesting because Dutch and English share with German the same morphosyntactic properties as far as the Saxon genitive constructions are concerned.

Let us focus, first of all, on the study by Van de Craats et al.. They explore the acquisition of possessive constructions in Moroccan/Turkish adult and children L2 learners of Dutch pointing out the fact that during the first stage of acquisition the L2 learners resort exclusively to the pattern available in their L1 grammar for expressing a possessive relation. Hence, analytic constructions (of-insertion) can be found in the Moroccan data from early on due to the fact that L1 grammar allows such construction, while the same tendency is rare in the Turkish data because this option is not available there. Furthermore, they observe dissociation between adult and children L2 learners with regards to the process of targeting the L2. While the children's data reveals a clear process of restructuring the interlanguage grammar reaching a target like performance, the adults' patterns show a longer period of "fossilization" during which they resort to L1 structures to a greater extent.

The work by Di Domenico & Bennati (2006) deals with the acquisition of L2 English -s genitive constructions by Italian native speakers. They investigate original L2 English data collected through written elicitation tests from a group of 94 Italian teenagers learning L2 English in a formal environment. Similarly to the results I obtained with the SCT, they found a persistent tendency to insert the definite determiner when the BPN Poss appears in pronominal position. This result could be interpreted as a confirmation of a more general L2 strategy adopted by Italian learners to extend a property of the L1 pronominal possessive constructions (co-occurrence determiners and possessors) to L2 Saxon Genitive ones. The interesting question that arises is whether the Italian L2 learners run into a UG option when extending an L1 property to the L2 possessive constructions. In Chapter III, on the basis of cross-linguistic evidence, I will try to demonstrate that this seems to be the case.

- (a) an **intermediate state** where the L2 value for a given parameter is not completely gained and variability in word order is predicted. This pattern is well represented by Group B in the SCT. The tendency that emerged here suggests that L2 learners may go through a stage during which they seem to have reset the L2 value for BPN Poss Movement Parameter only in simple DPs but not in modified DPs.

As for the Intermediate L2 learners of the PDT, they do not show a well-defined tendency similar to the one observed in Group B. It is nevertheless necessary to point out the fact that the Intermediate L2 learners of the PDT are characterised by a more individual variability across the experimental subjects. However, it is worth noting that the occurrence of Saxon genitive constructions is slightly higher in simple DPs than in modified ones, at least in 3 out of 10 subjects (see Figure 3).

The patterns that emerged in the “intermediate state” group of L2 learners suggest two interesting considerations regarding:

- (i) the process of parameter resetting in Second Language Acquisition;
- (ii) the contribution that L2 data may have for better understanding the mechanism of a parameter.

Concerning (i), L2 learners may show different strategies in dealing with a parametric variation including the fact that a parameter could be “partially” set to a new value. Hence, L2 learners start adopting the L2 value only in specific contexts (i.e. BPN Poss Movement in simple DPs) but not in others (i.e. BPN Poss Movement in modified DPs). According to this idea, L2 interlanguage grammar may suffer from lack of clustering effects during an intermediate stage of acquisition when L2 learners are trying to abandon the L1 value for a given parameter.

In a study on Verb Raising Parameter in L2 English, White (1990/1991) proposes an analysis of clustering and variability in L2 parameter resetting for the first time. She tested verb placement under two different structural conditions (with respect to negation and to adverb) in French adult L2 learners and found a discrepancy between the two contexts as far as the position of the verb is concerned. On the basis of such results, she concluded that clustering may not occur in interlanguage grammar and that this fact represents an important difference with respect to First Language Acquisition⁷³.

Another interesting study on variability in parameter resetting was carried out by Hawkins et al. (1993) who investigated Verb Raising Parameter in English learners of L2 French by means of a grammaticality judgments task. Similarly to White’s data, he found a substantial discrepancy in judgments among the three structural conditions analysed (verb placement with respect to

⁷³ The L2 learners of White’s research received formal instruction in the L2. The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of formal instruction in parameter resetting.

adverbs, negation and floating quantifier) and concluded that the three phenomena were not parametrically clustered by L2 learners. He also underlined the incorrectness of assuming an analysis of L2 parameter resetting in terms of all-at-once phenomenon because the data collected in his study seems to suggest that, although L2 subjects appear to have reset the value for a given parameter, they may not have acquired all clustered properties of it.

The same analysis has been given by Herschensohn (1998a), who explores the development of Verb Raising Parameter in a group of Intermediate L2 English learners of French. The author investigates three major problematic domains related to the acquisition of Verb Raising Parameter: omission on inflection on lexical verbs; position of V with respect to negation; position of frequency adverbs and quality adverbs with respect to V. She administered a production task to two groups of intermediate anglophones with French L2 and found that the percentage of errors concerning inflection (2,5%) and negation (2,85%) contrasts markedly with the one for adverb placement (18,3%). The results of this experiment suggest that L2 learners appear to set the Verb Raising Parameter partially to a new value: they master negation placement before adverb placement. Hence, the intermediate grammars show mastery and non-mastery simultaneously.

Let us now turn to (ii). On the basis of the discrepancy that emerged between simple and modified DPs as far as BPN Poss placement is concerned, it could be interesting to further investigate whether the alternation Poss-N vs. Det-AP-N-Poss represents a UG option. In this case, it would mean that a more articulated mechanism for what I labelled BPN Possessor Movement Parameter has to be assumed (see Belletti (2005) for the role that L2 acquisition data may have for linguistic theory). I will turn to this interesting aspect in Chapter III.

(c) a **final state** where L2 parameter values are gained and L2 performance is target-like. This stage of acquisition is represented by Advanced L2 learners of PDT and L2 learners of Group A in SCT. Nevertheless, although the experimental subjects of these two groups appear to have reset both parameters to L2 values (BPN Poss Movement Parameter and NP Raising Parameter), it is worth pointing out that “L2 final state” seldom corresponds to a native-speaker knowledge of L1 grammar. Despite the fact that their syntax is extremely good, “expert L2 learners” often show incompleteness of peripheral aspects of the morpholexicon or at the level of syntax/semantics interface (see Herschensohn (1999), White (2003) and Sorace (2003) for relevant discussion on endstate grammar and nearnativeness in L2, respectively). The L2 data collected here does not allow me to classify Advanced learners of the PDT and the experimental subjects of Group A in the SCT as “expert L2 learners”. On the basis of the patterns found, the

only conclusion I can draw is that the final state L2 speakers and native speakers do not diverge at the level of the morphosyntax as far as Saxon genitive constructions are concerned; resetting of BPN Poss Movement Parameter is then possible. Hence, interlanguage grammars can realize parameter values distinct from those found in the L1.

As for the NP Raising Parameter, the most striking result is lack of L1 order *N-AP in all the L2 groups of both tests. While possessive constructions may represent a more problematic domain for Second Language Acquisition, the resetting of word-order parameter relevant for the different position of NP, with respect to attributive APs in Italian and German, seems to be an easier target to achieve from early on. No differences emerge in learners' performance, despite the different levels of proficiency in the L2. Furthermore, the data suggest that L1 transfer does not play a crucial role in this particular domain of Second Language Acquisition. This result contrasts with other research carried out on L2 German nominal syntax. Here, I refer to the work by Parodi, Schwartz and Clahsen (1996, 2004) who found that Romance language speakers produced *N-AP order to varying degrees in their interlanguage grammar depending on proficiency level. I think that the experimental procedure adopted for my research may play a role in accounting for this diverging result. Contrary to Parodi et al.'s study, which is based on a spontaneous production corpora, the present research has focused on production data obtained through a written and an oral elicitation procedure. Both tests may resemble, in some ways, the traditional tasks given to scholars during classroom activities. Hence, one of the consequences of the experimental procedures I adopted could have been to drive the L2 learners' attention to the topic under investigation with the risk of tapping more the conscious knowledge of their L2 (application of a rule taught during German classes), rather than the unconscious one. This fact could have influenced L2 learners who then performed better because they were more conscious of the aim of the task. However, two considerations should be taken into account. First of all, both the SCT and the PDT were designed to test the resetting of BPN Poss Movement Parameter. Hence, L2 learners' attention would have been driven more towards BPN Poss placement rather than to the position of the noun with respect to adjectives. Secondly, the study of Parodi et al. included cross-sectional and longitudinal data collected at different points of L2 speakers' permanence in Germany. As far as Romance language speakers are concerned, it is worth noting that the rate of *N-AP order produced by the two Italian L2 learners in their study is fairly low from early on (25% after 1,5-3 months and 37,5% after 2-4 months of permanence in Germany respectively). According to this fact, the total lack of *N-AP pattern found in my data could be attributed to the higher level of proficiency of the Beginner L2 subjects since that

they had also received at least one year of formal instruction in German at the time the test was administered. On the contrary, Parodi et al.'s experimental subjects were untutored L2 learners.

A different kind of consideration may also be formulated in order to account for the contrast that emerged in my research between L2 resetting of BPN Poss Movement Parameter and NP Raising Parameter. The interesting question that arises is why the former represents a more problematic domain for L2 acquisition with respect to the latter even though all the L2 learners received explicit classroom instruction on both topics. A possible factor that may be taken into consideration is the complexity of the syntactic derivation at work in BPN Poss Movement with respect to NP Raising.

As claimed so far, NP and BPN Poss with –s affix undergo movement to different dedicated positions in the German DP. While NP is assumed to reach a low functional position of the DP:

$$(208) \text{ [}_{\text{DFin}} \text{ die [}_{\text{SpecFP}} \text{ rote [}_{\text{F}} \text{ [}_{\text{SpecFP}} \text{ Tasche}_j \text{ [}_{\text{F}} \text{ [}_{\text{NP}} \text{ t}_j \text{]]]]]] }$$

The BPN Poss, which is merged inside the lexical layer, is likely to have a more articulated derivation. It enters the computation with an array of feature [+ case] [+ def], which I assumed that has to be checked in two different functional positions, SpecIP and SpecDFinP respectively:

$$(209) \text{ [}_{\text{SpecDFin}} \text{ Ilse}_i \text{ [}_{\text{DFin}} \text{ [}_{\text{SpecIP}} \text{ t}_i \text{ [}_{\text{I}} \text{ [}_{\text{SpecFP}} \text{ rote [}_{\text{F}} \text{ [}_{\text{SpecFP}} \text{ Tasche}_j \text{ [}_{\text{F}} \text{ [}_{\text{SpecNP}} \text{ t}_i \text{ [}_{\text{NP}} \text{ t}_j \text{]]]]]]]]]] }$$

For L2 learners' computational system, this two-step derivation may represent a more complicated process to accomplish, in comparison with the one-step derivation involved in NP Raising. A consequence of this could be a delay in acquiring the most “costly” derivation (BPN Poss movement to SpecDFinP via SpecIP) ⁷⁴.

⁷⁴ Another interesting aspect to be considered involves L2 formal instruction on German Saxon genitive constructions due to the fact that all informants were attending German classes in Italy at the time the tests were administered. It is worth noting that in grammar handbooks for German as a Second Language the following information is often lacking:

- (i) There is a **strict correlation between the prenominal position of BPN Poss with –s affix and the dropping of the determiner on the head noun**. Saxon genitive constructions are specified as [+ definite]. Due to the fact that BPN Poss with –s affix is intrinsic definite, **it takes the place of definite determiners** in this kind of possessive DPs.
- (ii) Prenominal BPN Poss with –s affix has the same distributional properties of German possessive pronouns. Hence, in case the head noun of a Saxon genitive construction is modified by an AP, the BPN with –s affix precede both AP and N;
- (iii) BPN Poss with –s affix appearing in postnominal position is very marked in Modern German

In my opinion, the three points mentioned above are particularly important especially for L2 learners whose L1 does not have inherited definiteness in possessive constructions such as, for example, Italian. I think that the correlation

Finally, let us focus on the suppliance of agreement morphology observed in the PDT. Overall, the results confirm that missing inflection on BPN Poss and attributive APs is a limited phenomenon in the interlanguage grammars of Italian L2 learners of German. Furthermore, morphological omissions are not random in the L2 interlanguage grammar, although a residual optional omission of inflectional morphology has been observed for attributive APs but not for BPN Poss. Concerning this particular aspect, I found that morphological accuracy increases considerably depending on proficiency level only in the case of PBN Poss. In my opinion, this fact could be interpreted in terms of easier acquisition of invariable bound morphemes (-s affix) over variable bound ones (inflectional endings of the adjectival declension in German).

As for the acquisition of -s affix, the data of Intermediate and Advanced L2 learners suggests that they capture the correlation between the prenominal position of BPN Poss and -s insertion, hence, they are able to acquire the strong related features of the functional nodes where BPN Poss is attracted and licensed in German. Nothing can be said as far as Beginner L2 learners are concerned because they do not produce Saxon genitive constructions at all⁷⁵.

Results on suppliance of agreement morphology on attributive APs confirm that L2 learners still have some difficulties in this particular domain, even at a high level of proficiency. On the contrary, L2 learners are very accurate in adjective placement from early on. Interestingly, the L2 data reveals a tendency to favour the insertion of non-target morphology over missing inflection⁷⁶. I think that these findings are not surprising given the fact that, for Italian L2 learners of German, knowledge of L2 adjectival agreement categories is available via L1 transfer: attributive APs agree in phi-features with the head noun in both languages. In my opinion, the difficulty in acquiring the target agreement morphology reflects a problem of mapping phi-features agreement into their particular surface morphological manifestation⁷⁷.

between the definiteness value of a BPN with -s affix and its possibility to function as a definite determiner in Saxon genitive constructions should be stressed in the L2 formal instruction of this particular syntactic domain. This would allow the L2 learners to capture- perhaps more easily - the fact BPN with -s affix has to be placed prenominally, thus preceding possible APs that modify the head noun.

⁷⁵ The same tendency does not emerge in the process of L1 acquisition. Production of prenominal BPN Poss is attested quite early in the child's speech but, interestingly, during the first stages, the -s affix on BPN Poss is omitted (see Matteini 2006 for an overview of L1 studies on the acquisition of German nominal syntax).

⁷⁶ Data on suppliance of non-target morphology on attributive APs seems to indicate that L2 learners resort to the "default" adjectival declension *-en* when supplying the non-target form of inflection. See footnote 66.

⁷⁷ See for example Lardiere 1998a,b, 2000 and Prévost and White 2000a,b for an account of the variable used of inflection in adult L2 acquisition.

Chapter 3 – Interlanguage Grammars and Possible UG Options: An Insight on Possessive Constructions from a Cross-Linguistic Perspective.

Abstract

This chapter seeks to explore the possibility that some L2 patterns produced by experimental subjects participating in the Sentence Completion Task (SCT) represent possible UG options. The traditional debate of generative studies on Second Language Acquisition relies on the L2 learner's ability vs. inability to reset parameter values. According to this view, incompleteness of L2 parameter resetting has been taken as evidence for no access to UG, while L2 resetting of parameter values not available in L1 has been taken to support full access to UG. More recently (see Schwarz & Sprouse 1994), it has been claimed that another piece of evidence concerning UG availability could be provided by the acquisition of "non-L1 characteristics" in general (see White 1989). In this sense, L2 learners could adopt options or parameter values of neither the L1 nor L2. Following this idea, I will revisit cross-linguistic variation phenomena in the syntax of Noun Phrases focusing in particular on the distribution of possessors, adjectives and nouns in different languages. On the basis of this comparative approach, I will attempt to show that the non-target possessive constructions produced in the interlanguage grammars of L2 learners of SCT are UG constrained.

3.0 Introduction

Before discussing the data in detail, it is necessary to give an explanation for the way an interlanguage grammar might differ from L1 and L2 in adopting options that reflect neither the first nor the second language. In the following, I will report on the acquisition of Dutch possessive constructions by Turkish and Moroccan Arabic L2 learners, focusing in particular on Turkish learners with regard to two particular aspects: (i) the acquisition of Dutch double possessive constructions: (ii) the insertion of the determiner in the L2 possessive constructions. This work carried out by Van de Craats et al. (2000) is interesting because it is primarily concerned with word-order variation in the acquisition of possessive constructions and suggests how a non-native speaker may "reconstruct" his interlanguage grammar in different ways, resorting to options not available in L1 and L2.

3.1 L2 Dutch: The Acquisition of Possessive Constructions by Turkish L2 Learners

In Van de Craats et al. (2000), a group of 4 adult L2 learners of Dutch (2 Moroccan and 2 Turkish) were recorded for a period of 2.5 years. The research was then extended to a corpus of child learners of Dutch (16 Moroccan and 16 Turkish) that were also recorded for a period of 2.5 years. Overall, the results indicate that, after a first period characterized by L1 transfer effects, L2 learners produce new possessive constructions that are not available in their L1. Moreover, this

fact coincides with an appropriate use of inflectional morphology. One of the interesting aspects in Van de Craats' study is represented by the Turkish children's performances.

Before focusing on the analysis of their interlanguage grammar, it is necessary to introduce some properties of Dutch and Turkish nominal syntax and, in particular, on possessive constructions. As for word-order, one of the most striking differences between the two languages concerns headedness. Dutch is head-initial and, at the level of nominal syntax, displays a linear order (D)-N-XP. Turkish is head-final. In this language the nominal constituents surface with a linear order XP-N. Furthermore, Turkish never displays definite article. The two languages do not differ as far as NP Raising is concerned; the strict order adjective-noun suggests that the NP never targets a higher position in Dutch or Turkish DP.

Similarly to Modern German, Dutch expresses possessive relations by means of five different types of constructions, as illustrated by the examples from (210) to (214), all adapted from Van de Craats et al. (2000):

Analytic construction

(210) de broer van Jan
"the brother of Jan"

Saxon genitive construction

(211) Jans broer
"Jan's brother"

Double possessive construction⁷⁸

(212) Jan z'n broer
"Jan his brother"

Possessive construction with weak/clitic possessives⁷⁹

(213) M'n broer
"my brother"

Possessive construction with strong possessives

(214) Zijn huis
"His house"

Contrary to Dutch, no analytic construction is available in Turkish. When a non-pronominal possessor is involved, the possessive construction displays the same linear order of Dutch Saxon

⁷⁸ This pattern is characterized by a "doubling" possessive clitic (*z'n* in the example (212)) which agrees in person, gender and number with the "doubled" possessor and not with the possessed noun. See Chapter I, section 1.1 and 1.1.2.1 for the derivation proposed for Dutch and German.

⁷⁹ For a detailed description of the Dutch pronominal possessive constructions see Van de Craats et al. (2000).

Genitive structure (Poss – N). Furthermore, the possessor bears a case morpheme, while the nominal head displays agreement in person and number with the possessor. The relevant pattern is exemplified in (215) below:

- (215) Ayse-n-in araba-si
Ayse-GEN car-3sg
“Ayse’s car” [+ def]

Interestingly, the structure in (215) has a default definite interpretation like the Germanic Saxon genitive construction. If the head noun has to be specified as [+indefinite], the indefinite element *bir* is inserted:

- (216) Ayse-n-in bir kitab-i
Ayse-GEN a book-3sg
“a book of Ayse”

In case of pronominal possession, the linear order is the same as in Dutch:

- (217) ben-im ev-im
I-GEN house-1sg
“my house”

As pointed out by Van de Craats et al., Turkish speakers of Dutch are familiar neither with possessive constructions in which the possessor follows the noun (the analytic form in (209)), nor with Double possessive constructions (see example (212)). Hence, both structures are more likely not to be affected by L1 transfer, rather to be “restructured” in a number of different ways during the course of acquisition.

Let us concentrate on the L2 patterns that emerged in the Double possessive constructions. Van de Craats et al. (2000) note that the structures produced by Turkish children do not reflect the target form. Some examples of L2 patterns are given below:

- (218) zijn hoed van z’n moeder
his hat of his mother
“the mother’s hat”

- (219) z’n naam van die land
his name of that country
„the name of that country“

- (220) m’n kleine zusje van mij
my little sister of me
“my little sister”

In all the L2 ill-formed constructions from (218) to (220), the noun is preceded by a possessive pronoun (*z'ijn, z'n, m'n*, respectively). Furthermore, the possessor is introduced by the preposition *van*. This variant of Double possessive construction is not available in Dutch, where the possessive pronoun intervenes between the possessor and the noun as in the example in (212) repeated here as (221):

(221) Jan z'n broer
 Jan his brother
 "Jan's brother"

Van de Craats et al. (2000) conclude that such a L2 pattern seems more similar to the Doubling construct state construction attested in Moroccan Arabic:

(222) xet-ha dyal Touria
 sister-her of Touria
 "Touria's sister"

In (222), the possessor (*Touria*) is introduced by the preposition *dyal*, while the noun shows up with a suffixed possessive pronoun (*-ha*). In this particular case, the linear order N-Poss can be analysed as the result of NP raising to a high functional position in Moroccan Arabic but not in Dutch L2 productions. This kind of evidence leads Van de Craats et al. to conclude that UG is implied in the process of Second Language Acquisition, especially as far as Turkish children L2 development is concerned. Interestingly, the same pattern is lacking in the Turkish adults' production and this fact can be explained by the lack of access to UG in such group of L2 learners.

Furthermore, Van de Craats et al. observed another interesting fact concerning the position of determiners in the L2 data of Turkish learners. In the first stage of acquisition, the researchers find that L2 speakers resort to L1 word-order when producing possessive constructions such as (223):

(223) garage **die** naam
 garage that name
 "the name of the garage"

where the determiner (in this case a demonstrative) is inserted between the possessor and the noun like in a Turkish possessive indefinite structure of the type in (216) repeated here as (224):

(224) Ayse-n-in **bir** kitab-i
 Ayse-GEN a book-3sg
 "a book of Ayse"

Later on, the L2 data suggests that Turkish speakers are trying to abandon the L1 word-order. During this period, L2 learners produce forms of the type in (225):

(225) **een/die** [van mijn vader [vriend]
a/the of my father friend
“a/the friend of my father/my father’s friend”

where the determiner (*een/die*) that refers to the head N (*vriend*) precedes the possessor (*van mijn vader*) and occupies the L2 target position.

According to Van de Craats et al., the insertion of the definite determiner relates to a piece of “conserved Turkish grammatical knowledge” based on the property of indefiniteness involved in Turkish DPs. As illustrated by the contrast between (215) and (216), the prenominal position of the possessor in Turkish does not seem to determine the definiteness of the entire possessive construction, as in the Dutch Saxon genitive structure. This fact leads Turkish L2 learners to mark the definiteness/indefiniteness on the nominal head through the insertion of a determiner during a period of L2 development, that Van de Craats et al. call “the restructuring stage”.

These findings are particularly interesting when compared to the L2 tendency observed in my study. Similarly to Turkish, in Italian possessive constructions the prenominal position of the possessor does not determine the definiteness/indefiniteness of the possessive DPs. When acquiring German Saxon genitive constructions, Italian adult learners also seem to go through a “restructuring stage” during which they abandon the L1 word order N-BPN Poss in favour of the L2 word order BPN Poss-N. Nevertheless, they still insert a determiner when the BPN Poss is in prenominal position in order to mark the definiteness/indefiniteness of the entire possessive construction, as required in their L1. In the next paragraph, I will turn to this issue.

3.2 L2 German: The Acquisition of Saxon genitive constructions by Italian Adult Learners

As pointed out in Chapter 2, the L2 patterns identified in Group B and Group C participating in the SCT have been classified as non-target constructions. While in the former a dissociation between simple and modified DPs has been observed, as far as the position of BPN Poss is concerned, in the latter there is a strong tendency to insert the determiner when BPN Poss is in prenominal position. In the following, I will examine both L2 learners’ performance starting with Group C.

3.2.1 Analyzing the Interlanguage Grammar of Group C

My attention on the performance of Group C was “captured” by some non-target like productions involving co-occurrence of determiners and prenominal BPN Poss. The relevant patterns are exemplified in (226) and (227):

(226) *Sie haben [die Annas Pizza] gegessen
„They have eaten Anna’s pizza“

(227) *Die Kinder schlafen auf [dem Erwins Bett]
„The children are sleeping on the Erwin’s bed“

Furthermore, in L2 data, BPN Poss occupies a different position with respect to the attributive adjectives. Sometimes it follows an AP, as in the example (228):

(228) *Der Polizist sucht [die rote Iلس Tasche]
The policeman is looking for the red Ilse’s bag

Sometimes it appears in preadjectival position like in the example (229):

(229) *Die Kinder beantworten [die Joans schwierige Frage]
The children reply to the John’s difficult question

Based on this fact, I think that the non-target constructions could be analyzed as the result of the interaction between the two different parameter values involved in German and Italian DP:

(A) BPN Poss Movement Parameter:

- (i) [strong] in German > BPN Poss is raised to DFinP layer
- (ii) [weak] in Italian > BPN Poss is licensed in the NP lexical layer through preposition;

(B) NP Raising Parameter:

- (i) [weak] in German > NP is not raised to an intermediate FP position⁸⁰
- (ii) [strong] in Italian > NP is raised to an intermediate FP position

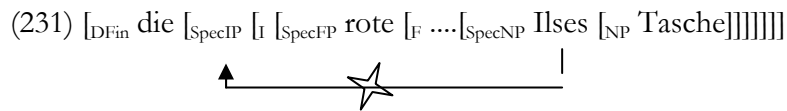
⁸⁰ As far as the position of NP in the German DP is concerned, it is worth pointing out that, on the basis of distributional properties of NP and its arguments, the noun is licensed in a low functional node immediately above the lexical layer. Hence, it is supposed to undergo “short movement” to the IP area whereas, in Italian it targets a higher position. See Chapter I, section 1.1.3.1 for a more detailed discussion on this topic.

Contrary to my findings - at least for this group of L2 learners - an analysis based on L1 transfer would predict a strong tendency to locate BPN Poss in postnominal position and NP mainly in preadjectival position as result of both: (i) NP raising to an intermediate functional node and (ii) lack of BPN Poss movement to the DFinP layer, as exemplified in (230):

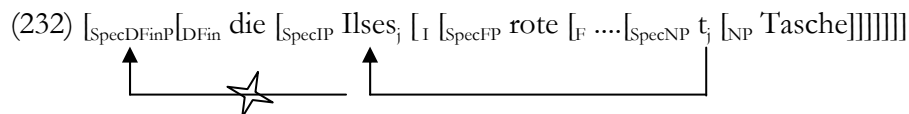
(230) *Der Polizist sucht die Tasche rote Ilse's⁸¹
 "The policeman is looking for the bag red Ilse's"

Crucially, this pattern is unattested in the L2 data I collected. The question that arises is how to interpret the non-target constructions in (226) to (229). In my opinion, there are two aspects in the ill-formed productions that should be pointed out:

- (i) **BPN Poss placement with respect to the APs and co-occurrence of BPN Poss and a definite determiner.** These facts strongly suggest that in the L2 learner's interlanguage grammar BPN Poss appears in two non-target prenominal positions: (1) adjacent to the NP (example (228)). In this case, BPN Poss is licensed in a lower position of the DP. Hence, the value for BPN Poss Movement Parameter does not seem to converge to the L2 value [strong]:

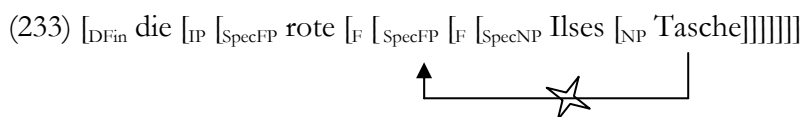


(2) adjacent to the AP (see example (229)). The BPN Poss is licensed in a high internal functional position immediately below the highest DP layer. The value for BPN Poss Movement Parameter seems to converge to the L2 [strong] value: BPN Poss is raised higher up in the extended nominal projection. Nevertheless, it does not target SpecDFinP, as suggested by the insertion of the determiner. The derivation in (232) illustrates this pattern:



⁸¹ This structure represents the L1 order in that the BPN Poss appears in postnominal position. However, contrary to what we find in Italian, in this particular case it is not introduced by a preposition. It is worth reminding that the option to resort to analytic constructions was not possible in the SCT.

- (ii) **NP placement with respect to BPN Poss and to APs.** As illustrated in (228), the fact that NP follows both the BPN Poss and the adjective suggests that NP does not move to a lower FP. Hence, the value for NP Raising Parameter seems to converge neither to the L1 nor to the L2 value:



The interlanguage productions of Group C seem to reflect both L1 transfer and “non L1 properties”.

The L1 transfer is represented by the insertion of the determiner. This fact could be related to the lack of inherited definiteness of Italian possessive DPs. Prenominal possessors do not induce a definite interpretation of the whole possessive construction in this language:

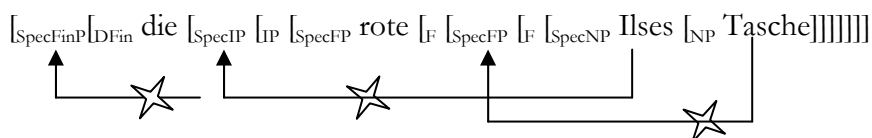
- (234)a Gianni legge la mia lettera
 John reads the my letter
 “John is reading my letter”

- b Gianni legge una mia lettera
 John reads a my letter
 “John is reading a letter of mine”

and, consequently, the insertion of a determiner in D° is necessary in order to mark the definiteness/indefiniteness of the possessive DPs.

The “non L1 properties” are represented by (i) the prenominal position of BPN Poss and (ii) lack of NP raising, as proposed for the structures (228) repeated here as (235):

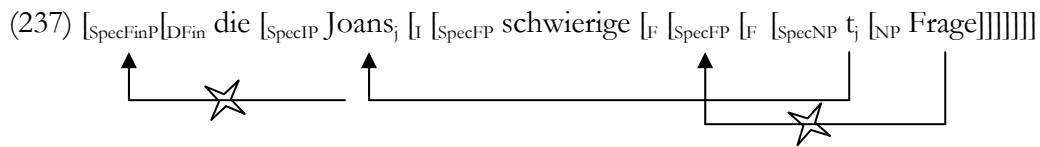
- (235) *Der Polizist sucht [die rote Ikses Tasche]
 The policeman is looking for the red Ilse’s bag



A slightly different analysis is required for the L2 pattern in (229) and repeated here as (236):

- (236) *Die Kinder beantworten [die Joans schwierige Frage]
 The children reply to the John’s difficult question

In this case it is plausible to assume that, while the NP is licensed in the low DP area, the BPN Poss targets an intermediate position below D. The derivation in (237) illustrates this fact:



The interesting question that arises is whether this variant of Saxon genitive constructions is attested in other languages of the world. More precisely, whether co-occurrence of determiners and pronominal non-pronominal possessors represents a UG option. Although the aim of this work is not to propose a comparative analysis of possessive constructions in different languages, I think that more careful attention dedicated to cross-linguistic variation in specific domains could represent an interesting and inspiring way to look at- and try to better understand – Second Language Acquisition with particular attention given to those stages where L1 transfer approach fails to give a satisfactory account for the L2 patterns. In the following section, I will revisit in detail some works on cross-linguistic variations in the syntax of Noun Phrases. I will start my discussion by focusing in particular on article-possessors complementarity and then I will introduce some languages in which both elements may co-occur. I will examine first Old High German; I will then introduce some considerations on Sinti, a variety of Romani⁸² spoken in Germany, Austria, Slovenia, northern Italy and France⁸³. Finally, I will conclude with some data on Hungarian and Swedish possessive constructions.

3.2.1.1 Complementarity/Co-occurrence of Possessors and Determiners

Lyons (1986) and Giorgi & Longobardi (1991) proposed, for the first time, the existence of a “Possessive parameter” in order to account for the co-occurrence of determiners and possessors in Italian but not in English:

- (238) a (*the) my bag is new
 b la mia borsa è nuova
 c *mia borsa è nuova

According to their claims, a possessor may have either a “determiner status”, as in English, or an “adjective status”, as in Italian. While the former is supposed to occupy the same structural

⁸² Romani is an Indo-Aryan language, whose varieties are spoken all over Europe by itinerant communities

⁸³ The French variety of Sinti is called Manuš

position as the article and does not co-occur with it, the latter behaves like any other attributive adjectives and, hence, may co-occur with different kind of determiners. Haspelmath (1999) points out that, although this parameter is able to capture the syntactic differences between some Romance and Germanic languages, it is inadequate for all those cases where possessors and determiners occupy different positions but are nevertheless in complementarity distribution within a possessive construction, as in Standard Swedish:

- (239) a bok-en (Haspelmath 1999)
 book the
 « the book »
- b Karins bok
 « Karin's book »
- c *Karins bok-en
 Karins book the
 « The Karin's book »

Further evidence of this kind is provided by languages where the determiner is an affix, while the possessor is a free expression and they are still in complementary distribution:

Amharic (South Semitic)

- (240) a bet-u (Haspelmath 1999)
 house-ART
 “the house”
- b bet-e
 house-1sg.poss
 “my house”

According to Haspelmath (1999), the complementarity article-possessor is not constrained by structural factors, rather by semantic and pragmatic reasons: the definite article can be omitted because possessors have mainly a definite reading. The same line of reasoning is adopted by Koptjeskaja-Tamm (2000), who suggests a “functional explanation” for article-possessor incompatibility. Prenominal possessors function mainly as anchors/reference point entities in discourse, “*they are reminiscent of definite articles: both signal that the listener has sufficient knowledge for identifying the referent of the nominal in question, and the nominal is thus **definite*** (Koptjeskaja-Tamm 2000:130)”. Interestingly, Haspelmath (1999) observes that in all languages with article-possessor incompatibility, the category of “definite article” appeared quite recently and a stage of optional use of definite articles in possessive constructions is often attested. As pointed out by Haspelmath, West Germanic and Nordic Languages show similar development: the optional use of definite article in possessive constructions gradually disappeared in favour of a determiner-less

possessive DPs. The data of High Old German I will present in the next paragraph seems to illustrate this situation.

3.2.1.2 High Old German

In High Old German⁸⁴, the process of grammaticalization of determiner-possessor complementarity is well attested: determinerless possessive constructions alternate with full possessive constructions. Furthermore, a relative word-order freedom of possessives and adjectives with respect to the noun is also attested. Most of the data that I will present is part of a large research on the syntax of DP in High Old German, which was carried out at the University of Venezia⁸⁵.

Contrary to Modern German, High Old German has quite a different distribution of nouns, adjectives, nominal arguments, as well as an optional use of definite articles. Interestingly, this optionality affects mainly nominals modified by non-pronominal possessors, possessive pronouns and APs in general:

- (241)a Gotes Boto
 GodGEN messenger
 „God’s messenger“
- b Der Gotes Boto
 the.ms.NOM GodGEN messenger
- c Boto Gotes
 messenger GodGEN
- d Der Boto Gotes
 the.ms.NOM messenger GodGEN
- (242)a Min Fater
 “my father”
- b Fater Min
 father my
- c Der min Fater
 the my father
- d Der Fater min
 the father my

⁸⁴ High Old German refers to a period between VII and XI century a.C.

⁸⁵ Marzolla A., *Die Struktur der Nominalphrasen im Althochdeutschen*, Tesi di Laurea, University Ca’ Foscari of Venezia (1990/1991).

(243)a barn unwahsan
child young
“the young child”

b die Küneginne rīch
the.pl queens powerful
“the powerful queens”

Furthermore, examples (241)c and d confirm that BPN Poss may be located in postnominal position as well in High Old German. In the following, I will concentrate only on the syntactic properties of the prenominal BPN Poss.

As for genitive arguments, examples (244)-(246) illustrate that, contrary to Modern German, determiners co-occur with prenominal genitive complements:

(244) dhemu Gotes sune
theDAT GodGEN Sohn
„to God’s Son“

(Marzolla 1991)

(245) in daz Ruotgises houc
in theACC Ruotgises hill
„in Ruotgis’ hill“

(246) duruh den Fredthantes uuigarton
through theACC FredthantGEN vineyard
“through Fredthant’s vineyard”

These forms alternate with possessive constructions where the prenominal genitive is in complementary distribution with determiners, as in Modern German:

(247) Davides sunu
DavidGEN son
“David’s Son”

(248) Iacobes got
IacobGEN God
“Jacob’s God”

(249) Siones dohter
SionGEN daughter
“Sion’s daughter”

One of the most interesting pieces of data reported by Marzolla (1991) concerns complex modified DPs, like the one in (250):

- (250) [[dhazs almahtiga gotes chiruni] dhera gotliihhun Christes
chiburdi]
ThisNOM almightyNOM GodGEN mistery theGENfem divineGENfem CristhiGEN
birth
“God’s almighty mistery of Cristi divine birth”

There are several aspects to point out in this construction. The “matrix” DP [*dhazs almahtiga gotes chiruni*] selects, as complement, a genitive DP [*dhera gotliihhun Christes chiburdi*]. In both DPs a BPN Poss in prenominal position co-occurs with a determiner - the demonstrative *dhazs* in the “matrix” DP and the definite article *dhera* in the genitive DP - that agrees with the head noun. The nominal head is modified by an attributive AP: *almahtiga* and *gotliihhun*, respectively. It is worth pointing out that both adjectives refer to the head noun and not to the genitive complements (namely *gotes* and *Christes*). This fact is confirmed by the adjectival endings: *-a* for the singular, neutrum Nominative Case⁸⁶, *-un* for the feminine singular Genitive⁸⁷.

On the basis of the distributional properties of genitive arguments, Marzolla (1991) concludes that the prenominal genitive in High Old German may be licensed in a lower position of the nominal projection or alternatively in the highest DP layer. The derivations in (251) and (252) illustrate these patterns:

- (251) [_{DP} dhazs [_{FP} almahtiga [_{SpecNP} gotes [_N chiruni]]]] (adapted by Marzolla 1991)
ThisNOM almightyNOM GodGEN mistery
“God’s almighty mistery”

- (252) [_{DP} Siones_j [_{FP} ... [_{SpecNP} t_j [_N dohter]]]]
SionGEN daughter
“Sion’s daughter”

In the former case, the prenominal genitive co-occurs with determiners, while in the latter it is in complementary distribution with it⁸⁸. It should be noted that, while Modern German has lost the option (251) in favour of (252), the interlanguage grammar of Italian L2 learners of German seems to access such possible UG option even if neither are available in their L1 nor in the L2 input they were exposed to.

⁸⁶ If the adjective would refer to the genitive *gotes* it would agree with it bearing genitive Case as well.

⁸⁷ The gender of the adjective confirms that *gotliihhun* modifies the head *chiburdi* and not the genitive complement

⁸⁸ In Marzolla’s proposal, the prenominal genitive occupies the specifier position of NP where it is theta-marked and checks the case feature or it could eventually raise to SpecDP to check genitive case.

(255) *Le phral-es-ker-i romñi* (Boretzky 2000)
 theOBL.m.sg brotherOBL-GEN-f.NOM wife
 “the brother’s wife”

Interestingly, as noted by Boretzky (2000) and Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2000), there are Rom dialects where, in constructions like (255), the determiner shows agreement with the head noun and not with the genitive argument, as exemplified in (256):

(256) **I** phrales-k-i **romñi** (Boretzky 2000)
 theNOMf.sg brotherOBL-GEN.f.NOM wife
 “the brother’s wife”

I think that the peculiarity observed in prenominal possessive constructions in Sinte - and namely that the article agrees with the noun and not with the possessor (see example (255) vs. (256)) - could be related to the “adjectival” nature of the non-pronominal possessor.

I propose for (256) the representation in (257):

(257) $[_{DFin} I [_{SpecIP} \text{phraleski}_j [_{I, \dots} [_{FP} [_{SpecNP} t_j [_{NP} \text{romñi}]]]]]]]$

In the other case (255), it is plausible to assume that the determiner (*le*) belongs to the possessor DP, as exemplified in the derivation (258) below:

(258) $[_{SpecDFinP} \text{Le phral-es-ker-i} [_{SpecIP} t_j [_{I, \dots} [_{FP} [_{SpecNP} t_j [_{NP} \text{romñi}]]]]]]]$

Nevertheless, Boretzky points out that the option in (256) is not frequent across the Rom dialects and “*this must be taken to constitute a breakdown of the traditional system, since it is not found in dialects that can be characterised as well-preserved* (Boretzky 2000:41) ”.

3.2.1.4 Hungarian

Szabolcsi’s analysis (1987, 1994) on Hungarian possessive constructions is one of the most pioneering works on the syntax of noun phrases in a generative framework. Based on the assumption that in this language possessive constructions have sentence-like properties, Szabolcsi proposed that data on Hungarian possessor extraction can be analyzed in this light. For the sake of the discussion, I will concentrate only on basic patterns concerning the distribution of possessors and determiners.

One of the innovative aspects of Szabolcsi’s work is represented by the claim that the DP has a peripheral position – SpecDP – which serves as an escape hatch for possessor extraction, just like the peripheral position of the clause serves as an escape hatch for subject extraction. Furthermore, she argues that two different positions are available for possessors that occur only prenominal in this language. Szabolcsi’s examples in (259)a,b, and c illustrate this fact:

- (259)a [D a [Spec(N+I) Mari [(N+I) kalap-ja]
the MariNOM hat-POSS.3sg
“Mari’s hat”
- b [SpecDP Mari-nak_i [D a [Spec(N+I) t_i [(N+I) kalap-ja]
Mari-DAT the hat-POSS.3sg
- c *[SpecDP Mari [D a [Spec(N+I) t_i [(N+I) kalap-ja]
- d Péter-nek_i csak Mari látta [SpecDP t_i’ [D a [Spec(N+I) t_i [(N+I) kalap-ja -t]
Peter-DAT only Mari saw the hat-POSS.3sg.ACC
“As for Peter, only Mary saw his hat”

The dative possessor – the *-nak* possessor in (259)b– targets the higher position available in Hungarian DP. It can surface outside the noun phrases as well, as exemplified by (259)d. The nominative possessor – example (259)a – is licensed in a lower internal position of the nominal projection and it is always adjacent to the nominal head. In the former case, the dative possessor precedes the determiner (Poss-Det-N), in the latter the determiner precedes the possessor (Det-Poss-N). As noted by Szabolcsi (1994), the *-nak* possessor in (259)b is structurally and morphologically distinct from the nominative possessor. The ungrammatical construction in (259)c clearly shows that the structural position of *-nak* possessor is different from the nominative one. The crucial fact is represented by the different position of the two possessors with respect to the article *a(z)*. In fact, the article that precedes the nominative possessor does not (need to) belong to the possessor, but rather to the whole construction. Szabolcsi underlined the fact that Upper Tisza and Decebreceen dialects are unique, in that proper names do not take an article but, as possessors, they are preceded by a determiner:

- (260)a a János kalap-ja
the Janos-NOM hat-POSS.3sg
“Janos’s hat”

- b *János kalap-ja
- (261) a *a János isz-ik
the János(NOM) drink-3sg
- b János isz-ik
János(NOM) drink-3sg
„Janos drinks“

The author takes this contrast to mean that, at least in such examples, *a(z)* belongs to the whole possessive construction and is not part of the possessor.

3.2.1.5 Scandinavian Dialects

Before concluding this section, I would like to introduce some data on possessive constructions reported in Marit (2004), Svenonius (1993) and Holmberg & Sandström (1996).

In Swedish, the definite marker has two morphological realizations. As enclitic element that attaches to the head noun, like in (262)a, or as a free morpheme, like in the Double Definiteness Constructions exemplified in (262)b⁹³:

- (262)a bil-en
car-the
“the car”
- b den stora bil-en
the big car-the
“the big car”

The enclitic definite marker does not show up in possessive constructions:

- Standard Swedish
- (263) lärare-n-s bok (Holmberg & Sandström 1996)
teacher-DEF-POSS book
“The teacher’s book”

Contrary to Standard Swedish, in some northern varieties, the same construction appears with a the definite marker on the nominal head:

- Northern Swedish
- (264) Johan-s bok-en (Svenonius 1993)
Johan-POSS book-DEF
“John’s book”

⁹³ This pattern is characterised by the presence of two definite markers: the pronominal free morpheme *den* and the enclitic element *-en*.

of an “expletive determiner” in the determiner position) over the more “economic” one (filling the determiner position with a raised possessor).

3.2.2 Analyzing the Interlanguage Grammar of Group B

In Chapter 2, I have classified Group B performance as non-target like. Let us recall the main characteristics of L2 learners’ interlanguage grammar. The most striking result observed in this group is the discrepancy that emerged between simple and modified DPs as far as the position of BPN Poss is concerned. Hence, the pattern BPN Poss-N alternates with the one Det-AP-N-BPN Poss. The peculiarity of this performance relies on the postnominal position of BPN Poss in modified DP and, consequently, on determiner insertion only in this environment. These facts are shown by the examples from (269) to (270):

(269) Mario ruft [Giselas Lehrerin] an
„Mario phones Gisela’s teacher“

(270) Die Kinder schlafen [auf Erwins Bett]
„The children sleep on Erwin’s bed“

(271) Der Polizist sucht [die rote Tasche Ilses]
„The policeman is looking for the red bag of Ilse “

(272) Die Frauen lesen [den langen Brief Ingeborgs]
„The ladies are reading the long letter of Ingeborg “

As for the process of Second Language Acquisition, in Chapter 2 I have claimed that the presence of an attributive adjective acts as a trigger for the postnominal position of BPN Poss. Although the alternation BPNPoss-N/Det-AP-BPN Poss seems to reflect a peculiar L2 strategy, it would nevertheless be interesting to further investigate whether such a pattern reflects a UG option. Once again, data on Scandinavian definite DPs represents a useful starting point for looking in detail at the distributional properties of possessors, attributive adjectives and definite determiners. In the following, I will introduce some data on Norwegian possessive constructions described in Marit (2004) and Vangsnes (1999).

3.2.2.1 Norwegian Possessive Constructions

In Norwegian definite DPs, the presence of a prenominal modifier (APs, numerals or weak quantifiers) determines the insertion of an expletive prenominal determiner. Examples (273) a and b illustrate such a contrast:

(273)a skjort-a (Marit 2004)
 shirt-DEF.f.sg
 “the shirt”

b den gul-e skjort-a⁹⁴
 DEF.sg yellow-W shirt-DEF.f.sg
 “the yellow skirt”

The adjective in (273)b acts as intervener for the noun raising to the DP layer. As a consequence, an expletive article in D is then inserted. A similar strategy is at work in possessive constructions. Norwegian allows both prenominal and post-nominal possessors. Crucially, the prenominal position of possessors precludes the presence of the enclitic definite marker on the noun. All the examples in (274)a,b,c and (275)a,b,c illustrate this pattern:

(274)a mi bok (Vangsnes 1999)
 “my book”

b boka mi
 book-DEF my

c *mi boka

(275)a Pers bok
 “Per’s book”

b boka til Per
 book-DEF to Per

c *Pers boka

The same alternation holds in a possessive construction containing an attributive AP. The prenominal position of possessors precludes the insertion of both types of determiners:

(276)a min gamle hest (Vangsnes 1999)
 „my old horse“

c *min gamle hesten
 my old horse-DEF

d *den min gamle hesten
 the my old horse-DEF

⁹⁴ The prenominal determiner *den* agrees in gender/number with the noun, while the adjective shows up with a weak invariant inflection *-e*.

On the contrary, when the possessor occurs in postnominal position, both determiners occur⁹⁵:

(276)a den gamle hesten min
the old horse-DEF my

Let us briefly focus on the pattern in (276). According to Vangsnes (1999), the DP layer could be filled with the complex N(DEF), which raises to D. However, the presence of an attributive adjective blocks N-to-D movement. Hence, the “last resort” option is the insertion of an expletive determiner in D. As a consequence, the possessor is licensed in situ and surfaces in postnominal position.

3.2.2.2 Conclusions

Let us now turn back to L2 data and investigate whether the patterns observed in Norwegian Double Definiteness Constructions may provide some explanations for the Group B performance.

Data on Norwegian possessive constructions suggests that the alternation Poss-N/ Det-AP-N-Poss conforms to UG. When acquiring the morphosyntactic properties of German Saxon genitive constructions, L2 learners of Group B run into the “Norwegian option”: they license the possessors either in: (i) prenominal position. In this case, the determiner and the possessor do not co-occur; (ii) in postnominal position. In this particular case, as in Norwegian Double Definiteness Constructions, L2 learners adopt the “last resort option” to insert an expletive determiner⁹⁶.

⁹⁵ Vangsnes’ description of Norwegian data is restricted mainly to pronominal possessors. Nevertheless, he points out the fact the same line of reasoning holds for non-pronominal possessors in –s possessive constructions as well. According to him, the complementarity with definite articles follows under the account that both elements target SpecDP when licensed in prenominal position.

⁹⁶ In the interlanguage grammars of L2 learners of Group B, the “Norwegian option” of inserting the expletive determiner is restricted to possessive DPs containing an adjective. In my opinion, a way to account for such a pattern is to hypothesize that the AP blocks BPN Poss movement to the DP layer. Let us briefly consider the German possessive construction under investigation again:

(i) Ilse rote Tasche
IlseGEN redNOM/ACC bag
“Ilse’s red bag”

The prenominal and preadjectival position of BPN Poss in a possessive structure, like the one in (i), is grammatical in Modern German. This means that, on the basis of what is assumed so far on BPN Poss derivation inside the DP, possessor movement over prenominal APs conforms to locality condition, consistent with what proposed by Rizzi (2002) on the left periphery of the clause. Possessors and adjectives do not share the same categorial features, hence, they do not have the same categorial status. Whatever kind of movement BPN Poss undergoes during the derivation, an AP that intervenes between this element and its trace cannot function as antecedent for BPN Poss trace. Hence, BPN Poss movement over APs is then possible and the construction in (i) is grammatical.

3.3 Final Remarks

On the basis of the non-target patterns found in two L2 learners' groups of the SCT, I have revisited some works on the syntax of possessive constructions.

I concentrated my attention on the distribution of determiners, adjectives, possessors and nouns in definite possessive constructions. The main aim was to verify whether L2 learners' interlanguage grammar instantiate options available in other languages. Overall, the results of this investigation seem to suggest that the L2 productions reflect properties of UG. Although the L2 patterns found in Group B and C of the SCT are undoubtedly "triggered" by properties of the L1 grammar, the resulting interlanguage productions still represent grammatical options.

Furthermore, the cross-linguistic variation phenomena that emerged in the domain of possessive constructions confirm the existence of different surface positions for pronominal and non-pronominal possessors. In order to account for this variability, this fact suggests that an articulated DP structure, hosting a certain number of functional projections for the licensing of possessors, is desirable.

However, in the interlanguage grammar of L2 learners of Group B, the AP seems to act as intervener between BPN Poss and its trace. A way to give an account of this pattern, is to suppose that the pronominal BPN Poss with *-s* affix is analysed as an adjective element by the Italian L2 learners in analogy with the fact that possessive pronouns have such a categorial status in this language. As a consequence, the insertion of an attributive AP might block the movement of the possessor to the higher DP-layers.

Conclusion

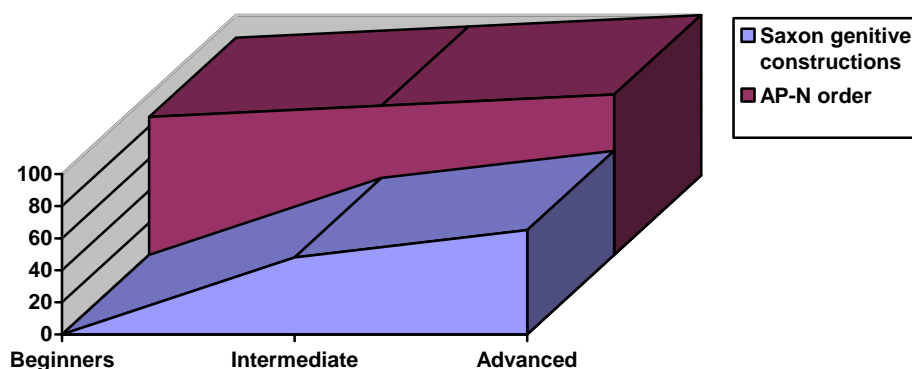
This study has focused on the acquisition of Saxon genitive constructions by 32 Italian adult L2 learners of German. The data I examined was collected by means of two experimental procedures: a Picture Description Task and a Sentence Completion Task. In Chapter 1, I introduced the different distribution of possessors and nouns in German and Italian possessive constructions and I have proposed that the mastery by Italian learners of the morphosyntactic properties at work in German Saxon genitive DPs implies the resetting of two parameters, namely: (i) BPN Poss Movement Parameter; (ii) NP Raising Parameter.

In Chapter 2, after a detailed description of the two experimental procedures, I focused on the data analysis. Overall, the results indicate that subjects are able to change the parametric values responsible for word order asymmetries between their L1 and the L2, such as the the different position of BPN possessors and nouns in possessive constructions. Furthermore, L2 learners capture the correlation between the prenominal position of nominal modifiers (BPN Poss and attributive APs) and the suppliance of inflectional morphology (i.e the –s affix on BPN Poss and the agreement morphology on attributive adjectives). The discussion of the results proposed in Chapter 2 leads to the following conclusions:

1. **The acquisition of Saxon genitive constructions by Italian L2 learners is characterized by a clear developmental path.** This fact is suggested by the data collected through the Picture Description Task. On the basis of the patterns that emerged, I intended a “three-step process” concerning the resetting of BPN Poss Movement Parameter: (i) an initial state, which reflects properties of the L1 grammar. L2 learners resort to possessive constructions available in their L1; (ii) an intermediate state, which is affected by a more variability as for the use of Saxon genitive DPs (iii) a final state, which reflects properties of the L2 grammar. L2 learners resort to Saxon genitive constructions as the favourite option for expressing the possession.

The same does not hold for NP Raising Parameter, whose resetting seems to be possible from earlier on. Figure 15 below illustrates the discrepancy found between the earlier production of AP-NP word order and the gradual use of Saxon genitive DPs by Italian learners:

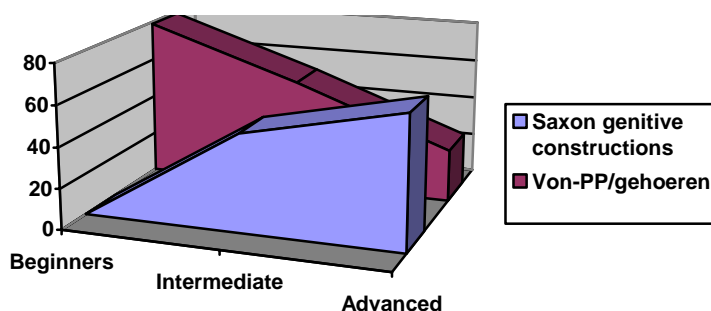
Figure 15: Picture Description Task - Comparison Between the Production of Saxon genitive constructions and AP-N Linear Order According to L2 Proficiency Level



I have proposed that a reason for such a dissociation may lie in the complexity of the syntactic derivation at work in BPN Poss Movement (a two-step derivation) with respect to NP raising and in the difficulty for L2 learners' computational system to process the former derivation with respect to the latter.

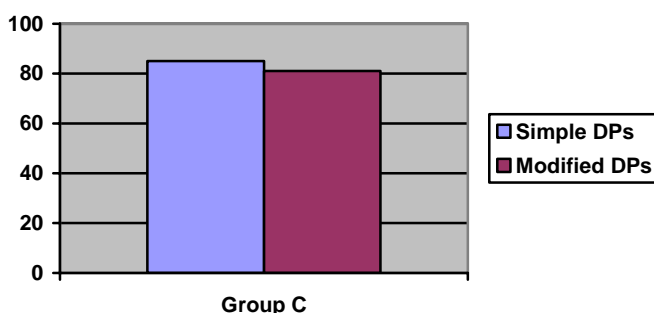
- L1 plays a role in the first stages of L2 acquisition.** L1 transfer may force L2 learners either to resort to possessive constructions only available in their L1 or, applying in a more selective way, to extend a property of Italian possessive constructions into the L2. In the former case, I found that the use of a case assigner for expressing the possession (*von*-PP/the verb *gehören*) prevails over Saxon genitive DPs during the first stages of acquisition, as illustrated by Figure 16 for the L2 learners participating in the Picture Description Task:

Figure 16: Picture Description Task - Types of Possessive Constructions Produced by L2 Learners According to Level of Proficiency



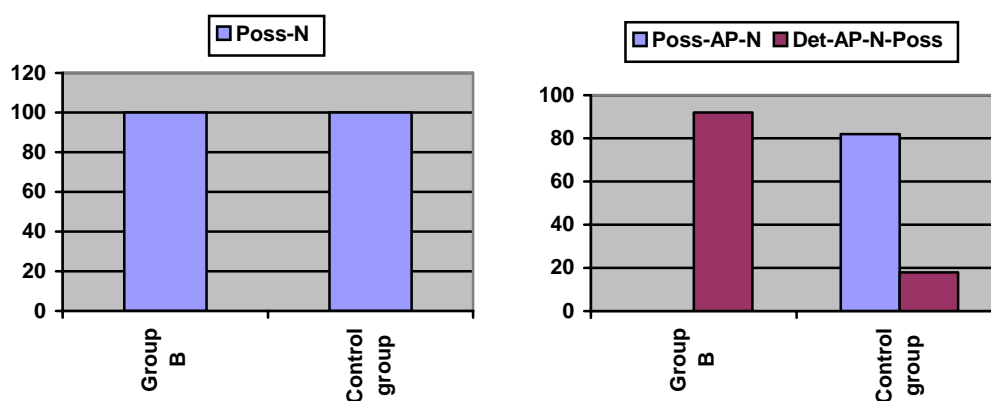
In the latter case, I found a tendency to insert the definite determiner when the BPN Poss is in prenominal position. Figure 17 exemplifies the pattern of the L2 learners identified as Group C of the Sentence Completion Task.

Figure 17: Sentence Completion Task – Co-occurrence Definite Determiner-Prenominal BPN Poss : Tendency Observed in Group C



3. **A stage of variability in word order as for the position of BPN Poss is attested.** The tendency has emerged in three L2 learners participating in the Sentence Completion Task, which has been identified in this study as the Group B. The pattern of this group reveals a discrepancy between simple and modified DPs as far as the position of BPN Poss is concerned: the prenominal position of BPN Poss in simple DPs alternates with the postnominal position of BPN Poss within DPs containing an attributive AP. Figure 18 illustrates this tendency:

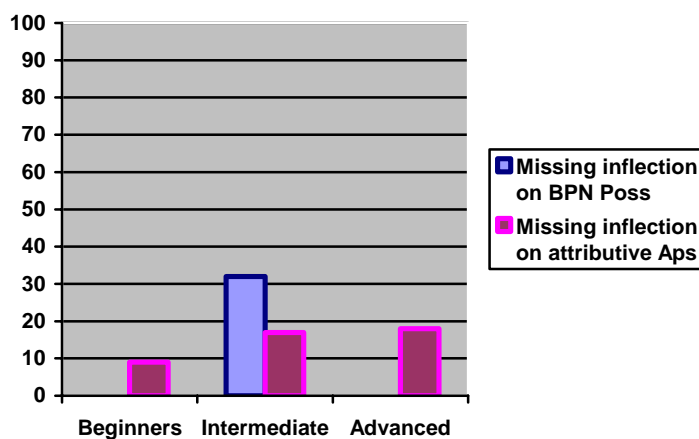
Figure 18: Sentence Completion Task – Pre- vs. Postnominal Position of BPN Poss: Discrepancy Emerged Between Simple and Modified DPs in Group B



Following the analyses on variability in L2 parameter resetting given by White (1990,1991), Hawkins (1993), Herschensohn (1998a), I propose that a way to account for this discrepancy is to assume that a parameter could be “partially” set to a new value during the course of L2 acquisition. As a consequence, L2 learners go through a stage during which they adopt the L2 value for BPN Poss Movement Parameter only in specific contexts (simple DPs) but not in others (modified DPs). Hence, they seem to master BPN Poss placement with respect to determiners but not with respect to attributive APs.

4. **The missing inflection on prenominal modifiers is a restricted phenomenon in the interlanguage grammars of Italian L2 learners of German**, as suggested by the results obtained through the Picture Description Task on the suppliance of inflectional morphology in this domain. I think that this data is not surprising in that knowledge of L2 adjectival agreement categories is available via L1 transfer in Italian L2 learners of German. Following Lardiere (1998a,b), Lardiere (2000) and Prévost and White (2000)a and b, I interpreted the residual phenomenon of missing inflection as a problem of mapping phi-features agreement into their particular morphological manifestation. Concerning this aspect, I found that accuracy on morphology suppliance increases considerably according to proficiency level only in case of BPN Poss. Figure 19 illustrates the comparison between missing inflection on BPN Poss and attributive APs⁹⁷:

Figure 19 – Missing Inflection on BPN Poss and Attributive APs:
Tendencies Observed According to Levels of Proficiency



I propose that a reason for such a dissociation may lie in an easier acquisition of invariable bound morphemes (-s affix) over variable bound ones (inflectional endings of the adjectival declension in German).

⁹⁷ Data on the omission of -s affix on BPN Poss is not available in the group of Beginners due to the fact that they never produce Saxon genitive constructions.

In the last Chapter, I propose that the L2 patterns described in (2) and (3) still reflect options made available by UG, as suggested by data on the distribution of determiners, possessors, adjectives and nouns in different languages. This fact also suggests that the incompleteness of parameter resetting observed in some L2 learners of this study can be taken as evidence for access to UG.

Finally, the observations developed here lead to the conclusion that in the process of Second Language Acquisition parameters cannot be reset in an “all or nothing manner”, but gradually⁹⁸. This is particularly evident during the so-called “intermediate stage” of L2 acquisition, during which L2 learners are trying to abandon the L1 value for a given parameter and, at the same time, they seem to “test” hypotheses about the L2 grammar. In my opinion, this stage represents an important domain of research in order to try to better understand the strategies adopted by L2 learners when dealing with a parametric variation. The present study offers only a first step in this direction and, at the same time, I hope it is a tempting suggestion for further research in this particular domain of nominal syntax.

⁹⁸ This is one of the central ideas of the *Constructionism Model* for Second Language Acquisition proposed by Herschensohn (1999). She argues that the stages of L2 acquisition include first L1 transfer, then an extended period of interlanguage development and a final state grammar. The extended period of interlanguage development – the Intermediate State in Herschensohn’s terms - is characterised by extensive variability due to the fact that the L2 learner has an incomplete morpholexicon and an incomplete syntax. During this stage, the L2 learner goes through a period of “parametric inconsistency” and his/her interlanguage grammar may suffer from lack of clustering effects.

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