

# Possessives in indefinite nominal phrases: A comparison between Italo-Romance and Daco-Romance<sup>1</sup>

GIUSEPPINA SILVESTRI

University of California, Los Angeles

## **Abstract**

Southern Italian dialects exhibit a peculiar morphosyntactic device in licensing possessives in non-definite noun phrases, i.e. the insertion of the functional element *de* followed by the definite article. This strategy shows striking similarities with the functional element A(-) employed in Romanian to introduce a possessive or a noun phrase marked as a genitive when it is not linearly preceded by a noun phrase marked as definite. This paper proves that an identical syntactic structure is detectable in both groups of varieties which stems from the definiteness requirements of the genitive.

**Key words:** genitive case, possessives, Italo-Romance, Daco-Romance, parametric syntax

## **1. Introduction: possessives and genitive case**

The morphosyntax of possessives in Italo-Romance varieties shows different patterns which are determined by the semantic-syntactic property of definiteness. For example, definiteness plays a crucial role in the distribution of enclitic possessives (Rohlf's 1969:§430, Salvi 2011:337, De Sisto & Torres-Tamarit in this volume). In Italo-Romance only the head nouns that are able to occupy the syntactic position (D) allow a cliticization of the possessives. The possessive itself can satisfy the definiteness requirements in that in some Italo-Romance varieties, like standard Italian, it lexicalizes the D position and acts as a definite determiner (Salvi 2011, Giusti 2016:553-554). The crucial role of definiteness and related features reveals itself even more if one observes the morphosyntactic behavior of possessives occurring in non-definite noun phrases. As observed for a number of Southern Italian dialects (Ledgeway 2009:263-266, Silvestri 2016, Massaro 2019), the realization of a possessive in a non-definite noun phrase requires a specific syntactic configuration which includes the functional element *de* and the definite article. The comparative assessment of the empirical evidence beyond Italo-Romance suggests a structural parallel between Southern Italian dialects and Daco-Romance, especially standard Modern Romanian, Old Romanian, and Aromanian. This paper is concerned with the syntactic puzzle of the possessives occurring in non-definite noun phrases in both Italo-Romance and Daco-Romance, which will be discussed within the framework of the parametric syntax of the noun phrase (Longobardi &

---

<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful for the punctual comments and helpful suggestions of two anonymous reviewers, thanks to which the first draft of this paper improved in many respects. I am also in debt with Ștefania Costea for discussing with me the Romanian data. However, I am the only responsible for any error or oversight the reader shall find.

Silvestri 2013, Longobardi *et al.* 2013a). After outlining the patterns of possessives attested in Italo-Romance (§2), I will describe the behavior of possessives in non-definite noun phrases (§3). The crucial evidence described for Italo-Romance will be juxtaposed with the Daco-Romance data (§3), so that the parallels between the two groups of varieties can be assessed comparatively and contrastingly (§4.2). A common underlying structure is proposed after presenting the theoretical background of the parametric syntax of the noun phrase (§5). A unifying structural account for Italo-Romance and Daco-Romance possessives in non-definite is put forward (§6) which aims to explain the employment of the same morphosyntactic strategy for focalized possessives in Southern Italian dialects (§6.2). Finally, the question about the structural similarity between Italo-Romance and Daco-Romance is addressed from a wider perspective and an explanation based on the interferences due to language contact between the Balkans and Southern Italy (Ledgeway *et al.* in press) is supported (§7).

One of the syntactic-semantic functions of adnominal possessives in Romance is the expression of possession, which is also conveyed through other strategies:

- (1) a. adnominal elements (possessives; 2a)  
b. *de*-phrases (2b)  
c. dative of possession (in restricted contexts; 2c)
- (2) a. Radu a citit cartea mea. (Romanian)  
Radu has read.PST.PTCP book.FSG.DEF POSS.1SG.FSG  
'Radu has read my book'
- b. Vi el coche del médico. (Castilian)  
saw.1SG the.MSG car of.the.MSG doctor  
'I have seen the doctor's car'
- c. Cette veste est à Marie / à moi. (French)  
this.FSG jacket.FSG is to Marie to me  
'This jacket is mine/Marie's'

Possessives and *de*-phrases may also encode other syntactic-semantic relations, i.e. Subject (=Agent) and Object (=Theme):<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> In some Spanish and Portuguese varieties, possessives can also correspond to other cases, like accusative or a range of oblique cases (Bouzouita & Salgado 2017, Marttinen Larsson & Bouzouita 2018, Bouzouita & Pato 2019, Casanova in this volume).

- (3) a. Marie a        acheté                    [son                premier roman]<sub>Possessor</sub>  
 Marie has        bought.PST.PTCT    POSS.3SG.MSG first.MSG novel.MSG  
 [de Fred Vargas.]<sub>Subject</sub>  
 of Fred Vargas  
 'Marie has bought her first novel by Fred Vargas.'
- b. [Il            tuo                    dipinto]<sub>Possessor</sub> [di Paolo]<sub>Object</sub>  
 the.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG painting.MSG   of Paolo  
 ci        commuove.  
 us=DO moves  
 'Your painting of Paolo moves us.'
- c. [vuestro        recuerdo]<sub>Subject</sub> [del            accidente]<sub>Object</sub>  
 POSS.2PL.MSG memory.MSG   of.the.MSG accident.MSG  
 me confunde.  
 me=confuses  
 'your memory of the accident confuses me.'

Therefore, adnominal possessives in Romance correspond to the overt realization within the DP of three main syntactic-semantic relations (Longobardi & Silvestri 2013, Silvestri 2013) and can behave as direct adnominal arguments (4 b, c):

- (4) a. possession (P)  
 b. internal thematic argument (O)  
 c. external thematic argument (S)

If a language realizes P, S, and O through the same form, this form corresponds to instances of the genitive case. This is the case of possessives in Romance languages:

- (5)    mes<sub>P,S,O</sub>            photographies (French)  
       POSS.1SG.FPL       photo.FPL  
       'my photos'

When within the same DP the two most common genitive configurations are found, i.e. the possessives and *de*-phrases (1a,b), the Possessor occupies the higher position in the structure followed by the Subject and, in turn, the Object (6,7):

- (6) Possessor > Subject > Object  
 (7) [mes photographies] [de Jean] (French)

- a. { P                    S    }  
 b. { P                    O    }  
 c. { S                    O    }

The entailments of the role of Possessor go beyond the mere reference to the individual that possesses or owns something. It also includes the concept of inalienable possession (e.g. if referred to kinship terms) and encodes other types of semantic relations between two nominals, like the reference of one to the other:

- (8) a. la situation éducative et sa complexité  
the.FSG situation.FSG educational.FSG and POSS.3SG.FSG complexity.FSG  
'the education condition and its complexity'
- b. una bottiglia [di vino rosso italiano]  
a.FSG bottle.FSG of wine.MSG red.MSG Italian.MSG  
'a bottle of Italian red wine'
- c. la hierba [[del jardín] del nuevo edificio ]  
the.FSG grass.FSG of.the.MSG garden.MSG of.the.MSG new.MSG building.MSG  
'the grass of the new building's garden'

This paper is centered on possessives, i.e. one the expressions of the genitive case, in Southern Italian dialects and in Romanian. In what follows the relevant empirical evidence is first assessed within the morphosyntactic map of possessives in *România*.

## 2. Patterns of possessives in Italo-Romance

The morphosyntax of possessives in Romance can be assessed according to two main axes of variation: (i) their syntactic distribution defines them either as determiners or adjectives; (ii) irrespective of their adjective-like or determiner-like nature, different patterns of phi-feature (gender and number) agreement with the referring nominal can be singled out (Longobardi *et al.* 2013b, Giusti 2016:553-554).<sup>3</sup>

Possessives function as determiners in expressing the definiteness of the whole noun phrase and rule out the overt realization of a definite determiner:

- (9) a. (\*1a) votre voiture (French)  
the.FSG POSS.2PL.FSG car.FSG  
'your car'
- b. (\*e1) tu libro (Castilian Spanish)  
the.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG book.MSG  
'your book'

The adjective-like syntactic distribution of possessives requires that the definiteness of the nominal phrase (hereinafter Determiner Phrase or DP), be expressed by the definite determiner:

---

<sup>3</sup> Possessives in Italo-Romance and in Romanian do not reflect the gender of their referent, i.e. the possessor, but are taken over by the agreement with the grammatical gender of their governing head noun (the *possessum*).

- (10) a.        la            mi            gatta (Tuscan, Pisa)  
               the.FSG POSS.1SG cat.FSG  
               ‘my cat’
- b.        el            teu            cor (Catalan)  
               the.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG heart.MSG  
               ‘your heart’

Partial (Castilian, French) or total (Catalan, Italian, European Portuguese, Romanian) matching of phi-features with the referring nominal can be observed in Romance. As shown in Table 1, the adjectival possessives fully agree with the Noun that represents the head noun of the nominal phrase in standard Italian (Std. It), European Portuguese (E. Ptg), Catalan (Cat), Romanian (Rom) and, among Central Italian dialects, Umbrian (Umbr).

French (Fr) and Spanish (Sp) exhibit a partial agreement (indicated with the symbol % in Table 1) resulting in syncretic forms, in that the former shows no gender distinction in the plural possessives and the latter neutralizes gender distinction both for the singular possessives and for the plural possessives. The Italo-Romance varieties at the bottom of the table (varieties from Tuscany (Tusc), Latium, Northern Calabria (N. Cal) and Sicily (Sic)) display no morphological agreement with the head noun.<sup>4</sup>

As only partially shown in Table 1, Italo-Romance displays a rich variation of possessives which needs to be further described. Possessives in Italo-Romance may behave as adjectives or not and may match in phi-features with the referring nominal or not. In what follows a classification of the main patterns detected in Italo-Romance are presented in details. The data discussed in this contribution have been collected by the author through consulting native speakers, unless otherwise indicated.

The evidence from Italo-Romance varieties provides five main patterns of possessive configurations, based on the syntactic distributional properties, the linear position with respect to the head noun and the semantic-syntactic property of the noun (Silvestri 2013, 2016).

---

<sup>4</sup> Some Southern Italian dialects distinguish gender and number on 1PL and 2PL possessives through phonetic alternation of the tonic vowel due to metaphony:

- i. nustrə            vs.    nòstrə (Northern Calabrian, Santa Maria del Cedro)  
    our.M.SG/PL    our.F.PL
- ii. vustrə           vs.    vòstrə  
    your.M.SG/PL    your.F.PL

Table 1. Agreement of possessives with referring head noun.

Variety	Agree	SG Head Noun		PL Head Noun	
		M	F	M	F
Std. It	Y	il tuo cane the.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG dog.MSG 'your dog'	la tua giacca the.FSG POSS.2SG.FSG jacket.FSG 'your jacket'	i tuoi cani the.MPL POSS.2SG.MPL dog.MPL 'your dogs'	le tue giacche the.FSG POSS.2SG.FPL jacket.FPL 'your jackets'
E. Ptg	Y	o teu cão the.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG dog.MSG 'your dog'	a tua jaqueta the.FSG POSS.2SG.FSG jacket.FSG 'your jacket'	os teus cães the.MPL POSS.2SG.MPL dog.MPL 'your dogs'	as tuas jaquetas the.FSG POSS.2SG.FPL jacket.FPL 'your jackets'
Cat	Y	el teu gos the.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG dog.MSG 'your dog'	la teva jaqueta the.FSG POSS.2SG.FSG jacket.FSG 'your jacket'	els teus gossos the.MPL POSS.2SG.MPL dog.MPL 'your dogs'	les teves jaquetas the.FSG POSS.2SG.FPL jacket.FPL 'your jackets'
Rom	Y	caînele tău dog.DEF.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG 'your dog'	jacheta ta jacket.DEF.FSG POSS.2SG.FSG 'your jacket'	caîinii tăi dog.DEF.MPL POSS.2SG.MPL 'your dogs'	jachete tale jacket.DEF.FPL POSS.2SG.FPL 'your jackets'
Fr	Y <sup>%</sup>	ton chien POSS.2SG.MSG dog.MSG 'your dog'	ta veste POSS.2SG.FSG jacket.FSG 'your jacket'	tes chiens POSS.2SG.MPL dog.MPL 'your dogs'	tes vestes POSS.2SG.FPL jacket.FPL 'your jackets'
Spa	Y <sup>%</sup>	tu libro POSS.2SG.SG book.MSG 'your book'	tu chaqueta POSS.2SG.SG jacket.FSG 'your jacket'	tus libros POSS.2SG.PL dog.MPL 'your books'	tus chaquetas POSS.2SG.PL jacket.FPL 'your jackets'
Umbr	Y	er libbro tuo the.MSG book.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG 'your book'	la giacca tua the.FSG jacket.FSG POSS.2SG.FSG 'your jacket'	i libbri tui the.MPL book.MPL POSS.2SG.MPL 'your books'	le giacche tue the.FPL jacket.FPL POSS.2SG.FPL 'your jackets'
Tusc	N	il/ir tu libro the.MSG POSS.2SG book.MSG 'your book'	la tu giacca the.FSG POSS.2SG jacket.FSG 'your jacket'	i tu libri the.MPL POSS.2SG book.MPL 'your books'	le tu giacche the.FPL POSS.2SG jacket.FPL 'your jackets'
Latium	N	lu libbrø tea the.MSG book.MSG POSS.2SG 'your book'	la giacchetta tea the.FSG jacket.FSG POSS.2SG 'your jacket'	li libbri tea the.MPL book.MPL POSS.2SG 'your books'	le giacchette tea the.FPL jacket.FPL POSS.2SG 'your jackets'
N. Cal	N	u libbrø tua the.MSG book.MSG POSS.2SG 'your book'	a giacchetta tua the.FSG jacket.FSG POSS.2SG 'your jacket'	i libbrø tua the.PL book.MPL POSS.2SG. 'your books'	i giacchetø tua the.PL jacket.FPL POSS.2SG 'your jackets'
Sic	N	u to libbru the.MSG POSS.2SG book.MSG 'your book'	a to giacca the.FSG POSS.2SG jacket.FSG 'your jacket'	to libbri the.MPL POSS.2SG book.MPL 'your books'	i to giacchi the.FPL POSS.2SG jacket.FPL 'your jackets'

## 2.1 Pattern A: Determiner-Possessive-Noun

This pattern is found in Italo-Romance (including standard Italian) and is given when the head noun is a common noun, a kinship term (singular/plural (11d) or plural only (11b)) or a proper name:

- (11) a. *il mio amico* (standard Italian)  
the.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG friend.MSG  
'my friend'  
b. *le sue sorelle*  
the.FPL POSS.3SG.FPL sister.FPL  
'his / her sisters'  
c. *la mia Francesca*  
the.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG Francesca  
'my Francesca'

Possessives may overtly agree in phi-features with the noun (11) or express invariable morphology (12):

- (12) a. *il mi amiho / la mi amiha* /  
the.MSG POSS.1SG friend.MSG the.FSG POSS.1SG friend.FSG  
*i mi amisci / le mi amihe* (Tuscan, Pisa)  
the.MPL POSS.1SG friend.MPL the.FPL POSS.1SG friend.FPL  
'my male friend, my female friend, my male friends, my female friends'  
b. *la me seddza / i me seddji*  
the.FSG POSS.1SG chair.FSG the.PL POSS.1SG chair.FPL  
'my chair' (Sicilian, Camporeale; Manzini & Savoia 2005:553-554)  
c. *ir mi cognato, le mi zie* (Tuscan, Livorno)  
the.MPL POSS.1SG brother-in-law the.FPL POSS.1SG aunt.PL  
'my brother-in-law, my aunties'

Pattern A is more frequent among Northern Italian dialects, Tuscan and Corsican varieties, Gallurese, and 'Extreme' Italian dialects such as Southern Calabrian and most Sicilian (Silvestri 2013).

## 2.2 Pattern B: Noun-Possessive

Pattern B arises in those cases in which the DP does not show a definite determiner, but a specific head noun followed by the possessive. The head noun corresponds to proper names (13a), common names syntactically behaving like proper names (e.g. *casa* 'house/home'; 14 b,c) and colloquial kinship terms both in argumental (13 d,e) and non-argumental (13f) function:

- (13) a. Francesca mia < la mia Francesca (standard Italian)  
 Francesca POSS.1SG.FSG the.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG Francesca  
 'my Francesca'
- b. casa mia < la mia casa  
 house.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG the.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG house.FSG  
 'my house / home'
- c. camera mia < la mia camera  
 room.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG the.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG room.FSG  
 'my room'
- d. papino mio < il mio papino  
 daddy POSS.1SG.MSG the.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG daddy  
 'my daddy'
- e. mamma mia < la mamma mamma  
 mommy POSS.1SG.FSG the.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG mommy  
 'my mommy'
- f. Zietta nostra! / Nonnino mio!  
 auntie POSS.1PL.FSG grandpa POSS.1SG.MSG  
 'Our dear auntie!'/ 'My dear grandpa!'

From a structural point of view, Pattern B can be conceived as a pattern derived from Pattern A, i.e. the result of the syntactic movement of the noun to the D position (Longobardi 1994):

- (14) [D  $\bar{D}$  [Gen [ (Adj) [Gen POSS [N N ] ] ] ] ] => N-to-D movement

Originally, the head noun occupies a lower position in the DP, virtually coinciding with its base-position. Pattern B is obtained through the movement of the head noun from its original position to D, i.e. the position of the DP responsible for conveying definiteness and other related features, and in Romance it is usually lexicalized through the definite article.

### 2.3 Pattern C: Possessive-Noun

Pattern C reflects a DP where there is no definite article and the possessive precedes the head noun. If adjectives occur, they follow the head noun (15).

In Italo-Romance, Pattern C is found when the head noun is a singular kinship term:

- (15) a. mio (\*alto) zio (alto), mia (\*simpatico) cugina  
 POSS.1SG.MSG uncle tall.MSG POSS.1SG.FSG cousin.FSG  
 (simpatica) (standard Italian)  
 nice.FSG  
 'my tall uncle', 'my nice cousin'
- b. sua (\*francese) zia (francese), mio (\*biondo) cugino  
 POSS.3SG.FSG aunt French.SG POSS.1SG.MSG cousin.MSG  
 (biondo)  
 blond.MSG  
 'my French aunt', 'my blond cousin'



This pattern is attested in standard Italian as well as some Central Italian varieties. In Romance Pattern C is also attested in Castilian:

- (16) a. (\*el) mi gato blanco malcriado (Castilian Spanish)  
the.MSG POSS.1SG cat.MSG white.MSG naughty.MSG  
‘my naughty white cat’  
b. (\*las) sus amigas italianas guapas  
the.FPL POSS.3SG.PL friend.FPL Italian.FPL cool.FPL  
‘her / his cool Italian friends’

Structurally, Pattern C can be seen as derived from Pattern A, insofar as results from a configuration where the possessive is merged in the D position and the head noun can raise over the adjectives (17). In this resulting structure, the possessive behaves as a definite determiner:

- (17) [D  $\bar{D}$  [<sub>Gen</sub> [(Adj) [<sub>Gen</sub> POSS [N N ] ] ] ] ] F
- 

One of the dimensions of variation concerned with this pattern is the base-position of the possessive, which depends on what type of genitive the possessive is licensing. More specifically, as shown in Longobardi & Silvestri (2013), two functional positions for genitives can be identified within the internal fine-grained structure of the DP, one being pre-adjectival ( $Gen\alpha$ ) and the other post-adjectival ( $Gen\beta$ ). Each language can exhibit one or both or neither, as viable parametric choices (Longobardi & Silvestri 2013, Crisma *et al.* in press).

#### 2.4 Pattern D: Determiner-Noun-Possessive

Pattern D describes a DP configuration where the definiteness is overtly expressed through the definite determiner and the possessive follows the head noun. It corresponds to a resulting linear order, which is obtained from the noun raising over the possessive:

- (18) a. la kamiʃa meʃa / teʃa / (Vastogirardi, Isernia; Manzini &  
the.FSG shirt.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG / POSS.2SG.FSG / Savoia 2015 III:557-8)  
seʃa / noʃtra / voʃtra  
POSS.3SG.FSG / POSS.1PL.FGS / POSS.2PL.FSG  
‘my shirt, your shirt, her/his shirt, our shirt, your shirt’  
b. u kenə meʃə (Molfetta, Bari; *ibid.*)  
the.MSG dog.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG  
‘my dog’  
c. su kane meu (Siniscola, Nuoro; *ibid.*)  
the.MSG dog.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG  
‘my dog’

In Italo-Romance Pattern D is found in non-standard varieties only, including Central and Southern dialects and regional varieties, and some Sardinian and Sicilian varieties too. It is also attested in Gallo-Romance spoken in Calabria:

- (19) u ves mevə (Guardia P., Cosenza; *ibid.*)  
 the.MSG dog.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG  
 ‘my dog’

From a comparative perspective, Romanian possessives exhibit Pattern D, in that they usually occur postnominally (20a). Under certain conditions, the possessive can also occur prenominal, like in (20b) where it follows the prenominal adjective:

- (20) a. copilul meu (/ lui / ei) (Romanian; Dindelegan 2013:338)<sup>5</sup>  
 child.MSG.DEF POSS.1SG.MSG POSS.3SG.MSG POSS.3SG.FSG  
 ‘my / his / her child’  
 b. frumoasa mea (/ lui / ei) prietenă  
 beautiful.FSG.DEF POSS.1SG.FSG POSS.3SG.MSG POSS.3SG.FSG friend.FSG  
 ‘my / his / her beautiful friend’ (*ibid.*)  
 c. coperta cărții mele (Dindelegan 2013:337)  
 cover.FSG.DEF book.FPL.GEN.DEF POSS.1SG.GEN.FPL  
 ‘the cover of my book’

Some Southern Italian dialects and Romanian show the same morphosyntactic pattern for possessives in that possessives behave as adjectives. Romanian possessives agree in gender, number and case (20c) with the head noun (cf. fn. 3), whereas possessives in Southern Italian dialects do not always display this possibility (Table 1). The crucial analogies between Southern Italian dialects and Romanian concern Pattern E (§ 2.5) as well as more crucially the insertion of a possessive in a non-definite DP (§ 4.2).

## 2.5 Pattern E: Noun-*enclitic* Possessive

This pattern refers to the behavior of the enclitic possessives (Salvi 2011:337) and their distributional constraints. Enclitic possessives almost exclusively occur if the head noun is represented by a closed list of singular kinship(-like) terms, nouns denoting close social relations, and nouns like ‘home, house’, i.e. terms that denote an inalienable possession or a possession so perceived. The enclitic possessives are mostly found in first and second person, although they are also sparsely attested in the third singular person (21 b,c) as well as the first and the second plural person (Ledgeway 2016:258). Also, empirically an implication appears to hold that if a variety has the third singular person of the possessive, then it exhibits the first two

<sup>5</sup> The adjectival possessives of 3<sup>rd</sup> persons (both singular and plural) are expressed through the genitive of the personal pronoun: *lui* ‘his’, *ei* ‘her’ and *lor* ‘their’. They express the gender of their antecedent, i.e. the *possessor* (Dindelegan 2013:336).

singular persons (Silvestri 2013). Consistently with the nature of clitics, the enclitic possessives are phonetically reduced with the (final) vowel often being centralized in schwa (see De Sisto & Torres-Tamarit in this volume). Morphologically they are invariable with respect to gender and number and, therefore, cannot show any morphological agreement with the head noun (21a):

- (21) a. pàtta, màm̃m̃əta, zìjəta (Northern Calabrian, S. Maria del Cedro)  
 father-POSS.2SG, mom-POSS.2SG, aunt / uncle-POSS.2SG  
 'your father, your mother, your aunt / uncle'
- b. patrəma, patəta, patrəsa (Central Calabrian, Pazzano)  
 father-POSS.1SG father-POSS.2SG father-POSS.3SG  
 'my father, your father, her / his father'
- c. m̃auma, m̃amm̃ita, m̃amm̃isa (Central Calabrian, *ibid.*)  
 mom-POSS.1SG mom-POSS.2SG mom-POSS.3SG  
 'my mom, your mom, her / his mom'
- d. cassəmə, comb̃ərəmə (Apulia, Bari; Andriani p.c.)  
 house-POSS.1SG buddy-POSS.1SG  
 'my house, your house, my buddy'

Pattern E is widespread across several Central and Southern Italian dialects. Some of the kinship terms that hold an enclitic possessive also allow a non-enclitic possessive:

- (22) a. mamməma, mamma mija  
 mom-POSS.1SG mom POSS.1SG.FSG  
 'my mom' (Northern Calabrian, Papisidero; Garzonio & Russo 2009:91)
- b. cugginəmu, cugginu miju (Northern Calabrian, Papisidero; *ibid.*)  
 'cousin- POSS.1SG cousin POSS.1SG.MSG  
 'my cousin'

The characterization of Pattern E also captures the morphosyntactic behavior of the series of enclitic possessives in Romanian, which like in Southern Italian dialects attach to head nouns that denote kinship and social relations. Unlike the relevant Italo-Romance varieties, the enclitic possessives in Romanian display a rich morphological exponence and agree with the head noun:

- (23) a. soră-ta, nevastă-sa (Romanian; Dindelegan 2013:341)  
 sister.FSG-POSS.2SG.FSG wife-POSS.3SG.FSG  
 'your sister, your wife'
- b. tac- su  
 father-POSS.3SG.MSG (Romanian; *ibid.*)  
 'her / his father'

From a structural point of view, Pattern E is the result of the head noun moving to the D position to convey definiteness, as witnessed by the fact that neither in

Southern Italian dialects nor in Romanian a definite determiner can occur and, at the same time, no indefinite article can appear (24).<sup>6</sup>

- (24) a. \*a / \*na zijə- ta (Northern Calabrian, Verbicaro)  
the.FSG a.FSG aunt-POSS.2SG  
‘your aunt’  
b. \*o mamă-sa (Romanian; Dindelegan 2013:342)  
a.FSG mom-POSS.3SG.FSG  
‘her / his mom’

The DPs hosting an enclitic possessive correspond to definite descriptions. Given the semantic nature of the selection upon the head noun, the cliticization of the possessive in Italo-Romance ought to be considered as a non-productive mechanism (Silvestri 2013).

In what follows I am going to focus on the non-clitic type of possessives, which I shall refer to as strong possessives. All the Italo-Romance varieties that avail themselves of the enclitic possessive included in Pattern E (§2.1.5), also present the strong type of possessives. Such possessives, that are involved in the underived Pattern A (§2.1.1) and Pattern D (§2.1.4), exhibit a peculiar behavior when occurring in a non-definite DP.

### 3. Possessives in indefinite DPs in Italo-Romance

In some Italo-Romance varieties adnominal possessives, when occurring within indefinite DPs exhibit a different syntactic behavior with respect to possessives in definite DPs. In indefinite DPs possessives have to be licensed through an additional structural device, that we call here ‘*de*-phrase’, i.e. an extra layer of syntactic structure introduced by the element *de* and its allomorphs (25). The same configurations characterizing the possessives in DPs headed by an indefinite determiner are also displayed if the DPs are introduced by numeral quantifiers (including ‘one’) and by demonstratives:

- (25) a. nu canə r-u miə (Northern Calabrian, Aieta)  
a.MSG dog.MSG of-the.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG  
‘a dog of mine’  
b. tre casi r-i sui  
three house.FPL of-the.PL POSS.3SG.PL  
‘three houses of hers / his’  
c. sa machina r-a tua  
this.FSG car.FSG of-the.FSG POSS.2SG.FSG  
‘this car of yours’

The *de*-phrase, which has to include the definite article (i.e. definite determiner, DefD), represents the necessary device for the possessive to be licensed as a

---

<sup>6</sup> A very similar, and yet not identical, syntactic movement is assumed for Pattern B.

Genitive Phrase (GenP). I assume that the DefD represents a further syntactic element, i.e. a DP:

(26) [*de*<sub>[DP DefD [<sub>GenP Possessive</sub> ] ] ]</sub>

Across Italo-Romance three types of genitival phrases embedding a possessive can be identified:

- (27) i. the head noun is plural and occurs within the *de*-phrase; the DefD and the possessive agrees with the head noun (28);  
 ii. the head noun is singular and occurs before the *de*-phrase, whereas the DefD is plural and the possessive may agree with the DefD (29);  
 iii. the head noun is singular or plural and occurs before the *de*-phrase, and DefD agrees in gender and number with the head noun; the possessive may agree too (30).
- (28) a. due dei miei figli (standard Italian)  
 two of.the.MPL POSS.1SG.MPL sons  
 'two of my sons'
- b. unu d i: fiłłi mia (Northern Calabria, San Marco A.; Manzini & Savoia 2005, III:749)  
 one.MSG of the.PL sons POSS.1SG  
 'one of my sons'
- c. n aṭru d i: fiłłi mia  
 another.MSG of the.PL sons POSS.1SG  
 'another one of my sons'
- (29) a. na giacchetta d-i mija (Northern Calabrian, Santa Maria del Cedro)  
 a.FSG jacket.FSG of-the.PL POSS.1SG  
 'a jacket of mine'
- b. nu fiłłu d i: mia (Northern Calabrian, S. Marco A.; Manzini & Savoia 2005, III:750)  
 a.MSG son of-the.PL POSS.1SG  
 'a son of mine'
- (30) a. na giacchetta d-a mija (Northern Calabrian and Southern Lucanian)  
 a.FSG jacket.FSG of-the.FSG POSS.1SG  
 'a jacket of mine'
- b. su figghjə d-u tua  
 this.MSG son of-the.MSG POSS.2SG  
 'this book of yours'
- c. tre casi d-i tua  
 three house.FPL of-the.PL POSS.2SG  
 'three houses of yours'
- d. Quissə su cartə d-i sua.  
 this.FPL are.3SG paper.FPL of-the.PL POSS.3SG  
 'These are some of her / his sheets.'

The configurations in (28) convey a partitive reading whereby the element 'son' corresponds to a member of a set including other identical members which denote the referent 'son' (son  $\subseteq$  sons).

The configuration in (29) generally entails a partitive reading as the preferred option by native speakers. However, based on the judgements of native speakers, it is also the case that the head noun does not refer to an element which belongs to a set of identical elements. It may also denote only a non-specific individual element.

In other words, the plurality encoded by the morphological number of the DefD does not always convey a semantic plurality: speakers may utter (29a) even if the possessed jacket is only one in the universe of the discourse. The grammatical number expressed through the morphological exponence does not strictly reflect the semantic interpretation: such mismatch between the morphological exponence and the semantic value of number proves that the agreement between the DefD and the head noun (or the lack thereof) is the result of structural relations between the GenP and the DP in which it occurs. The cases in (30) can all be interpreted by native speakers as straightforward non-partitive cases: the DPs refer to only one (30 a,b) or three (30c) or some (30d) non-specific individual.

In certain Southern Italian dialects of the 'Lausberg Area', which corresponds to a strip encompassing Northern Calabria and Southern Basilicata, the configuration described in (27iii), exemplified in (30) and abstractly represented in (31) is the only possible strategy for licensing possessives if embedded in indefinite DPs. The omission of the *de*-phrase and the definite article results in an ungrammatical outcome (32):

(31) [DP D N [*de* [DP DefD [GenP Possessive ] ] ] ]

- (32) a. \*na giacchetta mija (Northern Calabrian, Santa Maria del Cedro)  
a.FSG jacket.FSG POSS.1SG  
'a jacket of yours' (intended)  
b. \*tre casi tua  
three house.FSG POSS.2SG  
'three houses of yours' (intended)  
c. \*su parèntə tua  
this.MSG relative POSS.2SG  
'this relative of yours' (intended)

Based on this evidence, a question arises on the occurrence of this peculiar syntactic configuration concerning possessives in indefinite DPs in other Romance varieties. The answer is positive and is represented by Daco-Romance, which shows similar morphosyntactic patterns for possessives.

#### 4. Parallels between Southern Italian Dialects and Romanian

In this section the structural similarities holding between Southern Italian dialects and Daco-Romance will be highlighted concerning the morphosyntactic behavior of possessives in indefinite DPs. I will assess the relevant data from Romanian, Aromanian and Old Romanian and discuss the relevant emerging patterns through a comparison with Italo-Romance in order to evaluate whether a syntactic structure like the one proposed in (31) can be also detected for Daco-Romance possessives.



element intervenes between the definite DP and the genitive phrase or the DP is indefinite:

- (37) a. Am venit la petrecere cu prietenul ăla  
 have.1SG come.PPT to party with friend.MSG.DEF DEF.DET  
 frumos al meu.  
 beautiful.MSG A.MSG POSS.1SG.MSG  
 'I came to the party with my friend, the beautiful one.'  
 b. Niște prieteni ai mei sunt Americani.  
 some friend.MPL A.MPL POSS.1SG.MPL be.PRS.IND.3SG American.MPL  
 'Some friends of mine are American.'

The functional element A(-) is regularly attested since the early stages of Romanian, where it functions as a genitive licenser within indefinite DPs:

- (38) a. un mădulariu al tău (Giurgea 2015:159)  
 a.MSG member.MSG A.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG  
 'a member of yours'  
 b. în multă silă a sa  
 in much.FSG power.FSG A.FSG POSS.3SG.FSG  
 'in much of your power'

In Aromanian<sup>8</sup> A(-) marks all Genitive phrases, irrespective of the syntactic constraint of adjacency between the definite suffix and the genitive phrase (Androutsopoulou 1996, Franco *et al.* 2013, Manzini *et al.* 2014, Manzini & Savoia 2017) and always agrees with the genitive noun:

- (39) a. mən-a o fitʃor-u / ali fət-i / (Manzini & Savoia 2017:122)  
 hand.FSG.DEF A.MSG boy.DEF / A.FSG girl.GEN.DEF /  
 ali məʎer-i  
 A.FSG woman.GEN.DEF  
 'the boy's hand, the girl's hand, the woman's hand'  
 b. nipótul a viținîl'ei  
 nephew.MSG.DEF A.FSG neighbour.GEN.FSG.DEF  
 'the neighbour woman's nephew'  
 c. nepotul ali viținî<sup>9</sup>  
 nephew.MSG.DEF A.FSG neighbour.GEN.FSG.DEF  
 'the (female) neighbour's nephew'

#### 4.2 Genitive in indefinite DPs in Italo-Romance and Romanian

Southern Italian dialects (SIDs) and Romanian display the same mechanism of possessivization, in that possessives correspond to the adnominal genitive

<sup>8</sup> Aromanian is a Daco-Romance variety spoken in a number of localities in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Republic of Macedonia and Serbia as well as some villages in Romania.

<sup>9</sup> This configuration is specific to Farsherot, an Aromanian variety spoken in Epirus (Manuela Nevaci p.c.).



expressing the semantic role of Possessor<sup>10</sup> (§2). Southern Italian dialects and Romanian equally require a comparable syntactic device to license possessive: the former insert the complex represented by *de*-phrase+definite article and the latter requires the element A(-). Both these structures are endowed with morphology that phi-agrees with the DP. In Romanian A(-) shows morphological exponence (40a) that allows it to fully agree with the head noun (i.e. the *possessum*; 41). Similarly, in SIDs the element *de* welds together with the definite article into a portmanteau form (40b) that is able to show morphological agreement (42):

- (40) a. a, al, ai, ale  
 A.DEF.FSG A.DEF.MSG A.DEF.MPL A.DEF.FPL  
 b. d-a, d-u, d-i  
 de-the.FSG de-the.MSG de-the.F / M.PL
- (41) a. o jachetă a mea [-partitive] (Romanian)  
 a.FSG jacket.FSG A.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG  
 'a jacket of mine'  
 b. o jachetă de-a mea [±partitive]  
 a.FSG jacket.FSG de-A.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG  
 'a jacket of mine'  
 c. o jachetă de-ale mele [+partitive]  
 a.FSG jacket.FSG de-A.FPL POSS.1SG.FPL  
 'a jacket of mine'
- (42) a. na giacchetta d-a mija [-partitive] (Northern Calabrian, Verbicaro)  
 a.FSG jacket.FSG de-the.FSG POSS.1SG  
 'a jacket of mine'  
 b. na giacchetta d-i mija [±partitive]  
 a.FSG jacket.FSG de-the.PL POSS.1SG  
 'a jacket of mine'

Striking parallels can be observed through the comparison between the possessive licensing in Romanian and in SIDs. In (42a) the DefD agrees in gender and number with the head noun of the indefinite DP, and so does the element A(-) in (41a). The agreement also involves the possessives in Romanian, which are morphologically able to agree in gender and number with the referring nominal. In the Northern Calabrian varieties represented in (42) the possessives have invariant forms for gender and number. An apparent difference between Romanian and SIDs emerges in the expression of the partitive that, in Romanian, involves the insertion of the

<sup>10</sup> Possessives in Romanian also are assigned S and O thematic roles (§2):

- i. dormitul meu ore întregi (*meu*=S=Agent; Dindelegan 2013:340)  
 sleeping.MSG.DEF POSS.1SG.MSG hours full  
 'my annoyingly long sleeping'
- ii. susținerea mea / sa de către parteneri  
 (ma/sa=O=Theme)  
 supporting.FSG.DEF POSS.1SG.FSG/POSS.3SG.FSg by partners.MPL  
 'the partners supporting me / him' (lit. my / his supporting by my / his partners')

dedicated preposition *de* ‘of, among’.<sup>11</sup> Contrastingly, SIDs employ the element *de*, that historically comes from the same source of the Romanian preposition *de* (i.e. the Latin preposition *DE*)<sup>12</sup>, in two different configurations, i.e. the licensing of the possessive in an indefinite DP and the proper partitive. Arguably, in SIDs *de* represents two different homophonous elements: (1) one *de* corresponds to one of the two components of the syntactic structure required to insert the possessives in indefinite DPs, the other component being the definite article (42a); the other *de* is the preposition is employed to mark the partitive (42b) and corresponds to the Romanian *de* (41 b,c). The optional interpretation available in Romanian in cases like (41b) is not surprising if one considers the function of *de* in the history of this language: in Old Romanian *de* functioned also as a genitive case mark (Dindelegan 2013:457). As sketched in §3, cases like (42b) are interpreted preferentially as partitive by native speakers. However, it can also be the case that the head noun denotes only a non-specific individual and the plurality encoded by the GenP does not convey a semantic plurality: speakers may utter (42b) even if the possessed jacket is only one. The availability of these two readings for the same string might be due to the two distinct functions of *de*, which in Italo-Romance represents the partitive preposition as well as a component of the syntactic structure which licenses the possessive.

### 4.3 Interim summary

Given the language-specific definiteness requirements discussed in §3 and §4.1-2, possessives in Modern Romanian, Old Romanian, and Aromanian are licensed through the same specific mechanism, i.e. the insertion of the functional element A(-). A strikingly similar strategy is employed by SIDs, i.e. the occurrence of *de*-phrase+definite article. Some differences hold between the Daco-Romance and the Italo-Romance configurations. First, they show a different distribution, in that the phrases headed by A(-) in Romanian can occur in DP-initial position, a position forbidden in SIDs (43c):

- (43) a. al            cărei            frate... (Giurgea 2015:156)  
           A.MSG    who.GEN.FSG brother  
           ‘whose brother...’  
       b. al            nostru  
           A.MSG    POSS.1PL.MSG  
           ‘ours’  
       c. \*d-a            tua            a            terra  
           of-the.FSG    POSS.2SG the.FSG land  
           ‘your land’ (intended)

Also, A(-) and the *de*-phrase+definite article might have followed a different development from Latin. While in SIDs the portmanteau forms *d-u/d-a/d-i* come

<sup>11</sup> Other prepositions, i.e. *dintre* and *din*, are employed in Romanian in the expression of partitives (Dindelegan 2013:113, 281).

<sup>12</sup> Ernout & Thomas (1959:212).

from Latin *DE* welding with the definite determiner (originated by Latin *ILLE*), the origin of the Romanian *A(-)* is less transparent. *A(-)* can be traced back to pronominal from *ILLE* (Meyer-Lübke 1893, Ivănescu 1980 a.o.). Alternatively, an etymology including the preposition *AD* can be put forward (Meyer-Lübke 1930, Rosetti 1986 a.o.).

The *de*-phrase and the element *A(-)* also exhibit common properties. Both are required with indefinite DPs, including bare head nouns. According to Giurgea (2015), *A(-)* is an outcome of Latin *ILLE*. This hypothesis is supported by the evidence that shows that a process of reanalysis occurred and *A(-)*, from being in origin a definite morpheme, became a licenser of genitive case: such change first took place in DPs hosting possessives (Giurgea 2015:175-8). I adopt this view, according to which *A(-)* is the outcome of Latin *ILLE* and, therefore, keeps all the properties of pronominal determiner. One piece of evidence that supports this interpretation is that in Romanian the element *A(-)* can cooccur with the preposition *de* (41 b,c).<sup>13</sup> Such cooccurrence can be hardly explained as a cluster of two prepositions (i.e. *de* < *DE* + *a* < *AD*) which, among their many functions, also mark oblique cases across Romance. Thus, the prepositional nature is ascribable to *de* but not to *A(-)*. This does not undermine the possibility that the syntax of possessives in SIDs as well as Romanian share fundamental licensing properties also from a historical perspective.

I, therefore, assume that the structure licensing the possessives in Southern Italian dialects and in Romanian is the same, with the exception of the element *de-* that only occurs in the former. Such structure can be represented as follows:

(44) [(*de*) [<sub>DP</sub> DefD [<sub>GenP</sub> Possessive ] ] ]

Based on (44) I propose a unifying interpretation for the *de*-phrase+definite article in Italo-Romance (45a) and the element *A(-)* of Daco-Romance (45b), whereby they correspond to instances of the same syntactic element, i.e. a Linker (Den Dikken 2006):

(45) a. [<sub>LK</sub> *de*-DefD [<sub>GenP</sub> Possessive ] ] (Italo-Romance)  
b. [<sub>LK</sub> *A* [<sub>GenP</sub> Possessive ] ] (Daco-Romance)

Linkers are functional elements, often occurring as free morphemes, that do not convey any semantic content and only correspond to the result of a syntactic derivation.

## 5. Theoretical background

Based on syntactic properties such as distribution, expression of definiteness and morphological agreement, two main types of genitive configurations can be singled

---

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers who provided this hint to me.

out among the world's languages: a *free* genitive and a *functional* genitive (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991, Longobardi 2001, Longobardi & Silvestri 2013).

Free genitives are always overtly formally marked, therefore distinctively perceivable at the sensory-motor system. It can be freely iterated, whenever thematically interpretable. Also, from a strictly typological point of view, every language has at most one form to express the free genitive among the following morpho-syntactic devices:

- (46) a. prepositions (as in Romance and Germanic prepositional genitives)  
 b. postpositions (as in Basque, Hindi)  
 c. inflectional endings (as in classical Greek, Latin, and Romanian)

Given that two structural properties allow free genitives to be licensed, (i.e. the possibility of being iterated and its overt marking), languages in which genitives do not exhibit these properties avail themselves of another type of genitive, i.e. the *functional* genitive. The functional type displays distinct properties, like the impossibility of being iterated. Also, functional genitives do not show prepositions as possible markers. Structurally, they can inherit the definiteness of the DP, as opposed to the licensing of free genitives which is not sufficient to satisfy requirements of definiteness. Functional genitives are formally realized as follows (Longobardi & Silvestri 2013, Crisma *et al.* in press):

- (47) a. with an identical form as Free genitives (e.g. Latin; Gianollo 2005)  
 b. otherwise, as one of following configurations:  
     i. a phrase-final affix (English / Scandinavian *-s*; (48a))  
     ii. a word-final affix (German *-s*, perhaps Arabic *-i*; (48b))  
     iii. an fusional ending (Modern Greek or Slavic Genitive; (48c))  
     iv. zero-realization (Hebrew construct state Genitive; Old Romance; non-standard modern Romance; (48d))  
     v. phi-feature concord with N (Romance possessives, Slavic genitival adjectives, Hungarian Genitive; (48e))  
     vi. D-related genitive (Romanian; (48f))
- (48) a. my clever French colleague's gig (English)  
 b. Ottos       neues                Buch (German)  
    Otto.GEN   new.NOM.NSG   book.NOM.NSG  
    'Otto's new book'  
 c. i                    gata                mavri                tou  
    the.NOM.FSG   cat.NOM.FSG   black.FSG        the.GEN / DAT.MSG  
    daskalou (standard Modern Greek)  
    teacher.GEN / DAT.MSG  
    'the teacher's black cat'  
 d. a                figghja   a                sarta (Northern Calabrian, Verbicario)  
    the.FSG   daughter   the.FSG   seamstress  
    'the seamstress' daughter'  
 e. ta                voiture, ton                    chat (French)  
    POSS.2SG.FSG   car.FSG   POSS.2SG.MSG   cat.MSG  
    'your car, your cat'  
 f. eseul                lingvistei (Romanian)  
    essay.MSG.DEF   linguist.FSG.GEN.DEF

'the linguist's essay'

Two positions in the internal structure of the DP can be occupied by a functional genitive: a higher, pre-adjectival position (Gen $\alpha$ )<sup>14</sup> and a lower post-adjectival position (Gen $\beta$ )<sup>15</sup>:

(49) [ (N) Gen $\alpha$  (N) AP\* (N) Gen $\beta$  (N) [ <sub>a</sub> P [ S [ O ... N ... ] ] ] ]

Table 2. Language typology through genitives (based on Longobardi *et al.* (2013b))

	Gen $\alpha$	Gen $\beta$	Free Gen
Latin, German	+	+	+
Slavonic (most)	+	+	-
English	+	-	+
Hungarian	+	-	-
standard modern Greek	-	+	-
Celtic	-	+	+
Hindi (?)	-	-	+
standard Italian (50a)	+	-	+
French (50b)	+	-	+
E. Portuguese (50c)	+	-	+
Spanish (50d)	+	-	+
Romanian (50e)	+	-	-
Sicilian (50f)	+	-	+
Northern Calabrian (50g,h)	+	+	+

- (50) a. la [tua]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  presentazione [dell'argomento]<sub>Free Gen</sub> (standard  
the.FSG POSS.2SG.FSG presentation.FSG of.the.MSG topic.MSG Italian)  
'your presentation of the topic'
- b. [sa]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  discussion [du livre]<sub>Free Gen</sub>  
POSS.3SG.MSF discussion.FSG of.the.MSG book.MSG  
[de la linguiste]<sub>Free Gen</sub> (French)  
of the.FSG linguist.FSG  
'her / his discussion of the linguist's book'
- c. a [minha]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  tradução [do poema]<sub>Free Gen</sub> (European  
the.FSG POSS.1SG.FSG translation.FSG of.the.MSG poem.MSG Portuguese)  
'my translation of the poem'
- d. [mi]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  receta [de la tortilla]<sub>Free Gen</sub> [de abuela María]<sub>Free Gen</sub> (Spanish)  
POSS.1SG.SG recipe.FSG of.the.FSG tortilla.FSG of grandma María  
'my recipe of the tortilla by grandma María'

<sup>14</sup> Germanic genitive marked with *-s* as well as arguably the agreeing forms in (47 b-v) are checked in Gen $\alpha$  position.

<sup>15</sup> Gen $\beta$  is activated in Greek, Slavic, Icelandic, Celtic (Duffield 1993, Rouveret 1994) as well as in Old English (Crisma 1996). Old French and some non-standard Romance varieties (Delfitto & Paradisi 2009, Silvestri 2013, 2016) show Gen $\beta$  too. Semitic construct-state genitive (§ 5.2) can also be interpreted as a case of Gen $\beta$ .

- e. pozele [Mariei]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  / [voastre]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  (Romanian)  
 photo.FPL.DEF Maria.GEN POSS.2PL.FPL  
 'Maria's / your photos'
- f. a [to]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  rricetta [r-a cassata]<sub>Free Gen</sub> (Sicilian, Ragusa)  
 the.FSG POSS.2SG recipe.FSG of-the.FSG cassata.FSG  
 'your recipe of the cassata'
- g. a fotəgrafija [tua]<sub>Gen $\alpha$</sub>  nòva [du pajisə  
 the.FSG photo.FSG POSS.2SG new.FSG of.the.MSG village.MSG  
 viəcchjə]<sub>Free Gen</sub> (Northern Calabrian, Verbicaro)  
 old.MSG  
 'your new photo of the old town'
- h. a figghja [u miədəkə]<sub>Gen $\beta$</sub>  (Northern Calabrian, *ibid.*)  
 the.FSG daughter the.MSG doctor.MSG  
 'the doctor's daughter'

Based on characterization of these different types of genitive further comparative assessment of the genitive in Romanian and SIDs will be presented.

### 5.1 Romanian genitive

The type of genitive activated in Romanian is functional (Longobardi & Silvestri 2013, Crisma *et al.* in press), as it is able to check definiteness.<sup>16</sup> It cannot be iterated unless the Linker A(-) is inserted. Since the genitive and the definite marker have to be strictly adjacent and, thus, no adjectives can intervene between the D elements and the genitive, we can conclude that within the extended functional structure of the DP Romanian genitive is merged above all adjectives (and below D). It is, therefore, a Gen $\alpha$  type.<sup>17</sup> As a further property, phi-features are overtly expressed on genitive DPs and possessives:

- (51) a. portretul Mona Lisei \*(al)  
 portrait.MSG.DEF Mona Lisa.GEN.FSG.DEF A.MSG  
 lui Leonardo  
 GEN.MSG Leonardo  
 'Leonardo's portrait of Mona Lisa'
- b. A cui interpretare a spectacolului?  
 A whose interpretation.FSG A.FSG show.GEN.NSG.DEF  
 'Whose interpretation of the show?'

<sup>16</sup> Within the Minimalist program (Chomsky 1995), language architecture avails itself of a generative component that assembles structures by Merge and Move. The derivation reaches a point where the conceptual-intentional and the articulatory-perceptual processes diverge: the 'Spell-out' point. During the 'Merge' operation, there features are inserted in the structure which must be 'checked' before Spell-out. Each is a pairing of semantic-syntactic and morpho-syntactic information which languages can encode through features. A feature is checked against a head which does contain that information.

<sup>17</sup> See Grosu (1988) and Dobrovie-Sorin (2000) for insights about Romanian genitive showing similarities with Semitic Construct State genitive. See also Nicolae (2015) for further discussion of syntactic properties of Romanian genitive.

Possessives in Romanian are typically placed in post-nominal position, and may occur prenominal only under certain conditions (Dindelegan 2013:338).

## 5.2 The genitive in Southern Italian dialects

In SIDs possessives are licensed through one of the two functional positions within the extended functional structure of DP, i.e. Gen $\alpha$  or Gen $\beta$ , the former being pre-adjectival and the latter post-adjectival (Silvestri 2013). They may not overtly express gender and number and, therefore, show invariable forms. In a handful of Italian dialects the Gen $\beta$  functional position is also activated through a full DP which exhibits no overt mark of genitive case and, nonetheless, functions as a genitive (Silvestri 2013, 2016):

- (52) a casa [u swinnəkə]<sub>DPGen</sub> (Northern Calabrian, Verbicaro)  
 the.FSG house.FSG the.MSG mayor.MSG  
 ‘the mayor’s house’

The DPGen in (52) reminds of the Semitic Construct State construction (53), where a genitive DP that carries no over case mark is juxtaposed to the main DP:<sup>18</sup>

- (53) Beyt Dan ha-gadol (Hebrew; Longobardi & Silvestri 2013:113)  
 house Dan the-big  
 ‘Dan’s big house’

Given the properties concerning the genitive in SIDs and Romanian, in particular that the insertion *de*-phrase+the definite article of SIDs (54c) correspond to the functional element A(-) of Romanian (54b) and that both syntactic structures are equally instances of Linkers, we can assume that possessives in a non-definite syntactic context are licensed through the same configuration (54a) in Romanian and SIDs.

- (54) a. [DP[-DEF] N [Linker [DPGen Possessive ] ] ]  
 b. [DP[-DEF] o jachetă [LK a [DPGen mea<sup>+φagr</sup> ] ] ] (Romanian)  
 c. [DP[-DEF] na giacchetta [LK d-a [DPGen mija<sup>-/+φagr</sup> ] ] ] (Northern Calabrian)  
 ‘a jacket of mine’

In the next section, a unified structural account is proposed that comprehends the syntactic reasons underlying the configuration in (54a).

## 6. Towards a structural account

As a starting point, I assume that DPs can be endowed with a [genitive] feature. Therefore, [+genitive] can be considered to be a formal feature of DPs (Longobardi & Silvestri 2013, Silvestri 2013). If a DP is marked as [+genitive], it can be licensed either as a free genitive (through prepositions or inflectional endings) or as a

<sup>18</sup> An unmarked genitive, juxtaposed to the main DP, is attested in Old Romance (Old French) and in colloquial (non-)standard Modern Romance (Silvestri 2013).

functional genitive which is tied to specific fixed positions, i.e. Gen $\alpha$  or Gen $\beta$  (see §5). The D component of a DP is the syntactic locus of the realization of definiteness, i.e. the semantic-syntactic formal property which can be realized by definite pronouns. Therefore, it is possible to claim that a definite DP is endowed with pronominal (PRON) features, which ultimately must include [person] feature (Longobardi 2001, Bernstein 2008, Ledgeway *et al.* 2019). I assume that the D features of a [+genitive] DP are very similar to the D features of a pronominal DP or a definite DP, since they all convey to express definiteness.

### 6.1 Genitive structures in Romanian and in Southern Italian dialects

In Romanian there is robust evidence that reveals the structural relation between definiteness and the D position, on the one hand, and the [+genitive] feature, on the other hand: in Romanian [+genitive] is checked in D position, as bare nouns or nouns in indefinite DPs (e.g., DPs headed by an indefinite article or by *niște* ‘some’) are not inflected for genitive case, whereas the genitive inflectional ending, on the contrary, appears on pronouns, determiners as well as determiner-like nominals, such as personal and reflexive pronouns, proper names, definite determiners, demonstratives, wh- determiners, negatives, universal quantifiers, other quantifiers. Possessives in Romanian are licensed as a functional genitive (a Gen $\alpha$  type; Crisma *et al.* in press) and corresponds to a full DP marked as genitive (i.e. DP<sub>Gen</sub> in the structure in 55).<sup>19</sup> In order for the possessive, that corresponds to the DP<sub>Gen</sub>, to be licensed within a definite DP, its PRON features need to be checked by entering a syntactic relation with the D position of the main DP which in Romanian is lexicalized by the definite marker on the head noun.<sup>20</sup>

- (55) a. [DP<sub>[+DEF]</sub> N<sup>+DEF</sup> [DP<sub>Gen</sub> Possessive ] ]  
 b. DP<sub>Gen</sub> = [+genitive], [+PRON]

In SIDs possessives, which may not express overt agreement in gender and number with the head noun, can be interpreted too as expressions of a functional type of genitive (§5), arguably a Gen $\alpha$  in Northern Calabrian (56). In a handful of SIDs, the post-adjectival functional genitive Gen $\beta$  is also attested and expressed through a non-prepositional, unmarked type of genitive DPs occurring in a definite DP:

- (56) a casa (granna) [vòsta]<sub>DPGen $\alpha$</sub>  / [u swinnəkə]<sub>DPGen $\beta$</sub>   
 the.FSG house.FSG big.FSG POSS.2PL.FSG the.MSG mayor.MSG  
 ‘your/the mayor’s (big) house’ (Northern Calabrian, Verbicaro)

<sup>19</sup> For further theoretical details about the licensing of the gen in Gen $\alpha$  or Gen $\beta$  see Longobardi & Silvestri (2013:97-99) and Crisma *et al.* (in press).

<sup>20</sup> One can assume that the whole DP<sub>Gen</sub> is ultimately merged in the main D layer where the definiteness can be checked. In Romanian, N raises to D, so that the definiteness is realized as an enclitic morpheme.



The simplified structure in (55) can be adopted to explain the syntactic configuration of a definite DP that hosts a possessive or an unmarked GenP in Southern Italian dialects. The structure results from merging the DP endowed with [+genitive] feature, which is eventually spelled-out as an adnominal genitive, i.e. a possessive (*vòsta* ‘your(2pl.fsg)’), or as a full lexical DP (*u swinnəkə* ‘the mayor’). Again, for the possessive to be licensed as a DPGen in a functional genitive position, its PRON features need to be checked by entering a relation with the D position of the main definite DP.

In an indefinite DP the Linker A(-) is required and licensed in Romanian, where it is a syntactically constrained option. Similarly, in SIDs the Linker represented by the *de*-phrase+definite article is required to license the possessives in an indefinite DP. Therefore, in both Romanian and Italo-Romance possessives in indefinite DPs are licensed through the same mechanism and the phi-features expressed by the main DP match the features of the definite components of the Linker.<sup>21</sup> As I assumed for the structure in (55) repeated here in (57a), the *de*-phrase and the definite article of the Italian dialects (57c) correspond to the linker A(-) of Romanian (57b):

- (57) a. [DP[-DEF] N [Linker [DPGen Possessive ] ] ]  
 b. [DP[-DEF] o jachetă [LK a<sup>+φagr</sup> [DPGen mea<sup>+φagr</sup> ] ] ] (Romanian)  
 c. [DP[-DEF] na giacchetta [LK d-a<sup>+φagr</sup> [DPGen mija<sup>+φagr</sup> ] ] ] (SIDs)  
 ‘a jacket of mine’

I propose that a unified structural account can be put forward that explains the syntactic relations underlying the configuration in (57a) in both Romanian and Southern Italian dialects. Indefinite DPs show different semantic-syntactic properties with respect to definite DPs, in that indefinite DPs lack PRON features. Therefore, in an indefinite DP the PRON features of the DPGen cannot be checked, unless such features are otherwise set elsewhere and available for checking. Given the obligatory insertion of the Linker in indefinite contexts (57 b,c), we can assume that the Linker, i.e. A(-) in Romanian and *de*-phrase+definite article, corresponds to an empty nominal element that displays PRON features and is able to project a nominal structure. Additionally, as I will show in detail in (§6.2), the Linker is endowed with a [+genitive] feature. The licensing structure for possessives in indefinite DPs can be explained as the syntactic result of the mechanism of checking [genitive] and [PRON] features of the DPGen in a context represented by a main indefinite DP that lacks those very features. The Linker must be projected in Romanian and in Southern Italian dialects: it is obligatory in the former for all kinds of DPGen and is required in the latter only when DPGen corresponds to an adnominal genitive, i.e. a possessive. Being the Linker an empty nominal endowed with both [PRON] and [genitive] features, it becomes the device for possessives to be licensed as DPGen within an indefinite DP structure. In the next section some

<sup>21</sup> In Romanian, the spread of these features also involves the possessive.

independent evidence about the pronominal and genitival syntactic nature of the Linker is described and discussed.

## 6.2 Possessives in focalized definite DPs

In Italo-Romance possessives can be focalized for specific pragmatic purposes, like conveying a piece of contrastive/corrective information. The result of the focalization of possessives is a genitive phrase that denotes a specific individual in the role of possessor, as in the following examples from standard Italian:

- (58) a. (speaker A): - Questa è la villa dei genitori  
 this.FSG is the.FSG house.FSG of.the.MPL parents  
 di Luca? (standard Italian)  
 of Luca  
 'Is this Luca's parents' house?'  
 b'. (speaker B) - No, è proprio la SUA villa /  
 not is own.MSG the.FSG POSS.3SG.FSG house.FSG  
 la villa DI LUCA  
 the.FSG house.FSG of Luca  
 'Nope, it is (exactly) HIS house / LUCA'S house.'  
 b'' (speaker B)- No, è la villa sua propria.  
 not is the.FSG house.FSG POSS.3SG.FSG own.FSG  
 'Nope, it is his own house'

In (58b'), speaker B focalizes the possessive or the genitive phrase by means of a marked intonation and a prosodic peak on 'sua' and 'di Luca', respectively. In (58b'') the speaker adds an adjective, i.e. *propria*, that plays the role of focalizer of the possessive. In both sentences (58b') and (58b'') the possessor is focalized and conveys a contrastive/corrective type of information, in that speaker B means to correct speaker A about the ownership of the house.

In SIDs the possessive is focalized through the insertion of the Linker. In (59) two minimal pairs show that the focalization of the possessive (59 b,d) is realized through the insertion of the Linker:

- (59) a. Quissə jè u kanə mijə. (Northern Calabrian, Santa Maria del Cedro)  
 this.MSG is the.MSG dog.MSG POSS.1SG  
 'This is my dog.'  
 b. Quissə jè u kanə [D-U MIJƏ]  
 this.MSG is the.MSG dog.MSG LK.MSG POSS.1SG  
 'This is MY dog (not yours).'  
 c. A màchina tua jè ghjanca.  
 the.FSG car.FSG POSS.2SG is white.FSG  
 'Your car is white.'  
 d. A màchina [D-A TUA] jè ghjanca.  
 the.FSG car.FSG LK.FSG POSS.2SG is white.FSG  
 'YOUR car is white (hers is not).'

In this focalized configuration, the resulting genitive phrase has to display phi-features matching with the main DP. The Linker is the mechanism that allows

for the genitive phrase to express the phi-agreement in gender and number with the head noun, as shown in (60) where the phi-features of the Linker do not match the gender and number features and the resulting sentences are ungrammatical:

- (60) a. \* Quissə jè u kanə D-I MIJƏ  
 this.MSG is the.MSG dog.MSG LK.MPL POSS.1SG  
 b. \* A màchina D-I TUA jè ghjanca  
 the.FSG car.FSG LK.FPL POSS.2SG is white.FSG

I argue that the mechanism that licenses the Linker here shares some characteristics with the strategy involved in the Linker insertion with possessives in indefinite DPs (§6.1). Possessives in the dialects of Northern Calabria correspond to a functional type of genitive that, cross-linguistically, appear less robustly marked from an articulatory-perceptual point of view, as opposed to the Free type of genitive which always exhibit a robust marking (Longobardi & Silvestri 2013). Given the phonological weakness of the functional genitive, I assume that it cannot bear a focal accent. Therefore, in order for the possessive to be licensed in functional genitive position, it has to merge with an element, i.e. 'X' in (61), which in order to be capable of bearing focal accent has to more phonetically salient.<sup>22</sup>

- (61) ... X [ GenP ]

Let's now assume that in the dialects of Northern Calabria this element corresponds to a silent nominal with pronominal features, i.e. it is a PRO-like element. In order to be able to license a possessive, this element must be endowed with a [genitive] feature. We can further define such element as an 'own-type' pronoun that expresses a semantically focused position ultimately denoting the possessor's identity:

- (62) X = PRO-like nominal = *own*-type pronoun

Given this specification of the semantic and syntactic features of 'X', i.e. the bearer of the focal accent in the structure (62), we can argue that the focalized possessives are licensed in a definite DP through a similar syntactic structure as the one in which a possessive occurs in an indefinite DP.

In standard Italian the position of the element 'X' (61) can be lexicalized through the pronoun *proprio*, *-a*, *-i*, *-e* that agrees in gender and number with the head noun:

---

<sup>22</sup> This might be one of the crosslinguistic strategies to solve the interface problem created by focal-stressing silent material (Ahn & Sailor 2019).

- (63) a. Quella è l' auto sua propria (non l'ha  
 that.FPL is.the.FSG car.FSG POSS.3SG.FSG own.FSG not it.FSG=  
 presa a noleggio).  
 take.PST.PTCP.FSG at rental.MSG  
 'That is her own car (it is not a rental).'  
 b. Questi sono i gioielli propri di Anna (e non  
 this.MPL are.3PL the.MPL jewel.MPL own.MPL of Anna and not  
 di sua madre).  
 of POSS.3SG.FSG mother  
 'These are Anna's jewels (they're not her mother's).'

SIDs do not avail themselves with a corresponding focalizing possessive adjective and employ the Linker to focalize the possessor. The PRO nature of the element occupying the 'X' position, either the Linker in SIDs or *proprio* in standard Italian, respectively, is confirmed by some independent evidence. As pointed out in Longobardi (1996) and Longobardi & Silvestri (2013:112-114), an unmarked genitive DP is obligatorily given in standard Italian when the head noun 'casa' raises to D (64a). Such genitive argument, represented by the last name 'Ricci' in (64a), must strictly follow the noun 'casa':

- (64) a. Casa Ricci nuova (standard Italian)  
 house.FSG Ricci new.FSG  
 'Ricci's new house'  
 b. \*Casa nuova Ricci  
 house.FSG new.FSG Ricci

A lower and prepositional (*free*) genitive is allowed too in this configuration:

- (65) Casa nuova di / dei Ricci  
 house.FSG new.FSG of of.the.MPL Ricci  
 'Ricci's new house'

The two configurations in (64a) and (65) reflect the same structure in which in the position of the functional genitive as a silent PRO element is active and forms a chain with the lower prepositional genitive:

- (66) Casa PRO nuova di Ricci

The configuration in (66) reveals clear parallel properties with the Semitic Construct State construction (67), where an over pronoun is lexicalized in PRO position (68b):

- (67) a. Beyt Dan ha-gadol (Hebrew; Longobardi & Silvestri 2013:113)  
 house Dan the-big  
 b. \*Beyt ha-gadol Dan  
 house the-big Dan  
 'Dan's big house'

- (68) a. \*Beyt ha-gadol šel Dan  
house the-big of Dan  
b. Beyt-*o* ha-gadol šel Dan  
house-*his* the-big of Dan  
'Dan's own big house'

This cross-linguistic evidence conclusively proves that Linker has PRO as well as genitive features.

### 7. The role of contact: from the Balkans to Southern Italy

I have shown that the syntactic structure of an indefinite DP hosting a possessive is strikingly similar between Southern Italian dialects and Romanian, as in these varieties the lack of definiteness of the DP correlates with the insertion of an extra syntactic layer represented by the Linker. This element is ultimately responsible for checking the pronominal features, strictly related to definiteness, and the [genitive] feature that a DP that functions as a genitive has to check in the structure. Given such solid parallelism between SIDs and Romanian, a question arises on the origin of such structural similarity. Far from being just accidentally similar in the licensing of the possessives, SIDs and Romanian do exhibit the signs of structural interferences due to language contact. As shown in Ledgeway *et al.* (2020), the possessives licensed through a Linker do occur in other varieties that represent the *trait d'union* between the South of Italy and the Balkans, i.e. the Italo-Greek varieties spoken in Apulia and Southern Calabria (Ledgeway *et al.* in prep.). The key hypothesis is that the Linker that we observe in the Italo-Romance varieties of Southern Italy has its origin in the grammar of possessives of Italo-Greek. In turn, the morphosyntactic properties of possessives in the Greek varieties reflect the properties of possessives in other Balkan varieties other than Romanian, i.e. Aromanian and Albanian.

Both Italo-Greek and standard modern Greek (Eleftheriades 1985:218-219) avail themselves of two series of possessives: the enclitic possessives and the strong possessives. The latter are formed with the pronoun δικός, -ή, -ό to which the enclitic form of possessives attaches. In Italo-Greek the strong possessives are selected with indefinite DPs (69a) as well as when the possessor is pragmatically marked, i.e. focalized, in definite DPs (69b).

- (69) a. ena sciddo dikò-mmu  
a.NOM-MSG dog.NOM-MSG dikòs.NOM.MSG-POSS.1SG  
'a dog of mine' (Italo-Greek, Calabria; Ledgeway *et al.* in press)  
b. o ciuri dikò-mmu (Italo-Greek, Apulia; *ibid.*)  
the.NOM.MSG father.NOM.MSG dikòs.NOM.MSG-POSS.1SG  
'MY father'

A similar pragmatic use is shown by the strong possessives in standard Modern Greek, where they are employed to mark a contrastive information:

- (70) Το δικό σου σπίτι  
 the.NOM.NSG dikós.NOM-ACC.NSG POSS.2SG house.NOM.NSG  
 είναι μεγάλο, αλλά το  
 be.3SG.PRS.IND big.NOM-ACC.NSG but the.NOM-ACC.NSG  
 δικό μου είναι μικρό  
 dikós.NOM-ACC.NSG POSS.1SG be.3SG.PRS.IND small.NOM-ACC.NSG  
 'Your house is large, but mine is small.' (standard Modern Greek, Eleftheriades 1985:218)

In the Greek varieties the pronoun *δικός* corresponds to a definite determiner (DefD) and is able to express the key formal features of the DP, such as definiteness, gender, and number. Therefore, the structure that licenses the possessives in the indefinite DPs in the Italo-Romance varieties of Southern Italy and for Romanian (71) can be assumed for the Greek varieties too:

- (71) [(*de*) [DP DefD [GenP Possessive ] ] ]

In this view, the Linker A(-) of Romanian, that corresponds to the Linker of SIDs, i.e. *de*-phrase+the definite determiner, in turn echoes the pronoun *dikòs* in Italo-Greek:

- (72) a. [DP [Linker [DPGen Possessive ] ] ]  
 b. [DP[-DEF] un câine [LK al<sup>+φagr</sup> [DPGen meu<sup>+φagr</sup> ] ] ] (Romanian)  
 c. [DP[-DEF] nu canə [LK d-u<sup>+φagr</sup> [DPGen mija<sup>-φagr</sup> ] ] ] (Northern Calabrian)  
 d. [DP[-DEF] ena sciddho [LK dikò<sup>+φagr</sup> [DPGen mmu<sup>-φagr</sup> ] ] ] (Italo-Greek)  
 'A dog of mine'

As seen in §4.1, Aromanian too requires a Linker, which is morphologically identical to the Linker of Romanian (Manzini *et al.* 2014, Manzini & Savoia 2017) and yet structurally different. Namely, in Aromanian the Linker is always required to license a possessive in any DP and always agrees in gender and number with the DP that represents the genitive (i.e. the *possessor*):

- (73) mən-a o fɪʃfor-u / ali fət-i /  
 hand.FSG.DEF LK.msg boy.DEF / LK.FSG girl.GEN-DAT.DEF /  
 ali məʎer-i (Aromanian; Manzini & Savoia 2017:122)  
 LK.FSG woman.GEN-DAT.DEF  
 'the boy's 'the girl's / the woman's hand'

Other than the two Romance varieties of the Balkans, in the same geographic region the Linker is also found in Albanian, where it agrees in gender and number with the head noun and it is always required to license a possessive in DP, regardless of the DP's definiteness setting:

- (74) a. libri i vəða-it (Albanian; Manzini & Savoia 2014:84)  
 book.NOM.MSG.DEF LK.M brother.OBL.MSG.DEF  
 'the brother's book'
- b. putra ε cən-it  
 paw.NOM.FSG.DEF LK.F dog.OBL.M.FSG  
 'the dog's paw'

Summarizing, a Linker is required in a number of Balkan languages, i.e. Greek, Romanian, Aromanian, and Albanian to license a possessive or a genitive DP. In these languages the instances of the Linker show a morphological exponence that allows them to agree with the head noun (standard Modern Greek, Romanian, Albanian) or with the genitive DP (Aromanian). Given the evidently close structural correspondences among these varieties, Ledgeway *et al.* (2020) conclude that the syntax of possessives is a phenomenon ascribable to the Balkan *Sprachbund*, i.e. an indisputable case of language contact which results in horizontal transmission and converging phenomena (Sandfeld 1930, Tomić 2006 *i.a.*, Joseph 2011, Gardani *et al.* in press). In the Balkan picture two more important pieces need to be added, i.e. Italo-Greek and Southern Italian dialects, which equally exhibit a genitive-licensing Linker which matches in phi-features the head noun. This further set of correspondences across the Adriatic sea is the evidence that supports the hypothesis whereby the morphosyntax of possessives in Italo-Greek and Southern Italian dialects has a Balkan origin and has been brought to Southern Italy through Greek. The Romance syntax has adapted the requirement of the Linker by licensing the possessive not only with the insertion of the definite article, but also by selecting a *de*-phrase. Such phrase is introduced by an element that is homophonous with the preposition through which the genitive is usually expressed in Romance languages (with the exception of Romanian), i.e. *de* and its allomorphs (< Lat. DE). That in Romance a possessive is licensed through a Linker is a fact not uniquely attested in SIDs. Manzelli (2007:168) reports that the Ibero-Romance variety of Asturian-Leonese shows the *de*-phrase as a possibility when the possessive occurs post-nominally (75c):

- (75) a. el tou fiyu (Asturian-Leonese; Manzelli 2007:168)  
 the.MSG POSS.2SG.MSG son
- b. fiyu tou  
 son POSS.2SG.MSG
- c. fiyu de tou  
 son de POSS.2SG.MSG  
 'your son'

The case of Asturian-Leonese suggests that the Romance syntax is endowed with a peculiar device to license possessives under specific structural conditions. Such device was consistently activated in the Southern Italian dialects discussed here as a result of the structural interferences between Italo-Greek and Italo-Romance in Southern Italy, which have coexisted for almost a couple of Millennia.

## 8. Conclusions

A comparative look between Southern Italian dialects and Romanian unveils conspicuous parallels in the mechanisms that license possessives in non-definite DPs. Given that the syntactic nature of the genitive types can be ascribed to a parametric choice, one can argue that genitive phrases hosting possessives are licensed through the same structure in the relevant Romanian varieties and in Southern Italian dialects, where a Linker is inserted that permits the checking of the uninterpretable pronominal features of the genitive DP. Such Linker corresponds to a nominal element with pronominal features. The resulting superficial configuration shows two different elements that signal the genitive, i.e. the adnominal genitive represented by the possessive and the Linker itself. Comparable licensing strategies are attested elsewhere in Romance and beyond Romance, like in English where a phrase marked as genitive occurs in a non-definite DP through the insertion of the element *of* (Lyons 1986):

(76) 'A friend of yours/John's/the tall guy's'

In Romanian and in Southern Italian dialects, a Linker is necessarily inserted if a DP with [genitive] feature merges in a functional genitive position (GenP) within indefinite DPs: in Romanian such Linker (A(-)) is required with all DPGen, whereas in Italo-Romance the Linker (*of*-phrase+definite determiner) is inserted only when the DPGen is lexicalized through a possessive.

In Italo-Romance, the *de* component of the Linker is homophonous with the preposition *de* that also marks the free genitive. The former is inserted to license a functional type of genitive, whereas the latter is typically the overt (prepositional) realization of the free genitive in Romance (77b).

- (77) a. nu studentə [d-u mija] (Northern Calabrian; LK [*de*+DEF ART]: functional  
a.MSG student.MSG of-the.MSG POSS.1SG Gen)  
'a student of mine'  
b. a. màchəna [d-u pruvəssurə] (*de*-phrase: free Gen)  
a.FSG car.FSG of-the.MSG professor.MSG  
'the professor's car'

The contrastive analysis of Italo-Romance and Daco-Romance data opens up a question on the origin of the Linker strategy in the dialects of Southern Italy. A plausible answer to such question stems from the linguistic landscape of Southern Italy, where Latin and Romance have coexisted for centuries with Greek varieties, imported there since the VIII century BC (Ledgeway *et al.* in prep.: Ch.1). Italo-Romance has taken the specific syntax of strong possessives from Greek, which in turn shares it with a number of varieties spoken in the Balkan *Sprachbund*, i.e. Romanian, Aromanian, Albanian (Ledgeway *et al.* in press).



## References

- Ahn, Byron & Craig Sailor (2019), "The landscape of semantics-prosody mismatches". Presentation given at the 2019 LSA Annual Meeting. Handout available online: <http://byronahn.com/files/Ahn-Sailor-LSA-2019.pdf>.
- Androustoupoulou, Antonia (1996), "The licensing of adjectival modification", in Camacho, José, Lina Choueiri & Maki Watanabe (eds.), *Proceedings of WCCFL 14*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 17-31.
- Bernstein, Judy (2008), "Reformulating the determiner phrase analysis", *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2:1-25.
- Bouzouita, Miriam & Enrique Pato (2019), "Por qué no gustas de mí como yo gusto de ti? El verbo *gustar* y su complemento preposicional en español actual", *Círculo de lingüística aplicada a la comunicación* 79:161-186.
- Bouzouita, Miriam & Hugo Salgado (2017), El uso de las construcciones de adverbio locativo con pronombre posesivo en el español peninsular: un primer acercamiento diatópico, *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 133(3):766-794.
- Casanova, Vanessa (in this volume), "El uso del complemento posesivo verbal por el complemento de régimen preposicional en español actual", in Bouzouita, Miriam & Matti Marttinen Larsson (eds.), Special issue on possessive constructions in Romance, *Moderna språk*, 114(3):264-301.
- Cornilescu, Alexandra (1993), "Notes on the structure of Romanian DPs and the assignment of Genitive Case", *University of Venice Working Papers in Linguistics* 3(2), 107-129.
- Cornilescu, Alexandra (2003), "Romanian genitives revisited", *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* V, 1, 104-128.
- Crisma, Paola (1996), "On the configurational nature of adjectival modification", in Zagona, Karen (ed.), *Grammatical theory and Romance languages: Selected papers from the 25th Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages (LSRL XXV)*, Seattle, 2-4 March 1995. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 59-71.
- Crisma, Paola, Cristina Guardiano & Giuseppe Longobardi (in press), "Toward a unified theory of Case form and Case meaning", in Anagnostopoulou, Elena, Dionysios Mertyris & Christina Sevdali (eds.), *The place of Case in Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam (1995), *The minimalist program*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- De Sisto, Mirella & Francesc Torres-Tamarit (in this volume), "The prosodification of possessive enclitics in Airola and Boiano", in Bouzouita, Miriam & Matti Marttinen Larsson (eds.), Special issue on possessive constructions in Romance, *Moderna språk*, 114(3):198-225.
- Den Dikken, Marcel (2006), *Relators and Linkers*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Delfitto, Dennis & Paola Paradisi (2009), "Towards a Diachronic Theory of Genitive assignment in Romance", in Crisma, Paola & Giuseppe Longobardi (eds.), *Historical Syntax and Syntactic Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 292-310.
- Dindelegan, Gabriela (2013), *The grammar of Romanian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen (1987), "A propos de la structure du groupe nominal en roumain", *Rivista di grammatica generativa* 12:123-152.
- Dobrovie Sorin, Carmen (2000), "(In)definiteness spread: from Romanian genitives to Hebrew construct state nominals", in Motapanyane Virginia (ed.), *Comparative studies in Romanian syntax*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Duffield, Nigel (1993), "Irish construct state nominals and the radical pro-drop phenomenon", in Schafer Amy (ed.), *Proceedings of NELS 23*. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 113-127.
- Ernout, Alfred & François Thomas (1959), *Syntaxe latine*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Franco, Ludovico, Maria-Rita Manzini & Leonardo Savoia (2013), "Some call it article, some ezafe: 'Linkers' and 'agreement'": Available online: <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/001888>. Last consulted: October 15, 2020.
- Gardani, Francesco, Michele Loporcaro & Alberto Giudici (in press), "In and around the Balkans: Romance languages and the making of multi-layered languages", in Gardani, Francesco, Michele Loporcaro & Alberto Giudici (eds.), *Romance languages and the others: In and around the Balkans. The Journal of Language Contact*.
- Garzonio Iacopo & Mario Russo (2009), "Profilo morfosintattico del dialetto di Papisidero", *Quaderni di Lavoro ASIt. Studi sui dialetti della Calabria* 9: 5-100.
- Gianollo, Chiara (2005), *Constituent structure and parametric resetting in the Latin DP: A diachronic study*. Doctoral dissertation: Università di Pisa.
- Giorgi, Alessandra & Giuseppe Longobardi (1991), *The syntax of noun phrases*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Giurgea, Ion & Carmen Dobrovie-Sorin (2012), "Nominal and pronominal possessors in Romanian", in Carlier, Anne & Jean-Christophe Verstraete (eds.), *Genitive Case and Genitive constructions*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins, 105-139.
- Giurgea, Ion (2012), "The origin of the Romanian 'Possessive-Genitival Article' and the development of the demonstrative system", *Revue Romaine de Linguistique*, LVII(1):35-65.
- Giurgea, Ion (2015), "Agreeing and non-agreeing genitives in Old Romanian and the history of Romanian genitive constructions", in Hill, Virginia (ed.), *Formal approaches to DPs in Old Romanian*. Leiden: Brill, 154-199.
- Giusti, Giuliana (2016), "The structure of the nominal group", in Maiden, Martin & Adam Ledgeway (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Romance languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 553-554.
- Grosu, Alexander (1988), "On the distribution of Genitive phrases in Romanian", *Linguistics*, 26:931-49.
- Ivănescu, Gheorghe (1980), *Istoria limbii române*. Iași: Junimea.
- Joseph, Brian (2011), "Balancing formal and functional explanations in language change and language contact", *Linguistique*, 47:5-26.
- Kayne, Richard (2010), "Why isn't this a complementizer?", in Kayne, Richard (ed.), *Comparison and contrasts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 190-227.

- Ledgeway, Adam (2009), *Grammatica diacronica del napoletano* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie Band 350). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Ledgeway, Adam, Norma Schifano & Giuseppina Silvestri (2019), "Differential Object Marking and the properties of D in the dialects of the extreme South of Italy", *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 4(1):51.1-25.
- Ledgeway, Adam, Schifano, Norma & Giuseppina Silvestri (2020), "I possessivi in italo-greco e italo-romanzo: paralleli strutturali in un'area di contatto", *Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, 105(1):85-114.
- Ledgeway, Adam, Schifano, Norma & Giuseppina Silvestri (in preparation), *Greek-Romance contact: The fading voices of Southern Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe (1994), "Reference and proper names: a theory of N-movement in syntax and Logical Form", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 25:609-65.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe (1996), "The syntax of N-raising: a minimalist theory", *OTS Working Paper*, Utrecht.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe (2005), "Toward a unified grammar of reference", *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft*, 24(1):5-44.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe & Giuseppina Silvestri (2013), "The Structure of Noun Phrases: insights on Case, Empty Categories, and Poverty of Stimulus", in Luraghi, Silvia & Cristina Parodi (eds.), *Companion to Syntax*. London/New York: Continuum, 88-117.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe, Cristina Guardiano, Giuseppina Silvestri, Andrea Ceolin & Alessio Boattini (2013a), "Toward a syntactic phylogeny of modern Indo-European languages", in Kulikov, Leonid & Nikolaos Lavidas (eds.), *Proto-Indo-European Syntax and its Development: Journal of Historical Linguistics*, 3(1):122-152.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe, Cristina Guardiano, Giuseppina Silvestri, Andrea Ceolin & Alessio Boattini (2013b), "Toward a syntactic phylogeny of modern Indo-European languages: The supporting material", in Kulikov, Leonid & Nikolaos Lavidas (eds.), *Proto-Indo-European syntax and its development. Special issue of Journal of Historical Linguistics*: Available online: <https://www.benjamins.com/catalog/jhl.3.1.07lon/additional>.
- Lyons, Christopher (1986), "The syntax of English genitive structures", *Journal of Linguistics*, 22(1):123-143.
- Manzelli, Gianguido (2007), "Inalienability and emphatic pronominal possession in European and Mediterranean languages: Morphosyntactic strategies and historical changes", in Ramat, Paolo & Elisa Roma (eds.), *Europe and the Mediterranean as linguistic areas: Convergencies from a historical and typological perspective*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 159-182.
- Manzini, Maria-Rita, Ludovico Franco & Leonardo Savoia (2014), "Linkers are not 'possession markers' but 'agreements'", in Veselovská, Ludmila & Markéta Janebová (eds.), *Complex Visible Out There. Proceedings of the Olomouc*

- Linguistics Colloquium: Language Use and Linguistic Structure*. Olomouc: Palacký University, 233-252.
- Manzini, Maria-Rita & Leonardo Savoia (2005), *I dialetti italiani e romanci: Morfosintassi generativa*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Manzini, Maria Rita & Leonardo Savoia (2011), "Reducing 'case' to denotational primitives: Nominal inflections in Albanian", *Linguistic Variation*, 11:76-120.
- Manzini, Maria-Rita & Leonardo, Savoia (2014), "Linkers in Aromanian in comparison to Albanian and Romanian", *Rivista di Grammatica Generativa*, 36:83-104.
- Manzini, Maria-Rita & Leonardo Savoia (2017), "N morphology and its interpretation: The Neuter in Italian and Albanian varieties", in Bloch-Rozmej, Anna & Anna Bondaruk (eds.), *Constraints on structure and derivation in syntax, phonology and morphology*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 213-236.
- Marttinen Larsson, Matti & Miriam Bouzouita (2018), "Encima de mí vs. encima mío: un análisis variacionista de las construcciones adverbiales locativas con complementos preposicionales y posesivos en Twitter", *Moderna språk*, 112(1):1-39.
- Massaro, Angelapia (2019), *Morfosintassi dell'accordo nel genitivo e sua correlazione con elementi del tipo D*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Florence.
- Meyer-Lübke, Wilhelm (1893), *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen, II: Formenlehre*. Leipzig: Reisland.
- Meyer-Lübke, Wilhelm (1930), *Rumänisch und Romanisch*. Bucharest: Academiei R.S.R.
- Nicolae, Alexandru (2015), "The parameter of definiteness in Romanian: diachronic and synchronic evidence", in Hill, Virginia (ed.), *Formal approaches to DPs in Old Romanian*. Leiden: Brill, 17-61.
- Richards, Norvin (2010), *Uttering trees*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Rohlf, Gerhard (1969), *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Rosetti, Alexandru (1986), *Istoria limbii române*. Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Rouveret, Alain (1994), *Syntaxe du gallois*. Paris: CNRS éditions.
- Salvi, Giampaolo (2011), "Morphosyntactic persistence", in Maiden, Martin, John Charles Smith & Adam Ledgeway (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Romance Languages. I. Structures*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 318-381.
- Sandfeld, Kristian (1930), *Linguistique balkanique. Problèmes and résultats*, Paris: Klincksieck.
- Silvestri, Giuseppina (2012), "Il genitivo apreposizionale in alcune varietà dialettali italiane: un'analisi sintattica", *Studi Italiani di Linguistica Teorica e Applicata* XLI, 3:559-72.
- Silvestri, Giuseppina (2013), *The nature of Genitive Case*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Pisa.

*Giuseppina Silvestri – "Possessives in indefinite nominal phrases: A comparison ..."*

Silvestri, Giuseppina (2016), "Possessivi e partitivi nei dialetti italo-romanzi dell'Area Lausberg", *Lingua italiana. Storia, struttura, testi*, 12:127-142.

Tomić, Olga (2006), *Balkan Sprachbund Morpho-syntactic Features*. Springer: Dordrecht.