Romance genitives: agreement, definiteness, and phases

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In this paper, which discusses data from Gargano Apulian Italo-Romance, I propose that prepositional and non-prepositional genitives are fundamentally two different types of phrases, and that the interpretation of a non-prepositional noun as the possessor is not due to a silent preposition or head-modifier inversion, but rather to an agreement mechanism taking place between the modifier and its head. We propose that, just as a genitive can agree with its head for gender and number features so it can for definiteness, and that agreement for definiteness yields a genitival interpretation of the non-prepositional noun. I.e., definiteness can externalize the syntactic relation between head and modifier. We also propose that in this Apulian variety, non-prepositional genitives are syntactic phases (Chomsky 2001), and that the same holds for non-prepositional ‘qualitative’ predicative phrases in the same language. This would explain the impossibility of accessing the phrase through syntactic operations such as extraction.

Keywords: Apulian, genitive, definiteness agreement, phases

1. Introduction

The present work deals with a particular realization of genitival phrases found in the Italo-Romance variety of San Marco in Lamis, namely non-prepositional genitives. From the analysis of the data, we draw the following conclusions: no selection requirements for [+HUMAN] nouns take place; the head and its modifier are related through agreement for definiteness. Indefinites, by contrast, require the realization of a preposition. Post-nominal adjectival modification of the head is not allowed, and adjectives appear to the right of the modifier. Extraction and coordination are banned. We propose that such genitives constitute syntactic islands, in that they are phases. No syntactic operation can penetrate the phase, with phasehood being linked to definiteness (see Adger 2003, Radford 2004, and Jiménez-Fernández 2012). The paper is structured as follows: in §1 we present the data concerning non-prepositional possessors. In §2 we introduce other Romance non-prepositional genitives. We find that diachronic and diatopic variation mainly involves the modifier, particularly the possibility of its being article-less. In §3 we give an overview of a couple of proposals related to non-prepositional genitives. We suggest that agreement for definiteness takes place in Apulian non-prepositional genitives and we extend this idea to other types of Romance non-prepositional genitives. In §4 we discuss genitive agreement cross-linguistically, and add Romanian to the wider picture of genitives and definiteness in Romance, with the difference being that in Romanian, the denotation of heads extends to their modifiers even when they are indefinites (see Dobrovie-Sorin 2000). In §5 we give a first description of Apulian non-prepositional qualitative noun phrases and suggest that they can be treated on a par with non-prepositional genitives with respect to agreement for definiteness. In §6 we try to answer the question relative to the correlation of modification to D elements, and suggest that it has to do with a connection between D and Person. We treat definiteness like a proper agreement feature, such as gender and number features (which we refer to as q). Φ can externalize the syntactic agreement, definiteness, and phases

1 I wish to thank Paolo Lorusso for feedback on a first draft of this paper, and Danny Bate for proofreading it.
relation between head and modifier, and so can definiteness. We propose that Apulian non-
prepositional genitives are phases and that their phasehood is linked to definiteness (Adger 2003,
Radford 2004, and Jiménez-Fernández 2012). From this derive their islandhood properties vis-à-vis
the unavailability of syntactic operations such as extraction. Finally, §7 concludes.

2. Apulian non-prepositional genitives

As evident from their name, non-prepositional genitives are possessor phrases that do not realize
P(reposition). We focus here on their occurrence in a caseless\(^2\) language, the Apulian Italo-Romance
of San Marco in Lamis (Gargano promontory). The language under analysis here realizes the
prepositional element as *də* (‘of’) and can realize either a prepositional or a non-prepositional genitive
((1) represents a context in which the school owns books that can be borrowed).

(1) a. l-i libbr-a l-a skɔl-a
    DEF-PL book-M.PL DEF-F.SG school-F.SG
    ‘the school’s books’

b. l-i libbr-a dall-a skɔl-a
    ‘the school’s books’

The choice however between a prepositional and a non-prepositional genitive is not free;
prepositional genitives are found with nouns headed by both definite and indefinite articles, while
non-prepositional genitives only allow nouns headed by definite articles.

(2) a.*l-i libbr-a n-a skɔl-a
    DEF-PL book-M.PL INDEF-F.SG school-F.SG
    ‘a school’s books’

b. l-i libbr-a də n-a skɔl-a
    DEF-PL book-M.PL of INDEF-F.SG school-F.SG
    ‘a school’s books’

The construction can yield a proper possessive interpretation, but also a partitive or a locative one:

(3) a. l-i skarp-ə l-u patrə
    DEF-PL shoe-PL DEF-M.SG father
    ‘the father’s shoes’

b. l utəm-a l-a list-a
    DEF last-F.SG DEF-F.SG list-F.SG
    ‘the last of the list’

c. a l-u kwuartə l-a skɔl-a
    to DEF-M.SG side DEF-F.SG school-F.SG
    ‘beside the school’

Non-prepositional genitives also occur with prominence in the creation of toponyms:

\(^2\) Grammatical case is residual and is realized in the pronominal system (*i/ja/me*; ‘I/me’).
In this Apulian variety, adjectival modification of non-prepositional genitives seems to be restricted to the sole genitival modifier (see the context in (6-7)). Except for a restricted class, adjectives appear post-nominally and consequently to the right of the genitival modifier. Adjectival modification of the head seems excluded in this construction (see §2).^3

We have mentioned that this construction never involves indefinites. We can now add a further element with regard to the role of definite articles. In this variety proper names are article-less, and so, regardless of whether we ascribe this to an N-to-D movement (Longobardi 2005) or to a non-realization of the D position, proper names do not occur with definite articles. We can take a look at (8-9) and see how the (non)realization of definite articles works out in a non-prepositional context.

This means that in this Apulian variety, a noun with no definite article can be a possessor only if it is prepositional. Even though proper names are definite elements, a non-prepositional possessor can only be definite and articulated, i.e. it requires that definiteness be grammaticalized through an overt definite article.

Although the construction generally occurs in the form of two consecutive articulated nouns, we found two instances in which the head noun can be article-less and these are: (10) head nouns as proper names; and (11) head nouns as vocatives, respectively.^4 5

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^3 Plural definite articles in this language inflect as /i/ regardless of gender.
^4 Strettula is the name of a street.
^5 Vocatives as in (11) correlate with apocope on the rightmost element of the phrase, applying right after the stressed vowel, here going from /gˈjanka/ (‘white’) to /gˈgia/. If the vocative phrase is composed of the head only, apocope will
We move now to other syntactic properties exhibited by the construction, such as presence/absence of the preposition; co-ordinated possessors; isolation and clefting of the non-prepositional noun. Further on in this work, we will propose that these contexts show us that the head and its non-prepositional modifier form are contained within a phase.

Let us start with co-ordination. In this variety of Apulian the non-prepositional genitive cannot be coordinated:

124  (12)  *l-a fu’nestr-a l-a kas-a e l-a skɔl-a
126       ‘the window of the house and of the school’
127  (13)  l-i fu’nestr-ɔ l-a kas-a e *(dɔ)ll-a skɔl-a
129       ‘the windows of the house and of the school’

(13) shows that the phrase where the non-prepositional possessor is contained can function as the first conjunct, but that at the same time, there is no non-prepositional possessor functioning as second conjunct.

Fronting of the possessor is another test we can carry out. In (14) we can see that a fronted non-prepositional modifier is never an option. The consequence is that fronting is only allowed for prepositional possessors/modifiers:

136  (14)  *l-a kart-a ne lett-ɔ dojɔ paðɔ ɔn-ə
137       DEF-F.SG letter-F.SG part.have.1.SG read-PL two.F page-PL
138       ‘of the letter I have read two pages’
139  (15)  dɔll-a kart-a ne lett-ɔ dojɔ paðɔ ɔn-ə
140       of DEF-F.SG letter-F.SG part.have.1.SG read.PST-PL two.F page-PL
141       ‘of the letter, I have read two pages’

Clefting of the non-prepositional possessor produces identical results, requiring that the clefted nominal be prepositional:

144  (16)  *’ɛ l-a kart-a ke ne lettɔ l-a bbusta
145       is DEF-F.SG letter-F.SG that part.have.1.SG read.pst DEF-F.SG envelope
146       ‘it is of the letter that I read (what’s on) the envelope’
147  (17)  ‘ɛ dɔll-a kart-a ke ne lettɔ l-a bbusta
148       is of DEF-F.SG letter-F.SG that part.have.1.SG read.pst DEF-F.SG envelope

apply on the head itself. For truncation in the vocatives of the languages of Southern Italy, the reader is referred to D’Alessandro and van Oostendorp (2016).
‘it is of the letter that I read the envelope’

We believe that the facts described suggest that non-prepositional modifiers are contained within a phase with their head noun. In §6 we will propose that what’s at stake is D(efiniteness)-agreement within the constituent; before proceeding, in the next section we offer an overview of non-prepositional genitives within Romance languages and see that they occur in both Old Romance (Old Italian, Old French, Old Sicilian) and in other Contemporary Italo-Romance varieties, such as Calabrese. We will proceed diachronically, starting from Old Romance.

3. **Old and Contemporary Romance**

Non-prepositional genitives are often found in Old Romance. Jensen (1990) offers an outline of the construction in Old French, showing that it was a construction mainly dedicated to definite and specific referents. Summing up the data from Jensen (1990:19, 20; (18e) from Diedhiou 2002: 3), we offer the following (18):

(18) a. l-a court l-e rei
   DEF-F.SG court DEF-M.SG king
   ‘the king’s court’

   b. l-e cheval Kex
   DEF-M.SG horse Kex
   ‘Kex’s horse’

   c. l-i filz Venus
   DEF-M.SG son Venus
   ‘Venus’s son’

   d. l-a Dieu benivolance
   DEF-F.SG God.m benevolence.F
   ‘God’s benevolence’

   e. un-e maison a un hermite trova
   INDEF-F.SG house.F to INDEF-M.SG hermit found
   ‘s/he came across the house of a hermit

   f. enondu!
   In.name.God
   ‘in the name of God!’

(18a) is the same configuration with two consecutive determiner phrases as we found in Apulian. (18b), however, shows a dissimilarity between Old Romance and Apulian in which, as we said, proper names can be possessors only when prepositional. Here, instead, an article-less possessor can be non-prepositional. (18d) shows that in Old French the position of head and modifier could be reversed (minus the position of the definite article dominating the head, which remains phrase-initial), however agreement morphology on the definite article specifies which one is the head. (18e) is an indication of a common trait shared with Apulian non-prepositional genitives and namely the realization of a preposition (here *a*) in the presence of indefinites. Lastly, (18f) indicates that non-prepositional

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6 Syncretism between dative and genitive elements is not rare cross-linguistically, occurring regardless of whether this is externalized analytically or synthetically (like for case syncretism in Romanian, uniting genitive and dative in oblique morphology). For an overview of the dative-genitive syncretism in Indo-European, see Luraghi (1987); Manzini and
genitives could form a compound. This pattern is solid within Romance but applies to other instances of non-prepositional genitives crosslinguistically, such as the Hebrew one, with heads in the Construct State (see Borer 2008).  

Old Italian non-prepositional genitives align with Old French ones, allowing, as far as we can tell, the same types of configurations encountered in Old French. In (19) we present Old Italian data obtained from Delfitto and Paradisi (2009):

(19) a. l-a Iddio mercé
     DEF-F.SG God.m mercy.F
     ‘for God’s mercy’

b. l-o padre Enea
     DEF-M.SG father Aeneas
     ‘Anchises, Aeneas’s father’

c. a nome messer Eustagio
     to name sir Eustagio
     ‘in the name of Sir Eustagio’

d. da le rede Bertino d’Aiuolo
     from DEF heir Bertino d’Aiuolo
     ‘from Bertino d’Aiuolo’s heir’

e. li armi Diana
     DEF weapons Diana
     ‘Diana’s weapons’

f. cocitura lo detto pane
     cooking DEF said bread
     ‘the cooking of said bread’

(19a) shows that also in Old Italian the position of the head and the modifier could be reversed, yielding the order modifier-head. The definite article of the head, again, remains however in place and gender features specify which of the two nominals is the head. (19b-e) contain article-less modifiers, with (19c) and (19f) containing an article-less head as well. The latter comprises a pre-nominal modifier of the genitival noun (pane) in the form of a past participle. This means that there is evidence that in Old Italian a non-prepositional genitive could be modified by a pre-nominal modifier, unlike what we have seen for Apulian. This is different also from what we see in a type of non-prepositional genitive found in Contemporary Italian, with casa ‘house’ as its head ((20) adapted from Longobardi (2001: 572)):

(20) a. cas-a Rossi
     house-F.SG Rossi
     ‘the house of the Rossi’s’

Savoia (2011, 2014). What is interesting anyway is that it is a prepositional form (in this instance the a-type) which occurs with indefinite nominals.

7 Nouns in the Semitic construct state are notoriously characterized by an article-less head but might undergo other processes such as the realization of feminine inflection (on this topic with regard to Arabic see, for instance, Mohammad (1999), working on Palestinian Arabic).

8 As we anticipated in §2, only a handful of adjectives can be pre-nominal in this Apulian variety, among including bell-, brutt-, bo/n-, brav- (‘beautiful’, ‘ugly’, ‘good’, etc.). Note however that the adjectives in the data we present in this paper are strictly post-nominal (as nov-, ‘new’, exx (6-7)).
b. *cas-a nuov-a Rossi
   house-F.SG new-F.SG Rossi
   ‘the new house of the Rossi’s’
c. cas-a Rossi nuov-a
   house-F.SG Rossi.PL new-F.SG
   ‘the new house of the Rossi’s’

There is also a difference between Italian in (20c) and Apulian in (6-7), in that in Apulian the adjective agrees with the possessor, while in Italian it agrees with the head, as evident from agreement morphology.

The Old French non-prepositional genitive seems limited to [+HUMAN] referents (see Jensen 1990). This is however not true of Apulian and Old Italian, in which the non-prepositional modifier can also be a –human nominal (pane, ‘bread’ in (19f). Nonetheless, all the varieties presented so far (excluding Apulian) allow for articleless non-prepositional proper names as possessors, and this includes Old Sicilian as well ((21) from Delfitto and Paradisi 2009: 63):

(21)     a. la morti Dyonisiu tyranpu
   DEF death Dionysius tyrant
   ‘the death of the tyrant Dionysius’

As we anticipated, Calabrese is another contemporary Italo-Romance variety of Southern Italy allowing non-prepositional possessors. The construction in the Calabrese variety has been previously analyzed in Rohlf’s (1969) and Silvestri (2012, 2016). The AIS map contains instances of Calabrese non-prepositional genitives, specifically from the variety of Mangone. Like Old Romance, the Calabrese variety of Mangone admits articleless non-prepositional possessors (AIS: 120)

(22)     u pumu Adõmu
   DEF knob Adam
   ‘laryngeal prominence’

Like in Apulian and Old Italian, Calabrese non-prepositional possessors are not restricted to [+HUMAN] referents. We can see this in (23). Verbicaro Calabrese data from Silvestri (2012, 2016):

(23)     a. a nučo u koɔdda
   DEF nut DEF neck
   ‘cervical vertebra’
b. u čiala a vuɔkkə
   DEF sky DEF mouth
   ‘palate’
c. a panza a gamma
   DEF belly DEF leg
   ‘calf’

The construction in Calabrese seems to admit post-nominal adjectival modifiers of the head (Silvestri 2013: 142):
The puzzling thing about non-prepositional genitives inevitably involves a question about how a non-prepositional noun can be interpreted as a possessor in the absence of a preposition or case morphology specifying it as such. This is the topic of the next paragraph, where we will give an overview of proposals put forward in the literature. We will suggest that in the case of Apulian, this interpretation is made possible through the agreement of the two nouns for definiteness.

4. Interpretation with no P

The first account on non-prepositional genitives in the languages of Southern Italy goes back to Rohlfs (1969), who analyzed non-prepositional genitives of the Calabrese variety and proposed that the lack of a preposition is due to its absorption in an intervocalic context (vocalic word end for the head, and the vocalic definite article for the possessor). In contrast to other Romance varieties of Italy, whose articles retained the lateral from ille, the definite article of the Calabrese varieties discussed by Rohlfs underwent the loss of the lateral consonant, thus resulting in the articles a (F)/u, o (M).

The fact however that in several Romance varieties whose definite articles retained the lateral (such as the Apulian of San Marco in Lamis we deal with in this paper) non-prepositional genitives occur as well is the reason behind Silvestri’s (2012) proposal that Rohlf’s hypothesis might be incorrect, in that the lateral in the definite article assures that no inter-vocalic absorption takes place.

Within generative grammar, proposals for Romance non-prepositional genitives either involve a non-pronounced P, or head-modifier inversion. Working on Old French non-prepositional genitives, Simonenko (2010: 9) proposes a KP (Kase Phrase) which is only filled with prepositional genitives, otherwise remaining silent.

Head-modifier inversion is instead proposed in Delfitto and Paradisi (2009: 60), who approach the issue with an analysis à la Kayne, postulating head-modifier inversion.
The AGR head receives the definiteness feature of the possessor via Spec-Head agreement. The incorporation of AGR in D is triggered by a [+HUMAN] feature which syntactically activates AGR/K°, taking into account the [+HUMAN] nature of Old French non-prepositional possessors. However, this cannot apply to all the varieties we examine here, in that several of them require no [+HUMAN] feature for the possessor, making the triggering of AGR into D via a [+HUMAN] feature untenable.

As for (26), in this paper we maintain that the prepositional and the non-prepositional construction do not share the same underlying structure and that the interpretation of a non-prepositional noun as possessor is not due to a silent preposition or to inversion, but rather to an agreement mechanism taking place between the modifier and its head. In the following section, we will propose that just as a genitive can agree with its head for gender and number, so can it for definiteness, and that agreement for definiteness yields a genitival interpretation of the non-prepositional noun, in that it can externalize the syntactic relation taking place between the head and its modifier.

5. Genitive agreement cross-linguistically. A syntactic analysis

In the previous section we suggested that in Apulian a non-prepositional noun is interpreted as a possessor iff:

(27) a) it always occurs with its head from which it cannot be separated neither via extraction nor because of interposing material (e.g. adjectives);
    b) it is accompanied by an article;
    c) it is definite, and so is the head.

(c) in particular is shared by all the Romance non-prepositional genitives we discussed in the paper. Let us say that (c) means that in these languages, a non-prepositional noun is interpreted as genitive only if it agrees for definiteness with its head.

Modifier-head agreement is a trait mostly associated with adjectival modifiers, but agreement between a genitival modifier and its head also exists. This can be achieved through (at least) two different strategies, namely one where agreement with the head is realized on the modifier itself, and a second type where this is externalized on free-standing elements. The first type is the one we find in Georgian wherein the possessor, in the oblique case, might agree with the head noun in number and case so that if the structural case of the head is nominative, the genitive will bear nominative morphology too (Bopp 1848, in Plank 1995: 4):

(28) çinamsbol-n-i laškar-ta-n-i
    vanguard-PL-NOM army-OBL.PL-PL-NOM
    ‘the vanguard of the armies’

In the second type, agreement appears on an element other than the possessor noun itself, which is generally known as linker. Albanian linkers, for instance, are elements that are identical to or allomorphs of definite inflections, agreeing with the head noun (Manzini and Savoia 2014: 84):

(29) libr-i i vəða-it
    book-DEF.NOM.M. LKR.M brother-DEF.OBL.M
    ‘the book of the brother’
Let us return to Romance now, because Romanian has linkers too. There is a second reason why we include Romanian in this list, and this pertains to the ‘purely synthetic’ genitive that Romanian employs. Definiteness, as we will see, plays an important role in the realization of this type of genitive. The linker type, as evident from inflection morphology, is an agreeing element. Like the Albanian linker, the Romanian linker contains a D element (Latin *ille*)9, ((32)a from Dobrovie-Sorin 2000, 2005):

(30)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a. o casa a vecin-ului</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INDEF house.F LKR.F neighbor-DEF.OBL.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘a house of the neighbor’s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. o câine al vecin-ului</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INDEF dog.M LKR.M neighbor-DEF.OBL.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘a dog of the neighbor’s’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘purely synthetic’ type sees the possessor in the oblique case, with no linker appearing between head and modifier (Dobrovie-Sorin 2000):

(31)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a. casa vecin-ului</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>house neighbor-DEF.OBL.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘the neighbor’s house’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. o casa a vecin-ului</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INDEF house.F LKR.F neighbor-DEF.OBL.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘a house of the neighbor’s’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(31) shows that (in)definiteness is the feature leading to the realization of either a synthetic or a linker genitive. Romanian non-*al* genitives can also include modifiers headed by indefinite articles (*unui, unei*) and modifiers in the form of proper names, so that we have cases like the following:10

(32)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a. [evaluate-a [utilizabilitati-i [un-ui scenariui]]]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evaluation-DEF usability-DEF INDEF-GEN scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘evaluation of the usability of a scenario’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. casă Mari-ei</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INDEF house.M LKR.M neighbor-DEF.OBL.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mary’s house’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indeed in the first case, *scenariu* is indefinite and no definiteness trait is present. For such instances, we might adopt the analysis proposed in Dobrovie-Sorin (2000: 216), “the denotation of the overall nominal projection is obtained by applying the denotation of the head N to the denotation of the DP in SpecDP” (SpecDP would be the position assigned to the genitive, in her work). In so doing, a definite interpretation is not derived compositionally, but rather extended from the head to the whole phrase. As for (32b), we have no overt determiner, although definite nouns such as *casa* are known, similarly to proper names, to show such a pattern (see Longobardi 2001).

Longobardi (1995) was the first to notice similarities between the Italian non-prepositional construction in (20) and the Semitic Construct State, which include an articleless head and resistance to post-nominal modification of the head. In Hebrew, genitival modification can be of two types. One

9 It is debated whether other elements (such as the Latin preposition *ad*) might have been present in the original make-up of the linker. An extended discussion on the matter is provided by Giurgea (2012).
10 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
is prepositional (Hebrew has no grammatical case), and this relates to head nouns accompanied by an article, the possibility of a following adjectival modifier and that of an indefinite head and/or possessor. Alternatively, it is a non-prepositional genitive, and this correlates with modifier-head definiteness agreement and a phonologically reduced deaccented articleless head, with stress falling on the genitival noun ((34b), Borer 1988: 48):

(33)  
   a. ha-cašif šel ha-yalda/ šel yalda
   DEF-scarf of DEF-girl/ of girl
   ‘the scarf of the girl/of a girl’
   b. cašif ha-yaldá
   scarf DEF-girl
   ‘the scarf of the girl’

In a similar vein to Dobrovie-Sorin’s proposal for Romanian, Borer (1988) and Hoyt (2008) propose that in Hebrew and Arabic11, respectively, the (in)definiteness feature of modifiers spreads to the head (whereas for Romanian, the purported mechanism progresses from the head to the modifier).

5. More Apulian non-prepositional constructions: qualitative noun phrases
This section deals with another context where P might be absent, namely that of qualitative noun phrases. These constructions are usually characterized by the realization of two nouns, one of which is understood as the predicate. As such, they have been extensively studied with regard to predication (see Napoli 1989, Den Dikken 2006). By predication, it is intended that the head is the externalization of a property associated with the second noun. This is exemplified in the Italian example in (34) (from Napoli 1989: 247):

(34)  
   la teoria della relatività
   ‘the theory of relativity’

What (34) says about relativity is that it is a theory. The head predicates that the property of being a theory is related to relatività. We focus here on a particular type of qualitative noun phrase found in Apulian, namely the N of an N type.

What we know about Italian is that this type of phrase sees its first member as generally dominated by a distal demonstrative, with the second member realized as an indefinite:

(35) quell’idiota di un dottore
   ‘that idiot of a doctor’

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11 Hoyt (2008: 5, 6) shows that it is the modifier which triggers an (in)definite interpretation, as in the following cases, with identical heads, but with modifiers realized differently.

(i)  
   a. kitāb-u bint-i-n
      book-NOM girl-GEN-NUN
      ‘a girl’s book’
   b. kitāb-u l-bint-i
      book-NOM DEF-girl-GEN
      ‘the girl’s book’
The predication being made about *dottore* is that of being an idiot. But in Italian we can also find two variants of the construction: a type with a distal demonstrative preceding the first member and a definite article preceding the second one (36a). The second type occurs with two definite-articled nouns (36b).

(36)  
   a. quell’idiota del dottore  
   ‘that idiot of the doctor’  
   b. l’idiota del dottore  
   ‘the idiot of the doctor’

In the Apulian variety we are dealing with here, binominal qualitative noun phrases occur in a fashion similar to (36b). Except that they can be non-prepositional.

(37)  
   a. l-u ˈʃemə l-u ˈmedəkə  
   DEF-M.SG idiot DEF-M.SG doctor  
   ‘the idiot of the doctor’  
   b. l-a ˈkaspəta l-a bul’letta  
   DEF-F.SG freaking DEF-F.SG bill  
   ‘that freaking thin of a bill’

The non-prepositional construction in (38) obeys the same constraints we found for Apulian non-prepositional genitives, and especially the most salient one, namely a ban on indefinites.

(38)  
   a. l-u ˈʃemə l-u ˈmedəkə  
   DEF-M.SG idiot DEF-M.SG doctor  
   ‘the idiot of the doctor’  
   b. *n-u ˈʃemə l-u ˈmedəkə  
   *an idiot of the doctor’  
   c. *l-u ˈʃemə n-u ˈmedəkə  
   *the idiot of a doctor’  
   d. n-u ˈʃemə ˈmedəkə  
   ‘an idiot of a doctor’  
   e. *n-u ˈʃemə n-u ˈmedəkə  
   *an idiot of a doctor’

Like in non-prepositional genitives, here the second element of the construction cannot undergo fronting. But this is often true of prepositional predicative noun phrases in Italian (see Napoli 1989) and Apulian as well.

(39)  
   a. n-u ˈʃemə ˈmedəkə  
   INDEF-M.SG idiot of doctor  
   ‘an idiot of a doctor’  
   b. *dall-u ˈmedəkə e vista l-u ˈʃemə  
   of.DEF-M.SG doctor have.1sg seen DEF-M.SG idiot
It is possible for the whole phrase to be fronted, or to be a cleft, but not for one of the two DPs which constitute it.

Napoli (1989) proposes that a qualitative noun phrase sits in the terminal node of an NP; that is to say, it behaves like a noun. In generative frameworks, qualitative noun phrases have been derived either on a par with prepositional possessive phrases proper, or in a separate fashion. Kayne (1994: 105-6), for instance, proposes a unitary derivation.

Den Dikken (2006) proposes a structure for qualitative noun phrases only, distinguishing them from possessive prepositional phrases proper. In any case both propose inversion, having the common idea that the preposition of is a sort of nominal copula (the doctor is an idiot). Without advocating inversion, with regard to the Apulian data we suggest, like Kayne, that the two occurrences of of can be united if we take into account the nature of the preposition in such instances, and namely that of an element relating sets. P can relate head and modifier and therefore possessee and possessor. At the same time, it can relate a property to a noun. In our case, P is absent, but definiteness agreement relates the two nouns. One could argue that unlike qualitative noun phrases, possessors can undergo fronting and clefting and that the two constructions should not go under the same umbrella. For the time being, we will delay this discussion until §6.3, in which we return to the issue. To end this section, we can recapitulate what we have found from the analysis of the data at our disposal. We have seen that Apulian non-prepositional qualitative noun phrases are regulated by agreement for definiteness. In section 3-4, we have proposed that this is what expresses the syntactic relation between head and modifier in non-prepositional genitives. In the absence of P, we propose that the same happens in non-prepositional qualitative noun phrases, i.e. that the relation between the
predicate and the subject of the predication is externalized through definiteness agreement, rather
than the externalization of a preposition.


6.1 Agreement

This last section is dedicated to the question of why there seems to be a correlation between D elements and modification in the nominal domain. This correlation seems to externalize (mostly) in two ways. In one, elements stemming from allomorphs of determiners interposed between head and genitive modifiers host number and gender features. They can be either the features of the genitival noun, or those of the head. We have seen that these elements are usually called linkers. They seem to form a constituent with the modifier rather than with the head noun as suggested by linker behaviour in coordination (Philip 2012) and modifier iteration contexts (Manzini et al. 2014) (even though in some cases they might appear as graphically attached to the head, as in Persian). In this case, these elements belong with the modifier, and show agreement with the head via number and gender features. We have seen this for Albanian and Romanian (29-31). Previously, we have seen that in Romanian, oblique case morphology alone does not suffice for the noun to be interpreted as the possessor, and that it is somewhat defective.

So we end up with (at least) two contexts in which D is pivotal for head-modifier agreement. In one, D hosts gender and number features. In the other one, it is just the locus where definiteness is grammaticalized and definiteness agreement with the head is externalized. Another instance in which agreement for definiteness occurs in modification is that of relative clauses. Specifically, Modern Standard Arabic relative clauses are headed by llaðî when the noun they modify is definite (for discussion, see Mohammad 1999). This element is not present with indefinite heads ((42) from Galal 2004: 46).

(42) a. raʔayt-u 1-walad-a ʔallaðî ʔaaʔ-a al-yaum
   saw-1.SG DEF-boy-ACC REL came-he DEF-day
   ‘I saw the boy who came today’
   b.*raʔayt-u walad-a-n ʔallaðî ʔaaʔ-a al-yaum
   saw-1.SG boy-ACC REL came-he DEF-day
   ‘I saw a boy who came today’

By the same token (assuming llaðî to be a D element), Apulian non-prepositional genitives, which always modify a definite head, must be headed by an overt D.

What we would like to suggest with regard to the correlation of D(efiniteness) to modification is that this has something to do with indexing. In previous literature, it has been suggested that there is a correlation between D elements and person, gender and number features, and specifically with Person. In Chomsky (1995), by instance, D elements can satisfy the EPP [Extended Projection Principle], meaning the necessity for verbs to express a subject, either via a pronominal element, verbal inflection, or an expletive. Lyons (1999) goes further and proposes that Person and Definiteness can be unified under the same category, namely Person-Definiteness. When it comes to nouns, Person reduces to 3rd person (see Baker (2003) and Ackema and Neeleman (2019a, 2019b) on number features in R-expressions) and the rest is achieved by number and/or gender and case. If number and gender and definiteness can be correlated, this means that just as Kartvelian genitives
can agree for number, gender, and case, so genitives in other languages can agree for definiteness. In this sense, definiteness is a proper feature, and as such can externalize the syntactic relation between a head and its modifier. The definiteness features of internal arguments can also influence the type of inflectional morphology present on a verb. This happens in Hungarian. Coppock and Wechsler (2012) show that this occurs in a number of contexts, including proper names, possessives, third person direct object pronouns,\textsuperscript{13} and definite internal arguments. Again, there is a strong correlation between person and definiteness. As they explain, definite inflections stem from pronoun incorporation, but given that they inflect according to mood and tense, Coppock and Wechsler argue that they amount to agreement morphology, rather than object clitics. They propose that through reanalysis, such pronouns lost \( \varphi \)-features,\textsuperscript{14} while retaining formal DEF properties, finally resulting in a \( \varphi \)-less form of agreement, which is what we find in Apulian non-prepositional genitives. Within Southern Italo-romance, yet another proof that (in)definiteness is pivotal in the choice of a particular configuration over another emerges. Ledgeway et al. (2020), for instance, show that Calabrese features a type of linker, which is found only in indefinite contexts only.

\begin{center}
(43) a. nu cumpagn-\(\text{-}\)ə *(r-u) miə (Orsomarso, Cosenza. Ledgeway et al. 2020: 97)  
\hspace{1cm} INDEF friend-m of-DEF my  
\hspace{1cm} ‘a friend of mine’  
\hspace{1cm} b. a cumpagna suə  
\hspace{1cm} DEF friend his/her  
\hspace{1cm} ‘his/her friend’
\end{center}

\textit{ru} is undoubtedly a type of linker. Its morphological makeup is also analogous to the one found in Romanian and Aromanian (§5, footnote 8 of this paper, and reference contained therein). Ledgeway et al. also show that Italo-Greek varieties of Southern Italy prefer strong possessive forms over enclitic ones in indefinite configurations. This is also true of Southern Italo-Romance in general, as in the following example from Gargano Apulian.

\begin{center}
(44) a. *nu fratə-mə  
\hspace{1cm} INDEF brother-my  
\hspace{1cm} b. nu frata mjə  
\hspace{1cm} INDEF brother my  
\hspace{1cm} ‘one of my brothers’  
\hspace{1cm} c. fratə-mə  
\hspace{1cm} brother(s)-my  
\hspace{1cm} ‘my brother’ \textit{or} ‘my brothers’\textsuperscript{15}
\end{center}

6.2 \textit{Definiteness and phasehood}

How can we explain the fact that non-prepositional genitives do not allow syntactic operations such as extraction? Here we would like to propose that this is because they are phases. A \textit{phase} is a chunk

\textsuperscript{13} First and second person trigger instead the \textit{subjective} inflection. See Coppock and Wechsler (2012) for discussion.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Phi} features, or number and gender features.

\textsuperscript{15} Plural forms of the enclitic possessive only exist in the first person plural. Masculine, feminine plural and masculine singular morphology in nouns and possessives carries an invariable schwa. \textit{Agreement morphology in the clause} disambiguates singular from plural forms.
of syntactic structure that once completed, is not accessible to further syntactic operations (Chomsky 1998). Structure is built phase by phase, and once the phase is closed, no syntactic operation can take place, and therefore island effects arise.  

Chomsky (2001: 12) proposed that “phases are propositional: verbal phrases with full argument structure and CP with force indicators”. More recently, Adger (2003), Radford (2004), Jiménez-Fernández (2012), and Chomsky (2020) have argued that definite DPs can have phasehood status, as shown in (47), in which the banned syntactic operation is wh-extraction.

\[(45)\]  
a. *Which poem did you hear Homer’s recital of last night? (Adger 2003: 327)  
b. Which poem did you go to hear a recital of last night?

Since Higginbotham (1985), nominal phrases are thought to be endowed with argument structure too. So for example in a language with articles, determiners saturate one of the noun’s argumental slots. Yet so do genitival phrases (regardless of whether this is grammatical case or its analytical counterpart). Putting together the proposal that definite DPs are phases with the idea that genitives are phrases with full argument structure, we would like to propose that non-prepositional genitives of the Apulian kind are actually phases, and therefore subject to islandhood effects. A similar proposal with respect to genitives is put forward in Shormani (2016), who argues that Semitic Construct State genitives constitute phases.

One question left to answer is why we have cases in which both the head and the modifier are headed by definite articles, but the result is not a non-prepositional genitive. We have already seen that prepositional and non-prepositional genitives allow for different syntactic operations, including extraction. Diachronically, we have seen that non-prepositional genitives externalize specific referents. This is also the case in contemporary Apulian. Such genitives are typically associated head-modifier pairs (court and king; wheel and car, or toponyms). In some instances, just like in Italian, a definite article does not necessarily contain a [+DEF] feature, and is not an iota operator proper.

\[(46)\]  
mangio la torta  
et-1sg DEF cake  
‘I eat (the) cake’

What we have in non-prepositional genitives, instead, is DPs with a specific reference, with definite articles functioning as fully-fledged iota operators. So we might have a genitival phrase wherein both the head and the modifier are headed by definite articles, but definite articles will not always yield a definite interpretation.

6.3 Qualitative noun phrases and phasehood

In §5 we have speculated that the role of prepositions in genitival noun phrases and in qualitative noun phrases is roughly the same: that of relating two nouns. In the case of non-prepositional phrases, this role is played by definiteness agreement. It remains to explain why a prepositional genitival noun phrase can undergo extraction, while qualitative noun phrases cannot, regardless of whether they are prepositional or non-prepositional. This can be explained if we take into account the predicative function of qualitative constructions, with an analogous case being adjectival modification. Simple

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16 See Ross (1967), in which they were first introduced.
adjectival phrases, at least in the systems considered here, do not allow the extraction of the head noun or its modifier. Hypothesizing a phasehood status for such cases would explain the impossibility for extraction (see also Chomsky 2020: 51). We assume here that merging of $N_1$ with a prepositional phrase (or through definiteness agreement) containing $N_2$ (that genius$_N$ of a doctor$_N$) turns it into a predicative element on a par with adjectival modifiers. Consider further, by instance, that a qualitative noun phrase is analogous to saying “x is a doctor and an idiot”. Bošković (2020), following Higginbotham (1985), treats adjunction (modification) as being analogous to coordination$^{17}$, which would explain similarities shared by the two regarding the impossibility of extraction.

To conclude, both non-prepositional genitives and non-prepositional qualitative noun phrases constitute phases, but for different reasons. In the case of genitives, this is to do with definiteness. In the case of qualitative noun phrases, this is to do with their predicative function.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we introduced a peculiar type of non-prepositional genitive. We found that, in absence of a prepositional element, head and modifier are related through definiteness agreement. In light of the fact that a number of syntactic operations (such as extraction) cannot access these phrases, we proposed that this is due to their being phases. In this case, following previous work, we argued that their phasehood status is triggered by definiteness.

We also introduced another type of non-prepositional phrase, namely non-prepositional qualitative constructions. We identified a number of mechanisms shared with non-prepositional genitives; also in this case, we argued that the two nouns are related through definiteness agreement, and we also found that qualitative noun-phrases resist extraction too. We have proposed that qualitative noun phrases are predicative in nature, and that this derives from their phasehood (see also Bošković 2020 and Chomsky 2020).

References


$^{17}$ A big butterfly $=$ That is a butterfly, and it is big (for a butterfly) (see Higginbotham 1985: 563).


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