

Pro-Drop in Nominal Possessive Constructions

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Overview of the Talk

- Introduction
 - Agreement, pronoun incorporation, and pro-drop in LFG
- Possessive Constructions in Low Saxon
 - The pronominal possessive construction
 - The possessive linker construction (pro-drop of the possessor)
 - Parallels to verbal pro-drop
 - Pro-drop of the possessum
 - The s-possessive
- Application to Other Languages
 - Other Germanic languages
 - Other Languages

Introduction

Agreement, Pronoun Incorporation, Pro-Drop

- In many languages, arguments of a head are “indexed” by morphology on this head.
- Three patterns of head marking are usually distinguished in LFG (cf. Bresnan 2001, chapter 8):
 - Agreement
 - Pronoun Incorporation
 - Pro-Drop

Agreement

- Subject-Verb Agreement in English
- Verb puts restrictions on possible subjects.

Mary walks.

* *People walks.*

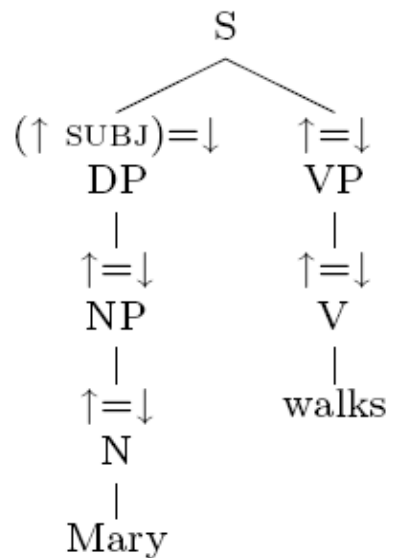
- An overt complement-DP/NP must be present.

Mary walks.

* *walks. (=She walks.)*

Agreement

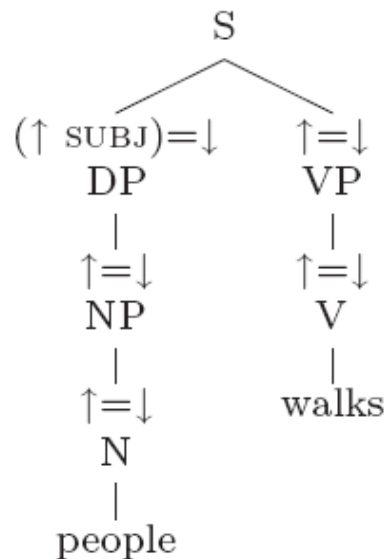
Mary	N	(↑ PRED)=‘Mary’	walks	V	(↑ PRED)=‘walk<(↑ SUBJ)>’
		(↑ NUM)=sg			(↑ SUBJ NUM)=sg
		(↑ PERS)=3			(↑ SUBJ PERS)=3
		(↑ GEND)=f			(↑ TENSE)=pres



	PRED	‘walk<(↑ SUBJ)>’	
	TENSE	pres	
SUBJ	PRED	‘Mary’	
	NUM	sg	
	PERS	3	
	GEND	f	

Agreement

people N (↑ PRED)='people' walks V (↑ PRED)='walk<(↑ SUBJ)>
 (↑ NUM)=pl (↑ SUBJ NUM)=sg
 (↑ PERS)=3 (↑ SUBJ PERS)=3
 (↑ TENSE)=pres



	PRED	'walk<(↑ SUBJ)>'								
	TENSE	pres								
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>PRED</td> <td>'people'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NUM</td> <td>sg pl</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PERS</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GEND</td> <td>f</td> </tr> </table>		PRED	'people'	NUM	sg pl	PERS	3	GEND	f
PRED	'people'									
NUM	sg pl									
PERS	3									
GEND	f									
SUBJ										

Agreement

walks V (\uparrow PRED)=‘walk<(\uparrow SUBJ)>’
 (\uparrow SUBJ NUM)=sg
 (\uparrow SUBJ PERS)=3
 (\uparrow TENSE)=pres

S
|
 \uparrow = \downarrow
VP
|
 \uparrow = \downarrow
V
|
walks

PRED	‘walk<(\uparrow SUBJ)>’				
TENSE	pres				
SUBJ	<table border="1"><tr><td>NUM</td><td>sg</td></tr><tr><td>PERS</td><td>3</td></tr></table>	NUM	sg	PERS	3
NUM	sg				
PERS	3				

Pronoun Incorporation

- An anaphoric pronoun is “incorporated” into the verbal head.

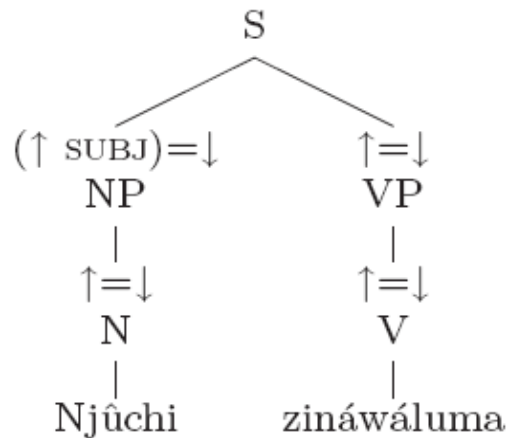
Njûchi zi- ná- wá- lum-a. (“The bees bit them.”)
10.bee 10.S-PST-2.O-bite-FV

- An overt complement-DP/NP cannot be present at the same time.

* *Njûchi zi- ná- wá- lum-a a-lenje.*
10.bee 10.S-PST-2.O-bite-FV 2-hunter
“The bees bit them the hunters.”

Pronoun Incorporation

njûchi N (↑ PRED)=‘bee’ zináwáluma V (↑ PRED)=‘bite<(↑SUBJ)(↑OBJ)>’
 (↑ PERS)=3 (↑ SUBJ GEND)=10
 (↑ GEND)=10 (↑ OBJ PRED)=‘PRO’
 (↑ OBJ GEND)=2



PRED	‘bite<(↑ SUBJ)(↑ OBJ)>’	
TENSE	past	
SUBJ	PRED	‘bee’
	PERS	3
	GEND	10
OBJ	PRED	‘PRO’
	GEND	2

Pro-Drop

- Intermediate stage between agreement and pronoun incorporation
- The verb morphology can provide a pronominal interpretation for a missing argument.

Zi- ná- wá- lum-a.

10.S- PST-2.O- bite-FV

“They bit them.”

- But an overt complement-DP/NP **can** also be present.

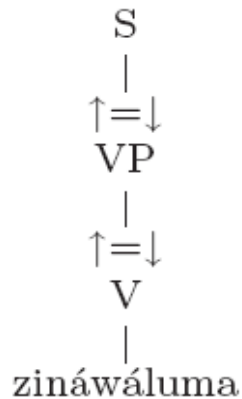
Njûchi zi- ná- wá- lum-a.

10.bee 10.S-PST-2.O- bite-FV

“The bees bit them.”

Pro-Drop

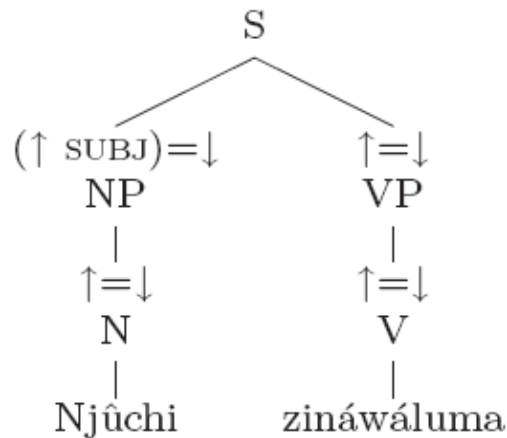
zináwáluma V (↑ PRED)=‘bite<(↑SUBJ)(↑OBJ)>’
 ((↑ SUBJ PRED)=‘PRO’)
 (↑ SUBJ GEND)=10
 (↑ OBJ PRED)=‘PRO’
 (↑ OBJ GEND)=2



PRED	‘bite<(↑ SUBJ)(↑ OBJ)>’				
TENSE	past				
SUBJ	<table style="border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">PRED</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">‘PRO’</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">GEND</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">10</td> </tr> </table>	PRED	‘PRO’	GEND	10
PRED	‘PRO’				
GEND	10				
OBJ	<table style="border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">PRED</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">‘PRO’</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">GEND</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2</td> </tr> </table>	PRED	‘PRO’	GEND	2
PRED	‘PRO’				
GEND	2				

Pro-Drop

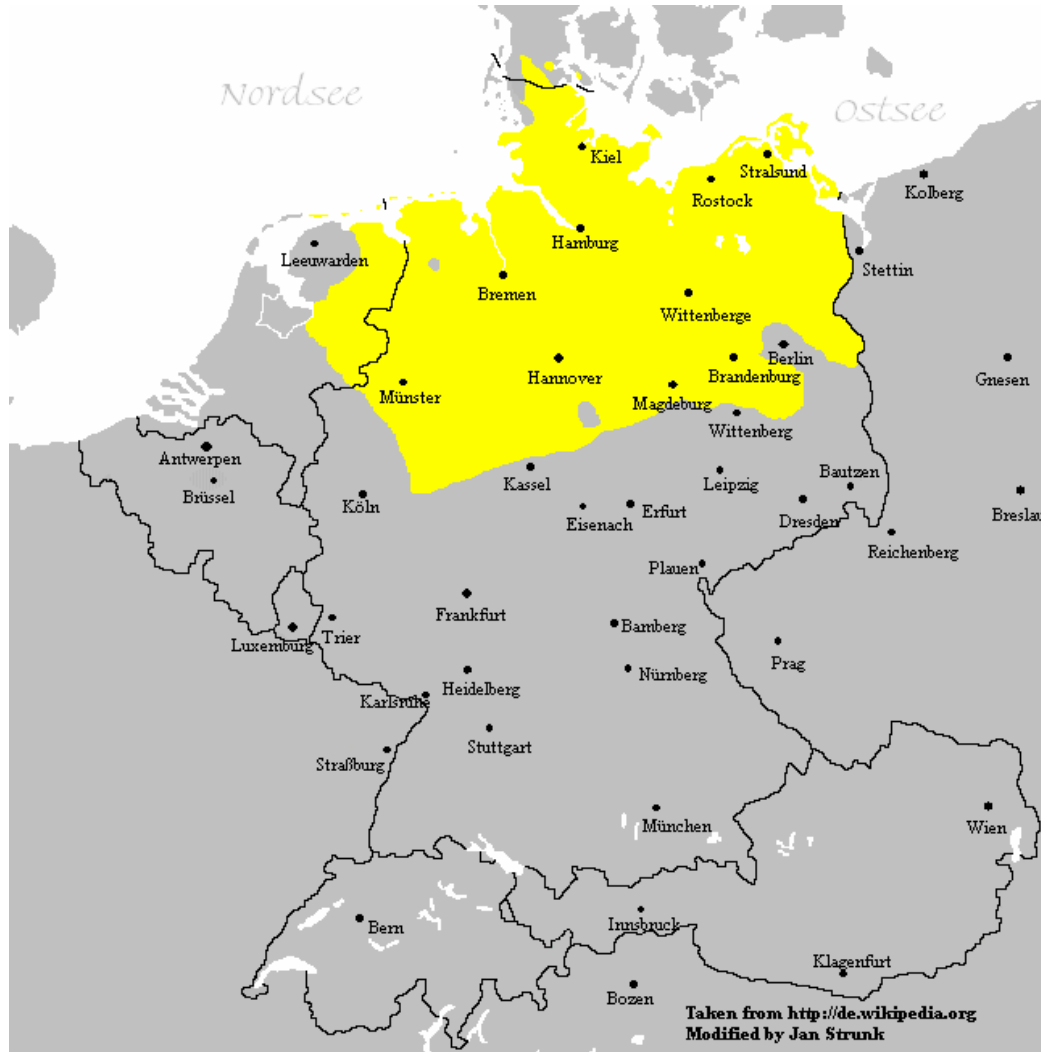
njûchi N (↑ PRED)=‘bee’ zináwáluma V (↑ PRED)=‘bite<(↑SUBJ)(↑OBJ)>’
 (↑ PERS)=3 ((↑ SUBJ PRED)=‘PRO’)
 (↑ GEND)=10 (↑ SUBJ GEND)=10
 (↑ OBJ PRED)=‘PRO’
 (↑ OBJ GEND)=2



PRED	‘bite<(↑ SUBJ)(↑ OBJ)>’	
TENSE	past	
SUBJ	PRED	‘bee’
	PERS	3
	GEND	10
OBJ	PRED	‘PRO’
	GEND	2

Possessive Constructions in Low Saxon

The Low Saxon Language



The Pronominal Possessive Construction

- A pronominal possessor is expressed by a possessive pronoun preceding a possessum NP.

mien Huus *ehr Huus* *sien Huus*
my house *her/their house* *his house*

- Low Saxon nominal phrases are DPs.
- The possessive pronouns are determiners.
- I therefore analyze them as a D co-head of the possessum NP.

The Pronominal Possessive Construction

- Possessive pronouns agree with the possessum NP in number, gender, and case.

he geht seinen Weg
he goes his-M.SG.ACC way.M.SG.ACC
“He goes his way.”

* *he geht seine Weg*
he goes his-F.SG/PL way.M.SG.ACC

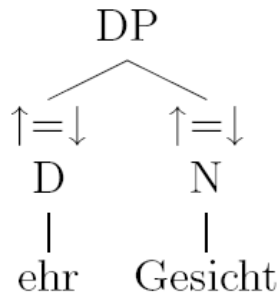
- Possessive pronouns also specify the person, number, and gender of the possessor.

sein Weg *ihre Weg* *mein Weg* *uns Weg*
his way *their way* *my way* *our way*

The Pronominal Possessive Construction

ehr D (↑ POSS PRED)=‘PRO’
 (↑ POSS PERS)=3
 (↑ POSS NUM)=sg
 (↑ POSS GEND)=f
 (↑ NUM)=sg
 (↑ GEND)=n
 (↑ CASE)=acc

Gesicht N (↑ PRED)=‘face-of<(↑ POSS)>’
 (↑ GEND)=n
 (↑ NUM)=sg
 (↑ CASE)=acc



PRED	‘face-of<(↑ POSS)>’								
GEND	n								
NUM	sg								
CASE	acc								
POSS	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>PRED</td> <td>‘PRO’</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PERS</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GEND</td> <td>f</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NUM</td> <td>sg</td> </tr> </table>	PRED	‘PRO’	PERS	3	GEND	f	NUM	sg
	PRED	‘PRO’							
	PERS	3							
	GEND	f							
NUM	sg								

The Possessive Linker Construction

- A full possessor DP is preposed to a pronominal possessive construction.

[[de'n Jung] sien Vadder]
the.M.SG.ACC boy.M.SG.ACC his.M.SG father.M.SG
“the boy’s father”

- The possessor DP has to be in the accusative case.

* *[[de Jung] sien Vadder]*
the.M.SG.NOM boy.M.SG.NOM his.M.SG father.M.SG
“the boy’s father”

- The possessor DP and the possessive pronoun agree in number and gender.

[[Gerda] ehr Mudder]
Gerda.F.SG her.F.SG mother.F.SG
“Gerda’s mother”

The Possessive Linker Construction

- The possessor DP, the linker, and the possessum NP form a constituent.

- Subject position (V2)

[Wendtland sien Vadder] harr gor Fritz Reuter kennt.

Wendtland his father had even Fritz Reuter known.

“Wendtland’s father had even known Fritz Reuter.”

- Pied Piping

ena [daem sien Shoobaunt] ekj nich faeich sie loos to moake

one who his shoe string I not able am loose to make

“one whose shoe string I am not able to untie”

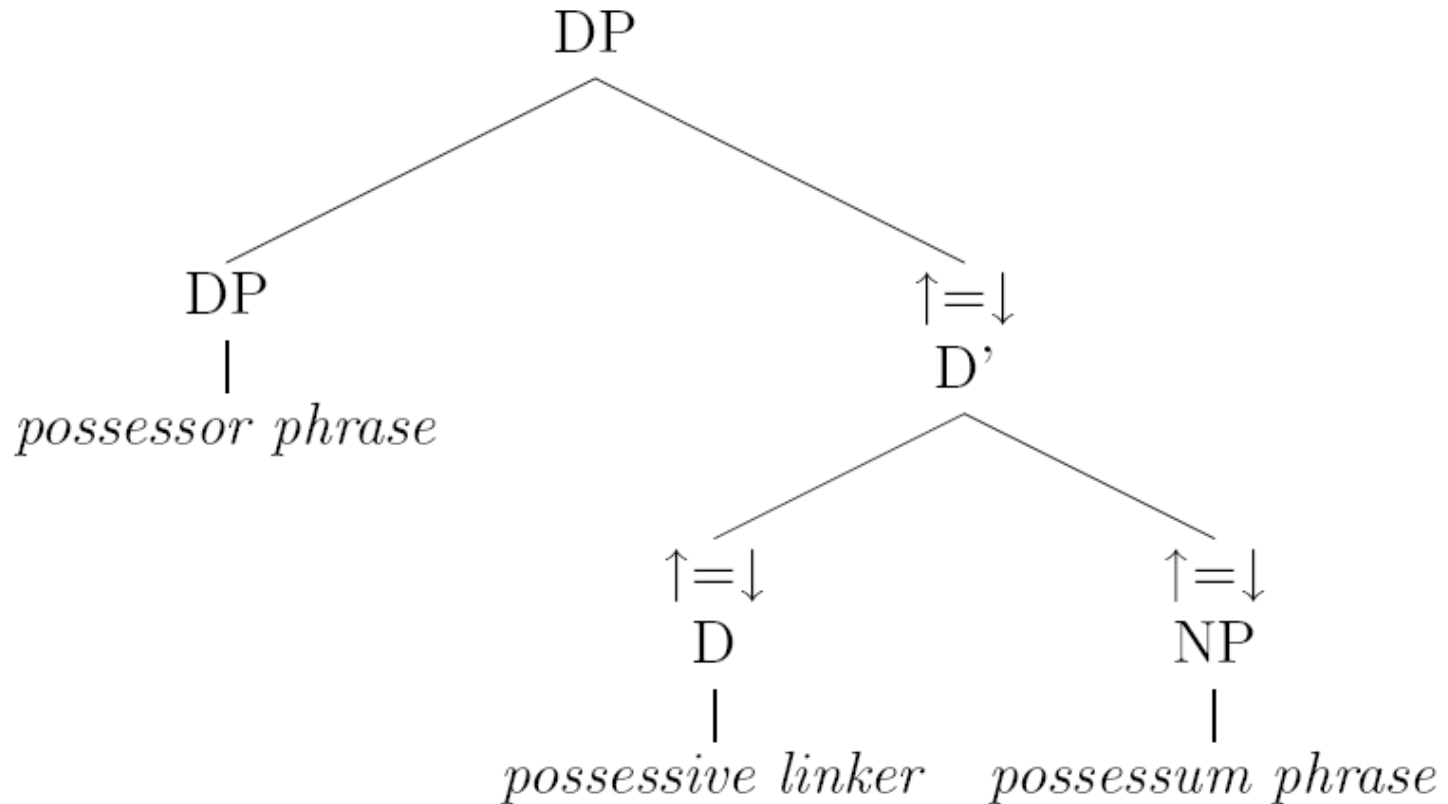
- Complex possessive constructions

[[Paul siene Sesta] aea Saen]

Paul his sister her son

“Paul’s sister’s son”

The Possessive Linker Construction



(Cf. Abney 1987, Corver 1990, Radford 1990, Delsing 1991, Taylor 1996, Norde 1997, Weerman and de Witt 1999, etc.)

The Possessive Linker Construction

- No resumption is involved (contra Norde 1997)
 - The possessive linker phrase can occur in the middle of a sentence.
De grugelige Bang' in [mudder ehr Ogen] seih ick noch hüt.
the terrible fear in mother her eyes see I still today
“Even today I still see the terrible fear in mother’s eyes.”
 - The possessor phrase can contain question words or negative indefinite pronouns (which is not possible with resumptive pronouns) (cf. Falk 2002).

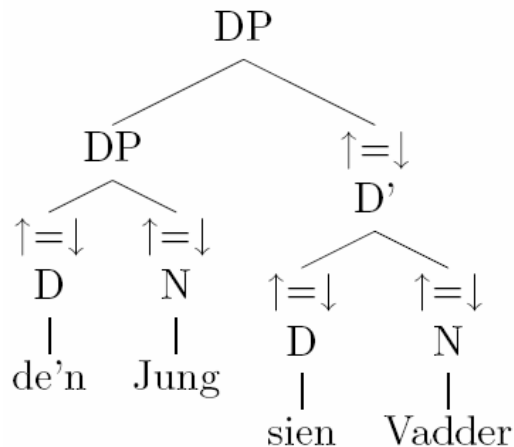
nümms siin Vadder
nobody his father
“nobody’s father”

The Possessive Linker Construction

- Pronounced as one intonation unit.
- Native speakers do not perceive the linker as a second act of reference.
- Pronoun/linker is always directly adjacent to the possessor DP and obligatorily “bound” by it.
 - Diachronic pressure to lose anaphoric function

The Possessive Linker Construction as Nominal Pro-Drop

- No resumption → the pronoun is not interpreted anaphorically
- It simply acts as a possessive linker / marker
- **The possessive pronoun / linker shows nominal pro-drop behavior**



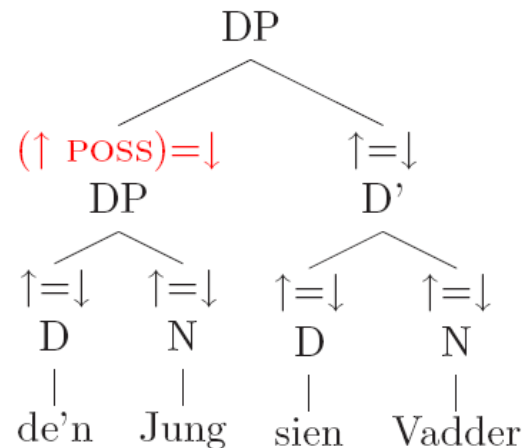
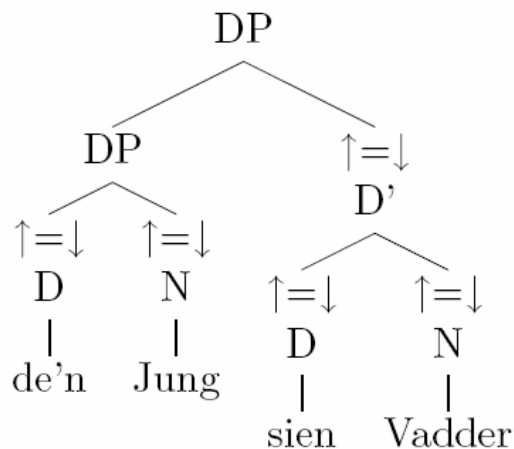
sien D ((↑ POSS PRED)=‘PRO’)
 (↑ POSS PERS)=3
 (↑ POSS GEND)=m
 (↑ POSS NUM)=sg
 (↑ GEND)=m
 (↑ NUM)=sg
 (↑ CASE)=nom

PRED	‘father-of<(↑ POSS)>’																
GEND	m																
NUM	sg																
CASE	nom																
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>PRED</td> <td colspan="2">‘boy’</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PERS</td> <td colspan="2">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GEND</td> <td colspan="2">m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NUM</td> <td colspan="2">sg</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CASE</td> <td colspan="2">acc</td> </tr> </table>		PRED	‘boy’		PERS	3		GEND	m		NUM	sg		CASE	acc	
PRED	‘boy’																
PERS	3																
GEND	m																
NUM	sg																
CASE	acc																
POSS	GEND	m															
	NUM	sg															
	CASE	acc															

The Possessive Linker Construction as Nominal Pro-Drop

- How is the information from the possessor DP projected?
- Possessive marking (i.e. the linker) establishes POSS.
- Possessor DP can only project if the linker is present (cf. also Plank 1980).

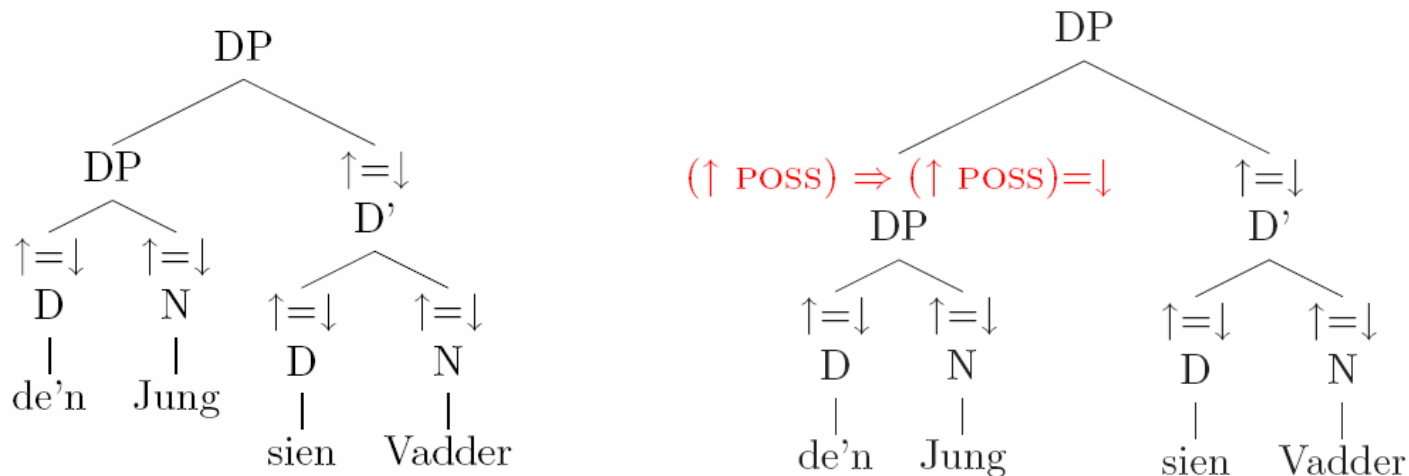
** de'n Jung Vadder*
the boy father



The Possessive Linker Construction as Nominal Pro-Drop

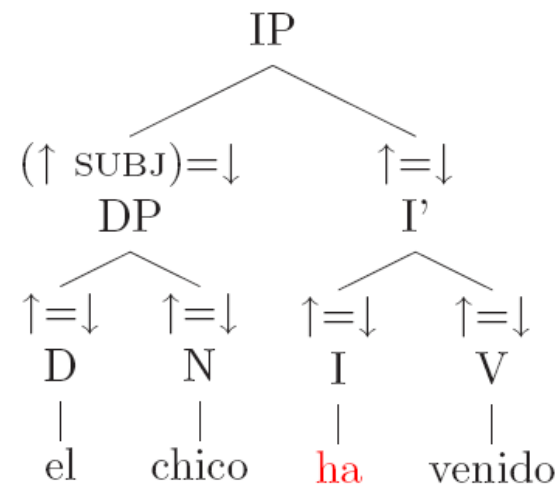
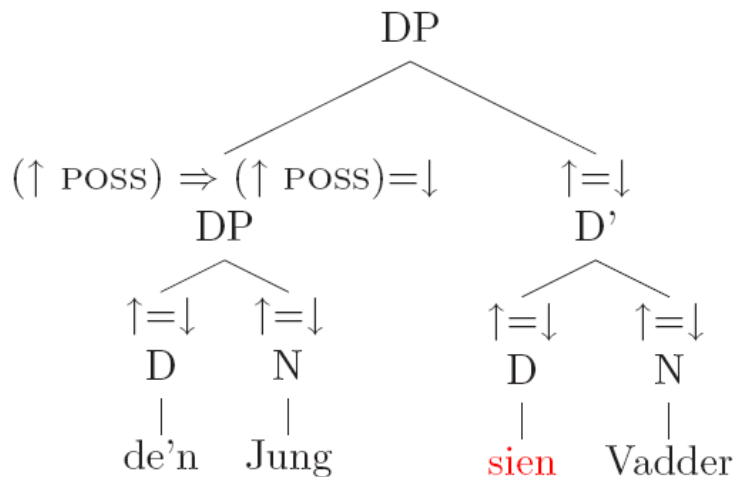
- How is the information from the possessor DP projected?
- Possessive marking (i.e. the linker) establishes POSS.
- Possessor DP can only project if the linker is present (cf. also Plank 1980).

* *de'n Jung Vadder*
the boy father



Co-Head as Locus of Pro-Drop Information

- Co-head as locus of agreement / pro-drop morphology is not as strange as it may seem.
- **Agreement / pro-drop information does not have to appear on the lexical head itself, it can also be part of a co-head!**
- The possessive pronoun / linker is not an ordinary pronoun:
 - Possessive marker
 - Contains information on both possessor and possessum



Comparing Verbal and Nominal Pro-Drop

- No overt subject / possessor
 - Anaphorical reference to a highly accessible referent
- Overt non-pronominal subjects / possessors
 - Expression of lexical semantic content
- Overt pronominal subjects / possessors
 - In special contexts only, no free variation

Comparing Verbal and Nominal Pro-Drop

- Contrastive focus (cf. Larson and Lujàn 1989, Cameron 1992, Bresnan 2001, Amaral and Schwenter 2005, etc.)

*Ik heff all en moien Wogen, man **em sien Auto** is nog veel beter.
I have already a nice car, but him his car is still much better.
“I already have a very nice car, but **his** car is still much better.”*

- Referring to an antecedent that is currently not the most accessible (Dimitriadis 1995, 1996), “Switch Reference” (Cameron 1992)

*Jan wull gern angeln gohn. He wull sien Fründ Hinnerk ok inloden.
Man [**em sien Telefoon**] wöör twei.
“Jan wanted to go fishing. He wanted to invite his friend Hinnerk.
But his phone was broken.” (i.e. Hinnerk’s phone was broken)*

Comparing Verbal and Nominal Pro-Drop

- Coordination (Larson and Lujàn 1989)

Dat sünd [[em un sien Broder] ehr Peer].
That are him and his Brother their horses
“Those are his and his brother’s horses.”

- Deixis (cf. eg. de Bruyne 1993, p. 145)

Wokeen hört dei tou? – Och, dat is em sien Wogen.
Who belongs that to? Well, that is him his car
“Who does that one belong to? – Well, that’s his car.”
(while pointing at someone)

Pro-Drop of the Possessum

- Possessum NP can be left out both in the pronominal possessive construction and the possessive linker construction.

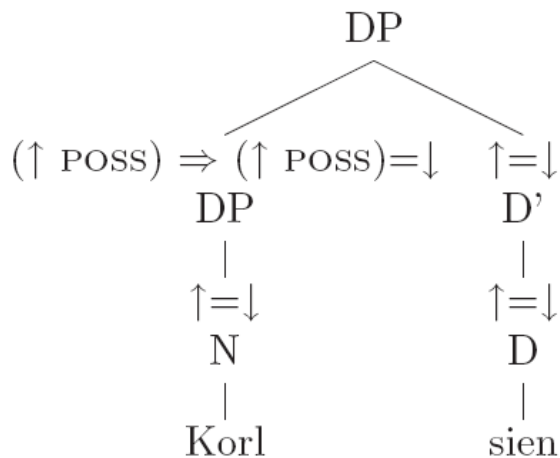
säi läegt höör kop tegen mîn
she lays her head against mine
“She leans her head against mine.”

Mien Öller [...] Fritz sien [...] un Korl sien [...]
my age Fritz his and Korl his
“my age, Fritz’s and Korl’s”

- The possessum is interpreted pronominally when no overt possessum is present.

Pro-Drop of the Possessum

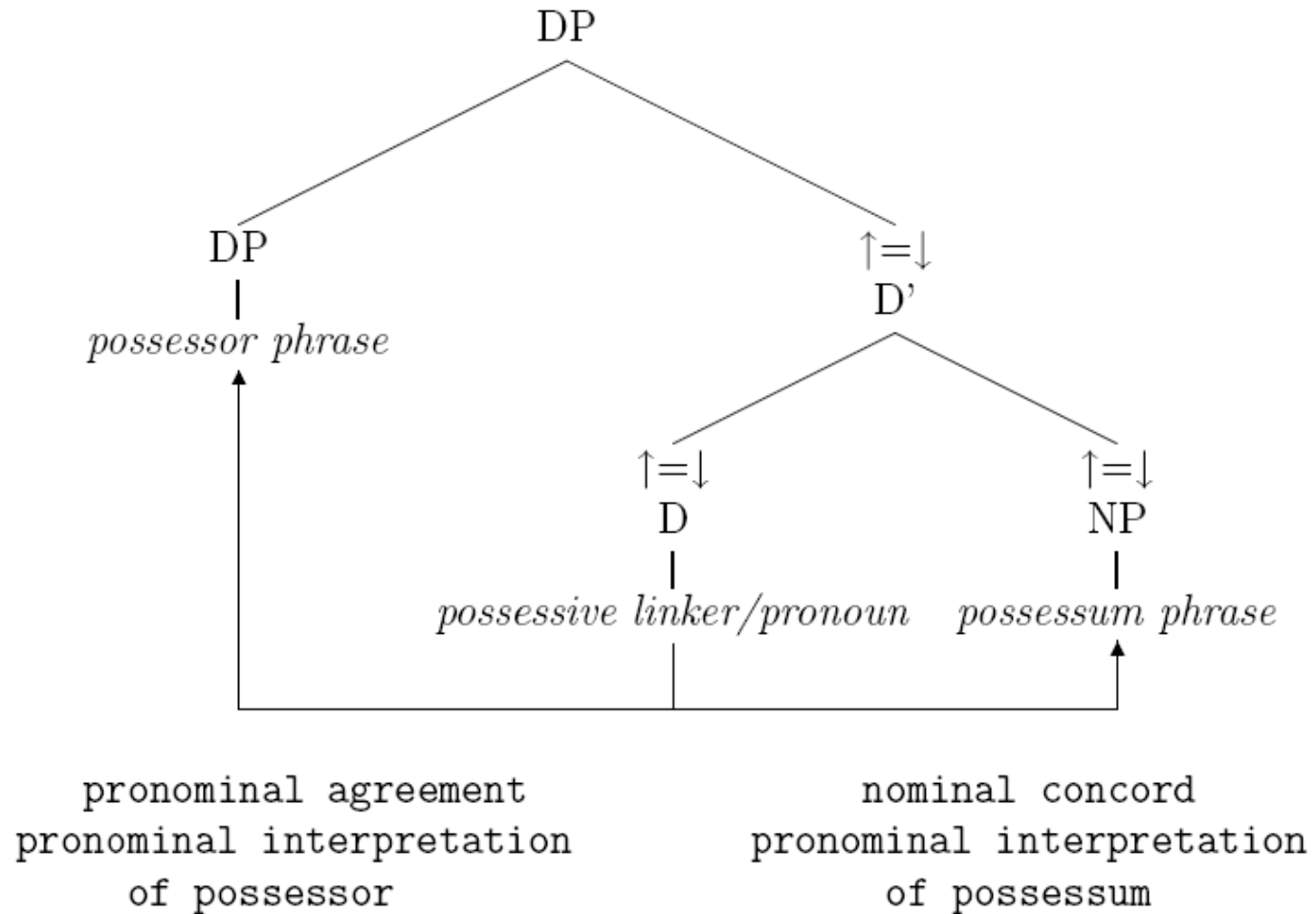
- Pro-drop of the possessum
- The possessive pronoun / linker contains two optional PRED features:
 - one for the possessor
 - one for the possessum



sien D ((↑ POSS PRED)=‘PRO’)
 (↑ POSS PERS)=3
 (↑ POSS GEND)=m
 (↑ POSS NUM)=sg
 ((↑ PRED)=‘PRO-of<(↑ POSS)>’)
 (↑ GEND)=n
 (↑ NUM)=sg
 (↑ CASE)=nom

PRED	‘PRO-of<(↑ POSS)>’										
GEND	n										
NUM	sg										
CASE	nom										
POSS	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>PRED</td> <td>‘Korl’</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PERS</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GEND</td> <td>m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NUM</td> <td>sg</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CASE</td> <td>acc</td> </tr> </table>	PRED	‘Korl’	PERS	3	GEND	m	NUM	sg	CASE	acc
PRED	‘Korl’										
PERS	3										
GEND	m										
NUM	sg										
CASE	acc										

The Possessive Linker Construction



The S-Possessive

- Many dialects of Low Saxon have an s-possessive construction.

[höör ollens] hus
her parents' house

Antjes Bröögam
Antje's bridegroom

Hinnerk's Huss iss groote den Antje's.
Hinnerk's house is bigger than Antje's

- Traditionally regarded as a possessive construction with possessor in genitive case.

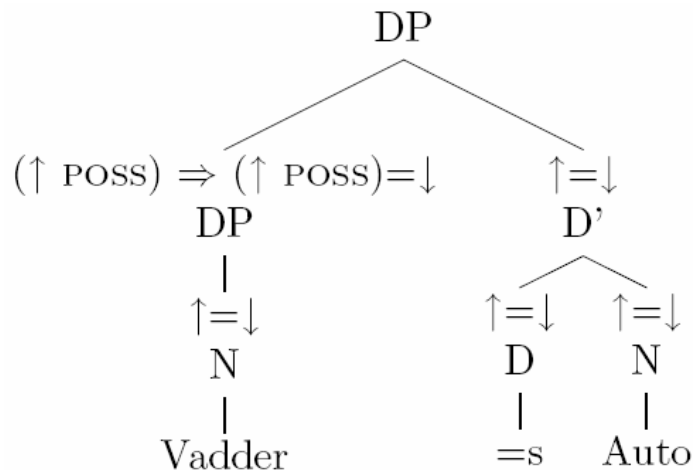
The S-Possessive

- But the possessive marker behaves more like a linker than like case-marking morphology.
- This has also been shown for the s-possessive in other Germanic languages.
(Janda 1980, Hudson 1995, Taylor 1996, Norde 1997, Weerman and de Wit 1999)
- Complementary distribution of =s and determiners suggests an analysis of =s as a possessive linker of category D.
(cf. Hudson 1995, Radford 1990, Corver 1990, Delsing 1991, Taylor 1996)

S-Possessive as Possessive Linker

- Clitic =s establishes the possessive relation
- Contains no agreement information.
- But provides an optional pronominal PRED feature for the possessum.

=s D (↑ POSS)=↓
 ((↑ PRED)='PRO-of<(↑ POSS)>')



PRED	'car-of<(↑ POSS)>'						
GEND	n						
NUM	sg						
CASE	nom						
POSS	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>PRED</td> <td>'father'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GEND</td> <td>m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NUM</td> <td>sg</td> </tr> </table>	PRED	'father'	GEND	m	NUM	sg
PRED	'father'						
GEND	m						
NUM	sg						

Application to other Languages

Other Germanic Languages

- Most modern Germanic languages have a possessive linker construction and/or an s-possessive.
 - English s-possessive
my mother's car
 - Dutch possessive linker construction and s-possessive
mijn moeder d'r auto *mijn moeders auto* (“my mother's car”)
my mother her car *my mother's car*
 - West Flemish possessive linker construction and s-possessive construction (?) (Haegeman 2003)
Marie euren boek *Marie-se boek* (“Mary's book”)
Mary her book *Mary's (?) book*
 - Afrikaans possessive linker construction
my moeder se huis (“my mother's house”)
my mother LK house

Other Germanic Languages

- Frisian possessive linker construction and s-possessive (Tiersma 1985)

heit syn hynder (“father’s horse”)
father his horse

ús buormans tún (“our neighbor’s garden”)
our neighbor’s garden

- Colloquial German possessive linker construction and s-possessive

meiner Mutter ihr Auto *Mutters Auto* (“mother’s car”)
my mother her car *mother’s car*

- Norwegian possessive linker construction and Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish s-possessive

Per sin bil *Pers bil* (“Peter’s car”)
Peter his car *Peter’s car*

Other Languages

- This kind of “possessor doubling” construction is actually very widespread in the languages of the world.
(Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001, p. 963)
- The term “pro-drop” has already been used by Chisarik and Payne (2001) in connection with Hungarian possessive constructions and by Kathol (2001) in connection with possessives in Luiseño.
- One last example from the Oceanic language Roviana
(Corston-Oliver 2002)

tama-na
father-3.SG
“his/her father”

tama-na tie hoi
father-3.SG person that
“that person’s father”

Thank you!

I would like to thank Joan Bresnan, Reuben Epp,
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Friedrich W. Neumann, Anette Rosenbach, Helge Tietz,
Tom Wasow, Holger Weigelt, and Shirley Wyatt!

Online Papers

- Based on the first part of my master's thesis from Stanford University (plus some additional material):
Jan Strunk (2004): Possessive Constructions in Modern Low Saxon. Master's Thesis. Department of Linguistics, Stanford University.

<http://www.linguistics.rub.de/~strunk/mathesis.pdf>

- See also the following hand-out on the choice of possessive construction:
Jan Strunk (2005): The Role of Animacy in the Nominal Possessive Constructions of Modern Low Saxon. Presentation at the PIONIER Workshop on Animacy, Radboud University Nijmegen, May 20.

<http://www.linguistics.rub.de/~strunk/strunkLowSaxonAnimacy.pdf>

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Pro-Drop of Possessum vs. Ellipsis

Pro-Drop of the Possessum vs. Ellipsis

- Why not treat a missing possessum as ellipsis?
 - The possessive relation established by the possessive linker always entails a possessum.
 - The possessive pronoun / linker contains information about the possessum anyway.
 - Number, gender, and case
 - Other determiners (such as demonstratives) also function as pronouns (apparently without elided material).

Dat kann he doch ni nich!

that can he though never

“But he could never do that!”

Pro-Drop of the Possessum vs. Ellipsis

- The same is true for the possessive pronoun / linker.

Hest du dien, de Anner sien

have you yours the other his

“If you have yours and the other his, ...”

(very abstract interpretation of possessum)

- There are cases of pronoun incorporation.
(Uniform analysis of pro-drop and pronoun incorporation in LFG).

heur voader en mienent

her father and mine

* *heur voader en mienent voader*

her father and mine father

The Low Saxon S-Possessive is not a Genitive

The S-Possessive is not a Genitive

- No allomorphy: “s” is invariant.

[[[myns Grotvaders] older Möme] sprack]
my grand father’s old grandmother’s language
“the language of my grandfather’s old grandmother”
(pre-modern Low Saxon, possessor phrases in the genitive)

[[[mien Grotvaders] olle Mömes] spraak]
my grand father’s old grandmother’s language
(modern Low Saxon, s-possessive)

- No case concord in the possessor phrase
- “s” is a syntactically placed clitic marker.

[Hinnerk un Annas] Huus *Franz vun Assisi’s “Sünnensang”*
Hinnerk and Anna’s house *Francis of Assisi’s “song of the sun”*

The S-Possessive is not a Genitive

- There are no productive uses of real genitive case in the modern dialects of Low Saxon.
- Studies of the s-possessive in other Germanic languages also come to the conclusion that the s-possessive is not a genitive (Janda 1980, Hudson 1995, Taylor 1996, Norde 1997, Weerman and de Wit 1999).
- Like the possessive linker and in contrast to the real genitive (at least in German), the s-possessive allows for a pronominal interpretation of the possessum, if there is no overt possessum.

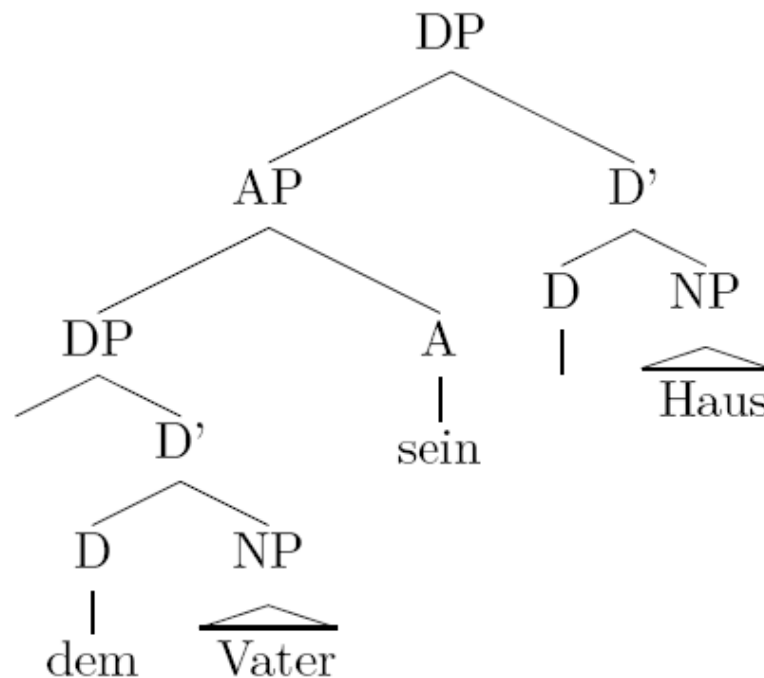
[Mien Moders] is beter as [mien Vaders].
my mother's is better than my father's

* *[_{gen}Meiner Mutter] ist besser als [_{gen}meines Vaters].*
my mother's is better than my father's

Comparison to Lindauer (1995)

Comparison to Lindauer (1995)

- Lindauer assumes that the possessive pronoun / linker is an adjective that select the possessor as a complement (cf. the structure below, Lindauer 1995, p. 158).



Comparison to Lindauer (1995)

- There are several problems for Lindauer's analysis:
 - Ordinary adjectives do not restrict the person and number of their complements – the possessive linker does.
 - Ordinary adjectives can occur after a determiner – the possessive linker cannot.
 - Ordinary adjectives project an f-structure of their own in LFG.
- The possessive linker can be repeated before each conjunct in a coordination of possessum NPs.

[[dee Jude] [[aeare Site] en [aeare Froag]]
the Jews their customs and their questions
“the customs and questions of the Jews”

Comparison to Lindauer (1995)

- Lindauer provides the following German coordination example as evidence for his constituent structure:

[[dem Vater sein] und [mein]] Haus
the father his and my house
“father’s and my house”

- I would argue that this example requires a special intonational structure and that it should be considered as non-constituent coordination.
- My analysis seems to be much more straightforward than Lindauer’s especially when assuming the LFG framework.

Comparison to Fiva (1987)

Comparison to Fiva (1987)

- Fiva assumes that the overt possessor NP, the linker, and a hypothesized postnominal base position form a chain in genitive case (Fiva 1987, p. 15):

[_{NP} [_{NP} Per_i] sin_i bil_j [_{NP} t_i]]
Peter his car

“Peter’s car”

- The possessor DP in Norwegian carries no overt case marking.
- However, the possessor DP in Low Saxon is clearly not in the genitive but in the accusative.
- In fact, I would argue that neither modern Low Saxon nor modern Norwegian do even have a genitive case at all.
- As Lindauer (1995), Fiva also regards the possessive linker as an adjective (see my arguments against Lindauer 1995).