SCANDINAVIAN POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS FROM A NORTHERN SWEDISH VIEWPOINT

ANDERS HOLMBERG & GÖREL SANDSTRÖM
University of Tromsø & Umeå University

Introduction

We discuss two parameters which account for much of the variation in the form of the noun phrase among the Scandinavian languages and dialects, in particular possessive constructions, and more particularly, constructions with a postnominal possessor. We will claim that one of the two parameters is a so-called major parameter, that is a parameter which (a) concerns the feature values of a functional category with a general distribution, (b) which is therefore resistant to change, and (c) therefore resistant to dialectal variation. The other parameter is a so-called minor parameter, that is to say a parameter which (a) concerns the feature values of a functional category with a restricted distribution, (b) which is therefore vulnerable to change, and (c) therefore subject to dialectal variation.

1. Major and minor parameters

In Principles-and-Parameters (P&P) theory all grammars are special cases of Universal Grammar (UG). There is grammatical variation among languages because UG contains some parameters the values of which are left open by UG; these are fixed in the process of language acquisition, on the basis of data in the linguistic environment. It is understood, although perhaps not often explicitly stated, that some parameters have a greater impact on the surface form of languages than others. For some parameters, let us call them major parameters, a change of value will have wide repercussions in the grammar, affecting many
constructions. Other parameters are *minor parameters*, in the sense that they affect few constructions, in the most extreme case only one.

The value of a minor parameter is much more likely to change from one generation to the next than the value of a major parameter. All it takes to change the value of a minor parameter is that the construction where the parameter has its effects, and which hence provides the crucial trigger experience for fixing its value, is pushed out of use by another construction, spontaneously created or taken over from, say, a neighbouring dialect or language. In other words, a minor change in the linguistic environment may be enough to change the value of a minor parameter from one generation to the next. To change the value of a major parameter, on the other hand, it is not enough that just one construction is changed or replaced: since the value for a major parameter is selected on the basis of information from several constructions, there have to be several more or less simultaneous changes in the linguistic environment, affecting several of the relevant constructions, to create the conditions for a change in the setting of the parameter.

Since the value of a minor parameter is easily changed from one generation to the next, it is likely to be subject to dialectal variation. A major parameter, on the other hand, is less likely to exhibit dialectal variation. That is to say, what we call dialectal variation typically concerns minor parameters.

One of the leading ideas within P&P theory is that all syntactic variation is due to variation in the feature values of certain functional categories. In this perspective a major parameter is one which concerns features of a functional category which is involved in many constructions, while a minor parameter is one which concerns features of a functional category which may occur in only one construction, in the most extreme case. We may summarized the properties of major and minor parameters as follows:

(1) **a major parameter:**
- concerns feature values of a functional category with a *general distribution*,
- is (therefore) *resistant to change*, and
- (therefore) *resistant to dialectal variation*.

**a minor parameter:**
- concerns feature values of a functional category with a *restricted distribution*,
- is (therefore) *vulnerable to change*, and
- (therefore) *likely to show dialectal variation*.

These differences suggest a certain heuristic for associating syntactic forms with major vs. minor parameters. Imagine a population $P$ within which the social conditions for more or less normal dialectal variation are met, as shown by the fact that various forms of dialectal variation in fact occurs. Imagine a syntactic form $F$ used within $P$, where $F$ is subject to cross-linguistic variation (i.e., it is not universal) but is not subject to any dialectal variation within $P$. Then $F$ is most probably dependent on a particular value of a *major* parameter. This means, given (1), that there must be other forms in the language spoken by $P$ which are dependent on the same parameter value. If not, it is hard to explain the lack of dialectal variation for $F$. That is to say, we should find other forms which could in principle vary but which do not vary within $P$, and which can plausibly be related to the same parameter value as $F$.

Conversely, if another syntactic form $G$ is found to be subject to dialectal variation within $P$, then $G$ is probably dependent on the value of a *minor* parameter, and we do not necessarily expect to find other forms subject to variation correlating with the variation exhibited by $G$.

With this in mind, we move to examine the range of variation in possessive constructions in the Scandinavian languages, especially constructions with a postnominal possessor.

2. *Postnominal possessors in Scandinavian*

Within the Scandinavian languages, there are basically two forms of postnominal possessor constructions: one with a bare head noun, the other with a head noun bearing the definite suffix ('N.D' = noun with definite suffix).

(2) a. biljóns (Icelandic) b. bilen hans (Norwegian)
car Jon's car, d. his

The construction exemplified in (2a), which we will call the N-POSS construction, is found in Icelandic and Old Scandinavian, but in no variety of Mainland Scandinavian. The N.D-POSS construction of (2b) is common to Icelandic, Norwegian, Northern Swedish, and, with a PP possessor, Faroese. We will address mainly two issues. First, we will explain why the N-POSS construction (2a) is restricted to Icelandic and Old Scandinavian. We claim that this is an effect of a major parameter in Scandinavian syntax, namely *strong versus*

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1 Dialect variation may be restricted by various social factors, such as a strong normative tradition, enforced in primary education and by various forms of 'language control'.
weak Case: Icelandic and Old Scandinavian have strong Case, while the other Scandinavian languages all have weak Case. Second, we will discuss the N-D-POSS construction (2b). This construction has been discussed in the literature on the basis of facts from Icelandic, Norwegian, and some varieties of Northern Swedish. In all of these languages/dialects the possessor can only be a pronoun, or possibly a proper name in construction with a pronoun (examples will be provided below). When we look at a wider range of Northern Swedish dialects, however, it emerges that the variation in the categorial and morphological features of the possessor in this construction is much richer than is generally assumed. We will propose an analysis which is consistent with this variation. The claim is that the definite form of the noun is moved to D, the highest functional head in the nominal projection, and the possessor is moved to the specifier position of an Aor head situated between D and NP. The variation is due to a minor parameter in the feature-content of the DP-internal Aor, where, however, the features are subject to a universal hierarchy of argument features which is well known from the typological literature.

3. Sentence structure and NP structure

Variation in sentential structure among the Scandinavian languages has been studied in great detail; see Platzack (1987), Holmberg & Platzack (1991), Holmberg & Platzack (1995), Holmberg (1994), Rohrbacher (1994), Vikner (1994). The picture which emerges from these studies is clear enough: the main division separates Icelandic and Old Scandinavian on the one hand from the Mainland Scandinavian languages (Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian) on the other. Between the two main groups there is plenty of variation; within the groups there is by comparison little variation, and there is not much variation cutting across the main division.

When we look at the internal structure of noun phrases we can observe reflections of the same division, with Icelandic and Old Scandinavian on one side and Mainland Scandinavian on the other, but the picture is less clear here in that

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2 The category we call D in this paper corresponds to the category called K in Sandstrøm and Holmberg (1994).

3 The position of Faroese in this dichotomy is more controversial, but according to Holmberg (1994) it is truly in-between, in a well-defined sense, as described below fn. 6.

4 To put it more precisely, there is a good deal of variation which cuts across the 'main division', but it partitions the languages in all sorts of ways. In other words, the inter-group variation is due to a number of different parameters, mostly with a quite limited syntactic effect—what we call minor parameters.

(a) there is also some striking variation which cuts across this division, and (b) there is a remarkable amount of variation within one of the main groups, namely Mainland Scandinavian. In fact, it appears that there is at least as much word order and morphological variation in possessive constructions within Northern Swedish alone as there is among all the Scandinavian standard languages. In (3) are exemplified three possessive constructions found in the Scandinavian languages. The table in (4) illustrates how they are distributed among the Scandinavian languages.

(3)  
(a) bili Jons  
    car Jon's  
    (N-POSS)  
(b) bili hans  
    car d his  
    (N.D-POSS)  
(c) Jons bil  
    Jon's car  
    (POSS-N)

(4)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICE</th>
<th>NOR</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>STSW</th>
<th>DAN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N-POSS</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.D-POSS</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>POSS-N</td>
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Icelandic has two constructions with a postnominal possessor, N-POSS, i.e., a bare noun followed by a possessor, and N.D-POSS, i.e., a noun with a suffixed definite article followed by a possessor. Norwegian and certain Northern Swedish dialects have only N.D-POSS. In addition they have prenominal possessors. Standard Swedish and Danish have only prenominal possessors, as do most varieties of Central and Southern Swedish. So, with regard to N-POSS and POSS-N we do see the familiar pattern, with Icelandic on one side (in fact, again together with Old Scandinavian) and the Mainland Scandinavian languages on the other side. But the construction N.D-POSS straddles the boundary between Icelandic and Mainland Scandinavian, being common to Icelandic, Norwegian, and Northern Swedish, but excluded from most other dialects of Swedish, as well as from Danish.

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5 Mainly for ease of presentation we have left out Faroese from the table. Faroese has + in all three rows. However, there are special restrictions on all the forms; N-POSS occurs only with family relations, N.DEF-POSS only with a PP possessor, and POSS-N only with proper names. We will not deal with Faroese in this paper, but see Holmberg (1994). The table represents an idealization also in that not all Norwegian or Northern Swedish dialects have POSS-N as well as N.DEF-POSS, but some do, including both standard varieties of Norwegian.
In a series of works Christer Platzack and Anders Holmberg have argued that, as regards sentential syntax, there are two major parameters which distinguish between the two main groups of Scandinavian languages: Icelandic and Old Scandinavian have 'strong AGR$' and 'strong Case', while Mainland Scandinavian (henceforth MSc) has 'weak AGR$' and 'weak Case'.

This difference is reflected in the richness of the morphological paradigms (although, as discussed in Holmberg (1994), the relation between feature strength and overt morphology is not a simple one): while Icelandic and Old Scandinavian have fairly rich case and subject-verb agreement morphology, MSc has very poor case morphology and no subject-verb agreement morphology. These parameters are shown to be reflected in at least 15 syntactic differences, concerning impersonal constructions, verb placement, various scrambling phenomena, and so on.

Of the two morphological parameters claimed to be responsible for the variation in sentential syntax, we do not, perhaps, expect to see any DP-internal effects of strength of AGR$, but it seems not unlikely that the strength of Case might have effects not just on the distribution of DPs in sentences, but also on the internal syntax of DPs. This, we claim, is the case: the reason why no dialect of MSc has N-POSS is that the construction requires strong Case, and among the modern Scandinavian languages only Icelandic has strong Case. This notion will be discussed in the next section.

4. Why MSc does not have N-POSS

Why is (2a), repeated here as (5a), not well formed in any MSc dialect, including those dialects which allow postnominal possessors in some constructions?

(5) a. bili Jóns (Icelandic) b. * bili Jons (Norwegian, NSw.)
    car Jon’s

In (6) there is a selection of postnominal possessive constructions found among Norwegian and NSw dialects:

(6) a. bilen hans
car.d his
   "his car"
b. bilen hans n Jon
car.d his ART Jon
   "Jon’s car"
c. bilen n Jons
car.d ART Jon’s
   "Jon’s car"
d. bilen läraren
car.d teacher.d
   "the teacher’s car"
e. bilen åt läraren
car.d to the teacher
   "the teacher’s car"

There is variation among these dialects in the categorial and morphological features of the possessor: some dialects only allow pronominal possessors, other dialects allow proper names as well, others still lexical (definite) DPs as well, and still others allow pronouns and DPs but not lexical DPs; the possessor may be marked with a possessive pronoun, an s-suffix, or not at all. However, common to them all is that the head noun must be definite.

The Icelandic noun phrase differs from the MSc noun phrase in certain other respects, too:

(7) a. Icelandic has case morphology on nouns,
    b. Icelandic has no indefinite article,
    c. Icelandic has no free definite article.

These properties are exemplified in (8) and (9) (W = the so-called weak adjectival inflection).

(8) a. Ég så bil. (Icelandic) b. Jag såg *(cn) bil. (Swedish)
    I saw car+ACC
car I saw a car
    "I saw a car"

(9) a. Ég så nya bilinn b. Jag såg *(den) nya bilen
    I saw new,W car+ACC.d
car I saw the new,W car.d
    "I saw the new car"

As far as we know, all MSc dialects have an obligatory indefinite article. Likewise, although not all MSc dialects have a free definite article, it is neverthe-
less true (as far as we know) that no MSc dialect has a construction such as (9a) as the unmarked alternative, the way Icelandic does.\footnote{Some MSc varieties have it as a marked, semantically restricted alternative; see Delsing (1993:118). More interestingly, many Northern Swedish dialects lack a free definite article, but nevertheless do not allow the construction (9a). Instead the adjective is incorporated in the definite noun.}

We assume the following principle, given here in two versions. Following Delsing (1993) we call it ‘the Argument Rule’.

(10) **THE ARGUMENT RULE** (two versions):

a. All arguments must have a filled determiner position at S-structure. (Delsing 1993: 65).

b. An argument must have a strong feature in D. (Holmberg 1994)

The role of this principle in Scandinavian syntax, conceived as in (10a), is discussed in great detail in Delsing (1993). This is the principle which explains, among other things, why argument noun phrases in for instance English are normally headed by an article or some other visible determiner. The principle is reformulated in Holmberg (1994) in the framework of a minimalist theory, assuming no level of S-structure. In minimalism terms the Argument Rule must be satisfied at LF, yet it is reflected in PF as a phonetically filled D. Following Chomsky (1993) we assume that the strong feature has the effect of attracting phonetic material to D. This is ensured by the following principles:

(11) a. A strong feature must be checked off (eliminated through checking) before spell-out to PF.

b. A strong feature of a functional category F is checked off if a phonetically licit category with a matching feature is adjoined to F, or placed in SPEC-F.

A functional feature, such as Case or definiteness, can be morphologically represented on a lexical head, for instance N, as well as being represented on a functional head determining the scope, and more generally, the syntactic role of the feature, namely D.\footnote{This presupposes a lexicalist theory of inflectional morphology, according to which lexical heads are inserted with (at least some) inflections already attached, as proposed by Chomsky (1993).} Both Case and definiteness are syntactically properties of DP, although they may be morphologically realized on N, or some other head other than D within DP. Checking is here regarded as a way to ensure that the morphological feature and the syntactic feature have matching values. If the syntactic feature is strong, in Chomsky’s (1993) sense, it must be checked before spell-out, either by insertion of an appropriately specified category in one of the checking positions (cf. 11b), or by movement of an appropriately specified lexical category. If the feature is weak, checking can wait until LF. We assume that the need for checking is mutual between the morphological and the syntactic feature. Let us say that the morphological feature cannot be interpreted at LF unless it is checked. Following Chomsky (1993) we assume the syntactic feature cannot be phonologically interpreted, and therefore must be checked off before spell-out if it is strong (= ‘visible’), assuming checking to result in deletion of the syntactic feature. A weak (= ‘invisible’) feature is innocuous in PF, and therefore need not be checked off before LF. Also following Chomsky (1993), we assume the Greed principle:

(12) **GREED**

Movement of a category α is triggered only if the movement helps to satisfy the needs of α itself.

The strong feature required by the Argument Rule (10b) may be Case, clearly a property of DP, hence its head D. Alternatively it is definiteness, also clearly a property of D/DP. It follows from the assumptions made above that strong Case in D requires that the language have either some kind of free Case morpheme(s) which can be inserted in D, checking off the strong Case feature, or bound Case morphology on N or some other nominal category within DP, triggering movement of this category to D or SPEC-D. Correspondingly, strong definiteness in D requires that the language have either free definiteness morphemes (articles) which can be inserted in D, checking off the strong definiteness feature, or bound definiteness morphology on N or some other nominal cat-

\footnote{According to Sandström and Holmberg (1994) the definite noun is moved to D (called K in that work) across the attributive adjective, followed by adjective incorporation into the definite noun. It is not inconceivable that the lack of a free definite article is one of the factors behind the preference for the N.DEF-POSS construction over POSS-N in Northern Swedish. It is not, however, the case that all dialects which have N.DEF-POSS also have Adjective Incorporation.}
egory within DP, triggering movement of this category to D or SPEC.D. A lexical head without any functional morphology does not move.\(^9\),\(^10\)

In (13), we give a rough analysis of an argument noun phrase in Icelandic, a language with strong Case (represented as capitals, while the morphological feature is represented as lower case letters).

(13)

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DP
  D [acc] NP
    N'
      | N DP
      | bil Jóns
      [see]
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Here the Case morphology on the noun triggers movement of N to D, checking off the strong Case feature.

Structure (14) is the rough structure of an argument noun phrase in Swedish, a language with weak Case but, by assumption, strong definiteness.

(14)

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DP
  D [+DEF] NP
    N' N DP
      | bilen Jóns
      [+def]
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Here the definiteness morphology triggers N-movement to D, checking off the strong feature.\(^11\)

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\(^9\) See Pollock (1994) for a similar view of checking.

\(^10\) The converse does not hold: a language may have, for example, Case-morphology on N, and yet have weak Case in D, checked only in LF. According to Holmberg (1994) Faroese is such a language.

\(^11\) N-to-D movement may be blocked by an adjective intervening between D and N; see Delsing (1993: 116-134), Holmberg (1993), Kester (1993), Sandström and Holmberg (1994), Santelmann (1993). In that case many varieties of Swedish, including Standard Swedish, have a free article inserted in D, effecting the check-off of the strong definiteness feature. (Not all of these varieties allow a postnominal possessor.)

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We conclude that the reason why Icelandic unlike MSc can do without an indefinite article in (8), or a free definite article in (9) is that Icelandic has strong Case. The strong Case feature satisfies the Argument Rule at LF, and the case morphology on the noun triggers movement of the noun to D, checking off the strong Case feature before spell-out. MSc, on the other hand, has to rely on strong definiteness coupled with free or bound definiteness morphology. For the same reason (15a) below is ungrammatical in MSc, while the corresponding form is grammatical in Icelandic;\(^12\) (15b), on the other hand, is grammatical in MSc as well as in Icelandic, subject to dialectal variation.

(15) a. *bil hans / Jóns / åt läraren / etc.
    b. bilen hans / Jóns / åt läraren / etc.

Since MSc does not have strong Case, it has to rely on definiteness morphology triggering noun movement to D, eliminating the strong feature. Therefore the noun in the postnominal possessor construction has to be definite, as in (15b).

Insertion of a free definite article in (15a) would satisfy the Argument Rule, but the result is nevertheless ungrammatical.

(16) *den bil hans
    the car his

Note that (16) is ill-formed with or without the possessor: the definite form of an unmodified DP can only be [dp bilen]. We conjecture that this is an effect

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\(^12\) There are certain restrictions regarding the choice of head noun and the choice of possessor which we will not discuss here: see Sigurðsson (1993).
of economy of representation (Chomsky 1991 and subsequent work): where there is a choice, a less specified category is preferred over a more specified one, blocking the latter. In the case at hand, and possibly in general, this means that a bound morpheme (the bound definite article) is preferred over a free morpheme (the free definite article). The free definite article can be used only when the bound form is not capable of satisfying the Argument Rule, movement to D being blocked by an intervening adjective. Note, however, that (17) is also ill-formed.

(17) * en bil hans / Jons / åt läraren / etc. 
    a car his / Jon’s / of the teacher / etc.

Here the corresponding possessorless form [DP en bil ] is fine. The Argument Rule and strong feature checking is (potentially) satisfied in (17), so the problem seems to be the possessor. We return to (16) and (17) below, after having established the more precise structure of DP in Swedish.

5. Postnominal possessors in Northern Swedish

Characteristic of the construction (2b), repeated here, is that there are constraints on the categorial features of the possessor, subject to dialectal variation.

(2b) bilen min
    car.d my

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13 It is not obvious in which sense the free definite article is more specified than the bound definite article, apart from containing one more phonetic segment. Tarald Taraldsen (p.c.) suggests that the free definite article may actually be bimorphemic, consisting of two parts: [d [en]]. If so, it would indeed be structurally more complex and contain more feature specifications than the bound article.

14 The construction with a postnominal PP (en bil åt läraren) is well formed as long as the PP has a goal or benefactive reading: 'a car for the teacher'. In at least some dialects, including standard varieties of Norwegian, it is ill formed if the PP is a possessor; see Taraldsen (1990). See also footnotes 22 and 23, below.

15 An anonymous reviewer points out that formulation of the Argument Rule in terms of a strong feature implies that there are languages which have a weak feature in D, given the usual employment of the strong/weak dichotomy as a formalization of parametric variation. Insofar as there are languages which make do without either articles or case-morphology, or any other form of overt marking of argumenthood (Chinese is a possible candidate) this could be formally expressed as a weak feature in D. An interesting possibility is that predicative noun phrases have a weak feature in D, perhaps universally.

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In Standard Icelandic and Norwegian the possessor can only be a pronoun, as in (18a), or a proper name in construction with a pronoun, as in (18b).\(^{16}\) Crucially, the possessor cannot be a bare proper name or any other nominal category.

(18) a. bilen hans (Norwegian)
    car.d his
b. bilen hans Jon
    car.d his Jon
c. * bilen Jons
    car.d Jon's
d. * bilen lærerens
    car.d teacher.d's
e. * bilen hans læreren
    car.d his teacher.d

In addition, Norwegian but not Icelandic permits a PP as possessor in this construction. But in NSw dialects we find a wider range of categories as possessors.\(^{17}\) Some dialects are like Norwegian and Standard Icelandic, permitting only pronouns or proper names in construction with a pronoun in possessor position, but other dialects permit bare proper names as well. Still other dialects permit family relation terms, like mama and granny. Still other dialects permit any definite DP in this position. However, there seems to be a pattern to the combinations of possessor categories which occur in postnominal position. On the basis of the data we now have, it seems that the postnominal possessors conform to the following implicational hierarchy:

(19) pronoun < pronoun + name < bare name or family term < definite DP

If a dialect allows any of these categories as postnominal possessor, it allows all the categories to the left in the implicational hierarchy (19). The data come from interviews with 17 informants from Västerbotten, Norrbotten, and Österbotten.\(^{18}\) All informants except one accepted a postnominal pronoun. Ten

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\(^{16}\) The pronoun + name construction, as in (18b), is usually regarded as instantiating not a pronoun with a proper name in some kind of appositional relation, but rather as a form of article (a 'proprietary article'), homonymous with a pronoun, with a proper name as complement: see Taraldsen (1990), Sigurðsson (1993), and especially Delsing (1993). This is clearly not correct for all NSw dialects, as will be shown below, hence possibly not correct for any dialect.

\(^{17}\) Certain Icelandic dialects, too, allow a wider range of categories as possessors, according to Sigurðsson (1993). The more precise properties of the possessors in these dialects have not been investigated.

\(^{18}\) Västerbotten and Norrbotten make up roughly the northernmost third of Sweden. Österbotten is a region in Finland where Swedish is widely spoken, primarily along the coast, across the Baltic Sea from Västerbotten.
accepted a postnominal proper name in construction with a pronoun or a bare proper name. Of these ten, five did not allow a postnominal bare proper name, while three did not allow pronoun + name. Six accepted a postnominal (bare) family term. Two accepted other bare DPs postnominally. In (20) we list some examples, which also exemplify some of the variation in possessive morphology.

(20) a. biln hans n Janne (Ålvbyn) b. car.d his ART Janne car.d Janne’s “Janne’s car”
c. huse n mormor (Ljusvattnet) d. house.d ART.DAT grandmother car.d priest.D “grandmother’s house”
e. biln hans kyrkoherdin (Fillifors) car.d his Vicar.D car.d “the Vicar’s car”

None of the dialects seem to allow an indefinite DP as postnominal possessor. We conjecture that indefinite DPs are lowest in the hierarchy.

19 We also have a few examples of postnominal family terms and other DPs constructed with a pronoun. One informant consistently constructed all postnominal arguments, names, family terms and other definite DPs, with a pronoun.

20 The geographical name within parentheses denotes the village or region where the informant (or one of the informants) who produced the example in question grew up. We do not know, at this stage in our research, to what extent the informant’s judgments are representative of the dialect spoken in this region. For all we know they may represent only the informant’s idiolect. We will still refer to these varieties as “the dialect of Ålvbyn”, etc., for convenience.

21 The postnominal pronoun+name construction was discussed briefly in footnote 15 above. (20a) shows that the pronoun is not necessarily a prepositional article in this construction, since in (20a) the pronoun co-occurs with a prepositional article (usually a) for masculine, for feminine.

22 An indefinite DP may occur embedded in a postnominal possessor PP in various dialects. We are indeterminate as regards the status of postnominal possessors DPs. On the one hand, Taraldsen (1990) has presented arguments which appear to show that possessor PPs behave just like postnominal possessors DPs, in our terms would mean that they are subject to the same movement-and-checking requirements as possessor DPs (see the text below). On the other hand it is tempting to view postnominal possessor PPs as an analogue of other well known cases where insertion of a ‘dummy preposition’ is an alternative to Case-triggered DP movement.

23 Postnominal indefinite possessors are found in the dialect of Överkalix (in Norrbotten), documented in Källskog (1992). These are always marked Dative.

So, in French, German and Russian there is a special prenominal position where only pronouns (French), or pronouns, family terms, and proper names (German, Russian) may move, to have their morphological and/or categorial features checked (the prenominal forms in both German and Russian have a special affix, distinct from the ones found in postnominal position). In Scandinavian, too, we find the same set of possessor categories occurring in a special position, only in Scandinavian this position is superficially postnominal. Compare for instance German, Russian, and the following two NSw dialects:

It is not uncommon for languages to have a special position for possessive pronouns, family terms, and/or proper names. There are a number of languages which have pre- or postnominal possessives, and where the prenominal possessors are restricted to just pronouns, or pronouns and proper names, and possibly family terms. French and other Romance languages are a case in point, allowing only pronouns in prenominal position.

(21) mon livre, le livre de Pierre (French) my book, the book of Pierre

German allows pronouns, family terms, and proper names, but no other DPs in prenominal position:


Russian, too, allows pronouns, family terms, and proper names, but no other possessors in prenominal position:


Possibly they should be grouped with postnominal possessor PPs, as found in many dialects (see the previous footnote).
Scandinavian N.D-POSS construction, we would be justified in postulating that Possessor Shift is to SPEC-NP (from, say, COMP-N position). But the choice of prenominal possessor in French, German, and Russian, and postnominal possessor in the MSc N.D-POSS construction is not dependent on the properties of N, as far as we know. Instead, what determines whether a nominal category can undergo Possessor Shift or not is some combination of morphological and categorial features of the possessor itself.

This all leads up to an analysis where the shifted possessor lands in the SPEC of an abstract functional head between D and NP which checks the morphological and categorial features of the possessor, i.e., the abstract functional head is a form of Agr. We will call it AGRG ("genitive agreement", i.e., possessor agreement). In French and some NSw dialects only pronouns are checked in AGRG in overt syntax, i.e., only pronouns move visibly to SPEC-AGR. We may assume, following Chomsky (1993), that all possessors are checked in AGRG at LF, but this is not crucial. In German, Russian, and other NSw dialects not only pronouns but also proper names and family terms are checked in SPEC-AGR in overt syntax. In still other NSw dialects other definite DPs, too, but not indefinite DPs, are overtly checked in SPEC-AGR.

Assuming that the Argument principle holds universally, the prenominal possessor in French, German, and Russian ultimately moves to SPEC-DP, checking off the strong feature in D in the process. But first, we now assume, the possessor moves to SPEC-AGR, checking its morphological and categorial features. The analysis of the Scandinavian N.D-POSS construction is as in (26):

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24 In Italian, too, there is direct evidence of a prenominal possessor position between D and NP, since the possesive pronoun co-occurs with an article: *il mio libro*, lit. "the my book".

25 See, however, Sigurðsson (1993) for some observations regarding the interplay of noun semantics and possessor constructions in Icelandic.

26 The fact that the prenominal possessor cannot co-occur with an article in German, indicates that the possessor is in SPEC-DP (*das Buch, Peters Buch, *das Peters Buch*).
The definite noun moves to D, through AGRG. We postulate that movement of the noun to AGRG has the effect of 'activating' AGRG, or, to use another metaphor, it makes AGRG visible at LF by including AGRG in a visible head chain (visible by virtue of the features of bilen, in this case). This makes it possible for a possessor to move to SPEC-AGRG, having its features checked. This explains why we have Possessor Shift (to abstract AGRG) only in conjunction with definite noun movement to D (prenominal possessors are discussed below).  

As mentioned, in Standard Icelandic, Norwegian, and some NSW dialects AGRG has only features checking pronouns (that is if we regard checking of the pronoun + name construction as a special case of pronoun checking). But in, say, the NSW dialect of Pitê, AGRG also has a feature checking family relation terms and proper names, while in the dialect of Lövånger AGRG can check any definite DP (see footnote 20 on our use of the notion 'dialect'). If so, the variation is due to a low level morphological parameter, that is, in terms of the typology of parameters outlined in the introduction, a minor parameter. This means that we do not expect to find any systematic covariation between the form of the possessor construction and other variable properties in the dialects in question. We do not, for example, expect the dialects which allow postnominal kin term DPs to share some other property which is systematically absent from the other dialects.

This minor parameter is, however, subject to a hierarchy, quite possibly a universal hierarchy, where pronouns are ordered above family terms and proper names, which, in turn, are ordered above other DPs. It is not clear what this hierarchy is a hierarchy of, or in other words, along which parameter the argument categories are hierarchically ordered. Comrie (1989) suggests animacy; the hierarchy in (19) would form the upper end of an animacy hierarchy, the lower end of which would consist of various inanimate noun categories. Comrie discusses some other instantiations of this putative hierarchy. An alternative parameter, also mentioned by Comrie, is definiteness: pronouns would be somehow inher-

ently more definite than names, which are more definite than definite DPs, which are (obviously) more definite than indefinite DPs.

6. Prenominal possessors

What is the analysis of the Standard Swedish possessive construction (27), which also figured in the dialect of Pitê in (24)?

(27) läraren bok  
   teacher's book

Let us assume an analysis along the lines of Fiva (1985) for Norwegian and Abney (1987) for English: The genitive -s is base-generated as a functional head which takes NP as complement. More specifically we propose that -s is base-generated in AGRG. That is to say, -s is a phonetically visible instantiation of AGRG. The genitive -s blocks movement of the definite noun to D, hence the noun has the bare form (but see below for a counterexample). Hence the only way the strong feature in D, required by the Argument Rule, can be checked off, is by movement of -s to D, the possessor ending up in SPEC-DP, by movement from inside NP. Assuming Greed, this presupposes that -s as well as the possessor have some feature or features which require checking in D and SPEC-DP, respectively. Assuming strong definiteness in D, -s must have a definiteness feature. The affixation of -s would be a late phonetic process suffixing -s to the final word of the possessor DP; see Fiva (1985).

In Standard Swedish possessive -s is not restricted in any way, but accepts any kind of DP as specifier (unlike for instance those varieties of English where genitive -s takes only [+animate] DPs as its specifier: the boy's book, the beer's colour). The reason why Icelandic does not have prenominal possessors is,

27 Delsing (1993: 173-175) argues that the N-D-POSS construction does not involve N-movement to D, but instead would be derived by movement of a DP headed by the definite noun to SPEC-DP, and movement of the possessor (he only considers constructions with a pronominal possessor) to D. The structure would be

(i) [DP [pp bilen], [y] min [POSS-P e1 [POSS-e2 ]]

This solves some descriptive problems which beset the N-to-D hypothesis, but creates other problems. For one thing, it is far from obvious how this theory will account for the cases where the possessor is not a simple pronoun, hence plausibly a head, but a complex DP, as for instance in (6b, c, d).

28 This analysis of (27) is consistent with the fact that a noun phrase containing a prenominal possessor can function as a predicate, as in

(i) Per är James' son. (Swedish)
   Per is James's son.

As discussed by Holmberg (1993) and Mandelbaum (1994), this sentence can have a predicative reading equivalent with, say, John is a student. According to Holmberg (1993) and Mandelbaum (1994) the predicative reading presupposes that the possessor does not occupy the highest SPEC-position in the nominal projection. That is to say, in this construction -s and the possessor have not moved to DSPEC-DP, but remain in AGRG/SPEC-AGRG. Not being an argument, the construction is not subject to the Argument Rule.
quite simply, that Icelandic does not have any overt AGRG, i.e., no morpheme corresponding to MSC and English genitive -s.

Consider again the dialect exemplified in (24): as long as the possessor was a pronoun, proper name, or family term, the 'abstract AGRG strategy' could be employed, with definite noun movement through AGRG to D, followed by Possessor Shift to SPEC-AGR G. However, for any other possessor category this option is closed, by hypothesis because abstract AGRG does not have the features required to check DPs other than pronouns, names, and family terms. For such DPs, the dialect employs the 'overt AGRG strategy', inserting genitive -s, an unrestricted DP-checking head, in AGRG. The possessor DP moves to the SPEC of -s.

In Standard Swedish as well as in Danish and Norwegian the head noun must have the bare form in the presence of a pronominal possessor, as in (27). However, in many varieties of NSw the head noun can be definite. Thus (28) is sharply ungrammatical in Standard Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, but perfectly well formed in many Northern Swedish dialects.29

(28) James’ bilen
James’s car

It seems to be the case in all, or nearly all, dialects where (28) occurs, that the pronominal possessor cannot be a pronoun. This suggests that the construction requires overt AGRG, i.e., genitive -s in AGRG.30 Why this should be so, we do not know. The construction is problematic in the framework articulated here. In particular, how is checking of the definite noun ensured, without violation of the Head Movement Constraint? We leave this construction for future research, however.

This all implies that postnominal instances of genitive -s, as in (20b) or (24) do not instantiate overt AGRG, but something closer to a genuine Case inflection, presumably base-generated with the noun, checked in overt syntax. Note that in several dialects, in fact most dialects in our data, postnominal lexical DPs have a special morphology. Particularly common is the construction with a pronoun plus lexical DP, but, as noted in passing, other possessive forms occur as well, for instance (20c, d).

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29 It is common also in Swedish dialects in South Finland.

30 Strikingly, one informant accepted a third person pronoun in pronominal position, but with a 'double' genitive form, an -s added to the standard possessive form.
One property which Object Shift and Possessor Shift share is that they apply only to pronouns in some varieties of Scandinavian, although not the same varieties. Thus, in MSc (including NSw) Object Shift is restricted to (weak) pronouns, while in Icelandic any definite object DP can shift:

(31) a. * Jeg så Jon ikke. (Norwegian)
b. Jeg så ham ikke.
I saw him not

The fact that only pronouns undergo Object Shift in MSc while all DPs do in Icelandic has been explained as a consequence of the fact that only pronouns have morphological case in MSc, while all DPs do in Icelandic (Holmberg & Platzack 1995). The underlying assumption is that Object Shift only affects DPs with overt Case. This hypothesis is confirmed by the Possessor Shift construction, since the shifted possessor is either a pronoun, a DP headed by a pronoun, or a DP with some form of overt possessive morphology, the only exception being the apparently inflectionless possessor in the dialect represented in (20d). At first sight, Icelandic seems to be a problem for this theory, though. The theory predicts that Icelandic should have Possessor Shift of a bare lexical DP, since Icelandic has morphological Case, and strong Case, in the sense discussed above. But as mentioned, Standard Icelandic allows only a pronoun or a pronoun-plus-name as possessor in the N.D-POSS construction. This is not necessarily a problem, though. First, we have been informed by Halldór Á. Sigurðsson (p.c.), that forms such as bókin Jóns, although not acceptable in Standard Icelandic, are not infrequently encountered in spoken Icelandic. Second, we conjecture that the fact that Icelandic has the N-POSS option for lexical DP possessors means that the N-D-POSS construction with a lexical DP possessor is blocked, as an effect of economy.31 This presupposes that Case is cheaper than definiteness, and/or that (bound) case morphology is cheaper than (bound) definiteness morphology (as discussed in section 3, what makes the N-POSS construction work is strong Case coupled with bound case morphology). At present we do not have any independent support for this hypothesis, except the observation that bound case morphology is more common (perhaps even much more common) among the languages of the world than bound definiteness morphology.

Another property shared by Object Shift and Possessor Shift is that they both presuppose movement of the lexical head, i.e., they both conform to "Holmberg's Generalization". Consider (32) and (33): in (32), Object Shift has applied without verb movement (there is no verb movement in embedded clauses in MSc). The result is ungrammatical. In (33) Possessor Shift has applied without definite noun movement. The result is ungrammatical.

(32) * ...at jeg ham (ikke) så (Norwegian) 
...that I him not saw
(33) * hans Janne nya boken 
his Janne new book

Above we proposed that the reason why the Possessor Shift requires noun movement is that abstract AoG must be included in a visible head chain to be visible itself for grammatical processes, and thus able to check the features of a possessor. This hypothesis can easily be extended to Object Shift, given the analysis in (31): abstract AoG needs to be included in a visible head chain to become visible, and thus able to check the features of an object.32, 33

32 See Chomsky (1993) for a different account of why Object Shift requires verb movement. Following Branigan (1992) Chomsky assumes that the reason why for instance (31) is ruled out is that movement of the object across the subject position in SPEC-VP violates the Shortest Movement condition.

(31) [...]Jeg [AOGP ham ... ikke [VP et [VP så e]]]

According to Chomsky (1993), the reason why verb movement helps to circumvent Shortest Movement is that verb movement extends the domain of the verb, in a sense, so that SPEC-AGR OP and SPEC-VP count as equidistant from the object position, and therefore object movement directly to SPEC-AGR OP is technically as short as movement to SPEC-VP. It is not obvious how to extend this explanation to Possessor Shift. We could postulate that SPEC-NP of a definite noun contains an abstract category corresponding to the subject in SPEC-VP. This category might be the abstract demonstrative pronoun postulated in Holmberg (1993). This category would block possessor movement, unless the noun moves as well, making SPEC-NP and SPEC-AOGP equidistant from COMP-N. However, as mentioned in the text, we do have possessor movement to SPEC-AoG, even across a definite noun (in some dialects), namely when AoG is overt.

33 Insofar as definite noun movement to D is obligatory, triggered by the needs of the definite noun, (33) will be ungrammatical already because it contains an unmoved definite noun. In that case it will not tell us anything about Holmberg's Generalization. Note, however, that in construction with an attributive adjective, the definite noun does not move to D (at least not...
8. Conclusions

We have discussed two parameters affecting possessive constructions in the Scandinavian languages: strong vs. weak Case, which accounted for the variation in the N-POSS construction, and the feature content of AGRG, which accounted for the variation in the N.D-POSS construction. Both parameters are 'morphological', in the sense that they concern features of a functional head associated with nominal morphology. In terms of the theory of parameters sketched at the outset, strong or weak Case is a major parameter, exhibiting all the diagnostic properties of major parameters listed in (1), namely

- It concerns the feature values of a functional category with a general distribution, namely the category D, present in all argument noun phrases.
- Therefore it affects (potentially) all constructions involving the category D, that is all argument noun phrases; we mentioned the fact that Icelandic, but not MSc, can do without an indefinite article and a free definite article (but see footnote 7 on the free definite article), and that Icelandic but not MSc has case morphology.
- It is resistant to change, and hence to dialectal variation: We are not aware of any dialect in Mainland Scandinavia, however 'archaic' or 'exotic', which would allow the N-POSS construction. Nor have we heard of any dialect which would not have an indefinite article. As regards Case morphology, there are several dialects in Northern Sweden and Norway which have a morphological dative, but as far as we know there is no dialect which would retain a morphological distinction between subjective and objective Case, which plausibly is a minimum requirement for strong Case to be possible.

By contrast, the parameter responsible for the variation in the N.D-POSS construction is a minor parameter, exhibiting all the diagnostic properties of minor parameters listed in (1).

- It concerns the feature values of a category which occurs only in noun phrases containing a possessor; therefore
- it does not affect any other constructions; and therefore
- it is vulnerable to change, hence to dialectal variation.

(overleaf). This is the case when a free definite article must be inserted: den nya boken 'the new book.DEF'. Movement of a possessor to D is ruled out, as shown by (32), and as explained by the theory presented here in terms of the visibility of AGRG.

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THE OCCASIONAL ABSENCE OF ANAPHORIC AGREEMENT IN LABRADOR INUTTUT*

ALANA JOHNS  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Introduction

This article forms part of ongoing research into a parametric analysis of some dialects of the Inuit language (Johns 1993, 1995). The Inuit language (in most of Canada referred to as Inuktitut) is spoken from Alaska to Greenland (see Doraí 1990). As a result of the fact that migrations were from west to east, the linguistically more conservative dialects are found in the west, while the more innovative, i.e., those having undergone more phonological and morphological change, are found in the east. In this work I will examine one property that differentiates Labrador Inuitut, an eastern dialect spoken on the northern coast of Labrador, from other dialects. The property concerns the distribution of a particular form of agreement suffixation (anaphoric agreement) which specifies that one referent is an anaphor, taking another referent as antecedent. More specifically, the issue revolves around whether or not an anaphoric agreement may be found in one syntactic context: possessed NPs in absolutive (nominative) case.

The research is conducted within the Principles and Parameters approach of Generative Grammar (Chomsky 1991, 1993), where languages are viewed as obeying a universal set of principles, and where language differences result from

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