Abstract
In Old French, genitive structures both mirrored and differed from those found in Modern French. Prepositional genitives were found (i.e., la nièce au duc, la nièce du duc both ‘the duke’s niece’), but there were also structures without prepositions, the juxtaposition genitive, JG (cf. Arteaga D. On Old French genitive constructions. In: Amastae J, Goodall G, Montalbetti M, Phinney M (eds) Contemporary research in Romance linguistics. J. Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp 79–90, 1995; Arteaga D, Herschensohn J. A phase-based analysis of old French genitive constructions. In Colina S, Olarrea A, Carvalho AM (eds) Romance Linguistics 2009: selected papers from the 39th annual conference of the Linguistic symposium on the romance languages. J. Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp 285–300, 2010; Delfitto and Paradisi 2009) type la nièce duc or lalle duc nièce.). In an analysis focusing on the evolution of the genitive, we propose that the JG in Old French has directly inherited the same structure in Latin, although Latin had no definite article. In later OF, when case endings ceased to be pronounced, case had to be checked by a preposition. At that point, children no longer had the morphological cues (Lightfoot D. The development of language: acquisition, change, and evolution. Blackwell, Oxford, 1999) to assign a genitive meaning to the possessor, the JG was lost. The reason for the narrowing of the à genitives can be explained by the fact that dative à has always been limited to persons (Herslund M. Problèmes de syntaxe de l’ancien français. Compléments datifs et génitifs. Akademisk Forlag, Uppsala, 1980).
Chapter 2
A Diachronic View of Old French Genitive Constructions

Deborah Arteaga and Julia Herschensohn

2.1 Introduction

As noted by Arteaga (1995), Delfitto and Paradisi (2008, henceforth D and P), Arteaga and Herschensohn (2010, henceforth A and H), Old French (OF) and Modern French (Mod FR) shared certain genitive structures, but not others. For example, OF, like Mod FR, had a wide range of genitive structures including those with à, (type un ami à moi ‘a friend of mine’) and those with de (type la tête de la femme ‘the head of the woman’). The most important difference between OF and Mod FR genitive structures was the existence of the so-called juxtaposition genitive (JG) in OF but not in Mod FR, which could be either postnominal (type la nièce le duc ‘the niece of the duke’), or prenominal (la duc nièce or le duc nièce).

In this chapter, we adopt the general analysis of OF genitive constructions mapped out by A and H and D and P. Unlike these articles, however, we focus on the diachronic evolution of the genitive from Latin to OF and then to Mod FR. We seek to answer the following questions:

1. Why was the JG lost?
2. What explains the change of distribution of the prepositional genitives?
3. How does the evolution of the genitive from Latin to Mod FR broaden our understanding of language change in general?
In the following sections we first review the genitive constructions of Latin, Late Latin, OF and Mod FR. We next provide background concerning our theoretical framework, the Minimalist Program (cf. Chomsky 1995) and provide accounts of the possessive constructions in Latin, OF and Mod FR. We then consider the development of the various genitive constructions, including the loss of the juxtaposition genitive (both types). We then discuss the change in distribution of prepositional genitives, and finally, how the evolution from Latin to OF to Mod FR informs our view of diachronic change in general.

2.2 Latin Genitive Constructions

Traditional philologists (Jensen 1990; Ménard 1988; Moignet 1988; Westholm 1899) note that Latin genitive structures are the source for those found in OF. The oldest structure found in Latin is the JG. In such structures, the possessor could either precede or follow the possessed without an intervening preposition (e.g., Ménard 1988:27; Anglade 1965:155) and the possessor (in bold) was marked by genitive case:

\[(1) \text{Reg} \quad \text{filius}\]
king-m-sg-gen son-m-sg-nom
\[\text{or}\]
son-m-sg-nom \quad \text{Regis} \quad \text{king-m-sg-gen}

‘the son of the king’

\[(2) \text{dei} \quad \text{gratia}\]
God-m-sg-gen grace-f-sg-nom
\[\text{gratia} \quad \text{dei}\]
grace-f-sg-nom \quad God-m-sg-gen

‘God’s grace’

\[\text{regis/dei} \quad \text{is in the genitive case.} \]

Compare (3)–(4) below (Westholm 1899:2):

\[(3) \text{Illic est } \text{Philocomasio} \quad \text{custos}\]
Here-is-3sg \quad Philocomasiu-genitive \quad \text{m-sg} \quad \text{guardian-nom-m-sg}
\[\text{‘Here is Philocomasiu’s guardian.’}\]
(Plautus Mil 272)

1 The following abbreviations are used: m = masculine, f = feminine, sg = singular, pl = plural, nom = nominative, gen = genitive, dat = dative, obl = oblique, def = definite, spec = specific, 1-2-3 = first-second-third person.
A Diachronic View of Old French Genitive Constructions

(4) *illic est Philocomasii custos*

Here is-3sg Philocomasiu-dative-m-sg guardian-nom-m-sg

‘Here is Philocomasii’s guardian.’

(Plautus Mil 1431)

Note that in (3) the possessor, *Philocomasius*, precedes the possessed, *custos*, which is in the nominative case (Ménard). In Later Latin, the possessor noun could also be in the dative case (4). The strong link in Latin between the dative and genitive case is particularly important for the evolution of genitive structures in OF.

The preposition *de* ‘of’ is also found with a genitive use in Popular Latin (e.g., the works of Plautus, Meyer-Lübke 1888) expressing possession (Westholm 1899). An example can be found in (5)–(6) below (Jensen 1990:24):

(5) *unos multorum*

one-nom-m-sg of.many-gen-m-sg

‘One of many.’

(6) *unus de multis*

one-nom-m-sg of many-dative-m-sg

(5)

As seen by (5) and (6) above, the genitive *multorum* alternated with the structure *de multis* (dative).

Another genitive structure found in Later Latin (Meyer-Lübke 1888:375), was one construed with *a/ad*:

(7) *hic requiescunt membra ad duus fratres Gallo et Fidencio qui feorunt fili Magno et vixerunt in pace.*

here lie-3pl remains-nom-neuter-sg to two-dative-m-pl brothers-m-pl Gallo and Fidencio who were-pl the sons-NOM-m-pl Magno-dative-m-sg and lived-3-pl in peace-ablative-f-sg

‘Here lie the remains of two brothers Gallo and Fidencio who were sons of Magnus and lived in peace.’

In (7) above the prepositional phrase *ad duus fratres* indicates possession, despite the fact that *duus fratres* is in the accusative. Note further that the proper noun *Magno* is in the dative, not genitive, case.

To summarize, Classical Latin preferred genitives with no intervening preposition (JG). The head noun could precede the possessor or follow it. In Later Latin, prepositional genitives, in which the dative alternated with the genitive to indicate possession, were also found.
2.3 Old French Genitive Constructions

Like Latin, OF evinced several genitive structures.\(^2\) We begin by considering prepositional genitives as described by traditional philologists. We then look at JG genitives, a structure no longer found in Mod FR.

2.3.1 Prepositional Genitives

2.3.1.1 Genitive with à

In OF, possession could be indicated with the preposition à, such as in the following:

(8) les piés \(\rightarrow\) cheval

the feet-OBL-m-pl to the-OBL-m-sg horse-OBL-m-sg

‘The feet of (literally ‘to’) the horse.’

(9) chastel \(\rightarrow\) puceles

the castle-NOM-m-sg to the-OBL-f-pl maidens-OBL-f-pl

‘The castle of (literally ‘to’) the maidens.’

(10) fille \(\rightarrow\) un comte

daughter-NOM-f-sg to a-OBL-m-sg count-OBL-m-sg

‘She was the daughter of (literally ‘to’) a count.’

Note that the possessor could be definite, les (à \(\rightarrow\) le) puceles as in (9), or indefinite, as in (10) un comte.\(^3\) However, in all cases, the possessor is specific.

\(^2\) An anonymous reviewer notes that the JG is relatively rare and that our analysis is not based on a corpus. However, we have culled examples from scores of philologists, so that our analysis is based on empirical data. The relative rarity of JG does not exempt it from investigation; on the contrary, we find this construction sheds new light on the diachronic development of OF. Another anonymous reviewer, noting Kibler’s (1984) suggestion that the JG is limited to possessors represented by kinship, rank profession or “God,” indicates that “this could already represent a narrowing down of a previously more general construction.”

\(^3\) This is contra D and P who argue that the genitive with à was normally used with indefinite articles and could not be iterated (p. 298).
[+spec]. The possessor is not necessarily human [+hum], as (8) indicates. This construction is quite common in Modern Spoken French (see Joseph 1988), as in structures like the following:

(11) *L’amī à ma soeur.*

‘My sister’s friend.’ (literally, ‘The friend to my sister.’)

However, the distribution of à genitives is not identical in Mod FR and OF. In Mod FR the à genitive is limited to [+human] possessors (Grevisse 1993:131–133). Unlike Mod FR, OF also evinced genitive with à constructions in which the possessor is animate, but not human, as seen in (8) above. To summarize, then, in OF, à genitives could be used with definite or indefinite possessors, providing that they were animate.4 We next turn to the genitive with de.

2.3.1.2 Genitive with *de*

It is widely accepted that genitive structures with de have the widest distribution in OF. Consider (12)–(13) below5:

(12) *la pel du lōu*  

the-NOM-f-sg skin-NOM-f-sg of the-OBL-m-sg wolf-OBL-m-sg  

‘The skin of the wolf.’

(Renart 10.1622)

(13) *fiz de sa sorur*  

son-NOM-m-sg of his-OBL-f-sg sister-OBL-f-sg  

‘The son of his sister.’

(Brut 9141)

(14) *sor le bort de la nef*  

on the-OBL-m-sg bord-OBL-m-sg of the-OBL-f-sg ship-OBL-f-sg  

‘on board the ship’ (literally ‘on the board of the ship’)

(Queste 100.31)  

(Herslund 1980:84)

These structures could occur before any kind of article and with animate and inanimate possessors. In (12) the possessor *lōu* is [+animate, -human]; in (13) the possessor *sa sorur* is [+animate, +human], and in (14) it is [-animate, -human]

4Philogists (inter alia Togeby 1976; Foulet 1928/1982; Jensen 1990) argue that the genitive with à is found when the possessor is indefinite or plural. However, there are counterexamples from the literature that illustrate that this is a tendency only.

5Examples (17)–(19) are taken from Herslund (1980:84).
Therefore, the *de* genitive differed from the *à* genitive in that it could be used with inanimate possessors (14). The two prepositional structures patterned similarly, however, with respect to the feature [+spec]. We next turn to the JG.

### 2.3.2 The Juxtaposition Genitive

#### 2.3.2.1 The Postposed JG

Like Latin, in OF possession could be indicated by the JG (Arteaga 1995; D and P 2009; A and H 2009). Recall that in such structures, there is no intervening preposition between the head noun and the possessor. Yet OF was different from Latin in that it only had two cases (rather than five), nominative (sentential subject) and oblique (all other functions). In OF, while the possessor was obligatorily in the oblique case, the case of the head noun depended on its grammatical function in the sentence. The most common of the JG structures in OF was the DP that was possessed followed by the possessor, as in (15):

(15) *la chambre son pedre*

The room of his father’ (Literally, ‘the room his father’)

(St. Alexis 75)

(16) *La niece le duc manoir*

The duke’s niece remained.’

(La Chasteleine de Vergi 376)

(1928/1982:14)

(17) *des chevaliers*

Some of King Arthur’s knights’

(Mort 5.6)

(Herslund 1980:119)

---

*Cited in Arteaga (1995).*
et cil a prise et et cil a prise et
and this. one-NOM-f-sg has-3sg taken-NOM-f-sg and
recëue sa fame
received-NOM-f-sg his-OBL-f-sg wife-OBL-f-sg
des mains un abé
from.the-OBL-f-sg hands-OBL-f-sg an abby-OBL-m-sg
‘And this one took and received his wife from the hands of an abbot.’

(Guillaume)
(Herslund 1984:85)

In (15), the possessor son pedre is in the oblique case; the nominative would be ses pere(s). In the example (16), the possessor duc is in the oblique case (nominative li ducs). In (17), le roi Artu is also in the oblique case (nominative li roi rois Artus), and in (18) abé is oblique. Note that while the possessor is invariably specific, the DP that is possessed can be either be [+specific] or [-specific]. Evidence that the crucial feature is [+specific], rather than definite or indefinite comes from examples such as (18) above, where un abé has the sense of un tel abé ‘one such abbot’.7 We next consider the prenominal JG structure.

2.3.2.2 The Preposed Juxtaposition Genitive

Another genitive construction was possible in OF, one in which the possessor preceded the DP that was possessed. This form is thought by philologists to be older than the postposed JG discussed above (inter alia Jensen 1990; Ménard 1988; Moignet 1988; Tobler 1921; Anglade 1965).8 Consider the following:

Mes ne tocha la deu merci
but not attained-3sg pro the-OBL-f-sg God-OBL-m-sg grace-OBL-f-sg
‘But he never attained the grace of God.’ (literally ‘The grace God’)
(Tobler 1921:70)
(Ch. Lyon 5063)

7 D and P claim that the DP that is possessed is always definite in the JG structure. However, counterexamples abound. See Herslund (1980) for discussion. As for the possessor, an anonymous reviewer confirms that there are isolated cases in which it may be indefinite. However, we note that it is always [+specific]. Proper names do not usually show determiners although they are [+spec], as Dieu in l’Hotel Dieu.

8 An anonymous reviewer points out that this genitive was far less common in OF (Foulet 1928/1982:18; also Buridant 2000: 95). This is accounted for by our analysis because the structure contains a defective phase, which is necessarily marked, and perhaps less stable for that reason. See Section 3.2.3 for details.
D. Arteaga and J. Herschensohn

Car il fut ja since he-NOM-m-sg was-3sg already

de son pere maisnie] from his-OBL-m-sg father-OBL-m-sg household-OBL-f-sg

‘He was already part of the household of his father. (Literally ‘the household his father.’)

(Tobler 1921:70)

(Ch Lyon 948)

In (18), the article is not that of deu (masculine), but rather the one corresponding to merci, which was feminine in OF. However, in (19), the possessive adjective is masculine oblique, indicating that it belongs to pere, and not maisnie (feminine). In both cases, the possessor is in the oblique case (cf. nominative deus, ses pere(s)).

Previous analyses have noted that the JG is used with [+human] possessors, and have claimed that the possessor must be [+def], which cannot account for examples like (18) above. We therefore propose that the essential feature is specificity [+spec].

The JG is usually a single possessed-possessor, but there are instances of multiple instantiations, as (19) and (20) show.9

le prei the-OBL-m-sg meadow-OBL-m-sg

les oirs le Pelletier

OBL-m-sg heirs-OBL-m-sg the-OBL-m-sg Pelletier-OBL-m-sg

‘Pelletier’s heirs’ meadow’ (literally ‘The meadow the heirs the Pelletier’) Lanher (1975:117.5)

Holman (1992:142)

To summarize, in Old French, four genitive structures were found, two of which are not found in Mod FR, namely the preposed and postposed JG (cf 15–20). In the JG, the possessor could precede or follow the possessed without the use of a preposition. The two other structures, the genitive with à and with de, are found in Mod FR, although the distribution of the former is now limited to [+human] possessors, as opposed to animate nouns, as was the case in OF. In the discussion that follows, we will to the research questions outlined in Sect. 2.1 above:

1. Why was the JG lost?
2. What explains the change of distribution of the prepositional genitives?

9 Contra D and P’s claim (p. 297) that “multiple instantiations are excluded.”
3. How does the evolution of the genitive from Latin to Mod FR broaden our understanding of language change in general?

We next turn to the theoretical framework that we assume in our analysis, as well as earlier analyses of genitive structures in OF.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Minimalism

The program that we adopt is that of Minimalism (Chomsky 1995, 2001), a framework that has grown out of the Principles and Parameters approach (Chomsky 1981), but differs in that it advocates a streamlined computational system. Both frameworks propose an account of syntactic structures of a given language in terms of a grammar capable of generating its sentences. The current program assumes a minimal number of operations, Merge (the combination of two syntactic items) and Move, procedures that are very often triggered by feature-matching. Syntactic categories may carry interpretable (necessary for semantic interpretation to give meaning to the sentence) or uninterpretable (strictly grammatical) features. The latter represent links that are syntactically required but meaningless; they must be “valued” and then eliminated (checked off) during the course of the syntactic derivation.

For example, verbs carry person/number features that are grammatical (hence uninterpretable), while nominative subjects carry those same features as interpretable characteristics of the noun. In this case, the uninterpretable features must “look for” syntactic categories that carry interpretable features to match, value and check off the uninterpretable ones. The result is subject verb agreement, with the verb carrying person-number features that are only interpretable in terms of the subject NP. Another example of uninterpretable features includes case on nouns. Prepositions, on the other hand, which can syntactically determine case, carry the interpretable feature of case. Finally, determiners carry an interpretable [def] feature, while nouns may carry an uninterpretable [udef] feature that must be valued by the determiner (Lin 2008). This feature is crucial to the GJ in OF.

2.4.2 Previous Analyses of OF Genitive Constructions

Recall that the genitive constructions include possessors marked à and de as in Mod FR (21, 22) as well as postnominal (23) and prenominal (24–25) JGs.
D. Arteaga and J. Herschensohn

The prenominal genitive must be preceded by a definite article, but this definite
determiner may relate either to the possessor or the possessed as the two examples
show.

2.4.2.1 Arteaga (1995)

Within the Government and Binding framework, Arteaga (1995) considers OF gen-
tive constructions. Her conclusion is that their derivation can be explained if the
presence of an agreement (AGR) projection in DPs is posited. This lexical AGR
(Contreras 1992) assigns a case to genitive complements in the JG without the need
for a preposition. She argues that the two JGs in OF have the same base structure.
The prenominal JG is explained, in this view, by movement out of the lower NP, after
which it adjoins to the AgrP of the higher DP. She further claims that if the lower D
is null, the definite determiner is that of the DP that is possessed, whereas if it is the
higher D that is null, the definite determiner is that of the raised possessor.

Summing up the views of traditional philologists, Arteaga (1995) notes that the
three types of genitive in OF are essentially a function of lexical selection. In the
case of the genitive with à, it was typically found when the complement noun was
plural or lacked a definite determiner. The genitive with de was preferred when the
possessor was not a person, when a whole class of individuals is designated, with
proper nouns, or before a personal pronoun. Finally, the JG occurred when the pos-
sessor was human and the article definite or a proper noun. She explains the loss of
the JG by the fact that AGR ceased to be available in Middle French, as the language
was no longer pro-drop by the fifteenth century. She does not address the evolution
of prepositional genitives, i.e., the fact that à came to be used with [+human] only.

2.4.2.2 Delfitto and Paradisi (2008)

D and P provide an analysis of genitive structures in OF, Old Italian, and general
Romance. They note that in OF, the possessor in genitives may be preceded with
the prepositions à or de (cf. (8–14) above), which assign case (oblique in OF) as one
of their lexical properties. The structure of possessive de/à constructions that they

---

10 See d’Alessandro and Roberts (2) for discussion of past participle agreement in defective phases, and Hartman and Zimmerman on adnominal genitives.
assume is as in (26), in which the head noun voiture ‘car’ moves from an IP to a position in spec D/PP.\footnote{Kayne (1993:102) uses the symbol D/P “to represent a prepositional determiner de (comparable to a prepositional complementizer).”}

\begin{equation}
\text{la}_{\text{D/PP}} [\text{[}_\text{IP} \text{Jean [AGR}^o \text{[voiture]}_j \ldots \Rightarrow
\text{la}_{\text{D/PP}} \text{voiture}_j [\text{de}_\text{IP} \text{Jean [AGR}^o \text{[e]}_j \ldots \text{‘Jean’s car’ (literally, ‘the car of Jean’)}
\end{equation}

Following Kayne (1993, 2005), D and P assume preposition insertion of de in the above structure to assign case to Jean. In fact, as an anonymous reviewer notes, the structures proposed in (26) are not clear. The movements are primarily based on Kayne’s earlier proposals and do not correspond to recent assumptions within the minimalist framework (see Arteaga and Herschensohn 2010 for extended discussion). Furthermore, they provide no motivation for adopting the structure in (26) where the possessor is base generated between the D la and the head noun voiture (an order that looks similar to the prenominal JG that they do not discuss).

They deal mainly with prepositionless genitives, and limit their discussion to the postnominal JG (cf. (15)–(17)), relating it to similar genitives in other Romance and Semitic languages. They adopt Kayne’s (1993) antisymmetric structure for DP in which the possessor precedes the head noun and in English can raise to spec DP (from complement of D to specifier of D), giving the Saxon genitive as the king’s horse (cf. Adger 2003:257–258). For the OF JG, D and P (2008:299) propose the structure in (27) whereby the head N raises from IP, as does AGR/K, the “agreement-case morphology associated with the possessor constituent” into D$^o$.

\begin{equation}
\text{la}_{\text{D/PP}} [\text{[}_\text{IP} \text{le duc [AGR/K}^o \text{[niece]}_j \ldots \Rightarrow
\text{la}_{\text{D/PP}} \text{niece}_j [\text{AGR/K}^o_{\text{D}}]_\text{IP} \text{le duc [e}_j \text{e]}_j \ldots \text{‘the duke’s niece’}
\end{equation}

(literally, ‘the niece the duke’) = (16)

The most important points are that D and P assume an AGR/K phrase that assigns objective case to the possessor in the OF JG and that the possessor and possessed leapfrog one another to be placed in the correct order. While their account is a serious attempt to link genitive structures in various Romance languages, both synchronically and diachronically, it has limitations (see A and H 2010 for detailed discussion). A major problem is that their analysis does not extend to the prenominal JG, as in (18)–(19), a shortcoming addressed in A and H.\footnote{Furthermore, many of their claims, such as the lack of iteration of JG or genitive with à, the notion that à genitives are almost always indefinite, and their observation that the possessor in the JG is almost always masculine, can simply not be reconciled with the data, as there are counterexamples. Discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper.}
A and H propose the same structure for all genitive structures (prepositional and JG) in OF, (28):

(28) [\[DP \[ nP \ldots \[NP \[ N \[KP \[K/P \[ DP \[ nP \ldots \[NP \[ N-possessor]]]]]]]]

They argue that in OF genitive structures, the possessor nouns in question carry interpretable gender and number features (e.g. [+f, -pl], cf. Bernstein 1991; Longobardi 1994; Mallén 1997) and uninterpretable case and definite features (per Lin 2008) as [u-case], [u-def]. The D carries interpretable [def], and there are additional functional projections such as NumP, SpecP between D and nP which likewise carry interpretable features that can value and delete the u-features (Lin 2008).

The gender, number, and case features are the same as in Mod FR. They assume that in OF prepositional genitive structures, the relational character of à/de carries an interpretable feature [K] (a case assigning feature) that can value and delete the [u-case] feature of the oblique N. The head of this “possessor” complement phrase is K/P, a grammatical head that is overt, appearing as a preposition (P, à or de), or else null, appearing as K, a genitive case assigning interpretable feature that grounds the possessor referentially in time and space (Bittner and Hale 1996). In prepositional genitive structures, as we have seen in (8–14), the possessor may be definite or indefinite, in which case D carries an interpretable [+/-def] feature. The [u-def] feature of the possessor N may be valued by [+/-def] on the D, while the SpecP provides interpretable [+spec]. We assume that unlike some languages which allow in situ checking of features, OF DP requires a c-command relationship for case checking (e.g. the case assigning K c-commands the possessor DP embedded under it).

Recall that the possessed N receives its case from a higher source (nominative through Tense or oblique often from the verb).

For the JG, on the other hand, A and H propose that the K/P head here has no overt reflex (as in overt P), but must also carry the features [uhum], [u-def], [uspec] since those features of the JG possessor provide sufficient reference to “ground” the DP complement (cf. Pesetsky and Torrego 2004, 2009). The [hum], [def] and [spec] features of the K/P projections and the features of the possessor DP check and delete, while the interpretable case feature of the null K head deletes the [u-case] feature of the possessor DP (cf. Pesetsky and Torrego 2004). For the postnominal JG (la niece le duc type), A and H adopt the structure of (26), proposing that the K/P head here has no overt preposition, but must carry the features [u-def], [uhum], [uspec] to ensure the referentiality of the DP complement. These features of K/P are valued by the [+def] determiner and the necessarily [+hum, +spec] possessor noun le duc, while the null preposition of K/P deletes the oblique case of the possessor DP. According to their account, the postnominal JG construction is obtained by the feature checking and valuing of [+def], [+hum], [+spec] of the possessor DP.

---

13 An anonymous reviewer questions this notion, as s/he claims that a possessor may be generic. We have found no examples of generic JGs. However, articles do not appear in Old French generics. See A and H (2010) for discussion.
For the prenominal JG, A and H assume that either the possessor or the DP that is possessed, is defective, in that it lacks D, and is thus a bare np. It is an incomplete DP functional shell that requires a D to check off the uninterpretable features of the np. In other words, if there is no D in the lower possessor NP, it must raise to prenominal position, as *la deu merci* or *la duc niece* using the [+def] feature of the higher D to check the [udef] feature of both the DP that is possessed and the possessor. Recall that in such structures, it is the definite article of the upper DP that is expressed.

In A and H’s proposal, when the determiner is that of the lower DP, as *son pere maisnie* or *le duc niece*, it is the upper NP that has no D. In that case, the entire lower possessor DP fronts to check off and value the uninterpretable [udef] feature of the upper N as well as that of the originally lower possessor noun that has been subsequently raised. This in turn explains examples like *son pere maisnie*, in which the entire lower possessor DP has fronted.

### 2.5 New Proposal

### 2.5.1 Latin KP

While neither A and H nor D and P discuss Latin genitive structures, we believe that generally speaking, their analyses regarding case assignment apply to Latin as well. Pereltsvaig (2007) argues for the universality of DP whether or not a language has overt determiners or not. As noted by A and H (2010) a special case phrase (KP) is needed for case assignment in Latin within a minimalist framework. The structure we propose is the following:

(29) *filius regis* ‘the son of the/a king’ (=1 above)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+gen] D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[uGen uNum +def]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f pl uDef uCase]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reg-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

14 An anonymous reviewer asks why the [uDef] feature of the upper N can’t probe down to enter into a checking relationship with the possessor DP, that the order could remain *maisnie son père*. This is explained by our analysis because the upper phase is defective and therefore cannot enter into a checking relationship with a lower D in situ, given the c-command requirement.
In the above structure, K carries the interpretable feature of genitive which will match and delete the [u-case] of the possessor noun. The determiner, which is often null in Latin (except for demonstratives, possessives, quantifiers and the like), carries the uninterpretable features of number and gender and the interpretable definiteness that are not realized overtly (cf. Lin 2008 for null D in Chinese). The D feature may be either [+/-def] for it to delete the [u-def] feature of the noun. The noun, in turn, carries the interpretable features of gender, number, [u-case] and [u-def]. To generate the correct morphology, reg- will raise to precede the genitive suffix –is as part of the spelling out of morphology.

In later Latin, however, as noted above, the prepositions ad and de were also found, suggesting that a PP alternated with KP in Proto Romance, as proposed for OF by A and H (2010) and D and P. We therefore provide the following structure for the example in (7) above:

\[
\begin{align*}
(30) & \quad \text{ad duus fraters 'of two brothers':} \\
\text{KP/PP} & \\
\text{P} & \\
\text{NP} & \\
\text{D} & \\
\text{N} & \\
\text{[gen]} & \\
\text{[u-gen u-num + def]} & \\
\text{[f + p] u-def u-case u-spec} & \\
\text{ad} & \\
\text{duus} & \\
\text{fraters}
\end{align*}
\]

In the derivation of both (29) and (30), contra D and P and A and H’s analysis of OF, we assume that in Latin genitive structures, the nouns in question carry interpretable gender and number features and uninterpretable case. Note that (29) can mean either ‘the son of the king’ or ‘the son of a king.’ This illustrates the fact that the crucial uninterpretable feature is not [+def] but rather [+spec] (cf. Ionin 2004), a feature that is determined by the discourse and speaker intent. In (30), the determiner is overt, checking and deleting [u-spec] on the noun which, in turn, deletes the uninterpretable features of D. The overt preposition ad is able to check [u-case] of the noun.

As seen by the examples above, one difference between the determiner system in Latin and OF was that the determiner in the former language could be null, yet could nonetheless express [+/-spec] and/or [+def] (Gamillscheg 1957). We therefore assume, following Lin’s (2008) analysis for Mandarin Chinese, that a null definite feature could check off [u-def] in Latin. In later Latin, demonstratives, 15

---

15 We adopt the broadly accepted terminology of [gender] as an interpretable feature of the noun (cf. Carstens 2000, 2003) although it is clearly a grammatical one with semantic interpretation only in terms of animate nouns. See also Bittner and Hale (1996).
including *illi* (Classical *ille*, *illa*, neuter *illud*), the source of Romance articles, came to be used as definite articles expressing specificity, as in (31):

(31) *Cito proferte mihi stolam*

right.away offer-IMP-2sg to.me shawl-OBL-f-sg

*i llam primam.*

that-OBL-f-sg first-OBL-f-sg

‘Offer me right away the (literally, that) first shawl.

(Luke 15 v 22)

(Grandgent 1934:36)

In the example in (31), demonstrative article *illam* modifies *stolam*, matching it in both gender (feminine) and case (accusative). We interpret this to mean that in later Latin a null determiner was losing its ability to check off and value the feature [+spec]. As the Latin demonstrative lost its deictic value and became grammaticalized into the definite article in OF, it also eventually evolved into a distinctive mark of the JG. The KP case phrase that could license genitive case in Latin evolved into what we designate as K/PP in OF. As argued above, the JG allows a null preposition, but carries the [u*def*] and [u*spec*] features that require a definite article and a [+spec] DP. We will see that by Middle French the [u*spec*] and [u*hum*] features of the K/P and null preposition are no longer sufficient to indicate the possessor relationship, thus leading to the requirement of overt prepositions (*à* or *de*).

### 2.5.2 Old French KP/PP

#### 2.5.2.1 Prepositional Genitives

As noted above, A and H propose that in OF genitives, the case assigner could either be an overt P (*à* or *de*) or in the juxtaposition genitive constructions, a null preposition. In prepositional genitives, the possessor could be [+/-def] or [+/-hum], but for the JG the possessor had to be [+/-def], [+hum], [+spec] to sufficiently identify the reference of the possessor using a null P.16 There is independent empirical evidence for A and H’s proposal that null prepositions were possible in OF. As noted by Herslund (1980), Togeby (1974), Jensen (1990), among many others, dative verbs may be construed with or without *à*, which is required in Mod FR.17

---

16 Most frequently the JG is [+def], but there are attested cases of [−def] [+spec].

17 When dative verbs are construed with an object pronoun, it is invariably the dative that is used, except in North-Eastern and Anglo-Norman varieties, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer.
‘He said it to the king.’ (literally, ‘he said it the king’)

‘I will tell it to my uncle directly.’

The fact that in (34) above, only the dative pronoun in francien *li* is possible (as opposed to the accusative pronoun *le*) further demonstrates that dative verbs took a dative complement in OF whether or not an overt preposition (*à*) introduced the full lexical DP. The complement of dative verbs is usually [+human] in OF as in Mod FR.

We assume, therefore, that the OF prepositional genitives were structured as in Latin and Mod FR with *à* and thus continuing the Proto Romance alternation of a PP with KP. We provide in (35) the structure for the example in (10) above:

In (35) the uninterpretable features (number and gender) of the D match and are deleted by the interpretable features (masculine singular) of the N, whereas the

---

18 An anonymous reviewer notes that Anglo-Norman continued to have the JG even after the decline of the case system. Due to space limitations, we are unable to address dialectal variation in this paper.
uninterpretable feature of N (specific) is matched and deleted by the interpretable counterpart of D.

2.5.2.2 Juxtaposition Genitives

For the JG, we assume then—continuing the KP structure seen in late Latin—that OF allowed possessors to be complements of the head (possessed) NP, introduced by either a an overt or null preposition in K/PP. When the P was overt, it could assign case to the possessor; if P were null, the additional stipulations of the human-definite-specific features were required, excluding indefinites such as [ad] un comte. The JG had a structure similar (35), but further required that the possessor be [+spec], [+hum] as illustrated by (36):

(36) la chambre son pere (=23)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{KP/PP} \\
\text{K/P'} \\
\text{K/P DP} \\
\{+OBL, \text{hum, uspec}\} \\
\{u\text{gen, umum + spec}\} \\
N \\
\{+f-pl, +hum, uspec, ucase\} \\
\text{son} \\
\text{pere}
\end{array}
\]

In (36) the uninterpretable features of the D (gen, num) are valued and deleted by the interpretable gender and number of pere, while its [uspec] feature is matched by the definite determiner. The noun’s [ucase] is matched by the interpretable oblique feature of K/P that is licensed by [+def, +hum]; the uninterpretable K/P feature [uhuman] is valued by the noun.

For the prenominal JG, recall that either the possessor or possessed is defective, lacking D, which is needs to check off ufeatures, as in (37):

(37) la deu merci (=24)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{KP/PP} \\
\text{K/P'} \\
\text{K/P} \\
\{+OBL, \text{hum, uspec}\} \\
\{u\text{gen, umum + def + spec}\} \\
\text{la} \\
\{+f-pl, +hum, uspec, ucase\} \\
\text{deu} \\
\text{n}\text{P}_1 \\
\text{N}_2 \\
\text{merci}
\end{array}
\]

\text{deu}

\text{merci}
If there is no D in the lower possessor NP, it must raise to prenominal position, as la deu merci, using the [+def] feature of the higher D to check the [udef] feature of both the possessed and the possessor. Recall that in such structures, it is the definite article of the upper DP that is expressed. If the higher NP is defective, the non-defective DP raises to furnish the features [+def +spec] as in son pere maisnie.

Our analysis can account for the fact that the prenominal JG is older, because it is part of a defective phase, which is marked as it is not the norm. Our analysis differs from both D and P and A and H, in that the possessor must be [+spec]; it may be either [+def]. What is crucial to our analysis is that the [uspec] feature may be valued by [+spec] on the D. We next turn to our diachronic analysis from Old French to Mod FR.

2.5.3 Modern French

With the loss of the OF dual case system, possessors could no longer be oblique complements of the head (possessed) NP, introduced by a null preposition. Either the preposition à or de was now required, and their distribution became more specialized. No longer was there a definiteness restriction (as for the JG) on the possessor, and de became the general all-purpose genitive marker. The preposition à now became limited to [+human] possessors as in un ami à moi. In our view, the Mod FR prepositional genitives are structured as in Latin and OF with à and de, although they only continue the PP. We provide in (37) the following structure for example fille d’un comte ‘daughter of a count’ (cf. 10 above):

(37) PP
     P’ P          DP
     [+gen]         D                                            NP
     [u gen num]               N
     [-f-pl case]
     de un comte

2.6 The Evolution of the OF Genitive as a Window into Language Change

The changes exemplified by the evolution of genitive structures from Latin to Mod FR show from one perspective the development of analytic morphosyntax from synthetic nominal declensions and from another perspective the interplay of morphology, phonology, and syntax. We see these changes as a gradual
replacement of minimal features as native speakers reanalyze the underlying structure of their changing language. In the case at hand, the KP case phrase in Latin began sharing its function with PPs with overt prepositions in Late Latin, thus giving the prepositional and juxtaposition genitives found in Classical Latin, Late Latin and OF. The JG of OF, with its requirements of [+spec +hum] possessor, gave way to only the prepositional genitive once case morphology eroded in Middle French. In Mod FR, only prepositional genitives can license possessor complements. Crucial to our analysis, discussed below, is the proposal by Lightfoot (1999) of cue based language change (Lightfoot 1999) in the evolution of genitives in French.

2.6.1 Loss of the JG

In our view, there are several reasons for the loss of the JG. Recall that while Latin had five nominal cases, these were reduced to two in OF, nominative and oblique. The case difference was not usually seen in the feminine (except in imparisyllabic nouns whose nominative and oblique forms had differing numbers of syllables, and in nouns ending in consonants, Pope 1934:312–313), but rather was evident in the masculine whose nominative singular and oblique plural were distinguished by final –s. Consonants (especially [s/z]) were effaced in final and preconsonantal positions certainly by the end of the Middle Ages (in many cases thus rendering the case marking of nominative and oblique masculine ineffective). This, in turn, resulted in the breakdown of the OF case system, at around the time that the JG was lost (Arteaga 1995). Isolated examples of the JG may be found after that time, but they are considered to be archaisms (Grevisse 1993; Herslund 1980; Palm 1977).

The loss of the case system in nominals related to the morphological leveling that resulted in part from the loss of final consonants and in part from a shift from synthetic grammatical marking (inflections on nouns and verbs as in Latin) to more analytical indication of grammatical function (prepositional phrases and word order). As Pope (1934:313) notes, “The gradual effacement of final s in pre-consonantal position and even elsewhere rendered the flexional system often inoperative; the increasing fixity of word order made it unnecessary.” In our view, the fact that the case system was no longer functional meant that null prepositions were not possible: the generalization of oblique case to both nominative and accusative functions—distinguished now exclusively by word order except in the pronominal system—excluded the use of oblique as the marker of possession.

Thus a native speaker could no longer determine the relationship of a noun adjacent to another noun or as a verbal complement without an intervening preposition.
This is confirmed by the fact that null à after dative verbs was no longer possible at the same time (Herslund 1980). The features [+spec], [+hum], [+obl case] no longer sufficed to identify a juxtaposed possessor, so the K/P head could no longer carry a null P with the features described earlier. The overt P, either à or de, became obligatory to indicate possession, and the order of the possessor with respect to the possessed became fixed to follow the possessed NP (as was the case for all nominal complements). Finally, these changes obviated the restriction of the JG to human definites, and the distribution of prepositional genitives necessarily changed as well.

Our proposal also accounts for the earlier loss of the prenominal JG. Recall that in such structures either the definite article of the upper DP or that of the lower DP is expressed. We have argued that in such cases, the phase is defective. We would expect, therefore, that such a marked structure would be lost earlier than the postnominal JG that followed the same word order as prepositional genitives.

### 2.6.1.2 Change in Distribution of Prepositional Genitives

As noted above, from OF to Mod FR there has been a change in the use of genitive à, namely that it generally refers to [+human] in Mod FR. Grevisse (1993: 531–533) provides ample examples of human pronouns and nouns, suggesting that the usage with à may be a reduction of appartenant à ‘belonging to.’ Only two non-human examples are given, *l’écurie à la vache* ‘the cow’s stable’ and *la faute à la guerre* ‘war’s fault.’ Our explanation for this has its roots in the dative structure. According to Herslund (1980), the indirect object has always been animate and human. Consider the following example:

{(38) Dist la pucele au chevalier
    Says the maiden-NOM-f-sg to.the-OBL-M-sg knight-OBL-m-sg
    ‘The maiden said to the knight.’
    (Lancelot 1044)

Historically, à has usually been used for [+human] as an indirect object, a practice that is almost exclusive in Mod FR (Herschensohn 1996). The dative can exceptionally be used to individuate/personify inanimate objects and animate beings as in *donner à manger aux animaux* or *donner le nom de Joseph à l’épée*. But generally, speakers came to associate indirect object and possessive constructions headed by à with [+human]. The loss of JG in the fourteenth century necessitated the adoption of a preposition, and the default genitive marker for [+/-human] became *de* since it was already positioned to apply to [+/-hum, +/-def]. The preposition à was not simply limited to human possessors, but became lexically restricted as well in Mod FR.
Broader Implications: Cue Based Evolution

How does the diachronic change described in this study contribute to our more general understanding of how languages change and what the implications may be for synchronic language variation and acquisition? In order to consider these broader implications, we examine the proposals of Lightfoot (1999). He has argued that children are the vehicles of language change in that they may modify the input they receive in creating what turn out to be “new” grammars of their native language. For example, sixteenth century English, as French, used to be a language in which the inflected verb raised above negation and adverbs as in *thinks not* (cf. MF *pense pas*) instead of *does not think*. Modern English allows raising of only auxiliaries, leaving the main verb *in situ*. Lightfoot argues that young children scan their input for cues to the grammar that they are building, and if they perceive variability, they will select cues that sometimes generalize to a grammar that differs from that of their parents—a non-raising pattern for verbs in English, for example. Why would children construct “new grammars”? According to Lightfoot (1999:202), “children need evidence to establish the category that a lexical item belongs to. That evidence might be distributional, inflectional or paradigmatic.” We next explore each of these characteristics with respect to the genitive structures we have examined in the earlier sections, most particularly the total displacement of JG from OF by the prepositional genitive of Mod FR.

In terms of distribution, the JG already had competition from *à* and *de* in late Latin and in OF, so children were exposed to variable input, first in terms of JG and prepositional, but also in terms of the post- and prenominal JG and its variable determiner. The JG was further limited to [+hum+def+spec] DPs, reducing further its generalizability, while *à* genitives were limited to [+animate]. If we look at salience, one must conclude that overt prepositions are more salient than null ones, and the obvious winner in the competition would probably be the most generally used P, *de*. A final note on distribution is that the definite article—along with oblique case, which is the principal overt morphology indicating possession on the JG—was not used in OF for generic (43) and abstract noun phrases (44), both of which are [-spec]:

(43) *Pechiez le m’a tolut*

sin-NOM-m-sg him to.me has-3sg taken.away-NOM-m-sg

‘Sin took him away from me’ (cf. Mod FR *Le peché*)

(Saint Alexis 108)

---

19 Although see Gamillscheg (1957:90) who argues that with abstract nouns, the definite article is present from the earliest texts when they refer to “concrete cases.” He cites three examples, in all of which the definite article has a possessive function. For example, *Guardez, de nos ne turnez le curage* (Roland 650) “Watch that you do not turn away from your courage.”
In (43), the abstract noun *Pechiez* is unaccompanied by articles. Similarly, in (44), there are three generics that are not introduced by a definite article, *Galois*, *bêtes*, and *nature*.

The use of the definite article spread to generics around the fourteenth century, thus eliminating the link between specificity and definiteness. The increased functional load of definite articles in Middle French would further reduce the interpretability of definite articles, making the JG a poor cue for children learning the language.

In terms of inflection, we have already noted that the inflectional systems first of Latin and later of OF experienced morphological erosion that represented a shift from synthetic grammatical marking to analytical (separate grammatical words and fixed word order). The exclusive use of the genitive case with free word order JG in classical Latin was supplemented in later Latin with the prepositional genitives using *ad* and *de*. These same constructions were used in OF, which had two cases (reduced from five in Latin), with oblique serving as direct object, indirect object, and genitive object, all of which permitted null prepositions.

The loss of final consonants in late Old French (cf. Chap. 9 by Schøsler, Chap. 7 by Lindschouw, Chap. 5 by Gess, this volume) led to several changes that influenced the cues that children would have received. Speakers no longer made the distinction between nominative and oblique for masculine and consonant final feminine nouns, since the final *–s* was lost. Similarly, the loss of *–s* obviated the distinction between singular and plural ill nouns so that the burden of marking plurality fell to the determiner (see (43)–(44) above). Partially due to this shift, determiners became obligatory, and thus grammaticalized, in French, and the null determiner which had formerly signaled [-spec] generic DPs gave way to the definite article. The JG then experienced two factors that contributed to its non-distinctness as a means of marking possession by a juxtaposed DP: oblique case was no longer distinctive as an indication of case, and definiteness was no longer a distinct mark of referential specificity. Objective case, the non-nominative case, had to be assigned by either a verb (direct object) or by an overt preposition; the option of a K/PP with a null preposition was lost.

---

20 In Mod FR either *par la nature* or *par nature* is found, the latter of which is a fixed expression.
Finally, considering paradigmatic data, we see that the converging tendencies described above contributed to paradigm leveling, which in turn further marginalized the JG. The loss of the two case nominal system resulted in the domination of the objective form (generalized to both masculine and feminine as no marker in singular and –s in plural for orthography) for nouns and articles. But because the orthographic –s was lost in spoken French, it was only the articles (e.g. le/la singular, les plural) that distinguished number. Imparsyllabic nouns—the most saliently marked nouns case-wise—were eliminated since usually only the oblique form survived. Paradigm leveling is not a primary factor in the loss of JG, but it is definitely concurrent. If paradigm identification helps learners to master morphological alternations, then the leveling could be seen as effecting change. Lightfoot’s criteria seem to hold, for it certainly appears that the converging morphosyntactic changes engendered by phonological evolution provided children with at first variable and then non-existent cues that led them to restructure the genitive marking of possessor nouns in Middle and Mod FR. Alternately, the same forces might be seen as affecting teenagers or adults in their use of the language; the mechanisms of past language change cannot be known for sure.

2.7 Conclusion

In this paper, we have considered the evolution of genitive structures from Latin to OF. We first introduced Latin data, followed by a presentation of the dative in OF. Our analysis differs from earlier ones in that we argue that the possessor in all genitive structures in OF must be [+spec], not merely [+def], as an indefinite article could occasionally introduce the possessor, provided that the latter was specific. We then proposed an analysis of case marked genitive and dative in Latin and then showed how the KP case phrase of Later Latin evolved into K/PP. It is this structure which OF inherited, using a preposition, null or overt, to mark genitive and oblique case. In our view, null prepositions, which checked the case of the juxtaposition genitive and certain datives, ceased to be possible in Middle French (MidF).

We then discussed genitive structures from a diachronic viewpoint. We argued that once final consonants ceased to be pronounced, leading to the loss of the case system and the concomitant paradigmatic leveling, a child would no longer receive unambiguous input. The upshot of this is that speakers ceased to use the JG. This also explains the fact that the dative pronoun à not only became obligatory, but was almost exclusively limited to [+human] complements, meant that the distribution of the à genitive followed suit.

Finally, we addressed the evolution of genitive structures from Latin to OF, discussing how this diachronic development has implications for language change in general.
References

Primary Sources


Linguistic References


2 A Diachronic View of Old French Genitive Constructions


Ionin, Tania. 2006. This is definitely specific: Specificity and definiteness in article systems. *Natural Language Semantics* 14: 175–234.


[AU10]


## Author Queries

**Chapter No.: 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Queries</th>
<th>Details Required</th>
<th>Author’s Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AU1</td>
<td>Please confirm the corresponding author.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU2</td>
<td>Please confirm the affiliation details.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU4</td>
<td>Please confirm the identified head levels are set correctly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU5</td>
<td>Please provide appropriate opening parenthesis in the sentence “regis(dei) is in …”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU6</td>
<td>Examples no. (18) and (37) are repeated and (39–42) are missing. Please confirm and provide.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU7</td>
<td>Please provide appropriate missing head level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU8</td>
<td>None of the references in “Primary Sources” has been cited in text and provide complete details.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU9</td>
<td>Please provide publisher location for Chrétien de Troyes (1912).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU10</td>
<td>Please provide publisher details for Meyer–Lübke (1888).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>