

**NORWEGIAN POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS:
PHRASES, WORDS OR SUFFIXES?**

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Abstract

In Norwegian, possessive pronouns can be prenominal (*min bil* 'my car') or postnominal (*bilen min* 'car.DEF my'). In the Principles and Parameters literature, the standard assumption is that possessive pronouns are prenominal in underlying structure, while the postnominal position is a result of N-movement. This paper takes a different approach. The focus is the grammatical differences between the positions. They motivate an analysis in which prenominal and postnominal possessive pronouns do not realize one underlying position. Lexical Functional Grammar makes it possible to implement this kind of analysis in a simple way. The basic properties of prenominal and postnominal possessive pronouns follow from the theory of strong and weak pronouns. There is evidence, however, that the dialect of Western Oslo has a group of suffixal possessives.

1. Introduction¹

Norwegian possessive pronouns can be prenominal or postnominal, as shown in (1)–(2).

- (1) **min** bil
my car
(2) bilen **min**
car.DEF my

The noun has indefinite morphology with prenominal possessives, and definite morphology with postnominal possessives. This is a general rule for all possessive expressions, as shown in (3)–(4).

- (3) Johns bil / *bilen
John.GEN car / car.DEF
'John's car'
(4) bilen / *bil til John
car.DEF / car of John
'John's car'

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Some possessive pronouns agree with the noun in number and gender, like *min* 'my' in (1)–(2), while others only have one form, for example *hans* 'his'. Some nominal phrases only allow a prenominal possessive (Lødrup forthcoming), for example when the noun lacks a definite form, as in (5), when the noun is silent, as in (6), and in many fixed expressions, such as (7).

(5) **hans** pårørende

his relatives

(6) **våre** fattige

our poor

(7) på **min** måte

in my way

In spoken Norwegian, the postnominal possessive pronoun is the more frequent option. In the written language, there is a tendency that prenominal possessives are more frequent, especially in non-colloquial style.

There are some dialectal differences within Norwegian concerning the data to be discussed. The focus here will be on urban east Norwegian. It could also be noted that Norwegian differs from the other Mainland Scandinavian languages. Danish and Standard Swedish only have prenominal possessives (but some Swedish dialects also have postnominal possessives). Faroese and Icelandic have both prenominal and postnominal possessive pronouns (Delsing 1993:155–58, Sigurðsson 2006).

Scandinavian nominal phrases have been an important research topic the last two decades.² In the Principles and Parameters literature, the standard treatment of possessive pronouns is the following: In underlying structure, possessive pronouns are prenominal. Postnominal possessives are a result of N-movement upwards in the syntactic tree (Taraldsen 1990, Delsing 1993:149–75, Vangsnes 1999:124–27, Julien 2005:159–95). Prenominal possessives move to the left to their final position (see e.g. Julien 2005:201–4).

This paper takes a different approach. The focus is the grammatical differences between the two positions, which have never received much attention in the literature. They motivate an analysis in which prenominal and postnominal possessive pronouns do not realize one underlying position. Prenominal and postnominal possessives can be treated as strong and weak pronouns. This is the topic of section 2 and 3. Section 4 discusses a mismatch between topicality and linear position shown by Norwegian possessives. Section 5 takes up the question if (some) postnominal possessives could be suffixes.

² For the Scandinavian Principles and Parameters tradition, see Taraldsen (1990), Delsing (1993), Vangsnes (1999), Julien (2005). For alternatives, see Börjars (1998), Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002), Börjars and Harries (2008).

2. Strong and weak pronouns

2.1 General

The distinction between strong and weak pronouns is a traditional one (Kayne 1975, Cardinaletti 1998, Cardinaletti and Starke 1999, Bresnan 2001a). This distinction is also relevant to possessive pronouns. Cardinaletti (1998) shows that Italian has strong and weak possessive pronouns. The strong ones are postnominal, while the weak ones are prenominal. It will be shown that Norwegian also has strong and weak possessive pronouns, but their distribution is different: The strong ones are prenominal, while the weak ones are postnominal. Section 2.2 discusses the properties that distinguish strong and weak possessives in Norwegian. The term weak will be taken to mean 'not strong' (Cardinaletti's 'deficient').

2.2 Properties of strong and weak possessive pronouns

2.2.1 Position

The prenominal possessive precedes prenominal modifiers, as in example (8). It can only be preceded by a universal quantifier. The postnominal possessive follows the noun, and there can be no linguistic material between the noun and the possessive, not even a complement that is selected by the noun. An example is (9).

(8) **min** nye analyse av diktet

my new analysis of poem.DEF

(9) den nye analysen **min** av diktet / * av diktet **min**

the new analysis.DEF my of poem.DEF / of poem.DEF my

'my new analysis of the poem'

2.2.2 Phrasality

A prenominal possessive can in some cases be a part of a possessive phrase, while a postnominal possessive cannot. This will be shown using examples with coordination and adjunction, and the genitive marker *sin*.

— Coordination: The prenominal possessive can be coordinated, while the postnominal possessive cannot, as shown in (10).

(10) [**mitt** og **hennes**] hus — *huset [**mitt** og **hennes**]

my and her house — house.DEF my and her

'my and her house'

— Adjunction: Certain adverbs can adjoin to prenominal possessives, but not to postnominal possessives. In (11), a focus adverb is adjoined.

- (11) Dette er bare **mitt** hus — *huset bare **mitt**.
this is only my house — house.DEF only my
'This house is mine only'

— The genitive marker *sin*: The genitive marker *sin* is an alternative to the bound *-s*. Colloquially, this marker can be used with a pronoun, but only prenominally, as shown in (12).

- (12) **han sin** bil — *bilen **han sin**
he GEN car — car.DEF he GEN
'his car'

2.2.3 Stress and reference

The Norwegian literature mentions contrast and stress as important factors for choosing a prenominal possessive pronoun (e.g. Western 1921:486–87, Faarlund et al. 1997:265). Knudsen (1967:55) says that when the possessive is postnominal, it is usually unstressed, and the possessive relation is backgrounded; it is taken to be given information or self evident.

In colloquial Norwegian, a topical possessive is normally postnominal. A prenominal topical possessive is usually very strange, as shown in (13).

- (13) John var rasende. — Noen hadde stjålet bilen **hans** / ??**hans** bil.
John was furious — somebody had stolen car.DEF his / his car
'John was furious. Somebody had stolen his car.'

This is not equally clear in writing, however. It should also be noted that a prenominal possessive is the only option in some cases (see (5)–(7) above).

It is possible to stress a postnominal possessive, as in (14).

- (14) Først ble bilen **MIN** stjålet, og nå er bilen **DIN** stjålet.
first was car.DEF my stolen and now is car.DEF your stolen
'First, MY car was stolen, and now, YOUR car is stolen.'

This option is not necessarily an argument that the possessive is strong. Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) show that uncontroversial weak forms can be stressed under certain circumstances, giving French examples like (15). Their generalization is that this is possible if the pronouns refer to something that is already prominent in the discourse (Cardinaletti and Starke 1999:153–4).

- (15) A: Je te casseraï la gueule!
I you break.FUTURE the face
 'I will break your face!'
 B: Ah ouais? Tu veux dire que je TE casseraï la gueule!
oh yeah? you will say that I YOU break.FUTURE the face
 'Oh yeah? What you want to say is that I will break YOUR face!'

2.2.4 Morphological forms

The sets of prenominal and postnominal possessives are not identical. Second person singular *din* can be realized with initial *r-* in colloquial speech, but only postnominally, as shown in (16). This does not follow from regular phonological rules (Kristoffersen 2000:333–335). Furthermore, the third person singular neuter *dets* does not occur postnominally, as shown in (17).

- (16) boka **ri** — ***ri** bok
book.DEF your — your book
 'your book'
 (17) **dets** faste plass — *den faste plass **dets**
its regular place — the regular place.DEF its
 'its regular place'

A more radical difference between the sets of prenominal and postnominal forms can be found in the dialect of Western Oslo, which will be discussed in section 5.2.³

2.2.5 Elliptical and predicative forms

The weak possessive is never the only word in a nominal phrase. In elliptical phrases such as (18), the possessive is strong, as can be seen from the fact that a coordination is possible.

- (18) (Hvem sitt hus er det ?) **Mitt** (og **hennes**) ___
who GEN house is that my and her
 'Whose house is that? Mine and hers.'

³ Some dialects have postnominal possessives with different properties than urban east Norwegian. When a proper name is a possessor, some dialects allow, or require, it to be realized after the noun, preceded by a possessive pronoun, as in (i). This construction is mostly found in rural dialects (Julien 2005:141).

- (i) katta **hennes** Kari (Julien 2005:142)
cat.DEF her Kari
 'Kari's cat'

In predicate expressions, the possessive also has the properties of the strong form. (There is no special form for use without a noun, such as English *mine*.) Again, a coordination is possible, as in (19).

- (19) Huset er **mitt** (og **hennes**).
house.DEF is my and her
'The house is mine and hers.'

3. Analysis

3.1. State of the art

The differences between prenominal and postnominal possessive pronouns have never received attention in the rich Scandinavian literature on noun phrase structure. It was mentioned above that Principles and Parameters analyses assume that possessive pronouns are prenominal in underlying structure, and that the postnominal ones are a result of N-movement upwards in the syntactic tree

The alternative option of generating the possessive pronoun in the postnominal position and moving it to the prenominal position has not been discussed. This analysis is assumed for Italian in Cardinaletti (1998), and motivated as clitic movement. This motivation cannot be transferred to Norwegian, which is different with respect to the clitic position. Clitic movement is movement upwards, as is all movement in Principles and Parameters theory. When the clitic position is the postnominal position, the movement required cannot be clitic movement.

The standard N-movement analysis of Norwegian is motivated by theory internal considerations of Principles and Parameters theory. Taraldsen (1990:423) points out that a postnominal possessive can bind a reflexive, as in (20), which requires that it c-commands the reflexive at some level of representation.

- (20) beskrivelsen **hans_i** av seg selv_i
description.DEF his of REFL SELF
'his description of himself'

However, Taraldsen also points out that a possessive PP can bind a reflexive, as in (21).

- (21) beskrivelsen til Per_i av seg selv_i
description.DEF of Per of REFL SELF
'Per's description of himself'

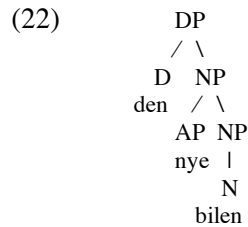
Taraldsen, like for example Julien (2005:145–46), assumes that the possessive PP is also prenominal in underlying structure. The motivation for this move is weaker, however, because a prenominal PP is ungrammatical. The binding facts in (20)–(21) should rather be taken as an argument for an approach to binding in which prominence is defined on the basis of grammatical relations. In Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), both the possessive pronoun and the possessive PP have the grammatical relation POSS, which is high on the relational hierarchy.

Taraldsen (1990) also motivates N-movement with the problems that a base generated postnominal possessive would create for traditional X' theory. First, in a phrase like (20) above, base generation of the possessive would make it impossible to assume the expected X' constituent consisting of the noun head and the complement, but excluding the possessive. Second, a base generated postnominal possessive could not have the expected head position in a DP. These considerations do not carry over to LFG. First, a complement does not necessarily form a constituent with its head. Second, the head of the phrase with a postnominal possessive is not necessarily the possessive, as will be shown in section 3.2.

3.2. A weak pronoun analysis

The postnominal possessive pronoun is often a clitic, as pointed out already in Western (1921:486). However, it does not have to be a clitic, as shown in example (14) above. In this paper, the postnominal possessive is referred to as a weak pronoun, to stress the grammatical (as opposed to phonological) nature of the difference between prenominal and postnominal possessives. The central property of a weak pronoun is that it does not project a phrase, and this property is in principle independent of the question whether the weak pronoun is phonologically dependent on another word (following Toivonen (2003:41–50), see also Sells (2001:90–93)).

The structure of noun phrases with postnominal possessives will now be discussed. The proposal to be given is based upon insights from lexicalist work, especially Sells (2001) and Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002). It is first necessary to consider the syntactic position of definite nouns, because postnominal possessives require definite morphology. Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002) argue that definite morphology in Danish is assigned by a lexical rule that converts an N to a D. The phrase *bilen* 'car.DEF' is then simply a DP consisting of a D. For Swedish and Norwegian, Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002) propose that the lexical class conversion is optional, because a definite determiner can co-occur with a definite noun (this is often called 'double definiteness'). The analysis of *den nye bilen* 'the new car.DEF' is then as in (22).



The question is what the structure is when a postnominal possessive is added. A comparison to weak object pronouns is enlightening. Sells (2001:54) discusses the Swedish sentences (23)—(24).

(23) Anna såg den inte.

Anna saw it not
'Anna didn't see it.'

(24) Såg Anna den inte?

saw Anna it not
'Didn't Anna see it?'

Sells points out that while the verbs are in different positions, there is no evidence that the object pronouns are in different positions. Sells assumes that (23) is an IP with the object pronoun adjoined to I. This is not a morphological analysis; the verb and the pronoun are still two words. Sentence (24), on the other hand, is a CP with the finite verb in C. This means that I only dominates the pronoun in (24).

Consider examples (25)—(26) with postnominal possessives.

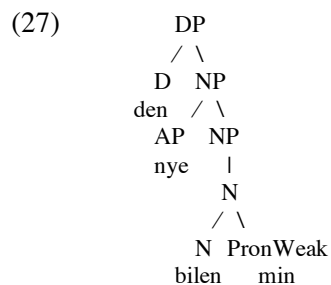
(25) den nye bilen **min**

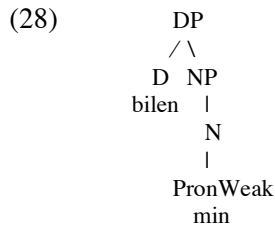
the new car.DEF my

(26) bilen **min**

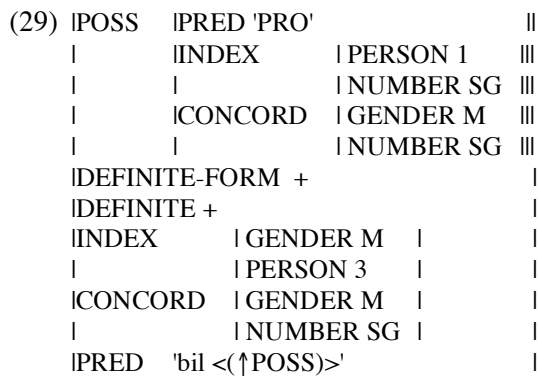
car.DEF my

A natural assumption would be that the postnominal possessive is adjoined to N in (25). In (26), on the other hand, the noun is in D, and N only dominates the possessive. The structures are as in (27) and (28).





The constituent structure (28) corresponds to the functional structure (29) (in which the feature DEFINITE-FORM reflects the morphological form of the noun, while DEFINITE is the standard definiteness feature that can have various sources).



The f-structure (29) uses INDEX and CONCORD features as proposed in Wechsler and Zlatic (2000) and Zlatic (2000). This division gives a convenient way to state the fact that possessive pronouns both have features that account for their reference, and features that account for their agreement with the noun. For example, the form *min* 'my' is singular in that it refers to the speaker, but it is also singular in a different way, in that it agrees with a singular noun. The features of postnominal *min* 'my' are as in (30).⁴

⁴ The features of a prenominal possessive pronoun are rather similar. One difference is that the prenominal possessive requires the absence of the definite suffix. Another difference is that a prenominal possessive pronoun has to induce definiteness (which is not necessary for a postnominal pronoun, because it requires a definite noun).

I assume that a prenominal possessive pronoun is in Spec DP. This assumption is not important here. Another possibility is that the prenominal possessive pronoun is in D. It cannot be a co-head of the N, however, because it has a PRED. In Strunk (2005), the prenominal possessive pronoun in Low Saxon is a D projecting a POSS in f-structure.

- (30) min PronWeak
 (↑ PRED) = 'PRO'
 (↑ INDEX PERSON) = 1
 (↑ INDEX NUMBER) = SG
 (↑ CONCORD GENDER) = M
 (↑ CONCORD NUMBER) = SG
 (↑ DEFINITE-FORM) = c +

4. Interlude: A topicality mismatch

Studies of pronominal systems show that weak forms are used for topical information, while strong forms are used for focal information (Cardinaletti and Starke 1999, Bresnan 2001a). This is also true of Norwegian possessive pronouns. It was mentioned above that a topical pronominal possessive is generally unacceptable in colloquial Norwegian (see example (13) above). The point to be discussed in this section is that Norwegian possessive pronouns show a mismatch between their information structural status and their linear position.⁵

From a general point of view, the pronominal position is more prominent than the postnominal position, because it precedes the postnominal position and is higher in the syntactic tree. The expectation is therefore that the pronominal position is the position that will associate with other prominent features, such as topicality, givenness, definiteness, and animacy. This expectation has been shown to be correct for English possessive expressions. It has often been observed that the pronominal genitive is topical, while the postnominal possessive PP is not (see e.g. Taylor (1996:ch 8)). Rosenbach (2002) shows that topicality is among the features that contribute to realizing a possessive expression as a genitive. The corresponding situation in Norwegian has never been investigated (but see Baron (1996) on Danish). However, the broad picture seems to be comparable to English concerning the relation between the genitive and the possessive PP. For example, (31) with an indefinite genitive is not good, as compared to the text example (32) with a possessive PP.

- (31) ??fordi de ikke likte en annen skurks favoritt-TV-serie
because they not liked an other crook's favorite TV series
 'because they did not like another crook's favorite TV series'
 (32) fordi de ikke likte favoritt-TV-serien til en annen skurk
because they not liked favorite TV series.DEF of an other crook
 'because they did not like the favorite TV series of another crook'

⁵ This was mentioned in Julien (2005:203 note 3). The situation seems to be basically the same in Faroese and Icelandic.

English, of course, gives no material for comparison when it comes to possessive pronouns. However, Italian possessive pronouns have the expected distribution with respect to information structural status. Cardinaletti (1998:19) shows that a postnominal possessive is focused in an example such as *la casa sua* 'the house his/her'. Spanish and Catalan are like Italian in this respect (Bernstein 2001).

We see, then, that Norwegian possessive pronouns violate general principles of topic distribution. This could be viewed as a constraint conflict. The central weak pronouns of Norwegian are positioned immediately following heads: possessive pronouns relative to the noun, and object pronouns relative to the finite verb. This constraint conflicts with information structural requirements in the case of possessive pronouns — unlike weak object pronouns, which get a position that is more topical than the regular object position (in sentences corresponding to (23)—(24) above).

5. A suffix analysis

5.1 General

It is impossible to discuss Norwegian possessive pronouns without taking up the question of whether a suffix analysis is possible. This idea has been mentioned in the Norwegian literature (Johannessen 1989:141, Hagen 2000:382, Trosterud 2003:66), but never really discussed. Two neighbor languages of Norwegian have both syntactic and suffixal possessives, namely Saami and Finnish (Toivonen 2000). It is well known that a clitic pronoun can develop into an affix. Trosterud (2003:66) mentions the possibility that Norwegian might be in the process of developing suffixal possessives.

With the suffix analysis, a possessive pronoun is an incorporated pronoun, i.e. "a bound morpheme that specifies a complete pronominal f-structure" (Bresnan 2001b:144). A possessive suffix constructs a POSS in f-structure, in the same way as verbal morphology constructs a SUBJ in pro-drop-languages. If *bilen min* 'car.DEF my' is a word, its features are as in (33).

(33) *bilen-min*

- (↑ POSS PRED) = 'PRO'
- (↑ POSS INDEX PERSON) = 1
- (↑ POSS INDEX NUMBER) = SG
- (↑ DEFINITE-FORM) = +
- (↑ DEFINITE) = +
- (↑ CONCORD NUMBER) = SG
- (↑ CONCORD GENDER) = M
- (↑ INDEX NUMBER) = SG
- (↑ INDEX PERSON) = 3
- (↑ PRED) = 'bil<(↑ POSS)>'

The suffix analysis accounts for the binding properties of the possessive in the same way as the weak pronoun analysis. In both cases, there is a POSS in f-structure. POSS shares an INDEX with the anaphor in (20) above, repeated as (34). In (35) with a reflexive possessive, it shares an INDEX with the binder.

- (34) beskrivelsen **hans_i** av seg selv_i
description.DEF his_i of REFL SELF
 'his description of himself'
- (35) John_i mistet klokka **si_i**
John lost watch.DEF REFL.POSS
 'John lost his watch.'

One important difference from the weak pronoun analysis concerns the account of the form of the possessive. In traditional terms, some Norwegian possessive pronouns agree with the noun in number and gender. This agreement motivated the CONCORD features on the pronoun; see (29) and (30) above. However, POSS in (33) does not have CONCORD features. If the possessive is a suffix, its form is not constrained through agreement, instead it is selected by the inflectional class of the noun.

This idea that postnominal possessives are suffixes has never been discussed thoroughly. It can hardly be the whole truth for all Norwegian dialects. The rural dialects mentioned in note 3 with phrasal postnominal possessives cannot have this analysis, at least not for all postnominal possessives. On the other hand, it will be shown in section 5.2 that the Western Oslo dialect has evidence for a suffix analysis which is not found in other dialects. Before discussing Western Oslo, other varieties of urban east Norwegian will be discussed more generally.

It was mentioned above that the postnominal possessive can be stressed, as in example (14) above. This is not necessarily an argument against the suffix analysis. There is a tradition for distinguishing contrastive stress and contrastive accent (Bolinger 1961, Zribi-Hertz and Mbolatianavalona 1999:167), and postnominal possessives could be assumed to show the latter. Contrastive accent may conflict with word stress; Bolinger (1961:83) gives this example (my underlining):

- (36) 'This whiskey,' said O'Reilly, sampling spirits that claimed to be from his homeland, 'was not exported from Ireland; it was deported.'

One argument for the suffix analysis is that the possessive always follows the noun immediately. This rule has no exceptions. (The possessive PP, as in example (4) above, also follows the noun immediately, but this rule could be violated by a heavy PP.) The possessive does not show the 'promiscuous

attachment' that is typical of clitics; this is a case of the first criterion for distinguishing clitics and affixes in Zwicky and Pullum (1983:503):

"Clitics can exhibit a low degree of selection with respect to their hosts, [note deleted] while affixes exhibit a high degree of selection with respect to their stems." (Zwicky and Pullum 1983:503)

On the other hand, two arguments speak against the suffix analysis.

First argument against the suffix analysis: The suffix analysis predicts that there can be no postnominal possessive without a realized noun. This prediction is almost correct. However, there is one elliptical construction which falsifies it; an example is (37). This ellipsis requires an antecedent that is realized close to it; it seems to be a case of gapping (Jackendoff 1971).

(37) den nye bilen **din** og den gamle __ **min**
the new car.DEF your and the old my
'your new car and my old one'

The possessive in (37) does not have the properties of prenominal possessives; for example, it cannot be phrasal. This means that the possessive in (37) is in the postnominal position, without a realized noun preceding it. This is an important argument against the suffix analysis.⁶

Second argument against the suffix analysis: A much used criterion for an affix is that it must be repeated on every conjunct in a coordinate structure (Miller 1992). For example, the definite suffix cannot be left out as in (38) when each conjunct is to be understood as definite. However, it is not necessary to repeat a postnominal possessive on every conjunct, as shown in (39).

(38) bilen og båten — *bil og båten
car.DEF and boat.DEF — car and boat.DEF
'the car and the boat'

(39) bilen (**min**) og båten **min**
car.DEF (my) and boat.DEF my
'my car and my boat'

⁶ It might be objected that ellipsis can affect a part of a word in some cases (Booij 1985). A Norwegian example is (i).

(i) hvetebrød og -boller
wheat.bread and -buns

However, this kind of ellipsis seems to have different properties from the one in example (37). For example, it requires that the elided part is adjacent to the conjunction (Booij 1985:148).

It must be mentioned that there are established cases in which an affix does not have to be repeated on every conjunct. This phenomenon is called suspended affixation; the standard example is Turkish (see e.g. Kabak (2007), Broadwell (2008)). However, suspended affixation is a marked phenomenon, which is not productive in any other cases of affixation in Norwegian. The option shown in (39) must therefore be considered an argument against a suffix analysis.

It seems, then, that it is difficult to argue for a suffix analysis for urban east Norwegian in general.

5.2 The 'West side story'

There is more evidence for a suffix analysis in the dialect of the west side of Oslo,⁷ which will be called Western Oslo. Much of what is written in the Bokmål standard reflects this dialect in relevant respects, but the written language will not be considered here.

An argument for a suffix analysis (mentioned in Johannessen 1989:141 and Trosterud 2003:66) is based upon the premise that Western Oslo has two grammatical genders, unlike most other Norwegian dialects, which have three (see Fretheim 1985, Hagen 2000:382, Enger 2004:133–34, Lødrup 2011). Grammatical gender is standardly given a definition based upon agreement (Corbett 1991). Most Norwegian dialects have separate masculine and feminine and neuter forms of certain quantifiers and determiners in the singular. Western Oslo does not have separate feminine forms of agreeing categories. The only forms that might be suspected to be feminine are the possessives *mi* (1st person singular), *di* (2nd person singular), and *si* (3rd person reflexive). In three gender dialects, these are regular weak or strong feminine forms. In Western Oslo, on the other hand, these forms can only be weak, and their distribution is easy to describe: they can and must follow one of the suffixes for the definite singular, namely *-a*. In other positions, for example in the prenominal position and the predicate position, *mi*, *di* and *si* are ungrammatical, as shown in (40)–(41). This means that the possessive in a phrase such as *boka mi* 'book.DEF my' is a feminine form in the three gender dialects, but not in Western Oslo.

⁷ What is called Western Oslo might be thought of as 'Standard Norwegian'. However, I am only interested in the speech of those who have this dialect as their first language (for example myself). Western Oslo is spreading and influencing other dialects; this is shown for the phenomena discussed here in Lødrup (2011).

| | <u>Western Oslo</u> | <u>Three gender dialects</u> |
|------|---|---|
| (40) | min /* mi bok <i>my/my book</i> | mi /* min bok <i>my/my book</i> |
| (41) | Denne boka er min / * mi <i>this book.DEF is my/my</i> | Denne boka er mi / * min <i>this book.DEF is my/my</i> |

Some information about nominal inflection is needed at this point: In three gender dialects, the definite singular suffix is always different in the three genders, as shown in (42).⁸ With feminines, the definite singular suffix is *-a* in the three gender dialects surrounding Western Oslo.

- (42) Three gender dialects:
 Masculine: *bilen* 'car.DEF'
 Feminine: *boka* 'book.DEF'
 Neuter: *huset* 'house.DEF'

Western Oslo also has a definite suffix *-a*, but this suffix has no relation to feminine gender (Fretheim 1985, Enger 2004:133–34, Lødrup 2011). It is not used as in the three gender dialects. It is obligatory with some nouns (such as *øy* 'island' and *jente* 'girl'), and optional with many other non-neuter nouns (such as *bok* 'book' and *klokke* 'watch'), alternating with *-en*. The suffix *-a* defines the only context in which the forms *mi*, *di* and *si* can and must be used in Western Oslo.⁹

⁸ This fact is a reflection of the historical origin of the definite suffix. It developed from a clitic determiner which agreed with the noun; see Faarlund (2009). Some researchers assume that the definite suffix is still a clitic (see Lahiri et al 2005), but the evidence against this analysis is overwhelming, see e.g. Börjars (1998:40–88), Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002:153 note 19), and Faarlund (2009) (on Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, respectively).

⁹ Some historical facts might be of interest here. Western Oslo represents a development of the 'Colloquial Standard' that was the daily speech of the educated class in the 19th century (Haugen 1966:31). This standard was a compromise between the urban dialect on the one hand, and a Norwegian reading pronunciation of Danish on the other hand. Danish does not have postnominal possessives. Even so, postnominal possessives must have been used to some extent in the Colloquial Standard (as they sometimes were in contemporary fiction, see Lundeby (1965:195–225)). From the point of view of Danish, a phrase such as *boka mi* 'book.DEF my' is unacceptable. (The Danish equivalent is *min bog* 'my book'.) Not only is the position of the possessive ungrammatical; Danish does not have the suffix *-a* or the form *mi*. (Danish does not have a feminine gender.) One could imagine that a phrase such as *boka mi* 'book.DEF my' was felt to be a borrowed unit in the Colloquial Standard.

An important point is that the noun with the *-a*-suffix must be phonologically realized. Even if Western Oslo follows other dialects in allowing postnominal possessives to occur with an elided noun, *mi*, *di* and *si* do not have this option. Examples are (37) above, repeated as (43), and (44)–(45).

- (43) All dialects den nye bilen **din** og den gamle __ **min**
the new car.DEF your and the old my
 'your new car and my old one'
- (44) Three gender dialects den nye lua **di** og den gamle __ **mi** / ***min**
the new hat.DEF your and the old my / my
 'your new hat and my old one'
- (45) Western Oslo den nye lua **di** og den gamle __ **min** / ***mi**
the new hat.DEF your and the old my / my
 'your new hat and my old one'

These examples show that Western Oslo *mi*, *di* and *si* differ from all other postnominal possessives in requiring a phonologically realized noun.

The question is now how the distribution of *mi*, *di* and *si* in Western Oslo should be accounted for.¹⁰ If they are considered suffixes, a natural account follows. As suffixes, they have no agreement features (see (33) above); *mi*, *di* and *si* are the possessive suffixes used in the inflectional class of common gender nouns that takes *-a* in the definite singular. The fact that they only occur with a phonologically realized noun follows by itself.

If *mi*, *di* and *si* are the only possessive suffixes in Western Oslo, there would be possessive suffixes for one inflectional class only. This might be considered a marked situation. However, it is possible for a language to express the same grammatical information in different ways through a paradigm. For example, Irish has verbal paradigms in which some forms are 'synthetic', realizing person and number through verbal morphology, while others are 'analytic', requiring independent personal pronouns. This kind of situation represents in itself no problem for LFG (Andrews 1990).

There is one argument against the suffix analysis. The second argument against the suffix analysis in section 5.1 applies to all possessives in Western Oslo. Like other dialects, Western Oslo does not have to repeat a possessive

¹⁰ It should be mentioned that the choice of *mi*, *di* and *si* is not phonologically conditioned in Western Oslo. To see this, consider the colloquial (i).

(i) kjære Anna **min**/***mi**
dear Anna my / my

In (i), a first person singular possessive follows a proper name. With a woman's name, three gender dialects use the form *mi*. In Western Oslo, only *min* can be used. It is not relevant if the proper name ends in *-a*, which shows that it is not the phonology, but the grammatical status of *-a* that is decisive.

on every conjunct in a coordinate structure; this is also true of *mi*, *di* and *si*. An example is (46).

(46) buksa (**mi**) og lua **mi**
trouser.DEF (my) and hat.DEF my
'my trousers and hat'

This argument gives evidence against the suffix analysis for all possessive forms in Western Oslo. On the other hand, it is the only empirical argument that goes against the suffix analysis for *mi*, *di* and *si*. What conclusion can be drawn from this? Two options present themselves.

The first option is to let the affix repetition argument be decisive, and give up the suffix analysis. *Mi*, *di* and *si* must then be considered weak pronouns, and the rule for their distribution must make reference to the inflectional class of the preceding noun. This would be a strange rule without parallels in grammar. Inflectional class is known to be a 'pure' morphological property (Aronoff 1994), which does not play a part in syntax. Another reason to reject this option is that the rule would have to stipulate that the noun is not elided (see example (45) above). The other postnominal possessives do not have this requirement (see example (43) above).

The second option is to give less priority to the affix repetition argument, and still consider *mi*, *di* and *si* suffixes. To me, this seems to be the better option, because it seems to be the only way to give a natural account for the distribution of *mi*, *di* and *si* — both the fact that they only occur after the definiteness suffix *-a*, and the fact that they differ from all other postnominal possessives in requiring that the preceding noun is not elided. This is not to deny that the affix repetition argument is a real argument. However, it was mentioned at the end of section 5.1 that there are established cases in which an affix does not have to be repeated on every conjunct, so-called suspended affixation. Even if suspended affixation is not productive in other areas of Norwegian morphology, it has the advantage of being an independently established option in grammatical theory.

6. Conclusion

Prenominal and postnominal possessive pronouns provide a situation where two positions contribute the same information, while there are grammatical differences between them. The architecture of LFG makes it possible to handle this type of situation in an enlightening way. The basic properties of Norwegian possessive pronouns can be accounted for by assuming that the prenominal ones are strong, while the postnominal ones are weak. There is evidence, however, that the dialect of Western Oslo has a group of suffixal possessives.

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