

Micro-variation in the Possessive Systems of Italian Dialects

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Abstract: The paper addresses the parametric variation found in the possessive systems of Italian dialects. Data come from AIS maps (Jaberg and Jud 1928–40; Tisato 2009) and the vast traditional and generative literature on the topic. We claim that variation mainly concerns lexical variation. Dialects differ from one another and from Italian with respect to the possessive forms available in their lexicon (clitic, weak, strong possessives; cf. Cardinaletti's 1998 extension to possessives of the tripartition of pronouns proposed by Cardinaletti and Starke 1999) and to the different lexical properties of kinship terms and common nouns (Giusti 2015). Much micro-variation is indeed found with kinship terms. Variation concerns the status of the possessive, the position of the noun, the occurrence of the definite article, and the paradigm of possessives, whether complete in the 3 singular persons or limited to 1st and 2nd person singular.

Keywords: possessives; Italian dialects; kinship terms; number features; microvariation.

1. Introduction

Italian possessive constructions distinguish between common nouns, with which prenominal possessives appear with an article in both singular and plural (1a)–(2a), and singular kinship terms, which are article-less in the singular (1b')–(2b):

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|------|----------|-----|------|------|----------|
| (1) | (a) | il | mio | libro | vs. | (a') | *mio | libro |
| | | the | my | book | | | my | book |
| | (b) | *il | tuo | fratello | vs. | (b') | tuo | fratello |
| | | the | your | brother | | | your | brother |

- (2) (a) i miei libri vs. (a') *miei libri
 the my books my books
- (b) i tuoi fratelli vs. (b') *tuoi fratelli
 the your brothers your brothers

Both common nouns and kinship terms occur with the article if modified by a post-nominal possessive: *la macchina mia* “the car my”, *il fratello mio* “the brother my”.

Other Romance languages have less complex systems. The occurrence (as in Catalan) or absence (as in French and Spanish) of the article with prenominal possessives does not distinguish between common nouns and kinship terms, or between singular and plural. In (3), we only report singular forms for space reasons:

- (3) Catalan French / Spanish
- (a) el meu llibre (a') mon livre / mi libro
 the my book my book
- (b) el teu germà (b') ton frère / tu hermano
 the your brother your brother

In addition to this, Spanish and Catalan display different possessives in prenominal and postnominal position, cf. Sp.: *mi libro* vs. *el libro mio* “my book”. This not found in Italian.

This paper addresses four research questions regarding dialectal variation:

1. Does the distribution of possessives across Italian dialects mirror the Italian pattern or the patterns found in other Romance languages?
2. Are there patterns that are not represented in Italian?
3. Is there variation in the morpho-syntactic properties of kinship terms (as found in Italian)?
4. Is there variation in the morpho-syntactic properties of possessives (as found in Spanish)?

We show that Italian dialects mirror the Italian pattern, although they do display possibilities unattested in Italian, including micro-variation with kinship terms.

Following Biberauer and Roberts (2012), we suggest that the microvariation analysed here is captured by nano-parameters associated with nouns and possessives in the lexicon. Dialects differ from one another with respect to (i) the possessive forms available (clitic, weak, strong possessives; cf. Cardinaletti’s 1998 extension to possessives of the tripartition of pronouns proposed by Cardinaletti and Starke 1999) and (ii) the different lexical properties of common nouns vs. kinship terms (cf. Giusti 2015, who proposes that rigid designators project a reduced structure).

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 analyzes the Italian possessive system, which displays weak and strong possessives. Section 3 focuses on common nouns in Italian dialects. While most properties are shared with Italian (e.g., the distribution of the article and the weak/strong bipartition), a first difference emerges. In some Southern dialects, possessives only occur in postnominal position. This suggests that possessive raising does not apply in these dialects. Section 4 is devoted to kinship terms in the dialects, which display clitic possessives (both proclitic and enclitic) and null articles in the plural, unlike Italian. Section 5 briefly addresses possessive paradigms, which may display person restrictions. Section 6 draws the conclusions.

2. Weak vs. Strong Possessives in Italian

Italian prenominal and postnominal possessives are weak and strong, respectively (Cardinaletti 1998). While prenominal possessives have both human and non-human reference (4a/a'), postnominal possessives are restricted to human referents (4b/b'). Note that (4b') and parallel structures discussed below are ungrammatical only in the case the 3rd person referent is inanimate, as represented in the gloss:

- (4) (a) il suo libro (a') il suo coperchio
 the his/her book the its lid
- (b) il libro suo (b') *il coperchio suo
 the book his/her the lid its

The strong possessive in (4b) is used in emphatic and contrastive contexts. Its syntactic distribution confirms the above analysis. It can occur in isolation (5a) and predicative position (6a), while the weak form referring to non-humans cannot (5b)–(6b):

- (5) (a) Di chi è questo libro? Suo
 of whom is this book? his/her
- (b) Di cos'è questo coperchio? *Suo
 of what is this lid its
- (6) (a) Questo libro è suo
 this book is his/her
- (b) *Questo coperchio è suo
 this lid is its

We take strong possessives (7a) to stay in their NP-internal thematic position and be postnominal due to N-raising (Giusti 1994, Brugè 1996, Cardinaletti 1998), while weak possessives (7b) move to SpecPossP above pronominal adjectives and immediately below D (Picallo 1994, Cardinaletti 1998):

- (7) (a) [_{DP} l' [_{PossP} [Poss] ([_{FP2} ultimo) [_{FP1} libro [_{NP} mio libro]]]]]
the last book my
- (b) [_{DP} il [_{PossP} mio [Poss] ([_{FP2} ultimo) [_{FP1} libro [_{NP} mio libro]]]]]
the my last book
“my last book”

Following Giusti (2015), we propose that kinship terms modified by possessive adjectives are similar to proper names, in that they are interpreted as rigid designators. This is the reason why they both lack the definite article in Italian. Note however that some regional varieties display the definite article with proper names (cf. *la Maria* in (8a)). Longobardi (1994) assumes that in these cases, articles are “expletive”. Such expletive articles are not displayed by kinship terms preceded by overt possessors (8b) in the same regional varieties. Note that with singular common nouns, the article is mandatory (8c):

- (8) (a) Maria / %La Maria è arrivata
Maria the Maria has arrived
- (b) Mia sorella / *La mia sorella è arrivata
my sister the my sister has arrived
- (c) La ragazza / *Ragazza è arrivata
the girl girl has arrived

Giusti (2015) dispenses with the assumption of “expletive” articles and accounts for silent Ds with proper names and kinship terms proposing that rigid designators project reduced structures. This makes them different from common nouns. Common nouns project three layers (the lexical NP, the modification layer FP, and the referential layer DP). These layers are realized by at least one projection, which can be iterated if necessary; for example, in (7) above, the modification layer is made of two hierarchically ordered FPs. This is what makes PossP necessary. Parallel to the subject position in the clause, the possessor is moved from the lexical layer, where its theta-relation to N is established, to the highest non-phasal projection, where its index is interpreted as contributing to the referential interpretation of the main Nominal Expression.

Rigid designators only project the lexical layer NP and the phasal layer DP. The possessor in (9) is theta-interpreted and referentially interpreted in the merger position (SpecNP), which is immediately lower than D, because no FP is merged between NP and D. In (9a), the kinship term in Italian has a bare D. In (9b), following Longobardi (1994), the proper name remerges in D. This captures the fact that the possessor is pre-nominal in (9a) and postnominal in (9b). Note that some kinship terms also raise (9c), completing the parallel with proper names:¹

- (9) (a) [_{DP} 0 [_{NP} mia sorella]]
 “my sister”
- (b) [_{DP} Maria [_{NP} mia Maria]]
 “my Maria”
- (c) [_{DP} mamma [_{NP} mia ~~mamma~~]]
 “my mom”

Giusti’s reduced structure correctly predicts that proper names and kinship terms do not project modifiers. If modifiers are merged, the Nominal Expression is no more a rigid designator and has the tripartite structure of common nouns, with the intermediate FP projected and the possessor moving from SpecNP to SpecPossP, as in (7b) above. In this case, the article is mandatory irrespective of the three possible orders of possessor and adjective, as shown in (10):

- (10) (a) *(la) mia simpatica sorella
- (b) *(la) mia sorella simpatica
- (c) *(la) simpatica sorella mia
 “my nice sister”

The same holds of proper names, cf. **simpatica Maria*; **Maria simpatica*; *la simpatica Maria*.

Another parallel between proper names and kinship terms is the restriction of both (at least in Italian) to singular number:

¹ In this paper, we abstract away from kinship terms like *mamma* in (9c), restricting our survey to the core constructions, represented in (9a).

(11) (a) *(le) mie sorelle
 the my sisters

(b) *(i) Giusti
 the Giusti's

This suggests that the reduced structure is only possible when the lexical item is specified in the lexicon for this property. This specification is part of its inflectional morphological specification and can be sensitive to gender and number. In Italian, plural kinship terms have the same full syntactic structure as common nouns:

(12) [_{DP} le [_{PossP} mie [_{FP} sorelle [_{NP} mie sorelle]]]]
 the my sisters
 “my sisters”

3. Weak vs. Strong Possessives in Italian Dialects

Like in Italian, many Italian dialects have both weak prenominal and strong postnominal possessives. This is the case of Paduan in (13) (Cardinaletti 1998), and of the dialect of Marsala (Trapani) in (14). Unlike Italian, the two forms are morphologically different. The weak form is reduced and does not concord with the noun:

(13) (a) el me libro
 the my book

(b) el libro mio
 the book my

(14) (a) i to causi
 the your trousers

(b) i causi toi
 the trousers your

Like in Italian, weak possessives move to SpecPossP, while strong possessives stay in their NP-internal thematic position and end up being postnominal due to N-raising to an intermediate functional head:

(15) (a) [_{DP} el [_{PossP} me [Poss] [_{FP} libro [_{NP} me libro]]]]
 the my book

(b) [_{DP} li [_{PossP} to [Poss] [_{FP} causi [_{NP} to causi]]]]
 the your trousers

(16) (a) [_{DP} el [_{PossP} [Poss] [_{FP} libro [_{NP} mio libro]]]]
 the book my

(b) [_{DP} li [_{PossP} [Poss] [_{FP} causi [_{NP} toi causi]]]]
 the trousers your

Weak possessives in prenominal position are the unmarked choice in northern dialects, western central dialects down to northern Lazio, and Sicilian dialects. In some central and the remaining southern dialects, postnominal possessives are the only possibility with common nouns (cf. AIS map 1554 *i tuoi calzoni* “the your trousers”). This is exemplified with the Ancona dialect in (17)–(18):²

(17) (a) l’ amigo mio
 the friend my

(b) i caltsoni tui
 the trousers your

(18) (a) *el mi amigo
 the your friend

(b) *i tu caltsoni
 the your trousers

In Anconetano, the postnominal possessive is strong as shown by the fact that it only has human reference and is allowed in isolation and predicative contexts:

(19) (a) el ca’ mio/ tuo/ suo
 the dog my/ your/ his/her
 “my/your/his/her dog”

² Note that in Anconetano, prenominal weak possessives exist but are only possible with kinship terms, cf. (22a) below.

- (b) *el cuperchio suo
the lid its
“its lid”
- (c) De chi è sto libro? Mio.
of whom is this book? My
“Whose book is this? Mine.”
- (d) Sto libro è mio
this book is my
“This book is mine”

In upper southern Italian dialects, notably Abruzzese, postnominal possessives are instead weak, as confirmed by the fact that they can have non-human reference and are ungrammatical in isolation and predicative position. Data come from the dialect of Lanciano (Chieti) (Cuonzo 2018):³

- (20) (a) lu canə mé/ té/ sé
the dog my/ your/ his/her
“my/your/his/her dog”
- (b) el cuperchiə sé
the lid its
“its lid”
- (c) Di chi iè ssu libbrə? *Mé.
of whom is this book? My
“Whose book is this? Mine.”
- (d) *Ssu libbrə iè mé
this book is my
“This book is mine”

3 This dialect does not have strong possessives. In contexts like (20c–d), weak possessives occur in elliptic nominal expressions:

- (i) (a) Di chi ié ssu libbrə? Lu mé.
of whom is this book? the mine
- (b) Ssu libbrə ié lu mé.
this book is the mine

In Lanciano, postnominal possessives have a reduced form showing no concord with the head noun, unlike the postnominal forms in Anconetano which are inflected (cf. (17)).⁴

We propose that postnominal possessives stay in the NP-internal thematic position and are moved across by the noun. The relation with the head Poss is the same as in northern dialects. The only difference is that movement is not triggered:⁵

- (21) (a) [_{DP} eɪ [_{PossP} [Poss] [_{FP} ca' [_{NP} mio eɑ²]]]]
 (b) [_{DP} lu [_{PossP} [Poss] [_{FP} canə [_{NP} mé eɑnə]]]]

The mandatory postnominal position of possessives with common nouns, as in the Ancona and Abruzzo dialects, is a first difference between Italian dialects and Italian. Movement to the prenominal position is not obligatory in southern dialects, while it is in Italian and northern, western central, and Sicilian dialects, as we have seen above. Different movement possibilities of verbal arguments are a well-known source of language variation. This is a case in which different movement possibilities of nominal arguments are observed.

In all cases reported in this section, common nouns modified by a possessive always occur with an article. The only exceptions are found in some Piedmontese dialects where, certainly due to contact with French, omission is found in both the singular (AIS map 1108 *dal mio amico* “from the my friend”) and the plural (AIS map 1554 *i tuoi calzoni* “the your trousers”). Interestingly, Benincà, Parry and Pescarini (2016, 198) report on some differences with respect to gender and number richly exemplified by Manzini and Savoia (2005, v. 3), suggesting that this pattern is unstable in the modern dialects.

4. Kinship Terms in Italian Dialects

Most variation among Italian dialects concerns kinship terms. As in Italian, the number feature of the kinship term is often relevant, although not always. Furthermore, dialects instantiate more possibilities than Italian. Variation regards the status of the possessive (which may be clitic, weak, or strong), the position of the noun, which may raise to D,

4 Some central dialects display gender/number neutralization in strong postnominal possessives: Macerata *lu paese mia* “the.M.SG village.M.SG my” (Loporcaro and Paciaroni 2016, 237).

5 The structure in (21b) is simplified. Assuming parallel structures for clauses and Nominal Expressions (Giusti 1996, 2006) and assuming that weak pronouns move to the middle field (Cardinaletti 1991, Cardinaletti and Starke 1999), weak postnominal possessives in the Lanciano dialect should be analysed as moving to a nominal middle field, lower than the head in which the lexical noun is realized. This is confirmed by Cuonzo’s observation that the weak possessor can precede or follow color adjectives but only precede size adjectives. We leave the detailed analysis of the landing position of weak possessives in Abruzzese for further research.

and the co-occurrence with the article. An overview of the possibilities found with singular and plural kinship terms is provided in (22) and (23), respectively:

- (22) (a) prenominal without article:
me pare (Padua)
- (a') mi padre (Ancona)
my father
- (b) prenominal with article:
il mi babbo (Florence)
the my father
- (c) enclitic without article:
petrə-mə (Lanciano)
father-my
“my father”
- (23) (a) prenominal without article:
so fradei (Mira)
his/her brothers
- (b) prenominal with article:
i so fradei (Mira)
the his/her brothers
- (c) enclitic without article:
fradi-di (Treia)
brothers-my
- (d) postnominal with article:
i frateli mii (Ancona)
the brothers my
“my brothers”
- (e) enclitic with article:
li sucəmə (Lanciano)
the parents-in-law-my
“my parents in law”

We are not aware of the occurrence of any other logical possibility not mentioned in (22)–(23), i.e. enclitic possessives with article and postnominal possessives with and without article in the singular, and postnominal possessives without article in the plural.

4.1 Prenominal Possessives with both Singular and Plural Kinship Terms

In the whole northern Italy and Sicily, we find a pattern similar to Italian, namely prenominal possessive forms without article in the singular and with article in the plural. As with common nouns in these dialects, prenominal forms are reduced and generally uninflected. In (24), we exemplify this pattern with Sicilian forms (cf. AIS map 13 *tuo fratello / i tuoi fratelli* “the your brother / the your brothers”). The structural analysis for Italian in (9a) and (12) above is extended to these cases. Singular kinship terms project a reduced structure, while plural kinship terms have full nominal structure:

(24) (a) [_{DP} 0 [_{NP} to frati]]
 “your brothers

(b) [_{DP} li [_{PossP} to [Poss] [_{FP} frati [_{NP} to frati]]]]
 “your brothers”

The status of a prenominal possessive can however be different. In dialects like Paduan, the reduced possessive form is clitic, as shown by the fact that it can double a PP.⁶ Being clitic, the possessive encliticizes into D:

(25) (a) so pare (de Toni)
 his father of Toni
 “Toni’s father”

(b) [_{DP} [_D so] [_{NP} so pare]]

In the plural, Veneto dialects display two possibilities (cf. AIS maps 13, 14, 18–21, 23, 24, 26, 28): some dialects require the article, on a par with Sicilian (24b); others extend the absence of the article, typical of the singular throughout Italy. The dialect of Mira (Venice) displays both possibilities (Laura Volpato, pers. comm.) and allows us to check whether the absence or presence of the article correlates with the status of the possessive. This is indeed the case. When the article is absent, the possessive is clitic, as shown by the availability of doubling (26a). The structure (26b) is therefore the same as in the singular (25b). When the article is present, doubling is not possible (27a). The

⁶ In this respect, clitic *so* differs from weak *so* occurring with common nouns (cf. (13a)), which does not allow clitic doubling: *el so libro* (**de Toni*) “the his book of Toni” (Cardinaletti 1998).

structure (27b) is therefore the same as with common nouns in Veneto (15a) and plural kinship terms in Sicilian (24b).

(26) (a) so fradei (de Toni)
 his brothers of Toni

(b) [_{DP} [_D so] [_{NP} sɔ fradei]]

(27) (a) i so fradei (*de Toni)
 the his brothers of Toni

(b) [_{DP} i [_{PossP} so [Poss] [_{FP} fradei [_{NP} sɔ fradei]]
 “his brothers”

The doubling diagnostics only holds in the third person. With first and second persons, doubling cannot be checked because genitive PPs embedding personal pronouns are independently ruled out (**de mi* “of me” / **de ti* “of you”). Therefore, we cannot exclude that with first and second persons, the structure proposed for Italian (9a) and Sicilian (24a) is also present and extended to the plural in these dialects.

This must be assumed anyway in case of bisyllabic possessives such as *nostro* “our” and *vostro* “your.PL”, which cannot be clitic. In (28), null articles occur with NP-internal weak possessives, as proposed for singular kinship terms in Italian (9a) and Sicilian (24a):

(28) (a) [_{DP} 0 [_{NP} nostri nevodi]]
 “our nephews” (S. Stino di Livenza, AIS map 18, point 356)

(b) [_{DP} 0 [_{NP} vostre nevode]]
 “your nieces” (Vicenza, AIS map 23, point 363)

4.2 Singular Kinship Terms with Articles

In northern Piedmont and Lombardy, Tuscany, and northern Umbria, singular kinship terms occur with articles (AIS maps 13, 14, 16, 17). Two potential analyses are available for these cases: kinship terms have either a reduced structure as in Italian and the dialects discussed so far (29a), or the full structure typical of common nouns (29b):

(29) (a) [_{DP} i [_{NP} tu fratello]]
 the your brother

(b) [_{DP} i [_{PossP} tu [Poss] [_{FP} fratello [_{NP} tu fratello]]]]
 “your brother” (Firenze, AIS map 13, point 523)

There is no evidence to decide between (29a) and (29b). On the one hand, (29a) is supported by the observation that also proper names in these dialects co-occur with definite articles (cf. Rohlfs 1968, 128; 1969, 30), thereby suggesting that the definite article is the overt counterpart of the null D found with proper names in Italian. On the other hand, learnability issues favour (29b) because there is no detectable difference between kinship terms and common nouns in these dialects, similarly to other Romance languages (see (3) above).

This issue also arises in the plural. As above for some Veneto dialects (26) and below for some southern dialects (32b), plural kinship terms may have the same reduced structure as singular ones. This is however rather rare. In general, plural kinship terms tend to behave like common nouns. We therefore expect that the reduced structure in the plural can only be found in those dialects that display the reduced structure in the singular. If in a dialect, there are reasons to exclude (29a) for the singular, the same conclusion should be drawn for the plural.

4.3 Different Forms of Possessives with Singular and Plural Kinship Terms

Central-southern dialects also display the two asymmetries found in Italian: common vs. kinship, and singular vs. plural. Unlike common nouns, singular kinship terms require reduced possessives without article, which may either be prenominal or enclitic. Plural kinship terms behave like common nouns in these dialects in displaying postnominal possessives. In a subset of dialects, enclitic possessives are also found in the plural.

A first case (prenominal possessives in the singular and postnominal possessives in the plural) is exemplified with data from the dialect of Ancona. In the singular, they project the reduced structure (30a); in the plural, they project the same full nominal structure as common nouns (30b):⁷

- (30) (a) [_{DP} 0 [_{NP} mi fratelo]]
 my brother
- (b) [_{DP} i [_{PossP} [Poss] [_{FP} frate*li* [_{NP} mii frate*li*]]]]
 the brothers my
 “my brother” / “my brothers”

The distribution of the article is the same as in Italian and most northern dialects.

7 Reduced prenominal forms are uninflected, while strong postnominal forms are inflected for gender and number. In other dialects, strong postnominal forms may be gender neutral (cf. Ledgeway 2016, 218 for Tuscan; see fn. 4 for common nouns).

Let us now deal with enclitic possessives, a possibility not attested in Italian. This form can either be found only in the singular or also in the plural.

The former case is exemplified by the Calabrian dialect of Verbicaro (Cosenza, from Manzini and Savoia 2005, v. 3, 677). In the singular (31a), we propose that both the noun and the possessive raise to the D head. In (31b), we propose that the plural behaves like common nouns, as usual:

- (31) (a) $[_{DP} [_D \text{ fratə-mə}]] \quad [_{NP} \text{ mə fratə}]]$
 brother-my
- (b) $[_{DP} i \quad [_{PossP} [Poss] [_{FP} \text{ fra:tə} \quad [_{NP} \text{ me:jə fratə}]]]]]$
 the brothers my
 “my brother” / “my brothers”

Note that the clitic can double a strong possessive, e.g. *fratima (mia)* “brother-my my” (Cervicati, Cosenza, Manzini and Savoia 2005, V.3, 720).

The latter case is found in southern Marche and sporadically throughout southern Italy. For example, in the dialect of Treia (Macerata, Marche; AIS map 13, point 558), the reduced structure observed for the singular in (32a) is extended to the plural (32b):

- (32) (a) $[_{DP} [_D \text{ fradi-du}]] \quad [_{NP} \text{ dɛ fradi}]]$
- (b) $[_{DP} [_D \text{ fradi-di}]] \quad [_{NP} \text{ dɛ fradi}]]$
 “your brother” / “your brothers”

A more intricate case is represented by Abruzzese dialects such as the dialect of Lanciano (Chieti), where enclitic possessives are found in both the singular and the plural, but the distribution of the article distinguishes between the two (33) (for a similar pattern in the Abruzzese dialect of Arielli, Chieti, see D’Alessandro and Migliori 2017). We take the clitic possessive and the kinship term to move to D in the singular (33a), as in (31a)–(32a). The plural case in (33b) needs further elaboration. We suggest that this is an instance of split DP (Giusti 1996; 2006). The plural does not project full nominal structure, as shown by the fact that it behaves like the singular in not allowing nominal modification (34) (Cuonzo 2018 and pers. comm.):

- (33) (a) $[_{DP} [_D \text{ petrə-mə}]] \quad [_{NP} \text{ mə petrə}]]$
 father-my
 “my father”

- (b) [_{DP} li [_{DP} sucə-mə [_{NP} mə sucə]]]
 the parents-in-law-my
 “my parents-in-law”

- (34) (a) *zijəmə bellə
 aunt-my pretty

- (b) *li zijəmə billə
 the aunts-my pretty
 “my pretty aunt / aunts”

Movement to D correlates with reduced forms. The possessive displays a final schwa (cf. clitic *mə* vs. weak *mé* in (20) above), and the noun can either undergo metaphony (*patrə* > *petrəmə* “father, father-my”) or syllable drop (*socərə* > *socəmə* “father/mother-in-law, father/mother-in-law-my”) (Cuonzo 2018).

5. Person Restrictions

Further variation concerns the persons of the possessive paradigm with kinship terms: all (singular) persons vs. 1st and 2nd singular only. Veneto dialects display the first pattern (35a), the dialect of Ancona does not have 3rd person weak possessive forms but uses the article instead (35b). The same contrast is found with enclitic possessives. Calabrian dialects display the three forms (examples (36a) from Rohlf 1968, 125), while the dialect of Lanciano uses the definite article in the 3rd person (36b) (Cuonzo 2018):⁸

- (35) (a) me / to / so pare
 my your his/her father

- (b) mi / tu / *su/ el padre
 my your his/her the father

- (36) (a) ziumma, ziumta, zisa
 aunt-my aunt-your aunt-his/her

- (b) petrəmə, petrətə, *petrəsə, lu patrə
 father-my father-your father-his/her the father

8 In the dialect of Roiate (Orlandi 2000, 118f), quoted by Loporcaro and Paciaroni (2016), enclitic possessives are also only possible in the 1st and 2nd person singular: *paremu* “father my”, *paretu* “father your”. This dialect differs minimally from the one of Lanciano in that the 3rd person singular displays a postnominal strong possessive: cf. (36b) with *ju patre seo* “the father his”.

These data show that person restrictions are independent of N-to-D raising.

Note finally that enclitic plural possessives are very rare but do exist. Rohlf's (1968, 125) reports *neputene* “nephews our” in San Donato (Caserta), Campania, and *neputevo* “nephew your” in Sonnino (Latina).

6. Results and Conclusions

We have shown that the syntax of possessives across Italian dialects mirrors the Italian pattern: on the one hand, there is a major difference between common nouns and kinship terms; on the other, number features often distinguish among kinship terms. These two features set Italian and Italian dialects apart from the other Romance languages.

We have also shown that Italian dialects display micro-variation and instantiate more syntactic possibilities than Italian.

First, Italian dialects display reduced weak possessives and clitic possessives (both proclitic and enclitic) not present in Italian.

Second, kinship terms may differ with respect to

- whether they project a reduced structure, or not
 - and if so, whether they project a reduced structure only in the singular (as in most dialects), or also in the plural (e.g., Mira (26) and Treia (32));
- whether they have a reduced form and move to D, or not
 - and if so, whether they have a reduced form only in the singular (as in most dialects), or also in the plural (e.g., Treia (32) and Lanciano (33));
- whether they co-occur with a zero article, or not
 - and if so, whether they have a zero article only in the singular (as in most dialects), or also in the plural (e.g., Veneto dialects (28)).

We suggest that the observed micro-variation stems from lexical properties of possessive forms and kinship terms, respectively. They can therefore be considered as nano-parameters in the typology of parameters proposed by Biberauer and Roberts (2012).

The availability of clitic, weak or strong forms is a lexical property of a language. Similar language variation is found in personal pronoun systems. For instance, while clitic pronouns appear in most Romance languages, they are not found in Rhaeto-Romance dialects (Benincà and Poletto 2005, 228–229), which make use of the functionally equivalent weak forms (Cardinaletti and Starke 1999; Cardinaletti 2015).

The properties of kinship terms are also lexical properties. If functional structure is taken as the extended projection of the noun, the choice between a reduced and a full structure is a lexical property of the noun. The existence of reduced forms of N, which move to D, is also a lexical property of the language. Finally, if the article is the highest functional head of the nominal structure, its realization also depends on the lexical properties of the noun.

In this perspective, the fact that plural kinship terms in some dialects can project the reduced structure is captured by the hypothesis that this property is specified on the

paradigm of the noun. Our proposal correctly predicts that the plural is equally or more complex than the singular but never vice versa.

Finally, we predict that the kinship terms which project the reduced structure may be different in different dialects, as is indeed the case. A thorough search for this type of lexical variation is however yet to be done.

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