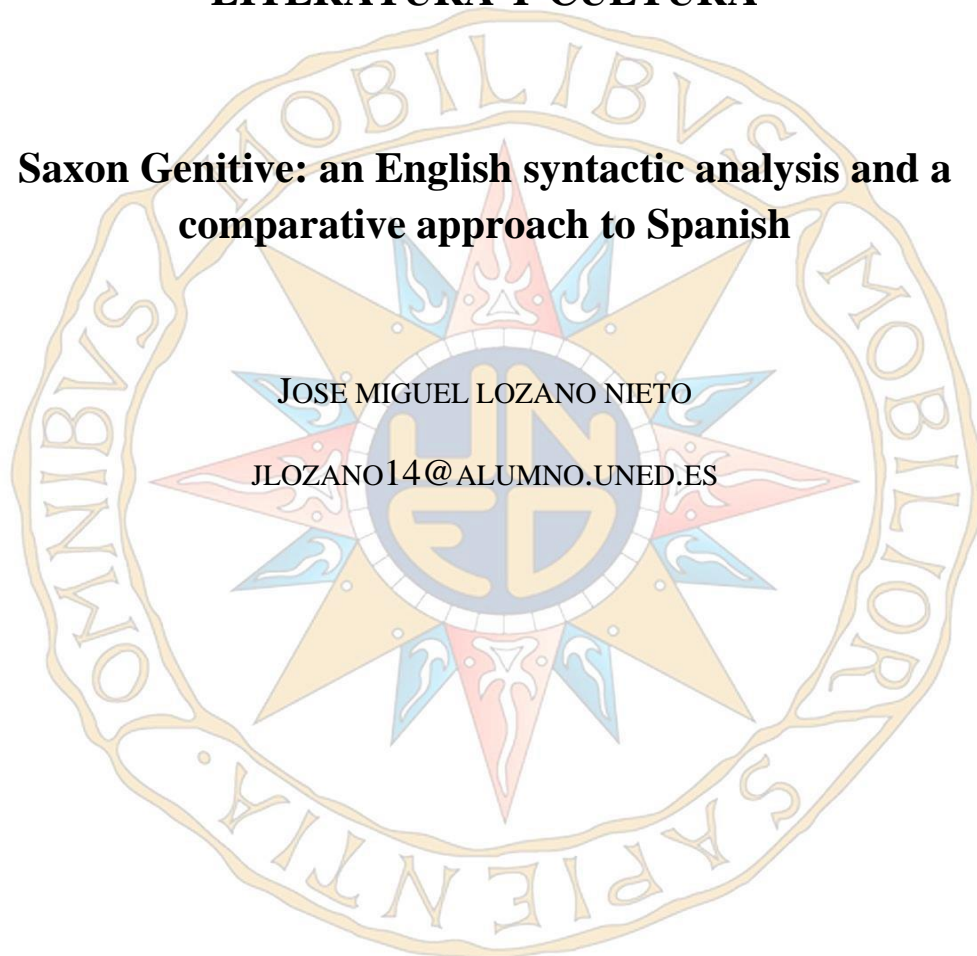




**TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO**

**GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES: LENGUA,  
LITERATURA Y CULTURA**

**Saxon Genitive: an English syntactic analysis and a  
comparative approach to Spanish**



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## Summary

Saxon Genitive can be considered a specific syntactical case of nominal phrases that include possession which in other languages is, in fact, understood as '*rara avis*' as in Romance which exhibits the use of preposition "of" which is responsible for the possessive case. Certainly, the English structure is intricate, and it has been examined throughout the recent centuries until today's status.

Although, it is not broadly comparable to the Spanish, some similarities can be found in comparison with the postnominal genitive frame. Nonetheless, just because of obvious dissimilarities, Spanish learners of L2 language may find it difficult to learn Saxon Genitive when studying and internalizing L2 English.

## Key words

*Saxon-genitive*, possessive case, preposition "of" *phrase*, *postnominal* genitive, L2 English acquisition.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1.- Justification

Throughout all my years studying English, I have found many Spanish nationals trying to get a profitable proficiency level in this language. It was astonishingly surprising the number of them giving up during the process or complaining about the difficulties they encountered in order to reach that level. Without the shadow of a doubt, it cannot be said that this is an individual or a transitory hurdle; if we have a look to the 2020 report of the EF English First company, EF English Proficiency Index – <https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/> – we will be at first sight amazed about the ‘insufficient’ Spanish rank included in it: number 34 (level of the ‘average’ person). Yes, far away from many European countries and being the 26 out of them, with a score of 537 points, and included into the Moderate level proficiency; critically speaking it has to be accounted that we are at the lowest end in the European Union regarding this matter.

Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
1.Netherlands	13.Croatia	30.Malaysia	48.Dominican Republic	77.Colombia
2.Denmark	14.Hungary	30.Italy	49.Honduras	78.Mongolia
3.Finland	15.Serbia	32.South Korea	50.India	79.Afghanistan
4.Sweden	16.Poland	33.Hong Kong, China	51.Armenia	80.Angola
5.Norway	17.Romania	34.Nigeria	51.Uruguay	81.Algeria
6.Austria	18.Switzerland	34.Spain	53.Brazil	82.Mexico
7.Portugal	19.Czech Republic	36.Costa Rica	54.Tunisia	83.Egypt
8.Germany	20.Bulgaria	37.Chile	55.Japan	84.Cambodia
9.Belgium	21.Greece	38.China	56.El Salvador	85.Sudan
10.Singapore	22.Kenya	39.Paraguay	56.Panama	86.Azerbaijan
11.Luxembourg	23.Slovakia	40.Belarus	56.Iran	87.Syria
12.South Africa	24.Lithuania	41.Russia	59.Peru	88.Uzbekistan
	25.Estonia	41.Cuba	60.Nepal	89.Cameroon
	25.Argentina	43.Albania	61.Pakistan	89.Thailand

 The table continues

Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
	27.Philippines	44.Ukraine	62.Ethiopia	91.Ivory Coast
	28.France	45.Macau, China	63.Bangladesh	92.Kazakhstan
	29.Latvia	46.Bolivia	63.Guatemala	93.Myanmar
		47.Georgia	65.Vietnam	93.Ecuador
			66.UAE	95.Rwanda
			67.Venezuela	96.Kyrgyzstan
			68.Sri Lanka	97.Saudi Arabia
			69.Turkey	98.Oman
			70.Kuwait	99.Iraq
			71.Qatar	100.Tajikistan
			72.Jordan	
			73.Nicaragua	
			74.Morocco	
			74.Indonesia	
			74.Bahrain	

Moreover, conducting a report's scrutiny, we may realize that the proficiency trend has not been levelly evolving, year by year, in the last decade.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Rank	24/44	18/54	23/60	20/63	23/70	25/72	28/80	32/88	35/100	34/100
Level	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Thus, at this moment dear reader, you can be arguing what these report's features have to do with the purpose of my analysis: the Saxon Genitive. Well, by all odds, this information has to do nothing and everything at the same time. I mean, from my perspective, this should be my starting point when it comes to tackle a more specific linguistic peculiarity as Saxon Genitive is, because it can open our minds at the moment of figuring out how this English particular genitive can be learnt and understood by a Spanish scholars. In fact, that L2 learning process is under the scope of the analysis, and we should keep in mind

that this work is dedicated to the at last but not least the comparison of both languages.

Therefore, as Spanish learner of English for many, many years, one of its features that attracted and surprised me a lot was the Saxon Genitive. Why English expresses possession in such a different way? How it has evolved throughout time and why? And even more tempting for me, how to compare its distinctiveness with my Spanish mother tongue and how L2 Spanish learners cope with it during the educational process?

Yet still, my absorption was not just related with the Saxon Genitive's general structure but more specifically with the differentiation between the clitic possessive 's and the *of phrase*; obviously, latter this one much more related with our Spanish configurations of possessive, and undoubtedly, better preferred by my countrypersons. Indeed, when I was trying to figure out the scope of my examinations, and reading and reading about this topic, I found some interesting online comments and works about it; as the one in the online Spanish blog: 'elblogdeidiomas' - <https://elblogdeidiomas.es/genitivo-sajon/>, in which a comment by the author Carlos grabbed my interest: "*El genitivo sajón ya es complicado de por sí ya que en español no lo usamos; para indicar posesión nos limitamos al "de" (el primo de mi madre, la puerta del coche, la silla de mi abuelo) y, por eso, la historia de "esto va con apóstrofo 's" y "esto otro va con "of" nos puede volver un poco locos.*" Here it is simply explained that something so easily thinkable as adding the apostrophe 's to the end of a word, in fact originates many times a syntactic headache for my nationals, and this plight is under my concerns about this analysis and my clarifications.

Finally, now here I am at my English Studies degree's final stage. When the possibility to analyze this topic in depth made me profoundly eager to resolve my unanswered past questions about Saxon Genitive; furthermore, if I could provide some kind of clearness to a present or future of English's Spanish learners, my own justification could be a shared one for many of them.

## 1.2.- Objectives

As it is briefly exposed during my aforesaid justification, there are many questions that need to be answered throughout my analysis. It is not only a general matter, but it is also a multiple-part question. Then, I have taken the decision to establish as many partial objectives as needed, obviously keeping the track to my main objective, that is the one mentioned in my TFG title – Saxon Genitive: an English syntactic analysis and a comparative approach to Spanish. These are my objectives, detailed and explained in such a proposal manner:

1. **Extensive structure understanding.** Saxon Genitive does not consist on merely adding an apostrophe by a clitic morpheme 's. Many scholars have gone deeply in its structure, developing a wide study about affinities, differences and peculiarities of this kind of possession framework. I will 'sail' into those studies in order to offer a far-reaching knowledge about the topic.
2. **Deeper application overview.** Laying aside the basics about Saxon Genitive application, I am eager to go a step further and deal with a deeper but quite simple overview, just not referring to the grammatical or syntactical conception.
3. **Evolutionary development.** When my children try to figure out how their future job is going to be, I usually say to them that *if you never forget where you come from, you will always know where to go*. From my point of view, Saxon Genitive evolution in time has to be treated alike, just because this diachronic analysis can explain us why it is syntactically nowadays and from where it evolved. Therefore, I propose myself to travel along history and get a valuable answer.
4. **Spanish counterpart.** We will see in the next pages that there is not an equal structure of Saxon Genitive in the Spanish Grammar and Syntax. Certainly, it is not an easy task to include the English version of possession in our possessive standards. That is why I will analyze the issue and will try to find a middle inclusive point of performance.
5. **L2 Saxon Genitive acquisition.** If we have a look to my justification chapter, one of my concerns is to evaluate how Spanish learners of English do handle with the Saxon Genitive during the L2 acquisition process. Some eminent researchers have abord the question, as in Escobar-Álvarez (2011). Here, some problems and drawbacks will be discussed considering the difficulty that the linguistic phenomenon has for L2 English learners.

### 1.3.- Method

Up to this point, I have stated that Saxon Genitive is an English very particular structure. Moreover, Spanish language has not a similar configuration and it provokes problems of learning and comprehension by Spanish students. Now we do have some problematic questions displayed and the different objectives I propose to cover this subject. Consequently, I will analyze many pieces of work done by different experts and scholars, citing, and exposing their studies, in order to answer those pending queries, I aforementioned in the justification step.

Nonetheless, it should be taken into account that the English possessive whole structure will not properly be developed here, and this analysis will cover only the Saxon Genitive precise case.

#### 1.4.- State of the art

There are, at the moment, many studies including the Saxon Genitive matter at hand, and how and why its acquisition is somehow a problem for Spanish learners. Being precise, some of them are more relevant than others, as regards to the scope of this analysis; example giving:

- *The choice between the s-genitive and the Of-phrase*, Žan Jovišič, Vanja Premuž and Zala Hreščak.

Here we find out a very accurate comparative analysis between the *s-genitive* and the *of-phrase*. It is not only an explanation about the types and uses, but it is also study about both classes of genitives as regards to the register, semantic relation, and many other features. Additionally, this piece of work is supported by a corpus analysis that gives a wider picture and understanding about this syntactical paradox. All in all, this investigation is divided in four different sections which provide among others a theoretical general outlook of the topic and the differentiation in use within nonidentical context.

- *The Adult L2 Acquisition of the Saxon Genitive: Italian and Spanish results*, M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles Escobar Álvarez.

In pro of supporting the general theory that adults assimilating a second language, English in this case, have fully comprehensive access to the Universal Grammar (UG) – generative principle – which undoubtedly takes part in the acquisition of that second language. By comparison of several results among Italian and Spanish students acquiring the knowledge about the Saxon Genitive, it is determined that both groups ‘stumble over the same stone’ during the process, even though they belong to different linguistic backgrounds.

- *Dative and genitive variability in Late Modern English: Exploring cross-constructural variation and change*, Christoph Wolk, Joan Bresnan, Anette Rosenbach, Benedikt Szmrecsanyi.

A study written in 2011 by aforesaid scholars, exploring the transposition of the dative and the genitive in Late Modern English since 1650 to 1990. Freshly surprising the application of state-of-the-art techniques applied to statistical examples and information gathering. These authors become aware of the fact that both, dative and genitive, present similar variations, and in fact, they agree on the idea that this uncommon behavior can incite newfangled alterations on prolonged-term probabilistic grammars.

- *Compare and Contrast. An English Grammar for Speakers of Spanish*, John L. Mackenzie, and Elena M. Caro.

“Based on decades of experience, it not only provides a thorough introduction to the linguistic description of English but also devotes explicit attention to the pitfalls that lie in wait for the Spanish-speaking learner.” A recent approach to the Spanish learners – 2012 – who want



to go in depth into the English grammar, but not only exposed as the typical and ordinary point of view, but it is also a cross-check version of many difficulties arisen by the students when comparing in the learning process their Spanish vernacular with the English vicissitudes. Indeed, the most interesting part, in connection with the scope of this analysis, is widely treated in the chapter 8 – The genitive. Finally, it should be precisely taken into consideration the last part of it mentioning the genitive issue conclusions.

### **1.5.- Procedure**

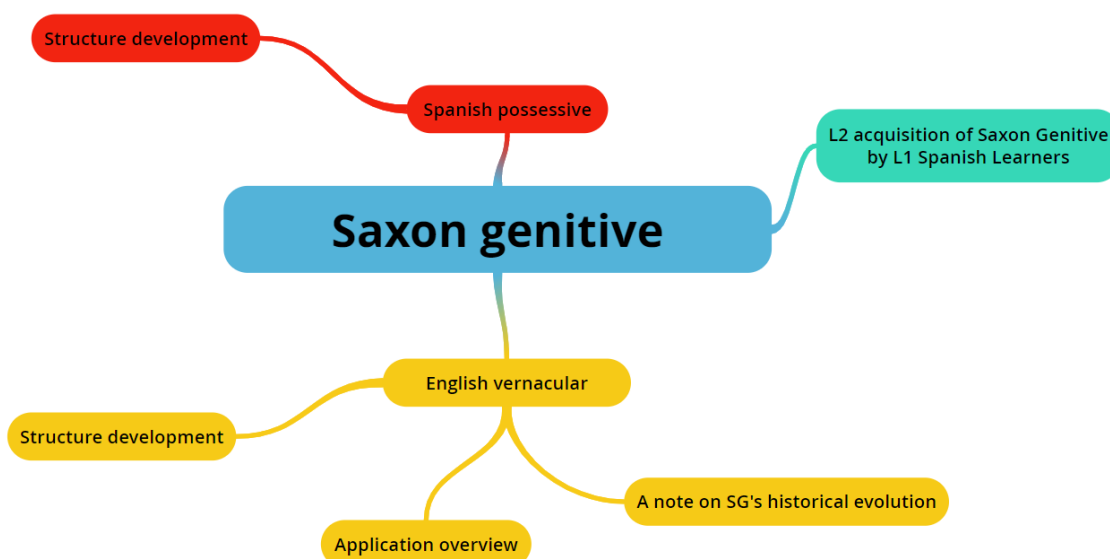
My analysis is based on the study of many inquirers and academics. It is not a scientific experiment either a hypothetical investigation. In fact, throughout my readings I will extract the most relevant pieces of information needed for my document. Obviously, because this is a TFG degree's final project, it goes without saying that it has to be performed according to UNED's directives detailed in the file *Características formales y estructura del TFG*, on a digital format and fulfilled during the school year course 2020-2021.

What is more, this is an individual and personal assignment, and nobody else is involved in the development or composition of it, although I count on the priceless support and guidance of my counsellor M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles Escobar Álvarez. Ergo, I will try to honour her and all the scholars I study and comprehend here across their inquiries, keeping in mind certain Spanish saying: "*Mi pluma y mi tintero me valen lo que quiero.*"

## 2. Analysis

Certainly, it should be necessary, from a starting viewpoint, to remark that Saxon Genitive is nowadays considered an echo of the English language inflectional past; based on the fact that there were four (4) cases in the Old English: nominative, genitive, dative and accusative, and the current permanent standing one is genitive case. Contemporary literate experts agree on the version that it is an evidence of the degrammaticalization and grammaticalization progression. Indeed, this process has not been profoundly developed in any other languages apart from English; even though, some particular analyses have been performed in accordance with this topic as *Degrammaticalized Anglo-Saxon genitive in Spanish*, by Margarita, D M; M<sup>a</sup> Jesús, P Q.

### 2.1.- My mindmap



### 2.2.- Saxon genitive – English vernacular

#### 2.2.1.- Structure development

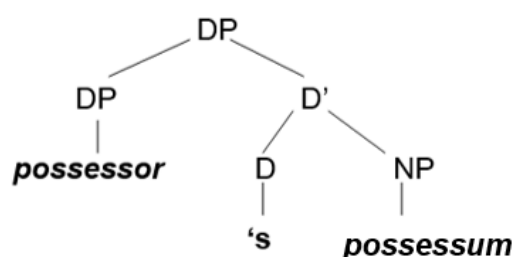
Primarily, it is useful to define the main purpose of each single piece of study; in this particular case, the Saxon genitive's main aim is to indicate the noun phrase's source of which it is belonging to; it is obviously associated with a possession. Indeed, if we have a quick look to the definition of possession on Internet, we can find really precise definitions as: "*the state of having, owing, or controlling something*", "*something that is own or possessed*". A noun phrase

comprises another noun phrase which indicates its head, and those parts were morphologically marked in order to expose the genitive connection.

Before going in depth anent the Saxon genitive, a peculiar concern must be explained, that is the diverse meanings genitive can abord; from manifold meanings to a broad aim of connection, or eve more to a precise possession. This is not under the scope of our analytical focus, although it can give a richer understanding of the main issue. e.g.:

- *Joanna's car* (car possessed by Joanna).
- *A neighbors' affair* (an affair between neighbors).
- *The boss' project* (a project made by the boss).
- *A rich of the club member* (a rich club member).
- *The cancer operation of Valeriu* (an operation suffered by Valeriu).
- *The canton of Zurich* (a Swiss canton named Zurich).
- *The selfie of Raquel* (a selfie representing Raquel).

From this starting point, and obviously keeping apart other broader points of analysis as just aforesaid in connection with the different meanings of the genitive, we may initially begin saying that the Saxon genitive consists of two nouns in which the first one – the **possessor** – is connected by 's with the second one – the **possessum**. Possessive 's is typically presumed to have an independent syntactic position, due to the fact that it is placed in an exclusive terminal node within a syntactic tree; truly prescribe as a *Determiner*. The reason why is attached on the left side of the structure is because it is prosodically deficient, that means it is allotted by general syntactic principles. A basic syntactic tree, as follows, helps to understand the fundamental concept about this possessive relationship.



**[owner's (possessor) house (possessum)]**



determiners but before the head of a noun or of a noun phrase (NP); on the contrary, *postmodifiers* are placed after the noun head.

*[This is Joanna]'s car.*

#### Sample 1.

Even more, basically, in English we interact with the prenominal genitive constructing two similar but syntactically different structures. Here, it is needed to keep an eye on the three English genitive patterns: a) **independent genitive**, b) **double genitive** and c) **Saxon Genitive**.

- a) **Independent genitive**: it is composition in which the noun coming after the possessive frame is excluded, not being previously mentioned.  
e.g., *I went to Sara's.*
- b) **Double genitive**: we may obviously encounter two possessives in the same clause. The possession is denoted by the preposition *of* and the possessive frame - noun or pronoun.  
e.g., *A costumer of Sara's.*
- c) **Saxon Genitive**: the object of our analysis, described and developed as follows:

Some other studies and theories, Biber *et al.* (1999: 292-297), determine a plainer distinction such as *dependant* and *independent genitives*. The former includes the *specifying genitives* – *Joanna's car*, the *classifying genitives* – *Her car was like a rich's automobile*, and the *genitive of time* and *of measure* – *tomorrow's appointment*, meanwhile the latter entails *elliptic genitives*, as it was aforementioned before.

Firstly, the *s-genitive* – *definite* possessive, *prenominal* possessive or also known as a *clitic*, as a remaining inflection in the modern English, to one extent can be divided to the application on singular nouns and plural nouns (Sample 2); certainly, the former is come about affixing the suffix 's to the noun, and the latter appends an apostrophe to it; although if a plural noun does not end in –s, as to singular nouns, the suffix 's is added (Sample 3). Moreover, there are certain singular nouns that are handled as plural ones (Sample 4). These categories of Saxon Genitive usually refer to objects possessed by people.

*[This is the girl]'s magazine.*

*[These are the girls]' magazines.*

#### Sample 2.

*[This is my children]’s playground.*

Sample 3.

*[People]’s behavior.*

Sample 4.

Even though we have dealt with the general rules about the *prenominal* genitive, or purely speaking Saxon genitive, some marking rules must be taken into account. Usually, within the sentence, is the *possessor* the ‘recipient’ of the *clitic* morpheme ‘s, being the last word’s appendage in the genitive NP. The ‘s *clitic* appears to be almost identical to the suffix –s that normally marks the plural. Thus, it can happen that the *possessor* is not the recipient (last word) of the genitive NP, and the marker is not essentially a suffix (Sample 5).

*[The Joanna]’s car broke down.*

*[The Joanna who is my best friend]’s car broke down.*

Sample 5.

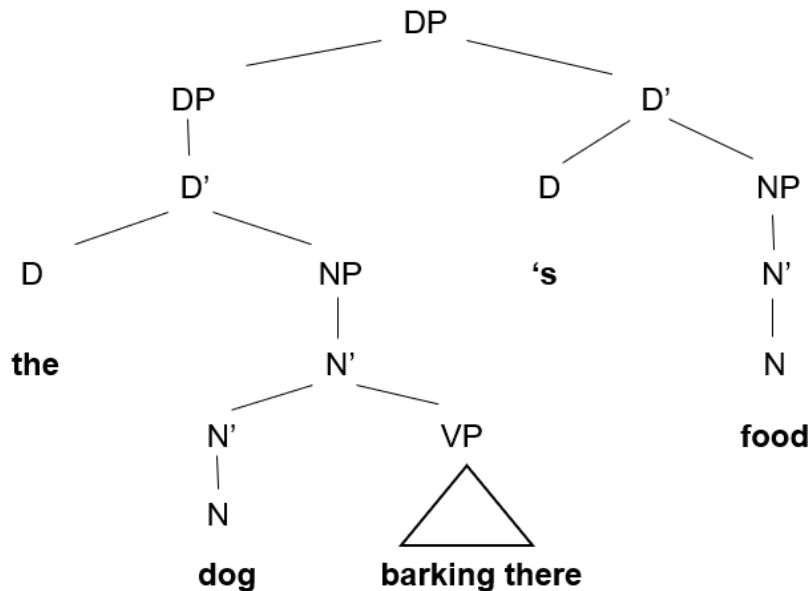
It can be seen that in the first sentence *Joanna* acts as the *possessor* of the car and to her is attached the *clitic*; notwithstanding, it is not the case in the second phrase where the Saxon Genitive morpheme is added to the last word of the genitive NP, not the *possessor* obviously. This type of exemplar is called *group* genitive, and it is widely used in spoken language; however, in writing mode is frequently replenished by a corresponding *postnominal* genitive. e.g., *The car of my best friend Joanna broke down.*

Stepping slightly back, referring to the term *clitic*, it is a morpheme that has the syntactic features of a word but phonologically speaking depends on another word, being syntactically autonomous but phonologically subjected to - also known as a *enclitic postposition* (*enclitic* comes from the Greek term *enklínein*, meaning *rely on*). Specifically speaking, they are affixes-like but with the distribution of words with a little lexical meaning – function words. Based on Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985: 328): “*The -s ending is not a case ending in the sense which applies to languages such as Latin, Russian, and German. It can be more appropriately described as a ‘postposed enclitic’: ie, its function is parallel to that of a preposition, except that it is placed after the noun phrase.*”

As aforementioned in Samples 1-2, the words to which ‘s *clitic* are attached are called *hosts* or also *anchors*; thus ‘s *hosts* are *girls* in the sentence. Furthermore, as regards to a syntactic tree, an independent syntactic status is normally established by the possessive ‘s: it is located under its own

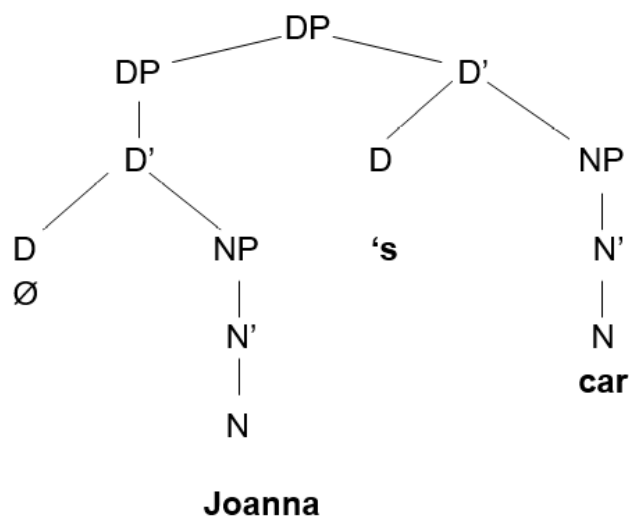
terminal node and is usually allocated to the category *Determiner* (Sample 6). Indeed, it should be observed that it is in complementary distribution with determiners – therefore it cannot co-occur with them, obviously being the determiner of its DP (Sample 7).

- *[the dog barking there]'s food.*



Sample 6.

- *\*[A Joanna]'s car* → *[Joanna]'s car*



Sample 7.

Secondly, instead of using the *s-genitive* with objects, normally the *of-phrase* – *indefinite possessives* or *free genitive* – is a more feasible or preferred

alternative, and it uses the preposition *of* to point the possessive association between the two NPs. It is worth mentioning that this form appeared in the ninth century. Syntactically speaking, *of-phrase* is a prepositional phrase which can replace the Saxon Genitive (Sample 8), and, contrary to it, works as a postmodifier in the phrase. It should be kept in mind that the noun phrase's head needs the definite article, and it is preferred with abstract nouns or inanimate things.

*[These are the magazines of the girls.]*

#### Sample 8.

Lastly, we may make a small note about the behavior or connection of compound names as regards to the genitive; in fact, it is not actually interesting in the analysis we are carrying out, however it is surprisingly sensitive if we consider the L2 acquisition viewpoint of the Spanish Learners. Let's try to figure out the difference, then, among these three examples:

- *Our view's point.*
- *Our point of view.*
- *Our viewpoint.*

In the last sentence, we encounter a single compound name acting in meaning and concept similarly to the previous *Saxon genitive* and *of-phrase* examples. Even further, let's now compare this 'characteristic' with other three examples compounding the nouns *Madrid* and *President*, and it can be equally presumed that the behavior is similar:

- *Miss Ayuso, Madrid's President!*
- *Miss Ayuso, President of Madrid!*
- *Miss Ayuso, Madrid President!*

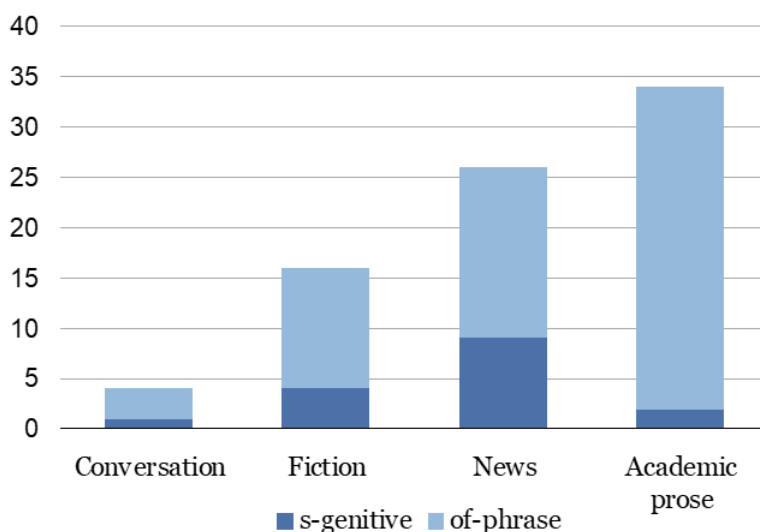
No additional examination is needed at this stage about this topic because it will be alluded in one of the latter sections dealing with L2 acquisition and its contingencies.

#### **2.2.2.- Application overview**

This section only slightly explains the differences in application between the *s-genitive* and the *of-phrase* from a particular point of view. According to Žan Jovišič *et al.*(2014): in some cases, the *s-genitive* and the *of-phrase* are applied in much the same manner; however, in some other cases, they are not exchangeable at all and it should be taken into account six referred categories:



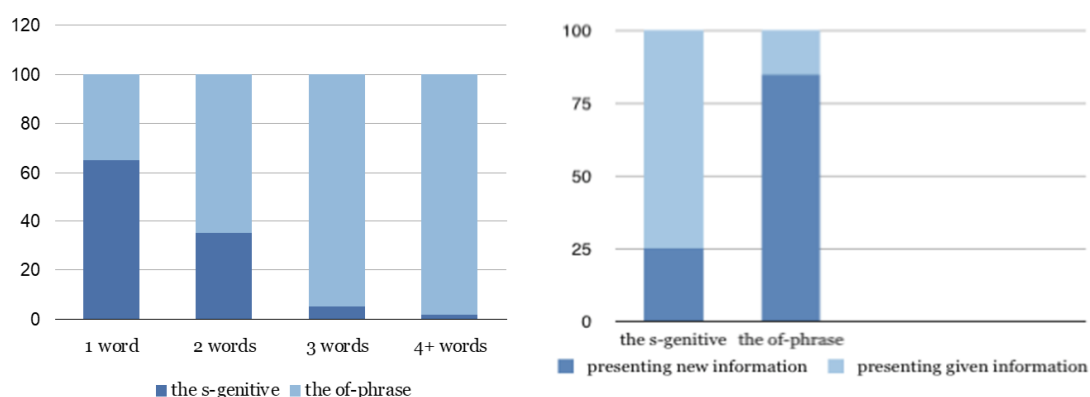
register, type of dependent noun phrase, semantic relation between the head and dependent noun phrase, the complexity of the dependent noun phrase, the information status of the dependent noun phrase and specific collocations. It is not the purpose of this chapter to come across all of these features, and only the most relevant are under our concern. Certainly, as regards to their application, **register** is the most conditional feature to give consideration. Thus, accordingly, *of phrase* genitive overpass by far to the *s-genitive* utilization, when for example considering both options among a group of people that work together or have the same interests. Up to this point of the analysis, we can ask ourselves: how we usually choose between both options? When and why is the general choice elected by the user? This graph and subsequent, carried out by Biber (2000,302), perfectly explain these specifications Here, he compares both genitives as regards to the *register*:



Therefore, the pair are rarely used in conversations: “*The register distribution of s-genitives and of-phrases depends on the overall frequency of nouns. Since the frequency of nouns is low in conversation, the frequency of noun-dependent elements is low too*”. Be noticed also the low percentage or frequency of the *s-genitive* among these elements.

Apropos of the **type of the dependant noun phrase**, we find out that innermost allusions – most likely proper names – do prefer the *s-genitive* construction; however, abstract impersonal nouns structures are more eager to take *of-phrase* genitive. More detailed information about the remaining categories can be deeply found in the analysis.

Yet still, when it comes to the length of the structure, *s-genitive* is certainly opted for short dependant expressions, and talking about the disposal of new information, the *of-phrase* appears to be a preference, versus the given one, in which the *s-genitive* ‘takes the lead’.



It is worth dwelling upon the way to mention *branching constraint*. Briefly speaking, this constraint presented by Kayne (1984) precepts the syntactic structures in which a sentence comprises more than two coterminous constituents. As a matter of fact, it should be highlighted that double Saxon genitive configuration does prefer left-branching, whereas of-phrases are more preference-oriented to right-branching. There are many reasons keeping up these two manners into practice, indeed, Thomas Berg (2012) explains: “*The branching direction decision is argued to be under the sway of several distinct factors: a syntactic factor controlling the alternative between leftward and rightward expansion; a lexical factor regulating the idiomatization of a given pair of elements; and a processing factor geared towards preventing garden path effects. Furthermore, branching direction is determined by listeners’ desire to minimize constituent recognition domains.*”

### 2.2.3.- A note on SG’s historical evolution

By no means is necessary to go in detail as regards to the four (4) cases in Old English: nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative. Therefore, in Old English there were different terminations for the genitive case, and subjecting to the declension, singular and plural. Thus, Saxon Genitive is descended from the inflectional ending <-es>, that obviously changed the meaning of the word attached to; the elision of <-e> by the apostrophe is established around the eighteenth century. Even more, Modern English does have to mark the genitive relationship in two ways, as aforementioned.

Regarding to a timeline evolution, the *of*-genitive is the ‘original’ variety, which appeared in the ninth century. Thomas (1931:284) (cited in Mustanoja 1960:75) states that the inflected genitive utilization exceeded by far the periphrasis *of* until the twelfth century. Even more, according to Mustanoja (1960:70): “*a strong tendency to replace the inflectional genitive by periphrastic*

*constructions, above all by periphrasis with the preposition of*”, and then is when the inflected genitive appeared to be dying out, Jucker (1993: 121). Then it can be said that the inflectional genitive was substituted by a predominant periphrastic *of*-genitive position from the late tenth to the fourteenth century.

It can be stated that in the course of Middle English period some ‘new versions’ outcrop as the so-called *absolute genitive* – *St. Paul’s* bearing on the well-known Cathedral, and the *double genitive* – *a brother of the King’s niece*.

Surprisingly, in the Early Modern English interval, the *s-genitive* “suffers” a revival; and nowadays its usage is middle-balanced, Hinrichs and Szmrecsanyi *et al* (2007). Many authors highlight that genitive variability in the Later Modern English period is not actually much known, although it is one the most inquired syntactic alterations in English.

Furthermore, some linguists as Norde (2009:160, 172-178) allege that the Anglo-Saxon genitive has suffered a process of *deinflectionalization*: “*a composite change whereby an inflectional affix in a specific linguistic context gains a new function, while shifting to a less bound morpheme type.*”, then acquiring the role of a determiner.

Along this line of thought, one of the most relevant conclusions as regards to this analysis is as follows: “*The s-genitive, formed by adjoining ’s to a dependent noun, is found to be one of the only markers of case still left in Modern English, which reflects the tendency to shift towards more elaborate and transparent forms.*” Žan Jovišič *et al* (2014).

Yet still, reaching this point of development, we should ask us one important question: to what extent both formulae *noun+noun* or *noun+of+noun* are part of the Modern English?

## 2.3.- Spanish possessive

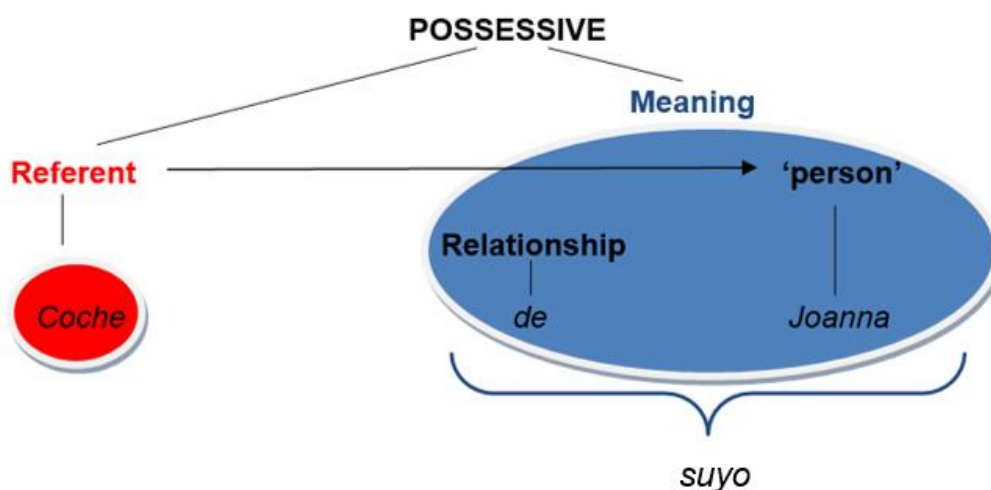
### 2.3.1.- Structure development

Initially, due to the fact that along this point we are going to treat genitive case’s structures in Spanish, it is almost compulsory to refer our focus to the description of the *genitive case* that RAE (Real Academia Española – Spanish Royal Academy) does:

- **Caso genitivo**: “*caso de la declinación latina y de otras lenguas indoeuropeas que indica generalmente posesión o pertenencia.*” (case

of the Latin declination and other Indo-European languages that generally expresses possession or belonging).

In present day Spanish there is not an equivalent genitive sort to English; an analytic structure is used instead with the *de* preposition which we can similarly compare with the *of* utilization. It was mentioned above that Modern English has two ways of excerpting the genitive association; then well, Spanish has only one as regards to this scope of analysis: the **postnominal genitive**. Furthermore, it was also explained that the English postnominal variation is presented by the *of* preposition in *of-phrases*, meanwhile in Spanish it is similarly done by the preposition *de* – a postnominal possessive phrase presented by that preposition *de* equivalent to English *of*, no matter definite or indefinite entry. This scheme can visually explain the structure in a plain way:



Along this line of thought, even though we highlighted only the interest of postnominal genitive in Spanish in order to be compared with its English version, it should be slightly commented to reach a better comprehension of the matter, that in Spanish the prenominal possessives are conventionally decoded as complement of the noun – canonical possessives. Thus, in third's person possessive case *su* – equivalent to *his*, *her* or *their* – can have the same elucidation as the *de* possessive. Some explanatory examples are these Samples 9 and 10:

*su coche (his, her or their car)*

Sample 9.

*El coche de mi primo (The car of my cousin / My cousin's car)*

Sample 10.

Important to mention that Spanish does not have an *enclitic postposition* as English does, although it has *enclitic pronouns*. e.g., **muéstramelo** (pronouns *me* and *lo* are linked to the verb *mostrar*).

Continually, in Spanish there are three types of evaluative prenominal possessives:

- a) **Affective possessive**: taking precedence over a proper name, implies a bond between the person specified by the possessive and the one intended by the proper name.  
e.g., [*Mi Lourdes*] *me adora sin duda*.
- b) **Emphatic possessives**: from the speaker point of view, is used in the account of ingrained current events describing an individual.  
e.g., *Por la tarde me bebo [mi cervecita]*.
- c) **Prenominal possessive within double genitive structures** mainly concerned with the Old and American Spanish, where the possessor is displayed two times in a nominal statement, having two types into consideration, Huerta Flores (2009): the [Poss+N+*de*+DP] and the [Poss+N+restrictive relative] sequences. e.g., ***Ella vivía allí con su perro de él*** and ***Se puso su collar más lujoso que poseía***, respectively.

As it was explained previously similarly to the *s-genitive* (page 6), the Spanish possession is approached according to the number of persons involved in the possession relationship; that is to say to the singular and plural approach, and obviously is closely related with the number of people involved and the number of relations each of them have among them, or with the things the possession is specifying to. e.g.:

Singular:

- ***Mi*** *trabajo está en el centro de la ciudad* [My job is in the City Centre].
- *Me gusta mucho* ***tu*** *forma de ser* [I love your way of being].
- ***Su*** *meta es ganar la lotería con* ***su*** *hermana* [Her goal is to win the lottery with her sister].

Plural:

- ***Nuestro*** *trabajo está en el centro de la ciudad* [Our job is the City Center].
- ***Su*** *viaje de novios fue increíble* [Their honeymoon was incredible].

## 2.4.- L2 Acquisition of Saxon Genitive by L1 Spanish learners

Many scholars have dedicated their focus on the ‘peculiarities’ that native learners from Romance languages, that said Spanish from our point of perspective, face with the Germanic evolved variation, English, in **L2 acquisition**. In point of fact, we may call to mind that L2 acquisition, also called sequential acquisition, is the acquirement of a second language throughout a learning process. From our point of consideration here, as regards to the Saxon Genitive case, adult’s acquisition is on our main concern, discarding nonnative English children going to school for the first time, and obviously involved in a slightly different learning method.

As we have reviewed in previous chapters, one of the biggest differences between English and Spanish possession matter is that in the former there are two possible choices: Saxon genitive and *of-phrases*, meanwhile in the latter, the only choice available is the periphrastic structure with the *of* preposition – *de*, in Spanish. Then, from a starting learning point of view, such dichotomy provokes certain difficulties on the subject of linguistic acquisition.

At first, let’s recover the explanation about our two analyzed genitives’ variations and the compound names genitive case. If we remember properly, briefly we mentioned that the compound names have such a kind of behavior and association with our genitive scope cases. Significantly, it has been detected that Spanish learners instead of applying the compound when suitable (Sample 11) will choose the prenominal genitive form as an alternative (Sample 12).

*Fusion Chef.*

Sample 11.

*\*Fusion’s Chef.*

Sample 12.

*(Chef of fusion – Chef de fusión).*

Moreover, when Spanish genitive is interjected by the preposition *de* without the definite or indefinite article, the compounding methodology is regularly recommended.

Secondly, there are different hypothesis partially covering the ‘paradox’ *Saxon Genitive* versus *of phrase*. According to the work of M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles Escobar: “According to our new findings, L1 transfer is not only what is at hand in the acquisition of the Saxon Genitive by Spanish speaking adults, since Spanish grammar bans the presence of determiners in prenominal possessors”.

Furthermore, as she states, one of the main concerns is intimately correlated with the different syntactic parameters Spanish learners may encounter in L2 acquisition contrasting English and their mother tongue: “*The study reported in this paper was aimed to test the predictions made by the FTFA hypotheses by considering the L2 acquisition of one syntactic parameter, the Saxon Genitive parameter (SGP) in English by native speakers of Italian and Spanish whose L1 apparently belongs to a different syntactic parameter, the Prepositional Genitive parameter (PGP)*”. One of the references applied by M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles appertains to the study done by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994) *Word order and nominative case innonnative language acquisition: A longitudinal study of (L1 Turkish) German interlanguage*, and (1996) *L2 cognitive states and the ‘full transfer/full access’ model*. Basically, they adopt the model of Selinker about the acquisition of second language; that said briefly, they posit that the 2<sup>nd</sup> language version acquired is a hybrid one, and this type has an intrinsic structure and set on precepts.

In our previous chapter 2.1.1. *Structure development* we mentioned that the clitic ‘s was appointed to the category *Determiner*, and because it was in complementary distribution with them, it cannot coincide with them eventually. Equally speaking, as M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles mentions, in English proper names are in complementary distribution with determiners, and them we may find these grammatical and ungrammatical structures:

- [DP [NP my Joanna]]
- \*[DP The [NP my Joanna]]

Therefore, if the determiner does not appear, the proper name does not need to move to occupy the D head. Just the contrary in Spanish – a Romance language – as proper names must be relocated from the noun head (N) to the determiner head (D) when the determiner is not present, Longobardi (1994). He also highlights that N-to-D movement is evident in Romance but under covered in Germanic. This parameter is mentioned as *Strong versus weak D* by M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles.

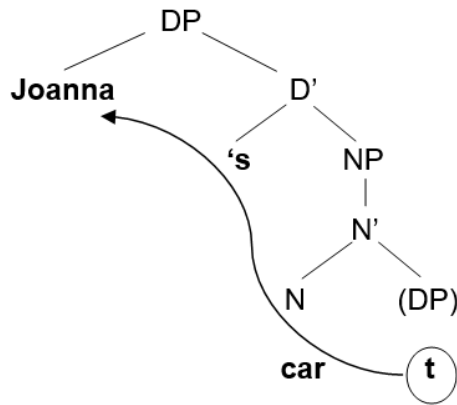
Moreover, a secondly parameter *One vs. two possessive configurations: Romance vs. English* is within the field of this work. Spanish displays one periphrastic configuration in which *of* form – *of phrase* – is included, for definite and indefinite structures. e.g.:

- ***El*** hermano de Joanna.
- ***Un*** hermano de Joanna.

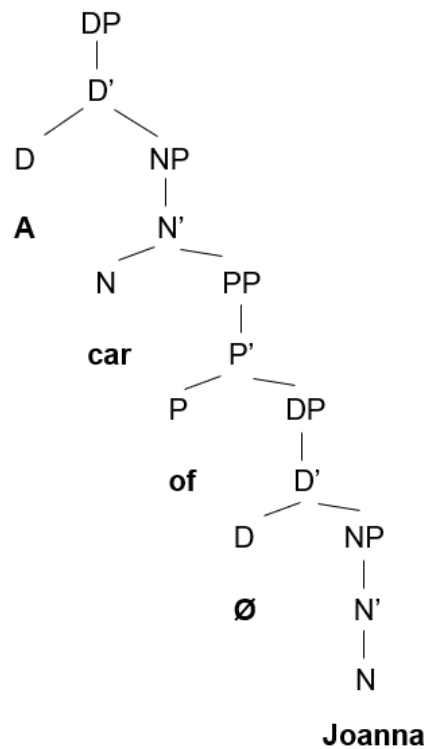
Nonetheless, in English only two formats, as regards to definite and indefinite forms, are defined (Sample 13 (a) y (b)). In fact, indefinite possessives

constitute a periphrastic framework regarding the *of* preposition (Sample 14), and differing from definite ones, they do not witness any movement from their canonical position as in Sample 11(a), and obviously coincide with the two Spanish types of these possessives (Sample 15).

- (a) *Joanna's car.*



- (b) *A car of Joanna.*



Sample 13.

- *A relative of Joanna's.*

- *A relative of mine.*

Sample 14.



- *El hermano de Joanna* [Joanna's brother].

- *Un hermano de Joanna* [A brother of Joanna's].

#### Sample 15.

Following this line of development, therefore it should be taken heed of the fact that English does allow the feasibility to present *prenominal possessor* after the *Determiner*; meanwhile, Spanish pronominal possessor cannot be ahead of the noun, and without a doubt it must come after it.

- \**El tuyo tío*.

- *El tío tuyo*. [The uncle yours]

All these considerations exposed by M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles drive her to the conclusion that, as the second language acquisition is concerned, Spanish learners of English will begin with the grammar of L1 language, and afterwards will consequently go along with the definite and indefinite analytic possessive structure of English (TL). Moreover, she defines two different aspects about age acquisition: "*For many linguists these findings support a critical period hypothesis for language acquisition, and, hence, support early foreign language instruction. However, other more recent studies put forward the idea that though early acquisition of a L2 appears to require less cellular area than in late acquisition, the study simply cannot suggest anything more without further study*".

Up to this point, we may consider other studies about L2 English acquisition in general terms, but without a doubt closely related with our study's evolution. Based on a feature-based approach and more focused on the acquisition regarding the English article system, Hegarty (2005) and Lardiere (2009), being more focused on children's L2 attainment, a universal kit of elements is at children disposal, and their principal task is that to elect only those elements presented in their L1 – fully comparably to Spanish in this case, when ignoring the other elements. Even more, there is a difference between children and adults' acquirement: children L1 elections are not undeniably be the same as adults, and more notably identical within all the L1 steps of attainment. Notwithstanding, when dealing with L2 acquisition, the peculiarities not available in L1 are acquirable and able to be introduced into the language of acquisition, but a real obstacle is presented because of the morphological dissimilarities in how those peculiarities are put together in lexical items. In fact, according to Lardiere (2009): "*The acquisition problem in this case involves the learners' figuring out how the relevant features are remapped onto new language-specific morphophonological forms.*"

Yet still, some other academics have approached this matter from the usage and social point of view. Indeed, recovering the work done by Žan Jovišič *et al.* (2014), and more accurately, considering Biber (2000:302), there is a tendency to preference the *of phrase* structures in academic prose and dialogues – obviously linked with L2 acquisition – versus the ‘s genitive that would rather be used in news and fiction, due to the fact that by these means the compression of the information acquires a relevant importance; in clear opposition to *postmodification* that favors a less dense and more clear mechanisms of exposition. This piece of work concludes decidedly within this last appreciation: “*In a society where huge amounts of information are transmitted with a tap of a finger, such a trend is logical. **The of-phrase allows for longer constructions, while remaining transparent - a necessity in an increasingly information packed age.***”

Nevertheless, we may see further promising results regarding this question, as Escobar- Álvarez points out: “*In future research we aim to test whether this contrastive-pattern learning strategy provides better results in the acquisition of the English genitive.*”

### 3. Conclusions

First and foremost, the initial conclusion that comes to our consideration is that the Saxon Genitive is not as simple as choosing and adding a clitic morpheme or a postnominal genitive. Having a look to all those English grammatical books for Spanish learners, the Saxon Genitive seems to be an easy choice with only the aforementioned options. Throughout our analysis we have seen that it is not a question of own willing, but is a selection made by determined syntactic rules, linguistic and contextual meditations. Indeed, the close relationship between the *possessor* and the *possessum* is the key point of this peroration. This conclusion matches the first question determined by our objectives chapter.

Certainly, up close to this first conclusion, it may be said that, obviously, the Saxon Genitive is not the only genitive feature of the English vernacular 'riding' alone throughout the language: *independent* and *double genitives* are intimate but have different patterns; indeed, sometimes unconsciously mixed up with the Saxon Genitive one, or thought to be two belonging parts of it.

In the same line of thought, it has been considered the evolution of this possessive feature in the recent centuries; that said, the current Saxon Genitive didn't appear out of the blue as we know it nowadays. In fact, it suffered a few changes related to the English language change itself, provoked by the social peculiarities of those moments (this social development has not been studied here in depth but partially). Moreover, the *'s genitive* and the *of-phrase* were not born twins we could say, having both different timeline 'births' – "not born together, similar childhood, but separated by time". Up to this juncture, I would like to keep an open question, as a personal reflection, that I will answer at the end of this chapter: if *s-genitive* finally disappears as a linguistic evolution in favor of the *of-phrase* structure, will this not mean that English will lose a part of its own identity?

Notwithstanding, one of the most striking conclusions that may came to our minds here is that Spanish has not an equal type of genitive as the Saxon. Undoubtedly, this does not mean that Spanish has not a possessive structure; on the contrary, Spanish exhibits a possessive case so does English. However, these languages differ in the use of the preposition "of", which is the standard way to satisfy "possessive case" in Spanish, as in most Romance languages, but not in English. In this latter language a new structure emerged due to the fact that compound nouns are standard and the incorporation of the suffix 's has helped to satisfy "possessive case" in another structure.

On the same line of analysis, the statics presented in the work of Žan Jovišič, Vanja Premuž and Zala Hreščak talking about percentages of use and preference between *s-genitive* and *of-phrase*, truly state that mainly is the *of-*

*phrase* structure the chosen one by the English writers in general. No matter the register, the length, or the information status, the postnominal configuration seems to be more accessible to the public in common spoken language used daily activities. Precisely, the constant social and linguistic evolution, do L2 learners prefer postnominal possessive constructions due to its better clarity and quantity of information provided.

As regards to the L2 acquisition issue by L1 Spanish learners, many scholars' studies showed us that mainly of phrase structure becomes a preference, due to obvious similarities with the syntactical-twin configuration, as discussed in Escobar-Álvarez (2011), where L2 possessive procurement is overlapped on the basis of L1 syntactic rules; and undoubtedly, this is closely linked with the postnominal structure preference aforementioned. Before we decided getting into depth about her piece of job, many doubts about L2 acquisition of Saxon Genitive were 'on the board', as if the same errors were done among different Romance languages, and if the age of the learners was at stake, concerning Saxon Genitive along the learning process. Even though we didn't specifically mention the learnedness difference between adults and children in her study, but it is clear that according to M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles, there are some studies proposing a critical difference according to the learners' age, and we should adopt here conclusion on that: "...these other studies show evidence of better proficiency in L2 over L1 (in this case, Spanish), suggesting that English becomes the dominant language over time when this is the language of the learner's academics." Indeed, Hegarty (2005) and Lardiere (2005) clearly pointed out: "...children L1 elections are not undeniably be the same as adults, and more notably identical within all the L1 steps of attainment". Undoubtedly, without the shadow of a doubt, in accordance and apropos to Escobar- Álvarez (2011), L2 language students' success should be focus on broad exposal to indefinite and definite genitives, as a means to get an extensive differentiation about their particular configurations. Thus, our original single starting point at the beginning of this analysis became a deeper and wider understanding of the learning acquisition: it is not only a simple question about choosing a prenominal or postnominal structure, but it is also a maturity and linguistic background issue.

Finally, my personal conclusion, a key lesson learnt developed within this analysis, is that when approaching a singular easy matter – initially thought in such a way – as the Saxon Genitive case, a clear study-path is pre-performed, although throughout its systematic flourishing the issue generates many alternative variations, and two- or three-way street turns into a labyrinth of possibilities. Moreover, tracing back my open question aforesaid, undoubtedly we may say that language is an intrinsic social feature, society change, so does language, but if English language loses a part of its identity – *s-genitive*, definitely English society will lose a part of their history.

Therefore, dear readers, I apologize if some of my comments and pieces of analysis were not clear or significant enough, and I guess all my original objectives are positively covered within this document.

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