'Living on the edge of two languages': a contrastive analysis of possessive constructions in Smaro Kamboureli's *'In the Second Person'*

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Abstract: Smaro Kamboureli's poetic diary records/reports on the reconstruction of a woman's identity deconstructed by living as a Greek immigrant in the 1980s Canadian society. The inner dualism implicit in her bilingualism causes the splitting of the self as mentioned in the book title and makes her live «on the edge of two languages, on the edge of two selves named and constructed by language» (p. 34). In this paper I analyse the possessive constructions occurring in the text as a structured category unified under cognitive principles (Langacker 2000; Taylor 2000; Fónagy 2004). Following the procedure adopted in a recent study on the semantic relations encoded by *N N* and *N Prep N* instances from a parallel corpus of English and Romance languages (Girju 2009), I carried out a similar study by matching corpus-based evidence and the linguistic diagnostics (cross-linguistic syntactic and semantic mappings) adopted in previous research. In order to perform empirical investigations of the semantics of possessive constructions encoded by nominal phrases (namely *N Prep N*, *N's N*) and compounds (*NN*) in English, and to test the interpretation of such instances in Italian, I collected the data by digitalizing a bilingual edition of the diary published in 2007. The English version was syntactically parsed using VISL applications/linguistic tools which can provide both syntactic and semantic information on a given constituent structure. Then each *N N* and *N P N* instance was manually mapped to the corresponding translations to verify the corpus

distribution of the semantic relations per each syntactic construction as well as the role of English and Italian prepositions in the semantic interpretation of possessive constructions.

1. Introduction

Smaro Kamboureli's poetic diary records the reconstruction process of a woman's identity deconstructed by living as a Greek immigrant in the 1980s Canadian society. The inner dualism implicit in her bilingualism causes the splitting of herself as mentioned in the book title and makes her live «on the edge of two languages, on the edge of two selves named and constructed by language» (Kamboureli 2007: 34). The reader is hereby taken throughout an intricate web of reflections involving two different interpretative levels of linguistic and socio-cultural analyses. In fact, in recent years one of the central issues of the current theoretical linguistics is the so called 'cognitive realism' which interprets linguistic phenomena as a reflection of cognitive processes. In other words, the assumption shared by linguists from different theoretical orientations such as Chomsky and Langacker is that language analysis should include a description of the mental structures and cognitive processes underlying speakers' language behavior. Among the non-finite amount of language data at the analyst's disposal, *thoughts* and *words* transcribed in a poetic diary seems to perfectly combine the current stances of theoretical linguistics. From this perspective, I will therefore analyze the possessive constructions occurring in the text and discuss the different ways in which the concept of Possession is encoded in both Kamboureli's poetic diary and its corresponding translation. Along with such theoretical orientation, this paper draws on the methodological procedures adopted by both the current corpus linguistics and applied stylistics approaches to the study of a specific type of Noun Phrase (NP), i.e. the possessive construction.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I will characterize the conceptual basis of each of the different possessive constructions, while in section 3 it will be shown how the

formal distinctions reflect underlying semantic differences. It will be argued that the distinction between alienable and inalienable nouns plays a crucial role in explaining the formal differences between possessive constructions along with finer semantic differences (such as those involving different inalienable noun classes) that have an important influence on the overt grammatical properties of linguistic forms. In section 4, I will report back with/present the findings of a preliminary study carried out on the possessive constructions occurring in two parallel corpora and based on an analogous/similar research in the field of computational linguistics. Section 5 includes closing remarks which relate the present study to a wider context of studies in the tradition of British stylistics.

2. Syntactic structure

The linguistic and cognitive aspects of possessive relations have often been important research issues, since possession seems to be one of the central concepts of human cognition:

> *The possessive **syntactic** structure covering a heterogeneous **semantic** domain reflects a primitive vision of the universe* (Fónagy, 2004: 528)

A first distinction has to be made in research that focuses on the expression of the possessive relationship on the clausal level on the one hand (Benveniste 1966; Lyons 1967; Freeze 1992; Heine 1997) and research that studies this relationship within the same NP on the other hand (Abney 1988; Barker 1995). The different research orientations reflect the three ways of encoding relationships between possessors (PRs) and possessed entities or Possessum (PM) as follows:

1. attributive or adnomial: when PR and PM are encoded within the same NP (e.g. *my family's pass)*

2. predicative: when the relation of possession is encoded by a two-place predicate such as *have/ owe* (*I have a dog*)*, belong (the dog belongs to me), be (the dog is mine)*

3. external: when the relation is not specified either by a lexical verb or within an NP, but rather at the level of clausal construction and PR and PM are realised as arguments of a verb whose lexical meaning does not involve the notion of possession (*He tapped him-PR on the shoulder-PM*) (McGregor: 2 and 144).

The attributive type which is the major topic of the paper encodes the two main syntactic constructions characterized by modifying elements in pre-nominal and post-nominal position: the Saxon genitive (*X's Y*) and its counterpart with the preposition *of* (*the Y of X*). Comparing the two main structures with regard to semantics, the degree of humanness of the possessor X generates a ranking or gradient of six semantic levels ranging from the so-called 'hard core' of the *'s* genitive to the 'hard core' of the *of*-construction (Leech et al. 1994: 71, cited by Aarts 2007: 180f):

1. X is human

2. X is a place

3. X is a human organization

4. X is animal but not human

5. X is abstract

6. X is concrete and inanimate (apart from place)

Examples in the diary of the two 'canonical' structures which represent 'the hard cores' of both the genitive category and the *of*-construction are respectively:

(1)

　　a. Maria's sister

　　b. The museum of natural history

Taylor (2000: 288) argues for a cline between three types of construction: pre-nominal possessives ([~N~[N   ] POSS [N]], e.g. *[the woman']s magazine* = the magazine belongs to a specific woman), possessive compounds ([~NP~ [~DET~ NP POSS] [N   ]], e.g. *[the woman's] magazine* = the magazine is devoted to/for women) and non-possessive compounds[1] NN which are in rough complementary distribution to possessive compounds (Taylor 2000: 302) so that *woman doctor*[2] is a doctor who is a woman with a specifying function which contrasts with the classifying function of *woman's doctor* or *women's doctor* , i.e. doctor for women. If the modifier is inanimate, or abstract, the genitive is generally impossible. The choice between *s-genitive* or pre-nominal constructions in general and post-modifying structures/phrases depends upon a number of factors ranging from register to the complexity of the dependent phrase. The far greater frequency of *of*-phrases in all registers may be due to a general preference for less compact structures which convey more transparent meanings (Biber et al. 1999: 302).

2.1.   Pre-nominal constructions

a.　*The Saxon genitive of the* N's NP *or* X's Y *type* – The most general model is represented by a [+animate][+human] possessor marked by the *'s* morpheme which functions as the reference point of the head noun.

(2)

　　　　a. father's head

　　　　b. my parents' and brother's bodies

　　　　c. Maria's parents

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The examples in (2) show that the possessive relation is asymmetric since it is not possible to change the roles of the constituents, e.g. *Maria's parents ->* parents' Maria.* In the generative grammar the possessive phrase [SN's] is classified as a determiner which sets out a reference relation with the head noun. Nonetheless, *s*-genitives are less explicit in meaning since the left dislocation makes the connection to the head noun more unspecified than post-modifying structures in which syntactic and semantic relationships are more clearly signaled (Biber et al. 1999: 300).

b. The NN compounds - Compounding is an extremely productive process in English which tends to create a lexicalized class of nouns whose main function is to name an object in discourse (Downing 1977; Bongartz 2002). The initial element may be a simple noun, a more complex nominal phrase and even a genitive compound and generally occurs in an APPOSITION or thematic relation to the head noun as PURPOSE (Taylor 2000: 302f).

(3)

    a.   *straw hat*

    b. *my immigrant condition*

    c. *one single word musings/this wriggling winsome fish*

    d. *a Pasolini film*

In this group of compounds the modifying nominal receives a generic interpretation (Lieber 1988, cited by Taylor 2000: 302). It is for this reason that in general the modifying nominal lacks a determiner and a marker of plurality as well. Anyway it is worth noting that the examples above (taken from Kamboureli) bear a definite meaning except for example d. The appropriateness of a given relationship depends on the use to which the compound will be put,

the interpretability of the compound, and the extent to which it allows full exploitation of the informational resources of the compound form.

2.2. Analytic constructions / Post-modifying constructions

c. Nominal phrases of the NP of N/NP *or* Y of X *type* – The high frequency of *of*-phrases represents the current state of a historical shift from agglutinating to analytic structures 'that has been ongoing ever since Old English, where inflected genitives predominated (Biber et al. 1999: 302). Analytic constructions are generally licensed when the possessor is [-animate][-human].

(4)

      a. *The pages of my old journals*

      b. *Parameters of objectivity/ a member of the crew*

The 'possessive phrase' represents a particular form of NP that was specifically studied in the generative theoretical framework by the end of 1980s (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991). The main findings of these studies stated that 1. since in English the external arguments, either possessors or agents, are generated on the left of the head, i.e. in the Spec(ifier) position, it follows that only one argument can be generated there, determining the impossibility for the agent and the possessor to co-occur unless the agent is expressed by means of a *by*-phrase[3], 2. there is a perfect correspondence between the internal structure of the NP and the clause (see further).

2.2. Function of the possessive constructions

Research carried out in the field of historical linguistics (Lyons 1967; Taylor 2000) has found out in Indo-European languages as well as in non-related languages on the one hand a certain

correspondence between the adjective and the genitive with an adnominal function (Lyons 1967: 296) and on the other hand a correspondence between the genitive and the subject and/or object of an active verb as in the example from the diary: *pictures of Maria's making.*

In fact, the main function of the possessive phrase or genitive is to modify a noun or a nominal phrase just like adjectives do as modifiers/specifiers of nouns: the examples *My father's daughter, My eldest daughter* show the structural correspondence between N's+N and Adj+N constructions.

Such structures are therefore transformationally correlated to the subject-verb construction and/or the verb object construction occurring in a clause as shown in Fig.1:
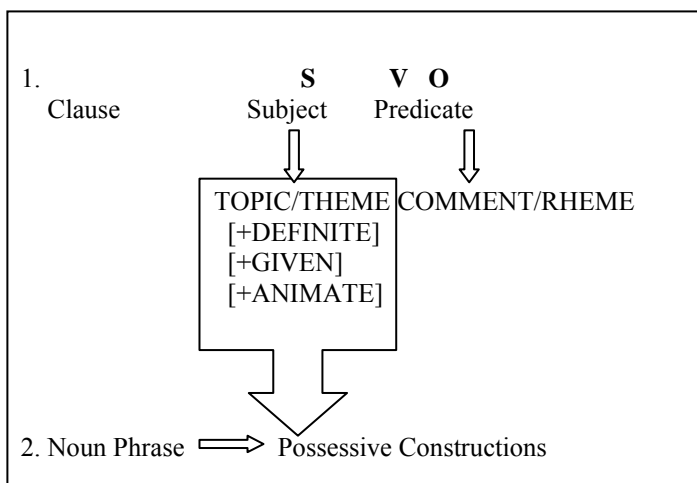

Fig.1. Structural correspondence between clause, NP and possessive constructions.

and exemplified in (5):

(5)

a. *the splitting of my body*

   my body has split → SV

b. *pictures of Maria's making*

   Maria has made pictures → SVO

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The topicality process which is characterized by the features [+definite] [+animate] [+given] represents one of the main parameters of formal grammaticality/correctedness of possessive constructions. With respect to purely syntactic explanations, those referring to the concept of 'topicality' rely on more general cognitive processes such as 'concept accessing' and 'discourse organization'. In particular, topicality depending on discourse is a function of the context in which constructions occur and is therefore variable. As a consequence, the acceptability of some possessive constructions is supposed to vary according to the context especially when it facilitates the topicalization of the possessor whereas in other contexts the same constructions are considered as ungrammatical as shown in Tab.1.

Decreasing Acceptability		Decreasing Acceptability
My foot	The foot of me	
His foot	The foot of him	
Its foot	The foot of it	
Bill's foot	The foot of Bill	
My uncle's foot	The foot of my uncle	
The dog's foot	The foot of the dog	
The house's roof	The roof of the house	
His honour's nature	The nature of his honour	

Tab.1. Degrees of topicalization as formal correctedness criterion (Deane 1987:202-4, cited by Taylor, 2000:221)

In possessive constructions the entity encoded as the possessor is always the more salient entity in a given situation and thus represents the reference point. It serves to ensure identification of the possessed, which is the target entity. This accounts for the wide range of possessive

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constructions as well as the striking asymmetry of possessive relations and it also explains the tendency of possessive constructions to be definite. Thus, this cognitive ability has a direct effect on linguistic organization and proves as one of the basic claims of cognitive linguistics. As a matter of fact, this is in line with Lakoff's (1987) and Johnson's (1987) accounts of the importance of image schemas in structuring meaning, and consequently, language. This image schematic ability is inherent in the concept of the archetype which defines the category's prototype. Langacker gives prototype status to the three central categories (ownership, kinship and physical part/whole relations) explaining that "each involves a clear and clearly defined reference point relationship" (Langacker 2000:176-177). Therefore he proposes two types of underlying structure for the possessive category: (1) a reference point model as an abstract image schema underlying the wide range of possessive meanings; and (2) conceptual archetypes which have a strong experiential base and define the category prototypes (ownership, kinship and part-whole). The reference point schema is a cognitive model largely present in human experience which "involves the notion *mental contact* (Langacker 1995:58). By definition, to establish mental contact with an entity is to single it out for individual conscious awareness. The reference-point model is simply the idea that we commonly invoke the conception of one entity for the purpose of establishing mental contact with another" (*ib.*).

3. Semantic issues

The interpretation of a NP depends on two different but interrelated criteria: the 'semantic' criterion and the 'pragmatic' criterion. For example, the genitive phrase *Maria's photographs* may have three different interpretations: 1. *a photograph **belonging** to Maria*, 2. *a photograph **created** by Maria* (the context supports the last interpretation since the genitive phrase is followed by *of you*) and 3. *a photograph **depicting** Maria*. The predicative function of the elliptic genitive *in the room that is usually Maria's* strongly invokes the first of these relations.

This means that all possessives with a predicative function seem to be semantically compatible only with a relation of possession. The right interpretation of such constructions is favoured by the transparent meaning of each constituent in the NP. Nevertheless, the semantic relation between possessor and possessum is not always inherent to the possessive construction, but it is rather determined by various considerations of a semantic-pragmatic nature (Taylor 2000:288) as shown by the examples in (6) that, in spite of their common structure, encode different semantic relations.

(5)

a. a desert in the heart of my country

b. a sea of people

c. the eye of the beholder

d. the white walls of the houses

This relationship can be so versatile that it is tempting to claim that any relationship between two entities can be interpreted as possessive. However, this is not the case, since the possessive relationship is asymmetric and it is normally not possible to reverse the referent roles (compare: *Tom's hat* and **the hat's Tom*) without affecting the meaning in some way. Within the cognitive approach there have been several attempts to analyze the possessive functions as structured polysemy. In fact, the pragmatic interpretation depends not only on speakers' lexical knowledge, but rather on their discourse and pragmatic knowledge and is therefore particularly sensible to semantic extension. Therefore, we can assume the existence of a variety of linguistic means to express a relation of paradigmatic possession and the notion of accessibility of the target testifies to the importance of the relation of paradigmatic possession in the semantics of the possessive construction. In particular, the concept of possession contains conceptual

archetypes such as OWNERSHIP, KINSHIP and PART-WHOLE which mainly refer to the relationship between human beings and their material and cultural/intellectual background (Fónagy 2004). Such relations create a semantic web of possessive constructions that can be simplified and classified according to a certain number of/eleven semantic relations (Tab.2.)[4].

1. POSSESSION- Possession of an object can be considered the basic meaning of any possessive construction in   European languages, where N_1 stands for the possessor and N_2 for the possessum: *Rita's apartment*

2. KINSSHIP - Expression of a social, familiar or sentimental link: *Nikos' sister's fiancé*

3. PART-WHOLE RELATION - *Paulina's left leg, The first volume of Nin's Diaries*

4. PLACE - N_2 refers to the place of origin of N_1: *the University of Texas*

5. MEASURE - N_1 refers to the formal or functional dimension or quantitative aspect of a person or object: *the shape of my arms*

6. TEMPORAL - N_1 refers to a quantitative aspect of N_2: *the sixth hour of a summer day, doubleness of my language*

7. AGENTNESS - N_1 is a product of N_2: *Maria's photograph's of you*

8. THEME - N_1 refers to an activity of N_2 ('action nominal' o agentive nominal'): *the beating of my heart*

9. QUALITY - N_1 designates an intrinsic quality of N_2: *green of the trees*

10. LOCATION - Geographic names: *Manhattan apartment*

11. TYPE - In literary texts N_1 and N_2 can refer to the two terms of a poetic equivalence, a metaphor or a simile: *the geographies of our desire, floods of love, effigy of irreverence, drops of darkness, deflowering of the self, emerald sea.*

Tab.2. Semantic relations encoded by possessive constructions (adapted from Fónagy 2004: 508f)

The syntactic and semantic diversification of possessive constructions overcomes therefore the generalization according to which the possessor always corresponds to the subject and the possessum to the Verb Phrase (VP).

4. The study

In order to understand the nature of the semantic relations encoded by the possessive constructions occurring in a literary text (T_1) and to test the interpretation of such instances in the corresponding Italian translation (T_2), a preliminary study on the distribution of the different types of possessives occurring in two parallel corpora has been carried out with the primary concern to verify:

1. The kind of syntactic constructions used to translate the English instances into Italian *(syntactic mapping)*

2. The kind of semantic relations encoded by these constructions *(semantic mapping)*

3. The distribution of the semantic relations for each syntactic construction in the corpus

4. The role of English/Italian prepositions in the semantic interpretation of nominal phrases and compounds.

4.1. The data

The corpus was created by digitalizing a bilingual edition of the diary published in Italy in 2007 edited by E. Rao and translated by C. Antonucci. The printed edition was converted into electronic form by the OCR (Optical Character Recognition) system which transforms scanned texts or images in .doc or .txt files. This procedure resulted in the creation of a parallel

Italian/English corpus of about 12,000 tokens each. Tab.3 shows the statistical information of the English corpus where the high percentage of the token/type ratio (47,14%) confirms the high creativity characterizing literary texts.

Tokens	12,014
Types	2,890
Type/Token Ratio	24,06%
Standardised Type/Token	47,14%

Tab.4. Statistical information of the English corpus

4.2. Method

The two corpora were processed by following two different procedures: 1. a statistical procedure with the application of the *ConcApp* concordancer (http://www.edict.com.hk/), 2. a qualitative procedure with the application of the Visual Interactive Syntax Learning (http://visl.sdu.dk) tools which provide automatic annotation of data. The VISL interface is based on the theoretical framework of the *Constraint Grammar*, a methodological paradigm widely adopted in *Natural Language Processing* (NLP) which can provide both syntactic and semantic information on a given constituent structure by assigning tags of lemmatization, inflection, derivation, syntactic function, constituent dependency, valency, semantic classification (e.g. PRP= preposition, N = noun, GN= genitive). The system also marks the *dependency relation structure*s between parts of speech POS) with the symbol @ placed before (>) or after (<) the head-noun. The system therefore generates not only constituents and tags , but also the representations of dependency relations. Once annotated, each *N N* and *N Prep N* instance was automatically extracted from the corpus with the application of the concordancer and then manually mapped to the corresponding Italian translations in order to match the data

with the structural patterns considered in §.2. Tab.4 shows the corpus distribution of each syntactic type as well as the corresponding token/type ratio.

POS	Functional Category Tags	Frequency n	% Token/Type Ratio
PRP N	@< NOM-OF	402	3,34%
N+N	@NN>	91	0,75%
N ('s) N	@GN>	34	0,28 %

Tab. 4. Corpus distribution of possessive constructions

The high frequency (n=402) of analytical structures (N Prep N) confirms an expected outcome since they almost cover all semantic relations listed in Tab.2. Since the polysemy of the preposition *of* is substantial, its syntactic-semantic behaviour was matched with a significantly representative sample of semantic relations. The prepositions used to translate NPs and compounds into Italian were then analysed in order to find out possible elements of 'foregrounding' in both corpora/texts.

Following the procedure adopted in a recent study on the semantic relations encoded by *N N* and *N Prep N* instances from a parallel corpus of English and Romance languages (Girju 2009), the main hypothesis adopted in analyzing data focuses on the syntactic directionality characterized by the head-modifier relation in compounds ($N_1 N_2$), genitive constructions (N's N) and analytic constructions (N_1 Prep N_2). It is worth noting that does not always correspond to the same argument structure as their semantic relation, i.e. N_1 and N_2 do not always correspond to Arg_1 and Arg_2 respectively. Languages choose different NPs or nominal phrases to encode relations between their constituents: for example, Romance languages have only a few compounds of the NN type (It. *legge quadro* with the head on the left of the modifier) encoding a qualitative or TYPE semantic relation. Moreover, Romance   prepositions which

have been used to translate both the English compounds and N Prep N instances may vary according to primarily semantic criteria. Anyway, Girju (2009: 192) warns that 'lists of very specific semantic relations are difficult to build as they usually contain a very large number of predicates, such as the list of all possible verbs that can link the noun constituents'. Tab.3 outlines the mapping between the list of semantic relations provided in Tab.2, their semantic argument frames[5] and the corresponding possessive constructions in both English and Italian (translation).

Semantic relations	Argument frame	English	Italian	Examples
1.OWNERSHIP	Arg1 POSSESSES Arg2	*Of, 's, NN*	*di*	*the voice of sounds; Sifnos' waves;university c.*
2.KINSHIP	Arg1 IS IN KINSHIP REL. WITH Arg2	*'s*	*di*	*my father's daughter; Rita's boyfriend*
3.PART-WHOLE	Arg2 IS PART OF (whole) Arg1	*Of, NN*	*di*	*the eye of the beholder; Paulina's left leg*
4.SOURCE?/TOPIC	Arg1 IS SOURCE OF Arg2	*NN, of*	*di, su*	*moon dreams, law literature*
5.MEASURE	Arg2 IS MEASURE OF Arg1	*NN, of*	*di*	*five minute distance*
6.TEMPORAL	Arg1 IS TEMPORAL LOCATION OF Arg2	*NN, of*	*di*	*Six hours of therapy; the beginning of June; summer day; eight-week course*
7.AGENT	Arg1 IS AGENT OF Arg2	*'s*	*da,di*	*Nin's Diaries*
8.PURPOSE	Arg1 IS PURPOSE OF Arg2	*NN*	*di, per, NN*	*Farewell rituals; immigrant office; ice-cream cone*
9.LOCATION	Arg2 IS LOCATED IN Arg1	*NN, of*	*a, di, in,su*	*Manhattan apartment; on the edge of two selves*
10.MANNER/TYPE	Arg1 IS MANNER/TYPE OF Arg2	*NN*	*per, in*	*Motion signs (*It. *segni in movimento)*
11.POETIC RELATION	Arg1 IS EQUAL TO Arg2	*NN, of*	*in,*	*Place of language, floods of love/ stream of life, the heart of my country, labyrinth of my mind, a sea of people, belt of silence, the sound of silence, the language of the self, the splitting image of the self, the desolation of the senses,the spouting of green*

Tab.3. Mapping between the list of semantic relations, semantic argument frames and corresponding possessive constructions in both English and Italian.

It is assumed that, in languages with multiple syntactic options such as English ('s genitive marked constructions, N N and N Prep N, the choice between such constructions in context is

governed in part by semantic factors, in part by stylistic choices as attested in the poetic text under study. For instance, the semantic relations between word pairs in the corpus are encoded by different syntactic constructions in English, but only by one syntactic construction in Italian (N Prep/*di* N) so that some opaque cases can be decoded through an insightful analysis of the context in which they occur. In fact, the *'s* genitive construction in (7) which co-occurs in the corpus along with the *of*-construction in (7') can be interpreted through the personification of *love* which is specified by the features [+animate] [+given] and supported by the further entry with the capitalized letter reported in (8).

(7) It is inscribed onto my skin, onto **love**'s body

occurs in complementary distribution to

 (7') Every time I embrace the body of **love** I also embrace all these questions

whereas

(8) If you decide to yield **Love**'s smile remember to unwind its thread of origins.
 co-occurs along with the construction in (8'):

(8') I will change the **name** of Love

The feature intrinsic to the semantic structure of the head noun in (7 and 8) is with respect to (7' and 8') less clear-cut and this is due to the range of different interpretations available for the pre-nominal construction which could have both a subjective or an objective interpretation. (7') encodes a part-whole relation, whereas the constituents in *it's an act of **love*** refer to the same entity but characterize it in different ways. For this reason the two nominals can be said to be in apposition in which the second nominal offers a more precise specification of the referent of the first nominal (*ib.*:338)[6]. Therefore, we can assume the existence of a variety of linguistic means

to express a relation of paradigmatic possession and the notion of accessibility of the target testifies to the importance of that relation in the semantics of the possessive construction.

In some other cases, the relation between the constituents of a compound NN or N's genitive in T_1 requires a deep interpretative process when translated in T_2 which also confirms the existence of a unique phrase structure underlying such constructions exemplified in (9)-(12):

(9) And my passport is just a notebook **of** motion signs

(9') E il mio passaporto è un taccuino di segni **in** movimento

(10) I've slept in the room that is usually **Maria's**

(10') Io ho dormito nella stanza **che** di solito **occupa Maria** (with a relative clause)

(11) Maria's photographs of you

(11') le fotografie di te fatte da Maria

(12) In your blood's flow

(12') nel tuo flusso sanguigno (possessive construction replaced by an Adjective Phrase in Italian)

4.3. Discussion

The analysis of the data has highlighted the occurrence of possessive structures which can be considered as 'deviations' or 'peculiarities' of the poetic diary with respect to the canonical structural patterns singled out in Tab.2. Such features can be classified into four categories:

    a. **Deviations** from the typology reported in Tab.1;

b. **Syntactic directionality** which is determined by the head-modifier relation in N_1 N_2 compounds, genitive constructions marked by *'s* and the analytic constructions N_1 Prep N_2, not always corresponding to the Italian transposition;

c. **Hapax (legomena)** including those constructions which show semantic extension and are attested only in the corpus under study,

d. **Prepositions** introducing **internal arguments**, i.e. those constructions which bear restrictions imposed by the lexical properties to the syntactic representations according to the Chomskyan *theta* criterion and *s-selection* principle.

On the whole these features represent the 'foregrounding' elements of the text (as this is meant by Leech 2008) whose interpretation relies on the stylistic /creative strategies adopted by the author as shown in the examples (13)-(19) below:

a. deviations	
(13) My silence sings the song of **my mouth's hollowness**	(13') canta **la canzone della vuota cavità che è la mia bocca**
(14) your **bodiless** voice. i am your **body**. you are my **body's history** (REPETITION)	(14') tua voce senza <u>corpo</u>. io sono il tuo <u>corpo</u>. tu sei **la storia del mio <u>corpo</u>**
b. syntactic direzionality	
(15) wall two very large, **mounted photographs of <u>M</u>aria's <u>m</u>aking** (ALLITERATION)	(15') il muro due grandi fotografie in cornice **fatte da Maria** (AGENT)
c. 'hapax'	
(16) you tempt me with a **siren's voice** to come to your space	(16') mi tenti con **voce di sirena** ad avanzare nel tuo spazio
(17) i am the thorn in your **blood's flow** and you are the garden where i **b**loom I **b**reath (ALLITERATION)	(17') sono la spina nel tuo **flusso sanguigno** e tu il giardino dove sboccio respiro
d. prepositions with internal argument	

(18)our skin murmurs i-love-y sunday afternoon **love of paradox** (19)you conquered there your **fear of darkness**	(18')nostra pelle mormora ti-amo sabato pomeriggio **amore *del** [per il] p**aradosso** (19')è lì che hai conquistato la tua **paura del buio**

From this perspective, the construction in (16) for instance is particularly interesting for both its uniqueness as attested form and the lexical choices (16') made by the translator. As a matter of fact, the reference corpora (Brown/LOB Corpus, Wordnet) which have been queried contain / include the attested form *siren's fatal song* as well as the lexicalized compound *the siren song* , whereas the alliterative construction in (17) is attested as a compound (*blood stream)* in the above mentioned corpora.

5. Conclusion

Dealing with the 'stylistic' level of a text mainly means finding out those elements which are significantly relevant to the structural features which sound as 'deviant' or 'exceptional' with respect to the everyday language and its formal correctedness rules (Leech 2008: 163).

«Syntactic indeterminacy, in the poetic framework, is source of aesthetic pleasure [with] the creation of new meaning through the extension and differentiation of the conceptual network» (Fónagy, 2004: 529).

Deviation concerning a specific language feature in T1 can be defined as an outstanding feature from a poetic point of view, especially when compared to a reference corpus of general English a text reveals statistically significant features of *exceptionality.* The concept of *foregrounding* therefore draws on those elements which are statistically relevant to identify the deviant use of language by an artist.

Nonetheless, even the interpretation of the *foregrounding* features which deviate from the standard/common use of the language relies on a commonly shared underlying cognitive

and cultural interface which facilitates different speakers' interpretative processes and is enhanced by the literary text itself

Shared responses between readers are far more substantial than has been thought and rely on the meanings and formal characteristics which reside in the text (Leech 2008: 194).

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Notes

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[1] The possessive marker *'s* is prohibited in some classes of NN compound including the so-called 'synthetic' compounds, in which the modifier stands in a thematic relation, usually that of Patient, to the head noun. For example a person who molests children is a *child molester* , not **a child's molester* (*ib.:*303).

[2] This class comprises compounds where the two nominal constituents are in apposition.

[3] In some languages such as Italian, on the contrary, this structure is acceptable (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991: 132).

[4] Anyway, lists of very specific semantic relations are difficult to build as they usually contain a very large number of predicates, such as the list of all possible verbs that can link the noun constituents.

[5] A semantic argument frame is defined for each semantic relation and indicates the position of each semantic argument in the underlying relation (Girju 2008: 193).

[6] The appositive *of*-construction can also take on affective overtones (*ib.:*329) generally encoding negative meanings.