

Prenominal Possessives in Yiddish: *mayn bruder* vs. *mayner a bruder**

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1. Introduction

The interpretation of a possessive DP (*John's book*) depends on the definiteness of the possessor itself (*John*). A definite possessor brings about a definite DP and an indefinite possessor yields an indefinite DP. This is often called Definiteness Spread and its effects become visible in contexts sensitive to definiteness:

- (1) a. * There was John's book on the table.
b. There was a man's book on the table.

According to Alexiadou (2005), Definiteness Spread is straightforward in English (but different in Hebrew and Greek). Assuming that the possessor/possessive (*John/John's*) is in Spec,DP, Spec-head agreement makes D and thus DP as a whole definite. This explains the contrast in (1).

In this paper I discuss data from Yiddish in this respect. There are two types of prenominal possessives in this language. The first is familiar from other languages (2). Common noun phrases are traditionally glossed as datives (2c):

- (2) a. *mayn khaver*
my friend
'my friend'
b. *Moyshes feder*
Moyshe's pen
'Moses' pen' (Jacobs 2005: 184)
c. *dem altn d'r Hershmans zin*
the.DAT old-DAT doctor Hershman's sons
'the old doctor Hershman's sons' (Birnbaum 1979: 299)

The second type of prenominal possessive is less well known. Unlike (2a) above, the possessive pronominal in (3a) displays an inflection and it is followed by an indefinite article. Like in (2a), the pronominal can be replaced by a proper name or a regular noun phrase (3b-c):

- (3) a. *mayn-er a khaver*
mine-INFL a friend
'a friend of mine'

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- b. *Yitskhoks a briv*
Isaac's a letter
'a letter of Isaac's' (Lockwood 1995: 110)
- c. *dem rebns a nes*
the.DAT rabbi-DAT's a miracle
'a miracle of the rabbi's' (Olsvanger's *L'Chayim!* p. 67)

I will argue that the first construction in (2) straightforwardly adheres to Definiteness Spread and that despite appearances, the second construction in (3) does too.

The paper is organized as follows. First, I present more data showing that these constructions involve constituents, that possessor DPs are in the dative, and that the construction in (3) is indeed indefinite in interpretation. Section 3 provides the basic account arguing that possessives of the first construction (2) are in Spec,DP but that possessives of the second construction (3) are most likely adjoined to DP or in a specifier position above the DP-level. In section 4, I extend the discussion to other cases showing that adjunction has a number of advantages. Section 5 addresses some remaining issues of the account. This includes a discussion of an alternative analysis and some brief remarks on postnominal possessives in Yiddish. In the last section, I provide a conclusion.

2. Data

The first two subsections deal with some preliminary points, constituency and case on the possessor DP involving a definite article. The third subsection discusses some further differences between the two prenominal possessive constructions.

2.1. Constituency

These two types of construction form constituents. As this is straightforward for the cases in (2), I will focus on the construction in (3). Constituency can be exemplified by the Verb-Second constraint (4a); by (asymmetric) coordination, that is, coordination of different elements (4b) (for symmetric coordination, see section 3.3); and by the construction occurring as the complement of a preposition (4c):

- (4) a. *[A furmans a zun] hot khasene gehat.*
a coachman's a son has wedding had
'A son of a coachman got married.' (Olsvanger's *Röyte* p. 147)
- b. *ikh un [mayne a khaverte] un mayn shvester hobn ...*
I and mine a friend and my sister have
'I and a friend of mine and my sister have...' (Reershemius 1997: 334)
- c. *tsu [irer a khaverte]*
to hers a friend
'to a friend of hers' (Olsvanger's *Röyte* p. 142)

In addition, there is also language-specific evidence for constituency such that the possessive can be sandwiched between *eyner* and the indefinite article; compare (5a) and (5b). Following Lockwood (1995: 66), I translate the string *eyner a* as ‘a certain’:

- (5) a. *eyner a khaver*
 one a friend
 ‘a certain friend’
 b. *eyner [zayner a khaver]*
 one his a friend
 ‘a certain friend of his’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 150)

This constituency is confirmed by the fact that the possessive pronominal, the indefinite article, and the head noun must all agree in case, number, and gender; that is, all these elements participate in concord. This is illustrated with elements in the masculine gender in (6a-b) (see also (5) above). Note that the singular indefinite article does not vary with regard to concord features but as in English, with regard to the presence or absence of a vowel at the beginning of the following word. As shown in (6c), a plural noun phrase is possible too (I turn to the discussion of plural possessives in section 5.1):

- (6) a. *zayner an amoliker khaver*
 his-MASC.NOM a former-MASC.NOM friend.MASC.NOM
 ‘a former friend of his’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 125)
 b. *zaynem a gutn fraynd*
 his-MASC.DAT a good-MASC.DAT friend.MASC.DAT
 ‘a good friend of mine’ (Olsvanger’s *L’Chayim!* p. 10)
 c. *ale mayne dray eltere brider*
 all-PL my-PL three older-PL brothers
 ‘all my three older brothers’ (Jacobs 2005: 240)

Combinations of elements in the singular and plural are not possible:

- (7) a. * *mayner a khaveyrim*
 mine-MASC.NOM a friends
 b. * *mayne a khaveyrim*
 mine-PL a friends
 c. * *mayne a khaver*
 mine-PL a friend

It is clear then that all these elements form a constituent and the possessive pronominal must agree with the rest of the nominal. Possessives involving definite DPs also form constituents with the lower nominal. However, as shown in the next subsection, they do not share concord features with the rest of the nominal.

2.2. Possessives Involving Common Noun Phrases are Dative

Above, I followed the traditional analysis of glossing the possessors in (2c) and (3c) as dative case. In a recent paper, Hoge (2018) argues that possessives involving DPs with a definite article should be analyzed as genitives.¹ Focusing on the first possessive construction, she points out that if the possessor DP were indeed dative, then certain noun phrases would appear with unexpected endings on the head noun; for instance, while *der tate* ‘the father’ appears as *dem tat-n-s*, *di mame* ‘the mother’ shows up as *der mame-s* where *-n-* is missing. Hoge (2018: 262) argues that these cases should be analyzed as genitive case positing suffixes different from traditional assumptions (8a). This seems to be confirmed by the fact that group genitive constructions involving PPs (or relative clauses) are not possible (8b):

- (8) a. *dem tat-n-s shtub*
 the father-GEN house
 ‘the father’s house’ (cf. Hoge 2018: 249)
 b. * *dem rov fun der ortiker shuls tokhter*
 the rabbi of the local synagogue’s daughter (Hoge 2018: 251)

In a footnote, Hoge (2018 fn. 23) states that complex proper names take the possessive marker ‘s on the right edge. Presumably, these are lexicalized units and that explains the existence of possessives like *Glikl fun Hameln*s ‘Glikl of Hameln’s’ (Lockwood 1995: 9), which on the surface, is similar to the possessive of the ungrammatical (8b). Since post-modified possessors are not possible, Hoge concludes that Yiddish provides no evidence that the possessive marker attaches to an element other than the head noun.

However, there is clear evidence that the possessive ‘s can be separated from a regular head noun. This includes an inflected head noun in the first construction (9a) and is also possible in the second construction (9b). Note already here that a possessive can also follow its possessum head noun (see section 5.3) and that this entire noun phrase can form a possessive of the matrix possessum head noun (9c):²

- (9) a. *mayn tat-n olov-hasholem’s bild*
 my father-DAT peace.be.with.him’s picture
 ‘the picture of my father peace be with him’ (Olsvanger’s *L’Chayim!* p. 103)

¹ Note that unlike possessive pronouns (*mayner*), possessive determiners (*mayn*) only change with regard to plural (*mayne*) but not case and gender. Recall also that the singular indefinite article is invariant as regards case and gender. Thus, if an adjective is missing, morphological case cannot easily be inspected on DPs with such determiners (but see section 4.2 for a diagnostic involving adjunction).

² One might claim that (9a-b) belong to (the non-standard) Dialect 1 as discussed in Hoge (2018: 264) with the qualification that ‘s has further developed toward a clitic-type element. In this dialect, the possessive marker is indeed preceded by a dative phrase. As stated by Hoge, this dialect should allow possessive forms like *der mame-n-s Noun* where the presence of *-n-* would indeed indicate a dative form. Looking at the two texts in *L’Chayim!*, there were no relevant examples to confirm or disconfirm this. As for (9c), note that the possessor is in the nominative, which is possible in certain dialects (for dative examples, see the possessives in Lockwood 1995: 53, Birnbaum 1979: 253, also section 3). Crucially, the possessive marker is also on a postnominal element.

- b. *zayn shvester Shprintses a zun*
 his sister Shprintse's a son
 'a son of his sister Shprintse' (Olsvanger's *L'Chayim!* p. 21)
- c. *a khaver mayners a tokhter iz...*
 a friend mine's a daughter is
 'a daughter of a friend of mine is...'
 (googled: <http://www.kaveshtiebel.com/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=11567>)

Furthermore, the possessive marker can also appear on higher elements in the noun phrase, on adjectives (10a) and determiners (10b). This is also possible with quantificational elements (10c) including indefinite pronouns that cannot involve an (overt) head noun (10d):

- (10) a. *der ander-er-s tokhter*
 the.DAT other-DAT.FEM's daughter
 'the other's daughter' (Lockwood 1995: 110)
- b. *unter dems melukhe*
 under that.DAT's kingdom
 'under his government' (from *Jehoash*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)
- c. *alemens zind*
 all's sins
 'everybody's sins' (Lockwood 1995: 150)
- d. *emetsns tayster*
 somebody's purse
 'somebody's purse' (Mark 1978: 180)

As far as I have been able to establish, such cases are possible quite generally (see also section 3). Now, given the fact that the possessive marker can appear on an element other than the head noun, that is, either to the left or right of it, I will continue assuming that the traditional analysis of dative case plus possessive marker is correct (for most dialects). This means that the unexpected possessive forms are in need of a different explanation. In what follows, I will focus on possessive pronominals as they exhibit concord with the lower nominal and show a clear difference to the first construction inside the possessive (inflection).

2.3. *Differences Between the First and Second Possessive Constructions*

Besides the presence or absence of the pronominal inflection and the indefinite article, there are four more arguments that show that these two types of possessives, (2) and (3), are systematically different. First, both types of possessive behave differently in presentational (/existential) sentences (cf. Jacobs 2005: 225; ^m = marked):

- (11) a. ^m *S'iz do dayn khaver in gortn.*
 it is there your friend in garden
 'There is your friend in the garden.'
- b. *S'iz do dayner a khaver in gortn.*
 it is there yours a friend in garden
 'There is a friend of yours in the garden.'

Second, in a running text, new information appears in an indefinite form but old information is in a definite form. This is exactly what we find with possessives where the second construction introduces new information but the first construction is used to continue the discourse:

- (12) *Nor eyner fun zey iz geven a shnayders a zun...Un dem shnayders zun hot nit gehat ...*
 but one of them is been a tailor's a son and the tailor's son has not had
 'But one of them was a son of a tailor's... And the tailor's son did not have...'
 (Olsvanger's *L'Chayim!* p. 27)

Note that both the possessor and the entire nominal change from indefinite to definite form. Crucially, I have never seen cases where the first possessive construction occurs before the second one. I take this to mean that the (in-)definite form reflects the corresponding interpretation.

Third, it is clear that *Peter is married and Peter is not married* is contradictory if Peter is the same person. There is a difference in Yiddish when *mayn khaver* replaces both names vs. when *mayner a khaver* replaces both names. The first leads to a contradictory statement but the second is non-contradictory:

- (13)a. *Mayn khaver iz a khasene-gehater un mayn khaver iz nisht keyn khasene-gehater.*
 my friend is a married and my friend is not no married
 'My friend is married and my friend is not married.'
 b. *Mayner a khaver iz a khasene-gehater un mayner a khaver iz nisht keyn khasene-gehater.*
 mine a friend is a married and mine a friend is not no married
 'A friend of mine is married and a friend of mine is not married.'

Presumably, this follows from the observation that *mayn khaver* implies uniqueness but *mayner a khaver* does not.

Fourth, *khaver* has different meanings: *khaver* means both 'boy-friend' and 'friend' in (2a) but only 'friend' in (3a). This is indicated in (14a) and (14b) by the respective translations:

- (14) a. *dayn khaver*
 your friend
 'your boy-friend'
 'your friend'
 b. *dayner a khaver*
 yours a friend
 'a friend of yours'

Again, this distinction presumably follows from the fact that *dayn khaver* has a uniqueness implication, which *dayner a khaver* lacks. Note now that uniqueness is part of a definiteness interpretation. Given the above differences, I conclude that the construction in (2) is definite and the one in (3) is indeed indefinite.

In reference books, *mayner a khaver* is rendered as 'a friend of mine' or 'one of my friends' (Lockwood 1995: 53f, also Jacobs 2005: 184, Birnbaum 1979: 297, Wiener 1893: 66).

These are indefinite meanings. In fact, these possessives can have two types of indefinite interpretation as regards specificity. First, it is clear that (15a) describes a specific (known) friend. In contrast, contexts such as (15b) describe a more general fact, which is unspecific as to the identity of the friend; that is, this statement could apply to any of my friends:

- (15) a. *Ikh hob khasene gehat mit maynem a khaver.*
 I have wedding had with mine a friend
 'I married a friend of mine.'
- b. *Ikh volt keyn mol nisht khasene gehat mit maynem a khaver.*
 I would no time not wedding had with mine a friend
 'I would never marry a friend of mine.'

These two types of interpretation are typical of indefinite articles. In other words, the presence of the possessive makes no difference for the (in-)definiteness of the noun phrase as a whole.

To summarize, the second prenominal possessive construction forms a constituent, its possessor involving a common DP is in the dative, and it is indeed indefinite.

3. Proposal

We know from the first construction that possessors such as possessive pronominals, proper names, and definite noun phrases trigger definiteness of the entire DP. In contrast, these possessors do not bring about definiteness in the second construction despite the fact that they are also in prenominal position. This seems unexpected and requires an explanation. There are two questions that any proposal needs to answer: First, how does the second type of possessive construction fare with regard to Definiteness Spread? Second and related to the first question, where in the structure are the two types of possessive located?

Starting with the first question, it was pointed out above that the possessive pronominals differ in inflection, (2a) vs. (3a). An inflected possessive pronominal can also occur as an argument (16b) or a (specificational) predicate (16d):

- (16) a. *Mayn khaver iz gliklekh.*
 my friend is happy
 'My friend is happy.'
- b. *Mayner iz nisht gliklekh.*
 mine is not happy
 'Mine is not happy.'
- c. *Dos iz mayn khaver.*
 that is my friend
 'That is my friend.'
- d. *Dos iz mayner.*
 that is mine
 'That is mine.'

The generalization for the singular cases is as follows: if an (overt) noun is present, an inflection on the possessive pronominal is absent; in contrast, if such a noun is absent, the inflection is

present. I assume then that (16b) and (16d) are elliptical constructions. For current purposes, I simply assume a null noun (e_N) for these cases as schematically represented in (17b):

- (17) a. Possessive Determiner:
 mayn $N_{[overt]}$
 my Noun
 b. Possessive Pronoun:
 mayner e_N
 mine

I propose that the uninflected possessive is in the DP-level of the matrix nominal:

- (18) a. *zayn khaver*
 his friend
 ‘his friend’
- b. DP
 / \
 zayn D’
 / \
 D NP
 khaver

Given the generalization that the DP-level in West Germanic usually contains only one overt element, this immediately explains its complementary distribution with the indefinite article (for the discussion of definite elements in this regard, see Roehrs to appear a). Making the standard assumption that the (in-)definiteness of the entire noun phrase is determined at the DP-level, an element in D or, by Spec-head agreement, in Spec,DP will yield the relevant interpretation of the DP. Specifically, *zayn* will bring about definiteness and the article *a* indefiniteness.

As for inflected *zayner*, I take (17b) to hold for all inflected possessive pronominals. In other words, I propose that the possessive in (3a) also involves an elliptical construction where the null noun is licensed by the inflection on the pronominal. Furthermore, I propose that *zayner* is part of a second nominal embedded inside the matrix nominal (I turn to the identification of XP below):

- (19) a. *zayner a khaver*
 his a friend
 ‘a friend of his’
- b. XP
 / \
 [_{DP} \emptyset *zayner* e_N] ?
 / \
 D NP
 a *khaver*

I assume that *zayner* is lower inside the embedded nominal. This is indicated by Ø in (19b). Recall that I assume that these are elliptical constructions. There is evidence that possessives are in a lower position in elliptical contexts; that is, they follow a determiner:³

- (20) a. *Ober ikh halt zikh bay dos mayne: ...*
 but I hold myself by the mine
 ‘But I stick to my opinion: ...’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 179)
 b. *az du dos dayn oyf ribis host, ...*
 that you the yours at interest have
 ‘that you have all that is yours on interest, ...’ (Kühnert & Wagner 2014: 125)

If the possessive is indeed lower inside the embedded DP, several facts follow: *zayner* does not “overwrite” the indefiniteness of the hosting noun phrase (in fact, there is no clash in definiteness). Furthermore, there is no violation of the Backward Anaphora Constraint:

- (21) Backward Anaphora Constraint (BAC)
 Anaphoric elements may not simultaneously command and linearly precede their antecedents. (cf. Langacker 1969: 167)

Specifically, the possessive pronominal in (19b) is lower inside the embedded DP and consequently, it does not c-command the lower matrix nominal.

Thus far, it appears that Definiteness Spread can be maintained for Yiddish. In view of the structure in (18b), the examples in (2) straightforwardly yield definite DPs. Given the structure in (19b), (3a) is expected to be indefinite, which is true. As for (3b-c), I assume that proper name and regular DP possessors are also lower inside the embedded DP where the possessive marker licences the null noun. That such possessives can also license ellipsis is clear from the following examples:

³ Notice that (20b) is from an older variety of Yiddish (1588) and lacks the inflection on the possessive. For completeness’ sake, note that possessives that are clearly adjectival (-ik-) also follow the definite determiner (ia). In fact, such possessives can follow indefinite elements as well (ib):

- (i) a. *Ober der doktor halt zikh bay dos zaynike: ...*
 but the doctor holds himself by the his
 ‘But the doctor sticks to his opinion: ...’ (Olsvanger’s *L’Chayim!* p. 7)
 b. *bay eynem a zeyerikn*
 at one a theirs
 ‘at a certain one of theirs’

(from Dovid Bergelson’s *In a fargrebter shtot*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)

Finally, in very rare cases, one can find the possessive element even lower in the structure. Note that the possessive below has an inflection despite the fact that this is not an elliptical construction:

- (ii) *in der itstiker undzerer sotsyaler lage*
 in the today’s our social situation
 ‘in our social situation today’ (from *Forverts* 10/04/2009; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)

This possessive has the looks of an adjectival element as well. The example in (ii) is the only one I have come across so far.

- (22) a. *dos gelt iz zayne yorshims*
the money is his heirs'
'the money belongs to his heirs' (Lockwood 1995: 110)
- b. *Vemens fatsheyle iz es? Keyners nit?*
whose shawl is it nobody-DAT.FEM's not
'Whose shawl is it? Nobody's?' (van der Auwera & Gybels 2014: 207)
- c. *Yederers iz beser fun dayn disertatsye.*
everyone-DAT.FEM's is better than your dissertation
'Everyone's is better than your dissertation.' (Jacobs 2005: 185)
- d. *az di tsigaretn zaynen dem zun zaynems, ...*
that the cigarettes are the.DAT son his-DAT's
'that the cigarettes belong to his son, ...'
(googled: http://yiddish415.rssing.com/chan-63808630/all_p4.html)

Note again that the possessive marker can appear on an element other than the head noun. This is particularly clear in (22d).

The general structure of these embedded possessives could look as follows (23a). The structure of the possessive pronominal in (19b) is fleshed out in (23b):⁴

- (23) a. [DP Ø [YP [PossP DP's] Y [NP e_N]]]
b. [DP Ø [YP [PossP *zayner*] Y [NP e_N]]]

Next, I turn to the second question from above. After detailing the other part of the structure in (19b), I will briefly return to the issue of Definiteness Spread.

There are four options of where the above embedded DP could be located. Focussing on the inflected pronominal, the latter and the indefinite article could form a Doubly-filled DP (24a). Both of these elements could form a complex specifier in Spec,DP (24b). The inflected pronominal could be in a specifier above the DP (24c) where XP from above is interpreted as the Left Periphery Phrase (see Giusti & Iovino 2016). Finally, the inflected pronominal could be adjoined to DP (24d):

- (24) a. *Doubly-filled DP:*
[DP *zayner* [D' a [NP *khaver*]]]
b. *Complex Spec,DP:*
[DP *zayner* a [D' Ø [NP *khaver*]]]
c. *Split-DP:*
[LPP *zayner* LP [DP a [NP *khaver*]]]
d. *Adjunction to DP:*
[DP *zayner* [DP a [NP *khaver*]]]

In what follows, I will discuss these four options in more detail showing that (24c) or (24d) are most likely to be correct.

⁴ To the extent that this is correct, this provides another argument that the possessive marker is not part of the extended projection line of the head noun but rather forms its own (embedded) phrase (for the discussion of the internal structure of possessives, see Roehrs to appear b).

3.1. Option 1: Doubly-filled DP

I claimed above that there is usually only one overt element in the West Germanic DP-level. Let us assume for a moment that this is not so. As such, we could propose that the embedded DP is in Spec,DP and the indefinite article is in D. Spec-head constellations are often employed to explain cases of adjacency. However, there is clear evidence that the possessive and indefinite article can be split up by another element:

- (25) a. *undzere (epes) a kroyve*
 ours some a kinswoman
 ‘some kinswoman of ours’ (Mark 1978: 243)
- b. *zaynem take a gevezenem talmid*
 his really a former student
 ‘one of his (indeed) former students’ (Olsvanger’s *L’Chayim!* p. 29)

In some frameworks, X’ is “invisible”. If there is no adjunction to X’, or D’ specifically, this construction cannot involve a Doubly-filled DP.

3.2. Option 2: Complex Spec,DP

The embedded DP and the indefinite article form a constituent inside the specifier of DP. Observe though that in discontinuous DPs, the possessive and *eyner*, occurring as a unit, are always ungrammatical contrary to expectation; consider the (a)-examples (for the discussion of *eyner*, see the next subsection):

- (26) a. * *Briv hob ikh geleyent {zaynem / Moyshes} eynem.*
 letter have I read his / Moses’ one
- b. *A briv hob ikh geleyent {zaynem / Moyshes}.*
 a letter have I read his / Moses’
 ‘I read a letter of Moses’.
- (27) a. * *{Zaynem / Moyshes} eynem hob ikh geleyent briv.*
 his / Moses’ one have I read letter
- b. *{Zaynem / Moyshes} hob ikh geleyent a briv.*
 his / Moses’ have I read a letter
 ‘I read a letter of Moses’.

Conversely, if the possessive and the indefinite article indeed formed a complex specifier and thus a constituent, separating these two elements as in the (b)-examples should be bad, contrary to fact. This indicates that these elements do not form a complex specifier.

3.3. Option 3 and 4: Possessive is outside of the DP proper

The embedded DP is above the DP-layer: either the possessive is in Spec,LLP or it is adjoined to DP. These two options fare better. First, consider ellipsis in symmetric coordination (# = interpretation is not available):

- (28) a. *Mayn khaver un zayner kumen haynt.*
 my friend and his come today
 √‘My friend and his (friend) are coming today.’
 #‘My friend and one (friend) of his are coming today.’
- b. *Mayner a khaver un zayner eyner kumen haynt.*
 mine a friend and his one come today
 #‘A friend of mine and his (friend) are coming today.’
 √‘A friend of mine and one (friend) of his are coming today.’

Second, similar facts hold with ellipsis in asymmetric coordination (apparently, (29b) is hard to interpret):

- (29) a. *Mayn khaver un zayner eyner kumen haynt.*
 my friend and his one come today
 #‘My friend and his (friend) are coming today.’
 √‘My friend and one (friend) of his are coming today.’
- b. # *Mayner a khaver un zayner kumen haynt.*
 mine a friend and his come today
 ‘A friend of mine and his (friend) are coming today.’
 ‘A friend of mine and one (friend) of his are coming today.’

The generalization about the interpretation of possessive pronominals is as follows:

- (30) a. *zayner* -> definite (‘his__’)
 b. *zayner eyner* -> indefinite (‘one of his__’)

The question arises as to how these facts – specifically (30b) – can be derived. For convenience, I repeat the different possible structures of the indefinite possessive construction here:

- (31) a. *Doubly-filled DP:*
 [_{DP} *zayner* [_D *a* [_{NP} *khaver*]]]
- b. *Complex Spec,DP:*
 [_{DP} *zayner a* [_D \emptyset [_{NP} *khaver*]]]
- c. *Split-DP:*
 [_{LPP} *zayner* _{LP} [_{DP} *a* [_{NP} *khaver*]]]
- d. *Adjunction to DP:*
 [_{DP} *zayner* [_{DP} *a* [_{NP} *khaver*]]]

Yiddish does not have *one*-insertion of the type found in English, e.g., *a green one* (cf. Jacobs 2005: 173). With this in mind, we can state that in (31a), *eyner* would replace *D*’, which, again,

is “invisible” in certain frameworks. In (31b), *eyner* would replace a non-constituent. Thus, consonant with the discussion above, these two options are unlikely to be correct. As for (31c-d), *eyner* straightforwardly replaces a DP:

- (32) a. [LPP *zayner* LP [DP *eyner*]]
 b. [DP *zayner* [DP *eyner*]]

This is independently possible as shown by the following:

- (33) a. *A/eyn yid iz geblibn in dorf.*
 a/one Jew is remained in village
 ‘A/one Jew remained in the village.’
 b. *Eyner iz geblibn in dorf.*
 One is remained in village
 ‘One (guy) remained in the village’ (Jacobs 2005: 184)

I return to the first question from above, namely how the second possessive construction fares with regard to Definiteness Spread. In (32a), the embedded DP sits in the specifier position of a Left Periphery Phrase just above the DP-level. In order to explain why the entire noun phrase is indefinite, one could claim that indefiniteness is “passed up” from the DP-level or it is a default interpretation such that if definiteness is absent, the noun phrase is interpreted as indefinite. As for (32b), the embedded DP is adjoined to the (indefinite) matrix DP. Under standard assumptions of adjunction, this would immediately explain the indefiniteness of the entire DP. This means that Definiteness Spread can be maintained for Yiddish. So far, both of these structural options fare equally well.

4. Data Indicating Adjunction

Besides the possessive and *eyner*, other elements can precede the indefinite article as well. In this section, I discuss *eyner a Noun* in more detail and add *epes a Noun* to the discussion. This will lay the foundation for arguing that the possessive in the second construction is most likely adjoined to the lower nominal.

4.1. *Eyner and epes are Similar to the Inflected Possessive Pronominal*

As seen in section 2.1, *eyner* can precede an indefinite article. Like *mayner*, *eyner* also agrees with the lower nominal in concord features (34a). The word *epes* can also precede an indefinite article but this element is invariable (34b):⁵

⁵ The word *epes* can have other functions. Among others, it can be an indefinite pronoun meaning ‘something’, it can be a degree element interpreted as ‘somewhat’, or it can be a modal particle (for some discussion, see Roehrs 2012, also van der Auwera & Gybels 2014). Also, note that adjectives like *modne* ‘strange’ in (34b) do not take an agreement inflection.

- (34) a. *tsu eynem a yidishn zelner*
to one-MASC.DAT a Jewish-MASC.DAT soldier.MASC.DAT
‘to a certain Jewish soldier’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 58)
- b. *oyf epes a modne daytshmerishn dialekt*
in some a strange German-like-MASC.DAT dialect.MASC.DAT
‘in some strange German-like dialect’ (Goldberg 1993: 22)

The words *eyner* and *epes* behave like the possessive in the second construction in other respects. First, *eyner* can be separated from the indefinite article by the degree word *zeyer* ‘very’ (see also section 5.1):

- (35) a. *eyner zeyer a raykher daytsh*
one very a rich German
‘a certain very rich German’
(from Yitskhok-Leybush Perets’ *Briv un redes fun Y.L. Perets*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)
- b. *durkh eynem zeyer a grobn oder*
through one very a thick vein
‘though a certain very thick vein’
(from Yu Vagner’s *Dertseylungen vegn bale-khayim*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)

As might be expected, *epes* can also be separated from the indefinite article, for example by the word *nokh* ‘still’ (36a), the degree word *gor* ‘very’ and negation (36b), and the degree word *zeyer* ‘very’ (36c):⁶

- (36) a. *mit epes nokh a goy*
with some still a gentile
‘with another (some) gentile’ (Olsvanger’s *L’Chayim!* p. 103)
- b. *epes gor keyn yidishe tsure hot er nit...*
some very no Jewish face has he not
‘he does not have a particular Jewish face...’ (Lockwood 1995: 113-114)
- c. *mit epes zeyer an eydeln gayst*
with some very a noble spirit
‘with some very noble spirit’
(google: <https://docplayer.ru/34417165-Zhenskaya-tema-v-evreyskoy-literature.html>)

Second, like with the second possessive construction, the indefinite DP can be substituted by *eyner*. Consider examples involving *epes*:

⁶ Note that *keyn* is the negative article, presumably consisting of abstract NEG and the indefinite article. Also, notice that the translations of these constructions into English are not always straightforward.

- (37) a. *es zol mir emets heysn; epes a baskol, epes eyner, afile...*
 it should me somebody tell some a heavenly.voice, some one, even...
 ‘somebody should tell me; some heavenly voice, anyone, even...’
 (from Yitskhok-Leybush Perets’ *Der meshugener batlen*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)
- b. *epes eynem fun ire kremers a zun*
 some one of her shopkeepers’ a son
 ‘anyone of some sons of her shopkeepers’
 (from Dovid Bergelson’s *In a fargrebter shtot*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)

As far as I know, this is not possible when *eyner* is the first element, presumably because the substitution would yield two identical elements (*eyner eyner*).

To sum up thus far, *eyner* and *epes* are similar to the inflected pronominal in the second possessive construction: these elements can precede the indefinite article and they can be separated from it by other words. Furthermore and to the extent possible, they exhibit concord in features with the lower nominal (*eyner*) and the lower nominal can be substituted by *eyner* (*epes*).

4.2. Some Arguments for Adjunction

There is evidence that these three elements are adjoined to the lower DP (Option 4). First, these pre-determiner elements can be stacked; for instance, *eyner* can precede the possessive (both examples from Zaretski 1929: 172):

- (38) a. *af eynem zaynem a simen*
 on one his an indication
 ‘on a certain one of its properties’
- b. *tsu eynem irn a simen*
 to one hers an indication
 ‘to a certain one of its properties’

Syntactic context and agreement facts indicate clearly that these complex structures form constituents.

A good indication that this is indeed adjunction to the entire nominal (rather than to the possessive itself) comes from the following two examples. Note again that *eyner* shows concord in features with the possessive, nominative masculine in (39a) and dative masculine in (39b):

- (39) a. [*eyner [zayner a khaver]*]
 one his a friend
 ‘a certain friend of his’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 150)
- b. [*Eynem [a yeshuvniks]*] *a zun* hot ...
 one a farmer’s a son has
 ‘A son of a certain farmer has...’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 157)

Given the dative case on *eynem* in (39b), it is clear that *eynem* belongs to the possessive *a yeshuvniks* (see the discussion of definite possessors in section 2.2). Similarly, *eyner* in (39a) could be in construction with the possessive pronominal. However, while I have seen hundreds of examples where *eyner* or *zayner* form a constituent with a lower DP (e.g., *a khaver*), I have never seen an example such as *eyner zayner* by itself (but cf. *zayner eyner* in (28b) and (29a)). It appears that *eyner zayner* is only possible if an indefinite article appears lower in the nominal structure. I take this to mean that *eyner* is adjoined to the whole phrase *zayner a khaver* in (39a) (rather than to *zayner* itself). This is indicated by different bracketings and translations in (39).

As might be expected, *epes* can also precede a possessive:⁷

- (40) a. *epes irer a shvesters a zun*
 some hers a sister's a son
 'some son of a sister's of hers' (Olsvanger's *L'Chayim!* p. 73)
- b. *in epes zayns a lid*
 in some his a song
 'in some song of his' (from *Forverts 01/26/2007*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)

A very strong argument in favor of adjunction comes from the fact that the two elements above the indefinite article, *epes* and the possessive, can actually switch positions:

- (41) a. *take zayner epes a vayter korev*
 really his some a distant relative
 'indeed some distant relative of his' (googled: *A pritsisher hoyf*, p. 15)
- b. *undzere (epes) a kroyve*
 ours some a kinswoman
 'some kinswoman of ours' (Mark 1978: 243)

Again, syntactic context and agreement facts show that these are constituents. Importantly, it is unlikely that the possessive in (41a-b) is adjoined to *epes* itself. Again, I assume that adjunction is to the entire lower nominal.

Turning to the interaction between *eyner* and *epes*, the former can precede the latter:

- (42) a. *kumt eyner epes a lets mit a naves*
 comes one some a prankster with a news
 'some prankster comes with some news'
 (googled: *Der hedger voirker* [The Headgear Worker], p. 31)

⁷ Note that (40a) involves a complex possessive that contains a second possessive. Considering (40c), (40a) is potentially ambiguous: *epes* may have switched positions with either *irer* or *irer a shvesters*.

(i) a. *epes [irer] a shvesters a zun*
 b. *epes [irer a shvesters] a zun*

Related to this, it is not entirely clear where *epes* in (40a) is adjoined to. Similar to *eyner zayner*, I have never seen an example like *epes irer* by itself. As such, *epes* could be adjoined either to the entire nominal (as reflected by the translation in the main text) or to the possessive *irer a shvesters*, which could be rendered as something like 'a son of some sister of hers'. Finally, I have not found cases of *eyner*-substitution with these complex nominals: *eyner zayner eyner* or *epes irer eyner*.

- b. *a goyisher shrayber, eyner epes a Lesing, tsi...*
 a gentile writer one some a Lessing or
 ‘a gentile writer, some Lessing, or...’
 (googled: *Tsu der geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur in 19tn yorhundert*,
 p. 146)

As might be expected by now, both of these elements can also switch positions:⁸

- (43) a. *Epes eyner a balagole hot amol...*
 some one a coachman has once
 ‘Once, a certain coachman has...’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 74)
 b. *... hot men arestirt epes eynem an enektrotekhniker*
 has one arrested some one a energy.technician
 ‘...they arrested a certain energy technician’
 (from *Yor: samlbukh far shuln 1905*; Corpus of Modern Yiddish)

Again, it is clear from the context and agreement facts that these structures involve constituents. Similar to above, I assume that *eyner* and *epes* are adjoined to the entire noun phrase. Finally, at the beginning of this subsection, I provided examples like *eyner mayner a Noun*. I have not found any examples of the type *mayner eyner a Noun*.

To explain these stackings and their different distributional options in a Split-DP (Option 3), we would have to assume that LPP is recursive, which raises other questions: for instance, what is the nature of this recursive LPP and why can the elements in the specifiers of this recursive LPP be switched (see also Roehrs to appear b)? These types of questions do not arise in an account involving adjunction.

More generally, Yiddish seems to be a language that tolerates adjunction quite easily. This can be seen by the following postnominal modifiers (also section 5.3):

- (44) a. *a yingl a takhshit*
 a boy a brat
 ‘an unruly boy / a brat of a boy’
 b. *a kind a goldns*
 a child a golden
 ‘a golden child’

⁸ Note that *enektrotekhniker* in (43b) could involve a typo, the correct form probably being *elektrotekhniker*. Also, notice again that English translations are not straightforward. With German closely related to Yiddish, a possible German translation for *epes eyner a* could perhaps be something like ‘irgendein gewisser’ (cf. van der Auwera & Gybels 2014: 198, who translate this string as ‘irgendein’). Finally, the word *epes* can also appear before other elements. Here are two other cases (for more discussion, see van der Auwera & Gybels 2014: 222, who anticipate the existence of (ib)):

- (i) a. *epes eynmal*
 some one.time
 ‘once’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 39)
 b. *epes emetser*
 some somebody
 ‘anybody’ (Olsvanger’s *L’Chayim!* p. 142)

- c. *a shverd afile a hiltserns, nor a sharfs*
 a sword even a wooden but a sharp
 ‘even a wooden but sharp sword’ (Neuberg 2014: 256)

These types of modifiers are presumably right-adjoined to the preceding DP.

In this section, I showed that *eyner*, *epes*, and the inflected pronominal of the second possessive construction behave the same. These elements seem to be adjoined to the lower DP.

5. Remaining Issues, an Alternative Analysis, and Postnominal Possessives

In this section, I discuss two remaining issues for the current account. I show that they cannot be related to a potentially similar restriction in German. Finally, I briefly discuss and reject an alternative analysis and I make a few remarks about postnominal possessives.

5.1. Yiddish

First, an inflected possessive pronominal cannot be followed by a definite article:

- (45) * *mayner der khaver*
 mine-INFL the friend

Given current assumptions, one may wonder how we can formalize the fact that these pronominal possessives only tolerate an indefinite article.

Second, it is well known that the Germanic languages have null plural indefinite articles. However, possessive pronominals in the plural are not possible in the second construction at all. As explicitly confirmed by Jean Lowenstamm (p.c.), *mayne dray khaveyrim* ‘my three friends’ does not feel at all like the plural of *mayner a khaver* ‘a friend of mine’. In other words, there is an interpretative restriction with pronominal plural possessives (46a). This means that (46a) cannot be analyzed as (46b) (\emptyset_{INDEF} = null plural indefinite article):⁹

- (46) a. *mayne khaveyrim*
 my friends
 √‘my friends’
 #‘friends of mine’
 b. (*) *mayne \emptyset_{INDEF} khaveyrim*

To repeat, indefinite pronominal possessives only occur with an indefinite article in the singular. This is different for postnominal possessives which can be both indefinite and plural:

- (47) Indefinite: pronominal postnominal
 a. ‘a friend of mine’: *mayner a khaver* = *a khaver mayner*
 b. ‘friends of mine’: - *khaveyrim mayne*

⁹ Zaretski (1929: 170) states that both the first and the second possessive construction involve each a definite and an indefinite interpretation. Given section 2.3 and all other sources consulted, this statement is probably not correct.

Similar to the first question, one may wonder how we can formalize the fact that these prenominal possessives only occur in the singular.

Selection could be invoked to explain why only an indefinite nominal occurs in this construction. Selection is only statable if a head is present. Thus, we could stipulate that LP selects a DP involving the feature [INDEF]. Furthermore, we could exclude plurals by stipulating again that LP only selects a singular DP. As shown above though, all nominal elements inside the larger noun phrase participate in concord of case and phi-features including plural (cf. (9c)). These agreeing elements involve phrases (including heads). So contrary to fact, we would presumably expect plurals to be possible under selection.

Above, I argued for adjunction. We could suggest then that adjunction in the plural is blocked by the more economical derivation of the type used for *mayn khaver*. In other words, only a simple DP would be projected in the plural (cf. (18b)). Depending on the internal structure of the possessive itself, this might also explain why an indefinite interpretation in the plural is not available. However, if economy of derivation holds more generally as one would expect, then how are the singular cases in (3) allowed back in? An answer to this question is not obvious.¹⁰

We have seen that *eyner* and *epes* can precede an indefinite article (see, e.g., (34)). Interestingly, degree words such as *zeyer* / *gor* / *graylekh* ‘very’ can also precede the indefinite article but not the definite one (Jacobs 2005: 240, Lockwood 1995: 61). Consider (48a-b).¹¹ Importantly, these degree words can follow both the indefinite and definite article (48c-d):

¹⁰ One could try to explain this restriction to singular in terms of the overtness vs. covertness of the indefinite articles. However, it is not obvious how to relate the (c)overtness of an element to the syntactic notion of economy of derivation. Note also that this restriction might be of a morphological nature only. Recall the example in (37b), repeated here as (i):

- (i) *epes eynem fun ire kremers a zun*
 some one of her shopkeepers’ a son
 ‘anyone of some sons of her shopkeepers’

This is a partitive construction implying a plural reference set. It is straightforward that the possessive *ire kremers* is plural. However, the lower DP *a zun* is obviously singular. It should be clear though that different shopkeepers typically have different sons. As such, it is implied that there are several, different sons. This fits well with the requirement of a partitive construction of involving a plural set. If this is on the right track, it means that the restriction of the second possessive construction to singular is only morphological in nature and plural semantics of the second possessive construction is possible if coerced.

¹¹ As expected, strings like (48a) can be in the complement position of a preposition:

- (i) *fun zeyer a fayne haus*
 of very a fine house
 ‘of a very good family’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 39)

Surprisingly, the degree word *zeyer* ‘very’ can even precede a preposition (iia). Other elements can “switch” positions with a preposition as well (iib-c):

- (ii) a. *zeyer oyf a shlekhtn shtand*
 very in a bad position
 ‘in a very bad position’ (Wiener 1893: 54)
 b. *a tsvaygele epes fun a bliend barenboym*
 a twig some of a blooming pear.tree
 ‘a twig of some blooming pear-tree’ (Taube 2014: 242)
 c. *eyner gor fun di groyse shikurim*
 one very of the big drunkards
 ‘one of the (very?) big drunkards’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 105)

- (48) a. *zeyer an alter man*
 very an old man
 ‘a very old man’
 b. * *zeyer der alter man*
 very the old man
 c. *a zeyer alter man*
 a very old man
 ‘a very old man’
 d. *der zeyer alter man*
 the very old man
 ‘the very old man’

As far as I can see, we can add to this list *take* ‘really’ (25b) and *nokh* ‘still’ (36a). Furthermore, *a sakh* ‘many/much’ seems to behave in the same way (although I am not sure if this complex element can follow an article, definite or indefinite):

- (49) *a sakh a breytern batayt*
 a lot a broader meaning
 ‘a much broader meaning’ (Goldberg 1996: 79)

With this in mind, we can state that there are restrictions on elements in the DP-level in Yiddish if something precedes them. Specifically, this is true of the indefinite article. As far as I know, only two elements can precede this article:¹²

- (50) a. [X [Y [a [...]]]]
 b. X = non-PP possessives, *epes*, *eyner*, *zeyer*, *gor*, *graylekh*, *take*, *nokh*, *a sakh*
 c. Y can be filled with X (in stacking) or remain empty

This restriction has the looks of a template that accommodates two predeterminer elements. It is a first approximation and I will not discuss it in much detail here. For instance, I will not investigate what all the possible and impossible combinations of X and Y are. Let me just repeat here that while I have found examples of the type in (51), I have not come across any examples of the kind in (52). This includes a fairly comprehensive search of these kinds of examples in the Modern Yiddish Corpus and on the internet:

- (51) a. *epes eyner a Noun* (= (43))
 b. *eyner epes a Noun* (= (42))
 c. *epes mayner a Noun* (= (40))
 d. *mayner epes a Noun* (= (41))
 e. *eyner mayner a Noun* (= (38))

It is clear that more empirical work is needed here. Let me also point out that *fun* in (iib-c) is the grammatical preposition ‘of’ that is not immediately adjacent to the higher head noun. Finally, (iic) involves a lower definite DP.
¹² Considering (25b), (41a) could potentially be an example with three pre-determiner elements. Also, note that there is no restriction to an indefinite article with postnominal adjunctions (section 5.3).

(52) *mayner eyner a Noun*

Interestingly, like *epes* and *take* in (25b), the degree word *zeyer* ‘very’ can also intervene between the possessive pronominal and the indefinite article:

- (53) a. ...*geven mayner zeyer a guter fraynd*
 ...been mine very a good friend
 ‘...was a very good friend of mine’
 (googled: ohd.huji.ac.il/holocaust/project12/project12pdf/12-20.pdf)
- b. *er iz oykh mayner zeyer a guter fraynd*
 he is also mine very a good friend
 ‘he is also a very good friend of mine’
 (googled: ohd.huji.ac.il/holocaust/project101/project101pdf/101-84.pdf)

Thus, let us assume that (52) is indeed not possible. Unlike *epes*, *take*, and *zeyer*, both *eyner* and *mayner* share concord features. Let us also assume that *epes* and *eyner* are base-generated above the DP-level but that *mayner* moves from a lower base position (see section 5.3).¹³ If so, one could speculate that *mayner* cannot cross *eyner* (perhaps because these two elements share the same features and a similar internal makeup).

5.2. German

As pointed out in Roehrs (2019), elements in the German DP-level are also subject to restrictions if something precedes them. Among others, this can be seen with preposed PPs (data is taken from Haider 1992: 315; for (54c), see also Fortmann 1996: 22):¹⁴

- (54) a. *aus Jena der Anruf*
 from Jena the.NOM call
 ‘the call from Jena’
- b. *aus Jena sein Anruf*
 from Jena his call
 ‘his call from Jena’
- c. * *aus Jena Peters Anruf*
 from Jena Peter’s call

The generalization is as follows:

- (55) *Generalization:*
 If a linguistic unit is in the left periphery (= above the DP-level), the determiner(-like) element must agree with the head noun.

¹³ Considering the example (iia) in footnote 11, it is not clear to me where *zeyer* (or *take*) is base-generated.

¹⁴ To make preposed PPs felicitous, the head noun of the preposed PP should be stressed (similarly for Yiddish below).

Thus, in German there are also restrictions on elements in the DP-level if something precedes them. For German, I argued in Roehrs (2019) that this is a selectional requirement imposed on the DP by the head LP. Now, preposed PPs are also possible in Yiddish (56a). Similar to German though, Yiddish also allows a definite article here (56b-c):

- (56) a. [Fun Moyshen a bukh] hob ikh geleyent.
 of Moses.DAT a book have I read
 ‘I have read a book of Moses.’
 b. [Fun Moyshen dos bukh] hob ikh geleyent.
 of Moses.DAT the book have I read
 ‘I have read Moses’ book.’
 c. Un [fun di rusishe tsionistn di kligste] zaynen...
 and of the Russian Zionists the smartest are...
 ‘And the smartest ones of the Russian Zionists are...’
 (Olsvanger’s *L’Chayim!* p. 113)

Given the possibility of a definite article, the restriction to the indefinite article in Yiddish prenominal possessives does not seem to be relatable to the restriction seen with German preposed PPs. As such, adjunction as discussed above seems to be more plausible for the Yiddish possessives. Given my current understanding of these issues, I would like to suggest that a template as in (50) appears to be needed for Yiddish.

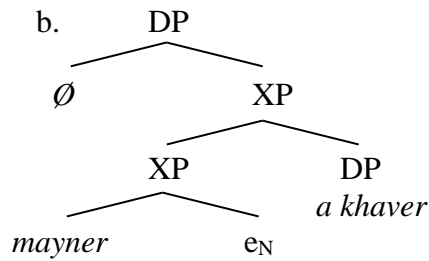
5.3. *An Alternative Analysis and Postnominal Possessives*

In the present proposal, possessives in the second constructions are left-adjoined to the lower DP. Prince (2001: 273ff) makes a different proposal for the similar *eyner-a-Noun* construction in (57a) relating it to (57b). She states that both of these cases are intoned as a single constituent with no break between the two nominals. Furthermore, the second nominal forms a restricted modifier to the first:

- (57) a. *eyner a yid*
 one a Jew
 ‘a certain Jew’
 b. *a meyd a sheyne*
 a girl a pretty
 ‘a pretty girl’

Prince does not flesh out the syntactic details of these constructions. At the end of section 4, I briefly suggested that post-modificational elements are right-adjoined to the preceding DP. Thus, similar to *a sheyne* in (57b), *a yid* in (57a) could presumably also be taken to be right-adjoined to its preceding element. Advocates of this proposal for (57a) might extend it to the second possessive construction where (58a) is now analyzed as (58b):

- (58) a. *mayner a khaver*
 mine a friend
 ‘a friend of mine’



At first glance, this proposal is not implausible. In the discussion of discontinuous DPs in section 3.2, we have seen that the possessive can be separated from the lower DP: the possessive can be topicalized and the lower DP stays in situ or vice versa. Assuming that (57b) is the basic underlying structure, we find similar discontinuous patterns with postnominal modifiers (both examples from Lockwood 1995: 112):

- (59) a. *der bokher iz gegangen a hungeriker un a farshmakhter*
 the.MASC young.man is gone a hungry-MASC and an exhausted-MASC
 ‘the young man left hungry and exhausted’
 b. *a gliklekhe hot im di froy mekabl geven*
 a happy-FEM has him the.FEM woman receiving been
 ‘the woman was happy to receive it’

However, there is one obvious difference between (57a) and (58a) vs. (57b): the overt head noun is part of the second nominal in (57a) and (58a) but it is in the first nominal in (57b). In my view, this makes it unlikely that all these cases receive the same analysis; that is, that right adjunction is also involved in both (57a) and (58a). Consider some arguments against this alternative proposal.

First, we have documented above that possessive pronominals, *eyner*, and *epes* have similar properties. Thus, it seems desirable to extend this proposal to *epes* as well:

- (60) a. *epes a khaver*
 some a friend
 ‘some friend’
 b. *epes eyner a yid*
 some one a Jew
 ‘a certain Jew’

With the lower nominal right-adjoined, *epes* occurs as a separate nominal element in the alternative account. As an individual nominal element, *epes* functions as a syntactic argument meaning ‘something’. While this indefinite pronoun is a neuter non-animate element, the second nominal in (60) is a masculine animate one. On the alternative account, this would lead to a morphological and semantic mismatch (see Roehrs 2012 for detailed discussion).

Second, let us make the discussion even more general. As briefly mentioned at the end of section 4.2, Yiddish also allows structures of the type *a-Noun-a-Noun*, which are very frequent in occurrence. They can be emotive (61a-b) or more matter-of-fact in tone (61c-d):

- (61) a. *a yingl a takhshit*
a boy a brat
'an unruly boy / a brat of a boy'
- b. *a meydl, a tsatske*
a girl a doll
'a doll of a girl' (Olsvanger's *Röyte* p. 9)
- c. *a yid a soycher*
a Jew a merchant
'a Jew a merchant' (Olsvanger's *Röyte* p. 159)
- d. *a yid, a vaynshenker*
a Jew a wine.saloon.keeper
'a Jew, a wine saloon keeper' (Olsvanger's *Röyte* p. 91)

Many of these examples do not have a comma (61a, c) but quite a few do (61b, d).¹⁵ Although they appear with or without a comma, they also form one intonational phrase. Semantically, nouns are sometimes treated as predicates (Heim & Kratzer 1998). As such, they are similar to adjectives. Consequently, let us relate *a Noun a Noun* to *a Noun a Adjective*. Now, as pointed out by Prince (2001), these post-modificational structures can also involve definite elements (62a). Again, some authors separate the two nominals by a comma (62b):

- (62) a. *di oygn di grine*
the eyes the green
'the green eyes' (Prince 2001: 273)
- b. *der tish, der sheyner*
the table the beautiful
'the beautiful table' (Lockwood 1995: 112)

However, as mentioned above, a definite DP cannot follow *mayner* and as far as I know, this is also impossible with *eyner* (and presumably *epes*). This indicates that all these structures should not receive the same type of account.

Furthermore, post-modificational elements do not have to agree with the first nominal in definiteness (63a) and, occasionally, these nominals do not even show concord in case (63b):¹⁶

¹⁵ As far as I can tell, the commas in these instances do not indicate a systematic difference from Prince's examples. In fact, putting commas seems somewhat random. In a string of three nominals, the comma can appear after every nominal (*epes a balagole, an amorets, a bur* 'some coachman, an illiterate, an ignorant person', *Röyte* p. 149), after the first nominal only (*zaynem a gevezenem talmid, a yid a nogid* 'one of his former students, a Jew a rich man', *L'Chayim!* p. 28), or after the second nominal only (*eyner a yid a khazer, a kamtsn* 'a certain Jew a pig, a miser', *Röyte* p. 114). Importantly though, there is never a comma after the inflected possessive pronominal, *eyner*, or *epes* in these constructions. While this has, admittedly, to do with spelling, it could be taken as evidence that these constructions are felt to be different by the speakers and consequently, have a different account.

¹⁶ An indefinite nominal can also precede a definite one:

- (i) *a toyber yid, reb Shmule*
a deaf Jew Mr. Shmule
'a deaf Jew, Mr. Shmule' (Olsvanger's *Röyte* p. 79)

I am not sure if these cases are the same as the ones discussed in the main text.

- (63) a. *di rebetsn, an alte yidene*
 the wife.of.the.rabbi an old Jewish.woman
 ‘the wife of the rabbi, an old Jewish woman’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 154)
- b. *dem yidn, a gezunter, a shtarker*
 the.ACC Jew-ACC a healthy-NOM a strong-NOM
 ‘the Jew, a healthy one, a strong one’ (Olsvanger’s *Röyte* p. 62)

The current analysis of the second possessive construction involves possessives lower inside their embedded DP. As such, they do not interfere with the indefiniteness of the entire noun phrase. In other words, both parts of the construction are indefinite for all intents and purposes. The same goes for the constructions involving *eyner* and *epes*. This is different from (63a), which clearly involves a definite and an indefinite nominal. As for (63b), a lack of agreement in case as in this example is not possible with the other constructions discussed in this paper (sections 2.1 and 4.1). This provides another argument against this alternative analysis. Finally, the alternative account does not shed any light on the restriction of the second possessive pronominal to be in the singular only.

As briefly mentioned above, possessives can also occur in postnominal position. This is fairly frequent with possessive pronominals (64a) and is occasionally found with proper name and definite DP possessors (64b-c).¹⁷

- (64) a. *di dozike ale reyd zeyere*
 these here all words theirs
 ‘all these words of theirs’ (Lockwood 1995: 54)
- b. *eynike verk Ashkenazis*
 some works Ashkenazi’s
 ‘some works of Ashkenazi’s’ (Lockwood 1995: 246)
- c. *finf hundert ki dem grafs*
 five hundred cows the.DAT count’s
 ‘five hundred cows of the count’s’ (Waletzky 1980: 260)

It is unlikely that these possessives are right-adjoined to their preceding DP. As possessives receive a theta-role, they must be in an A-position at some point in the derivation. Given that these possessives are on the right side of the possessum head noun, it is more likely that they are in a low specifier position. If this is on the right track, one could speculate further that this is the position where prenominal possessives move from.

To sum up, *eyner* a Noun, *epes* a Noun, and the second possessive construction should not be related to structures containing post-modifiers: the former three involve *eyner*, *epes*, and the inflected possessive pronominal left-adjoined to an indefinite DP but the latter involves right adjunction of the second nominal to the first. Postnominal possessives are most likely in a low specifier position.

¹⁷ Postnominal possessives are most frequent with the preposition *fun* ‘of’, something I will not discuss here. Note also that the quantifier *ale* ‘all’ often follows the definite article in Yiddish. In fact, in (64a), *ale* follows both the definite determiner and its deictic reinforcer.

6. Conclusion

There is clear evidence that there are structural positions above the DP-level in Yiddish. It appears that the second possessive construction in Yiddish involves adjunction. On the current analysis, we can maintain the claim for Yiddish that definiteness is determined at the DP-level. Thus, indefinite pronominal possessives in Yiddish are no problem for assuming Definiteness Spread in the language. Finally, strings like *eyner a Noun* and *epes a Noun* are similar to the second possessive construction.

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