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**Position of the German attributive genitive  
and other questions related to the structure of  
the genitive substitute *von* + NP**

The article presents an attempt at explaining the German genitive substitute *von* + NP as the result of a grammaticalization process. The explanation takes into account paradigmatic and syntagmatic grammaticalization parameters (Lehmann 1995), analysed with the text corpus from Old High German to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the structure *von* + NP is a genitive substitute for the morphological genitive, both structures underwent a process of grammaticalization during the historical development. The complete picture of the degree of grammaticalization of a structure is represented by the results of the analysis according to all of the parameters. The integrity and the scope of *von* + NP are two only partly applicable parameters, connected with the entrance into the grammaticalization channel. The genitival substitute *von* + NP has a wider scope in comparison with the morphological genitive, which is a sign of a lower degree of grammaticalization. The other four parameters show a more or less consistent picture with regard to the morphological structure or the diachronic component. Of particular importance is the comparison which shows a higher grammaticalization degree of the morphological genitive according to five parameters. The diachronic component is also important: the genitival substitute *von* + NP is not as highly grammaticalized as the morphological genitive, but in its development it went through progressive grammaticalization. Although its degrees of that process cannot be defined as structure-changing, they can be described in a precise way. The first degree is the entrance into the grammaticalization channel, i.e. the occurrence of the structure (Old High German). In the subsequent centuries the structure remained rela-



tively constant, with only a few factors indicating change: the fusion and the positioning in the nominal phrase, the latter not entirely fixed. The most prominent changes of the structure that occurred during this process are its distribution and frequency. Both can be associated with text types and language varieties. The corpus analysis is complemented by the analysis of the semantic aspects of the German morphological genitive and the genitive substitute *von* + NP.

**Key words:** genitive; genitive substitute; morphological genitive; German; grammaticalization.

## 1. Introduction

In his historical syntax of the German language, Ebert (1986: 97) notes that there has been no adequate explanation for the development of the position of the attributive genitive, although there have been several attempts at such an explanation. It is generally known that throughout language history the genitival attribute has changed its position, moving after the headword in the nominal phrase. To this day, there have been several attempts to explain this post-nominal position, but, as Ebert claims, none of these explanations have been convincing. The present article offers an explanation which involves the grammaticalization theory.

Studies of grammaticalization processes from the 1980s and 1990s try to look at the linguistic sign from the perspective of its paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, which have resulted in the setting of grammaticalization parameters (Lehmann 1995: 122ff). The whole of the grammaticalization processes is the sum of values attributed to particular parameters, whereby this sum represents the grammaticalization stage of a form in comparison to some other form, or a form at different historical stages. Among the three parameters which define the syntagmatic relations between the linguistic sign and other linguistic signs, there is the parameter of *syntagmatic variability*. It represents the degree of the movability of a sign in the syntagma and decreases with the increased grammaticalization. This theoretical premise can be illustrated by different kinds of evidence, and as well by the morphological genitive (*der Garten meines Onkels*) and the genitive substitute *von* + NP (*der Garten von meinem Onkel*). In terms of linguistic typology, they can be described as synthetic genitive and as analytic genitive, respectively. In the morphological genitive, the possession is marked with a case inflection, while in the substitute genitive *von* + NP it is marked with a preposition *von*. The first variant can thus be seen as 'more synthetic' or 'more bound,' while the second can be seen



as ‘more analytical’ (cf. Rosenbach 2003: 380–381).<sup>1</sup> The occurrence of the more recent variant of the genitive, the genitive substitute *von* + NP can be seen in relation to the changes in the system of the language, i.e. in relation to the historical formation of analytical structures (e.g. the categories of the verb). Other attempts to explain the genitive substitute are offered by Behaghel (1923) and Ebert (1986: 91), who attribute the spreading of the substitute form to the decline of nominal inflections, whereby Ebert also takes into account the influence of French.

This article argues that both structures, the morphological genitive and the genitive substitute *von* + NP, underwent a process of grammaticalization during the historical development. The process of grammaticalization is visible in the parameter of syntagmatic variability, the values of which are presented for both structures later in the article. This is followed by an overview of the values of other grammaticalization parameters, bearing in mind that only the sum of all values represents the whole picture of the grammaticalization degree and process.

## 2. Syntagmatic variability: the morphological genitive

Admoni (1990: 56, 111) writes about the formation of the genitive attribute in the post-nominal position in the nominal phrase. In the time of Early New High German there were first significant changes with regard to the post-nominal position. Admoni (1990: 48) argues that these changes can be associated with the semantics of the object. Ebert (1986: 95), on the other hand, associates the postnominal position with the presence of personal names in different text types. Admoni (1990: 228) claims that during the centuries following Early New High German, the post-nominal position became particularly prominent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The causes for the postnominal position and for the existence of the Saxon genitive are explained by Braunmüller (1982: 165ff), with the principle of right modification in the general transition from the synthetic to the analytical. Because of the usual post-nominal position of the genitival attribute and the limitless possibility of adding genitive attributes, the construction is described as endocentric or recursive (Eisenberg 2004: 247), whereby the recursiveness is described as a formal expression of the “creative expression” of the syntax of natural languages. Taking this

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<sup>1</sup> In literature, the genitive substitute *von* + NP has been termed differently: a prepositional phrase with *von* (e.g. A. Demske 2001: 276; Ebert 1986: 90); a prenominal group with *von* (Duden grammatik 1995: 644); linkage with *von* (Duden grammatik 2005: 839); a prenominal attribute with *von* (Lehmann 1991: 489; Admoni 1990: 112); a periphrastic construction with a genitival function (Braunmüller 1982: 168); a genitival substitute (Di Meola 2000: 159); an analytical genitive or genitive with *von* + dative (Pfeffer and Lorenz 1979: 53); and a group *von* + dative (Starke 1985).



into consideration, the development to the postnominal position was to be expected.

The interpretation which is based on the Latin influence has recently been modified, e.g. by Prell (2000: 6) and some other linguists who think there are a lack of modern morphological-syntactical investigations of this topic, and that it is still open whether the main factor at play was an external influence or whether it was just a case of structural parallels. Barufke (1998: 52), too, renounces the Latin influence, claiming that even a considerable Latin influence could not have caused completely ungrammatical structures in German, so that at least the potential for such a structure must have already existed in German.<sup>2</sup> Most explanations fail because they treat the change of position as an isolated instance of language change in the history of the German language (Demske 2001: 222). Demske, however, argues for an explanation which integrates the changes in the structure of the nominal phrase, also taking into account the comparison with other Germanic languages. Demske (2001: 247) thus reaches the conclusion that the prenominal genitive was reanalyzed as part of the article system, and so the majority of inanimate nouns were postposed because they could not be interpreted as expressing possession.

The question remains whether there were other causes which could have been responsible for the postposition, causes which are related to the theoretical concept of grammaticalization. In order to illustrate the rise of the post-nominal position by referring to the grammaticalization process, a corpus analysis is presented which contains a sample of 5,469 instances of the morphological genitive. The corpus<sup>3</sup> contains texts from *Der althochdeutsche Isidor* to texts from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The texts share similarities with regard to authors or text types.

Table 1 shows the percentage of prenominal (*wībes lōn/ Moriz von Craūn, des Teufels Werk/ Martin Luther*) and postnominal (*die Anreizung des süßen Schlafes/ Grimmelshausen*) genitival attributes and the number of instances in each text.

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<sup>2</sup> Similar to assumptions about Latin influence on the German genitive, Slovenian linguistics has attributed the Slovenian structure genitival substitute *od* + NP (*od* is equivalent to German *von*) to German influence. On the basis of an analysis of the grammaticalization process and by taking account of the different varieties of Slovene, I tried to show that the influence is highly overrated, and that this is a case of a parallel process (cf. Lipavic Oštir 2004 and Lipavic Oštir 2006).

<sup>3</sup> The list of all of the texts can be found in the reference section. The first hundred pages of each text were included in the corpus, with the exception of the text by Moriz von Craūn, which is shorter than a hundred pages, and was included in total.



Table 1.

<i>Text</i>	<i>Number of instances</i>	<i>PreMPG<sup>4</sup> (%)</i>	<i>PostMPG<sup>5</sup> (%)</i>
Der althochdeutsche Isidor	100	70.71	29.29
Meister Eckhart (tractates)	419	28.40	71.60
Moriz von Craûn	16	100	0
Martin Luther (writings)	226	39.39	60.61
Martin Luther (the Bible)	468	22.65	77.35
Martin Luther (letters)	187	34.76	65.24
Abraham a Sancta Clara (sermons)	734	12.94	87.06
Grimmelshausen (novel)	163	49.69	50.31
Leibniz (letters)	176	31.82	68.18
Goethe (Werther)	461	14.75	85.25
Goethe (writings)	321	5.92	94.08
Goethe (letters)	141	17.73	82.27
Goethes Zeitgenossen (private letters)	209	25.84	74.16
Jakob Grimm (letters)	391	26.60	73.40
Jakob Grimm (dissertations)	324	2.47	97.53
Miklošič (letters)	549	6.74	93.26
Bonitz et al. (letters, published by Schneider)	584	4.97	95.03

How to interpret the percentages? At first sight it seems that the prenominal position is predominant in the text from the Early and Middle High German period. However, the texts by Meister Eckhart are unusually modern in comparison to the texts from the Baroque period, as well as some other more recent texts, showing only a 28.4% of instances of the prenominal position. In other texts from this period the prenominal position is predominant. In Martin Luther's texts there are differences in text-type: the writings and the letters are similar in their preference for the prenominal position, while the examples from the Bible translation show a lower proportion of the prenominal position. In the more recent texts (from Abraham a Sancta Clara to Bonitz), the percentages of the prenominal position are not consistent, which can be seen as evidence for syntagmatic variability and the process of grammaticalization. In general, however, there seems to be a tendency towards the postnominal position, which is particularly visible in the examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The examples from the letters by J. Grimm are an exception here, with the prenominal position at 26.6%. It has to be noted that both J. Grimm and K. Lachmann, the authors of the letters, use the genitive substitute *von* + NP instead of

<sup>4</sup> PreMPG = prenominal morphological genitive.

<sup>5</sup> PostMPG = postnominal morphological genitive.



the prenominal morphological genitive, in particular with personal names, which occur frequently in letters.

The analysis of the position of the morphological genitive in the syntagma shows that during the grammaticalization process it became established after the head of the nominal phrase. In other words, the syntagmatic variability decreased during the process of grammaticalization, which is evidence for its way through the grammaticalization channel. The morphological genitive thus reached a higher degree (or higher degrees) of grammaticalization. Can this statement, based on the analysis above and on the theoretical premise by Lehmann, be supported by some other line of reasoning?

The problem of the postnominal position of the morphological genitive after the headword can also be seen as part of the larger process of changes in the nominal system. The German prenominal genitive was interpreted as a kind of article<sup>6</sup> (cf. Demske 2001: 207<sup>7</sup>), while the postnominal morphological genitive which is predominant today, does not have this function. The change of its position can briefly be described in the following way:<sup>8</sup> in Old High German the prenominal position was the usual position (with the exception of the partitive genitive, which occurred in the postnominal position already in Old High German), but the first changes in position emerged already toward the end of the Old High German period (Notker), whereby the postnominal position was increasingly occupied by inanimate nouns. Prell (2000: 28, 36) observes that in the Middle High German period there is evidence for the postnominal position, but during this period the genitival attributes in the prenominal position are much more frequent compared to the New High German, whereby over the half of the prenominal genitives belong to personal nouns (Prell 2000: 33). This development was completed by the beginning of the Early New High German period. The prenominal position remained reserved for proper names and animate nouns, with animate nouns also losing this position around 1700. In the state of affairs reached during the New High German (morphological vagueness of the prenominal genitive and its determiner function, incompatible

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<sup>6</sup> In this respect, modern German is like other Germanic languages, e.g. *Lotta's exhibition* vs. *\*the Lotta's exhibition* vs. *\*Lotta's the exhibition* (Demske 2001: 209; or Rosebach 2002: 229. About the differences cf. also Demske 2001: 210f; or Rosenbach 2002: 229).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also the Duden Grammatik (2005: 834): "Prenominal genitival attributes occupy in the superordinate NP the same position as the article words. Prenominal genitival attributes and article words thus cancel each other out."

<sup>8</sup> For an overview, see Demske (2001: 216f).



with the article) prenominal genitives such as *\*des Onkels Garten* seemed almost ungrammatical.

The diachronic changes of the attributive genitive also include the emancipation of the prenominal genitival forms from the genitive attributes (cf. Demske 2001: 252). The development of the prenominal forms into possessive determiners is not only accompanied by syntactic and semantic changes, but also by morphological ones: of all the genitival markers, prenominal NPs are marked only by the suffix –s, and when they follow the head, the morphological genitive is replaced by the genitival substitute *von* + NP.

Demske (2001: 222, 254) agrees with Eberts (cf. the introduction) that these changes still have not been sufficiently explained and sees the failure of the past explanations in their treatment of the problem as an isolated instance of language change. The observed change, however, can be explained if it is seen in the context of the observed changes of the nominal phrase and in direct relation to the diachronic changes of the article system. If one looks at the problem of the genitive from the perspective of the article, one can come to the conclusion that the explosion of the articles in Old High German occurred in genitive nominal phrases (Oubouzar 1989: 574, in Leiss 2000: 185). In the period before the rise of the articles, the pre-posed genitival attributes were definite, individualizing and not partitive, whereas the postposed genitival attributes were indefinite or partitive genitives. The use of the article first increased with pre-posed genitives, and only later with post-posed genitives. Leiss (2000: 186–191) sees the problem of the genitive in an even wider context, searching for associations between the genitive, the article and aspect. With the systematic spreading of the article system, the aspectuality of verbs became gradually invisible, whereas the nominal system of definiteness in the form of articles became systematically more prominent. In Old High German, this system was essentially consistent. There was only one inconsistency, i.e. the coding of partitiveness was still expressed through heterogeneous morphological signals.<sup>9</sup>

With regard to the position of the morphological genitive, it can be observed that in the period without articles, the pre-posed position of the morphological genitive had the grammatical function of definiteness. With the rise of the article system (which is based on the invisibility of the aspect system, cf. Leiss 2000) the

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<sup>9</sup> More about partitiveness later in the context of the establishment of the genitival substitute *von* + NP.





morphological genitive lost this function, which is also evident in the present predominance of the post-position with the exception of the suffix *-s* in association with proper names. Similar characteristics are also visible in other postnominal attributes (prepositional phrases, adverbs, adjectival clauses, adjectives with no declination, cf. Prell 2000: 37), since due to the tendency toward a rigid organization of the nominal group, congruent attributes diachronically tend towards the prenominal position, and non-congruent attributes (including the genitive) towards the postnominal position. This development is stringent in the case of the nominal phrase, however not in the case of the sentence structure because of the strengthening of the ‘centripetal’ word and constituent structures in which the subordinate expression precedes the super-ordinate expression. New High German has the characteristics of a SO(V) language, with different types of bracketing. Compared to this, the development of the morphological genitive towards the ‘centrifugal’ postnominal position (and also towards debracketing) looks like a typological inconsistency. Prell (2000: 38) argues against this interpretation, claiming that the nominal phrase in its basic syntactic structure does not just spread towards or away from a centre, but has a third, ‘nuclear’ structure in which attributes can be placed left or right of the center.

The question is how these explanations can be related to the theoretical premise of grammaticalization process. At first sight, it seems that this is not possible. In the case of the article, the grammaticalization process resulted in a variety of functions of the article and in its position before the head of the nominal phrase. This process pressured the genitival attribute into the postnominal position, since it no longer had a determiner function. The genitival attribute thus retained the expression of possessiveness. At the same time, the genitival attribute also underwent some functional loss, which, however, cannot be described as a process of degrammaticalization, as shown by the analysis of other grammaticalization parameters (more about it later). Evidence for such a development can also be seen in the changes in the position of the genitive substitute *von* + NP. This structure, too, underwent a positional change resulting in the postnominal position (*von Steinach der lande art/ Luther vs. dem Munde von Germanen/Grimm*), which was confirmed by the corpus analysis (more about it later). This, however, brings up even more questions which can perhaps be answered in the context of the grammaticalization analysis of the whole article system.

The postnominal and prenominal positions are related to the difference between proper nouns and common nouns. In German, proper nouns are typically prenominal and marked with the suffix *-s* for all genders. The prenominal (Saxon) genitive has functions of a possessive adjective (Hentschel 1994: 24), insofar that syntacti-





cally it is used with attributive function, while semantically it denotes the given or previously mentioned information. Due to the special position of proper nouns used as genitival attributes and their typical marking, the proper nouns from the corpus<sup>10</sup> were treated and analyzed<sup>11</sup> separately.

In the texts from the Old High German and the Middle High German, prenominal and postnominal genitival attributes can be found with proper nouns, and their frequency is very similar. Table 2 shows the periods following Middle High German:

Table 2.

	Number of instances	prenominal (%)	postnominal (%)
Early New High German texts	25	28	72
Baroque	115	19.13	80.87
Classicism	188	<b>65.96</b>	<b>34.04</b>
19 <sup>th</sup>	295	<b>62.03</b>	<b>37.97</b>
20 <sup>th</sup>	485	<b>67.84</b>	<b>32.16</b>

Early New High German texts show a higher frequency of the postnominal position, similarly the texts from Baroque. In subsequent centuries, this changed, resulting in a higher frequency of prenominal position. The change in prenominal position (percentage) can be summarized in the following way: 28 → 19.13 → 65.96 → 62.03 → 67.84. These numbers suggest a greater change in position in the period between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Demske (2001: 219) also dates the loss of the option of genitival attributes to have either prenominal or postnominal positions around the year 1700. In Modern German this option remains reserved only for proper nouns.

To get a more detailed picture of the Saxon genitive with proper nouns from the corpus, the instances were analyzed with regard to the genitival marker (A) and the complexity of the nominal phrases (B).

(A) In addition to the marker *-s*, the instances are marked with other markers, which is true in general for the older periods (cf. Primus 1997, Hentschel 1994). The Old High German and Middle High German texts from the corpus show the

<sup>10</sup> The same corpus was used as for the other analyses mentioned in the article.

<sup>11</sup> The analysis of the position and complexity of nominal phrases with proper nouns yields more exact dates for the periods of Early and New High German, whereas the dates for the periods Old and Middle High German have to be taken with caution.



following markers: *en-*, *-s*, *-i*, *-e*. They all occur with quite similar frequency. In the Early New High German corpus, the predominant marker is not *-s*, but other markers (the ratio between the other markers and *-s* is 20:5). The situation is similar in other texts from the baroque in which only 23 instances of the *-s* marker were found, compared to 92 instances of other markers. The 18<sup>th</sup> century shows a completely different picture: the *-s* marker appears in 84.57% of cases, compared to 15.43% of other markers. This tendency also continues in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where the *-s* marker appears in 76.95% of instances, and other markers in only 23.05%. The situation is similar in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the *-s* marker appears in 87.22% of instances, and other markers in only 12.78%. The correlation between the marker *-s* and the prenominal position shows that the marker *-s* appears predominantly in the prenominal position in all the periods, whereby the percentages differ and move through time towards a higher proportion of prenominal position: 66.67 → 56.52 → 77.36 → 81.94 → 84.50. The increasing proportion of the marker *-s* shows that it became fully established and generalized.

As previously mentioned, the change of position of the genitival attribute has so far received different interpretations. One of the interpretations refers to the complexity of the genitival attribute. Behaghel (1932: 194) attributes the change of position to *the law of increasing complexity*, which postulates that the complexity of phrases increases with time. Ebert (1986, in Demske 2001: 220) questions this thesis, stating that only the genitival phrases with more than one modifier are postposed. If proper nouns have a preference for the prenominal position, then they should appear as less complex nominal phrases in this position. They should retain this property all through their development in time since the genitival attributes with proper nouns in the postnominal position should consist of more complex nominal phrases, especially in more recent periods, when postposition is supposed to be associated with greater complexity. The analysis of the complexity (B) which looks into the existence of modifiers shows a greater complexity of genitival attributes in the postnominal position (the whole corpus shows the proportion of 13 prenominal genitival attributes with additional modifiers compared to 79 postnominal genitival attributes with postmodifiers). Behaghel's hypothesis (in this case referring to proper nouns), which is based on the progression of historical periods, thus cannot be confirmed.

### 3. Syntagmatic variability: genitival substitute *von* + NP

The genitival substitute *von* + NP (*der Garten von meinem Onkel*) appears in a phrase with the following structure: the head of the nominal phrase (*der Garten*)



which can be expanded by different modifiers, and a prepositional phrase with the preposition *von* (*von meinem Onkel*) which can also be expanded through different modifiers.<sup>12</sup> The second half, the prepositional phrase, has the typical characteristics of such phrases in German, e.g. the agreement of the preposition with particular case forms, here the dative case. One of these characteristics is also its position in the whole syntagma. Literature on this topic offers only little information on the position of elements in the genitival substitute *von* + NP, but it gives information about prepositional phrases in general. Admoni (1990: 111) observes that in Middle High German, the *von*-phrase can also be found left of the head (*von Tronege Hagene*).

The genitive substitute *von* + NP, which has through the history of the German language undergone, and is still undergoing, a process of grammaticalization, also shows changes which can be seen in association with syntagmatic variability. It can be assumed that the *von*-phrase has become established in the position right of the head of the nominal phrase. In others words, we can speak of the change of position of the *von*-phrase into the postnominal position in such a structure. This change should contain a historical element, which was investigated with an analysis. The starting point of the analysis is the usual postnominal position, which is also common today: *der Garten von Joseph*, *der Garten von Onkel Joseph und Tante Liesl*, and not *von Joseph der Garten*, *von Onkel Joseph und Tante Liesl der Garten*. Today this is the usual structure of prepositional phrases, although the prenominal position of prepositional phrases can also be found in regional dialects (Duden 2005: 836), but only with subjects and objects in the accusative case: *Von Joseph der Garten liegt im Prater*, but *\*Liesl fährt zu von Joseph der Garten im Prater*.

The position of the prepositional phrase was investigated by the analysis of the instances from the same corpus (1,459 instances). These instances mostly have the following structure: the head of the nominal phrase + the *von*-phrase (*das wichtige Werk von Wackernagel/J. Grimm*), but there are also deviations from this structure. The deviations can have the following forms:

- a) The *von*-phrase + the head of the nominal phrase: *von göttlicher minne gliehen gunst/ Meister Eckhart*,

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<sup>12</sup> With regard to the morphological genitive expanded by modifiers see Prell (200: 28) and with regard to the "exceptional non-occurrence of debracketing" in which both nominal groups are separated by a verbal form (the deviation of type b above) and "other mixed forms and particularities," see Prell (2000: 29f).



- b) The head of the nominal phrase + some other sentence element or part of another sentence element + the *von*-phrase: *die wort anzufechten von der bepstlichen ratification*/ Martin Luther; this can be described as the extraposition of the prepositional phrase,
- c) combination of a) + b): *von Goethe sehen Sie nächstens einen Roman* 'Leiden des jungen Werthers'/ Goethe's contemporaries, a complement and not an attribute, here classified as a deviations from the type a.

Such examples, which are a kind of deviation from the type the head of the nominal phrase + the *von*-phrase, represented by the examples from the types a), b), and c), have a lower frequency in the more recent texts. Conversely, more such examples can also be found in the older texts. This is shown by the percentages of deviations in Table 3.<sup>13</sup>

Table 3.

<i>Text</i>	Number of instances	Dev. Type a) %	Dev. Type b) %	Dev. Type c) %
Meister Eckhart (tractates)	15	6.67	6.67	/
Moriz von Craûn	5	/	20	/
Martin Luther (the Bible)	58	5.17	1.72	/
Martin Luther (letters)	83	10.84	3.61	1.20
Primož Trubar (letters)	86	4.65	/	/
slovenian protestants (letters)	16	6.25	6.25	/
Abraham a Sancta Clara (sermons)	35	/	8.57	/
Grimmelshausen (novel)	17	5.88	/	/
Leibniz (letters)	38	2.63	2.63	2.63
Goethe (Werther)	58	3.45	1.72	/
Goethe (writings)	30	/	/	/
Goethe (letters)	47	2.13	/	/
Goethes Zeitgenossen (private letters)	51	/	3.92	5.88
Jakob Grimm (letters)	81	2.47	/	7.41
Jakob Grimm (dissertations)	22	/	/	/
Miklošič (letters)	82	1.22	/	6.10

<sup>13</sup> It has to be noted here that in the third and the fourth chapters of the *Der althochdeutsche Isidor* only one instance of the analytical genitive (*sunu fona fater*) could be found, which was not included in the statistics.



Bonitz et al. (letters, ed. Schneider)	55	/	1.82	/
Johanna von Bismarck (letters)	25	/	/	/
Freud/Ferenczi (letters)	48	/	/	2.08
Freud (dissertations)	71	/	/	/
Lorenz/Heinroth (letters)	50	/	/	6
Lorenz (dissertations)	166	/	/	/
Tucholsky (letters)	28	3.57	/	3.57
Tucholsky (prose)	28	/	/	/
Torberg (letters)	55	/	/	3.64
Torberg (novel)	29	/	/	3.45
Frischmuth (novel)	31	/	/	/
Frischmuth (juvenile prose)	36	/	/	/
Frischmuth (lectures)	85	/	1,18	/
Stein – Fischer (children's prose)	28	/	/	/

As expected, the instances of different deviations are more frequent in the older text, although some instances occur even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Already Barufke (1995: 182) drew attention to the position of the prepositional modifiers. With a statistical analysis of different texts from Middle High German, she showed that the probability of the occurrence of prepositional modifiers (including the genitival substitute *von* + NP) in different positions in the syntagma was more frequent in the Middle High German period compared to the New High German period. In the present, the position of the *von*-phrase after the head is more usual, but in the Middle High German period the position before the head or the occurrence of other elements in the structure of the nominal phrase was more usual.

There is no doubt that in addition to adjectival modifiers, the prepositional modifiers also moved to the position after the head of the nominal phrase. This was also attributed to the change of word order in the sentence, to the so-called 'sentence frame' (Weber 1971). Givón (1990: 221), however, states that the genitival attributes in the position before or after the headword of the nominal phrase became established in both VO and OV languages. Others, e.g. Lötscher (1990: 222) look for the causes for the positional change in the tendencies of Kanzleisprachen in Early New High German. These tendencies are assumed to be reflected in the general developmental principle of German grammar, whereby the sentence structure was built progressively according to the economic and logical syntactic rules. Illogical possibilities, while still present in the Middle High German period, were thus ousted from the system. Lötscher's interpretation implies conscious activity in



language use, whereas many other interpretations of language change reject such an interpretation. For example, Keller's thesis about language as a phenomenon of the third kind (1994) interprets the change of language use as a result of communication according certain communication maxims. Moreover, Lötscher probably overrated the influence of Kanzleisprachen. No doubt these were a significant attempt to form a cross-regional standard language, but such attempts were often based on a restricted dialect, or on the cross-regional form of the vernacular. The changes which include the positioning of a variety of attributes, including the *von*-phrase, into a fixed position in the syntagma, be it before or after the head, are too extensive to be only attributed to the influence of one single language variety. These changes occurred more or less throughout the whole of the territory of the German language and show characteristics of structural changes in the language. These are essentially stable grammatical structures that underwent one or more processes of grammaticalization. It seems that during their development they followed the general principles of grammaticalization. This claim is also supported by the results of the corpus analysis presented in Table 3.

As far as the deviations of the expected word order: the head of the nominal phrase + the *von*-phrase are concerned, the most frequent deviation is that of type a) (*von seinen stücken eine scherbe*/Luther), followed by the deviation of type c), which is a complement and not an attribute (*von den Nibelungen und dem Iwein haben wir noch keinen buchstaben gesehen*/J. Grimm), and of type b) (*ein Bild zu entwerfen von der Roheit und Depravation der hiesigen Bevölkerung*/ Bonitz et al.). According to the results, the postnominal position became established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The examples from the 20<sup>th</sup> century show the lowest frequency of all three deviations. In order to date this change more precisely, an analysis of a larger corpus is necessary, a corpus which should include several text types. In view of the unfolding of the grammaticalization process, the determination of a precise date is not of great importance. Grammaticalization can be seen as a process of degrees. These degrees can in some cases be associated with particular periods of language history or even particular centuries, but often this is not possible. What is important here are grammaticalization degrees and not individual periods of language history. According to the results of the corpus analysis, the position of the genitival substitute *von* + NP seems to have become established in the postnominal position over the course of language history, or during the grammaticalization process. This is a sign of the decreasing syntagmatic variability of the genitival substitute *von* + NP, and the achievement of a higher degree (or higher degrees) of grammaticalization. This process is similar to the one with the morphological genitive, where the position of the morphological genitive seems to be more fixed. This, in effect, is a sign



of decreasing syntagmatic variability (see the percentages of deviations of the analytical genitive compared to those in Table 1). The comparison of both structures shows that the morphological genitive has reached a higher degree of grammaticalization. This is also supported by the results of the analysis of other parameters (more about it later), and also by the structure of both constructions. It is generally known that in Indo-European languages, such as German, the analytical structures are of a more recent origin, and that many of these languages show a strong tendency towards the formation of such structures. This could lead one to conclude that older structures always have a higher degree of grammaticalization. This may be true in many cases, but not always. The fact is that grammaticalization is not a deterministic process, and not all linguistic signs which go through the grammaticalization process arrive at the next degree or degrees of grammaticalization. In the case of the German genitive it is not only the typological difference between the 'synthetic vs. analytic,' which is evidence for the higher degree of grammaticalization of the morphological genitive (the marking is morphological and not by an additional morpheme), but also the whole analysis of the grammaticalization parameters. These parameters will be presented briefly in the next chapter in order to provide argumentation for the proposed explanation of the establishment of the position of the genitival attributes.

#### 4. Other grammaticalization parameters and their analysis

As already mentioned in the introduction, the concept of parameters by Lehmann (Lehmann 1995: 122ff.) includes both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic dimension of a linguistic sign. In the case of the genitival substitute *von* + NP the preposition *von* is the linguistic sign which has been grammaticalized. This means that through the grammaticalization process this linguistic sign can denote the domain of possessiveness in the widest sense, which is a new semantic domain. Before the start of the grammaticalization process, the preposition *von* could mark the whole range of semantic domains (temporality, causality, locality, modality), with the exception of possessiveness, which was in German marked mainly by the morphological genitive. By gaining this new possibility of expressing possessiveness, the preposition *von* entered a new paradigm. According to Lehmann, the grammaticalization parameters which refer to the paradigmatic aspect of the linguistic sign are paradigmatic weight (integrity),<sup>14</sup> paradigmatic cohesion (paradigmaticity), and paradigmatic variability. The grammaticalization parameters which refer to the syntagmatic dimension of the linguistic sign are syntagmatic weight (structural scope),

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<sup>14</sup> About German terminology see Diewald (1997: 22f).





syntagmatic cohesion (degree of bounding), and syntagmatic variability. The analysis of all the six parameters, based on the above corpus with reference to both variants of the genitive, can be presented in a table in the following way:

Table 4.

Genitival substitute <i>von</i> + NP				
Parameter:	Results			
	<i>applicable</i>	<i>gs</i> <sup>15</sup> vs. <i>mg</i> <sup>16</sup>	<i>gs</i> vs. other linguistic signs	<i>gs</i> in language development
<i>Integrity</i>	partly			entrance into the gram. channel
Paradigmaticity	yes	-	+	
Paradigmatic variability	yes	-		-, >
Scope	partly	-		?
Boundedness	yes	-		-, >
Syntagmatic variability	yes	-		-, >

Integrity refers to the semantic and phonological size of the sign. A less grammaticalized sign has greater integrity. The phonological size of the preposition *von* changed (Old High German *fona* › Middle High German *fon*), but these changes cannot be associated with the grammaticalization process resulting in the marker for possessiveness, since the phonological structure of the linguistic sign was not changed along with the enrichment of the semantic domains. The change of the phonological structure is a consequence of the weakening of unstressed vocals and can thus be interpreted as a phonological change. According to Lehmann (1995), the term semantic integrity refers to the narrowing down of the content of semantic domains of the linguistic sign. In the case of the analytical genitive, the situation seems to be the reverse: through the grammaticalization process, the preposition *von* had the potential to express a new, wide domain, i.e. the domain of possessiveness. This is a case of enrichment. Furthermore, Lehmann interprets such changes as dessemanticization, which is not true in the case of the genitival substitute *von* + NP. The enrichment of the semantic domains of the preposition *von* during the grammaticalization process represents the entrance into the grammaticalization channel, the beginning of which is the metaphorical transfer from the domain of lo-

<sup>15</sup> *gs* = genitival substitute *von* + NP.

<sup>16</sup> *mg* = morphological genitive.



cality to the domain of possessiveness (there was a parallel development in Slovene, cf. the functions of the old *ie.* ablative).

The parameter of paradigmaticity refers to the degree of the inclusion of a sign in a paradigm, and is in positive correlation with the degree of grammaticalization of a sign, i.e. the greater the paradigmaticity, the greater the degree of grammaticalization. This parameter is applicable and can illustrate the grammaticalization process by the comparison of the genitival substitute *von* + NP with the morphological genitive, as well as by the comparison to other prepositions. The preposition *von* belongs to primary prepositions, which form a relatively small and stable class of prepositions, and which are more strongly grammaticalized than the secondary prepositions. On the other side, there is the competitive structure of the morphological genitive, which is grammaticalized even more strongly. The German morphological genitive belongs to the very small class of case endings, which have undergone a lot of changes in the course of language history. A well-known fact is that the case endings for the feminine gender disappeared a long time ago, the same as almost all plural endings. Recently it has been observed that the case endings for the masculine and neutral gender are also disappearing (cf. Lehmann 1991: 97). These changes bring the structure closer to the last degree of grammaticalization. This parameter shows a higher degree of grammaticalization of the morphological genitive in comparison to the genitival substitute *von* + NP.

According to Lehmann (1995), the term paradigmatic variability refers to the freedom of the usability of a sign. With grammaticalization, the paradigmatic variability decreases and the obligatoriness increases. This parameter is applicable in the analysis of the genitive, and its application to the diachronic aspect of both structures shows the following: the morphological genitive, which according to the parameters has a higher degree of grammaticalization, can be replaced by the genitival substitute *von* + NP, and the dative phrase, or apposition, which is a sign of a lower degree of grammaticalization. In contrast, the genitive substitute *von* + NP can only be formed with the preposition *von* (with the exception of some dialectal and local particularities), which is a sign of a higher degree of grammaticalization. This might, at first sight, lead one to conclude that the genitival substitute *von* + NP be a more grammaticalized structure than the morphological genitive, which was not shown by the first three parameters. The results of the corpus analysis, however, contradict this, since they show a significantly higher grammaticalization degree of the morphological variant, also from the diachronic aspect. The distribution of the morphological genitive is larger and through centuries this has been the structure most frequently used, which showed in the texts of all text types. The genitival substitute *von* + NP also shows diachronically increased distribution.



Though it never reaches the value of the morphological variant, it shows the tendency toward a more frequent use in more recent texts. Here, several differences with regard to text types were observed, showing that the distribution of the genitival substitute *von* + NP is associated with linguistic varieties and with text types. The German genitival substitute *von* + NP is not grammaticalized strongly enough to be an obligatory structure in every linguistic context. There are additional structures that compete with it especially with the older morphological structure. The parameter of paradigmatic variability also shows a higher degree of grammaticalization of the morphological variant, although this is contradicted by the criterion of inner-paradigmatic variability, which shows a rather higher degree of grammaticalization of the genitival substitute *von* + NP.

The parameter of scope refers to the size of the linguistic sign in the constituent structure, i.e. the 'extent' of the construction, which narrows through grammaticalization.<sup>17</sup> The morphological genitive has a relatively narrow scope, which is a sign of a higher degree of grammaticalization. The analysis of the complexity of the whole nominal phrase, which contains both structures as its parts, is expected to show differences between different developmental stages. Contrary to expectation, the analysis did not support this assumption, i.e. it did not show a narrower scope in more recent texts. It can be assumed that the general diachronic tendency towards a greater complexity of the nominal phrase works against it. Therefore, this parameter is only partly applicable. This can be explained also in the following way: in the case of the morphological genitive, the category of the genitive is realized by the following markers: by a case ending (*Vaters*), by an article (*das Haus des Vaters*), or only through an article (*das Haus der Großmutter*) – this is a narrow scope. The genitival substitute *von* + NP is marked by the whole prepositional phrase, the scope of which is wider, because it has the bigger size in the constituent structure in comparison with the morphological genitive. This is a sign of a higher grammaticalization degree of the morphological variant without accounting for the diachronic component. Diachronically, the genitival substitute *von* + NP remains unchanged, whereas the morphological structure of the morphological genitive underwent change, i.e. the loss of case endings.

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<sup>17</sup> Diewald (1997: 23), Rosenbach (2004: 76), Tabor and Traugott (1998, in Rosenbach 2004: 76) describe the parameter scope as problematic, not only because the term can have different meanings, but also because there are cases of grammaticalization which are associated with an extension of the scope. Diewald gives the example of the formation of subordinating conjunctions in German from demonstratives: the demonstrative has a function within the constituent structure of a clause, whereas the conjunction links the whole subordinate clause with the main clause.



The last parameter is called ‘boundedness’ and refers to the degree of fusion. It increases with higher grammaticalization. It is applicable in the analysis of the genitival substitute *von* + NP, also with respect to diachronic aspects. Boundedness is expressed in the form of fusion (*vom*). The greater the number of examples of fusion, the greater the boundedness. The corpus analysis shows the following: in more recent texts (with some exceptions) there are more examples of fusion than in older texts. In some cases, the more recent texts have more than a third of examples which are characterized by fusion. The examples of fusion often occur in idiomatic phrases, which shows that in its development the genitival substitute *von* + NP gradually became grammaticalized into a genitival structure. Idiomatic phrases are very stable and a change in their structure or a new formation means that the genitival substitute *von* + NP has already reached a higher degree of grammaticalization.

As far as the morphological genitive is concerned, the marking by the case ending shows a high degree of grammaticalization, because the case ending is a part of the noun. There exist even more restricted markers, e.g. Slavic case endings which are an essential part of the noun in the sense that the noun is not a morphological word without them (e.g. Slov. the noun *lipa* ‘linden’; *lip-a* (nom.), *lip-e* (gen.), *lip-i* (dat.), *lip-o* (acc.) etc.: *lip-* as the root can exist only if it is combined with a case ending as a morphemic combination lexical + grammatical morpheme). The German morphological genitive is somewhere in the middle between the analytical structures and the complete fusion, since the case endings are added to the noun and the noun can be used without the ending. This is only a relic of the older situation, given the loss of previous case morphology.

The complete picture of the degree of grammaticalization<sup>18</sup> of a structure is represented by the results of the analysis according to all the parameters which represent the linguistic process. Of course, not all six parameters are always applicable. This was shown in the case of the genitival substitute *von* + NP: the integrity and the scope are two only partly applicable parameters. But even then we can assume the entrance into the grammaticalization channel, which is at the beginning of every grammaticalization process. Furthermore, the genitival substitute *von* + NP has a wider scope in comparison with the morphological genitive, which is a sign of a lower degree of grammaticalization. There was no evidence for the diachronic

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<sup>18</sup> Another possible interpretation of particular grammaticalization degrees (Lipavc Oštir 2001: 245ff): the development of the German analytical genitive has reached grammaticalization degree 3, i.e. the linguistic sign *von* cannot always (with some locally very restricted exceptions) be replaced by another sign, so the structure has reached the status of a category.



component here. The other four parameters show a more or less consistent picture with regard to the morphological structure or the diachronic component. Of particular importance is the comparison, which shows a higher grammaticalization degree of the morphological genitive according to five parameters. The diachronic component is also important: the genitival substitute *von* + NP is not as highly grammaticalized as the morphological genitive, but in its development it went through progressive grammaticalization. Although its degrees of grammaticalization cannot be defined as structure-changing, they can be described in a precise way. The first grammaticalization degree is the entrance into the grammaticalization channel, i.e. the occurrence of the structure. It can be associated with Old High German. In the next centuries the structure remained relatively constant, with only a few factors indicating change: the fusion and the positioning in the nominal phrase, the latter not entirely fixed. The most prominent changes of the structure that occurred during the grammaticalization process are its distribution and frequency. Both can be associated with text types and language varieties.

The analysis according to Lehmann's grammaticalization parameters can be complemented by the analysis of the semantic aspect of the genitival substitute *von* + NP. This analysis was also carried out using the aforementioned corpus. In view of the problems involved in the semantic interpretation of the genitive (cf. Ballweg 1998: 156) and in the criteria for categorization, six interpretations which are generally considered as unproblematic were selected for the analysis: the possessive genitive (*der Garten von Joseph*), the subjective genitive (*das Arbeiten von Joseph*), the objective genitive (*der Anbau von einem Kräutergarten*), genitivus qualitatis (genitive of quality) (*die Größe von dem Garten*), the partitive genitive (*die schönsten von Josephs Blumen*), and genitivus explicativus (genitive of explanation) (*das Konzept von einem Kräutergarten*). The corpus analysis showed that the changes in the distribution of individual semantic interpretations were parallel to the grammaticalization process. Diachronically, the variety of interpretations increased. In the older texts the predominant interpretations were the possessive and the partitive genitive. The structure retained these two meanings, and added all the others to them. This proves that the genitival substitute *von* + NP was grammaticalized to such a degree that it could express all the semantic nuances of the genitive.<sup>19</sup> The analysis also showed that the semantic basis or the starting point of the

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<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the Slovenian analytical genitive can even centuries after the beginning of the grammaticalization process mark only a few meanings (mainly the possessive and the partitive meaning). The causes for this are explained through a comparison of the grammaticalization of the German and Slovenian analytical genitive in Lipavic Oštir (2004).



grammaticalization process represents the basic meaning of the genitive, which is mainly known as the possessive genitive.

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### POLOŽAJ NJEMAČKOG ATRIBUTIVNOG GENITIVA I DRUGA PITANJA VEZANA UZ STRUKTURU *VON* + IMENSKA FRAZA KAO ZAMJENU ZA GENITIVNI ATRIBUT

Rad pokušava razjasniti ulogu njemačkog prijedložnog atributa *von* + imenska fraza kao zamjene za genitivni atribut koja proizlazi iz procesa gramatikalizacije. Analiza u obzir uzima paradigmatičke i sintagmatičke parametre gramatikalizacije (Lehmann 1995) na temelju korpusa tekstova od razdoblja starovisokonjemačkog jezika do 2. polovice 19. stoljeća. Budući da struktura *von* + imenska fraza predstavlja zamjenu za morfološki genitivni atribut, obje su strukture tijekom svog povijesnog razvoja prošle kroz proces gramatikalizacije. Potpunu sliku o stupnju gramatikalizacije struktura daju rezultati analize prema svim parametrima. Integritet i raspon strukture *von* + imenska fraza dva su samo djelomično primjenjiva parametra povezana s početkom procesa gramatikalizacije. Prijedložni atribut *von* + imen-



ska fraza kao zamjena za genitiv ima širi raspon u usporedbi s morfološkim genitivom, što je znak nižeg stupnja gramatikalizacije. Preostala četiri parametra daju u većoj ili manjoj mjeri dosljednu sliku s obzirom na morfološku strukturu ili dijakronijsku komponentu. Od osobite je važnosti usporedba koja prikazuje viši stupanj gramatikalizacije morfološkog genitiva s obzirom na pet parametara. Dijakronijska je komponenta također važna: zamjenski priložni atribut *von* + imenska fraza nije do te mjere gramatikaliziran kao morfološki genitiv, no tijekom svog razvoja prošao je progresivnu gramatikalizaciju. Iako se razine tog procesa ne mogu definirati kao promjena strukture, mogu se točno opisati. Prvi stupanj predstavlja početak gramatikalizacije, točnije pojavljivanje strukture (starovisokonjemački). U stoljećima koja su uslijedila struktura je ostala relativno postojana i samo je nekoliko faktora ukazivalo na promjenu: spajanje te zauzimanje položaja unutar imenske fraze, pri čemu taj položaj nije u potpunosti fiksiran. Najistaknutije promjene strukture tijekom ovog procesa su distribucija i učestalost. Obje se mogu dovesti u vezu s tekstnom vrstom i jezičnim varijetetom. Analizu korpusa upotpunjuje analiza semantičkih aspekata njemačkog morfološkog genitiva i prijedložnog atributa *von* + imenska fraza kao zamjene za genitiv.

**Ključne riječi:** genitiv; zamjena za genitiv; morfološki genitiv; njemački jezik; gramatikalizacija.