

A Minimalist analysis of Uyghur genitives

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- Uyghur is a Turkic language spoken in western China and Central Asia
- Uyghur possessive constructions bear marking on both the *possessor* and *possessed* (Engsæth, Yakup, and Dwyer 2009; de Jong 2007; Tömür 1987)

1 Syntactic and semantic properties

1.1 Morphological marking and agreement

- Morphemes:
 - “Possessor”: GEN case suffix *-ning*
 - “Possessed”: POSS agreement suffix, agrees with “possessor” in person & number

- (1)
- a. *më-ning alma-m*
me-GEN apple-POSS.1s
“my apple”
 - b. **më-ning almi-miz*
me-GEN apple-POSS.1p
 - c. **më-ning almi-si*
me-GEN apple-POSS.3s
 - d. *më-ning almi-lir-im*
me-GEN apple-PL-POSS.1s
“my apples”
 - e. **më-ning almi-lir-imiz*
me-GEN apple-PL-POSS.1p
- (2)
- a. *biz-ning almi-miz*
us-GEN apple-POSS.1p
“our apple”
 - b. *biz-ning almi-lir-imiz*
our-GEN apple-PL-POSS.1p
“our apples”
 - c. **biz-ning almi-lir-im*
our-GEN apple-PL-POSS.1s

1.2 Semantic roles

- “Possessors” are not always really possessors (Dede 1978):

- (3) a. Kinship:

Rene-ning ati-si
Rene-GEN father-POSS.3s

b. Association:

Rene-ning ders-i
Rene-GEN class-POSS.3s

c. Undergoer:

Rene-ning vapat-i
Rene-GEN death-POSS.3s

- Like sentence subjects, “possessors” are actually a syntactic notion, not a semantic one
- From now on will call them “DP-subjects”, as they are in the subject position of the DP

1.3 Distribution of DP-subjects

- DP-subject may be omitted (Tömür 1987; Dede 1978):

(4) (*Më-ning*) *ata-m* *bek* *ëgiz*.
(me-GEN) father-POSS.1s very tall

“My father is very tall.”

(5) (*Siz-ning*) *kitab-ingiz* *qiziq-mu?*
(you-GEN) book-POSS.2s interesting-INTER

“Is your book interesting?”

(6) a. *Mehmud-ning ders-i* *uzun*.
Mehmud-GEN class-POSS.3s long

“Mehmud’s class is long”

b. *U-ning ders-i* *uzun*.
him-GEN class-POSS.3s long

“His class is long.”

c. (*Mehmud tëxi kel-mi-di.*) *Ders-i* *uzun*.
Mehmud still come-NEG-PERF.3s class-POSS.3s long

“(Mehmud has not arrived yet.) His [Mehmud’s] class is long.”

- Non-genitive possessives (POSS marking but no GEN case):

(7) a. *Tarim oymanliq-i*
Tarim basin-POSS.3s

“the Tarim basin”

b. *Azadliq yol-i*
Liberation street-POSS.3s

“Liberation Avenue”

- (8) a. *tor bēkit-i*
 Internet stop-POSS.3s
 “website”
 b. *poyiz istansi-si*
 train station-POSS.3s
 “train station”

2 Case checking and agreement marking

2.1 DP-subjects are like TP-subjects

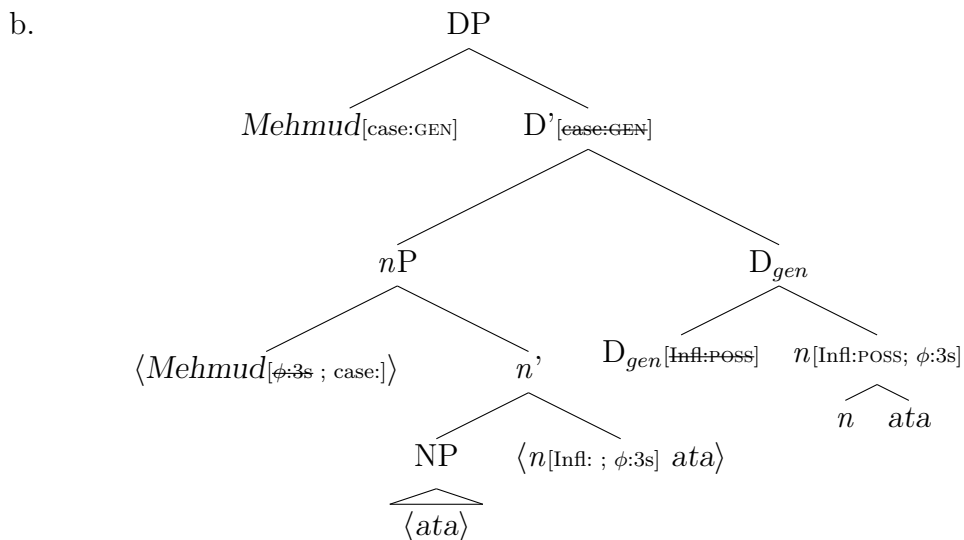
- Uyghur has *pro*-drop:

- (9) (Men) *bügün tash kördüm.*
 (I) today rock saw
 “Today (I) saw a rock.”

- TP-subject drop and DP-subject drop occur under similar conditions:
 - Subject not receiving focus or bringing in a new discourse element
 - Subject is 1st person, 2nd person, or 3rd person but already given in the discourse
- In both TP and DP, overt subject names the specific referent, while inflection (verbal or POSS) identifies some characteristics of the referent
- Making an analogy between DP-subjects and TP-subjects:
 - In TP, subject occupies [Spec,T] and receives [nom] case there. AGENTS are introduced by *v*, which also hosts verbal inflection (tense and subject-verb agreement)
 - In DP, subject should occupy [Spec,D] and receive [gen] case there. “possessor”s (the only kind of DP-subject) introduced by *n*, which also hosts nominal inflection (POSS and “possessor”–“possessed” agreement)

2.2 The theory in action

- (10) a. *Mehmud-ning ati-si*
 Mehmud-GEN father-POSS.3s
 “Mehmud’s father”



- Derivation:
 - Bare NP *ata* formed, selected as complement of *n* and raises to adjoin with *n*, which will host its inflectional and ϕ features
 - *n* introduces *Mehmud* as its specifier, to fill a c-selectional requirement ($[uD]$) and to get its ϕ features valued
 - *nP* becomes the complement of D_{gen} , a null D with GEN case and POSS inflectional features
 - *Mehmud* raises to [Spec,D] to receive GEN case, which will be pronounced as *-ning* thanks to morphophonological interface rules
 - The whole *n* complex raises to adjoin with D to have its inflectional features valued. POSS inflection with third-singular ϕ features will be pronounced as *si* on the only potential host, *ata*
 - This roughly parallels the derivation of a verbal extended projection

2.3 Details, details

- Why *n*?
 - Typically *n* is used for a nominal AGENT for a deverbal noun, as in *John's examination of the patient* (Adger 2003). Uyghur lacks such nouns (there are only gerunds)
 - Just as *v* allows subject–verb agreement by hosting inflection and ϕ -features, so does *n* allow DP–subject–noun agreement
 - *n* introduces an external “argument” of the noun (possessor, relative, associate, undergoer, etc.), as does *v* (Kratzer 1996)
- What is the locus of “possessive interpretation”?
 - D_{gen} . *n* only facilitates agreement and introduces external argument

- In cases of DP-subject drop (6–8), there is unpronounced GEN case hosted on a phonetically null *pro* in [Spec,DP]
- Why must DP-subject raise to [Spec,DP]?
 - Evidence comes from non-genitive possessive constructions

- (11) a. * *bir* [*partiyе-ning nizamnami-si*]
 one party-GEN constitution-POSS.3s
 (intended: “a [the party’s constitution]”)
- b. [*bir partiyе*]-*ning nizamnami-si*
 one party-GEN constitution-POSS.3s
 “[a party’s] constitution”
- c. *partiyе-ning bir nizamnami-si*
 party-GEN one constitution-POSS.3s
 “a constitution of the party’s”

- (12) a. *bir* [*partiyе nizamnami-si*]
 one party constitution-POSS.3s
 “a party constitution”
- b. * *partiyе bir nizamnami-si*
 party one constitution-POSS.3s

- Assume that *bir* “one” is in [Spec,NumP], above *nP* and below DP
- Regular genitive-possessives cannot be further modified by numbers or articles; numbers must be internal to the phrase. DP-subject has risen past NumP
- Non-genitive possessives can be; number cannot be phrase internal. First constituent has remained in [Spec,*nP*]. GEN case not discharged, so no possessive interpretation

3 Handling gerunds

- Gerunds formed with nominalizer suffix *genlik*
- Gerund subjects bear GEN case; gerundized verbs bear agreeing POSS marking

- (13) a. *siz-ning alma-ni yë-gen-lik-ingiz*
 you-GEN apple-ACC eat-PERF-NZR-POSS.2s
 “your eating of the apple”
- b. *më-ning Nur-ni öltür-gen-lik-im*
 me-GEN Nur-ACC kill-PERF-NZR-POSS.1s
 “my killing of Nur”

- Proposal:

- b. * [Tünügün siz-ning Nur-ni öltür-gen-lik-ingiz]-ni bil-dim
 you-GEN yesterday Nur-ACC kill-PERF-NZR-POSS.2s-ACC know-PAST.1s
 (only interpretation possible is “I found out yesterday that you killed Nur”)

- If gerund structures cause the AGENT to raise to [Spec,DP] while leaving the adverb stranded in the gerund, this ordering is expected

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