

### Genitive-marked subjects in Kazakh relative clauses

**Overview.** This paper investigates the seemingly nonlocal case assignment/agreement between the relative clause subject and the noun phrase modified by the relative clause (cf. (2)). This phenomenon can be found in several Turkic languages (such as Uyghur, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Sakha, etc.), and has gotten significant attention in the past couple of years. I present novel Kazakh data based on two grammaticality judgment questionnaires that contain close to a hundred sentences related to the investigated phenomenon. The questionnaires were filled out by five Kazakh consultants. These data can shed new light on this much debated phenomenon; based on the data, I propose a new analysis.

**Background.** There are two subject case marking patterns in Kazakh relative clauses (henceforth, RCs): the RC subject is nominative and agreement is not indicated (cf. (1)), or the RC subject is in the genitive and the agreement with it is indicated on the noun phrase modified by the RC (cf. (2)).

- (1) [Sæule- $\emptyset$  zaz-up otur-gan] karandaf – Bolat-tuŋ karandaf-u.  
[Saule-NOM write-IP AUX-NF] pencil Bolat-GEN pencil-POSS.1SG  
'The pencil [that Saule is writing with] is Bolat's pencil.'
- (2) Sæule-niŋ zaz-up otur-gan karandaf-u – Bolat-tuŋ karandaf-u.  
Saule-GEN write-IP AUX-NF pencil-POSS.3 Bolat-GEN pencil-POSS.1SG  
'The pencil [that Saule is writing with] is Bolat's pencil.'

It has been argued (Kornfilt 2008, 2015, Asarina 2011, Laszakovits 2018, etc.) that genitive-marked subjects are contained within the RC, and they can be assigned genitive case (under Agree) by the clause-external DP, which the RC modifies, because the RC is not a full CP, consequently it is not a phase, thus its constituents are available for matrix probes. However, there are problems with this account: it is unclear how the modified DP can probe into the RC which is its adjunct. Also, this account makes the prediction that genitive marking on the RC subject is always possible as long as the noun phrase can be genitive-marked.

**Restriction on genitive-marked subjects.** The data I elicited do not support this prediction. All of my consultants find genitive marking on RC subjects ungrammatical if the RC subject is inanimate (cf. (3)) or if the modified noun phrase is human (non-relational) (cf. (4)). These sentences are grammatical with nominative subject and no agreement, which pattern, according to my data, is always available.

- (3) \* Ulttuk premija-niŋ ber-il-gen zazwfu-su ōte ataktu.  
national award-GEN give-PASS-NF writer-POSS.3 very well-known  
Intended: 'The writer [who was awarded the national award] is very well-known.'
- (4) \* Bolat-tuŋ puŋfakta-gan adam-u Sæule-niŋ ata-su eken.  
Bolat-GEN stab-NF man-POSS.3 Saule-GEN father-POSS.3 COP.EVID.3  
Intended: 'The man [who Bolat stabbed] turned out to be Saule's father.'

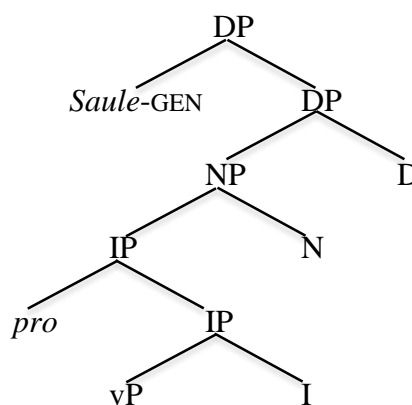
I argue that genitive marking in these sentences is disallowed because it is not possible to establish possessive semantics between the genitive-marked DP and the possessive-marked DP in the given contexts. These cases would typically be disallowed as possessive constructions as well (or, the very least, they would require abundant contextual support), such as #'the writer of the national award' and #'Bolat's man' are infelicitous in the given contexts. The requirement for the establishment of a felicitous possessive relationship between genitive and possessive-marked DPs indicates that the genitive-marked DP is in possessor position, and gets Possessor Theta-role in that position.

**Further similarities between possessors and genitive-marked RC subjects.** In possessive constructions, it is possible to “leave out” the possessive suffix while the genitive marking is present e.g., *biz-dij Kazakstan* ‘we-GEN Kazakhstan’. This is not grammatical in any non-finite clause type except in RCs with genitive subjects, indicating that genitive-marked RC subjects are in fact in possessor position. Secondly, if the modified DP is a relational noun (such as ‘father’), the genitive-marked RC subject must be interpreted as the possessor (cf. (5)), which is not predicted under the “genitive subject in the RC” approach.

- (5) # *Saule-nij toj-da uzak søjles-ken æke-si – Aynur-dij æke-si.*  
 Saule-GEN celebration-LOC long chat-NF father-POSS.3 Aynur-GEN father-POSS.3  
 Intended: ‘The father [with whom Saule chatted for a long time at the celebration] is Aynur’s father.’

**Analysis.**

To account for these data, I propose that the genitive marked DP is base-generated in the possessor position and there is a *pro* subject in the RC that is co-referent with the DP in possessor position (cf. tree). My proposal is different from Hale & Ning 1996 and Hale 2002 for Dagur (Mongolic) in that I do not derive this construction by raising from RC subject to possessor position, which would be raising out of an adjunct clause.



**Two groups of speakers.** I found that there are two groups of speakers: for the first group (two of the consultants) genitive marking on RC subjects is only grammatical if it is possible to establish owner-possessum, creator-output, or user-instrument relations between the genitive and possessive-marked DPs. The second, more permissive, group also allows other “less canonical possessive” relations (e.g., ‘the building [where Saule used to work]’) between these DPs (but crucially not any relation, such as those illustrated in (3) and (4)).

**Adverb placement.** Kornfilt (2015) shows that in several Turkic languages, among them in Kazakh, adverbs can precede the genitive-marked subject of the RC. Since these adverbs are interpreted as modifiers of the RC predicate, Kornfilt argues that they must be contained within the RC, and since they precede the genitive-marked subject, the subject must also be in the RC. I found that this is only acceptable for the second, more permissive group of speakers, and only in cases where the relationship between the genitive and possessive-marked DPs is a “less canonical possessive” relation. While in this (and only in this) structure the genitive-marked DP is in the RC, the possessor position must still be filled by a covert pronominal which gets Possessor Theta-role, since it is not the case that any DP can be licensed regardless of the relationship between the genitive and possessive-marked DPs (cf. (3) and (4)). It remains an open question how genitive is assigned in these constructions.

**Selected references.** Asarina, A. 2011. Case in Uyghur and Beyond // Hale, K. & C. Ning 1996. Raising in Dagur Relative Clauses // Hale, K. 2002. On the Dagur Object Relative: Some Comparative Notes // Kornfilt, J. 2008. Agreement – Subject Case Correlations in Turkish and Beyond // Kornfilt, J. 2015. Turkish Relative Clauses: How Exceptional are they from a Central Asian Turkic Perspective? // Laszakovits, S. 2018. On possessed relative clauses in Kyrgyz.