

Non-Local Agreement in Kazakh Relative Clauses?

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Background. Kazakh, a Kipchak Turkic language spoken in Kazakhstan and in the neighboring countries, has two subject case/agreement marking strategies in relative clauses (henceforth, RCs). The subject is either nominative and there is no morphologically overt agreement indicated with it (cf. (1)), or the subject is genitive, and the agreement is marked on the modified noun phrase (cf. (2)). The second strategy has drawn significant attention because, on the face of it, it constitutes a non-local agreement/case assignment configuration.

- (1) [*Ajnur-Ø biz-ge ajt-kan*] *æleŋ*
[Ainur-nom we-dat tell-nf] poem
'the poem [that Ainur told us]'
- (2) *Ajnur-duŋ [biz-ge ajt-kan] æleŋ-i*
Ainur-gen [we-dat tell-nf] poem-poss.3
'the poem [that Ainur told us]'

Several analyses have been proposed to account for the seemingly non-local case assignment and agreement relationship between the RC subject and the modified noun phrase, such as Hale 2002 (for Dagur), Kornfilt 2005, Kornfilt 2008 (for several Turkic languages, among them Kazakh), Asarina 2010 (for Uyghur); for an overview cf. Ackerman & Nikolaeva 2013. The most influential view in the context of Turkic languages has been that the RC is smaller than CP, therefore not a phase, hence accessible for clause-external probes. The D projection of the modified noun (*æleŋ* 'poem' in (2)) probes its domain searching for an accessible goal; since the RC is not a phase, the highest (subject) DP (*Ajnur* in (2)) is an accessible goal, agreement is established, and the case feature of the RC subject is valued. Under this approach, the genitive-marking is only possible when the subject is moved to a higher position where it is visible for the outside probes; nominative subjects are contained in a smaller phase.

Overview. This paper proposes that the seemingly non-local Agree relation between RC subject and modified noun phrase originate from the possessor-possessee relationship between *Ajnur* (possessor) and *æleŋ* 'poem' (possessee). Novel data will be provided, based on the author's fieldwork in Kazakhstan conducted with 12 native speaker consultants, that show that the genitive-marked subjects pattern with possessors, which supports the proposed analysis. The paper also provides explanation for one of the main arguments against the genitive-marked "subject" as possessor approach, namely adverb placement facts with genitive RC "subjects."

Distribution of the nominative and genitive strategies. It has gone unnoticed in the literature that the genitive and nominative RC subject strategies are not in complementary distribution; the nominative strategy is always available (as my fieldwork data show), while the genitive strategy has restrictions (cf. below). This indicates that the genitive strategy is not derivable from the nominative strategy, which casts doubt on the validity on the "smaller than CP" approach.

Restrictions on the genitive strategy. (I) Genitive marking is not available if the modified DP is a proper name (e.g., proper names, words such as 'sun'). In this case, only the nominative strategy is available (cf. (3)). The "smaller than CP" approach would predict that the definite DP *Saule*, which must raise out of VoiceP, gets genitive in (3). Under the assumption that the genitive-marked DP is the possessor and the modified DP is the possessee, this restriction is predicted since proper names cannot be possessed (Löbner 2011).

- (3) # *Aχmet-tiŋ [ætken apta kəmektes-ken] Gylmira-su*
Ahmet-GEN [last week help-NF] Gülmira-POSS.3

Intended: 'Gülmira(,) whom Ahmet helped last week' (Felicitous if A. is in love with G.)

(II) Inanimate/non-agentive subjects can't serve as genitive-marked subjects (as in (4)) unless the modified noun phrase is in part-whole relationship with the subject (cf. (5)). The "smaller than CP" approach can't explain why *agaf* 'tree' can be genitive-marked in (5) but not in (4). These data lend further support for the view that genitive RC "subject" pattern as possessors, since the possessive construction *'the tree's window' is unacceptable in the context of the tree breaking the window (compare it with (4)), whereas 'the tree's place' is acceptable if the tree grows in that place (cf. (5)).

- (4) * *Agaf-tuŋ [sundur-gan] tereze-si*
tree-GEN [break-NF] window-POSS.3
Intended: 'the window that the tree broke'
- (5) *Agaf-tiŋ [æs-etin] zer-i*
tree-GEN [grow-NF] place-POSS.3
'the place where the tree grows'

(III) It is also unexpected under the “smaller than CP” approach but predicted under the “genitive-DP as possessor” analysis that the genitive marked DP has obligatory possessor interpretation when the modified DP is an inherently relational noun such as ‘father’.

(6) *Sæule-niŋ* [toj-da uzak sɔjles-ken] ake-si (in an out-of-the-blue context)
 Saule-GEN [celebration-LOC long chat-NF] father-POSS.3

‘Saule’s father, with whom she chatted for a long time at the celebration’

(IV) *-GI*-marked, unambiguously adjectival modifiers of the modified noun phrase, can follow the genitive-marked DP, shown in (7). The ungrammatical (8) illustrates that a *-GI*-marked phrase cannot serve as an adverbial modifier of *bar-* ‘to go’, therefore in (7), it must be modifying the noun phrase *zer* ‘place’. It is unclear how the “smaller than CP” could explain that an adjectival modifier can intrude in the RC, whereas it is predicted under the “genitive-DP as possessor” analysis.

(7) *Men-ij Vengrija-da-gu* [erteŋ bar-atun] zer-im alusta.
 I-GEN Hungary-LOC-ADJ [tomorrow go-NF] place-POSS.SG3 far
 ‘The place in Hungary where I’m going tomorrow is far.’

(8) * *Men Vengrija-da-gu erteŋ bar-a-mun.*
 I Hungary-LOC-ADJ tomorrow go-PRES-SG1
 Intended: ‘I’m going to Hungary tomorrow.’

Adverb placement. The main argument against the “genitive DP as possessor” analysis has been that adverbial modifiers of the RC predicate can precede the genitive-marked DP, cf. (9) (Kornfilt 2008). The argument is that since the adverb is interpreted as a RC modifier, it must be contained within the RC, and since they precede the genitive-marked subject, the subject must also be in the RC, i.e., the genitive-marked DP is not the possessor.

(9) *Erteŋ men-ij* [bar-atun] zer-im alusta. (Kornfilt 2008, simplified)
 tomorrow I-GEN [go-NF] place-POSS.SG1 far
 ‘The place where I am going to tomorrow is far.’

However, I found that placing the adverb in front of the genitive-DP is also available when there is an adjectival modifier (a *-GI*-phrase) following the genitive, illustrated in (10). (10) shows that RC adverbs (*erteŋ* ‘tomorrow’) can precede nominal modifiers, such as the *-GI*-marked adjectival phrase *Vengrijadagu*, therefore the fact that they can precede the genitive-marked DP does not indicate that it is not the possessor.

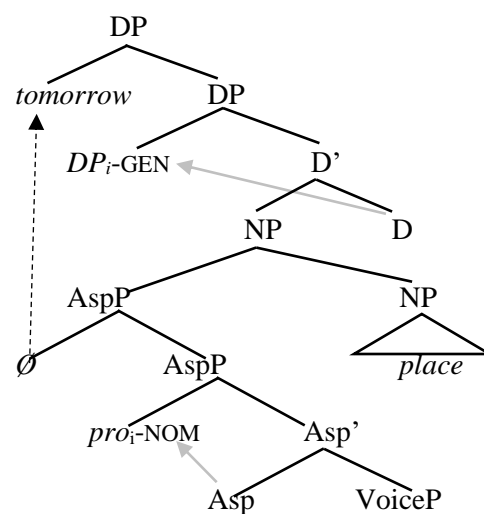
(10) *Erteŋ men-ij Vengrija-da-gu* [bar-atun] zer-im alusta.
 tomorrow I-GEN Hungary-LOC-ADJ [go-NF] place-POSS.SG3 far
 ‘The place in Hungary where I’m going tomorrow is far.’

Analysis.

Nominative case is assigned by the Asp^o of the RC; the modified noun phrase can’t probe into the RC because probing into an adjunct is prohibited.

Genitive is assigned by D^o of the modified noun phrase, and there is a *pro* subject co-indexed with the possessor in Spec,AspP in the RC. The tree to the right illustrates this strategy. It remains an open question whether the genitive DP moves to the possessor position or it is base-generated there (the tree illustrates the latter).

High adverbs, such as ‘tomorrow’ adjoin to AspP. Since this type of adverb is on the edge of AspP, it can scramble out of its base position, and it is free to scramble within the DP phase. (Lower constituents, e.g., dative-marked arguments, can’t scramble out of the RC.)



References

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