Two distinct mechanisms for genitive across nominalizations in Turkish

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1 The puzzle: case (dis)connectivity under sluicing

In Turkish, sluicing can leave behind a wh-expression marked with case, auxiliary morphology (aka copula) and tense. However, the case marking on this wh-expression (i.e., wh-remnant) does not always match that of its corresponding expression in the preceding clause.

- Genitive on the wh-remnant is unacceptable with *-DIK* and *-AcAK* nominalizations (1);

(1) Biri-nin gel-{**diğ/eceğ**}-i-ni duy-du-m ama **kim(*-in)-di** bil-mi-yor-um.
someone-GEN come-NML-POSS.3SG-ACC hear-PST-1SG but who-GEN-AUX.PST know-NEG-IPFV-1SG
Int. 'I heard that someone came/would come, but I don't know who.'

- but acceptable with *-mA* and *-Iş* nominalizations (2) as well as with possessive DPs (3).

(2) Biri-nin koş-{**ma/uş**}-(s)I-nI izle-di-m ama **kim-in-di** bil-mi-yor-um.
someone-GEN run-NML-POSS.3SG-ACC watch-PST-1SG but who-GEN-AUX.PST know-NEG-IPFV-1SG
'I watched someone/someone's running but I don't know who.'

(3) Biri-nin yarış-ı-nı izle-di-m ama **kim-in-di** hatırla-mı-yor-um.
someone-GEN race-POSS.3SG-ACC watch-PST-1SG but who-GEN-AUX.PST remember-NEG-IPFV-1SG
'I watched someone's race, but I don't remember whose.'

Main Claim

Nominalizations in Turkish fall into two structurally distinct classes, whose different internal architectures give rise to distinct mechanisms of genitive case assignment, accounting for the sluicing asymmetry.

2 Two classes of nominalizations: Diagnostics

The two classes differ in the size of their clausal spine and the presence of lower nominal structure:

- FULL-CLAUSAL (*-DIK*, *-AcAK*): full clausal spine up to CP w/o a lower nominal licensing head following Borsley & Kornfilt (1999), Kornfilt & Whitman (2011).
- PARTIALLY-CLAUSAL (*-mA*, *-Iş*): reduced clausal spine embedded under a lower nominal projection (*n*P) e.g.; Alexiadou et al. (2008), Alexiadou (2020).

Diagnostic	*-DIK/AcAK*	*-mA/Iş*	Structural Implication
Verbal core	✓	✓	VoiceP
Nominal modification	×	✓	*n*P
Pluralization	×	✓	*n*P
***ki*-replacement**	×	✓	*n*P
Clausal operators	✓	×	CP
Nominal ϕ-agreement	✓	✓	DP

Nominal modification & Pluralization

Full-clausal nominalizations resist nominal modification and pluralization (4a), but partially-clausal nominalizations allow both, patterning with event-denoting nominals and motivating a lower nominal projection (e.g., *n*P) (4b).

(4) a. *Çayan'ın **son** parkur-da koş-{**tuk/acak**}-**lar**-ı bun-lar.
Çayan.GEN last track-LOC run-NML-PL-3POSS this-PL
Int. 'These were/will be Çayan's last runnings at the track.'
b. Çayan'ın **son** parkurda koş-{**uş/ma**}-**lar**ı bunlar.

3 Two classes of nominalizations: Architecture

Pronominal *ki*-replacement

In possessive DPs, *ki* replaces the possessee (possibly PossP) like English 'yours' e.g., *Ali'nin yarışı* 'Ali's race' vs. *Ali'ninki* 'Ali's' (Hankamer 2004, Öztürk & Taylan 2016, Öyük & Demirok 2026). The same pattern holds for partially-clausal, but not full-clausal nominalizations.

(5) a. Çayan'ın koş-{**ma/uş**}-(s)I-nI izle-di-m, Ali'nin-**ki**-ni de.
Çayan.GEN run-NML-POSS.3SG-ACC watch-PST-1SG Ali.GEN-KI-ACC too
'I watched Çayan's running, and Ali's too.'
b. Çayan'ın koş-{**tuğ/acağ**}-InI biliyorum, Ali'nin(***ki**ni) de.

I adopt the structures in (6) for the two classes of nominalizations, assuming that PossP hosts nominal ϕ-agreement but does not license GEN (Paparounas & Akkuş 2024; Lim 2025; Öyük & Demirok 2026).

(6) a. $[_{DP}\ [_{PossP}\ [_{CP}\ [_{TP}\ [_{VoiceP}\ \text{DP} \dots v \dots]\ \text{T}\ ]\ \text{C}\ ]\ \text{Poss}_{\phi}\ ]\ \text{D}\ ]$ FULL-CLAUSAL
b. $[_{DP}\ [_{PossP}\ [_{nP}\ [_{TP}\ [_{VoiceP}\ \text{DP} \dots v \dots]\ \text{T}\ ]\ n\ ]\ \text{Poss}_{\phi}\ ]\ \text{D}\ ]$ PARTIALLY-CLAUSAL

4 Two mechanisms for GEN assignment

Following the movement and deletion analysis of sluicing developed in Kiper (to appear) as well as Ince (2006), I assume that the wh-remnant is extracted out of a sub-clausal constituent whose deletion is licensed by a local head upon merge.

Proposal

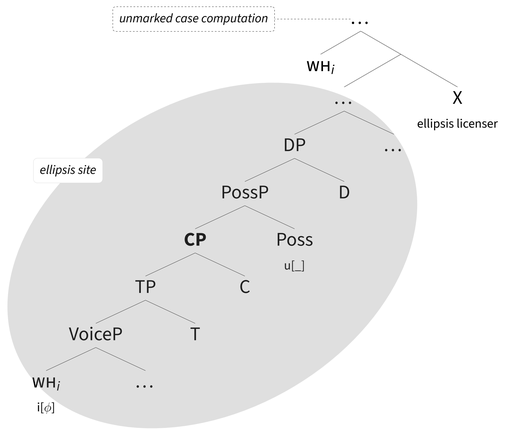
The sluicing asymmetry follows from where GEN assignment is computed relative to the ellipsis domain:

- FULL-CLAUSAL: GEN is assigned in a higher domain, **beyond the ellipsis site**, resulting in case disconnectivity.
- PARTIALLY-CLAUSAL: GEN is assigned in a lower domain **within the ellipsis site**, resulting in case connectivity.

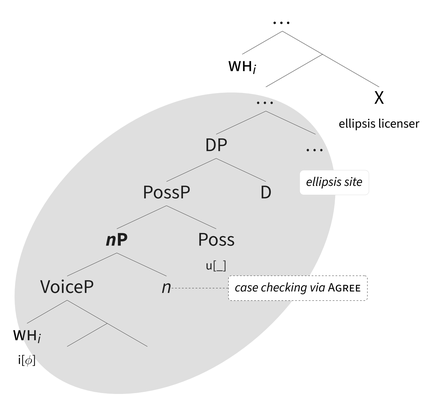
I implement the distinction through

- **configurational unmarked case** spelled out as GEN in nominal and NOM in clausal domains (7) (e.g.; Marantz 1991, Laszakovits 2017, Satık 2020)
- **AGREE** with a lower nominal head *n* (8) (e.g.; Kornfilt 2003, Baker & Vinokurova 2010)

(7) FULL-CLAUSAL NOMINALIZATIONS



(8) PARTIALLY-CLAUSAL NOMINALIZATIONS



5 Conclusion

A single morphological case can conceal two syntactic derivations. case (dis)connectivity under sluicing reveals that full- and partially-clausal nominalizations realize GEN through distinct mechanisms, despite sharing nominal ϕ-agreement.

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