Ellipsis as leverage for dependent case theory *

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1 Overview

Turkish exhibits two types of sluicing: one where the wh-remnant matches the case of its correlate (1B), and one where the remnant appears with an auxiliary (aka *copula*) and tense as well as case (1B') (Ince, 2006; Palaz, 2018; Kiper, 2020, 2025).¹

(1) A: Çayan toplantı-da $\underline{\text{biri-ne}}_i$ çok kız-dı. Çayan meeting-loc somebody-dat very get.mad-pst 'Çayan got very mad at someone.'

B: $\mathbf{Kim} \cdot \mathbf{e}_i$? \mathbf{B}' : $\mathbf{Kim} \cdot \mathbf{e}_i \cdot \mathbf{y} \cdot \mathbf{di}$? who-dat who-dat-aux-pst

'Who?' high sluicing Int. 'Who?' low sluicing

THE PUZZLE In low sluicing, the so-called structural cases fail to surface on wh-remnants *even when their correlates bear them*, showing **case disconnectivity** (Kiper, 2020).

 \gg accusative case is disallowed $(2B')^2$

(2) A: Çayan çatı-da $\underline{\text{biri-ni}}_i$ gör-müş. B: $\underline{\text{Kim-i}}_i$? B': $\underline{\text{Kim}}_i$ (*-i)-Y-miş? Çayan roof-Loc someone-ACC see-EVI who-ACC who-ACC who-ACC-AUX-EVI 'Apparently Çayan saw someone on the roof.' 'Who?' INT. 'Who?'

» genitive case on subjects of nominalized clauses (henceforth: subject genitive) is also unacceptable (3B')

(3) A: Çayan [biri-nin; gel-diğ-in]-i söyle-di. B: Kim-in;? B': Kim; (*-in)-Ø-di? Çayan [someone-gen come-nml-poss.3sg]-acc say-pst who-gen who-gen who-gen-aux-pst 'Çayan said that someone came.' 'Who?'

IN THIS TALK Case disconnectivity in low sluicing arises from the interaction between the **timing of case assignment** and the **movement of the remnant**: dependent case (ACC) and unmarked case (GEN) are computed **after** the ellipsis-specific movement has applied.

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 $^{^{1}}$ 3sG ϕ -agreement and nominative case—assigned to matrix subjects—are phonologically null in Turkish, and thus are not glossed throughout the handout.

²The ban on accusative with copula and tense in sluicing is also attested in Uzbek (Gribanova, 2013), Japanese (Kizu, 1997), and Korean (p.c. Hanyoung Byun, Jungu Kang).

I argue that:

- i) accusative fails when the remnant moves above its competitor, creating a **reversed configuration** prior to dependent case computation;
- ii) genitive fails when the remnant leaves its nominal domain, undergoing a **domain displacement**, before unmarked case applies.

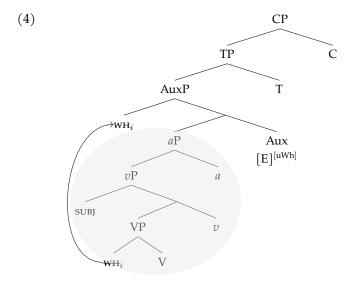
ROADMAP OF THE TALK

- §1 Overview
- §2 Low sluicing as movement and deletion
- §3 The accusative puzzle: reversed configuration
- §4 The genitive puzzle: domain displacement
- §5 High sluicing and timing of case assignment
- §6 Conclusion

2 Low sluicing involves movement and deletion

MAIN CLAIM Low sluicing in Turkish is derived through **movement of the remnant** and subsequent deletion of a deverbal constituent smaller than a clause, an analysis that creates the structural configuration necessary for understanding the case puzzle (Kiper, 2025).

Given the case connectivity between correlates and wh-remnants, I take low sluicing in Turkish to derive from a full clausal source, where the wh-phrase surfaces as the remnant of a deleted clause (Ince 2006; Van Craenenbroeck and Lipták 2008; Kiper 2025; pace Şener 2012; Palaz 2018) (4).³



I set aside copular alternatives in which wh-phrases are just predicates. Although it sounds plausible given the presence of an auxiliary (or copula) on wh-remnants, I present **three arguments why this cannot be the case**:

i) **Multiple wh-remnants:** Low sluicing allows multiple wh-remnants, whereas copular clauses, having a single predicate position, cannot host more than one wh-remnant.

 $^{^3}$ There are independent reasons to assume an aP layer immediately below AuxP, based on facts from the verbal domain in Turkish. See Sağ (2013); Kelepir (2021) and ? for detailed discussion.

(5) A: Çayan $\underline{\text{biri-ne}}_i$ $\underline{\text{bir şey}}_k$ ver-di. Çayan someone-dat one thing give-pst 'Çayan gave something to someone.'

B: **Kim-e**_i(**-y-di**) **ne**_k**-y-di**? who-dat-aux-pst what-aux-pst int. 'To whom what?'

low sluicing

B': #?Fatih'e(-y-di) hediye-y-di. Fatih.dat-aux-pst gift-aux-pst

INT. 'It was a gift for Fatih.'

copular clause

- ii) Island effects: Copular clauses contain no islands, but low sluicing is island-sensitive (Ince, 2006).⁴
 - (6) A: Çayan [Fatih'in $\underline{\text{biri-ne}}_i$ yüklü bir miktar-da para ver-diğ-i] dedikodu-su-nu Çayan Fatih.sgen someone-dat loaded one amount-loc money give-nml-poss.3sg rumor-poss.3sg-acc duy-du.

'Çayan heard the rumor that Fatih gave someone a large amount of money.'

B: *?Kim-e_i-y-di? who-dat-aux-pst int. 'Who?' B': İş arkadaş-ı-na-y-dı. job friend-3poss-dat-aux-pst

low sluicing 'It was to his colleague.'

- iii) Adjuncthood: Copular clauses do not license adjunct predicates, but low sluicing allows adjunct wh-remnants (Ince, 2006).
 - (7) A: Çayan gözlüğ-ü-nü bir yer-de_i kaybet-ti. Çayan glass-poss.3sg-ACC some place-LOC lose-pst 'Çayan lost his glasses somewhere.'

B: **Nere-de**_i**-y-di**? where-loc-aux-pst

B': #Sokak-ta-**y-d1**. street-LOC-AUX-PST

LIT. 'Where was it?'

low sluicing

LIT. '(They) were on the street.'

copular clause

copular clause

- » The diagnostics make clear that a full clausal analysis is **required**, at least in cases where copular sources are unavailable.⁵
- » Yet, an empirical problem remains: wh-remnants fail to bear accusative or subject genitive, despite originating within a full clausal structure and moving out of a deleted verbal projection.

We now turn to the **accusative puzzle**, showing how this pattern follows from the timing of case computation and remnant movement under Dependent Case Theory (DCT).

3 The accusative puzzle

MAIN CLAIM The lack of accusative on remnants in low sluicing arises since the dependent case calculation occurs after the movement of the wh-remnant.

The analysis rests on three key ingredients:

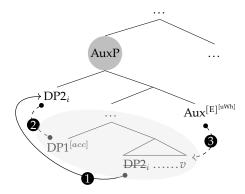
(i) The **dependent case domain** for accusative assignment corresponds to **AuxP**: it includes at least *v*P but does not extend to CP (e.g., Marantz 1991; Baker and Vinokurova 2010; Baker 2015; Dikmen et al. 2023; Sağ et al. 2025 among others).

⁴This is notable given that sluicing is typically island-insensitive (Merchant, 2001).

⁵See Appendix A for comparisons with full clefts.

- (ii) The case calculation occurs once the AuxP domain is built.
- (iii) The Aux head bears a bundled feature complex [E]^[uWh]:
 - It attracts the remnant to [Spec AuxP], which is a low final landing site and
 - It triggers deletion of its complement at PF.

(8)



Under these assumptions, the analysis yields a reversed configuration between DP1 and DP2, where the remnant DP2 raises above DP1 prior to dependent-case computation, resulting in accusative on the subject DP1.

3.1 The domain and timing of case assignment

The first component of the analysis concerns the **domain** of dependent case assignment, which extends at least to *v*P but does not reach CP.

Two independent phenomena provide empirical support to delimit this domain:

1) Differential Object Marking & Pseudo-incorporation

Accusative-marked objects reflect **differential object marking** (DOM), while bare objects in canonical object position are analyzed as **pseudo-incorporated** (PI'ed) (Taylan, 1984; Öztürk, 2005; Sağ, 2022; Sağ et al., 2025).

- » This alternation correlates with specificity: accusative → specific; no case → non-specific (Enç, 1991; Aissen, 2003; Kornfilt, 2008) (9).
 - (9) Çayan gözlüğ-ü/gözlük bul-du. Çayan glass-ACC/glass find-PST 'Çayan found the glasses/some glasses.'
- » Nouns can be PI'ed only when they are adjacent to the predicate (10).
- (10) Çayan gözlüğ*(**-ü**) **yol-da** bul-du. Çayan glass-ACC road-LOC find-PST 'Çayan found the glasses on the road.'
- » The pattern constitutes a **configurational split**: higher DPs receive accusative, while lower ones surface as unmarked (cf. object shift in Baker and Vinokurova 2010).

Following Sağ et al. (2025), I assume a two-layered verbal structure to account for this alternation:

» a VP-internal "event kind" domain, opaque to case where PI'ed non-case-marked objects remain and

» a VP-external "event token" domain, where canonical argument structure is built and dependent case is calculated.⁶

(11)
$$[CP ... [vP DP [VP_{external} b-pro_i [ET VP_{internal} DP V]] V] v] ... C]^7$$
 opaque to case

In short, the VP-internal domain is **not** a case domain and remains invisible to dependent case computation. Only DPs in the VP-external domain enter into case competition— a configuration into which sluicing remnants are merged.

2) SCRAMBLING

Scrambling (aka free word order since Ross 1967) in Turkish, where displaced constituents retain their case marking, helps further refine the domains of case assignment.

- » For instance, objects can scramble to a sentence-initial position, and unlike low sluicing remnants, their accusative case remains intact (12).
- (12) **Gözlüğ-ü** Çayan bul-du. glasses-ACC Çayan find-PST 'Çayan found the glasses.'
- » I assume that scrambling targets the left periphery, typically [Spec CP] or a higher projection in Turkish (Rizzi, 1997; Kelepir, 2001; Kornfilt, 2003; İşsever, 2007; Özsoy, 2009; Şener, 2019, a.o.).
- » In scrambling, there is no [E]-triggered landing site in AuxP; dependent case is computed within the (AuxP/vP) domain **before** the object moves to [Spec CP]. Hence, accusative survives on scrambled objects.

(13)
$$\left[\text{CP OBJ}_{i}^{[\text{acc}]} \left[\text{TP} \left[\left[\text{AuxP } \left[vP \text{ SUBJ OBJ}_{i}^{[\text{acc}]} \text{V } \right] \text{Aux } \right] \right] \text{T } \right] \text{C} \right] \right]$$
 dependent case

» In contrast, in low sluicing, the E-feature on Aux attracts the remnant to [Spec AuxP] *before* dependent case is computed. As a result, the subject—object configuration required for accusative is reversed.

3.2 The nature of [E]-feature

The final component of the analysis concerns the **nature and role of the** [E]-feature and how it plays out for the current proposal.

- » The [E]-feature encodes the **licensing condition** on ellipsis (Sag, 1976; Lobeck, 1995; Merchant, 2001; Van Craenenbroeck, 2010, a.o.). Most broadly, [E]
 - is a strong uninterpretable feature bundled on a head
 - triggers deletion of its complement at PF, while LF recovers an appropriate antecedent (Merchant, 2001, 2005, 2018, see).
- » Merchant (2001) typically **locates** [E] **on** C for sluicing in English: [E] and wh-features are bundled on the same head, ensuring a head-to-head relation between ellipsis licensing and interrogative force.
- » I adopt Merchant's (2001) view that [E] triggers both remnant movement and deletion of its complement, but I **depart** in locating [E] lower for low sluicing.

⁶Sağ et al. (2025) propose that a null anchor pronoun (*b-pro*) merges in the higher VP-domain, coindexed with the PI'ed argument, and introduces existential closure over its token-level realizations. This null pronoun serves to mediate a *belong-to* relation between the kind-level argument in the lower VP-internal domain and its object-level instantiations in the VP-external domain, but it does not participate in case competition.

⁷ET marks the event-token domain introduced by Event Tokenization, which ensures existential closure over token-level events and participants that "belong to" the kind-level argument in the EK domain.

- In **low sluicing**, [E] is realized on Aux, deleting the *a*P domain rather than TP.
- In **high sluicing**, [E] is realized on C, deleting the TP domain as in English (Ince, 2009).
- » I also assume that [E] surfaces as [E]^[uWh], a feature bundle including an uninterpretable strong wh-feature.

(14)
$$[[aP \dots] Aux^{[E]^{[uWh]}}]$$

» There are some empirical consequences of this assumption:

- Wh-remnants must move overtly (even in a wh-in-situ language) because movement is demanded by [E].8
- This movement is limited to elliptical contexts, showing that it is triggered by [E], not by interrogative force per se.

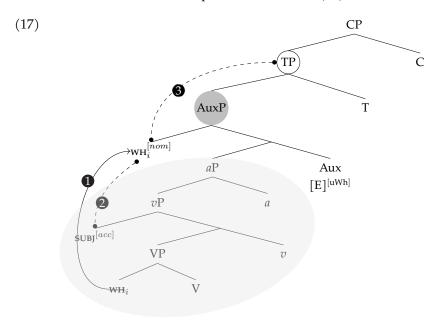
3.3 The implementation

Having established the domain, timing, and triggering mechanism of case assignment, let us now formalize how case is assigned under DCT in low sluicing configurations.

- (15) Dependent Case Assignment
 Within an AuxP/vP domain, when two distinct caseless DPs stand in a c-command relation, the lower DP receives dependent case realized as accusative.
- (16) Unmarked Case Assignment (to be revised)

 Any DP that has not received lexical or dependent case is assigned unmarked case, realized as nominative in clausal domains.

Given these rules, the derivation proceeds as follows (17).



- » The feature bundle $[E]^{[uWh]}$ on Aux attracts the remnant to $[Spec\ AuxP]$.
- » Once AuxP is built, the subject is assigned dependent case (ACC).
- » Once dependent case is computed, the remaining caseless remnant receives unmarked case (NOM).

⁸Even in wh-in-situ languages, the survival of wh-remnants suggests some leftward displacement. One view holds that wh-phrases in sluicing move to a focus position, as argued for Persian (Toosarvandani, 2008) and, more controversially, for Turkish (Ince, 2006, 2009, 2012) (pace Şener 2012; Palaz 2018). Others treat Turkish as a prosodic focus-in-situ language (Göksel and Özsoy, 2000; Kiliçaslan, 2004, a.o.), where focus is realized by stress and only topics move (Kamali and Krifka, 2020).

» The [E]-feature on Aux subsequently triggers deletion of the aP at PF.

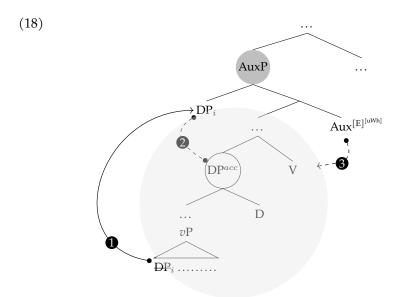
Although the subject is assigned accusative case under this "reversed configuration", which is unattested in Turkish, the derivation converges because the constituent containing it is deleted at PF.

4 The genitive puzzle

MAIN CLAIM The absence of (subject) genitive in low sluicing occurs because the remnant moves out of the nominal domain before the unmarked case is assigned to the remaining DPs.

The analysis builds on the following (additional) ingredients:

- (i) Nominalized embedded clauses are deverbal nominalizations projecting a functional DP layer (Kornfilt, 1984; Marantz, 1997; Borsley and Kornfilt, 1999; Kornfilt and Whitman, 2011, a.o.).
- (ii) The **unmarked case domain** for genitive is the nominal projection **DP** (Bobaljik, 2008; Preminger, 2011; Levin and Preminger, 2015).
- (iii) The unmarked case is assigned globally.



In short, before unmarked genitive can apply, the remnant escapes the nominal domain, undergoing a domain displacement. Once in the clausal domain, it receives nominative, capturing the observed mismatch.

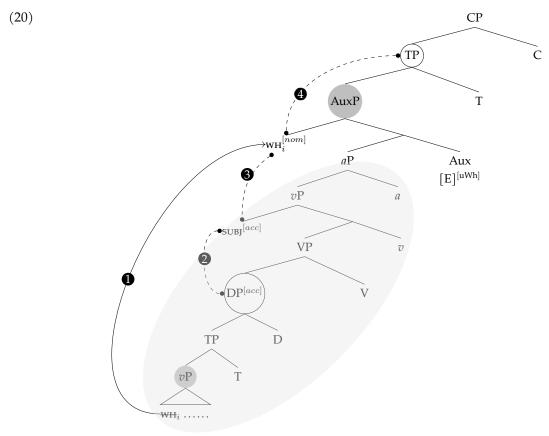
4.1 The Implementation

Let us formalize how DCT derives the lack of genitive in low sluicing.

(19) Unmarked Case Assignment (*final*)

Any DP that has not received lexical or dependent case is assigned **unmarked case** globally, morphologically realized as nominative in clausal domains (TP) and as genitive in nominal domains (DP).

Given the revised rule, the derivation proceeds as follows (20).



- » The [E]-feature on Aux attracts the wh-remnant to [Spec AuxP].
- » When the AuxP domain is complete, dependent case applies to lower DPs.
- » Once dependent case is exhausted, unmarked case is assigned to remaining caseless DPs. The wh-remnant, now in the clausal domain, receives nominative.
- » The [E]-feature on Aux triggers deletion of the aP.

The accusative case on the subject is unexpected but poses no problem, as it remains unpronounced due to deletion.

4.2 More on timing: possessive genitive under low sluicing

The behavior of **possessive genitive** provides an important contrast to subject genitive, highlighting how the timing of case assignment determines whether case survives ellipsis.

- » Possessive GEN arises in nominal projections without any verbal structure (21).
- » It appears as -(n)In making it morphologically indistinguishable from subject GEN and co-occurs with a possessive suffix.
- (21) Çayan-ın gözlüğ-ü Çayan-gen glass-poss.3sg 'Çayan's glasses.'

Possessive GEN is generally argued to be on a par with subject GEN, since it is obligatory across all possessive constructions and unrestricted by nominal type:

i) unmarked case of the nominal domain e.g., Kornfilt (1985); Miyagawa (1993); Aygen (2002); Öztürk and Taylan (2016); Satik (2020)

ii) assigned via Agree with a functional head e.g., Baker and Vinokurova (2010); Baker (2015); Kornfilt and Preminger (2015); Levin and Preminger (2015)

However, **under low sluicing** while subject genitive is systematically ruled out, possessive genitive remains perfectly grammatical (22).

(22) a. Çayan [biri-nin_i gözlüğ-ü]-nü bul-du ama **kim-in**_i? Çayan [somebody-gen glass-poss.3sg]-ACC find-pst but who-gen 'Çayan found someone's glasses but whose (glasses)?'

high sluicing

b. Çayan [biri-nin_i gözlüğ-ü]-nü bul-du ama kim*(-in)_i-Ø-di? Çayan [somebody-gen glass-poss.3sg]-ACC find-PST but who-gen-AUX-PST INT. 'Cayan found someone's glasses but whose (glasses)?'

low sluicing

This contrast is revealing:

- » If both genitives were assigned at the same stage, both should disappear under ellipsis.
- » The fact that only possessive GEN survives shows that its case is assigned earlier before remnant movement occurs and dependent case is calculated.
 - I therefore take possessive genitive to be a case assigned **immediately upon Merge**, within the nominal domain itself.

The timing argument leaves open what kind of locally assigned case possessive GEN actually is. Two possibilities arise:

- i) Lexical case as Kuzgun and Atlamaz (2023) argue for genitive assigned by certain postpositions
 - Possessive GEN however differs from such postpositional genitives: it is productive, obligatory across all possessive DPs, and not restricted to specific heads or pronominal complements.
- ii) Inherent case as dative-marked goals or ablative-marked sources
 - This view is less traditional, since inherent case is usually tied to theta-role assignment.

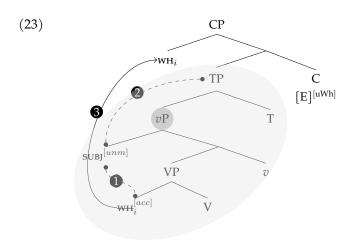
I remain agnostic as to which classification is ultimately correct. What matters for present purposes is that both lexical and inherent cases are **timing-insensitive**: they are assigned first in line with Disjunctive Case Hierarchy (Marantz, 1991).

- » The survival of possessive GEN under ellipsis therefore follows from its early, local assignment.
- » Unlike subject GEN, computed globally, possessive GEN is assigned too early to be disrupted by movement and deletion.

5 High sluicing

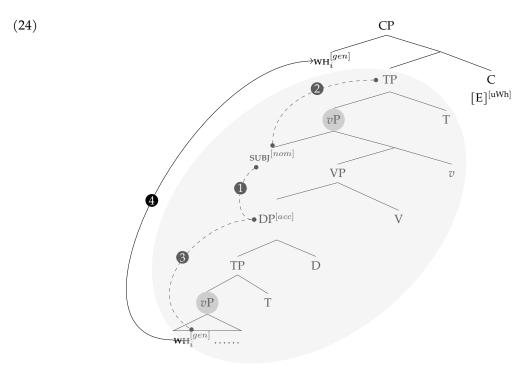
MAIN CLAIM The issues that arise in low sluicing, reversed configuration for accusative and domain displacement for subject genitive, do not occur under high sluicing because the [E]-feature attracts the wh-remnant to a position **above the case domain**.

To see how this plays out, consider first the matrix configuration. Here, the remnant is attracted by $[E]^{[uWh]}$ on C after case assignment has already applied in the lower vP domain. As a result, dependent and unmarked cases are successfully assigned before movement and deletion.



- \gg Within the vP case domain, the subject c-commands the wh-phrase, assigning it dependent case (ACC).
- » After dependent case applies, unmarked case (NOM) is assigned to the remaining DP (the subject).
- » The [E]-feature on C then attracts the remnant to [Spec CP].
- » Finally, the [E]-feature on C triggers deletion of the TP at PF.

Next, in embedded high sluicing, the same logic extends to a biclausal configuration. Case is assigned locally within each domain before the [E]-feature induces remnant movement to the matrix edge, ensuring that both dependent and unmarked cases survive deletion.



- » Within vP, the lower DP (the embedded clause) receives dependent case (ACC) in competition with the matrix subject.
- » The remaining DPs, the matrix subject and the remnant, belong to distinct domains and thus receive unmarked case: the subject NOM in TP, the remnant GEN in DP.
- » The [E]-feature on C attracts the remnant to [Spec CP], above the case domain.
- » The [E]-feature then triggers deletion of the TP.

6 Conclusion

TAKEAWAY The timing of ellipsis exposes the timing of case. In low sluicing, $[E]^{[uWh]}$ -driven movement applies *before* case computation bleeding dependent and unmarked case assignment (ACC, subject GEN). In high sluicing, by contrast, [E] attracts the remnant *after* case has been assigned so case survives.

- » Case assignment is both **configurational** and **timed**: its visibility depends on the order of operations between case competition and ellipsis.
- » Unmarked case is domain-sensitive and global: realized as subject GEN in DP and NOM in TP.
- » Locally assigned cases survive because their assignment precedes clausal case computation.

Overall, low sluicing provides a new diagnostic for case timing: when ellipsis bleeds the configuration required for case, only those cases assigned *early and locally* remain visible.

Appendix

A. More diagnostics

Copular clauses (aka truncated clefts) have an independent derivation. Full clefts, which embed such copular clauses, differ only in containing an additional deleted cleft clause. Accordingly, any diagnostic that applies to copular clauses also extends to full clefts.

(25) a. Çayan bu konu-da <u>biri-ne</u>; çok güven-di. Çayan this matter-loc someone-dat very trust-pst 'Çayan trusted someone so much on this matter.'

b. $Kim-e_i-y-di$?

who-dat-aux-pst

INT. 'Who?'

c. Çayan'ın bu konu-da çok güven-diğ-i (kişi) kim(*-e)-**Y-di**? Çayan-gen this matter-loc very trust-rel-poss.3sg person who-dat-aux-pst Int. 'Who was it that Çayan trusted so much on this matter?'

full cleft

full cleft

(26) A: Çayan tüm gece parti-de $\underline{\text{biri-nden}}_i$ kaç-tı- \emptyset . Çayan whole night party-loc someone-abl escape-pst-3sg 'Çayan avoided someone at the party the whole night.'

B: Kim-den_i- \emptyset -di?

who-abl-aux-pst

INT. 'Who?'

B': Çayan'ın tüm gece parti-de kaç-tığ-ı kim(*-den)-Ø-di?
Ali-gen whole night party-loc escape-rel-poss.3sg who-abl-aux-pst

INT. 'Who was it that Çayan avoided at the party the whole night?'

B. Correlation \neq Causation

A common view holds that genitive case assignment is tied to agreement. Evidence often cited includes possessor agreement on the embedded predicate for subject GEN and on the possessed noun for possessive GEN: a nominal head

probes its DP for ϕ -features, triggering both case and agreement (Kornfilt, 2008; Baker and Vinokurova, 2010; Miyagawa, 2011; Major and Eziz, 2024, a.o.). While agreement frequently co-occurs with genitive, the correlation is not causal.

1) Differential Subject Marking ${\mathcal E}$ Agent Pseudo-incorporation

- » In complement clauses, genitive-marked subjects reflect **Differential Subject Marking** (DSM), while bare subjects instantiate **agent pseudo-incorporation**, paralleling DOM in interpretation (Kornfilt, 1984; Von Heusinger and Kornfilt, 2005; Laszakovits, 2017; Sağ, 2022; Sağ et al., 2025).
- » The embedded predicate, however, shows ϕ -agreement in both cases, independently of the subject's case.
- (27) a. [Sokak-ta bir adam-ın bağır-dığ*(-ı)]-nı duy-du-m. street-loc one man-gen yell-nmlz-poss.3sg-acc hear-pst-1sg 'I heard a certain man yelling on the street.'
 - b. [Sokak-ta bir adam bağır-dığ*(-1)]-nı duy-du-m. street-loc one man yell-nmlz-poss.3sg-acc hear-pst-1sg
 'I heard some man yelling on the street.'

2) Adjunct Clauses

- » In adjunct clauses, the embedded predicate bears **possessor agreement**, but the genitive subject is absent (28) (Kornfilt, 2003).
- (28) Bir adam*(-in) (sokak-ta) bağır-dığ-i için one man-gen street-loc yell-nmlz-poss.3sg for 'Since some/a certain man yelled on the street...'

3) Nominalizations Under Postpositions

- » Recent work has proposed that case blocks agreement and that genitive-marked NPs lead to default agreement (Satik, 2020; Paparounas and Akkuş, 2020).
- » They present compelling data, but the distribution of genitive and default agreement is not as straightforward as it appears.
- » Even when NPs bear genitive, which we often observe full agreement on the predicate when nominalizations are embedded under postpositions.
- (29) Biz-im parti-ye git-me-miz için Çayan her şey-i dene-di.

 1PL-GEN party-dat go-nmlz-1PL for Çayan every thing-acc try-pst

 'Çayan tried everything for us to go to the party.'

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