Between predicative and attributive possession in Bashkir*

Maria Ovsjannikova & Sergey Say
Institute for Linguistic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg

Bashkir employs the genitive strategy for predicative possessive construction (‘he has a car’ literally is ‘his car exists’). However, in predicative possessive constructions the genitival possessor shows syntactic properties that are mostly indicative of its clause-level status. Some other uses with genitival possessors (as in e.g. ‘his leg hurts’) show mixed behaviour with respect to various constituency-related tests. The distribution of these properties directly reflects the degree of the relevance of the possessor. This semantics-to-syntax link is reminiscent of the external vs. internal possessor contrasts in other languages, although normally these contrasts are also manifested morphologically. The fact that constituency tests do not converge on identical results calls into question the applicability of the traditional notion of constituency to Bashkir possessive constructions.

Keywords: Bashkir; Turkic; noun phrase; possessive constructions; constituency; external possessor; word order; genitive

1. Setting the stage

The basic type of structure that is used in Bashkir for encoding predicative possession is illustrated in (1):

(1) Mansur-ðəŋ mašina-hə bar.
Mansur-gen car-p.3 there.is
‘Mansur has a car.’

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In the Bashkir basic predicative possessive construction the possessor is marked by the genitive suffix, the possessee NP bears a suffix which indicates the person and sometimes number of the possessor, and the clause is headed by the existential predicate. Thus, the morphological means for encoding the two nominal entities in predicative possessive constructions, where, by definition, ownership is asserted (predicated of a possessor), fully coincide with those that can be used in attributive possessive constructions, cf. (2), where the fact that Mansur has a car is presupposed, not asserted:

\[(2)\] Mansur-ðəŋ mašina-hə iðker-gän.
Mansur-gen car-p3 fall.into.decay-pc.pst

‘Mansur’s car has deteriorated.’

Given the identity of forms employed in (1) and (2), Bashkir can be classified as a language that employs the “Genitive Schema” (Heine 1997: 58–59) for encoding predicative possession.

An analysis that readily suggests itself for languages of this kind is that the possessor in the predicative possessive constructions belongs to the same noun phrase as the possessee, as it is naturally supposed to do in the usual attributive possessive construction. Under this analysis, Bashkir and similar languages would not conform with a match between function and form that is observed in languages like English, where possessive modifiers belong to the same constituent as the possessee ([John’s car] is red), while in predicative possessive construction the two nominals evidently do not form a single constituent ([John] has [a car]).

Stassen (2009: 114) notes, however, that the constituency status of possessor + possessee combinations in structures like (1) “is open to serious doubt” for at least a number of similar languages:

“In such languages the possessor NP and possessee NP may form a constituent in attributive possession, while they do not form a constituent in predicative possession. For this reason, from the fact that the possessor NP and the possessee NP in a sentence like John’s house burnt down form a constituent one cannot deduce automatically that in a construction like John’s house exists ‘John has a house’ the possessor NP and the possessee NP must form a constituent as well”.

(Stassen 2009: 114)

Stassen’s subsequent discussion of the problem (Stassen 2009: 114–122) is based on data from available descriptions of the relevant languages and is primarily focused on contiguity and inseparability as criteria for constituency, for the lack of other relevant data. However, Stassen explicitly sets the stage for further detailed language-specific studies, which can of course involve a wider range of both typologically relevant and language-specific properties.

Assessing the constituency properties of Bashkir predicative possessive constructions against the background of other possessive constructions in the language is the
Between predicative and attributive possession in Bashkir

major goal of the current study. There are two important provisos that are to be made before turning to empirical data.

1. Once one starts to employ multiple constituency tests, there are no a priori grounds to believe that they have to yield uniform results. The ultimate goal of this study is to arrive at a set of properties characteristic of each of constructions under comparison rather than to establish their phrasal vs. clausal nature in a clear yes-or-no fashion.

2. Given this potential complexity, one has also to bear in mind that an individual language, like Bashkir, might employ more than just two types of possessive constructions (attributive vs. predicative). It can well be the case that there is a wider range of superficially similar constructions that can differ in terms of their constituency properties. Unfortunately, one cannot establish a list of such constructions before studying the data of the language at issue. Below, we follow a different methodology: based on a pilot study, we distinguish several types of uses involving various shades of possessive meanings (see Section 3), without claiming that these contexts correspond to different linguistic constructions of Bashkir in any meaningful sense. We then compare these types of uses to each other, looking for possible differences. Abandoning the pre-established two-way distinction between predicative (clause-level) and attributive (phrase-level) types of possessive constructions, we thus acknowledge that in some non-predicative possessive constructions possessors can manifest some properties that are typical of clause-level constituents. In other words, one shouldn’t stop when finding that in a particular respect the possessor and the possessee in a predicative possessive construction do not behave as parts of a single constituent. As the next step, it is necessary to find out the properties of other, non-predicative, constructions with respect to the relevant property.

The structure of the remainder of the article is as follows. Section 2 contains a brief overview of our data and method. In Section 3 we introduce the types of possessive uses that were analyzed in our study. In Section 4 these types of uses are checked against various criteria that are related to constituency. Section 5 contains generalizations based on our empirical findings. Finally, in Section 6 we speculate that our analysis of properties of genitives in Bashkir can be relevant for the typological study of so-called “external possessor constructions”.

2. Language, data and method

Bashkir is a Turkic language spoken by over a million of speakers living mainly in the Republic of Bashkortostan and some surrounding areas in Russia. Bashkir is
genetically and structurally very close to Tatar. The relationship between the two languages is further complicated by the fact that the two populations are geographically intermingled and sometimes mixed. Standard Bashkir is a written language with a well-developed literary tradition and also the official language in the Republic of Bashkortostan (along with Russian). It is primarily based on Eastern and, to some extent, Southern dialects of Bashkir.

The data for this study have been gathered during fieldwork (in the summers of 2011 and 2012) in the village of Rakhmetovo in the Eastern (Trans-Ural) part of Bashkortostan. All examples are presented in the system of transcription and glossing that was developed by the members of our research team.

The analysis is largely based on elicitation from native speakers. Russian was used as a contact language during fieldwork (all our consultants are bilingual in Bashkir and Russian). Wherever possible, data from transcripts of spontaneous speech and available written sources have also been used.

The elicited examples cited below result from both translating from Russian and grammaticality judgments about sentences which were made up. In some cases there was some degree of variation between the speakers when evaluating individual sentences. What is represented below by means of degree-of-grammaticality symbols\(^1\) is sometimes an average judgment resulting from several speakers (two to five in most cases). Although these symbols are thus somewhat conventional, what is most relevant for the present study is the comparison between constructions, and in this respect speakers were generally quite unanimous. For example, when evaluating the possibility of insertion in structures A and B a speaker could have judged A perfectly natural and B, rather awkward. A more restrictive speaker would probably claim A possible and B utterly ungrammatical. Whatever the averaged grammaticality judgments for these sentences are, in such a situation one can be quite confident that A is more separable than B.

3. Types of uses

As outlined above, this section contains a brief description of those types of possessive uses that we distinguished in our study. This classification is based primarily on semantic and pragmatic properties, although in some cases resultant types of uses

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1. An asterisk (*) marks sentences that were rejected, a question mark in superscript precedes sentences that received mixed judgments, “OK” in superscript is used for sentences that were evaluated as grammatical, and the lack of such symbols represents that the sentence was generated by our consultants.
have immediate grammatical repercussions. When outlining individual types of uses, we simultaneously take into account several partially independent properties, such as e.g. the nature of the predicate (it is particularly important when defining types a and b), the type of semantic relation between the possessor and the possessee (e.g. type c only involves possessee denoting body-parts), etc.

In this study, we are only concerned with those uses where the possessee functions as the subject of an independent clause, although in some cases the distinctions being made can be projected onto other syntactic positions.

a. The first type tightly corresponds to what is considered “predicative possessive constructions” in typological literature (for possible definitions, see Heine (1997: 25 ff.), Stassen (2009: 35)), cf. (1) above or (3).

(3) Mansur-ðəŋ ös ul-ə bar.
Mansur-gen three son-p.3 there.is
‘Mansur has three sons.’

The predicate in these constructions is bar ‘there is’ or juq ‘there is no’.

b. In the second type of use the possessee is in the subject relation to a verb which is, technically speaking, a non-agentive monovalent predicate, but the meaning of the verb is such that the possessor is normally highly affected by the event, cf. (4).

Mansur-gen head-p.3 ache-prs
‘Mansur has a headache.’ (lit. ‘Mansur’s head aches.’)

Although awərt- ‘ache’ is syntactically a monovalent verb, it denotes a bodily sensation experienced by a sentient participant which is syntactically construed as the possessor of the subject (body-part). Thus, the very meaning of the verb entails a highly affected possessor.2

There were also constructions with other types of possessees that were included in this group. For example, the most natural way to render the meaning ‘to be born (to)’ or ‘to give birth (to)’ in Bashkir is to use the verb təw- ‘be born’.

(5) Gölnaz-ðəŋ ul-ə təw-ðə.
Gulnaz-gen son-P.3 be.born-pst
‘Gulnaz gave birth to a son.’

2. Reznikova et al. (2012:443–446) provide a brief overview of possible models of syntactic construal for the domain of ‘pain’ in considerable sample of languages. It follows from their analysis that in most types of constructions the experiencer and the body part are coded as separate arguments of the verb so that monovalent structures like my leg hurts are typologically attested, but not predominant in this domain.
Again, the verb itself is monovalent, but the possessor of the subject referent is highly relevant and is often the topic.

c. In this type of use the subject position is occupied by a body-part term and the clause is headed by a change-of-state verb. The difference from uses like (4) above is that here the verb as such does not entail a possessor.

(6) Bulat-tnŋ kūd-e qādar-də.  
    Bulat-GEN eye-P.3 redden-PST  
    ‘Bulat’s eyes turned red.’

Whereas predicates from group b can be viewed as semantically bivalent (and in some languages their meanings are rendered by syntactically bivalent verbs), predicates like qādar- ‘to redden’ are not. There is some similarity, though, in terms of contextually created affectedness and “aboutness”, cf.: “in most contexts, body part terms have a low discourse status: what really matters is not so much the body part as such, but rather the affected person or animal” (Dahl & Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 209). The sentence in (6), for example, is likely to denote not so much a change in the physical condition of Bulat’s eyes as body-parts, but rather a particular sensation or an emotional state on the part of Bulat, who thus turns out to be a very relevant and topical possessor.

d. The next group consists of all other uses of genitival possessive constructions that were recruited for the study. For purposes of inter-group comparison we mainly used sentences with more or less agentive possessees in the subject position.

(7) Bulat-tnŋ aya-hə asqos-ə-n juyalt-qan.  
    Bulat-GEN elder.brother-P.3 key-P.3-ACC lose-P.C.PST  
    ‘Bulat’s elder brother has lost his key.’

Unlike uses from previous groups, here the posseessor is unlikely to be directly affected by the event. The main pragmatic function of the possessor in most of such uses is to serve as an anchor, or reference point, for the possessee, i.e. to fulfill the function that is sometimes considered to be central for referential possessors, see e.g. (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2002: 147–154) for a discussion. Note, however, that in previous groups of uses, the discourse role of the possessor was much richer than just that.

e. The final type of possessive uses is easily differentiated from all previous types morphosyntactically: in these uses the possessor is not marked for the genitive case, although the possessee does bear the usual possessive suffix.

(8) matematika uqatɔwɔsə-hə awɔŋə-j.  
    mathematics teacher-P.3 be.ill-PRS  
    ‘The mathematics teacher is ill.’
Between predicative and attributive possession in Bashkir

This type of head-marked construction is referred to as “the second izafet construction” by many turkologists (especially those working in the former USSR-based tradition) and is thus differentiated from the double-marked construction discussed above (“the third izafet construction”), see e.g. (van Schaaik 2002: 22ff) for the story of these somewhat misleading terms. There is abundant literature on the semantic basis of the distinction between the two types of izafet constructions in various Turkic languages (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2003: 649); see especially Grashchenkov (2007b) for an in-depth analysis of data from the closely related Tatar. There are differences between individual languages, but in a nutshell, the contrast is usually attributed to referentiality, specificity, or definiteness of the possessor: typically unmarked “possessors” are non-referential. The semantic and pragmatic underpinnings of the opposition between type e and the types of uses with possessors marked by the genitive are far from being clear-cut, but they won’t be discussed in any detail here (see Dmitriev 2008: 208–212). Whatever they are, there are crucial differences in syntactic properties of marked and unmarked “possessors”; see an extensive discussion of Tatar data, which seem to be very similar to Bashkir in this respect, in Grashchenkov (2007a). For example, marked possessors normally precede all types of nominal modifiers (demonstratives, quantifiers, adjectives, relative clauses etc.), whereas unmarked possessors are in the head-adjacent position.

Now that the working classification of types of uses has been presented, a remark of caution is in order. The classification above is not supposed to be exhaustive and conclusive. What we will claim below is that there are constituency-related differences between the uses we grouped under labels a, b, c, d and e. We are not claiming that there are no further differences that can ultimately call into question the integrity of types of uses as outlined above.

Moreover, the nature of individual types is, in all probability, not identical. For example, there is a very clear-cut borderline between type e (head-marked possessive construction) and all other types in terms of both morphology and syntax. This type is discussed below mainly for purposes of comparison; we are quite confident that all unmarked possessors show NP-internal status by all criteria, and it is highly unlikely that any subtypes can emerge here so that the unmarked possessors would turn out to be heterogeneous in terms of constituency.

Type a (predicative uses) is also relatively well-defined; it seems that there are no crucial constituency-related differences between, e.g. positive and negative sentences (‘Bulat has a car’ and ‘Bulat doesn’t have a car’) or differences attributable to ontological properties of the possessee (sentences like ‘Bulat has a car/a son/a beard’ showed identical constituency-related properties). It is, however, possible that we have overlooked some predicative possessive uses that are different from the ones we tested.
Types b (uses like ‘Bulat’s head aches’) and c (uses like ‘Bulat’s eyes reddened’) are, on the contrary, singled out in a very tentative way. They emerged through the study of constituency-related properties (see next Section 4) of individual uses that happened to be in our questionnaires. It is quite possible that current groupings are not accurate, either because there are other constructions that actually behave similarly, or because there are further semantic subdivisions, which we overlooked.

Type d is most problematic of all, as it emerged as a large residual zone in our study: it encompasses all genitival constructions that failed to belong to types a, b or c. It is quite possible that within this type there are further subtypes, which await finer analysis.

4. Constituency-related properties

4.1 Separability

Inseparability is the key property of constituents, as traditionally defined (a constituent used to be originally understood as a string of words with some further properties). Separability of the possessor + possessee combinations in predicative possessive constructions in many languages that employ the genitive strategy for coding this meaning is the property that is central for Stassen’s discussion on whether these constructions are indeed just combinations of a possessive noun phrase and an existential predicate (Stassen 2009: 114ff.), cf. also (König & Haspelmath 1997: 527), where separability is mentioned among constituency diagnostics for possessive constructions.

When checking Bashkir possessive constructions for (in)separability, we followed a two-step methodology.

First, we elicited a sentence pertaining to one of the types of uses outlined above without any material that could disrupt the possessor + possessee sequence and asked a speaker to add clause-level material (e.g. time adverbials) in the linear position where it would fit best. In case of types a (9) and b (10), for many speakers the first choice would be to place the adverbial immediately after the possessor, thus disrupting the linear unity of the alleged noun phrase:

(9) Bulat-təŋ küptän haqal-ə bar.
    Bulat-GEN long.ago beard-p.3 there.is
    ‘Bulat has been wearing a beard for a long time.’

(10) Bulat-təŋ bögün baš-ə awört-a.
    Bulat-GEN today head-p.3 ache-PRS
    ‘Bulat has a headache today.’

If, however, the first choice was different (as was usually the case with other types of use), we asked the consultants to evaluate three linear positions for the adverbial
(clause-initial, immediately after the possessor, and after the possessee) as preferable, possible or ungrammatical. Thus, for type c no speaker actually produced structure (11) themselves, but everyone judged it to be possible, for type d the judgments were somewhat mixed (12), and finally for type e the position of the adverbial within the possessive combination was unequivocally claimed ungrammatical (13).

(11)  
\[ \text{Bulat-təŋ böğön qul-ə qədar-yan.} \]
\[ \text{Bulat-}\text{gen today hand-p.3 redden-}\text{pc.pst} \]
\[ '\text{Bulat’s hands reddened today.’} \]

(12)  
\[ \text{Bulat-təŋ böğön həjər-ə kärtä-he-n jemer-gän.} \]
\[ \text{Bulat-}\text{gen today cow-p.3 fence-p.3-acc destroy-pc.pst} \]
\[ '\text{Today Bulat’s cow broke his fence.’} \]

(13)  
\[ *\text{Matematika böğön uqətwəsə-hə awərə-p kit-kän} \]
\[ \text{mathematics today teacher-p.3 be.ill-cv go.away-pc.pst} \]
\[ \text{Intended meaning: ‘Today the mathematics teacher fell ill.’} \]

Of course, the methodology employed here has its limits. Whenever a speaker is asked to produce a grammaticality judgment about a particular linear order, the hidden task is to imagine such a context in which this order would be appropriate. In case of a positive answer (11), we may be more or less confident that the possessor is indeed separable, as is the case with our types a, b and c. An answer in the negative, however, can be so for various reasons; for example, whereas the speakers were reluctant to accept (12) as grammatical, it could be the case that other uses of type d could have been judged grammatical. Unmarked possessors, however, are inseparable from the possessee even within their noun phrases, let alone by clause-level material.

Our finding that genitive possessors can be separable from their respective possessee is not without precedence in Turkic linguistics. For example, separability in Turkish predicative possessive constructions, which are parallel to those in Bashkir, is the “proof” used by Lewis (1967:246–247) when he claims that these structures do not involve an adnominal possessive construction plus an existential predicate and

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3. It is briefly mentioned in (Juldashev (ed.) 1981:123–124) that genitival possessors in Bashkir can be located “discontinuously” relative to the head noun. However, on closer inspection the examples that are intended to illustrate this point appear to be uninformative since in all of them the intervening material belongs to the same noun phrase. It is thus not clear whether it was only implied that there can be other modifiers between the genitival possessor and the head (which is a well-established fact) or that there are indeed discontinuous possessive constructions in Bashkir.
that their syntactic grouping is in fact such that the possessor behaves as a separate constituent. 4

Although even the data on separability alone do highlight the differences between types of possessive uses in Bashkir, we have to bear in mind that “habitual discontinuity may be indicative of a low degree of phrasal integration; but it does not suffice to disprove phrasehood” (Plank 2003: 5). In the following subsections we turn to other criteria related to constituency.

4.2 Personal pronouns and proper names as possessees

Personal pronouns, as well as some other types of expressions, e.g. proper names, are expected to have syntactic distribution similar to that of whole noun phrases rather than nouns or other parts of noun phrases. This property can be employed as a constituency diagnostics: if a personal pronoun can be used as the possessee along with a possessor, it can be conjectured that they actually are not parts of an integrated noun phrase, cf. a brief mention of this diagnostics in (König & Haspelmath 1997: 528).

For the 1st and 2nd persons Bashkir possesses genuine personal pronouns, but for the 3rd person it makes use of several demonstratives, none of which is fully grammaticalised into a real personal pronoun. In particular, the 1st and 2nd person personal pronouns seem to be the only type of referential expressions that do not take possessive suffixes. It could be expected that this property of real personal pronouns along with their NP-equivalent status would make it impossible to use such a pronoun as a possessee. However, even the real personal pronouns can sometimes be used as possessees in predicative possessive constructions (type a) without any possessive suffix, as in the last retort of the following dialogue:

(14) A. Qäðerle-m, hineŋ xzjal-əŋ bar-mə?
dear-p.1sg, thou.gen dream-p.2sg there.is-q

B. Bar ine.
there.is be.pst

4. It should be noted, though, that Lewis expectably contrasts just two types of structures: predicative possessive constructions (our type a), which are shown to be separable, and the “usual” izafet constructions, which are claimed to be inseparable (Lewis 1967:246–247). The latter category seems to correspond to our types b, c and d together. If Lewis’ observations are accurate, it would mean that Turkish makes an a vs. b+c+d distinction with respect to separability, unlike Bashkir, which rather makes an a+b+c vs. d distinction. It can be noticed, though, that Lewis’ inseparable examples all involve uses that we’d classify as belonging to type d, so it remains unclear whether Turkish genitival constructions behave differently from those in Bashkir in terms of separability, or finer distinction between various types of uses would give the results similar to those observed for Bashkir.
A. Ä xäder?
and now

B. Ä xäder mineŋ hin bar.
and now I.gen thou there.is
(taken from yeshlek-gazeta.ru, webpage of a Bashkir newspaper)

‘Darling, do you have a dream?’ – ‘I used to have one’ – ‘And now? –
‘And now I have you’

Other NP-equivalent expressions can also be used as a possessee in the predicative
possessive construction, but they obligatorily bear possessive suffixes: this is true of
both demonstrative pronouns (15)–(16) and proper nouns (17).

(15) Murat-təŋ unəhə =la bar ənəhə=la bar.
Murat-gen that.p.3 =even there.is this.p.3=even there.is
‘Murat has this, Murat has that.’ (= ‘Murat has a lot of things.’)

(16) Mineŋ aqəl-əm bar, a unəhə unəhə =la juq.
I.gen mind-p.1sg there.is and I.gen that.p.3 =even there.is.no
‘I have brains, and he doesn’t.’

(17) OK Gölnaz-dəŋ malaj-ə bar, a mineŋ Mujnak-əm bar.
Gulnaz-gen boy-p.3 there.is and I.gen Mujnak-p.1sg there.is
‘Gulnaz has a son, and I have Mujnak.’ (Mujnak is a common dog name)

The ability of personal pronouns and proper nouns to function as possessees can be
regarded as an argument against phrase-internal status of possessors in predicative
possessive constructions like (14)–(17). In all non-predicative types of possessive con-
structions NP-equivalent expressions were claimed to be ungrammatical in the posi-
tion of the possessee, cf. the following contrived example of a type b use:

(18) *Bögün Murat-təŋ unəhə awərt-a.
today Murat-gen that.p.3 ache-prs
{Left context: after drinking beer one’s head usually aches.} ‘For example,
today Murat’s head aches.’

5. It can be noticed that the pronouns used in (15) and (16) differ in terms of their refer-
etential status. In (15) ul ‘this’ and bəl ‘that’ are used non-specifically, cf. They haven't installed
my telephone yet (Partee 2004:52). In (16) the pronoun ul ‘this’ is used as a substitute of the
antecedent NP but is not co-referent with it, cf. (Partee 2004:116–117) for the discussion of
various approaches to this kind of pronominal use under the label of so-called “pronouns of
laziness”. These examples were suggested by one of the consultants as possible sentences with
unəhə ‘this.P.3’ and evaluated as grammatical by several other speakers. However, some exam-
pies similar to (16) were claimed to be ungrammatical by the same speakers, so it might be the
case that the pronominalization of the possessee with demonstrative pronouns is restricted to
a number of set phrases only and is not fully productive.
Thus, this criterion makes a distinction between predicative possessive construction (type a), where the possessor and the possessee behave as if they are not parts of a single constituent, and all other types of use at issue (types b–e), where the evidence is opposite.

4.3 Interrogative and negative pronouns as possessees

Personal pronouns are not the only type of pronominal expressions whose use can be indicative of constituency structure. Syntactic distribution of other pronouns, such as interrogative and negative pronouns like ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘nobody,’ etc. (in Bashkir, as in many other languages, these two classes are related to each other), can be used as evidence for constituency following the same line as was discussed in Section 4.2 for personal pronouns. The results of these tests are, however, different. Indeed, in this case pronouns can function as possessees not only in type a uses, but also in uses of type b and even c, as in the following example:

(19) Murat-təŋ ber nāmā-he =lä qəddar-ma-yən.
Murat-gen one thing-p.3 even redden-NEG-PC.PST

{Left context: bees have stung Murat all over, however} ‘No part of Murat’s turned red.’ (lit. ‘Murat’s nothing reddened.’).

It could be hypothesized that the grammaticality of (19), as opposes to, e.g. ungrammaticality of (18) is attributable to the fact that the negative pronoun ber nāmā lä ‘nothing’ does not behave as a whole noun phrase, but can also be used as a fragment. It must be partially true, at the very least there is evidently a difference in the properties of personal vs. negative pronouns. However, importantly, it is not in all types of possessive uses that negative and interrogative pronouns can function as possessees. For example, in genitival constructions of type d (cf. (20) below) the use of an interrogative pronoun in the position of the possessee was judged ungrammatical in the intended meaning and considered possible only as an echo-question in case the subject NP was not properly heard.

(20) Murat-təŋ kem-e aṣqəs-ə-n juyalt-qan?
Murat-gen who-P.3 key-P.3-ACC lose-PC.PST

*‘Who (of Murat’s family) has lost his keys?’

Nor can negative and interrogative pronouns be used as possessees in constructions with unmarked possessors (type e). Thus, whatever the syntactic nature of the pronouns at issue, their behaviour draws a dividing line between types a, b, c, on the one hand, and types d and e, on the other hand.

4.4 Relativization: Possessor remaining within the relative clause

The main relativization strategy employed in Bashkir is the participial “gap” strategy: the relativized noun phrase is not represented within the relative clause by any overt material.
What is important for us here is that the gap substitutes for the whole noun phrase, not its nominal head or any other fragment. By contrast, clause-level material is expected to remain within the relative clause under relativization. This property makes relativization of *possessees* (sic! not to be confused with the widely studied problem of the position of possessors on the accessibility hierarchy) a potential tool for studying constituency. However, there are two complications with this criterion.

First, Bashkir does not allow for relativization of the possessee based on the basic predicative possessive construction (type a). In other words, it is not possible to derive a relative clause from the structure like (1) (with the intended meaning like ‘the car that Mansur has’). This is probably partly a morphological rather than a syntactic constraint, as *bar* ‘there is’ and *juq* ‘there isn’t’ morphologically are not verbs (see Dmitriev [2008: 64] on their nominal origin) and don’t have participles. In any event, this criterion is inapplicable to uses of type a.

Second, due to the structure of the relative clause and the ordering of nominal modifiers in Bashkir, the basic sentence with a relativized possessor cannot be diagnostic of whether the possessor is a phrase-internal or a clause-level constituent. Consider the following example:

(22) *Morat-tnŋ qal-y an berdn-ber kūd-e bik nasar kūr-ā.*
    murat-gen remain-pc.pst sole-one eye-p.3 very bad see-prs

‘Murat’s only remaining eye sees badly.’

Provided that genitival possessors always precede all other types of nominal modifiers, there are two potential analyses for this sentence. A more natural one is that the possessor (*Morattŋ*) is the first of the three modifiers of the head noun and the relative clause consists of just a participle. Indeed, genitival possessors always precede all other types of modifiers, so this analysis is in full accord with the observed order of elements. The constituent structure of modifiers in (22) under this analysis could be partially highlighted as ‘[Murat’s] only [remaining] eye sees badly’. Our question is, however, whether it is at all impossible that the possessor is within the relative clause, which is not precluded by the word order. The constituent structure would then be something like ‘the only eye [that remains [to Murat]] sees badly’.

There is no basis for choosing between the two alternatives for this example, except for projecting our expectations from the syntax of other languages, which would definitely favour the first alternative: indeed, it is unusual for a canonical possessor to remain within the clause when the possessee is relativised (cf. *I put it in the bag, which John’s was big enough*).
However, it is possible to create specific conditions that could unequivocally indicate that the genitival possessor is within the relative clause despite the fact that the possessee is gapped, as in the following example:

(23) \[ \text{Ike säyät elek Bulat-tən tətön-gä qədər-yən} \]
\[ \text{two hour earlier Bulat-GEN smoke-DAT redden-PST} \]
\[ \text{küd-dər-e xäde r jəslən-ep tor-a.} \]
\[ \text{eye-PL-P.3 now water-CV stand-PRS} \]

‘Bulat’s eyes, which turned red because of smoke two hours ago, are now watering.’ (more literally ‘The eyes [which of Bulat turned red because of smoke two hours ago] are now watering.’)

The crucial property of this example is that there is a time adverbial ‘two hours ago’ that clearly belongs to the relative clause and has it in its scope. One can thus conclude that the possessor belongs to the relative clause as well (scrambling that violates clause boundaries is not attested elsewhere in Bashkir).

Of course, structures of this kind are not very common in everyday life of a Bashkir speaker and it is not always easy to elicit them. However, it is worth noting that this and all similar structures that received positive grammaticality judgments from at least some speakers belonged to types c (23) or b. Sentences with stranded possessors belonging to types d and e were invariably declined as ungrammatical. Whatever the exact nature of this phenomenon, we can conclude that at least some possessors of type b and c can show behaviour which is expected for clause-level dependents.

4.5 Pronominal possessors: Presence of a free pronoun

Free pronouns that denote possessors in Bashkir are always marked for the genitive case. Other morphosyntactic aspects of pronominal possessive constructions are more flexible. The distribution of possible structures in Bashkir possessive constructions with pronominal possessors is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Bashkir pronominal possessive constructions: coding devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1SG &amp; 2SG</th>
<th>1PL &amp; 2PL</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Possessee-P</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Pronoun-GEN Possessee-P</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Pronoun-GEN Possessee</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. This means that possessive constructions of type e are incompatible with pronominal possessors. This is not surprising given that in this type of construction “possessors” are mostly non-referential and often function as qualitative modifiers.
We will not be concerned here with the choice that arises for 3rd person possessors. Dependent-marking pattern (C) is not possible here. The choice between options A and B is in fact a part of the usual three-way choice for expressing non-locutors: the possessor can be referred to by a full noun phrase (not shown in the table), by a pronoun (pattern B) or by zero (pattern A).

Nor will we discuss the choice that arises for 1st and 2nd person plural possessors. The basic option here, especially for the young speakers, is dependent-marking (C), although options A and B are also possible. In short, this fact reflects relatively low degree of grammaticalization of 1st and 2nd person plural possessive suffixes.

For the 1st and 2nd person singular possessors the situation is completely different. Here, the use of possessive suffixes is (almost) obligatory. Thus, in every such case the reference of the possessor is exhaustively established by the possessive suffix and the use of an independent pronoun is semantically redundant. This fact is mentioned in traditional grammars of Bashkir; for example, both in (Dmitriev 2008:63) and (Juldashev (ed.) 1981:123) it is noticed that although grammatically structures of type A and B are both possible and interchangeable, the more economic structure A is the basic option, which is preferred in neutral contexts.

Unlike previous sections, where we were concerned with grammaticality judgments, which had more or less direct consequences for the understanding of constituency structure, in this part of our study we were mostly interested in speakers’ preferences. We employed the following technique: speakers were presented with Bashkir sentences with 3rd person singular possessor (e.g. ‘Bulat’s brother lives in Ufa’). We then asked them to produce a sentence that the possessor could use for the same meaning (e.g. ‘My brother lives in Ufa’). We mainly paid attention to the version which was produced first, although we then asked whether the alternative construction could have also been used.

The data we obtained through this experiment-like technique generally confirm the observations above; in particular, most speakers judged both structures like A and B possible. However, speakers’ on-the-spot reactions were not identical for various types of possessive constructions. Indeed, our data fully confirm the usual claims with respect to “ordinary” possessive constructions (type d; same results were also obtained for type c): in this case most speakers’ first spontaneous reaction was to use the more economic structure:

\[
\text{Ayaj-əm gripp menän awərə-j.}
\]

‘My elder brother has the flu.’

7. Potential deviations are mentioned in (Dmitriev 2008:63), but are virtually unattested in our data.
However, for uses of type a (predicative possessive construction) a completely different picture has been observed. Speakers definitely prefer the redundant pattern, and sometimes were even reluctant to accept the usual economic pattern:

\[(25)\] 
\[
(Mineg) \ haqal-əm \ bar.
\]
L/gen beard-p.1sg there.is
'I wear a beard.'

For uses of type b the reactions were mixed, so that both options were used as on-the-spot renditions for intended meanings:

\[(26)\] 
\[
(Mineg) \ ul-əm \ təw-ðə.
\]
L/gen son-p.1sg be.born-pst
'A son has been born to me.'

Thus, the uses we checked displayed the following hierarchy: a (predicative possessive construction, possessor tends to be expressed by both a suffix and a free pronoun) > b > c, d (possessor is usually expressed by a suffix only).

This evidence is related to the main theme in a somewhat tangential manner, as in fact both phrase-level and clause-level possessors can be omitted. However, one can expect that such a construal in which the possessor is perceived as a full-fledged participant of an event can account for the speakers’ willingness to use a seemingly redundant free pronoun in sentences like (25) and (26). If so, the obtained data can be viewed as oblique evidence for clause-level status of possessors in structures of type a and, to a lesser extent, b.

4.6 Ellipsis of the possessee

In Bashkir, the possessor NP is obligatorily marked with a dedicated suffix -\textit{nəqə} (\textit{pnm\textsubscript{l}iz}) or its allomorphs (not the ordinary genitive case marker) whenever there is no possessee in the expected position to the right of the possessor. The distribution of possessors bearing this suffix is reminiscent of the use of English forms like \textit{hers} or \textit{yours} (but is not limited to pronominal possessors). This rule applies regardless of the reasons that account for the syntactic absence of the possessee; for example, the suffix is registered when the possessee is omitted due to ellipsis (cf. \textit{My book is on the table. Where is hers?}), or when the possessor is used as the head of a non-verbal predicate (cf. (27) and \textit{This car is hers} in English):

\[(27)\] 
\[
Bəl \ kitap Bulat-təqə.
\]
this book Bulat-p.nm\textsubscript{l}iz
'This book is Bulat's.'

The easiest way to capture this rule is to word it in terms of constituent structure. Indeed, if one assumes that normally the possessor constitutes a part of a phrase
headed by the possessee, the shortest way to describe the use of -naqə is to say that it obligatorily marks headless possessors. By contrast, without reference to the alleged phrasehood of the usual possessor + possessee combinations, it would be very difficult to capture the distribution of -naqə: it would not be easy to formulate what is specific to contexts where -naqə is in fact obligatorily used.

Interestingly, the use of -naqə seems to obey the same simple rule irregardless of the type of use of the possessive construction in the above sense. For example, even in predicative possessive construction (for which the phrasehood of possessor + possessee combinations is most problematic) -naqə is obligatory whenever the possessee is omitted for this or that reason:

(28) Morat-təŋ əqəð-ə bar, ä Bulat-təqə juq.
Murat-gen girl-p.3 there.is and Bulat-N.NMLZ NEG.COP
‘Murat has a daughter, and Bulat doesn’t.’

The use of this suffix is one of few rules that treat constructions with genitive possessors (types a through d in our classification) more or less on a par with constructions with unmarked possessors (type e). Although the structure in (27) sounds somewhat unnatural for some speakers, they all agree that the headless possessor (tarix ‘history’) cannot remain unmarked in the following example:

(29) Matematika uqətəwəsə-hə awərə-j, ä
mathematics teacher-p.3 be.ill-PRS and
ɔktarix-təqə / *tarix awərə-mə-j.
history-P.NMLZ / history be.ill-NEG-PRS
‘The teacher of mathematics is ill, and the one of history is not ill.’

If one assumes that the suffix -naqə (p.NMLZ) obligatorily marks headless possessors, we have to conclude that the lack of this marker is a criterion for the phrasehood of the possessor + possessee combinations. Under this assumption, with respect to this criterion in all types of possessive uses discussed in our study (a–e) possessors behave as phrase-level modifiers.

5. Generalizations and discussion

We are now in a position to summarize the distribution of constituency-related properties in various types of possessive uses in Bashkir, see Table 2.8

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8. Types of uses are indicated by letters, as introduced in Section 3: (a) stands for predicative possessive uses like ’Mansur has three sons’ (3); (b) stands for uses that like ’Mansur has a headache’, = literally ’Mansur’s head aches’ (4); (c) stands for uses like ’Bulat’s eyes turned red’
Table 2. Clause-level (Cl) and phrase-level (Ph) properties of Bashkir possessors: the five types of uses compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d/Ph</th>
<th>e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separability (see 4.1)</td>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>Cl/Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative and negative pronouns as possessees (see 4.3)</td>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativization of possessee (see 4.4)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Cl(?)</td>
<td>Cl(?)</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronominal possessor (see 4.5)</td>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>Cl/Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal pronouns and proper names as possessees (see 4.2)</td>
<td>Cl(?)</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellipsis of possessee (Section 4.6)</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Ph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 2 allow us to make a number of empirical generalizations.

First, type e (unmarked possessors) is the only type of use that demonstrates straightforward results with respect to various constituency-related properties: in this type of use “possessors” clearly belong to the noun phrase headed by the possessee. This is not surprising if one takes into account the semantics of such uses: unmarked possessors are typically non-referential and often function as qualitative modifiers to nouns. Unmarked possessor construction (type e) is not discussed any further.

The distribution of syntactic properties for types a, b, c and d shows a more complicated pattern, despite identity in coding technique (double-marking). All these types differ with respect to constituency-related properties and, moreover, every one of them shows a somewhat mixed behaviour.

We can now recall that our investigation arose from the problem sketched by Stassen (2009:114–122): what is the constituent structure in predicative possessive constructions in a language that employs the genitive strategy. The initial question was whether we can analyze Bashkir structure for ‘Mansur has a car’ (type a) as simply consisting of the noun phrase denoting ‘Mansur’s car’ (as in ‘Mansur’s car is red’, type d) and an existential predicate. An alternative is to view the possessor as a clause-level element that happens to coincide in morphological form with the phrase-internal possessor.

If one now compares the data for types a and d in Table 2, it would be tempting to favour the former answer, as the two types of uses clearly differ in terms of their

(6); (d) stands for most uses with referential possessors like ‘Bulat’s brother lost his key’ (7) and finally (e) stands for uses with unmarked (typically non-specific) possessors, like ‘mathematics teacher’ (8).
constituency-related properties. We can immediately notice, though, that even when comparing uses a and d only, one has to somehow explain why in type a the possessor shows at least one property characteristic of phrase-internal possessors (ellipsis-sensitivity) and why in type d there are some properties that are not quite expected for phrase-internal possessors (separability, albeit limited).

It is, however, crucial that the overall picture is more complicated. Indeed, there are uses that occupy positions between types a and d, namely, uses b (like in 'Gulnaz gave birth to a daughter,' lit. 'Gulnaz’s daughter was born') and c ('Mansur’s eyes reddened').

The four genitival uses that we distinguish form a hierarchy a > b > c > d (and > e at the extreme of the hierarchy) so that the possessors in uses higher on the hierarchy have more properties of clause-level elements, whereas possessors lower on the hierarchy have more properties of phrase-internal dependents.

The facts we observe make it problematic to classify Bashkir genitives into two clearly distinct constructions: the attributive possessive construction, where the genitive NP is part of the noun phrase headed by the possessee, and the predicative possessive construction, where the genitive NP is not part of such a noun phrase and functions as a clause-level element. This two-way distinction, although it has a good record in typological studies (Heine 1997: 25–29), cannot adequately capture the heterogeneous behaviour of possessive constructions in Bashkir.

Instead, we propose to interpret the observed data in the following way.

i. Bashkir genitival construction is “mixed” in the sense of (Lander 2004: 317 ff). Yu. Lander applies this label to such patterns that share properties of internal possessors and external possessors. All examples cited by Yu. Lander are constructions that are not basic possessive patterns in their respective languages. However, nothing rules out the possibility that a language can employ a mixed pattern as the basic means of coding possession. We will postpone the discussion of the relevance of our data for the typology of external possessor construction until Section 6.

ii. Bashkir genitival constructions are inherently weakly integrated and can show palpable signs of disintegration in some discursive contexts. This gives rise to the following question: is there any connection between the recruitment of the genitive strategy for coding predicative possession and weaker (compared to

9. Unfortunately, we did not have access to sufficient amount of discourse data to truly investigate those discourse factors that account for the differences in the degree of phrase integration. However, the nature of those tangible contrasts that did show up in our elicitation tasks (e.g. the fact that animate, linearly initial, inherently topical and affected possessors show less properties of NP-internal constituents) makes us firmly believe that the real factors that account for syntactic differences are related to the domain of discourse.
other languages) integration in attributive possessive constructions (or any other intrinsic features of genitival constructions as such)? This typological question is to be inquired into elsewhere. It can be noticed, however, that this question can be of special importance for the study of the languages of Asia, and especially of Altaic languages. Indeed, in Stassen’s 240-languages sample there were 22 (approximately 9%) languages that employ the genitive strategy for coding predicative possession (Stassen 2005). Out of these 22, 16 languages are spoken in Asia, which makes this strategy more popular in this continent than elsewhere. Johanson (1998: 56) considers the genitive strategy as the basic predicative possessive strategy for Turkic, cf. also an overview of other Altaic languages of this type in (Stassen 2009: 299–306).

iii. It was found that in Bashkir syntactic properties of morphologically identical possessive constructions greatly vary depending on semantic and pragmatic properties of uses. The very fact that various genitival uses can differ with respect to syntactic properties depending on the semantic content (and despite identity of surface form) is not typologically unprecedented. For example, Polinsky and Comrie (1999: 539) report that:

[T]he constraint against relativization of genitives in Tsez is overridden for genitives if the possessor and possessum are in a highly predictable relation and/or the predicate of the relative clause is an intransitive unaccusative verb.

iv. The hypothesis in (ii) inevitably leads to the question of what exactly are the discourse factors that can trigger violation of phrasehood in Bashkir genitival uses. Unfortunately, we have had almost no access to spontaneous discourse data, and we have to rely upon tangential evidence when hunting out the discourse factors behind distinctions we observe. The main cue at our disposal is the hierarchy of types of uses that emerged from our questionnaire. Based on this hierarchy, we can hypothesize that the basic factor behind clause-level behaviour of possessors is its high relevance for the content of the clause. A discussion of existing approach to the notion of “relevant possessors” can be found in (Lander 2004); it is shown in this paper that there is no clear consensus with respect to this notion. However, the hierarchy that emerged in this paper hints at one aspect of relevance which is most important for us: the relevance of a possessor reflects the likeliness of its being construed as an entity that is directly involved in the proposition in which the possessee functions as an argument. Thusly understood, the relevance is not of course a scalar phenomenon, but rather forms a continuum. However, the five types of uses that we employed (a > b > c > d > e) are sui generis discrete “probes” on the continuous semantic-pragmatic space and are clearly found in that order on this continuum. Indeed, in predicative possessive uses (type a) the possessor is indispensable: here, the possession is predicated of it. Uses that have the literal
structure ‘Bulat’s head aches’ (type b) theoretically can be one-place propositions but their usual function in discourse is to describe protagonist’s (possessor’s) bodily sensations. Uses like ‘Bulat’s eyes reddened’ (type c) are ambivalent; ‘Bulat’ can be just a reference point (e.g. for an ophthalmologist), but a more natural context for such a clause is a context where the possessor is highly relevant. Uses of type d, e.g. ‘Bulat’s brother has lost his keys’, are neutral in terms of possessor’s relevance. Except for a very special discourse context the possessor here cannot be understood as directly involved in the event or affected by it; however, it can serve as a referential anchor for the possessee. In uses of type e (‘mathematics teacher’) possessors normally are not even referential, let alone relevant.

In short, our hypothesis is that the five-way distinction of types of uses is a snapshot of the degree of possessor’s relevance. If this is true, our main empirical finding is a clear instance of semantics-to-syntax iconicity: the higher the relevance of the possessor for the meaning of the clause, the more properties of a clause-level element it shows in terms of syntax.

Such a correlation between relevance for the meaning of the clause and non-phrasal nature of possessors is well established in the typological literature for external possessors. In the remaining section we will discuss the insights that the Bashkir data above can bring to the study of external possessor constructions.

6. On the nature of external-possessor constructions: A speculation

An often-quoted definition of external possessor construction runs as follows:

External possessor constructions are constructions in which a semantic possessor-possessum relation is expressed (i) by coding the possessor as a core grammatical relation of the verb and (ii) in a constituent separate from that which contains the possesum. (iii) Despite being coded as a core argument, the possessor phrase is not licensed by the argument frame of the verb root itself (König 2001:971).

It can be noticed that this definition mostly relies upon syntactic properties of constructions. A typical example of this phenomenon is the following German construction cited in the same source:

(30)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Mir} & \quad \text{zittern} & \quad \text{die Hände.} \\
\text{me.DAT} & \quad \text{shake.3PL} & \quad \text{the hands} \\
\end{align*}

‘My hands are shaking.’ (König 2001:970)

10. Nikolaeva (2005) shows that the same set of discourse- or construal-related factors can simultaneously govern the use of external possessor constructions and the choice between two internal-possessor constructions in several Uralic languages.
The dative possessor in this structure (mir) can be easily shown to be outside the phrase headed by the possessee (die Hände): they are non-adjacent, in the first place, but there are further syntactic arguments related to pronominalization, passivization, inversion and other syntactic phenomena (König & Haspelmath 1997: 526–529).

External possessor constructions are reported to (almost?) always co-exist with internal possessor constructions, that is, with constructions in which the possessor is an adnominal modifier (König 2001: 972), like mein 'my' in German. In other words, it is often assumed that languages can lack an external possessor construction but must have an internal possessor construction.

This is the usual starting point for studying the semantics and pragmatics of external possessor constructions: external possessors are usually analysed against the background of the “usual” adnominal possessors. For example, in order to understand the semantic purport of German dative possessors it is wise to view individual uses of possessive constructions as what Rosenbach (2002: 27 ff.) calls “choice contexts” and to determine those factors that regulate speakers’ choices.

Under such an approach, explicit or implicit, external possessor constructions in many languages are shown to be a dedicated means for coding possessors that are topical and/or strongly affected by the event, whereas internal possessor constructions are often neutral in these respects (Kibrik 2003). These general functions of external possessor constructions can often account for less general and language-specific semantic and pragmatic nuances as well as constraints in the use of external possessor constructions.

We are now in a position to unveil an assumption that is intrinsic to the logic of most inquiries into the nature of external possessor constructions (as briefly recapitulated above), but usually is not made explicit (to the best of our knowledge). Most researchers assume that the coding means employed in external possessor constructions have to be formally (morphologically) distinct from those employed in internal possessor construction. This tacit assumption has immediate analytic consequences: morphological patterns often serve as ready-made “identity cards” for individual syntactic constructions.¹¹ In other words, the taxonomy of constructions is often based on morphology rather than syntax (e.g. constituency tests as such). In German for

¹¹. A notable exception here is Nikolaeva’s (2005) study of possessors in some Ob-Ugric and Samoyedic languages. In many respects her data and analysis are similar to ours. In particular, Nikolaeva shows that the topicalisation of possessors in Nenets and Ostyak correlates with the use of the external possessor construction, which, nevertheless, involve morphological devices that are fully identical to those employed in internal possessor constructions. Nikolaeva’s data (or analysis?) are different from ours in that external and internal possessor constructions are presented as two discrete types of structure that, apart from identical morphology, systematically pattern differently with respect to other properties.
instance, it can be easily shown that dative possessors can be discontinuous in some uses, as in (30). This and similar observations often count as evidence for the conclusion that other dative possessors in German are external (including those that, e.g. happen to be adjacent to possessees).

The whole picture boils down to the following model that is tacitly assumed when analyzing languages that have an external possessor construction.

i. When facing the need to express the idea of possession, a speaker has to choose between two constructions with clearly distinct surface forms. This choice can be intricately determined by many factors, such as affectedness, animacy and topicality of the possessor, the semantic of the verb etc.

ii. However, the outcome is always discrete: the speaker ends up choosing one of the constructions available, which is clearly manifested by the use of morphological forms.

iii. Constituency-related properties are construction-specific, so that there is a fixed association between the construction (= morphological means) chosen and the external vs. internal status of the possessor. Wherever the external possessor construction is chosen, the combination of the possessor and the possessee is expected not to behave as a single phrase. However, these manifestations are associated with the constructions, rather than with the discourse factors (see i) as such, see e.g. (Leontjev 2008) for such an approach.

When confronted with the Bashkir data presented above (see Section 5 for their summary), such an implicit model runs into serious problems. Even if we put aside uses of type a (the predicative possessive construction, which is thought to be beyond the usual external vs. internal possessor dichotomy) and type e (which is morphologically distinct from other types of use) we have to face the fact that in Bashkir constituency-related properties of possessors differ in uses of types b, c and d despite the identity of coding means. Imagine one applies the usual logic to Bashkir data, that is, bases the taxonomy of constructions on coding devices and extrapolates disproval of phrase- hood for a particular use of a construction onto its other uses. Under such an approach one would have to acknowledge that the genitival construction in Bashkir is an external possessor construction in some instances and external possessor constructions in others.

12. For the sake of simplicity, we now disregard the possibility that there may be more than two types of coding devices employed in possessive constructions.

13. An important exception here is the study by Lander (2004). As already mentioned above, Lander admits that there are “mixed” possessive constructions. As far as we can judge, however, what is implied by Lander is that there are structures that pass some constituency tests, but not others, rather than that there are morphological devices that serve internal possessor constructions in some instances and external possessor constructions in others.
possessor construction, as indeed in some uses the possessor marked by the genitive does behave as a clause-level constituent. Such a conclusion is of course counterintuitive: in uses of type d, which can be thought of as a default type of marked possessor constructions in Bashkir, possessors normally behave as phrase-internal constituents, and it looks absurd to ascribe to these possessors the external status based on other uses of the same morphological form.

Instead of applying the usual, albeit partly implicit, model to new data that do not fit into it, we propose to partly revise the model itself. We think that in Bashkir there is a direct link between the properties of contexts related to the relevance of the possessor and various syntactic properties discussed in Section 4. For example, in contexts with more relevant possessors a speaker may choose to express it within a relative clause where the possessee is relativised, whereas this never happens in contexts with less relevant possessors (see Section 4.4). Only very relevant possessors can be preferably expressed by both a possessive affix and a genitive form of 1SG or 2SG pronoun, whereas for less relevant possessors this option is clearly disfavoured (see Section 4.5); etc.

However, the degree of relevance of the possessor doesn’t influence the choice of coding means for the possessor: all referential possessors are uniformly coded by the genitive case. In other words, the genitive as a morphological means has a wide spectrum of discourse flexibility ranging from non-relevant possessors that serve merely as referential anchors to most relevant ones. In still other words, a single coding device, the genitive case, covers those domains that are typologically associated with predicative possessive constructions, external possessor constructions and internal possessor constructions. Our conclusion that Bashkir genitives can be in some contexts functionally analogous to external possessors of other languages is obliquely supported by the observation that in Bashkir there is no other, morphologically distinct, external possessor constructions. Probably the reason is that they are simply unnecessary! In other words, there might be intrinsic connection between the weak phrasal integration of genitives and the lack of alternative means for coding possessors. This is of course a possible task of typological inquiry: it would be tempting to check whether in languages that lack (morphologically distinct) external possessors the usual “internal” possessors are syntactically more loosely associated with possessees than in languages with genuine external possessors.

This brings us to another issue which was so far at the background of the discussion of internal vs. external possessor status of Bashkir genitive possessors. Our inquiry into the constituency status of Bashkir genitive possessors showed that even for the small set of the types of uses we studied the notion of constituency seems to be evanescent as there are almost as many different sets of properties that could be viewed as indicative of constituency status as there are constructions. Thus, it can be called into question that the notion of constituency is needed for the analysis of
Bashkir data presented in the study. These data are less problematic for an approach that treats constituency as merely a conventional tool of description, a sui generis shortcut that encompasses a set of several loosely related properties. However, non-consistent behaviour with respect to these properties is not abnormal. The syntactic properties of Bashkir genitive possessors are secondary to and derivative of the semantic and pragmatic properties typically associated with different types of possessors. Our analysis is in line with the proposals made in (Langacker 1997), where the “classical constituents” are viewed as emergent from semantic and phonological grouping, and (Bybee 2002), where the major role is attributed to the frequency of co-occurrence of items, whereas the notion of constituent turns out to be in some cases inadequate, and in others, redundant. What we see in Bashkir possessive constructions can be described by the combination of the two approaches. Viewed as generalized types of use, their degree of deviation from the NP-internal status seems to be in the direct relation to the degree of semantic and pragmatic salience of the possessor. But if we look at these uses from the speaker’s point of view, we are inclined to believe that the speaker’s judgments come from the speaker’s experience of perception and production of various uses of genitive possessors and that the speaker is more likely to evaluate as grammatical those structures they more often hear and produce. However, to prove this belief we would have to carry out at least as much as a corpus study of Bashkir possessive constructions.

In a nutshell, our basic claim is that in Bashkir, where all referential possessors are coded by the genitive case, there is a direct link between the degree of relevance of the possessor and the extent to which it behaves as a clause-level constituent. This link is not mediated by the choice between two discrete morphological forms. If this conclusion is correct, it can also be a lesson to bear in mind when studying languages that do have a morphologically distinct external possessor construction. It might well be the case that in those languages, there is also a direct link between discourse configurations (such as e.g. possessor’s referent being topical, salient, speaker’s empathy focus, etc.) and syntactic properties related to what is assumed to be constituency. The difference can be that speakers of those other languages have to make one more choice, the choice of the morphological form, on top of syntactic choices that can be quite similar to those discussed for Bashkir.

**Abbreviations**

1, 2, 3 = 1st, 2nd, 3rd person, acc = accusative, caus = causative, cop = copula, cv = converb, dat = dative, gen = genitive, neg = negation, nmlz = nominalization, p = possessive affix, pc = participle, pl = plural, pst = past, prs = present, q = question, sg = singular.
References


