

**The Syntax of Possessors in the Nominal Phrase:
Drawing the Lines and Deriving the Forms**

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Among the conundra posed by POSSESSORS in nominal phrases is the many-to-many relation they present between meaning and form. It is generally accepted that the notion POSSESSOR encompasses a range of semantic relations, including possession proper, description, relation, subject, and object. In English, the POSSESSOR may be associated with one of three forms: (i) the inflectional genitive ('s genitive), (ii) the periphrastic genitive (adnominal *of* phrase), and (iii) double genitive (post-posed 's genitive). As a syntactic problem, POSSESSORS are typically defined as those constituents which may be expressed by the inflectional genitive, thereby excluding those phrases which are expressed only by the periphrastic or double genitive, even those representing a semantic category encompassed by a POSSESSOR.

The situation is simpler in Polish, which like Slavic languages generally has (only) two formal means of expressing POSSESSORS: the adnominal genitive and the possessive adjective (derived from a noun or pronoun).

(1)

	<i>Adnominal Genitive</i>	<i>Possessive Adjective</i>
<i>Possession</i>	dom ojca 'father's house'	jego dom 'his house'
<i>Relation</i>	cena domu 'the cost of the house' slady palców 'fingerprints'	jego cena 'his cost' jego slady 'his traces'
<i>Subject</i>	opery Verdiego 'Verdi's operas' rzenie koni 'the horses' neighing'	jego opery 'his operas' jego rzenie 'his neighing'
<i>Object</i>	portret chlopa 'a portrait of the peasant' karmienie psów 'the feeding of the dogs'	jego portret 'his portrait' jego aresztowanie 'his arrest'

Moreover, Polish is simpler than other Slavic languages on this point, because nominal possessive adjectives are not productive. We define POSSESSORS in Polish as those constituents whose syntactic expression is distributed according to the following function:

- (2) a. Pronominal POSSESSORS are expressed by possessive adjectives;
b. Lexical POSSESSORS are expressed by adnominal genitives.

We assume that condition (2b) giving adnominal genitives as the output represents the default expression of POSSESSORS, with a marked morphological adjustment rule accounting for (2a).

Not all adnominal genitives undergo this morphological adjustment rule; cf.:

(3)

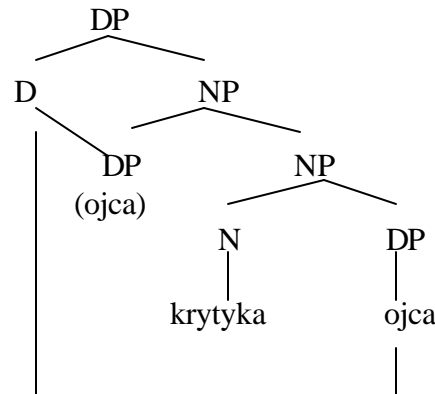
		<i>Adnominal Genitive</i>	<i>Possessive Adjective</i>
Selected Complement	<i>Quantification</i>	kilo chleba 'a kilo of bread' szklanka wody 'a glass of water'	—
	<i>Other</i>	pozbawienie narodu wolnosci 'deprivation of the people of freedom'	—
Adjunct	<i>Description</i>	czlowiek dobrej woli 'a person of good will' pole bitwy 'battlefield'	—

Non-POSSESSORS encompass selected complements (inherent case) and adjuncts (semantic case).

The morphosyntactic form of POSSESSORS, in contrast, is the result of structural case assignment resulting from D AGREEING (in the technical sense of Chomsky 1998, 1999) with a nominal containing an unvalued case feature [case:]. D is analogous to T(ense) in assigning case without assigning any semantic role of its own. D can assign case under agreement to caseless (by default) arguments of N, whether specifiers or complements, as in:

(4) krytyka ojca

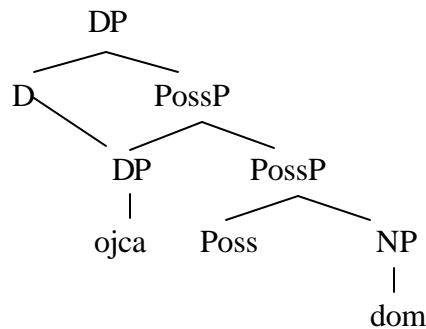
‘criticism of the father’ (ambiguous between subject and object interpretations)



Another context in which D assigns structural case is provided by the functional category Possessor, which assigns a semantic role (of possession proper) to its specifier:

(5) dom ojca

‘father’s house’



This partition between structural case assignment within the nominal phrase and other sources of the adnominal genitive accounts for the co-occurrence restrictions among types of adnominal genitive phrases, well-known in the literature. Selected complements and adjuncts, for example, may co-occur, because the source of their case differs. And either of these constituent types may co-occur with a POSSESSOR, for the same reason. But the various POSSESSORS cannot co-occur with each other, because they all compete for a single source of case.