The case of the missing possessive morpheme

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The puzzle presented in this talk can be summed up as follows: There appears to be a missing morpheme in the 1P and 2P possessive constructions in Turkish. We will show that the morpheme *-(s)ɪ*, proposed to be a possessive morpheme in the literature (Göksel 2009, Kunduraci 2013) emerges overtly in 3P possessive constructions only. A study of the phonological operations that apply in possessive constructions may appear to conceal the fact that this morpheme does not emerge elsewhere, but it is demonstrably absent. We will argue that the absence of *-(s)ɪ* is not morpho-syntactic, but allomorphic. What is interesting here is that the phonology conspires to make this distinction unclear. The Turkish possessive paradigm is: 1P.SG –m, 2P.SG –n, 3P.SG -(s)ɪ(n), 1P.PL -mɪz, 2P.PL -nɪz, 3P.PL -lar-ɪ(n).

The plural possessive markers are bi-morphemic. The 3P.SG marker is also complex. It is composed of possessive *-(s)ɪ* and the 3P pronoun *o(n)*. The 3P possessive markers are therefore divergent in two ways: *-(s)ɪ* is present, and the plural is marked with the default nominative suffix *–lAr* instead of the pronominal(AGR) plural marker *-ɪz*. The consonants in parentheses are variably present. [s] appears only following a vowel, a transparent case of phonologically-conditioned allomorphy (1). [n] appears only when non-final (3). What this means is that sometimes the 3P.SG emerges as [ɪ] (1a).

(1) a. bedel-í 'its price' **b.** fire-sí 'its attrition'

(2) a. araba-sí 'his/her car (NOM) **b.** araba-sın-dá 'in his/her car'

In the 1P and 2P forms, there is also an [ɪ] that occasionally emerges. On the surface, its origin appears to be epenthetic in only the SG forms (3), as other forms equivalent in all pertinent respects to the PL forms do not trigger epenthesis (4). Note that stress is final by default in Turkish.

(3) a. 1sg ev-í-m 'my house' **b.** 1pl ev-i-míz, *ev-miz 'our house' **(4)** sev-mék 'to love'

The stress facts in (3) appear to disconfirm a cyclic analysis of (3b) where the [i] is epenthetic in the cycle containing *–m*, prior to affixation of *-ɪz (ev-m → evim → evimiz)*. It has been argued that stress falls on the final syllable of the innermost cycle in Turkish, with evidence from the verbal domain (Newell 2008), and therefore the derivation of (3b) and (4) appear to be mono-cyclic. The question can then be raised as to whether the [i] in words like *ev[i]miz* is an exponent of the possessive morpheme. This analysis is disconfirmed by the presence of vowel-final 1/2P possessed nouns. If *(s)ɪ* were present in these cases the consonant should emerge, but it does not.

(5) kedi-m, *kedi-si-m 'my cat'

Phonological evidence from elsewhere in the language leads to the firm conclusion that it is the stress facts here that are misleading and that *-sɪ* is not present in (3). Nominal forms in general, and person markers specifically, do not demonstrate the same stress behaviour as in the verbal domain. Regular stress is invariably on the final syllable of a noun, even when affixed with prepositional-type affixes that could be considered cyclic in a Distributed Morphology framework (6). Also, person/number affixes may sit inside or outside the stress domain even in verbal constructions (7).

(6) kitap-lık-lar-ım-ız-dán 'from our bookcases'
book-case-pl-1p-pl-from

(7) a. gör-dü-lár see-past-3pl 'They saw it'
b. gör-dű-lar see-past-3pl 'They saw it'
(Günes & Göksel 2016)

We therefore conclude that the stress pattern in (3b) is an unreliable indicator of a non-cyclic derivation, and that the cyclic derivation accounts for the emergence of [i]. This entails that *-(s)ɪ* emerges only in 3P contexts. Interestingly, the distribution of *-(s)ɪ* and of the default plural *–lAr* demonstrate the underspecification of *o(n)* for person features, making it a plausible elsewhere environment. Also, *-(s)ɪ* appears in genitive constructions that do not contain person features; it appears as a linker in compounds. We therefore conclude that the possessive morpheme in Turkish is ∅ ⇔ agreement, and *-(s)ɪ* ⇔ elsewhere.

REFS: Göksel, A. 2009. Compounds in Turkish. Lingue e linguaggio VIII.2. 213-235. **Günes, G. & Göksel, A.** 2016. M-word vs. ω-word: Top down prosody vs. bottom up syntax. Presented at The word and the Morpheme. Berlin. **Kunduracı, A.** 2013. Pseudo-3rd person marker and possessive constructions in Turkish. Actes du congrès annuel de l'Association de linguistique. **Newell, H.** 2008. Aspects of the morphology and phonology of phases. PhD. McGill.