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Basque Genitive Case and Multiple Checking*

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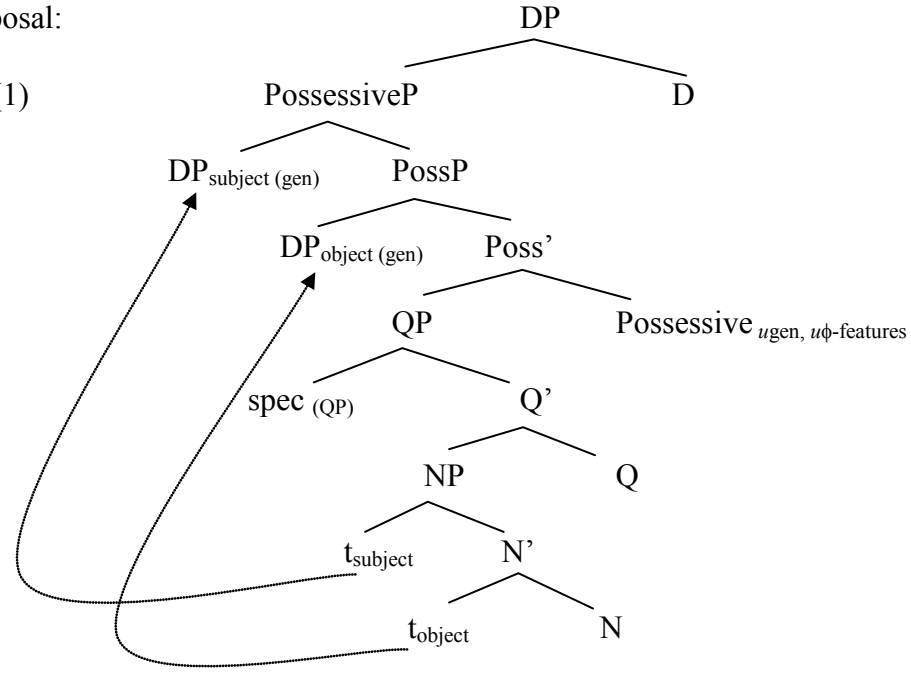
Introduction

In this article I propose (a) that Basque genitive structural case is checked in the functional projection *possessive* (or *possessor* as proposed by De Wit (1997) and others based on pioneering work by Szabolcsi); and (b) that this functional projection allows both subject *and* object to check case simultaneously in a multiple specifier configuration. The diagram in (1) illustrates the core of the proposal:

(1)



* This research is supported by grant FFI2008-05135/FILO from the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation. I use the following abbreviations: art = article, aux = auxiliary, A = absolutive, D = dative, E = ergative, gen = genitive, P = possessor, pl = plural(izer), R = root. When irrelevant for the discussion, I simply gloss the auxiliary verb as "aux".

This instance of multiple genitive case bears on the correct characterization of the *Person Case Constraint* and on the characterization of the operation *Agree*; the Basque data presented favors Jeong's formulation of the constraint in (2):

(2) *General Person-Case Constraint*
Two DPs cannot be [+person]/[+animate] if they check that feature against the same functional head (T/v) (Jeong 2004: 419).

I will argue that the functional head *possessive* in Basque allows more than one DP to check genitive case, but only one of them can be [+ person]. Therefore, the head *possessive* should be added to T/v in (2).

I have structured the article as follows: after a short introduction to Basque genitive DPs in section 1, section 2 makes a first sketch of the proposal. Section 3 develops it further and presents arguments for DPs' raising past QP in Basque to check genitive case in a multiple specifier possessive-phrase; I discuss superiority phenomena, together with PCC effects, as evidence for multiple checking.

1 A Descriptive Outline of Basque DPs and Genitives

My departing assumption is that the structure of Basque DPs looks like (3):

(3) $[_{DP}\ [_{PossP}\ [_{QP}\ XP\ [_{Q'}\ [NP]\ Q]]\ Poss]\ D]$
where [XP = QPs, including numerals, and measure phrases]

The head *possessive*, the subject matter of this article, is a functional head with no morphological realization in Basque. I take it for granted that Artiagoitia's (2002) analysis of Basque quantifiers is on the right track, namely that prenominal quantifiers (including numerals, measure phrases, and heavier quantifiers like *hainbat, hainbeste* 'so many/much') occupy the specifier position of Q and that the head-like quantifiers occupy the Q position mediating between the Noun and the Determiner position. I provide illustrative examples in (4):

(4) a. liburu (gutxi) hauek = $[_{DP}\ [_{QP}\ [_{NP}$ liburu$]\ [_{Q}$ (gutxi)$]]\ [_{D}$ hauek$]]$
book few these
'these (few) books'

b. hainbat liburu = $[_{DP}\ [_{QP}\ [_{QP}$ hainbat$]\ [_{NP}$ liburu$]\ [_{Q}Ø]]\ [_{D}Ø]]$
so many book
'so many books'

c. bost liburu(-ak) = $[_{DP}\ [_{QP}\ [_{QP}$ bost$]\ [_{NP}$ liburu$]]\ [_{D}$ (-ak)$]]$
five book art
(the) five books'

d. gela bete liburu = [$_{DP}$ [$_{QP}$ [$_{XP}$ gela bete] [$_{NP}$ liburu]] [$_{D}$Ø]]
room full book
'a room full of books'

The main features of Basque genitive DPs in comparison with other well-known languages are summarized in (5):

(5) a. Basque genitives are of the type *DP + case*;
b. Basque genitives are not in complementary distribution with determiner heads;
c. there are not two types of DP genitives inside noun phrases.

Basque genitives are of the type DP + case. In other words, subject, object (and possessor) genitives are full DPs bearing the case mark *–(r)en*, the older form *–(r)e* in the case of personal pronouns. Relevant examples are given in (6):

(6) a. Etorri berri den gizona-ren anaia
come just aux.comp man.gen brother
'the man who has just arrived's brother'
b. Artista hor-ren Miren-en eta ni-re erretratua
artist that.gen Mary.gen and I.gen portrait.art
'That artist's portrait of Mary and me'

Basque genitive is akin to a case mark borne by DP arguments. In fact, most Basque scholars assume that genitive *–(r)en* is just the nominal counterpart of clausal ergative or absolutive case. A fully argument-loaded CP/DP parallelism strongly favors this conclusion, as you can see in (7):

(7) a. Goenaga-*k* bere azken artelan-ak-*Ø* erakutsi ditu.
Goenaga.E his last artwork.art.A exhibit aux
'Goenaga exhibited his last artworks'
b. Goenaga-*ren* bere azken artelan-*en* erakusketa
Goenaga.gen his last artwork.gen exhibition
'Goenaga's exhibition of his last artworks'

Basque genitives are not in complementary distribution with determiner heads. This simply means that Basque articles, demonstratives and quantifiers, prenominal or postnominal, are never in complementary distribution with genitives, as it becomes evident upon looking at examples in (8):

(8) a. {Atxagaren/ nire} liburu {-a, hau}
Atxaga's I.gen book art this

'{the, this} book {of mine/Atxaga's}' (several interpretations)
b. {Atxagaren/nire} liburu {bat, batzuk}
Atxaga's I.gen book one several
'one, several book(s) {of mine/Atxaga's}' (idem)
c. {Atxagaren/nire} hainbat liburu
Atxaga's I.gen so many book
'so many books {of mine/Atxaga's}' (idem)

There aren't two types of DP genitives inside noun phrases. Basque doesn't have two different types of DP genitives (synthetic and periphrastic), and both subject and object genitives, as well as regular possessors, are isomorphic and equally prenominal, as can be seen in the examples (6)-(7b) and (8) above. The difference between the genitive and the so called *locative genitive* has a different source. I give a couple of examples of the *locative genitive* in (9):

(9) a. *Bilboko* itsas-museoa b. *zuretzako* oparia
.ko sea museum.art you.for.*ko* gift.art
'The sea museum in/from Bilbao' 'a/the gift for you'

According to Goenaga (2003) and Artiagoitia (2006), there is a division of labor between–*(r)en* and –*ko* summarized in (10):

(10) *Basque DP-internal constituents*
a. DP arguments take genitive–*(r)en*;
b. Other constituents (PP, NP, QP, CP, AdvP…) take the genitive -*ko*

The division of labor between the two genitives reflects a category distinction (*DP vs other categories*) or, in the worst case, a category *and* selectional distinction (*DP arguments vs other categories*). The distinction is reminiscent of a DP's need of abstract case, and ultimately, of the Case Filter.

2 Genitives Inside Noun Phrases: Basic Data

The basic and most relevant piece of data is that a genitive usually precedes all other modifiers (except for relative clauses); it precedes –*ko* modifiers and prenominal quantifiers:

(11) a. *Jonen* atzoko txistea b. *Mirenen* hiru autoak
John.gen yesterday.*ko* joke.art Mary.gen three car.art
'John's joke from yesterday' 'Mary's three cars'

Let's focus on example (11b); it is worth noting that genitives are necessarily to the left of prenominal quantifiers like 'three' *hiru* or 'so much/many' *hainbat* as you can check in (12) and (13) respectively; this is so regardless of the interpretation of the genitive, as shown in example (13a) with a *picture* noun:

(12) a. Mirenen hiru autoak (=11b) b. * hiru Mirenen autoak
Mary.gen three car.art
'Mary's three cars'

(13) a. Jonen hainbat erretratu b.* hainbat Jonen erretratu
John.gen so-many portrait
'so many portraits {by, of} John'

Assuming that relational and derived nouns can have both subject and object arguments, examples like (12-13) suggest that DP arguments raise to some position higher than QP in Basque noun phrases.

The same is also true of normal possessors if these originate in some high position inside NP or a related projection as assumed by Longobardi (2001), Alexiadou et al. (2007), and others. So (14) reflects the derivation of (13a), which can be three-way ambiguous:

(14) $[_{DP}$ … Jonen$_i$ $[_{QP}$ hainbat $[_{NP}$ ...t_i ... erretratu]] … D]
(where t_i = subject, object or possessor)

A similar raising analysis is required when both subject and object genitives co-occur in the same noun phrase; both subject and object must precede quantifiers (in 15a) and *-ko* phrases as well (e. g. in 15b):

(15) a. Velazquezen Felipe erregearen bost erretratuak
.gen king.gen five portrait.art
'the five portraits of King Felipe by Velazquez'

b. Peruren Mirenen igerilekuko argazkia (Zabala 1999: 150)
Peter.gen Mary.gen pool.*ko* picture.art
'Peter's portrait of Mary at the swimming pool'

The derivation of the examples in (15) would be roughly as in (16):

(16) a. Velazquezen$_i$ Felipe erregearen$_j$ $[_{QP}$ bost $[_{NP}$ t_i t_j erretratu]]-ak
b. Peruren$_i$ Mirenen$_j$ igerilekuko $[_{NP}$ t_i t_j argazki]-a

The conclusion is, then, that subject and object genitives raise past QP (and past nominal adjuncts) in Basque DPs. The natural question is: do they move to the specifier of the same projection or do they move to different projections?

In what follows, after further justifying the existence of a higher structural position for genitives, I provide positive evidence that all genitives raise to the specifier of the functional head *possessive*, thus creating a multiple-specifier configuration.

3 Multiple Genitive Case: Justification and Development of the Proposal

3.1 Arguments for Locating Genitives above QP

As the examples in (17) remind us, there is ample crosslinguistic evidence for a possessive-phrase on top of QP and below the DP projection, from a variety of languages and authors:

(17) a. Catalan: les *seves* novelles de Nabokov
the his novels of
'his novels of Nabokov' (Picallo 1991: 284)

b. Italian: il *mio* libro
the my book
'my book' (Schoorlemmer 1998)

c. Hungarian: (a) *Mari* kalap-ja-i
art Mari.nom hat.agr.pl
'Mary's hats' (Szabolcsi 1994: 180)

d. Maorese: tā *Hōne* patu-nga o te wahine
art .gen killing .gen art woman
'Hone's killing of the woman' (Pearce 1998: 427)

Seminal work by Szabolcsi is taken in the generative tradition as the main reference for proposing a functional projection right below DP connected with possessives; similar conclusions have been reached independently by many scholars, which may differ in the qualification of that functional projection: *nominal inflection* (Szabolcsi 1994 and related work); *possessor* (De Wit 1997, Delsing 1998, Schoolemmer 1998); *Number* (Picallo 1991*)*; or just *AGR* (Alexiadou et. al. 2007). Here, I call this projection *possessive*, slightly adapting De Wit's and Schlooemer's nomenclature.

Coming back to Basque, we have already seen the main argument for locating Basque genitives above QP: both subject and object arguments show up to the left of prenominal quantifiers, as sketched in (14) and (16) above. Furthermore, coordination data internal to Basque suggest that genitives and QP or NP form a constituent outside the scope of D (i.e. the article, demonstratives). The relevant examples are in (18):

(18) a. [[$_{PossP}$ zure liburu] eta [$_{PossP}$ nire artikulu] -ak]
you.gen book and I.gen article art
'the books of yours and articles of mine'

b. atzo aipatu zenituen [[$_{PossP}$ zure bi
yesterday mention aux.comp you.gen two
liburu] eta [$_{PossP}$ nire hiru disko] -ak] desagertu dira
book and I.gen three disc art disappear aux
'The [three discs of mine] and [two books of yours] that you mentioned yesterday have disappeared'

In sum, we've got evidence for raising of *both S & O* genitives to a position higher than QP; given that Basque genitives are independent of the occurrence of a given D, I will assume that both genitives target the specifier of Possessive-Phrase, as represented schematically in (19):

(19) [$_{DP}$ [$_{PossP}$ S O [$_{QP}$ XP [$_{NP}$ t_s t_o N] Q] Poss] D]

The proposal in (19) deserves some scrutiny: double genitives have been described in the literature, but they usually involve two different structural positions, one for each genitive (cf. English); in other languages, not only do double genitives involve two different forms but the higher structural position for genitives may also go hand-in-hand with N-raising to a functional projection (cf. Lindauer (1998) for German and De Wit (1997) for Dutch). The Basque situation differs in two respects: first, it seems as though both Basque subject and object genitives are entirely isomorphic and might target the same functional projection; second, the noun remains in situ as noun-adjective sequences show in (20):

(20) a. zure [$_{QP}$ [$_{spec}$ bost] [$_{NP + Adj}$ erretratu txiki polit]] hauek
you.gen five portrait small pretty these
'These five beautiful small pictures {of/by} you'

b. zure [$_{QP}$ [$_{NP + Adj}$ erretratu txiki polit] [$_{Q}$ gutxi]] hauek
portrait small pretty few these
'These few beautiful small pictures {of/by} you'

Put it differently, the order *N-Adj-Adj* remains constant with respect to prenominal or postnominal quantifiers; this lack of N-raising in Basque squares well with the impoverished noun morphology given there is no number or gender concord inside noun phrases.

3.2 Arguments for a Multiple Specifier Approach

The argumentation reduces to two types of facts: on one side, Richards' (2001) theory of multiple A-specifiers predicts the properties displayed by the combination of subject-object genitives; on the other side, a multiple specifier approach to genitives predicts the existence of *Person Case Constraint* effects in the case of two [+person] genitives, a prediction that turns out to be correct.

3.2.1 Multiple A-specifiers and DP Internal Word Order in Basque

The proposal advanced in section 2 presupposes a derivation like (19) for DPs with both subject and object genitives. We may assume, further, that the head *possessive* in Basque has a feature composition like the one in (21):

(21) *posssesive*, (n-)*u*genitive *, *u*φ-features (*poss* has no lexical content)

where * means strong, and forces displacement of the relevant argument DPs.[1] I will leave aside whether the possibility of multiple genitive checking is due to a parametrized lexical property (Ura 1996) of a given functional head (*possessive* in the case at hand) or whether it has a different source (Boeckx 2003).

Basque multiple genitives are consistent with Richards' theory of multiple specifiers. He gives wide empirical evidence from both A- and A'-movement to establish that movement to multiple specifiers of a single head obeys superiority and, hence, systematically creates crossing paths. With respect to A-movement, he mentions superiority effects from the analysis of idiom chunks, A-scrambling in Japanese, object-shift in Germanic languages, multiple agreement systems, and so on.

Basque genitives, which represent A-raising of both subject and object to the same head, seem to provide additional support. Below I discuss (a) superiority and object-scrambling; (b) lack of scope ambiguity inside DPs; and (c) interaction of possessors with subject and object genitives.

Superiority. First of all, as predicted by Richards' theory, the resulting structure obeys superiority; the subject occupies the outer specifier and c-commands the object and the SO-X-N order is the unmarked and most usual one:

(22) Capa-ren$_i$ bere buruaren$_j$ bost [t_i t_j irudi]-ak [SO-X-N]
.gen his head.gen five picture.art
'Capa's five pictures of himself'

[1] The displacement property may be due to an EPP-feature of *possessive*, à la Chomsky (2001).

As pointed out by Eguzkitza (1993), it is true that Basque allows [OS…N] word orders. But these seem to be derived by further moving the object to the left of the subject, a movement which has the effect of giving what is left behind it a highly restrictive reading, absent in the neutral word order. Eguzkitza's own examples and interpretations are given in (23):

(23) a. Cortazar-en Poe-ren itzulpena
.gen .gen translation.art
'Cortazar's translation of Poe'
b. Poe-ren$_i$ Cortazar-en t_i itzulpena (Eguzkitza 1993: 170)
'out of all Poe's translations, [we pick] CORTAZAR'S translation'

Eguzkitza derived examples like (23b) via A'-topicalization to the [spec, D] position, an account that seems questionable. That [OS…N] orders are derived via subsequent object-scrambling is shown by two pieces of data: first, object anaphors cannot scramble around a genitive subject, as one can observe by comparing (22) to the ungrammatical (24):

(24) *[Bere buruaren $_i$ Capa-ren t_i bost irudiak] … [= *$O_{anaphor}$-S-X-N]

Second, a universal quantifier in subject position can bind a pronoun variable in SON orders, whereas the reverse is impossible; however, a (DP-internally) scrambled object with a universal quantifier can bind a pronoun variable in subject position (=25c):

(25) a. [idazle bakoitzaren$_i$ bere$_i$ poema baten bi bertsio]
writer each.gen his poem one.gn two version
daude liburuan
are book.loc
'In the book there are two versions of one of his poems by every writer'
b. *[Bere$_i$ idazlearen poema bakoitzaren$_i$ bi bertsio] ...
its writer.gen poem each.gen two version
c. ?[*poema* *bakoitzaren$_i$* bere$_i$ idazlearen t_i bi bertsio] …
poem each.gen its writer.gen two version.art
'In the book there two versions of one of his poems by every writer'

(26) a. √ Subj-∀ Obj-vbl b.* Subj-vbl Obj-∀ c. √ Obj-∀ Subj-vbl t_{obj}

The movement of the object doesn't give rise to WCO effects in (25c), thus confirming that it is not A'-movement. In sum, the data in (24-25) show that object-movement is closer to A-scrambling than it is to A'-scrambling and they also suggest the object's usual position is to the right of the subject. Thus,

[OS…N] orders result from at least two movements/attractors: raising of both subject and object past QP *and* subsequent object-scrambling.

Lack of scope ambiguity inside DP. According to Richards (2001), a related property of multiple A-scrambling in Japanese is that no quantifier ambiguities arise; in other words, multiple specifiers of the same head tend to reflect the same scope relations as in the base position. Basque allows very few cases of reverse scope but, in cases where this is possible in sentential subject-object scope interactions, virtually all speakers interpret the genitive subject as taking scope over the genitive object. This is illustrated in the contrast in (27):

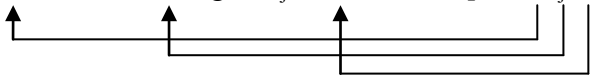
(27) a. Ume guztiek ipuin bi kontatu dituzte ($2 > \forall$, $\forall > 2$)
'All children told two fairy tales'
b. Ume guztien ipuin biren kontaketa ikusi dugu ($\forall > 2$, *? $2 > \forall$)
'We witnessed all children's telling of two fairy tales'

Possessor arguments and Superiority. Richards' theory can also give us a clue to understand some data from Eguzkitza (1993). This author regarded *possessor-subject-object* patterns (=28a) as grammatical but *possessor-object-subject* orders (=28b) as ungrammatical:

(28) a. [$_{DP}$Monzonen .gen Leizarragaren .gen Bibliaren Bible.gen itzulpen-a] translation.art
b. * [$_{DP}$ Monzonen .gen Bibliaren Bible.gen Leizarragaren .gen itzulpen-a] translation.art
'Monzon's (copy of the) translation of the Bible by Leizarraga'

Eguzkitza's account was formulated in terms of competition between P and O for the [spec, D'] position. However, Richards' approach suggests a more attractive analysis. If, as now standardly assumed by many, the possessor argument also originates inside NP (or a related projection) and c-commands both subject and object arguments, Richards' theory of multiple specifiers predicts that, if all the possessor, subject and object arguments are attracted to Possessive, their paths will cross and the resulting word order will be *possessor-subject-object*. This prediction is correct, as just seen, given that (28a) is the unmarked and default order. The derivation would then be something like (29):

(29) [$_{DP}$ [$_{PossP}$ Monzonen$_i$ Leizarragaren$_j$ Bibliaren$_k$ ... [$_{NP}$ t_i t_j t_k itzulpen]-a]



The ungrammatical **P-O-S* order is simply the result of the moved arguments not respecting superiority.

3.2.2 PCC Effects as Evidence for Multiple Checking

The proposal made so far makes an interesting prediction: assuming that Jeong's version of PCC is right, if both S and O genitives raise to the same functional projection, we predict *Person Case Constraint* effects given that the same feature (i.e. person) cannot be checked twice. As expected, the PCC issue never arises when two DPs check their features in different projections (=30a) but is at stake in some well-known cases (=30b):

(30) a. nik zu ikusi zaitut
I.E you see 2A.R.1E
'I saw you'
b. *Zuk ni etsaiari saldu naiozu
You.E I.A enemy.D sell 1A.R.3D.2E
'You sold me to the enemy' (Ormazabal & Romero 2007: 316)

In examples like (30a), no conflict arises given the standard assumption that subjects and objects check their case and ϕ-features against different functional heads (T and v); examples like (30b), on the other hand, are usually referred to as violations of Bonet's *Person-Case Constraint*:

(31) *Person-Case Constraint*
if DATIVE, then ACC/ABS = 3rd person (Bonet 1994: 36)

This constraint is under scrutiny in current theory: Ormazabal and Romero (2007) have convincingly shown that the constraint is basically syntactic in nature, independent of case and morphological realization, and propose to derive it from the impossibility of having two animate objects agreeing with the verbal complex. Since we don't deal with object agreement proper but with a configuration where subject and object check the same feature, more abstract approaches seem relevant: Boeckx (2003) and, specially, Jeong (2004) argue that in situations of multiple feature checking, multiple case checking is licit given that case is an uninterpretable feature on the goal (and can be checked in a symmetric way); multiple person checking is, however, illicit since it is only interpretable on the goal and dependent on asymmetric checking (closest c-command) which can only take place once. As a result, as Jeong puts it, there cannot be two [+person] or [+animate] DPs in the same domain:

(32) *General PCC*
Two DPs cannot be [+person]/[+animate] if they check that feature against the same functional head (T/v) (Jeong 2004: 419).

In a similar vein, Rezac (2008) argues that PCC effects arise when the same probe establish a person-Agree relationship with two goals: the first one blocks person agreement with the one, provided the first one c-commands the other.

Going back to (30b), and taking for granted with Jeong (2004: 418) that person entails animacy and lack of animacy entails lack of person (i.e. [+person] ➔ [+animacy]; [-animacy] ➔ [-person]) the only assumption one needs to explain its ungrammatical status is that agreeing datives are inherently marked as [+animate] in Basque,[2] even when they are 3rd person. In other words, we have two DPs, one [+person] and the other [+animate], checking their features against the same functional head *v*. There is no violation of the General PCC if the offending dative has no agreement marker in the auxiliary (and behaves as a plain PP):

(33) Zuk ni etsaiari saldu nauzu
You.E I.A enemy.D sell 1A.R. 2E
'You sold me to the enemy'

On general grounds, we don't expect the PCC to be an issue in the case of two genitives being realized in different domains and agreeing with different probes/heads. This would be the case of English or Spanish genitives in (34):

(34) a. My {description, portrait, vision, examination} of you
b. Tu {descripción, necesidad, retrato} de mí (Spanish)
'Your {description, necessity, portrait} of me'

The higher genitive is generally associated with a functional projection (*possessive*), whereas the lower genitive is associated with a lower head (N or *n*). However, in the case of Basque, given that both subject and object genitives are in the specifier of the same functional projection *possessive*, the prediction is that both DPs cannot be [+person]. A good test is given by first and second person arguments, which I assume are necessarily [+person]. The ungrammaticality of the examples (35c and 35d) confirm that the proposal is correct:

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[2] There is good evidence for this, given that locative inanimate goals cannot appear as datives in ditransitive structures (Oyharçabal 2010):

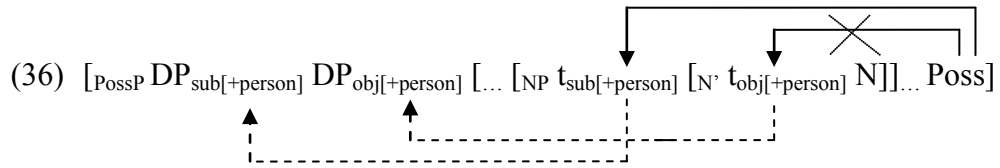
(i) *Gutuna Parisi igorri diot
Letter.A Paris.D send aux
'I sent the letter to Paris' (cf. *I sent Paris the letter)

Ormazabal and Romero (2007) also assume that agreeing datives are inherently animate.

(35) a. nire Jonen (hiru) erretratuak
I.gen .gen three portrait.art
'My (three) pictures of John'
b. Jonen nire (hiru) deskribapenak
.gen I.gen three description.art
'John's (three) descriptions of me'
c. *nire zure (hiru) erretratuak
I.gen you.gen three portrait.art
'My (three) pictures of you'
d. *zure nire (hiru) deskribapenak
you.gen I.gen three description.art
'Your (three) descriptions of me'

I outline the ungrammatical derivation in (36), where the head *Poss* cannot person-agree with a [+person] object if there is a closer c-commanding [+person] subject:

(36) $[_{PossP}\ DP_{sub[+person]}\ DP_{obj[+person]}\ [_{\ldots}\ [_{NP}\ t_{sub[+person]}\ [_{N'}\ t_{obj[+person]}\ N]]]_{\ldots}\ Poss]$



In short: examples combining first or second person and third person [-person] subject/object genitives are at best slightly unusual given the general oddity of Basque double genitives, but the combination of first and second person arguments (both [+person]) is sharply ungrammatical, which suggests that both genitive DPs are checking their person features against the same functional head (i.e. *possessive*).

Three conclusions can be drawn from the proposal in this article: (a) it suggests that UG allows the existence of heads whose case feature can be checked n-times, but φ-features can only be checked once (as argued by Jeong 2004); (b) interestingly, the head *possessive* has all the said properties despite having no morphological realization, which favors a syntactic approach to PCC phenomena; and (c) Basque also seems to personify a situation where raising of genitive DPs is pervasive: all DPs can, and *must*, raise to the specifier of Possessive.

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