

## Investigating the Ability of Iraqi University Learners of English to Recognize the Semantics of the

### English 's Genitive

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#### Abstract

The marked genitive case as distinguished from the unmarked common one is one of the forms accompanied with the noun phrase in English to express grammatical/semantic relationships within sentences in texts.

In many instances in complex noun phrases, there is a similarity of function and meaning between 's-genitive or a genitive construction and its equivalent with 'of phrase' or 'of-construction'. In many cases, the two forms are equivalent in meaning and are both perfectly acceptable, in other cases either the 's-genitive or the of-construction is the only appropriate choice regarding the factors affecting the best choice.

The research aims at investigating the 2<sup>nd</sup>-year student's ability to identify the exact meanings of the 's-genitive constructions with its wide range of semantic interpretations which express some preferred meanings as possession, subjective, objective, descriptive, partitive, genitive of origin, genitive of close family relationships, measure and attribute.

It is hypothesized that the preferred meaning of s-genitive constructions is possessive, though it doesn't apply adequately to all uses and meanings. It is also hypothesized that the students are unaware of the patterns of variation and ambiguity in English 's-genitive constructions' which are pervasive and systematic. To validate this hypothesis, a test is to be conducted. It is a multi-choice test of the suitable 's-genitive meanings' chosen from different grammar books. The results of the test will be discussed and suggestions will be recommended on the lights of the results obtained after doing some statistical programmes.

It is concluded that the arbitrariness and ambiguity of some 's-genitive constructions' make it difficult for the students to sentimentally paraphrase such constructions as the 's-genitive constructions' are characteristically more compact and less explicit in meaning than the 'of-constructions'.

التحقق من قابلية المتعلمين للغة الإنكليزية للمرحلة الجامعية في تمييزهم لمعاني الإضافة في اللغة الإنكليزية

#### الملخص

تعتبر حالة الإضافة الغير قياسية في تمييزنا لها عن الحالة الاعتيادية القياسية، أحد الأشكال المصاحبة للعبارة الأسمية للتعبير عن العلاقات القواعدية والمعنوية ضمن الجمل في النصوص الإنكليزية.

يوجد في كثير من أمثلة العبارات الأسمية المعقدة حالات تماثل في الوظيفة والمعنى بين كل من صيغ الإضافة باستخدام اللاحقة ('s) أو التركيب الإضافي أي الإضافة باستخدام حرف الجر 'of' أو ما يسمى بتراكيب حرف الجر 'of'.

في كثير من الحالات، يوجد هناك تكافؤ تام في المعنى لكلا الصيغتين أو التركيبين. في حالات كثيرة أخرى يتوجب اختيار إحداهما باعتبارها الأكثر ملاءمة مع الأخذ بنظر الاعتبار العوامل المؤثرة في الاختيار الأمثل. يهدف البحث إلى التحري عن مقدرة متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية في المرحلة الثانية بقسم اللغة الإنكليزية بكلية الآداب في التعرف على المعاني الملائمة لتراكيب الإضافة بـ 's مع ذلك الفيض من التأويلات المعنوية، مثال ذلك، التملك والإضافة الدالة على الفاعل والمفعول به، والوصفية، والتبضيعية، وإضافة التعبير عن المصدر، والإضافة التي تعبر عن العلاقات العائلية الوثيقة، إضافة إلى القياس والنعت.

تم افتراض أن الطلاب أكثر ميلاً لاستخدام معنى التملك من استخدام المعاني الأخرى لتراكيب الإضافة بـ ('s) رغم أن هذا المعنى لا ينطبق بصورة متساوية على جميع الحالات. تم أيضاً افتراض أن الطلاب لا يأخذون بنظر الاعتبار الأنماط المختلفة والغموض الذي يصاحب التراكيب المدروسة.

ولبرهنة ذلك تم إجراء اختبار للطلاب المعنيين للتعرف على قابلياتهم في ذلك. تم أيضاً مناقشة النتائج ووضع الاقتراحات والتوصيات على ضوءها بعد إجراء البرنامج الإحصائي (SPSS).

تم التوصل إلى أن التعسفية والغموض لبعض تراكيب الإضافة المدروسة أدت إلى بعض الصعوبات التي واجهها الطلاب في عملية الاختبار، لأن تراكيب الإضافة بـ ('s) تعتبر أكثر تركيزاً وأقل وضوحاً في المعنى من تراكيب الإضافة بتراكيب حرف الجر 'of'.

## 1. Introduction:

Quirk and Greenbaum (1972: 192) state that case is a grammatical category that can express a number of different relationships between nominal elements. In English nouns and pronouns have only a two-case system: unmarked common case and the marked genitive one (e.g. boy's in singular, boys' in the plural). In common case (e.g. boy in the singular, boys in the plural) is simply the form used when the genitive is not used.

By internet (2006: 1), in grammar, the genitive case or possessive case also called (the second case) is the case that marks a noun as modifying another noun. It often marks a noun as being the possessor of another noun but it can also indicate various relationships other than possession, which is the context of linguistics, is an asymmetric relationship between two constituents, the referent of one of which (the possessor) possesses (owns, rules over, has as a part, etc.) the referent of the other (the possessed).

Szmrecsanyi (2010: 139) mentions that English has two grammatically overt means of expressing genitive relations:

- (a) the inflected genitive 'the s-genitive' or the 'saxon genitive'. It is indicated in writing by apostrophe + s suffix or apostrophe only after the modifying noun.

**Modifying NP + 's + head noun-phrase**, as in sentence (1):

(1) *The children toy's were new.*

- (b) the periphrastic genitive (the of–construction consisting of the modifying noun phrase in a prepositional phrase after the head noun phrase):

**Head noun phrase + of + modifying noun phrase.**

The ‘of genitive’ is (also known as the ‘Norman genitive’ or of–construction), as in sentence (2):

- (2) *The toys of the youngest children were new.*

Szmrecsanyi (Ibid: 140) mentions that where an ‘s–genitive’ can be paraphrased by an ‘of–genitive’ (or vice versa), there are many factors that bear on language users’ choice.

Quirk et al. (1985: 321) mention that in many cases as in sentences (1) and (2), there is a similarity in function and meaning between the ‘s–genitive’ and ‘of–constructions’. In other cases, the two forms are not normally in free variation, as in sentences (3a, b) and (4a, b).

- (3) a. *John’s school is the most famous one in the city.*

b. *\*The school of John is the most famous one in the city.*

- (4) a. *The front of the house was destroyed.*

b. *\*The house’s front was destroyed.*

Quirk et al. (Ibid: 196) mention that the ‘s–genitive’ must clearly be included in dealing with ‘case’, since the of–genitive constructions is not an inflection but a structure of postmodification.

Shumaker (1975: 70) identifies that the use of the genitive is determined by a combination of structural and semantic conditions. The structural/semantical status of the genitive can be as a determiner or modifier. Grammarians have formulated rules that describe the syntax of English (’s) constructions quite well, they have found the semantics to be complex and difficult to deal with. In order to capture the variety of meanings expressed by ‘s genitive constructions’, they have divided them into several semantic categories, e.g. possessive, subjective and objective, the genitive of origin, genitive of measure, the descriptive genitive. In order to find a comprehensive meaning for the genitive, they treat the genitive as a possessive case. There are other types of genitives which are the local, the elliptical and the past genitives. The selection of the s–genitive is related to the highest classes in the gender scale (topicality and animation) in particular the animate or rather personal quality of the modifying noun.

**2. The ‘S–Genitive’ and the ‘Of–Constructions’:**

Quirk et al. (1985: 1275) compare between the ‘s–genitive’ and ‘of–constructions’. Ibid (1985: 321) clarify that in many instances there is a similarity in function and meaning between the two constructions. In other cases, either one of them is acceptable, according to both *form* and *function*.

**(a) Form:**

The genitive construction consists of two noun phrases one a noun marked for the genitive case by inflection the other a succeeding and superordinate noun phrases unmarked for case in which the genitive noun phrases embedded with a determinative function. Determinative function means that the genitive noun phrase functions like a definite determiner: It plays a role in the superordinate noun phrase equivalent to that of a determiner such as ‘the’ or ‘our’, as in:

- (5) a. *the*  
 b. *our*  
 c. *the city's*
- } *population are increasing.*

In the of–construction, which is often equivalent in meaning to the genitive construction, the superordinate noun phrase precedes a noun phrase introduced by ‘of’ as in (e). The genitive phrase and the of–phrase thus occur in different order in the two constructions. The use of the two constructions is determined by semantic and syntactic restrictions.

- d. The city's population  
 [N<sub>1</sub> 's N<sub>2</sub>]
- e. [The population [of the city]]  
 N<sub>2</sub> of N<sub>1</sub>
- } *are increasing.*

**(b) Function:**

The function of the genitive noun phrase is a definite determinative, whereas the function of the ‘of–construction’ is that of a postmodifier with the superordinate noun phrase either definite or indefinite. The sentence in (6a) shows a direct correspondence with (6b), (7a) corresponds to (7b); while (8) has no correspondence with a genitive construction.

- (6) a. *The funnel of the ship*  
 b. *The ship's funnel*
- } *was destroyed.*

- (7) a. *The funnel of a ship*  
 b. *A ship's funnel*
- } *was destroyed.*

(8) *A funnel of the ship was destroyed.*

The only type of genitive where indefinite reference is permitted is the ‘post–genitive’ where the genitive and the of–construction are combined, as in (9). The function of the

genitive is not determinative in two uses: descriptive genitive, as in sentence (10) and genitive of measure, as in sentence (11). In addition, there are factors which influence the choice of the ‘s- and of-genitive constructions’. They are lexical, relational, objective and subjective, syntactic and communicative factors.

(9) *I meet a friend of my brother’s.*

(10) *They will build a girl’s school.*

(11) *The manager expected an hour’s delay.*

Rosenbach (2003: 379), in an experimental study with British and American speech, deals with aspects of iconicity and economy in the choice between the ‘s-genitive’ and the ‘of-construction’ in English. The paper investigated how the factors animacy; topicality and possessive relation affected the mentioned choice. The analysis shows that the relative importance of the three factors is: animacy > topicality > possessive relation. While this hierarchy as such turns out to be unaffected by standard variety and diachrony, a significant increase of the ‘s-genitive’ with inanimate possessors both in British and American English.

Szmrecsanyi (2010: 140) mentions that where an ‘s-genitive’ can be paraphrased by an ‘of-genitive’ (or vice versa), there are major language internal factor groups:

- (i) Semantic and Pragmatic factors.
- (ii) Phonology.
- (iii) Processing and Parsing-related factors.
- (iv) Economy-related factors.

In addition, the genitive alternation is also sensitive to a number of a language external factors.

Barker (2010: 5) mentions that the most common relational concepts lexicalized in the world’s language include family relations (mother, uncle, cousin); body parts (hand, head, finger); and intrinsic aspects of entities such as color, speed, weight, shape, temperature. In some languages, prepositions are frozen possessives (at the river) is expressed literally as (the river’s place). Many languages grammatically distinguish between alienable and inalienable possession, where the alienable nouns express a set of inherently relations/concepts.

Barker (Ibid: 4) mentions that in English only relational nouns can participate in the postnominal genitive possessive construction (the brother of Mary, \*the cloud of Mary), English makes a syntactic distinction between alienable (cloud, squirrel) and inalienable (brother, speed) nouns.

Alienability refers to the ability to dissociate something from its parent, or a quality from its owner. Inalienably possessed something is usually an attribute, e.g. ‘John’s big nose’, because it cannot (without surgery) be removed from John. In contrast, ‘John’s brief

case'. Is alienably possessed, it can be separated from John. Many languages make this distinction as part of their grammar (see Chappell and McGregor, 1996).

Quirk and Greenbaum (1972: 195) highlighted the functional similarity of the 's-genitive' and the 'of-phrase' by calling them both 'genitive'. 'Of' has become conventionalized as the chief preposition of the periphrastic genitive which accounts for the name 'of-genitive', other prepositions can be used in a similar function, as in sentence (12.b):

(12) a. *The Ambassador's secretary was here.*

b. *The secretary {of / to} the Ambassador was here.*

Rosenbach (2003: 342) clarifies that not every 's-genitive' can be expressed by an 'of-genitive', and vice versa. The identification and subsequent exclusion of those contexts in which there is no choice 'categorical contexts' is therefore a crucial precondition for any quantitative analysis comparing the frequency of the two genitive constructions, as in Figure (1).

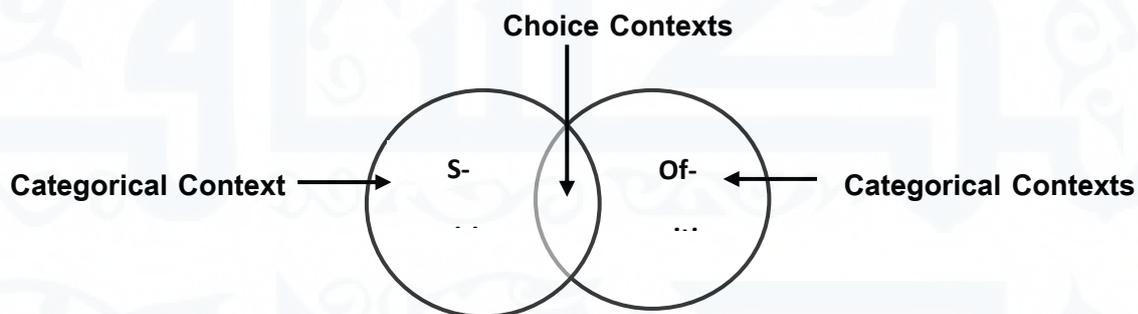


Figure (1): Categorical Versus Choice Contexts

### 3. The Form of the S-Genitive:

Biber et al. (1999: 232) mention that the genitive of singular nouns is marked by the addition of a suffix which varies in pronunciation in the same way as the plural ending.

/s/ after voiceless consonants except /s, ʃ, tʃ/: cat's, Jack's, Patrick's.

/z/ after vowels and voiced consonants except /z, ʒ, dʒ/: boy's, girls, men's.

/ɪz/ after /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/: Charles's, George's, Rosse's.

In writing, the genitive suffix is marked off by an apostrophe. The genitive or regular plural noun is shown in writing by the addition of an apostrophe: boys – boys'.

In speech, there is no distinction between the genitive and the common case of regular plural nouns. Irregular plural nouns are marked in the same way as genitive singular forms and differ from the common case forms in both speech and writing: men – men's, women – women's.

#### 4. Factors Affecting the Use of the Genitive:

Quirk et al. (1985: 321) identify that the semantic classification of ‘s-genitive constructions’ is in fact arbitrary. There are certain factors to be mentioned:

##### 4.1 Relational Factors:

The meanings expressed by the relation between the genitive noun and its head noun. The meaning can be best shown by sentential or phrasal analogues. The meanings can be expressed by a corresponding ‘of-construction’ where this is acceptable in certain cases (see Table 1).

**Table (1): S-Genitive Meanings**  
According to Quirk et al. (1985: 321-322)

Genitive Meaning	Examples	Sentential Analogues	A Corresponding Of-Construction
(a) Possessive	My wife's father	My wife has a father	No
(b) Subjective Meaning	The boy's application	The boy applied for ...	
(c) Objective	The boy's release	(...) released the boy	
(d) Genitive of Origin	The general's letter (cf.) the wines of France	The general wrote a letter France produces wines	
(e) Descriptive Genitive	A doctor's degree	A doctoral degree	The degree of doctor
(f) Genitive of Measure	Ten boys' absence	The absence lasted ten days	An absence of ten days
(g) Genitive of Attribute	The party's policy	The party has a certain policy	The policy of the party
(h) Partitive Genitive	The earth's surface	The earth has a surface	The surface of the earth
(i) Close Family Relationships	Peter's Jane	i.e. his girlfriend	

(Ibid: 322) there is a tendency for ‘s-genitives’ to be taken as subjective and for ‘of-constructions’ to be taken as objective. The ‘genitive of opposition’ which is a marginal additional category, is normally replaced by ‘an’ appositive of-construction in today’s usage as in sentences (13) and (14).

In addition, possessives and genitives can be used to denote close family relationships, as in sentence (15).

(13) *Dublin's fair city was amazing.*

(14) *Dublin, a fair city, was amazing.*

(15) *John and Mary are very anxious about Simon's Tom.* [e.g. Simons friend]

Keating (2004: 1) summarizes the most common uses of the genitive case. He divided them into three categories, the adjectival to include attributive, possessive, partitive, genitive of apposition, genitive in simple apposition and descriptive genitive. The ablative genitives to include genitive of comparison. The verbal genitives to include the subjective and objective and the plenary genitive. The adverbial genitives to include genitive absolute and genitive of time.

#### 4.2 Lexical Factors:

Quirk et al. (1985: 1277) mention that the lexical factors comprise the type of the noun taking the genitive which include; the gender of the genitive noun, the genitive in relation to noun classes, the genitive with superlatives and ordinals, end-focus and end-weight.

##### 4.2.1 Gender of the Genitive Noun:

Quirk and Greenbaum (1972: 198) and Quirk et al. (1985: 322) identify that the selection of the 's-genitive' is described in relation to the gender classes represented by the noun which takes the s-suffix. The 's-genitive' is favoured by the classes that are highest on the gender scale, i.e. animate nouns, in particular persons and animals with personal gender characteristics. Although there is a choice between a form with 's-genitive' and 'of-genitive construction' in certain cases, the two forms are not normally in free variation, see sentences (3a, b) and (4a, b). The inflected genitive can be used with animals. The rules of-thumb here is that the higher animals are more likely to have the 's-genitive' than the lower animals, as in sentence (16).

(16) *The project deals with*  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \textit{the dog's life.} \\ \textit{the life of the dogs.} \end{array} \right\}$

##### 4.2.2 The Genitive in Relation to Noun Classes:

Quirk et al. (1985: 324) identify the following four animate noun classes which normally take the 's-genitive', but the 'of-genitive' is also possible in most cases with personal names and nouns and in sentences (17) and (18), also with animal nouns denoting higher animals as in sentence (19) and with collective nouns as in sentence (20). The genitive is further used with certain kinds of inanimate nouns with geographical names which comprise names of continents, countries, states, cities and towns and universities names as in sentences (21), (22), (23), (24) and (25). The locative nouns written with initial

capital letters as in sentence (26). The temporal nouns as in sentence (27) and with other nouns of special relevance to human activity as in sentence (28).

(17) *George Washington's statue was painted.*

(18) *I am discussing my sister-in-law's problem.*

(19) *The child looked at the horse's tail.*

(20) *They neglected the committee's decision.*

(21) *Europe's future is to be reviewed.*

(22) *China's development is quietly amazing.*

(23) *Washington state's Senator has resigned.*

(24) *Hollywood's studios are under reconstruction.*

(25) *Harvard's Department of Linguistics is announcing new scholarships.*

(26) *The world's economy is getting worse.*

(27) *Several {weeks' / weeks} vacation, all what I need.*

(28) *The science's influence on Society is very important.*

#### 4.2.3 The Genitive with Superlatives and Ordinals:

Quirk et al. (1985: 325) identify that the genitive is common with locative nouns when it is followed by a superlative adjective or general ordinal like 'only', 'first' and 'last'. The corresponding prepositional phrase in these cases is introduced by 'in' rather than by 'of' as in sentence (29a and b).

(29) a. *The world's best universities are listed.*

b. *The best universities in the world are listed.*

#### 4.2.4 Specific Lexical Noun Heads:

Quirk et al. (1972: 200) mention that there are some constructions with the inflected genitive which can best be described in terms of specific lexical noun heads. They are nouns heads with the genitive. These include the following of which 'edge', 'end', 'surface' and 'for-sake'. They permit 'of', while the examples with 'length', 'reach', 'throw' and 'worth' are 'idiomatized' and do not permit an 'of-genitive', as in sentences (30), (31) and (32).

(30) *She stood at* { *the water's edge.*  
*the edge of the water.* }

(31) *He did it for* { *charity's sake.*  
*For the sake of charity.* }

(32) *People don't get* { *\*the worth of their money.*  
*Their money's worth.* }

#### 4.3 Objective and Subjective Relations:

Quirk et al. (1985: 1278) identify the variable ‘direction of Predications’ which corresponds to noun phrases postmodification by of–constructions greatly to the complexity of these expressions and has a bearing on the correspondence with the genitive. We have a left–to–right predication or objective relation as in sentence (33), where we have verb–object–relationship and a right–to–left predication or subjective relation as in sentence (34), where we have a subject–verb–relationship. These relations are more obvious where the heads are deverbal nouns as in sentences (33) and (35) than in sentences (34) and (36) where the predication relationship is covert or implicit.

**Left–to–right predication:**

(33) *The imprisonment of the murderer was declared ~ (Someone imprisoned the murderer).*

(34) *A women of courage was rewarded ~ (The women has courage).*

**Right–to–left predication:**

(35)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{The arrival of the train is expected} \\ \text{The train's arrival} \end{array} \right. \sim \text{(the train arrival)}.$

(36) *The funnel of the ship was destroyed ~ the ship has a funnel.*

Quirk et al. (1985: 1279) identify that where the implicit verb is intransitive, there can be no difficulty in interpreting the ‘of–phrase’ as subjective, but problems can arise where the verb is one that can be used either transitively or intransitively, e.g. ‘shoot’, as in ‘the shooting of the rebels’. The ambiguity in such phrases ‘x shoots the rebel’ or ‘the rebels were shooting’ is usually resolved by the context.

A lexical counter–indication is a clear indication of the relationships in the genitive construction. This can be achieved by adding a prepositional phrase beginning with ‘of’ (after a construction of subjective relationship) and one beginning with ‘by’ (after a construction of objective relationship). Such postmodifiers overrule any lexical pressure in the direction of a particular interpretation as in sentences (37) and (38).

(37) *They remembered the man's examination of the student.* [SVO]

(38) *They remembered the man's examination by the doctor.* [OVS]

**4.4 Syntactic Factors:**

Since both the ‘s–genitive’ and ‘of–construction’ consist of two noun phrases each of which, at least theoretically admits indefinite expressions, the minimal structures in sentence (39a, b) may be expanded to sentence (40a and b).

(39) a. *His daughter's arrival enjoyed the family.*

b. *The arrival of his daughter enjoyed the family.*

(40) a. *His 19-year-old daughter's arrived from Hamburg* } *enjoyed the*

*b. The arrival from Hamburg of his 19-year-old daughter family.*

There are two types of expansion, the left branching structure by premodification and the right-branching structure by postmodification, apposition and coordination, as in sentence (41). Where the post-modification of the head is likely to be understood as non restrictive. With restrictive modification, the genitive is compulsory or greatly preferred, in order to avoid awkwardness, discontinuity, or ambiguity, as in sentence (42).

(41) *The arrival of a friend which had been expected for several weeks was yesterday.*

(42) *A friend's arrival which had been expected for several weeks was yesterday.*

#### **4.5 End-Focus and End-Weight:**

Quirk et al. (1985: 323) state further factors influencing the choice of genitive which are the principle of end-focus and end-weight. They encourage the placing of more complex and communicatively more important units towards the end of the noun phrase. According to the principle of end-focus, the 's-genitive' tends to give information focus to the head noun, whereas the 'of-construction' tends to give focus to the prepositional complement, as in sentences (43) and (44). This principle is congruent with the preference for the 'of-construction' with partitive and appositive meaning, where the 's-genitive' would result in undesirable or absurd final prominence, as in sentences (45) and (46).

(43) *The explosion damaged the ship's funnel.* [funnel in focus]

(44) *Having looked at all the funnels, she considered that the most handsome was the funnel of the orion.* [the orion in focus]

(45) *\*The problem pact was discussed.*

(46) *\*His resignation's shock was great.*

#### **5. The Grammatical Status of the Genitive:**

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 105) mention that the grammatical status of the genitive is as a determiner or modifier (See, Deal, 2006: 36 and Heine, 1997: 7 and Lyons, 1986: 371).

##### **5.1 The Genitive as Determiner:**

Genitives function exactly like central definite determiners and thus preclude the cooccurrence of other determiners. The genitive is a phrase incorporating its own determiner, where the items preceding the genitive relate to the inflected noun as in sentence (47) where it must be understood as 'the son of that old gentleman' and not as 'that son of the old gentleman'. An exception is made where the preceding item is a predeterminer, since this may relate either to the genitive noun as in sentence (48) or to the noun that follows in sentence (49).

(47) *That old gentleman's son was intelligent.*

(48) *We attributed both girl's success to their hard work.* [i.e. the success of both the girls]

(49) *Both the girl's parents were present.* [i.e. both the parents of the girl]

### 5.2 The Genitive as a Modifier:

Descriptive genitives function not as a determiner but as a modifier with a classifying role. Determiners are such noun phrases usually relate not to the genitive but to the noun following it, as in sentence (50), where the singular could obviously not cooccur with the plural noun 'women' with other modifying items in the noun phrase are less likely to relate to the genitive noun than to the noun that follows it as in sentence (51) where 'the cottage'; that is, 'quaint' and 'old', not the 'shepherd'. Grammatically, some phrases can be ambiguous if they are independent of the context.

(50) *They attend a woman's university in Kyoto.*

(51) *She lives in a quaint old shepherd's cottage.*

### 6. The Test and Data Analysis:

In the present paper, the sample chosen to take part in the test was the second year Iraqi college students in the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Mosul, in the academic year 2011–2012. The total number of the participants was 25 were chosen with the same linguistic background in the area being tested. The students are supposed to be able to response to the test for they were taught the topic the 'genitive case' in the second academic year. The allocated time was an academic hour to do the test. The aim of the test was to check the students performance in their recognition of the suitable 's-genitive meanings'.

In order to achieve that a multi-choices test was submitted with ten sentences to explain the 's-genitive meanings'. The students are required to chose among three meanings which are chosen deliberately from different grammar books to cover a variety of genitive constructions which require the students to use paraphrase as a method of semantic analysis to reveal fine distinctions of meaning that are not otherwise apparent.

The corpus was limited to constructions in which a noun with ('s ending) precedes and modifies a head noun. The corpus comprised the possessive, attribute, genitive of origin, subjective, objective, descriptive, partitive, genitive of measure, genitive of both meanings subjective and objective and the genitive of close family relationships. Three kinds of constructions were excluded: the absolute genitive, the periphrastic genitive or the of-genitive, the double genitive and the elliptical genitive. 'Of-genitive' were set aside because they produce so many problems for analysis although some of 'of-genitive' phrases can be paraphrased as 's-genitives'. However, the chosen (sentences) are representative of the 's-genitives' and some of them found in day-to-day speech.

All the results were tabulated and statistically processed. Test reliability is estimated by the use of the (SPSS) Programme which is a statistical computer programme (see Table 2). In this programme, Alpha scale (standardized item alpha = 0.970) has been applied to verify the results statistically. It offers many significant and effective statistical variables to verify the values arrived at in the test, such as: validity, percentage, standard deviation, standard error mean, reliability, etc. Also it provides ultimately exact values of frequencies. For each sentence, there is a table of the ‘s-genitive’ meaning. The choices are numbered.

**Table (2): The Overall Results of the Test**

	Number of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	Variance
Sentence 1	25	2.8400	.47258	.09452	.223
Sentence 2	25	2.0000	.70711	.14142	.500
Sentence 3	25	2.0400	.84063	.16813	.707
Sentence 4	25	0.2000	.81650	.16330	.667
Sentence 5	25	2.2800	.67823	.13565	.460
Sentence 6	25	1.8800	.52599	.10520	.277
Sentence 7	25	2.4500	.77028	.15406	.593
Sentence 8	25	1.9600	.73485	.14697	.540
Sentence 9	25	2.0800	.70238	.14048	.493
Sentence 10	25	1.8800	.72572	.14514	.527

The test in the present study is conducted to investigate what is proposed by the hypothesis which that (IULE) may find difficulty in recognizing the ‘s-genitive’ meanings. The genitive with superlatives and ordinals, the independent, the local and the post genitives are excluded.

The data analysis concerning each sentence was tabulated by giving the suitable or the exact meaning of the ‘s-genitive’ number (3). Number (2) is given to the ‘s-genitive’ meaning interfere with the suitable one. Number (1) is given to the ‘s-genitive’ meaning with less interference with number (3) and (2) in the column valid. The frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percent were also given.

## 7. Data Analysis and Discussion:

**Sentence No.1:** Miguel’s and Cecilia’s new cars are in the parking lot.

The ‘s genitive’ in sentence No.1 expresses the meaning of possession (possessive). The genitive mean ‘to have’. The have relationship can identify both personal qualities and parts. In the mentioned sentence, both Miguel and Cecilia have cars, so sometimes it is called the partitive genitive.

The recorded rates were 88% (i.e. 22) as possessive, 8% (i.e. 2) as partitive and 4% (i.e. 1) as subjective as shown in table (3).

**Table (3): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.1**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	1	4.0	4.0	4.0
2.00	2	8.0	8.0	12.0
3.00	22	88.0	88.0	100.
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Though most of the students or testees identified the suitable answer to be possessive meaning which support the hypothesis of the research, but the possessive genitive can be multiply ambiguous both in and out of context. In the mentioned example, the ‘s-genitive’ may refer to ‘the cars that they own’, it also can be interpreted as referring to ‘the cars that they created’ or the subjective genitive. So both relationships of ownership and one of creation are expressed at the same time with no change in context.

There are many types of possession, but a common distinction is alienable versus inalienable possession. Alienability refers to the ability to dissociate something from its parent. In this case, a quality from its owner. When something is inalienably possessed, it is usually an attributes. Miguel’s and Cecilia’s cars – is alienably possessed. It can be separated from them [4% (i.e. 1) of students identified the subjective meaning of ‘the cars that they create’. The sentence may express both a relationship of ownership and one of creation].

**Sentence No.2:** Martha’s courage failed her on occasions.

In sentence No.2 the suitable meaning of ‘s-genitive’ was ‘attribute’. Shumaker (1975: 3) mentions that the attribute specifies an innate quality of the head noun. This construction consists of a head noun ‘courage’ which is adjectival noun. This type of genitive can be related to constructions in which the modifier ‘Martha’ is the subject of ‘verb to be’ and the head word ‘courage’ is an adjective. The adjectival complement is represented by a corresponding abstract noun. ‘Attribute’ is semantically similar to simple adjective, but more emphatic in force.

Table (4) shows that the majority of the students chose the meaning of ‘descriptive’ which recorded 52% (i.e. 13). This is because all genitives do some description; therefore, this category should be the last resort, only if the genitive fits into no other use. ‘Descriptive’ describes the head noun in a loose way. The second and third rates recorded were 24% (i.e. 6) as attribute and possessive respectively. This is because the nature of the

relationship between the two nouns is usually quite ambiguous, similar to attributive use, but broader.

**Table (4): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.2**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	6	24.0	24.0	27.0
2.00	13	52.0	52.0	76.0
3.00	6	24.0	24.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Sentence No.3:** Confucius's teaching was great.

The construction of this type expresses a relationship of authorship between the modifier 'Confucius' and the head noun 'teaching' such that the modifier is viewed as responsible for the creation of the headword. The verb 'produce' encompasses all kinds of authorship. The choice of the verb to express the exact meaning depends on the headword. In all cases, the basic notion expressed is that the modifier denotes the one who has originated or created the thing referred to by the headword.

Table (5) exemplifies that the rates recorded are rather similar. They are 36% (i.e. 9) as origin, 32% (i.e. 8) as both subjective and objective genitive.

**Table (5): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.3**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	8	32.0	32.0	32.0
2.00	8	32.0	32.0	64.0
3.00	9	36.0	36.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The subjective reading is that 'Confucius taught', the objective reading is "someone taught Confucius". The origin reading is "Confucius composed/taught". The majority of the students chose the objective and subjective genitive as the suitable meanings without any notice that the head noun does not imply a transitive verbal idea or it can be related morphologically to a verb. The students should know the idea implicit in the head noun (i.e. the definition) with the recognition of other important elements or identification.

**Sentence No.4:** The queen's arrival was a surprise.

The construction is semantically subjective. In such constructions, the headword can be morphologically related to a verb and a paraphrase can be composed by making the genitive phrase the subject of that verb 'to be' (*She arrived*).

Table (6) presents that the rates recorded are: 44% (i.e. 11) as objective, 32% (i.e. 8) as subjective and 24% (i.e. 6) as origin the suitable meanings.

**Table (6): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.4**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	6	24.0	24.0	24.0
2.00	8	32.0	32.0	56.0
3.00	11	44.0	44.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Though the nature of the relationship among the three meanings subject, object and origin is usually quite ambiguous, the distinction is clear-cut in the mentioned sentence.

In other cases, some constructions contain headwords that imply a verbal concept but for which there is no corresponding common English verb, as in (*The dguge's unsophisticated posture*). The construction contains a noun head that is semantically deverbal and the verb (*posture*) has a more specific meaning than the noun. Other constructions contain nouns whose matching verbs are obsolete, as in (*The lady's efforts*).

Still other constructions like the (*boy's memory ...*) which contain a deverbal noun which must be paraphrased by using a verb that is morphologically quite different from the noun stem (i.e. remember).

Other constructions like (*the novelist's rhetoric ...*) or (*the teacher's manner...*) whose head nouns express a verbal concept but which must be paraphrased by inserting a verb before the headword (i.e. she uses rhetoric) and (*He behaves in a certain manner*).

The free use of some verbs tends to be obscure the distinction between genitives of subjective meaning and those of the origin genitive.

The sentence can be paraphrased as (*The queen advised*) as subjective reading or (*The advice she gave/produced*) as an origin.

**Sentence No.5:** Jim's punishment was deserved.

According to Keating (2004: 1), he identifies the definition of objective genitive, the genitive substantive functions semantically as the direct object of the verbal idea implicit in the head noun. According to the identification, the objective genitive can only occur with head nouns that imply a transitive verbal idea, thus having a direct object.

The suitable meaning of the sentence was that of 'objective'. Table (7) presents that the recorded results were as follows: 40% (i.e. 10) as objective, 48% (i.e. 12) as subjective and 12% (i.e. 3) as descriptive.

**Table (7): Numbers and Percentages of the S–genitive Meaning of Sentence No.5**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	3	12.0	12.0	12.0
2.00	12	48.0	48.0	60.0
3.00	10	40.0	40.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

It is clear that many object–verb constructions become ambiguous when taken out of context (external reading), because the modifier (punishment) can be understood as either the subject or the object of the verb. In this construction, it is noticed that although Subject–Verb and Object–Verb constructions have been separated into two distinct types, there are similarities between them. The most obvious, is that they both contain headwords that can be related to verbs. In addition, it is possible to construct noun phrase paraphrase with the same structure, for both types of constructions. The ambiguity means according to Anttila and Fong (2005: 1) one–to–many mapping between form and meaning, e.g. ‘Jim was punished by someone’ as an objective meaning or ‘Jim punished someone’ as a subjective meaning to the sentence: Jim’s punishment was deserved.

The chosen meanings scored by the students indicate that there are similarities between them (subjective and objective). The similar paraphrase are possible because the headword noun (punishment) not only has a related verb (punishment/punish), but also a related predicate with a dummy verb that occur in more or less fixed collocations (punish/punishment).

In the classification used, it is the semantic status of the modifier to the headword, as an actor or recipient of the action, that determines the separation of the constructions into two distinct types.

Though in certain ambiguous structures, there is a relation between objective and descriptive genitive, the nature of this relationship between objective and descriptive is not clear here, 12% (i.e. 3) chose the descriptive genitive.

**Sentence No. 6:** He worked at a women’s college.

The ’s–genitive meaning of the sentence is that the nature of the relationship between the two nouns is usually quite ambiguous. Similar to attributive use but border. It is used to express ‘purpose’ “a woman’s college” ~ a college for women: They are commonly used with personal nouns, especially when they are in the plural form (See Biber, 1999: 295).

The genitive noun can be replaced by or described by or ‘characterized by’.

Table (8) shows that most of the students chose possessive as a suitable meaning. The recorded rates were: 8% (i.e. 2) as descriptive, 72% (i.e. 2) as possessive and 20%

(i.e. 5) as objective. The construction expresses a relationship of ownership between the modifier 'women' and the headword 'college', 'A college that the women owned, built, created, ....'. The nature of the relationship between the two nouns is usually quite ambiguous. The second recorded rate as 'objective' means that the construction 'a women's college' is semantically similar to the Object-Verb construction. In that, the headword 'college' is related to a verb like 'employees' and the modifier 'women' is the recipient of the verbal action: 'A college which employees women'.

**Table (8): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.6**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	5	20.0	20.0	20.0
2.00	18	72.0	72.0	92.0
3.00	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The third recorded rate was 8% (i.e. 2) as descriptive. There are multiple interpretations for this construction for the idea that this type can be multiply ambiguous both in and out of the context.

It is obvious that the descriptive genitive should be rarely used since all genitives do some description, therefore, this category should be the last resort, only if the genitive fits into no other use.

**Sentence No. 7:** He is always dreaming of a day's visit to Paris.

The suitable 's-genitive' meaning is that of Measure. This construction contains a headword 'visit' that is located in time by the modifier 'a day'. Constructions expressing location in time can be paraphrased with 'for' as 'a visit for a day'. It expresses a duration or time.

Table (9) presents the scores recorded as: 64% (i.e. 16) as measure, 20% (i.e. 5) as attribute and 16% (i.e. 4) as descriptive.

**Table (9): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.7**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	4	16.0	16.0	16.0
2.00	5	20.0	20.0	36.0
3.00	16	64.0	64.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

It is noticed that no ambiguity was recognized by students to select the suitable meaning for the definition of the genitive of time is that the genitive substantive indicates the

extent of time. In addition to other important elements, according to the idea of identification; that is, 'genitive of time' can be expressed with words that lexically involve a temporal element.

**Sentence No.8:** Hazel's head was big.

The suitable 's-genitive meaning is Partitive. As for the definition of partitive genitive: It indicates the whole of which head noun "head" is a part which requires the head noun to have a nuance indicating 'Portion' (e.g. some, one, a part, tenth, etc.). The genitive noun will usually be inanimate.

Table (10) shows the rates recorded as: 24% (i.e. 6) as partitive, 48% (i.e. 12) as possessive and 28% (i.e. 7) as origin.

**Table (10): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.8**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	7	28.0	28.0	28.0
2.00	12	48.0	48.0	76.0
3.00	6	24.0	24.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

There is ambiguity in this construction, especially when it is taken out of context. There are more external readings for this part-to-whole genitive construction 'head' with human modifier 'Hazel'. Such readings are less probable with nonhuman modifier.

The ownership between 'Hazel' and 'head' appeared in one of the meanings according to the students by viewing the headword 'head' as a separate (or alienable) possession of the modifier 'Hazel': 'The head that he (Hazel) painted/sculpted/drew', a genitive of possession.

The other reading expresses a relation of authorship between the modifier 'Hazel' and the headword 'head' which viewed 'Hazel' as responsible for the creation of the headword 'head', 'The head that Hazel produced' a genitive of origin.

**Sentence No.9:** William's memory was very effective.

The 's-genitive' structure contains both subjective and objective genitive ideas at the same time. Both subjective and objective meaning seem to fit, which was not recognized by the testees.

Tables (11) shows the recorded rates as: 28% (i.e. 7) as both, 52% (i.e. 13) as subjective and 20% (i.e. 5) as objective.

**Table (11): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.9**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	5	20.0	20.0	20.0
2.00	13	52.0	52.0	72.0
3.00	7	28.0	28.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The most obvious point is that the subjective and objective genitives contain headwords that can be related to verbs. In addition, it is possible to construct noun-phrase paraphrases with the same structure for both types of construction; that is, 'Williams memory' could be paraphrased as: 'William remembered something' where the headword 'memory' denotes a verbal idea or Subject-Verb relationship, or as 'Paul remembered William' to denote an Object-Verb relation. In that, the modifier 'William' is the recipient of the verbal action. So the modifier in this sentence 'William' can be taken as either subject or object of the headword 'memory' which can be related to the verb 'remember'. The students were unaware of the 's-genitive' relationship.

**Sentence No.10:** Granny is delighted with Peter's Jane.

The sentence contained a genitive which expresses a close family relationship (e.g. Peter's girlfriend).

Table (12) identifies the recorded rates as: 20% (i.e. 5) as family relationship, 48% (i.e. 12) as possessive and 32% (i.e. 8) as partitive.

**Table (12): Numbers and Percentages of the S-genitive Meaning of Sentence No.10**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	8	32.0	32.0	32.0
2.00	12	48.0	48.0	80.0
3.00	5	20.0	20.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The family or social relationship is described between the modifier 'Peter' and the headword 'Jane'. There is ambiguity when 'Peter's Jane' was taken out of context, because the headword is a proper noun. Thus, there is no way to tell exactly what role 'Jane' fills in relationship to 'Peter'.

The students chose 'Partitive' as one reading to express a kind of part-to-whole relationship; in that, the modifier 'Peter' is a member of the group named by the headword 'Jane'.

The students chose 'possessive' meaning to express the ownership relationship between Peter and Jane, which support the hypothesis of the project.

### 8. Conclusions:

1. It is concluded that the genitive case is a grammatical category which often marks a noun as modifying another noun, so the relationship between the two nouns indicates various relationships. Through the syntactic status of the English 's-genitive constructions' have been formulated quite well by grammarians, they have found the semantics to be complex and difficult to delineate.
2. The students have certain problems in identifying the suitable meaning of the 's-genitive constructions' given to them for the fact that most contemporary pedagogical texts now use the term **possessive** as an equivalent of genitive and refer to the possessive case when speaking of the genitive. Moreover, there is rarely any discussion in such texts of the wide range of semantics readings to many 's-genitive constructions'.
3. The excessive use of the possessive meaning of the genitive was obvious among the students. The need to know the definition and other important elements/identifications of each 's-genitive meaning' is very essential to recognize the suitable meaning correctly by grammar textbooks designers.
4. The arbitrariness and ambiguity of some 's-genitive constructions' make it difficult for the students to identify them appropriately. They are more compact and less explicit in meaning.

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### Appendix

Mention the relation between the italicized possessive and its following noun by choosing the suitable meaning listed in front of each sentence.

1. <i>Miguel's and Cecilia's new cars</i> are in the parking lot.	<input type="checkbox"/> Possessive <input type="checkbox"/> Partitive <input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive
2. <i>Martha's courage</i> failed her on occasions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Possessive <input type="checkbox"/> Attributive <input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive
3. <i>Confucius's teaching</i> was great.	<input type="checkbox"/> Subjective <input type="checkbox"/> Origin <input type="checkbox"/> Objective
4. <i>The queen's arrival</i> was a surprise.	<input type="checkbox"/> Subjective <input type="checkbox"/> Origin <input type="checkbox"/> Objective
5. <i>Jim's punishment</i> was deserved.	<input type="checkbox"/> Subjective

	<input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive <input type="checkbox"/> Objective
6. He worked at <i>a women's college</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Possessive <input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive <input type="checkbox"/> Origin
7. He is always dreaming of <i>a day's visit</i> to Paris.	<input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive <input type="checkbox"/> Attribute <input type="checkbox"/> Measure
8. <i>Hazel's head</i> was big.	<input type="checkbox"/> Possessive <input type="checkbox"/> Partitive <input type="checkbox"/> Origin
9. <i>William's memory</i> was very effective.	<input type="checkbox"/> Subjective <input type="checkbox"/> Objective <input type="checkbox"/> Both
10. Granny is delighted with <i>Peter's Jane</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Possessive <input type="checkbox"/> Partitive <input type="checkbox"/> Close Family relationship