

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POSSESSIVE CASE SUFFIXES IN KOREAN AND
UZBEK**

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes possessive suffixes in Korean and Uzbek from a contrastive linguistic perspective. The purpose of the study is to examine typological and pragmatic differences between the two languages. In Korean, possession is expressed by attaching *-ui* to a noun, but in actual spoken usage it is often omitted or replaced, and in many cases possession is determined by the conversational context.

In contrast, Uzbek expresses possession through grammatical possessive suffixes according to person, such as *-im*, *-ing*, *-i*, *-miz*, *-ingiz*, and *-lari*, which clearly reflect the characteristics of an agglutinative language.

Furthermore, in both Korean and Uzbek, possessive expressions show various pragmatic variations depending on factors such as the social relationship and degree of familiarity between the speaker and the listener, as well as the honorific system. This provides meaningful points of comparison not only at the grammatical level but also from a sociolinguistic perspective.

This contrastive analysis is expected to help Uzbek-speaking learners of Korean better understand the omission and substitution of Korean possessive markers, and conversely, to provide Korean speakers with foundational materials for learning the system of Uzbek possessive suffixes.

Keywords: Korean language, Uzbek language, possessive case suffixes, contrastive linguistics, agglutinative languages, pragmatic features, sociolinguistic factors, language typology

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Significance of the Study. Language is a highly developed tool that reflects not only the transmission of information but also human cognitive systems, social relationships, and culture. In particular, grammatical elements expressing **possession** constitute a core mechanism through which humans define their relationship with the surrounding world, and they exist as an essential grammatical category in all individual languages. Possessive expressions are used with very high frequency in everyday language, as they encompass a wide range of meanings extending beyond simple ownership of objects to include family relations, body parts, and abstract attributes.

The Korean and Uzbek languages examined in this study both belong to the category of **agglutinative languages** from the perspective of morphological typology. The two languages share genealogical and structural similarities in that sentences are formed by sequentially attaching grammatical affixes to lexical roots. However, despite this common foundation, they display clear contrasts in the concrete ways in which possessive case is realized. In Korean, the possessive case particle *-ui* functions as a single, fixed marker that modifies a following noun regardless of person or number. In contrast, Uzbek employs a more complex system in which possession is marked doubly: through the possessive case suffix *-ning* attached to the possessor and through **personal possessive suffixes (Egalik qo'shimchalari)** attached to the possessed noun.

These structural differences frequently lead to grammatical errors in the process of learning Korean and Uzbek as foreign languages. For instance, Korean learners of Uzbek often omit personal possessive suffixes on the possessed noun, while Uzbek learners of Korean tend to redundantly use unnecessary personal pronouns. Therefore, a contrastive analysis of possessive expression systems in the two languages is not only linguistically significant but also provides essential foundational data for predicting and correcting learner errors in actual educational contexts.



Scope and Methodology. This study focuses on the Korean possessive particle *-ui* and its Uzbek counterparts, namely the possessive case suffix *-ning* and personal possessive suffixes (first, second, and third person in both singular and plural forms). The following research methods are employed:

First, the grammatical characteristics and syntactic constraints of possessive morphemes in each language are described, with particular attention to the conditions under which *-ui* is omitted in Korean and the phonological alternations of Uzbek possessive suffixes (consonant and vowel harmony).

Second, the possessive structures of the two languages are contrasted within a typological framework of **single-marking** and **double-marking**, visually analyzing how grammatical agreement operates between the possessor and the possessed noun.

Third, based on the results of the contrastive analysis, actual learner error cases are collected and their causes identified. Through this process, pedagogical implications relevant to Korean and Uzbek language education are derived.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND DEFINITION OF THE POSSESSIVE CASE

Linguistic Definition of the Possessive Case. The possessive case (genitive or possessive case) is one of the grammatical case categories that define relationships between nouns within a sentence. It typically indicates relationships such as possession, affiliation, origin, or attribute between two nominal elements. From a typological perspective, the possessive case serves as a mechanism that explicitly marks the relationship between the **possessor** and the **possessum (possessed)**.

In traditional case grammar, the possessive case primarily functions as a determiner within a noun phrase, restricting or specifying the meaning of the head noun. However, modern linguistics emphasizes that “possession” does not refer solely to physical ownership. For example, *my book* denotes physical possession, *my hometown* expresses emotional attachment, and *my death* indicates agency. Therefore, the possessive case is more comprehensively defined as a “**marker of association.**”

Realization of the Possessive Case in Agglutinative Languages. In agglutinative languages such as Korean and Uzbek, the possessive case is typically realized through affixes attached to lexical stems. Unlike inflectional languages, where grammatical categories are fused into single forms, agglutinative languages exhibit clearly segmented morphemes, each representing an independent grammatical meaning.

Nevertheless, possessive marking can be classified according to its position:

- **Dependent-marking:** Possessive marking is attached to the possessor (e.g., Korean *-ui*).
- **Head-marking:** Possessive marking is attached to the possessed noun (e.g., Hungarian).
- **Double-marking:** Possessive marking appears on both the possessor and the possessed noun (e.g., Uzbek).

Grammatical Definition of Korean *-ui*. In Korean, the possessive case—also known as the genitive case—is realized through the particle *-ui*, which attaches to nouns and indicates that they modify the following noun. The main characteristics of Korean possessive marking are as follows:

1 Syntactic Uniformity

The form of *-ui* does not change according to person, number, or gender.

2 Semantic Diversity

It expresses a wide range of relationships, including possession (*Chulsoo-ui car*), subject relations (*my success*), object relations (*the arrest of the criminal*), and attributes (*the age of peace*).

3 Optional Omission

When the possessive relationship is clear from context, *-ui* is often omitted, resulting in compound noun constructions.

Definition of the Uzbek Possessive System. In Uzbek, the possessive case is called *Qaratqich kelishigi* and is realized by the suffix *-ning*. However, Uzbek possessive constructions obligatorily involve **personal possessive suffixes (Egalik qo'shimchalari)** attached to the possessed noun.

1 Grammatical Agreement

When *-ning* is attached to the possessor, the possessed noun must take a possessive suffix corresponding to the possessor's person and number.

2 Referential Explicitness

Since possessive suffixes encode possessor information, Uzbek can convey complete possessive meaning without explicit possessive pronouns.

Summary. In summary, the possessive case grammaticalizes the close associative relationship between two entities. Korean establishes an economical and uniform modifying system through the possessive particle *-ui*, while Uzbek exhibits a more precise and redundant agreement system by grammatically binding the possessor and the possessed noun through suffixes. These definitional differences deeply influence sentence structure and speakers' cognitive patterns in each language.

THE KOREAN POSSESSIVE SYSTEM: FOCUSING ON THE GENITIVE PARTICLE *-UI*

Morphological Characteristics of *-ui*. The Korean possessive case is realized by the single morpheme *-ui*. Although Korean is an agglutinative language, it maintains a notably simple and systematic structure in expressing possession.

1 Invariance by Person and Number

Unlike Uzbek and other person-marking languages, the Korean possessive particle does not change form regardless of person or number.

2 Phonological Stability

Unlike other Korean particles that vary depending on the phonological structure of the preceding noun, *-ui* remains phonologically invariant.

Syntactic Function of *-ui*: Dependent-Marking. Korean possessive constructions follow the structure [Noun₁ (Possessor) + *-ui* + Noun₂ (Possessed)], where *-ui* marks the possessor and modifies the head noun.

Semantic Versatility. The particle *-ui* expresses various relationships beyond simple ownership:

- **Canonical possession:** physical ownership
- **Whole-part relationships:** components or body parts
- **Subject/object relations:** in nominalized verb phrases
- **Attributes and location:** qualities or spatial relations

Omission and Optionality. One of the most distinctive features of Korean possessive constructions is the optional omission of *-ui*, especially in spoken language, when the relationship is contextually clear.

Examples: *mother's photo* → *mother photo*, *school's playground* → *school playground*.

With personal pronouns, contraction occurs:

- *na + ui* → *nae*
- *jeo + ui* → *je*
- *neo + ui* → *ne*



This optionality enhances linguistic economy but increases reliance on contextual interpretation.

Summary. The Korean possessive system represents a single-marking strategy characterized by morphological simplicity and semantic breadth. This contrasts sharply with the double-marking system of Uzbek, explaining why Korean learners often perceive Uzbek possessive suffixes as complex.

THE UZBEK POSSESSIVE SYSTEM: -NING AND PERSONAL POSSESSIVE SUFFIXES

Uzbek possessive constructions require grammatical agreement between the possessor and the possessed noun, forming a more complex system than Korean.

The Possessive Case Suffix *-ning*. The suffix *-ning* is functionally similar to Korean *-ui* and attaches to the possessor. However, it obligatorily triggers possessive suffixes on the possessed noun.

Personal Possessive Suffixes (*Egalik Qo'shimchalari*). The core of the Uzbek possessive system lies in possessive suffixes attached to the possessed noun, encoding the person and number of the possessor. These suffixes exhibit allomorphs depending on whether the noun ends in a consonant or a vowel.

인칭	접미사	예시 (kitob = 책)
1인칭 단수	-im/-m	kitobim (내 책)
2인칭 단수	-ing/-ng	kitobing (네 책)
3인칭 단수	-i/-si	kitobi (그의 책)
1인칭 복수	-imiz	kitobimiz (우리의 책)
2인칭 복수	-ingiz	kitobingiz (너희의 책)
3인칭 복수	-lari	kitoblari (그들의 책)

Consonant-final nouns

(e.g., *kitob* ‘book’):

kitobim (my book), *kitobing* (your book), *kitobi* (his/her book)

Vowel-final nouns

(e.g., *uy* ‘house’ / *ona* ‘mother’):

onam (my mother), *onang* (your mother), *onasi* (his/her mother)

Note: Although *uy* ends with the letter *-y*, it is phonologically treated as a consonant-final noun and thus follows the same pattern as *kitob*. In contrast, *ona* ends in a vowel and therefore takes the suffixes *-m* / *-ng* / *-si*.

Double-marking and omission of possessive pronouns. Uzbek clearly represents a prototypical **double-marking language**, in which grammatical markers appear on both the possessor (dependent) and the possessed noun (head).

Full structure:

Mening kitobim (“my book” – literally “my book-my”)

Mening (possessor marking) + *kitobim* (possessed noun marking)

Reduced structure:

Kitobim (“my book”)

Since the possessive suffix *-im* already encodes sufficient information about the possessor (“my”), the possessive pronoun *mening* is normally omitted unless emphasis or contrast is intended. This mechanism operates in the opposite direction from Korean: while Korean tends to omit the genitive marker *-ui*, Uzbek omits the possessor itself rather than the possessive marker.

Phonological changes in the attachment of possessive suffixes. When possessive suffixes are attached to Uzbek nouns, certain phonological alternations occur, especially with nouns ending in specific consonants. This aspect is considered one of the most challenging areas for Korean learners of Uzbek.

1. k → g alternation:

istak (wish) + *-im* → *istagim* (“my wish”)

2 q → g’ alternation:

qishloq (village) + *-imiz* → *qishlog’imiz* (“our village”)

3 Vowel deletion:

shahar (city) + *-i* → *shahri* (“his/her city”)

Summary. The Uzbek possessive system establishes a very strong grammatical linkage between the possessor and the possessed noun. Possessive suffixes are not merely optional or decorative elements but play a role as crucial as person agreement between the subject and the predicate. This highly structured and explicit system stands in sharp contrast to the relatively simple genitive marker system of Korean.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF KOREAN AND UZBEK

A comparison of possessive expressions in Korean and Uzbek reveals the following differences:

(The discussion continues.)

항목	한국어	우즈베크어
소유격 표지	조사 -의	소유 접미사 / 조사 -ning
인칭 반영 여부	없음	인칭 및 수 반영
소유격 위치	소유자 뒤에 조사 -의 부착	피소유 명사 뒤에 접미사
구어체 사용	-의 생략 가능	접미사 생략 불가능, 소유주 생략
표현의 다양성	단일(조사 중심)	이중(접미사+조사 가능)

These differences also influence learner errors. Uzbek learners of Korean often tend to overuse the genitive marker *-ui* or, conversely, attempt to omit it in all contexts. In contrast, Korean learners of Uzbek experience difficulties in acquiring the morphological variations of possessive suffixes.

CONCLUSION

This study has compared the ways in which possessive constructions are expressed in Korean and Uzbek. Korean marks possession uniformly through the genitive particle *-ui*, which can be omitted in colloquial usage. Uzbek, by contrast, possesses a well-developed system of possessive suffixes that explicitly reflects distinctions of person and number. In addition, the genitive marker *-ning* allows for a clearer representation of the relationship between the possessor and the possessed noun.

These structural differences may lead to cross-linguistic interference for learners of both languages. Therefore, Korean language instruction should clearly emphasize the usage and omission rules of *-ui*, while Uzbek language instruction should systematically teach the functions of possessive suffixes and the genitive marker *-ning*.

Future research should analyze patterns of possessive expression errors based on actual learner data and propose more concrete teaching and learning strategies accordingly.

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