THE USE OF THE GENITIVE IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN[1]

Abstract*: The paper aims at presenting the use of the genitive in English and Romanian. In English the genitive is the rule with nouns denoting persons and sometimes things and with nouns denoting time. It may also be used as a post-genitive or as a local genitive whether singular or plural. The genitive alternates with an of-adjunct with proper names, with names of animals, with certain names of things, with names of measures and values.*

In Romanian the genitive has numerous values: the possessive genitive, the subjective genitive, the objective genitive, the genitive of denomination, the qualitative genitive, and the genitive implied by prepositions and prepositional phrases. As concerns the morphological means of expression, the genitive is functionally clear, being marked by determinatives.

Key words: *headword, local genitive, of-adjunct, determinative, noun*

Résumé*: Ce travail se propose de présenter l'utilisation du génitif en anglais et roumain. En anglais, le génitif est utilisé avec des noms désignant des personnes et parfois des choses et avec des noms désignant le temps. Il peut être utilisé comme un génitif postposé ou génitif local au singulier ou pluriel. Le génitif alterne avec of avec des noms propres, noms d'animaux, avec certains noms de choses, noms de mesure et valeur.*

En Roumain, le génitif a plusieurs valeurs : le génitif possessif, le subjonctif possessif, le génitif objectif, le génitif de dénomination, la qualité génitive, le génitif présupposé par des prépositions ou locutions prépositionnelles. En ce qui concerne les moyens morphologiques d'expression, le génitif est marqué par des déterminatifs.

Mots-clés *: entrée, génitif local, of, déterminatif, nom*

1. The Genitive Singular

In all kinds of English, nouns denoting persons, whether proper names or class-nouns, may occur in the genitive singular. Names of animals are also used in the genitive:

The dog knew his *master**'s*** name at once.

It is difficult to explain *a bird**'s*** notes in writing.

Names of things are not as a rule used in the genitive, at least in non-literary English. One exception is formed by nouns denoting time, including some that are really adverbs:

We never had *a moment**'s*** rest.

Nouns denoting distance may be used in the genitive when followed by a headword (i.e. the word qualified by the genitive) related in meaning: *at a yard's distance*.

Several nouns denoting things are used in the genitive in set phrases. They cannot be freely combined with other nouns, or used in other than special meanings: *to keep a person at arm's length*; *a needle's eye.*

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In more or less literary English other names of things may occur in the Genitive: *England's greatness, London's history, the church's doctrine, the world's doctrine*, *the play's title, etc.*

The examples given so far all illustrate the *Attributive Genitive*, which is grammatically subordinated to its headword.

English also makes frequent use of the *Independent Genitive*, i.e. the genitive without a headword. The headword need not be repeated if it occurs earlier or later in the sentence:

She put her arm through her *mother's.*

He had read all the Waverley novels, and many of *Marryat's.*

With a form of *to be* the genitive in this construction may come to be used *predicatively*:

Whose is this umbrella? – I think it'*s father's.*

The attributive genitive always precedes its headword in English. The only case when an English genitive may be said to follow its headword is when it is the principal part of an *of*-adjunct to a preceding noun. The headword may be qualified by an article, a numeral or a pronoun, or used in the plural without a qualifying word. When the noun in the genitive introduces a new idea, both it and its headword are stressed (a); when it has been mentioned before, only the headword is stressed (b). The construction is known as the *Post-Genitive*:

a. I gave her an old ***raincoat of my sister's.***
This is that ***picture of Turner's*** *that he is always talking about.*
b. This ***realism of Carlyle's*** *gives a great charm to his writings.*

The genitive of a proper name, or of a noun linked with the idea of trade or relationship, may be used to denote a building or business (church, school, shop, house, hospital, etc.) with which the bearer of the name is somehow connected (whether as owner or as patron, founder, etc.). This kind of genitive occurs especially in prepositional adjuncts of place, but, with the exception of nouns denoting relationship, may also be used in other functions (subject, object, etc.). It may be called the *Local Genitive*:

Old *St. Paul's* was burnt down in 1666.

Where did you buy this tie? – At *Selfridge's* .

I am dining at *my uncle's* tonight.

It is obvious that a form thus freely used ceases to some extent to be felt as a genitive. In consequence, the apostrophe is generally omitted in names of department stores, publishing firms and the like: *Harrods, Woolworths, Longmans, Cooks*. This, together with the collective character of such names, explains why they are usually construed as plurals.

In the case of shops the local genitive denotes the shop from the customer's point of view: *Sutton's, the butcher's, at my tailor's* – just as, for instance, *Guy's* as the name of a London hospital will be used primarily by the medical students frequenting it. Department stores like *Harrod's, Gamage's, Selfridge's*, are nearly always denoted by the local genitive. There is no current alternative such as Harrod's stores.

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Combinations of an attributive genitive plus headword fall into two groups:The noun in the genitive refers to a particular person or thing, or it denotes the class or kind to which the person or thing denoted by the headword belongs.

Examples of the former group are: *my mother's picture, the man's voice, England's greatness.* This kind of genitive is called *the Specifying Genitive*. On the other hand, *sheep's eyes* are not the eyes of one particular sheep, but a kind of eyes (or glances); *a giant's task* is a kind of task; *a summer's day* such a day one expects in summer. This is called *Classifying Genitive.*

A number of classifying genitives differ from those just discussed in that the groups of which they form part are usually pronounced with even stress. Among them there are many combinations with *ship's*: *a ship's carpenter*, *the ship's doctor, ship's papers*, etc. There are also genitives of nouns denoting time: *a day's work, a good night's rest*.

On comparing examples of the classifying with those of the specifying genitive it will be seen that the two do not cover exactly the same ground. On the one hand, the specifying genitive is the freer of the two, because it is as a rule less limited in its choice of headwords than the classifying genitive of the same noun. Thus *child's* as a specifying genitive can take a great many headwords: the child's mother, father, parents, clothes, toys, feelings, etc. On the other hand, especially with names of animals and names of things, a classifying genitive may be current in cases where a specifying genitive would hardly be used, at least in spoken and ordinary written English: *a lark's egg, a lark's nest*, but *the song of the lark*; *a stone's throw,* but *the size of the stone*.

2. The Genitive Plural

Genitives formed from plural names of persons not ending in a sibilant–suffix are used in the same way as the genitive singular:

The *men's faces* were keen and intelligent.

The place was alive with happy *children's voices*.

The specifying genitive plural of other names of persons and animals can be used when the context leaves no doubt as to its identity. It is commoner in written than in spoken English:

As a solicitor I have to consider my *clients' interests* in the first place.

The *horses' heads* were turned from the fire.

In groups with a classifying genitive, the genitive usually takes the plural form when the number of persons (animals or things) denoted by the word in the genitive is greater than that denoted by the headword: *a ladies' committee, the Ladies' gallery, a prisoner's camp, a thieves' den.* Sometimes when the number of persons denoted by the genitive is the same as (or less than) that denoted by the headword, we naturally find ***'s*** in the singular (a butcher's shop). The plural is spelt either *butcher's shops* or *butchers' shops*.

Nouns denoting time may also occur in the genitive plural, though the apostrophe is not always written (or printed):

We had (a) five *minutes' talk* before breakfast.

He owed me several *months' rent*.

In ten or twenty *years time*.

Names of measures and values may occur in the genitive plural if they are followed by a headword related in meaning. The apostrophe is sometimes omitted:

The fox ran by at less than a hundred *yards' distance* from where we stood.

He had chosen a shawl of about thirty *shillings' value*.

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A thirty *miles march*.

3. Genitive and Of-Adjunct

In the linguistic consciousness of speakers and writers of English the genitive is associated with certain uses of the adnominal *of-adjunct*. Thus *his master's voice* is felt as nearly equivalent to *the voice of his master*; *the play's title* is a possible alternative to *the title of the play*.

With proper names the genitive is commoner than the of-adjunct, the latter being chiefly used for the sake of balance. Thus, *John's father*, but *the father of John and Mary*; *James' reign*, but *the reign of James the Second*, *Shakespeare's plays*, but, on a title-page, *The Works of Shakespeare*.

One should note that the position after the headword usually gives more prominence to the proper name than the position before the headword, which is the only one for a word in the genitive. Thus *the novels of Charles Dickens* draws attention to the name of the author, whereas *Dickens' novels* emphasizes *novels* at least as much as *Dickens'*.

Classifying genitives are mostly inseparable fro their headwords, so that there can, as a rule, be no question of replacing them by an of-adjunct*: a doctor's degree, a lady's maid,* etc. In some cases, where the connection between genitive and headword is less close, an of-adjunct may occur: *a clergyman's son – the son of a clergyman; a planter's life – the life of a planter.*

The specifying genitive exists by the side of the of-adjunct in the case of the names of the larger and more familiar animals. Thus *the elephant's trunk – the trunk of the elephant*; *his horse's tail – the tail of his horse*. Spoken English usually prefers the latter construction, especially in the case of the smaller and less-known species. With names of things the of-adjunct is the rule, with some exceptions already mentioned.

An attributive genitive with the headword mentioned before may be replaced by an *of-adjunct* preceded by *that* or *those*:

She put her arm through *that of her mother.*

He had read all the Waverley novels, and *many of those* by Marryat.

The post-genitive is itself part of an of-adjunct. It differs from an ordinary of-adjunct in suggesting a subject-object relation between the word in the genitive and its headword: *a friend of Mary's* implies that Mary has a friend or friends; *that picture of Turner's*, that Turner painted the picture.

Spoken English usually prefers an of-adjunct (*the interests of my clients*), as a sibilant-suffix in attributive position generally suggests to the ear the singular number (*my client's interests*). This is not necessarily so with such a word as *(grand)parents'*, the singular being infrequent.

4. The Use of the Genitive in Romanian

The usual syntactical function of the noun is that of a nominal determinative. The genitive has numerous values. The *possessive genitive* denotes the proper owner of the object denoted by its determinative or it indicates only the affiliation: *stăpânul casei, nasturii hainei.*

The *subjective genitive* determines an infinitive with a noun value or a noun of action, that contains the characteristic process of a verb. The noun in the genitive is the author or the agent of the substantivized action: *înaintea **lucrărilor**, plecarea **părinţilor***.

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The *objective genitive* also determines a noun which comes from a verb, that represents in fact the object of the determined action: *recoltatul **cerealelor**, rezolvarea **problemelor**, recunoaşterea **drepturilor**, respectarea **suveranităţii** si a **integrităţii**.*

The *qualitative genitive* is rare: *îngerul **iubirii**, omul **dreptăţii**, omul **datoriei**.*

The *genitive of denomination* individualizes the determined noun and turns it into a personal name: *apele **Dunării**, ţara **Moldovei.***

The *qualitative genitive with a maximum intensification* is a repetition of the determined noun through its genitive: floarea-**florilor**, voinicul-**voinicilor**.

There is also a genitive implied by some prepositions and prepositional phrases like: *asupra, contra, deasupra, dinaintea, din dreptul, împotriva, în contra, înaintea, înapoia, în dreptul*, etc., which determines verbal nouns that signify processes.

At present some syntagms like *în vederea, în scopul*, etc. tend to become prepositional phrases and ask the genitive establishing a purpose relation: *Învaţă în vederea examenelor.* The use of the genitive with prepositions and prepositional phrases mentioned above can be explained by the analysis of one element of theirs as a noun: *din cauza, în dreptul, în vederea.*

Even if *în vederea, în scopul, în dreptul, din cauza*, etc. were considered independent syntagms, the noun in the genitive that follows would be the attributive determinative of the preposition or of the prepositional phrase, which is doubtful. In Romanian there is a tendency of enlarging the genitive function. As regards the morphological means of expression, the genitive is distinct from the other cases only from a functional point of view or because it is marked by determinatives. Thus the oppositions *Nominative / Genitive*: *om / (al) unui om, om / (al) acestui om, om / (al) cărui om, om / (al) fiecărui om,* etc. are distinguished because the genitive form are determined by articles or pronominal adjectives which function as grammatical morphemes.

The feminine nouns have specific genitive inflexions, which are found in the plural nominative: ***-e, -i** final**, -le**, and **zero***: *mama / (unei)mame, stea / (unei) stele, muşama / (unei) muşamale, mare / (unei) mări*. The feminine nouns forms denoting persons have no opposition nominative / genitive, being invariable in the plural: *admiratoare / (unei) admiratoare, bocitoare /(unei) bocitoare, ghicitoare / (unei) ghicitoare,* etc.

The feminine nouns that are derived with the suffix ***–oaie*** are also invariable in the genitive: *căsoaie /(unei) căsoaie, cuţitoaie / (unei) cuţitoaie, doftoroaie / (unei) doftoroaie, lăboaie /(unei) lăboaie, tălpoaie / (unei) tălpoaie, băboaie / (unei) băboaie,* etc.

5. Conclusions

In English the genitive is the rule, to the exclusion of an of-adjunct, with nouns denoting persons; with classifying genitive; with nouns denoting time; as a post-genitive; as a local genitive; as a subjective genitive; in a number of set-phrases.

The genitive alternates with an of-adjunct, with varying ratios of frequency, with proper names; with other names of persons in the singular, with names of animals in the singular; in written English, with names of persons and animals in the plural and with certain names of things; with some names of measures and values.

The of-adjunct is the rule to the entire or practical exclusion of the genitive, with names of things; in spoken English, with a noun in a plural sibilant-suffix.

In Romanian the genitive has numerous values: the *possessive genitive,* which denotes the proper owner of the object; the *subjective genitive* that determines an infinitive with a noun value; the *objective genitive* which determines a noun that comes from a verb;

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the *genitive of denomination* that individualizes the determined noun. The *qualitative genitive with a maximum intensification* is a repetition of the determined noun through its genitive. There is also *a genitive implied* by some prepositions and prepositional phrases.

In Romanian there is a tendency of enlarging the genitive function. As regards the morphological means of expression, the genitive is distinct from the other cases from a functional point of view, because it is marked by determinatives.

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