

GENITIVE CASE (-(N)IN)

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

The genitive case marks a noun or pronoun as the possessor of, or in a close relationship with, another noun. The marker is -(n)In, which attaches to the possessor and typically works together with a possessive suffix on the noun that follows.

1. Function / Meaning

The genitive suffix most often marks ownership, but it also expresses part-whole relations, association, or a defining connection between two nouns.

Examples:

Ali'nin arabası (Ali's car — ownership)

Türkiye'nin başkenti (Turkey's capital — part-whole)

filmin sonu (the end of the film — relation, not ownership)

2. Form and Structure

Noun stem → -(n)In, with four-way vowel harmony:

a, ı → -ın

e, i → -in

o, u → -un

ö, ü → -ün

Examples:

Ahmet-in

öğretmen-in

okul-un

öğrenci-nin

3. Buffer Consonant -n- in the Genitive Suffix

When the noun ends in a vowel, a buffer -n- appears before the suffix.

Examples:

oda → oda-nın

araba → araba-nın

anne → anne-nin

kedi → kedi-nin

Exception: su → suyun. The word su uses the buffer consonant -y- instead of -n-.

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4. Personal Pronoun Genitive Forms

Personal pronouns take special genitive forms rather than the regular -(n)In pattern. These are best learned as a set:

ben → benim (my/mine)
sen → senin (your/yours)
o → onun (his/her/hers/its)
biz → bizim (our/ours)
siz → sizin (your/yours)
onlar → onların (their/theirs)

Examples:

benim kitabım (my book)
onun arabası (his/her car)
bizim evimiz (our house)

5. Asking About Possession or Relation

Kimin is the genitive form of kim (“who”), while neyin is the genitive form of ne (“what”).

- Kimin? — Whose?
- Neyin? — Of what?

Examples:

- Kimin çantası bu? — Whose bag is this?
- Bu kalem kimin? — Whose pen is this?
- Neyin kokusu bu? — What is this the smell of?

Examples:

Kimin çantası bu? — Whose bag is this?
Bu kalem kimin? — Whose pen is this?

6. Genitive Forms Without a Following Possessive Noun

The genitive does not always require a possessive-marked noun right after it. It can stand alone as a predicate, or appear before certain postpositions with personal pronouns.

Examples:

Bu kitap benim. — This book is mine.
Bu kalem senin mi? — Is this pen yours?
Benim için bir hediye aldı. — He/she got a gift for me.
Senin gibi çalışıyor. — He/she works like you.
Onun kadar hızlı koşamam. — I can't run as fast as him/her.

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7. The Genitive-Possessive Construction

A full possessive phrase pairs a genitive-marked possessor with a possessive-marked possessed noun, agreeing in person.

Structure: (possessor + genitive) + (possessed noun + possessive)

Examples:

Ali'nin oğlu (Ali's son) odanın kapısı (the door of the room)
annemin evi (my mother's house)

Note: anne-m-in, the 1st person possessive -m and the genitive -in stack on "anne")

The possessor pronoun can be dropped when the possessive suffix already makes the meaning clear:

benim kitabım → kitabım
bizim evimiz → evimiz

8. Case Suffixes on the Whole Phrase

When the phrase needs a further case ending, it attaches to the possessed noun at the end. A buffer -n- appears only if that noun carries a 3rd person possessive suffix; 1st and 2nd person possessive forms take the case ending directly, with no extra -n-.

Examples:

Ali'nin evinde (in Ali's house) — 3rd person possessive, -n- appears
benim evimde (in my house) — 1st person possessive, no extra -n-
senin evinden (from your house) — 2nd person possessive, no extra -n-

Examples

- Ahmet'in arabası. — Ahmet's car.
- Öğretmenin kitabı. — The teacher's book.
- Okulun bahçesi. — The school's garden.
- Bu kalem kimin? — Whose pen is this?
- Bu kitap benim. — This book is mine.
- Benim için bir hediye aldı. — He/she got a gift for me.
- Ali'nin evinde kalıyorum. — I'm staying at Ali's house.
- Benim evimde kalıyorsun. — You're staying at my house.

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Notes

- Genitive marks ownership most often, but also part-whole relations and other close associations, not only literal possession.
- Genitive-marked words don't always need a following possessive noun. They can stand alone as predicates or appear before postpositions like için, gibi, kadar with personal pronouns.
- Personal pronoun genitive forms don't follow the regular -(n)In pattern and should be taught as a set.
- The buffer -n- before a case suffix appears only after a 3rd person possessive ending, not after 1st or 2nd person possessive forms.
- A possessor can be dropped once the possessive suffix already shows who it belongs to (benim kitabım → kitabım).
- okulun bahçesi (a specific school's garden) differs from okul bahçesi (school garden, a type). The first noun takes no suffix in the second pattern. This distinction is covered fully in the next lesson, Noun Phrases: Definite and Indefinite.