Tolerance of Underspecification
Evidence from Karachay-Balkar

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Abstract
In this paper we discuss differences between two variants — old (G₁) and young (G₂) — of the Cherek dialect of the Karachay-Balkar language (Turkic, Altaic). We show that a few morphological and syntactic differences (possessive constructions and number agreement) within noun phrase are due to a tiny structural change on the interface between syntax and PF.

1 Setting the scene
In the Cherek dialect of Karachay-Balkar language we found a number of differences between the older variant (G₁) and the younger one (G₂). Due to the space limit in this talk we will discuss just two of them:
1. Use of the overt marker of possession implies presence of a referential possessor in G₂ (1).
2. Number agreement mismatch between an anaphoric element and its antecedent is disallowed in G₂ (2).

(1) tisiru zirri-ix
woman dress-3SG

(2) [Alim, bla Kerim,1j an-ni/*j / egeč-i-ni süj-e.
Alim and Kerim he-GEN sister-3ACC love-PRS
Alim and Kerim loves his/her sister. G₁: an-ni/*j, G₂: an-ni/*j

2 Synopsis of the analysis
We argue that G₂ preserves the syntactic structure and agreement rules of G₁. What lies in the core of the differences is a structural change of the rule of the Spell-Out that can be formulated as follows:
Old rule Tolerate nominal structures with underspecified φ-features for Spell-Out.
New rule Never tolerate nominal structures with any underspecified φ-features and leave them unpronounced.

3 Data
3.1 Possessive constructions
The Cherek Balkar (as most Turkic) distinguishes two types of possessive constructions — with the non-referential possessor (PC II) and with the referential one (PC I). The referential possessor is always marked with the genitive. In G₁ both PC I and PC II are marked with the possessive marker -si on the head noun. In PC II possessive marker agrees with the possessor in person (5). G₂ restricts use of -si to PC II only:

(3) sahab ojuncas-i
child toy-3

(4) sahab ni ojuncas-i
child-GEN toy-3

(5) meni kitab-im
my book

In both G₁ and G₂ PC II affix should be specified in person (6):

(6) meni qiz gaszi-ler-im
my girlish dolls

The plural marker always precedes the possessive marker (7).

3.2 Number agreement mismatch
G₁ licenses use of a morphologically singular pronominal with the semantically plural antecedent, while G₂ requires full feature match between an anaphor and an antecedent (8). Both variants ban the match of morphologically plural anaphor and singular antecedent (9).

(8) a. [eki dzäzëk, an-ni/*j / meśina-ni satar-di
two man he-GEN car-ACC sell-PST
Two men sold their car. G₁: eki dzäzëk, G₂: eki dzäzëk

b. [eki dzäzëk, an-nar-ni/*j / meśina-ni satar-di
two man he-PL-GEN car-ACC sell-PST
Two men sold their car. G₁: eki dzäzëk, G₂: eki dzäzëk

(9) *džäzëk an-nar-ni meśina-ni satar-di
man he-PL-GEN car-ACC sell-PST

4 Solution
We adopt Grashchenkov (2007)'s view on the possessive constructions in Turkic. Within the noun phrase two projections take care of possessors — Spec nP licenses the non-referential possessor and Spec DP assigns genitive to the referential possessor (cf. Split-NP analysis in Radford (2000) i.e.). Number projection NumP according to Split-NP analysis mediates nP and DP. Heads n, Num and D bear [Rossi], [Num], and [Pers] features respectively. This can be illustrated with the following ascetic tree:

We argue that in G₁ possessive marker can be sent to the Spell-Out with underspecified [Pers] feature, i.e. at the level of Num (or n if we change linearization rules appropriately), while in G₂ this is not an option. The similar can be said about number agreement between an anaphor and an antecedent: pronominal in G₁ can be underspecified for number (in line with van Gelderen 1992, Burzio 1989 i.e.).

References
BURZIO, LuIGI. On the morphology of reflexives and impersonals. Paper presented at the 19th Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages, Columbus, Ohio, April 21-23 1989.


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What we understand here by underspecification is α-specification (Rooryck 1994).