

# Topicalized and external possessors in Sumerian

## INTRO

Sumerian is a genetic isolate which was spoken in the southern part of ancient Mesopotamia, an area which roughly corresponds to today's Iraq. It is a mainly agglutinative, verb final language, characterized by ergativity with a split according to the semantics of the NP and to the tense and modality of the finite verb. It has a system of grammatical gender based on a distinction between human and non-human referents. It is an extinct language, which can be studied today solely from written sources which date from the middle of the 3rd millennium BC until around 1c AD. Sumerian was replaced by East-Semitic Akkadian as a vernacular during the first part of the second millennium BC. After around 1600 (sixteen hundred) BC Sumerian remained to be taught and learnt only for the purposes of the cultic, literary and scholarly tradition.

The present talk aims to discuss two types of genitive constructions in Sumerian. In both of these constructions the possessor is positioned before the head of the possessum in a sentence initial position, while in normal genitive constructions the possessor occupies a position behind the head noun. The two constructions differ, however, in the case-marking of the left-dislocated possessor. In the construction called anticipatory genitive construction in Sumerology, the possessor is case-marked with the genitive, while in the lexical external possession construction (henceforth referred to as EPC), the possessor is case-marked with a case governed by the predicate.

I will start my talk with a short overview of the parts of Sumerian grammar which play a role in the constructions described here. In the next part I discuss the structure and the function of the anticipatory genitive construction. Then I move on to discuss the external possession constructions of Sumerian. In the final part of my talk I analyze the differences and similarities between anticipatory genitive constructions and lexical EPCs.

The Sumerian noun phrase consists of five structural positions:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
HEAD	MODIFIER	POSSESSOR	PLURAL-MARKER	CASE-MARKER

Table 1: The Sumerian nominal template

This apparently simple structure may produce very complicated constructions, primarily due to the range of structural units that may occur in position 3. This position, the position of the POSSESSOR, may be occupied by two kinds of elements: by a possessive pronominal enclitic as in example (1), or by a NP in the GENITIVE case as in example (2). In example (3) the NP occupying Position 3 has elements in all of its five positions, and consequently there are five structural units between the HEAD and the CASE-MARKER of the main NP:

(1)

p<sub>1</sub>ama=p<sub>3</sub>ani=p<sub>5</sub>ra  
mother=POSS.3SG=DAT.H  
“for his/her mother”

(2)

p<sub>1</sub>ama      p<sub>3</sub>[p<sub>1</sub>dumu=p<sub>5</sub>ak]=p<sub>5</sub>ra  
 mother      son=GEN=DAT.H  
 “for the mother of the son”

(3)

p<sub>1</sub>ama      p<sub>3</sub>[p<sub>1</sub>dumu      p<sub>2</sub>zid=p<sub>3</sub>ani=p<sub>4</sub>ene=p<sub>5</sub>ak]=p<sub>5</sub>ra  
 mother      son      true=POSS.3SG=PL=GEN=DAT.H  
 “for the mother of his true sons”

In (4) the embedded noun contains yet another NP in its Position 3:

(4)

p<sub>1</sub>ama      p<sub>3</sub>[p<sub>1</sub>dumu      p<sub>2</sub>zid      p<sub>3</sub>[p<sub>1</sub>lugal=p<sub>5</sub>ak]=p<sub>4</sub>ene=p<sub>5</sub>ak]=p<sub>5</sub>ra  
 mother      son      true      king=GEN=PL=GEN=DAT.H  
 “for the mother of the king’s true sons”

As the elements in P4, P5, and the possessive pronominal in P3 are enclitics being attached to the final word-level constituent of the NP, all these elements cumulate at the right end of phrases like (3) and (4).

The last position of the Sumerian noun phrase accommodates the case-markers. Ten case-markers can be distinguished in Sumerian which are enclitics that function to distinguish cases. In Sumerian cases are distinguished, however, not only by nominal case-markers, the verbal affixes also play an essential role in the identification of cases. Three of the nominal case-markers (-/ra/, -/a/, and -/e/), and one of the verbal affixes (/i/ in Slot 9) are used as markers of more than one case. On the basis of correspondences between nominal case-markers and verbal affixes eleven cases can be distinguished in Sumerian:

CASE	NOMINAL CASE-MARKER		VERBAL AFFIX	approx. meaning
	<i>human</i>	<i>non-human</i>		
ERGATIVE	-/e/	-/e/	pr. prefix (S10) and/or pr. suffix (S13)	
ABSOLUTIVE	-/ø/	-/ø/	pr. prefix (S10) and pr. suffix (S13)	
<b>ADVERBIAL CASES</b>				
DATIVE	-/ra/	-/c/	/a/ (S6)	
OBLIQUE-DIRECTIVE	-/ra/	-/c/	/i/ (S9)	in(to) contact with
OBLIQUE-LOCATIVE	-/ra/	-/’a/	/i/ (S9)	on(to)
LOCATIVE	—	-/’a/	/ni/ (S9)	in(to)
TERMINATIVE	-/šc/	-/šc/	/ši/ (S8)	towards
ABLATIVE	—	-/ta/	/ta/ (S8)	from
COMITATIVE	-/da/	-/da/	/da/ (S7)	at, with
<b>ADNOMINAL CASES</b>				
GENITIVE	-/ak/	-/ak/	—	
EQUATIVE	-/gin/	-/gin/	—	like

Table 2: Sumerian cases

The eleven cases can be classified into three groups: i) ERGATIVE and the ABSOLUTIVE, encoders of the agent, the subject, and the patient; ii) adverbial cases; iii) adnominal cases which relate to no corresponding verbal affixes.

Finite verbal forms in Sumerian are distinguished by the large number of affixes which can be attached to a verbal stem (see table 3). These affixes and the verbal stem can be arranged into fourteen structural positions or slots. Unlike in German or English where among the participants of a verb only the subject is cross-referenced with an affix on the verbal form, Sumerian verbal forms may cross-reference up to four participants of the verb.

The Agent, the Subject and the Patient are cross-referenced with pronominal affixes in S10 and S13. The syntactic function other participants can be indicated with one of the prefixes in the ADVERBIAL slots (S6–S9) If there are more than one adverbial prefixes in a verbal form, then the person, number, and gender of the first in their sequence is marked with a pronominal prefix in Slot 5. The set of pronominal prefixes in Slot 5 contains no morpheme cross-referencing the 3rd ps. sg. non-human participant. The pronominal prefix referring to 3rd ps. sg. non-human participants developed from the middle-marker in Slot 4. Before a dative prefix the cislocative prefix in Slot 3 functions as the 1st ps. sg. pronoun (see, e.g. [19] below).

The verbal affixes cross-referencing verbal participants function similarly to the pronouns of other languages, so verbal participants introduced earlier into the discourse may be encoded only with the verbal affixes.

Slot 1	MODAL prefixes
Slot 2	COORDINATOR prefix
Slot 3	CISLOCATIVE (ventive) prefix
Slot 4	MIDDLE prefix or 3NH PRONOMINAL prefix ( <i>specifying the person, gender and number of the first in the sequence of adverbial prefixes</i> )
Slot 5	PRONOMINAL prefix ( <i>specifying the person, gender and number of the first in the sequence of adverbial prefixes</i> )
Slot 6	Adverbial I: DATIVE prefix
Slot 7	Adverbial II: COMITATIVE prefix
Slot 8	Adverbial III: ABLATIVE or TERMINATIVE prefix
Slot 9	Adverbial IV: LOCATIVE, OBLIQUE-LOCATIVE, or OBLIQUE-DIRECTIVE prefix
Slot 10	PRONOMINAL prefix ( <i>referring to A or P, depending on the tense</i> )
Slot 11	STEM
Slot 12	PRESENT-FUTURE MARKER ( <i>in intransitive verbs</i> )
Slot 13	PRONOMINAL suffix ( <i>referring A, S, or P depending on the tense</i> )
Slot 14	SUBORDINATOR

Table 3: Sumerian verbal template

### AGC

As I mentioned earlier the possessor normally occupies Position 3 of the noun phrase. Under certain conditions, however, the possessor may have a position before the head of the noun phrase. In the construction called anticipatory genitive by Sumerologists, the possessor occupies a position before the head of the noun phrase and is marked with a genitive case-marker, while Position 3 is occupied by a pronominal enclitic which agrees in person, gender, and number with the possessor. A simple example is (5) and (6) (in the glosses of these examples the anticipated possessor and the co-referent resumptive pronominal enclitic are underlined):

(5) Ent. 28 5:12–13

nam-nun-da-ki- <u>ḡar-ra</u> ,	ur <sub>2</sub> -bi	na <sub>4</sub> -a
p <sub>1</sub> <u>namnundakiḡara</u> =p <sub>5</sub> ak	p <sub>1</sub> ur=p <sub>3</sub> bi=p <sub>5</sub> ∅	na=a
GN=GEN	base=POSS.3NH=ABS	stone=LOC

mu-na-ni-du<sub>3</sub>  
s<sub>3</sub>mu-s<sub>5</sub>nn-s<sub>6</sub>a-s<sub>9</sub>ni-s<sub>10</sub>n-s<sub>11</sub>du-s<sub>13</sub>∅  
CISL-3SG-DAT-LOC-A.3SG-build-P.3NH

“He built him the base of the Namnunda-kiḡara from stone”

In (5) the possessive pronominal enclitic *-/bi/* agrees in person, gender, and number with the left dislocated non-human possessor “Namnunda-kiḡara”, which is marked with the genitive case-marker *-/ak/*. In (6) the possessive pronominal enclitic *-/ani/* agrees in person, gender, and number with the left dislocated human possessor “Ur-tukula”, which is marked with the genitive case-marker *-/ak/*.

(6) TCS 1 36: 3–4

Ur- <sup>ḡiṣ</sup> tukul-ka,	gu <sub>4</sub> -a-ni	ga-na-ab-zig <sub>3</sub>
p <sub>1</sub> <u>urtukulak</u> =p <sub>5</sub> ak	p <sub>1</sub> gu=p <sub>3</sub> ani=p <sub>5</sub> ∅	s <sub>1</sub> ga-s <sub>5</sub> nn-s <sub>6</sub> a-s <sub>10</sub> b-s <sub>11</sub> zig
PN=GEN	ox=POSS.3SG=ABS	MOD-3SG-DAT-P.3NH-issue

“I want to issue Mr Ur-tukula’s ox for him.”

The possessor and the possessum may be separated by another participant of the verb like in (7) and (8) below. In (7) the possessor and the possessum are separated by the agent of the clause; while in (8) they are separated by the agent and the patient. In (9) the possessum is the participant of a relative clause whose head functions as the object of another main clause. The left dislocated possessor “Gudea, the ruler of Lagaš” precedes the head noun of the relative clause and stands at the beginning of the whole main clause.

(7) Gudea Cyl. A 17:11 (2.1.7)

e <sub>2</sub> -a	<sup>d</sup> en-ki-ke <sub>4</sub>	<sup>ḡiṣ</sup> hur-be <sub>2</sub>
p <sub>1</sub> <u>e</u> =p <sub>5</sub> ak	enkik=e	p <sub>1</sub> <sup>ḡiṣ</sup> hur=p <sub>3</sub> bi=p <sub>5</sub> e
temple=GEN	DN=ERG	plan=3NH.POSS=OD.NH

si  
si=∅  
horn=ABS

mu-na-sa<sub>2</sub>  
s<sub>3</sub>mu-s<sub>5</sub>nn-s<sub>6</sub>a-s<sub>9</sub>j-n-sa-∅  
CISL-3SG-DAT-OD-A.3SG-straighten-P.3NH

“The god Enki put right the design of the temple for him.”

(8) Bar-Am 366/qof 1–3

Ur- <sup>d</sup> šul-pa-e <sub>3</sub> -ka,	ensi <sub>2</sub> -ke <sub>4</sub> ,	gu <sub>4</sub>	apin	1-am <sub>3</sub>
p <sub>1</sub> <u>uršulpaek</u> =p <sub>5</sub> ak	ensik=e	gu	apin=ak	1=am-∅
PN=GEN	ruler=ERG	ox	plough=GEN	one=COP-S.3NH

šu-ne<sub>2</sub>  
p<sub>1</sub>šu=p<sub>3</sub>ani=p<sub>5</sub>e
 ba-an-šum<sub>2</sub>  s<sub>4</sub>b-s<sub>6</sub>a-s<sub>10</sub>n-s<sub>11</sub>šum-s<sub>13</sub>∅ || hand=3SG.POSS=DAT.NH | 3NH-DAT-A.3SG-give-P.3NH |

“The ruler entrusted (lit.gave to his hand) Ur-Šulpae with one plough-ox ”

(9) Gudea Statue B 8:39–42

gu <sub>3</sub> -de <sub>2</sub> -a,	ensi <sub>2</sub> ,	lagaš <sup>ki</sup> -ka,
<u>p<sub>1</sub>gudea</u>	<u>p<sub>1</sub>ensi</u>	<u>p<sub>3</sub>[p<sub>1</sub>lagaš=p<sub>5</sub>ak]=p<sub>5</sub>ak</u>
PN	ruler	GN=GEN=GEN
lu <sub>2</sub>	inim-ni	ib-kur <sub>2</sub> -a
<u>p<sub>1</sub>lu</u>	<u>p<sub>2</sub>[p<sub>1</sub>inim=p<sub>3</sub>ani=p<sub>5</sub>∅]</u>	<u>s<sub>10</sub>ib-s<sub>11</sub>kur-s<sub>13</sub>c-s<sub>14</sub>'a]=p<sub>5</sub>∅</u>
man	word=3SG.POSS=ABS	P.3NH-change-A.3SG-SUB=ABS
“the man who changes the orders of Gudea, the ruler of Lagaš”		

The Sumerian anticipatory genitive construction is a pragmatically motivated structural device whose primary function is to announce a new topic or to mark a shift from one topic to another by promoting a participant from a cognitively accessible but inactive state to an active state in the discourse. Having been promoted, the topical participant will be expressed by a pronominal which is the most preferred topic expression for an active topical participant (see Lambrecht 1994: 172–184). Consider example (10):

(10) Gudea Cyl A 29:14–17 (2.1.7)

e <sub>2</sub> -a	ni <sub>2</sub>	gal-bi,	kalam-ma	mu-ri,
<u>p<sub>1</sub>e=p<sub>5</sub>ak</u>	<u>p<sub>1</sub>ni</u>	<u>p<sub>2</sub>gal=p<sub>3</sub>bi=p<sub>5</sub>∅</u>	<u>kalam=’a</u>	<u>s<sub>3</sub>mu-s<sub>9</sub>n-s<sub>11</sub>ri-s<sub>13</sub>∅</u>
house=GEN	fear	great=3NH.POSS=ABS	land=LOC	CISL-LOC-settle-S.3NH
ka-tar-ra-bi,		kur-re	ba-ti	
<u>p<sub>1</sub>katara=p<sub>3</sub>bi=p<sub>5</sub>∅</u>		<u>kur=e</u>	<u>s<sub>4</sub>b-s<sub>6</sub>a-s<sub>11</sub>ti-s<sub>13</sub>∅</u>	
praise=3NH.POSS=ABS		highlands=DAT.NH	3NH-DAT-reach-S.3NH	
“The house’s great awesomeness settles upon the whole Land, its praise reaches to the highlands,”				

In (10) the first clause contains an anticipatory genitive construction introducing the “house” as the topic. In the following clause the same participant remains the topic, but being cognitively active it is expressed only with a pronominal enclitic on the possessum.

The announcement of a new topic as the function of the anticipatory genitive is especially clear in examples (6) and (8). These examples come from an administrative letter and a legal document respectively, which represent a simpler discourse situation than the royal inscriptions and the literary texts. (6) is the first sentence in the message part of a letter, preceded only by the address formula. The participant functioning as the possessor, “Ur-tukula”, must be therefore in a cognitively inactive state. The sender of the letter, however, must have assumed that the receiver can identify it, so it should be cognitively accessible. The same applies to (5), the very first sentence of a legal document about Ur-Šulpae.

## EPC

External possession is the grammatical phenomenon that in a semantic possessor-possessum relationship the possessor is expressed externally to the constituent that contains the possessum, and the possessor occurs as a separate clause-level constituent that is not required by the verb’s argument structure. A familiar manifestation of external possession is example (11):

(11)

Die Mutter wusch dem Kind die Haare.  
 “The mother washed the child’s hair”

In (11) the possessor (“das Kind”) is expressed by an NP external to the possessum (“die Haare”) and is case-marked with the dative case. The possessor is human and the possessum is inalienable, both of which are kind of nouns cross-linguistically most accessible to external possession constructions (see Payne and Barshi 1999a: 14).

EPCs are also present in Sumerian. Their most striking structural property is that a pronominal affix of the predicate agrees in person, gender, and number with the possessor instead of the possessum. An example for it is example (12) (in the glosses of the following examples, external possessor, the coindexed resumptive pronominal enclitic, the verbal pronominal prefix, and the cross-referencing adverbial prefix are underlined):

(12) Ean. 6 4:13-15

<u>ḏ</u> nin- <u>ḡ</u> ir <sub>2</sub> -su-ra,	a- <u>ṣ</u> ag <sub>4</sub> aṣag	ki a <u>ḡ</u> <sub>2</sub> -ni,
<u>P</u> <sub>1</sub> <u>ninḡirsuk</u> = <u>P</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ra</u>	aṣag	ki a <u>ḡ</u> =ani=∅
DN=OL.H	field	beloved=POSS.3SG=ABS

ṣu-na	mu-ni-gi <sub>4</sub>
<u>P</u> <sub>1</sub> ṣu= <u>P</u> <sub>3</sub> <u>ani</u> = <u>P</u> <sub>5</sub> ’a	<u>S</u> <sub>3</sub> <u>mu</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>nn</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>9</sub> <u>i</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>10</sub> <u>n</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>11</sub> <u>gi</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>13</sub> ∅
hand=POSS.3SG=OL.NH	CISL-3SG-OL-A.3SG-return-P.3NH

“He (= Eannatum) has returned (lit. ‘returned to his hand’) his beloved field to Nin- ḡirsu”

In (12) the possessor of the word ṣu “hand” is the god Ninḡirsu. The possessor is, however, not in Position 3 of the NP whose head is the word “hand”, but is left-dislocated and occupies a sentence initial position. Position 3 is filled with a pronominal enclitic agreeing in gender, person, and number with the human possessor. The possessor is cross-referenced with the verbal prefix /i/ of Slot 9 glossed as oblique-locative here. The pronominal prefix preceding the oblique-locative prefix in Slot 5 shows agreement in gender, person, and number with the possessor, but not with the possessum. The possessor and the possessum are case-marked with the case-markers -/ra/ and -/a/ respectively which correspond to the human and non-human markers of the oblique-locative case.

The same verbal expression is used in (13), but here the word “hand” has no possessor. Accordingly the pronominal prefix in Slot 5 agrees in gender, person, and number with the non-human possessum, the word “hand”.

(13) AWL 81 5:1-4

en-ig-gal,	nu-banda <sub>3</sub> ,	e <sub>2</sub>	zag	iri-ka-ka,
eniggal	nubanda=e	e	zag	iri=ak=ak=’a
PN	overseer=ERG	house	border	city=GEN=GEN=LOC

ṣu=a	bi <sub>2</sub> -gi <sub>4</sub>
ṣu=’a	<u>S</u> <sub>4</sub> <u>b</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>9</sub> <u>i</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>10</sub> <u>n</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>11</sub> <u>gi</u> - <u>S</u> <sub>13</sub> ∅
hand=OL.NH	3NH-OL-A.3SG-return-P.3NH

“Eniggal, the overseer has delivered (lit. ‘returned to hand’) them (= various sorts of wood) in the house at the border of the city”

In terms of case-marking two types of external possession constructions can be distinguished in Sumerian. Constructions like that in example (12), where the possessor and the possessum are in the same distributive case, will be called identically marked external possession constructions. There exist, however, another type of construction in which the external possessor and the possessum are in different cases. These constructions, discussed a bit later, will be called differently marked

external possessor constructions. A further distinction can be made among the EPCs in terms of the presence or the absence of a lexical possessor. EPCs where the left-dislocated external possessor is overtly present as a lexical NP will be referred to as lexical EPCs, while EPCs where the possessor is present only as a bound pronominal on the verbal form or the predicate will be referred to as pronominal EPCs.

Examples (14)–(16) show further examples of indetifically marked EPCs. In all these examples the left-dislocated possessor and possessum are case-marked with the same case. In (14), like in (12) before, the pronominal prefix in S5 agrees in gender, person, and number with the human possessor, the goddess Ninḫursaĝ, and not with the non-human possessum, the “knee”. Both the possessor and the possessum are in the oblique-locative case.

(14) Ean. 1 4:24-26

<sup>d</sup> nin-ḫur-saĝ-ra,	dug <sub>3</sub>	zid-da-na,	mu-ni-tuš
ninḫursaĝ= <u>ra</u>	dug	zid-a= <u>ani</u> =’a	s <sub>3</sub> mu-s <sub>5</sub> <u>nn</u> -s <sub>9</sub> <u>i</u> -s <sub>10</sub> <u>n</u> -s <sub>11</sub> tuš-s <sub>13</sub> ∅
DN=OL.H	knee	right-PT=POSS.3SG=OL.NH	CISL-3SG-OL-A3.SG-sit-P.3SG

“She (= Inana) has made him (= Eanatum) sit on the right knee of the goddess Ninḫursaĝ  
”

In [15]–[16] the possessor is not present overtly. The pronominal prefix preceding the oblique-locative prefix in (15), and the terminative in (16) shows agreement, however, with a 3rd ps human possessor but not with the 3rd ps. non-human possessum. In both examples a possessive enclitic showing agreement with the possessor is attached to the possessum.

(15) AWL 183 3:1-4

šubur,	nu-banda <sub>3</sub> ,	gu <sub>2</sub> -ne-ne-a,	e-ne-ĝar
šubur	nubanda=e	gu= <u>anene</u> =’a	s <sub>5</sub> <u>enne</u> -s <sub>9</sub> <u>i</u> -s <sub>10</sub> <u>n</u> -s <sub>11</sub> ĝar-s <sub>13</sub> ∅
PN	overseer=ERG	neck=POSS.3PL=OL.NH	3PL-OL-A.3SG-put-P.3NH

“Šubur, the overseer, has entered it (= a given amount of silver) as their (= 3 fishermen) debt” (literally, “put them on their neck”)

(16) En. I 33 2:13–3:6

kur-kur	šu-ni-še <sub>3</sub> ,	mu-še <sub>3</sub> -ĝar-ra-a
kur~kur=∅	šu= <u>ani</u> =še	s <sub>3</sub> mu-s <sub>5</sub> <u>n</u> -s <sub>8</sub> <u>ši</u> -s <sub>9</sub> <u>n</u> -s <sub>10</sub> ĝar-s <sub>13</sub> ∅-s <sub>14</sub> ’a-’a
country~PL=ABS	hand-POSS.3SG-TERM	CISL-3SG-TERM-A.3SG-put-P.3NH-SUB-LOC

“When he (= Lugal-URUxKÁR) has given all the foreign lands into his (= Enannatum’s) hands”

Examples (17)–(18) differ from the previous examples in having a non-verbal predicate. The predicate of these examples consists of the copula and a noun phrase or a non-finite verbal form. The subject of these copular clauses is possessed by a 2nd ps. sg. participant expressed only by a pronominal enclitic. The copula agrees in gender, person, and number with the possessor but not with 3rd ps. sg. subject. As the copula is construed always with a constituent in the absolutive case in Sumerian, the form of the copula indicates that both the possessor and the possessum are in the absolutive case in (17)–(18).

(17) Išme-Dagan W (2.5.4.23) A38-40

šag <sub>4</sub> -zu	u <sub>18</sub> -ru-me-en,	bar-zu,	ni <sub>2</sub>	gur <sub>3</sub> -ru-me-en
šag= <u>zu</u> =∅	uru= <u>me-en</u>	bar= <u>zu</u> =∅	ni	gur-ed= <u>me-en</u>
heart=POSS.2SG=ABS	huge=COP=S.2SG	outside=POSS.2SG=ABS	fear	carry-PF=COP-S.2SG

“Your (= Nibru) interior is enormous, your exterior is imbued with fearsomeness”

(18) Iddin-Dagan D (2.5.3.4) 30

igi-zu	ḥuš-me-en	za-pa- <sup>l</sup> aḡ <sub>2</sub> -zu <sup>l</sup>	ṽmaḥ <sup>?</sup> -me-en <sup>l</sup>
igi= <u>zu</u> =∅	huš= <u>me</u> - <u>en</u>	zapaḡ= <u>zu</u> =∅	maḥ= <u>me</u> - <u>en</u>
face=POSS.2SG=ABS	awesome=COP-2SG.S	cry=POSS.2SG-ABS	majestic=COP-2SG.S

“Your face is awesome, your cry is majestic”

Examples (19) and (20) are differently marked external possession constructions. In these examples the possessor and the possessum are case-marked with different cases: the possessor is case-marked with the dative, while the possessum is case-marked with the locative. The different cases of the possessor and possessum are to be explained with the semantics of the locative in Sumerian: this case can only be used with non-human nouns, the locative verbal prefix always stands without a pronominal prefix in the verbal prefix-chain. Consequently, the human external possessor cannot be cross-referenced with the locative, it can be marked only with another case. External possessors case-marked with the dative are cross-linguistically a common type, especially in Europe.

Only one example with an lexical possessor is known from this type, (21); and except for (21), all attested possessors are in the 1st or 2nd ps. The German translations are provided with (19)-(20) to demonstrate how easily these examples translate with German EPCs. In (19), the non-human possessum “ka” “mouth” is in the locative case. A 1st ps. sg. possessive enclitic is attached to it, which refers to the same person as the dative prefix in the verbal form. Here the first person reference is expressed with a cislocative prefix. In (20), once can see the same construction here, a 2nd ps. sg. possessive enclitic is attached to the possessum whic refers to the same participant as the dative in the prefix chain. In (21) the possessor is overtly present, otherwise the construction is the same as in the previous two examples.

(19) Išme-Dagan A (2.5.4.01) 90

<sup>d</sup> utu	niḡ <sub>2</sub> -si-sa <sub>2</sub>	inim	gen <sub>6</sub> -na	ka-ḡa <sub>2</sub>
utu=e	niḡsisa	inim	gen- <sup>’</sup> a=∅	ka= <u>ḡu</u> = <sup>’</sup> a
DN=ERG	justice	word	firm-PT=ABS	mouth=POSS.1SG=LOC

ḥa-ma-ni-in-ḡar  
<sub>S1</sub>ḥa-<sub>S3</sub>m-<sub>S6a</sub>-<sub>S9</sub>ni-<sub>S10</sub>n-<sub>S11</sub>ḡar-<sub>S13</sub>∅  
 MOD-CISL-DAT-LOC-A.3SG-put-P.3NH

“The god Utu put justice and reliable words in my mouth.”

“Utu legte mir Gerechtigkeit und zuverlässige Worte in den Mund”

(20) Išme-Dagan Q (2.5.4.17) 5

ḡidru	kug	šu-za	ma-ra-ni-in-ge-en
ḡidru	kug=∅	šu= <u>zu</u> = <sup>’</sup> a	<sub>S3</sub> ma- <sub>S5</sub> <u>r</u> - <sub>S6a</sub> - <sub>S9</sub> ni- <sub>S10</sub> n- <sub>S11</sub> gen- <sub>S13</sub> ∅
sceptre	holy=ABS	hand=POSS.2SG=LOC	CISL-2SG-DAT-LOC-A.3SG-firmly.put-P.3NH

“He has firmly put the holy sceptre in your hand.”

“Er legte dir das heiligen Zepter fest in die Hand”

(21) Enmerkar and the lord of Aratta (1.8.2.3) 433–434

en-e	kiḡ <sub>2</sub> -gi <sub>4</sub> -a	kur-še <sub>3</sub>	du-ur <sub>2</sub>
en=e	<u>kiḡgia</u>	<u>kur</u> =še	<u>du</u> =ra
lord=ERG	messenger	mountain=TERM	go.PF-DAT.H

ḡidru	šu-na	mu-un-na-ḡa <sub>2</sub> -ḡa <sub>2</sub>
ḡidru=∅	šu= <u>ani</u> = <sup>’</sup> a	<sub>S3</sub> mu- <sub>S5</sub> <u>nn</u> - <sub>S6a</sub> - <sub>S9</sub> n- <sub>S11</sub> ḡa~ḡa- <sub>S13</sub> e
sceptre=ABS	hand=POSS.3SG=LOC	CISL-3SG-DAT-LOC-put~PF-A.3SG

“The lord placed the sceptre in the hands of the messenger going to the mountains.”



Both types of Sumerian EPCs are characterized by inalienable possession. In the great majority of the attested EPCs the possessum is a body part or part of inanimate wholes which are cross-linguistically the most accessible type of possessa in EPCs.

Haspelmath (1999: 119) classifies the EPCs in non-European languages into three broad categories in terms of the grammatical coding of the possessum (he actually uses the term possessor raising): (i) EPCs with possessum demotion; (ii) EPCs with possessum incorporation; (iii) EPCs with applicative marking on the verb. Sumerian identically marked EPCs appear to belong to category (i). In these constructions the possessum retains its case, but it is not cross-referenced by bound pronominal on the verbal form or the copula any longer. It is therefore demoted in the sense that it will no longer belong to the set of participants which are cross-referenced in the verbal prefix-chain or on the copula. What is common in both types of EPCs is, however, the promotion of the possessor: it will be the possessor but not the possessum which is cross-referenced with a pronominal on the predicate.

To sum it up, the most important licensing condition of EPCs in Sumerian appears to be the semantics of the possessum: external possession is possible only in the case of inalienable possession. The possessors are as a rule human, often in the 1st or 2nd ps. The case of the possessum and the type of the predicate does not seem to play a role. No possessum functioning as the agent, the patient, or indirect object is, however, attested with external possessors.

Without informants or relevant contrasting examples it is difficult to see what exactly influenced the choice between an EPC and an internal possessive construction. Examples like (8) which involve a body part and yet does not use an EPC may suggest that inalienable possession was only a necessary but not a sufficient condition. It seems likely that the affectedness of the possessor might have also played a role, that is, the possessor had to be construed as the primarily affected and not his or its part.

The question of the topicality of the possessor in pronominal EPCs also needs to be addressed. As EPCs seem to signal that instead of his or its part, the possessor is primarily affected by the predicate, that is, it signals a shift in the aboutness relation between a participant and the predicate, it is plausible to assume that EPCs in Sumerian always involve the topicality of the possessor. A pronominal EPC thus appears to differ from a lexical EPC in the cognitive accessibility of the referent of the external possessor. In a lexical EPC the referent of the possessor is accessible but inactive, while in a pronominal EPC it is accessible and active. Their difference is therefore similar to the difference observed in (10). In (10) the first clause contains an anticipatory genitive construction introducing the “house” as the topic, followed by clause in which the cognitively active possessor is expressed only with a pronominal enclitic on the possessum.

Lexical EPCs and anticipatory genitive constructions show a number of structural similarities. In both constructions the possessor is left-dislocated, and a pronominal enclitic is attached to the possessum showing agreement with the possessor. Both constructions present a structural configuration in which the possessor is no longer behind the possessum, but stands in a pragmatically more prominent position. But there exist a number of differences. The possessor of an anticipatory genitive construction remains part of the NP containing the possessum, while the external possessor is a participant governed by the verb; and consequently, the possessor of an anticipatory genitive construction retains its genitive case, while the external

possessor bears the case of the possessum or the dative and is cross-referenced by a pronominal and an adverbial prefix on the verb. Table 4 summarizes the formal features of the normal and anticipatory genitive construction, and the lexical EPC.

	PR'S POSITION	PR'S CASE	VERBAL CROSS-REFERENCING
NORMAL	behind the PM	genitive	no
AGC	in topic position	genitive	no
LEXICAL EPC	in topic position	that of PM, or dative	yes

Table 4: Types of genitive constructions in terms of structure

What Table 4 shows is that in comparison to a normal genitive construction, the anticipatory genitive and the lexical EPC differ in the number of the distinguishing formal features. The anticipatory genitive construction differs from the normal genitive construction *only* in the position of the possessor, while the lexical EPC differs in the position *and* the case of the possessor.

The left-dislocation of the possessor in the AGC has been indentified after Lambrecht 1994 as a pragmatically motivated structural device to topicalize an accesible but inactive participant. It seems reasonable to assume that left-dislocation has the same function in the lexical EPCs. At the same time lexical EPCs are a sub-type of the external possession constructions which share with the pronominal EPCs the promotion of the possessor, and the inalienability of the possession. The formal features of Table 4 may therefore be “translated ” into the notional features of Table 5 below:

	TOPICALITY	INTERNAL POSSESSION	EXTERNAL POSSESSION
NORMAL	–	+	–
AGC	+	+	–
LEXICAL EPC	+	–	+

Table 5 Types of genitive constructions in terms of notional features

Table 5 suggests that the AGC is a left-dislocated internal possessor, while the lexical EPC is a left-dislocated external possessor. In other words, Sumerian appears to distinguish formally between left-dislocated internal and left-dislocated external possessors: the former retains its genitive case-marker, while the latter will be case-marked with a case governed by the predicate. One way of explaining that in lexical identically marked EPCs the left-dislocated possessor bears the same case as the possessum is to assume that they represent the same argument of the verb, forming a kind of an appositive construction. The members of this construction are not, as expected, juxtaposed, because the topical possessor cannot but be located in the sentence initial topic position. The construction is restricted to cases of inalienable possession because the condition of such an appositive construction is the referential non-distinctness of its members. Constructions similar to Sumerian lexical EPCs are described by Heine (1997: 158–161) as the result of possessor specification involving the Topic Schema. Heine states that these “constructions are occasionally described as instances of possessor–possessee apposition. ... in languages having a system of overt case marking, such constructions are likely to be characterized by case agreement in

that the possessee (= the specifier) receives the same case marking as the possessor (= the specified). Such a situation appears to obtain, for example in many Australian languages (cf. Dixon 1980: 293), even if possessor specification of this type tends to be confined to ‘inalienable’ possession.” (Heine 1997: 159).

The case-marking of differently marked EPCs follows from the semantic incompatibility of the locative with human nouns, and from the cross-linguistically, and also in Sumerian attested use of dative to mark a beneficially affected participant.