





We argue that such a construction-theoretic proposal is compatible with the cross-linguistic variability in the expression of possessive relatives in a way that an alternative tree-theoretic proposal for similar data (Kornfilt 2005, 2008) is not. The tree-theoretic alternative adopts a Kaynean view of relatives adapted to prenominal relatives. The proposal requires positing (1) a universal structural base, (2) organized into binary branching subtrees, (3) with “movement” relating initial, intermediate, and final locations for pieces of trees among (more and less) abstract nodes, (4) assumptions about the parts of (phonologically integrated) complex word that are accessible to movement and indexing, and (5) assumptions about parts of such words that are not moved, but function as clitics. Some of these assumptions are simply not empirically disconfirmable, e.g., a universal structural base which requires deviations from the basic form in order to account for language particular variation, while those that are disconfirmable i.e., predicted morphotactics for e.g., case and person/number and their status as clitics or affixes, are empirically disconfirmed. Kornfilt (2005, 2008) identifies a typology of constructions previously discussed and analyzed lexically and constructionally in Ackerman 1998, Ackerman and Nikolaeva 1997, Malouf, and Nikolaeva (2004) and Sells 2008, Nikolaeva, Ackerman and Malouf (to appear) for more recent analyses. We compare these competing construction-theoretic and tree-theoretic proposals and argue that only the former succeeds in motivating the existence and specific realizations of the possessive relatives in the languages that contain them, while both proposals can be designed to adequately describe the facts with sufficient stipulation.