Possession as non-verbal predication

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1 Introduction

Proposal This paper argues that crosslinguistic variation in the forms of clausal possessive predication (1-2) arises to a large extent from the NON-VERBAL nature of possessive predication.

(1) raam-ke paas ek hii makaan hai
Ram-OBL.GEN near one only building be-PR
Ram has/owns only one building. Indefinite possessive predication
(Hindi: Mohanan 1994:179, (63))

(2) This pen is Pat's. Definite possessive predication

Evidence Possessive predication across languages shows all the variation possible for non-verbal predication in general.

– Although possession may certainly be verbally expressed, e.g. English *own*, *belong*, Japanese *motu* 'own' , Mandarin *yōngyǒu* 'own', etc. not all languages have possessive verbs. But both in languages with and without such verbs, non-verbal possessive structures such as (1) and (2) may occur.

Prediction The non-verbal approach not only accounts for previously observed major strategies in possessive predication, for both INDEFINITE (1) and DEFINITE (2) predication (also known respectively as HAVE and BELONG possessives), it also predicts the availability of "minor", less-frequently observed encoding strategies.

Overview
Section 2: Background on crosslinguistic variation in the forms of possessive predication.

Section 3: Background on non-verbal predication.

Section 4: The forms of possessive predication.

Section 5: Conclusion

2 Variation in possessive predication

There are currently two major proposals concerning crosslinguistic variation in the forms of possessive predication.

– Heine (1997) is concerned with the metaphorical sources of possessive morphemes.

– Stassen (2009) proposes a typology of indefinite possessive predication clauses.

2.1 Possessive morphemes have different metaphorical sources

One major source of crosslinguistic variation in possessive predication is that possessive-encoding morphology may have its source in other conceptual categories.

– The occurrence of locative morphology in possessive encoding, e.g. in Hindi (1) above is perhaps the best-known and most-discussed (Lyons 1968:388-399, 1977: 473-4, Clark 1970, Ostler 1979, Jackendoff 1983, Freeze 1992, 2001, Harley 1995, 1996, Baron and Herslund 2001).

– Heine (1997) identifies eight "event schemas" that occur in possessive predication (3).

(3)

Formula	Label of event schema
X takes Y	Action
X is located at Y	Location
X is with Y	Companion
X's Y exists	Genitive
Y exists for/to X	Goal
Y exists from X	Source
As for X, Y exists	Topic
Y is X's (property)	Equation

(Heine 1997: 47 Table 2.1)

– Variation in the conceptual categories related to possessive-encoding morphemes is taken for granted here, and not the main focus of the current work, but they are discussed briefly below.

2.2 Variation in the forms of possessive clauses

Stassen (2009) proposes a classfication of the MORPHOSYNTACTIC FORMS that possessive predication may take (i.e., less on the conceptual associations of the possessive morpheme), based on an extensive crosslinguistic study.

He proposes four typological categories of indefinite possessive predication clauses: Locational, With, Topic, and Have.

Locational: The possesor (PSR) nominal usually shows locative marking (4c), (5c = (1)), and the possessive sentence looks identical in surface form to an existential sentence (4b), (5b).

– Also included: PSRs in genitive and dative case (see below).

(4) Finnish (Locational)

a. Kissa on mato**-lla**
cat is mat-ADESS
The cat is on the mat. (Locative)

b. Mato-**lla** on kissa
mat-ADESS is cat
There is a cat on the mat. (Existential)

c. John**-lla** on kissa
John-ADESS is cat
John has a cat. (Possessive)

(5) Hindi (Locational)

a. raam baazaar-**ke** **paas** hai
Ram-NOM market-OBL.GEN near be-PR
Ram is near the market. (Locative)

b. baazaar-**ke** **paas** peḍ hai
market-OBL.GEN near tree be-PR
There is a tree near the market. (Existential)

c. raam-**ke** **paas** ek hii makaan hai
Ram-OBL.GEN near one only building be-PR
Ram has/owns only one building. (Possessive (= (1)))

With: The possessee (PSE) nominal occurs in a phrase with comitative marking, e.g. a *with* adposition (6).

(6) Amele (With)

Ija sigin ca
1sg knife with
I have a knife. (Roberts 1987: 81, cited in Stassen 2009:56 (44))

Topic: The PSR and PSE nominals show no marking; the clause contains an existential verb, presumed intransitive. The PSR is assumed to be the topic and the PSE the subject.

(7) Mandarin (Topic)

a. Sānmáo yǒu yì zhī gǒu
Sanmao have one CL dog
Sanmao has a dog. (Possessive)

b. shù-xia yǒu yì zhī gǒu
tree-below exist one CL dog
There is a dog under the tree. (Existential)

Have: The PSR and PSE nominals show no marking; the clause contains a transitive verb typically descended from an Action verb of taking, seizing, grabbing etc.

(8) English (Have): Pat has a dog.

(9) Norwegian (Have)
Mannen ha-r en hund
man.DEF have-PR a dog
The man has a dog. (Stassen 2009:65 (87), data from Pål Kristian Eriksen)

Stassen's categories correspond partially to Heine's (see (10)). The main distinction: Stassen's typology is confined to INDEFINITE POSSESSIVE PREDICATION (where the possessee nominal is canonically indefinite). Heine's includes DEFINITE POSSESSIVE PREDICATION (e.g. (2)), where the possessor nominal is canonically definite.

(10)

Stassen's classes	Heine's classes
INDEFINITE POSSESSIVE PREDICATION	
Locational	Location, Genitive, Goal, (sometimes Source[1])
With	Companion
Topic	Topic
Have	Action
INDEFINITE POSSESSIVE PREDICATION	
N/A	Equation

Some questions raised by Stassen's typology:

– How can definite possessive predication be accommodated?

– While the typology covers many languages, it does not allow for "minor" encoding strategies such as the juxtaposition of possessor and possessee nominals (ibid. 84), conjunction (ibid. 90-91), etc. (see below).

– Languages are classified as belonging to a particular typological class (Stassen 2009:45), yet different possessive encoding strategies may occur in the same language.

2.3 This work

This work proposes that the morphosyntactic variation in possessive clauses arises fundamentally from the NON-VERBAL nature of possessive predication.

I show below that the non-verbal approach

(i) accounts for both indefinite and definite possessive predication;

(ii) is compatible with the existence of multiple possessive encoding strategies in one language;

(iii) predicts the availability of less-frequently observed possessive clause structures.

3 Non-verbal predication

Non-verbal predication structures (NVPSs) are those in which the semantic relation need not be expressed by a verb (Dik 1980, Hengeveld 1992).

Across languages, NVPSs may vary according to

(i) the morphosyntactic category of the predicate phrase

(ii) the predication type of the clause (ascriptive, equative, presentative)

(iii) the kinds of verbal elements such as copulas (if any) that occur in them, and their semantic contribution.

[1]The Source schema is characterized by a PSR with ablative marking, and is mainly restricted to adnominal possessive expressions (Heine 1997:64).

3.1 Non-verbal predicate categories

A non-verbal predicate may be nominal (11a), adjectival (11b), or an oblique phrase which shows some kind of adpositional or semantic case marking (11c).

(11) a. John is a carpenter. (Nominal)
b. Sheila is intelligent. (Adjectival)
c. John is in the garden. (Oblique phrase)

Nominal predication expresses notional categories such as set membership (11a), class inclusion (12a) and identity (12b).

(12) a. A cat is an animal.
b. John is my best friend.

Adjectives predicate a property of an individual (11b), while an oblique phrase may express a range of relations including locative (11c), possessive (13a), accompaniment (13b), benefit (13c) etc.

(13) a. This book is John's.
b. John is with Bill.
c. This book is for John.

3.2 Predication type

NVPSs also fall into different categories of PREDICATION TYPE.

Ascriptive They may be ascriptive (Lyons 1977:148, Hengeveld 1992), where a predicate meaning is applied to a subject.

This would be the category of NVPSs such as (14) and (16), with the relatively standard semantic structures in (15) and (17) respectively.

(14) Jemima is a cat.
(15) λx [cat(x)](j)
(16) Jemima is in the garden.
(17) λx [ιy garden(y) $\wedge$ in(y)(x)](j)

Equative NVPSs may also be equative, indicating that two descriptions of the same semantic type have the same denotation.

(18) The Morning Star is the Evening Star.
(19) War is war. (Heycock 2002:105 (16a))

– Sentences with two definite NPs may be distinguished in terms of whether they are specifying or characterizing (Hengeveld 1992:82-88, also see Higgins 1979), but it should be clear that at least a subset of sentences with two referring expressions of the same type can be interpreted as expressing identity.

– For instance, (20a) would have a semantic structure as in (20b).

(20) a. That dog over there is Fido.
b. λy λx [x = y](f)(that.dog.over.there)

Presentative Finally, NVPSs may be presentative, the classic example being an existential sentence (21).

(21) There is a boy/someone/a strange book in the room.

(22) #There is my sister/everyone/the strange book in the room. (Safir 1987:71 (1))

The function of presentative sentences: Introduce or re-introduce an individual into the discourse.

– The definiteness effect (DE) (22) exhibited by the post-copular nominal (the pivot) in an English *there*-existential is well-known.

– A copious literature exists on how best to formally characterize the NPs that occur felicitously in this position across contexts (Milsark 1974, Barwise and Cooper 1980, Keenan 1987, Safir 1987, Zucchi 1995, McNally 1997, Francez 2006).

– Formal properties aside, however, there is a general recognition that there is a pragmatic component to the DE (Bolinger 1977, Barwise and Cooper 1980, Lumsden 1988, Abbott 1992, 1993, Zucchi 1995, McNally 1997, Francez 2006), which Abbott (1992:9) characterizes as functioning "typically to present items to the addressee".

A working definition of presentative sentences: Drawing on these insights, I take as "presentative" any construction that imposes some condition of newness or unfamiliarity on one nominal in the construction. This condition may be realized in different ways for different kinds of sentences.

– In *there* existentials, this condition shows up in part as a formal condition on the pivot.

– In other kinds of presentative sentences, e.g. so-called "presentational *there*-insertion" (Aissen 1975, Kim 2003) and locative inversion (24) (Hartvigson and Jakobsen 1974, Penhallurick 1984, Coopmans 1989, Rochemont and Culicover 1990, Bresnan 1994, Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, Birner and Ward 1998), the condition applies to the information status of the postposed nominal (it cannot be the topic, and cannot just have been mentioned).

(23) a. There hangs on the office wall a picture of Edward Sapir. (Aissen 1975: 1 (1))
b. There still stands on this desk the bowling trophy he won last year. (Kim 2003:237 (6))

(24) a. In the corner was a lamp. (Bresnan 1994:75 (1b))
b. Among the guests was sitting my friend Rose. (ibid (2b))

3.3 Verbal elements in NVPSs

NVPSs often contain a verbal element, although the role played by this element varies, and may not always be obvious.

But semantic relations expressed non-verbally in some languages (i.e. different kinds of property ascription, identity, presentation) may also be encoded verbally either in the same language or in other languages.

3.3.1 Copulas

An NVPS may contain a copula,[2] (e.g. English *be*) often considered a semantically empty element, present only as a carrier of grammatical features such as tense (Benveniste 1966/1971, Lyons 1968, 1977, Dik

[2]The copula itself may vary as to whether it is verbal or non-verbal, or whether it is a free or bound morpheme (Pustet 2003:41ff).

1980:94-98, Hengeveld 1992:73, Pustet 2003:3, though see Stassen (1997:65-76) for a critique of this assumption).

– One view of copulas is that they express highly abstract meanings, e.g. type-shifting functions (Partee 1986), or converting the ontological category of predicates (see Maienborn (2007) and references cited therein).

– Languages vary as to whether a copula is available.

– In languages with a copula, a copula may be present or absent depending on the category of the non-verbal predicate, or on sentence tense category (Stassen 1997:64).

Russian NVPSs in the present tense do not allow a copula, but in all other tenses, the copula *byt* is required (Stassen 1997:64) (25).

(25) Russian

a. Ta stena vysokaja
that.FEM.SG wall high.FEM.SG.NOM
That wall is high. (Present Tense)
(Russian: Raptschinsky 1946:15, cited in Stassen 1997:64 (6a))

b. Pogoda byla xorošaja
weather be.3SG.FEM.PA fine.FEM.SG.nom
The weather was fine. (Past Tense)
(Fennell 1961:53, cited in Stassen 1997:64 (6d))

Hungarian: A NVPS in the present tense with 3rd person subject

– is disallowed with nominal predicate (26a)

– but required with locative predication (26b).

(26) Hungarian

a. Péter ∅-/*van katona
Peter ∅-/be.3SG.PR soldier
Peter is a soldier. (Nominal pred)
(Hungarian: Kiefer 1968:56)

b. A fa a kert-ben *∅-/van
the tree the garden-in ∅-/be.3SG.PR
The tree is in the garden. (Locative pred)
(Hall 1938:98,[3] cited in Stassen 1997:67 (6b))

3.3.2 Light verbs

– In some languages, NVPSs of different morphosyntactic and predication categories make use of the same copula, e.g. English, French, Finnish.

– Their counterparts in other languages, however, may manifest different verbs, based on the meaning expressed. Often, there is a "split" between existential and non-existential predication (Stassen 1997).

Serbo-Croat: Nominal, adjectival, and locative predication show the copula *biti* "to be" (27a-c). Existential sentences employ the impersonal form of the verb *imati* "to have", with the presented theme occurring in the accusative case (27d) (Stassen 1997:10).

[3] The year of publication Stassen provides in the text is 1944, but the corresponding entry in the bibliography shows 1938.

(27) Serbo-Croat

a. On **je** profesor
3SG.MASC be.3SG.PR professor
He is a professor. (Nominal)
(Heaney 2003:32)

b. Ôn **je** zäo
3SG.MASC be.3SG.PR bad.NOM.MASC.SG
He is bad. (Adjectival)
(Hamm 1975:89, cited in Stassen 1997:374)

c. Marko **je** ovde
Marko-NOM.3SG.PR be.3SG.PR here
Marko is here. (Locative)
(Lord 1958: 22, cited in Stassen 1997:10 (3))

d. U Beogradu **ima** vojnika
in Beograd-LOC have.3SG.PR soldier.ACC
There are soldiers in Beograd. (Existential)
(Lord 1958: 22, cited in Stassen 1997:10 (4))

Mandarin The copula *shì* 'be' is used in nominal predication sentences (28a). Adjectival predication does not allow the copula (28b). Existential predication uses the verb *yǒu* 'have/exist'. Locative predication is expressed with the "coverb" *zài* 'be at', which shows properties of both verbs and prepositions (Li and Thompson 1981:356-369).

(28) Mandarin

a. Sānmáo **shì** gū-er
Sanmao be orphan
Sanmao is an orphan. (Nominal)

b. Sānmáo (*shì) hěn gāo
Sanmao (*be) very tall
Sanmao is tall. (Adjectival)

c. zhuō-shang **yǒu** shū
table-upon have book
There is a book on the table. (Existential)

d. shū **zài** zhuō-shang
book be.at table-upon
The book is on the table. (Locative)

– I reserve the term COPULA for a verb or "linking word" in nominal predication, where one occurs.

– If a distinct word is used in existential predication, I refer to that word as a LIGHT VERB.

– This is because such verbs often evolve to express more abstract meanings, e.g. tense, aspect, modality, etc. (see Heine (1997:187ff) and references cited therein).

– I extend the range of NVPSs to include light verb predication structures (LVPSs) such as Serbo-Croat *imati* sentences and Mandarin *yǒu* sentences.

Summary

To sum up, NVPSs may vary according to

(i) morphosyntactic category of the predicate phrase;

(ii) predication type (ascriptive, equative, presentative);

(iii) whether there is a copula present, and

(iv) whether a light verb distinct from the copula is used.

4 The non-verbal analysis of possessive predication

I show that possessive predication structures across languages vary precisely along the lines drawn by NVPSs (including LVPSs).

Moreover, the non-verbal analysis accounts for both indefinite and definite possessive predication, and also predicts the possibility of less-frequently observed possessive encoding options.

4.1 Major classes: deriving Stassen's (2009) typology

I first show how the major categories of indefinite possessive predication as identified in Stassen (2009) arise.

Two nominals Possession is a two-place relation, so we may reasonably expect two nominals in a possessive clause, the PSR and the PSE.

No light verb, oblique phrase Turning first to cases where there is no light verb, and where the NVPS contains an oblique phrase, this means oblique marking could fall on either PSR or PSE.[4]

Without further assumptions, this already gives us two major classes in Stassen's (2009) typology: Locational possessives (oblique marking on PSR) (4c) and With possessives (oblique marking on PSE) (6). Relevant examples from Finnish and Amele are repeated below.

(4c) **John-lla** on kissa
John-ADESS is cat
John has a cat. (Finnish: oblique PSR)

(6) Ija **sigin ca**
1sg knife with
I have a knife. (Amele: oblique PSE)

Light verb Alternatively, a light verb may be used. Disregarding whether the verb is "truly" transitive, this yields the other two members of the typology: Topic (7) and Have (8) possessives.

(7) Sānmáo **yǒu** yì zhī gǒu
Sanmao have one CL dog
Sanmao has a dog. (Mandarin: "Topic")

(8) Pat **has** a dog. (English: "Have")

An advantage of the non-verbal analysis is that it distinguishes morphosyntactic category from conceptual category.

– Stassen's (2009) Locational class includes Genitive (29) and Dative (30) cases PSRs, which are all classified separately in Heine (1997).

(29) raam-**ke** tiin b^haaii h$\tilde{a}\tilde{n}$
Raam-GEN three brothers be-PR
Ram has three brothers.
(Hindi: Mohanan 1994: 177 (61c))

(30) Ma-**te** pot tienewa
1SG-DAT books be.INAN.PR
I have books (Sinhalese: Gair 1970:60,
cited in Stassen 2009:51 (16))

– Stassen (2009:50) suggests genitive and dative PSRs could arise from case syncretism with locative case. This might or might not be the case, but the current approach does not force a connection where one perhaps does not exist.

– Stassen does argue for distinguishing between morphosyntactic and conceptual category for With possessives: "there are quite a few instances of the With-Possessive in which the marker of the PE (= possessee) does not — or at least not synchronically — function as a marker of comitativity" (p55).

– This suggests so-called With or Comitative possessives can simply be characterized as oblique marking on the PSE.

[4] I presume there are general markedness restrictions against both PSR and PSE nominals showing oblique marking.

– Treating Locational possessives (Locative, Dative, Genitive) simply as showing oblique marking on the PSR brings greater unity to these encoding options.

4.2 Presence of a copula

As with other NVPSs, possessive clauses may or may not show a copula. This point is relevant only for cases where there is no light verb.

Whether oblique marking occurs on PSR or PSE, there may or may not be a copula present:

(31) γur-s takerrust tamellalt
at-him car white
He has a white car. (Oblique PSR, no copula)
(Kabyle: Naït-Zerrad 2001:130, cited in Stassen 2009:79 (57))

(32) Ngōn ǐ kɔ̀ kìyā
child is with knife
The child has a knife. (Oblique PSE, with copula)
(Mbay: Keegan 1997:77, cited in Stassen 2009:57 (52))

(33)

Copula:	*Present*	*Absent*
Oblique PSR	Finnish	Kabyle
Oblique PSE	Mbay	Amele

4.3 Extending the major classes to definite possessive predication

The same assumptions account for definite possessive predication (e.g. *This pen is Pat's*), which show almost all the same kinds of morphosyntactic variation.

No light verb, oblique phrase Definite possessive predication may show oblique marking on PSRs, with the same range: locative, dative, genitive, found in indefinite possessive predication. Indeed, a genitive PSR in definite possessive predication is found in many languages (34):

(34) Genitive marking on PSR

a. liber est Marc-i
book be.3SG.PR Mark-GEN
The book belongs to Mark. (Gen PSR, copula, Latin: Seiler 2001:33 (1b))

b. Marra kurljiwarn-jina
nest bowerbird-GEN
The nest is a bowerbird's OR The nest belongs to a bowerbird.
(Gen PSR, no copula, Yawuru: Hosokawa 1991: 248, cited in McGregor 2001: 340, (3))

The PSR may also show locative (35) or dative (36) marking.

(35) Locative/goal marking on PSR
Ce livre est à moi.
this book is at/to me
This book is mine. (French: Langacker 1995:66 (4a))

(36) Dative marking on PSR
Kamirri yila manin-ji
that dog woman-DAT
That dog is the woman's. OR That dog belongs to the woman.
(Nyikina: Stokes 1982:398, cited in McGregor 2001:342 (12))

A gap in the paradigm: Definite possessive predication does not seem to allow the PSE to show oblique marking. Elsewhere (Tham ms), I suggest this is due to the PSE nominal being specified as the centre of attention (Chafe 1976, 1987, Ariel 1988, Gundel *et al.* 1993).

Light verb There are also cases of definite possessive predication realized with a light verb. This is found in Akan (37). This verb is distinct from the copula (i.e. the verb found in nominal predication structures (38).

(37) Light verb definite possessive predication

a. Me **wo** wodan bi
1SG be.at house one
I have a house

b. Odan yi **wo** me
house DEF be.at 1SG
This house is mine/belongs to me.
(Akan: Christaller 1875:66, cited in Stassen 2009:29 (40))

(38) The copula (distinct from the possessive light verb)

a. ɔ-yɛ ɔbarima
3SG-COP man
He is a man. (Akan: Ellis and Boadi 1969:18)

b. Dwoada ne ɛnnɛ
Monday COP today
Monday is today. (ibid. 25)

Distinguishing the conceptual category of the possessive morpheme from the argument it marks: Again, it is more productive to approach non-verbal possessive predication in terms of *which argument nominal* oblique marking falls on, rather than *what kind of marker* occurs.

– As noted above, both the classifications provided by Heine and Stassen include a comitative/"with" class of indefinite possessives where the PSE shows comitative marking of some sort.

– But comitative marking can also occur on PSRs both in definite possessive predication sentences, as in Irish (39), and in indefinite possessive predication in Welsh (40) and Gulf Arabic (41).

(39) An ceathrú plánéad ba **le** fear gnó é
DEF fourth planet COP.PRET with man business 3SG.MASC
The fourth planet belonged to a businessman.
(Irish: Stolz 2001: 341 (31), Definite Poss Pred)

(40) r-oedd ffagl **gyda** phob un o'-r ddau
DEC-be.PRET:3SG torch with all one of-DEF two
Each of the two had a torch. (Welsh: Stolz 2001:343 (33) Indefinite Poss Pred)

(41) Saar-at **9indah** Diifaan
became-3.FEM with.him guests
He had guests.
(Gulf Arabic: Holes 1990:95-6, cited in Heine 1997:56 (23e) Indefinite Poss Pred)

– This shows the conceptual category/source of a possessive morpheme is distinct from the morphosyntactic form of the possessive sentence.

– Heine (1997:57) suggests examples such as (41) are instances of the Location schema, thus treating each schema as essentially (associated with) a particular morphosyntactic category.

– In the current analysis, however, the conceptual category of the possessive morpheme is separate from the morphosyntactic form of the possessive sentence.

– Therefore it naturally accommodates cases where a morpheme of one conceptual category may occur in more than one morphosyntactic encoding option for possessive sentences.

4.4 Predication type in possessive sentences

Possessive predication sentences may also be ascriptive, equative, or presentative.

4.4.1 Ascriptive and equative meanings for possessives

Partee and Borschev (2001) argue that definite possessive predication sentences such as (2), repeated below, could have two possible analyses.

(2) This pen is Pat's.

– The genitive NP could be predicative, with a type $< e, t >$ meaning as in (42), i.e. the sentence would be ascriptive.

(42) **Pat's**: λ x [R_{POSS}(Pat)(x)] **type**: $< e, t >$
(Partee and Borschev 2001: (31))

– Alternatively, it could be understood as an elliptical NP, potentially ranging over type e, type $< e, t >$, or type $< e, < e, t >>$: an equative sentence.

An example from Russian: Partee and Borschev (2001) suggest that definite possessive predication in Russian allows both ascriptive and equative options.

– In such sentences, the PSR may be in Instrumental case in the past tense (43a), or it may be nominative (43b) (Partee and Borschev 2001).

(43) Russian definite possessive predication

a. Éta strana byla kogda-to **moej**
that-FEM.NOM.SG country-FEM.NOM.SG was-FEM.SG once my-FEM.INSTR
That country was once mine' ('possession' or citizenship)

b. Éta strana byla kogda-to **moja**
that-FEM.NOM.SG country-FEM.NOM.SG was-FEM.SG once my-FEM.NOM.SG
That country was once mine' ('possession' only)

– There is a contrast between nominative and instrumental PSRs: The instrumental PSR is synonymous with a full adnominal possessive (44a). If the PSR is in nominative case, however, it cannot be replaced by an adnominal possessive (44b).

(44) A contrast between instrumental and nominative PSRs

a. Éta strana byla kogda-to **moej**
that-FEM.NOM.SG country-FEM.NOM.SG was-FEM.SG once my-FEM.INSTR.SG
stranoj
country-FEM.INSTR.SG
That country was once my country. ('possession' or citizenship)
(Partee and Borschev 2001: (32))

b. *Éta strana byla kogda-to **moja**
that-FEM.NOM.SG country-FEM.NOM.SG was-FEM.SG once my-FEM.NOM.SG
strana
country-FEM.NOM.SG
That country was once my country.
(Russian: Partee and Borschev 2001: (33))

– This indicates the instrumental PSR in (43a) is an elliptical NP, and the possessive sentence is an equative one.

– The nominative PSR in (43b), however, would be a predicate of type $< e, t >$, and the sentence is ascriptive.

– Partee and Borschev (2001) further support this distinction with data from Polish and German.

4.4.2 Presentative

Indefinite possessive predication sentences in various languages show a definiteness effect on the PSE nominal, and are presentative according to the working definition proposed above.

English Partee (1999) shows that English *have*, like the pivot in existential *there* sentences, is infelicitous with definite or "strong" NPs (Milsark 1974):

(45) John has a/some/three/at least three/several/many/a few/no/few/at most three/exactly three sisters.

(46) #John has the/every/both/most/neither/all/all three/the three sisters.
(adapted from Partee 1999 (4)-(6))

– Tham (2006) argues that the definiteness effect is imposed by possessive *have*.

– *Have* sentences with an indefinite complement nominal e.g. (47) allow two kinds of interpretations.

(47) Pat has a sister/a crooked nose/a pen.

Possessive: The interpretation that first comes to mind would be the relational interpretation with kinship and body-part nominals such as *a sister/a nose*. With a non-relational nominal, e.g. *pen*, the interpretation

is one of ownership or some kind of control, disposal rights, etc. I consider these to be core possessive relations.

Non-possessive interpretations Other interpretations are possible: For instance, if some friends had been given puppies from the same litter, one of them, on finding out Pat's puppy was a sister of their friends' puppy, could well utter *Pat has a sister.*

– Similarly, *Pat has a pen*, uttered when comparing gains from a raffle, could mean that Pat had drawn a pen in the raffle.

– But these non-possessive meanings can only arise in context, whereas the possessive meanings discussed above are available out of context.

– Importantly, a definite complement to *have*, e.g. *Pat has the sister*, has no felicitous interpretation out of context.

Mandarin *yǒu*: A parallel observation can be made for Mandarin *yǒu*, which expresses both possession (48a) and existence (48c).

Both in possessive and existential sentences, a definite complement to *yǒu* is infelicitous out of context (48b, d), whereas an indefinite complement (48a, c) can be felicitously interpreted out of context.

(48) Mandarin *yǒu*

a. Sānmáo yǒu (sān) gè jiějie/bēi-bāo
Sanmao have three CL elder.sister/back-pack
Sanmao has three/an elder sister(s)/backpacks. (Possessive)

b. #Sānmao yǒu nà/měi gè jiějie/bēi-bāo
Sanmao have that/every CL elder.sister/back-pack
Intended: Sanmao has that/every elder sister/backpack.

c. yǒu rén!
exist person
There's someone! (Existential)

d. #yǒu nèi gè rén
exist that CL person
There's that man.

– Similar DEs have been noted in other languages, e.g. German (Heine 1997:30, citing Clasen (1981)), Japanese (Kishimoto 2000, Tsujioka 2002).

– The preceding discussion shows that possessive sentences, like NVPSs, may be ascriptive, equative, and presentative.

Interim Summary

– To summarize, the major categories of possessive predication in Stassen's (2009) typology can be derived from recognizing their fundamental status as either NVPSs with an oblique phrase (oblique PSR, oblique PSE), or as light verb structures.

– Moreover, the same morphosyntactic encoding options are shown by definite possessive predication sentences, an advantage of the current analysis.

– Like NVPSs in general, possessive predication sentences may further vary according to (i) whether a copula is present, and (ii) predication type.

4.5 Predictions

The current analysis predicts that other kinds of NVPSs may occur in possessive predication.

4.5.1 Zero encoding

The non-verbal analysis predicts that we should actually see possessive sentences that simply juxtapose the PSR and PSE NPs, one of the minor strategies noted by Stassen (2009:83). This pattern is found in Kayardild (49a) and possibly other languages (see Stassen (2009) for further examples).

(49) Kayardild

a. ngumban-da wakatha maku kiyarrng-k
2SG.POSS-NOM sister.NOM sister-in-law.NOM two-NOM
Your sister has two sisters-in-law.
(Evans 1995:318 (9-24))

b. dathin-a kunawun wungunduwungundu
that-NOM child.NOM thief.NOM
That child is a thief.
(Evans 1995:314 (9-3))

– Juxtaposition of two (non-oblique) nominals is frequently encountered in nominal predication.

– Stassen (2009) notes that possessive sentences of this shape are ambiguous with nominal predication interpretations, although real world knowledge frequently constrains the interpretation to one or the other. This may be why it is rare to find such possessive sentences.

4.5.2 Head-marking

Possessive encoding may also be expressed via head-marking affixes in languages that use agglutinative structures.

Jabirrjabirr (a Western Nyulnyulan language spoken on the Dampier Land peninsula in Australia) expresses possession through an applicative morpheme (McGregor 2001).

(50) ibal-en i-nen-ang bugiyan bogedjamaneman
ibal-en i-n-in-ang bukiyan bukijjamaniman
father-ERG 3SG.NOM-PRES-APP things all:kinds
Father has many things of all kinds.
(Jabirrjabirr: Nekes and Worms 1953:398, cited in McGregor 2001:340 (2))

– Note that head-marking affixes do not really fall under any of the categories posited by either Heine (1997) or Stassen (2009), whether conceptually- or morphosyntactically-based.

– Under the current approach, however, the range of possessive encoding structures may vary as much as the crosslinguistic range of non-verbal encoding structures, which in turn depends on the range of morpholexical and structural devices available in particular languages.

4.5.3 Conjunction

Stassen (2009:89-94) reports the use of conjunction in possessive predication "in a small number of unrelated languages" (p89).

(51) Ngohi **dé** ai tahu-ka
1SG and my house-already
I have a house.
(Galela: Van Baarda 1908:135, cited in Stassen 2009:90 (104))

(52) Ngohi to tagi **dé** una wo goge
1SG.EMPH 1SG go and 3SG.EMPH 3SG.EMPH stay
I go and he stays.
(Van Baarda 1908:62, cited in Stassen 2009:90 (105)a)

– Again, this kind of structure does not fit neatly into any of the major typological categories proposed by either Heine (1997) or Stassen (2009).[5]

– Under the current analysis, however, a conjunction morpheme is a non-verbal category with a relational function that could potentially develop predicative status, and its use in possessive encoding is predicted to be possible, though presumably infrequent since conjunctions are typically non-predicative.

4.5.4 Adjectival predicates in possessive predication?

Stassen (2009:137ff) suggests that With possessives may in some languages become reanalyzed as an intransitive predicate that shows morphosyntactic marking parallel to that of adjectives in the language.

In different languages, adjectives may pattern like nouns or like verbs (Dixon 1977, Stassen 1997)). Drawing on this division, Stassen (2009:139-140) demonstrates that, in languages where a With possessive has been reanalyzed to an intransitive predicate:

– If adjectives pattern like verbs (e.g. they directly combine with tense and agreement markers without a copula present), the possessive predicate also patterns like a verb. This is the case in Tundra Yukaghir, a Northeast Siberian Yukaghir language.

– If adjectives pattern like nouns (they cannot directly combine with tense and agreement markers), the possessive predicate also patterns like nouns. An example is the Mongolian language Khalkha.

– The point is subtle and needs more detailed investigation, but if Stassen's claims are correct, this suggests possessive predicates show the whole range of non-verbal predicate categories as well: nominal (e.g. NP-juxtaposition), oblique phrase (adpositional or oblique case), and adjectival! This conclusion would further support the non-verbal analysis.

[5] Although see Stassen (2009: chapter 13) for a discussion of how such structures may reflect deeper factors in possessive predication.

5 Conclusion

The correspondences and contrasts between the current non-verbal analysis and the typologies of Stassen (2009) and Heine (1997) are laid out in the table below:

(53) The non-verbal analysis compared to the Stassen (2009) and Heine (1997) classes

Non-verbal analysis	**Stassen (2009)**	**Heine (1997)**
INDEFINITE POSS PRED		
Oblique PSR	Locational	Locative, Genitive, Goal
Oblique PSE	With	Companion
Light verb	Topic, Have	Topic, Action
NP NP	Minor strategy	NA
Head marking	Minor strategy	NA
DEFINITE POSS PRED		
Oblique PSR	NA	Equation
Oblique PSE not observed	NA	not observed
Light verb	NA	not mentioned

– To recapitulate, the non-verbal analysis of possessive predication, extended with light verbs,

a. provides a principled account for the major morphosyntactic categories in indefinite possessive predication laid out by Stassen (2009);

b. accounts for both definite possessive predication in the same way;

c. predicts the existence of less-frequently observed possessive predication structures problematic for typological approaches; and

d. does so by applying existing generalizations about NVPSs without positing special mechanisms particular to possession.

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