RIVISTA

DEGLI

STUDI ORIENTALI

SOMMARIO

RECENSIONI

PREDICATIVE POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN JAPANESE AND KOREAN

ARTEMIJ KEIDAN[*]

("La Sapienza" University, Rome)

> …I remember being very puzzled by the way one says in English 'a dog *has* four legs,' 'a cat *has* a tail.' In Japanese the verb to have is not used in this way.
>
> D. T. SUZUKI, *Early Memories*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Presentation*

THE expression of possession in the languages of the world has been, in the last couple of decades, a very debated topic in linguistic literature, in both generativist and functionalist approaches. Up to now, the main issues concerned with possessives, have been the following:

(i) Is whatever we define as 'possession' from the lexico-semantic point of view based on a universal cognitive feature of the mind?

(ii) How can possession be expressed and why are there so many different possessive patterns in the languages of the world?

(iii) Why do many possessive constructions become polysemous and extend their meaning to other semantic domains?

Both Generativist and Functionalist schools of linguistics have spent much effort in order to clarify these topics, so that some contemporary achievements can be considered as their definitive solution. However, some further questions concerning possessives still remain – completely or partly – unsolved. In this respect I should like to draw the reader's attention to the following two additional issues:

(iv) How can different possessive constructions coexist in one and the same language?

(v) Why can a possessive construction undergo a typological change in diachrony?

Generally, my approach is of the semantic-cognitive kind rather than a syntactic one. The conclusions of this paper must be seen as regarding the structure of the semantic units involved, rather than as a solution to some questions about the syntactic expression of such units.

I will analyse linguistic data primarily from Japanese and Korean, comparing them to similar data from some European languages (Latin, French, Russian). In brief, the main aim of this paper is to explain why the Japanese language (as well as other similar languages) lacks a translational equivalent of the English verb *to have*.

1. 2. *Possessive construction typologies*

The number of types of possessive patterns cross-linguistically varies depending on each scholar's approach and categorization. It ranges from the four possessive construction types stated by Stassen (2001) to the eight "event schemas" claimed by Heine (1997: Section 2.1). The latter convincingly argues that his classification is the most comprehensive and explicative.

In the generativist approach, on the contrary, some reductionist hypotheses are supported in order to show the underlying uniqueness of the possessive constructions which are viewed as dissimilar only on the surface level. Thus, the verb *have* is believed to be a kind of "fake" verb, i.e. not a true lexical verb, but only a superficially lexicalized manifestation of a so-called "functional head" (cf. Dikken 1997: Section 5). In my opinion, a purely formalist reductionist approach, i.e. the one based exclusively on the analysis of the linguistic form (for instance, syntactic structures) and leaving out the meaning (here, the conception of 'possession'), is of little use. Thus, to say that the underlying syntactical structure is always the same does still not explain why so many different ways of expressing the possessive relation are actually observable in languages.

In order to describe the semantics of the different possessive construction typologies, I should like to start from the consideration of what the typical possession scene is made of. Whatever grammatical pattern is involved, there are always at least two participants on the stage: the Possessor (henceforth: Pr), i.e. the one who has something at his disposal, and the Possessee (Pe), i.e. the thing being at Possessor's disposal. The various constructions differ in what syntactic and/or morphological form these two participants are being assigned in the sentence. Moreover, from a diachronic perspective, the difference is also to be found in the metaphorical shift that led certain constructions from some previous semantic meanings to possessive ones.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the possessive scene as a whole can be expressed either by a lexical predicate specialized in this semantic function as its default value, or by a construction involving an otherwise existential – or copular – verb (such as 'be', 'exist', or similar). Only in the former construction is the Pr the grammatical subject of a purely possessive predicate (like English *to have* and its translational equivalents in other languages), while in the latter the subject (if any) is constituted by the Pe participant, the Pr being usually introduced by a preposition (or some other oblique marking). On the

ground of this distinction I am going to make use of a further "supercatego-rization" of all the possessive patterns into two "macro-types": *h*-possessives (i.e. *have*-possessives) and *e*-possessives (i.e. *existential*-possessives).

Notice that such a twofold classification used to be widespread among linguists (since the distinction between "*have*-languages" and "*be*-languages" suggested in a seminal paper by Isačenko 1974), and remains valid even today for many of the generativist scholars interested mainly in the analysis of English – or "average European" – grammar. Heine (1997) has definitively shown this to be an oversimplification of the real distinction observed among languages (especially if we include the "exotic" ones into the analysis). However, in my opinion, this supercategorization can nevertheless be useful to some extent as far as the information structure of the possessive scene is concerned.

The two macro-types can be observed in the following examples:

1) *Have* [Pr_{SUBJ} + Pe_{OBJ}]
    English: *John has a book.*

2) *Be* [Pe_{SUBJ} + Pr_{OBL}]
    Russian: *U   Ivana   est'   kniga.*
             Near   Ivan   is   book.
             Ivan has a book.

The distribution of these two macro-types among languages is highly disproportional: the majority of languages show the *e*-possessive construction (in its many subtypes), some other (but, importantly, many of the European languages) show the *h*-possessive construction, and few – if any – use both (see Heine 1997: 74-75 for statistical data). The disproportion is partly explainable by the fact that the *e*-possessive category is a label behind which a greater amount of different patterns is hidden.

The two macro-types imply different kinds of theoretical issues: if the *h*-possessive construction is present in a language, the problem arises of the non-possessive meanings of the possessive predicate (such as the verb *to have* in English). Indeed, verbs of this kind are often extremely rich in semantic variability, including possible grammaticalized values.

Otherwise, if a language uses an *e*-possessive construction, the question arises about the motivation of the possessive drift of a certain formerly non-possessive (e.g. existential, locative, topical, or similar) construction to the expression of possession.

Finally, if both patterns are used by a certain language, the problem is their mutual distribution, the reason for this twofold situation, and the motivation of the eventual loss of one of the two constructions. Particularly, we will be concerned here with so-called *have*-drift, i.e. a diachronic process of creation of a possessive predicate similar to the English verb *to have* starting from a different pattern.

1.3. *Translational equivalents approach*

When one faces the problem of the lexico-semantic comparison between two (or more) different languages, the most obvious algorithm is to take lexemes of the source language and to find the corresponding lexical units in the target language, and thus to establish the translational equivalencies between the two of them. This algorithm assumes that both the source and the target language refer to the same "linguistic conceptualization" of the world (same concepts corresponding to same lexico-semantic units). Thus, for example, we can say that English *dog* corresponds to Japanese *inu* because both these languages have lexical meanings matching – more or less – one and the same mental concept about the world (i.e., the same abstraction about all of the dogs we see in our life).

However, things become more complicated when no lexeme in the target language represents the exact translational equivalent of the source language lexeme. Such a situation is more common than one could think. Furthermore, it must be considered as standard due to the Saussurean arbitrariness of language (which makes every approach to the analysis of semantics extremely indeterminate). Thus, many cognitive linguists claim the impossibility of establishing any perfect translation equivalence at all (this seems to be the position of Taylor 1996, argued against in Francis 2000: 98).

Such a situation is observed especially when words with a highly abstract denotation come into play. Their semantics is built from a mix of general mental conceptions and particular lexical meanings. Thus, the manifold meanings of the word *to have* in English (listed further on in this paper) end up merging – in the mind of a native English speaker – into a complex conception, encompassing a great variety of particular verbal meanings as if they were all part of a general "idea of possession". It is clear that no language would ever show a perfect translational equivalent of a verb with such complicated and multiform semantics.

Notice that this difficulty involves only the lexical level, not the conceptual or cognitive one. This would mean that there is no determinism in the relation between mental concepts and words. For instance, we cannot assume the impossibility, for speakers having no translational equivalent of English *dog* in their mother-tongue, to conceptualize this real-world object: they can still understand what a 'dog' is, even if they have to use a complex phrase (a lexical turn) to express it. In fact, as every good translator knows, there are some appropriate techniques to overcome the lack of translational equivalents, e.g., a description or lexical turn can always be used instead of a singular term (thus 'dog' becoming 'domesticated carnivorous mammal' or, contextually, 'preferred pet of my grandma').

Therefore, when no translational equivalent is to be found in the target language, we have to turn to the cognitive domain coded by the lexeme under

consideration as its primary or core meaning (thus, proceeding from meaning to concept), and then to find the most appropriate linguistic expression – be it a word or a phrase – of such a cognitive domain in the target language (thus, moving from concept to meaning). The resulting expression could be as distant from the literal meaning of the source expression as it may, but it must be usable in reference to the same situations and contexts as the first one. Indeed, the structures of the mental representation of the world are more pivotal and universal than their lexical (or grammatical) coding in different languages. This means that it is only the mental representations that are important, not the words we use to transmit them linguistically.

1. 4. *Possession cross-linguistically*

As we know, it is impossible to translate exactly the English verb *to have* into Japanese (among other languages) because of the lack of a good translational equivalent. Japanese does not have a unique lexeme that can sum up all of the semantic features possessed by English *to have*.

In our analysis we will proceed in the following way. First, we will try to specify what might be considered as core meaning of the possessive constructions cross-linguistically. Next, we will see how Japanese codes such a semantic domain. At the end we will evaluate the consequences of the data from Japanese for the general theory.

Therefore, the main "philosophical" question we have to start with here is the following: Is the notion of 'possession' anthropologically universal?

A prima facie answer should be: yes, from a purely anthropological point of view, all human beings are, generally, well aware of the difference between what is 'mine' and what is 'yours' or 'someone else's', or between what is 'having something' from what is 'not having that thing'. However, this constitutes a purely philosophical matter that does not entail any direct implication for the language in general and the grammars of different languages of the world in particular. From a linguistic point of view, instead, the first thing to assume, as a matter of evidence, is the lack of a universally valid lexical (or grammatical) coding of the possession relationship (see Heine 2001: 312).

This makes any discussion about the presumed universality of the cognitive concept of possession a highly frustrating experience. We have to maintain a clear distinction between the lexical meanings of our mother-tongue and universal cognitive structures which are extra-linguistic. A special challenge for linguists who are speakers of a European language in analysing the possessive constructions cross-linguistically is to get rid of their mother-tongue habits (which usually imply an *h*-possessive construction), and to separate the true – i.e. prototypical – possessive constructions from those which are considered as possessive simply because they share the same linguistic – lexical or syntactic – forms with the former.

Indeed, the lexemes by means of which we express possession in our mother-tongue are often not restricted to that cognitive domain, having a considerably wider range of meanings, both direct and metaphorical. Let's take into consideration, for example, a list of usages of the verb *to have* in English, going from the expression of a material possession to the coding of an abstract link between concepts and/or objects; eventually, some grammaticalized uses are also to be observed (notice the type of the "possessive scene", as well as the semantic features of the participants involved, indicated in brackets; for the grammaticalized uses the grammatical function is mentioned):

3) a. John has a bag.
      [HUMAN ↔ THING; material possession]
   b. John has two sisters.
      [HUMAN ↔ HUMAN; kinship]
   c. John has pink hair.
      [HUMAN ↔ THING; part-whole relationship]
   d. The pie has a good taste.
      [THING ↔ ABSTRACT; material property]
   e. Nowadays novels have strange plots.
      [ABSTRACT ↔ ABSTRACT; abstract property]
   f. John had a good time.
      [HUMAN ↔ ABSTRACT; mental state]
   g. I have John wash the car every weekend.
      [*causative*]
   h. I have to go out.
      [*modality*]
   i. I have finished.
      [*auxiliary*]

Even if we put aside the grammaticalization, a high degree of semantic heterogeneity can be seen in the usages of this verb. These usages are hardly predictable and constitute what Heine (1997: 156) argues to be Lakoffian "radial networks" of metaphorically derived meanings. Yet, for native speakers this heterogeneity is obliterated by the fact that one and the same verb is employed. They perceive all of the meanings as "possessive" in some way.
Unfortunately the resulting concept of possession is too complex and polysemous, and can hardly be recognized as a universal feature of the human mind. Even if we succeed in identifying a good candidate for the translational equivalent of this lexeme in a given target language, it will never match perfectly all of the semantic characteristics of the source lexeme. Generally speaking, the main mistake to avoid is considering as possessive some extra-European linguistic constructions only because they are usually translated through a formally possessive pattern in one of the European languages.
   In fact, if we try to translate the sentences listed above into a typologically very different language, we would easily realize that their being "possessive"

is only a matter of form (here, the lexeme involved), and not of semantics. Thus, Japanese translations of these English sentences (excepting for those with grammaticalized *have*) use at least four different grammatical patterns, some of which could not be considered as possessive at all (e.g. c-f):

4) a.1 John   san   wa   kaban   ga   aru.
        John   HON   TOP   bag   SUBJ   exist.
        John has a bag.
   a.2 John   san   wa   kaban   o   motte   iru.
        John   HON   TOP   bag   OBJ   hold.SUSP AUX
        John has a bag.
   b.   John   san   wa   ane   ga   futari   iru.
        John   HON   TOP   sister SUBJ   two   exist
        John has two sisters.
   c.   John   san   wa   pinku   no   kami   o   shite   iru.
        John   HON   TOP   pink   REL   hair   OBJ   do.SUSP   AUX
        John has pink hair.
   d.   Sono   pai   wa   aji   ga   ii.
        that   pie   TOP   taste   SUBJ   good
        The pie has a good taste.
   e.   Gendai   shoosetsu   wa   purotto   ga   kawatte   iru.
        contemporary   novels   TOP   plot   SUBJ   strange.SUSP AUX
        Nowadays novels have strange plots.
   f.   John   san   wa   tanoshinda.
        John   HON   TOP   have fun.PAST
        John had a good time.

In the terms of Francis (2000: 87), we may say that a formally possessive construction can express different kinds of states of affairs (ownership, emotional states, kinship, knowledge state etc.), only one of which describes a prototypical possessive situation. Therefore, when the sentences above are translated in another language, such as Japanese, each event gains its own form of expression.

    For this reason I claim the translational equivalents' approach to a cross-linguistic analysis of possessiveness to be essentially misguided. In this approach, the tendency to identify a "common denominator" shared by all of the formally possessive patterns has induced scholars to maintain the existence of an all-embracing definition of 'possession'. A kind of constant "constructional" possessive meaning is defended, and it is thought to explain the high semantic variability of the possessive constructions as purely contextual (see Taylor 1996; Francis 2000: Section 5), or logically inferable from this general meaning (see Herslund and Baron 2001).

    In my opinion, instead, the only way to grasp the definition of the possessive meaning must pass through the individuation of the most prototypical use of the formally possessive constructions (i.e., the only ones to be really

possessive, as opposed to the more peripheral cases). Such a prototypical usage should be cognitively primary and definable cross-linguistically. From a semantic point of view this core possessive meaning must have all those characteristics that make possession an autonomous concept. In particular, only the core meaning should be capable of providing the source for the metaphorical extension of the "possessive" verb to other semantic values, and eventually for grammaticalization. Furthermore, it has to be structured in a precise way as far as information packaging is concerned.

What follows is an attempt to define such a core possessive meaning in its essence.

II. Definition of core possessiveness

Three approaches are possible as far as the semantic characterization of possessiveness is concerned. The distinctive features of possessiveness *per se* can be:

(i)   increased in number, in order to better describe the very semantic "essence" of this pattern, exhibited by most of its usages (as in Taylor's approach);
(ii) reduced to zero, in order to present the possessive pattern as a special instance of a more general and abstract class of grammatical constructions (as in Langacker's approach);
(iii) decresaed to a small number in order to define what can be considered as prototypical possessive meaning, to be distinguished from some peripheral usages (as suggested in this paper).

While advocating the third approach, I assume that the nature of the distinctive features in question is twofold: on the one hand, core possessiveness entails some semantic characteristics, but on the other hand it is based on some pragmatic – e.g. informational – features as well. In other words, what we are facing here is a prototypical category of the language, resulting from a conglomeration of two different domains: the semantic and the informational. These two aspects of possessiveness are illustrated in the following paragraphs.

II.1. *Semantics of prototypical possession*

Recently, R. Langacker (2000) proposed a cognitive view of possession with his *Reference point model*, which I adopt here as a point of departure. This approach defines possessive meaning in terms of some elementary cognitive elements, belonging to a more general abstract class of cognitive constructions, namely, those entailing a "reference point" and a "target" as a description of the real world entities.

Langacker rightly assumes the general capability of the human mind to create mental paths that serve to grasp certain target entities, departing from entities that serve as reference points. Since our cognition is additive, when a new

entity has to be communicated, the easiest way to do so is to find a reference point leading to it, so that the new information is not completely unexpected and gets linked to some already acquired data (see Prince 1981, Keidan 2008).

Both target object and reference point bear some semantic properties. Such properties are definable through the following semantic binary features:

[±human], [±animate], [±concrete], [±singular], [±definite], [±alienable], [±manipulable], and some others.

Different distributions of these semantic features among the two mental entities we are concerned with give rise to different semantic events, and, therefore, can be expressed by different linguistic patterns, including possessive constructions (but not only them).

For example, if both the target and the reference point are [+human], and their real word referents are also relatives, we obtain a kinship relation (see ex. 3b). If both participants are [–animate] and [+concrete], the resulting meaning is more likely to be described as locative:

5) The table has a book [on it]. / There is a book on the table.

If the target is [–concrete] and the reference point is [+human] the resulting construction sometimes is more likely to be considered as describing a mental state, cf. sentences like Russian:

6) Segodnja   u   menja   ploxoe   nastroenie.
   today   near   me   bad   mood
   Today I am in a bad mood.

or English:

7) I have fun.

Now, Langacker is not bothered with this polymorphism of the possessive constructions, since he simply considers all of them as instances of a highly abstract mental capability (reference point model), whatever semantic characterization the NPs involved could have.

For my part, I suggest to assume as prototypical possessive meaning the one constituted only by the combination of a [–animate, +concrete] target with a [+human] reference point. Indeed, only such a combination of semantic features (besides being intuitively obvious) can explain the metaphorical extension that leads to all those peripheral possessive meanings attested cross-linguistically. Conversely, no other configuration could serve as the source of the semantic drift of the verb *to have* to all of the above mentioned metaphorical meanings.

Other scholars have suggested more prolific lists of semantic characteristics of prototypical possession. For example, consider the following list of the features of the "possession gestalt" in Taylor (1996: 340):

a. The Pr is a specific human being.
b. The Pe is an inanimate entity, usually a concrete physical object.
c. The possessive relation is exclusive, i.e. there can be one Pr to many Pe, but not vice versa.
d. The Pr has the exclusive rights to access the Pe.
e. Pe is an object of value, commercial or sentimental.
f.   The Pr's rights on the Pe are produced by some special transaction (purchase, gift, inheritance or the like).
g. It is a long term relation.
h. The Pe is located in the proximity of the Pr.
    [some others]

In my opinion, however, the features in this list are of decreasing saliency. The combination of a human Pr and a concrete inanimate Pe is far more pertinent than proximity, value, rights, etc. Therefore I consider the first two features as sufficient to define the prototypical possession (the core possessive meaning). Furthermore, in a cross-linguistic approach, a simple category with few prototypical features is far more suitable than a complex one resulting from the agglomeration of a high number of features.

The direct consequence of my approach is that the core possessive meaning is quite rare if compared to the impressively high frequency of the possessive predicate lexemes in a language like English (which are in effect only "formally" possessive in the most part of the occurrences).

From the point of view of predication, the relationship involved in a reference point model amounts to nothing but coexistence. Pr and Pe do not interact in any other way besides simply coexisting. Therefore, usually an existential verb is used in such constructions. Even when there is an *h*-possessive construction, which uses a specialized possessive predicate, such a verb shares many characteristics with existential verbs. Thus, cross-linguistic translational equivalence between existence and possession verbs is not rare, especially when a peripheral possessive meaning is to be expressed. Consider the following Italian sentence in comparison to its English translation:

8) Io   ho   freddo.
   I   have   cold.
   I am cold.

If no predication is to be expressed, the reference point model gives rise to a "genitive" nominal phrase, or its equivalents, which are, probably, even more polysemous than the verb *to have* (consider the uses of the PP with *of* in English).

<center>II. 2. <i>Information structure of prototypical possession</i></center>

As already said, information structure (or information packaging, Vallduví 1995) is necessarily involved in the definition of the category of core posses-

siveness. Indeed, without mentioning the informational component, possession is virtually indistinguishable from a simple location or coexistence (as far as its *de re* interpretation is concerned).

The informational structure of the core possessive meaning is simply the following: the prototypical Pr must be topical, while the Pe represents a comment upon this topic. Such a view is shared by many scholars, e.g.: "In an ascription of possession, the possessor is taken as the referential anchor – as the theme –, and possession of the possessum is predicated over him" (Lehmann 1996: 21; cf. also Cuzzolin and Baldi 2001: 210; Taylor 1996: 207). The topicality we are concerned with here belongs primarily to the cognitive domain, not simply to the grammatical level. Being a Langackerian reference point, the Pr constitutes, by its own nature, the "anchor information" by means of which the Pe object is located and referenced. Usually – but not necessarily, as we will see – to this cognitive topicality corresponds isomorphically a topical function of the Pr in the grammatical structure of the sentence.

The main diversity of languages consists mainly in how this topicality is actually coded. Languages can use different coding strategies in order to mark the categories of the informational structure of the sentence. The means involved are of four kinds:

(i) morphology (free morphemes or affixes, for example the Japanese *wa* marker for the topic of the sentence);
(ii) syntax (word ordering: the topic usually appears as soon as possible, in the linear structure of the sentence; but also more complex grammatical phenomena, like subject, etc);
(iii) suprasegmental phenomena (word stress, pauses, and intonation which can underline the informational status of a sentence constituent);
(iv) lexical means, be it a lexical selection (as when we choose from two perspectival inverses in order to mark the informational salience of a certain participant, e.g.: *to buy* vs. *to sell*), or a grammaticalized lexical turn (such as, for example, the expression *as far as X is concerned* in order to code the topic in English).

The coding strategies can be – and usually actually are – used in combination, and sometimes a grammatical category is not marked overtly, being inferred implicitly from some other values.

For our concern, two different cases must be distinguished: some languages mark the topical constituent overtly, others do it implicitly. Most of the languages with the *h*-possessive construction, such as many European languages, topicalize the Pr implicitly by raising it to the subject position (which is inherently topical) of the verb *to have* (or its translation equivalents). In other words, the verb *to have* structurally implies the topicality of the Pr since it necessarily becomes the subject of the sentence (on the cognitive and grammatical correlation between topics, subjects, and possessors see Langacker 2001 and also Taylor 1996: ch. 8).

On the other hand, languages with overt topic marking, like Japanese and Korean, use special morphological means such as special topic particles (resp. *wa* and *nun*). Notice that, as a consequence, it does not make much sense positing a grammatical subject similar to that of the European languages in Japanese and Korean, if by "subject" we intend a grammatical coalescence of topic with the agentive argument (as suggested in Bhat 1991).

In general, actual topic marking is never such a pure case. Usually a complex proceeding, consisting of more than one grammatical means, is used. Thus, Japanese combines the explicit topic morpheme *wa* (in its non-contrastive sense) with the initial syntactical position of the topicalized NP (according to Martin 1975: 224-225, position is altogether the primary grammatical means as far as topic marking is concerned). In English, the subject function implies a great amount of typical syntactic "privileges" of subjecthood (such as initial position in the sentence, accord with the predicate, and many others).

Therefore, while the Pr, in a possessive construction, must be marked as topical, the proceedings involved vary from language to language. In languages with *e*-possessive construction, the Pr, being often an obliquely marked argument of the verb, is usually put in initial position in the sentence. This implies, for such languages, a relatively free constituent order: a non-direct argument must be able to stand at the beginning of the sentence. Besides Japanese and Korean, good instances of this typology are Latin and Russian, both having an *e*-possessive construction and a high degree of freedom in constituent order.

On the other hand, in languages with *h*-possessive construction, the Pr turns out to be the direct argument of the possessive predicate (because of its valency structure), so it often becomes the subject of the sentence. Such languages usually do not have a free constituent order, and the subject is necessarily put at the beginning of the sentence. Thus, two interesting correlations may be suggested:

> *h*-possessive construction ↔ rigid constituent order
> *e*-possessive construction ↔ free constituent order

Admittedly, as for now we do not have enough cross-linguistic data in order to consider this an implicational universal of human language. Thus, the second correlation seems to be more difficult to demonstrate (see Section III.4). However, it seems to work quite well with languages under consideration in this paper.

Some more evidence for this correlation is provided if we check the diachronic development. Indeed, linguistic change leading to a more rigid constituent order should favour, according to this hypothesis, the emergence of an *h*-possessive construction (starting from a source situation with the *e*-possessive only) or the prevailing of the *h*-possessive over the *e*-possessive (if both

are present in the source language). As a matter of fact, such developments are actually attested (an example is Latin, as we shall see later).

II. 3. *Prototypical vs. contextual informational structure*

Languages that – at least apparently – have both the *h*-possessive and the *e*-possessive constructions lead us to take into consideration another important parameter of possession: the difference between information structure on the cognitive level, and information structure of the sentence in a given context.

Indeed, only from a cognitive point of view must the Pr be considered as the reference point of communication. Its reference point nature is what defines it in opposition to the Pe (which is prototypically a cognitive target). However, when we formulate a concrete sentence in a concrete discourse context, the mutual disposition of actual topic and comment elements (or link and focus in Vallduví's terms) could differ from prototypical information structure.

In other words, we can consider the sentence form with a topicalized Pr as the default choice for expressing possession. However, this default choice does not invalidate the possibility of an alternative choice (as often happens in grammar) such as the one which topicalizes the Pe. In order to explain similar cases, Langacker postulates his "trajector" and "landmark" notions: while the reference point is prototypically topical from the paradigmatic point of view, the trajector is the concrete topic element in a given syntagmatic environment.

The double choice for topic explains why some languages have paired verbs like English *to have* vs. *to belong*. Their use is quite similar to that of perspectival inverses; this is, in my opinion, the very meaning of the famous statement by Benveniste (1966: 197): "[…] *avoir* n'est rien autre qu'un *être-à* inversé".

Thus, the pair of verbs *to sell* vs. *to buy* describe nearly one and the same factual situation, but they do it from two different points of view: the seller's and the buyer's. It means that *to sell* and *to buy* topicalize different participants of the "commercial event", as Fillmore (1977: 72) called it. Therefore, Fillmore's perspective (or, better, a perspective-oriented verb switch) must be recognized as an indirect means of expressing topic. Now, paired verbs like *to belong* and *to have* are used exactly for the same aim: they topicalize, respectively, the Pe and the Pr. Not by chance, in the *have*-construction, the Pe is preferably indefinite, while it is definite in the *belong*-construction (see Heine 1997: 29-31; see also his Section 2.5 for a general discussion of what he calls language-internal "major" and "minor" possessive schemas). In Langackerian terms, these two opposite constructions allow the speaker to choose between the Pr and the Pe as sentence trajector:

9) a. John has a car. (reference point as trajector)
   b. The car belongs to John. (target as trajector)

Notice that the alternative choice of topicalization (like English *to have* and *to belong*) is something quite different from having two possessive constructions within one and the same language. Notwithstanding this, the two phenomena can be easily confused. I claim that many of the presumed instances of double possessive constructions must be really thought of as perspectival inverses. Consider, for example, the following French sentences:

10) a. J'ai un livre.
        I have a book. (topicalized Pr)
     b. Le livre est à moi.
        The book belongs to me. (topicalized Pe)

In sentences of the type similar to variant (b) above, the Pe is necessarily definite, and therefore topical, while in the variant (a) the Pe is preferably – though not obligatory, as stated in Benveniste (1966: 196) – indefinite. I will consider here such a pattern as a non-prototypical possessive construction, actually a perspectival inverse of the verb *avoir* 'to have', which represents the default choice, in French, for expressing possession. In this, French differs from Latin (Cuzzolin and Baldi 2001: 203; Bauer 2000: 187), where both possessive constructions seem to have been coexisting for some time. The existential one consistently topicalized the dative-marked Pr by putting it at the initial position in the sentence.

   However, real synchronic coexistence of two possessive constructions is rare. My claim is that such a situation is to be considered as highly unstable and transitional from one type towards the other (like in Latin and, as I will argue, probably also in Japanese). In many cases, one of the two constructions ends up being the marked one from a stylistic or semantic point of view. Thus, in Russian the *e*-possessive construction is significantly prevalent over the verb *imet'* 'to have', which is usable only in some rare contexts, having entered this language under the influence of the Western European languages (Isačenko 1974: 51; not all scholars agree on this statement, see Heine 1997: 84).

II. 4. *Definition of core possession*

To sum up, prototypical or core possessive meaning can be defined as follows.
   From a cognitive point of view, core possessive meaning is characterized as a mental path leading from a prototypically topical human reference point (the Pr) to a concrete inanimate target object (the Pe). If this state of things has to be predicated, a "semantically neutral" verb is used in order to purely denote the coexistence of the Pr and Pe. My claim here is that, with such a narrow definition, and only with it, a universally valid description of possession can be delivered. This combination of semantic and informational features has an autonomous status for the human mind as a cognitive invariant,

and therefore usually corresponds to some constant linguistic coding (and underlies many diachronic developments).

Given the definition of core possessive meaning, I can now define what I intend by "truly possessive" constructions (in opposition to "formally possessive" ones).

If, in a language, there exists a clear-cut and paradigmatic way of expressing the previously mentioned semantic features, which furthermore assigns the topic function to the Pr as a default choice, we can call it a truly possessive construction. This construction can provide the ground for some other (metaphorically derived, and therefore unpredictable, see Taylor 1996: 15) non-core possessive meanings; in such a case, the constructions involved will be termed as "peripheral" possessive. Most peripheral possessive constructions may be considered as "formally" possessive: their possessiveness is only formal, while their actual meaning can be completely different.

This method is preferable over the translational equivalents approach, since it allows us to distinguish what is significant from what is redundant, and to establish a cross-linguistic universal as a point of departure. It is also preferable to the analysis of Langacker's Reference point model, since it posits a possessive meaning as an autonomous concept, independently from more abstract categories. Further, it is not "prolix" as some features analyses, such as the one presented in Taylor (1996) and the like, and therefore it is more suitable to the description of many different possessive constructions notwithstanding their polysemy.

Furthermore, the individuation of core possessiveness allows us to establish a directionality in the metaphorical development of the possessive construction, going from core to periphery. A backward direction for this meaning extension seems to be highly implausible: a great amount of data from many languages shows the drift direction to be exactly from temporary concrete physical possession to abstract and/or inalienable cases (see Heine 1997: 88-89).

While considering possessive patterns cross-linguistically, we must restrict our concern to the constructions that lexicalize – or grammaticalize – the core possessive meaning as their primary and paradigmatic value. Thus, we no longer need to find translational equivalencies of some broadly defined, semantically vague, "possessive" patterns in different languages, but instead we can concentrate our efforts on retrieving the truly possessive expression in each language.

Notice that, if no expression in a given language exhibits the required possessive features as its primary and default value, we are allowed to conclude that there is no truly possessive construction in this language. This situation should not be seen as unnatural: a language may lack a possessive construction just as it may have no singular term for 'dog' or, say, 'transcendence', the speakers thereof still being able to understand these conceptions on a cognitive level.

III. Possessive constructions in Japanese and Korean

III. 1. *Presentation of the Japanese data*

The case of Japanese and Korean is extremely interesting because in these languages topicality is overtly marked, which leads towards an important clash with the obligatory topicality of the Pr in a truly possessive construction. Indeed, if the topicality cannot be rigidly predicted in the sentence, this is of great consequence as far as truly possessive constructions are concerned.

As stated in the descriptive grammars of Japanese, this language has at least two different allegedly possessive constructions: the existential-locative one (of the type *e*-possessive), and the one involving the verb *motsu* which literally means something like 'to hold', 'to keep' (similar to an *h*-possessive predicate). Other less frequent patterns are also possible (like, for example, the use of the verb *suru* 'to do' in order to express the possession of body parts with adjectives).

I will consider here first of all the most frequently used possessive construction in Japanese, namely the existential-locative one. The pattern of this sentence type is as follows: at the initial position there is the Pr NP, marked with the particle *ni*, normally used to code the "dative" or other oblique NPs (here, glossed as OBL); then, any number of adjuncts can be inserted; then, in the preverbal position, the Pe NP is placed, marked with the particle *ga* (often wrongly considered the "subject" or "nominative" particle, but see Heycock 1994: 169 who interprets *ga* as a marker of non-topic; however, for the sake of simplicity, I gloss it here as SUBJ); finally, the predicate comes: it is constituted by the verb *aru* or *iru* 'be, exist', depending on the [±animate] feature of the Pe (but see further explanations below), for example:

11) John san   ni   kuruma ga   aru.
    John HON   OBL   car   SUBJ   exist
    John has a car.

For most speakers, the Pr must also be overtly marked as topical NP of the sentence:

13) John san   ni   wa   kuruma ga   aru.
    John HON   OBL   TOP   car   SUBJ   exist
    John has a car.

Furthermore, the topic mark can also fully replace the Pr mark (this seems to be the preferred *e*-possessive pattern for many speakers):

13) John san   wa   kuruma ga   aru.
    John HON   OBL   TOP car SUBJ   exist
    John has a car.

Lastly, even zero-marked topicalization is possible (see Martin 1975: 50-51); despite its near-ungrammaticality in the standard language, it is widespread in colloquial usage:

14) John,   kuruma   aru   yo.
John   car   exist   EXCL
John does have a car!

At first glance, the Japanese *e*-possessive construction seems very similar to the locative one, the sole difference consisting in the semantic characterization of the two participants involved. Thus, when the *ni*-marked NP has the [+human] feature, the possessive reading is more likely (whether the *ga*-marked NP is [–animate] or not); on the other hand, when the *ni*-marked NP is [–animate], the locative / existential interpretation is preferable:

15) Heya   ni   otoko   ga   iru.
room   OBL   man   SUBJ   exist
*There is a man in the room / *The room has a man.*

The similarity of the two sentence structures leads, to some extent, to semantic ambiguity; thus, if both participants of the scene exhibit the [–animate] feature, the interpretation of the sentence turns twofold:

16) Kuruma   ni   enjin   ga   aru.
car   OBL   engine   SUBJ   exist
There is an engine in the car / The car has an engine.

Notice that topicalization in Japanese (and also in Korean) is often only continued from the preceding context, and not explicitly stated. In other words, once a topic has been introduced in the discourse, it is not repeated further in the subsequent sentences, until a new topic is introduced. This means that in such sentences only the non-topical part of the communication ("rheme") is expressed. This is not without consequences for the possessive construction, which, by definition, requires overt topicalization. Let us consider the following example:

17) Taroo   wa   kuruma   ga   daisuki   da.   Rolls-Royce   mo   aru.
Taroo   TOP   car   SUBJ   lover   COP   Rolls-Royce   even   exist
Taroo likes cars very much. He even has a Rolls-Royce.

There is no overt topic NP in the second sentence since the preceding topic is continued. I suggest that, in similar contexts, the resulting sentence cannot be considered as truly possessive, but only existential. Here, the topical entity (Langackerian reference point) is present to the mind of the speakers (being continued from the preceding sentence), but is totally absent from the linguistic construction as such, which thus is lacking one of the distinctive features of a truly possessive construction.

On the other hand, let us consider as well one example of the alternative possessive construction in Japanese, i.e. that using the verb *motsu* 'to hold' as an *h*-possessive predicate:

18) Taroo wa/ga   kaban o   motte   iru.
    Taroo   TOP/SUBJ   bag   OBJ   hold.SUSP   AUX
    Taroo has a bag.

This pattern is less widespread, and has some additional semantic restrictions. For instance, it implies not only the humanness of the Pr, but also the alienability and manipulability of the Pe: the latter is not an obligatory semantic feature of the core possessive meaning. Interestingly, it is used with abstract Pe denoting mental states. In general, however, the possessive meaning does not represent the default value of this verb. Nonetheless, it is of great interest, since it belongs to the *h*-possessive type, unlike the main possessive pattern, which is clearly an instance of the *e*-possessive type.

III. 2. *Other features of the e-possessive pattern in Japanese*

Scholars such as Tsujioka (2002) and Tomioka (2007) have identified some more syntactic and semantic features differentiating the possessive pattern from the existential-locative one. These features are listed below.

1. The Pr and the Location NP, though marked with the same particle *ni*, are replaced by two different Pro-forms in interrogative sentences, respectively *doko ni* 'where' and *nani ni* '[to] what':

19) a. Ringo   wa   doko ni /*nani ni   aru   no?
       apple   TOP   where   /*what   exist   Q
       Where is the apple? (only locative)
    b. Puropera wa   nani ni /*doko ni   aru   no?
       propeller TOP   what   /*where   exist   Q
       What has a propeller? (only possessive)

2. Only in a possessive sentence can two *ni*-marked arguments actually cooccur without violating the θ-criterion. This means that the thematic roles of the two must be different, namely Pr and Location (notice that the Location must occur strictly between the Pr and the Pe, cf. Tsujioka 2002: 69, 83). Indeed, the repetition of *ni*-marked NPs would be ruled out if both had one and the same (locative) meaning:

20) a. Taroo   ni (wa)   Tokyo   ni   ie   ga   aru.
       Taroo   OBL (TOP)   Tokyo   OBL   house   SUBJ   exist
       Taroo has a house in Tokyo.
    b. *Tokyo   ni   Setagaya   ni   ie   ga   aru.
       Tokyo   OBL   Setagaya   OBL   house   SUBJ   exist
       Intended: *There is a house in Setagaya in Tokyo.*

3. The locative construction (in the same way as most sentence patterns in Japanese) allows for so-called "scrambling", i.e. a – more or less – free ordering of the preverbal nominal constituents in the sentence, while *e*-possessive sentences do not. Thus, all of the following sentences have virtually the same semantic value (for instance, 'Taro bought the / a book at that store'), though the arrangement of the preverbal noun phrases seems to be completely free and unpredictable:

21) a. Ano   mise   de   hon   o   Taroo   ga   katta.
       that   store   IN   book   OBJ   Taroo   SUBJ   buy.PAST

    b. Hon   o   ano   mise   de   Taroo   ga   katta.
       book   OBJ   that   store   IN   Taroo   SUBJ   buy.PAST

    c. Taroo   ga   ano   mise   de   hon   o   katta.
       Taroo   SUBJ   that   store   IN   book   OBJ   buy.PAST

    d. Ano   mise   de   Taroo   ga   hon   o   katta.
       that   store   IN   Taroo   SUBJ   book   OBJ   buy.PAST

    e. Hon   o   Taroo   ga   ano   mise   de   katta.
       book   OBJ   Taroo   SUBJ   that   store   IN   buy.PAST

    f. Taroo   ga   hon   o   ano   mise   de   katta.
       Taroo   SUBJ   book   OBJ   that   store   IN   buy.PAST

On the other hand, In the following examples, the displacement of the Pr NP from its initial position disturbs the possessive interpretation to a high degree, or even makes the sentence near-ungrammatical (or, at least, semantically infelicitous):

22) a. Enjin   ga   kuruma   ni   aru.
       engine   SUBJ   car   OBL   exist
       *There is an engine in the car / *The car has an engine.*

    b. ?/*Kuruma   ga   watashi   ni   aru.
        car   SUBJ   I   OBL   exist
        Intended: *I have a car* (more likely: *The car is with me*.)

This situation is explainable by the fact that the initial position is reserved for the topical constituent, and in a truly possessive construction the Pr must be topical, and therefore it must stand at the beginning of the sentence (see Martin 1975: 35).

4. Only in the *e*-possessive sentence can the Pr particle *ni* be substituted by the Topic marker *wa*, while the Locative *ni* is always obligatorily maintained:

23) a. Taroo   (ni) wa   kuruma   ga   aru.
       Taroo   (OBL) TOP   car   SUBJ   exist
       Speaking of Taroo, he has the car.

    b. Heya   *(ni) wa   otoko   ga   iru.
       room   (OBL) TOP   man   SUBJ   exist
       Speaking of the room, there is a man there.

5. Only in the *e*-possessive sentence can the Pr particle *ni* be substituted by the particle *ga* (here, glossed as FOC) if it needs to be focused:

24) a. Taroo   ga   kuruma   ga   aru.
     Taroo   FOC   car   SUBJ   exist
     It is Taroo who has the car.
     b. *Rezoko   ga   ringo   ga   aru.
     fridge   FOC   apple   SUBJ   exist
     It is in the fridge that the apple is.

Note that both the topicalization and the focalization of the Location NP dispense with the rigid word order of the Pr, Pe, and Location mentioned above (italics represents a special focus-marking accentuation):

25) a. ˀ*Tokyo*   *ni*   Taroo   ni   ie   ga   aru.
     Tokyo   OBL   Taroo   OBL   house   SUBJ   exist
     It is in Tokyo that Taroo has a house.
     b. Tokyo   ni wa   Taroo   ni   ie   ga   aru.
     Tokyo   OBL TOP   Taroo   OBL   house   SUBJ   exist
     Speaking of Tokyo, Taroo has a house there.

6. In a locative sentence the *ga*-marked NP triggers the existential verb: *iru* 'exist' is used with animates, while *aru* 'exist' is used with all others. In the possessive construction, on the other hand, if both Pr and Pe are animate, the difference of salience between them can be indirectly (or "negatively") marked by relieving the Pe of this feature:

26) a. Taroo   ni   kodomo   ga   aru / iru.
     Taroo   OBL   child   SUBJ   exist
     Taroo has a child.
     b. Asoko   ni   ie   ga   aru / *iru.
     there   OBL   house   SUBJ   exist
     There is a house over there.
     c. Ie   ni   kodomo   ga   *aru / iru.
     Ihouse   OBL   child   SUBJ   exist
     There is a child in the house.

III.3. *Korean data*

Korean represents an interesting case in that it is typologically similar to Japanese and, like Japanese, is an overtly topic marking language. The two main possessive constructions of Japanese have almost exact parallels in Korean.

Regarding the *e*-possessive pattern in Korean, Sohn (1999: 284) states that the locative-coded Pr requires topicalization in order to be considered truly possessive: "When possession is intended, the locative nominal denoting an

animate is shifted to the nominative case [from the locative one] functioning as the subject of the sentence. Then, the original nominative subject […] functions as the object, although its nominative particle remains intact". The following examples are borrowed, with some slight modifications, from Sohn (1999):

27) a. Halapeci-kkey   chayk-i   manh-ayo.
       granpa-at   book-SUBJ   many-POL
       There are many books with my grandpa. (existential/locative)
    b. Halapeci-ka/nun   chayk-i   manh-usy-eyo.
       granpa-SUBJ/TOP   book-SUBJ   many-HON-POL
       My grandpa has many books. (possessive)

Notice that here topicality is expressed by either Topic or the so-called "Nominative" (that I gloss as SUBJ, i.e. subject) particle (these two particles are more interchangeable in Korean than in Japanese, see Shimojo and Choi 2000), plus a higher honorific accord of the predicate with the Pr (see Yeon 2003: 60 about this kind of "subjectivization" of the Pr in Korean). It seems that the overtly marked topicality of the Pr is mandatorily required in the Korean *e*-possessive pattern. This is the most important difference distinguishing the analogous construction in Japanese (which also allows inherent or indirect marking of the topical Pr, such as the initial position in the sentence of the *ni*-marked NP, or the use of the inanimate verb with an animate Pe).

   An instance of the *h*-possessive pattern in Korean is shown below:

28) Na-nun   chacenke-lul   han-tay   kaciko   issta
    I-TOP   bike-OBJ   one-CLS   have.SUSP   AUX
    I have one bike.

The verb *kacita* involved in this construction literally means 'to hold', like its Japanese equivalent (i.e. *motsu*). According to some speakers, it has, in its possessive use, a semantic nuance similar to the English verb *to get*. Interestingly enough, it is used also for denoting the possession of sentiments and mental states, similarly to Japanese *motsu*.

III. 4. *Some diachronic evidence*

Diachronic evidence is important to current discussions since it provides perspective on the universal invariant in spite of the peculiar linguistic forms: "From a diachronic perspective, it is the conceptual domain which is primary, not its structural expressions" (Cuzzolin and Baldi 2001: 203). In this respect, the case of Latin possessive constructions is extremely interesting, since it quite resembles the situation in Japanese and Korean, and since we know the history of this language (and its daughter languages) through millennia.

   If we look at the development from the IE stage to the Romance languages, we observe a typological change. Latin inherited from prehistory an *e*-pos-

sessive construction (*mihi est aliquid* 'something is to me', 'I have') that was used for core possession and all of the peripheral meanings. At a certain point, a metaphorically extended possessive use of the formerly transitive agentive verb *habeō* 'to grab, seize' developed. For some centuries, the two constructions coexisted, with different semantic characterizations; it seems that, at least initially, the *e*-possessives were used to express general possession without any semantic distinction (Cuzzolin and Baldi 2001: 209), while the *h*-construction implied a concrete, manipulable Pe: "[…] the feature of control, never a prominent feature in PIE, remains absent in *mihi est*, and is attached to *habeō* in Latin" (Cuzzolin and Baldi 2001: 212; cf. Magni 1999). Eventually, only the *h*-construction survived in most of the Romance languages as the unique expression of possessive meaning and, therefore, the truly possessive construction.

French appears to be an exception. However, its alleged two possessive constructions have completely different distribution compared to Latin, and basically constitute, as already mentioned, two perspectival inverses. There seems to be no reason to think that the French *e*-possessive construction arose directly from the Latin one: the original *mihi est* pattern has completely disappeared from the later Latin language, so the French construction is an independent innovation (cf. Bauer 2000: 189; but already Benveniste 1966: 196). Interestingly, this construction is observable also in the German dialects which for a long time had been under the influence of French, like, for example, the Pfalzdeutsch (where a pattern like "Das Buch ist mir" is widely used).

The reason for such a drift is to be found in information packaging problems with the *mihi est* construction. Indeed, in archaic and classical Latin, the sentential constituent (or even word) order was extremely free (at least as much as the written sources allow us to judge). Topicalization was marked mostly by the initial position, or, otherwise, logically inferred. Thus, the Pr of the *e*-possessive construction could be freely put at the first position in the sentence despite its "oblique" dative marking. Furthermore, the Pr of the *mihi est* construction being predominantly pronominal, at least in the oldest sources (Cuzzolin and Baldi 2001: 213; Bauer 2000: 185), it always functioned as topical simply because of the inherent topicality of the pronouns.

The "rigidification" of word order in late Latin and the Romance languages made the initial positioning of an oblique-marked verbal argument less acceptable. The new syntactic typology, with an increasing relevance of the transitive pattern (see Bauer 2000: 343-346), required a mandatory (or preferable) nominative-marked Subject at the beginning of the sentence (or, at least, at the preverbal position). The *h*-possessive construction with *habeō* inherited the original agentive configuration of its arguments frame. Indeed, it implied the topicality of its subject, i.e. of the Pr. Therefore, it was perceived more and more as a good substitute of the dative-existential construction,

starting from core possessive meaning and arriving, at the end, to the whole possessive domain (even more extended, if compared to the distribution of the *mihi est* construction in the oldest texts, see Bauer 2000: 187).

Some parallel drifts have been observed by scholars. Thus, in Kulneff-Eriksson (1999) the development of the verb ἔχω 'have' in Ancient Greek is analysed (the situation is quite similar to that of Latin *habeō*). An instance of an ongoing *have*-drift and its correlation with word order, in the eastern Arabic dialects, is described in Naïm (2001).

Other modern European languages present a similar picture: rigid word order implies an *h*-possessive construction (e.g. English), while free word order is correlated with the presence of an *e*-possessive pattern in the language (e.g. Russian). Actually, the second case is weaker; indeed, languages with free constituent order but also the *h*-possessive pattern are possible (e.g. some modern Slavonic languages, probably influenced by their Germanic and Romance neighbours). In any case, the syntactic feature strongly required in order to support an *e*-possessive pattern is the possibility of an oblique-marked argument at sentence initial position.

IV. Conclusions

IV.1. *My interpretation of the Japanese data*

In order to explain the nature of the possessive construction in Japanese, I should like to adopt here a set-theoretical approach. We have to divide Japanese sentences into some subsets.

The first one will contain all sentences governed by the existential predicate *aru* (and *iru*) with a locative argument marked by *ni* particle.

The second one will contain all those sentences which have a topic-marked constituent (coded by initial position and the particle *wa*).

The third subset will embody sentences with a human and a concrete inanimate object referred to by the arguments of the verb.

Given these three subsets, we can imagine there to be an intersection thereof, i.e., a sentence pattern with an existential predicate, a topicalized human participant as location and an inanimate object involved. Such a pattern will correspond to the expression of a core possessive meaning in Japanese.

By this intersection-model I wish to underline the fact that, in Japanese, the distinctive features of the core possessive meaning are provided separately by different linguistic structures. Especially, as far as topicalization is concerned, it is coded in Japanese with an unbound morpheme (plus initial position), independently of the function played by the topical constituent in the sentence structure. Therefore, in order to obtain a truly possessive pattern, there must be a combination of at least three different structures cooccurring in the same context (sentence). Insofar as we can consider such a combination an autonomous grammatical entity, we can call it the truly possessive pattern of

Japanese. This is certainly the main source for the extended possessive usages in Japanese (peripheral possessive meanings).

For this reason, the grammatical features of the Japanese *e*-possessive pattern mentioned above (Section III. 2) must be intended, so to say, "in reverse": they are not the *features of* the possessive pattern, they are *conditions for* it. Something similar is intended by Tomioka (2007) in his insightful paper on the locative vs. possessive interpretation of Japanese sentences, when he states that the true mechanism of disambiguation here is not syntactic but purely informational. Therefore, syntactical phenomena are not the explanation, but the consequence of changes in the informational structure of the sentence.

In this, Japanese (as well as Korean) differs not only from languages with the *h*-possessive pattern but also from many of those with the *e*-possessive pattern. In such languages (e.g. Russian) the topical constituent is coded indirectly (by sentence initial position), or is logically inferred (for example, from the humanness of the referent), so that a possessive pattern cannot be easily "depossessivized" by deleting the topic marker. In Japanese and Korean, on the other hand, the deletion of the topic marker from a possessive construction leads to a locative interpretation thereof, or to ungrammaticality. Furthermore, sentences without any topical constituent at all (for example, sentences where the topic is continued from the preceding context) are not to be considered as possessive but only as existential, even if, in European languages (including those with the *e*-possessive pattern, like Russian), they would be translated using possessive constructions.

The pattern with the verb *motsu* (used mainly with concrete manipulable Pe, but also with abstract notions and feelings), on the other hand, cannot be considered as truly possessive since the possessive meaning is only a metaphorical extension of the basic sense of this verb which remains similar to such English verbs as *to hold*, *keep*, *bear*, *carry*.

IV. 2. *Conclusion and predictions*

In conclusion, some predictions could be made. From a synchronic point of view, we can suppose that what we defined as the Japanese truly possessive pattern is actually quite rare in occurrence, especially compared to the highest frequency of the verb *to have* in English (and similar). In fact, the latter has a great amount of different non-core meanings (not to mention all the grammaticalized usages) which greatly increases its frequency.

The Japanese pattern, on the contrary, despite a certain number of non-core usages, is structurally resistant to metaphorical extension. Indeed, if the two arguments involved are semantically too distant from the prototypical Pr and Pe (the former topicalized and animate, the latter inanimate), the construction is simply no longer possessive, since the combination of conditions

I argued for is not provided. On its part, the pattern with *motsu* should be even rarer, since it is semantically excessively peculiar. In the Appendix to this paper some real data are given that confirm perfectly this prediction.

Secondarily, if I am allowed to make a long-term diachronic prediction on the future development of the Japanese possessive construction, a situation similar to that of Latin and Romance languages may be suggested: the truly possessive construction could make a drift from the *e*-possessive type to the *h*-possessive. Three events are necessary for this typological change to occur:

(i) The verb *motsu* must loose its metaphorical link with the original meaning, becoming an autonomous possessive predicate not unlike the English verb *to have*.
(ii) The overt topic marking must change into the indirect one, giving rise, as a consequence, to the subject function.
(iii) Word order must become rigid, or at least disallow initial position for an oblique case marked NP.

To a certain extent, some scanty evidence of such developments can already be observed. Thus, the complex verb *motte(i)ru*, deriving from a merger of *motsu* and the auxiliary verb *iru*, is presently undergoing a grammaticalization process restricted to its possessive meaning (including partly some non-core configurations). A similar possessive predicate is witnessed in the Korean *kacita* 'to have, get'. Furthermore, indirect topic marking can be seen in the usage of the – as for now redundant – initial position of the topical NP (both in Japanese and Korean), and in *aru/iru* neutralization in Japanese.

However, only our distant descendants will be able to say whether such drift will be accomplished…

Appendix[*]

In order to verify some of the hypotheses formulated in the preceding paragraphs, a brief corpus analysis has been made. The effort was to account for the frequency of the core possessive meaning (and, therefore, of the truly possessive construction) in an average literary text in Japanese.

The novel "Sanshirō" by Natsume Sōseki (1908) has been chosen as the source corpus (containing circa 7000 sentences). In order to quantify the occurrences of the core possessive meaning, formally possessive sentences have been identified by searching (with a computer aided procedure) two types of sentence pattern: the locative-existential pattern with *aru* (or *iru*), and the pattern with *motsu*. Relative clauses and sentences with "continued" topic have not been taken into account. In particular, the sentence structures under consideration are the following.

e-possessive:

[NP₁ ni / ni wa / wa] + [NP₂ ga] + [V$_{ARU}$ / V$_{IRU}$]

V$_{ARU}$ = {aru / nai / atta / nakatta / areba / nakereba / attara / nakattara / atte / nakute / arimasu / arimasen / arimashita / arimasendeshita}

V$_{IRU}$ = {iru / ita / inai / inakatta / ireba / inakereba / itara / inakattara / ite / inakute / imasu / imasen / imashita / imasendeshita}

h-possessive:

[NP₁ wa / ga] + [NP₂ o] + [V$_{MOTSU}$]

V$_{MOTSU}$ = {motsu / motanai / motta / motanakatta / motanakattara / motte(i)ru / motte(i)ta / motte(i)nakatta / motte / motanakute / mottara / motanakereba / motteinakereba / motte(i)nai}

The pure computer aided search reached the amount of 158 sentences with *aru* and 25 sentences with *motsu*. Let us first consider the former.

Over the entire set of 158 sentences, 80 sentences have been sifted out as purely locative in meaning (since both participants involved are [–animate]), for example:

29) 机の上には筆と紙がある。
Tsukue no ue ni wa fude to kami ga aru.
On the desk, there are (some) paintbrushes and sheets

30) 背広はところどころにしみがある。
Sebiro wa tokorodokoro ni shimi ga aru.
The suits had spots here and there on them

77 sentences have an inanimate but also abstract Pe, including idioms such as 'to have interest in', for example:

31) 若い人は活気があっていい。
Wakai hito wa kakki ga atte ii.
Young people should have liveliness

32) それでは与次郎に責任があるわけだ。
Sore de ha Yojirō ni sekinin ga aru wake da.
Well, it is the reason why Yojirō has responsibility

33) なにわたしは用があるから、どうせちょっと行かなければならない。
Nani watashi wa yō ga aru kara, dōse chotto ikanakereba naranai.
Since I have kind of an engagement, I must go

One sentence only (!) resulted in having core possessive meaning as it has been defined in this paper:

34) あの女は自分の金があるのかい?
Ano onna wa jibun no kane ga aru no kai?
Does that woman have money of her own?

Only two sentences with the verb *iru* marking the possession of an animate Pe may be added:

35) 君はたしかおつかさんがいたね。
Kimi wa tashika okkasan ga ita ne
You surely had a mother, right?

36) 三四郎はこの三人のほかに、まだ連がいるかいないかを確かめようとした。
Sanshirō wa kono san nin no hoka ni, mada tsure ga iru ka inai ka o tashikameyō to shita.
Sanshirō made efforts to ascertain whether he had any other fellow besides these three people.

Now, turning to *h*-possessive sentences, only three (!) occurrences of the appropriate pattern was found. Notice that only the first one has a proper core possessive meaning, while in the remaining two the Pe is an abstract notion:

37) はじめから家を持たないほうがよかろう。
Hajime kara uchi o motanai hō ga yokarō.
Wouldn't it be better not to have a house from the beginning?

38) けれどもその当時は頭の中へ焼きつけられたように熱い印象を持っていた。
Keredomo sono tōji wa atama no naka e yakitsukerareta yōni atsui inshō o motte ita.
But at the same time (he) got an impression, burning as it was imprinted in his head

39) 心持ちを持っているだけである。
Kokoromochi o motte iru dake de aru.
(He) just had a feeling

As already said, sentences with no explicit topic element have been left out from the account, even if they could be considered possessive from a certain point of view. Thus, the last of the following three sentences would be truly possessive if only it included the topic NP; here, instead, the topic is continued from the first sentence:

40) 熊本の学生はみんな赤酒を飲む。たまたま飲食店へ上がれば牛肉屋である。
その牛肉屋の牛が馬肉かもしれないという嫌疑がある。
Kumamoto no gakusei wa minna akazake o nomu. Tamatama inshokuten e agareba gyūnikuya de aru. Sono gyūnikuya no gyū ga baniku kamoshirenai to iu kengi ga aru.
All the students of Kumamoto's used to drink red sake. If sometimes they went to an eating house, they used to go to a beef house. They had the suspicion that beef was actually horse meat.

These results are interesting since they agree with some important generalizations. It is clearly shown that the core possessive meaning is quite rare compared to the widespread usage of the formally possessive constructions (both language internally, and cross-linguistically). Thus, for example, there have been extracted 615 expressions containing the verb *to have* from a 7000-sentences corpus in English (Horiguchi 2001), while, in contrast, the occurrences of truly possessive construction in an average literary text in modern Japan-

ese of the same extent can be counted on the fingers of only one hand! (Notice however that the attributive expression of the Pr was not taken into account.) As far as the non-core possessive meanings are concerned, the *ni … aru* construction is still the preferred one, while the verb *motsu* is used in a couple of occurrences only.

REFERENCE

BALDI, P. & CUZZOLIN, P. (2001). Towards a new historical syntax of Latin. In Moussy, C. (ed.), *De lingua Latina novae quaestiones. Actes du xᵉ Colloque International de Linguistique Latine. Paris-Sèvres, 19-23 avril 1999*. Louvain, Paris, 201-225.

BAUER, B. (2000). *Archaic Syntax in Indo-European*. Berlin, New York: Mouton.

BENVENISTE, É. (1966). «Être» et «avoir» dans leur fonctions linguistiques. In *Problèmes de linguistique générale*. Paris: NRF, Gallimard, 187-207.

BHAT, D. (1991). *Grammatical relations: the evidence against their necessity and universality*. New York: Routledge.

DIKKEN, M. DEN (1997). The syntax of possession and the verb 'have'. *Lingua* 101, 129-150.

FILLMORE, C. J. (1977). Case for case reopened. In Cole, P. and Saddock, J. (eds.), *Grammatical Relations (Syntax and Semantics 8)*. New York: Academic Press, 59-81.

FRANCIS, E. (2000). Two perspectives on the grammar of possession. *Language Sciences* 22.1, 87-107.

HEINE, B. (1997). *Possession: Cognitive Sources, Forces, and Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HEINE, B. (2001). Ways of explaining possession. In Baron, I. et al (eds.), *Dimensions of Possession*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins, 311-328.

HERSLUND, M. & BARON, I. (2001). Introduction. In Baron, I. et al (eds.), *Dimensions of Possession*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1-25.

HEYCOCK, C. (1994). Focus Projection in Japanese. In Gonzalez, M. (ed.), *Proceedings of NELS 24*, 157-171.

HORIGUCHI, K. (2001). Information-Based Machine Translation. In *Proceedings of the 2ⁿᵈ Meeting of the North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics, June 2-7, Pittsburgh, USA*. Morristown, NJ: Association for Computational Linguistics.

ISAČENKO, A. (1974). On *have* and *be* Languages: A Typological Sketch. In Flier, M. S. (ed.), *Slavic Forum: Essays in Linguistics and Literature*. The Hague: Mouton, 43-77.

KEIDAN, A. (2008). Deissi, arbitrarietà e disambiguazione: due approcci a confronto. In Keidan, A. & Alfieri, L. (eds.), *Deissi, riferimento, metafora. Questioni classiche di linguistica e filosofia del linguaggio*. Firenze: FUP, 19-66.

KULNEFF-ERIKSSON, K. (1999). *On 'have' in Ancient Greek. An investigation on ἔχω and the construction εἶναι with a dative as expressions for 'have'*. Lund: Lund University Press.

LANGACKER, R. W. (2000). *Grammar and Conceptualization*. Berlin, New York: Mouton-de Gruyter, chap. 6 "Reference point contructions".

LANGACKER, R. W. (2001). Topic, subject, and possessor. In Simonsen, H. G. & Endresen, R. T. (eds.), *A Cognitive Approach to the Verb. Morphological and Constructional Perspectives*. Haag: de Gruyter.

LEHMANN, C. (1997). Person prominence vs. relation prominence. In Palek, B. (ed.), *Typology: prototypes, item orderings and universals. Proceedings of LP'96*. Prague, 17-26.

Magni, E. (1999). La significazione del possesso in latino: il tipo *mihi est aliquid* come manifestazione della transitività ridotta. *AGI* 84.1, 44-66.

Martin, S. E. (1988). *A Reference Grammar of Japanese*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press.

Naïm, S. (2003). La predication possessive et l'émergence de formes d'*avoir* en arabe oriental. *BSL* 98, 359-383.

Prince, E. (1981). Towards a taxonomy of given-new information. In Cole, P. (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press, 223-255.

Shimojo, M & Choi, H. (2000). On asymmetry in topic marking - the case of Japanese *wa* and Korean *nun*. In *Proceedings of the 36ᵗʰ annual meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society*, Chicago, 455-467.

Sohn, H. (1999). *The Korean language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stassen, L. (2001). Predicative possession. In *Language Typology and Language Universals*. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 954-960.

Taylor, J. R. (1996). *Possessives in English: An Exploration in Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Tomioka, S. (2007). The Japanese existential possession: A case study of pragmatic disambiguation. *Lingua* 117, 881-902.

Tsujioka, T. (2002). *The Syntax of Possession in Japanese*. London: Routledge.

Vallduví, E. (1995). Structural properties of information packaging in Catalan. In Kiss, K. (ed.), *Discourse Configurational Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 122-152.

Yeon, J. (2003). *Korean Grammatical Constructions. Their form and meaning*, London: Saffron.