

**Predicative Possession Constructions Vary in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Merge Position of the Possessor:  
An Existence Proof from Cochabamba Quechua**

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**1 Introduction.** In this talk, I employ evidence from Cochabamba Quechua (Quechuan, Bolivia- see Lastra 1968; van de Kerke 1996) to argue that **a major syntactic parameter of variation in possession constructions is the first-merge position of the possessor** (see also Boneh & Sichel 2010; Levinson 2011). This means that it cannot be the case that all predicative possession constructions cross-linguistically share an underlying source (Freeze 1992; Kayne 1993; den Dikken 1998), with surface variation resulting from movement. **2. The data.** Cochabamba Quechua has no transitive verb HAVE, in the sense of a transitive verb that conveys a range of alienable and inalienable possession relations. Instead, it has three BE-based possession constructions. Of interest here are the two constructions based around the existential BE verb *tiya-*, exemplified in (1) and (2) (all data are from original fieldwork carried out in Cochabamba, Bolivia).

- (1) Noqa-qta iskay pana-s-\*(niy) tiya-n. (2) Noqa-qta iskay pana-s tiya-pu-wa-n.  
I-GEN two sister-PL-1POSS BE-3SUBJ I-GEN two sister-PL BE-APPL-1OBJ-3SUBJ  
'I have two sisters.' 'I have two sisters.'

(1) and (2) have in common that they are existential constructions, as shown by the verb root *tiya-*, and by the fact that the verb displays 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular default subject agreement (agreeing neither with the 1<sup>st</sup> person possessor nor with the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural possessee- see Hastings 2004). Also, the case marking of the possessor and possessee (respectively genitive and nominative) is the same in both. Furthermore, the two constructions appear to be thematically identical, i.e. they can convey the exact same subset of "possession" relations (kinship, permanent ownership, abstract properties, and, with some degree of deviance, body-parts/part-whole relations). The constructions also match up with respect to the subtypes of possession relation that they cannot convey (temporary possession, psychological states, diseases, and physical sensations). For space reasons, only examples involving permanent ownership and diseases are provided here.

- (3) Juan-pata wasi-n tiya-n. (4) Juan-pata wasi tiya-pu-ø-n.  
Juan-GEN house-3POSS BE-3SUBJ Juan-GEN house BE-APPL-3OBJ-3SUBJ  
'Juan has a house.' 'Juan has a house.'
- (5) \*Juan-pata soroqchi-n tiya-n. (6)\*Juan-pata soroqchi tiya-pu-ø-n.  
J.-GEN altitude.sickness-3POSS BE-3SUBJ J.-GEN altitude.sickness BE-APPL-3OBJ-3SUBJ  
'Juan has altitude sickness.' 'Juan has altitude sickness.'

**3. The Present Approach.** Despite these morphosyntactic and semantic similarities, I will argue that these two constructions differ in terms of where the possessor argument is first-merged. In particular, I argue that in (1) the possessor is first-merged inside the possessee DP, much as argued for similar constructions in Hungarian by Szabolcsi (1981) and in Japanese by Tsujioka (2002) (there is evidence that, just as in Hungarian and Japanese, the possessor subsequently raises out of the possessee DP in (1), but I do not review this evidence here for space reasons). In (2), on the other hand, the possessor is introduced in the specifier of a high applicative head in the sense of Pytkänen (2008) (realized by the suffix *-pu*). The structure of (1) is therefore as (partially) depicted in (7); the structure of (2) is given in (8) (abstracting away from head-finality, and from movement of the object clitic *-wa* in (2); note I assume a 'Big DP' analysis of clitic doubling, although nothing crucial hinges on this).

(7) [<sub>VP</sub> tiya-<sub>v</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> noqa-qta] [<sub>D'</sub> -niy<sub>D</sub> [<sub>NumP</sub> iskay pana-s ] ] ] ]

(8) [<sub>AppIP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> noqa-qta] [<sub>DP</sub> -wa- ] ] [<sub>Appl'</sub> -pu<sub>Appl</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> tiya-<sub>v</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> iskay pana-s ] ] ] ]

The structures in (7) and (8) yield an immediate account of three core differences between (1) and (2). Exemplification is omitted here for space reasons.

(i) **The morpheme *-pu* appears in construction (2), but not in construction (1).** This follows from (7)-(8) since *-pu* is the high applicative morpheme elsewhere in the language, where it has benefactive/malefactive semantics (it does not have any benefactive meaning in (2), however, a point to which I return). (ii) **The possessor in (2) must be clitic-doubled, but the possessor in (1) may not be.** This is explained by the structures (7)-(8) because the object of a verb, including an applied object, must be clitic doubled in Cochabamba Quechua, whereas clitic doubling of DP-internal possessors is generally impossible. (iii) **DP-internal possessor agreement is obligatory in (1), but not (2).** This follows from the representation in (7), according to which (1) involves first-merging the possessor inside the possessee DP, given the fact that DP-internal possessors obligatorily trigger such agreement in Cochabamba Quechua. The fact that there is no such agreement requirement in (2) is accounted for if the possessor is not in fact first-merged internal to the possessee, as claimed by the structure in (8).

Recall that these two constructions are semantically identical in terms of the possession relations they can express. This too can be explained, despite the basic syntactic difference depicted in (7)-(8), assuming (a.) that **possession related thematic roles are introduced DP internally**, following Szabolcsi (1981,1994), Kayne (1993); and (b.) that **argument-introducing heads may be interpreted ‘expletively’ under certain circumstances**, following Schaefer (2008); Wood (2012)- in other words, such heads may fail to introduce a theta-role so long as the resulting structure successfully composes at the semantic interface. The idea is that *pana* ‘sister’ in (1) and (2) is interpreted as a relation along the lines of  $\lambda x \exists y[\text{sister-of}(y,x)]$ . This relation can be saturated inside the DP itself, as it is in (1). Alternatively, it can be “passed up the tree” and satiated in spec, ApplP, as it is in (2), so long as Appl itself is interpreted expletively (consistent with this, recall that *-pu* does not have its usual benefactive meaning in (2)). Such an approach is possible if thematic roles are read off of syntactic structure at LF, in accordance with Kratzer (1996) and others. **4. Against a movement approach.** Any movement approach to the alternation between (1) and (2) would have to start from the assumption that the possessor begins the derivation inside the possessee DP, and either stays there, yielding (1), or raises into spec-AppIP, yielding (2) (the AppIP would then be a raising Appl, in the sense of Paul & Whitman 2010). However, such an approach immediately encounters severe difficulties: (i) why isn’t DP-internal possessor agreement obligatory in (2) also, given it is otherwise always obligatory when a possessor is first-merged DP-internally?; (ii) why would this putative movement step make clitic doubling obligatory in (2), when it is impossible in (1)?; (iii) what would motivate the movement step deriving (2), given that a DP-internal possessor is clearly able to be licensed in-situ? **5. Conclusion and extension to HAVE constructions.** The conclusion that truth-conditionally identical possession constructions can vary in terms of the first-merge position of the possessor, in combination with a Kratzerian approach to argument structure in which thematic roles are read-off the output of syntax, extends easily to HAVE constructions/languages. These will be constructions in which the possessor is introduced neither inside the possessed DP, nor in the specifier of AppIP, but higher still- in Spec-VoiceP. This means that HAVE in this perspective is the transitive form of BE (see Hoekstra 1984, 1994). Note that we immediately solve an abiding mystery in the typology of predicative possession: why HAVE constructions are rarer than BE constructions (only 26% of languages have HAVE, according to WALS- see Stassen 2013). The solution follows from the fact that Voice is the highest head in the thematic domain; this means that there are many ways of merging a possessor into the structure which lead to BE (anywhere below VoiceP), but only one way to merge a possessor into the structure which yields HAVE (into spec-VoiceP). Therefore, HAVE’s rarity no longer looks anomalous.