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## Semantic and pragmatic possession: alienability splits as evidence for type shifts

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### Introduction

The Concept Type and Determination approach by Löbner (2011) assumes a classification of nouns into four types: sortal, relational, individual, and functional concept (SC, RC, IC, FC). These types arise from cross-classifying the properties [ $\pm$ relational] und [ $\pm$ unique reference]. The logical type of SCs is  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , while that of RCs is  $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ ; those of ICs and FCs are  $e$  and  $\langle e, e \rangle$ , respectively.

### Definiteness and Uniqueness, Relationality and Possession

A crucial distinction within Löbner's Concept Type and Determination theory is that between semantic and pragmatic uniqueness. Semantic uniqueness entails that the reference of a noun phrase is unambiguous because of its lexical or compositional semantics, independently of the context. Pragmatic uniqueness refers to those uses of nouns whose unambiguous reference comes about by the context, as is the case with deictic and anaphoric use.

Fully along these lines, this paper advocates the view that the contrast of inalienable and alienable possession should be re-interpreted as semantic and pragmatic possession. Semantic possession implies that some relation of affiliation between the noun's referential argument (the 'possessum') and the possessor is inherent to the lexical semantics of a an RC. Pragmatic possession implies that the POSS relation is established by the context rather than by the lexical meaning of the possessum, often depending on the utterance situation. (My taxonomy differs from that of Jensen & Vikner (2004:5) in that these authors subsume both inalienable and alienable possession under semantic interpretations, and characterise pragmatic interpretations as "requir[ing] knowledge of some of the *individuals* referred to in the utterance". They consider Qualia roles as part of the lexical semantics, whereas under the present approach only those relational components are considered which are also manifest in the argument structure, thus making the noun a relational noun.)

Accordingly, I argue for the following analogy: RCs are semantically possessed, hence undergo inalienable possession, in exactly the same way as semantically unique concepts (ICs and FCs) do not take the definite article in languages with an article split. The shift from sortal to relational concept (SC  $\rightarrow$  RC) is displayed by what is traditionally called alienable possession, in the same way as the shift from sortal to an individual concept (SC  $\rightarrow$  IC) is displayed by the definite article.

Relating this conceptual contrast to the morphosyntactic facts, I portray the major typological modes of expressing (in)alienability distinctions. According to one such strategy, the noun is straightaway possessible vs. only possessible via a connective morpheme. In Yucatec, semantically possessed nouns directly combine with a possessor as in (1a). By contrast, the SC *nah* 'house' must be morphologically extended by the suffix *-il* in (1c) in order to be possessed.

(1) Yucatec Mayan (Lehmann 1998)

a.	<i>in</i>	<i>la'ak</i>	b.	<i>le nah-o'</i>	c.	<i>in nah-il</i>
	1SG.P'OR	friend		DEFhouse-DISTAL		1SG.P'OR house-POSS
	'my friend'			'the house'		'my house'

The analytic technique I pursue is that morphological means of alienability, such as connectives and classifiers, are interpreted as establishing a contextual POSS relation. I argue for the following claim:

(2) The morphological means of pragmatic possession should be analysed as denoting a shift from SC to RC; thus, <<et>,<e,<et>>>.

What I propose, then, is a lexicalist solution: semantic operations are paired with morphological material. (Note that a template equivalent to the POSS shift is also proposed by Barker (1995) on compositional-semantic grounds for English; see also Vikner & Jensen (2002) and Partee & Borschev (2003) for discussion.)

This solution implies that possessors are logically treated as individuals rather than as functors. As for possessor agreement clitics, thus, their semantics will be captured by whatever is assumed as the semantics of personal pronouns. This is a consequence of the POSS shift and has the following advantages:

- It correctly predicts that for RCs such as 'friend' in (1a) the pronominal possessor markers can occur without prior application of the POSS shift.
- It accounts for the fact that the same paradigm of pronominal markers occurs with transitive verbs, specifying the ergative argument.

These two facts of (not only) Mayan languages would not be accounted for if one were to analyse these clitics as including particular reference to possession.

Furthermore, the fact that for underlying RCs any occurrence without a possessor is morphologically marked in many languages of Melanesia and the Americas, thus depicting an argument-reducing operation (Seiler's 1983 'de-relationisation'), strongly supports the concept type approach.

### Some results

'Inalienable' morphology is generally confined to relational nouns and merely displays the inherence of a relation of affiliation. 'Alienable' morphology expresses the shift SC → RC.

The two dimensions of nominal determination, i.e. possession and definiteness, are largely parallel in the following regards:

- (i) the distinction of semantic vs. pragmatic
- (ii) the type shifts from a noun's underlying concept type to its actual use
- (iii) the correlation of conceptual and morphosyntactic markedness in split systems.

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