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

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Goal of the talk:
- show that that morphological means of alienability, such as connectives and classifiers, are best interpreted as establishing a contextual POSS relation
- to highlight the analogy of the two dimensions of nominal determination, namely definiteness and possession, and their cross-linguistic manifestation
- by exploiting the distiction of inherent vs. contextual meaning, a.k.a. semantic vs. pragmatic

1. Setting the stage: the theory of Concept Types and Determination (CTD)

Löbner (2011) elaborates on the (1985) distinction of sortal vs. relational vs. functional into the following cross-classification of nominal concept types:

(1)

	not inherently unique	inherently unique
not inherently relational	sortal nouns (**SN**) <e,t> *dog, tree, adjective, water*	individual nouns (**IN**) e *sun, weather, Mary, prime minister*
inherently relational	relational nouns (**RN**) <e,<e,t>> *sister, leg, friend, blood*	functional nouns (**FN**) <e,e> *mother, surface, head, begin*

Fully analogously to the opposition of semantic and pragmatic uniqueness (Löbner 1985; Ortmann 2014), I re-interpret the contrast 'inalienable and alienable possession' as <u>semantic</u> and <u>pragmatic</u> <u>possession</u>:
– For semantic possession some relation of affiliation is <u>inherent</u> in the lexical meaning of the possessum
– For pragmatic possession the POSS relation is <u>established by the context</u> rather than the word semantics.

I argue for the following analogy: The shift from [– relational] to [+ relational] (SN → RC, IN → FC) is denoted by alienable possession in languages with an alienability split, in exactly the same way as the shift from [– unique] to [+ unique] is denoted by a strong definite article.

2. The typology of adnominal possession: the role of semantic vs. pragmatic possession

2.1 Alienability splits

<u>inalienable possession</u> (to be argued to correspond to semantic possession):
inherent affiliation; unchangeable under normal conditions; relations that are not subject to choice or control: kinship, body parts, part-whole, location
<u>alienable possession</u> (to be argued to correspond to pragmatic possession):
temporary affiliation, where the p'or typically has control over the p'um. Accordingly, what is relevant is the purpose (e.g., eating, drinking, growing, tool) the p'um serves for the p'or.
(cf. Seiler 1983, Nichols 1988, Heine 1997, introduction of Chappell & McGregor 1996, Stolz et al. 2008)

Some major modes of expressing an alienability distinction in possession:

- Possessor agreement is directly attached to the noun vs. mediated by a connective or relator:
(2) Diegueño (Yuman < Hokan; Mexiko; after Nichols 1992: 117)
    a. *ʔ-ətal^y*   b. *ʔ-ə^n-ʔwa:*
       1SG-mother   1SG-POSS-house
       'my mother'   'my house'

- Possessor agreement is directly attached to the noun vs. attached to possessive classifier:

(3) Paamese (Oceanic < Austronesian, Vanuatu; Crowley 1996: 384ff)

    a. *vati-n   ēhon*   b. *ani   **emo**-n*   *ēhon*
       head-3SG child   coconut POSSCL(potable)-3SG   child
       'the child's head'   'child's drinking coconut'

- The possessor is realised as a prefix vs. as a free (possessive or personal) pronoun:

(4) Eastern Pomo (< Hokan; California), after Nichols (1992: 118)

    a. *wí-bayle*   b. ***wáx***   *šári*
       1SG-husband   PRON1SG.GEN basket
       'my husband'   'my basket'

$\Rightarrow$ Less conceptual distance is mirrored by less morphosyntactic complexity (see also Chappell & McGregor 1995 and references there)

$\Rightarrow$ If the relation between p'or and p'um is a conceptually inherent one, let's speak of <u>semantic possession</u>.
If the relation between p'or and p'um is conceptualised as being circumstantial, or contextually instantiated, let's speak of <u>pragmatic possession</u>.
NB: In Barker (2011) this distinction is labelled lexical vs. pragmatic interpretation; see also Vikner & Jensen (2002: 194-216), Storto 2004: 60f).[1]

$\Rightarrow$ Morphological markers of 'alienability' (connectives, classifiers) should be interpreted as establishing a non-inherent, contextual, hence pragmatic POSS relation

2.2 Type shifts in possession

(5) **Claim:** Pragmatic possession involves the type shift from [– relational] to [+ relational].

(6) a.   sortal noun, e.g., *house*: $\lambda x . \text{HOUSE}'(x)$
     b.   template of POSS type shift SN $\rightarrow$ RC: $\lambda N . \lambda y . \lambda x . [N(x) \& \text{POSS}(y,x)]$
     c.   (6b) applied to (6a) $\lambda y . \lambda x . [\text{HOUSE}'(x) \& \text{POSS}(y,x)]$
     d.   (6c) applied to p'or phrase *John*: $\lambda x . [\text{HOUSE}'(x) \& \text{POSS}(\text{John}',x)]$

For a template equivalent to (6b), on compositional-semantic grounds for English, see Barker 1995, 2011, Vikner & Jensen 2002 and Partee & Borschev 2003.

3.3 'Alienable' morphology denotes pragmatic possession ([–relational]$\rightarrow$[+relational])

Claim: Mayan languages are particularly explicit in employing markers for shifts. Absolute nouns (= SNs) are transformed into RCs by means of suffixation of *-il*, and by vowel lengthening, respectively.

(7) Yucatec Mayan (Lehmann 1998: 56, 38; Tozzer 1921: 50)

    a. *le   nah=o'*   vs. *in=nah-**il***   b. *ha*   vs. *u=ha-**il***   *tš'en*
       DEM house-DISTAL   1SG.E-house-POSS   water   3SG.E-water-POSS well
       'the house'   'my house'   'water'   'the water of the well'

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[1] A major difference of the classification by Jensen & Vikner and the present approach is that the former considers Qualia roles as part of the lexical semantics, whereas under the latter only those relational components are considered which are also manifest in the argument structure and, hence, make the noun a relational noun.

(8) Mam (Mayan; England 1983: 67)

    a. *xaq* vs. *n-xaaq=a*   b. *ne'l* vs . *n-nee'l=a*
        rock   1SG.E-rock.POSS-NON3RD   sheep   1SG.E-sheep.POSS-NON3RD
        'rock'   'my rock'   'sheep'   'my sheep'

$\Rightarrow$ Generalisation: in possessive use, 'alienable' nouns in Mam are subject to vowel lengthening unless they already contain an underlying long vowel

Representations:
– Compositional analysis that pairs the involved operations with the involved morphological material
– In particular, the relator morpheme is analysed as the morphological exponent of establishing the relation POSS for alienable nouns as in (6b), thus, denoting the shift from [– relational] to [+ relational].

For Yucatec:

(9)   a. sortal noun: *nah*: λx . HOUSE'(x)
     b. overt POSS shift SN $\rightarrow$ RC :   *-il*: λN . λy . λx . $[N(x)$ & POSS$(y,x)]$
     c. result of POSS shift: *nah-il*: λy . λx . $[$HOUSE'(x) & POSS$(y,x)]$
     d. discharcing of p'or argument: *in=nah-il*: λx . $[$HOUSE'(x) & POSS $($SPEAKER$_U$, $x)]$

For Mam: assume that the exponent of the POSS-operation is a prosodic element

(10) a. sortal noun: *ne'l*: λx . SHEEP'(x)
     b. overt POSS shift SN$\rightarrow$RC: μ: λN . λy λx . $[N(x)$ & POSS$(y,x)]$
     c. result of POSS shift: *nee'l*: λy . λx . $[$SHEEP'(x) & POSS$(y,x)]$
     d. discharcing of p'or argument: *n-nee'l=a*: λx . $[$SHEEP'(x) & POSS $($SPEAKER$_U$, $x)]$

$\Rightarrow$ A radical lexicalist solution: a putatively abstract semantic operation is paired with morpho(phono)logical exponents

Some consequences:

(11) p'or clitic as entity: *in=*: ιz $[z =$ SPEAKER$_U]$

   – correctly predicts that for RNs and FNs such as 'father' the possessor affixes can occur without prior application of the POSS shift, due to the relational semantics of the noun (13a)
   – accounts for the fact that the same set of ergative clitic agreement markers occurs with transitive verbs, where they also have pronominal status (the Mayan language generally exhibiting pro-drop).

2.4. 'Inalienable' morphology indicates semantic possession

De-relativisation: In numerous genetically unrelated languages of the Americas and of Melanesia, an overt morphological marker is required if underlying [+ relational] nouns (RNs and FNs) are used as SCs and ICs, that is, without a p'or argument.

(12) Mam (Mayan; England 1983: 69)

    a. *n-yaa'=ya*   vs.   *yaa-b'aj*   b. *t-qan*   vs.   *qam-b'aj*
       1SG.E-grandmother-NON3RD   grandmother-DEREL   3SG.E-foot   foot-DEREL
       'my grandmother'   'grandmother'   'his/her foot'   'foot'

(13) Yucatec Mayan (after Lehmann 1998: 70ff)

    a. *in=tàatah*   vs.   *le*   *tàatah-tsil-o'*   b. *in*   *chi'*   vs.   *le*   *chi'-tsil-o'*
       P'OR1SG-father   DEF father-DEREL-DEM   P'OR1SG mouth   DEF   mouth-DEREL-DEM
       'my father'   'the father'   'my mouth'   'the mouth'

Analysis: overt shift RN → SC

(14)   'derelative' affixes: *-baj, -tsil*: $\lambda R \, . \, \lambda x \, . \, \exists y \, R(x,y)$

(The operation corresponds to Stiebels's (2006: 180f) 'antipossessive', as well as to what is called 'detransitivization type-shifter' by Barker (2011), conceived of as a silent operator.)
In some languages, a de-relativising shift can be followed by the reverse, thus, [+ relational] → [– relational] → [+ relational]. The p'um is then provided with a contextual (rather than inherent) relation of possession.

(15)   Koyukon (Athapaskan < Na-Dene; Thompson 1996: 666f)
    a. *nelaane*   b. *be-nelaane*   c. *se-k'e-nelaane*
       meat   3SG-meat   1SG-DEREL-meat
       'meat, flesh'   'his/her (own) flesh'   'my (animal's) meat'

'Fluid' (or 'temporary') (in)alienability assignments: For many languages nouns are not invariably assigned to either alienable or inalienable possession.

(16)   Patpatar (Oceanic < East Malayo-Polynesian; Chappell & McGregor 1996: 3)
    a. *a   kat-igu*   b. *agu   kat*
       DEF   liver-1SG   1SG   liver
       'my liver'   'my liver (that I am going to eat)'

(17)   Maltese (Semitic < Afro-Asiatic; Fabri 1993: 161f)
    a. *ras   Basilju*   b. *ir-ras   ta'   l-istatwa*
       head   Basil   DEF-head   of   DEF-statute
       'Basil's head'   'the head of the statute'

(18)   Representation of 'fluid' possession in Patpatar
    a. scheme for FNs:
                $\lambda y \, . \, \iota x \, [(\text{SortalComponent}(x) \,) \, ... \, \& \, (\text{RelationalComponent}(x,y))]$
    b. instantiation by *kat* 'liver':
                $\lambda y \, . \, \iota x \, [\text{LIVER'}(x) \, ... \, \& \, \text{PART-OF}(x,y)]$
    c. shift FN → SC plus contextual relation to p'or (thus, FN → SC → RC):
                $\lambda RC \, . \, \lambda z \, . \, \lambda x \, . \, \exists y \, [RC(x,y) \, \& \, \text{POSS}_{\text{context}}(z,x)]$
    d. (18c) applied to (18b):
                $\lambda z \, . \, \lambda x. \, \exists y \, [\text{LIVER'}(x) \, \& \, \text{PART-OF}(x,y) \, \& \, \text{POSS}_{\text{context}}(z,x)]$
The result (18d) can be applied so as to discharge the p'or in exactly the same way as (10d).

Results of this section:
• The semantic vs. pragmatic distinction accounts for what is known as the alienability contrast:
• 'Alienable' morphology (esp. connectives, classifiers) denote a change from SN to RC
• 'Inalienable' is morphologically unmarked because the relation of affiliation is inherent
• The inalienable construction therefore corresponds to either weak or absent definite articles

3. The parallel of definiteness and possession –

   Semantic vs. pragmatic uniqueness: article splits as evidence for type shifts

Uniqueness approach to definiteness (Löbner 1985, 1998): Any definite noun phrase indicates unique reference; thus, it is used as an IC or FC.

Unique reference may come about in two different ways:
– uniqueness results from the meaning of the noun: INs and FNs such as *the sun, the temperature in Oslo at noon, John's mother* ⇒ <u>semantic uniqueness</u>
– uniqueness results from the (linguistic or non-linguistic) context: anaphoric uses of SCs, or situational definiteness: *the man at the corner* ⇒ <u>pragmatic uniqueness</u> (shift SN → IC)

3.1 Article splits

Assumption: a scale established according to the invariance of reference of nominal expressions:

(19) Scale of uniqueness (Ortmann 2014: 314, adapted from Löbner 2011):

deicitc with SN < anaphoric with SN < SN with establishing relative clause < relational DAAs < part-whole DAAs < compositional FCs < lexical IN/FN < proper names < personal pronouns

(20) Predictions entailed by the Scale of uniqueness:

1. A decrease of obligatoriness in the use of articles as one moves from the left end to the right. This decrease correlates with a decrease of functional load.

2. Diachronically, the use of the article spreads from left to right along the scale, thus eventually covering also those areas where it is functionally redundant.

(21) Old High German (Luke, 2, 4–6; translation from 8th century)
    a.   *... her   uuas fon   <u>huse</u>   inti   fon   <u>hiuuiske</u>   Dauides.*   FCs
            he   was   from house   and   from line   David's

    b.   *... wurðun <u>taga</u>   gifulte   thaz siu   bari.*   AUTOPHORIC
            were   days   fulfilled   that she   gave_birth
⇒ Semantic uniqueness is unmarked, in harmony with the uniqueness scale

Claim made in Ortmann (2014): Language-specific asymmetries fall into two kinds:

(22) **Split I:** A leftmost segment of the scale is marked by the definite article, the rest remains unmarked.
    Split II: Two segments of the scale (normally pragmatic and semantic uniqueness) are morphosyntactically distinguished in terms of different article forms, each of which will be subject to the Predictions 1 and 2 of (20).

3.2 Type shifts in definiteness

(23) **Claim:** Pragmatic uniqueness involves a type shift from [– unique] to [+ unique].
        'Strong' articles overtly signal this shift, their logical type thus being $<<e,t>,e>$.
        'Weak' articles indicate semantic uniqueness. They signify an identical mapping $<e,e>$.

Analogously to de-relativisation, indefinite uses of INs and FNs (*a sun*, *a mother of monsters*) are 'de-functionalisation'. They involve a shift in the opposite direction: IN → SC (and FN → RC, respectively); thus, $<e,<e,t>>$ and $<<e,e>,<e,<e,t>>>$.

3.3 'Zero' and weak articles indicate semantic uniqueness

3.3.1 The 'zero' article implies semantic uniqueness: Split I

Colloquial Upper Sorbian (Breu 2004, Scholze 2007): no definite article with lexical INs or FNs:

(24) Upper Sorbian (< West Slavic; Breu 2004: 30)

a. <u>*słónco*</u>
sun
'the sun'

b. *Tame jo <u>dwórnišćo</u>.*
there AUX station
'There's the station.'

c. *Tame jo <u>cyrkej</u>.*
there AUX church
'There's the church.'

For all contexts further left on the scale articles are either optional or even obligator (cf. next subsection).
⇒ In accordance with the Predictions 1, [+ unique] nominals, i.e., IN/FN, do not take articles.

3.3.2 The weak article implies semantic uniqueness: Split II

Split II involves a morphological opposition of two (paradigms of) definite articles. Often one is a phonologically reduced form of the other.

(25) Definite article paradigm of Alemannic (Swiss German), after Studler (2014:152f)

		MASC	FEM	NEUTER	PLURAL
strong ('full')	NOM/ACC:	*dä*	*di*	*das*	*di*
	DAT:	*dëm*	*dër*	*dëm*	*dëne*
weak ('reduced')	NOM/ACC:	*de*	*d*	*s*	*d*
	DAT:	*em*	*de*	*em*	*de*

The weak article occurs with all subtypes of semantically unique concepts (INs or FNs):

(26) Swiss German (Alemannic < West Germanic; Studler 2014:155)

a. *s grööscht Schtück Chueche*
DEF.NEUT.WK largest piece cake
'the largest piece of cake'

b. *de Mond schiint*
DEF.MASC.WK moon shine.3SG
'the moon shines'

(27) Kölsch (< Central Franconian < West Germanic; Tiling-Herrwegen 2002: 142):

a. *der Pitter*
DEF.MASC.WK P.
'Pitter'

b. *Et Levve geiht wigger.*
DEF.NEUT.WK life go.3SG further
'Life goes on.'

c. *Nemm der Schirm met, et es am rähne!*
take DEF.MASC.WK umbrella with PRON.NEUT be.3SG at rain.INF
'Take your (*lit.:* the) umbrella, it is raining.'

⇒ In accordance with the Predictions 2, [+ unique] nominals, i.e., IN/FN, take the weak article forms.
⇒ Parallel to possession: The unmarked construction (inalienable morphology, weak or no article) indicates inherent possession and uniqueness, rsp.

3.4 (Strong) articles denote pragmatic uniqueness ([– unique] → [+ unique])

34.1 Article as opposed to no article: Split I

In Upper Sorbian, contexts of anaphoricity and autophoricity require the article:

(28) Upper Sorbian (< West Slavic; Breu 2004: 39, 22)

a. *Papa jo s woza panoł ha ji sej ruku złamał.*
Papa AUX from car fall.PRET and PRON REFL hand break.PRET
***Ta** ruka dyrbi něk dwě nězli we gipsu wostać.* ANAPHORIC
DEF.F hand must.3SG now two weeks in cast stay
'Daddy fell from the cart and broke his hand. The hand has to stay in the cast for two weeks now.'

b. *Kóždy   dóstane **tón**   žonu, kiž   sej   wón   zasłuži.*   AUTOPHORIC
   everyone   get.3SG DEF.ACC.F wife REL.PRON.F REFL PRON.3SG.M   deserve.3SG
   'Every man gets the wife that he deserves.'

$\Rightarrow$ Where Split I articles occur, they denote pragmatic uniqueness, hence an overt shift SN $\rightarrow$ IC.

3.4.2 The strong article denotes pragmatic uniqueness: Split II

(29) Swiss German (Alemannic < West Germanic; Studler 2014: 156)
   a. *Uf em   Teschl   liit   es   Buech. Das   Buech wot i lääse.*   ANAPHORIC
      on DEF.DAT.WK table   lie.3SG INDEF.N book   DEF.N.STR book want I read
      'There is a book on the table. I want to read the book.'

   b. *Das   Buech, wo-n-i   geschter   gchouft   ha*   AUTOPHORIC
      DEF.N.STR   book   REL-EP-PRON.1SG   yesterday   buy.PART   have
      'the book that I bought yesterday'

Like in most other German dialects, the strong forms overtly denote a shift from [– unique] to [+ unique].

$\Rightarrow$ The contrast of forms clearly reflects the conceptual difference of semantic and pragmatic uniqueness.
$\Rightarrow$ Where strong articles occur, they denote pragmatic uniqueness, hence an overt shift SN $\rightarrow$ IC.
$\Rightarrow$ Parallel to possession: The marked constrution (alienable morphology, realisation of (strong) articles) denotes contextually established possession and uniqueness, rsp.

4. Conclusion

The distinction of semantic vs. pragmatic is successful in explaining morphosyntactic splits w.r.t. the two dimensions of nominal determination:

Definiteness:
• Semantic uniqueness implies that the reference of a noun is unambiguous because of its lexical (or compositional) semantics. Pragmatic uniqueness refers to those uses of nouns whose unambiguous reference only comes about by the context of utterance.
• This distinction is reflected by two different sorts of splits:
   Split I: Pragmatic uniqueness is marked by the definite article, whereas semantic uniqueness is unmarked (e.g., in West Slavic).
   Split II: Pragmatic and semantic uniqueness is morphosyntactically distinguished by either lexically or phonologically different article forms (e.g., in Germanic).
• 'Weak' articles are semantically redundant, they merely display unambiguous reference.
   They denote an identical mapping of the type <e,e>.
• 'Strong' articles (as well as the articles of split (i) languages) denote an <<et>,e> shift from [– unique] to [+ unique]. Thus, the semantics of dialectal German *dä*, *die*, *dat* (as opposed to *d(e)r*, *de*, *et*): SN $\rightarrow$ IC

Possession:
• Semantic possession implies that the relation between the noun's referential argument (the 'possessum') and the possessor is inherent to the noun's lexical semantics. Pragmatic possession implies that the POSS relation is contextually established, and often depends on the utterance situation.
• The semantic vs. pragmatic distinction largely accounts for what is known as alienability contrast
• 'Inalienable' morphology merely signals the inherence of a relation of affiliation

- 'Alienable' morphology (e.g., connectives, classifiers) denotes a change from [– relational] to [+ relational], thus, <<e,t>,<e,<e,t>>>:

  type shift template for sortal noun p'um: $\lambda N \, \lambda y \, \lambda x \, . \, [N(x) \, \& \, \text{POSS}(y,x)]$

  applied to sortal noun, e.g., *house*: $\lambda y \, \lambda x \, . \, [\text{HOUSE}(x) \, \& \, \text{POSS}(y,x)]$

  result applied to an NP, e.g., *John*: $\lambda x \, . \, [\text{HOUSE}(x) \, \& \, \text{POSS}(\text{John'},x)]$

The two dimensions of nominal determination, definiteness and possession, have been shown to be parallel in the following regards:
    (i) the distinction of semantic vs. pragmatic;
    (ii) overt shifting operations from underlying concept type to actual use;
    (iii) the close correlation of semantic and morphosyntactic markedness.

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