

24. Locus of Marking in Possessive Noun Phrases

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1. Definition and values

Locus is a convenient one-word term for what is also known as *head/dependent marking*. In any kind of phrase, overt morphosyntactic marking reflecting the syntactic relations within the phrase may be located on the head of the phrase, on a non-head (i.e. on a dependent), on both, or on neither. Examples illustrating marking of various kinds in possessive noun phrases are (1)–(4) below. In possessive phrases, the possessed noun is head and the possessor is dependent.

The following locus types are distinguished on the map:

@	1. Possessor is head-marked	72
@	2. Possessor is dependent-marked	97
@	3. Possessor is double-marked	22
@	4. Possessor has no marking	32
@	5. Other types	12
	total	235

These five types are illustrated in the following subsections.

1.1. Head marking.

(1) Acoma (Keresan; New Mexico; Miller 1965: 177)

s'adyúm'ə gâam'a

1SG.brother 3SG.house

'my brother's house' (lit. 'my-brother his-house')

In these examples the possessed noun (the head) agrees in person and number with the possessor noun, the most common pattern for head-marked noun phrases. Agreement in gender is also fairly common. A few languages have a non-agreeing

marker on the head noun. In Fijian, a possessive affix *-i* marks possessed nouns; that it does not vary for person or number of the possessor is shown in (2b):

(2) Fijian (Austronesian; Fiji; Dixon 1988: 36)

- a. *a mata-i Jone*
 ART eye-POSS John
 'John's eye'
- b. *a liga-i 'eirau*
 ART hand-POSS 1 DU.EXCL
 'our hand(s)'

In Yoruba, the possessed noun has its final vowel lengthened on a mid tone before a consonant-initial possessor noun:

(3) Yoruba (Benue-Congo; Nigeria; Awobuluyi 1978: 40)

- owóo Dàda*
 money.POSS Dada
 'Dada's money' (cf. *owó* 'money')

1.2. Dependent marking. In the following examples from Chechen (Nakh-Daghestanian), the possessor noun is in the genitive case.

(4) Chechen (Nichols, own data)

- a. *loem-an k'orni*
 lion-GEN baby.animal
 'lion cub', 'lion's cub' (lit. 'of-lion cub')
- b. *mashien-an maax*
 car-GEN price
 'the price of a car' (lit. 'of-car price')

1.3. Double marking.

- (5) Southern Sierra Miwok (Miwok–Costanoan; California; Broadbent 1964: 133)
cuku-ŋ hu:ki-ʔ-hy:
 dog–GEN tail–3SG
 'dog's tail' (lit. 'of–dog its–tail')

1.4. No marking.

- (6) Tiwi (isolate; northern Australia; Osborne 1974: 74)
jərəkəpai tuwaja
 crocodile tail
 '(a/the) crocodile's tail' (lit. 'crocodile tail')
- (7) Asmat (Asmat–Kamoro family; Papua, Indonesia; Voorhoeve 1965b: 136, 133)
- a. *Warsé ci*
 Warse canoe
 'Warse's canoe' (lit. 'Warse canoe')
- b. *no céṃ*
 1SG house
 'my house' (lit. 'I house' or 'me house')

In the Acoma examples in (1), the possessed noun (the head) is inflected, agreeing in person and number with the possessor. In the Chechen examples, in contrast, the possessor noun (the non–head) is inflected, bearing the genitive case. In Southern Sierra Miwok both words are inflected. In the Tiwi and Asmat examples there is no inflection of either word; possessive phrases are formed by juxtaposition of the uninflected possessor and possessed nominals. (This is not the only adnominal construction of Tiwi; see the next paragraph.)

In these examples the inflection is affixal. However, the same work can also be done by separate words. Head marking using a separate word is illustrated by (8) from Tiwi, where the marker of possession is the uninflected pronoun *ŋara* 'he'. That

it is syntactically attached to the head noun 'tail' and not the possessor noun 'crocodile' is shown when the order of possessor and possessed nouns is inverted: in (6a–b) 'he' immediately precedes 'tail' regardless of the latter's position relative to 'crocodile'.

(8) Tiwi (Osborne 1974: 74–75)

- a. *jərəkəpai* *ɲara* *tuwaja*
 crocodile he tail
 'the crocodile's tail'
- b. *ɲara* *tuwaja* *jərəkəpai*
 he tail crocodile
 'id.'

Dependent marking using a separate word is illustrated by (9), where *na* is a postposition, and by English phrases with *of*, e. g. *the price of oil*.

(9) Amele (Trans–New Guinea; Papua New Guinea;
 Roberts 1987: 139)

- Naus* *na* *jo*
 Naus of house
 'Naus's house'

1.5. Other. The division into head, dependent, double, and zero marking does not exhaust the possible types. There are several low–frequency but systematic further patterns, all of them grouped together as "Other" on the map. One of them is **free (or floating) marking**, where the marker is positioned with respect not to the head or the dependent of the phrase but relative to the phrase boundaries. The commonest such position is probably second, or Wackernagel, position, with the marker following the first word or similar unit of the phrase, as in the following NP examples from Chamorro, where *=n* is a second–

position clitic following the first tonic word in the phrase ("=" is a clitic boundary).

(10) Chamorro (Austronesian; Guam; Topping 1980: 223)

i=lepblo=n *estudiante*
 ART=book=LINK student
 'the student's book'

That the =*n* is in second position is shown by the fact that in phrases with attributive modifiers, where word-order inversion is possible, it follows whichever word comes first:

(11) Chamorro (Topping 1980: 208)

a. *i=dánkolo=n* *taotao*
 ART=big=LINK man
 'the big man'

b. *i=kareta=n* *Japanese*
 ART=car=LINK Japanese
 'Japanese car'

Another minor type is **headward-migrated dependent marking**, where a fully inflected dependent (typically a pronominal argument) cliticizes to the head, as in Bororo (Macro-Ge; Mato Grosso, Brazil):

(12) Bororo (Crowell 1979: 197)

barae *eno* *moto*
 Brazilians 3PL.GEN land
 'Brazil' (lit. 'Brazilians' land')

This is different from (8) in that the pronominal piece in (12) is case-inflected and is therefore a syntactic word, while that in (8) has no case and can therefore be regarded as a phonologically word-like grammatical formative.

2. Exemplar-based survey

Though a number of languages have more than one adnominal construction, for this map we sought just one type per language. We have mapped only possessive constructions with overt heads and noun possessors. For all languages in which there was more than one marking pattern for possessive NP's, we chose whichever is default or has the fewest restrictions. For instance, if a closed or restricted lexical group of nouns (such as kin terms and/or body parts or "inalienables": see chapter 59 on possessive classification) has a distinct form of possessive marking, we have not included this but have mapped only the treatment of the open, or default (or "alienable"), set of nouns. If nouns and pronouns have different marking we have mapped only the noun marking; if only first and second persons have a distinctive form of marking we have not included it; and likewise for any enumerable or delimitable special forms of marking. Though kin terms and body parts are prototypically possessed and might be thought the best possible examples of possessive phrases, in the languages that formally differentiate "alienable" from "inalienable" possession it is always the "inalienables" that are the closed or defined class. Hence they are not the open, default construction we seek in this survey. Furthermore, the open class of possession reflects the language's typological preferences for marking locus, whereas "inalienable" possession shows a clear worldwide preference for head marking. More generally, we found that closed-class and minority patterns are so driven by universal preferences in their marking as to yield little interesting typological or geographical variation: pronouns often inflect for case or are otherwise dependent-marked in languages that have no cases on nouns (see chapter 50), and they are also prone to cliticize to heads when nouns are not.

The result of surveying only open-class marking is fewer data points than have been used to define locus types in earlier literature (e.g. Nichols 1986, 1992, Cysouw 2002). This is an

exemplar-based survey which takes the most typologically revealing and least universal-driven pattern to represent the language's type. In addition to greater typological clarity it also produces a clearer picture of continental and larger geographical distributions, albeit at the price of a more schematic description of each individual language's morphosyntax. (For further discussion of the exemplar-based method, see the section "Defining locus types" in chapter 23, and Bickel and Nichols 2002; for other applications, see chapters 20–22, and 25.)

3. Geographical distribution

Head-marked possessive NPs are common in the Americas and the Pacific (chiefly Melanesia) and infrequent elsewhere. Dependent-marked NPs have a roughly complementary distribution to this: they are frequent in all parts of Africa, Eurasia, and Australia–New Guinea. The only area where the two types overlap appreciably is in New Guinea. Double-marked possession is rare; it is found around the Eurasian periphery, in the Himalayas, and along the Pacific coast of North America (see chapter 22 on synthesis for a similar distribution). Zero-marked possession is also uncommon; instances of it on the map are mostly found near the equator, but apart from this curious distribution it does not form any true clusters.

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