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Building and interpreting possession sentences in Cochabamba Quecha

This talk develops an analysis of the syntax and semantics of three different predicative possession constructions in Cochabamba Quechua, a Quechuan language of Bolivia, and draws out the consequences of that analysis for the theory of thematic roles and their place in the grammar.

Like many languages, Cochabamba Quechua has no true HAVE verb (in the sense of a transitive verb capable of conveying a range of inalienable and alienable possession relations). It does, however, have three syntactically distinguishable types of possession sentences based around the intransitive verb BE. The first of these, which will be the focus of the first part of the talk, is what I will call the *-yoq* construction.

(1) Noqa uj libru-yoq   ka-ni.
     I   one book-YOQ   be-1s
   "I have one book."

This construction is characterized by having the possessor in subject position, the possessee marked by a suffix *-yoq*, and a predicative copula which agrees with the nominative possessor subject (this is the same copula as is used with predicate nominals, predicate adjectives, and PP predicates). At first sight, the *-yoq* construction looks like an instance of the well-known category of WITH possession constructions (discussed by Stassen 2009:ch10), so that (1) is simply the head-final version of the following construction recently discussed for Icelandic by Levinson (2011).

(2) Ég er me∂ bók. (Icelandic)
     I   am with book
     "I have a book."

I will show, however, that *-yoq*-marked phrases in Cochabamba are nominal in category, not adpositional and not adjectival. I will also show that *-yoq* is semantically restricted to conveying inalienable possessive relations involving indefinite possessees- it cannot express temporary possession, nor can it combine with definite possessees. I will argue that the following two hypotheses are the best explanation for these facts:

(3) a. The phrase that *-yoq* combines with is a DP containing a functional head which introduces the relevant "possessive" theta-role (whether kinship, part-of, permanent ownership, etc.), but does not contain a possessor DP that satiates that role.
   b. *-yoq* itself is morphosyntactically a derivational little-n which selects a DP (i.e., it is a "phrasal" derivational suffix). Semantically, it is of type $<<e,<e,t>>,<e,t>>$ -i.e., it maps a relation-denoting DP to the type of a common noun. This common noun can then go on to be the predicate nominal of a copular construction, yielding a sentence like (1).

This analysis relies on the idea that a thematic role can be introduced by a given functional head, but not satisfied straightaway. In particular, a possession-related theta-role is introduced inside a possessee DP, but not satiated inside that DP. Instead, we have "delayed gratification" of that thematic role until the level at which the possessor DP combines with the predicate nominal formed by *-yoq*. This possibility fits naturally into a theory in which thematic roles are not formal features in the syntax, but are rather read off from the syntactic structure at semantics (as in Schäfer 2008; Wood 2012; Marantz 2009,2013). I argue that the phenomenon discussed in this part of the talk is radically incompatible with reducing all predicative possession to underlying locative structures (cf. Freeze 1992).

Time-permitting, the second part of this talk will compare the following two constructions, which are both based around the existential variant of BE rather than the copular variant.

(4) Noqa-qta uj   libru-*(y)   tiya-n.
     I-Gen   one book-1poss beexist-3s
    "I have one book."

(5) Noqa-qta uj   libru-(y)   tiya-pu-wa-n.
     I-Gen   one book-1poss beexist-Appl-1obj-3s
    "I have one book."

These constructions are compatible with a somewhat smaller subset of "possessive" relations than the *–yoq* construction, a fact which I will argue is attributable to their existential syntax. The constructions in (4) and (5) also turn out to be compatible with the exact same subset of "possessive" relations, making them close to semantically identical. Despite this, I will argue that the morphosyntactic differences between the two (including the presence of an applicative morpheme and clitic doubling of possessor in (5), and the obligatoriness of DP-internal possessive agreement in (4)) mean that the most successful analysis is one in which (4) involves first-merging the possessor internal to the possessee DP (in the style of Szabolcsi's (1981, 1983, 1994) analysis of a very similar Hungarian construction) and (5) involves the possessor being first-merged in the specifier of a low applicative head (with the possession-related thematic role once again introduced inside the possessee, but this time satisfied under delayed gratification by the possessor in spec ApplP).