

## 0. Summary

This paper offers novel support for four proposals from earlier literature concerning the morphosyntax of (in)alienability distinctions in natural language. These are:

- (1) Ownership and other semantic relations associated with alienable possession constructions cross-linguistically are introduced by a functional head in the extended projection of NP, which can be called Poss<sup>0</sup>.
- (2) Part-whole relations, kinship relations, clothing-being-worn, and other semantic relations that are associated with inalienable possession constructions are instead introduced internal to NP itself (that is, they involve a *smaller* morphosyntactic structure than do alienable possession constructions).
- (3) Kinship NPs, however, are subject to an additional restriction: in order to occur with a possessor argument projected in the morphosyntax, they must also be in construction with a determiner.
- (4) Within NP itself, the semantics of the possession relation does not inhere in the root, but rather in the nominal categorizer (little-*n*, in the terms of Distributed Morphology).

Proposals (1)-(2) have had a number of supporters in the generative literature (Español Echevarría 1997; Alexiadou 2003; Myler 2016). Proposal (3) was put forward (somewhat sheepishly, since it doesn't follow from anything else) in Myler (2016:375) as a way of curbing a source of over-generation that would otherwise afflict the account of the English *brown-eyed* construction presented there. Proposal (4) has been defended in Myler (2018, in preparation) on the basis of data from the Mayan language Tz'utujil, and in Adamson (2024) on the basis of the interaction between inalienable possession and gender assignment in Teop, Jarawara, Yanyuwa, and Coastal Marind.

In support of proposals (1)-(3), the paper under review looks at three constructions in Spanish: *N-i-A* compounds (e.g. *pel-i-rrojo* hair-i-red “red-haired”), *A de N* constructions (e.g. *largo de cuello* “long of neck”), and external possession constructions (e.g. *Juan movió el pie* Juan moved the foot “Juan moved his foot”; *Juan me tocó la espalda* Juan me.dative touched the back “Juan touched me on the back”). The author shows that the first two involve a small nominal substructure, and that, just as predicted by proposals (1)-(3), they are correspondingly semantically restricted to expressing a subset of inalienable relations that excludes kinship. External possession constructions, in contrast, involve a full DP, and correspondingly can involve kinship and ownership relations in addition.

In support of proposal (4), the paper argues that Myler's (2018, in prep) analysis of Tz'utujil plausibly generalizes to other Mayan languages, including Tzeltal, Yucatec Maya, Chuj, K'iche', and some others.

## 1. Publication recommendation

I recommend that this paper be published with minor revisions.

## 2. Short justification of recommendation (maximum 10 sentences).

While the key facts from Spanish and various Mayan languages are not novel to this paper, and nor are proposals (1)-(4), the paper's observation of the relevance of the Spanish data for proposals (1)-(3) is novel. The discussion of the Mayan family is somewhat summary, and it does not establish that the crucial suffixes have nominalizing uses in the other Mayan languages (something which Myler, citing data from Dailey 1985, does show for Tz'utujil), but this should be easy to establish in a minor revision.

## 3. Does the paper present an empirical discovery potentially of interest to most of this journal's readers? Please substantiate your answer.

As discussed above, the main contribution of this paper does not lie in the discovery of new empirical facts, but in highlighting the relevance of previously established facts for current theory. And this is completely fine.

## 4. Is the empirical content of the paper sound (e.g. fieldwork includes proper controls and comparisons, experiments well designed, etc.)? Please substantiate your answer.

The paper cites existing literature for its empirical content, and I have no reason to doubt the veracity of any of the claims in that literature.

## 5. Does the paper make a broader proposal about an aspect of linguistic theory potentially of interest to most of this journal's readers? Please substantiate your answer.

Certainly. The question of how semantic labor is divided amongst morphosyntactic pieces across languages, and how variation in this domain is constrained, is one of the core issues of grammatical theory. This paper adduces novel support for proposals (1)-(4), which themselves address an important subarea (i.e., adnominal possession) of this more general question.

## 6. Is the argumentation linking the paper's broader conclusions to its empirical or theoretical premises sound? In answering this question, please substantiate your answer without regard to your personal judgments concerning the plausibility of these premises — see question 7.

In general, yes. This is especially clear in the discussion of Spanish.

As mentioned under question 2, however, Myler (2018, in prep.) supports the idea that the suffix that appears on a certain class of inalienables when they are possessed is a nominal categorizer by showing that the same suffix, *-VII*, is also used to form abstract nouns in the language.

Hence, in Tz'utujil there are pairs like the following (these appear as examples (31) and (38) in Myler 2018).

(5) n-muuj-aal (Tz'utujil)  
1sg-shade-inal  
'my shadow'

(6) r-chee7-aal (Tz'utujil)  
3sg-wood-nmlz  
'its woodness'

This is important, because it supplies the argument for saying that the inalienable relation is associated with little-n specifically, as opposed to some other functional head. Now, the paper under review shows for several other Mayan languages that they have constructions like (5), but does not go on to show that the suffixes involved are otherwise used as nominalizers, like in (6). Without this, the argument that the analysis of Tz'utujil in Myler (2018, in prep.) plausibly generalizes to Mayan at large is incomplete.

**7. Comment on the paper's premises or the conceptual framework that it assumes, if you believe that issues in this area are relevant to the overall evaluation of the paper.**

No issues here.

**8. Any other comments relevant to the evaluation of the paper as a whole.**

Nothing further.

**9. What are your suggestions for improving the paper? (optional if your publication recommendation is "accept" or "reject", strongly recommended otherwise). If your publication recommendation was "revisions required" or "resubmit for review", your recommendations may be taken by the editor as requirements for future acceptance, unless you explicitly state otherwise, so please try to distinguish your high-priority requirements for revision from weaker suggestions.**

The main agenda items would be (i) if possible, filling in the gap in the argument from Mayan identified in my answer to question 6, and (ii) addressing the minor typos listed in the specific comments below.

The specific comments also contain some issues of substance, but I don't regard addressing these as a prerequisite for publication.

**10. Specific line-by-line comments on details of the paper. Begin each comment with a page number, example number or paragraph/line from top or bottom, as appropriate.**

p. 2 Typo: “a general overviews”

p.5 Typo: “I am a red-carred”

p.7 Typo: “identical properties to that of \_\_\_ predicativizing adjectival morpheme”. *That* should be *those*, and the gap should be filled by *the*.

p.7 In (15b), I think it’s unnecessary for the morphosyntax of aR to select for a *relational* nP specifically. The morphosyntax can just say that it selects nP; the fact that the nP has to denote a relation will follow from the semantics provided in (15c).

p.9 aR' is identical to aR in all respects except what it takes as a complement, which suggests that a generalization is being missed.

p.9 Maybe there are two PRs; one pronounced *de*, and another pronounced *i* into which n incorporates, and which goes on to incorporate into Adj?

p.9 Is there independent evidence that the "cara" part is just an nP (e.g., is it impossible to include numerals, determiners, other modifiers?). [On the next page, the author states that "the possessee is always a bare noun" in these constructions, but it would be good to have the examples showing that larger structures are ungrammatical. It's also not obvious that the restriction to nP would rule out adjectives; to the extent that these are disallowed, perhaps selection for n-zero needs to be countenanced here, a la Wood 2023, Embick 2023).]

p.10 I think there’s a typo here: “predication” where *prediction* appears to be intended.

p.11 Typo: “inalieble”

p.19 Typo: “Here, a kinship \_\_\_ may appear unmarked”; the gap should presumably be filled by *term*, *noun*, or similar.

p.19. In the paragraph immediately above example (47), it looks like there are some broken cross-references to the examples.

p.21 Typo: “all together” should be *altogether*

References (other than those already in the paper)

Adamson, Luke. 2024. Gender assignment is local: On the relation between grammatical gender and inalienable possession. *Language* 100.2:218-264.

Embick, David. 2023. Smaller syntax for English stative passives: A first report. *Acta Linguistica Academica* 70:3, 285-316

Myler, Neil. In Preparation. Attributive Possession, the Contributions of Roots, and Parameters of Poss and *n*. Paper in preparation for the edited volume *Possession and the part-whole relationship in language*, ed by Lieven Danckaert, Vassil Mostrov, and Fayssal Tayalati. Volume accepted for publication with Oxford University Press.

Wood, Jim. 2023. *Icelandic nominalizations and allosemy*. Oxford University Press.