

Neil Myler (New York University), Einar Freyr Sigurðsson (University of Pennsylvania) and Jim Wood (Yale University)

Predicative Possession Builds on Top of Attributive Possession: Evidence from Icelandic

In this talk, we argue that the syntactic expression of possession in the clause is directly related to the syntactic expression of possession DP-internally. We defend this claim in light of recent research on DP-internal possession in Icelandic, a language whose rich array of predicative possession constructions make it an ideal empirical domain for investigating this connection between the clausal and nominal realms.

1. DP internally, there are three basic constructions for expressing possession: Construction A involves a bare NP followed by a possessive pronoun; Construction B involves a definite-suffixed noun followed by a possessive pronoun; Construction C involves a definite-suffixed noun followed by a PP expressing the possessor. The table in (1) shows the distribution of concrete, kinship, body part, and abstract possession among these constructions.

(1)	A: NP - POSS. PRON	B: NP-DEF - POSS. PRON	C: NP-DEF - PREP - PRON
Concrete (‘my book’)	# bók míð book my	bók-in míð book-DEF my	* bók-in hjá mér book-DEF at me
Kinship (‘my sister’)	systir míð sister my	* systir-in míð sister-DEF my	* systir-in hjá mér sister-DEF at me
Body part (‘my eyes’)	# augu míð eyes my	% augu-n míð eyes-DEF my	augu-n í mér eyes-DEF in me
Abstract (‘my idea’)	hugmynd míð idea my	* hugmynd-in míð idea-DEF my	hugmynd-in hjá mér idea-DEF at me

For reasons of space, we will set aside a number of complex issues, including speaker variation for body part possession, special interpretations of concrete possession in Construction A, etc. The shaded boxes reflect the “core” cases that we will focus on. **2.** For **clausal possession**, there are again three basic forms. We will focus here on two: verb *hafa* ‘have₁’ and the verb *eiga* ‘have₂/own’. (We set aside the *vera með* ‘be with’ construction; see Levinson 2011 for recent discussion.) In (2) we show the distribution of *hafa* and *eiga* across the same categories of possession shown in (1). (Note that (2d) with *hafa* is grammatical, *pace* Levinson 2011; see also Irie 1997.)

(2) a. Concrete	b. Kinship
Peir { <i>hafa/eiga</i> } stóra bók. they.NOM { <i>have₁/have₂</i> } big book.ACC ‘They have a big book.’	Peir { <i>hafa/eiga</i> } systur. they.NOM { <i>have₁/have₂</i> } sister.ACC ‘They have a sister.’
c. Abstract	d. Body part
Peir { <i>hafa/*eiga</i> } ekki hugmynd. they.NOM { <i>have₁/*have₂</i> } not idea.ACC ‘They have no idea.’	Peir { <i>hafa/*eiga</i> } augu. they.NOM { <i>have₁/*have₂</i> } eyes.ACC ‘They have eyes.’

3. Despite numerous complications in the description and analysis of clausal and DP-internal possession by themselves, let alone the relationship between the two domains, the following generalizations seem to hold:

- (3) **Generalization 1:** Clausal possession can be expressed with *eiga* only if DP-internal possession cannot be expressed with a PP.
- (4) **Generalization 2:** Clausal possession can be expressed with *hafa* only if DP-internal possession can be expressed with a PP.

We derive these generalizations by assuming that *hafa* and *eiga* have no lexical content of their own (Ritter & Rosen 1997), but are rather light verbs that spell out little v; the choice between the two spellouts depends on the properties of the complement of v (Folli & Harley 2013), which in this case contains the possesum.

4. We assume, following much work in the literature, that there is more than one way to build possessive structures DP internally. Specifically, we assume that DP-internal possessors may

be merged as predicates of a DP-internal small clause (**Option A**), or as specifiers in a nominal projection (**Option B**); the pre-movement configurations are shown in (5) and (6).

(5) **Possessor Option A:** $[_{DP} D [_{PredP} POSSESSUM [Pred POSSESSOR]]]$

(6) **Possessor Option B:** $[_{DP} D [_{nP} POSSESSOR [_n n-POSSESSUM]]]$

To build clausal possession, a DP-internal possession structure forms the complement of a light verb *v*. *Hafa* and *eiga* are suppletive manifestations of the same transitive *v*. Which allomorph is chosen depends on the type of attributive possession structure is embedded under this *v*, as follows (suppletion notation from Bobaljik 2012):

(7) a. $v \rightarrow hafa / __ \text{Pred}$ b. $v \rightarrow eiga$

In other words, if *v* embeds a *PredP* substructure, then *hafa* results. Otherwise, we get *eiga*. As additional evidence that the presence of *PredP* is crucial for the selection of *hafa*, consider the fact that *hafa* can productively take small clause complements, whereas *eiga* cannot.

(8) Hann hafði það upp úr henni. = $[_{VP} he [_v, v(=hafa) [_{PredP} it out of her]]]$
he.NOM had it up out.of her 'He got it out of her.'

5. Body part possession, DP-internally, is built as in (9). The *nP* then moves to *SpecDP*, as proposed by Julien (2005). In clausal contexts, the same basic structure is built, but *D* is not merged, and *Pred* raises and incorporates into *v*.

(9) $[_{DP} D-DEF [_{PredP} [_{nP} eyes] [_{Pred} Pred [_{PP} in [_{DP} me]]]]]$

(10) $[_{VP} [_{DP} \text{they}]_i [_v Pred+v(=hafa) [_{PredP} [_{nP} eyes] [_{Pred} <Pred> [_{PP} IN [_{DP} PRO_i]]]]]]$

At this point, the question that arises is why we fail to see the *PP* in clausal contexts; that is, why do we not see '*they have blue eyes in them*'? There are two possibilities: (i) *P* incorporates into *Pred* before *Pred* incorporates into *v*; this licenses Predicate Inversion (Den Dikken 2006), so the *DP* complement of *P* is moved to *SpecvP*, where it is spelled out; (ii) incorporation of *Pred* allows the raising and licensing of a null *pro*-predicate, as indicated (pre-movement) in (10). Either option will suffice for present purposes, although we have independent reasons to believe that (ii) is correct. A slightly modified version of this analysis extends directly to **abstract possession**, as in (2d). **6. For kinship and concrete possession**, no *PredP* small clause can be formed *DP* internally, so the structure in (6) is used; see (11).

(11) $[_{DP} D [_{PossP} my [_{nP} <my> sister]]]$

Again following Julien 2005, the possessor merges in *SpecnP* and moves to *SpecPossP*, followed by movement of *nP* to *SpecDP* (not shown). (Note that we cannot go into the distribution of the definite suffix here.) We assume that *Poss* introduces possessive semantics, so that the interpretation of (11) is as in (12).

(12) a. $\llbracket \text{Poss} \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda y. \text{sister-of}(y, x)$ b. $\llbracket \text{PossP} \rrbracket = \lambda y. \text{sister-of}(y, \text{speaker})$

c. $\llbracket \text{DP} \rrbracket = \lambda y. \text{sister-of}(y, \text{speaker})$

Since kinship/concrete possession does not involve *Pred* *DP*-internally, *hafa* does not spell out *v* in clausal contexts. In clausal contexts, we argue that the *nP* merges without a *DP/nP*-internal possessor, though the *Poss* head is still merged, so the structure is as in (13).

(13) $[_{VP} [_{DP} I]_i [_v, v(=eiga) [_{PossP} Poss [_{nP} sister]]]]$

Despite no possessor being merged in *SpecPossP*, the *Poss* head still introduces a possession relation semantically; this relation is saturated by the *DP* merged in *SpecvP*. The *v* head is a purely syntactic element in this case, and adds nothing to the interpretation. The interpretation of (13) is shown in (14).

(14) a. $\llbracket \text{PossP} \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda y. \text{sister-of}(y, x)$ b. $\llbracket v' \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda y. \text{sister-of}(y, x)$

c. $\llbracket \text{vP} \rrbracket = \lambda y. \text{sister-of}(y, \text{speaker}) \rightarrow_{\text{existential-closure}} \exists y. \text{sister-of}(y, \text{speaker})$

7. Conclusion. While there are some details that will be elaborated upon in the course of the talk, the foregoing should be enough to get across the basic idea: *DP*-internal possessive syntax and semantics directly feeds clausal possessive syntax and semantics, and this explains Generalizations 1 and 2 in (3)-(4).