Relational and partitive inalienable possession in Slave*

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Agreement asymmetries seen in Slave, a Dene language of Northern Canada, suggest that its inalienable class of nouns must be further divided into two subclasses: partitive inalienable nouns (body parts, goods, and possessions) and relational inalienable nouns (kinship terms). While all possessums, regardless of noun class, determine subject agreement, the partitive inalienable possessor determines object agreement, and this is not the case with alienable and relational nouns, which always have the possessum as the target of agreement (Rice, 1989). This paper argues that this is a product of the way that object agreement is formed in the language, in conjunction with variation in the position of the possessor in possessive construction across the three classes of nouns.

1 Introduction

The focus of this paper will be on the possessive construction of Slave (/slevi/), a Northeastern Dene language spoken in parts of the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, and Alberta, Canada (Rice, 1989: 1). Dene languages are known for their highly intricate verbal morphology, and have comparatively sparse inflection in the nominal domain. A subset of Dene languages inflect nouns only for possession and no other grammatical category, and this is the case in Slave, which lacks number marking, a case system, a determiner system, non-emphatic pronouns, and grammatical gender (Rice, 1989). Because of the comparative impoverishment of nominal inflection, the possessive construction provides one of the few windows into the shape of the DP/NP in Slave, and is therefore in a unique position to shed light on what kind of syntactic and semantic distinctions might be important for nouns in this language.

Rice (1989) provides a thorough overview of the morphosyntactic behaviour of the possessive construction in Slave, listing two general categories of possession: alienable and inalienable. Alienably possessed nouns occur freely outside of the possessive construction, have a wide range of meanings, and exhibit consistent possessive morphology when possessed. Inalienably possessed nouns, on the other hand, obligatorily occur in a possessive construction, fall into only three semantic categories (body parts, possessions, and kinship terms) and show variation in their possessive morphology. A more detailed syntactic/semantic account of Northeastern Dene alienable and inalienable possession has been given in Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) for Slave’s two most closely related sister languages, Dene Sulîne and Tłı̨chǫ Yatití. These three languages pattern quite similarly in many respects, so it is tempting to subsume Slave possession under the proposal put forward for its sister languages, and at first blush this appears to be viable with little alteration of Saxon and Wilhelm (2016)’s analysis. However, some interesting asymmetries in the interaction of Slave possessive constructions with verbal agreement (also documented in Rice (1989)) may suggest that Slave is better served by an approach to the possessive construction that splits inalienable possession into two distinct subclasses: relation inalienable possession (kinship terms) and partitive\(^1\) inalienable possession (body parts, goods and

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\(^1\)I use the term partitive here to emphasize that the possessed item is a part of its possessor, which constitutes the whole.
possessions). When partitive inalienable nouns trigger object agreement on a verb, that object agreement reflects the $\phi$-features of the possessor, and this contrasts with the pattern seen in alienable and relational inalienable nouns, which trigger object agreement that reflects the $\phi$-features of the possessum (possessed object). No such asymmetry is discernible with subject agreement, which uniformly targets the possessum. This partitive/relational split reflects the semantic split evident in Rice’s (1989) description of the kinds of nouns that occur in the inalienable possessive construction:

(1)  
   a. Items that do not occur independently of an individual (body parts, goods and possessions).
   b. Items that are defined in relation to an individual (kinship terms).

The agreement asymmetry present between relational and partitive inalienable nouns implies that this is not solely a semantic distinction, but a distinction with real syntactic consequences.

The main goal of this paper will be to provide a modified version of the possessive constructions proposed by Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) that can accommodate the asymmetrical patterning of inalienable noun subclasses in Slave while preserving the morphological and semantic explanatory value of the original structures. I will propose that the agreement asymmetry seen between relational, partitive and alienable nouns is a reflex of the fact that a) object agreement, but not subject agreement, is a function of clitic doubling (in the sense of Nevins (2011)), and b) the possessor of each possessive subclass is introduced in a different position inside the possessive construction: the alienable possessor in the Spec of a possessive phrase, $n_{P}$, the partitive inalienable possessor in the Spec of a transitive categorizing head NP$_{TRANS}$, and the relational inalienable possessor as the complement of the possessum root (beneath the categorizing head).

Section 2 below will provide an overview of some morphosyntactic features of Slave nouns, as well as the behaviour of alienable and inalienable possession as set out by Rice (1989), and section 3 will expand on this to include the agreement asymmetries seen with possessive constructions in a broader syntactic context. Section 4 below will outline some previous approaches to a partitive/relational split in inalienable possession, followed by section 5, which will set out the analysis of Northeastern Dene possession given by Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) that will be expanded in section 6 to accommodate the partitive/relational split seen in Slave. Concluding remarks will be given in section 7.

2 Nominal morphosyntax and possession in Slave

As mentioned in section 1, Slave does not inflect nouns for number, case, or gender, and lacks both a determiner system and non-empthatic pronouns (i.e., it is an obligatory pro-drop language) (Rice, 1989). Nouns stems exhibit a further ambiguity, in fact, in that many lexical items in Slave can be used both as nouns and as verbs. Therefore, Rice (1989) takes the following to be true about word formation in the language:

“Instead of taking either the noun or the verb as basic, I assume that the underlying form is a root, not necessarily assigned to a lexical category. Roots are converted into stems by stem formation rules which assign a lexical category, noun, verb, or postposition. In nouns, there are three stem formatives. The most commonly found stem formative is a null suffix .... Two other noun stem formatives, -e and -l are (also) discussed...” (Rice, 1989: 161).

The relative frequency of the various noun-formation suffixes will not be discussed here, but what is of interest for the purposes of this paper is the special role the possessive construction plays in determining the presence of the the suffixes -e and -l and their status as nominal categorizers:
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The examples in 2a & b show that -e is a nominal categorizer because it is deleted when the possessive suffix -é is added. As root vowels are never deleted, Rice (1989) takes this to suggest that -e is a suffix, synchronically. In the examples in 2c & d, the suffix -l appears when the vocalic possessed noun suffix is added. It is reduced to -h in the non-possessed forms, due to phonological restrictions on coda consonants in Slave, but its absence in the corresponding verb forms (listed below the nouns) is what implicates it as a nominal categorizer.

It is notable that all the examples listed in 2 occur as both independent nouns and as components of the possessive construction, making them part of the ‘independent’ class of Slave nouns. Independent nouns exhibit alienable possession, which is one of the two distinct categories of possession as they are traditionally delimited in the language. An overview of the morphosyntax of alienable possession is given in section 2.1 below, and likewise for inalienable possession in section 2.2.

2.1 Alienable possession

Alienable nouns are not required to occur in a possessive construction, and fall into a diverse range of semantic categories. There are three components of alienable possession in Slave, and these are the possessor, the possessed noun, and the possessive suffix -é (sometimes realized as ’). An example of alienable possession can be seen in 3 below, where the possessive construction is bracketed. The possessor always precedes the possessum when it is overt.

(3) [Charlie lje] t’áh qaht’é
  Charlie  dog,pns with 1sg.opt.go^4
  ‘I want to use Charlie’s dog’ (Rice, 1989: 229)

When no overt possessor occurs, the possessed noun must also bear a possessive prefix that denotes the person and number of the possessor—this happens when the possessor is a pronoun, due to obligatory pro-drop in the language. The possessive prefixes used to indicate possessive agreement have the same morphological form as the object agreement prefixes seen on transitive verbs Rice (1989). Some examples of alienable possessive agreement can be seen in 4–6 below, but a more exhaustive paradigm is included in the appendix (section A).

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2I am assuming here, as Rice (1989) seems to imply, that this deletion happens for phonological reasons, and not because nominal categorization is not occurring.
3The fact that it does not get deleted by the possessed noun suffix may be due to the fact that it is a consonant, and does not produce a long vowel when a vocalic suffix is added.
4pns = possessed noun suffix, sg=singular, pl=plural, opt=optative, pf=perfective, top=topic, s=subject, o=object do=direct object, oo=oblique object
In some rare cases it is possible for both an overt possessor and an agreement prefix to appear, as in 7 below. When this occurs, it is a function of the possessor being topicalized (Rice, 1989: 234).

Here the possessor has been string-vacuously raised from its base position for discourse reasons. In this way alienable possessive agreement patterns with object agreement, which only occurs with a null pronominal object, or when the overt object has been displaced (Rice, 2003). The effect of object displacement on agreement can be clearly seen in the sentence in 8a below, where not only does object agreement occur, but the overt object, gah, has been clearly displaced via topic fronting, subverting the normal SOV word order. This is contrastive with the un-topicalized transitive object in 8b, which does not trigger object agreement.

Rice (2003) attributes this to the fact that object agreement can only be triggered by a pronoun, and that when nouns move out of their base position/are dislocated, they are doubled by a resumptive pronoun which triggers agreement. This will be discussed in greater detail in section 6, but is further supported here by the fact that when overt emphatic pronouns occur, so does object/possessive agreement:6

Alienable possession is also a productive means of forming nominal compounds in the language, and can express a diverse set of relations between two compounded nouns (Rice, 1989):

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5 Third singular agreement can be either expressed by a y- or b- . The factors that condition this are not relevant here—see Rice and Saxon (2005) for details.

6 The strength of this support is unclear, as overt pronouns, being emphatic, may or may not be obligatorily fronted. I could find no unambiguous examples in the data considered here. However, it is still the case that agreement appears with untopicalized overt pronouns.
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Despite the presence of a possessive suffix, these nouns do not need to occur with a possessive prefix or overt possessor - the first noun of the compound is functioning as the grammatical possessor. Rice (1989) assigns these the structure below, where a root noun is followed by a possessed noun stem:

\[ ([N_{root}] \ [N_{stem}] \ \text{possessive}] \]

2.2 Inalienable possession

Inalienable nouns do not usually occur independently from a possessive construction, unless they are incorporated into verbs or are part of a compound (and only a subset are eligible for incorporation). They are restricted to roughly three groups: body parts, goods and possessions, and kinship terms. The possessed noun suffix, while still present on inalienables, can take a variety of different forms, which include -é, -’, -∅, or -e (Rice, 1989).

(12) a. **Body Parts**
    -w’éné ‘leg, bone’
    -daá ‘eye’

b. **Goods and Possessions**
    -sízí ‘my name’
    -t’aré ‘goods, provisions’
    -t’oo ‘nest’

c. **Kinship Terms**
    -dare ‘older sister’
    -chile ‘younger brother’
    -túé ‘daughter’

Rice (1989) broadly describes the necessary semantic criteria for a noun’s inclusion in the inalienable class as follows:

(13) a. Items that do not occur independently of an individual (body parts, goods and possessions).
    b. Items that are defined in relation to an individual (kinship terms).

The distinction between 13a and 13b will prove to be an important one over the course of this paper, but will be set aside for the moment and taken up again in section 3.

Unlike alienable possession, inalienable possession with an overt possessor must typically still include possessive agreement prefixes.
When possessive agreement does not occur with an overt possessor, the reference of the possession is generic (this is at least true for body parts—I found no examples with kinship terms or possessions in the data examined here).

If Rice (2003) is on the right track about doubling, movement, and agreement, then this may suggest that possessors in inalienable constructions must move out of their base position to become referential. This will be discussed further in sections 5 and 6.

In addition to alienable compounds, Rice (1989) also makes note of what she calls ‘inalienable compounds.’ A minimal pair consisting of a bare (nonpossessed) compound and an inalienable compound is provided below:

These compounds seem to have a more restricted set of possible interpretations, with $N_2$ being an integral part of $N_1$. She assigns them the following structure, with the possessive suffix attaching to the entire compound, as opposed to combining with $N_2$ first:

3 Slave possession in a broader syntactic context

At first glance, it may seem possible that the asymmetry seen in the compound structures proposed by Rice (1989) for alienable compounds (11) and inalienable compounds (17) might be sufficient to account for the differences in alienable and inalienable constructions in general. They are restated below in 18a and 18b, for purposes of comparison.

\[\text{[[[N_{root}] [N_{stem}]] possessive]}^{7}\]
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(18)  

a. **Alienable Compounds:**

\[[N_{\text{root}}][N_{\text{stem}} \text{ possessive}]\]

b. **Inalienable Compounds:**

\[[[N_{\text{root}}][N_{\text{stem}}] \text{ possessive}]\]

In fact, something similar is proposed in Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) for Slave’s two most closely related sister languages, Tłı̨chǫ Yatı (Dogrib) and Dene Suliné (Chipewyan) (see section 5). However, as mentioned in section 1, there is some reason to believe that not all inalienables are created equally, and that the inalienable class of nouns in Slave must be divided into relational inalienable and partitive inalienable subclasses. In Slave, the morphosyntactic evidence for the subdivision of inalienability that will be addressed here is agreement asymmetries. However, there may be some evidence of this in noun incorporation patterns as well. In noun incorporation, only body parts and not relational terms or inalienable nouns may productively be incorporated by verbs, and there also appears to be multiple further restrictions on this with regards to which body parts can be incorporated into which verbs (Rice, 1989: 647). As there is a vast literature on noun incorporation and the factors that influence it, the primary focus of this paper will be on object agreement asymmetries, and circumstances surrounding noun incorporation will be set aside as an area for further research. Agreement asymmetries are discussed in section 3.1 below.

3.1 **Agreement asymmetries**

When the object of a matrix clause is coreferential with the subject of an embedded clause, there is a divide between relation and partitive inalienable nouns in regards to whether the possessor or possessum determines that agreement. With relational inalienables (kinship terms) the matrix object agreement is determined by the possessum, as in 19 below:

(19)  

\[\text{sedare náʔedló} \; ?ayílá} \\
1sg.sister 3.laugh 3sg.S.made.4sg.o^8 \\
\text{‘He made my sister laugh’ (Rice, 1989: 1234)}

Here, the subject of the embedded clause *sedare náʔedló* (*my sister laughs*) is determining the fourth person object agreement on the matrix verb *?ayílá* (*he made her*). This does not seem to be the case with partitive inalienables, in which it is the possessor of the embedded subject that determines object agreement. The matrix verb of the example in 20 below is, according to Rice (1989), an obligatory object control verb, where the matrix object must necessarily corefer/agree with the embedded subject. When a partitive inalienable is the embedded subject, the possessor is controlling the matrix object agreement:

(20)  

\[\text{segoyá húle} \; ã?asedalee} \\
1sg.mind 3.is.lacking COMP 3sg.S.caused.1sg.o \\
\text{‘He made me crazy’ (lit. ‘he caused that my mind is lacking’) (Rice, 1989: 1234)}

The possessor of partitive inalienables does not, however, seem to be able to determine subject agreement. The possessum is what determines subject agreement in both partitive (21a, 21b) and relational inalienable possession (21c):

(21)  

a. \[\text{segoyá húle} \; ã?asedalee} \\
1sg.mind 3sg.S.is.lacking COMP 3sg.S.caused.1sg.o \\
\text{‘He made me crazy’ (lit. ‘he caused that my mind is lacking’) (Rice, 1989: 1234)}

^8Fourth person is used instead of third here simply because the subject of the matrix clause is also third singular, and says nothing about the coreferential relationship between the matrix object and embedded subject.
b. sekwi ṭeyá
   1sg.head 3sg.s.hurts
   ‘my head hurts’ (Rice, 1989: 18)

c. [sedare náʔedló] ṭayilá
   1sg.sister 3sg.s.laugh 3sg.s.made 4sg.o
   ‘He made my sister laugh’ (Rice, 1989: 1234)

The fact that Slave object agreement does not appear when the object argument remains in situ makes it difficult to say whether this phenomena is restricted to coreference/argument sharing embedded clauses. That being said (and as noted in section 2.1) object agreement appears when the putative object is dislocated, and this seems to be a unified phenomenon regardless of the means of this dislocation (topicalization, complementation, etc). Therefore it seems reasonable to adopt the partitive/relational split in agreement evident in the data as a working hypothesis for all object agreement in the language, at least until more data can be found to falsify it.

I did not find a case of an alienable possessive construction situated in the right context to elicit the exact agreement phenomenon seen in 19 and 20 above, but when an alienable possessive construction is a topicalized object, there appears some evidence to suggest that the object agreement is determined by the possessum:

(22) a. dene lée [John skidoo] nájtse
    person one John skidoo 3.broke
    ‘someone broke John’s skidoo’ (Rice, 1989: 1202)

b. [John skidoo] dene lée náyejtse
    John skidoo person one 3sg.s.broke 4sg.o
    ‘John’s skidoo, someone broke it’ (Rice, 1989: 1202)

c. [John] dene lée yeskidoo nájtse
    John person one 4sg.skidoo 3sg.s.broke
    ‘John, someone broke his skidoo’ (Rice, 1989: 1202)

In 22b the alienable possessive construction is topicalized and fronted, causing object agreement to surface on the verb. Because both the possessor and the possessum are 3sg, it is unclear which element of the possessive construction the verb is agreeing with in this example (4sg agreement is surfacing because the subject is also 3sg). However, in 22c only the possessor is topicalized, and object agreement does not appear on the verb, instead surfacing on the possessum. This suggests that the object agreement seen in 22b is in fact reflective of the possessum φ-features, as topicalization movement of the possessor alone seems insufficient to trigger it. Subject agreement is likewise triggered by the possessum, as can be seen in example 23 below, where subject agreement on the stative verb rala is reflecting the φ-features of the singular possessum -li and not the plural possessor ku-:

(23) kulí ŋala
    3pl.dog.pns 3sg.s.is.fast
    ‘their dog is fast’ (Rice, 1989: 209)

Despite the fact that the possessed noun suffix does not appear on the word ‘skidoo,’ it is evident that this word is alienable on account of the absence of an agreement prefix. The lack of a possessed noun suffix is likely related to the fact that ‘skidoo’ is a borrowed word.

Rice (1989) notes that this is not a grammatical structure for all speakers. The questions of the acceptability of this construction must be set aside here, but 22c still provides valuable insight into the patterning of object agreement, at least for the speakers who accept it.
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Table 1: Possession agreement patterns in Slave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alienable</th>
<th>Inalienable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object Agreement</td>
<td>Possessum</td>
<td>Possessum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Agreement</td>
<td>Possessum</td>
<td>Possessum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the data presented here suggests that object agreement is determined by the possessum in relational and alienable possessive constructions, while it is the possessor that triggers this agreement in partitive inalienable possession. Subject agreement, on the other hand, seems to be consistently determined by the possessum regardless of its noun class, as seen in Table 1.

4 Three semantic classes of nouns

The idea that the inalienable class of nouns (in languages that make such a distinction) should be further divided into partitive and relational subclasses is not a novel one, and has been suggested previously for the Algonquian language, Plains Cree, by Mühlbauer (2007) and for Choctaw, a Muskogean language, by Davies (1984).

Mühlbauer (2007) argues primarily for a refinement of the semantics of nominals, with morphosyntactic patterns playing a supporting role. Plains Cree, like Slave, has morphologically alienable and inalienable nouns and, also like Slave, seems to draw a further distinction between partitive and relational inalienables. Mühlbauer (2007) describes the semantic distinction between the two as the following:

“‘relational nouns’ are treated here as the class of nouns that inherently denote relations between individuals...while ‘inalienable nouns’ are those nouns that denote a material component of an individual.” (Mühlbauer, 2007: 168)

This description falls in line with the intuitions of Rice (1989) for Slave noted in Section 1 above. According to Mühlbauer (2007)’s proposal, alienable possession is predicative in nature, relational possession is a reflex of the conceptual content of the noun, and inalienable nouns (which I call partitive inalienable nouns here) “encode a special ordering relation between portions of matter on a lattice (symbolized by ‘T’)” (Mühlbauer, 2007: 168). He gives a summary of the various relevant semantic denotations, reproduced in Table 2 below (with minor alterations for notational consistency).

The semantics argued for by Mühlbauer (2007) are nearly identical to those proposed by Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) (see section 5), with the exception of the partitive, which I will be adopting in the modified structure in section 6. Mühlbauer (2007) does not report any agreement asymmetries of the type seen in Slave for Plains

Table 2: Mühlbauer’s (2007) semantic denotations for possession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Formula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alienable</td>
<td>Jess’s tree</td>
<td>(\lambda x[\text{tree}(x) &amp; R(x, J)])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Jess’s mother</td>
<td>(\lambda x[\text{mother}(x, J)])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partitive</td>
<td>Jess’s hand</td>
<td>(\lambda x[\text{hand}(x) &amp; x , T , J])</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cree. Rather, he draws evidence for the further subdivision of the inalienable class from a split in how Plains Cree marks impersonal uses of the relational and partitive inalienable nouns. This is not a division seen in Slave, which uniformly marks impersonal use with the unspecified possessive prefix (see Appendix A).

Davies (1984), in contrast with Mühlbauer (2007), gives a predominately descriptive overview of the morphosyntactic consequences of the partitive/relational split in Choctaw, with little reference to semantics. Davies (1984) makes reference to what he terms ‘referential coding rules,’ which govern grammatical phenomena that signal relationships between clausal and sentential elements. He shows that, while these ‘coding rules’ typically reference the head of an NP, they may alternatively reference the possessor of an inalienably possessed body part. This bears a striking resemblance to the pattern described for possession and object agreement in Slave (see section 3.1), although agreement marking and ‘referential coding’ appears to be much less opaque in Choctaw (as there are significant restrictions on object marking in Slave), making the phenomenon easier to observe. There are two major distinction between the agreement asymmetry in Choctaw and Slave, however. Firstly, in Choctaw object agreement seems to optionally be able to reference the possessor or possessorum of the partitive inalienable in Choctaw, while this (as of the present moment) does not appear to be optional in Slave. Secondly, the possessor of a partitive possessum also appears to be able to determine subject agreement in Choctaw, and this does not appear to be an option in Slave, where subject agreement uniformly references the possessum. What this seems to indicate is that there is a consistent semantic difference between partitive and relational inalienable nouns across a typological sub-class of languages, but that individual languages may syntactically realize this in different ways.

5 The Northeastern Dene possessive construction

As mentioned in section 3 above, Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) proposes an account of the possessive construction for Slave’s sister languages, Tłı̨chǫ Yatì and Dene Sųliné, and they employ structures similar to the ones proposed by Rice (1989) for Slave compounds. Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) make an interesting note on their use of the term “possessive” for this construction, which, considering its role as a compound-former in Slave, is also pertinent here:

“While in our view it is somewhat misleading to call the construction under investigation “possessive,” we will nonetheless use this term, for two reasons. First, it is the established term in the literature on Dene languages. Second, the cases of canonical possession may be the core instance of this construction, from which it has been extended to other uses (see Taylor 1996). Readers should interpret “possessive construction” as our shorthand for “nominal argument licensing construction” or “NP construction.” (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 3)

The morphosyntax of possession in Tłı̨chǫ Yatì and Dene Sųliné is for the most part identical to what has already been described for Slave in sections 2.1 and 2.2, with the following exception: Overt possessors are in complementary distribution with possessive suffixes in Slave alienable possessive constructions, but appear to optionally co-occur with possessive suffixes in Tłı̨chǫ Yatì and Dene Sųliné, in both alienable (24b, 24e, 24d) and inalienable (24c) constructions:
(24) **Slave**

a. [Charlie ljé] t’áh
   Charlie dog.pns with
   ?aoht’é
   1sg.opt.go
   ‘I want to use Charlie’s dog’
   (Rice, 1989: 229)

**Dene Sulíné**

b. John bebesé
   John 3sg.knife.pns
   ‘John’s knife’ (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 5)

c. dëne dzaghé
   person ear.pns
   ‘(persons) ear’ (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 11)

**Tłı̨chó Yatíi**

d. amìi thį
   who dog.pns
   ‘whose dog?’ (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 5)

e. amìi welį
   who 3sg.dog.pns
   ‘whose dog?’ (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 5)

Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) do not take up the question of the co-occurrence of overt possessors and agreement, which appears to be more variable in the languages they target than it is in Slave, but they do note that (in line with Rice (2003)) “the co-occurrence of pronominal inflection and an overt noun phrase in Dene languages may be associated with specificity, case, or other referential properties not well understood” (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 5). This question will be likewise set aside here.

The possessed noun suffix in Dene Sulíné is the same -é seen in Slave, while the Tłı̨chó cognate takes the form of a moraic duplicate of the word-final vowel with a low tone, -ji (Tłı̨chó has lexical low tones wherever Slave and Dene Sulíné have a lexical high tone). Like Slave, the inalienable possessed noun suffix takes a variety of forms in both Dene Sulíné and Tłı̨chó Yatíi. A summary of how Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) contrast alienable and inalienable possession is shown in Table 3.

Based off these facts, Wilhelm and Saxon propose that all inalienable nouns have relational semantics, and that “the possessor of an inalienable noun will be merged as the complement of N within NP, the closest of all syntactic relationships” (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 14) as a product of that. The possessor of an alienable noun, meanwhile, is not an argument of N, but is merged at a higher level of the structure, in the specifier of a functional category nP - making them arguments of n rather than of N. The alienable possessor has an indirect relationship to N that is mediated by n, which is the head of a phrase analogous to vP in

| Table 3: Properties of alienable & inalienable possession (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 14) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **ALIENABLE**                   | **INALIENABLE**                 |
| **Syntax**                     |                                 |
| • possessor is not obligatory   | • possessor is obligatory       |
| • possessor is a noun (phrase), | • possessor is a noun (phrase)  |
| numeral, or (nominalized) relative clause |                        |
| **Semantics**                  |                                 |
| • possessor can stand in any semantic relation to the possessed noun | • possessor stands in a small set of semantic relations to the possessed noun |
| • noun is interpretable by itself, complete | • noun is uninterpretable without a possessor, incomplete |
| **Morphology**                 |                                 |
| • largely predictable          | • unpredictable                  |
| • vocalic suffix, with very few exceptions | • vocalic suffix / tonal suffix / no overt suffix |
the verbal domain, where external arguments are merged. In this way the asymmetry between inalienable and alienable possession is taken to mirror the asymmetry between internal and external arguments. The possessed noun suffix here is proposed to be a manifestation of $n$, and contributes a “free $R$” general relation (Partee, 2008; Partee & Borschev, 2003; etc.). This free $R$ relates the possessor to the head noun, by creating a syntactic and semantic argument relation between head noun and possessor which says that they stand in “some relation” determined by context. This accounts for the comparatively wide range of interpretations available with the alienable possessive construction, an example of which is given in 25b below:

(25) **Alienable Possession** (Saxon & Wilhelm, 2016: 15)

a. John bebesé
   John 3sg.knife.pns
   ‘John’s knife’

b. $nP$
   $\lambda x [\text{knife}(x) \ & R(x, John)]$
   $\text{DP}$
   $\lambda y x [\text{knife}(x) \ & R(x, y)]$
   $n'$
   $n$
   $\text{alienable possessor}$
   $\text{John}$
   $\text{N}$
   $\lambda y x [Q(x) \ & R(x, y)]$
   $\text{vocalic pns}$
   $\text{bes}$
   $\lambda x [\text{knife}(x)]$
   $\text{alienable possessum}$

Due to their relational semantics, inalienable nouns behave somewhat differently. As noted above, the possessor merges directly with the possessum NP as an inherent argument of the head noun. An $nP$ layer also occurs here, however, as inalienable nouns still occur in the possessive construction and bear a possessed noun suffix. According to the Saxon and Wilhelm (2016), inalienable nouns lexically select an $nP$, similar to how obligatorily transitive verbs select a $vP$. Inalienable nouns determine the meaning of the $n$ they select, and so the relation between the possessor and possessum is more restricted than the relation seen in alienable possession. Inalienable $n$ is semantically empty and returns the denotation of whatever it merges with. The morphological form that the possessed noun suffix takes is likewise determined by the lexical specification of N. This is demonstrated in 26 below, using the inalienable Dene Súliné noun -gán (‘arm’):
Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) assume a higher nominal projection, DP, above nP. No matter where the possessor is initially merged ([Spec nP] or [Spec NP]), it must eventually move into [Spec DP] in order to check a referential feature. Inalienable possessors must move into [Spec nP] on the way to [Spec DP], and that is the movement indicated by the arrow in 26. If this line of thinking is correct, then it could also be this movement that triggers agreement suffixes to appear (when they appear) in line with Rice (2003).

Saxon and Wilhelm’s (2016) proposal also seems to mirror, to a large extent, the structures proposed for possessive compounds in Slave by Rice (1989), which are reiterated below:

(27)

a. **Alienable Compounds:**

   $$[[N_{\text{root}}] [N_{\text{stem}} \text{possessive}]]$$

b. **Inalienable Compounds:**

   $$[[[N_{\text{root}}] [N_{\text{stem}}]] \text{possessive}]$$

What this dual model of possession doesn’t capture, however, is the asymmetry in agreement seen between relational and partitive inalienable nouns described in section 3.1. Section 6 below will propose a modified version of the proposal set out in Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) that is able to account for this distinction while still maintaining the basic morphological and semantic composition of Saxon and Wilhelm’s (2016) possessive nP.

### 6 A modified possessive construction

Recall that in section 2 some evidence was given for a distinction between what Rice (1989) calls ‘roots’ and ‘stems’, and that this evidence came from the interaction of what appear to be overt nominal categorizers with the possessive construction morphology. What this data crucially suggests is that the nominal categorizer occurs within and not in place of the possessive nP. That is to say, the head of possessive nP in Slave takes (at least\(^\text{12}\)) a categorized stem and not a root as its complement. It is this distinction, along with the idea that uncategorized syntactic formatives (i.e., roots) can take complements (Harley, 2014a)

\(^{12}\)I will not deal with the question of whether nP selects a DP or an NP complement here, but leave that as a question for further research in favour of following the notation of Saxon and Wilhelm (2016).
that will allow partitive and relational inalienable nouns to be distinguished here syntactically, and not just semantically.

Section 5 above briefly touched on the parallels drawn by Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) between the argument structure of their possessive $nP$ and transitive $vP$ in regards to internal and external arguments, and here that will be revised to reflect the inclusion of a root phrase, $\sqrt{P}$, and a nominal categorizing phrase (I diverge from the literature and call this categorizing head NP instead of $nP$, in order to avoid conflating Saxon and Wilhelm’s (2016) possessed noun suffix with the categorizer):

(28) **Parallels between the Nominal and Verbal Spine**

a. *Saxon and Wilhelm (2016)*
   
   Transitive: \[[external argument ] [internal argument] [verb] VP]\ $\sqrt{P}$
   
   Possessive: \[[alienable possessor ] [inalienable possessor] [possessum] NP]\ $nP$

b. *Modified Possessive Construction*
   
   Transitive: \[[external argument ] [internal argument] [ $\sqrt{\ P}$] $\sqrt{P}$]\ $\sqrt{P}$
   
   Possessive: \[[external possessor] [internal possessor] [ \sqrt{P}\ NP]\ $nP$

The introduction of a root *and* categorizing phrase here makes the possessive $nP$ more akin to a higher $\sqrt{P}$ level (Kratzer, 1996) which introduces an external argument and is not a categorizing head. Note that this preserves the analogy drawn between $nP$ and a verbal functional projection responsible for introducing the external argument. What I have labeled ‘internal possessor’ above is proposed to be the partitive possessor, and an argument of NP, while the ‘$\sqrt{P}$ possessor’ represents the relational possessor, an argument of the root. The various possible positions for a possessor to be merged into the possessive $nP$ (shown in the bracket structure in 28b) can be seen in tree form below:

(29)

```
  nP
 /   \
|    |  \
|    |   \
|    vP  \
|    /   \
|   N   \
|   /   \
N'  /     \\
   /       \\
-partitive possessor

   /   \
   |    |
   |    |  \
   |    |   \
   |    |   |
   |    v   |
   |     /   |
   NPS  /     |
   /       |
  alienable possessor
```

The interaction of the particular noun classes with this structure will be discussed individually in the sections below: alienable possession will be addressed in section 6.1, relational inalienable possession in section 6.2 and partitive inalienable possession in section 6.3. Before that can be undertaken, however, some further discussion of how agreement is established, and what role doubling plays in this process, is called for. As mentioned in section 2.1, Rice (2003) proposed an account of object agreement in Slave in which *in situ* objects are not eligible to participate in agreement - instead, when an object is dislocated a null resumptive
Inalienable possession in Slave

pronoun occupies the argument position, and it is this element that licenses object agreement. This accounts for the complementary distribution of overt, in situ objects and pronominal agreement. Pronouns in Slave, which are obligatorily null, likewise trigger object agreement.

I will be proposing a slight adjustment to this analysis of Slave agreement in order to capture the split behaviour of this ‘resumptive pronoun’ in regards to partitive and alienable possession. Instead of saying that a resumptive pronoun occupies the argument position of a moved or dislocated argument, I will hold here that (in at least some cases) it is instead a clitic double that triggers object agreement. The exact mechanism by which clitic doubling occurs will not be discussed in great detail here, as that would take this paper too far afield from its original goals. That being said, I am assuming that a null clitic which is coreferential with a dislocated putative object is the grammatical object argument (complement) of the verb, and also that this clitic is base-generated in a local configuration with the dislocated object such that the $\phi$-features of the clitic are valued by the overt DP/NP, possibly via an agreement relationship. The clitic is then separable from the DP/NP that it doubles, and may be stranded or move itself (see Nevins (2011) for details). The structure I will be using to represent clitic doubling here is borrowed from Nevins (2011):

(30)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{KP} \\
D_{DO} & \text{KP}_{DO} \\
K & \text{DP}
\end{array}
\]

In the tree in 30 the clitic, represented here by $D_{DO}$ ($do$ for direct object), is adjoined to a KP (case phrase) above the object DP (or NP). According to Nevins, case is assigned to the sister of $D_{DO}$ (KP$_{DO}$), while the clitic D does not have a case feature, leaving it open for movement and multiple agreement relationships once the DP/NP has been rendered inactive itself by having all of its $\phi$-features valued (the valuation of KP blocking access to the DP/NP $\phi$-features). For his purposes, the clitic moves and adjoins to the head of vP higher in the structure, itself becoming an actual agreement morpheme, but here it is assumed that the clitic simply raises to an argument position of (or enters into long distance agreement with) vP and triggers genuine agreement, in line with the claims of Rice (2003). So the important distinction between the proposal here and Nevins (2011) is that the agreement in Slave is not the clitic double itself, but is the product of an agreement relationship between the verb and the null clitic double.

On the other hand, subject agreement in this language does not appear to be a function of clitic doubling, but is formed by virtue of agreement alone. Slave subject agreement is also less restricted than object agreement, and occurs with overt, in situ subjects as well as null pronominal ones. Therefore, subject agreement is taken here to be a reflex of true agreement between a subject and Asp, a projection high in the verbal spine.

13Opinions seem to vary about whether the clitic is base-generated locally to the object it doubles and moves into argument position (Nevins, 2011), or whether it is is generated in situ and the DP/NP covertly moves into a local configuration with it (Sportiche, 1996). I am following Nevins (2011), and this has some important bearings on the analysis here, but other views may also be compatible, with some adjustment. See Anagnostopoulou (2006) and Nevins (2011), as well as the references therein, for further details on clitic doubling.

14It is also important to note that the proposal of Nevins (2011) relies on the Probe-Goal (Agree) framework of Chomsky (2000), and on the existence of a case phrase (KP). Slave, although it has rich agreement, shows no evidence whatsoever of a case system - I am assuming null case features for the sake of agreement here, but this may warrant revision in future.

15I say Asp here in place of the traditional T because it is likely that AspP plays an analogous role to TP in regards to subject agreement (etc.) in Northeastern Dene languages, as verbs in this language are highly sensitive to aspectual
6.1 Alienable possession in Slave

Alienable possession in Slave, in this account, proceeds much as it is proposed to do in Dene Sųliné and Tłı̨chǫ Yatì in Saxon and Wilhelm (2016):

(31) a. Charlie lié
   Charlie dog.pns
   ‘Charlie’s dog’ (Rice, 1989: 229)

b. $\lambda x[\text{dog}(x) & R(x, \text{Charlie})]$

The vocalic possessed noun suffix -é contains a “free $R$” that relates the possessum to the possessor via a contextually salient relationship. The major difference between this proposal and the one given by Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) is that, in this account, the overt possessor does not move out of $[\text{Spec nP}]$ to the Spec of a higher XP to check a referential feature. Rather, $[\text{Spec nP}]$ is taken here to be a sufficient position to have this checked. This accounts for the fact that agreement prefixes do not occur with overt possessors, as clitic doubling is triggered by movement/dislocation, and agreement is only licensed by proforms (pronouns and clitics). The overt possessor does not move, no clitic doubling occurs, and no agreement surfaces. Null pronominal possessors are free to enter into agreement from that position as well, as they are unrestricted by movement.

In section 3.1 it was established that subject agreement on the verb reflects the $\phi$-features of the possessum, when the alienable possessive construction is the grammatical subject:

(32) kuljé rała
    3pl.dog.pns 3sg.s.is.fast
    ‘their dog is fast’ (Rice, 1989: 209)

This can be accounted for by the following: any uninterpretable features on the possessor are satisfied by an agreement relationship with the vocalic possessed noun suffix that semantically selects it, rendering it unavailable as a participant in further agreement. This is not the case for the possessum, which must look outside of the possessive construction to have any uninterpretable $\phi$-features valued. This weakens the
analogy between the verbal and nominal/possessive spines made in 28b, as it assumes that NP, unlike vP, can form an agreement relationship with its internal argument—NP, therefore, is an intransitive categorizer.

Object agreement, although also targeting the possessum, proceeds by slightly different means. What I am proposing here is that clitic doubling targets the NP (possibly with the intervention of a KP as in Nevins (2011)) and not the nP. I will not spend too much time supporting this claim, but as both the possessor and object seem to have the ability to double (see section 3.1), it is likely not the whole nP that undergoes doubling. In this case it is the lower NP that is doubled, and produces the null clitic that licenses object agreement. The reason that it is the possessum and not the possessor NP that doubles may have something to do with uninterpretable $\phi$-features, or it may be the case that clitic doubling simply targets the NP that contains the putative object.

6.2 Relation inalienable possession in Slave

Relational inalienable possession as it will be described here most resembles the inalienable possessive construction of Saxon and Wilhelm (2016):

(a) Mary betá
   Mary 3sg.father.pns
   ‘Mary’s dad’ (Rice, 1989: 228)

(b) $\lambda x [\text{father}(x, \text{Mary})]$

Here the relational semantics of the root, i.e., the fact that it is ‘defined in relation to an individual’ (Rice, 1989) cause it to semantically select an argument DP (the relational possessor), with which it combines by functional application at LF. The possessed noun suffix in this case is variable and semantically vacuous, returning the denotation of the NP and having its morphological form determined by the root.

16The role of the DP level in Northeastern Dene languages is unclear (see Wilhelm (2014, 2015)), and so consideration of this will be omitted at present.
The syntactic necessity of the DP argument of the relational root is unclear, as Harley (2014a) and others have provided evidence that roots are syntactically vacuous and do not have selectional features that would allow for this. I will hold here that the possessor argument is only semantically required, and that arguments of a root do have a certain (syntactic) optionality about them as a product of roots lacking features. This has some bearing on the process of clitic doubling: If it is the case that syntactic roots have no features, and the features of the NP are located in the categorizing head N, then it seems natural that the features of the possessum would determine the features of the clitic, as the categorizing head N is the highest (most local) feature-bearing unit in the NP targeted by doubling, and therefore may act as an intervenor between a clitic double above NP and the relational possessor that is sister to the root. This accounts for why relational possessive constructions trigger object agreement with the possessum and not the possessor.

Subject agreement, on the other hand, proceeds much the same as with alienable possessive constructions. The movement of the possessor into [Spec nP] indicated by the arrow in 33b causes the referential feature (and other unvalued ϕ-features) to be checked in that position, rendering it ineligible for further agreement. This movement is also what triggers the obligatory appearance of the possessive prefix agreement in relational possession (not indicated in 33b, but bolded in 33a): The possessive prefix is a function of clitic doubling at the level of the embedded possessor NP—the clitic double is ostensibly stranded when that NP moves, and agreement appears.\(^{17}\)

---

\(^{17}\)The circumstances under which stranding of the clitic occurs over movement are unclear, but may have something to do with whether or not the doubled NP has uninterpretable ϕ-features.
6.3 Partitive inalienable possession in Slave

The partitive inalienable construction proposed here marks the biggest divergence from the account of Northeastern Dene possession given in Saxon and Wilhelm (2016):

\[(34)\]

\[\text{a. Mary bekw’ene}\]
\[\text{Mary 3sg. leg.PNS}\]
\[‘Mary’s leg’}^{18}\]

\[\text{b.}\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]
\[\lambda y\lambda x[\text{leg}(x) \& x T \text{Mary}]\]

The partitive possessor is neither an argument of the root nor of the possessive NP, but instead is an argument of the categorizing head of NP. This is analogous to the idea that the internal arguments of transitive verbs may be semantically selected as the complement of a root or selected as the subject of an inner predicate (Spec vP) (Cuervo, 2014; Harley, 2014b). The relational structure seen in section 6.2 parallels the former, while the partitive structure seen above parallels the latter.

As can be seen in 34b, I have borrowed the denotation proposed for partitive nouns by Mühlbauer (2007), but instead of assigning this to the root, I have assigned it to the categorizing head N. Whether the partitive semantics are a part of the root or the transitive NP is not crucial here, as long as the possessor is an argument of the NP and not the root phrase. I have chosen to include the partitive semantics as the denotation of N to highlight its transitivity, and also because there seems to be some syntactic evidence to suggest that the roots of partitive inalienables are separable from a partitive denotation. This comes from the existence of compounds such as those seen in 16, which is reiterated in 35 below:

\[^{18}\text{This is a cooked example based on data from Rice (1989). Any errors are my own.}\]
Both fi 'head' and gha 'hair' in the above should be partitive inalienables. In the compound in 35a the semantic head of the compound, gha, is an alienable stem. We know this because root-initial continuants (such as ‘gh / x ’) in Slave are underspecified for voice, and there is a split in voicing of the initial continuant depending on whether or not the root has been categorized (Rice, 1989: 129). Stem-initial continuants are always voiced after a vocalic prefix, and this is the case for gha in compounds above. Therefore, the contrast between 35a and 35b shows that the inalienability is not a function of the partitive root. I am assuming here that the partitive root in 35a is being categorized by the intransitive, bare NP that categorizes alienable nouns.

It also seems unlikely that the locus of partitive inalienability is nP—this is due to the variable nature of the possessed noun suffix and the fixed relational meaning not seen with the alienable, semantically meaningful nP. It could be the case that there is a third, partitive flavour of nP, but if that were so, you would expect the partitive possessor to be merged in [Spec nP] as with the alienable possessor, and you would not expect possessive prefix agreement to obligatorily occur with partitives, as they do not occur with overt alienable possessors in the same position (possessors don’t appear to need to move from that position). On a related note, having the partitive possessor merged in [Spec NP] also nicely captures the difference in interpretation of prefix-less possession between alienable and partitive inalienables:

\[(36)\]

a. [ʔamá ts’éré] laïdi
   mother blanket.pns where.is.it
   ‘where is mom’s blanket?’ (Rice, 1989: 229)

b. bebi ghú
   baby teeth
   ‘baby teeth ’(Rice, 1989: 229)

In 36a, the alienable possessive phrase lacks prefix agreement, but still receives a referential interpretation. This suggests that the alienable possessor is having its referential feature checked in situ, and therefore no movement occurs that would trigger clitic doubling and agreement. The partitive inalienable in 36b likewise lacks possessive prefixes on the possesum, suggesting that no movement of the possessor is occurring that would trigger clitic doubling. However, as noted by Rice (1989), the possessive phrase in 36b is also receiving a generic, non-referential interpretation, suggesting that its referential feature cannot be checked in its in situ position, in contrast with the alienable possessor. It seems safe to infer then, that the alienable and partitive possessors are base-generated in different locations. This, coupled with the fact that the partitive root also does not appear to be the locus of inalienability, leaves the categorizing head of NP as the last remaining candidate for the partitive inalienable denotation proposed by Mühlbauer (2007). Therefore, I am proposing that there exists in Slave both a transitive/partitive NP_{trans} and an intransitive, independent NP_{intrans}. As with the relational alienable construction, and the alienable construction of Saxon and Wilhelm (2016), a semantically vacuous nP is still selected for, providing the possessed noun suffix and a means of checking the referential feature of the possessor.

One happy consequence of having the partitive inalienable possessor merged into [Spec NP]_{trans} is that it provides us with a possible explanation for why object agreement occurs with the possessor of the partitive inalienable construction and not with the possesum, as it does elsewhere. This falls out from the configuration of clitic doubling adopted here (from Nevins (2011)):
The idea here is that, because the NP is the target for clitic doubling (or KP, adopting Nevins (2011)), the partitive possessor can act as an intervenor for determining the clitic double’s $\phi$-features, as it is higher in the putative object-containing NP than N, the locus of the putative object’s (possessum’s) $\phi$-features. This intervention of an N with valued $\phi$-features does not occur in alienable constructions, where the possessor is introduced in [Spec nP], nor in relational inalienable constructions, where the possessor is lower in the putative object NP than the $\phi$-feature carrying N. What is vital for this is the assumption that clitic doubling occurs as the NP is being built, before the possessor moves into [Spec nP] to check its referential feature. It may be the case that clitic doubling occurs with all NPs, and is only evident when it triggers agreement. Whatever the cause, the derivation according to this proposal proceeds as follows: the NP is built up from the root and is immediately doubled by the clitic. The rest of the possessive construction is built up (or the NP is merged into it) and the partitive possessor moves into [Spec nP] to check its referential feature:

This is followed by merging the entire possessive nP into its position in the sentential structure, by which point the possessor has moved to nP, rendering it ineligible for subject agreement, which proceeds as with alienable and relational inalienable constructions.
7 Summary and conclusion

Agreement asymmetries seen in Slave suggest that the inalienable class of nouns must be further divided into two subclasses: partitive and relational inalienable nouns. While all possessums, regardless of class, determine the $\phi$-features of subject agreement, the partitive inalienable possessor determines the value of object agreement, and this is not the case with alienable and relational nouns, which always have the possessum as the target of agreement. I have argued here that this is a product of the way that object agreement is formed in the language, in conjunction with variation in the position of the possessor in possessive construction across the three classes of nouns. Alienable possession has the possessor introduced in [Spec nP], and so when clitic doubling occurs on the putative object, it does not act as an intervenor for the valuation of the clitic double’s $\phi$-features. Relational possessors likewise do not act as intervenors, and this is because they are an argument of the possessum root, which semantically selects them. Roots lack $\phi$-features, which are situated in the categorizing head N, and act as an intervenor for agreement with anything interior to the root phrase. The possessors of partitive, however, are introduced as an argument in the specifier of a transitive categorizing head N$^{\text{TRANS}}$, and therefore are the most local candidate for valuing the $\phi$-features of the clitic double that determines object agreement. Because clitic doubling occurs as the NP is being built, the possessors interior to the NP have not yet moved into [Spec nP] to check a relational feature when the clitic is valued. This movement into [Spec nP] is what makes them ineligible for subject agreement, as it renders them inactive.

With this analysis, the semantics and morphological contributions of Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) are maintained, and this is important because it accounts for the fact that partitive and relational possessive constructions pattern together in the distribution of their agreement prefixes and in the variability of the possessed noun suffix, which is lexically determined when a semantically vacuous nP is projected. This also preserves the parallel drawn by Saxon and Wilhelm (2016) between the possessive construction in the nominal domain and the transitive construction in the verbal domain, but goes one step further by incorporating a theory of roots that helps distinguish between internal arguments semantically selected by the root and those selected by a categorizing head. It is unclear to what extent a proposal like the one given here might be applicable to other languages which exhibit a partitive/relational inalienability split (as noted in section 4), but the semantic and syntactic intersection in possessive phenomena between these languages indicate that this may be a fruitful area for future research.
Inalienable possession in Slave

References


### A Paradigms

**Table 1: Slave possessive paradigm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.sg</td>
<td>se-</td>
<td>sembehé</td>
<td>‘my knife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mbeh</td>
<td>‘knife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.sg</td>
<td>ne-</td>
<td>netl’ulé</td>
<td>‘your rope’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t’l’uh</td>
<td>‘rope’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.sg</td>
<td>be-/me-</td>
<td>meljé</td>
<td>‘his/her dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>li</td>
<td>‘dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.sg</td>
<td>ye-</td>
<td>yembechinché</td>
<td>‘his/her sled’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mbechinché</td>
<td>‘sled’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td>?ede- / de-</td>
<td>deljé</td>
<td>‘his/her own dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>li</td>
<td>‘dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>?e-</td>
<td>?eljé</td>
<td>‘someone’s dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>li</td>
<td>‘dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.pl / 2.pl</td>
<td>naxe-</td>
<td>naxets’érè</td>
<td>‘your (pl) / our blanket’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ts’érè</td>
<td>‘blanket’</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.pl</td>
<td>ku-/ki-/go-</td>
<td>kuljé</td>
<td>‘their dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>li</td>
<td>‘dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.pl Reflexive</td>
<td>kede-</td>
<td>kedés’ó</td>
<td>‘Their own grandmother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-só</td>
<td>‘grandmother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.pl</td>
<td>go-</td>
<td>gotá</td>
<td>‘their father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-tá</td>
<td>‘father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal</td>
<td>?ele-</td>
<td>?elekwighá</td>
<td>‘each other’s hair’</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kwighá (?)</td>
<td>‘hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areal Possessor</td>
<td>go-</td>
<td>?oleré</td>
<td>‘its (the area’s) smoke’</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>le (?)</td>
<td>‘smoke’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>