

**“Your birch-bark bag has something” –
Grammaticalization and diachrony of locative, existential and possessive predication**

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It is widely known that locative, existential and possessive predications are closely related in many languages of the world (see Lyons 1967, Clark 1978, Freeze 1992, Hengeveld 1992, Koch 2012). In what follows, I conceive locative and existential predications as expressing the temporary presence or absence of a figure (a.k.a. theme, pivot) in a ground (a.k.a. location, coda), their difference lying in perspectivization (Hengeveld 1992: 94–100; Creissels 2019: 37). The prototypical instances of locative and existential predications are clauses like (1a) and (1b), respectively. In turn, predications which either express the permanent presence/absence of a certain referent (1c) or lack a specified location (1d) represent a different, though often formally similar, type of predication. Following Koch (2012), I call the former *bounded existentials* and the latter *generic existentials*. Possessive predication expresses an asymmetric and usually unidirectional relation of two entities, the possessor and the possessee, whereby the possessee belongs to the possessor (1e).

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|------|--|-----------------------|
| (1a) | <i>The book is on the table.</i> | (LOCATIVE) |
| (1b) | <i>There is a book on the table.</i> | (EXISTENTIAL) |
| (1c) | <i>There are many lions in Africa.</i> | (BOUNDED EXISTENTIAL) |
| (1d) | <i>There are many unhappy people.</i> | (GENERIC EXISTENTIAL) |
| (1e) | <i>Bill has a book.</i> | (POSSESSIVE) |

Given the overlap of the functional domains expressed, it is not surprising that many languages use similar or even the same linguistic structures to express the predications of type (1a) to (1e) (Hengeveld 1992: Ch. 5.1.3; Heine 1997: Ch. 2). Whereas this can be described on a synchronic level from various perspectives, it has also diachronic implications given that languages evolve during time and linguistic structures may spread from one functional domain to another.

Within the realm of possessive predication, the grammaticalization of so-called *habeo*-verbs is a classical instance. They often have their lexical source in verbs like *get, grab, take, obtain, hold, carry* or alike, as e.g. the Dullay (< Eastern Cushitic < Afro-Asiatic) verbal root *-sheeg-* ‘have; carry on one’s head or shoulder’ or the Khanty (< Uralic) verb *taj-* ‘have; hold; carry’ (Heine 1997: 47–48; Honti 2008: 172). Additionally, as shown by Koch (2012: 572–575) and Creissels (2019: 70–76), *habeo*-verbs can appear in existential clauses, like in Greek (< Indo-European) (2); the distinguishing criterion of a possessive (2a) and existential (2b) reading is the locative coding of the “possessor” in (2b). The Mansi (< Uralic) example (3) shows a sentence, structurally ambiguous between the two readings, but the semantics of the “possessor” rather favour an existential reading.

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|------|--|--|
| (2a) | <i>Ta chōriá den échoun dáskalous.</i> | |
| | the villages NEG have.PRS.3PL teachers.ACC | |
| | ‘The villages don’t have teachers.’ | |

(2b) *Den eíche dáskalous sta chōriá.*
 NEG have.PST.3SG teachers.ACC in.the villages
 ‘There were no teachers in the villages.’
 (Greek (< Indo-European); Creissels 2019: 71)

(3) *Pajp-ən matər o:nsi-i.*
 birchbark.bag-POSS.2SG something have-PRS.3SG
 ‘There is something in your birch-bark bag.’ ~
 ?‘Your birch-bark bag has something.’
 (Mansi (< Uralic); Kannisto & Liimola 1956. OUDB Northern Mansi Corpus. Text ID 1235, 211)

Besides that, existential predications of the type (1b) show a wide variation of potential source structures, as shown by Creissels (2019). E.g., Icelandic (< Indo-European) shows a construction, which formally resembles identificational clauses (4a). In Nganasan (< Uralic), a similar construction seems to have developed further on the grammaticalization pathway: Existential clauses are formed with the existential verb *təisʹa*, lexicalized from the combination of the demonstrative stem *tə-* and the copula verb *isʹa* (Wagner-Nagy 2019: 354; example 4b).

(4a) *Pað eru mys í baðkerinu.*
 that are mice in bathtub
 ‘There are mice in the bathtub.’ (lit. ‘That are mice in the bathtub.’)
 (Icelandic (< Indo-European); Creissels 2019: 79)

(4b) *tahariábə təndə siti bəŋgüʔtiə təi-čü.*
 now there two burrow EX-AOR.3SG
 ‘Now, there are two burrows.’ (< lit. ‘Now, that is two burrows there.’)
 (Nganasan (< Uralic); Wagner-Nagy 2019: 355)

Finally, Hengeveld (1992: 238–240), Newman (2002) and Ameka & Levinson (2007), among others, account for the grammaticalization of posture verbs like *stand*, *sit*, *lie* as copula elements in locative and existential predication. As a case in point, Mbay (< Nilo-Saharan) uses, among others, the posture verb *tən* ‘lie’ in existential clauses (5).

(5) *mbētē li-í lā tən.*
 book POSS-you LOC lying
 ‘Here is your book.’
 (Mbay (< Nilo-Saharan); Newman 2002: 10, cit. from Keegan 1997: 76)

This non-exhaustive sketch already shows that many synchronically observed overlaps in the realm of locative, existential and possessive predication are connected to diachronic developments. Having in mind the similar, if not identical, underlying semantic structure of the discussed predication types, this does not surprise.

The aim of this workshop is to bring together researchers working on various aspects of the named functional domain and to discuss the role of diachrony and grammaticalization processes within it. Therefore, contributions may take any theoretical perspective and deal with single languages or work cross-linguistically, granted that they somehow acknowledge the diachronic perspective of the conference. Additionally, it is desirable that the presented work relates to the

theoretical understanding of locative, existential and possessive predication. Finally, the contributions to this workshop shall not interfere with eventual contributions to the SLE workshop on core and periphery in locative and existential predication. The accepted abstracts cover various aspects of the discussed domains. Two of them are more theoretical in nature, whereas the other two are rather case studies dealing with Semitic and Indo-European languages, respectively. All of them discuss relevant co-expression patterns and aspects of their diachronic development; one abstract additionally targets negative structures in the discussed domains.

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Negated but similar - Negation in the domains of locative, existential, and possessive predication: The case of Indo-European.

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The relationship between the domains of predicative possession, predicate location, and existence has been explored by many scholars. These relationships have often been argued for based on similarities in the structural coding means (i.e., type of copula, indexation, or flagging) deployed in affirmative clauses across these domains. Here, we ask to what degree does this relationship extend to the patterns in which these domains are negated. This is motivated by the well-known finding that negation in these domains shows rich and complex synchronic and diachronic patterns, both in individual languages and cross-linguistically (e.g., Croft 1991, Veselinova 2014, Van der Auwera & Krasnoukhova 2020, Shirtz, Talamo, & Verkerk 2021, Verkerk & Shirtz 2022).

To do this, we focus on the expression of negation in the three target domains across the Indo-European language family, a diverse family with a large amount of data available throughout most of its branches. We explore the variety of ways in which each domain is negated in the languages of our sample, illustrating the typological wealth of negation patterns across the three domains and the intra-linguistic variation in negation patterns within and across domains. We use this to explore the similarities and differences in negation patterns in the three domains across Indo-European and its branches, thus measuring the degree to which negation patterns support the purported grammatical relationship between predicative possession, predicate location, and existence.

To illustrate this variation, consider the Hindi clause in (1), expressing predicative possession with the copula *hai* indexing the possessed and the possessor flagged by *ke* Genitive + *pa:s* ‘near’. The same coding means are deployed also in clauses expressing predicate location, which differ in the relative order of ‘cats’ and ‘book’. The clause in (1) and its predicate location counterpart are both negated by the standard Hindi negation marker, *nahĩ*. The negation of Hindi existentials, however, may also be signaled by *nahĩ* functioning as a negative existential copula, without *hai* (Bashir 2006). This, then, illustrates the difference in negation patterns across domains.

Hindi (Indo-Aryan; own knowledge)

(1) *billi:jo=ke pa:s kita:b nahĩ hai* ‘the cats don’t have the book’
cat.PL=GEN near book NEG COP.PRS.3SG

The Odia negative copula *nah-* is used to negate clauses across all three domains, illustrated in (2a-b). In the past tense, however, the negation marker *no* is deployed, followed by the past tense copula *t^ha*, culminating in a tense/aspect-based split of copular negation that is common across Indo-Iranian. English illustrates another pattern of variation, where existential and possessive predication may be negated by the indefinite negator *no* as in (3a), but also by the English negated auxiliary construction *do + not* as in (3b), or (rarely) by both patterns as in (3c). The strategies found in (3b-c), however, are not available in English existentials and predicate location.

Odia (Indo-Aryan; Neukom & Patnaik: 2003: 343-344; edited glosses)

(2a) *tɔmɔ-rɔ kɔ:ɲɔ kɔnca lɔnka nah-ĩ ki* ‘Don’t you have green chili?’
2.POL-GEN QUANT green chili COP.NEG-3SG Q

(2b) *set^{hi}-re kehi nah-anti* 'There is no one in it'
there-LOC anyone COP.NEG-3PL

English (Germanic; COCA (Davies 2012))

(3) (a) *We have no car* (b) *We don't have a car* (c) *I don't have no car*

In this study, we focus on the emergence of within-family splits in the negation strategies of locative, existential, and possessive predicates. We identify splits of different nature 1) splits affecting all three domains equally (e.g., those based on tense-aspect), 2) splits between domains, such that possession and/or location and/or existence are negated in different ways, and 3) complex combinations of 1) and 2). We typologize the different diachronic processes that give rise to such splits, shedding light on sources of both semantic, lexical, and syntactic innovation that shape the expression of locative, existential, and possessive predicates.

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The development of locative, existential and possessive predication from a functional perspective

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This paper discusses various diachronic pathways of development of locative, existential and possessive predication using the framework of Functional Discourse Grammar (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008) and drawing on earlier work on the topic by the author (Hengeveld 1992). The focus is on two different aspects. The first concerns the diachronic development of the constructions involved as a whole, the second concerns the diachronic development of the copular element used within these constructions, if any.

As regards the first aspect, I will show that locative, existential, and possessive constructions may express meanings other than their original ones within the domain under study. Table 1 shows the distribution of constructions over meanings. It clearly shows that possessive meaning is most often parasitic on constructions that not are possessive in origin, locative meaning least often, with (locative-)existential meaning occupying an intermediate position. The paper will provide the empirical data that support Table 1.

Construction Meaning	Lexical	Pseudo-transitive	Propriative	Predicative quantifier	Locative	Existential
Locative	+					
(Locative-)Existential	+	+	+	+		
Possessive	+	+	+	+	+	+

Table 1. Constructions versus meanings

As regards the second aspect, the paper discusses the development of the copular element in the different types of predication. This copular element may have its origin in a locative, possessive, perception, or existential predicate of a lexical nature. Table 2 shows how these types of predicate enter the different construction types. Interestingly, it is the lexical possessive predicate that enters the widest range of construction types. Again, the paper will present the empirical data on which Table 2 is based.

Origin of Copula Construction	Locative predicate	Perception predicate	Possessive predicate	Existential predicate
Existential			+	+
Pseudo-transitive		+	+	
Locative	+			

Table 2. Distribution of copula of different origins across different construction types

Combining the data in the two tables, it seems that the conclusion may be that possessive meaning is expressed drawing in the widest possible range of construction types, while at the same time lexical possessive predicates are an important source for the creation of copular elements in languages.

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‘Be/have’ verbs in historical perspective

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A ‘be/have’ verb is a verb expressing possession in clauses such as English *John has a car*, in which the coding of the Possessor and the Possessee is similar to that of A and P in typical transitive clauses, but also used intransitively as a copula in plain-locational predication (i.e., in clauses such as English *John is in his office*),¹ sometimes also in nominal and/or adjectival predication (*John is a teacher, John is tall*). The following examples (from Li & Navarro 2015: 86, 89, 93) illustrate such a configuration in Kikuyu (Bantu), an AVP/SV language in which subjects are obligatorily indexed by means of a verbal prefix.²

- (1) *mũ-ti-rĩ* *arimũ.*
SBJ:2PL-NEG-**be/have** PL.teachers(2)
‘You are not teachers.’ (nominal predication)

- (2) *tũ-rĩ* *a-rũaru.*
SBJ:1PL-**be/have** cl2-sick
‘We are sick.’ (adjectival predication)

- (3) *i-bera* *rĩ-rĩ* *gĩ-kombe-inĩ.*
SG-pear(5) SBJ:cl5-**be/have** SG-cup(7)-LOC
‘The pear is in the cup.’ (plain-locational predication)

- (4) *tũ-rĩ* *n-gari.*
SBJ:1PL-**be/have** SG-car(9)
‘We have a car.’ (possessive predication)

- (5) *ha-rĩ* *benjũ* *metha-inĩ.*
SBJ:cl16-**be/have** SG.pencil(9) SG.table(9)-LOC
‘There is a pencil on the table.’ (inverse-locational predication)

Most of the languages that have a ‘be/have’ verb are spoken in Mainland South East Asia. In this area, according to Chappell & Lü (2022), ‘be/have’ verbs are mainly found in Tibeto-Burman (Jingpho, Tujia, and several languages belonging to the Lolo-Burmese, Qiangic and Karenic branches of Tibeto-Burman), but also in two Austroasiatic languages (Bugan and Mang), in one Hmongic language (Yanghao), in three Sinitic languages (Hainan Southern Min, Linxia and Dabu Hakka), and in four varieties of Bai (a language whose classification as a Sinitic language or a highly sinicized Tibeto-Burman language is unclear).

Outside of Mainland South East Asia, this configuration is attested in a few languages of the Ghana-Togo region in West Africa: Akan (Kwa; Boadi 1971, Redden & Owusu 1995), Nkonya (Kwa; Reineke 1972) and Lama (Gur; Simnara 2019).

The other languages for which I have been able to find mentions of the existence of a ‘be/have’ verb show no areal clustering:

- Indonesian (Austronesian; Sneddon 1996),

¹ On plain-locational predication, as opposed to inverse-locational predication, see Creissels (2019).

² The role played by the subject index of class 16 in the inverse-locational clause (5) is comparable to that of *there* in the English equivalent of this clause.

- Diu Indo-Portuguese (Creole; Cardoso 2009),
- Gulf Pidgin Arabic (Bakir 2014),
- Iatmul and Manambu (two closely related Papuan languages; Jendraschek 2012, Aikhenvald 2008),
- Kikuyu (Bantu; Li & Navarro 2015).

In the presentation I would like to submit for the Workshop “Grammaticalization and diachrony of locative, existential and possessive predication”, I show that, for at least some of the languages listed above, there is solid evidence that the emergence of a ‘be/have’ verb resulted from one of the following scenarios:

- ‘have’ verb > existential predicator > locational copula
- copula used in possessive clauses of the type ‘At Possessor is Possessee’ > ‘have’ verb
- copula used in possessive clauses of the type ‘Possessor is with Possessee’ > ‘have’ verb

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Parallels in the development from locative and existential predications to possessive structures in Arabic and Hebrew

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This work takes as its starting point claims made in the typological and grammaticalisation literature then blends these with statements and analyses that stem from theoretical syntactic perspectives, with the aim at a reconstruction of Arabic and colloquial Hebrew possessive structures, meant to provide an analysis of the varied steps in the trajectory. Highlighting what led to the grammaticalisation of what synchronically appears to be a transitive have-like possessive structures in languages that do not possess a quintessential lexical ‘have’ predicate of the type that characterises Romance and Germanic possessive structures, the study will provide an answer to the question how be possessive predications mould into have ones, having themselves already stemmed from other clausal structures. Possessives in Arabic have developed out of a (predicative) locative structure Comrie (1991); Heine (1997), while according to Berman (1978), the Hebrew possessive structure is a development out of existentials. A synchronic analytical difference which characterises the two possessive structures is the following: The theoretical Arabic literature appears to have caught up with claims in Stassen (2009) that Arabic clausal possessives display a have-Drift that has led to their transitive have-like nature. Hallman (2020) has argued that Arabic possessives can be classified as be and have types, further mentioning that the latter is a development of the former, in line with a number of claims in the literature, e.g. Benveniste (1966). In the Hebrew syntactic literature, in contrast, possessives such as (1) are analysed distinctly, even if the varied strands in the literature agree on their diachronic origin as existentials.

- (1) yeš le-dani harbe sfarim
EXIST to-Dani many books
Dani has many books.

The claim put forward here is that the above Hebrew structure can best be characterised as a transitive have structure as Shlonsky (1987) analyses it. However, that is not all. The full picture is such that structures such as (2) are also available. In the analysis to be presented here, these structures are treated as be predicates on a par with Arabic counterparts. These are hypothesised to have functioned as precursors of the have structures in (1), even if the availability of such structures is not given much exposure in the literature.

- (2) le-dani sfarim harbe
to-Dani books many
Dani has many books.

Key to the development in the structures across the two systems is the earlier development of a P that bleaches into a CASE marker, in which *la* in Hebrew develops as a DATIVE marker (Borer and Grodzinsky, 1986), while collectively, the locative Ps *ʕand* ‘at’, *maʕ* ‘with’ and *la* ‘to’ grammaticalise as dependent markers that identify their erstwhile complement as the possessor NP. In both instances, a possessor grammaticalises as the SUBJ of a BE possessive predication. The main difference is that in Hebrew it is a NP, while in Arabic, it is a PP, parallel to ‘to’ + NP structures in English. This stage in the development constitutes a be predication; one that in the case of Arabic is merely a semantic development out of an inverted locative predicative structure. In both languages, it is a zero element that predicates of these structures. It may have been for this reason that by time we then observe the development of a pseudo-verbal HAVE predication moulding itself, as the BE possessive structures in both systems shift and develop into a HAVE structure. While Arabic reaches this stage via a dependent-to-head marking shift, Hebrew makes use of the existential structure, with the change involving a remapping between the grammatical functions/relations and the different thematic arguments involved.

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