

Predicative possessives in Budai Rukai*

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1 Introduction

- Across the world's languages, predicative possessives are expressed by different syntactic strategies (Heine 1997, Stassen 2009, Myler 2014, 2016, a.o.).

- (1) a. English
I have a dog.
- b. Yucatec (Mayan, Freeze 1992:577)
yaan huntul ciimin ti? in-paapa.
COP one horse P my-father
'My father has a horse.' (= A horse is with my father.)
- c. Central Amis (Formosan, Zeitoun et al. 1999:3)
ira ku paysu nira.
exist NOM money 3SG.GEN
'He has money.' (= His money exists.)

- Most Formosan languages (Austronesian; Taiwan) employ the strategy 'X's Y exists' for predicative possessives, including Budai Rukai (Zeitoun 2000). The predicate is also used in existentials and locatives (Zeitoun 2024, Zeitoun et al. 1999, a.o.).

- (2) a. Y<a>kay ku tawpungu=**li**.
<AV.REAL>exist NOM dog=**1SG.GEN**
'I have a dog.'
- b. Y<a>kay ku tawpungu.
<AV.REAL>exist NOM dog
'There is a dog.'
- c. Y<a>kay **nakwane** ku tawpungu.
<AV.REAL>exist **1SG.OBL** NOM dog
'The dog is with me.'

- **Goal:** to investigate the possessive constructions in Budai Rukai, in terms of the grammatical relations of possessors and possessums

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- **Claims:**

- The genitive predicative possessor originates inside the DP headed by the possessum.
- The genitive predicative possessor behaves as a grammatical subject, whereas the nominative possessum is inert.
- The genitive predicative possessor undergoes A-movement to Spec,IP. This movement is unpronounced but feeds later subject-restricted A'-movement.

- **Outline:**

- §2: Theoretical background
- §3: Possessors pronounced in PossP
- §4: Possessors as grammatical subjects
- §5: Possessums as inert arguments
- §6: Analysis
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2 Theoretical background

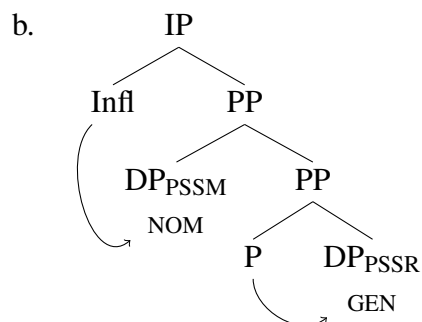
- Theoretically, two main proposals can be found: the locative approach (Huang 2013) and the expletive approach (Myler 2014, 2016).

2.1 Locative approach

- Following Freeze 1992, Huang 2013 proposes a locative syntax for 'X's Y exists' (i.e., 'The house is with me.') in Mayrinax Atayal (Formosan). The predicate 'exist' is regarded as a preposition. The possessum is regarded as the grammatical subject, while the possessor is regarded as the object of the preposition.¹
- In terms of case-marking, the possessum is assigned nominative (absolutive) by Infl, while the possessor is assigned inherent genitive by the preposition (= 'exist') and undergoes cliticization onto the possessum in morphology.

(3) a. Mayrinax Atayal (Huang 2013:42)

Kiya a imuwang=niya.
 exist IND.ABS house=3SG.GEN
 'He has a house.'

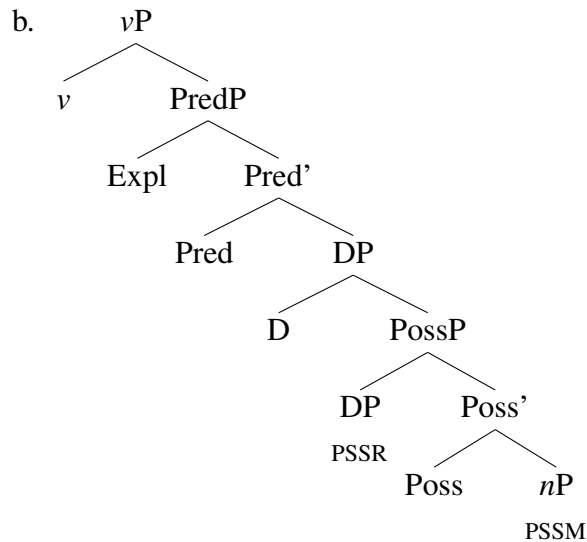


¹The tree structure presented here in (3b) is a simplified version of Huang's tree, where more projections of the preposition are posited. For the ease of expository convenience, the functional projections of the preposition is removed.

2.2 Expletive approach

- Myler 2014, 2016 propose an expletive syntax for ‘X’s Y exists’ in Quechua. The possessor is contained in a DP headed by the possessum, which serves as a predicate of an expletive subject.

- (4) a. Quechua (Myler 2014:294)
 Noqa-qta auto-s-ni-y tiya-n.
 1SG-GEN car-PL-EUPH-1POSS be_{exist}-3S
 ‘I have cars.’



- Main difference between two proposals:** The possessum is expected to be the grammatical subject in the locative approach, whereas neither the possessum or the possessor is expected to be the grammatical subject in the expletive approach.
- Highlight of Budai Rukai:**
 - The predicative possessor starts out in the possessum DP, following Myler 2014, 2016.
 - The predicative possessor serves as the grammatical subject in Budai Rukai, not the possessum or an expletive subject as expected in these two approaches.

3 Possessors pronounced in PossP

- Argument:** Predicative possessors are pronounced in PossP and form a constituent with possessums, thus like regular DP possessors but unlike clausal subjects on the surface.

3.1 Genitive marking

- The predicative possessor is genitive-marked, like the regular possessor but not like the nominative clausal subject.

- (5) a. Y<a>kay ku tawpungu=li.
 <AV.REAL>exist NOM dog=1SG.GEN
 ‘I have a dog.’
- b. Wa-pacay ku tawpungu=li.
 AV.REAL-die NOM dog=1SG.GEN
 ‘My dog died.’
- c. Wa-lrumadh=**aku** ki tawpungu.
 AV.REAL-hit=1SG.NOM OBL dog
 ‘I hit Lavurase.’

3.2 Contextual allomorphy

- Budai Rukai shows contextual allomorphy for kinship terms. The predicative possessor shows the allomorphy like the regular possessor.

(6)	Inalienable possession (kinship)					
	father	mother	older sibling	younger sibling		book
1S	ama	ina	kaka	agi=li		hungu=li
2S	t-ama=su	t-ina=su	t-aka	agi		hungu=su
3S	t-ama=ini	t-ina=ini	t-aka=ini	agi=ini		hungu=ini
1P.IN	t-ama=ta	t-ina=ta	t-aka=ta	agi=ta		hungu=ta
1P.EX	t-ama=nay	t-ina=nay	t-aka=nay	agi=nay		hungu=nay
2P	t-ama=numi	t-ina=numi	t-aka=numi	agi=numi		hungu=numi
3P	t-ama=lini	t-ina=lini	t-aka=lini	agi=lini		hungu=lini

- (7) a. Wa-kela-nga ka t-aka-Ø.
AV.REAL-come-PFV NOM T-older.sibling-2SG.GEN
'Your older sibling has come.'
- b. Y<a>kay ku t-aka-Ø?
<AV.REAL>exist NOM T-older.sibling-2SG.GEN
'Do you have an older sibling?'

3.3 Word order

- The predicative possessor is required to follow the possessum, like the regular possessor but unlike the clausal subject which can either precede or follow the object.

- (8) a. Y<a>kay [X ki Lavurase] [ku tawpungu] [✓ ki Lavurase].
<AV.REAL>exist [X GEN Lavurase] [NOM dog] [✓ GEN Lavurase]
Intended: 'Lavurase has a dog.'
- b. Wa-a<lea>leale [X ki Lavurase] [ku tawpungu] [✓ ki Lavurase].
AV.REAL-<RED>bark [X GEN Lavurase] [NOM dog] [✓ GEN Lavurase]
Intended: 'Lavurase's dog is barking.'
- c. Wa-lrumay [✓ ku Lavurase] [ki tawpungu] [✓ ku Lavurase].
AV.REAL-hit [✓ NOM Lavurase] [OBL dog] [✓ NOM Lavurase]
'Lavurase hit the dog.'

3.4 Cliticization

- The pronominal predicative possessor remains with the possessum, like the regular possessor but unlike the clausal subject which cliticizes onto the verb.

- (9) a. Y<a>kay ku tawpungu=**li**.
<AV.REAL>exist NOM dog=**1SG.GEN**
'I have a dog.'
- b. *Y<a>kay=**yaku** ku tawpungu.
<AV.REAL>exist=**1SG.NOM** NOM dog
'I have a dog.'
- (10) a. Wa-pacay ku tawpungu=**li**.
AV.REAL-die NOM dog=**1SG.GEN**
'My dog died.'
- b. Wa-lrumadh=**aku** ki tawpungu.
AV.REAL-hit=**1SG.NOM** OBL dog
'I hit Lavurase.'

4 Possessors as grammatical subjects

- **Argument:** Although contained in the DP headed by the possessum like regular possessors, predicative possessors function as grammatical subjects, syntactically differing from regular possessors.

4.1 Controlled PRO

- The grammatical subject can be controlled PRO in Budai Rukai. The predicative possessor can serve as controlled PRO, which shows its status as a grammatical subject, whereas the regular possessor cannot.

- (11) a. Ma-dalam=aku [ka-sipelrenge **PRO**].
AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [STAT-sleep **PRO**]
'I like to sleep.'
- b. Ma-dalam=aku [lrabwale **PRO**].
AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [run **PRO**]
'I like to run.'
- (12) a. Ma-dalam=aku [ikay ku tawpungu **PRO**].
AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [exist NOM dog **PRO**]
'I like to have a dog.'
- b. *Ma-dalam=aku [lrabwale ku tawpungu=**PRO**].
AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [run NOM dog=**PRO**]
Intended 'I like for my dog to run.'

- Note that the predicate here takes a control structure rather than lexical restructuring (see Wurmbrand 2004); for example, the structure can host clausal negation.

- (13) a. Ma-dalam=aku [**kai** ka-sipelrenge **PRO**].
AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [**NEG** STAT-sleep **PRO**]
'I like not to sleep.'
- b. Ma-dalam=aku [**kai** ikay ku tawpungu **PRO**].
AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [**NEG** exist NOM dog **PRO**]
'I like to not have a dog.'

4.2 Quantifier float

- The quantifier in Budai Rukai typically appears in a post-nominal position, as seen in topicalization where a constituent is topicalized.

- (14) a. Ka taraalupu **makanaelre**, wa-lapu ku tawpungu.
NOM hunter **all** AV.REAL-keep OBL dog
'All the hunters keep a dog.'
- b. ***makanaelre** ka taraalupu, wa-lapu ku tawpungu.
all NOM hunter AV.REAL-keep OBL dog
'All the hunters keep a dog.'

- The grammatical subject but not the grammatical object can license a floating quantifier in a non-adjacent position. The quantifier can be adjacent to the modified argument, but can only be non-adjacent for the subject but not the object.

- (15) a. Wa-senay (✓) ka la-sinsi **makanaelre** i-gaku (✓).
 AV.REAL-sing (all) NOM PL-teacher all LOC-school (all)
 ‘All the teachers sang at school.’
- b. Kay sini, wa-lrumay (✓) ki la-panudhu **makanaelre** i-gaku (✗).
 this teacher AV.REAL-hit (all) OBL PL-student all LOC-school (*all)
 ‘This teacher hit all the students at school.’

- The predicative possessor patterns with the grammatical subject in licensing non-adjacent quantifier float, whereas the regular possessor cannot.²

- (16) a. Wa-lapu **makanaelre** ku tawpungu **ka** **taraalupu**.
 AV.REAL-keep all OBL dog NOM hunter
 ‘All the hunters keep a dog.’
- b. Y<a>kay **makanaelre** ku tawpungu **ki** **taraalupu**.
 <AV.REAL>exist all NOM dog GEN hunter
 ‘All the hunters have a dog.’
- c. *M-u<a>bere **makanaelre** ku tawpungu **ki** **taraalupu**.
 M-<AV.REAL>escape all NOM dog GEN hunter
 Intended: ‘The dogs of all the hunters escaped.’

4.3 Topicalization

- In Budai Rukai, the grammatical subject but not the grammatical object can be topicalized in AV (= active voice).

- (17) a. **Ka Lavurase**, wa-lrumay ki tawpungu.
 NOM Lavurase AV.REAL-hit OBL dog
 ‘Lavurase hit the dog.’
- b. ***Ki** / ***Ki tawpungu**, wa-lrumay ka Lavurase.
 OBL / NOM dog AV.REAL-hit NOM Lavurase
 ‘Lavurase hit the dog.’

- The predicative possessor can be topicalized without a pronoun in-situ or a resumptive pronoun, whereas the regular possessor cannot (see also Huang 2013 for Mayrinax Atayal). I assume that the pronominal strategy involves a hanging topic base-generated in the left periphery.

- (18) a. Ka Lavurase, y<a>kay ku daane(=ini).
 NOM Lavurase, <AV.REAL>exist NOM house(=3SG.GEN)
 ‘Lavurase has a house.’
- b. Ka Lavurase, m-u<a>kulrudru ka daane*(=ini).
 NOM Lavurase M-<AV.REAL>fall NOM house*(=3SG.GEN)
 ‘Lavurase’s house fell.’

²(16c) is grammatical when the quantifier ‘all’ modifies the DP ‘dog’.

4.4 *Wh*-movement

- Like most Austronesian languages (see Georgopoulos 1985, Aldridge 2002, Potsdam 2007, Tsai 2024, a.o.), the fronted interrogative is a *wh*-predicate and the rest of the clause is headless relativization in Budai Rukai (C.-F. Chen 1999).
- With an AV headless relative clause, only the grammatical subject (= agent) but not the grammatical object (= theme) can undergo operator movement within the relative clause and be identified with the *wh*-predicate. The thematic object can only undergo *wh*-movement through an OV verb (object voice), where the object becomes a grammatical subject (Shih 2025).

- (19) a. Aneane [ka **wa-lrumay** ki tawpungu]?
 who [NOM **AV.REAL-hit** OBL dog]
 ‘Who hit the dog?’ (= The one that hit the dog is who?)
- b. *Manemane [ka **wa-lrumay** ka Lavurase]?
 what [NOM **AV.REAL-hit** NOM Lavurase]
 ‘What did Lavurase hit?’
- c. Manemane [ka **lrumay** ki Lavurase]?
 what [NOM **OV.hit** GEN Lavurase]
 ‘What did Lavurase hit?’

- The predicative possessor can undergo *wh*-movement with an AV verb, whereas the regular possessor cannot (see also Huang 2013 for Mayrinax Atayal).

- (20) a. Aneane [ku **y<a>kay** ku daane]?
 who [NOM **<AV.REAL>exist** NOM house]
 ‘Who has a house?’
- b. *Aneane [ku **m-u<a>kadrulru** ku danne]?
 who [NOM **M-<AV.REAL>fall** NOM house]
 ‘Whose house fell?’

4.5 Relativization

- The grammatical subject but not the grammatical object can be relativized with an AV verb. The thematic object can be relativized only through an OV verb, where the object becomes a grammatical subject.

- (21) a. M-u<a>bere ka [wa-lrumay ki tawpungu ka] lasu.
 M-<AV.REAL>escape NOM [AV.REAL-hit OBL dog REL] man
 ‘The man that hit the dog escaped.’
- b. *M-u<a>bere ku [wa-lrumay ka Lavurase ka] tawpungu.
 M-<AV.REAL>escape NOM [AV.REAL-hit NOM Lavurase REL] dog
 ‘The dog that Lavurase hit escaped.’
- c. M-u<a>bere ka [lrumay ki Lavurase ka] tawpungu.
 M-<AV.REAL>escape NOM [OV.hit GEN Lavurase REL] dog
 ‘The dog that Lavurase hit escaped.’

- The predicative possessor can be relativized with an AV verb, whereas the regular possessor cannot.

- (22) a. Sa-paysu-ane ku lasu [ku **y<a>kay** ku daane].
 have(.a.lot)-money-NMLZ NOM man [REL **<AV.REAL>exist** NOM house]
 ‘The man that has a house is wealthy.’

- b. *Ma-lisi-lisi ka lasu [ka **m-u<a>kadrulru** ku daane].
 AV.STAT.REAL-RED-angry NOM man [REL <AV.REAL>**fall** NOM house]
 ‘The man whose house fell is angry.’

4.6 Quantifier binding

- The quantificational grammatical subject can bind into the grammatical object, while the quantificational object cannot bind into the grammatical subject. Note that variable binding in Budai Rukai is insensitive to word order.

- (23) a. Ma-dalame [sana ka sinsi_i] [ki panudhu=ini_i].
 AV.STAT.REAL-like [every KA teacher_i] [OBL student=3SG.GEN_i]
 ‘Every teacher_i likes his_i students.’
 b. Ma-dalame [ki panudhu=ini_i] [sana ka sinsi_i].
 AV.STAT.REAL-like [OBL student=3SG.GEN_i] [every KA teacher_i]
 ‘Every teacher_i likes his_i students.’
 (24) a. Ma-dalame [kay sinsi=ini_{*i/k}] [sana ka panudhu_i].
 AV.STAT.REAL-like [this teacher=3SG.GEN_{*i/k}] [every KA student_i]
 ‘His_{*i/k} teacher likes every student_i.’
 b. Ma-dalame [sana ka panudhu_i] [kay sinsi=ini_{*i/k}].
 AV.STAT.REAL-like [every KA student_i] [this teacher=3SG.GEN_{*i/k}]
 ‘His_{*i/k} teacher likes every student_i.’

- The quantificational possessum cannot bind into the predicative possessor. This thus speaks against Huang’s locative approach, where the possessum is higher than the possessor.

- (25) *Y<a>kay [sana ka lalake_i] [ki t-ina=ini_i].
 <AV.REAL>exist [every KA child_i] [GEN T-mother=3SG.GEN_i]
 ‘His_i mother has every child_i.’

4.7 Interim summary

- As shown in the table, the predicative possessor syntactically behaves as the grammatical subject but unlike the regular possessor.

- (26) Comparison of the syntactic behavior³

	grammatical subject	predicative possessor	regular possessor
controlled PRO	✓	✓	✗
quantifier float	✓	✓	✗
topicalization in AV	✓	✓	✗
wh-movement in AV	✓	✓	✗
relativization in AV	✓	✓	✗

- The subject properties of the predicative possessor cannot be captured by the locative approach (where the possessum is the subject) or expletive approach (where the expletive is the subject).
- In addition, the possessum cannot bind into the predicative possessor, which cannot be captured by the locative approach, where the possessum c-commands the possessor.
- As the regular possessor does not behave as the grammatical subject, general possessor raising (see Deal 2013) is not found in Budai Rukai.

³For topicalization of the regular possessor, it is labeled ungrammatical if we leave out hanging topics.

5 Possessums as inert arguments

- **Argument:** Possessums in possessives are not grammatical subjects, different from the thematic subject of an AV verb or the thematic object of an OV verb, but behave as inert arguments with nominative case.

5.1 Controlled PRO

- Despite the nominative marking, the possessum cannot be controlled PRO, which suggests it doesn't serve as a grammatical subject.

- (27) a. *Ma-dalame ka tawpungu [ikay **PRO**=li].
AV.STAT.REAL-like NOM dog [exist **PRO**=1SG.GEN]
'That dog likes to be mine / be owned by me.'
- b. *Ma-lrase ka ngiaw [ikay **PRO** ki Lavurase].
AV.STAT.REAL-hate NOM cat [exist **PRO** GEN Lavurase]
'That cat hates to be Lavurase's / be owned by Lavurase.'

5.2 Topicalization

- The possessum or the possessor-possessum DP cannot be topicalized.

- (28) a. *Ku daane, y<a>kay ki Lavurase.
NOM house <AV.REAL>exist GEN Lavurase
'A house, Lavurase has one.'
- b. ??Ku daane ki Lavurase, y<a>kay.
NOM house GEN Lavurase <AV.REAL>exist
'Lavurase has a house.'

- With a kind interpretation, the possessum cannot be topicalized either, suggesting no semantic effect at play here for topicalization.

- (29) a. Y<a>kay ku miyaiya kay ku laimay ki Lavurase.
<AV.REAL>exist NOM like this REL clothes GEN Lavurase
'Lavurase has this kind of clothes.'
- b. *Ku miyaiya kay ku laimay, y<a>kay ki Lavurase.
NOM like this REL clothes <AV.REAL>exist GEN Lavurase
'This kind of clothes, Lavurase has.'

- This differs from the regular possessor, where the possessor-possessum DP can be topicalized as a constituent.

- (30) Ka daane ki Lavurase, m-u<a>kulrudru.
NOM house GEN Lavurase M-<AV.REAL>fall
'Lavurase's house, it fell.'

5.3 Wh-movement

- The possessum cannot undergo *wh*-movement, either with an AV verb or an OV verb, so does not behave as a grammatical subject, different from the thematic subject of an AV verb and the thematic object of an OV verb. The only way to have a possessum interrogative is through the in-situ strategy.

- (31) a. *Manemane [ku y<a>kay=su]?
 what [NOM <AV.REAL>exist=2SG.GEN]
 ‘What do you have?’
- b. *Manemane [ku ikay=su]?
 what [NOM OV.exist=2SG.GEN]
 ‘What do you have?’
- c. Y<a>kay ku manemane=su?
 <AV.REAL>exist NOM what=2SG.GEN
 ‘What do you have?’

5.4 Relativization

- The possessum cannot be relativized, either with an AV verb or an OV verb, so does not behave as a grammatical subject, different from the thematic subject of an AV verb and the thematic object of an OV verb.

- (32) a. *M-u<a>kadrulu-nga ku [y<a>kay ki Lavurase ku] daane.
 M-<AV.REAL>fall-PFV NOM [<AV.REAL>exist GEN Lavurase REL] house
 ‘The house that Lavurase has fell.’
- b. *M-u<a>kadrulu-nga ku [ikay ki Lavurase ku] daane.
 M-<AV.REAL>fall-PFV NOM [OV.exist GEN Lavurase REL] house
 ‘The house that Lavurase has fell.’

5.5 Case

- The nominative case remains in the non-finite control structure, which suggests the nominative case on possessums does not originate from finite Infl and may be default (see Schütze 2001).

- (33) a. Ma-dalam=aku [ikay ku / *ki tawpungu **PRO**].
 AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [exist NOM / OBL dog **PRO**]
 Intended: ‘I like to have a dog.’
- b. Ma-dalam=aku [ikay ku / *ki sasiakawlu **PRO**].
 AV.STAT.REAL-like=1SG.NOM [exist NOM / OBL servant **PRO**]
 Intended: ‘I like to have servants.’

- Note that the nominative is default within this language, as seen in topicalization.

- (34) a. Y<a>kay ku tawpungu **ki Lavurase**.
 <AV.REAL>exist NOM dog **GEN Lavurase**
 ‘Lavurase has a dog.’
- b. **Ka Lavurase**, y<a>kay ku tawpungu.
NOM Lavurase <AV.REAL>exist NOM dog
 ‘Lavuras has a dog.’

5.6 Demonstratives

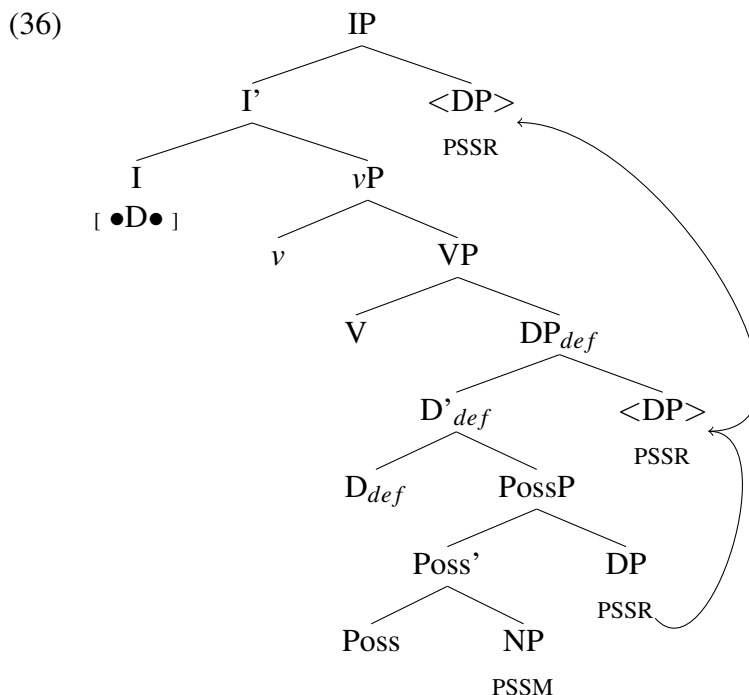
- The possessum with a demonstrative cannot serve as a referential DP.

- (35) a. Q: Anean-ane kay hungu?
 who-ANE this book?
 ‘Whose book is this (book)?’
 b. A: #Y<a>kay kay hungu=li.
 <AV.REAL>exist this book=1SG.GEN
 ‘I have this book.’

- A similar phenomenon is reported in existential constructions, where the argument is interpreted as a property but not as a referential entity (see Chung and Ladusaw 2003 and McNally 2016). Note that since the predicative possessives in Budai Rukai are expressed through the same predicate found in the existential construction, a similar semantic restriction is expected.

6 Analysis

- To summarize, (a) the predicative possessor is pronounced in PossP like the regular possessor, but (b) it behaves as the grammatical subject; (c) the possessum appears as an inert argument.
- As the predicative possessor is inside the possessum, we thus follow Myler 2014, 2016 in adopting a complex DP where the possessor is introduced in PossP.
- However, instead of PredP in Myler 2014, 2016, we propose Infl with [**•D•**] to have the possessor undergo A-movement to the grammatical subject position, Spec,IP.
- With A-movement, the lower copy is pronounced and assigned genitive in the base position, while the higher copy shows the grammatical subject properties and feeds subject-restricted A'-movement.
- Given the lack of referentiality in semantics, we propose that the possessum is defective and syntactically without a D-feature. Hence, it cannot be moved by Infl and does not count as a closer goal for the probe Infl.
- As defective, the possessum is realized with default nominative case.



7 Conclusion

- We showed that the genitive predicative possessor originates within the possessum DP but undergoes A-movement to Spec,IP. This movement is unpronounced but feeds later subject-restricted A'-movement.
- We showed that the nominative possessum is syntactically inert and not referential.
- We proposed that Infl with [\bullet D \bullet] triggers A-movement of the predicative possessor and that the possessum, as defective and lacking a D-feature, does not interfere with the movement of the possessor.

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