

# Introducing Possessor Datives – High or Low?

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## 0. Goals of this talk

- (i) Add to the body of evidence that supports the analysis of German ‘Possessor Datives’ as introduced by one of Pylkkänen’s (2002) applicative heads.
- (ii) Show that German is miscategorized as a ‘low-applicative’ language in the scheme of Pylkkänen’s typology.
- (iii) Propose that the German ‘Possessor Dative Construction’ is in fact a ‘high applicative’ construction, the possessive aspect of its meaning derived by ‘Possessor Raising’.

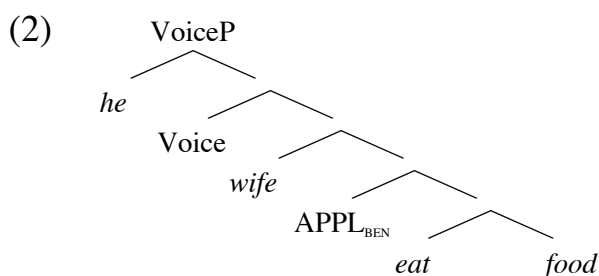
## 1. Background: German Possessor Datives

- ‘Possessor Dative Constructions’ (PDCs) like (1a-c) are commonly analyzed as an instance of the widely attested linguistic phenomenon known as ‘External Possession’ (see e.g. Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992 and Payne & Barshi 1999):
    - dative-marked nominal (henceforth ‘Possessor Dative’ or PD) acts as possessor, i.e. subpart of larger nominal phrase
    - PD also functions as benefactive or malefactive (affectee) argument of verb
- (1) a. Tim hat **der Nachbarin** gestern **das Auto** gewaschen.  
Tim has the neighbor (DAT, FEM) yesterday the car washed  
‘Tim washed the neighbor’s car for her yesterday.’
- b. Mein Bruder hat **der Mami** leider **das Auto** zu Schrott gefahren.  
my brother has the mom (DAT) unfortunately the car to scraps driven  
‘My brother totaled mom’s car on her.’
- c. Ein guter Ehemann massiert **seiner Frau** jeden Abend **den Rücken**.  
a good husband massages his wife (DAT) each evening the back  
‘A good husband massages his wife’s back every night.’
- The dual functioning of PDs has been accounted for in various ways:
    - ‘Possessor Ascension/Raising’ of PD from possessor position within possessee nominal to dative-licensing verbal argument position (see e.g. Isačenko 1965, Gallmann 1992, Allen et al. 1990, Landau 1999, Lee-Schoenfeld to appear)

- Binding/Control relation between PD in verbal argument position and null element in possessor position (see e.g. Guéron 1985, Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992, Kempchinsky 1992, Hole to appear)
- Other non-movement approaches (e.g. Shibatani 1994, Wunderlich 1996, 2000, Pylkkänen 2002, McIntyre 2003)
- Problem for Possessor Ascension/Raising and Binding/Control approaches: PD must be assigned two  $\bar{\lambda}$ -roles, possessor and affectee. Proposed solutions:
  - Guéron 1985, Kempchinsky 1992: Possessor role is “secondary”/“non-genuine”
  - Landau 1999: Hebrew PDC is only subject to pragmatic, not syntactically encoded affectedness condition; PD is only assigned one  $\bar{\lambda}$ -role: possessor
  - Lee-Schoenfeld to appear: double  $\bar{\lambda}$ -role assignment does not necessarily violate  $\bar{\lambda}$ -Criterion; in Minimalist system, heads with their selectional features are introduced in course of derivation; newly built sentence domain means possibility of new  $\bar{\lambda}$ -assignment; overgeneration is avoided by movement being strictly driven by formal (case, not  $\bar{\lambda}$ -)features
- Pylkkänen (2002): Double  $\bar{\lambda}$ -assignment and other problems with Possessor Raising approach (in particular Landau’s) can be avoided by analyzing PDCs on a par with Double Object Constructions (DOCs), as a type of ‘low applicative’ construction.

## 2. The PDC as a low applicative construction

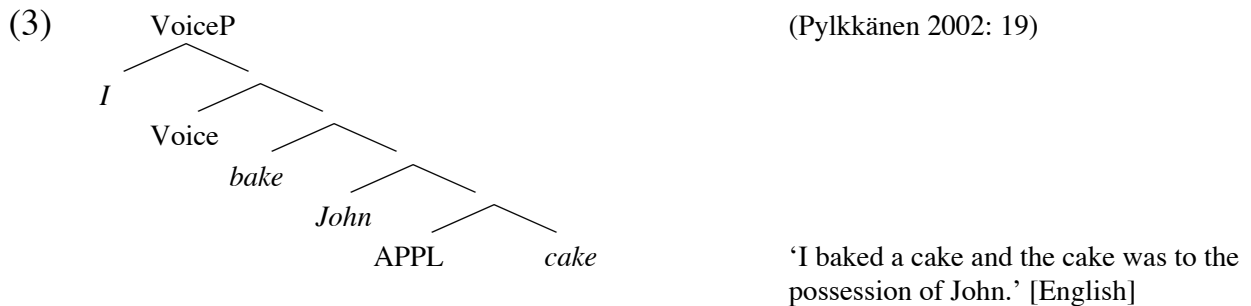
- In much recent work, non-core arguments (like PDs) have been analyzed as introduced by an affectee applicative head (see e.g. Anagnostopoulou 2002, Baker to appear, Hole to appear, McFadden 2003, McIntyre 2003, Miyagawa & Tsujigka 2004, Pereltsvaig 2003, and Pylkkänen 2002).
- In Pylkkänen’s (2002) typology of non-core argument introducers (seven overall), there are three types of applicative heads:
  - high applicative: thematic relation between applied argument and event described by verb (e.g. Chaga, Luganda, and Venda benefactive construction)



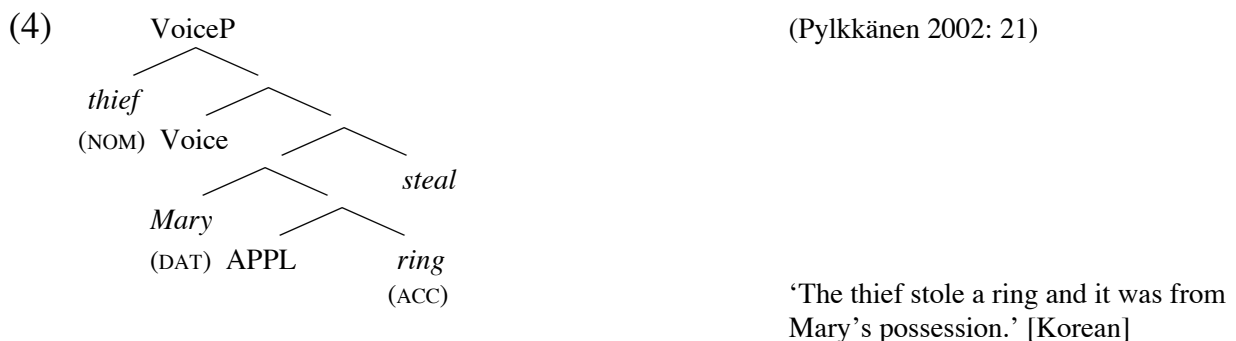
(Pylkkänen 2002: 19)

‘He is eating food for his wife.’ [Chaga]

- low recipient applicative: transfer of possession relation between two individuals; asserts that the direct object is *to* the possession of the indirect object (e.g. English and Japanese DOC)



- low source applicative: transfer of possession relation between two individuals; asserts that the direct object is *from* the possession of the indirect object (e.g. Korean and Hebrew PDC)



- PDCs are analyzed as low applicatives, on a par with DOCs; only difference is that applied argument functions as source rather than recipient; no direct relation between verb and PD

### 3. Why German PDs can’t be introduced low

#### 3.1 *Transfer of possession*

- One of Pylkkänen’s diagnostics for the high-low distinction between types of applicatives is based on verb semantics. Since the event in a low applicative construction must result in a transfer of possession, the verb cannot be static. No such restriction holds for high applicative constructions.

- diagnostic classifies English DOC as low:

(5) \*I held him the bag.  
(Pylkkänen 2002: 24)

- diagnostic classifies German PDC as high:

- (6) ✓ Ich habe **ihm** **die Tasche** gehalten  
 I have him (DAT) the bag held  
 ‘I held his bag for him.’

- The transfer of possession relation between the applied argument and the direct object is claimed to account for the obligatory possessor interpretation in PDCs (see in particular Landau 1999). The possessor relation is said to always coincide with a transfer of possession.

- works for obvious loss of possession in Korean example in (4)
- can also be extended to Finnish examples in (7), although transfer of possession needs to be interpreted as privacy loss; PDC is only acceptable when referent of direct object is intimately or secretly possessed:

- (7) a. Riikka näki Sanna-lta aluspaida-n.  
 Riikka.NOM saw I-ABL undershirt-ACC  
 ‘Riikka saw Sanna’s undershirt.’  
 (Lit: ‘Riikka saw an undershirt from Sanna.’)

- b. #Riikka näki Sanna-lta päällystaki-n.  
 Riikka.NOM saw I-ABL overcoat-ACC  
 ‘Riikka saw Sanna’s overcoat.’  
 (Lit: ‘Riikka saw an overcoat from Sanna.’)  
 (Pylkkänen 2002: 47)

- does not work for German examples like (1a), repeated as (8), where there is no no privacy loss in any sense because direct object is possessed publicly

- (8) Tim hat **der Nachbarin** gestern **das Auto** gewaschen.  
 Tim has the neighbor (DAT, FEM) yesterday the car washed  
 ‘Tim washed the neighbor’s car for her yesterday.’

- also unconvincing for examples like (1c), repeated as (9), where body part is a private possession but notion of privacy loss mischaracterizes situation

- (9) Ein guter Ehemann massiert **seiner Frau** jeden Abend **den Rücken**.  
 a good husband massages his wife (DAT) each evening the back  
 ‘A good husband massages his wife’s back every night.’

- possessor relation between PD and direct object as well as PD-affectedness expressed by verb are obligatory in German PDC; cannot be replaced by single notion of transfer of possession, relating only PD and direct object
- in (8) and (9), dative nominal functions as beneficiary of event expressed by verb, i.e. is directly related to verb; can only be in Spec of high applicative head

### 3.2 Incompatibility of low applicatives with PP-internal DPs

- Pykkänen's low applicative analysis does not allow for the applied argument to relate to a PP-internal DP:

(10) \*John sat Mary in the car.  
 (Intended meaning: 'John sat in a car which was to Mary's possession.')

(Pykkänen 2002: 56)

- constructions like Hebrew (11) can then not be PDCs

(11) Gil gar le-Rina ba-xacer.

Gil lives to-Rina in-the-yard

'He lives in Rina's yard.'

(Landau 1999: 4)

- dative nominal is argued to only look like PD; dative argument is really introduced by verb *be*, as in simple possessor sentences like *Jon has a son*, literally *(there) is to Jon a son*
- prediction: only languages that have *be*-possessor constructions (i.e. use *be* not *have* in simple possessor sentences) have PDC-like constructions like (11) with possessee embedded in PP
- German does not have *be*-possessor constructions; predicted to be incompatible with PP-embedded possessee; counter to fact:

(12) a. ✓ Er stand **ihr** [auf **dem Fuß**].

he stood her (DAT) on the foot

'He stood on her foot.'

b. ✓ Das Kind legte sich **dem Papa** [auf **den Bauch**].

the child lay self the dad (DAT) on the stomach

'The child lay down on dad's stomach.'

c. ✓ Eine Katze kommt **meinen Eltern** nicht [ins **Haus**].

a cat comes my parents (DAT) not into-the house

'A cat is not allowed in my parents' house.'

- German example provided by Pykkänen (see (13)) is ungrammatical for different reasons: lack of PD-affectedness and cooccurrence of PD with possessive pronoun

(13) \*Hans hat ihm in seinem Hof gewohnt.

Hans has him (DAT) in his yard lived

'Hans had him living in his yard.'

(Pykkänen 2002: 57)

- Possessor Raising (A-movement) account of PDC makes right prediction: PD-movement out of PP is expected to be grammatical as long as PP is an argument

#### 4. Conclusion

The German facts suggest a distinction between genuine low applicatives, like the English DOC, which involve transfer of possession, and high applicatives in which the applicative argument originates as a possessor. This distinction eliminates the dubious notion of privacy loss and avoids incorrect predictions about the German PDC, while maintaining the core of Pyllkänen's otherwise attractive typology.

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