

## Individual-denoting and Property-denoting Possessives

In this paper I show that possessives can be divided into two classes – individual-denoting possessives (IDPs, exemplified in (1)) and property-denoting possessives (PDPs, exemplified in (2)) – based on a number of syntactic and semantic properties. Similar classifications have been suggested before (Hazout 1991 for Hebrew, Munn 1995 for English, Kolliakou 1999 for French) with discussion of either syntactic (Hazout, Munn) or semantic (Kolliakou) properties. My contributions are to integrate the previous analyses, note some additional distinctions between the two possessive types, and provide explanations for their semantic differences in terms of their syntax and a mapping principle.

Some of the syntactic and semantic differences between IDPs and PDPs are shown in (3) – (8). (3) shows that when possessors of both type are present in the same construction, the IDP possessor must precede the PDP possessor. (4) shows that the ordering between possessors and quantifiers/adjectives depends on the kind of possessive involved. (5) shows that ellipsis of the possessum is possible in IDPs but not PDPs (5c is included to show that the effect is not related to the double possessor in 5b, but to the interpretation). (6) shows that IDP antecedents are referred to with anaphoric *it* while PDPs have a reading with *one* as an anaphor. (7) shows that the possessor position in IDPs is extensional while the same position in PDPs is intensional. And the principles in (8a-b) describe another difference between the two possessive types: they assert that (8c) must be true for some R, while for (8d), there is some y for which no assignment to R and x will make the formula true.

Following Munn, I analyze IDPs as DPs with DP possessors and PDPs as non-DPs (NPs or PossPs) with non-DP possessors. On a common view of the syntax-semantics mapping, these syntactic categories would force IDPs to be individuals of type e and PDPs to be properties of type  $\langle et \rangle$  or  $\langle s\langle et \rangle \rangle$ . This analysis predicts or suggests explanations for the properties in (3) – (8): the word order facts in (3) and (4) follow in an obvious way; the pattern in (5) is partially accounted for if a necessary condition for ellipsis is that the ellipsed element can be an NP but not a sub-NP constituent; the different anaphors in (6) might be associated with different categories (DP vs. non-DP) or different semantic types (e vs.  $\langle et \rangle$  or  $\langle s\langle et \rangle \rangle$ ); the difference in intensionality is predicted if we follow a suggestion in Partee (1986) that all properties are intensional; and the facts in (8) look similar to the analysis of properties in Zimmermann (1992), in which there is no assertion of existence when a verb's argument is a property, even if the context would otherwise assert existence. Similarly, the relevance of entities is diminished in property-denoting possessives.

The distinction between individual- and property-denoting possessives raises questions about possessive constructions as well as about the grammar in general. One question is whether the cluster of syntactic and semantic properties is idiosyncratic or systematic across languages. I show that almost all of the patterns in (3) – (8) hold in the case of Hebrew *šel*-possessives as well, suggesting that the cluster is systematic. Another more general question concerns the non-existence of DP possessors of PDPs and non-DP possessors of IDPs, i.e. the ungrammaticality of (9a-b). I will show that Munn's (1995) explanation for this pattern in terms of feature-checking and Greed (Chomsky 1995) cannot accommodate the Hebrew data, which shows the IDP/PDP distinction. In Hebrew IDP *šel*-possessives, possessors are right-adjoined and it is implausible to derive their position by movement. I suggest that a filter on representations, in which DP specifiers or adjuncts must be DPs and vice versa, is better able to handle the range of data. An open question concerns possessives in languages like Italian, where possessor pronouns occur in a projection lower than DP but are interpreted as IDPs (10).

- (1) **Individual-denoting possessives**  
Frank's hat; yesterday's lunch; John's song
- (2) **Property-denoting possessives (italicized part)**  
*A men's hat; this girls' school; yesterday's teacher's strike*
- (3) **Double possessive**  
a. Frank's men's hat  
b. \*Men's Frank's hat
- (4) **Quantifier/adjective placement**  
a. Many/round men's hats  
b. \*Men's many/round hats  
c. \*Many/round Frank's hats  
d. Frank's many/round hats
- (5) **Ellipsis**  
a. I supported yesterday's strike but not today's  
b. ??I supported yesterday's teachers' strike but not today's students'  
c. \$I supported one teachers' strike but several students'
- (\$ = grammatical only on the readings involving strikes of one teacher and several students)
- (6) **Anaphora**  
a. I'd like to have Frank's hat, but I can't afford to buy it/\*one  
b. I'd like to have a men's hat, but I can't afford to buy one/%it
- (% = grammatical only on specific reading)
- (7) **Intensionality**  
a. This is Frank's hat  
Frank is the President of the United States  
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This is the President of the United States' hat  
b. This is an iguana trainers' manual  
All and only iguana trainers are iguana breeders  
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#This is an iguana breeders' manual
- (8) a. The entity denoted by an IDP possessor participates in a relation with the entity denoted by the DP.  
b. There is no need for any entity which is an argument of the predicate denoted by a PDP possessor to participate in a relation with the entity denoted by the DP.  
c. R(Frank, Frank's hat)  
d. x: x is a man, y: y is a man's hat R(x,y)
- (9) a. \*<sub>[DP]</sub>the [<sub>[NP]</sub><sub>[DP]</sub>John's] hat]  
b. \*<sub>[DP]</sub><sub>[NP]</sub>man's] hat]
- (10) <sub>[DP]</sub>il<sub>[PossP/NP]</sub> mio libro]] "my book", literally "the my book"

## References

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