

Predicative Possession in Fijian[†]

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1. Introduction

In every language, possessive relationship can be expressed both within a noun phrase (nominal possession) and within a clause (predicative possession). Nominal possession in Fijian is well described in previous studies (Pawley and Sayaba 1990, Geraghty 2000, Lynch 2001, and so forth) but predicative possession has been less explored. This paper points out that Fijian employs two types of possessive construction, namely the Locational possessive and the Genitive possessive, and claims that the former is semantically restricted while the latter is widely observed.

The organization of the paper is as follows. Section 2 and 3 provide a typological overview of predicative possession and some preliminaries on possessive expression in Fijian respectively. Section 4 describes two types of possession (the Locational possessive and the Genitive possessive). Section 5 concludes the paper. Examples without sources were collected through elicitation with two consultants LG (male, born in 1962) and SG (female, born in 1962). Note that this work deals mainly with Standard Fijian, hereafter just Fijian.

2. Typological overview on predicative possession

Stassen (2013), the chapter of predicative possession on the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS), provides five types of predicative possession. That is to say, the Have-possessive, the Locational possessive, the Genitive possessive, the Topic possessive, and the Conjunctive possessive. This study adopts these concepts to describe predicative possession in Fijian.

Among them, the Have-possessive utilizes a transitive verb as a predicate, so the possessor appears as a subject while the possessed item as an object (1).

(1) Have-possessive: English

John has a motorcycle

(Stassen 2013)

Other four types contain in common an existential verb as a predicate. In the Locational possessive, the possessor is expressed by a locational noun phrase (2). In the Genitive possessive, the possessor occurs within a noun phrase (3). As discussed below, Fijian employs both the Locational and the

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Genitive possessive. Stassen (2013) calls these two types of predicative possession the Oblique possessive.

(2) Locational possessive: Written Mongolic¹

na-dur morin bui

1SG-at horse be.3SG.PRES

‘I have a horse (lit. A horse exists at me)’ (Poppe 1954: 147, glosses by Stassen 2013)

(3) Genitive possessive: Avar (Daghestanian, Caucasus)

dir mašina b-ugo

1SG.GEN car III-be.PRES

‘I have a car (lit. My car exists)’ (Kalinina 1993: 97, glosses by Stassen 2013)

In the Topic possessive, as its name suggests, the possessor is a topic noun phrase (4).

(4) Topic possessive: Tondano (Austronesian, northern Sulawesi)

si tuama si wewean wale rua

ANIM.SG man TOP exist house two

‘The man has two houses (lit. As for the man, there are two houses exist)’

(Sneddon 1975: 175, glosses by Stassen 2013)

The Conjunctive possessive has an existential verb just like the Oblique possessive (2), (3) and the Topic possessive (4). However, it differs from them in that the possessor appears as the subject of the clause (5).

(5) Conjunctive possessive: Sango (Adamawa-Ubangi, Central African Republic)

lo eke na bongo

3SG be and/with garment

‘She has a garment (lit. She exists with a garment)’

(Samarin 1967: 95, glosses by Stassen 2013)

3. Possessive construction in Fijian

3.1. Preliminaries

Before moving onto the main discussion of the paper, let me provide some preliminaries on Fijian. Fijian is an Oceanic language (Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian) with a basic word order of VS/VPA. The phoneme inventory is as follows: /p, b [ᵐb], t, d [ᵐd], k, q [ᵐg], r, dr [ᵐr], v [β], f, c [ð],

¹ Poppe (1954) himself does not regard *bui* in (2) as a predicate that agrees with the third person singular subject (Yohei Yamada, personal communication).

j [tʃ], z [ʰdʒ], m, n, g [ŋ], l, w, y, a, a:, e, e:, i, i:, o, o:, u, u:/. Long vowels are indicated by a macron. Note that a predicate may consist of more than one phonological word. Nouns are divided into two types: common and proper. Each noun class co-occurs with different articles and prepositions (Table 1). The proper class includes not only proper nouns but also personal pronouns.

Table 1: Two noun classes

	Article	Preposition		
		in, at	to	from
Common	<i>na</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>mai</i>
Proper	<i>o</i>	<i>vei</i>		<i>mai vei</i>

Section 3.2 and 3.3 below show nominal possession and predicative possession in Fijian respectively.

3.2. Nominal possession

Nominal possession is a construction where the possessive relationship is expressed within a noun phrase as in *John's book*. Although this paper discusses predicative possession, this section briefly summarizes nominal possession in Fijian.

Oceanic languages including Fijian formally distinguish two types of nominal possessive construction: ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ possession. This distinction generally corresponds to a semantic distinction between inalienable and alienable possession. Lynch et al. (2002: 40) state that in direct possession, “a possessor suffix [...] is attached directly to the possessed noun”, while in indirect possession, “an uninflected possessed noun is either preceded or followed by an independent possessive constituent, which is itself marked with one of the possessor suffixes”. Fijian is no exception to this. Direct possession (i.e. possession of body parts and kinship terms) is expressed by attaching a possessive suffix directly to the possessed noun (6). A possessive suffix indicates the person and the number of the possessor (Table 2).

(6) Direct possession

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| a. <i>na ulu-na</i> | b. <i>na tama-na</i> |
| ART head-3SG | ART father-3SG |
| ‘his head’ | ‘his father’ |

Table 2: Possessive suffix (Schütz 2014: 305)

	1st person		2nd person	3rd person
	exclusive	inclusive		
singular		<i>-qu</i>	<i>-mu</i>	<i>-na</i>
dual	<i>-irau</i>	<i>-daru</i>	<i>-mudrau</i>	<i>-drau</i>
paucal	<i>-itou</i>	<i>-datou</i>	<i>-mutou</i>	<i>-dratou</i>
plural	<i>-imami</i>	<i>-da</i>	<i>-munī</i>	<i>-dra</i>

In indirect possession, on the other hand, the possessor is signaled by an independent word consisting of a classifier and a possessive suffix, which precedes the possessed noun. The correct classifier must be chosen according to the relationship between the possessor and the possessed item. There are three types of classifiers: *ke-* (edible), *me-* (drinkable), and *no-* (neutral) (7). These modifiers may or may not co-occur with the article *na*.

(7) Indirect possession

a. <i>na ke-na ika</i>	b. <i>na me-na tī</i>	c. <i>na no-na vale</i>
ART CLF.E-3SG fish	ART CLF.D-3SG tea	ART CLF.N-3SG house
‘his fish’	‘his tea’	‘his house’

The possessor is indicated by not only pronouns but also independent nouns such as proper nouns and common nouns. When the possessor is a proper noun, the suffix *-i* is used as in (8).

(8) a. <i>na ulu-i Mere</i>	b. <i>na ika ke-i Mere</i>
ART head-of Mere	ART fish CLF.E-of Mere
‘Mere’s head’	‘Mere’s fish’
c. <i>na tī me-i Mere</i>	d. <i>na vale ne-i Mere</i>
ART tea CLF.D-of Mere	ART house CLF.N-of Mere
‘Mere’s tea’	‘Mere’s house’

When the possessor is a common noun, on the other hand, it is placed after the possessed noun (9a) or indicated by the preposition *ni* ‘of’ (9b). Note that in (9b) the distinction of possessive relationship, which is indicated by the classifier *ke-* in (9a), is neutralized.

(9) a. <i>na ke-na ika na gone</i>	b. <i>na ika ni gone</i>
ART CLF.E-3SG fish ART child	ART fish of child
‘the child’s fish (to eat)’	‘the child’s fish’

3.3. Predicative possession

Typological studies on predicative possession have classified Fijian as a language which uses the Locational possessive (Heine 1997: 51, Stassen 2009: 130, 755, Stassen 2013, and so forth). Existential verbs such as *tiko* and *tū* are used for the predicate, which I gloss just as ‘be’².

Dixon (1988) also provides examples of the Locational possessive in Boumaa Fijian. In (10)³, the existential verb *tiʔo* is used. The possessed noun *puaʔa* ‘pig’ appears as an intransitive subject. It should be noted that the subject agrees with a bound pronoun in person and number (cf. (11), (12) below) but the third person singular bound pronoun *e* cannot co-occur with the aspect marker *sā*. The possessor *au* ‘me’, on the other hand, is signaled by the preposition *vei*.

- (10) *Sā tiʔo vei au e dua a puaʔa*
 ASP be to.PRP 1SG 3SG one ART pig
 ‘I now have a pig’ (Dixon 1988: 128)

Milner (1956), however, provides examples of not only the Locational possessive but also the Genitive possessive. (11) is an example of the Locational possessive, where the possessed item *e dua na ilavo* ‘some money’ agrees with the bound pronoun *e* while the possessor is marked by the preposition *vei*.

- (11) *E tū vei au e dua na ilavo*
 3SG be to.PRP 1SG 3SG one ART money
 ‘I have some money’ (Milner 1956: 59)

In the Genitive possessive (12), on the other hand, the possessor occurs as a possessive suffix within an NP.

- (12) *E dua na no-na cina vou*
 3SG one ART CLF.N-3SG lamp new
 ‘He has a new lamp’ (Milner 1956: 36)

Here the predicate is *dua* ‘one’ (cf. footnote 1). Fijian numerals, which obligatorily occur with the third person singular bound pronoun *e*, are often used in predicative possession instead of existential verbs. Stassen (2009: 31) refers to this construction as ‘quantifier/modifier-raising’.

² Dixon (1988: 128) points out that existential verbs are related to the difference in meaning in Boumaa Fijian. This paper focuses mainly on a constructional difference between the Locational possessive and the Genitive possessive.

³ In Fijian, numerals are analyzed as a subtype of verb. In (10), *e dua* forms a relative clause to modify the subsequent noun *puaʔa* ‘pig’. *E dua* often functions like an ‘indefinite article’ as in (11).

4. Locational and Genitive possessive in Fijian

As shown in Section 3.3 above, Fijian has both the Locational possessive and the Genitive possessive. Section 4.1 describes these two types of predicative possession within the framework of Heine (1997) and claims that the permanence of the possessive relationship is related. Section 4.2 points out that the noun class of possessor is also concerned.

4.1. Permanence of the possessive relationship

Heine (1997) suggests seven possessive types as shown in (13).

(13) Possessive relationship (Heine 1997: 34-5)

a. Physical possession (PHYS)

I want to fill in this form: do you have a pen?

b. Temporary possession (TEMP)

I have a car that I use to go to the office but it belongs to Judy.

c. Permanent possession (PERM)

Judy has a car but I use it all the time.

d. Inalienable possession (INAL)

I have blue eyes/two sisters.

e. Abstract possession (ABST)

He has no time/no mercy.

f. Inanimate inalienable possession (IN/I)

That tree has few branches.

g. Inanimate alienable possession (IN/A)

That tree has crows on it.

The following subsections show which predicative possession type (i.e. the Locational possessive or the Genitive possessive) is preferred in each possessive type.

4.1.1. Physical possession

Physical possession is a relationship where “the possessor and the possessee are physically associated with one another at reference time” (Heine 1997: 34). In this possessive relationship, both types are observed (14). Note that in the examples below the capital letters L and G represent the Locational possessive and the Genitive possessive respectively and the possessor noun phrase is shown in bold.

(14) Do you have a pen?

L: *E tiko vei iko e dua na peni?*
 3SG be to.PRP 2SG 3SG one ART pen

G: *E dua no-mu peni?*
 3SG one CLF.N-2SG pen

4. 1. 2. Temporary possession

In temporary possession, “the possessor can dispose of the possessee for a limited time but s/he cannot claim ownership to it” (Heine 1997: 34). As shown in (15), both types are used.

(15) I have a book (that I borrowed)

L: *E tiko vei au na ivola*
 3SG be to.PRP 1SG ART book

G: *E dua no-qu ivola*
 3SG one CLF.N-1SG book

4. 1. 3. Permanent possession

Permanent possession is a relationship where “the possessee is the property of the possessor, and typically the possessor has a legal title to the possessee” (Heine 1997: 34). In this possessive relationship, the Genitive possessive is preferred (16).

(16) Jone has a car (that he bought)

G: *E dua na motokā ne-i Jone*
 3SG one ART car CLF.N-of Jone

4. 1. 4. Inalienable possession

In inalienable possession, “the possessee is conceived of typically as being inseparable from the possessor” (Heine 1997: 34). Inalienable possession is divided into kinship terms and body parts. As for the possession of kinship term, only the Genitive possessive is observed (17).

(17) I have two brothers

G: *E rua na taci-qu*
 3SG two ART younger_sibling-1SG

Similarly, the Genitive possessive is dominantly used for body parts as shown in (18), whose literal meaning is “his eggs of eye (i.e. eye balls) are blue”.

(18) He has blue eyes

E karakarawa na yaloka ni mata-na
 3SG blue ART egg of eye-3SG

One explanation of the reason why only the Genitive possessive is allowed in inalienable possession is that the majority of kinship terms and body parts are bound nouns, which require a possessive suffix within a noun phrase. In addition, quantifier/modifier-raising is common in inalienable possession because the possessive relationship is expectable by definition, therefore the property of a possessed noun is foregrounded. For instance, the numeral *rua* ‘two’ in (17) and the adjective *karakarawa* ‘blue’ in (18) are ‘raised’ to the predicate respectively.

4.1.5. Abstract possession

In abstract possession, “the possessee is a concept that is not visible or tangible, like a disease, a feeling, or some other psychological state” (Heine 1997: 34). In Fijian, such states are expressed not by possessive constructions but by adjectives. Heine (1997: 35) adds that “abstract possession may be said to be also present when the meaning of the proposition concerned is actually the contrary to possession, as in *I have a missing tooth*”. ‘Absence’ like this is expressed by both possessive types in Fijian. In such a case, the predicate is the negative verb *sega* (19).

(19) I have no money

L: *E sega vei au na ilavo*
 3SG NEGV to.PRP 1SG ART money
 G: *E sega na no-qu ilavo*
 3SG NEGV ART CLF.N-1SG money

4.1.6. Inanimate inalienable possession

Inanimate inalienable possession is often referred to as a part-whole relationship (Heine 1997: 35). This type differs from inalienable possession discussed in Section 4.1.4 in that the possessor is inanimate. Whether the possessor is animate or inanimate, what inalienable possession types have in common is that they are expressed only by the Genitive possessive. In (20), *taba* ‘branch’ is a bound noun so the possessor is signaled by the possessive suffix *-na* and the following noun phrase.

(20) The tree has three branches

E tolu na taba-na na vunikau
 3SG three ART branch-3SG ART tree

In (21), the possessor is expressed by the preposition *ni* ‘of’.

(21) My room has two doors

G: *E rua na katuba ni no-qu vale*
 3SG two ART door of CLF.N-1SG house

4.1.7. Inanimate alienable possession

The last type of possession is inanimate alienable possession, where the possessor is inanimate and the possessee is separable from the possessor (Heine 1997: 35). As shown in (22), only the Locational possessive is used here.

(22) This room has a table

L: *E tiko e na rumu qō e dua na tēveli*
 3SG be in ART room this 3SG one ART table

4.1.8. Intermediate conclusion

Table 3 summarizes what I demonstrated above.

Table 3: Predicative possession in Fijian

	IN/A	PHYS	TEMP	ABST	PERM	INAL	IN/I
Permanence	–	–	–	+/-	+	+	+
Locational	+	+	+	+	–	–	–
Genitive	–	+	+	+	+	+	+

As shown in the table, the Locational possessive can be used only for less permanent possessive relationships. It follows from what has been said that the Genitive possessive, rather than the Locational possessive, is the prototypical predicative possession of Fijian since it has almost no restriction on the subtypes of possession.

The Locational possessive, as its name indicates, can be claimed to be a ‘locational expression’ rather than a possessive one. In other words, it just expresses that something exists somewhere and possessive relationship does not imply. Accordingly, it is used for temporary possession and inanimate alienable possession. (23) makes it clear that the genitive *nomu* ‘your’ is the ‘true’ possessor of a pen while the locational *vei au* ‘to me’ is a mere place where a pen is.

(23) *E dua vei au na no-mu peni*
 3SG one to.PRP 1SG ART CLF.N-2SG pen
 ‘Your pen exists to me’

4.2. Noun class of possessor

As shown in Table 1 in Section 3.1, Fijian nouns are divided into the common class or the proper class. Nouns of the proper class (i.e. pronouns and proper nouns) can be the possessor of both the Locational possessive and the Genitive possessive (24), (25).

(24) I have a book

L: *E dua vei au na ivola*

3SG one to.PRP 1SG ART book

G: *E dua no-qu ivola*

3SG one CLF.N-1SG book

(25) Mere has a book

L: *E dua vei Mere na ivola*

3SG one to.PRP Mere ART book

G: *E dua na ivola ne-i Mere*

3SG one ART book CLF.N-of Mere

Nouns of the common class, on the other hand, cannot be the possessor of the Locational possessive so common nouns as the possessor should be within a noun phrase (26).

(26) The child has a book

L: **E dua ki na gone na ivola* / **E dua e na gone na ivola*

3SG one to ART child ART book 3SG one in ART child ART book

G: *E dua no-na ivola na gone* / *E dua na ivola ni gone*

3SG one CLF.N-3SG book ART child 3SG one ART book of child

Perhaps, the selection of possessive types is related to information structure. The proper class (i.e. pronouns and proper nouns) are semantically definite by definition. Therefore, as shown in (24) and (25), both possessive types can have a definite possessor. An indefinite possessor, on the other hand, might tend to appear in the Genitive possessive. As to this point, Milner (1956: 36) states that the Genitive possessive is “especially useful as a sentence opening”. It follows that the Genitive possessive is apt to have an indefinite possessor since opening sentences consist wholly of new information. The relation between possessive type and information structure needs to be addressed in future research.

5. Conclusion

Typological studies have classified Fijian as a language that employs the Locational possessive for predicative possession. However, this study reveals that the Genitive possessive, not the Locational

possessive, is the prototypical possessive expression. There are two supporting reasons for this. First, the Genitive possessive is used regardless of the temporal properties of possession, while the Locational possessive is used only for temporary possessive relationships. Second, the Genitive possessive can take all types of nouns as its possessor, while the Locational possessive can only have nouns of the proper class.

Stassen (2013) points out that predicative possessives consisting of an existential verb might be transitivized, which he calls a HAVE-Drift. It should be emphasized that in Fijian a HAVE-Drift has not happened so far. In (27a) below, the subject is not the possessor but the possessed item, which is confirmed by the agreement. A bound pronoun at the left edge of a predicate never agrees with a possessor NP (27b).

- (27) a. *E dua vei au na motokā*
 3SG one to.PRP 1SG ART car
 ‘I have a car’
 b. **Au dua vei au na motokā*
 1SG one to.PRP 1SG ART car

This work focuses on predicative possession of Standard Fijian but it is worth noting that Vatulele Fijian, a Western Fijian dialect, has the same tendency. That is, the Genitive possessive can be said to be the default possessive type.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person	GEN	genitive
III	noun class III	N	neutral
ANIM	animate	NEGV	negative verb
ART	article	PRES	present
ASP	aspect	PRP	proper
CLF	classifier	SG	singular
D	drinkable	TOP	topic
E	edible		

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フィジー語の叙述所有

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キーワード：フィジー語，所有，言語類型論

フィジー語の叙述所有は、類型論的に、所有者を斜格で標示する場所型（私に本がある）であるとされてきた。しかし実際には、所有者を属格的形式で標示する属格型（私の本がある）も観察される。両者の違いは所有関係の時間的特性によるものである。場所型は恒常性の低い所有関係に用いられ、譲渡不可能所有や全体部分、所有権関係にはなじまない傾向にある。それに加えて、場所型は、その名の示す通り場所と連続しており、必ずしも所有関係を表すわけではない。一方、属格型には時間的特性について制限がなく、必ず所有関係を含意する。場所型と属格型の相違には、意味的な要因に加え、所有者の名詞クラスも関わっており、場所型は人称代名詞・固有名詞の所有者しか許容しない一方、属格型にはそのような制限がない。このことから、フィジー語において属格型が原型的な叙述所有表現であるといえる。