

**“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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