

The development of locative, existential and possessive predication from a functional perspective

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This paper discusses various diachronic pathways of development of locative, existential and possessive predication using the framework of Functional Discourse Grammar (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008) and drawing on earlier work on the topic by the author (Hengeveld 1992). The focus is on two different aspects. The first concerns the diachronic development of the constructions involved as a whole, the second concerns the diachronic development of the copular element used within these constructions, if any.

As regards the first aspect, I will show that locative, existential, and possessive constructions may express meanings other than their original ones within the domain under study. Table 1 shows the distribution of constructions over meanings. It clearly shows that possessive meaning is most often parasitic on constructions that are not possessive in origin, locative meaning least often, with (locative-)existential meaning occupying an intermediate position. The paper will provide the empirical data that support Table 1.

Construction Meaning	Lexical	Pseudo-transitive	Proprietary	Predicative quantifier	Locative	Existential
Locative	+					
(Locative-)Existential	+	+	+	+		
Possessive	+	+	+	+	+	+

Table 1. Constructions versus meanings

As regards the second aspect, the paper discusses the development of the copular element in the different types of predication. This copular element may have its origin in a locative, possessive, perception, or existential predicate of a lexical nature. Table 2 shows how these types of predicate enter the different construction types. Interestingly, it is the lexical possessive predicate that enters the widest range of construction types. Again, the paper will present the empirical data on which Table 2 is based.

Origin of Copula Construction	Locative predicate	Perception predicate	Possessive predicate	Existential predicate
Existential			+	+
Pseudo-transitive		+	+	
Locative	+			

Table 2. Distribution of copula of different origins across different construction types

Combining the data in the two tables, it seems that the conclusion may be that possessive meaning is expressed drawing in the widest possible range of construction types, while at the same time lexical possessive predicates are an important source for the creation of copular elements in languages.

References

- Hengeveld, Kees (1992), *Non-verbal predication: theory, typology, diachrony* (Functional Grammar Series 15). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hengeveld, Kees & Mackenzie, J. Lachlan (2008), *Functional Discourse Grammar: A typologically-based theory of language structure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.